

# RFC NEWS No. 8

RFC Website: [ribblefisheriesca.co.uk](http://ribblefisheriesca.co.uk)

December 2008.

Could we wish all clubs, riparian owners and individual members a VERY HAPPY NEW YEAR. Let us hope it will be a good year in all respects for the Ribble Catchment.

## Entrepose

We had hoped that 2008 would see the end of this episode in the life of the Ribble. It is now taking on the attributes of a saga. The situation is that the firm should have appeared in December at Bradford Crown Court. Remember they had pleaded guilty in the magistrate's court a long time ago but appear to want to argue in mitigation. They did not appear in Dec.

pleading their barrister had been too busy to set the papers up. The Judge has rescheduled for March and allocated 2-4 days for the hearing. Once this is out of the way and we hope for a heavy fine there is the action on behalf of clubs and riparian owners being undertaken by the ACA. By the time this is sorted the ACA will be named Fish Legal.

## ACA Campaign for the Ribble.

Mention of the ACA brings one to the campaign, which was mentioned in the last Newsletter at some length. The campaign has been delayed owing to the ACA Campaign Manager getting a new job. Mark Lloyd, ACA Chief Exec, took the role over but of course he has become Chief Exec for the Angling Trust. The Campaign Plan is constantly updated but is waiting for the dust to settle in the creation of Unity.

## UNITY - The Angling Trust

Hopefully the majority of anglers will have received updates from their clubs as to the state of play. The Chairman of all participating organisations signed up for Unity in October and it is intended the new organisation representing the whole of angling will officially commence in Jan 2009.

The new body will consist of two entities: The Angling Trust, which will be the Governing body for coarse, game and sea angling in England and an unincorporated association "Fish Legal" which will deliver, throughout the UK, the legal protection and advice currently provided by the Anglers Conservation Association (ACA). This structure is necessary to comply with Law Society rules governing employment of solicitors and the requirements of Sport England. The ACA held an EGM in Birmingham and its members voted overwhelmingly for the change. All the participating organisations have been taking the same constitutional steps to wind up their organisations and transfer assets into the new unified body.

The new organisation hopes and expects the vast majority of angling clubs to join. Subscription information is already being sent to existing clubs in the various organisations. Unity is hoping to recruit 100000 individual members by 2011. Significant benefits will be provided to members but perhaps the greatest significance will be that at long last angling will have one body speaking for it with substantial clout. It is with some regret therefore that the Salmon and Trout Association could not join. Its newly gained charity status apparently being a stumbling block. Those of you who get the Trout and Salmon magazine will have read an article by the Salmon and Trout Association putting forward its view on where it stands. Time as they say will tell on that one.

## Pollution

There have been many pollution incidents throughout 2008. Fortunately most of them were small by nature and did not do irreparable harm. It is however death by a thousand cuts and only by ever more vigilant will the Ribble Catchment survive. The pollution reporting system is working well. May we remind you of procedures? First ring the EA hotline 0800 80 70 60 then ring Fred Higham for the Ribble and Hodder on 01200 423314, and Grahame Parkes for the Calder 07861 696813. They will follow it up and we have good links with the EA pollution teams. There is a pollution report at every RFC Council meeting and this goes to all clubs for their information.

## Signal Crayfish.

Sadly, the E.A. project on Buck Gill Beck to eradicate signals there never got off the ground. There are various reasons for this but space is too short to go into them. There was an attempt at hand picking and also electro fishing for them. The latter was tried by the RCCT, but neither was particularly successful. Nevertheless several hundred signals were removed and thanks must go to the volunteers concerned. Further efforts will be made in 2009.

## **Fly life and fry surveys.**

Jack Spees, the new technical officer for the RCCT, has achieved a lot in a short time. The RFCA purchased equipment to allow volunteers to be trained to do regular sampling for fly life in various streams around the catchment. A picture of fly life is being built up and will provide valuable information on the state of play. Likewise Jack has been electro-fishing small streams throughout the catchment with volunteers to establish fry densities. Again much valuable information is being put together. Jack has given talks at various club AGMs on his findings and has been well received. Thanks are due to the band of volunteers, especially the fly life group who go out each month, and the RFCA donation that made this possible.

## **Poaching and River Watch.**

Great efforts have been made this year to set up networks to look for poaching and alert the authorities. River Watch, launched at Waddow Weir in June, is but one part of the initiative, which involves the E.A., Police, Fishing and Shooting interests. All anglers should, through their clubs, have received a laminated card giving information on what to do if they suspect any poaching. Likewise signs have been erected on entry points to the river and along the Ribble Way giving similar information. CCTV cameras have been placed at strategic locations and these are moved at regular intervals. Police in East Lancashire launched Operation Sika as part of a crackdown on poaching and other rural crime. Police sent specific anti poaching letters to people identified as known offenders. This is the first time that this type of crime has been targeted in this way. In the New Year representatives of the RFCA will be meeting with the E.A. and Police to see what else can be done. Please report anything suspicious via the E.A. hotline **0800 80 70 60** and then let our poaching officer, Bruce Spedding, know on **07766441952**

## **Diploids v Triploids**

This argument rumbles on, indeed opposition is becoming ever more vociferous. For the uninitiated this argument is about trout stocking. The new E.A. policy is to stock only with triploids as from 2015. They hope that clubs will move voluntarily to this position and not stock diploids (your ordinary brown trout). Triploids are infertile as opposed to diploids. The major opposition appeared to be from the North West and the North East but there are numerous letters in Trout and Salmon from the South. The E.A. did not widely consult on this issue and have only themselves to blame for the opposition and the row. The RFCA has set up a group to look at the so-called research review under the Chairmanship of Brian Wells, Chairman of the Hodder Consultative. Hopefully once this group has come to a view we will publish it.

## **Water Framework Directive**

This is very complex but also very important. It is becoming the main driver for everything in the North West. The River Basin Management Draft Plan for the North West will be published shortly. I am told it is a mammoth document but it is crucial that it is read and suggestions made in the consultation period, which starts Dec 22nd. If it is not in the final plan then in simple terms it will not get done. Fortunately a member of the RFCA Council, Chairperson of the North West RFERAC, has been co-opted onto the River Basin Management Team.

## **Abstraction Notices**

A little known facet of our work are abstraction notices. Our Vice-Chairman gets a copy of all abstraction notices in the North West and sends them to the appropriate Consultative. We usually take advice if we are not sure and if required object to the proposed licence. It isn't glamorous work but very necessary when it comes to defending our environment.

## **Calder Catchment**

The group looking after this part of the system meets regularly and does good work. A representative from the E.A. is present to ensure speedy communication and there is always RFCA representation. The group deals with much of its own business but there is a clear communication link to RFCA Council and if required RFCA will also address the matter. The group were consulted by the E.A. on coarse fish stocking in the Calder and Padiham Weir is an ever-present topic. The proposed racecourse at Read is also being watched. The Trout in the Town Project with Colne Water Angling Association has exceeded expectations and congratulations are due.

## **By laws and Netting Limitation Order (NLO)**

A reminder that the 2 fish kill byelaw on the Ribble continues for 2009. This is part of a ten year NLO on the Ribble. 2009 sees the third year of the NLO and part of the agreement is a three yearly interval review. This will take place at the end of 2009. There have been several meetings with the E.A. to clarify the methods to be used. The RFCA has put out a paper on this, which went to all clubs and the E.A. gave a presentation at Council. The Ribble is doing well and we expect it to meet its targets. It has already moved into the second tier of rivers in terms of targets and if it continues in this vein will move into the top tier of waters, those considered not at risk and expected to reach their target. Much hard work has

gone into this state of affairs by a lot of people; hence we have to be doubly on our guard against abstraction schemes, pollution and poaching to mention but three.

2009 will see some new byelaws coming into being. Probably the one of most interest will be that no rod caught salmon or sea trout will be allowed for sale. This brings England and Wales into line with Scotland. All legal net or fixed engine caught salmon will have to have a tag fixed to them as a sign of their legality. The Ribble pilot-tagging scheme was cited in evidence for this. It does have implications for this official voluntary scheme, which has one year to run but, as yet, it is not clear what will happen in 2010 onwards. It's a case of watching this space.

## **Settle Hydro Project**

This was reported on in the last Newsletter and things have moved on a pace. Settle Hydro has been selling shares and one national newspaper has been pushing the scheme. They put an application in to Craven District Council for permission to erect an Archimedean Screw and to the E.A. for water abstraction. The RFCA opposed the application on the grounds that they had given insufficient evidence of how they were going to ensure the free passage of migratory fish through the fish ladder. We asked for proper hydrological studies to be undertaken and also an alteration in the outflow of the Screw. The application was refused and I am delighted to say that E.A. Fisheries backed our stance. Almost immediately Settle Hydro resubmitted their application with one change from the original. They had altered the outflow as requested but on the most significant item, that of the residual flow through the fish pass, the figures were exactly the same. We have again objected and have asked for a personal hearing at the planning meeting. Settle Hydro do appear, we think, to have got the message since they have appointed a consultant to do the hydrological study. At least we hope that is the case since, neither ourselves nor the E.A., have yet seen these figures. The bottom line is that unless we are satisfied on the residual flow over the fish pass we will continue to object. We would like to thank the many clubs, Consultatives and individuals who also wrote in and objected.

If anyone wants our paper on small hydro works on migratory rivers please go to our website [www.ribbonfisheriesca.co.uk](http://www.ribbonfisheriesca.co.uk) and click on the email link and make your request. This link comes through to the Chairman and Secretary.

## **Hodder Consultative.**

The Hodder is in the good hands of the Hodder Consultative. They are doing much good work with their salmon propagation scheme and are embarking on a sea trout propagation scheme on similar lines. They constantly ask anglers to tell them of any fin clipped salmon that they catch but rarely get this information. Imagine their delight when of the 20 salmon captured for spawning purposes four were found to be fin clipped. These were salmon reared by them that had returned to spawn.

## **Cormorants**

In the last Newsletter under Stop Press was request for people to support the report by Dr Heinze Kindermann on the Cormorant problem in Europe. We wrote to all North West MEPS and the Labour representative on the European Fisheries Committee in support of the Kindermann proposals. I am delighted to say that many of you did as well. It is only by showing a strong united front that Fishery interests will get anywhere- cue Unity in the UK. We also put our signatory to the European Anglers Alliance support of the proposals. The proposals came before the European Parliament and were overwhelmingly passed with 558 MEPS in favour and only 7 voting against. This is not binding on the Commission but the exceptionally strong backing from the European Parliament puts heavy pressure on the European Commission and the Council of Ministers to put forward the request for a pan European management plan. We must remember it was a European Directive in the first place, which has created the cormorant problem. Having said that questions need asking about the draconian interpretation of the Directive in England and Wales. Under this Directive 25000 cormorants are shot annually in France while we manage only 700?

## **State of the River**

The first thing to be said is that as far as can be ascertained the river is improving. As stated in previous Newsletters the Ribble has moved from Category 3 to Category 2. That is probably not at risk in 2011. Then we had another excellent run in 2007. The 2007 Return Figures came in a short time ago and they make interesting reading. The Ribble again came in the top six rivers for salmon catches in England and Wales and also for sea trout. Only one other river came in the top six for both species and that was the Tyne. But it is when you come to the Catch and Release Figures that the Ribble comes to the fore. The Ribble has the highest % return rate in the top six rivers for both salmon and sea trout. The figures are salmon 78% return rate, the next best in the top six is the Lune at 62%. For sea trout 73% return rate with the next at 56%. It will be interesting to see the final breakdowns by river from the E.A. since in 2006 the Hodder sea trout return was considerably lower than the Ribble? There is no question the high release rate is a major factor in the improvement of the river. 828 salmon were returned by anglers in 2007 and that is a lot of additional fish spawning that would otherwise be lost to the system. Congratulations and keep up the good work.

## Counter Figures for 2008

We are fortunate in having 2 counters on the system. However for much of the season the Winckley Counter has been malfunctioning and I am only going to give the Waddow figures. The EA hopes to retrieve the Winckley figures for a final analysis so they will be given in the next Newsletter. I must stress that the Waddow figures are the raw non-analysed returns. However, once we get the fully analysed figures they should be accurate since the E.A. has been doing weekly trap sampling of fish at Waddow.

With the Dec figures to come 5424 fish have ascended Waddow Weir. This is +441 on 2007 and Dec still to come. These are the best Waddow figures in six years.

The provisional net caught figure is very low in the region of 66 fish. The full breakdown of figures will be available in the next Newsletter.

## Website and Webcam.

The RFCA website [www.ribblefisheriesca.co.uk](http://www.ribblefisheriesca.co.uk) is not as user friendly as we intend it to be. One of the tasks for 2009 will be to improve it. The intention is that any club or individual member will be able to access it and find minutes, all consultation replies which are on your behalf, all papers produced by the RFCA. Any on going issues will be similarly highlighted and particularly where you can get involved. We have seen with the Settle Weir Hydro and the cormorant problem clubs and individuals being mobilised to action. In this day and age unity and strength of purpose is all important. This why we ask any individual member who has an email address or who has changed their email address to let John Whitham know.

In a previous Newsletter we gave information on another interesting development, that of the setting up of a Forum on the Ribble by Fred Higham and David Wilmot (Sec RAA) It can be found under [www.ribblesalmonfishing.muux.org](http://www.ribblesalmonfishing.muux.org)

Fred Higham went every day to Waddow Weir and then published the water height on the website. This proved of great benefit to countless anglers judging by the number of hits, particularly those from a distance away. At the end of the season Fred asked via the website that if people had found it of interest contributions would be greatly accepted. The new RFCA Treasurer agreed to collect any such monies. Somewhat to peoples surprise over £200 was sent in. Out of this has come a new idea.

## Webcam

This came out of an idea from Fred Higham and the credit for it must go to him. This is to put a webcam at Waddow Weir with its own dedicated web page showing the state of play of the river there. This will show the height and the colour. Fred arranged a meeting at Waddow attended by the RFCA, E.A. and installation firm. RFCA Council has agreed in principle to fund the scheme and the £200 collected via the Ribble Forum website is being put towards the cost. It is intended subject to final estimates to have the webcam in operation for Spring 2009. It is hoped that this will provide a service to local anglers but particularly to the visiting angler. Perhaps it would be true to say that the Ribble has not been as welcoming to the visiting angler as it might have been. In a small way this will start to redress the balance and there are more moves afoot to hopefully improve matters.

Since this is the last Newsletter of 2008 and the first for 2009 some thanks are due. The E.A. does not always get a good press and much of that it brings upon itself. But at local level working with Richard McIlwain and his Fisheries team, and Helen Nightingale and her Pollution team there is nothing but respect for a job well done. They work closely with us and keep us informed and are ever responsive to our needs. If only the rest of the E.A. was as good?

The small but dedicated band of Officers, unpaid and over worked, do sterling work. As you will see from the list below we have a new Treasurer and a new Secretary. In truth, John Whitham was doing both jobs for long enough.

Once again, can we wish everyone a Very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. Let us hope that 2009 brings less pollution problems for the Ribble Catchment and more fish and good water.

## Tight Lines for 2009

David Hinks, Chairman,  
Mike Horner, Vice-Chairman,  
John Whitham, Secretary,  
Anthony Hooley, Treasurer,  
Fred Higham, Pollution Officer,  
Bruce Spedding, Poaching Officer.