

TAY SALMON NEWS

September 2020

Salmon catches up after Lockdown!

The first half of the 2020 season was very difficult for all. Catches were not notable in the first two months of the season, then we had the unprecedented closure for over two months, just when the season should really have been getting going.

There was obviously a sense of relief when fishing was opened for locals first of all at the end of May and for all in due course. But, what would catches be like?

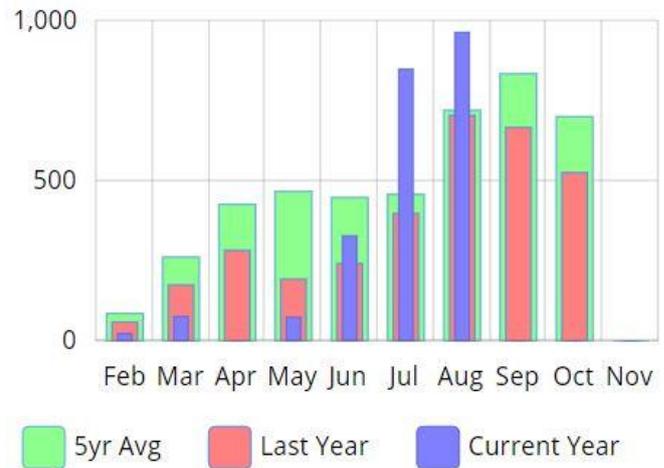
To nobody's surprise, perhaps, quite a number of beats had something of an initial bonanza. But, while things tailed off somewhat after the initial flurry, many beats continued to produce. Some beats low down the river, that never get much before July, did well too. It became clear that it wasn't just a lockdown build up. There really were more fish in the river.

At least for those beats which report on the Fishtay website, July was, overall, the best in years. Beats on both the lower and middle river did well. But, in August, catches cooled a bit up-river, and conditions have not been as consistently good as in July. However, some of the beats low down, say around Scone, have continued to fish well and will have had their best catch to end August in over a decade.

This has been great news after the Covid-19 issues, but the question on our minds is "what happens now?" The last few years have seen a tailing-off of fresh runs in September.

What will happen this year? Will the fish continue coming or have they come early?

We will soon see!



From the "Season so Far" page on the www.fishtay.co.uk website. July and August catches are well up.

Incidents up

Enforcement is a major part of the Board's work which often goes unappreciated. During the strict lockdown period, the Board's fisheries officers were on furlough but have returned to work in stages as lockdown eased.

On their return, the fisheries officers have had to deal with more issues than normal, approximately 30 call-outs alone. Perhaps a result of "staycations" or more people spending time in the local countryside, many reports have been of people angling in "suspicious" circumstances. Fortunately, in most cases, these have just been people who were unfamiliar and were generally put right or asked to leave. None warranted Police intervention.

However, the Board is grateful to proprietors and members of the public for their vigilance and reporting issues. We can only take action if something is reported when it's happening. It's no use after the event!

Hatchery News

During the long period of lockdown, when fisheries couldn't operate and had no income, the Board's priority activity was to keep our unique captive reconditioned kelt broodstock alive. While the rest of the staff were furloughed, the two hatchery staff were kept on, keeping completely apart. Their costs were very generously supported by John Apthorp CBE, to whom, once again, the Board is hugely grateful.

Our other staff all returned to work in mid-August. As well as continuing enforcement, much of our work, directly or indirectly, will be geared towards hatchery broodstock fishing which commences in October.

For example, our staff are conducting juvenile surveys which, among other things, are used to inform the annual application we have to make to Marine Scotland for permission to take broodstock.

A particular priority is to obtain DNA samples from juvenile salmon in the River Garry. This is part of a ground-breaking joint project with SSE and UHI which will demonstrate conclusively the effect of our hatchery on the Garry's recovery. A report on the first two years' work should be forthcoming shortly.

Also, early in the year, Scottish Ministers sold the site at Almondbank to the Tay Rivers Trust (formerly Tay Foundation). The TRT is now the landlord of the Board's hatchery instead of Scottish Ministers which will be better for long term security.

Tay District Salmon Fisheries Board
Site 6, Cromwellpark, Almondbank, PH1 3LW

01738 583733

ingamcgown@btconnect.com
d.summers@btinternet.com

www.tdsfb.org

Pitlochry Counter Playing Up?

With no spring fishing this year, the only good measure of the spring run is the Pitlochry Dam fish counter. However, SSE have confirmed, following concerns raised by the Board last year, that the present counter, installed in 2018, may be missing about one third of the ascending fish. It is not yet clear why. This means that, instead of just over 2,400 currently shown on the display, the true count will be more like 3,500, which is more respectable for the time of year. Board staff have now been able to access the counter site and found 49 PIT tagged salmon have ascended the pass so far. That is the most since the PIT tagging project commenced a few years ago.

More "salmon"?

A noticeable feature, up to July at least, was the number of summer salmon rather than grilse in the catch. This is a trend that has been building. Some of these were in great condition, like this cracker sent in to us by local angler Stevie Watt at the end of July.



Controlling Invasives

It has been a busy summer for the SISI project, now really getting to grips with the Tay's knotweed problem. If you wish to participate, please contact markeskrivers@gmail.com.

