

Rare trout on a “sky island”

On November 4, 2009, about 500 threatened Gila trout were stocked in their native range in Frye Creek on the “sky island” of Mount Graham in southeastern Arizona. Mora National Fish Hatchery and Technology Center transported the fish to the Arizona Game and Fish Department’s Cluff Ranch Wildlife Area near Pima, Arizona. After the fish were loaded into three 55-gallon drums, a helicopter transported them to biologists from multiple agencies that had hiked to drop zones along the rugged terrain on Mount Graham. Following a short acclimation period, the fish were stocked into pools within a five-mile reach of Frye Creek. “With a load of fish, this was physically taxing, but well worth the effort,” said Jason Kline, an AGFD fisheries biologist. “It is a historic occasion, as it will not only provide five miles of recovery habitat for Gila trout, it may also be the first fishable population of Gila trout in Arizona when the population becomes established.” The Gila trout recovery program is a joint effort among the Arizona and New Mexico departments of game and fish, U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Trout Unlimited, and other conservation organizations. ♦ Jeremy Voeltz



Craig Springer/USFWS

After a long absence, Gila trout now swim in Frye Creek.



Jennifer Johnson/USFWS

Stewart Jacks, Arizona Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office, receives Gila trout via helicopter.