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Permission

Free.

LOWER LOUGH ERNE**H 10 60**

Lower Lough Erne is a big lough, some 18 miles from Enniskillen to Rosscor viaduct and 37,800 acres in size. In shape, it looks a little like a small version of Lough Corrib and the resemblance continues with its vast area of shallow water and rocky areas. The season runs from 1 March to 30 September and there is a six-trout bag limit and a 12-inch size limit. Trout stocks have made a remarkable recovery in this lough in recent years, due mainly to improved natural recruitment from the streams. Rod catches have improved considerably. There is a good duckfly hatch and even sedges in late March and April and useful flies at this time are Claret Dabbler, Hare's Ear, March Brown, Fiery Brown, Golden Olive, Blae and Black, Bibio and Black Pennell. The mayfly season is without doubt the most important flyfishing period on the lough. The mayfly makes its appearance around 20 May and the good fishing continues well into June. First, it is wet fly fishing with a Green Drake or a Gosling and dapping the natural. Later – on suitable afternoons and evenings – there can be great dryfly spent-gnat fishing. Favourite patterns are Humpy (various), Wulffs and Spent Gnat patterns including Hughie O'Connor's Spent Gnat. There is a big sedge hatch at the end of July and into August and the 'daddy' is an important fly on the lough from August on into September, when wet fly fishing over shallow water is very productive. The following areas are all good for wet fly fishing when conditions are right: Castle Bay, Loftus Gap, Gubnagale Point, the Rough Islands (one of the best drifts on the lough), Ferny Gap, Lusty Island and all along the south shore of Boa Island, Gay Island, Creefin Island, the west side of Inishmakill, and west along the shore from Heron Island and on past Hill's Island. Boats are available for hire at a number of locations, including: Hotel Carlton, Belleek; Lough Erne Hotel, Kesh; Stella Marine, Castle Archdale; Lakeland Marina Ltd, Muckcross, Kesh. Visitors booking a boat for the first time are advised to take a boatman until they get familiar with the lough. The water is becoming clear again with the arrival of the zebra mussel. Trolling for big trout is popular on Lough Erne and the best fish recorded was just over 19lb.

Because of the arrival of the zebra mussel in the lough, anglers are asked to act responsibly and wash their boats before moving them to any of the nearby loughs.

Gillies & boat hire

Belleek Angling Centre, The Thatch, The River Erne, Belleek, Co. Fermanagh, BT93 3FX. Tel/Fax: (02868) 658181, email: cottages@freezone.co.uk; Sean Maguire, Melvin Angling, Garrison, Co. Fermanagh, BT93 6ER. Tel: (02868) 658194; Philip Keers, The Cottage, Manville House, Letter, Kesh, Co. Fermanagh, BT93 2BF. Mobile: 07711 697525; David Stinson, Dreenan Cottage, Dreenan, Boa Island, Co. Fermanagh, BT93 8AA. Tel: (02868) 631951, email: fisherdavy@aol.com; Bobby Bear, Lakeland Lodges, Pettigo, Co. Fermanagh. Tel: (02868) 631957;

1. GLENCOAGH LOUGH**G 87 79**

This is a small lough just over 1 mile north-west of the village of Mountcharles. It holds a small stock of little brown trout and is sometimes stocked with brown trout by the local angling club.

2. ST PETER'S LOUGH**G 87 79**

This limestone lough lies off the T72 Mountcharles-Killybegs road outside the village of Mountcharles. It holds a fair stock of wild brown trout averaging 1lb, and, in addition, it is stocked by the Northern Regional Fisheries Board with brown trout. There is a bag limit of four trout and all legitimate angling methods are allowed, but no maggots. Only bank fishing is allowed and the banks are good.

LOUGH ESKE**G 97 83**

Lough Eske is one of the largest and most productive loughs in Donegal (about 900 acres) and lies a few miles north of Donegal town. Access to the lough is at Lough Eske Angling Centre near Harvey's Point Hotel. It is a real gem of a fishery where, in season, the angler could hope to take any one of the salmonid species on rod and line from spring salmon to char. It is no mean fishery for salmon, and can fish well from April to September. It holds small brown trout but with the occasional fish to 2lb. The seatrout average $\frac{3}{4}$ lb and can be as big as 5lb. Lough Eske fishes best from a boat. In fact, bank fishing is no longer allowed.

Flyfishing and dapping are the most accepted angling methods, though trolling and spinning are acceptable where they do not interfere with other anglers. The late season is the best time to fish Eske and there are few more beautiful settings.

Spring salmon are present in the lough from March. The first grilse arrive in June and salmon continue to run right through to the end of the season. Good drifts for salmon include an area known to generations of Eske anglers, as 'The Ridge'. This is a long drift along the south east shore from The Salmon Rock to a point opposite Roshin Island. Another good drift is close in shore along the north west shore from just north of Moylederg Island to the mouth of the Corraber River. Dog's Head Bay is productive all over.

The seatrout and brown trout drifts are much more extensive. They include those above mentioned for salmon. Then, starting at the south end, there are drifts in Church Bay from the mouth of the River Eske, north east to O'Donnell's Island, and north west from Round Island, past Ross Dubh Point. Next, virtually all of the big bay from the south west corner of Ross Dubh, north past the Angling Centre and as far as Harvey's Point Hotel, is all fishable. Be careful though, because it is shallow with a lot of underwater rock outcrops.

The next good area is from Harvey's Point northwards, keeping on the inside of the island – again beware of rocks. Finally, try McNulty's Bay beginning at Gull Islands, all the way north and around the point to the mouth of the Clady River.

I am reliably informed by fishery staff that this lough holds three sea winter salmon and with the demise of drift netting, salmon stocks are sure to improve. The Northern Fisheries Board has carried out extensive stream and habitat rehabilitation over the past ten years. This includes a new fish pass on the Lowerymore River

INVERMORE FISHERY

'Due to the lack of seatrout this fishery is currently closed *as a conservation measure*'. The italics are mine. FISHERY CLOSED. It's official, according to the approved publication. Fisherman pass on. There are no seatrout left in Invermore.

But, Invermore was one of the jewels in the glowing crescent of Connemara seatrout fisheries!

Every summer it was teeming with seatrout.

What happened to them?

In the late 1970s, the Government decided the economy of Connemara needed a boost. So the Government, with its offer of venture capital and big business, established a salmon farming industry and expanded its forestry programme. Sea lice from the salmon farms infested the seatrout smolts and forestry contaminated the clear streams that were their nursery wards.

The evidence is there for all to see but, there are none so blind as those who do not wish to see.

How do you write an obituary for a fishery? The anticipation of a day's seatrout fishing. The excitement in the breast at a leaping seatrout. Lunch in the stone cottage on the island on Curreel. The wild wrench of the take. The tired creak of oar in row-lock at the end of the day, the ferry boat to Cushman, the memory of the big trout that missed the top dropper.

Every part of this land is sacred to our people. Our heritage. We hold it in trust. Every shining holly leaf, every wave that breaks on the lough shore, every wisp of mist in the valley, every bird, every humming insect. Even the humble Daddy Long Legs. All part of the same family. The seatrout are our sisters. Mother nature.

I know the entrepreneur does not understand me. Land is property. It is there to be exploited. He exploits it, pollutes the air, the streams and the sea and moves on. He doesn't understand that it is precious. That the air he breathes and the water he drinks is shared with the hares, the otters, the badgers, the stoats, the golden plover, the grouse and the rare slender naiad. One portion of land is the same as the next to him. In Connemara, after all, it is only bog. The bog is not his friend, but his enemy, to be conquered and move on. Who ever heard of sustainable development?

There is no quiet place in this man's cities. No place to hear the rustle of the new leaves in spring, to listen to the hum of insect's wings or a frog croaking by a bog pool at dusk. But what is there to life if a man cannot hear the lovely cry of the curlew, the arguments of the mallard on a dark pond or the unmistakable splash of a white trout in the lough at midnight. What is there for the angler if he has no need for a Bibio, Claret Bumble, Kingsmill, Connemara Black, Watson's Fancy or a Daddy any more?

This I know. The earth does not belong to man; man belongs to the earth. All things are connected. There is a balance in Nature. Man does not weave the web of life; he is merely a strand in it. Whatever he does to the web, he does to himself. Continue to contaminate your own bed and you will one night suffocate in your own waste. Our destiny is in our own hands. What's the matter with us? Don't we care any more? How did we let this happen? We were a great little country with lots of potential but we have squandered this treasure. Are we ever going to wake up?

Permits

Shannon Regional Fisheries Board at Tullaghan or Tudenham or see Introduction to Shannon Region, or online: www.shannon-fisheries-board.ie

Information

Dermot Broughan, Shannon Regional Fisheries Board, Tudenham, Mullingar, Co. Westmeath. Tel: (044) 9348769.

Disabled anglers

Disabled anglers 'wheelie boat' can be hired from the Shannon Regional Fisheries Board, Tudenham, Mullingar, Co. Westmeath. Tel: (044) 9348769.

LOUGH SHEELIN**N 41 82**

Sheelin has always been one of my favourite loughs. Its attractiveness lies in the size and quality of its trout, the many and varied challenges they offer, the range of fly-fishing techniques that may be used and, above all, the great spirit of friendship among the anglers who fish it regularly. It had its problems with eutrophication but that appears to be now well under control and the mayfly hatch, for which the lough was famous, returned in 1991. They have been joined by other fly species and other methods and the 2006 angling season demonstrated that Sheelin still holds one of the finest stocks of trout of any lough in the country. Trout up to 4lb were not uncommon and at least one angler had four trout totalling over 16lb for one outing. That the lough continues to offer such superb sport is a great tribute to the tenacity of the local angling association, Lough Sheelin Trout Protection Association (founded 1900), particularly Sean Young and the late James J. (Jim) McNally of Cavan, together with the fisheries authorities and the local authority, in the face of tremendous opposition. Fishery scientists estimate that it has the largest trout-carrying capacity of any lough of comparable size in Ireland – over 100,000 trout – and predict some really good fishing from 2007 into the future. The season runs from 1 March to 12 October. The size limit is 35cm (14-inches) and there is a bag limit of four trout. The fishing methods are artificial fly only until 30 April, spinning and trolling (under oars only) from 1 May (see local notices for bye-laws). The lough is well served with public access points and car parks. There are free mooring facilities at Kilnahard Pier, at Crover Pier and in the River Inny at Finea. The Department of Forestry provides mooring for a fee at Rusheen Pier and boats may also be kept at various private access points, for example, Crover House Hotel and Chambers of Mullaghboy. The lough is 4,500 acres in area, 5 miles long and about 2 miles wide. This is a high-pH limestone water with extensive shallow bays.

In recent years with the advent of the zebra mussel, the roach population has collapsed and pike numbers are also in decline.

The best fishing in March and early April is mainly along rocky shores and exposed points, and favourite areas are Chamber's Bay, Kilnahard Shore, Merry Point, Arley Point, Curry Point, Ross Bay and the south shore of Derrysheridan. Useful fly patterns at this time are Minky, Sooty Olive, Mallard & Claret, March