

Association of Salmon Fishery Boards Rivers & Fisheries Trusts of Scotland

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CBC House, 24 Canning St, Edinburgh, EH3 8EG Tel: 0131 272 2797
asfb.org.uk - rafts.org.uk - asfb@btconnect.com - callum@rafts.co.uk

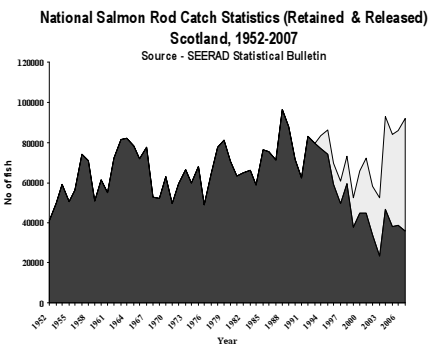


ASFB

2007/8 Season — The statistical bulletin for salmon and sea-trout catches was published in September and it reported that 2007 was the 3rd highest salmon catch on record at just over 92,000 fish. After a relatively poor spring and another late and patchy grilse run it would be fair to say that these figures are probably partly a result

of exceptionally good angling conditions due to the wet summer and autumn of 2007. This demonstrates the need for caution about drawing conclusions from catches in any one year. The 2008

season started with a better but not startling spring, followed by some excellent runs of late spring / early summer fish in many east coast rivers. The grilse run was again late though fish, this year, appeared to be, if not large, then in better condition. The grilse and summer run picked up throughout another wet summer (barring the North West) and the autumn fishing appears, at the time of writing, to have been solid. East Coast rivers (bar the Tay) have done well this year, the Spey particularly. Sea-trout catches remain very disappointing, except in the Firth of Clyde, and the Association has urged all members to take account of this depressing trend when setting catch and release policies for 2009. The West Coast sea-trout runs were, as they have been over many years now, very poor and grilse runs suffered quite severe gaps in the run in the middle of the summer. Although an exceptionally dry summer influenced catches in the far north west, there is little doubt that the bulk of the West Coast grilse run was simply missing. The River Awe barrage counter which has shown steady counts over the last decade was, by the end of the season, down about 1500 fish (50% of 5 yr avg). The reasons for this are not clear although the Lochy, which has been recovering in recent years, is still experiencing its consecutive year cycle that is completely consistent with high sea-lice levels on farms in the second year of the two year cycle of aquaculture production. This cycle, now in its fifth incarnation is mounting evidence of a fairly serious impact by sea-lice in consecutive years.



ASFB News — The following are a series of short news items on key fisheries management issues for 2008/9:

Mixed Stock Fisheries — The Strategic Framework for Scottish Freshwater Fisheries outlined a 'priority for action' to examine the future of Scottish mixed stock fisheries. The Association has long held the view that these fisheries should be decommissioned to bring Scotland into line with international policy on salmon exploitation. Following the partial closure of the North East and the closure of the Irish Drift Net Fisheries, attention is now on Scotland to make progress on the mixed stock fishery issue. A dedicated working group, including representation from the net fishing industry, is currently meeting to look at the issues and options and hopes to report towards the end of 2009.

Stocking Guidance — The ASFB has produced, with advice from RAFTS, a Stocking Guidance Policy which it is expecting its members to adopt. The document reflects growing concerns about the importance of managing discrete genetic populations of salmon and the Trusts and Boards are currently working on a nationwide genetic analysis project to try and 'map' the main salmon populations in each system in Scotland with a view to, in due course, managing and exploiting these stocks in a more rational and effective way. The guidance contains a presumption against all stocking between rivers and major tributaries except in very particular circumstances (eg. highly depleted stocks). It also urges extreme caution in broodstock selection and strongly recommends that any stocking takes place using stock taken from as close to the origin of the fish as possible.

Wind-farms — The current rash of wind-farm applications has raised important issues for Fishery Boards and Trusts which the Association has been developing policy on. The first of these is the potential conflict of interest that Board members may have as potential developers and the need to absent themselves from decision making. The second is



to have a robust decision-tree in place to establish what risks the development may present salmon populations. Because of the highly politicised nature of windfarms, fisheries issues can be used as a reason for

objection. The Association has been working on a policy that will allow Boards to make risk assessments relating solely to the statutory function of the Boards and not to any other issues such as landscape etc. The impact of windfarms is likely be at its most damaging during construction but there may be long term impacts on hydrology, particularly on sensitive soil types and there are further issues to do with the cumulative impacts where there may be several developments proposed in a single catchment. These policies will be refined over time as we gain more experience of these developments. But one thing is clear, Boards must oblige developers to put in place proper pre, during and post development monitoring programmes so that it is possible to establish what these impacts are, and the costs of these must be covered by the developer.

SEPA Restoration Fund — The Association, in conjunction with RAFTS, is in the process of bidding for funding to help deliver local projects tackling obstacles to salmonid migration. SEPA have, under the provisions of the Water Framework Directive, significant funding over the coming years to aid the restoration of watercourses. One of the initial priority areas for this will be to support schemes that ease fish passage and remove barriers to fish migration. As such, fishery boards and trusts will play an important role in bringing forward proposals to the scheme based upon local knowledge and understanding of barriers present and which could usefully be removed or improved for fish.

Beavers — The Association is continuing to maintain opposition in principle to the current plans to introduce beavers on a trial basis, though discussions with SNH and the Minister, Mike Russell, are scheduled. A trial at Knapdale has now received Ministerial approval, and the first introductions are expected to take place in spring 2009. The key reason for the Association's position is that one of the stated objectives of the Knapdale trial is to "generate information that will inform a potential further release of beavers at other sites with different habitat characteristics". There is therefore a likelihood of further trials elsewhere in Scotland where interactions with migratory salmonids is very likely. The 3 key issues of



concern to the Association are: the potential for beaver dams to inhibit the movement of migratory salmonids; the modification of riparian habitats to the detriment of salmonid fish populations; and concerns about the difficulties of controlling beaver populations once established. The Association has

gathered evidence from Europe and Canada demonstrating that negative interactions do occur between the two species. Basic modelling work on the Tweed catchment indicates that beaver dams could have a serious effect on fish migration and spawning, particularly in dry autumns. The Association intends to present this information to SNH and the Scottish Government with the intention of working with them to try and better understand these impacts and how they might be addressed.

Training issues & the Institute of Fishery Management (IFM) - IFM and the Association will continue to collaborate on various training matters in the future. It has been agreed that there is scope to bring on board the Scottish bailiffs as members of IFM and use the resources of the Association to help realise that. All DSFBs will be asked to enrol their bailiffs as IFM Scottish Branch members – ASFB believes that this will help keep all bailiffs fully 'in the loop' on fishery management issues and will also ensure that there will be a mechanism to allow the bailiff network to contribute effectively to, and influence the work of IFM. The ASFB will shortly be planning the detail of next year's Bailiff's Conference. This will be held on Deeside and the date and venue will be agreed shortly (likely to be March). As is customary, the IFM bailiff examination will be convened at the same time. Full details will be circulated shortly to all Boards, bailiffs and others.

Gyrodactylus salaris — The Association, with helpful assistance from Scottish Government, is currently helping member Boards address gaps in provisions relating to GS prevention. This is to assist with riverbank signage and disinfectant supplies in time for the 2009 season. Further work concerning awareness-raising is ongoing and all Boards will continue to be asked by the Association to maintain vigilance and ensure as much publicity is given to GS as possible. This will be monitored annually via the annual



return from Boards to the ASFB. It goes without saying that GS has and remains one of the biggest potential threats to Scotland's salmon fisheries which could make redundant all the hard work of many years. Keeping GS out of Scotland is our first priority but a contingency plan has been prepared by the Scottish Government should the parasite be identified in Scottish rivers. The GS Task

Force has done some excellent work on this area. It is now essential that all Boards and proprietors do everything in their power to put in place, and be seen to be putting in place, effective measures to ensure that the parasite does not get a foothold in Scotland. Whilst the response has been good in some places, there is clearly a lot more work still to be done to keep up the awareness of how disastrous GS would be if it arrived in Scotland. The Association therefore is extremely keen to see all its members rise to this challenge.

Anglers' Conservation Association (ACA) - The ACA is now operating effectively in Scotland with an interesting case load ranging from pollution incidents in North Ayrshire to escapes of farmed fish in Argyll. We are now planning for the ACA to provide more general legal advice for the Boards and ASFB in 2009. The idea behind this is that, given Boards' statutory powers and the power of the various EU Directives, there may be opportunities to try and underpin some of the more routine work that Boards are involved in with some legal force. On top of this the ACA will be preparing legal briefings and running legal workshops to acquaint Board members better with some of the issues and opportunities that may present themselves. We hope to employ a part time solicitor in Scotland next year in association with the ACA and trial some ideas about how Boards might more effectively use their powers.

Website — ASFB and RAFTS are in the process of rebuilding their respective websites in partnership with a company called Initiative2. It is hoped to have both sites fully active as soon as possible with a view to placing on it a wide range of briefings, literature and policy papers for wider perusal.

Rivers & Fisheries Trusts of Scotland

Working with Scottish Natural Heritage:

American Signal Crayfish — RAFTS has just signed a Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) with SNH to undertake work to further assess and determine the distribution of American Signal Crayfish in Scotland. This alien species is an unwanted newcomer to Scottish waters and steps to prevent its further spread and to contain the populations which already exist are challenges to us all. This work, which will involve a number of RAFTS members, will help to ensure the extent of current populations is known so that measures of control can be considered and properly assessed.

Freshwater Pearl Mussel — Over the summer RAFTS and a number of its members have been completing work under another MoA with SNH; this time to assess fish populations



in sites designated, at least in part, due to the presence of freshwater pearl mussels. This work will be reported upon in the coming months and support SNH in considering how to maintain the pearl mussel populations in these locations. Pearl

mussels rely on fish populations being present to complete their life cycle (a larval life stage of the pearl mussel, glochidia, lives for a period in the gills of fish) so without good numbers of fish in pearl mussel locations it is more difficult for the mussel populations to be sustained. RAFTS members have added value to this work by providing historic electro fishing data for relevant sites and gathering genetic samples from mussels to support other SNH studies.

Atlantic Salmon Trust / RAFTS Auction — The Atlantic Salmon Trust (AST) and RAFTS have agreed to work together in the 2009 AST auction to raise funds for both bodies. The long established AST auction has generously been made available to RAFTS as a vehicle to support its fundraising work. This partnership will allow RAFTS to raise funds by bringing lots into the auction with proceeds returning to RAFTS, and assists AST by contributing to the running and administrative costs of the exercise. We hope this will be the first year of a mutually beneficial and ongoing relationship! Our job now is to ensure that the RAFTS lots are sold following the generous donations made by many people. Our thanks to all who have supported this initiative by donating lots large or small.

Fisheries Management Planning — The fisheries management planning process continues apace. A number of these plans are currently issued for consultation

and will be finalised by the end of 2008. At the same time a wide range of plan implementation projects have been approved and are being implemented by trusts as we speak. This work is supported by a grant from Scottish Government but the projects being proposed and implemented are demonstrating the huge additional value that RAFTS members are delivering through project implementation. Trust staff time, volunteer labour and additional external funding will combine to multiply the value of the government grant many times over. RAFTS, Freshwater Research Services (FRS) and individual trusts and District Salmon Fishery Boards (DSFB) are also working together to put in place shared resources to analyse genetic samples from rivers across Scotland. This 3 year programme of sampling and analysis will help to provide fisheries managers with even better genetic information about salmon populations to improve management decisions on an ongoing basis. We will provide further reports on this project in later newsletters.

Working with the Wild Trout Trust — RAFTS and the Wild Trout Trust (WTT) have reached agreement to work together to encourage and support work on Scottish trout populations. RAFTS members can undertake Advisory Visits for WTT or request financial support directly to undertake these visits in priority areas. In addition WTT grants can be applied for by RAFTS members to support trout projects as part of fishery management plan implementation or other initiatives. We are delighted to be able to work with the WTT in this way and hope our members can take up opportunities to have important work on trout populations and habitats supported through this partnership. The delivery of practical improvement projects which make a difference to our renowned and special wild trout populations is an important aspect of WTT and RAFTS members' work. Further information on the WTT is available at: www.wildtrout.org

Biosecurity Planning Project - Following the appointment of Chris Horrill in September RAFTS is now taking forward an important biosecurity planning project. This work, supported by grant awards by Scottish Natural Heritage, Scottish Government and Esmee Fairbairn Foundation, will see the preparation of biosecurity plans by RAFTS members in the next 2 - 3 years. These plans will help to prevent the introduction of additional non-native species and help to direct containment and eradication measures and strategies in each plan area. Importantly the plans will target priority species identified from the Scottish Government / Scottish Natural Heritage Species Action Framework and from Water Framework Directive implementation helping to ensure good links between the work of our members and these other important national work areas. Further information on this project can be provided by Chris Horrill on 0131 272 2797 or chris@rafts.org.uk

People



Fiona Campbell — Fiona Campbell has recently joined to take over from Coreen Scott to whom we said goodbye and thanks in the summer. Fiona will be helping us with administration and book-keeping for 2 days a week. Welcome therefore to her and good luck keeping Andrew, Callum and Brian under some semblance of control.

Dr Katherine "Frin" Ross is to leave the Outer Hebrides Fisheries Trust after three years. Frin has made an enormous contribution to both OHFT and RAFTS; we wish her the best as she returns to her career in Marine Biology in the Falkland Islands. David Kelly will take up the post as Biologist to the Outer Hebrides Fisheries Trust in December.

Sarah Bayley — Sarah Bayley, now living in Geneva, has been working for RAFTS, part time, on European funding opportunities. This work comes to an end in December. Sarah has also provided invaluable help with the ease-in period for Callum Sinclair. We are delighted to hear Sarah is having a baby next year and we will be maintaining contact with her in the event that any of the EU funding projects come to fruition, in which case, we may wish to contract her on a project by project basis.

David Dunkley — David Dunkley, the former Inspector of Salmon & Freshwater Fisheries and latterly Head of the Scottish Government Salmon & Freshwater Fisheries Branch retired in August 2008. We would like to thank David for the advice and assistance he has given to the Association and its members over the years. David's successor is Louise Donnelly who is very keen to get out and visit as many Boards as possible over coming months to familiarise herself with the issues. Any Boards wishing to arrange such a visit should contact the office. Louise's email is: louise.donnelly@scotland.gsi.gov.uk

Reports

Scottish Salmon & Sea-Trout Catches 2007, Statistical Bulletin – For most recent salmon and sea-trout catches. Copies available from FRS on: 01224 294454. The document is also on the FRS website under information and resources.

Shieldaig Project Review 2006-7— This is the latest report on the monitoring of the impacts of sea-lice on post smolts at Shieldaig. Copies from FRS website: www.frs-scotland.gov.uk

SNH Corporate Strategy 2008-2013 — Available from SNH website: www.snh.org.uk

River Dee Annual Report 2008 — Copies from River Dee office. Tel: 01339 880411

Summary Report by the Royal Society on the Future of Scotland's Hills & Islands — Contact: 0131 240 5000. www.royalsoced.org.uk

NASCO 25'th Annual Meeting Report — Available on CD or on website. Contact NASCO on 0131 228 2551. www.nasco.int

Invasive Non Native Species Species Framework Strategy for GB — published by DEFRA/Scottish Govt and Welsh Assembly. www.nonnativespecies.org.

Guidance for Competent Authorities — This guide assists those making decision about activities in SACs. Copies from SNH. tel: 01738 444177. Web: www.snh.org.uk

Salmon Assessment in Scotland — This is a summary of salmon stock assessment techniques produced by FRS. Copies: Tel: 01224 876544. Web: www.frs-scotland.gov.uk

Trust / Board Reports

Tweed Foundation 2008 Progress Report & Review (25'th Anniversary) - Copies from Tweed Foundation. Tel: 01896 848271. Web: www.tweedfoundation.org.uk

Wester Ross Fisheries Trust Review 2008 — Copies from Wester Ross Fisheries. tel: 01445 712899. Web: www.wrft.org.uk

Ayrshire Rivers Trust Annual report 07— copies from ART. Tel: 01292 525142. Web: www.ayrshirerivertrust.org

Conferences

RAFTS 3'rd Annual Conference, March 11'th 2009 — The 2009 RAFTS Conference will be held at Battleby Conference Centre (nr Perth) this year on Tues March 11'th. Last year we were oversubscribed so if you wish to confirm a place please contact Callum Sinclair. Email: callum@rafts.org.uk as soon as possible. The theme this year will focus on how RAFTS members can get results and deliver services.

Scottish Aquaculture: A Sustainable Future—Edinburgh; 21/22 April 2009. The theme of sustainability will be explored under the four broad themes of the environment, fish health and welfare, the role of science within regulation and policy, together with the socio-economic impact of aquaculture. www.sarf.org.uk/symposium.htm

6th International Charr Symposium - Stirling University 15th to the 20th June 2009 with a 2 day excursion to visit notable Arctic charr sites in the Scottish Highlands Further information from: C.Adams@bio.gla.ac.uk

Tayside Local Biodiversity Action Plan Group - Seminar/Workshop - "River Management for Biodiversity, Fish and People" - 29th January 2009, Birnam

Meeting Dates —2009

| ORGANISATION | DATE |
|------------------------------|-------------------|
| RAFTS Executive Committee | 4 February 2009 |
| ASFB Council | 17 February 2009 |
| RAFTS General Committee | 10 March 2009 |
| RAFTS Conference | 11 March 2009 |
| ASFB Executive Committee | 17 March 2009 |
| ASFB/RAFTS Directors Meeting | 25 March 2009 |
| RAFTS Executive Committee | 12 May 2009 |
| ASFB Executive/Council | 16 June 2009 |
| RAFTS General Committee | 15 September 2009 |
| ASFB Executive Committee | 22 September 2009 |
| RAFTS Executive Committee | 20 October 2009 |
| ASFB AGM & Council | 10 November 2009 |