

Gairloch Hills and surrounding areas, 27<sup>th</sup>-28<sup>th</sup> May 2011



*Amidst the hill lochs above Gairloch.*

In May 2008, the Tweed Foundation hosted the inaugural RAFTS challenge trophy following a workshop in Melrose. As recipients of the trophy, Wester Ross Fisheries Trust invited river and fisheries trusts from Scotland and beyond to Gairloch in June 2009 to fish for wild trout and sample aquatic invertebrates in the hills of Wester Ross. <http://www.wrft.org.uk/news/newsitem.cfm?id=80>

Since then the RAFTS Trophy has been to the Hampshire Avon (<http://www.wsrt.org.uk> now Wessex Chalk Stream and Rivers Trust [www.wcsrt.org.uk](http://www.wcsrt.org.uk)) and now resides back in the WRFT Office in Gairloch, following a memorable weekend in May in 2010. <http://www.wrft.org.uk/news/newsitem.cfm?id=114>

There are over 400 stillwaters within the WRFT area. These lochs and lochans are wonderfully diverse. Many support trout populations, some support charr, eel and stickleback. However, others do not support self-sustaining fish populations and instead have a much higher diversity and abundance of other animal life, often with the palmate newt as 'top predator'. WRFT still does not have a complete inventory of which waters support wild trout populations and which waters do not. Our challenge is to continue to find out more about them.

Following registration, each Fishery Trust will be allocated an area with 5 or more lochs and lochans, with appropriate fishing permits and permissions. This area will be their sampling area where the trust team will be based over the night of 27<sup>th</sup> May. A registration fee of £25 will cover the cost of a registration pack which will include a map of the sampling area and guidance and workshop details. Participants will normally require a good level of fitness. To reach sampling areas, a ½ hour drive and a one hour walk will normally be required. A roadside sampling area has been set aside for any team which has a member with limited mobility. The minimum team size is 2 participants; the maximum size is 4 participants.

## Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> May

Teams arriving the day before can meet up for a meal in Gairloch. There are two campsites in the Gairloch area; alternatively, a wide selection of B&B & hotel accommodation is available.

## Friday 27<sup>th</sup> May

The workshop will take place from **10:00 am to 12:00 pm at Poolewe Village** hall, 6 miles from Gairloch. The informal workshop will review methods of sampling stillwaters for fish and other wildlife likely to be encountered during the 'challenge'. Themes may include:

- Invertebrate surveys
- Fish inventory survey
- (Stocking fish and EIA)
- (Biosecurity issues)
- (Conservation and management priorities)

At 1.00 pm, each sampling team will set off to their allocated area, where they will set up base camp unless they choose to overnight in alternative accommodation and return to retrieve any sampling equipment the following morning.

Teams may collect dip net samples of invertebrates, set light traps to catch water beetles, and fish for wild trout (C&R). Some sampling equipment will be provided. Teams should bring their own camping equipment, fly fishing tackle, dip net for kick sampling, out-door clothing, midge protection (vital), first aid kit, and food for camping overnight. Although we hope for a dry, calm night, it could be very cold and wet and windy! It is important that each team is prepared for any eventuality.



Trout

*from a loch in the Gairloch Hills. Most of the trout are smaller than this, but there are a few larger ones in some waters . . .*

## Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> May

Teams should return to the **Loch Maree Hotel** by 12 noon on Saturday to submit their recording sheet. Hot showers will be available! A buffet lunch will be served, and at 1:30 pm, the RAFTS Challenge Trophy will be presented to the most successful team.

The RAFTS challenge trophy will be awarded to the team that gains the highest score as follows:

### Scoring system:

The total score will be as follows:

The total score = trout score + biodiversity score

- Trout score (please note that all trout should be carefully released):

Lengths (in cm) of up to ten longest trout added together.

1 point for each cm

- Biodiversity score:

For aquatic insects of the following orders:

- Ephemeroptera      Mayflies
- Odonata              Dragonflies
- Plecoptera          Stoneflies
- Hemiptera          Aquatic bugs
- Trichoptera        Caddis flies
- Coleoptera          Water beetles

10 points per species if recorded along with a grid reference for the water it came from. Insects may come from any of the waters within the allocated sampling area. Insects do not have to be identified to species in the field. However, where there is doubt regarding the identity of an animal, a photograph or voucher specimen will be required to be brought back to the Loch Maree hotel where a decision will be made.

2 pm departure

Following the event, there may be opportunities for fishing for trout (and charr) on Loch Maree by arrangement with the Loch Maree Hotel. Gairloch also has some of the UK's leading marine wildlife tour operators and many other attractions for those wishing to stay in the area for longer.