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THE DEVERON FLYER

The Deveron, Bogie and Isla Rivers Charitable Trust

Newsletter 35, summer 2018

Welcome to the 35th newsletter of the Deveron, Bogie & Isla Rivers Charitable Trust.

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



Giant Hogweed and American Mink



Out to get 'em

In March, the Trust welcomed Dr Al Reeve and Karen Müller (pictured) as Project Officers. Al and Karen will tackle invasive non-native species (INNS) in the Deveron, Ythan and Ugie catchments as part of the new Scottish Invasive Species Initiative (SISI). SISI is a four-year partnership project funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) and Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH), involving many fishery boards and trusts, the University of Aberdeen. The project's target species include the most vigorous INNS, such as Giant Hogweed, Himalayan Balsam, Japanese Knotweed and American Mink, which damage the natural environment and have significant impacts on biodiversity, the economy and human health. During

the last two months, Al and Karen have focused on Giant Hogweed control with the help of landowners, farmers, angling clubs, ghillies and volunteers, in line with the project aim of implementing community-based INNS management. Volunteers have also helped to survey the River Ugie in order to gain a better understanding of INNS. Himalayan Balsam pulling has just commenced and Japanese Knotweed injection will start later in the year. A number of mink rafts have been deployed, with two mink captured in May. More rafts have recently been built by Wood Recyclability and there will be a focus on installing them from August, when females re-emerge from the dens with their young.



SISI is looking for volunteers

We are looking for help to carry out practical management, such as Giant Hogweed spraying, Himalayan Balsam pulling, Japanese Knotweed injection and Mink monitoring. If you are interested in these activities, would like to report an INNS sighting or just want to find out more, please contact Al: alreeve@deveron.org or phone: 01466 711 388

To find out more about these species and their management visit: www.deveron.org/biosecurity

A magical trip to the Deveron

by Nathan Krelle, Australia

Scotland has always seemed like a magical place to a boy from the antipodes. As a young child it was the excitement and awe of reading about fierce Scottish warriors in their castles, and the untamed beauty of the Highlands, lochs and glens. Growing older brought an interest in Scottish engineering and academic exploits; and an appreciation of the whisky exports. Fast-forward to 2018, and finally a boyhood dream of exploring Scotland was realised.

My wife Felicity and I visited Scotland for the first time in March this year, travelling from Melbourne, Australia. As a 'dream destination', we decided to spend our 18 days solely in Scotland; self-driving ourselves on a tour to see as much of the country as we could. After landing in Glasgow, we travelled north to Loch Lomond, and the following day around to Tarbet. We hit our first obstacle when it was discovered that the ferry to Islay was fully booked for vehicles over the Easter weekend; so we resolved to carry on as foot passengers (which, on an island boasting no less than eight distilleries, wasn't such a bad thing). With the assistance of the amazing Emma Clark at Glenegedale House, the local bus service and a friendly local lorry driver, we were able to make it to our target destination of Bunnahabhain distillery (amongst others). After Islay, we continued north to Oban; sampling the exquisite local seafood at the Green Shack, before continuing on to the Isle of Skye. From beautiful clear mornings to being snowed-on at the Old Man of Storr, we explored Skye before heading east to Inverness and Aberchirder beyond. We'd now reached the portion of the journey reserved for fishing. Salmonids are a bit of an exotic beast where I grew up, about 4 hours east of Melbourne, Australia – so it's really only been in the last seven or eight years that trout and salmon fishing has become a favoured pastime. My wife is a Kiwi, and every chance we get to visit the family in Christchurch is an opportunity to get out for a fish (the trout and salmon fishing in New Zealand is truly spectacular).

In some respects our choice of fishing the River Deveron was pure luck; having only Google as a reference, we started out searching for trout and



salmon rivers throughout Scotland. Whilst rivers such as the Spey looked spectacular there was something altogether more 'manageable' about the Deveron (particularly where travel rods are concerned), and combined with the location and holding the record of Scotland's largest fly-caught salmon it seemed like the perfect choice.

We had booked a day of fishing at Coniecleugh on Friday. The Thursday driving into town was beautiful; warm, with clear skies and barely a breeze. Friday was the polar opposite; freezing cold, windy and continuously threatening to pour with rain. But we'd made a commitment, and we were going to see it through. We were shown over the beat by Robbie Brown, who gave us a few tips on the preferred tackle, before setting out into the cold. It was about an hour in before the first signs of life; a strike from a large brown trout in fast water. But a practiced shake of the head threw a poorly seated hook without any trouble, and he darted off to safety. The next half an hour brought nothing but the risk of hypothermia, so it was back to the hut for a cup of tea.

With feeling once more returned to the extremities, it was down towards the rail bridge. The first fish landed was a feisty brown, about a pound and a half, landed on a black and copper Celta. Venturing on, the next fish was another brown; this

Farewell...

Mr Andrew D Tennant

by Malcolm C Hay, Chairman RDevDSFB

It is with great sadness that we record the passing earlier this year of Andrew D Tennant. It is difficult to think of anyone who has shown a greater passion for and interest in our river. Even up to his last days, he was in regular contact with your Board Chairman and the Trust, brimming with ideas and passing on constructive advice.

During his many years as Chairman of the Deveron Fishery Board, he presided over the crucial buy outs of the estuarine and coastal nets, a major contributing factor behind the increases in the rod catch over the 1990s. He was greatly concerned by the apparent lacuna in the government's position on sea trout, campaigning tirelessly to have this reversed. He will be sorely missed by many of us on the river as both a passionate fisherman and a very good friend.

River Champion Award



Mr Robert McConnell, Honorary Membership Secretary of the Trust has recently been recognised as a 'River Champion' by the River Restoration Centre.

The success of projects aiming to improve rivers for wildlife and people is largely influenced by the involvement of volunteers. The River

Restoration Centre understands the importance of this contribution and wishes to acknowledge those that may otherwise not get recognition.

'River Champions' seeks to celebrate the outstanding efforts of individuals contributing to river restoration in their area. It aims to recognise those dedicating time outside of their day-to-day roles to contribute towards improving rivers for wildlife and people.

Robert McConnell has been instrumental in the success of the Trust membership, encouraging membership and securing funding over the last 14 years. This funding has helped build fish passes for salmon and sea trout, offer educational projects for schools, and carry out invasive species control projects, as well as ground breaking salmon smolt tracking studies.

time two pounds, and caught on a red and gold Celta. Another half an hour or so, and several lure changes later, another brown; this one larger still at two and a half pounds.

By this stage we were quite happy. Despite the cold we'd landed some nice fish, and our thoughts were starting to wander to hot food in front of the fire. And then it happened. Casting past a likely looking boulder, the lure caught up on something that felt like a soft snag; perhaps a bit of weed. But in a moment annoyance turned to glee as a rippling silver shape billowed in the water. It was a fish. A very big fish. As the line screamed off the reel, all I could think of was the leader; as much as I'd dreamed of catching a salmon on the Deveron, all I was expecting was trout – and was fishing 5lb accordingly. I gingerly played the fish, gaining a few feet before another run; eventually reaching the point where I was gaining more than I lost. After about five minutes my thoughts changed from "don't lose this" to "how the heck am I going to land this". The bank was steep, and we weren't travelling with a landing net. But it was obviously meant to be; the fish tired, and keeping its head up I was able to manoeuvre it in towards the bank where I could swiftly pluck it from the water.

After a quick measure and a couple of photos, it was away again; a silver ribbon melting into the depths. At 35 inches it was a personal best – and a Scottish springer to boot! Feeling that it was now impossible to top that result, we returned to the New Inn in Aberchirder for some real ales (and a wee dram of Glendronach) and told our story in front of the fire.

All too soon we were on the road again; to Newtonmore and the Cairngorms, a stop for the engineer to ogle the Falkirk Wheel, and finally a tour of Edinburgh before boarding the long flight home. And so the journey was finished; with so much yet unseen, and so many whiskies untasted. But the boyhood dreams of seeing Scotland had been satisfied, for now, and the memory of that fish would never be forgotten!

Smolt shepherding and tracking project 2018

In 2016 and 2017 the Trust's smolt tracking studies found that 60% of salmon smolts from the Upper Deveron were not successfully making it to sea. Given that this significant loss is taking place along the Deveron, there is real potential for the Trust and RDevDSFB to implement management to increase the number of smolts reaching the sea and ultimately the number of adults returning to the river.

This spring the Deveron ghillies, volunteers and beat owners from Br Marnoch to Muireisk have been conducting a smolt shepherding trial to see if we can reduce smolt mortality. This will be determined by tracking the survival of 100 smolts from the Allt Deveron to the river mouth. Despite record numbers of smolts being recorded leaving the Upper Deveron this spring, the very low water levels will have made it hard for smolts to leave the river. We will have preliminary results later in the year. Many thanks to the Glasgow University SCENE and The Atlantic Salmon Trust for their help with tagging and tracking, to all Trust Members who sponsored tags and finally to Marine Scotland Science for donating tags.



Acoustic receivers being deployed

The Missing Salmon Project

The Atlantic Salmon Trust (AST) recently launched the Missing Salmon Project. The Trust and RDevDSFB are partners in the exciting new project, which aims to investigate what is happening on the salmon's journey from the headwaters of the rivers to the sea and then take steps to help increase survival. A campaign by AST to raise significant funds by the end of 2018 has commenced to begin a tagging and tracking project that will uncover the secrets of the missing

salmon to help prevent further decline of this iconic species.

The project will be the largest acoustic tracking project for salmon in Europe and will track smolts further than ever before. If funding is secured, in 2019 the tagging project will start its work in the Moray Firth – the route taken by 20% of all salmon that leave the UK. The lessons learned from the study in the Moray Firth will provide valuable insights that are transferable to other populations of salmon around the UK.

Since the launch of the Missing Salmon Project, lots of people have been wondering 'Why start the project on the Moray Firth?' as well as some other important questions which are addressed here:

www.atlanticsalmontrust.org/missing-salmon-project-your-questions-answered/



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