

July 2017

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SPEY JOIN ARMADALE SALMON TRACKING PROJECT

The Spey Fishery Board is collaborating with Marine Scotland Science in the Armadale Salmon tracking project to find out more about the homeward migration of salmon around the Scottish coast and the spatial extent of impact of coastal fisheries. This investigation involves acoustically tagging 750 salmon at Armadale on the north coast and tracking their subsequent movements. The aim is to collect new information on where fish start to swim close to shore and the number of rivers that they nose into as they head home. The data will be compared with existing information based on coastal net catches of tagged salmon. The data collected may also be useful in relation to planning of coastal developments, including deployments of marine renewable energy devices. It may also be possible to evaluate the impact of red vent on subsequent survival of salmon in the coastal zone.

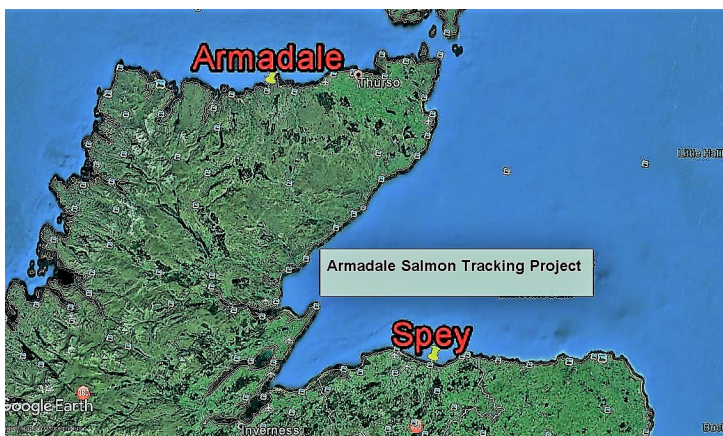
Tagging of the salmon began in the last week of June and will continue until the 25th August. The fish will be externally tagged with small 69 KHz acoustic tags, which emit unique coded signals that can be picked up by receivers. We are assisting Marine Scotland by placing two receivers in the lower river for the duration of the project. These receivers, which are also being deployed in almost all

the significant salmon rivers in Scotland, should pick up the signal emitted by any salmon entering the Spey. Instructions on what you should do if you catch one of these tagged fish have been widely circulated on the river and via our website.

Whilst the Spey Fishery Board are supportive of this study we also have significant concerns, primarily regarding the timing; by the time the tagging starts the spring run (the component of greatest conservation concern) will be over and the majority of the multi-sea winter fish will already be in our river. Ideally we would also have liked more than one netting station to have been used, as fish are known to arrive in our home-waters from a variety of directions. These concerns have been raised with Marine Scotland Science.



Above photo shows the Acoustic Tag used (Courtesy of Marine Scotland). Below photo shows one of the receivers in position in the River Spey.



Above map shows the location of the netting stations at Armadale and the mouth of the River Spey (Courtesy of Google Earth).



BRIEFING - July 2017

CATCH & RELEASE GUIDE FOR ANGLERS

Catch and release is vital to help protect and restore salmon stocks in our rivers. We encourage anglers to give salmon the best opportunity of reaching the spawning redds and to observe best practice when handling and releasing fish. Fungus can become established on any fish due to stress, or via predator damage, but poor handling during catch and release could also contribute significantly. The following guidelines were published by Marine Scotland in 2016.

Tackle

Single hooks are much easier to remove than either double or treble hooks, and barbless hooks are easier to remove than barbed ones. If you do not have barbless hooks, you can flatten the barbs with pliers. Multi-hooked lures should not be used.



Planning Ahead

Before fishing a pool, always identify where a fish can be safely landed without risk of damage on rocks or stones. If fishing alone, take a net. Traditional large mesh salmon nets can cause split fins and tails. Have long-nose forceps or a similar tool close to hand for prompt hook removal. If you want a photo of your salmon before release, have your camera ready.

Fishing from Boats

If fishing from a boat, where convenient, take the boat to the shore to land the fish. If the fish is landed in a boat, ensure that the fish is laid on a flat, wet surface for unhooking. A soaking wet towel or unhooking mat is ideal for this purpose. Laying the fish upside down will often calm it for unhooking. Fish produce most of their energy from their tails, and so holding down the tail on a flat surface will keep a fish still.

Playing Fish & Landing Fish

- The more exhausted a fish becomes, the lower are its chances of survival. It is better to land the fish quickly, and firm pressure should be used to subdue it. The fish should be netted using a soft, knotless mesh net and kept in the water as much as possible since fish breathe through their wetted gills.
- The hook should be removed immediately with the fish remaining in the water. It is sometimes easier to cut the leader first and lay the rod aside so that you can concentrate fully on looking after the fish. If there is someone with you, they can help by holding the net. If you are alone, you can support the handle of the net between your knees or perhaps use the riverbank or a stone to support the net rim.
- Be gentle and take care to wet your hands before handling the fish. Be careful not to squeeze the fish when removing the hook. On no account put your fingers under the gill covers. Extra care is required with very fresh fish as their scales are easily dislodged and this can lead to fungal infection.

Forceps or pliers make removing the hook much easier and should be kept to hand. Self-locking surgical forceps are very effective.

Fish should be allowed to recover and returned in steady clean water, but not in a fast flow. Recovery may take some time.



Recording your catch

Weigh nets are ideal for weighing fish quickly with minimal harm to the fish. If necessary, you can get a good estimate of the fish's weight by measuring its length. A tape measure can be carried to do this or you can mark out the net handle, wading staff or rod. If you are alone a photograph can be taken of the fish in the net. If a companion is nearby, a photograph can be taken as you briefly lift the fish out of the water.



Photography - The fish should be supported gently in the water for release, head upstream to aid breathing, until it makes to swim off. This may take some time, depending on how tired the fish is, but be patient. When you feel the fish trying to swim away, let it go.

Doing your bit

The chances of survival of a released fish depend on how it has been handled. If you handle the fish properly you can be confident that the fish will have the greatest chance of going on to spawn. Catch and release is one of the most effective ways in which anglers can contribute to the future of their sport.



Above Photo: Delfur Ghillie, Grant Morrison

Summary

- Use appropriate tackle, play fish quickly and use a knotless nylon net.
- Keep the fish in the water as much as possible.
- Handle the fish as carefully as possible.
- Support the fish facing into the current until it has recovered, then let it go.

Weighing - Weight can be estimated from length. Fish should be measured from the nose to the fork of the tail. See scale below.

We hope that you enjoy your fishing. We thank you for your support in our conservation policy and wish you **TIGHT LINES.**

Length (ins)	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42
Weight (lbs)	5	6	6 1/2	7 1/2	8 1/4	9 1/4	10 1/2	12	13	14 1/4	16	17	19	20 3/4	22 1/2	24 3/4	26 3/4	29	31

Willow Spiling demonstration site – River Spey at Aviemore



Photos from top to bottom show the eroding bank in December 2016 before works commenced, followed by the repair two months later and the progression to green willow banks after rainfall in June.

The standard approach to protecting river banks is often hard engineering solutions that use rock or concrete. However, wherever possible this is now being discouraged in favour of more natural, environmentally friendly and aesthetically pleasing techniques that are based on natural materials such as large root wads or live trees. Although popular elsewhere, there were very few examples of techniques such as willow spiling or log jams being used in the Highlands. Therefore the Spey Catchment Initiative were keen to trial them within the Spey Catchment.

A section of eroding river bank near Aviemore had recently been restored using willow spiling, a technique whereby live willows are woven into a support structure of vertical willow posts.

As they root, the willows form a living wall, reinforcing the bank and protecting it from further erosion. In this case a two-tiered system had been used. However, a single-tier is often sufficient for smaller banks.

The site will now be monitored to assess the effectiveness and suitability of the technique for use next to high flow river systems and its resilience to the Highland climate. Once established, annual pruning will be required, but the cuttings can then be utilised elsewhere. This project was made possible thanks to the generous support of the Cairngorms National Park Authority.



DATES FOR THE DIARY

Spey Fishery Board Meetings

To be held at 10:00 am at the Craigellachie Hotel, Victoria Street, Craigellachie, AB38 9SR on the following dates:
Friday 18th August and Friday 24th November 2017.

Members of the public are invited to attend as observers, but are requested to give notice to the Board's Administrator, Sally Gross, by telephone on 01340-810841, or by email at admin@speyfisheryboard.com

SPEY FISHERY BOARD RESEARCH OFFICE

1 NETHER BORLUM COTTAGE, KNOCKANDO, MORAYSHIRE, AB38 7SD

TEL: 01340 810841 FAX: 01340 810842 E-MAIL: admin@speyfisheryboard.com