

Peter Murray

From: Michael Wigan [mwigan@borrobol.co.uk]
Sent: 18 November 2012 20:12
To: Peter Murray
Subject: Report to AGM River Bladnoch DSFB.2012. November.doc Peter -- have I left anything out?
Michael.

Address for AGM River Bladnoch DSFB.

Tuesday 20th November 2012.

Welcome to the AGM of the River Bladnoch District Salmon Fishery Board.

It has been a less good year than 2011. The bigger runs from last year did not appear.

But there have been highlights. A fish from this river of 31 pounds is exceptional, another of 27 lb a few days later confirmed that somewhere in the system, at some time, some very big fish indeed managed to spawn, probably two big ones with each other.

The run has been late and the Spring was disappointing. The majority of fish have been caught in September and October. Other rivers are getting later too. We are not alone.

There has been a steady effort to remove predatory pike and this has been intensified in the present year. Thanks to those who assisted in this.

During the winter there was a high-profile accident in flash-flood conditions at the fish-trap, from which we get broodstock for the hatchery. Some of the reactions to this were, in my view, overblown. All capture of adult salmon has a risk. In this case 3 fish died. Please remember this – the point of it all was to improve runs of salmon on the river. The Board is trying to compensate for the lack of spawning in the upper tributaries with a stocking policy. Hatchery fish are protected from predation in their early lives. We cannot expect rapid improvements to acidification in the upper river. Stocking is the Board's best response.

Leaving for the open seas from Scotland not as many young salmon survive as they do from Iceland. It is a tougher migration. But a few, on a river like this, in this phase in its duration, make a big difference. Balancing the merits and risk of having a reintroduction programme the Board believes the risks are outweighed by the possible benefits. I am sure this right.

Netting at Innerwell did not take place as the Board reached an agreement with he proprietor.

Work has been done by volunteers and others to the blockages in the burns feeding the river. It is a large task but some progress has been made. Thanks to those who spent their time and effort in this habitat work. Without such contributions our river would be the poorer by a long way.

The Fishing Competition was a success with several fish caught.

The progress towards improving forest practices in the headwaters is frustratingly slow. Any member of the public who wants to improve this river can do no better than badger his representatives, whether in the Scottish Parliament or the Council, to continue to pressurise the FC about making a serious effort to reduce acidity by making sure forestry is better planned in

the future. The latest excuses for delay in setting down the actual limits for new forest planting were shortages of staff and inadequate information from England about the same issues. It is all frustrating. The same delays do not seem to apply when pushing developments forward, only when making good original errors. From the other side the FC is being pushed to expand forest-land over Scotland. Sometimes aims are simply incompatible, but that never stops vested interests from advancing their own cases.

There are schemes for hydro-power electricity generation, another policy being pushed by government, which affect this river and the Trust responds to these on our behalf. The Board itself is not a statutory consultee on these matters but in as far as we are involved we have tried to make the case for protection of salmon in what is after all a river identified for salmon protection. My own view is that SNH feels itself between a rock and hard place in being asked to advise on this matter.

On salmon protection by sporting anglers I am pleased to see good figures for the number of fish released. The Board is not of the mind that 'every salmon is too valuable to kill' but a general agreement with the common sense of returning fish surplus to needs, in addition obviously to all stale fish, is welcomed.

On gravel loosening for breeding salmon, and on liming to combat acid, the GFT will report.

There has been an effort to control the spread of alien plant species and it is working. Laborious it may be, but when you see rivers that have been over-run with Himalyan balsam and Jap knotweed it is pretty depressing.

Through the year we have been ably assisted as usual by the Galloway Fisheries Trust. Their work underpins what we are doing. The Board thanks the Trust for the time devoted to the River Bladnoch and appreciates their help in continuing to press for improved planting regulations. There is no doubt in my mind that without the Trust's professional lobbying on this matter our voice would simply never be heeded at all. The same applies to general planning issues which might affect the river.

Meantime, thank all of you for your continued interest in this river, for your patience, and for the shared faith we have that eventually matters will improve and re-claim those parts of the headwaters which presently are unable to support migrating fish.

Thank you.

END.

River Bladnoch District Salmon Fishery Board

Income & Expenditure Account For The Year To 31st August 2012

<u>2011</u>		<u>2012</u>
	Income	
6405	Assessments Received	9443
<u>1</u>	Bank Interest	<u>5</u>
6406		9448
	Less: Expenditure	
4400	Galloway Fisheries Trust - Levy	4400
385	Subscriptions	355
583	Insurance	593
1175	Clerk Fees	1200
132	Accountant's Fees	132
<u>445</u>	Miscellaneous Expenses	<u>435</u>
<u>7120</u>		<u>7115</u>
<u>£(714)</u>	Surplus/(Deficit) for Year	<u>£ 2333</u>