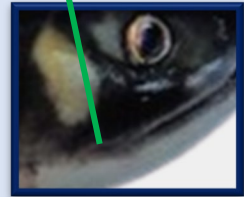
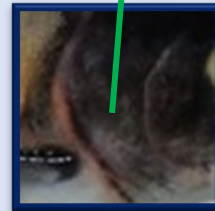
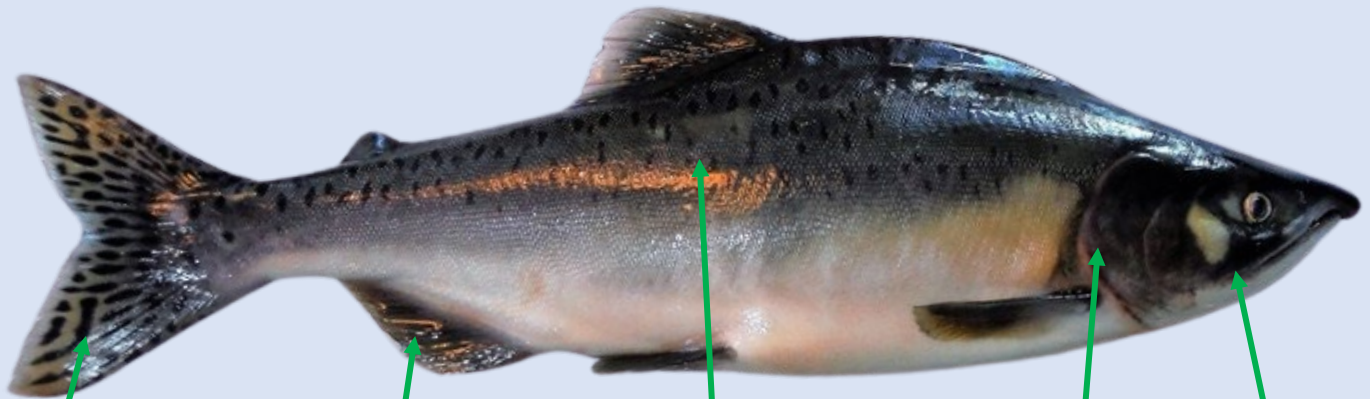


# Pink Salmon

*Oncorhynchus gorbuscha*

## Invasive Species Alert

Photo by Ola Ugedal, NINA



Large black oval  
Spots on tail

11-19 rays on anal fin.  
Atlantic salmon have  
7-11 rays

Scales are very small  
and much smaller than  
Atlantic salmon

No notable  
dark spots  
over gill cover

Upper jaw  
typically extends  
beyond eye

If you encounter pink salmon in any Northern Ireland waterway,  
please send your record into:



Contact NIEA Invasive Non-  
Native Species Team

[invasivespecies@daera-ni.gov.uk](mailto:invasivespecies@daera-ni.gov.uk)

028 9056 9558

Anglers are asked to keep and freeze any pink salmon they catch and report them to the NIEA Invasive Species Team

For further ID guidance and information check out the  
Invasive Species NI website:  
[invasivespeciesni.co.uk](http://invasivespeciesni.co.uk)



## What is a pink salmon?

The pink salmon, also known as the humpback salmon, is a migratory species, moving from cold coastal waters, upstream into rivers to spawn. Native to the Northern Pacific and Arctic Oceans, the fish was first introduced outside its native range into Northwest Russia, for commercial food production which took place in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Self-sustaining populations can now be found in the rivers of Northern Norway and the Northwest of Russia.

Outside of their native range they can become invasive, spreading diseases to our native fish species, displacing native salmon from spawning sites and acting aggressively towards them. If the population size grows, the numerous deaths after a spawning event can increase the nutrient load on a river, impacting entire ecosystems.

## How to identify a pink salmon?

- Adult fish taken from the sea have steel-blue to blue/green colouration on their backs, silver flanks and a white belly
- Typically grow 40-55cm in length, maximum 76cm
- Typically weigh 1-2.5kg, maximum 6.8kg
- They have distinctive large oval spots on their back and tail fin
- Upper jaw extends beyond the eye
- No black spots on gill cover
- They have very small scales, much smaller than Atlantic salmon
- 11-19 fin rays on anal fin
- Spawning males found in freshwater become dark and red, with brown/green blotches on their flanks
- Near-spawning males also develop a hump on their back, giving them the name 'humpback' salmon
- Pink salmon tend to spawn earlier in the year (June/July through to early autumn), compared to Atlantic salmon



**Above:** Pink salmon in its ocean phase

Photo: Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife

**Below:** Male pink salmon in its freshwater phase

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## Are they present in Northern Ireland?

There have been many records of pink salmon in Scotland, alongside several reports from the Republic of Ireland. There have only been two reports of pink salmon in Northern Ireland, one in the River Mourne and one in the River Bush, but it is likely that there are many more present in our rivers which have so far gone unrecorded.

**Report all sightings of pink salmon**

