

ANNUAL MEETING - JUNE 1969The proportions of grilse in England and Wales catches

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In accordance with the recommendations of the ICES/ICNAF Working Party, River Authorities in England and Wales have been urged to analyse the catches of salmon made by nets, or other commercial methods, and by rods in their Areas in order to provide more complete information on the proportion of grilse in the catches.

Many River Authorities have responded to this recommendation, with the result that the information on grilse and other year classes is now increasing rapidly.

In Table I the proportions of grilse in samples of the 1968 catches by rods and nets (where available) are shown for some of the rivers in the 5 regional areas used in reporting annual catches to the Working Party.

Table I

Percentages of grilse in samples of 1968 catches

Area	River	% grilse in rod catch sample	% grilse in net catch sample
Area 1	Avon	0	0
	Stour	0	0
	Frome	0	0
	Axe		27.5 (1)
	Exe		6.1
	Teign		25.2
Area 2	Taw		12.7
	Torrige		
	Severn	3.6	17
	Wye	16	17
	Usk	38	
	Towy	10	
Area 3	Dovey	33	17
	Comway		
	Dee		25
Area 4	Ribble		35
	Lune		
Area 5	Esk	27	33
	Tyne		
	Coquet	21	48

Note (1): Data from scale reading of salmon run ascending through M.A.F.F. research installation.

In a few cases the identification has been made on the basis of scale-reading (obviously the most reliable method, but the most time-consuming) but the sizes of the catch samples examined have been relatively small.

In most cases the identification of the grilse has depended upon weight, a fish of under 7 lbs being classified as a grilse except in 2 River Authorities where a weight of 6 lbs has been used. In all cases except the River Axe in Area 1 (where observations are continued throughout the year) the samples on which the grilse proportions are based are confined to the angling or netting season. Any grilse entering the rivers after the end of the fishing seasons, therefore, will not be included in the analysis.

It is seen that the percentages of grilse in the catches ranged, in 1968 from 0 to 48 per cent, but this range of variation must be viewed with some reserve at present, because of the small samples available for analysis in some areas and also because as yet there is inadequate information as to the error involved, in the several areas, in adopting a 7 lb weight limit. In Area 1, for instance, grilse of up to 10 lbs have been identified by scale-reading.

It appears that there may be a trend for the proportion of grilse in the rivers to increase as one proceeds from South to North of the country (i.e. from top to bottom of Table I.) The apparent absence of grilse from some rivers on the South coast (which requires confirmation) is in striking contrast to the high proportions in the most northerly rivers, Tyne and Coquet. The extent to which English and Welsh catches rely upon the older year-classes (2-sea-winters and over) varies accordingly, and the wide range in values of the grilse proportion so far apparent makes a meaningful calculation of an average national value for the proportion of grilse difficult, although this might be justifiable for the 5 regional catches separately.
