

DEVON ANGLING REVIEW

The Newsletter of the Devon Angling Association

Hon. Secretary Comments - The Devon Year 2019

The River Devon is a delightful river to fish whichever method you choose to employ. With careful wading it is possible to fish almost all that part of the river which is covered by our permit. The "purist" who believes that the only acceptable method is upstream dry-fly can find long stretches of water to suit; if your preference is for downstream wet-fly then even more possibilities exist since faster flowing stretches can more easily be covered by this method. In many parts of the river skilful trotting of a worm can produce some of the larger specimens and spinning with light tackle also has its place. Some anglers, expert in modern techniques i.e. Czech nymphing and the French method, have discovered that the River Devon responds very well to their efforts.

It is noticeable this year that there has been a small increase in ticket sales compared with 2018. Perhaps people have realised that it is not necessary to add stock fish to the river's population-given the right conditions the trout will regenerate themselves. Certainly, the members of the Committee are keen to continue the policy of not stocking, thereby ensuring that the river continues as a wild fishery.

Anglers' Riverfly Monitoring Initiative:

From Spring 2020, the Devon Angling Association will be participating in the national Anglers' Riverfly Monitoring Initiative (ARMI), which provides data on the health of our rivers.

Three DAA committee members have already participated in an ARMI training programme on river sampling to provide data to ensure that any pollution events that affect invertebrate life are detected at any early stage. The technique involves 'kick-sampling' the riverbed with wader-clad feet, and then catching in a net invertebrates stirred-up into the water.



These bugs are identified and then marked against a scoring system based on type of invertebrate caught and their abundance. Selected sites are monitored on a regular basis throughout the year.

Trial sampling carried out by DAA volunteers in the autumn of 2019 indicated a good abundance of invertebrate life at the selected sites. Invertebrates are the engine room of the river, the driving force that supports everything else – food for birds, fish and so much else. They provide many other ecological benefits too, including the recycling of nutrients.

River Devon fishing 2019 season:

Some very nice trout in excess of two pounds as well as large numbers of smaller fish were caught this season.

The Devon is essentially a trout river, but it does afford anglers a chance of a salmon during the autumn. After a run of recent poor seasons, 2019 has proved rather better, with 25 salmon and 14 sea trout recorded, all returned of course as the Devon is still a Category 3 river.

“The Clear Winding Devon” to quote Robert Burns can be a magical place at times, and is worthy of our attention, both in angling terms and in our attention to its health for the future.

Glenquey Reservoir - Analysis of Catch Returns:

	NUMBER OF ANGLERS				NUMBER OF FISH CAUGHT				WEIGHT OF FISH CAUGHT (LB)			
Year	2016	2017	2018	2019	2016	2017	2018	2019	2016	2017	2018	2019
Total	330	328	316	257	1442	1698	1209	999	887	1009	662	529

Year	2016	2017	2018	2019
Average Weight per fish (oz.)	9.84	9.50	8.76	8.47
%age return of tickets	62	61	64	57

Comments:

- The average weight of trout at about half a pound could be construed as very good, considering the number of small fish of just a few ounces which are caught
- The year 2019 was notable for blustery, rainy weather throughout. The reservoir was at maximum height for extended periods.

Year	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Ticket Sales	424	529	545	498	452

River Habitat Survey carried out by the Wild Trout Trust:

At the request of the DAA the Wild Trout Trust carried out a habitat survey on the River Devon in October of 2019. The survey visit was conducted as a series of spot-checks (working in a general upstream direction) to provide an overview of the habitat quality for wild salmonids and identify potential areas where improvements could be made. A report has been produced for the DAA and is currently being considered by the Committee who will decide on what improvement actions may be taken. Key findings noted in the report are as below:

- General habitat quality on the river is good and a natural array of bankside cover is present in many areas, particularly where livestock are excluded. Excluding livestock from the watercourse where they currently do have access would be beneficial.
- The habitat observed during the visit appears to be more than capable of supporting healthy salmonid populations and stocking with hatchery reared fish should not be necessary.
- It would be beneficial to leave more natural occurring woody material within the channel, to provide cover, shelter and protection from predators for the river's fish populations.
- Fish passage could be greatly improved on the Dollar Burn, where a previously installed Larinier pass is well outside the optimum specifications for that (or any) type of pass.

Work parties and volunteering:

The Association's Committee carry out a considerable amount of work along the Devon both to ensure access to and the health of the riparian environment. Tasks undertaken by the DAA work parties often require significant physical activity and any help by volunteers from within the membership is valuable. Apart from seeing jobs well done, being out in the environment along with colleagues who share interest in the river is very satisfying. The DAA has a forward looking 5 year management plan, its implementation and achievements are reviewed annually.