

DEVON

ANGLING REVIEW

The Newsletter of the Devon Angling Association

RIVER FISHING REPORTS (by David Mudie Hon. Secretary):

Trout Fishing - For the first time in recent memory, no stock fish were put into the river or Glenquay in 2012. This was for reasons beyond our control and it is intended to return to our normal stocking policy for the 2013 season. However, it is interesting to note that for many anglers on the River Devon, especially those fishing fly, 2012 was a very good year. In fact a number of fishermen reported that it had been as good a season as any they had known. Trout in the 6-10oz range were very prolific in some parts of the river and many fish over 1lb were caught. The largest taken on a fly was reported as 3½lb, although one or two specimens over that weight were reported by bait fishers.

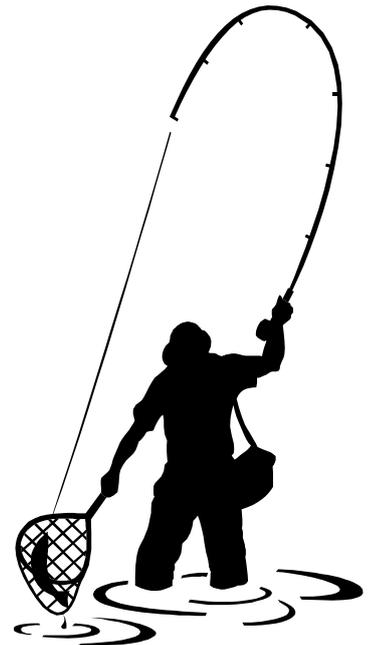
Why was 2012 a much better season than most other recent years? Has the absence of stocked trout meant that there was more food for the natural fish? Most people would argue that this is not necessarily the case as indigenous fish are known to out-compete stock fish. Notably, the river, apart from early spring had a good flow of water, giving rise to good angling conditions and an abundance of feeding for the fish. Another factor might be a lack of salmon parr in some stretches of the river, this giving young trout an advantage. Whatever the reason it was a good season and it will be interesting to observe any differences when stocked fish are introduced again in 2013.

Reserve at Fossoway - As indicated last year the Committee has decided that the Fossoway stretch is to be retained as a reserve area with no fishing permitted during the 2013 season. This is due to the pollution incident at Castlehill last July which killed almost all of the fish downstream to Crook of Devon. Monitoring indicates that little or no regeneration of the indigenous trout population is evident as yet, following that incident.

Salmon Fishing - As in most previous years salmon fishing was generally confined to September and October. Despite good water flows and the presence of salmon and sea trout observed at Cambus earlier in the year, the fish were not seen upstream until the autumn, by which time many were very coloured and, if caught, were returned. It was notable during 2012 that more anglers have been using a fly rod for their salmon fishing. This makes a lot of sense, particularly when you consider that most fish will be in the 4-6lb range and less vulnerable to damage from a salmon fly than from the treble hook of a spinner. The two largest fish reported caught were both about 15lb, both being released. In total, 45 salmon and grilse were reported caught which is in line with the general improvement in catches over recent years. 22 sea trout were reported caught and all but four were released.

SALMON / SEA TROUT CATCH RETURNS:

All 2012 salmon permit holders are reminded that salmon / sea trout catch returns, including nil returns, must be made to the Hon. Secretary. **A 2012 catch return will be required before any new permit is issued to the member for the 2013 season.**



ELECTROFISHING:

We are indebted to the River Forth Fisheries Trust biologist, Dr Joanna Girvan, for continuing to provide data on trout populations in the various burns, indicative of spawning activity.

The most recent study was carried out on the Menstrie Burn and indicated a large population of both salmon and trout parr. Interestingly, soon after this exercise took place, there was a massive flood in the Menstrie Burn which burst its banks and flooded parts of the village. It was thought that the small fish stood no chance and would all be swept away. Not a bit of it - when the precise spot was re-surveyed after the burn returned to normal, it was found that there were just as many fish there as before!

GLENQUEY RESERVIOR 2012:

The number of angler visits to the reservoir this year was well down on figures for recent years. This is not a surprise since the weather over the summer period was so wet and windy. Nevertheless, on good days many anglers enjoyed excellent sport although not many trout over 1lb were recorded. On this latter point, it is notable that more anglers have been leaving their catch returns in the box. This year 66% of all tickets sold were returned. Apart from being eligible for the draw giving a free day's fishing, the data provided gives the Committee information on what action they might take on stocking or any other decision-making.

The reservoir had very high water levels for long periods, reducing the area of bank available for fishing. To address this recurring problem, it is planned to carry out some tree pruning and bracken clearance during 2013. Efforts will be made to do this before the opening day on the 1st April. Any help will be gratefully received.

CONTROL OF INVASIVE SPECIES:

Year one of the three year Ochils Landscape Partnership project was completed in 2012, the object being to reduce the spread of Himalayan Balsam and Japanese Knotweed along the river banks. Between Vicars Bridge and Glenfoot Tillicoultry some 20,000 square metres (almost 5 acres) was cut before the plants seeded, thus the extent of growth in 2013 should show a reduction. Large areas of Japanese Knotweed were also treated with herbicide. However the poor weather during the year hindered progress. The DAA working parties maintained access along the river banks and in so doing made a substantial contribution alongside the OLP project.

ANOTHER DEVON SALMON (by Graham Owens):

I have held a salmon permit on the Devon for a good few years, bought in part to extend my fishing season but really in the hope of landing a nice trophy migratory fish. In that time as nice as it was to be out on the river in the early autumn catching sight of red squirrels, watching the Ochils set alight with the glowing reds of the late afternoon sun and even the occasional close encounter with an otter I had never caught a solitary sea trout or salmon. I have cast down through pools as salmon have amused themselves by performing belly flops right before my eyes without so much as a tug. I tried everything, different flies, spinning, fishing at dawn, fishing at dusk and even resorting to wearing my lucky jumper all without reward. So I found myself once more on the Devon this October getting very frustrated as every tug on the line turned out to be a migratory sycamore leaf! I took a step forward, cast, mended, let the fly swing across the pool and then blow me a tug! It came as a shock to feel a violent headshake. After a wee ten minute tussle I had landed a beautiful grilse of about 4lb which after a quick photo-call was returned to continue its journey up the river! Over the years I have spent a considerable sum (well in excess of £100), to catch that salmon, which was probably as small a fish as you might expect to catch - was it worth it? Yes, worth every penny!

DAA WEEKEND WORK PARTIES:

Most Wednesday afternoons you will find a dedicated group of volunteers working on the river for the benefit of members, visiting anglers, local residents and most importantly for our resident trout and salmon. This work includes clearing falling timber, making sure fish have access to the spawning burns, clearing litter, cutting paths through the luxuriant vegetation, maintaining stiles, building bridges etc. For the 2013 season we are holding a number of weekend work parties for members and friends who would like to contribute to maintenance of the river and are unable to attend weekday work parties. These will be held from 9.30am on the Sunday mornings of the 19th May, 30th June and 1st September. If you would like to participate in either weekday or weekend work parties please contact the Hon. Secretary or email thedaa@talktalk.net

The DAA website address is given below, the site will be updated as soon as practical following the January 2013 AGM.

www.clacksnet.org.uk/hosted/daa