

Salmon at stake

Thursday, 23 September 2010

POLICE in Moyle have mounted night-time patrols of rivers in the district in a bid to clamp down on illegal poaching.

Salmon and sea-trout stocks from the Glens through to Ballycastle are under serious threat from the activity and a meeting was held between the PSNI and the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure Salmon and Inland Fisheries Enforcement Manager on Monday in Cushendall to discuss the issue.

Ballycastle PSNI Sergeant David Armour said the growing problem needed to be tackled: "People have this romantic notion of a poacher being like the Seth Armstrong character in Emmerdale, with a handlebar moustache and a flat cap but nothing is further from the truth. "Poachers are criminals. The people who fish our district's rivers legitimately spend a lot of time and effort stocking up the rivers and the work of criminals is putting fish stocks at risk."

A DCAL spokesperson said Monday's meeting was very constructive and both parties agreed a co-ordinated approach to deal with possible poaching that may be taking place in the area. "All parties have a role to play to protect our iconic salmon resource including members of the public who should be in no doubt as to the poor status of many of our salmon populations," they added.

A meeting with the Glens Angling club is also planned to discuss this matter with them and to ensure coordination of all the resources available in order to conserve and protect salmon stocks in the area.

This meeting will build on the DCAL seminar for local Angling Club, Private Water Bailiffs, that took place in Ballymena in April and the guidance documentation provided to them.

Poaching 'gangs', who come to the region specifically to steal fish, as well as some locals who continue to fish illegally, are to blame for the threat against local fish stocks.

Salmon and sea-trout in the Rive Dall, Dun, Glenariffe, Glenshesk and Margy are all at risk. 20 years ago around 500 salmon would have ran the River Dun. A fish counter introduced over the last four years first registered 95 fish. The following year this had reduced to 74 and last year it counted only 40 fish. DCAL has urged any members of the public who suspect poaching is taking place to report it by ringing 028 905 15119 or by email to dcalangling@dcalni.gov.uk, or via the hotline number 0800 807 060 if outside office hours.