Issue 2, Number 1

# Fisheries Trust Newsletter

FINDHORN
NAIRN
LOSSIE

## Chairman's Message

The Trust, in close co-operation with the three District Salmon Fishery Boards, has been working on the following projects:

- Electro fishing surveys to monitor fish stocks.
- Habitat surveys to identify restoration work and the location of invasive non-natives species (INNS) such as giant hogweed, Japanese knotweed, Himalayan balsam and American signal crayfish.
- Participation in the Scottish Mink Initiative and review of predator control (seals, piscivorous birds).
- Comments on wind farm development and flood alleviation schemes.
- Training courses for INNS control and eradication and also for dealing with fish diseases.

The Trust's priorities for next year will include the implementation of the plan to control INNS plants in co-operation with all landowners. Bob Laughton becomes our Director and Biologist from January and this will make a tremendous difference to the Trust's capabilities. We will also be able to focus more on fish stock issues: size of the population, conservation codes, hatcheries and stocking.

Marcus Walters, Project Officer for the Moray Firth Sea Trout Project, shares an office with us here at Logie. Beth Dunlop, our Administrator, is about to complete work on a new website. We now have a small store next to the Office for protective clothing and equipment. It will also have a fridge/freezer for a variety of uses!

This issue of the newsletter has a number of articles about diseases and invasive non-native species (INNS). This is not designed to alarm you but to encourage the precautionary approach and correct procedures to prevent dramas on our rivers.

So we make progress and I see a quantum leap in activity next year as we take on our new Director.
— Maj Gen Seymour Monro

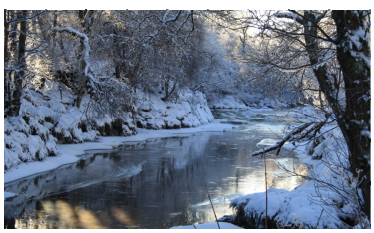
## Inside This Issue



## The Rivers in Winter


Findhorn


Lossie


Nairn

Photos courtesy of Bob Laughton, Gordon Rennie and David Coats

## Disease Awareness

*'Where signs of disease are observed, the fish should be kept alive where possible to enable diagnostic samples to be taken.'*

On 31st May 2011, following reports of fish showing signs of a fungal infection in the River Findhorn, the Trust called in Marine Scotland Fish Health Inspectorate, based at the Marine Laboratory Aberdeen, to investigate. Findings from samples taken suggested the low water levels over the spring in the River Findhorn were likely to have caused stress to the fish and physical damage. Fungal and bacterial pathogens isolated from the samples were considered to be opportunistic secondary infections.

This event has highlighted that it is important for anglers and riparian owners to be aware of diseases that may affect fish stocks and to contact the Fish Health Inspectorate should signs of disease be observed. Where signs of disease are observed, the fish should be kept alive where possible to enable diagnostic samples to be taken, and where this is not possible the fish should be removed from the river, humanely dispatched, and arrangements made with the Fish Health Inspectorate (or the Trust) to enable diagnostic sampling where possible. Despatched fish should be disposed of by an approved manner in accordance with local authority guidelines.

This form of reporting acts as an early warning system to Marine Scotland and may (in the case of exotic or locally absent diseases) enable disease to be prevented from spreading to other rivers and other areas of Scotland. There is a legal obligation for persons to report suspicion of a notifiable disease in fish and a list of the notifiable diseases and the associated signs is given on the website below.

The Marine Scotland Fish Health Inspectorate will offer a training session early in 2012 to provide land managers and river workers with the necessary skills to take samples from fish showing signs of disease on the river bank. This will ensure good quality samples are obtained from the animals as soon as possible.

The Fish Health Inspectorate duty inspector may be contacted on MS.fishealth@scotland.gsi.gov.uk or by telephone on (01224) 295525. Further information on notifiable diseases can be found on the Marine Scotland web pages at http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/marine/Fish-Shellfish/18364/18610/diseases/notifiableDisease

—Dan Stewart**,** Senior Fish Health Inspector - Fish Health Inspectorate, Marine Scotland - Science

FNLFT Comment:

While the FHI would have needed fresher tissue samples to identify the fungus to species level, we believe it was *Saprolegnia*.

Our local authorities advise that dead or despatched fish should be put in bin bags and then into a wheelie bin. If there are more than two or three fish, they should be taken to the nearest council tip. The Trust encourages attendance at the FHI training session – see next article.

*Saprolegnia* fungus
Photo courtesy of Marine Scotland Science

## Free Training on Taking Tissue Samples of Diseased Fish

On 1st March 2012, the Fish Health Inspectorate (FHI) of Marine Scotland will hold a training session for gamekeepers, ghillies, bailiffs, land managers and proprietors at Logie Steading.

FHI will teach how to obtain, store and transport tissue samples from diseased and damaged fish. They will also advise on what to do with dead and moribund fish.

The training is a result of last spring's *Saprolegnia* outbreak on the Findhorn.

Had more of us had this training last spring, we would have collected tissue samples from the affected fish and transported them to FHI in Aberdeen immediately, as their test lab needs extremely fresh samples to identify various organisms that may be harming the fish. Fortunately, in this instance, the problem was *Saprolegnia* rather than a more unpleasant condition. The Trust encourages you to attend this training. Please contact the office (see details on back page) to register.

# Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS)

Giant hogweed, Japanese knotweed and Himalayan balsam are bad for native riparian vegetation and therefore bad for rivers and fish. Giant hogweed also poses a real risk to humans via the nasty rash its sap produces when exposed to sunlight. Despite individual attempts to control them, all three plants have proliferated over the past few years.

The Trust received a 5-year grant from SEPA, obtained with the invaluable assistance of RAFTS, to control these plant INNS. The grant amount, £30,000+ over 5 years, is not enough to eradicate plant INNS on all three rivers. However, it will allow the Trust to take on the heretofore unfilled role of co-ordinating various INNS control efforts.

The feeling is that eradication efforts have been less than entirely successful, partly because treatment has not occurred in a co-ordinated fashion. At the moment, various land managers do various amounts of spraying with varying levels of effectiveness, and some are not currently treating INNS. The Trust's intention is to co-ordinate these existing efforts, encourage the responsible parties to fill in the gaps, and provide training and loans of equipment to make it that bit easier for land managers to commit their own resources to the challenge. With a single point of co-ordination, INNS control can start at the upstream extent of the infestations and work downstream. Eradicating INNS species upstream will at least prevent the re-infestation of downstream stretches. As time goes on, the focus will shift downstream, until all that remains will be a quick annual or biannual check to spray the final intruders.

Chris Worthington is doing a stellar job for the Trust in surveying the extent of infestation, liaising with land managers and other organisations, planning training, ordering equipment and chemicals, and generally conceiving a sensible, doable way to tackle the problem.

**The first Trust-sponsored training will take place on 14-15th February at Logie Steading.** Participants will emerge with PA1 and PA6 qualifications, which will ensure that they operate both safely and effectively. **We welcome anyone who is willing and able to provide a few days' return of service to take advantage of this training .** The Trust is offering the training free of charge to land managers in exchange for a return of service. Trust-trained sprayers would spend a few days per year in a sort of SWAT-team, tackling the most strategically important infestations.

In an ideal world, all land managers would control the INNS on their land. This is, in fact, the legal requirement. The Wildlife and Natural Environment Act makes it an offence to plant in the wild any plant outwith its native range, and to cause to grow any plant outwith its native range.

The Trust would like to thank all those who do treat INNS; your efforts, while sometimes seemingly fruitless, are critical! The Trust's aims are to help land managers to get a better grip on infestations that are close to out of control (and clearly out of control in some areas), and to make it easier for land managers to remain in control of INNS. From a pragmatic perspective, this means that in the early years, the Trust will provide co-ordination, training, some chemicals and loans of equipment.

Each river requires a river-specific approach, which may involve different strategies for different stretches of rivers and different proprietors. The Trust's INNS control plans will evolve as we gain experience.

Over time, the Trust expects land managers to take on more responsibility for controlling INNS on their land, as per the legal requirement, and its role will diminish. There may well remain a need for a single co-ordinator, to ensure there are no gaps and to co-ordinate the timing of control efforts.

The Trust gratefully acknowledges the support of RAF-Kinloss, Chris's employer.

Giant Hogweed
Photo courtesy of Bob Laughton

Japanese knotweed
Photo courtesy of the GB Non-Native Species Secretariat

Himalayan Balsam
Photo: FNLFT

American signal crayfish
Photo courtesy of James Dunbar

## Alien Species Alerts: Rainbow Trout and Pink Salmon

Rainbow Trout
Photo courtesy of Alison Underhill

**Rainbow trout** have been spotted in the River Lossie. Rainbows are a non-native species and should be removed and despatched. Please report any rainbows to the Trust office. Photos are helpful.

The ASFB (Association of Salmon Fishery Boards) reports that **Pink Salmon** have been caught in nets in the Tweed District. Pink Salmon were introduced to rivers around the White Sea in the 1960s and have now colonised some northern Norwegian rivers. An introduced population in Newfoundland appears to have colonised some rivers in Nova Scotia and Quebec. It is possible that it could successfully spawn in Scotland. Please report any sightings to ASFB (www.asfb.org.uk, 0131 272 2797) and Marine Scotland Science ( 01224) 295525). Any angler who catches one should remove it from the river. For more information, please see http://news.rivertweed.org.uk/blog/_archives/2011/8/4/4872249.html.

## Alien Species Alerts: 'Killer Shrimp'

'Killer Shrimp'
Photo courtesy of the Environment Agency

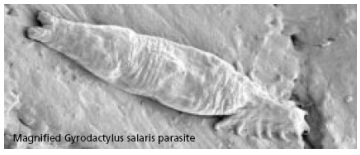
If you are returning from Grafham Water in Cambridgeshire, Cardiff Bay in South Wales or Eglwys Nunydd Reservoir in Port Talbot, South Wales please take the following precautions with your equipment to prevent an alien species new to Britain, 'killer shrimp' or *Dikerogammarus villosus*, from invading any other water.

- Inspect and clean boats, kit, clothing and shoes before and after use.
- Dry all equipment and clothing - some species can live for many days in moist conditions.
- Inspect and clean launching trailers.
- Drain all bilge water from boats before leaving the site.
- Disinfect angling kit before use.
- Make sure no lake water is taken away with your kit. Don't transfer bait between water bodies.

If you do come across any organisms, leave them at the water body where you found them. If you find this species, please send a photo and details of the sighting to: alert_nonnative@ceh.ac.uk

For further information, please see the GB Non-Native Species Secretariat website at https://secure.fera.defra.gov.uk/nonnativespecies and search for 'killer shrimp.'

## Alien Species Alerts: *Gyrodactylus salaris*




*Gyrodactylus salaris*
Photo courtesy of Tyne Rivers Trust

As the threat of ***Gyrodactylus salaris*** remains a serious worry, we reproduce the advice from an earlier newsletter.

*Gyrodactylus salaris* is a fish parasite that now occurs throughout Western Europe, Scandinavia and Russia. It travels on damp and wet equipment such as waders, fishing equipment, bags, canoes, and windsurfing gear.

It is the responsibility of proprietors and angling associations to ensure that anglers have taken the correct precautions where necessary. Virkon sachets are available at cost from the Trust office.

To avoid bringing the Gs bug to Scotland,

- Dry equipment at a minimum of 20°C for at least 2 days
- Heat for at least 1 hour at temperatures of above 60°C
- Deep freeze for at least 1 day
- Immerse in a solution* suitable for killing Gs for a minimum of 10 minutes

*Chemical solutions which have been used include Virkon® Aquatic (1%), Wecodyne (1%), sodium chloride (3%) and sodium hydroxide (0.2%).

Information courtesy of SEERAD, www.infoscotland.com/gsbug

# Handling Fish—Best Practice

The text of this article is taken from the ASFB publication, Catch and Release – an Angler's Guide.

Many anglers voluntarily choose to release salmon, often as part of wider conservation measures. Numerous angling and radio-tracking studies have demonstrated high survival rates and successful spawning for salmon released after capture - up to 100% under certain conditions. However, the longer a fish is out of water, or poorly handled, the less chance it has of survival. So, to give your salmon the best opportunity of reaching the spawning redds, handle with great care - and follow this advice.

Tackle advice
Barbless hooks are strongly advised if fish are to be released. Single and double hooks cause much less damage than trebles, which should be avoided. There's less risk of damage with smaller hooks. The effectiveness of rapala and similar lures can be improved by using a single or double hook sliding rig, similar to a tube fly set-up. If worm fishing, skill is required to ensure that fish do not swallow baits. Using circle hooks will reduce the chances of deep hooking. These can be sourced from all good tackle shops. Always use as strong a leader material as possible. This will ensure the fish can be brought to the net quickly and safely.

Planning ahead
Before fishing a pool, always identify where a fish can be safely landed without risk of damage on rocks or stones. If fishing alone, take a net. Traditional large mesh salmon nets can cause split fins and tails. Have long-nosed forceps or a similar tool close to hand for prompt hook removal. If you want a photo of your salmon before release, have your camera ready, for example, on a neck lanyard.

Playing fish
Fish should be played quickly and as firmly as possible so that they can be released before becoming too exhausted.

Landing fish
Never lift your salmon from the water by its tail, or gill cover. Fish should be kept in the water if at all possible. Avoid taking them onto the bank or dragging them over stones or gravel. Use a soft, knotless net with small mesh size and rectangular shape with a shallow, wide bottom to allow the fish to lie flat. Knotless mesh is a legal requirement.

Bleeding fish
Even if a fish is bleeding heavily, it can have a good chance of survival. Do not kill a fish simply because it is bleeding. If a fish is going to die from blood loss, it will do so very quickly. Fish should be allowed to recover and returned in steady clean water, but not in a fast flow. Recovery may take some time. If fish are deep-hooked, particularly in the gills, it may not be possible to remove the hook – snip the line close to the hook. This will cause less harm to the fish than removing it.

Recording your catch
Only lift the fish from the water for the minimum time necessary.
When photographing a fish, keep it in, or briefly just above the water. Support the fish gently under the belly and loosely hold the wrist of the tail.
If possible, use a weight net, or scales hooked onto a conventional net.
Measure the fish in the water. Take a tape measure or mark up your wading staff or the butt section of your rod as an easy indicator. A good general guide for differentiating between grilse and salmon after mid-June is 28". Weight can be estimated from length. Fish should be measured from the nose to the fork of the tail.

Handling fish
Photo courtesy of ASFB

*'Never lift your salmon from the water by its tail, or gill cover.'*

# Staff Update

The Trust has appointed Bob Laughton as its Director/Biologist. Bob has been a Biologist on the River Spey for over 20 years, and will continue to work half-time for the Spey while working half-time for the Trust. His arrival will make a tremendous difference to the Trust's research, restoration and improvement projects. This will further demonstrate the benefits which the Trust brings as it works in close co-operation with the DSFBs.

Bob's arrival means that the Trust can be even more effective with projects and fieldwork. Bob already knows the three rivers, having been the Trust's Scientific Advisor for the past 2 years, and he wrote the Fishery Management Plans that are informing the Trust's choice of projects each year. He starts on 1st January 2012.

We are delighted to welcome Bob.

Bob Laughton
Photo: FNLFT

## Scottish Mink Initiative

American Mink
Photo courtesy of Kathryn Newton

Now eight months in, the Scottish Mink Initiative is making headway with increasing American mink (*Neovison vison*) trapping effort across north east Scotland. The Findhorn, Nairn and Lossie fall within my work area and I'm continuing to recruit new volunteers and collect trap records in order to build a picture of American mink distribution across the area. Anyone can volunteer to monitor a mink raft and our 500+ volunteers include ghillies, gamekeepers, local residents and even a local school!

2011 has been a productive tracking year for American mink on the three rivers, with 37 being trapped on the Nairn, 14 on the Lossie and juveniles being spotted playing on the beach at Burghead.

Rafts and land tunnels are being deployed in the catchments however there are still large gaps in coverage which may be providing females with suitable habitat in which to breed. Over the winter I am going to continue to contact estates to ask for their American mink records and request that carcasses are retained so that they can be sent to University of Aberdeen for analysis. Trap data analysis lets us pinpoint where breeding females are being caught and helps us focus effort. DNA analysis also lets us see how far juveniles are dispersing from their approximate place of birth.

If you would like to find out what is involved with monitoring a mink raft, report a mink sighting or capture, please do get in touch. Thank you for your help.

—Cat Robinson, Scottish Mink Initiative
07825 185178 or cat@rafts.org.uk

## Funding Update and Anglers' Contribution Scheme

*This year, the Trust is strongly encouraging more proprietors to participate in the Anglers' Contribution Scheme.*

**Funding Update**

The Trust was pleased to receive a grant from SEPA, with the assistance of RAFTS, to confront invasive non-natives species (INNS). It is a 5-year grant for over £30,000, and covers training, equipment, chemicals and monitoring and evaluation. At this stage, the project focuses on plant INNS, although there are also efforts to control American mink (The Scottish Mink Initiative) and American signal crayfish (Nairn Angling Association and the Nairn Bailiff). Chris Worthington has done an excellent job of surveying the extent of infestation on the rivers and creating a plan for how to tackle INNS. Spraying will begin in the spring.

The Trust also received £5,000 from RAFTS to produce a Biosecurity Plan. RAFTS is encouraging all rivers and fisheries trusts to prepare a biosecurity plan as one step in the ongoing process of protecting biodiversity, native species, riparian habitat, and the integrity of our rivers, from introduced species that can take over ecosystems and damage the ecological and economic value of rivers.

We also applied for SEPA funding to assist with the removal of barriers to fish passage. The outcome of this grant is not yet known.

In previous years, the Scottish Government has funded rivers and fisheries trusts to the tune of £14,000 each. This year, however, the funding dropped to £9,000. We remain very grateful for this support.

The Trust would like to thank ACE Adventures for its continued donations to the Trust's work, and we look forward to working with them further. They may be particularly well placed to note the locations of INNS that can be seen more easily from the river than from the banks.

**Anglers' Contribution Scheme**

In 2011, anglers have contributed over £4,000 to the Trust so far. Gift Aid increases this by 25%. Angler contributions constituted about 10% of the Trust's income this year, which is a substantial amount. The Trust is most grateful to these donors, and to the proprietors who encourage the scheme.

For the first two years of the scheme, over 90% of angler contributions have been received through two proprietors. This year, the Trust is strongly encouraging more proprietors to participate. We estimate that total contributions could double if more proprietors participated. We recognise that some proprietors do not let their fishings on a large scale, but for those who do let fishings, the Trust feels it is entirely reasonable to expect those who benefit from the Trust's river management activities, to contribute towards them. The scheme again remains entirely voluntary this year.

Island Pool, River Findhorn
Photo courtesy of Lethen Estate

Findhorn, Nairn and Lossie Fisheries Trust
Logie Steading
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Moray IV36 2QN
01309 611220
admin.fnlfisheries@btconnect.com

You can support the work of the Findhorn, Nairn and Lossie Fisheries Trust by making a cash donation or by setting up a Banker's Order. Please complete the Gift Aid Declaration and Part A or B.

## *Gift Aid Declaration*

I would like the Trust to treat as Gift Aid this and all donations I make from the date of this declaration until I notify the Trust otherwise.

Title_____ Forename(s) _____ Surname _____

Home address _____

_____Postcode _____

E-mail (for receiving Trust newsletters only) _____

Signature _____ Date _____

### A. Cash donation

I enclose a cheque in the sum of £ _____ made payable to Findhorn, Nairn and Lossie Fisheries Trust.

### B. To make a series of donations, please complete the Banker's Order below.

BANKER'S ORDER

To The Manager_____ Bank Plc Sort Code _____

Branch Address _____

_____Postcode _____

Please pay to ROYAL BANK OF SCOTLAND, 20 High Street, Nairn IV12 4AY (83-25-23) for the credit of FINDHORN, NAIRN AND LOSSIE FISHERIES TRUST (Account No. 00244739) the sum of £ _____ ( _____ pounds) on the _____ day of _____, 20 _____, and a like amount on the same day each month/quarter/year (delete as appropriate) (a) until I give you notice in writing OR (b) for a total period of _____ years.

Account to be debited A/C No _____Sort Code _____ Account name _____

Signature _____ Date _____

Title_____ Forename(s) _____ Surname _____

Home address _____

_____ Postcode _____

**If you have fished on one of the rivers, please state River _____ and Beat_____**

## Please submit the completed form to your bank or to the Trust office.

You must pay an amount of income tax and/or capital gains tax in each tax year at least equal to the tax that the Trust will claim from HM Revenue & Customs on your Gift Aid donation(s).

Please notify the Findhorn, Nairn and Lossie Fisheries Trust if you: (1) want to cancel this declaration, (2) change your name or home address, (3) no longer pay sufficient tax on your income and/or capital gains.

The Trust will reclaim 25p of tax on every £1 you give on or after 6 April 2008. The Government will pay to the charity an additional 3p on every £1 you give between April 2008 and 5 April 2011. This transitional relief for the charity does not affect your tax position.

If you pay income tax at the higher rate, you must include all your Gift Aid donations on your Self Assessment tax return if you want to receive the additional tax relief due to you.

FINDHORN NAIRN LOSSIE

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www.fnlft.org.uk

**About the Findhorn, Nairn and Lossie Fisheries Trust:**

Officially launched in 2009, the Trust's objectives are:

To conserve and restore all species of native freshwater fish and improve their habitats, and

To advance the education and understanding of the river environment and river catchment management.

The Trust works in close co-operation with the District Salmon Fishery Boards, as well as the local Councils, SNH and SEPA. It produces 5-year Fishery Management Plans for each river.

The Trust is funded by grants from the Scottish Government through RAFTS, by donations from anglers, and by other fundraising efforts. We welcome all contributions, see the form overleaf if you would like to donate. All funds are used to improve the health of the rivers and the fish.

**Early in the New Year, please look out for the Trust's new website at www.fnlft.org.uk.**

## Reports From the Rivers

**Findhorn:** As in recent years, the 2011 spring run showed lower numbers than historically. The temperature barrier moved earlier, so the fish ran through to the middle beats sooner than usual. This was followed by low water and unusually warm temperatures. An outbreak of *Saprolegnia* fungus killed quite a few fish. Numbers improved in the summer, with one beat having a record week, and carried on strongly, for the most part, till near the end of the season. Grilse numbers were low throughout the season, about a quarter of the previous year's numbers, as was the case throughout the Moray Firth. There were signs of grilse in October. The overall release rate was 75%.

**Nairn**: The Nairn Angling Association season opened on 26th February and the total catch for the season was 469 fish. This total was down on last season by 135.

There was a rise in the number of salmon compared to previous seasons, with a total count of 154. Disappointingly only 10 of these fish were spring fish. All 10 spring fish were returned safely to the river .

Grilse catches were down from 436 last season, to 263 this season. Fish were seen in most of the pools from July onwards, but because the river was running above the usual summer level from August to October, they did not stop for long in the pools before moving up river.

Sea trout catches were up from 40 in 2010 to 52 this season, all of which were returned safely to the river .Members of the angling association trapped 400 crayfish in the Geddes Burn this season, compared to 173 last season.

**Lossie:** Water levels and grilse numbers were low in 2011. Shortly after the end of the season, a sizable run of salmon and grilse was seen at the mouth, with large numbers seen at sea. Sea trout numbers were down, though this could be because of much reduced fishing effort. Overall, 60 salmon and grilse and 124 sea trout were caught.

**The Trust strongly encourages anglers and all river visitors to wear personal flotation devices when in or near rivers.**