

# A New Spawning Channel on the River Conon, Scotland

*A short review by Martin Janes*

On a recent trip to Scotland I went to the River Conon near Dingwall and was given a tour round the Dunglass Island spawning channel by Simon Cohen (Scottish Natural Heritage) and Simon McKelvey (Conon District Fishery Board).

We initially looked round the site in 2002. The idea of re-excavating the defunct, but mature alder lined channel for the benefit of salmon and trout, as spawning grounds was discussed. The Island itself has a designation for wet alder woodland, but this channel area had been over-planted with conifer, due to be harvested.

The Fishery Board were keen to show their members and others how they benefit the river fishing by spending hard earned resources upstream on improving spawning grounds. Unfortunately this work is a long way from the Island, it being just upstream from the mouth of the Cromarty Firth. The spawning channel was an ideal way of demonstrating this approach within the lower reaches, and restoring the feature.

In 2004 the conifers were felled by the supportive landowner, the channel was re-dug and field stones were placed by hand over the 500m length by Simon McKelvey and his gang. Due to the need to protect the Island from flooding, the surrounding embankment was breached by a penstock upstream and a culvert downstream. The culvert was oversized and half buried in the bed to allow easy passage in for spawning fish.

Although early days, the channel has already seen use, the alder is regenerating and sand martins are nesting in the banks. This project is a great example of how to

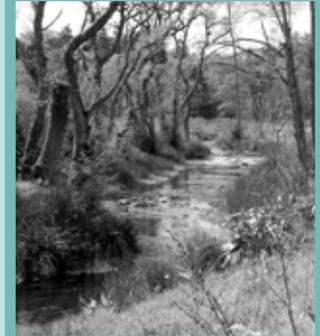
restore a defunct channel, requiring minimal excavation, and it has been recently recognised as such, highly commended by the 2005 SEPA Habitat Enhancement Awards.

For more information contact RRC or Simon Cohen ([simon.cohen@snh.gov.uk](mailto:simon.cohen@snh.gov.uk))

*The old alder lined channel within the conifer plantation*



*The restored channel after a year. The mature alders give it an established feel*



*Complete with original alder islands*