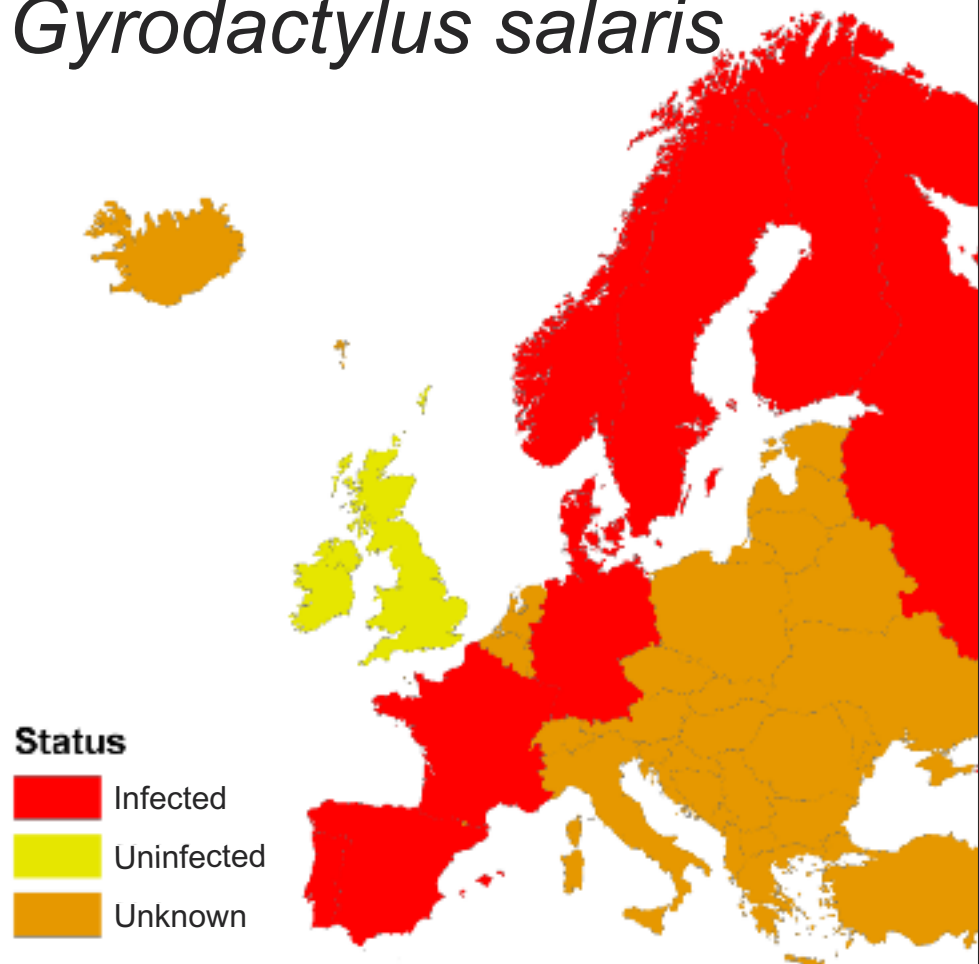


# European distribution of *Gyrodactylus salaris*



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**PLAY YOUR PART  
PROTECT IRELAND'S FISH HEALTH STATUS**



**Be biosecurity aware!**

<http://www.fisheriesireland.ie/invasive-species/invasive-species.html>

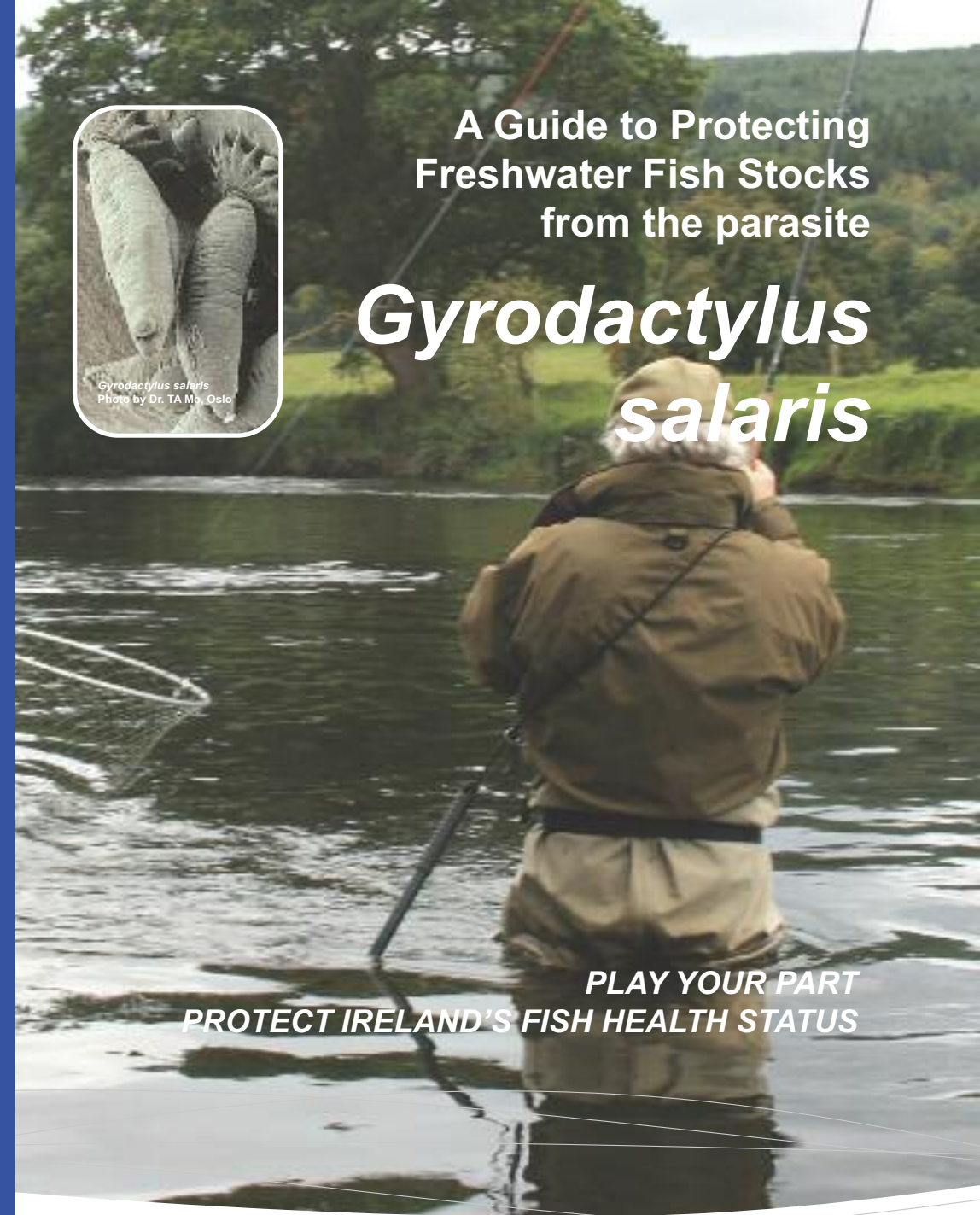
For information and to report

**LO-CALL: 1890 34 74 24**



A Guide to Protecting  
Freshwater Fish Stocks  
from the parasite

# *Gyrodactylus salaris*



## What is *Gyrodactylus salaris*?

Ireland is currently free of *Gyrodactylus salaris*, a parasite which infects the skin, fins and gills of salmon and trout. Many fresh water species are known to be vectors of the parasite yet can remain unaffected by its presence. It is less than half a millimetre in size; so small that it is barely visible to the naked eye. Despite this, it can cause very serious damage to Atlantic salmon stocks.



*Gyrodactylus salaris* Photo by Dr. TA Mo, Oslo

Based on the experience in countries with Atlantic salmon populations which have become infected, if *Gyrodactylus salaris* establishes itself in Irish waters, it could mean a catastrophic collapse of our salmon stocks. Experience elsewhere has shown that up to 98% of our Atlantic salmon parr population could die within a few years of becoming infected.

## Can it be destroyed?

**Successful treatment of catchments is by no means guaranteed and if the most effective treatment is to be used, all fish in the river will need to be destroyed.**

To eliminate *Gyrodactylus salaris* from affected waters, all fish capable of harbouring the parasite must be removed using aggressive chemical treatment of the catchment or part thereof. Such remedial work is extremely difficult and very expensive; is likely to take many years, and has no guarantee of success. Making every effort to keep the parasite out of Ireland in the first instance is therefore the only real strategy from a disease control perspective.



## Is it a notifiable disease?

*Gyrodactylus salaris* is a notifiable disease. Legislation is in place to prevent the transfer to Irish waters, of live salmonids as well as other vector species, which could cause infection here. The current EU legislation recognises the special status of Ireland as a country which is free of the parasite.

## How could it get here?

**Imports of live fish for aquaculture purposes and re-stocking are strictly regulated under Council Directive 2006/88/EC. The most significant risk of introducing *Gyrodactylus salaris* to Irish waters comes from the illegal importation of infected fish.**

**The next most significant risk comes from the possible importation of the parasite on contaminated fishing equipment.**

The parasite is very hardy and is capable of surviving for several days in damp conditions such as wet angling equipment e.g. bags, waders, landing nets, lines, fishing bait etc. The parasite could therefore, be introduced by anglers who visit rivers in affected countries and then use the same equipment here in Ireland without taking the necessary disease control measures.



The parasite can potentially survive on all freshwater fish species if those species have been in contact with salmonids. Care must be taken at all times to ensure that movement of susceptible and vector species takes place strictly in accordance with statutory fish health requirements (see [www.marine.ie/fishhealth](http://www.marine.ie/fishhealth)).

The *Gyrodactylus salaris* parasite gives birth to live young and is capable of prolific reproduction. It is possible therefore, that even a single parasite introduced to Irish waters would be capable of starting an infection and ultimately an epidemic in a very short period of time.

## What can I do if I have been fishing outside of Ireland?

Ireland and the UK are both free of *Gyrodactylus salaris*. Significant risks do however exist, in relation to people returning home to Ireland having fished in infected waters further afield as well as in relation to tourists coming here on holidays with their own equipment, which has been previously used in infected waters.

Prior to arriving here, anglers travelling with equipment which has been used outside of Ireland or the UK, should take the following precautions to ensure their equipment is fully de-contaminated:

**All fishing equipment should be thoroughly cleaned and then treated to kill any parasites by either:**

- Immersion in / spraying with a solution which is capable of killing *Gyrodactylus salaris*, ensuring a minimum contact of 10 minutes or according to the manufacturers instructions or;
- Deep freezing at -20°C for at least one day.

**Chemical solutions which have been used successfully include Vikron®Aquatic\* (1%), Wescodyne\* (1%), Biosolve Plus\* (1%).**

\*These chemicals are available from agricultural chemical suppliers. The use of trade names is for illustrative purposes only and does not signify endorsements of any particular product. Always follow the manufacturer's instructions.

It is recommended that all equipment so treated should be accompanied by a certificate of disinfection issued by a competent professional in the country of origin.

**Please report any sightings of dead salmonids in Irish waters immediately to:**

**Marine Institute - Email: [fishhealth@marine.ie](mailto:fishhealth@marine.ie); Tel: +353 (0) 91 387 200 or  
Inland Fisheries Ireland - Email: [info@fisheriesireland.ie](mailto:info@fisheriesireland.ie);  
Freephone 1890 347 424**