

River Ythan Spawning Summary 2022

Compiled by Martin Webster

DDSFb

Summary

The annual monitoring of ten 1km spawning sites across the Ythan catchment commenced on the first week of November. All sites were surveyed (water conditions permitting) on a weekly basis until spawning ceased. Low water levels aided surveys over the first week and several pairs of sea trout were seen occupying suitable gravel in the tributaries. An increase in spawning activity was observed across several sites on the 10th as both salmon and sea trout continued to take advantage of the ideal conditions. Several larger sea trout in the 5-6lb range were observed whilst the salmon were predominately made up of grilse sized fish.

Prospects were looking good for the remainder of the month but unfortunately, on the 18th just as we were approaching the peak period in spawning activity the weather broke. Over the following two days heavy rainfall caused major flooding across the catchment and all ongoing surveys were halted until safe for staff to restart. It was late November before surveys resumed, damage was noticeable across several sites; sections of gravel movement and bank erosion had occurred, and a few minor blockages were found. The visible redds made earlier were found flattened, and unfortunately a few sites had suffered washout. A distinct lack of fish was noticeable on the gravel and continued to be the case until water levels finally improved in early December upon which several salmon were seen utilising spawning areas. Whether these were new fish entering the system or those that had dropped back down river with the flood it was had to establish. It was encouraging to see over the following weeks right up until late December salmon redds across several sites. As the year ended spent salmon and sea trout kelts were found washed up on the riverbank.

Surveys resumed in the new year to better overhead and water conditions, all sites were found completed with only older redds the odd spent kelt found.

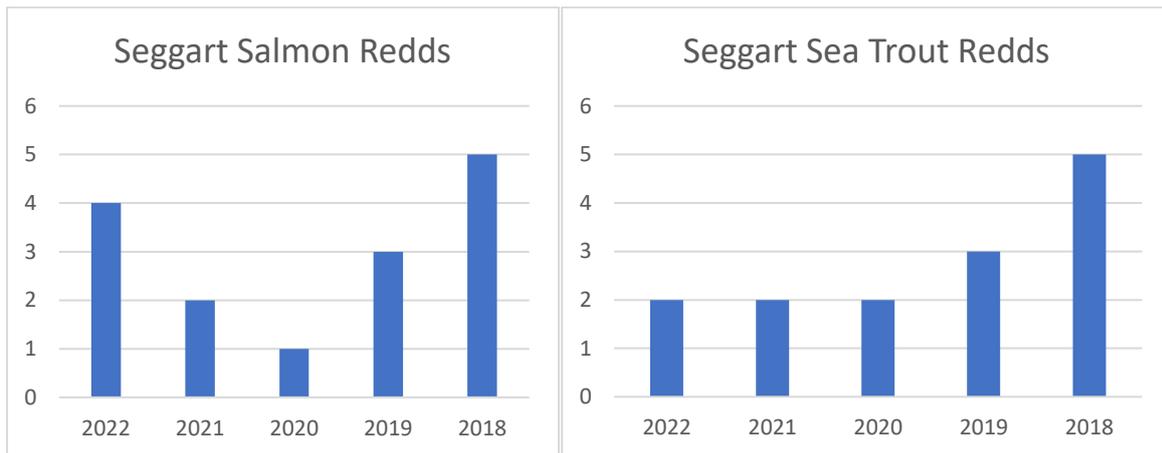
A few positive results have been collated over the weeks, several redds were found alongside this year's willow bank repair on the Ebrie and it was evident that salmon made good use of the previously gravel jettied area on the mainstem at Methlick site. The Fordoun burn at Fyvie improved for salmon redds and increased spawning was noted on the tree cleared section at Cranna Wood following Storm Arwen.

Unfortunately, due to the poor river conditions experienced from mid-November until early December surveys were limited, preventing a full picture of this year's spawning activity. Despite this Ebrie, Seggat, Bronie, Keithfield and Fordoun sites all increased slightly on the previous year.

Monitoring concluded on 9th of January 2023.

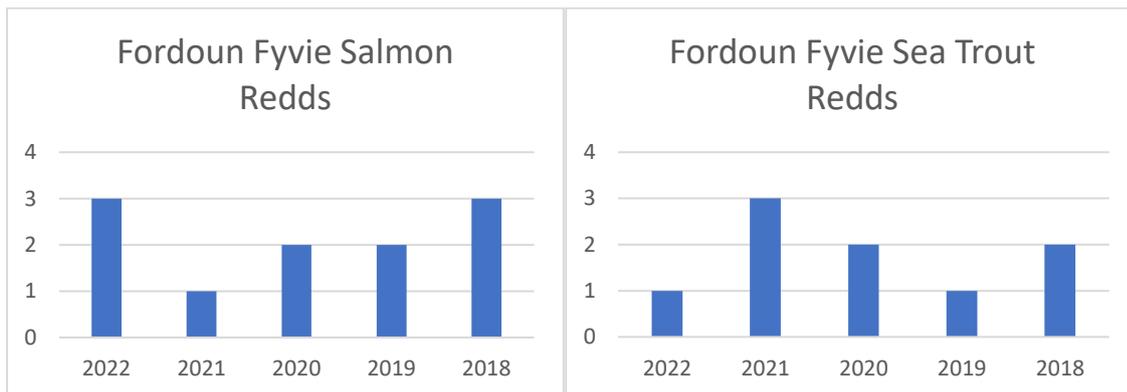
Chapel of Seggat

Sea trout were found paired up on the gravel on the first visit in November and subsequent trout and salmon redds were found on 11/11/22, Further salmon redds were found on the following dates 02/12/22 and 22/12/22. No redds were found in January. This site holds good areas of spawning gravel and could easily accommodate more redds. A few sections of bank erosion have occurred after the flood.



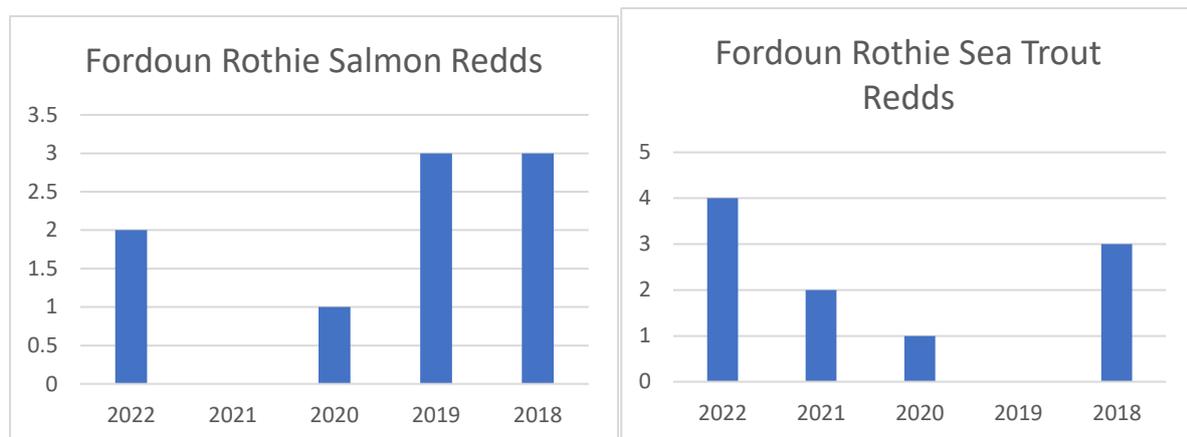
Fordoun Fyvie

Sea trout were seen on the gravel over the first visit although no further ST redds were discovered. Early December saw the first salmon spawning activity occur with further redds found on 09/12/22 and 16/12/22. With limited spawning gravel available redds appeared on the same sections of gravel as in previous years. A few areas of bank erosion and minor blockages discovered after the flood.



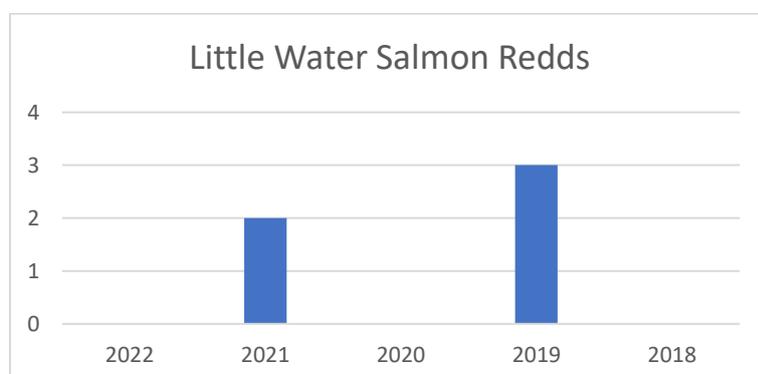
Fordoun Rothienorman

An increase in sea trout activity was seen on the 04/11/22 and 11/11/22. Several fish around 5lbs were also observed moving past upstream. Suitable spawning gravel was utilised by salmon on the 02/12/22 although no further redds were found several spent kelts were found washed up on the 9th and 22nd of December. An improvement in suitable gravel areas after the flood especially around the cleared Cranna Wood area. A few trees felled in the burn causing partial blockages. Noticeable increase in fish activity moving upstream this year. Improved salmon and sea trout redd count.



Little Water

Dence areas of ranunculus was found on the bed of the burn over initial visits. It was hoped the higher flows experienced later in the month would have attracted fish upstream onto the cleared sections of gravel however no redds or fish were discovered over subsequent surveys. Another poor season without any redds appearing. This site could benefit from removal of heavily weeded areas prior to the spawning period which might help attract fish to stop off. No Sea Trout were recorded once again at this site.



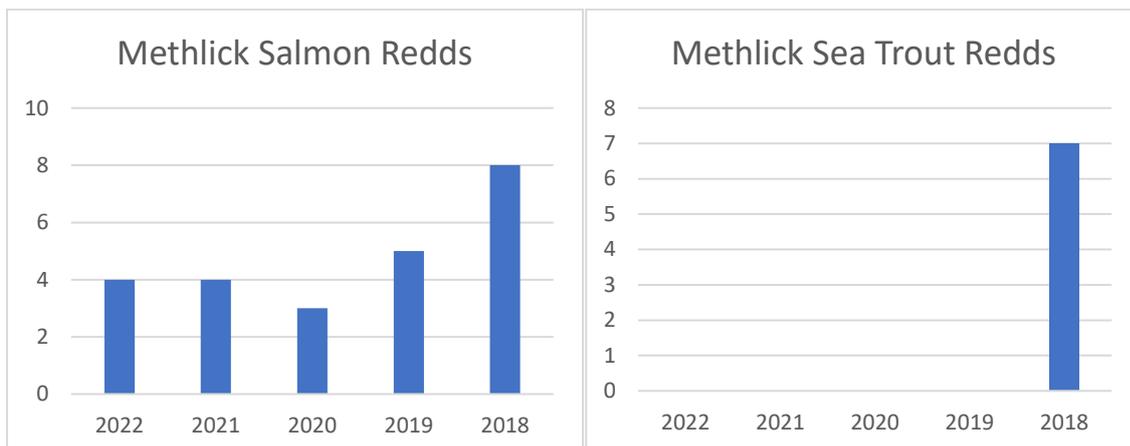
Little Water (New)

Suitable water conditions over early surveys revealed sea trout sitting on the gravel areas with the first redds appearing on 08/11/22. The first salmon redds were found on 16/12/22 and further activity was seen on 23/12/22. As on the other Little Water site conditions could be improved for fish by removing dense sections of ranunculus prior to spawning. Redd count on par with previous year.



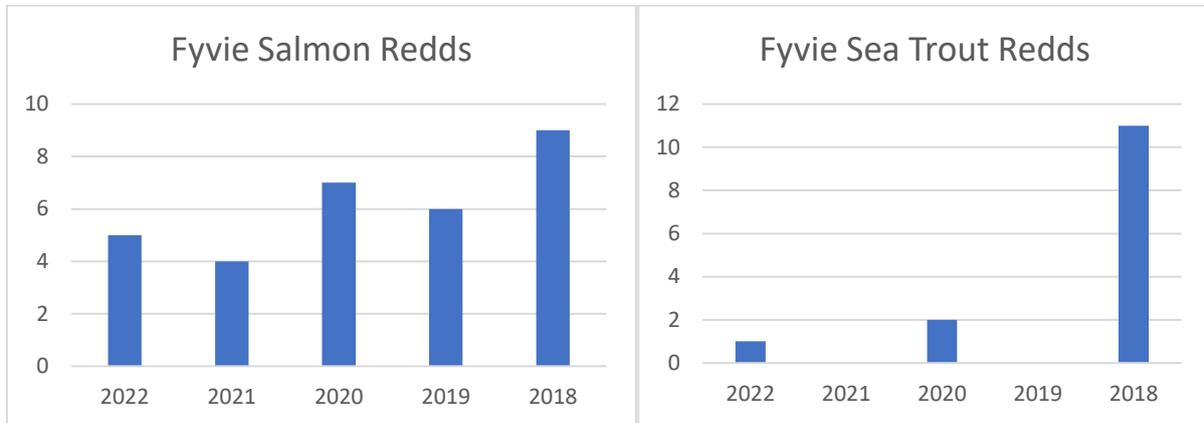
Methlick

Water and overhead conditions suited early surveys, 4 separate salmon redds were found on 11/11/22 around the Polesburn Wood area which had been gravel washed the previous year. The site then endured constant high coloured water over the remaining weeks of November and into December which made for poor viewing. Surveys resumed in early January to better conditions and revealed clean sections of gravel throughout the site after the flood however no further redds or fish were seen. Redd count on par with previous year.



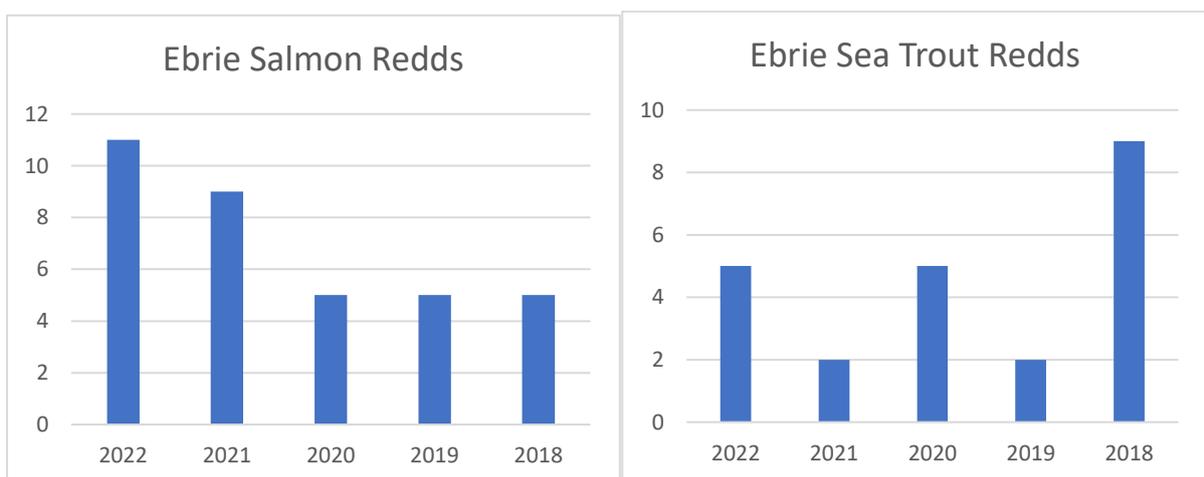
Fyvie

Nothing reported over the early surveys. Salmon and clean redds began to appear on the gravel 09/12/22 as water levels and overhead conditions improved. Further redds were found on 16/12/22. As the year ended no other redds were seen over the section and this remained the same pattern into January. Slight improvement on the salmon redd count from previous year.



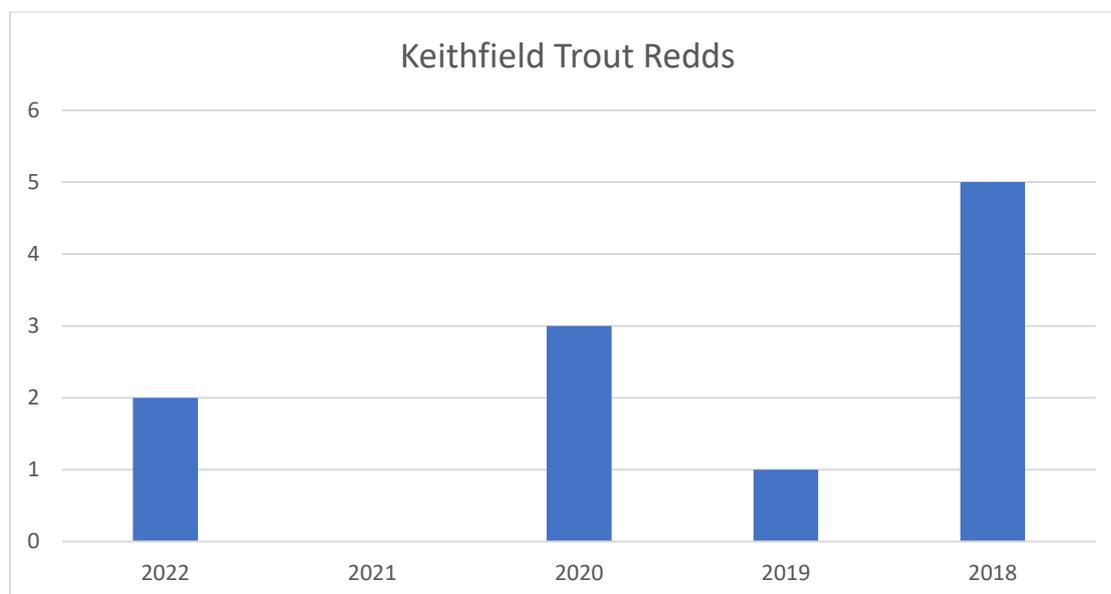
Ebrie

Suitable water and overhead conditions over the first two weeks assisted surveys and saw both salmon and sea trout taking full advantage. Several fish were seen on the gravel and new redds were found throughout the site 10/11/22 including the area of willow bank repair. This peak of activity quickly dropped off as fish fell downstream off the gravel. Several attempts to survey the site were made over late from November into December, but poor water conditions made viewing difficult. Another increase on both salmon and sea trout redds from previous year.



Keithfield

Two small trout redds were found on sections of suitable spawning gravel on 10/11/22. Further surveys were hampered by poor water conditions but no further redds were found. A few sections of bank erosion were found after the flood.



Bronie

Low and clear river levels aided surveys over the first two weeks with sea trout and a new redd found 10/11/21. Flood conditions and poor viewing prevented surveys resuming until late December when two new salmon redds were found 23/12/22 both on the recently altered section of burn. Some changes in flow have occurred since the flood and minor repairs may be required to stabilise the banks. A slight increase in both salmon and sea trout redds from previous year.

