

## Trout Condition

During this month (August) there will be many trout returning to their preferred localities after having survived the rigours of spawning. Some of these fish will be caught by our newer club members over the next month or two and we hope to help you to be able to recognise what a “spent” trout looks like.

For those who enjoy eating trout they will find that the meat of a spent fish is of poor flavour and texture until the trout regains some condition i.e. body tone and weight. The committee recommends that all spent fish are carefully handled and released to regain strength and body condition for some future appointment with an angler.

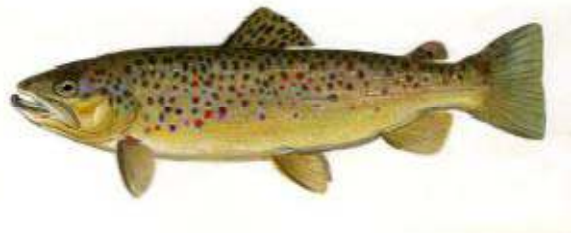
The first clue that you have hooked a poorly conditioned fish is often that the fish makes a single dash for freedom but tires fairly quickly and it will be surprisingly easy to bring to the net. Inexperienced anglers can very often be fooled if a fish looks to be in good nick but there are some points to look for in winter and early season fish that give clues to its condition.

The first thing to look for is the shape of the belly of the fish, if it forms a straight line between the pectoral and anal fins the belly is virtually empty and this is typical of a trout that has recently spawned. In this condition the fish are usually voracious feeders because they need an increased intake of protein in the form of invertebrates and small fish, snails, worms etc. to regain weight and strength.

Another clue is to check the condition of the fish’s tail and anal fins. In the case of hen fish these may be noticeably damaged due to the abrasion caused while forming the hollow in the streambed to lay her eggs. The female trout’s anus will be enlarged by forcing her eggs out of the stomach cavity. These parts of her body will repair as the fish regains condition.



recovering trout



trout in good condition

Many anglers (the writer included) have been fooled by a well mended fish that appears bright and silvery but is perhaps slim in profile. When knocked on the head the fish soon changes in appearance; and in death appears as it really is – a dull coloured and emaciated spent fish!

During late winter and spring, spent fish will be found resting in slow water along the edges of rivers. If allowed to regain their vigour they will transform into the dynamic creatures every trout angler dreams about.