

RIVER SPEY ROD CATCHES 2003

Catches of salmon and grilse in 2003 were severely affected by the drought, with river flows dropping to their lowest levels since 1976. Large shoals of salmon were observed along the Moray Firth coast throughout the summer, waiting for water to run the rivers. As the drought progressed fish congregated in the lower reaches, and when water temperatures began to fall fishing conditions improved. As a result some beats from Aberlour downstream experienced outstanding catches towards the end of the season in September.

As in 2002, the cooperation of almost all proprietors enabled the Spey Fishery Board (SFB) to collate catches at the end of the 2003 season. The total salmon and grilse catch was 6,650 fish, slightly higher than the 2002 catch of 6,400. Considering the drought conditions this was an encouraging total, suggesting that the 2003 run was probably larger than in 2002. However, the catch fell 28% below the 10 year average of 9,158 (Figure 1)

Prior to the drought the spring catches showed some improvement. In February - April a total of 520 multi-sea winter salmon had been caught, showing a minor improvement on previous poor years (Figure 1). Until the end of June 2,550 fish were caught, compared to 2,100 in 2002. Approximately 90% of these were multi-sea winter salmon. The continuing limited number of spring salmon remains a cause for concern and consequently the SFB has maintained the Salmon Conservation Policy for the 2004 season (see overleaf).

The 2003 rod catch for sea trout was approximately 2,700, a significant decrease from the 2002 catch of 4,400, and 41% below the 10 year average of 4,589 (Figure 2). Whether the fall in catches was a reflection of a poor run of fish or due to the drought is difficult to judge. Nonetheless, the gradual increase in catches over the past 50 years suggests that the sea trout stock is in a healthy state, although catches in the late 1990s have not been as prolific as the early 1990s.

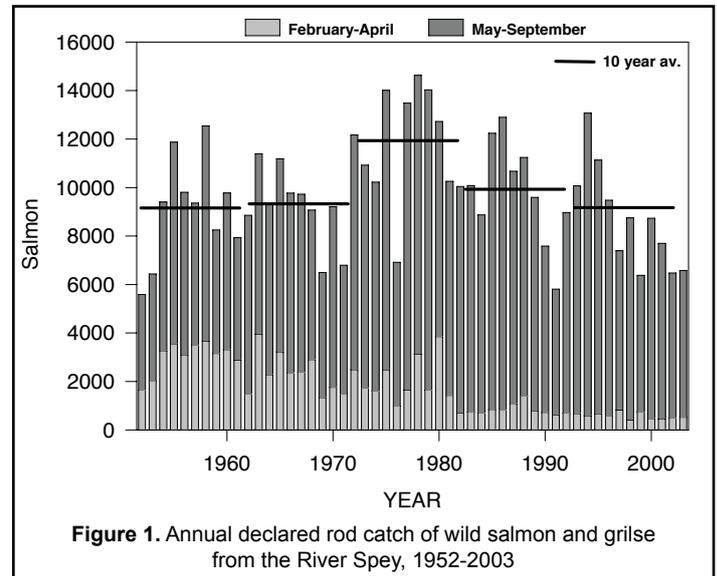


Figure 1. Annual declared rod catch of wild salmon and grilse from the River Spey, 1952-2003

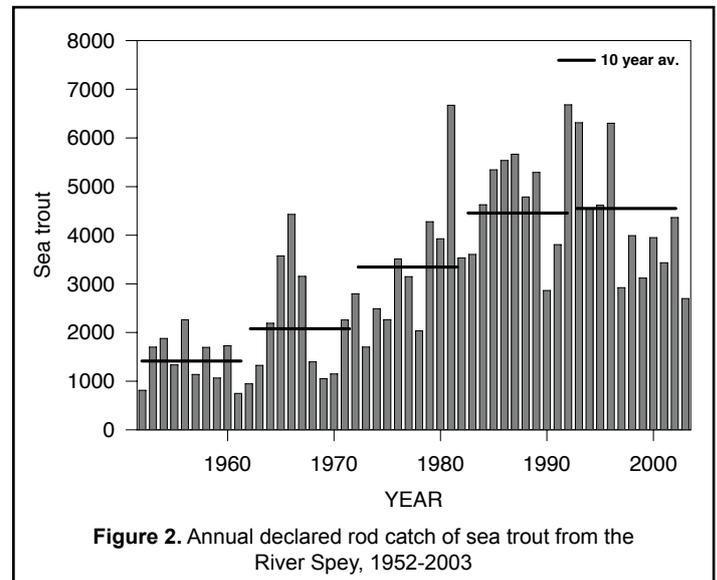
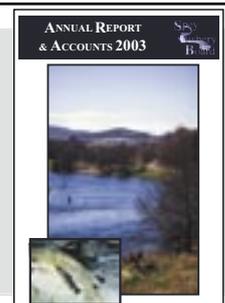


Figure 2. Annual declared rod catch of sea trout from the River Spey, 1952-2003

Spey Fishery Board Annual Report & Accounts 2003

has been published and is available from the SFB Research Office or can be downloaded from the website:

www.speyfisheryboard.com



SPEY FISHERY BOARD RESEARCH OFFICE

I NETHER BORLUM COTTAGE, KNOCKANDO, MORAYSHIRE, AB38 7SD

TEL: 01340 810841 FAX: 01340 810842 E-MAIL: research@speyfisheryboard.com

OPENING DAY 2004

The 2004 Spey salmon fishing season opened on 11th February. Conditions were good, and eight fresh salmon were confirmed caught plus one other unconfirmed. In keeping with the Salmon Conservation Policy, all were released. This represents a marked improvement on Opening Day 2003, when two fish were caught.

The Glenfarclas Spey Quaich for the largest fish was won by Mr Bill Goodlad of Huntly. He caught and released a 17lb. salmon on fly at Rothes & Aikenway.



Landing a fresh salmon on Opening Day 2004 (photo: Richard Whyte)

SALMON CONSERVATION POLICY 2004

1. Catch & Release

- Until 30th June each angler must return the 1st, 3rd, 5th etc. salmon and grilse caught
- After 30th June all hen salmon and grilse must be returned
- Throughout the season all stale or gravid fish must be released
- Escaped farm salmon must be retained

2. Method

- Where possible anglers should be encouraged to fish with a fly
- All hooks should be 'pinched' or barbless
- Where spinning is allowed only one set of barbless hooks may be used on a lure

3. Fishing Effort

- Where possible the numbers of hours and rods fished should be limited



Forceps, donated by Sportfish,
are available **FREE** from the
SFB Research Office,
Tel 01340 810841

SPORTFISH