

# Anglers urged to be vigilant for invasive pink salmon



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The Environment Agency is urging anglers to report unusual catches or sightings of invasive pink salmon after unprecedented numbers have been detected further south than previously observed.

The pink salmon, which can be identified by large black oval spots on its tail, could carry diseases which threaten native fish stocks.

EA specialists have predicted that the fish (also known as humpback salmon), will be spotted in North East and North West rivers over the coming weeks. Fisheries managers, anglers and netsmen are therefore requested to remain vigilant and report any sightings or catches to the EA's national hotline: 0800 80 70 60.

Data collected will help the Environment Agency and fisheries researchers better understand how to manage the arrival of pink salmon in the UK.

Simon Toms, National Fisheries Management Team Leader at the Environment Agency, said:

Wild Atlantic salmon stocks are already under great pressure from a variety of sources. The introduction of novel parasites or diseases from invasive species, such as Pacific pink salmon, could represent an additional risk to the species.

We want to better understand the immediate risk that pink salmon could represent to our important wild salmon stocks. We are urging anglers to report the capture or sightings of all pink salmon to us as soon as possible.

Pink salmon (*Onchorhynchus gorbuscha*) originate from the northern Pacific Ocean. Following an initiative to develop a net

fishery in Northern Russia, pink salmon 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.

Previously, pink salmon have been caught in the River Tyne at Wylam and in other locations across Cornwall, Wales, Scotland and western Ireland. Examinations revealed that no notable disease or novel parasites were detected. However, the Environment Agency has stressed the need to remain watchful and will continue to investigate the possible risk posed by pink salmon.

The Environment Agency has produced a useful guidance factsheet with all of the advice needed for individuals who catch a Pacific pink salmon, more information can be found [here](#).

Anglers holding a salmon licence who catch pink salmon are asked not to return the fish to the water. Instead they are asked to dispatch of them humanely and, if possible, make the fish available to the Environment Agency for inspection and further analysis.

If this is not possible, they are asked to send a sample of the scales. Trout and coarse anglers are asked to call the Environment Agency on 0800 80 70 60, if unsuccessful please return the salmon.

This guidance also applies to rivers with mandatory catch and release for Atlantic salmon or trout and coarse rod licence holders. In either instance, it is important that if retaining a pink salmon, please call the Environment Agency immediately to report the capture and retention of this fish. The capture will then be formally logged.

How to identify a pink salmon:

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

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