



2013 ANNUAL REPORT

Chairman's word

During the past 12 months I believe SFCC has achieved a tremendous amount for the resources that we have available. In our first annual report for 2012 I mentioned our aspirations of being more forward thinking, innovative and inclusive. I believe these aspirations are now becoming incorporated into the way SFCC operates, as evidenced by the summary of achievements in this report. As you will see, training for biologists is an increasingly important aspect of SFCC work and we will continue to develop additional means of helping our members through the provision of mapping data, databases and protocols. Of note, myself and Sean Dugan (the new SFCC manager) met Andrew Thin to discuss the Wild Fisheries Management Review in Scotland. Under the theme of evidence based fisheries management, we believe the SFCC (with its close links to membership organisations) is ideally placed to facilitate a future training and data management structure that will help achieve this 'common sense' philosophy. *James Hunt*

The SFCC 2020 Vision

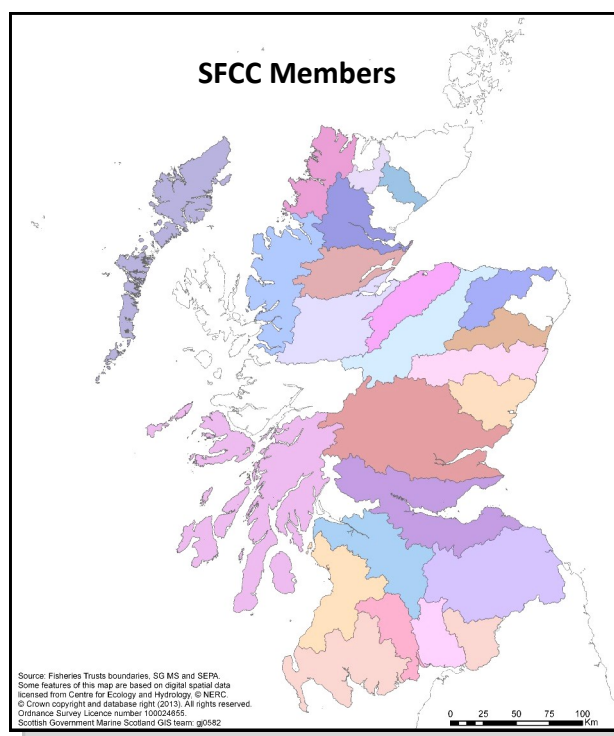
The SFCC management committee has produced a vision for where we see the SFCC being by the year 2020. [The draft vision](#) is now on our website and we welcome any comments and additions during the draft period until May 30th 2014. We believe our member Fisheries Trusts are well placed to deliver local fisheries data collection to a rigorous standard.

Fisheries Management Review

The SFCC met Andrew Thin on the 24th March 2013 to outline the functioning of SFCC and to discuss how it could facilitate a future management structure based on evidence based fisheries management. Out of these discussions it would appear that the SFCC is well placed to deliver a training programme that will ensure high quality data collection, storage and availability. The SFCC is also re-evaluating its data sharing philosophy to public organisations, with consideration being given to a memorandum of understanding for data provision. The next stage in the process is for the SFCC to respond to the call for evidence in April 2014.

Current SFCC Member Organisations

In 2013-2014 the SFCC membership totalled 23 organisations with The Nith Catchment Fisheries Trust becoming a new member.



Employment of a new manager

Of primary importance to the progress and development of SFCC, Sean Dugan became our new manager on the 1st April 2013. Financial support for this half post was provided by The Scottish Government. Fresh from university, wilderness guiding in Canada, and experience working for The Spey Foundation, Sean has particularly enjoyed meeting and working with the member biologists during the year. With support from the chairman and management committee, he has taken forward a number of initiatives including training course organisation, training videos, website development and the national smolt data collation project. Sean is looking forward to the variety of tasks arising from the SFCC and his joint role with the Beaver-Salmonid Working Group (BSWG) in 2014.

Training course development

To provide rigorously collected data and facilitate evidence based fisheries management in Scotland, it is essential that SFCC member biologists maintain and develop their data collection, management and analytical skills through a structured, continued professional development (CPD) programme.

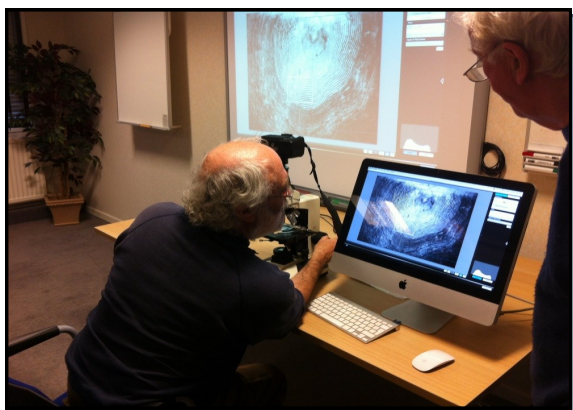
Annual training course attendance

SFCC Training Course	Number of attendees
Fish Autopsy	11
Habitat Surveying	11
Introductory Electrofishing	51
Team Leader Electrofishing	6
Intermediate GIS	10
Introduction to Database Design	7
Introductory Scale Reading	7
Annual total	103

During 2013, SFCC has developed a training vision whereby demand for courses is assessed at the end of each calendar year and in January courses are organised for the coming year with the aim of operating at full cost recovery. In recognition of the large distances that members are required to travel and recent advances in online technology, we are developing interactive courses that are delivered electronically, and can be completed at the pace of the pupil. In order to add value to SFCC courses we have also agreed with the Institute of Fisheries Management (IFM) that all SFCC courses will be attributed CPD points under the IFM chartered environmentalist scheme. Attendance records on SFCC courses are currently maintained and visible on the [SFCC website](#).

Online learning

Presently, video tutorials have been created for our electro-fishing database and fish autopsy procedures. Further learning materials are currently in progress for Geographical Information Systems (GIS) and fish scale reading.



Ronald Campbell utilising new microscope image technology to teach fish scale reading theory during the introductory level course on March 19th 2014.



Ross Gardiner (Marine Scotland Science) providing expert tuition as part of a course developed by The Tweed Foundation.

Electrofishing

A new Team Leader Refresher Course will be launched on June 26th. Aimed at biologists who have passed their qualification in summer 2011 or before, this one day refresher will deliver the following objectives:

1. To ensure SFCC Protocol standards are maintained
2. To update on the new health and safety regulations for 2014
3. Provide updates on best practice for survey design
4. To ensure the use of appropriate practical techniques



SFCC delivers training in Northern Ireland

30 participants from The Loughs Agency, Northern Ireland Environment Agency and the University of Ulster have completed SFCC Introductory Electrofishing courses in Derry ~ Londonderry. Staff from the Galloway Fisheries Trust travelled from Scotland to deliver the course, providing a sound theoretical and practical foundation in the fundamentals of electrofishing.

Art Niven, Fisheries Biologist with the Loughs Agency said:

“By accessing the SFCC SVQ accredited course, Loughs Agency staff and partners have been able to contribute towards their continuing professional development. Certification has been an important element of this as it demonstrates compliance with, in the Loughs Agency opinion, the best industry standard currently available in the British Isles. The Loughs Agency hopes to offer the SFCC Team Leader course to staff in the near future”

National smolt data collation project

The SFCC was recently awarded a major contract from Marine Scotland Science (MSS) to collate all available datasets on smolt populations in Scotland. With assistance from numerous Fisheries Trusts, academic institutions and individuals, a range of smolt monitoring locations have been identified to date. The assistance of SFCC members and other organisations for providing data and meta-data is gratefully acknowledged with some organisations providing up to 4 man-days in order to collate and supply data.



Smolt monitoring undertaken by Galloway Fisheries

The data collated by SFCC will be incorporated into a project that aims to assess the potential of identifying migration run timings around the Scottish Coast in the context of planned offshore and marine renewables developments. An improved understanding of migration run timings is deemed to be essential in designing construction mitigation strategies, if these are so required. This research is undertaken in the context of the forthcoming National Research and Monitoring Strategy for Diadromous Fish (NRMSD) to investigate the potential for interactions between diadromous fish and wind, wave and tidal renewable energy developments. Further information on this stakeholder led strategy can be [found here](#).

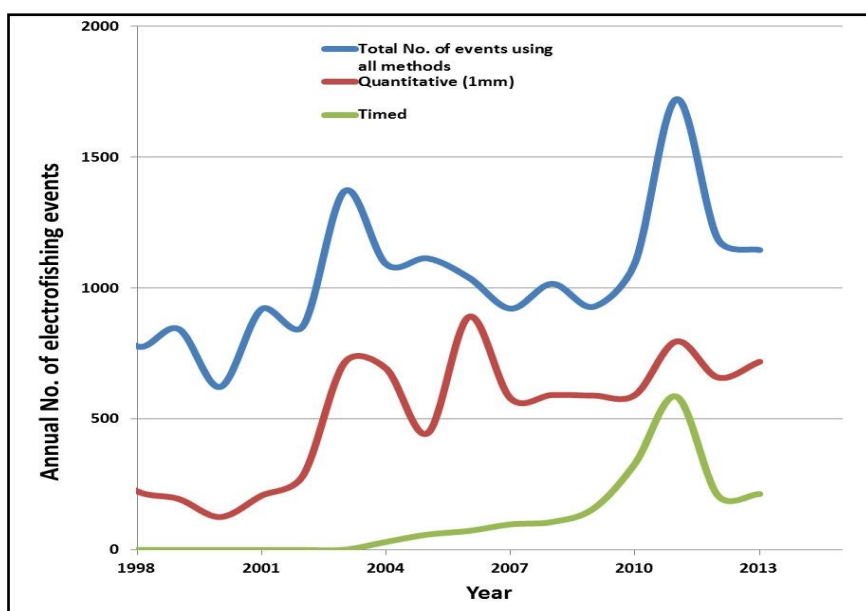
The report is due to be published by MSS imminently, and SFCC will let you know as soon as this occurs.

Catchment mapping training & data

SFCC have commissioned the Westcountry Rivers Trust to develop a bespoke 4 day computer mapping Geographical Information Systems (GIS) training course covering introductory and advanced techniques. Using current fisheries and ecological data from Scottish catchments, the course provides local fisheries managers with the tools to present and analyse their data on a catchment scale. Furthermore, the SFCC continues to provide key GIS datasets on an annual basis under a consortium license, we have identified that spatial data relevant to river managers is becoming increasingly available in the public domain, and these sources are collated and [available to members](#).



SFCC Advanced GIS course in October 2013 delivered at The Freshwater Laboratory.



Increasing numbers of electrofishing events added annually to the SFCC database for timed fishing, quantitative (1mm) and all methods.

SFCC electro-fishing database

SFCC Members continue to utilise the SFCC electro-fishing database, with 9,275 sites and 18,447 individual electro-fishing events currently stored securely within standard recording protocols. Online and phone support is also provided during office hours. Small scale improvements were made to the database functionality during 2013, with large scale developments to the data entry process budgeted for 2014. Data provision to 4 academic institutions took place in 2013 towards collaborative projects with respective Fisheries Trusts. Relationships with The River's Trust in England are being further developed with the Tyne & Wear River's Trust currently trialling our database.

Communication

To improve communication with our members and help raise the profile of the SFCC, we have developed a new bespoke website, launched on April 1st 2014 which can be found by clicking on the image below. Along with latest news and information on training courses, our site will be developed as a resource for members with training videos, protocols, relevant links and research papers being added to the site. Bespoke online training courses will be delivered through a member area with the majority of content publically available to help raise the profile of local fisheries data collection.



Annual biologists' meeting

On the 29th and 30th January 2014, our annual SFCC and RAFTS Biologists' meeting was held at the Freshwater Laboratory at Pitlochry, with 46 members attending each day. As ever, we gratefully acknowledge Marine Scotland Science for hosting us. The programme was particularly diverse this year, including [presentations](#) from The Loughs Agency and IBIS Project.

Venue change

The number of attendees for the biologists' meeting has now exceeded the capacity of The Freshwater Laboratory. As we do not wish to turn members away from this event, the SFCC committee has agreed, in principle, to move to the nearby Birnam Institute. The SFCC acknowledge the support provided by MSS over the past decade, and wish to further the direct link with MSS by adding a 1-day event held at The Lab for senior Trust biologists, senior Lab staff and other SFCC associates. We propose that this event will take the form of a practical discussion workshop on the theme of data, evidence and communication. In the ethos of data transparency and availability, the SFCC believe that the value of this proposed annual event will be two-fold. Firstly, it will provide a means to help public bodies harness local data collection efforts, to inform research at a national-scale. Secondly, local biologists will benefit from gaining updates on the most up to date sampling and data storage strategies utilised by Marine Scotland Science and others.

New smolt monitoring course launch

The SFCC and the IFM have pooled resources to deliver a smolt monitoring workshop hosted by The Tweed Foundation on May 14th. Local biologists and academic expertise from North and South of the border have been invited to provide presentations before travelling to a field site to gain practical experience in smolt data collection. To sign up, please visit the [IFM website](#).



Committee meetings

Quarterly committee meetings take place in March, June, September and December and are open publicly including all SFCC member biologists and invited parties (SNH, RAFTS, SSE and SEPA). This year's agendas continued to be busy with proceedings running into lunch on every occasion! Please see here for our [previous minutes](#) and we welcome attendance at our next meeting on June 11th 2014.

Closing note

Our member biologists continue to support the SFCC and we wish to thank each of you. We encourage your engagement and welcome any feedback to ensure that our proposed vision reflects the direction of our membership.

To receive our quarterly E-bulletins please [sign up here](#).