

VOLUNTARY CATCH AND RELEASE OF SALMON

In the present climate of reduced salmon stocks, the Clwyd and the Elwy Angling clubs strongly support the policy of 'VOLUNTARY CATCH AND RELEASE ' as a method to conserve and improve fisheries.

Unless we undertake a voluntary catch and release policy in the Vale of Clwyd the Environment Agency will introduce mandatory catch and release of salmon from 2010.

We therefore urge anglers fishing club waters to show restraint and to minimise the number of salmon and grilse that are retained.

Scientists using Rod Catch as an estimate of the stock have indicated the rivers Clwyd and Elwy are not meeting the conservation limit.

Remember it's our responsibility to safe guard salmon stocks in our rivers, for us and for the future generation of anglers. We do not want to be in the position where 'MANDATORY CATCH AND RELEASE' is enforced upon us.

GUIDELINES ON THE PRACTICE OF CATCH AND RELEASE

FISHING TACKLE

Salmon caught by using single barbless hooks, have a greater chance of survival than fish caught on barbed hooks. Barbless hooks do less damage, are easier to remove and reduce handling time. Trebles should be avoided. The fishing tackle should be strong enough to enable the fish to be brought in quickly, taking into account of the prevailing conditions and the possible size of the fish that might be caught.

PLAYING THE FISH

Playing the fish in the following way will help its chance of survival.

- Avoid exhausting the fish
- In a river move the salmon out of the fast current into quieter water
- Once the fish is subdued bring it quickly to the bank

LANDING THE FISH

Research has shown that exposing a salmon to air for even a short period, can significantly reduce its chance of survival.

- Keep the salmon in the water at all times
- Use a large diameter landing net with soft knotless mesh
- Avoid beaching the fish
- Ensure you have adequate access to the water to avoid dragging the fish up a steep bank

- No gaffs or tailers
- Always handle the salmon with wet hands

REMOVING THE HOOK

- Wet your hands and keep the fish in the water, handling of the fish should be minimized
- When necessary the fish should be supported from beneath and the hook gently removed either by hand or by means of long-nosed forceps
- If a hook is deeply embedded and cannot be removed, the leader should be cut close to the hook, as fish released with the hook attached will generally survive
- Take extra care with the fresh fish, as they are more prone to scale loss, injury and subsequent fungal infection
- Care must be taken not to squeeze the fish or hold it by the gills

RELEASING AND REVIVING THE FISH

- After removing the hook or cutting the leader, the fish should be supported in the water facing into the current and given sufficient time to recover
- Hold the fish gently until it is capable of swimming away strongly
- Avoid weighing the fish
- The weight can be estimated from its length by using a conversion chart (obtained via the Environment Agency)
- A tape measure or a wading stick can be used to take the approximate length while keeping the fish in the water

CAUTION: High water temperatures (21 degrees C) can significantly reduce the 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)

Research has shown that the survival rate of salmon caught and released can be close to 100% when the above guidelines are followed.