

MARCH 2023 NEWSLETTER

Please note: If you do not want to receive further emails or have any questions on the content of this newsletter, or suggestions or comments,

please contact our Secretary, John Ross, on email sec@tayghillies.co.uk

Welcome to our March 2023 Newsletter! Its been a while since our last newsletter so here is a quick catch-up!

The TGA is in good heart and ready for another season on the Tay. At the end of last season we held a Ghillies Social which was really well attended—over 80 people were there enjoying each other's company, a full bar, Hog Roast, a raffle and an auction. We raised £7500 for projects—a fantastic sum and sincere thanks to all those who donated prizes and lots, and who bought raffle tickets and bid for lots.

Our AGM in January was uneventful. Jim Henderson stood down as Secretary due to work commitments and John Ross was voted in as Secretary. Many thanks to Jim for all his hard work and a warm welcome back to John and best of luck in the Secretary role.

In late January we asked the members to consider a proposal to change the award criteria for the TGA sponsored Redford Trophy. The Trophy, was originally presented to the angler who caught the heaviest fish on the Tay opening day. With the scarcity of springers, the TGA committee proposed to change the criteria to be the heaviest fish caught on the first day of catches. The membership agreed and the trophy was duly awarded to Arnot McWhinnie who caught a sea-liced 21lb hen fish on 18 January on the Pitlochrie beat, Upper Scone The award ceremony took place on

4 March at the Pitlochrie Beat hut.

Arnot was given the trophy by our own legend, George McInnes. Other notable guests were Davie Barwick who helped land the big fish, Robert Jamieson, Director of James Crockart & Son Limited, Blairgowrie who made a donation, plus friends and fellow anglers and ghillies. George and Arnot made



short speeches to mark the occasion with Arnot making a plea to anglers everywhere to write to their MSP asking them to lobby the Scottish Government to act quickly to save this iconic species and not just talk about it.

We continue to plough our own furrow and do what we believe we can do for our river without any interaction with the Board. Recent events appear to show the Board in some disarray with internal politics taking priority over necessary river actions. We took the right decision to ignore them.....



Davie Barwick, Arnot McWhinnie, and George McInnes



Let the celebrations begin!!

TDSFB Relations

It was notable that, at the Proprietors' AGM, the Convenor stated that he very much wished that the Board could work with the TGA and enjoy the relationship held in the past. At our AGM his statement was discussed and it was decided that the TGA Secretary write to the Convenor and ask how he might want to reengage. The Secretary wrote to him, asking the question and also pointing out that the previous condition to re-engage, laid down by the convenor, had not been acceptable. However, the TGA stood ready to hear his thoughts. Unfortunately, we are still waiting because the Secretary's mail, and a follow-up, have not been answered or even acknowledged! Obviously, the Convenor's statement was a soundbite for the proprietors and was not meant to be followed up. We carry on regardless.

We also note that the TDSFB home page gives details of 2022 meetings and the 2023 meetings are hidden under "Reports". How useful. Also, the Public meeting venue for Wednesday 15 March is to be confirmed.....!! They obviously do not want any attendees! How unprofessional.

History

A comment was made at the Ghillies' social that we must capture thoughts and memories of our "elder statesmen" ghillies and record them for posterity. We have taken that further and have commissioned a video to record the thoughts of what it was like, what it is like now and what must be done. Ghillies and anglers have been interviewed. These threads will be woven between material describing the life cycle of our iconic fish and the problems it faces. It is intended to educate people on the plight of the salmon and is timely with so much focus on the environment right now. Timing of this is not fixed and will depend on financing. This is going to be a very professional video and the

material and editing will be costly. We are now focussing on further fund raising—more details later this month.

SmartRivers

In late October last year we completed the autumn sampling on both the Ericht and Lochay. We had been delayed slightly due to rising levels on both rivers but eventually managed to take samples and send them off for analysis.

Again the results are very good for both rivers with some sites showing a little bit of stress due to low flows over the summer drought period. WildFish, the new name for Salmon & Trout Conservation, are pleased with the results and would like us to move to other rivers. We are currently looking at two different rivers and will let you know shortly where they are.

Marine Scotland Meeting

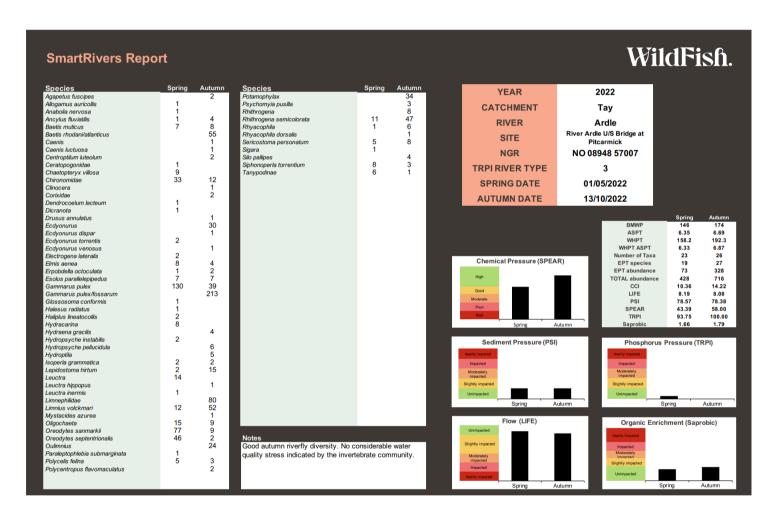
On Friday, 10 March we met with Marine Scotland, Dr Antje Branding, Head of Salmon and Recreational Fisheries, Marine Scotland and Vanessa Brown, Policy Officer, Wild Salmon and Recreational Fisheries. The meeting took place at the Tayside Hotel. The meeting was hosted by Jim Henderson and Bob Mason who welcomed the visitors and thanked them for giving up time in their busy schedule.

Discussions centred around the process, or lack of, in Marine Scotland, which would allow the general public to make a complaint about the governance in District Boards and not rely on circular complaint resolution within the boards themselves — where boards basically "mark their own homework"! We also discussed fish counters and budget constraints and finished off with some TGA comments on the Wild Salmon Strategy Implementation Plan. The meeting overall was positive, extremely cordial and very useful from both sides. We would welcome Dr Branding and Vanessa back to the Tay at any time.

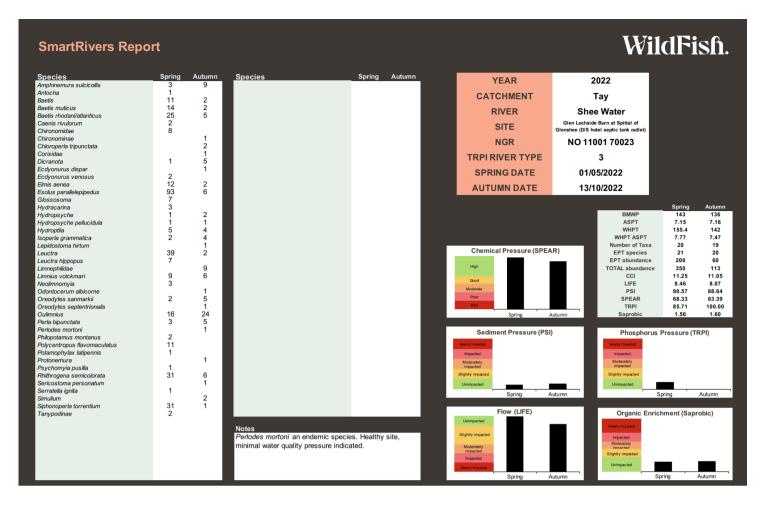
SMARTRIVERS RESULTS

The results from WildFish analysis are below and they show the 2022 Autumn invertebrate count on the left and a pressure comparison between spring and autumn on the eright.

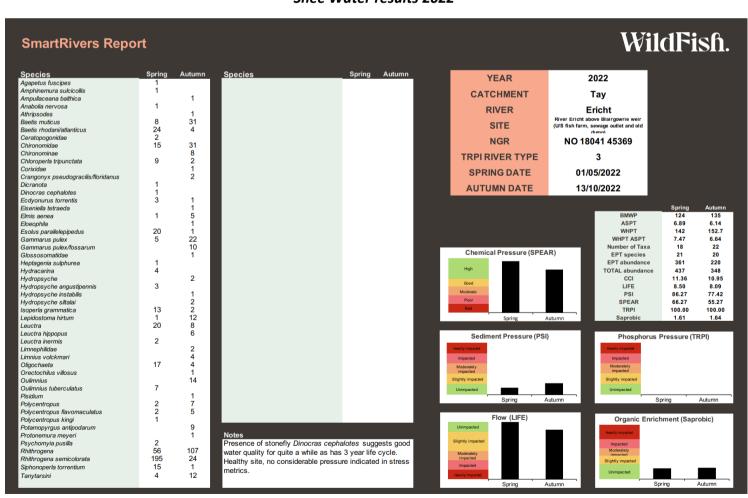
While the Lochay and Ericht are in good shape invertebrate-wise, there are still major issues on both rivers. The Lochay suffers badly from hydro extraction especially in drought conditions and there must be real concern in the future over its status as a salmon river. We all know the issues on the Ericht—over-abstraction, failing lade gates, crumbling weirs, sewage discharges and the old dump. We understand there is an Ericht Focus Group, formed by the TDSFB, which is addressing these issues. We wish them luck. Solutions should be relatively easy—science is not required to sort them — management, and action, and money are required. Of course, the will of all parties to actually get it done.......



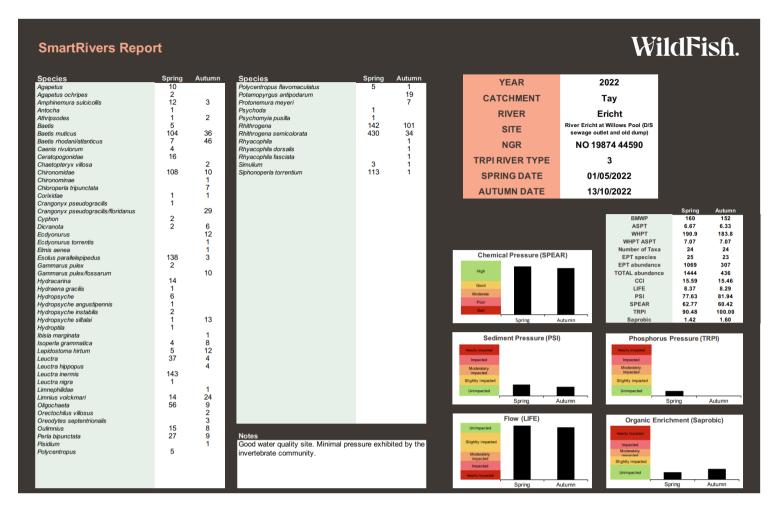
River Ardle results 2022



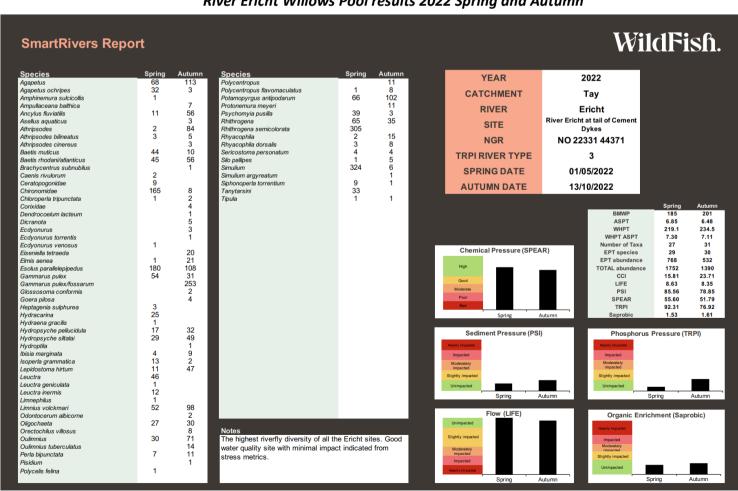
Shee Water results 2022

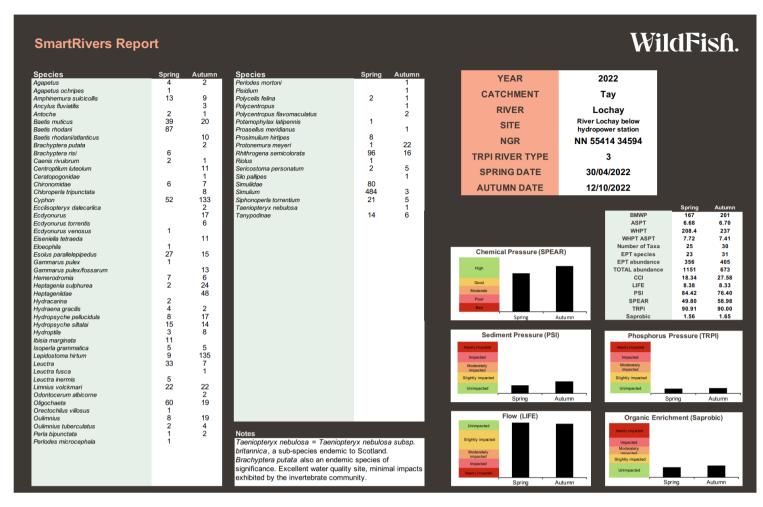


River Ericht above the bridge results

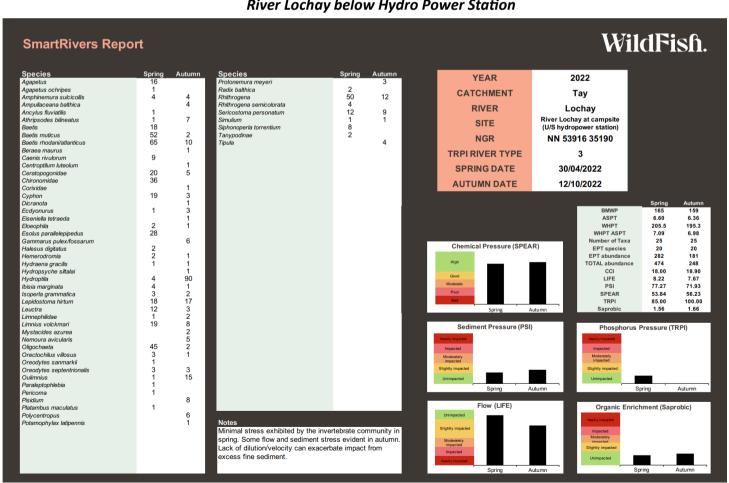


River Ericht Willows Pool results 2022 Spring and Autumn

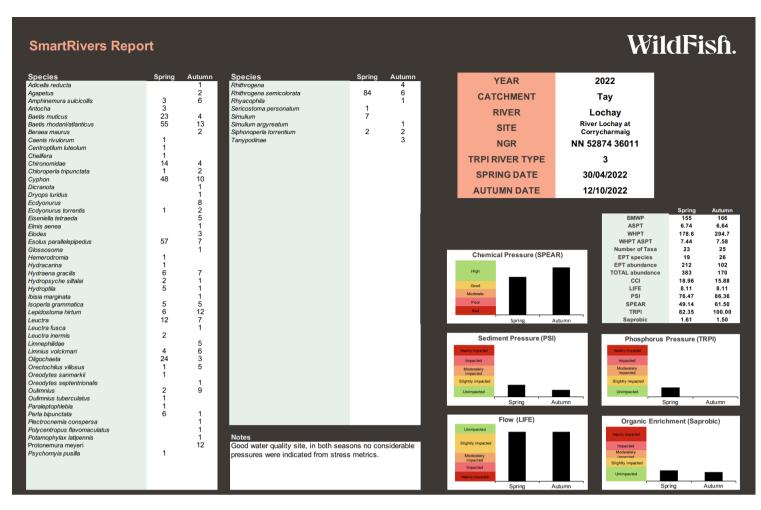




River Lochay below Hydro Power Station



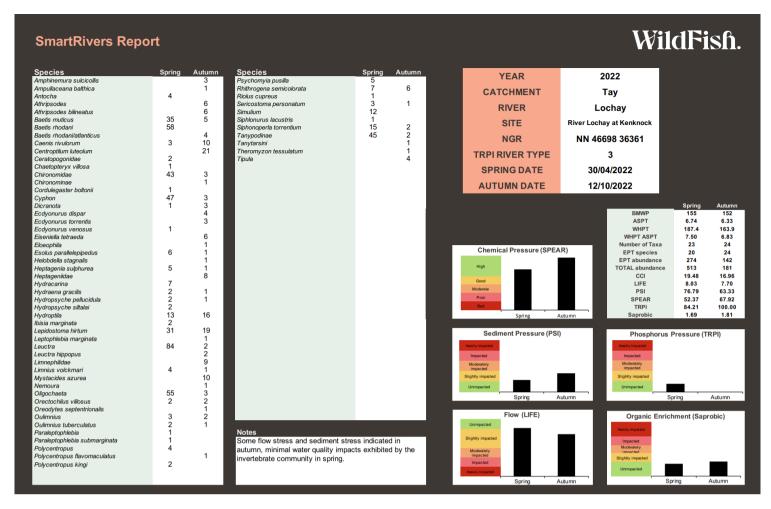
River Lochay Campsite above Hydro Power Station



River Lochay Corrycharmaig



River Lochay below ford at Innishoarach



River Lochay Kenknock

SMARTRIVERS THANK YOUs!!

The TGA would like to thank the following people for their unwavering support of our SmartRivers project on the Rivers Ericht and Lochay:

ERICHT:

Grant Kellie

Clare Cooper

Henry Ingram

Kate Everett

Paul Cumberland

Peter Lock

LOCHAY:

Alex Stewart

Bob Mason

Jim Henderson

And on both rivers—All the Riparian Owners who allowed us access—your support is essential and appreciated—thank you!