

# *River Health Data*

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# *Citizen Science on the Don*

This year we are actively participating in two national monitoring schemes:

1. The 'Guardians of our Rivers' project, coordinated by Buglife Scotland, the Riverfly Partnership and the Freshwater Biological Association.
2. Earthwatch UK's 'Great UK WaterBlitz' - a biannual 'snapshot' of freshwater quality across the UK.

# *The Bugs - overview*

## The Scheme:

- Monthly monitoring of 8 groups of freshwater invertebrates, from April to October.
- The 8 groups are: Cased and Caseless Caddis, Mayfly, Blue Wing Olives, Flat Body Stone Clingers, Olives, Stonefly, and Shrimp.
- Currently 7 sites on the Don: 3 at Parkhill, 2 at Inverurie (managed by IDAA), and 2 at Kemnay (one managed by Kemnay Beat 4).
- Each monitoring session generates a 'score' for the site. If the score goes below the trigger level for the site, SEPA attend to determine if there is a problem.

# *The Bugs – RMI and Abundance*

Year	Samples	Average RMI	Average Monthly Count
2023	15	12	516
2024	30	13	1609
2025	32	12	1180
TOTAL	77		

# *The Bugs – RMI and Abundance*

## Observations:

- Trigger levels now in place and agreed with SEPA.
- We came close to trigger a few times – we had five RMI 8 scores and one 7.
- 2023 and 2025 closer in number to 2024 – possibly drier summers/higher temperatures/lower water in both years?
- We are still building up data, so not clear what the patterns mean yet.

# *The Bugs - Distribution*

	Cased	Caseless	BWO	Flat Body	Olives	Stonefly	Shrimp
2023	8%	14%	16%	10%	29%	2%	21%
2024	10%	9%	15%	18%	24%	3%	21%
2025	12%	14%	7%	13%	19%	5%	30%
National Average (2025)	9%	3%	3%	4%	19%	2%	60%

# *The Bugs – Distribution*

## Observations:

- Should we be worried about BWO and Olive numbers?
- BWO:
  - 2023: Distribution – 16%.
  - 2024: Distribution – 15%. Total: 242. Monthly average: 40.
  - 2025: Distribution – 7%. Total: 83. Monthly average: 12.

# *The Bugs – Distribution*

## Observations:

- Should we be worried about BWO and Olive numbers?
- Olives:
  - 2023: Distribution – 29%.
  - 2024: Distribution – 24%. Total: 382. Monthly average: 64.
  - 2025: Distribution – 19%. Total: 225. Monthly average: 32.

# *Great UK WaterBlitz – National Results*

## 25<sup>th</sup>-28<sup>th</sup> April National Results:

- 7978 people took part, sampling 4017 sites
- UK wide, 66% of these sites showed unacceptable water quality.
- In Scotland, 30% of sites showed unacceptable quality.
- In Aberdeen City, 40% of sites showed unacceptable water quality.
- In Aberdeenshire, 55% of the sites showed unacceptable water quality.

# *Great UK WaterBlitz – National Results*

## September 19<sup>th</sup> – 22<sup>nd</sup> September National Results:

- 5708 people took part, sampling 3430 sites.
- UK wide, 60% of these sites showed unacceptable water quality.
- In Scotland 30% of the sites showed unacceptable water quality.
- In Aberdeen City 0% of the sites showed unacceptable water quality.
- In Aberdeenshire 70% of the sites showed unacceptable water quality.

# *Great UK WaterBlitz – River Don Results*

## April:

- We sampled 14 sites on the Don.
- 4 sites were registered as having unacceptable levels of Nitrate (Ayrburn and Bridge Pool, Parkhill; Kemnay Beat 4, and the Urie). All registered nitrate levels between 2 and 5 mg/L. Phosphate levels were acceptable across all sites.

## September:

- We sampled 14 sites on the Don.
- 3 sites had moderate levels of Nitrate (1-2 mg/L) (Kintore (Golf Course); Inverurie; and the Urie). 1 site unacceptable levels of Nitrate (2-5 mg/L) (Kemnay Academy Pool). Phosphate levels were acceptable across all sites.

# *Great UK WaterBlitz – other observations*

## Some further points of note:

- E.coli testing in April at Grandholme Bridge (Cruives), Mausoleum Pool (Parkhill), Meeting Pools (Inverurie), Kemnay Beat 4.
- Over 900 cfu/100ml – unsafe for swimming. Grandholme Bridge 125 cfu/100ml. Mausoleum 308 cfu/100ml. Meeting Pools 614 cfu/100ml. Kemnay Beat 4 99 cfu/100ml.
- City of Aberdeen listed in national report as 1 of only 6 areas in the UK and 4 in Scotland with 100% acceptable water quality in September WaterBlitz.

# *Great UK WaterBlitz – other observations*

## Some further points of note:

- National analysis of chemicals in freshwater during September WaterBlitz – three major concerns:
  - (i) pharmaceuticals, antibiotics and pesticides a risk to aquatic life;
  - (ii) antibiotics at concentrations at which we should consider the chances of antimicrobial resistance developing in our waterways;
  - (iii) imidacloprid – banned for agricultural use but still used in tick and flea treatments for pets – present in some samples in sufficient numbers to pose significant treat to aquatic life.

# *Finally...*

Thanks to:

- Buglife Scotland Team.
- River Don Trust and River Don Salmon Fisheries Board.
- ADAA and Inverurie Angling Association.
- Our volunteers, including many ADAA members





*If you are interested*

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Or contact the Association.