

## River Ythan SLA Report March/April/ May 2026

### 1. Introduction

The Don DFSB have been contracted to carry out fisheries protection, predator surveys, spawning surveys and habitat restoration activities across the river Ythan catchment throughout 2026/27 by the Ythan DSFB under a Service Level Agreement. Each activity is allocated a set number of man-days/patrols to accommodate the requirements of the annually agreed SLA. Activities are defined following consultation with the Ythan DSFB.

Any incidents relating to pollution and policing will be recorded and shared with the Clerk. Information from predator surveys will be collated and shared with the Clerk directly following the survey period. Information on spawning surveys will be collated and reported in a summary report following the end of the spawning period. Any seals reported above Logie Buchan Bridge will be reported to the Clerk as soon as possible.

All activities will be covered by the Don DSFB health and safety policies, as stated in the service level agreement.

### 2. Reporting

A log of all patrols and activities will be sent to the Clerk monthly.

SLA Activities/ Piscivorous Bird Count/March, April

**Table 1. Spring Piscivorous Bird Surveys 2026.**

Table 1. Spring Piscivorous Bird Surveys 2026	Number of Goosanders	Number of Cormorants	Number of Mergansers
River Ythan bird count, 31 <sup>st</sup> of March	16	3	0
River Ythan Bird Count, 23 <sup>th</sup> of April.	20	5	0
River Ythan Bird Count, 28 <sup>th</sup> of May	21	3	

#### Location of Birds

On the 31st of March, 16 Goosanders were identified along with 3 Cormorants. The survey area extends from Blairfowl to Newburgh estuary. Locations where birds were seen are as follows: 6 Goosanders were identified between Blairfowl and Methlick Bridge and 1 Cormorant. 7 Goosanders were counted from Methlick Bridge down to Ythan Bank Bridge. From this point downstream to the Meadows, 1 male Goosander was counted. From the Meadows down to Newburgh Estuary, 2 Goosanders and 2 Cormorants were surveyed.

On the 24<sup>th</sup> of April survey, 18 Goosanders and 3 Cormorants were counted. There were 8 Goosanders identified, between Blairfowl and Methlick Bridge. Methlick Bridge to Ythanbank Bridge, only 1 pair of Goosanders was noted. Ythan Bank down to the Meadows, 5 Goosanders were accounted for. Meadows down to Newburgh estuary, 3 goosanders along with 2 Cormorants were seen.

The last spring bird count was on the 28<sup>th</sup> of May, 21 Goosanders and 3 Cormorants were counted. 4 Goosanders were noted between Blairfowl and Methlick Bridge. On the Ardlethan beat 5 Goosanders were surveyed. On the Logie beat 6 Goosanders were seen on a sand bank. At Newburgh Estuary 6 Goosanders along with 3 Cormorants were identified.

**Table 2. SLA Activities/ Willow Bank Repair/Glen of Ebrie/ Length of Repair-16 meters/  
Grid Reference: NJ 93585 40194**

River/Tributary. Ebrie Burn, Date.	Activity: Willow Bank Repair	Time	Comments
16/03/2026	Willow harvest site	1 staff member-8am to 4.30pm = 1 day.	48 live willow posts cut and pointed and delivered to original site.
23/03/2026	Willow harvest site	1 staff member-8am to 4.30pm = 1 day.	Live willow canes cut into 20 bundles and tied ready for transport to site.
24/03/2026	Load and deliver materials to Ebrie site	1 staff member-8am to 12.30pm= 0.5 Hours.	Load canes bundles, pick up posts from original site and deliver to new site on the Ebrie burn. Unload and stalk materials for following day.
25/03/2026	Posting	1 staff member-9am to 5.30pm = 1 day.	19 posts put into stream bed.
26/03/2026	Posting complete	1 staff member-9am to 5.30pm = 1 day	Posting completed
27/03/2026	Weaving	1 staff member 8.30am to 4.30pm = 1day	Willow weaving around post structure
30/03/2026	Weaving	1 staff member-8am to 4.30pm = 1 day	Willow weaving completed today.
01/04/2026	Back Filling	1 staff member-8am to 4.30pm = 1 day.	Back filling with woody brush material to create filter for trapping sediment.
03/04/2026	Back Filling	1 staff member-9am to 5.30pm = 1 day.	Continued back filling with woody brush. Ebrie bank repair now completed.

### **Willow Bank Repair**

On the habitat improvement plan 2026, it was my intention to carryout a bank repair on a section of the Fordoun Burn. Unfortunately, this was not possible due to hitting bed rock. Many attempts were made to break through the bed rock by using a pinch bar and trying to punch a hole through the bed rock, all attempts failed. An alternative site was found, this time on the Ebrie burn, severe flooding over the winder period had caused significant erosion. 3ft of embankment was lost along a length of 16 meters, leaving bare earth and large silt deposits entering the stream. Below the erosion site has excellent spawning gravel that has suffered with sediment deposits on the gravel surface. I

approached the proprietor and gained permission to carry out a repair. Please find pictures below of, before, during and after completion of the willow bank repair.

Fig 1, Before repair, very badly eroded bank. 3ft of embankment gone.



Fig 2, During repair. Live willow post in and weaving of live canes has commenced.



Fig 3, Willow bank repair completed.



**Table 3. SLA Activities/ checking for possible obstacles to Smolt migration.**

Date	Tributary /River Section Surveyed	Time	Notes
12/03/2026	Schivas Bridge	1 staff member- 11am to 1pm = 2 hours.	Assess accumulation of timber limbs, reported in by Haddo Angling Club, blocking $\frac{3}{4}$ of the main river channel.
31/03/2026	Shivas Bridge	X 3 staff members 12.30pm to 2.30pm = 6 hours	Removed 3 large timber limbs, using winch and cut into manageable sections.
15/05/2026	Fordoun burn at confluence with the River Ythan.	1 staff member 9am to 4.30pm = 1 day	Remove fallen limb spanning the length of the Fordoun burn. Would have caused possible issues during low flow periods, for fish traveling upstream. Large, corrugated sheeting along with tree branches were removed from the fish passes under the Fordoun burn Bridge at Fyvie on the same date. I also checked areas from last year where obstructions were found on the Fordoun burn, no issues were found. Fyvie Estate water was also surveyed, where we have had previous issues, no issues found on this occasion.

### Seals

I have not had any reports of marauding seal sightings in river this year.

### Pollution

Periodic checks have been made, when I have been in the vicinity of the Ramornie beat, this is to check the outflow pipe from the Scottish water pumping station. At this time no pollution has been found. Continued checks will be made throughout the year.

I have not had any reports of pollution within the river catchment during March, April, May.

*Jim Kerr*

Senior Fishers Officer  
Acting on behalf of the Ythan DSFB



*Our River In Harmony*

