Skye & Wester Ross Fisheries Trusts

Newsletter, January 2017

This newsletter provides a summary of some recent activities relating to wild fisheries in Wester Ross and Skye. The two fisheries trusts have worked together closely over the past year and are currently in the process of a formal merger. Thank you to everyone who provided support for our work during 2016. We look forward to hearing from you if have other news to share or are able to help with field work or other support again in 2017!

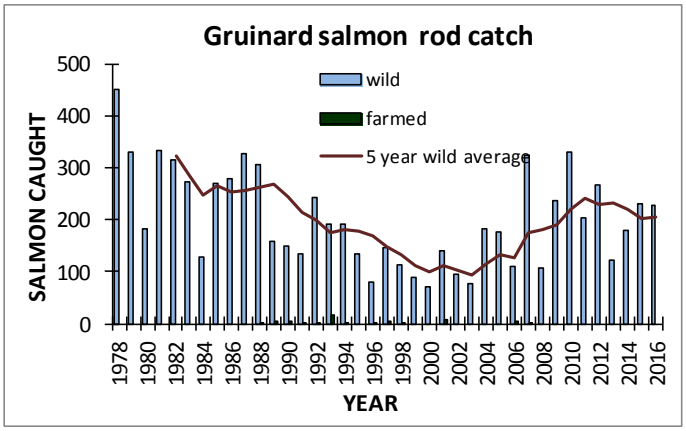
Rod catches of salmon in 2016: a season of two halves?

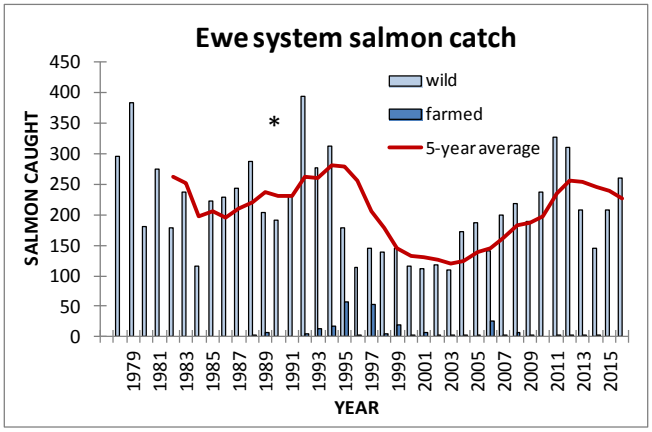
The 2016 angling season started well with good catches of multi-sea winter salmon in May and June, and some excellent fishing for both grilse and salmon in July. However, from mid August until the end of the season, there was a considerable decline in the number of fish taken by anglers. So, by the end of the season, some fishery managers were complaining of a lack of fish. For the River Ewe and to a lesser extend the Gruinard River, the main difference from other recent years was that the main runs entering rivers of both Multi-sea winter salmon and of grilse were earlier in the season than in some other recent years.

Derek Dowsett reported a reasonable catch of 101 salmon (largest 22lb), all returned, from the River Snizort on Skye. One particularly notable event was the capture of a magnificent freshly run 20lb cock salmon by 14 year old Mark MacQueen *(left)*. Well done Mark!

Reports in the angling press describe similar timings of catches elsewhere in the West of Scotland and Ireland.

*Catch graphs for the Gruinard River and River Ewe (*the figure for the Ewe for 2016 is subject to confirmation).*





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Ian Lindsay (Chairman, Skye)

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A record one-day catch of salmon in the upstream trap at Tournaig

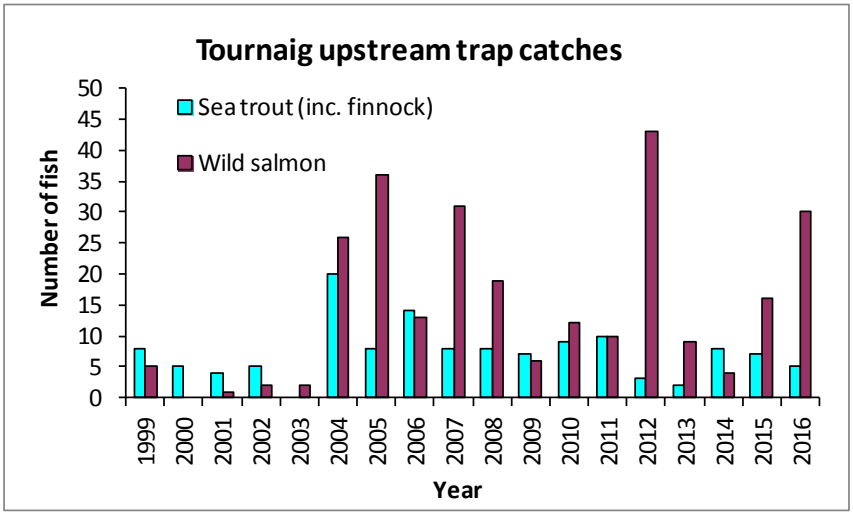
The Tournaig trap, by Loch Ewe, recorded its highest ever run of fish entering the upstream trap in a 24hr period. Twenty three putative grilse (scales have yet to be read) were taken from the trap on the morning of 8th August. To process the catch, Ben Rushbrooke worked from early morning until after noon (latterly assisted by Peter Cunningham).

(above) Ben processing a salmon from the Tournaig trap on 8th August 2016.

Most of the fish were between 50cm and 60cm in length (av. 54.6cm), with an average length slightly less than long term averages for grilse at Tournaig. Weights ranged from 994g to 2236g (average 1550g [~3lb 7oz]) and fish were rather thin, with condition factors ranging from 0.85 to 1.12 (average 0.94).

Despite water levels suitable for salmon entering the sea on many other occasions especially in September and October, only another 7 small grilse were caught in the trap between the 8th of August and early December when the trap was decommissioned for the winter.

The total catch of 30 adult salmon (all putative grilse) in the upstream trap in 2016 is the 4th highest end of season total since the project was initiated in 1999 (*below*). Scales will be read during the coming weeks to confirm whether or not all the fish were indeed grilse of wild origin.



For sea trout, the season was a poor one at Tournaig with just one adult fish in the upstream trap.

Thank you to Marine Harvest Scotland Ltd for continued support for this project.

(below) Male salmon taken in the Tournaig trap on 2nd September 2016 (photo by Ben).

Juvenile fish surveys in Wester Ross

Over 120 sites in 17 river systems, from the River Kanaird in the north to the River Croe in the south, were surveyed by the WRFT e-fishing team during the summer and autumn of 2016 (see Figure 1).

For salmon, the overall picture was of healthy numbers of fry and parr. Within some of the smaller rivers, including some of the tributary streams, numbers were generally lower than at core habitat areas within the major rivers.

Most sites were fished as 'one-run' sites with the fishing area estimated and the fishing time recorded. Figure 1 shows the distribution and relative abundance of fry expressed as CPUE [catch per unit effort]. The highest numbers of salmon fry (young of the year) were recorded at sites in the Ewe, Gruinard, Kanaird, Badachro; and at one site in the Tournaig system close to where a salmon had spawned the previous year.

At a few sites within 'marginal habitat' areas (places where salmon face many more challenges to complete their life cycle), juvenile salmon were very scarce or absent. No juvenile salmon were found in the Bruachaig river above the falls above Incheril (near Kinlochewe) where a hydropower scheme is currently being developed; nor in the Glasnock burn in the headwaters of the Balgy river system.

The highest CPUE values for parr were recorded at sites in the Kanaird, Dundonnell, Gruinard and Badachro systems; parr were also recorded at high CPUE in the River Ewe and several other systems. Compared to fry, salmon parr tend to be under-recorded especially in the larger rivers as many of them inhabit deeper water where our electro-fishing equipment is less effective at catching them!

Compared to previous years, no major changes in juvenile salmon abundance have so far been noted. Survey data will be analysed more fully over the coming months.

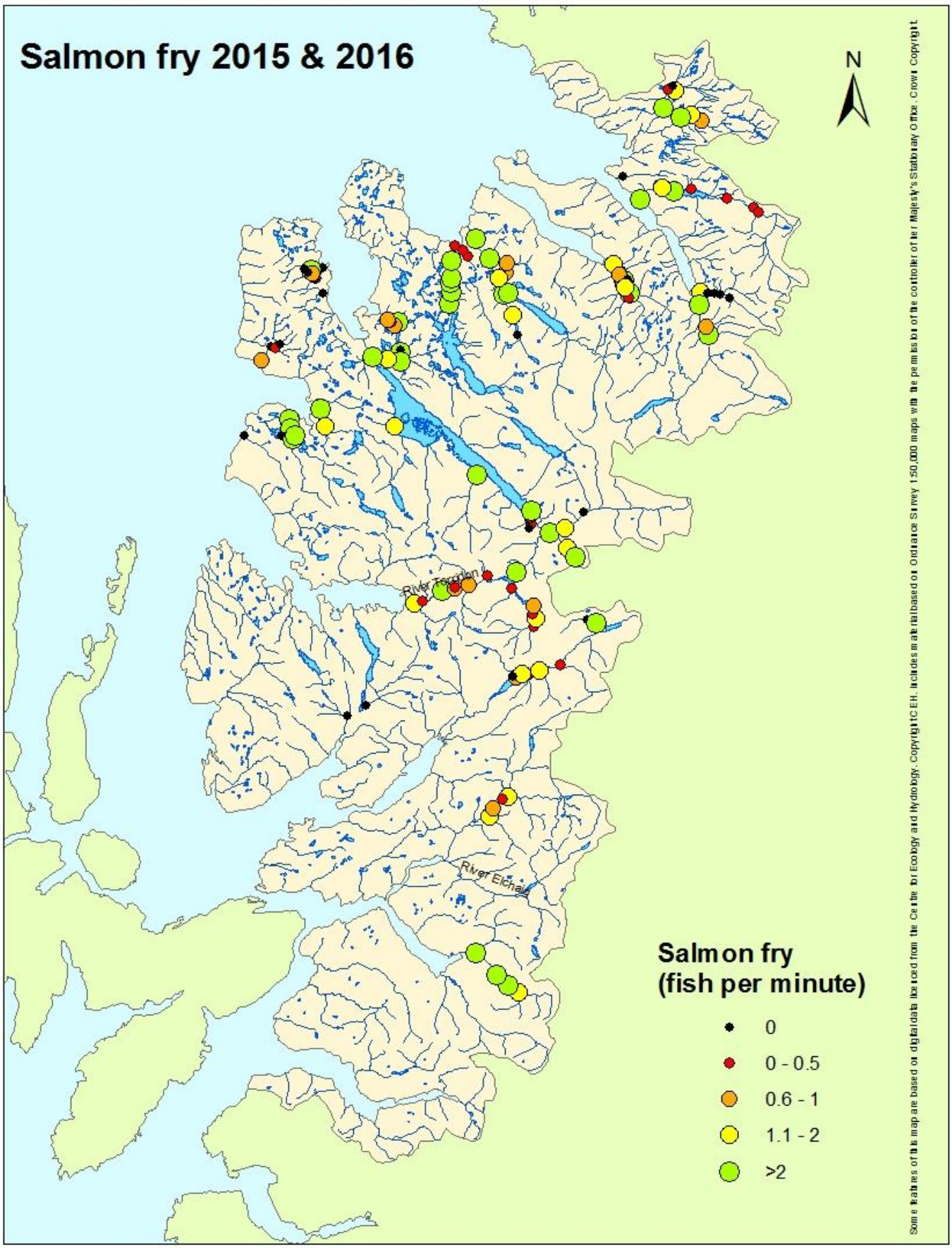
For trout, the highest CPUE figures for fry were for sites in the Broom, Dundonnell, Taagan burn (Ewe system), Sguod and Tournaig river system. For the Broom and Dundonnell rivers and possibly the Tagaan burn, the majority of trout fry are likely to be progeny of female sea trout, given the proportion of sea trout reported in rod catches nearby. The high counts at sites in the Tournaig river system and in the Sgoud river system may also include progeny of female sea trout in addition to those of female trout that had not been to sea.

For midges, a survey site below the Drumrunie falls (upper River Kanaird catchment) on 23rd August was particularly notable; there are at least 50 dead midges stuck to each side of the field data sheet. Field data sheets for previous years have yet to be examined to see whether the midges encountered that day represent a 'record' for the fish survey team within the WRFT area ☺.

Thank you especially to Colin Simpson and David Holland for assisting with juvenile fish surveys, and to many keepers, ghillies and other volunteers for providing enthusiastic support.

SNH Beinn Eigh NNR volunteers (Eilidh Johnson, Robert Leigh, Lorenza Pozzil, Madara Vilde and SNH area office Mary Gibson) helping with processing the catch of juvenile salmon and trout by the River Kerry on 15th September. This site was surveyed as part of a RAFTS contract for SNH to learn about the occurrence of Freshwater Pearl Mussel glochidia in juvenile salmon and trout.

Figure 1. Distribution and relative abundance of salmon fry in 2015 (Rhu burn, River Ullapool, Inverianvie, Ghuibsachain burn and River Ling) and 2016 (all other sites) as recorded by the WRFT electro-fishing teams.



Sweep netting for sea trout and sea lice infestation: mainland sites

Sea trout were sampled using a sweep net, by electro-fishing, and / or by using rod and line from the River Kanaird estuary, Loch Ewe, River Ewe, Loch Gairloch, Torridon estuary and from the Balmacara Burn near Kyle of Lochalsh to learn about parasitic sea lice infestation levels.

For the second year in succession, few lice were seen on sea trout in the north of the area including those caught at the mouth of the River Kanaird and in Loch Ewe. Lice levels were generally low on sea trout sampled in Loch Gairloch. However, further south at Balmacara, some heavily infested sea trout were taken in June and early July.

Our results again tend to concur with reported sea lice levels on salmon farms within nearby areas, based on figures in SSPO fish health management reports. For the second year in succession, reported sea lice levels on salmon farms within the north of the WRFT area around Loch Broom area were consistently low throughout the period. In contrast, in the Loch Alsh – Loch Duich area, sea louse levels were typically several times higher than the Industry's 'Code of Good Practice' treatment threshold levels, demonstrating continued failure to adequately control lice.

On the positive side, local fish farming company Wester Ross Fisheries has continued to achieve a very good level of control of sea lice on their farmed salmon throughout the production cycle using wild caught wrasse as cleaner fish, without resorting to chemical treatments (see WRFT Review May 2016).

(left) This post-smolt sea trout, taken at Balmacara, near Loch Alsh on 10th June 2016, had 250 lice on it.

(right) Kathy Pritchard-Jones, Katherine Vine, Jim Raffell (Marine Science Scotland), Colin Simpson, Andy Moys (MSS) and Michael Aitchison with the largest sea trout of the sweep netting season in Wester Ross, a recaptured male trout of 53cm, at Gairloch on 20th September 2016.

Three new 2000+ tonne salmon farms proposed for Summer Isles area

Given the continuing failure of large salmon farms to control on-farm sea lice production to levels where wild sea trout and salmon populations can remain healthy in nearby waters, we are particularly concerned by proposals by Marine Harvest Scotland Ltd, and Scottish Sea Farms Ltd to develop three new 2000+ tonne farms within the Summer Isles area, all within 15km of the mouth the Little Gruinard River Atlantic Salmon SAC and Gruinard River.

The proposed new sites are not just within one of the most sensitive areas for wild sea trout and salmon populations within the NW of Scotland, they are all located within the newly established Wester Ross Marine Protected Area.

WRFT has supported the WRASFB with initial responses to proposals.

(left) Aird salmon farm in Loch Torridon. Each of the farms proposed for the Summer Isles area is to be even larger than this farm.

Fisheries management report from the Isle of Skye

This brief review provides information about some of the fisheries management activities of the Skye Fisheries Trust (SFT) over the 2016 calendar year, with the help of numerous volunteers and the financial assistance of Grieg Seafood®. Thank you everyone!

Please note that the following data cannot be used or replicated without the consent of Isabel Moore (isabelmoore89@gmail.com).

As part of a 3 year PhD programme with the University of Glasgow to investigate factors affecting brown trout populations on the Isle of Skye, five river catchments the Varagill, Snizort, Drynoch, Strathmor, and Eishort were chosen for research purposes and underwent an intensive programme of sampling in both freshwater and marine environments.

The following summary describes work that was carried out at all five catchments.

- **Redd Mapping**

Beginning in January 2016, both the Strathmor and Eishort catchments were explored with the aim of identifying spawning locations of brown trout in the upper reaches of the rivers.

Two redds were identified in the Strathmor catchment, but it was hypothesised that because of the time of year and the large spates that had occurred during the winter, the majority of redds had either been washed out or significantly flattened by the heavy rains, making them difficult to identify. Redd mapping began again in the autumn of 2016 and continued into the winter. Four redds were identified in the Varagill River soon after river levels rose in November.

A small number of eggs were collected from each identified redd and will be used for future stable isotope analysis to monitor the percentage of anadromous and residential spawning females in Skye's catchments. Additionally, a small number of eggs were stripped from a trout hen caught in the Snizort River.

This work will continue into January 2018 during the spawning seasons.

Trout eggs collected from an identified redd.

- **Habitat and Productivity Assessments**

Habitat and macroinvertebrate kick sampling surveys were carried out simultaneously over April and May 2016 in all five river catchments. The purpose of these surveys was to firstly identify suitable juvenile brown trout habitats that could be electrofished later in the year, and secondly, determine the estimated productivity levels in areas around the catchment that could support brown trout populations.

A total of 50 sites were chosen during the spring, and habitat surveys were carried out at each site following SFCC guidelines. Additionally, two macroinvertebrate samples were collected in both pool and riffle sequences in each 50 m site. The majority of sites in the Snizort, Varagill, and Drynoch catchments had been electrofished in previous surveys completed in 2011 and 2012.

Further macroinvertebrate sampling occurred in August and September 2016, during electrofishing surveying, in order to observe temporal changes in community structures over time. During the summer sampling however, only one kick sample was taken from each sites, normally from riffle sections.

The macroinvertebrate samples will be processed in the future using RIVPACS protocols in order to assign each site a biomonitoring score based on the biodiversity and abundance of its invertebrate community.

A macroinvertebrate sample containing both stonefly and mayfly larvae.

- **Electrofishing surveys**

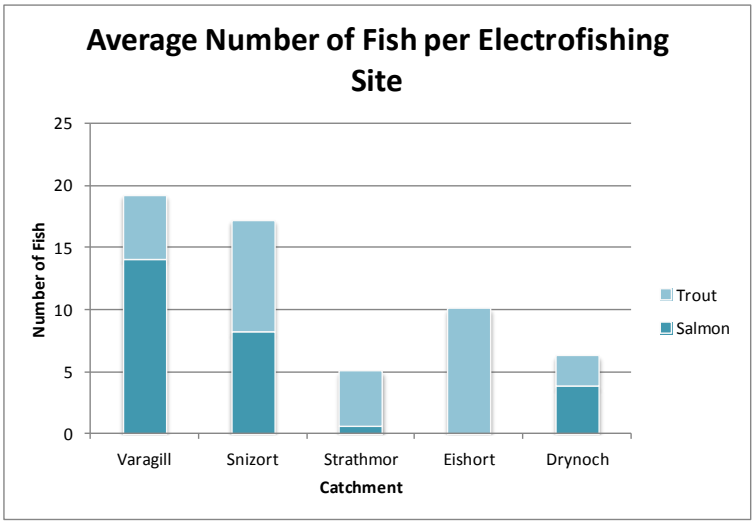
As mentioned previously, the majority of electrofishing sites in the Varagill, Snizort and Drynoch have been sampled in previous surveys completed in 2011 and 2012 and this provides more long term data that can be used for population analysis.

The Eishort and Strathmor rivers had not been as extensively surveyed before, however, the electrofishing that took place in 2016 provides important baseline data for future monitoring work.

In total, 35 sites were electrofished semi-quantitatively in the five river catchments. Figure 2 shows the average numbers of fish recorded. Additionally, a macroinvertebrate kick sample was taken at each site. The collected data provide a fantastic amount of baseline information about the juvenile brown trout populations and temporal changes in habitat productivity.

One of the juvenile fish caught at an electrofishing site in the River Snizort.

Figure 2. The average number of fish found at each electrofishing site in each river catchment. Juvenile salmon were more numerous than trout at sites in the rivers Varagill and Drynoch; however trout were more numerous than salmon at sites in the rivers Snizort and Strathmor. Only brown trout were found in the river Eishort sites..



- **Sea trout and salmon (sea) lice surveys on Skye**

In accordance with the RAFTS recommended protocol, netting for *Salmo trutta* post smolts began at the end of May 2016 and continued until the beginning of October 2016. The sea loch or estuary associated with each of the five aforementioned river catchments was sampled. Initially, a seine net was used at all five sites. Subsequently however, the use of fyke nets was supplemented into the sampling protocol for three of the five lochs (Eishort, Varagill, and Drynoch) when this particular methodology proved more effective.

A total of 231 sea trout individuals were sampled between May and October. A general overview of information about the fish caught at each site can be found in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Basic overview of sea trout information collected from seine and fyke netting in 2016 by location.

River system	Eishort	Snizort	Drynoch	Slapin	Varagill
Number of fish caught	27	31	40	88	45
Average number of lice per fish	7	20	4	4	0
Average length (g)	236	165	216	228	191
Average weight (g)	162	54	158	149	100

Over the course of the summer, additional protocols were developed with the help of Marine Scotland Science to begin trawling for free floating salmon lice napulii larvae along transects in the sea lochs that were simultaneously being sampled for sea trout. Samples were collected on foot by walking several transects (no deeper than thigh height) in each loch at high tide. Salinity samples were also taken along each transect. This sampling occurred in all five sea lochs where sea trout surveys were occurring, and in two additional sites around the island. The samples were then examined under a microscope to count the number of lice larvae present.

While this methodology was not as effective as originally planned, it is hoped that with some adjustments, the sampling procedure will prove to be useful in the future for identifying areas of high salmon louse abundance.

(left) Processing sea trout at Loch Slapin; (right) Fyke nets set up in the River Varagill.

Scottish Government Salmon Conservation Regulations 2017

In November 2016, Scottish Government published its final grades and conservation regulations for salmon rivers for the 2017 angling season.

The model from which the grades have been obtained depends upon a relationship between reported rod catches in previous years and actual numbers of adult fish at spawning time. There are of course many factors, particularly for smaller rivers in our area, affecting the validity of this relationship.

Comments were submitted in to the Scottish Government's September 2016 Consultation on Draft Regulations for the 2017 season, via the WRASFB and Skye DSFB.

The view of both the Wester Ross and Skye biologists and other biologists working for West Coast fisheries trusts was that wild salmon abundance in many rivers had been greatly overestimated for many rivers. Proposed changes from 'grade' 3 in 2016 (mandatory catch and release) to 'grade 1' or 'grade 2' for 2017 (some killing of wild salmon allowed) based on the 'draft' model for 2017 could not be supported. Of particular concern, given that the interpretation of rod catch data that the model is based on is unverifiable, the proposed grading for 2017 could also be detrimental to on-going progress towards better protection of wild salmon in our areas.

Subsequently, the model was adjusted; and grades for rivers in Wester Ross and Skye were revised.

Mainland rivers	Grade for 2016	**Final Grade for 2017**
Kanaird	3	**3**
Ullapool	3	**2**
Broom	3	**3**
Dundonnell	3	**2**
Gruinard	3	**2**
Little Gruinard		**2**
Ewe	3	**2**
Kerry & Badachro		**1**
Torridon	2	**3**
Balgy		**2**
Applecross	3	**3**
Carron	3	**2**
Ling	3	**2**
Elchaig	3	**2**
Croe	3	
Shiel		**3**
Glenmore	3	**3**
Glenbeag	3	**3**
Arnisdale		**2**

Skye Rivers	Grade for 2016	**Final Grade for 2017**
Brogaig, Stenscholl and Kilmaluag		3
Hinnesdal to Haultin		1
Snizort & Oze	3	**3**
Drynoch & Eynort		**3**
Fhionnairigh & Scavaig		**3**
Sligachan	3	**3**
Broadford river		**3**

The final grades for 2017 for rivers, in the areas covered by the Skye and Wester Ross Fisheries Trusts, are shown *(left).*

These are regarded as being more reasonable. However, even for Grade 1 and Grade 2 rivers, ***we would recommend that anglers continue to return salmon to ensure that stocks remain healthy for future years***.

Note that the grade for the rivers Kerry and Badachro may be overly optimistic, partly as a consequence of the way the model works. The Kerry is a regulated river and conditions for salmon fishing after rainfall tend to last longer than for other small rivers in the area, so the reported rod catch may represent a much higher proportion of the actual number of adult fish in the river than for other rivers.

That said, electro-fishing surveys in the Badachro and Kerry have consistently demonstrated high numbers of juvenile salmon at most sites in recent years.

Please contact either biologist if you have any queries about conservation regulations for rivers within the Skye and Wester Ross Fisheries Trust area in 2017. A summary of the final grading and further explanation can be found at: http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0051/00510533.pdf .

WRFT Loch Maree Fishing day, 19th September 2016

Five boats set out from the Loch Maree Hotel for the annual WRFT fishing day. 13 trout were taken; the largest a brown trout of 349mm. Only one of the trout was a mature female, and it was a 'brown' (loch) trout rather than a sea trout. However none of them looked like a sea trout (scales have yet to be read).

Thank you and John Weir and SNH Beinne Eighe NNR for providing the wheel boat enabling Ian Cross to spend a couple of hours teaching Sue Pomeroy, John Weir and Duncan Shaw about dapping for sea trout on the loch. Thank you also to ghillie, Fred Robertson, and to the Loch Maree Hotel for supporting the event and providing soup and sandwiches at lunchtime.

(left) Anglers and ghillies with Raymond and Caroline Gault from the Loch Maree Hotel prior to setting off in search of wild trout on the 19th September.

Wester Ross & Skye Fisheries Trust Open Day

To mark the ongoing amalgamation of the Wester Ross and Skye Fisheries Trusts, a meeting attended by about 40 participants took place at Torridon Community Hall on 24th October. The two Trusts have worked together closely over recent years, addressing similar challenges facing wild salmon and sea trout. The meeting also provided an opportunity to consider options for a new Fisheries Management Organisation as part of the on-going restructuring of fisheries management in Scotland. Thank you to all who attended and contributed to the discussion.

Peter's presentation (only part of which was given on the day) summarising much recent work can be found via links at http://www.wrft.org.uk/news/newsitem.cfm?id=200 .

Ecosystem fertility and (wild) life production in Wester Ross

Following the WRFT Refertilising Wester Ross workshop that took place at Beinn Eighe NNR and Gairloch in April 2016 (see website), Peter Cunningham was invited to Lochinver by Assynt Field Club to do a talk. This provided an opportunity to review the relevance of more recent observations and further reading around the subject of ecosystem nutrition, including some papers describing the export of phosphorus via red deer out of the Swiss National Park (comparable to some river catchment areas in Wester).

Any comments on the Assynt presentation, and a draft poster entitled *'Ecosystem Nutrition in Wester Ross: conserving and replenishing phosphorus'* would be very welcome.

Please visit: http://www.wrft.org.uk/news/newsitem.cfm?id=201

Colin Simpson by a boulder by the Little Gruinard River in September 2016

Invasive Japanese knotweed reduced to <1% of former biomass along the River Broom

Following surveys of Japanese Knotweed within the catchment in 2014, Coile Alba, with funding from Landfill Communities Fund (through WRFT), Inverbroom Estate, National Trust for Scotland and the Forestry Commission, embarked on the first year of a projected 5-6 year Japanese knotweed control programme along the River Broom. Over 60,000 Japanese knotweed stems were stem injected in August 2015 (see WRFT Review May 2016 http://www.wrft.org.uk/news/newsitem.cfm?id=197).

A site assessment in June 2016, confirmed the exceptional effectiveness of the stem injection method, especially in healthy, vigorous stands. For most stands, the living above-ground knotweed biomass was reduced to less than 1% from the previous season.

(left) Japanese knotweed by the River Broom in September 2014; (right) after treatment, June 2016.

Ahead of the 2016 treatment season, two local contractors, Louis Neate and Chester Hodgkinson, received specialist training to safely handle and apply pesticides (NPTC PA1 and PA6AW). Coille Alba's Wilbur Rundle provided hands-on training during control operations. Wilbur and Louis worked together and treated all knotweed stands in September 2016.

Operations included repeat visits to stands stem-injected in 2015, and a handful of 'new' stands which had been previously overlooked in gorge sections. All injectable stems were injected. Smaller plants were sprayed using a Berthoud knapsack sprayer. They were also GPSd and mapped.

All plants located were treated, regardless of access difficulties, with the exception of the few survivors on the Corrieshalloch rock-face, which require roped access. It was agreed to postpone further rope-work until we have made more progress on the burn above.

(left) To allow spraying below wet rock-faces, a temporary frame was erected by Wilbur and Louis and covered with polythene; this was removed the following day.

This project was made possible through the support of all the River Broom riparian owners. Thanks to Rob Dewar (National Trust for Scotland), Suzanne Dolby (Forestry Commission Scotland), to Inverbroom Estate and Chester Hodgkinson (Braemore Square) for help with accommodation, and Sandy Mackenzie (Scottish Water). Special thanks are due to John Parrott of Coile Alba, and the field operations team: Wilbur Rundle and Louis Neate, who worked hard to ensure they found and treated every knotweed stand, whatever the obstacles!

Consultancy Work on Skye

In addition to the field work for her PhD, Isabel completed a post-development fish survey in the Loch Buidhe system above Broadford in August 2016. This is the second consecutive year that a post construction survey has occurred in this loch system, and this year, an electrofishing survey was included in addition to the visual assessment.

Unfortunately no fish were found in the electrofishing sites, suggesting that the construction of the impoundment system might have isolated local brown trout in the upstream lochs from their historic downstream spawning grounds below the dam, thus severely impacting the reproductive success of the population. Scottish Water did build a fish pass next to the impoundment; and it was thought that fish would be capable of moving between the loch system using this pass, but this survey would suggest that they did not.

However, the lochs themselves were not sampled and it is possible that mature fish were still present in the loch system and might still be able to reproduce in the future [above the loch]. Another electrofishing survey in 2017 could prove useful in determining the population status of local fish.

Education and outreach on Skye

In December 2016, a school programme was held at Portree High School to raise awareness about the importance of freshwater resources and communities, including the value of indigenous Scottish fish populations such as *S. trutta*. Students investigated concepts like food webs, natural resource management, and over-population, and also explored live macroinvertebrate samples that had been collected from local burns. It is hoped that this programme will be carried out again in the winter of 2017.

(*left) Students at Portree High School play games that demonstrate the importance of resource availability in the marine environment. (right) Students at Portree High School discuss food webs.*

If you have any questions about fishery trust work on Skye, or would like to get involved with our projects on Skye as a volunteer, please contact Isabel Moore by email (isabelmoore89@gmail.com) or phone (07825 567765).

(left) One of the largest trout sampled by the sweep netting team in Skye during 2016 (photo by Isabel Moore).

School field trips to see salmon spawning streams

Two field trips were arranged for Wester Ross school pupils to learn about salmon in spawning streams. On 21st November, Poolewe Primary school set off towards Kernsary. The day was bright, the children excited; however the river was perhaps a little too low and no fish were seen. However we were able to see freshly-made ?trout redds by the side of the burn and learn about some of the animals which follow salmon and trout up spawning streams in the autumn. River Ewe ghillie, Raymond Dingwall, and NTS Inverewe Countryside Ranger, Carol Mackintosh were also on hand to tell the boys and girls about angling, wild salmon and other wildlife. Thank you to Ray, Carol and to teachers at Poolewe Primary School for organising this trip.

Ray Dingwall telling the pupils about the salmon in the River Ewe.

Two days later, a group of 3rd year pupils from Gairloch High School with teachers Dr James Close and Lorna Nelson (aka Dr Lorna Brown), went to Coulin Estate in order to observe rarely seen salmon spawning behaviour in the wild, plant trees as part of the "Trees for Fish" incentive and to watch salmon eggs being extracted and fertilized in Coulin Estate's, salmon hatchery. The following is based on the report on the Gairloch High School facebook page:

The day was a perfect winter's day, blue skies, no wind and no rain or snow. The river level had dropped to the optimal level, and Peter Cunningham, Lorna and Neil Morrison were on hand to guide our pupils to the best spot for seeing wild salmon spawning behaviour. Pupils were rewarded by the sight of large male salmon arching out of the water, huge dorsal fins emerging in a "Jaws like" manner as the males pursued females, chased each other off and fertilized the eggs as they were being laid in the redds (*below left*). We spent a good half an hour watching this exciting behaviour then went further into the estate to see a fine collection of stags antlers with Mr Morrison, then to plant trees along a river bank (*below right*). With guidance from forester Robbie Alexander, willow, aspen, alder, birch and oak trees were planted from the banks up the slope in that order; as the willow can grow in wet soil and the oak cannot.

The final task of the day was to get the eggs from the hen salmon and the milt from the cock and mix them to fertilize; a good job done. Some of the salmon eggs will be transferred to a classroom hatchery in February where pupils will look after them until they hatch and until the salmon fry are ready to be released back into the wild.

Thank you very much to all the pupils for their active interest, to Robbie Alexander telling the children about tree planting; and to Neil Morrison and to Coulin Estate for supporting a very successful field trip.

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Loch Maree Conversations with Ghillies Project

This project has been developed in collaboration with the Gairloch Heritage Museum and Two Lochs Radio. Several years ago Sue Pomeroy recorded a series of conversations with former herring fishermen. Her conversations were edited for a series of programmes that were broadcast on Two Loch Radio. The conversations also provide a record of the fishers and the fisheries of the area. Ruby Neervoort's MSc thesis, which can be found on the WRFT website, was also partly based on the recorded interviews.

So far Sue has interviewed eight former and some still practicing ghillies; all with years of experience on Loch Maree. Support for the current project has been provided by local fishery proprietors and other individuals keen to safeguard ghillies knowledge for the future.

If anyone else would like to contribute to this project, either by offering to meet up with Sue to record a conversation, or by making a donation towards expenses, that would be very much appreciated.

Ian Cross showed Sue how to dap for sea trout on Loch Maree on 19th September 2016 (photo by Sue).

Dr Paul Vecsei has painted a Wester Ross *ferox* trout

In October 2011, Peter Cunningham and Roger McLachlan caught a large trout in a spawning stream within the Loch Maree catchment area. The story and pictures, including one of a scale from the 'ferox' trout, were posted on the WRFT website where they can still be found http://www.wrft.org.uk/news/newsitem.cfm?id=137. Recently, Canadian fish biologist, Dr Paul Vecsei emailed Peter with the picture of the same trout (below). It is possibly the most detailed and accurate illustration of a trout that we have seen to date!

The illustration is to appear in a forthcoming book by Paul highlighting the diversity of wild trout around the world. Paul has very kindly agreed to allow the Trust to make use of this picture for 'not for profit' purposes. Thank you very much Paul; it is a wonderful illustration. Many other illustrations and spectacular underwater photographs of trout, salmon, charr and other fish can be found on Paul's flickr page https://www.flickr.com/photos/fishasart/ .