

TAY SALMON NEWS

From the Tay District Salmon Fisheries Board and the Tay Rivers Trust

August 2021

July was tough for fishing, but prospects looking much better!

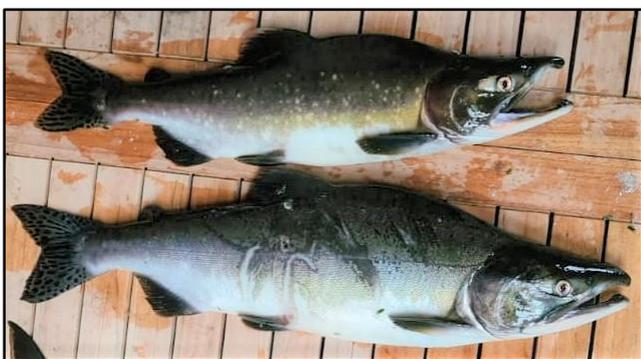
Apart from a few days with thundery rain, July was largely a dry, warm, sometimes sweltering, month. Fishing conditions, particularly in the latter half, were tough, both on the fish and anglers trying to cope in 28 C heat.

Unsurprisingly, catches were not notable on many beats. However, the weather finally broke a few days before the month's end. Although the rise that took place was short lived, the weather is now cooler. Hopefully this will be enough to switch the fish on and we look forward to much better fishing in August which has, anyway, tended to be the best month for grilse in recent years.

Pacific Pink Salmon

Pink salmon, introduced to northern Russia some decades ago, appeared in unprecedented numbers in Norway and even here in 2017. As they have a two year lifecycle, there was another, but smaller pulse in 2019. However, it appears that much greater numbers have appeared in Norway this summer. They have also been widely reported in the British Isles.

We would ask all Tay anglers to keep a look out for these. Any that are caught should be humanely killed and reported as soon as possible to the Board.



Pink salmon caught recently in the River Polla, Sutherland. Photo courtesy of Jerry Saunders.

New Convener appointed

Iain McLaren (Mandate for Kinnaird) stood down from his post of Convener to the Tay District Salmon Fisheries Board earlier this month. Iain was a Board member for 6 and a half years and was voted Convener in 2018 and again in 2021.

The Board would like to thank Iain for his hard work and dedication during his tenure as Convener. His sense of humour and wit certainly steered the Board through some particularly trying times.

During the last six months, Iain can be proud that he has set the new Board up for the future; outlining and consulting upon a River Plan for 2021/22, agreeing a robust budget, agreeing a way forward with the Tay Rivers Trust which will be beneficial to both organisations and to the Tay as a whole, and overseeing the construction of a new website, and an overhaul in policies and procedures.

Iain's position as Board member has been filled by Claire Mercer Nairne (Meikleour), and his position on the Tay Rivers Trust has been filled by Nikki Thompson (co-opted angling representative). In another change, board member Alastair Riddell (North Chesthill) retired and was replaced by John Nevin as his mandatory. Alastair was the board's longest serving member having first joined in 2008.

The Convener's position has been filled by Toby Metcalfe (Mandate for Crown Estate Scotland).



Problems of low flows

July saw the lowest flows since 2018. Most notably, levels in the River Erich were so low that salmon became stuck in pools below Blairgowrie. Heightened water temperatures enhancing the risk of fungal outbreaks required regular monitoring. The situation was exacerbated by water abstraction into a lade supplying a fish farm. Interim changes to the farm's licence introduced by SEPA in 2019 meant it was not as bad as in 2018, but the Board still has significant concerns. The Board in liaison with the Blairgowrie AC have gathered data over this critical period to encourage SEPA to undertake a further review the licence provisions.

SSE have also reported that at one point the River Lochay borland fish lift had to be switched off. There was insufficient water for the lift to operate. SSE have warned that their long-term storage position could potentially lead to problems later in the summer. The Board will continue to monitor the position with SSE. The break in the hot weather has now helped the situation but it is important we stay vigilant until the risk has passed. Water scarcity concerns should be reported to SEPA at LowFlowImpacts@sepa.org.uk.

Staff Priorities

In July, while continuing to police the river as usual, the Board's staff commenced work on the Tay element of the National Electrofishing Programme for Scotland (NEPS), an annual juvenile salmon monitoring exercise funded by Marine Scotland. In August they will also commence sampling for the genetic analysis of juvenile salmon in the River Garry, which informs us of the success of our restocking of this recently restored river.

Marine Scotland have also provided funds for boards or trusts to conduct a trial sampling programme of adult rod caught fish across the country. Since few salmon are now killed in Scotland, there will be no data on how salmon growth rates and ages may change in future. This project is intended to determine how easily such data might be obtained from catch and release fisheries.

We will commence this work this month on a lower Tay beat or beats. The objective is that over two months some 50 fish will be weighed, measured and scales taken for ageing purposes. It may be

necessary to lightly anaesthetise fish in order to do this. As such fish should not be eaten until the chemical is sufficiently withdrawn, they will be tagged with yellow numbered "Floy" tags as a warning. No such fish should be eaten. They should be released, as is normal practice now anyway.



Please look out for tagged salmon and let us know the number. Such fish should not be eaten because they will have been anaesthetised and the chemical may not be sufficiently withdrawn.

Management Plan Consultation

In the last edition of *Tay Salmon News* we highlighted the Board's new Management Plan and opportunity for consultation. Many proprietors, anglers and others responded to the consultation. We are very grateful to all of you who did. The responses are being collated and we will expand on our findings in the next newsletter in a few weeks.

Of course, while the formal consultation may have finished on 19 July, the Board welcomes your feedback at any time.

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