

NWWAC Reservoir Report - October/November/December 2021

October 2021

Water Level.

The water level in Rutland Water has now dropped about just over 2 m. The effect of this has been to expose more weed beds which in turn, has made bank fishing very difficult. The drop in water level has also exposed millions, or maybe zillions, of zebra mussels. These are now decaying in the absence of water coverage and give off an appalling stench. Walking along this littoral zone is crunch, crunch, crunch! I had no concept of how many millions of these mussels were present until now.

However, this drop in water level isn't all bad news as it has enabled less mobile fly fisherman access to all banks. There are a couple of dodgy spots with very sticky mud to avoid. The left-hand point of Carrot Creek and the South-East corner of East Creek.

It is great having this access: however, we need rainfall to recharge the rivers so that pumping can commence to cover this now, almost barren zone before the winter frost gets at it.

Rutland Water Biology.

No wonder, with the filtering activities of so many molluscs, that the water has become so clear. There is little that mankind can do to overcome this problem and, I think it's quite clear that this weed growth will be an annual event. One time, it used to be just Canadian pond weed, but now there are a number of species growing up, including hornwort and milfoil and *potamogeton* species. However, at the time of writing, following some quite strong winds, the weed is steadily dying back and being washed up on lee shores.

It seems very likely, that this filtering activity will have dramatically reduced the phytoplankton (algae). The impact of this would be lead to a decline in daphnia which is, as we all know, is a very valuable food source to the trout. If any of you find daphnia in your fish you have killed please notify your John Wadham.

Invertebrate survey.

Jane Walker and John Wadham have already carried out some preliminary sampling in various places around the lake. The sampling showed, more interestingly, what was missing or in reduced numbers. This is in line with anecdotal evidence. E.g. *Corixa*, Caddis, Beetles, Hog lice and, most importantly *chironomids* (bloodworms). However, the absence of these fauna is more than compensated for by the plethora of three species of shrimps, an abundance of snails, olive nymphs and, what now appears, as recorded above, to be millions of zebra mussels (*Dreissena spp*).

This work will now continue in conjunction with the Angling Trust and the Institute of Fisheries Management and eventually be written into an updated bank fishers' guide in 2023.

Fishing.

The boat fishing outside of these weed beds has been pretty good. Some fine fish, both rainbows and browns, have been hooked or lost. Similarly, some nice fish have been caught from the bank and some equally large ones lost in the weed. This latter comment should what prompts one to realise, that, with such dense weed beds, inevitably fish are going to plunge into these and one is either going to lose the fish or be broken off. So, you need thick string and a rod with a bit of guts: nothing less than an eight weight.

The ideal scenario is for intermittent patches weed which you know the fish will be visiting on a regular basis. So ideally, fish between two of these weed beds. At the moment, it is very hard to decide where the fish are likely to be. So, it's quite useful to fish with something floating or just under as this will no doubt provoke of boil or some indication that a fish is

interested in your offering and, of course keep the fly out of the weed. Recently, most fish have been caught by this method: either with floating fry, daddy long legs. Sometimes, they want it static and others moved. This latter unfortunately, at the moment, causes one to pick up a lot of weed. It would be very nice, to be able to fish with, for example size 12 bobs bits or sugar cube GRHE. However, as indicated, one needs pretty stout tackle to restrain fish from the weed beds. Unless you have got flies tied on very strong hooks less than a size eight they are likely to be straightened.

Bank clearance.

Sometime between now and the commencement of the 2022 fishing season, it is our intention with Anglian Water staff and equipment to carry out some tidying up work to make the bank more accessible between Whitwell and the Mound; to include Belgrano Bay.

Grafham Water Fly Fishers has done some excellent work at their reservoir. You will be kept up to date when we intend to start work. It will be very useful to be able to do it while the water is at a low level. Watch this space!

November 2021

Water level.

At one time, the Rutland water level was down approximately 4 m. This has left a very large littoral zone. The sooner this fills up the better: rather than having this area exposed to the rigours of frost and ice. It has been very useful enabling us to carry out the bank side work. Many of the zebra mussels have been left high and dry and hopefully a little frost on these would be very helpful. While we were carrying out the bank side work, the stench given off by these decaying molluscs was quite foul.

Weather.

December 2021 was as a very mild if rather dull month. We finished up with average rainfall, most of which fell in the last 10 days. Total rainfall for the month was 65 mm which is near average.

At last, following this recent rainfall, the source rivers have finally got into flood but are very turbid with a huge amount of water off the land and off streets of the towns alongside the source rivers. In addition, the Gwash is well in flood and this volume would almost represent one of Anglian Water's pumps. This additional water will eventually enable Anglian Water to switch on the pumps and start filling reservoir up.

At the time of writing even with the land run-off, there is evidence that the water level is rising slowly.

Fishing.

This has been quite patchy and the anticipated late-season bonanza has not been realised. However, some great fish have been caught and the rainbows in particular, are in very good condition and appeared to have lived off the fat of the land. Some great Brownies have been caught. Most effective method has been fishing with suspender Minkies. The technique has been to cast out 15 to 20 m and await events. The fish have wanted it static. Because of the clear water, it has paid to move from spot to spot. I said it was patchy, but one golden patch has been the head of Whitwell Creek. Here, as demonstrated in the fur and feather, fish appear to have gathered in quantity. Many of these were stock fish introduced in October but there was some more seasoned fish travelling around with them. As most people put the fish back it was hard to determine whether they were here to feed or possibly to enjoy slightly warmer water discharging via the spring which comes out under the Willows.

Another interesting factor which makes it very hard to locate the fish, and this may seem very simplistic, is that there is very little indication on the surface that you have got fish in front of you. I have spoken to many regulars who are catching fish but have seen very little sign of rising fish since

the mid-summer period. This may be due to their diet which does appear to be mainly snails and shrimps.

Grafham Dam Update.

Two representatives from the major flyfishing clubs affected by the closure have been invited to attend a Zoom meeting on Wednesday, January 12, 2022 at 5.0pm. The meeting will be chaired by Peter Hartley. Following the result of discussions, further representations will be presented to Anglian Water on the matter.

You will be kept up- to speed on developments.

RWFF website.

Our thanks to Tim Lawson who has done a tremendous amount of work and spent a lot of time in getting it up to date and launching it.

December 2021

Water level.

Following a very dry November, with only 4 mm of rain recorded in Oakham by the 27th, the water level is still continuing to fall and is approaching 3 m below top level. While this doesn't suit the supply undertakings, it does suit us less able anglers who can now fish the entire perimeter of the lake that is available to us this time of year. However, there are some very sticky muddy patches where it is easy to get mired.

At this time, the river Gwash, which is the main feeder is now down to a trickle. However, 12.5 mm of rain on the 27th has increased this flow. This, however, is unlikely to have any impact on the level of the lake. Needless to say, the source rivers, Nene and Welland, are at a very low level and so pumping from these will not commence until there is a considerable increase in flow.

The water still remains very clear, and, following a gale force wind on 31 October, a great deal of the weed has now died back or been washed up allowing one to fish subsurface without fear of becoming weeded.

Weather.

Not only has this been a dry autumn it has also been very calm which has enabled fishing from most banks but not ideal for those using the rudder! Nevertheless, the boats have had some good catches with other methods. Many of the fish caught appear to have little in their stomachs and, to judge their excellent full-bodied condition could live on their fat for some period of time. This promises very well for next spring, given reasonable winter weather conditions. Ideally, the reservoir level needs to rise as soon as possible to prevent the impact of frost on the exposed marginal fauna.

Working parties

These were held on Friday 3 December and Friday, 10 December from 10.00am to 3.0pm. A number of fishing spots have been made available on the Mound from the Barnsdale corner back round towards and round the east side of Belgrano Bay. We worked in conjunction with other volunteers supplied by Anglian Water and under the direction of Luke Russel. This was exhausting and quite rewarding work, but enjoyable, secure in the knowledge that this very useful fishing area will be available for next season. It was very useful at the time, to have the water at such a low level so that we could have bonfires "on the beach". Our work was much appreciated as indicated by a number of "likes" on Facebook.

We were very fortunate with the weather but, a little more wind would be nice to get the bonfires going!

Next working party Friday January 28th – water level permitting.



Quagga mussels.

These horrible invasive molluscs can be found around almost all of the margins of the reservoir. One particular hotspot is New Zealand point. Where as many as fifty specimens could be found on a rock size of a cricket ball - below. It's very important when you are fishing these places that you take care not to transmit them elsewhere as they can get easily wedged in the cleats of boots. So please bear in mind the advice "Check, clean, Dry".





Grafham Water Dam

Fishing on the dam wall has been suspended commencing 29th November 2021 through to the season's end on January 31st 2022. This caused a huge amount of dismay to the many anglers who visit Grafham. Particularly affected would be those with less mobility who, following the installation of the rock armour around the natural banks, found that the dam wall was the main point of access for bank fishing. Since the announcement of this closure, at the anglers meeting on Tuesday November 25th, there have been a number of discussions, meetings and correspondence among members of the major fly-fishing clubs involved and Anglian Water staff.

The problem arose as a result of an alleged incident where a member of the public was injured by an angler's fly on the back cast.

A great many suggestions of how to deal with this have been put forward in order to comply with public safety.

Three main suggestions were.

- 1 Limit the access time for the general public along the back of the dam wall.
- 2 Consider allowing fishing from the dam wall where the water level falls such that, any back cast will not pass above the wall.
- 3 Consider installing a structure which would ensure that the anglers' cast did not reach the public at full water level.

At a recent zoom meeting chaired by Peter Hartley the matter was discussed in considerable depth. Peter Hartley read out a letter sent to Jake Williams at Anglian Water outlining in considerable detail the anglers' views and reactions.



Grafham Dan Wall Meeting – Wednesday 12th January 2022.

Peter Hartley opened the meeting explaining that he had met on Monday 10th January with Jake Williams. The meeting lasted some 2.5hrs and was positive in that there is still scope for discussion and some latitude on access to the dam namely:

1. Extending morning session to 10am
2. Evening fishing 8pm to 1 hour after sunset
3. Possible unrestricted access if water level falls below a to be determined safe level
4. Possible movement on current fishing restriction during weekends, public and school holidays

Peter has written a comprehensive letter to Jake Williams summarising all the points discussed at the meeting including a 'wish list' of improvements to the access so far granted. The meeting agreed that before we take any further action that we should await Jake's response to Peter's letter and dependent upon response: then decide the next course of action.

The loss of access to other parts of the water were discussed and David Moore stressed that we should seek some compensation for the lost access as AW have a responsibility to provide some compensation. It was also noted that the water park will open this year in June and will remain open until September: meaning the loss of bank space from Marlow Stones to G Marker bank.

Suggested areas of compensation were:

1. Access points provided at intervals along rocked shorelines
2. Anglers' car park at the Seat
3. Clearance of Savages Creek bank
4. Clearance of fishing spots to the right and left of Sludge Point
5. Ongoing AW maintenance programme to maintain bank access

Grafham Dam Petition

Paul Wild reminded the meeting that a petition has been created on Facebook, and at the time of writing 1,611 have signed the petition. It is hoped that it will achieve 2,500 which will be a significant number and likely to attract attention from the media etc.

Meeting Conclusion

It was agreed that once a response has been received to Peter Hartley's letter, we should arrange a further interclub Zoom meeting to discuss our next steps. Mark Brinkman to send out Zoom invitation for the meeting.