

ESKE FISHERY

NEWSLETTER 2006



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- Fishery Description
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THE ESKE FISHERY



The Eske fishery consists of the 5km River Eske and the 900 acre Lough Eske. The Lough and River are amongst the most picturesque in Donegal set among the Blue Stack and Tawnawully Mountains. Few fisheries can boast such a beautiful backdrop to fish against. The fishery is noted for its spring salmon, grilse, sea trout and char and it is also a productive brown trout fishery. The lough also holds ferox trout, though these have been rarely fished for as a target species. Sea trout angling is at its best from late July onwards. Salmon fishing can be good from 'Easter' to the end of the season with large double figure salmon present throughout the season. With ongoing development work catches have improved in recent years. There has been extensive work on the fishery such as habitat rehabilitation, construction of a fish counter and the creation of a fish pass on the Lowerymore River which has virtually doubled available spawning habitat for salmon. The Lowerymore River above the pass has been seeded with unfed salmon fry for a number of years. In 2005 the first of these fish returned and for the first time, salmon redds were recorded on the Upper Lowerymore River. A dedicated Angling Centre has been built on the shores of the Lough next to Harvey's Point Hotel which services the anglers needs for bookings, Permits, Licences, boat hire etc. Season: The Angling Centre opens on the week prior to Easter and closes on September 30th inclusive.

ANGLING ON LOUGH ESKE



Spring salmon are present in the Lough from March to the end of the season. Grilse arrive into the Lough from June onwards with the peak of the run occurring fairly evenly spread from July to the end of the season. The main run of sea trout occurs from July on although the some bigger sea trout are present in the Lough much earlier than this. The sea trout average $\frac{3}{4}$ lb but can be as big as 6lb. The brown trout average $\frac{1}{2}$ lb but there are good numbers of trout in the $1\frac{1}{2}$ to $2\frac{1}{2}$ lb bracket with the odd fish up to $4\frac{1}{2}$ lb plus. The biggest brown trout caught in recent years was John Doherty's 9lb 4oz fish which was caught on the fly.

Angling on the Lough is by boat only (no shore fishing allowed) and boats are limited to 2 anglers per boat. 5 boats are available for hire for visitors from the Angling Centre. In the interests of safety all anglers **must** wear a floatation device. Anglers should motor cautiously round any area marked by a buoy. These are placed in the more dangerous areas but not every rock can be marked. Caution is advised for anglers who do not yet know the lough.

Good drifts for salmon include the long drift along the south east shore from the Salmon Rock to the point opposite Roshin Island. This includes the famous 'Ridge' which lies just offshore where the Lowerymore River enters the lough. The drift close inshore along the northwest shore from north of Moylederg Island to the mouth of the Corraber River in Dog's Head bay is also productive. Salmon can appear all over the lough however as do the Sea trout. Noted drifts for sea trout include the two drifts mentioned above. Also the drift running from O'Donnell's Island to the mouth of the Eske River can be good when the wind is favorable. Ross Dhu point can be good at times. Other notable drifts include the shore running north east from Harvey's Point Hotel and the east shore running south from The Sod bay. This bay, Dogs Head and McNulty's Bay are good bays for sea trout. Also the large bay in front of the Angling Centre can be productive for sea trout and also for brown trout. When fishing this bay anglers should only travel at oar speed in the northern half of this bay since it has numerous large rocks just under the surface!

Fly-fishing and trolling are the most popular methods for salmon with the fly accounting for most sea and brown trout. No prawn or shrimp fishing is allowed. Popular flies on the lough are: Silver Doctor, Bibbio, Connemara Black, Claret Bumble, Green Peter, Octopus, Dabblers (various shades) and Wet Mayflies during the summer. Wet Daddy Longlegs in various shades seem to fish well from summer to the end of the season. Sizes 8 to 12 should suffice for most conditions. The brown trout often show a liking for flies with orange or yellow (summer) in their makeup. The most popular lure for trolling is a Silver or Silver & Blue Toby.

ANGLING ON THE RIVER ESKE



Salmon run the river from March to the end of the season with the peak of the grilse run occurring in the months of July, August and September. The main sea trout run is from July onwards. The Eske Anglers and the Northern Regional Fisheries Board have recently improved access along the river and have also provided wheelchair friendly access at the Mill Pool. The river is divided into 4 beats with 2 visitor rods permitted on each beat.

Popular stretches of the river include Timony's Turn to the Mill Pool on the outskirts of Donegal Town (beat 4), below and above Miss Jenny's Bridge in the Middle section of the river (beat 2) and at the Eel Weir Turn downstream of Lough Eske Bridge (beat 1). Fly fishing and spinning are the most popular angling methods on the fishery depending on water heights. No prawn or shrimp fishing is allowed. For spinning a Flying 'C' in varying colours or a Blue and Silver Devon are the most effective baits on the river. Popular flies include the Fiery Brown, Jacob's Ladder, Donegal Blue, Dark Mackerel or any of the shrimp patterns such as Curry's Red Shrimp, Foxford Shrimp etc. A sinking line is usually preferable early in the season to fish the fly deep until the water warms when a floating line will be used for most fishing. A sink tip is useful when the river is running a little high or on some of the faster flowing pools to stop the fly 'dragging' near the surface. Most anglers fish a single handed rod since the river is not wide. A 12' or 12' 6" double handed fly rod can be an advantage due to the extra power if playing a good fish in high water.

2005 SEASON REPORT

The fishery was opened this season for the first time in 5 years after the agreed moratorium to assist stock recovery. The fishery was fairly quiet for the season since few anglers knew the fishery was open. Indeed, many anglers are not aware of the fishery. This is unusual considering the Eske's former reputation as a prime salmon and sea trout fishery.

March.

The Angling Centre opened on the 21st of March in time for the Easter weekend. This is traditionally when salmon start to be caught on the Lough. Conditions on the river were lovely on the Monday through to the Wednesday but then water levels fell away to leave the river and lough at low levels by the last week of the month. There was rainfall in the last number of days which rose levels once again. The remainder of March was fairly quiet with only 4 visiting anglers fishing on the lough (2 boat days). No salmon were recorded for the month but a number of brown trout were caught from the lough up to 1lb on the fly.

April.

The month was also quiet with only 7 anglers fishing the lough (3 boat days). The first salmon of the season was caught by a local angler from the river on the 1st. I am awaiting confirmation of weight and captor. Another young club member also accounted for a fine 6½lb from the river at McGee's on the same day. Visiting English angler Roy French recorded the first salmon caught from the lough. The fish weighed 10lb and was caught on the fly.

May.

There were a number of minor flood over the month with variable rainfall we received. The fishery was quiet with only 6 visiting anglers all fishing the lough (3 boat days). There were few reported catches early in the month. On the 22nd, local angler Anthony O'Malley Daly recorded a 9lb salmon from the lough caught on a blue & silver Toby spinner. On the 28th, visiting anglers Bernard McGee and Brian O'Donnell recorded 15 brown trout to 1¼lb from the Lough caught on the fly. All were returned. On the 31st, local angler John Doherty recorded a 6lb salmon from the lough caught on a spinner.

June.

The month was only a little busier with 6 anglers fishing the lough (4 boat days) and 7 visitors fishing the river. The lough was high for the first week of the month. Water levels then fell away to low levels and remained so for the rest of the month. There was no recorded catch of salmon for the month. A number of sea trout to 1½lb were recorded from the lough and to 2¼lb from the river on fly, spinner and worm.

July.



The month was very dry with no floods to speak of. The lough and river remained very low for the whole month. Consequently, only 10 visiting anglers fished the lough (8 boat days) and no visitors were fishing the river. Salmon fishing was 'pretty lean' with very low water conditions in the river. There was however, a huge number of sea trout in the river from the town section up to the fish counter. One shoal contained upward of 150 fish around the 1½lb mark! Local anglers had some good evening fishing for the sea trout with up to 20 fish recorded on occasion. John O'Donnell recorded sea trout on the 6th, 10th & 16th with the best 4 at 2, 2½, 2¾ and 3lb all caught on the fly. John Doherty recorded a 5½lb grilse from the lough caught on a spinner at 'The Ridge'. Large numbers of brown trout were caught on the lough to 1lb on the fly and a number of Finnock.

August.

The first fortnight of the month was very dry with the lough and river running at low levels. We received rainfall on the 17th which raised the lough by ½ foot by the following day. The lough stayed at high levels to the end of the month which gave the river some good water levels. 20 visiting anglers fished the lough (10 boat days) and 3 visiting anglers fished the river. During the first half of the month the only reported catches were from the lough of numerous brown trout and sea trout to 1lb. On the 22nd local angler Anthony O'Malley Daly recorded a 12lb salmon caught on the fly from the fish counter pool on the river. The following day he caught a grilse of 3lb on a Toby spinner. On the 25th local angler John Hanna recorded grilse of 4 & 6lb caught on the lough. A number of sea trout in the 1 to 1½lb bracket were caught on the lough.

September.

There were a number of floods during the month which ensure some good water levels on the lough and river. At times the river was too high to fish the fly. 37 visiting anglers fished the lough (26 boat days) with only 1 visitor fishing the river. A good number of salmon were caught this month from the river and lough plus some nice sea trout. Given here is a selection of catches. On the 1st, John Hanna recorded a grilse of 5lb from the lough and myself and Paul McCormaic accounted for 8 sea trout to 1lb and 50+ brown trout to 1lb caught on the fly from the lough (all but 3 returned). On the 13th, Gay Colleran recorded a grilse of 5lb caught on the lough. The following day John Ward accounted for a 10lb salmon caught on the fly from the lough. He also lost another 'much bigger' salmon. On the same day, Frankie Byrne and angling partner recorded 4 sea trout to 1½lb and 10 brown trout to 1lb also losing a salmon all on the fly. On the 15th, Gerry McCafferty recorded a 7lb grilse caught on the fly from Miss Jenny's (river).

Over a number of days fishing in the month Billy and Albert Johnston accounted for 6 salmon between them with 4 of these (6, 8, 8 and 9lb) caught, by Albert. On the 18th, Chris Marshall and Eugene Cole recorded salmon of 6, 8 and 9lb caught from the lough on a spinner. Colm Matthews and Gay Colleran recorded grilse of 6, 6½ and 7lb caught on the fly from the lough. Liam McCauley accounted for a grilse of the same size caught on the fly from the river (Miss Jenny's). On the 18th and 19th, Paul McCormaic and myself recorded 8 sea trout and 16 brown trout from the lough. The better sea trout weighed 1½lb, 1lb 14oz, 2 @ 2lb and 3¾lb and all were caught on the fly. The best of the brown trout weighed in at 1lb. All but 3 were released. On the 23rd, E. Hamilton caught and released an 8lb grilse from Miss Jenny's. The following day Billy Johnstone recorded a 9lb salmon from the lough and I accounted for a 7lb grilse from Miss Jenny's (river) on the fly. The 25th was a good day with a number of salmon caught from both the lough and river. Peter McGroary accounted for salmon of 8 & 6lb from the upstream of the fish counter and the Eel Weir Pool. Liam McCauley caught a 6½lb grilse from the lough on the fly. Albert Johnstone accounted for salmon of 9 & 6lb caught on the fly off the river with 2 further salmon caught from the lough. He was in evidence again with grilse of 4 & 8lb caught on the spinner from the river on the 28th.

On the final day of the season the river was running very high and there were some 10 salmon caught on the fishery and a number of sea & brown trout to 1½lb. On the lough, Jim Entwistle landed a 12lb salmon caught on the fly. John Hanna and Anthony O'Malley Daly recorded grilse of 5 & 6lb caught on the fly. On the river, Liam McCauley caught fish of 4 & 9lb on the spinner. A. O'Donnell recorded grilse of 5 & 8lb caught on the spinner from Miss Jenny's. Francey Murphy had a great day with salmon of 7, 8 & 15lb caught on the spinner.

And that was it, the end of the season. Overall it was a quiet season since few anglers are yet aware of the fishery and it's potential. We expect word of mouth will put paid to this situation. We look forward to the coming season.



OFFICIALLY RECORDED SALMON 10LB or OVER 2005

CAPTOR	DATE	LOCATION	METHOD	WEIGHT
Francie Murphy	30 th September	Below Miss Jenny's Bridge	Spinner	15lb
Anthony O'Malley Daly	22 nd August	Fish Counter Pool	Fly	12lb
Jim Entwhistle	30 th September	Lough	Fly	12lb
Roy French	24 th April	Lough	Fly	10lb
John Ward	14 th September	Lough	Fly	10lb

Average overall weight of salmon for the season was 7.23lb.

MOST POPULAR METHOD



This is calculated based on the recorded salmon caught where the lure was stated. Exactly the same numbers of salmon were caught on the fly and the spinner this season making each method equally as popular. No salmon were recorded taken on the worm.



ILLEGAL METHODS

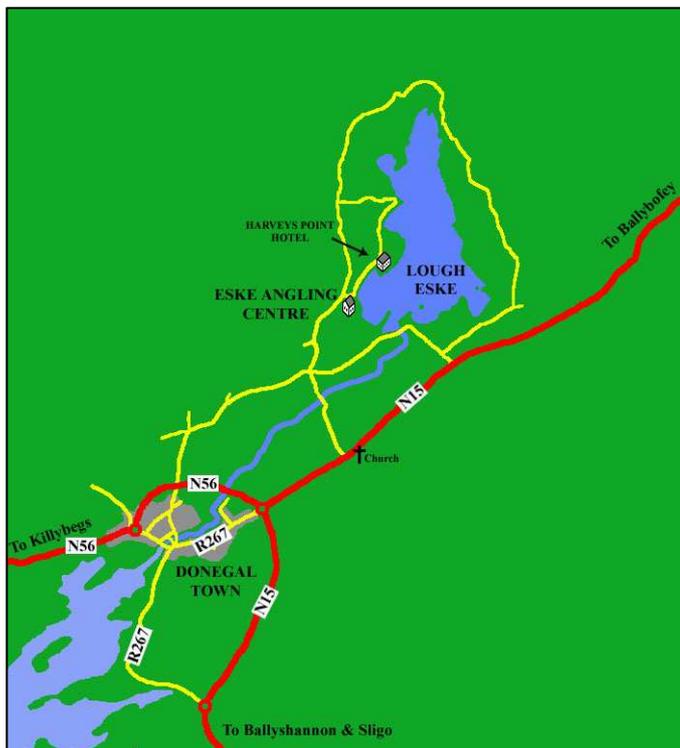
Anglers are reminded that shrimp, prawn and roe baits are illegal; any angler found using illegal baits, **will** be prosecuted.



ESKE ANGLING CENTRE



The Eske Angling Centre is located on the south western shore of Lough Eske next to Harvey's Point Hotel. Permits and Licences are issued from the centre and bookings for boats and beats can be taken for fishing both the Lough and River.



Season: The Angling Centre is open from Monday of the week preceding Easter to the 30th September.

Hours of Business: The Angling Centre is open from 9am to 1pm, 7 days a week during the season.

Permits:

- Adult Day Permit on River - €30
- Juvenile Day Permit - €12
- Weekly Permit (7 days) - €150
- Boat with 1 angler (Lough) - €50
- Boat with 2 anglers (Lough) - €80
- Boat & Engine - €40

Licenses: You must have one of the following Salmon & Sea Trout State licences if you wish to fish for salmon or sea trout on the Eske Fishery: A full year state licence €64, a *Ballyshannon* district year licence €30, a 21day-licence €24, a day licence €17, or a juvenile full year licence €10.

ESKE FISH COUNTER



The fish counter installed is a three-channel resistivity (Logie) Fish Counter installed on a dual crump weir with a central fish pass. Under the majority of flow conditions, fish passage is restricted to the central fish pass. During higher water conditions the two crump weirs automatically commence logging any fish passage once sufficient water is spilling over the weir faces. To assess the performance of the counter, one of the crump weirs is monitored by an over-head camera to verify readings of fish passing over the weir. The design of the weirs and fish pass ensures fish swim close to the electrodes when ascending or descending the counter. Electrodes are set onto the surface of the crump weirs and fish pass. The electrodes register the difference in the resistivity as a fish passes over them. The counter is set at present to record any fish of 35cm or longer. The counter will record salmon or sea trout of this length or over. The counter recalibrates itself every half hour to take into account changing environmental conditions such as water height and water conductivity due to floods etc.

Unfortunately the counter was out of action for the majority of 2005 due to a fault with the modem which would not allow the information to be downloaded. This all means that we only have counts for November & December and no meaningful figure for the run of fish on the Eske System for 2005. A pity since there was a larger than usual run of sea trout last season.

SALMON TAGGING SCHEME



All anglers are legally required to tag and record all salmon and any sea trout over 40cm in length. Each angler will be issued 1 to 5 plastic gill tags and a logbook when they purchase a salmon & sea trout rod licence.

All salmon and any sea trout over 40cm in length must be tagged immediately and recorded in the logbook. Any farmed salmon caught by an angler is considered to be a "wild Fish" and should be tagged. It is an offence to be in possession of an untagged salmon (or sea trout over 40cm) on the riverbank or elsewhere.

Tags must be inserted through the gills and mouth and securely fixed. It is an offence to be in possession of a salmon or sea trout over 40cm that is untagged. The tag number, size of fish and catch location must be entered into the logbook. Logbooks must be made available to authorised fisheries officers on request.

Anglers found with untagged fish or failing to produce a logbook or licence on request will be issued with an **on the spot fine of €65.**

Extra tags are issued when an angler produces their logbook detailing their catch & usage of Tags. If a logbook or tags are lost or damaged the loss or damage must be reported to an authorised distributor.

Logbooks and unused tags must be returned to the N.R.F.B. within a period of 21 days from the date of the expiry of the license.

CONSERVATION of SALMON / SEA TROUT STOCKS & ROD ANGLING QUOTAS.

A new By-law (No. 786, 2002) came into effect as from January 1st 2003 to help protect stocks of salmon and sea trout. This pertains to all salmon and all sea trout that are larger than 40cm (tip of the snout to the fork of the tail). The By-law prohibits the taking by rod and line of more than 20 fish, either salmon or sea trout or any combination of both fish (subject to review) for any year commencing on 1st January. Also anglers are not allowed to kill more than one salmon or one sea trout (40cm +) per day from January 1st to the May 31st inclusive. For the remainder of the year the daily bag limit is 3 such fish (subject to review).

This basically means that anglers are limited to killing 20 salmon per year or less if sea trout of more than 40cm are killed since these are included in the 20 fish allowed per year. There is a bag limit of 1 per day up to and including 31st May. Thereafter, for the rest of the season the bag limit per day is 3 fish.

DEVELOPMENT



The Northern Regional Fisheries Board has carried out development work on the Eske Fishery since 1995. This includes the purchase of the private part of the fishery from Lord Arran including the purchase and withdrawal of netting rights on the Eske estuary. In-stream habitat rehabilitation has been undertaken. This consists of creation of angling pools and refurbishment of spawning and juvenile salmonid areas. A dedicated angling centre has been constructed on the shores of Lough Eske. A fish pass has been constructed on the Lowerymore River (main tributary feeding the lough) at the impassable falls at the White Goat's Island. This has practically doubled the available spawning for salmon and sea trout. The Lowerymore River above this pass has been seeded over 4 years with indigenous un-fed salmon fry reared in a purpose built hatchery. The board, jointly with the Eske Angling Association, has improved angling access on the fishery. This consists of the provision of stiles, walkways etc and the provision of a disabled angling section at the Mill Pool. This work is still ongoing and is undertaken as necessary.

ACCOMMODATION

HOTELS

- Harvey's Point Hotel, Lough Eske, Donegal, Co. Donegal. Tel: 074 9722208.
Email: info@harveyspoint.com Web: www.harveyspoint.com
- Mill Park Hotel, The Mullins, Donegal Town, Co. Donegal. Tel: 074 9722880.
Email: info@millparkhotel.com Web: www.millparkhotel.com

BED & BREAKFAST.

- Mrs Shona McNeice, Lakeland B & B, Birchill, Lough Eske, Donegal Town, Co. Donegal.
Tel & Fax: 074 9722481. Email: mcneice@gofree.indigo.ie Web: www.lakelandbedandbreakfast.com
- Mrs Noreen McGinty, The Arches Country House, Lough Eske, Donegal Town, Co. Donegal.
Tel & Fax: 074 9722029. Email: archescountryhse@eircom.net Web: www.archescountryhse.com
- Mrs Mary McGinty, Ardeevin, Lough Eske, Barnesmore, Donegal, Co. Donegal.
Tel & Fax: 074 9721790. Email: seanmcginty@eircom.net
- Ann McGlinchey, Eas Dun Lodge, Greenans, Lough Eske, Donegal, Co. Donegal.
Tel: 074 9722628 Email: info@easdunlodge.com Web: www.easdunlodge.com
- Avalon, The Haugh, Lough Eske, Donegal Town, Co. Donegal.
Tel: 074 9721949 Email: justaggie@eircom.net
- Heeneys Lodge, Killymard, Donegal Town, Co. Donegal. Tel: 074 9723048.
Email: breda@heeneyslodge.com Web: www.heeneyslodge.com
- G. McGettigan, Rhu-Gorse, Lough Eske, Donegal, Co Donegal. Tel: (074) 9721685.

SELF CATERING.

- Mairead McNulty, Heenys, Lough Eske, Co. Donegal. Tel: 074 9721746 & 087 7941234.
- Corrakille House, Old Laghy Road, Donegal Town, County Donegal. Tel: 074 9722052.
Fax: 074 9722468. Email: martinpc@iol.ie Web: www.corrakille-house.com
- The Mullins, Donegal Town, Co. Donegal. Tel: 074 9723836 or 087 2813209.
Email: ashwoodapts@eircom.net
- Cullionboy, Barnesmore, Co. Donegal. Tel: 074 9722298 or 086 3078282.