

ESK DISTRICT SALMON FISHERY BOARD ANNUAL REPORT 2016

Board members 2016

MEMBERS 2016

Malcolm Taylor
Neil Andersen
Ian Runcie
Hugh Campbell Adamson
Ali Gemmel
Andrew Montgomery
Charlie Gow

Tony Andrews
John MacDougal
Robert Ritchie
Inverbervie Angling Club
Tom Sampson
Jim Simpson
Martin Stansfeld

CLERK TO THE BOARD: Dr Marshall M Halliday
BAILIFFS: Nigel McMullan and Steve Hawkins

THE ESK RIVERS & FISHERY TRUST

Tom Sampson (Chairman)
Mike Clarke
Byron Pace
James Simpson
Mike Mechan

Roy Bagnall
Jeremy Garrett-Cox
Eric Grieg
Hugh Campbell Adamson

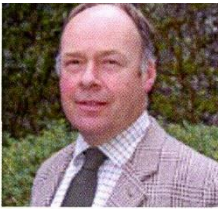
Trust Director Dr Marshall M Halliday



ANGUS ENVIRONMENTAL TRUST



ESK DISTRICT SALMON FISHERY BOARD ANNUAL REPORT



MALCOLM TAYLOR

The Chairman's Report 2016

I think we all approached the 2016 season with trepidation, following the worst floods experienced in the Esks, Bervie and Luther catchments in living memory. The damage to the rivers and the banks will undoubtedly have an impact for many years, with redds being washed out and pools obliterated. On a positive note, some beats gained pools which inexplicably fished well all year.

The inability of Marine Science Scotland to provide regular and accurate data on the number of fish ascending the North Esk remains an area of serious concern. In these days of science based management plans for the catchments, it is vital that we have as much accurate data as possible. The Board will continue to press the Government for additional funding to repair the counter, and provide staff to analyse the data to ensure that we can manage the rivers to the best of our abilities, but the lack of regular and accurate data is a concern.

Having spent a considerable amount of time and effort on the Wild Fisheries Review it is disappointing the Scottish Government have abandoned the majority of the proposals. Much of what was proposed made sound management sense, but the lack of funding was a major failing of the proposals.

We continue to monitor the Morpie Dyke. If major structural issues affect the remains of the Dyke a CAR licence will be applied for especially for remedial work if undermining of the north arm occurs or if fish get caught below the collapsed part of the structure. To date there have been no issues and there are spring fish right through the system.

I would like to thank the Trust for their continued work in the catchments. We have managed again to run the Board with a full complement of bailiffs and by prudent cost control we have managed to keep the levy to one of the lowest in Scotland. Thanks must go to the Clerk, Dr Marshall Halliday for his work with the Board and the Trust and for managing the scientific work undertaken in the catchments, and to the bailiffs Nigel McMullan and Steve Hawkins for their continued hard work supporting the work of the Board.

Marshall Halliday is to retire in June and we wish him well in his retirement, but must thank him for his work for the Board and his enthusiasm in finding funds for the ERFT to carry out the improvements to the catchments and the feeder burns. Marshall's successor as Director is Craig MacIntyre, and we look forward to working with him to the benefit of the fish stocks in our rivers.

ESK DISTRICT SALMON FISHERY BOARD ANNUAL REPORT 2016

Compliance with the Aquaculture and Fisheries (Scotland) Act 2013

Esk Board Meetings

All Board meetings were advertised on the web site and members of the public have been in attendance. A proprietors and separate public meeting were held in 2016 in accordance with the requirements of the Act.

Complaints procedure 2016

No formal complaints were received:

Members' interest

These have been documented and published on the web site. They are subject to review at every Board Meeting.

Good governance requirements

The Board had complied with the requirements of "good governance" through its standing orders and code of conduct.

Conservation Measures

As part of the Scottish Government's implementation of aspects of the Wild Fisheries Review (WFR), no salmon are to be killed within the Esk District up to and including 30th April. Sea trout however are excluded from this legislation despite all sea trout catch trends in the River South Esk indicating management action required. In the course of the year conservation proposals were consulted on resulting in The Conservation of Salmon (Scotland) Regulations 2016. These conservation measures including the following:

- A ban on the killing of salmon caught in coastal waters within a salmon fishery district
- A plan for each district may be required to set out the objectives, priorities and management measures with respect to:
 - The management of salmon fisheries in that area
 - The conservation of salmon in that area
- An assessment of the conservation status of salmon in inland waters having regard to any special area of conservation forming part of those areas of inland waters

The implications of this for the Esk District are as follows:

- (i) **Grade 1** At least an 80% mean probability of CL being met in the last 5 years. North Esk and South Esk SAC

Advice provided (either to District Salmon Fishery Board or proprietors/fisheries in areas without a DSFB) indicating that exploitation is sustainable therefore no additional management action is currently required. This recognises the effectiveness of existing non-statutory local management.

- (ii) **Grade 2** 60-80% mean probability of CL being met in the last 5 years.

Management action is necessary to reduce exploitation; mandatory catch and release will not be required in the first instance, but this will be reviewed annually.

- (iii) **Grade 3** Less than 60% mean probability of CL being met in the last 5 years. Bervie Water, Lunan Water and South Esk non-SAC below the Grid Reference NO6653 9154 downstream of

the Bridge of Dun

Exploitation is unsustainable and mandatory catch and release (all methods) will be required. Management action is necessary to reduce exploitation.

The Board wishes to reinforce the conservation of salmon and sea trout (the latter being omitted from the 2016 Act) by requesting anglers to release all salmon, grilse and sea trout caught up to the 15th June. The Board were surprised that the South Esk status had been revised to a Category 1 river.

Obstructions

Morphie Dyke continues to deteriorate with the exceptionally high flows experienced recently. The new owners propose to tidy up the base of the dyke which will improve fish passage and reduce the probability of damage.

River Flows

The winter of 2016/17 was unusually dry with no exceptional spates recorded.

Predation

During the 2016 season, the Board delegated all bird control including the application and management of a licence to Martin Stansfeld. Smolt shepherding continued in the spring of 2016. The Board purchased a hand held laser which was extremely effective in scaring birds up a range of 600m.

Enforcement

River and coastal patrols are maintained by bailiff staff.

UDN Project and disease

Due to low water conditions in the late spring, a significant number of dead salmon were found in the Edzell area of the North Esk. For the first time significant diseased salmon were also observed above the Burn Loups. Good samples from dying fish were obtained but there was no particular pathogen identified except for *Saprolegnia sp.* It has been established that different strains of the fungus exist some of which are highly pathogenic.

Compliance and function

Compliance with the Board's statutory duties 2016: All measures are in place to ensure compliance with the Board's statutory duties in 2016 and this will be monitored at each Board Meeting.

Function: The Board will continue to monitor compliance with fisheries legislation and enforce where appropriate, predator control and stock monitoring using the Rod Catch Assessment Tool as advocated by the Scottish Government. Any concerns over stock numbers will be discussed with the Scottish Government. The Board is also a custodian of the South ESK SAC but has limited powers through which it can discharge its responsibilities without the support of the Scottish Government. The governance procedures for an SAC is stipulated under the Habitat Directive.

Planning Applications

Kinnaird Hydro Scheme: Monitoring of smolts has begun to be trialled at Kinnaird and discussions are ongoing with SEPA to establish the best methodology.

Aberdeen Offshore Wind Farm: Planning permission has been granted for this development on the basis of an adaptive management approach. The main concerns outlined by the Board are a lack of knowledge on salmon migration routes and whether such a development might cause problems. Research has been advocated and this is being undertaken by MSS.

Wild Fisheries Review

Regrettably the Scottish Government have announced that the Wild Fisheries Review will be a much reduced version compared with what was anticipated. Plans to abolish Fishery Boards and replace them with Fishery Management Organisations have been abandoned. This is largely due to a lack of funding and parliamentary time. However there will be further legislation which will focus on the following issues:

- (i) **Management of Fisheries:**

This will be undertaken by existing Boards and Trusts however there will be enabling legislation to promote voluntary mergers. In this respect the government will resolve the fishery assessment as it varies considerably between boards and this may be an impediment to voluntary mergers. Annual catch returns will be submitted to a single authority which could be boards, assessor or government.

Fishery Management Plans (based on a standard template) will be a statutory requirement of all boards

A national unit and the development of a national wild fisheries strategy remains an objective
- (ii) **Conservation of fish stocks:**

Coastal Fisheries: The ban on coastal fisheries is not time limited. Government are committed to conducting a review by 31st March 2018. A coastal tagging programme is being implemented this year to inform the review.

Pike conservation: It is proposed to introduce measures to restrict bag limits and size limits to conserve pike stocks

Brown trout: There are no proposals to protect brown trout at this stage

Improved local flexible conservation measure for spring salmon: The Government are examining options to permit a more flexible local approach to the conservation of spring salmon
- (iii) **Enforcement:**

Gill net legislation: It is intended to strengthen existing legislation by prohibiting the use of gill nets within 0.5 miles of the coast

Protection Orders: There is a commitment to review the application process

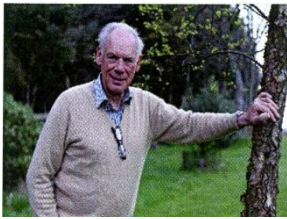
FishPal: Possible use of texting might be introduced to assist bailiffs with enforcement issues

National warrant coverage: This will be progressed with assistance from MS compliance and Police Scotland. Suitable software is being developed to improve and control current risks
- (iv) **Angling Promotion and Development:**

It is proposed to develop a national angling development structure with an angling promotion web site.
- (v) **CPD:**

An operational CPD matrix has been developed and this will be reinforced by further training modules, job profiles and mentoring

THE 2016 SEASON IN THE ESK DISTRICT



MARSHALL M HALLIDAY

The 2016 season was characterised by low salmon catches both nationally and internationally, however the North Esk showed a welcome improvement.

THE NORTH ESK

The Logie Counter (Figure 1) recorded 10,371 fish ascending the river compared with 12100 in 2015 and a 10-year average of 12,149. The spring run was much improved better – 3704, compared with 2,684 in 2015 and a 10 – year average of 2,917. It should be noted that the counter suffered some damage with Storm Frank and recording has been limited with two of the three channels not fully functional. Thus 2016 counts should be regarded as a minimum figure.

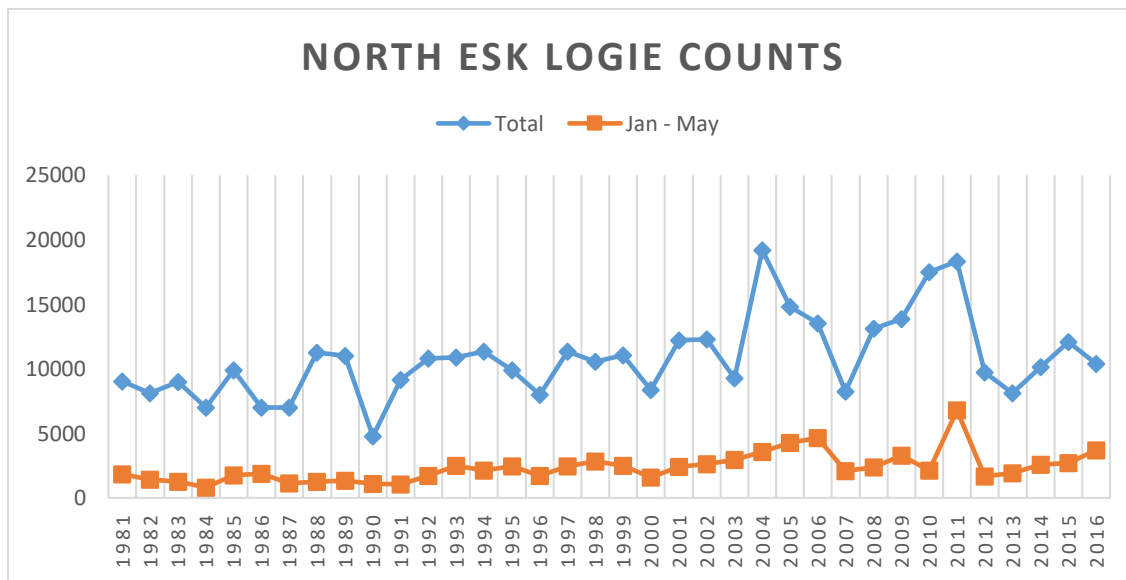


Figure 1 Logie upstream counts 1981-2016

The net and coble catch of sea trout was much better than in 2014 and indicated a reasonable run of sea trout in 2015. The salmon catch was lower than in 2014 but the grilse catch improved.

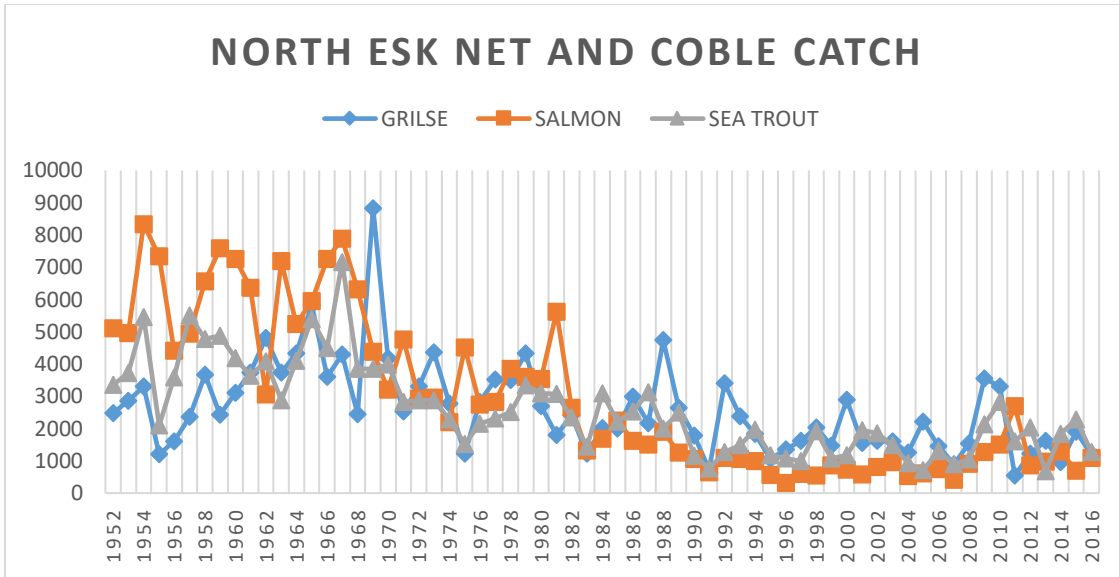


Figure 2 Net & coble catch 1952-2016

The most notable feature of the net and coble catch in 2016 was the lack of grilse caught in August – the grilse run seemed to fade dramatically after the first week in August. This compares with the low Logie Counter figures between September and November.

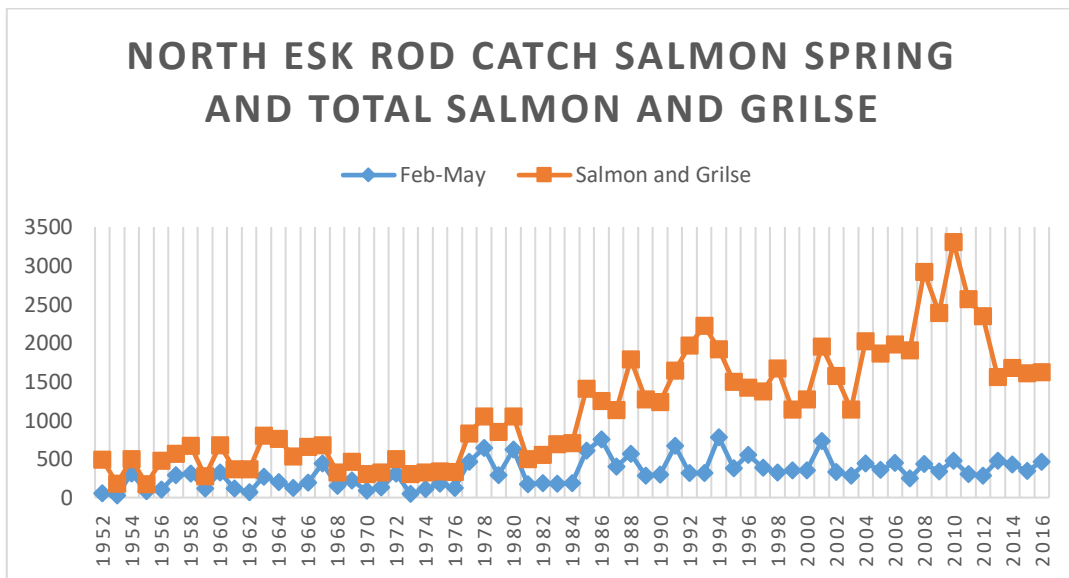


FIGURE 3 North Esk salmon rod catch

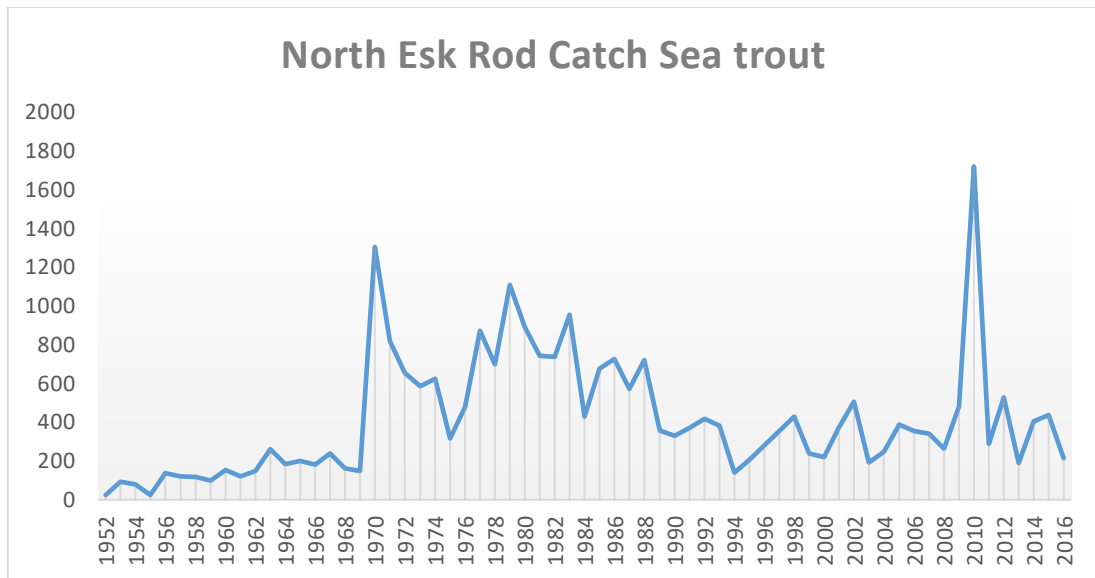


Figure 4 North Esk rod catch of sea trout

Rod catches in the North Esk did not reflect the improved numbers of spring salmon recorded at the Logie counter. It seemed that moderate water flows encouraged salmon and sea trout to run straight through the traditional spring beats. Rod catches of salmon and sea trout were on a par with the last few years.

THE SOUTH ESK

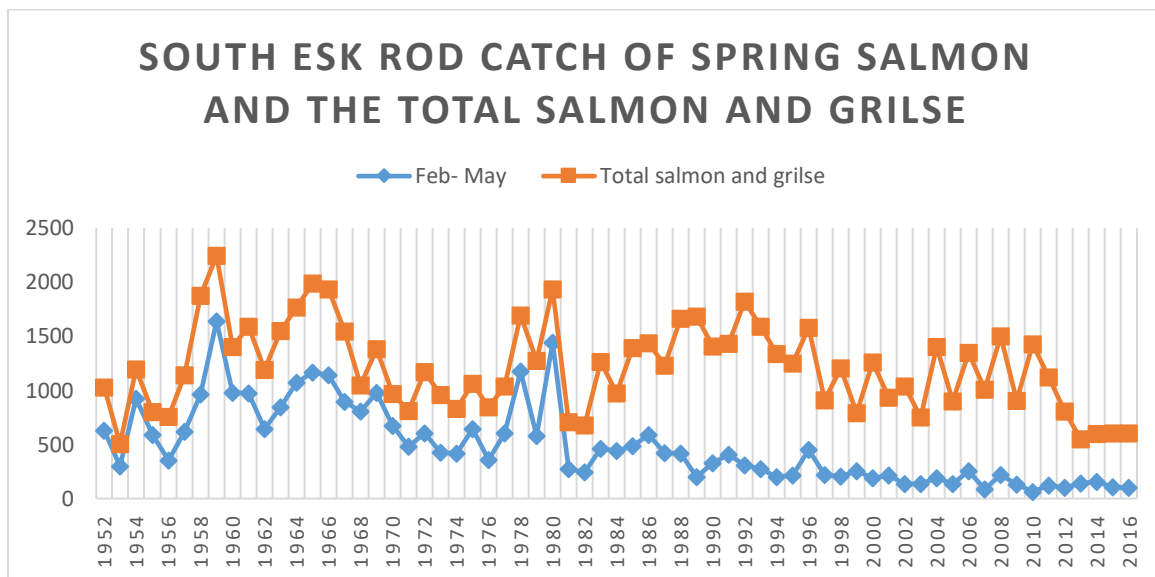


Figure 5 South Esk rod catch salmon February to May and the total salmon and grilse

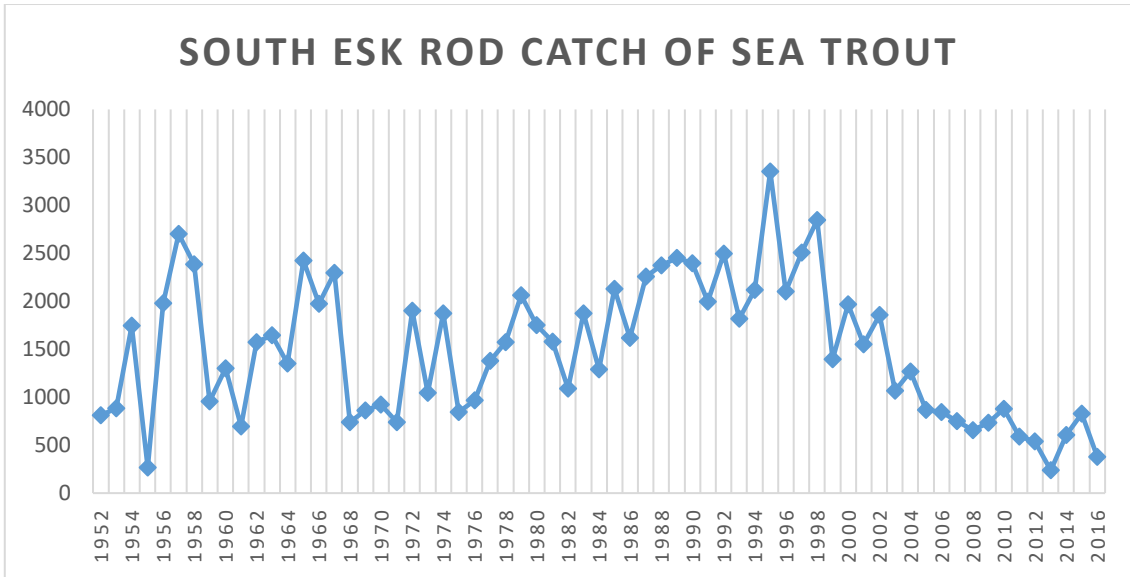


Figure 6 South Esk rod catch of sea trout

The catches of salmon and grilse were broadly similar to those in 2015 however the sea trout catch was down and at the lower end of the catch records. This was disappointing as both 2014 and 2015 has shown improved sea trout catches.

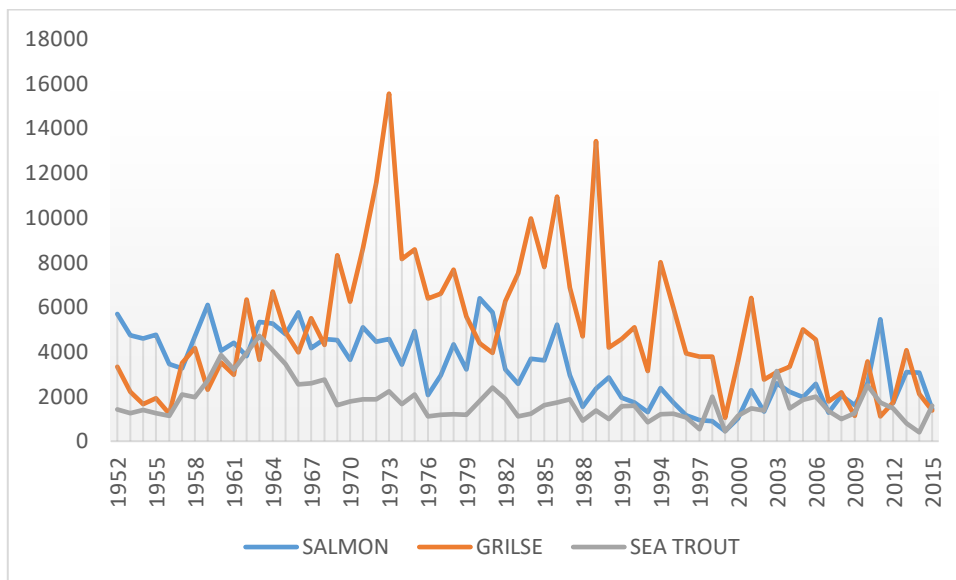


Figure 7 South Esk Fixed engine catch 1952-2015

NB all healthy sea trout are released.

There was no coastal netting in 2016.

The North Esk and South Esk compared - Total salmon and grilse catch

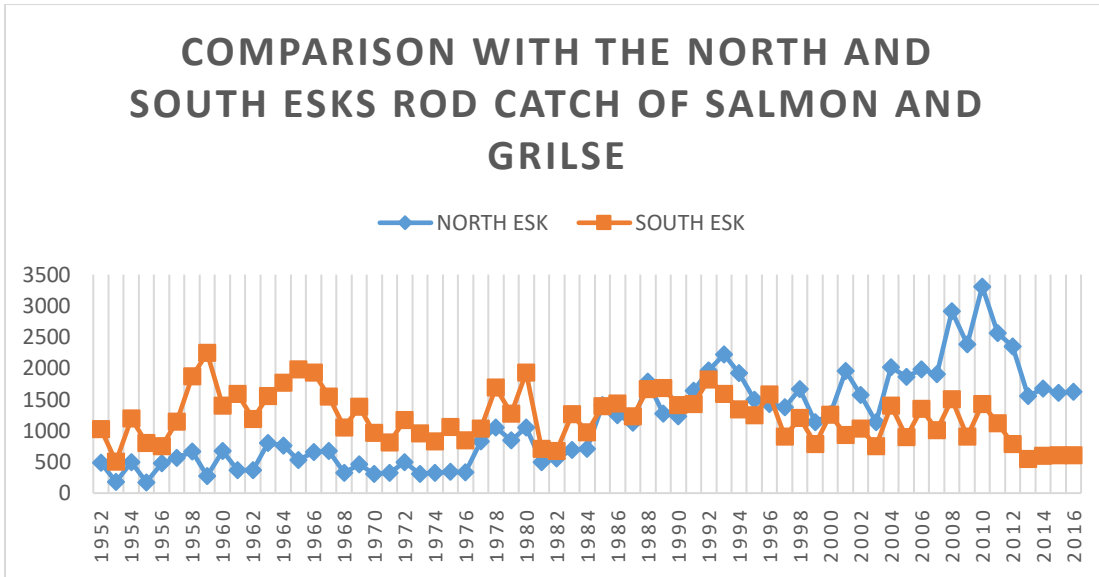


Figure 8 Comparison on the North and South Esk rod catch of salmon and grilse

It is interesting to note that the rod catches for both rivers track each other consistently during the last decade.

Stock Assessment – Application of the Rod Catch Assessment Tool 2016

Management action required

	Feb	March	April	May	June	July	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Total Salmon	Sea Trout
N Esk											
S Esk											

The assessment of stock status:

North Esk stocks do not indicate any cause for concern based on the 2016 rod catch. However anglers are asked to support conservation measures.

The South Esk assessment indicate a particular concern for the spring salmon stock as well as the October stock. It should be noted that with the low catches of salmon during the last few years, any error in catch returns can distort the Rod Catch Tool Assessment. In addition, no account is taken of fishing effort. The state of the South Esk stocks in 2016 raises an issue with the categorisation applied by MSS although at the time they would not have had the 2016 catch data. available

BERVIE WATER

A total of 4 salmon and grilse with no sea trout were reported from the Bervie Water.

LUNAN WATER

There have been no reports of catches of sea trout or salmon in 2016. In view of this situation, Arbroath Angling Club no longer have taken the Crown Lease. This has been transferred to the ERFT who have authorised the Club to offer permits on a total catch and release regime.

JUVENILE SURVEY RESULTS

E-fishing survey work in connection with the PIP Project indicated a reduction in 2016 fry across a number of sites. This is attributed to the effects of Storm Frank washing out redds.

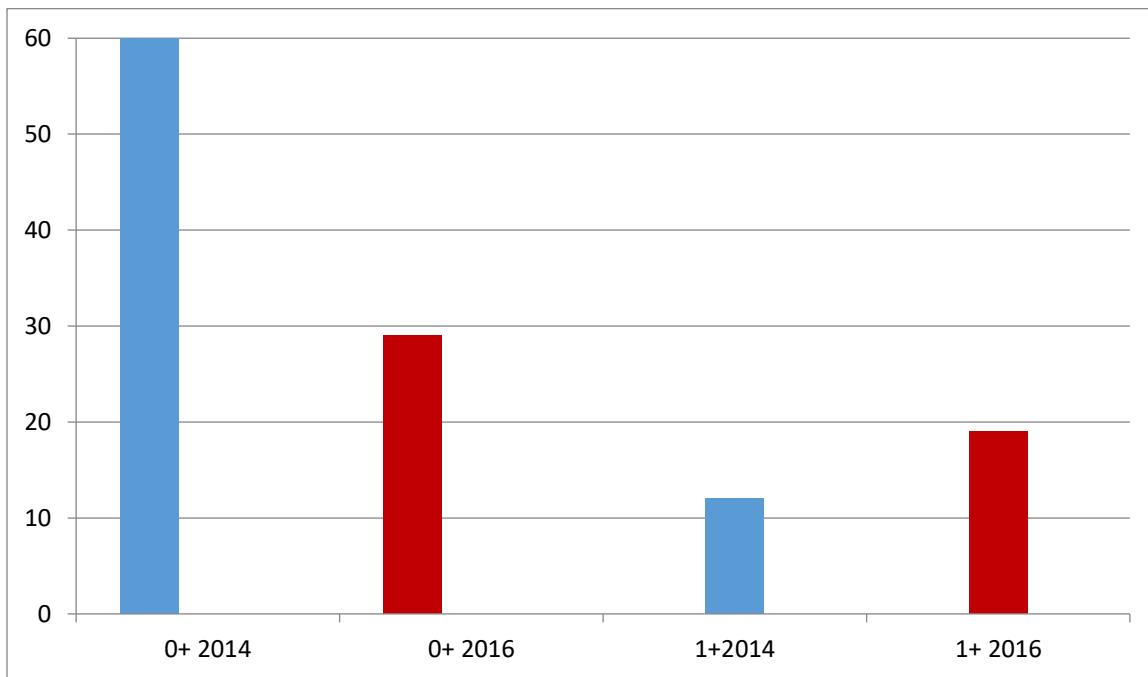


Figure 9 South Esk sites at Acharn, Moulzie and Braedownie comparison of the total juvenile 0+ and 1+ between 2014 and 2016

ESK BOARD ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31ST DECEMBER 2016

Walker Harris CA

INCOME	Y/E 31 ST Dec 2016	TOTAL	Y/E 31 ST Dec 2015	TOTAL
Fishery Assessments	221,109		147,568	
Project Income	7,451		646	
Esk Salmon Management Interest	1,939		2,240	
Term Deposit interest	478			
Total Income		230,499		150,454

EXPENDITURE	Y/E 31 ST Dec 2016	TOTAL	Y/E 31 ST Dec 2015	TOTAL
Wages	56,872		53,290	
Casual wages	177		400	
Pensions	321		7,530	
Telephone - Bailiffs	758		856	
Rent and rates	1,968		4,319	
Clerk's remuneration	23,386		21,260	
Travelling expense – Clerk	834		1,421	
Telephone - Clerk	480		480	
Postage , stationary and printing	1,689		1,383	
Advertising			680	
Insurance	831		805	
Motor expenses	4,078		4,015	
Health and safety Skyguard	1,719		1,719	
Repairs and renewals	1,155		839	
Sundry expenses	983		730	
Accountancy fees	1,574		924	
Esk Rivers & Fishery Trust - grant	10,000		10,000	
Training costs	9,020		100	
Legal fees	676		8,056	
Netting compensation			40,000	
Subscriptions and voluntary levy	4,696		7,066	
Ordnance survey maps			836	
South Esk Catchment Management	5,000		5,000	
LIFE Project			3,936	
Bad Debts				
Bank charges	193		322	
Bank interest				
Taxation	784		578	
Depn of hatchery	6		7	
Depn of equipment	4		5	
Depn of motor vehicles	3,108		4,144	
Depn of computer equipment				
Loss on sale of motor vehicle			475	
Professional fees	10,169	140,275		180,340

EXCESS INCOME OVER EXPENDITURE

90,224

(29,886)

TANGIBLE FIXED ASSETS SCHEDULE 31ST DECEMBER 2015

COST	HATCHERY	EQUIPMENT	MOTOR VEHICLES	COMPUTER EQUIPMENT	TOTALS
At 1 st January 2016	1,540	7,411	22,000	400	31,351
Additions					
Disposals					
At 31 st December 2016	1540	7,411	22,000	400	31,351
DEPRECIATION					
At 1 st January 2016	1,501	7,393	9,659	400	18,863
Charge for year	6	4	3,108		3,118
Eliminated on disposal					
At 31 st December 2016	1,507	7,397	12,677	400	21,981
NET BOOK VALUE					
At 31 st December 2016	33	14	9,323	-	9,370
At 31 st December 2015	39	18	12,431	-	12,488

RESERVES SCHEDULE

	Hatchery Reserve	Net Buy-out Fund	Totals
At 1 st January 2016	42,381	258,211	300,592
At 31 st December 2016	42,381	258,211	300,592

BALANCE SHEET 31ST DECEMBER 2014

	Y/E 31st Dec 2014	TOTAL	Y/E 31st Dec 2015	TOTAL
FIXED ASSETS				
Hatchery	46			
Equipment	23			
Motor vehicles	8,950			
Computer equipment	-			
		9,019		12,488
CURRENT ASSETS				
Trade debtors	4,935		175	
Prepayments			1,548	
Loan-Esk Salmon Management Ltd	148,753		138,939	
Bank – current a/c	223,721		149,574	
Bank- term deposits	-		-	
Bank – river improvement a/c	90		90	
	377,499		290,326	
CURRENT LIABILITIES				
Sundry creditors	10,843	366,656	17,012	273,314
NET ASSETS		376,026		285,802
FINANCED BY				

RESERVES AND FUNDS				
Reserves		300,592		300,592
CAPITAL ACCOUNT		75,434		
Capital Fund brought forward	75,434		(14,790)	
		376,026		285,802