

# Week Five

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Week five started with a meeting with the Rivers and Fisheries Trusts for Scotland (RAFTS) Director, Callum Sinclair. I was joined by two other directors of the River Don Trust my line manager Dave Gordon and the scientific advisor Dr Sam Martin. Callum was kind enough to visit us at the new office, bring some visual aids with him to brighten up the bare office walls and inform visitors of issues such as the Salmon life cycle and Salmonid Identification chart.

With Callum we discussed the initial establishment of the Trust and our short term plan. He gave us a few pointers from the experiences which he gained over his career. Callum was originally a trust biologist for the Galloway Fisheries Trust, he then moved onto work with SEPA and was integral in their role in implementing the Water Framework Directive and developing SEPA's River Basin Management Plans (RBMP). We've recently been consulted on the NE (RBMP) with regards to the status of the River Don Catchment and the various actions due to be implemented to enhance catchment. The document is currently under review and will be produced next year.

Callum also provided information on RAFTS funding which is available to the Trust. The funding is part of a package of funding made available to Fisheries Trusts in Scotland through the Scottish Government. The funding a total of £1.2m over three years is distributed to the trusts through RAFTS. Each Fisheries Trust has an equal sum of money available to them no matter what scale they are or resources they already have. They then apply to RAFTS with project briefs for specific works and the funding is allocated accordingly. There are several projects areas outlined on the RAFTS site [www.rafts.org.uk](http://www.rafts.org.uk) The main themes at present are the establishment of Fisheries Management Plans, genetic sampling, obstacle removal, invasive species control and education.

We discussed various avenues for funding and potential projects. This gave us a great chance to bounce ideas of Callum and glean information on the application process. This would enable us to streamline the application process as much as possible. With enough information to fill ten pages of A4 and the transfer of some files via USB the time had come for Callum to start his 7 hour drive home. We would like to thank Callum once again for his help and advice.

The following day I was office bound, going through the notes i had made from the previous days meeting with Callum. Half way through the day I had the pleasure of being joined by the Cluny Castle estate gamekeeper Dave Meldrum. Dave had popped into discuss some Invasive American mink control on the Estate, on the Cluny/Ton burn in particular. The burn runs right past the office and has some good habitat on it for Salmon, although the majority of it is very trouty water. I have yet to survey the whole burn but this meeting enabled me to gain permission to a large area in one go. (More information on this in due course) Dave was very interested in monitoring and controlling Invasive American mink on the estate and we quickly established a plan. He intends on trapping on several rafts across the estate and complimenting this with traditional trapping methods, he is also keen to spread the word across the catchment to his colleagues and peers. It's understood that mink have a devastating impact upon salmonid parr especially during the winter period where salmonids are in almost tauper like states in the freezing waters. Their impact upon other species should not be overlooked as well; the water vole is the most threatened mammal in the UK at present partially due

to the American mink, and the more common ducks and moorhens obviously suffer great losses of chicks to these voracious alien predators.



Evidence! American Mink (female) caught in trap on mink monitoring raft, the mink left its prey (a small trout) outside before entering the cage trap.

The next day I met with one of the trust directors, Dr Sam Martin and the River Superintendent, Jim Kerr, to discuss the forthcoming genetic sampling plan. The meeting was very successful and resulted in plans being made for the collection of the samples from several sites and an appropriate

procedure established to standardise the collection. Jim was a great source of information again, his insight and knowledge is vital to the outcomes of this and other projects. We also discussed the current Electro Fishing programme. Electro Fishing is the best method of obtaining samples for the genetics project. It enables you to sample specific areas, access the different age classes and suspected runs of fish i.e. Spring/Autumn all by taking a small clip of a fry or parr's fin then returning the fish alive. The Don DSFB Electro Fishing programme is due to start in August, weather dependant (More on this in due course).

I finished the week with some office work and a meeting with University student Andrew Gauldie. This was the second stage of an interview regarding the roles of various organisations and groups involved with the aforementioned River Basin management Plan. Andrew is carrying out this work as part of an MSc in Environmental Management; he hopes to identify procedures to make process such as the RBMP consultation more effective by encouraging the government and other bodies to communicate their documents to a wider audience and producing a copy which is easily understood by all. (More on this in due course)

Next week I'll be meeting with some members of the Inverurie Angling Association, following up on links with the Water Vole conservation and Mink Control Project and producing some outline grant proposals.

Cheers Jamie