

LOWER LOUGH ERNE



Lower Lough Erne is situated in Co.Fermanagh on the western edge of Northern Ireland some six miles from the Atlantic Ocean. It is one of the great Irish limestone loughs and holds an interest to the game angler from the start of the season in March right through to the season's end on September 30th. While the main quarry are wild brown trout the lough also has salmon and sea trout.

The following brief notes are an attempt to help the angler find the productive areas safely and to explain some of the methods used to catch them. Again it must be emphasised that there is no substitute for local knowledge nor can these notes identify every rock or drift on the lough.

SAFETY

Like all the big loughs it is best fished from a boat, although there are some limited bank fishing opportunities. Loughs of this size require the angler to pay a great deal of respect to weather conditions and safety. With the lightness and comfort of modern day life jackets it is inexcusable to venture on to this type of water without wearing one. Equally important are a well-found boat and a reliable outboard engine. It is also very useful to know how to change a shear pin and clean a spark plug. It might seem like stating the obvious but an adequate fuel supply is also imperative as to run out of fuel in a big wave several miles from a safe landing spot can be a lot worse than just uncomfortable and tiring. Experienced anglers and boatmen would rightly be reluctant to venture out in anything less than a 5m (17-foot) boat and 4HP engine and a more common approach is a 6m (19 –20 foot) boat with a 10 – 15HP engine. The bigger engine can help you get around faster and give you more control but if you don't know where you are going it can also help you hit rocks harder!

Many of the above perils can be avoided by hiring a good local boatman until you at least know some of the safe ways about and some of the more productive drifts.

It also pays to keep an eye on the weather forecast. You may start off on a morning with a soft breeze and gentle ripple and by lunchtime be several miles downwind. If you see dark clouds coming in from the west and feel the wind rising you can be sure a weather front is coming in from the Atlantic. This can mean a bone jarring ride home for the angler in the bow and a thorough soaking for the guy in charge of the engine. This is not only uncomfortable but can be dangerous in heavy winds.

If you do get caught out in a big wave it is always safer to head into them with the boat at a slight angle so as it takes the waves on its shoulder. Running before a big wave can appear exhilarating but if you get out of sequence you can get pooped and this is perhaps the most dangerous way to take water. Again going across a heavy sea can be both uncomfortable and dangerous. It often pays to take shelter in the lee of an island until conditions settle down.

Although the navigation markers are principally designed for use by the cruisers and bigger boats they are a useful guide for the angler as well and by keeping to the white side you will always know that you are in relatively deep and thus safe water.

TROUT FISHING

The lough opens for trout fishing on the 1st March and closes on the 30th September. Early in the season the fly fisher may have to use sinking or sink tip lines with flies like the Claret Dabber and shrimp patterns being effective. As the water and weather warm up there will be more surface activity with olive and sedge imitations coming to the fore.

For many the highlight of the season is mayfly time which is usually from mid May through to the middle or end of June. This is traditionally when the trout, including some of the bigger specimens, can be attracted to the surface away from the rich bottom feeding. Undoubtedly this is when there is most surface activity and increasingly anglers seem to be using dry flies as opposed to the traditional wet patterns such as the goslings. A big wild trout coming up to take your dry imitation has got to be one of game anglings most exciting sights. Most of the trout at this time of year will be from 1.5lbs to 3.0lbs with the occasional 'bullock' from 5lbs to 10lbs.

There are many useful patterns for the dry fly angler to try at this time including the ever-popular Grey Wulff, Green Wulff, Humpy and Klinkhammers to imitate the dun or emerging dun. Spent patterns become increasingly important as time moves on and flies such as the Inny Spent, Grizzle Spent and the more modern creations made from Cul de Canard feathers can all be deadly. The trout can become very choosy with both the dun and spent mayflies and it pays to have a selection of both types of patterns in different shades and sizes. On an ideal day you could be fishing dun patterns up until late afternoon or early evening and then taking a break before the gnat begins to come out and fall on a warm still balmy evening. In reality this does not happen too often and the spent gnats may start to trickle out from the middle of the afternoon. However once the trout have got a taste for the spent they often will take it even if the dun is still hatching. Those new to dry fly fishing on loughs may imagine that you fish with just one fly on your cast. The more experienced will usually have two, three or even four flies



floating out in front of them Apart from the obvious fact that you can fish a selection of patterns it is actually easier on the eye to be concentrating on two or three objects.

As the mayfly draws to a close there can be some good sedge fishing in the evenings. The trout at this time will usually then start to concentrate on fry feeding and can become exceedingly frustrating to try and catch!

By the time August arrives there can be a secondary hatch of Mayfly, Olives and Sedges or falls of Daddy Long Legs and from the middle of this month to the end of the season fishing activity can pick up nicely again.

There is a biomass of some 40 –50 000kg of trout fairly evenly distributed throughout the lough but they do move around quite a bit. A bay that one day seems to be full of fish may be practically devoid of action the following therefore the angler has to be prepared to search for the fish.

In such a vast piece of water it is difficult for those new to the lough to know where to start and the best advice, as stated before, is to get a local guide or ghillie for a few days.

The following is a brief trip around the lough starting at the western end, where the mayfly traditionally begins to hatch, anywhere from Rosscor to Stony Island (see Sheet 1). Perhaps the best known landmark in this area is Gubnagole Point, which is better known as 'the Eagle'. Around the islands and shallows along the shores from here to Loftus, Bingham and Round Island (see Sheet 2) there are many good drifts and bays. To the north of Boa Island is an area of the lough known as the 'wee lough' or 'little Lough Erne'. The 'wee lough' has some very large and more often than not dour trout, but it is also not as well charted as the main lough. It is sometimes a more sheltered route westward but anglers should stick to the Boa shore as the northern or Letter shore is a mass of rocks and requires careful navigation. The Lusty Islands (see Sheet 3) and the surrounding islets such as Screegan (often known as Gull Island) can be very productive throughout the season. There is wealth of fishing from Kesh Bay (see Sheet 4) around the shorelines and islands although anglers should be aware that the area around Muckcross and Drumrush can attract a lot of water sports. I know from personal experience why Gubbaroe Point is also known as Cape Horn (something to do with very rough water conditions!) but there are some very nice sheltered bays once you are in behind the islands. Castle Archdale (see Sheet 5) provides more interesting and productive shallows. As you move further south of Inish Garve (see Sheet 6) right down to Car Island the lough becomes narrower and there is increased cruiser traffic but with the improved water clarity this has now become an interesting area for the fly fisher. Heron Island and Tully Castle (see Sheet 7) were known as old salmon lies but they are also fine trout fishing ground.

Trolling is another way to take trout and is perhaps the most likely way to get hold of one of the monster fish the Lough holds. In the 90's the Ferox 85 Group visited Lower Lough Erne and from their short stay was convinced there was the possibility of a record trout. There have been several trout caught in the high teens of pounds and lures like the Tasmanian Devil and Rapalas can be very productive.

SALMON FISHING

There has been a considerable amount of work carried out to try and reestablish a significant salmon population with last year seeing a substantial run. The occasional salmon and grilse have been taken on wet flies especially around the area from Rosscor to Ferny Island (see Sheet 1). The south shore from Hills Island down to Heron Island and Tully Castle (see Sheets 1, 2 & 7) is the most likely spot to take a salmon on the troll.

FLY FISHING FOR PIKE

There is a good head of pike and they can provide great sport on a trout rod. Fly-fishing for this superb predatory fish has become increasingly popular with the use of big streamer like flies such as the Ballydoolagh Bomber. When the trout are off the angler can have great fun in a number of bays such as those in Castle Caldwell (see Sheet 1) although it is important to have the right equipment and know how to safely handle *Esox Lucious*.

GHILLIES & BOATHIRE

Belleek Angling centre

The Thatch, The River Erne, Belleek, Co. Fermanagh, N. Ireland BT93 3FX
Tel/Fax. 028 686 58181; e-mail cottages@freezone.co.uk

Sean Maguire

Melvin Angling, Garrison, Co.Fermanagh, BT93 6ER
Tel 028 686 58194

Philip Keers

The cottage, Manville house, Letter, Kesh, Co. Fermanagh, BT93 2BF
Tel. 07711 697525

David Stinson

Dreenan Cottage, Dreenan, Boa Island, Co. Fermanagh, BT93 8AA,
Tel. 028 686 31951, e-mail fisherdavy@aol.com

ANGLING HOLIDAY ORGANISERS
.....**Michael Short**

Qualified Fly Casting Instructor, Flatfield Fly Fishing, Flatfield, Sydare,
Ballinamallard, BT94 2DU,
Tel 028 66 388184

John Todd

Gillaroo Angles, 7 Cooleen Park, Jordanstown, Co. Antrim BT37 ORR.
Tel. 028 90 862419

Sean Maguire

Melvin Angling, Garrison, Co. Fermanagh, BT93 4ER,
Tel 028 686 58194

Davy Stinson

Dreenan Cottage, Dreenan, Boa island, Co.Fermanagh, BT93 8AA
Tel. 028 686 31951, e-mail fisherdavy@aol.com

Belleek Angling Centre

The Thatch, The river Erne, Belleek, Co. Fermanagh, N. Ireland BT93 3FX
Tel/Fax 028 686 58181; e-mail cottages@freezone.co.uk

TACKLE SHOPS & FLY TYERS
.....**Frankie McPhillips**

Fly Dresser, The Buttermarket Craft Centre, Down Street, Enniskillen,
Tel. 028 66 323047, e-mail fmcphillips@swiftsoft.net

Sean Maguire

Melvin angling, Garrison, Co. Fermanagh,
Tel 028 68658194

Belleek Angling Centre

The Thatch, The River Erne, Belleek, Co. Fermanagh, N. Ireland, BT93 3FX,
Tel/Fax 028 686 58181, e-mail cottages@freezone.co.uk

Home Field & Stream

18 Church street, Enniskillen,
Tel 028 66 322114, Fax 028 66 327335

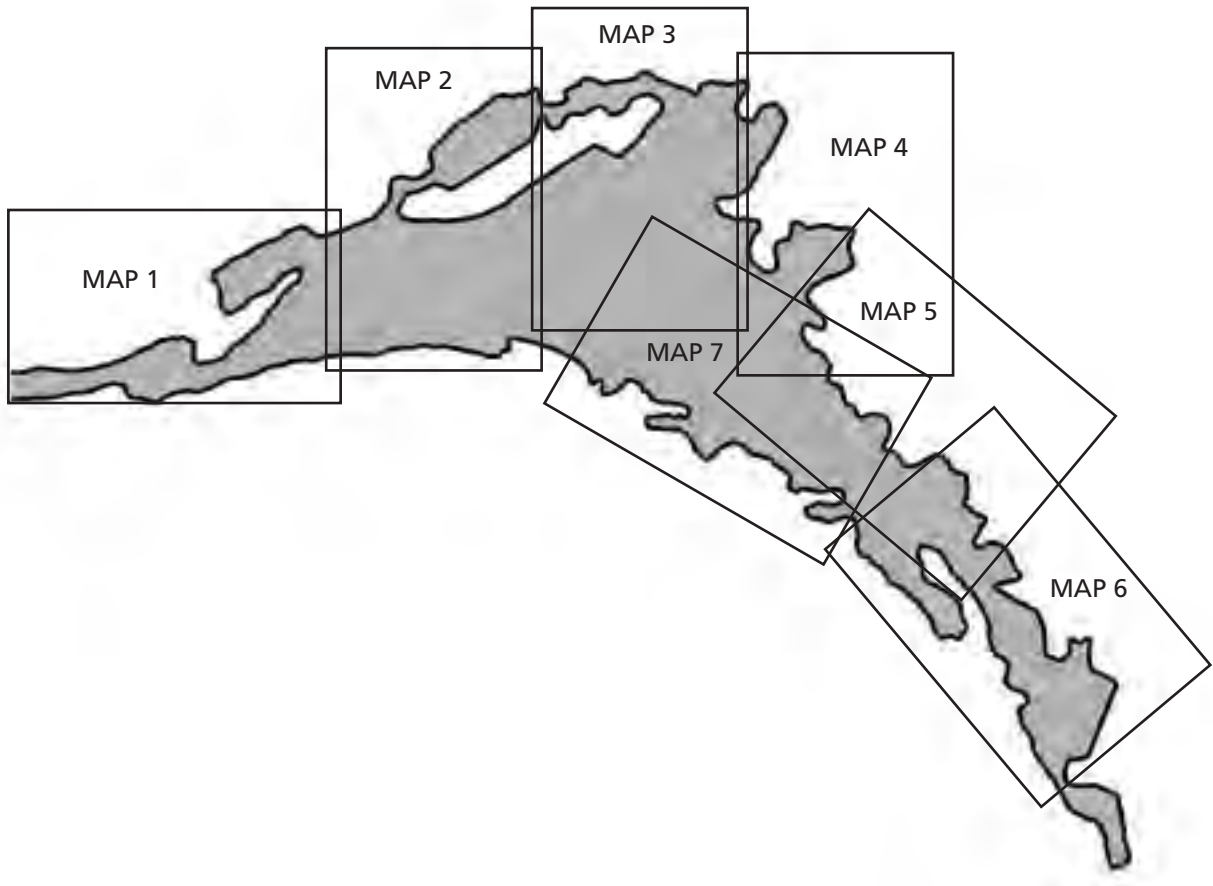
Mullen's Pet & Shooting Supplies

Unit 3, Scotch store bridge, Sligo road,
Enniskillen Tel 028 66 324975

Country Sports

52 Drumadavey Road, Irvinestown,
Co. Fermanagh, N. Ireland.
Tel/Fax 028 686 21788





Access Guide - Lower Lough Erne Sh 1



Public Launching Point

Warning

Lough becomes rough in strong winds

Scale: 1:25 000
(approx 2.5 ins - 1 Mile or 1cm - 0.25 Kms)

Based on OSNI Lower Lough Erne Outdoor Pursuit Map. Permit No 1154
Produced by Ordnance Survey of Northern Ireland
© Crown Copyright 1998

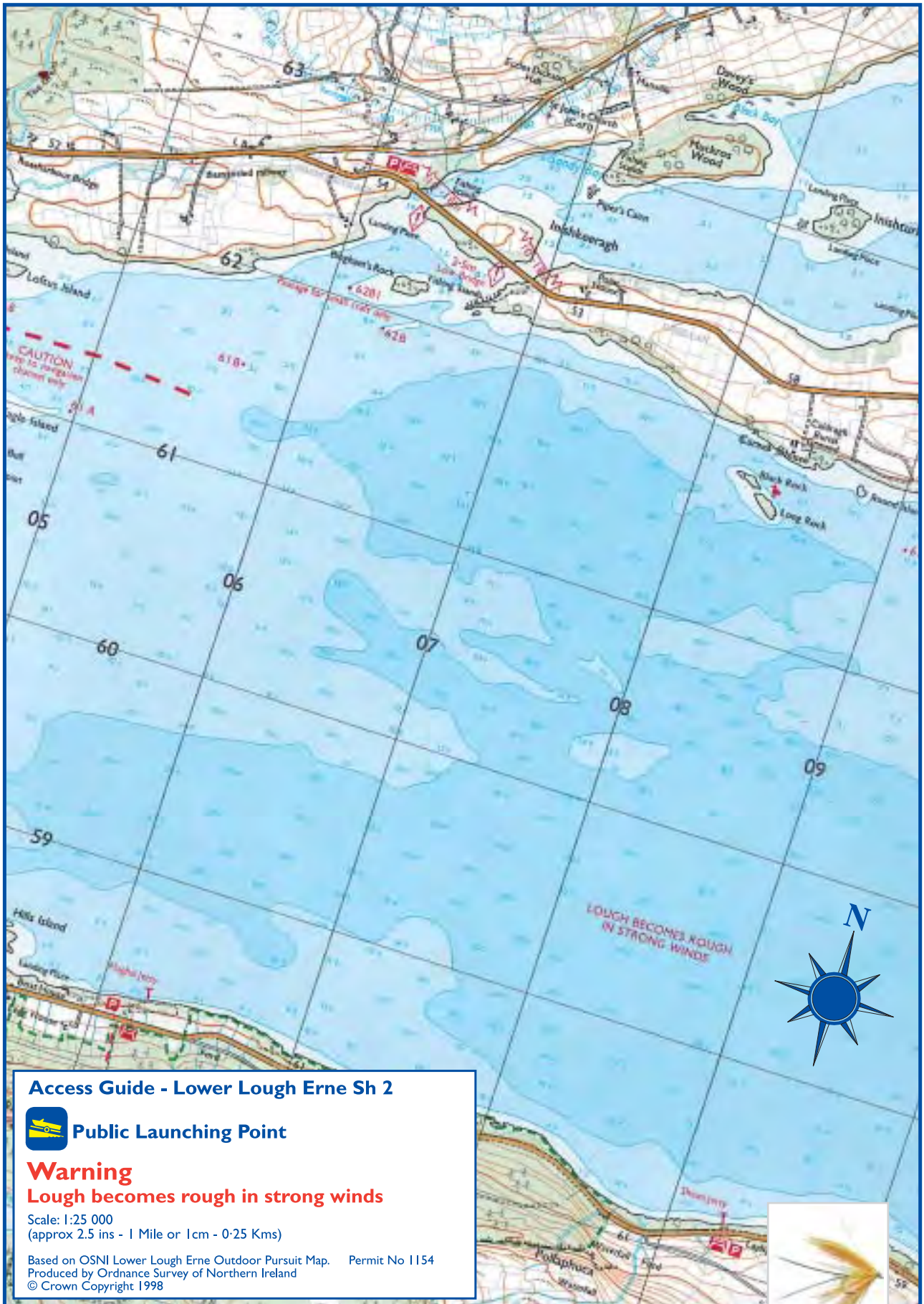


Traditionally the mayfly fishing starts from around the middle of May from Ferry Island westwards. Also good fly fishing around Buck, Gravelly and Croghan's Islands as well as Gubnagole Point. ('The Eagle')



LOUGH ERNE GOSLING

| | |
|---------|--|
| TAIL | Three Fibres Cock Pheasant Tail |
| BODY | Medium Olive Seal's Fur |
| RIB | Oval Gold |
| HACKLES | i) Scarlet Cock ii) Grey Speckled Mallard dyed yellow |



Access Guide - Lower Lough Erne Sh 2



Public Launching Point

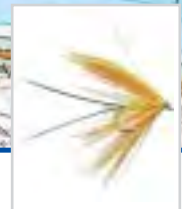
Warning

Lough becomes rough in strong winds

Scale: 1:25 000
(approx 2.5 ins - 1 Mile or 1cm - 0.25 Kms)

Based on OSNI Lower Lough Erne Outdoor Pursuit Map. Permit No 1154
Produced by Ordnance Survey of Northern Ireland
© Crown Copyright 1998

Good drifts from Loftus Island along the northern shore to Round Island in a south west to west wind. Southern shore is often more suited to trolling.



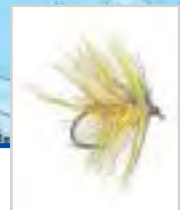


GOLDEN OLIVE BUMBLE

| | |
|------------------|--|
| TAIL | Golden Pheasant Topping |
| BODY | Golden Olive Seal's Fur |
| RIB | Oval Gold |
| BODY HACKLES | Golden Olive and natural medium Red Cock |
| SHOULDER HACKLES | Two Turns of Blue Jay |



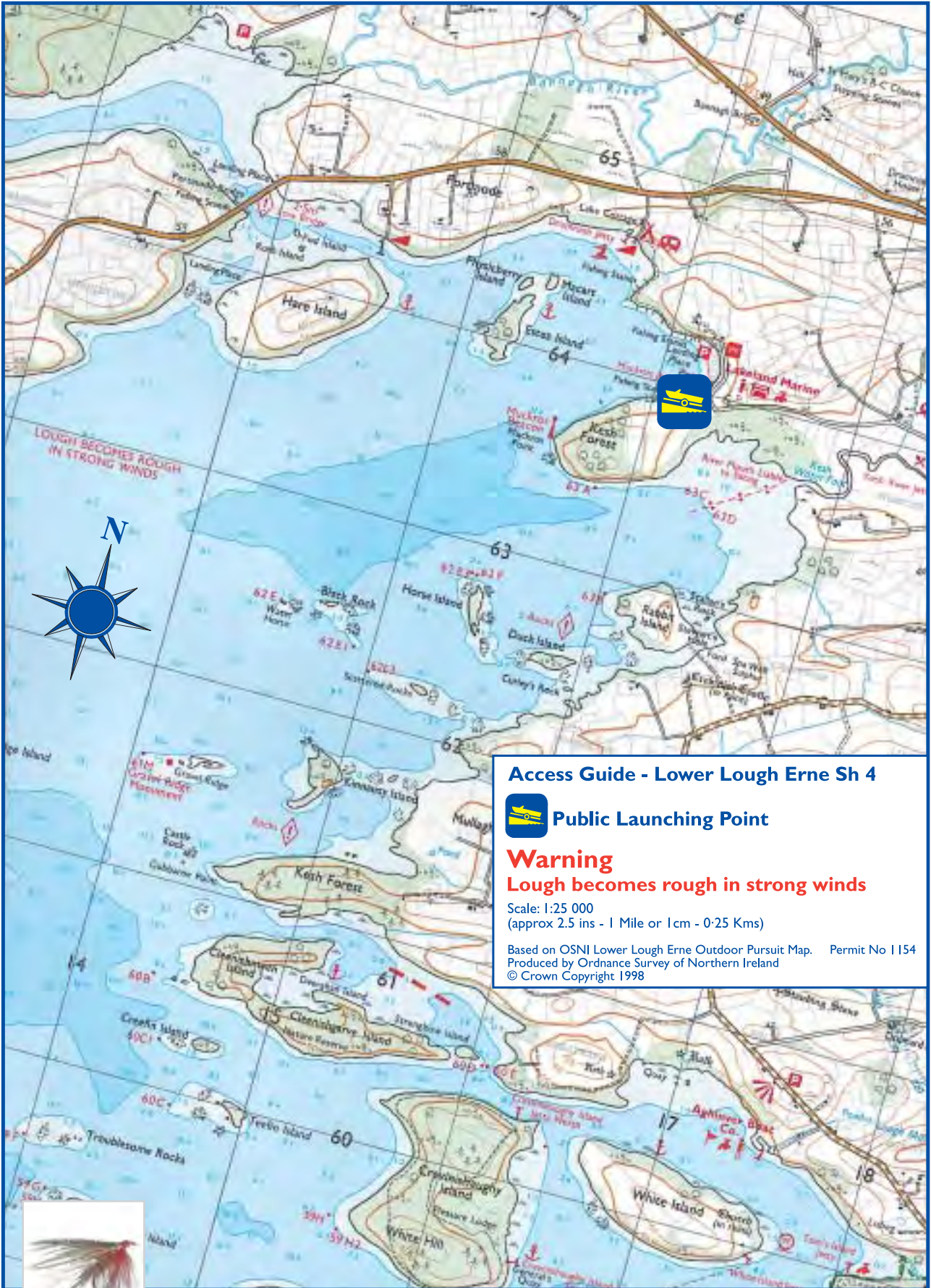
Excellent fly fishing opportunities around all the islands to the south of Boa Island. Both Lusty More and Lusty Beg can provide shelter from strong winds.






CLARET DABBLER

| | |
|---------|----------------------------------|
| TAIL | Golden Pheasant Cock Tail Fibres |
| BODY | Claret Seal's Fur |
| RIB | Oval Gold |
| HACKLES | Claret Cock |
| WING | Bronze Mallard tied all round |



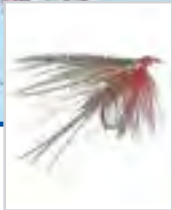
Access Guide - Lower Lough Erne Sh 4

 **Public Launching Point**

Warning
Lough becomes rough in strong winds

Scale: 1:25 000
 (approx 2.5 ins - 1 Mile or 1cm - 0.25 Kms)

Based on OSNI Lower Lough Erne Outdoor Pursuit Map. Permit No 1154
 Produced by Ordnance Survey of Northern Ireland
 © Crown Copyright 1998



Good fly fishing opportunities around all the islands although from Hare Island to Muckross Point can become busy with watersports activities. It can become rough around Gubbaroe Point in strong winds.



FIERY BROWN

| | |
|--------|-------------------------|
| TAIL | Golden Pheasant Tippets |
| BODY | Fiery Brown Seal's Fur |
| RIB | Oval Gold |
| HACKLE | Fiery Brown |
| WING | Bronze Mallard |



Access Guide - Lower Lough Erne Sh 5



Public Launching Point

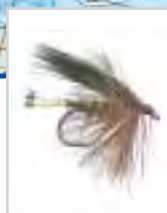
Warning

Lough becomes rough in strong winds

Scale: 1:25 000

(approx 2.5 ins - 1 Mile or 1cm - 0.25 Kms)

Based on OSNI Lower Lough Erne Outdoor Pursuit Map. Permit No 1154
Produced by Ordnance Survey of Northern Ireland
© Crown Copyright 1998

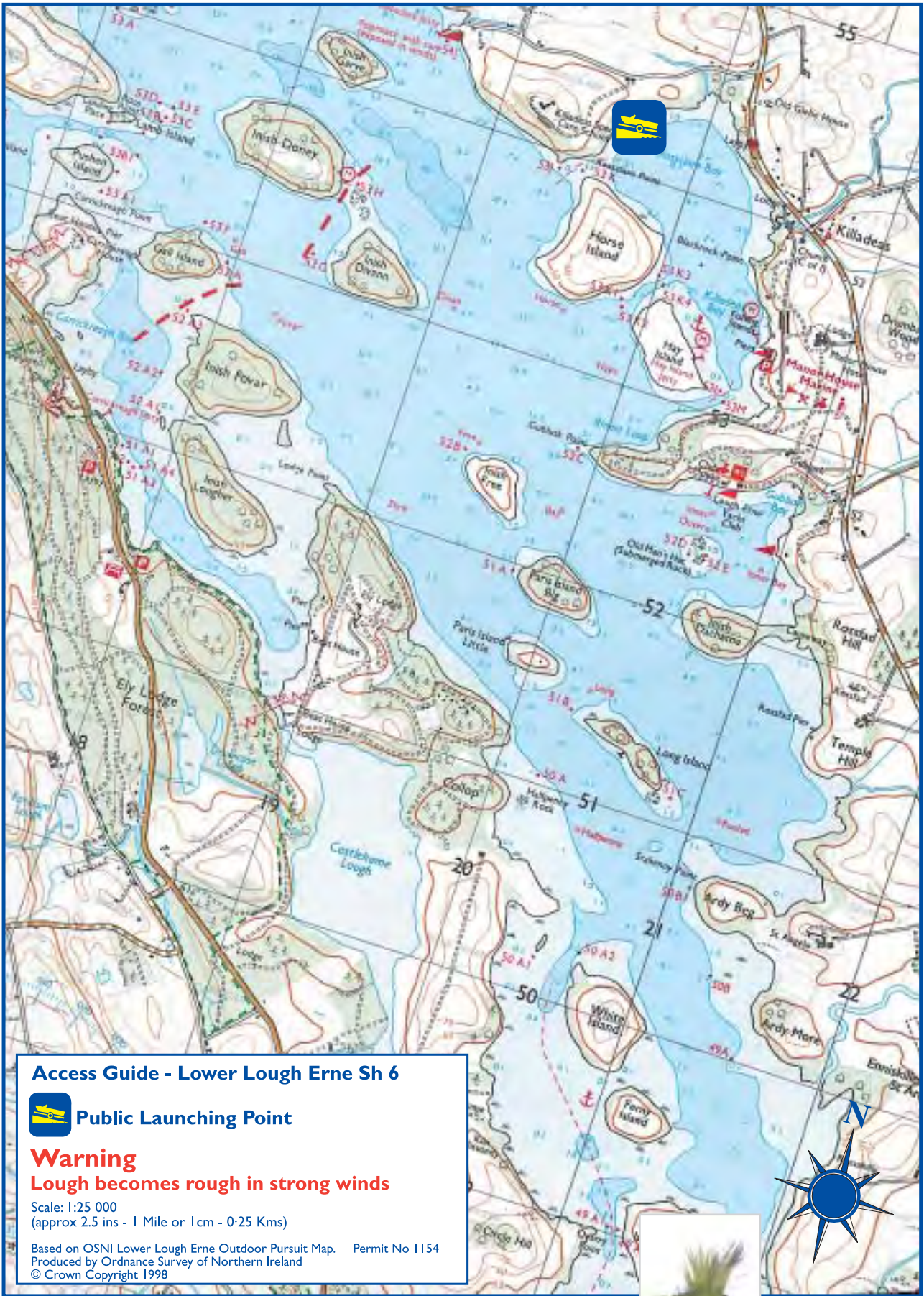


Good trout fishing around the shallows on the eastern shore near Castledale and around the islands.




GREEN WULFF

| | |
|---------|------------------------|
| TAIL | Brown Squirrel Hair |
| BODY | Pea Green Seal's Fur |
| RIB | Oval Gold |
| HACKLES | Two Green Cock Hackles |
| WING | Brown Squirrel Hair |



Access Guide - Lower Lough Erne Sh 6

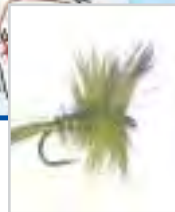
 **Public Launching Point**

Warning
Lough becomes rough in strong winds

Scale: 1:25 000
 (approx 2.5 ins - 1 Mile or 1cm - 0.25 Kms)

Based on OSNI Lower Lough Erne Outdoor Pursuit Map. Permit No 1154
 Produced by Ordnance Survey of Northern Ireland
 © Crown Copyright 1998

As the lough is narrower here the angler may expect more contact with cruisers however trout can still be caught around the islands and in the shallows.





DADDY LONG LEGS

| | |
|---------|---------------------------------------|
| BODY | Golden Pheasant Tail Cock Fibres |
| RIB | Fine Oval Gold |
| HACKLES | Two Natural Red Game |
| LEGS | Six Knotted Cock Pheasant Tail Fibres |
| WINGS | Two Grizzle Hackle Points |



The area around Heron Island and Tully Castle is an old salmon lie and there are trout in the shallows.





BADGER SPENT GNAT

| | |
|---------|----------------------------------|
| TAIL | Golden Pheasant Cock Tail Fibres |
| RIB | Fine Oval Gold |
| BODY | Grey Seal's Fur or Dubbing |
| HACKLES | Two Badger Cock Hackles |
| WING | Two Black Cock Hackle Points |