

Book review – salmon, surviving in a changing world

Many in Scotland are aware of the importance of salmon to the economy north of the Border, but it is only when you read a book like Drew Jamieson's *Scotland's Wild Salmon*, that you realise the full extent of that reliance.

Salmon, dubbed by the author as Scotland's iconic king of fish, has a huge impact, contributing millions to the economy and affecting hotels and small businesses including B&B, restaurants and even the local sandwich bars and fish and chip shops.

And it is frightening to see in print that the salmon catch by anglers in Scotland two years ago was the lowest on record.

Well-heeled fishermen from many countries, he claims, are turning their backs on Scotland's rivers and Jamieson said that is having a disastrous effect on the economy of many parts of rural Scotland.

He added: "Tourists used to come wondering how many fish they would catch, now they wonder if they will catch even one." The decline has meant job losses.

In his 127-page paperback he looks back at the environmental changes which have contributed to this staggering drop and focuses strongly on climate change.

For example, Scottish rivers experienced unusually high temperatures and low flow conditions in 2018. The Tweed (pictured near Peebles) had only 52 per cent of its 30-year baseline flow.

Salmon is, he said, a cold-water species and needs strict temperature conditions to survive and thrive. He added; "River

temperatures significantly affect the distribution, health and survival of our salmon.”

Predators including seals and birds like the cormorant and goosander also have an impact and Jamieson said there has to be a balance struck so salmon can survive.

The geographer, angler, conservationist and writer said that restoring rivers to their natural state – he focuses on one in Denmark – could be advantageous moving forward and he makes a plea for more joined-up thinking and action.

The book explores how Scotland’s rivers were formed, the position of the country in the global weather map, and is packed with facts, figures and relevant quotes.

It also caters for those not fully versed in the complex life of a salmon from birth to death, explaining the various stages of development of the fish and the crucial conditions it needs to spawn.

Chillingly, he includes a section of a report published in 2017 by the International Council on the Exploration of the Sea.

It concluded that it is extremely unlikely that Atlantic salmon as a species will become globally extinct within the next 100 years.

It added: “However, it is very likely that some populations will suffer significant reductions in abundance.” In Scotland, argues Jamieson, the Atlantic salmon is a mainstay of some rural economies.