

Keep *Gyrodactylus salaris* out of the Spey

What is *Gyrodactylus salaris*?

Gyrodactylus salaris (GS) is a parasitic fluke which lives on freshwater fish. It is less than 1 mm in length, and is invisible to the naked eye. It can be carried by brown trout, rainbow trout and other fish, but is lethal to Scottish salmon.

Where does it come from?

GS is native to rivers in Sweden, Finland and Russia, where local salmon have evolved resistance to the parasite. During the 1970s it was accidentally spread to Norway by the movement of rainbow trout between fish farms. Since then it has spread to Denmark, Germany, France, Spain and Portugal. The UK is currently free from GS.

What effect does it have on salmon and fisheries?

GS rapidly infests juvenile salmon, causing mass mortality. In Norway, infected rivers lost up to 98% of their salmon within 5 years. Fishing in infected rivers becomes unfeasible due to the lack of fish, and restrictions on anglers' movements.

What are the risks of infection for the UK?

GS is most likely to be introduced to the UK by the movement of live fish from the continent, and rainbow trout in particular. GS can survive for 5 - 7 days without a host in damp conditions. The parasite could survive on wet angling clothing or equipment, or canoes, rafts or boats.

How can it be eradicated?

Once infected, all fish in a river must be destroyed to remove potential hosts. This usually involves poisoning with Rotenone. Barriers may have to be built to prevent adult salmon entering rivers and producing more juvenile hosts. Restrictions on the movements of fish, anglers, canoes and rafts between catchments are also necessary to prevent re-infection. In Norway, £300 million has been spent treating GS since the 1970s.

How could the Spey become infected?

The Spey catchment could be infected by any anglers coming from Scandinavia or the Continent. Canoeists and rafters with boats used in infected countries could also transport the parasite. The movement of live fish into the catchment would be a major risk if the UK became infected.

What would be the implications for the Spey catchment?

Angling on the Spey generates £12 million annually to the local economy, supporting 367 full-time equivalent jobs. The capital value of salmon fisheries on the Spey is approximately £70 million. Water sports generate £2 million annually and support 48 full-time equivalent jobs. Under the EU Habitats Directive the Spey has been designated a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) for salmon, freshwater pearl mussels, sea lampreys and otters. The introduction of GS would severely limit angling and canoeing and the economic benefits of this tourism. The destruction of salmon and all other freshwater fish would have a catastrophic impact on the freshwater ecology of the river, and the SAC.

What can anglers and canoeists do to prevent GS infection?

If you have fished or canoed in Scandinavia or the Continent you should take the following precautions before visiting the Spey:

Dry equipment or clothing at 20°C or more for at least 2 days

OR

Heat equipment or clothing at 60°C or more for at least 1 hour

OR

Deep freeze equipment or clothing for at least 1 day

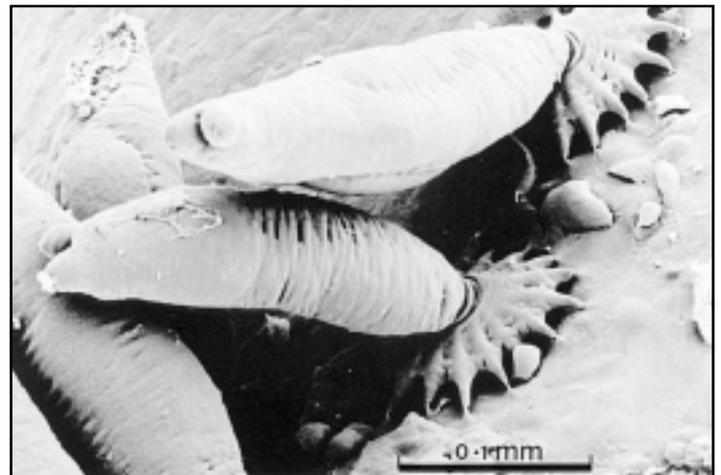
OR

Immerse for 10 minutes or more in either of the following treatments:

- Virkon (1%)
- Wescodyne (1%)
- Sodium chloride (3%)
- Sodium hydroxide (0.2%)

What is the Spey Fishery Board policy on GS?

The SFB has begun working with Scottish Natural Heritage, the Cairngorms National Park Authority and the Scottish Environment Protection Agency to formulate a GS Contingency Plan for the Spey catchment. The SFB recommends that fisheries publicise the GS issue to all anglers, and make anglers declare themselves GS-free before fishing (a GS Declaration is available from www.speyfisheryboard.com or fishspey.co.uk). Fisheries are advised to provide suitable preventative measures to anglers prior to fishing.



(Photo: Carey Cunningham)

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Spey Spring Catch Update

The total catch of Spey spring salmon until the end of April 2005 was 840, compared to 1,100 for the same period last year (Fig. 1). Although less than in 2004, this catch still substantially exceeds the 10 year average (1992-2001) of 600. Fishing effort was also likely to have been less than in 2004 due to wintery conditions, followed by a snow-melt flood in late March, which prevented angling for several days.

Based on the acoustic counter studies carried out in 1998-2000, approximately 12,000 fish had run into the river by the end of April. Catches suggest that most of these fish remained in the lower half of the river, from Carron Bridge downstream, perhaps because their ascent was slowed by colder water temperatures.

Anglers, proprietors and ghillies continued to support the SFB's Salmon Conservation Policy, releasing 76% of fish caught. Few sea trout have entered the river, and therefore it is too early to judge the success of the Sea Trout Conservation Policy.

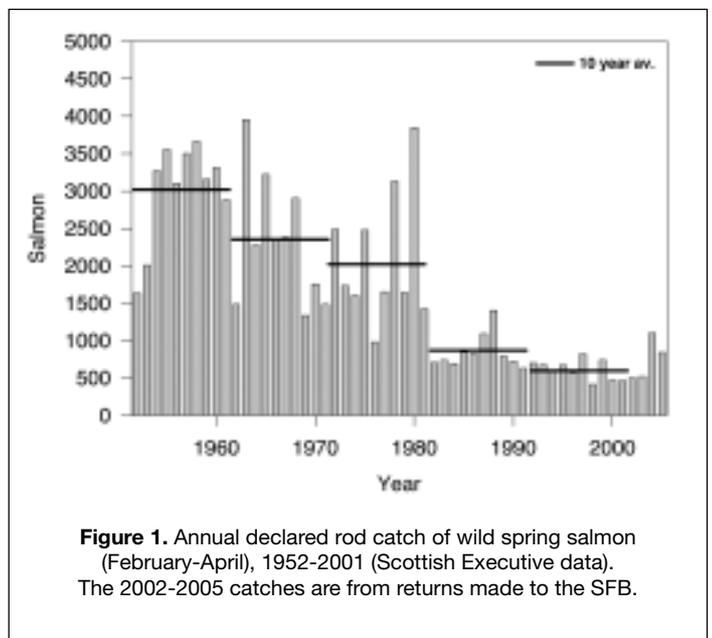


Figure 1. Annual declared rod catch of wild spring salmon (February-April), 1952-2001 (Scottish Executive data). The 2002-2005 catches are from returns made to the SFB.

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Salmon Fishing
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Getting here
Where to stay
Where to eat
Tackle advice
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FishSpey

- The definitive guide to fishing on the River Spey
- See current availability and book online today
- For telephone enquiries please ring 01573 470612

www.fishspey.co.uk

The *FishSpey* website has been launched to advertise the availability of salmon, sea trout, brown trout and rainbow trout fishing in the Spey catchment area. The website provides services for booking fishing, accommodation, travel advice, tackle services, river heights and important background information for visiting anglers.

Membership Fees:

Fishery/Beat Rateable Value over £10,000	£500 per annum
Fishery/Beat Rateable Value under £10,000	£250 per annum
Multi Beat Fishery	£750 per annum
Other Fishery (Rainbow Trout, Pike)	£250 per annum
<i>VAT will be charged on each fee</i>	

Advertising Fees:

Dynamic Link	£100 per annum
Advert only	£50 per annum
<i>VAT will be charged on above</i>	

For further information on subscribing to the site, please call Malcolm Newbould (*FishSpey* Franchise Manager) on:

07766502443