

# ANGLERS' PREFERENCES FOR FISHING SITE ATTRIBUTES

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## INTRODUCTION

Fishery managers seek to create a high quality fishing experience for anglers. What constitutes 'high quality' is likely to vary across anglers but is affected by the attributes of, and services available, at fishing sites. For instance, factors such as fishing bank access, fishing guides (ghillies), parking, boating, accommodation, tackle shops, water quality, amongst others, as well as fish stocks and catch rates all can affect an angler's enjoyment from a fishing trip. Fishery managers have good data on fishing site attributes but only anecdotal information about anglers' preferences for such attributes and their relative importance. Knowing which fishing site attributes have the most relevance for anglers is valuable information for fishery managers seeking to improve angler satisfaction. Given an angler's choice of fishing location, this research investigates the relative importance of site attributes in decisions on angling trip duration, that is, which site attributes are associated with fishing trips of longer duration. Such information is beneficial to those seeking to increase the economic benefit of angling as a tourism attraction.

The research focuses on time anglers spend on site and does not consider the effect of site attributes on the decision about which fishing site to visit. Some site attributes may be more important in one decision than the other.

## FINDINGS AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Our most significant findings for game angling (i.e. salmon and trout) relate to 'catch & release' fisheries and availability of guide (ghillie) services. Angling trips are of shorter duration in fisheries regulated as 'catch & release', on average by half a day. The largest impact on trip duration is associated with the availability

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<sup>1</sup>This Bulletin summarises the findings from: Curtis, J., Breen, B., (2017), "Irish coarse and game anglers' preferences for fishing site attributes", *Fisheries Research*, 190: 103–112 Available online: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.fishres.2017.01.016> or <https://authors.elsevier.com/a/1Ua-2biU1dcSV>

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of fishing guides, with average trip demand 1.5 days longer where guides are available. The impact is even greater for tourist anglers, with anglers from Northern Ireland or overseas spending approximately 3.5 days more at sites with guiding services compared to those without. The availability of guiding services is correlated with fishery quality so the result should not be interpreted too closely as one of causation. However, tourist anglers clearly rely on guiding services to a greater extent than anglers resident in the Republic of Ireland. The implication for the development of angling tourism destinations is that the availability of guiding services should be an integral part of marketing strategies.

The availability of specimen sized fish and good access to the water-side are key issues for coarse anglers (i.e. non-salmonid, such as bream, tench, and roach). Coarse anglers spend more time fishing at sites where specimen fish are caught on a regular basis, on average by one day and more in the case of tourist anglers. Maintaining sustainable stocks of specimen sized fish will be important to attract tourist anglers. Coarse anglers often transport a large volume of equipment to the water-side, often by means of wheel-barrows or trolleys. Fishing trip lengths are longer at sites with good parking facilities and with good water-bank access. Average trip length is 2.5 days higher at sites with both good access and where specimen fish are caught regularly compared to sites with neither. Accordingly, continued investment in site access facilities is fundamental for the development of coarse fisheries.

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