

ADAA Newsletter June 2023

1. Introduction:

Following my temporary absence from the editor's chair (so to speak), I am pleased to be back and would like to thank President Paul Adderton for his excellent work in the interim. Much has been happening on several ADAA fronts and the newsletter contains the apposite details.

JWS

2. President's Remarks:

June, and we are now halfway through the season and given the late but much welcomed warmer weather many of us are now enjoying some excellent trout fishing on both river and loch. I am pleased to say the Loch of Loirston is enjoying some excellent catches to date with members recording fish of 8lb and many in the 4lb and 5lb. category. Though weed has always been a problem on the loch it is becoming even more so given climate change. Past weed cutting has helped the situation a little but come mid-summer much of the loch becomes unfishable because of weed. This summer, Beat Convenor Kenny Riddell, has plans to address the weed incursion which Kenny explains further in this newsletter.

The river Don too has been yielding good baskets of brown trout this Spring both to the wet fly and dry fly. The two Kemnay beats have proved very popular with members catching wild trout up to 5lb. The Don is renowned for its wild brown trout fishing and our Association is very fortunate to own some excellent beats and as such has a responsibility to conserve it. A particular interest of mine is water quality, and this can be measured by the invertebrate life that inhabits the riverbed. Those of you that attended the AGM will recall the presentation by Rebecca Lewis of the River Fly Initiative and following this presentation I am pleased to inform you that some members have started an invertebrate monitoring programme on various stretches of our river Don beats under the stewardship of Gerry Hough, who explains more on this project further in the newsletter.

Sadly, salmon catches to date on our river beats are very poor, and not just on the Association's waters as this is also reflected on other rivers throughout the country. The Spring run is a shadow of past years whereas the summer and autumn runs are still holding up and at least give us the opportunity of catching a salmon. It is interesting that our Kemnay beat on the Don has been picking away with the odd fish as our catch records, thanks to Murray Hourston informs us on our members only Facebook page.

We are aware the various River Boards are very active in bucking the trend in our declining salmon stocks. The river Dee Trust, which we are pleased to support hold fund raising activities which finance various conservation projects along the river system. Many of these projects can be seen by the public on their guided river walks. They are most informative, I attended one such walk last year, and it was an enlightening experience. So, if you want to know what the Boards are doing join in on a river walk.

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Predation is still a major issue and particularly with goosanders and especially so during the spring smolt run. Fortunately, numbers of these fish-eating birds can be controlled by culling which we have a licence for at certain times of the year. During the peak smolt run there is a herding initiative where the shoals of smolts are protected by bailiffs and gillies up and down the river by scaring the birds away enabling the smolts to have safe passage on their way to sea.

The Millpond is very popular among our members and even more so among our juniors. Our Junior Convenor Ash McKinnon and the Pond convenor spends a fair amount of time there and is always on hand to help our younger members. The Junior competition held last year at the pond was a notable success and I am pleased to report this will be repeated this year, and once more the Ardoe House Hotel will be sponsoring the event, providing all catering, soft drinks, and prizes.

As well as the junior event at the Millpond we are going to hold a junior salmon fly fishing day at our Middle Drum Beat on the river Dee. The date has yet to be agreed but will be held on a Saturday in late August. For those juniors who have no salmon tackle there is no need to worry, as all tackle will be provided, and of course there will be senior members on hand for both support and tuition. More information on this event will follow due course.

The Middle Drum Beat is a much welcomed addition to our salmon fishing portfolio and although just for a short period I certainly hope we take full advantage of it. Catches just now are poor with just the odd fish or two which does not reflect the amount of effort that members have put in. However, I am sure come later in the year catch numbers will improve. It is a four rod beat with an agreement reached with the owners and that there are two rods below the hut and two rods above the hut. The Lawson pool is the most popular and productive pool on the beat, and I ask that members do not hog this pool during their session but consider other rods fishing and allow them the opportunity to fish all the beat. And remember, keep the hut tidy.....

As the sun shines so does the grass grow and given the amount of riverbank that the Association must keep tidy enabling safe and easy access for members to fish, I am sure you all will agree that this is a mammoth undertaking. We are fortunate to have a dedicated team managed by Lewis Baxter, that looks after all our maintenance requirements which is not just grass cutting along the riverbanks, but buildings, vehicles, trailers, gates, and fences and as such we have a fair amount of equipment which needs servicing and replacing. These are costly items to manage and this year we have noticed a sharp increase in both fuel and service costs let alone increased insurance premiums and a sharp rise in our river boards assessments. There is a programme for grass cutting on all the Associations beats which follows a set path of action when beats become popular among members to fish. Nicky Taylor assisted by volunteer Raymond, have perfected a timetable when and where grass cutting takes place throughout the grass cutting season. As members know some beats do require more than one cut which is accommodated when time becomes available. However, all grass cutting is weather dependant which can cause delays and some inconvenience, but rest assured, Nicky puts in a lot of time for the benefit of us all. There will also be improvements for members comfort whilst fishing with no more sitting on the wet grass as some complain about. You will already have noticed



the positioning of seat benches on the odd Don beat and there are more planned to be put out during the season also on the Schivas beat on the Ythan.

At our AGM we gave notice that the committee was to embark on a membership recruitment drive which is being led by Robert Paterson and Ash McKinnon. The first phase of this initiative was to conduct an online membership survey to seek feedback from members on their choice of fishing methods, preferred angling venues from all our waters together with the many benefits we have for members plus any ideas. The response was most pleasing, with many positive reports and suggestions for the committee to take on board. Robert gives a short summary of the survey findings further in this newsletter. Representing the Association further afield and around the community we must thank Ash McKinnon who has been on the road in the ADAA Land Rover many a weekend at the various farmers markets with our well designed ADAA display boards and hand out material. Ash informs me that he has had some excellent response. We have also planned to produce several short videos showing the promoting the Association's fishing beats that we can inform potential members and visitors to come and join us. Our first video featuring the Parkhill Beats is now in production. All the videos will be uploaded onto the YOUTUBE platform reaching a maximum audience. I'm sure they will make for good viewing.

And finally. I was out for a walk the other evening and I wish I had my camera with me as a badger came out of some thicket and started, well as badgers do, badgering away in front of me. I watched it for a few minutes and quite closeup too. I will most certainly have my camera when next out fishing. After all, there is an ADAA photographic competition to enter.

Tight lines

Paul Adderton

3. The season so far

2023 has, up to the middle of June, followed fairly closely the trajectory experienced last year, with reasonable early season water levels facilitating our expected and well-proven river brown trout angling, allied to a degree of salmon sport. Sadly, and this is of course especially felt in our pursuit of migratory fish, rainfall has again been negligible in the last few weeks, in fact to all intents and purposes, almost entirely absent.



In early June our 3 rivers were already running below summer level, with subsequent water temperature concerns (see the accompanying photographs of the river just below the Parkhill road bridge, where the side stream on the right (south) bank has completely dried up, something I cannot recall happening even during last year's extended drought). Fishing the late rise at Lower Parkhill one evening recently, I felt tempted to divest myself of my waders and other gear and take a dip in

the inviting water. Not wishing to engender any mirth or ridicule should any passer-by or late dog walker happen along, I wisely desisted. Seriously though, we need rain urgently to freshen our waters and not just for our salmon.



As I write these particular words as the last week of June approaches, the situation has not improved, and our river boards have posted further advice and guidance on refraining from angling between the hours of 11am and 9pm. Our President, Paul Adderton, has also issued a supporting statement and I am sure we will all see the justification for introducing (hopefully for a short period only) this measure.

At this point and to summarise the first half of the season, I leave it to committee member Murray Hourston, who has taken on the not- inconsiderable task of collating the figures from members' catch returns. Murray's estimable work in this field has provided us with all the main information needed on how our river beats and stillwaters have performed this year to date.

JWS

4. Catch Returns:

Although the catch details below will be incomplete and not include late May and early June returns by the time you are reading your Newsletters it is worth saying at

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the outset that the catches so far, are comparable or even slightly better than last year. Stats for the year up to 20th May, with last years in brackets, are as follows: 26 Salmon [25], 19 Sea Trout [23], 71 Finnock [74], 174 brown trout [125], and 828 Rainbows [390]. Brown and rainbow trout catches are significantly higher this year, with one more salmon and roughly the same number of finnock reported.

Now in the words of Mark Twain, there are lies, damned lies, and statistics. Since he was also a fisherman, I think that he probably knew what he was talking about. So can I make it clear that this report is based purely on the catch returns provided by members, each return has been treated as accurate unless it is an obvious error.

Can I also make a plea to all anglers that they record blank salmon trips. We have a statutory duty to provide this information and face a hefty fine if our returns are inaccurate. More importantly though, it is this information that leads to decisions on areas of scientific research, river classifications, and predator control, which are vital in trying to protect wild salmon.

To give some context I have broken these stats down into monthly catches below.

January,

This month is dedicated to the hardy group of anglers, most of whom began shaving at least half a century ago, and who regularly ventured to Millpond, despite often inclement weather. Their steadfast efforts were rewarded with 67 rainbows of up to 3lbs in weight. Well done guys it was tough going some days.

February

Congratulations to Bill Wright who caught the first salmon from ADAA waters this year, which was also the first from the Don. Bill's fish weighed 5lbs and was caught whilst spinning at Upper Parkhill on the 13th. Such early success was short lived, but we did have our second salmon of the season on the 18th, a fish estimated as weighing about 6lbs and again caught on a spinner at Upper Parkhill.

On the Ythan the few brave anglers chasing finnock had some success with a total 37 caught up to 5th March.

A small stocking at Millpond certainly enhanced the sport there with a total of 197 fish caught of up to 5lbs.

March

The salmon fishing really got underway in March, with 12 reported from our Don beats and 2 from the newly acquired water at Middle Drum. Congratulations to our President Paul Adderton, on catching our first Dee fish, an 8 lb springer complete with sea lice! On the Don the fish were well spread throughout our beats and some good salmon were caught, the best estimated at 11 and 12lbs.

The Brown trout season this year again opened on the 15th. After a slow start, good numbers of fish were reported, mainly from Kemnay and Upper Parkhill. In all 32 were caught up to 3lbs in weight.

At Millpond the fishing slowed a bit, 39 Rainbow trout were reported up to 5lbs in weight, but the pond was partially frozen for several days and the cold snap probably

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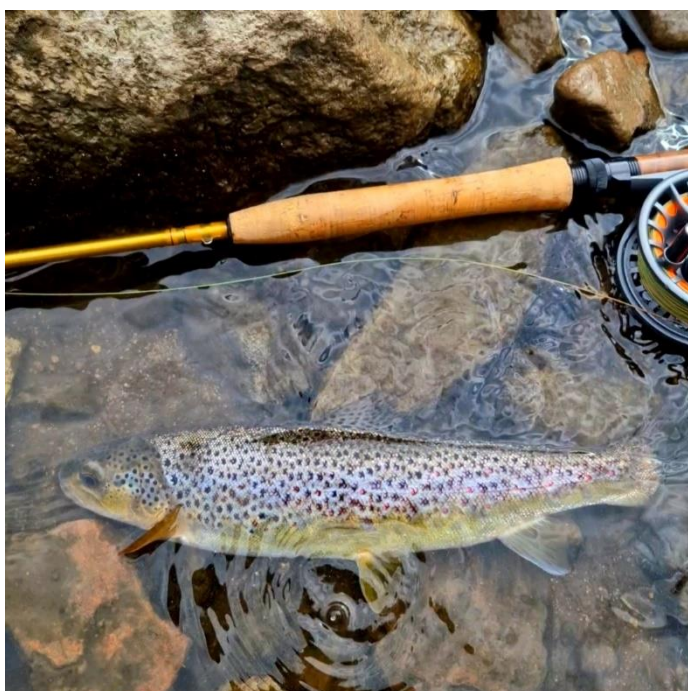
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put the fish off. The surprise package from Millpond was a brownie estimated at 4lb which must either have been a wild fish or from a stocking many years ago.

April

From early April onwards good hatches of March browns, along with some olives, were appearing on the Don, and the brown trout responded well. In all 99 brownies were landed up to 4lbs in weight, with many fish over 2lbs and some over 3lbs reported. Fish were caught throughout our beats from Kemnay to Netherdon. This really was exciting sport with some anglers putting excellent baskets together, metaphorically speaking of course.



Salmo Fario perfection from the Aberdeenshire Don– guaranteed to gladden the heart of any angler. JWS.

April started well for salmon too with an 11lb fish from Lower Fintray on the 4th but a dry spell towards the middle of the month saw salmon catches drop off. In total 4 were landed for the month, another from Lower Fintray, and, as the water warmed, 2 more were caught on the fly at Kemnay and the Cruives. Early sea trout began to appear on the Don towards the end of the month with 5 reported from Upper Parkhill, the Cruives and Netherdon.



Fresh Springer from the Aberdeenshire Don

Finnock fishing also began to pick up again with 13 fish reported from the Pots and Fords where March Browns were also present in good numbers. Another 5 were reported at Netherdon.

Both Millpond and the Loch of Loirston were stocked during April and the catches took off! A total of 269 rainbows were landed with the majority caught at Millpond although 113 fish were reported from Loirston. The buzzer hatches had to be seen to be believed at Loirston where some larger, and clearly over wintered, fish were caught.

May

May began with a bang for our salmon fishers with 3 caught on the 1st. Lower Fintray produced 2 and Lower Parkhill 1. The fish weighing 14, 10 and 6lbs, were caught on worm, spinner, and fly! Another 3 were caught up to the 20th, 2 from Kemnay and 1 from Lower Fintray.

Sea trout began to appear on the Dee with 5 reported from Kingcausie, Middle Drum and Banchory Devenick. Another 4 were reported on the Don, from the Cruives and Upper Fintray.

10 Finnock were reported from Kingcausie, Garthdee and the Pots and Fords.

Brown trout fishing remained good with 41 reported throughout our beats with the best at 5lb caught at Kemnay. It was good to see some anglers fishing Upper Fintray and this beat should come into its own next month with better quality browns and sea trout.

250 Rainbow trout were reported with some overwintered fish again appearing at Loirston where a fish estimated at 8lbs was caught. Several of 5lb were recorded from both venues, Kenny Riddell assures that fish of this size have not been stocked in the loch. Not that it is a competition but for those of you who are interested Millpond still has the edge with 130 landed so far in May compared to 122 at Loirston.

So that concludes our catch reports up to 20th May. Not a bad start to our season, and we have a lot to look forward to with extensive salmon water now leased on the lower Dee, an enhanced rainbow stocking programme at Loirston and superb evening trout fishing on the Don.

Tight Lines

Murray Hourston

5. Beat Specific Remarks

Loch of Loirston.

This winter continued to drive cold and unsettled weather into the Northeast of Scotland with Loirston Loch being on the receiving end of what was exceptionally bad fishing conditions.

However, the 1st week in May, although still very wet conditions looked like the weather had turned a corner and the temperatures continued to rise slow and steadily throughout the month.

The first stocking went in as planned on Wednesday 12th April with 320 fish a mixture of Rainbows and Blues. 160 fish released at the disabled pier and a further 160 released at the farm side.

The second stocking went in on Tuesday 25th April, another mixture of 320 Rainbows and Blues, the stock was again split between the roadside and the farm side.

Our members now have access through the gate at the farm side, that's the road that leads to the old Aberdeen City Council's Rangers Station at the West side of the Loch, access is via the ADAA Padlock, the number is in your diary. Please remember to lock the gate on your way in and on your way out, if not we could lose this access.

The annual weed has still, at the time of writing this to make an appearance, but I suspect during June the weed will pop up as usual. The committee have decided not to outsource the aquatic weed cutting this year, but to keep it in-house with a new approach to see if we can help alleviate the annual growth.

Catches at Loirston Loch during April & May have been very encouraging with some members catching double figures. Some lucky members have caught some really nice over-wintered rainbow trout of 5 & 7lbs respectively.

Some of the brown trout we stocked in 2021 have also been caught and they've been seen cruising around snacking on buzzers and terrestrials.

The stocking programme will continue throughout the season and should provide some great winter sport when the rivers are closed, and the annual weed at the loch dies back.

Kenny Riddell, Convener

6. Membership Development

(As members of the ADAA, we enjoy a large and unrivalled portfolio of varied fishings, and to maintain such angling riches, we need to ensure our



membership numbers, especially in the face of modern society trends are, as far as possible, kept at a suitable level. JWS)

In pursuit of this, over the last few months, the ADAA membership development sub-committee of Ash Mckinnon (Chairman), Rob Paterson and Matthew Hart has introduced several new initiatives to help attract and retain members to the association.



The initiatives include: 1. Promoting the ADAA at events such as local markets and country shows (led by Ash - see illustration), 2. Creating and distributing a benefits flyer to local hotels and fisheries, 3. Launching a membership survey to better understand the needs of our anglers (led by Rob and Matt), 4. Introducing an incentive scheme and 5. Distributing catch returns information on social media and via fishing publications.

During May we embarked on our most challenging project so far with the creation of our first beat video to showcase the association's Parkhill fishings. The video was created in conjunction with TwinPeakes fly fishing and features some of the fantastic waters we have available in the ADAA to hopefully attract a few

new anglers to join us. The video was filmed at our Parkhill beats over the 15th & 16th of May and includes bankside filming of many of the pools and riverside fauna as well as a few anglers casting a line for both trout and salmon. The video is currently being edited and we expect to be able to share it with you shortly. If the video is well received, we are considering creating similar videos for our other beats on the Dee, Don and Ythan.

The other big news item in May was the completion of the membership survey. In total we received 276 responses which provided a fascinating insight into our members priorities and suggestions. It will take a little time to go through all the information we received, but I wanted to share some of the highlights with you.

1. Most members (98%) believe that membership of the association provides good value for money.
2. 50% of our anglers prefer to fish for salmon, 35% river trout fishing and 10 % prefer stillwater fishing for rainbows. It should be noted however that many anglers fish for both salmon and trout at different times of the year.
3. Approximately 40% of responses would like to see more investment in our existing fishings with 60% suggesting investment in additional waters. There was a wide range of options proposed by members and we will review these



in detail to see if any of these opportunities might complement our existing range of waters.

4. Less than 10% of members have utilised our permit exchange agreements, although there were many suggestions for other clubs to partner with, particularly on Speyside and Donside.
5. We received almost 100 suggestions of ways to retain/attract new members and a similar number of suggestions for further enhancing members fishing enjoyment. These are the key areas that we will be analysing further over the coming months to identify priorities and actions. With a membership of almost 700 anglers there was as expected a very diverse and often opposing set of responses covering many aspects of our fishing such as membership events, beat maintenance, fishing rules etc. It was however pleasing to see feedback from many members who are enjoying being a member of the ADAA and the fishing they have access to.

Finally, we asked in the questionnaire if any existing members were willing to help assist with the running of the association, we did receive several positive responses and it would be great if we can get a few new faces to join the committee to help us action some of the constructive suggestions that you have made.

Rob Paterson

7. The Riverfly Initiative

Murray Hourston, along with other ADAA members, has been very much involved in this to date and has forwarded the following missive from Gerry Hough, who is leading the project.



“Water quality and river conservation are very much in the news at the moment, with keen anglers like Paul Whitehouse and Fergal Sharkey leading the charge against the pollution of our rivers and lakes.

These are important issues, not only to ensure the quality of our fisheries into the future, but also to protect the environment which our members get so much from. That being the case, the Association has taken a lead role in establishing a Riverfly Partnership invertebrate monitoring group on the Don. Put more simply, we have – with the support of the charity Buglife—set up a group to start monitoring bug life in the river.

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- **These must be anglers. After all, who but fishers could exhibit such concentration of minds on trays of beasties! JWS**



12 ADAA members have undergone initial training to run the 'Riverfly Partnership Anglers River Monitoring Initiative'. This will involve Association members monitoring numbers of key bug species in the river every month, submitting the results to the Freshwater Biological Association, and reporting any changes or concerns about bug

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life and pollution to SEPA for follow up. The bugs we will monitor are key to trout and salmon life (mayflies/olives, caddis, stoneflies, and shrimp) and are sensitive to various different kinds of pollution in the river. Training was completed in April and monitoring will start in earnest at Parkhill in June. We hope to expand monitoring to Kemnay in the near future and are currently exploring the possibility of expanding monitoring further up the Don and possibly also on the Urie and Ythan.

Anyone interested in hearing more or getting involved should email riverflyonthedon@gmail.com or contact the group co-ordinator Gerry Hough (07753754554). You can also find information about the monitoring programme [here](#) and [here](#)."

Gerry Hough

8. Beat Maintenance

Even in a dry summer like this year's to date, as always riverbank vegetation growth has accelerated over the last month. Our team of Nicky Taylor, assisted by others, including member volunteers and led by works convener Lewis Baxter has been carrying out the necessary work as scheduled.

As well as the ongoing river programme, the stillwaters also need to be looked after. The annual (and recently undertaken) deployment of barley straw at Loirston, specifically in the inlet burn, has the effect of inhibiting weed growth in the loch, and this season, for the first time, approved chemical weed control will also be commissioned. These measures will hopefully keep the weed under control and continue to afford our members the excellent loch angling experienced in the first half of the year.

9. Junior Members

Our junior membership, the future life blood of the association, has increased greatly this year, due in part to initiatives including the waiving of the former joining fees for

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ABERDEEN AND DISTRICT ANGLING ASSOCIATION

"The Ardoe House Hotel and Spa Junior Angling Competition"

Free entry open to all ADAA Junior members

Limited places so please apply early

The Millpond Newmachar on Sunday 9th of July 11am to 3pm

Free casting tuition

Mini games/ casting competition

Prize for biggest fish caught on the fly by boy and girl

Prize for best catch on the fly by boy and girl

Prize for the biggest bait (bait supplied) caught fish by boy and girl

Free BBQ and soft drinks

Toilet facilities available

Mums and Dads most welcome (come and have a natter)

If wishing to attend, please contact ADAA Junior Convenor Ash Mckinnon at ashm@adaasales.co.uk

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young anglers.

credit must be given to Ash (he is a busy man!) for his sterling work with our young members.

At this juncture,

10. The Competition Scene

At the time of writing, following the 4 club events to date, at the Pots and Fords in April, Loirston Loch in May, Cruives and Netherdon in June, and, also in June, the "Away" competition at the Loch of Leven, Ernie McKay (senior) leads the field, closely followed by (Vice President) Kenny Riddell and (Ernie's loon (for our Doric readers!)), Ernie McKay (junior).

Our events are open to all members of course, and competition regulars are always happy to assist any members who have not entered before.

Also, Richard McHattie, Kenny Riddell & Mike Cordiner have all progressed to the River Final of the SANACC Rivers competition which could see some, or all 3 going forward to represent the ADAA at the River Home international on the River Tees in 2024.

11. In Conclusion

As I pen this last paragraph, quill in hand, or should I say, perched at my laptop, I hear the joyous sound of heavy precipitation outside. This brings to mind a rapturous number 1 hit song, from more years ago than I care to remember, titled "The day that the rains came down", a ditty which only very senior members may recall and I can almost imagine the relief of salmon and sea trout, hopefully massed offshore,

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sensing hope, in the changing atmospheric pressure, of impending release. Well, I hope there are salmon waiting safely offshore, out of the reach, for the moment, of the ever-present predatory mammals around our estuaries and in our rivers. In any case let's hope that the rest of the season will not be bedevilled with drought.

Tight lines to all members.

John Stephen, Dyce