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Major cocaine haul at Rhine port

Swiss police have made one of their biggest ever cocaine hauls in one of the Rhine ports near Basel. Workers found 70 kilograms of white powder in four bags when they unloaded a container of coffee from Guatemala in Muttenz.

The police put the black market value of the drugs at between SFr7-8 million. They said the cocaine was almost certainly not destined for Switzerland. If it had been, it would no longer have been in the container when it was unloaded.

The largest cocaine haul ever made in Switzerland was in 2007, when the Zurich police found 124 kg in an apartment and garage in the city. The same police force made a 79 kg find in 2006.

It is not the first time cocaine has been seized in a Rhine port. In 2006 57 kg was found in a container of coffee from Colombia.

Basel is the furthest navigable point on the Rhine. Goods are distributed from there to destinations all over Europe.

from swissinfo



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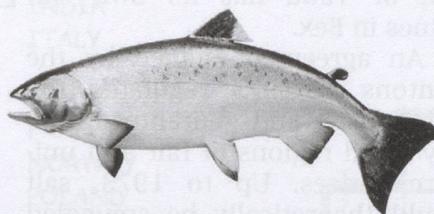
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Hope jumps at salmon's return to Switzerland

The reappearance of a salmon in the Birs, a tributary of the River Rhine, for the first time in 50 years has raised hopes that the fish might be making a return to Swiss Rhine waters.



The International Commission for the Protection of the Rhine (ICPR), which has been working with the Swiss to improve water quality and remove barriers to spawning, said a milestone had been reached.

The female Atlantic salmon was reeled in by an amateur fisherman, photographed and then released. Salmon used to be common in the area but have not been seen in Basel since 1958.

The reason for the salmon's disappearance in many rivers in Switzerland are hydroelectric plants built on the River Rhine which prevent the fish from reaching spawning zones, and poor water quality.

The appearance of the female salmon is proof that the species could return to Switzerland. The individual could spawn in the next few months and there are particularly good breeding areas upriver from where she was caught, following measures to restore the Birs.

Switzerland and its partners in the ICPR have been working together to improve Rhine water quality since the 1980s. The ICPR stepped up its salmon activities in 1987, a year after a fire at a Sandoz warehouse caused a chemical spill which killed thousands of fish in the Rhine.

The ICPR project, which also includes Germany, France, the Netherlands and Luxembourg, aims to have greater numbers of wild salmon back in the Rhine by 2020 by restoring habitats and

removing barriers to migration.

More than 5,000 mature salmon have returned to parts of the Rhine watershed so far.

There are still physical barriers stopping the salmon from returning to Basel.

One measure would be for hydroelectric plants to be equipped with fish ladders to allow fish to pass through. Switzerland and the ICPR are currently looking for a solution.

The main problem at the moment are French electricity plants in the Upper Rhine.

from swissinfo

Der Salm

*Ein Rheinsalm schwamm den Rhein
bis in die Schweiz hinein.*

*Und sprang den Oberlauf
von Fall zu Fall hinauf.*

*Er war schon weissgottwo,
doch eines Tages - oh!*

*da kam er an ein Wehr:
das mass zwölf Fuss und mehr!*

*Zehn Fuss - die sprang er gut!
Doch hier zerbrach sein Mut.*

*Drei Wochen stand der Salm
am Fuss der Wasser-Alm.*

*Und kehrte schliesslich stumm
nach Deutsch- und Holland um.*

Christian Morgenstern

Ψ Dr Veronika Isler
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