

## The Moray Firth Sea Trout Project

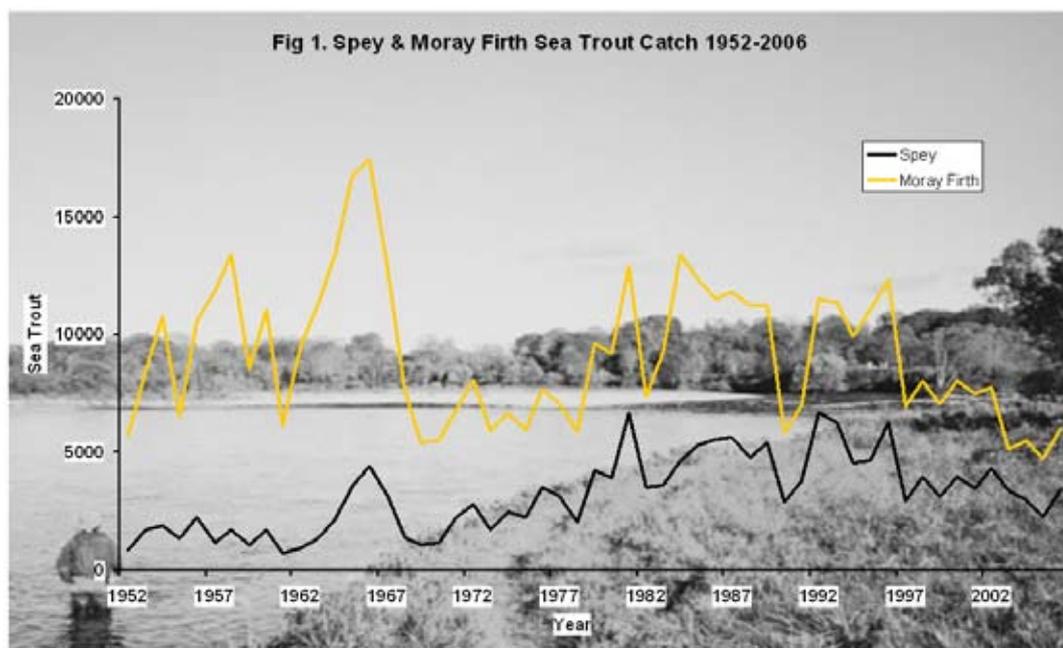
The Moray Firth Sea Trout Project is a three year collaborative project combining the efforts of District Salmon Fisheries Boards, Fisheries Trusts and Angling Associations around the Moray Firth to address the decline in sea trout stocks. The management area extends from the River Deveron in the East right round to the Kyle system in the North and takes in all rivers and coastal streams round the coast. The project is now under way and Marcus Walters has been employed as the full time Project Officer.

The sea trout fishery right across the Moray Firth has shown worrying signs of decline in recent years. Moray Firth sea trout stocks are not only an essential alternative to salmon as a source of income in the local area but also a stock of national importance constituting 28% of total Rod & Line caught sea trout in Scotland in 2006. The River Spey supports significant sea trout stocks and as such is often one of the top 3 sea trout rivers in Scotland. However recent catches have been considerably lower with 2007 falling to 52% below the 10 year (1992-2001) average.



Photo by Ian Neale

The main aim of this collaborative project is to address the need for sea trout management in the area. Sea trout has historically been overshadowed by the famed Scottish salmon. However, often considered to be better both as a game fish, pound for pound, and to eat it is time that the sea trout got the recognition it deserves.



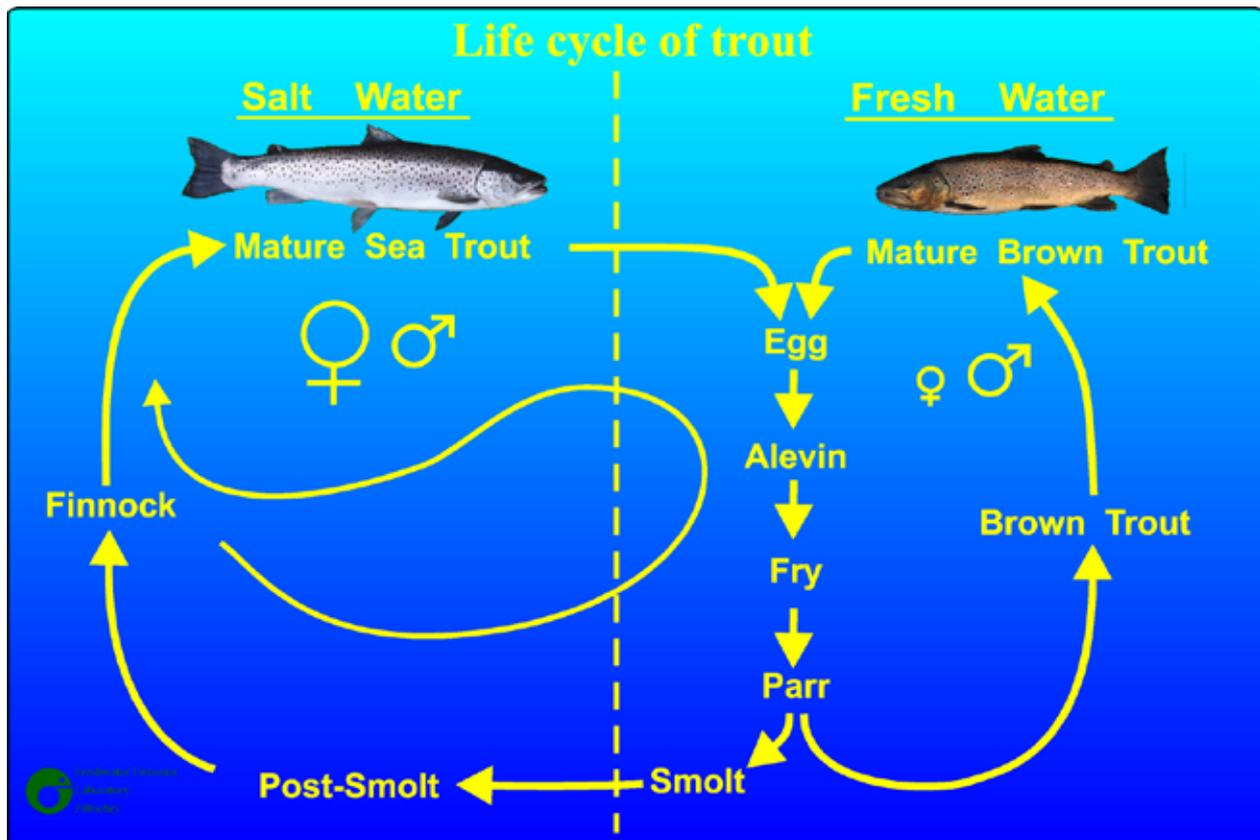
Marcus is willing to attend any Angling Association meetings and would be very pleased to talk to anybody interested in the project. For more information or if you would be interested in filling in a Questionnaire or taking on a Sea Trout Logbook please contact:

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## The Moray Firth Sea Trout Project

Managing sea trout stocks is complicated for a number of reasons: the variable nature of the sea trout life cycle is often specific to each individual river; the need to understand the subtle relationship between sea trout and brown trout; the vast range of threats to which fish are exposed to during their migratory life cycle including water quality and habitat loss while in freshwater and predation, by-catch and potential food shortages while at sea.



### Overview of Moray Firth Sea Trout Project Actions:

- **Questionnaire-** A brief questionnaire is already in circulation to collect information on local knowledge, get opinions on sea trout and identify sea trout catch records.
- **Logbook-** A logbook targeted specifically at sea trout anglers to collect records on fishing effort and specific fish details is currently in print and will be distributed soon.
- **Habitat mapping-** Mapping software will be used to record the quality, extent and limitations of sea trout habitat to help plan surveys as well as catchment specific management plans.
- **Scale Collections-** Scale packets will be issued specifically for sea trout shortly. Scales collected will provide vital information on fish life history and river population behaviour.

### Future Steps:

- **Genetic Sampling-** Analysis of small samples of fin tissue will provide detailed information on genetic variation between rivers, population structure and the origin of individual fish.
- **Tagging-** Tagging individual fish can provide some vital information on fish movements within the river and to a limited extent at sea as well as an estimate of population size.



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