

RFC NEWS No. 15

June 2010.

State of the river and Counter Figures (to date).

As I write June 5th the river is as low as I can remember and most fishing is at low ebb. One of the “perks” of being an RFERAC member is that we get monthly updates of the state of NW waters (reservoirs and rivers). This has now become a weekly update for obvious reasons. We are at a state of potential drought and having read the updates, one wonders why a state of drought has not been called? That of course is a political decision with lots of ramifications. The E.A. has asked all big organisations to try and save water and there was a Granada (?) item asking people likewise to try and save water. If things continue with a lack of rainfall it will not be long before one is officially called. Try to prevent the neighbours from using their sprinklers all day and pressure washing their cars!

2010

	Waddow		Winckley		Locks	
	Up	Down	Up	Down	Up	Down
January	8	12	279	15	28	18
February	2	5	28	6	-	-
March	15	12	55	19	-	-
April	26	4	70	55	-	-
May					-	-
June					-	-
July					-	-
August						
September						
October						
November						
December						
TOTAL						

Comment:

The low water through April has not been conducive to the movement of fish at Waddow, this has carried on into May with very few events recorded so far. At Winckley, a large amount of down counts have been recorded, this is likely to be the movement of kelts still present within the system. The low water has meant that I have been able to remove all of the trash that has collected around the fish pass structure at Winckley through the winter so when we get a rise in water, the fish will have an easier passage.

The E.A. officer is due to visit Locks next week so he will send the figures through with his next monthly report.

Hydropower

There is always a silver lining and since Jan 1st the Settle Hydro has hardly run a day. How they intend paying off their loan is an interesting situation? That has not stopped the same group advertising in the Financial Guardian for subscriptions to build hydros at Bainbridge Weir in Yorkshire and one on the R. Goyt at Stockport. In both cases they are claiming a return will be paid? The very conditions which are being suggested will happen under climate change; i.e. concentrated rainfall leading to floods followed by drought conditions are the very conditions hydros cannot run in so we are building white elephants.

The RFC submitted a response to the E.A.'s consultation on the new streamlined permitting system for hydropower, but is anyone listening? I know that members of the Angling Trust met members of the Government but their view is that no one is listening. The dash for so called green hydropower is a farce when you think that if all 26000 identified sites in England and Wales were up and running then the maximum amount of energy produced would be equal to 1% of the nations needs while a realistic figure is 0.5%.

The Angling Trust Technical Director, Alan Butterworth, gave an excellent presentation to members and guests on hydropower at an evening at Read Constitutional Club. Evenings such as this are becoming a feature of RFCA activities.

One further thought on hydropower, I spent a morning at Whalley Weir trying to persuade two members of Whalley Green from intending to put a 120 kw hydro on the Weir. I fear I was not very successful and I know that Jack Spees from the RCCT has also tried. The only thing making hydros in any way an economic proposition are Government grants and a ridiculously high guaranteed price for any electricity produced. Electricity the taxpayer will be forking out for, effectively paying twice

Pollution

There have been quite a few low level pollutions and in the low water this has led to fish kills. As you are walking about the countryside please keep your eyes open and report any incident to the E.A. hot line

0800 80 70 60

and then let Fred Higham Pollution Officer for the Ribble and Hodder on **01200 423314** and Graham Parkes for the Calder on **07861 696813**. We have had fish kills on both catchments in the last few weeks.

At the AGM, Helen Nightingale, E.A. Team Leader Pollution, gave us an explanation of the new arrangements under which they now operate. Helen and her team do a great job in very difficult circumstances.

Poaching and River Watch

There are very few salmon around for obvious reasons but sea trout may well make their way. Keep an eye out and report any suspected poaching on the E.A. Hotline above and report it to our poaching officer, Bruce Spedding, on 07766441952. At the next RFCA Council meeting there will be an item on the new proposed Enforcement Pilot by Jackie Swire, Team Leader Fisheries.

Water Related Recreation Activities Draft Strategy NW

As I reported in Newsletter 13 the original was withdrawn. I am pleased to report that the rewritten draft came to RFERAC at their last meeting and was approved. This is a much better document that we can live with. If it had been written like this in the first place there would not have been such a storm of protest. The original document was written by Professor Ravenscroft team at Brighton University. The latest one was written by the NW E.A.

Webcams

All three webcams are in place, at Waddow on the Ribble, at Winkley (Winckley) on the Hodder and Jumbles on the Ribble. By using all three you can get a reliable view on what is happening on the system. We have had two problems with the Winkley camera, firstly with branches obscuring the lens which has been sorted. The second problem is of a technical nature and is proving more problematic. You will find at times that this camera is off line. We are making every effort to sort this problem.

North West Fisheries Consultative Council

The RFCA is a member of this grouping and takes a very active part. It had been hoped that an Angling Trust NW Forum would have been up and running by now but that is not the case. It is my hope that the NWFCC will continue irrespective as a tightly focussed group concentrating on major issues. Two sub groups have been set up on Stocking Policies, led by Chris Heap of the Hodder Consultative, and Hydropower by David Hinks RFCA.

RFERAC

I have referred to this earlier but not all members may be familiar with it. Regional Fisheries, Ecology, Recreation Advisory Committee to give it its full name was initially a formally constituted Fisheries Committee to advise the E.A. It was broadened in scope to its present situation. The Fishery interest on it is still the largest grouping and you have to apply to be a member. It deals with a great many issues and has an important part to play. There is something of a row going on at the moment since the E.A. has changed the constitution of membership and in so doing removed the number of fishery interests by right. Given the fishery interest members are the

most vociferous in objecting to what the E.A. does, (e.g. Water Related Activities) but to try and get rid of them is not the answer? A letter of objection has already gone to our local MP Nigel Evans.

Padiham Weir

Most of you will be aware that Padiham Weir has finally gone. This was the single worst obstacle to fish migration on the system. There has been some uninformed comment in the Press, which has been unfortunate. The E.A. has put out a statement clarifying the situation. We should be grateful to the E.A. and the RCCT for rectifying a situation that had gone on far too long. That section of the Calder will revert back to what nature intended.

Research Projects

We have been approached to be involved with 3 projects to date; the first looking at March Brown populations; the second relating to salmon and where they go in the sea; and the Celtic Sea Trout Project. In each case we are encouraging anglers in general - not just members – to become involved both from an interest point of view and also from being able to make a contribution.

Increasingly the problems encountered at sea are being recognised so to try and explore these DEFRA has engaged Southampton University to carry out some research. Using the data stored in the salmon's scales they hope to be able to identify where the fish go and what factors contribute to their survival and growth rates.

However, as with all research, the success of the project will depend on the co-operation received from anglers in collecting scale samples will be crucial. We often complain that nothing is being done to support our sport - sometimes with justification – but now you have your chance to make a contribution,

Flyer from the University of Southampton

Salmon in decline...

Atlantic salmon, *Salmo salar* (L.), populations have declined severely over the past three decades and their **future survival is at risk**.

More than 90% of mortality occurs at sea.

Unfortunately, very little is known about the marine life of salmon so the causes of decline are poorly understood. Individual river stocks migrate to distinct feeding grounds in the North Atlantic Ocean. Salmon are exposed to different environmental conditions depending on where they go. *To predict the response of specific river stocks to future environmental changes at sea, we need to locate their marine feeding grounds.*

This will benefit stock management on a river – specific basis and will identify populations that are likely to be most vulnerable to changing conditions over the next few decades

How can we track salmon?

Since the 1960s, tagging studies have allowed us to track salmon from their country of origin to the point of capture in high-seas fisheries. This has been an important step in understanding their general ocean distribution, but has been limited by the locations of high seas fisheries and the low number of tag returns. But, salmon carry a natural tag in the form of their scales, and those collected for ageing also hold chemical clues to their location at sea. By comparing chemical signals from scales to satellite temperature records, we can map areas used by these fish.

We have used this technique to find the marine feeding grounds of salmon from 3 UK rivers at a higher resolution than has previously been possible. Our results show that fish from different rivers and of different age-classes migrate to discrete areas.

Now, we want to extend the project to cover **all main salmon rivers in England and Wales** to distinguish which river stocks share common feeding grounds and to identify which stocks are most vulnerable to environmental variability.

We are working on a DEFRA-funded project, in collaboration with the Environment Agency, the Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science (CEFAS) and Centre of Ecology and Hydrology (CEH), to improve understanding of the ocean distribution of salmon from UK rivers.

Scale archives are incredibly valuable for understanding responses to environmental changes at sea, but they are increasingly hard to find and are often incomplete or missing vital information.

For your local river, we are very interested to find out:

- 1) What scale collections exist?
- 2) What collection programs are currently active?
- 3) Can scales be collected for the future?

With scales from **your local river**, we can locate the marine feeding grounds of your salmon, and we will be better able to understand the risks to which your stock is exposed.

We are very happy to visit you with more details and look forward to making a difference to the salmon conservation effort in your local rivers.

For more information please contact Catherine Cole or Kirsteen MacKenzie:

By e-mail: catherine.cole@noc.soton.ac.uk
or
kirsteen.mackenzie@noc.soton.ac.uk.

By phone: 023 8059 6528

By post: School of Ocean and Earth Sciences,
University of Southampton,
Waterfront Campus,
European Way,
Southampton,
SO14 3ZH

Salmon Research



Please Help! Please Help! Please Help!

The University want 15 scale samples from fish of each river within two categories – multi- sea winter fish and grilse. When you have killed your salmon please collect scale samples as indicated and place them in a small envelope and return them to Kyle Young at the local Environment Agency office:

Lutra House, off Seedlee Road, Walton Summit, Bamber Bridge Preston. PR5 8BX

Future Events

Hopefully this Newsletter will come out in time. The Celtic Sea Trout Programme, Read Constitutional Club, **Monday June 14th, 7-30pm**. Nigel Milner, leading expert on sea trout, APEM and University of Bangor will give a presentation. **This is an open meeting for anyone.**

Next Council Meeting July 7th Read Constitutional Club 7-30pm

Finally if we get some rain pray it is a slow build up since the last thing we want is a flash flood, which will bring a lot of pollution with it.

Byelaws

The new byelaws covering eels have been approved and now become operative.

Annual Reports

Many of these were distributed at the AGM. The Secretary has been distributing the rest so all should have received one or do so in the next few days. If not contact the Secretary John Whitham, preferably by email if you have one.

Tight Lines to one and all.