

Monthly Report – August 2022

Electrofishing

August has been a busy month for board staff with over 500-man hours spent carrying out juvenile salmonid surveys throughout the catchment. Primarily, juvenile surveys aim to inform stocking efforts on the Blackwater and Orrin rivers. Surveying fry that would have been planted out as eggs the previous winter, and parr which would have been put into the river as eggs in the winter of 2020.

We also take the opportunity to survey sites in the wider catchment to get an idea of the general health of juvenile populations and recruitment in all rivers in the district. Despite reports of low adult catches on rod and line, we are seeing reasonably healthy juvenile populations throughout the upper catchment. Results will follow in the Annual Report this winter.



Staff Development and Training

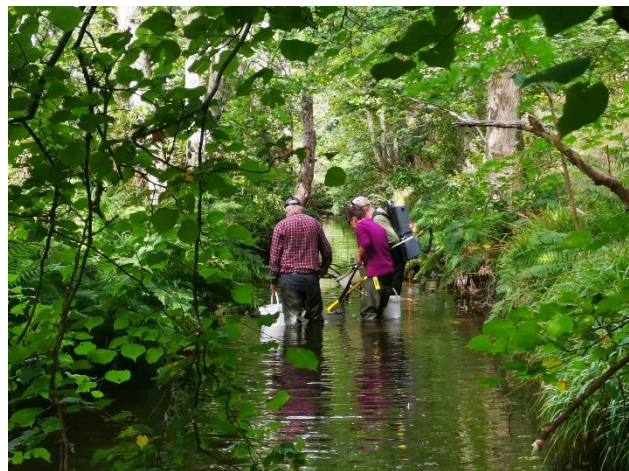
As part of our responsibility for monitoring and maintaining the health and functioning of Atlantic salmon populations within the catchment, we need to ensure non-impacted rivers remain free of barriers to migration. As part of this commitment, two members of board staff attended a week-long chainsaw operating course in Kiltarlity where they were trained in the safe use of saws and correct felling techniques. Windblown trees have the potential to effectively block up- or downstream migration of salmon and it is important we are equipped to deal with such issues rapidly should they arise.

Staff also attended a Scottish Freshwater Fisheries Coordination Centre (SFCC) training event on freshwater pearl mussel survey techniques. The event, held in Invermoriston was attended by biologists and interested parties from across Scotland.



Contract Survey Work

A big event in this year's calendar was the undertaking of a large-scale fish rescue from the Peffery river as part of a remaindering, river restoration project. Heavy plant have been on site for two months cutting the new channel at Fodderty and we worked closely with staff from the Ness District Salmon Fishery Board to rescue and relocate over 1600 fish, including salmon, trout, lamprey, eels and stickleback. River works conclude on the first of September and we hope that the project will have a significant net benefit on the health of salmon and sea trout populations in the river. The board will carry out monitoring over the next 5 years.



The board also continue to monitor the impact of Blackrock Hydropower scheme on fish populations in the Allt Graad. The annual sites have been surveyed again in 2022 and we see evidence of strong juvenile recruitment all three sites.

Staff also continue to monitor the Ussie burn and are involved in a settlement project which should see priority issues identified and remedied. This small coastal burn is an important spawning tributary for sea trout and efforts have already been made to ease passage through the lower reaches and implement green engineering strategies to reduce flooding and provide cover for fish. Working closely with local landowners and SEPA we hope that we can make good progress on mitigating any issues from which this small burn suffers.

Invasive Non Native Species

The Scottish invasive species initiative (SISI) is currently in the process of applying for a large Nature Restoration Fund grant to allow INNS control to continue within the catchment. As ever, board staff are committed to eradication of non-native species in the catchment and greatly appreciate the network of volunteers monitoring mink traps and helping in the removal of invasive plants.

As ever, please report any sightings to us and we will do our best to remove them.

Bailiffing Report

There was an increase in persons found fishing by rod and line without permission on the rivers across the district during August with a total of 13 people removed. Further to this, a report has been submitted to Police Scotland regarding one incident that occurred on one of the rivers within the district.

One gill net was retrieved from the lower reaches of the River Conon with the incident reported to Police Scotland. Towards the end of the month a joint patrol with Police Scotland was carried out on the Rivers Alness and Conon. Although no one was found during this patrol, the continued support we receive from them to tackle illegal fishing is greatly appreciated.