Redd Snapper

UK Redd Identification

This guide was designed with the support of WildFish.

Recording redds on Redd Snapper helps track the health of our rivers.

Institute of Fisheries Management x WildFish. SmartRivers

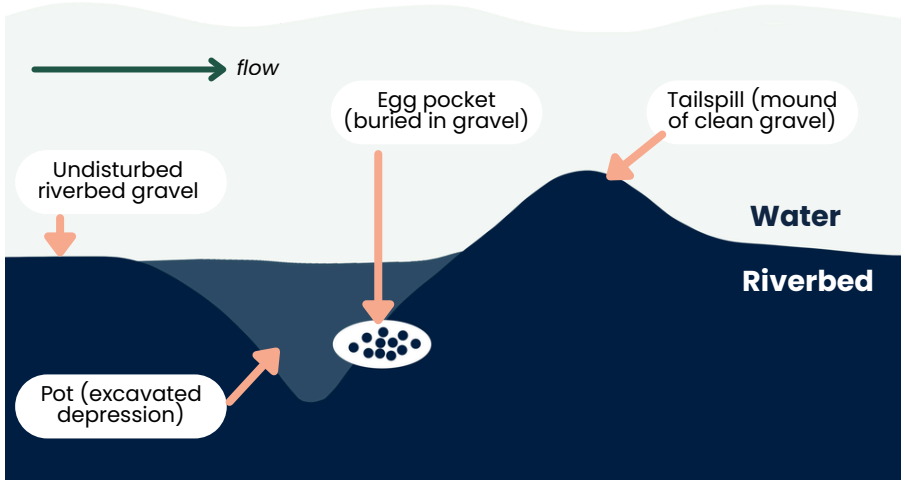
What is a redd?

A redd is a nest that a fish excavates in clean river gravel.

- Fish dig a shallow pit in the gravel
- Eggs are laid into the pit
- Pit is covered with clean gravel
- Result: a patch of disturbed, cleaner gravel visible against the surrounding riverbed

For salmonids, the female uses her body and tail to dig. For lampreys both fish use their sucker mouths.

Generic redd anatomy (side view)



Recording redds: good practice

- **Survey from the bank or a bridge.** Wading through gravel can crush eggs. Even a single footstep on a redd, including one that looks old or abandoned, can destroy a large share of the eggs it contains.
- Watch quietly from a distance if you see fish actively spawning — **do not approach or disturb them**.
- Keep dogs out of the water in spawning areas during the season!

What information should I record?

You can use the ReddSnapper survey app in the field, or upload the information at home.

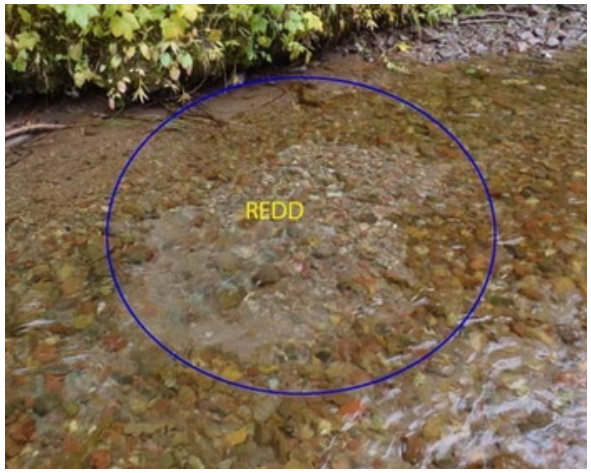
- A photo with something for scale (*a coin, ruler, or your boot*)
- A GPS point or grid reference
- Date and time
- Water clarity
- Flow

Scan to survey!

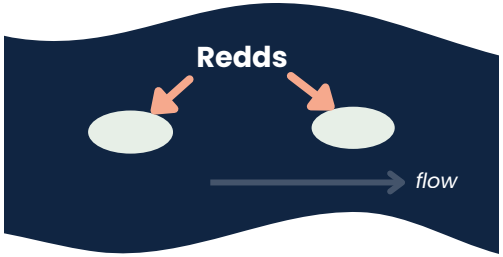
If in doubt about a species, record what you saw and mark your confidence level rather than guessing.

Atlantic salmon/sea trout *(Salmo salar / Salmo trutta)*

Spawning season (UK)	October - January.
Redd size	Salmon redds are approximately 0.8–5 m² and generally the largest redds you will see. Sea trout redds are more variable.
Spawning habitat	Gravel and cobble. Riffles and glides, often mid-channel, faster flow. Smaller sea trout may use the same areas as brown trout.







Redd typical location (from above)

Record as SALMON/TROUT

These redds are virtually indistinguishable unless you see an adult fish!

Adult fish

Atlantic salmon



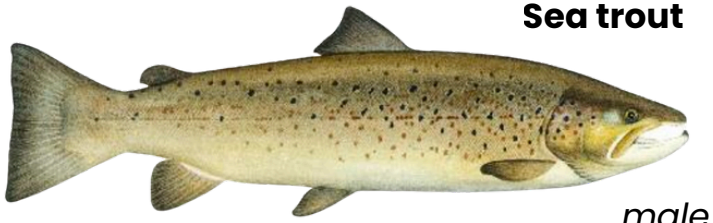
male



© Robin Ade

female

Sea trout



male



© Robin Ade

female

Most are coloured but late-running fish may still be silver-sided

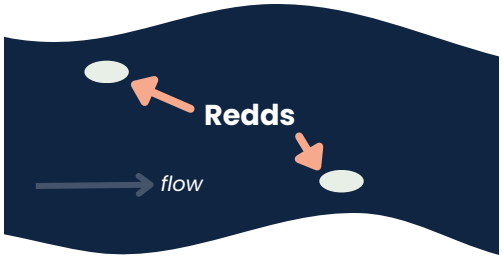
Brown trout *(Salmo trutta)*

Spawning season (UK)	October to January (peak November–December).
Redd size	The clean gravel patch is noticeably smaller than a typical salmon redd, often around 0.3–1 m², roughly 50 cm across for smaller fish.
Spawning habitat	Gravel. Smaller streams. Frequently close to the bank. Multiple small redds clustered in a short stretch of a small tributary is a good sign of brown trout activity.

Adult fish







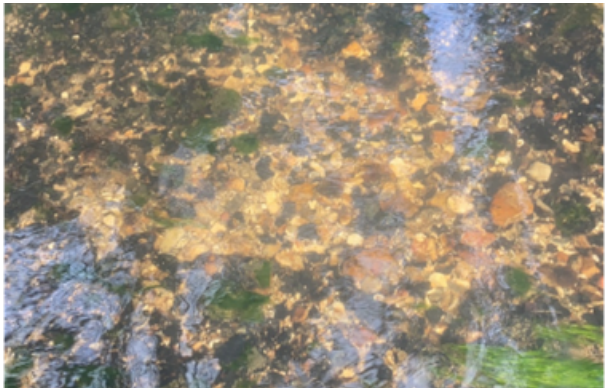
Redd typical location (from above)

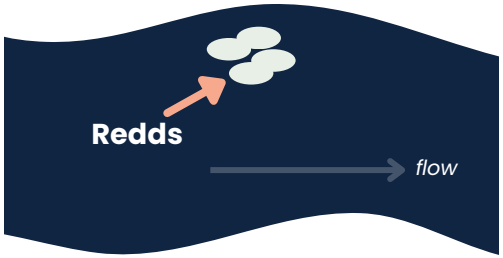
Record as TROUT (species unclear):

Small sea trout use identical sites and cannot be separated from brown trout redds without the presence of adult fish.

River/brook lamprey *(Lampetra fluviatilis / Lampetra planeri)*

Spawning season (UK)	**River lamprey**: April to May (some records extend to June). **Brook lamprey**: March to June, depending on water temperature.
Redd size	Spawning 'ball'. Shallow communal hollow, smaller and less distinct than a sea lamprey redd.
Spawning habitat	**River lamprey:** Pebble/gravel riffles. Rivers with a connection to the sea/estuary. **Brook lamprey:** Sandy or fine gravel bed. Shallow margins of small streams, brooks and headwaters, including sites isolated by barriers.



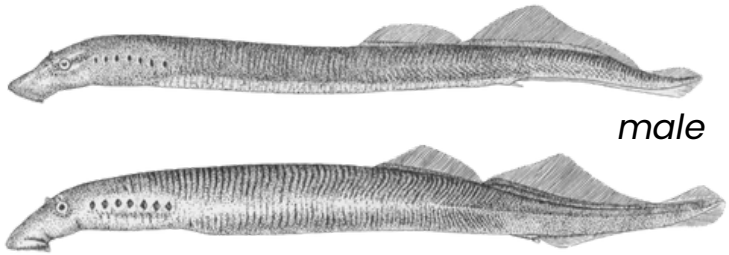


Redd typical location (from above)



Adult fish

River lamprey



male

female

Poll, M. (1947).

30-50cm

Brook lamprey

Look the same as river lamprey, just **noticeably smaller** (15-25cm).

Spawning adults develop an orange-red tinge around the mouth and vent.

Record as BROOK/RIVER LAMPREY:

Redds look almost identical; only separate based on adult size (30–50 cm vs 15–25 cm) if visible and whether the site connects to the sea.

Sea lamprey *(Petromyzon marinus)*

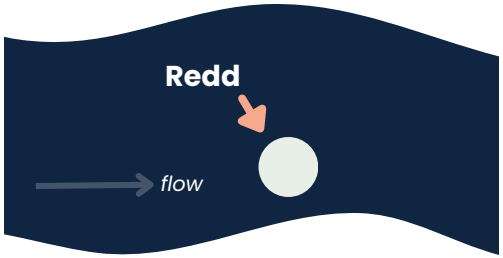
Adult fish

Spawning season (UK)	May to July (spring/early summer runs, after 18–24 months at sea).
Redd size	Distinctive — a circular depression 50–60 cm deep and 1–2 m across.
Spawning habitat	Coarse gravel and cobble, overturned and rearranged by the fish. Shallow, fast-flowing streams.









Redd typical location (from above)

Record as SEA LAMPREY

This is the easiest lamprey redd to spot, the size and depth make it very distinctive. Time of year also rules out salmon/trout.