



Director's Report March 2013.

Whilst most of the rest of the country suffered from heavy snow, the Cromarty Firth area stayed cold and dry during most of March. This gave good conditions for tree planting and has slowed the development of eggs in the hatchery.

Projects / research

Mink rafts are now deployed throughout the Cromarty Firth region ready for a period when mink are likely to be setting up new territories. As well as the network of tracking pads on rafts which alert us to the presence of mink, traps were set at key locations for a week. These locations were identified by peaks of mink activity in previous years. The traps need to be checked daily but whilst mink are likely to be moving around looking for territories this gives an extra chance of capturing them.

Bailiffs and volunteers have been busy planting native trees along the banks of the Upper Peffery and the Orrin. The Woodland Trust supplied 2,500 cell grown trees with tree guards and stakes for the Orrin. A mixture of; alder, willow, aspen, rowan, hazel and oak were planted in areas which have been cleared of rhododendron. Russell Jobson from the Woodland Trust visited to help Dingwall Environment Group plant some of these trees.

New biosecurity signs aimed at anglers and boat users have been supplied to ghillies. More signs are available should they be required.

Carcass tags were ordered in early March and should arrive imminently; a new smaller angler's log sheet has been designed and will be printed on card. We will need lists of angling club membership so that we can issue tags and cards in April.

A site visit took place to Strath Rannoch with the Forestry Commission to look at ways to establish more native tree cover along the banks of this important tributary of the Blackwater. The Forestry Commission also supplied trees for planting along the banks of the Upper Peffery.

A site visit took place to Ardross Castle to look at opportunities for future rhododendron clearance works. Some of the tributary burns are heavily infested and the fishery habitat would benefit from clearance and restoration of native vegetation. With the Orrin clearance now completed we will look for sources of grant aid to clear the Alness.

The Dingwall Environment Group are continuing their involvement with rivers and fishery projects, this month they helped with a Peffery river clean up day as well as tree planting on the Orrin.

The Trust has been funded by Scottish Natural Heritage to help test and populate a new database called BARS II (Biodiversity Actions Reporting System). So far for the Cromarty Firth region 40 projects containing 170 actions have been entered. The data can be viewed on an interactive map, this project showcases the extent of survey, research and management work carried out by the Cromarty Board and Trust which benefits both fisheries and the wider freshwater environment.

Preparations are underway for smolt trapping and tagging at Achanalt at the start of April

Meetings attended / consultations

Forestry Commission visit to Strath Rannoch
Highland Invasive Species Forum
ASFB / IFM Bailiffs Conference
IFM Scotland AGM
Dingwall Environment Group
Dingwall Ward Councilors Meeting
ASFB Carcass tagging meeting
Ardross Castle Estate site visit
Rivers and Lochs Institute Steering Group
BARSII Database meeting
Peffery road scheme
Luichart Long Term Forest Plan consultation
Achterneed hydro consultation
Strath Bran hydro consultation
Balnagown hydro consultation