

Findhorn Projects Summary

R. Laughton 21/08/2017

A brief update on activities and projects within the Findhorn since the last Board meeting for discussion at Board meeting on Monday 21st August 2017.

Juvenile Surveys 2017: Summary

Findhorn 2016 report still to be completed but historical juvenile survey reports have also been added to the FNLFT web site. Data from Findhorn 2016 survey provided to Scott Galbraith (HTI) who has completed analysis on fish densities and length with relation to altitude as part of his studies and a copy of his report will be circulated shortly.

Divie Smolt Trap 2017



A 4ft diameter trap on loan from the Atlantic Salmon Trust was installed on the lower Divie on 24th March and operated to 22nd May.

Daily operation was carried out by Sean and Billy with assistance from local anglers and volunteers.

With the low flows and lack of operation time this year we were unable to carry out any mark and recapture studies to estimate trapping efficiency. So estimating overall population runs is tricky. Using last year's efficiency estimates from the Nairn trap of 10.2% this would give a

smolt run size of around 6700 for Divie run. However, given the prevailing conditions this estimates should be treated with caution. In general despite the unusually low flows the site offers potential for longer term monitoring with a 4ft trap.

Predator Control

Seal Counts

Sean and Paul Warrener carried out first combined count of the seals at Findhorn Bay using drone and visual counts in May 2017. Results indicated visual counts of 160 seals; drone count of the same locations 374.

Further count carried out on July 16th, visual count 250, aerial count 275.

More counts scheduled for later this year.



Sawbill Control

Regular counts continued through November to May. Data compiled and submitted with licence application co-ordinated by Roger Knight (Spey). Awaiting decision on licence for 2017-18. Review meeting for Moray Firth Control programme organised for 25th August at MSS Lab, Pitlochry.

Fish Disease Outbreak

Low flows and warm temperatures led to



unseasonable warm water within the rivers during May. Reports of diseased salmon were received from various beats along the Findhorn. Difficult to give an accurate figure on the losses of salmon but in the region of 100 were reported via discussions with anglers, emails, and inspections of the river Findhorn in addition to some smolts. One diseased salmon reported from the Nairn. 25 Findhorn salmon were inspected and measurements collected. Of the 25, 23 were female, 2 were male, most were badly infected with *Saprolognia* and no fish showed any signs of handling or hook damage. Three fish had red vent syndrome and two had some noticeable predation damage. MSS Fish Disease inspector Dave Tomlinson

visited the Findhorn on 19th May and with RL/BF and George from Darnaway attempted to catch several poorly salmon at Sluie, Holm Beat. Sadly, no success, despite Billy's valiant attempts but several dead salmon and a smolt were inspected.

Tissue samples were collected from one salmon from Lethan and analysed by MSS fish inspectors, the report indicated nothing unusual and fish likely to have died from fungal infections. Welcome rain appeared at the end of May and river levels rose plus temps cooled and no further reports of diseased salmon were received after May.

INNs Control

Giant Hogweed Control

Findhorn: Treatment of GH from Coulmony to A96 completed along both banks. Considerable reduction GH with flowering plants no rare upstream from Mundole/Dalvey. Some small GH plants still found and treated in Coulmony but no plants found further upstream this year. Two raft trips completed to tackle GH from Daltulich to Sluie. Blokes on Ropes contracted to tackle the GH on the cliff at Broadreeds. Three sessions were completed and no plants reached the flowering/seed stage this year. The operation was covered by local press and also filmed by ITV, and shown on six o'clock news, [click here](#) to view. Darnaway estate staff dealt with GH within the estate. While downstream, contractors were employed to maintain control by assisting Jenny Davidson at Mundole Farm and on Dalvey Estate. GH in the accessible areas is now declining rapidly but there is still difficulties in getting to plants within dense whin bushes for example. However, good progress is being made.

Mosset: GH treatment was completed from Sourbank near Rafford and from Altyre all the way to the mouth at Findhorn Bay. Treatment was completed using "Monday Night is Hogweed Night" volunteers, contractors, local farmers and bailiffs, Sean and Billy. Control within Forres at a number of locations was also carried out, including Matrix Garage and the Old Tescos and where isolated plants were reported we also dealt with them.

Application to Heritage Lottery Fund through RAFTS/SNH completed. HLF meet to review application in early September and then decision on funding should be known shortly after.

MInk

A number of mink sightings reported recently, one from Dallas Dhu on the Mosset, and several sightings along the coast at Cummington and Burghead. Traps set and operated and one juvenile mink captured at Cummington so far.

Pink Salmon

Spawning in the Nairn upstream from Howford Bridge, three captured so far. Three diseased fish reported from Lossie but all badly predated and decayed. One definitely a trout samples retained for other two for genetic analysis. No definite reports so far from Findhorn.

Biosecurity

Reviewing information and collecting information on approaches from Beats etc.

Education and Publicity

Berry Burn Community Fund and Forres Rotary Club proved funding for the Schools Go To Fish initiative. Pilmuir and Logie Primary Schools participated this year and after completing tuition in casting delivered by the bailiffs and volunteers from Forres AA the pupils enjoyed a fishing trip to the Kellas Trout Fishery. The fishery was well stocked and with fine weather the pupils had a great fishing experience with the majority catching a fish. The initiative was a great success and very enjoyable and my thanks to Eddie, Hammy and all at The Kellas Fishery for their support and help, also to Sean, Ali, Billy, Donny McBean and Steve Pannell for all their help with casting tuition and on the fishing trips. In addition Violea have donated 20 lifejackets to the Trust as part of our schools initiative. A photo shoot to highlight this will be organised in the new school term. My thanks to Ian McIntosh for helping with this.



Logie pupils with their catch!

I have submitted four further proposals to a four funding organisations, Tesco Bags of Help, Strathdearn Community Fund, Strathnairn Community Fund, and Scottish Power Foundation, during July.

Future Management

The three Board chairs met in shortly after the demise of the fisheries reform process to consider if it was worth pursuing a unified Board for the three rivers. It was agreed to look into this further and initially at the next series of Board meeting to seek opinion on whether the respective Board would like to explore the idea. All three Board have discussed the idea and although cautious have asked that a paper outlining the process of amalgamation, the potential structure, financial implications etc., be prepare for discussion. I've arranged a meetings with Alan Wells (FMS), Simon Dryden (Scot Gov) and Mark Laing (FNLFT) to discuss the procedure and whether there is any funding support on the 22nd August and then will prepare a paper for the next series of Board meetings.

Bailiff Staff: Billy Forrester (Findhorn) decided to leave the Findhorn during July and move back to central Scotland. This was disappointing news since Billy had settled into bailiff duties well and was also developing excellent scale reading skills! We marked his leaving with an engraved quach and bottle of malt from Tomatin and wish him well for the future.

