

Alien Fish Species Established in the Spey.

Growing worries regarding the discard of live bait after angling and reports of an enthusiastic local angler releasing alien species into Speyside lochs prompted the Spey Research Trust to undertake a survey of non-native fish populations within the Spey catchment during 2004. The project was funded by Leader+, Scottish Natural Heritage, and the Cairngorms National Park. Similar work is also underway on Deeside.

A netting survey carried out in Lochs Insh, Morlich, Alvie and Beag indicated that roach and rudd were present in Loch Beag. Further enquires revealed that these fish had been apparently released into Loch Beag to foster a more varied fish population. Tench, carp, bleak, asp and orfe had also been released into various other lochs on Speyside.

A further survey using boat electro-fishing was conducted in June 2005 on Loch Beag, the Nethy Pool on the Spey and the Skating Pond in Grantown. The latter was included due to reports of large gold coloured fish being observed by people who were feeding the ducks!

The fish in the Skating Pond turned out to be a Golden Orfe. Two other large coarse fish species were also captured and a formal identification is underway. A juvenile tench was also caught.

In 2004 an angler reported capturing a roach in the Nethy Pool but the electro-fishing survey results from the pool were inconclusive, with only one small pike captured. However, Loch Beag produced a more interesting result. An initial survey with a Fish Finder indicated the presence of substantial shoals of small fish. Electro-fishing revealed these were juvenile roach and rudd, confirming that these species

were successfully breeding. An impressive female tench at 8lbs was also caught which proved to be 2lb short of the Scottish record. No juvenile tench were captured.

The results are of concern once an alien species has become established it is almost impossible to remove it. Loch Beag flows into the Spey through Loch Alvie so there is a possibility that roach and rudd will find their way into the mainstem. This could lead to competition for food and habitat with native trout, salmon and charr, but the long-term implications for the Spey's Special Area of Conservation are unclear.

What is clear however, is the need for better controls on transfer of fish within Scotland to curb the spread of unwanted species and reduce risks to valuable native populations. The Spey Fishery Board will be addressing this issue with the Cairngorm National Park and others shortly.



*Rockingham Fisheries Team electro-fishing Loch Beag where roach and rudd have established.
(photo: Bob Laughton)*

Spey Research Trust are grateful to Rockingham Fisheries for conducting the survey, and for the additional assistance provided by Cairngorms LBAP Bio-diversity Officer, Stephen Corcoran, Pike Angling Alliance For Scotland, Pike Anglers Club, SFB Bailiffs and staff from Seafield and Alvie Estates.

SPEY FISHERY BOARD RESEARCH OFFICE

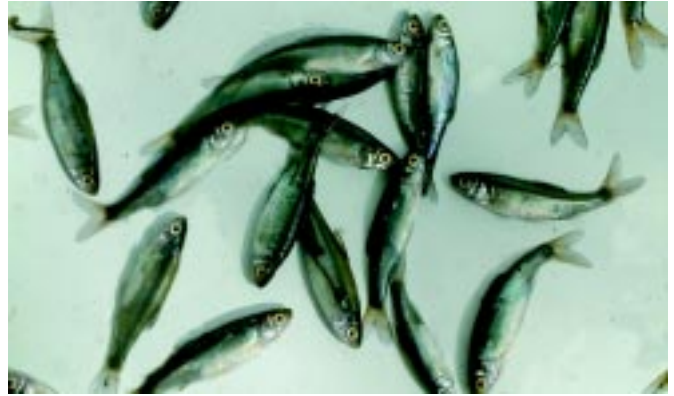
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Alien Species found during 2005

Top Left: Unidentified coarse fish from the Skating Pond, Grantown - Top right: Roach and Rudd fry from Loch Beag

Bottom Left: Golden Orfe also from the Skating Pond, Grantown - - Bottom right: 8lb Tench also from Loch Beag.



Anglers catching any unusual fish species please retain the fish and contact
Spey Research Trust 01340 810841



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