

The River Deveron District
Salmon Fishery Board



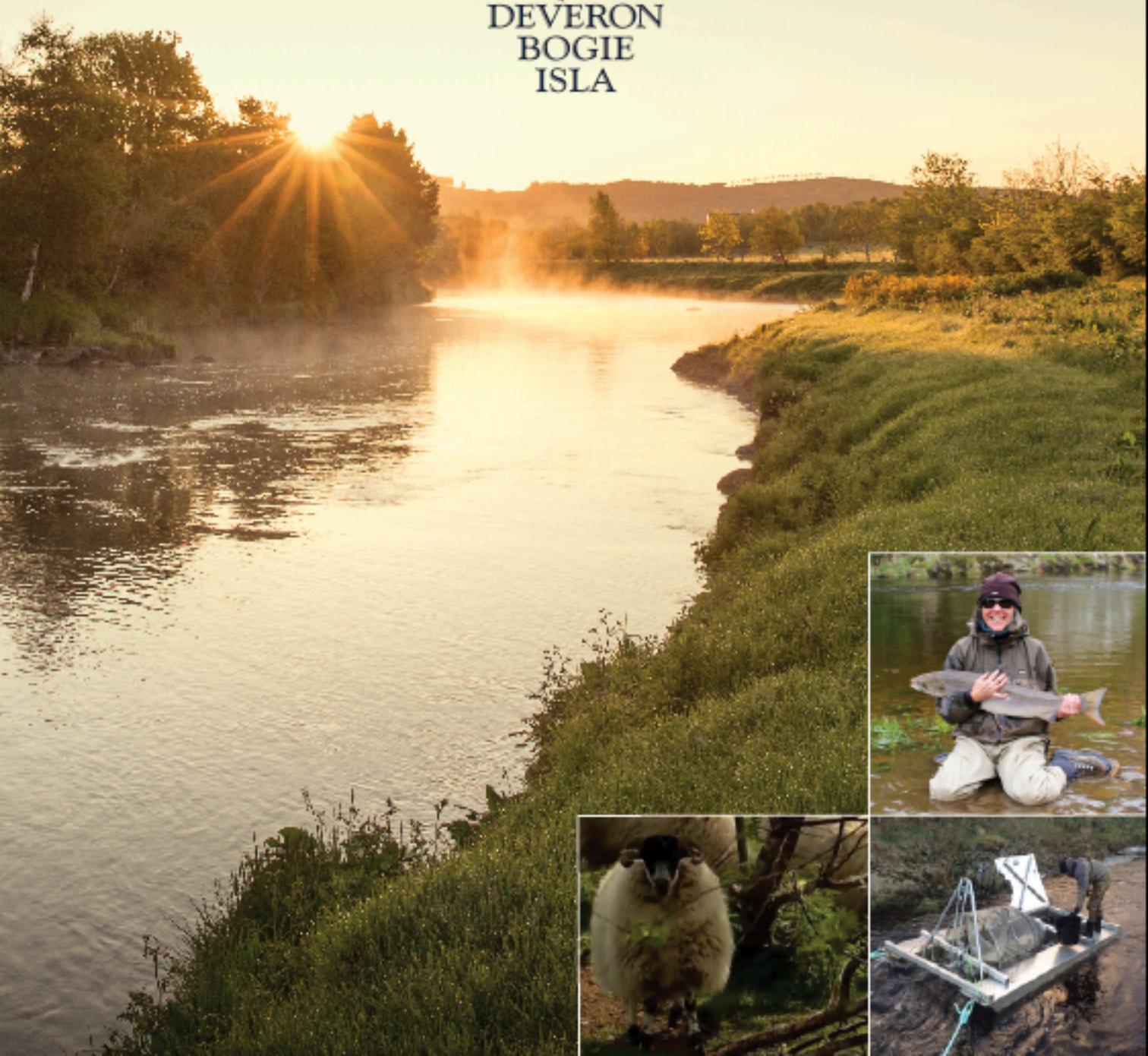
The Deveron, Bogie and Isla
Rivers Charitable Trust

www.deveron.org

Annual Report and Accounts 2015



DEVERON
BOGIE
ISLA





**DEVERON
BOGIE
ISLA**

**Report by
R C MILLER, M C HAY and S PAXTON**

KINDLY DONATED BY A G MORISON



The Morison Trophy

Awarded for the heaviest fly-caught salmon of the season from the Deveron

View it at Turriff Tackle and Trophies

Catch it...
Weigh it...
Measure it...
Verify it...
Record it...
Enter it...

Release your salmon to win a Vision fly-rod



Mrs 'Tiny' Morison's magnificent 61lb Deveron salmon. The heaviest UK fly-caught salmon.



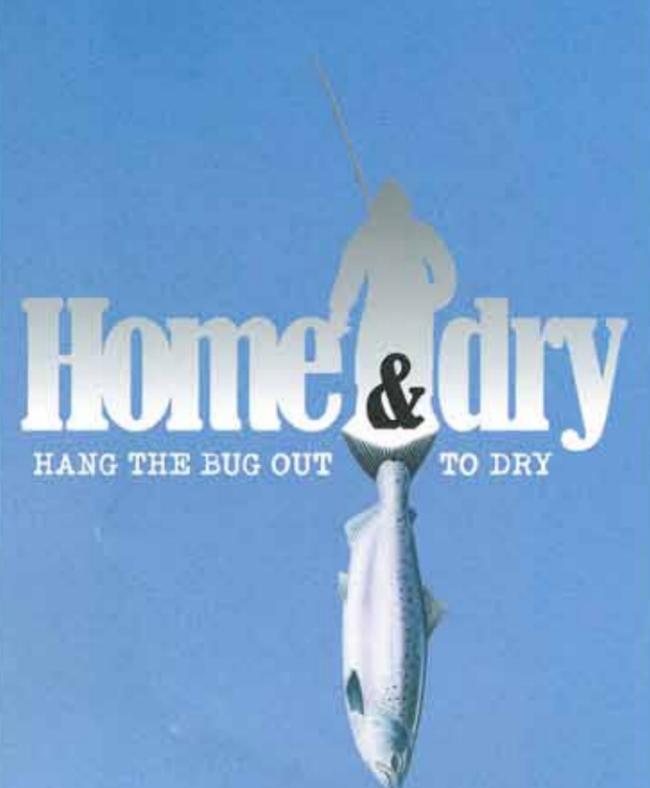
For more details contact The Deveron Bogie & Isla Rivers Charitable Trust
Tel 01466 711388 www.deveron.org

Contents

| | | |
|----|--|--|
| 05 | Supporters, funding, officials and staff | |
| 06 | Chairman's report | |
| 09 | Deveron salmon catches | |
| 10 | Deveron sea trout catches | |
| 11 | 2015 catches |  |
| 12 | Invasive non-native species and biosecurity programme | |
| 14 | Management report | |
| 16 | Angler's map of the River Deveron 2016/17 priorities and actions | |
| | | 18 Research and monitoring |
| | | 22 Education and community outreach |
| | | 24 Chasing the Deveron Leopards |
| | | 28 Good Governance |
| | | 30 The Deveron, Bogie and Isla Rivers Charitable Trust accounts |
| | | 33 The River Deveron District Salmon Fishery Board accounts |
| | | 36 The River Deveron Conservation Code 2016 |



FRONT AND BACK COVER:
Avochie by Paul Fosbury



Fishing or doing water sports abroad?

Just come back from Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Norway, Portugal, Russia, Spain or Sweden?

Ensure your equipment is not carrying the highly contagious Gs parasite which has the ability to wipe out freshwater salmon stocks.

What is the Gs Parasite?

The Gs parasite is a highly contagious bug that has devastated salmon stocks in Norway. We want to keep it out of Scotland's rivers.

Here's what you need to do

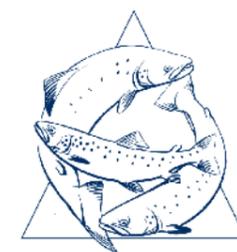
To ensure your equipment is not contaminated, please take one of the following precautionary measures:

- Completely dry equipment (e.g. waders, fishing equipment, bags, canoes and windsurf gear) at the minimum temperature of 20° for at least 2 days **or**
- Heat for at least 1 hour at above 60°C **or**
- Deep freeze for at least 1 day **or**
- Immerse in a Gs killing solution for min 10 minutes



Gyrodactylus salaris parasite magnified

For more info call: 0131 244 6225 or go to: www.infoscotland.com/gsbug



Supporters and Funding

The River Deveron District Salmon Fishery Board (RDevDSFB) and The Deveron, Bogie and Isla Rivers Charitable Trust (DBIT) would like to take this opportunity to thank all its supporters and funding organisations who have helped implement our district fisheries management programme during 2015.

The RDevDSFB and DBIT would like to thank the following:

- Aberdeenshire Council**
- Scottish Natural Heritage**
- John Dewar & Sons**
- Longcliffe Quarries**
- Chivas Regal**
- BMF Group**
- Marine Scotland Science**
- Huntly Fishings**
- Turriff Angling Association**
- Celebrations of Turriff**
- Banff & Macduff Angling Association**
- Turriff Tackle and Trophies**
- Robert McConnell**
- DBIT members**

Volunteers (River Champions)

We thank all volunteers who have given up their own time to help with projects such as the river opening ceremony, control of American mink, invasive plant control and piscivorous bird surveys.

Ghillies and Estate Workers

We thank all the Deveron Ghillies and Estate workers who have helped with many aspects of managing the fishery from assistance with piscivorous bird surveys, scale sampling, obstacle removal and biosecurity measures.

Officials and Staff

The River Deveron District Salmon Fishery Board Members

Representatives of upper proprietors
M.C. Hay (Chairman), R.J.G. Shields, A. G. Morison, Mrs J. A. Player, R. Cooper

Representatives of lower proprietors
C.R. Marsden, D. A. Galloway

Representatives of Salmon anglers
F. Henderson, R. Breakell, D. Borthwick

Director
R. C. Miller

Clerk
Mrs S. Paxton

River Superintendent
J. Minty

The Deveron, Bogie and Isla Rivers Charitable Trust

Honorary Life President
Prof D. W. Mackay OBE

Trustees
R.J.G. Shields (Chairman), M.C. Hay, F. Henderson, R. Polson, J.S. Cruickshank OBE, D. Borthwick, R. Cooper

Trust Personnel
R.C. Miller (Director), R. Vasey (Consultant Biosecurity Officer), Mrs S. Paxton (Administrator), R.F. McConnell (Hon Membership Secretary) and N. Stephen (Ghillies Rep)



Chairman's Report

Malcolm Hay, Chairman of the RDevDSFB

Some very good fish were landed during 2015, including a 30.5lb salmon (which secured the Morison trophy) and a 14lb sea trout. The sea trout catch was up 41 per cent on the year, albeit from a low base, and the Deveron remains a Category 1 river under the government's new grading system. This implies that the river is in good shape overall and that it regularly shows sufficient adult fish returning each year to sustain its population of salmonids. A glance at any graph of historical records shows that the Deveron is one of only a handful of rivers in Scotland showing a long-term upward trend in overall catch statistics.

However, 2015 was a very poor year for the rods, mainly due to low water flows and a notable reduction in angling effort. Catches were abysmally low – the salmon rod catch was the second lowest since records began in 1952, and well below the long-term average. Of particular note was the very poor catch of spring fish. But, (thanks to Chivas Regal's sponsorship), we achieved a creditable 72 per cent rate of catch and release of spring salmon.

Mercifully, there have been a lot more salmon and sea trout in the river so far in 2016, which, after two miserable years, is most welcome. However, catch returns are patchy and we still have a lot to understand about the migratory behaviour of the king of fish. Why are the runs better? The 64-million dollar question we ask every year. A 2005 Marine Scotland study points to the strong influence of good river flows on our historical catch statistics and this was certainly a major factor in the low spring and summer catches experienced locally over the past three years. Other factors might include the suspension of mixed stock netting, or, perhaps, cooler conditions in the Norwegian Sea. As ever, the only truthful answer is that we just do not know. On that question, all your Board and Trust can do is to keep plugging away at improving our in-river habitat by allowing free passage for migratory fish to their spawning grounds and ensuring that their offspring enjoy optimal conditions in which to grow before they themselves undertake that epic migration back to sea.

To that end, our fund raising evening at Mayen, courtesy of Mr and Mrs Alfie Cheyne, was a huge success and provided funding towards many of our key initiatives including our innovative smolt tracking project, invasive non-native species control, monitoring of juvenile stocks and our hugely important local primary schools' education programme.

We are investigating currently options for installing fish counters to record upstream migration – this will be a key component in advising the government's new conservation limit and river classification system. We have been trialling underwater cameras and are in the process of evaluating various sonar alternatives.

The river is also becoming increasingly well known for its brown trout fishing. While this is no secret to many of us who have enjoyed excellent trout fishing over the years, some spectacular bags of trout are now being recorded regularly in the spring months, as well as a good number of large individual specimens.

We should also be grateful that the devastating floods of 2015, which caused so much damage to so many of our Aberdeenshire neighbours, largely by-passed our catchment. However, as the major flood earlier in 2016 showed, we are still at the mercy of extreme weather conditions, and other possible impacts of climate change. "Climate change proofing" the river remains an important long term objective and work is underway on possible options for restoring riparian tree cover in the upper catchment as well as studying the worryingly low flows we experience in drier years and determining the possible causes.



The bridge at Avochie

However, implementing these longer term projects is hampered severely by the continuing uncertainty over the future of Boards and Trusts. I wrote two years ago that the only thing I knew for certain is that your Board was going to be abolished. We have now spent nearly three years operating in limbo as the government struggles with the Pandora's box that many think should never have been opened.

However, we are where we are and must try and make the best of it. Having fought hard to retain our independence on the grounds that we are perfectly capable of managing our own affairs and funding all the initiatives required to ensure our river's continuing success, it would appear that we are being pushed towards joining a north east agglomeration of rivers which discharge into the Moray Firth.

The supposed rationale for this is to spread more widely the "senior management" costs associated with managing such a large entity. Needless to say, there are no "senior management" costs under the existing system. For those of us who have given our time happily for free over many years and who have run an extremely tight ship in order to keep riparian owners costs to a minimum, it is extremely galling to see our voluntary effort being spurned and replaced by what, inevitably, will become an expensive and remote bureaucracy.

All of this turmoil and uncertainty has been sparked by a perceived need to be more accountable to various EU Habitat Directives relating to the conservation of salmon. Frankly, and in the wake of the Brexit vote, it all looks like a pretty good shambles now.



The Crow Stone, Rhynie

However, there are some things we can do - first of all, our Trust is a robust and well managed operation and there is no reason why it cannot continue, albeit under guidance from the newly constituted Fisheries Management Organisation rather than its own local Board.

Secondly, your Board administers a healthy six figure Improvement Fund which consists of monies raised by proprietors over many decades to fight various threats to our river including a proposed dam in the Cabrach. Over the years, this fund has prospered due to achieving excellent investment returns. By an historical quirk, the fund is regulated by OSCR, the Scottish charities' regulator, and is ring fenced to allow funding only of projects aimed at improving the river Deveron catchment. We will be proposing at the 2016 AGM that we transfer the administration of this fund to the Trust to ensure its continuing management for the good of the river Deveron and its tributaries.

I would like to thank all the members of your Board and Trust for their continuing hard work and dedication in these uncertain times and for maintaining such a high level of enthusiasm for the work that we do. I would like to single out, in particular, the commitment and continuing dedication of our River Director, Richie Miller and the team.

Finally, 2016 marks a turning point in our river's history in the imminent retirement at the end of this fishing season of our long-serving (and some might add long suffering) bailiff, Jimmy Minty. Jimmy has put in an astonishing shift of 38 years and his no-nonsense operating style and wealth of local knowledge will be sadly missed as we enter a new era. Robin Vasey is also retiring. Robin has been with the Trust since its conception in 2001 and has been involved in all aspects of the Trust's work. In particular, his work on invasive species control has been paramount and we owe him a great deal of thanks. We wish both Jimmy and Robin all the best for their forthcoming retirement.

I look forward to welcoming you at our joint Trust/Board AGM in September and, as ever, would encourage you to engage with both your Board and Trust and help us continue to improve the management of our river and its fisheries.

Deveron Salmon

The total annual salmon rod and line catch for the Deveron District was relatively stable from 1952 (when records began) until the end of the 1980s with the 10-year average consistently being just over 2000 fish per year with a record low catch in 1989. Catches gradually improved with the 10-year average increasing to just over 3000 (1993-2002) and increasing again to an average of 3418 for the last 10 years (2003-2012).

Catch and release records began in 1994 and the practice has increased from 22% to 75% in 2015. It was adopted in the river as a voluntary conservation measure to preserve fragile stocks and has been particularly encouraged for the spring component of the catch (Feb- May).

Spring salmon

Spring salmon return to the river in the spring and are available to the rod & line fishery from February onwards. They are typically Multiple Sea Winter Fish which have spent at least 2 years feeding at sea. Figure 2 shows that the spring salmon catch (Feb-May) has declined significantly since 1952. There was a steep decline in the late 1960s before a brief recovery in the late 1970s. It then continued to decline to record low catches in the early 1990s potentially due to poor marine survival but has since gradually shown signs of increasing over the past 10 years.

The River Deveron Summer (June-Aug) and Autumn (Sep-Oct) Rod and Line catch has been showing a very different trend with catches steadily increasing on average although there is a lot of annual variation.

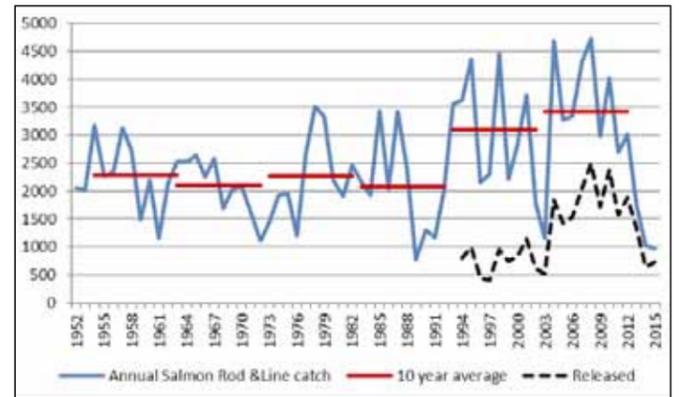


Figure 1

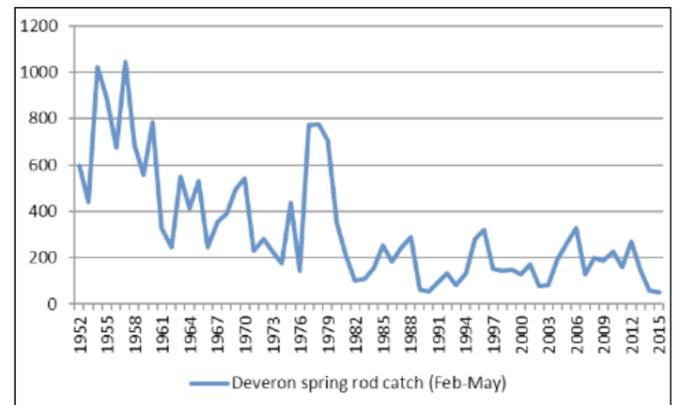


Figure 2

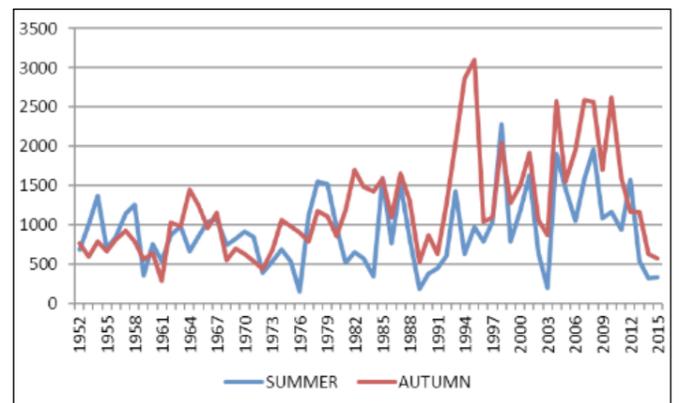


Figure 3

Figure 1: Annual Rod and Line Catch for the River Deveron District showing 10 year averages and the numbers released since 1994.

Figure 2: River Deveron Spring (Feb-May) Rod and Line catch.

Figure 3: River Deveron Summer (June-Aug) & Autumn (Sep-Oct) Rod and Line Catch.

Deveron Sea Trout

The annual Deveron Rod and Line Catch (Figure 4) has shown annual variations from 1952 with two significant peaks of nearly 3500 fish. The 10-year average has consistently been between 1000 and 2100 fish until 2003 when catches fell to a record low of 317 fish and have remained relatively low since with the latest 10-year average (2003-2012) falling to only 685 fish.

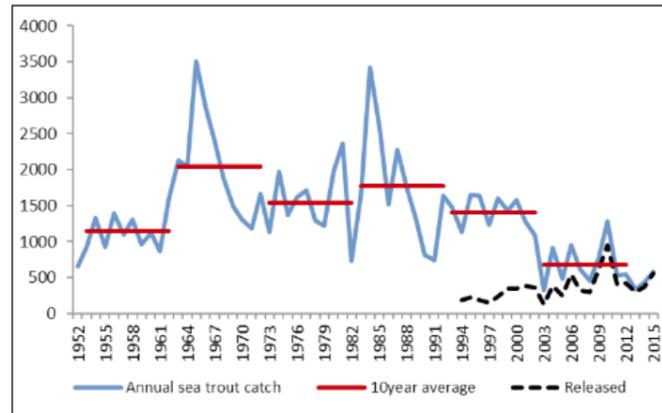


Figure 4

Catch and release records began in 1994 and the practice has gradually increased from 16% to 95% of the total catch in 2015. In response to the clear decline in stocks the RDevDSFB adopted a 100% catch and release policy for sea trout in 2013.

When the annual Deveron sea trout catch is compared to the Moray Firth Region (minus Deveron) (Rivers: Spey - Cromarty) it is clear that since the mid-1960s the Deveron has shown a similar annual variation to other Moray Firth Rivers which have also shown a similar steep decline in catches over the last 10 to 15 years.

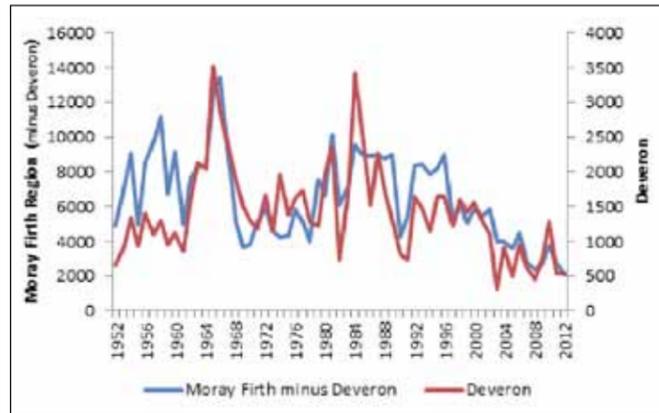


Figure 5

Figure 4: Annual sea trout Rod and Line Catch showing 10-year averages and numbers released since 1994.

Figure 5: Moray Firth Rod and Line catch overlaid with the Deveron annual catch.

Conservation policy and statutory regulations

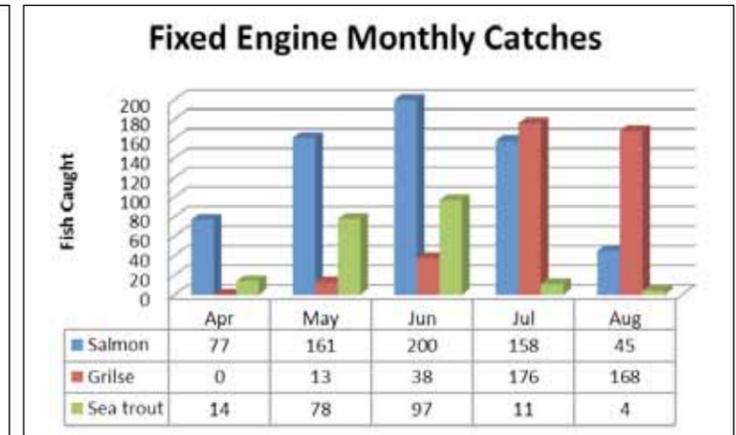
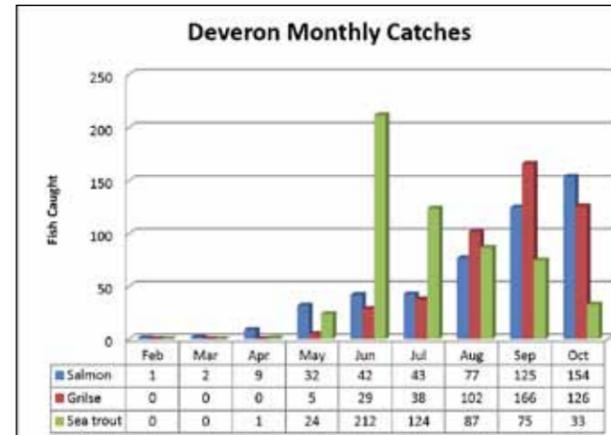
To assist in protecting and improving fish stocks the RDevDSFB launched a conservation code in 2003, outlining local policy and statutory regulations. Local and visiting anglers are asked annually to observe the code to help conserve local fish stocks, ensure a sustainable fishery and stop biosecurity threats such as *Gyrodactylus salaris*. The current code aims to achieve a high release rate (>70%) of salmon and grilse (particularly female fish) and to protect stocks of multi-sea winter spring salmon which have declined considerably. The Conservation of Salmon (Annual Close Times and Catch and Release) (Scotland) Regulations came into force on 9th January 2015 and made it illegal to kill wild Atlantic salmon caught before 1st April each year. The RDevDSFB conservation code recommends additional protection of this fragile stock and recommends that all salmon are released until 31st May, due to local data showing spring salmon still make up a notable percentage of the May catch. The code also outlines measures for conservation of sea trout, recommending 100% catch and release until stocks are shown to recover. Low exploitation of resident brown trout is also encouraged to allow sustainability of this popular fishery.

For the 2016 season the Scottish Government has classified the Deveron as a Category 1 river, whereby current levels of salmon exploitation are thought to be sustainable. The River Deveron District Salmon Fishery Board aims to preserve this classification and fish stocks and ask that the River Deveron Conservation Code 2016 (found at www.deveron.org) be adhered to by all anglers.

2015 Catches

Rod and line

2015 produced the second lowest salmon rod catch since records began and was well below the long-term average. The salmon and grilse rod catch was down from 1021 to 980. Of the 980 salmon and grilse caught, 75% were returned. Spring salmon catches decreased from the previous year to 44 salmon by end of May, with 72% returned to the river, aided by the Chivas Regal spring salmon conservation scheme. The Deveron rod catch has been shown in a study by Marine Scotland (2005) to be particularly influenced by river flow and this has certainly been a major factor in the low spring and summer catches experienced locally over the last three years. A notable salmon of 30.5 lbs was successfully caught and released during October which secured the Morison Trophy. The sea trout catch increased by 41% from 412 to a total of 584, of which 95% were returned.



Fixed engine

A total of 1036 salmon and grilse, and 204 sea trout were landed by the coastal net-fishery. From 2016 onwards net fishing out-with estuary limits will be prohibited by the Scottish Government for a period of three years due to the mixed stock nature of the fishery

Left: Rod and Line monthly catches 2015.

Right: Fixed Engine (net) monthly catches 2015



Invasive Non-Native Species & Biosecurity Programme

The DBIT were delighted to announce in June that an extension to the Deveron Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS) Control Project had been grant aided by Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH). The DBIT were awarded funding of £31,875 by SNH to allow the project to continue and develop over the next 15 months and beyond. The main objectives of the project extension were to continue the control of invasive non-native species, with the ultimate goal to create a more self-sustaining control programme in the future. Phase 1 & 2 successes included the coordination of river catchment wide (1266Km) control of Giant Hogweed, including the use of techniques such as grazing control, the removal of 270 American Mink and the control of 28 sites of Japanese Knotweed. The funding package from SNH allowed the DBIT to continue to contract a Biosecurity Officer, to coordinate the project and also purchase all required project equipment. One of the Biosecurity Officers main responsibilities was to co-opt new and manage current volunteers (River Champions) and work with local landowners in the control programme throughout the Deveron district.



Black-Faced sheep are the new weapon in the battle against Giant Hogweed.

Since the phase II extension was granted in June, Giant Hogweed control has again been the primary focus with control on the Bogie and Isla tributaries being priority. Several minor burns and wasteland areas, have again had their hogweed infestations tackled by the DBIT, Huntly Fishing's and volunteers to help ensure a catchment wide approach. Overall close to 179 km's were monitored and treated as part of the collaborative programme. The hogweed grazing project, using black face sheep, continued during 2015 and has again been an outstanding success. This innovative method of control was recently featured on BBC Radio 2's, Jeremy Vine show. 15 sheep were introduced to the site at Auldtown of Netherdale in March of 2015, to coincide with juvenile hogweed plants emergence. The sheep sufficiently grazed the hogweed plants within the site that no plants were allowed to seed for the third year running. The sheep have been routinely monitored by the local vet and AHVLA for any signs of distress or damage caused by the grazing of hogweed, of which no signs have been recorded.



Himalayan Balsam

A small number of hogweed plants outside the trial area fence were controlled by DBIT using Round-up Biactive. Aberdeen University through the work of student Kirsten O'sullivan, visited the Auldtown site on 28th September and completed a follow up survey of how the site has changed and has also prepared a monitoring plan for 2016.

During September, twenty known Japanese Knotweed sites were re-visited and re-treated when necessary. Most of these were re-injected if the stems were robust enough to accept the injection needle. Some sites required spray/weed wipe when the stems were immature.

Himalayan Balsam was pulled and cut on a 9km section of the river Isla between Drummuir and the town of Keith also during September

Three American mink were trapped in 2015, two from the river Isla and one from the Cunning burn in the middle Deveron. The DBIT has also monitored coastal burns such as the Burn of Boyne, Tore of Troup, Water of Philorth and RSPB reserve at Loch of Strathbeg, where no mink has been seen or trapped.



American Mink

Management Report

Moray Firth seal management plan

The Moray Firth Seal Management Plan (MFSMP) continued in 2015. The plan commenced in 2005, with the joint aim of protecting wild salmon and sea trout stocks, whilst also maintaining the conservation status of the Dornoch Firth Special Protection Area (SPA) for common seals. Since 2013, the Spey Fishery Board (SFB) has coordinated the Plan's licence application. A licence was again successfully granted for 2015, which permitted the shooting of 45 Grey seals and 6 Common seals within the plan's geographic area, between 1st February and the 31st January. Nominated and qualified marksmen carried out the licence conditions on behalf of the Plan's partners during 2015.

Sawbill duck & cormorant management

During 2015 the DBIT continued the coordination of the annual Piscivorous (fish-eating) bird counts required for the licence application to Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH). Two counts were carried out along the Deveron (Avochie Fishing's to Estuary) during March and April by DBIT personnel, ghillies and volunteers. The 2015/16 licence application was successful and a licence was granted (under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981) by SNH. The licence permitted the shooting of ten Goosander and one cormorant as an aid to scaring and for the purpose of preventing serious damage to fish stocks.

Fishery protection

Protecting local fish stocks from illegal activity, such as poaching, is enforced by the RDevDSFB. Fishery protection is essential in combating both damage to local fish stocks and the economy and is an ongoing priority. During 2015 the RDevDSFB continued to work closely with Police Scotland, and in particular, carried out a number of joint-patrols at various locations throughout the Deveron catchment. During July, two members of the public were warned after being caught fishing without permits at Banff. The RDevDSFB also continued to work with the SFB to undertake coastal patrols between Cowhythe Point and the Water of Philorth. Patrols were used to ensure the weekly close-time of coastal net fisheries within the district and to search for the presence of any illegal fishing nets.

Wild fisheries reform

In January 2014, the First Minister announced that a Wild Fisheries Review would be undertaken.

The aims of the review were to:

- develop and promote a modern, evidence-based management system for wild fisheries fit for purpose in the 21st century, and capable of responding to the changing environment;
- to manage, conserve and develop our wild fisheries to maximise the sustainable benefit of Scotland's wild fish resources to the country as a whole and particularly to rural areas.

On 8 October 2014, the review submitted its final report and 54 recommendations to the Minister for Environment and Climate Change. During 2015, a consultation paper was published which set out the Government's response to the Wild Fisheries Review. The RDevDSFB and DBIT submitted a joint response to the consultation in advance of the 7th August deadline.

Latest information on the WFR process can be found online at www.gov.scot/Topics/marine/Salmon-Trout-Coarse/fishreform.



Cormorant



Scottish Government measures to control the killing of wild salmon

Following on from the Wild Fisheries Review, Marine Scotland embarked on a programme of Wild Fisheries Reform (WFR), including a package of Conservation Regulations. During 2015 the Scottish Government consulted on a new proposal for a licencing system for killing wild salmon and a carcass tagging scheme. The RDevDSFB and DBIT submitted an objection to the proposal, as the scheme seemed unnecessary for the rod fishery due to the success of existing voluntary and statutory measures.

In September 2015 the Scottish Government abandoned the proposals for a kill licence for salmon. Following further consideration, Scottish Ministers have now confirmed that they will be progressing with the below salmon regulations from 1st April 2016:

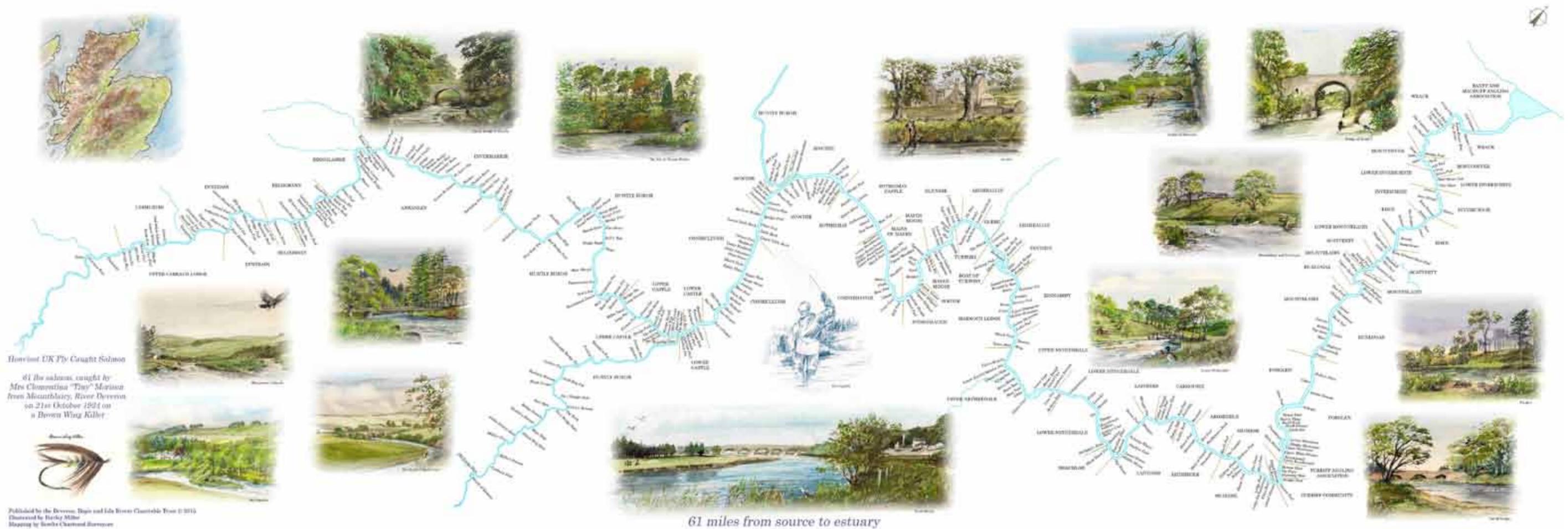
- Killing outwith estuary limits by net fisheries will be prohibited for a period of three years due to the mixed stock nature of the fishery and the limited data on the stock composition of the catch. This will be reviewed after three years.
- The killing of Atlantic salmon will be managed on an annual basis by categorising fishery districts in relation to their conservation status and with accompanying guidance and/or regulation.

For the 2016 season the Scottish Government has classified the Deveron as a Category 1 river, whereby current levels of salmon exploitation are thought to be sustainable and no further intervention is required.

More information on the new conservation measures, and how they are determined can be found online at www.gov.scot/Topics/marine/Salmon-Trout-Coarse/fishreform/licence/status

Catch at the Wrack

Angler's Map of the river Deveron - Tom Ingleby Edition



2016/17 PRIORITIES & ACTIONS

During the coming months the RDevDSFB and DBIT will continue to work closely with Scottish Natural Heritage, SEPA, Fishery proprietors, schools, gillies and angling clubs to take priority actions forward, these include:

- Salmon smolt tracking project to investigate mortality rates and locations
- Continuation of district wide invasive non-native species control
- Complete fish counter trial (Aris Sonar)



Copies of the Angler's Map of River Deveron are available to buy.

Maps can be purchased on completion of an order form available at www.deveron.org. The cost of the print is £35 (plus £6 p&p). It is printed on matt, coated 180gsm; print size is 100cm x 35cm. Please email richiemiller@deveron.org or call the DBIT on 01466 711 388 for further information.

Research & Monitoring



Smolt monitoring - Dorenell wind farm

We reported during 2014 that the Dorenell Wind farm (59 turbines) is planned to be located within the Blackwater catchment (Upper Deveron) and close to the Fiddich (Spey). As part of this development, a monitoring plan has commenced which includes baseline water quality, fish, habitat and invertebrate surveys of the Blackwater, Fiddich and also the Allt Deveron (selected as a suitable control site out with the wind farm area). The surveys ensure that the overall status prior to any development can be determined and documented. As part of the monitoring plan, smolt output of the river stretches commenced in 2014 and continued again in 2015. The programme quantified the smolt run from the Allt Deveron and Blackwater catchment through the deployment of rotary screw traps.

The total Allt Deveron salmon smolt run was estimated at 8250 +/- 1570 (95% confidence limits) (5950 +/- 562 in 2014) from 1443 captured smolts (3043 in 2014). The majority of trout caught on the Allt Deveron did not display signs of smoltification and hence a parr production estimate was calculated instead at 4309 +/- 2257 (6952 +/- 1498 in 2014) from 417 captured (1759 in 2014). For both salmon and trout, the catch in 2015 was lower than in 2014. For salmon the run estimate was higher than 2014 although the confidence limits were also wider compared to 2014. It was the opposite for trout with the 2015 estimate being lower with confidence limits again being wider.

Rotary Screw Trap - Allt Deveron

The total Blackwater salmon smolt run was estimated at 4129 +/- 754 (95% confidence limits) (3834 +/- 886 in 2014) from 1438 captured smolts (1133 in 2014). Similar to the Allt Deveron the majority of trout caught on the Blackwater did not display signs of smoltification and hence a parr production estimate was calculated instead at 4009 +/- 2174 (7141 +/- 4065 in 2014) from 420 captured (621 in 2014). For salmon the run estimate was slightly higher than 2014 with narrower confidence limits. The trout estimate for 2015 was estimated at being lower than in 2014, although confidence limits were narrower.

Deveron salmon smolt tracking project - feasibility study

During 2015 the RDevDSFB asked the DBIT to undertake a feasibility study into tracking salmon smolts within the river Deveron and estuary. Smolts is the name given to young salmon (1-4 yrs old), moving down river to sea. The project's aim is to investigate the degree of smolt mortality between the upper Deveron and the estuary. The feasibility study focused on the equipment, time and costings required for operating a telemetry project of this nature.

Working with Marcus Walters from the Moray Firth Trout Initiative (MFTI) and Matt Newton from Glasgow University, the DBIT & RDevDSFB will embark on a smolt tracking project during spring 2016. Using rotary screw traps operated in the upper Deveron, 50 smolts will be caught and tagged with acoustic ID tags. Each tag emits a unique high frequency pulse, identifying the specific fish when detected by a receiver. 9 receivers will be deployed along the length of the Deveron to track the downstream migration of the smolts through the river and 5 receivers will be deployed in the estuary.

This project will provide a huge amount of information to the RDevDSFB on the migration and survival of smolts and should ultimately help to ensure Deveron smolts have an improved passage to sea. The project aims to quantify the proportion of salmon smolts making it out to sea. Measure the speed of downstream migrating smolts and identify any bottlenecks that are either delaying the smolt migration or specific locations that are resulting in smolt mortality.

At the 2015 RAFTS Conference Matt Newton (Glasgow University IBIS PhD candidate) gave an alarming presentation that found more than 85% of the smolts from the rivers Finn and Mourne, on the Northern Irish border, never made it beyond Lough Foyle and out to sea. Although previous studies on the Tweed have found high levels of smolt mortality (44%) at river barriers, Matt Newton's study found very little impact from in river barriers but significant levels of mortality once the smolts reached the estuary.

Given the current reduced numbers of Atlantic salmon returning to Scottish rivers to spawn, this level of smolt mortality is potentially very significant. The low numbers of salmon returning to our rivers is most likely driven by high levels of marine mortality which is often attributed to poor marine feeding, the Greenland fishery and pelagic trawlers. Previously the RDevDSFB had felt there was very little that they could do about these far off marine pressures. However, if the level of smolt mortality seen in the Foyle or Tweed is potentially taking place in the river Deveron and immediate marine environment, then there may be management measures that the RDevDSFB can deploy to ease their passage and improve the survival of smolts leaving the river.

Funding for the project will be provided by the RDevDSFB, DBIT membership and Muireisk Fishing's.



Acoustic receiver - Muireisk



Paul Proctor with a Deveron brown trout

PAUL PROCTOR

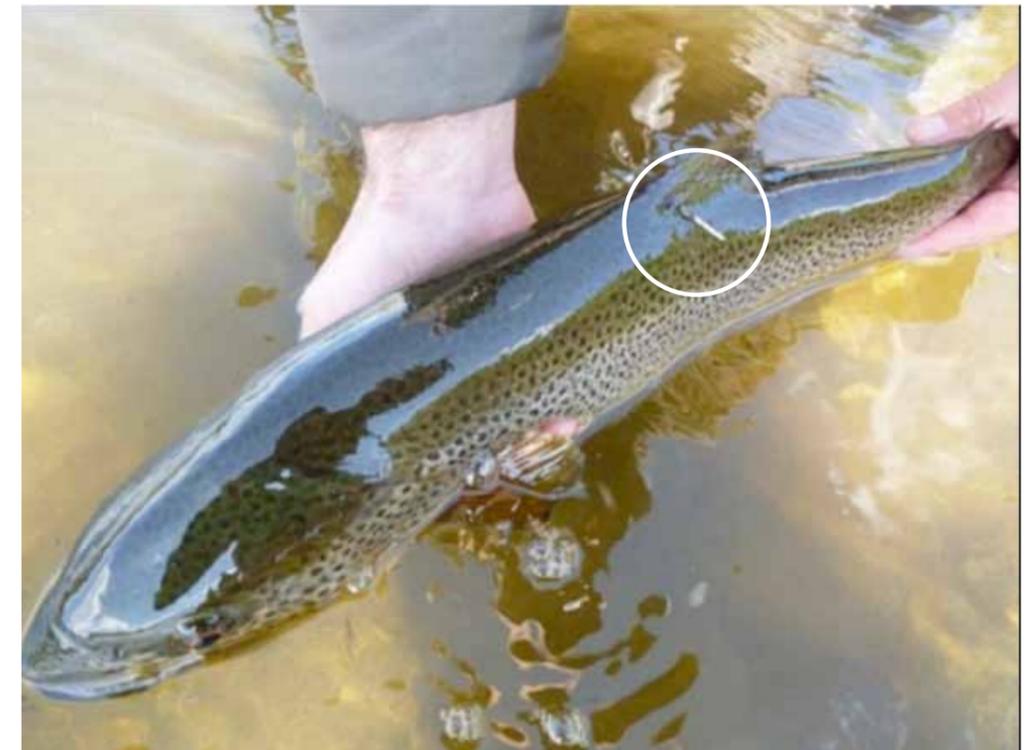
Juvenile monitoring and invertebrate surveys

During 2015 there were 44 juvenile electrofishing surveys completed throughout the Deveron catchment and district. Core monitoring sites were again re-visited to maintain long-term data sets. A number of sites were completed in connection with monitoring potential impacts of renewable energy projects on fish stocks and the remainder of the sites was visited to monitor habitat and fish passage restoration works. During 2015 invertebrate samples were again collected from each juvenile electrofishing site and used as an indicator of water quality.

Tagged Blackwater trout - 2015 recapture

A Blackwater brown trout floy-tagged in October 2011 was re-caught on the Deveron Mainstem at Avochie by visiting angler Stuart Minnikin. First Tagged in October 2010 at 50cm the 7-year-old brown trout was re-caught in April 2015 at 60.5cm (4lb 2oz) now 12 years old. The Blackwater trout were tagged as part of our investigations into the migrations of these large trout when we were still trying to determine if they were sea or brown trout. Our isotope and acoustic tagging work has since revealed that by far the majority of these trout are in fact large brown trout that migrate throughout the entire river system. This is the 3rd tagged trout to be re-caught; the other two were also caught on the main stem at Avochie and Huntly.

A Blackwater Brown Trout was re-caught on the Deveron mainstream at Avochie. You can see its tag in the circle as shown.



2nd annual trout scale sampling day

On the 9th of May the 2nd annual scale sampling event was held on the Deveron. The event was kindly organized by Mr Brian Arnold in conjunction with the Moray Firth Trout Initiative. The events focus was again to obtain trout scale samples through angling and submit the samples for use in subsequent scientific analysis, e.g. stock structuring, age and distribution (from genetics and scale micro-chemistry) and features such as age and sex composition, life history, growth and survival. Over 200 trout were caught by participating anglers and an excellent number of samples were obtained. Our thanks go to all participating anglers and fishing beats.

A full report of the scale analysis can be obtained on request from the Moray Firth Trout Initiative.

Education and Community Outreach

Ghillies evening

The annual ghillies evening was held on the 30th of November in Turriff. Many interesting themes were covered and an action plan has been drawn up by the DBIT to tackle some of the matters raised.

Newsletters and social media

Two editions of the popular Deveron Flyer were produced during 2015 and distributed to keep all DBIT members and interested parties updated on the work of the RDevDSFB & DBIT and current fisheries news. The website of the RDevDSFB & DBIT (www.deveron.org) was updated regularly with latest meeting minutes, news and announcements.

 Social media such as Twitter (@DBIRCT) and Facebook (DeveronBogiesla) was updated regularly by the DBIT with latest local and national news, angling opportunities, and conservation initiatives.



Sundown on the Deveron

Sundown on the Deveron sponsored by Bowlt's Chartered Surveyors

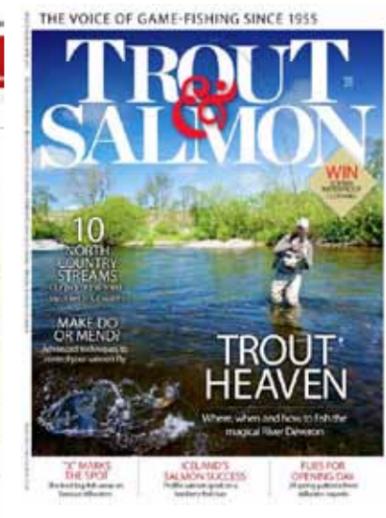
On the evening of 6th June the DBIT held a BBQ and Auction at Mayen Estate, by kind permission of Mr and Mrs Cheyne. The event was a resounding success with a total of £8,000 raised after costs to support local river conservation projects. The eagerly anticipated Angler's Map of River Deveron - Tom Ingleby Edition, was also officially launched during the event by Mrs Pam Ingleby.



Media coverage

Local press continued to cover projects such as invasive non-native species control, Chivas Spring Salmon Reward Scheme and educational work. STV, BBC Radio 2 and BBC News Scotland produced coverage of projects such as the river opening ceremony and giant hogweed grazing project. The DBIT worked with Trout and Salmon magazine for its feature on the Deveron trout fishery for its April edition and also Fly Fishing and Fly Tying Magazine for its February edition on the tracking of Deveron trout.

www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-north-east-orkney-shetland-27713798



Deveron Opening Ceremony and Morison Trophy



The Morison Family and DBIT were delighted to announce the 2014 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 Deveron, was won by visiting angler, Mr Adam Woodward and presented by special guest, Mr Craig Brown CBE, who also officially opened the salmon season. The award was given for his fly-caught 22lbs salmon from Marnoch Lodge beat. In winning the trophy Mr Woodward was also presented with a Vision salmon fly-rod, courtesy of Turriff Tackle and Trophies for releasing the fish, a limited edition "Morisons" Fly box and bottle of Glen Deveron whisky courtesy of John Dewar & Sons Ltd.



Avochie Fishings

Chasing the Deveron Leopards by Allan Liddle

First published in *The Deveron Flyer*

Rising high in the hills above the Cabrach and flowing into the Moray Firth at Banff runs the delightful River Deveron, through a backdrop of beautiful scenery from the wild heather clad upland beginnings through arable fertile farmlands.

Despite the main river itself gathering strength from its three main tributaries, Blackwater, Bogie and Isla, the Deveron isn't what you'd call a big river especially not in terms of width but what it lacks in size it certainly makes up for in promise and character. Strange then that despite all these attributes it's always been relatively overlooked.

Much is known of The Deveron's salmon fishing heritage and glorious past, not least of which was Clementina 'Tiny' Morrison's sixty one pound monster which remains the heaviest salmon caught on the fly in this country.

Not much has been said regarding the quality and excellence of the trout fishing the Deveron also boasts. Fact is it wouldn't be too much to suggest that in river trout terms this water is one of Scotland's best kept secrets, not that I'm suggesting this has been deliberate, more a case of circumstance. Tucked away between its near neighbours the mighty River Spey and famous trout stream the Don, with our Royal Dee also close by, it soon becomes clear how the Deveron can easily be overlooked especially when you appreciate visiting anglers would have to travel past the aforementioned neighbouring waters.

In terms of the trout you also have to consider this river is known as a salmon stream meaning the fantastic humble 'broonies' were overlooked even more, not totally however, there's always been a band of trout anglers who appreciate the quality this river can offer which has grown slightly in recent years given the steady downturn in migratory returns along with a slight upturn in interest for wild river trout fishing. More exposure from the angling press as well as social media has also had a bearing on the 'word getting out' on the Deveron trout even so I'd suggest that it is still slightly overshadowed by the reputation and fame of its close cousin the Don. Biased as I am though I would suggest that it's still a case of the Don being a World Class trout river everyone knows about, with the Deveron an even better one that fewer do. It's not only me that thinks this as recently my good friend angling author, fly dresser, guide, exceptional trout angler and all round good guy Paul Proctor voted the Deveron in his top five trout waters in the UK, for me it's simply number one.

Riparian owners on the Deveron are slowly starting to realise the resource on offer from these resident trout and through the hard work of Frank Henderson of Turriff Trophies and Tackle we now have the situation where some beats offer trout permits, at least in the first half of the season. Hopefully this is something that will expand and costs set in lines with the Don.

Frank's beats offer the additional attraction of his on-line booking service meaning more direct and easier access for the visiting angler and hopefully the venture is successful enough for more beats to realise the potential and open up more water for us 'trout bums' to roam and wander in search of success.

All this throws up a wee dilemma though, great as it is to finally see the trout fishing in this river finally getting some of the recognition it deserves, it's also fair comment to air a word of caution about the fish themselves and request careful handling and careful return of the better ones you might encounter, especially if they fall into the 'Trophy Trout' three pound plus category, or 'Rod Benders' as I like to call them.

Recent studies on the river and these cracking fish has thrown up some remarkable facts as well as a lot of questions; first up is the remarkable fact that many of these big trout are spawning together as early as September or October, well before the accepted norm of mid to late November (all obviously weather depending), next it appears they don't hang about long in the spawning area instead preferring to travel back through the river system to their general area of choice. Does this mean that these big fish breed big fish? Early indications would suggest this is the case, studies on other waters with similar sized trout might help support this and similar traits seem to be present meaning that if this is the case then if some of these trout were removed from the system the damage could be significant and it could take a long time for the water to recover. Simple request then to return them, these fish really are too valuable to be caught only once.

The colours, spots, shape and beauty as well as the fighting qualities of these fish is something to behold meaning they certainly deserve the name of Deveron Leopards and seeking them out with an upstream dry fly is without doubt the 'crème de la crème' of wild trout angling, something river anglers would love to experience and something we really need to protect.

That said the general and more abundant fish in the river still average a healthy ten to twelve ounces with pound plus fish common and 'notable' fish of two to three pounds also not too infrequent. For me it's only the smaller sub two pound trout I ever 'harvest' with a brace or two of them more than enough for any angler, especially when you stick them on the smoker - they are simply delicious.

So now we know there's a healthy good head of resident trout in the river, what's the best method to catch them? Fly goes without question - if you're not going to do it right then don't do it at all, and this water lends itself to a whole host of techniques you might want to try. From the simple 'across and down' swing of wet flies or spiders, through short line nymph fishing with weighted flies, the thrill of seeking out likely areas with streamer flies and the big takes it can produce, through to the aforementioned upstream dry fly or simply 'dries' as it's more commonly known amongst those who fish this way regularly and to me easily the most rewarding way to fish.

Wandering the banks searching, studying and stalking fish can certainly be frustrating but ultimately highly rewarding. Anticipation grows as you spot a good trout, then grows some more as you move into position - a bit more again as you wait for your moment before hitting fever pitch as you make your cast and track your fly over the fish's location - moving up a notch, each time you cover the fish especially if it's still picking off natural insects in between.

Sometimes (often) it all ends in disappointment, the fish is 'spooked', you miss the take, the hook doesn't take or worst of all you break off. Sometimes the fish simply comes off mid fight, but sometimes, quite a lot of times, it all comes good and you're rewarded with a beautiful, unique and stunning fish to briefly admire, weigh if you have to be sure it's a true 'Rod Bender', quick few pictures then carefully nurture and help revive the fish to hopefully enjoy again another day. Yes I have caught the same fish more than once as small hook nicks can show if you get them within a week or two before these marks heal over, couple of times I've even been rewarded with the remains of my fly having broken off previously and I know of fish on other waters where I helped work on a tagging project that were caught and recorded more than once through the rest of that season.



As the Deveron can often run clear when the river is settled especially after a period of no rain then you can be rewarded with the spectacle of watching the fish rise to your fly which really gets the heart thumping, especially if it's a Trophy Trout. It's a wonder you get near a fish like this at all as you will most certainly be fishing with your hands trembling and your knees knocking together, and if you're not at first you definitely will once you've hooked it.

Osprey

So for any trout angler out there who would like to experience this same excitement, then the Deveron could be the one for you, besides as said the general fishing can be so good anyway it doesn't matter if you encounter a big fish or not (as often happens, don't be fooled into thinking they line up to chase your fly). When you get a good hatch on one of the up-wing insect species this water can produce, and you see the number of fish that present you with multiple opportunities you'll really appreciate the sheer quality of trout fishing this river can, and often does produce.

If you spot an angler wandering upstream with two mad Labradors in tow (as if it wasn't hard enough) give a wave and shout hello, it most likely will be me passing the day on the river I love best searching out another 'Deveron Leopard.'

The Deveron, Bogie and Isla Rivers Charitable Trust accounts

Year ended 31st March 2016

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES

| | Unrestricted fund | Restricted funds | 31.3.16 Total funds | 31.3.15 Total |
|---|-------------------|------------------|------------------------|------------------|
| | £ | £ | £ | £ |
| INCOMING RESOURCES | | | | |
| Incoming resources from generated funds | | | | |
| Voluntary income | 59,851 | 55,645 | 115,496 | 81,895 |
| Gain on sale of investment | 545 | - | 545 | - |
| Incoming resources from charitable activities | | | | |
| Charitable activities | 7,101 | - | 7,101 | 2,196 |
| Work done | 46,963 | - | 46,963 | 55,572 |
| Total incoming resources | 114,460 | 55,645 | 170,105 | 139,663 |
| RESOURCES EXPENDED | | | | |
| Charitable activities | | | | |
| Donations made | 1,250 | - | 1,250 | 1,250 |
| Charitable activities | 106,165 | - | 106,165 | 88,237 |
| Expenditure on biosecurity projects | - | 56,354 | 56,354 | 37,126 |
| Governance costs | 1,269 | - | 1,269 | 1,280 |
| Total resources expended | 108,684 | 56,354 | 165,038 | 127,893 |
| NET INCOMING/(OUTGOING) RESOURCES BEFORE TRANSFERS | | | | |
| | 5,776 | (709) | 5,067 | 11,770 |
| Gross transfers between funds | (533) | 533 | - | - |
| Net incoming/(outgoing) resources | 5,243 | (176) | 5,067 | 11,770 |
| RECONCILIATION OF FUNDS | | | | |
| Total funds brought forward | 118,430 | 1,174 | 119,604 | 107,834 |
| TOTAL FUNDS CARRIED FORWARD | 123,673 | 998 | 124,671 | 119,604 |

BALANCE SHEET

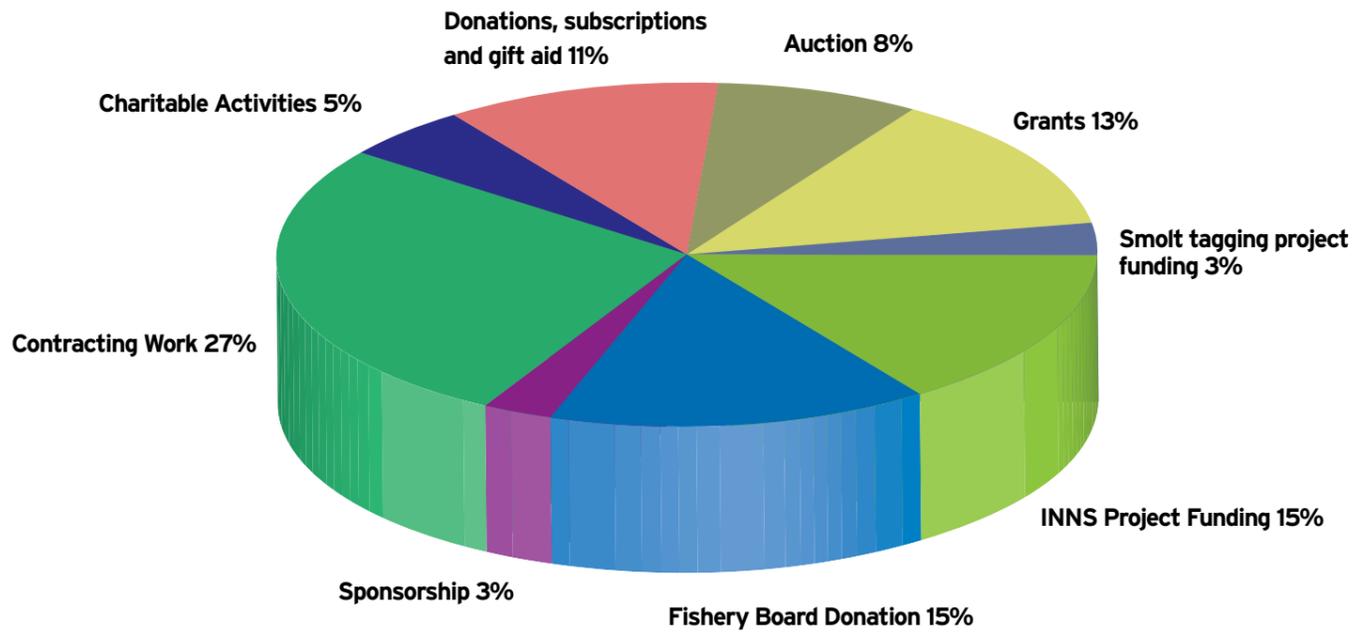
| | £ | 2016 £ | 2015 £ |
|--|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| FIXED ASSETS | | | |
| Tangible assets | 57,590 | 998 | 77,920 |
| Investments | - | - | 6,955 |
| | 57,590 | 998 | 84,875 |
| CURRENT ASSETS | | | |
| Debtors and prepayments | 21,958 | 1,345 | 29,139 |
| Cash at bank | 62,350 | - | 46,037 |
| | 84,308 | 1,345 | 75,176 |
| | (12,951) | (1,345) | (29,900) |
| CREDITORS | | | |
| Amounts falling due within one year | | | |
| | 71,357 | - | 45,276 |
| NET CURRENT ASSETS | | | |
| | 128,947 | 998 | 130,151 |
| TOTAL ASSETS LESS CURRENT LIABILITIES | | | |
| CREDITORS | | | |
| Amounts falling due after more than one year | (5,274) | - | (10,547) |
| | 123,673 | 998 | 119,604 |
| NET ASSETS | | | |
| FUNDS | | | |
| Unrestricted funds | | 123,673 | 118,430 |
| Restricted funds | | 998 | 1,174 |
| TOTAL FUNDS | | 124,671 | 119,604 |

These financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard for Smaller Entities (effective April 2008). The above figures have been approved by the Trustees and will be presented as such at the Annual General Meeting. These are extracts from the full financial statements. A copy of the Trust's full Financial Statements, together with explanatory notes, will be published on its website (www.deveron.org) following the Annual General Meeting.

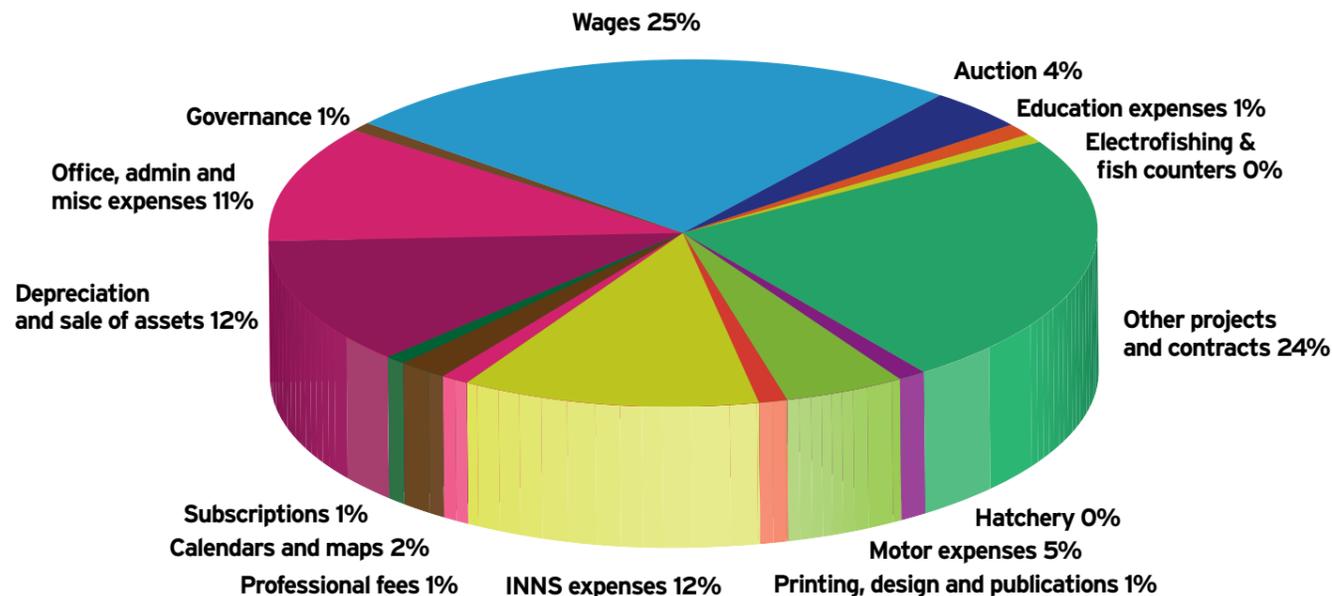
The Deveron, Bogie and Isla Rivers Charitable Trust accounts

Year ended 31st March 2016

Income April 2015 - March 2016



Expenditure April 2015 - March 2016



The River Deveron District Salmon Fishery Board accounts

Year ended 31 March 2016

INCOME & EXPENDITURE

| | 2016 | 2015 |
|--|---------------|----------------|
| INCOME | | |
| Assessment Income (49p in £) | 71,971 | 72,388 |
| Bank Interest | 8 | 98 |
| | 71,979 | 72,486 |
| EXPENDITURE | | |
| Employee costs | 20,071 | 21,488 |
| Contribution to DBI Trust for habitat work | 25,000 | 25,000 |
| Telephone | 256 | 284 |
| Subscriptions | 4,306 | 6,483 |
| Clerk's Remuneration | 4,613 | 10,600 |
| Insurance | 596 | 772 |
| Bank Charges | 4 | 30 |
| Postage, Printing Stationery & Advertising | 2,822 | 4,677 |
| Accountancy Fees | 460 | 2,654 |
| Board Meeting expenses | 778 | 1,114 |
| Depreciation | - | 78 |
| Miscellaneous Expenses | 3,658 | 4,006 |
| | 62,564 | 77,186 |
| SURPLUS/(DEFICIT) ON GENERAL FUND | 9,415 | (4,700) |

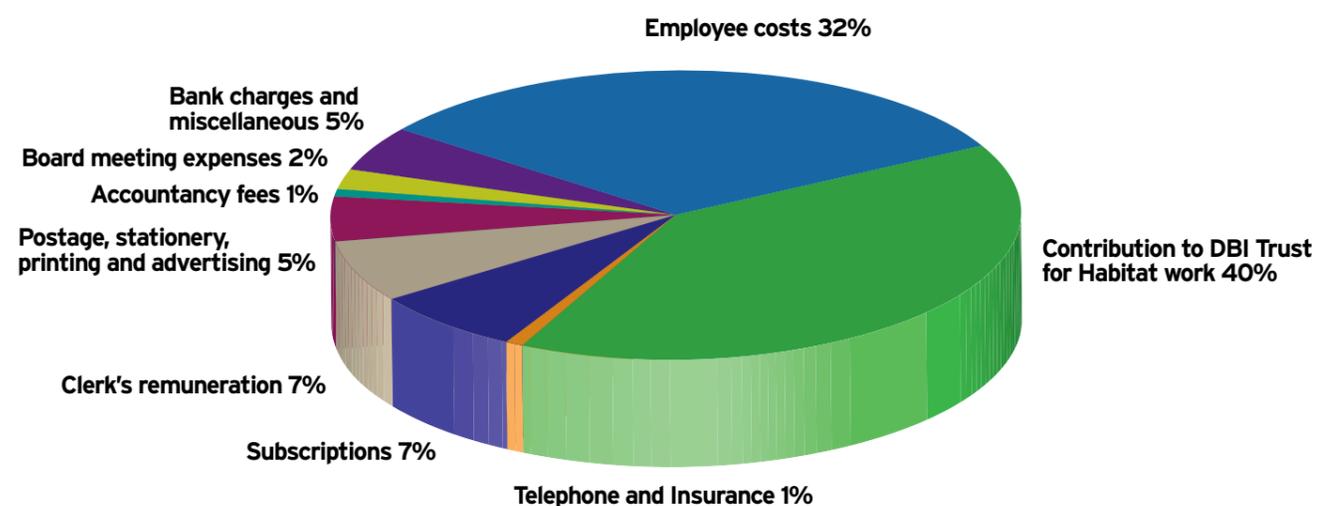
The River Deveron District Salmon Fishery Board accounts

Year ended 31 March 2016

SURPLUS ON IMPROVEMENT FUND

| | 2016 | | 2015 | |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------------|---------------|
| | £ | £ | £ | £ |
| Bank Interest | | - | | 3 |
| Dividends | | <u>3,650</u> | | <u>3,457</u> |
| | | 3,650 | | 3,460 |
| Funding provided - Smolt Tag project | | (5,851) | | |
| Market Value of Investments 1 April 2015 | 128,466 | | 116,623 | |
| Cost of Investments purchased (ie Dividends reinvested by Stockbrokers) | 3,650 | | 3,457 | |
| Proceeds from sale of units | (5,000) | | - | |
| Market Value of Investments at 31 March 2016 | <u>123,871</u> | | <u>128,466</u> | |
| Increase/(Decrease) in Market Value of Investments | | (3,245) | | 8,386 |
| Surplus/(Deficit) on Improvement Fund | | <u>(5,456)</u> | | <u>11,846</u> |

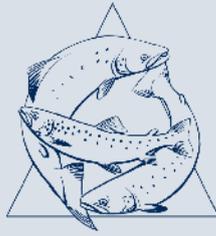
Expenditure April 2015 - March 2016



BALANCE SHEET

| | 2016 | | 2015 | |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------------|----------------|
| | £ | £ | £ | £ |
| FIXED ASSETS | | | | |
| IMPROVEMENT FUND INVESTMENTS | | 123,871 | | 128,466 |
| CURRENT ASSETS | | | | |
| Bank Account | 37,308 | | 28,596 | |
| Improvement Fund Account | <u>238</u> | | <u>1,099</u> | |
| | 37,546 | | 29,695 | |
| CURRENT LIABILITIES | | | | |
| Sundry Creditors | <u>1,802</u> | | <u>2,505</u> | |
| NET CURRENT ASSETS | | 35,744 | | 27,190 |
| | | <u>159,615</u> | | <u>155,656</u> |
| Represented by: | | | | |
| CAPITAL ACCOUNT | | | | |
| General Fund | | | | |
| Balance as at 1 April 2015 | 39,106 | | 43,806 | |
| Surplus/(Deficit) for the year | <u>9,415</u> | | <u>(4,700)</u> | |
| | | 48,521 | | 39,106 |
| Improvement Fund | | | | |
| Balance as at 1 April 2015 | 116,550 | | 104,704 | |
| (Deficit)/Surplus for the year | <u>(5,456)</u> | | <u>11,846</u> | |
| | | 111,094 | | 116,550 |
| | | <u>159,615</u> | | <u>155,656</u> |

These financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard for Smaller Entities (effective April 2008). The above figures have been approved by the Board and will be presented as such at the Annual Meeting. These are extracts from the full financial statements. A copy of the Board's full Financial Statements, together with explanatory notes, will be published on its website (www.deveron.org) following the Annual Meeting.



River Deveron Conservation Code for Salmon and Trout 2016

Your Board remains extremely concerned over fragile levels of fish stocks in the river
and in particular spring salmon and sea trout.
Anglers are asked, therefore, to observe the following guidelines during the forthcoming season:

SALMON & GRILSE

All salmon to be returned up to the end of May

**Under the Conservation of Salmon (Annual Close Time and Catch and Release)
(Scotland) Regulations 2014 no person may retain any salmon caught by rod and line
between 11th February and 31st March (inclusive)**

In conjunction with Chivas Brothers, The Deveron Bogie & Isla Rivers Charitable Trust will donate one bottle of Chivas Regal 12 Year Old Scotch Whisky (70cl) per angler, for safely returning a spring salmon up to May 31st
(Follow set claim procedure and call 01466 711388 to claim. Strictly over 18s only.)

**From June 1st to October 31st, anglers may retain one salmon or grilse per rod per day
with a maximum of two fish per rod per week**

Anglers are asked to observe the Board's aspiration that all hen fish, and any cock salmon over 10lbs be returned
Therefore, the Board requests that only male fish under 10lbs be retained

Release all stale and unseasonable fish (Gravid fish, kelts, smolts, over-wintered finnock)

SEA TROUT

All sea trout to be returned throughout the season

The guidance on sea trout will be in place for a minimum of three years or until stocks recover to acceptable levels

BROWN TROUT

From 15th March to 30th September, all Brown Trout under 10 inches in length to be returned

No more than 2 brown trout per rod per week to be retained

Anglers are encouraged to fish with a fly only except in exceptionally coloured or high water

Spinning lures should have only one single set of hooks with a maximum sized 4 crimped or barbless

Anglers are reminded that it is illegal to sell rod caught salmon or sea trout

Injured or damaged fish outwith the above limits should be handed to the proprietor

All farmed fish must be retained and notified to the DBIT (01466 711388)

All visiting anglers must read, act upon and sign a *Gyrodactylus salaris* declaration form immediately before fishing.
Please contact the DBIT or your beat Ghillie/Manager/Agent.