

The westslope cutthroat trout (*Oncorhynchus clarkii lewisi*) are common in both headwater lakes and stream environments. They are native to streams and lakes in the upper Columbia River basin (Idaho and Montana), the Methow River and Lake Chelan drainages (Washington), the John Day River drainage (Oregon), the headwaters of the South Saskatchewan River (Montana), and the upper Missouri River basin (Montana and Wyoming).

They feed mainly on insects and zooplankton. The average length of the fish is about 8-12 inches and rarely exceeds 18 inches. They have small dark freckles-like dots clustered around the tail area. They are distinguished by the red, pink, or orange marking by their "throat", hence the name cutthroat. The trout has a more silvery or greenish coloring than other cutthroats. The trout prefer cool, clear streams with coarse sediment.

This subspecies is considered threatened in its native range in Alberta. This fish has been seriously reduced in its range and population due to hybridization, habitat loss, and degradation. Westslope cutthroat trouts play a critical role in the ecosystem because they provide an important source of food to an estimated 18 species of bird, and mammals including bears, river otters, and minks. If the trout were to become extinct, the animals that rely on them will too. We must make laws to protect the trout as they are essential to our ecosystem.