

Erriff Fishery Newsletter 2018



Tough season with record low water levels

Catch-Photo-Release #CPRsavesfish

The 2018 season was a memorable one with extremely low water levels during July causing the fishery to close for a little over 3 weeks for fish welfare reasons. After this some great fishing was had once the water levels returned to normal and the fishing recommenced.

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. 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.

April was a relatively quiet month at the fishery with just a few anglers out fishing. The cold weather didn't help fishing conditions and there were no salmon landed during this time.



May

Our 1st salmon of the season was landed by Alan Coles on the 10th of May. Alan's 9.5lbs wild salmon was caught on a small Cascade in the Middle Garden Pool.

A very successful Salmon angling course run by Ken Whelan and Jason O'Riordain was held on the Erriff during the weekend of the 19th and 20th. During the weekend the 10 participants learned all aspects of salmon fishing from salmon behaviour to fly selection to casting techniques. Course participant Tomas Messner put into practice what he had learned on Monday 21st and landed our first ranched salmon of the season which weighed 8lbs. Tomas's fish took a Red Ally's Shrimp in the Falls Pool. Later that day regular angler Peter Hunt landed a 9.4lbs ranched salmon from the Middle Garden Pool using a Green Butt Cascade - this was the last fish to be landed during the month with dry weather hampering the fishing after that.

There were 3 salmon recorded for the month consisting of 1 wild and 2 ranched salmon. Unfortunately the wild salmon could not be revived resulting in 0% C&R for the wild fish.



Iascach Intire Éireann
Inland Fisheries Ireland



Tomas Messner with his 8lbs fish from the Falls.

Monthly Catches 2018

Month	Salmon	Sea Trout
April	0	0
May	3	0
June	40	3
July	22	7
August	74	135
September	43	64
Total	182	209

June

The water level was low during the first 2 weeks of the month dropping from 0.6m – 0.52m on the gauge. Despite this there were some good spring salmon caught on Beat 9 such as Peter Murphy's 8.7lbs wild salmon from the Falls Pool using a Cascade, and Tim Brown's 7.5lbs wild salmon from the Falls Pool on a Posh Tosh. The grilse arrived in early June and Jeff Hellerbach had 2 ranched grilse on the 9th weighing 3.7lbs and 4.1lbs from the Middle Garden Pool on a Cascade. 3 floods during the 3rd week of June helped to entice the growing number of fish in the Killary into the system and fishing improved. The heaviest wild fish for the month was estimated at 14lbs and was released by John Ryan on the evening of the 18th; John had been using a Cascade in the Lower Garden Pool.

There were 40 salmon recorded for the month, consisting of 17 wild and 23 ranched fish. Of the 17 wild salmon caught 15 were released, 2 salmon could not be revived, resulting in 88.2% C&R for the wild fish.

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Mark Regan before releasing his 7lbs wild salmon from Tawnyard Potholes on Beat 3.



Tim Brown with his 7.5lbs wild salmon from the Falls.

July

July is usually our busiest month on the Erriff coinciding with the peak of our grilse run. However, the summer heatwave was in full swing by this stage, resulting in very low water levels - 0.42m on the gauge at one point, and high water temperatures of up to 25°C meant the added stress of angling on the fish was unacceptable, so the decision was made to close the fishery on the 3rd of July.

The fishery re-opened on the 28th July after some much needed rain and a drop in water temperatures. Ian Ferris had fantastic sport on the morning of the 28th releasing 6 wild salmon ranging in weight from 1.5 - 9lbs on a Collie Dog tube on Beat 9.

The fish that had been held up below the Falls and in the Killary spread quickly throughout the entire river following the break in the weather. On the 31st Mark Regan released a nice 7lbs salmon from the Tawnyard potholes on Beat 3 using a Cascade.

There were 22 salmon recorded for the month consisting of 20 wild and 2 ranched salmon and 7 sea trout. All of the 20 wild salmon caught were released resulting in 100% wild C&R.

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Andrew Beattie releasing a 6lbs wild grilse
#CPRsavesfish

Top 5 Fly Patterns 2018

Rank	Fly
1	Cascade
2	Collie Dog
3	Willie Gunn
4	Posh Tosh
5	Stoats Tail

August

Regular rainfall throughout August spread the fresh fish coming in off the tides well throughout the system; fish were caught from Beats 2 down through 9. The big news of the month was a 20lbs wild salmon released by Joe Pilkington on the 16th. Joe was using an Orange and Gold shrimp fly in the Boat Pool on Beat 5. This was the largest salmon from the Erriff in a good number of years.

The Sea-trout fishing really picked up during August. Seamus O'Neill had great sport on the morning of the 1st releasing 37 from Beat 5 ranging in weight from 0.75lbs – 11lbs, all on silver flies. Neil Spellacy had 3 grilse on the 2nd from Broken Bridge on Beat 5 and Humps and Hollows on Beat 6. He had 3 more grilse from 2.5lbs to 5.5lbs on the morning of the 16th from the School House and Mike's Pools on Beat 3, all on a Collie Dog tube and Black Shrimp.

Another good angler Seamus O'Neill had 3 grilse on the morning of the 18th from Altamont's Dam on Beat 6 using a Collie Dog tube ranging from 4lbs to 4.4lbs.

There were 74 salmon recorded during the month consisting of 53 wild and 21 ranched salmon and 135 sea trout. Of the 53 wild salmon caught, 52 were released, 1 could not be revived, resulting in 98% C&R for the wild fish.

#CPRsavesfish

September

The water level remained at a good height for angling for most of the month with a big spate of 2.35m on the 19th. Regular anglers Albert Caffrey, Paddy Donegan, Donal Chambers and Mick Vincent returned for their annual week's fishing and managed 7 salmon between them. Their fish ranged from 2.7lbs – 7lbs and came from beats 3, 6 and 7 using a variety of flies including Willie Gunn, Posh Tosh and Collie Dog tube.

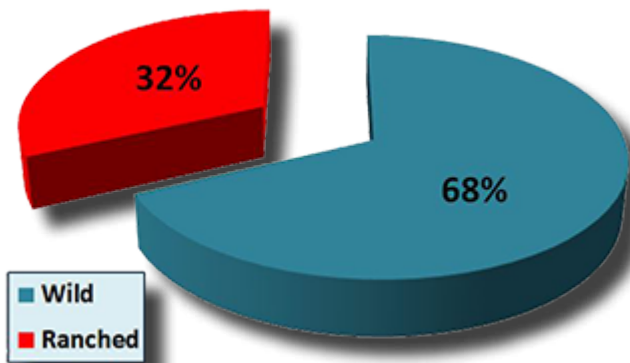
Another regular visitor Archie McCauley fished on the 20th and released a 9lbs salmon from Poleen on Beat 4 using a Collie Dog tube. Michael Parry and Selby Knox returned to the Erriff a bit later in the season than usual due to the earlier drought and Michael was rewarded with an 11.5lbs salmon from the Colonel's Pool on Beat 6 which he released, and Selby also had some nice sea trout.

There were 43 salmon recorded during the month consisting of 32 wild and 11 ranched salmon, along with 64 sea trout. All of the 32 wild salmon caught were released resulting in 100% C&R for the wild fish.

Heaviest Salmon 2018

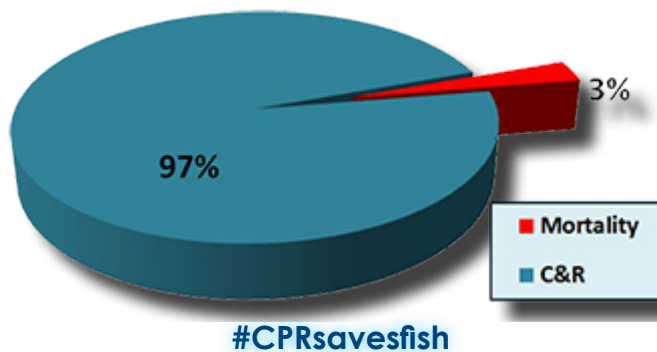
Name	Date	Pool	Fly	Wt.
Joe Pilkington	16 Aug	Boat Pool	Orange & Gold Shrimp	20lbs
John Ryan	18 June	Lower Garden	Cascade	14lbs
Brian Noonan	13 Aug	Falls	Munro Killer	14lbs
Herve Chadenat	1 July	Falls	Blue Tube	13lbs
Tom Harrington	2 Aug	Colonels Run	Red Cascade	12.5lbs
John Closworthy	8 Aug	Falls	Orange Shrimp	12lbs
Michael Parry	26 Sep	Colonels Run	Silver Stoats Tail	11.5lbs
John Ryan	18 June	Falls	Collie Dog	11lbs

Salmon Wild v Ranched %



Ian Ferris with his 10lbs wild fish #cprsavefish

Wild Fish Catch & Release



Research

There were a number of research projects ongoing from previous years 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.

Season Overview

It was an extremely unusual season with the very dry conditions and high temperatures during June and July. There was a better return of multi-sea-winter (MSW) salmon, what anglers would often refer to as 'spring or summer fish' during the year, which was encouraging to see, and we had an average return of grilse to the system. What was noticeable was the good condition both the MSW salmon and grilse were in, along with the sea trout, which could indicate that they had had good feeding while they were at sea. Let's hope this continues for the future.

A fixed PIT (Passive Integrated Transponder) has been in operation at the Aasleagh trap for a number of years to monitor the returning adult salmon and sea trout previously tagged by researchers undertaking biological, migratory and marine survival studies. The PIT Tag antenna is linked directly into the IT infrastructure at the adjacent Research Station enabling the real-time monitoring of tagged fish.



Kieran Clancy with his 4.5lbs wild grilse before release



PIT Tag Reader at Aasleagh Falls Trap

Scientists are hoping this project will help us understand the timing of the downstream migration of 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 started in Killary in 2017. 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.

Development

The continued upgrade of our Stiles and footbridges from old wooden structures to new aluminium and recycled plastic ones was on going throughout the year along with bank restoration and general maintenance of the fishery. New signage was also put in place along the fishery drawing attention to the possible hazards to anglers and the general public.



New stiles made from aluminium (top) and recycled plastic (bottom).



Participants on the Salmon Fishing course run by Ken Whelan and Jason O'Riordan. The course will run again in May 2019.

Acknowledgements

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

A special word of thanks is extended to Martin Joe Wallace for his 25 years hard work put in as a Fishery Officer and in Development in the Ballinakill District.

Thanks are also extended to the Community Employment Scheme staff for all their hard work maintaining the banks and angling access to the fishery during the year. Thanks also to the local landowners along the river for their continued support.

Finally the anglers who visited the fishery - thank you for coming and we look forward to seeing you all again in 2019!



Pictured (back row, L-R): Donavin Brinklow, Martin Joe Wallace, Walter Butler, Laura Walsh, Padraic O'Malley. (Front row, L-R): Osgur Grieve, Liam Gavin