

## Report 7

### Nith District Salmon Fishery Board meeting on February 2014

By John Miller

At the meeting of the Fishery Board at Friars Carse on 11<sup>th</sup> February, Jim Henderson the Fishery Director gave an interesting talk with slide illustrations on the Celtic Sea Trout project and intended follow ups to the project.

Our Board had become involved in the Celtic Sea Trout Project about 5 years ago and had been sufficiently convinced of the value that it had contributed £40,000. 99 rivers had been included in the research, between the Solway and South Wales on this side of the Irish Sea and the whole east coast of Ireland on the other side. A total of 10536 tissue samples were taken from fry and parr and a trawler was used in the sea itself to find out where the sea trout were, what they were eating and what parasites were affecting them.

It was ascertained that:

Smolts on leaving their river tend to follow the currents, possibly because they are not sufficiently strong to do otherwise.

Sea Trout like sandbanks and such areas. They feed mostly on sand eels (42% of stomach contents of the samples) and sprats (23%) and herring. There is not in fact a problem with sea lice on sea trout in the Irish Sea.

On the way forward there is now to be co-operation and involvement with projects to the North of the Irish Sea up the west coast of Scotland where the fish farms are located and where we know to expect very different results concerning infestation by sea lice. At the moment we do not know what proportion of our smolts head North.

The findings of these projects will be absolutely crucial since there is no prospect of the Scottish Executive looking seriously at the effect of fish farms on migratory fish without clear and unequivocal scientific facts.

Upper Nithsdale Angling Club reports a disastrous year for sea trout, as a result of which their Management Committee has imposed a mandatory three years ban on killing sea trout or brown trout. This report appears to fly in the face of information I received on a numbers of occasions during the season, so it just goes to show you that you cannot always believe what you hear or read on angling matters.