



Director's Report May 2012.

May brought extreme weather conditions with a cold start to the month followed by a period of very heavy rainfall and even a brief heatwave.

Fry planting was completed during May.

The smolt run was delayed by the cold weather early in the month 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.

Bailiffing operations were stepped up during May and coastal boat patrols started. An illegal net was seized on the Black Isle.

There was a pollution incident in early May, when as a result of a road traffic accident a diesel generator spilled its fuel into a tributary of the Blackwater near Garve. A quick response by the fire brigade and SEPA contained the spill and the main stem of the Blackwater was protected from what could have been a serious pollution incident.

There have been worrying reports of an outbreak UDN from some beats on the Spey and a briefing note is attached.

Projects / research

Riverfly monitoring sites have been established and monitoring is underway with the help of volunteer anglers and ghillies.

A funding application has been made to the SEPA restoration fund for this year's planned works on the Peffery. Scottish Water now has approval to carry out works to construct a fish pass at the Strathpeffer Sewage Treatment Works weir.

A meeting was held with SEPA to consider all the remaining man made obstructions to migration in the region. A proposed hydro development on the Balnagown may give an opportunity to remove two of the most significant remaining barriers.

The Conservation Volunteers (formerly BTCV) have started Himalayan balsam clearance works. The spring phase of giant hogweed control was completed in May and this will be followed up with spraying of this year's seedlings in summer.

More mink rafts and traps have been located to strengthen the reporting network. There have been two mink caught locally and one road casualty this spring. The reporting of sightings is very important over the summer to prevent any successful breeding territories being established in the region.

Meetings attended / consultations

IFM conference planning meeting
Balnagown hydro scheme site visit
Moray Firth Partnership Dolphin course
Inverness Canoe Club
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

To: All Proprietors

29th May 2012

Dear Proprietor,

Spey Salmon Head Lesions: Interim Notice

Many anglers and ghillies have noticed salmon entering the river this season with lesions and ulcers on the head, typically on the nose and above the gill covers. More recently there have been some instances of fish being observed with fungus (*Saprolegnia*) and there has been some mortality.

The Fishery Board organised for two fish exhibiting head lesions to be sampled on the river bank by fish health inspectors from Marine Scotland Science (MSS), Marine Laboratory in Aberdeen. The Board has now received verbal confirmation from MSS that one of the fish sampled was suffering from Ulcerative Dermal Necrosis (UDN).

UDN is a naturally occurring disease which salmon are understood to be carrying when they enter the river from the sea. The disease is known to have manifested itself in salmon from time to time and there have been two serious outbreaks, one in the 1880s and another in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

UDN is considered to be endemic and it is important to appreciate that the disease has been present at other times without serious mortalities resulting.

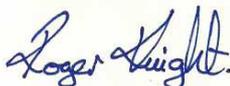
There has been some research into UDN but it is still little understood and some of the results are contradictory. No causative agent was identified in previous outbreaks and it is still not known if there is an underlying viral or bacterial infection involved. Mortalities tend to occur as a result of the secondary infection by *Saprolegnia* to which the fish become susceptible because of UDN. The disease can affect sea trout and brown trout but juvenile fish do not appear susceptible. Previous outbreaks have died out naturally after a period of time.

It is important to note that fish affected by UDN can and do survive to spawn normally. As an interim measure it is recommended that all fresh run fish exhibiting head lesions, but otherwise free of fungal infection should be returned in the hope that they will recover and spawn naturally. Further guidance from the Fishery Board regarding the Conservation Policy will be forthcoming.

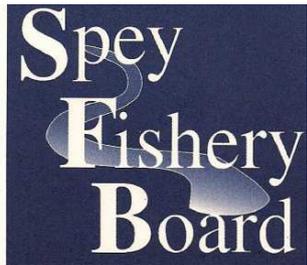
The Board is anticipating further written guidance from MSS but for the time being has been advised that moribund fish should be removed from the river. Biosecurity measures should be in place for anglers and ghillies who may be handling affected fish. To that end the fishery board will distribute disinfectant, guidance and sprayers, if required, to all beats on the river.

The Board will continue to inform Proprietors of developments and further advice from MSS as they occur.

Yours sincerely,



Roger Knight
Director



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