

Heron Brook CROTS Survey (Survey #: 619005)
Les Resseguie, Region 6 Fisheries

10/22/2019

Heron Brook (ONT-66-11-P26-24-14-18) is a small unstocked tributary to the East Branch of Fish Creek in the Town of Lewis, Lewis County, NY. The East Branch of Fish Creek is stocked annually (Line ID 01199) with 2,000 brown trout yearlings and 1,100 rainbow trout yearlings. Those stockings may influence the trout populations in Heron Brook. Heron Brook has ample public access as it is within the recently acquired NYSDEC East Branch of Fish Creek Conservation Easement.

We surveyed Heron Brook to assess the wild trout population that was previously surveyed in 2001. Sampling effort was lower in 2019 (0.28 hrs) than in 2001 (0.52 hrs). The surveys have similar site characteristics and we used similar electrofishing gear performance. The 2001 survey reported numerous wild brook trout (n=80), stocked brown trout (n=9) and rainbow trout (n=2). The 2019 survey captured 30 brook trout, four brown trout, and several species commonly found in trout streams (Table 1). Brook trout total length ranged from 2.8 to 10.3 inches (79 – 262 mm).

The brown trout are likely stocked fish seeking thermal refuge in the cooler water of Heron Brook. All brook trout were likely wild. Fish were in good condition and fin-wear, indicative of stocked trout, was not apparent. The Catch Rate Oriented Trout Stocking (CROTS) Model estimated a brook trout density of 1,525 yearlings/acre and biomass of 280 lbs/acre using a gear efficiency of 0.5 (i.e., only 50% of fish were captured) because of sampling difficulty due to deep undercut banks and coarse woody debris. These 2019 estimates for wild brook trout are higher than estimates from the 2001 survey and indicate that Heron Brook continues to have good wild production of brook trout. The stream should continue to be managed as a wild fishery.

Table 1. Species sampled during the 2019 Heron Brook CROTS survey.

Species	Number of Individuals
Brook Trout	30
Brown Trout	4
Margined Madtom	3
Slimy Sculpin	2
Pumpkinseed	1
Fantail Darter	4
Cutlip Minnow	1
Blacknose Dace	9
Longnose Dace	57
Creek Chub	12

