

**The Decline and Impending Collapse of the Atlantic**

**Salmon (*Salmo salar*)  
Population in the North Atlantic**

**Ocean: A Review of Possible Causes.**

**Marine Institute Publication**

**Please click on Photo**

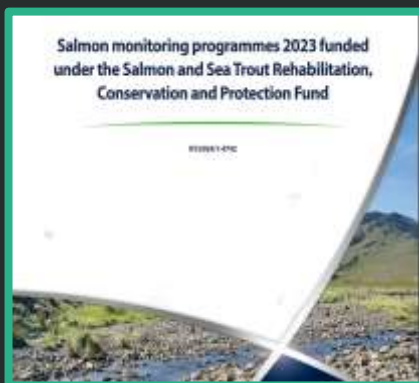
## **Salmon Watch Ireland Update 15 February 2025 Collapse of Atlantic salmon stocks**

Salmon Watch Ireland along with most other organisations concerned with the ongoing and accelerating decline in Atlantic salmon are still looking for the main reasons and causes which have heralded extremely poor returns of salmon to Ireland and indeed throughout their range. Many manmade causes have been linked to this decline which in part may explain some but certainly not all the decline.

It is somewhat naïve that many blame certain manmade causes which affect salmon at a local scale to be the defining cause of the decline. It must be emphasized that the collapse is almost universal and cannot be linked entirely to local or indeed regional causes.



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The common thread running through their life cycle might include climatic change and changing oceanic conditions which may inhibit growth thus reducing life expectancy, but another commonality is where Atlantic salmon feed at sea and how these areas are protected from illegal and unregulated fisheries.

A recent publication in the Marine Institutes library discusses the issue of illegal unregulated fisheries for salmon which is postulated that this activity may be the principal cause of the decline of Atlantic salmon.

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The following extract notes the common characteristics of the collapse.

*“The decline and collapse of stocks has common characteristics:*

- 1) cyclic annual adult returns cease,*
- 2) annual adult returns flatline,*
- 3) adult mean size declines,*
- 4) stock collapses occurred earliest among watersheds distant from the North Atlantic Sub-Polar Gyre (NASpG). Cyclic annual adult returns were common to all stocks in the past that were not impacted by anthropogenic changes to their natal streams.”*

The extent of any illegal fishery at sea is difficult to gauge but certainly does happen to a certain extent. It is not unreasonable to suggest that fisheries which existed legally around Greenland and the Faroes give any prospective illegal actors the knowledge and indeed the scope to fish illegally and directly for salmon.

Greenland fishery is now controlled by an international agreement (NASCO) with a small quota while the Faroes has no legal salmon fishery since 2000.

Some of these illegal fisheries may take place in international waters and predominantly during periods from autumn to early spring when weather and sea conditions may hide illegal activity.



Photo Inland Fisheries Ireland

If you require further information, please log onto our website.



While we suggest that you read the paper it is wise to point out that little concrete evidence exists to suggest that such fisheries are common but as always, we suggest caution and there must be a concerted international effort to examine such issues.

It is also our belief that one should always concentrate on what can be achieved locally for salmon and try and influence the issues which we can control. The specter of salmon farming and water quality and indeed the destruction of habitat are all issues that you as an individual can help mitigate by speaking out and demanding that environmental laws are respected.

