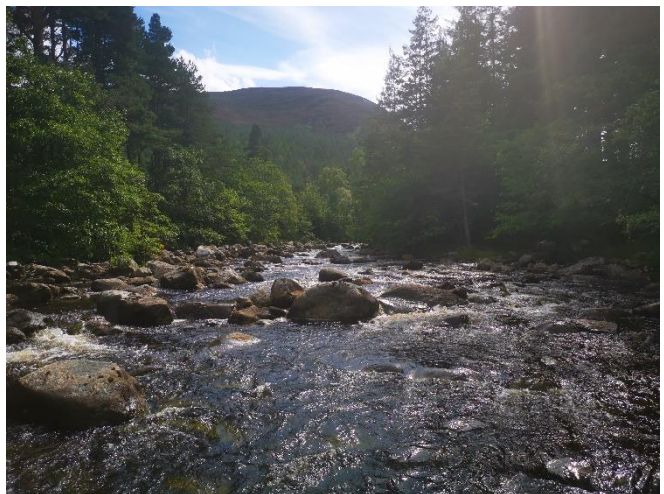


Monthly Report – July 2022

Electrofishing

The board continue to take advantage of the dry conditions to undertake juvenile stock assessments throughout the catchment. Due to a lack of funding, the National Electrofishing Programme for Scotland (NEPS) did not go ahead in 2022. Nevertheless, the board are committed to pursuing a random stratified approach to survey sites and have moved forward with a NEPS-like survey design to cover the main areas which were planted with eggs in the winter of 2021/22.



Invasive Non Native Species

The final stages of Giant Hogweed control on the Balnagown were undertaken in the first half of July, using both herbicide treatment and tap-rooting. At Kilmuir Bay, where there has been more extensive hogweed coverage, a second round of treatment was completed to ensure effective control of any plants that had been missed in the first round.

American Skunk Cabbage control also continued at several sites on the Conon River and near Urquhart on the Black Isle. At most sites the main plants found were small seedlings, rather than larger mature plants, which is a positive sign for future control in these areas.

Popular ‘Balsam Bashing’ events were held on every Friday throughout July, with volunteers joining our Project Officer to tackle Himalayan Balsam on Dunglass Island. Working from the western end of the island, the team hand-pulled balsam plants along the length of Dunglass over the course of 5 weeks. By pulling these plants before they have the chance to go to seed, we will reduce the seedbank in this area which is important for the long-term goal of eradicating this invasive species.

In preparation for an increase in mink activity in July and August, when young mink begin to leave their dens, a camera trap was deployed on a raft within the catchment. This will record mink activity in this area and allow us to deploy traps if necessary.

Riverwoods

As we travel around the catchment, electrofishing, board staff are also running basic maintenance on some of our small, riparian tree compounds. It is reassuring to see growth of the trees planted by board staff 5-10 years ago and reduced deer densities are evident from the amount of natural regeneration in some areas. Increasing tree cover through priority planting projects will help to stabilise extreme water temperatures during the summer and maintain healthy juvenile habitat in the upper reaches of the catchment. As ever the board are seeking areas where we can get trees planted and add to the functioning of these fragile ecosystems.



Contract Survey Work

The board continue to be approached by developers in the catchment looking to survey to inform construction proposals. We are also making preparations to undertake the fish rescue on the Peffery for the largescale re-meandering restoration project at Fodderty. This will involve working closely with the Ness District Salmon Fishery Board and contractors on site when they switch to the new river channel. Fish rescue works are expected to commence mid-August.

Bailiffing Report

Board staff continued to conduct day and night patrols during July across the district looking for those who fish illegally. During these patrols a total of 7 people were removed for fishing without permission. Further reports were also received from members of the public regarding suspicious activity and all these were attended when the reports were received. Contact was maintained with Police Scotland and it is hoped further joint patrols can be carried out with them, in particular around the rivers in Easter Ross.