

River Ythan SLA Report March to May 2023

1. Introduction

The Don DFSB have been contracted to carry out fisheries protection, predator surveys, spawning surveys and habitat restoration activities across the river Ythan catchment throughout 2023/24 by the Ythan DSFB under a Service Level Agreement. Each activity is allocated a set number of man-days/patrols to accommodate the requirements of the annually agreed SLA. Activities are defined following consultation with the Ythan DSFB.

Any incidents relating to pollution and policing will be recorded and shared with the Clerk. Information from predator surveys will be collated and shared with the Clerk directly following the survey period. Information on spawning surveys will be collated and reported upon in a summary report following the end of the spawning period. Any seals reported above Logie Buchan Bridge will be reported to the Clerk as soon as possible.

All activities will be covered by the Don DSFB health and safety polices, as stated in the service level agreement.

2. Reporting

A log of all patrols and activities will be sent to the Clerk monthly.

SLA Activities/ Piscivorous Bird Count/March, April, May

Table 1. Spring Piscivorous Bird Surveys 2023

Date 2022	Number of Goosanders	Number of Cormorants	Number of Merganser
River Ythan Bird Count 30th March	5	3	0
River Ythan Bird Count 20th April	7	4	0
River Ythan Bird Count 25th May	2	0	0

Location of Birds

On the first survey of the year, 5 Goosanders along with 3 Cormorants were identified, 3 of the birds were seen just upstream of Methlick Bridge and a further 2 were seen on the tidal waters of the Macher pool. 3 Cormorants were seen on the Newburgh Estuary.

The bird count on the 20th of April identified 7 Goosanders and 4 Cormorants. 1 Goosander was feeding on the Blairfowl stretch while 4 were seen on the lower Haddo beat, 2 more Goosanders were seen at Newburgh Estuary, 1 Cormorant was at the Meadows and 3 Cormorants were also seen at Newburgh Estuary.

The survey carried out on the 31st of May only accounted for 2 Goosanders, these 2 birds were identified at Newburgh Estuary waters.

SLA Activities/ Willow Bank Repair/Glen of Ebrie/ Grid Ref JN 93614 40148

Table 2. Time allocated to carry out and repair embankment due to erosion on the Ebrie Burn

Date	Activity-Willow Bank Repair	Time	Comments
3/4/2023	Willow Harvest site	8am to 16-30pm 1 Staff =1 day	Gathering materials, 16 bundles of canes cut and tied.
4/4/2023	Willow harvest site to load cane bundles and deliver to Ebrie site.	8am to 16-30pm 1 Staff = ½ day	Cane bundles carried a distance to the bank repair site.
10/4/2023	Cutting posts from on-site mature willow trees.	8am to 16.45pm 1 staff = 1 day	Posts cut and pointed 17
11/4/2023	1 st day of Posting	9am to 13.00pm 1 staff member = ½ day	Came across hard bedrock which took considerable time to work round
14/4/2023	Posting complete	9am to 17.00pm 1 staff member = 1 day	Came across hard bedrock which took considerable time to work round
17/4/2023	Weaving	9am to 17.00pm 1 staff member =1 day	Weaving started today
18/4/2023	Weaving willow canes around the post structure	8am to 16.00pm = 1 day	Willow weaving now completed.
21/4/2023	Back filling with woody brash material & tidy up site	8am to 16.00 = 1 day	Ebrie bank repair now completed.

It took 7 days to complete the willow bank repair and hitting bedrock when posting was at times challenging, this meant continually repositioning the posts and starting once again. The salmon Redds 30m below the bank repair, were still visible and suggesting that no redd washout occurred during the winter floods. Now that this eroded section of the stream has been stabilised, it will prevent heavy silt deposits from smothering the bed of the burn. I have added pictures below before works commenced and after the repair was completed.

Fig 1, Before works commenced on the eroded bank repair.



Fig 2, During bank stabilization repair below.



Fig 3, below showing completed Willow bank repair.



SLA Activities/checking for possible obstacles to Smolt migration.

Date	Stream Name	Grid Reference	Type of Obstacle	Time Used	comments
8/5/2023	Fordoun Burn	NJ 73373 36520 Upstream of Rothie Vale	Fallen Tree	2 hours	Although this obstruction is covering the entire width of the stream, and debris is collecting around it, Smolts and other fish species would still be able to migrate underneath/over the obstruction at the time of my visit.
8/5/2023	Fordoun Burn	NJ 75077 37515	Fallen Tree	2 hours	Fallen wind blown tree partially in stream but not causing obstruction at this time.

These two 'Obstacles' found will be closely monitored and if found to be causing significant obstruction to fish passage, will be partially eased to allow migration, see images below.

Fig 4, fallen tree above Rothie Vale below.



Fig 5, Windblown tree Grid Ref 75077 37515 below.



SLA Activities/Pollution/Unauthorized works

On the 18th of May I came across a small tributary, the Fortrie burn a tributary of the Ebrie burn that had sadly been dredged, pictures below. Location of this incident is directly below the road bridge on the A948 Ellon to Auchnagatt road, Grid reference NJ 93855 39715. Approximately 500 meters down to confluence with the Ebrie burn was dredged of all surface substrate and bankside vegetation. I contacted SEPA and explained what I had found. On the 26th of May I gave a statement to SEPA Inspector Mr Mark Gracey who is handling the incident, at this time they are gathering evidence to take forward. Due to data protection, they would not indulge further information on the person responsible at this time.

Fig 6, Fortrie Burn below.



A report was received on the 15th of May of possibly sewage, seen below the water treatment works at Ellon. I have made enquiries with SEPA and was informed that due to prolonged and heavy rain, this had overwhelmed a drain, which led to a flush of the drain system which caused the incident. SEPA inspector Mark Gracey, is working with Scottish water to find a solution of preventing this of happening again.

Jim Kerr

Senior Fisheries Officer
On Behalf of the Ythan DSFB