

Findhorn District Salmon Fishery Board

Conservation Code 2026

In view of the current scarcity of Atlantic Salmon in our Scottish rivers, the Board would encourage anglers to release as many fish as possible. The conservation code below is an absolute minimum that should be achieved. In addition to the catch and release policy, this code contains guidance on how to maintain biosecurity measures, best practice to increase the success of catch and release and advice on angling in high temperatures. We encourage adoption of this guidance.

BIOSECURITY

1. Anyone who goes fishing should be aware of the risks of transferring diseases and invasive non-native species (INNS) on clothing and equipment. By practising good biosecurity, you are helping to minimise the spread of non-native species, plant and animal pests, as well as their parasites and diseases.

2. Follow the 'Check, Clean, Dry' principles of biosecurity:

Check - your equipment and clothing for live organisms - particular in areas that are damp or hard to inspect.

Clean - wash all equipment, footwear and clothes thoroughly. Use hot water where possible. If you do come across any organisms, leave them at the water body where you found them.

Dry - all equipment and clothing at 20 degrees centigrade or more for at least 2 days or deep freeze for at least 1 day

3. For example:

Gyrodactylus salaris – a highly infectious parasite which has badly affected Salmon stocks in Norway can live outside of a fish host for up to 7 days in damp conditions (Source: FishPal.com).

Haracleum mantegazzianum – Better known as Giant Hogweed, the seeds of this dangerous invasive plant species have a dormancy of up to 15 years (Source: GB Non-Native Species Secretariat).

CATCH AND RELEASE POLICY

If an angler catches a fish that they feel is likely not to survive, then the angler can retain it, but they must report immediately to the estate, the head bailiff, **Sean McLean 07920 483081**, or the FNLRT, **Ollie Smaje 07887 535986**, who will decide what to do with the fish. This course of action also applies to all fish, which would normally be returned throughout the season under the FDSFB Conservation Code.

RELEASE: **Up to and including the 14th May, anglers must release:**

All Salmon and Grilse

Are encouraged to release all Sea Trout and Finnock

RELEASE: **From 15th May:**

All salmon over 9lbs / 28inches (4kg / 72cm)

All Sea Trout over 4lbs / 21inches (1.8kg / 55cm)

All coloured, stale and gravid salmon/grilse/sea trout

As many female hen salmon/grilse/sea trout as possible

RELEASE RATE: **Anglers are asked to achieve a minimum of:**

75% of all salmon and grilse caught from the 15th May

75% of all sea trout and finnock caught from the 11th February

KEEP RATE **Guidance only as Release Rate above should take priority:**

A maximum of 1 salmon (under 9lbs) or 2 grilse per rod per 6 days

METHOD *Before 1st May fly fishing is encouraged.*

Most beats are fly only all season. From 1st May it is mandatory.

Pinched or barbless hooks are recommended.

Avoid using triple hooks

No bait fishing is allowed within the river, this includes the Findhorn Bay Angling Association waters in Findhorn Bay

CATCH AND RELEASE

6 SIMPLE STEPS

1. Use the strongest practical nylon cast to aid quick landing of fish. Long playing leads to the build-up of harmful metabolites such as lactic acid which kills fish even after they appear to swim away unscathed.
2. Use single or double hooks but avoid using triple hooks. Pinch the barbs by carefully crimping them with slim-jawed pliers. This is better than using barbless hooks.
3. Try and plan your release strategy as you are playing the fish - think where the best area would be to net or beach, unhook & release your fish. Avoid sandy beaches and silty bays, and where there are extensive areas where the water depth is shallower than the depth of the fish.
4. Take great care in handling fish. It helps if there are two of you so try and fish in pairs. Do **not** pick the fish up by the tail and carry it to the bank for unhooking purposes. If possible, use a wide-mouthed small knot-less mesh net to minimise handling and remove the hook and release the fish while still in the water. Wet the hands first or use surgical gloves and wet them as well, avoid the gill area, do not squeeze the stomach and take care not to rub off scales. Turning the fish upside down will often prevent it from struggling. Use your knees or the river bank to keep the frame of the net level and just above the water surface.
5. Use long-nosed artery forceps or slim-jawed pliers for removing hooks.
6. Try to minimise out of water and handling times. Return the fish as quickly as possible. Some photographers keep fish out of the water far too long, considerably reducing their chances of recovery. Support it until it has recovered enough to swim away.

ADVICE ON FISHING DURING PERIODS OF HOT WEATHER AND HIGH WATER TEMPERATURES

1. Salmon start to become uncomfortable at water temperatures of 20°C (68F) or more and there is documented evidence that with a water temperature above 20C salmon may not survive catch & release.
2. Early morning fishing is best from a welfare point of view, as this is when the water temperature will be at its lowest. As the day wears on into the evening on a hot sunny day the fish will be very reluctant to show any interest in taking a fly. A reduced fishing effort at this time decreases the chances of over stressing the fish as there is still an element of stress caused by fishing over them.
3. If a fish is hooked, the playing increases the fish's requirement for oxygen, and as warm water holds less of it, they can struggle to catch their breath when released. Great care must be taken to unhook in the water and not remove it to improve its chances of survival on release. The fish should be gently held upright in the water until it is fully recovered so allow plenty of time before releasing it.

Fish Length and Weight

(Note imperial lengths are rounded to nearest ½ inch)

Length (in)	Length (cm)	Weight (lb.)	Weight (kg)
20	50	3	1.4
21½	55	4	1.8
23	59	5	2.3
25	63	6	2.7
26	66	7	3.2
27	69	8	3.6
28	72	9	4.1
29½	75	10	4.5
30½	77	11	5
31	79	12	5.5
32	81	13	5.9
32½	83	14	6.4
33½	85	15	6.8
34½	87	16	7.3
35	89	17	7.7
36	91	18	8.2
36½	93	19	8.6
37	94	20	9.1
37½	96	21	9.5
38	97	22	10
39	99	23	10.5
39½	100	24	10.9
40	101	25	11.4
40½	103	26	11.8
41	104	27	12.3
41½	105	28	12.7
42	106	29	13.2
42½	108	30	13.6
43	109	31	14.1