



# Have you seen this fish?

This trout has black spot parasite.

## What does black spot parasite look like?

The parasite can be identified by sand grain-sized black spots on the skin of the trout. The number of marks can vary from a light spotting to being so numerous that the skin of the fish is almost black.

## Does black spot parasite in trout affect humans?

No. The presence of the black spot parasite does not influence the overall health of the fish and **it is not harmful to humans if consumed**. In fact, cooking the fish will kill the parasite.

Actually, **the presence of black spot parasites in a lake is an indication that the lake is in a healthy state**.

The pH of the water is likely near neutral (snails do not thrive in acidic waters), and there should be a healthy presence of fish-eating birds and mammals sharing the aquatic habitat with the snails and trout.



## How does the black spot parasite work?

The characteristic black spots you see in trout are caused by a colour change in the skin of the trout covering the black spot parasite. These parasites have a complicated life-cycle involving many host species.

The adult stage of the black spot parasite lives in the intestines of fish-eating birds. The parasites lay eggs, which end up in the birds' feces that enters lakes or streams. The eggs hatch, and the free-swimming parasite larvae seek a snail, which acts as a host for the developmental stages of the parasite. The parasite is released from the snail and searches for a trout as another host. If successful, the parasite burrows into the trout skin, and the so-called "black spot" is formed when the parasite is covered by the trout's pigment cells. When fish-eating birds or mammals eat infected trout the parasites emerge in the intestine and the cycle begins again.

## Have you caught trout infected with the black spot parasite?

If so, please let us know. We are researching this parasite in Nova Scotian lakes and rivers. Tell us the name and location of the lake or river where the trout affected with the parasite were found.

We are also interested in knowing of lakes or rivers with no indication of black spot parasites.

## We want to hear from you ... Contact us

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