

Week Twenty

As usual I started the week working in the office, the usual stuff catching up on emails and preparing for the week ahead. The only difference this week was the obvious mess left in the river after the massive flooding the week before. Here is an image of the fish pass (or not) at Newe Weir in Strathdon.



At present we suspect that it's impassable to the fish but once the water drops and it's safe to work the obstructions will be removed.

On Tuesday I met with Dave and Ian from the Trust and Headed over to the Dee offices to update our current risk assessments and health and safety policies. We spent most of the morning establishing the various risks involved in the task associated with job and highlighted the areas where we can revise and update our current documents.

I also returned the Electro Fishing kit which was kindly on loan from the River Dee Trust team as our kit is still in for repair. I checked everything over with Adrian to ensure that the kit was working properly in the burn by the offices and thanks him once again for the loan of the equipment. The River Don Trust will shortly be purchasing our own electro fishing kit for next season.

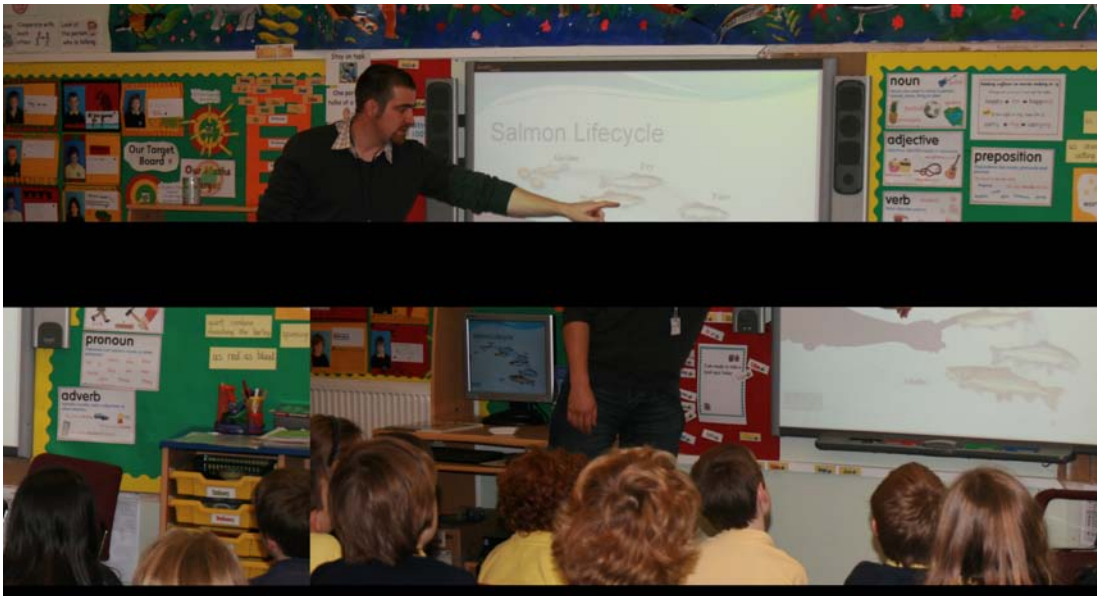
I spent some time racking the brains of Adrian, Edwin, Luke and Blair over a cup of tea and as a result chatted about obstructions, redd counting, hatchery work and invasive species to name just a few of the subjects we spoke about. I would like to say that the whole of the River Dee team have been very helpful and supportive over the past few months, I feel very lucky to have such a helpful group on the neighbouring catchment, thanks Jamie.

On Wednesday I met the first participants in the Salmon in the Classroom Project, the Monymusk Primary School. Miss McGuigan and her P5, 6 & 7 pupils were to be taking part in the project this year and so I stopped in to make arrangements for the presentation and hatchery visit. After arriving back at the office I continued to work on the presentation for the Salmon in the Classroom project. Having prepared the presentation previously it was just a matter of fine tuning to get it correct. I popped into Aberdeen to speak with Dr Sam Martin one of the Trust directors who had previously carried out this project for with other schools.

On Thursday I met Miss McGuigan and her P5, 6 & 7 pupils at Monymusk School. The presentation went well and was received well by the pupils with interest from other staff members as well. The pupils were very excited about the forthcoming visit to the hatchery and the salmon eggs that they are to rear up to fry. I spoke to some of the kids about the salmon's life cycle, the problems faced by salmon in the river and about food chains associated with the river. I had some very interesting questions with a few of the kids already knowing the score when it came to salmon and the river itself. Two of the kids spoke about the salmon ladder they had seen at Pitlochory and the ascending fish they had seen in the observation chamber, whilst other spoke of seeing otters eating fish in the river.

On Thursday evening I attended the Don DSFB AGM held at Lochter Fishing and Adventure Centre, Oldmeldrum. The event was well attended with over 30 representatives from proprietors, committee members, staff, Trust directors and anglers. The Chairman's report for Alistair Wallace gave a very informative account of the actions of the Board over the past year. Jim Kerr River Superintendant also gave a very descriptive account of the Board staff's activities over the past year. The session was finished with a guest speaker, on this occasion it was Trust chairman Dave Gordon. Dave gave an excellent presentation describing the objectives of the River Don Trust, its relationship with the Don DSFB and the River Don Brown Trout Improvement Association and the Trusts activities across the catchment. The presentation was well received with questions taken by Dave and I afterwards. In all the evening was very successful and I would like to thank the Board for accommodating us and being very helpful over the past few months.

On Friday I met with Mrs Shepherd and the pupils from Midmar Primary School. Midmar is another of the schools participating in the Salmon in the Classroom project. This school lies on the boundary between the Don and the Dee catchments and I clarified with the Dee Trust that any work carried out with the project would be on the Don catchment, in line with responsible catchment management.



Some pupils from Midmar Primary School listening to the Salmon in the Classroom presentation.

Next week I'll be presenting to more schools, hopefully weather permitting starting some redd counting and meeting with SEPA regarding the assessment of hydro schemes in the upper Don.

Cheers Jamie