

UPPER SHIN NEWS



2004



2005

The 2004 season can only be described as a game of two halves! The later weeks of May were looking very promising. The weather was warm, fish were jumping the falls with regularity and they were being seen in a lot of the Upper Shin,s pools. However, fishing was slow, but the fish that were caught were considerably larger than last year, and overall bigger than we have seen for some time. Maybe more MSW fish are returning to the Shin again. So why did we have to wait until the 8th of June for our first fish?



Mr. John Geddes, (see left) once again, caught the first salmon of the season, using a tadpole in Eleanors, this fish was a lovely 12.5 lbs cock.

The second, an hour and half later, was in Meadow on the same fly, identical in size but a hen. John sadly killed both these fish, contrary to the very clear instructions in the front of

the fishing record books. He then had to wait four days before he caught another, a 12 lb hen fish in Meadow. John did however return this one.

After this encouraging start I was expecting things to pick up steadily. One fish of note was caught by Julian Pardow in Meadow on the 13th July on a Sunray, returned, and estimated as 16 to 20 lbs.

By the middle of July the grilse had arrived in reasonable numbers and catches were encouraging. A plea from the record keeper. Could you all please manage to fill in the fishing book as instructed. One party managed not to record the weight of two fish, and another party managed not to record the sex of any of their fish!

A.J. Pitt-Pitts first salmon on a fly was caught in Field (13lbs). James Bouskell had a 4lb grilse in Meadow and commented "first for 25 years!" Caroline Trace caught her first salmon in Broad on a GP, and Charlie Martin had a monster estimated at 20/25lbs in Grudie on a Baldrick. Ashley Preston caught a 14lb salmon in Fir 3, and it took him right round the corner to Field (not an easy place to follow a fish). This is one of the areas marked out for Alick to trim back. And finally Julian Pullan had a magnificent cock salmon in the Aquarium (returned), which measured 41", this equates to between 22/27lbs depending which estimate chart you use.

The total for 2004 was 69 Salmon and 199 Grilse, giving a grand total of 268 fish. You returned 61 salmon and 160 Grilse, total 221 returned. This is a fantastic effort and I would like to thank all those who returned fish. This equates to 82% returned, this is the highest ever return rate on the Upper Shin. A fine example to all the Kyle Rivers. There were a lot of notes in the comments column saying "lost 2 more" or words to that effect. If you had landed all these fish we would have had a record year!

The most successful fly yet again was the Sunray Shadow with 104 fish, 2nd a long way behind on 21 was the Collie Dog, 3rd on 15 was the Ali Shrimp, and 4th one behind on 14 was the Willie Gun. 5th= the Baldrick and Black & Yellow on 10.

I would like to take this opportunity to say a big thank you to Alick and Daryll, for all of their sterling work throughout the long summer.

I am constantly told by all the rods how well they were looked after by them. Thank you all for your positive comments about the banks and Estate staff, they are much appreciated. Alick puts in a huge amount of work on the banks during the winter, and I'm sure we all benefited from it.

This winter Alick is going to concentrate on the far bank (station side), mainly on the bottom beat between Grudie and Broad. He is going to continue the improvements to the paths down the Cottage pools, and clear the alders alongside Pandoras Box and Miltons.

Hatchery News

Ian MacMyn our resident biologist reports that the netting was harder this year due to snow melt and fewer fish in the upper reaches of the river. He has caught some very large fish, one cock he thinks is over 30lbs!! This is going to be weighed, measured and scale samples taken for analysis down at Pitlochry. The fish are in good condition and are overall larger than last year.

The smolt tagging experiment looks like it will be going ahead. Nearly all the funding is in place, and it will be facniating to know the smolt survival rates through the dam.



Lucinda Darling.
with a 17lbs from Field



I have decided with my family to commemorate my sister Lucinda Darling by splitting the Field pool into two. The main pool where the Field burn enters will remain the Field pool, whilst the long stretch below the last ripples, all the way down to the crossing place above Lady Herberts, will from now on be known as Cinda's pool. Of all the pools on the Upper Shin these were the two pools I think she liked the most, at least she seemed to catch more fish than most in them.

Cinda's pool being one of the best spawning areas on the Shin will be strictly catch

and release only. (As is the Dam pool).

A small item of interest.

During the last week of the season, Annie suggested to one of the lodge guests to fish all the way down Cinda's. She did so and caught 3 grilse. Her husband on hearing of his wife's daring exploits, bagged the pool for himself the next morning and promptly repeated the feat. The fishing and wading are relatively easy, as long as you take your time. Keep fairly close to the large Alders, and either roll or spay cast your way down. Try to land your fly as close to the far bank as possible. All these grilse were caught on the skated Sunray.

Lairg Angling Club Boats.

The Estate has an arrangement with the Lairg Angling Club, whereby tenants can use their boats free of charge on Loch Shin. This agreement does not include engines or petrol, and due to a bit of a misunderstanding these were not charged for at the time. I had to stump up the cash for all the engines. Next year if you take out a boat to do some trout fishing, either row for free, or pay for a very well maintained engine and fuel.

Talking of trout. April and May on the Shin are fantastic. No midges, great trout fishing on the whole river for free when you stay in Reid's or Twinners.

Fishing Lessons on the Upper Shin.

If there is enough interested, I will be running a course during the first or second weeks of June 2005. If you, or anyone you know might be interested in improving their fishing techniques, please contact me as soon as possible. Unlock the secrets of the Upper Shin! Where do the fish lie? How should the Sunray be fished? How do you half spey cast? These and much more will be revealed. In the evenings enjoy gourmet food and wine. There will be plenty of time for sight-seeing, golf, and walks for non-fishing spouses. Prices have yet to be decided and will depend on the uptake.



Adelaide Greenwood (assisted by Snitch) with a lovely hen 12 to 14lbs in Lady Herberts, caught on a weekend exeat from Woldingham School.

I had great success this year when fishing the Sunray, by trailing a very small single hook about 3cm behind the main single hook. I caught 4 fish using this method. The trailing hook is just covered by the tail of the fly, so when a fish takes short, it might connect with the trailing hook.



One of the Upper Shin's regular tenants celebrated his 50th birthday this year. The lodge was full to overflowing and they often managed to seat 19 round the dining room table. One afternoon they took part in a treasure hunt around the local area, going as far as Bonar Bridge and Rosehall. All competitors, I am told, were wearing coloured hats, and had to ask the people in the village all sorts of questions to solve the devious clues set by Humphry Walwyn. From what I hear the villagers may take some time to recover. Their total for 8 rods was 41 fish caught and only 2 kept! They also had 30 fish on the lower river.



The 'Pink' winning team unwrap their treasure - from left: Angela Shaw, Louisa Hawker, Philip Bradley and Sam Smith

It is with great sadness that as I was going to print, my mother-in-law, Diddy Denny died on the 2nd December, aged 88. She fished the Shin from the time my parents bought the Lairg Estate in 1971. She was the Queen of Meadow and Eleanors, and caught a huge number of fish during her lifetime. Despite having mobility problems she always made it to the river, even if meant being slid under a fence on an old fertilizer bag.

Diddy Denny
with David Allison.



Wishing you all a very happy Christmas and prosperous New Year.

Sam. Smith