

West Thames Area Fisheries



Newsletter

January 2014

Fisheries and the effects of recent flooding.

For the past couple of weeks fishery officers have been assisting our colleagues with flood related work. We have been helping out with both flood data recording of water levels and ambassador work with the general public. We are anticipating fish movements within the flood plain as many lakes and ponds will have flooded and rivers will have burst their banks into adjoining fields. In past flood events we have had to carry out fish rescues of trapped fish as flood water recedes from fields and ditches. If you see any signs of stranded fish then please contact your local fisheries officer or call the incident hotline on 0800 80 70 60. Do not attempt to move fish yourself as you may be in breach of Section 30 of the Salmon and Freshwater Fisheries Act.

Wye Rivers Week. Why not!

Around sixty enthusiastic volunteers of varied backgrounds, experience and ages got involved in the first ever 'Wye Rivers Week' in High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire. The week was a mix of practical habitat improvements and specialist talks on water saving techniques, river fly life, pollution prevention, misconnection investigations and an enjoyable and informative guided walk looking at the Wye's heritage. The week began with a joint Environment Agency and Thames Water outfall walkover. This involved locating surface water outfalls flowing into the Wye using sewer maps. This highlighted a number of possible misconnections that will warrant further investigation. The days, set up by the Chilterns Chalk Stream Project and the Environment Agency, had a team of experts guiding volunteers on the techniques of installing woody debris and flow deflectors in the channel and explained the positive benefits of the work; including creating fish refuge and spawning areas. The three practical days were held at Kingsmead Recreation ground, Cores End and Wooburn Green Recreation Ground. Several areas were also identified that may benefit from some gravel cleaning operations. This removes organic material from the gravels in the river bed by blasting a jet of water mixed with air into the substrate. All the fine material is washed away leaving the gravels in a much more suitable state for species like brown trout to spawn on.

For more information on Wye Rivers Week or indeed any aspects of low cost river enhancement techniques please get in touch with matt.drew@environment-agency.gov.uk



Fisheries Officer Matt Drew, with the help of volunteers, fixes a large woody debris flow deflector into the Wye.

EA presence at The Big One

The Fisheries Team will be on a stand at The Big One fishing show at Farnborough Airfield this year. The event is held over two days from Saturday the 22nd Feb 2014 and is touted as the UK's largest fishing show and tackle sale. Come along for a chat with some of our bailiffs (see that they are human after all!) and find out more about where your rod licence money goes and how it is spent.

More information on The Big One can be found at <http://www.fishfacepromotions.co.uk/>

Shiplake boost to lock and weir fishing

Anglers visiting the Henley area have received a boost this autumn with the upgrading of fishing facilities at Shiplake weirpool. EA fisheries officers were joined by volunteers from Sparsholt College to construct a two angler platform with stepped access from the lock island. The project was a truly collaborative effort with further input and assistance from Thames Valley Angling Association and EA Waterways at the planning phase. Visit our website for full details on lock and weir permit fishing on the River Thames. <http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/homeandleisure/recreation/135005.asp>

[X](#)

Alien Invasive Species Eradication.....Successful!

Several Fisheries Officers from West Thames Area were recently called on to assist colleagues in Hampshire to complete the eradication of an invasive alien species at a fishery near Southampton. Several lakes on the site had been identified as having this small (up to 4") Asiatic species present which were multiplying at a rapid rate, to the detriment of the fishery. The piscicide Rotenone was used to ensure that no Topmouth gudgeon (TMGs) were left in the lakes. The final step was to ensure that quarantined stock – mostly carp, perch, roach and tench – had no TMGs hiding in them before they were returned to the fishery. This entailed every fish being thoroughly checked over twice by Agency staff to make sure no juvenile TMGs were hiding in mouth or gill cavities or folds in the fins of larger fish. Over four days around 7000lbs of fish were processed and returned to the fishing lakes. Only two adult TMGs were found highlighting how successful the initial fish removal and eradication had been.



Pseudorasbora parva – The topmouth gudgeon.

If you suspect a fishery has topmouth gudgeon present or would like to know more about other alien, invasive species then please get in touch with Stuart on stuart.manwaring@environment-agency.gov.uk or have a look at the following links.

www.environment-agency.gov.uk

www.nonnativespecies.org

Another fisheries survey season comes to an end

One of the last sets of surveys done this year was the Upper Thames boom boat and wading surveys. October saw the survey team out and about on the Upper Thames at Castle Eaton, Water Eaton, Hannington Bridge and Cricklade. The boom boat was also launched and fished half of the reaches between Lechlade and Oxford. Results for the wading sites were exceptional and of particular note was the continued presence of juvenile barbel and the all round excellent result once more at the Cricklade site. The boom boat surveys were hampered by persistent rainfall adding a tinge of colour to the river that made it difficult to spot stunned fish. Upstream of Lechlade Bridge and the Port Meadow section above Oxford had the best concentrations of fish this year. Chub and roach made up the majority of the catches although a 23lb pike

from the weir stream at Godstow certainly helped to bolster the biomass.

For more information on the survey programme please contact jonathan.baxter@environment-agency.gov.uk



Fisheries Officer Stuart Manwaring with a large pike from the Thames above Oxford.

Fisheries and Biodiversity Projects Summary 2012/2013

For a concise summary of all the projects the West Thames Fisheries and Biodiversity teams undertook in the 2012/2013 financial year please follow the link below. The projects range in scale from the volunteer dependant and relatively low cost Rivers Week type events all the way up to weir removals and large scale wetland creations. The funds for these projects come from a range of sources and partnerships, and not least from rod licence income. All the revenue we receive nationally from rod licence sales goes back into fisheries whether at a local, area level or by ensuring national facilities like the fisheries laboratory at Brampton or the fish farm at Calverton continue to function.

Please click here to access the document - <https://brand.environment-agency.gov.uk/mb/ELNhV6>

For more information on projects in West Thames Area please contact

lizzie.rhymes@environment-agency.gov.uk

Citizen scientists witness strong elver return

Citizen scientists working in partnership with the Zoological Society of London and the Environment Agency have been monitoring this year's upstream elver run on the River Thames system with encouraging results. Monitoring in West Thames takes place at Molesey weir where an elver trap was installed last year and has been monitored by members of the Thames Anglers' Conservancy. Although this is the first full year of operation for the Molesey trap, indications are that 2013 has seen a massive increase in numbers of elvers returning to the river. Scientists at the

Environment Agency, whilst expressing their optimism at this encouraging sign for the river's threatened eel stocks, also urge caution that one good year does not mean the eel's future is assured. Recent research from European scientists has however linked the decline in eel numbers to variable ocean currents affecting the migration success of the juveniles. <http://wwwnews.live.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-255056122>

Radcot fish pass – Maturing well!

Built in 2011 as part of the weir replacement scheme at Radcot lock, the fish and canoe pass is a semi-natural bypass channel that uses manufactured brushes to help lower the water velocity at key points along the pass. After completion it was a bare and muddy channel and not much to look at. Fisheries Officers returned in 2013 to carry out a fish survey to assess the use of the pass by fish. Not only had the fish pass matured into a very natural looking channel, there were also excellent numbers of fish present. Over 170 fish were caught (with many missed by the team in the fast flowing water) with eleven species represented.



Looking up to the second set of brushes at Radcot fish and canoe pass

Highlights of the catch were several brown trout, some of which were juveniles of a year or so old, and several barbel around a pound in weight. Roach and dace were the most numerous species though. Fisheries Officer Stuart Manwaring said "We believe that fish are not only using it to pass up and downstream but to also reproduce and live in the habitat we have made here. It is important for us that these channels are created to be so much more than just a way for fish to migrate. They are great opportunities to create incredibly valuable habitat that is generally scarce along the Thames".

For more information please contact stuart.manwaring@environment-agency.gov.uk

Sutton Courtenay AC's Phil's Lake receives refuges

After being hit particularly hard by cormorants in the past, representatives from Sutton Courtenay AC approached the Fisheries Team for some assistance. Some research and several conversations later it was decided that some fish refuges and an injection of tench and bream to supplement what was left of the existing stock would be worth a try. A Saturday was put by to create numerous rolls of stock fencing which were then attached to sealed drainage pipe to help them float. They were then anchored in a group in the main body of the lake. Tench and bream from the Agency's Calverton fish farm were then stocked into the lake. A visit a few weeks later showed some cormorants hunting unsuccessfully along the borders of the refuge complex. Hopefully this indicates the fish are well ensconced in the cover we provided, out of reach from the cormorants. This cover should allow the tench and bream to attain maturity and reach a size where they are no longer a viable prey item to these birds.



The first of several refuge units being taken out into Phil's lake by West Thames Fishery Officers.

For more information on this story please email stuart.manwaring@environment-agency.gov.uk

Angling Data View – Probably the best Lower Thames angling conditions and data relay site on the entire World Wide Web!

Angling Data View, the EA's handy river conditions website for anglers, has attracted more than 4,000 users since its launch in August 2013. The simple website which relays live data on water temperatures and turbidity from the rivers Thames, Kennet and Wey has become increasingly popular with the onset of winter conditions. Anglers 'in the know' have reported numerous successes now that they can check the conditions of their local rivers from the comfort of home before venturing out. Fisheries Officer Stuart Keable said "A local angler, Dave Harvey, told me how

he had been sitting at home wondering whether to go fishing or not. He opened up the ADV on the web and saw the river temperature was 7.5°C, more than warm enough for barbel, so of he went for the evening and bagged himself a barbel". You can check it out at <http://www.telemetrydata.co.uk/open?profile=Thamesangler> or via the Environment Agency's website.



TACs Dave Harvey with an ADV inspired catch.

River Windrush Habitat Enhancement

West Thames Fisheries Officers worked with the angling syndicate, Vaughan Lewis of Windrush AEC Ltd and the Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust to improve 350m The River Windrush near Bourton-on-the Water, Gloucestershire. Dredging and poaching by cattle had caused a build up of silt in the middle of the channel. The aims of the project were to restore previous attempts at narrowing the river, maintain gravels and mobilise the silt by installing deflectors and large woody debris.



A flow deflector gets firmly fixed in place to the river bed

Fisheries Officer Jim Seymour said, "You can achieve a great deal when you get groups of like minded people together for a project like this". Most of the materials were sourced on site so costs were kept to a minimum.

For more information please contact james.seymour@environment-agency.gov.uk

Stocking boost to venues in West Thames

West Thames Area was fortunate to be able to stock around 16'000 fish into a variety of waters this year from fish produced from our Calverton fish farm. Several watercourses around Oxford received juvenile barbel whilst Adderbury Lakes, the Rye Dyke and Coldstone AC's Ascott-Under-Wychwood venue received species like roach, tench and crucian carp. To see a video of crucian carp going into Ufton Pond please follow this link <http://youtu.be/Ze25jlgyduY>. Our colleagues in the Farnham office stocked fish to coincide with some recent habitat enhancement works. This included 300 barbel into The Cut at Bray Wick, and roach, chub, dace and barbel into the Wey at Eashing and Wrecclesham. A popular junior anglers teaching venue, Willow Pool, also received several hundred tench. The Fisheries Team believe that stocking fish to improve a fishery is only a viable option if it is felt that the habitat will support the fish. Where fish have been lost through predation it is important that measures are undertaken to reduce the effect of the predator before stocking should be considered. This may take the form of creating refuges or installing adequate fencing around a venue.



Fisheries Officer Tom Sherwood introduces roach into the Rye Dyke. A floating island fish refuge can be seen in the background.

Thames screening starts at Chertsey

This summer saw the installation of the first fish screen on a major River Thames water abstraction point. The screen is designed to prevent elvers and juvenile fish from being drawn off of the river when water is abstracted for domestic supply. It was installed across Affinity Water's off-take at Chertsey. The self cleaning polymer screen has tiny 1.75mm apertures which stop all but the smallest fish from being removed. It is expected that fish and eel stocks on the river will receive a considerable boost as the process of

screening advances to all abstraction points over the coming years.

Big Mick's a WICAC Winner!

West Thames Fisheries Enforcement Officer Mick Cox put down his pocket book and picked up his rod to win the top individual angler prize at the Water Industry Coarse Angling Championship in September. With 100 match anglers representing teams from around the country on Leicestershire's River Soar, Mick put together a winning haul of just over 10lb of mostly skimmer bream to take top spot and the impressive WICAC trophy.



Mick Cox receives the WICAC individual trophy

North branch of the River Wey - weir removal and habitat enhancement.

There are many weirs within the River Wey catchment and one particular weir identified to be removed was on the River Wey North Branch on the Coors Brewery land.



The weir at the Coors brewery about to be removed

The weir had created a slow flowing section of river where a large quantity of silt had collected.

A previous electro fishing survey showed a fish population of roach, bullhead and stone loach downstream of the weir with very little fish up stream

in the poor quality habitat. The removal of the weir has created a free passage for fish movement. Also with the impounding effect removed habitat has already started to recover upstream. The increased velocity of flow has exposed clean gravel which had been previously smothered in silt.

Habitat improvement works have also just been completed on the River Wey North Branch at Wrecclesham. Supported by the Environment Agency and partly funded by the Wey Fisheries Action Plan the Greyshott Angling club has delivered this project just upstream of Farnham Town.



Work starts on the creation of the first of two cattle drinks on the Wey at Wrecclesham

Improvement work has included the creation of two cattle drinks which also double as fish fry refuge areas to prevent small fish getting washed downstream when the river is in flood.

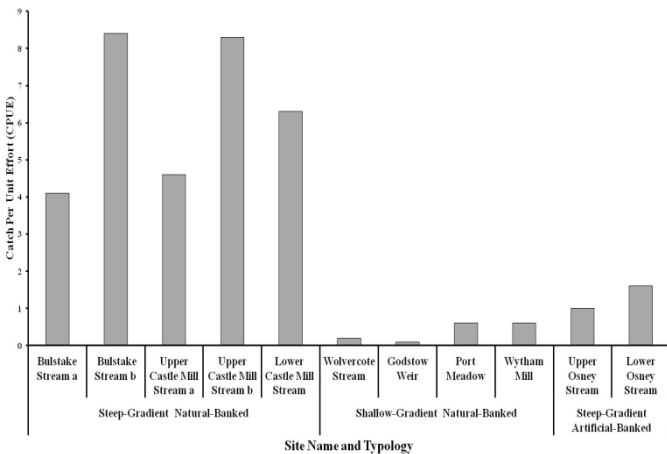
Two hundred meters of new fence is preventing cattle from poaching the river banks, this will allow marginal plants to recover and the introduction of 90 tonnes of gravel will provide spawning habitat for the wild brown trout present in this stretch of river.

For further information on the works on the River Wey please contact Adrian Bicknell on 01252 729568

MSc study on Signal Crayfish. Is there an alternative to trapping?

Signal Crayfish are well known to anglers due to their appetite for fishing bait. In addition to this nuisance value they cause bank damage and affect the ecology of the river. They generally have a detrimental effect on fish recruitment although they do provide a food item for larger fish and for fish predators such as the otter. Trapping can reduce crayfish numbers if it is intensive, sustained and the smaller crayfish are also targeted. Lower levels of trapping may make the problem worse. The Environment Agency worked with

Daniel Chadwick from Kings College, London and assisted him in collecting data for his MSc titled *Bank substrate and gradient preferences in Signal crayfish*. The study was carried out on the Oxford Watercourses and showed that physical bank characteristics can affect signal crayfish densities. Sites with steep clay banks had much greater numbers of crayfish present than shallow banked sites or sites with artificial banks. Dan did an excellent job with this project which was recognised in his grades. It is his intention to do further research on this subject, if he can get the right post and funding.



Some of Dan's results from sites around Oxford. This clearly shows the preference of crayfish for steep graded, natural banks.

Volunteer Bailiff Service update

For the past 18 months the Environment Agency has worked closely with the Angling Trust to set up The Trust's Volunteer Bailiff Service (VBS). The VBS currently remains an operational pilot project in our South East Region, divided into four 'Angling Watches', each with an Area Coordinator and working directly with an appointed Fisheries Enforcement Officer lead. The scheme has been designed to support Agency fisheries staff and help target their resources. The current phase of the VBS is modelled upon Neighbourhood Watch, where Volunteer Bailiffs (VB's) act as eyes and ears, contributing to the intelligence process. West Thames Area currently has 15 operational VBs who submit weekly reports based on their patrols and report any serious incidents immediately to our **Emergency Hotline 0800 80 70 60**. This information is directed to our Fisheries Enforcement Officers for assessment and action. The approach is leading to new sources of intelligence about offences and will improve our ability to protect fish stocks.

During the 2013 coarse close season the VBS ran 'Operation CLAMP DOWN' in South East Region, targeting illegal fishing on rivers, streams, brooks and drains. A total of 165 patrols were carried out. 14 groups of anglers were reported for offences, two

incidents of pollution reported and VBs assisted police on two occasions. The operation will be repeated in the 2014 coming close season. The Angling Trust is currently recruiting in South East Region. Applications close in March in preparation for the April 2014 induction. Anyone interested in applying or registering their interest should contact VBS administration at bailiffs@anglingtrust.net.

Our 24hr Emergency Hotline 0800 80 70 60 is open to all anglers and members of the public to report fisheries offences and pollutions.

Loddon WFD workshop outcomes

On the 23rd and 27th of November 2013, we held Loddon Catchment workshops to discuss a range of measures to address the key issues affecting our rivers. The consultation was an opportunity for us to share our understanding with attendees, and seek opinions on other significant pressures within the catchment. Over 50 representatives of 30 organisations attended, a variety of topics were discussed, these ranged from water resources and quality, to habitat degradation and alien species. There were also concerns over increased development exacerbating the pressures on water supply, water treatment and urban run-off. Another concern was a lack of communication/joined up approach in tackling invasive non-native species, it was thought that the best way to tack this would be by a catchment based approach. To read the full newsletter that followed the workshop, please go to: <http://www.lfcc.org.uk/downloads/category/26-loddon-catchment-workshops-november-2013>

Contact Us

If you would like any further information about any articles in this newsletter or have any other queries please contact Adam Hilliard.

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