

West Sutherland Fisheries Trust

Charity Reg. No. SC24426

18 October 2021.

Report to North & West District Salmon Fishery Board Work undertaken between 1st May – 18 October 2021

This report covers the work undertaken by the West Sutherland Fisheries Trust in line with the funding proposal approved by the District Fishery Board for 2021/2022.

The following work has been undertaken:

1. Juvenile surveys. The National Electrofishing Survey again took place in 2021. Thirty randomly generated sites across the area were fished and the final report will be made available by Marine Scotland after analysis in 2022. In addition we surveyed 9 catchments (Polla, Rhiconich, Sandwood, Laxford, Maldie, Oldany, Clashnessie, Inver and Polly) previously surveyed as part of the WSFT monitoring programme or as contract sites for other companies. The full report will be completed in the new year, supplied to the Board and published on the Trust website.
2. Broodstock Netting - this is yet to start but will be undertaken in November and early December together with the Estates, if requested.
3. Education – the Ghillies seminar will take place in April 2022, conditions permitting. It has been agreed within the Trust to open this event to the wider public.

We worked with Scourie Primary School on invasive non-native species. As part of the SISI project they then wrote and produced a video about American mink. This can be viewed at: <https://www.invasivespecies.scot/schools-film-project>

Due to the Covid restrictions no outreach events were run in 2021.

4. Sweep netting surveys were undertaken within the Laxford, Polla and Kyle of Durness where possible from April to October. A number of fish were caught and lice and predator damage recorded. We had 4 recaptures during 2021, all tagged in that year. The full report will be completed in the new year, supplied to the Board and published on the Trust website.

5. Biosecurity. The Trust continues to demonstrate biosecurity measures within its own work and promote the practice within the area while talking to members of the public.

The Trust was again involved in the pulling of Himalayan Balsam at Nedd and Clashnessie. The population in Nedd appears to be restricted to the host garden now, while that in Clashnessie is more focussed on the host garden.

The Trust continues to manage the mink project within the area. One mink was reported on Handa Island and dispatched by the rangers. We have had other sightings but no other captures. With thanks to our volunteers for their efforts in monitoring and reacting to sightings.

The Trust has treated 11 populations of Japanese knotweed within the area. During 2021 it was noted that populations are declining, with 3 showing no plants.

The Trust, with volunteers, also treated 3 populations of American skunk cabbage.

6. Smolt traps was installed in Badna Bay and the River Laxford during April and May. The Laxford trap was run with the AST as part of the West Coast Salmon Tracking project. Both traps operated successfully despite the low flows, with useful information obtained.
7. The Trust has worked with the Clerk to the Board as required, providing advice on a number of different matters.

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Fisheries Biologist