Marine Directorate
Topic Sheet
January 2026

Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba

Juvenile Salmonid Monitoring and Assessment: National Electrofishing Programme for Scotland (NEPS)

Figure 1-4: Examples of electrofishing.

Background

Electrofishing (where fish are temporarily stunned and captured) is a widely applied sampling method for monitoring numbers of salmon and trout in freshwater.

When combined with an appropriate survey design and modelling, these data can provide assessments of abundance, status and trends, and identify pressures acting on populations. This can inform management action and policy development across spatial scales.

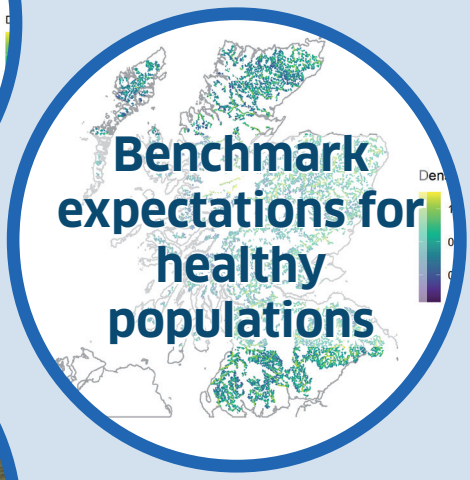
In recognition of the fragmented data collection landscape, the National Electrofishing Programme for Scotland (NEPS) was established in 2018.

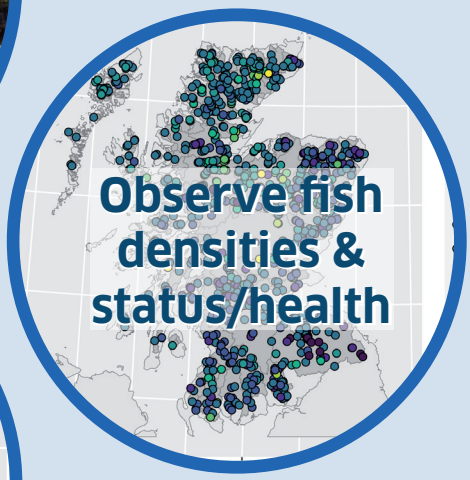
NEPS provides a scientifically robust, catch independent, sampling, data storage and analytical framework for the collection of data on the status of freshwater fish. It can support numerous policy, management and reporting needs from a single endeavour, consistent with the ethos of “collect once, use many times”.

Marine Directorate (MD) undertakes NEPS survey design and overall project management. National data collection was undertaken in 2018, 2019, 2021 and 2023 as a collaboration between the MD and the wild fisheries sector. Funding was provided by MD, with additional support from Crown Estate Scotland (2021, 2023), SEPA (2018) and Nature Scot (2018). Reporting undertaken by MD in subsequent years provides assessments for juvenile salmon and trout and accompanying tools and resources.

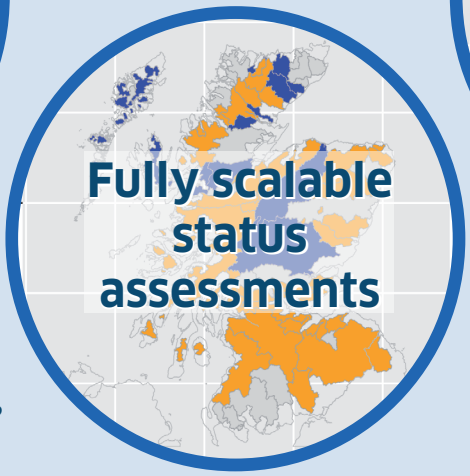
Wild Salmon Strategy; SG Response to Salmon Interactions Working Group; Sea Lice Risk Assessment Framework

How many fish would we expect for this habitat if everything was healthy?





What could be causing poor performance? (e.g. water quality, genetic introgression - National Introgression Programme for Scotland NIPS).
What action could be taken to help?



How many fish are there? Is that more or less than we expect?

How are populations performing at larger spatial scales? (sub-catchment, catchment, regional, national)

Further information

https://www.gov.scot/publications/national-electrofishing-programme-for-scotland/

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