

## Drop in Early Season Catch

The early season salmon catch was lower during 2007 than in 2006. With one or two beats still to submit returns to the Spey Fishery Board the catch for February to June currently stands at 2077 salmon, a drop of 1741 on the same period in 2006.

However, encouragingly catch and release have remained foremost in anglers and ghillies minds with 69% of these salmon being returned to the Spey to continue their spawning migration.

### Still Short

Sea trout catches continue to be a concern with 1055 caught up to the end of June. Similar to salmon this represents a fall in catch from the 2006 total of 1246. Catch and release rates have improved from 37% in 2006 to 43% but are still short of the 50% target aimed for by the Board.

The pattern on the Spey was similar to elsewhere in Scotland and the reasons behind the decline in catches remain unclear but may well lie at sea and include poor feeding opportunities and low smolt survival rates. In addition the unseasonably dry April and May did not help early season fishing. There were some reports of small thin grilse again but less than previous years and encouragingly recent catches indicated a strong run of MSW salmon and grilse to the river.



SFB Director Roger Knight releases a Grilse caught on the Castle Water beat. (Photo: Mrs Sally Rose Gordon Lennox)



Farmed salmon and wild salmon from Lower Wester Elchies. Again note the difference in condition of the tail fins, otherwise the farmed salmon was in very good condition. (Photo Bob Laughton)

## Farmed Salmon in the Spey!

**Despite being a considerable distance away from any salmon fish farming reports of farmed escapes began filtering into the Board during early summer.**

Most years the numbers reported seldom progress beyond a few but this year has differed significantly with numerous confirmed examples being reported from beats along the length of the river.

### More Challenging

The escapes result from a significant loss of farmed salmon during late May storms in the North of Scotland. Most reported fish have been large, ranging from 10-15lbs and in good condition. In fact a few anglers have reported that they are more challenging to land than their wild counterparts.

Farmed salmon are known to breed with wild salmon and this may affect the genetic structure of existing Spey salmon stocks.

The longer term implications are unknown. However, there is little we can do to prevent these fish entering the Spey but the Board urge any captured farmed salmon to be retained. A scale sample and photograph should also be taken and sent to the Board, who will try to confirm the origin of the fish.

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Photo 3. Grilse from the River Avon showing red vent condition (Photo: Alan Thompson)

# Bleeding Vents

The 2007 grilse run has been unusual in the high prevalence of bleeding and damaged vents reported both in the Spey and at least 22 other Scottish rivers.

Tests carried out by the Fishery Research Services Laboratory in Aberdeen indicate that the cause might be a common parasitic worm *Anasakis* which is found in many marine fish species.

## Health Issue

The exact causes are still being evaluated by FRS. For the latest update on the situation visit the FRS website at [www.frs-scotland.gov.uk](http://www.frs-scotland.gov.uk) At the moment, it is not thought that the condition will affect the breeding of the fish. However, *Anasakis* could be a potential human health issue and therefore it would be wise to ensure all fish are properly cooked before consumption!

It is possible to identify farmed fish by their appearance. Key features are rounded tail fins, damaged dorsal fins, deformed pectoral fins. These features are not common in wild fish. Examples of farmed fish escapes caught at Castle Grant are shown below. We are always keen to be kept informed of farmed fish captures and any photographs or scale samples are welcome. (Photos: Lionel Main)



Farmed Salmon escapes captured at Castle Grant. Note the rounded fins and damaged dorsal fins. (Photo Lionel Main)

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