

November trip to the redds

About SRT 15 members and friends had a fascinating day out when they accompanied Stephen Byrne of IFI and a representative of the Defence Forces on the annual trip to the upper reaches of the river to see how spawning was going.

Stephen Byrne showed members how to recognise the freshly disturbed gravel where the salmon had cut their redds, laid and fertilised the eggs and then covered them to keep them safe until hatched.



Stephen Byrne and members studying the redds.

It was very encouraging both to see several fish actually on the redds and a substantial increase in the numbers of redds particularly on the Defence Forces land where virtually no fish or redds were visible in 2010. While most of the fish we saw appeared to be in the 4 – 7lb category one or two “real” springers had been observed earlier. A cock salmon of nearly 30 lbs was reported being found dead near Baltinglass when stranded after a fast falling flood. We are trying to locate a photo of that fish

It was also interesting to see how bank works carried out in recent years had stabilised the banks and created spawning areas.

As would be expected given the warm, low water conditions, many of the fish had patches of disease after their long stay in the river and trip upstream. This made them easier to see as shown by the fish’s white nose and tail patches in the photo below.



White nosed salmon in the pool

The participants on the trip included anglers, a nets man, individuals involved in wild life protection and a couple of deer hunters and provided a great opportunity for the exchange of views and knowledge. Apart from salmon and trout other wildlife was in evidence with deer tracks and a badger latrine being identified – I guess not many of us knew about the existence of badger latrines before the trip!



A badger latrine

We delayed reporting on the trip until spawning had actually finished and IFI had completed the annual redd count and had finished protection activity on the redds.

We were very pleased that at 1,182 redds [the redd count](#) was the second best return in the past 10 years. This was still significantly behind the 1,801 redds counted in 2007. Despite the encouraging results on juvenile numbers via electro fishing that has enabled the river to be opened in 2012 on a catch and release basis, the impact of poor marine survival, the historic over exploitation of the resource by both netsmen and anglers and habitat degradation means that stocks in the Slaney are still far too low.