The River Dee

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Front cover image: SDUK Creative



river dee review
2020 - 2021



It is not overstating the case to say we are in a race against time, and we have worked as never before over the past year to meet that challenge.

In the face of a difficult fundraising climate for all charities, your Trust has helped deliver unprecedented levels of nature-restoration work. This has provided short-term as well as longer-range benefits for our salmon and the whole river ecosystem. Our efforts have gained international recognition and our methods are now being adopted on other rivers.

But the crisis facing Atlantic salmon across their entire range also demands urgent policy changes by Government. Your Trust has been at the forefront of efforts to persuade our politicians to turn their warm words into action. And all our efforts have been grounded in the best science.

Our Education Officer has also been promoting public appreciation of our precious river at a local level, engaging with thousands of people, young and old.

This report details your Trust's other achievements, including major innovations in fundraising. Our #FishDee24 marathon made a national impact. Look out for some eye-catching initiatives in the year ahead.



But much of this would not have been possible without the support of our partners at the Fishery Board, our river users, landowners, sponsors and other agencies. And I would again like to take this opportunity to pay special tribute to our incredible staff, directors, volunteers and the ever-growing numbers of public supporters who share our passion for the river we all treasure.

Sandy Bremner, Chair, River Dee Trust

We have now completed the first year of our current five year Fisheries Management Plan. I spoke last year of the momentum of activity which accompanied the launch of the plan and the need to sustain that with rhythm and pace. I feel that we are achieving that and I hope that when you read this report you will agree with me.

The world is not short of people and institutions that have grand ideas and fancy plans. However, the sad fact is that the majority fall down on the critical matter of delivery. The Board is determined that it will not fail here and to that end I can assure you that each and every one of the one hundred and fifty-two action items is being monitored and driven to a conclusion.

Along with many if not all Scottish rivers we have endured another miserable fishing season including a very poor run of sea trout. Numbers of salmon caught will be marginally up on last year but only thanks to greater fishing effort permitted by less disruption from CV19.

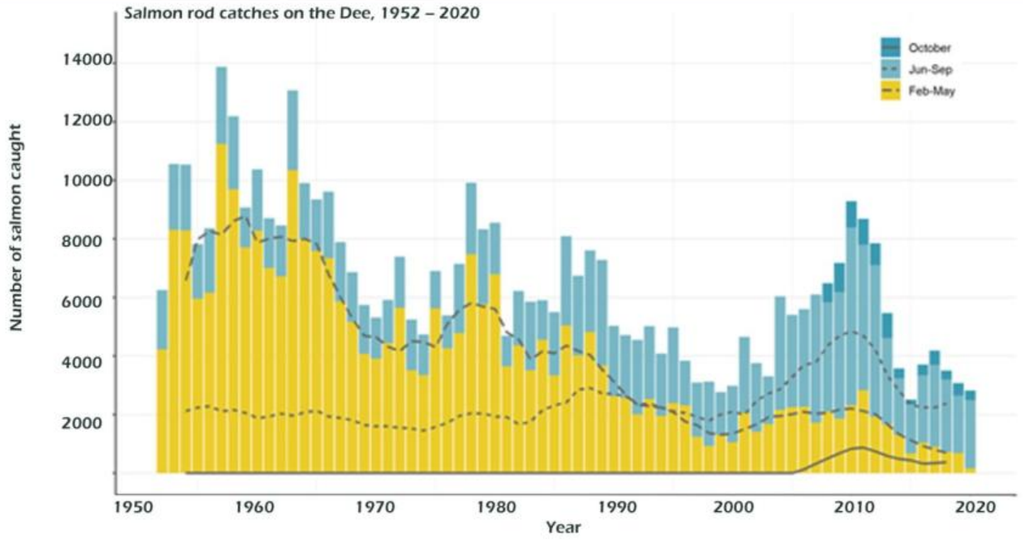
However, we do need to be careful not to be fixated by catches. A 'miserable fishing season' does not mean that everyone was miserable while fishing, quite the contrary. A day on the river is a day well spent with nature and friends and so it is good to see that we have continued to attract new anglers.

On behalf of the Board, Proprietors, Ghillies and Anglers I thank the River Office Team whose members have discharged their duties as ever with care, courtesy and courage. Well done all.



Lawrence Ross, Chair, Dee District Salmon Fishery Board

STOCK HEALTH

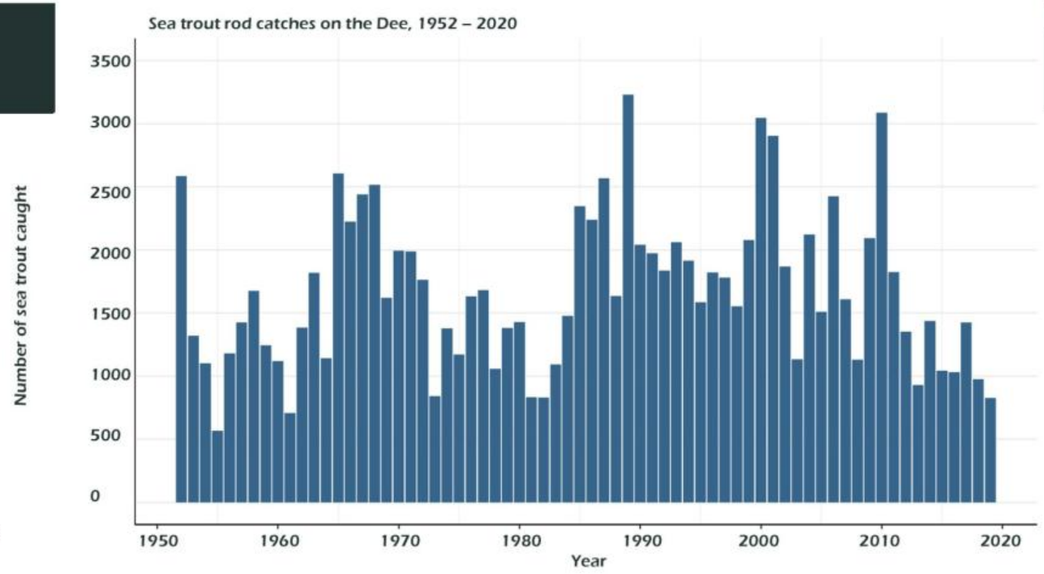


Our Atlantic salmon stocks are approaching crisis point, with increasing pressures in and around our rivers and seas. This isn't a local issue, it's an international crisis.

Salmon in the North Atlantic have declined by nearly two thirds in the last 40 years, and this has driven the patterns in the salmon fisheries on the Dee - in the 1960s, rod catches on the Dee were 8,000 – 10,000, and there were also a few tens of thousands caught in the coastal and in-river netting. In the last 5 years, rod catches are around 3,000-4,000 and there is no netting.

In 2020, 2,821 salmon were caught, including 155 spring fish. Of course, catches, particularly in the spring, were lower due to the Covid-related closure of the fishing beats for 10 weeks and a limitation of only local anglers for a further 10 weeks.

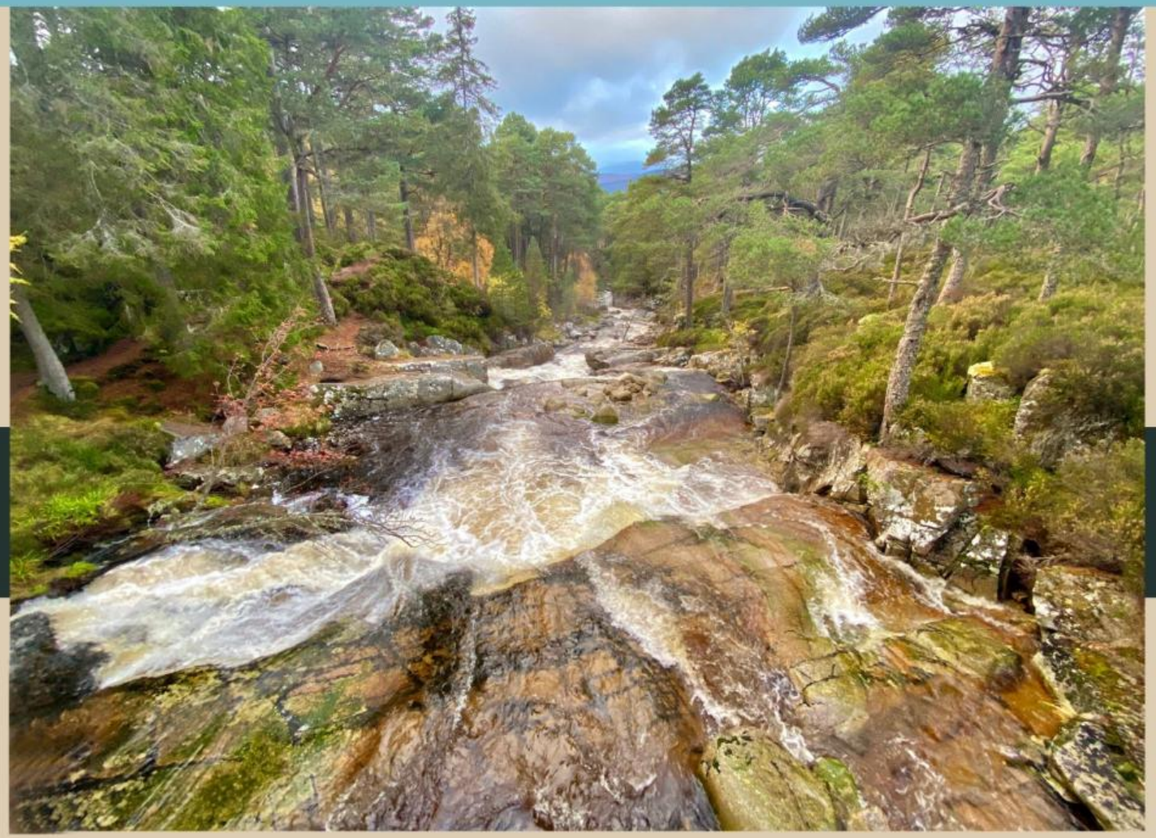
99.2% of these salmon caught were released back to continue their migration up-river and spawn. The positive news is that each year, our protection and environmental restoration work means that these fish have more habitat and better resources for producing fit and healthy juvenile fish.



613 sea trout were caught in 2020. This is low but also reflects the covid-related closure of the fishery. 98.5% of the sea trout caught were also released to continue their journey.



STOCK HEALTH



2020 spawning time

Weekly counts of fish spawning nests ('redds') were undertaken across the catchment during the winter. Across 14 sites and 14 kilometres, the number of redds counted was similar to the average we have counted at these sites over the last 5-10 years.

Few dead, spawned fish – kelts – were seen in 2020, and these have been noticeably declining over the last few decades, possibly resulting in a drain on nutrients from the catchment.

Young fish

The Marine Scotland Science (MSS) smolt traps on the Baddoch and Girnock burns in the upper Dee showed salmon smolt production in 2020 met the ten-year average overall, as Girnock numbers were 25% above this average, whilst Baddoch numbers were 26% down.

Electrofishing of younger juveniles (fry and parr) was not carried out in 2020 due to Covid-19 but results from 2019 suggest a low juvenile stock for what a catchment like the Dee should support.

Electrofishing was completed in summer 2021, including 30 sites to assess overall stock health in the catchment as part of a national assessment by MSS.

With huge pressures faced by salmon at sea, our work aims to produce as many healthy, wild juvenile fish from the river as possible: Not only does more fish going to sea mean more fish coming back, but also the health of the juvenile fish is key, as those in good condition are proven to have a better chance of surviving their ocean journey.



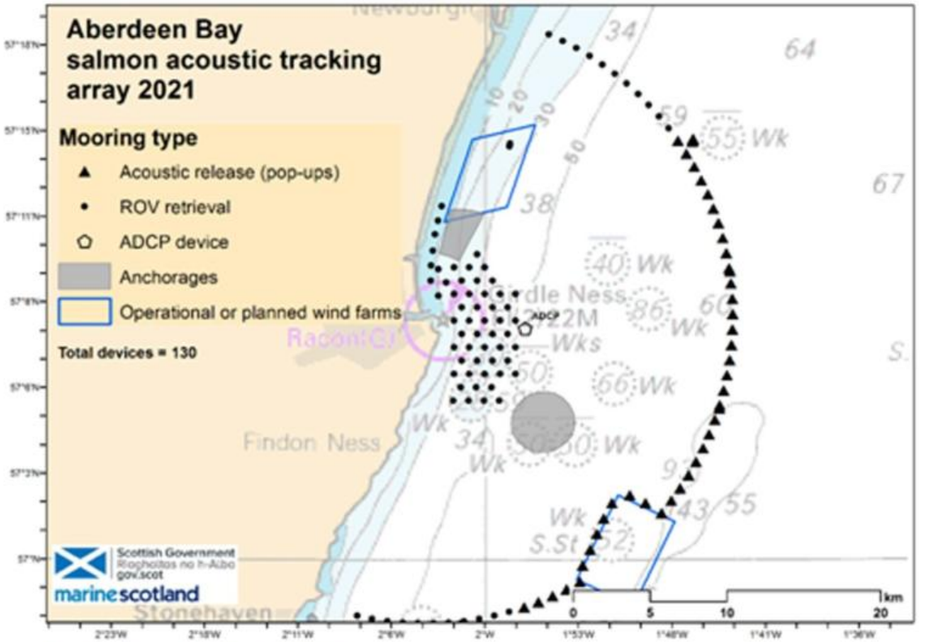
Protecting fish migration

Coastal & marine

In 2020 and 2021, salmon smolts were protected as they migrated out of the river due to a license provision by Marine Scotland to prevent suction dredging in Aberdeen Harbour in the few key weeks for smolt migration. In earlier years, this has not necessarily been the case, and smolt tracking found low numbers of smolts made it to sea. It is vital that this protection is continued in the future, otherwise the benefits of restoring the river are lost to salmon at this bottleneck for survival.

In 2021, we carried out the third and final year of the acoustic smolt tracking project jointly with MSS, funded by Aberdeen Offshore Windfarm Ltd and MSS. We tagged smolts in the river and tracked them to 20 km from shore, and this year focused on identifying significant routes for salmon populations from the North East by tracking both Dee and Don smolts. The receivers have now been lifted from the seabed and results are expected by the end of 2021.





Map: Receiver locations to detect fish.

Developments

The Fishery Board advises on any proposed developments that have potential to harm fish. Five marine consultations were required this year, including for three offshore windfarms along the East Scotland coast that could be on the migration route of salmon destined for the Dee. We also responded to 39 consultations that may impact on the fish in the river, such as riverbank works, housing developments and works by Scottish Water.

Protecting adult fish



Illegal exploitation

The Fishery Board works hard to protect fish from illegal fishing – 'poaching'. Not only is it illegal and unregulated, but it also goes against our key conservation measure – putting the fish back. This year, we dealt with 51 policing incidents and 21 formal warnings were given.

Much of this hard work is undercover at anti-social hours, but it is a vital form of protection. Our team is well supported by the community, for which we are very grateful. In particular, the reporting of poaching incidents by ghillies, proprietors, anglers and members of the public has been invaluable.

Social media has also helped raise awareness of poaching, with one social media post this summer reaching over 34,000 people. It resulted in two incidents being reported by members of the public and the suspects were given formal warnings.



We continue to work with the Don Fishery Board to increase coverage across both catchments. We have also been well supported by Police Scotland again this year, including delivering joint patrols at key times.

This year, we launched the use of a drone and body cameras to help with the detection of poachers and to help keep our staff safe. The drone enables us to survey large areas and check a site prior to staff accessing it, being particularly useful in coastal areas and remote locations.

We encourage anyone noticing suspicious activity around the river to report anonymously to our 24-hr number – 01339 880411 – all our fish are precious!

Managing predation

Goosanders

One of the pressures facing salmon in the river is increasing predation. Our earlier smolt tracking work highlighted substantial losses to smolts from predators, a key issue being predatory birds. We continue to monitor the situation with six bird counts done this year. Sharing this information with NatureScot allows us to organise a 'shoot to scare' programme designed to keep birds away from key locations particularly during the salmon smolt run, plus a limited licence to shoot birds to reinforce the scaring.

Understanding of national predation levels on smolts was slightly set-back due to a Covid-related cancellation of a Scottish Government project to investigate tagged smolt survival in the Dee and other rivers in spring 2021, but we are ready to resume in 2022.



Seals

Seal predation is a frequent problem for returning adult salmon, as evidenced by photos of salmon with predation damage collected by ghillies and proprietors and analysed by the Sea Mammal Research Unit (SMRU). Such information is helpful to demonstrate the magnitude of the impact and encourage Scottish Government to support development of non-lethal seal deterrents.

As yet, there is no single, effective non-lethal deterrent but we believe the longer-term goal should be to develop automated technology to scare seals – an effective 'detect and deter' system. The Fishery Board is currently supporting SMRU to develop automatic detection methods for seals in the river. Infrared video detection devices were trialed last winter and currently sonar detection devices are being trialed, with further scheduled for winter 2021/22. These techniques could then be linked to a startle device to displace seals using no lethal means.

Biosecurity & fish disease

Red Vent Syndrome, caused by high infection levels of a natural parasite, continued to be present on many adult salmon in the summer. A condition similar to Red Skin Disease was also seen on salmon, although this disease is still under investigation internationally to determine its cause and effect on fish.

Salmon are vulnerable to many diseases, some of which aren't even known to us – so we only react after they have infected fish. Instead, we should be doing all we can to avoid fish facing additional diseases in the first place.

Biosecurity measures are essential to help achieve this, being aimed at preventing the introduction and spread of animals, plants, pests, diseases and parasites. As one of the major fishing destinations in the world, the Dee is very much at risk of such accidental introductions.

It is therefore vital that our biosecurity measures are robust. Unfortunately, results of a survey we carried out on the river this year show that biosecurity is often considered someone else's problem and basic protection measures are not being taken. This exposes our salmon, our fisheries, and people's livelihoods to risks, such as the deadly parasite Gyrodactylus salaris, which could wipe out our salmon stocks.



Biosecurity must become a routine part of the fishing experience on the Dee and it requires everyone to take responsibility.

24-hr SEPA hotline: 0800 80 70 60, River Office: 01339 880411

Water quality & quantity



Good water quality is vital for a healthy river with healthy fish and wildlife populations. This year, the Trust launched its water quality investigation programme, carrying out invertebrate surveys to look for any evidence of water quality problems. Focusing on the agricultural tributaries of the Coy, Tarland and Culter sub catchments, we took invertebrate samples at sites in spring and these are being repeated in the autumn. SEPA - the water quality regulator - has agreed that any evidence of an issue will be investigated further.

Water quality issues are most noticeable when we have point-source pollution events, such as the release of wastewater from sewage treatment plants, or dirty water from construction sites. Whilst some pollutant discharges are legal, such as authorised public utility discharges, in our view they are never acceptable. All pollution is damaging to river health.

This year we found 13 pollution incidents, and a few we highlighted to Scottish Government to represent the catalogue of pollution problems that have become the norm on the Dee and other Scottish rivers. We await action from the regulators.

The 13 pollution incidents recorded are likely to be a gross underestimate of the true number. So please, if you see any discharges water entering the river or burns, report it to us and SEPA.

As part of our new campaign, please share any pollution incidents you find on social media, including pictures or short video, and tag us – we will follow up all incidents with SEPA but we need your help here to make a change.
@TheRiverDee (Facebook), @RiverDeeTeam (Twitter), theriverdeeteam (Instagram)
#riverpollution #riverconservation #saveoursalmon #scotgov

Buffer strips

With such a large part of the Dee catchment under agriculture, it is essential we reduce the pollutants – soil and chemicals - from agricultural land running into our rivers. We therefore assist land managers, owners and farmers to create protective land back from the riverbanks - buffer strips - which filter out soil and chemicals before they run into watercourses.
In the last year, we helped install 4 km of buffer strips, some of which was planted with 2,000 native trees, on the mainstem of the river and the Sheeoch burn. The physical works were funded by NatureScot and the Biodiversity Challenge Fund (BCF).

Throughout the year, our Habitat Advisers have continued to support farmers participating in existing environment-improving Government grant schemes on the Dee and sought funding for work in the next year. Applications have been submitted to BCF and the Scottish Government's agri-environment scheme.



Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS)



Plants

Our battle with invasive non-native riverbank plants continues – now in its eighth year on the Dee, and tenth year on the Rivers Cowie and Carron. We have sprayed, pulled and sprayed again the giant hogweed, Himalayan balsam and Japanese knotweed, over the last year. This included a few days of spraying on islands on the Dee, and these patches are getting considerably smaller. After ten years of treatment on the Rivers Cowie and Carron, the plants are getting weaker by the year but it's not over with yet!

Much of the treatment is carried out through the Scottish Invasive Species Initiative (SISI), a project funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund and NatureScot, and this enabled the Trust to employ a part-time Invasive Species Officer this year.

Our Invasive Species Officer has lead practical control work and in summer 2021 we were able to ask volunteers for help - which had not been possible during Covid-19 restrictions. The following achievements are thanks to the volunteers who hand-pull Himalayan balsam or have previously been trained by us to use herbicide on Japanese knotweed and giant hogweed:

- 75 km of Dee riverbank treated
- 6 km of Cowie riverbank treated
- 3.5 km of Carron riverbank treated

There is still much Himalayan balsam that remains untreated, as it requires a huge manpower effort to remove it all, and within the city there are also some stands of giant hogweed and Japanese knotweed which fall within the City Council and University grounds. We are delighted to see Aberdeen District Angling Association taking on control on riverbanks under their management.

Pink salmon

2021 saw the return of the non-native Pacific pink salmon to rivers throughout Scotland, including the Dee. Five were caught by anglers, but there was evidence of many more in the river. Numbers of 'pinks' first entered the Dee in 2017, and then again in 2019 – in keeping with their alternate year breeding cycle. 2021 saw an apparent range expansion as they moved upstream into the upper catchment.

Pink salmon may carry diseases or parasites that could affect our native salmon. They could also provide competition to our native salmon, which would be another pressure for them to contend with.

To reduce the chance of pink salmon impacting our native salmon, and other wildlife, this year the Fishery Board trialed the capture and removal of pinks using a speargun. This was successful but the window of opportunity for doing this is short, limited to their spawning period. Staff also destroyed any spawning redds that were found; however, it is likely some were missed and so we will be looking out for returns of these fish in 2023.



This work would not be possible without local community support. Whether it's letting us know a sighting of an invasive plant somewhere new, coming out surveying with us, helping with spraying or joined us pulling Himalayan balsam, it all helps.

Mink

Control of invasive non-native North American mink has also continued through the SISI project. Our 82 mink volunteers manage rafts to look for signs of mink and carry out trapping if animals are suspected to be present. This year we have removed eight mink from the catchment.

If anyone would be interested in helping monitor mink rafts, please get in touch with the River Office.

Restoring bankside habitat

Large efforts are required to save our salmon and to protect them in the future. We are delivering a variety of restoration measures intended to do just that, and at the heart of them is the expansion of native riverbank woodland which is a major factor in giving fish the rich, robust habitat they need to thrive and be fit and healthy for their journey at sea.

As large-scale change is required, we cannot do it on our own and so work with estates and landowners, land managers, the Cairngorms National Park Authority (CNPA), NatureScot, The Woodland Trust and many private funders.

One Million trees

To reach our Million Trees goal requires us to plant approximately 55,000 riverbank trees each year. Over the last year, we planted 72,310 trees. This included large-scale woodland creation in upper Glen Muick, with 57,360 trees planted and funded through Scottish Government's Forestry Grant Scheme. A further 4,200 willow cuttings were planted along the banks of the Muick, and 1,380 more willow cuttings along the Beltie burn, thanks to Dinnet and Glenmuick Estates letting us harvest willow.

The Woodland Trust donated 5,250 trees which we planted along the Chapel Stripe burn at Ballogie, the mainstem Dee opposite Ballater, the River Gairn and the banks of Tilquhillie beat. We try various measures to help our tree planting in these challenging upland environments. In the last year, we trialed 'mob-planting' – without fencing – of 1,000 alder trees on the River Muick on a steep slope not easily accessible to deer. One of our sites is trialing different tree tube designs, including biodegradable ones. Although we aim to move away from tree tubes, in some places they are necessary and we are keen to find more eco-friendly options. However, all our tree tubes will be collected and not left as litter.

We also created 100 small enclosures, a planting method we have been using since 2013 and appears largely successful in protecting trees from deer, without the need for deer fencing. This year's enclosures were funded by the CNPA's Green Recovery Fund and the Cairngorms Trust and contained 3,200 trees provided by the Woodland Trust.

Our Habitat Advisers deliver the tree planting and are supported by a large donation each year from the CNPA. The Woodland Trust has now added its support to secure their positions for the next three years, and additionally provided a further £30,000 each year for the next three years for tree planting costs.

To ensure tree planting continues to happen apace, we are now looking at additional support for the ongoing maintenance of infrastructure and trees, to ensure we can continue to take care of the expanding riverbank woodland. We are seeking committed volunteers and funding.

We are also seeking Scottish Government to review and update their Forestry Grant Scheme to be more favourable for upland riverbank tree planting, in recognition of its climate, carbon and biodiversity benefits.

Floodplains & wetlands





Our floodplains are needed to retain flood water and to release water under dry conditions. We have been working on three floodplain projects in the last year, and indications are that the fish are already benefitting.

Easter Beltie restoration project

The floodplain restoration on the Beltie burn near Torphins was completed in November 2020. 10 hectares were restored by re-meandering 2 km of the burn that had previously been straightened and dredged, reprofiling the riverbanks to connect river and floodplain, creating four instream wetland ponds covering 5 hectares, and improving instream habitat with spawning gravels and large wood structures.

Within weeks, fish were seen and 15 spawning redds were recorded at the newly restored site, having never been recorded before due to its canalised habitat. Summer electrofishing found juvenile salmon, as well as trout, eels and lamprey in the new river channel.
The project was funded by NatureScot's Biodiversity Challenge Fund and supported by landowner Bert McIntosh, and it has become a finalist in the Inspiring Aberdeenshire Awards and is shortlisted for the Nature of Scotland Awards 2021.



















Garbh Allt floodplain

The floodplain restoration of the upland Garbh Allt watercourse was also completed in November 2020. Historically, the burn was constrained to reduce flooding, by blocking side channels that took water in high flows, and by the construction of levees. This led to a much faster-flowing watercourse that subsequently washed out the smaller stones which provided fish habitat and spawning gravels.

Salmon spawning redds were counted here in the 1960s, but the last couple of years has seen no spawning.

The restoration work for the 4.5-hectare site involved removing five levees, reopening four side channels, and adding some instream gravels, so the river is now in the process of restoring itself. However, very shortly after the work was complete, small numbers of spawning fish and redds were spotted here.

Funding and support for this project came from NatureScot's Biodiversity Challenge Fund, Balmoral Estate and cbec eco engineering UK.







River Muick wetland restoration

Thanks to a third award from NatureScot's Biodiversity Challenge Fund of £192,000, a restoration project on the River Muick started in May 2021 and will be completed by March 2022. Part of the project includes creation and restoration of six wetland areas to establish small pools and wader habitat, creation of 72 leaky dams and 112 debris dams to help manage high and low flows, and reinstatement of 350 metres of a historic side channel to help reconnect the river and floodplain.

Peatland restoration

Peatland is key habitat for helping to filter water before it enters rivers, and for regulating water flows in flood and drought conditions. Not to mention the carbon benefits it provides to us all! 43 km of riverbank was surveyed in spring 2021 to locate severely eroding peat banks.

Our next step is to shortlist priority sites for action – such as green engineering repairs - and apply for funding to deliver restoration in 2022.

Restoring instream habitat

Large Wood Structures (LWS)

The lack of riverbank trees means not only less shading for the river in the summer heat, but also less woody material going into the river for habitat, and less invertebrates for food. The installation of Large Wood Structures (LWS) provides habitat for fish by creating varied river flows, causing gravel deposition, providing shelter from predators and high temperatures, and helping nutrient deposition.

40 LWS, made up of 160 large wind-blown trees and covering a 4-km reach of the upper River Muick, were installed in autumn 2020. This work was funded by NatureScot's Biodiversity Challenge Fund. Amazingly quickly, some of these structures created areas of spawning gravel downstream of them which salmon used for spawning in 2020.

A further 33 LWS, made up of 138 large wind-blown trees, are to be installed in autumn 2021 in a 4-km reach of the River Muick and the Fileachaidh burn. This is also funded by the Biodiversity Challenge Fund and will provide much needed juvenile and spawning habitat in the middle reaches of the River Muick. We have now installed a total of 137 LWS on the major upland tributaries of the Gairn and Muick.

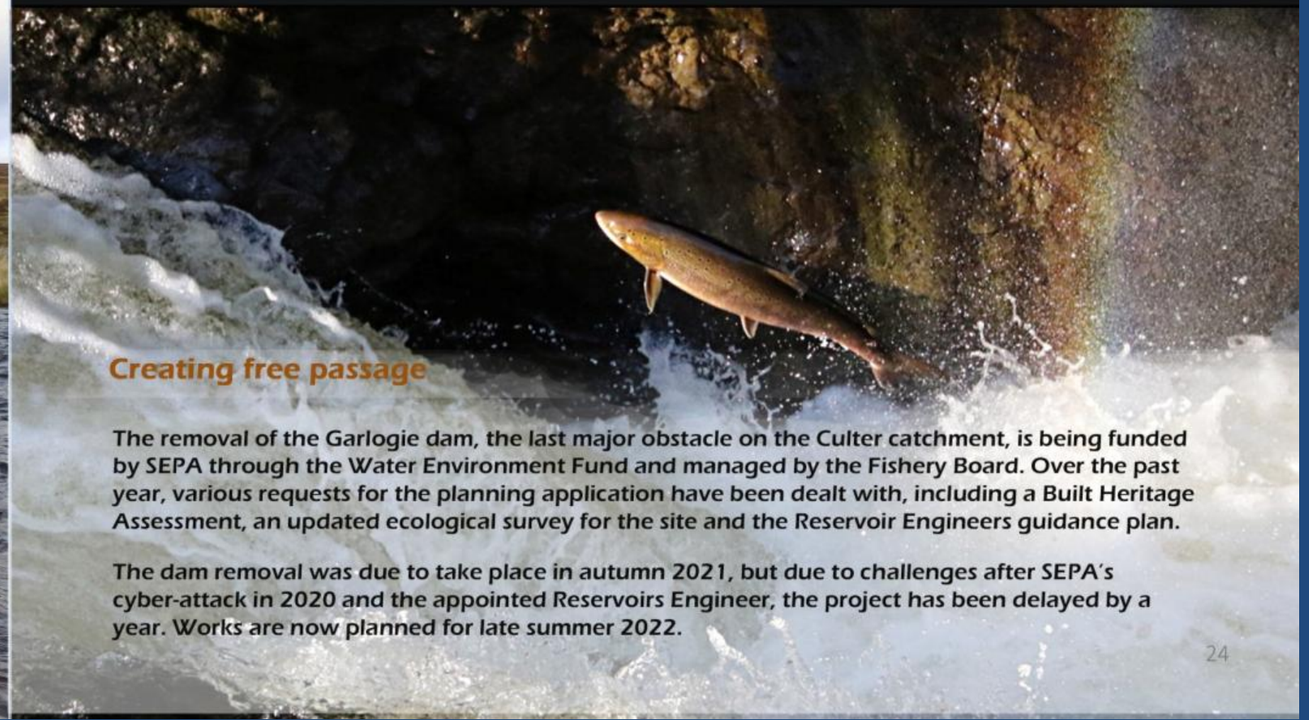


Nutrients

The decline in salmon numbers has meant a decline in nutrients being returned to our watercourses, and this was likely to be a significant contributor to aquatic life in our nutrient-poor upland streams.

We have continued a nutrient additions trial for a third year to assess the contributions and effect of adding either fish feed pellets or deer legs to watercourses. Research by the Trust and the James Hutton Institute this year has shown that the deer legs are indeed high in important nutrients (nitrogen and phosphorus) - a leg is very similar to a salmon carcass! - but leg nutrients appear to take a very long time to leach into the water environment.

We have therefore started monitoring breakdown rates to give us a better understanding of the timescale that adding deer legs will benefit a watercourse.



Creating free passage

The removal of the Garlogie dam, the last major obstacle on the Culter catchment, is being funded by SEPA through the Water Environment Fund and managed by the Fishery Board. Over the past year, various requests for the planning application have been dealt with, including a Built Heritage Assessment, an updated ecological survey for the site and the Reservoir Engineers guidance plan.

The dam removal was due to take place in autumn 2021, but due to challenges after SEPA's cyber-attack in 2020 and the appointed Reservoirs Engineer, the project has been delayed by a year. Works are now planned for late summer 2022.





Support

Due to Covid-19, the Trust's Living River Dinner was cancelled this year. We focused on raising funds through the online auction which ran in November 2020 and was our most successful ever - thanks to the very generous donations of lots we received, £18,500 was raised for the river.

Through our online shop we continued to raise funds through sales of neck warmers, with thanks to Robson Green for modelling and helping to publicise them, as well as books, prints and trees.

The Trust received very generous support from Deeside Distillery, who have donated four casks of whisky out of a bespoke 100-cask production. We hope to auction off our first cask at a dinner in autumn 2022.



A Development & Promotions Officer role was created for the Board and Trust in 2021, and Debbie Cooper took on this role in April. We have strategically reviewed all of our communication channels and messages, which covers three Facebook, two Instagram, Twitter, Linked In and You Tube channels, to be integrated into a new communications plan.

Over the last year we have highlighted the Dee on local and national media, including poaching challenges, angling and our 24-hour fishing event. Campaigning for national support for salmon and the Million Trees project included STV news coverage in 2020, and alongside Fisheries Management Scotland we pushed for pledges from political parties to '#save our salmon'.

The Million Trees campaign has been hugely supported by the public through an outpouring of donations, purchases of trees for our work, and the sponsorship of 12 small tree enclosures.

We are hugely grateful for everyone's generosity, keenness and brave endeavours!



@TheRiverDee
@FishDeeScotland

theriverdeeteam

@RiverDeeTeam

#saveoursalmon

River Dee Trust

We've also had some fantastic support from the local community, including Mirjam Brady who swam the Dee every week in the lead up to Christmas and raised over £800 for the campaign, and the local ladies swimming group, the Deeside Dippers, who took the plunge through the springtime and raised over £1,500.





Education

The Trust's education programme is focused on connecting young people to the River Dee through fun, hands on activities, linked to the Curriculum for Excellence. The launch of the programme in April 2020 was somewhat challenged by the Covid-19 lockdown. However, Jane Lilley took up our new post of Education Officer and developed and delivered 85 virtual class sessions. Once lockdown rules eased, she returned to schools and delivered 73 playground visits for outdoor learning, and finally six riverbank visits once schools opened up further.

Overall, the Trust has delivered 164 visits, to 100 classes, in the last year, working with 2,249 children.

The Education programme also launched the new Howard Butterworth Art Award in 2021, with this first year's theme being the landscape of the Dee. We received 168 entries from children aged 5-19 and it was won by Isla, aged 5, from Lumphanan. Isla's work was framed and displayed in the Butterworth Gallery at Ballogie, and her whole class is going out tree planting with the Trust shortly.

The education programme is only possible due to the funding provided by its sponsors – TAQA, Harbour Energy, Neptune Energy, CNOOC International, CNR International and Shell.









Keeping customers and appealing to new ones



13 yr old Camryn , joint top fundraiser for the 24hr Fishing event.

The 2021 fishing season got off to another challenging start, due to Covid-19 restrictions that meant anglers could not travel, groups of anglers was limited, and even fishing huts had to remain closed for the first three months of the season. Without an Opening Ceremony, we held a virtual award for the best fish caught by a youngster – to Joshua Bramman – with the Callum Mackenzie Cup, whilst the Tor Na Coille Hotel & Restaurant-sponsored 'best fish' trophy was won by Eddie Sinclair for his 30lb salmon.

The Fishery Board's annual bursary – aimed at helping an individual each year to establish a career on the river – was awarded to Blaine Lyon in 2019. The bursary supports training and work experience, but due to Covid-19 opportunities were limited in 2020. Blaine has therefore been undertaking various training courses this year and is currently training for his Scottish Game Angling Instructor Certificate, whilst working at TwinPeakes Fly Fishing and volunteering with angling events on the Dee.

Selling the Dee to the world

Promotion of fishing was possible in the summer with covid restrictions easing, and we held our first (and as far as we know, the only) 24-hour fishing event – #FishDee24. This raised funds for the Trust and the profile of fishing on the Dee. 27 people joined the event from all around the UK and fished seven beats that were generously donated by the fishery owners.

Over £21,000 was raised for the Trust and it provided great fishing promotion to potential anglers. 13-year-old Camryn and local teacher Naomi Bell were joint top fundraisers in the event. They now have the honour of performing the famous first casts at the Opening Ceremony in 2022.

We are currently exploring the development of marketing platforms to promote fishing on the Dee through development of a new website, social media platforms and working with FishDee Ltd. Weekly fishing reports, social media and Rod Alert issues are all targeted at engaging anglers and attracting new people to the Dee.





Creating new customers

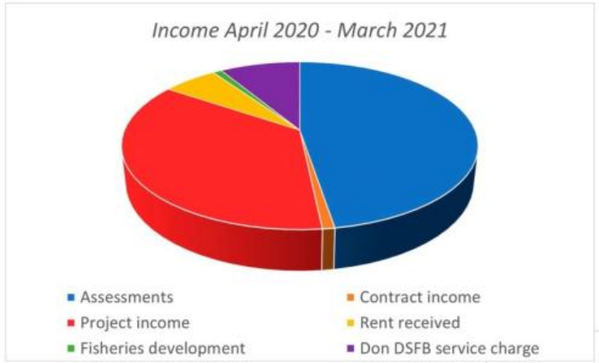
Through several events, we helped 42 people into the sport of fly fishing over the year.

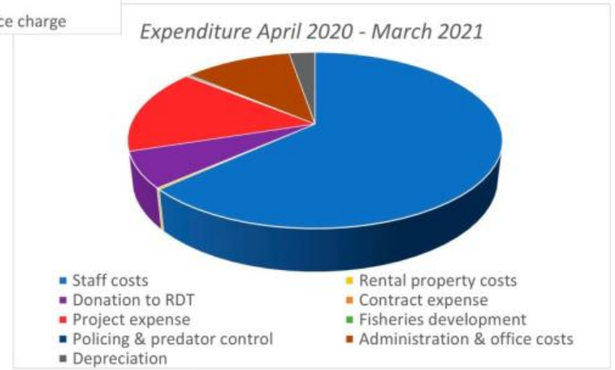
Aberdeenshire Fly Fish 50 (AFF50), which has been developed and delivered by volunteers, ran two separate courses, kindly hosted at Raemoir Trout Fishery in Banchory and Loch Insch Fishery, for a total of 21 participants. Over the course of three evening sessions with instruction and coaching, participants learned the art of fly fishing. These courses were bookable online and sold immediately, so we plan to do more next year.

We also held an AFF50 Introduction to Salmon Fishing Day in June for 11 people, and a Ladies Day in September for 10 people, both of which were kindly hosted by the Invery and Tilquhillie fishing beats and provided expert angling tuition with Dee ghillies. Due to the great feedback, we plan to hold more of these events next year, which will be advertised and bookable online. Please contact the River Office is you would like to register your interest to attend any angling event.

Fishery Board

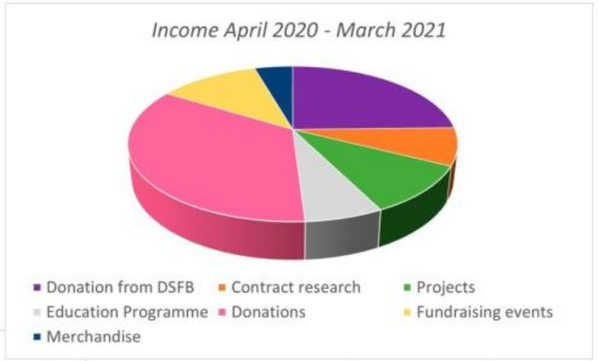
Due to Covid-19, the Fishery Board reduced the assessment levied on beats, which reduced the Board's own income; the assessment accounted for 47% of total income. Project income, which is external money brought in to deliver work on the river, became relatively more important and comprised 36% of total income. A further challenge was that contract work was not available due to Covid-19 and overall, income was £230,000 below the previous year.
A partial compensation was achieved as spend was lower - £120,000 below last year - due to a reduction in project work and reduced administration costs, both because of Covid-19, and so making staff costs proportionally greater.

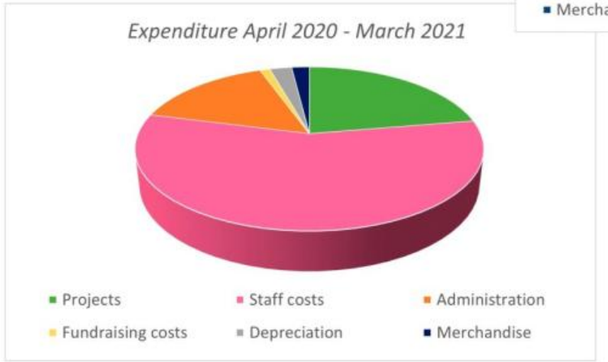




Trust

Income for the Trust was reduced due to impacts of Covid-19. Project income was down, largely due to an inability to deliver the smolt tracking work because of Covid-19. Donations, including the donation from the Fishery Board, therefore became a much bigger contributor to the Trust's income, providing nearly 60%. Merchandise sales was added as a new income stream.There was reduced spending in delivering projects (matching income), so staff costs and administration became proportionately greater this year.





RIVER DEE TEAM



1. River Director, Dr Lorraine Hawkins
2. River Operations Manager, Edwin Third
3. Fisheries Officer, Colin Esson
4. Lead Fisheries Officer, Diarmid Hawkins
5. Fisheries Officer, Mark Walker
6. Riparian Habitat Advisor, Flora Grigor-Taylor
7. Riparian Habitat Advisor, Steff Ferguson
8. Administrator, Carol Mair
9. Development & Promotions Officer, Debbie Cooper
10. Invasive Officer, Jan Simpson
11. Education Officer, Jane Lilley
12. Biologist, Dr Al Reeve
13. Trust Coordinator, Pamela Esson
14. Fisheries Protection Manager, Jamie Urquhart

2021-2022 WORK PLAN

Protecting Fish Stocks and their Rivers

- Work with others to seek coordinated national monitoring of impacts of offshore developments on fish migration
- Promote protection of migrating smolts in Aberdeen Harbour
- Investigate impacts of goosanders on smolts, working with other rivers and MSS (subject to funding)
- Monitor and promote impacts of bird predation
- Support SMRU trials to develop automatic video detection of seals
- Promote good fish handling techniques
- Promote biosecurity and uptake of measures
- Highlight pollution incidents that occur and press for regulatory action
- Develop abstraction awareness strategy linked to Scottish Government's climate concerns
- Control invasive plants and mink through the SISI project
- Deliver schools and community education programme
- Undertake smolt monitoring, juvenile electrofishing surveys and spawning surveys

Restoring Fish Stocks and their Rivers

- Support creation of buffer strips and protected riverbank
- Plant 55,000 riverbank trees
- Continue Million Trees Campaign to raise funds and awareness, including for reform of the Forestry Grant Scheme
- Maintain riverbank trees through development of volunteering and staff capacity
- Develop large floodplain project in partnership with CNPA and Dee Catchment Partnership
- Protect eroding peat banks through a Peatland Action grant
- Secure funding and install 30 large wood structures
- Continue nutrient additions trial and monitoring
- Remove the Garlogie dam
- Fundraise through a dinner and auction

Create Thriving Fisheries

- Seek anglers' views to understand challenges faced in selling fishing and guide marketing strategy
- Promote angling through digital marketing for experienced, casual and novice anglers
- Support fishing beats with digital media promotion
- Support fishing beats with development of new products
- Deliver and promote a FishDee24 event to highlight fishing opportunities
- Develop AFF50 programme and create 50 new fly fishers; monitor success
- Launch new River Dee website

RIVER DEE BOARD



1. Lawrence Ross
2. Victor Beamish
3. Andy Ford
4. Gavin Clark
5. Craig Fleming
6. Samantha Fleming
7. Shane Christie
8. Edward Humphrey
9. Ian Murray
10. Scott Rutherford
11. Tara Spiers
12. Craig Stewart
13. Mike Wilson
14. Iain Wood
15. Keith Young

RIVER DEE TRUST



1 Sandy Bremner
2. Victor Beamish
3. Lucy Campbell
4. Carol Fowler
5. Hugh Mackay
6. Randall Nicol
7. Mel Shand
8. Tara Spiers

SUPPORTERS, FUNDERS & FRIENDS



HM The Queen
Aberdeen District Angling Association
Aberdeen Offshore Windfarm Ltd
Aberdeen Journals Ltd
Alan Rodger
Alexander Burnett
Alisdair Watson
Andrew Barrowman
Anglers of Ballogie Estate Enterprises
Anglers of FishDee
Anthony Woodd Gallery
Arni Baldursson
Ballater Angling Association
Balmoral Estate
Banchory Golf Club
Banchory Fishings
Banchory Lodge Hotel
Bernard Williams
Bert McIntosh
Billy Davison
Breckness Estate
BrewDog Plc
Cairngorms Trust
Camryn Stewart
Caroline Russell
Cbec eco engineering UK
Christopher Cox
Clare Carson
Craig Fleming
David Flux
David Murray
Dave Wilmot
Deeside Dippers
Deeside Distillery
Deeside Photographics
Denzil Skinner
Dinnet & Kinord Estate
Edward Byam-Cook
Elaine Mathers
Eric Kiltie
Faye McAskill
FG Sandison
Filly Nicol
Fiona Robertson
FishPal
Flora Grigor-Taylor
Glen Dye Cabins & Cottages
Glenmuick Estate
Howard Butterworth
Hugh Mackay
Iain Mortimer
Ian Laws
Ian Murray
Isobel Maughan
Ivan & Manuela Wirth
Jacqueline Robertson
Jane Hutcheon
James Hutton Institute
Jim Milne
John Chomba
John Dewar
John Johnson
John Walker & Sons
Joshua Brammam
Julie Macleod
Justerini & Brooks
Katie Mould
Kevin Fleming
Lawrence Ross
Lee Harper
Loch Kinord Hotel
Lois Brown
LOOP Tackle
Louisa Bradford
Lucy Campbell
Mackie's of Scotland
Mark Dunphail
Martin Roberts
Maryculter House Hotel
Matt Will
Mel Shand
Mike Taylor
Miranda McHardy
Mirjam Brady
Naomi Bell
Nathan Lowes
Nicolas Cohen
Northlink Ferries
Paul Chisholm
Paul Pritchard
Richard Adam
Robert Eunson
Robert Harries
Robert Shield
Robson Green
Rora Dairy
Roy Bloomer
Royal Lochnagar
Sandgrouse Travel
Scott Rutherford
Shona Mutch
Simon Blackett
Somers Fishing Tackle
S Poett
Steffan Jones
St George Sporting
Tanqueray Gordon & Company
Tara Spiers
The Butterworth Gallery
The Pimm's Company
The Strong Water Co
Thurso River Ltd
Tor Na Coille Hotel & Restaurant
TwinPeakes Fly Fishing
Venetia Mitchell
Will Shropshire

Supporting PROTECTION of fish stocks

Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba
gov.scot
marinescotland science

Scottish Invasive Species Initiative

Supported by The National Lottery® through the Heritage Lottery Fund
Le tòrc bhon Chrannchur Nàiseanta tro Mhaoin-Dualchais a' Chrannchur

Supporting RESTORATION of the Dee

WOODLAND TRUST SCOTLAND

Cairngorms NATIONAL PARK
Pàirc Nàiseanta a' Mhonaidh Ruaidh

NatureScot
Scotland's Nature Agency
Buidheann Nàdair na h-Alba

Supporting our EDUCATION programme

CNR International

cnooc

TAQA

NEPTUNE ENERGY

Shell

Harbour Energy

www.riverdee.org