

Southern Appalachian Creature Feature Podcasts

Whirling Disease in North Carolina Trout

Greetings and welcome to the Southern Appalachian Creature Feature.

Whirling disease, a parasitic disease affecting trout and salmon, has been found in North Carolina.

The disease, native to Europe, affects trout and salmon by damaging nerves and cartilage, which may result in abnormal whirling or tail-chasing behavior. Other signs are a black tail and deformities to the head or body. These abnormalities in behavior and body make the fish more susceptible to predation and make it more difficult for the fish to find food. There is no known cure for fish infected with the whirling disease parasite. Once it's present in a river system, the parasite is almost impossible to eradicate.

The disease, found in the Watauga River, can be transmitted by anglers who may transfer the microscopic parasite on equipment or boots. The North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission asks the public to help prevent the spread of the disease by:

- Cleaning and drying equipment, clothing, and anything else that comes into contact with water;
- Never moving fish or aquatic life from one body of water to another without first obtaining a permit from the Commission;
- Disposing of fish parts carefully after cleaning fish by putting fish parts in the garbage, burying them deeply or burning them completely.

For WNCW and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, this is Gary Peeples.