

RFCA NEWS No. 7

RFCA Website: ribblefisheriesca.co.uk

September 2008.

It has been a very busy few months for the organisation. No sooner does one problem diminish that another rears its head. All the information in this Newsletter is with the Clubs and Owners who are members of the RFCA.

Entrepose

I think we all hoped that this was coming to an end. Entrepose duly appeared at Bradford Crown Court for sentencing but for some reason the Judge has agreed another day in court to listen to Entrepose presumably put in a plea for mitigation. We have no date for this so the saga goes on. Once this hearing is out of the way those clubs, who are pressing an action for damages via the ACA, can proceed.

ACA Campaign for the Ribble

Officers were approached by the ACA for help in preparing a publicity campaign for the work being undertaken within the Ribble catchment to address some of the problems that we have to deal with. A number of meetings have taken place and the Publicity Manager for the ACA spent several days in the catchment gaining first-hand knowledge of the difficulties – such as de-forestation in the upper headwaters, hydro power proposals, proposed race course, detrimental weirs, farm pollution problems and the Hodder propagation programme. A number of photographs were taken and an updated plan was produced. As was expected there have been a number of developments since so the plan is continually being updated. However it is hoped that, in the near future, the ACA will be able to launch a publicity campaign to support the work being piloted on the Ribble system to ensure its continued survival and improvement.

Pollution

Sadly there are many incidents of pollution in the Catchment. Only by being vigilant and reporting any such incident will we be able to protect the Ribble system. The pollution reporting system we have set up has proved its worth. Please ring the E.A. Hotline first **0800 80 70 60** then ring Fred Higham for the Ribble and the Hodder on **01200 423314**, and Graham Parkes for the Calder **07861 696813**. They will follow it up and we have really good links with Pollution Team Leader Central, Helen Nightingale, who does a really good job.

Poaching

River Watch was launched in June at Waddow Weir by the EA. The Police, Fishery Representatives, Habitat Trust, RFCA and the ACA were also in attendance. Signs are being put up on major entry points to the river informing the public what to look out for and what to do. CCTV cameras are being placed at strategic locations and are moved on a regular basis. All club Secretaries should have received plastic laminated cards to give to members, which gives all the information as to what to do if you see anything suspicious. Please report anything suspicious via the E.A. hotline **0800 80 70 60** and then let our Poaching Officer, Bruce Spedding, know – **0776 6441952**

If water levels drop then we all have to be more vigilant.

Sampling with RCCT

RFCA has contributed towards the provision of sampling equipment for the new RCCT Scientific Officer. Also we circulated members to seek volunteers to receive training and assist in doing the sampling. It is pleasing to be able to report that we had a good response and many of these people are now available to undertake sampling work. It is hoped that this information can be fed back to members through our annual report.

Netting Limitation Order (NLO)

This is the second year of the NLO and with it the 2 fish kill byelaw. It is also the second year of the three year pilot tagging scheme. This is voluntary but is an officially backed E.A. pilot. Many Ribble clubs have made tags compulsory under their club rules.

There have been several excellent meetings with the E.A. over the NLO Review. The first review is at the end of next year. It has always been RFCA policy that the review should be as transparent and as open as possible. E.A. representatives attended the September Council meeting and outlined very simply how they intended carrying out the review. The current

thinking on the Ribble situation was also outlined and the message is that the Ribble is doing well. It is meeting its targets and anglers were congratulated on their release rate, which was above 75%. Given the average rod catch of 1000 fish a voluntary release of 750 was a major boost to stocks. If anglers can keep this release rate up and if the net catch stays constant then matters look fair.

(If any member would like a simple paper on how the review is to be conducted the RFCA provided one for the last Council meeting. Go onto the RFCA website and request one by email.)

Information Sharing & Club Rules

In attempting to increase the effectiveness of the information that we have in the system there is one aspect that will allow clubs and the E.A. to share such information. However under the terms of the Data Protection Act clubs need to make an addition to their rules to allow this to happen. It is suggested that the clubs adopt the following wording for this purpose.

Whilst fishing anywhere on the Ribble catchment and its tributaries, if any member of the club is found to have killed a salmon but failed to tag the salmon on the riverbank immediately, then the following will happen:

If the club member is apprehended by an officer of the Environment Agency, that officer will ask to see their rod licence. The details of the members name, address and rod licence number will then be passed to the club secretary. The club will use this information to carry out an internal investigation which may ultimately result in expulsion from the club.

If the club member is apprehended by a private bailiff working for the club, that bailiff will ask to see their rod licence. The details of the members name, address and rod licence number will then be passed on to the Environment Agency. The Environment Agency will retain the information and may seek to use it in any future court proceeding should it be established that the individual concerned has breached the regional byelaw requiring anglers to comply with a 2 fish kill limit on the Ribble catchment and its tributaries.

By renewing your membership of the club, you accept that your personal information will be shared as outlined above.

Hydro Electricity Projects

I am sure most of you will be aware of the growing interest in small hydro schemes to create power and make a profit for the owners. One such project is scheduled for Settle Weir. The RFCA is not opposed to hydro schemes per se but it is paramount that under some green banner they do not impede the migratory runs of salmonids. We have had several meetings with the Settle Green Group, which is behind the proposal and have put our views. Sadly at this moment in time the proposals put forward do not pass our approval.

We have consulted experts on hydro power and fish passage. The central issue is the amount of water the project allows the fish pass and the current proposal does not, in our opinion, allow sufficient to ensure its operational capacity. We have expressed our views to the MPs for Skipton and Ribble Valley, to Settle Green Group, the E.A., North West Fishery Consultative Council, NW RFERAC and the ACA. If the proposals are not altered we will formally express opposition at the consultation stage. (We have produced a paper on concerns over Hydro schemes and if anyone wants one go to our website and email.)

Counters

The Ribble catchment is fortunate that it has two counters, one on the Hodder at Winckley and one on the Ribble at Waddow. While there are major concerns over the state of Winckley counter the one at Waddow is regarded as being very accurate. For the past few weeks counts have been taking place at the Waddow trap by the E.A. and helped by our Pollution Officer. This is all part of checking on the accuracy of the counter and in estimating the average size of salmon running the river and the proportion of cocks and hens.

We get the monthly figures from the counters and August was the best for Waddow since 2000. Given September and October to come, prime months for the Ribble salmon, it is looking good for another season.

Sea Trout

In the last Newsletter we said we were undertaking a catchment survey on the state of sea trout. This has been completed and the E.A. and the Hodder Consultative both have copies. It was the Hodder Consultative who first flagged up a concern. They have kindly agreed to go through the results and pass on their findings to the E.A. and all clubs and owners.

Hodder Consultative - Sea Trout Propagation & Habitat Work

The Hodder Consultative received assistance from members to clean out the smolt release ponds and fin clip the parr prior to them being placed in the smolt ponds this year.

The Consultative has continued to work on their sea trout improvement programme and work has been done to improve a culvert in Chipping and the sea trout rearing operation has got underway. We wish them every success.

Resources

We have been pushing hard that some of the money from fines for pollution and poaching should find its way back to the Catchment rather than all stay with the Treasury. Our view is that the poacher and polluter should pay something back for the damage they have done. Needless to say the Treasury has a different view.

Unity

I am sure you are all hoping that this new organisation will finally make it to the light of day and give angling the voice it deserves in the corridors of power. The decision of the Salmon and Trout Association to pull out of the merger owing to their new charitable status was a big disappointment. I am told that Unity is on time to come into being sometime in 2009. Let us all hope so.

It is worth pointing out that the spirit of unity is alive on the Ribble Catchment. In the last 3 years there have been very positive moves and the RFCA, the Hodder Consultative and the Lancashire Consultative now speak with a much more united voice. With the development of the Calder Catchment Group the whole Catchment is now covered.

Proposed Legislation

In the last Newsletter there was a long list of proposals. All these have gone through their consultation stage and will become law as and when they can be fitted into the legislative programme. One of these proposals has created a stir particularly in the North West and North East. This is covered in more detail in the next item.

Key items include the requirement for all netted salmon to be tagged so that can be traced through the channels used to sell them off. Also there will be ban on anglers selling their catch. This will mean that all salmon found in restaurants, fish merchants etc should be tagged. The E.A. will be busy checking this in their attempts to stifle illegal outlets.

Diploids v Triploids

The new E.A. policy is to stock only with genetically altered infertile trout (triploids) in England and Wales as from 2015. It is hoped that clubs and other organisations will move voluntarily to stock with triploids as opposed to diploids (your common brown trout) before then. The bulk of the opposition to this policy came from the NW/NE. I do not propose to go into the arguments for diploids v triploids in this Newsletter. It appeared under this policy that where there was a hatchery on the Catchment and if it could be guaranteed that only trout from the Catchment would be stocked and kept separate from other breeding trout then diploids could be stocked. The RFCA got the agreement of our Catchment Trout Farm to have 2 ponds for Ribble diploids. All that was required was E.A. permission to get the broodstock. Given the difficulties we wrote direct to the Head of Fisheries. The answer was a long one and came with a series of guidelines. These guidelines would appear to make it well nigh impossible to stock diploids. RFCA Council has agreed to set up a group to revisit the initial review that came up with this policy to see if it is a valid argument. In theory there is time but many farms are gearing up with triploids only?

Signal Crayfish

The E.A. proposal to eliminate Signals found in Buck Gill Beck at Long Preston first muted in 2005 was strongly supported by the RFCA. Sadly this project never got off the ground and there has been much anger and dismay aimed at certain sections of the E.A. A very limited measure is now being proposed which appears to be merely a sop and it looks as though Signals will take over the Ribble as they have many other rivers.

RFCA Website

We are hoping that the website will become more interactive in that members will be able to log in and get the latest information.

In addition Fred Higham, with significant assistance from David Wilmot (Secretary of RAA) has set up an Forum so that members can have a guide as to river heights and associated fishing matters. It can be found under **www.ribblesalmonfishing.muux.org** Anyone wishing to access the site will need to register and log in to make full use of the site. Any comments can be passed back to Fred using the RFCA website and e-mail address.

Calder Catchment

The Calder Catchment Group organised a series of successful river clean up sessions throughout the catchment. These sessions were well attended and a significant amount of rubbish was removed from the river Calder, without which much of it would have ended up in the lower Ribble. A hearty thank you and well done to all those who took part.

Colne Water Angling Association is heavily involved in a Trout in the Town Project, which appears to be going well.

Discussions continue about the prospect of removing the Padiham Weir and the other obstacles to migratory fish but, as usual, the main stumbling block is the necessary cash.

The Calder Group has been consulted by the E.A. with regard to introducing additional coarse fish into the Calder system and there have been discussions about how grayling may be introduced.

STOP PRESS

Please Help

Cormorants

Information is being sent to clubs and owners about a paper/report by **Dr Heinz Kindermann** that is being presented to the EU Committee on Fisheries, all about the problems created by the excess numbers of cormorants. We are urging everyone clubs and individual members to write to their MEP's seeking their support for the implementation of a European-wide action plan to tackle these issues. **The report will be voted on by the Committee on Fisheries on November 5th and by the European Parliament's plenary on December 4th.**

It would be a significant improvement if so many letter could be sent in that made our elected representatives think seriously about the damage done by the excessive numbers of these birds.

Best wishes and tight lines for 2008