

The outlook for this year is even more optimistic and angling groups expect there will be more anglers than ever trying their luck on the province's rivers.

— Bill Power

## Transplant

### Alberta gives the Red Deer River a boost

**T**he Alberta government thinks it has the perfect recipe for creating a top-quality brown trout fishery in the Red



Biologist Doug Lowe nets brown trout on the Bow River for transplant to the Red Deer River.

Deer River. The main ingredient is trout from the world-class Bow River, 150 kilometers to the south.

For the first time ever, the Alberta Fish and Wildlife Division has taken almost 1,000 mature brown trout from the Bow in the Calgary area and transplanted them into the Red Deer, which has a flagging brown trout population.

"We're trying to jump-start the river," says Doug Lowe, regional fisheries manager.

The transplant had its early critics, including the Bow River chapter of Trout Unlimited Canada based in Calgary. Before they moved the trout, a chapter official flatly stated, "We don't want anybody to take any fish out of the Bow River."

But Lowe insists that neither the Bow River nor its anglers will notice the loss of fewer

than 1,000 fish from a 30-kilometer stretch. In recent years, the Bow's brown trout have thrived. Electro-shock testing last summer downstream of Calgary revealed 571 browns per kilometer.

Lowe notes the Red Deer River trout population has "plateaued at a low level." Surveys in 1991 showed just nine brown trout and less than one rainbow trout per kilometer. Blaming low trout numbers on heavy angling pressure and natural predation, Lowe points out that in 1992, the province protected the few remaining trout by introducing a catch-and-release rule.

Lowe admits the transplant is a gamble but says the Red

Deer is ideal brown trout habitat and there's no reason the species shouldn't flourish there. He says they used browns from the Bow River because they are proven big-river survivors with a feisty reputation among anglers.

The biggest problem Lowe and his crew encountered during the operation was that big trout — 20-inch-plus fish — kept getting in the way. Since the transplant program targeted browns averaging 12 inches, they had no choice but to let all the big ones go.

Neil Jennings, president of Trout Unlimited Canada and co-owner of a Calgary fly-fishing shop, says the transplant fits TUC's mandate of increasing trout populations and angling opportunities.

"I'm convinced the biology is sound," he says.

Mike Guinn, president of the Bow River Angling Outfitters Association, also applauded the move. He believes it could relieve some angling pressure from the Bow and provide another fly-fishing hotspot for international clients.

— Bruce Masterman

