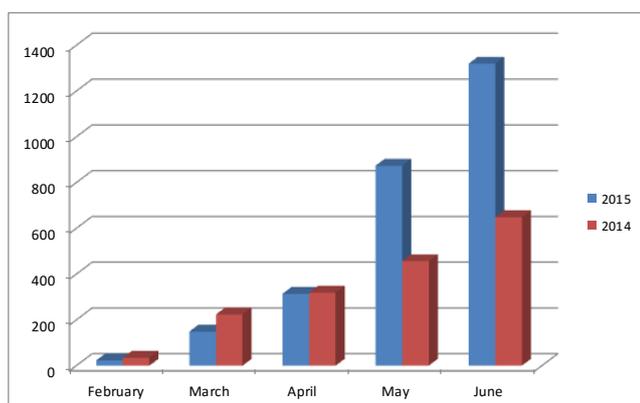


September 2015

www.speyfisheryboard.com

Salmon and Grilse Catches February - June 2015

Reported rod catches for the period February to June 2015 amounted to 2,680 salmon and grilse caught compared with 1,683 for the same period last year. This improved early season catch is encouraging, particularly as catches were well spread throughout the river.



Once again, Anglers have continued to show increasing support for the Board's Conservation Policy. By the 30th June, 94% of salmon and grilse had been released compared with 91% in 2014. Meanwhile, the rod catch for sea trout from February to June 2015 was reported to be 1,133 in contrast to 634 for the same period last year. The release rate for the Sea Trout was 79% compared to 80% last year.

SFB Director, Roger Knight said, "Although the start of the season was slow, by May rod catches were on the increase, with many reports of good sized salmon caught this year. We are most grateful to all the Ghillies and Anglers for their continued support for the Board's Conservation Policy by releasing the majority of all the fish they caught."

Left: Declared monthly rod catch of Wild Salmon and Grilse from the River Spey for February to June 2015 compared with 2014.

Wild Fisheries Reform

The Scottish Government published its Consultation on the Wild Fisheries Reform process on the 15th May 2015. The Spey Fishery Board subsequently held three public meetings to raise awareness of this and discuss issues that should be considered in formulating our response. These were held: at Craigellachie on the 4th June; at Grantown on Spey on the 9th June; and at Gordon Castle, Fochabers, on the 11th June 2015. The meetings were well attended and allowed for a full and frank exchange of views. In particular, they were useful in raising public awareness of the Scottish Government's proposals for significant reform of the fisheries management sector.

The Board's and Foundation's response to the Consultation was submitted to the Scottish Government on the 7th August 2015. It is also available on the Board's website (speyfisheryboard.com).

A draft Bill is expected to be published early in the New Year for a three month Consultation, to be completed

before Parliament rises on the 21st March 2016. It will be up to the new Government to decide when to consider the Draft Bill, but it is thought the new Legislation may begin its Parliamentary process in September or October 2016. This process will take several months and the Bill could become an Act in circa June 2017, followed by a transitional period for implementation.

Kill Licences and Carcass Tagging

In addition, on the 23rd July 2015, the Scottish Government announced its intentions to prohibit the killing of salmon out-with estuary limits and to introduce a licencing system for the killing of any wild salmon, together with an accompanying carcass tagging scheme. The Spey Fishery Board prepared a Briefing and submitted an extensive objection to the Scottish Government, both of which can be found on our website at www.speyfisheryboard.com/kill-licences-and-carcass-tagging/

SPEY FISHERY BOARD RESEARCH OFFICE

1 NETHER BORLUM COTTAGE, KNOCKANDO, MORAYSHIRE, AB38 7SD

TEL: 01340 810841 FAX: 01340 810842 E-MAIL: admin@speyfisheryboard.com

BRIEFING - September 2015

Fish Pass Installation by Speyburn Distillery

A new fish pass has been installed on the Broad Burn at Rothes, known locally as either Spey Burn or Granty Burn with its connection to the Speyburn distillery on its banks. The preparations for a fish pass began over a year ago when consultants were appointed to draw up designs.

This was a complex task with the conflicting requirements for water abstraction and fish passage. The change in river level between the intake and the stream bed below was around 1.8m and previously there was a high gradient "cascade" constructed from quarry boulders. Whilst spawning fish may have managed to get past the cascade if the burn level was high, such conditions rarely occur at the right time of the year.



Above: The rock cascade before – too steep to allow fish passage over a range of flows.

The contractors came up with a very effective solution to bypass the major problem encountered whilst working in a burn – keeping the site dry. The intake pipe for the distillery cooling pond was extended upstream and a temporary dam built to divert the entire flow through the pond.

The photo below shows the upper fish pass headwall after the shuttering was removed, with the remains of the old railway bridge in the background.



The photo above shows further headwalls under construction. The bed between the headwalls were subsequently filled with concrete and embedded boulders to create shallow pools. The head difference between the walls was 30cm, with the pass extending to over 30m in length to provide a low enough gradient.



Heavy rain filled the Broad Burn which provided a tantalising glimpse of how it would look when in operational flow. In due course the pools will accumulate gravel and the whole site will soon have a more natural appearance.



The photo above shows the Broad Burn upstream of the Speyburn Distillery. There is excellent spawning gravel in this burn and it was always known locally as an important spawning burn, especially for big sea trout. We look forward to monitoring its development in future years.

Scottish Mink Initiative: New volunteers needed!

The Spey Foundation participates in the Scottish Mink Initiative, a project which began in 2011 and aims to eradicate the invasive American Mink from Scotland. The American Mink was either deliberately or accidentally released in the 20th century whilst being farmed in Britain for its fur. The mink has since established itself in Britain, causing problems for native fish, birds and small mammals such as the water vole.

It is hoped that the project can help to remove the American Mink and give native species a better chance of survival. Although the Spey Foundation co-ordinates the project within the Spey catchment, the project is reliant on a network of volunteers who monitor for signs of mink.



Above: American Mink at the waters' edge (Photo by Emma Schofield).



Left: A new Mink Raft in Fochabers. Mink are curious about dark spaces so will enter the tunnel where there is a clay pad that picks up their footprints.

Since the start of 2015, there have been 9 sightings of mink in the catchment, indicating there are still populations around and it is vital that we prevent them from spreading further. The Spey Foundation are looking to recruit new volunteers to improve our coverage of monitoring rafts. Equipment and training will be provided. All that is required is that you check a monitoring raft once every 10 days for footprints of the mink and submit the results to an online database. More information can be found on the website at www.scottishmink.org.uk or from the Spey Fishery Board Office.

2015 Fin-clipping and Stocking

The Spey Fishery Board's Stocking Sub-Committee agreed that as many as possible of the 210,000 fed fry currently in the hatchery would have their adipose fin removed to facilitate identification, either during monitoring, or if caught in the future. The fin clipping of the Autumn fry took place at Sandbank Hatchery and SFB Director, Roger Knight said, "We are extremely grateful to the Spey Ghillies for their tremendous effort in giving up their evenings to assist with this project and to Hatchery Manager Jimmy Woods for producing fry in excellent condition."

The fish will subsequently be released into the following burns: Tommore, Rothies, Batten, Corrie and Dullan. We are also very grateful to the Speyburn Distillery for their continued support and partnership with the Spey Foundation and their provision of a dram to the participating ghillies.



Above: Fin-clipping in progress at Sandbank Hatchery (Photo: Roger Knight).

The Spey Fishery Board says "Farewell" to Assistant Biologist, Polly Burns

Polly Burns, our Assistant Biologist, joined the Spey Fishery Board after studying at the Scottish Association for Marine Science in Oban, where she gained a First Class degree in Marine Science in May 2013. She has accepted a position in Edinburgh working with commercial fishery sustainability. Polly said, "I have enjoyed being part of the Spey Fishery Board and being involved with many interesting projects, including 'Salmon in the Classroom' and I would like to thank everyone for their support." We wish her every success in the future.

Tomintoul and Glenlivet Landscape Partnership (TGLP)

The Spey Catchment Initiative applied for a feasibility study to look at improving the resilience of the catchment to high flows using a section of the River Avon, which is one of the main tributaries to the River Spey. The River Avon has become particularly active here in recent years with significant erosion, sediment transfer and deposition taking place during spate events. We are currently in a 'flood rich' period and improving the resilience of the catchment to extreme flows could be beneficial to both infrastructure, farmland and the salmonid population.



Above: Last year's erosion to an adjacent road to the River Avon and to agricultural land.

The study will be conducted over the autumn with results due to be published before the end of the year. The aim is to deliver agreed restoration options during the delivery phase of the TGLP project in 2017-2020.

In addition, an application was submitted to the new Scottish Rural Development Programme to undertake river margin improvement works at a farm within the TGLP boundary. If successful, it will be used as a demonstration farm for good riparian practice, green engineering schemes and alternative watering solutions, to encourage other land users in the TGLP area to undertake similar works. The decision on the application is expected in October.

Masters Research Dissertations

The Spey Catchment Initiative has secured two Ecosystem Services Master's students from Edinburgh University to undertake Spey-related research and scoping projects as their course dissertations.

One student will look at the feasibility of reintroducing a flow to, and improving habitats in, a 500m long backwater of the Spey which is currently blocked off. The other student will investigate the value of the water to the ecosystem relative to other water use pressures such as industry and renewable energies. It is hoped that this will lead to further river improvement works in due course.



DATES FOR THE DIARY

Spey Fishery Board Public Meeting

The Spey Fishery Board will be holding its Annual Public Meeting at the Fleming Hall, Queen's Road, Aberlour AB38 9PR on Tuesday 20th October, 7:00 - 9:00pm.

Due to limited places, booking is essential. Please advise the Spey Fishery Board's Administrator, Sally Gross, by telephone on 01340-810841 or by email at admin@speyfisheryboard.com by the 15th October if you wish to attend.

Spey Fishery Board Meeting

To be held on Friday 20th November at 9:30 am at the Craigellachie Hotel, Victoria Street, Craigellachie, AB38 9SR. Members of the public are invited to attend as observers, but are requested to give notice to the Board's Administrator.