

## River Ythan SLA Report October 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 policies, 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/ Piscivorous Bird Count/September

**Table 1. October SLA Activity/Policing Patrol allocation of shifts.**

Date	Patrol Area	Time of Patrol	Notes/Incidents
3/10/24	Methlick to Newburgh Estuary	12.00pm to 16.00pm 2 staff = 1 day	Numbers of anglers fishing above the Estuary limits are now increasing, salmon reported seen at Ardlethen water.
08/10/24	Methlick to Newburgh Estuary	12.30pm to 16.00pm 2 staff = 1 day	1 salmon caught at Schivas this afternoon, some of the pools on the mainstem of the river holding a small number of salmon.
16/10/24	Methlick to Newburgh Estuary	10am to 14.00pm 2 staff = 1 day	Heavy rain colouring up the river with runoff. Pollution checks on Scottish water pumping station at Ramornie Beat, clear. Outlet pipe above Ellon bridge, left bank was clear also. Very few anglers were seen.
31/10/24	Methlick to Newburgh Estuary	11am to 15.00pm 2 staff = 1 day	Low river flows over the catchment prevailing, Anglers were seen and checked on the ADAA beat at Ardlethen and Above the Ellon bridge.

Low flows have prevailed throughout the month of October. Salmon have been seen in some of the beats, but few were caught. The angling effort has been quiet, which is very unusual for the Ythan for October, when a normal year would see good water levels for the last month of the angling season and the beats would be very busy with anglers.

### Pollution

There have been no reports this month on the Ythan catchment. Periodic pollution checks on known hot spots, such as Ramornie beat and village of Ellon, has shown no discharge of pollution this month. On going checks over the coming months will continue.

**Table 2.SLA/Activity Autumn Piscivorous Bird Surveys 2024.**

<b>Table 1. Autumn Piscivorous Bird Surveys 2024</b>	<b>Number of Goosanders</b>	<b>Number of Cormorants</b>	<b>Number of Mergansers</b>
River Ythan Bird Count, Date 31st of October.	13	4	0

Areas where goosanders were identified are as follows, Blairfowl three goosanders, two goosanders were seen a short distance below Methlick bridge, a further two were identified at Ythanbank along with one cormorant. At Lower Haddo beat, 3 goosanders were identified, a further one goosander counted at Ellon and two goosanders down at Newburgh Estuary. A further three cormorants were identified at the nature reserve at Newburgh Estuary.

### Fyvie Gravel Washing

**Table 3. September/October SLA/Activity Gravel Washing**

Date	Time	Activity
13.8.24	8.30am to 16.30pm 1 staff member = 1 day	SEPA licence application preparation
14.8.24	9am to 13.00pm, 1 staff member = 0.1 day	SEPA licence application preparation
30.9.24	9am to 17.00pm 1 staff member = 1 day	Forking gravel bed to slacken off
1.10.24	9am to 17.00pm 1 staff member = 1 day	Forking gravel bed to slacken off
2.10.24	8.30am to 16.30pm 1 staff member = 1 day	Leaf Blowing substrate
3.10.24	12pm to 16.00pm 1 staff member = 0.5 day	Levelling off substrate

## Gravel Washing

This year's gravel washing procedure commenced on the 30<sup>th</sup> of September and was completed on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of October. It took two days to fork over the compacted substrate to a loose slack state, after this process is complete the use of a leaf blower is used to force air into the loose gravel to disperse fine sediments. The last procedure is raking the gravel level, then firm down the gravel by trampling, then raking over the surface of the gravel once more to completion. I returned to the site on the 31<sup>st</sup> of October, after completing a goosander survey. To my astonishment I counted 7 salmon redds and 1 small brown trout redd, 1 pair of salmon on a redd.

It was so gratifying to see the salmon and trout utilising the newly cleaned spawning gravel, in the knowing that you have increased their survival from egg to emerging fry, by removing all the heavy and fine sediments that prevent aeration of the gravel but instead smothers the eggs during incubation. Below are some pictures of the leaf blowing and newly cut salmon redds.

Fig 1. Gravel Washing by Leaf Blower



Once the first initial stage of slackening off the compacted gravel is complete, the use of a leaf blower brings excellent results, in removing sediment deposits from the spawning substrate.

Fig 2, example of compacted and cleaned gravel at the Fyvie.

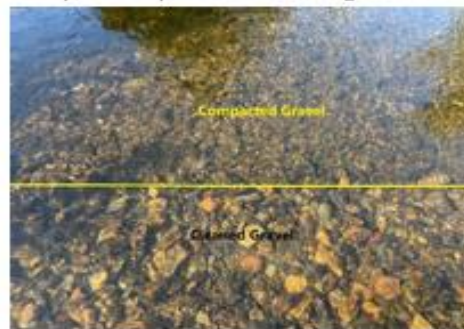


Fig 3, The yellow dots on the picture represents salmon Redds Salmon redds



If any Board members would like to visit the Gravel washing site, please get in touch.

Jim Kerr, Acting on behalf of the Ythan DSFB