

Week Nine

Week Nine started after a week's holiday. I had spent the week at my family home in Sutherland where I managed to practice some of the plant ID skills learnt whilst doing some fishing, finishing off the week with a 2lb 5oz highland brownie on the dry fly made it all the more worthwhile.

My plans for Monday had been arranged the previous week and I met with Ben Dixon, local casting instructor, expert angler and columnist for the trout and salmon. Ben is a very enthusiastic fisherman and is especially passionate about brown trout. Ben is a member of the River Don Brown Trout Improvement Association board and is keen to dedicate some time to this statutory organisation established in light of the 1990 River Don Protection Order (see trust website). Ben is also responsible for the running of the Fish Don website (www.fishdon.org) A site which provides information fishing resources across the Don catchment and also sells fishing permits on behalf of the proprietors. I was meeting Ben so that we could both meet a Mr John Riley from Heughhead in Strathdon. Mr Riley is the proprietor of the Semeil Fishing's on the Don below the Newe weir and he also operates the Archimedes screw hydro turbine above the Newe weir. It was a very insightful morning learning about the screw and understanding how it worked. I spent some time assessing the inflow and outflow to the screw and the fish guards on each. The two guards were different the outflow having vertically placed bars with an 80mm and the inflow having horizontally placed bars with an 85mm gap between bars. The outflow also had a weighted system should there be any debris gathering behind the gate it would quickly tilt when the water pressure behind the gate became too much, clearing the debris and allowing the flow to resume to normal. The screw itself seemed fairly innocuous the only issue could be that fish may be damaged when passing through the screw. This has been tested by the company Mann Power who produces the turbine and also Mr Riley himself. Both have shown that fish passing through the device have come to no harm on locations in England.



Intake of the Archimedes Screw at Newe Weir, Strahdon.

Tuesday was spent in the office catching up on paper work after last week's holiday. On Wednesday I met with some members of the River Dee Team, Mark Bilsby and Lorraine Hawkins. I had a chance to discuss various matters including forthcoming events and also forthcoming plans for next year to work on Sea Trout Post Smolts with Dee Trust. I had a tour of the offices and equipment that the trust and the board use and was introduced to a few of the bailiffs. Altogether it was a very constructive afternoon and I left knowing that the Dee Trust would be there to lend a hand with various issues should the need arise. Thursday was spent in the office working on the desktop plans for the Genetic sampling project, identifying areas of particular interest and selecting potential sites.

On Friday DR S.A.M. Martin joined me on the trip to Pitlochory to discuss and define the genetic sampling project with Marine Scotland. Sam had also arranged to stop of at the Fish traps on Deeside to have a look at them and explain a bit more about their purpose and the information gather over the past 20 years. He also arranged to meet with Dr Alan Youngson a good friend who works for Marine Scotland and has produced some very interesting work on salmonids over the years. We spent the morning with Alan and then met with Dr Eric Vespoor the coordinator of the genetics project and Dr Lucy Webster an old colleague of mine and now the project manager for the genetics project. Eric gave us the background on the project over lunch and we then spent the afternoon with Lucy going through the proposed sample sites and developing a revised edition. We collected our sample tubes from the Laboratory and then left heading back for Aberdeen.

Next week I'll be helping out the Dee Trust team with some electro fishing and attending a Freshwater and Wetlands group meeting on behalf of the Trust for the Local Biodiversity Action Group.

Cheers Jamie