



# What do wild salmon mean to me?

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Drew Jamieson is a salmon angler, conservationist, writer and Pict - in no particular order. A Fellow of the Institute of Fisheries Management, he served as Honorary Secretary of the Scottish Anglers' National Association for some years. A writer, for the past 50 years, he has contributed to many publications including *Trout and Salmon*, *The Field* and the *Atlantic Salmon Journal*.

I am an 'original aboriginal'. My DNA tells me I left Doggerland as the great ice-sheet melted some 12,000 years ago. I followed the retreating ice northwards together with the anadromous charr and the Atlantic salmon - my companions and means of survival. My Motherline settled somewhere among the stone circles around Inverurie in the valley of the River Don. My Fatherline ended up in Caithness - a "MacSheamais Cha-taich"- Son of James of Caithness - one of the Pictish 'Mormaers' of Caithness based on the River Thurso.

For my people - Scotland's 'First Nation' - the salmon is a god, a lesser god, perhaps, but nevertheless a god. For us the salmon was a marker of the seasonal rhythms of nature and our survival, just as the sun and the moon. The salmon provided essential protein in Spring after a lean winter. Come the Spring we would re-set the yair and inspect the cruive, waiting for the first silver salmon to run up from the sea. Winter was over. We could eat again. We had survived another harsh northern winter. In the summer the salmon provided abundance. In Autumn, whether with leister or 'cleek', the salmon ensured a winter larder for the lean times ahead.

So the salmon, for us North Britons, is not a plaything for gentlefolk. The salmon is an essential part of our survival, part of our essential Scottish biodiversity, part of our Pictish culture on stones and in story - the 'salmon of wisdom' and the 'nuts of knowledge'.

Homage to the salmon-god, nowadays, may take the form of a dram of "uisge beatha" - the Water of Life - as indeed, in the bringing back of the salmon in Spring - the water has indeed sustained life again. To fish a salmon river in the Spring is, indeed, to enter "the drawing room of the lesser gods". One enters with humility, awe, respect and homage to an ancient activity that recognises the supporting - not dominating - place of mankind.



Discover more about the importance of wild Atlantic salmon at:  
[www.fms.scot/what-do-wild-salmon-mean-to-me/](http://www.fms.scot/what-do-wild-salmon-mean-to-me/)  
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