



Barrier Assessments

Over the winter months the MFTI worked with Bob Laughton from the Findhorn Nairn and Lossie Fisheries Trust (FNLT) to conduct 8 barrier assessments. This technical survey technique can be used to determine if a structure (weir, culvert, bridge footing etc) is a barrier to migrating fish up or down stream. The assessments were carried out on potential barriers identified on the Isla tributary of the Deveron, the Linkwood Burn of the Lossie and the Polmaily of the Enrick. The resulting reports are the first step in altering or removing these structures to improve access for wild fish.



The Polmaily road culvert is a complete barrier to fish and needs to be modified to improve access for fish.

Events and Schools

Marcus Walters has been out and about representing wild trout and the MFTI at various events over the summer; attending the Spey Bay Really Wild Festival in April, The Dingwall Seashore Event and the Moy Game Fair. He will be attending Scotland's Salmon Festival in Inverness on the 4th & 5th of September and the FNLT River Festival on Sunday September 27th. The Fisheries Trusts have also been busy through the spring working with local schools to teach the pupils about trout and their local rivers while some have been lucky enough to go on river visits and get hands on experience doing invertebrate and fish surveys.



Volunteer Allan Liddle tying flies at the MFTI stall at the Spey Bay, Real Wild Festival

Loch Spawning

Loch Park on Drummuir Estate in the Deveron Catchment is a productive trout fishery that although historically stocked, now has a self-sustaining population, producing lots of trout across a range of sizes. Following a walkover survey around the Loch MFTI found that the only burn entering the Loch was very short and contained minimal trout spawning habitat. Further investigation in the Loch with a bathyscope soon revealed that the trout are actually spawning in the loch. Although in loch spawning by trout is often discussed as a possible source of recruitment where in-stream spawning is limited, it is not well documented and is typically underestimated. To be successful it requires suitable substrate and adequate circulation either from upwelling springs or wind driven currents. Further investigation and documentation is required but if you know of somewhere that trout spawn in a loch rather than in a burn or stream please get in touch.



A trout redd dug into bank-side gravel in Loch Park. Volunteer Ian Sharp using the Bathyscope to look for trout redds in Loch Park.



Out and about for trout...

River Lossie Trout Isotope Project

The Deveron Stable Isotope Project had great success in determining whether trout fry were from sea or brown trout females. By analyzing the levels of C13 and N15 in fry soon after emergence this technique can be a great tool in improving the understanding and potential management of brown and sea trout spawning populations in a catchment. The River Lossie has historically had good runs of sea trout and used to produce good annual returns to rod and line as well as the netting station; however catches have declined steadily over the last 20 years and reached record low levels in the last two years. These low catches have resulted in a local perception that very few sea trout are running the Lossie despite electrofishing surveys conducted by FNLTT continuing to show good juvenile trout numbers. This project aims to determine whether the good juvenile trout numbers are of resident or sea trout origin. Nine sites were sampled by FNLTT throughout the Lossie catchment and the samples are now with Napier University awaiting analysis.

Coastal Seine Netting for Sea Trout

During the first 2 years of the MFTI we trialed coastal seine netting for sea trout and have had some promising results. However, our attempts were limited by a rotten net and a lack of knowledge about the few sites we had initially trialed. This year the project has been expanded to begin exploring new sites in the Beaully Firth, Findhorn Bay, Cromarty Firth and Kyle of Sutherland, reinforced with the purchase of a specially designed coastal seine survey net. We have already conducted 6 nettings this year and are beginning to understand the best tides and times to fish the sites. Although we have caught only a few sea trout, we have caught a wide range of marine species including excellent numbers of sprat which are of course an important prey item for sea trout and other marine species.



Clockwise from top left: a sea trout post smolt, a large flounder, a good haul from the Cromarty Firth full of shrimp, setting the net in the Cromarty Firth and a good haul of sprat from the beaully Firth.

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