Trout and Salmon Report

River Tay

3 June 2024

"Ben Lui"

May was a month of some mixed weather. There was never any excessive water, but levels never really settled for long as there were several short sharp dirty rises, sometimes caused by thundery conditions. There was one such a few days into the month, then another mid month, another a week later and a final one up to around two and a half feet on the 27th. But in terms of catches, it was another month which failed to live up to its promise.

At the bottom of the river, catches really had still to get going in May. Luncarty and Upper Redgorton both reported one apiece. Nothing else has been reported below Stanley. Moving above Stanley, Taymount had five, while Stobhall had 6. The successful anglers there included Annie Mitchell, John Ross, Mike Brazendale, Jim Graham and Geoff Coates.

Fish had still to properly settle in Ballathie and Cargill, with Ballathie reporting four and Cargill three. On Ballathie, young Willaim Laird caught his first Tay fish, an 8 pounder, Jean Norton had a cracking sea liced 15 pounder, Iain Wright had a sea liced 11 pounder and Hugh Roberts had one of 8 pounds. On Cargill, Ian Muir had a cracking fish too.

However, conditions were at last more in Islamouth's favour, with it ending up with 21 for the month, the most of any beat. Anglers tasting success there included Anne Valentine, Flora Parker, Fiona MacBain, James Mayhew and Jim and Allan Ferrie. Its neighbours on the Meikleour and Upper Islamouth beat had four. Higher water early and, again, later in the month, would have seen fish push into the Isla and Ericht rather than settling in the Tay. On the Isla, the Keithick Mains beat reported three, while West Grange on the lower Ericht reported 7.

On the middle Tay, there doesn't appear to have been that much of a pattern, a steady smattering of fish across most beats rather than a big concentration in any one area. So, Kercock, for example, had five, with Andy Kerr, Rob Mitchell, Kenny Milne, Gareth Jones all appearing on the scoresheet. Glendelvine had one, Stenton had five, Murthly 2 had three but Murthly 1 had a more impressive 10. Newtyle, then, had two, a sea-liced cracker of a fish for Geraldine Gaffney and another for Dave Maxwell.

Dunkeld House had 8 for May. Among those, Peter Sproston had a sea-liced 13 pounder, Garry Dawkins had a 12 pounder and Ronnie Blair had two of 12 and 13 pounds. Dalmarnock, then, had one, caught by Scott MacNicol, while Dalguise had two. Both Lower and Upper Kinnaird had two springers apiece, with Sean Keane landing one of the fish on the upper beat.

Catches of a similar level seemed to continue right up the upper Tay too. Findynate, for example, had five, Edradynate had three, Lower Bolfracks had one, Lower Farleyer had four and Upper Farleyer had 7. Some fish also continued to be caught on Loch Tay too. Fishing with Loch Tay Fish n' Trips, two youngsters Tilly and Kyle had a real day to remember with 11 and 13 pounders. Andy Harper also had a fish of 7 pounds.

Of course, last month, the brightest spot was the River Tummel which fished well in April. However, once we got into May, water temperatures climbed into the zone, over 10 degrees, when fish can easily ascend Pitlochry Dam. This they did, and catches below the dam slowed accordingly. So, East Haugh, which had 46 in April had 11 for May, with George Renwick and Mark Hogg being among the successful. Likewise, Pitlochry Angling Club's dam beat had 15 for May as opposed to 40 in April. Among the successful there, included Jordan Wilson with two fish to 14 pounds, Gordon Hanslip with a 10 pounder, Neil Tong with an 11 pounder and Dave Stewart with an 8 pounder. Steve Watt, on the other hand, could only manage two 12 pounders this month, while Alun Williams beat all with two 15 pounders and a 10 pounder in one morning.

On the upside, SSE's new AI fish counter was displaying 959 at the month's end. That's not a bad count for the end of May, but it will all depend on what comes through in June. Did the run just go through early because of the weather or are there plenty more to come? Of course, with fish through the dam, fish are now starting to be caught upstream. Five were reported from Loch Faskally in May and on Pitlochry Angling Club's Ruan Ruarie Garry beat, Liam Mullen and David Wilson both had fish of 8 pounds on the spinner.

So that was it for May. Overall, I guess there will have been around 200 springers caught. Much the same as last year, but still well down on the recent norm. But, as I write this at the beginning of June, with the spring run behind us, we are waiting to see what the summer brings. In the last few years this is when the main runs of the year have taken place and fish begin to settle in the lower beats of the river too. The last few Julys have particularly seen good fishing on the classic beats just above Stanley. Of course, what's key to fishing at this time of year is reasonable weather and some water. As always, you can keep up to date with conditions and your chances in real time on the www.fishtay.co.uk website. Let's hope for a good fishing summer!

Tight lines

Ben Lui