

YTHAN DISTRICT FISHERY BOARD

Annual Report of the Clerk and Water Bailiff for 2014 Fishing Season

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River Ythan Trust Report

1. **State of the River**

Once again Ranunculus has been present this year on AADA / Ellon / Ramornie / Esslemont and Auchmacoy. The Ebrie and Bronie Burns were affected. Anglers of the Auchmacoy beat at The Meadows cleared most of the weed.

2. **Predators**

We have a licence to shoot seals above the Logie Buchan Bridge but none were shot and no seals were seen up to the Waterside Bridge. However, plenty seals at the mouth of the Ythan estuary.

Several traps were set for mink at the Ebrie, Methlick and Fyvie. No mink caught this season.

The Board applied for a licence to shoot cormorants, meganders and gooseanders but this was refused. There were few birds causing damage and these were scared off.

3. **Costal Nets**

Port Errol netting station has had several problems with bad weather. The Bailiff visited Cruden bay on several occasions to confirm that the sea state was too rough for the fishermen to go to sea. The owners let any fish that were captured out of the nets and back into the sea. The season was not very good for Salmon and Grilse fishing as the weather was often a problem.

4. **Nets on the Coast and River**

Now owned by USAN. No netting took place this season.

5. **2014 Season**

River catches have been poor this season on the river. The exception was the Ythan estuary where catches of Sea Trout were very good. Quite a lot of Finnock have come up the river in the last few weeks of the season.

Generally the Finnock and Sea Trout were in good condition. The majority of Sea Trout were put back into the river. All Finnock were returned to the river.

Salmon were scarce although some were caught at The Meadows, Ellon / AADA / Ellon water. Some did manage through further up river but not many were kept.

The season extension produced a limited number of fish. A number were caught in the Fyvie district where few if any fish were caught in the fishing season.

A full report of catches will be produced for the Annual Meeting in January.

6. **Spawning**
Spawning was good on the Little Water / Bronie / Ebrie/ Fyvie / Rothienorman / Rack Burn / Foveran Burn.

7. **Stocking**
Sea Trout fry from the River Carron were put in the river i.e. Foveran Burn / Rack Burn / Bronies Burn. This was due to pollution from Brewdog, Ellon and a contribution by them to cover the cost .

8. **Seals**
No seals above the Ythan Bridge at Newburgh. The Ythan District Fishery Board has a licence to shoot seals above Logie Buchan Bridge – none seen or shot. The count of seals at the Ythan estuary in mid-November, revealed that there were more than 1,000.
A licence to control seals during 2015 has been applied for. This will cover seals In the river upstream of the estuary SSSI/NNR.

9. **Season Extension**
The Ythan District Fishery Board was granted an extension by two weeks. Not many anglers took the opportunity to fish. Several Salmon, Sea Trout and Finnock were caught and all returned to the river. The two weeks' fishing ended on 15th November 2014. The last season for this permitted extension is 2015 but this will need to be applied for. The low numbers of anglers fishing during the period will make the validity of the experiment less valuable

10. **Vehicle and Communication**
The new Skoda and phone both working well. The Skoda needs no road tax and is very economical on fuel.

11. **Board Staff and Honorary Bailiffs**
Alexander (Sandy) Milne is the full time River Superintendent. He has served the Board for 40 years and remains committed to the task. Mark Andrew is the part time Clerk.
Steven Main, Craig Main and Michael Troup help in looking for poachers in the dark nights. Craig also helps with electric fishing and several times with jetting the spawning beds at Little Water and Fourdon Burn. Their help is very much appreciated.

12. **Sea Poaching**
No poaching on the coast of the Ythan this season.

13. **Jetting of Spawning Beds**
Some jetting was done in areas above Hayhillock to near Auchnagatt early in the season. Later on, Ranunculus was growing near Arnage upstream.

14. Pollution / Obstructions

Dave Basford has not taken out the sandbags near Mill of Elrick in compliance with the decision by the Reporter to his appeal against the restriction of the permitted volume of water through the hydro-electric system at Mill of Elrick. As a result, this is preventing Sea Trout and Salmon getting up to spawn in all but high water conditions which, fortunately have applied since October. This is, however, an ongoing saga which SEPA is to sort out. The burn must be opened to let fish move upstream in all normal water conditions.

We still have had pollution problems on:

- Foveran (fish kill) (oil)
- Brommies (silt) marine subsea
- Bronie (tractor / car accident (oil in burn)
- Ellon Sewage Plant, Ellon (grey coloured water)

New School – Ellon

There is still a problem of flooding at the Meadows close to where the new bridge is going to go to the new school.

15. New Fish Pass

The bridge on the road at Auchnagatt on the Ebrie Burn has had a fish pass made by Aberdeenshire Council. It looks absolutely super. No doubt fish will get up through the metal round bridge. There is a series of steps attached to the bridge. The bridge is finished and now allows Salmon and Sea Trout up.

16. Mill of Leask

The bridge at Mill of Leask (Forvie Burn) is now finished.

17. Electrofishing

Electro fishing of Kelly burn and The Bronie burn at Esslemont and Chapelton was carried out to support the work of The River Ythan Trust.

18. River Ythan Trust

The Bailiff congratulated all those concerned for their work to the Ythan Trust, with special thanks to Alec Patterson, Mark Andrew, Richard MacDonald, Jim Adie, Michael Stewart and also Nikki for his help to Alec. His work is very much appreciated. Well done Alec. The report from the Trust is attached as an annex to this report. The Board does not provide financial support to The Trust save using the Clerk's office (Thanks to The Marquess of Aberdeen) for meetings. Both Sandy Milne and Mark Andrew are volunteer directors / Trustees of The Trust.

19. Conservation Policy

The Board has adopted a conservation policy since 2008. This has been updated annually and places restrictions on the numbers of fish that can be caught and kept. The 2015 Policy appears on the website and was sent out to all Proprietors in November 2014.

20. Complaints Handling

The Board has adopted a Complaints Handling Procedure which is available from the Clerk and will shortly appear on the website.

21. Members Interests

The Clerk will keep a register of financial interests of all members of the Board and any person associated with the Board.

22. Activities for 2015

The Ythan is vulnerable to diffuse pollution from the agricultural activities in the District and to accidental pollution from farms, industrial estates, development and housing. Previous incidents have been numerous and led to significant fish kills.

The Board staff will continue to monitor the river for pollution and to support SEPA with any subsequent action,

The Board will encourage anglers to abide by the Conservation Policy and will ensure compliance with Scottish Statutory Instrument 2014 no 327 – Conservation of Salmon (Annual Close Time and Catch and Release) (Scotland) regulations which requires all fish caught from 11th February to 31st March to be returned alive at to the river.

Board Staff will carry out electro fishing surveys (conditions allowing) in support of surveys being undertaken by The River Ythan Trust.

The Board will support Aberdeen University and SNH in monitoring and surveying seals within Forvie NNR. This includes work to establish the proportion of salmonids in the diet of seals. Scottish Government has been unwilling to provide financial support for this work.

The Board will continue to work with SEPA in all cases of pollution or CAR licensing failures.

Board staff will continue to monitor the river for poaching or angling without a permit and to carry out coastal patrols and to work with Police Scotland to protect the river against illegal activity.

Board staff will continue to liaise, monitor and inspect netting activity to ensure compliance with weekly close times and to ensure that nets are compliant with statutory conditions.

The Board will continue to collect catch data from anglers and proprietors.

23. Personal Comment by Sandy Milne

I thoroughly enjoy my work, I am in good health and would love to continue as Water Bailiff for at least another year. I have advised the Clerk to the Board accordingly. Here's hoping next season will be a better one.

YTHAN DISTRICT FISHERY BOARD

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YTHAN CONSERVATION CODE 2015 SEASON

General Rules.

- All kelts, coloured fish, salmon and sea trout parr, smolts, and brown trout under 10 ins. must be returned carefully to the water.
- All salmon caught before the 31st May must be returned carefully to the water.
- All salmon of 32" or more must be returned carefully to the water.
- All sea trout caught after 30th September must be returned carefully to the water.
- All finnock (immature sea trout) must be returned carefully to the water.
- All foul hooked fish (hooked behind the head) must be returned carefully to the water.
- No rod caught fish to be sold. (It is illegal in Scotland to sell rod caught salmon or sea trout.)

Bag Limits (Fish killed) Over the Entire River by Any One Angler.

- Bag limits are not targets; anglers should only retain fish they will use.
- Anglers are encouraged to return fish. (Especially hen fish.)
- Annual bag limit for salmon and grilse (combined total) shall be 4 fish.
- Daily bag limit for salmon and grilse (combined total) shall be 1 fish.
- Annual bag limit for sea trout shall be 4 fish.
- Daily bag limit for sea trout shall be 2 fish.

Baits and Lures.

- No live or deadbait (other than worms) to be used.
- Barbless or de-barbed hooks are recommended.
- Only one treble hook per lure is recommended.

Fish Landing Equipment.

- The use of gaffs and tailers is not permitted.
- Only knotless landing nets are permitted.

Handling and Returning Fish

- Treat fish with care and respect.
- Fish should not be lifted, otherwise unsupported, by the wrist of the tail, or damage to the spine may result. Similarly holding up fish by the gill covers may well inflict mortal injury.
- If fish are to be kept, dispatch them quickly with a forceful blow from a suitably hefty instrument.
- Fish to be returned should be held firmly and unhooked quickly, using forceps.
- Fish to be returned to the water should be carefully supported, head to the current, and held until recovered sufficiently to swim free. (This may take several minutes.)

Ythan District Fishery Board

Detailed Statement of Financial Activities
for the Year Ended 25 July 2014

	25.7.14	25.7.13
	£	£
INCOMING RESOURCES		
Voluntary income		
Income	40,859	40,624
Sums paid to cover pollution	5,950	-
Other Income	<u>-</u>	<u>2,623</u>
	46,809	43,247
Investment income		
Deposit account interest	<u>10</u>	<u>5</u>
Total incoming resources	46,819	43,252
RESOURCES EXPENDED		
Governance costs		
Accountancy	900	1,095
Other resources expended		
Wages	25,892	25,562
Re-stocking & Habitat Expenses	3,810	557
Subscriptions	<u>1,049</u>	<u>1,033</u>
	30,751	27,152
Support costs		
Management		
Travel Expenses	163	-
Honorarium for Clerk	2,675	2,585
Insurance	586	644
Honorarium for Bailiffs	350	350
Telephone	706	698
Office Expenses	905	1,049
Sundries	52	460
Licence and Insurance	1,093	919
Repairs	512	253
Fuel	1,885	2,013
Other Motor Expenses	<u>-</u>	<u>1,483</u>
	8,927	10,454
Finance		
Bank charges	146	142
Hire Purchase Interest	<u>305</u>	<u>302</u>
	451	444
Other		
Motor vehicles	<u>2,109</u>	<u>2,813</u>
Total resources expended	43,138	41,958

This page does not form part of the statutory financial statements

Ythan District Fishery Board

Detailed Statement of Financial Activities
for the Year Ended 25 July 2014

	25.7.14	25.7.13
	£	£
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Net income	<u>3,681</u>	<u>1,294</u>

This page does not form part of the statutory financial statements

REPORT ON RIVER YTHAN TRUST ACTIVITIES 2014.

Debris Obstacle Removal and Easement

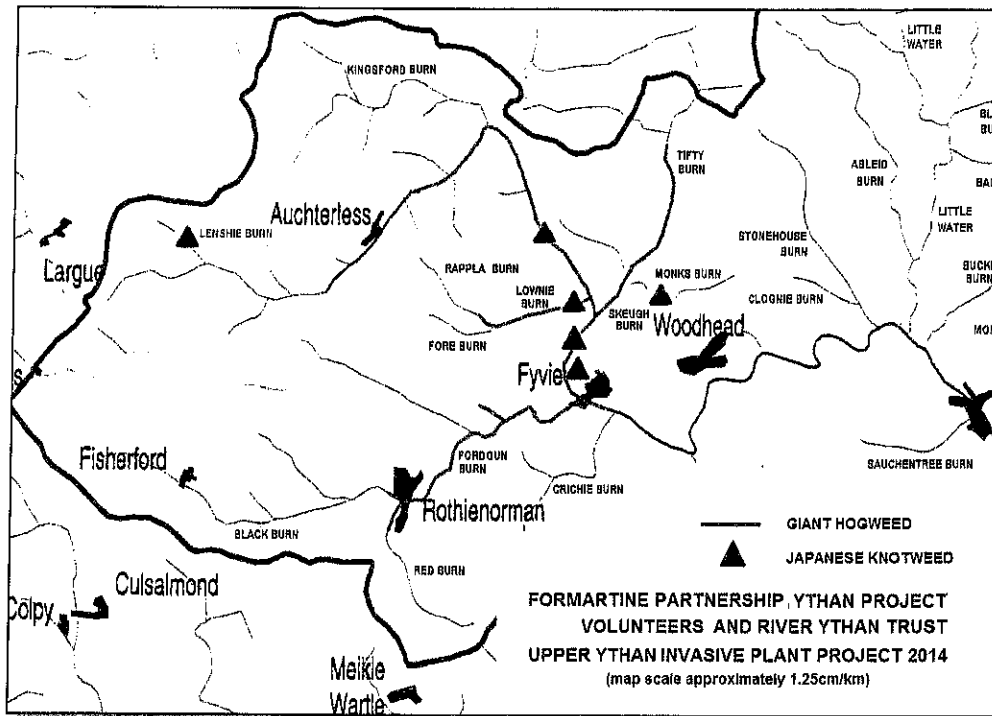
- Some work was carried out on the Asleid Burn (tributary of the Little Water), Fordoun Burn and the Ythan main stem at Fyvie, mainly removal of fallen trees and bushes.
- It was intended to carry out more work in late October and November but very high water levels made this impracticable.

Mill of Elrick Abstraction. Ebrie Burn.

- We monitored the abstraction on a number of occasions in November and December 2013 and also carried out a redd counting and mapping exercise from 2 miles below the abstraction to 1.5 miles above it.
- A report was prepared and included in our objection to Mr Basford's case at the public enquiry held at Ythanbank in April 2014.
- Mr Basford's case was rejected and he was instructed to rectify the matter by late autumn 2014.
- A recent check (November 2014) revealed work not carried out, however the Ythan District Salmon Fishery Board are pursuing this matter with SEPA.

Invasive Non Native Riparian Plants.

- All invasive non - native riparian plants in the Ythan catchment had been identified and recorded by the end of December 2012, but unfortunately since the trust did not exist when the RAFTS organised scheme started funding, and continues to fund all other local trusts to help control the plants, we were excluded from joining the scheme.
- Determined to try to do something, we became involved with the Ythan Project Volunteers, who had some funds and prepared an application on behalf of the Formartine Partnership for funding from Aberdeenshire Council for a pilot project of control on the upper Ythan.
- We prepared budget costs, identified equipment, PPE equipment, chemicals and dye and also prepared the documentation required by SEPA.
- We identified all tenants or proprietors and obtained their permission for the areas to be treated.
- The Ythan Project Volunteers purchased all equipment, PPE, other consumables, and hired a qualified pesticide spraying operator to lead volunteers in time for the practical work to commence in May 2014.
- The 2014 project involved spraying all invasive non - native riparian plants (Giant Hogweed and Japanese Knotweed) on the Ythan, Fordoun, Lownie, Rappla Skeugh, Tifty and Monks Burns, from Fyvie upstream, 15 miles of waterway, equating to 30 miles of riverbank
- In order to try to eliminate these plants the work will have to be repeated for a further 5 – 6 years.



YTHAN INVASIVE NON NATIVE RIPARIAN PLANT CONTROL AREA 2014.

- Time expended by our volunteers organising assisting in spraying, control, and finalising the 2014 phase of the project amounted to around 26 man days.
- In the fullness of time, if not treated, Giant Hogweed (current lower limit at Gight) will affect riverbanks all the way downstream to Ellon.

Haddo Lake Outfall Project 2013/2014.

Background Information.

- In the 19th and 20th century up to 1979 the grounds and lake in the Haddo Country Park was owned by Haddo Estate - it was then transferred to Grampian Regional Council to form the park.
- At that time there was no provision for fish passage on either of the two outfalls, although in the 18th century and perhaps the first years of the 20th century, the bailiffs employed by Haddo Estate may have removed the stop logs on the north east outfall in autumn to permit fish migration.
- Following an inspection of the lake in 1986, required under the Reservoirs (Scotland) Act, the north east outfall was modified, making it much wider and extremely shallow, making fish passage almost impossible.
- Electro fishing in the period 1996 – 2011 found no juvenile salmon above the lake, although small numbers were found downstream.
- The conclusion was made that both outfalls were an obstacle to upstream fish migration.
- It was decided that nothing practical could be done to improve the north central outfall, therefore we decided to look to improving the north east outfall

Aberdeenshire Council. (Owner of the lake.)

- As individuals, a few anglers have been trying since as far back as 1989 (following the 1987 works) to have the problem of fish passage improved, with little success.
- Towards the end of 2013 we had a meeting with Aberdeenshire Council's Landscape Services Officer, Brian Shand, regarding the situation – the outcome was that if we could find an affordable solution, Aberdeenshire Council might be prepared to part fund the project.

North East Outfall Surveys, Design and Contract Agreement.

- We carried out full dimensional surveys and fish passability study.
- Produced detailed design and construction drawings for the installation of weirs to create pool and weir fish passage facilities.
- We produced a budget estimate for the proposal on the basis that the River Ythan Trust and Inverurie Precast Ltd would provide all labour and construction plant free of charge, with Aberdeenshire Council reimbursing the hire of the large pump to bypass the work area, all fuel and materials at net cost.
- This proposal was accepted by Aberdeenshire Council, and a contract was placed with Inverurie Precast Ltd, with River Ythan Trust volunteers providing free labour.

Construction Phase

- Pre start site meetings and the site works were carried out in the period 21st August – 12th September, including 16 days working on site.

Project Summary.

- Several bodies have been instrumental in making this project possible, firstly Aberdeenshire Council for their cooperation and provision of funding for materials etc. Haddo Estate for providing access and boulders, Jim Adie and Inverurie Precast Ltd for free provision of plant and equipment and around 1 man week of their staff time, and SEPA for assistance in preparing the rather complex CAR Licence applications.
- The River Ythan Trust and their volunteers have provided around 65 man days of their free time devoted to the project since autumn 2013, without their work, nothing would have been achieved.
- We now have confidence that salmon will, given typical autumn water levels, have access to a further 14km (9 miles) of useful habitat that has been almost inaccessible to them for at least 25 Years, perhaps longer.
- Our habitat survey of 2012 indicated that a fish pass further upstream on the Keithfield Burn may be an obstacle to fish migration – if this is the case, and can be resolved, access to a further 11km (6 miles) may be achieved. This potential obstacle will be surveyed in the next few months.

2014 Green Butterfly Award.

In recognition of our work we were awarded this award by the Aberdeenshire Environmental Forum

- Award of the Green Butterfly Award in recognition of practical works to combat the spread of Invasive Non Native Plant Species in the Ythan catchment, (undertaken with the assistance of Ythan Project Volunteers and Formartine Partnership and with some additional financial support from Aberdeenshire Council Formartine Area Committee), and also recognising works undertaken to improve fish passage at Haddo Lake (Haddo Country Park) to spawning beds in the Kelly, Raxton and Keithfield burns (with support from Aberdeenshire Council, Haddo Estate and Inverurie Precast Ltd) all to the benefit of the Aberdeenshire environment.

Salmon in the Classroom.

Background Information.

- This is an educational project for primary schools that has been run by several trusts, including the River Don Trust, following the development of salmon ova to fingerling stage within an aquarium in the classroom environment.

Funding.

- These schemes were originally funded via Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) to purchase the tanks, pumps, filters and the most expensive component, the chiller units to keep the water temperature below 12°C – the ova will develop too quickly at higher temperatures.
- Unfortunately, by the time the River Ythan Trust came into being, austerity measures were such that SNH had ceased funding these educational projects.
- We have been trying for some time to gather together sufficient funding to purchase the necessary equipment; fortunately in the last few months sufficient donations have been provided by **Chevron, Ythan Community Council, Greenspan Energy and Farrans Construction**, to obtain equipment.

School Presentation Information.

- We were given permission to adapt the PowerPoint presentation and other information used by the River Don Trust and Don District Salmon Fishery Board – this has been modified to suit the Ythan, and is ready for use.
- The schools presentations will be carried out by Dr Mark Young, one of our directors.

Project Duration.

- For us, this is a pilot project for two primary schools and will run until from January to April/May 2015, at which time pupils will release the fry into a stream in their local area.

GENERAL FUNDING.

- For the last two years no funding has been received from Scottish government, Scottish Environment Protection Agency, Scottish Natural Heritage or via the Rivers and Fisheries Trusts of Scotland
- Since 2012 we have and continue to rely on voluntary contributions; we are very grateful for this support from the individuals and companies in the Ythan catchment area.
- Lack of any confirmed long term funding makes forward planning difficult, however we are making the best use of any funding received – everything is carried out by unpaid volunteers.

Wild Fisheries Review and the Future for the River Ythan Trust

- If the recommendations of the review are adopted by the Scottish Government, the trust and the Ythan District Salmon Fishery Board will within the next two or three years, possibly with other fishery boards and trusts (at this time details unknown) become a local fishery management organisation (FMO).
- For everyone, uncertain times lie ahead.

Alec Paterson. Secretary. River Ythan Trust. 9th December 2014.