

Week Four

Week four was completely taken up by preparing for, travelling to/from and attending a Habitat Surveying course in Dumfries and Galloway.



An appropriately named pub on route to Galloway Fisheries Trust

The course is an essential requirement to validate the data collected for the RDT. The completion and passing of this course gives you Scottish Fishery's Coordination Centre (SFCC) accreditation in Habitat Surveying (HS), which is the standard and most detailed form of habitat survey currently in use effectively. There are other more limited surveys which are perhaps useful for specific aspects of habitat surveying due to the lesser volume of time and skills required to perform them effectively. But by being accredited in this SFCC course it allows you to carry out a comprehensive survey if required or utilise some of the skills learned to perform a more limited type of survey.

The course was run through SFCC, but was hosted and led by The Galloway Fisheries Trust (GFT), based in Newton Stewart. The GFT has been established for over a decade and have three full time biologists working for them along with a part time receptionist. The current biologist team led Jamie Ribbens, with Jackie Graham and Rowan Armstrong have over thirty years of experience in fisheries biology and host the course annually. The course was split into field work, practical assessments, presentations and a written assessment at the end of the last day.

The other attendees of the course were in a similar situation to me having just joined a trust and requiring accreditation in habitat surveying. This proved to be very useful and good contacts were established with members of the Outer Hebridean Trust and the Ness and Beaully Trust.

The course required that you were familiar with the manual and external sources of literature, which although familiar with most of the content refreshing myself with this still took up the majority of Monday.

The main criteria to be observed and recorded in the HS are as follows, figures were recorded either in metres where applicable or as a percentages of the total figure.

1. General information (Location, date, surveyor, water level)
2. Channel Data
 - Water Depth, Substrate Type, Channel Features, Flow, Canopy Cover
3. Left and Right Bank Data recorded in separate sections.
 - Bankside fish cover, General bankside status, Riparian zone
4. Pollution points
5. Obstacles
6. Channel/Bank modifications
7. Spawning locations

After completing the data on the sheets for the site you would then continue to survey the rest of the river working using the same process. This can be very time consuming but will give the highest volume of information on the current status of the river and habitat at that time.

I thoroughly enjoyed the course and shall shortly be applying some of the skills learned on this course whilst carrying out some habitat surveys on the Don and its tributaries once the water level has dropped.

In other news there have been a few sea trout taken from the river in the past few weeks mainly to the lower waters including Grandholm, the ADAA and the Aberdeenshire Council waters, but there have been fish further up. A few salmon have been caught in the upper reaches as well as those lower down, but due to the lack of fishing for salmon the numbers caught have been low.

Next week i'll be meeting with the Chairman of the Rivers and Fisheries Trusts for Scotland (RAFTS) producing some grant applications and meeting with the bailiff team.

Cheers Jamie