

YTHAN DISTRICT FISHERY BOARD

Annual Report of the Clerk and Water Bailiff for 2015 Fishing Season

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1. **State of the River**

Once again Ranunculus has been present on AADA / Ellon / Ramornie / Esslemont and Auchmacoy. This broke up in September and October and affected downstream pools which, on many occasions, led to the River being unfishable down as far as The Meadows.

2. **Predators**

~~Once again, we have a licence to shoot seals above the Logie Buchan Bridge~~ but none were shot as no seals have ventured up river. There are, however plenty of seals at the mouth of the Ythan estuary.

No mink have been caught this season but there have been some sightings up by Gight.

Cormorants, meganders and gooseanders are scared off from eating young fish (including finnock).

3. **Costal Nets**

No nets were operated at Port Errol during the season.

4. **Nets on the Coast and River**

The Board rented out the netting including net and coble from USAN with the aid of donations from the Dee, Don and Spey District Salmon Fishery Boards.

5. **2015 Season**

River catches have once again been poor this season. The exception was the Ythan estuary where catches of sea trout were reasonably good. We have seen a number of salmon and sea trout come up the river later in the season. Generally, the finnock and sea trout were in good condition and the majority were returned.

Salmon were scarce throughout the river and even during the extension to the season few fish were caught. A full report of catches will be produced for the annual meeting in January.

6. **Spawning**

The spawning season is considered to have been good with reds seen in the last few days on the Little Water Burn with six salmon seen ascending above Little Water and eight near Asleid.

- 7. Stocking**
No sea trout fry were purchased during the year but a small number of salmon parr, which were hatched by the Salmon in the Classroom exercise carried out by the River Ythan Trust, were returned to water courses near to the schools at which the parr were produced.
- 8. Seals**
A consultation on the proposal to designate the Ythan estuary as a seal haul-out site was responded to in early December. The Board's view, which is shared by the Local Authority, is that the proposal involves a far greater area of land than is currently or likely to be used by the seals and that any designated haul-out site should be restricted to the area in which the seals are found.
- 9. Season Extension**
For the final time, the Board was granted an extension by two weeks. Few anglers took the opportunity to fish and even fewer salmon, sea trout and finnock were caught. The low number of anglers fishing and the poor return achieved makes it unlikely that the experiment will be repeated or that an application will be made to Ministers to alter the season.
- 10. Vehicle and Communication**
The Skoda has been replaced with a Dacia Sandero which is rather more versatile.
- 11. Board Staff and Honorary Bailiffs**
Alexander (Sandy) Milne is the full time River Superintendent. He has served the Board for 41 years and remains committed to the task. Mark Andrew is the part time Clerk.
Steven Main, Craig Main and Michael Troup help in looking for poachers in the dark nights. Craig also helps with other tasks, including electro fishing. Their help is very much appreciated.
- 12. Sea Poaching**
No poaching on the coast of the Ythan this season.

- 13. Pollution / Obstructions**
Dave Basford has at last re-engineered the intake to the hydro-electric plant at Mill of Elrick and although not perfect, the new arrangement does allow fish to ascend the Ebrie Burn above this point in most normal water conditions. There have been a number of pollution incidents including an ongoing problem at BrewDog in Ellon which has been reported to SEPA.
- 14. Electro fishing**
Electro fishing was carried out with the River Ythan Trust in the Kelly Burn. This unfortunately revealed that no salmon parr were to be found in either the Kelly or Raxton Burns.
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- 15. River Ythan Trust**
The Bailiff congratulated all those concerned for their work for the Ythan Trust, with special thanks to Alec Patterson, Richard MacDonald, Jim Adie, Michael Stewart and Mark Andrew. The report from the Trust is attached as an annex to this report.
- 16. Conservation Policy**
The Board has adopted a conservation policy since 2008. This has been updated annually and places restrictions on the numbers of fish that can be caught and kept. The 2016 Policy will be discussed with Marine Scotland as the River Ythan is within Category 2 of the three categories meaning that some fish may be kept by anglers.

(Note: Category 3 rivers are on a catch and release basis only).
- 17. Complaints Handling**
The Board has adopted a Complaints Handling Procedure which is available from the Clerk.
- 18. Members Interests**
The Clerk will keep a register of financial interests of all members of the Board and any person associated with the Board.
- 19. Activities for 2016**
The Ythan is vulnerable to diffuse pollution from the agricultural activities in the District and to accidental pollution from farms, industrial estates, development and housing. Previous incidents have been numerous and led to significant fish kills.

The Board staff will continue to monitor the river for pollution and to support SEPA with any subsequent action.

The Board will encourage anglers to abide by the Conservation Policy and will ensure compliance with the Scottish Statutory Instrument 2014 No.327 – Conservation of Salmon (Annual Close Time and Catch and Release) (Scotland) regulations which requires all fish caught from 11th February to 31st March to be returned alive at to the river.

Board Staff will carry out electro fishing surveys (conditions allowing) in support of surveys being undertaken by The River Ythan Trust.

The Board will support Aberdeen University and SNH in monitoring and surveying seals within Forvie NNR. This includes work to establish the proportion of salmonids in the diet of seals. Scottish Government has been unwilling to provide financial support for this work.

The Board will continue to work with SEPA in all cases of pollution or CAR licensing failures.

Board staff will continue to monitor the river for poaching or angling without a permit and to carry out coastal patrols and to work with Police Scotland to protect the river against illegal activity.

Board staff will continue to liaise, monitor and inspect netting activity to ensure compliance with weekly close times and to ensure that nets are compliant with statutory conditions.

The Board will continue to collect catch data from anglers and proprietors.

20. Personal Comment by Sandy Milne

I thoroughly enjoy my work, I am in good health and would love to continue as Water Bailiff for at least another year. I have advised the Clerk to the Board accordingly. Here's hoping next season will be a better one.