

As chairman of the Federation of clubs that surround Lough Corrib, I want to welcome you, dear reader, to one of the finest wild brown trout fisheries in the world. Corrib is a big lake, about 30 km north to south and 10Km east to west in the upper lake. The area is estimated at 176 square km. There are many features that make it such a good fishery. It is cool, which suits the trout. It is shallow, which helps support more life and keeps the trout nearer to where anglers operate. Over much of its area it lies on limestone, which is supportive of aquatic life and of big skeletons for big fish. It is fed by several good spawning rivers and streams, with identifiable genetic strains coming from different rivers..

We are told that the name Corrib comes from Loch Oirbsen, Orbsen's lake. Oirbsen was a name for an old sea-god, also known as Mananán. If a sea god wanted a lake it was fitting that he chose a big one and one joined to his sea kingdom by a very short river.

For such a big lake it is surprisingly hidden. One can drive north from Galway city on the west or on the east shore of the lake and catch barely a glimpse of it. But if you go north from Galway city and then cross the north shore of the lake you will be treated to some of the most beautiful vistas in Ireland. For scenery the north of the lake wins out. As for fishing, there are trout all over, and good ones too.

Corrib trout grow rapidly. At three years they will be between 12 and 14 inches long and weigh about a pound. (While Ireland has used a metric system for decades, tradition-steeped fishermen still use the old measurement systems. If you think in metrics, 12 inches is just over 30 cm, while a pound of butter weighs 454gm.).

By law, only trout measuring 13 inches from nose to the fork of the tail may be kept. A bag limit of four fish per angler applies.

There is an informal terminology for trout caught:

A small one: 13 to 14 inches.

A nice trout: About 1.75 to 2 pounds weight.

A good trout; About 2.5 pounds.

A fine trout: 3 pounds or more.

Children are taught early never to say that “daddy (or mammy) caught a big trout” unless the fish weighs more than four pounds.

The trout fishing season starts on February 15th and continues until September 30th. Most fishing is from a boat. Access to the shore is difficult, the conditions underfoot are rough and the fish near the shore tend to be small juveniles. The main fishing methods from a boat are casting artificial flies from a drifting boat, dapping natural or artificial flies from a drifting boat or trolling bait or lures behind a slow moving boat.

Life in Corrib has a number of seasons and fishing changes to match.

In early season the fish are often in shallow water feeding on snails, shrimp and beetles.

The first big emergence of flies, the “hatch” of flies, is of chironomid Duckfly in late March. The myriads of flies can be seen like waving plumes of smoke over bushy islands. In mid to late April the olives hatch, followed in May by their big cousins the famous Mayfly. From May onwards sedges are common on the lake. In June and July trout often turn to feeding on small fry. TC Kingsmill Moore, the author of “A Man May Fish” famously observed that “July is an abominable month of sun and calm and millions of perch fry”. In these months some intrepid anglers have taken to very early morning fishing with imitations of the tiny caenis fly. Near the end of July there is often another hatch of Mayfly. For the remainder of the year fishing is varied, try it and see being the best advice.

We have our challenges on the lake. Water quality is poorer that it should be, invasive species need to be prevented and controlled, predators need to be managed and we are concerned that Inland Fisheries Ireland is reducing its commitment to managing the fishery. Our Federation is tackling these issues and continues to look out for our lake.

There is also much to celebrate about the Corrib and I want to invite you to join with us. All

the clubs in our Federation welcome new members. When you join a club much of your membership fee will go to support the Carra Mask Corrib Water Protection Group, our environmental lobbying group. You will also get a Cairde Loch Coiribe ticket to acknowledge your support of our work in enhancing stream habitats. You will be invited to take part in club competitions.

Consider this. Fishing for trout on this wonderful lake is completely free. There is no licence fee. Anglers contribute voluntarily. If you enter a club competition, for something between 30 and 60 euro you will have a day on the lake with an experienced boatman and you will have a chance of winning a prize to boot. Where else would you get it? It is worth supporting this by joining one of our clubs. We would love to have you.

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