

WEST WILTS FLYFISHERS GUILD

WWFFG



Members of the Wild Trout Trust

Website: <http://wwffg.t15.org/>

OCTOBER 2012 NEWSLETTER

Last Guild Meeting - 10th October

Presentation by Samantha Stork - Wiltshire Wildlife Trust

Clearing Rivers of Invasive Species

Our waterways have been invaded by a plethora of invasive non-native species - plant and animal and are now in real danger. We have all seen Himalayan Balsam, maybe also Orange Balsam (probably without realising what it was), encountered the odd Signal Crayfish and heard of 'killer' shrimp at Grafham, but Sam showed us eye-popping examples of what happens when non-native species are free to multiply because they don't have the natural predators they would have in their home environments.

She is running the Wiltshire Wild Life (WWL) 'Source to Sea' project, funded by the Environment Agency (EA), to trial methods for clearing a complete river system of invasive non-native species.

The entire Hampshire Avon catchment including the Nadder, Ebbles, Bourne and Wylye - over 300 miles of river, is being surveyed as first stage of a determined clearout.

In a fast paced and lively talk we saw: fields of Himalayan Balsam, Japanese Knotweed growing through tarmac, 10' tall Giant Hogweed on the Nadder, blankets of Water Fern on the Bristol Avon and American Skunk Cabbage romping away in the New Forest. Sam told us that whilst these spread naturally along waterways they are associated with fly-tipping sites, river bridges and where lanes pass close to streams suggesting that people discarding garden waste are thoughtlessly exacerbating the problem.

The EA is most concerned that blocked waterways will lead to flooding. A host of eradication methods is being trialled - pull, spray, inject, strim, scythe, trap and introduce predators, but control is far from easy and good intentions can make things worse. The spread of Signal Crayfish seems unstoppable because trapping only captures the big ones and as they would normally have eaten the small ones there has been a population explosion. Now, to stop the extinction of our native crayfish the EA has created Arc sites in gravel pits as sanctuaries until a method for eradicating their big cousins is found. A desperate measure for desperate times.

Sam described the new invaders such as the 'Killer' Shrimp which, as we saw on a video clip, kills anything it can get hold of and has devastated some water eco systems in Germany. They can survive for days frozen in ice and a fortnight in damp waders.

The Environmental Agency's **STOP THE SPREAD** campaign is -

CHECK, CLEAN, DRY

To find out more - www.nonnativespecies.org

Not surprisingly Sam's talk generated a lot of interest and members had plenty of questions to ask and points to raise. If you would like to read about the Source to Sea project and possibly join the working groups (Salisbury & District Angling Club members are involved) to help clear out these invaders email sam@wiltshirewildlife.org

We have asked Sam to return in a year's time to see how the project is progressing. Let's hope it's successful.

Next Guild Meeting - The Shaw Hotel - Wednesday November 14th

An Auction Evening consisting mainly of the Late John Williams fishing tackle. **Please check the list of items for sale in the attachment accompanying this letter.** You will also find the list on our Website on 'activities' page and scroll down (Rods and Reels will be auctioned at the Cirencester Auction rooms soon.)

How many of the invasive species from Sam's talk can you identify below:



©Laurie Campbell



CALLING ALL CUPS

Would all the Cups and Trophies presented to winning Members at the AGM earlier this year be returned to Colin at the NOVEMBER Meeting please. They need to be re-inscribed, polished and ready for presentation to 2012 winners

The Guild's Rivers Meeting is scheduled for Thursday 8th November'12 at the Shaw Hotel commencing at 7:30pm. Roger, Jim and hopefully Malcolm will give us their reports on the Frome and Devon Rivers. Would all River Members please attend.

Jim Wheel (wheeljk@aol.com) requests your Catch Returns from the Frome by 5th November please. Perhaps an easy way to submit your **Frome** catch returns is by going on to the 'river frome' page of our website and follow the simple instructions. **After completing you Returns please do not forget to click 'save' on the top left hand corner of the spreadsheet.**

This only applies to the River Frome Fishing Returns.

Returns from the **Devon Rivers** to Malcolm (malbond1@btinternet.com) before the meeting to enable the returns to be collated and presented.



Fishing Report - Mole & Yeo - 2012

The 2012 season will be remembered for its plentiful rain throughout most of the late Spring, all Summer, and early Autumn. Rather than the usual spate-driven occasional major runs, the migratory fish have been trickling upriver throughout the season on a virtually continuous basis. Whilst this may have helped the fish reach the spawning areas, it has affected the fishing by reducing the opportunities.

The rain has caused a few problems on the Guild's water, firstly with regard to bank erosion - the Mole is quite fast-flowing and powerful for its size, and secondly the Environment Agency (EA) do believe that quite a lot of fry and juvenile fish may have been lost as a result of the floods. We will have to wait and see whether or not that reflects in the adult fish numbers over the next few years.

On the plus-side, we do believe that the removal two years ago of the 2-metre-high Head Weir further downstream is resulting in more migratory fish getting upstream earlier in the season, as you will see later in this report.

The Guild's fishing members have nevertheless been quite active, and from the returns received so far, there was a total fishing effort by 11 members of c.35 person-days. We can't say man-days, as Denise Ashton has made a number of successful visits, and on one trip, Denise caught and returned a 7lb hen salmon! Well over a hundred brownies were caught in total this season, including several fish in the 12"-13" (12-15 oz) category.

Another member, Derrick Jones, has been very successful in catching (or, at least, hooking) big salmon and sea trout. Derrick banked a 20lb salmon (safely returned), and lost another at the net - a hard-fighting fresh-run fish estimated at 15-16lb. He has also caught several sea trout, the biggest of which was 5lb.

Whilst Derrick does live in South Molton, and so can be on the bank quickly when the fish are there and the water conditions right, nevertheless to have a catch record like that does require a certain level of expertise! Well done, Derrick!

For next season, I intend to provide everyone with a large-scale map of the fishery, with the pools named and marked. Andy Moore has already kindly provided the map master copy, but due to a combination of injury, and then work commitments in London, I have been unable to get the work completed this season. Watch this space. If anyone has any suggestions for naming any pools, please let me know.

We are also now starting to plan the bank management activities for early next season, and to some extent this will be dependent on what the Westcountry Rivers Trust (WRT) agree to in regards to funding and organising major works (fencing repairs and coppicing etc.). WRT have assumed this responsibility from the EA, although the EA are still involved.

Unfortunately, Himalayan Balsam is becoming a problem on the rivers, so we will need to decide what we do - probably the best advice is for Guild members fishing is to pull up any stalks they see. The WRT are recommending that each angler pulls at least 20, so that's a good starting point (the more the merrier). I will provide more detailed advice before next season.

Malcolm Bond.

WWFFG Devon Rivers Officer,

October 2012.

The meeting will include news on the fishing, deciding dates for working parties and stocking the River Frome.

The Agenda:

1. Season 2012
2. Review River Frome
3. Review Rivers Mole & Yeo
4. Any other business.

A REPORT on the BLAGDON Guild SOCIAL DAY 23rd September
(heaviest day's rainfall of the year!)



As Trevor and I travelled towards the serenity of Blagdon Lake it started to rain and a strong breeze arose. Arriving at the famous Lodge, the car park was full, the Bristol Flyfishers Association were having a Competition Day. Luckily we were bank fishing and the Ranger found time to have a chat to our 5 Members. He said that there was an Easterly wind blowing which made



conditions perfect for fishing the North bank. We had a (free) cup of tea and stood with our backs to a roaring log fire in the hearth, secretly thinking how nice it would be to stay in the Lodge all day!

Arriving at the Lower end of North Shore we found the lake levels brimming over the banks which meant in places it was too deep to wade.

There was a huge flock of House Martins, (hundreds) enjoying a feeding frenzy plying one end of the lake to the other obviously taking advantage of a prolific hatches of black buzzers which continued all day. These birds were building up their strength and energy for their epic migration to Africa.

The five of us sheltered under dripping trees feeling and looking like water rats as we had our picnic lunch. Fishing continued throughout the afternoon, as did the rain, we were trying different patterns of flies but found it hard to contact the fish. We watched some local gentlemen fishing at a 'hotspot' known as Pegs Point. After pulling out about 5 or 6 trout they left so Trevor and I jumped into

their place and fished B.B.Buzzers for well over an hour without the slightest tug! How do these 'local' guys do it?

The result of the day was we all got soaked to the skin and not a lot to show for it - well I enjoyed it! Also thanks to the Members for joining in the fun.

Jon Jonik won the Henderson Trophy with two fish for a weight of 5lbs.12ozs. One of his Rainbows was left for a short time on the grass which had a chunk taken out by some furry creature, possibly a mink! Jon's successful fly was a **Black Pennell**. Congratulations Jon, you have also grabbed that delicious bottle of fishing plonk! Robert came second with a handsome Rainbow weighing in at 3lbs caught on a #14 Black Cruncher. Roll on next year!



The Black Pennell

The Black Pennell is a great fly for both trout and salmon. It is normally fished on a floating line as the point fly of a team, but it also works on its own. Tied small, it represents a small midge.

Hook - Size 8-14 Wet Fly. Thread - Black. Body - Black Floss Silk.

Tag - Fine Oval Silver Tinsel. Tail - Golden Pheasant Tippets.

Rib - Fine Oval Silver Tinsel. Hackle - Long Black Cock Hackle Fibres.

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Salmon & Trout Association SUBMITS LEGAL COMPLAINT TO EUROPE AGAINST UK GOVERNMENT

Complaint by Salmon & Trout Association highlights lack of delivery and years of prevarication in failure to comply with the Habitats Directive on River Avon SAC

We have today (27th September) submitted to the European Commission a formal legal complaint against the United Kingdom for its failure to protect English chalkstreams, particularly the Hampshire Avon, as it is required to do under the EU Habitats Directive.

Introduction

During a meeting with Environment Agency (EA) officials in April 2011, S&TA representatives were told that all Government fisheries' work would be evidence led. A senior EA operative then proceeded to dismiss two reports, from an eminent independent scientist, on the likely impact of a particular issue on salmon and trout stocks, stating that the EA 'just didn't believe him.' It was at this point we finally realised that science alone, however robust, would never influence national decision makers if the evidence was unsupportive of their own agendas.

Chalkstreams

England contains more than 80% of Europe's chalkstreams and therefore has a special responsibility to protect their ecosystems, yet successive governments have failed to address the stressors which have degraded chalk river habitats, particularly excessive water abstraction and diffuse pollution. Myriad official reports and plans over the past thirty years have delivered little effective action on the ground.

European Union (EU) Complaint

S&TA has finally lost patience with the lack of political commitment to conserve this precious international resource and so we have submitted this complaint to the EU that the UK has failed to protect Hampshire's iconic River Avon, a Special



Area of Conservation under the EU Habitats Directive. The complaint is based on the inability of the river to reach its conservation target for salmon, but the supportive evidence is just as relevant to brown trout and other aquatic species and, most importantly, to many more chalkstreams.

S&TA's Objectives in Submitting the Chalkstream Complaint

Principally, to challenge the Government's commitment to protecting the aquatic environment and dependent species.

Raise political and public profile that chalkstreams are degraded, not the pristine environments 'spun' by the EA's PR machine.

Object to the lack of action by Government to put in place policies on abstraction and diffuse pollution that would radically improve the Avon, despite

their own scientific reports that these are the underlying issues preventing restoration.

Force Government into establishing the required policies and providing sufficient new resources to restore chalkstreams to their proper ecological status, so conserving them for future generations.

Guy Linley-Adams, Solicitor to the S&TA, who drew up the legal complaint, points out, "The UK negotiated and then signed up to the Habitats Directive and the high level of protection for our very best nature conservation sites and key species that it requires. Delivery of that high level of protection is not optional, it is required by law. It is regrettable that the S&TA has to appeal to the European Commission for help in ensuring that the Hampshire Avon and its salmon are protected for future generations."



Water White Paper and Draft Bill

The UK Government recently published a Water White Paper and has even more recently published a draft Water Bill which presents an opportunity to deal with many of the criticisms raised in the S&TA's complaint, particularly those in relation to over-abstraction and restoring sustainable abstraction on English rivers. This complaint is intended to influence the Bill. By taking this unprecedented action, the S&TA hopes to compel the UK Government to take the measures necessary to deal with these problems, not only on the River Avon SAC or indeed just on the four chalkstream SACs (all of which suffer from broadly similar problems to the River Avon), but those being suffered by many English and Welsh rivers across the board.



FISH TAILS.....

"A fisherman can rarely cross a bridge without lingering for a few moments to gaze upon the streams. Running water is a thing that fascinates and holds us spellbound."

Harold Russell: Chalksteam and Moorland, 1911



The angling press is reporting that angling organisations such as the Angling Trust and S&T A, and various country pursuit groups including The Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust, have joined forces to remove the protected status cormorants enjoy. Even after the 3,000 words of red tape has been followed, fisheries with 60

cormorants can only cull two per year which is why the population has exploded from 2,000 to 25,000 since having this elevated status. The alliance is actively lobbying the government to reduce bureaucracy and give cormorants and goosanders the same status as crows and pigeons. If you wish to join the lobby go to www.anglingtrust.net/cormorants for sample letters to send to your MP.

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Fly Fishing the Bristol Water Fisheries with Martin Cottis

Martin Cottis, Trout Guide and Fly Fishing Instructor, gives WildernessTV.com presenters and novice fly fishermen, Ben Langdon and Nicky Brown, hints, tips and advice on fishing Chew Valley Lake near Bristol. (11mins.)

<http://youtu.be/ezLvBMEfB8I>

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The November Newsletter will appear early December!

HAPPY FISHING.....BOB