

### Salmon spawning

Last November and December saw the WSFT staff crawling around in the heather, armed with cameras, in an attempt to video some spawning fish. While the underwater filming proved a bit hit and miss—more miss, to be honest! - there was still a lot of activity to be seen. The video's can be viewed from the website or on You-tube.



*Spawning fish (S Marshall)*

It was encouraging to see a good amount of spawning around the area, particularly given the poor catch returns. While not approaching the historic highs, there seemed to be more action than in the previous few years, which is all to the good for the fish.

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### Catch returns

2014 will likely go down in the annals as a disaster for fishing, with low salmon catches seen throughout the Northern hemisphere. There were certainly no great highs reported from this area, although there appear to have been more, and bigger, sea trout around in some systems.

showing, but not taking in many systems. This is partly supported by the fact that dark fish were being taken as soon as the water rose.

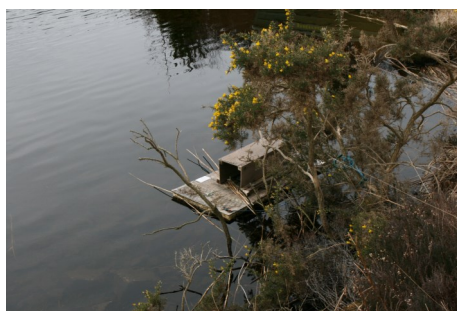
2014 was an exceptionally dry year, with conditions ideal for biologists and tourists but less suitable for anglers. This will also have had an impact on the catch returns.

However, before writing off the salmon completely, there have also been reports of fish

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### American mink:

Mink rafts in the Scourie area are monitored every fortnight during the winter and so far there has been no sign of this invasive species. The past few months have seen little activity as there have not even been pine marten or rodent prints in the rafts and tunnels. Here in west Sutherland we are very lucky in that there are few Invasive Non Native Species (INNS) and the Scottish Mink Initiative is now focusing more on other areas of Scotland.



*Mink raft in situ (A. Barnes)*

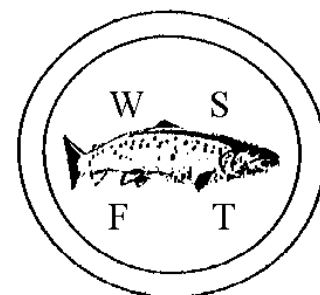
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### Latest News:

- **WSFT Shop:** The WSFT fly continues to be a great success and can be purchased from our online shop at <http://home.btconnect.com/wsft/Merchandise.html>.
- **Ghillies Seminar:** The annual Ghillies Seminar will be held on the 24th April 2015 in Scourie. This is an opportunity for information to be passed between ghillies, estate workers and fishery managers relating to various aspects of fisheries management.
- **Scourie Gala:** The WSFT will be represented at the first Scourie Gala on the 1st August on the football pitch. Why not come along and join us. Fun for all the family.



**WSFT Bestseller!**



# Changes in the Trust

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## Goodbye to Kate.....

Unfortunately we had to say 'goodbye to Kate this winter, as she headed off to pastures new. She will be much missed, but we wish her all the best for the future. Her enthusiasm for all aspects of the job was unrivalled and she has certainly given us a productive—and entertaining—3 years.

## .....Hello to Michael and Adam

We have been very lucky to gain a volunteer for a month during April and May, to help with field work. Michael is a High School teacher from Switzerland on a sabbatical. He is proving very useful with the field work—helping with the trap and culvert monitoring, amongst other—and also fitting some fishing in as well! Michael has spent some time in Assynt before, but this is his introduction to the north.

Shortly after Michael leaves we will be joined by Adam, our new Biologist. Adam has worked with a number of other Trusts, mainly seasonally, so will be bringing a lot of experience and ideas with him. A keen fisherman, he is looking forward to exploring the area and seeing what we have to offer. I'm sure he won't be disappointed!

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## 2015 Season Work Programme

Time seems to be racing, and we're looking forward to the start of the 2015 field season! Hard to believe that it's on us already, but with spring very definitely in the air preparations are well underway.

### Post Smolt Netting

The post smolt netting started in April, with one cancelled due to weather but the other successfully completed. This project gives us information on the growth rates and migrations of the sea trout, through the tagging programme. We also count and stage the sea lice, with this information feeding into the local Area Management Agreements as well as the National Programme. As I write this, we don't know what else will be surveyed on the national level, but hope to continue monitoring of the Kyle of Durness and possibly the Polly estuary. If you are interested in coming along to the netting please see the website ([www.wsft.co.uk](http://www.wsft.co.uk)) for upcoming details. This is always a lot of fun and any help is very much appreciated!

### Smolt Trap Installation

The smolt trap has been installed at Badna Bay and will run until June, being checked daily. This will give an indication of the size of the smolt run in the catchment and allow tagging of the sea trout to add information to the post smolt netting.

### Juvenile Salmonid Surveys

In July the salmonid juvenile surveys will begin again across selected catchments as part of our ongoing monitoring programme to assess the health of salmon and trout populations in the area. The electrofishing is one of the most interesting aspects of the varied work here at the Trust and a good opportunity to get out and about in this amazing landscape.

### Biosecurity

To date the removal of Himalayan Balsam at Nedd and Clashnessie has proved to be very successful with only a few plants remaining following the efforts of the Assynt Field Club, the Trust and other volunteers over the past 5 years. This area will continue to be monitored and controlled. In addition, we are hoping to extend the work into the removal of Japanese Knotweed from catchments around the area. The ultimate aim of this programme of work is the total removal of invasive non-natives from west Sutherland. If you see any non-natives while out and about then please report them to the Biologist..

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## How can you help?

- Become a member of the WSFT or make a donation
- Sponsor a sea trout
- Look out for tags when fishing and report to the Biologist with tag number, location and length (please return!)

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