



## **Director's Report September Board Meeting 2012.**

### ***Bailiffing***

Bailiffing patrols took place throughout the summer. There were problems with the boat engine which were eventually diagnosed and repaired by early August. Foot and sea kayak patrols took place as well as river canoe patrols.

An illegal gill net was seized on the Black Isle. By late August, bailiffs had dealt with 18 incidents and 4 arrests had been made. One of the arrests made was related to large scale commercial poaching.

A liaison meeting was held with the new Chief Superintendent at Dingwall to improve collaboration between bailiffs and police. New Wildlife Liaison Officers are to be appointed and will work with bailiffs to coordinate activities.

There were pollution incidents on the Allt Graad, Bran and Blackwater. In the two most serious of these SEPA are considering prosecution.

### ***Website***

A new website has been created with support from ASFB. The site is at [www.cromarty.dsfb.org.uk](http://www.cromarty.dsfb.org.uk). It is live but still under development. The site gives public access to important strategic documents such as the Fishery Management and Biosecurity plans as well as regular news updates and reports.

## ***Projects / research***

### ***Peffery***

The Conservation Volunteers and Dingwall Environment Group are working to restore diversity to the instream habitat of the River Peffery. The works involve the installation of timber and stone to create meanders and variation in flow and depth. This project is supported by funding from the SEPA restoration fund and help from the Moray Firth Sea Trout Project.

### ***Electro-fishing***

A number of electro-fishing projects took place this summer;

A fry index survey of the Allt Graad was completed in June.

A survey of juvenile salmon in the Orrin and Blackwater was undertaken by Marine Scotland Science. This is part of a project to monitor the effects of flow regimes on salmon production.

Sea trout spawning burns were surveyed for the Moray Firth Sea Trout Project.

Electro-fishing to sample juvenile salmon for the joint Glasgow University / Marine Scotland Science project took place.

Monitoring of the status of salmon stocks upstream of the Corrie Feol Fish pass on the River Meig found salmon parr at an increased number of sites. There were also wild spawned salmon fry found at more sites than last year.

### ***Riverfly monitoring***

A series of Riverfly monitoring sites have been set up throughout the region and are being sampled monthly by anglers, ghillies and Fishery Board staff. The data is supplied to SEPA and is used to help monitor the water quality of our regions rivers.

### ***Invasive alien plant species***

This year's clearance of giant hogweed was completed on the Balanagown. Mature hogweed plants were cut before flowering by TCV and Cromarty DSFB staff. Non-mature plants were sprayed with glyphosate.

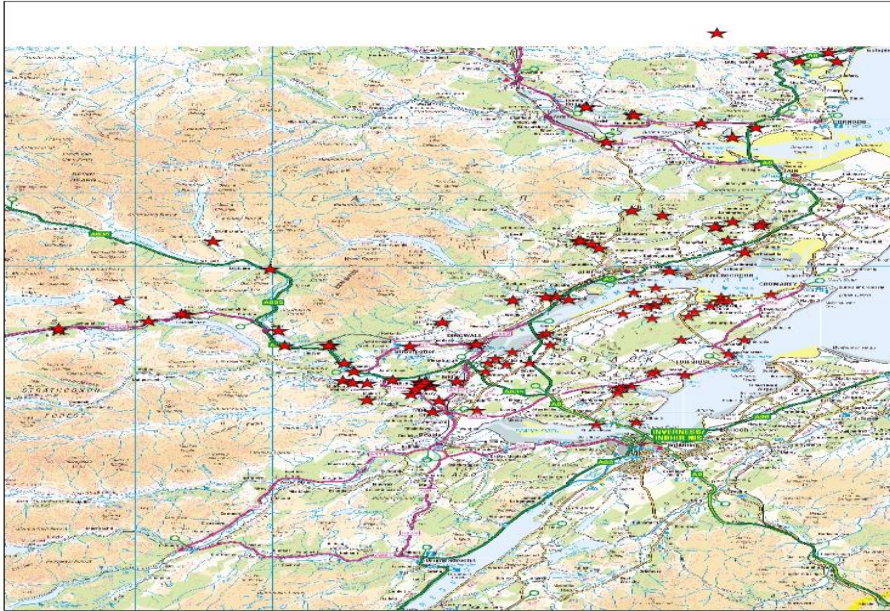
Himalayan balsam clearance works were completed by late August. Two km of the Peffery was cleared by Dingwall Environment Group volunteers.

TCV volunteers cleared balsam in the Orrin, Conon, Alness, Culcraggie, Contulich, Allt Graad and Sgitheach catchments.

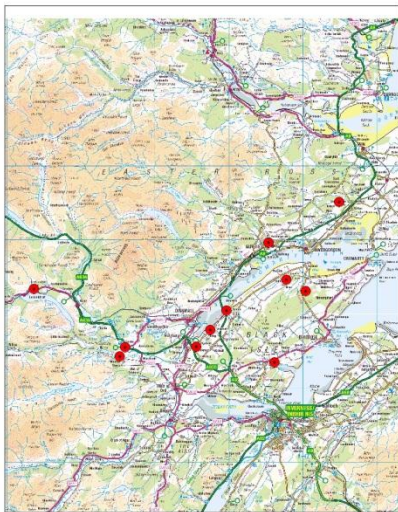
Spraying of rhododendron in the Orrin catchment and Japanese knotweed throughout the region will take place in September.

### *Mink project*

There are a total of 112 mink monitoring rafts and tunnels deployed across the region manned by a network of 63 active volunteers.



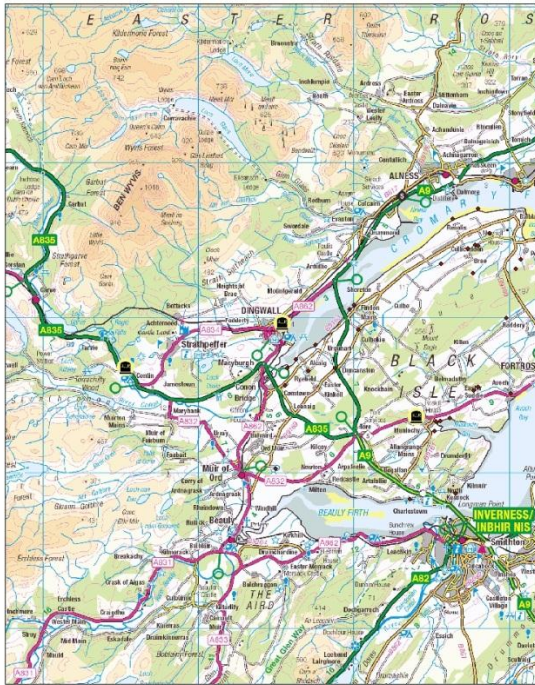
There were 11 reported sightings of mink at; Contin, Torr Achilty dam, Balnagown, River Fleet, Munloch bay, Newhall burn, Poynzfield, Tinkers burn, Corntown, Loch Luichart lodge and Castle Lead.



Ten traps were set at the locations below



There were mink captures at Munloch burn and Contin and a road kill at Dingwall



### ***European Union RAFTS funding bid***

The Cromarty Firth Fishery Trust along with another 14 trusts from the RAFTS network is submitting a bid to the EU Life + funding programme. The bid is almost half funded by contributions from SNH and SEPA and has support from Scottish Government.

The proposed project is a 5 year programme of eradication and monitoring of riverside invasive plants and mink. It is linked to the development of a network of volunteers who will help with ongoing monitoring and removal to prevent reinfection of cleared areas.

### ***Genetics project***

A final draft of the FASMOP report which describes the findings of research into the genetics of salmon stocks in the Cromarty Firth region has been produced. The draft has been approved and the final version will be posted on the website. The report contains useful information on the distribution of different genetic stocks in the region, wild and stocked populations and the genetic origin of rod caught adults.

## ***Smolt trapping 2102***

The smolt run was delayed by the cold weather early in the spring but appears to have been strong. Smolt trapping on the Bran was disrupted by a period of heavy rain and flooding which coincided with the peak of the run. Despite a week during which the trap was flooded out a total of 7,210 smolts were trapped and transported.

## ***Stocking 2012***

The successful broodstock collection last winter gave large number of eggs for stocking works this spring. A total of over 3.4 million eggs were stocked into the Conon system into areas where natural spawning has been impacted by hydro development. Full details are posted on the website but the overall distribution was; Blackwater 1,365,000, Bran 622,000, Meig 570,000 and Orrin 855,000.

Some stocking was carried out for collaborative research projects with Marine Scotland Science and Glasgow University.

The majority of stocking was carried out with either eyed ova or unfed fry but there was also some stocking with fed fry. In particular 100,000 fed fry were stocked into the Orrin and the results of this are being monitored by electro-fishing. The Orrin downstream of Orrin Dam to the mouth of the Aultgowrie Burn contains very little spawning or fry habitat although it contains excellent parr habitat. A release of water from Orrin Dam to encourage smolt passage means that flows in the spring may be unsuitable for unfed fry planting and a delayed stocking with fed fry is likely to be more successful.

## *Meetings attended / consultations*

Dingwall Biodiversity event  
Highland Invasive Species Forum  
Teanninich Distillery site visit abstraction consultation  
SEPA obstructions to fish migration meeting  
Scottish Mink Initiative steering group  
Dingwall Environment Group.  
Marine Scotland Science visit  
Strath Bran hydro consultation  
Kildermorie woodland restoration meeting  
Allt Graad Scottish Water abstraction  
Fairburn windfarm extension  
Rhododendron Project Officer meeting  
Sgitheach hydro  
Glasgow University / Marine Scotland NERC project planning meeting  
Dingwall Environment group meeting and balsam clearance x2  
IFM Scottish Branch Meeting  
Lochaber Crayfish eradication  
Ferintosh Environment group Lynn Mink presentation  
Renewal of Boards Insurance policies with Clarke Thompson Ltd  
Blackmuir pond plant survey  
Inverness College Rivers and Lochs Institute meeting  
SFCC meeting  
Inverness Canoe Club meeting and newsletter article  
Orrin windfarm extension  
Scottish Government Code of Good Practice for fisheries management  
Strath Rusdale hydro development  
Glen Ord Distillery visit  
Pefferry SEPA restoration application  
Wyvis hydro development  
Glen Morie windfarm  
Western Isles – Beaully power cable consultation  
IFM Scottish Branch Committee Meeting  
Conservation Volunteers Green Gym Electro-fishing  
Dingwall Environment Group work party  
RAFTS meeting for EU Invasives project funding bid  
IFM Code of Good Practice meeting  
Scottish Govt meeting  
Western Isles powerline consultation  
Orrin windfarm extension consultation