

Atlantic Salmon

Salmo salar

Fish · Runs the Nith spring–autumn · spawns Nov–Jan



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A powerful, streamlined, silver fish with a small pointed head and a slightly forked tail. Adults returning from the sea are bright chrome-silver, darkening to bronze and red as spawning nears, when males develop a hooked lower jaw called a kype. The Nith is one of Scotland's notable salmon rivers, and fish run it from spring through to late autumn before spawning in the clean gravel of the headwaters.

BEHAVIOUR

Salmon spawn in winter, the female cutting a depression in gravel — a redd — with her tail. Young fish spend one to three years in the river before smolting to silver and heading to sea. Adults returning to spawn navigate back to the very burn they hatched in, apparently by a combination of magnetic sense and smell. Most do not eat at all once they enter fresh water, living on reserves built up at sea.

WHEN TO SEE IT

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QUICK FACTS

FAMILY	Salmon and trout (Salmonidae)
SIZE	Typically 50–100 cm on return · can exceed 10 kg
UK STATUS	Endangered on the IUCN Red List; statutory close seasons apply

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