

Reporting pink salmon in Scottish waters



Photo © Ness District Salmon Fishery Board

Pink salmon

Pink salmon (*Oncorhynchus gorbuscha*) originate in the Pacific and is not native to Scottish waters. The species was introduced into Russian rivers in the 1960s to support fishing activity and in recent years has spread further west and south.

Sightings in Scottish waters

Some 139 pink salmon were reported in Scottish rivers in 2017 – the highest ever recorded – and a number were captured and sampled by Marine Scotland. A joint [opinion piece paper](#)¹ was published by Marine Scotland, Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) (now NatureScot) and Fisheries Management Scotland (FMS) in March 2018.

1 Armstrong JD, Bean CW, Wells A. The Scottish invasion of pink salmon in 2017. *J Fish Biol.* 2018; 93:8–11. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jfb.13680>

Pink salmon have a two-year lifecycle and fewer fish were reported in 2019 – just 20 across Scotland as a whole. However, it is not possible to predict numbers which may come to Scotland in 2021.

The Scottish Government works with FMS, NatureScot and the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) to co-ordinate advice and actions to help ensure that any recurrence of pink salmon in Scotland can be identified, reported and managed appropriately.

FMS have produced a detailed Advice Note [Advice Note](#)² to identify pink salmon and an app which can be used to report incidences. The findings will be available on [Scotland's environment site](#)³

What does the law say?

2 <http://fms.scot/pink-salmon-in-scotland/>

3 <https://www.environment.gov.scot/>

Under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 pink salmon is defined as an invasive, non-native species. Detailed provisions in the legislation are designed to help restrict the spread of invasive species and the Scottish Government has published a [Code of Practice on Non-Native Species](#)⁴.

Under terms of the 1981 Act it is an offence to fish for and retain pink salmon, or to have them under your control. However, the Act also says that it may be a defence against any charge of an offence to show that a person had taken all reasonable steps and exercised due diligence to avoiding committing that offence. The Code of Practice offers further advice on this at sections 2.20 to 2.24.

What to do if you spot a pink salmon or catch one inadvertently

If you identify a pink salmon, or if you catch one while fishing for other species, we are looking for your help to gather as much information as possible.

- **If you catch one, kill it humanely**

⁴ Guidance on non-native species, approved by the Scottish Parliament.
<https://www.gov.scot/publications/non-native-species-code-practice/>

- **Do not return it to the water**
- **Contact your District Salmon Fishery Board (DSFB) or Fisheries Trust who will advise on what to do next**
- **You will need to tell them:**
 - ▶ the date
 - ▶ the location where you saw or caught it, including a grid reference if possible
 - ▶ the method used to catch the fish e.g. rod & line
 - ▶ the sex of the fish
 - ▶ if relevant, the number of fish sighted/caught
- **The DSFB or Trust may also ask you to arrange to deliver the carcass to them for further analysis and sampling**

Contact information

Contact information for [District Salmon Fishery Boards](#) and [Fisheries Trusts](#) can be found on the Fisheries Management Scotland website at:

- <http://fms.scot/dsfb-contacts/> or
- <http://fms.scot/trust-contacts/>