



Atlantic Salmon Trust



Atlantic Salmon Trust Annual Review New Leadership for AST

A new Chairman, Executive Director and refreshed Board of Directors were appointed at the December 2015 AGM at Fishmongers Hall following the retirement of current post-holders. The announcement of Robbie Douglas-Miller as Chairman, and Sarah Bayley Slater as Executive Director, has been made separately. There is more about the new appointments at the end of this message.

A Declining Species, but Grounds for Optimism?

2015 was the year when worries about salmon survival prompted measures to be taken to find ways of reducing marine mortality. The emphasis on migration mapping and research comes at a time when there are some grounds for optimism over things that can be done to increase numbers of returning adult salmon. Any optimism, however, should be seen in the context of the continuing decline of salmon and grilse, especially in their southern range. The fragility of southern European multi-sea-winter stocks, which includes all UK and Irish rivers, is of concern, as is poor survival of maturing one-sea-winter fish (grilse) and post smolts.

NASCO's International Salmon Summit in 2011 concluded that climate change is the underlying driver of salmon decline. Ocean warming affects cold-water prey species, forcing salmon to find new feeding areas. In fresh water some rivers are now subject to extreme summer low-water and high temperature conditions, in which both adult and juvenile salmon struggle to survive. Some people feel that little can be done in these circumstances; but there is also a growing awareness that human exploitation of salmon, and manmade obstructions in fresh and saltwater environments, can be reduced to increase numbers of returning adult fish. AST's involvement in leading, coordinating or supporting research into risks to survival in coastal waters and open seas are the basis of the Trust's new strategy.

The Scottish Government Takes Action

The elimination of Scottish coastal netting is a huge step forward in protecting returning adult fish, as is the commitment of the angling community to catch and release. Both measures will guarantee that more wild Atlantic salmon spawn successfully. Mixed stocks netting in England, with Northeast drift nets and T&J coastal nets, needs to be addressed too. Now we must protect outgoing smolts as well as the incoming adults .

Salmon Farming: the Next Challenge

The single outstanding issue, which probably damages salmon and sea trout migrations far more than realised to date, is the impact of open-cage salmon farming on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean. AST has been at the forefront of encouraging the industry to develop sustainable production by adopting new technologies and practices, including closed containment. The salmon farming issue will be addressed in a special session at the next international meeting of NASCO in June 2016. Action is long overdue.

What are the Risks to our Post-Smolts?

The fate of smolts in lower rivers, estuaries and coastal waters also needs to be better understood, and remedial actions taken. The same applies to accidental killing of salmon at sea by pelagic trawlers. AST is involved in these areas, with the following examples of work:

Acoustic Tracking -- Salmon and Sea Trout

AST is encouraging post smolt tracking programmes by Salmon Fishery Boards and Trusts. Pilot work on the Dee will be carried out in close co-operation with Marine Scotland. The forthcoming AST & Dee Trust Seminar / Workshop in Aberdeen, in mid-February, should provide an ideal opportunity for those interested in co-operating in a more closely co-ordinated programme of work, to plan how to achieve this..

Innovative use of eDNA - Impacts of the Pelagic Fisheries on Salmon Post-Smolts

Work is progressing well in assessing the efficacy of a new Atlantic salmon eDNA probe, which is being tested as part of an AST funded research project in University College Dublin. The probe has been field tested on samples from the 2015 salmon fishery along the west coast of Ireland and on remnant salmon DNA material collected from the Burrishoole salmon index site. It is planned to use the probe to test water from holds, nets and storage tanks of pelagic boats fishing along the migration pathways of post-smolts in spring 2016.

Follow-up to the Sea Trout Symposium 2015 at Dundalk, Ireland

AST was central in organising this event as a follow-up to the ground-breaking conference in 2004. Following that event we recognised that sea trout were a neglected species. Publication of Sea Trout Facts was followed by a portfolio of research projects designed to build knowledge and improve management of these polymorphic fish. The focus on sea trout led AST's work towards an emphasis on estuaries and the coastal zone which is also crucially important to salmon. The 2015 Dundalk Symposium encouraged us to refresh, fund and initiate a new sea trout research programme and provided useful guidance for future work on sea trout, which will remain an important priority for AST.

Environment Agency Salmon Summit

AST is closely involved with policies emerging from the November 2015 Summit. Both Ken Whelan, AST's Research Director, and Ivor Llewelyn, AST Director for England and Wales, attended the event, as a result of which AST has been invited to lead on key outcomes. It is encouraging that in England, as well as Scotland, governments are now taking the plight of salmon seriously. The EA is committed to producing a five-point plan, and NGOs, including AST, will be fully involved in developing and implementing it. These levels of commitment throughout the UK will be severely tested in 2016 and beyond because, as well as political support, there will also be a requirement for significant resources.

AST's Work Across the Atlantic Ocean

At the 2015 AGM of the Atlantic Salmon Federation in New York I made the following statement at the end of a presentation to ASF directors. *"Salmon use all of the North Atlantic Ocean. To conserve them we must work 'wherever the salmon swims': together in the Big Picture, and in the smallest detail. The salmon knows no boundaries, nor should we".*

New Appointments

There are big changes taking place at the Atlantic Salmon Trust in the New Year with the appointment of a new Chairman, and a new Executive Director and Administrator following the retirements of Melfort Campbell, Tony Andrews and Marjorie Hunter.

At the December AGM, held as always in the sumptuous surroundings of Fishmongers Hall in London, AST's Council of Members elected Robbie Douglas Miller as the new chairman of the board of directors.



Robbie Douglas-Miller

Robbie Douglas-Miller is a director of six Edinburgh-based businesses. He lives and farms in East Lothian and has a lifelong interest in fishing. He is chairman of the Kyle of Sutherland District Fishery Board, where he is a proprietor on the Shin and the Oykel. He is also a keen conservationist, and was previously Chairman of GWCT Scotland and Wildlife Estates Scotland.

Sarah Bayley-Slater



Sarah Bayley Slater was appointed Executive Director designate in December 2015, and is due to take up the post after the retirement of Tony Andrews at the end of March 2016. From the beginning of January until April, Sarah will work on a consultancy basis before taking up the Executive Director post on a full time basis.

Some people say 'fishing gets in your blood'. For Sarah, it wasn't a desire to fish, but a pull to explore and understand what lay beneath the water's surface.

Sarah graduated from the University of Aberdeen/Scottish Agriculture College with an Honours Degree in Aquaculture in 1999. She worked for Inverness College as a researcher on international salmon and coastal zone management projects, and then as a lecturer and course developer of Fisheries Management qualifications and Natural Systems module for the University of the Highlands & Islands (UHI) Environmental Science Degree.

Sarah joined the Secretariat of the Association of West Coast Fisheries Trust (AWCFT) managing its evolution into the Rivers and Fisheries Trusts of Scotland (RAFTS) in 2005. She was RAFTS Director of Operations until 2007 when she moved to Switzerland with her husband.

While in Switzerland Sarah established a luxury chalet agency and studied fundraising, becoming a member of the Institute of Fundraising while maintaining her links with the Scottish Freshwater Fisheries sector. Most recently she worked with the Rivers and Lochs Institute, fundraising for their new Biodiversity Management Applied Genomics (BioMAG) laboratory. Sarah speaks three languages, loves spending time outdoors with her family and is passionate about animals, environmental conservation, skiing and horse riding.

Tony Andrews December 2015

Atlantic Salmon Trust, Suite 3/11, King James VI Business Centre, Friarton Road, Perth PH2 8DG

Tel: 01738 472032 - Email: info@atlanticsalmontrust.org - www.atlanticsalmontrust.org

If you have any comments regarding this e-communication please [email feedback](#)

If you do not want to receive any more newsletters, [this link](#)