

**The River Deveron District
Salmon Fishery Board**

**The Deveron, Bogie and Isla
Rivers Charitable Trust**



www.deveron.org



**DEVERON
BOGIE
ISLA**

**Annual Report
and Accounts
2016/17**



Report by
R C Miller, M C Hay, S Paxton and M Walters

KINDLY DONATED BY A G MORISON



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Awarded for the heaviest fly-caught salmon of the season from the Deveron

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Release your salmon to win a Vision fly-rod



Mrs 'Tiny' Morison's magnificent 61lb Deveron salmon. The heaviest UK fly-caught salmon.



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Deveron Trout by Paul Proctor



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River Deveron Conservation Code

LIAM STEPHEN





Home & dry
HANG THE BUG OUT TO DRY

Fishing or doing water sports abroad?

Just come back from Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Norway, Portugal, Russia, Spain or Sweden?

Ensure your equipment is not carrying the highly contagious Gs parasite which has the ability to wipe out freshwater salmon stocks.

What is the Gs Parasite?

The Gs parasite is a highly contagious bug that has devastated salmon stocks in Norway. We want to keep it out of Scotland's rivers.

Here's what you need to do

To ensure your equipment is not contaminated, please take one of the following precautionary measures:

- Completely dry equipment (e.g. waders, fishing equipment, bags, canoes and windsurf gear) at the minimum temperature of 20° for at least 2 days **or**
- Heat for at least 1 hour at above 60°C **or**
- Deep freeze for at least 1 day **or**
- Immerse in a Gs killing solution for min 10 minutes



Gyrodactylus salaris parasite magnified






For more info call: 0131 244 6225 or go to: www.infoscotland.com/gsbug



Supporters and Funding

The River Deveron District Salmon Fishery Board (RDevDSFB) and The Deveron, Bogie and Isla Rivers Charitable Trust (DBIT) would like to take this opportunity to thank all its supporters and funding organisations who have helped implement our district fisheries management programme during 2016/17.

The RDevDSFB and DBIT would like to thank the following:

Aberdeenshire Council
Scottish Natural Heritage
John Dewar & Sons
Longcliffe Quarries
Chivas Regal
Marine Scotland Science
Huntly Fishings
Turriff Angling Association
Henderson's Country Sports
Robert McConnell
DBIT members

Volunteers (River Champions)

We thank all volunteers who have given up their own time to help with projects such as the river opening ceremony, control of American mink, invasive plant control and piscivorous bird surveys.

Ghillies and Estate Workers

We thank all the Deveron Gillies and Estate workers who have helped with many aspects of managing the fishery from assistance with piscivorous bird surveys, scale sampling, obstacle removal and biosecurity measures.

Officials and Staff

The River Deveron District Salmon Fishery Board Members

Representatives of upper proprietors

M.C. Hay (Chairman), R.J.G. Shields, A.G. Morison, Mrs J.A. Player, R.Cooper

Representatives of lower proprietors

C.R. Marsden, D.A. Galloway

Representatives of Salmon anglers

F. Henderson, R Breakell, D. Borthwick

The Deveron, Bogie and Isla Rivers Charitable Trust

Honorary Life President Prof D. W. Mackay OBE

Trustees

R.J.G. Shields (Chairman), M.C. Hay, F. Henderson, J.S. Cruickshank OBE, D. Borthwick, R.Cooper

Trust Scientific Advisory Board

Dr M. Stutter (The James Hutton Institute), G. Clark (SNH), P. Wright (SEPA Diffuse Pollution team), Professor R. Van Der Wal (Aberdeen University), Professor S. Martin (Aberdeen University), Professor C. Adams (Glasgow University), Dr A. Walker (Consultant), D. Roberts (GWCT), G. Pedley (Wild Trout Trust), C. Macadam (Buglife)

Hon. Membership Secretary

R.F. McConnell

Ghillies Representative

N. Stephen

Staff

Director	R.C. Miller, BSc MIFM
River Operations Manager	M. Walters, MSc BSc MIFM
Clerk & Administrator	Mrs S. Paxton

Chairman's Report

Malcolm Hay, Chairman of the RDevDSFB

Three years ago, I wrote what I thought would be my last Chairman's report. The political tea leaves seemed to indicate that District Salmon Fishery Boards were about to be abolished. Now, it would seem, the axe is not going to fall after all, and, against all expectations, your Board is still here. However, and in anticipation of the Board's impending abolition or possible subsumption under a wider regional or even national body, we took prudent steps to limit the potential damage to our resources and employees. All personnel were re-employed directly by the Trust and the management of our improvement fund, already deemed to have charitable status, was also passed to the Trust.

The Board, as it exists today, remains responsible primarily for the gathering of the assessment, setting policy on catch and release and guiding the Trust on matters relevant to ensuring the safe passage of migratory salmonids and their habitats. Effectively, the day-to-day management of the river is undertaken by the Trust. Our Board has for many years included not simply the riparian owners of salmon fishing rights (which Boards were set up to protect), but has long included representation from all three local angling associations, the anglers who fish the river, the ghillies who guide them, and the netsmen. Furthermore, via the Trust, we have encouraged involvement in the management of our river by any person with a serious interest in its well-being.

I would like to pay tribute to my fellow Board members and, indeed, directors of the Trust, who have stuck by the river, through thick and thin and amid all the uncertainty of the past several years and who have continued not only to deliver a high standard of management, but to give their time and expertise for free. Still saddled with unenviable bureaucratic and legal strictures, we continue to direct our activities at the improvement of our river and its fishing. We have held festivals and other events to raise money and awareness of what we do. We have invested in local community ventures. We have embarked on ground breaking environmental projects such as recruiting the hogweed eating black face sheep. And, we have spent a considerable amount of time and money in educating children from our local primary schools in the hope that they will grow up to appreciate the jewel that exists on their doorstep. Indeed, the Deveron has been lauded as an excellent example of a Board and Trust acting together and many of the innovative and instructive projects we have initiated have won praise from across the fisheries and environmental management sectors. We have much to thank our highly professional team for in maintaining a very high standard of fisheries management across all species.

We are delighted to welcome Marcus Walters, River Operations Manager, who joined the Trust in November 2016 having previously managed the award winning Moray Firth Trout Initiative for eight years. Marcus graduated from the University of Newcastle in Marine Biology and then completed an MSc at Heriot Watt in Marine Resource Development Protection. Also in 2016, the Trust's Scientific Advisory Board was formed which includes representation from Glasgow and Aberdeen Universities, SNH, SEPA, The Wild Trout Trust and the James Hutton Institute. The Scientific Advisory Board will provide scientific input and advice on the drafting of the next Deveron Fisheries Management Plan along with scientific guidance for individual projects. The drawn out and abortive reform process, or lack of it, largely diverted focus away from its intended beneficiary, the Atlantic salmon. Some reforms have been implemented and some are good, but many have been introduced in such a muddled and confused manner that there are major and potentially disastrous omissions - most notably an almost complete absence of adequate protection measures for sea trout. Furthermore, the passing earlier this year of Orri Vigfusson, who fought tirelessly for the survival and restoration of the wild Atlantic salmon through the North Atlantic Salmon Fund, was a major blow. Vigfusson earned the admiration and respect of environmentalists all over the world for his vital conservation work and was given numerous distinguished awards. Without his continuing presence, our salmon have lost a fierce, unrelenting and highly effective ally. He will be sorely missed.

PAUL PROCTOR



Deveron Brown Trout
with distinctive blue spot

Although on the Deveron our ten year average catches still remain the highest since records began, the relatively poor returns of salmon over the past three years have been a cause for concern, and it seems that the pressures on the survival of our migratory salmonids are only getting worse. The rod catch for the 2016 season was 1,563. Although up 59% on the previous year, this is still well below the long term average of 2,468. Spring salmon catches increased from the previous year to 100 salmon by the end of May, with 85% returned to the river, aided by the Chivas Regal spring salmon conservation scheme. A notable salmon of 34lb was successfully caught and released during October, which secured the Morison Trophy.

The sea trout catch decreased by 24%, from 584 to a total of 444, of which 97% were returned. The drop in the sea trout catch is also a major worry, although the dynamic emergence of the river as an outstanding, world class brown trout fishery may hold some answers that we do not yet fully understand. For the 2017 season, the Scottish Government has classified the Deveron as a Category 1 river, whereby current levels of salmon exploitation are thought to be sustainable.

Your Board is working within three broad areas to try and improve matters as best we can.

Firstly, our innovative and highly instructive smolt run surveys have indicated that, contrary to conventional wisdom, the highest rate of smolt mortality occurs in the river system itself and not out at sea. We are examining, therefore, as a matter of priority, various techniques of smolt "shepherding", introducing enhanced protection from predators in identified predation blackspots, and even contemplating partial transportation as occurs, for example, on rivers which suffer from major hydro installations (although it has to be said that there are limiting factors on the Deveron that may make such extreme measures undesirable). We continue, of course, to lobby hard for increases in licenced limits for the predators we can legally control. Secondly, it has been very obvious over the past two seasons how fishing success has been limited by unusually low flows. While we are unable to organise higher rainfall, we can take some steps to try and mitigate some of the more drastic impacts of low water levels.



Initiatives have already been taken in peatland restoration in some parts of the upper catchment (blocking grips etc and re-wetting dry moorland) and it is hoped that some of the works associated with the enormous Dorenell wind farm project might prove to be of long term benefit in slowing down the rate of flash flooding. We are also pursuing apparent breaches of water abstraction limits identified in the study we undertook a couple of years ago.

Upper Deveron

Thirdly, we are doing all we can to restore the habitat for juvenile fish which is recognised as being the single most effective method of increasing fish stocks. We have removed dozens of artificial barriers, opening up large tracts of potential spawning and juvenile fish habitat on major burns and tributaries. Our invasive non-native species elimination is an important part of this, removing giant hogweed and other invasive weeds that damage the riparian environment. Farmers are being encouraged by SEPA and Scottish Water to instigate buffer zones along water courses for fertiliser and spraying operations, as well as the planting of riparian woodland.

We seem to have made great strides in virtually eradicating the American mink from our catchment. Finally, we have been investigating and trialling different technologies for a fish counter. The lack of a truly scientific measure of counting the numbers of returning fish is a major handicap, and leaves us at the mercy of the various arbitrary measurement techniques employed by the authorities, most of which are currently, at least from the anglers' perspective, pretty unsatisfactory. However, fish counting devices are very expensive and prone to catastrophic failure during major flood events, so we will not make the investment until we are sure we have a product that works.

Meanwhile, we are experimenting with drones, we are carrying out sea patrols looking for illegal nets and generally managing the system as best we can.

While I appreciate there is no magic wand which will solve many of the major problems facing our river and our beloved sport, we can all help by lobbying government, politicians and environmental organisations to pay closer attention to the threats facing our salmon and sea trout stocks and ensure the continuing survival and proliferation of these iconic species for the enjoyment of generations to come.

I would encourage all of you to visit the brand new river website www.deveron.org, highlighting all available beats and how to book and also to visit the Trust's, Facebook and Twitter pages for latest news from the river. Needless to say, my door is always open for suggestions and ideas on how we could improve the stewardship of this wonderful river of ours.

Deveron Salmon

The total annual salmon rod & line catch for the Deveron District was relatively stable from 1952 (when records began) until the end of the 1980s with the 10-year average consistently being just over 2000 fish per year with a record low catch in 1989. Catches gradually improved with the 10-year average increasing to just over 3000 (1993-2002) and increasing to an average of 3418 for the 10 years from 2003-2012. Catches have since fallen steeply, with 2014/15 being the second and third lowest catches on record.

Catch and release records began in 1994 and the practice has increased from 22% to 80% in 2016. The procedure was adopted in the river as a voluntary conservation measure to preserve fragile stocks and has been particularly encouraged by the RDevDSFB for the spring component of the catch (Feb- May).

Spring salmon

Spring salmon return to the river in the spring and are available to the rod & line fishery from February onwards. They are typically Multiple Sea Winter fish, which have spent at least 2 years feeding at sea. Figure 2 shows that the spring salmon catch (Feb-May) has declined significantly since 1952. There was a steep decline in the late 1960s before a brief recovery in the late 1970s. It then continued to decline to record low levels in the early 1990s but despite a slight recovery in the 2000s, fell again to the lowest ever spring catch on record in 2015.

The River Deveron Summer (June-Aug) and Autumn (Sep-Oct) Rod & Line catches showed a very different trend, steadily increasing until the late 2008-10 but have since fallen away steeply.

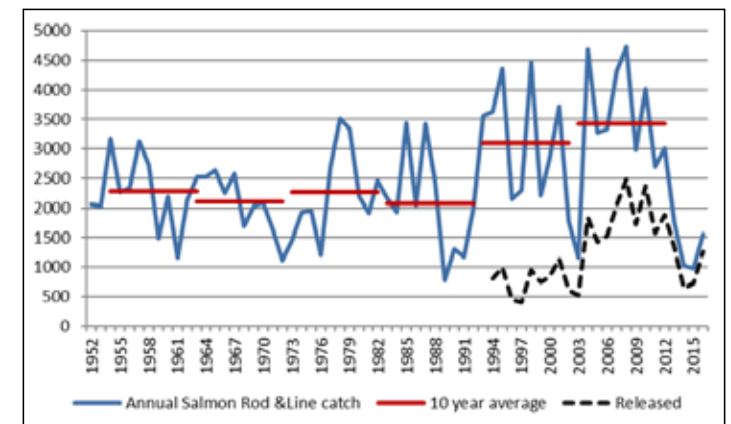


Figure 1

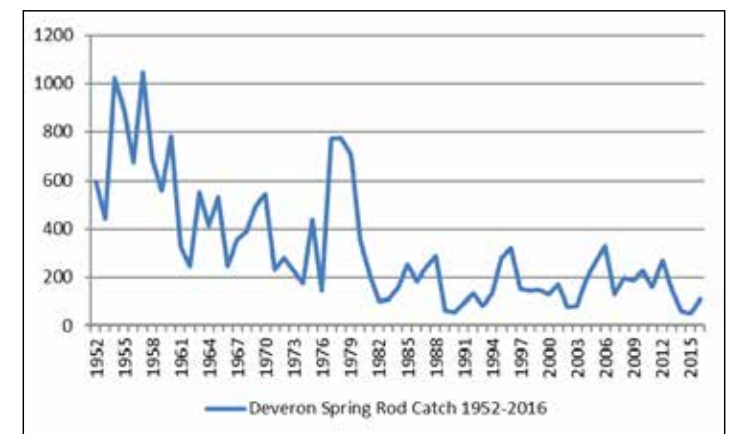


Figure 2

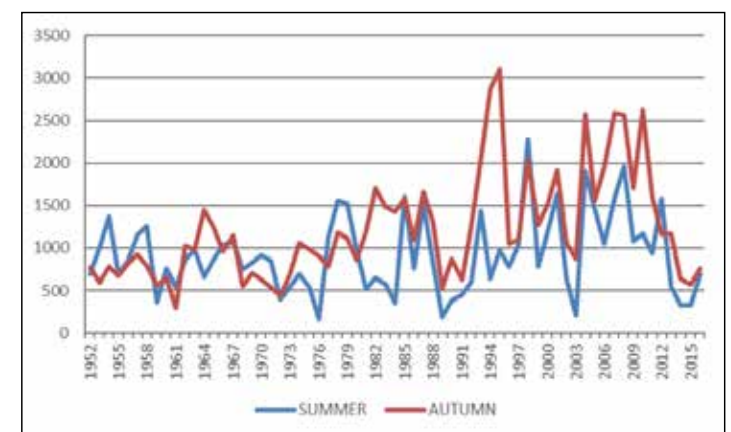


Figure 3

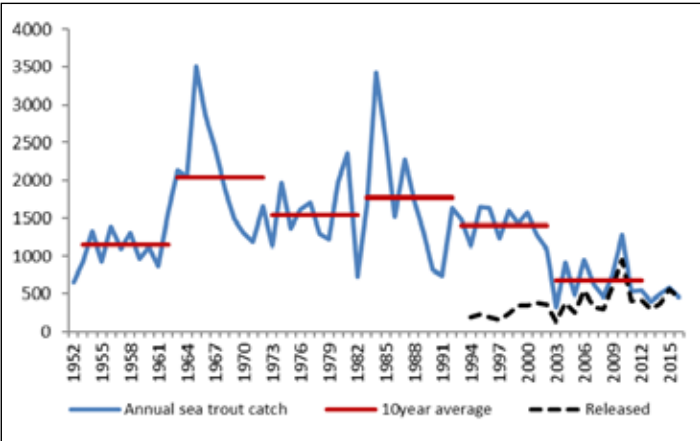
Figure 1: . Annual Rod & Line Catch for the River Deveron District showing 10 year averages and the numbers released since 1994.

Figure 2: River Deveron Spring (Feb-May) Rod & Line catch.

Figure3: River Deveron Summer (June-Aug) & Autumn (Sep-Oct) Rod & Line Catch.

Deveron Sea Trout

The Deveron sea trout Rod and Line catch (Figure 4) has shown annual variations from 1952 with two significant peaks of nearly 3500 fish. The 10-year average was consistently between 1000 and 2100 fish until 2003 when catches fell to a record low of 317. Since then catches have remained low with the 10-year average from 2003-2012 falling to 685 fish and from 2013-2016 to 485. A similar decline has been seen across the Moray Firth region and many Scottish Rivers.



Catch and release records began in 1994 and the practice has gradually increased from 16% in 1994 to 95% of the total catch in 2016. In response to the clear decline in stocks the RDevDSFB adopted a 100% catch and release policy for sea trout in 2013.

Figure 4: Annual sea trout Rod and Line Catch for the River Deveron District showing 10 year averages and the numbers released since 1994.

Conservation policy and statutory regulations

To assist in protecting and improving fish stocks the RDevDSFB launched a conservation code in 2003, outlining local policy and statutory regulations. Local and visiting anglers are asked annually to observe the code to help conserve local fish stocks, ensure a sustainable fishery and stop biosecurity threats such as *Gyrodactylus salaris* (right). The current code aims to achieve a high release rate (>70%) of salmon and grilse (particularly female fish) and to protect stocks of multi-sea winter spring salmon.



The Conservation of Salmon (Annual Close Times and Catch and Release) (Scotland) Regulations came into force on 9th January 2015 and made it illegal to kill wild Atlantic salmon caught before 1st April each year. The RDevDSFB conservation code recommends additional protection of this fragile stock and recommends that all salmon are released until 31st May, due to local data showing spring salmon still make up a notable percentage of the May catch. The code also outlines measures for conservation of sea trout, recommending 100% catch and release until stocks are shown to recover. Low exploitation of resident brown trout is also encouraged to maintain the sustainability of this popular fishery.

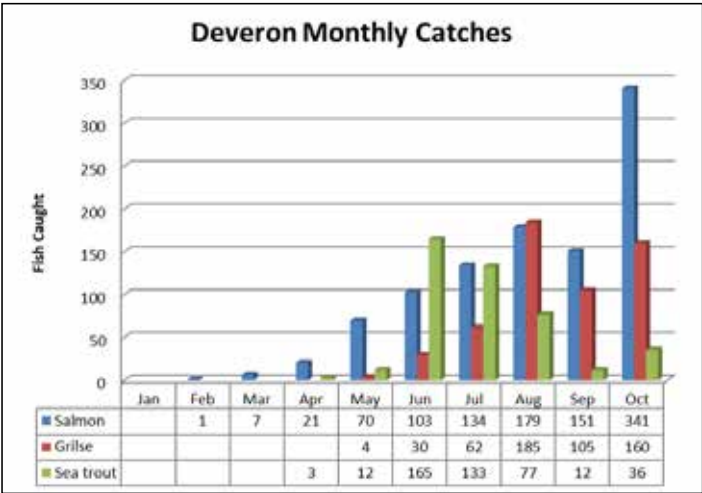
For the 2017 season, the Scottish Government has classified the Deveron as a Category 1 river, whereby current levels of salmon exploitation are thought to be sustainable. The RDevDSFB aims to preserve this classification and fish stocks and ask that the River Deveron Conservation Code 2017 (found at www.deveron.org.) be adhered to by all anglers.

2016 Catches

Rod and line

The 2016 salmon and grilse rod catch was up 59% from 980 in the previous year to 1553 but still well below the long-term average of 2468. Of the 1553 salmon and grilse caught, 80% were returned. Spring salmon catches increased from the previous year to 99 salmon by end of May, with 85% returned to the river, aided by the Chivas Regal spring salmon conservation scheme. A notable salmon of 34 lbs was successfully caught and released during October, which secured the Morison Trophy. The sea trout catch decreased by 25% from 584 to a total of 438, of which 97% were returned.

Rod and Line monthly catches 2016



Management Report

Moray Firth seal management plan

The Moray Firth Seal Management Plan (MFSMP) continued in 2016. The plan commenced in 2005, with the joint aim of protecting wild salmon and sea trout stocks, whilst also maintaining the conservation status of the Dornoch Firth Special Protection Area (SPA) for common seals. Since 2013, the Spey Fishery Board (SFB) has coordinated the Plan's licence application. A licence was again successfully granted for 2016, which permitted the shooting of 18 Grey seals and 0 Common seals within the plans geographic area, between 1st February and the 31st January. Nominated and qualified marksmen carried out the licence conditions on behalf of the Plans partners.



The common seal

Sawbill duck & cormorant management

During 2016 the DBIT continued the coordination of the annual Piscivorous (fish-eating) bird counts, required for the licence application to Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH). Two counts were carried out along the Deveron (Avochie Fishing's to Estuary) throughout March & April by DBIT personnel, Ghillies and Volunteers. Counts were undertaken during the annual smolt run. The 2016/17 licence application was successful and a licence was granted (under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981) by SNH. The licence permitted the shooting of 10 Goosander and 1 Cormorant as an aid to scaring and for the purpose of preventing serious damage to fish stocks.

Fishery protection

Protecting local fish stocks from illegal activity, such as poaching, is enforced by the RDevDSFB. Fishery protection is essential in combating both damage to local fish stocks and the economy and is an ongoing priority. During 2016 the RDevDSFB continued to work closely with Police Scotland, and in particular, carried out a number of joint-patrols at various locations throughout the Deveron catchment. During August, two members of the public were charged with fishing for salmon without written permission and the incident was referred to the Procurator Fiscal. Unfortunately on this occasion the case was not taken forward. The RDevDSFB also continued to work with the SFB to undertake coastal patrols between Cowhythe Point and the Water of Philorth. Patrols were used search for the presence of any illegal fishing nets.

Wild fisheries reform

In January 2014, the First Minister announced that a Wild Fisheries Review would be undertaken.

The aims of the review were to:

- develop and promote a modern, evidence-based management system for wild fisheries fit for purpose in the 21st century, and capable of responding to the changing environment;
- to manage, conserve and develop our wild fisheries to maximise the sustainable benefit of Scotland's wild fish resources to the country as a whole and particularly to rural areas.

LIAM STEPHEN



Brown Trout

On 8 October 2014, the review submitted its final report and 54 recommendations to the Minister for Environment and Climate Change. During 2015, a consultation paper was published which set out the Government's response to the Wild Fisheries Review. The RDevDSFB and DBIT submitted a joint response to the consultation in advance of the 7th August deadline.

On the 3rd February 2017 the Scottish Government issued a press release announcing a new approach to Wild Fisheries Reform. Proposals to introduce rod licences and a new wild fisheries levy were dropped. The Scottish Government ruled out these measures, as well as the criminalisation of freshwater fishing without written permission and proposals to overhaul the structure and remit of District Salmon Fishery Boards.

The Scottish Government stated that they would however facilitate work streams which encourage, empower and support the modernisation of fishery management, including the piloting of voluntary fishery board mergers to identify any existing legislative issues. It will also develop a fishery management plan to trial any changes with boards and will also explore potential freshwater conservation provisions ahead of the introduction of a Bill to Parliament.

Scottish Government measures to control the killing of wild salmon

Following on from the Wild Fisheries Review, Marine Scotland embarked up on a programme of Wild Fisheries Reform (WFR), including a package of Conservation Regulations. During early 2016 , Scottish Ministers confirmed they would be progressing with the below salmon regulations from 1st April onwards:

- Killing outwith estuary limits by net fisheries will be prohibited for a period of three years due to the mixed stock nature of the fishery and the limited data on the stock composition of the catch. This will be reviewed after three years.
- The killing of Atlantic salmon will be managed on an annual basis by categorising fishery districts in relation to their conservation status and with accompanying guidance and/or regulation.

For the 2017 season, the Scottish Government has classified the Deveron as a Category 1 river, whereby current levels of salmon exploitation are thought to be sustainable and no further intervention is required.

More information on the new conservation measures, and how they are determined can be found online at www.gov.scot/Topics/marine/Salmon-Trout-Coarse/fishreform/licence/status

Invasive Non-Native Species & Biosecurity Programme

We reported previously that an extension to the Deveron Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS) Control Project was grant aided by Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) in 2015. The grant extended the project until July 2016. The main objectives of the project extension were to continue the control of invasive non-native species and to create a more self-sustaining control programme going forward.

During 2016 Giant Hogweed control has again been the primary focus with control on the Bogie and Isla tributaries being priority. Several minor burns and wasteland areas, have again had their hogweed infestations tackled by the DBIT, Huntly Fishing's and volunteers to help ensure a catchment wide approach. Overall close to 179 km's were monitored and treated as part of the collaborative programme. The hogweed grazing project, using black face sheep, continued during 2016 and has again been an outstanding success. 13 sheep were introduced to the site at Auldtown of Netherdale in March of 2016, to coincide with juvenile hogweed plants. The sheep sufficiently grazed the hogweed plants within the site that no plants were able to seed for the fourth year running. The sheep have again been routinely monitored by the local vet for any signs of distress or damage caused by the grazing of hogweed, of which no signs have been recorded. During 2016 the hogweed grazing strategy became the focus of an excellent honours project report, by Sarah Lashley from Aberdeen University. During September 20 known Japanese Knotweed sites were re-visited and re-treated when necessary. The American Mink trapping programme continued during 2016 with 18 mink trapped and dispatched from 7 different locations.



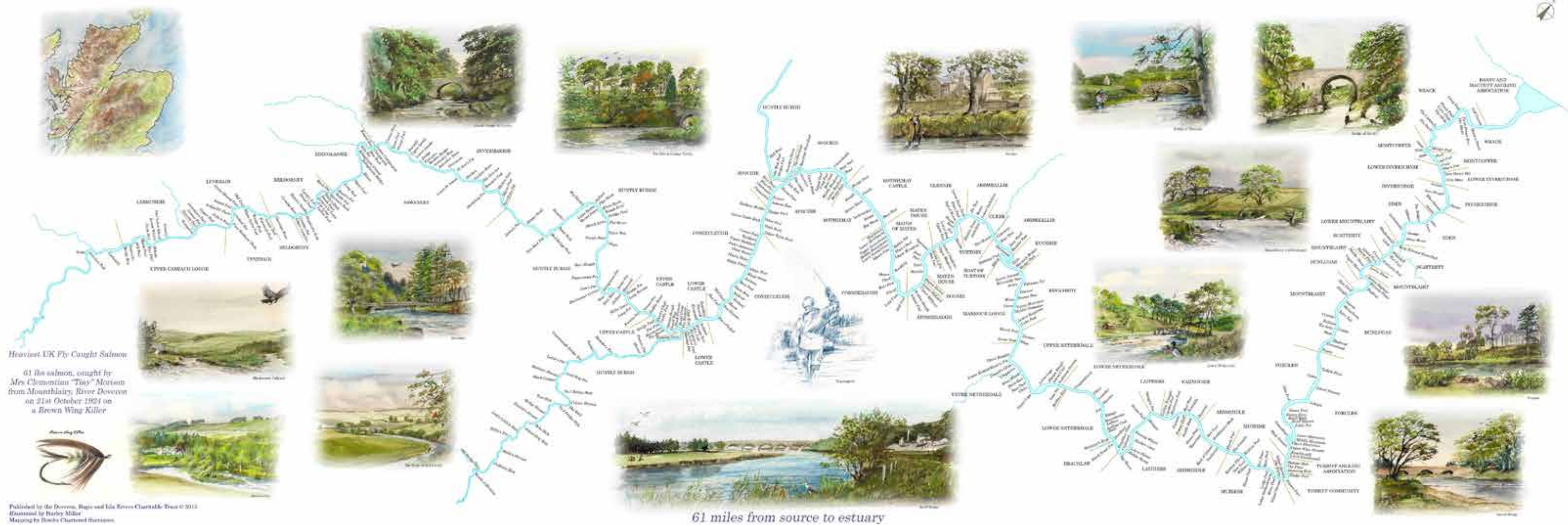
Giant Hogweed

LIAM STEPHEN



7lb Sea Trout caught at Avochie

Angler's Map of the River Deveron - Tom Ingleby Edition



2017/18 PRIORITIES

- Salmon smolt tracking project (phase II) to quantify smolt survival in river and investigate the sources and location of any smolt mortality
- Water quality monitoring programme
- Continuation of district wide invasive non-native species control
- Fish counters



PAUL PROCTOR

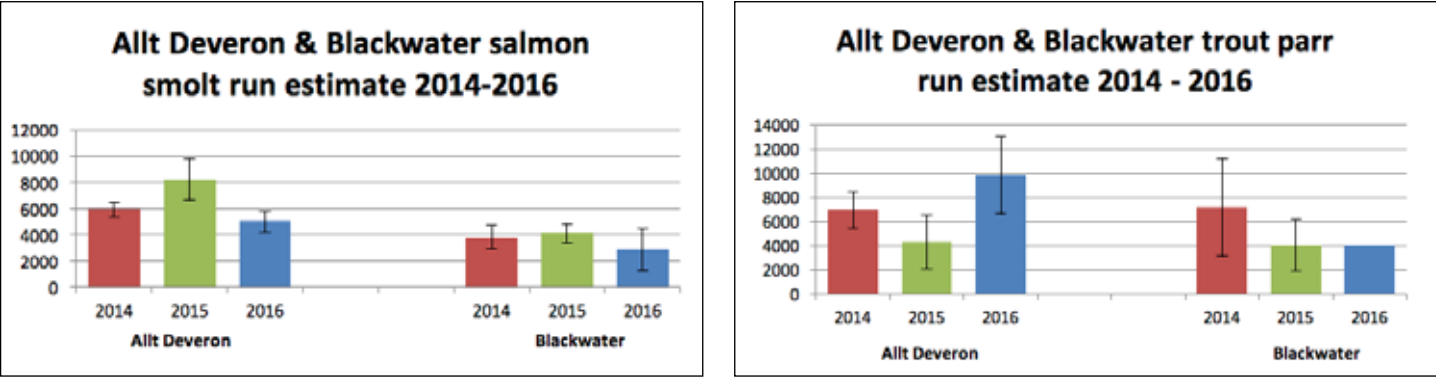
Copies of the Angler's Map of River Deveron are available to buy.

The cost of the print is £35 (plus £6 p&p). It is printed on matt, coated 180gsm; print size is 100cm x 35cm. Please email richiemiller@deveron.org or call the DBIT on 01466 711 388 for further information.

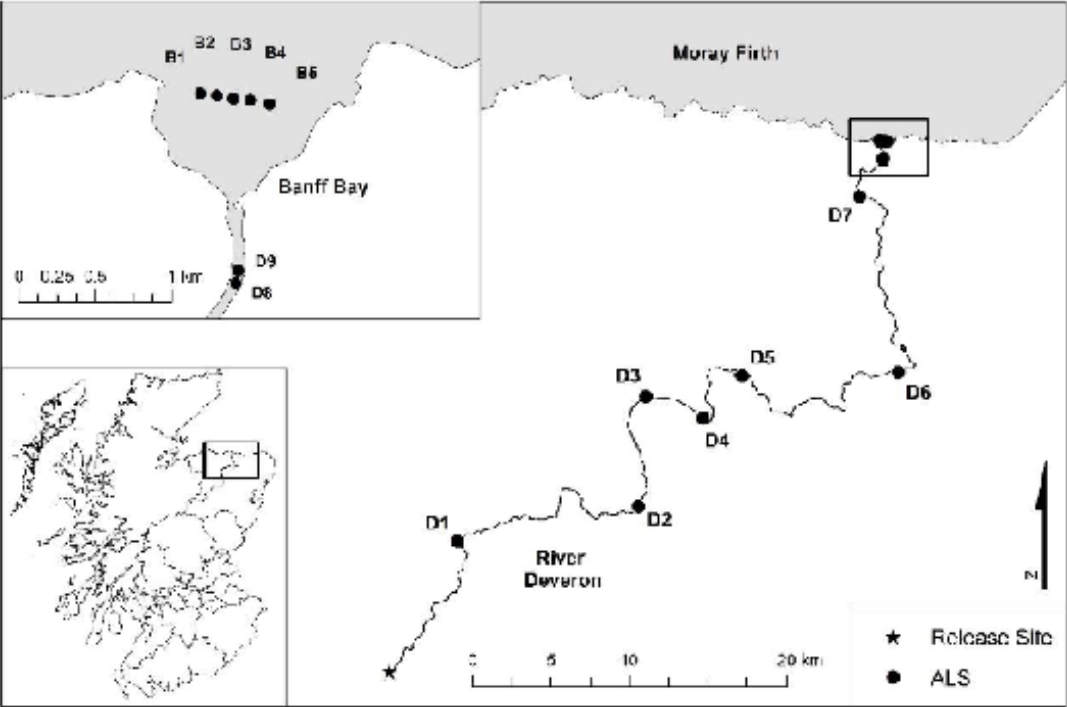
Research and Monitoring

Smolt monitoring - Dorenell wind farm

The Dorenell Fishery Management Plan pre-construction monitoring continued through 2016 with construction of the windfarm due to start in 2017. This plan includes baseline water quality monitoring, fish surveys, habitat and invertebrate surveys of the Blackwater, Fiddich and also the Allt Deveron (selected as a suitable control site out with the wind farm area). The surveys ensure that the overall status prior to any development can be determined and will provide a baseline against which monitoring during construction and for 2 years after can be compared. The fish monitoring includes the measuring of smolt output of the Allt Deveron and Blackwater catchments through the deployment of rotary screw traps. Figure 7 summarises the estimated salmon smolt production from the Allt Deveron and Blackwater for 2014, 2015 and 2016. Despite significant variation in river conditions the estimated smolt output over the 3 years is relatively consistent especially for the Blackwater. Reassuringly, the control site, Allt Deveron, is showing a similar pattern to that of the Blackwater where construction will begin in 2017. Figure 8 illustrates the estimated trout parr (many trout have not yet smolted this high in the catchment) production for the Allt Deveron and Blackwater catchments 2014, 2015 and 2016. The trout estimate is considerably more variable than the salmon numbers and is more complicated to understand as it will include sea trout and brown trout juveniles of many different ages. This high in the catchment sea trout smolts are not fully smolted and cannot yet be clearly defined as such.



FIGURES
Left: Allt Deveron and Blackwater salmon smolt run estimate 2014-2016 with 95% confidence intervals shown.
Right: Allt Deveron and Blackwater trout parr run estimate 2014-2016 with 95% confidence intervals shown. 95% confidence intervals could not be calculated for the Blackwater in 2016.



Automatic listening station (ALS) locations

Deveron salmon smolt tracking project 2016

In April (2016) fifty salmon smolts from the Upper Deveron rotary screw trap were surgically implanted with acoustic identification tags and tracked through the river and the immediate Moray Firth using Automatic Listening Stations (ALS). The tags emit unique acoustic high frequency pulses that identify the specific fish when detected by an acoustic receiver. Nine ALS receivers were deployed along the length of the River Deveron at the following locations; Edinglassie, Castle Water, Avochie, Mains of Mayen, Br. Marnoch, Montcoffer and two at Banff Bridge (see map). A further 5 receivers were deployed in Banff Bay as a curtain stretching across the bay from Banff Marina towards Macduff Harbour. All the receivers were successfully retrieved at the end of June and the data downloaded. The tagging was conducted by Dr Matt Newton from SCENE at Glasgow University and was written up and submitted as scientific paper by Angus Lothian as part of his MSc.

Results

Overall survival of smolts in the River Deveron was 40%, with a higher observed mortality in the river (0.77% km⁻¹) (Figure 1) than in the marine stage of migration (0% km⁻¹), resulting in a significantly higher survival rate in the marine stage than the river. There was no observed effect of a tag influencing whether a smolt left the river or not and the smallest fish tagged was detected on the marine array. A greater swim speed was observed in the marine environment (mean ± sd = 37.37 ± 28.20 km day⁻¹) than in the river (mean ± sd = 5.03 ± 1.73 km day⁻¹; W = 19, p < 0.001). The main smolt trajectory leaving the river was north-easterly (Figure 2). Mortality in the river is most likely due to predation, although the exact cause cannot be determined. The absence of mortality in marine migration is uncommon; a potential result of the river mouth morphology. High swim speed of smolts in the marine environment could be due to passive displacement by high river discharge. But the trajectory of travel indicates an active swim, along with a potential innate navigational mechanism which should be the focus of future research.

The 2016 project has now been published in a peer reviewed journal and can be access here:
deveron.org/site/wp-content/uploads/Lothian_et_al-2017-Ecology_of_Freshwater_Fish.pdf

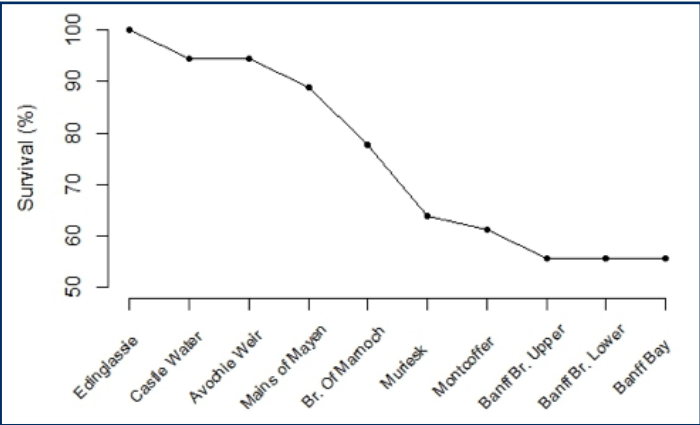


Figure 1. Survival curve of the Atlantic salmon smolts tagged on the river Deveron (not standardised for river length)

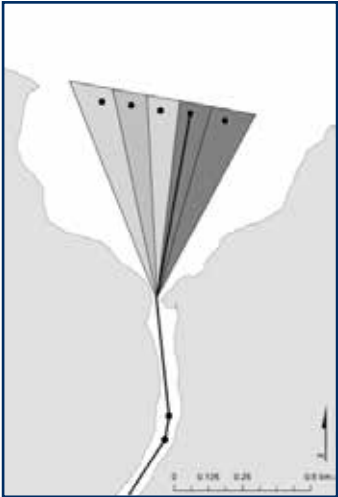


Figure 2 The median *S. salar* smolt travel vector into the bay (solid line) with distribution of smolts upon first entry into the bay - light grey represents two smolts (B1 and B3), medium grey represents four smolts (B2) and dark grey represents six smolts (B4)



Salmon smolt

Following on the success of the project, DBIT will extend the investigation of in river mortality in more detail in 2017. The project will not only quantify smolt survival in the river but will importantly investigate the sources and location of the observed smolt mortality.

Acknowledgements

Our sincere thanks should be extended to the following people who made the project possible:

- DBI Trust membership
- The River Deveron District Salmon Fishery Board
- Muiesk Fishing's
- Mr Robert McConnell - Trust Membership Secretary
- Mr James Mann for helping to build the receiver moorings
- Mr Rory Cooper for the use of his boat and time in deploying the Banff Bay Receivers
- The Divers (Matty & Kyle) for their help with deploying and in particular retrieving the Banff Bay Receivers
- Dr Matt Newton and the rest of the Glasgow University team for their help with the project and in particular their dedication to get the tagging done late in the evening
- The Tweed Foundation for equipment



3rd annual trout scale-sampling day

On the 7th and 8th of May the 3rd annual scale-sampling weekend was held on the Deveron. The event was kindly organised by Mr Brian Arnold in conjunction with the Moray Firth Trout Initiative. The events focus was again to obtain trout scale samples through angling and submit the samples for use in subsequent scientific analysis, e.g. stock structuring, age and distribution (from genetics and scale micro-chemistry) and features such as age and sex composition, life history, growth and survival. Over 280 trout were caught by participating anglers and an excellent number of samples obtained. Our thanks go to all participating anglers and fishing beats. Full report of the scale analysis can be obtained on request.



The trout scale sampling team

Juvenile monitoring and invertebrate surveys

During 2016 there were 49 juvenile electrofishing surveys completed throughout the Deveron catchment and district. Core monitoring sites were again re-visited to maintain long-term data sets. A large number of sites were completed to monitor any potential impacts of renewable energy projects on fish stocks and the remainder of the sites were visited to monitor habitat and fish passage restoration works. During 2016 invertebrate samples were again collected from each juvenile electrofishing site and used as an indicator of water quality.

Education and Community Outreach

Ghillies evening

The annual ghillies evening was held on the 3rd of October in Turriff. Many interesting themes were covered and an action plan has been drawn up by the DBIT to tackle all matters raised.

Newsletters and social media

One edition of the popular Deveron Flyer was produced during 2016 and distributed to keep all DBIT members and interested parties updated on the work of the RDevDSFB & DBIT and current fisheries news. The website of the RDevDSFB & DBIT (www.deveron.org) was updated regularly with latest meeting minutes, news and announcements.

 Social media such as Twitter (@DBIRCT) and Facebook (DeveronBogiesla) was also updated regularly by the DBIT with latest local and national news, angling opportunities, and conservation initiatives.



The Morison Trophy winning fish

Deveron Opening Ceremony and Morison Trophy

The Morison Family and DBIT were delighted to announce the 2015 winner of the Morison Trophy at the annual river opening ceremony held in February. The Morison Trophy, awarded for the heaviest fly-caught salmon of the season from the Deveron, was won by local angler, Mr Craig Wyness from Peterhead. This was the second time Mr Wyness had won the trophy after previously winning in 2012. The trophy was presented by special guest, Mr Paul Lawrie MBE who also officially opened the salmon season. The award was given for a fly-caught 30.5 lbs salmon from the Upper Netherdale beat. In winning the trophy Mr Wyness was also presented with a Vision salmon fly-rod, courtesy of Henderson's Country Sports for releasing the fish, a limited edition "Morisons" Fly box and bottle of 'The Deveron' malt whisky courtesy of John Dewar & Sons Ltd.



Media coverage

Local press continued to cover projects such as invasive non-native species control, Chivas Spring Salmon Reward Scheme and educational work. STV, BBC Radio 2 and BBC News Scotland produced coverage of projects such as the river opening ceremony and Smolt Tracking Project.

Public Presentations

Presentations were given by DBIT staff at the following events during 2016:

- The Institute of Fisheries Management Tagging and Telemetry Workshop, Edinburgh
- The RDevDSFB & DBIT AGM, Huntly
- Deveron Arts Workshop, Huntly
- Gillies Evening, Turriff



Good Governance

The RDevDSFB is established by Salmon Fisheries legislation consolidated by the Salmon and Freshwater Fisheries Consolidation (Scotland) Act 2003 which from 16th September 2013 was amended by the Aquaculture and Fisheries (Scotland) Act 2013. The Aquaculture and Fisheries (Scotland) Act 2007 also applies. The Board is empowered under the legislation to take such action as it considers expedient for the protection, enhancement and conservation of Atlantic Salmon and Sea Trout stocks and their fisheries. The Deveron Catchment area covers 1,266 km² and the length of the river system is 96 km.

The coastline along the Moray Firth extends from Cowhythe Point to the Water of Philorth and 3 nautical miles out to sea. There are 53 rod fisheries within the main stream of the Deveron and Netting Stations at ex adverso Auchmeddan Estate and in the Sea, Aberdour (per Lands Valuation Roll).

The Aquaculture and Fisheries (Scotland) Act 2013 consists of several parts, the second of which relates to salmon and freshwater fisheries. The emphasis is on the duty of Boards to be open, transparent and accountable. This includes:

- a duty to publish and copy to Scottish Ministers the Annual Report and audited accounts;
- a duty to hold a minimum of one public meeting, with all Board or other meetings held in public unless there is a good reason for them to be held in private;
- a duty to deal with complaints and to maintain and keep procedures under review;
- a duty to maintain a register and declaration of relevant financial interests of Board Members and to review these at Board Meetings.

The RDevDSFB's Complaints' Procedure and Registration and Declaration of relevant financial interests are dealt with later in this report.

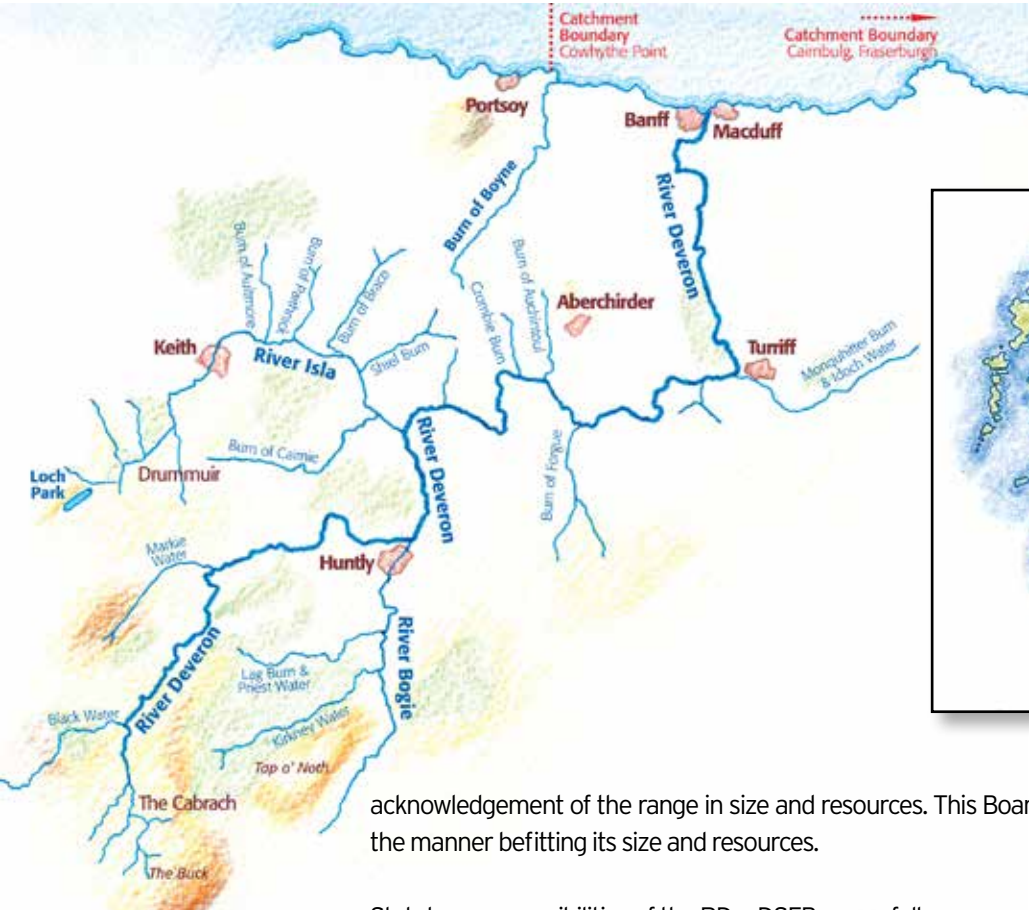
Meetings

Since the 2013 Act came into force meetings of the RDevDSFB are open to the public and the date, place and time of each meeting together with the likely agenda are published on www.deveron.org at least twenty-one days before the date of the meeting.

The statutory Annual Meeting of Qualified Proprietors has, in accordance with Board policy over many years, been a Public Meeting although not publicised as such in the manner which is now required by the 2013 Act. Qualified Proprietors were advised to publicise the meetings which were well attended by ghillies, employees and generally members of the public, in particular anglers.

The Annual Meeting of Qualified Proprietors 2017 will incorporate a public meeting although further meetings will be held in open session and advertised on www.deveron.org. In the case of the Annual Meetings also in local newspapers to enable anglers and members of the public to attend and, at the Annual Meetings, to encourage participation (questions, comments, etc.). Board Members, the River Bailiffs and the Clerk make this information available to tenants, ghillies, employees, managers, Angling Associations, letting agents, a Tackle Shop and members of the public by personal contact.

It should be noted from the Guidance on Good Governance Obligations issued by the Scottish Government, that it is not the intention that the obligations imposed by the 2003 and 2013 Acts seek to micromanage the business of Boards – the provisions provide flexibility in terms of delivery and



acknowledgement of the range in size and resources. This Board complies with the latest legislation in the manner befitting its size and resources.

Statutory responsibilities of the RDevDSFB are as follows:

- fisheries protection (Bailiffs in co-operation with Police);
- confirm the salmon and sea trout rod fisheries season - 11th February to 31st October;
- ensure fishery closed times - midnight Saturday - midnight Sunday - are complied with (Bailiffs and Police);
- deal with the purchase and sale of illegally caught or unseasonable fish;
- ensure the free passage of fish, e.g., over obstructions, etc. (to knowingly prevent free passage is a criminal offence);
- protect spawning redds and juvenile fish (Bailiffs and Police);
- regulate the introduction of adults, juveniles and ova.

Note: Details of the RDevDSFB's powers and duties are also published on the website

Complaints Procedure

The Aquaculture and Fisheries (Scotland) Act 2013 amended the 2003 Act regarding openness and accountability. The 2013 Act, therefore, requires a Fishery Board to maintain and keep under review proper arrangements for dealing with complaints made to the Board about the way in which the Board have carried out or propose to carry out their functions under the Act or any other enactment.

The RDevDSFB complaints procedure can be found at www.deveron.org/wb/media/pdfs/Complaints_Procedure_2013.pdf

Register of Board Members' Interests

Board Members have completed and signed declarations of relevant financial interests. These are recorded with the Clerk and available to inspect on reasonable notice at her office. This has been so intimated on www.deveron.org. The register is reviewed at each Board Meeting and a permanent item is on the agenda. Members are required to declare any change from the previous meeting.

The Deveron, Bogie and Isla Rivers

Charitable Trust accounts

Year ended 31st March 2017

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES

	Unrestricted fund	Restricted funds	31.3.17 Total funds	31.3.16 Total funds
	£	£	£	£
INCOME FROM:				
Donations and legacies	48,415	157,807	206,222	115,496
Charitable activities	74,051	-	74,051	46,963
Other trading activities	2,967	-	2,967	7,101
Investments	-	2,178	2,178	-
Total income	125,433	159,985	285,418	169,560
EXPENDITURE ON:				
Raising funds	-	25,856	25,856	63,475
Charitable activities	126,523	-	126,523	101,563
Total Expenditure	126,523	25,856	152,379	165,038
Net gains/(losses) on investments	-	-	-	545
Net Income/(Expenditure)	(1,090)	134,129	133,039	5,067
Transfers between funds	(196)	196	-	-
Net gains/(losses) on revaluation of fixed asset	-	3,950	3,950	-
Net movement in funds	(1,286)	138,275	136,989	5,067
RECONCILIATION OF FUNDS				
Total funds brought forward	123,673	998	124,671	119,604
TOTAL FUNDS CARRIED FORWARD	122,387	139,273	261,660	124,671

BALANCE SHEET

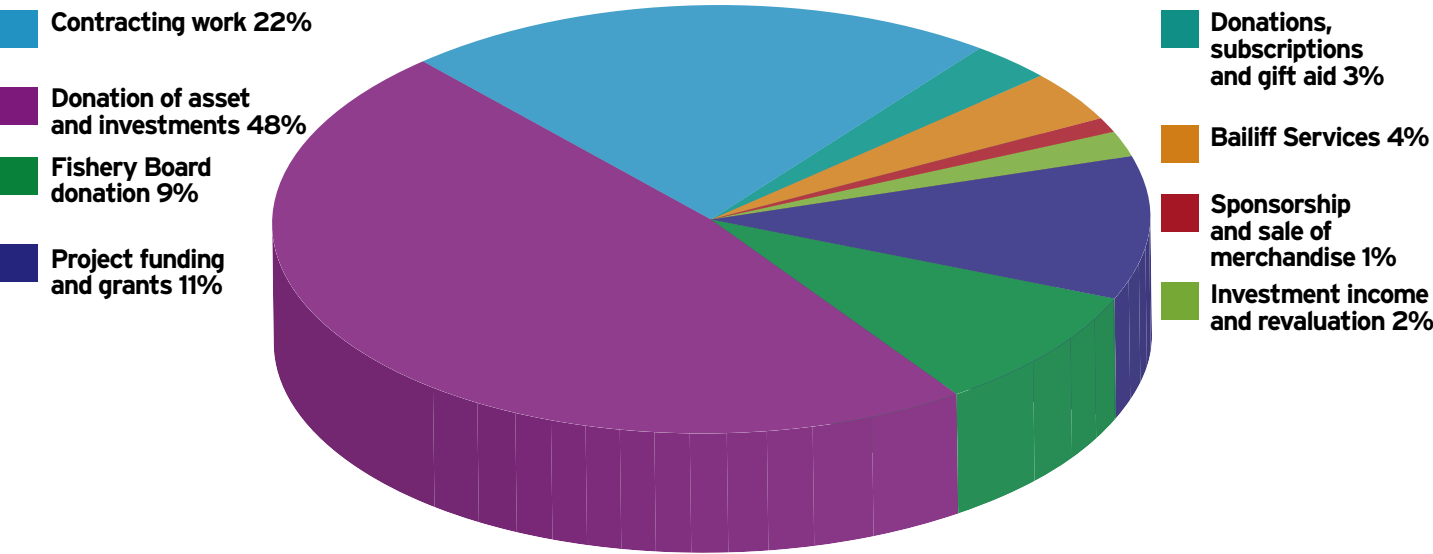
	Unrestricted fund	Restricted funds	31.3.17 Total funds	31.3.16 Total funds
	£	£	£	£
FIXED ASSETS				
Tangible assets	53,759	848	54,607	58,588
Investments	-	132,164	132,164	-
	53,759	133,012	186,771	58,588
CURRENT ASSETS				
Debtors and prepayments	8,537	-	8,537	23,303
Cash at bank	72,399	6,261	78,660	62,350
	80,936	6,261	87,197	86,653
CREDITORS				
Amounts falling due within one year	(12,308)	-	(12,308)	(14,296)
NET CURRENT ASSETS	68,628	6,261	74,889	71,357
TOTAL ASSETS LESS CURRENT LIABILITIES	122,387	139,273	261,660	129,945
CREDITORS				
Amounts falling due after more than one year	-	-	-	(5,274)
NET ASSETS	122,387	139,273	261,660	124,671
FUNDS				
Unrestricted funds			122,387	123,673
Restricted funds			139,273	998
TOTAL FUNDS			261,660	124,671

These financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard for Smaller Entities (effective April 2008). The above figures have been approved by the Trustees and will be presented as such at the Annual General Meeting. These are extracts from the full financial statements. . A copy of the Trust's full Financial Statements, together with explanatory notes, will be published on its website (www.deveron.org) following the Annual General Meeting.

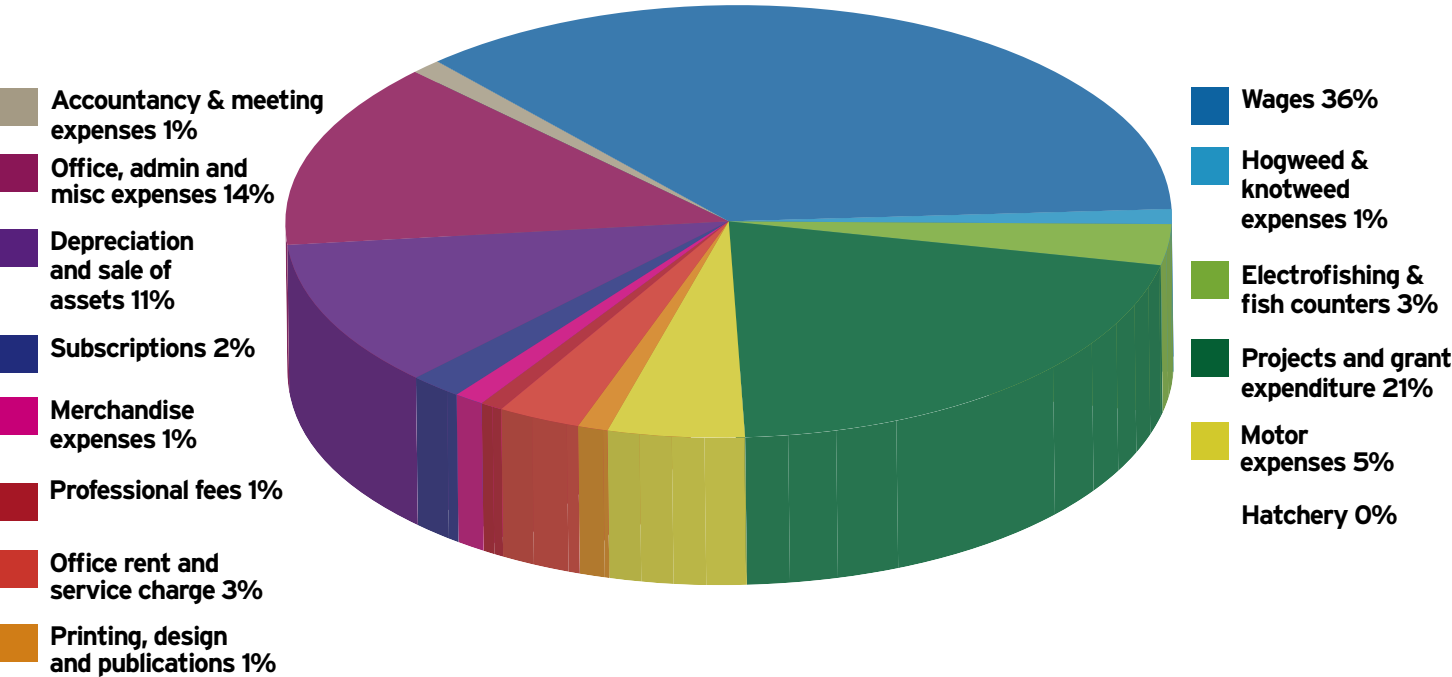
The Deveron, Bogie and Isla Rivers Charitable Trust accounts

Year ended 31st March 2017

Income April 2016 - March 2017



Expenditure April 2016 - March 2017



The River Deveron District Salmon Fishery Board accounts

Year ended 31 March 2017

INCOME & EXPENDITURE

	2017	2016
INCOME		
Assessment Income (49p in £)	71,971	71,971
Bank Interest	-	8
	71,971	71,979
EXPENDITURE		
Employee Costs	11,490	20,071
Bailiff Services and Expenses	9,888	-
Contribution to DBI Trust	26,500	25,000
Subscriptions	3,944	4,306
Clerk's Remuneration	3,937	4,613
Insurance	615	596
Miscellaneous Expenses	3,747	3,662
Postage, Printing, Stationery, Advertising and Telephone	2,872	3,078
Accountancy Fees	672	460
Board Meeting Expenses	879	778
Gifted Asset Donation to DBI Trust	12,430	-
	12,945	-
Transfer to Improvement Fund		
	89,919	62,564
	(17,948)	9,415

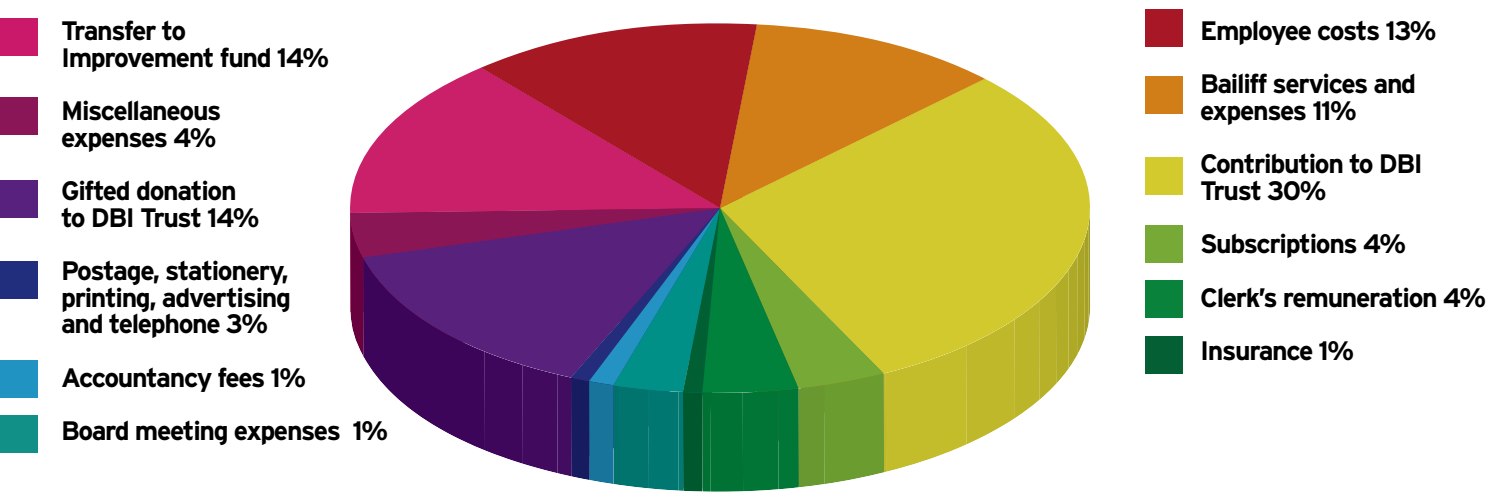
The River Deveron District Salmon Fishery Board accounts

Year ended 31 March 2017

MOVEMENT ON IMPROVEMENT FUND

	2017		2016	
	£	£	£	£
Dividends		1,424		3,650
Funding provided - Smolt Tag project		(7,668)		(5,861)
Transfer of Investments to DBI Trust		(126, 036)		-
Market Value of Investments 1 April 2016	123,871		128,446	
Cost of Investments purchased (ie Dividends reinvested by Stockbrokers)	1,424		3,650	
Proceeds from sale of units	(7,500)		(5,000)	
Transfer value of units to DBI Trust	(126,036)		-	
	(8,241)		127,116	
Market Value of Investments at 31 March 2017	-		123,871	
Increase/(Decrease) in Market Value of Investments		8,241		(3,245)
		(124,039)		(5,456)
Transfer to General Fund		12,945		-
DEFICIT ON IMPROVEMENT FUND		(111,094)		(5,456)

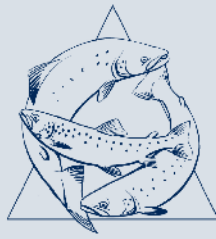
Expenditure April 2016 - March 2017



BALANCE SHEET

	2017		2016	
	£	£	£	£
FIXED ASSETS				
IMPROVEMENT FUND INVESTMENTS		-		123,871
CURRENT ASSETS				
Bank Account	31,560		37,308	
Improvement Fund Account	-		238	
	31,560		35,546	
CURRENT LIABILITIES				
Sundry Creditors	987		1,802	
NET CURRENT ASSETS		30,573		35,744
		30,573		159,615
Represented by:				
CAPITAL ACCOUNT				
General Fund				
Balance as at 1 April 2016	48,521		39,106	
(Deficit)/Surplus for the year	(17,948)		9,415	
		30,573		48,521
Improvement Fund				
Balance as at 1 April 2016	111,094		116,550	
(Deficit)/Surplus for the year	(111,094)		(5,456)	
		-		111,094
		30,573		159,615

These financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard for Smaller Entities (effective April 2008). The above figures have been approved by the Board and will be presented as such at the Annual Meeting. These are extracts from the full financial statements. A copy of the Board's full Financial Statements, together with explanatory notes, will be published on its website (www.deveron.org) following the Annual Meeting.



River Deveron Conservation Code for Salmon and Trout 2017

Your Board remains extremely concerned over fragile levels of fish stocks in the river
and in particular spring salmon and sea trout.
Anglers are asked, therefore, to observe the following guidelines during the forthcoming season:

SALMON & GRILSE

All salmon to be returned up to the end of May

**Under the Conservation of Salmon (Annual Close Time and Catch and Release)
(Scotland) Regulations 2014 no person may retain any salmon caught by rod and line
between 11th February and 31st March (inclusive)**

In conjunction with Chivas Brothers, The Deveron Bogie & Isla Rivers Charitable Trust will donate one bottle of Chivas
Regal 12 Year Old Scotch Whisky (70cl) per angler, for safely returning a spring salmon up to May 31st
(Follow set claim procedure and call 01466 711388 to claim. Strictly over 18s only.)

**From June 1st to October 31st, anglers may retain one salmon or grilse per rod per day
with a maximum of two fish per rod per week**

Anglers are asked to observe the Board's aspiration that all hen fish, and any cock salmon over 10lbs be returned
Therefore, the Board requests that only male fish under 10lbs be retained

Release all stale and unseasonable fish (Gravid fish, kelts, smolts, over-wintered finnock)

SEA TROUT

All sea trout to be returned throughout the season

The guidance on sea trout will be in place for a minimum of three years or until stocks recover to acceptable levels

BROWN TROUT

From 15th March to 30th September, all Brown Trout under 10 inches in length to be returned
No more than 2 brown trout per rod per week to be retained

Anglers are encouraged to fish with a fly only except in exceptionally coloured or high water

Spinning lures should have only one single set of hooks with a maximum sized 4 crimped or barbless

Anglers are reminded that it is illegal to sell rod caught salmon or sea trout

Injured or damaged fish outwith the above limits should be handed to the proprietor

All farmed fish must be retained and notified to the DBIT (01466 711388)

All visiting anglers must read, act upon and sign a *Gyrodactylus salaris* declaration form immediately before fishing.
Please contact the DBIT or your beat Ghillie/Manager/Agent.