

**The Angler's
Companion to
the Rivers and
Lochs of Scotland**

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deposits ; but, on the contrary, the occurrence of a winter spate only despoils their courses of such unappropriated aliment as found lodgment therein during the summer months. Such, along the greater portion of its career, is the Dee; such are the Coe and the Spean; such, also, are many of the mountain feeders in Perthshire, Inverness-shire, Aberdeenshire in fact, throughout the northern Highlands of Scotland. Hence we find the trout inhabiting them dwarfish in size, lean, and unhealthy.

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Even in the course of summer, when insect food is tolerably abundant, they make little improvement, and seldom do we see them encroached upon by varieties from neighbouring streams or lochs, unless with the intent, on the part of larger trout, to assail and devour them; or, it may be, when forced by circumstances to deposit their spawn.

Should the feeding, however, greatly exceed the average I still speak in respect 'to quantity although it rarely does so without the implication also of a superior quality of subsistence, trout will not only attain to a weight exceeding what I have mentioned to be that common to a full-grown Tweed fish, under ordinary circumstances, but they will arrive at it in a far shorter period of time in the course, it may be, of two, or at most three years ; whereas the Tweed trout needs four to acquire its sixteen ounces, and then ceases growing. Thus, in Leet or Eden, a trout of the second year's growth is as heavy as a three, or even a four years old fish pastured among the channels of Tweed or Ettrick ; and were the trout of these insignificant waters suffered undisturbed to reach their full size, which there is no question they would do in the course of five or six years, numbers would be found among them, as was the case not long ago, weighing severally upwards of two pounds. Thus, also, in respect to many lakes, fish-ponds, and old marl-pits, into which the fry of trout have been put. As long as these possess a superabundance of both ground and surface food, the young fish will thrive astonishingly, and arrive, in an incredibly short space of time, at dimensions exceeding those of average-sized river-trout.

But without enlarging any further upon this subject, I shall conclude, with a single observation, all that is essential to be said in regard to the growth of fish namely, that as sheep and cattle will not fatten and thrive on stinted pastures, or barren, exposed moorland, so neither will the finny tribe, be the stream ever so pure and abundant, acquire size and condition, unless sufficiently sheltered and amply and regularly provisioned. On the other hand, possessed of these advantages, they have all that is required in order to do them justice; while breeds or varieties of fish, hitherto pronounced shapeless and impracticable, will, when transferred to such favoured localities, become seemly in their proportions, active in their dispositions, and relishable, if not rich-tasted, as food.

Besides the *Salmo fario* and its countless varieties, there are three other species of fresh-water trout, held by several naturalists to inhabit our Scottish lakes and rivers. These are the Gillaroo or Gizzard trout, the *Salmo coscifer* or *Levenensis*, and the *Salmo ferox*.

The Gillaroo. Of our numerous Scottish lakes, a great proportion of which has been investigated by naturalists, one only is affirmed, with any degree of positiveness, to contain this species of trout. It is a small tarn or loch, situated on a shoulder of

Ben More, in Sutherlandshire, about three miles from Innisnadampf, named Mulach Corry. I visited it in August 1850, under somewhat unfavourable circumstances, during the occurrence of a snow-fall and when the loch was partially frozen, but succeeded, both with worm and fly, in securing a few specimens, none of which, however, exceeded in weight half a pound. In the shape and appearance of those fish I was much disappointed, nor did their edible qualities approach the reputation given them. They were very inferior in all respects to the trout of Lochs Awe and Assynt, situated a short way below them; nor did the stomach, when examined, differ so essentially in its muscular conformation as to induce the conclusion that they were a distinct species of trout. The gillaroo, in fact, of Mulach Corry, which is situated upon a limestone rock, I have every reason to think is nothing more than the/an'o or common trout; and that the gizzard or indurated portion of the stomach which distinguishes it, is entirely the result, not the occasion, of its peculiar feeding. This is true at least, that all fresh-water trout engross some measure of testaceous food; and when the opportunity offers, will greedily devour and abundantly thrive upon small shell-fish and horny substances. These, as well as grains or pellets of gravel, I have frequently found in the stomachs of common river trout, mixed with their ordinary fly sustenance; and I have reason to believe they are taken in order to assist digestion.

This species of trout, I have been told, was discovered in Loch Garve, in Ross-shire, by the late Sir Humphry Davy. In his *Salmonia*, however, he states distinctly, that "ex-

THE SALMO CCECIPEB, OR LEVENENSIS. 21

cept in Ireland, he never found a gillaroo trout." The Loch Garve trout, of which I have caught many fine specimens, are, I may mention, very unlike, in all respects, those of Mulach Cony, and, previous to the partial drainage of the lake, had few rivals in point of shape, beauty, and flavour among the finny tribe.

Salmo C(cecifer, or Levenensis. The far-famed trout of Loch Leven are distinguished, I understand, many of them, from the common fresh-water trout, by the numerical superiority of their coecal appendages. Although these, in their numerical relation, are insisted upon by Dr Parnell and others, as characteristics of the species, I see no reason why they should be relied on as such; and when I find that what have been described as the distinguishing features of the Loch Leven trout are, to my certain knowledge, held in common by the finny inhabitants of many of our Highland lochs, I certainly feel entitled to question the correctness of this mode of deciding upon the species. The following is an extract from an article published in the "Transactions of the Royal Society of Edinburgh," (Trans, vol. xiv. pp. 9 and 10,) with regard to the *Salmo Levenensis* or *Coecifer*, by Richard Parnell, Esq. M.D., F.R.S.E., &c. :

"This species of trout, which is well known to many persons as a delicious article of food, is considered by most naturalists as a variety of the *Salmo f.*"

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CHAPTER XXV.

RIVERS OF THE NORTH-WEST COAST.

Close to the Inn of Rhiconich, the Inchard river discharges itself into Loch Inchard, an arm of the Atlantic. Its course, the outlet of a chain of lakes, does not exceed two miles in length, and is characterised by its rapidity. Sea-trout and salmon, more particularly the former, ascend it in considerable numbers. These, however, travel for security beyond its bed, which contains few pools, and is too shallow and turbulent to furnish desirable shelter. They resort, accordingly, to the lochs and streams higher up; and in them, more especially the upper division of the lowermost lake, Garbet Beg, excellent sport is occasionally obtained. The angler, however, requires the assistance of a stiffish breeze. On this sheet of water, on the 26th of August 1850, I killed, in the course of five hours, thirty-eight sea-trout, several of them three pounders, two salmon, and a couple of beautiful newly-run grilse, besides several loch-trout, of various dimensions. On the following day, the wind having failed, I was tied down to the river, and succeeded in killing a fine grilse, and about a dozen of sea-trout. At Rhiconich the angler will find comfortable accommodation, and a kind and attentive hostess, in Mrs Mackay, whose son Hugh I would also recommend as a useful and obliging guide.

Betwixt Durine and Rhiconich, near Gualin House, are several small lakes, containing yellow trout. Tarns of a similar description, and similarly occupied, attract the attention of the tourist throughout the west coast of Sutherlandshire. They are generally met with in chains.

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and connected together by small becks, which, after heavy rains, are transformed into angry torrents. A minute investigation of their contents might lead possibly to some discoveries, but I have reason to think, in respect to most of them, that they contain merely common yellow or black trout, averaging in weight from four ounces up to a pound. A few, indeed, possess charr; and some, which I shall mention, especially in the Assynt district, trout of superior size and flavour.

Distant from Rhiconich about six miles stands the Bridge of Laxford. The Laxford has always been held among anglers in the highest repute as a salmon-river. It issues from Loch Stack, a singularly formed and highly picturesque sheet of water, emptying itself, after a course of not quite three miles, into Loch Laxford, an arm of the Atlantic. Like most of the rivers in the north, it has suffered greatly from the mode of fishing practised at the mouth. In 1835, its yield amounted to two thousand five hundred salmon and grilse, after which season a gradual falling off took place. In 1849, the produce of the whole river did not exceed seven hundred fish.

The salmon-fishings with the rod are held, along with the shootings of the district, by Lord Grosvenor. Among the pools or casts belonging to the Laxford may be enumerated the Boy Pool, below which is Luib; Nech Beann, or the White Horse; the Fern Pool, now called Duchess; Craig Sciach, or Pool of the Rock; Pool n'Ess; Pool of the Cruives; Garden Pool; and Bridge Pool, or Crackwell.

Loch Stack, out of which the Laxford flows, is justly celebrated as an angling loch, especially for sea-trout. In this respect it is unsurpassed by any other sheet of water in Scotland. It also contains large yellow trout, probably the *salmoferox*, and charr. Salmon, too, frequent it, and are occasionally taken at certain points. It is generally fished from the boat, and the best sport is obtained under a stifish breeze. The loch is about three or four miles in circumference, irregularly formed, and indented with bays, some of which, owing to the shelter afforded by the surrounding hills and rocks, retain their smoothness even when the body of the lake is highly agitated.

The flies reckoned most killing on Loch Stack are of a gaudy description. Small grilse-heck, B.B. Philips, with mixed wings, light blue or orange-coloured bodies, and tips of the golden pheasant, will be found attractive, especially in rough stormy weather. On ordinary occasions, however, the description of flies which, at page 73, I have formed a list of, will, one and all of them, answer the purpose. The Laxford may be fished successfully for salmon both with Irish and Scotch patterns, sizes 9, 8, and 7, Philips. The best season for the Laxford and Loch Stack is comprised betwixt June and the 15th of September. I was indebted, in 1850, to Evander MacIvor, Esq., his Grace's factor at Scowrie, and to Lord Anson, for a couple of days' fishing on the loch and river in question. The weather and state of water were, on both occasions, far from being propitious; but I was gratified, on the whole, with my success, especially on Loch Stack, where, in the course of a few hours, without a landing-net, I captured thirty-one sea-trout, the largest upwards of five pounds' weight; several yellow trout,

one of three pounds, and a charr. Of the Laxford, on the following day, I fished only the lower pools, which were much swollen. My spoils consisted of a salmon of seven or eight pounds, and about a dozen sea-trout. A recent communication which I have been kindly favoured with from Mr MacIvor, states that last year (1852) the quantity of fish on this river was enormous; but, as his Lordship came to it late, and had no angling weather while there, he could scarcely raise a fish. To satisfy his curiosity, however, he tried some of the pools with a trawl-net, and found them full of salmon.

Loch Stack is connected by one of its feeders with Loch More, a still larger expanse of water, which has seldom as yet been visited by the angler. In this loch, trout of large dimensions are known to abound; charr also inhabit its depths. A short way above it, and forming the western extremity of that chain of lakes out of which the river Shin issues, lies Loch Merkland. This lake, if not actually connected with Loch More, by a stream or discharge, is separated from it by a short tract of marshy land. Like Loch More, it has as yet been comparatively little fished.

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Loch More, but is supposed, upon good grounds, to contain the *salmo ferox* and large common trout. Communication with these lakes will in future be rendered easy, by means of a road which is in the course of being completed, if not already open, betwixt Lairg and Laxford Bridge.

The Bridge of Laxford is situated at a distance of seven miles from Scowrie, where there is a comfortable inn kept by Mr Tough. On the road-side, betwixt the two points, several lakes are passed, the largest of which are Badd-nabait, an isleted sheet of water, and Baddidarroch. Both contain small yellow trout. Betwixt Scowrie and Durine, and from thence to the ferries of Hilum and Tongue, no regular communication has as yet been established; but the road, although narrow, is an excellent one. Gigs or spring-carts may be procured at the different inns. From Scowrie to Assynt, and thence to Golspie, by Lairg, a conveyance carrying the mail-bags, and capable of accommodating four or five passengers, runs twice a-week. The fares are extremely moderate. In the Eddrachillis district, on the road to Kylesku, are met with the Badcall river, connected in the upper part with a chain of small lochs, in which charr are found; also the Alten-Strathan burn, from Loch Crokach; and farther on, the Altnaharra loch, out of which issues the Duart More river. All the streams I have mentioned are occasionally frequented by sea-trout.

There is excellent rod-fishing for sea-trout and grilse in the river, at the upper end of the Glendhu loch, during the months of August and September; also in the Altmaldie river, from Loch Leadvuan. The range of water, however, to which the fish mentioned have access in these rivers, is very limited, their progress upward being intercepted, not far from where they are discharged, by impassable rocks. At Kylesku ferry-house the angler will find tolerable accommodation, and a boat to convey him up lochs Dhu and Cuil.

Lochs And Rivers Of Assynt. The lakes in the parish of Assynt are upwards of two hundred in number, and vary in size from fourteen miles to one mile in circumference. Of these, the largest and most interesting is Loch Assynt, a beautiful sheet of water nearly seven miles in length, embosomed among rocks and rugged mountains. The depth of this lake is said to be very great, exceeding in many parts a hundred

fathoms. Although only one island embellishes its surface, its shape is diversified by numerous bays and promontories, which rivet the eye by the exceeding boldness of their outline. Loch Assynt contains the *salmo ferox*, and abundance of red-fleshed trout, averaging upwards of half a pound in weight. It is also frequented by salmon and sea-trout. These are sometimes taken with the rod not far from Castle Leod, at a rocky promontory stretching into the lake. I caught two sea-trout at this point in August 1850. On the same occasion, I took from the shore with the fly upwards of six dozen yellow trout, some of which weighed nearly two pounds a-piece. From the boat, with my trolling apparatus, I secured two specimens of the *ferox*, weighing respectively six and four pounds. Fish of a stone weight are, I understand, occasionally captured by the troller in this lake. When fishing with the fly from a boat, the angler, to meet with success, must throw in towards the shore to the very edge, in fact, of the rocks or gravel. At the mouths of the several feeders, he is sure, on a favourable day, to find trout on the outlook.

Loch Assynt, at its upper extremity, receives the Loanan and Traligill rivers; also the burns of Calda and Skiag. The Loanan issues from Loch Awe, an isleted lake containing fine red-fleshed trout, from half a pound up to two pounds in weight. Its course does not exceed three or four miles. Salmon occasionally ascend it, and have been captured with the rod near Stronchrubie. The Traligill river is connected with a small loch lying in the limestone heights above Innisnadamff, at a distance of two and a half miles from the inn, called Mulach Corrie. It is here that the gillarroo, or gizzard-trout of Sir W. Jardine, is found. (*See Chap. I.*)

At the lower end of Loch Assynt, about a mile from its outlet, is situated a beautifully-wooded expanse of water called Loch Letteressie. Its communication with the larger lake does not extend above a few yards, and is passed over, through means of a bridge, by the road leading to Loch Inver. Loch Letteressie is supposed to contain the

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salmo ferox. It is connected with the Gorm lochs, More and Beg, and numerous other mountain reservoirs or tarns, occupied by yellow trout of various dimensions.

The river Inver, issuing from Loch Assynt, and discharging itself, after a course of four or five miles, into Loch Inver, is well entitled to the consideration of the angler. The rod-fishings on this river a portion of them at least are rented, along with those of the Kirkaig, by Mr Thomas Mackenzie, innkeeper at Loch Inver. Parties residing at the inn can be accommodated with salmon-fishing at a fixed charge per *diem*. No charge, however, is made for trout-fishing, which, in the vicinity of Loch Inver, is inexhaustible. In favourable seasons the Inver river affords excellent sport to the salmon-fisher. In some places the pools or casts are narrow, rocky, and full of hazards; in others, they are easily fished. Both Scotch and Irish flies are held in esteem; among others, the Dun-wing and Butcher. The upper part of the river widens out here and there into pools of considerable breadth as well as depth. In these the common trout are very abundant, and attain to a large size. I had an opportunity, in August 1850, in company with Mr Fitzgibbon, and another gentleman, of judging of the contents of the Inver in this respect. At a single draught of the net, taken by Mr Dunbar, the late tenant of the fishings, over a very small portion of one of the pools half-way up

the river, nearly a hundred yellow trout, along with a fine salmon and two or three whillings, were brought to shore. Of the yellow trout several were two-pounders; the greater part of them fully half a pound in weight. Mr Dunbar seemed disappointed that we did not hit upon a specimen of four or five pounds' weight, of which, he has no doubt, the Inver contains many. The fish thus taken, after having been rapidly inspected and commented on, were, I may mention, set at liberty, the purpose of the experiment being merely to give us an idea of the vast numbers of trout with which the pools were plenished. In the spring of 1850, Mr Dunbar caught, when fishing for salmon on this river, a yellow trout which weighed fifteen and three-quarter pounds. The Kirkaig river, also rented by Mr Mackenzie, is rocky and impetuous, but contains a succession of inviting salmon-pools. At a distance of about three miles from the sea, fish are arrested in their progress by a fall of considerable height, below which, from an overhanging rock, lies a cast of some repute, where, in the event of a salmon being hooked, the most skilful angler would feel somewhat at a loss. Should the fish bolt upwards, for instance, into the Fall-pool, the landing-place there, if it can be called so, cannot be reached without great danger, and it is only by the assistance of a clip or net in the hands of an experienced person that the straggler can possibly be secured; should it press downwards, there is no remedy but to use main force, and save your tackle if you can. From six to fourteen salmon and grilses have frequently been taken in the Kirkaig in the course of a day, by one rod, and the sport they afford I can easily conceive to be splendid. It is considered an earlier river than the Inver; indeed, clean salmon are said to ascend it in December, a period when, along the north-west coast of Scotland, few fish, it has been remarked, are inclined to take the fresh water.

A mile or two above the falls of Kirkaig, and at a distance of four miles across the hill from Loch Inver, stretches the sheet of water from which it issues! Fewn Loch, a fine expanse about three miles in length. It contains numbers of excellent red-fleshed trout. *Theferox*, also, or a large lake-trout resembling it in its habits, and weighing from six to ten pounds, abounds in its waters. Charr are numerous, and take the fly readily. Fewn Loch is the lowermost of a chain of lakes of considerable extent. Immediately above it lies Loch Veyattie, forming, along with Loch Fewn and the Kirkaig river, part of the boundary line betwixt Sutherland and Ross-shire, or rather Cromarty. Beyond Veyattie is the Cama Loch, which is connected at different points with Loch Urigill and Loch Boarlan. All these lakes contain large splendid trout, and are suited for trolling in. Loch Boarlan is passed by the road on which the mail-gig runs betwixt Golspie and Loch Inver. At Altnagealgach, or "The Burn of the Deceivers," which falls into it, there is a small inn, at which the angler may procure night-quarters.

The following lakes, in the vicinity of Loch Inver, deserve mention!

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Loch Krockinaich, half a mile from Loch Inver, and connected with the sea by the Culaig burn, contains grilse, sea-trout, and yellow trout.

The Break, or trout lochs, the nearest of which is not more than one mile and a half from Loch Inver. They contain trout of large size and excellent flavour.

Loch Beannoch, situated four miles from Loch Inver, and about a mile from the road leading to Innisnadamp, contains splendid trout.

Loch Crokach, three miles from Loch Inver, on the road leading to Stoir, possesses trout of superior dimensions and unsurpassed symmetry.

Loch Roe, connected with the Break lochs, two and a half miles from Loch Inver, also on the road leading to Stoir, is frequented by sea-trout.

Loch Neach, or the Raven's loch, two miles from Loch Inver.

Loch-na-Breck More, or loch of the large trout, on the Assynt road, four miles from Loch Inver.

Clash-More Loch, seven miles from Loch Inver, not far from Stoir, contains fine trout from one pound to three pounds. These, however, are considered to take the fly shyly.

The inn at Loch Inver, kept by Mr Thomas Mackenzie, affords ample and excellent accommodation for anglers. At Innisnadamp, also, at the upper end of Loch Assynt, comfortable summer quarters are situated, and the landlord, Mr Macgregor, will be found obliging and attentive. A good boat for trolling from is kept by one Macleod, whose services in managing it may be relied on. I also recommend old Sandy MiTorquil, at Loch Inver, as a knowing guide to the streams and lochs in the vicinity. I am indebted to Mr Horsburgh, Tongue House, and Mr MacIvor, Scowrie, for their prompt kindness in affording me much of the information relative to the salmon-fishings in their respective districts, which is embodied in this and the preceding chapter.

The Ewe. From its source in Loch Maree to its confluence with Loch Ewe, an arm of the sea, the Ewe is little more than a mile in length. Considering the shortness of its course, it is unrivalled as an angling stream for salmon. It was of common occurrence for the late Sir Hector Mackenzie, grandfather of the present proprietor, to capture twenty fish and upwards in the course of a day, all of them new-run salmon and grilse. Many of the salmon taken with the rod on this river are of great weight, exceeding thirty pounds, and they afford sport that one accustomed to kelt-fishing has little idea of, frequently unwinding at a single burst from sixty to ninety yards of line. The sea-trout angling in July is incomparable, and by many preferred to the nobler amusement. On a favourable day, these fish may be raised at every cast. A high wind on Loch Maree has the effect, while it lasts, of knocking up every chance of sport on the river below, which, of course, it considerably augments, causing the fish to disregard every species of lure. The Gairloch salmon-fishings were let in 1836 for \$150 (that portion of them which is carried on by cruives, stell-nets, &c. The angling is generally rented along with the shootings.

Loch Maree is eighteen miles in length, and one and a half in breadth. It contains salmon, trout, and charr. The scenery is magnificent, and no fewer than twenty-four wooded islets ornament the lake. There are inns at Gairloch and Poolewe, near the latter of which the river is discharged; also at Kinloch, close to the head of Loch Maree.

The Gruinyard river, and that which enters at the head of Loch Broom, as well as a small stream on Loch Torridon, teem occasionally with grilse and sea-trout; but they are, like many of the west-coast rivers, difficult of access, and the rod-fishing during summer is uncertain.

On the river Carron, which discharges itself into a salt-water loch of the same name, not far from Jeantown, I recollect having a week's excellent sport among sea-trout, running from half a pound to three pounds in weight. There are several good salmon-casts on this river, but these, during the grilse season, are confined to the reach of water below the cruive-dyke at New Kelso. The removal of this obstacle, and the application of the same system as is now pursued in Sutherland, would greatly benefit the Carron as a salmon-stream. Lochs Doule and Scaven also, from which its waters proceed, might be

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made to contribute more largely than they do at present to the sport of the angler.

The island of Lewis possesses several rivers where salmon are found. Of these the best is the Laxay, but the Creed, Tong, and Gress also produce this fish. The sea-trout and grilse fishing on these rivers, in the event of a summer flood, is frequently first-rate. There are numbers of lochs in Lewis and Harris, also in the Uists and Barra, most of which contain trout in great abundance, and several of them are visited by the migratory species, sea-trout and mullet. A few carp are said to exist in some of these lakes.

In the district of Kintail are two well-reputed salmon-streams, the Sheil and the Croe, running at a short distance from each other. I have fished in both, but, as neither was in trim, met with little sport. In the upper pools of the Sheil, however, I descried, looking down from the banks, numbers of salmon and grilse, and have no doubt good angling is occasionally obtained on this small river. The Loing and Elchaig also are frequented by salmon.

In the island of Skye, although there is no river vying with those of even a second-class description on the main-land, excellent sport among sea-trout and finnock is frequently obtained. Salmon and grilse are also occasionally captured with the rod in the streams and lochs. The waters discharging themselves at Broadford Bay, Portree, Snizort, and Altivaig, are resorted to by these fish. In Harris, the rivers Lucksta, Scant, and Obbe, abound in sea-trout and salmon. Loch Bee, in the island of South Uist, contains sea-trout and mullet. The trout of Loch Tangestal in the island of Barra are justly celebrated.