

River Ythan SLA Report September 2025

1. Introduction

The Don DFSB have been contracted to carry out fisheries protection, predator surveys, spawning surveys and habitat restoration activities across the river Ythan catchment throughout 2025/26 by the Ythan DSFB under a Service Level Agreement. Each activity is allocated a set number of man-days/patrols to accommodate the requirements of the annually agreed SLA. Activities are defined following consultation with the Ythan DSFB.

Any incidents relating to pollution and policing will be recorded and shared with the Clerk. Information from predator surveys will be collated and shared with the Clerk directly following the survey period. Information on spawning surveys will be collated and reported upon in a summary report following the end of the spawning period. Any seals reported above Logie Buchan Bridge will be reported to the Clerk as soon as possible.

All activities will be covered by the Don DSFB health and safety polices, as stated in the service level agreement.

2. Reporting

A log of all patrols and activities will be sent to the Clerk monthly.

SLA Activities/ Table 1. September, SLA Activity/Policing Patrol allocation of shifts

Date	Patrol Area	Time of Patrol	Notes/Incidents
17/9/25	Methlick to Newburgh Estuary.	2pm to 6pm 2 staff = 1 day	Good numbers of Finnock still being landed at Newburgh Estuary and the Machar pool. 1 Grey seal spotted at the Machar pool.
24/9/25	Methlick to Newburgh Estuary.	12pm to 4pm 2 staff = 1 day	Newburgh estuary was quiet today with only a few anglers fishing.

Angling effort for the month, has been concentrated on the tidal reaches of the river. River conditions for the month, held at extreme low flows with scarcity of water within the Ythan district. Sea trout catches for the month started to fall away around Mid-September, at Newburgh estuary. Finnock on the other hand, have been giving anglers good sport throughout September.

Seals

1 Grey seal was identified in the Machar pool and was swiftly moved back down towards Newburgh estuary.

SLA Activities/ Piscivorous Bird Count/September

Table 2. Autumn Piscivorous Bird Surveys 2025.

Autumn Piscivorous Bird Surveys 2025	Number of Goosanders	Number of Cormorants	Number of Mergansers
River Ythan bird count 23 rd of September.	28	30	0

Location of Birds

On the 23rd of the month, 28 Goosanders along with 30 Cormorants were counted during the piscivorous bird survey.

From Blairfowl down to Methlick bridge, a flock of 5 goosanders were identified. Just upstream of lovies bridge at Methlick, a further 4 Goosanders were counted. 1 pair of Goosanders were seen between Tanglandford bridge and Ythanbank bridge. Between Ythanbank and Ardlethen upper beat, a flock of 7 Goosanders were counted. From Ardlethen lower beat to Ardlethen bridge, 2 Goosanders were identified. The area between Ardlethen bridge and the Railway viaduct above Ellon village, accounted for a further 2 Goosanders. On the Ellon stretch of river, 3 Goosanders were counted. Between the Machar pool and Newburgh estuary, a further 3 Goosanders along with 30 Cormorants were identified. This is the largest count of Cormorants counted, the majority of the Cormorants were diving and very active.

Pollution

No reports for the month.

Tree removal

Table 3. SLA Activities/September/Tree Removal

Date	Location	Tree Removal Description	Allocated time
16.9.25	NJ 86956 36181	Cut and remove part obstruction from river.	1 staff member 1 day.

I received a report from Haddo angling club, of a large willow tree that had fallen into the river above lovies bridge at Methlick. I visited the site in question to investigate the severity of the fallen tree and found it was covering well over half the breadth of the river on that section.

Luckily the tree had fallen into very shallow water, where I was able to safely remove the fallen tree from the river. Pictures below of the tree.

Fig 1. Fallen tree



Fig 2. Tree removed.



Table 4. SLA Activity/September/Gravel Washing

Date	Time	Activity
19.9.25	8.30am to 5pm = 1 day	Setting silt curtain and digging over substrate to loosen
23.9.25	1pm to 5.15pm = 0.5 day	Digging over substrate to loosen.
24.9.25	8am to 4.30pm = 1 day	Using leaf blower to free sediment from gravel.
26.9.25	12.30pm to 5pm = 0.5 day	Using leaf blower to free sediment from gravel. Level off substrate using garden rake, tidy up site.

Gravel Washing

The gravel washing on the Chappel of Seggat site took 3 days to complete, 2 days were used to dig over the site to loosen off the hard packed gravel, which was overwhelmed by sand and finer sediment.

Once this task was complete, I used a leaf blower to force air into the gravel. By doing this, it freed the sediment that was trapped in the gravel. The silt curtain that was placed at the bottom of the gravel washing site, caught any loose sediment preventing any pollution further downstream. By doing this project, it will vastly improve the survival rate from egg to emerging fry in late spring of 2026. The site will be monitored during the spawning period.

Fig 3. Before gravel washing.



Fig 4. During gravel washing procedure.



Fig 5. Cleaned and compacted gravel

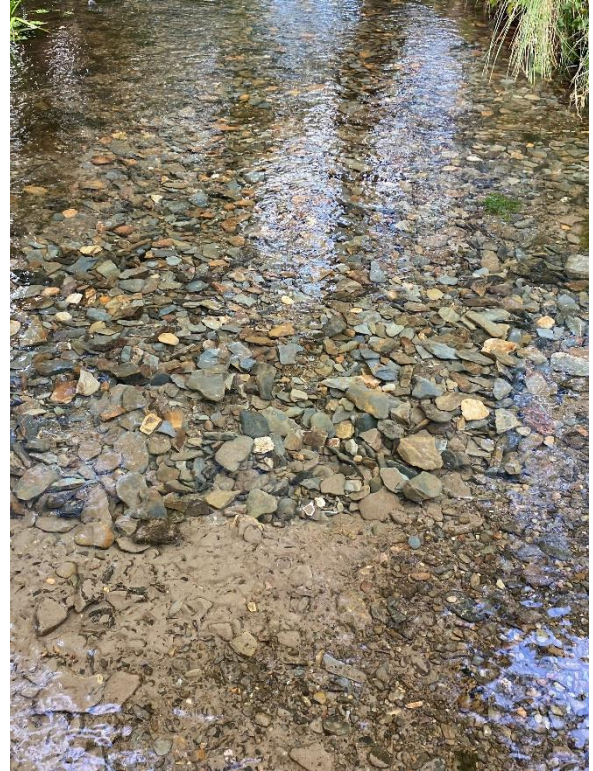


Fig 6, Completed section now cleaned, the water flow is now flowing through the gravel and not just flowing over. Now the river flow is flowing through the gravel, this will increase oxygen levels within the substrate for the forthcoming spawning season and promote better survival from egg to emerging fry.



SLA Activities October/November/December.

Piscivorous bird count surveys October /November.

Annual redd counting surveys will begin on all our allocated sites chosen by the Ythan DSFB.

Checks will be made on tributaries for blockages to fish migration, will be carried out in October.

Jim Kerr
Senior Fisheries Officer
Acting on behalf of the Ythan DSFB