



What do wild salmon mean to me?

Sam MacDonald



Sam lives in Perthshire, grew up on the Isle of Lewis and, after 4 years at Camberwell School of Arts and Crafts, lived on Orkney for 20 years.

This enabled his love of fishing, diving and the sea to combine with his developing skills in metalwork. Sam uses traditional metal work techniques to produce contemporary and unique impressions of fish.

The salmon represents nature and free spirit in the wilderness and the fact that this icon is now threatened epitomises the dire situation that we as humans now find ourselves in due to greed and belligerence. From the audacious precocious parr to the noble old spent kelt, the salmon in all its stages has been a source of fascination and intrigue to me. A trout makes sense and is logical. Cast the right fly, imitating the correct insect at the correct depth, and the trout will try to feed on it. A salmon however has no such logic. It seems to have no rhyme or reason as to why it chooses to attack, play with, or pluck at a gaudy imitation of nothing in particular when it doesn't need to feed. When you catch a salmon it's more like the salmon has allowed you to do so and has given you a gift, so you have to treat this creature with the reverence it deserves.

There is a sense that this fish still holds on to mysteries and we constantly learn from it. It teaches us many of life's emotions, frustration, joy, intrigue, satisfaction, respect and most importantly patience and to expect the unexpected. Even in folklore the salmon dictates decisions. When it was proposed that Somerled become Lord of the Isles he agreed only on the condition that he first catch the fish he was after at that moment.

Growing up beside a small salmon river it was one quarry prized above all others. As an artist/sculptor the

salmon is the quintessential 'form following function'. Superbly aerodynamic and incredibly powerful, a thing of real beauty. It can power upstream and leap through a torrent of fast flowing water to continue undaunted up to its spawning ground. This leap is such a show of force and grit over adversity that it fascinates all and always causes an involuntary gasp when first seen by the viewer. The exciting palette of colours during its life vary from fleeting silver to steely blues and then the rich copper Autumnal tones as it changes into its coat of many colours. The challenge of every artist who tackles the 'good fish' is to grasp, touch, or hold that transient awe that this fish demands.



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

