

Fish in Rivers Factsheet

ERBD

River Dodder Catchment

Factsheet: 2025/05

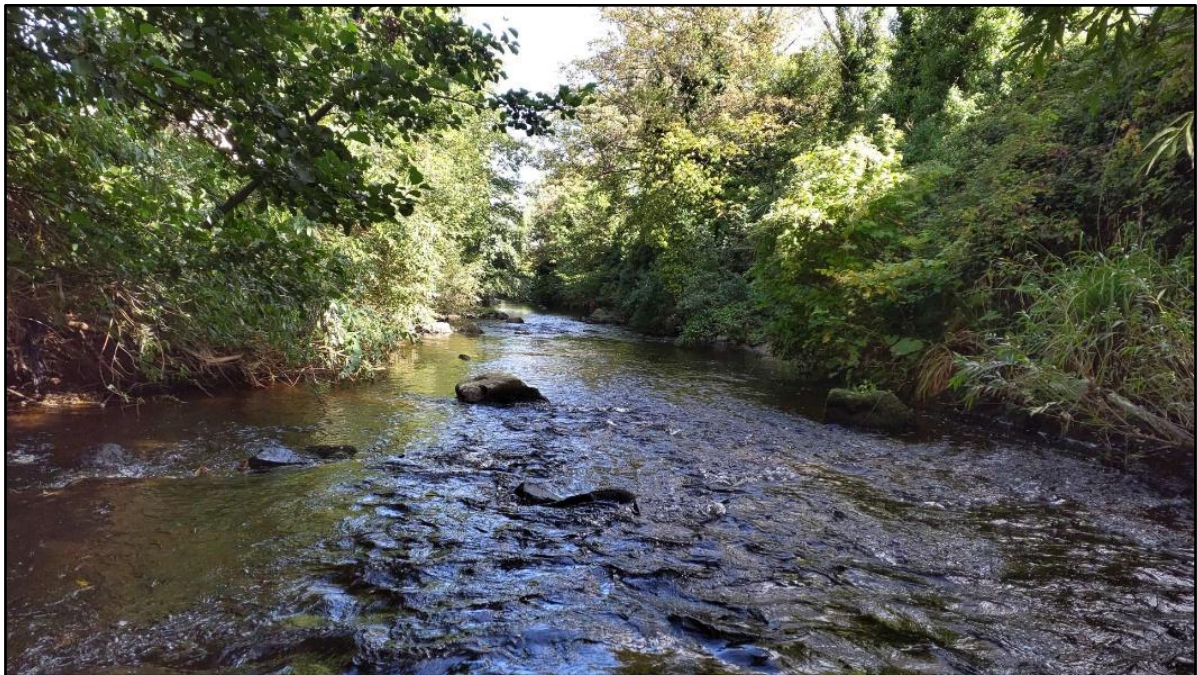
The River Dodder Catchment is in the Eastern River Basin District and covers an area of approximately 113km². The River Dodder originates from three streams in the Kippure Mountains in Co. Wicklow flowing in a north-easterly direction through south Co. Dublin, reaching the River Liffey at Grand Canal Dock in Dublin City, flowing in total for approximately 26km.

The geology of this catchment is mixed, comprising of granite, limestone and slate. Land use in the catchment consists mainly of scrubland in the upper catchment, with agriculture lower down towards the two reservoirs. The River Dodder becomes a highly urbanised channel downstream of Oldbawn. The uppermost parts of this catchment, including the Glenasmole Reservoirs and their feeder streams fall within the Wicklow Mountains Special Area of Conservation (EPA 2021).

Inland Fisheries Ireland conducts annual nation-wide fish sampling surveys to assess and report the status of stocks in Ireland's rivers, lakes and transitional waters. This report presents the results of an electro-fishing (CEN 2003) survey carried out in the River Dodder Catchment.

Thirteen sites in total were surveyed during the 2025 survey season. Two sites were surveyed on the 3rd of July, ten sites between the 14th to 15th of August and one site on the 26th of September 2025.

The survey methods included 10-minute timed Electro-Fishing (TEF₁₀), and Area Delineated Electro-Fishing (ADEF handset). All TEF₁₀ fish count results were converted to minimum population estimates according to Matson *et al.* 2018.



Dodder River at Foot Bridge Beaver Row (Site 10), Donnybrook, Dublin.

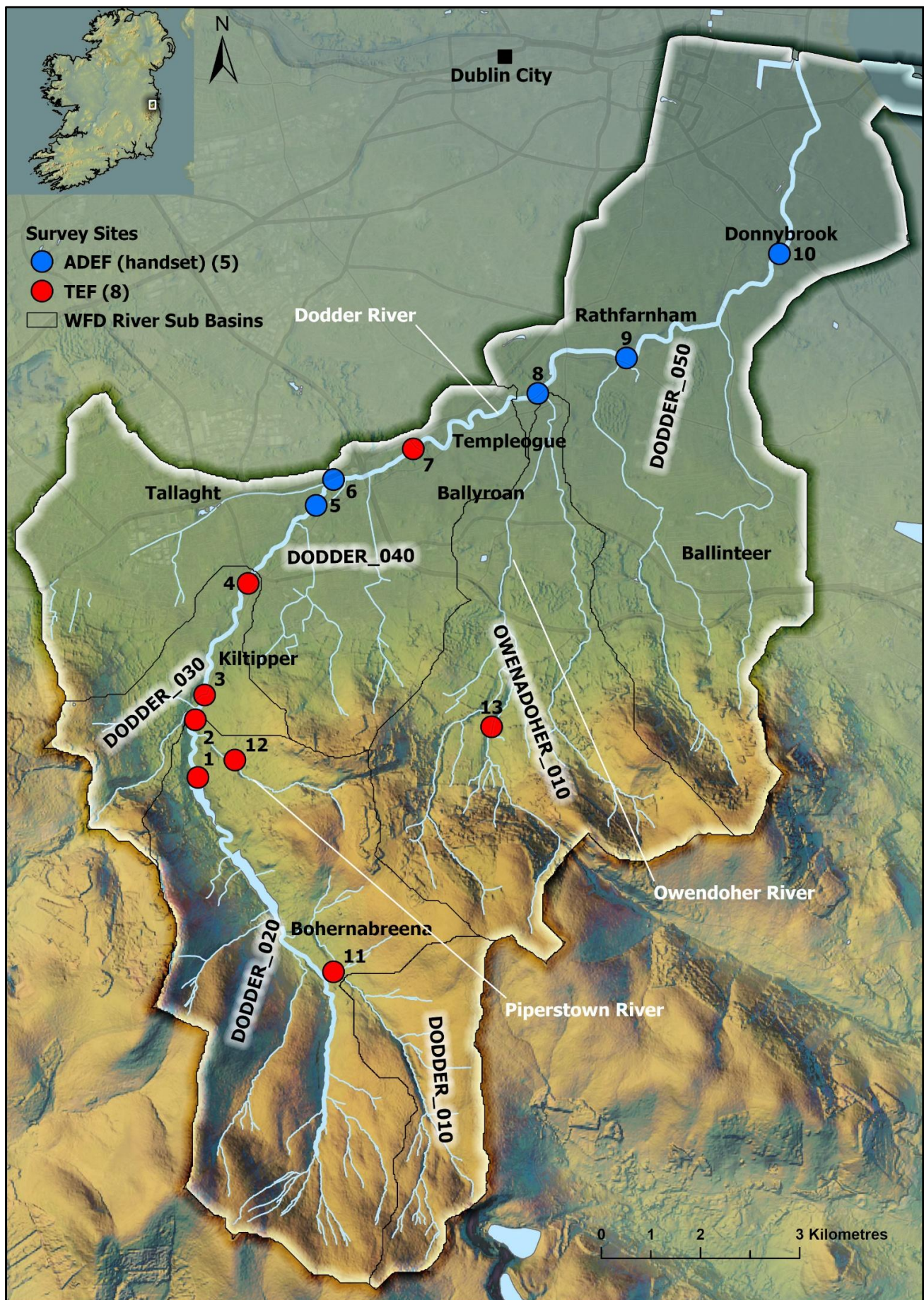


Figure 1. Location of electrofishing survey sites on the River Dodder Catchment 2025. Sub-catchments and WFD river sub-basins are also highlighted.

Table 1. Site survey details, River Dodder Catchment 2025.

No.	WFD Sub-basin	River	Site	Method	WFD	Date
Dodder River Catchment						
1	DODDER_020	Dodder River	d/s of Lower Reservoir	TEF (Handset)	NO	14/08/2025
2	DODDER_020	Dodder River	Bohernabreena	TEF (Handset)	NO	14/08/2025
3	DODDER_040	Dodder River	Friarstown	TEF (Handset)	NO	14/08/2025
4	DODDER_040	Dodder River	Oldbawn	TEF (Handset)	NO	14/08/2025
5	DODDER_040	Dodder River	255m d/s Firhouse	ADEF (Handset)	NO	03/07/2025
6	DODDER_040	Dodder River	Knocklyon	ADEF (Handset)	NO	03/07/2025
7	DODDER_040	Dodder River	Templeogue Carpark	TEF (Handset)	NO	14/08/2025
8	DODDER_050	Dodder River	Bushy Park	ADEF (Handset)	NO	15/08/2025
9	DODDER_050	Dodder River	Mount Carmel Hospital	ADEF (Handset)	NO	15/08/2025
10	DODDER_050	Dodder River	Footbridge Beaver Row	ADEF (Handset)	YES	26/09/2025
11	DODDER_020	Dodder River Tributary	Cunard	TEF (Handset)	NO	14/08/2025
12	DODDER_020	Dodder (Piperstown) River	Tributary at Corrageen	TEF (Handset)	NO	14/08/2025
13	OWENADOHER_010	Dodder (Owendohar) River	Cruagh Road Bridge	TEF (Handset)	NO	14/08/2025



Dodder River, Downstream of Lower Reservoir (Site 1), Bohernabreena, Co. Dublin.

Table 2. Minimum density estimates of fish (no. fish/m²), River Dodder Catchment 2025 (previous results are shown where applicable).

Dodder River Catchment								
Site no.	1		2			3		
Species	2018	2025	2018	2019	2025	2018	2019	
Brown trout	0.020	0.007	0.104	0.131	0.418	0.237	0.222	
0+ brown trout	-	-	0.032	0.053	0.013	0.024	0.150	
1+ & older brown trout	0.020	0.007	0.072	0.078	0.405	0.213	0.071	
Minnow	0.020	0.031	0.009	-	0.013	-	-	
Stone loach	0.010	0.007	0.005	-	-	-	-	
Three-spined stickleback	0.597	0.020	-	-	-	-	-	
All fish	0.646	0.065	0.117	0.131	0.431	0.237	0.222	
Dodder River Catchment								
Site no.	3	4			5	6	7	
Species	2025	2018	2019	2025	2025	2025	2018	
Brown trout	0.497	0.088	0.197	0.466	0.342	0.427	0.277	
0+ brown trout	0.078	0.017	0.172	0.113	0.041	0.069	0.088	
1+ & older brown trout	0.419	0.071	0.025	0.353	0.301	0.358	0.188	
European eel	-	-	0.013	-	0.014	0.008	-	
Lamprey sp.	-	-	-	0.013	0.082	-	-	
Minnow	-	-	-	-	0.007	0.099	-	
Stone loach	-	0.013	0.025	-	0.027	-	-	
All fish	0.497	0.101	0.235	0.480	0.471	0.534	0.277	
Dodder River Catchment								
Site no.	7	8			9			
Species	2025	2018	2019	2025	2018	2019	2025	
Brown trout	0.592	0.217	0.279	0.265	0.150	0.189	0.217	
0+ brown trout	0.077	0.039	0.149	0.138	0.102	0.155	0.187	
1+ & older brown trout	0.515	0.178	0.131	0.126	0.048	0.034	0.030	
European eel	0.059	-	-	0.009	0.015	-	0.009	
Lamprey sp.	-	-	-	0.003	-	-	-	
Minnow	-	0.055	0.024	0.048	0.015	0.021	0.012	
Roach	-	-	0.003	-	-	-	-	
Stone loach	-	0.116	0.033	0.033	0.033	-	0.040	
Three-spined stickleback	-	0.019	-	0.006	-	-	-	
All fish	0.651	0.407	0.339	0.364	0.214	0.209	0.278	
Dodder River Catchment								
Site no.	10		11		12		13	
Species	2008	2025	2019	2025	2010	2025	2011	2025
Brown trout	0.054	0.129	0.236	0.084	-	-	0.085	0.781
0+ brown trout	0.030	0.073	0.087	-	-	-	-	0.333
1+ & older brown trout	0.025	0.056	0.150	0.084	-	-	0.085	0.447
Salmon	0.068	0.107	-	-	-	-	-	-
0+ salmon	0.032	0.063	-	-	-	-	-	-
1+ & older salmon	0.037	0.044	-	-	-	-	-	-
European eel	0.019	0.029	-	-	-	-	-	-
Flounder	-	0.022	-	-	-	-	-	-
Lamprey sp.	-	0.002	-	-	-	-	-	-
Minnow	0.012	0.002	-	-	-	-	-	-
Sea trout	0.002	0.002	-	-	-	-	-	-
Stone loach	0.004	0.002	-	-	-	-	-	-
All fish	0.160	0.296	0.236	0.084	no fish	no fish	0.085	0.781

Table 3. Salmonid % age class structure (where recorded), River Dodder Catchment, July & August 2025.

Species	Site No.	% of catch					
		0+	1+	2+	3+	4+	5+
Brown trout	1	-	-	100	-	-	-
	2	3	62	32	-	3	-
	3	17	56	27	-	-	-
	4	28	66	6	-	-	-
	5	12	26	56	6	-	-
	6	16	31	48	5	-	-
	7	16	53	31	-	-	-
	8	53	17	27	2	-	1
	9	86	5	9	-	-	-
	10	58	23	17	1	1	-
	11	-	71	29	-	-	-
	13	48	43	9	-	-	-
Salmon	10	58	38	4	-	-	-

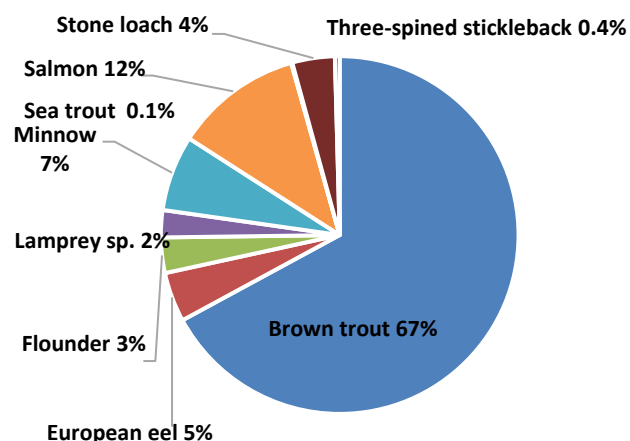


Figure 4. Fish species composition (%), River Dodder Catchment, 2025.

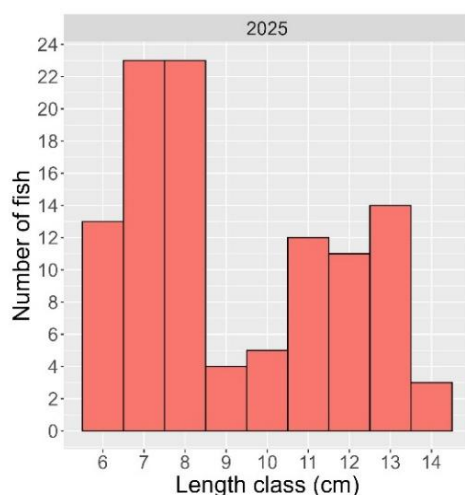


Figure 2. Length frequency distribution for salmon (n=108), River Dodder Catchment, 2025 (No. sites=1).

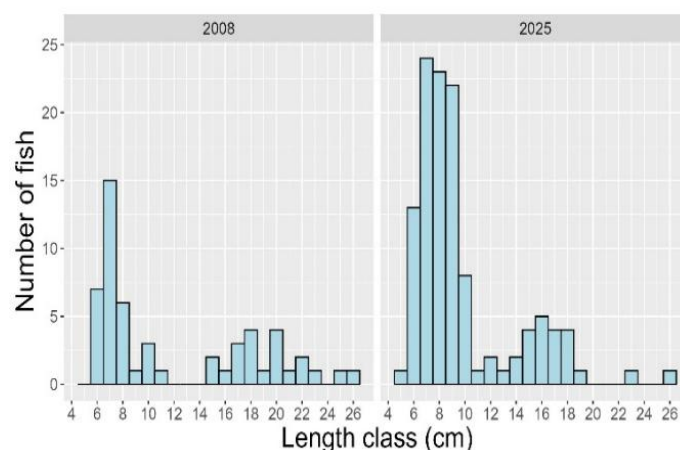


Figure 5. Length frequency distribution of brown trout, (2008 n=54, 2025 n=117) at Beaver Row (Site 10), a WFD monitoring site, on the Dodder River.

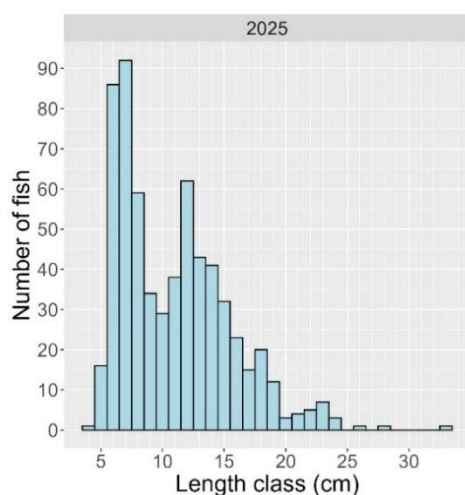


Figure 3. Length frequency distribution for brown trout (n = 628), River Dodder Catchment, 2025 (No. sites = 12).

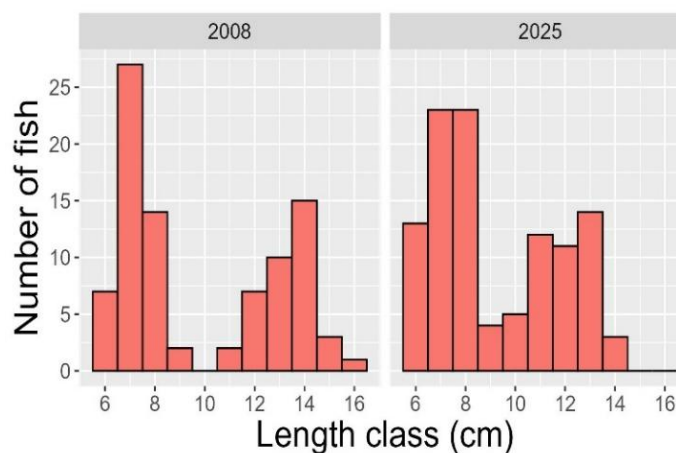


Figure 6. Length frequency distribution of salmon, (2008 n=88, 2025 n=108) at Beaver Row (Site 10), a WFD monitoring site, on the Dodder River.

Table 4. Fish ecological status, River Dodder Catchment, August 2025 (and previous years where applicable).

Site No.	2018	2019	2020	2022	2025
Dodder River Catchment					
1	P	-	-	-	P
2	M	M	-	-	M
3	M	M	-	-	M
4	P	M	-	-	M
5	-	-	-	-	M
6	M	-	-	-	M
7	M	-	-	-	M
8	M	M	-	-	M
9	M	M	-	-	M
10	-	-	-	H	H
11	-	M	-	-	P
12	-	-	-	-	N/A
13	-	-	-	-	M



Electrofishing on the River Dodder at Bushy Park (Site 3), Rathfarnham, Dublin.

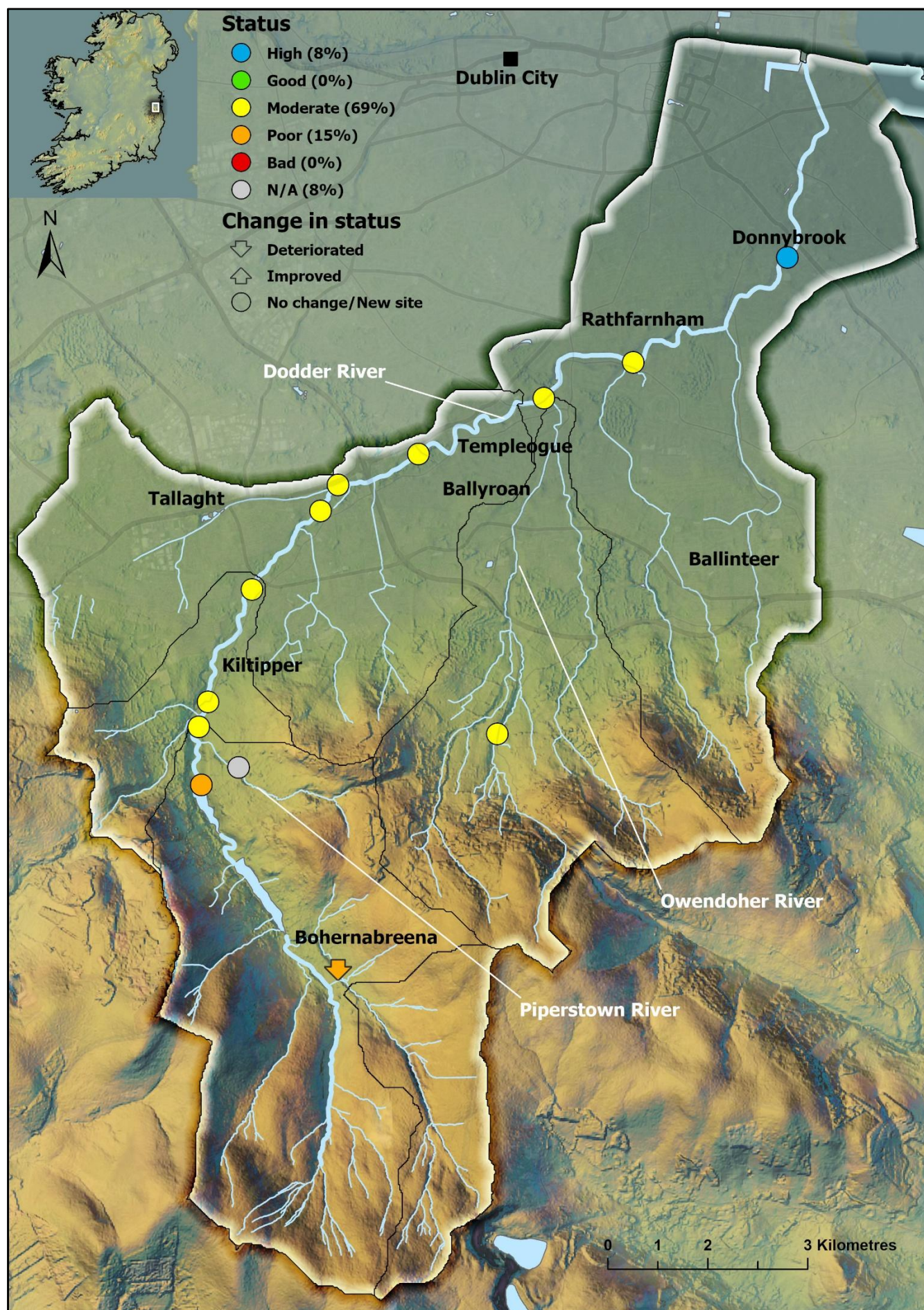


Figure 7. Fish ecological status in the River Dodder Catchment, July to August 2025. Arrows indicate a change in status since previous surveys (where applicable).

Summary

Eight fish species and sea trout, a separate 'variety' of trout, were captured at thirteen sites surveyed in the River Dodder Catchment in 2025.

Brown trout was the most common species present (twelve sites, 92%), followed by minnow (seven sites, 54%), European eel (six sites, 46%), stone loach (five sites, 38%), lamprey sp. (four sites, 31%), three-spined stickleback (two sites, 15%), salmon, flounder and sea trout (one site each, 8%).

Brown trout was the most abundant species recorded, followed by salmon, minnow, European eel, stone loach, flounder, lamprey sp., three-spined stickleback and sea trout (Figure 4).

Brown trout ranged in length from 4.7 to 33.1cm. Six age classes were present (0+, 1+, 2+, 3+, 4+ and 5+), with 0+ being the most abundant cohort (Figure 3 & Table 3). The highest density of brown trout (all ages combined) (0.780 fish/m²) was recorded at Site 13 (Cruagh Road Bridge) on the Owendoher River. The highest density of 0+ brown trout (0.333 fish/m²) was also recorded at Site 13 (Cruagh Road Bridge) in the Owendoher River. The highest densities of 1+ and older brown trout (0.514 fish/m²) were recorded at Site 7 (Templeogue Carpark).

Salmon ranged in length from 6 to 14.7cm. Salmon were only recorded at Site 10 (Footbridge Beaver Row). Three age classes were present (0+, 1+ and 2+), with 0+ being the most abundant cohort (Figure 2 & Table 3). The density of salmon at this site (all ages combined) was 0.107 fish/m² (0+ salmon = 0.063 fish/m² and 1+ and older salmon = 0.044 fish/m²).

A Water Framework Directive fish classification tool (FCS2) was developed for Irish rivers in 2011 (SNIFFER

2011). The tool works by comparing various fish community metric values within a site to those predicted for a site under un-impacted conditions. In general, a site will achieve High status if all indicator species (e.g. both salmonid cohorts 0+ and 1+ and older) are present and in expected numbers. Status will decline if such cohorts are missing, are in poor abundance, or if more tolerant species proliferate.

Fish ecological status was assigned to twelve sites surveyed in the River Dodder Catchment during 2025, one site was not assigned a status. Of the assigned sites, one site was assigned High status, nine sites Moderate and two sites Poor status. Ten sites were surveyed previously on this catchment and assigned fish ecological status. When compared with their most recent previous surveys, one site deteriorated (Site 11) and nine sites remained unchanged (Table 4 and Figure 7).

The reasons for the failures (i.e. moderate status) in fish ecological status were due to lower-than-expected abundance of type specific indicator species (e.g., salmon and trout), absence of certain age cohorts indicating recruitment failures. Failures and deteriorations in fish ecological status can be caused by pressures such as nutrient enrichment, habitat modification and fish passage issues.

References

- CEN (2003) Water Quality Sampling of Fish with Electricity. CEN EN 14011:2000. Brussels. European Committee for Standardization.
- Matson, R., Delanty, K., Shephard, S., Coghlan, B. and Kelly, F. (2018). *Moving from multiple pass depletion to single pass timed electrofishing for fish community assessment in wadeable streams*. Fisheries Research, 198, 99-108.

SNIFFER (2011) River Fish Classification Tool: Science Work. WFD68c, Phase 2. Final Report. Version 6. Edinburgh. Scotland and Northern Ireland Forum for Environmental Research.

EPA (2021) <https://gis.epa.ie/EPAMaps/WaterCatchments.ie> Accessed in December 2025.

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