

FISHERIES OFFICER ANNUAL SUMMARY

06 JANUARY – 21 NOVEMBER 2022

The Fishery Officer/Water Bailiff is a wide and varied role. This includes working with the Senior Biologist, Seasonal Bailiff, Ghillies and Volunteers. I am also in regular contact with the Bailiffs from the Ness and Cromarty Boards to share any fisheries intelligence.

I continue to keep a very high profile to deter poaching activity on the rivers and along the coastline. Whilst poaching activity may be declining, there is no doubt that without the dedicated professional work of the BDSFB Bailiffs, the rivers Beaully, Glass and Farrar would be far more of a target for such illegal activity.

I have fostered excellent working relationships with the bailiffs, ghillies, river watchers, volunteers, and staff from SSE. I arrange for the catchment to be patrolled 14 hours a day (where possible), through a combination of early/day/late/night patrols during the season to try and deter potential poaching activities within the catchment. Most weekends are covered between May-August.

Members of the BAC and river watchers have been very helpful in reporting suspicious behavior and of strange cars parked at the river. I have found the local Police Wildlife Officers to be a great source of information and they have also been extremely helpful when I have had to contact them.

I would like to say a special thank you to the Seasonal Bailiff, Bob Smart, for all his hard work and for the support he gave me in 2022.

This season was extremely busy compared to 2021 but this could be due to the Covid restrictions being lifted. We received more calls out in May 2022, than during the whole of the 2021 season. Most poaching reports turned out to be for Brown Trout and Pike fishermen.

Fisheries Protection is reviewed annually, and recommendations are worked on ahead of the following season.

Beaully

Fishery Board



Tasks undertaken:

Beaully Fishery Board

- Monthly Operational meetings attended with the Chair of the Board/ Management committee and Senior Biologist to discuss operational matters.
- Posted regular updates on Social Media.
- Attended the official opening of the 2022 Salmon season (BAC).
- The Board's Annual report was printed and was made available in all Syndicate huts.
- Life vests were serviced.
- Interviews were conducted for the seasonal Bailiff and 3-month Trainee.

Monitoring

- Checking for Salmon and Sea Trout Kelts above the Dams during January, February, March and April. Three dead Kelts were observed on the Teannasie burn. 20 Kelts were released above Kilmorack dam in early March.
- Tributaries in our catchment were inspected for Redds.
- Fish count validation completed at Aigas and Kilmorack, and fish lifts observed.
- Re-installed river temperature loggers at the Upper Misge and Tomich burns in January with RW, which were then collected and downloaded in November.
- Arranged and undertook a bird count in February with help from Ghillies, volunteers, then updated the sawbill data sheet. Conducted a further bird count in early April.
- Successfully completed my drone exam and our first drone experiment was completed with Jim Braithwaite.
- Started entering the 2022 electro fishing sites onto the SFCC website.

Smolt monitoring

- Purchased equipment for the Smolt trap.
- I collected 3 smolt box traps from Strathconon and the Kyle of Sutherland and delivered to the river Farrar for this seasons Smolt run.
- The river Farrar was surveyed for potential Smolt box trap sites and once the sites were agreed upon, the Smolt box traps were installed and operational in April and May.
- Daily monitoring the 3 smolts traps until the end of May on a rota basis with the Senior Biologist, Seasonal Bailiff, Trainee and volunteers.

Work to address the Pressures faced by Salmon and Sea trout- Bailiffing

- Policed all rivers throughout the entire year. Introduced myself to as many anglers as possible.
- Two patrols were arranged with Police Scotland's Wildlife officers in February and March, and this was ongoing throughout the season.
- Marine Scotland joint Rib - land patrol with the Beaully Bailiffs on the Beaully Firth, this was undertaken in September this year.
- I attended a river watch meeting with Police Officers from the Wildlife Crime Unit and water bailiffs from the Cromarty, Findhorn, Nairn and Deveron to discuss fisheries issues and training.



Other Work to address the Pressures

- Met with Braulen Estate representatives to discuss future tree planting on the estate with RW.
- Contacted proprietors about ensuring burns clear of debris blockages ahead of spawning season and visited burns.
- Paint ball gun was purchased and delivered to the Ghillies for scaring Seals in LBFS beats.

Scottish Invasive Species Initiative

- Completed the SISI returns and contacted our mink volunteers regarding Mink equipment to volunteers.
- SISI Volunteers hours were recorded on the Cervis database. Cervis was updated with new volunteers, and I attended a SISI meeting to discuss non-native issues within our catchment.
- Carried out Japanese knotweed and skunk cabbage treatment throughout the catchment.



Before and after - treatment of Skunk Cabbage on Kirkton burn (June)

Beaully

Fishery Board



River Patrols 2022

The total numbers of patrols (carried out by both the Fishery Officer and Seasonal bailiff) are shown below. (September to end November patrols in **blue**)

River	Patrols (6 Jan 2022 - 21 Nov 2022)-	Action
BAC water	206 – (45)	1 warning letter. 4 verbal warnings/ Advice
Beaully -Syndicate and Middle	309 – (40)	4 Warning letters. 10 verbal warnings/Advice
Glass	147 – (31)	8 verbal warnings/ Advice 1 case to Police Scotland
Farrar	59 – (9)	1 verbal warning/ Advice
Beaully Firth	222 – (38)	1 warning letter. 18 verbal warnings/ Advice

Lower-Middle Beaully

- 515 patrols were conducted on the Beaully Angling Club (BAC) waters, and Lower and Middle beats of the Syndicate during the season Jan – Nov 2022. I have spoken to several youths regarding fishing the BAC waters without a permit and advice was given regarding joining the BAC.
- Five anglers were removed from the BAC and Syndicate waters for fishing without a permit and fishing with the wrong tackle. They were all issued with a warning letter and all fishing equipment was seized. They had no Salmon.
- Wildlife cameras were set.
- 3 rods and tackle were found between the dams after I met with 3 persons in the area.
- Several anglers were spoken to by the LBFS ghillies regarding trying to fish the beats.
- Gang operating from Eilean Aigas-Mauld fishing for trout. Parked up at dams but nothing directly observed by bailiffs

Glass

- 147 patrols were conducted on the river Glass during the season. No warning letters were issued, but 8 anglers were given advice about fishing the correct beats especially in the Cannich area.
- Very few anglers fished the river until August, but we kept a good presence in the area over the whole season.
- I met with the Bailiff and Ghillie from the Glass syndicate and agreed our joint working operational plan for the season.
- One incident at Balmore beat 6 was submitted to Police Scotland.
- There has been a massive increase on anglers fishing the river Glass for Brown Trout this year. Information was passed onto me that a group of anglers were buying Brown Trout permits but spinning in the area. They are well known to the Bailiffs and targeted patrols were and will continue in the area.



Rod and Tackle seized by the Beauly Water Bailiffs

Farrar

- As well as daily visits to the river to monitor the 3 box traps, a further 59 patrols were conducted on the river Farrar, and a number of small-scale fisheries issues were addressed, e.g. purchasing Brown Trout permits but fishing with Salmon tackle.
- I met with several SSE employees in the Farrar catchment and shared with them both mine and the seasonal Bailiff's contact details.
- I have an excellent working relationship with the Ghillies on the Farrar.

Beaully

Fishery Board



Beaully Firth

- 222 patrols were conducted within the Beaully Firth.
- One multi mono net was found on the shoreline while carrying out a night patrol and the information was reported to Police Scotland.
- I received numerous phone calls reporting possible poaching in the Beaully Firth by small scale vessels and carried out as many patrols as possible. Several vessels were inspected on arrival into Kessock pier, nothing was found.
- The Beaully Firth is a hive of activity with Sea Trout, Sea Bass, Herring and Mackerel fishing and also with Pollack fishermen.
- I contacted Marine Scotland - Compliance and they deployed one of their inshore vessels to carry out a rib patrols within the Inner Beaully Firth with help from the Beaully bailiffs. No nets were found.



Monofilament net found on shoreline

On patrol with Police Scotland

Offences Reported

One incident was reported to Police Scotland this past year.

Police Scotland

I organised several joint patrols throughout the season with the local Wildlife Crime Officer from Police Scotland. This collaborative approach will be ongoing to deter any illegal fishing.

All poaching incidents are passed onto the Wildlife Crime Officer to record on Police Scotland's database.

Beauly

Fishery Board



Bailiffing- priorities for 2023

All Beats: Retain a high profile to deter any poaching activity.

All Beats: Maintain good relationships with Police Scotland, anglers, ghillies, bailiffs and neighbouring catchments.

All Beats: I would request that all proprietors submit a weekly rota of who is fishing their beats to the Fishery Officer to support the Bailiffs in their deterrence operations.

Lower Beauly: Continue pointing youth poachers etc in the direction of the BAC youth sessions. A list of permitted members would be useful.

Glass: Request for more info on who is fishing from proprietors (ongoing from last year). Ghillies present but not always. New proprietor at Cannich. 'no fishing' signage to be discussed with proprietor. Knoc hotel map needs improving.

Upper Glass: It would be very helpful if more proprietors would share with the Water Bailiffs who is fishing the river every week. This in turn will allow the Fishery Officer to provide additional support and coverage during peak times.

Farrar: Proprietors to pass on info regarding permits issued for trout and pike angling (as well as salmon angling) so less time wasted attending call-outs for trout and pike.

Firth: Continue to arrange joint operations with MS Compliance in 2023 to allow for further river surveillance and joint patrols further into Beauly firth.

-Summary posts on Facebook to show bailiffing presence.

-Ensure Seasonal Bailiff details are on website.

-Ensure anglers note on catch returns if fish have net marks or other poaching marks on them- report to bailiffs. LBFS to request this of anglers.

Please feel free to contact me regarding any issues on the river by email at ali@beaulyfisheryboard.org or by phone on 07786 741482.