

# All About Trout Day

Inverness 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2014



There was a great turn out for the MFTI All About Trout Day with nearly 60 delegates including anglers, biologists managers and scientists

The Moray Firth Trout Initiative's (MFTI) All About Trout Day held in Inverness at the beginning of October was a huge success with nearly 60 delegates turning out on the day to partake in a series of talks and discussion about wild trout research, conservation and management. The majority of the delegates were local anglers making up 46% of the attendees, closely followed by fisheries managers and biologists who accounted for 39% while the remainder included local SEPA staff, Highland Council Rangers and research scientists from around Scotland. The broad range of interests and backgrounds made for excellent questions and discussion. It is fair to say that everyone went away having learnt something and met someone new!

The sea trout session was started off by Marcus Walters introducing the MFTI and the work the project does looking towards the marine side of the trout life cycle. This focussed on the declining sea trout catch returns over the last 20 years and explored how changes in the marine environment might be driving these changes. This included a summary of the MFTI scale data collected by volunteer anglers and a new technique trialled on the Deveron to determine whether trout fry are of sea or brown trout origin.

Dr Ronald Campbell from the Tweed Foundation then summarised the work done under the Living North Sea Project to highlight the needs of fish that rely on migrating between the marine and freshwater environments in the North Sea. He demonstrated the genetic structuring of sea trout populations in the North Sea, the plight of smolts migrating to sea and the migration routes of Scottish sea trout at sea.

After a brief break Marcus Walters introduced the brown trout session with a summary of the MFTI brown trout work. Focussing on the Deveron Blackwater case study he outlined how this population of large brown trout although originally thought to be sea trout are actually fast growing brown trout that migrate through the entire Deveron catchment but never go to sea.



(L to R): Ness DSFB Director Chris Conroy introduces the Brown Trout session, a good discussion kicks off during lunch, MFTI Project Manager Marcus Walters discusses scale reading and sampling with Dr Andy Walker.

Alastair Thorne from Marine Scotland Science then gave a fascinating talk on his research and angling for Ferox in Loch Rannoch and Loch Awe. His excellent presentation was illustrated with incredible pictures and videos of huge trout as he demonstrated catch and release of these remarkable trout and showed how their scales change over time and some of his findings from tracking and recapture work.

Allan Liddle is a local angler capped by Scotland's fly fishing team; he is also a fly tier for Partridge and part time angling journalist. He gave a fascinating talk on the quality and diversity of brown trout angling in Scotland and surely inspired a few anglers to get back out there and take advantage of the world class trout on our doorstep.

Eric Verspoor then finished the brown trout session off with a fascinating presentation on the genetic and morphological structuring of brown trout populations in Loch Laidon. Having sampled this loch using gill nets and anglers Eric has been able to reveal 3 distinct trout populations. He raised the thought provoking question of whether these "populations" should be classed as distinct species. Finally, he left us pondering the question, if this is what he found in this one loch, what might the rest Scotland's lochs reveal?

After lunch Marcus Walters summarised the practical river habitat restoration work conducted by MFTI with particular focus on the River Peffery. Tim Jacklin then followed with a description of some of the practical restoration techniques and solutions used by the Wild Trout Trust to address typical river habitat issues. The formal talks were finished off by Glasgow University PhD student Martin Hughes describing 3 IBIS funded PhD projects investigating different trout life history strategies; sea trout, brown trout and Ferox. He described the common garden experiments where they have crossed brown trout & sea trout and brown trout & Ferox with fascinating results showing differences in egg deposition, the relative development of the progeny and ended with a startling video illustrating behavioural differences.

The final session of the day consisted of practical demonstrations with the Ness & Beaully Fisheries Trust electrofishing in the River Ness while Dr Andy Walker demonstrated scale reading and Allan Liddle showed off his expertise at fly tying with a good crowd of interested anglers.



Practical Session (L to R): Dr Andy Walker explains the dark arts of trout scale reading, Allan Liddle demonstrates fly tying and Biologist Chris Daphne from the Ness & Beaully Fisheries Trust talks delegates through the electrofishing catch from the River Ness.

*I would like to thank all the speakers who contributed their time on the day and for travelling all the way to Inverness. I am also very grateful to all the delegates who made the day successful with their enthusiastic engagement with questions and discussion. The smooth running on the day was thanks to the support of the local Fisheries Trusts & DSFBs staff that chaired the sessions and helped on the day. Lastly a big thank you has to go to all the MFTI funders who made the day possible and continue to support our work with wild trout around the Moray Firth.*

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