



Alert heightened around non-native fish species in Welsh river systems

July 2019

Natural Resources Wales appeals to anglers and the public for continued help in identifying and reporting pink salmon catches.

Natural Resources Wales is urging netsmen and anglers to report unusual catches after the first capture of a pink salmon in the river Dee at the Chester fish trap monitoring station.

Numerous capture reports were made around the UK in 2017 especially in Scotland and off England's north east coast. Pink salmon were also recorded spawning in Scotland, however there were few reports from the UK western coast and none in Wales.

NRW is collecting vital data about sightings so officers can monitor the situation to determine any potential impact on the local environment and species. Data collected will help the NRW, fisheries researchers and other organisations with an interest in fisheries management in the United Kingdom, Ireland and Scandinavia, better understand how to manage the arrival of pink salmon in the UK.



Non-native pink salmon caught on the River Dee July 2019

Unusual find

Dave Mee Lead Specialist Advisor said:

It is quite unusual to find pink salmon in our waters, this may be the first in some 30 years, though there were numerous reports around the UK and Ireland in 2017

I'd urge netsmen and anglers to contact us if they see any non-native salmon in the waters, with a date, location and if possible a photograph, which would really help us identify them and build up a picture of where they may be.

Advice for anglers and netsmen

We are concerned about the state of our native Atlantic salmon stocks and urge all netsmen and anglers to return all native salmon. However, those who catch a non-native pink salmon are asked not to return the fish to the water. Instead they are asked to dispatch of them humanely and, if possible, make the fish available to the NRW for inspection and further analysis.

- Keep the fish and do not release it back into the water (even in rivers only open for catch and release angling)
- Record the date & location of capture, length and weight of fish
- Take a photograph of the fish
- Report it to NRWs 24-hour confidential hotline number 03000653000 without delay.

NRW will then arrange collection of the fish for further examination. This will help establish the abundance and extent of distribution of the species in Welsh waters.

Pink salmon (*Oncorhynchus gorbuscha*), also known as humpback salmon, originate from the northern Pacific Ocean.

The appearance of the species is of concern as it may impact on Wales' indigenous salmon and sea trout populations in the future. The potential impact of pink salmon is unclear at present; however, these fish may introduce parasites and pathogens not present in native salmonid fish. Interbreeding with Atlantic salmon is unlikely as pink salmon spawn in late summer whereas Atlantic salmon spawn in winter. However, competition for food and space in nursery areas between juvenile pink and Atlantic salmon is possible.

Anyone with information is asked to contact Natural Resources Wales Customer Care Centre 03000653000 or email fisheries@cyfoethnaturiolcymru.gov.uk

How to identify a pink salmon:

- Large black oval spots on the tail
- Bluish back, silver flanks and white belly
- Much smaller scales than an Atlantic salmon of the same size
- Very dark mouth and tongue
- 40-60cm in length
- Breeding males develop a distinctive hump

In contrast, the native Atlantic salmon typically:

- Have no spots on the tail
- Usually larger (up 100cm in length)
- Pale mouth and tongue
- Larger scales
- One or two black spots on the gill cover
- Spots on the back above the lateral line
- Thicker base of tail than a pink salmon

Photographs helping identify pink salmon



Distinctive spotting pattern on tail



Ocean phase