

Is There a Better Prospect for Angling in Wales in 2020?

On Saturday May the 16th 2020 we will again be celebrating World Fish Migration day a biannual event that celebrates both the large and small distances that fish travel to breed. Visit info@fishmigration.org and look for an event near you. It will be worth a visit. Provided the corona virus does not disrupt the planned events.

Here in Wales we have the annual migration of several species some well-known others not so.

Our natural wild brown trout move within a river system to breed each winter while other species such as sea lamprey and shad migrate from the sea into our rivers as part of their life cycle of living in the sea but migrating to fresh water to breed. These migrations happen in the months of April, May and June.

The two most iconic Welsh species that carry out a migration pattern are the sea trout and salmon. Sadly both these are currently in decline with numbers so reduced that it may take years if ever for stocks to recover. For over twenty years various by-laws, bait restrictions, and now a ban on taking any salmon have been tried. Not one of these introductions has had any effect with salmon stocks continually in decline. As far back as 2003 reports have been made on the effect that salmon farms are having on wild stocks. The inherent problems of a large quantity of fish in an enclosed area results in an increase in sea lice that feed on the young migrating salmon and are in such prolific numbers that they will attach to any wild smolts passing by on their migrations routes. They are in such large numbers that the young fish will die, a silent loss that is not seen. Disease also due to the large number of salmon in the fish farms is also a problem, as are escapes of salmon that will breed with wild fish. During 2019 the first reported pink salmon, a Pacific species was recorded in the fish trap on the river Dee in North Wales, again a worry for our Atlantic salmon stock.

The shock and disruption caused by the largest recorded flood on the river Taff in South Wales, and the floods in other areas of Wales will still be visible when you read this. What we will not know is the damage that will have been caused to our rivers. So much gravel has moved it could be that many



An early season Brown Trout from the River Taff by Daniel Popp

redds where fish lay their eggs have been destroyed.

The trout and salmon season started off with very high river flows and because of the large amount of land slips left many of the Welsh rivers running very high and highly coloured and not conducive for fishing. Those who did venture out have had success using French leaders and weighted nymphs trout fishing. We are not going to be able to see the cost to our rivers caused by all these extremely high waters until the end of April or May when you will be reading this.

The Wye was always a favourite venue for Spring salmon and the season started very well on that river in March with eight springers being recorded on opening day the highest for an opening day for some time.

Hopefully the weather will improve with May heralding the start of the summer fishing as the evenings can be quite warm. If they are, sedge patterns come into their own, from late afternoon and can be a very productive method of fishing.

After many years of angling being the poor relation in terms of advertising, a new project to promote Welsh fishing was officially launched in the Spring. A new modern, content-driven website 'Fishing in Wales' is being created with the objective of increasing angling participation in Wales. The project is being managed and delivered by the Angling Trust, with funding from Visit Wales and Natural Resources Wales. It will include key information on where, how and when to fish, covering all angling disciplines. Also included will be the extra essential information, such as local accommodation, tackle outlets and guides.

Another feature that will make this stand out from previous promotional websites is the ability to book the fishing that is listed online. The WUF Fishing Passport will provide this facility. Any Welsh fisheries wishing to join the project can do so by contacting Ceri Thomas at the Angling Trust.



Salmon Parr
Thousands more
of these are
needed if
Salmon are
to survive.