

Who says fishing is not for girls?

ABOUT once a year, I suggest to my wife that she gives fishing a try.

I usually pop that question around mid-May when trout fishing is at its peak and I'm out at every opportunity.

To be honest, I'm probably salving my conscience because I'm spending so much time by the water and would get the shock of my life if she actually said Yes.

That's just what Debbie Johnston did when partner Neil invited her to give angling a go – and six years on, she's a self-confessed fishing obsessive.

There are some terrific female anglers out there, but it's a fact they are still in a tiny minority.

Shopping

Debbie reckons women are missing out and wants to put that right, starting with a reassurance that being an angler and being feminine does mix.

She said: "My favourite colour is pink and I enjoy shopping, handbags, high heels and socialising like any other 28-year-old girl. That doesn't mean I can't spey cast, double haul or know my improved clinch knot from my blood knot!"

Fishing has taken Debbie, from Glasgow, to some of the world's top fishing spots. She told me:



SPEY TO GO . . . Debbie casting on the Aberdeenshire Dee

"Among my proudest moments have been landing a stunning 12lb sockeye from Quartz Creek, Alaska, and 2lb marble trout from the Tolminka River, Slovenia."

But she is equally at home on Glasgow's River Kelvin and Coyle Water fishery near Ayr, where the bacon sandwiches are as welcome as the hard-fighting fish.

She is in no doubt why she meets so few other women anglers on her travels.

Debbie said: "Whether it be magazines, on TV, in the tackle shop or by the waterside, guys are the dominant sex when it comes to angling. It's time to break tradition and get the girls outside

with a fly rod. Wipe out those preconceived ideas, get out there, give it a go, enjoy the challenge. The anticipation, excitement, challenge, and outdoors give you feelings you'll never forget. It's a great way to travel, meet new people and make friends for life."

Debbie offers a practical reason why men should encourage their partners. She said: "You can enjoy the same experiences and help each other. Imagine being pulled round fishing stores instead of shoe shops!"

● Debbie organises fishing packages to Slovenia. Check out details and other great features on her website – www.reelbacking.com.

DEBBIE'S FLY REHAB PLAN

AS a nurse involved in the care of the physically disabled, Debbie Johnston believes fly-fishing can play another role — as part of a rehabilitation programme.

She explained: "I would love to help people with any disability.

"Fishing can help not only mentally with the challenge, fresh air and social side but help tone the upper body. Physiotherapy could mean getting outside, meeting new

people, relaxing, enjoying a new challenge and getting healthier as opposed to being stuck in a room."

Debbie, *pictured right*, added: "Most trout fisheries now seem to cater for people who require wheelchairs.

"So once the better weather arrives in 2009, I am hoping to take patients from my ward to a trout fishery to make their rehab easier and faster."



Stories, pics, reports and Prize Catch entries to: scotfish@the-sun.co.uk