

August 2011

Issue 1

Nith News

Nith Fishery Management Newsletter

Nith District Salmon Fishery Board & Nith Catchment Fishery Trust

Chairman's comments

As Chairman of both the Nith District Salmon Fishery Board and the Nith Catchment Fishery Trust I am pleased to report on a really successful working arrangement between both organisations. I am perhaps in the unique position of being able to see best how both operate together, sharing resources, staff and equipment to ensure that our rivers, lochs and the general aquatic environment are maintained to the highest standards. This close working arrangement is the same as that practised in many areas across Scotland and has proven to be a successful and cost effective mechanism for delivering modern day freshwater fisheries management.

In particular I am pleased to see the important work being carried out in encouraging young people to take up fishing and giving them a better understanding of the aquatic environment and the countryside in general. It is heartening to see the grass roots users of the river eager to become involved in assisting with the management by participating with our professional staff. Two examples of this are the Riverfly Partnership Anglers Monitoring Initiative and the Auxiliary Water Bailiff scheme. Both projects depend on individuals giving up their time to "put something back" into the river and this assistance is greatly appreciated.

We who fish and enjoy the rivers and lochs are all in the "custodian business" and all have a vested interest in ensuring the welfare of all our wetland areas. So let's continue to work together and make it happen.



Thomas C. Florey

Promising start to 2011 fishing season

The 2011 season got off to a fantastic start. Since the river's opening on the 25th February, salmon have been caught every week on various beats of the River Nith. Comments from seasoned anglers state that it is the best spring run for over 25 years. As a consequence of the many "springers" being caught, the Board's "Return and Reward" scheme has been well subscribed to. The sweatshirt, which was specially designed by children throughout the Nith catchment and is awarded to fishers who return spring salmon, is being proudly worn by anglers the length of the river.

The Board are delighted with the response of the conservation minded fishers who want to "do their bit" for Nith. This conservation scheme certainly contributes to spring stocks of salmon in the River Nith. The Board is doing all it can to protect vulnerable stocks. To help "do your bit" for conserving the Nith's stocks of spring salmon, remember to return any salmon caught before the 1st June.

If you would like more information please visit our website www.river-nith.com, where you can find interesting articles, information on our Return and Reward scheme and download a leaflet on the best way to catch and release your fish.



Invasive Plant Control in the Nith Catchment

In 2010 a project to control Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS) of riparian plants within the Nith catchment was launched. The target plants included Japanese knotweed, Giant hogweed and Himalayan balsam, all of which were introduced into the Nith catchment as ornamental garden plants. Unfortunately, due to their invasive nature, they have spread into the wild. The distribution of these plants has been facilitated by the water in river corridors, transporting seeds and plants down the catchment. It has been found that the most effective method to control Japanese knotweed and Giant hogweed is by injecting Roundup into their stems. Encouragingly, stands of Japanese knotweed that were treated in 2010 have shown less than 10% re-growth in 2011. This re-growth will be treated later in the summer once the plants have reached their maximum annual growth.



Giant hogweed gets treated on the island in the Caul Back, Dumfries

Treatment of Japanese knotweed started in the upper catchment, with stands being treated from New Cumnock to Auldgirth. From mid-July onwards, those stands downstream will be treated. It is important to treat all of these invasive plants from the upper catchment downstream to prevent re-infestation of treated sites occurring.

Currently, Giant hogweed is being treated throughout the catchment. Giant hogweed is different to Japanese knotweed due to the fact that it is spread through seeds. Giant hogweed forms large white flowers when they are about 3 – 5 years old, which mature into seed heads containing approximately 20,000 seeds. Once these seed heads have matured they release their seed. These seeds can stay dormant in the soil for many years, however generally they are only viable for 2 - 3 years. This means that necessary to go back year after year to treat the newly emerging plants.

Himalayan balsam is the third invasive species that is being tackled in this project. Although Himalayan balsam is an annual plant it is considered to be one of the hardest invasive species to control. This is due to its explosive method of distributing its seeds. If you have walked along Burns' Walk in Dumfries on a hot August day you will have heard, and probably seen, this plant releasing its seeds at the slightest gust of wind and spraying them for metres around.



Lethal injection delivered to Japanese knotweed

One way to control this plant is by spraying large areas with Roundup, which has the downside of killing all other non-target plants in the area being treated. Other methods of control include strimming or hand pulling the plants before they seed. These methods are time consuming, expensive in labour and some landowners are often reluctant to allow Himalayan balsam to be treated as it attracts bees and butterflies. Volunteer days are being organised to try and reduce the amount of Himalayan balsam along the banks of the Nith. If you would be interested in assisting with the control of Himalayan balsam along the Nith, please email invasives@river-nith.com

For more information on the INNS project go to www.river-nith.com.

Salmon in the Classroom

Education is an important part of the Trust's objectives and one of the projects run is "Salmon in the Classroom". This is a valuable project with its fun, hands-on method of getting children involved with fish, fishing and the work involved with conserving their habitats as well as teaching them about the importance of keeping rivers clean and healthy.

The project progresses throughout the school year with a series of field trips and classroom activities. The first field trip involves a visit to the NDSFB hatchery where the pupils learn about salmon and their lifecycle before actually getting to have a go at stripping the eggs out of a salmon themselves. A hundred of these eggs are then taken to the classroom and placed into a specially designed aquarium for the pupils to take care of until they hatch.



Alevins in the classroom aquarium

Once the weather has warmed up a bit, to give the fry the best possible chance of survival, the children then release their fry into the river from which their parents originated. Over the last few years, this project has evolved and now includes a river survey field trip where the children are taken to a section of river and carry out invertebrate sampling and measure the width, depth and flow of the river. This gives the children the opportunity to study and observe the environment around them in a more structured way.

As with all of the projects run by the Trust, Salmon in the Classroom relies on donations and grants in order to operate and thanks go to everyone who has assisted with this project. If you would like to see this project in a school near you contact Debbie at trust@river-nith.com.

Celtic Sea Trout Project

The Celtic Sea Trout Project (CSTP) is a groundbreaking, €2 million, multi-agency partnership investigation into the sea trout stocks and fisheries of the rivers entering the Irish Sea. The Celtic Sea Trout Project was launched in 2010 in response to a general decline in sea trout fisheries throughout parts of Western Britain, including the Irish Sea.

The pattern of decline is mixed and in most cases the causes of change are poorly understood and thus the solutions difficult to identify. The purpose of the CSTP is to try and discover what happens to sea trout when they are out at sea, what pressures they are exposed to and how their life histories vary.

In order to gain this information, more than 80 rivers entering the Irish sea are being sampled and then analysed using micro chemistry, genetics and scale readings. This data will then be used to model interactions between stocks, fisheries and the environment.

Obtaining sea trout samples in the marine environment has been the priority for the Nith DSFB in relation to their contribution to the Celtic Sea Trout Project during 2011. Assisted by the Trust, the Board have used a number of netting methods at various locations within their jurisdiction to attempt to capture sea trout. It is important that we sample throughout the year to obtain a cross section of the population of sea trout which navigate through the Solway.



A sea trout caught in the Solway

Mike Palmer visits Dumfries and Galloway

On Thursday 7th July the opportunity was afforded to the River Nith to show officials from the Scottish Government some of the fisheries management initiatives that are currently been worked on by the Board and the Trust. Mike Palmer, Head of Fisheries for Scotland, was accompanied by Manson Wright from Salmon and Recreational Fisheries for Scotland.



Tom Brown shows Mike Palmer how to use a haaf net

They saw around the Nith catchment as part of a two day visit to the Southwest. Their morning started early with a visit to a diversion of the River Nith at Greenburn surface coal mine. The diversion is still under construction and the party was given a guided tour where it was explained how fisheries' interests are incorporated into the design features of the new channel. They then moved onto the House of Water site where the Nith had previously been diverted in 2004. They saw and were given explanations about habitat creation and management of the riparian corridor and the methodology for measuring success and long term monitoring.

From the very uppermost parts of the River Nith, the party moved to the tidal estuarial reaches where the river discharges in to the Solway Firth. A representative group from the Nith Estuary Haaf Netters Association was met and this historic method of fishing was explained. This visit gave the Board and the Trust the chance to discuss issues specific to the Nith.

Bailiffs up the anti

The NDSFB has expanded considerably its enforcement team this year. Three auxiliary Water Bailiffs have been engaged by the Board to assist the full time Bailiff staff. The auxiliaries have attended training courses and are working towards attaining professional qualifications which will enable the Board to issue them with warrant cards. The auxiliary Bailiff scheme is proving to be very successful already, due to the commitment of those individuals involved.

In addition to the Water Bailiffs, the Board are supported by Wildlife Officers from Dumfries and Galloway Constabulary. Police Constable Mike Jardine has been very helpful over recent years and indeed gives up his own time to join the Bailiff team on patrols on the River Nith. We currently have more Water Bailiffs on the river bank engaged on enforcement work than we have had for a long time.



Constable Mike Jardine assists with the anti poaching efforts

Poachers beware!

Monitoring Water Quality in the Nith

Aquatic invertebrates are often the first to be affected by poor water quality and pollution incidents. The Scottish Environment Protection Agency has been monitoring invertebrate populations on a regular basis for a long time.

The Nith Catchment Fishery Trust is acting as co-ordinator for a group of interested anglers from throughout the Nith catchment to become trained in the identification and surveying methods of aquatic invertebrate populations. This is part of an Anglers' Monitoring Initiative that was set up by the Riverfly Partnership in order to monitor invertebrate populations throughout the UK and supplement the data already gathered on an annual basis by the Environment Agency and SEPA.

This initiative monitors 7 groups of riverflies which are all sensitive to pollution and whose presence/absence indicates the health of the river. Monthly monitoring of selected sites will allow long term biological data to be gathered and trends to be analysed. There have been cases in England where pollution incidents identified by AMI groups have led to prosecution.

This is an opportunity for the angler and anyone who is interested in conserving the riverine environment to play their part. If you would like to know more about this initiative and follow its progress on the Nith, please check out the Trust website at www.river-nith.com.



Volunteers training in identifying aquatic invertebrates

Here we go again!

The River Nith is again being diverted in the upper catchment to facilitate the extraction of coal from Greenburn Surface Coal Mine. Kier Mining are extending their existing operations in a southerly direction which means that the river will have to be diverted. This may sound like a daunting operation but the Nith Board have a wealth of experience dealing with these construction projects.

The Nith was diverted in 2000 and again in 2004, upstream of the Greenburn site. Both projects have been considered successful in environmental terms. The coal industry utilises fisheries data as a measure of environmental protection and having the presence of salmon; that iconic Scottish species, present within the boundaries of a coal mine is reassurance of the high environmental standards demanded by the Board as part of the mining operations.

During his recent visit to the catchment, Mike Palmer, Head of Fisheries for the Scottish Government, paid a visit to the Greenburn river diversion channel and saw the channel under construction. The new channel is currently being dug out and lined with clay before substrate is placed along the bed of the channel. The riparian zone along the channel is being seeded with grasses and planted with native trees and shrubs.

This newly dug channel will be allowed to settle and mature for a period of a year before water from the River Nith is diverted down it. At this point NDSFB and NCFT will carry out a fish rescue and transfer all fish captured into the new channel.



The new River Nith channel being created

Encouraging Youngsters into Angling

In a bid to get young people interested in taking up angling, the Nith Catchment Fishery Trust has organised a series of angling sessions with schools within the Nith catchment.

The Nith Catchment Fishery Trust employed three professional angling instructors from Borderlines, a not-for-profit organisation, and they started the angling days by teaching aquatic ecology to the children. The children were then given the opportunity to try their hand at casting under the supervision of the instructors and staff from Nith Catchment Fishery Trust and Nith District Salmon Fishery Board. All participants had an enjoyable day and we now hope, are “hooked on fishing”.

This project is designed to encourage more young people to take up angling as a hobby. It is of concern to fishery managers and owners that there is a shortage of young people taking up the sport and the Nith Catchment Fishery Trust runs events throughout the River Nith catchment designed to introduce young people to fishing.

In support of this project, the venues were kindly donated by Andy Ross who operates Drum Loch Fishery near Dalswinton and New Cumnock Angling Association, who also provided some young brown trout for the children to release into Loch Creoch. Thank you to everyone who sponsored the project including McKechnies Garage, New Cumnock and John McNeil from Ian's Barbers, New Cumnock.

More angling days will be organised next year and any schools or youth groups that would be interested in becoming involved should contact Debbie on trust@river-nith.com.



Hunting for bugs and beasties in the waters of Loch Creoch

Know the Code!

Over the course of the 2010, Nith District Salmon Fishery Board has been working on developing a new angling code for the River Nith. The Board has consulted with proprietors and members and taken cognisance of current best practise as promoted throughout Scotland today. In developing this code the Board seeks to demonstrate to the Scottish Government that management based at a local, catchment level, is responsible enough to maintain a sustainable fishery within the Nith catchment. Legislative options are available for the Board to apply to the government to put stringent draconian measures in place to control or limit the fishery but the Board prefers to seek the “buy in” from the angler on the river bank. In addition our many responsible anglers on the Nith are asserting peer pressure on those who would seek to flout the conservation code and its ethos.

“Get in the mode and adopt the code!”



A lovely salmon being returned to the River Nith

Fishing for Knowledge

In 2008 a project to encourage more young people to take up fishing as a sport was launched in Dumfries and Galloway. A pilot project was launched on the River Nith and from this successful event the "Fishing for Knowledge" project evolved. It is well recognised that anglers are reducing in number and increasing in age and one of the objectives of the "Fishing for Knowledge" project is to raise awareness of fisheries and to educate people about the importance of maintaining the aquatic environment.

The "Fishing for Knowledge" project targeted a number of schools throughout the region and brought fishing into the classroom. Professional angling instructors visited each school and delivered 6 sessions ranging from fish biology and basic entomology to setting up a rod and reel and how to cast. The sessions culminated in two field trips; one out to a local water body for a bug hunt and the other to put into practice all of the casting tuition and to try and catch a fish!



Perfecting the role cast!

An additional "Fishing for Knowledge" event, a family fishing day, was funded and co-ordinated by the Nith Catchment Fishery Trust and took place on the River Nith at Carnsalloch, part of Dumfries and Galloway Angling Association's water. The family day provided additional opportunities for families to try their hand at fishing in a safe environment and under the expert guidance of the Borderlines instructors.

Thanks to all who supported the Fishing For Knowledge project including SEPA, SNH, Leader, the Scottish Government and special thanks to Dumfries and Galloway Angling Association, Dumfries Burgh Common Good Fishings, Buccleuch Estates, Mid Nithsdale Angling Association and Upper Nithsdale's Angling Association for providing the venues which enabled this project to go ahead.

DGAA donation purchases Microscope for Trust

Dumfries and Galloway Angling Association kindly donated £1400 to the Nith Catchment Fishery Trust in order that the Trust could purchase a microscope.



Debbie reading scales using the new microscope

The microscope will be used to carry out scale readings on juvenile salmonids to identify how old they are when they are leaving to smolt and also enable the Trust to provide a service to anglers by reading the scales of adult fish caught in the Nith catchment. For a small donation the Trust will provide the angler with a certificate showing a photo of the scale and age of the fish. If you are interested in this service, please email at trust@river-nith.com to request free scale packets and instructions on how to take scale samples correctly.

As the microscope is able to be connected up to a digital camera, photographs and videos can be taken and even projected onto a screen for education purposes.

The Trust would like to thank Dumfries and Galloway Angling Association for their kind donation.

Nith Fisheries Management Team

Nith District
Salmon Fishery Board



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About the Nith Fisheries Management Team

Nith District Salmon Fishery Board

The Board is constituted under the Salmon Fisheries Legislation commencing in the 1860's as subsequently amended and presently stated in the Salmon and Freshwater Fisheries (Consolidation) (Scotland) Act 2003. The Board is empowered under the 2003 Act and other legislation to do such acts as it considers expedient for the protection, enhancement and conservation of stocks of salmon and sea trout and the general protection and enhancement of the fishery itself.

Nith Catchment Fishery Trust

The Nith Catchment Fishery Trust is a company with charitable status and has been formed to conserve and enhance all native freshwater fish and their habitats located within the inland and coastal waters of the River Nith catchment and the jurisdictional area of the Nith District Salmon Fishery Board. The Trust works closely with the Nith District Salmon Fishery Board to help achieve a more all-encompassing level of conservation throughout the catchment.

How to be involved

If you would like to become a member of the Nith Catchment Fishery Trust just download and complete the membership form from our website. Membership is free and entitles you to receive a copy of the Nith Catchment Fishery Trust Annual Report and to attend the Trust AGM where you can have your say.

The Trust is a non-profit organisation and relies on grants and donations to fund the projects that it is involved in. If you would like to make a donation and help to make some of the work we carry out possible we would love to hear from you.

What your donation enables us to do

Every pound you donate to the Nith Catchment Fishery Trust enables us to look after all the aquatic environments found within the River Nith catchment and to raise awareness of the aquatic environment through education. The following examples are designed to give you an idea of what your donation might be used towards.

- £10 could buy 2 metres of fencing for a habitat scheme or 20 trees
- £20 could buy a mink trap to help reduce mink populations and save our native species
- £80 could buy a survey kit for our invertebrate monitoring groups
- £150 could provide transport for a school to go on a field or angling trip
- £200 could go towards co-ordinating a volunteer day on the river
- £500 could help fund a day's professional angling tuition for a youth group
- £800 could buy a cooler for a school and enable them to participate in "Salmon in the Classroom"

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