

Week sixteen

This week started a couple of days early with some weekend work. I joined Mike Beach an independent Fish Pass Consultant, with over 40 years experience with the Environment Agency and its previous forms to assess the level of obstruction of several weirs on the River Don and propose solutions to reduce their impact. On Saturday we headed out to a weir on the Goval Burn and to a site on the River Urie above Pitcaple. Mike took various engineers measurements at each location, photographed and drew the site and asked for anecdotal references to the water level which were to be corroborated at a later date with data from SEPA. He also suggested several options for passing the obstruction from low to high cost and low to high impact of construction. Mike will produce a report of these individual sites for us which will be available early next year. From this information we will be able to decide the best method to alleviate the obstruction and enhance the catchment upstream.



Goval Weir measurements.

On Monday I joined Mike again to look at the two remaining sites one on the Leochel burn and one at the very top of the system Alt Veannaich at Delnadamph. En route we stopped in at the Newe Weir and carried out a quick assessment of the existing fish pass at the weir. Again this day was very successful and many thanks go to Jim Kerr and his team for their assistance and also to Mike beach for his expertise over the couple of days. We are looking forward to the reports in February where we can really get to grips with the obstacle removal programme.



Alt Veannaich, Delnadamph

On Tuesday I was joined by the Board team again to complete the last of the genetic sampling. We were heading down to the main river at Kintore. The area by the golf course is often very shallow and is a good spot for anglers to cross. In turn it's also a good location for parr and fry and offered suitable ease of access with the large electro fishing kit and the generator. It was soon apparent that this stretch of the river had an abundant juvenile population and also mixture of other species. The areas of weed provided cover and food for these fish and we had the last of the genetic samples in

no time at all. We also found a few other species which was nice to see, those included, Stone loach, Lamprey, Eels, Minnow and Gudgeon. It's believed that the Gudgeon were introduced as a bait fish initially and have since established a population in the Don.



Gudgeon and Salmon parr

On Wednesday I headed into the fishing tackle shops in and around Aberdeen to drop off some scale sample packets and scale deposit boxes. I had asked several shops if they would partake in the Trust's Scale sampling project. They all agreed to distribute scale packets to anglers and also have a deposit box on their premises for anglers to return the samples to. The intention is to have a couple of training days during the winter at the hatchery to illustrate how to remove scales from the fish, without harming them. It is hoped that the anglers will then participate in this programme during the remainder of this season and next to collect information on the fish stocks present in the rod catch of the River Don fisheries. See projects page for more details.

On Thursday I was due to join the Dee team again to assist with the radio tagging programme in the morning but due to the water conditions it was unlikely that they were to catch anything and therefore I used my time more efficiently in the office. In the afternoon I met with Justin Prigmore and several members of the Freshwater and Wetlands group to discuss the Cairngorm National Park Wetland Vision Project. The aim of the project in conjunction with SEPA was to pilot the reconstruction of wetland areas within the National Park. This would be achieved by firstly identifying suitable areas using a GIS programme, then ascertaining suitability and impacts of reconstruction, ascertaining acceptability of the of the proposal by the public and landowners and then sourcing funding and managing any project should they go ahead. The project although in its early stages has been very successful in outlining suitable areas and identifying the impacts. The Wetland Vision Project now faces the hurdle of addressing the landowners and public and effectively working with these stakeholders to reach an agreement. At present this project is a few years away

from any actual physical works, but I have stressed that the River Don Trust is involved throughout the process to ensure that the catchment benefits from any potential habitat changes.

I had a day off on Friday

Next week I'll be attending a conference on micro hydro schemes in Birnam, and electro fishing on the Goyal Burn.

Cheers Jamie