

DEVON

ANGLING REVIEW

The Newsletter of the Devon Angling Association

Hon. Secretary comments - The Devon Year 2015

The very variable weather during the season has created its problems. The mild winter was followed by wet and windy conditions during the summer months. The dry period with low water levels during September and early October has not been conducive to the movement of salmon into the river.

Several works have been undertaken on the river this year which are worthy of mention. The weir at Dollar (above Rackmill) has seen an improved fish pass installed. The DAA made a contribution towards the cost of this project. We have yet to see how effective it will be. A fish pass has been installed on the Dollar Burn just above the old railway bridge; this should aid both trout and salmon in their upstream movement. Every year we see considerable erosion at various points along the river and when the problem becomes too bad it is necessary to take some action. There are a number of key areas of concern but I am happy to report that one of them has been receiving attention. This is a section of bank on the south side halfway between Rackmill and Vicars Bridge which has been shored up and consolidated. Incidentally, the DAA have spent time improving the path from Rackmill to Vicars Bridge and this makes an excellent walk for anglers and other visitors.



Glenquey Reservoir

Statistics for season 2015:

MONTH	NUMBER OF ANGLERS	NUMBER OF FISH CAUGHT	WEIGHT OF FISH (lb) approx.
April	48	130	90
May	37	84	52
June	57	313	227
July	47	112	74
Aug	34	66	44
<u>Sept</u>	<u>40</u>	<u>226</u>	<u>148</u>
Total	263	931	635

The returned tickets (263/424) = 62.0% of all tickets sold. The average weight of fish caught (635/931) = 0.68lb (10.9oz)

From the individual returns it is clear that on good days some anglers had excellent results. The best outing recorded was 20 trout, including several in the 1-2lb class. It has to be said that the very best results were obtained in September when the reservoir at last dropped somewhat in level and anglers could fish the North Bank as well. The Committee are making strenuous efforts to clear a number of trees on the North Bank in order to allow better access by next season.

According to the lease of Glenquey Reservoir, the Association is responsible for the upkeep of the original boathouse. The roof has been largely renewed this year and further work will be undertaken to ensure that the boathouse will be in good condition for years to come (although it has not accommodated boats for many years).

River Devon fishing during 2015 season

The river fished very well for trout on milder days, partly because of good water flows, but there were too many wet and windy days to contend with. The best trout recorded on the fly was 3.5lb. The salmon season just never took off this year. There was no heavy rain until the last few days of October and even then not enough to encourage the fish. The Secretary then had the unenviable task of completing a nil return to the Crown Estate and to Marine Scotland for both salmon and sea trout. The very low water in September and October was the main factor in fish not moving up river, but another major problem is the extent to which the seals patrol the short and relatively narrow stretch of tidal water below Cambus Weir and pick off their victims with ease. Common and Grey seals are protected species under the Marine (Scotland) Act. Atlantic Salmon have conservation status and are included in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan Priority Species List.

Wild Fisheries Review

The Scottish Government has stated that on all Class 3 rivers, of which the Devon is one, there will be a mandatory catch and release policy for salmon in 2016. This situation will then be reviewed for further years. I hope that members will not be put off by this new regulation which will apply to all but the major rivers in Scotland. Unfortunately the statistical analysis on which the classification of rivers is based is not robust enough, being based solely on catches over five years for those rivers unable to supply recruitment figures of migratory fish entering into their catchment. The River Devon urgently requires a fish counter for salmon entering the river and, in addition, a means of counting smolts on their way downstream. This would provide both the DAA and Marine Scotland with incontestable evidence regarding the real recruitment of salmon in our river.

A past threat to the River Devon

The following article is from the Dollar Magazine, dated February 1964 p.13:

'According to geologists, the Devon's course was not always down our valley. Instead of turning west at The Crook, it flowed into Loch Leven. Now we learn that Fife County Council plans to reverse the process which gave us our river, and send it again into the loch, for the sake of water supplies elsewhere. The possibility is more than any lover of Dollar will care to contemplate. Can we imagine the valley without the stream which inspired Robert Burns, and which has given pleasure, in one way and another, to generations living in its neighbourhood? Lord Clyde, Lord President of the Court of Session, who has an estate near Crook of Devon, has written in protest to Fife County Council

and has also approached Kinross County Council. Let us hope that his efforts and those of others will be powerful enough to resist such robbery and that the Fife plan is considered too fantastic ever to be heard of again'.

Fortunately this proposal never came to fruition; instead some 15 years later the building of the Castlehill Dam enabled Castlehill Reservoir to provide water for Fife. However this dam is having some serious implications for the wellbeing of the River Devon.

The Devon Angling Association is investigating further river improvements

In conjunction with the River Forth Fisheries Trust (RFFT) the DAA is in the process of assessing the potential to increase spawning habitat for trout in the upper river. This could be achieved if fish access to the Thorny Burn at Crook of Devon can be improved. Subject to the necessary landowner and regulatory permissions this might involve replacing culverts adjacent to the burn's confluence with the river by a simple bridge across the burn for use by farm vehicles.

The RFFT is also assisting the DAA to resolve the difficulty salmon have in gaining access to the Devon from the Forth at Cambus for spawning. Access to the Cambus Weir is very restricted during low tides, likewise performance of the fish pass during low water periods needs improving.

Devon Angling Association Website

Two years ago the DAA's website went live. It was intended to provide a means of communicating and providing information about the Association's fishing to members and visitors alike. The level of site visits has exceeded our expectations with traffic nearly doubling year on year. We have had routine visitors from the USA, Canada, Spain, Ireland and even Madagascar. The Association's name has provided some slightly odd enquiries from visitors including request from Channel 5 News for information about wild beavers on the River Axe in Devon and advice on Chub fishing on the River Devon (though this was for River Devon in Nottinghamshire). Website visitors have used the site to provide the DAA with useful and interesting information about fishing conditions, hazards, illegal fishing, fly-tipping and fish health. If you are not familiar with the website then please visit it, you will find plenty of information about the river. Also please feel free to contribute!

www.devonanglingassociation.org.uk