

Salmon fishery statistics - 2021 season



This publication summarises the salmon fishery statistics, based on returns from proprietors, occupiers and agents of fisheries throughout Scotland, for the 2021 fishing season. These data are derived from 1,951 forms returned from 2,155 forms issued (91% return rate). Catches for the previous 10 years are based on return rates of between 92% and 94%.

These statistics are part of a time series which began in 1952 and are collected and collated by Marine Scotland Science.

Summary

- The total reported rod catch of wild salmon for 2021 is 35,693. This is the lowest on record and 75% of the previous five-year average. The impact of coronavirus restrictions early in the season, and poor fishing conditions during the summer, complicates direct comparisons. However, these figures highlight the decline in salmon returning to Scotland.

- Catch and release in 2021 accounted for 95% of the total rod catch and 99% of the rod-caught spring multi sea-winter fish (taken before 1 May)
- Reported spring catches in 2021, which were affected by coronavirus restrictions, were 66% of the previous five-year average
- In 2021 there was a 26% decrease in summer rod catches of both multi sea-winter fish and one sea-winter fish compared to 2020
- Reported retained catch for the net fisheries were among the lowest recorded since records began. Released net-caught fish were reported for the first time in 2021
- Fish reported as being of farmed origin represented 0.08% of the total Scottish catch in 2021

Salmon Fishery Regulations

Statutory conservation measures are in place to regulate the killing of salmon in the early months of the fishing season (<https://www.gov.scot/publications/wild-salmon-spring-conservation-measures/>), in coastal waters and on stocks with poor conservation status (<https://www.gov.scot/policies/salmon-and-recreational-fisheries/conservation/>).

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

Catch and effort reported by Scottish salmon fisheries in 2021

The rod fishery

Of the 35,693 wild fish reported as caught in the rod fishery, 34,074 were subsequently released and 1,619 retained. Total rod catch of salmon has generally declined from its peak in 2010. The 2021 total rod catch was the lowest on record and 75% of the previous five-year average (Figure 1).

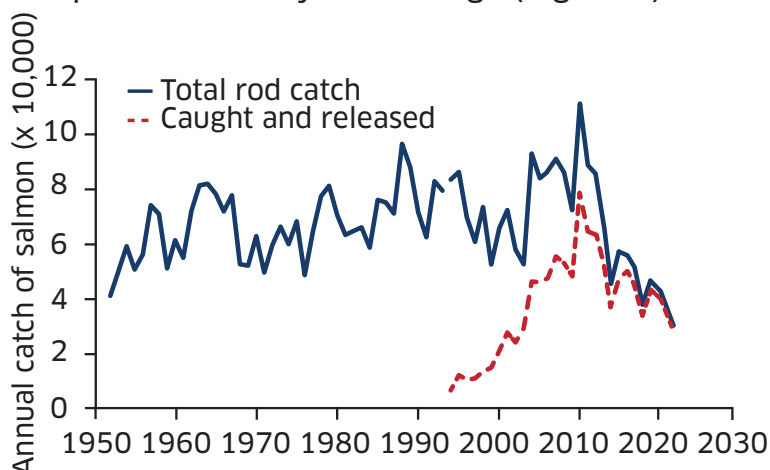


Figure 1
Annual catch of salmon, rod fishery

Trends in total rod catch vary among individual stock components (Figure 2). Catches of spring multi sea-winter (MSW) fish (taken before 1 May) have generally declined since records began

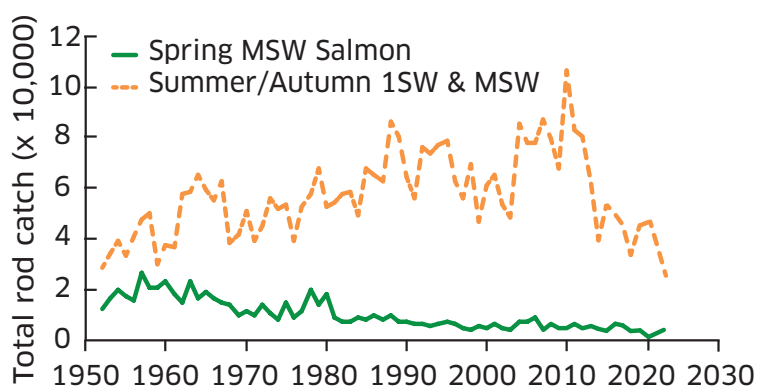


Figure 2
Trends in salmon stock components, rod fishery

and although relatively stable in recent years the 2021 catches were 66% of the previous five-year average. The recent decline in catches during later months (one sea-winter (1SW) and MSW caught after April) continued with the 2021 total being the third lowest on record.

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 2021, 95% of the annual rod catch, and 99% of the spring rod catch, were released (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.

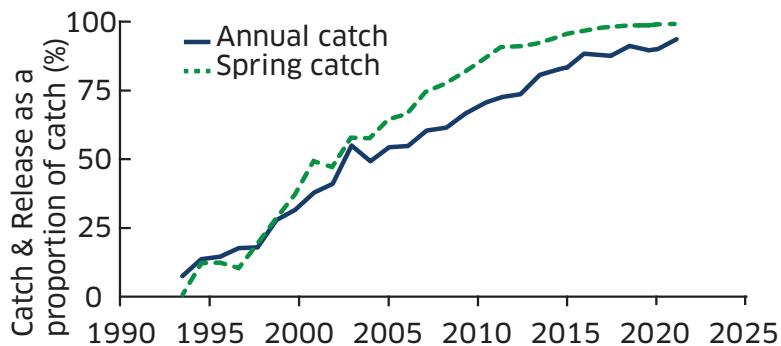


Figure 3
Catch and release, rod fishery

The net fisheries

As a result of the Salmon Conservation Regulations, retention of salmon caught in coastal waters has been prohibited since the 2016 season. The 2021 season was the first occasion that net fisheries were required to report caught and released fish. More than 99% of fish caught by the fixed engine fisheries (including the haaf nets in the Solway region) and 21% of fish caught by the net and coble fisheries were released.

In 2021, a total of 574 wild fish were reported caught and retained in the net and coble fishery, the second lowest catch since 1952. A further 155 fish were reported as caught and released. The haaf net fishery in the Solway region reported two caught and retained fish, and 339 caught and released fish. Other types of fixed engine fisheries reported no fish caught and retained, and 74 caught and released.

The catch by fishing method

In 2021, 97% of the total annual reported catch was accounted for by the rod fisheries. Net and coble fisheries comprised 2%. Rods accounted for 74% of the retained catch compared to 26% for the net and coble fisheries.

Farmed salmon

A total of 28 fish believed to be of farmed origin were reported caught in 2021. These represented 0.08% of the total Scottish catch.

Rod effort and rainfall

Marine Scotland began collecting national data on rod effort in 2019. Provision of rod effort information on returned rod catch forms has increased from 88% in 2019 to 94% in 2021.

Stay-at-home orders associated with the coronavirus pandemic, along with restrictions on national and international travel, disrupted fisheries during the 2021 season. Fishing effort and catch for the 2021 season shows a decrease during the spring compared to 2019 (Figure 4).

Rainfall records from the Met Office highlight the dry conditions in rivers, with rainfall 11% to 56% lower than the 30-year average from June to September in 2021. Catches tend to be lower in drought conditions and this may have contributed to the low catches in 2021.

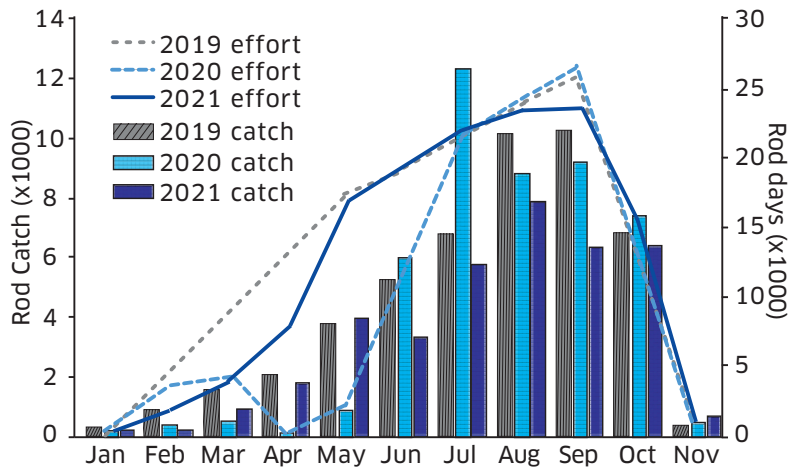


Figure 4
Comparison of monthly reported catch and rod effort in 2019, 2020 and 2021 (effort information is restricted to those fisheries which reported effort in all years).

Time series data

Catch data can be downloaded from the Marine Scotland Data portal. Available datasets include Salmon Fishery District level data for 1952 to 2021 and assessment area level data for 2017 to 2021 as used for the Conservation of Salmon (Scotland) Regulations.

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

Downloads

Topic sheet no. 67 (Collecting the Marine Scotland Salmon and Sea Trout Fishery Statistics) explains how we collect the catch statistics.

Topic sheet no. 69 summarises the sea trout fishery statistics for the 2021 fishing season.

Both topic sheets are available for download at <https://www.gov.scot/publications/marine-publications-information-on-scottish-salmon-and-sea-trout-statistics/>

Summary data for fishing seasons 1952 to 2021 are available from our data visualisation application (<https://scotland.shinyapps.io/sg-salmon-sea-trout-catch/>), whilst more detailed data can be obtained from the Marine Scotland Data Portal (<https://data.marine.gov.scot/search/type/dataset>).

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 when the statistics for the most recent fishing season are published.