GWCT needs your help to save sea trout

Wednesday 12 September, 2018

DYLAN Roberts, a fisheries scientist at Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust (GWCT), is drumming up support to secure much-needed funds for a revolutionary piece of technology that could unlock the mystery of declining sea trout numbers.

Donations received through the latest fundraising appeal will be used to buy data storage tags which are inserted into adult sea trout and record the temperature and depth every two minutes.

Each tag, roughly one inch in size, contains several sensors to measure crucial information to an internal memory. They need to be recovered to analyse the data and allow an insight into their marine behaviour.

Costing £300 each, the Trust is hoping to buy 300 tags across the duration of a five-year project called SAMARCH (SAlmonid MAnagement Round the CHannel).

The project is co-funded by the EU's Interreg channel programme, which covers 69% of the overall cost, with GWCT left to stump up the rest (www.channelmanche.com).

> "As a lifelong fisherman, I have fond memories of catching my first sea trout as a boy. The sight of a sea trout – or sewin as we know them in Wales – leaping in abundance, was a joy to behold, our rivers were full of these enigmatic fish," recalled Dylan."Sadly, today our sea trout are in serious trouble with stocks at historic lows.

"But, by donating £93 (or £75 plus Gift Aid), you will cover the GWCT cost of buying a data storage tag and make a real contribution to the future of sea trout survival. This could provide an important insight to improve the way we manage coastal areas to reduce mortality. All donors will receive updates about the findings from the tags we recover.

"If you can, a donation of £125 will support not only the purchase of a tag, but also catching a sea trout and fitting the tag humanely. Please give whatever you can to support our work today."

It is estimated that sea trout have declined by 70% since the 1970s. There are concerns regarding the bycatch of sea trout from coastal fishing activities and impacts from coastal developments and renewable energy schemes such as, wind farms, tidal lagoons and underwater turbines. Knowing where sea trout spend their time at sea will provide crucial evidence to help limit deleterious impacts.

Our research also shows that 80% of the young sea trout that leave our rivers die at sea, a figure which is continuing to grow. If we can increase the survival rate through more effective, evidence-based management, more adults returning to our rivers to spawn.

> Dylan added: "Your support in buying new tags could help us find the answers to help our sea trout as time is running out and, if we don't act quickly, it will be too late."

To donate, visit https://www.gwct.org.uk/seatrout

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