

MONTAUK HATCHERY HISTORY

BY
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Montauk Hatchery is located at the headwaters of the Current River in Montauk State Park. The hatchery is owned and operated by the Missouri Department of Conservation. Montauk Springs, Bluff Springs and other small springs in the park provide water for the hatchery. An estimated 53 million gallons of water flow daily from this series of sand boil and bluff springs. Montauk is the 12th largest spring in Missouri.

Montauk Hatchery began operation in 1932. The first trout season in which daily tags were issued was 1939, when 3,040 were sold. In contrast, the record year was 1989 when 103,056 were sold. In 2005, 86,469 tags were sold. The hatchery office and buildings are all located in one remodeled building. The original building and hatching facilities were constructed in 1948. The hatchery staff consists of nine full time and one seasonal employee. At least one hatchery employee is always on duty, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

In October and November, hatchery staff spawn and fertilize eggs collected from Montauk's own broodstock. In February, fertilized eggs are received from Shepard of the Hills hatchery in Branson. The eggs are placed in hatching jars and supplied with a constant flow of spring water. Water temperature is usually around 56°F. Two weeks after the eggs have been fertilized, the eyes of the trout become visible through the egg shell. This usually means that the trout will start hatching within a week.

Newly hatched trout do not have a swim bladder or a fully functional mouth. After hatching, it takes an additional two weeks for the swim bladder and mouth parts to fully develop. When trout are in this stage of life, they are called sac fry. Fortunately, sac fry are hatched with two weeks of food in their stomach. While the swim bladder develops, the sac fry will remain on the bottom of the hatching tank consuming the food in their bellies. The swim bladder is fully developed after two weeks and the fish will begin to swim.

At this stage of life they are called swim-ups or juveniles. The swim-ups are transferred from the hatching jars to the holding tanks where they are fed hourly during the daylight hours. They will remain in the hatchery basement for three months until they reach two to three inches in length. At this stage they are called fingerlings and are moved outside to the raceways.

Montauk Hatchery has three raceway systems. The mill pool cluster located between the mill and the lodge was constructed in 1968 and is the largest of the three systems. It is divided into twelve separate pools (150 ft x 20 ft x 2.29 ft.) and is capable of producing 360,000 ten inch trout annually. Water flow requirements to operate this pool system are 25 cubic feet per second or 16,156,800 gallons per day.

The Montauk lake cluster is the second largest system and was constructed in 1972. It is located north of the hatchery office near Montauk Lake. It consists of four pools (100 ft x 12 ft x 2.25 ft each) and is capable of producing 100,000 ten inch rainbow trout annually. Water requirements for operating this pool system are 7.5 cubic ft per second or 4,847,040 gallons per day. The third and smallest cluster of raceways, called the hatchery pools, are located next to the hatchery office and were constructed in 1963. It is capable of producing 20,000 ten inch trout annually. Water flow requirements to operate this pool cluster are 2.7 cubic feet per second or 1,724,546 gallons per day.

Annual capacity of these three pool clusters is between 280,000 and 300,000 pounds of trout. Trout are fed a commercial trout food. After 15 months, the trout have grown to twelve inches and are ready to be stocked in Missouri's trout streams and lakes. Hatchery personnel feed 1.3 pounds of fish food for every pound of fish produced. The cost to produce one twelve inch fish ranges from \$1.00 to \$1.25. The hatchery staff on average feeds about a thousand pounds of trout feed each day.

Montauk Fishing

The Current River in Montauk State Park is about three miles long and is divided into three zones. The summer fishing season begins March 1st and continues through October 31st. Free Fishing Days are held the first Saturday and Sunday following the first Monday in June. Winter Catch and Release begins the second Friday in November and runs to the second Monday in February. Fishing is only permitted upstream from the old low-water bridge located just below the ADA fishing pier in the campground.

Montauk Stocking Schedule

Fish are stocked every night between March 1st and October 31st at a rate of 2.25 trout per anticipated tag. Fish are stocked in approximately 30 different locations during weekends and 23 different locations during the week. For example, in 2005, 208,000 trout weighing 172,000 pounds were stocked for this program. The average sized fish was 12.5 inches. In other terms, that is 69,333 trout per mile of stream.

Other Areas Receiving Montauk Trout

Six of the Missouri Department of Conservation's Trout Areas are stocked by Montauk Hatchery. These areas are stocked annually with a total of 30,000 to 35,000 fish. Each area is stocked periodically by a boat or truck. These areas are Stone Mill Spring at Fort Leonard Wood, the Roubidoux Creek in Waynesville, Little Piney River southwest of Rolla, and the Current River between Cedar Grove and Aker's Ferry.

As part of the St. Louis Winter Fishing Program, Montauk raises and stocks 35,000 trout for numerous lakes in St. Louis and the Busch Conservation Area. Montauk raised fish are also supplied for fishing at Roaring River State Park and Maramec Spring Park as well as an occasional stocking in Lake Taneycomo, near Branson.