

GUIDANCE NOTES FOR GAME FISHING

GENERAL

Game fishing takes place on rivers and lochs throughout Scotland. The season ranges from January to the end of November, and there is always a risk of extreme weather conditions including flooding, ice and snow, thunder and lightning.

Due to the nature of game fishing, it may involve unaccompanied outings to remote areas, and suitable precautions and preparation should be taken. If “lone” fishing, leave details of location and expected return time. You should also have access to a personal first aid kit. Game fishing can be a dangerous activity as it may involve deep and/or fast flowing cold water, and wading and/or boats and rough steep banks. Mobile phones are unlikely to work in remote areas.

Anyone involved in game fishing should carry out a personal risk assessment before and during the fishing session. Please read the summary below to remind you of the main procedures and what we consider to be “best practice”:

1. CLOTHING

- Take suitable clothing for the weather. This should normally include a waterproof coat, leggings, headgear and specialist footwear (see below).
- Take additional layers of warm clothing, and spare clothing should you get wet.
- Wear suitable protective footwear for the type of fishing you are engaged in. This may include chest or thigh waders, wellingtons or robust walking boots. The river banks may be rocky, wet, steep and uneven. If wading, be aware of the best soles for the type of river you are fishing. Studded or felt soles can be slippery on grass or snow. Waders should not be worn whilst boat fishing.
- Safety glasses should always be worn whilst fishing, or standing in close proximity to another person fishing. Polarised sunglasses are preferred by many as they reduce surface glare.
- Life jackets should always be worn near water. The self inflating type is always recommended.

2. THE ENVIRONMENT

- Be aware that a degree of physical fitness is required for game fishing.
- Please take care in accessing the fishing area, and follow instructions. Follow designated routes if provided.
- Seek assistance if you have difficulty crossing a burn, negotiating a steep bank or crossing a fence.
- Use gates where possible and close them behind you.
- Be aware of fire risk in dry weather and avoid smoking or lighting matches.
- Bring suntan lotion and drinking water on hot days to reduce the risk of sunburn or sunstroke.
- Be aware of power lines in close proximity (see below).
- In the event of thunder and lightning, lay your fishing rod on the ground and move away from it. If wading or in a boat, make for dry land and seek shelter (not under a lone tree) (see below).
- Avoid risky river crossings and seek assistance from the Ghillie.
- Be aware of rights of way and public highways in the vicinity of the fishing area (see below).
- Be aware of changing water levels. Rain fed rivers can rise rapidly following heavy rain. River systems with dams may have a controlled release of water, which can lead to rapidly rising water. Seek local advice and be careful whilst wading or crossing.

Lynedoch House, Barossa Place, Perth PH1 5EP

Tel: 01738 451600 | Fax: 01738 451900 | enquiries@sportinglets.co.uk | sportinglets.co.uk

3. EQUIPMENT

- Fishing rods are commonly build of carbon fibre which have a high degree of conductivity. Be aware of overhead powerlines and always keep rods clear to avoid “arcing”.
- In the event of an electric storm (thunder and lightning), place rods down some distance from you on the ground and not on or in a vehicle.
- Fishing always involves the use of hooks, which may be barbed. Be careful in handling the hooks, unhooking fish and please do not discard hooks on the ground, dispose of them safely. In the event of hooking yourself or another individual, seek medical advice immediately.
- Casting on windy days increase the risk of being caught by a hook.
- Never discard fishing line on the bank, dispose of it responsibly. Discarded fishing line can be hazardous to other individuals and wildlife.
- Lead Shot and Lead Wire – Be aware that lead is toxic, consider non-toxic alternatives.
- Waders – if wading, always wear waders appropriate for the water you are fishing (usually either thigh or chest waders) and always wear a life jacket. Consider using a wading stick, particularly in deep, fast, discoloured water. Cleated soles are only safe on grass/mud. Studded soles are suitable for rocky banks and rivers. Felt soles are the best for rocky rivers, and should be studded. Plain felt soles can be slippery on wet grass/snow.
- Always wear eye protection, particularly whilst fly fishing.
- Life jackets should be routinely serviced and checked regularly before use.

4. LOCH OR LAKE FISHING

Bank Fishing

- Lochs are fished from both bank and by boat.
- Bank fishing may involve wading. Be particularly careful on steep rocky banks adjacent to deep water. If wading in a loch, be aware of sudden drop offs, boulders and also muddy or sandy bottoms which may be unsuitable for wading.
- Peaty lochs have poor visibility and it may be difficult to see in the water.
- Take heed of local advice. We recommend that only thigh length waders are worn. These should have a cleated and studded sole (please note that felt soled waders can be very hazardous on snow or wet grass).
- If wading wear a suitable life jacket.

Boat Fishing

- The boat should be fully serviced and fit for purpose.
- Check the boat equipment in advance.
- A bung must be securely fitted.
- Rowing boats should have secure rowlocks and good oars.
- Outboard engines should be fully serviced and secured to the boat. Operators should be fully conversant with the operating procedure (start/stop and the refueling procedure).
- Check there is sufficient fuel, spare shear pins.
- Ensure you have a serviceable baler.
- Always wear a life jacket.
- Do not stand up in boats, particularly whilst fishing.
- Be aware of the weather conditions, and do not go out in rough or windy weather. Rowing in rough weather can be tiring and difficult.
- If fishing two or more in a boat, be aware of other individuals whilst fishing.
- Be particularly careful if employing anchors or drogues. Be proficient in their use and aware of changed boat handling characteristics.

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5. RIVER FISHING

RIVERS MAY BE FISHED FROM THE BANK OR BY WADING (OR IN CERTAIN CIRCUMSTANCES BY BOAT)

Wading

- Pay attention to the advice of the Ghillie if available. Rivers may be deep or fast flowing and the water discoloured.
- We always recommend that life jackets are worn and wading sticks employed.
- Do not wade more deeply than comfortable, for whatever reason.
- Be particularly careful if the river bed is rocky with large and small boulders. Be aware of deep water.
- Be careful if the river bed is fine gravel and there are steep drop offs. Keep well back from these drop offs.
- Wading sticks are strongly recommended at all times.
- If you do fall into deep water, lie on your back, point your feet in the direction of the current and allow the current to bring you back to shore.

Bank Fishing

- Be particularly careful on steep banks, whether rocky or grass, especially if adjacent to deep water.
- Be aware of footpaths behind, particularly whist fly casting.
- Be aware of power lines in the vicinity.

Boat Fishing

- If boat fishing on a river, please refer to paragraph 4 for general safety guidelines.
- Be aware that the boat may be operating in strong currents and take the necessary precautions.
- Take care getting into or out of boats.
- Never stand in a boat whilst afloat.
- Avoid rapids or waterfalls and shallow water.

6. HEALTH HAZARDS

- If you are on medication, please bring it with you. Advise the Ghillie.
- If you are allergic to bee or wasp stings please remember to take antihistamine medicine with you.
- Midge repellent should be carried and applied to exposed skin as appropriate. Consider a head net for additional protection.
- Midges can cause discomfort, particularly in early morning/evenings.
- If you have sensitive eyes, take eye wash/lotion with you.
- On hot days, please take water with you and avoid drinking excessive alcohol.
- If alcohol is consumed, it will impair your judgment and could be a significant safety hazard.
- Hats should always be worn whilst fishing. On sunny days they will reduce the risk of sunstroke. Suntan lotion may be necessary, and should be applied. The reflection of water can multiply the effects of the sun's rays, particularly whilst wading or boat fishing.
- In cold conditions, hypothermia or exposure can be a risk. Please take adequate clothing, and a spare set, in case you should get wet.
- Do not light matches in dry conditions. Avoid the risk of fire.
- Be aware of the health hazard of being bitten by ticks. Tick borne diseases such as Lyme Disease are on the increase. The best protection is to avoid being bitten. Cover up well, avoid lying on the ground. Exposed skin should be treated with insect repellent. After fishing check yourself carefully for ticks. If you find a tick on you, be aware the best means of removal. If in doubt seek medical advice. If a rash appears after tick removal, seek medical advice immediately.

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- Please follow instructions clearly when going from beat/fishing area to another and park in the correct place.
- When travelling in an estate vehicle, please be aware that the ride can be uneven and uncomfortable. Avoid trailing loose clothing which could become entangled, especially in argocats or tracked vehicles. Ensure safety boots are worn.
- If you are driving off road, ensure that the vehicle is fit for purpose, and the driver has sufficient level of experience to drive on the chosen route. If in doubt, seek advice.
- Do not attempt to ford rivers, even at designated crossing points, without prior advice.
- Please take advice from the Ghillie if your vehicle has to cross a deep gully, ford or go up steep tracks.

4. COMMUNICATIONS

- Be aware of instructions and advice from the Ghillie during the day. Pass on any advice to others in your party.
- Whilst mobile telephones are helpful for communication and can be used in an emergency, they should generally be switched off whilst fishing. Note that mobile phones do not always work, particularly in remote areas, and should never be relied upon in an emergency.
- If you are going out fishing by yourself then please leave an accurate description of your route and timings. Be particularly careful if you are operating a boat single handed.
- Follow instructions by Estate Staff otherwise this could jeopardise your safety or enjoyment of your fishing. Ignoring the rules could result in termination of your fishing.

The above is intended as a guide when you are game fishing. Most of these notes are common sense but please do take the time to read them and make sure your fishing companions do as well.



GALBRAITH
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