

Council	CNL(26)35
<i>Status of Pink Salmon Work in Sweden (Submitted to Council by EU-Sweden)</i>	Agenda item: 6.d)

***Status of Pink Salmon Work in Sweden
(Tabled by EU-Sweden)***

Before 2017, reports of pink salmon in Sweden’s marine and freshwater systems were sporadic, low and often anecdotal. The first report in Sweden was in 1974 in Ljusnan, a river draining into the Baltic Sea. As in many countries around the Atlantic Ocean, pink salmon began appearing in relatively higher numbers from 2017, compared to the past. So far, since 2017, pink salmon have only been reported in rivers and coastal areas on the Swedish west coast and during odd years.

Since 2017, pink salmon reports and observations have mainly come from either the fish counter (camera) in the river Ätran or catch reports from recreational fishers (Table 1; Figure 1). In both 2023 and 2025, the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU) led eDNA monitoring for pink salmon in rivers draining into the Atlantic and Baltic Sea (Table 1). From the eDNA results, pink salmon were found as far south as Rönne å on the west coast, which is close to the Baltic Sea region (Figure 1). Though pink salmon have not been detected or reported in the Baltic Sea region for the last 40 years. eDNA detections from 2025 positively identified two new rivers, Suseån and Löftaån, where pink salmon had no previous reports or detections. Pink salmon have now been detected, observed or caught in 16 out of the 24 Atlantic salmon rivers on the west coast from 2017-2025.

The average size of pink salmon across all years was approximately 50 cm. Pink salmon began being observed in the fish counter in late June, with highest reports in July, tapering off in August and few in September.

Table 1: Number of pink salmon reported in the fish counter in the river Ätran and catch by recreational fishers from 2017-2025. The numbers of rivers with a positive detection using eDNA in 2023. The total number of rivers where pink salmon have been reported from 2017-2025.

Year	Number of pink salmon passed through the fish counter	Number of pink salmon in catches	Total number of reported pink salmon	eDNA - numbers of rivers with pink salmon	Total number of rivers reported/detected from all methods
2017	18	26	44	-	4
2019	5	-	5	-	1
2021	45	26	71	-	6
2023	12	1	13	11 of 27	11
2025	8	1	9	7 of 28	7



Figure. 1: Map of rivers on the Swedish west coast where pink salmon have been reported from 2017-2025 by camera (fish counter), catch from recreational fisheries and eDNA presence.

Current projects

1. **NASCO PINKTrack** is financed through the European Commission and national funding through the Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management from 2023-2026.
2. **NASCO PINKTrack II** is financed through the European Commission and national funding through the Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management from 2026-2027.
3. **National monitoring of pink salmon** using eDNA will continue in 2026, conducted by SLU. This will likely be linked to methods discussed and utilised in PINKTrack II.

Concluded projects

1. **Pink salmon in Sweden** was a research project financed through the Swedish Research Council FORMAS during 2023-2025. Website: <https://www.slu.se/pink-salmon>

The project aims were to:

- a. Give an overall picture of the distribution of spawning pink salmon on the Swedish west coast and southern Baltic Sea using environmental DNA (eDNA). Sampling was conducted in July-August 2023 across 27 rivers in western and southern Sweden. Based on these results, there is evidence that pink salmon has spread over much of the west coast. See publication [here](#).
 - b. Determine spawning success by examining whether there are any pink salmon fry in selected rivers. Based on eDNA results from part a, 5 rivers were investigated using eDNA and electrofishing to try to detect if pink salmon reproduction was successful. Surveys were conducted in February, March, April and May 2024. Manuscript in progress.
 - c. Increase public awareness and reporting of pink salmon. To date, we have spread information through webinars, conference presentations, information at exhibitions, stickers, website and social media and interviews.
2. **Nordic cooperation and strategies for managing the invasive pink salmon** funded by the Nordic Council of Ministers, 2024.

This international project was conducted between all Nordic countries which resulted in a summary of the latest distribution and spread of pink salmon across the region, together with monitoring and research work and awareness and communication. The publication from this project can be found [here](#).

Pink salmon publications from Sweden

Staveley, T. A. and Ahlbeck Bergendahl, I. 2022. Pink salmon distribution in Sweden: The calm before the storm? *Ecology and Evolution*, 12, e9194. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ece3.9194>

Staveley, T. A., Hellström, M., Birgersson, V., Hernvall, P., Schibli, H., Axelsson, E., Larliander, L. *et al.* 2025. Detection of Non-Native Pink Salmon (*Oncorhynchus gorbuscha*) in Swedish Rivers Using eDNA. *Environmental DNA*, 7, e70117. <https://doi.org/10.1002/edn3.70117>

Staveley, T. A., Bergendahl, I. A., Bárðarson, H., Berntsen, H. H., Eliassen, K., Erkinaro, J., Nygaard, R. *et al.* 2025. Status and future perspectives of pink salmon in the Nordic region. *Boreal Environment Research*, 30, 149-162. <https://doi.org/10.60910/ber2025.wt02-y377>