

# SALMON *a fisherman's guide* RECOGNITION



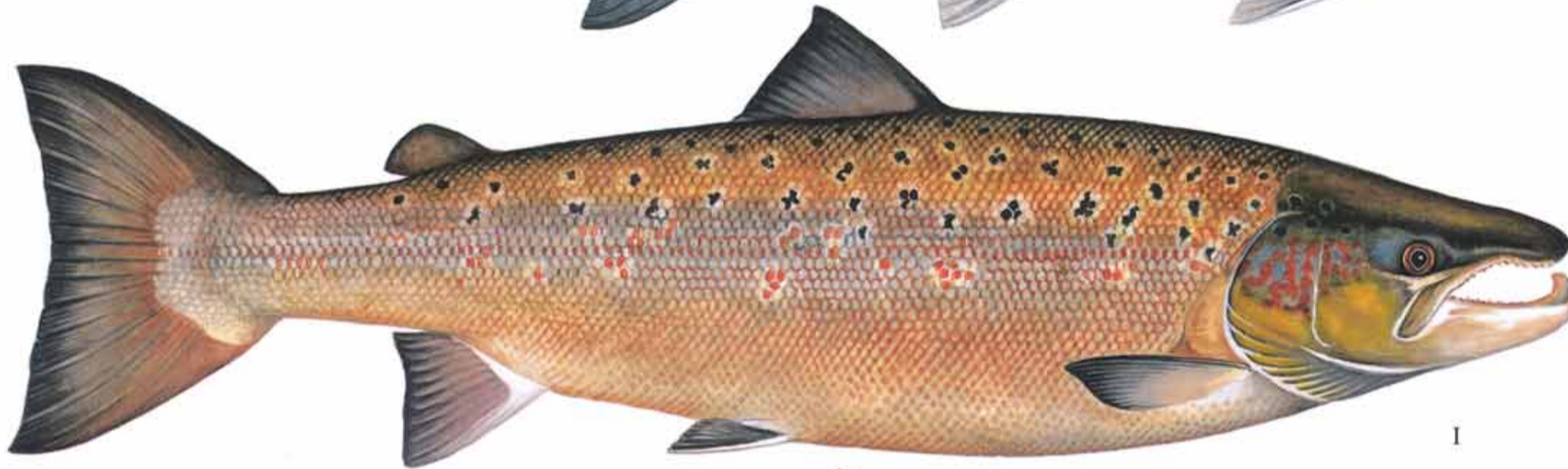
## FRESH RUN SALMON

Recognised by the pristine condition and bright silver flanks. Fish straight from salt water have loose, easily detached scales and many carry sea lice which drop off within a few days. Hen salmon (illustrated) have a tiny kype on the lower jaw but unlike cocks they retain normal head proportions while in the river. Fresh run salmon make the best eating.



## KELT

Kelts are salmon which have spawned. Usually identified by the thin shape, distended vent and presence of "gill maggots" on the red gill filaments, they are often encountered by anglers in spring when they regain a silvery appearance and can be mistaken for fresh run Springers. Kelts must be returned unharmed to the water.



I



II

## MATURING COCK & HEN

- I. **Cock.** Recognised by the enlarged jaws, cocks often become coloured soon after leaving salt water. This one shows typical appearance after a few weeks in fresh or brackish water; some are more reddish, others less so but all will have the partially developed kype. At this stage cocks are still good to eat.
- II. **Hen.** These are usually less coloured than cocks of similar river age and they never have enlarged jaws. This one will have spent a few weeks in river or estuary – note the coloured head and lack of true silver flanks. Hens should not be killed on the basis of colour alone – autumn fish are closest to spawning regardless of colour. For conservation purposes hens are the most important.

## COCK & HEN IN BREEDING DRESS

- I. **Cock.** The combination of "tartan" colours is typical although shades vary – the fully developed kype, used in fighting rivals, is the most consistent indicator of maturity. Condition can be gauged by viewing from above (fig.1) – if the back is still thick a fish is in better condition (and more likely to be edible) than a thin "kipper" which, unless it is a first salmon, is better returned.



I



II

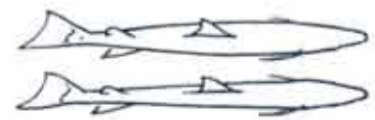


Fig 1.

- II. **Hen.** This is a summer fish – Springers are often darker by spawning time while late entrants may still be silver flanked. Fully mature hens have soft, swollen bellies and spawning is imminent if they also have protruding vents.

**SALMON & SEA TROUT**  
Salmon (I) can be distinguished from large Sea Trout (II) by a more streamlined shape, concave tail, slimmer tail wrist, upper jaw reaching no further than rear of eye, few if any black spots below lateral line, 10 to 15 (usually 11-13) scales counted obliquely forward from adipose fin to lateral line - trout have 13-16.

**GRILSE & SALMON**  
Grilse or one sea winter salmon, which comprise most of the annual rod catch, are often indistinguishable from multi sea winter salmon except by scale reading. They are smaller on average (2-3lb. in May, 5-7lb. in July) but grilse entering rivers in September often attain 8-10lb. and in October 12-15lb. Salmon usually weigh over 8lb. Most are 2SW fish; these returning in spring average 8-10lb., in summer 12-14lb., in autumn 16-18lb. Salmon tend to double in weight during each full growing period (May - Oct) spent at sea.

**SALMON & TROUT PARR**  
Salmon Parr (I) can normally be distinguished from young Brown/Sea Trout (II) by the more streamlined shape, deeply forked tail, longer pectoral fin, lack of orange on adipose fin, smaller mouth, sharper snout, only 1-4 spots on gill cover (often one large spot), well defined parr marks.

ROBIN ADE · 94

