

Monthly Report – March 2021

Egg Stocking

The remaining eggs from the Contin hatchery were stocked into the Conon system in March. A total of 1.52 million eggs are now incubating in the riverbed prior to hatching in the coming weeks. The Blackwater was stocked as part of the long-term mitigation work for the Conon hydro scheme. The River Orrin was stocked in anticipation of gravel reintroductions later this year to create adult salmon spawning beds. This will form part of short-term restoration stocking programme to create a self-sustaining run of salmon on the Orrin. The River Meig was stocked above the Corriefeol fish pass for restoration, as electrofishing survey data from recent years failed to detect any juvenile salmon.

AST Missing Salmon Project

The Atlantic Salmon Trust Missing Salmon Project is looking at survival of salmon smolts migrating across the Moray Firth area this spring. Board staff attended several training



sessions to learn the surgical procedures involved in tagging salmon smolts with acoustic tags. Seven acoustic receivers were deployed in the Conon from Tor Achilty dam down to the tidal limit. The movement and survival of smolts will allow clear management decisions to be made on predation risks to smolts in different parts of the river. This will inform a wider programme of predator monitoring and control across the Cromarty

district. Board staff wish to thank landowners and angling clubs for their valuable input on receiver locations. Particular thanks are extended to the ghillies who assisted with deployment on their respective beats.

FMS “International Year of the Salmon” Film Series

Fisheries Management Scotland are producing a series of films on Atlantic salmon in Scotland as part of the International Year of the Salmon (IYS). IYS is a five-year initiative that aspires to establish the conditions necessary to ensure the resilience of salmon and people throughout the Northern Hemisphere. The films will illustrate the pressures relating to Atlantic salmon and highlight the work that local Fishery Boards and Trusts are doing to address these. The project is funded by the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization (NASCO) through the IYS education and outreach funding programme. Board staff met with Craig Sommerville from Castabroad Collective to film the Contin hatchery and to capture the unique work that

is undertaken as part of the Conon mitigation stocking programme. The filming will feature in an episode that considers the appropriate use of hatcheries as a fisheries management tool in Scotland.

Bailiff Report

Board staff conducted patrols of vulnerable areas within the district where illegal fishing has taken place in recent years. Due to ongoing travel restrictions combined with persistent cold weather, very little activity was observed. Patrols were carried out at varying times of the day including weekends. One report of fishing on the River Peffery in Dingwall was responded to, but no persons were found upon arrival.

Board staff maintain close links with the local Police Scotland Wildlife Crime Officer, and a joint evening foot patrol was carried out on the lower reaches of the River Alness at the start of the month.

Prior to becoming a warranted water bailiff, prospective candidates must first undergo training provided by the Scottish branch of the Institute of Fisheries Management. This training provides prospective water bailiffs with an understanding of fisheries law and core bailiffing skills. Board staff help provide this training, and during March a total of 16 individuals successfully passed the course.