

REPORTING PINK SALMON IN SCOTTISH WATERS



Photo © Ness District Salmon Fishery Board

Pink salmon

Pink salmon (*Oncorhynchus gorbuscha*) is a species originating in the Pacific and is not native to Scottish waters. The species was introduced into a number of Russian rivers in the 1960s, to support fishing activity and in recent years pink salmon have spread further west and south.

Sightings in Scottish waters

Some 139 pink salmon were reported in Scottish rivers in 2017 – the highest ever recorded – and a number were captured and sampled by Marine Scotland. A joint opinion piece paper¹ was published by Marine Scotland, Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) and Fisheries Management Scotland (FMS) in March 2018.

Because of their two-year lifecycle pink salmon are expected to return to Scottish waters in 2019 and in odd numbered years thereafter.

The Scottish Government has been working with FMS, SNH and the Scottish Environment

¹ Armstrong JD, Bean CW, Wells A. The Scottish invasion of pink salmon in 2017. *J Fish Biol.* 2018; 93:8-11. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jfb.13680>

Protection Agency (SEPA) to co-ordinate advice and actions to help ensure that any recurrence of pink salmon in Scotland can be identified, reported and managed appropriately. A detailed Advice Note² has been produced by FMS which includes, amongst other things, help on the identification of pink salmon.

What does the law say?

Under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 pink salmon is defined as an invasive, non-native species. Detailed provisions in the legislation are designed to help restrict the spread of invasive species and the Scottish Government has published a Code of Practice on Non-Native Species³.

Under terms of the 1981 Act it is an offence to fish for and retain pink salmon, or to have them under your control. However, the Act also says that it may be a defence against any charge of

² <http://fms.scot/pink-salmon-in-scotland/>

³ Guidance on non-native species, approved by the Scottish Parliament. <https://www.gov.scot/publications/non-native-species-code-practice/>



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an offence to show that a person had taken all reasonable steps and exercised due diligence to avoiding committing that offence.

The Code of Practice offers further advice on this at sections 2.20 to 2.24 and notes that it is a matter for the courts to determine whether the defence of due diligence has been established. This will depend on the circumstances of each case but compliance or non-compliance with the best practice set out below, in the FMS Advice Note and elsewhere could be used as evidence in any prosecution.

What to do if you spot a pink salmon or catch one inadvertently

In order to allow the Government to assess the scale of the issue in 2019, and to plan for future years, it is important that we have as much information as possible. If you identify a pink salmon in the water, or if you catch one while fishing for other species, we are looking for your help.

- If you catch one, kill it humanely
- Do not return it to the water
- Contact your District Salmon Fishery Board (DSFB) or Fisheries Trust who will advise on what to do next

- **You will need to tell them:**
 - the date
 - the location where you saw or caught it, including a grid reference if possible
 - the method used to catch the fish e.g. rod & line
 - the sex of the fish
 - if relevant, the number of fish sighted/ caught
- **The DSFB or Trust may also ask you to arrange to deliver the carcass to them for further analysis and sampling**

Fisheries Management Scotland will collate information on sightings and catches and this will be shared through the Scotland's environment website⁴.

Contact information

Contact information for District Salmon Fishery Boards and Fisheries Trusts can be found on the Fisheries Management Scotland website at

- <http://fms.scot/dsfb-contacts/> or
- <http://fms.scot/trust-contacts/>

⁴ <https://www.environment.gov.scot/>