



River Ythan Spawning Summary 2024

Compiled by Martin Webster

DDSF



Summary

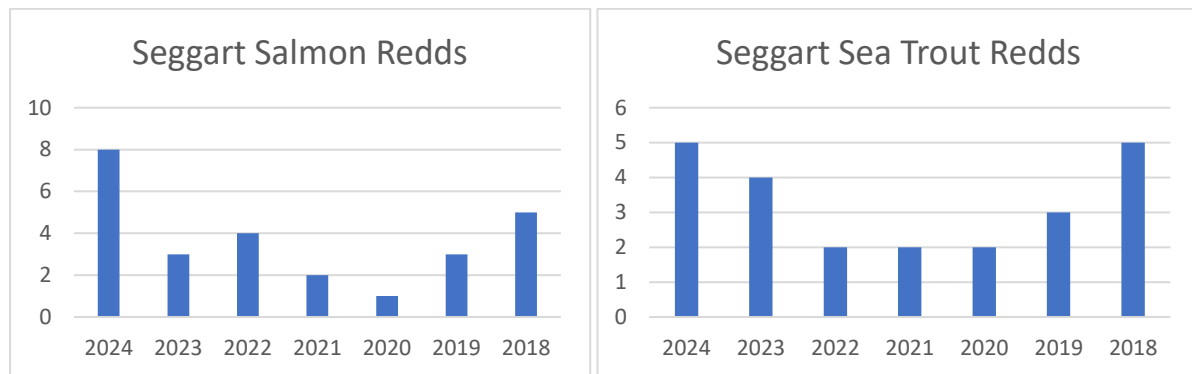
The annual monitoring of nine 1km spawning sites across the Ythan catchment commenced on the first week of November. All sites are surveyed (water conditions permitting) on a weekly basis until spawning ceases. Suitable overhead and water conditions aided viewing over the early weeks and promising numbers of salmon and sea trout were seen starting to pair up on the gravel at Fyvie and Seggat sites. Spawning activity was soon underway across the main river and completed redds were found in promising figures especially at Fyvie where salmon and sea trout had stopped off and taken full advantage of the recent jet washed areas of gravel. Seggat and Methlick sites also revealed an increase in activity compared to the previous season and several large salmon were observed moving up through.

Water levels were running desperately low on the tributaries and this greatly slowed fish passage upstream especially for salmon. A few sea trout were however already instream when surveys commenced and redds begun to appear on the limited gravel areas but salmon sightings and redds remained low across the tributary sites. The first substantial lift in water in over a month finally arrived late on in November as heavy snow and rain fell across the catchment. This limited ongoing surveys until water conditions improved later in December. It was hoped this lift in levels would increase salmon activity, but disappointingly upon restarting only a few additional redds were to be found on the Fordoun and Bronie sites. Its possible fish destined for the tributaries were delayed too long from running up and subsequently dropped back onto available gravel close to the confluence of the burns.

Spawning activity was largely complete by mid-December, despite the improved water height all surveyed sites failed to produce any further redds and further sightings of fish were low indicating a lack of late running autumn fish. The sudden drop in water temperature finished off already exhausted fish and several salmon and sea trout kelts were found washed up on the bankside at Seggat, Fyvie and Methlick indicating a finish to spawning. The peak period for both salmon and sea trout spawning was found to take place slightly earlier this year with fish already paired up on the gravel upon the first visit in November and peaking across most sites over the third week in November. Final figures revealed an increase in salmon and sea trout redds across all main river sites this year compared to 2023. The last surveys were completed on 17th December.

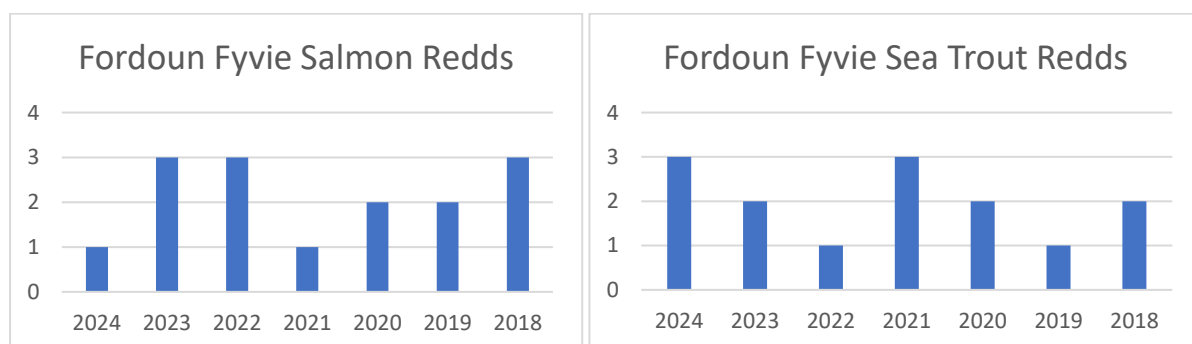
Chapel of Seggat

Salmon and sea trout were seen on the gravel during initial visits with redds in progress. Low water conditions continued for most of the month but a steady increase in salmon redds was observed over the weeks. Despite a lift in water levels early December no further redds were found. Increase seen for salmon redds this year with several fish observed moving up through the stretch. A few areas of suitable spawning gravel found to be heavily silted and would benefit from gravel washing to attract further fish to stop off. Several mature trees have come down over the stretch and require tidying up.



Fordoun - Fyvie

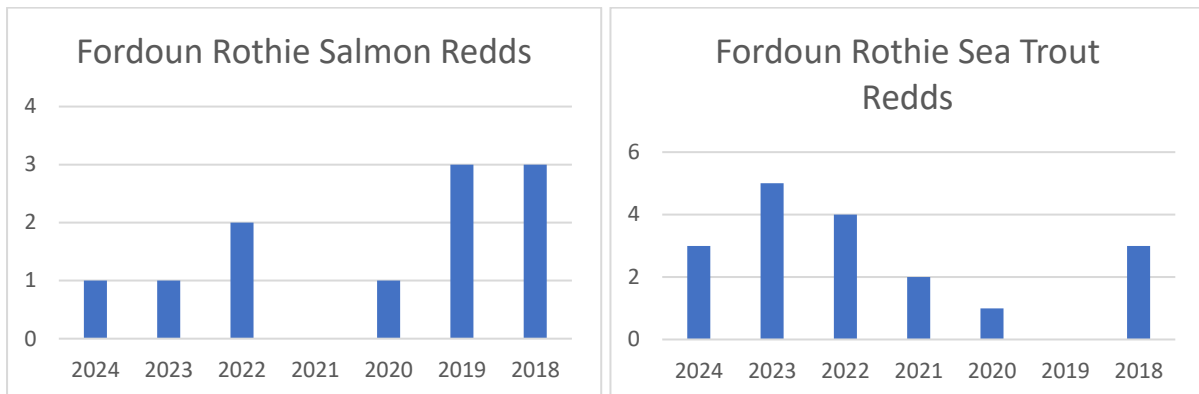
Water levels remained low throughout, and this hindered upstream movement of salmon over the obstacles at Fyvie and Rootie Linn. A few sea trout redds were found around mid-November but no salmon redds were seen until a lift in levels in December assisted fish upstream. No further spawning activity was seen after 17th December. Redds located on the same areas of gravel as in the previous years. Slight decrease in salmon redds possibly due to limited water delaying upstream passage throughout November.



Fordoun - Rothienorman

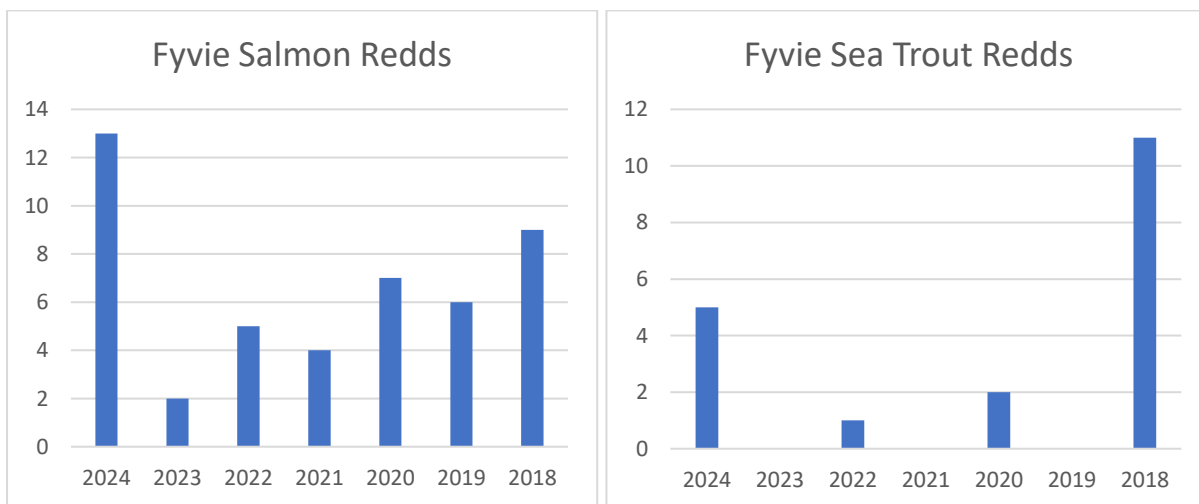
Low flows prevailed for most of November, large areas of thick weed growth were noticeable on the gravel this year something not seen in previous years. Initial surveys found only a few sea trout redds up around the upper Cranna Wood area. After a rise in water the first salmon redd was found on 13th December but no further fish or redds were seen afterwards. Slight decrease in salmon redds seen this year. Several mature trees found fallen lying across the

burn on the upper Cranna wood section which may need trimmed to prevent blockages occurring.



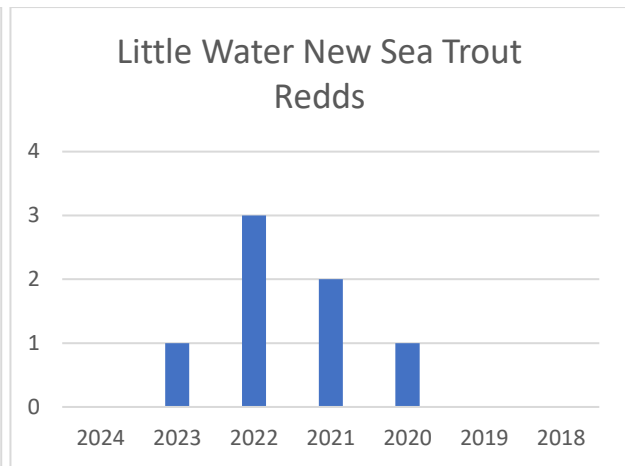
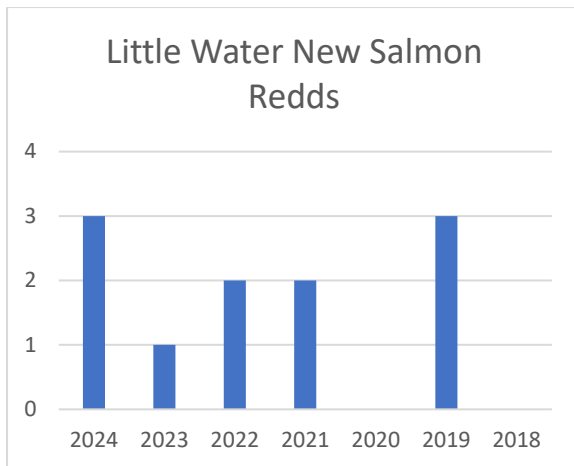
Fyvie

The first survey revealed good numbers of salmon and sea trout lying in the deeper pools. These fish soon moved onto the gravel areas and fully utilised the available gravel especially the recently cleaned section below Fyvie bridge. Further weekly visits in November saw a steady increase in salmon redds with the peak activity appearing on the third week of November. Fluctuating water levels in December hindered several visits but upon restarting no further redds were discovered. Overall, a substantial increase in salmon redds from the previous year possibly due to fish being unable to push up into the Fordoun burn and dropping back down into the main stem to spawn. Encouraging to see a return to figures not seen since 2018.



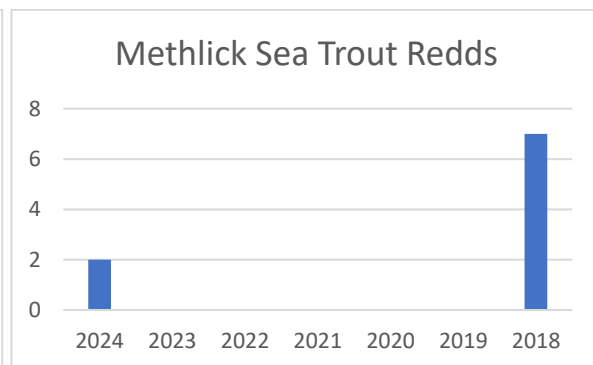
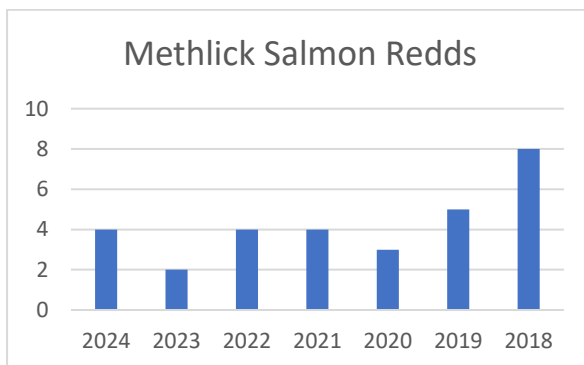
Littlewater (New)

Water levels remained low over initial surveys, less weed growth was found on the spawning gravel sections this year. The first signs of activity appeared on 19th of November whereabout 3 fresh salmon redds were found. Despite a lift in water early December no further live fish or redds were seen. A slight increase in salmon redds compared to the previous year.



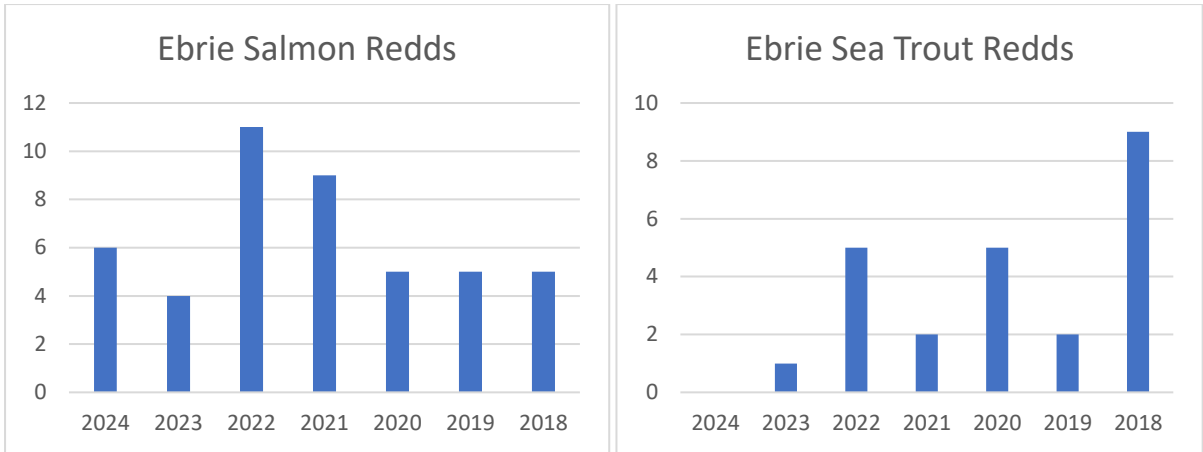
Methlick

Initial surveys found salmon and sea trout already paired up on the suitable gravel areas. Completed redds were found over further visits with a peak in activity seen on 19th November. Surveys were hampered over December due to poor water conditions but upon restarting no further redds were found. Dead spent kelts found washed up on bankside mid-December. An increase in salmon and sea trout redds this year.



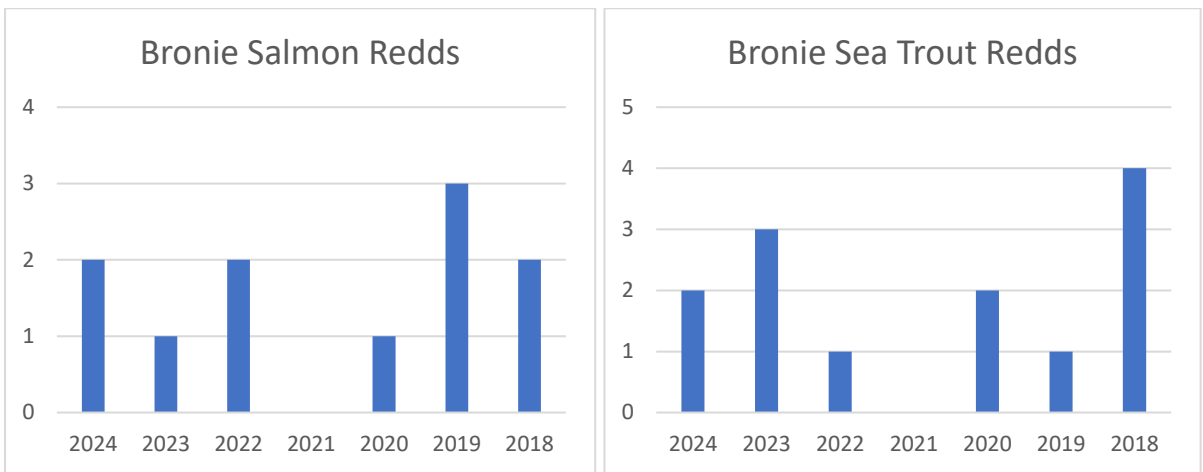
Ebrie

Despite low water levels, the initial survey identified a few paired up salmon already on the gravel. Completed redds were found over the weekly visits in November before a substantial rise in water arrived in early December. Surveys were limited thereafter due to continual coloured water making viewing difficult however no further redds were found. A few areas of suitable spawning habitat remained untouched. A slight increase found for salmon redds this year but poor returns for sea trout.



Bronie

Water levels remained very low over the first few surveys, only a couple of sea trout redds were found until a decent lift in water early in December brought some salmon up through the stretch. The survey carried out on December 16th found a couple of fresh salmon redds on the gravel. Some undercutting of the bankside has occurred alongside the lower tree planted area.



Keithfield

Low water levels prevailed for most of November with only one brown trout redd found over the month. Despite a rise in water in early December no further redds were found across the section. No migratory fish or redds were seen over the completed surveys.

