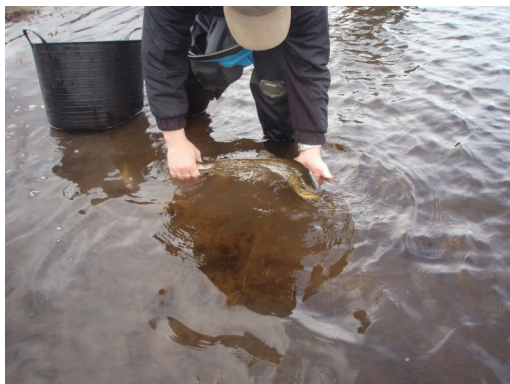


Post smolt netting almost complete for another year and our old friend returns once more



The release of J77 (S.Marshall)

The 2013 sweep netting programme is almost at an end with the Kinloch and Dionard estuaries already completed. Monthly netting on the Polla and Laxford will continue until the end of October. To date high numbers of fish have been caught at all sites except the Dionard, all with varying lice levels. Post smolt netting provides useful information about population dynamics, lice burdens and sea trout movements during the marine phase of their lifecycle. Growth rates can also be calculated from recaptures. The report detailing this year's data will be available on the website next year. For more information about netting, or to find out how to help, please visit our website at <http://home.btconnect.com/wsft/page14.html>.

After another year J77, our oldest tagged female sea trout, was once again recaptured in the Polla Estuary in excellent condition. This fish was tagged as a smolt back in 2005 and was recaptured twice last year in June and July, both times on the Polla. Now measuring 63cm and weighing more than 6lb, this beautiful fish has definitely grown since last year and is believed to be ten years old and mother to many having spawned several times.

Scottish Mink Initiative enters a new phase

As of the beginning of September 2013 the work of the Scottish Mink Initiative is now being supported by local organisations and Fisheries Trusts rather than mink control officers, making the Trust the first point of contact for any sightings of mink in our area. To date we have been lucky in that mink are not too much of a problem up here and few sightings have been recorded, although it is imperative to keep monitoring, focusing on the Coigach and Assynt area to ensure that mink do not move north from the Wester Ross area. We would like to say a huge thankyou to all our volunteers currently checking rafts and tunnels. Without them it would not be possible to carry out this work. To find out more about mink monitoring and other Invasive Non Native Species, or to become a volunteer please visit our website at <http://home.btconnect.com/wsft/page18.html>.



Mink raft in situ (C.Daphne)

Quick Updates

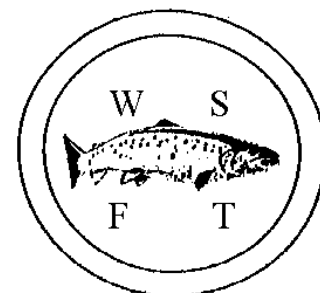


Fred the fish at Moy (S.Marshall)



Salmonids in the Badnabay smolt trap (K.Batchelor)

- **Moy Games:** Many thanks to all those who came to support the Trust at the Games this year and congratulations to the winners of our 'Find a Fish' competition! It was great fun sharing the marquee with the Findhorn, Nairn and Lossie Fisheries Trust and The Spey Foundation. Being close to take off because of the wind only added to the excitement.
- **Smolt Traps:** Between mid April and early May smolt traps were installed in Bhadaidh Daraich and Badnabay. A good number of salmonid smolts were caught and subsequently weighed and measured prior to continuing their marine migration. A number of kelts were also tagged in the Badnabay system before the trap was washed out in spates in late April and early May.
- **Ghillies Seminar:** This years' seminar in April was very well received covering a variety of topics including genetic studies in relation to the Spey hatchery, biosecurity and seal-salmon interactions.



2013 field season progresses

Biosecurity

Rhododendron mapping

The Trust was contracted to map *Rhododendron ponticum* on the Reay Forest Estate earlier in the year and so far this work is progressing well with only a few areas left to survey in the woods at the foot of Ben Stack. The locations of large stands and individual plants are recorded using a GPS and subsequently transferred to a map in GIS format. This data will be used to draw up plans for the removal of this highly invasive species.



Rhododendrons at Allt Horn (K.Batchelor)



Himalayan Balsam at Nedd (K.Batchelor)

Himalayan Balsam cleared at Nedd and Clashnessie

As part of the control of invasive species, Himalayan Balsam was removed from sites in Nedd and Clashnessie in August following on from work in previous years by the Trust and Assynt Field Club. With the help of dedicated volunteers this has proved to be quite successful with few plants remaining compared to earlier times. Most of the plants were small and grew close to the burn such that some are easily missed. The removal of invasive species is part of an on-going project and will continue in the next field season.

Juvenile Salmonid Surveys

Five catchments, Clash Fern, Laxford, Duart, Inver and na Thull have currently been electrofished this year as part of the Trust's monitoring programme to assess the health of our salmon and trout populations. Due to some wet weather and high water levels the surveys got off to a slow start although it is hoped that further catchments will



be surveyed just before the end of the season. Good numbers of both salmon and trout from different age classes were caught in each catchment and it was great to be out and about and see such beautiful wee fish.

Educational Projects

Scourie Detectives was once again run in August in association with the Community Council and the Scourie Detective Agency. Despite fairly miserable weather there was a reasonable turnout of people and much fun was had by all learning more about the local wildlife and geology, and especially enjoying soup, home baking and the

wide variety of games and quizzes on offer such as hook a duck, feed the fish and throw the sponge! Many thanks to everyone for their all their help and generous contributions.

The Trust was happy to assist P1-P4 children from Scourie Primary School with kick sampling for invertebrates and electrofishing in Bhadaidh Daraich in May. This was a good opportunity to enthuse the next generation in the amazing aquatic life of their local rivers. A similar project with Kinlochbervie High School allowed pupils to become more familiar with different groups of aquatic invertebrates, and how they are adapted to the freshwater environment. In addition, the 'shoals, shocks and shorelines' project in June brought together children from all the local primary schools for a range of outdoor activities focusing on both the marine and freshwater habitat.

Plankton Sampling

The plankton sampling in Eddrachilles Bay as part of the sea lice dispersal project is almost at an end with only the October sampling to complete. With monthly data collected from 12 sites over a year, the Scottish Association for Marine Science (SAMS) intends to model the lice dispersal in the bay to get a clearer understanding of lice movements and numbers for use in management and control. For more information about this project and others, please visit the website at www.wsft.co.uk

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!)

If you would like further information, have a view to express or would simply like to make a donation, please visit our website or contact:

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