Registered Scottish Charity Number SC 037684
Company Registration No. SC 294401

NESS & BEAULY FISHERIES TRUST

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH 2015

LBCo Ltd
t/a Lees-Buckley & Co
16 Northfields Prospect Business Centre
Putney Bridge Road
London SW18 1PE

NESS & BEAULY FISHERIES TRUST

STATUTORY INFORMATION

ORGANISATION STATUS

Ness and Beauly Fisheries Trust is governed by its Memorandum and Articles of Association and is a registered Scottish charity and a company limited by guarantee. Charitable status was granted on 20th December 2006.

SCOTTISH CHARITY REGISTRATION NUMBER:

SC 037684

COMPANY REGISTRATION NUMBER:

SC 294401

REGISTERED OFFICE:

Corff House
Beauly
Inverness-shire
Scotland
IV4 7BE

PRINCIPAL BANKERS:

Clydesdale Bank, 32 Longman Road, Inverness, IV1 1RY

SOLICITORS:

Harper Macleod, Alder House, Cradlehall Business Park, Inverness, IV2 5GH

ACCOUNTANTS:

LBCo Ltd t/a Lees-Buckley & Co, Chartered Accountants, 16 Northfields Prospect Business Centre, Putney Bridge Road, London SW18 1PE

NESS & BEAULY FISHERIES TRUST

REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH 2015

The Trustees of Ness and Beauly Fisheries Trust have pleasure in presenting their Annual Report for the year ended 31st March 2015.

Structure, Governance and Management

The Trust is a registered charity and a company limited by guarantee and governed by the Memorandum and Articles of Association.

The Board comprises not less than four and not more than seven trustees. In addition two additional trustees can be co-opted by the board for their expertise in a particular field.

The Ness District Salmon Board and the Beauly District Salmon Board are entitled to nominate two trustees each to the Board.

At each AGM one-third of the trustees must retire by rotation. Retiring trustees are eligible for re-appointment.

The Trust is a member of the River and Fisheries Trust for Scotland. RAFTS offers guidance and assistance to its Member Trusts and in addition seeks funding at national levels and distributes these funds to the Member Trusts.

Chairman's Report

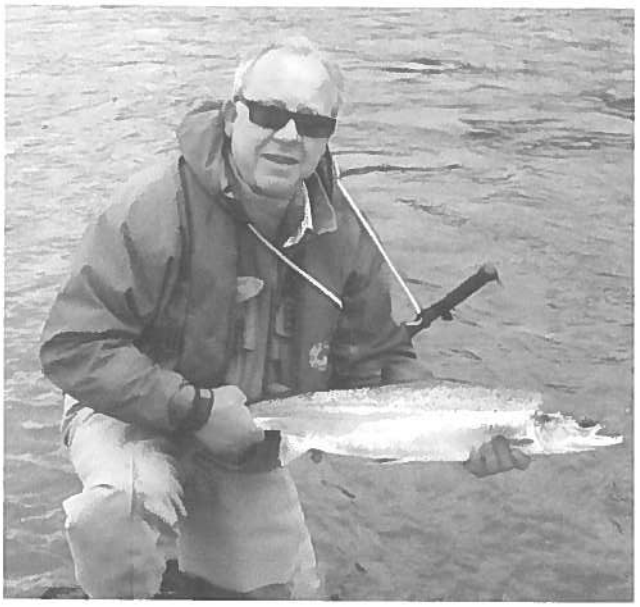
It is disappointing to report that that the Trust made a small loss in the financial year. There was a substantial drop in external contract work as I had forecast in my last report. With a diligent control of expenditure, the loss was restricted to £1,976 with a corresponding reduction in cash reserves. Sourcing external projects will remain challenging as the cut in green energy subsidy has led to a reduction in new projects and this had been a significant source of contract income in recent years.

On a more positive note, we made significant improvements in the administration and management of the Trust. Chris Conroy completed his first full year as part-time director of the Trust, a position he shares with Ness District Salmon Fisheries Board. The joint position eliminated much of the duplication of effort of both organisations and allowed Chris to have a good look at our housekeeping. It is important that we maintain and evolve our reporting and control procedures, not only for the effective management of the Trust but also for securing both external and government contracts. I am very pleased with the progress that has been made and Chris's appointment has also freed up our biologists to concentrate on more practical matters.

Nick Barker was appointed to Senior Biologist with Chris Daphne recruited as Assistant Biologist. As you can see from our Activities Report, the work they undertook was considerable and significant. In particular, I would like to commend the ground-breaking work being undertaken on the Pearls in Peril project in which we are becoming experts in our field.

As we move forward we will have to change and adapt as the Scottish Government undertakes a Wild Fisheries Review. It is likely that Boards and Trusts as we know them will cease to exist being replaced with proposed Fisheries Management Organisations. As yet there is uncertainty as to the structure of these organisations, however it should become clearer as the findings of the consultation period are released during the autumn. It is the intention to place a Bill before the Scottish Parliament next spring. Change will not happen overnight and in the meantime we will continue to manage the Trust in a professional and business-like manner, and ensure an organised passage into the new structure.

Despite the small loss I do consider we this has been a very successful year in what we have achieved, and I would like to thank all the staff and fellow trustees for all their efforts during the year.



Neil Cameron
Chairman

Administration and Communication

Team Structure

Following Dr Keith Williams' departure from the Ness and Beauly Fisheries Trust (NBFT) at the end of April, there have been a number of changes to our team structure:

- **Trust Director** – Chris Conroy (Director, Ness District Salmon Fishery Board) has taken on the new position of part-time Trust Director, reporting to the Trust Chairman. The Ness Board has agreed to contribute two days of his time per week in support of the management of the Trust.

- **Senior Biologist** – Nick Barker has been promoted to the position of Senior Biologist, reporting to the Trust Director. The Senior Biologist is responsible for the development and delivery of a range of fisheries research, education and monitoring programmes. He has a high degree of independence and considerable responsibility regarding the development and implementation of fisheries management plans.

- **Assistant Biologist** – Chris Daphne (formerly 'Pearls in Peril' River Watcher) has taken over from Nick's previous role as Assistant Biologist, reporting to the Senior Biologist. His primary role is assisting the Senior Biologist in the development and delivery of fisheries research, education and monitoring programmes.

- **Pearls in Peril River Watcher** – Natalie Young (formally with the Conon Fishery Board/Trust) has taken over from Chris's previous role as 'Perils in Pearl' River Watcher. The River Watcher is employed by RAFTS (Rivers and Fisheries Trusts Scotland) and managed on a day-to-day basis by the NBFT. The primary role of this post is to combat illegal activities concerning pearl mussels.

Office Refurbishment

The NBFT office at Corff House has been given a long overdue refurbishment. The office was completely emptied before being given a deep clean and new coat of paint. New matching office furniture was delivered and fitted on the 13th June 2014. This includes four matching desks, a meeting table, chairs and storage units.

New Website

On the 24th June 2014 Indra Design Ltd were commissioned to develop a new, more functional website for the NBFT which became live on the 21st October 2014. The new site is in a WordPress format similar to the Ness and Beauly Fishery Board's websites. We are now able to create and post our own news items and make changes to the content of the site. A new membership feature has been configured so that users are able to subscribe to membership. This feature uses PayPal pay/subscribe buttons. Funds are automatically transferred to a nominated PayPal account.

Key Activities

This section of the report provides a summary of the work carried out by the Trust during the period ended 31st March 2015.

Fisheries Monitoring

The Ness and Beauly Fisheries Trust completed a comprehensive fisheries monitoring programme across both the Ness and Beauly catchments. The results will be used to provide a measure of the extent to which spawning and nursery habitats are being utilised, an assessment of the demographic structure of the populations, identify adverse environmental impacts and highlight any recruitment failures.

Ness System Juvenile Salmonid Surveys

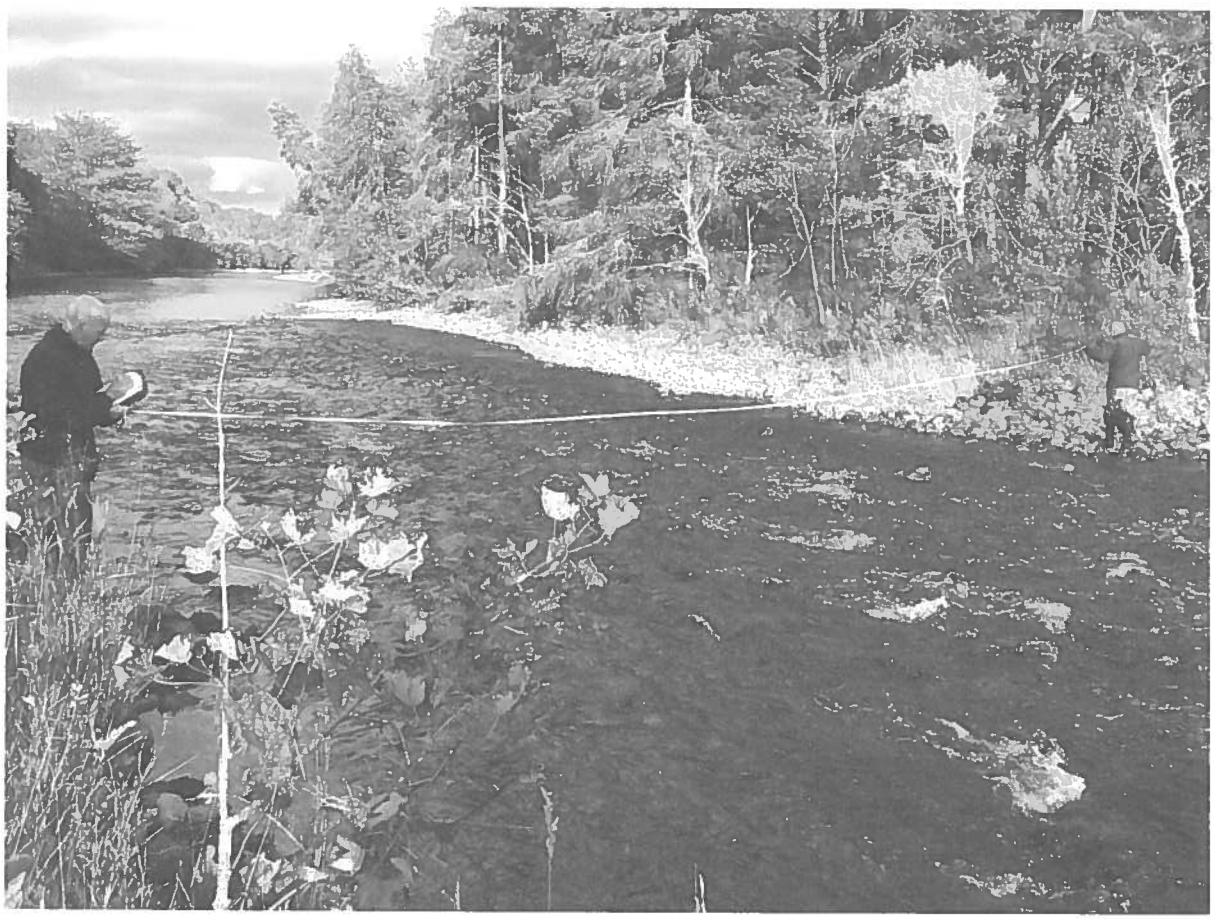
Until recently there was a distinct lack of information relating to the status and distribution of juvenile salmonid populations and their habitat in the Ness system. Over the last few years the NBFT has addressed this by completing a comprehensive programme of electro-fishing across the catchment.

River Ness Mainstem Surveys - Results of the 2014 surveys on the mainstem of the River Ness were extremely encouraging. Of the three River Ness sites, each one produced densities of salmon fry that would be regarded as 'excellent' under the NBFT density classification scheme.

Juvenile salmon being processed during a River Ness mainstem survey

The salmon fry density of 417/100m^2 from site N4 (Dochfour) is the highest ever recorded from the Ness catchment and indicates a good level of spawning activity in the upper reaches of the River Ness in the winter of 2013. Older year classes of salmon were also well represented, with two sites (N2: Holm Mills Weir and N3: Ness Castle) achieving density classifications of 'excellent' and one site (N4) being classed as 'good'. Numbers of juvenile trout were low from each of the mainstem sites. This result is almost certainly an artefact of site selection which sought to sample areas of juvenile salmon habitat rather than trout habitat.

Record site details during the survey at Dochfour on the River Ness in summer 2014



River Enrick Mainstem Surveys - The two quantitative surveys executed on the River Enrick showed similarly encouraging results. The lowermost site EN1 (Drumnadrochit) has consistently shown itself to support 'excellent' densities of both salmon fry and parr. The most recent survey was no exception to this, with both cohorts being classed as 'excellent'.

The upper site EN7 (Corrimony) is towards the upper range in which returning adult salmon can naturally access. In contrast to EN1, spawning is not as plentiful and represents what NBFT would regard as parr habitat. This has been reflected by the inconsistent densities of salmon fry seen between 2007 and 2014. The most recent survey generated salmon fry and parr densities that would be classed as 'good' and 'excellent' respectively. However, it should be noted that there appears to be an overall downward trend in salmon fry density at both sites.

Lower River Garry and Tributaries - Results gathered from historic and the most recent surveys on the Lower River Garry (sites GAR2 and GAR3) would indicate that the limited spawning media present in the vicinity of the sites is well utilized, with both surveys generating salmon fry density estimates that would be classed as 'excellent'. However, densities of salmon parr appear to have

declined year on year. Precise reasons for the decline remain unknown and we intend to monitor the situation closely.

Allt na Caillichie is an important tributary of the Lower River Garry that shows itself to harbour an important population of juvenile salmon. The 2014 survey generated salmon fry and parr densities that would be classed as 'good' and 'moderate' respectively. In our routine habitat survey of site ANC1, we have noted considerable changes to the substrate matrix between surveys and this could indicate that the burn periodically suffers from redd 'wash-out'.

The Aldernaig Burn is heavily impacted by abstraction in its upper reaches and this lead to NBFT being unable to carry out surveys in 2010 and 2011 due to severely depleted flows. Densities of salmon fry have been typically low/absent. Indeed, spawning media in this section of the burn is extremely sparse, both in terms of area and distribution. Salmon parr were well represented in 2009 and 2013 with density classifications of 'excellent' and 'good' respectively. However, there was a marked decrease of over 80% between 2013 and 2014. The precise reasons for this remain unknown although it is possible that during drought conditions, juvenile salmon may leave the burn's lower reaches for the relative sanctuary of the mainstem.

When comparing mean salmon fry densities between Watt (2005) and NBFT in 2013 and 2014, this report has shown that results appear to fluctuate between years. In terms of mean salmon parr densities, these too appear to fluctuate with a decrease in excess of 50% between 2013 and 2014.

Loch Garry and Tributaries - Salmon fry were recorded as absent from each of the quantitative surveys carried out on Allt Daingean, Greenfield Burn, Garbh Allt and Allt Garry Gualach. With the exception of the Allt Daingean site (ADAI1), these results are in line with results from the 2013 surveys. Similarly, salmon parr were absent from each site except from ADAI1 where a 'moderate' density was generated from the quantitative survey. When examining densities of juvenile trout, results would suggest that the Greenfield Burn and Garbh Allt act as important nursery areas for trout. It remains to be seen if the trout in these burns are the progeny of resident or migratory trout.

Comparison of mean salmon fry and parr densities between Watt (2005) and NBFT's surveys in 2013 and 2014 have shown marked reductions in both year classes indicating a distinct lack of returning adult salmon to these parts of the catchment.

Upper River Garry and Tributaries - The four surveys conducted on the Upper River Garry and its tributaries showed very low numbers of both salmon fry and parr, despite the presence of some very suitable habitat both in terms of spawning and accompanying juvenile habitat. Results from 2013 and 2014 clearly show a distinct underutilisation of the available habitat by salmon. Conversely, it would appear that the habitat available on Allt Choire a' Bhalachain and Allt na Slaitaich is well utilised by trout. Comparison of mean densities of juvenile salmon show an overall falling trend both in terms of salmon fry and parr.

River Gearr Garry and River Kingie - Up until 2014, salmon fry were not recorded in any electro-fishing surveys on the Gearr Garry despite the removal of Poulary Heck in 2004. The presence of a single salmon fry at Site GG2 (Gearr Garry) in 2014 would indicate a degree of spawning success in the winter of 2013. A further two timed surveys on the Gearr Garry showed salmon to be absent.

The 2014 quantitative assessments of the River Kingie and the Kinbreac Burn showed salmon fry to be present, albeit in densities that would be classed as 'poor' and 'moderate' respectively. However, salmon parr densities from the same sites were more encouraging and would be classed as 'moderate' and 'good'. Further upstream, the timed sites KI/Timed11 and KI/Timed13 revealed salmon fry in low numbers whilst parr were absent.

Beauly System Juvenile Salmonid Surveys

During 2014, the NBFT continued with their programme of electro-fishing surveys in tributaries of the Beauly system. A total of 18 sites were the subject of fully quantitative surveys.

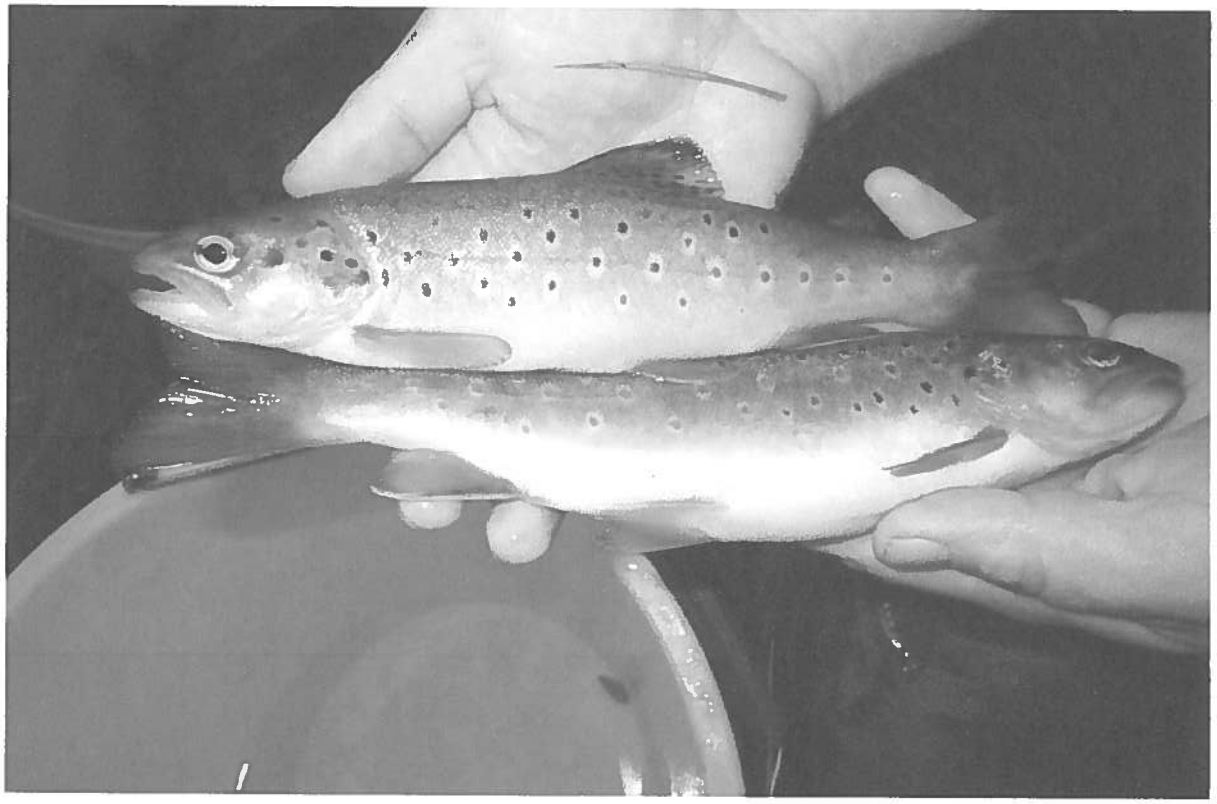
Farrar Catchment - Results from the Farrar catchment were typically within their historical range for each site. With the exception of Allt Innis a' Mhuillt, salmon fry densities were towards the lower end of the range. It would appear there was less spawning activity in the vicinity of the sites. Salmon parr densities were largely encouraging. There is a paucity of information on the utilisation of spawning habitat on the mainstem of the River Farrar. It is recommended that area based surveys (where practicable) are increased on the mainstem.

Lower Beauly and Tributaries - Salmon fry and parr densities on the lower site of the Bruiach Burn were towards the lower end of the historical range though densities would still be classed as moderate and good respectively. Access to the upper site was not possible in 2014. NBFT intend to resolve this issue for 2015 and also repeat a series of timed surveys to investigate the extent of spawning success along the burn's length. There also appeared to be a reduction in trout recruitment in 2014 though fry and parr densities would still be classed as good and excellent respectively. A similar picture was seen on the lower Belladrum Burn site with vastly reduced numbers of salmon fry though the 2014 result is still within the historical range for the site. The 2014 salmon parr density would be classed as good.

Members of the NBFT team carrying out an electro-fishing survey on the River Beauly in summer 2014

The upper Belladrum Burn site continues to produce excellent densities of juvenile trout. It remains to be seen if these fish are the progeny of sea trout. Salmon were absent from the upper site due to the presence of a natural waterfall downstream of the site

A brace of brown trout caught during an electro-fishing survey on the Belladrum Burn in 2014



The precise reason for the apparent decline in salmon spawning activity in the area near the Culburnie Burn site remains unknown. This report has proposed that the Culburnie Burn was primarily a sea trout burn and that the historical stocking of salmon possibly displaced the trout population. To assess this, it is recommended that a series of timed surveys take place along the burn's accessible length to establish levels of spawning success by salmon. Salmon parr appear to utilise the available habitat very well and the 2014 result would be classed as excellent. Juvenile trout were well represented in the 2014 survey and both age classes would be classed as excellent.

Drought conditions throughout much of the summer period allowed the Trust to survey four locations on the mainstem of the lower River Beauly. With the exception of the site on the lower Downie Beat, densities were at an acceptable level for the habitat fished. The most notable result was the excellent density (45/100m2) of salmon parr from the upper Falls Beat site.

Middle Beauly - The Breakachy Burn continues to produce excellent densities of juvenile salmon. The 2014 fry density is amongst the highest ever recorded in the Beauly catchment.

Upper Beauly Tributaries - Salmon fry density on the Eskadale Burn increased greatly following very low counts between 2011 and 2013. Parr density has remained relatively stable and the most recent survey generated a density that would be classed as 'excellent'.

Although not as productive as some lower tributaries, the Erchless Burn is an important upper River spawning area for both salmon and trout. The salmon parr habitat at the upper site is very well utilised. In terms of the lower site, it would appear that the bed in this section is prone to substantial gravel movements under high water conditions. This has changed the nature of the site considerably and caution should be used when comparing results between years. With this said however, salmon

and trout densities are encouraging. Given the influx of a larger substrate to the lower section of the burn, it is entirely possible that salmon and trout parr densities may increase over time.

River Glass and Tributaries - The Abhainn Deabhag site once again revealed encouraging densities of juvenile salmon. The available habitat in this section of the river is obviously well utilised as is the vast majority of the accessible habitat.

The Glass Burn is one of few notable tributaries of the River Glass. Densities of salmon fry and parr have typically been classed as good/moderate. The prevalence of juvenile trout from past and present surveys also shows the burn as an important spawning and nursery area for trout. It remains to be seen whether the trout capture in the Glass Burn are the progeny of resident or migratory trout.

Beauly Firth Sea Trout Netting with the MFTI

One of the key aims of the Moray Firth Trout Initiative (MFTI), to which the NBFT is a partner, is to learn more about our local sea trout populations and how they use the marine environment and in particular the inner firths. To achieve this, in 2014 we conducting a series of coastal seine netting trials to catch sea trout and collect length data, scales and conduct sea lice counts.

Staff from the MFTI, NDSFB and NBFT with other volunteers hauling the net after a successful shot

Reading the scales we can learn how old the fish are, when they smolted, how long they have been at sea and if they have spawned before. We can then compare this information with historical collections and analysis conducted by G.H Nall for the Fishery Board for Scotland in 1929. The length of the fish at any given age can provide us with a growth rate and an indication of food availability. Conducting sea lice counts on all trout caught helps us monitor the presence of this marine parasite in our coastal waters.

Salmon Netting at Rosemarkie

On the 13th August 2014 the NBFT worked in partnership with Ness District Salmon Fishery Board (NBSFB), Moray Firth Trout Initiative, Moray Firth Partnership and Kincurdie Net Fishery to sweep net for salmon and sea trout at Rosemarkie beach on the Black Isle.

A salmon conservation agreement is currently in place between the Kincurdie Fishery (together with the Longman Fishery) and the NDSFB. This means that the netting station will not be operated until May 2015, unless for specific research and monitoring purposes agreed in advance by the board.

The key purpose of the operation was to capture, tag and release fish in an attempt to further our understanding of salmon and sea trout movements within the firth. This relies on a proportion of the tagged fish subsequently being recaptured by anglers in nearby rivers. The Moray Firth Partnership also took the opportunity to film the netting operation from a cultural heritage perspective.

Only one fish was captured on the day. The 4.75lb male grilse was anaesthetised before being measured, weighed and tagged with an external anchor tag carrying a unique code number. A scale sample was taken so that the age of the fish could be determined. A sea lice count was also carried out and a DNA sample taken so that attempts could be made to assign the fish to its natal river. The fish was then revived before being returned alive and well to the firth.

Taking scale and DNA samples from the fish before tagging and releasing

Although employed in other parts of Scotland, this sampling technique is new to the Ness district. Overall the operation ran very smoothly, with the small sample size owing more to a distinct lack of fish than anything else. We look forward to further developing joint monitoring opportunities with the netsmen in the future.

Ness District Salmon Tagging Programme

During the 2014 season tagging training sessions were delivered to ghillies and anglers throughout the Ness catchment. Tagging provides basic information about where an individual fish is at two times in its life, i.e. when it is caught and tagged, and when it is recaptured. Information gathered following

the recapture of tagged fish can be used to provide information about growth, stock identity, movements, migration (both rates and routes), abundance and mortality.

Fish released by anglers were subsequently tagged using individually numbered and colour coded external anchor (Floy) tags. Those fish captured on the River Ness were marked with yellow tags, those on the Moriston with white tags and those on the Oich with orange tags.

The details of each fish were recorded at the time of the first capture (including the date, pool, weight and condition) and again at the time of the second capture. This information will be collated and published in the '2014 Ness Catchment Salmon Tagging Programme' report.

A yellow River Ness Floy Tag clearly visible on a recaptured salmon

Ness District Scale Sampling Programme

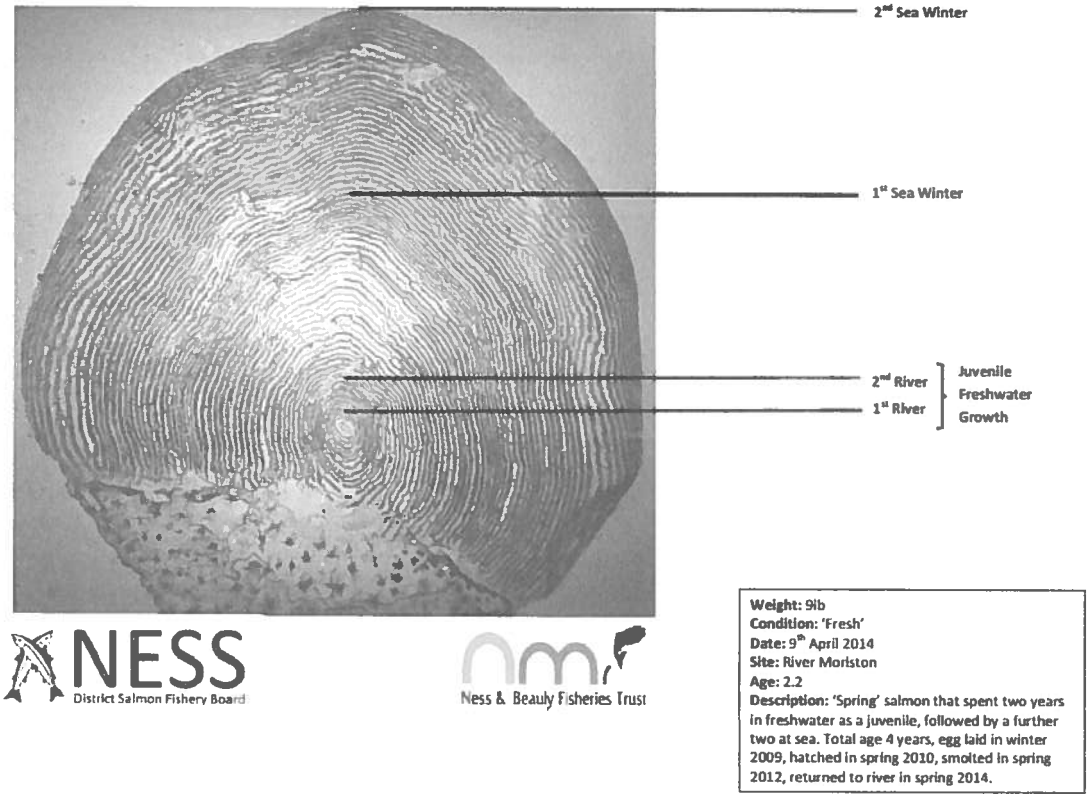
2014 saw the introduction of a comprehensive salmon scale sampling and ageing programme on the Ness catchment. The ageing of fish is an important fisheries management tool. It allows growth rates to be calculated, estimates of annual survival to be made and strong and weak year-classes of fish to be identified. Physiological changes such as maturation or smoltification can also be seen in salmon.

Many of the skeletal structures of fish exhibit growth rings; scales are usually chosen because they can be sampled without sacrificing the fish. Bands of individual lines known as 'circuli' radiate out from the centre of the scale, the 'Focus'. When the scales are attached to the fish they are held in pockets. The circuli are formed as the scale pushes against the dermis and the pressure forms ridges on the scale which then become calcified.

During the summer months the fish grows quickly. In the colder months growth slows down and the circuli form closer together. When the fish begins to grow again a new ridge is formed which 'cuts

across' the incomplete circuli. This region is known as an annual 'check' or 'annuli', the number of which can be used to determine the age of the fish.

Example of an annotated scale photograph produced for anglers who have submitted scale samples



Samples had been submitted from a total of 75 adult salmon captured across the Ness system during the 2014 season. A proportion of these were photographed and annotated images shared with the angler who caught the fish. All ages have been validated by an independent expert and the results will be published in the '2014 Ness System Scale Sampling Programme' report.

Beauly Scale Sampling and Tagging Course

In February 2015 the NBFT hosted a scale sampling and tagging course for ghillies and anglers on the River Beauly and its tributaries. Eleven representatives from the Lower Beauly Fishing Syndicate, Upper Beauly Fishing Syndicate, River Glass Syndicate, River Farrar, Beauly Angling Club and the Beauly District Fishery Board were in attendance. The course, held at the Lovat Hotel in Beauly, covered:

- The basic principles of scale reading and fish tagging;
- The marking and structure of scales;
- Fish handling, scale sampling and tagging procedures;
- Recording of the information collected; and
- The practical fisheries management applications.

The ageing of fish provides a useful fisheries management tool. It allows determination of the river age, sea age and various other characteristics for stock discrimination. Growth patterns can be related to production and environmental trends. The timing of physiological changes such as maturation, smoltification and spawning can be also be identified. This information, combined with sex and size data, can be used to inform management decisions within a fishery.

The attendees included ghillies and anglers from across the Beauly catchment

The results of the scale sampling and tagging programmes will be published at the end of the season, together with those from the Ness system.

Fisheries Management

The principle aim of our fisheries management activities is to maximise the natural production of fish populations in our rivers and lochs through the protection and enhancement of spawning success and juvenile survival.

The Ness and Beauly Fisheries Trust works with a wide range of partners to achieve these aims and objectives. This includes the local Fishery Boards, regulatory bodies such as the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) and SNH, together with individual land owners and tenant farmers.

Production of Fisheries Management Plans

The NBFT and Fishery Boards have jointly prepared draft Fisheries Management Plans (FMPs) for each catchment. These were put out to public consultation and we received an excellent response from a range of organisations; including the Scottish Environment Protection Agency, Scottish Natural Heritage and the Scottish Coarse Fish Federation. The comments were overwhelmingly positive and included a number of extremely constructive suggestions, which we were able to incorporate into the reports.

The final versions of the FMPs were released in August 2014 and can be viewed on the Publications page of our website. They set out priority actions identified as being required for the management of fish populations within the Ness and Beauly catchments. This provides a framework for the protection and enhancement of such populations and to ensure that their exploitation is undertaken in a sustainable manor.

The catchments have been sub-divided into smaller management units in order that those pressures and associated actions that are generic across the district or more specific in nature can be defined. The FMPs also recognises that fish populations within the catchments are not only an important and integral feature of their aquatic ecosystems, but they also present a valuable resource in terms of the local economy. Their full ecological value and economic potential can only be achieved and sustained

through careful fisheries management. The FMPs relate to all native and naturally occurring fish species with the catchments, with a particular focus on salmon and sea trout populations.

The lifespan of the FMPs is six years. Throughout this period the plans will be regularly reviewed and progress reported on. They will be updated as required and kept relevant to current situations and knowledge.

Control of Invasive Non-Native Species

The Inner Moray Firth Invasive Non-Native Plants Project aims to eradicate riparian invasive non-native plants (INNPS) in the Project area. The great majority of these are located along watercourses and on adjacent flood-prone areas in the Lower Ness, Lower Beauly and Nairn catchments.

The NBFT sits on its steering group, together with representatives from other fisheries trusts, Scottish Natural Heritage, Urquhart Bay Woods and Highland Council. Coille Alba (who is leading the project) has been controlling INNPS in the Lower Ness catchment since 2008, initially in Glenurquhart, extending operations in 2011 to the environs of Inverness.

The main species of concern are giant hogweed, Japanese knotweed and Himalayan balsam, but there are also smaller or more localised populations of other plants, especially white butterbur, American skunk cabbage, rhododendron and Tolmiea.

Japanese knotweed on the banks of the River Ness

The presence of INNPS in the Lower Ness catchment has been fairly well mapped over the last few years. Nevertheless, new INNPS populations are still coming to light. These include a well-established colony of American skunk cabbage *Lysichiton americanus* along 400m of a burn at Ballindarroch. This burn feeds into the River Ness, and probably accounts for the occasional skunk

cabbage records further downstream. Coile Alba also undertook a survey of *Tolmiea menziesii* in Urquhart Bay Woods SSSI, and a population of Tibetan cowslip *Primula florindae* at Tullich, near Loch Ruthven.

The distribution of INNPS in the Beauly catchment was less well-known. Coille Alba has been adding to data collected by the NBFT through more comprehensive surveys. Isolated colonies of Himalayan balsam and Japanese knotweed in the Beauly catchment above the Lovat Bridge have been mapped. Because these populations are further upstream than the known established populations, they are a high priority for action.

The extensive population of Japanese knotweed in the tidal lower reaches of the River Beauly proved difficult to assess from land. This was finally achieved much more expediently from a boat. Colonies of Himalayan balsam and Salmonberry *Rubus spectabilis* were also located and mapped. The tidal nature of the lower Beauly and steep riverbanks presented a number of new challenges for the project. A number of rhododendron colonies have been assessed and mapped in the Beauly catchment.

Our work continues with the Scottish Mink Initiative, we currently have over 40 volunteers monitoring rafts and traps throughout the Ness and Beauly Catchments. There were 24 reported sightings for the period April 2014 to March 2015, some of these were multiple sightings giving a total of 40 mink seen. It is important to note that many sightings of multiple mink are family groups seen around the dispersal period and some would be sightings of the same animal.. The area around Bught park and Holm Mills in Inverness is a particular hot spot and it is thought a number of mink may have set up territory in this area as it provides ideal habitat.

An American mink successfully trapped on the Ness system

The same period saw 8 captures, with the carcasses being tagged and sent to Aberdeen University for analysis. More volunteers are needed however as the Great Glen provides a thoroughfare from the west coast to the east. The Ness and Beauly Fisheries Trust would like to thank all volunteers for their efforts.

Predator Management

Sawbill bird counts were undertaken on the Ness and Beauly catchments by the NBFT and local fishery board staff in May 2014. This was later than usual with low numbers of goosander, merganser and cormorants being recorded, possibly due to the fact that they had already begun nesting. A licence was subsequently issued by Scottish Natural Heritage. This allowed the shooting of 4 Goosander and 1 Red-breasted Merganser on the River Ness, together with 3 Goosander and 1 cormorant on the River Beauly, for the purpose of preventing serious damage to fish stocks and as an aid to scaring.

A goosander and her chicks on the River Moriston

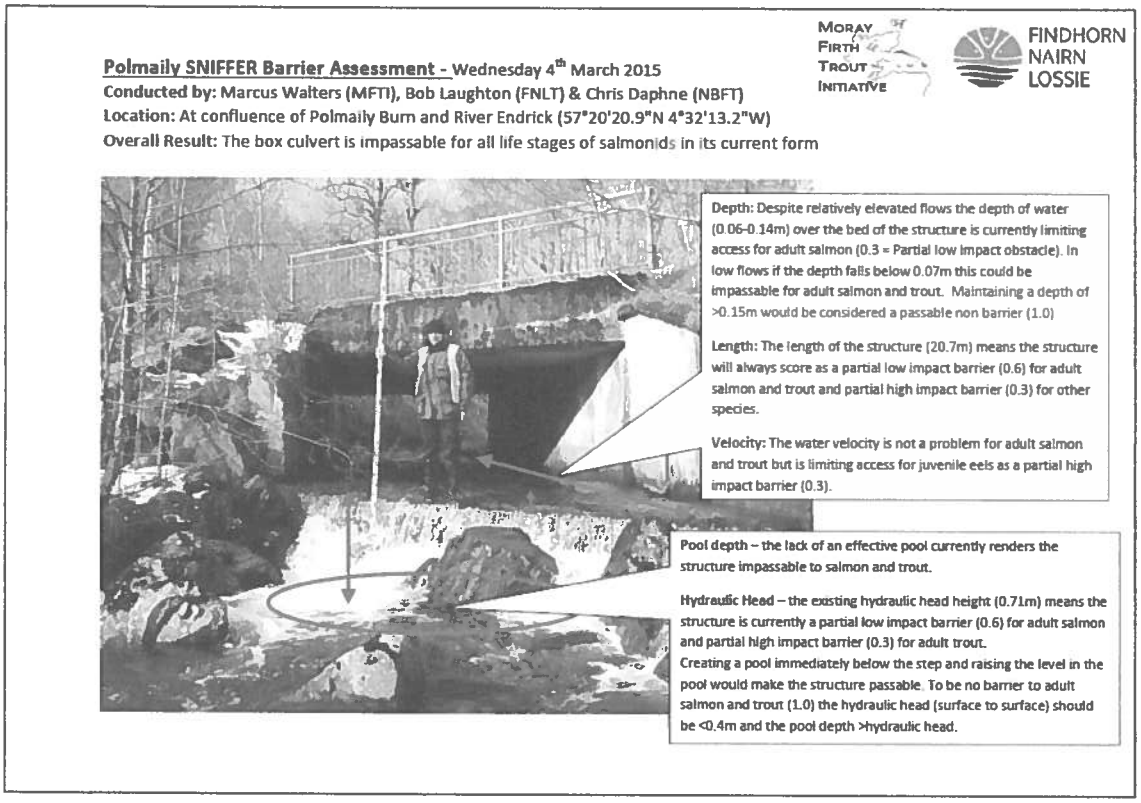
The Moray Firth Seal Management Group (MFSMG) were granted a licence to shoot up to 60 grey and 10 common seals in the Moray Firth area for the prevention of serious damage to fisheries in those waters during the period 1st February 2014 to 31st January 2015. The 2015/16 quota has been reduced to 40 greys and 6 commons. This is a reflection of the fact that the quota allocated for the last few years has not been fulfilled. In 2014 only circa 7 grey seals and 2 commons (from the 60 greys and 10 commons licenced) were shot throughout the whole of the Moray Firth region. No seals have been shot in the Ness or Beauly districts for a number of years.

Polmaily Barrier Assessment

On the 4th March 2015 the NBFT worked with the MFTI and Findhorn Nairn and Lossie Fisheries Trust (FNLT) to conduct a barrier assessment of a bridge apron at Polmaily Burn, a tributary of the River Enrick in the Ness system. Results of electro-fishing surveys completed by the NBFT suggested that bridge apron/culvert is only semi passible to migratory salmonids.

This technical survey technique can be used to determine if a structure is a barrier to fish migration (up or down stream). The resulting reports are the first step in altering or removing these structures to improve access for wild fish. In this instance, the results of the assessment indicate that the box culvert is impassable for all life stages of salmonids in its current form.

Results of the Polmaily Barrier Assessment



Culburnie Bridge Apron Removal

The structure at Culburnie is the apron of a former bridge which carried a single track road, dating back to at least the 1800s. The bridge is no longer present and was believed to have been demolished following a realignment of the road and construction of new bridge in the late 1970s or early 1980s. The results of electro-fishing surveys indicate that the remaining structure was creating a barrier to the migration of fish.

Photograph of the structure (upstream view) taken prior to the easement works commencing

The bridge apron is located on the Culburnie Burn, a tributary of the River Beauly, which provides an important spawning and nursery area for salmon and sea trout. In 2012 EnviroCentre Ltd was commissioned by the Rivers & Fisheries Trusts of Scotland (RAFTS) and the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) to undertake a scoping assessment for the easement of the structure. RAFTS and its member trusts are working with SEPA to facilitate fish passage at a range of sites across Scotland. This work is being supported by the Water Environment Fund (WEF), assisted by other support provided by RAFTS, member trusts and other stakeholders involved with specific sites.

The Contractor MacDonald Plant Ltd was appointed for the easement works in July 2014. They worked with staff from the NBFT to develop detailed design drawings and a method statement. The onsite works commenced on the 1st September 2014. Given the relative inaccessibility of the site and to minimise bankside disturbance, a 50 tonne crane was used to lower a mini digger through the tree canopy and into the river channel. The digger and all waste materials were craned out following completion of the works, leaving no 'footprints'. The works went very smoothly and were officially signed off on the 11th September 2014.

Photograph of the structure (downstream view) taken after the easement works (under low flow conditions)

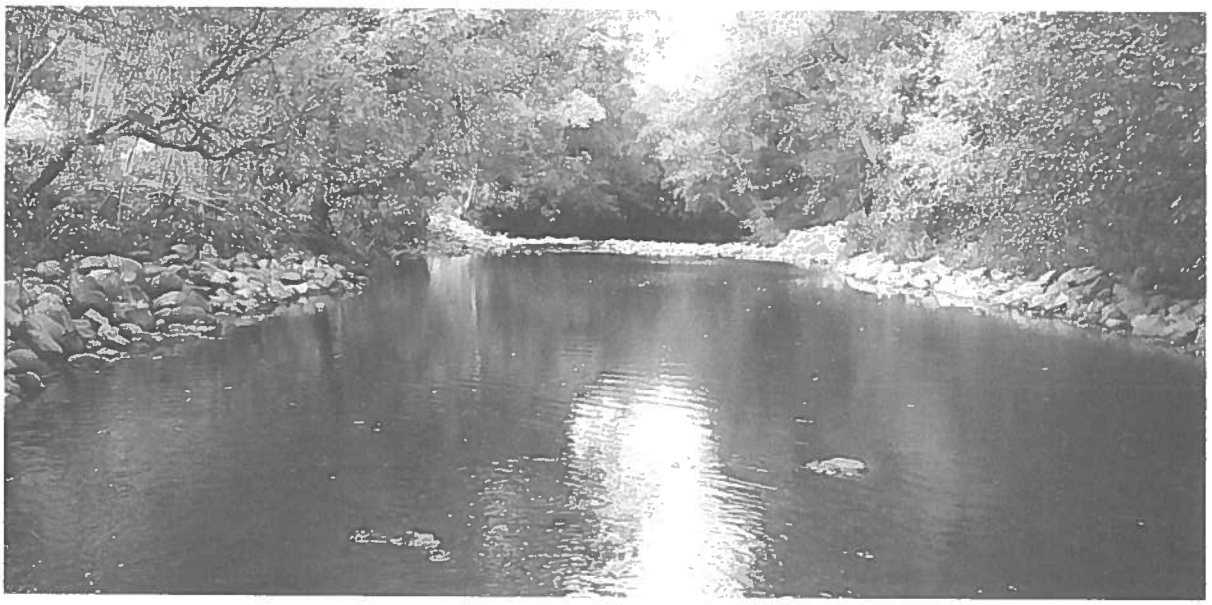
A 'naturalised' fish pass channel has been created through the structure. He hope that this will facilitate the passage of both juvenile and adult salmon and sea trout to an extra 4km of pristine spawning and nursery habitat. The area upstream of the pass will be monitored over the coming years to see whether the works have resulted in an increase in the numbers of juvenile salmon and trout.

River Tarff Restoration

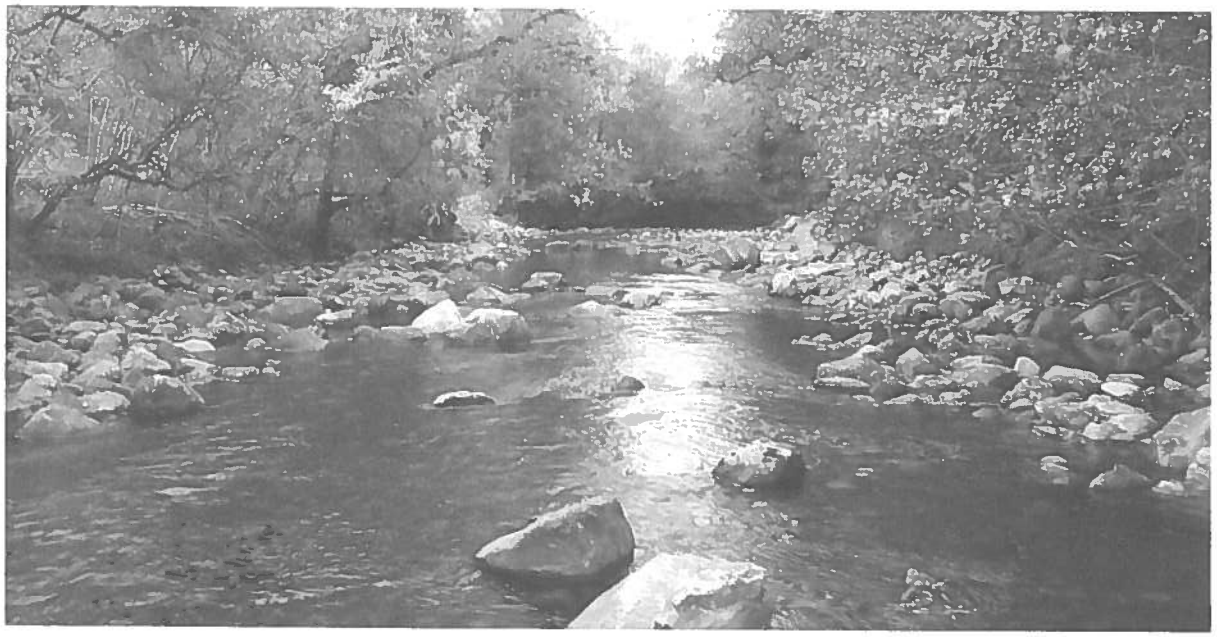
In 2013 NDSFB staff discovered that approximately 200 metres of the River Tarff in Fort Augustus had been dredged. Cobbles and boulders had been removed from the main channel and deposited on each bank. This resulted in a widening of the channel and created a shallow, featureless glide with a significant loss of juvenile habitat.

In September 2014 the NBFT worked in partnership with the NDSFB, SSE and SEPA to restore this reach of the Tarff to its former condition. A machine was used to redistribute material from the banks back into the main channel. The material was graded from the banks towards the centre of the channel with a shallow slope. A meandering 'low flow' channel was created in the middle allowing adequate depth for juvenile salmon and trout under all conditions.

Lower section BEFORE the restoration works (looking downstream).



Lower section AFTER the restoration works (looking downstream).



Pearls in Pearl LIFE+ Project

An important part of the work programme in 2014/15 was the Trust's participation in the Pearls in Peril LIFE+ Project (http://www.rafts.org.uk/pearls-in-peril/). The River Moriston is a Special Area of Conservation for Pearl Mussels and Atlantic salmon and a number of actions are planned within the Moriston catchment as part of the project. Many issues such as pollution and land use that have the potential to impact negatively on pearl mussel populations are equally relevant to fish populations and the actions taken as part of the project should help safeguard the important Moriston pearl mussel and salmon populations.

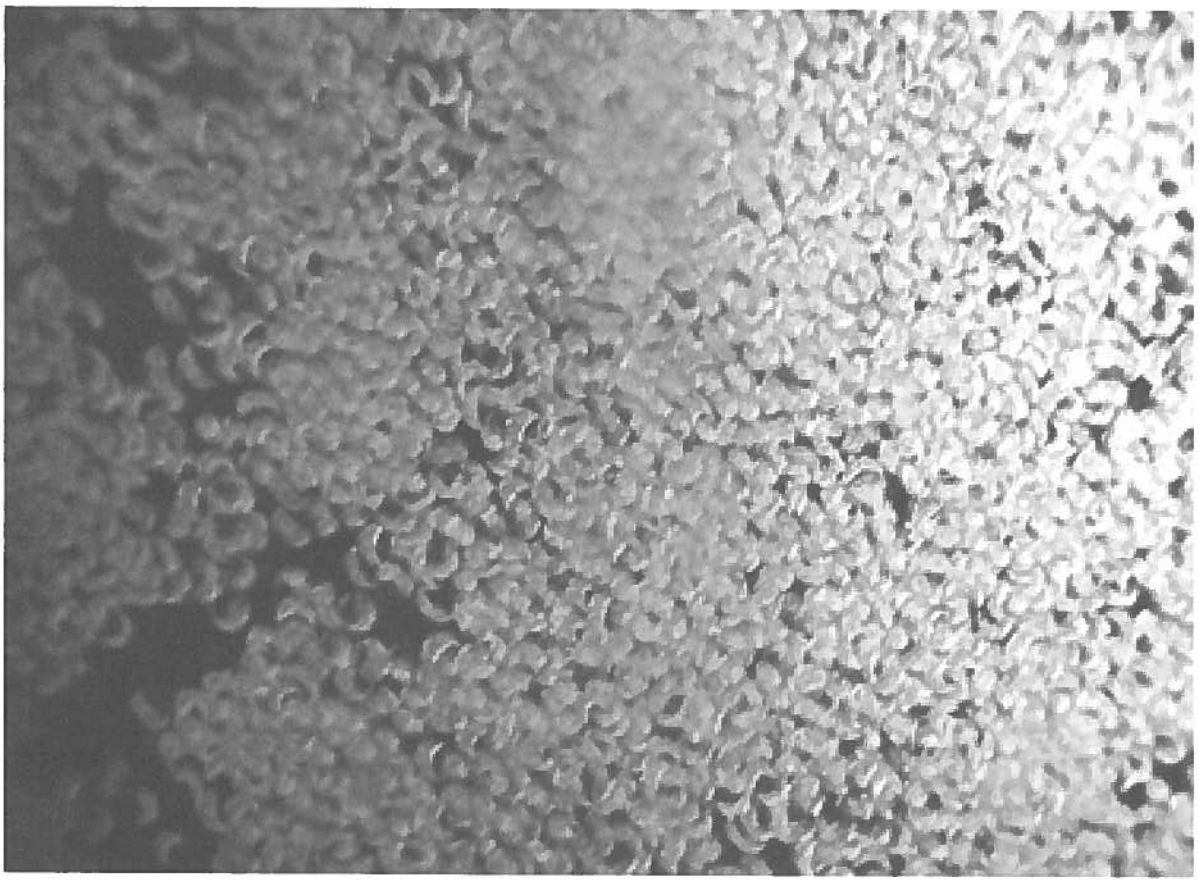
Freshwater pearl mussels reproduce by releasing millions of microscopic young (glochidia) into the river in late summer. These glochidia attach (or 'encyst') to the gills of young salmon or trout (without

causing them any problems) and remain there throughout the winter. They drop off the following spring at the size of a 'pin head' and settle in the river bed were they grow to adulthood

During the spring of 2014 the NBFT monitored the natural encystment by freshwater pearl mussel glochidia on Atlantic salmon and brown trout juveniles in the River Moriston to investigate which species of fish are used as hosts. The methodology required a sample of fish to be caught using electro-fishing at various sites along the river. The fish were anaesthetised and their lengths recorded. The gills were checked for the presence of glochidia using a hand held microscope, with the numbers present being recorded.

Samples of 10 to 20 mussels were inspected at four locations on the River Moriston in between June and August 2014. The mussels were carefully examined in order to detect the presence of glochidia and to ascertain the reproductive condition.

Glochidia from Moriston Mussels under the Microscope



As a result of the glochidial development monitoring, the probable 'spat' (or release date) was identified. Groups of ten mussels were then placed in buckets containing river water. Within 5 minutes mussels started to release glochidia into the buckets. After spatting all mussels were returned to their original location within the river, with the water containing the glochidial suspension being retained.

A total of 40 mussels were used in this process. The glochidia and water were then mixed and split between three containers, one for each of three electro-fishing sites. At each site juvenile salmonids were captured. The fish were then placed in a large container holding the glochidial suspension.

All fish were held for ten minutes within the suspension where they inhale the glochidia. All fish were then returned to the river along with the remaining glochidia/water (it was hoped that the glochidia

would attach to any other fish within the vicinity). A total of 150 fish were encysted of which, 38 were salmon and 112 were trout.

Following the Trust's artificial encystment of juvenile salmon and trout in August 2014, the next stage of the process was to investigate the success of the aforementioned project outcome. NBFT staff electro-fished three encystment locations in an attempt to recapture some of the fish that were artificially exposed to glochidia.

Of the 49 fish that were captured, a single 2+ salmon parr from the Ceannocroc area of the River Moriston exhibited an extremely heavy loading of glochidia. This is an extremely positive result for the project and the Trust. Assuming SSE can hold back water from the Upper Catchment in August 2015, the Trust will repeat the artificial encystment process in a number of locations in addition to those completed in 2014.

A 2+ year old salmon parr from the Upper Moriston exhibiting a heavy loading of glochidia

Holm Burn Salmon Restoration Project

The Holm Burn was an important spawning and nursery area for salmon and sea trout. However, water abstraction, morphological alterations and barriers to fish migration have resulted in the condition of the Burn and its fish stocks becoming severely degraded. A compensation flow agreement is believed to be the key to the long-term restoration of the Holm Burn; however this is unlikely to be reached until at least 2016. A number of short-term actions are therefore being taken, specifically:

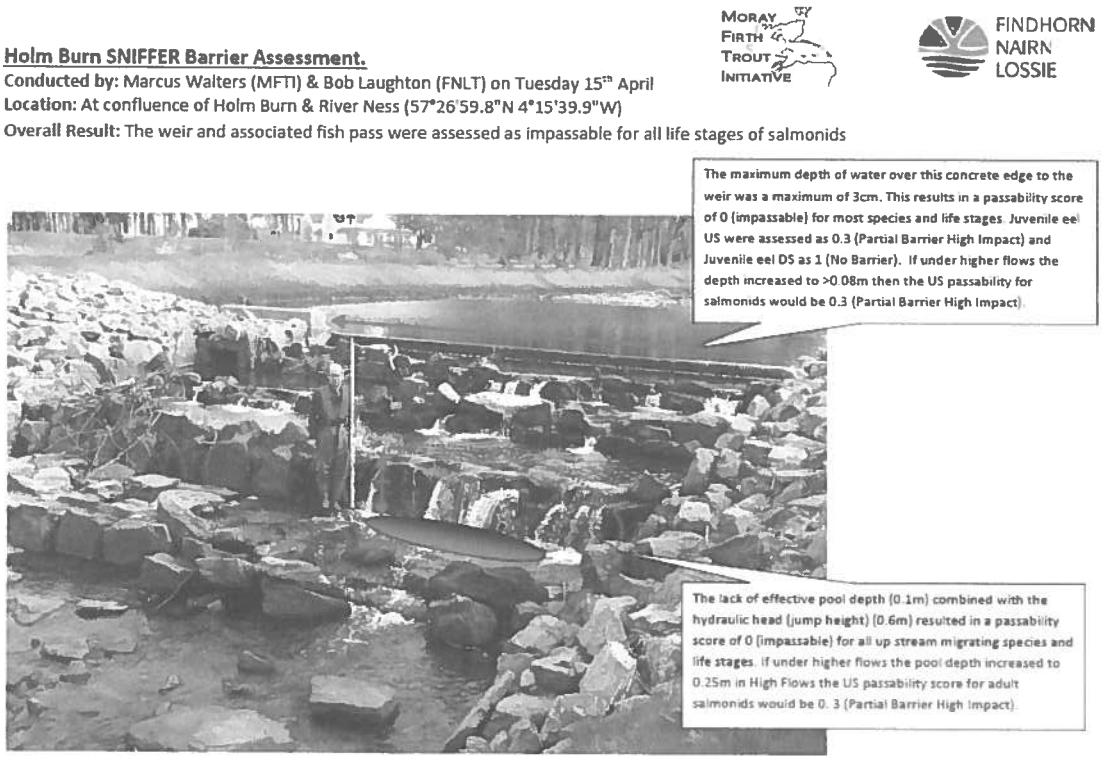
- Assessing and Improving (if required) fish passage in the Holm Burn;

- Carrying out a restoration stocking programme to support the recovery of a self-sustaining salmon population; and

- Mitigating the impacts of low flows through the delivery of a habitat enhancement programme.

Significant progress was made towards the implementation of these actions in 2014. On the 15th April 2014 the weir in the grounds of Ness-side Estate was assessed using a coarse-level fish pass ability assessment protocol developed by SEPA, NIEA and the EA. The results of the assessment indicate that, despite modification in 2010, the structure is still largely impassable to fish. Options for addressing this issue are now being investigated.

Results of the fish passage assessment on the weir at the mouth of the Holm Burn



Relevant permissions were secured to undertake a restoration stocking to 'pump-prime' the salmon populations in the Holm Burn. The primary aim of this operation was to support the recovery of a self-sustaining salmon population at carrying capacity. Adult brood stock fish would be captured on the main stem of the River Ness, close to the mouth of the Holm Burn, as close to spawning as possible with the fish being 'stripped' and eggs fertilised on the bank.

Approximately 15,000 fertilised eggs would then be transferred into a bankside incubation box. This would act as an artificial spawning gravel and allow the fish to develop in as close to a natural environment as possible. Once the fish hatched and subsequently 'swam up', they would be collected in a 'catch tray' before being stocked out as unfed fry at suitable locations along the Holm Burn.

Unfortunately, although good numbers of adult fish were present in the river, none were caught close enough to spawning to be stripped on the bank. It is believed that the fish did not spawning until late January/February 2015 during a period of high water which made their capture impossible. Lessons have been learnt and the project will be repeated again in the winter of 2015/16.

Incubation boxes under construction

Upper Garry Salmon Restoration Project

Scottish & Southern Energy (SSE), The Ness District Salmon Fishery Board (NDSFB), The Ness and Beauly Fisheries Trust (NBFT), Marine Harvest (MH), Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) and the Rivers and Lochs Institute (RLI) have come together to collaborate on the delivery of a project to restore a self-sustaining wild salmon population to the Upper River Garry.

The abundance of salmon in the Upper River Garry has declined over the last fifty years and is showing little sign of recovery. Stocking undertaken as mitigation for loss of habitat following historical hydroelectric development, together with subsequent easing of fish passage, has proven to be unsuccessful. It is believed that the indigenous population may have been effected by none native strains of salmon that may not be fully adapted to their environment. Initial baseline monitoring has indicated that a remnant of the original native stock of salmon is still present.

In 2012 the RLI was commissioned by the NDSFB to carry out a scoping study for the development of a salmon stock restoration programme for the Upper Garry. Their recommendations included the implementation of carefully targeted, designed and linked enhancement initiatives, encompassing habitat improvement and stock rehabilitation through supportive breeding and supplementary stocking.

The supportive breeding and supplementary stocking element of the project involves capture of a proportion of the Upper Garry salmon smolts as they migrate downstream towards the sea between March and May. These fish will then be grown on to maturity in captivity, enabling a sufficient number of eggs to be produced to have a meaningful impact on the system. It is intended to stock these eggs

to areas accessible to salmon upstream of Garry Dam for a period of 4 years in an attempt to "kick-start" the population.

The project began with the capture of smolts from lower River Garry using a rotary screw trap between March and April 2014. The fish were held in a pen on Loch Garry before being transferred to a salt water tank at the Ardtoe research facility. We initially experienced a high mortality rate that was believed to relate to maladaptation to seawater and an inability to get the fish feeding properly in captivity. However, the surviving fish adapted well and are now thriving.

A salmon smolt captured on the lower River Garry in spring 2014

Tissue samples taken from the smolts captured in spring 2014, together with those collected during baseline electrofishing surveys in 2013, were sent to UHI for analysis in early July 2014. They have since been forwarded to the Institute for Marine Research (IMR) in Norway. They will analyse the samples and provide a data set to UHI for population genetic analysis.

Education

Education is a vital component of the work carried out by the NBFT. It provides an important link between the work of the trust and local communities and the general public. In addition, it raises awareness of both the freshwater and marine environments and the need for their protection/conservation. Although primarily aimed at primary schools, the trust has attended the Highland Field Sports Fair and works closely with the Highland Ranger Service.

As part of the Pearls in Peril Life+ project 2014/2015, the Trust delivered educational events at 13 schools, reaching over 560 children of various ages ranging from nursery to 3rd year degree students.

As part of the Moray Firth Trout Initiative 'Trout in the Classroom' project, 3 schools were visited reaching 100 pupils.

A 'Pearls in Peril' educational event on the River Moriston in 2014

Educational events take the form of an initial classroom visit and activities. The classroom visits are then followed up with a field trip to a local river where the children are given an electro-fishing demonstration so they can observe all the fish species found within the river. The field trips give the children an opportunity to 'get their feet wet' during searches for the myriad of invertebrates found within the river. These visits give the children 'hands on' experience in basic biology/ecology and are always well received. It is hoped to extend these activities to other species.

Plans for Future Period

In addition to delivery of its core monitoring programmes, the Ness & Beauly Fisheries Trust Intends to progress the flowing key objectives over the coming year:

- Efficiently and effectively manage the Trust through full compliance with all statutes, compliance with the RAFTS Code of Governance for Trusts, provision of effective administration, ensuring sound financial control and being a good employer;

- Ensure the delivery of ongoing projects, including EU Funded Pearls in Peril LIFE+ Project, the Upper Garry Restoration Project and the Ness and Beauly Invasive Plant Project; and

- Engage positively in the Scottish Government's Wild Fisheries Reform process and continue to manage the Trust in a professional and business-like manner, ensuring an organised passage into the new structure.

NESS & BEAULY FISHERIES TRUST

REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH 2015

Trustees

The trustees (who are also directors) who served during the year were:

James Eric Braithwaite
Neil Cameron (Chairman)
Christopher Paul Conroy (resigned 1st May 2014)
Graham John Mackenzie
Joseph Michael Martin
James (Jock) Miller (Vice Chairman)
Christopher Frank Spencer-Nairn
Murray Cameron Stark

This report was approved by the board of trustees on 21/10/15 and signed on its behalf.

Neil Cameron
Trustee

NESS & BEAULY FISHERIES TRUST

Independent Examiner's Report to the Directors of the Ness and Beauly Fisheries Trust

I report on the accounts of the charity for the year ended 31st March 2015 which are set out on pages 29 to 32.

Respective responsibilities of trustees and examiner

The charity's trustees are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the terms of the Charities Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2006.

The charity trustees consider that the audit requirement of Regulation 10(1) (a) to (c) of the Accounts Regulations does not apply. It is my responsibility to examine the accounts as required under section 44(1) (c) of the Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) Act 2005 and to state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

Basis of independent examiner's statement

My examination is carried out in accordance with Regulation 11 of the Charities Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2006. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts, and seeks explanations from the trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit, and consequently I do not express an audit opinion on the view given by the accounts.

Independent examiner's statement

In the course of my examination, no matter has come to my attention:

1 Which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect the requirements:

to keep accounting records in accordance with Section 44(1) (a) of the Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) Act 2005 and Regulation 4 of the 2006 Accounts Regulations, and

to prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records and comply with Regulation 8 of the 2006 Accounts Regulations have not been met, or

2 To which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

L G Lees-Buckley FCA
Chartered Accountant and Registered Auditor
16 Northfields Prospect Business Centre
Putney Bridge Road
London SW18 1PE

Date ..27th November 2015

NESS & BEAULY FISHERIES TRUST

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES (INCLUDING AN INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT)

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH 2015

	Note	Year Ended 31st March 2015 Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total £	Year Ended 31.03.2014 Total £
INCOMING RESOURCES					
Voluntary Income					
Donations and Gifts		50,000	-	50,000	50,000
Grants for Core Activities		-	26,640	26,640	35,071
Other		2,347	-	2,347	3,100
Membership Subscriptions		535	-	535	475
		52,882	26,640	79,522	88,646
Generated Funds					
Bank Interest		-	-	-	-
TOTAL INCOMING RESOURCES		52,882	26,640	79,522	88,646
RESOURCES EXPENDED	2				
Charitable Activities		(50,700)	(25,541)	(76,241)	(80,907)
Support Costs		(3,496)	(1,761)	(5,257)	(6,106)
		(54,196)	(27,302)	(81,498)	(87,013)
(Deficit)/Surplus for the Year		(1,314)	(662)	(1,976)	1,633
Funds Balances Brought Forward		24,809	13,862	38,671	37,038
Funds Balances Carried Forward	6	23,495	13,200	36,695	38,671

All the amounts relate to continuing operations.
The charity has no other recognised gains or losses for the year.

The notes on pages 31 & 32 form part of these accounts.

NESS & BEAULY FISHERIES TRUST

BALANCE SHEET

AS AT 31ST MARCH 2015

	Notes	2015		2014
		£	£	£
FIXED ASSETS				
Tangible Assets	3		3,655	2,810
CURRENT ASSETS				
Cash at Bank and in Hand		48,168		33,905
Debtors	4	1,807		6,810
		49,975		40,715
CREDITORS: amounts falling due within one year	5	16,935		4,854
NET CURRENT ASSETS			33,040	35,861
NET ASSETS			36,695	38,671
RETAINED FUNDS				
Restricted Funds	6		13,200	13,862
Unrestricted Income Funds	6		23,495	24,809
			36,695	38,671

The trustees consider that the company is entitled to exemption from the requirement to have an audit under the provisions of s.11 (1) of the Charities Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2006 and section 477 of the Companies Act 2006. The members have not required the company to obtain an audit of its financial statements for the year ended 31st March 2015 in accordance with Section 476 of the Companies Act 2006.

The trustees acknowledge their responsibilities for ensuring that the company keeps accounting records which comply with s.44(1)(a) of the Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) Act 2005 and Regulation 4 of the Charities Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2006, and for preparing accounts which accord with the accounting records, comply with Regulation 8 of the 2006 Regulations and which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the company as at 31st March 2015 and of its result for the year then ended.

The accounts, which have been prepared in accordance with the provisions of s.4 of the Charities Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2006, were approved by the board of trustees on 21/10/15 and signed on its behalf.

.....

Neil Cameron
Trustee

The notes on pages 31 & 32 form part of these accounts.

NESS & BEAULY FISHERIES TRUST

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH 2015

1. ACCOUNTING POLICIES

Basis of Preparation of Accounts
The accounts are prepared under the historical cost convention and in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard for Smaller Entities (effective April 2008)

Incoming Resources
Incoming resources represents grants received, donations and fees earned in the year.

Tangible Fixed Assets
Depreciation is provided at the following annual rates in order to write off each asset over its estimated useful life.

Motor vehicle - 25% reducing balance
Computers - 25% straight line
Plant and equipment - 20% straight line

2. RESOURCES EXPENDED

Resources expended includes:	2015	2014
	£	£
Depreciation		
Owned Assets	1,219	2,972

3. TANGIBLE FIXED ASSETS

	Motor Vehicle	Computers	Plant and Equipment	Total
	£	£	£	£
Cost				
At 1st April 2014	10,344	2,703	5,018	18,065
Additions	0	2,064	0	2,064
At 31st March 2015	10,344	4,767	5,018	20,129
Depreciation				
At 1st April 2014	8,094	2,567	4,594	15,255
Charge for the Year	619	462	138	1,219
At 31st March 2015	8,713	3,029	4,732	16,474
Net Book Value				
At 31st March 2015	1,631	1,738	286	3,655
At 31st March 2014	2,250	136	424	2,810

4 DEBTORS

	2015	2014
	£	£
Prepayments and Accrued Income	1,807	6,810

5 CREDITORS: amounts falling due within one year

	2015	2014
	£	£
Deferred Income	2,500	2,500
Trade Creditors	561	1,054
Social Security and Other Taxes	1,216	0
Sundry Creditors	0	0
Accruals	12,658	1,300
	16,935	4,854

6. RETAINED FUNDS

	2015		2014	
	Restricted	Unrestricted	Restricted	Unrestricted
	£	£	£	£
Surplus Brought Forward	13,216	23,822	13,216	23,822
(Deficit)/Surplus for the Year	(662)	(1,314)	646	987
Surplus Carried Forward	12,554	22,508	13,862	24,809

NESS & BEAULY FISHERIES TRUST

SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH 2015

NESS & BEAULY FISHERIES TRUST

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH 2015

	2015		2014
	£	£	£
INCOME			
Grants Receivable		79,522	88,646
EXPENDITURE			
Salaries and Staff Costs	63,450		64,376
Fishing and Mapping Equipment	640		475
Contributions and Projects	3,750		6,207
Subscriptions	1,200		1,200
Insurance	1,813		1,918
Motor Expenses	4,023		4,968
Travel and Subsistence	146		238
Printing, Stationery and Website	1,250		1,093
Repairs and Renewals	195		291
Office and Miscellaneous Expenses	598		572
Telephone	801		622
Legal and Professional	414		972
Accountancy and Bookkeeping	1,881		2,448
Bank Charges	118		108
Depreciation of Tangible Fixed Assets	1,219		1,525
		81,498	87,013
(DEFICIT)/SURPLUS FOR THE YEAR		(1,976)	1,633