

Findhorn, Nairn and Lossie Fisheries Trust Update Findhorn Fishery Board Meeting 23rd April 2014

FMP 1: Environment

1.2 **SEPA Shenachie Gauging Station:** Discussing addition of temp probes at SEPA gauging stations with Andy Low (SEPA). Andy confirmed renovation works at the Shenachie gauging station will start at the end of May and a temperature probe will be part of the upgraded installation.

1.3 **Berry Burn:** Water monitoring continued and no incidents were recorded. However, long period of low flows through April led to high than normal weed/algae growth within the burns. The growth of algae in particular also completely covered the turbidity monitor. Although the monitor has a cleaning mechanism this was unable to cope with the algal growth, leading to some poor results during April. More recent higher flows have cleared the problem but more attention to cleaning the probe will be required if a similar low flows and rapid algal growth is observed in the future.

Riverworks/Developments: Comments also submitted and meetings attended on range of other riverworks, including Tomatin-Knockangel Sub-station, SSE Inverness-Aberdeen Pylon/Cable Upgrade.

Moy Wind Farm: Meeting with Moy Wind Farm developers held on 16/04/14 to review of proposals for controlling runoff and ensure water quality maintained in Moy Burn. In general proposals very good and should ensure water quality is maintained. Good site biologist appointed and contractors are Morrisons who also have good environmental record. Proposals for fish monitoring submitted.

FMP2: Adult Salmon and Sea Trout Stocks

2.1 Adult Salmon and Trout Escapement, Exploitation and Conservation:

Scale samples: I attended a scale reading workshop in March which allowed cross checking of the Findhorn scales with other more experienced scale readers. A number of corrections were made and final report will be issued shortly.

A few reports of diseased and poorly salmon have filtered through in last few weeks but to date no opportunities to sample the any fish have arisen. Samples will still be collected in 2014 if opportunity arises.

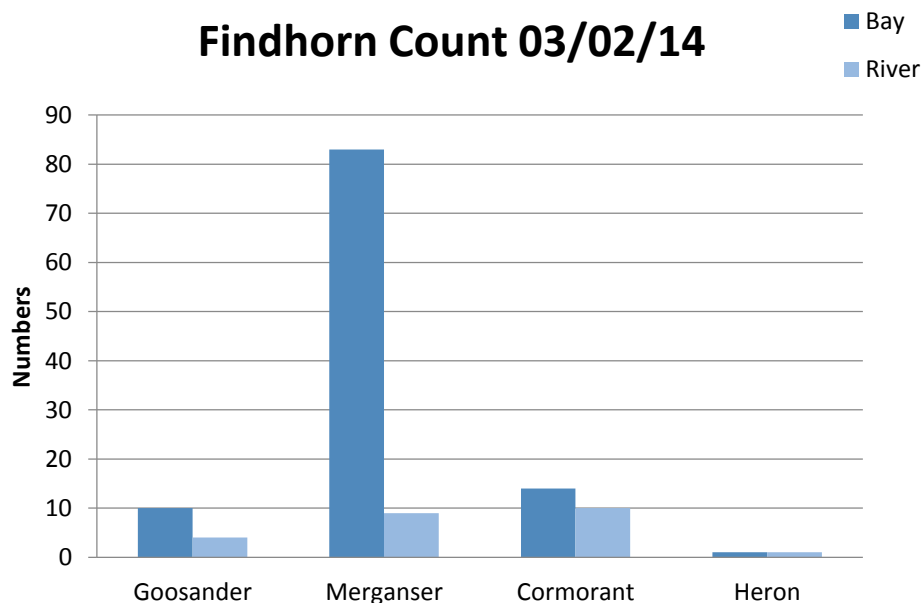
FMP3: Juvenile Salmon and Trout:

3.1 **Juvenile Stocks:** EF surveys planned for summer 2014. Proposal for detailed survey of Coignafearn under preparation to determine fish distribution and density with their tributaries. All EF equipment fully serviced during May.

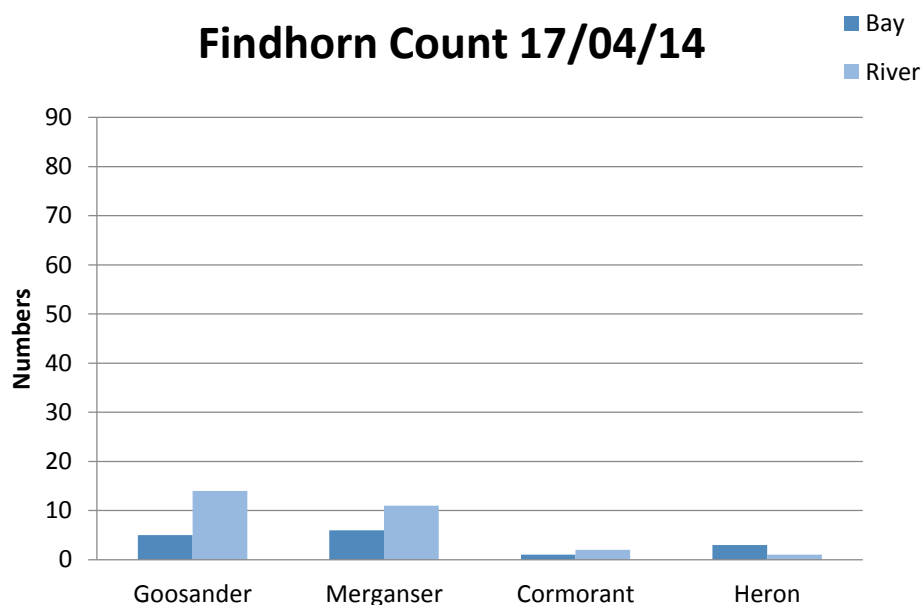
FMP4: Protection of Salmon and Trout Stocks

Sawbills: Counts completed on the Findhorn (3rd Feb and 17th April 2014), see Figures below.

Findhorn Count 03/02/14



Findhorn Count 17/04/14



Sawbill Management Meeting: I attended a very useful meeting on Moray Firth sawbill management on 16th April 2014. Key Points:

1. Literature review completed and move to more counts and projects
2. Encouraged to submit licence applications with count data

Seals: Seal Count completed around Findhorn Bay by Albert Duffus and Sean Maclean in April 2014, 37 observed at mouth of Findhorn Bay and 178 observed on Culbin sands, total 215. Work begun on compiling photographic data from Findhorn Bay 2013-14. Further counts will be conducted throughout the year.

Moray Firth Seal Management Plan: Roger Knight (SFB) has been reviewing the Moray Firth Seal Management Plan and licence application process. I attended a very productive meeting on 1st April in Beaulieu.

Key Points

1. 2014 Moray Firth Licence - 60 grey and 10 Common
2. Quotas Findhorn 3 grey and 1 common, Nairn 3 grey, to be transferred to Findhorn,
3. Seals to be targeted must be in river
4. Quarterly returns must be submitted (via Roger)

Additional discussion on scaring techniques, Sea Sheppard activities, training courses were also discussed.

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Mink Eradication Project:

Three mink captured-culled during spring, from Covesea, Loch Spynie and near Decora in Elgin. The capture from Spynie and Elgin were particularly rewarding since mink had been sighted several times in these areas.

Trapping also continues along the Nairn and the surrounding area but to date no definite reports of mink activity. Alastair Skinner has taken over organizing the volunteers.

Several new rafts installed two near Tomatin and one at Holme Rose Farm on the Nairn. Plus the traps at Decora/Cooper Park were also newly installed.

Sean and Alastair attended training meeting in April and funding has been confirmed to August 2015 from SNH through RAFTS.

Thanks to Sean and Alastair for organizing the project and to all our volunteers and gamekeepers for their help.

Beginning preparation of large scale control project for submission to Berry Burn Wind Farm Community Fund.

Grant bids to Forres Common Good Fund will be re-submitted (£1000) to support control on Mosset Burn.

4.2 Non Native Species Work Commenced in May 2014(funder SEPA/RAFTS £6500)

Round up and equipment issued to Kilravock Estate and discussions on control methods. Round up ready to supply to Geddes and Cawdor Estates. Two volunteers recruited for control of GH below Howford Bridge, plus control of JK agreed on Firhall.

Joint application for further funding to continue control on the upper Nairn submitted with John Parrot and the Ness Fisheries Trust still awaiting outcome.

Control of hogweed along Mosset Burn with Forres volunteer group began in May with spraying completed at Burdshaugh and downstream from the A96 to Ben Romach distillery. Walk surveys underway to assess GH along burn and initial results indicate GH densities much less in treated areas. Control will continue in 2014.

Survey on Lower Findhorn started in May and will be completed shortly. Planned recruitment of student help to begin spraying GH on Findhorn. Still exploring options for aerial surveys on Findhorn and other two rivers to improve monitoring approach.

Round up and sprayer provided to Kellas Estate who have completed extensive spraying of GH during April. More knotweed and balsam discovered further upstream throughout Dallas estate, key target for 2014 to reduce the spread.

FMP 7.1 Education Publicity

Funding from RJ Mcleods (£1100) Pilmuir Primary completed visit to the Berry Burn wind farm and a Bugs and Beastie Hunt on the 19th May. Sadly Logie Primary did not participate due to staff changes within the school and failure on my part to confirm a suitable date! However, further arrangements will be made for next year.

Web site news section updated, Findhorn Board section updated and newsletters added. www.fnift.org.uk

Summer newsletter featuring Berry Burn monitoring results in preparation. Funded sought from Statkraft.

Fishing Day organised by Valerie and Campbell Ross (Forres AA) at the Achagour Fishery, Nairnside for 1st June 2014.

R. Laughton

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