

SALMON FISHERY STATISTICS - 2018 SEASON



Summary

- The total reported rod catch (retained and released) of wild salmon and grilse for 2018 is 37,196. Total reported catch is 67% of the previous 5-year average and is the lowest since records began in 1952.
- The proportion of the rod catch accounted for by catch and release is among the highest recorded. In 2018, 99% of rod caught spring salmon (multi sea-winter fish taken before 1 May) were released, as were 93% of the annual rod catch. A proportion of fish released from the rod fishery may be re-caught and hence inflate the catch statistics by appearing in the reported data more than once.
- Trends in rod catch varied among individual stock components. Reported catch of spring salmon has generally declined since records began and, although there is some indication that catch has stabilised in recent years, it remains at a low level. Overall catch of salmon and grilse in later months, on the other hand, generally increased up to 2010, after which it fell sharply over the next 4 years before recovering slightly in 2015 and 2016 only to fall again in 2017 and 2018.
- Reported catch and effort for the fixed engine and net & coble fisheries were among the lowest recorded by either fishery since records began in 1952.
- Salmon and grilse reported as being of farmed origin represented 0.1% of the total Scottish catch in 2018. The distribution of farmed origin fish was highly uneven, with the West Coast region accounting for 81.5% of those reported.

This publication summarises the salmon fishery statistics based on returns from proprietors, occupiers or agents of fisheries throughout Scotland for the 2018 fishing season. These data are derived from 1,976 forms returned from 2,144 forms issued (92% return rate). Final published statistics for the previous 10 years have been based on return rates of between 93% and 94%. These statistics are part of a time series which began in 1952 and are collected and collated by Marine Scotland Science.

Salmon Fishery Regulations

Statutory conservation measures are in place to regulate both the killing of salmon in the early months of the fishing season (<https://www2.gov.scot/Topics/marine/Salmon-Trout-Coarse/fishreform/licence/spring>), in coastal waters and on stocks with poor conservation status (<https://www2.gov.scot/Topics/marine/Salmon-Trout-Coarse/fishreform/licence/status>).

These regulations will have an impact on the catch and effort data reported by Scottish salmon fisheries.

CATCH AND EFFORT REPORTED BY SCOTTISH SALMON FISHERIES IN 2018

The rod and line fishery

A total of 2,475 wild salmon and grilse was reported caught and retained in the rod and line fishery. A further 34,721 wild salmon and grilse were reported caught and released. The combined retained and released rod catch is 37,196, which is 67% of the previous 5-year average. We have no time series of fishing effort information associated with the rod and line fishery.

Annual rod catch generally increased over the period 1952 to 2010, declining in each subsequent year until 2014, the third lowest on record. Reported rod catch recovered slightly in 2015 and 2016 only to fall again in 2017 and 2018 (Figure 1).

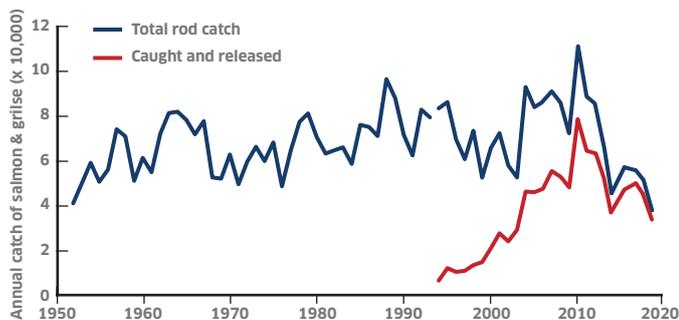


FIGURE 1
ROD AND LINE FISHERY

Trends in total rod catch varied among individual stock components (Figure 2). Spring salmon catch (for the purposes of this report defined as multi sea-winter fish taken before 1 May) has generally declined since records began. Although stabilising in recent years, catches remain at a low level. Overall catch of salmon and grilse in later months generally increased up to 2010, after which it fell sharply only to recover slightly in 2015 and 2016 before falling again in 2017 and 2018.

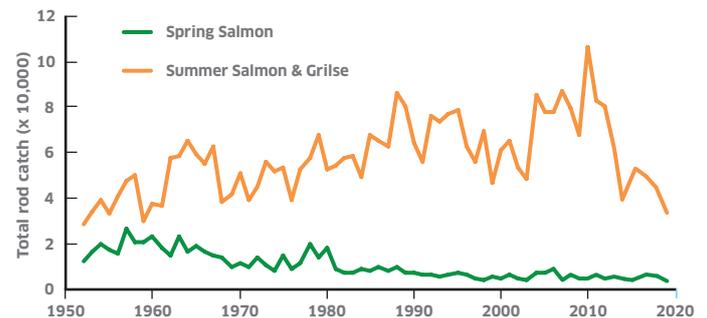


FIGURE 2
TRENDS IN STOCK COMPONENTS, ROD AND LINE FISHERY

Catch and release

The proportion of the rod catch accounted for by catch and release has generally increased since 1994, when such information was first recorded. In 2018, 93% of the annual rod catch





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was released compared to less than 8% in 1994. Similarly, less than 1% of rod caught spring salmon were released in 1994 whereas 99% were released in 2018 (Figure 3). A proportion of fish released from the rod fishery may be re-caught and hence inflate the catch statistics by appearing in the reported data more than once.

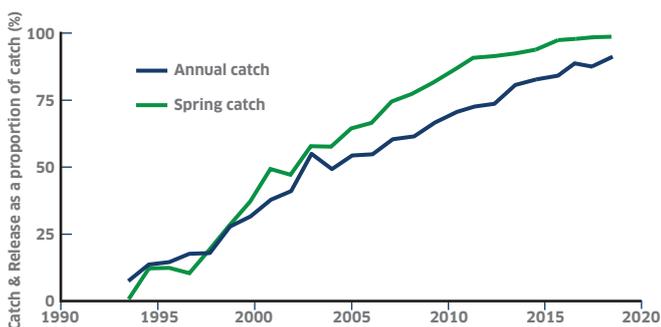


FIGURE 3
CATCH AND RELEASE, ROD AND LINE FISHERY

The net fisheries

Reported catch and effort for the fixed engine and net & coble fisheries in 2018 remain among the lowest recorded by either fishery since records began in 1952. In 2018, reported

catches for the fixed engine and net & coble fisheries were the third and fifth lowest, respectively, whereas reported effort for each fishery was the lowest in the respective time series.

As a result of the Salmon Conservation Regulations, retention of salmon caught in coastal waters was prohibited.

On the Solway, a total of 50 wild salmon and grilse was reported caught and retained in a scientific haaf net fishery in the Annan district from a reported fishing effort of 75 net months. A further 69 salmon and grilse were reported caught and retained by other haaf nets in the Solway region, from an effort of 137 net months.

Effort returns from Solway fisheries do not yield data that can be easily combined with returns from gear types in the rest of Scotland and data from this region are generally omitted when calculating a national index for fixed engine fishing effort.

A total of 3,751 wild salmon and grilse was reported caught and retained in the net & coble fishery from a reported effort of 25.5 crew months.

The catch by fishing method

In 2018, approximately 91% of the total annual reported catch was accounted for by the rod fisheries. Net & coble fisheries comprised 9% with fixed engine fisheries accounting for around 0.3%. Restricting the analysis to the retained catch, the rods accounted for approximately 39% of the catch compared to 59% and 2% for the net & coble and fixed engine fisheries respectively.

In the spring, rod fisheries accounted for almost 100% of the total reported catch while net and coble catch comprised less than 0.1%. Of the retained catch, rod fisheries accounted for 98% while net and coble catches accounted for the remaining 2%.

Farmed salmon and grilse

A total of 27 fish of farmed origin was reported caught by all methods in 2018. Fish of farmed origin represented 0.1% of the total number of salmon and grilse caught in Scotland. The distribution of farmed origin fish was highly uneven, with the West Coast region accounting for 81.5% of reports. Scottish regions are shown in MS Topic Sheet 67 (<https://www2.gov.scot/Topics/marine/Publications/TopicSheets/tslist>)

Impact of low water flows during 2018

When inferring the status of stocks from catch data, it is important to consider trends over a number of years rather than simply focusing on catch levels for the most recent year. Both numbers of salmon caught and the allocation of catch among fishing methods may be influenced by many factors, the most obvious of which are environmental conditions.

The 2018 season catch returns provided an instructive illustration of the effects of environmental conditions on salmon catches. In 2018 Scottish rivers experienced a prolonged period of extremely low flows throughout the year. Such low flows are known to be difficult conditions for anglers catching fish, and salmon have been shown to delay entering rivers until flows increase, which can be towards the end of the fishing season. It is not possible to determine from catch data alone how much the drop in reported catch is a reflection of decreasing numbers returning to Scottish waters and how much is a result of challenging conditions.

Downloads

Topic sheet no. 67 explains how we collect the catch statistics.

Topic sheet no. 69 summarises the sea trout fishery statistics for the 2018 fishing season.

Both topic sheets are available for download at <https://www2.gov.scot/Topics/marine/Publications/TopicSheets/tslist>

Summary data for fishing seasons 1952 to 2018 are available for download at <https://www2.gov.scot/Topics/marine/Publications/stats/SalmonSeaTroutCatches>

These data are provided as the most complete at the time of publication. Our records are amended when further information becomes available and updated annually in April when the statistics for the most recent fishing season are published.

Contact

If you have a specific request for Scottish salmon and sea trout fishery information, not available at the links on this page, please contact us directly at ms.catchform@gov.scot