

The Missing Salmon Alliance

Atlantic salmon are found in most of the clean and accessible rivers draining into the north Atlantic, from Spain in the south, to Norway in the north, across to Greenland and North America in the west. Atlantic salmon, and their close cousin the sea trout, spend the first portion of their life in the freshwater rivers around the Atlantic, before heading off on significant ocean migrations. As such they provide a good ecological indicator of the health of our rivers and oceans. Since 1985 the number of salmon in the Atlantic has dropped from 8-10 million fish to less than 3 million, and there are no signs of this decline abating.

The Missing Salmon Alliance is a program of evidence based research to provide managers with the tools to develop comprehensive action plans to halt and reverse this decline in stocks of wild Atlantic salmon. The programme is based on an established process – a suspects framework - which was used to successfully halt and reverse the decline of stocks of cod in the Irish Sea. To take the project forward the Atlantic Salmon Trust, along with Game Conservancy & Wildlife Trust, Salmon and Trout Conservation and The Angling Trust have formed the Missing Salmon Alliance (The MSA). This is a collaborative partnership to use the individual skills and resources of the partner organisations to more effectively deliver management of the remaining salmon stocks. As such it is the first time that information on salmon and sea trout stocks from around the Atlantic will be brought together to one place and interrogated so that we more fully understand what is happening to fish stocks and how we may better look after them.

Creating The Suspects Framework

The MSA and the inter-governmental bodies across the Atlantic and Pacific, have developed a statistical framework for conceptualising all of the impacts on salmon during their freshwater migration phase and subsequent marine migration. This is the suspects framework for Atlantic salmon. To populate the framework evidence needs to be gathered from different populations of salmon around the Atlantic. The aim is to assess this information, prioritise where the losses are occurring and, where possible, develop pragmatic management solutions to halt and reverse their decline. To create this suspects framework a small team needs to be brought together to collate and model the information, highlight gaps in our understanding and work to facilitate the filling of those gaps.

Populating the Framework

One of the gaps that has already been identified is the fate of the smolts as they migrate downstream and out to sea. To start the process of filling this gap, the Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust and Atlantic Salmon Trust have instigated complimentary programmes to track the movements and survival of young salmon and sea trout throughout the English Channel and the Moray Firth. These exemplar projects, the largest ever undertaken in Europe, are on target to understand why and where the fish are dying.

Using the Framework

The suspects framework will be used to create a prioritised list of the suspects implicated in the decline of salmon stocks and the evidence base needed to inform management policy where appropriate. These will be used to support management plans at a local level and also influence policy at national and international levels. This is with the clear aim of reversing the decline in Atlantic salmon stocks. There will be conferences in London at Fishmongers Hall on the 26th November and Edinburgh in early 2020 to discuss the Likely Suspects Framework and the preliminary results from The Moray Firth Programme.



Roseanna Cunningham
Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform



10 January 2020

Dear Ms Cunningham,

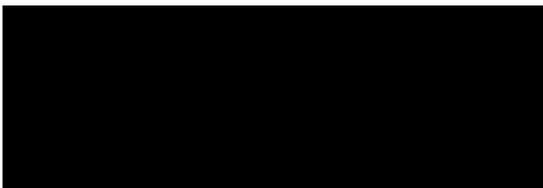
Thank you for your contribution to our event in the Scottish Parliament on Tuesday 7th January. Your introduction set the tone for the meeting perfectly and was very helpful for the wider audience to see such a clear recognition of the current situation that Scotland's salmon face.

During my presentation, and again at the evening reception, I expressed our gratitude for the support you announced for our west coast tracking project, but I wanted to write to you to thank you directly. Understanding the migratory pathways used by our juvenile Atlantic salmon smolts has been recognised for many years as an important knowledge gap in our management of this iconic species. As you know, this is the latest in a number of positive collaborative initiatives, for the benefit of our salmon, which have been taken forward in partnership between Government and fisheries managers in recent years. We are very grateful for this ongoing support.

I hope that our roundtable event will help to inform the forthcoming salmon strategy. There were a number of key themes which arose during the discussion, which we will capture and make available to everyone with an interest in this issue. Fisheries Management Scotland, and our members, stand ready to contribute to the process of developing the strategy.

Thank you again for joining us on Tuesday, and I look forward to engaging with you, and your officials, on developing and delivering positive management action to help protect and enhance our iconic salmon.

Yours sincerely,



 Fisheries Management Scotland