

## **Monthly Report – October 2022**

### **Loch na Croic Adult Fish Trap**

Staff spent the first part of the month preparing the trap and hatchery for the broodstock operations. All systems were cleaned down, checked and made ready for the arrival of the salmon. The screens were routinely cleaned to ensure correct flow was maintained as fish were drawn through the loch towards the trap. During a period of high water at the start of the month, Salmon were observed, in good numbers, holding in the loch below the heck.

We are fortunate to be joined by a number of the Conon ghillies again this year. They have offered to help operate the trap for the duration of the trapping and stripping season. This will allow us to fish the trap every working day of the week whilst ensuring staff cover over the weekends.

All staff and ghillies attended a Health & Safety briefing on the 19<sup>th</sup> October with the trap being opened the same day. Unfortunately, river levels were dropping by this point and Salmon appeared to drop back into the loch. Significant fish numbers are not expected until we see a meaningful rise in water.

### **New Staff**

The board are delighted to welcome James Symonds and Geordie Fraser who joined the team in the latter part of September as the new Biologist and Fishery Officer respectively. They have spent their time getting to know the catchments, assisting in the Loch na Croic operations and processing the electrofishing data for 2022.

James arrives from the rivers Spey, Findhorn, Nairn and Lossie where he was employed as the SISI project officer for the last 4 years and has built up a wealth of experience in habitat and fisheries management. Geordie has a background in deer stalking and has worked as a seasonal bailiff on the Naver.

### **Invasive Non-Native Species**

October is a quiet time for INNS management and, whilst there are still some mink about, our attention has been more focussed on the Loch na Croic operations. That being said, if any mink are sighted please do get in touch as we are still able to respond.

Staff attended the quarterly SISI stakeholder meeting where it was confirmed that the extension bid to the Nature Restoration Fund has been submitted and we await the funding decision. If successful it is likely that the CFDSB will have a full-time project officer to be shared with the Ness and Beaully. We are lucky that, with James' background as a SISI project officer we will be able to continue our efforts on mink control until such time as a new project officer is, hopefully, appointed.

### **Scotland River Temperature Monitoring Network**

As the water begins to cool down staff have taken advantage of low water levels to retrieve and download river temperature data from a network of data loggers spread throughout the upper catchment and main stem. These loggers have been deployed as part of Marine Scotland's river temperature monitoring network which will allow predictions to be made in the face of climate change and expected warming of freshwater ecosystems. Stream temperature is an important control of the health of fish populations. Extremes in summer can have drastic implications for juvenile survival and growth. With this network in place, we can identify which areas are most

likely to experience extreme warming and can feed this into restorative actions plans including upstream riparian woodland creation.

### **Bailiffing Report**

With the close of the fishing season, the enforcement team continue their patrols but focus more intently on maintaining fish passage through passes and the removal of obstructions. Two large, fallen trees were removed from the lower Balnagowan that could have proved a barrier to fish passage.

Late season patrols have also been taking place across all rivers in the district so that new staff can familiarise themselves with the fishing beats and pools for the coming summer.