

## Protecting wild salmon

### Progress of the Wild Salmon Strategy and Implementation Plan



Leaping salmon



Barrier removal (before and after) - Forth Rivers Trust



## Introduction

Atlantic salmon is often referred to as King of Fish, reflecting its important role in Scotland both culturally and economically with angling making a key contribution to many rural areas. [Catches of salmon](#) in Scotland have been recorded since 1952. There is strong evidence that numbers of wild Atlantic salmon returning to Scotland's coasts continue to decline, a pattern repeated across the salmon's North Atlantic range. Wild salmon encounter a range of pressures which impact their survival including the effects of climate change.

## Strategy and Implementation Plan

Against this backdrop, the [Wild Salmon Strategy](#) sets out how to tackle the wide range of pressures on wild salmon in river, on the coast and at sea. The [Strategy Implementation Plan 2023-28](#) identifies collective action for wild salmon to be taken by government, businesses and charitable sectors. Work to protect the

species is an example of our commitment to tackle the twin crises of biodiversity loss and climate change.

## Local delivery

District Salmon Fishery Boards (DSFBs) are statutory bodies responsible for the protection and development of salmon fisheries. Across Scotland DSFBs and associated charitable Trusts undertake a programme of measures in support of salmon conservation. Important ongoing investment made by fishery owners and anglers makes a significant contribution to delivering the outcomes of the Wild Salmon Strategy.

## Science and research

A new [science board](#) brings together experts that advise on monitoring, integrated data gathering and provides evidence for policy development at national scale and for management at local level.



Peatland restoration, Galloway Fisheries Trust



Crawick water riparian tree planting



Electrofishing - River Tyne

## Annual Progress Report

A [progress report](#) summarises the progress made towards delivery of over fifty actions in 2023/24, the first year since publication of the Implementation Plan. Some examples of progress made include:

### Water quality

- reducing diffuse pollution and improving water quality through SEPA working with farmers to implement good land management practices

### In-river habitat improvement

- restoration of 7500 hectares of peatland across Scotland by damming drains and revegetating eroded areas through Peatland ACTION
- removal or easement of barriers by SEPA through river basin management planning. Work to ease fish passage on eight barriers was completed, with over 100 barriers being assessed and 69 progressing to the next stage

### Climate change

- providing shade to keep water cool, enhanced grants are now available from Scottish Forestry to plant trees along rivers

### Invasive Non-Native Species

- detecting pink salmon in 10 rivers through Scotland wide eDNA monitoring across 30 rivers, funded by Marine

Fund Scotland and led by Pink Salmon Task Group. This will inform targeted management action

### Angling

- refreshing Conservation of Salmon Regulations outlining where mandatory catch and release must be practised during the [2024 fishing season](#)

### Coastal environment

- managing the risk to wild salmon from sea lice, SEPA have developed and begun implementing a sea lice risk assessment framework to support the sustainable development of fish farming

### Marine migration

- understanding the marine migration patterns of wild salmon by a third year of data collection through of the [West Coast Tracking Project](#) (a partnership between Atlantic Salmon Trust, Fisheries Management Scotland and Marine Directorate). Additional support and equipment provided by the [ScotMER](#) programme

### Investment

In addition to local investment Scottish Government:

- provided an additional £500,000 for the monitoring of wild salmon populations
- supported the fisheries management sector with over £700,000 investment from Marine Fund Scotland