

YTHAN DISTRICT FISHERY BOARD

Annual Report of the Clerk for 2022 Fishing Season

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1. State of the River

For yet another year low water levels through much of the season kept anglers away from all but the lower beats until late in the season when rainfall returned river levels to more normal condition. The lower beats had the best of it both salmon and sea trout for the season. Late rain produced some fish for upstream proprietors. Ranunculus remains a problem particularly from the Ebrie downstream.

2. Predators

Once again we leased the seal scarer + boat combination from the Ugie Board. The boat was launched and deployed at Boatie Tom’s just upstream of the by-pass bridge and proved very effective at keeping seals downstream of it and for the salmon season no seals passed in to the town waters. We will book the boat for the 2023 season (subject to Board approval).

No Mink have been caught this season but vigilance continues.

Cormorants, Mergansers and Goosanders have been surveyed and counted by the Bailiffing team from Gight to Newburgh and a licence was applied for and obtained but far too late for any shooting to take place. Nature Scot are exceedingly slow in dealing with applications of this type but the surveying does produce the data showing that a licence would be beneficial to control the population of piscivorous birds

3. Nets in the River

No netting has taken place so far as we are aware.

4. 2021 Season

A slightly poorer season than 2021 for salmon fishing due, mainly, to low water conditions. The overall count provided to the Board by proprietors and tenants is 114 salmon and grilse (all returned). 1,375 sea trout and finnock of which only 62% were returned. (All finnock – 715 and 136 sea trout were returned. 524 sea trout, mostly caught in the estuary, were retained.)

Catches of salmon were common to all beats but generally restricted to the last month (October) above Ellon. Sea trout were found in greater abundance in the Estuary and upstream. Finnock fishing within the river has declined somewhat which is a concern. –The catch statistics table is shown below.

Total Total Returned % Returned incl Nets % Ret
 Salmon Sea Trout Salmon Sea Trout salmon ST Salmon Sea Trout Salmon S T

2022	114	1375		114	851	100	62	114	1375	100	62
2021	117	1643		117	1379	100	84	117	1643	100	84
2020	160	1670		160	1450	100	87	160	1670	100	87
2019	67	795		67	666	100	84	67	815	100	82
2018	127	1185		127	980	100	83	127	1224	100	80
2017	129	1525		111	1263	86	83	129	1539	86	82
2016	58	1315		44	1060	76	80	58	1329	76	80
2015	130	1268		89	890	68	70	130	1288	68	69
2014	141	1821		85	1288	61	71	266	1865	32	69
2013	215	1228		124	882	57	72	488	1236	25	71
2012	419	2078		261	1560	62	75	603	2121	43	74
2011	337	2122		215	1606	64	76	523	2139	41	75
2010	537	2337		352	1604	66	69	744	2411	47	67
10y	1258	13825	-	1038	10709	-	-	1656	13984		
Av	126	1383		104	1071	83	77	255	1398	41	76
5y	585	6668	0	585	5326			585	6727		
Av	117	1334		117	1065	100	80	117	1345	100	79

5. Spawning

We are awaiting the Redd Count data from the Bailiffing team and will publish this on the website once we have it. The same survey corridors have been used in 2022 -3 as in previous years so we are beginning to build up a better picture of the spawning situation over a reasonable area of riverbed.

6. Electrofishing Survey

The Scottish Government Marine Science survey of 16 sites went ahead but did not include the 4 annual sites that have been surveyed in the previous 3 years. In order to maintain these sites we arranged for them to be added to the MS sites by the Deveron Bogie and Isla Rivers Trust.

The four sites contained both salmon fry and parr and trout fry and parr in all 4 locations and a summary of the data over the last 4 years is set out below. (Note the numbers present are graded from A (excellent) to F (absent)).

Passes	Year	Area m ²	Sal Fry	Grade	Sal Parr	Grade	Trt Fry	Grade	Trt Parr	Grade	
3	2018	102.0	58	B	6	C	18	B	7	C	Locham's Pot Methlick
3	2019	103.8	57	B	16	B	3	D	11	C	
3	2020	103.8	17	D	9	C	34	B	18	B	
3	2021	104.0	61	B	13	B	13	C	9	C	
3	2022	104.0	68	B	7	C	12	C	3	D	
	2018	105.0	26	C	3	D	5	D	6	C	Slaties Pot opp. Ardlogie
	2019	105.0	4	E	1	E	5	D	2	D	
1	2020	112.0	2	E	1	E	7	D	22	A	
1	2021	112.0	18	D	0	F	3	D	4	D	
1	2022	112.0	19	D	5	C	12	C	3	D	
1	2018	106.0	0	F	0	F	36	B	15	B	Mains of Towie
1	2019	112.0	7	E	0	F	87	A	9	C	
1	2020	114.0	1	E	1	E	13	C	10	C	
1	2021	114.0	0	F	0	F	18	B	14	C	
1	2022	114.0	0	F	2	D	13	C	17	B	
3	2018	112.0	7	E	10	B	97	A	11	C	Fordoun burn Rootie Linn Fyvie
3	2019	104.8	21	D	5	C	58	A	18	B	
3	2020	117.6	70	B	10	B	42	A	15	B	
3	2021	118.0	12	D	13	B	66	A	5	C	
3	2022	118	1	E	11	B	43	A	11	C	

7. Stocking

No stocking took place during the year.

FMS and Scottish Government Marine Science does not support introducing any stock fish from a hatchery save in exceptional circumstances. This remains an area of huge debate not only in the

UK but also now in the USA and Canada particularly regarding Pacific salmon species which have been heavily re-stocked for many years possibly at the expense of natural stocking.

8. Board staff / Bailiffing

The work of bailiffing the river has been conducted by a team from the River Don DSFB. All reports of illegal fishing have been followed up by the team and in some cases, anglers warned off. As detailed above the bailiffs' time has been increasingly spent on non-policing activities including piscivorous bird surveys, redd counts, clearing obstructions and clearing ranunculus from spawning areas. These non-policing activities are likely to continue to occupy more of the bailiffs' time in the future as stock recovery is of paramount importance to the Board.

9. Sea Poaching

There have been no reports of poaching on the coast of the Ythan during the season.

10. Pollution / Obstructions

The devastation of woodlands by Storm Arwen in late November 2021 and Storm Malik in January 2022 caused new obstructions to the river and its tributaries. Only a few of these will affect the upstream passage of fish but if you see an obstruction that you consider impassable, please advise the Clerk and a survey will be carried out.

SEPA has completed the project to remove the weir from the Bronie Burn at Scottisley (it was postponed due to the lockdown conditions in 2020 and 2021) thanks to the work of Alec Patterson and the River Ythan Trust. There is a report about it on the website

Scottish Water intimated their intention to remove the obstruction on the Fordoun Burn at Bridge of Lewes in Fyvie some time ago. This will be a large project and SEPA have insisted on careful design of the replacement channel which has yet to be agreed.

11. River Ythan Trust

The Trust has again arranged for and supported the Ythan Biodiversity Volunteers to undertake the control of invasive species (plants) that remain in the catchment. Despite Covid regulations it has been possible for the annual spraying of Giant Hogweed and Japanese Knotweed to take place within the river Ythan with assistance from the SISI project. SISI has also controlled Japanese Knotweed and Himalayan Balsam within the water of Cruden / Laeca and Slains burn.

12. Website

The website is working well. If you have any ideas for improvement, please report these to the Clerk.

13. Conservation Policy

The Board has adopted a conservation policy since 2008. This has been updated annually and places restrictions on the numbers of fish that can be caught and kept. The river has remained in Category 3 which requires all salmon to be returned to the river. There will be an opportunity to discuss the number of sea trout that can be taken – if any.

14. Complaints Handling

The Board has adopted a Complaints Handling Procedure which is available from the Clerk.

15. Members' Interests

The Clerk will keep a register of financial interests of all members of the Board and any person associated with the Board.

16. Activities for 2023

The Ythan is vulnerable to diffuse pollution from the agricultural activities in the District and to accidental pollution from farms, industrial estates, development and housing. Previous incidents have been numerous and led to significant fish kills.

The Board will continue to monitor the river for pollution and to support SEPA with any subsequent action.

During 2020 SEPA ceased carrying out individual inspections of all farms in the catchment area from Ellon westwards (those to the East of Ellon have already been surveyed) because of Covid restrictions. The work in the catchment has still not yet been completed and further surveys did not take place in 2021 and few in 2022. We hope that these will be concluded in 2023 and that follow up visits will take place. Each farmer will be given a list of unacceptable practices or installations found on their farm and will be given an opportunity to discuss with SEPA a timetable for action. Those that fail to keep up with the agreed timetable may face further action from SEPA who now great experience of farm inspections have having already completed surveys of all of the other catchments in the North East.

The Board will ensure anglers abide by the Conservation Policy and will ensure compliance with the 100% catch and release policy on salmon that has been imposed on the river during 2022 season.

The Board will commission electro fishing surveys as requested by Marine Scotland of sites allocated by Marine Scotland over the Ythan and Ugie catchments. The Board will consider whether or not to continue to conduct electro-fishing surveys of the 4 annual sites as detailed above.

The Board will support Aberdeen University and Nature Scot in monitoring and surveying seals within Forvie NNR. This includes work to establish the proportion of salmonids in the diet of seals. Scottish Government has been unwilling to provide financial support for this work.

The Board will continue to work with SEPA in all cases of pollution or CAR licensing failures.

The bailiffs will continue to monitor the river for poaching or angling without a permit, to carry out coastal patrols and to work with Police Scotland to protect the river against illegal activity.

The bailiffs will continue to carry out surveys to count the numbers of piscivorous birds and to assess the numbers of salmon and sea trout redds within the catchment by undertaking sample surveys and to undertake restoration projects to improve the quality and quantity of habitats for juvenile and breeding salmonids. The team will also assist in organising control of piscivorous birds on specific dates during the early spring of 2022 (Licence permitting)

The Board will continue to collect catch data from anglers and proprietors.