

NWWAC -Still-water Report - April 2019

Rutland Water.

Water Level

During the opening week, the water was at a very awkward level for bank fishing being 1m below top level and halfway up the rock armour. In the subsequent week, following a good fall of rain, it was all hands to the pumps plus the input from the feeder stream, River Gwash in full flood, that resulted in a massive rise to top water level (96%) over a period of 10 days.

This has made bank fishing little bit easier but obviously covered up some barren marginal territory. However, the fauna will soon find its way back into the rock armour.

Fishing.

This has been, arguably, one of the toughest openings for bank fishing in the history of the fishery. There appeared to be no obvious reason for this, as the marginal temperature on the opening day was well above the average for the time year at 8° C compared with 2° C in 2018! The fish appeared to remain safely offshore. Consequently, the boat fishing was pretty good.

During the subsequent 10 days gale force winds kept bank anglers at home, muddied up the margins and prevented boats from going out with the consequent loss of income. This was “winter restrictions” enforced by nature!

Most of the fish caught were excellent stockies of very good average size.

Inevitably, a number of the larger Browns up to 10lb have showed up and were caught mostly from the harbour wall.

The fishing has since been patchy with some places producing fish for very short periods, suggesting that shoals of stock fish are touring the margins.

There have been some quality rainbows caught with the best fish, a specimen of 6 lb 11 oz caught from the Harbour Wall on a perch fry imitation.

Browns have been in evidence elsewhere than the harbour wall and have been seen patrolling the dam wall.

Most of the fish have been caught from the main body of the lake.

Fish have been caught on everything from size 16 buzzers to snakes.

Stocking is going ahead as planned with 20,000 fish averaging 1.2 kilos to be in by the end of March.

Despite the numbers of fish stocked well up the arms, almost the entire new population appears to have migrated to the main basin and are caught mainly but not exclusively east of an imaginary line drawn from Whitwell Creek to East Creek.

This is not an uncommon occurrence as on one previous occasion, brown trout stocked at the Transformer on Friday afternoon arrived in Stockie Bay, 4 miles away, on Saturday morning! So, once again, Stockie Bay has lived up to its reputation!

More and more overwintered fish are showing up. Some of them are very thin, some are in quite good nick and a few appeared to have recovered.

Many still exhibit evidence of Ergasilus, Some showing evidence of Argulus (fish louse) and Piscicola spp (Fish leeches).

Despite this, these overwintered fish are silver and give a very good account of themselves: even 2 lb fish have been going out to the backing.

Litter Pick Sunday, March 17, 2019

Eleven adult members of Rutland Water Fly Fishers and a very young third generation Cooper, turned out for this on a fine, gale free, Sunday morning.

Approximately 20 bags of rubbish were collected. Our thanks to Josie Porter and Pat Bonner who provided us with delicious bacon baps before we set out. Thanks also to Anglian Water for tea and coffee and providing us with gloves, plastic bags and “helping hand” pick up tools. As a reward, RWFF received four boat vouchers for their efforts. (See pic).

Access at Blue Pipes.

At a meeting with Will Kirstein, Parks Manager, John Wadham enquired whether access could be made available to the blue pipes fishing zone via the entry gate adjacent to the draw off tower.

Will Kirstein stated that this would not be acceptable for safety reasons due to the amount of other track users including cyclists and walkers.

He added that Anglian Water were not keen to provide additional padlocks and keys for site security reasons. He also drew attention to the fact that some season ticket key holders have abused this by driving round the Peninsula track when the fishery was closed.

Also, the stile access is likely to be retained but for foot access only. Also parking, under new proposed legislation, will not be available on the roadside verge.

Anglian Water Forum – Thursday March 7th 2019

Panel consisted of:-

Will Kirstein - Parks manager

Jon Marshall - Fishery Manager

Andy Ainscough - Senior Ranger

Jon Marshall

He started by commenting on the excellent quality of the stock fish available which were in good condition and well up to size for 2019. In 2018 fish farms had problems getting fish to size due to the “beast from the east” and subsequent heatwave. Three new boats have been ordered for Rutland and in future years two boats will be replaced annually to maintain a quality fleet. These will be 16 foot rather than the fifteen-foot previous models.

Outboard engines.

These are leased and serviced annually. Any problems arising should be notified to fishery staff immediately.

He said that the price match in the shop with the Internet would be retained.

12,000 fish had been stocked in March and would amount to 18,000 by late April 1st.

Anglian Water have a new Facebook page.

Questions.

Q. Why had the guest tickets been replaced by meal vouchers.

A. Apparently, there had been problems with certain season-ticket holders abusing the privilege and not signing in the shop prior to going out with a guest which resulted in many illegal guest visits. Recreation and access manager stated that this was costing Anglian Water.

Q. Why were Bronze tickets now subject to a four fish a day kill.

A. This was to come into line with four fish day ticket.

Q. Why has there been the reduction of 20 fish for the silver ticket.

A. It was indicated that cost of stock fish had increased considerably and it was pointed out that 180 fish at £3 each gave more than value for money against the cost of the ticket. It was also noted that some anglers now, and in the past, were guilty of fiddling their catch returns and not giving the correct numbers on their ticket.

Ergasilus (gill maggot)

There was some discussion on this parasite which did not appear to affect the brown trout but it was felt that “triploid” rainbow trout were more likely to be susceptible. It was also indicated that the bream and roach could be carriers. It was reported that rainbow trout at Grafham Water were similarly affected. In due course, Anglian Water will be putting out an advisory leaflet suggesting that to attempt to overcome this problem, seriously infested fish should be destroyed.

Stocking times

Consideration to be given to varying this according to water temperature with particular regard to reducing input in warm weather conditions-especially July/August.

Water Temperature 2019

Will Kirstein discussed the impact of temperature on the ecology and reported that the maximum recorded temperature in 2018 was 20° C.

Temperatures are taken every Wednesday and prior to all swimming events. They are taken at 1 m, 3 m, and a 6 m respectively. Anglian Water agreed to publish these in the weekly reports.

Stocking.

Jon Marshall stated that stocking was carried out throughout the season to aim for 3 to 3.5 rod average. 80,000 fish are planned to be stocked during the 2019 season.

Ticket Sales

He discussed the reasons for the apparent decline in sales, alluding to the average age of trout anglers and reduction in the number of young people entering the sport. He said that the courses run by Anglian Water and those by Fly Fishers groups were helping to bridge this gap.

Brown trout.

Q. Why are these not stocked more often?

A. Jon Marshall said that they are much more expensive than rainbow trout and take longer to get up to size. Also, there are not enough fish farms producing them. Because of their success in the reservoir Anglian Water would agree to try and obtain more.

Catch and release.

There was some discussion on this topic particularly with regard to C&R in hot weather. Fishery staff agreed to monitor this very carefully.

Catch and release care.

Q. Education of anglers needed.

A. This was agreed by the panel who indicated how careful coarse fishermen were.

Barbless hooks.

Q. One member asked whether all fishing should be with barbless hooks.

A. Anglian Water replied that there are not ready for this yet.

Ticket sales.

Will Kirstein summarised the situation so far and gave details of the numbers sold in the full range. Season tickets sales were similar to last year.

Straps in boats.

These were not proposed for Rutland Water but had been introduced at Grafham following incidents of anglers falling out of boats.

Water levels.

Will Kirstein gave details of the pumping regime and indicated that water could not be pumped into the reservoir during periods of low flow so as not impact the downstream water quality in the source rivers. Also, intake water quality would have to be monitored prior to pumping: particularly with regard to pesticides. E.g. Metaldehyde (slug pellet).

Anglian Water business.

Will Kirstein gave details of their functions.

1 Regulated business. This involves water supply and sewage disposal.

2 Non-regulated business. This involves recreation and site management. He indicated that water companies were obliged to offer access to their premises.

Winter restrictions.

Will Kirstein outlined the reasons for these and gave details of negotiations with Natural England, the Rutland Wildlife Trust and other ecological bodies. He indicated that prior to these restrictions fishing finished at the end of October and start again until April 1. No boats were formerly allowed on the water in March. Natural England had agreed to allow Anglian Water to have 20 boats on the water during this period. The prohibition areas are those where bird counts are carried out. He indicated that, until the lagoons constructed in 2008 become registered as and SSSI then the prohibition areas will remain in place. He gave details of negotiations with Natural England regarding ecological improvements to other parts of the site.

Competitions for 2019.

Jon Marshall said that there had been a good take up for these as in previous years. He mentioned certain events: particularly the ladies national and rudder matches- during which eight fish kill limit will be imposed. In order to achieve this, bronze ticket holders- on a four fish limit- would have to buy a ticket on the day.

Predator fishing.

This has proved exceedingly popular and provided Anglian Water with considerable income which, in turn, could be seen to some extent to subsidise the trout fishing.

Grafham.

As with Rutland Water, the early season fishing has been dogged by gales. This has led to discolouration of the water in the margins and prevented boats from going out. In addition, with continued pumping, the water level has been rising steadily but over a littoral zone, some of which has been exposed since the 2018 heatwave. Apart from the dam wall, fishing locations have been very limited. The water level is still some 2.5 m below top level. However, the dam wall continues to provide some good fishing.

Ergasilus still present in the gills of the rainbow trout. When the water finally reaches top level, the fauna will be able to recolonise the margins and no doubt fishing will improve.