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# THE DEVERON FLYER

The Deveron, Bogie and Isla Rivers Charitable Trust

Newsletter 26 Autumn 2013

## Welcome to the 26th newsletter of the Deveron, Bogie & Isla Rivers Charitable Trust.

The Trust's objectives are to 'conserve, protect and rehabilitate salmon, sea trout and trout and other indigenous species of animal, bird, insect and plant life and more generally to promote the ecological cycle for the benefit of the inhabitants of the Deveron'.

## Catch 29!

The Morison Family and DBIT Board of Directors were delighted to announce the 2012 winner of the Morison Trophy at the annual river opening ceremony held in February. The Morison Trophy, awarded for the heaviest fly-caught salmon of the season from the Deveron, was won by local angler, Mr Craig Wyness. His capture, which was safely returned, weighed 29lbs (Length 42 inches / Girth 24.5 inches) and was caught on a cascade (size 12) fly, from the Sheeps Haugh pool on Upper Netherdale during October. The large male salmon was safely landed with the assistance of Ghille, Willie Smith. Mr Wyness saw his name engraved onto the beautiful silver trophy and received a G-Loomis Versa Spey flyrod as well as a porcelain flagon of Royal Salute by CHIVAS REGAL.



**Above: Craig Wyness (Morison Trophy Winner), Paul Young (Special Guest) and Malcolm Hay (RDevDSFB Chair) Below left: Paul Young, Richie Miller and Billy Hepburn and below right: Ghillie Willie Smith with winning 29lbs salmon.**



## Deveron District Biosecurity Project

Thanks to our many volunteers (River-Champions), we have captured 45 American mink since October 2013. Having initially thought that we may have curtailed the Bogie and Isla populations to virtually zero in the

last 12 months, we have recently removed seven from the Bogie and six from the Isla. The Forge burn has been disturbingly productive for mink with eight removed from

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## Ghillies evening

*The RDevDSFB/DBIT will hold the annual ghillies evening on Wednesday the 9th of October at the Fife Arms Hotel in Turriff at 7.30pm. The evening will include an annual update by Richie Miller (DBIT).*

# Trout fishing destination

by Marcus Walters, Moray Firth Trout Initiative (MFTI) Project Manager

Anglers will be well aware that the last two years have not been good for sea trout catches on the River Deveron. This is not just the plight of the Deveron but is a worrying pattern seen in many of the Moray Firth Rivers. The Moray Firth Rod and Line catch in 2011 was the second lowest on record since 1952 and fell away further in 2012 to the lowest year on record. The DBIT is working closely with the Moray Firth Trout Initiative (MFTI) to improve our understanding of Deveron trout populations to ensure appropriate management and conservation measures can be implemented to assist in understanding, and if possible, halting this decline. The Deveron is being increasingly recognised as a spectacular trout angling destination and the Blackwater tracking project described in Case Study 1 is helping us to understand how these fish use the catchment. Furthermore, despite the poor sea

trout rod-catch, the DBIT's annual electrofishing surveys have been showing excellent numbers of trout fry and parr throughout the catchment during 2012. To investigate this further an exploratory study (funded by the Atlantic Salmon Trust) using stable isotope ratios to investigate patterns of anadromy (sea trout) and residency (brown trout) in trout from the Deveron Catchment has begun.

The project sets out to trial the techniques utilised by Edinburgh Napier University and the Tweed Foundation using stable isotope ratios in fry to determine if they are the progeny of female sea trout or brown trout (Briers et al 2012). Fishery managers already have good knowledge of the distribution and relative abundance of juvenile trout from electrofishing surveys, however, this technique will greatly enhance the value of this data by revealing the origin of the fry.

## CASE STUDY 1: Blackwater Trout Tracking

The Deveron, Blackwater tributary has a strong run of large fast growing trout that have historically been thought of as sea trout but scale reading and stable Isotope analysis suggests that they are more likely piscivorous brown trout.

A partnership project between the DBIT, Marine Scotland Science and Moray Firth Trout Initiative has been developed to track these trout through the Deveron catchment. This will help to improve our understanding of how these large trout use the Deveron catchment and provide an insight into other large piscivorous populations elsewhere.

In the Autumn of 2012, ten trout were caught in the Upper Blackwater and tagged under licence by Dave Stewart from Marine Scotland Science. They were released with 9mm acoustic tags. The acoustic tags emit unique acoustic pulse trains that

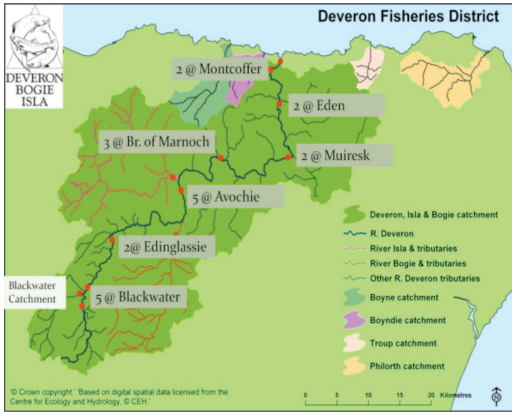


identify the specific tag or fish when detected. The signal is detected and logged by the 13 receivers loaned to the project by Marine Scotland Science and deployed along the length of the Deveron, at key locations, to log the trout as they migrate through the system.

In 2012, the data on the receivers was checked monthly and downloaded. Of the ten tagged trout, eight have so far been logged somewhere in the system. The fish that have not been logged may have not left the Blackwater, or they passed

receivers without being logged or perhaps have died naturally. The first fish left the Blackwater tributary within 12 hours and the last after 11 days. Two fish have migrated as far downstream as Montcoffer which is only two miles from the river mouth but none have migrated to sea (see map). Three trout have migrated as far as the Bridge of Marnoch and five as far as Avochie. Avochie has so far been the most frequented location with five fish having been logged there.

After the initial downstream migration the fish were not logged moving that much until July and August when three of the tagged trout began to be logged moving back upstream. One particular fish (Tag number: ID22239) has been logged migrating downstream to Montcoffer where it was logged regularly until migrating back upstream in July.



**Map 1: The Deveron Catchment, with the Blackwater sub catchment labelled in the SW corner. The logger locations are shown by red dots and the annotations show how many trout have been logged at each location**



**BLACKWATER TAGGED TROUT (ID22239) RECORDED MOVEMENTS 2012/13**

- 31.10.12** Released Upper Blackwater
- 06.11.12** Passed lower Blackwater (15.17)
- 06.11.12** Passed Edinglassie (21.37)
- 07.11.12** Passed Avochie (04.57)
- 07.11.12** At Bridge of Marnoch (09.34-18.29)
- 13.11.12** Passed Muiresk
- 14.11.12** Passed Eden
- 28.11.12** Arrived Montcoffer (Logged on and off all winter and early summer).
- 08.07.13** Last logged at Montcoffer
- 09.07.13** Passed Eden
- 10.07.13** Passed Muiresk
- 12.07.13** Passed Bridge of Marnoch
- 13.07.13** Passed Avochie

**Deveron District Biosecurity Project – Phase II**



*Continued from front page*

the Drumblade area. A new burn covered this year, the Cunning burn (middle Deveron) has produced five mink captures. The remaining captures have been from the Deveron main-stem from Rothiemay down to Banff. These results demonstrate that continuous monitoring and trapping will be required for the foreseeable future.

Control of Giant Hogweed on the Isla and Bogie systems continued for the twelfth consecutive year. Colin Grant (Huntly Fishing's) carried on his great work on the Bogie whilst the DBIT controlled the Isla with help from volunteers Kevin Barron and John Wilson. Our thanks to all ghillies and landowners who have contributed to the district control programme. Local farmers have responded well to our requests to control invasive plants in the riparian zone, particularly since the WANE Act (Scotland) Act 2011 came into legislation imposing a greater responsibility to ensure invasives are not spread.

The Giant Hogweed grazing control trial at Auldtown of Netherdale started this spring with 20 black faced sheep released onto the enclosed site. DBIT Trustee Roger Polson is kindly providing assistance and inspecting the animals, ensuring that their welfare is not compromised with regular inspections from the Animal Health and Veterinary Laboratories Agency (AHVLA). The dry, hot spring and summer conditions allowed the most heavily infested area to thrive, so we assisted the grazing control through some spraying at key locations.

We are very pleased with the progress of the grazing control so far and have evidence that black face sheep even graze maturing and emerging plants as late as August. No hogweed plants were allowed to seed this year which is a great step forward. Further sheep will be joining the trial in spring 2014, doubling the flock size to 40, as we have concluded that heavier stocking is needed to control the hogweed plants as they emerge next spring.

All known sites of Japanese Knotweed have been revisited and injected. Most sites showed modest re-growth after treatment. Some stems inevitably are missed during injection, but this method is more effective than spraying which can take 3-4 years longer for eradication. Three new sites have been detected and treated also. Finally, a severe infestation of Himalayan Balsam was pulled on the upper Isla system during early September.

BEFORE CULVERT REMOVAL



AFTER CULVERT REMOVAL



## Rights of passage

During July this year a long-term obstacle to migratory fish was successfully removed from the Auchininna burn (pictured above). The obstacle was removed by Mr Harvey Grant of Lower Netherdale Estate on behalf of AJ Duncan Farms Ltd of which we pass our thanks. Migratory fish now have access to approximately 3.7km of nursery habitat.

**The DBIT are delighted to announce after over 10 years of campaigning, Scottish Water have agreed to fund the installation of a permanent fish pass and upgrade of adjoining screens on the Davidston weir, pictured left (Keith drinking water supply). The Davidston weir is situated on the Davidston, a tributary of the upper river Isla. This project will allow access to a further 4.7km of nursery habitat. Construction is currently about to begin and is estimated to take two weeks.**



• **The Trust and Montcoffer Fishing's would like to wish Rachel and Scott Watt (Whitehills), all the best for the future, pictured here beside the Bridge of Alvah.**

## Education, education, education

The Trust continued their schools programme with Primary schools, part-funded by the Moray Firth Trout Initiative. Children were given salmon eggs in an aquarium and cool box and were shown information on the life cycle of migratory fish. They reared the emerging fish which were taken back to the hatchery. The young fish were released by the children into their natal burn. Cairnie School released their fish at Ruthven whilst St. Thomas' visited the hatchery and released their fish

in the Drumhendry burn where BBC Radio Scotland recorded the day as part of LAB Scotland project in which the children produced a programme. The Trust staff were 'interviewed' by the class with questions on the work relating to wild fish.

• **Robin Vasey gave a talk to Gartly Primary school children raising awareness of Invasive Non Native Species including the dangers of Giant Hogweed.**

**For further information please contact The Senior Biologist at The Offices, Avochie, Rothiemay, Huntly, Aberdeenshire AB54 7YY Telephone/fax: 01466 711388; email: richiemiller@deveron.org or visit the Trust's website [www.deveron.org](http://www.deveron.org) The Deveron, Bogie and Isla Rivers Charitable Trust is a registered charity. No. SC 032131**