



Cairngorms Nature is a new partnership where people and organisations come together, regardless of sector or background, with one thing in common - a desire to safeguard and enhance the outstanding nature in the Cairngorms National Park. Working together, is more likely to achieve success and this means positive change for nature in the Park.



The Cairngorms Nature Action Plan

Cairngorms Nature and the **Cairngorms Nature Action Plan (CNAP)** were successfully launched by Richard Lochhead on Saturday 18 May. The Action Plan builds on the foundations laid by the Cairngorms Local Biodiversity Action Plan 2002-2013. CNAP describes what we agree are the most important things to do over the next five years and provides a focus for the work of partners.

The Cairngorms Nature Strategy Group will provide strategic leadership of Cairngorms Nature, overseeing the development of the partnership and the delivery of the Action Plan.

The Action Plan highlights many opportunities for enhancing river catchments for biodiversity benefit,



with a particular focus on riparian woodland, renaturalisation of watercourses and natural flood management schemes. Established partnership organisations such as the South Esk Catchment Partnership have much to offer in helping to turn words into action.

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Climate change indicators “Not Found” is just as important as ‘Abundant’.



A recent volunteer “shore thing” survey monitoring climate change indicators and INNS in the river mouth.

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Southesk Farms — Sharing Good Practice

The River South Esk Catchment Partnership steering group recently visited Southesk Farms and were kindly shown examples of farming good practice by Farms Manager Neil McLeod. Southesk Farms is a 1600 hectare low lying farming business situated between Brechin and Montrose in the heart of the lower South Esk catchment. The farming enterprise managed in hand is mainly made up of 14 farms ranging from 50 – 200 hectares. There is also a 10 hectare soft fruit enterprise producing Strawberries and Blueberries.



“The fragmented nature of the farms with their variable soil types make agronomic and operational based decisions very challenging however every effort is made to farm as efficiently as possible whilst not compromising attention to detail”.



Southesk farms were recently awarded two Rural Development contracts through the Scottish Rural Development programme which will see 5,500 metres of hedges planted, 5000 mixed hardwood trees planted, 40 hectares of grass margins and water margins established, 10 hectares of wild bird seed sown (mainly to promote corn Buntings) and a management programme established for 85 hectares of low-land heath.

These particular rural priorities were chosen not only with their positive environmental impact in mind but also because of their ability to complement the core farming business and continue the work undertaken in a previous Rural Stewardship scheme. With the River South Esk, a number of its tributaries and the enclosed estuary Montrose Basin flowing through the farms, every effort is made where possible to minimise diffuse pollution and sediment run – off. With the recent extremely unpredictable weather patterns experienced locally, delivering high rainfall, the grass and water margins will undoubtedly assist in helping maintain water quality in the farms immediate area in turn assisting in ongoing sustainable catchment management practices.

River South Esk Catchment Emergency Control of Invasive Weeds

Invasive Non Native Species (INNS) are on of the greatest threat to biodiversity being capable of rapidly colonising a wide range of habitats and excluding native flora and fauna. Previous INNS treatment projects in the catchment have resulted in the successful treatment of Giant Hogweed over an area of 181,00 square metres.

The exceptional high water flows of 2012/2013 has mobilised seed banks depositing them on the flood plain which now pose a threat to the work previously undertaken. Additional work is needed to maintain the long term value of the previous investment. This summers additional treatment will be funded by the SEPA Restoration Fund, the Esk Rivers and Fisheries Trust and the Angus Environmental Trust.

Angus Environmental Trust has now been funding many and various projects around Angus, through The Landfill Communities Fund for more than 13 years. If you are looking for guidance or for the mechanism to undertake improvements to an area near you, for the benefit of the Community, please get in touch with Angus Environmental Trust. The Trust Administrator can be contacted by telephone on 01307 473334 or email phillipsge@angus.gov.uk



Finavon Castle Blog—Observing Nature and the Health of the River South Esk

The last few years have seen wet starts to the Scottish 'summer', which has had its pros and cons as far as fly fishing for salmon and sea trout is concerned. From a conservation viewpoint, higher water levels have enabled spring salmon and sea trout to migrate in good flows to the upper catchments of river systems, putting them in place to gain easy access to spawning redds later in the year. From an angling viewpoint, and for those people who use rod catches as the primary indicator of abundance, those years have been poor for angling. Moreover, warm winter rivers encourage early running multi sea winter (MSW) salmon to move through the lower sections of rivers such as the Dee and Tay into the upper catchment, thus leaving historically famous spring beats on the lower river with few fish for the angler.

“One of the difficulties for fishery managers in this situation is in trying to get a handhold on the numbers of early running salmon”.

This year - 2013 - has been much colder than recent springs. The effects of colder water temperatures can be seen clearly in, for example, rod catches on the lower River Tay and South Esk below Brechin. MSW salmon have been held back by low water temperatures, thus enabling lower angling beats to increase their catches, in contrast to recent seasons. In the case of the Tay, catches are close to double the five-year average on some beats.



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One of the difficulties for fishery managers in this situation is in trying to get a handhold on the numbers of early running salmon. In the 2011 RAFTS/ASFB summary of the 2011 season Andrew Wallace pointed out that rod catches are sometimes unhelpful when attempting to assess numbers of salmon that have migrated into rivers. He cited the example of the Tweed which in 2011 had a poor October and November as far as rod-caught fish were concerned, but that there had clearly been a strong run of salmon earlier, probably as result of invitingly high, and normally unseasonal, water levels.



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2013/05/09

The result of the late summer run into the Tweed was that anglers fishing in the normally prolific month of October were fishing for stale fish, many of which were reluctant to take a fly.

The antithesis is that in the spring of 2013 we have seen conditions ideal for rod fishers to maximise their catches in the context of, at best, a mediocre spring run. That mediocrity in some rivers, most notably the Aberdeenshire Dee, has resulted in below-average catches, which in the case of that most productive of spring rivers says more about the fishability of that river than about water temperatures. In other words 2013 is not demonstrating a strong run of multi sea-winter salmon, some evidence for which is the counter figures at Logie on the North Esk.

Pearls in Peril LIFE + Project

'Pearls in Peril' (PIP) is a UK wide project to safeguard the future of the freshwater pearl mussel (FWPM) in Scotland, England and Wales. PIP is funded in part through the European Commission LIFE Nature programme and by 14 organisations across the UK. The project will run until September 2016.

Fundamental to the project are actions that will restore river habitat to benefit FWPM and salmonids (Atlantic salmon and trout) on which the pearl mussel lifecycle depends; secure the long-term survival of existing populations; and raise awareness of FWPM conservation issues with local, national and international audiences.

This summer, survey work will begin on the upper reaches of the River South Esk to explore the suitability of sites for future in-stream restoration work. The results will allow us to select the most appropriate site-based restoration options for restoring natural processes and improving freshwater pearl mussel and salmonid habitat.

Over the next few months plans will be developed to plant approximately 16 ha of riparian native woodland along the mainstem South Esk and several tributaries, covering around 5 km of riverbanks in Glen Clova. The proposals also include the management of existing riparian woodland to exclude grazing, to encourage regeneration and more diverse vegetation; and felling dense Sitka spruce to facilitate a more native and diverse riparian habitat.

A River Watcher has been appointed and is based in Beauly, Highland. The main aim of this post is to combat illegal activities concerning pearl mussels. These include pearl fishing and pollution.



The River Watcher will be working closely with Police Scotland and the National Wildlife Crime Unit, fisheries trusts and landowners throughout 16 SACs in Scotland. The River Watcher will collect evidence of suspected crimes and set up riverwatch schemes. These schemes will inform river users about illegal activities, what to look for and how to report any evidence.

The 'Pearls in the Classroom' education programme is also underway, as fisheries trusts from 20 river catchments, including the South Esk, have the target of visiting 150 primary schools over the duration of the project.



Children aged eight-to-eleven learn about the incredible lifecycle of the FWPM and the threats to its survival, and take part in a range of indoor and outdoor activities. Educational materials will soon be available to all on our website, as well as further details about the project. For more information see <http://www.snh.gov.uk/protecting-scotlands-nature/protected-species/life-projects/pearls-in-peril/>

Montrose Port - Going From Strength to Strength

Those who are familiar with Montrose port and pass it frequently may have noticed the significant increase in shipping tonnage berthing on both north and south sides of the river over the past year. General cargo tonnages as well as oil & gas related cargoes have increased and all properties in the port are occupied and significant activity has occurred on open storage and quayside project areas.

New cargoes to the port during the year included wind turbine components for temporary storage and transfer to on-shore wind farms, construction cement and mooring chain for offshore oil structures. Significant increases were reported in both imports and exports. Imports increasing were scrap



metal and pipes, wheat, maize and malt and even a small increase in pulp for papermaking. Fertilisers suffered a slight decrease following an increase the previous year. Exports increasing were barley, processed scrap metal, pipes and roundwood logs with slight decreases in fertilisers and oilseed rape.

The year has seen the full usage of the deep water berths completed on South Quay in 2011 and this has proven to be greatly beneficial for the oil & gas industry and other importers and exporters by increasing the capacity of the port.

Next year, these increases will be offset by the need to construct a new quay at Berth 6 on North Quay and apply major renewals to its neighbour Berth 7 which entails losing berthing capacity for several months at each location. It is hoped that disruption to the port's valued customers will be minimised during this important investment project.

Montrose Port Authority has invested substantially in repairs and upgrades to the fabric of roads, quays, buildings and other infrastructure during the past year. Port users have also been investing substantially in cargo handling equipment, grain storage and warehousing. The port is working with Angus Council and University of Dundee in researching possibilities of beneficial use of essential dredging uprisings from the navigation channel to maintain its navigable depth. The next dredge is planned for July 2013, the last one having been in October 2012. Exceptional continuous easterly gales early this year have led to dredging being required earlier than anticipated. The dredge prior to October 2012 was in April 2011.

Thereby, the port on the river South Esk continues to be a healthy economic driver for the County of Angus and its neighbours to the North, South and East.

Dipper

Dippers have evolved a superb ability to hunt underwater. Holding their wings outstretched, they stabilize their weight and walk along the bottom of fast running rivers or streams. Dippers feed on a wide range of aquatic invertebrates and fish and are found throughout most of Europe and the Middle East.



Dippers are named for the bobbing and dipping movements they make whilst perched. They have a distinctive white throat and breast against their dark brown-black plumage. A flash of their specialised white eyelids, used to protect the eyes when submerged, provides further identification if needed.

Did you know?

Dippers can remain under water for up to 30 seconds.

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About The River South Esk Catchment Partnership

To address the many issues which affect the South Esk catchment, representatives of some organisations have been meeting regularly since 2004 with the development of an integrated Catchment Management Plan at the forefront of their aims. Gradually an informal Steering Group was formed*. The process of developing a Catchment Management Plan began in earnest in 2008 with the employment of a part-time Project Officer to oversee an intensive two year consultation phase which would capture people's views on what they considered the key environmental, social and economic issues to be within the catchment. These views were used to form the basis of the plan's strategic aims, catchment objectives and actions. Phase one of the plans implementation is now complete and development of the next phase of implementation is at the forefront of the Partnership's mind.

The River South Esk Catchment Partnership would like to thank all its funders and supporters.

Without them it would be impossible to carry out the work we are undertaking. The logos on display denote the funders of the 2011/12 phase. Their funding will allow us to work towards enhancing and promoting many facets of the catchment .



*The Esk District Salmon Fishery Board, Angus Council, Scottish Natural Heritage, Esk Rivers and Fisheries Trust, the Scottish Environment Protection Agency, Atlantic Salmon Trust, Scottish Agricultural College, Forestry Commission Scotland, Littlewood Land Care, Cairngorms National Park Authority, Macaulay Institute, Scottish Water, National Farmers Union

For any comments or to join our mailing list, please contact:

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