

# Tay Salmon News

*from the Tay District Salmon Fisheries Board*

## An autumn to forget!

The autumn of 2009 was one we should like to forget! While there were some good salmon around, the grilse, which should be the mainstay of the summer and autumn runs were not present in big numbers. Catches reported on the fishtay website in August were only 46% of the recent average and in September 56%. October saw fishing improve, but only to 78% of the average.

However, if it is any consolation, the Tay has not been alone. Most Scottish and indeed Irish rivers seem to have had poorer grilse runs this year, showing that the main problem lies at sea, where survival rates have clearly been very low. For example, fishtweed only reported 56% of the average for August and 64% for September. Some have contrasted the Tay with the Dee which reported an average autumn, but catches in the lower Dee in September, were only 54% of average, again indicating a poorer run of true autumn fish. Much of the Dee's reported catch were older coloured fish caught in middle and upper beats.

The Tay suffered worse than other rivers because high water persisted through most of August and September. There were 14 separate rises between 1 August and mid September. High water in summer allows fish to run quickly through the main Tay fishing beats but on a shallow river like the Dee high summer levels are beneficial. This is backed up by the fact that the fish counter results from the Ericht and Tummel are healthier than catches were. Both counters are only about 15% down on the recent average. Indeed, the Pitlochry count is better than it was in 2008.

## River Tay Dinner 2009 in aid of the Tay Foundation

Over £20,000 was raised at the River Tay Dinner held in June at Ballathie where over 150 guests gathered at the Annual Dinner.

Savills sponsored awards for Long Service on the River Tay and retired Ghillies: Dennis Buchan, Sandy Penny and Willie MacGregor all received silver leaping salmon mementos.



Jim Davidson, the Dinner Speaker receives a specially designed fly, the Dandy Davidson.



**RIVER TAY GHILLIES** were awarded the 2009 Ballathie Award for Conservation for their key role in promoting catch & release.

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## **Board agrees 100% catch and release for spring 2010**

The continuing poor survival of grilse at sea and poorer runs of spring fish means there is a real danger that spawning stocks could drop below critical levels. It is essential therefore that we do all we can to preserve stocks.

In the light of this, the Board has agreed to strengthen the conservation code for 2010. **In particular the Board is now recommending that all salmon should be released alive before 1 June.** With runs of fish as they are the Board believes there is now no justification in killing spring salmon. Given that over 75% of spring salmon are already being released this should not prove an obstacle to most responsible minded anglers, especially since this is already accepted practice on some other rivers.

### **The Code is as Follows:**

#### 15 January – 31 May

All fish to be released.

#### 1 June to end of season

All hen fish of any size and all cock fish over 10 pounds should be released.

All coloured and gravid fish should be released.

No more than one clean fish weighing less than 10 pounds should be retained per angler per day.

#### Sea trout

All sea trout should be released.

#### Worming

Worming only permitted in June, July and August. Only Circle or Shelton release hooks should be used.

## **Help on its way for autumn fish**

In recent times most of the Board's efforts have gone into helping spring salmon, but it is clear from this year's poorer autumn catches that more must be done to ensure the Tay maintains a strong autumn run.

In conjunction with the Tay Ghillies Association a survey will be performed this winter of the tributary burns of the middle and lower reaches of the Tay. This will identify any obstructions to be removed, habitat improvement works that are to be required and to boost the level of stocking in the area. It is intended this will include stocking with fed-on parr, the first time the Board will have tried this in recent times.

## **River Ericht hydro – another emerging threat!**

**An application has been made by Blairgowrie & Rattray Regeneration Committee (BARRC) to install an Archimedes screw turbine at Keathbank Weir on the River Ericht.**

While it is claimed that this new type of turbine might not harm smolts, the Board has objected to the proposal to abstract 2/3 of the Ericht's flow at precisely the level of flow when most salmon ascend the fish pass at Keathbank Weir. This could make the lead up to the fish pass much less attractive and salmon could be held up downstream of this weir and become more vulnerable to damage, disease and poaching.

As a result of the Board's concerns BARRC have now agreed to accept to abstract no more than 50% of the flow and to screen fish from the tailrace. However, there are still outstanding concerns as to where fish will be most attracted. Discussions with SEPA and Perth & Kinross Council continue.