

**Upper Preston Pond General Biological Survey #519062:  
Tom Shanahan, Region 5 Fisheries**

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Upper Preston Pond (P239) is located in the Essex County towns of Newcomb and North Elba. The pond is immediately south of and flows into Lower Preston Pond. It is a 72-acre waterbody in the Raquette watershed with exceptionally clear water attaining a maximum depth of 70 feet. The pond is part of the High Peaks Wilderness area and is accessed via a foot trail from the south near Henderson Lake. A partial survey was conducted in 2004, soon after the parcel became State land, and the Adirondack Lakes Survey Corporation (ALSC) netted the pond in 1986.

A stocking policy for fall fingerling Temiscamie X Domestic hybrid brook trout was initiated in 2008, a few years after the pond became part of the Forest Preserve. It is presumed that the pond was stocked prior to that when it was privately owned, but we do not know the details of any fish stockings. Upper Preston Pond also received plantings of round whitefish, a species that is endangered in New York State, as part of its restoration plan. More than a thousand round whitefish were stocked in each of the springs of 2016 and 2017 with a goal of establishing a self-sustaining population.

The pond was surveyed in July 2019 along with neighboring Lower Preston Pond (survey # 519063) to assess the salmonid populations using our standard suite of sampling gear: 150' experimental gill nets (3), one 30' minnow net and a metal minnow trap. The survey caught brook trout, round whitefish and creek chub. This was the first survey since round whitefish were stocked; 15 were netted with a size range of 10.4 to 13 inches. Creek chub were also present during the ALSC survey, though in much smaller numbers: three in 1986 vs. 125 in 2019. The number of brook trout caught in the experimental nets varied greatly among the three surveys (Table 1.), but the number of nets set were not consistent.

Table 1. Comparison of numbers caught in experimental nets and sizes of brook trout in Upper Preston Pond over time.

Year	Number caught	Avg. length (inches)	Max. length (inches)	Catch per net
2019	32	10	16	10.67
2004	4	11	13	2.0
1986	74	8	13	18.50

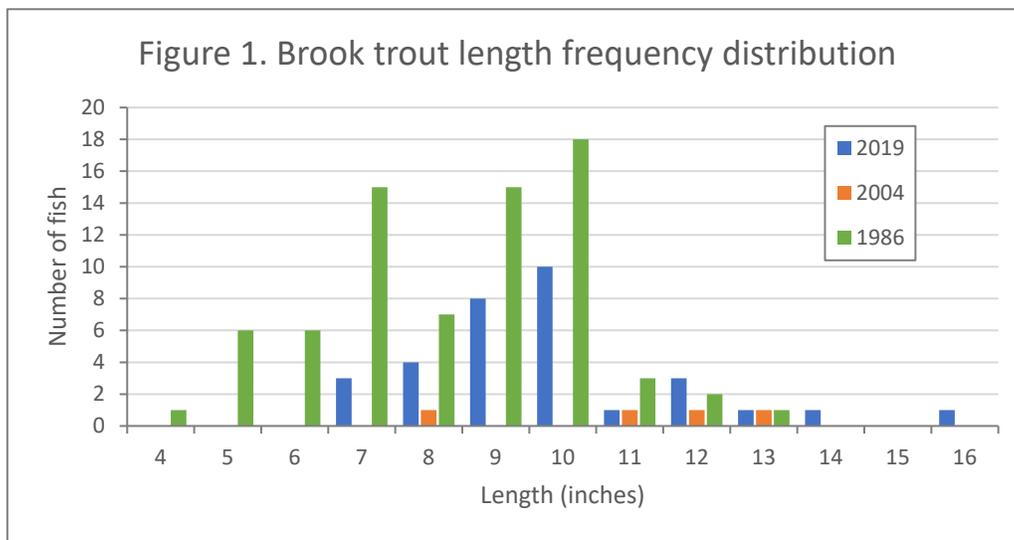
Upper Preston Pond has seen a dramatic improvement in water chemistry (Table 2.) since the ALSC survey for both pH and acid neutralizing capacity (ANC). The pH results show that the pond was ten times more acidic in 1986 than present day. Current water chemistry results combined with excellent dissolved oxygen levels and temperatures throughout the water column now provide a very suitable habitat for salmonids.



Table 2. Water chemistry values (at 5 ft depth) in Upper Preston Pond over time.

Year	pH	ANC ( $\mu\text{eq/l}$ )	Silica (mg/l)	Sodium (mg/l)
2019	6.6	32.8	3.93	0.51
2004	6.3	21.4	-	-
1986	5.6	5.0	5.0	0.46

Examining the history of the Upper Preston Pond fishery is complicated by the various ownership and stocking regimes. Looking at the brook trout catch from experimental nets (Figure 1.) for the three most recent surveys reveals an inconsistent pattern. The highest catch rates were found in 1986, but the population was dominated by small fish. The pond was privately owned at this time and perhaps was overstocked. The next survey (2004) had the lowest catch rates, but this was in the transition period before DEC began stocking and after any private stocking likely concluded. The 2019 survey shows the best balance between overall numbers and size structure; this was the only netting with fish in excess of 13 inches.



Upper Preston Pond currently seems to be providing a fine backcountry fishing experience for brook trout. An unfortunate note is we observed parasitic copepods or “gill lice” to be fairly prevalent on the brook trout. We should continue the current stocking policy and periodically resurvey the pond to monitor the brook trout population and species composition. As is the case for all waters in the High Peaks Wilderness, the use of baitfish is prohibited. The pond is otherwise subject to Statewide Angling Regulations and that will continue.