

Ronald Campbell, Buckland Professor 2018, Pitlochry Lecture

Ronald Campbell, the Buckland Professor for 2018, presented his lecture *the history of salmon management in the British Isles* during the Marine Scotland Science Freshwater Fisheries Laboratory Open Day on 15th June 2019. The Open Day was part of the *International Year of the Salmon* and included a wide range of posters, videos, schools competitions, hands-on fish dissections, virtual reality excursions, and electrofishing for trout in the Japanese Garden in the Atholl Palace grounds. A total of about 450 visitors attended the overall event, 53 of whom sat in to listen to Ronald and were entertained afterwards to lunch and discussion, courtesy of Marine Scotland. The audience largely comprised fisheries managers and anglers from around Scotland, and also included those from as far away as New Zealand.



Dr Ronald Campbell presenting the 2019 Buckland lecture in Pitlochry

Ronald's theme, the history of salmon management, could not be more appropriate for a Buckland lecture given that Frank Buckland was himself a pioneer in the field. Ronald took us on a journey through the earliest salmon legislation, battles in the Scottish borders over fish obstructions, cunning methods of catching the fish (not least a basket suspended adjacent to a waterfall and rigged to ring a bell when successful), through the historic understanding of salmon biology and how it changed with research. One of the most fascinating aspects discussed was the culture of wild salmon for stocking rivers. Ronald produced examples of historic articles, usually published in *The Field*, that fuelled vigorous debates over decades between advocates for and against stocking. The key misconception, believed by most managers for many years, was that wild salmon are so unsuccessful at spawning, that it is better to do it for them by stripping and mixing the gametes and rearing on the offspring in captivity before subsequent release. Ronald showed how such dogma persisted irrespective of research that revealed salmon to be perfectly

capable of doing the job very effectively themselves. Furthermore, research subsequently showed stocking to be damaging in many cases. How fitting, therefore, that at the end of Ronald's presentation a lively discussion was dominated by precisely the issue that he had been discussing, with several of the audience berating Marine Scotland for not having a more liberal policy on stocking (which is now under some regulation). The discussion continued through lunch and most of the afternoon keeping the Marine Scotland policy delegate busy.

Ronald's talk was preceded by a brief presentation by me explaining the current poor conservation status of Scottish wild salmon and how modern research techniques are opening up an extraordinarily detailed understanding of aspects of the life of the species, yet much remains mysterious. Hence, this mini-colloquium traced the development of management and research into Atlantic salmon across time, together with the changing political and environmental context.

The Open Day also featured presentations of a video concerning the demise of salmon internationally. Narration was by David Attenborough, the great modern communicator of natural history, appropriately juxtaposed with Ronald's account of Frank Buckland, a pioneer in that field also.

The Freshwater Fisheries Laboratory is very grateful to the Buckland Foundation for supporting Ronald and his excellent contribution to the Open Day proceedings.

John Armstrong

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