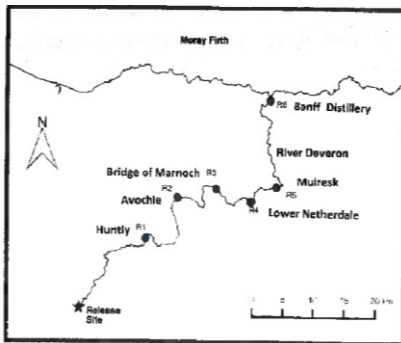


## Deveron Smolt Report 2018

The plan was to tag 100 Smolts caught – mid April to early May – in the conventional Screw Traps which were positioned in the same places as earlier projects. They were close to The Grouse Inn where the Allt Deveron is joined by The Blackwater – in The Cabrach. Both are attractive spots and ideal positions as the water is narrow and the stream can be directed into the Trap. Using the same place each year gives consistency to the project and records can be accurately compared.

A total of **4,924** Smolts were trapped compared to **2,017** in 2017. Of these 100 were selected – according to size and condition. Each Smolt is anaesthetised in clove oil before surgery which is carried out by a Licensed Specialist from The University of Glasgow. A small incision is made in the under belly into which the Tag is inserted. Two different types of Tag were used – ‘Thelma’ 11-13mm 1.9grams, and ‘Vemco’ 7-9mm 0.65grams. With the operation completed the Smolts were returned to the holding tanks on the traps exposing them to fresh, aerated flowing river water. They rested there for a period before being released downstream to avoid being recaptured.



Once released, they are on their own for the journey to the sea. On this long journey they face numerous dangers and this year the weather probably provided the greatest problem, certainly greater than normal, due to the low river level, slow flow and hot direct sunlight giving high water temperatures. There were 6 Receiver Stations which pick up the signals released by the Tags as they pass with the last Station being next to the Distillery just above MacDuff Bridge.

This year losses were heavy with 100 Smolts starting out – but only **9** reaching the sea against **40** in 2016 and **42** in 2017.

This is very disappointing and does not bode well for returning Salmon numbers. The high losses are mirrored in other rivers so is not particular to The Deveron.

For those who kindly Sponsored a Smolt it is disappointing that yours might be lost during its river journey, however it has provided vital information for the River, and without this generous support we would not know of this situation. I witnessed the recovery of the 2 Receivers by the Distillery where they were sitting on the river floor close to the bank.

They were secured to a short mast, set in concrete, in a medium sized tyre. The river was low and it was slack water but the effort to go underwater and to find the tyre, lift the ‘complete’ heavy tyre, and then pass it up the Bank was considerable – not an easy task!

It is thanks to the Sponsors who have this project possible and enabled this important information to be gathered and recorded; but we must also appreciate those who have carried out the work on the ground for weeks regardless of weather – snow, heavy frost, hot and wet days ending underwater recovering the Receiver nearest to the Banff Distillery.

It’s a **“Big Thank You”** to all concerned.

Robert McConnell

September 2018

