

September 2017

www.speyfisheryboard.com

Pacific Pink Salmon Update



Above: Male Pink Salmon with noticeable humped back caught by the Fochabers Angling Association.

Background

In July, we issued an advice note to explain what to do if anglers caught a Pacific Pink Salmon (*Oncorhynchus gorbuscha*) in the River Spey.

Current Situation

It is important to emphasise that small numbers of Pink Salmon have turned up in UK rivers for many years and so this is nothing new. However, 2017 has seen unprecedented numbers of fish captured across the UK and also in Norway and Finland. Captures have also been reported in Denmark and Germany.

To date, around 70 fish have been captured in at least 18 Scottish rivers, including at least 9 in the River Spey. There has also been spawning activity with redds being cut.

What is the risk?

The simple answer is that we do not know. We know that populations of pink salmon have established in Finland and Norway and that very high numbers have been observed in northern Scandinavia this year. The reasons behind the unusually large numbers in 2017 remain unclear. The population from the Kola Peninsula tends to be stronger and more numerous in odd years (like this year) rather than even years. It would appear that these salmon originate from a particularly strong year class with good marine survival and this may explain the unusually high numbers across several countries in 2017.

It is not understood how the Scottish river temperature regime will affect the development and incubation of eggs

spawned in August. The time of emergence is likely to be early, with fry heading to sea as early as November. This is much earlier than native salmonids, but Pink Salmon are a very successful species and they may well become established, despite this apparent mis-match in timing.

There have been no recent captures of fresh Pink Salmon, but they die after spawning and so the Spey Fishery Board is also interested in any sightings of dead fish on the riverbank.



Above: Female pink salmon with eggs caught at Craigellachie.

What should you do if you catch a Pacific salmon?

If you are confident that you have caught a Pink Salmon, the fish should be humanely despatched and retained. The Spey Fishery Board is keen that as many of these fish as possible are removed from the river.

All such fish, as well as any dead Pacific Salmon found, should be passed to staff at the Spey Fishery Board, who will take scale samples and arrange for further inspection and analysis. Where possible, please also record the following information and report it to the Spey Fishery Board:

- Date of Capture
- Sex of Fish
- Location of capture
- Method of capture

Also, and in particular, please be especially vigilant for any sign of spawning activity, which is usually during August and September. We would be most grateful if this could also be reported to the Spey Fishery Board by telephone on **01340-810841** or via email to: 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

BRIEFING - September 2017

Juvenile Monitoring 2017

The mainstem juvenile monitoring is such a prominent and important part of our work. It's importance is a reflection of the quantity, and quality, of available habitat in the Spey mainstem. Our primary monitoring technique for assessing the mainstem is a series of replicate salmon fry index surveys conducted mainly in shallow riffle or run habitat i.e. salmon fry habitat. These sites are surveyed annually for three minutes (*actual electrofishing time counted down by the Efish-ing kit*). The main target species and life stage is salmon fry but we also catch parr plus other species such as trout, eels etc.

The table to the right shows the survey results for monitoring salmon fry along the mainstem of the Spey each year since 2012. The colours represent the following classification below :

Spey timed fry breakpoint 2012-2016		
Class	Grade	Breakpoint (salmon fry/min)
Absent	AB	0
Very low	E	<5.00
Low	D	Between 5.1 to 10.9
Moderate	C	Between 11.0 to < 17.3
Good	B	Between 17.4 to 28.0
Excellent	A	>28.1+



Above: The Spey Electrofishing team at Granttown on Spey.



In summary, the fry counts for 2017 were generally very good with the highest average in the sequence.

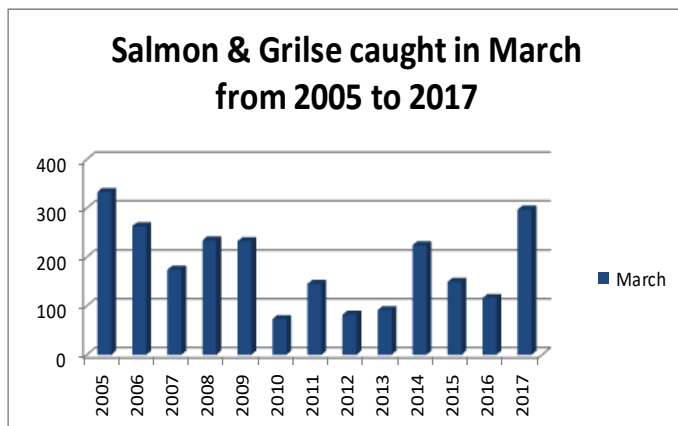
The mainstem parr counts are middle-ranking compared to previous years, with low parr counts below Wester Elchies compared to 2016 and average parr counts from Wester Elchies to Spey Dam. As we progressed up-river, the parr counts improved, with some sites producing their highest parr counts (Ballindalloch through Tulchan in particular). Trends in parr counts reflect low fry counts last year, with evidence of some downstream migration from above the Avon confluence. This process is likely to continue until smoltification. The results from timed surveys in the tributaries were similar, with good fry counts but reduced parr counts.

		Salmon fry/min					
Site code	Location	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
S007R1	Gordon Castle	24.7	22.7	16.3	27.3	5.7	46.3
S012R1	Gordon Castle	11.3	17.0	17.3	20.3	10.7	14.7
S017L2	Gordon Castle	31.7	52.7	24.7	20.0	13.0	32.0
S019L2	Gordon Castle	13.3	57.7	28.7	34.7	17.3	59.3
S025L1	Gordon Castle	7.7	26.0	23.0	26.0	20.7	24.0
S029L1	Orton Water	6.3	41.0	15.0	31.7	15.7	29.0
S032L1	Orton Water	9.0	44.0	17.7	28.3	14.7	36.3
S034R1	Delfur	19.7	12.0	55.0	27.0	5.0	27.7
S040L1	Delfur	6.7	14.0	13.3	22.0	4.7	50.3
S040L2	Delfur		90.0	66.0	29.0	15.7	52.7
S042L1	Rothies	7.7	44.0	10.3	14.7	12.0	31.7
S047L1	Rothies	6.3	9.3	9.0	18.3	4.7	21.7
S050R1	Armdilly	13.7	29.7	28.3	16.0	13.3	31.0
S052L1	Armdilly	15.7	15.7	19.7	23.7	9.3	21.3
S056L1	East Elchies	17.7	34.7	43.7	39.7	16.0	50.3
S059R1	Craigellachie	36.7	28.3	33.3	23.0	17.3	45.7
S060R1	Craigellachie	13.0	12.3	23.0	11.7	17.7	20.3
S061R1	Craigellachie	20.3	12.3	22.0	10.0	4.7	16.0
S066R1	Aberlour	10.0	15.3	27.7	17.0	11.0	31.3
S068R1	Kinermory	3.3	7.3				
S068L1	Wester Elchies		15.7	12.0	9.3	3.3	38.7
S071R1	Delagyle	7.0	6.3				
S072L2	Wester Elchies		19.3	7.3	28.3	3.0	22.7
S074L1	Laggan	7.0	5.3	9.0	13.7	2.0	18.0
S077L1	Laggan	36.7	10.0	31.3	27.7	7.7	32.0
S079R1	Carron	15.7	31.0	16.3	18.3	11.7	27.0
S082L1	Knockando	8.3	9.3	17.7	15.0	8.7	18.7
S087L1	Phones		3.7	6.0	4.7	0.7	7.0
S093R1	Lower Pitchroy	21.3	25.7	20.3	41.7	16.7	40.7
S096R1	Ballindalloch	11.0	20.0	49.0	37.0	20.3	52.0
S104L2	Ballindalloch	20.3	61.3	40.7	43.0	25.0	54.7
S105L2	Tulchan D	35.0	65.7	33.7	45.7	33.3	39.0
S112L1	Tulchan C	10.3	35.0	11.3	31.3	14.7	28.7
S119L1	Tulchan B	28.0	30.7	10.0	27.7	12.7	31.0
S124R1	Tulchan A	13.0	38.0	14.7	18.7	11.7	33.7
S131L1	Castle Grant 3	29.0	40.0	21.0	34.3	24.0	35.3
S135L1	Castle Grant 2	17.7	44.0	36.3	20.0	10.0	32.3
S141L1	Castle Grant 1	3.7	8.0	9.3	17.0	24.3	19.7
S147L1	SAIA	11.0	17.3	16.0	45.3	24.7	42.3
S149L1	SAIA	12.0	10.3	14.7	21.7	23.7	23.0
S163L1	Abernethy AA	33.7	73.3	59.3	28.0	28.3	68.3
S177L1	Abernethy AA	23.0	53.0	24.0	31.0	24.3	45.3
S183L1	Kinchurdy	5.7	45.0	21.0	29.7	17.3	38.0
S195L1	Aviemore AA	14.0	36.0	13.7	11.0	14.3	17.7
S209L1	Kinrara	19.0	28.3	13.3	19.3	12.3	27.0
S212R1	Kinrara	16.0					
S215L1	Dalraddy	24.3	63.3	47.7	24.0	21.3	24.3
S243R1	Badenoch Ruthven Bridge	8.7	14.3	17.7		38.7	56.0
S254R1	Badenoch Golf course	6.0	8.0	18.3	10.7	12.0	18.7
S258L1	Badenoch Calder Mouth	12.7	11.0	19.3	5.7	38.3	37.0
S260L1	Badenoch AA				20.7	22.7	23.7
S264R1	Truim	22.0	4.3	5.3			
S282R1	Laggan	19.7	17.7	18.7	26.0	20.7	30.0
S287L1	Laggan	12.3	21.3	14.7	5.0	29.7	25.3
S290L1	Below Spey Dam	18.0	25.0	5.7	8.0	17.0	8.0
S298R1	Glenshirra	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.3	0.0	0.0
S305R1	Garvamore	3.3	3.7	0.0	2.7	0.0	0.3
S305R2	Garva Bridge	1.3	1.3	0.0	1.0	0.0	1.0
S311L1	Upper Spey	4.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.0
S312L1	Upper Spey	4.7	0.0	0.0	0.3	0.0	2.7
S315L1	Upper Spey	5.7	0.0	0.0	8.0	0.0	2.0
S317L1	Upper Spey	7.0	0.0	0.0	1.0	0.0	6.7
S318L1	Upper Spey	3.0	0.0	0.0	0.3	0.3	1.3
S319R1	Upper Spey	0.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.7	1.3
S324L1	Upper Spey				0.0	2.0	0.7
S326L1	Upper Spey	5.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.7	0.0
S328R1	Upper Spey	0.0	*				0.0
Mean		13.6	23.6	18.8	19.2	13.0	26.6

Spring Catch 2017

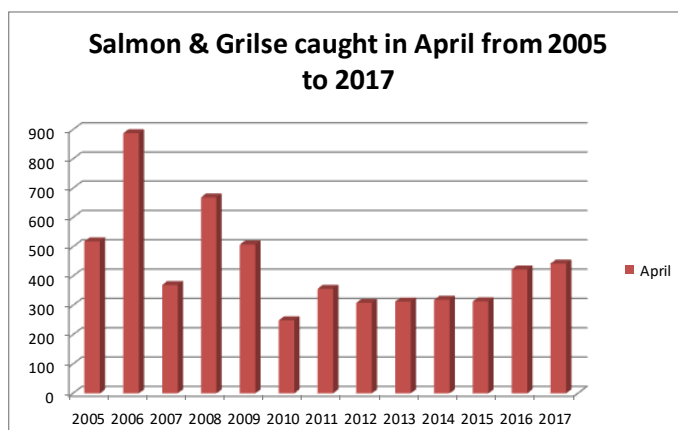
Salmon & Grilse

The River Spey's Salmon & Grilse catch from February to June 2017 has amounted to **2,677** fish. Whilst this may be 1,263 less than the number caught for the same period last year (3,940), it is only 45 below the five-year average of 2,722.



Above chart shows the salmon and grilse caught in March each year from 2005 to 2017.

Below chart shows the salmon and grilse caught in April each year between 2005 and 2017.



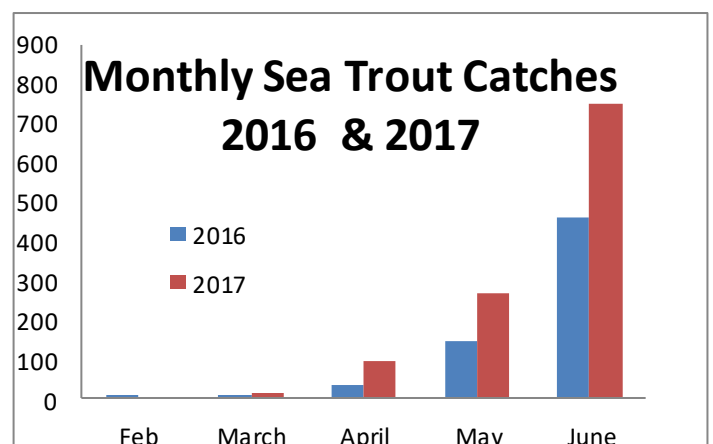
The catches for March and April were also significantly better than their five-year averages. In fact this March was the best catch for salmon and grilse since March 2005 and this April saw the best catch since April 2009. Furthermore, the Catch & Release rate has risen to **96%**, up 2% on last year's figure. SFB Director, Roger Knight said, "This is a resounding success for the Spey's Conservation Policy and is down to the continued strong support from the angling community. The Board is most grateful to the ghillies and proprietors for promoting our voluntary conservation policy."



Above: David Wood at Delfur (Courtesy of Mark Melville).

Sea Trout

The Sea Trout catch for the early part of the season has amounted to **1,122**, up 477 on the 645 caught for the same period last year and significantly above the 5-year and 10-year averages of 812 and 903 respectively. Anglers and ghillies have also continued to support the Board's Conservation Policy for Sea Trout too, returning **75%** of the fish caught, up 5% on the release rate for this period last year.



Above: Monthly Sea Trout caught between February and June in 2017 compared with the same period in 2016.

Fochabers Burn

When the Fochabers Burn experienced a 1-in-50 year flood event in 2009, there was extensive de-stabilization of the river bed which resulted in huge volumes of sediment being released. The burn continues to take a long time to settle down from this event and this year the sediment movements within it have been extraordinary. This can be seen from the photographs below, which were taken following a spate earlier in 2017. They illustrate the highly mobile nature of this burn, which has rendered the lower fish pass, installed during the CASS Life project between 2004 and 2008, completely inoperable.

The Spey Catchment Initiative is continuing to look at restorative options for this burn to ascertain whether any of them would be practicable and sustainable.



2011 *Mouth of Fochabers Burn* 2017



2011 *Looking downstream towards the caravan park* 2017



DATES FOR THE DIARY

Spey Fishery Board Meeting

To be held at 09.30 am at the Craigellachie Hotel, Victoria Street, Craigellachie, AB38 9SR on **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