

Week Thirty-four & Thirty-five

Dee opening

The month started with opening of the River Dee opening, this year held at Milton of Crathes and opened by none other than the Big Yin Billy Connelly. The event was attended by over 200 hundred people with coverage from local and national press. Mr Connelly who lives on Donside spoke favourably of his passion for trout fishing and toasted the river with a dram of Irn Bru. RDT Trustee Alistair Wallace a neighbour and friend of Mr Connelly introduce RDT Chairman Dave Gordon to him at the event and Mr Connelly noted that he would be most pleased to hear further details from the River Don Trust in the future.



Dave Gordon (Trust Chairman), Mark Bilsby (Dee Board/Trust Director) Billy Connelly and Alistair Wallace (Trustee) chatting at the opening of the River Dee. (L-R)

Mark Bilsby River Dee Board and Trust director explained to all present what had been achieved over the last year by the River Dee organisations and what the future intentions were, one which may have startled many was the suggestion of planting of native broadleaved trees in the upper catchment, in order to reduce the effects of temperature on the juvenile salmon.

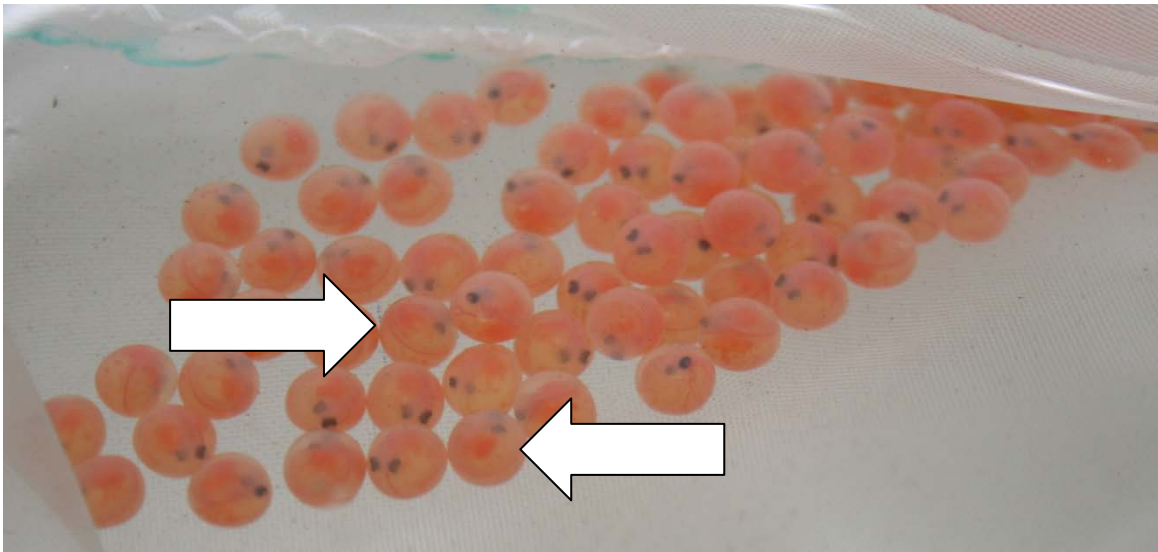
Having spoken to lead biologist Adrian Hudson about this subject he had mentioned that since records began at the Baddoch and Girnock research/trapping stations in the mid 60's the average temperature of the water at these locations has rose by nearly three degrees. Evidence such as this underlines Mark statement for the need for future habitat work in the upper catchment to buffer against these environmental changes.

Thanks to the Dee team for organising such a great event and also for welcoming their neighbours with open arms and a Dee dram.

SITC

Following on from my previous visits to the hatchery with Martin and Stephen it was now time to take some eggs down to the tank in the office. So I joined Martin for the morning and assisted him at the hatchery with the duties. We then headed back down to the office with the eggs. The purpose of taking some eggs down early was to establish how long it would be before they hatched in the office & classroom system. It also saved time and fuel as the location of some of the participating schools is over an hour from the hatchery but only ten minutes from the office.

The eggs travelled well and were soon in place in the tank in the office. The temperature was set at five degrees two degrees above that of the current water temp in the hatchery but the 45 min journey in the bucket of water would have brought the temperature up to a similar level so there was no chance of temperature shock killing the eggs. By bringing the temperature up like this it also gave me a chance to ensure that the office tank would be one step ahead of the schools. This may prove useful in identifying any problems with the set up but also acts as a backup should any disasters occur with the schools.



Pictured are some Salmon eggs brought down from the hatchery in a fine mesh bag, notice the stage of development they are at now. The left arrow indicates the formation of the spine (the line within the egg) as the alevin is curled up ready to hatch and the right arrow indicates the dark orange yolk sac which will feed the alevin for the first few weeks.

After the establishment of the eggs in the office tank, the following week I began to set up the tanks in the school classrooms. The first school was a seasoned veteran when it comes to the Salmon in the classroom project having participated in previous years it was Cragievar Primary. Later that week I set up Monymusk and Lumsden, with Towie and Midmar waiting upon some electrical rewiring until I could install the tanks. The kids were very excited and keen to have the eggs in the classroom but it would not be until the following week before the eggs arrive.

SEPA event

I also attended a Scottish Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA) water body classification meeting held at Torry. The aim of this workshop was to provide SEPA with habitat data in particular physical and morphological changes to the river and its tributaries. This information could range from a small culvert by the roadside to a large obstruction such as Delnadamph Weir. The event was attended well with representatives from the Dee, Deveron and Esks alongside Alec Paterson (Don DSFB & new Ythan Trustee) and me. The day was focused around transferring data on obstructions to SEPA in order for them to classify the water bodies more accurately. This information informs the management of the water bodies in line with the Water Framework Directive and Priority Catchments (of which the Don is scheduled for the 3rd phase of the programme).

At present the RDT is not in a position to provide very detailed obstruction data across the catchment. We will however be feeding into this programme on a regular basis to ensure that the SEPA records are updated. Information gathered during this season's habitat surveys will be collated and passed to SEPA at the end of the year. SEPA are also in a similar state to us not having a great deal of information on the physical obstructions, they did however have information on the morphological changes to the catchment thanks to a map reading programme which snaps data points from OS maps such as bridges, canalised sections etc.

I spent the afternoon inputting data with an old flatmate who works for SEPA (a handy contact for the future) and by the time we had finished the SEPA records has soared to over ten times the volume of data points on obstructions across the Don from their original records. Thanks must go to Jim and Martin for their time the previous week when we poured across several maps picking out all known obstructions.

Cheers Jamie