

River Lossie catch records

1. River Lossie Marine Scotland Catch Data

The catch return data collected by the Scottish government via Marine Scotland (previously Fisheries Research Services) is essential data in monitoring our sea trout catches and stocks. This is the only consistent and long time series set of sea trout data available. Catch rates can vary greatly with fishing effort, run timing, environmental conditions and can often be inaccurate due to misreporting of catch figures. As a result the specific value for a given year or month may be inaccurate but given the time scale and size of this catch data set the overall trends are likely to reflect and the underlying trends in sea trout abundance within the rivers. This catch data is protected by Crown copyright, used with the permission of Marine Scotland Science (MSS), Aberdeen. MSS is not responsible for interpretation of these data by third parties

The rod and line catch of sea trout on the Lossie (Figure 1) has been very variable, reaching highs of over 2500 per annum and lows of 130 per annum in consecutive years in the 1950s. Catches then increased in the 1960s before falling way again in the 1970s and then rebuilding in the 1980s and again falling away again from 1990-2011. The long term average annual catch on the Lossie from 1952-2001 was 805 but this has fallen by 74% to an average of 206 for the years 2002-2011. Catch and release on the Lossie has been slowly increasing since it first was recorded in 1994 but has levelled off around 50% in 2009-2011. Compared to other Moray Firth Rivers this return rate is quite low and considering how far the catch numbers have fallen efforts should be taken to increase the rate of returned fish.

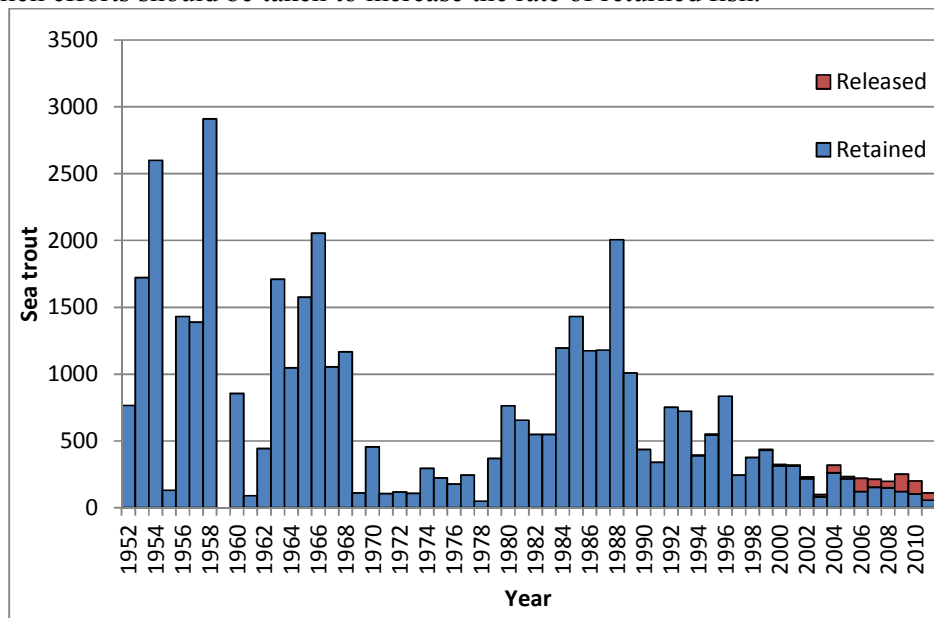


Figure 1 Lossie Rod & Line catch data 1952-2011. Sea trout Retained and Released.

The Lossie also supported a productive Net & Coble net fishery for sea trout which harvested significant numbers of fish before it closed in 2000 (Figure 2). On average from 1952-2000 the fishery took 635 sea trout per year. Since the net fishery ceased there has no clear corresponding increase in the Rod & Line catch.

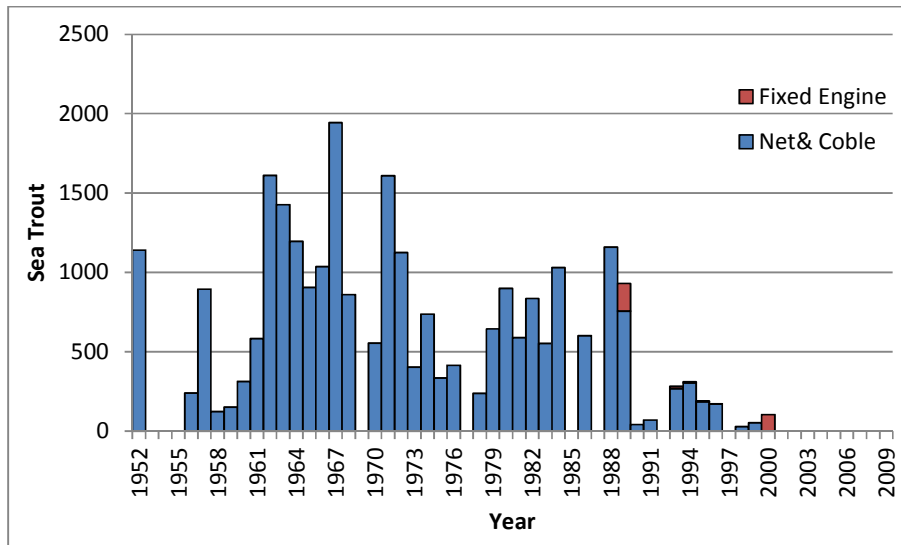


Figure 2, Lossie sea trout netting catch returns for Net & Coble and Fixed Engine methods

2. Elgin Angling Association Records

The Elgin Angling Association has kindly donated their annual trout catch records to the MFSTP and these are summarised below in Figure 3. It is rare but very valuable to have the brown trout records alongside the sea trout records as the two are intrinsically connected and reliant on each other for healthy productive trout populations. The Elgin AA catch records follow a very similar annual pattern to that of the Elgin District as a whole and actually constitute the majority of the sea trout recorded in the district.

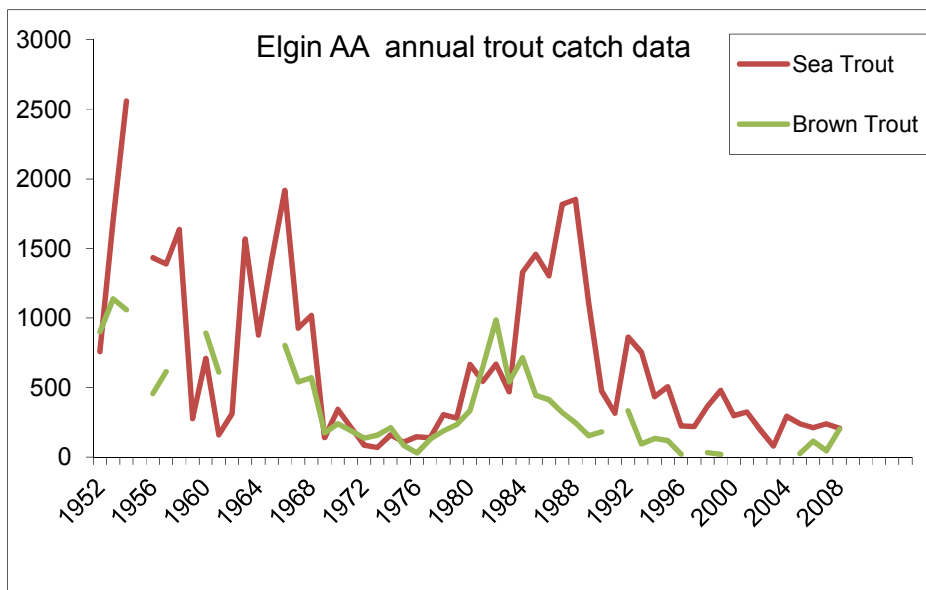


Figure 3, Elgin AA Trout Catch Records

3. Monthly Catch Data

The MFSTP has obtained the monthly sea trout catch figures from the Scottish Governments records (Marine Scotland Science) for the Lossie 1952-2009. Figure 4 shows the average monthly rod and line catch of sea trout for 10 year periods from 1952-2009. The timing of the fishery has not changed significantly over time despite declines in overall catch rates. The fishery typically starts in January increasing in April peaking in July

and August before gradually declining towards the end of the season in October. Interestingly the peak in catch rates for 1962-71 was much earlier than normal occurring in May before declining in June and then increasing slightly in July and August before declining towards the end of the season. The Findhorn also showed a uncharacteristic peak in sea trout catches in May over that same 10 year period. It is worth noting that although there have been no significant changes in timing of sea trout catches on the Lossie other rivers have shown significant changes in the timing of the peak fishing season.

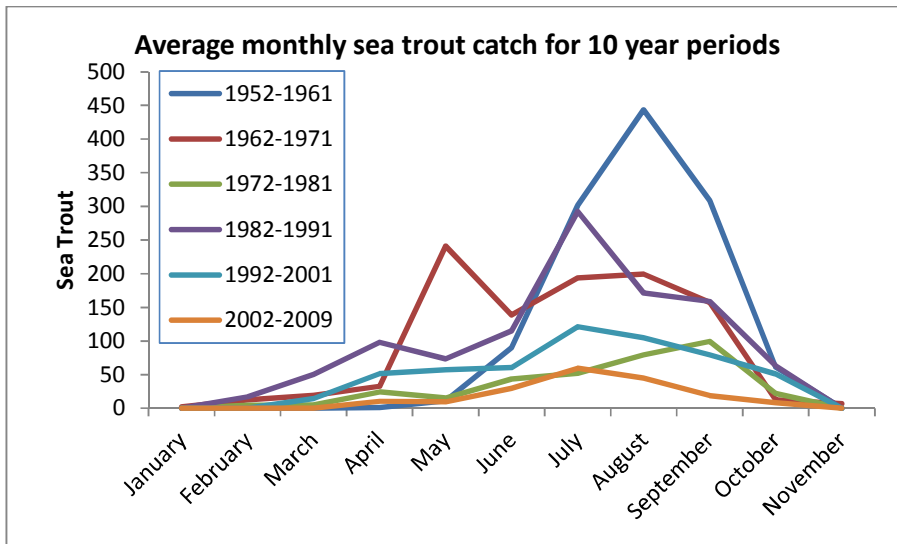


Figure 4, Average monthly sea trout catch on the Lossie (1952-2009) for 10 year periods.