Trout and Salmon Report

River Tay

16 December 2024

"Ben Lui"

My last report, penned on 20 November, noted how we had not had really appreciable rain for weeks. Well, as ever, I spoke to soon! A few days later, the Ballathie gauge rocketed from less than a foot – very unusual for November – to nearly 7 feet. Then, over the next three weeks there were several other rises up to again over 7 feet. But, approaching mid December, we were only at three and a half feet which, even that, is not really high for the time of year. However, as I write on 16 December, the frosty weather that had been prevailing has truly broken. The far west of the catchment took a fair bit of rain over night as an "atmospheric river" worked its way up the west coast of Scotland, especially hammering the Wester Ross area. More rain is forecast for the 17th. So, come Opening Day, who knows, we may see more normal levels for the time of year.

And so, of course, if you are reading this report soon after publication, the new Tay salmon season will only be days away! The 2025 salmon season will open on Wednesday 15 January.

The big opening ceremony will again be held this year at Meikleour, hosted by Claire Mercer Nairne. The opening itself will be conducted by TV personality Paul Murton, well known for his Grand Tours of Scotland series. Anglers wishing to fish there on the day should email Tayopening@gmail.com, although I suspect the 100 places will have been taken by the time you read this. You will also be more than welcome to attend as a spectator, with overspill parking available at the Meikleour Hotel. The money raised will go to support the work of the Tay Rivers Trust.

Of course, all the other beats will be marking the occasion in their own way. Wherever you are fishing, I hope you have a good day. As I have said before, the Tay opening is just a great occasion, brightening up the dullest part of the year and knowing that fishing has resumed once again.

But what of prospects? Well, who knows? Last year certainly was a poor spring, but no one expected the turnaround seen in the summer. Perhaps this spring will be better. We all certainly hope so. But one thing is pretty certain, the loveliest fish of all are caught in the early weeks of the season. Those big pristine springers. Thay have seen an increase over recent years and they should be there again. So, if you get one of these early season fish, you can be sure of something special. And, of course, there is plenty of fishing available on the www.fishtay.co.uk website, for you to try!

All the best for the new season!

Ben Lui