

Looking back on an excellent year of angling achievements

DEE BEAT

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The year 2013 has been a busy one on the River Dee and, as only a few weeks remain, it's time to look back at the achievements and highlights of the year.

The fishing season started on February 1, with 230 supporters gathering at Potarch to witness the official opening of the season by Alistair Hume. This year marks the 150th anniversary of the Dee District Salmon Fishery Board.

Low flows and warm temperatures affected the salmon and the anglers of the Dee alike.

Fewer salmon seemed to enter the Dee as there weren't the high flows to attract them in, while anglers found more productive activities in the summer sun.

Overall, the number of salmon caught on the Dee in 2013 was around 5000 fish, which is about two thirds of the catch of recent years and a similar pattern was seen on many other Scottish rivers.

The riverbank tree planting programme began this May as part of the European funded Pearls in Peril LIFE project.

Enclosures containing native trees have been planted along the bank side of the Gairn and the Clunie rivers and can be seen from the road between Braemar and Glenshee. These enclosures are the start of things to come, as the aim of the Pearls in Peril project is to plant 70 km of riverbank over the next 3 years.

The enclosures will create wooded buffer strips along the riverbank providing dappled shade, woodland habitat for a range of birds and mammals and will help stabilise the banks from erosion.

Freshwater pearl mussels have the same habitat requirements as salmon and the work undertaken by the Pearls in Peril project will benefit both

mussels and salmon and many other species.

Data loggers have been installed to record water temperatures, which will show how the shading provided as these trees grow will affect water temperatures in the future and hopefully mitigate against climate change.

River Dee Trust staff spent many sunny days surveying over the summer.

Electrofishing surveys, where young fish are caught, measured and released, were carried out to monitor numbers and check that we have healthy populations of salmon and trout.

These surveys also show how successful fish passes are and whether fish are able to travel above them and spawn. Two fish passes were created this year on the Muick and Clunie and electrofishing surveys will be carried out next year to monitor their success.

Pamela, our habitat surveyor, is walking the length and breadth of the Dee catchment to identify where problems occur and inform future restoration



Salmon ladder on the Dee.

projects by the Board and Trust. This is quite a task as a total of 2000 km of Dee rivers and burns are to be walked!

Over 30 students from Banchory, Mackie and Mearns Academies took part in the

annual Mar Lodge Adventure Week in June completing the John Muir Award. The programme is a partnership between the River Dee Trust, Aberdeenshire Active Schools, Cairngorms National Park, the

National Trust for Scotland (NTS), John Muir Trust and Tiso.

Students participated in a range of activities to raise their understanding of issues relating to the environment, ecology,

land management and conservation. Activities included mountain biking, gorge walking, conservation work with NTS staff and learning to fly fish on the River Dee.

An additional 12 schools were visited by the River Dee Trust this year.

I joined the River Dee team in August as the Dee catchment outreach officer. The post is the first of its kind for Scottish rivers and recognises the importance of the river to the Deeside community. One of the primary aims of my post is to raise awareness of the River Dee among school children.

During 2014 I will be developing an education package to encourage use of the river as an educational resource that is tailored to the Curriculum for Excellence for primary and secondary school students.

In 2005/06, local schools were gifted a Riverbank Resource Box that highlighted the geography, history and wildlife of the River Dee catchment.

Questionnaires will be sent out to all schools within the Dee catchment who received a box to gain feedback on how the boxes have been used and how they can be updated in the new year.

If you would like more information on our education work please email Joanna@riverdee.org.

All River Dee staff would like to wish everyone a happy new year and tight lines to all anglers in 2014.



Young anglers practice casting.