

**THE DON DISTRICT SALMON FISHERY BOARD
SUPERINTENDENTS
REPORT FOR AGM 25th OCTOBER 2011**

Good evening ladies and Gentlemen.

The stocking of salmon and sea trout eyed Ova commenced on the 18th of February and was completed by the end of the second week of March. A total of approximately 311,000 salmon eggs and 36,000 sea trout eggs were planted out into the river system.

We actually thought we would be unable to complete this task, simply due to the severity of the continual winter snow storms, which had been affecting the upper top catchment of the river system. But using 2 or 3 short windows of opportunity between the snow melting and the next snow storm arriving over the Grampians we managed.

Stocking areas were identified by means of electro fishing surveys, which was completed in 2010. The surveys showed a number of areas void of salmon or very low numbers therefore ideal for restocking. Once these areas were stocked, the surplus eggs were stocked into spawning beds in the main river which had shown very little spawning activity during 2010. 1000 eggs were planted into an artificial Redd, and a Grid reference was then taken of each redd site and recorded for future reference. If any one wishes to see the full stocking report it is on our website at www.riverdon.org.uk

It has been another busy year on the river, with the Don staff involved in a good mixture of different projects. These projects are all in accordance with the Fishery management plan. A sample of some of the projects carried out this year is as follows,

Electro fishing surveys of all the Don tributaries have now been completed. The surveys are to establish fish densities and the different fish species there are in the river catchment area. Surveys of the main stem of the river will begin in 2012.

Clearing Blockages to allow better access into spawning areas of tributaries. This year we removed just over 61 blockages, which consisted of all manner of things, from farm waste, to dead animals, wind blown fall timber and yes even a good old shopping trolley, they seem to get

everywhere. Clearing blockages is an on going program that never ends as with every high wind, trees fall and cause problems over the catchment area.

Salmon in the Classroom Project

There were 5 primary schools which took part this year; Cluny, Inch, Old Rayne, Tough, and Oyne primary. This project is always warmly welcomed by the schools. Again all schools completed rearing the young salmon in their aquarium, with very few mishaps. This year for the first time, there will be a prize given to the school that has the best art work or has successfully completed the task; the winning school will receive a digital camera, which has been donated to the trust from Mike Barrio of Haddo trout fishery.

The Inverurie Angling Association also had great success this year, with their own school project of Brown trout in the classroom. This year the school chosen was Market Place primary school at Inverurie. On the day of the release of the young trout back to the river I was given a kind donation from Mr Peter Dow chair of the IAA towards the hatchery fund, later on in the year I had a visit from Dr Sam Marin where he gave myself a framed picture that Mr Dow had made up of different photos taken during and after the release of the fish. I would just like to thank the IAA on behalf of the Board and myself for these kind gifts.

Fish in River

The 2010 season was an exceptional year, which showed good numbers of salmon and sea trout returning to their home rivers from the sea. This season was not as good as 2010 but in saying that, still good numbers of spring salmon were landed through February & March. To the end of March 2010 recorded catches were 52 spring salmon landed; in 2011 69 spring fish were landed, up by 17 fish from the previous season. April-May was very disappointing, low flows through these two months resulted in very few fish being seen entering the river system, fishing effort was also low on beats above Fintry. From June onwards fishing effort picked up once again, river levels started to increase with another wet summer. Sea trout in larger numbers started to appear on the lower river, where the ADAA managed to land 70 sea trout for the month. July and August on the river saw a good mix of large salmon and small runs of Grilse entering the system, the most productive beats on the lower river fairing best, with average catch returns for the month.

September is normally the month anglers start saying to us, where have all these coloured fish come from that's in the pools? This year has seen no change in this, even though some would say it has been quite a poor season, I would say it has been an average year. Speaking to many anglers throughout the season from the lower Don to the middle reaches, commenting when the river has been big, fish have been heading and tailing through the pools all day and they have been unable to stop them. Then in September they appear off the bed of the river in full spawning dress where they have been lying dormant for many weeks or even longer. Fishing is always a challenge in September, for many beats that have coloured salmon in the pools, as it can put clean fish off the take with other interests on their minds. Looking at my September monthly report for catches, it has not been disappointing with a figure of 351 salmon landed; this count is only from certain beats from Alford down to the lower Don, this figure could quite easily be a lot higher when you take in all the syndicate beats and private salmon beats in between. We are now into October the last month of the angling season, and we will have to wait until the end of this month to see how salmon catches have been.

I would just like to take this opportunity to thank, on behalf of the Board, Trust, and staff all river proprietors and anglers who have assisted us this year, in achieving tasks that have been completed this year.

Thank you.