



LOCH ACHONACHIE ANGLING CLUB NEWSLETTER 39 - NOVEMBER 2021

SEASON TO BE JOLLY – HOPEFULLY

Hi again folks, and with fingers crossed that the virus doesn't escape the control measures updated by our First Minister today, and we can continue to enjoy safe freedom of movement and safe activities as the festive season beckons. This final newsletter of 2021 includes some more of members' highlights of **2021** including LAAC WINTER LEAGUE COMPETITION; a very fine article by Archie Prentice on Loch Watten; a welcome restart to your Executive Committee meeting face to face rather than virtually; and some possible projects for SEASON 2022.

It was a memorable first season of club membership for young Ewan Rennie (aged 8). On a perfect May Day fishing outing - 1st May 2021 – Ewan was spinning on South No 1 Beat of the Upper Conon during Hydro generation. He hooked and played his first salmon - ably netted by his Dad, Alistair both seen below. They quickly estimated it at between 6 to 8lbs before carefully returning it to resume its journey upstream. Ewan caught this lovely fresh run fish on a Mepps lure just above the weir at the entrance of River Conon into Loch Achonachie.

CONGRATULATIONS EWAN, VERY WELL DONE

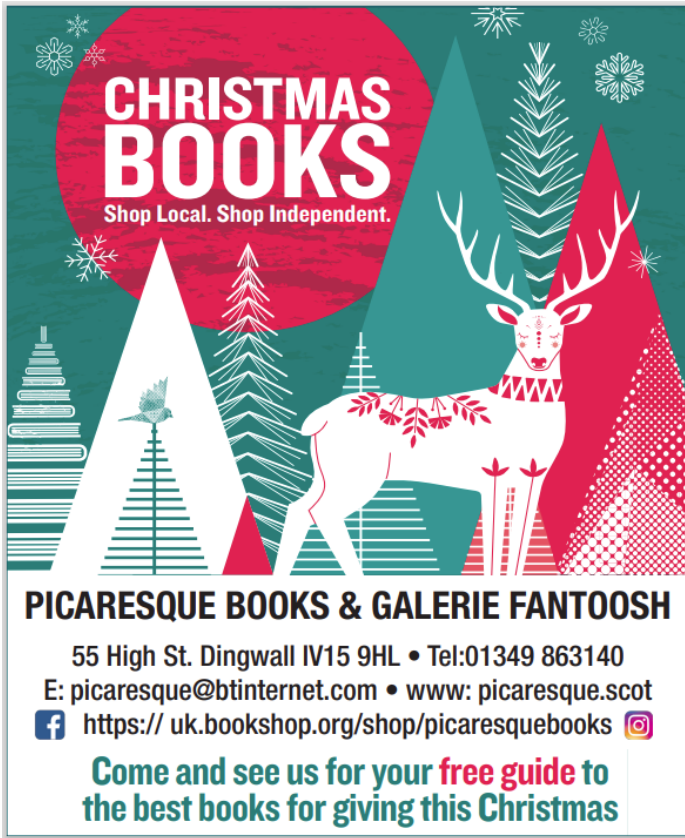


CATCH RETURNS

We had a high volume of catch returns submitted by club members, many more done electronically this season, but a worryingly low number of river day tickets not returned to Contin Filling Station, which is an unacceptable position. The committee will tackle this with members & visitors in the season to come. "Ballpark" figures for trout & salmon this year are set out just below and a detailed report will be available for the club AGM in February

CATCH RETURNS Conon & Blackwater combined :- 38 salmon caught with 31 of them safely returned – largest recorded was 13lbs. Lochs Combined :- 812 trout

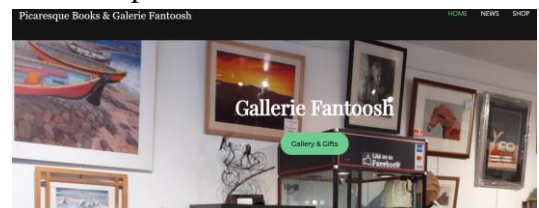
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Come and see us for your free guide to the best books for giving this Christmas

Each Christmas LAAC club members are given a **special 15% festive discount** at two of the stores on Dingwall High Street. Both have an online presence if you want to browse ahead of your visit and you'll receive a very warm welcome when you visit their absolute treasure trove shops.



Just up the street from the Town House you'll find Andy & Debbie Downie ready to help you get just the right gifts for your family at **The Sports & Model Shop** - and with a generous **15% discount to club members** your Christmas spending money will go much further. You might even see Santa.....➔ or is that Andy - never seen together by the way ????



www.sportsandmodelshop.co.uk

SUPPORTING THOSE WHO SUPPORT OUR COMMUNITY

Formerly a stalwart of the Club's Junior Section, **Emily Ross** now has a first class honours Law Degree to her credit and is working now for Ross and Cromarty Citizens Advice Bureau. I asked her for a contribution to our newsletter. Emily writes

“Ross and Cromarty Citizens Advice Bureau are running a new project called **‘Rights Here, Right Now.’** The project aims to share key information about people's rights and responsibilities with those who need it most. This is key to helping people identifying issues they may not even know they have and encouraging them to seek advice.

We are utilising social media and displaying information leaflets in key locations for the public. We are looking to contact community groups for assistance on this and aim to display this information in as many accessible locations as possible.

We are always open to suggestions for community group, cubs and centres who would be willing to assist us with this. If you are aware of any groups who may wish to help please email us at emily.ross@alnesscab.casonline.org.uk

**RIGHTS HERE,
RIGHT NOW!**

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT:
[WWW.CITIZENSADVICE.ORG.UK/
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**BENEFITS
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**citizens
advice
bureau**

Our job is to provide free, impartial, independent and confidential information and advice to anyone who needs it. We are a registered Scottish charity and a registered company, and as a voluntary led organisation the majority of our team are volunteers who give up their spare time to help the people within their community.

We are always looking for new volunteers to help us out in our mission to support citizens in the community. We are looking for people who want to make a difference and can spare 6 hours of their time per week. Full training and support are given to every volunteer who joins our wonderful team.”

Many thanks Emily, and very best wishes to everyone on the team.

WATTEN ADVENTURER – CLUB MEMBER ARCHIE PRENTICE WRITES

Some people keep a log of their fishing trips. Location, date, flies, weather and numbers caught. All are noted to help inform the next visit to a water. I don't keep a log. It would just remind me of how many unsuccessful fishing trips I have. And top of the pile of blank outings with its own



log page would be **Loch Watten**. The log page would probably be titled Loch “#####” Watten. Working in the Caithness area one day in June, I thought why not try an evening and dusk session on the loch. My luck could change. After all, the competitions we fish on that Loch, all finish before tea, and we are packed and gone by the evening.

Who knows what happens later on?

Picked up the boat key late afternoon and was out on the Loch for 17.30. Uncharted territory fishing at this time on Watten and I had the loch to myself. Travelling light, I didn't have an engine. I wanted to move quietly about the loch stalking those Watten leviathans as they rose to feed in the twilight. I rowed for an hour getting to my favourite location. Stopped for a couple of casts now and then – nothing. But this is Watten. Fished my go-to place first and had a couple of swirls as fish came to see my flies, with some snatches at

the bob. Then moved to other spots. After a few hours, all went quiet and flat calm. Not a good sign. If you have never experienced a hatch of Caenis type flies, well, it's something else. My first encounter, many years ago was when I heard the sound of large raindrops hitting the water. Except it wasn't raining. The sound was the noise of fish souking the Caenis flies off the surface.

And so it was on Watten. The place erupted and the Caenis flies were everywhere. Forget proactive fishing. Catching a fish during a Caenis hatch? You will find a pot of gold at the end of the rainbow first. Sit back and enjoy the moment. This is when you see how many fish are in a loch!!

Some cruise about, their backs out the water as they Hoover up the flies from just below the surface. The gap between the dorsal and tail fin gives you an idea of the size. And there were some big fish!

The flies want to land on something, shed their casing and get back into the water. Turns out I was quite a handy landing zone for them. Just as well I had my buff, they were going everywhere, even settling on my sunglass lenses and in my ears.

And then the flies and fish vanished. Silence. Just me, alone, on a flat calm Watten as the sun was setting. I hadn't taken a torch for night fishing so had to get ashore before it got too late

..... as I rowed back, I witnessed spectacular leaps out the water as fish tried to grab some very big sedge flies that were now the attraction. This was my view



You may notice the landing net in the photo. Yes, that was being too confident. And yes, it wasn't used. Loch Watten 1 – Archie 0 - AGAIN !

But I didn't mind. I know why I really don't keep a fishing log. Catching fish is good. Fishing though is about more. It's the experience, the moment, the environment and the memories of those special occasions. No log could record those. On the way back to the mooring. A great evening!

Pictured: Loch Watten

CROMARTY FISHERY BOARD UPDATE NOTES

The proposed "Wolf Trap" to capture smolts for transportation downstream avoiding the impediments of hydro dams will not now go ahead as the size needed and costs involved were too great,. Instead rotary screw traps will continue to be used with trapped smolts being released below Tor Achilty dam. They will be released at different locations and at both day and night time to establish a baseline for survivability. In addition, it was noted that despite very low smolt numbers recorded during electrofishing, highly significant numbers were present in deep pools. This was likely due to high temperatures and low water flow. This data is being presented to Marine Scotland as mitigation for what are most likely erroneously low numbers, otherwise this surprisingly low electrofishing data could have a detrimental effect on establishing accurate conservation categories for the rivers.

The Fishery Board are examining a proposition to enact bye-laws which would enforce legal ban on the use of treble hooks. Figures of salmon numbers recorded by fish counters was down (these should be seen as artificially low numbers because counters are under recording), and work is being commissioned by SSE to make the counters more accurate.

The CFFB fishery manager, Dr Ross Glover is leaving to take over the role of fishery biologist for SSE in place of Dr Alastair Stephen who is retiring. There will be some continuity however, as Dr Stephen is remaining as a Trustee with the Cromarty Firth Fishery Trust. The issue of catching kelts for conservation and transportation below the barriers they face in making their way back to the sea will be debated at the next meeting.

WINTER LEAGUE 2021-22

The Winter League is now well under way and after a fine day at Achagour the Leg 1 League Table showed last year's winner swiftly into pole position. The 2nd leg was shifted from Lagg due to very stormy weather forecast for North West Sutherland at the beginning of November so we headed east instead to Glen of Rothes. A couple of hours of strong winds and a difficult but brief spell of torrential, gale driven rain, but also some benign autumnal brightness too. Twenty competitors and a warm welcome to George Cameron out with the Rainbow Warriors for the first time. Updated league table is shown below and another good day for our Dingwall High Street shop owners David Duguid (Picaresque Books) and Andy Downie (Sports & Model Shop) for biggest fish and heaviest bag. Great day out ! Next leg is on **Saturday 27 November at Lochter** - www.lochter.co.uk/fishery.php contact achonachie.angling@gmail.com for updated Winter League information for competitors.



George Cameron was out with the Rainbow Warriors for the first ever time and on the day was the first competitor with a fish in the net.



Neal Drummond chasing rainbows and as it is Panto season after all we can say – it's behind you Neal !

WINTER LEAGUE TABLE 2021-22 LEGS 1-2								
Name	No Fish	Total Wt	Points	No Fish	Total Wt	Points	Running Total	League position
David Duguid	3	6lb 8oz	2	3	7lb 2oz	3	5	1
Okain Maclennan	3	7lb 3oz	1	3	6lb 3oz	7	8	2
Lewis Ross	3	6lb 6oz	4	3	6lb 3oz	7	11	3
Andy Downie	1	2lb 2oz	11	3	8lbs 12oz	1	12=	4=
Brian Scobie	2	3lb 6oz	10	3	7lb 4oz	2	12=	4=
George Smith	3	5lb 5oz	7	3	6lb 13oz	5	12=	4=
Dave Macgregor	3	5lb 10oz	5	3	6lb 7oz	9	14=	7=
Derek Williamson	3	5lb 3oz	8	3	6lb 6oz	6	14=	7=
Stevie Dowds	3	6lb 7oz	3	3	5lb 10oz	11	14=	7=
Derek Ritchie	3	5lb 9oz	6	3	5lb 8oz	12	18=	10=
Neil Macritchie	1	1lb 6oz	14	3	6lb 14oz	4	18=	10=
Ian MacPhail	0	0	15	3	6lb 1oz	10	25	12
Neal Drummond	1	1lb 14oz	13	3	5lb 7oz	13	26	13
Jonson Swinton	0	0	15	3	4lb 15oz	14	29	14
Alex Marks	0	0	15	2	2lb 2oz	15	30=	15=
Mike MacPherson	2	3lb 15oz	9	N/S		21	30=	15=
Gavin Morton	1	2lbs	12	0		19	31	17
Ally Hunter	3 N/Wd	0	15	1	2lb 5oz	17	32	18
Bodhi Middleton	0	0	15	1	1lb 13oz	18	33	19
George Cameron	N/S	0	20	4	3lb 8oz	16	36	20
Gordon Martin	N/S	0	20	0		19	39	21

Lots of tied positions at this stage showing how tightly competitive the Winter League can be and maybe a fly to try at Lochter this week?

Christmas Tree



100 CLUB

The draw for November was carried out at the recent committee meeting. The results were:-

First prize No 31 Henry Cameron

Second prize No 53 George Patience

Third prize No 56 Gavin Morton

CRACKING CATCHES: SEASON 2021 : LOCH ACHONACHIE SALMON



Another very fine fish caught and returned to our waters this one by Callum Brady on 21 May this year. Though the fish counter at Tor Achilty has not been working we are hopeful that the Category 1 conservation status will be retained since there was clear evidence of many fish running through once the rains came. Some members may recall past schemes to net out kelts from Loch Achonachie in the early part of the season and release them below the Tor Achilty dam in hope that they would head back to sea. Anyone with information please get in touch at achonachie.angling@gmail.com

As has been the way during the pandemic many folk have been doing “clear-outs”, looking through old correspondence, photos and press cuttings. No surprise then that Isobel Hunter sent us this cutting from The Ross-shire showing salmon netting at Loch Fannich in the 1890s.

With hydro schemes being dismantled in some countries and local campaigning to “return the water” to rivers such as the Spey, can the future be brighter for the bountiful return of salmon to Scottish waters?

<https://atlanticsalmontrust.org/our-work/morayfirhtrackingproject/>



Salmon fishing at Loch Fannich, Ross-shire, in the early 1890s. Picture submitted by Colin Campbell, of Ballater.

10 YEARS AGO

● HIGH winds continued to batter the North and North-

20 YEARS AGO

● THE British gas industry stepped into unknown territories when technicians

30 YEARS AGO

● TORY MPs were to be allowed a free vote in the crucial Commons division on

Do you have a picture you would like to share with our readers? Send prints to: Past Times,

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE: FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

Your committee resumed face-to-face meetings this month and adopted an ambitious plan for developing our work and improving our fishings for members and visitors. Inevitably that means we need the involvement of members in the work of the club. We are looking at ways to make that easier, less time-consuming, less onerous, and with wider sharing of responsibilities. The club is looking for greater team work at times suited to members’ ability to contribute. I will be in touch with members directly so as to explain in more detail. Meantime, if you’ve enjoyed this newsletter and found it useful please let us know, and remember **your contributions** in stories and photographs are always very welcome. **Thanks to all our contributors for Newsletter 39.** Our Club website <https://highlandfishing.net/>, Facebook page and Instagram site are all available to stay up to date with LAAC activities and news. Email me at achonachie.angling@gmail.com

Stephen Dowds

LAAC Chairman

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