

**THE  
FORTH DISTRICT  
SALMON FISHERY  
BOARD**

**Annual Report**



**2008**



# The Forth District Salmon Fishery Board

## **MEMBERS ELECTED BY UPPER PROPRIETORS**

(Chairman) J.M.B. Baillie-Hamilton - Cambusmore

(Vice-Chairman) D.A.J. Dickson - Lanrick

Mrs. F. Simpson - Mandatory for the Crown Estates

G.A. Cameron - Leny

## **MEMBERS ELECTED BY LOWER PROPRIETORS**

D. Balsillie – Mandatory for Stirling Council

J. McGarvie – Airth

## **CO-OPTED MEMBERS**

H. Shaw – Salmon Anglers' Representative

F. Howieson - Salmon Anglers' Representative

## **DIRECTOR and CLERK**

Patrick Fotheringham: The Lagg Aberfeldy, Perthshire, PH15 2EE

Tel: 07788 416788

## **SUPERINTENDENT**

Bill Cunningham

Tel: 01786 842122 or Mob: 07887835549

# Chairman's Report

**Mike Baillie-Hamilton - Chairman FDSFB & Vice-Chairman RFFT**

The principal item to report this year is that we have our new Director, Patrick Fotheringham, in place. Tom McKenzie has been and continues to be helpful in achieving a smooth handover. Inevitably this took considerably more time than was to be hoped but it is now complete. Having a full time Director between the Board and the Trust is a big commitment for us and I believe this represents the beginning of a fairly major change that will see a more professional Board evolving in the future. Patrick has many useful contacts in the Scottish fishing hierarchy and has already been able to open a number of new doors for us to explore.

In parallel we now have the new River Forth Fisheries Trust legally constituted and about to be officially launched. The intention is to run the Board and Trust fairly closely but we have divided up the jobs somewhat and I will leave the Trust Chairman to elaborate on this shortly. The new trust has already raised significant funds but will need funding from the Board to start with. In the medium and long term this should be money well spent.

Tom McKenzie was presented with a fishing rod of his choice by the Board as thanks for his long service to us. The presentation was made at an informal dinner funded entirely by the board members present – no junkets on expense accounts for us.

The nearest we got to a junket was a Christmas dinner for Bill Cunningham and his band of volunteer bailiffs as a small token of our thanks for another year of hard work. It is both regrettable to have to note but satisfying to be able to report that Bill, his assistants and the Police working with us achieved many more arrests this year than for a long time. Indeed I suspect our arrest tally was a very considerable proportion of the Scottish fisheries total. Further details are in Bill's report. Regrettably not all fiscals are overly concerned with or successful in taking our cases and this is an area we will be looking to improve on.

One of Patrick's major tasks to date has been to write a "Catchment Management Plan". This sounds rather all embracing and it is. It brings together all the existing knowledge on all rivers and fish in our catchment and proposes solutions to problems. The first draft is out for consultation and any proprietor or club wishing to have a copy and make helpful comments on it is welcome. This document will expand and evolve over time. As well as being useful internally this document is prerequisite background material for many grant applications. The River Clyde Fishery Trust collated much of the existing data for this plan and has continued to be helpful to us doing work on a contract basis on a variety of tasks.

Our accounts show a major increase in admin expenditure. This was expected and will have to be borne for a while until the Trust becomes fully operational. There will also be expenditure shortly on a new vehicle. We have economized by giving up the lease of our unused hatchery.

A major escape of farmed salmon smolts took place on the Devon. Initially, the operator denied responsibility but they have, under pressure from the ACA, agreed to spend money on an attempted clear up - albeit the opportunity may well have passed. We look forward to working closely with the ACA though preferably on pre-emptive problem solving rather than post incident legal action. This and other incidents have highlighted how fishery boards are low down or not even on the list of people notified by FRS, SEPA and other official bodies. This is something we hope to resolve at a national level.

We are very grateful to a proprietor who funded a significant study into the problems arising from the Braes of Doune wind-farm. Though we have so far been unable to achieve any solution to the problems arising there we are now better prepared for similar developments.

Further details on the Devon incident, the discovery of several American Signal Crayfish populations in our catchment and other incidents are contained in Patrick's report.

Your catch returns to us have proven enlightening although there are shadows we will wish to explore. This data needs a thorough study and should then start to help us make decisions on conservation measures. Although this report covers the calendar year 2008 you will by now know of the apparently poor spring run in 2009 and further conservation measures will be needed on both a temporary and probably permanent basis. We do need accurate data to make correct decisions and your help with catch returns would be much appreciated.

Now that we have a working trust we have ceased to operate a habitat sub-committee. Much more is now being discussed by telephone with Patrick ringing the Trust chairman and myself at least weekly and other trustees and board members on a regular basis. Bill Carroll of the Allan Water Angling Improvement Association, who had been co-opted onto the Board, resigned for personal reasons and since the year end we have welcomed Fen Howieson of the Cramond Angling Association as a new co-opted member to represent angling interests. Donald Balsillie returned to the Board representing Stirling Council. Attendance at meetings remained high.

## **The River Forth Fisheries Trust**

### **Chairman's Interim Report**

**Alistair Dickson** - Chairman RFFT & Vice-Chairman FDSFB

I am delighted to be able to announce the formation of the new River Forth Fisheries Trust. The Trust received charitable status earlier this year and has been set up in order to promote educational, research and management objectives relating to all freshwater fish species within the Forth District. With the support from the Scottish Government, the formation of the Trust closely follows the now proven example set by Trusts in other Districts. It is a member of RAFTS (Rivers and Fisheries Trusts of Scotland) which represents all of Scotland's Fisheries Trusts covering in excess of 80% of Scotland's rivers. Working closely alongside, although independently from, the Forth District Salmon Fishery Board, the Trust will address the growing number of local issues facing both migratory and non-migratory species and collaborate in national programmes.

Patrick Fotheringham has been appointed Director and his immediate challenge has been to start fundraising. The Fishery Board, has endorsed the setting up of the Trust by generously providing an injection of core funding for a period of three years but I am very pleased to say that despite the economic gloom Patrick has, in just six months, been very successful in securing external funding for some initial projects including the completion of the catchment management plan, crayfish surveys and the identification of natural barriers and obstructions. A research student has been employed on a temporary basis to help carry out this work. The Trust aims to carry out "evidence based management" and also to provide the Salmon Fishery Board with information upon which it may base, justify and promote its decisions.

Although the work of the Trust is not confined to migratory species, the same aquatic environment is common to all. The annual value of migratory fish to the Scottish economy has been estimated at £120m which emphasises the importance of protecting this natural resource by enhancing the environment. The Forth catchment is a complex system with a high population density, an intensive industrial presence. The District faces a huge variety of problems ranging from extensive agriculture and widespread afforestation of its headwaters to serious water quality issues caused by both point-source and diffuse pollution. Such activities all have a major impact on the biodiversity.

By way of a historical aside, the Edinburgh felt-hat industry left a toxic waste problem in the form of mercury in Aberlady Bay and it is perhaps remarkable that any fish actually survive at all. The number of species encountered in the estuary in 1840 by a biologist named Parnell totalled 240 but sadly had dwindled to a mere 24 by 1940. Today I fear the numbers will be even fewer. However, on a brighter note, it is encouraging that there is a growing interest in the protection of the environment through the adoption of conservation measures and introduction of more responsible industrial and agricultural practices with an overall objective of keeping our waters clean.

With your support the Trust will be able to help enhance our river environment by identifying key threats and problems and finding appropriate solutions that will enable all fish to prosper in the future.

## **Director's Report**

**Patrick Fotheringham - Director FDSFB & RFFT**

As many of you will be aware, half way through the year, I took over as Clerk to the Board from Tom McKenzie who had been in the role for 31 years. Over that time he witnessed many changes both for better and regrettably for worse and his encyclopaedic knowledge of the District will be very hard to emulate. I would like to thank him for all his help in handing over the job and feel sure that all those with an interest in the Forth's salmon and sea trout fisheries would want to thank him and wish him a very long and happy retirement.

2008 has been a year of change in terms of the Forth's fisheries management structure. As you will have seen elsewhere in this report we have set up a new fisheries trust to work alongside the Board to ensure that all species of fish and the habitat in which they live will be properly managed and looked after. The Board has agreed that the Trust should be given £20,000 per annum for at least the first three years in order to put it on a firm footing and the Board has now passed all the work of its Habitat Committee to the new Trust. It is important to note that although I am the Director of both the Board and the Trust they are in fact two different organisations with two separate management bodies. However, given the level of the Board's commitment to the Trust I felt it was appropriate even though this is DSFB's annual report to outline its activities.

There are three main ways in which the River Forth Fisheries Trust (RFFT) hopes to deliver its objectives; namely, through research, management intervention and education. It is demonstrably the case that modern fisheries management requires high quality science to back-up and justify management intervention activities. Additionally, through education we hope to ensure that those who live in the District will have a greater interest in and understanding of the wider aquatic environment. Given that

many of the Forth's most serious fisheries-related problems are anthropogenic in origin, education is a key component of what the River Forth Fisheries Trust must try to achieve.

In order to demonstrate its commitment to its objectives, the Trust has carried out or supported one project in each area in its first few months of operating. The research objective is demonstrated by an ambitious project to map the genetics of the District's salmon populations and ties in with a wider project across the rest of the country. The project was part funded through a Government grant which was matched by money from a number of other organisations.

The management intervention side of things was covered by a contribution to the second phase of an excellent restoration project on the river Avon by the Slamannan Angling & Protective Association. This project has been a huge success and we are informed that in the autumn of 2008 salmon were seen spawning in the upper Avon in a part of the river in which they had not been seen for a generation. This project is an excellent example of how local angling clubs can make a huge difference to the rivers they look after and the Trust aims to assist and advise any clubs or organisations that would be interested in taking projects forward. For example we plan to work with clubs on the Tyne, Alan and Devon in 2009.

The Trust's commitment to education was met through a contribution to the Clackmannanshire "Fish go to School Project". A total of 213 pupils from nine classes in eight schools participated in the project in 2009. The children attended a launch day at the Glasgow Science Centre in mid-January, where they were given interactive talks on the River Devon and on the care and maintenance of their classroom hatcheries. Each class was given 250 brown trout eggs from Howietoun and all of the hatcheries performed well. Dr. Willie Yeomans visited each school weekly when the eggs/alevins/fry were on-site and he received help from Clacks Council Countryside Rangers on the release days, when they undertook some invertebrate sampling with the children. Since the start of the project in 2006, a total of 801 children have participated from 31 classes in all 19 primary schools in Clackmannanshire (plus the Primary Schools Support Service). The 2009 project was the first of a second three-year cycle.

Other projects that were carried out included electro-fishing surveys on fresh water pearl mussel beds that were contracted by SNH and preliminary work on a large signal crayfish mapping project that will be carried out in 2009. We have now established that there are at least three American signal crayfish populations in the District and we will be surveying with a view to potential eradication.

The largest part of the Trust's work in its first six months of operating involved establishing the building blocks for a complete Forth Fisheries Management Plan. The challenge is not a small one. The District is comprised of over 4,200km of river and numerous lochs and still waters in twelve sub-catchments and resources in terms of both time and money are extremely tight. The production of the management plan has been funded by Government and a Draft of the document will go out for wide consultation in 2009. It will set out the details of the Forth's hydrology, geology and topography and against that backdrop outline what is known concerning the status of fish populations of all species within the District. It will map out the resources that are currently available and finally and most importantly will outline projects, management activities and research objectives that will be carried out over the life-time of the plan. Given that the RFFT is currently Scotland's smallest and most under resourced fisheries Trust in one of Scotland's largest fisheries Districts, expectation management is important. The initial draft plan will represent the first few steps down the road of producing a complete, fully costed, timetabled list of projects. However, where some Board's and Trusts are now in the implementation phase of their organisational life-cycle having worked for ten years on research, the Forth Trust's plan will show how much we do not yet know and where there are gaps in our knowledge that must be filled.

In addition to its commitments to habitat enhancement, stock restoration and research the Board also has key duties in terms of fisheries protection. The most obvious way in which this is carried out is through the activities of the Superintendent and our team of volunteers. The bailiffs have had a busy year and made numerous arrests and prosecutions which are outlined in the following report and I would like to take this opportunity of thanking them for all that they do for us. They have been working more closely with the police, which has proved to be both effective and practical and it is to be hoped that this working relationship can be extended in 2009.

There is a less obvious fisheries protection role than that of preventing poaching. This is delivered through the numerous responses to planning and development applications and through interactions with other organisations and regulators such as SEEPA and SNH. In a heavily populated and industrialised area such as that of the Forth there are many threats to our fish populations. Point-source pollution incidents still occur with monotonous regularity and planning applications regularly highlight developments that may be damaging to fish populations.

There is also one more particular threat that has emerged in the past year. In the early autumn while carrying out routine electro-fishing on the river Devon a large escape of farmed salmon pre-smolts was found to have occurred. We carried out further electro-fishing surveys and caught numerous salmon parr throughout the upper river. The fish escaped from a fish farm at Fossaway and were above a fall that is impassable to salmon. This meant that there was no question that all the juvenile salmon we found were of farmed origin. Not only does this present a significant threat to wild salmon in the Devon in terms of the potential for irrevocable genetic pollution to occur but there is always a risk of the spread of disease from farmed to wild stocks.

The Board is a member of an organisation called “Fishlegal” (formerly the ACA) that provides its members with legal advice on fisheries related matters. Their lawyer wrote to the fish farmers in question who have agreed to settle the Board’s expenses with regard to the escape and also to pay for a “clear up operation” to remove the escaped fish from the river. This sends out a clear message to fish farmers in the District that the Board will not accept that fish farm escapes should be permitted to occur unchallenged and the Board is committed to taking threats from aquaculture seriously.

Finally, may I make a brief point about conservation? The spring run of 2008 was a poor one and at the time of writing 2009 has been even poorer. Catch and release is now a widely adopted precautionary conservation measure and we would encourage anglers to practise it. The Board believes that it is vital that as many spring salmon as possible are returned to the river alive and that later in the year restraint is shown in terms of the number of fish killed. We would also note that in recent seasons sea trout catches have shown a marked decline and so would also encourage anglers to return as many of them as possible. Restraint of this kind is a necessary precautionary step if rod and line fishing is not to have a damaging effect on vulnerable stocks and the oft repeated old chestnut remains true that future generations will not forgive us if we kill too many fish and irrevocably damage future runs of salmon and sea trout.

It has been a busy, exciting and challenging year for the Board. We have put various measures in place to make us more effective in the way we operate and through a close working relationship with the new Trust will work towards delivering integrated freshwater fisheries management for the Forth District.

If you would like any further information please feel free to contact me. Details can be found at the back of this report.

# Superintendent's Report 2008

Bill Cunningham – Superintendent FDSFB

## General River System Information

There have been mixed reports about catches for the 2008 season. The quality of some of the fish that were caught was disappointing, looking more like eels or kelts than fresh run salmon. I received several reports of fish as small as 3lbs being caught. However, on a brighter note there were a number of reports of fish weighing between 20 to 30lbs. The fish that were in particularly short supply were mid weight fish of between 15 and 20lb. There are I think two reasons which may have had an effect on the quality of catches. There were long dry periods during the 2008 season and so in June and July I hardly came across anybody salmon fishing. Additionally, the grilse run was very disappointing and very late compared to past years.

Spring 2009 started off with six fish being caught, ranging from 6lbs to 14lbs. On the down side only two of these fish were returned. The other four fish which were caught at Callander were killed; one fisherman caught and killed two. This unfortunate behaviour has continued, most of the fish caught at Callander being killed. With regard to sea trout most anglers behaved themselves and did not kill every fish that they caught. However, there were a few that did and it shows that there is still some way to go in winning hearts and minds with regard to catch and release.

Once again I feel that I must mention the so called trout fishermen. As I said last year the board is aware of a problem whereby some of these anglers (not all) exploit a loophole in the law by using heavy spinning lines, weights and worms etc. They are targeting species other than brown trout because no permit is required to fish for brown trout and everyone knows that salmon can be and on occasions have been hooked by this method.

On the lower reaches of the river Forth six boats were observed fishing by net and cobble. Only Joe McGarvie's boat was working on a regular basis. The crews were reporting poor catches once again and I was being asked "where are all the fish?" I witnessed this myself where on several occasions the crews were fishing for a whole tide with no reward. It seems that the wetter the summer the worse it is for the netting crews.

Once again I am pleased to report that I received no reports of fish dying in the lower reaches during the summer months. I am not saying that it is not happening but I do not come across large numbers of people looking for them as I did in the ninties.

I still receive reports of illegal fishing taking place at Fallin and Alloa especially during October. As I am on my own the only thing I can do is to try to get hold of a volunteer and if one is not available try to get police help, but because of the police work load that is not always possible.

In the picture, one of the Board's unpaid volunteer bailiffs is removing a net that they had covertly watched over night. The voluntary bailiffs have been working hard and effectively throughout the year. I do not need to remind anybody that without the voluntary bailiff force it would be impossible to carry out anti-poaching operations like this. However I am sorry to report that this year morale amongst the bailiffs is not as good as it has been in previous years. The main reason for this is the number of court results that have gone against us and the continual verbal abuse they have to take whilst out patrolling and checking permits. I am pleased to report that during 2008 a large number of joint patrols with wild life and environmental crime officers took place with success and several arrests took place. It is planned that a lot more joint patrols will take place during this year and I have been assured



that illegal fishing will be taken very seriously.

## Prosecution Reports

Nineteen offence reports were submitted to the Procurators Fiscal at Stirling, Haddington and Glenrothes. The result of two cases that did go to court in 2008; a fine of £500 and a custodial sentence of sixty days were levied on the offenders. The offender that got sixty days is a well known professional poacher and has been arrested nine times which amounted to over thirty cases against him.



This net which is 110yards/ 100.58metres long x16.5yards/ 15.087 metres deep was removed from one of the rivers in the Boards area and is one of many that have been lifted over the last year.

As I stated last year with the influx of many eastern Europeans into the area, most of whom have never had to obtain a permit to fish before now, a problem could arise through lack of local knowledge and understanding of the Scottish fishing laws. I have now obtained a crib board printed in English and Polish which asks the relevant questions relating to fishing. Any proprietor wishing a copy please get in contact with me.

Once again I would like to remind all proprietors of netting stations and rod and line beats that written permission is required to net & coble and rod and line fish. Permits will be checked.

As I have said in the past if at any time a problem occurs on any beat throughout the system I hope that proprietors feel that they can approach me in the knowledge that I will do my level best to assist them.

I am best contacted by telephone. Tel: 01786 842 122 or Mob: 07887 835 549

## Current & Future Challenges for Scottish Fisheries Management

**Andrew Wallace - Managing Director ASFB & RAFTS**

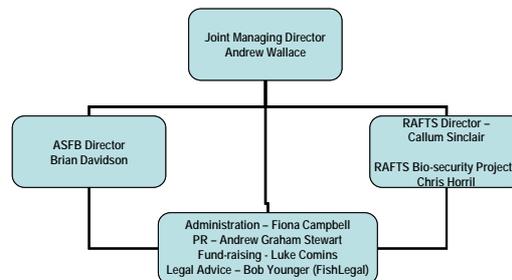
The world of Scottish fisheries management is an immensely absorbing one for those directly involved in it. However, to those not living and breathing fisheries, it is easy to forget how confusing it can appear. After all, there are innumerable organisations, countless passionately held views and a good deal of disagreement. It is therefore important that people involved in organisations like the Forth Fishery Board and Trust are kept informed, not only about what is going on at catchment level, but also what is happening at the national and international level.

The Fishery Board system is a unique one to the UK. While regulations regarding salmon fisheries south of the Border are managed by a public body - the Environment Agency - in Scotland each major catchment, or group of catchments, has a District Salmon Fishery Board (DSFB). The Boards are underwritten by the Salmon and Freshwater Fisheries (Consolidation) Act, an accretion of fisheries legislation that stretches back into the mists of time. The most singular quality of this 2003 legislation is that owners and managers of salmon and sea trout fishing have wide-ranging responsibilities for the “protection and improvement of salmon fisheries”, which is coupled with the power to raise money from their fellow proprietors in order to achieve this target.

This unusual situation is one that has been subject to a degree of criticism and challenge. However, the current Strategic Framework for Scottish Freshwater Fisheries now recognises the value of management at catchment level and has set out some ideas about how to gradually evolve the fishery board system to make it more effective and focussed on management of all species of fish and the freshwater environment in which they live. The legal structure of Boards is very much focussed on migratory salmonids. The

Fisheries Trust system, which the Forth has adopted, allows work to be done in other areas such as education, habitat improvement and other fish species management. It also enables money to be raised against certain projects – such as the recent Forth Fisheries Management Plan - that may not have been so easily available to the Boards. The challenge now is to ensure that these Boards and Trusts work well together, sharing staff and resources and prioritising work, whilst still respecting the independence of both bodies. Joint Chairmen, Chief Executives and shared staff are all solutions to this and present no significant governance problems if handled properly. Our task is to make the Board/Trust system work. If we can do this we should have no need to fear from radical change to the existing system. The challenge therefore is to “use it or lose it”!

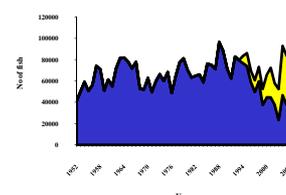
At a national level, the Association of Salmon Fishery Boards (ASFB) is the representative body of the Board network and is chaired by Hugh Campbell Adamson, and Rivers and Fisheries Trusts of Scotland (RAFTS) - a registered charity and the representative body - is chaired by Roger Brook. I have partly explained the historical and legal reasons why we need these two bodies which effectively reflect the Board/Trust system at catchment level, but we try to minimise the confusion by having a joint Chief Executive of both bodies (myself); a dedicated Director, of ASFB - Brian Davidson; a dedicated Director of RAFTS – Callum Sinclair; and shared part-time legal, media and administrative help working out of the same office in Edinburgh.



We also have various projects running (usually through RAFTS) with staff to support these, such as Dr Chris Horril, who lives in the Forth District, and is our Bio-security and Invasive Species project manager. RAFTS and ASFB now work ever more closely together representing the Boards and Trusts and are responsible for lobbying, information flow in and out of the network, fund-raising, project development, establishing guides to best practice, training etc. Effectively we are a ‘trade association’ for the Boards and Trusts and increasingly are trying to position ourselves as an effective “gateway” into the Scottish fisheries management network acknowledging that many people who we do business with are not that interested in whether we are Boards or Trusts or RAFTS or ASFB, they just want someone sensible to deal with.

That is a brief canter through the management system we now have in place. But what are the challenges that these organisations are faced with. Salmon are clearly the economic engine room of Scottish freshwater fisheries with an annual value to the Scottish economy of about £100m, supporting around 2000 jobs in the rural economy. Whilst in the past the industry was very much net dominated it is now largely a recreational fishery catching about 70-90000 a year – a figure which has been gradually rising in recent years (see graph; yellow = catch and release). The net catch is now normally below 20,000 fish. Scottish salmon stocks overall are in pretty good shape and we have in Scotland the greatest diversity of populations, the longest season and one of

National Salmon Rod Catch Statistics (Retained & Released)  
Scotland, 1952-2007



the biggest catches in the salmon producing world. Scotland is Atlantic salmon HQ and we sometimes seem to be unaware of how special our situation is.

Keeping control on exploitation is a key contributor to maintaining stocks and is also important from a perception point of view. Why should others help us manage this resource better if we then simply over-exploit it ourselves? Boards, proprietors and anglers have made tremendous progress in reducing exploitation through Catch & Release which is now running at about 65% a year - more on spring stocks which are currently in a weaker state. The recent call by the ASFB to increase C&R rates against this year's apparently very weak spring run is a classic example of what one might call adaptive management – effective, voluntary, self determined and evidence based - it works well providing people respond. Regulatory solutions are available through the Boards' ability to apply to Government for conservation orders but we all believe that winning hearts and minds is a better solution which has been proven to work. However, persistent offenders beware! Boards can, will and do use regulations where people simply won't respond to sensible management proposals. This applies to both net and rod fisheries.

Further areas where we can make a difference is in improving habitats, ensuring fish can get into and out of systems and have access to as much spawning area as possible, as well as through the enforcement of poaching. Overall, our task can be seen as one of trying to maximise the smolt output of all our systems. There are many uncertainties to the salmon and sea-trout's life at sea which we simply don't understand and over which we have little control. There have been some successes in curbing exploitation by drift net fisheries and home water fisheries in Greenland and the Faroes, also in looking at by-catch in pelagic trawler fleets, but at the end of the day our influence over salmon and sea-trout ends pretty much as they leave the estuary. With marine mortality rates currently very high – 90-95% - the more smolts that got to sea, the more adults return.

At a broader environmental level, Trusts are now involved in establishing fisheries management plans for all species. Salmonids are important but so are many other species, both for recreation and for the health of our catchments. These have been badly neglected and now Trusts are able to provide some ideas about how the management of Scottish catchments can incorporate all these issues. Trusts are also developing national scale projects such as the RAFTS Bio-Security project which is developing ideas on the control of invasive species such as Signal Crayfish, Hogweed, Gyrodactylus and Mink. There is also a major RAFTS project running that is attempting to produce a genetic map of all the different, highly adapted, salmon populations in Scottish rivers. This will greatly assist management. In 2009, RAFTS will be raising about £650,000 of project income for its 22 members of which the Forth is one. This is significant money and it is vital that these organisations deliver against the objectives of these projects. Over time we hope Trusts, such as the Forth, will be seen as reliable, authoritative bodies for the delivery of a wide range of environmental services.

The situation described above is exciting but can be confusing. The RAFTS/ASFB network is fast showing that it has the makings of an effective national group of fisheries and catchment management bodies which can be entrusted with some serious responsibilities. It would be wrong to suggest the situation is perfect - many challenges face our freshwater environment and the network of organisations. There is still a great deal to do. However, we believe considerable progress has been made in recent years and that we have an increasingly 'fit for purpose' structure in place for effectively managing one of Scotland's greatest natural icons – the Atlantic salmon, the environment it lives in and indeed also all the other fish species for which Scotland has such a wonderful reputation.

For more information contact: [www.asfb.org.uk](http://www.asfb.org.uk) or [www.rafts.org.uk](http://www.rafts.org.uk)

Or to be put on our newsletter and annual review mailing lists contact: 0131 2722797

# The New Face of Fisheries Management

**Tom McKenzie** – Former Clerk to the FDSFB

District Salmon Fishery Boards in Scotland first came into being in 1868 under legislation designed at that time to control illegal fishing and over exploitation of salmon stocks. This was followed in 1886 and again in 1951 with legislation which clarified how Boards should be elected and financed, powers of water bailiffs, and greater detail of the charges which could be brought against poachers. The 1951 Act effectively became the bible for Fishery Boards and Bailiffs for more than half a century. All of these early pieces of legislation were designed solely to protect stocks by limiting fishing methods and controlling poaching. Very little if anything within these Acts examined how we could protect our salmon stocks other than by curtailing poaching and it was down to individual Boards to decide what other enhancement measures they undertook. Some of the larger fishery Boards where money for research was available began to look into habitat improvement and assessing salmon stocks on a more scientific basis. Stocking of hatchery reared fry was also advocated as best practice at that time and introduction of salmon fry from hatcheries was common throughout Scotland and, for many years many Boards had extensive hatchery facilities, some of which still exist today.

The Forth Board has always suffered from limited resources and since the primary concern was the unacceptable level of poaching, no hatchery-based enhancement was undertaken and all its available cash resources were diverted to fishery protection. This was perhaps understandable as up to 40 illegal nets regularly operated between Stirling and Kincardine and gangs of poachers operated on the upper rivers in a totally indiscriminate fashion with scant regard for the law. There was however in the early 1960s an opportunity to obtain cheap stocks of fish from the Beaulieu area due to over-production of hatchery reared fry. Many thousands of these were stocked annually throughout the 1960s in the Rivers Teith and Forth and for a number of years this was regarded as a success as many of these fry returned as adults. It was however soon apparent that there were differences in these returning fish and it was possible to distinguish the more slender Beaulieu fish from the native Forth fish with its small head and broad shoulders. Since that time and coincidental with the stocking of these fish the average weight of salmon entering the river has dropped from about 15lbs. to less than 9lbs and controversy still rages as to whether this drop in average size was as a result of these early stockings. There is some evidence to suggest that the average weight is again increasing and perhaps this is a sign of encouragement that the native stocks are again improving.

No further stocking or habitat improvement was undertaken for almost 30 years and it was not until 1994 when the CARIS Project surveyed the rivers Avon and Carron and advocated a kick-start restocking programme for both rivers. A small hatchery was built capable of rearing 100,000 fry per annum and this ran for a period of five years during which time both rivers were stocked annually with salmon and sea-trout. The CARIS Project has proved a very real success and from these limited initial stockings both these rivers now have viable and improving natural salmon and sea-trout runs.

A number of new regulations were enacted over the years which improved matters for the Board but it was not until the introduction of the Aquaculture and Fisheries (Scotland) Act 2007 and other new initiatives under the European Water Framework Directive such as River Basin Management Planning and the new Controlled Activities Regulations that the emphasis in fishery management on the Forth changed from a solely protection role to a role encompassing improvement and restoration of habitat as a means of supporting a much wider diversity of animals, fish, and plants. The Board very quickly realised the need for a body to oversee these new initiatives and in 2008 the River Forth Fisheries Trust was born.

Since it was formed, much work has already been done, under the firm hand of its Director Mr Patrick Fotheringham, including genetic tagging of salmon stocks, preparation of a river basin management plan, and pulling together the habitat improvement initiatives of Angling Associations on the rivers Avon, Allan, Almond, and Tyne. These local initiatives are the building blocks which will ensure that salmon stocks in these rivers can face better times and should be encouraged. Things today are a far cry from the days when success was measured simply in how many poachers were caught. We are now in a position where we can look forward to a much more positive future. Bottlenecks and problems areas where our salmon as facing difficulties are being identified and solutions drawn up and, as time moves on, these will all be addressed and I am confident that once these improvement initiatives are rolled out to all of our rivers the Forth salmon face a much brighter future.

## **Stirling Council's Fisheries**

**Donald Balsillie** - Countryside Team Leader & Member of the FDSFB

Stirling Council manages fishing interest on both the River Forth and Teith. In common with a handful of remaining Local Authority fisheries in Scotland access is open to the public and usually favours local residents. Stirling Council inherited its fishing rights from Stirling and Callander Burghs the former had several royal grants of fishing rights between 1386 (Charter from Robert II) and 1641 (confirmation from Charles I). This includes a charter for "the Minister Boat" from David II (1329-71).

The public access tends to generate an almost automatic conflict with private beats because our public beats are in or close to the tidal limits and therefore have first crack at the Salmon as they arrive in the river catchment and lie-up waiting for suitable water to ascend the system.

Our classic management problem is how to preserve a diminishing resource while catering for the ordinary angler who is usually excluded from the private beats often because of their sheer numbers but also because of the high charges to fish.

Stirling Councils principle management role is to preserve and sustainably manage both salmon and sea trout. Both species have been identified in the European Habitats Directive and Local Biodiversity action plan as under threat and requiring conservation.

In conservation terms there is the issue of how to measure exploitation pressure, *i.e.*, the number of rods per beat verses the annual catch per individual angler. Two fish per angler per day as a bag limit is not a sensible way of conserving stocks without being able to limit fishing effort. If one angler were lucky enough to take 1 fish per day for a fishery season he would take 234 fish. Even 10% of this is unacceptable at the present time.

How many fish per annum can be safely taken if the total population number and composition is unknown?

Reliance on catch records, although generally the only measure of population numbers, is very risky and highly variable season to season because of natural factors alone, such as water levels, international exploitation of stocks and climate variations on a global scale affecting feeding grounds and spawning areas. There is no indication at present as to the interaction between riverine habitat quality and its effect

on population success post spawning. Efforts to boost smolt recruitment from the hatchery are also unreliable and potentially damaging for wild populations.

Against this background of uncertainty, what can be done to reduce angler effects on the catchment's salmon population?

In 1999 Stirling Council introduced a compulsory quota or carcass tagging scheme linked to a comprehensive permit system and bailiff team on its public fisheries on the Rivers Forth and Teith. It is interesting to note that there have been no others on the rest of the system who have shown any interest although tagging systems are now the norm in Canada and Ireland with the River Leven introducing tagging last year.

### **Catch Returns**

In 2008 Stirling Council issued a Fisheries Questionnaire to all its season permit holders.

A total of 271 questionnaires were completed representing around 53% of all invitations that were sent out. The responses were collated and analyzed by the Council's research team with support from countryside and fisheries service staff.

The results from this survey are now available on the Council's web site. This survey has provided invaluable information for our fisheries management from ordinary anglers on their views and attitudes to the management of Stirling Council's fisheries and has and will be used to take informed decisions on future management. Of the respondents 28% said they have a permit for the Teith and 70% of all respondents had a River Forth permit. Of all respondents 41% reported having a concession permit.

This was a very worthwhile exercise and we wish to continue to improve our dialogue with individual fishermen as well as agencies with an interest in our fisheries management such as the Forth District Salmon Fisheries Board, The new River Forth Fisheries Trust, Forth Anglers Association and the Forth and Teith Anglers Association.

From the 2008 survey 48% of anglers felt the rivers were over fished compared to 42% who did not feel they were. 83% supported a bag limit on all catches with 79% supporting the Council's tagging scheme. In 1996 a similar survey of anglers was undertaken although only 193 individuals participated out of a possible 800+ 51% were for and 47% were against a bag limit. The 83% support in 2008 for catch restrictions against 51% in support in 1996 before the tagging scheme was introduced represents a significant change in attitudes towards conservation measures that bodes well for the conservation of salmon in the future.

Anglers were asked how many tags they would like to see issued with a permit; 233 respondents gave an average (mean) figure of 6.1. The most common response was for 5 tags, followed by 10 tags. Responses of zero or none indicating a lack of support for the scheme were not included.

Stirling Council's Fisheries staff believe that tagging and the setting of catch quotas, which are readily enforceable may be the only way to manage salmon exploitation without killing off the whole economic base for game fishing. The tagging of all salmon to be taken from the fishery combined with the use of a catch and release policy achieves the following objectives:-

- 1) The mechanism is and has to be seen as fair and equitable to those buying permits
- 2) Each angler can choose when to use his tags during the season (within the overall fisheries rules)
- 3) Anglers are not restricted in being able to enjoy their sport.

- 4) Everyone has the same quota restrictions on them.
- 5) The reasoning behind the mechanism is understood and generally acceptable
- 6) The tagging scheme acts as a vehicle for understanding and implementing real conservation measures
- 7) The tags are a very visible means of conservation and enforcement with anglers able to report any breaches of the rules and tagging system.

On a lighter note to the open question on Why do you fish? - 33% of anglers said hobby, 25% for relaxation, 20% pleasure, 12% enjoyment of countryside, 5% other reasons, 3% health and 2% fish for the table. It was touch and go for a while but in the last week only one reply out of 271 said "to get away from the wife"! The highest percentage response was 91% to retain a concession for the retired and disabled. In addition Stirling Council has approved that veterans are eligible for our concessionary Fishing Permits.

The 2008 season saw decent runs of fish with good catch returns of salmon and sea trout.

In 2008 the council lost one longstanding Bailiff and our Biodiversity and Fisheries Officer early in the season. This called for a restructure of the Fisheries and a new Fisheries Officer was appointed in March 2009.

The priorities set for our new Fisheries Officer David Jones Supported by Colin Fridge our Bailiff for the 2009 season are firmly centred on policing and conservation with a number of initiatives being introduced. Some of these are as follows.

- 1) Partnership working with a variety of agencies to improve policing of the rivers.
- 2) Intelligence led operations so that resources can be used to maximum effect.
- 3) Working with the Board and new Trust to identify ways to improve fish habitat.
- 4) The introduction of a volunteer Bailiff scheme.
- 5) A youth development programme to encourage youngsters to take up the sport.
- 6) Produce a new set of fishing rules to work in tandem with a misconduct code.
- 7) Produce a Fisheries management plan.
- 8) Control invasive species such as giant hogweed mink etc.
- 9) Continue to develop the tagging system.

Stirling Council's Countryside Team is happy to support the new River Forth Fisheries Trust and will send a copy of the FDSFB/RFFT newsletter to all season permit holders when it is published.

# The Rivers Devon and Black Devon

Dennis Toon – Trustee RFFT

Both Clackmannanshire Rivers were the subject of routine population monitoring in September 2008. This task jointly funded by the Devon Angling Association (DAA), Clackmannanshire Biodiversity Partnership (CBP) and the River Forth Fisheries Trust (RFFT) was carried out by the Clyde Fisheries Foundation with in-field support from the DAA. Nine sites were electro-fished on the Devon and four on the Black Devon. The sites were selected by the DAA on the basis of previous known anomalies together with sites forming part of the strategic fisheries monitoring programme previously undertaken by the now defunct Forth Fisheries Foundation. A small number of ad-hoc sites on the main stem of each river above and below the limits of salmon access were included. A detailed report has been issued and is held by the RFFT for analysis and reference.

The site adjacent to the smolt farm at Fossoway Bridge (this area is not accessible to wild salmon) showed anomalies in 2006. In 2008 the absence of trout and numbers of farmed salmon present in the river caused concern, a fish kill was also reported at the same time in the vicinity of the smolt farm. This was investigated under instruction from the FDSFB and farmed salmon were recorded at 14 of the 16 sites subsequently electro-fished above and below the Bridge. The Farm operator, Mainstream, has now conceded liability and a financial settlement agreed. This covers the cost of the investigation and the forward cost necessary to re-establish confidence in bio-security of the farming operation.

The autumn salmon run in the Devon was the best since the mid-1980's, probably due to high water levels at the time. A number of sizeable spent fish could be seen along the river generating much interest amongst anglers and the public. There has been no evidence of a spring run since the early 80's.

With part funding contributions from the RFFT and the CBP the 'Fish go to School' programme has been completed in all the Clackmannanshire primary schools. It was highly successful both in terms of educational value learning about fish and the river environment but also in the enjoyment of the youngsters.

The unregulated nature of the Black Devon makes Autumn Salmon Presence difficult to quantify, as fishing is uncontrolled. In September 2008 large numbers of salmon fry were accounted for but no parr were located whilst electro-fishing. Trout numbers were very low and none are present in the area of the old Solsgirth mine. Development of the Solsgirth mine site, remediation of the Meadow hill open-cast site together with a planned substantial residential and leisure development at Forestmill does indicate a prospect to develop the fishery potential of this river. Population monitoring remains important in order to properly assess and characterise the river. The SEPA River Basin Management Plan sets out to improve water quality in the Alloa / Grangemouth area of the Forth, an action which will further improve the rivers prospects.

The DAA has regular working parties out on the Devon although much of their activity has to be directed toward dealing with fallen trees and invasive weeds. This detracts from the generally pressing issue of improving the fishery and its riparian habitat. The river suffers from extensive bank erosion in the Dollar / Tillicoultry area and substantial problems in the same areas with Himalayan Balsam, one is largely the consequence of the other and often fallen trees are the result. Funding awards for the Ochil Landscape Partnership programme includes provision to improve the quality of the Clackmannanshire rivers; this may assist in resolving these key problems. In the vicinity of the Kerry site at Menstrie the river has high nutrient levels causing extensive weed growth on the riverbed. This is a problem to migratory fish and needs periodic cutting with a drag chain along the riverbed. The DAA or RFFT should

seek assistance from Diageo to have this done as the problem originates from the sites historic use of river water for cooling applications in the production process.

The RFFT recognises the importance of the Clackmannanshire rivers and is working with both the Clackmannanshire Biodiversity Partnership Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) and the Devon Angling Association to ensure conservation and improvement of these fisheries.

## **The River Allan Management Plan**

**Tom McKenzie** – Former Clerk FDSFB

### **Background**

The Water Framework Directive Scotland was introduced in 2000 to establish systems to manage the water environment, and was transposed into Scots Law in 2003 and the whole of Scotland was at that time classified as a single River Basin District. This was further broken down into blocks each with a discrete Area Action Group (AAG) to decide on key issues in each area. The Forth Salmon Fisheries District is unique in that it comprises an AAG area in its own right. This has provided the Board the opportunity to be an effective voice in the decision making processes required to get our rivers back to historical status and the wider consultation remit has provided the opportunity for responsibility for improvements to be devolved down to individual river management strategies. The River Allan Angling Improvement Association having drawn on a 2009 inventory of all the factors on the river which are affecting our salmon and sea trout stocks has prepared and is implementing a management plan to tackle the real issues on the river.

### **Geographical**

The Allan flows in a generally south easterly direction with its headwaters above Blackford. Much of the substrate, particularly in the feeder burns such as the Danny, Buttergask, and Ogilvy Burns, is alluvial gravel and as such is ideal habitat for salmonids. The underlying geology is Devonian Old Red Sandstone and is about 350 million years old. Historically migratory fish had unhindered access to all the burns on the river and were barred from proceeding upstream only where natural outcrops of Old Red Sandstone occurred

### **Historical**

The River Allan has suffered greatly at the hands of man since the Industrial Revolution and at one time had 12 mill dams on the main river between Kinbuck and Bridge of Allan to feed the textile and paper mills. Two working dams remain. There were also numerous others on the smaller tributaries such as the Millstane, Burnside, and Keir Burns for local meal mills. Of recent years there have been a number of upgradings of the A9 between Blackford and Dunblane and almost every burn on the left bank of the Allan has now been culverted or affected in some way and access to hitherto prime spawning and nursery areas is now barred. Downstream of Blackford the river has since 1942 been engineered by successive annual works carried out under the 1941 Land Drainage Act (now repealed). These ad hoc annual works severely degraded the habitat between Blackford and Ashfield as engineers sought to straighten the river channel to improve run off. They did nothing to stabilize the riverbanks and simply exacerbated the problem. Modern farming practices and poor forestry practices have also added to the problem and erosion remains significant.

## **Today**

The Allan which is part of the River Teith Special Area for Conservation (SAC) has natural populations of salmon, sea trout, brown trout, lamprey spp., minnow, eel, stone loach, and 3 spined sticklebacks and is home to a wide variety of birds including moorhen and kingfisher. Otter populations also exist on the river. There are still a few pearl mussel beds but these are now seriously endangered by transport of the substrates in which they live.

The Allan Water- *An inventory of current status of the River Allan and its tributaries.* (McKenzie 2009) highlights the downward and limiting pressures on the River Allan and its fauna and flora, also the good points. This takes into account historical and geographical information, catch returns and scientific survey data, and forms the basis on which the plan has been drawn up. There are numerous and complex issues which affect the river, however examination of these has shown that they can be broken down into three distinct key issues which if addressed will achieve the aims of the Association and the good ecological status required by the Water Framework Directive by 2015. These are;

- Man-made obstructions and industrial processes that restrict/affect fish migrations.
- Siltation caused by excessive erosion from all sources.
- Bio-security

Whilst the plan is principally to enhance the riparian habitat with respect to its aquatic fauna and flora it should be recognised that the improvements will have much wider social and ecological benefits and that restoring the currently degraded habitats will also support a much wider and more diverse range of animal and plant species. The plan includes the actions required to quantify and execute remedial works, identify partners, identify costs and funding sources, timescales, and quantifies the environmental benefits.

# **The River Almond**

## **Back from the Brink and working with the Board**

### **Fen Howieson – Member FDSFB & Secretary Crammond AC**

With the UK in the grips of recession it reminds me of a time only a few years ago when my local angling club was about to collapse. Membership numbers were at an all time low, rules and regulations weren't current and worse still, weren't even issued to the members. The club wasn't exactly flavour of the month with both the Board and the Crown Estates.

All that was about to change, a new committee was put in place and the first thing they did was to plan the clubs recovery. Lesson one: Define the roles and responsibilities, making sure that everyone involved understood the effort required in making it happen, the Chairman "chairs", the Secretary keeps accurate records and the Treasurer "treasure's" if that makes sense if not, "looks after the cash".

First and foremost on the list was the fishing, with the current lease due to expire some serious talking needed to take place. Thankfully the damage hadn't been too bad and the Crown agreed to an initial renewal allowing the club to move to stage two, with a caveat that we worked closely with the Board. So, next on the list was the Board, not something anybody relished after what had been happening on the River, but something that needed to be done.

The Board were excellent, listening intently as we explained all the past errors and our recommendations for righting these wrongs. A draft set of rules were produced taking into account our lease and the

Salmon and Freshwater Fisheries (Consolidated) (Scotland) Act 2003 and sent to the Board for approval. All day ticket books were collected from the various outlets and the new season started, with every member and day ticket holder receiving a copy of the agreed rules. Under advice from the Board, the club appointed "Club Bailiffs", and this allowed the transition from the old days to the new regulated fishery. Lesson two: these club bailiffs were the advocates, spending time on the river, encouraging day ticket holders to join the club and making many a dog walker or passer by aware of the potential. To get a feel for how successful this was, the club initially had less than thirty members five seasons ago, we're now sitting with in excess of two hundred members and we hold leases for five times more fishing.

Lesson three: Understand the Boards levy. This has to be the most misunderstood, misrepresented levy. People's understanding varied within our club, so much so that in the past the club thought it best to misrepresent its catch returns hoping to decrease the levy due. So for the record, the income made from the sale of permits, the fish caught (both released and retained) and the potential earning are used by the valuers to determine the rateable value of a fishery, then the levy is charged based on that value. *i.e.* if the rateable value of your fishery was £300 and a levy charged of £1.50 in the £1.00, then the payment to the Board would be £450.

This misrepresentation was a very short sighted view from our club, as at the time they didn't understand where this information was destined and what it might be used for. So, again for the record, the salmon and sea trout catch information is requested and collated by the Fisheries Research Services (FRS), which gives a national view of the health and welfare of our sport and provides information to the Scottish Government, with the FRS providing research, monitoring and advice to a number of Government departments.

Having an understanding how the Board was funded, lesson four; was to understand what function the Board played, how they are structured and resourced. This knowledge was important to our club in understanding the two different roles; protection and conservation, which effectively is the business plan our committee are there to drive and manage. Having built up a good working relationship with the Board, the club has maintained a close working relationship with both the Director and Superintendent, relying on their knowledge and expertise on several occasions. With the Superintendent policing certain areas out with our fishing control at key times of the year and educating the club bailiffs, ensuring they know which tell tale signs to keep an eye out for.

Lesson five, six and beyond: as the new committee matured we started to look into the conservation aspects of our fishery, having adopted and actively encouraged the Boards conservation policy we started to look at our head waters. Working with the Wild Trout Trust to better understand the health of the system and how best to monitor the water quality a report was produced and a programme of kick sampling was implemented. The Club and the Board are now represented at the Councils catchment planning committee and this has lead to further reports being commissioned by the Club and these have been provided to the Board and have been included within the Forth District Salmon Fisheries Board Management Plan, which will be driven forward by the new Trust.

This is a very exciting time for our district and we would certainly recommend getting behind both the Board and the Trust and look forward to help drive the Management Plan and its initiatives.

# The River Tyne

**Brian Davidson** – Director ASFB& Secretary of the East Lothian AA

The Tyne is a small river of approximately 28 miles in length which rises in Midlothian, (Tynehead) and flows east, draining rich agricultural lowlands until it empties into a wide, sandy estuary just west of Dunbar in East Lothian. It has a range of mill weirs throughout its course which present partial barriers to salmon and sea trout. There is one significant natural fall (The Linn) on the lower river at East Linton where the river drops dramatically through bedrock. The river has a tendency for massive spates, and this has been a historical characteristic *“it is subject to inundations of such suddenness and magnitude, as, if not restrained by embankments, would wreak enormous havoc” (Ordnance Gazetteer of Scotland, 1882-1885)*

Whilst the river is small, it has been historically renowned for a relatively significant run of sea trout, some of which are very large in size. It also supports a brown trout fishery, and it receives a small, late run of salmon at the end of the year. The vast majority of the river is leased to the East Lothian Angling Association (ELAA), who manage the river and let the fishings at reasonable cost to all. ELAA are engaged in a number of projects to improve the river habitat, fish stocks and fishery as a whole.

The ELAA is committed to assisting the new Forth Fishery Trust (FFT) in delivering its objectives, and has started to work closely with the new Trust on a range of projects, as well as having a close working relationship with the Forth District salmon Fishery Board, in particular Bill Cunningham and his team of bailiffs.

The Tyne has a number of impacts which the ELAA and Board/Trust are attempting to address. Through the ELAA's local Management Plan and the wider FFT Fishery Management Plan, the key issues facing the Tyne are weirs, a lack of data, localised poaching and wider issues such as diffuse water enrichment and abstraction as a result of the agricultural impacts.

*Tyne sea trout around 2lbs*



## Weirs & Fish Passes

The Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) have significant funding available to assist with restoration of watercourses in Scotland and one priority for this funding is improving fish passage at man-made obstacles. A funding application has now received approval to support a professional assessment and engineering report on most of the weirs on the River Tyne. The aim of the first part of this project is to commission a fish pass specialist to examine each weir and provide a costed solution to

improve fish passage at each weir. Around 60% funding of the cost of each report is available from SEPA for this purpose. Once the reports and plans have been drawn up, the second stage would be to present the findings to SEPA and then apply for funding support to begin the necessary remedial works highlighted in each report. This second phase will probably be costly, and whilst funding support may be secured from SEPA, the ELAA would have to explore other funding avenues to match this. The FFT may be in a position to assist with some contributory support to help deliver these assessments in 2009

### **Data collection**

In 2007 we commissioned Dr Willie Yeomans and his team from the Clyde River Foundation to undertake an electro-fishing survey at various sites on the river in autumn of that year. It is proposed to embark on ongoing survey work of this nature annually as part of the ELAA Management Plan. This will allow us to improve our understanding of the fish stocks in the Tyne and address any problems that are uncovered by this work. It will also help deliver the objectives of the FFT Fishery Management Plan. In 2008, ELAA secured a £10,000 Awards for All Lottery Grant for a comprehensive electro-fishing survey covering 30 sites on the river. It was hoped to have undertaken this survey last year soon after we secured the grant, but river conditions were unsuitable. The survey will now be conducted when conditions allow in 2009 by Willie Yeomans on contract to the ELAA and FFT.

### **ELAA Stocking policy 2009**

For several years the Association has stocked the river with brown trout at various locations twice a year. In August 2008 new regulations came into force requiring the Association to obtain formal legal permission from Government before stocking takes place. The authorisation requires details of the type and number of fish to be stocked and the location and dates of where the fish are to be released.

This has led the Committee to consider its stocking policy. Anglers seem to have strong views on whether stocking should be undertaken or not. Many anglers want the river to be stocked as they feel this increases their chances of catching fish. Others feel that a river with only natural wild brown trout provides a more satisfying challenge. Evidence from other rivers indicates that if stocking is reduced, or stopped, the wild brown trout numbers and size of individual trout will, over time, increase. It is also known that some anglers enjoy fishing for stocked fish as much as wild trout and that they might be less inclined to buy a permit, and observe the rules, if stocking were to be discontinued.

ELAA debated this at length and the following policy has been adopted for 2009 - 2011:-

Stocking will continue to be undertaken but only on the river below the West Mill Weir in Haddington. Upstream of the West Mill Weir will not be stocked and will be left as wild brown trout only. In this wild brown trout only area anglers would be encouraged to operate catch and release or, at the very least, to observe a maximum two fish per day bag limit so as to enhance the brown trout population.

*A wild brown trout of around 3lbs from the Upper Tyne*



This policy will continue for the next three years during which time the state of the fish and fishing will be carefully monitored. Members have been asked to give this policy time to develop and by the end of the three-year time period ELAA would hope to be in a position to report back to the members as to whether the wild brown trout population above the West Mills has improved or not. In addition there will have been feedback from permit holders as to how successful or otherwise they perceive the policy has been.

### **Poaching**

Localised poaching of sea trout has been a long running issue on the Tyne, with numbers of nets being set along most of the river throughout the year. These nets are often found to contain significant numbers of sea trout, some of which are very large. ELAA has received considerable assistance from the Forth DSFB bailiffs, and Bill Cunningham and his team were particularly vigilant during 2008, and removed a number of nets from the river, as well as securing convictions on a well known local poacher.

## **CONTACT DETAILS**

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