

SALMON WATCH IRELAND

Conference Newsletter – Number 49

Ireland's Wild Atlantic Salmon: What Does the Science Tell Us?

**Annual Conference – Saturday, 14 November 2026
Sheraton Hotel, Athlone**



Science, conservation and action for Ireland's wild salmon

Salmon Watch Ireland would like to remind supporters that our **Annual Conference will take place on Saturday, 14 November 2026, at the Sheraton Hotel, Athlone.**

With the event fast approaching, we encourage everyone with an interest in the future of Ireland's wild Atlantic salmon to join us for an important day of scientific presentations, discussion and debate.

Our programme brings together leading scientists, conservationists and fisheries experts to examine the pressures facing wild salmon populations and, importantly, the practical actions needed to protect and restore this iconic species. **We encourage supporters who have not yet booked to secure their tickets and help make this year's conference a success.**

With salmon populations declining across much of their North Atlantic range, this year's conference will focus on scientific evidence, river restoration, water quality, genetic integrity and the practical measures needed to support the recovery of wild salmon.

Tickets are now available. We strongly encourage supporters to book their places in advance and help make this year's conference a success.



Our speakers and presentations

Professor Phil McGinnity – Farmed Salmon Escapes: Genetic Impacts on Ireland's Wild Salmon

Professor Phil McGinnity will examine the genetic consequences of escaped farmed Atlantic salmon interbreeding with wild populations. His presentation will explore how genetic introgression can affect the fitness, adaptation and long-term resilience of wild salmon stocks.

Dr Hazel King – Ireland's National Barriers Programme

Dr Hazel King will outline the work of the National Barriers Programme, including progress in identifying and addressing barriers to fish migration. The presentation will highlight the importance of restoring river connectivity and access to essential spawning and nursery habitats.

Dr Michael Millane – The National Salmonid Index Catchment: What the Science Tells Us

Dr Michael Millane will discuss the scientific monitoring of salmon and sea trout populations, including research undertaken on the River Erriff. The presentation will examine what long-term monitoring tells us about salmon survival, population trends and the pressures affecting stocks.

Dr Elaine McGoff – Water Quality and the Protection of Ireland's Rivers

Representing An Taisce, Dr Elaine McGoff will address the challenges facing Ireland's freshwater environment, the pressures affecting water quality and the measures required to protect and restore healthy river ecosystems.

Conor Arnold – The Munster Blackwater Fish Kill: One Year On

Conor Arnold will examine the consequences of the devastating August 2025 fish kill on the Munster Blackwater, including its impact on the river, fisheries and local communities. His presentation will consider the lessons learned, improvements in reporting and response, and the importance of preventing similar incidents.

Shaun Leonard – Wild Trout Trust: Restoring Healthy Rivers

Shaun Leonard of the Wild Trout Trust will explore practical approaches to river habitat restoration, including measures to improve habitat quality, river connectivity and the ecological conditions necessary to support healthy populations of wild salmon and trout.

Noel Meehan – Teagasc: Better Farming for Water Quality

Noel Meehan of Teagasc will discuss the Better Farming for Water initiative, examining agricultural pressures on water quality and the measures being introduced to reduce nutrient losses, improve farming practices and safeguard Ireland's rivers into the future.

Salmon Hero Awards 2026

This year's conference will also celebrate outstanding contributions to conservation through the presentation of two awards.

The **Salmon Hero Award** will recognise an exceptional contribution to the protection and conservation of wild Atlantic salmon.

The new **Youth Salmon Hero Award** will recognise young people making a positive contribution to the conservation of salmon and the wider freshwater and marine environment.

By recognising the achievements of young conservationists, Salmon Watch Ireland hopes to encourage greater involvement by the next generation in protecting our aquatic ecosystems.



Turning scientific evidence into conservation action

The challenges facing wild Atlantic salmon are considerable, but opportunities for recovery remain.

Improving water quality, restoring river connectivity, protecting genetic integrity, strengthening scientific monitoring and ensuring precautionary fisheries management are all essential components of an effective conservation strategy.

Our conference will provide an opportunity to examine the evidence, discuss practical solutions and encourage the coordinated action necessary to protect and restore Ireland's wild salmon populations.

Have Your Say – Public Consultation on Salmon Management

Salmon Watch Ireland strongly encourages all anglers, conservationists, river associations and members of the public concerned about the future of wild Atlantic salmon to engage with the public consultation on salmon management policy from 2027 onwards. The decisions arising from this review will have important consequences for the conservation and exploitation of Ireland's remaining wild salmon stocks. Salmon Watch Ireland has advocated a more precautionary, science-based approach, including stronger protection for spring salmon, reduced recreational and commercial exploitation, improved monitoring and management measures that respond to declining marine survival. **We urge everyone with an interest in the future of wild salmon to examine the proposals and make their views known through the consultation process.** Meaningful public participation is essential to ensuring that conservation and stock recovery remain at the centre of future salmon management policy.

Link to Public Consultation: [Public Consultation Link](#)

Salmon Watch Ireland Submission: [SWIRL Submission](#)

BOOK YOUR CONFERENCE TICKET TODAY – SATURDAY, 14 NOVEMBER

The future of Ireland's wild Atlantic salmon matters. Your participation matters too.

We are asking all our supporters, anglers, conservationists and everyone concerned about the future of our rivers to make a special effort to attend this year's conference.

This is an opportunity to hear directly from leading scientists and conservation specialists, ask questions, exchange ideas and contribute to an informed discussion about the future of wild salmon in Ireland.

Please do not leave your booking until the last minute. Book your ticket now and help us demonstrate the strength of public interest in protecting Ireland's wild salmon.

We also ask supporters to share the conference details with their angling clubs, river associations, environmental organisations, friends and colleagues. Encouraging just one or two additional people to attend can make a real difference.

Conference details

Date: Saturday, 14 November 2026

Venue: Sheraton Hotel, Athlone

Theme: Ireland's Wild Atlantic Salmon – What Does the Science Tell Us?

BOOK YOUR PLACE NOW

Tickets can be booked online through Eventbrite:

Atlantic Salmon at a crossroads - Science, Catchments and Road to Recovery

by **Salmon Watch Ireland**
30 followers • 4 events • 8y hosting • 177 total attendees

✓ Following

€30
Sat 14 Nov • 9:30 AM

Get tickets

<https://www.eventbrite.ie/e/2000472605414?aff=oddtcreator>

Please book today and encourage others to join you.

Your attendance will help strengthen the collective voice calling for effective, science-based conservation of Ireland's wild Atlantic salmon.

We look forward to welcoming you to Athlone.

Salmon Watch Ireland

Protecting wild Atlantic salmon and the ecosystems on which they depend.