

2012 TRIP TO THE REDDS

Saturday the 17th of November saw some 30 plus members and friends on the Slaney River Trust accompany Stephen Byrne of IFI and Ger Fogarty of the defences forces on the now annual visit to the upper reaches of the Slaney to view the progress of the spawning season.

As the photos below show it was a beautiful winter's day and group included a mixture of anglers from all parts of the Slaney plus visitors from both the Nore and Suir along with several naturalists who had never been fishing. It was also great to see a number of young anglers accompanying their dads on the trip.

Stephen Byrne explained the process of spawning showing us how to recognise a fresh redd where the hen fish had dug a deep depression with her tail prior to laying her eggs and recovering the site with a pile of freshly disturbed stones. The sites are clearly visible due to the clean colour of the stones which she had turned over.

The Slaney is a very early spawning river and we were lucky enough to see a number of salmon actually on the redds along with substantial evidence of earlier spawning by other fish. I think everyone on the trip got to see at least one fish and a number of pools had several fish active in them.

Those who hadn't been there before were fascinated by how shallow the water is in some places and realised just how vulnerable the spawning fish can be. This was aptly illustrated by Ger Fogarty in the picture below who is pointing out a hen on the redds with his walking stick. We cannot over emphasise the importance of IFI and local vigilance to protect the fish at this stage of the year.

Interestingly there was virtually no sign of diseased fish this year – perhaps as a result of the very high water levels for most of the season allowing the fish to make their way up stream and then rest with minimum stress levels.

While the final redd count information is not yet available and a number of counts were disrupted by high water the general consensus is that it was a better than average spawning year by recent standards, albeit perhaps a little lower than last year. However it would appear that there was higher than normal level of activity in the main channel away from the spawning tributaries which is encouraging.

Given the lack of a full river counter, the redd counts combined with electrofishing surveys are an important source of information to help the scientists determine the status of the stock in the river.

The pictures on the following pages give an idea of what the trip was like. Any angler or individual interested in salmon who has not been before should make their business to go on a trip like this next winter.

The Slaney River Trust would like to record their thanks to IFI, The Defence Forces and private land owner who facilitated the trip.

Thanks also to photographers Robin Harvey, Paul O'Nolan and Mark Stephens for their work.

Fantastic winter light high up the river



Stephen Byrne explains the spawning process



Is that a fish there?



Attractive spawning gravel –there was a fish just behind the weed



A likely spot



Ger Fogarty points to a fish on the redds



Views of the source of the river



Thanks to photographers Robin Harvey, Paul O' Nolan and Mark Stephens