



## Why Your Catch Data are Important



### Introduction

The annual collection of salmon and sea trout catch data has been carried out since 1952 to record the progress of fisheries throughout Scotland. The data are collected under the Salmon and Freshwater Fisheries (Protection) (Scotland) Act 1951 (as amended by the 1986 Salmon Act). Almost 2000 requests for information are mailed each year. The returned data are checked, collated and published in summary form in the Statistical Bulletin, Fisheries Series by FRS Freshwater Laboratory on behalf of the Scottish Executive.

We would like to thank you for your support. Without it, the catch records and the insights gained from them would be not as valuable as they are. In order to be able to discharge our responsibilities to best effect, we depend on a continuing supply of high quality information from all the fisheries. In return, FRS Freshwater Laboratory provides assessment advice to Government and to any other party that may require it.

### What use is made of the data collected?

Catch information is used in several ways, and for a variety of purposes. Some examples areas follows:

- On an international scale, the catch information is used in conjunction with comparable data from all other North Atlantic countries, to provide scientific advice for regulating the fisheries at West Greenland and at the Faroe Islands;

- In the Scottish context, the catch data are used to provide an annual assessment of the status of salmon and sea trout; providing scientific information that guides the freshwater fishery policies of the Scottish Executive;
- On a local level, fisheries data are used to provide background information to requests for licences to control salmon predators (birds and seals);
- Fishery data are made available to local District Salmon Fishery Boards at an aggregated level that both respects the commercial in confidence guarantee given to respondents, and supports local management with good information;
- Relating catches of salmon to their abundance is difficult. Recently a useful index of changes in the spring salmon fisheries has been developed using catch data. This will greatly aid efforts to manage the valuable spring resource. Work is underway to extend the process to the salmon and grilse fisheries of summer and autumn.

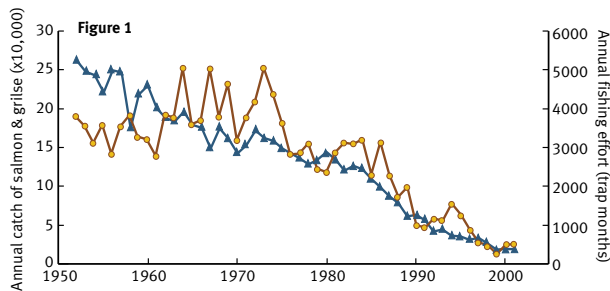
### Improving communications

To ensure that you are kept abreast of developments in Scottish salmon fisheries, FRS plan to publish information leaflets and to distribute them with the catch forms. In this leaflet, we have started the process by focussing on trends in the catches made by each of the three fishing methods that are permitted in Scotland.

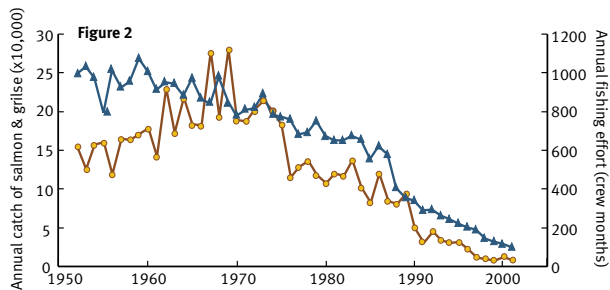


## Trends in Scottish salmon catches

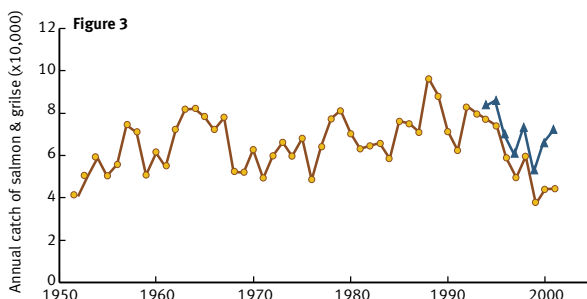
**Figure 1** shows the Scottish fixed engine catch and the fishing effort deployed over the period 1952-2001. Both catch (brown line) and effort (blue line) have decreased markedly over the period of record.



**Figure 2** presents comparable information for the Scottish net and coble fishery. The trends are similar to those observed for the fixed engine fishery.



**Figure 3** shows the Scottish rod catch. The brown line shows the fish caught and retained. Since 1994, data for fish caught and released have also been collected. The blue line shows the combined numbers of retained and released fish. Information on the amount of fishing effort expended by anglers is not available. Rod catches have fluctuated over the years but, on the whole, they have remained stable.



## Summary

The overall picture is one of declining net catches, but stable rod catches. Net catches have declined mainly because of a long-term decrease in the size of the netting industry due to:

- fewer available fish in recent years caused by higher levels of mortality at sea;
- falling prices caused by competition from aquaculture;
- buy-outs of net fisheries by rod-fishing interests.

Reductions in the netting industry have allowed a greater proportion of fish into rivers. Rod catches have not increased as might have been expected but they have been maintained. The main causes of marine mortality are not known but, if high levels of mortality continue, rod catches may well decline in future and ultimately spawning populations may be put at risk.

In view of this uncertainty, we need to be able to monitor the fisheries particularly closely. Accordingly, we acknowledge the valuable contribution that the catch returns have made to this work in the past and we ask for your continued support.

## Thank you for your support

An expanding range of information, including information leaflets, reports and papers, is available from the library at –

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