



River Ythan Spawning Summary 2023

Compiled by Martin Webster

DDSFb

Summary

The annual monitoring of ten 1km spawning sites across the Ythan catchment commenced on the first week of November. All sites were surveyed (water conditions permitting) on a weekly basis until spawning ceased.

Continual high coloured water hampered viewing across all sites over the first couple of weeks. As levels slowly dropped away and cleared a brief spell of activity was seen from the 16th to the 23rd of November, upon which several sea trout were seen paired up on the gravel areas of the tributaries.

Improved numbers of sea trout were found in the Fordoun burn below Rothienorman. An odd salmon began to appear on a few tributary sites on the 23rd but despite steady water heights aiding access upstream sightings of fish and numbers of redds remained low thereafter with no decent head of fish appearing across many sites.

The main river sites at Fyvie and Methlick were continually running at a high level on occasions seen spilling over the bankside which made viewing impossible at times. During a small window of improved conditions on the 6th of December fresh salmon redds and surrounding clean sections of gravel could be seen through the water.

The remaining weeks of the month saw severe weather appearing which once again caused flooding issues across the catchment.

The main spawning period this year for sea trout has been from mid to late November with no further sea trout activity witnessed thereafter. As the year ended only a few additional salmon redds were discovered on the Fordoun (Fyvie) and Bronie sites.

Surveys resumed in January to yet more high flows, no further new redds were found on all sites only those from earlier, many were found flattened and unfortunately a few had suffered some gravel washout. As expected with the high flow conditions very little salmon or sea trout kelts were found washed up on the riverbanks this year.

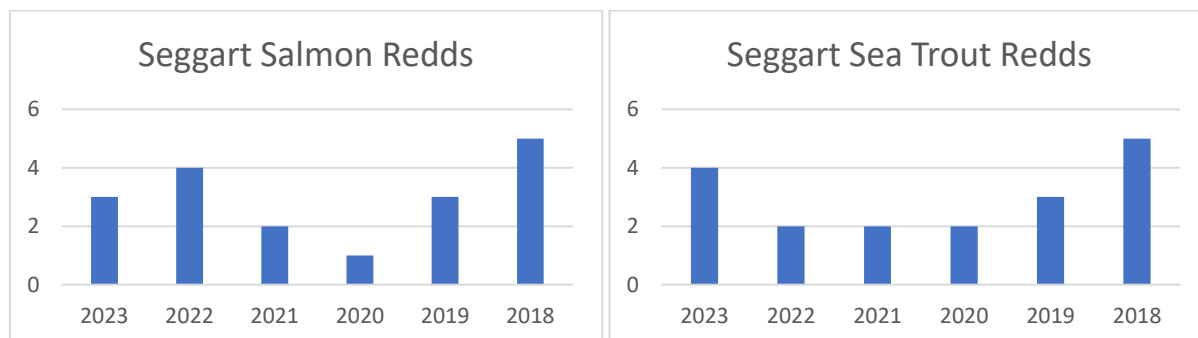
Summary

Due to the constant high-water levels across many sites, it has been a challenging spawning period over the past few months with limited opportunities occurring for both fish spawning and staff to survey. This has prevented a full picture being established over this period; however, all sites did at least record some activity and its possible fish may have pushed further on up the tributaries due to the increased flows. One positive this year have been the Fordoun burn which saw a healthy amount of sea trout moving up through on days in November, several stopping off and utilizing the gravel at Cranna Woods. The Chapel of Seggat site also continues to produce a steady number of salmon and sea trout redds year on year.

Monitoring concluded on January 12th, 2024.

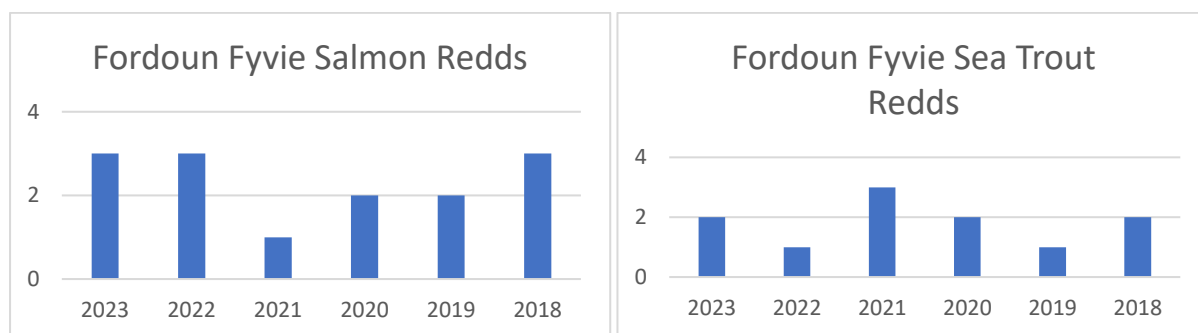
Chapel of Seggat

Poor viewing conditions up until 16/11/23 when live sea trout were seen already paired up on the gravel areas along with ongoing salmon cutting redds. Further salmon redds were found on the 23/11/23 survey. Despite several fish being seen moving through during December surveys no other redds were found across the site. Some bank loss was evident when water levels fell back, these may require repairing to prevent further erosion occurring.



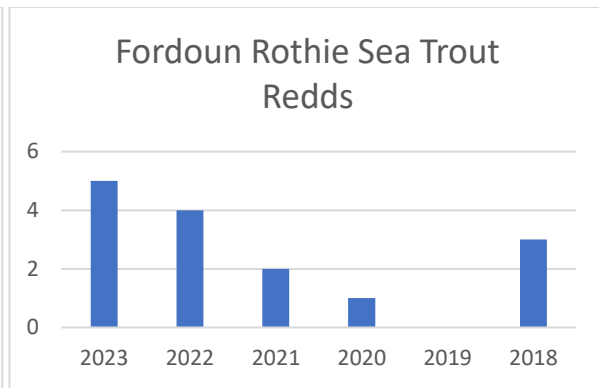
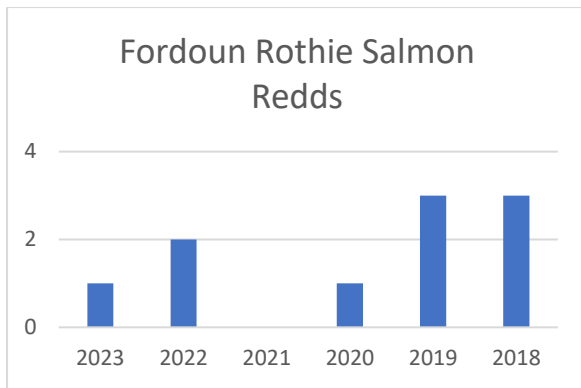
Fordoun Fyvie

Water conditions remained high over the early surveys until the 16/11/23 when live salmon and sea trout were seen in the lying in the deeper pools. Several in progress redds were also found on the gravel areas. Further fresh salmon redds were found on 30/11/23 and 20/12/23. No further spawning activity was seen in January. Redds located on the same areas of gravel as in previous years. Numbers seen on par with previous years.



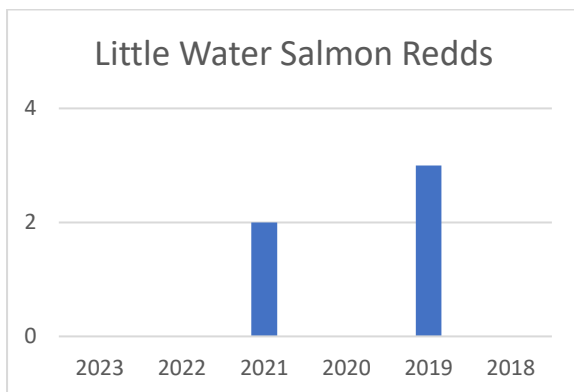
Fordoun Rothienorman

No live fish or redds were seen due to the high-water levels until 16/11/23 sea trout found in good numbers on gravel areas in progress cutting redds. High water levels made further surveys difficult but a single salmon redd was found on 20/12/23 once conditions improved. All redds situated on the upper section of Cranna Wood. Further sea trout were evident this year heading upstream. Several mature trees found lying across the burn, these may need clearing to prevent future blockages.



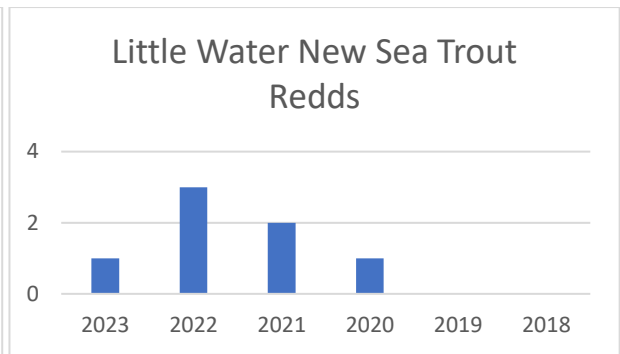
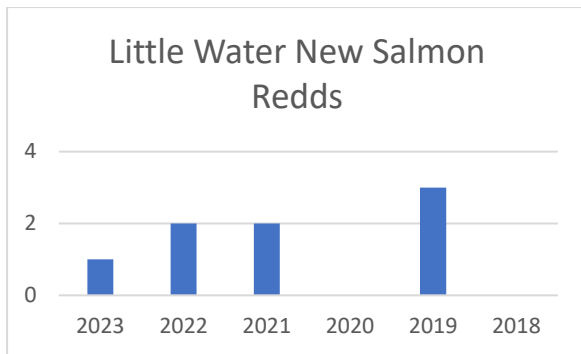
Littlewater

Despite plenty water available to help assist fish upstream only one sea trout redd seen on 16/11/23 with a pair of fish sitting on the gravel. Thereafter no further activity was found over the site. Rununculus weed wasn't so dense on the gravel areas this season, but several areas were found to have deepened. No live salmon seen or redds found during surveys. No sea trout redds have been recorded at this site since 2018.



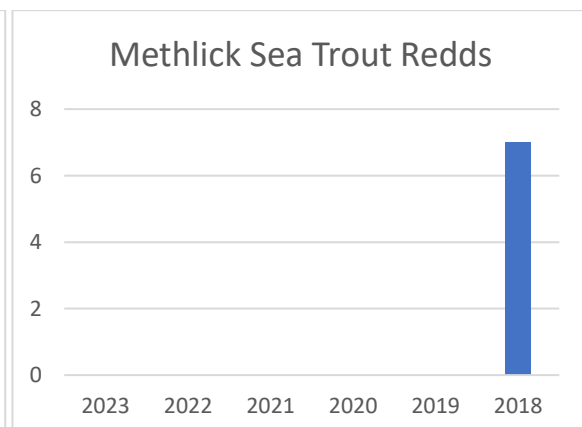
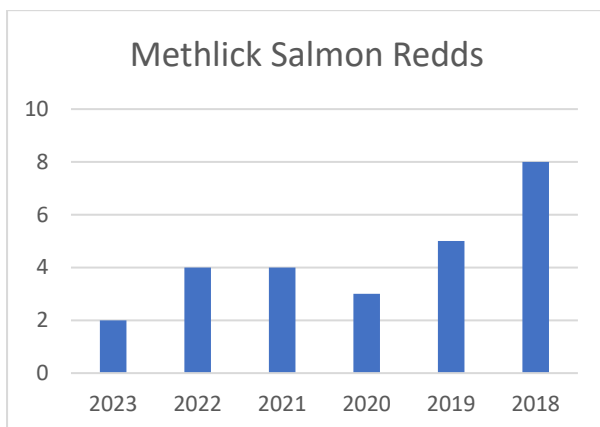
Littlewater (New)

No activity seen until 22/11/23 when both salmon and sea trout were found on gravel sections sitting on redds. Despite further lifts in water to attract fish upstream no other live fish or redds were found over visits. A slight drop in redds compared to the previous year. Rununculus weed wasn't so dense on gravel sections this year. Both Littlewater sites are still not achieving their full potential to produce more redds with gravel sections remaining unused.



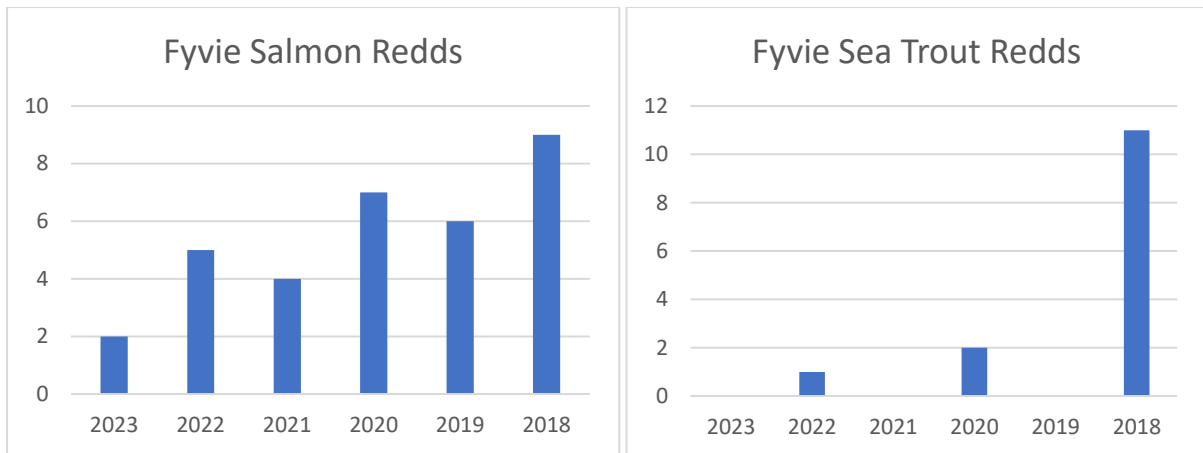
Methlick

This site endured constant high-water levels and poor clarity which impeded many surveys. Improved conditions for viewing on 06/12/23, found fresh salmon redds visible on the gravel before the water rose again. A walkover in January found old redds covered in silt, the floods have caused some damage to fencing and sections of riverbanks. Redd count down on previous year.



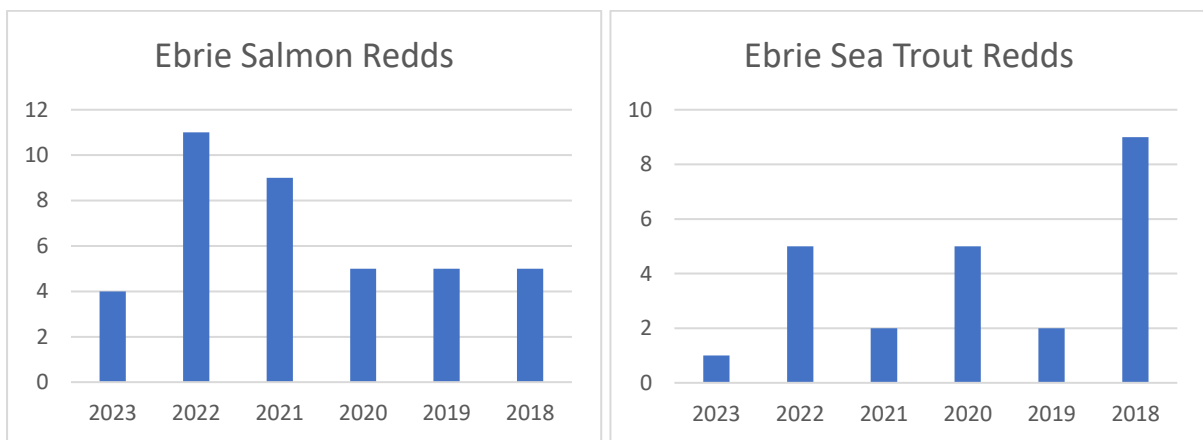
Fyvie

Like Methlick this site suffered from high coloured water over the months which disrupted surveys being undertaken over several visits. Improved conditions for viewing on 06/12/23, found fresh salmon redds but no live fish were seen over the site. River levels then went into flood and surveys were stopped until safe to return. Further surveys on the 20/12/23 and 12/01/24 found no new redds with large areas of suitable gravel remaining untouched. Another noticeable drop in redds from the previous year's figures.



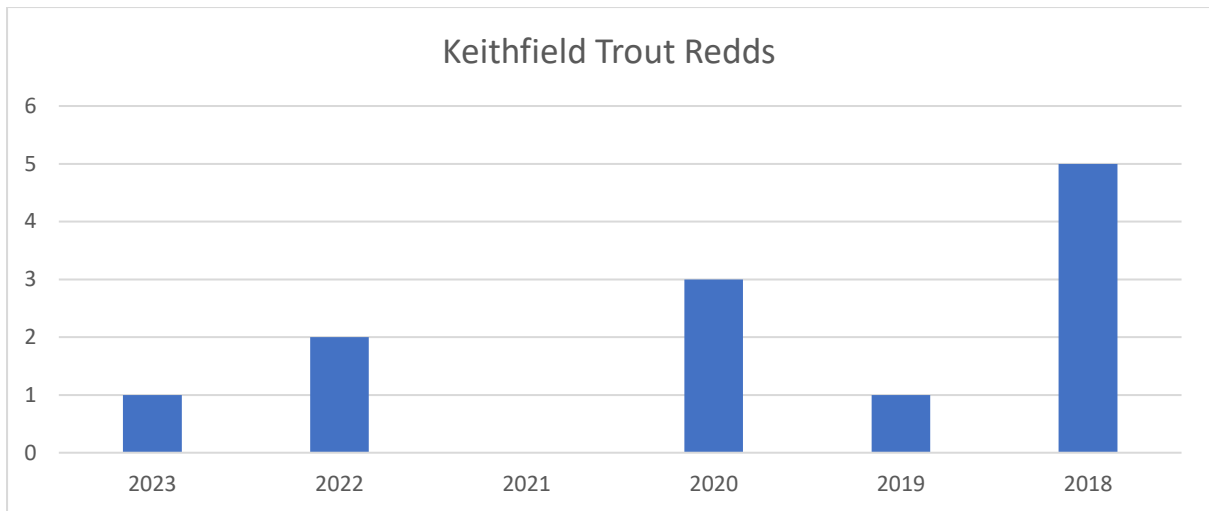
Ebrie

High and coloured water prevented surveys being undertaken until conditions finally improved on 24/11/23. Fresh salmon and sea trout redds were found on patches of gravel but those live fish had already moved off. This brief spell of activity quickly dropped away and despite further increases in water levels to assist fish upstream no further redds were seen across the site. Several attempts to survey the site were made from late November into December, but poor water clarity made viewing difficult. A few areas of suitable spawning habitat remained untouched. A significant drop in redds seen from the previous year.



Keithfield

Poor viewing conditions due to high and coloured water over the first month resulted in no redds being seen. One completed trout redd was found on 01/12/23. No further activity was found during subsequent visits. No salmon or sea trout redds have been recorded at this site since 2018.



Bronie

Several visits over the months saw poor in stream conditions but a couple of sea and brown trout redds were found during the November surveys, no salmon were seen until 14/12/23 when a large clean redd was found on the altered section of burn upstream from the removed weir. No further redds were seen over the remaining weeks of December and this was the case when surveys re commenced in January. A slight drop in salmon redds this season but an increase in sea trout.

