



The River South Esk
Catchment Partnership

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Newsletter

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River South Esk Catchment "Balsam Bashing" 26 July 2014

Volunteers Get Tough on Invasive Aliens!

A coordinated day of balsam bashing took place on Saturday 26th July in the River South Esk catchment. The aim of the day was to tackle areas of balsam infestation and raise awareness of this ongoing problem. Local SWT Volunteers tackled the invasive Himalayan Balsam on the banks of the river South Esk at Montrose Basin, and Finavon Castle and Southesk Estates had a bash at controlling the balsam in their grounds.

The images below from the Bridge of Dun show just how successful a concentrated effort can be and how quickly sites can be recolonised by native species. For more information contact Anna Chesheir the SWT Ranger at Montrose Basin LNR at achesheir@swt.org.uk



One year after treatment



Native plant colonisation two years after treatment



Rural Skills Investment

New Funding for Land management Training in Cairngorms National Park

The Cairngorms National Park Authority (CNPA) is offering land based workers funding towards training courses in practical rural skills through this year's Land Management Training Project.

A grant of 30 per cent is being made available for short courses that will help raise standards in land management activities, promote best practice and make rural businesses more versatile and successful.



Allt Lorgy © CNPA

Any employees working on estates, farms, rivers and fisheries or other land management businesses within the Cairngorms National Park – or anyone aspiring to work in any of these rural enterprises – can apply to the scheme. The types of training courses that are eligible for funding include off road vehicle driving, chainsaw operation, deer stalking, habitat monitoring and pesticide use as well as first aid.

Eleanor Mackintosh, CNPA Board Member commented: "Our previous land based business training projects have proved extremely popular and have certainly helped rural workers to improve or acquire new skills. This in turn helps rural land based businesses become more efficient, competitive and adaptable for the future."

Land-based industries are worth around £70 million annually to the Park economy – which includes the £40 million contribution made by the food and agriculture sectors – and makes a living for over 900 people. In addition, forestry contributes £10 million to the National Park's economy each year.

Land Management Officer at the CNPA, Penny Lawson added: "We're delighted to be able to announce that as part of our support for land managers in the Cairngorms National Park for 2014-15, we can offer a grant subsidy of 30 per cent towards training courses. Furthermore, we will be running a series of free courses and events throughout the year on a range of topics of broad interest to land managers and workers."

To find out more or apply for training support, download an application pack from the CNPA website at <http:// Cairngorms.co.uk/learn/training/land-management-training-project/> or contact Penny Lawson on tel: 01479 870519 or email: pennylawson@ Cairngorms.co.uk.

Glen Clova Wader Survey

Glen Clova remains an important site for breeding waders

The floodplain of the River South Esk between Braedownie and Gella Bridge in Glen Clova is considered to be one of the most important areas for breeding waders in Tayside. A comprehensive survey of the site in 1996 estimated there to be 390 pairs of breeding waders (lapwing, oystercatcher, redshank, snipe and curlew) in this area. A repeat of this survey was carried out in 2012 as part of a wider Tayside Wader Survey. The results of this survey indicate the number of pairs of breeding waders in Glen Clova have dropped by approximately 40% to 230 pairs. This follows the national trend in populations of breeding waders recorded in many areas of the country, largely as a result of changes in farming practices, increased drainage and afforestation reducing the availability of suitable breeding habitat.

Despite declines, Glen Clova remains an important site for breeding waders and in particular lapwing in comparison to other areas surveyed across Tayside. From 65 sites surveyed, lapwing abundance reduced by 66% and breeding lapwing have gone from 41% of sites. RSPB consider the protection of the remaining high quality breeding habitat found in Glen Clova a conservation priority. A survey of the breeding waders and habitat in Glen Clova was repeated in 2014 and the information collected will assist with conservation work on the ground, including providing advice to land managers on habitat management and the targeting of agri-environment schemes.

More information can be found at www.rspb.org.uk/taysidewaders



Lapwing © Andy Hay

Brechin Flood Prevention Scheme

Scheme work well under way



Main Scheme

The main contract for the construction works were put out to tender by Angus Council at the start of August 2014, with 6 Contractors tendering for the work. Angus Council is hoping to award the contract and appoint a contractor by the end of October 2014, with work commencing on site later this year. Angus Council anticipate having a "soft-start" in December 2014, with the contractor coming to site to set up compounds and mobilise plant in preparation for the main construction work commencing at the start of January 2015 until March 2016.

CAR Licence

A CAR Licence application is required for the proposed works and Angus Council anticipate receiving the CAR Licence in December 2014.

Enabling Works

At present, utility diversion / upgrade works are taking place in River Street, requiring Road Closure which is anticipated to end by late October. Witchden Road and River Street will be closed from January 2015 to March 2016 to allow the Flood Scheme to be built. To maintain access to Middleton Park and Nursery Lane, Angus Council are proposing to re-open the Nursery Lane link road from Montrose Street; this work will take place in November. Additionally, enabling works will be take place within East Mill Road Caravan Park, requiring a number of the Park Homes to be relocated within Caravan Park Site.

For more information contact Design Engineer Richard Meeson at meesonr@angus.gov.uk

Drain care guide

The Dee Catchment Partnership has created the Drain Care Guide to give useful advice to householders on how they can improve water quality by putting only the correct things down household drains.

The Drain Care Guide lists simple steps to avoid blocked drains, prevent harm to water supplies and the environment and save you money, such as

- Don't dispose of grease, cooking or frier oil down any drain - instead wipe out pans, pour fat into a container and put it in a bin.
- Bag and bin cotton buds, cotton wool, plasters, wipes and nappies.

Check out the Drain Care Guide for more useful advice.

For your free copies of the Drain Care Guides e-mail info@theriverdee.org or visit www.theriverdee.org.

Scottish wildcat conservation: what happens next?

The Scottish wildcat – in trouble, Fiona Strachan SNH

The Scottish wildcat is our last remaining feline species. It used to be found throughout Scotland but is now restricted to areas north of the Highland Boundary fault. Experts have agreed that it is in grave danger and that action must be taken now before we lose it forever.

Scottish wildcats look superficially like domestic tabby cats, but there are some important characteristics that can be used to tell them apart (see Diagram 1).

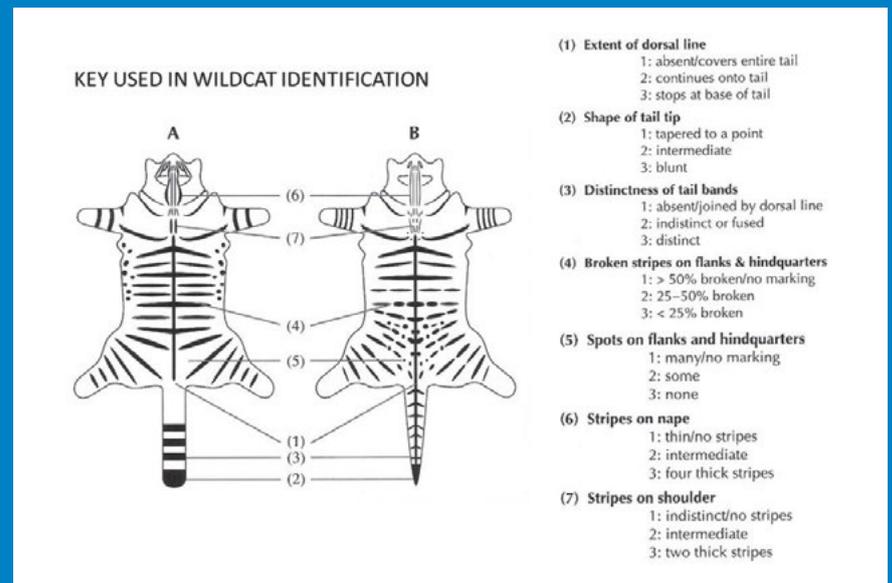


Diagram 1 Seven key characteristics which can be used to distinguish Scottish wildcats (left) from domestic tabby cats (right)(adapted from Kitchener et. al 2005).

Taking Action

The Scottish Wildcat Conservation Action Plan was launched last year by a partnership dedicated to halting the decline of the Scottish wildcat. It sets out conservation measures which will address the threats to wildcat populations. Reducing the number of feral cats is one of the most urgent tasks as hybridisation with feral cats is one of the main threats facing wildcats today. Working in wildcat priority areas, we plan to trap feral cats so that they can be neutered and vaccinated before being released again where they were caught. This is known as trap-neuter-return (TNR) and will help to reduce the chances of wildcats mating with feral cats, and of feral cat populations increasing further. Vaccinating feral cats will also reduce the chances of diseases spreading from feral cats to wildcats. We also need to make sure that the "tap is turned off" and no more domestic cats become feral, so at the same time we'll be working with people in the priority areas to increase awareness and understanding of the impact that feral and domestic cats can have on wildcats, and how cat owners can help by ensuring their cats are neutered and vaccinated. We'll also be working directly with gamekeepers, land managers and landowners to promote 'wildcat friendly' methods of predator control which will reduce the chances of wildcats being killed accidentally.

We'll be setting up wildcat monitoring programmes in the wildcat priority areas using camera traps to capture images of wildcats (and feral cats). This will improve our knowledge of their distribution and abundance and also help us to assess the impact of our conservation actions. Both the monitoring and TNR programmes will require a lot of help from volunteers so there will be plenty of opportunities for people to get involved directly.

Scottish wildcats in Angus

The Angus Glens has been chosen as one of our wildcat priority areas. Please feel free to contact me if you would like to find out more about our plans, or are interested in volunteering for the project.

Fiona Strachan, Scottish Wildcat Conservation Project Development Officer, Scottish Natural Heritage

fiona.strachan@snh.gov.uk

One of the wildcats captured on camera in Angus during the priority area surveys



Small Streams: The Need for Action

Connecting people with their environment

A project is underway in Northern Ireland and Scotland to engage and educate young people & their communities in river catchment management, with a focus on very small streams (First Order Streams), through community projects in citizen science. Tony Andrews the Director of the Atlantic Salmon Trust (AST) outlines the project below.

“Small streams make up some 70% of total river length in England and Wales. They are essential to the health of our landscape, connecting aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems and home to a host of important species of plants and animals: many bird and bat species feed on emerging flies, many fish species live in our small streams and some invertebrate species are found only in our headwater small streams. They are reservoirs of biodiversity for river catchments.

Sensitive management of small streams is also likely to play a vital role in controlling the loss of soils from agricultural land and in regulating flood water flows through a catchment. However, because of their size, small streams are particularly vulnerable, both to general pressures and to specific problems. This vulnerability is compounded by a widespread lack of knowledge of the role and importance of small streams among farmers, land and river managers

The relatively new emphasis on river catchment planning, inspired perhaps by the Water Framework Directive, has led us to a point where ecosystem management is the strategy now adopted in managing the terrestrial and freshwater environment. That development in our thinking should be welcomed, while raising awareness of where there are gaps in our efforts and research.

By mobilising local communities, and inviting them to take interest in and actions on behalf of their local water courses, we can take pressure off the overstretched agencies and NGOs. To be effective it is essential that the organisation, training and deployment of local volunteer groups is managed strategically, and that ultimately is the focus of the AST's Small Streams Project.

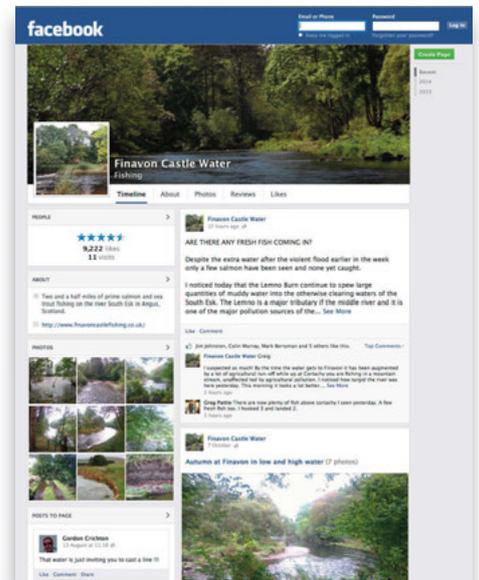
The manual for volunteer 'citizen science' groups is now in draft and will be formally introduced at the forthcoming IFM conference in Autumn 2014”.

Tony Andrews
Atlantic Salmon Trust
2014

For further information visit
<http://www.atlanticsalmontrust.org/>

Finavon Castle Water launch New Facebook Page

Check out the 2014 Photo collection at Finavon Castle Water. “Over the spring, summer and early autumn I took these photos to remind myself and FCW friends of the beauty of the South Esk, not to mention its occasional productivity! TA”



The Allt Lorgy



Morphology and Habitat Improvement in Speyside

The Allt Lorgy, is a moderately high energy tributary of the River Dulnain in the Spey catchment. In September 2012 work was undertaken to restore the morphology and habitats of the burn and reconnect it to its adjoining floodplain by removing significant artificial constraints that had canalised the watercourse. The intention was that by kick starting the process, the watercourse would over time and through natural events, do its own work to re-establish its natural equilibrium, both in stream and with its floodplain.

Five artificial embankments were lowered by removing over 900m3 of material. In stream boulders were removed and replaced with large wood structures. Additional wood structures were introduced in key locations and some of the extracted gravel was graded and stockpiled to be used for sediment reintroduction. Nearly 5000 native species trees donated by the Woodland Trust were planted by volunteers including the local primary school.

In time this should improve both the in water and surrounding habitat and create a more diverse ecological environment. It should also enable the burn and its floodplain to contribute better to upland water flow management in times of prolonged rainfall or high spate.

The works were designed by CBec Engineering Ltd and funded by SNH, SEPA, The Spey District Fishery Board and CNPA and were managed by the Spey Catchment Initiative.

Two years on and significant changes have taken place at the site. In stream features such as pools and riffles have been created and a more variable substrate now exists. Following several spates and a significant flood event, the processes of erosion and deposition are now well underway.

More information on this and other projects instigated by the Spey Catchment Initiative can be obtained by contacting the Project Officer, Liz Henderson at l.henderson@speyfisheryboard.com



New Tayside Biodiversity Partnership Action Plan

Water, wetlands & marine and coasts input wanted

The new 10 year Local Biodiversity Action Plan need input from you as to what actions you deem most important in our aquatic environment over the next 10 years. The plan aims to formulate a wide range of new collaborative short and long terms visions and actions that contribute to enhancing and protecting Tayside's aquatic environments and species. Do you have ongoing projects that may be the inspiration for new actions? Or new actions you would like to have considered? Please contact info@theriversouthesk.org with any suggestions.



South Esk Partnership

New Partnership twitter account

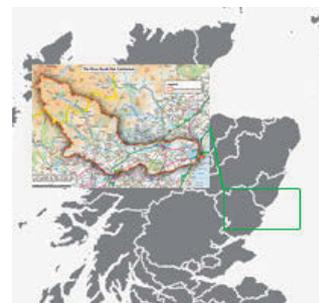
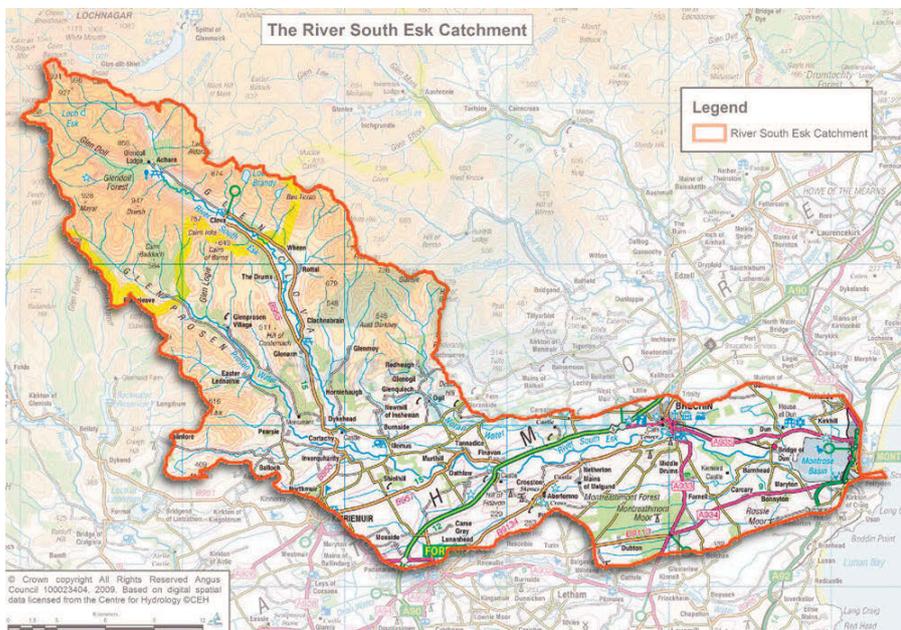
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About The River South Esk Catchment Partnership

To address the many issues which affect the South Esk catchment, representatives of some organisations have been meeting regularly since 2004 with the development of an integrated Catchment Management Plan at the forefront of their aims. This plan was published in 2009 after an intensive two year consultation phase which captured people's views on what they considered the key environmental, social and economic issues to be within the catchment. These views were used to form the basis of the plan's strategic aims, catchment objectives and actions.

The River South Esk Catchment Partnership would like to thank all its funders and supporters. Without them it would be impossible to carry out the work we are undertaking. For more information on the partners please visit www.theriversouthesk.org/partners/



For any comments or to join our mailing list, please contact:

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