

## Optimistic Outlook for 2009



*A winter freeze gripped the Spey for the Opening Day of the 2009 season.  
(Photo: Roger Knight)*

**In these times of economic doom and gloom, the Salmon fishing season on the River Spey opened on 11th February with refreshing optimism for yet another successful year. Last year saw 11,556 Salmon and Grilse caught, a 27% increase on the ten-year average and the highest annual catch since 1994. Whilst a winter freeze led to the cancellation of the Opening Ceremony at Aberlour because of safety concerns, a number of hardy anglers proved that the snow had done little to dampen their spirits and went out for a cast regardless.**

The volume of last year's salmon catch was not the only reason for optimism; 2008 also saw a rise in and continued success of the river's voluntary Catch and Release policy, under which anglers are encouraged to release the fish they catch so that they can return to the natural environment from which they came in order to spawn. Last year 8,566 Salmon and Grilse were returned to the River to spawn. Assuming that at least 50% of these were hen fish, and with an average yield of 5,000 eggs each, this means that an extra 21.5 million Salmon eggs will have been deposited throughout the Spey's catchment. For the previous two years, 71% of all Salmon and Grilse caught on the River Spey were returned to the River to spawn and in 2008 this release rate increased to 74%.

With concern still high about the poor survival rate of Salmon at sea, this is a highly commendable achievement for such a large River as the Spey. The Spey Fishery Board is grateful to all proprietors, ghillies and anglers for their active support for and cooperation with the policy.

### Sea Trout Still A Concern

Meanwhile the dwindling numbers of Sea Trout around most Moray Firth Rivers have continued to be a cause for concern. Here too, though, anglers have responded positively by returning over 60% of their catches to the river, in the hope that an increase in the numbers of fish available to spawn will help redress the situation. District Salmon Fishery Boards throughout the region are sponsoring a Moray Firth Sea Trout Project, which began in April last year. Marcus Walters, a marine biologist, has been recruited for the project and tasked to identify reasons behind this decline in Sea Trout numbers. Over a three year project, during which we hope Marcus will be able to identify the likely causes, he will also be looking at suitable management plans to try to reverse this worrying trend. This continued decline in Sea Trout catches prompted the Spey Research Committee to reconsider and revise its Sea Trout Conservation policy, which was subsequently approved by the Board and is published again on the reverse of this Monthly Briefing. With this in mind, the Spey Board would also like to highlight the importance of conserving Brown Trout, which are the same species as Sea Trout.

Whilst nothing is ever certain about this captivating sport, we look forward in anticipation to what we hope will be another successful year on the River Spey. We wish all of you, both local anglers and the many who travel from afar to experience the fishing on this internationally-renowned River, "tight lines" in the season ahead.

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# SPEY CONSERVATION POLICIES

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## SEA TROUT



© James Taylor

- Release all finnock of 16oz/35cm/14" or less



© Ian York

- Release all Sea Trout of 3lb / 50cm / 20" or above



© Ian York

- Retain only 1 Sea Trout of takeable size per calendar day. Anglers are also encouraged to release their first fish and keep the second that is of takeable size



© James Taylor

Stale Hen

- Release all unseasonable fish (smolts, stale fish, kelts, over wintered finnock)



Kelts

Record all released fish and estimate weight from length

Length cm	Length inches	Weight lbs	Length cm	Length inches	Weight lbs	Length cm	Length inches	Weight lbs	Length cm	Length inches	Weight lbs	Length cm	Length inches	Weight lbs
50	19.7	3	75	29.5	10	91	35.8	18	101	39.8	25	103	40.6	26
55	21.7	4	77	30.3	11	93	36.6	19	103	40.6	26	104	40.9	27
59	23.2	5	79	31.1	12	94	37.0	20	104	40.9	27	105	41.3	28
63	24.8	6	81	31.9	13	96	37.8	21	105	41.3	28	106	41.7	29
66	26.0	7	83	32.7	14	97	38.2	22	106	41.7	29	108	42.5	30
69	27.2	8	85	33.5	15	99	39.0	23	108	42.5	30	109	42.9	31
72	28.3	9	89	35.0	17	100	39.4	24	109	42.9	31			

## SALMON



© James Mc

- Until 30th June each angler must return the 1st, 3rd, 5th etc... fish caught.



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- After 30th June all hen salmon and hen grilse must be released.



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- Throughout the season all stale or gravid fish must be released.



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- Escaped farmed salmon must be retained.