

Monthly Report – April 2022

Smolt Tagging, Tracking and Survival

On the 1st of April, board staff deployed two rotary screw traps on the Meig to mitigate loss of juvenile salmon as they migrate through the Meig impoundment on their way to sea. These traps are checked on a daily basis throughout the entire smolt run and fish are tagged, transported and released downstream of Tor Achilty dam. Unusually low rainfall for the month meant that we did not see a large early run of fish, but rather a slow and steady increase up to the end of April by which time, over 2000 smolts have been successfully tagged and released downstream



Board staff also maintain operation of the Wolf trap at Achanalt on the Bran, moving all smolts downstream and tagging a proportion of fish across the entire run. For fish from both rivers, we continue to run the day versus night release trial designed by SSE, Glasgow university and the board in 2021; half of all tagged smolts are put into the in-house built delayed release cage which opens during the hours of darkness and allow smolts to continue their migration under more natural conditions.

Scottish Invasive Species Initiative

Interviews were held in April for a 5-month Seasonal Project Officer post as part of the Nature Scot funded Scottish Invasive Species Initiative (SISI). Deirdre Mitchell will join board staff for a second summer to manage invasive non-native species across the Cromarty district. With a focus on removal of invasive plant species such as Japanese knotweed, giant hogweed, American skunk cabbage and Himalayan balsam, Dierdre will work closely with the team to map, treat and remove these plants which can wreak havoc on the natural riparian ecosystem. She will also work toward engaging volunteers and working toward the removal of American mink from the catchment.

Easement of Fish Passage – Alness Weir

A meeting was held in early March to discuss works to the existing weir on the lower Alness. Representatives from SEPA, Alness angling association and local proprietors were in attendance and all agreed that proposed plans to add rock armour to the edges of the pool will improve conditions for ascent by migrating salmon. Work is expected to take place in early summer.

Bailiff Report

As well as routine evening and weekend patrols board staff responded to seven reports of suspected illegal fishing. Several of these reports resulted in people being found to be fishing, or about to go fishing without permission. April is a busy time of year with board staff spending a great deal of time operating the smolt traps. The information received from anglers, ghillies and members of the public is always appreciated and acted on.

During the month a total of 4 persons were dealt with. One incident resulted in officers from Police Scotland being called for assistance. The subsequent warning issued after the incident regarding fishing without permission was recorded by the officers who attended.