

# YTHAN DISTRICT FISHERY BOARD

## Annual Report of the Clerk and Water Bailiff for 2016 Fishing Season

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# C O N T E N T S

## Report of Clerk and Bailiff

### Page 1

1. State of River
2. Predators
3. Coastal Nets
4. Nets on the River
5. 2016 Season
6. Spawning

### Page 2

7. Stocking
8. Seals
9. Vehicle and Communication
10. Board Staff and Honorary Bailiffs
11. Sea Poaching
12. Pollution / Obstructions
13. Travelers at Newburgh
14. River Ythan Trust

### Page 3

15. Conservation Policy
16. Complaints Handling
17. Members' Interests
18. Activities for 2017
19. Personal Comment by Sandy Milne

**1. State of the River**

Once again Ranunculus has been present on ADAA / Ellon / Ramornie / Esslemont and Auchmacoy waters. There were less complaints of broken weed affecting downstream fishings. The weed also affects the Ebrie burn which is important for Salmon and Sea Trout spawning.

**2. Predators**

Once again, we have a licence to shoot seals above the Logie Buchan Bridge but none were shot as no seals ventured up river. There are, however plenty of seals at the mouth of the Ythan estuary and a recent Press story has the number at 3,000.

No mink have been caught this season but vigilance continues.

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

**3. Coastal Nets**

Scottish Government has placed a three year ban on netting in the sea and therefore no nets were operated at Port Errol during the season.

**4. Nets on the River**

USAN did not operate a net and coble system during the season.

**5. 2016 Season**

River catches have once again been poor this season although catches of Sea Trout in the estuary and in the lower waters were reasonably good. We have seen a large number of Salmon and Sea Trout come up the river later in the season. Good finnock fishing has been enjoyed at the beginning and end of the season with one angler having caught 96 finnock. All were returned.

**6. Spawning**

The spawning season was good for both Salmon and Sea Trout with a good number of Sea Trout in the Fordoun burn above Rothienorman and Salmon below Rothienorman. The Little Water held good numbers of Sea Trout and Finnock above Cairnbanno and Salmon from below Asleid to near Cairnbanno. The main stem of the river attracted Sea Trout above Auchterless and Salmon below Auchterless. A number of Sea Trout were seen spawning in the main river around Fyvie and a number of Salmon and Grilse in the Ebrie and Bronie. Sea Trout was also seen in the Youlie Burn. A number of Salmon and Sea Trout were spawning above Methlick and a large number of Sea Trout were seen ascending the fish pass adjacent to Kelly Sawmill during the recent rise in water levels.

- 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**  
The consultation on the proposal to designate the Ythan estuary as a seal haul-out site has not yet concluded but it seems to be well accepted that the area for the haul-out site should be restricted to the North side of the estuary where the seals currently haul-out.
- 9. Vehicle and Communication**  
The Dacia Sandero is working well.
- 10. Board Staff and Honorary Bailiffs**  
Alexander (Sandy) Milne is the full time River Superintendent. He has served the Board for 42 years and has been committed to the tasks of the jobs. Mark Andrew is the part time Clerk. No Honorary Bailiffs have been active this year.
- 11. Sea Poaching**  
There have been no reports of poaching on the coast of the Ythan during the season.
- 12. Pollution / Obstructions**  
Effluent from BrewDog has damaged the Broomies Burn on a number of occasions and has led to fish being killed. Graham Clark from SEPA was informed of all these events. In addition, oil pollution at Fyvie, silage pollution at Rothienorman, run off pollution from fields caused by ditching and draining work and general diffuse pollution has been on the increase.
- 13. Travelers at Newburgh**  
A great deal of time has been spent during the year policing travelers who had once again camped at Newburgh close to the river. A number of incidents of illegal fishing took place but these were quickly stopped.
- 14. River Ythan Trust**  
The Bailiff congratulated all those concerned for their work for the Ythan Trust, with special thanks to Alec Patterson. The report from the Trust is attached as an annex to this report.

**15. 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 2017 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.

**16. Complaints Handling**

The Board has adopted a Complaints Handling Procedure which is available from the Clerk.

**17. Members' Interests**

The Clerk will keep a register of financial interests of all members of the Board and any person associated with the Board.

**18. Activities for 2017**

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 11<sup>th</sup> February to 31<sup>st</sup> March to be returned alive 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.

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

**19. Personal Comment by Sandy Milne**

I wish that the season had been better for fishing and hope that 2017 will produce better results.