

MONTHLY BRIEFING

November 2005

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Spey Salmon and Sea Trout Catch Report 2005

Preliminary rod catch figures for the 2005 season show that the Spey has had another good year for salmon and grilse, with 9,700 fish caught in February - September. This follows close behind the 2004 catch of 9,820, which was the best season since 1995 (Figure 1). For the second year running the rod catch has exceeded the 10 year average of 9,100. As in 2004, the season began with an above-average catch of spring multi-sea winter salmon. In February - April 930 spring fish were caught, compared to 1,100 in 2004 (Figure 1).

Fishermen continued to support the Spey Fishery Boards (SFB) Salmon Conservation Policy, releasing 69% of all salmon and grilse caught. This was similar to the 2004 release rate of 68%, and remained a significant improvement on the 2002 rate of 29% (Figure 2). As a consequence of the efforts of anglers, ghillies and proprietors an additional 6,700 salmon and grilse were released to spawn. The SFB reviews the Salmon Conservation Policy annually, and at its most recent meeting on 9th November 2005 decided to maintain the policy until at least 2008 (see overleaf).

By contrast sea trout catches were low, with 2,100 fish caught in 2005 (Figure 3). This represents the poorest season since 1990, and the catch is significantly below the 10 year average of 4,600. It is not known why sea trout stocks are declining, but the Spey Research Trust has begun a Sea Trout Research Programme to investigate the potential problems affecting this species. As a

precautionary measure, the SFB introduced a Sea Trout Conservation Policy in 2004, which aimed to increase the numbers of mature fish released to spawn. The policy has resulted in an increase in the release rate of fish to 40%, from 21% in 2003. Having reviewed the situation, the SFB has decided to maintain the existing policy for 2006 (see overleaf).

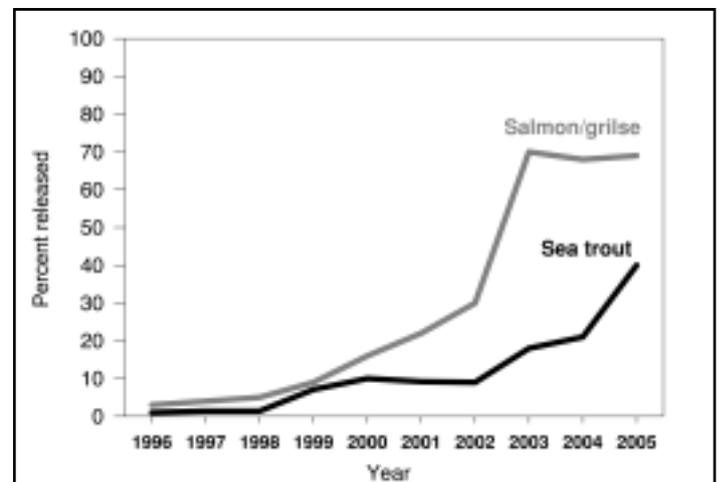


Figure 2. The proportion of wild rod-caught salmon/grilse and sea trout released on the River Spey, 1996-2005.

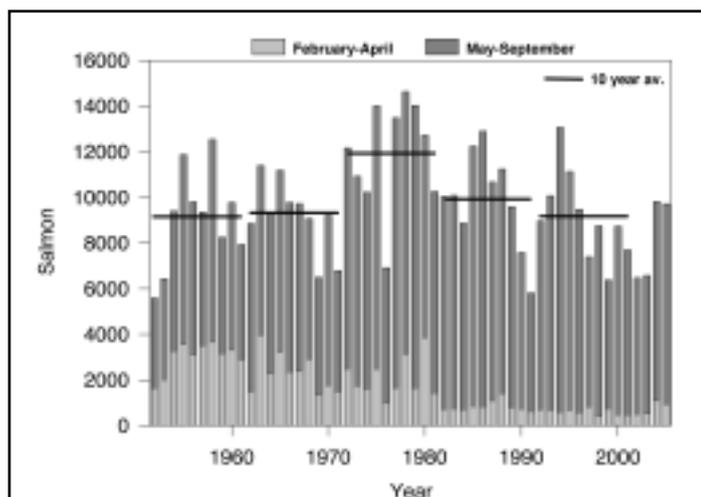


Figure 1. Declared rod catch of wild salmon and grilse on the River Spey, 1952-2005, showing spring (Feb.-Apr.) and summer (May-Sept.) catches.

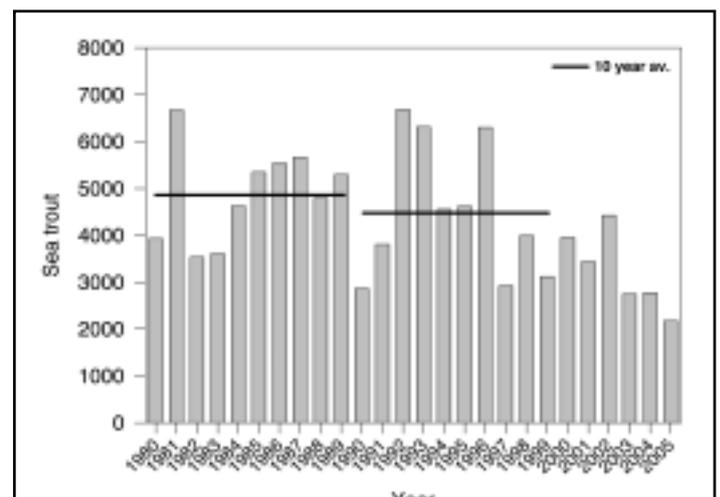


Figure 3. Declared rod catch of sea trout on the River Spey, 1980-2005.

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SEA TROUT CONSERVATION POLICY 2006



Photo: Ian Neale

1. FINNOCK: Release all fish of 10 oz. / 25 cm / 10 " *or less.*

2. SEA TROUT: Release all fish of 3 lb. / 50 cm / 20 " *or more.*

3. BAG LIMIT: 2 sea trout or finnock of takeable size per calendar day.

4. UNSEASONABLE FISH: Release all unseasonable fish (smolts, stale fish, kelts, over-wintered finnock).

SALMON CONSERVATION POLICY 2006



Photo: Ian Neale

1. CATCH & RELEASE

- Until 30th June each angler must release the 1st, 3rd, 5th etc. salmon and grilse caught.
- After 30th June all hen salmon and hen grilse must be released.
- 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.