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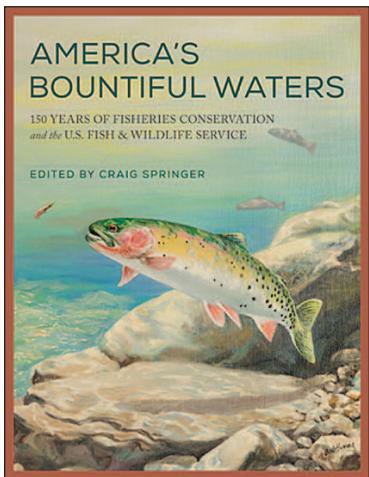
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‘America’s Bountiful Waters’

New book commemorates 150 years of U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

by Marcia Martinek
Herald Editor Emerita



Contributed photo “America’s Bountiful Waters” is now available for purchase.

“Fish came first,” said Jeff Trandahl in the prologue to “America’s Bountiful Waters,” a book published this year commemorating 150 years of fisheries conservation and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Trandahl, CEO and executive director of the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation in Washington, D.C., takes readers back to Feb. 8, 1871, when the U.S. Commission of Fish and Fisheries was formed. It was the nation’s first federal conservation agency.

Today, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) consists of 83 national fish hatcheries and centers, 568 wildlife refuges and 38 wetland management districts. As most Leadvillians know, the second-oldest national fish hatchery is right outside Leadville.

Back in 1871, fish conservation was likely not a big issue in Leadville, which was seven years short of becoming a city. But elsewhere in more populous areas of the country, both overfishing and pollution were leading to a decline in the fish population.

“America’s Bountiful Waters,” edited by Craig Springer, a fish biologist and writer with the USFWS, spotlights the men and women

who have been important in the conservation of fish over the years, and also includes the stories of various species of fish found throughout this country, some present today and others, sadly, that have become extinct.

The first fish hatchery, Baird Station, was established by Stan Livingston at the junction of the McCloud and Pit rivers in Northern California. It no longer exists.

The Leadville National Fish Hatchery was established in 1895. It currently is one of three fisheries facilities in the state of Colorado, although nine others have been closed over the years.

Numerous USFWS employees contributed articles to the book, often including first-hand experiences.

“I soak in the incredible landscape. Balanced on a six-foot ladder waist deep in water — as is customary at this locale — a vast body of water stretches out before me: Pyramid Lake. ... eight-weight fly rod in hand, I present an



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service/National Fish and Aquatics Conservation Archives
U.S. Bureau of Fisheries employee Evelene Spencer is featured in an ad for the Eat More Fish campaign during World War I.

irresistible minnow imitation almost as vibrant as the sunrise. The object of my desire: the highly coveted Lahontan cutthroat — the largest growing trout native to North America.”

This is how Carlos Martinez begins his article on the Lahontan cutthroat, a fish once thought extinct until a small population of the trout was discovered in a small lake on a Utah mountainside.

Martinez says the story of the Lahontan cutthroat’s comeback is his favorite fish comeback story.

His fishing expedition at Pyramid Lake did result in his catching a Lahontan cutthroat, although not the 20-pounder he envisioned.

Martinez, who contributed several articles to “America’s Bountiful Waters,” is currently director of the D.C. Booth

National Fish Hatchery and the National Fish and Aquatic Conservation Archives in Spearfish, South Dakota. He joined USFWS in 1999, serving first as the assistant manager at the Leadville National Fish Hatchery up until 2008.

Leadvillians also know him currently as the director of several local races, including the Hatchery 5K, and as chairman of the Leadville/Lake County Sports Hall of Fame.

Another fish with an interesting history is the greenback cutthroat trout, now the state fish of Colorado. A very popular fish, it became depleted by overharvesting. One of the reasons for the Leadville Fish Cultural Station (the original name for the Leadville Hatchery) was to produce fish to make up for the depleted species. Efforts

were made to raise the native cutthroat trout, but other species brought in from all over the United States and mixed with the greenback led to the greenback cutthroat trout being declared extinct in 1937.

The greenback trout was said to make a comeback in 1969 when cutthroat trout were found in Como Creek that were believed to be the original greenback cutthroat.

However, once the genetics of the Como Creek trout were compared with the original trout, which had been stored in museums throughout the country, it was determined that they weren’t the same fish.

Today the only original Greenback trout population can be found in Bear Creek, where they had been stocked by a homesteader in 1882.

See LEADVILLE, page 8



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