



# 2018

ANNUAL REVIEW

# **Fisheries Management Scotland was formed in 2016 as the single representative organisation for the District Salmon Fishery Boards, River Tweed Commission and Fisheries Trusts and Foundations in Scotland.**

We aim to:

- Promote and ensure the best fisheries management for the protection, preservation and development of Scotland's wild salmon and freshwater fish, along with their fisheries and environment.
- Represent the interests of our member organisations

FMS employs 3 staff – Dr Alan Wells (Chief Executive), Brian Davidson (Director of Communications & Administration) and Sean Dugan (Manager of the Scottish Fisheries Co-ordination Centre). We are grateful to Marine Scotland for facilitating the secondment of Aleksander Jasinski to Fisheries Management Scotland on a part-time basis.



Fisheries Management Scotland are grateful for the support received from Marine Scotland and Crown Estate Scotland for project work undertaken by our members

Editor: Rob Fletcher / Design: bremnerdesign.co.uk



## Chairman's introduction

**Alister Jack**

Chairman, Fisheries Management Scotland

2017 was a very busy first full year for Fisheries Management Scotland. We are a small organisation with a staff complement of only three, but – as you will see throughout the pages of this review – we punch well above our weight. I would like to thank Alan and Brian for their considerable efforts on behalf of our members.

I would also like to welcome Sean Dugan from the Scottish Fisheries Coordination Centre (SFCC) to the team. SFCC, a unique partnership between local fisheries managers and public bodies, joined with Fisheries Management Scotland in 2017 and plays a vital role in the evidence-based management of fisheries.

Fisheries Management Scotland was set up to support our members and promote good fisheries management. As we cannot do this on our own we need to forge strong partnerships. One of the most productive partnerships we have developed over the last year has been the relationship with the Scottish Government and its agencies, which is a crucial step in influencing thinking and achieving change. Whilst there will always be things that we don't agree on, our role as a 'critical friend' is increasingly bearing fruit, as there is an increasing recognition within the Scottish Government that more needs to be done to address the multiple pressures faced by our fish and the environment on which they depend.

A major issue for the fisheries management community in recent years has been a lack of stable and ongoing funding, particularly in the light of declining catches and the recent revaluation of fishings. This is an issue that we have raised regularly with officials and we very much welcome the recent announcement of significant support for our sector in 2018/19. We will continue to make the case for further funding on behalf of our members.

At our last annual conference I invited the salmon farming industry to help to fund fisheries management activities in the aquaculture zone – the shared space occupied by wild fisheries and the salmon farming industry. We are now progressing discussions with the SSPO, as part of our wider efforts to engage with the industry.

As you will read elsewhere in this review, catches in 2017 were again characterised by a reduced grilse run and a paucity of fresh fish in the autumn. As we have known

for some time, marine conditions are far from favourable, and therefore we need to redouble our efforts to ensure that good numbers of healthy wild smolts are leaving our rivers. Throughout this review you will see examples of such work undertaken by our members. These are just a few instances of the good work being delivered to look after Scotland's fish and fisheries for this and future generations.

Finally, I would like to extend my thanks to Strutt & Parker for once again sponsoring this review and I would like to wish everyone involved a successful and enjoyable season.

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*"One of the most productive partnerships we have developed over the last year has been the relationship with the Scottish Government and its agencies, which is a crucial step in achieving change."*

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# The year in review

**Dr Alan Wells**

Chief Executive, Fisheries Management Scotland

**Brian Davidson**

Director of Communications and Administration, Fisheries Management Scotland

Fisheries Management Scotland is still a young organisation and the current Board only met for the first time in February 2017. Our first year was a busy one and the purpose of this article is to reflect on the work we have undertaken on behalf of our members and the challenges that face us in future. We would urge you to visit our website – [www.fms.scot](http://www.fms.scot) – where you can find detailed information about our priorities and our members' activities.

Fisheries management primarily involves managing impacts, pressures and people to ensure that the environment on which the fish depend is optimal. These pressures and impacts are many and varied, and we draw on the extensive experience of our members to help inform our thinking and policy. To date, we have established two specific committees to inform our work on fish farming and fisheries enforcement. More detail on the work of these committees can be found on pages 10-11 and 12-13 respectively.

The Scottish Fisheries Coordination Centre (SFCC) joined with Fisheries Management Scotland in 2017 and is now constituted as a committee of Fisheries Management Scotland, albeit one with a distinct funding stream and identity. This demonstrates our commitment to evidence-based management of freshwater fish and fisheries in Scotland and further details of the work of SFCC can be found on pages 14-15.



© Desmond Dugan

At the time of last year's review the fisheries management community was still absorbing the news that the ambition of the wild fisheries reform programme had been reduced. Whilst there is still disappointment in some quarters, there is now also a renewed vigour to 'get on with the day job'. As will be evident from the articles in this review, our members make a hugely significant contribution to maintaining and improving our freshwater environment. It must be recognised, however, that the extent of this positive contribution is limited by lack of funding. Fisheries Management Scotland continue to press the case for stable and ongoing funding on behalf of our members and therefore we are delighted that the Scottish Government has responded through the announcement of a 'wild fisheries governance fund' and significant support for monitoring and research efforts in 2018/19.

The conservation regulations for 2018 were announced in September and 122 of 171 rivers now fall into Category 3 (less than 60 percent probability that the conservation limit will be met). The regulations require mandatory catch and release of salmon in all rivers accorded Category 3 status. In addition, 2017 was the second year in a row with a reduced grilse run. The geographically widespread nature of this issue points to the main problems taking place at sea. Whilst the lack of grilse has been offset by larger numbers of multi-seawater fish, it is a worrying trend and will have knock-on effects – making it harder to sell fishing, maintain Scotland's angling tourism economy and help support fisheries management.

Fisheries Management Scotland supports the principle of ensuring that exploitation is sustainable. We are also actively engaged in workstreams aimed at ensuring that the model which underpins the process continually improves and receives the necessary development and investment. We are developing proposals which, if accepted, will allow local fisheries managers to have a greater input into the process.

It is understandable that anglers and fishery owners feel that a disproportionate focus has been placed on controlling exploitation in fisheries, whilst other pressures on fish have received much less attention. The majority of our work is aimed at reducing and mitigating those impacts which fall under human control. As the representative body for Scottish fisheries management, we are uniquely placed to influence policy and speak with a unified voice for the needs of fish and fisheries. Some examples of our priorities can be seen in the following pages.





### River Basin Management Planning

We participated in a SEPA River Basin Management Plan workshop which provided an opportunity for Fisheries Trusts to identify areas where local information can contribute directly to waterbody classifications, and therefore pave the way for remedial action. We are working with SEPA to make progress across a range of issues – including improving downstream smolt passage; alleviating acidification pressures relating to commercial forestry; and ensuring close communication with DSFBs and Fisheries Trusts in licensing and enforcement activities.

### Beaver reintroductions

Fisheries Management Scotland and the Tay DSFB are members of the Scottish Beaver Forum. Beaver damming activity is a real concern for fisheries managers. Whilst not all dams will be impassable, it is very likely that additional barriers in our rivers will delay fish migration, making them more vulnerable to predators. Even if dams do not require to be notched or removed, free passage of fish to and from spawning tributaries will need to be assessed in both the spring and the autumn. We are working to ensure that the burden of this additional management should not fall on fishery managers.

### Predation

Recent acoustic tracking work on the Dee, Tweed and Deveron suggests that the early part of the smolts' journey within the river can result in high losses of juvenile fish. It is likely that some of these losses are down to predation and there is a direct relationship between the number of

smolts leaving the river and the number of adults that return in subsequent years. We will be working with our members, Scottish Government and agencies to ensure that the necessary tools are available to maximise survival of smolts during this vulnerable period.

### Angling development

We are currently exploring options for creating a national structure that will provide the opportunity for all, particularly young people, from all backgrounds and abilities, to get involved in angling. We are working in partnership with Countryside Learning Scotland to develop this, with a view to building on the excellent work already undertaken by many of our members. Further details can be found on page 20 of this review.



Beaver. © Ronan Dugan



## Fish migration: breaking down the barriers

**Alison Baker**

Catchment Manager, Forth Fisheries Trust

Rivers which are impacted by manmade weirs are less resilient than those that flow naturally. Any barrier – small or large – will affect the river's ability to support a natural and sustainable ecosystem. Installing or retaining barriers prevents functions such as sediment and gravel movements, cleansing of substrates and the movement of aquatic species through the system. Without providing the best ecosystem within our rivers and lochs, we cannot expect the fish which inhabit them to flourish.

Our fisheries need sustainable populations of fish. Without this, as managers we cannot support, develop and maintain our fisheries and the economic and social benefits which they provide.

In the last year, many members have worked towards solutions to remove or mitigate the effect of barriers within river systems. In 2017 this resulted in 15 barriers being removed or eased, with 92 km of rivers being made accessible to fish. We continue to work with SEPA and others to ensure better and more consistent regulation. This work continues at both national and local level and Fisheries Management Scotland and its members are well placed to lead discussions to advance improvements.

Throughout Scotland, barriers have been, and continue to be, created within river systems for many reasons. The impacts of these barriers are often more profound than

the simple tests required prior to installing them suggest. Fish passage is important: without adequate provision, the impacts of barriers on fish populations are immediate and can be devastating, and 'fish pass' options all have some negative impact. Simply putting in a technical pass or other management system is not a long-term sustainable solution. This should be the last resort, not the first option considered. Our river systems are too important.

Working on rivers which have many, often large, manmade barriers is difficult. The conflicting requirements of our economy, built heritage and social perception of what is natural make the case for removal of these barriers difficult, but not impossible. Partnership working can identify compromises which use the best technical solutions available. The world does not stand still and barriers put in place on a river 100, or even 30, years ago are not necessarily acceptable today.

The Forth Trust has been working with the City of Edinburgh and West Lothian Councils to mitigate the impacts of eight man-made weirs on the River Almond. A legacy of industrial developments in the 18th and 19th centuries, their primary uses are now redundant. However, due to the development of infrastructure, housing and the importance of the aesthetic and historic context of these weirs, removal is not possible in all cases. Two fish pass solutions were completed in 2017 and the work will continue until 2020, including works to improve habitat upstream of barriers.

Leadership and coordination by the Trust has been crucial to the project's success. The project members have been able to collaborate with a number of funders, land and structure owners and members of the community. The value of the river and the impact of these weirs on both wildlife and people is better understood, leading to better stewardship of the river for the future.



Fair a Far fish pass, River Almond. © Forth Fisheries Trust

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*"In the last year, FMS members have worked towards solutions to remove or mitigate the effect of barriers within river systems. In 2017 this resulted in 15 barriers being removed or eased with, 92 km of rivers being made accessible to fish"*

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## Peatland restoration: how rivers can reap the rewards

**Diane Baum**

Biologist, Lochaber Fisheries Trust

For many years the freshwater fisheries sector has acknowledged the need for catchment-scale management policies that consider the condition of the wider physical and biological environment in order to improve fish populations. This is not only a more effective way of managing fish stocks, it also allows us to potentially find new partners and – crucially – to unlock new sources of funding. Scottish Natural Heritage's PeatlandACTION programme provides just such an opportunity for fishery managers and landowners.

Peatland that is bare of vegetation and actively eroding can exacerbate extreme water flows and contribute to the sedimentation of our rivers. The result is a greater risk of redd washout, more pronounced droughts and the silting up of juvenile salmon and trout habitat. The main reason why the Scottish Government set aside £8 million for peatland restoration in 2017 and a further £6 million this year may be to fulfil their commitment to 'Climate Ready Scotland' and lock up more carbon in peatlands, but our fish could also benefit greatly from this investment.

A number of Fisheries Trusts have already used PeatlandACTION funding to improve their catchments. Galloway Fisheries Trust are looking at ways to remove forestry inappropriately planted on deep peat that

damages fish habitat whilst providing little in the way of economic timber production. The Forth Fisheries Trust have used PeatlandACTION money to block drainage ditches on raised bogs and restore natural water flow patterns. In Lochaber we are hoping to re-meander a straightened channel to help reduce the loss of water on the surrounding blanket bog and improve the fish habitat.

Peatland accounts for 20 percent of Scotland's total land cover and its condition is fundamental to the health of our rivers and fish. In the past these areas may have been viewed as worthless wastelands and in many ways peatland restoration is attempting to reverse some of the ill-advised, historic initiatives to turn bogs into forestry or agricultural land. We are now beginning to recognise the value of peatlands as carbon stores, water filters, flood prevention mechanisms and wildlife habitats. If you embark on a peatland restoration project you will find many new friends across government agencies, conservation bodies and land management groups. You will also get to use phrases such as 'ecosystem services' and 'climate change resilience' without a hint of hyperbole.

For more information on peatland restoration funding, contact [PeatlandAction@snh.gov.uk](mailto:PeatlandAction@snh.gov.uk)



Peat hag re-profiling. © Lorne Gill, SNH





# Restoring the River Garry

**Dr David Summers**

Director, Tay DSFB and Tay Foundation

Following the abstraction of water for hydro power in the 1950s, approximately 21 km of the Upper Garry in Perthshire had practically no flow and duly lost its salmon population. However, thanks to the EU Water Framework Directive, after a process that went on for some years, in 2016 the details of a restoration project were finally agreed on between Scottish and Southern Energy (SSE), SEPA and the Tay DSFB.

In December 2016, SSE restoration commenced work by breaching a weir at the bottom of the affected stretch, which had been installed to prevent salmon access. Then, following a formal announcement at the opening of the Tay salmon season, engineering work commenced on two abstraction weirs in the late spring to ensure a minimum flow of water to be released from one intake at a point 13 km up the river, and another on a major tributary. The intention was to provide salmon access right up to both these intakes.

The work on the main intake was completed in early August, and on the Glas Choire tributary late in the year. Flow was officially restored at an event on 30 October attended by Roseanna Cunningham, Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change & Land Reform, although in practice water had been released since the spring from tributary intakes in order for the work to be done in the dry. SSE will also do more work in 2018 to provide flow in the upper 8 km of the abstracted mainstem, although salmon will not have access to that part.

For some years, the Tay DSFB has stocked salmon eggs and fry obtained from reconditioned kelt broodstock of local provenance in the almost dry river in anticipation of this restoration. To our obvious delight, adult salmon, perhaps of hatchery origin, were seen jumping at waterfalls just upstream of the breached weir in the early autumn. Then, in early November, some adult salmon and approximately 30 redds were observed well above the falls in the newly restored area.

To ensure salmon fully recolonise the river in the years to come, an adaptive management plan has been agreed between SEPA, SSE and the Tay DSFB. This will involve monitoring and potentially altering some aspects of flow, if required – for example the release of migration “freshets”. Needless to say, we are delighted with progress so far.



Downstream, prior to re-watering. © Tay DSFB



Ongoing works at the intake. © Tay DSFB



Flow is restored. © Denise Reed, SNH



## Green engineering: a solution to reduce erosion?

**Stuart Brabbs**

Trust Manager, Ayrshire Rivers Trust

Sustainable 'green engineering' solutions are increasingly advocated by SEPA as a means to combat riparian erosion and provide environmentally sensitive bank stability. The Water Environment (Controlled Activities) (Scotland) Regulations 2011 offer a practical guide that details the necessary requirements for those contemplating any engineering works and lists all permissible actions and the level of authorisation necessary to proceed.

Ayrshire Rivers Trust (ART) are enthusiastic supporters of green techniques but we recognise that it may not be appropriate to intervene in all circumstances. Understanding why 'problems' exist before attempting to address issues is essential and, in some cases, doing nothing may be more appropriate than modifying otherwise natural habitat and processes.

A partnership works best where SEPA, landowners and fishery interests agree on the approach taken. Nothing is guaranteed when installing green engineering in an unpredictable natural environment but we are learning from failures, while our successes demonstrate that minor measures can bring substantial benefits.



Severe erosion contributing tonnes of fine sediment to the river. Livestock contribute to the problem. A failed attempt by anglers to stabilise this bank using Hazel spiling can be seen



After – natural restoration well underway

In Ayrshire, where intensive agricultural production and diffuse pollution are widespread, green engineering provides an opportunity to address issues, stabilise erosion and reduce excess silt and nutrient inputs. Key to the success of green engineering projects is livestock exclusion, as farm animals frequently cause bank instability through trampling and grazing and will quickly destroy any efforts to implement a 'living' solution. Allowing time for establishment is essential and, in any case, stock exclusion is good practice.

The case study featured illustrates how the multiple techniques employed have restored stability on the River Girvan that was straightened for agricultural purposes in the 19th century. Tonnes of soil and fine sediment were entering the river and this was accelerated by livestock grazing. Doing nothing was not an option, due to the loss of valuable land, hence green engineering was used to stop the erosion and cut sediment inputs. Fine sediments have serious detrimental impacts on fish populations, as – when they drop out of suspension – they can smother spawning gravels and reduce the supply of oxygenated water reaching developing ova. By cutting sediment inputs we expect to see the quality of fish habitat improve and productivity increase downstream of the sediment source.

Anglers previously attempted to tackle the erosion with hazel spiling (willow woven into the riverbank), but this material doesn't root and benefits were short-lived. ART used locally sourced willow and hardwood faggots (bundles of willow and hardwood tied together) staked into the toe of the bank. The willow quickly rooted, providing a buffer against the current and erosion was halted. Behind the willow, solids were deposited and the bank started building up. Willow cuttings were planted across the site and livestock were excluded. Within 18 months, the results were remarkable. As the willow develops, it will provide shade and cover for fish as well as a source of material for further restorative works.

This site also offers local landowners an opportunity to view and discuss green engineering techniques before deciding on which methods to use.





## Nutrient enhancement – a new strategy to improve juvenile production

**Simon Mckelvey**

Director, Cromarty Fisheries Trust/DSFB



Blackwater Bridge. © Desmond Dugan

Scientists from the Cromarty Fisheries Trust, Marine Scotland Science (MSS) and the US Forest Service have recently assessed the impact of manipulating levels of nutrients that would naturally come from decaying salmon carcasses during the winter spawning season. Burns that lack dead adult salmon support fewer insects, and therefore produce less food, so that the surviving salmon fry are smaller and belong to fewer families. The resulting loss of genetic diversity could make these salmon populations more vulnerable to extinction.

Issues caused by nutrients in rivers have frequently been studied in terms of eutrophication of lowland rivers, frequently associated with diffuse pollution. However, human activity can also lead to the opposite – oligotrophication – in middle and upper catchments, and this is commonplace over much of north and northwest Scotland. In particular, phosphorus may be lacking from many salmon nursery streams, with returning adults being the only natural source of replacement. Loss of riparian habitat, overgrazing, construction of dams and decline in the numbers of returning salmon dying in headwater streams all contribute to habitats unnaturally devoid of nutrients. The Conon is particularly impacted by all these issues and has been part of a nutrient restoration research programme for a number of years. The presence of streams above hydro dams without salmon, a hatchery programme to supply salmon eggs and the availability of salmon carcasses allowed large scale field experiments to be conducted.

The recent collaboration showed that introducing salmon carcasses into streams increased invertebrate densities and that isotopes could be used to demonstrate the

uptake of marine nutrients by invertebrates. A radio tracking study revealed that, after spawning, 35 percent of kelts left the river Bran, whilst the remainder died within the system – half in lochs and half in streams.

Stocking experiments have shown that the numbers of juvenile salmon above and below the salmon carcass addition sites increased in proportion to carcass addition and at some sites doubled.

Recent work with Glasgow University replaced the use of salmon carcasses with artificial carcasses (made up of nutrient pellets in hessian sacks). These have been used to investigate the effects of nutrient restoration on individual families of salmon. In restored streams, juvenile salmon from a larger number of families survived, leading to an increase in genetic diversity. In restored streams there was an increase in invertebrate production and an increase in salmon growth rate and biomass.

Further work is taking place to investigate whether this increase in growth rate will result in larger smolts and will change the age of smolting.

Initial results show that it is possible to increase productivity in streams in which nutrients are restored. This can be done through a combination of supplying nutrients through the addition of artificial salmon carcasses and the strategic addition of large woody debris. Fish in restored streams have a higher genetic diversity and growth rate than those which lacked nutrients. Early indications suggest that such techniques are likely to provide a more effective alternative enhancement to stocking, whilst avoiding the latter's well-documented negative impacts.



2017 in summary – our members' contribution to protecting and improving our freshwater habitats.



15

Barriers physically eased/  
removed to which our members  
have contributed time or money

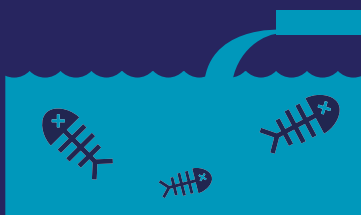


41

Offences formally reported  
to Police Scotland or Crown Office  
and Procurator Fiscal Service

53

Illegal instruments  
retrieved/confiscated



119

Pollution incidents  
reported to SEPA

130,050

Riparian  
trees planted



232

Schools worked with

Pupils engaged  
10,237



## Fish farming – a new era?

**Dr Alan Wells**

Chief Executive, Fisheries Management Scotland



Sweep netting. © Argyll Fisheries Trust

For many years, the interactions between wild and farmed fish has been a regular feature in this publication. This reflects the frustration felt by the wild fisheries sector at a lack of progress made in addressing the underlying issues, and demonstrates how intractable this has been over decades. However, there is now a genuine sense that we have an opportunity to make significant and meaningful progress towards a better situation for wild fish and fisheries.

Fisheries Management Scotland has established a specific committee, with membership drawn from all of the DSFBs and Fishery Trusts in the 'aquaculture zone'. As a sector, our agreed aims are relatively simple, at least on paper. We wish to see:

- Thriving salmon and sea trout populations and fisheries without negative impacts arising from salmon farming.
- A harmonious local coexistence with an industry that understands the importance of being a good neighbour and communicates openly and transparently with stakeholders.
- A world-leading regulatory and planning system which protects wild migratory fish and proactively seeks to address any local negative impacts.
- Investment of a proportion of any profits generated into the protection and improvement of local salmon and sea trout populations and fisheries.

It is undeniable that aquaculture is vital to Scotland's economy, particularly on the west coast of Scotland. As will be clear throughout this publication, it is not – and never has been – our position that sea lice arising from fish farms are the only reason for the overall decline of wild salmonid populations. However, it is recognised that uncontrolled farm-derived lice in the environment, and escaped farmed fish, do present a hazard to wild salmonids and the resulting impacts are well documented in Norway and Ireland. It is not credible to argue that the lack of strategic research that has taken place in Scotland suggests no impact on Scottish stocks of Atlantic salmon and sea trout.

Concern about impacts on wild fish have been exacerbated by the biological challenges that the industry has faced in recent years – with gill disease, sea lice and mortalities being regularly highlighted in the press. The Scottish Government committed to progressing a strategic framework for farmed fish health in its Programme for Government in 2017, and Fisheries Management Scotland are contributing to this process.

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*"We have genuine reasons to believe that 2018 may prove to be a pivotal year in relation to interactions between wild and farmed fish."*

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### Reasons for optimism?

We have genuine reasons to believe that 2018 may prove to be a pivotal year in relation to interactions between wild and farmed fish. Fisheries Management Scotland, Atlantic Salmon Trust, Marine Harvest, SSPO, Marine Scotland, Aquaculture Stewardship Council and Sainsbury's have been involved in discussions, facilitated by the International Sustainability Unit, with the aim of ascertaining the critical pathway to ensure that the Scottish fish farming industry operates sustainably, with a particular focus on possible impacts on wild salmon populations.

Fisheries Management Scotland and the Atlantic Salmon Trust recently co-hosted a workshop, attended by local fisheries managers, salmon farmers, SEPA, Marine Scotland and the Aquaculture Stewardship Council, to discuss the potential benefits that ASC certification could have for wild fish. This certification scheme includes many elements that we believe can benefit wild fish, including a clear requirement for farmers to monitor any impacts on wild fish, and alter farm management practices should such impacts be evident.

We are starting to forge a more positive and productive relationship with the industry, and in particular Marine Harvest. Scotland's largest salmon producer has been publishing farm specific information on sea lice and mortalities throughout 2017 and recently the SSPO has announced their intention to publish this information on a farm-by-farm basis across the industry. We very much welcome this initiative. We are progressing discussions about the possibility of securing funding from SSPO for fisheries management activities in the aquaculture zone

– the shared space occupied by wild fisheries and the salmon farming industry.

We are working with Crown Estate Scotland, Marine Harvest, Marine Scotland and SNH to develop agreed protocols for monitoring wild fish impacts and we are grateful to Crown Estate Scotland for funding this project. The driver for this work is ASC certification and recent planning decisions which have placed a condition on farmers to produce an 'Environmental Management Plan' which includes monitoring of wild fish. Ultimately, we are seeking to see these principles enshrined in the regulatory system for all farms, to address the deeply unsatisfactory situation whereby the regulatory system and powers of the Fish Health Inspectorate are limited to the health and welfare of the fish within the cages and cannot be used to regulate any impacts on wild fish outside the cages. This is also the case in relation to the consideration that SEPA gives when consenting biomass – the impact of sea lice from that biomass on wild fish is not considered.

Other important drivers in 2018 are the Scottish Parliamentary inquiries relating to salmon farming in Scotland. At the time of writing the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee has finished taking evidence and the Rural Economy Committee has issued a call for evidence. Fisheries Management Scotland have been invited to give oral evidence and we await the outcome of this process with great interest.

As we stated last year, Fisheries Management Scotland are committed to engaging with Scottish Government and the aquaculture industry with a view to making meaningful progress. It is through such engagement that we believe that the optimism expressed above might be realised.



Salmon farm. © Fisheries Management Scotland





## Fisheries enforcement – moving with the times

**Brian Davidson**

Director of Communications & Administration, Fisheries Management Scotland

In modern Scotland it is both a privilege and responsibility that powers of arrest, seizure, entry and search are vested in organisations other than the police. Since 1868, District Salmon Fishery Boards have retained power to appoint individuals as water bailiffs to enforce the various laws relating to salmon and freshwater fisheries in Scotland. There is a sense and logic to this arrangement, never more so than in the 21st century. Fisheries enforcement is a very specialised area, requiring specific knowledge and skills. Criminal activity is often most prevalent in rural areas, where conventional police resources are stretched. Water bailiffs provide an essential law enforcement service at virtually no cost to the public purse.

The latest Wildlife Crime Report, published by Scottish Ministers in 2017, highlights a number of pertinent facts about fish poaching. It is gratifying to see Roseanna Cunningham MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform, open her Ministerial foreword by pointing out that: “Fish poaching remains the highest volume wildlife crime, but it has also seen a significant 26 percent reduction in offences – down from 101 offences in 2014-15 to 75 in 2015-16. This is a welcome sign and testament to the partnership work of Police Scotland, Fisheries Management Scotland and the District Salmon Fishery Boards.”



Illegal set lines. © Ness DSFB

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*“Criminal activity [relating to fish] is often most prevalent in rural areas, where conventional police resources are stretched. Water bailiffs provide an essential law enforcement service at virtually no cost to the public purse.”*

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Of the nine categories of wildlife crime, fish poaching remains the most prevalent, accounting for 29 percent of the total crimes reported. But, while fish poaching cases have an overall conviction rate of 67 percent, the average fine for those convicted is a mere £257. We will be advocating changes to this in the light of the the Wildlife Crime Penalties Review Group, which recommended increases in the maximum penalties available for those convicted of wildlife crime.

What do these metrics tell us? They provide hard evidence that our enforcement network delivers three key objectives: deterring criminal activity, converting criminal activity to prosecutions and ensuring that fish poaching receives rightful recognition as a wildlife crime at Government and ministerial level. Without the work of our dedicated enforcement network, represented through a variety of means in Fisheries Management Scotland, it is highly likely that these figures, and the overall profile of our work, would be significantly lower.

### The evolution of enforcement

What is Fisheries Management Scotland doing to ensure the enforcement network will continue to be able to meet the challenges for the future?

We have established a new Enforcement Committee to inform Fisheries Management Scotland of activities relating to fisheries enforcement and to coordinate and facilitate delivery of bailiff training in Scotland, including the annual bailiff seminar. The committee is currently examining a number of priorities, to ensure that DSFBs – as the appointing authorities and the providers of bailiffs



Working in partnership. © Ness DSFB



Sea trout in gill net, River Tyne, East Lothian. © Forth DSFB

– have access to appropriate training, good governance protocols and representation at national level with Scottish Government and other stakeholders.

This will include:

- Reviewing what a future enforcement system might look like – the present legislation is complex and ambiguous in places – with Scottish Government. This includes, for example, long-running issues with inshore gill netting and how the law deals with gravid fish. The potential for a bill in 2018/19 means that it may be possible to make the current suite of offences clearer and easier to enforce.
- Providing clear guidance to DSFBs for managing the bailiff appointment process. Appointing bailiffs – as employed individuals, volunteers or to other third parties – can present varied challenges in terms of liability and risk to appointing authorities.
- Considering how experience and skills can be better shared across the sector, and whether more flexible warranting might help. The development of a system of continued professional development (CPD) is an important part of this process.
- Maintaining our good relations with Police Scotland, the National Wildlife Crime Unit, Scottish Government and others to ensure we can maximise the effectiveness of fisheries enforcement. This will include looking at how intelligence and other information can be gathered and shared in a safe, secure and consistent way.

- Promoting and delivering training opportunities and events for bailiffs. Fisheries Management Scotland, with the Institute of Fisheries Management, helped to design and deliver six training courses and modules during 2017. Training and professional development will remain a key focus to ensure that the bailiff network is equipped with the right skills and knowledge to do the job.

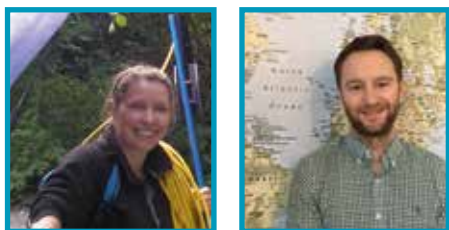
Scotland's salmon and freshwater fish populations are renowned worldwide due to their economic, cultural and ecological significance. The utility of our enforcement network in safeguarding this precious resource is without doubt. Fisheries Management Scotland will help build on the excellent progress made so far to ensure that genuine partnership working will deliver meaningful results.

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*"Fish poaching remains the highest volume wildlife crime, but it has also seen a significant 26 percent reduction in offences."*

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## Wild fisheries data collection: supporting our members

**Jo Girvan** (Chair)

**Sean Dugan** (Manager)

Scottish Fisheries Coordination Centre

The Scottish Fisheries Coordination Centre (SFCC) was established in 1997 as a unique partnership between local fisheries managers and public bodies with an interest in the evidence-based management of freshwater fish and fisheries in Scotland. Since then SFCC has supported its members through the development of consistent data collection and storage standards and protocols. SFCC offers a bespoke training and support service to members – on subjects including electrofishing, mapping and scale reading.

This consistent approach to monitoring and data enables information to be pooled from across Scotland and then fed into national assessments, such as the currently developing juvenile assessment model for conservation limits. The vital interface between local and national management is encapsulated by the annual biologists meeting, which provides an opportunity for Marine Scotland, agencies (including SEPA and SNH) and local managers to come together and discuss key issues of relevance to the evidence-based management of fish and fisheries.

2018 is shaping up to be another busy year. We intend to review and update the existing electrofishing protocols and training to ensure the highest quality of data collection, to meet both local and national needs. Sean will continue to work with Fisheries Management Scotland and Marine Scotland to develop web-based tools to underpin the evolving fisheries management plan template. It is

anticipated that this will be available for consultation later this year.

Digital mapping techniques have revolutionised the way in which we understand our environment and will provide increasingly powerful tools for fisheries managers. During 2018 we will continue to ensure that SFCC members have access to the latest tools and mapping data. A key element of the support that we will provide to members is in facilitating and supporting the use of such technology at a local level. For example, in 2017 we provided up-to-date maps highlighting the geographical distribution of Pacific pink salmon in Scottish rivers, more details of which can be found on pages 16-17 of this review.

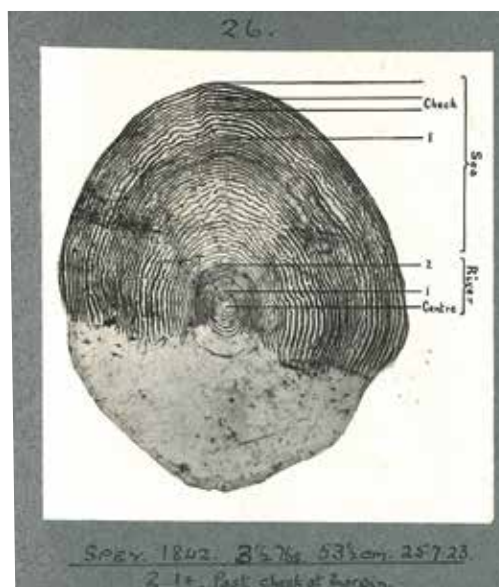
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*“Digital mapping techniques have revolutionised the way in which we understand our environment and will provide increasingly powerful tools for fisheries managers.”*

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Recording fish data. © The Tweed Foundation



Salmon scale archive. © Sean Dugan, SFCC



## Members' views

### 1. Providing support to member organisations

*"The value of SFCC is having a constant point of contact for queries about data, mapping and protocols. SFCC provides the interface between acquiring skills via training events and the capture and storage of data those skills generate"*

Paul Hopper – Outer Hebrides Fisheries Trust

### 2. Local-national interface: pooling resources

*"The SFCC provides a strong and effective link between Scottish Government and local fisheries managers. I hope that SFCC can continue to develop this important data management role, whilst also refining guidance on standards and protocols to ensure even more effective management of Scotland's fisheries,"*

Iain Malcolm – Marine Scotland Science

### 3. Training provision

*"The SFCC has been indispensable in providing training to SEPA staff. We make regular use of the electrofishing training, but courses in scale reading, statistical analysis and fish counters have also proved useful. It gives us assurance to know that other organisations are being trained to the same high standard,"*

Alistair Duguid – Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA).



Snorkel surveys in Norway. © Anders Lamberg

## Looking forward: innovations in fisheries management

During the last five years there have been a number of major technological developments in the way we can record, share and communicate fisheries data. Here are five areas of innovation to look out for in the coming years.

### 1. Using the web to gather local knowledge

During 2016, using a web tool developed by SFCC, Fisheries Trusts submitted over 5000 updates to Scotland's salmon distribution map to help refine Conservation Regulations assessments. Similar tools, which could include maps within fisheries management plans, could also be deployed in future, allowing the regional and national themes most important to fisheries managers to be highlighted.

### 2. Greater insight from map-based tools

Map-based tools will provide an increasing source of evidence for management, such as riparian planting schemes to mitigate the effects of climate change on water temperature. This work by Marine Scotland Science provides map-based guidance for river managers across the whole of Scotland. In other countries mapping has also been applied to quantify trout habitat, redd distribution and to prioritise invasive plant removal.

### 3. Understanding juvenile salmonid populations

Using electrofishing data collected by Trusts, Marine Scotland Science are making great progress in developing a national juvenile assessment tool. An early example is already published for the Aberdeenshire Dee.

### 4. Counting fish the Norwegian way

At the recent SFCC annual meeting Anders Lamberg from Scandinavian Nature Surveillance presented Norway's approach to monitoring adult fish populations. Snorkelling is the most frequently used method, followed by the use of underwater video systems. Many of Scotland's rivers may be too turbid, but snorkelling could be applicable for certain small and medium sized clear rivers, particularly on the west coast.

### 5. Advances in fish tracking and telemetry

Technological advances will allow a wider range of questions to be tackled. Collaboration between countries, such as in the developing European Telemetry Network, will also promote efficient use of resources and enable a more holistic view of fish migration in European waters.



# Pink salmon in Scotland

**Brian Davidson**

Director of Communications and Administration, Fisheries Management Scotland

**Chris Conroy**

Director, Ness DSFB

Pacific pink salmon (*Oncorhynchus gorbuscha*) have frequented UK rivers in small numbers for several decades. Introduced to some Russian rivers in the 1960s, they have slowly spread westwards and have now colonised some northern Norwegian rivers. They are a highly successful species and are quite different in their habits from Atlantic salmon. They spawn earlier, in July and August, and – due to their strict two-year lifecycle – the progeny will come from distinct ‘odd’ or ‘even’ years, with the Russian/Norwegian fish being primarily odd-year stocks.

In July 2017, Fisheries Management Scotland began to receive reports of captures of fresh-run pink salmon. It soon became clear that there were unprecedented and alarming numbers of these fish appearing across the UK, Scandinavia, Iceland and northern Europe. By mid-August 2017, spawning activity was observed on the Dee, Ness and Spey, with fish reported well upstream in some systems.

In 2017, 139 pink salmon were reported in 18 Scottish rivers. This unusual episode provoked both concern and scientific curiosity amongst the national and international fisheries and science community and prompted concerted



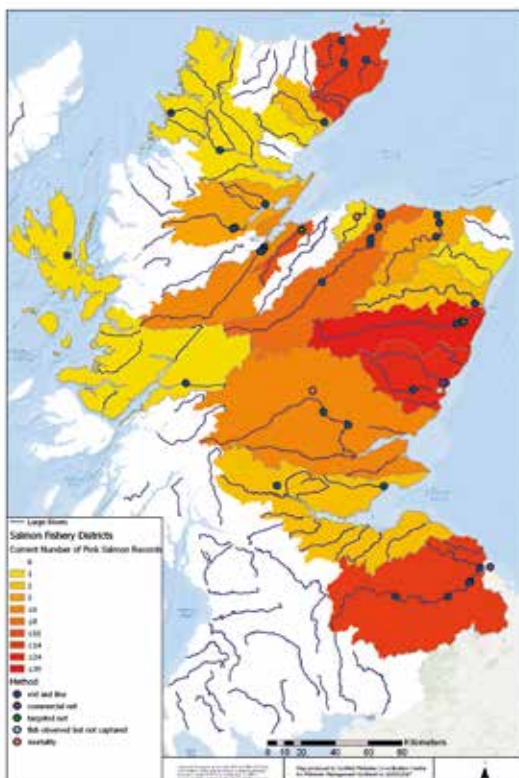
Rod-caught pink salmon, River Ness. © Ness DSFB

action. In a pioneering spirit, our member Boards and Trusts collected a great deal of new information on this species in Scotland, contributing significantly to the wider international understanding of this phenomenon. This included innovative video footage which revealed the presence of pink salmon redds, prompting further study in partnership with Marine Scotland and SNH. Egg development was monitored, both using in-river egg chambers and laboratory conditions, fish were removed and redds destroyed where possible. It soon became apparent that removal of these non-native fish will be expensive, difficult and time-consuming. Such work is dependent on safe water levels and even the simple detection and monitoring of redds can be difficult, if not impossible, during periods when water levels are high and rivers are coloured.

## What next?

Last year’s incidents have brought together a range of national and international interests with a common interest – to understand the risks these fish present to our native fish and fisheries, and to inform our response. At this stage, the impact of these fish is uncertain, and it is important to recognise that future incursions of these fish are likely to be from expanding stocks in Norway and Russia, rather than populations bred in the UK.

The ongoing investigations will provide vital information in understanding the risk of pink salmon invasions in future. A full UK risk assessment, taking account of such information, is currently being developed. The management work undertaken by our members has demonstrated the need for any future work to be properly resourced and has highlighted the need for strong local, national and international collaboration in order to manage this threat. It is vital that we plan ahead, to ensure we are ready to act if and when pink salmon return.



Recorded incidences of pink salmon 2017. © SFCC



Monitoring pink salmon activity. © Ness DSFB

### Case study: River Ness

The first reported rod-caught Pacific pink salmon on the Ness was captured on 5 July, and it was followed by another seven over the course of the season. Anglers were asked to retain the carcasses of these fish and closer examination indicated that they were close to spawning. Following the capture of mature male and female fish in spawning condition, the Ness DSFB placed an underwater camera in the River Ness to monitor for signs of spawning activity. On 11 August a spent female pink salmon was seen exhibiting 'cutting' behaviour on a redd, with the actual fertilisation of eggs subsequently captured on camera. This provided the first definitive evidence that the Pacific pink salmon are actually spawning in UK waters.

Once spawning was confirmed, we carried out surveys to establish the location of as many of the pink salmon redds as possible. This involved the use of an aerial drone, together with walk-over surveys to confirm that they were in fact pink salmon redds. It is estimated that there were at least 100 pink salmon redds distributed throughout the Ness. Once confirmed, we began marking the location of known redds with streamer tape in anticipation of any future opportunities to assess the viability of their eggs.

### Incubation box trials

On 4 September 2017 a total of 200 Pacific pink salmon eggs were recovered from redds in the River Ness as part of an ongoing assessment of viability. The majority were found to have developed to 'eyed ova' stage, meaning

that they were successfully fertilised and were close to hatching.

The eggs were transferred into two fully enclosed in-stream incubation chambers, provided by Marine Scotland Science under licence from Scottish Natural Heritage (100 eggs in each). These were buried in the river gravel, together with two temperature loggers (one above and another below the gravel) to allow us to monitor the survival of the eggs, together with the time and temperature at hatching and emergence.

The eggs were regularly checked and a newly hatched pink salmon alevin was recorded on 23 September, the first record of natural hatching in the UK. Further eggs were found to have hatched in subsequent days and, although survival was low (approximately 3 percent), a number of the alevins were developing well and beginning to exhibit a silver colouration in preparation for their seaward migration.

On 15 November we found that none of the fish had gone on to survive to the point of emergence (when they swim up from the gravel). Despite the mortalities experienced in the incubation boxes, we believe it likely that at least a small proportion of pink salmon contained in natural redds in the Ness will go on to emerge. It seems that this may occur earlier than it would in their natural range (November/December rather than April/May), which may reduce their chances of survival in the marine environment.





# The Missing Salmon Project

**Sarah Bayley Slater**

Executive Director, the Atlantic Salmon Trust

Many of those representing organisations that work to manage or protect wild salmon get asked the question “What is happening to our salmon stocks?”

Unquestionably the answer is a combination of the known and the unknown – getting to the bottom of the latter is the challenge.

We all know that every year wild salmon start one of the planet’s greatest natural migrations, travelling thousands of miles out to sea to return to their natal river to spawn.

It’s a journey this incredible species has been making for more than 60 million years. But these remarkable fish are now dying somewhere en route in larger numbers than ever before. This year for every 100 salmon smolts that leave our rivers for the sea less than five may return – a decline of nearly 70 percent in just 25 years.

In a period of just over 40 years, wild Atlantic salmon numbers around the world have more than halved. We aim to raise £1 million by the end of 2018 to implement the largest tracking project in the UK and track smolts further out to sea than ever before. The total population in the Atlantic has fallen from 8-10 million fish in the early 1970s to 3-4 million today. Seemingly no-one knows exactly where the bulk of this mortality is occurring; how many are dying at sea, or how many are failing to even make it that far? If this trend continues could salmon be an endangered species by the time the children we are encouraging to take up angling, reach middle age?

## What can be done?

The race is now on for scientists and fisheries managers to collectively take action on a scale never seen before to identify what is happening and determine how to halt this decline. Put simply, if we can find out what is happening on the salmon’s journey, we can take steps to help increase survival.

The task at hand is momentous but perfectly clear. We urgently need to know:

- What are the migration pathways our smolts use?
- How do we quantify the major impacts on their mortality during this journey?

A fully integrated scientific study to find out what’s happening to wild salmon on their journey down our river systems and out to sea is needed. Only then can evidence-



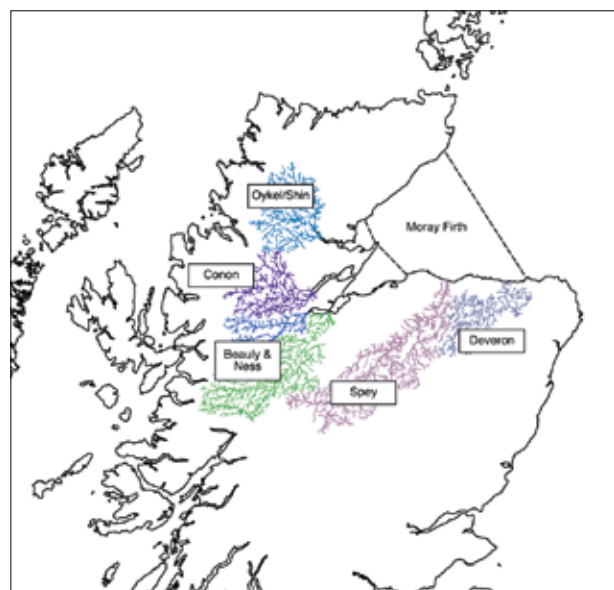
Deployment of tracking equipment. © Atlantic Salmon Federation

based recommendations be made to inform policy and enable management solutions.

For this reason the Atlantic Salmon Trust (AST) has launched The Missing Salmon Project.

A number of Fishery Boards and Trusts have been running acoustic tracking projects on individual rivers for some years now – they are building up some incredibly valuable information. Now the AST want to go further.

We aim to raise £1 million by the end of 2018 to implement the largest tracking project in the UK and track smolts further out to sea than ever before. The Moray Firth Acoustic Tracking project covers 35 percent of Scotland’s salmon populations and 20 percent of the UK’s and will help to uncover some of the secrets of what happens to our salmon smolts as they start this epic migration.



The project will track smolts from five major river systems around the Moray Firth.



Smolt trap, River Deveron catchment. © Sarah Bayley Slater

The project's focus will be on:

- Tracking salmon from the headwaters of five rivers up to 90 km out to sea.
- Identifying where and why salmon smolts are being lost.
- Developing management solutions to ensure that more young salmon make it to the feeding grounds.

The scale of this project is critical to its success – it creates the dynamics to measure impacts on a regional scale. Over 1,000 smolts will be tagged and tracked from the headwaters of at least five major river systems up to 90 km out to sea, enabling us to understand more about their migration behaviour and where mortality occurs.

The Missing Salmon Project does not stand alone. To solve the mystery of our missing salmon we need to be working in parallel both in the marine and the freshwater environments. The project is supported by an equally ambitious international initiative, The Likely Suspects Framework ([www.atlanticsalmontrust.org/suspects-framework/](http://www.atlanticsalmontrust.org/suspects-framework/)). Spearheaded by AST, endorsed by NASCO and the International Year of the Salmon, the framework will, for the very first time, identify and integrate the various marine and freshwater mortality factors impacting our wild salmon stocks and quantify how each of these factors affects survival. In an approach more akin to financial accounting than mathematical modelling, the

cumulative effect of these factors is made to account for the observed overall marine survival of our wild salmon stocks. A recent Likely Suspects Framework workshop, of salmon scientists from both the Pacific and Atlantic, has recommended that the two critical areas to be tackled are researching the losses associated with the smolts' journey from the headwaters for the two following months out to sea and also researching key marine areas, such as the coast of Greenland, where large numbers of feeding stocks are impacted by similar mortality factors.

To find out more about the initiative visit:  
[www.crowdfunder.co.uk/themissingsalmonproject](http://www.crowdfunder.co.uk/themissingsalmonproject)

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*"We aim to raise £1 million by the end of 2018 to implement the largest tracking project in the UK and track smolts further out to sea than ever before."*

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# The search for a national angling development strategy

**Ian Robertson**

Executive Director, Countryside Learning Scotland

Over the last 20 years opportunities to participate in a wide range of recreational activities have increased, due to a number of factors. Following the teachers' strike in the '80s, which limited the extracurricular programme of sport in the education system, governing bodies of a wide variety of sport and recreation activities have sought to increase participation in their sports by other means. And they have since upped their games – marketing the benefits of their activities and easing entry into their particular sport or pastime. Nearly every activity now has full- or part-time professional development officers to promote it. Increasing participation in sport and recreation has therefore become a very competitive world.

## Where does angling currently sit?

I was once told that angling had the highest mortality rate of any sport. I found this hard to believe, given its relatively sedentary nature, until I was informed that most of the mortalities were from heart attacks – a clear measure of our ageing demographic and the need for a new generation of participants!

So where does angling currently sit within this increasingly competitive world of sports development? The reality is 20 years behind football and rugby and, on a sliding scale, behind nearly every minor sport too. I recognise that there are currently a number of inspiring initiatives that promote angling participation on a local or regional level. However, what is missing is the sort of support that a national development programme could offer. Factors such as

geography, demographics, available financial and human resources, current local initiatives and available facilities mean that a one-size-fits-all local delivery programme to boost angling participation is almost impossible to develop. A national strategy can, however, be created to support local grassroots delivery.

## Where do we go from here?

Lack of resources and structure are the main reasons our governing bodies have struggled to create a national grassroots development programme. If we are to finally catch up with the rest of the sporting world and give angling – and all its social, economic and environmental benefits – the chance to attract enough new participants to sustain the sport, Fisheries Management Scotland, the DSFBs and Fisheries Trusts are well placed to take responsibility.

The Boards and Trusts already have a national structure, accountable governance and an overseeing body in Fisheries Management Scotland. Our sea, coarse and game governing bodies have already created a coach education and performance pathway for those who wish to take part in competitive angling – a factor that allows angling to retain its position as a sport, and not just an activity or pastime, thus opening up potential funding streams. The requirement now is for Fisheries Management Scotland to set out a national grassroots development template that can be delivered locally across Scotland.



Young anglers. © Nith Catchment Fishery Trust







## Putting a value on salmon fishings

**Robert McCulloch**  
Strutt & Parker



Strutt & Parker analyse every transaction which involves entire river systems, beats on rivers, *pro indiviso* shares of beats and timeshare weeks. But – at the time of preparing this article – the market for the sale of salmon fishings in Scotland is unusually quiet.

The market has been thin for the last three years. It begs the question: Why?

The acquisition of a stretch of salmon fishings has always been a discretionary purchase and dictated by buyers having disposable cash, much like a luxury product. Rarely, if ever, does it involve borrowed money (even at today's very modest interest rates).

When a fresh buyer enters the market, they will most likely have previously rented fishings on one or more Scottish rivers so have developed the taste and passion for fishing. Purchasers generally fall into three categories:

- Those who like “big” rivers such as the Spey, Dee, Tay and Tweed. They have long seasons and beats can be fished both by wading and from a boat.
- Those who favour medium-sized and smaller rivers, where perhaps a single-handed rod is the preferred method, and where water conditions can be more spatey in nature. Typical examples might be those in the southwest (such as the Cree, Stinchar, Nith), or the Highlands (such as the Naver, Helmsdale, Oykel).
- Those who seek a true holiday experience of being on a river on one of the islands. Examples include the Grimeresta on Lewis, and the Ba on Mull.

The method for valuing salmon fishings is a specialist subject. Strutt & Parker is the leading agent in the sale of salmon fishings in Scotland and, as such, we are often asked to value and sell for owners. Values hinge on a variety of factors which include location, length of beat, single or double bank, ownership of the solum and/or adjoining riverbank, existence of a cottage for a ghillie, number of rods customarily fishing the beat, and the existence or otherwise of netting rights at the mouth of the river.

After carefully considering these variables, a valuer then assesses both the five- and ten-year catch records of

salmon and sea trout for the fishings, in order to discern any patterns. Generally, the valuation reached is an average of the five- and ten-year annual catch multiplied by a valuation number. This figure varies according to the size and location of the river. An appropriate current yardstick is:



Big river	£5,000 to £7,000 per salmon £1,500 to £2,000 per sea trout
Medium-sized and smaller rivers	£3,000 to £6,000 per salmon £1,250 to £1,500 per sea trout
Island rivers	£2,500 to £4,000 per salmon £1,000 to £1,250 per sea trout

In the absence of any significant beats of salmon fishings for sale over the last year or so, Strutt & Parker has acted as selling agent for *pro indiviso* shares on the River Lochy and also on the River Awe. The buyers were from Belgium and southern England respectively.

It is interesting to study our database of buyers and applicants for salmon fishings. Whilst they are mainly from the UK, there are also purchasers who have registered with us from Europe, the Middle East, USA, Canada and the Far East. It proves that, in spite of the uncertainty that will always surround the long-term sustainability of runs of Atlantic salmon, ownership of salmon fishings in Scotland is a sought-after commodity with an international appeal.



## 2017: where have all the grilse gone?

**Brian Davidson**

Director of Communications & Administration, Fisheries Management Scotland

The catch data collected by our members highlight that 2017 was a difficult and testing season for anglers, proprietors and fisheries managers. This was the second year in a row with a reduced grilse run and a pronounced lack of fresh fish in the autumn. The geographically widespread nature of this issue suggests that the main problems are occurring at sea.

As always there are local variations in these trends and some rivers, particularly in the north of Scotland, recorded catches in line with – or above – their 10-year average. There have also been reports of good numbers of fish on spawning beds and healthy redd counts in some rivers.

Estimating the annual Scottish rod catch of salmon for any season is not easy, but it is likely that the 2017 catch will be somewhere between 45,000 and 50,000 – approximately 70-80 percent of the previous five-year average. If this estimate proves to be accurate, that would point to the 2017 catch being the third lowest on record. A recognised shortcoming of catch statistics is that they do not account for angling effort, and we do not know how consistent these variables are on a year-to-year basis.

However, this is unlikely to offer an explanation, or much solace, for what appear to be much wider factors driving salmon abundance.

Last year, we discussed the cyclical nature of salmon catches and the dominance of different stock components over time. We also wondered if we are entering the beginning of a period of spring and summer stock dominance over autumn runs. However, it is also apparent that some of the changes we are seeing in the marine environment, related to climate change, may represent a very different situation to any that has gone before. 2018 may therefore prove pivotal in determining whether we are returning to a state similar to one experienced in the past or whether we're entering into a situation with no recorded precedent.

The efforts of fisheries managers are focused on minimising the pressures faced by our freshwater fish and ensuring that the 'bed and board' provided for the fish in their freshwater habitat is as good as it can be. These efforts have never been more important.



© Desmond Dugan



## TWEED

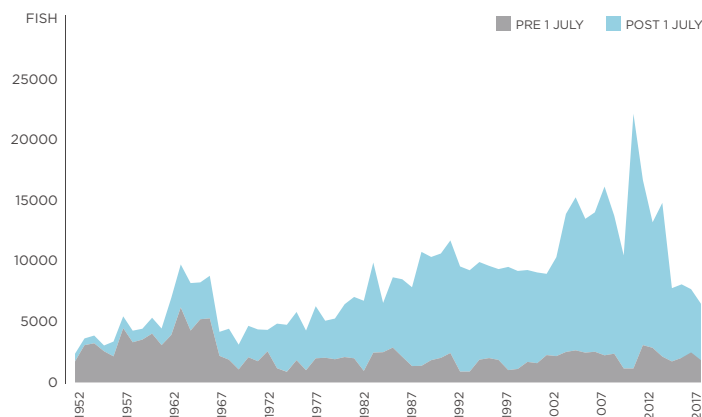
**Fay Hieatt**

Clerk, River Tweed Commission and Director,  
The Tweed Foundation

The recent downward trend in catches – and at times angling effort – continued. Early spring did not produce many fish but, for the first time, summer catches from 1 June to 31 August (2,700) were practically equal to the autumn from 1 September to 30 November (2,712). September fishing was slightly better than in 2016, but the last two months of the season showed a 38 percent drop on the previous year, with just 374 fish caught in November. Sea trout catches were up by 55 percent. The two remaining in-river nets continued – one operating commercially, the other for research purposes only. Fisheries again complied with the conservation measures, extending the catch and release period beyond the mandatory 1 April, and a request to extend this period in the spring to further protect the stock was made to the government.

	2017 total	Pre July 1	Post July 1	Total nets	10yr Av	Release rate	Largest Fish
Salmon	6577	1852	4725	426	12,219	98/78/83%*	36lb
Sea Trout	1939	n/a	n/a	n/a	2006	55%	n/a

Season: 1 Feb – 30 Nov. \*Spring/rest of season/overall.



**TWEED ROD CATCH STATISTICS 1952-2017**

SOURCE – RIVER TWEED COMMISSION



## FORTH

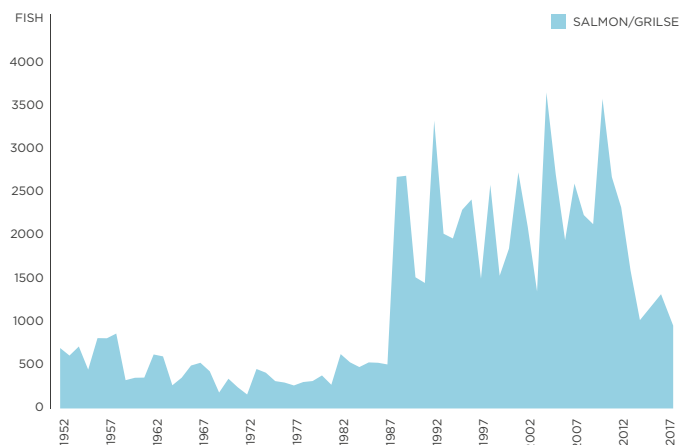
**Alison Baker**

Forth DSFB Fisheries Trust

Not all returns had been submitted at the time of writing, and collecting accurate data remains an issue for the District, but it is clear that 2017 was the second worst season in the last 23 years. While catches from most of the small rivers in the District remain stable, salmon returns for the Teith collapsed to 525. Barriers remain a major issue on the smaller rivers and, although the Almond Barriers improvement project is now underway, others remain unaddressed. The health of the estuary area is not within the means of the Board to actively manage, due to resource issues, and this could be having a significant impact on the ability of fish to reach the Forth/Teith system. All rivers in the District except Forth, Teith and Allan have been given Category 3 status, resulting in a mandatory catch and release policy.

	2017 total	Pre June 1	Post June 1	Total nets	10yr Av	Release rate	Largest Fish
Salmon	931	68	863	n/a	1825	100/87/89%*	32lb
Sea Trout	357	n/a	n/a	n/a	708	94%	n/a

Season: 1 Feb – 31 Oct. \*Spring/rest of season/overall.



**FORTH DISTRICT ROD CATCH STATISTICS 1952-2017**

SOURCE – FORTH DSFB



## TAY

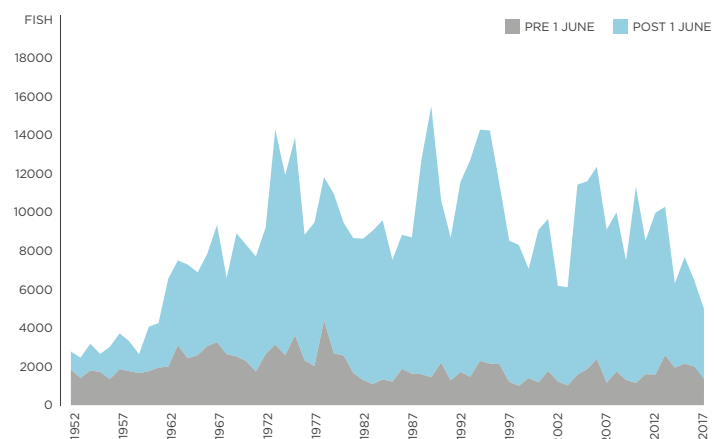
**Dr David Summers**

Director, Tay DSFB and Tay Foundation

The spring catch was a little down on recent improving springs. Warmer, drier conditions did not help. The earliest weeks were dominated by three sea winter salmon, which continue to increase. Unfortunately, the grilse run appeared weak, and fresh fish of any age were scarce after July. Autumn catches were substantially reduced, causing the lowest total reported rod catch in over 50 seasons. After years of anticipation, SSE restored flow to the formerly dry upper River Garry. Adult salmon, perhaps themselves originally stocked by the Board, spawned in the restored reach – the first to do so since the 1950s.

	2017 total	Pre June 1	Post June 1	Total nets	10yr Av	Release rate	Largest Fish
Salmon	5171	1423	3748	n/a	8459	96/87/89%*	31lb
Sea Trout	1425	n/a	n/a	n/a	1199	90%	n/a

Season: 15 Jan – 15 Oct. \*Spring/rest of season/overall.



**TAY ROD CATCH STATISTICS 1952-2017**

SOURCE – TAY DSFB



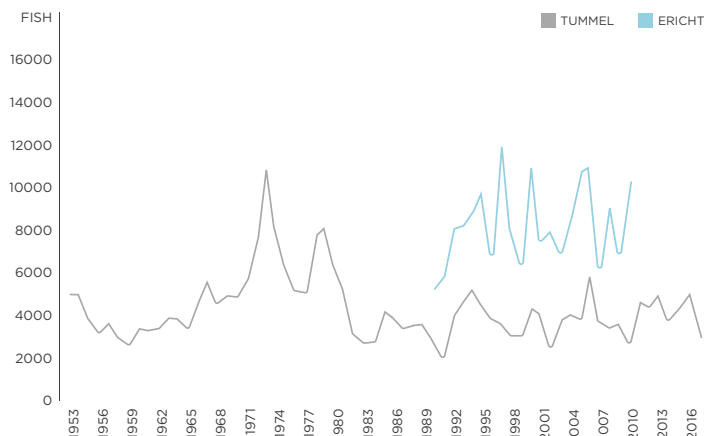


## TAY COUNTER

Dr David Summers

Director, Tay DSFB and Tay Foundation

The counter on the Tummel at Pitlochry Dam recorded more fish before the end of May than in any year since 1978. It continued to record good numbers until the end of June, after when the counts were the lowest on record, resulting in a reduced overall count. Whether there was a lack of summer MSW salmon or they just came early is not clear but there was clearly a poor grilse run, confirmed by other evidence.



RIVER TUMMEL (PITLOCHRY) UPSTREAM COUNT 1953-2017

SOURCE – SSE

RIVER ERICHT UPSTREAM COUNT 1990-2010

SOURCE – TAY DSFB



## SOUTH ESK

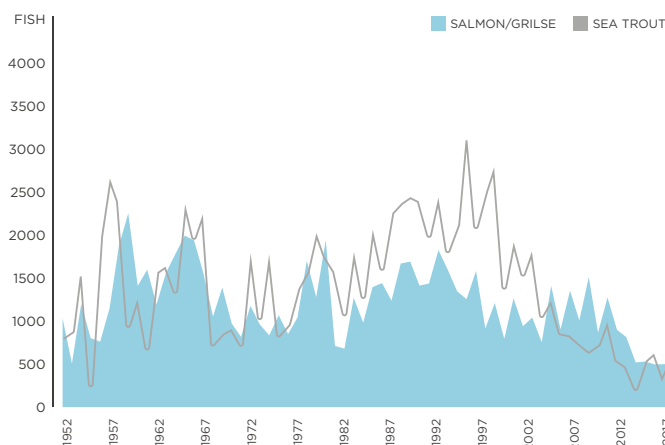
Craig MacIntyre

Esk's Rivers Director

Salmon catches in 2017 were disappointing. Water conditions during June and July were not ideal for fishing when it appears that most of the salmon were running. However, catches picked up towards the end of the season, with a decent October adding respectability to the overall catch. Work was completed on 2km of river bank and in-stream work on the Pow Burn, including installing two-stage river banks, large woody debris and in-stream flow deflectors. Voluntary catch and release was introduced from 1st May to 15th June.

	2017 total	Pre June 1	Post June 1	Total nets	10yr Av	Release rate	Largest Fish
Salmon	511	44	467	n/a	913	97/85/86%*	n/a
Sea Trout	637	n/a	n/a	n/a	620	n/a	5lb

Season: 16 Feb – 31 Oct. \*Spring/rest of season/overall.



SOUTH ESK ROD CATCH STATISTICS 1952-2017

SOURCE – ESK DSFB



## NORTH ESK

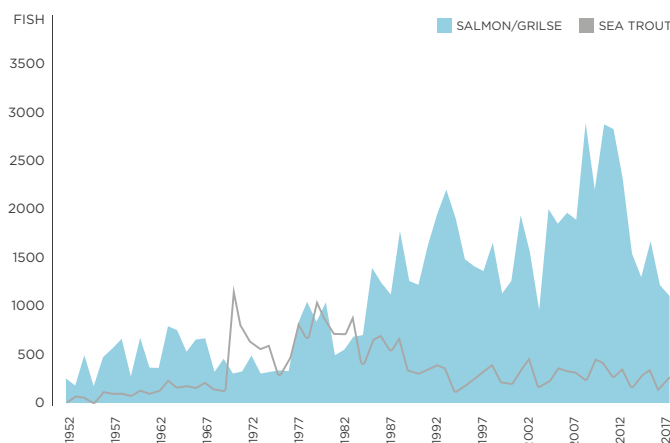
Craig MacIntyre

Esk's Rivers Director

The 2017 season will not be fondly remembered, but catches held up reasonably well considering poor runs of fish. The main run of salmon was in June/July, when fishing conditions were not ideal. The numbers of late running fish were very poor. Sea trout numbers and sizes were promising.

	2017 total	Pre June 1	Post June 1	Total nets	10yr Av	Release rate	Largest Fish
Salmon	1109	208	901	1704	2249	93/76/79%*	n/a
Sea Trout	267	n/a	n/a	n/a	487	n/a	n/a

Season: 16 Feb – 31 Oct. \*Spring/rest of season/overall.



NORTH ESK CATCH STATISTICS 1952-2017

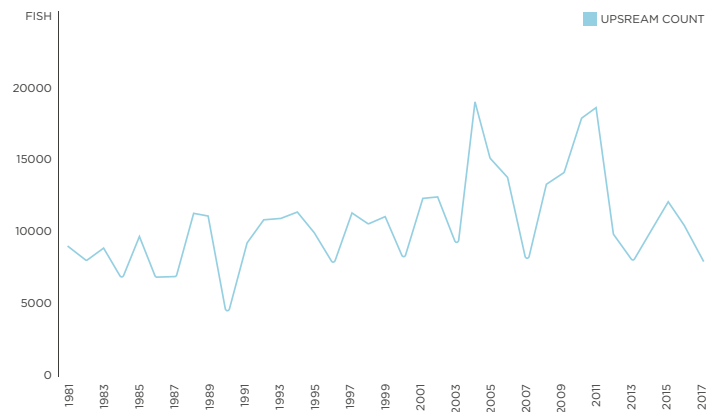
SOURCE – ESK DSFB



## LOGIE COUNTER (NORTH ESK)

**Craig MacIntyre**  
Esks Rivers Director

The fish counter at Logie recorded a total upstream count of 8332 to the end of November, against a five-year average of 10,000. The main runs of salmon were in June and July, with relatively low numbers of fresh fish running in September, October and November.



**NORTH ESK UPSTREAM COUNT 1981-2017**  
SOURCE - MARINE SCOTLAND SCIENCE



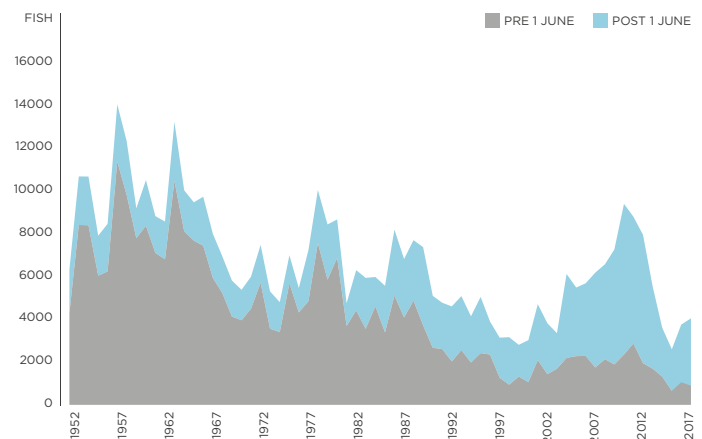
## DEE

**Mark Bilsby**  
River Dee Director

The general consensus on the river, subsequently borne out by redd counts and fish traps, indicated that the runs of fish were much better than in the previous three years. Unfortunately, while anglers saw plenty of fish, the catch return was less impressive, but after the trials and tribulations that followed Storm Frank the fish counts were an encouraging sign. And juvenile fish numbers showed signs of improvement too. The smolt tracking programme completed its second year and involved tagging fish in the upper catchment, where most of the spring fish originate from. Unfortunately, large numbers of the tagged smolts did not make it to the sea. The patterns of where these fish were lost indicate a bird predation issue. Positive discussions are ongoing with SNH on how to better tackle this problem.

	2017 total	Pre June 1	Post June 1	Total nets	10yr Av	Release rate	Largest Fish
Salmon	4051	898	3153	n/a	5879	99%	28lb
Sea Trout	1424	n/a	n/a	n/a	1536	99%	10lb

Season: 11 Feb – 15 Oct.



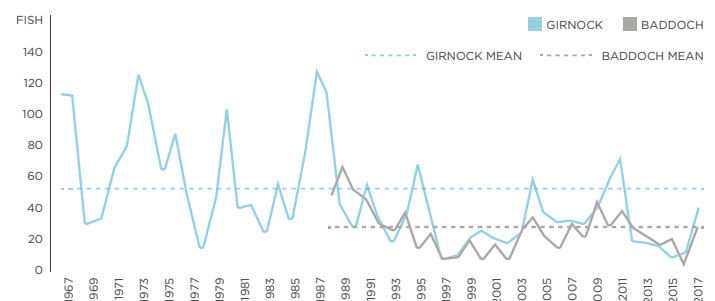
**DEE ROD CATCH STATISTICS 1952-2017**  
SOURCE - DEE DSFB



## GIRNOCK AND BADDDOCH (RIVER DEE)

**Ross Glover**  
Freshwater Fisheries Laboratory,  
Marine Scotland Science

Marine Scotland Science Freshwater Fisheries Laboratory operates traps on the Girnock and Baddoch burns, upper tributaries of the Aberdeenshire Dee. These burns are dominated by early-running multi-sea winter spring salmon, the stock component that has been of most concern in recent decades. Although numbers of male and female salmon caught in the traps show similar temporal trends, female numbers are plotted here, as they are considered the fundamental spawning component. The 27 females caught in the Baddoch and 39 females caught in the Girnock trap in 2017 represent 98% and 76% of the long-term averages respectively. However, it should be noted that the mean count at the Baddoch is over a shorter time period and does not include the period of high adult returns observed in earlier years at the Girnock. For further information on these fish traps, see: <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/marine/Salmon-Trout-Coarse/Freshwater/Monitoring/Traps>



**GIRNOCK & BADDDOCH FEMALE UPSTREAM BURN TRAP COUNTS 1966-2017**  
SOURCE - MARINE SCOTLAND SCIENCE © Crown copyright

Number of adult females returning to the Girnock and Baddoch traps on Deeside. Long-term mean values are shown for each site.



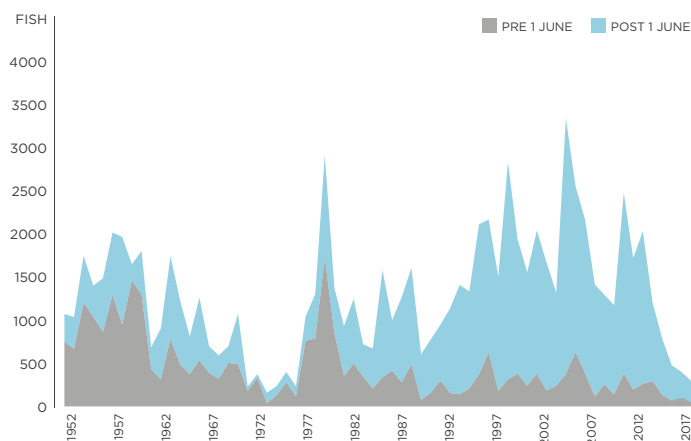
## DON

**Mark Bilsby**  
River Don Director

The salmon catch was one of the worst in recent times. While angling effort was low it appeared that the run was poor, as the redd counts mirrored the rod catch. Over recent years the low catches have meant that the Don has been given Category 3 status, so there will be mandatory catch and release for salmon throughout the 2018 season. On a more positive note there is a real will on the catchment to jump off this downward spiral and look at how to improve fish stocks by addressing the myriad of obstacles to fish migration on the catchment, tackling diffuse pollution by working with the farming community and encouraging new anglers to take up the sport.

	2017 total	Pre June 1	Post June 1	Total nets	10yr Av	Release rate	Largest Fish
Salmon	263	41	222	n/a	1152	100/93/94%*	24lb
Sea Trout	132	n/a	n/a	n/a	242	96%	7lb

Season: 11 Feb – 31 Oct. \*Spring/rest of season/overall.



**DON ROD CATCH STATISTICS 1952-2017**

SOURCE – DON DSFB



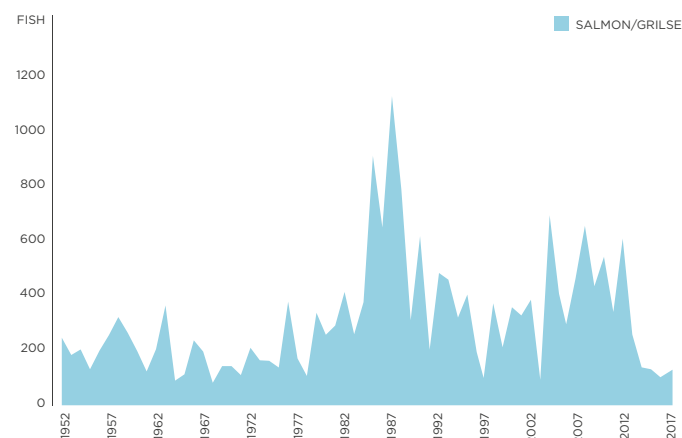
## YTHAN

**Mark Andrew**  
Ythan, DSFB

The 2017 season was a great deal more productive than 2016, with better water conditions and an improved catch. Salmon remain sparse, however, and it is not too surprising that the river has now dropped to Category 3 status, requiring catch and release of all salmon throughout the 2018 season. The sea trout fishing has remained reasonably good and was excellent for early and late season finnock, which appear to be abundant. The estuary fishings remain the dominant sea trout fishery but effort there is somewhat subdued as a result of the seal colony hauled out just inside the estuary, which has now become a tourist attraction in its own right.

	2017 total	Pre June 1	Post June 1	Total nets	10yr Av	Release rate	Largest Fish
Salmon	129	n/a	n/a	n/a	282	86%	n/a
Sea Trout	1525	n/a	n/a	n/a	1383	83%	n/a

Season: 11 Feb – 31 Oct.



**YTHAN ROD CATCH STATISTICS 1952-2017**

SOURCE – YTHAN DSFB



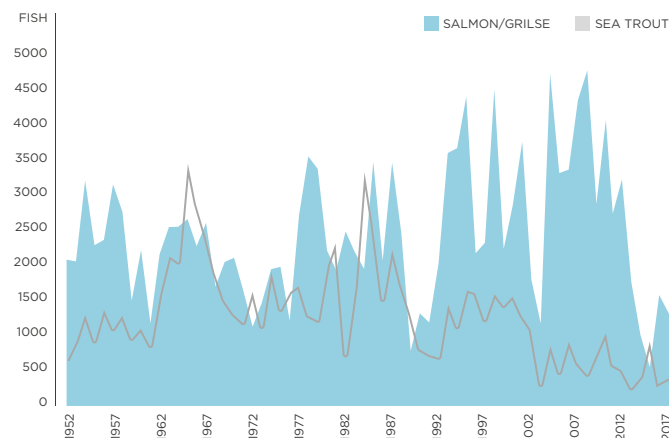
## DEVERON

**Richard Miller**  
Director Deveron DSFB & Deveron,  
Bogie & Isla Rivers Charitable Trust

The salmon and grilse rod catch was down 16 percent compared to the previous year and again below the long-term average, but on a positive note 81 percent of catches were returned. Spring salmon catches decreased from the previous year, with 85 percent returned to the river, aided by the Chivas Regal spring salmon conservation scheme. A notable salmon of 28lb was successfully caught and released during October, which secured the Morison Trophy for the largest fly-caught fish of the year. The sea trout catch decreased by 15 percent, of which 96 percent were returned. For the 2018 season, the government has given the Deveron Category 2 status. As a result, the Board has reviewed and updated the angling code ([www.deveron.org](http://www.deveron.org)) and is implementing additional management measures to protect juvenile salmon.

	2017 total	Pre June 1	Post June 1	Total nets	10yr Av	Release rate	Largest Fish
Salmon	1313	89	1224	n/a	2404	85/81/81%*	31lb
Sea Trout	377	n/a	n/a	n/a	596	96%	9lb

Season: 11 Feb – 31 Oct. \*Spring/rest of season/overall.



**DEVERON ROD CATCH STATISTICS 1952-2017**

SOURCE – DEVERON DSFB





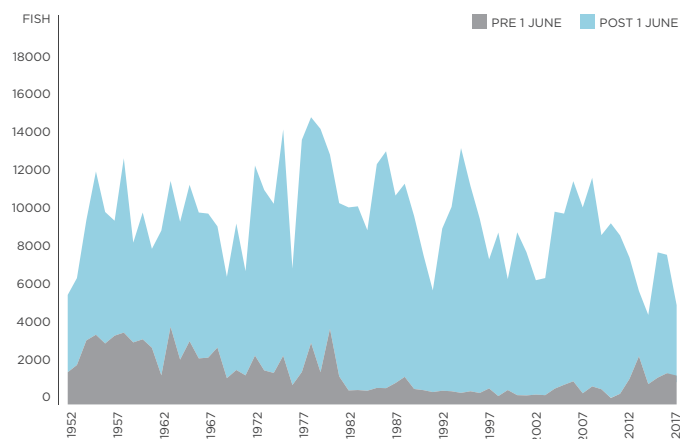
## SPEY

**Roger Knight**  
Director, Spey Board and Foundation

While the spring produced good numbers of fish in excellent condition, the second half of the season lacked summer and autumn grilse. The declared salmon and grilse catch was lower than in 2016, but still over 1000 fish more than many had been predicting and sea trout catches improved markedly. The Board remains concerned by water abstraction in the upper catchment at Spey Dam, where significant volumes are diverted to Fort William. The impact of the abstraction and its associated infrastructure on the upper Spey salmon population is severe, with minimal numbers of salmon fry recorded above the dam in 2017 and none in previous years. The Board continues to engage positively with SEPA over this issue and is encouraged by the promising relationship being developed with the new owners of Spey Dam, GFG Alliance.

	2017 total	Pre June 1	Post June 1	Total nets	10yr Av	Release rate	Largest Fish
Salmon	5292	1503	3789	n/a	7650	96%	34lb
Sea Trout	2293	n/a	n/a	n/a	2000	82%	11lb

Season: 11 Feb – 30 Sep.



**SPEY ROD CATCH STATISTICS 1952-2017**

SOURCE – SPEY DSFB



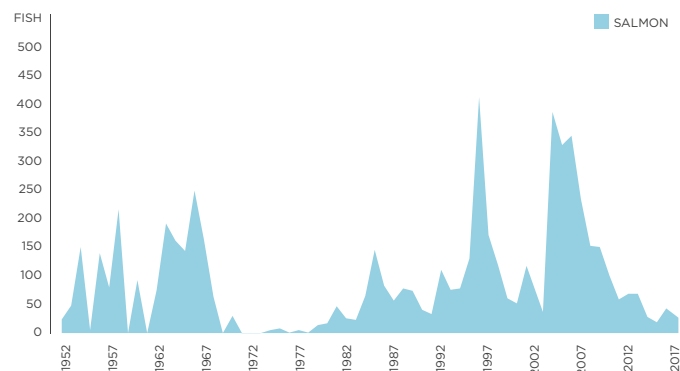
## LOSSIE

**Valerie Wardlaw**  
Administrator, Lossie DSFB

The total reflects the low number of anglers fishing the river, with salmon catches at the five-year average. The Lossie is mainly a sea trout river catch was 30 percent up on last year and substantially above the five-year average. Summer runs of fish were excellent, with large numbers remaining in pools in Elgin. The usual late run of fish was not seen this year, but redds were reported from the upper river earlier than usual. A number of Pacific pink salmon were reported and mink continue to be seen along the coast. INNS plant control in the upper river continued with more intensive treatment by contractors, but infestations are severe. Developments to remove barriers to fish passage on the Linkwood Burn continued. Wind farm developments are monitored throughout their development and construction phases.

	2017 total	Pre June 1	Post June 1	Total nets	10yr Av	Release rate	Largest Fish
Salmon	32	2	30	n/a	79	100%	10.5lb
Sea Trout	70	n/a	n/a	n/a	114	43%	4lb

Season: 25 Feb – 31 Oct.



**LOSSIE ROD CATCH STATISTICS 1952-2017**

SOURCE – FINDHORN, NAIRN AND LOSSIE FISHERIES TRUST



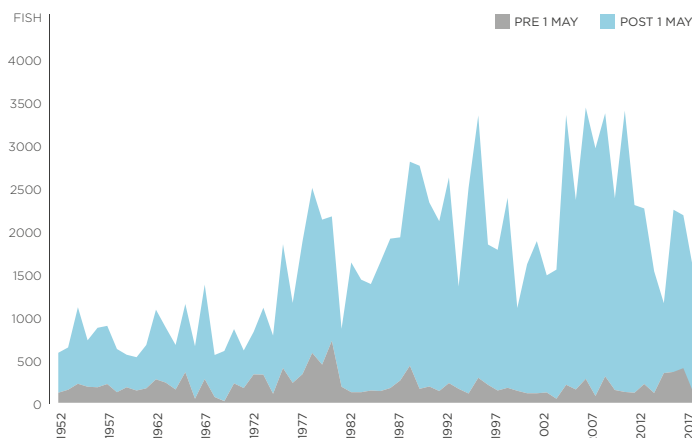
## FINDHORN

**Valerie Wardlaw**  
Administrator, Findhorn DSFB

The spring catch was average and the summer grilse run was below average. August and September were quite wet, so fish didn't linger in the lower Findhorn and a number of fresh silver grilse were caught above Tomatin during these months. Some salmon were lost to fungal disease in May, due to low water levels and high water temperatures. INNS plant control continued with intensive treatment upstream of the A96, but infestations are still severe. Major developments such as wind farms, trunk roads and overhead power line upgrades continue to be monitored. Anglers continued to release all fish up to 14 May, all fish over 9lb and all coloured fish, and were encouraged to release hen fish. The target release rate for salmon and sea trout was 75 percent after 14 May, which was surpassed.

	2017 total	Pre May 1	Post May 1	Total nets	10yr Av	Release rate	Largest Fish
Salmon	1561	213	1348	n/a	2403	95/86/87%*	21lb
Sea Trout	148	n/a	n/a	n/a	164	65%	6lb

Season: 11 Feb – 30 Sep. \*Spring/rest of season/overall.



**FINDHORN ROD CATCH STATISTICS 1952-2017**

SOURCE – FINDHORN DSFB



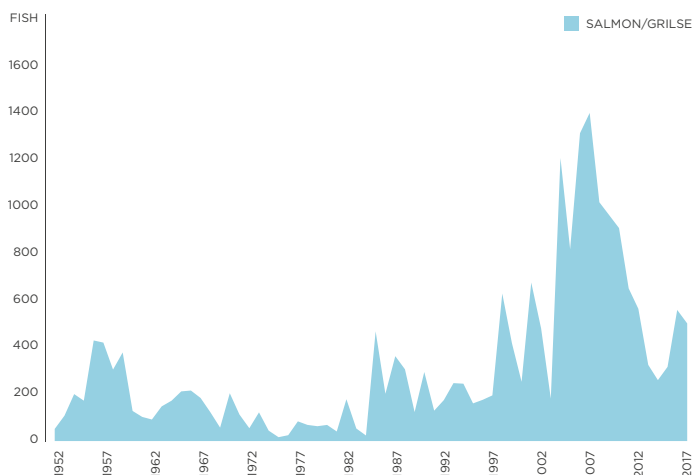
## NAIRN

**Valerie Wardlaw**  
Administrator, Nairn DSFB

The season started with a good run of spring fish, followed by low water levels in May. The river levels were far higher than the previous year, giving an improved salmon catch but there was a reduced run of grilse. The former were a good average size, with many exceeding 9lb. The sea trout catch improved to nearly twice the ten-year average. A 1km stretch of the upper river was re-meandered to improve habitat and reduce flooding. INNS plant control continued, leading to densities of these plants decreasing. Mink were seen for the first time in five years in the upper catchment, but none were caught. Pacific pink salmon were seen spawning in the lower and middle river, while American signal crayfish control was not undertaken this year.

	2017 total	Pre June 1	Post June 1	Total nets	10yr Av	Release rate	Largest Fish
Salmon	499	35	464	n/a	700	77/62/63%*	28lb
Sea Trout	124	n/a	n/a	n/a	79	81%	8lb

Season: 1 Mar – 7 Oct. \*Spring/rest of season/overall.



**NAIRN ROD CATCH STATISTICS 1952-2017**  
SOURCE – NAIRN DSFB



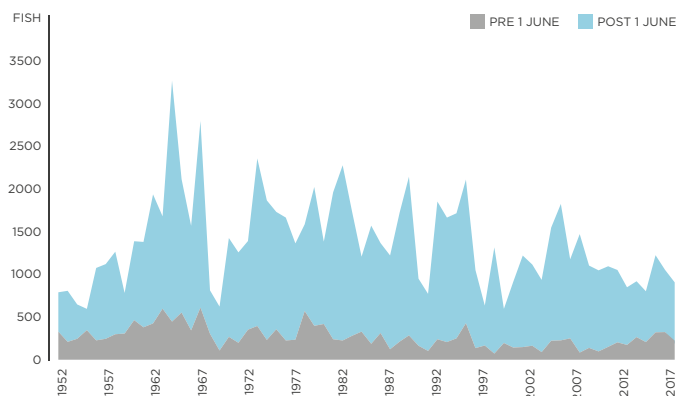
## NESS

**Chris Conroy**  
Director, Ness DSFB

The catch was 12 per cent down on the previous year, due to a decline in MSW salmon, poor fishing conditions in the spring and a lack of summer and autumn fish. Close liaison with developers meant that major works on the West Link Bridge and Ness Weir proceeded without major incident. Fish passage improvements were made at the Holm Burn, Whin Park Lade and the River Coiltie and we reached an exciting stage in the Upper Garry Salmon Restoration Project, whereby eggs will shortly be stocked back into the system. The team demonstrated an impressively rapid response to the arrival of the non-native Pacific pink salmon, of which eight were reported caught. An extension to our netting agreement means that no salmon have been reported caught by the net fishery for the last five years.

	2017 total	Pre June 1	Post June 1	Total nets	10yr Av	Release rate	Largest Fish
Salmon	925	242	683	n/a	989	100/90/93%*	29.5lb
Sea Trout	123	n/a	n/a	n/a	75	93%	n/a

Season: 15 Jan – 15 Oct. Spring/rest of season/overall.



**NESS ROD CATCH STATISTICS 1952-2017**  
SOURCE – NESS DSFB



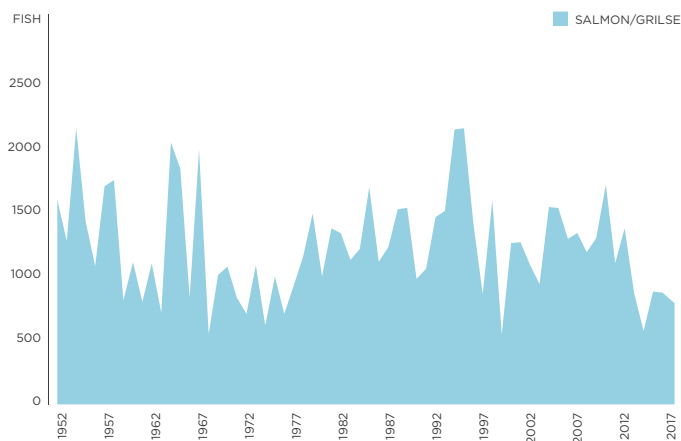
## BEAULY

**Alastair Campbell**  
Beauly DSFB

The catch was very similar to 2016 in total numbers, with encouraging spring catches once again. However, as with recent years, autumn runs were disappointing, with poorer fishing conditions on the lower beats caused by low flows and warm water conditions. Upper beats generally reported slightly higher catches than in recent years, but some beats continued to see a drop in fishing effort. There are no figures available for the counter at the Aigas dam this year, as SSE fitted a new counter which unfortunately suffered teething problems.

	2017 total	Pre June 1	Post June 1	Total nets	10yr Av	Release rate	Largest Fish
Salmon	795	n/a	n/a	n/a	1067	93%	n/a
Sea Trout	518	n/a	n/a	n/a	403	n/a	n/a

Season: 11 Feb – 15 Oct.



**BEAULY ROD CATCH STATISTICS 1952-2017**  
SOURCE – BEAULY DSFB



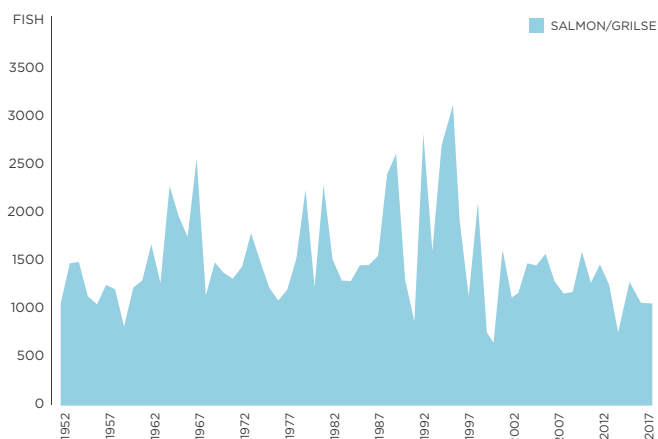
## CONON

Simon McKelvey  
Cromarty DSFB

2017 began with another strong spring run, but grilse were very scarce. Stocks of fish above Tor Achilty Dam were over the 5-year average of 1198, with 1229 counted through the dam. This increase is entirely due to wild spawning, some of which is now taking place above the restored fish ladder at Corriefeol. On the Blackwater, which is dominated by a summer grilse stock linked to the hatchery, the count was down to 750, compared with a 10-year average of 1063, due to the absence of larger female grilse, which used to be the main source of eggs for the Blackwater. Management priorities include maximising smolt escapement from predation at hydro impoundments, restoring the nutrient status of upper and middle catchments and the restoration of riparian habitats to safeguard juvenile fish.

	2017 total	Pre June 1	Post June 1	Total nets	10yr Av	Release rate	Largest Fish
Salmon	1060	n/a	n/a	n/a	1236	100/85%*	23lb
Sea Trout	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	596	96%	4.5lb

Season: 11 Feb – 30 Sep. \*Spring/overall.



CONON ROD CATCH STATISTICS 1952-2017

SOURCE – CONON DSFB



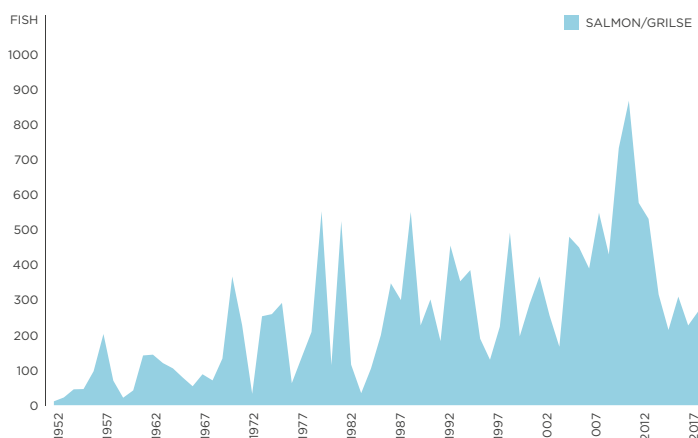
## ALNESS

Roger Dowsett  
Novar Fishings Manager

Although there were a few spring salmon caught off the Angling Club water in March and April, May was particularly warm and dry, and the main spring run was unable to run the river until mid-June when there were a few spates, and a flurry of catches. Grilse again seemed to arrive earlier than expected, in mid/late July, but with very few visiting anglers, catches were modest. It was another dry August and with low angling effort also, catches were very disappointing. Water levels picked up from mid-September, and October catches were the best since 2013. For the second consecutive year, the MSW salmon component of the summer/autumn runs seemed low – 24 percent based on catch returns. Once more, good numbers of MSW salmon were seen ascending the weir in Alness after the close of the season.

	2017 total	Pre June 1	Post June 1	Total nets	10yr Av	Release rate	Largest Fish
Salmon	273	12	261	472	472	100/85/89%*	20lb
Sea Trout	40	n/a	n/a	65	65	95%	4.5lb

Season: 10 Feb – 31 Oct. \*Spring/rest of season/overall.



ALNESS ROD CATCH STATISTICS 1952-2017

SOURCE – CROMARTY DSFB



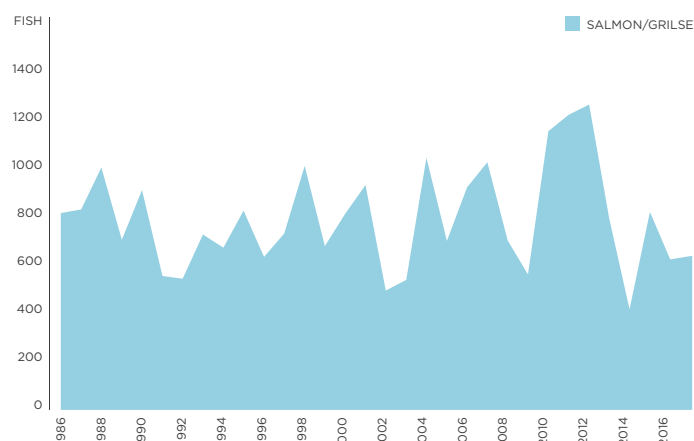
## CARRON (EAST COAST)

Keith Williams  
Director, Kyle DSFB

The first salmon was caught on 21 February on Cornhill and it appeared that the early fish were well spread through the system. April proved productive, and it was hoped that good fishing would continue into May, but catches suffered from low water. Water temperatures peaked as high as 22°C in late May, which led to concerns about potential disease outbreaks, but cooler temperatures in the summer appear to have prevented any major issues. On a more positive note, the low water conditions allowed salmon to negotiate Glencalvie Falls earlier than normal. Overall, spring catches were a little lower than in 2016, while the grilse runs were again patchy. In contrast to its neighbours, the Carron seemed to miss out on rainfall during much of the summer. The exception was September, when decent water resulted in a final flurry of catches.

	2017 total	Pre June 1	Post June 1	Total nets	10yr Av	Release rate	Largest Fish
Salmon	632	172	460	n/a	n/a	99/97/98%*	n/a
Sea Trout	39	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	87%	n/a

Season: 11 Jan – 30 Sep. \*Spring/rest of season/overall.



CARRON ROD CATCH STATISTICS 1986-2017

SOURCE – KYLE DSFB





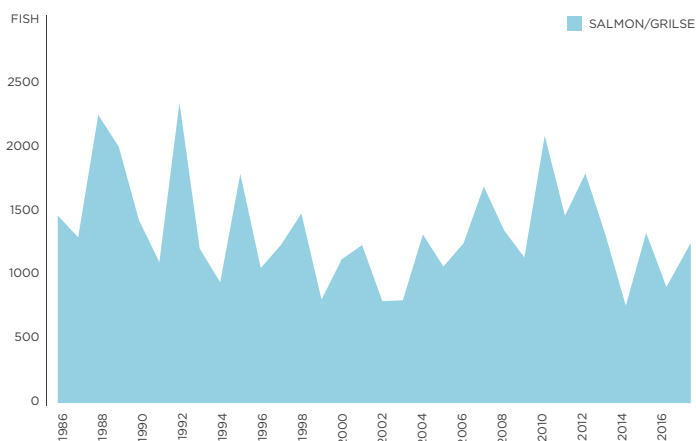
## OYKEL

**Keith Williams**  
Director, Kyle DSFB

The overall spring total was marginally ahead of the 2016 figure, but would have been higher were it not for a very dry May. Good water conditions prevailed for most of the summer, which resulted in a total of over 1200 salmon and grilse, well up on the 2016 figure, helped by high rainfall in September. Sea trout catches were also encouraging. The water conditions also ensured that the fish were well spread throughout the system, resulting in better catches on the Upper Oykell. As an addition to the Pearls in Peril project, an area of drained ground on the Upper Oykell underwent restoration as a demonstration project. This involved the blocking of a number of the drainage ditches to slow run-off and restore peatland areas – work that was assisted by SNH with some staff contribution from Kyle of Sutherland DSFB.

	2017 total	Pre June 1	Post June 1	Total nets	10yr Av	Release rate	Largest Fish
Salmon	1261	163	1098	n/a	n/a	100/94/95%*	n/a
Sea Trout	239	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	96%	n/a

Season: 11 Jan – 30 Sep. \*Spring/rest of season/overall.



OYKEL ROD CATCH STATISTICS 1986-2017

SOURCE – KYLE DSFB



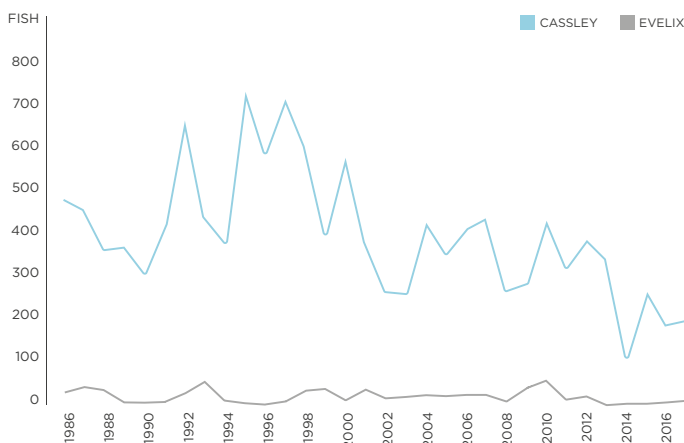
## EVELIX & CASSLEY

**Keith Williams**  
Director, Kyle DSFB

The first salmon of the season on the Cassley was caught in March. In common with the majority of the Kyle rivers, spring catches peaked in April, with dry weather conditions prevailing for much of May. Spring catches were slightly down on the 2016 figure, although the Cassley's final total for the season was marginally higher. Unverified figures from the SSE counter at Duchally suggest that the number of salmon and grilse entering the headwaters of the system were considerably higher than the five-year average. Fish were recorded steadily by the counter from the middle of June onwards. Generally wet summer conditions favoured the Evelix and a modest number of salmon and grilse were caught from July onwards, but it is likely to remain a Category 3 fishery in 2018.

	2017 total	Pre June 1	Post June 1	Total nets	10yr Av	Release rate	Largest Fish
Salmon	195	68	n/a	n/a	n/a	100/97/98%*	n/a
Sea Trout	2	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	84%	n/a

Season: 11 Jan – 30 Sep. \*Spring/rest of season/overall.



EVELIX & CASSLEY ROD CATCH STATISTICS 1986-2017

SOURCE – KYLE DSFB



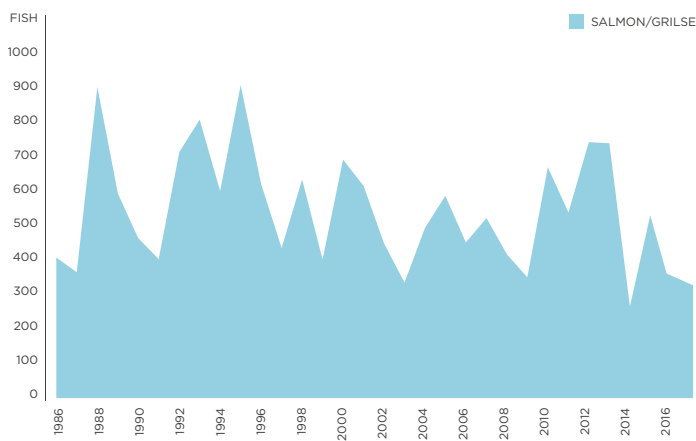
## SHIN

**Keith Williams**  
Director, Kyle DSFB

The best of the spring months was May, perhaps helped by the compensation flow from the hydro scheme, but early catches were disappointing compared to recent seasons. Fishing improved as the season progressed, but fish seemed to be reluctant to take the fly. Total catches were down on the 2016 and unverified counts from the fish counter in Lairg suggest that the number of salmon entering the upper catchment was also lower than average. Smolts were again captured and transported from the Fiag and Tirry tributaries of Loch Shin and subsequently released downstream of the dams to mitigate issues relating to downstream smolt passage. Considerable electro-fishing was undertaken on the Tirry and Fiag rivers in the summer in order to assess the status of juvenile salmon numbers.

	2017 total	Pre June 1	Post June 1	Total nets	10yr Av	Release rate	Largest Fish
Salmon	328	15	313	n/a	n/a	87/99/99%*	n/a
Sea Trout	6	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	84%	n/a

Season: 11 Jan – 30 Sep. \*Spring/rest of season/overall.



SHIN ROD CATCH STATISTICS 1986-2017

SOURCE – KYLE DSFB



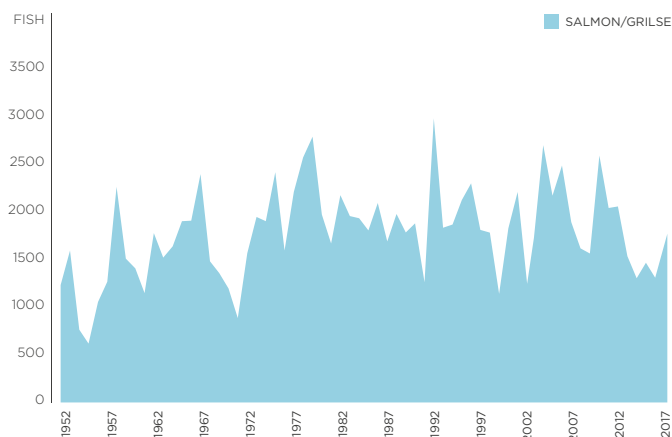
## HELMSDALE

**Michael Wigan**  
Manager, Helmsdale DSFB

The season was an improvement on 2016, with September being particularly productive. Two thirds of the catch were salmon rather than grilse, a reversal of the proportions 10 years ago. An unusual number of heavy salmon were caught, with 22 over 20lb. Although there were no major spates, rain was continuous, at levels which supported a reasonable water height.

	2017 total	Pre June 1	Post June 1	Total nets	10yr Av	Release rate	Largest Fish
Salmon	1734	412	1322	n/a	1698	100/96/96%*	30lb
Sea Trout	147	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

Season: 11 Jan – 30 Sep. \*Spring/rest of season/overall.



HELMSDALE ROD CATCH STATISTICS 1952-2017

SOURCE – HELMSDALE DSFB



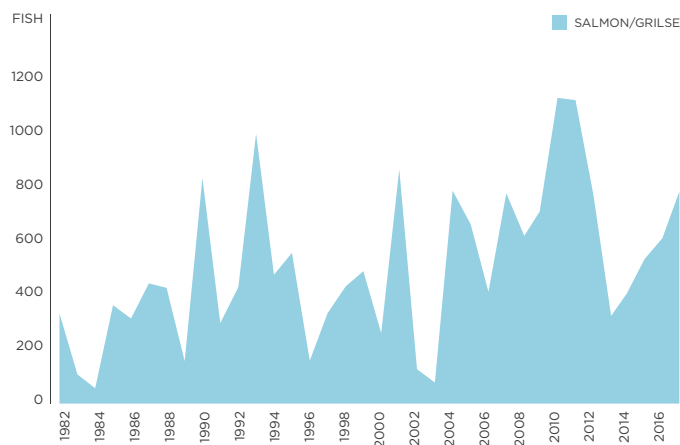
## WICK

**John Mackay**  
Secretary, Wick Angling Club

2017 was a very good season, with a 26 percent catch increase over the previous season and 71 salmon above our 10-year average. The river fished well from mid-June until the end of the season because of the very wet conditions and a large stock of fish. September was our best month, but the majority of fish were coloured as very few entered the river after August. We have also noticed an increase in the numbers of larger fish, in excess of 12lb, in the system over the last three years.

	2017 total	Pre June 1	Post June 1	Total nets	10yr Av	Release rate	Largest Fish
Salmon	768	25	743	n/a	697	4/44/43%*	16lb
Sea Trout	2	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	4lb

Season: 11 Feb – 12 Oct. \*Spring/rest of season/overall.



WICK ROD CATCH STATISTICS 1982-2017

SOURCE – RIVER WICK



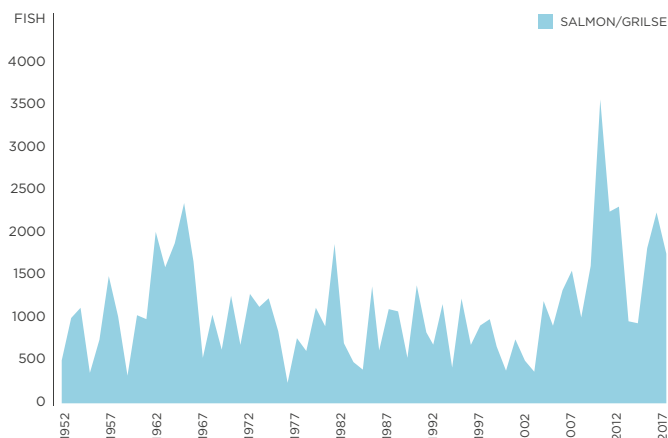
## THURSO

**Tim Hawes**  
Thurso River Manager

The season started with a strong spring run, March and April were better than previous years which was encouraging, and the run continued well into June. There is no doubt that the removal of the costal nets has helped the spring fishing. The grilse started arriving in May, with a peak at the end of July. A further strong run of grilse and salmon entered the river during the second week of August, but overall the grilse run could only be described as average. What was of concern was that we saw very few fresh fish entering the river after the middle of August. The river continues to be healthy, with the electro-fishing results showing a healthy population of juvenile fish. The catch and release policy remains in place, with all fish returned up to the middle of June, after which one brace of grilse may be taken for each week's fishing.

	2017 total	Pre June 1	Post June 1	Total nets	10yr Av	Release rate	Largest Fish
Salmon	1745	242	1503	n/a	1769	99/93/94%*	27.5lb
Sea Trout	14	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	5lb

Season: 11 Jan – 5 Oct. \*Spring/rest of season/overall.



THURSO ROD CATCH STATISTICS 1952-2017

SOURCE – THURSO RIVER MANAGEMENT



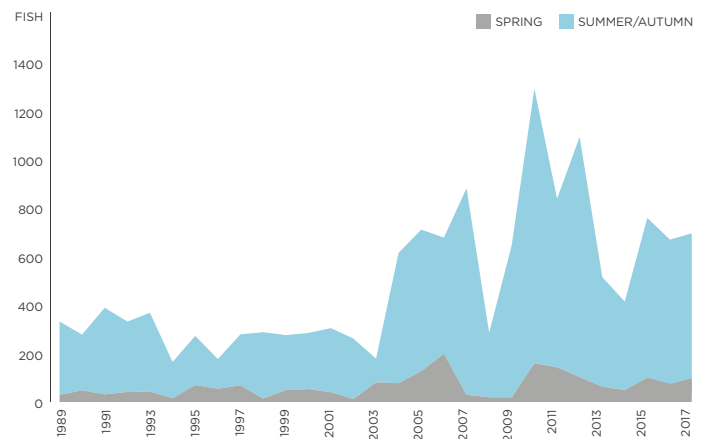
## HALLADALE

John Salkeld  
Halladale Partnership

Again it appears that runs of salmon are increasing while grilse runs are on the decline. The spring salmon rod catch was the second highest on record, reaching 178 fish by mid-June, and runs of grilse again started in June but tailed off in August. The total rod catch total was encouraging and water levels were average with the exception of a low May and good June, while a good September brought catch levels for that month back to the average. Conifer felling is continuing but protocols have been established largely avoiding felling in sensitive areas between spawning and hatching. The catch and release code remains the same for 2018 and achieved an overall increase in return rates in summer and autumn, with spring rate reaching 100 percent.

	2017 total	Pre June 1	Post June 1	Total nets	10yr Av	Release rate	Largest Fish
Salmon	713	96	617	n/a	745	100/81/89%*	24lb
Sea Trout	7	n/a	n/a	n/a	5	n/a	2lb

Season: 12 Jan – 30 Sep. \*Spring/rest of season/overall.



HALLADALE ROD CATCH STATISTICS 1989-2017

SOURCE – HALLADALE PARTNERSHIP



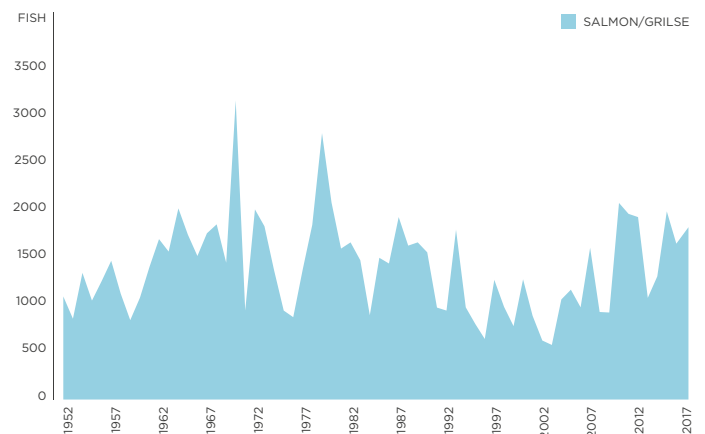
## NAVER

Richard Wright  
Bailiff, River Naver

The Naver had a strong spring run, with the six beats producing 315 salmon and 15 grilse up to 1 June. The summer and back end produced another 419 salmon and 677 grilse, which means it was the third highest catch return from the six beats since 1989. The return for the whole catchment was 1746. Good numbers of spawning fish were seen into November in the main river and tributaries, and high water meant that fish had no issues getting to the upper reaches of the catchment above Loch Naver and Loch Choire. Snow on the tops this winter will hopefully keep the temperatures down and prevent the eggs from hatching till well into the spring, when food will be more abundant for the emerging fry.

	2017 total	Pre June 1	Post June 1	Total nets	10yr Av	Release rate	Largest Fish
Salmon	1746	330	1096	n/a	1498	94%	28lb
Sea Trout	138	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	5lb

Season: 12 Jan – 30 Sep.



NAVER ROD CATCH STATISTICS 1952-2017

SOURCE – NAVER MANAGEMENT



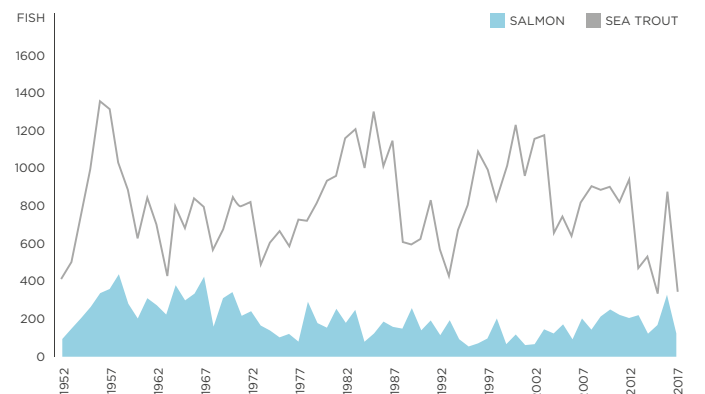
## HOPE

Andrew Adamson  
Wildland Ltd Estate Manager

The 2017 season has picked up from the previous years, following some changes within the Wildland properties, which meant that there were very few rods on the river for several years. In 2017 we had four weeks of guests, with one very successful week towards the end of July accounting for more than half of the season's salmon and grilse. We are now working closely with the West Sutherland Fisheries Trust (WSFT) to increase our monitoring across the Wildland fishings in Sutherland, which the Hope system is part of. Hopefully, with our wider conservation efforts and an increase in guest bookings on the river, we will see an increase in returns going forward.

	2017 total	Pre June 1	Post June 1	Total nets	10yr Av	Release rate	Largest Fish
Salmon	123	3	120	n/a	n/a	100%	12lb
Sea Trout	350	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	100%	7lb

Season: 12 Jan – 30 Sep.



HOPE ROD CATCH STATISTICS 1952-2017

SOURCE – WILDLAND LTD. MARINE SCOTLAND SCIENCE© Crown copyright





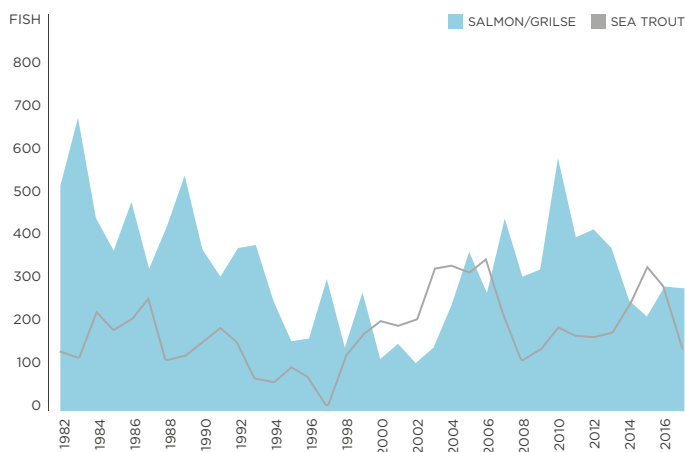
## DIONARD

Jim Allingham  
North and West DSFB

The 2017 season was slightly disappointing on the River Dionard. Until mid-August runs seemed well up to normal when there was water in the system. However, from mid-August onwards each rise in water seemed to produce fewer fresh salmon and sea trout. There was evidence that some fresh fish entered the river after the season had closed – a not unusual feature in some years, especially with sea trout.

	2017 total	Pre June 1	Post June 1	Total nets	10yr Av	Release rate	Largest Fish
Salmon	285	n/a	n/a	n/a	346	92%	12lb
Sea Trout	153	n/a	n/a	n/a	199	97%	3.5lb

Season: 11 Feb – 31 Oct.



DIONARD ROD CATCH STATISTICS 1982-2017

SOURCE – NORTH AND WEST DSFB



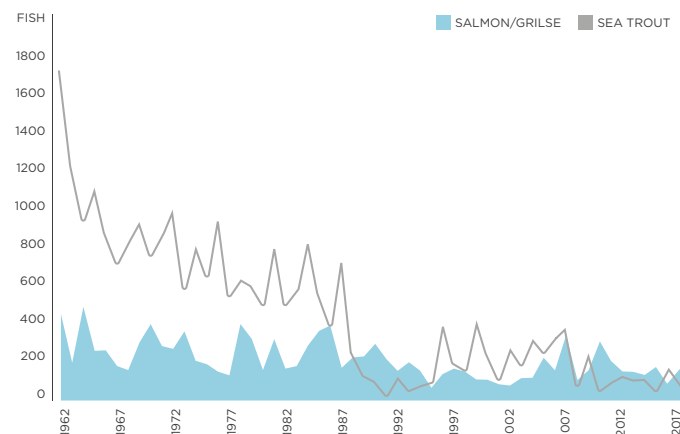
## LAXFORD

Shona Marshall  
Biologist, West Sutherland Fisheries Trust

Salmon catches were good and high numbers of fish were also noted within the system. While most fish were taken in July and August, reflecting the historic patterns of the grilse run, fish were taken throughout the year, thanks to the steady rainfall. Sea trout catches were the fourth lowest recorded since 1957. The ongoing restructuring and development of woodland close to riparian waters should result in improvements to riparian zones and water quality in the long term.

	2017 total	Pre June 1	Post June 1	Total nets	10yr Av	Release rate	Largest Fish
Salmon	173	2	171	n/a	168	100%	22lb
Sea Trout	72	n/a	n/a	n/a	119	100%	4lb

Season: 1 March – 30 Sep.



LAXFORD ROD CATCH STATISTICS 1962-2017

SOURCE – WEST SUTHERLAND FISHERIES TRUST



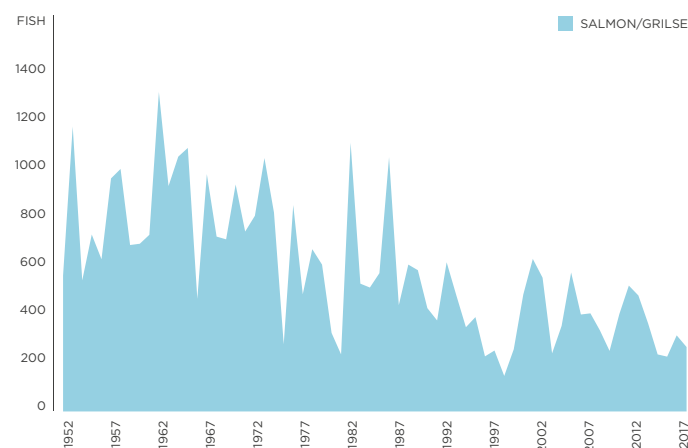
## GRIMERSTA

Jason Laing  
Grimersta Estate Manager

Water levels remained low in the early season, before rising in late July. Despite this, grilse began to run in mid-June and early catches were encouraging. The fish continued to run steadily in July but not in great numbers and steady but unspectacular fishing continued right through the season. The average size of the fish was down, although most were in reasonable condition. 2017 was not a particularly good grilse run and the tally of 260 reflects this. Of concern is the decline in sea trout numbers, the return of 93 is well down on last year and less than a quarter of 2015's total. Despite our Category 1 status we continue to operate a voluntary catch and release policy which resulted in 88 percent of salmon and all sea trout being returned.

	2017 total	Pre June 1	Post June 1	Total nets	10yr Av	Release rate	Largest Fish
Salmon	260	5	255	n/a	337	100/88/88%*	12lb
Sea Trout	93	n/a	n/a	n/a	250	100%	3.5lb

Season: 11 Feb – 15 Oct. \*Spring/rest of season/overall.



GRIMERSTA ROD CATCH STATISTICS 1952-2017

SOURCE – WESTERN ISLES DSFB



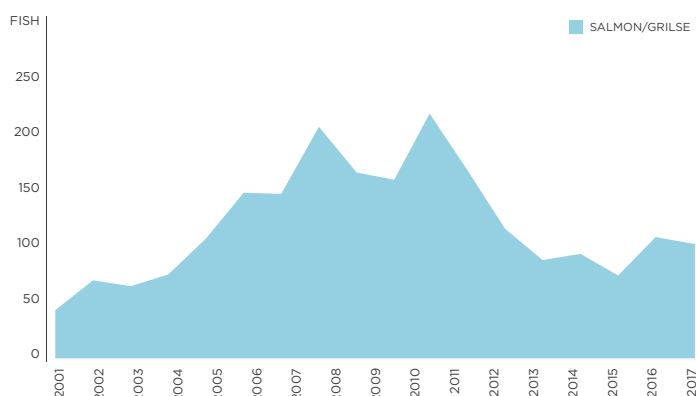
## SNIZORT

**Derek Dowsett**  
Snizort River Manager

2017 was a disappointing year for salmon and sea trout, not helped by the last day of the season – in which the condition of the river was ideal and salmon and sea trout were showing in good numbers – falling on a Sunday, preventing us from reaching the 100-salmon mark. The overall condition of both species was good, although the average weights of the fish have dropped noticeably as well as the total number of fish caught. The sea trout did not appear on the river as early as usual and we didn't start catching them in reasonable quantity until late September, but their condition was good with little evidence of parasite damage. The rainfall levels were an improvement on the preceding three years but the trend for a reduction in the number of seasonal spates continues.

	2017 total	Pre June 1	Post June 1	Total nets	10yr Av	Release rate	Largest Fish
Salmon	96	0	96	n/a	120	100%	18lb
Sea Trout	38	n/a	n/a	n/a	53	100%	2.5lb

Season: 11 Feb – 15 Oct.



**SNIZORT ROD CATCH STATISTICS 2000-2017**  
SOURCE – SKYE DSFB



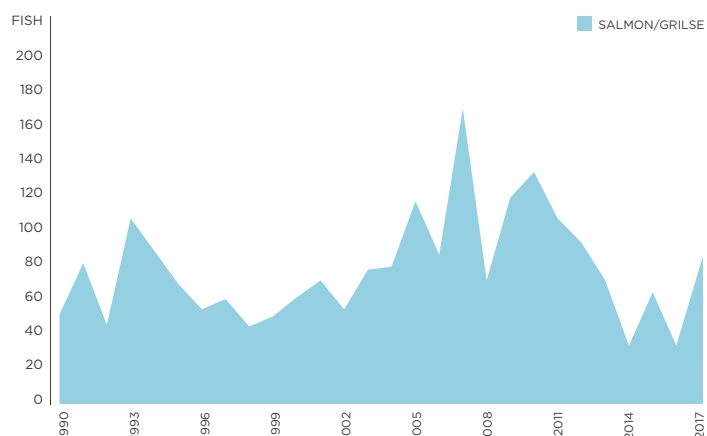
## LITTLE GRUINARD

**Stuart Allison**  
Head Keeper, Eilean Darach Estates

2017 was a strange season – fluctuating between feast and famine on a weekly basis. The majority of the fish arrived over the course of three days, which was an unbelievable sight, but this run was followed by a very frustrating few weeks in which the fish ignored everything in the fly box. Many of the grilse were under the average weight and there were few finnock again this year. Overall, it was a very average season for salmon and another disappointing season for sea trout.

	2017 total	Pre June 1	Post June 1	Total nets	10yr Av	Release rate	Largest Fish
Salmon	84	n/a	n/a	n/a	92	100%	15.5lb
Sea Trout	3	n/a	n/a	n/a	5	100%	2.5lb

Season: 11 Feb – 31 Oct.



**LITTLE GRUINARD ROD CATCH STATISTICS 1990-2017**  
SOURCE – LITTLE GRUINARD MANAGEMENT



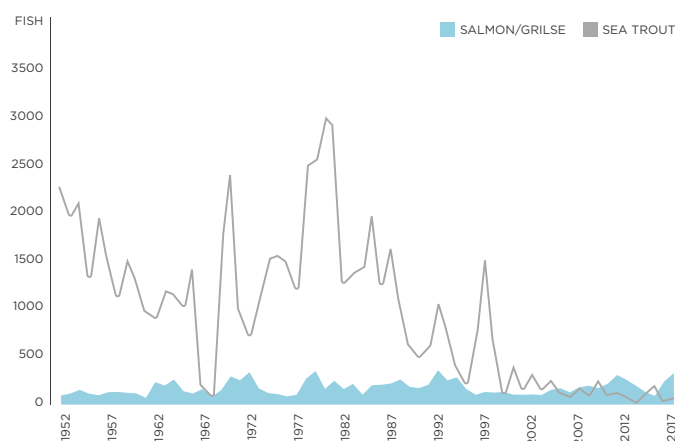
## EW & LOCH MAREE

**Peter Cunningham**  
Biologist, Skye and Wester Ross Fisheries Trust

The unofficial total catch of salmon and grilse was the highest since 1992, but the lack of sea trout remains the biggest cause for concern – being so far below the 2000 per annum average of the 1980s. Before the collapse, four rods used to fish the Ewe at night for sea trout and four rods during the day for salmon. From the 1990s only the day rods continued and, although they principally fished for salmon, many sea trout were caught as bycatch, but now few sea trout are caught in the river. Fishing effort on Loch Maree was once again relatively light. Where recorded, brown trout outnumbered sea trout in rod catches. In recent years, trout in parts of the Ewe system may have further shifted away from anadromy to resident as a result of poor marine survival of sea-going trout.

	2017 total	Pre June 1	Post June 1	Total nets	10yr Av	Release rate	Largest Fish
Salmon	359	17	342	n/a	n/a	100/99/99%*	22lb
Sea Trout	63	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	100%	2.75lb

Season: 11 Feb – 31 Oct. \*Spring/rest of season/overall.



**RIVER EW & LOCH MAREE ROD CATCH STATISTICS 1952-2017**  
SOURCE – WESTER ROSS FISHERIES TRUST



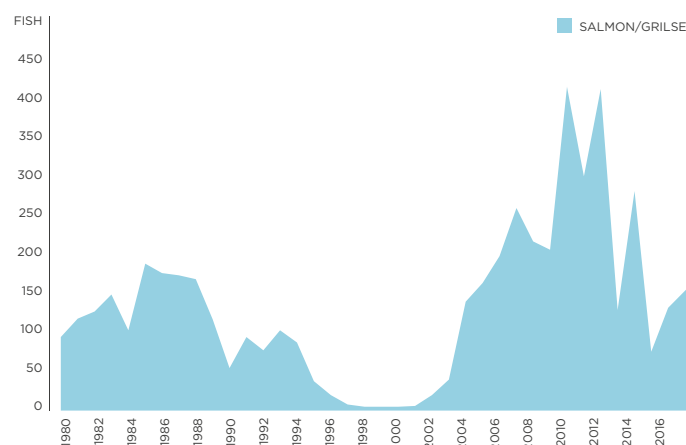
## CARRON (WEST COAST)

**Bob Kindness**  
Carron River Manager

Overall the season was better than 2016, with grilse being slightly fewer than salmon. No salmon appeared before June due to low water, but 24 averaging over 10lb were caught in June, despite minimal fishing effort. Fresh salmon and grilse continued to run until early August, after which time only coloured fish were caught. Sea trout and particularly finnock were evident in good numbers and were almost completely devoid of sea lice. Approximately 90 percent of the fish caught had no lice and no evidence of any fin damage. Winter spates, moving gravel, potential redd wash-out and fish losses caused by goosanders continue to occur. These are mitigated by the stocking programme, which has now been running for 16 years. Catches during this period have been maintained at higher than historic levels and a 100 percent C&R policy continues.

	2017 total	Pre June 1	Post June 1	Total nets	10yr Av	Release rate	Largest Fish
Salmon	157	0	157	n/a	235	99%	17lb
Sea Trout	92	n/a	n/a	n/a	120	100%	4lb

Season: 15 Feb – 31 Oct.



**CARRON (W.COAST) ROD CATCH 1980-2017**  
SOURCE – RIVER CARRON MANAGEMENT



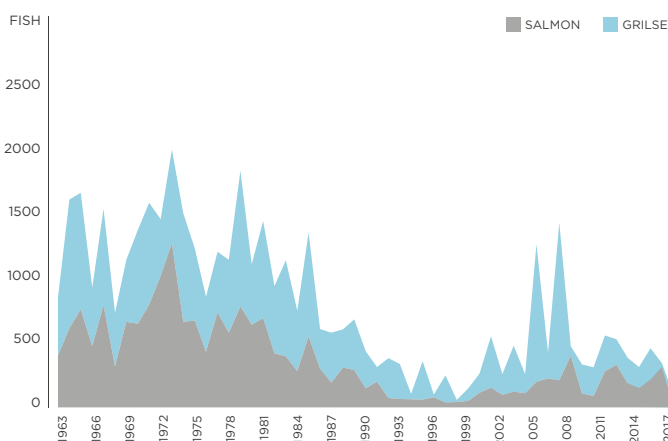
## LOCHY

**John Veitch**  
Lochy River Manager

2017's returns were the lowest in 20 years – down by 73 percent than the 10-year average, with a 36 / 64 percent split of salmon vs grilse. Grilse numbers were better than 2016 but MSW salmon numbers were significantly down on previous years. Hydro issues hampered catches but marine and estuarine survival are likely to be the key contributing factors for the poor returns. This is illustrated by the poor survival rate of 2015 smolt run, which resulted in the collapse of grilse in 2016 and MSW salmon in 2017. Catches on Mucomir Pool were below average and water release via the dam gates means the fish do not settle in the pool in the same way. The excess water also allows fish destined for Spean and Roy to push straight through. The best of the fishing was in June and July rather than the autumn.

	2017 total	Pre June 1	Post June 1	Total nets	10yr Av	Release rate	Largest Fish
Salmon	138	3	135	n/a	520	100/96/96%	18lb
Sea Trout	104	n/a	n/a	n/a	157	n/a	5lb

Season: 1 Mar – 14 Oct. \*Spring/rest of season/overall.



**LOCHY ROD CATCH STATISTICS 1963-2017**  
SOURCE – LOCHY ASSOCIATION



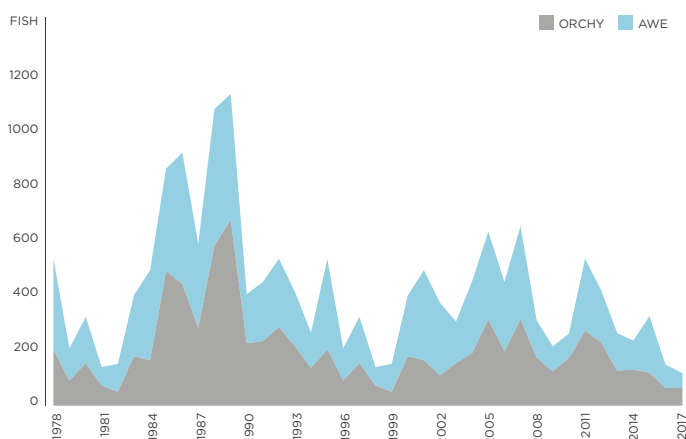
## AWE & ORCHY

**Roger Brook**  
Chairman, Argyll DSFB

The catch was 77 percent of the previous year's total, but this was better than could be expected given that the counter showed the number of returning fish was only 60 percent of the previous year's tally. We have seen before, both here and elsewhere in Scotland, that in low returning years a greater percent of the fish can be caught. This year we caught almost a quarter of the returning fish count. Unlike last year, there was not a disproportionate shortage of grilse; just a shortage of fish throughout the season. One notable fish weighed in at 40lb, a worthy winner of the 2017 FishPal Malloch trophy – the annual award for the largest fly-caught salmon which is returned to the water in Scotland each year.

	2017 total	Pre June 1	Post June 1	Total nets	10yr Av	Release rate	Largest Fish
Salmon	118	7	111	n/a	338	100%	40lb
Sea Trout	0	n/a	n/a	n/a	0	n/a	n/a

Season: 11 Feb – 31 Oct.



**AWE & ORCHY ROD CATCH STATISTICS 1978-2017**  
SOURCE - ARGYLL DSFB

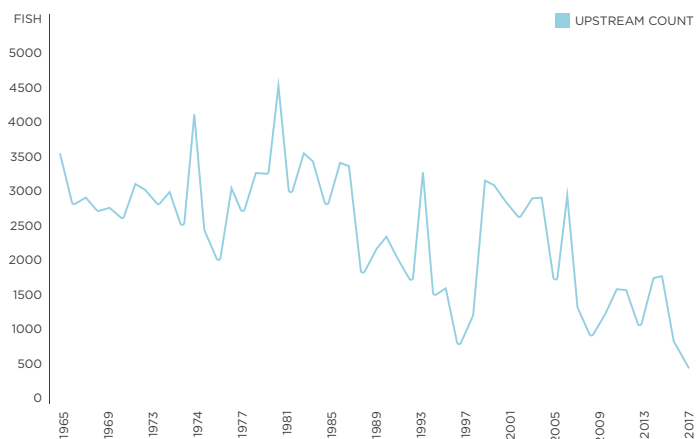




## AWE COUNTER

**Roger Brook**  
Chairman, Argyll DSFB

The Awe counter registered a total of 480 salmon and grilse, only 60 percent of the previous year's total and a mere 35 percent of the five-year average. It is also the lowest count recorded since the counter was installed in 1964 and a tiny fraction of the 3000 fish that returned to the river in better times. The count was low from the start of the season and continued to run at a low level throughout. There was no particular missing component of the run – fish came at the right times but in the wrong numbers.



**AWE BARRAGE UPSTREAM COUNT 1964-2017**

SOURCE – SCOTTISH AND SOUTHERN ENERGY



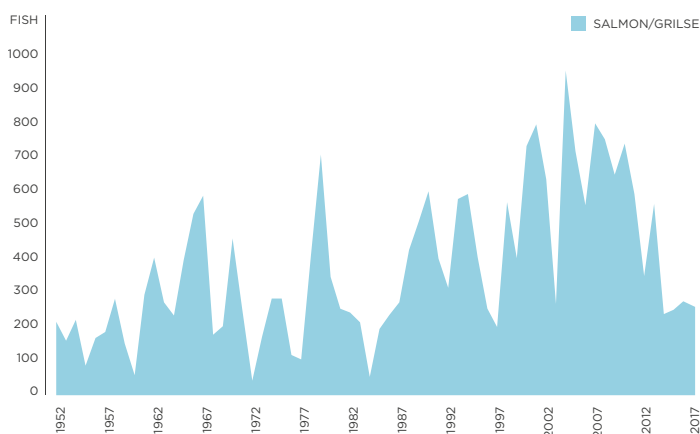
## AYR

**Stuart Brabbs**  
Ayrshire Rivers Trust

With some angling clubs failing to provide catch returns, the total reported catch is lower than the actual figure – a trend that is detrimental to the marketing potential of this river. The first salmon of 2017 were caught in April before dry weather saw the river on its bare bones until late in May, when a few more springers were encountered. June was very wet, encouraging a good run of salmon. The eagerly anticipated grilse runs failed to appear in any numbers in July or August. Multi-sea winter fish dominated catches for the rest of the season, but fresh fish were notably scarce. While the freshwater habitat is improving, in-river predation of smolts is high, as revealed by the Trust during a smolt trapping exercise. A new counter has been installed at Catrine fish pass, which will be a valuable management tool.

	2016 total	Pre June 1	Post June 1	Total nets	10yr Av	Release rate	Largest Fish
Salmon	257	12	245	n/a	n/a	92/97%*	n/a
Sea Trout	17	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	100%	n/a

Season: 15 Feb – 31 Oct. \*Spring/overall.



**AYR ROD CATCH STATISTICS 1952-2017**

SOURCE – AYRSHIRE RIVERS TRUST



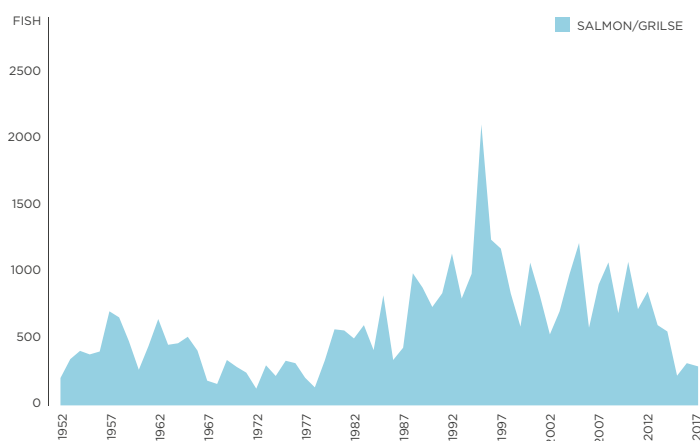
## DOON

**David Cosh**  
Doon DSFB

A few bigger than usual fish were caught in June and July, while very few grilse entered the system and there was virtually no back-end run – resulting in the worst season since reasonable records began. Every year gets worse and one wonders why the Doon was rated a Category 1 river, fortunately the Board has asked for 100 percent catch and release for salmon and sea trout for 2018. Let's hope the government inquiry due early 2018 ends the sea lice issue, which kills so many smolts from west coast rivers on their way to the feeding grounds, and fish farms are forced to control what they have not managed to in the last few years, or better still, go on-shore. The hatchery at Dalmellington has more eggs than usual and the fry from here will be planted out in the spring.

	2016 total	Pre June 1	Post June 1	Total nets	10yr Av	Release rate	Largest Fish
Salmon	297	0	297	n/a	n/a	84%	n/a
Sea Trout	38	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	97%	8lb

Season: 11 Feb – 31 Oct.



**DOON ROD CATCH STATISTICS 1952-2017**

SOURCE – AYRSHIRE RIVERS TRUST



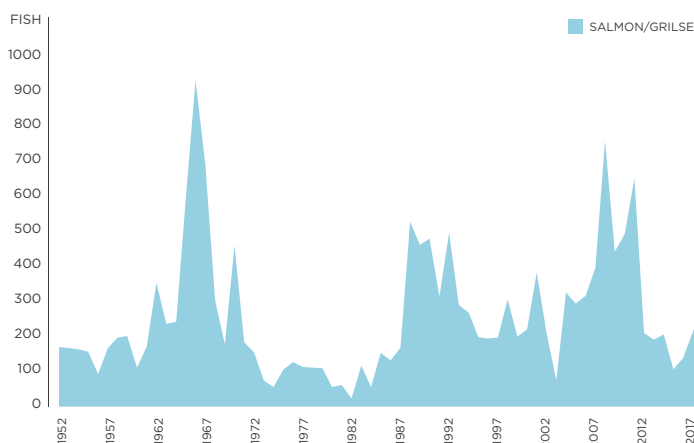
## GIRVAN

Stuart Brabbs  
Ayrshire Rivers Trust

The Girvan produced the first Ayrshire salmon of the 2017 season and the spring run was encouraging – by the end of May, 43 springers had been released, mostly in the upper beats. Throughout the rest of the season fishing was steady but the grilse failed to show up in any numbers. From summer to the end of the season, persistent rain kept river levels up, which wasn't conducive to good sport, and salmon arrived in dribs and drabs rather than in distinct runs. There was a notable lack of rod effort which hasn't helped catch returns. In keeping with other local rivers, there was a swing to multi-sea winter salmon in 2017 and one lucky angler had salmon of 27.5lb and 23.5lb in the same day. Work continues to reduce diffuse pollution and improve bank stability with a number of green engineering projects.

	2017 total	Pre June 1	Post June 1	Total nets	10yr Av	Release rate	Largest Fish
Salmon	223	43	190	n/a	n/a	100/79/83%*	27.5lb
Sea Trout	81	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	99%	n/a

Season: 21 Feb – 31 Oct. \*Spring/rest of season/overall.



GIRVAN ROD CATCH STATISTICS 1952-2017

SOURCE – AYRSHIRE RIVERS TRUST



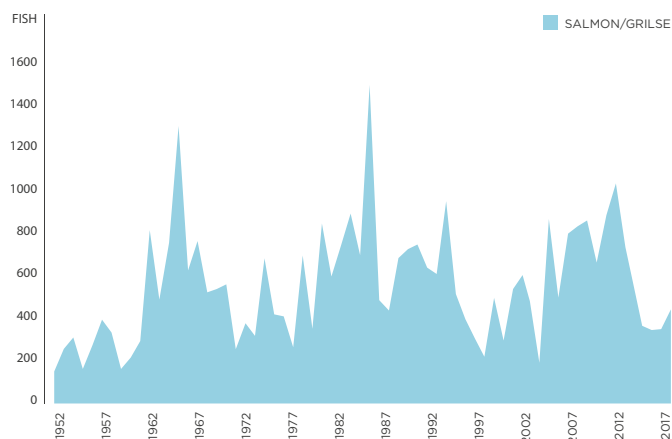
## STINCHAR

Stuart Brabbs  
Ayrshire Rivers Trust

The season started well, with June producing good catches of MSW salmon to the few rods venturing out. This trend of salmon rather than grilse prevailed all season and, while there was no shortage of fish around, catching them was challenging in a river that was in spate constantly from July until the end of the season. Reports of good numbers of sea trout aren't reflected in the total catch but few anglers fish for them and a rod catch of 61 probably doesn't reflect their true numbers. Beats reported pools full of salmon from July onwards but, despite the high water, few fresh fish appeared and the back-end run failed to materialise. Despite this, the river had its best season since 2013. Electrofishing results in 2017 were the best on record and this bodes well for the future.

	2017 total	Pre June 1	Post June 1	Total nets	10yr Av	Release rate	Largest Fish
Salmon	433	0	433	n/a	n/a	91%	n/a
Sea Trout	61	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	100%	n/a

Season: 25 Feb – 31 Oct.



STINCHAR ROD CATCH STATISTICS 1952-2017

SOURCE – AYRSHIRE RIVERS TRUST



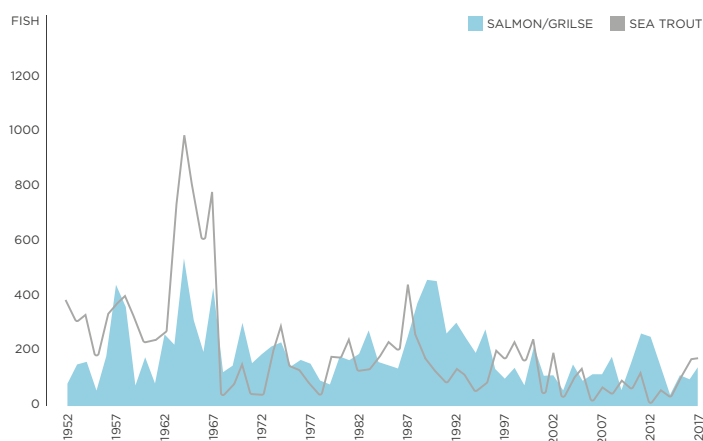
## LUCE

Galloway Fisheries Trust

Promising early runs that included numbers of big fish suggested a good start to the 2017 season and good numbers of sea trout were also caught early on. However, once the rain came and the river rose the sea trout fishing was much more difficult and catches declined. In general there was fairly light fishing pressure through the system for salmon, but anglers did enjoy steady runs when there was decent water. The grilse run was lower, with a few around, but not as many as was expected. Overall the season was deemed to be good, especially given the light fishing pressure. An active management and conservation plan is implemented annually on the river. The Luce has been given Category 2 status for the 2018 season.

	2016 total	Pre June 1	Post June 1	Total nets	10yr Av	Release rate	Largest Fish
Salmon	150	0	150	n/a	147	91%	25lb
Sea Trout	179	n/a	n/a	n/a	109	83%	7lb

Season: 25 Feb – 31 Oct.



LUCE ROD CATCH STATISTICS 1952-2017

SOURCE – GALLOWAY FISHERIES TRUST



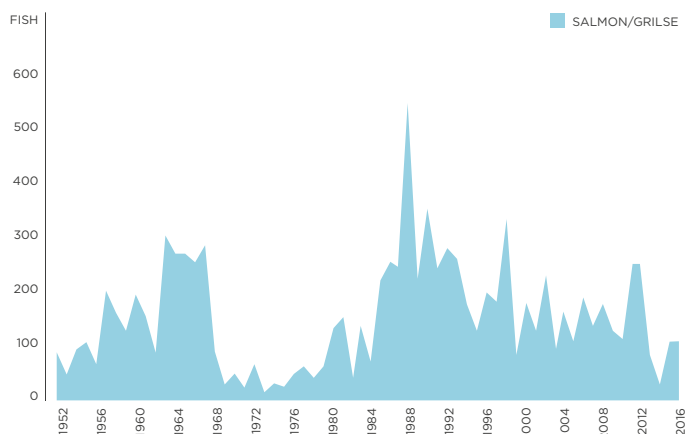
## BLADNOCH

Galloway Fisheries Trust

Full catch returns for 2017 were not available at the time of writing, but the beginning of the 2017 season started slowly. Although a few springers and some nice MSW fish were caught, low water conditions made angling difficult. Later in the spring and into the summer the opposite was seen, with a lot of water allowing many fish to run through the system relatively quickly. However, some good MSW fish were caught, with the grilse run being slow to show. Overall, 2017 was one of the better recent seasons, with nearly 200 fish caught. A programme of conifer removal and peatland restoration is being undertaken to improve water quality, while a small targeted hatchery is used to ameliorate the acidification problems and various riparian works have been carried out by Kirkcowan AC.

	2016 total	Pre June 1	Post June 1	Total nets	10yr Av	Release rate	Largest Fish
Salmon	108	5	103	n/a	139	100%	n/a
Sea Trout	1	n/a	n/a	n/a	1	100%	n/a

Season: 11 Feb – 31 Oct



BLADNOCH ROD CATCH STATISTICS 1952-2016  
SOURCE – GALLOWAY FISHERIES TRUST



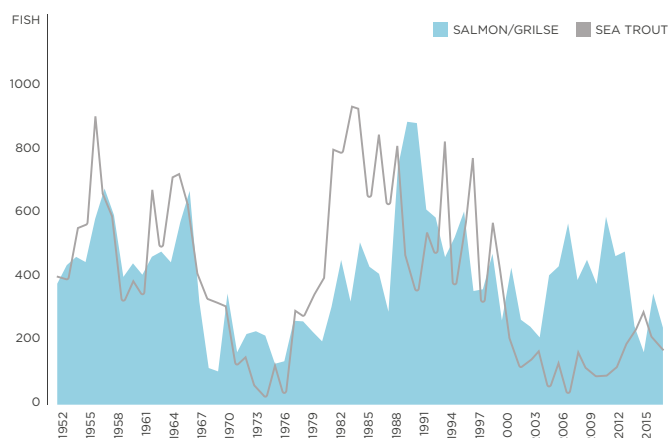
## CREE

Terence Flanagan  
Chairman, Cree DSFB

Although exact figures are not to hand at the time of writing, it appears that the 2017 rod catch was approximately 305 salmon and grilse and 240 sea trout. The season got off to a slow start, thanks in part to the exceptionally dry April. However, the rains arrived in mid-May and the catches responded accordingly, while June was exceptional. Thereafter, catches tailed off, despite many fish being observed in the river. Almost continual high water from August to the end of the season hampered fishing effort and seemed to put fish off the take. The best fishing appears to be getting earlier in the season. Also, the proportion of grilse seems to be reducing. A programme of environmental improvements continues, including the removal of self-seeded Sitka spruce close to various spawning burns and re-planting with native broadleaf trees.

	2016 total	Pre June 1	Post June 1	Total nets	10yr Av	Release rate	Largest Fish
Salmon	242	6	236	n/a	n/a	100%	12lb
Sea Trout	181	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	3.5lb

Season: 1 Mar – 14 Oct.



CREE ROD CATCH STATISTICS 1952-2016  
SOURCE – CREE DSFB



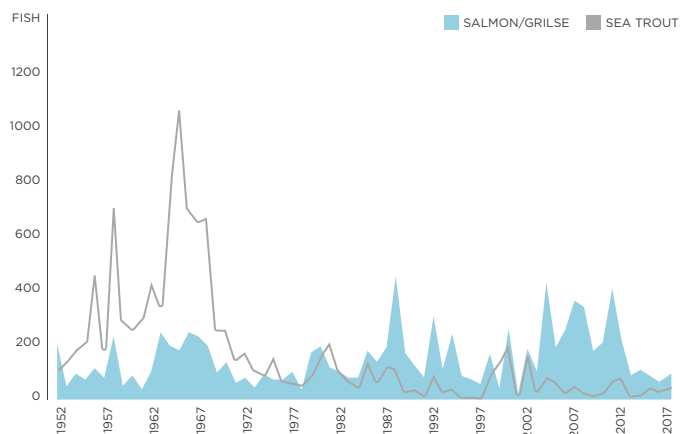
## URR

Will Marshall - Secretary, Dalbeattie Angling Association  
Kenny Irvine - Chairman, Castle Douglas Angling Association

The grilse run was patchy, but summer salmon were big, with most in double figures. Despite once being famous for its back-end run, very few salmon were caught in November. The best fishing is now August/September and Dalbeattie AA will be adjusting ticket prices to reflect this. On the whole another year of low catches is making the long-term survival of the AA pretty perilous – small scale associations offering affordable salmon fishing also appear to be suffering from the increase in regulations. Works to install the new gas pipeline across Dumfries and Galloway have resulted in high levels of silt in our feeder streams. The Board is working with SEPA and the companies involved to resolve this, but it made parts of the river virtually unfishable some of the season, and may have damaged spawning redds and invertebrate life.

	2017 total	Pre June 1	Post June 1	Total nets	10yr Av	Release rate	Largest Fish
Salmon	93	3	90	n/a	n/a	100/72/73%*	22lb
Sea Trout	47	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	89%	3.5lb

Season: 25 Feb – 30 Nov. \*Spring/rest of season/overall.



URR ROD CATCH STATISTICS 1952-2017  
SOURCE – DALBEATTIE AA & CASTLE DOUGLAS AA





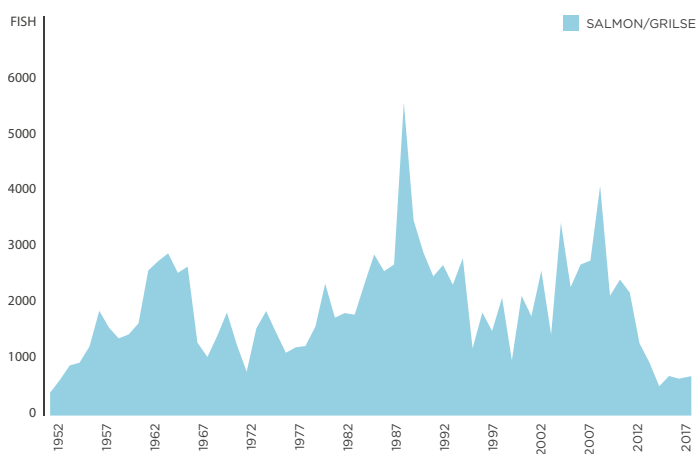
## NITH

**Jim Henderson**  
Fishery Director, Nith DSFB

The recorded catch of salmon remained consistent with previous years, at approximately 700. The main run of salmon came through during the summer, with fewer fish in the autumn, although a pulse of large back-end fish came through during the second half of November. Grilse numbers were low and sea trout numbers were slightly down, but high water levels allowed these fish to run straight through. The Board and Trust plan to have several fish counters installed during 2018 to help support management decisions. The river was assigned Category 2 status for the 2017 season and voluntary catch and release of all salmon was recommended, combined with a caveat that no more than two salmon per angler/hetsman per season could be taken. Compliance with this request was upheld.

	2017 total	Pre June 1	Post June 1	Total nets	10yr Av	Release rate	Largest Fish
Salmon	695	59	636	133	1939	97/88/89%*	25lb
Sea Trout	768	n/a	n/a	214	1076	83%	6lb

Season: 25 Feb – 31 Nov. \*Spring/rest of season/overall.



**NITH ROD CATCH STATISTICS 1952-2017**

SOURCE – NITH DSFB



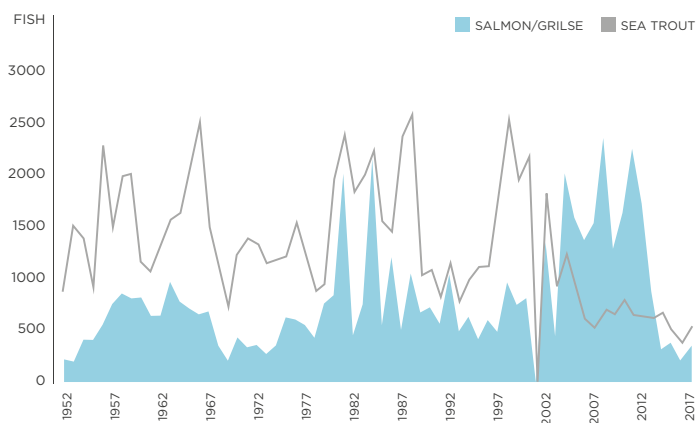
## ANNAN

**Antony Donnelly**  
Director, Annan Board and Trust

360 rod caught salmon represented a slight improvement on the previous few seasons and autumn redd count surveys indicated an overall increase in the number of fish entering the system. For the fourth consecutive season the main run of salmon arrived in the Solway in late May and entered the river in June. A few grilse did arrive but not until August and September. Fishing conditions were excellent from June onwards and consistently high flows favoured anglers fishing the middle river beats, although sea trout didn't appear to be present in large numbers. We significantly increased our electrofishing programme, surveying 142 sites. The Trust has welcomed Abi Carroll – who joins as Community Engagement Project Officer for the HLF/Leader-funded Restoring Annan's Water catchment management initiative – to the team.

	2017 total	Pre June 1	Post June 1	Total nets	10yr Av	Release rate	Largest Fish
Salmon	360	4	356	35	1140	100%	25lb
Sea Trout	545	n/a	n/a	n/a	607	95%	7lb

Season: 25 Feb – 15 Nov.



**ANNAN ROD CATCH STATISTICS 1952-2017**

SOURCE – ANNAN DSFB



## District Salmon Fishery Boards

- 1 Caithness

2 Helmsdale

3 Brora

4 Kyle of Sutherland

5 Cromarty

6 Beauly

7 Ness

8 Nairn

9 Findhorn

10 Lossie

11 Spey

12 Deveron

13 Ugie

14 Ythan

15 Don

16 Dee (Aberdeen)

17 Esk

18 Tay

19 Forth

20 Tweed

21 Annan
- 22 Nith

23 Urr

24 Dee (Kircudbright)

25 Fleet (Kircudbright)

26 Cree

27 Bladnoch

28 Luce

29 Stinchar

30 Girvan

31 Doon

32 Ayr

33 Eachaig

34 Argyll

35 Laggan and Sorn

36 Lochaber

37 Skye

38 Wester Ross

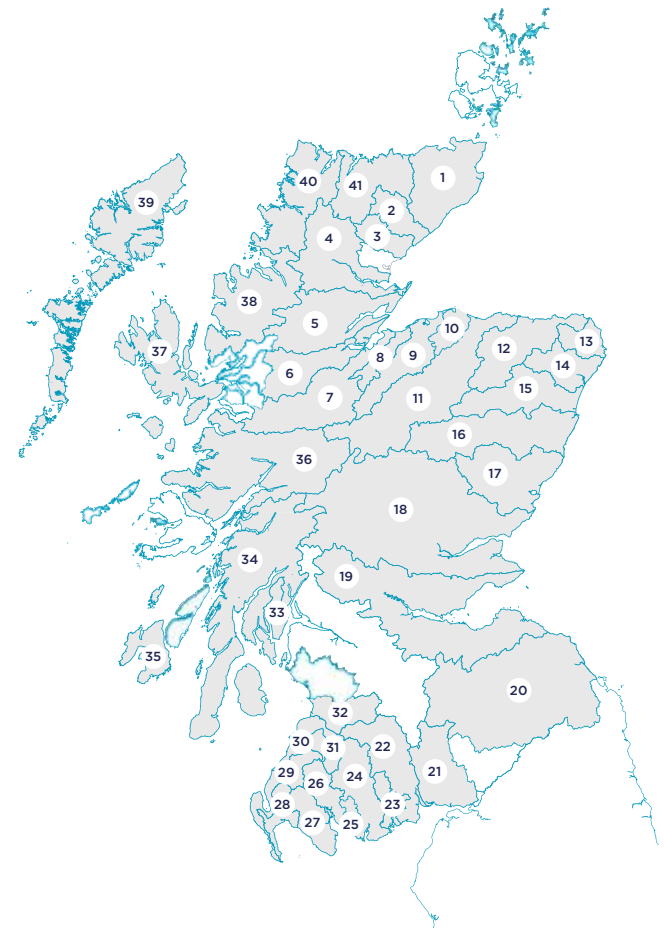
39 Western Isles

40 North and West

41 Northern

Sources:

SFD / DSFB boundaries, SEPA (2009) & SG MS (2017)  
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## Fisheries Trusts

1. Kyle of Sutherland Fisheries Trust

2. Cromarty Firth Fisheries Trust

3. Ness & Beauly Fisheries Trust

4. Findhorn, Nairn & Lossie Trust

5. Spey Foundation

6. Deveron, Bogie & Isla Rivers Charitable Trust

7. River Ythan Trust

8. River Don Trust

9. River Dee Trust

10. The Esks Rivers Fisheries Trust

11. Tay Foundation

12. Forth Fisheries Trust

13. Tweed Foundation

14. River Annan Trust

15. Nith Catchment Fisheries Trust

16. Galloway Fisheries Trust

17. Ayrshire Rivers Trust

18. Clyde River Foundation

19. Loch Lomond Fisheries Trust

20. Argyll Fisheries Trust

21. Lochaber Fisheries Trust

22. Outer Hebrides Fisheries Trust

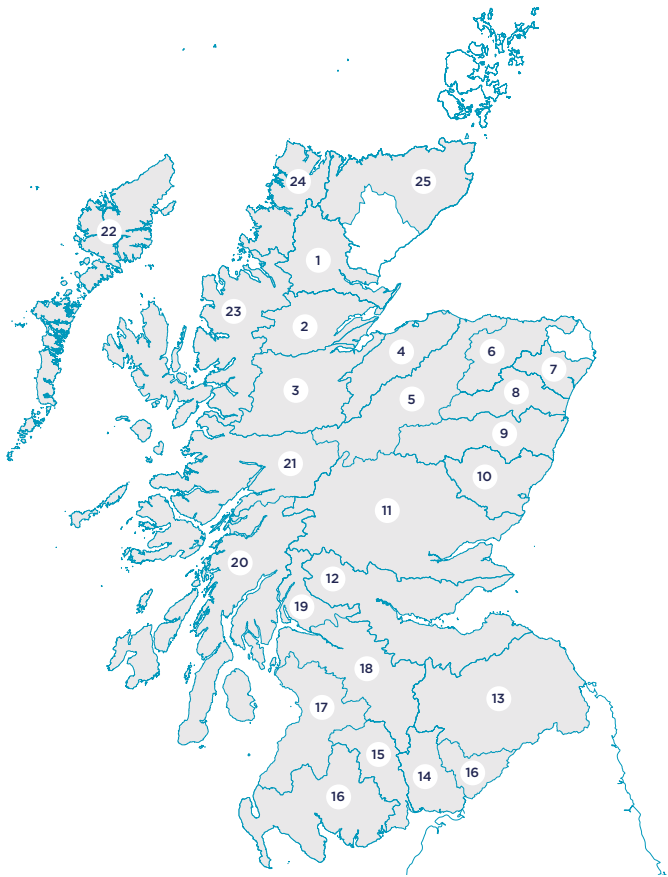
23. Skye & Wester Ross Fisheries Trust

24. West Sutherland Fisheries Trust

25. Flow Country Rivers Trust

Sources:

Fisheries Trust Boundaries, SEPA (2009) & SG MS (2017)  
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