West Sutherland Fisheries Trust
2025 Electrofishing Surveys

A report to the West Sutherland Fisheries Trust, Report No. WSFT 01/26

January 2026

West Sutherland Fisheries Trust
Gardeners Cottage
Scourie
By Lairg
Sutherland
IV27 4SX

Contents:

1. Introduction…… pg 3

2. Methodology…… pg 3-4

3. Results…… pg 5-31

3.1 Hope…… pg 5-7

3.2 Polla…… pg 7-9

3.3 Oldshoremore…… pg 9-11

3.4 Loch Innis…… pg 11-13

3.5 Achriesgill…… pg 13-15

3.6 Rhiconich…… pg 15-17

3.7 Loch na Thull…… pg 18-20

3.8 Loch nam Brac…… pg 20-21

3.9 Loch a'Bhadaidh Daraich…… pg 22-23

3.10 Duartmore…… pg 23-25

3.11 Gleann Leireag…… pg 26-27

3.13 Polly…… pg 27-29

3.14 Garvie…… pg 29-31

4. Area Summary…… pg 32-36

1. Introduction:

As part of West Sutherland Fisheries Trust's work programme, established sites in different freshwater catchments are routinely monitored through electrofishing surveys, which are carried out in accordance with Scottish Fisheries Coordination Centre (SFCC) protocol. This provides valuable information on temporal changes within juvenile salmonid densities. Where possible all sites were revisited, but due to natural changes in sites and weather conditions this was not achieved in all catchments.

This report summarises the data for each system surveyed and draws them together into an area-wide summary. Individual reports for each catchment detailing the data, are available on request.

2. Methodology:

Electrofishing equipment operates by creating an electrical field in the water which affects the muscles of the fish, causing them to swim towards the positive electrode (anode) and subsequently immobilises them for a brief period. At this point they can be captured for processing before being released unharmed into the river sections from which they were caught. As the electrical field is restricted in size and the conductivity of the water generally extremely low in most WSFT catchments, the best operating conditions are within shallow water in narrow tributaries. While it is possible to sample large main river stems, the escape rate is higher than that found in the narrower tributaries. Similarly, a high escape rate is found in exceptionally shallow, stony, or weedy areas, where fish can move into the substrate and are thus inaccessible to the nets.

Semi quantitative surveys are conducted in compliance with SFCC protocol. This involves one fishing run of a site in order to calculate a minimum estimate of juvenile salmonid densities. Although semi-quantitative surveys do not calculate absolute densities, they are quicker, enabling more sites to be covered, and give an indication of changes over time. This results in a broad picture of the population status of each catchment which can then be compared from year to year.

Fish densities were assessed using an electrafish backpack supplying smooth direct current (DC). Fish drawn to the hand-held anode were netted into a bucket and were retained until the end of the run for processing. The sites were fished systematically in an upstream direction, applying the same fishing pressure throughout to ensure that all fish had the same probability of capture as far as possible, thus increasing the reliability and accuracy of the minimum estimates of density.

All fish were anaesthetised using Tricaine Pharmaq, identified to species and measured (± 1 mm). Small scale samples were taken from a proportion of each length range for age determination, split into fry (young of the year, 0+ years old) and parr (≥1 years old). The fish were then placed in a bucket before being returned to the survey site upon complete recovery. Densities of fish were calculated as minimum estimates, such that a minimum number of fish present per 100 m^2 could be determined. Water level was not used in the density estimates, although it must be realised that stream conditions will have an impact on the density determined and efficiency of the fishing technique. Fish densities were then categorised using the SFCC salmonid density classification scheme for the Northwest area, which can be seen in table 1.

In 2025 some of the electrofishing sites were surveyed using the 3-pass electrofishing method. This is a quantitative electrofishing method, carried out following guidelines set out by SFCC. This method is similar to 1-pass electrofishing, with 3 passes conducted on the same site. Each run is processed separately, with processed fish kept in in-river holding bins as subsequent passes are carried out. As it is assumed there is no movement of fish in or out of the site during the survey, there should be a

depletion of fish numbers run to run. If so, the Zippin method can be applied to the results to calculate an estimated density, and a capture efficiency. In 2025 sites on the Hope, Polla, and Loch na Thull were fished with the 3-pass method.

The average capture efficiency from these catchments was applied to the 1-pass survey results using the equations detailed in Malcolm et al (2023) where count equals the number of fish caught (split by age class and species), and Pcum equals the cumulative capture probability (Pcum = 1 - (1 - P1) * (1 - P2) * (1 - P3)), giving estimated densities per metre for all. This is then multiplied by 100, to give an estimated fish density per 100m^2.

$$Estimated\ density = \frac{\sum count_{pass\ n}}{site\ area * Pcum}$$

Bankside and instream characteristics, including substrate type, water flow, and riparian cover, were recorded at each site in accordance with the SFCC habitat survey associated with electrofishing surveys.

Table 1: SFCC salmonid density classification scheme for the Northwest area

		Minimum density per 100m²			
SFCC Class	**Descriptor**	**Salmon Fry**	**Salmon Parr**	**Trout Fry**	**Trout Parr**
A	Excellent	26.05	13.09	15.80	8.58
B	Good	14.15	8.04	8.25	4.31
C	Moderate	8.00	4.67	4.26	2.72
D	Poor	4.42	2.58	1.99	1.52
E	Very Poor	0.78	0.66	0.44	0.22
U	Unclassified	0	0	0	0

3. Results:

3.1 Hope

Table 3.1.1 shows the grid reference, and location of each site fished. Minimum density estimates of salmon and trout fry (0+ years) and parr (>1 year) per 100m^2 in each site are presented in table 3.1.2 and classified in accordance with the SFCC classification scheme (table 1).

Table 3.1.1: Electrofishing site details.

Site Code	Easting	Northing	Situation
H1B	247542	957777	Allt a'Mhuillin. 50m downstream of road
H2A	247381	956926	Breasgill, below the road.
H2B	247452	956947	Breasgill burn, above road and below sheep dip.
H4A	246173	947722	Tributary at shed by Ben Hope path.
H9A	242063	941561	Abhainn Strath Coir an Easaidh, 1 mile up the track, just upstream of stone bridge.
H9B	243659	941883	Abhainn Strath Coir an Easaidh, by lodge.
H10A	243143	941471	Allt a Choire Ghrainde, just below bridge.

Table 3.1.2: A summary of the minimum and estimated densities of salmon and trout fry (0+ years) and parr (greater than 1 year) at each site per 100 m^2.

		Minimum Density				Estimated Density			
Site Code	Habitat Type	Salmon Fry	Salmon Parr	Trout Fry	Trout Parr	Salmon Fry	Salmon Parr	Trout Fry	Trout Parr
H1B	Parr	9.37	6.94	17.36	6.94	22.02	7.43	17.76	7.50
H2A	Mixed	10.41	13.12	3.28	9.84	12.49	14.05	7.15	12.45
H2B	Mixed	11.74	24.73	2.75	8.24	13.95	26.48	2.81	8.90
H4A	Fry	16.40	29.34	26.41	14.67	18.62	31.43	29.72	15.85
H9A	Mixed	0.00	0.00	1.33	7.99	0.00	0.00	1.36	8.63
H9B	Mixed	4.00	10.25	0.00	0.00	7.80	10.97	0.00	0.00
H10A	Mixed	0.00	0.00	2.50	7.50	0.00	0.00	2.56	8.10

Salmon and trout are widespread throughout the Hope catchment, with salmon only absent from H9A and H10A. Salmon parr densities were higher than fry in most sites due to habitat type, a trend seen in trout also.

The minimum, maximum, average minimum observed densities, and the average estimated density for the catchment can be seen in table 3.1.3. This summarises the system and allows direct comparison between all surveyed catchments in the West Sutherland area.

Table 3.1.3: A summary of the minimum estimate densities determined for all sites surveyed (per 100m^2), and the average estimated density.

Species/Lifestage	Minimum	Maximum	Average Minimum Observed Density	Average Estimated Density
Salmon Fry	0	30.03	7.42	16.75
Salmon Parr	0	24.76	12.05	12.25
Trout Fry	0.93	18.77	7.66	8.77
Trout Parr	0	22.52	7.88	8.78

Figures 3.1.1 and 3.1.2 show the temporal fluctuations in the average juvenile salmon and trout densities in the catchment. Figure 3.1.1 shows a general increase in salmon fry and parr densities since the system was first surveyed, with fry densities peaking in 2022, and parr peaking in 2012. Trout fry densities show a gradually increasing trend over time, with parr remaining consistent and stable at around 5 fish/100m^2. Both salmon and trout fry were seen in much lower densities than in 2024, though this could just be a natural fluctuation.

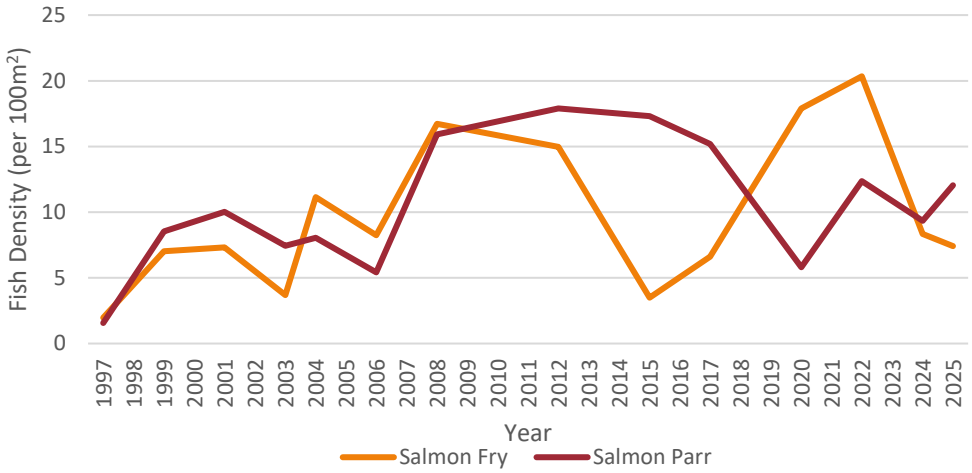

Figure 3.1.1: Temporal changes in average salmon densities within the Hope catchment.

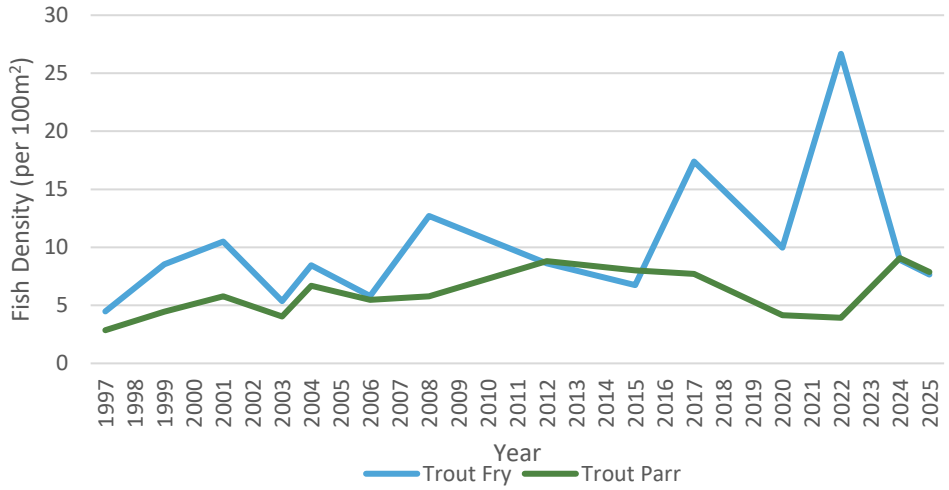

Figure 3.1.2: Temporal changes in average trout densities within the Hope catchment.

In 2014 Hurricane Bertha caused considerable changes to some of the tributaries along the east shore of Loch Hope. With respect to this survey, H2 and H4A were severely altered in terms of both sediment and riparian areas. In H2, while both sites have been impacted physically, they now show little impact in terms of fish density, with recent observed densities similar or better than pre-2014 levels. Whilst the 2025 data shows a drop in density from 2022, levels are still within the usual fluctuation for the sites. The channel of the Breasgill burn has stabilised over time but remains vulnerable to change in exceptionally high spates due to the lack of complex vegetation reinforcing the banks.

Salmon historically form a small component of the salmonid population in H9A, however they have not been observed in the site since 2015. This firmly suggests that there has been a change in the burn preventing salmon access.

This catchment could benefit from strategic planting of broadleaf trees in riparian zones, which would improve fish cover, food availability, and bankside stability – overall providing great benefits to fish populations.

3.2 Polla

Table 3.2.1 shows the grid reference, and location of each site fished. Minimum density estimates of salmon and trout fry (0+ years) and parr (>1 year) per 100m^2 in each site are presented in table 3.2.2 and classified in accordance with the SFCC classification scheme (table 1).

Table 3.2.1: Electrofishing site details.

Site Code	Easting	Northing	Situation
P2A	238599	954120	Allt Coire an Uinnseinn, upstream of bridge
P4A	239087	951809	Mainstem river, adjacent to Strabeg House
P5A	239118	951907	Allt Odhsrgaraidh, downstream of ford
P8A	238851	952436	Small burn across from field, 10m upstream from mainstem

Table 3.2.2: A summary of the minimum and estimated densities of salmon and trout fry (0+ years) and parr (greater than 1 year) at each site per 100 m^2.

		Minimum Density				Estimated Density			
Site Code	Habitat Type	Salmon Fry	Salmon Parr	Trout Fry	Trout Parr	Salmon Fry	Salmon Parr	Trout Fry	Trout Parr
P2A	Fry	28.65	15.24	18.29	15.24	42.56	16.26	36.59	16.47
P4A	Mixed	4.21	31.25	0.00	5.21	9.91	33.47	0.00	5.63
P5A	Mixed	25.70	11.86	23.72	5.93	21.08	12.70	25.87	6.40
P8A	Fry	6.10	0.00	6.42	3.21	8.15	0.00	6.58	3.47

Salmon and trout are present in good and excellent densities throughout the Polla catchment, with both species present in every site. The habitats and burn width for the surveyed sites were varied, indicating that a multitude of tributaries are utilised.

The minimum, maximum, average minimum densities, and average estimated density for the catchment can be seen in table 3.2.3. This summarises the system and allows direct comparison between all surveyed catchments in the West Sutherland area.

Table 3.2.3: A summary of the minimum estimate densities determined for all sites surveyed (per 100m^2), and the average estimated density.

Species/Lifestage	Minimum	Maximum	Minimum Observed Density Average	Estimated Density Average
Salmon Fry	4.21	28.65	16.16	28.25
Salmon Parr	0.00	31.25	14.59	30.28
Trout Fry	3.13	23.72	12.11	17.26
Trout Parr	3.21	15.24	7.40	7.99

Figures 3.2.1 and 3.2.2 show the temporal fluctuations in the average juvenile salmon and trout densities in the catchment. Figure 3.2.1 shows a general increase in salmon fry and parr densities since the system was first surveyed, with fry densities peaking in 2018. Trout densities also show a gradually increasing trend over time, though this is less pronounced in trout parr densities.

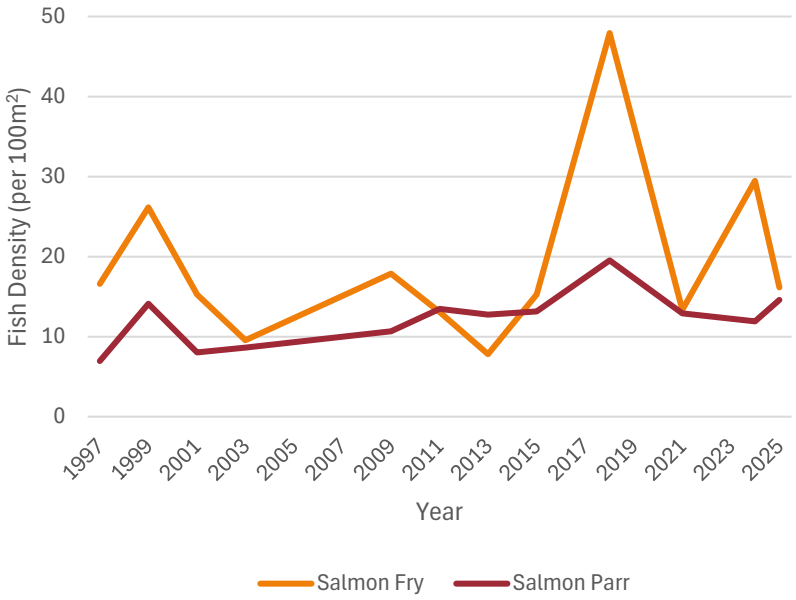

Figure 3.2.1: Temporal changes in average salmon densities within the Polla catchment.

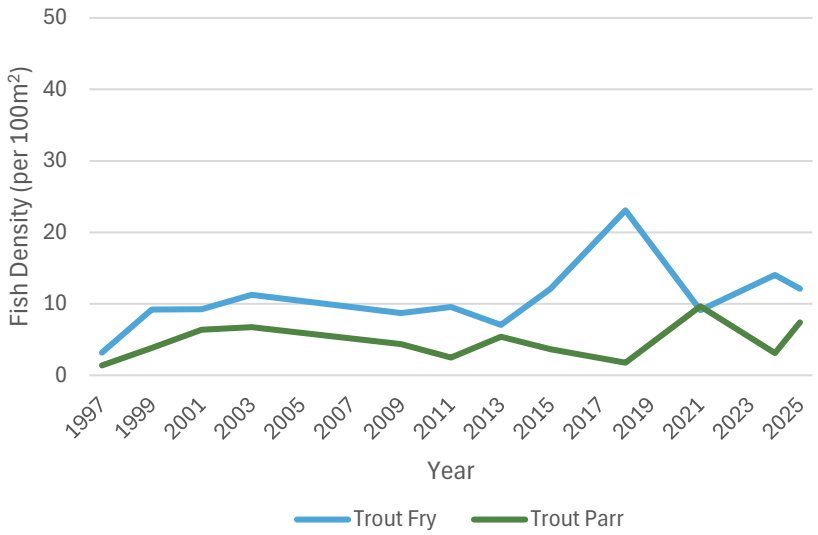

Figure 3.2.2: Temporal changes in average trout densities within the Polla catchment.

Salmon and trout were present in every site surveyed on the Polla, one in the mainstem and four in tributaries. It was noted that in many places near the main river there was natural tree regeneration, likely due to the estate's deer management lowering the grazing pressure. This is a promising development, as with riparian tree growth comes shade and nutrient input. The catchment could still benefit from targeted planting and improvement works detailed in the catchment management plan.

3.3 Oldshoremore

Table 3.3.1 shows the grid reference, and location of each site fished. Minimum density estimates of salmon and trout fry (0+ years) and parr (>1 year) per 100m^2 in each site are presented in table 3.3.2 and classified in accordance with the SFCC classification scheme (table 1).

Table 3.3.1: Electrofishing site details.

Site Code	Easting	Northing	Altitude	Situation
OM1	221829	958919	55	Allt an Lòin Bhain, near head of Loch Aisir Mòr
OM2A	222249	958671	60	Allt an Lòin Bhain, with rise on right bank and large boulders in site and in bank
OM3	222825	958249	80	Allt an Lòin Bhain, before glide, at widest part of the channel
OM4	220800	959000	40	Middle braid above mill lade, from start to first main riffle
OM5	220784	958956	40	Below wall, near islands. Large white rock in centre. Island and riffle in centre of site (left to right)

Table 3.3.2: A summary of the minimum and estimated densities of salmon and trout fry (0+ years) and parr (greater than 1 year) at each site per 100m^2.

		Minimum Density				Estimated Density			
Site Code	Habitat Type	Salmon Fry	Salmon Parr	Trout Fry	Trout Parr	Salmon Fry	Salmon Parr	Trout Fry	Trout Parr
OM1	Mixed	5.91	3.94	9.85	0.00	7.50	4.22	10.08	0.00
OM2A	Parr	6.28	0.00	6.28	6.28	7.97	0.00	6.42	6.78
OM3	Fry	0.00	0.00	8.71	2.18	0.00	0.00	8.91	2.35
OM4	Parr	0.00	4.60	9.20	9.20	0.00	4.92	9.41	9.93
OM5	Parr	0.00	3.56	12.45	7.11	0.00	3.81	12.74	7.68

Salmon densities in the Oldshoremore system are poor, with salmon fry only observed in two of the five sites fished. Conversely trout densities are good across the catchment, with the highest density of fry in OM5, and the highest parr in OM1.

The minimum, maximum, average minimum observed densities, and the average estimated density for the catchment can be seen in table 3.3.3. This summarises the system and allows direct comparison between all surveyed catchments in the West Sutherland area.

Table 3.3.3: A summary of the minimum estimate densities determined for all sites surveyed (per 100m^2), and the average estimated density.

Species/Lifestage	Minimum	Maximum	Average Observed Minimum Density	Average Estimated Density
Salmon Fry	0.00	6.28	2.44	3.09
Salmon Parr	0.00	4.60	2.42	2.59
Trout Fry	6.28	12.45	9.30	9.51
Trout Parr	0.00	9.20	4.95	5.35

Figures 3.3.1 and 3.3.2 show the temporal fluctuations in the average juvenile salmon and trout densities in the catchment. It can be seen that there has been a consistent drop in salmon densities over the last 3 surveys. Crucially this is also mirrored by a drop in parr densities which is concerning. Trout densities have varied greatly over time, but show a very slowly increasing trend.

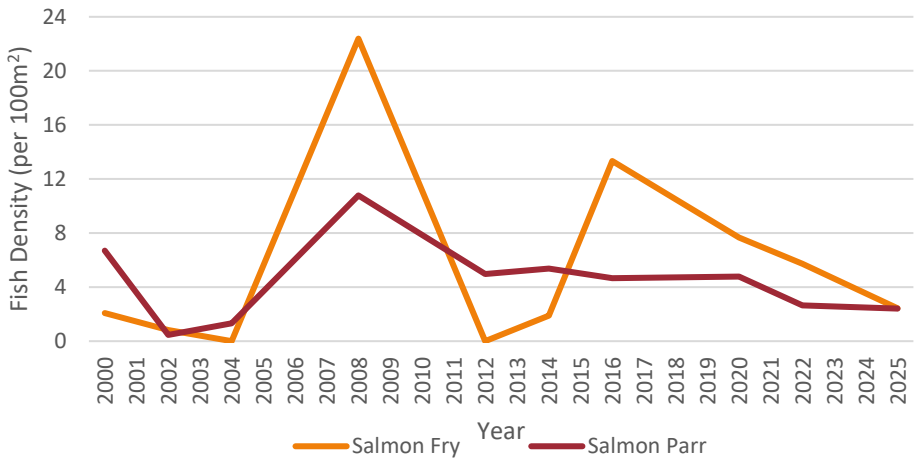

Figure 3.3.1: Temporal changes in average salmon densities within the Oldshoremore catchment.

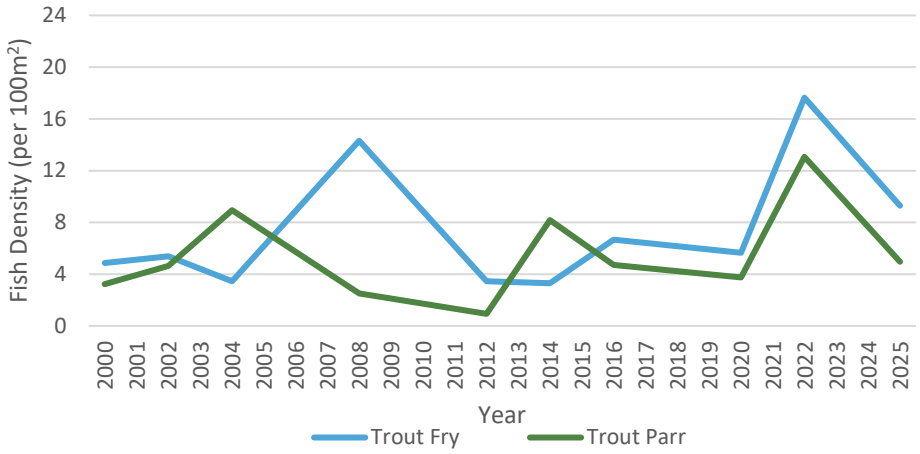

Figure 3.3.2: Temporal changes in average trout densities within the Oldshoremore catchment.

Salmon and trout in all sites in the Oldshoremore catchment showed a drop in densities from 2022 to 2025, across all lifestages. Whilst this isn't worrying for the trout, as this variation is seen year to year but it is concerning for the salmon population, which has been decreasing in density since 2016.

Oldshoremore is a small catchment running through degraded peatland, meaning it is not very resilient to further negative changes. Similarly, with only a small salmon population, they also lack resilience – so this drop in density is very concerning.

3.4 Loch Innis

Table 3.4.1 shows the grid reference, and location of each site fished. Minimum density estimates of trout fry (0+ years) and parr (>1 year) per 100m^2 in each site are presented in table 3.4.2 and classified in accordance with the SFCC classification scheme (table 1).

Table 3.4.1: Electrofishing site details.

Site Code	Easting	Northing	Altitude	Situation
LI1	222286	957485	20	Allt Loch na Larach, from 2nd meander through gate
LI2A	223010	956912	50	Cam Alltan, above bedrock falls, just before bend in river
LI2C	222688	956906	15	Cam Alltan, from 20m above the loch to the original channel.
LI3	222643	956966	15	Small tributary close to Cam Alltan. Site is just above the loch

Table 3.4.2: A summary of the minimum and estimated densities of trout fry (0+ years) and parr (greater than 1 year) at each site per 100 m^2.

		Minimum Density		Estimated Density	
Site Code	Habitat Type	Trout Fry	Trout Parr	Trout Fry	Trout Parr
LI1	Mixed Juvenile	35.09	14.62	35.91	15.79
LI2A	Mixed Juvenile	0.00	9.67	0.00	10.44
LI2C	Fry	9.87	0.00	10.10	0.00
LI3	Mixed Juvenile	18.79	6.26	19.23	6.76

Trout are present in good and excellent densities throughout the Loch Innis catchment, with only LI2A lacking fry and LI2C showing an absence of parr.

The minimum, maximum, average minimum observed density, and the average estimated density for the catchment can be seen in table 3.4.3. This summarises the system and allows direct comparison between all surveyed catchments in the West Sutherland area.

Table 3.4.3: A summary of the minimum observed densities determined for all sites surveyed (per 100m^2), and the average estimated density.

Species/Lifestage	Minimum	Maximum	Average Minimum Observed Density	Average Estimated Density
Trout Fry	0.00	35.09	15.94	16.31
Trout Parr	0.00	14.62	7.64	8.25

Figure 3.4.1 shows the temporal fluctuations in the average juvenile trout densities in the catchment. Despite fluctuation in the fry and parr densities the population has been relatively stable since the system was first surveyed. Densities dipped in 2025 but in terms of parr, not outwith previous lows. Trout fry densities also show a declining trend, though this could be due to changes in habitat rather than an issue with the population.

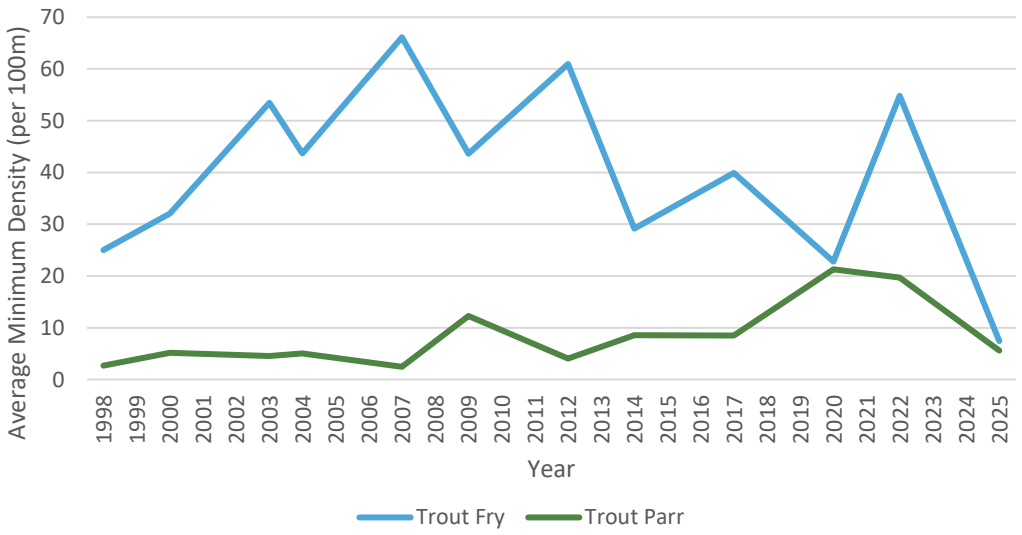

Figure 3.4.1: Temporal changes in average trout densities within the Loch Innis catchment.

Previously this system has been categorised as a trout system, with a transitory salmon population. The trout population is healthy and stable, with excellent densities throughout the catchment.

It is hypothesised that the mouth and lower reaches of this catchment were previously difficult for migratory fish to navigate, and accessibility was likely flow dependent. No salmon have been observed in recent surveys, indicating the possibility of the system now being inaccessible to migratory salmonids.

3.5 Achriesgill

Table 3.5.1 shows the grid reference, altitude, and location of each site fished. Minimum density estimates of salmon and trout fry (0+ years) and parr (>1 year) per 100m^2 in each site are presented in table 3.5.2 and classified in accordance with the SFCC classification scheme (table 1).

Table 3.5.1: Electrofishing site details.

Site Code	Easting	Northing	Altitude	Situation
GL1	225659	954059	10	In main river, just above bridge
GL2	226572	953063	70	Allt an Easain Ghairbh, downstream of waterworks, across from ruin.
GL3	227100	953900	40	Down from double passing place, by boulder pile on edge of river.
GL5	227806	954410	75	Upstream of burn and rowan tree, main river.

Table 3.5.2: A summary of the minimum and estimated densities of trout fry (0+ years) and parr (greater than 1 year) at each site per 100 m^2.

		Minimum Density				Estimated Density			
Site Code	Habitat Type	Salmon Fry	Salmon Parr	Trout Fry	Trout Parr	Salmon Fry	Salmon Parr	Trout Fry	Trout Parr
GL1	Mixed Juvenile	13.08	7.85	0.00	5.23	16.60	8.41	0.00	5.65
GL2	Fry	0.00	0.00	0.99	6.91	0.00	0.00	1.01	7.47
GL3	Fry	0.00	0.00	7.75	0.00	0.00	0.00	7.93	0.00
GL5	Parr	0.00	0.00	4.05	0.00	0.00	0.00	4.15	0.00

Salmon were only present in GL1, with good numbers of fry and parr observed. Trout parr were only present in GL1 and GL2, but were seen in good densities. Trout Fry were observed in 3 of 4 sites, but found in very poor-moderate densities.

The minimum, maximum, average minimum observed density, and the average estimated density for the catchment can be seen in table 3.5.3. This summarises the system and allows direct comparison between all surveyed catchments in the West Sutherland area. Due to much of the

catchment being inaccessible to salmon, the average density for them is represented as the average of the sites within the accessible reach.

Table 3.5.3: A summary of the minimum observed densities determined for all sites surveyed (per 100m^2), and the average estimated density.

Species/Lifestage	Minimum	Maximum	Average Minimum Observed Density	Average Estimated Density
Salmon Fry	0.00	13.08	n/a	n/a
Salmon Parr	0.00	7.85	n/a	n/a
Trout Fry	0.00	7.75	3.20	3.27
Trout Parr	0.00	6.91	3.04	3.28

Figures 3.5.1 and 3.5.2 show the temporal fluctuations in the average trout density, and salmon density in the only site accessible in the Achriesgill catchment. Trout densities have fluctuated greatly, but show a relatively stable parr density over time, with increases in fry densities since 2006. Salmon densities are poor in GL1, showing a slight drop from 2022 to 2025. The catchment average has not been included due to the observation that salmon no longer access the system above the first waterfall -just downstream of the old dam- with the last individuals observed above it in 2014.

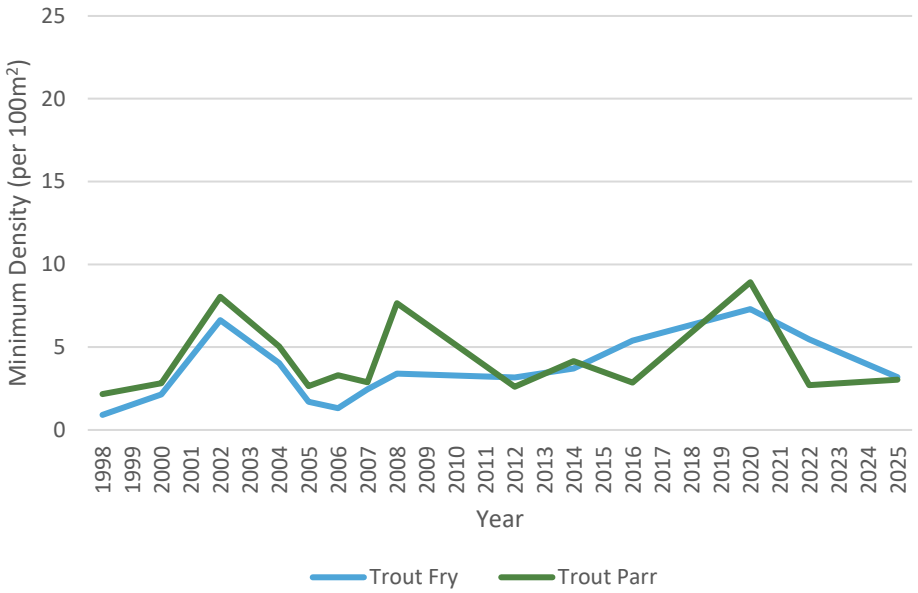

Figure 3.5.1: Temporal changes in average trout densities within the Achriesgill catchment.

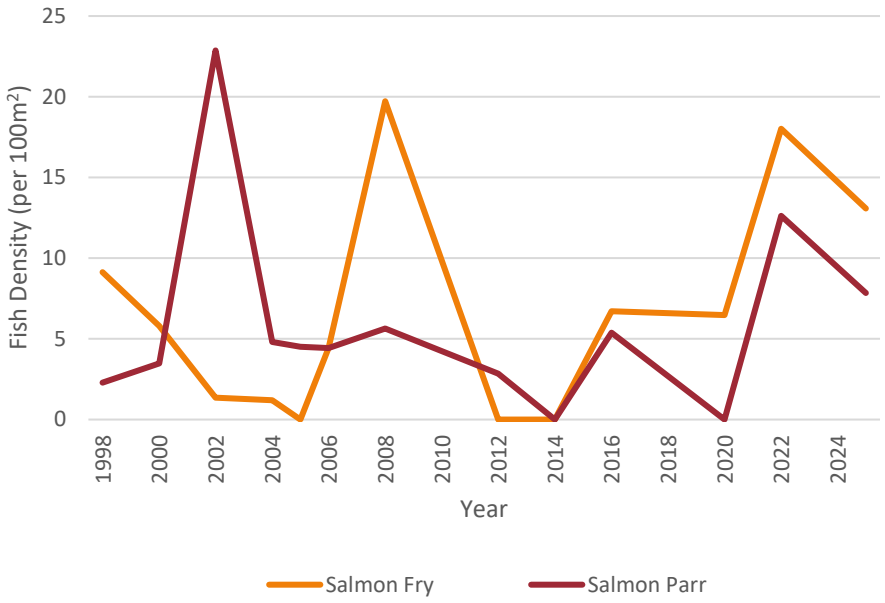

Figure 3.5.2: Temporal changes in salmon densities within the site GL1, in the Achriesgill catchment.

Salmon within the Achriesgill catchment are now restricted to a very small stretch of the main river, with the waterfall now an impassable barrier. This is supported by the absence of salmon from sites upstream of the waterfall since 2014, but the consistent population found in GL1.

The prominence of trout parr in the survey reflects the habitat in the system, with much of it dominated by boulder step falls in steep tributaries, and deep channels elsewhere. GL3 is more suitable fry habitat, but consists of smaller cobble and pebbles with little cover. The removal of the retaining dam for Generals Loch in late 2004 would not appear to have had a long-term impact on the salmonid populations within the catchment. This is primarily a trout system, again reflecting access and habitat availability. The trout populations appear to be stable, with variations potentially reflecting changes in the river conditions and efficiency of the survey technique between years.

3.6 Rhiconich

Table 3.6.1 shows the grid reference, and location of each site fished. Minimum density estimates of salmon and trout fry (0+ years) and parr (>1 year) per $100m^2$ in each site are presented in table 3.6.2 and classified in accordance with the SFCC classification scheme (table 1).

Table 3.6.1: Electrofishing site details.

Site Code	Easting	Northing	Altitude	Situation
R1	225935	951548	25	On bend between cairn and outcrop. Just up from large boulder on right.
R2	226320	950754	45	Before loch, after widening of the river, by large boulder.
R3	226990	949452	45	Between bends on the river between the lochs.
R5	227112	949866	55	Glide below deep pool between 2 bends.

Table 3.6.2: A summary of the minimum and estimated densities of salmon and trout fry (0+ years) and parr (greater than 1 year) at each site per 100m^2.

		Minimum Density				Estimated Density			
Site Code	Habitat Type	Salmon Fry	Salmon Parr	Trout Fry	Trout Parr	Salmon Fry	Salmon Parr	Trout Fry	Trout Parr
R1	Fry	23.28	0.00	0.00	0.00	29.54	0.00	0.00	0.00
R2	Fry	15.59	0.00	1.95	3.90	19.79	0.00	1.99	4.21
R3	Mixed	64.20	40.85	0.00	0.00	81.46	43.75	0.00	0.00
R5	Fry	36.31	4.74	0.00	0.00	46.07	5.07	0.00	0.00

Salmon densities in the Rhiconich system are excellent and good, for salmon fry and parr respectively. Conversely trout densities are poor across the catchment, only observed in site R2.

The minimum, maximum, average minimum observed densities, and the average estimated density for the catchment can be seen in table 3.6.3. This summarises the system and allows direct comparison between all surveyed catchments in the West Sutherland area.

Table 3.6.3: A summary of the minimum estimate densities determined for all sites surveyed (per 100m^2), and the average estimated density.

Species/Lifestage	Minimum	Maximum	Average Minimum Observed Density	Average Estimated Density
Salmon Fry	15.59	64.20	34.84	44.22
Salmon Parr	4.74	40.85	11.40	12.21
Trout Fry	0.00	1.95	0.49	0.50
Trout Parr	0.00	3.90	0.97	1.05

Figures 3.6.1 and 3.6.2 show the temporal fluctuations in the average juvenile salmon and trout densities in the catchment. It can be seen that there has been a consistent increase in salmon fry and parr densities, peaking in 2018 and dropping off marginally in 2021 and 2025.

Trout densities have been consistently low since surveys began, and there was no change to this trend in 2025.

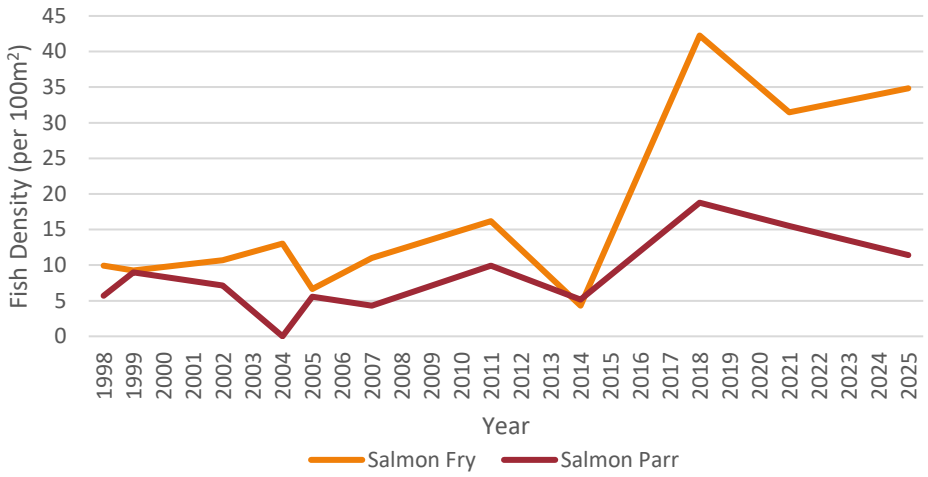

Figure 3.6.1: Temporal changes in average salmon densities within the Rhiconich catchment.

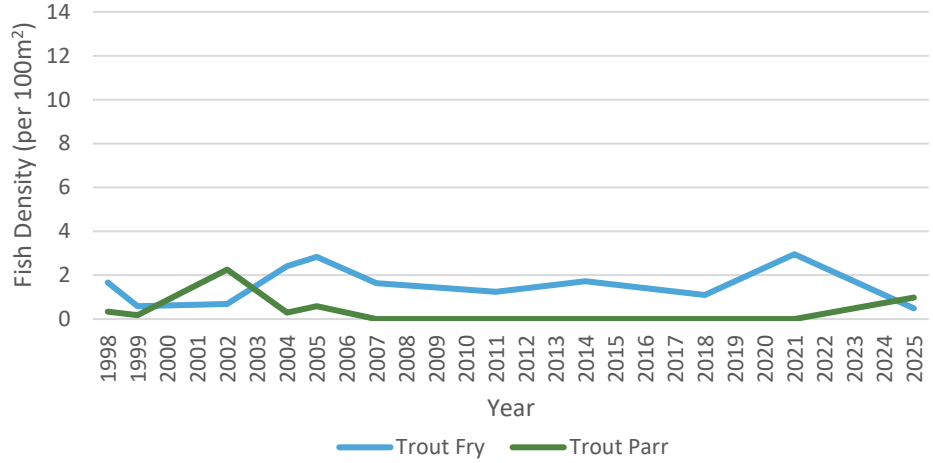

Figure 3.6.2: Temporal changes in average trout densities within the Rhiconich catchment.

Salmon densities in the Rhiconich catchment were stable until 2018, where densities peaked. Since then densities have remained high, which is good to see. Juvenile trout densities in this catchment are observed to be low, which is likely due to the habitat rather than an issue with the population. The sites in the Rhiconich are primarily salmon habitat, and salmon will often outcompete trout and push them out of more favourable areas.

3.7 Loch na Thull

Table 3.7.1 shows the grid reference, and location of each site fished. Minimum density estimates of salmon and trout fry (0+ years) and parr (>1 year) per 100m^2 in each site are presented in table 3.7.2 and classified in accordance with the SFCC classification scheme (table 1).

Table 3.7.1: Electrofishing site details.

Site Code	Easting	Northing	Altitude	Situation
NT1	224664	951360	35	Above road bridge
NT2	224751	951155	45	Below Loch Na-Cailich, by large boulder.
NT3	224553	951542	30	By telegraph poles, between two bends and next to small stream on right
NT7	224620	951394	35	Below road bridge

Table 3.7.2: A summary of the minimum and estimated densities of salmon and trout fry (0+ years) and parr (greater than 1 year) at each site per 100m^2.

		Minimum Density				Estimated Density			
Site Code	Habitat Type	Salmon Fry	Salmon Parr	Trout Fry	Trout Parr	Salmon Fry	Salmon Parr	Trout Fry	Trout Parr
NT1	Fry	36.74	7.35	11.76	0.00	46.63	7.87	12.03	0.00
NT2	Parr	0.00	1.84	9.20	3.68	0.00	1.97	9.42	3.98
NT3	Mixed	20.33	2.26	2.26	4.52	25.79	2.42	2.31	4.88
NT7	Parr	3.87	7.75	0.00	0.00	4.92	8.30	0.00	0.00

Salmon densities in the Loch na Thull system are good and moderate, for salmon fry and parr respectively. Trout densities were observed to be lower, with fry classified as moderate, and poor for parr.

The minimum, maximum, average minimum observed densities, and the average estimated density for the catchment can be seen in table 3.7.3. This summarises the system and allows direct comparison between all surveyed catchments in the West Sutherland area.

Table 3.7.3: A summary of the minimum estimate densities determined for all sites surveyed (per 100m^2), and the average estimated density.

Species/Lifestage	Minimum	Maximum	Average Minimum Observed Density	Average Estimated Density
Salmon Fry	0.00	36.74	15.24	19.33
Salmon Parr	1.84	7.75	4.80	5.14
Trout Fry	0.00	11.76	5.81	5.94
Trout Parr	0.00	4.52	2.05	2.21

Figures 3.7.1 and 3.7.2 show the temporal fluctuations in the average juvenile salmon and trout densities in the catchment. It can be seen that after the peak in salmon fry densities in 2016 they

have been slowly decreasing, coming back in line with numbers seen previously. Parr densities have been variable throughout the years, but have dropped to the lowest numbers seen since 1998.

Trout parr densities have been consistently low since surveys began, and there was no change to this trend in 2025. Fry numbers were seen to be very high in 2020, but have since returned to typical densities for the catchment.

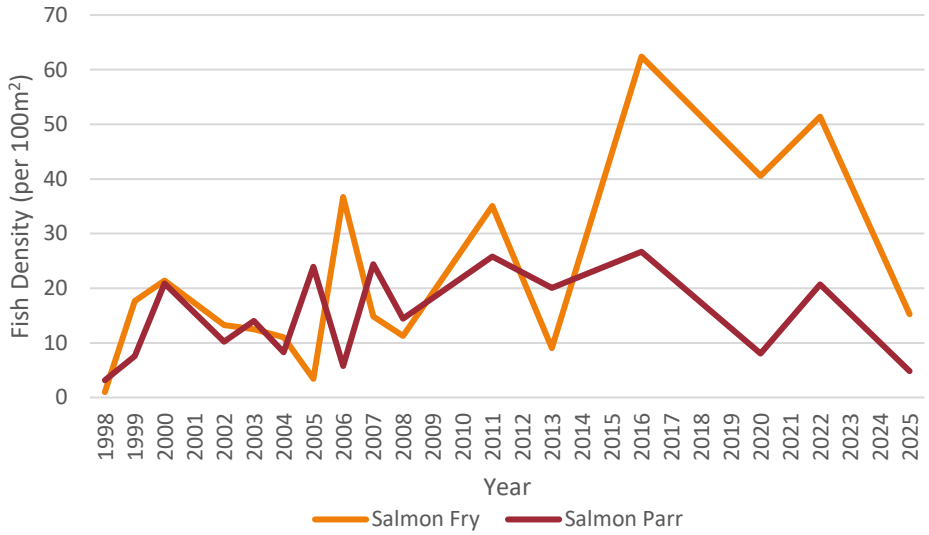

Figure 3.7.1: Temporal changes in average salmon densities within the Loch na Thull catchment.

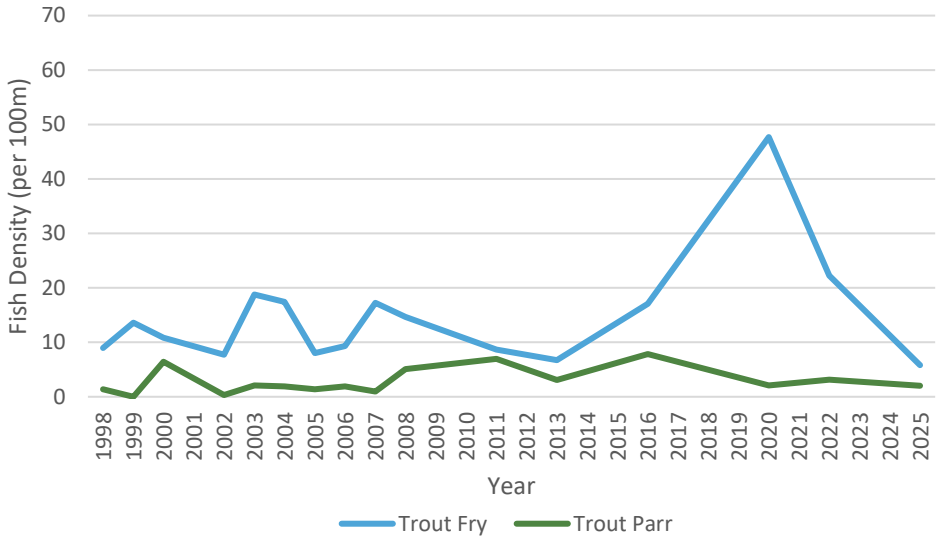

Figure 3.7.2: Temporal changes in average trout densities within the Loch na Thull catchment.

Both salmon fry and parr have declined from levels seen in 2016 and 2020, but show a stable trend – neither increasing or decreasing. Salmonid fry densities are naturally higher than parr in all freshwater systems because of density dependent mortality combined with migration as the parr grow and migrate through the catchment. Whilst this is largely reflected in the surveys within the

Loch na Thull catchment, there are certain years where salmonid fry numbers drop below that of parr.

The stable densities over recent years suggests that there is no major cause for concern regarding instream freshwater habitat, although strategical planting of mixed broadleaf trees in riparian zones would be extremely beneficial as it would provide better fish cover, additional food sources, and bankside stability.

3.8 Loch nam Brac

Table 3.8.1 shows the grid reference, and location of each site fished. Minimum density estimates of trout fry (0+ years) and parr (>1 year) per 100m^2 in each site are presented in table 3.8.2 and classified in accordance with the SFCC classification scheme (table 1).

Table 3.8.1: Electrofishing site details.

Site Code	Easting	Northing	Altitude	Situation
NB1	218207	947138	70	Lochside, in inflow burn.
NBA1	218028	948795	70	Between two riffles, just below loch
NBA2	218250	948913	70	Downstream of small waterfall
NBA3	218262	949129	50	Downstream of road culvert

Table 3.8.2: A summary of the minimum and estimated densities of trout fry (0+ years) and parr (greater than 1 year) at each site per 100 m^2.

		Minimum Density		Estimated Density	
Site Code	Habitat Type	Trout Fry	Trout Parr	Trout Fry	Trout Parr
NB1	Mixed Juvenile	23.12	0.00	23.66	0.00
NBA1	Mixed Juvenile	43.18	45.45	44.19	49.10
NBA2	Fry	25.90	4.71	26.51	5.09
NBA3	Mixed Juvenile	37.53	2.27	38.41	2.46

Trout are present in excellent densities throughout the Loch nam Brac catchment, with only NB1 showing an absence of parr.

The minimum, maximum, average minimum observed density, and the average estimated density for the catchment can be seen in table 3.8.3. This summarises the system and allows direct comparison between all surveyed catchments in the West Sutherland area.

Table 3.8.3: A summary of the minimum observed densities determined for all sites surveyed (per 100m^2), and the average estimated density.

	Trout Density (per 100m^2)			
Lifestage	Minimum	Maximum	Mean Minimum Observed Densitiy	Mean Estimated Density
Fry	23.12	43.18	32.43	33.19
Parr	0	45.45	13.11	14.16

Figure 3.8.1 shows the temporal fluctuations in the average juvenile trout densities in the catchment. The fluctuations in density over time show that trout fry densities have varied greatly over time, peaking at 70 fry per 100m^2 and showing a low of 25 fry per 100m^2. Despite this parr densities have remained consistent.

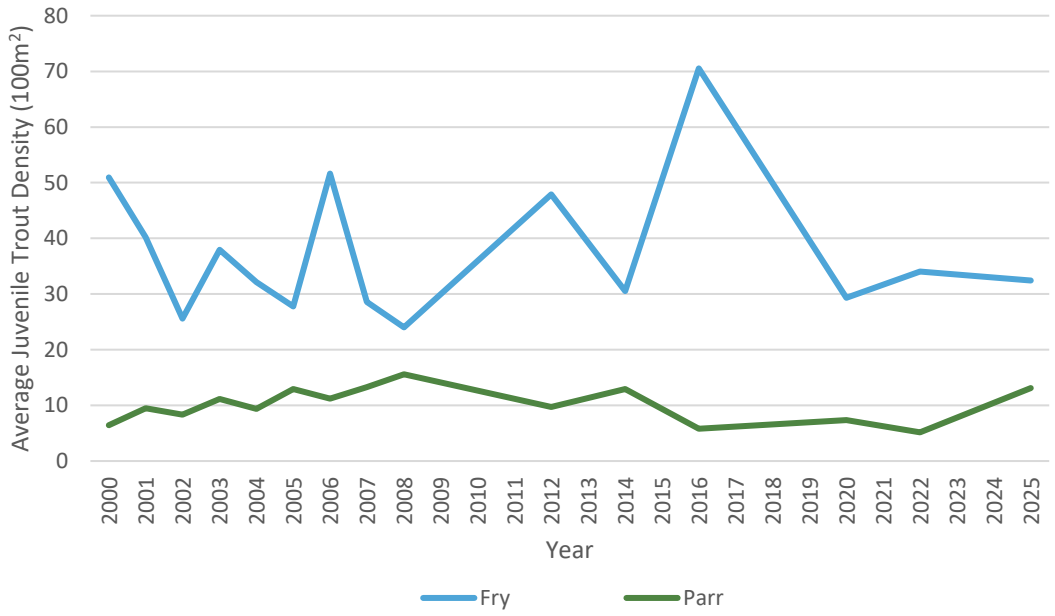

Figure 3.8.1: Temporal changes in average trout densities within the Loch Innis catchment.

Salmonid fry densities are naturally higher than parr in all freshwater catchments resulting from density dependent mortality combined with migration as the parr grow and move into new feeding territories. The result of this survey reflects these migratory tendencies, with the lack of older trout found within the sites indicating the movement of older fish into deeper areas, such as the loch.

Despite the fluctuations observed in the fry densities, the trout population within the catchment would appear to be stable and healthy. The lack of competing salmon combined with the residentiary trout population may provide more stable observed juvenile densities.

3.9 Loch a'Bhadaidh Daraich

Table 3.9.1 shows the grid reference, and location of each site fished. Minimum density estimates of trout fry (0+ years) and parr (>1 year) per 100m^2 in each site are presented in table 3.9.2 and classified in accordance with the SFCC classification scheme (table 1).

Table 3.9.1: Electrofishing site details.

Site Code	Easting	Northing	Altitude	Situation
BD3	216498	944242	25	By the big boulder, 100m above falls in Allt Loch Leathad nan Cruineachd.
BD5	216265	944055	45	Just below Loch Leathad nan Cruineachd.

Table 3.9.2: A summary of the minimum and estimated densities of trout fry (0+ years) and parr (greater than 1 year) at each site per 100 m^2.

		Minimum Density		Estimated Density	
Site Code	Habitat Type	Trout Fry	Trout Parr	Trout Fry	Trout Parr
BD3	Mixed	3.07	12.30	3.15	13.28
BD5	Fry	5.52	1.84	5.65	1.99

BD3 and BD5 are both located above an impassable culvert just metres above Loch a'Bhadaidh Darach, so all juvenile trout are from individuals resident to the burn or lochs upstream. Trout densities are variable, reflecting the habitat in each.

The minimum, maximum, average minimum observed density, and the average estimated density for the catchment can be seen in table 3.9.3. This summarises the system and allows direct comparison between all surveyed catchments in the West Sutherland area.

Table 3.9.3: A summary of the minimum observed densities determined for all sites surveyed (per 100m^2), and the average estimated density.

	Minimum	Maximum	Average Minimum Observed Density	Average Estimated Density
Trout Fry	6.06	23.98	4.30	4.40
Trout Parr	1.50	17.59	7.07	7.64

Figure 3.9.1 demonstrates the temporal fluctuations in trout densities within the catchment. In previous years fry density often exceeded 30 fish per 100m^2, however fry densities have been observed below 15 fish per 100m^2 since 2020, dropping to 4.30 per 100m^2 in 2025. Parr densities have not shown the same decline.

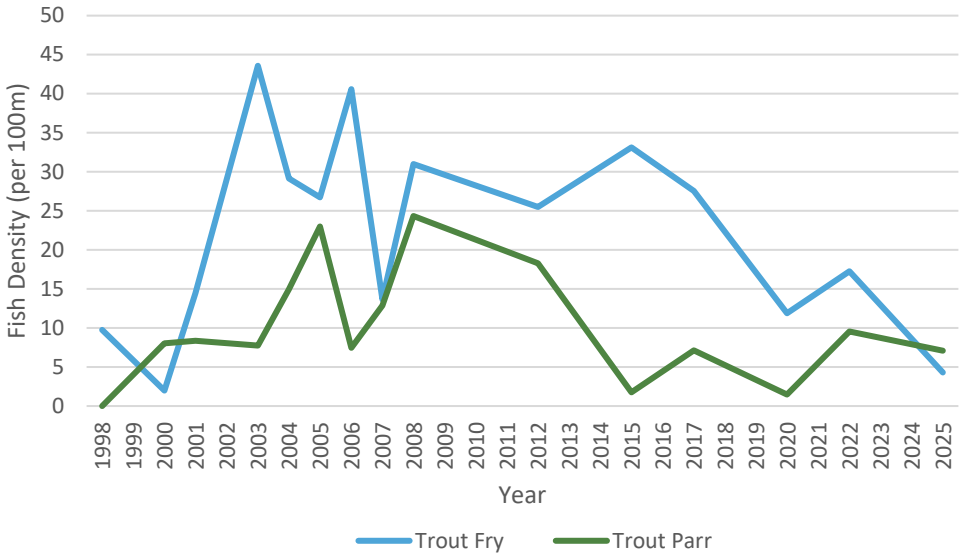

Figure 3.9.1: Temporal changes in average trout densities within the Loch a'Bhadaidh Daraich catchment.

Within the natural fluctuations observed within fish populations, parr have remained relatively stable since 1998. Given the high level of density dependent mortality operating on fry populations, they are prone to large fluctuations which has been observed in this catchment. The general decline in fry densities since 2015 is likely due to changes in habitat, rather than an issue with the population.

Improved fish passage through the catchment -particularly through the lochan at the mouth of the system and the culvert under the A894- would enhance the population dynamics of the system, and potentially allow for the re-establishment of migratory salmonid populations.

3.10 Duart

Table 3.10.1 shows the grid reference, and location of each site fished. Minimum density estimates of salmon and trout fry (0+ years) and parr (>1 year) per 100m^2 in each site are presented in table 3.10.2 and classified in accordance with the SFCC classification scheme (table 1).

Table 3.10.1: Electrofishing site details.

Site Code	Easting	Northing	Altitude	Situation
D2	220027	937372	40	Above hatchery, just before bend into waterfall pool. From the first trees to the riffle.
D3	218443	937143	50	In riffle, just before bend down to falls. At stepping stones.
D5A	221332	936276	60	Eastern channel of burn, 20m above loch.
D6	221398	936243	60	Above stock fence by loch.
D8	221020	936148	60	Riffle below Loch Allt nan Ramh. Just below bridge.

Table 3.10.2: A summary of the minimum and estimated densities of salmon and trout fry (0+ years) and parr (greater than 1 year) at each site per 100m^2.

		Minimum Density				Estimated Density			
Site	Habitat Type	Salmon Fry	Salmon Parr	Trout Fry	Trout Parr	Salmon Fry	Salmon Parr	Trout Fry	Trout Parr
D2	Parr	0.00	0.00	0.00	33.82	0.00	0.00	0.00	36.53
D3	Fry	50.66	1.63	21.25	1.63	64.29	1.75	21.74	1.77
D5A	Mixed	5.48	13.71	0.00	0.00	6.96	14.68	0.00	0.00
D6	Fry	5.14	7.71	12.85	12.85	6.52	8.26	13.15	13.88
D8	Fry	13.38	10.04	6.69	6.69	16.98	10.75	6.85	7.23

Salmon densities in the Duart system are variable, for both salmon fry and parr. Trout densities were observed to be lower, with fry classified as moderate, and poor for parr.

The minimum, maximum, average minimum observed densities, and the average estimated density for the catchment can be seen in table 3.10.3. This summarises the system and allows direct comparison between all surveyed catchments in the West Sutherland area.

Table 3.10.3: A summary of the minimum estimate densities determined for all sites surveyed (per 100m^2), and the average estimated density.

Species/Lifestage	Minimum	Maximum	Average Minimum Observed Density	Average Estimated Density
Salmon Fry	0.00	36.74	15.24	19.33
Salmon Parr	1.84	7.75	4.80	5.14
Trout Fry	0.00	11.76	5.81	5.94
Trout Parr	0.00	4.52	2.05	2.21

Figures 3.10.1 and 3.10.2 show the temporal fluctuations in the average juvenile salmon and trout densities in the catchment. Salmon parr densities have improved since 1998, with the highest density recorded in 2022. Salmon fry densities peaked in 2000 and 2015, and dropped to 0 in 2022. Thankfully this was not repeated in 2025, with an average fry density of 14.93 per 100m^2 found in the catchment.

Trout parr densities have steadily risen since 2013, with a slight dip in 2025. Fry densities spiked in 2013, and have since dropped back to normal levels.

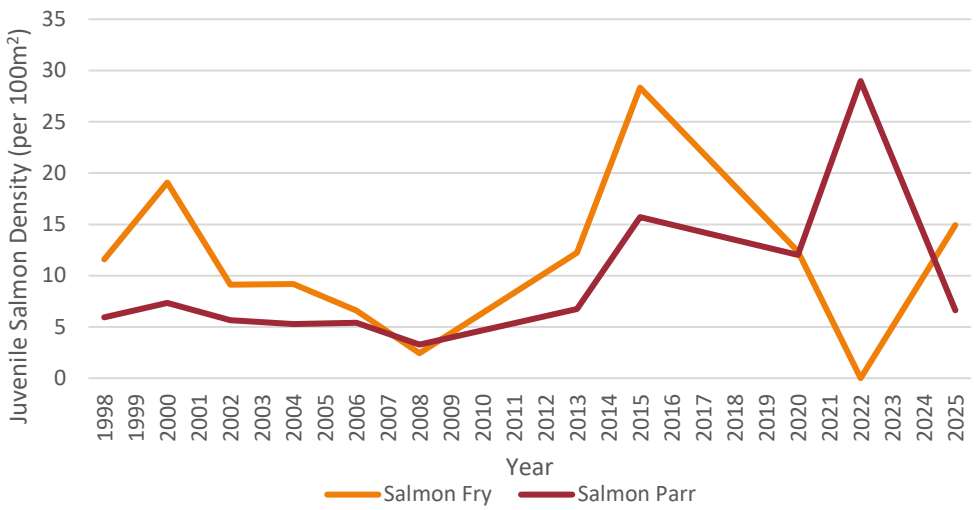

Figure 3.10.1: Temporal changes in average salmon densities within the Duart catchment.

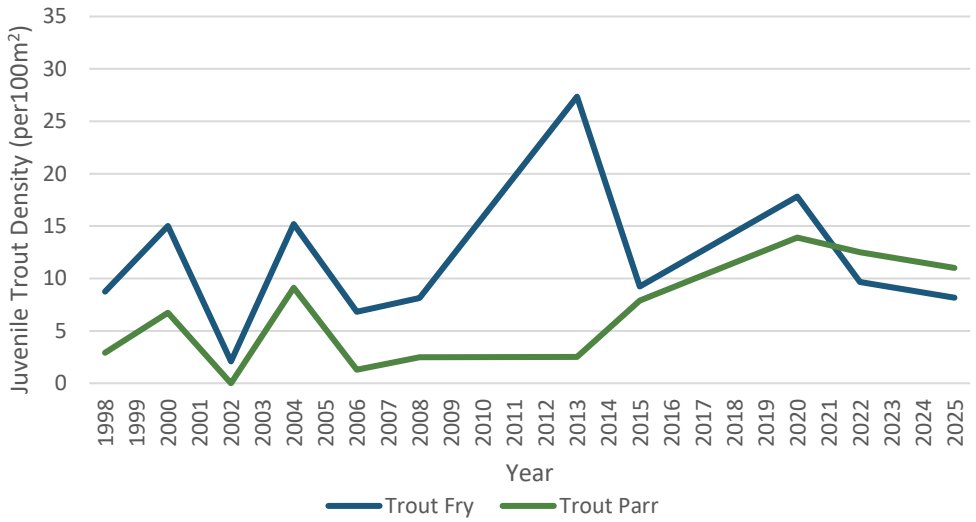

Figure 3.10.2: Temporal changes in average trout densities within the Duart catchment.

The peaks and troughs within the salmonid populations are likely to be a result of natural ecosystem dynamics, with the exception of the lack of salmon fry in 2022, which was likely caused by low flows preventing adult migration. There appears to be no major cause for concern over freshwater habitat regarding instream characteristics, though strategic planting of mixed broadleaf trees within riparian zones would dramatically improve fish cover, food availability, and structural bankside reinforcement.

3.11 Gleann Leireag

Table 3.11.1 shows the grid reference, and location of each site fished. Minimum density estimates of trout fry (0+ years) and parr (>1 year) per 100m^2 in each site are presented in table 3.11.2 and classified in accordance with the SFCC classification scheme (table 1).

Table 3.11.1: Electrofishing site details.

Site Code	Easting	Northing	Altitude	Situation
GLL1	215805	930835	75	Abhainn Gleann Leireag. By large rocks on right bank, tree on left.
GLL2	217029	930592	125	Tributary of Loch Uidh na h-Iarna. Just below path
GLL3	217879	929706	125	Uidh an Leothaidh, 150m upstream of Loch an Leothaidh

Table 3.11.2: A summary of the minimum and estimated densities of trout fry (0+ years) and parr (greater than 1 year) at each site per 100 m^2.

		Minimum Density		Estimated Density	
Site Code	Habitat Type	Trout Fry	Trout Parr	Trout Fry	Trout Parr
GLL1	Parr	0.00	36.03	0.00	38.92
GLL2	Fry	113.80	14.22	116.47	15.37
GLL3	Mixed	32.22	10.74	32.98	11.60

Trout are present in excellent densities throughout the Gleann Leireag catchment, with only GLL1 showing an absence of fry.

The minimum, maximum, average minimum observed density, and the average estimated density for the catchment can be seen in table 3.11.3. This summarises the system and allows direct comparison between all surveyed catchments in the West Sutherland area.

Table 3.11.3: A summary of the minimum observed densities determined for all sites surveyed (per 100m^2), and the average estimated density.

Species/Lifestage	Minimum	Maximum	Average Minimum Observed Density	Average Estimated Density
Trout Fry	0.00	113.80	48.67	49.81
Trout Parr	10.74	36.03	20.33	21.96

Figure 3.11.1 shows the temporal fluctuations in the average juvenile trout densities in the catchment. In 2025 the highest ever densities of trout fry and parr were recorded in the catchment, increasing significantly from historic levels.

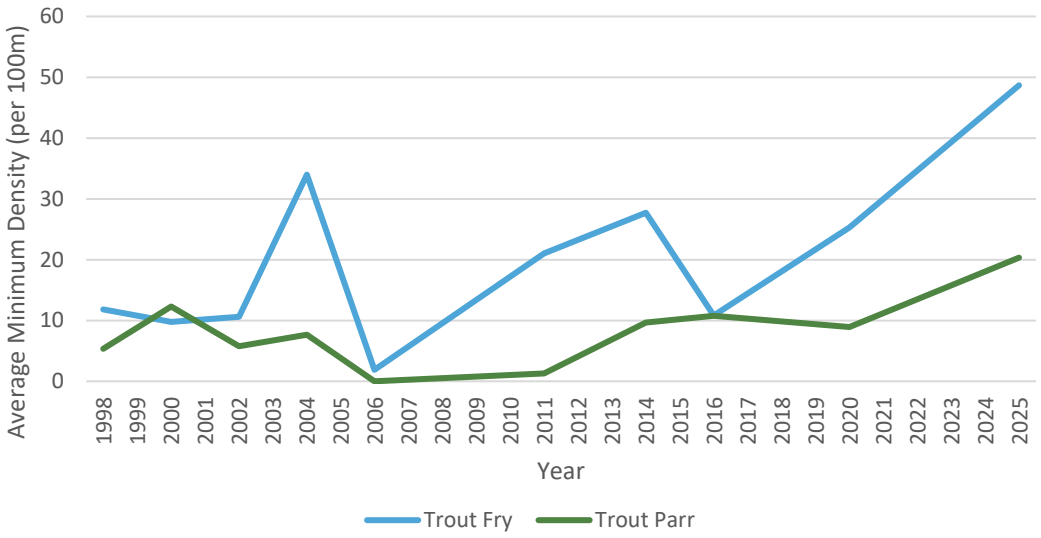

Figure 3.11.1: Temporal changes in average trout densities within the Gleann Leireag catchment.

Parr populations have remained relatively constant over the period of these surveys, commonly observed at around 10 parr per 100m^2 until 2025, with a sudden increase in density. Fry populations are more variable, but this can be attributed to natural ecosystem dynamics with density dependent mortality acting on this age class, coupled with changes in the timing of the survey and the environmental conditions at that time. These surveys indicate that the trout population is healthy, although there are some opportunities for habitat improvements within the catchment. In particular, habitat improvements within the tributaries and riparian planting around the catchment.

3.12 Polly

Table 3.12.1 shows the grid reference, and location of each site fished. Minimum density estimates of salmon and trout fry (0+ years) and parr (>1 year) per 100m^2 in each site are presented in table 3.12.2 and classified in accordance with the SFCC classification scheme (table 1).

Table 3.12.1: Electrofishing site details.

Site Code	Easting	Northing	Altitude	Situation
Polly 3	207827	912744	40	In mainstem Polly. In the second largest braid in section, just downstream of second bend.
Polly 4	207947	912657	40	Stack Burn/Allt Gleann na Gaoithe. Just downstream of fence, by a tree

Table 3.12.2: A summary of the minimum and estimated densities of salmon and trout fry (0+ years) and parr (greater than 1 year) at each site per 100m^2.

		Minimum Density				Estimated Density			
Site Code	Habitat Type	Salmon Fry	Salmon Parr	Trout Fry	Trout Parr	Salmon Fry	Salmon Parr	Trout Fry	Trout Parr
Polly 3	Fry	28.88	9.63	3.21	0.00	36.65	10.31	3.28	0.00
Polly 4	Parr	4.06	16.25	4.06	0.00	5.15	17.40	4.16	0.00

Salmon densities in the Polly system are variable, for both salmon fry and parr. Trout densities were observed to be lower, with trout parr absent from both sites.

The minimum, maximum, average minimum observed densities, and the average estimated density for the catchment can be seen in table 3.12.3. This summarises the system and allows direct comparison between all surveyed catchments in the West Sutherland area.

Table 3.12.3: A summary of the minimum estimate densities determined for all sites surveyed (per 100m^2), and the average estimated density.

Species/Lifestage	Minimum	Maximum	Average Minimum Observed Density	Average Estimated Density
Salmon Fry	1.06	28.88	14.97	20.90
Salmon Parr	9.63	16.25	12.94	13.86
Trout Fry	3.21	4.06	3.64	3.72
Trout Parr	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

Figures 3.12.1 and 3.12.2 show the temporal fluctuations in the average juvenile salmon and trout densities in the catchment. As these sites have not been fished with any regularity it is difficult to identify any trends in the salmon or trout populations, but it is clear that trout parr are only intermittently present within these sites, which is not unexpected as they are primarily salmon habitat.

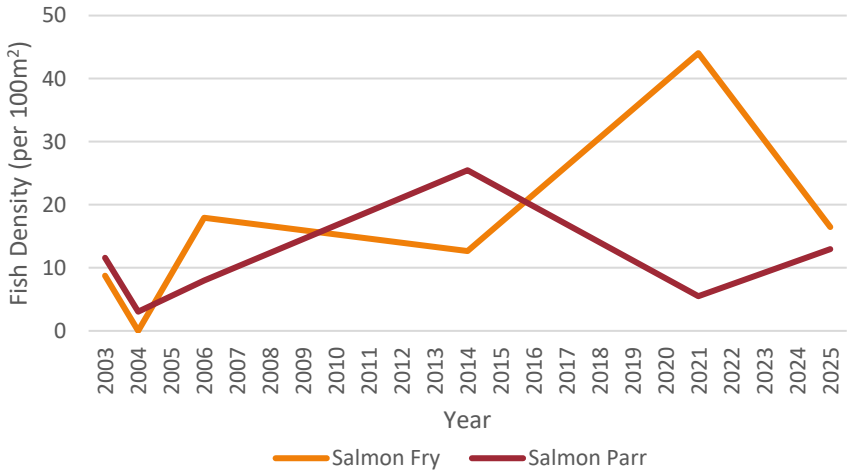

Figure 3.12.1: Temporal changes in average salmon densities within the Polly catchment.

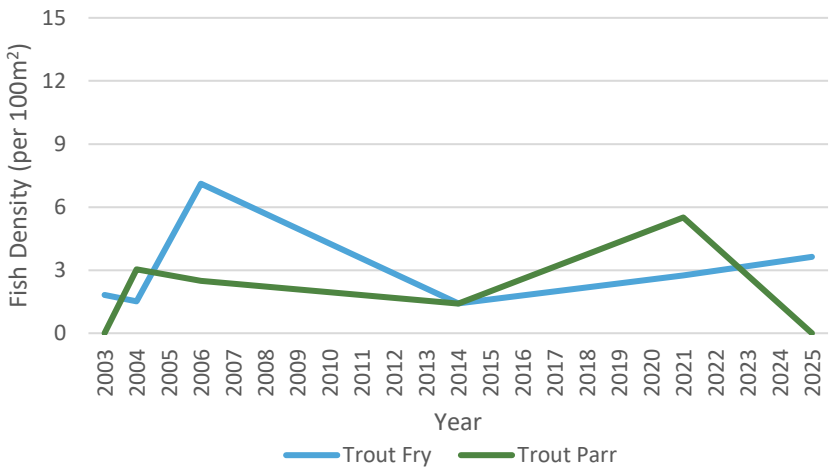

Figure 3.12.2: Temporal changes in average trout densities within the Polly catchment.

Due to the high water conditions on the Polly at the time of surveying, only two sites were possible to fish, so the results are not representative of the whole catchment. It can be seen though that the salmon populations in these two sites are good, with both fry and parr densities classified as such by the SFCC classification system (table 1). Trout densities are lower, though this is not unexpected and is due to the site habitat rather than an issue with the population.

3.13 Garvie

Table 3.13.1 shows the grid reference, and location of each site fished. Minimum density estimates of salmon and trout fry (0+ years) and parr (>1 year) per 100m^2 in each site are presented in table 3.13.2 and classified in accordance with the SFCC classification scheme (table 1).

Table 3.13.1: Electrofishing site details.

Site Code	Easting	Northing	Altitude	Situation
G2C	213281	906589	70	Allt Claonaidh, by riffle just below deer fence
G4C	204957	910717	40	Allt Coire Òsgaig. 300m upstream of loch, in small silver birch copse by crooked trees.
OB1	205231	911837	35	Abhainn Òsgaig. In the braids, small channel in right bank.

Table 3.13.2: A summary of the minimum and estimated densities of salmon and trout fry (0+ years) and parr (greater than 1 year) at each site per 100m^2.

		Minimum Density				Estimated Density			
Site Code	Habitat Type	Salmon Fry	Salmon Parr	Trout Fry	Trout Parr	Salmon Fry	Salmon Parr	Trout Fry	Trout Parr
G2C	Fry	21.11	0.00	27.78	6.67	26.79	0.00	28.43	7.20
G4C	Mixed	0.00	0.00	31.65	39.56	0.00	0.00	32.39	42.73
OB1	Mixed	4.74	0.00	0.00	0.00	6.02	0.00	0.00	0.00

Salmon fry densities in the Garvie system are variable, with parr absent from all sites on this occasion. Trout densities were observed to be much higher, though were not seen in OB1.

The minimum, maximum, average minimum observed densities, and the average estimated density for the catchment can be seen in table 3.13.3. This summarises the system and allows direct comparison between all surveyed catchments in the West Sutherland area.

Table 3.13.3: A summary of the minimum estimate densities determined for all sites surveyed (per 100m^2), and the average estimated density.

Species/Lifestage	Minimum	Maximum	Average Minimum Observed Density	Average Estimated Density
Salmon Fry	0.00	21.11	8.62	10.94
Salmon Parr	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Trout Fry	0.00	31.65	19.81	20.27
Trout Parr	0.00	39.56	15.41	16.64

Figures 3.13.1 and 3.13.2 show the temporal fluctuations in the average juvenile salmon and trout densities in the catchment. Only three sites in the Garvie catchment were fished on this occasion, and as such the observed salmon densities over time are low, but consistent. Both trout fry and parr show significant fluctuations in density over time, though show a stable trend overall. Fry densities peaked in 2003, though this is an anomaly in this site, with all other surveys showing much lower numbers.

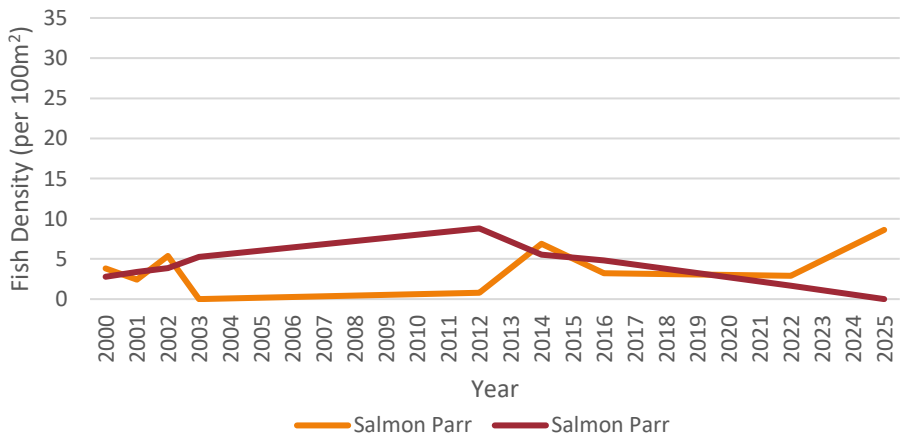

Figure 3.13.1: Temporal changes in average salmon densities within the Garvie catchment.

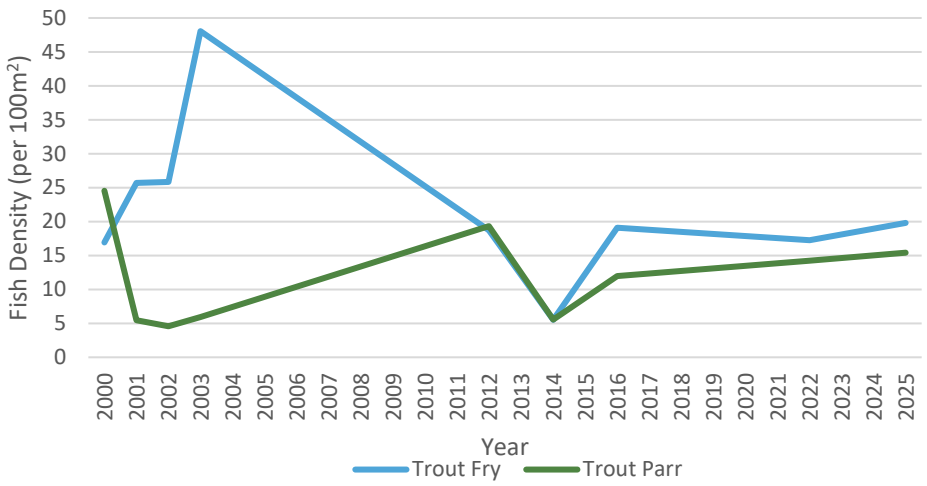

Figure 3.13.2: Temporal changes in average trout densities within the Garvie catchment.

Due to the high water conditions on the Garvie at the time of surveying, only three sites were possible to fish, so the results are not representative of the whole catchment. The results from the sites that were fished show that densities of both salmon and trout are similar to densities seen in the past, and although salmon parr were not caught on this occasion it is not a cause for concern, as the habitat in the sites fished is more suited to trout.

4. Area Summary

The average densities of fish within each catchment are summarised (table 4.1). This allows comparison between the catchments, although it should be noted that temporal changes in density throughout the summer months and habitat differences between catchments are not considered in this table. The timing of sampling is important, with fish moving within the tributaries because of water height and temperature, food availability and size. Thus, sampling after a spate may give a low density as a result of washout, whilst drought may decrease density as fish move into deeper water to avoid predation or desiccation, or may increase density as a result of concentration in severe cases. Similarly, densities will be greater shortly after hatching, reducing with time as the fish grow and require a larger territory for survival. In 2025 6 of the 17 catchments fished were non-migratory, which was a much higher proportion than usual. As such, the average minimum salmonid density of the migratory systems was also included to give a better idea of the state of the juvenile salmon populations in the West Sutherland area.

Table 4.1: Average minimum densities of juvenile salmonids per catchment.

	Average Minimum Estimated Density (per 100m^2)			
	Salmon		Trout	
Catchment	**Fry**	**Parr**	**Fry**	**Parr**
Hope	8.43	12.05	7.66	7.88
Polla	13.94	16.54	12.11	6.10
Oldshoremore	2.44	2.42	9.30	4.95
Loch Innis na Ba Buidhe	0.00	0.00	15.94	7.64
Achriesgill	3.27	1.96	3.20	3.04
Rhichonich	34.84	11.40	0.49	0.97
Loch na Thull	15.24	4.80	5.81	2.05
Laxford	17.34	6.67	1.52	2.42
Loch nam Brac	0.00	0.00	32.43	13.11
Loch a'Bhadaidh Daraich	0.00	0.00	4.30	7.07
Duart	14.93	8.62	8.16	11.00
Maldie	0.00	0.00	11.24	14.59
Gleann Leireag	0.00	0.00	48.67	20.33
Oldany	0.00	0.29	4.42	11.53
Clashnessie	0.00	0.00	7.34	23.05
Polly	14.97	12.94	3.64	0.00
Garvie	8.62	0.00	19.81	15.41
WSFT Area	**7.88**	**4.57**	**11.53**	**8.89**
WSFT Migratory Catchments Only	**12.40**	**7.12**	**6.62**	**5.86**

Figures 4.1 and 4.2 show there is a good distribution of salmonids throughout the West Sutherland area, with trout present in every catchment surveyed. Salmon were not present in Loch Innis, Loch nam Brac, Loch a'Bhadaidh Daraich, Maldie, Gleann Leireag, or Clashnessie, as these are all known trout systems. The Maldie occasionally has salmon parr present in the lowest site, but none were seen this year.

Salmon and trout fry were found in greater densities than parr in most catchments, as expected. This wasn't the case for salmon in the Hope or Polla, or for trout in multiple catchments, but this is likely due to the habitats surveyed, as parr will disperse far from the redds they hatched from, and prefer faster flowing water with larger substrate than fry.

Trout densities are commonly seen to be much lower in systems where salmon are present. This is due to salmon outcompeting trout, forcing them into other areas of the burns.

Figure 4.1: Average salmon fry and parr densities within West Sutherland catchments and the West Sutherland area in 2025.

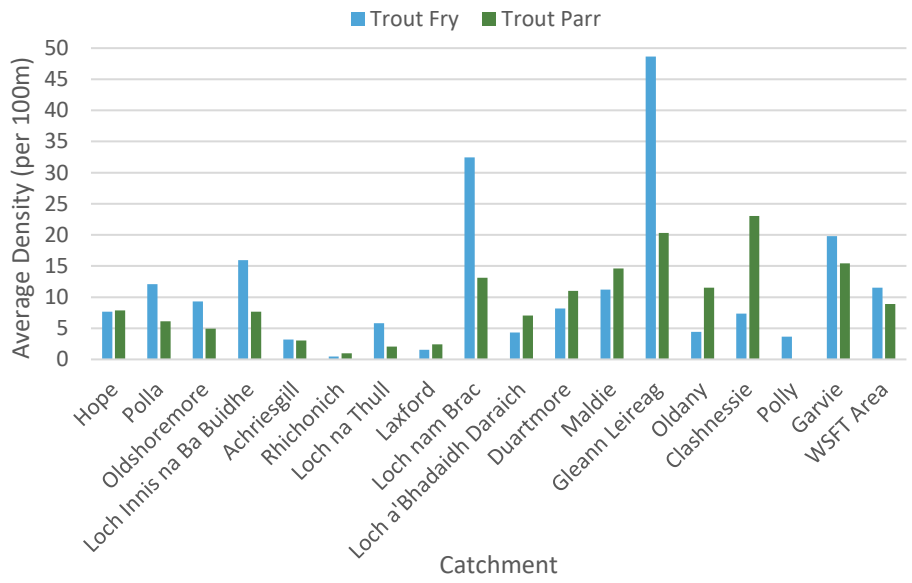

Figure 4.2: Average trout fry and parr densities within West Sutherland catchments and the West Sutherland area in 2025.

Figure 4.3 summarises the classifications of all sites against the SFCC classification scheme for the Northwest area (table 1). 24.66% of all sites support good and excellent densities of salmon fry, with parr classified as good and excellent in 20.55% of sites surveyed. Trout fry were found in good and

excellent densities in 39.73% of sites, and 54.79% of sites were seen to have good and excellent densities of trout parr. As so many non-migratory catchments were surveyed in 2025, the juvenile salmon classifications in the migratory catchment have also been graphed, showing 37.50% of sites had good and excellent densities of fry, and parr were seen in good and excellent densities in 31.25%.

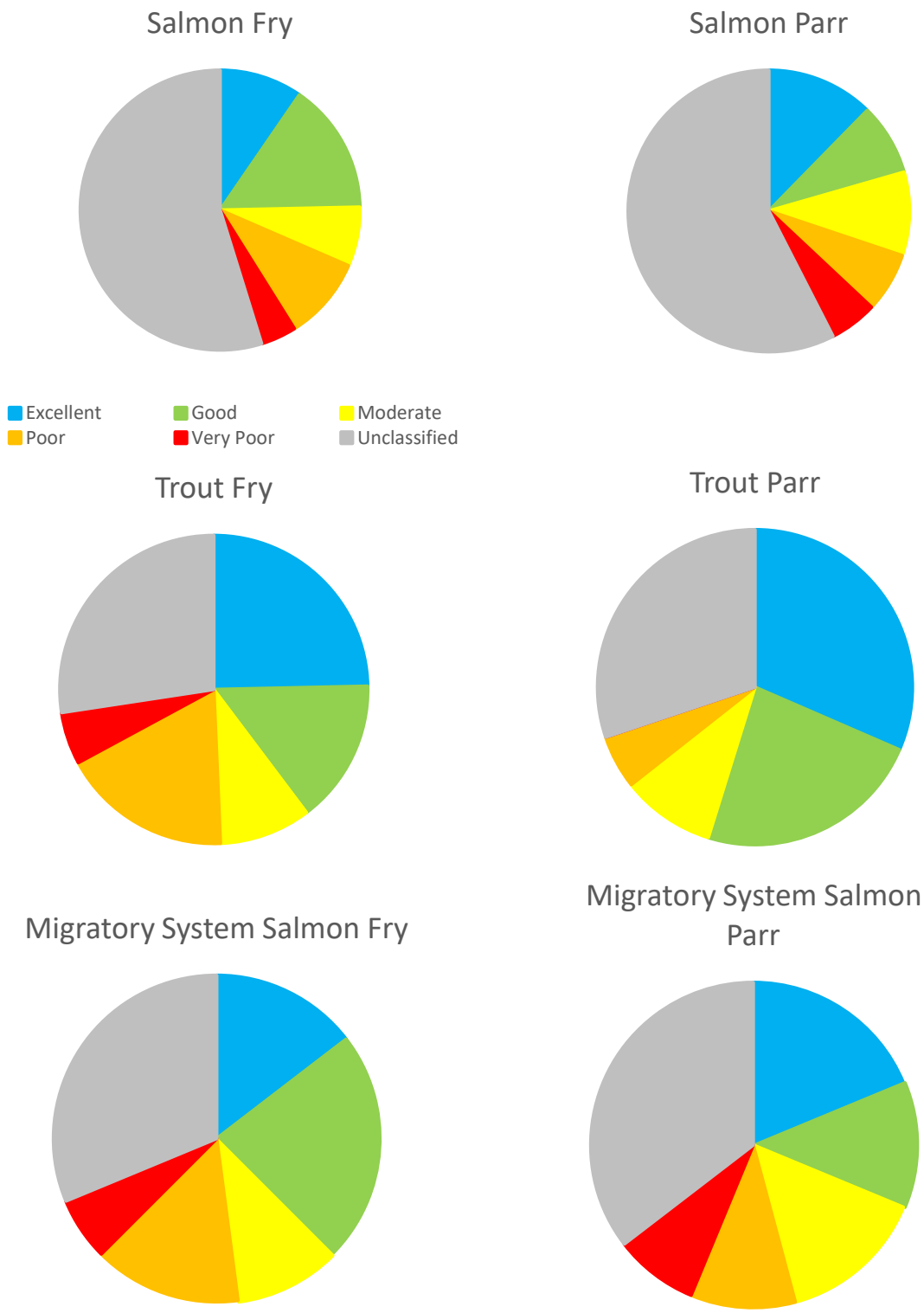

Figure 4.3: West Sutherland area salmonid densities according to the SFCC classification scheme (table 1).

During the catchment surveys other species were found; eels being the most widespread of these (figure 4.4). Eels were observed in 16 of the 17 catchments fished, but only present in all sites in 5 systems. Eels are known to be present in the Garvie, but were not observed on this occasion. Minnows were caught in 7 catchments, though were only seen in a few sites in each. One stickleback was caught whilst surveying the Oldshoremore system. There was also a flounder observed in the Oldany system, in the bottom site.

Trout were caught in every surveyed catchment, present in every site in 11 systems. Salmon were not quite as widely distributed, only present in every site in 11 of the 17 catchments they were present in.

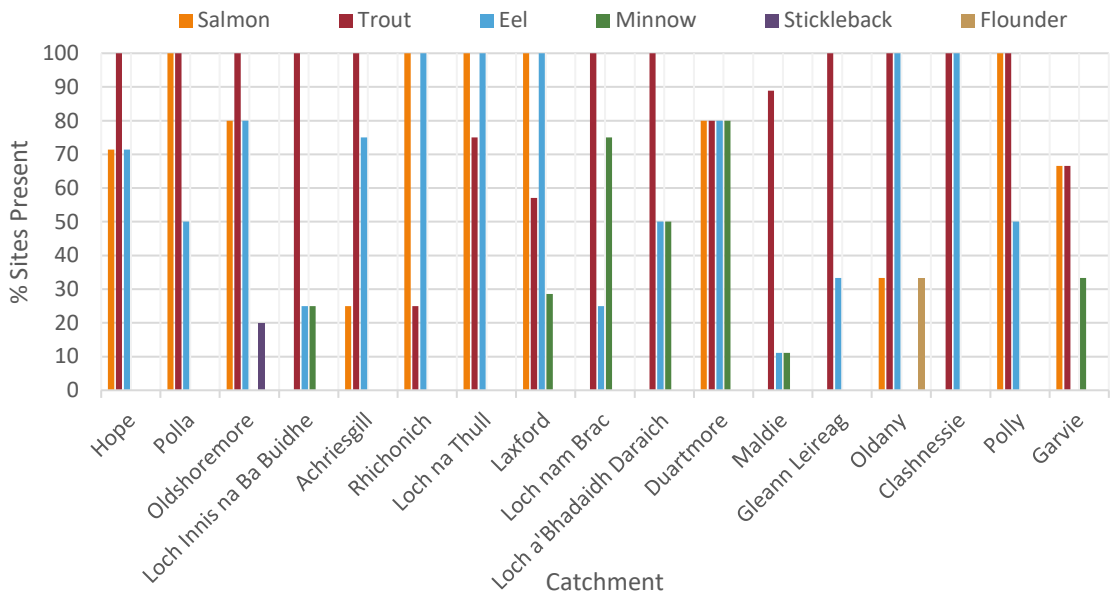

Figure 4.4: Species composition and distribution by catchment.

It was seen in 2025 that only 1 salmon parr was caught in the Oldany system with no fry seen, which suggests there has been a persistent lack of successful spawning. It is possible that there wasn't enough smolt production generated in the Oldany system, resulting in too few returning adults to effectively sustain the population.

The results show that in the area overall trout dominated, seen in higher densities than juvenile salmon. However, in 2025 there were more non-migratory catchments fished than in previous years, which has influenced the results. When the trout only catchments were removed, salmon dominated.

Salmonid fry were seen in higher densities than their respective parr counterparts, which is an expected observation. Salmonid fry densities are naturally higher than parr resulting from density dependent mortality as fry, combined with migration as the parr grow and move into new feeding territories. reducing the numbers observed.

Whilst overall instream habitat is favourable for salmonids in the West Sutherland area, it could benefit from strategic planting of broadleaf trees in riparian zones, which would improve cover, food availability, and bankside stability – overall providing great benefits to fish populations.

References:

I A Malcolm, F L Jackson, K J Millidine, P J Bacon, A G McCartney and R J Fryer. (2023). *The National Electrofishing Programme for Scotland (NEPS) 2021*. Scottish Marine and Freshwater Science Vol 14 No 2, 62p. DOI: 10.7489/12435-1.