

Falling stocks of wild salmon will see tourist anglers 'avoid Scotland'

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FISHING tourism in Scotland will be hit hard due to falling wild salmon stocks, experts have warned.

Fisheries Management Scotland has previously claimed wild salmon levels are at "crisis point" and called for preservation of the species to become a government priority.

The alliance of salmon fishery boards estimates catches of the fish are at their lowest levels since 1952.

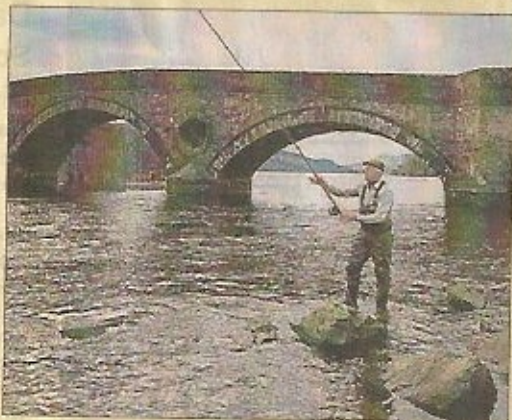
Recent estimates suggest that for every 100 salmon that leave rivers for the sea, fewer than five return, marking a decline of nearly 70 per cent in salmon numbers in just 25 years.

Now Andrew Grainger, of the Scottish Country Sports Tourism Group, has warned the issue is expected to impact on the £86 million fishing tourism industry.

He said angling tourists will avoid Scotland if there is no chance of catching salmon.

"I think all organisations involved with salmon fishing have expressed concern," he added. "Anglers don't want to be coming here thinking they have no chance of catching anything."

Last year in Scotland, a total



■ It is estimated catches of salmon are at their lowest levels since 1952.

of 37,196 wild salmon were caught and released, representing just 67 per cent of the previous five-year average total. In 2017, the total rod catch was put at 49,444 fish, a drop of 20 per cent on the five-year average and the fourth lowest figure on record. Nine out of 10 fish were returned in a bid to help stocks.

The Scottish Government has attributed the decline to "a prolonged period of extremely low flows throughout the year" due to hot weather conditions, but some campaigners claim fish farms are to blame for wild salmon deaths as a result of sea lice originating from the farms.

A Scottish Government

spokesman said: "The decline in reported catches of wild salmon is of great concern. We are determined to safeguard the future of this important species, but recognise the problem is down to a range of complex factors.

"We have identified 12 high level groups of pressures on salmon and in this, the International Year of the Salmon, we will continue to work within Scotland and beyond with our key partners, such as Fisheries Management Scotland, District Salmon Fishery Boards and Fishery Trusts, to better understand and tackle all of these, taking into account affordability and practicality."