

Week Seven

Week seven started with a meeting with Chris Horril from Rivers and Fisheries Trusts for Scotland (RAFTS). Chris is the newly appointed Biosecurity officer for RAFTS and has developed the forthcoming Biosecurity plan which is due to be rolled out across all Fisheries Trusts over the next two years. Chris has also developed a series of events for Trust and Board employees to attend where they can broaden their skill set with regards to issues of invasive species be this through identification, monitoring and control or providing advice to others.

One such event was the Invasive Plant Identification Course which is to be hosted by the River Don Trust on Tue and Wed of this week. Chris contacted me when I responded to the course as an interested participant, it was then that he inquired about the potential of the River Don Trust hosting the event. I was only too pleased to help and felt that this would be a great opportunity to meet other trust and boards employees whilst learning vital identification skills. We spent most of the day discussing the arrangements for the course and visiting the sites. I had also enquired with the Ythan DSFB regarding access to the Ythan for potential sites and a positive response was given. The ADAA were also very helpful in the provision of access to two sites one on the Ythan at Ardlethen and the other at Parkhill fishery by the Don.



One of the first sites on the Lochter Burn, a tributary to the River Urie.

Tuesday was the first day of the course; we were to meet in the Tesco Car Park at Inverurie for 9.30am. After a lot of rushing around and last minute printing of information sheets for the course I arrived early to be greeted by over half of the other participants, they were either very keen to get

started or the accommodation I had recommended to them was not up to much. The other participants included folk from the Cromarty Firth Trust, Spey board, Esk Trust, Argyll Trust, Clyde Trust, Dee Trust, West Sutherland Trust and me from the Don Trust. Overall there were 12 other individuals taking part in the course, which was run by the EA accredited Nigel Holmes. We spent the whole day on the Ythan catchment in the vain hope that the water would not be as high as it was on the Don. I had secured some off river sites (ponds and lakes) to ensure that we could still do some plant identification assuming high water conditions. We headed to Haddo lake with kind permission from the Aberdeenshire council but were unfortunate to find anything due to the large volume of geese which were grazing all the vegetation on the bottom of the shallow lake. We moved on down river and tried a few sites along the river getting our eye in on some aquatic and terrestrial plants. The most common plant by far was the Rannunculus or River Crowfoot a member of the butter cup family. We finished the Day at the ADAA Ardlethen beat on the Ythan and the adjacent Ardlethen Quarry Pond. On heading to the pond we were greeted with an amazing 5 minute display from two otters playing in the river in full view only meters from the bank. One group member was fortunate enough to get it on film whilst for some others it was their first sighting of an otter.



My cocker spaniel Jarvis against the Invasive Giant Hogweed plant as an indication of scale.



The smaller non invasive Burbean, can be mistaken for Giant Hogweed in it's earlier growth.

The Wednesday started a bit better but still the water was high and coloured, this made it difficult to find the aquatic plants which were to take up the bulk of the ID work. Again we tried a few spots on the main river and the Urie but the best location was the ADAA pond at Parkhill. The site was full of life and we covered most of the plant types you would expect to find in a still water environment and a few we didn't expect. Some of the sedges we had seen on the previous day were present but interestingly some of their hybrids were also present along with a few garden varieties of the non invasive sort. Robert Dey one of the Trust Directors and Chariman of the ADAA joined us to give us the guided tour of the fishery. Bob located several species and also arranged access with the owners on behalf of the Trust, thanks for your help Bob. The pond had a high number of plant species present for its size an attribute later linked to the fact that it was spring fed. We finished up the day with a question and answer session in the fishery car park and went over the various plants gathered and used the keys to identify them. Folk departed from there to their various destinations, and we once again thanked Chris and Nigel for the providing and running the course. I felt the course was a great success, in terms of putting the River Don Trust on the map in relation to other trusts and boards and also from an educational point of view.



Going over the samples collected, in this case a small pondweed.

On Thursday I reproduced the information I collected during the course and also practiced the plant ID on some samples from the nearby Ton burn. See images below.

The weather had still not settled on Friday and I spent a day in the office, quite a change for this week. During the course of the day I was contacted by Justin Prigmore from the Cairngorm National Park Authority (CNPA). Justin is the CNPA's environmental biodiversity officer, he's responsible for developing and instigating plans to enhance and protect priority species and habitats across the park. Justin used to work as my line manager in my old post before moving to work for the CNPA. He was in touch with me to discuss the possibility of the River Don trust becoming a partner in a new project which is due to be launched. The project aims to restore areas of historical wetlands within the CNP and several potential sites were identified on the Don. I intimated the Trust interest in the project but also its concern at the potential damage to salmonid habitat. Justin confirmed that he would produce a summary of the project for consultation by the Trust directors before we could commit to the project in any way. We have yet to hear back from Justin but given the time of year i can only assume that he is on holiday at present. I shall endeavour to provide you with a progress report on this ASAP.

Next week I'll be on holiday. I'm heading away for a week's holiday and hopefully some fishing.

I'll update you of events upon my return during week nine.

Cheers Jamie