



What do wild salmon mean to me?

David Profumo



David Profumo lives in Perthshire, and is the long-standing Fishing Correspondent for Country Life magazine. An award-winning novelist and journalist, he is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature and has fished in more than forty countries.

After thousands of miles at sea, he comes forging up from the dark tides toward the headwaters of his natal streams, flanks shimmering with a mauvish opalescence, the vigour of the deeps still upon him. He has navigated by starlight and gravity, and homed in with a miraculous sense of smell. You could never mistake him for some fish-farmed fake.

He's a marvel, a mythic creature, a changeling from our ancient past - starting life as a smudged tiddler, then disguising himself in his smolting jacket, running the gauntlet of the predators, nets and lice of the estuary, before disappearing (we still scarcely know where) and staging a glamorous return - the panache of the exile, mercurial, mysterious, muscular, an emblem of endurance. Glancing up the runs at dusk. A blade at the waterfall. The river's hero.

Small wonder the glorious leaper has inspired so many centuries of lore and literature - the salmon of knowledge, the salmon which retrieves the lost ring, the tribute fish at the founding of London's church. Alevin, parr, grilse, springer, greyback, baggot, rawner, kelt - he (and she, more often the survivor) go under many names, slipping in and out of the phases of their hydrau-

lic saga. Even those late season, rusting individuals have their dignity and splendour and power - what Ted Hughes called their 'epic poise.'

Once, they were so abundant in the Thames that Henry III's polar bear from the Tower of London was swum each day on a chain to fish for his own supper. Now, their populations are fragile and embattled. It is unthinkable the wild salmon should disappear on our watch. But every sentence that begins, 'God Forbid' describes something that is possible.



Discover more about the importance of wild Atlantic salmon at:
www.fms.scot/what-do-wild-salmon-mean-to-me/
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