

Erriff Fishery Newsletter 2017



Fantastic season with 509 salmon recorded
Includes 422 wild salmon caught and released
Catch-Photo-Release #CPRsavesfish

April

The season opened on the 1st of April under the management of Inland Fisheries Ireland. In the interest of conservation, the fishery was managed on a catch-and-release basis for wild salmon for the season, and most anglers were very happy to see this. Due to the availability of ranched salmon, which are removed at the trap anyway, anglers releasing a wild salmon were offered a ranched fish where possible.

The fishing season had a slow start and the lack of rain from the end of March to mid-May did not help matters. With the month of April being so dry and little angling pressure this resulted in no fish being caught during April.

May

The dry spell continued through the first 2 weeks of May; by this stage the gauge was reading 0.46m at Aasleagh Bridge. We finally got a flood on the 15th which was very dirty and it took 2 days to properly clear and become fishable.

Regular visitors Steve and Phillipa Sayer (UK) returned along with their son Christopher to fish the afternoon of the 17th, and Phillipa was rewarded with her 1st ever salmon which she caught on a Green Butt Cascade in the Bridge Pool on Beat 9. This ranched salmon weighed 8.1lbs and was the 1st fish of the season.

There were a further 3 ranched springers caught for the month on Beat 9 by Jamie McStay (8.75lbs.) Simon Pont (7lbs) and Will Wright (7.5lbs).

June

The grilse arrived early in June and were seen in greater numbers than in the previous 2 seasons, a trend that was to continue for the rest of the season.

Local man Peter Coyne caught and released our 1st wild salmon which weighed 6lbs; this grilse came from the Middle Garden Pool on Beat 9 using a Willie Gunn.



Glen Harmon releasing a 6lbs grilse below the Falls



Iascach Intíre Éireann
Inland Fisheries Ireland



Regular visitor Kevin Attridge had a 'red letter day' on Monday 5th June landing 5 salmon which weighed 4lbs, 10.75lbs, 3.75lbs, 4lbs and 4lbs; these fish came to a Garry Dog and a Foxford Shrimp in the Falls and Middle Garden Pools on Beat 9. Regular visitors Michael Parry and Selby Knox (UK) returned again this year and had 7 grilse between them for their week - these fish ranged from 3-5lbs and were all caught on Beat 9. As the month progressed we had fish coming off the upper beats up as far as Beat 5.

There were a few small sea trout caught and released during the month ranging in weight from 0.5 – 0.75lbs. Overall there was a very disappointing run of sea trout during the 2017 season.

There were 74 salmon recorded for the month, including 52 wild fish and 22 ranched. 47 wild fish were released, 5 could not be revived (90% release).

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Andrew Beattie with his 6lbs wild grilse before release above the falls.



Julie McMullen (USA) with her 1st ever Atlantic salmon weighing 3.5lbs pictured before release.

July

The grilse run peaked in July with 180 grilse landed for the month. The water was relatively low during the first 3 weeks of the month after which the weather broke and there were regular top-ups of water for the rest of the season. With the numbers of grilse entering the system increasing daily so did the numbers of anglers and it was great to see new faces at the fishery along with our regulars.

Regular visitor Andrew Beattie returned on the 8th and had a great week. He beat his own record, landing 14 grilse for the week between 2.25-8lbs using a Cascade and Curry's Red.

July was a great month at the fishery where on some days it was not uncommon for an angler to have caught and released 3 grilse for their day.

Monthly Catches 2017

Month	Salmon	Sea Trout
April	0	0
May	4	0
June	74	11
July	180	6
August	139	9
September	112	38
Total	509	64



As the month progressed fish were coming from nearly the entire length of the fishery which was pleasing to see. Interestingly over the last 2 days of the month (30th – 31st) 18 rods fished and accounted for 52 salmon. Top rod over this period was Peter Murphy who released 14 salmon between 5–7lbs from the Falls and Middle Garden Pools using a Posh Tosh.

Total catch for the month was 180 salmon, including 144 wild fish and 36 ranched, of which 139 wild fish were released successfully (96.5%).

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Top 5 Fly Patterns 2017

Rank	Fly
1	Cascade
2	Ally's Shrimp
3	Posh Tosh
4	Bann Special
5	Garry Dog



Jamie McStay with his 8.75lbs springer

August

The good run of grilse continued during August and catches reflected this with a total of 140 salmon landed for the month. August was a wet month which enabled the grilse to get a clear passage upstream. The anglers were delighted to be meeting fresh fish well up the system as a result of the continuing higher water levels.

Regular visitor Martin Witort had a great afternoon on the 2nd releasing 3 salmon on Beat 6 from Altamont's Dam and Colonel's Run weighing 8lbs, 4lbs and 3.5lbs on a Cascade and a Fiery Brown shrimp fly.

As the month progressed there were more fish coming from the upper beats such as Pat Erritty's 7lbs salmon from the Quarry pool on Beat 2 using a Green Butt Cascade and Seamus O'Neil's 5lbs grilse from Mike's Pools on Beat 3 using a Sunray Shadow.

There were 139 salmon recorded for August, including 130 wild fish and 9 ranched. 127 wild fish were released successfully (91%).

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Pink Salmon

During the month of August a pink salmon was caught by an angler in the Lower Garden Pool on Beat 9. At the time there were a number of reports coming in from around the country of pink salmon being caught by anglers.

Subsequent to this a camera was placed into the Lower Garden Pool where more pink salmon were observed. A short video of this is viewable at this address:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jVVU3GGfcy8>



1.91lbs pink salmon caught on Beat 9 on the Erriff 09/08/17

Heaviest Salmon 2017

Name	Date	Pool	Fly	Wt.
Kevin Attridge	5 June	Falls	Foxford Shrimp	10.75lbs
Glen Harmon	8 Sep	Willow	Stinchard Stroat	10.5lbs
Joe Tynan	14 Aug	Kings	Red Allys	10lbs
Arthur Muckian	29 July	Kings	Cascade	9lbs
Jamie McStay	20 May	Sea Pool	Conehead Cascade	8.75lbs
Philip Harte	29 Sep	The Straight	Red Muffin	8.5lbs
Philippa Sayer	17 May	Bridge	Green Butt Cascade	8.1lbs



September

Average water level during the month was 1.31m

The month of September was very wet with some floods reaching over 2m. This constant addition of freshwater to the system encouraged the fish that were getting darker in colour to still take a fly, not to mention the few fresh fish that were still coming in with the tides. September produced 111 salmon and anglers made the most of the good fishing.

Regular visitors Paddy Donegan, Mick Vincent, Donal Chambers and Albert Caffrey had a fantastic 1st week of September releasing 26 salmon between them. Their best fish were 8lbs, 5.5lbs, 7lbs, and 8lbs respectively, from Beats 3, 4 and 6 mainly using a variety of shrimp patterns.

Regular visitor John Phelan ended his great season releasing a fresh grilse of 4lbs from the Falls using a Cascade on the 21st and a 3.5lbs grilse from the Lower Garden Pool on the 22nd during a flood. The final fish of 2017 went to Gerry Murray who released 2 grilse of 4lbs on Beat 5 using a Temple Dog tube.

During September there were a number of farmed salmon caught on the Erriff of unknown origin, similar reports also came from nearby fisheries at this time.

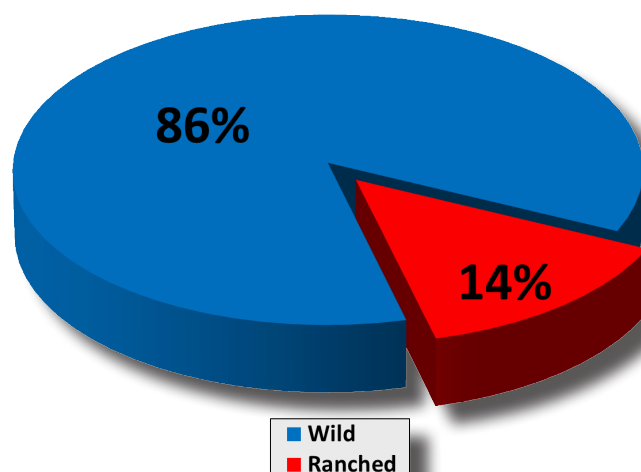
Total catch for the month was 112 salmon, including 111 wild fish and 1 ranched, of which 109 wild fish were released successfully (98%).

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Paddy Donegan, Mick Vincent, Donal Chambers and Albert Caffrey.

Salmon Wild v Ranched %



Research

During the year there were a number of research projects on going at the Erriff. An EU funded NASCO project known as the SMOLTRACK project was conducted on the Black River where salmon smolts were implanted with miniature acoustic transmitters and released. Acoustic listening devices were placed at different points down through the river system and out in Killary Fjord.

Scientists are hoping this project will help us understand the timing of the downstream migration of the salmon smolts as well as migration behaviour and survival rates of smolts as they migrate down the river system.

The information gathered from this project should help in the conservation of smolts in the future.

A second EU funded NASCO programme called Licetrack also started in Killary in 2016. This project aims to develop a sea lice model developing and refining existing hydrodynamic modelling, environmental variables, sea lice production on salmon farms and other data requirements to support sustainable development of salmon aquaculture and wild salmon stocks.

This project will contribute to developing best management practice for sea lice control and define a range of production strategies aiming at reducing the presence of sea lice and their negative impacts, both on farmed and wild Atlantic salmon.



IFI staff deploying mooring and acoustic receiver as part of the SMOLTRACK project.



New footbridge erected between Beats 7 and 8.

Development

New stiles and footbridges have been erected by IFI and Community Scheme staff members where needed, and this will continue until all have been replaced.



New aluminium stile

And finally...

It was an interesting season at the fishery with unusual species of salmon appearing. The sea trout run did not materialise and we can only hope that next year things will improve on this front.

The good numbers of grilse returning this year coincided with regular floods which encouraged them up through the system and a healthy number of anglers coming to fish gave us a very healthy final rod catch for the season of 509. Indeed you would have to look as far back as 2011 to see a similar rod catch. Let's hope this improvement in salmon returns continues.

Acknowledgements

We would like to take this opportunity to thank the IFI Ballinakill staff who assisted with the smooth running and protection of the fishery during the year.

A special word of thanks is extended to Barry Kelly for all his years hard work put in as a Fishery Officer in the Ballinakill District, and good luck in his new role in Galway.

Also we would like to thank the land owners along the fishery as well as the Community Employment Schemes staff for all their hard work with maintenance and angling access to the fishery during the year.

Finally, the anglers who visited this fishery, we thank you for coming and look forward to seeing you all again in 2018.