

River Ythan SLA Report July 2024

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 2024/25 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.

Policing

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

Date	Patrol Area	Time of Patrol	Notes/Incidents
3/7/24	Methlick to Newburgh Estuary.	14.30pm to 18.30pm 2 staff = 1 day	Numbers of sea trout being landed at Newburgh Estuary
4/7/24	Methlick to Newburgh Estuary.	16.30pm to 20.30pm 2 staff = 1 day	High fishing effort at Newburgh Estuary today.
9/7/24	Methlick to Newburgh Estuary.	14.30pm to 18.30pm 2 staff = 1 day	Shoals of finnock giving sport at Newburgh estuary
10/7/24	Ardlethan to Newburgh Estuary	12.30pm to 16.30pm 2 staff = 1 day	None
16/7/24	Methlick to Newburgh Estuary.	14.00pm to 18.00pm 2 staff = 1 day	All beats quite today due to bad weather.
17/7/24	Methlick to Newburgh Estuary.	14.00pm to 18.00pm 2 staff = 1 day	None
24/7/24	Methlick to Newburgh Estuary.	15.00pm to 19.00pm 2 staff = 1 day	Report of illegal activity on the Esslemont Beat, Fisheries Officers recovered braided fishing line with treble hooks and lead weight.
31/7/24	Methlick to Newburgh Estuary, also Fyvie water inspected.	14.30pm to 18.30pm 2 staff = 1 day	Pollution report investigated at Ramornie beat, this incident has now been reported to SEPA.

July has been a productive month for sea trout catches at Newburgh estuary, although some fishing days were lost due to poor weather conditions. Shoals of finnock have been seen feeding within the estuary limits giving good sport to anglers.

There was one reported incident of illegal activity on the Esslemont beat, where a large amount of braided line along with treble hook and large lead weight attached was recovered. The Fisheries Officers carried out a search of the undergrowth for further evidence but nothing else was found. Permission has been granted to set up remote trail/wildlife cameras to provide monitoring of any illegal activity along with our mobile and foot patrols.

Habitat Restoration

Table 2. July SLA Activity- Ranunculus Weed cutting sites cleared-Ebrie Burn

Survey Point	Grid Ref	Survey Point	Grid Ref
Location 1	NJ 93212/36720	Location 6	NJ 93270/38603
Location 2	NJ 93119/36968	Location 7	NJ 93292/39409
Location 3	NJ 93086/36997	Location 8	NJ 93270/39461
Location 4	NJ 93152/36893	Location 9	NJ 93252/39739
Location 5	NJ 92908/37623	Location 10	NJ 93230/39674

Table 3. July SLA Activity- Ranunculus Weed cutting-Ebrie Burn

Date	Activity-Weed cutting	Time
4/7/24	Weed clearing	8am to 4pm, 1 Staff =1 day
5/7/24	Weed clearing	8am to 4pm, 1 Staff =1 day
9/7/24	Weed clearing	12.30pm to 5.00pm, 1 staff = 0.5 day
12/7/24	Weed clearing	9am to 13.00pm, 1 staff = 0.5 day
17/7/24	Weed clearing	9am to 5pm, 1 staff = 1 day
18/7/24	Weed clearing	9am to 5pm, 1 staff = 1 day
23/7/24	Weed clearing	9.30am to 5.30pm, 1 staff member = 1 day
27/7/24	Weed clearing	9am to 5.30pm, 1 staff = 1 day

In total 10 sites were chosen on the Ebrie burn for Ranunculus weed clearing. The area selected between Drumwhindle bridge up to Glenebrie bridge (5km), exhibited areas of excellent spawning gravel. Sadly Ranunculus weed growth had smothered many sites. Following weed clearing these spawning sites have been restored allowing salmon and trout to access weed free spawning gravel for this coming spawning season, see example of before and after Fig 1 & 2 below.

Fig 1, Before clearing weed off spawning gravel



Fig 2, After spawning gravel now free of weed



Pollution

On Saturday the 27th of July there was a what looked like a sewage discharge on the Ramornie beat. Above the Ramornie beat is a Scottish Water waste treatment works which has discharge into the river it was here that the incident was witnessed.

This incident has now been reported to SEPA, where an investigation is being carried out.

Thank you to Mr Ritchie for promptly reporting the incident

Predators

Seals

No reports this month.

Piscivorous Bird Surveys

Piscivorous bird counts will commence once again in September.

3. Upcoming tasks

In the coming months once the stream bank vegetation subsides, habitat survey work will commence on the Litte Water burn. This will identify areas that improvement could be beneficial for future works and funding opportunities that might arise.

Jim Kerr

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