

RFCANews

No. 46

September 2018

I said in the last Newsletter that 2018 had been a season for the sun worshipper. Although there has been some rain there have been no significant floods to bring fish in. The Ribble is a comparatively slow flowing river unlike many major salmonid rivers. We need a fair amount of water to get the fish running.

Counter Movements

Waddow/Locks Counts 2018

	Waddow		Locks	
	Up	Down	Up	Down
January	2	18	1	5
February	4	1	1	2
March	9	2	7	1
April	12	5	18	9
May	52	8	33	25
June	297	108	31	27
July	246	80	11	10
August	193	22	19	13
September	815			
October				
November				
December				
Totals	815	244	121	92

The downs for Waddow in June is a mystery!!

Catch and Release on the Ribble

We have been fortunate that anglers on the Ribble have responded well and in the regulated club part of the Catchment the C/R has been above 90%. This must continue if we are to be in voluntary rather than mandatory measures. The classification of the Ribble changed from "at risk" to "probably at risk" owing to the 2017 catch figures which were an improvement on 2015/6. The 2018 season has all the hallmarks of a disaster as far as catches are concerned. We have been in contact with the E.A. as to how they will do the figures. Their view is that they will use the 4 index rivers data and extrapolate the stock classification for the rest of the rivers. You can imagine our views on that!

Which brings me back to the Ribble. For every one fish killed by an angler nine other anglers must catch a fish and release it to attain a 90% C/R. That is much easier to do in a year where plenty of fish are caught but in a season that we are having where we expect few fish to be caught attaining 90% becomes very difficult. Please give that some thought. I have not killed a fish for many years. The last one was a badly bleeding fish which after a long time trying to release it I reluctantly killed. I would hate to be in a mandatory 100% C/R where I had to release that fish which subsequently bellied up in full view of the walkers on the Ribble Way. Not the greatest advert for angling.

Pollution

With our current low flows any pollution will have a disastrous effect on the river, particularly so with so few anglers out on the river. Our Pollution Officer for the Ribble and Hodder is keeping a watch. Given how few Fishery Officers and Pollution Officers there are it is crucial that all anglers keep their eyes open and report any pollution to the E.A. on 0800 80 70 60 and then to Fred Higham (Ribble and Hodder) on 01200 423314 and Graham Parkes (Calder) on 07861 696 813.

Put simply if we do not report pollution it will probably not get reported.

Poaching

Exactly the same advice applies for poaching. Use the same number for the E.A. and then contact the RFCA Anti-Poaching Officer Grant Hinks on 07930 807 980. Grant has all the contacts with the E.A. and the Police. I will keep on saying this it is now the responsibility of anglers and clubs to report pollution and poaching since we can now no longer rely on the E.A., given the cuts they have had. There has been the odd incident but nothing major.

Avian Predation

All the paperwork was sent in for the last licence indication that we had shot our quota.

Also, we submitted an application for renewal together with evidence of the need to increase the allocation, particularly for Goosanders. This was linked to maximising the smolt production on the river and other key issues at this time - such as the AT trying to get the number that can be culled increased from 3000 nationally and the fact that the Ribble licence is the biggest area nationally but doesn't have the largest allocation because we can't count the estuary.

I hadn't heard anything and the start date was fast approaching so contacted Natural England and RB.

Due to cuts N.E. haven't enough staff to deal with these licences so the matter had been sent to the north east area and Nick White is now dealing with the matter.

I have spoken to him and he stated that he was limited in the number of birds that he could allow so wanted increased count data.

I challenged this and then referred the matter to RB who has written a strong supporting letter on our behalf.

The likely outcome is that the licence will initially be issued as last year whilst consideration is given to a revision of numbers.

This clearly demonstrates the need to record all sightings and so I will be asking all site co-ordinators to keep a sightings log - basically the more the better.

As soon as I hear anything from NE I will make an initial allocation as we have done previously and call a meeting for all site co-ordinators to discuss the way forward for the coming shooting season.

In addition, it is imperative that I get monthly reports from all site co-ordinators, which may then be used to prove the need both for future bird counts and allocations.

In other areas they have found that a two man canoe down the river has indicated a much larger population than previously recorded by the usual counts. If anyone has, or knows anyone has, a two man canoe and is prepared to undertake this task RB has indicated that he will do the counts for us.

Such a move would give Council a real headache given the stance we have taken regarding canoeing.

Byelaw Consultation

I will try to simplify the situation. First if you objected and have not received a reply you must contact Heidi Stone on heidi.stone@environment-agency.gov.uk

It has become apparent that many people from the NW received replies very late or only when they asked for them.

So where are we in terms of what happens now?

The E.A will send their proposals to the Minister along with all the objections and the Minister then decides the outcomes. We have just learnt that in Wales, who joined the NW in opposing, that the Minister has called for a Public Inquiry. How this will affect our Minister we do not know.

We believe the following that the EA are proposing for 2019 that all rivers "at risk" under the Stock Classification will be 100% mandatory catch and release.

Those rivers in the "probably at risk ", **the Ribble**, will be on a voluntary catch and release policy but must reach 90%. Failure to do so will result in a 100% catch and release in future years. There may be an interim period where the catchment has a chance to prove it can reach 90%.

These measures will be in place for 10 years. We believe there will be a 3 yearly review but have no idea what this will consist of, what criteria will be adopted and how it will be done. We assume that the Stock Classification model will feature prominently year on year which is a fundamental objection of ours since we believe it to be totally flawed.

The E.A. has recommended to the Minister that Bye 13 relating to hook sizes and methods of the proposals be withdrawn. This is something we campaigned against since it was unworkable.

We are fortunate in the NW that we have 2 representatives on the AT Salmon Angling Advisory Body so we get good information. As soon as we have definite information we will inform all clubs.

Finally, on Saturday the 15th of September RRT are having a "River Heritage" celebration at Edisford Park, there will be a range of activities suitable for families and anglers alike (from project show cases to badge making and casting instruction!), please could you promote this to everyone you know!

Tight Lines for the rest of the season

David Hinks,
John Whitham
John Rawlinson