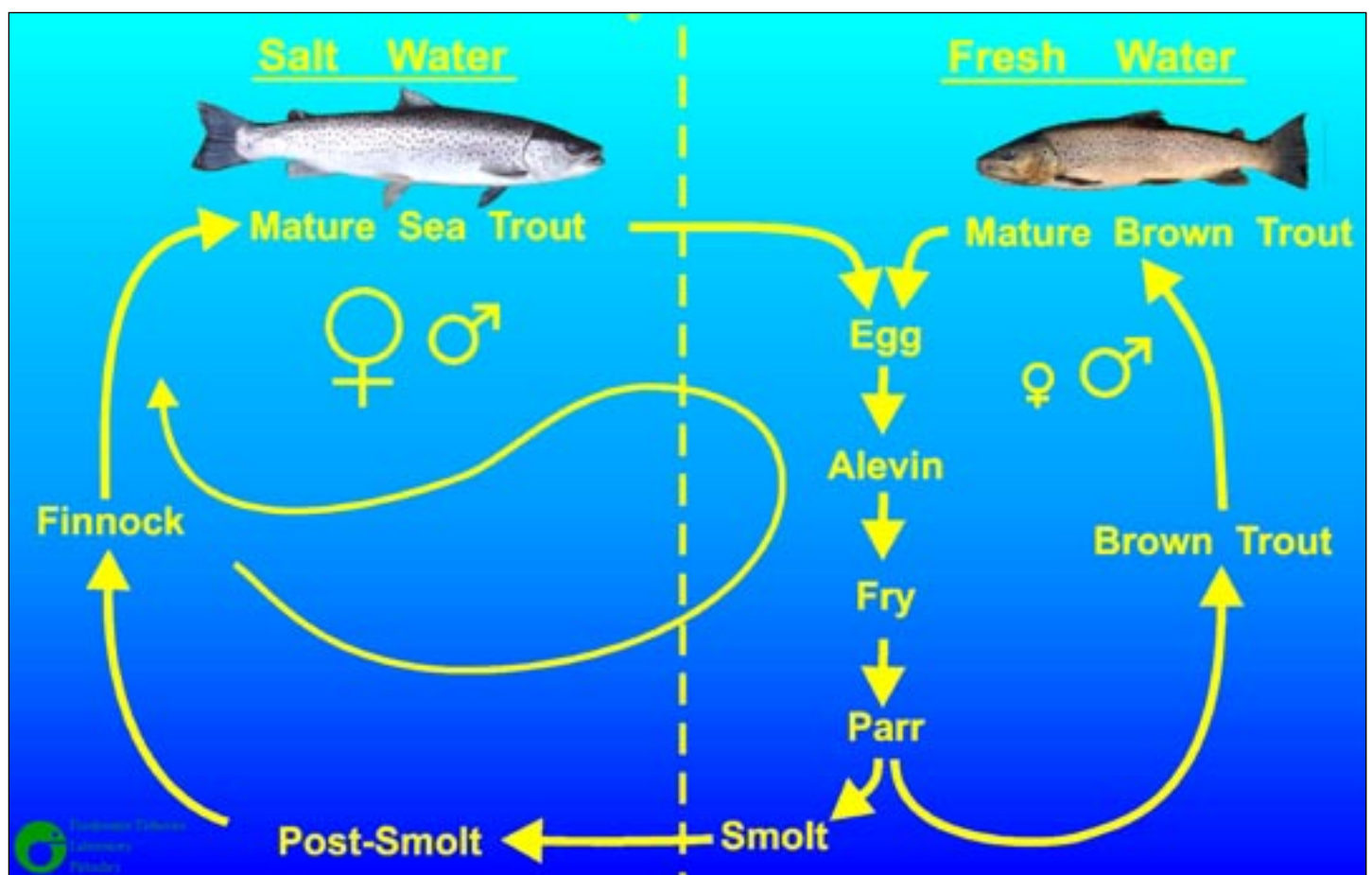


What is a Spey sea trout?

Under Scottish fisheries legislation sea trout have the same legal status as salmon, and District Salmon Fishery Boards are responsible for their protection and improvement. However, since salmon legislation was first formulated in the 1860s our understanding of sea trout has increased, and it is now well-established that sea trout are simply individuals of a river's brown trout stock which run to sea. In general, sea trout are females and most resident brown trout are males, partly because females prefer the rich feeding in the sea to produce eggs. In the autumn, sea trout breed with brown trout in fresh water (see diagram below).

Therefore to manage sea trout effectively, it is important to also understand and protect brown trout in a river. Trout in the River Spey are poorly understood and sometimes regarded as vermin. However, catch statistics show that the Spey sea trout rod fishery is one of the largest in the UK, with a 10 year average annual catch of 4,590. By comparison only the Rivers Tywi and Teifi in Wales catch more fish. Approximately 60% of Spey sea trout are caught by angling associations, and are important for their income. Consequently the Spey Fishery Board (SFB) has started to focus on sea trout and brown trout management in 2006, and the Spey Research Trust (SRT) has begun a research programme for these important fish (see overleaf).



SPEY FISHERY BOARD RESEARCH OFFICE

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Sea trout and brown trout work on the Spey in 2006



1. Sea Trout Conservation Policy:

To protect sea trout, the SFB introduced this policy in 2005 to encourage the release of rod-caught sea trout.



2. Catch recording of brown trout:

Starting in 2006, fisheries and beats are asked to record all sea trout AND brown trout caught, and to submit these records with their SFB catch returns.



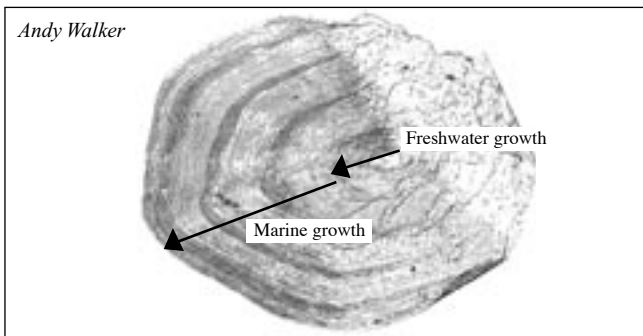
3. Brown trout diet:

Ghillies and anglers are asked to keep the stomachs of any brown trout killed to allow an assessment of their diet. Anyone with stomach samples should contact the SFB Research Office.



4. Tagging:

Sea trout and brown trout are being floy-tagged and released to understand more about their capture rates by anglers, and their movements. Volunteer taggers should contact the SFB Research Office.



5. Scale reading:

Scale samples from sea trout and brown trout are being collected to understand more about their growth rates, and factors which may affect this, particularly in the Moray Firth.



6. Habitat improvement:

Juvenile surveys on the Spey show that trout prefer smaller burns as spawning areas. Habitat surveys are identifying degraded areas and man-made obstacles on these burns, and restoration schemes are underway in many areas.



7. Smolt output:

Using its Rotary Screw Trap in the mainstem at Brae Water, the SRT is estimating sea trout smolt output from the Spey.



8. Stocking:

The SFB has been collecting and stocking up to 150,000 native Spey sea trout eggs per year and seeding fry into areas above impassable man-made obstructions.