



# the River

News from Tweed Fisheries Management: The River Tweed Commission & The Tweed Foundation



## *Bird predation update*

- Our regular October main stem bird count from Ettrick Mouth to Berwick was carried out on the 23<sup>rd</sup>, with 312 Goosanders counted, compared to the long-term average of 324 (in October). 76 Cormorants were counted (long-term October average of 61).
- The Cormorant roost at Rutherford continues to be monitored, with a welcome decrease in numbers in November from over 100 birds down to around 20. We have had no reports of these birds being found elsewhere on the river but please report any sightings, particularly any new roost sites that we can then monitor.
- To start updating the dietary composition estimates for damage assessment, which was last done in the 1990's, birds shot under licence, and retrieved, are now being processed by The Centre of Ecology and Hydrology. A scientific licence application from SNH is in progress, which will allow for more targeted dietary analysis in 2019, if granted.

**(Our first edition of *the River* provided further details on bird predation and the licencing system.)**

## *Ettrick fish counter*

The new Ettrick fish counter, which was installed in April 2018, is producing high quality data on the numbers and sizes of fish migrating up the Ettrick, along with video recording for species identification. While we cannot produce a final total until the end of the year, it is clear at this stage that the numbers of Salmon and Trout will be less than baseline numbers recorded by the old counter from 1998-2009. As we know, most Spring fish originate from the Ettrick catchment and the reduced counter total is consistent with the low Spring catch figure. Further analysis, including electro-fishing monitoring of Salmon fry, next year will tell us whether juvenile stocks may be affected.

## *Electro-fishing*

Juvenile Salmon and Trout monitoring continued this year on the Leader, Gala and Upper Tweed. Whilst we are continuing to process the data, preliminary results show numbers of Salmon Fry in the main stem of the Upper Tweed and Gala Water continue to remain stable, despite the recent decline in numbers of adults. Leader Water Fry numbers have dropped since 2016, although to levels similar to the Upper Tweed and Gala, which are extremely productive.

*Around twenty, 20lbs plus Salmon (including one fish of around 40lbs) have travelled through the Ettrick counter this year.*



## Fish Easements

Over the last few years The Tweed Foundation has been working with the River Tweed Commission (RTC) and local Angling Associations to install fish easements within trout spawning burns where significant man-made obstructions to fish movement have been identified. A fish easement is a low cost, “home-made”, solution to fish passage that can be installed in situations where obstacles cannot be removed, and where the funding required for a professionally designed and installed fish pass is not an option. Many obstructions in trout spawning burns fall into this category due to the relatively small area of water upstream.



*The Shiplaw Burn bridge culvert before and after the installation of a fish easement*

After the successful installation of easements on the Toddle and Halk Burns (both Gala Water) in 2016 and 2017 respectively, three further easements were installed this year on obstructions to fish movement in the Shiplaw Burn (Eddleston Water, Upper Tweed) the Cockholm Burn (Gala Water) and the Harden Burn (Borthwick Water, River Teviot). In all three cases the easements use simple wooden baffles to increase depth, and reduced the speed of the flow, over concrete structures where the flow was too shallow and/or fast for fish to pass freely.

The Tweed Foundation would like to thank the RTC, Hawick AC, Gala AA and the Peeblesshire TFA for funding the easements. We'd also like to thank the owners of the structures on which the easements were installed for allowing access and granting permission for the works to be carried out.



*The Toddle Burn easement was installed in 2016 in a bridge culvert at the bottom of the burn. It resulted in a significant increase in juvenile Trout production upstream of the culvert*