Erriff Fishery & Aasleagh Lodge Newsletter 2014

Summer Drought Impacts on Salmon Angling, Sea Trout Numbers Show Huge Improvement

May

Unlike the previous year the Erriff was slow to get started this season. The first fish was caught on Saturday the 10th – a sea-liced fish of 7.25lbs which was caught by Dr. Eoin Bresnihan from Oughterard, Co. Galway, fishing a "Yabby" fly in the Garden Pool on Beat 9. The second fish followed swiftly the following day, with Niall Wickham landing a nice fish of 8.25lbs in high water at the tail of Broken Bridge Pool on Beat 5. The fish was taken on a 2" copper tube fly.

Dr. Eoin Bresnihan with the first fish of 2014.

Rain increased levels on Monday 19th and a few fish were hooked and lost on Beat 9. The following day Niilo Hakkinen, Finland lost a salmon in the Sea Pool.

There was little angling activity on the river for the next few days. Water levels and angling conditions were perfect on the morning of the 24th. Rod Robinson, Waterville, Co. Kerry, fishing the Erriff for the first time caught a 15.75lbs fish on an Apache Shrimp in the Coronation Pool on Beat 8. Basil Towers, UK caught one of 6.25lbs on a Black Pennell in School House Pool on Beat 3.

The following day Hugh Maguire, Dublin caught one of 10.25lbs on a Black Shrimp pattern in Poleen on Beat 4. Tom Harrington, Limerick hooked and lost a good fish on Beat 6, but his luck changed when he caught one of 8lbs on a Tosh in the Colonel's Pool.

June

The run of sea trout commenced with fish running upstream in very low water with just over 200 recorded through the counter during the first week.

Iascach Intíre Éireann
Inland Fisheries Ireland

Roderick Robinson (Co. Kerry) with his fine 15.75lbs springer

The third week of June featured a spell of hot summer weather - a very dry week with low water of 0.6m on the gauge. However there were rewards for those who persevered. Selby Knox had 2 salmon and a sea trout for the week - best was a fresh fish of 11lbs taken in the Broken Bridge Pool on a Red Ally's Shrimp, his favourite fly on the Erriff, despite the fishery manager's long-time disapproval! A few days later Selby caught a grilse of 5.25lbs in Black Banks on Beat 6. Tim Marshall, UK, had a sea trout in the Garden Pool and a grilse of 4lbs on a Red Ally's in the Falls Pool on Beat 9. Andrew Morley, London on his first ever salmon fishing trip caught a sea trout in the Garden Pool and a grilse of 6.25lbs in the Falls Pool; both fish were caught on a Cascade.

The following week, despite torrential downpours elsewhere, no rain fell in the Erriff valley. Despite the low water sea trout continued to run the fish pass in very good numbers with over 800 recorded for the month. There was also a scattering of salmon moving up from Beat 9 into the lower beats. The few rods that braved the conditions had good sport. It was a time to dispense with the traditional salmon patterns and switch to the smaller lightly dressed sea trout flies.

Annie and Hugh Woodsend, UK, fishing the Erriff for the first time had 10 sea trout up to 2.5lbs taken on various small flies including Teal & Silver, Black Gnat and a Butcher. Knocht Roland, Switzerland caught a grilse on a Hare's Ear in the Falls Pool on Beat 9 and also some beautifully spotted brown trout on Moher Lake. It was a super sea trout fishing week for low water expert Raphael Amat from France – Raphael topped his record sea trout catch of 52 last season and recorded a catch of 75 sea trout up to 2.5lbs! In addition Raphael also caught 2 sea-liced grilse – all 77 fish were sportingly released into the river again. The most successful patterns were Stoats Tail, Black Pennell, Black Shrimp, and tiny Cascades – all flies were tied by Raphael himself and all very lightly dressed.

July

Early July brought bright sunshine and some very heavy thundery showers. Water levels were low for the first three days of the month – however the sea trout continued to run in very good numbers with almost 250 trout running through the counter during that period. Overall the rainfall was disappointing with water levels recorded at just over 1.1m on the 4th - however what did fall was a welcome bonus for salmon fry in the feeder streams which were running seriously low. The first good pulse of the grilse run with a scattering of springers saw almost 100 fish move upstream – the run of sea trout was excellent with almost 700 fish recorded through the counter.

Aoife Keogh (Clontarf, Dublin) with a nice mid-July grilse.

Michel Le Paire caught a sparkling fresh sea-liced grilse in the Bridge Pool on Beat 9 on a Sunray Shadow. Fishing lightly dressed Cascades, Enda O'Connell, Newcastle -upon-Tyne, UK had a very successful few days on the river catching 3 fresh grilse in the Falls and Garden Pools on Beat 9. Ken Mills, UK caught 2 grilse in the Garden Pool, also on a Cascade. Simone Scaggio and Michele Malagugini from Italy, fishing the Erriff for the first time, caught their first ever salmon. David Gaffney caught a nice sea trout on Beat 1. Hugh Maguire, Irl. caught a grilse and 3 sea trout in the Upper Sally Pool on Beat 7.

Rain on the 14th and 16th brought a welcome rise in water levels, peaking at 1.6m on the gauge. The increase in water levels accompanied by high tides brought in an additional 600 sea trout and 100+ salmon.

French anglers Francois Tartaguino, fishing the Erriff for the first time, and regular visitor Gerard Garnier had a successful visit, with Francois catching his first Irish salmon in the Bridge Pool on Beat 9 – they then went on to catch a further 10 sea trout and 2 grilse during the period. Regular UK visitor Andrew Beattie caught 20 sea trout and 5 grilse to 7.75lbs, including 8 sea trout on one day from the Tawnyard Potholes.
The following week Gerard Garnier landed 23 sea trout and 3 grilse to 5.5lbs. Chris Dennison, UK, released 6 sea trout and a grilse caught on a Silver Stoat in the Colonel's Pool on Beat 6. Lady angler Aoife Keogh, Dublin caught a sparkling fresh grilse of 5.5lbs in the Falls Pool.

The hot summer weather continued throughout the last week of July. Neil Spellacy, Moycullen had a good night sea trout fishing in the Quarry Pool on Beat 2 – releasing a salmon estimated at 8lbs taken just below Finnegan's Burn. Neil then went on to catch and release another 2 sea trout of 1.5lbs and a few small brown trout - all were caught on a Teal Blue and Silver. Tawnyard Lough produced 15 sea trout (best 2.5lbs) and 25 brown trout for Paul Caslin and Peter Gray – most successful flies were an Extractor, McCormack Peter and a Gorgeous George.

Alexander Mills (NI) releasing a nice grilse

August

The first half of the month was very dry, with almost no rainfall. Gernot Lipp, Austria had a brilliant week catching 3 grilse - best 6lbs which was taken in the Bridge Pool on his own dressing of a Silver Sheep Fly. Fellow Austrian Martin Weinzerl caught 2 – best 6.25lbs in the Middle Garden Pool and Bridge Pool. Bernd Schubel, also from Austria, caught his first ever salmon, weighing 6.25lbs in the Falls Pool on an Ally's Shrimp fly – Bernd was unlucky to part company with a few more fish.

Margie Crawford took a grilse on an Orange Shrimp pattern that weighed 5lbs. Kevin Glynn, Dalkey, Co. Dublin landed 2 weighing 9lbs. Brian, Holloway, UK,

Margie Crawford and son Robbie with a nice summer fish.

The weather was rather mixed during the 3rd week with bright sunshine, light winds and about 0.75in of rain. Brian Bell, Liverpool, landed a grilse in the Garden Pool on a Sunray Shadow. Anthony Holden, Dublin released a fish of 6.5lbs taken on a Yellow Cascade in the Falls Pool. King's Pool on Beat 4 produced a grilse and a sea trout for Martin Davison, Northern Ireland.

Nick Fenton, also from Northern Ireland, caught 2 grilse with one from King's Pool and the second from Doyle's Pool. Tobias Stern, Austria landed a grilse in the School House Pool on a Bann Special and unfortunately had a few more takes which didn't hold. Paul Sheehan, Dublin caught one in Shratloe Pool at the bottom of Beat 5.

A heavy spate on the 28/29th August was a welcome relief

There was a massive spate of 3m on the 28th/29th. First angler off the mark was Roger Thompson, NI with a grilse from the Wall Pool on Beat 1. Stuart Topp, Orkney and Mike Sutherland, Edinburgh had a brilliant week catching 14 salmon and 24 sea trout (best sea trout 3lbs) between them including fish from Black Banks, Colonel's, School House and the Bridge Pool at the top of Beat 3 - most successful flies were Silver Stoat and Cascades.

The Garden Pool produced a grilse for Ian Ferris, Dublin – the fish was taken on a Waddington in high water. David Burke caught one in the Yellow Banks on Beat 5 and Philip Harte released a sea trout estimated at 3 lbs in the Quarry Pool on Beat 2. Tawnyard Lough produced 6 sea trout and several brown trout.

Andrew Kyd's (UK) party with a good catch.

September

September was the driest month on record for many years and conditions were far from ideal for angling, however the river did produce for those anglers who braved the inhospitable angling conditions which prevailed for most of the month. Stuart Topp, Orkney Isles and Mike Sutherland, Banchory, Scotland completed their fishing holiday on the 5th with an additional 3 grilse - best 6lbs, with 2 from the School House Pool and another from the Coronation Pool – all fish were released.

David Forde, Cork released four fish, best estimated at 6lbs – all fish were caught on a Cascade in the Bridge Pool and Falls Pool on Beat 9. Inigo Tellaeche, Spain released 3 and retained 1 – all were taken on a beaded nymph on Beat 9. Bart & Liam Maloney, Loughrea released one each which were caught on a Stoats Tail and Willie Gunn in the Falls & Garden Pool on Beat 9. Liam Gilsenan, Mullingar released 8 sea trout on the last day of the season on Beat 6. Tawnyard Lough produced 12 sea trout and 25 brown trout during the month.

Monthly Catches 2014

Month	Salmon 2013	Salmon 2014	Sea Trout 2013	Sea Trout 2014
April	4	0	1	0
May	20	6	0	1
June	27	10	72	98
July	54	53	46	138
August	77	64	27	80
September	88	24	52	31
Total	**270**	**156**	**198**	**348**

Top 10 Heaviest Salmon 2014

Name	Date	Pool	Fly	Wt.
R. Robinson	24 May	Coronation	Shrimp Fly	15.75lbs
S. Knox	10 June	Broken Bridge	Red Shrimp	11lbs
H. Maguire	25 May	Poleen	Shrimp Fly	10.25lbs
N. Wickham	11 May	Broken Bridge	Copper Tube	8.25lbs
T. Harrington	25 May	Colonel's	Tosh	8lbs
P. Donegan	15 Sep	Garden Pool	Purple Shrimp	8lbs
M. Davison	23 July	Colonel's	Shrimp Fly	8lbs (R)
A.Beattie	11 July	Upper Garden	Cascade	7.75lbs
G. Garnier	29 July	Falls	Allys Shrimp	7.75lbs
I. Kyd	14 Aug	Upper Garden	Cascade	7.5lbs
(R) = Released				

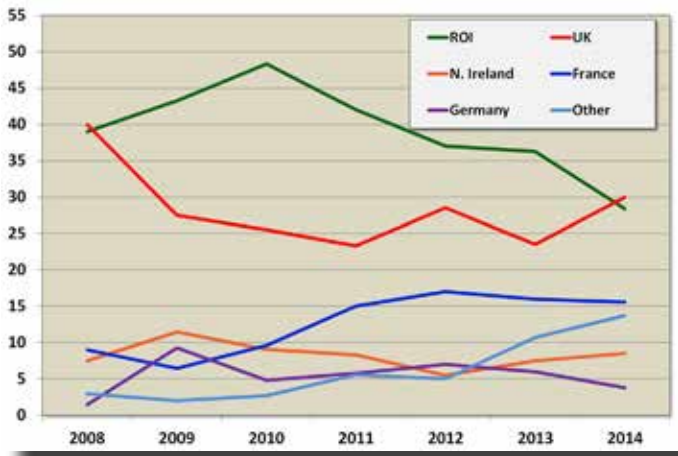
Salmon Taken on Each Beat 2014

Beat	No. Salmon	% of Catch
Tawnyard L.	1	0.6%
Abve Beat 1	2	1.3%
Beat 1	1	0.6%
Beat 2	2	1.3%
Beat 3	17	10.9%
Beat 4	6	3.8%
Beat 5	10	6.4%
Beat 6	11	7.1%
Beat 7	1	0.6%
Beat 8	5	3.2%
Beat 9*	98	62.8%
Unknown	2	1.3%
Total	**156**	**100%**

*** Very high catch on Beat 9 due to exceptional low water**

Nationality of Anglers

The chart below illustrates the percentage of guests from the 5 principal countries who have fished the Erriff River over the past 7 years.



Gernot Lipp from Austria with a nice low water grilse

Fish Counter Returns 2014

The counter was operated from the 1st January through to the end of the year. The following table shows the verified recordings for the year with comparative figures for the previous year.

Month	Salmon 2013	Salmon 2014	Sea Trout 2013	Sea Trout 2014
January	0	0	0	0
February	0	0	1	0
March	5	4	7	8
April	33	10	12	2
May	110	62	14	38
June	96	123	161	904
July	1349	535	116	3868
August	834	650	41	138
September	169	39	106	22
October	152	317	118	321
November	69	4	26	1
December	31	12	9	2
Total	**2848**	**1756**	**611**	**5304**

Erriff National Sea trout Index Catchment

In September 2014, the Erriff catchment was launched as the National Sea Trout Index Catchment, and new fishery laboratory facilities were officially opened at the trap at Aasleagh Falls. While sea trout research has been ongoing on the Erriff at the Tawnyard trap facilities since 1984, this new research facility will allow monitoring of sea trout stocks in the upstream trap at Aasleagh. Data on length, weight, age, marine growth, sea lice levels, etc. were collected from almost 5,000 sea trout during 2014. Monitoring of sea trout with acoustic tags returning to the Erriff was also undertaken. This new research facility will be important in monitoring the Erriff sea trout population in the future, and will allow assessment of the impact of environmental factors, including sea lice levels, on the sea trout stock. The Erriff catchment will also act as an index for other west of Ireland sea trout populations and be a valuable research facility in the long term.

The new research laboratory at Aasleagh Falls.

	Sea Trout		Salmon	
Month	Kelts	Smolts	Kelts	Smolts
February	2	3	6	0
March	24	33	4	3
April	107	895	2	582
May	74	1372	0	105
Total	**207**	**2303**	**12**	**690**

Tawnyard Trap Downstream Counts 2014

Position Regarding Interim Bookings for 2015

Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI) is currently reviewing the management and operation of Aasleagh Lodge and Cottages with a view to ensuring the long term survival of this business into the future. This comes against a backdrop whereby running a guesthouse is not seen as core to the business of wild fishery management which is the remit of IFI.

At present the board is seeking expert assistance to identify the best options for the running of the lodge in the future with the intention that, from 2015, a new management arrangement will be in place.

Whilst this change has been on the cards for some 4 years – it is now more opportune with the pending retirement of the long term manager James Stafford in January 2015.

For the existing repeat customers at Aasleagh this should not mean any radical change in the availability of their normal periods of holidaying – however it is only reasonable to advise anyone intending coming to fish and stay in 2015 that this process has commenced and that over the coming months the board of IFI will be looking at the options and discussing proposals with all interested parties.

As a consequence I am sure you will understand that any bookings sought for 2015 are taken on a provisional booking basis as we cannot guarantee the precise arrangements that will exist in 2015 – however – It is only reasonable to assume that whatever arrangement is put in place that the management operating Aasleagh in 2015 will be only too pleased to have continuing clientele. – it should operate as close to 'business as usual – but under new management'!

As soon as this restructuring is complete anyone with provisional bookings will be contacted to finalise their arrangements. In the interim I would like to thanks you for your patience in this important matter.

Greg Forde, Head of Operations, Inland Fisheries Ireland.

Acknowledgements

It is not possible for Aasleagh Lodge to function without the dedication and commitment of all staff. In that regard a very special word of thanks goes to Mary, Martin Joe, Donavin and John Luke Flannagan.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who have assisted with the smooth running of the lodge and the protection of the fishery during the year. We wish to extend a special word of thanks to Inspector Walter Butler and his staff for all the protection work carried out on the fishery and at sea during the year. We also thank the staff engaged in the Rural Social Employment and Community Employment Schemes for general maintenance and improvement works to the lodge and grounds, and maintaining angling access to the pools on the river.

Philip Harte (Co. Galway) with one of the many fine sea trout caught this year, this one taken on Beat 8.

Obituaries

Our sympathies go to the relatives and friends of Edward and Patricia Murphy, Dublin; Bernard Lemetayer, Jacques Misseague, and François Boutonnet – all from France; Henri Hosinger, Luxembourg; Ronnie Tallon, Dublin, and Mary Henry from Nunnington, UK.

Ar dheis Dé go raibh a n-anam dílis.

Retirement Dinner

I wish to thank the group of anglers who organised the 'Retirement Dinner' on the last day of the season. Many of the anglers have been coming to Aasleagh Lodge and the Erriff River since I was appointed Manager on 20th May 1985 – almost 30 years ago. It was an occasion to celebrate 30 years of both working in one of the most beautiful parts of Ireland and to personally thank all those who have patronized the Erriff for many many years. During that time I have seen many changes in both the Lodge and Fishery. It has not always been an easy time with unsocial hours and staff shortages in the latter years, but the happy times and job satisfaction were of paramount importance and have been much appreciated. On behalf of my wife Mary and myself I wish to take this opportunity to thank all my work colleagues who assisted with the smooth operation of the Fishery during the last 30 years. I would also like to express my appreciation for the co-operation of local landowners and neighbours during those happy times.

James Stafford

Denis Daly presenting Jim with a "flattering" portrait commissioned by some of the long-time Erriff regular visitors. Jim will be sorely missed by his friends, colleagues and many anglers who have benefited from his dedication, expertise and friendship. We look forward to seeing him on his beloved Lough Carra and indeed, back on the Erriff on his own time.