



Monthly Report – July 2024

Junior Angling Club

After several years hiatus, we have revived the Junior Angling Club. The club aims to give young people the chance to try fishing with instruction from staff and volunteers. The first scheduled date was in June which, due to 50mph winds, had to be called off but Julys session was a great success with 10 children coming along to Tarvie lochs to try fishing, some for the first time. Plenty of fish were caught and whilst not everyone managed to catch, everyone had a great morning out and have already booked back on to the August date. If the remaining date also proves successful, we will look how we can build on this for next year.



Summer Electrofishing

Our electrofishing season got off to a slightly slower start this year as training commitments elsewhere and a lack of good weather delayed matters somewhat. The team have now hit their stride and have completed surveys on the Orrin (pre-restoration), Peffrey (post-restoration) and Ussie burn (post-pollution recovery). It will be a few weeks before the data is input and analysed as further surveys are planned across the district as we seek to get a fuller picture of juvenile densities across all of the rivers within the Cromarty Firth.

As NEPS (National Electrofishing Program Scotland) is not going ahead this year we will focus on gathering baseline data for areas that are due to be restored so that we can monitor any changes over time. Specifically, we hope to establish robust baseline monitoring sites on the Meig, Bran and Orrin and Alness in line with long-term restoration plans for the catchments.

Orrin Gravel Reintroduction

Orrin dam has blocked the transport of sediment from the upper river to the lower sections and the discharge from the dam has, for over 60 years, scoured the river of suitable spawning gravels. The riverbed from the dam to the Allt Goibhre burn is now largely made up of

boulders and larger cobble and it is not until the Allt Goibhre burn, below Orrin falls, delivers a significant input of sediment that spawning habitat is readily available.

The Board has, for the past 10 years, aspired to create spawning fords downstream of the dam to provide suitable habitat for fish that ascend the falls by reintroducing finer substrate, cobble and pebble, that the river is now lacking. This summer Staff have conducted baseline electrofishing surveys and completed an aerial drone survey to map the river at this location and, perhaps most importantly, the first loads of gravel are being delivered to site in preparation for works to begin in August.



Alness Temperature Monitoring

The River Conon network of temperature loggers has provided useful insights across the catchment and helps us to identify tributaries and fish populations that may be vulnerable or subject to thermal stress at times of low water and high temperature. We have now deployed

a series of loggers throughout the Alness to create a comparable dataset and provide the same information going forward. This will allow us to assess how the Alness fairs in summer conditions and help us identify areas for improvement.

Invasive Species

July sees the start of the juvenile mink dispersal season, at this time of groups of young mink are starting to wander further from their dens in preparation from leaving their mothers and establishing territories of their own. This is an important time of year to trap before the mink can disperse across wider areas. July saw three mink despatched on upper Brahan with further sightings across the catchment. Traps have been set and are being monitored by staff and volunteers. If you would like to volunteer your time to monitor a trap or a raft please contact Trudi for more information via email Trudi.Clarke@Cromartyboard.com

Bailiff Report

A total of 16 people were removed from the rivers across the district during July for fishing without permission. In all instances verbal warnings were issued along with relevant advice when required. At the start of the month a joint patrol with an officer from Police Scotland was carried out with various priority areas visited.