

Monthly Report – June 2023

National Electrofishing Program Scotland (NEPS)

We have received confirmation that NEPS will be going ahead this year. Throughout July and August, the team will survey 30 sites across the district and the data collected will contribute to the national long-term monitoring of juvenile Salmon across Scotland.

Mainstem electrofishing

With the low flows experienced throughout June we took advantage of the weather and fished a number of sites along the Conon mainstem. It was evident that where good juvenile habitat exists there are high densities of both parr and fry, indicating significant spawning throughout the main stem of the lower river.



Temperature loggers

With a relatively quiet beginning to June we found a window to replace all of the temperature loggers throughout the district. As with NEPS, the temperature loggers feed into a national river temperature monitoring programme which will assess change over time as well as identify watercourses particularly vulnerable to extreme temperatures. On a local level it has proven to be a useful management tool. Whilst the majority of the loggers had been changed before the heat wave in late June, the logger on the blackwater was not lifted until after. This logger recorded 4 days that exceeded 23 degrees Celsius on the main stem of the Blackwater. Above this temperature juvenile salmonids experience significant thermal stress, leading them to abandon territories to seek cold water refuges. These elevated temperatures also exacerbate the spread of fish disease, particularly infections such as saprolegnia.

Fish disease

June saw the first reports of red skin disease on the river. If you do happen to catch a fish with a red rash or lesions on its underside, please either report it to your ghillie or directly to the biology team who will log it. Please include as much information about the fish as possible; date, time and location, sex, length and severity of infection are particularly useful.

Rogie fish pass

Prior to opening the fish pass at Rogie falls on the 1st of June the team undertook extensive clearance of the holding pools to ease passage through the pass. Fish have already been observed ascending the pass, even in the low flows we have been experiencing.

American Mink

Our first mink of the season was caught and dispatched on Dunglass island at the end of June. Trudi also deployed two new mink rafts on the Conon which will be monitored by a volunteer. As always please report any sightings: Trudi.Clarke@Cromartyboard.com

Invasive Plants

July will see the start of the Himalayan balsam control season. Trudi will be out and about running Balsam bashes throughout July and August. Keep an eye out on our social media and if you would like to get involved then please get in touch. Free tea and biscuits!

Balnagowan blockage

The team undertook works to clear a substantial blockage on the Balnagowan. Woody debris had collected to form a significant barrier to fish passage. With the low water conditions, it was feared that Salmon would be unable to ascend the river and be vulnerable to predation, trapped at the river mouth.



Bailiff Report

Patrols looking for those fishing illegally continued across the district during June. During this period a total of 5 individuals were reported to Police Scotland for a variety of offences under the Salmon and Freshwater Fisheries (Consolidation) (Scotland) Act 2003.

Three joint patrols were carried out with officers from Police Scotland, two of these were during the day and one at night. Whilst no offences were detected, we are grateful for the ongoing support we receive from them in dealing with illegal fishing.

In August 2022 two males were reported for fishing illegally. This case has now been processed and both received a fiscal warning.