

## Education Activities

### Family events

This spring has been a busy time for education work with the Project Manager, Marcus Walters, out and about visiting schools and attending events to raise awareness about the importance of our local rivers and burns and especially the value and complexity of the local trout populations. In early May Marcus attended the Spey Bay Really Wild Fest and with over 2500 visitors to the event he was run off his feet by an endless stream of families. Their attention was really caught by a tray of invertebrates from a local stream full of lots of different species including the distinctive mayflies and stoneflies. A week later he attended the Knockando Woolmill educational event where 3 groups of 10-18 year olds got to try out the “Trout Game” for the first time. This interactive game based around the trout lifecycle is designed to highlight the habitat requirements of trout and their importance in the ecosystem as well as some of the threats they face.



Children at the Knockando Woolmill learning about trout habitat

### School and river visits

With funding provided by the Moray Firth Trout Initiative (MFTI), Moray Firth Fisheries Trusts have been visiting local schools and taking the pupils to investigate their local burn to learn firsthand about the diversity of invertebrates and fish they support. Many classes have been lucky enough to experience an electrofishing demonstration and have had the chance to do a kick sampling survey for invertebrates. Some have then gone on to do Mayfly in the Classroom (see below). So far 14 schools have been involved in the MFTI educational programme with more school visits planned for the end of term and after the school holidays. A river visit was also done with the SWT Moray Wildlife Group and further Ranger activities are planned for the summer and autumn.



Dallas school visit the River Lossie

### Mayfly in the Classroom

Following the successful Mayfly in the Classroom (MiC) Workshop run by the WTT’s Ben Tyser in Beauly the programme has taken off with support from the MFTI. MiC is an excellent way to teach local children about the importance of their local rivers and wider lessons about biodiversity, food chains, environmental quality and general ecology. The pupils collect river fly nymphs from their local

The MFTI is supported by local Fisheries Trusts, Boards and Angling Associations and funded by:

**Mob:** 07500602216

**Email:** marcus@morayfirhtrout.org

**Web:** www.morayfirhtrout.org

River before hatching them out in a homemade apparatus in the classroom (see picture) and then releasing them back to their river. The project really catches the pupil's attention and some pupils have been really surprised at the large creepy crawlies that can be found where they normally go swimming. Lynne and Natalie from the Cromarty Fisheries Trust had the added excitement of a mass stonefly hatch while they were identifying their sample on the river bank!



Dallas pupils with their Mayfly in the Classroom kit

## Conservation Work

As well as raising awareness about local trout populations and their threats through the Education Programme the MFTI has been working on practical projects to protect and restore trout habitat in our local rivers and at sea.

### Habitat surveys

The MFTI Project Manager recently attended the SFCC Habitat Training Course in Argyle and has been conducted habitat surveys with the Ness & Beaully Fisheries along the coastal burns around Inverness. Marcus now plans to continue these surveys along the small and coastal burns to identify where work needs to be done to protect or restore this essential trout habitat. He is looking for volunteers to help him with these surveys.

### Restoration

A main aim of the MFTI is to restore habitat that has become degraded but this requires a lot of background work to secure permission from landowners as well SEPA and to secure funding to do the work. The Tore Burn near Banff is a small coastal stream with some excellent habitat that supports both sea and brown trout. However access for upstream migration is potentially limited by a degraded road culvert and the project has been working with the local landowner to get the local council to restore the structure while also helping them



Bill and Lynn volunteered with some tree planting on the Tore Burn



Rubbish collected from the Bridgend Burn

do some tree planting along the lower reaches with local Alder cuttings. In the Beaully Firth the MFTI is helping the local Trust to restore various coastal Burns. A cleanup day on the 30<sup>th</sup> June was well attended by volunteers from the Beaully Angling Club who removed litter and debris from the Bridgend Burn (see pic). Plans are continuing on the Peffery to carry out significant in stream restoration work this Autumn while previous Peffery works have been entered into the Wild Trout Trust Conservation Awards.

The MFTI is supported by local Fisheries Trusts, Boards and Angling Associations and funded by:

**Mob:** 07500602216

**Email:** marcus@morayfirhtrout.org

**Web:** www.morayfirhtrout.org

## Coastal netting trial

One of the aims of the MFTI is to improve our understanding of how trout use the marine and coastal environment. The main method we plan to use for this work is seine netting to catch trout soon after they have left the river as smolts as well as adults that stay inshore. The first netting day was conducted on the Beaully Firth on 20<sup>th</sup> June and although nothing was caught the net worked well in the water and this looks a promising site for the future. This work will continue through the year and we are always looking for volunteers to help.



First netting trial on the Beaully Firth

## Loch sampling

There are hundreds of Lochs around the Moray Firth all of which support trout but few of which are fished and certainly very little is known about the trout populations they support. To try and address this gap in our knowledge the project is using the skills of local anglers to sample these Lochs so that information can be collected on these fish (length, condition and age from scales). This will help ensure their improved management and protection in the future. The first sampling day was on Loch Park in the Deveron catchment where 22 trout were caught over the day and should provide an excellent sample of the population. A trip Loch Sheilah on the Balnagowan catchment in the Cromarty Firth also produced 15 trout while a trip to Loch na Bo in the River Lossie Catchment proved less successful with only 5 trout caught. Further trips are planned so if you are interested in helping please get in touch.



A beautiful trout from Loch Park



Another beautiful but very different looking trout from Loch Park

The MFTI is supported by local Fisheries Trusts, Boards and Angling Associations and funded by: