



PRESS RELEASE

Ballynahinch rod catches prove a point – no salmon farm, no sea lice, no problem!

A major revival of sea trout in Connemara's top sea trout river system, the Ballynahinch & Inagh catchment, provides further proof that sea trout recover rapidly as soon as salmon farms go away.

The salmon farm in Bertraghboy Bay (the estuary of the Ballynahinch system) switched from salmon to cod farming in February 2005. Cod are not susceptible to the devastating sea lice that proliferate on salmon farms.

As a result, the catches of sea trout at Ballynahinch Castle and Lough Inagh Lodge have increased sharply over the past two summers.

In 2004, when salmon farming was still active in the bay, the rod catch was just 77 small sea trout. With the farmed salmon gone by the time of the crucial spring migration period in 2005, the catch that summer increased nearly 15-fold to 1,115 young sea trout.

And now, in 2006, the rod catch has jumped again to 1,292 sea trout, with some much bigger fish being taken by anglers. There was also an excellent run of over 1,500 salmon in 2006.

There is now general acceptance in scientific circles that sea lice from salmon farms have a ruinous impact on wild sea trout and in some cases wild salmon too. This has been demonstrated not just in Ireland but in Scotland, Norway & Canada, all countries with large salmon farming operations.

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Patrick O'Flaherty, general manager of Ballynahinch Castle Hotel, said today: "This new catch data shows just how easy it is to revive viable sea trout stocks - and the angling tourism that goes with them. There is great excitement in the area and, although we are not yet back to the catch levels before salmon farming started up, we are well on the way - and confident that we'll get there.

"There was nothing else wrong with this relatively pristine catchment. It was just the sea lice from salmon farms that killed the young trout smolts when they migrated out through the bay", he added.

Maire O'Connor of Lough Inagh Lodge Hotel, was also delighted with the upturn: "This summer was almost like the good old days. Anglers were coming in with smiles on their faces for the first time in many years. And we have seen people taking up angling again who had abandoned all hope for the last 15 years or so. Long may it continue".

The results at Ballynahinch and Inagh are a vindication of the long-running campaign by **SOS/Save Our Seatrout** to restore valuable sea trout stocks along the western seaboard of Ireland.

SOS chairman Michael Kennedy welcomed the news today: "We have always said 'No lice, no problem'. This is great news from Ballynahinch. But we must now make sure this revival can continue and be repeated on all the many other devastated sea trout fisheries which still suffer from lice infestations derived from salmon farms in their estuaries".

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