

Pink Salmon Alert

The Environment Agency has received unusually high and widespread reports of pink salmon catches this year in North East England, Scotland and Ireland.

Non-native species have the potential to disturb the natural balance of our environment. Therefore, to protect our rivers and native salmon species, we are closely monitoring the situation.

To do this, we need your help.

What are pink salmon?

Pink salmon (*Onchorhynchus gorbuscha*), also known as humpback salmon, originate from the northern Pacific Ocean.

Millions were stocked in the White Sea region of north Russia from the 1950's until 2003 to develop a net fishery. As a result, some have established self-sustaining populations in rivers in Russia, Finland and northern Norway. This is the most likely origin of the pink salmon recently caught in the UK and Ireland.

How to identify a pink salmon



Two pink salmon caught in the North East net fishery in 2017

- Large black oval spots on the tail
- Bluish back, silver flanks and white belly
- Much smaller scales than an Atlantic salmon of the same size
- Very dark mouth and tongue
- 40-60cm in length
- Breeding males develop a distinctive hump

In contrast, the native Atlantic salmon typically:

- Have no spots on the tail
- Usually larger (up 110cm in length)
- Pale mouth and tongue
- Larger scales
- One or two black spots on the gill cover
- Spots on the back above the lateral line
- Thicker base of tail than a pink salmon



Atlantic salmon from the River Tyne

How you can help:

If you catch a pink salmon:

- Do NOT return it to the river.
- Dispatch of it humanely.
- Send a photograph of the fish and details of where you caught it to Jon Shelley at the Environment Agency on: jonathan.shelley@environment-agency.gov.uk
- If able, please make the fish available to us for inspection and further analysis. If this is not possible, please send a sample of the scales.

This information will help us, fisheries researchers and other organisations with an interest in fisheries management in the United Kingdom, Ireland and Scandinavia, better understand how to manage the arrival of pink salmon in the UK.