

# put them back



## Catch and release guidelines

How anglers can help to conserve the salmon stocks of England and Wales

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Published by:

Environment Agency  
Rio House  
Waterside Drive, Aztec West  
Almondsbury, Bristol BS32 4UD  
Tel: 0870 8506506  
Email: [enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk)  
[www.environment-agency.gov.uk](http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk)

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**“One way we, as anglers, can help restore depleted salmon stocks is to practice voluntary catch and release, particularly where local stocks are threatened, and learn to do it properly”**

*(Paul Knight, Director of the Salmon & Trout Association).*

## Conservation status of salmon stocks in England and Wales

According to the latest scientific assessments, most salmon stocks in England and Wales are under threat. Further actions aimed at conserving and rebuilding stocks are urgently required if we are to ensure that future generations can enjoy the social and economic benefits associated with thriving salmon stocks.

Advice from the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organisation (NASCO) is that grilse as well as stocks of mutli-sea-winter salmon are now under threat and should also be afforded greater protection.

**No distinction should be made between male or female, large or small salmon, all now require further protection.**



Barbless hooks should be used at all times – see pages 6 and 7 for further guidance on successful Catch and Release.

## The role of the Agency

The Agency, along with the national game angler representative bodies in England and Wales, has long been an advocate of Catch and Release for salmon fisheries. We believe that Catch and Release is a highly effective conservation tool that, although now widely practised by anglers, should be further encouraged, particularly on

those rivers where salmon stocks have been identified as being at greatest risk.

“In many of our rivers at present there just aren’t enough eggs being laid. With Catch and Release we can continue the benefits of fishing and still get the eggs because survival rates of released salmon are high”

*(Dr Dafydd Evans, Environment Agency Head of Fisheries).*

Rivers in England and Wales where salmon stocks are judged unlikely to reach satisfactory levels before at least 2008. Current percentage release rates (2004) are shown in brackets after the river name.

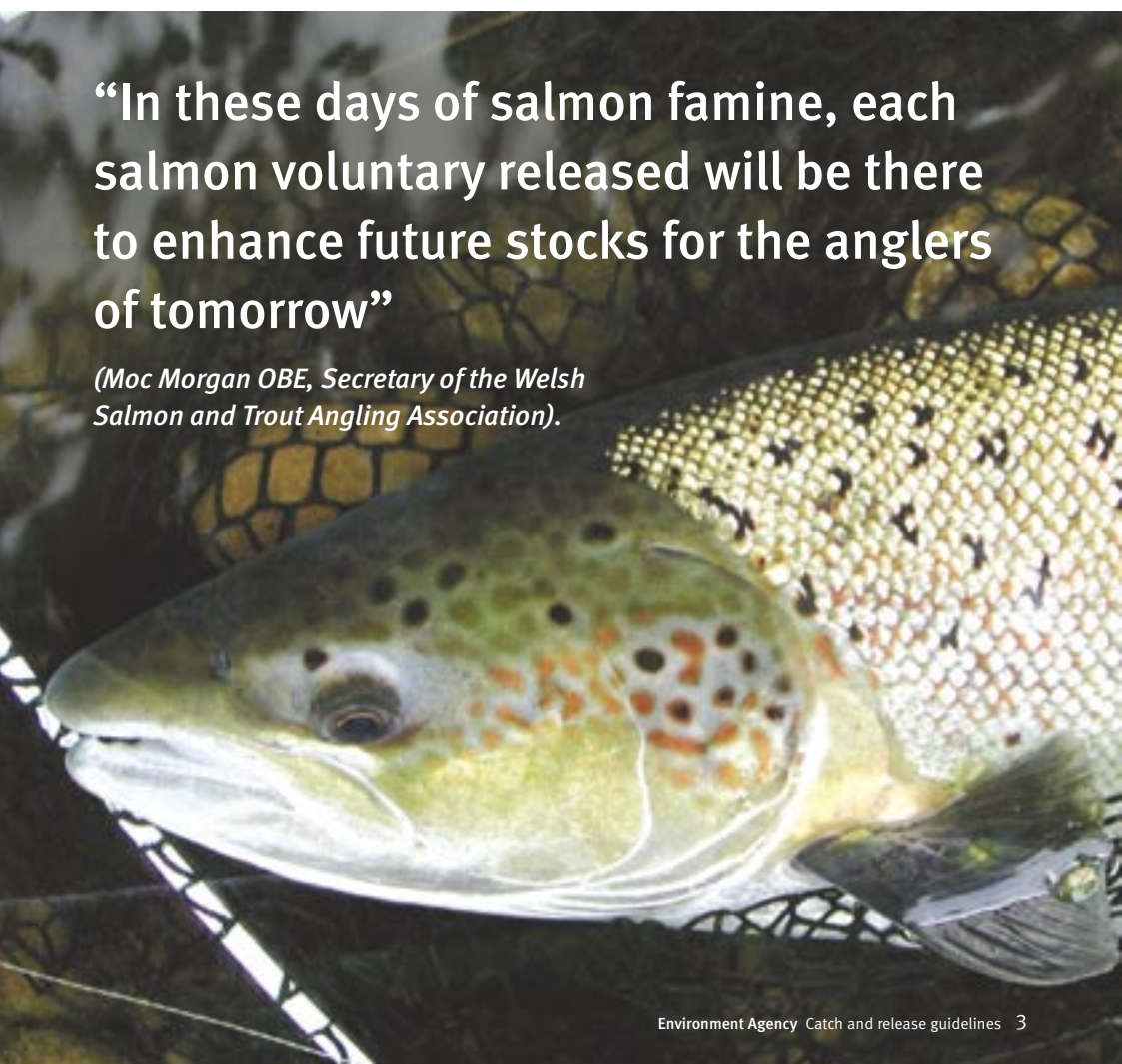
North East	South West	Midlands	Wales	North West
Esk (47)	Dart (61)	Severn (55)	Cleddau (31)	Border Esk (38)
Tees (52)	Devon Avon (75)		Clwyd (31)	Calder (43)
	Erme (40)		Dee (37)	Cumb. Esk (27)
	Exe (54)		Dwyfawr (38)	Duddon (49)
	Frome (62)		Dwryrd (19)	Eden (37)
	Lynher (52)		Dyfi (14)	Ehen (19)
	Plym (67)		Dysynni (0)	Irt (37)
	Tamar (59)		Glaslyn (30)	Ribble (65)
	Tavy (54)		Mawddach (31)	Wyre (58)
	Taw (60)		Nevern (7)	
	Teign (38)		Ogmore (27)	
	Torridge (64)		Ogwen (21)	
	Yealm (67)		Rheidol (22)	
			Seiont (14)	
			Taf (24)	
			Taff (45)	
			Tawe (32)	
			Teifi (25)	
			Tywi (29)	
			Usk (49)	
			Wye (73)	


## Catch and Release – it works

Numerous angling and radio-tracking studies undertaken in recent years have demonstrated high survival rates to spawning for salmon released following capture – up to 100% under certain conditions. Studies have also shown that recapture rates for released salmon are generally very low.

**“In these days of salmon famine, each salmon voluntarily released will be there to enhance future stocks for the anglers of tomorrow”**

*(Moc Morgan OBE, Secretary of the Welsh Salmon and Trout Angling Association).*





**By releasing 13,000 salmon in 2004 anglers contributed around 40 million eggs to the breeding population.**

## **Catch and Release and the angler**

A combination of greater angler awareness, local voluntary agreements and legislative changes has led to a big increase in recent years in the proportion of salmon released following capture. In 1994 just 12% of the salmon rod catch was released by anglers in England and Wales compared with just under 50% in 2004.

A national byelaw introduced by the Agency in 1999 to protect spring salmon now ensures that anglers must return all salmon caught in England and Wales before 16 June each year.

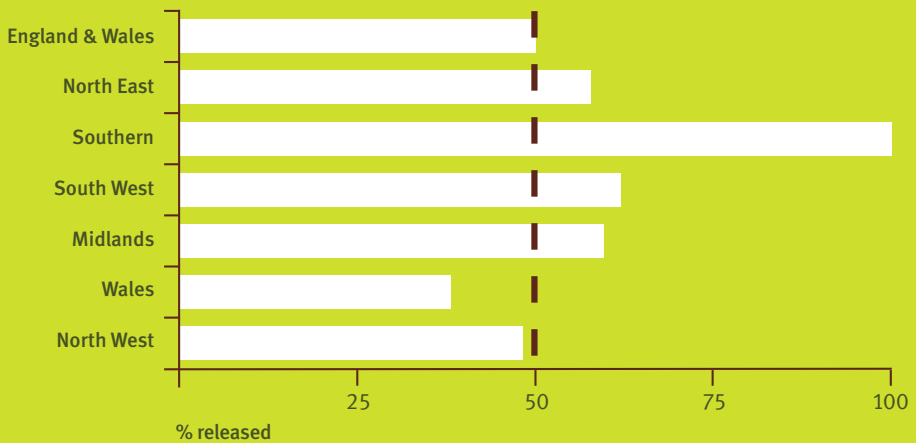
On a number of rivers, however, catch and release rates remain low. We believe that increasing release rates on these rivers, together with other measures such as building fish passes and restoring degraded habitat, will help with the recovery of stocks. All anglers can play their part in helping to conserve and restore our precious salmon stocks.

By following the guidelines set out below and by applying the Golden Rules at all times you can be confident that any fish you release will have a very high chance of going on to spawn successfully.





### Catch and Release rates by Agency region (2004)



As a result of local agreements between anglers, owners and the Agency all salmon caught on the rivers Test and Itchen in Southern region are now released following capture.



# Guidelines for successful Catch and Release angling

## Fishing tackle and equipment

Small single or double hooks should be used at all times. Trebles should be avoided. Hooks should be barbless. Barbed hooks can easily be converted to barbless by pinching the barb with pliers.

Rod and line should be strong enough to subdue a fish with the minimum delay. Strength of flows and potential size of fish likely to be encountered are considerations when selecting the appropriate tackle to use.

Additional useful items to keep close to hand when fishing are pliers or a similar tool for removing hooks quickly, scissors for cutting line, a landing net with knotless mesh and a plastic tape measure.

## Golden Rule 1

**Use barbless hooks at all times and avoid trebles.**

## Playing the fish

A fish once hooked should be brought to hand or net as quickly as possible. This will help keep stress and fatigue levels to a minimum and will ensure the fish is able to recover quickly.

Before commencing fishing it is worth thinking about where a fish might be landed. The aim is to keep the fish in the water and avoid beaching or dragging it up a steep bank before release.

## Golden Rule 2

**Minimise the time spent playing a hooked fish.**





## Handling the fish

Aim to keep handling time to a minimum. Make every effort to keep the fish in the water at all times as prolonged exposure to air will reduce survival rates. Before handling a fish make sure that hands are wet. Avoid squeezing the fish.

**CAUTION:** High water temperatures (>21°C) can significantly reduce survival rates. Anglers should, therefore, take extra care when practising Catch and Release when flows are low and water temperatures are high (typical high summer conditions)

## Golden Rule 3

**Release the fish as quickly as possible and do not remove it from the water.**

## Releasing the fish

Use pliers to remove hooks but if hooks are too deep and removal will lead to damage or delayed release then cut the line as near to the hook as possible.

Support the fish in the water preferably in a gentle current and with the fish facing upstream. Recovery can take several minutes so be patient. Wait until the fish recovers sufficiently to swim away from you.

Quickly estimate the weight of the fish for reporting purposes. This can be done by measuring the length of the fish and using the chart below to convert length to weight. If measuring the length of the fish is not possible an estimate of the weight should be made.

## Golden Rule 4

**Support the fish in the water until it is sufficiently recovered.**

# Table for converting salmon length (inches and cms.) to weight (lb and kg)

inches	lb.	cms.	kg.
20	3.1	50	1.4
22	4.2	55	1.9
24	5.8	60	2.6
26	7.4	65	3.4
28	9.0	70	4.1
30	10.7	75	4.9
32	12.4	80	5.6
34	15.2	85	6.9
36	18.2	90	8.3
38	21.2	95	9.6
40	24.2	100	11.0
42	27.2	105	12.4
44	30.3	110	13.8
46	33.3	115	15.1
48	36.3	120	16.5
50	39.3	125	17.9
52	42.3	130	19.2

**Photographs should be avoided unless they can be taken quickly and without removing the fish from the water. Under no circumstances should fish be lifted out of the water by the tail.**

# Further information

Information on the status of salmon stocks and fisheries can be found on the Environment Agency's web site,

[www.environment-agency.gov.uk](http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk)

## **North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organisation (NASCO)**

NASCO, 11 Rutland Square, Edinburgh EH1 2AS  
United Kingdom

[www.nasco.int](http://www.nasco.int)

## **Salmon & Trout Association (S&TA)**

Salmon & Trout Association, Fishmongers' Hall,  
London Bridge, London EC4R 9EL

[www.salmon-trout.org](http://www.salmon-trout.org)



## **Atlantic Salmon Trust**

Atlantic Salmon Trust, Moulin, Pitlochry,  
Perthshire PH16 5JQ

[www.atlanticsalmontrust.org](http://www.atlanticsalmontrust.org)

## **Welsh Salmon & Trout Angling Association (WSTAA)**

*WSTAA.ORG*

Contact email: [info@wstaa.org](mailto:info@wstaa.org)

[www.wstaa.org](http://www.wstaa.org)

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