



## Scottish Fisheries Coordination Centre Annual Report 2012-2013

### A note from the Chairman, James Hunt

Welcome to the first SFCC annual report, which represents another step forward in the current development of the SFCC. One of my first tasks since taking over the chairmanship in January 2012 has been to lead a review of the way in which the SFCC functions and how this can be improved. In a nutshell, the SFCC needs to be more innovative, forward looking and inclusive. As can be seen in this report, we have started the process of adopting these values. Effective communication is essential, with the annual report being particularly important in conveying the vital work that the SFCC carries out, not only to the Biologists, but also Trustees and Directors of member organisations. To this end we have included a summary at the end of the report that describes the aims and objectives of the SFCC and the core functions that it provides. My thanks go to all of the SFCC members that have assisted in the activities of the last year and to the coerced editorial team of Alastair Stephen and Simon Mckelvey who put the main part of this document together!

### Changes in personnel

2012 has been a very busy and successful year but it has also been challenging in a number of ways. The financial climate has meant that a number of changes have been forced upon the SFCC, including the withdrawal of funding support for Dr James Orpwood who was the SFCC manager for the past 4 years. James has been indispensable in providing a solid point of contact at the Freshwater Fisheries Laboratory in Pitlochry for the SFCC membership. He has been outstanding in delivering the updated databases, of which more later. Everyone involved with the SFCC

thanks James for all his hard work and wishes him success in the future.

2012 also saw a new Chairman of the SFCC get "his feet under the table" with James Hunt, assistant biologist at The Tweed Foundation taking over from the previous chair Bob Laughton, biologist from the Spey Foundation (and now the Findhorn, Nairn and Lossie Fisheries Trust). James has taken on his role with a passion and has already headed a number of initiatives including the successful autumn electro-fishing workshop and delivery of the long awaited Catch Database – the online Angling Diary.

Following the departure of James Orpwood , Sean Dugan has just been appointed to work as the SFCC Manager on a half time basis, the rest of his time being taken up working for The Beaver-Salmonid Working Group. The funding for this two-year post is from the Scottish Government and SNH. Sean will be based at the Freshwater Fisheries Laboratory and line managed by the SFCC Chairman, with the job commencing auspiciously on 1<sup>st</sup> April.

### Relationship with The Rivers Trust (RT)

Over the last year the SFCC Chairman has been in discussion with The RT in England and Wales with the aim of investigating potential joint initiatives concerned with data collection and storage. These discussions are on-going but there is the potential for a large number of mutual benefits in any such arrangement, particularly in regards to training and database development.

### **Representation at The Institute of Fisheries Management (IFM) Study Conference**

James Hunt gave an excellent update on the SFCC on 4<sup>th</sup> October in Edinburgh at The IFM Study Conference. This year the conference, which attracted an excellent attendance from across the UK, focussed on the broad subject of Evidence Based Fisheries Management, and James gave his presentation in the second session devoted to how this was achieved in Scotland. The conference, which was opened by the new Environment Minister in Scotland, Paul Wheelhouse, was seen as a significant success.

### **Electro-fishing workshop**

A two-day workshop was held in the autumn to investigate all aspects of electro-fishing, from the latest technical developments in equipment through to survey design and possible improvement to protocols. This event was attended by most of the SFCC members' biologists and was regarded as very useful. Main thanks need to go to Jackie Graham, from the Galloway Fisheries Trust, and to James Hunt for organising the event.



***Jackie organising the electro-fishing workshop***



***Young biologist trying out new backpack!***

### **Successful biologists meeting**

The annual biologists' meeting that took place in January 2013 was well attended and once again allowed for a huge range of topics to be covered. It was also good to see some not so well-known faces, including new members of staff and SFCC members, giving presentations and the event highlighted the vast amount of work that is going on in all corners of the country.

The first day's subjects included experience of dealing with *Gyrodactylus salaris* in a very substantial Norwegian river and the implications for Scotland if the parasite was ever introduced, the RAFTS barrier prioritisation strategy, and a number of presentations about fascinating local projects involving work on brown trout.

On the second day the development of Conversation Limits for Scottish rivers was thoroughly discussed, along with the potential usefulness of fish counters. Other presentations included the trials and

tribulations of North American Signal crayfish eradication from a quarry site in Lochaber, and two examples of the work sponsored by the SEPA Restoration Fund on tributaries of the Rivers South Esk and Deveron.

In addition to the two days of excellent lectures the event always gives plenty of time for networking discussions about all the current fish and fisheries issues of the day, and a lot else besides!

### **Training**

Two Introductory electro-fishing courses were run last year - at Inverness College and the Barony College in Dumfries. One Team Leader course was also delivered by Inverness College. In total 20 certificates were issued for the Introductory course and 5 for the Team Leader.

A scale reading course was run in March and was attended by 9 people and GIS training was successfully delivered to four participants in April.

A membership questionnaire was circulated to assess training needs, with new courses being rolled out in 2013.

### **Angling Diary delivery**

The SFCC Angling Diary aims to overcome the problems of traditional paper-based angling diaries and logbooks by combining them into a single online diary:

[www.anglingdiary.org.uk](http://www.anglingdiary.org.uk)).

Anglers can now permanently record their angling experiences along with the catch data normally recorded in a log book.

The simple philosophy behind the site is that with the benefits of being able to record angling records online with pictures, a map

display, and a blog for local areas, more anglers will want to enter their catches and keep on doing so. In turn this will improve the quality and quantity of information that fisheries managers have available to manage their fisheries.

### **Non SFCC protocols adopted**

Over the past decade the SFCC has been aware that a number of useful external protocols have been developed for gathering information concerning relevant aspects of freshwater ecology and morphology. To prevent an unnecessary duplication of effort it was decided to highlight these methodologies and protocols and links can be found to them on the SFCC website. The following are protocols that have been assessed and adopted for use by our members :-

- Barrier assessment
- Diatom assessment
- Eel survey
- Riverfly invertebrate survey
- Lamprey survey
- Large water body survey
- Freshwater Pearl Mussel survey
- Smolt counting protocol
- Invasive non-native plant survey protocol



*Looking at the 3D application presented by APFM*



## A SUMMARY OF THE SFCC

### A brief history

The SFCC was established in 1997, initially with 3 years of funding from Scottish Hydro-Electric, to meet the need for high quality fisheries information and standard data collection methods in the light of a growing awareness of Salmonid decline throughout Scotland. Since 1999 the manager position has been supported by the Scottish Government and hosted at the Freshwater Laboratory in Pitlochry, with most other costs covered by the annual subscriptions from its membership.

The SFCC is an association of Fisheries Trusts, District Salmon Fishery Boards, Scottish Government, and other interested parties such as SEPA and SNH involved and committed to the sound management of freshwater fish and their habitats in Scotland.

### What is the SFCC?

The SFCC provides a mechanism for local fisheries managers and biologists to standardise aspects of data collection and storage. Specialist software development is co-ordinated in a cost-effective way and members are supplied with spatial data relevant to the freshwater environment.

The SFCC also provides a facility for balanced scientific analysis of available information and encourages informed discussion of fisheries issues for both local management and national policy decisions.

The main aims of the SFCC are to:

1. Develop general protocols for sampling related to management of all fish species.
2. Co-ordinate storage of fish data.
3. Facilitate sharing of GIS-related and other information.

The subsidiary aims of the SFCC are to:

1. Co-ordinate training related to the main aims.
2. Facilitate discussion and collaboration among groups of fish scientists.
3. Facilitate cross-Scotland projects.

The SFCC is specifically *not* a lobbying organisation: it is a non-profit making, non-proprietary, data-orientated organisation. It is taken seriously by Government, SEPA, SNH and the fisheries industry because it is seen as politically neutral and interested only in developing and maintaining proficient and accurate data collection through the development and delivery of high standard training programmes and database development.

### THE BENEFITS OF BEING AN SFCC MEMBER

#### SFCC protocols in place

- Introductory electro-fishing training manual.
- Team leader electro-fishing training manual.
- Habitat survey training manual.

#### Electrofishing Database

A web-based database was commissioned from a third party commercial company to allow input, storage and export of electro-fishing data and associated site information, and to also produce calculations of salmonid density estimates and the production of simple reports. Members' data from the original database was also migrated into the new web-based database. By and large the resulting database is far more robust and resilient and is now "fit for purpose".

#### GIS data provision

The SFCC continues to provide key GIS datasets for map production and data analysis with cost savings made through group membership license agreements.

#### Training

The SFCC continues to provide training courses that meet the requirements and demands of its membership. These include courses for GIS training, electro-fishing and scale reading.