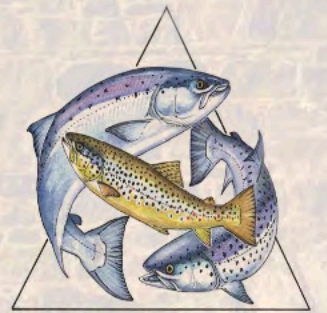




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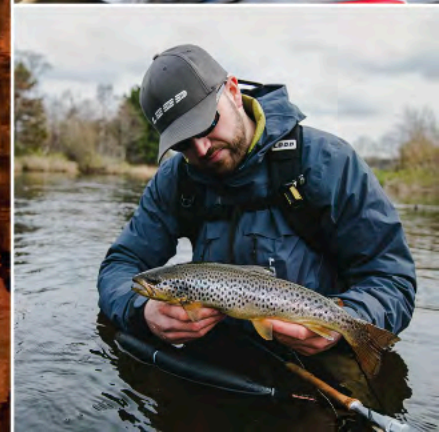


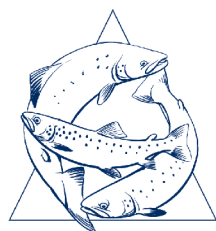
# DEVERON BOGIE & ISLA

The River Deveron District  
Salmon Fishery Board

The Deveron, Bogie  
and Isla Rivers  
Charitable Trust

## Annual Report and Accounts 2020/21





DEVERON  
BOGIE  
ISLA

Report by

A Allwood, R Miller, M Walters, K Müller and S Roebuck

The Offices, Avochie Stables, Avochie, Huntly, Aberdeenshire AB54 7YY

Tel: **01466 711388** email: **office@deveron.org**

**www.deveron.org**

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



For more details contact The Deveron Bogie & Isla Rivers Charitable Trust  
Tel 01466 711388 [www.deveron.org](http://www.deveron.org)

## Contents



FRONT COVER:  
Banff Bridge  
by Mairi Grant Photography

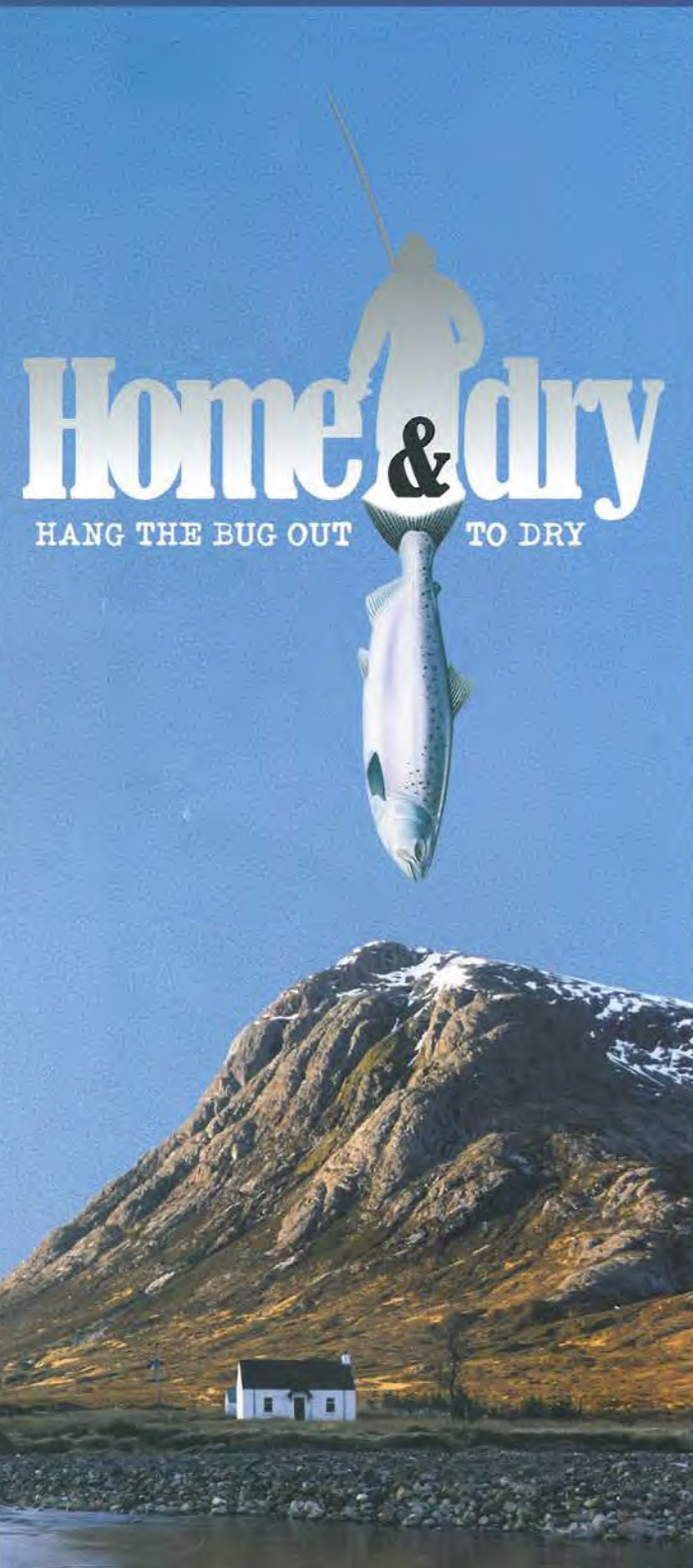
- 05 Supporters and Funding - Officials and Staff
- 06 Chairman's Report
- 10 Deveron Salmon 
- 11 Deveron Sea Trout Conservation Code and Statutory Regulations
- 12 Deveron District - 2020 Catches
- 13 Conservation Code and Statutory Regulations
- 14 Management Report
- 22 Angler's map of the River Deveron 2021/22 Priorities
- 24 Research and Monitoring
- 35 Community and Outreach

- 38 Deveron Reminiscences
- 44 Good Governance
- 46 The Deveron, Bogie and Isla Rivers Charitable Trust accounts
- 50 The River Deveron District Salmon Fishery Board accounts
- 52 Deveron Angling Code for Salmon and Trout 2021



# 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.

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- 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](http://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 partners who have helped implement our district fisheries management programme during 2020/21.

The RDevDSFB and DBIT would like to thank the following:

- Aberdeenshire Council**
- Bowlts Chartered Surveyors**
- Chivas Regal**
- DBIT members**
- Fisheries Management Scotland**
- Henderson's Country Sports**
- Heritage Lottery Fund**
- John Dewar & Sons**
- Longcliffe Quarries**
- Loop Tackle Design**
- Marine Scotland Science**
- Scottish Natural Heritage**
- Tesco**
- The Atlantic Salmon Trust**
- The Nineveh Charitable Trust**
- Turriff Angling Association**
- TwinPeakes Fly Fishing**
- University of Glasgow**

### 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

A. G. Allwood (Chairman), R. J. G. Shields, A. G. Morison, Mrs J. A. Player, R. Cooper, J. S. Cruickshank OBE

#### Representatives of lower proprietors

C. R. Marsden, M. C. R. Marsden, R. Copland

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

#### 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), Dr Colin Bull (AST)

#### Team

Director	R. Miller, BSc MIFM
River Operations Manager	M. Walters, MSc BSc MIFM
Project Officer	K. Müller, MSc BSc (Hons)
Seasonal Volunteer Coordinator	J. Farge, BSc
Clerk and Administrator	S. Roebuck, BA MICB
Field Assistant	C. Grant



## Chairman's Report

Andrew Allwood, Chairman of the RDevDSFB

Another year since the last report has flown by and we are already half way through the 2021 season. So much water has passed by and yet despite massive challenges the work and duties of the River Board and Trust has continued. After a brief period as the world ground to a halt to work out how to face the covid attack we have regrouped and found ways of continuing to function and move our longstanding plans forward.

Malcolm Hay has retired after 15 years of service as Chairman, his charm and dedication was such an important part of the smooth functioning of the Board. His knowledge of the countryside and the natural world is so comprehensive. We shall miss his effortless style and humour and wish him well for the future.

Time spent on the water with the rod last season was significantly reduced and did not approach some sort of normality until August. Nevertheless the rod catch was 1483 for salmon and grilse, (1504 in 2019). An encouraging figure considering the recorded rod effort was down by 40%. The numbers are still way below the the average of the last 50 years, but at least they have not plummeted further. On the other hand sea trout numbers have continued to struggle and only 260 were recorded of which 98% were returned. Brown trout have continued to show aplenty and it is encouraging to see that at least one aspect of fish in the river is doing well.

The above figures demonstrate the desperate plight of migratory fish in our rivers. We are grateful to the anglers who have continued to play their part, 95% of all salmon and grilse were returned. The Board is determined to increase its efforts to promote the wellbeing of these wonderful creatures. An enormous amount of work has been done over the last 2 years to develop a plan for the future. Water quality is being sampled and we are working with higher government bodies such as SEPA to ensure that monitoring and controls are effective. We are working closely with the Atlantic Salmon Trust on several projects within their Missing Salmon Alliance to count and detect the movements of fish in our rivers and onwards to the sea.

The Deveron has retained its status as a category 2 river for 2021 which means that the Board's voluntary Angling Code remains in place with minor amendments. Of course we would welcome a return to category 1, but this will take some time and patience. The Board is keen to make sure that all catches are released in a way that reduces stress on the fish and has developed a Catch and Release Guide which is available on our website and in the fishing huts on the beats.

Somewhat unsurprisingly we saw a marked uptick in poaching incidents last season and this problem is generally on the increase. We have a close working relationship with Police Scotland who have been very helpful, charges and a prosecution have been taken forward. The efforts of our Board and Trust members is very moving, work has continued though all adversities. The Trust Team has shown enormous dedication and in their work. Karen Müller and Jack Farge waging a very personal war against giant hogweed and other nasty invasive species, Marcus Walters plunging into a frigid river to deploy receivers, Sarah Roebuck keeping finances in good order and Richie Miller spending long hours checking for poachers and keeping the programme on track. Also many tasks small and large to maintain the river and reduce invasive species by hundreds of unsung heroes.

Over the last year a good deal of work has had to be done online where possible. It has been very frustrating not to be able to have our Board and Trust meetings in person. Thanks to medical advances and the easing of restrictions we will return to having meetings around a table in future, albeit with



Rainbow over Euchrie

precautions. These meetings will be open to the general public online. The Board has invested in new technology and we would welcome those who would like to attend. To do this, please contact our Clerk to the Board, Sarah Roebuck.

Another batch of our unique River Deveron Gin is being crafted. Each batch will have a different label showing scenes of the river we all love. Limited edition prints will be available as each batch is released. The artwork has been created by our local artist Bryan Angus whose work is recognised worldwide. You can enjoy your tincture knowing that botanicals used in the production will have been harvested from the actual scene depicted!

Much of what happens to fish in the oceans is still unknown though a lot of work is being undertaken to correct this gap. In the river more can be done to improve the habitat and encourage the ecology to thrive. Here the Board's plan is comprehensive and work has begun. We are currently building on the efforts so far in the upper reaches of the catchment and are also working on surveying the major tributaries in the middle and lower half of the river to see what needs to be done to improve the habitat there. If we can increase the fecundity throughout the catchment area we will surely see improvements. We hope that by getting yourselves, local owners and all people who love our river involved in our efforts we can build a dynamic force to make the Deveron and its inhabitants a jewel for future generations.



## Deveron Salmon - Historical

The total annual salmon rod & line catch for the Deveron District was stable from 1952 (when records began) until the end of the 1980s, with the 10-year average sitting at just over 2000 fish per year. There was a record low catch in 1989 before catches improved with the 10-year average increasing to just over 3000 (1993-2002) and increasing again to an average of 3418 for the 10 years from 2003-2012. Since then, catches have fallen steeply, with 2018 being the lowest rod catch on record followed by slightly improved catches in 2019 and 2020.

Catch and release records began in 1994 and the practice has increased from 22% of salmon returned in 1994 to 95% returned in 2020. 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 salmon catch (Feb- May) and for sea trout.

### Spring salmon

Spring salmon return to the river in the spring months 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. The catch continued to decline to record low levels in the early 1990s but despite a slight recovery in the 2000s, fell again in 2015 and has since remained relatively low. The Spring Catch in 2020 was the lowest on record but should be considered in the context of Covid-19 and the resulting lockdown that meant there was very little angling during the spring period.

The River Deveron Summer (June-Aug) and Autumn (Sep-Oct) Rod & Line catches showed a very different trend (Figure 3), steadily increasing until the late 2000s but then fell away steeply to a record low in 2018 before improving in 2019 and again in 2020.

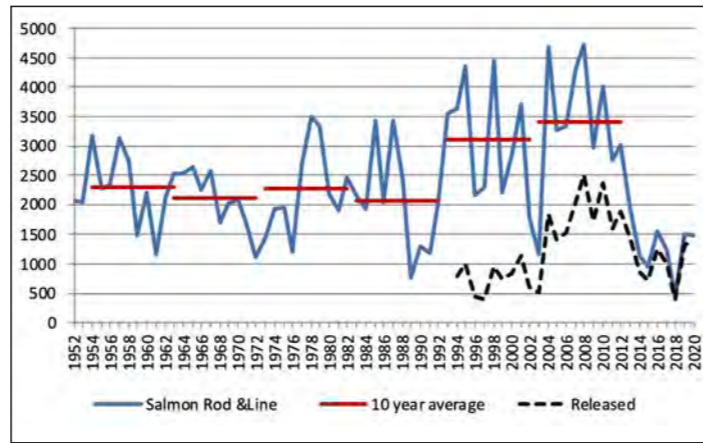


Figure 1

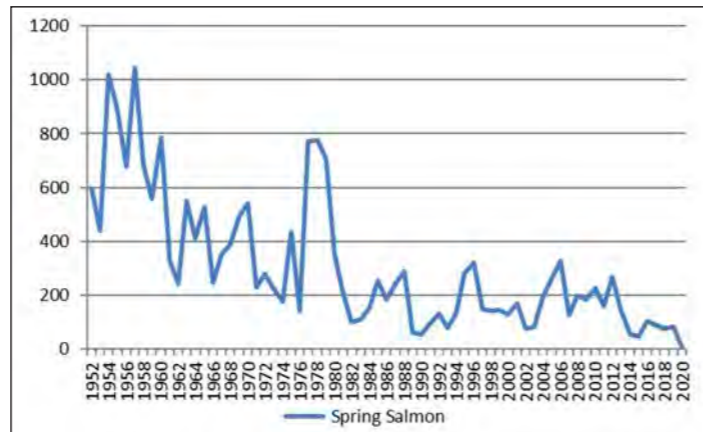


Figure 2

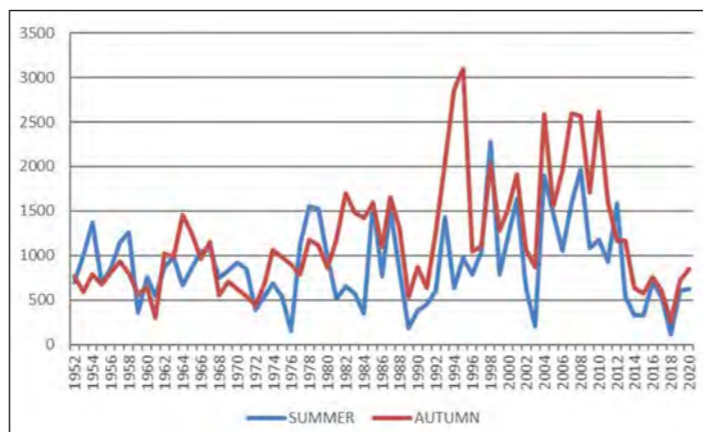
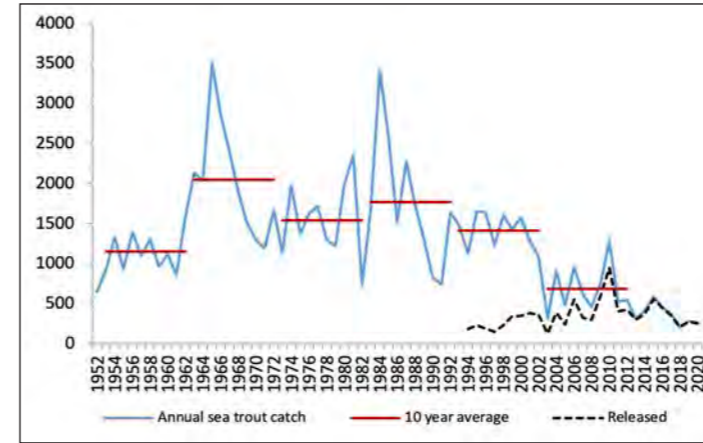


Figure 3

**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.**  
**Figure 3: River Deveron Summer (June-Aug) & Autumn (Sep-Oct) Rod & Line Catch.**

## Deveron Sea Trout - Historical

The Deveron sea trout Rod & 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 the second lowest catch on record of 317 fish. Since then, catches have remained low with the 10-year average from 2003-2012 falling to 685 fish and from 2013-2020 to 361. 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 97% of the total catch in 2020. 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 & Line Catch for the River Deveron District showing 10 year averages and the numbers released since 1994.**



Deveron Sea Trout

# Deveron District - 2020 Catches

## Rod and line

The 2020 salmon and grilse rod catch of 1483 was very similar to the 2019 catch of 1504 despite angling effort being 40% lower than 2019 due to Covid-19 lockdowns and travel restrictions. Although an improvement this is still well below the long-term average of 2384 salmon per annum (1952-2020). Of the 1483 salmon and grilse caught, 95% were returned. Spring salmon catches were significantly reduced with only 6 spring salmon caught compared to 84 in 2019. This is primarily due to the Covid-19 and resulting lockdown during March and June. All of the spring salmon were returned to the river, aided by the RDevDSFB angler reward scheme. The sea trout catch fell to 260, which is well below the long term average (1952-2020) of 1298, of which 97% were returned.

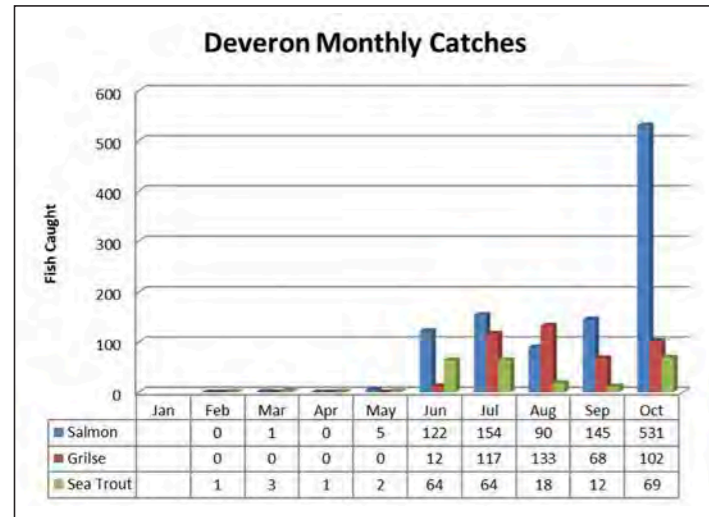


Figure 5: Rod and Line Monthly Catches 2020



The Wrack

# Conservation Code 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. The code aims to achieve a high release rate (>80%) of salmon and grilse (particularly female fish) and to protect stocks of multi-sea winter spring salmon which have declined considerably.



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. This is due to our local scale 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 2021 Angling season, the Scottish Government has again classified the river Deveron as a Category 2 river, whereby management action is deemed necessary to reduce exploitation: catch and release should be promoted strongly in the first instance. The need for mandatory catch and release will also be reviewed annually. The Water of Philorth (coastal) has been classified as a Category 3 river again, which requires all salmon to be returned by law throughout the 2021 season.

## Summary Table

Eggs required (m <sup>2</sup> ) <sup>a</sup>	Area (m <sup>2</sup> ) <sup>a</sup>	Total egg requirement <sup>a</sup>	Percentage chance meeting requirement					Overall	Grade
			2014	2015	2016	2017	2018		
2.98	3,474,900	10,355,355	69.77	74.67	87.37	83.97	45.18	72.19	2

<sup>a</sup> Figures presented are median values

Source: Marine Scotland

Category	Probability of Meeting CL	Advice
1	At least 80%	Exploitation is sustainable therefore no additional management action is currently required. This recognises the effectiveness of existing non-statutory local management interventions.
2	60-80%	Management action is necessary to reduce exploitation: catch and release should be promoted strongly in the first instance. The need for mandatory catch and release will be reviewed annually.
3	Less than 60%	Exploitation is unsustainable therefore management actions required to reduce exploitation for 1 year i.e. mandatory catch and release (all methods).



# Management Report

## Moray Firth Seal Management Plan

The Moray Firth Seal Management Plan (MFSMP) continued in 2020. 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. The Plan includes the Scottish Government's Marine Scotland, the Sea Mammal Research Unit (SMRU) from St Andrew's University, Scottish Natural Heritage, all of the District Salmon Fishery Boards from the River Deveron around the Moray Firth to the River Helmsdale and previously a limited number of salmon net fisheries. Overall, it provides for seal management for 16 rivers and 5 netting stations throughout the Moray Firth region.



Grey seal eating Salmon

Since 2013, the Spey Fishery Board (SFB) has coordinated the Plan's licence application. A 12-month licence was granted for 2020. The licence again permitted the shooting of 18 Grey seals and 0 Common seals within the plans geographic area, between 1st Feb 2020 and the 31st January 2021. Nominated and qualified marksmen carried out the licence conditions on behalf of the plans partners.

## Fishery Protection

Protecting Deveron 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 2020 the RDevDSFB continued to work closely with Police Scotland to enforce salmon and freshwater fisheries law. The partnership was proven to be highly effective especially during the Covid-19 lockdown. During March one offence took place on the Deveron and one person was subsequently reported to Police Scotland. Two incidents took place on the Deveron in April with 4 persons reported to the Procurator Fiscal for several offences. A further two incidents took place on the Deveron in June with 3 persons reported to Police Scotland. During October, 5 persons were issued warnings on the river Isla and 6 persons were charged and reported to the Procurator Fiscal. The Spey Fishery Board was also contracted in 2020 to undertake a coastal patrol to search for and seize any illegal nets. No nets were located.

## Pollution Incidents

There was a pollution incident which resulted in a fish kill on the Forgue Burn during July 2020. Trust personnel and volunteers inspected the watercourse and found visible signs of dead fish (salmonid parr) over 2km. The pollution source was eventually located with the watercourse running clear above this point and no grey matter on the bed. The incident was subsequently reported to SEPA who attended and conducted dye tests and confirmed the source as farm surface drains. The Farmer was issued with a warning letter and agreed remedial measures.

There were two pollution incidents investigated during March 2021. Trust personnel and a local SEPA Officer attended a report of fuel in the Deveron mainstem at Eden. The source was eventually traced back to a mobile diesel bowser located adjacent to a small burn / lade that joins the river at Scatteredy. SEPA issued warning and suggested immediate remedial measures. While contractors were undertaking a habitat survey of the King Edward burn system, sewage fungus was found to be present for a considerable length of the Craigston burn. The owner of the pipe which was identified as the source of the pollution was contacted and subsequently confirmed a failed filtration system. A remedial solution was put in place until new equipment can be sourced.



**Salmon Smolt**



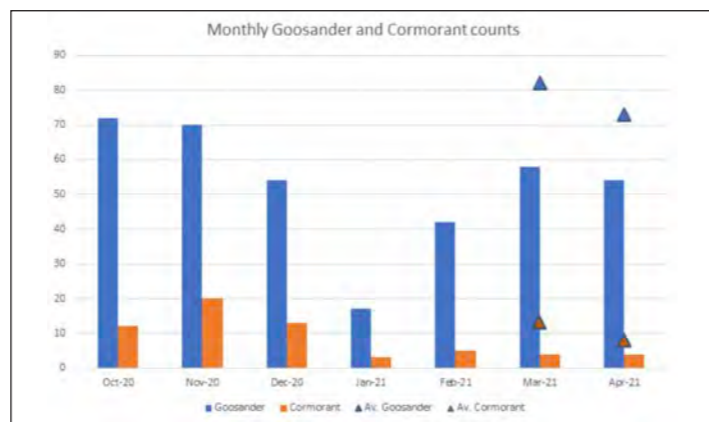
**Making Salmon Conservation a 'National Priority'**

On the 7th of January, representatives from the Deveron Board/Trust attended a seminar organised by Fisheries Management Scotland and Scottish Land and Estates in the Scottish Parliament. The event was held to address a looming crisis in wild Atlantic salmon stocks. Environmental change, and a range of human impacts across the Northern Hemisphere are placing salmon at risk across their natural range and the event explored what can be done to reverse this trend and ensure a healthy future for Scotland's iconic salmon. MSPs, fisheries managers, NGOs, ghillies, anglers and a range of national stakeholders participated in the event, which was sponsored by Michelle Ballantyne MSP, the species champion for Atlantic salmon. The opening address was given by Environment Secretary Roseanna Cunningham, who announced £750,000 for a major project between the Scottish Government, Atlantic Salmon Trust and Fisheries Management Scotland. The project will track salmon smolts from several rivers on the west coast of Scotland with a view to improving our understanding of migration routes. Dr Alan Wells, Chief Executive of Fisheries Management Scotland said, "We welcome the announcement of this funding and are very grateful for the support for this important work. Understanding the migratory pathways used by our juvenile Atlantic salmon smolts has been recognised for many years as an important knowledge gap in our management of this iconic species. "This programme of work will complement the work we are doing through the Salmon Interactions Working Group, to deliver a reformed regulatory regime for salmon aquaculture, in line with the recommendations of the Scottish Parliament Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee.

**Sawbills**

The Deveron Fishery Board continue to monitor the number of fish eating birds in the River Deveron by conducting a walked count from Banff to Huntly. The count helps DBIT both understand the potential impact of fish eating birds on juvenile salmon and trout but is also an essential step in securing the annual licence from Nature Scot to shoot as an aid to sacring.

Previously the count has been conducted only in March and April in advance of the smolt run. However, since October 2020 this has been increased to a monthly count to improve our understanding of predator numbers and their potential impact throughout the entire year. The graph below shows the number of Goosanders and Cormorants counted each month since October 2020 as compared to the average counts from the previous annual counts from March and April



**Monthly counts of Goosander and Cormorant between Huntly and Banff 2020-21 as compared to historical average counts for March and April (2010-2020).**

**Fish Passage (Isla)**

The Isla tributary flows over three weirs and a steep rock ramp all within a short 400m section in the town of Keith. These structures are cumulatively restricting the upstream migration of salmon and trout to spawn. Electrofishing data collected by DBIT and independent SEPA surveys show that the number of salmon fry upstream of Keith is significantly less than found during downstream surveys. The worst obstacle is the Glen Keith Weir which has caused adult salmon to become trapped in the past and have subsequently had to be rescued by DBIT. In the Autumn of 2020 significant numbers of salmon succeeded in climbing the rock ramp at the Linn Pot but then became trapped at the Glen Keith Weir. This area is often targeted by poachers and these fish are very vulnerable to illegal fishing methods. The DBIT were poised to conduct a fish rescue before a fortunately timed flood overtopped the weir and allowed the salmon to move upstream to spawn.

After a Fish Barrier Assessment conducted by SEPA Fish Ecologists in 2019 the Glen Keith Weir has been downgraded to impassable to salmon and trout. This new classification is reflected in the 2019 River Basin Management Plan for Scotland 2021 - 2027 that has reclassified the Isla upstream of Keith as poor. Chivas have now been issued with a letter by SEPA informing them that they have a legal requirement to install fish passage on the Glen Keith weir by 2024 in order to demonstrate the ecological improvement to achieve Good Status for fish ecology and fish barrier assessment by 2027.

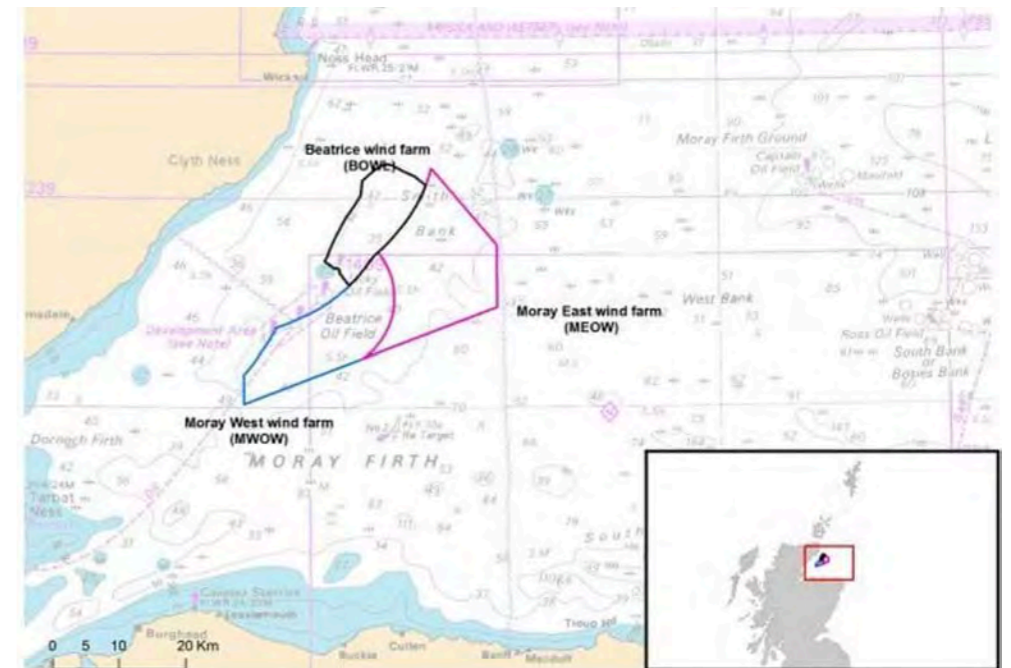
**Moray Firth Offshore Windfarms**

There are 3 offshore windfarms at various stages of completion, planning and construction in the Moray Firth.

1. Beatrice Offshore Wind Limited - has been fully operational since 2019 and consists of 84-turbines with a generating capacity of 588MW. It is situated to the NE of the Moray Firth, 13km off the Caithness Coast. It is connected to the National grid via a cable that makes landfall at Portgordon near Keith.

2. Moray East Offshore - is still under construction but when complete will consist of 100, 9.5 MW with a total capacity of 950MW. Turbines are currently being installed with the windfarm expected to be fully operational in 2022. The cable laying is now complete and comes ashore at Inverboyndie before joining the national grid at a new substation near New Deer. The underground cable was horizontally drilled under the Deveron at Inverichnie as well as 6 other smaller tributaries and burns. Following consultation with DBIT open cut ditches were used to cross the smallest waterways. Where required, DBIT have conducted fish rescues to remove fish before excavation took place.

3. Moray West Offshore Windfarm has consents in place for 85 turbines to be installed to the west of the Moray East site. The project has not yet secured a Contract for Difference from the UK Government to produce the electricity. Should the project proceed the cable would come ashore at Whitehillock before joining the national grid at Blackhillock near Keith via an underground cable.



**Source: Marine Scotland**



### **New Deveron Fishery Management plan 2020-23**

To help manage the local fisheries district in a broad and structured manner the Deveron, Bogie and Isla Rivers Charitable Trust (DBIT), in consultation with the River Deveron District Salmon Fishery Board (RDevDSFB), Deveron Scientific Advisory Board, Fisheries Management Scotland (FMS) and stakeholders, have written a new Deveron Fisheries District Management Plan (DFDMP).

The DFDMP will be delivered by the DBIT on behalf of the RDevDSFB, which is the statutory body originated by the Salmon Fisheries Act of the 19th century and has management responsibility between Cowhythe Head and the Water of Philorth. The strategy of this plan is to establish a framework for sustainable management of the districts fish stocks and to maintain and enhance the quality, extent, and status of its riverine habitats. The new plan can be viewed online at [www.deveron.org](http://www.deveron.org) under the Resources tab.

### **Deveron District Biosecurity Plan 2021-2025**

The Deveron Biosecurity plan was reviewed and updated during the final quarter of 2020. The plan outlines the current biosecurity issues of the Deveron Fisheries District and presents actions that have been agreed with stakeholders for the prevention, early detection, control, and mitigation of the introduction and spread of selected invasive non-native species (INNS), fish diseases and parasites.

### **Lower Tributaries Project**

Many of the Deveron's middle and lower tributaries have been classified as poor or bad for morphology by SEPA under the Water Framework Directive (Crooksmill, Isla, Fergie Turriff and King Edward). This is due to the historical creation of flood banks, revetments, dredging, straightening of channels removal of riparian vegetation. Through electrofishing surveys DBIT have also identified that many of these

### **Deveron Brown Trout**



### **River Deveron at Turriff**

burns have fewer juvenile salmon and trout than they could. Given the importance of these lower burns to the recruitment of salmon and trout to the middle and lower river the DBIT has identified these burns as restoration priorities. To begin understanding why these burns are not performing as they should and how to restore them. DBIT has begun conducting extra electrofishing surveys on these burns and included them in the water quality monitoring programme. Additionally DBIT commissioned C-Bec (funded by the Hill of Towie Windfarm Community Fund) to undertake a series of hydromorphological surveys on the Crooksmill to help identify potential restoration actions that will help the burn regain some of its natural river processes and habitat diversity within the limitations of existing landuse. This work is now complete and funding is being sought to take the Crooksmill restoration forward.

Similarly, on the King Edward Burn, Trex Ecology were commissioned to undertake a walked survey to understand current pressures and limits on appropriate ecological functioning within the channels of the King Edward, Craigston and Fergie Burns. A significant part of this report will be a table of practical measures that could be implemented to improve the ecological function of the system. Interestingly, during our survey work on these burns it has been observed that where the burns have been given adequate space; no dredging and the riparian zone has been allowed to naturally regenerate we have begun to see significant improvements in habitat.



### Invasive Non-Native Species & Biosecurity Programme

The Scottish Invasive Species Initiative (SISI) project started in March 2018, funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund and NatureScot. The project has completed its third year and Project Officers Karen Müller and Jack Farge have continued to strategically control Giant Hogweed across the Deveron, Ythan and Ugie catchments. A big thanks is due to land managers, who during COVID-19 and lockdown were safely out in force to control Giant hogweed on their land. From June onwards, project officers, with the help of multiple volunteers, contractors and ghillies successfully tackled the remaining hogweed across the catchments despite these challenging circumstances.

During the three months of home office in the first half of the year, the SISI project developed an online education pack 'Alien Detectives' to engage people of all ages with invasive species and the river environment. Find the free resource here: <https://www.invasivespecies.scot/alien-detectives>. Unfortunately, pesticide training courses, outreach events and educational visits were not possible in person, but some outreach events were held very successfully online - often reaching a much wider audience than previously.

The successful sheep-trial site at Auldtown came to an end in September 2019 and we are now looking to control the remaining giant hogweed on the site with more traditional herbicide methods. The new sheep trial site at Kirkside Farm, Macduff, which has been running since 2019 to assist in the control of a heavily infested area of hogweed, ran for its second year. We are continuously monitoring our progress and adjusting the grazing pressure, in partnership with the University of Aberdeen, and the interim results are promising. Over the next few years we hope to see a big change in the volume of hogweed and we will be publishing a best practice guidance document for land managers in 2022, sharing our findings and recommendations with anyone who would like to consider using sheep grazing to control giant hogweed.

We have also continued to get to grips with Himalayan balsam, which provided opportunities for larger volunteer groups, corporations and people of all ages to get involved in invasive species control in the past. While Covid-19 has made this slightly more challenging, in many ways getting out with our volunteers after a national lockdown has been extra rewarding and we managed to clear our priority areas of balsam. Japanese knotweed control was once again completed in 2020 and previously infested areas showed much improvement from 2018 when the SISI project began.

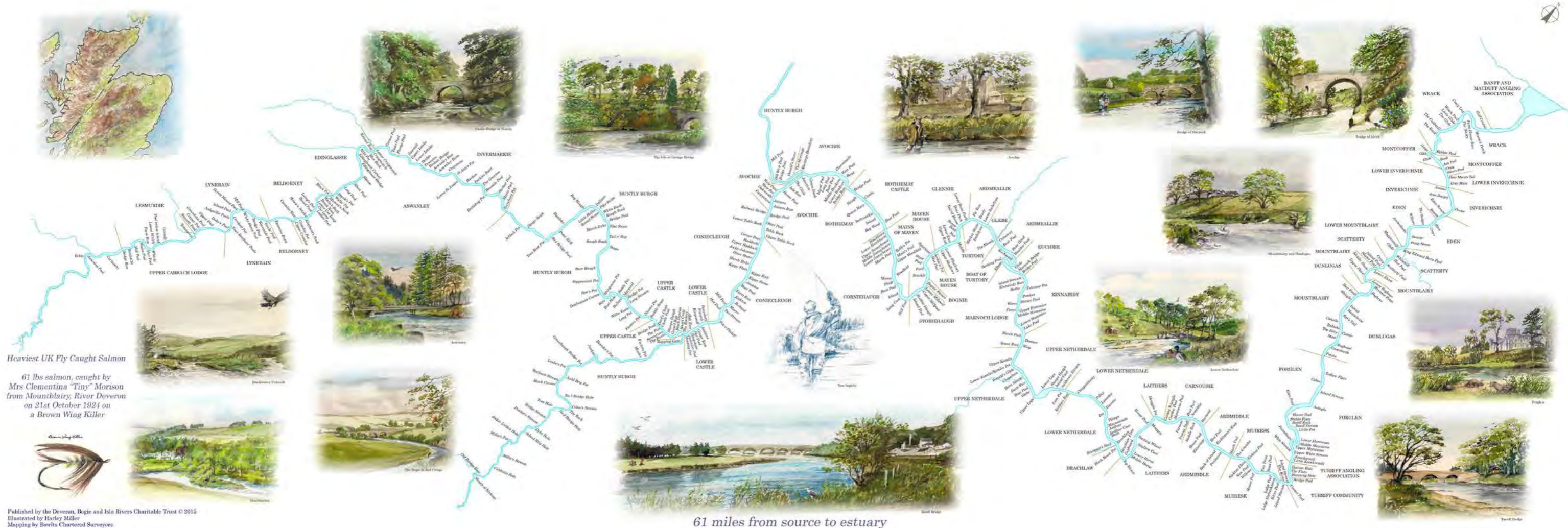


**Hogweed control continues**

American Mink trapping efforts have continued and increased, with 26 mink caught over the last year. The majority of mink were still caught in coastal areas where they appear to be thriving. Over the past two years we have been building up a network of volunteers to monitor mink traps along the coast, as well as the rest of the catchments, and help us to begin controlling their numbers in these at times difficult locations.

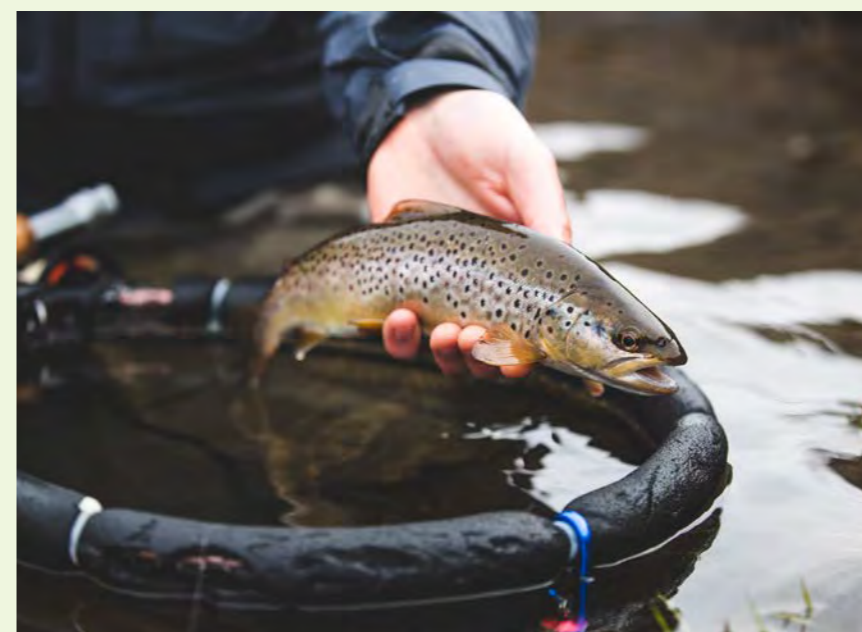
*We have updated and published our Biosecurity Plan 2021-2025, which can be accessed on our website. For 2021 we will continue to control invasive species and encourage and support local landowners, communities and volunteers to do the same. You can find out more about the SISI project and the invasive species we are controlling here: [www.invasivespecies.scot](http://www.invasivespecies.scot)*

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



## 2021/22 PRIORITIES

- Continue to collaborate with the Atlantic Salmon Trust (AST) on the The Missing Salmon Project (Tag 100 salmon smolts) and produce a science plan outlining the underlying science rationale for a combined fish counter (Sonar) and pit tagging telemetry array on the Deveron.
- Commission habitat survey of King Edward burn system.
- Continue Smolt Shepherding Programme to maximise number of smolt successfully entering the sea.
- Conclude Water Quality Monitoring Programme used to investigate pesticide intrusion and use the scientific evidence to lobby regulatory authorities and Scottish Government for remedial action.
- Continue Invasive Non-Native species control through the Scottish Invasive Species Initiative (SISI) Project.



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 [office@deveron.org](mailto:office@deveron.org) or call the DBIT on 01466 711 388 for further information.

# Research and Monitoring

## Water Quality Monitoring

Following concerns being raised about water quality in the River Deveron the RDevDSFB & DBIRT have developed a routine water monitoring strategy for the catchment working with the James Hutton Institute (JHI) in Aberdeen

Water samples were initially collected at the 3 sites on the Deveron Mainstem (upper, middle and lower) but this now been increased to 9 sites to include the 5 major tributaries (Bogie, Isla, Forgue, Turriff and King Edward). The samples are collected when run off is high (after heavy rain) and the risk of contaminants entering the river is considered to be at its highest. The samples are analysed by the JHI for; dissolved nutrients (nitrate, ammonium, phosphate), acidity, suspended sediment, dissolved oxygen and a range of pesticides including metaldehyde. Analysis of the initial samples showed moderate dissolved oxygen concentration, from a low-ish alkalinity river with no issues for pH or oxygen demand (biological oxygen demand is an indicator of organic pollution). The major elements didn't suggest any issues with metals like Zinc or Copper that would relate to toxicity and were at natural levels associated with the geology. Reactive Phosphorous (as phosphate, PO4) was low and Nitrate (NO3) which can leak out of farmland, was moderate, but not of concern.

What is of more concern is the range of pesticides that have been detected in many of the samples and appear to be routinely entering the river during high rainfall events (see Table right). This data needs to be viewed with the caveat that it is from a limited number of samples, however, it is still concerning that

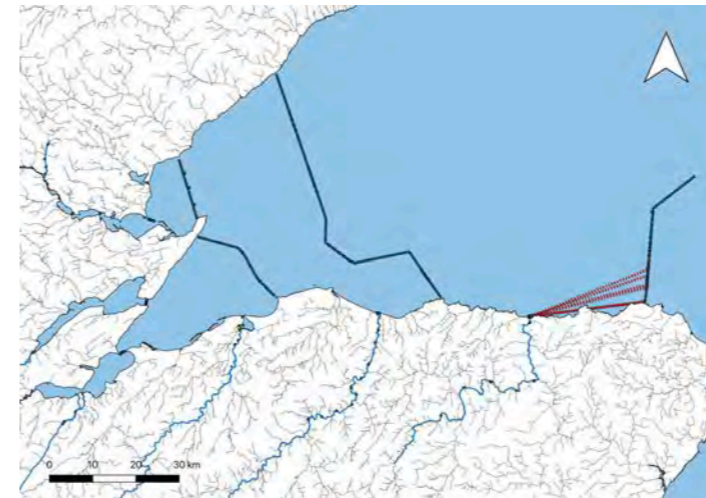
	Chlorpyrifos (pesticide)	Epoxicanazole (fungicide)	Permethrin (insecticide)	Cypermethrin (insecticide)
Jun-17 (3 Sites)	Minimal	Minimal	Minimal	Medium
Oct-18 (3 Sites)	Medium	na	Medium	HIGH
Apr-19 (3 Sites)	Medium	na	Medium	Medium
October-19 (5 sites)	Medium	Low	Medium	Low or better
July 2020 (9 sites)	Medium	Minimal	Low	NA

these chemicals are being routinely detected even if in very low concentrations. A longer term study is required to fully understand seasonal fluctuations and potential sources. Using methods developed from a longer term study on the River Ugie, the James Hutton Institute have compared the Deveron data to a system of ecotoxicological thresholds and applied categories of risk (Low, Medium and High). Despite being banned since 2016 Clorpyrifos has routinely shown up in samples at Medium Risk levels, Epoxicanazole at low levels, Permethrin at low to medium levels and of most concern, Cypermethrin, which has been detected frequently at medium levels and in October 2018 at High Risk levels.

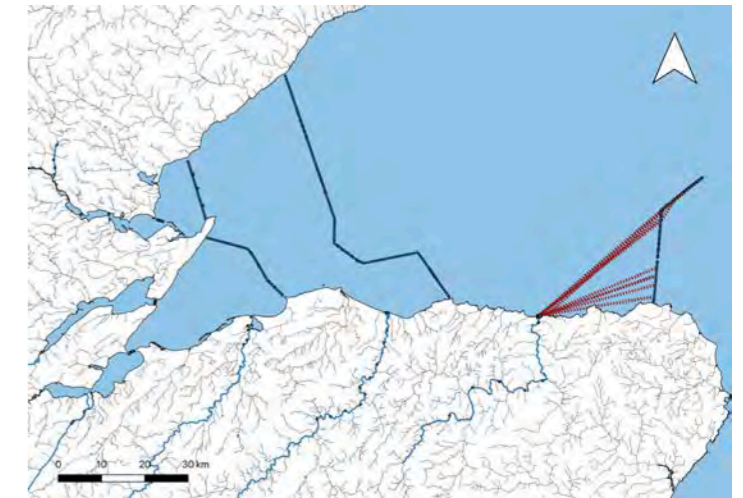
As result of this work SEPA have conducted additional invertebrate sampling at 4 sites in July and November 2019 and made the following conclusions: "Generally, Environmental Quality Standards (EQS) are set to be quite protective, and as it stands the exceedances of pesticides observed by external researchers are certainly not resulting in a mass decline of invertebrates according to our assessments." Additionally the SEPA Science & Monitoring team are rolling out a new chemical screening methodology more widely and the Deveron will be included in this work although this work has been delayed by the Covid-19 outbreak. The outbreak also reduced the activities of the SEPA Land Use Team who ceased all fieldwork apart from limited responses to pollution events once restrictions eased. The Land Use Team are due to redeploy and will be focussing on the following areas: King Edward Burn; Keithny Burn,; Cowie Burn and the area around Rhyne to ensure farm compliance.

Once the RDevDSFB has the final water monitoring results from 2020 there will be a review with the JHI to prioritise how the Board and DBIT can best work and campaign to reduce diffuse pollution and improve water quality in the Deveron Catchment.

**Highest Observed Eco-toxicology assessment using a Risk Quotient analysis by JHI.**



**Figure A. Marine migration direction of salmon smolts exiting the Deveron River, moving towards the Fraserburgh array.**



**Figure B. Marine migration direction of sea trout smolts exiting the Deveron River, and recorded at the Fraserburgh array.**

## Atlantic Salmon Trust Missing Salmon Project 2019 - extra marine migration results

In the spring of 2019, The Deveron took part in the largest acoustic telemetry project in Europe, the Moray Firth "Missing Salmon Project" led by The Atlantic Salmon Trust [www.atlanticsalmontrust.org/our-work/morayfirthtrackingproject/](http://www.atlanticsalmontrust.org/our-work/morayfirthtrackingproject/). Year 2 of the Project should have gone ahead in 2020 but had to be postponed to 2021 because of the Covid-19 pandemic. So although there are no new tracking results from 2020 we do have some extra analysis from the 2019 Project.

### Marine migration route/direction

Salmon smolts did not appear to show shoaling behaviour when exiting the mouth of the river for the marine environment. However, as the movement of the majority of the (un-tagged) smolt population was not recorded this should be treated with caution. A split pattern of direction was detected when smolts exited the mouth of the river, with two spatial clusters. Overall, the salmon smolts showed strong directional movement, heading east, north east (Figure A). This is well within the range of patterns expressed by the other rivers in the Moray Firth Study. Sea trout generally also showed a similar directional movement to salmon smolts when exiting the mouth of the river for the marine environment. This contrasts with the generally non-directional movement recorded by sea trout in other Moray Firth rivers (Figure B).

## Smolt Monitoring - Dorenell Windfarm 2019

The Dorenell Fishery Management Plan continued into the post-construction monitoring phase. This plan includes baseline water quality monitoring, fish surveys, habitat and invertebrate surveys of the Blackwater and Fiddich (Spey) that drain through the windfarm site but also includes the Allt Deveron as a suitable control site out with the wind farm area.

The final year of Dorenell smolt monitoring should have taken place in the Spring of 2020 but due to Covid-19 it was agreed between EDF and DBIT, with the permission of the licensing authorities, that this monitoring could and should be postponed until spring 2021.

**Blackwater and Dorenell Wind Farm**





**Blackwater and Dorenell Wind Farm**

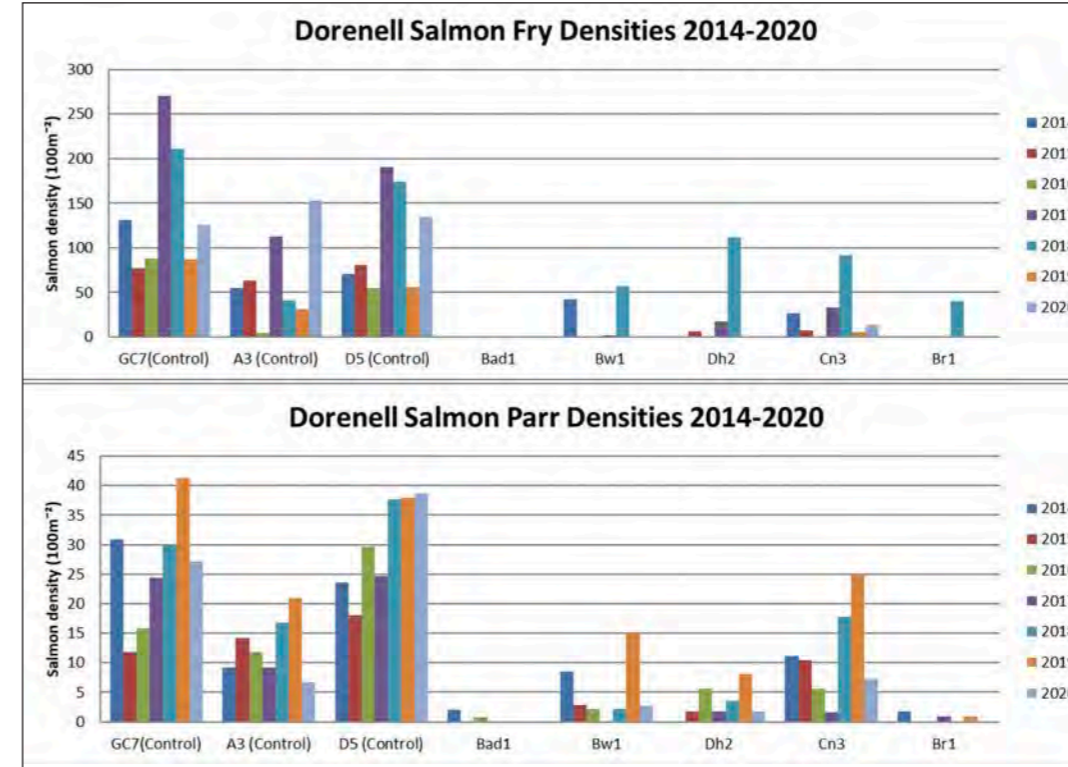
**Electrofishing surveys - 2020**

The number of electrofishing surveys conducted by DBIT were reduced in 2020 due to the Scottish Government funded National Electrofishing Programme for Scotland Survey (NEPS) being cancelled. A total of 35 Electrofishing surveys were conducted in 2020, this included: 5 main stem timed fry sites, 10 Dorenell windfarm sites on Allt Deveron and Blackwater, 10 NEPS core annual sites, 4 timed sites on Turriff, King Edward & Davidston (Isla), 2 timed sites on Forgue, 1 Bogie site and 3 coastal burn sites.

The Timed Electrofishing surveys on the mainstem only cover a fraction of the channel and so can only inform us if trout and salmon fry or parr are present or absent. From the results listed below we can conclude that successful spawning took place throughout the middle and lower mainstem in 2019 as far down as the tidal limit.

**Mainstem Timed sites** - presence or absence.

- Avochie - salmon fry and parr present
- Marnoch Churchyard - salmon fry and parr present
- Upper Netherdale - salmon fry and parr present
- Muiresk - salmon fry and parr present
- Wrack - salmon fry and parr (plus finnock) present



**Fry and Parr densities**

**1. Upper Deveron Electrofishing Summary**

- Dorenell windfarm Sites - final year of monitoring. Good year for salmon fry and parr in the Allt Deveron. The Blackwater sites are more suited to trout and although salmon fry and parr were present at many sites the densities were lower.
- The NEPS site on the Blackwater mainstem by the Blackwater Lodge had good numbers of fry and parr.
- We undertook a parr survey for the AST and found good numbers of salmon parr in the Blackwater and Allt Deveron.
- Overall, we can conclude there was good spawning in the upper catchment in 2019 and there are good numbers of parr present.

**2. Bogie Electrofishing Summary**

We conducted a 3-pass electrofishing survey on the Kirkney as this site has not always had salmon in recent years. This year we found good numbers of fry although very few parr. This suggests spawning was better in the Bogie in 2019 than in the last 2-3 years.

**3. Isla Electrofishing Summary**

- Timed sites were conducted on the Davidston, upstream of Keith and upstream of the Scottish Water weir fish pass. Salmon fry and parr present above the Scottish Water weir and upstream of the road bridge culvert fish pass. Demonstrating that work conducted by DBIRT to ease fish passage has been successful.
- A NEPS 3 pass survey was conducted at the Knackery upstream of Keith. There were very encouraging numbers of salmon fry considering the very poor habitat at this site. Previous surveys in 2018 and 2019 found no salmon fry here. This suggests that elevated water levels in autumn 2019 helped salmon over the GlenKeith Weir in 2019.
- Another NEPS site below Glen Keith weir had excellent numbers of salmon fry (better than 2018 or 2019) suggesting that although salmon did make it over there Linn Pot and weir, more spawning took place downstream possibly by fish that did not make it.
- A NEPS site in the Braco tributary of the Isla had good numbers of salmon fry and parr.



#### 4. Two timed sites were conducted on the Forgue at Conlan Mill and Mill of Pitfancy

Following a pollution incident in July, trout were present at both sites but salmon fry and parr were only present at Newmill of Pitfancy. Observations on the ground suggested the burn was recovering well following the pollution incident.

#### 5. Three sites were surveyed in the Turriff Burn.

A timed site in Turriff by the duck pond and two NEPS sites further upstream; one by the A947 and one further upstream at Cuminstown. The site in town by the boating pond had surprisingly good numbers of salmon fry. The site by the A947 has very poor habitat (selected at random) but did have some salmon fry. The site near Cuminstown was dominated by trout parr but did have salmon fry although in lower numbers. From this we can conclude that Salmon are spawning in the Turiff Burn as least as far up stream as Cuminstown.

#### 6. Three electrofishing sites were conducted in the King Edward Burn

One NEPS site near the bottom and another on the Fisherie at Bridgend Quarry and a timed sites at the restoration site at Balmaud. The King Edward system was hit by severe flash flooding in September 2019 and this has significantly altered and improved the habitat at all three sites. The lowest site is still relatively poor habitat and was dominated by trout parr but there were salmon fry and parr present in low numbers. The quarry site has changed significantly for the better with lots of good spawning gravels exposed and improved habitat diversity. This resulted in excellent numbers of salmon fry where there were no fry in 2018 or 2019. Further upstream the Balmaud timed site had salmon fry but no parr present. These results suggest improved spawning in the King Edward system in 2019.

#### 7. The Coastal burns of Philorth and Tore of Troup were also surveyed.

With salmon fry and parr found in the Philorth despite poor habitat but only trout parr were in the Tore of Troup. Trout fry were strangely missing despite good habitat. This could be because the gravel bar stopped sea trout getting into spawn but we would have anticipated some resident trout spawning.

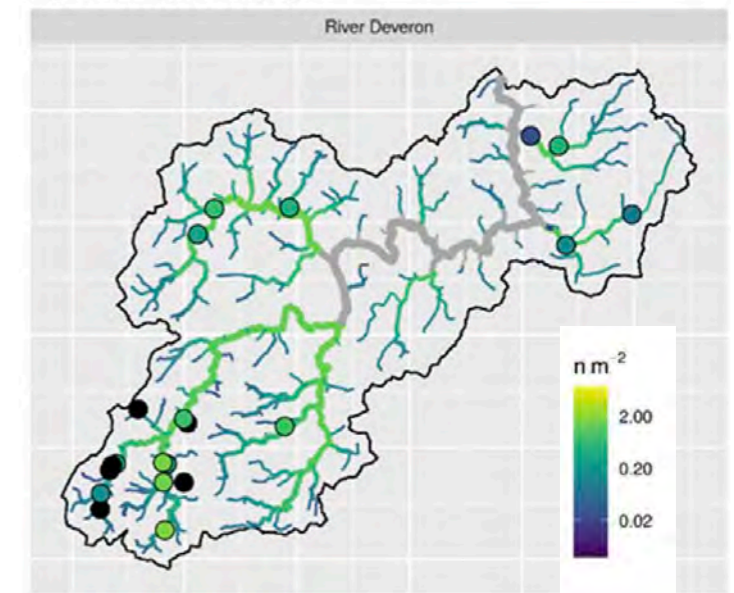
#### Electrofishing on the Blackwater



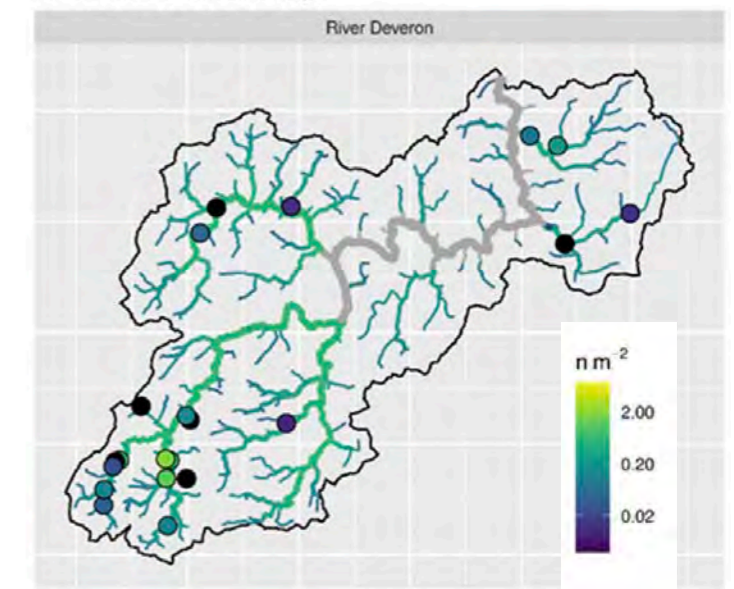
#### Catchment Overview of Electrofishing using Marine Scotland Science Shinyapp.

Marine Scotland Science have developed an application that allows us to compare our quantitative electrofishing results against a benchmark (an average expected density) for the site. From this we can look at how a site and the overall catchment are performing.

#### Fry - Observed Density



#### Parr - Observed Density



The maps above show the results from the 2020 quantitative electrofishing in the Deveron catchment. Salmon fry are shown in the top map and parr below. The colour of the river reflects the expected density for that stretch and the coloured dot the density of salmon found during the survey. Please note that some sites were in very small burns where we would not expect salmon to spawn.

The results show good fry numbers in the Allt Deveron, Isla and Bogie with densities higher than the benchmark. The King Edward and Turriff burn densities were similar or just below the expected benchmark. There were quite a few sites lower than the baseline on the Blackwater system but many of these sites were on small burns that would be better suited to the population of large trout that spawn in the Blackwater.

Overall the fry numbers were significantly improved in 2020 as result of the improved run of fish in 2019 as compared to the very poor run and extreme heat and drought in 2018 that resulted in very poor fry numbers in 2019.

Parr were found at nearly all sites apart from a few exceptions. Overall, parr numbers were not so good with most sites having lower densities than the predicted benchmark. This is a result of the poor spawning in 2018 and resulting low fry numbers in 2019.



## What do the kelts on the river bank tell us about what is happening to our salmon at sea?

Article By Dr Anna Sturrock, Lecturer in Marine Ecology, University of Essex.

It is generally well accepted that we need to try to provide our children with a healthy lifestyle and good nutrition in order for them to grow up healthy and strong. It is just the same for fish. There is growing evidence that our Atlantic salmon populations are experiencing extremely poor survival during their ocean phase. Understandably, there has been a good deal of attention given to understanding the causes of this (e.g. altered food webs, warming temperatures). What is very difficult to do is to understand how their previous experiences and behavioural 'choices' affected their lifetime resilience and their ability to survive stressful situations later in life. Here, we are starting a pilot study with Dr Anna Sturrock at the University of Essex and Dr Colin Bull at the Missing Salmon Alliance/Atlantic Salmon Trust to sample post-spawned adult salmon (i.e. 'the ultimate survivors') and then to use 'natural chemical tracers' to try to understand what they did differently to the ones that didn't make it. Specifically, a team of scientists will be analysing different chemical markers locked into the layers of eye lenses and otoliths (ear stones) to reconstruct what they ate, how old they were when they left freshwater, how fast they grew, where they went, and what temperatures they experienced. The reason they can do this, is that these particular tissues grow in layers throughout the lifetime of the fish, a bit like tree trunks and onions (see image below). As each layer forms, it locks chemical tracers into it that provide information about the water the fish was inhabiting and the food it was eating. In a nutshell, these



Kelt carcass head collection



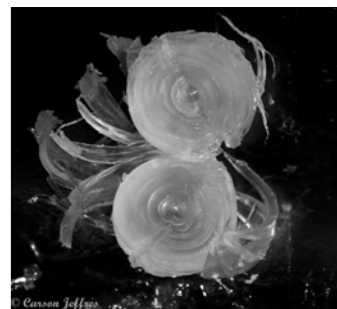
'biochronologies' allow the teams to 'look back in time' and gain unique insights into the fish's past health, growth and habitat use. At the moment we are starting with 'The Survivors', but ultimately the goal would be to also analyze a small sample of juveniles from the same cohort (sampled before they went to sea) in order to use process of elimination to work out 'who' didn't make it back. Dr Sturrock and collaborators at the University of California, Davis, have been developing these techniques with Chinook salmon in California, where the data reveal that the 'winners' can vary considerably among years. This highlights the importance of restoring a variety of river habitats in order to support diverse juvenile behaviours and spread risk in an increasingly unpredictable climate.

Importantly this project does rely on the Deveron Trust obtaining the heads from adult salmon carcasses before they are removed by otters (gruesome, we know!) so please do let us know if you spot a carcass in the water or on the river bank, even if it looks very degraded. Thank you! DBIRT collected 28 salmon kelt heads and 1 sea trout head to contribute towards this project in the Autumn of 2020.

Deveron Annual Report 2020/21



A juvenile Chinook salmon otolith that has been sectioned to reveal the daily growth rings and then lasered to analyze the chemical composition of the calcium carbonate layers from birth (core) to death (edge). In this example we were measuring strontium isotope values and 'drilling' the otolith using 40micron spots, which gave us measurements roughly every 10 days of its life. Photo credit: George Whitman, University of California, Davis.



A sectioned tuna eye lens showing the protein layers that form from birth (core) to death (edge). Photo credit: Dr Carson Jeffres, University of California, Davis. [www.sciencefriday.com/segments/salmon-eyes](http://www.sciencefriday.com/segments/salmon-eyes)

## Investigation of the predation by avian predators on juvenile Atlantic salmon

Atlantic Salmon Trust A52 Laboratory,  
School of Biology and Environmental Science University College Dublin



Predation of Atlantic salmon (*Salmo salar*) and brown trout (*S. trutta*) by birds, fish and mammalian predators has the potential to substantially impact salmonid juvenile and smolt survival. This reduced survival can, in turn, negatively affect adult returns to freshwater systems. However, both the scale and the timing of predation by these predators is little known and largely subject to anecdotal claims. It is suspected that predation on juvenile salmon and trout in Great Britain by avian predators such as cormorant (Genus *Phalacrocorax*), heron (*Ardea*), red breasted merganser and goosanders (both Genus *Mergus*) is a major cause of juvenile salmon and trout mortality. In 2020 the Area 52 research group (A52) at University College Dublin UCD agreed to undertake a pilot project with the Atlantic Salmon Trust (AST), designed to assess the feasibility of detecting salmon DNA in bird scat samples using quantitative (q)PCR species specific eDNA assays. In addition, to identify the species of predatory bird from scat samples, A52 was tasked with developing species-specific DNA assays for cormorant, heron, goosander and red breasted merganser. As the fish diet in these birds is likely not exclusively made up of salmonids, A52 was also tasked to explore the possibility of using DNA based Next Generation Sequencing (NGS) methods to elucidate the full spectrum of freshwater fish present in the diet of these birds. It might also be of interest to gain knowledge about the individual identity of avian predators to establish if these individuals are specialist predators on salmonids, or generalists, exploiting high density of prey availability at times of the year such as the smolt run. To achieve this, it is necessary to assess the potential of deploying nuclear (n)DNA markers such as microsatellites to generate profiles (identical to what is being used in crime forensics throughout the world) in order to facilitate spatial and temporal tracking of individuals or indeed families exhibiting such specialisation. Finally, to secure avian predator scat to assess avian predation on freshwater fish, A52 were tasked with training AST personnel in scat sampling and preservation, for DNA analyses. A52 would then deploy species specific eDNA qPCR assays to detect salmon DNA in scat and potentially quantify the amount of salmon DNA in scat samples collected during a salmon smolt run.



From the outset the project envisaged co-operation with local river Board and Trust staff for field sampling of goosander, cormorant, red-breasted merganser and heron scat at the focal rivers. Further, outreach and knowledge transfer were crucial to ensure local support for the goals of the project and to build an understanding of the methodology and approach. As one of the focal rivers the DBIT collected 30 samples (above) in the autumn of 2020 and more samples will be collected during the smolt run in 2021.



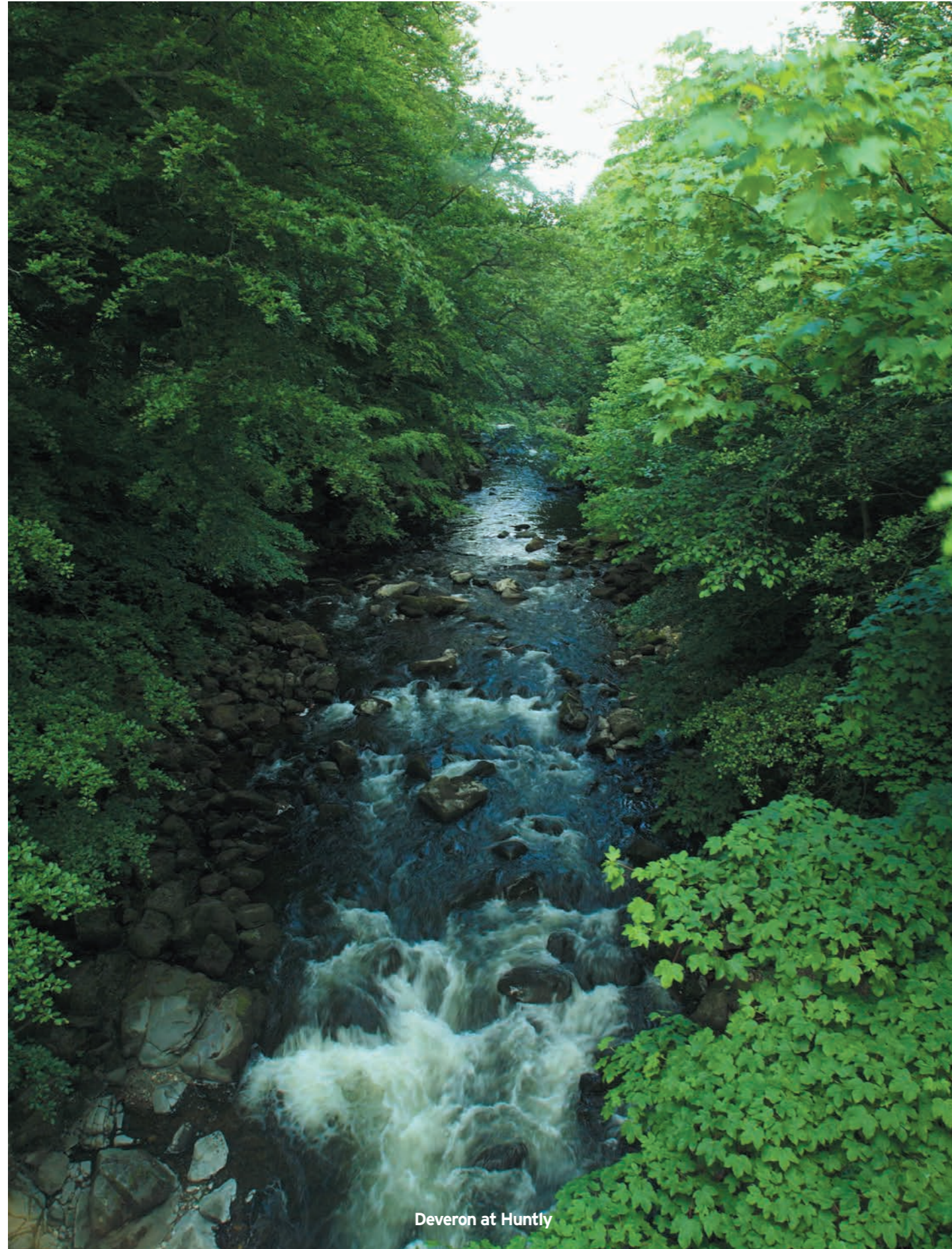
**Heron: a major cause of juvenile salmon and trout mortality**

### Crayfish Investigation

During late October 2020, a potential American Signal Crayfish sighting was reported to us by a local angler. The Trust moved quickly to investigate the sighting and applied for the 3 licences (SEPA, MSS and SNH) required to legally investigate/trap crayfish. We deployed 3 baited traps adjacent to the reported sighting location from the 3rd of Nov to 30th of Nov. No crayfish were captured. We will return to the location again in 2021 to investigate further when water temperatures are higher and additional capture methods can be deployed.

### Stock Assessment - Fish Counter

We reported during last year's annual report that a presentation was given by sonar experts Peter Clabburn and Richard Davies of Natural Resources Wales (NRW) at the September fishery board meeting. The presentation outlined the use of Sonar technology in Wales to estimate adult fish numbers and the pros and cons of the method and the different manufacturers available in the sector. The ARIS sonar, made by Sound Metrics, is currently the device that NRW use and is thought to be the most developed and best suited to fish counting in a riverine environment but is expensive to purchase. The ARIS would also take a period to set-up and a significant amount of staff time to monitor and operate. During spring 2021 we will be working with the Atlantic Salmon Trust and supporting partners to form a science plan outlining the underlying science rationale for a combined fish counter (Sonar) and pit tagging telemetry array on the Deveron. The plan will then be submitted to potential funding partners for consideration. If successful, this new instrumentation would allow not only the monitoring of salmon and sea trout smolts leaving the river but also the counting and monitoring of those that return as adults.



Deveron at Huntly

## Education and Community Outreach

### Presentation to Malcolm C. Hay

On the 21st of August we wished a warm farewell to our former Chairman of the Deveron District Salmon Fishery Board and founding member of the Trust, Malcolm Hay. Malcolm was presented with a beautiful glass bowl depicting Edinglassie house and Atlantic salmon. For 15 years Malcolm served the Deveron with his ceaseless enthusiasm, level-headedness - and, above all, his love for our river and its future.

### Newsletters and Social Media

Three editions of the Deveron Flyer were produced during 2020/21 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](http://www.deveron.org)) was updated regularly with latest board meeting minutes, news and announcements.

The Trust social media has grown considerably and platforms such as Twitter (@DBIRCT), Instagram (river\_deveron) and Facebook (DeveronBogiesla) were updated regularly by the DBIT, with latest local and national news, angling catches and opportunities, and local conservation initiatives. Summary below:

- Instagram: 0 (Oct 2018) to 1,523 (March 2021) followers
- Facebook: 902 (Oct 2018) to 2,087 (March 2021) followers
- Twitter: 934 (Oct 2018) to 1,248 (March 2021) followers



Former Chairman Malcolm Hay receiving his glass bowl

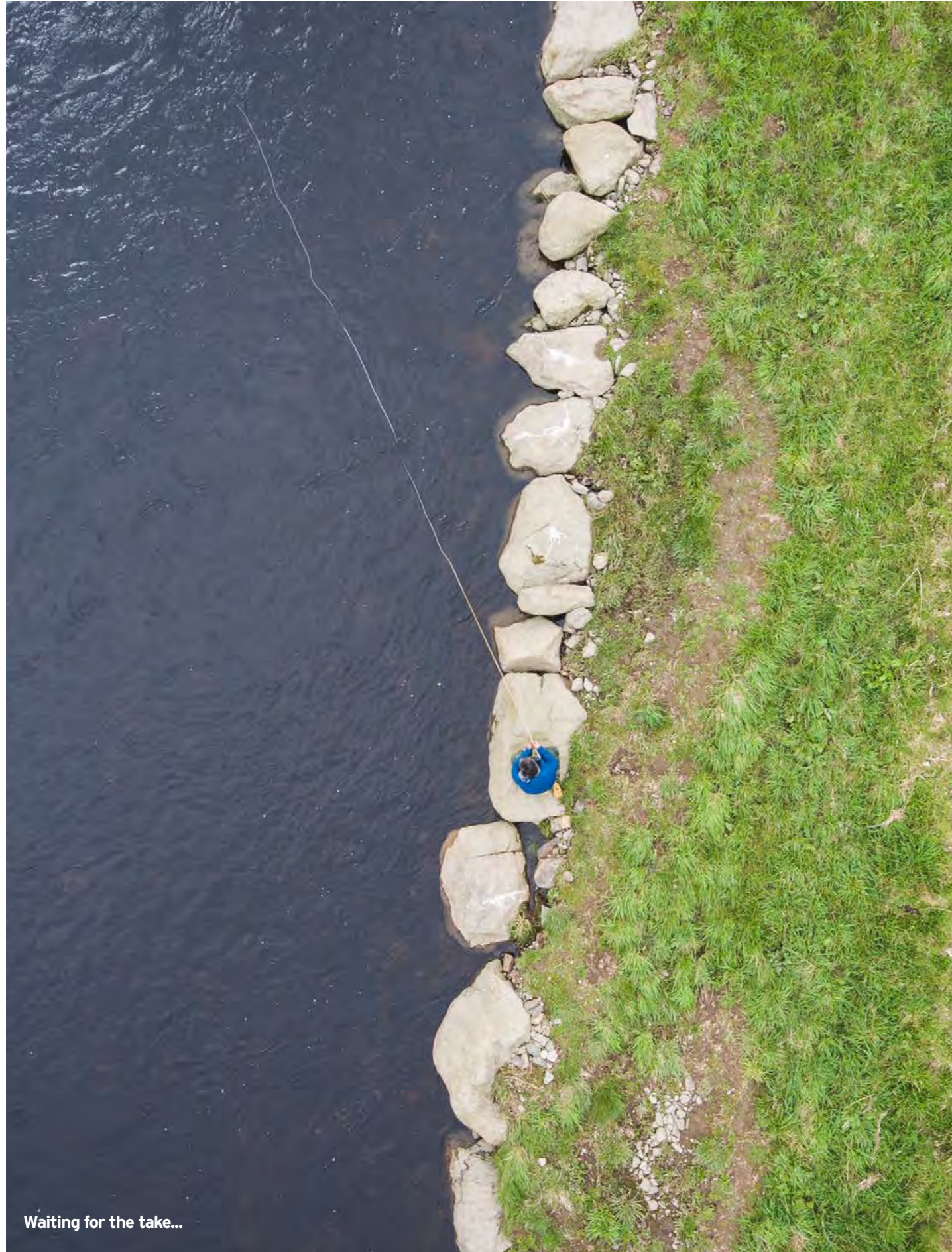


### Major Contribution Award unveiled

A new award was successfully launched in December. The award commissioned by Mr. Robert McConnell (Hon. Membership Secretary, Retd.) and supported by the Trustees of the Deveron, Bogie and Isla Rivers Charitable Trust recognises Major Contributions to our Trust and river and is open to all Volunteers, Supporters, Employees, Partners and Professionals.

The Trustees were delighted to announce Mr Richie Miller as the inaugural winner of the Major Contribution Award. Mr. Miller joined the Trust Team in 2007 and was appointed Director in 2015.

"Thanks to the generosity of Robert McConnell we now have a handsome award which recognises the huge effort that goes into looking after our river system each year. It is appropriate that Richie is the first recipient. His knowledge of all things Deveron is remarkable, and he has overseen the establishment of our Trust as a leading light in river management nationally. He is only one of a huge list of people who are dedicated to looking after our river, so I look forward to seeing many other names on the trophy in future years." - James Cruickshank OBE, Chairman.



Waiting for the take...

## Deveron Opening and the Morison Trophy

Marina Gibson (right) presented the Morison Trophy and officially opened the salmon season on the 11th Feb at Turriff Angling Association. Marina is an ambassador for the prestigious Orvis fishing company, Atlantic Salmon Trust and Fishing for Schools and has a social media following of over 60,000 people. The Morison Trophy, awarded for the heaviest fly-caught salmon of the season from the Deveron, was won by local angler, Mr Ronald Ewen. The award was given for his fly-caught 25lbs spring salmon from the Lower Netherdale beat. Mr Ewen 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. Mr Ewen made the first official cast of the season.



Mayen Trout Monster

## Deveron Reminiscences by Iain Ogden



The penurious period of student life in the early 70s led me in search of bargain fishing, and to the banks of the R Deveron. A very red and poor conditioned fish landed from the extensive Huntly AA waters was my fourth salmon ever, but it was on the fly and its capture duly noted in my flimsy fishing register. When finally in employment, I ventured further downstream to the wide choice of waters offered by George Manson from his Huntly shop. And what fine beats they were for the salmon tyro. Saturday trips to Rothiemay, Mains of Mayen, Lower Netherdale, Corniehaugh and Marnoch are all remembered fondly. One particular highlight was iced fish at Beldorney in May, how quickly springers travel. There was an appreciable spring run back in the 70s which was made evidently clear when we first fished Coniecleugh. I'd never even heard of the place when one day I met a gentleman playing a fish on the Spey at Kinermony. I innocently asked if the beat had been doing well and he completely surprised me by stating they were catching a few but not as many as his own beat on the Deveron. It transpired that the gent was Jock Brown, his brother Charles owned Kinermony and tickets for his beat Coniecleugh, could be had through George Manson. That lead was quickly pursued and we booked a week the following May. The ghillie, one George Milne, was a cheery and helpful soul and turned out to be father of Sandy Milne, head ghillie at Knockando and grandfather to Brian Milne who was ghillie at Tulchan. I'd fished with both but knowing keepering and ghillie jobs are often handed down through generations I don't suppose I was the first to have caught fish with father, son and grandson.

'I don't suppose I was the first to have caught fish with father, son and grandson'

**Jenkins Pool at Coniecleugh.**  
Photo by Andrew Higgins.



**Greenbank on Dunlugas with Mountblairy opposite, the site of Joe's lost monster fish.**  
Line drawing by Brian Naylor.

At about the same time, 1976, I saw vacancies for Dunlugas in one of the sporting agency circulars. A party was assembled and we took a week in June. Older readers may remember that was the year of the great drought which when coupled with, admittedly, inept fishing skills (clearly and without embarrassment pointed out by ghillie Peter Mitchell) it was little surprise that few were landed. Miss Lawrence, as Mrs Stancioff was then, took pity and offered a cast in September, a far more fruitful trip and we've been autumn tenants ever since. As our abilities improved so did our catches although it was from the Mountblairy bank opposite that Joe lost the biggest fish he'd ever encountered; tail like the proverbial shovel he claims.

Shortly after we took a May week at Laithers, surely the beat with the poshest hut on the whole river. More than a hut, the fisher might comfortably live there throughout the season, was this the precursor to the Tulchan lodges I wonder? Success here was somewhat limited despite the excellent attention of ghillie Ian Rattray, a gent from the old school. I remember the Turning Wheels came up trumps and an even better fish from the opposite bank, a 15lb March springer from Dracklaw.

A short while after and I was introduced to Ron Pedersen, feared maths teacher from Banff High and expert sea trout fisher of the lower reaches. At that time, I hadn't appreciated the remarkable sea trout runs for which the Deveron for justly famed, but repeated invites to Eden soon opened my eyes during Ron's prime fortnight in June. Curiously, his tackle was a 15' Walker salmon rod, a size 6 line and a number 12 Greenwell double. Armed thus he invariably landed more than most of his guests combined.

Attracted by the fame of the UK's largest fly caught salmon we took some autumn days on Lower Mountblairy, scene of Mrs Morison's 61-pounder. We'd often spied the pools from Dunlugas above



but the beat itself was unfamiliar. There's a wonderful account of its capture by Greg Dawson Allen in his Definitive Account of Mrs 'Tiny' Morison's Deveron Salmon. Local artist Mike Kitchen painted the Shaws Pool although today's view is perhaps marred by what is known as the Rainbow Bridge, a water pipeline across the river near the scene of the great fish's capture. Mike is a keen angler who I first met fishing Park on the Dee before he moved to Wood of Shaws, his one-time studio directly above the famous pool.

Finally, we arrived at Forglen, the river's premier beat and previously only viewed with envy as I drove past its hallowed pools on the way to Dunlugas. Fervent participation at a Salmon & Trout Association auction secured Tom Reid and I three precious and eagerly anticipated days in September. George Abel looked after us, but regrettably the fish weren't as enthusiastic as our auction bidding. I landed but one fish, from the Banff Stream. Here, the river runs into the celebrated Banff Rock below, named after Lord Banff who lived in the rather forbidding mansion which overlooks this part of the river. This pool probably accounts for more big fish than any other on the Deveron and scrutiny of the old records of the Abercrombie family reveal no less than three in the 40lb bracket and a host of 30-pounders. The largest, one of 45lbs caught by Douglas Abercromby in 1910 can be seen pictured with his ghillie in the Morrison hut, alongside a cast of the fish. One of 42½lbs was caught by George Abercromby in 1877 and the third sockdolager was a 40lb specimen landed by ghillie Jonathan Taylor in 1940.

My research has shown there are at least two other monster Deveron fish in the history books. But unlike the four described above both of these have an air of mystery about them. The first, and possibly the river's second largest fish, is Lt-Col Scott's 56lb fish caught in 1920 (possibly) from an unknown beat although the distinctive architecture of the adjacent house in the old newsclip photo below may give a clue? Mrs Stancioff thought it might be Eden House.

I have two references to the second enigmatic fish, a 45lb specimen from Dunlugas in 1924 (the same year as Mrs Morison's 61lb record fish) although surviving estate records don't go back that far.

**Looking upstream at the Turning Wheels with the Herons in the distance. Andy Innes Aerial Photography.**



**Mike Kitchen's painting of the Shaws Pool, Mountblairy.**



**WITH THE 56-LB. SALMON CAPTURED LAST OCTOBER ON THE LAST DAY OF THE DEVERON (OR BLACKWATER) SEASON: LIEUTENANT-COLONEL A. E. SCOTT.**



**Lord Banff's Stream and Rock with Forglen House in the distance. Andy Innes Aerial Photography.**

However, a close examination of historic sales particulars of Dunlugas clearly make mention of its capture as did Sir George Abercromby in his season-end summaries in the Forglen register.

Some of the ghillies I've mentioned here are with us no more but I'd like to acknowledge two who've looked after us for many years now, namely, Fred Dempster at Dunlugas and Robert Cardno at Forglen. Their company on the river is always looked forward to with great anticipation.

#### **Biography**

*Iain Ogden first began fishing seriously while studying in Aberdeen in the early 1970s, permits for local association waters being available through the very active University Angling Club which proved a great distraction to academic distinction. As a microbial biochemist at Torry Research Station and the die of pursuing salmon and sea trout having been firmly cast he ventured further afield to the R Deveron, and has now been a September tenant at Dunlugas for 45 years as well as a regular on Forglen. He also fishes the Dee, Spey, Findhorn, Naver and Orkla in Norway.*



## 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 km<sup>2</sup> 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.

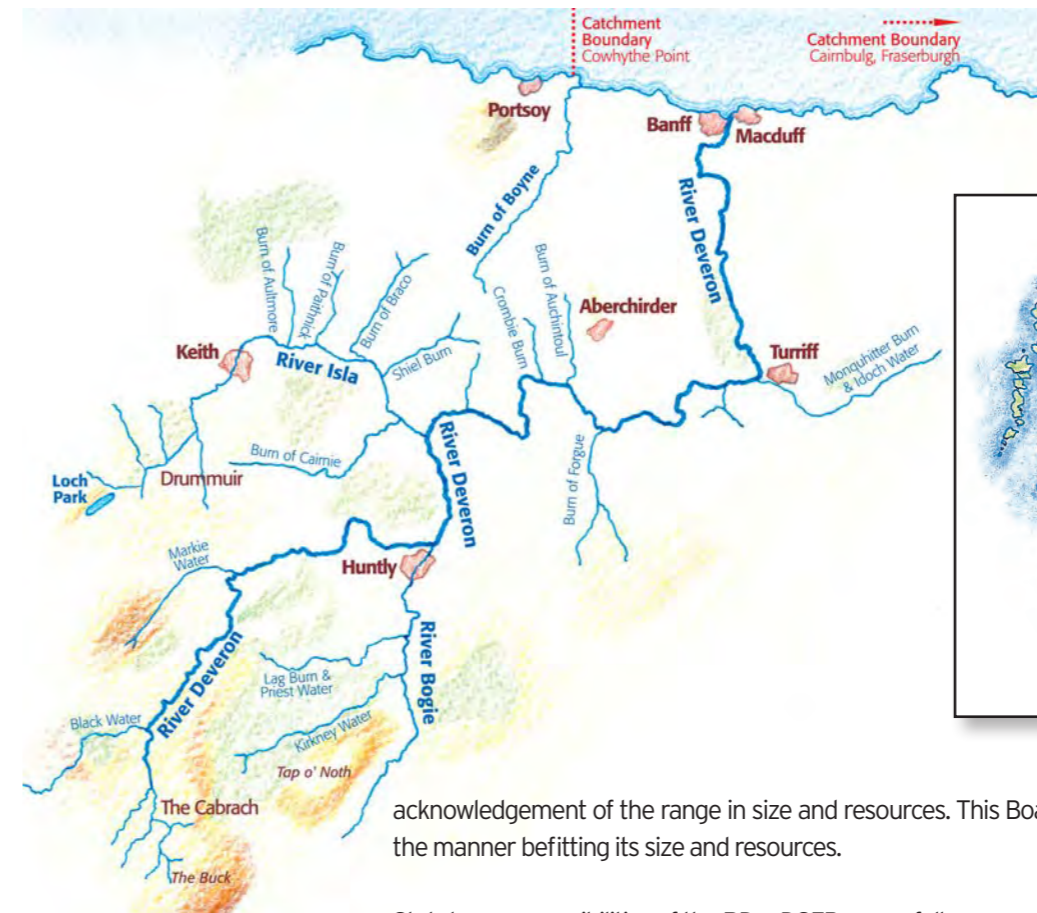
### Meetings

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](http://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 2021 will incorporate a public meeting although further meetings will be held in open session and advertised on [www.deveron.org](http://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](http://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](http://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 2021

## STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES

	Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	31.3.21 Total funds	31.3.20 Total funds
	£	£	£	£
<b>INCOME FROM:</b>				
Donations and legacies	52,547	47,940	<b>100,487</b>	141,392
Charitable activities	58,463	-	<b>58,463</b>	89,846
Other trading activities	10,788	-	<b>10,788</b>	26,109
Investments	-	3,462	<b>3,462</b>	3,965
Other income	-	-	-	-
<b>Total income</b>	121,798	51,402	<b>173,200</b>	261,312
<b>EXPENDITURE ON:</b>				
Raising funds	11,068	-	<b>11,068</b>	15,916
Charitable activities	124,272	47,940	<b>172,212</b>	213,200
Other	715	-	<b>715</b>	756
<b>Total resources expanded</b>	136,055	47,940	<b>183,995</b>	229,872
<b>Net Income/(outgoing) resources</b>	(14,257)	3,462	(10,795)	31,440
<b>Other recognised gains and losses</b>				
Revaluation of tangible fixed assets	-	15,669	15,669	(7,541)
<b>Net movement in funds</b>	(14,257)	19,131	4,874	23,899
<b>Fund balances at 1st April 2019</b>	181,641	121,111	<b>302,752</b>	278,853
<b>TOTAL FUNDS CARRIED FORWARD</b>	<b>167,384</b>	<b>140,242</b>	<b>307,626</b>	<b>302,752</b>

## BALANCE SHEET

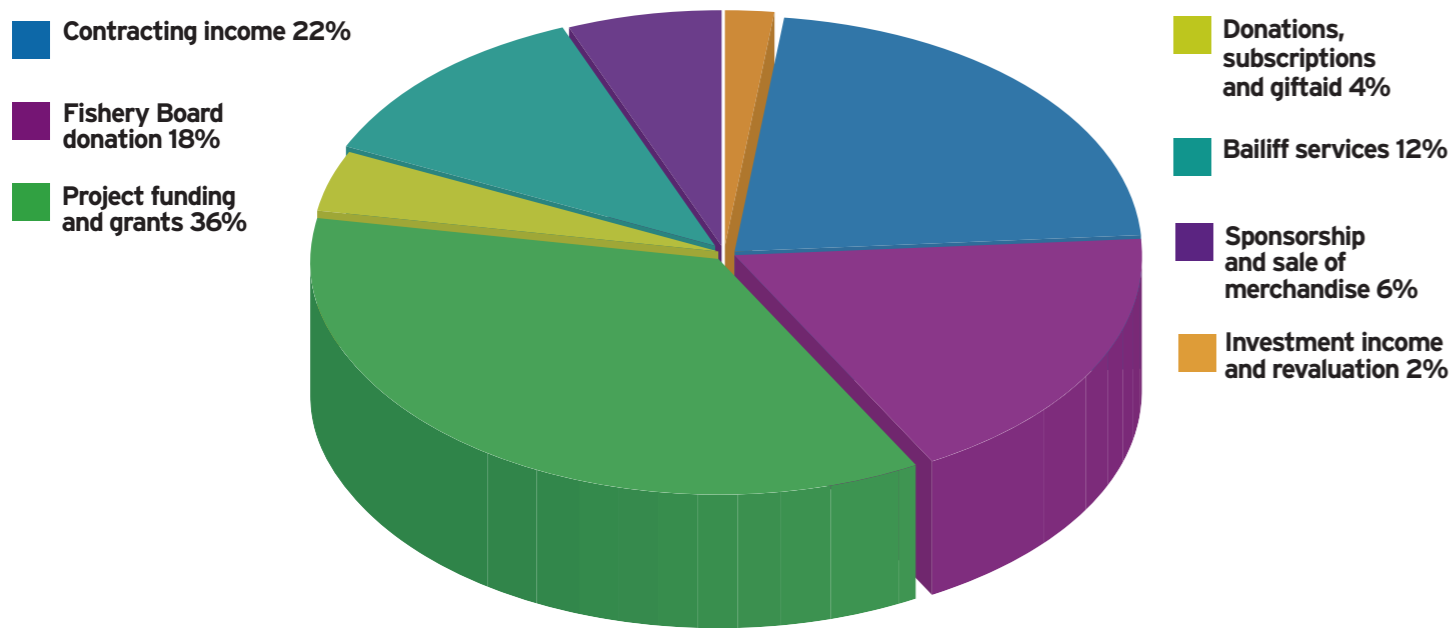
	31.3.21		31.3.20	
	£	£	£	£
<b>FIXED ASSETS</b>				
Property, plant and equipment		<b>35,707</b>		43,737
Investments		<b>140,242</b>		121,111
		<b>175,949</b>		164,848
<b>CURRENT ASSETS</b>				
Inventories	-		7,941	
Trade and other receivables	<b>11,970</b>		18,415	
Cash at bank	<b>128,797</b>		125,006	
	<b>140,767</b>		151,362	
<b>Current liabilities</b>	<b>(9,090)</b>		(13,458)	
Net Current liabilities		<b>131,677</b>		137,904
<b>TOTAL ASSETS LESS CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>		<b>307,626</b>		302,752
<b>Income funds</b>				
Restricted funds		<b>140,242</b>		1121,111
Unrestricted funds				
Designated funds	<b>21,603</b>		8,363	
General unrestricted funds	<b>145,781</b>		173,278	
		<b>167,384</b>		181,641
<b>TOTAL FUNDS</b>		<b>307,626</b>		<b>302,752</b>

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](http://www.deveron.org)) following the Annual General Meeting.

# The Deveron, Bogie and Isla Rivers Charitable Trust accounts

Year ended 31st March 2021

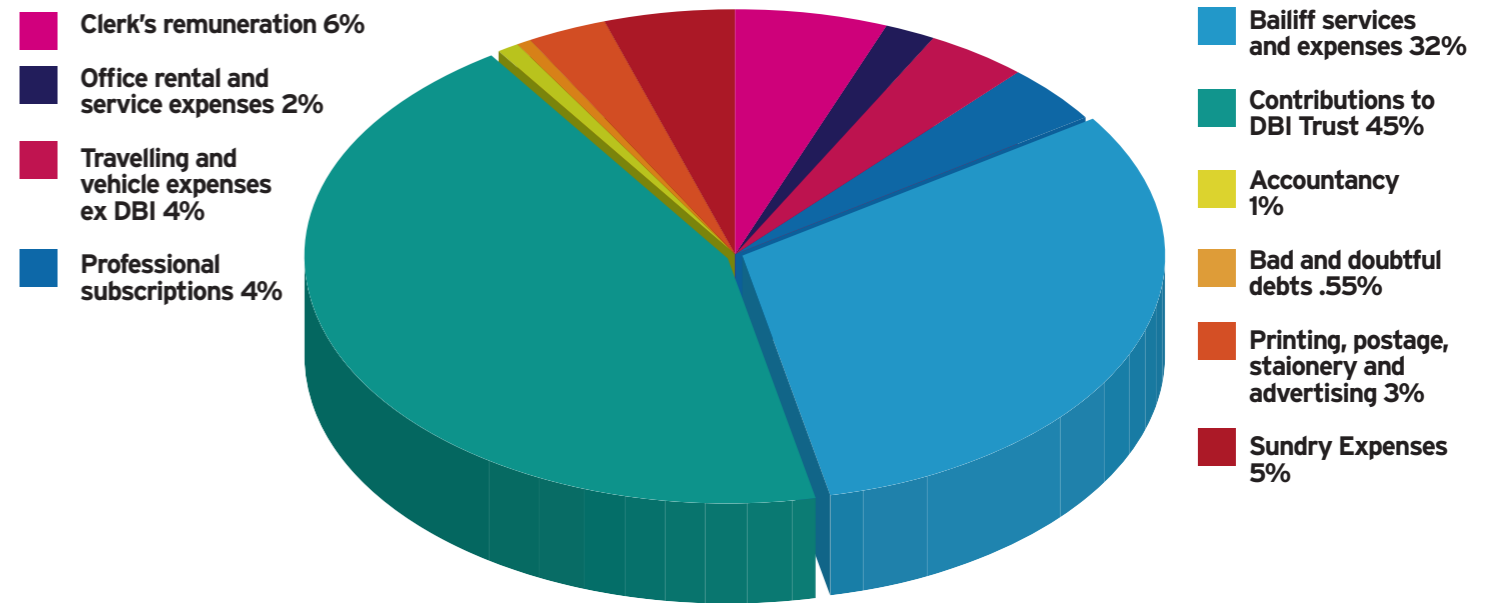
## Income April 2020 - March 2021



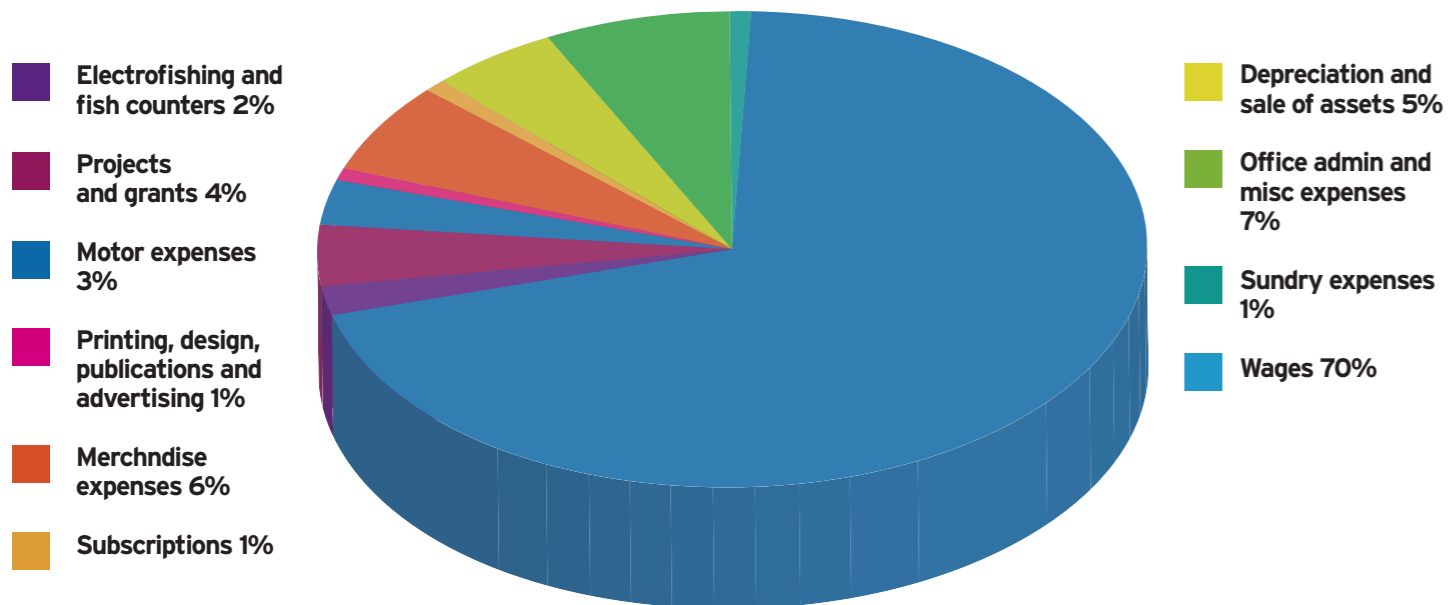
# The River Deveron District Salmon Fishery Board accounts

Year ended 31st March 2021

## Expenditure April 2020 - March 2021



## Expenditure April 2020 - March 2021



# The River Deveron District Salmon Fishery Board accounts

Year ended 31 March 2021

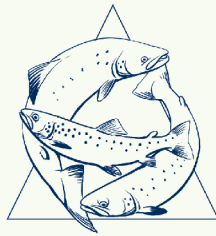
## INCOME & EXPENDITURE

	2021	2020
<b>INCOME</b>		
Assessment Income (42p in £)	71,711	73,540
	<u>71,711</u>	<u>73,540</u>
<b>EXPENDITURE</b>		
Clerk's Remuneration	4,070	3,853
Communications officer	-	-
Office rental and service expenses	1,105	1,105
Board meeting expenses	-	654
Travelling and vehicle expenses ex DBI	2,529	2,596
Deveron management plan	-	-
Professional subscriptions	2,519	615
Bailiff services and expenses	22,725	22,063
Contribution to DBI Trust	31,500	31,500
Accountancy	658	700
Postage, Printing, Stationery, Advertising and Telephones	1,975	2,887
Sundry expenses	3,187	3,247
Bad and doubtful debt	388	786
	<u>70,656</u>	<u>72,166</u>
<b>(DEFICIT)/SURPLUS ON GENERAL FUND</b>	<u>1,055</u>	<u>1,374</u>

## BALANCE SHEET

	2021	2020
	£	£
<b>CURRENT ASSETS</b>		
Cash and cash equivalents	38,241	35,766
	<u>38,241</u>	<u>35,766</u>
<b>CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>	<u>(2,120)</u>	<u>(700)</u>
<b>NET CURRENT ASSETS</b>		<u>36,121</u>
		<u>35,066</u>
<b>General Fund</b>		
Balance brought forward		33,692
(Decrease)/Increase for the year	1,055	1,374
		<u>35,066</u>
<b>Total General Fund</b>	<u>36,121</u>	<u>35,066</u>

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](http://www.deveron.org)) following the Annual Meeting.



## The River Deveron District Salmon Fishery Board

The Offices, The Stables, Avochie, Huntly, Aberdeenshire AB54 7YY Tel: 01466 711388

# Deveron Angling Code for Salmon and Trout 2021

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 statutory regulations and guidelines throughout the season:

### **SALMON & GRILSE**

**From 11th February to 31st May (Inclusive) all salmon to be returned**

**It is illegal to take any salmon (dead or alive) from 11th February to 31st March (inclusive) each year**

The River Deveron District Salmon Fishery Board will donate one bottle of Scotch Whisky per angler, for safely returning a spring salmon between the 1st April and 31st May (Follow set claim procedure and Call 01466 711 388 to claim - strictly over 18s only).

**From 1st June to 31st October (Inclusive), weekly rods may retain one salmon or grilse per rod per day with a maximum of one per rod per week. Day rods to return all salmon.**

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.

### **SEA TROUT**

**All sea trout to be returned throughout the season**

The guidance on sea trout will be in place until stocks recover to acceptable levels

### **BROWN TROUT**

**From 15th March to 6th October (Inclusive), all Brown Trout under 10 inches in length to be returned. No more than 2 brown trout per rod per week to be retained.**

**It is illegal to fish without legal right or written permission from the beat owner or representative**

**It is illegal to kill unclean or unseasonable fish (baggots, gravid fish, kelts)**

**It is illegal to sell or buy wild salmon roe**

**It is illegal to attempt to deliberately foul-hook fish**

**Only knotless landing nets to be used - it is illegal to use gaffs or tailers**

**It is illegal to fish with prawns, shrimps or salmon roe throughout the catchment and throughout the year**

**Fishing for salmon and/or sea trout on a Sunday is prohibited**

**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 must be handed to the proprietor**

**All farmed salmon and pink salmon (*Oncorhynchus gorboscha*) must be retained and notified to the RDevDSFB**

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



The Offices  
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