

Make time to go fishing



Lincs and Northants Fisheries Team Activity Report January 2022

Introduction

Welcome to the January edition of our Fisheries Activity Report. This recent period has provide us with many challenges not least with our staffing levels. A number of our staff including myself have required long periods of extended sick leave. I can report that staff are recovering well and we are hopeful we can return to full operational fitness soon. Sadly we also say cheerio to Darren Randall who has moved over to the biodiversity side of the FBG team. We wish Darren all the best in his new role. We are currently advertising Darren's post and hope to be carrying out interviews later this month. We also welcome Darin Alberry who is starting work for the team at the end of January. Darren will be working as our new fisheries technical specialist, he will be based in Lincoln but will have overview across the entire operational area. Darin has kindly sent us a paragraph of introduction.

Hi am Darin; I am originally from Clowne outside Sheffield and as a child spending anytime with a fishing rod in hand was always the best time, growing up fishing the open matches in the 80s that were staged along the River Trent from Holm Marsh to the Weirfield and fishing in the local club. It was always a dream to get a job in the Fisheries sector and I started my journey in 1995 when I enrolled on a BSC in Environmental Science at UEA and graduated in 1999. I have worked all over the world and spent 12yrs in the USA, working in Oregon on Salmon rivers and in NYC where I ended up as the fisheries Biologist for the City, while in NYC I was part of a comprehensive study into the impacts of the invasive Snakehead Channa Argus ending up with two white papers being published within scientific journals on the subject. Five years ago I decided it was time to come home and apply the skills I have honed to the rivers and water bodies I grew up fishing, I have been working as a fisheries Technical officer within the West Midlands fisheries team for the past four and a half years, running the upper Trent and River Dove Barbel study and habitat restoration projects for the River Alne and River Arrow along with fulfilling my daily duties as a grade 4 fisheries officer. I am looking forward to joining the L&N Team and hope to stay there until it's time to retire with the aim to leave a legacy of improved waterbodies resulting in bigger and more numerous fish populations to entertain myself with in my twilight years (I do this Job for purely selfish reasons). Three pictures showing a nice pike captured on the Upper River Trent and a nice barbel from the tidal Trent. In addition a nice Rooster Fish from the River Nene (only joking from Cabo San Lucas Mexico).



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Fisheries Enforcement & Regulation Summary

Our enforcement and regulation work has been impacted by our staffing levels this period. We have also suffered from problems with equipment and PPE provision. All these issues will be resolved this year and we will be back to full operation strength soon. We have continued to respond to incidents as they are reported. Figure 2 shows some recently seized fish traps. These were baited and were full of fish when recovered from the River Glen.

	Area code														Totals
	CLA	DCS	EAN	EMD	GMC	HNL	KSL	LNA	NEA	SSD	THM	WMD	WSX	YOR	
Licence checks	77	51	449	249	58	646	47	103	248	107	290	564	265	1206	4360
ORF's issued	14	3	32	17	27	63	93	31	19	28	105	46	22	339	839

Figure 1 Rod Licence check data from July - September 2021



Figure 2 Illegal Fish Traps Seized

Keeping and Introduction of Live Fish Regulations (KIFr)

Our National fisheries Colleagues are currently re-refreshing our Fish Movement regulatory work and Lincs and Northants have been fully engaging in this project. We also have a number of on-going investigations regarding non-native fish species and a new site that has been identified as being infested with a new novel argulus parasite called *Argulus monogolianus*. I will expand on this topic on the final page of this report.

Monitoring Summary

Jake Reeds and Darren Finnie have completed winter fish surveys on the River Ancholme. A video survey report will be published shortly. Results indicate classic winter fish distribution that we see on lowland waterbodies with large aggregations of silver fish at key points. The Fish survey on the River Steeping has been completed. The survey shows good numbers of bream overwintering in the same locations previously observed. This included a pre habitat improvement survey above Burgh Sluice. Our Flood and Coastal Risk Management team are planning to create some new off channel fisheries habitat. A winter fish survey has been completed on the North Level Drain. This work has been undertaken in conjunction with Tydd Gote Angling Club and North Level Internal Drainage Board after a poor seasons fishing on what is usually a very good fishery. The results showed good numbers of adult bream but there may be a significant impact on roach after a hard previous winter. Some funding from the National Fisheries Technical team may be available to look at possible habitat works to improve things for fish in regards to reducing entrainment at lowland pump stations.

Darren and Jake have also undertaken some work at Peakirk Pumping Station fish survey. This site is a key overwinter fish refuge. We worked with flood defence team to help with the yearly issue of pump testing and reducing fish mortality.

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Figure 3 Officer Finnie operating scanning equipment at Peakirk Pumping Station

In addition to our rolling three year survey program Jake and Darren also dedicate time to support our local Angling clubs. This winter our brave crazy duo have completed a fish survey of Drummer Boy Lake on behalf of Brixworth Angling Club and Horseshoe Lake for Deeping St James Angling Club. These included a bathymetry survey and multibeam and side scan survey to look at the fish population present. The field work is then followed up with a detailed report. Both of these clubs are concerned about fish biomass and a potential overstocking situation. Our rolling three year monitoring program continues in 2022-23 and this year the River Welland will be focus of attention. This work will include our scanning boat and the more traditional electric fish equipment.

Videos and reports from all our survey work can be provided to anybody who would like to read them. This work is carried out over the cold winter months and is always subject to weather and ground conditions. This year has been no exception with some very cold mornings for Darren and Jake to get to grips with.



Figure 4 Fisheries Officers Jake Reeds & Darren Finnie, wrapped up for the weather!

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Fisheries Improvement Program (FIP)

Summary for 2020/21

During this period income from Rod Licence sales has been used to support a diverse range of projects in the Lincs and Northants Area. We have supported anglers and fisheries habitats in both River and Stillwater settings.

The Nene Backwaters project is an on-going long term effort to improve these important fishery habitats within the diverse range of backwaters within the River Nene catchment. The Nene backwaters provide some of the best fisheries habitats which support all life stages of our wild fish populations. From spawning areas to nursery areas the backwaters are critical in supporting young fish into full maturity. These projects are delivered in partnership with River Nene Regional Park, Nenescape and are developed to enhance and protect these important habitats for the future.

We have also supported on-going projects on the Willow Brook and River Gwash. In partnership with the Wild Trout Trust we have delivered marginal and instream habitat improvements to support wild trout populations. In turn these have also improved angler access for club members.

We also continue to maintain angling platforms on the Maud Foster and Boston drain systems. These are very popular venues providing angling hotspots for local anglers of all abilities.

Lincoln & District Angling Association have been supported with fisheries improvement funding in the development of Stillwater venue called Blue Lagoon in Lincoln. The project included habitat management and access improvements. The club and venue have also benefited from some new coarse fish from our Rod Licence funded fish farm at Calverton near Nottingham.

Oakham Canal Project aims to improve fisheries access and overall fisheries habitats within Oakham Canal. Close to Oakham this lovely fishery provides some excellent angling opportunities for local residents of all age groups and abilities.

Ringstead Island Fishery - Solar Aeration Project. In partnership with Wellingborough & District Angling Association this project supported the purchase and installation of water quality monitoring equipment. This equipment provides an early warning for low oxygen events. The equipment is then linked to solar powered aeration equipment which provides a sustainable way of managing the hot summer months and low oxygen events. The club are keen to provide other fishery managers with feedback, advice and guidance on the use of this type of equipment set up.

Water Supply Improvements to Wicksteed Park Angling – Working with Edge Angling Club the aim of this project was to restore a gravity fed water supply to Wicksteed Park angling lake. This important freshwater feed provided valuable water supply in the hot summer months. Failure to reinstate this supply would have resulted in the total loss of this important semi-urban fishery. Deeping St James

Horseshoe Fishery Project - This project had two main objectives. Firstly to improve open water habitat to provide fish cover from predators. In addition both marginal and bankside habitats were improved which in turn improved access and angling opportunities.

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Fisheries Improvement Program & Look Forward 2021-22

Summary 2021-2022

In addition to supporting the on-going Nene Backwaters project with Nenescape funding for the period 2021-2022 was largely directed to a very exciting project at Delapre Lake Northampton. In partnership with Delapre Angling Club and with support from the Angling Trust we are developing a bespoke angling coaching venue which is directly adjacent to the main fishing lake. This is a significant project that will develop and grow over several years. This year the site is being prepared by the club membership. This work includes; improved access, footpaths, de-silting, vegetation management, the installation of platforms and landscaping. The ambitious target is for the site to be open to angling coaching events later this year. For information about this exciting project please contact Delapre Angling Club.



Figure 5 Delapre Angling Club Coaching Pond

FIP - Look Forward 2022-2023

We are now looking at our potential funding allocation and reviewing our current list of applications and expressions of interest. Applications have been received both directly to Area officers and also via the Angling Trust portal. At this time we are oversubscribed but confident we can support several clubs who have detailed projects ready to go.

The Get Fishing Fund is now open!

The Get Fishing Fund is open for applications NOW. Application open – Monday 17th January to Friday 18th March 2022. Building on the successful launch of the Get Fishing Fund in December 2020, the Environment Agency and Angling Trust have announced an additional £100,000 investment to encourage more people to give fishing a go for the first time in 2022. Funded from fishing licence sales, grants of up to £2,500 are available to benefit angling-based projects. The funding can be used to help purchase equipment, fishing tackle and resources to run fishing events and activities to give people the opportunity to get into fishing. The deadline for applications is Friday 18th March 2022. Applications will be judged on a weekly basis and as a result, the funds may be allocated before the deadline. The Get Fishing Fund has been incredibly popular with clubs, fisheries, charities and other organisations using funding to get thousands more people into fishing. Therefore, we would strongly recommend that organisations that are interested in applying do not delay and submit their application now.

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Calverton Fish Stocks.

This year we set a very ambitious target for the distribution of fish reared at our Fish Farm in Calverton. With regret we were unable to meet our target. This yearly project is often difficult to manage. We have a narrow window in which to collect the fish and with several staff on sick leave we were unable to collect and distribute all the fish we had planned to. A number of clubs will be disappointed this year but all those clubs and waters that did not receive the planned allocation will be included in next year's request sheet.



Those clubs who have benefited this year include, Holbeach AC, Lincoln & District AC, Boston & District AC, the River Steeping, and Peterborough & District AC.

Operational Priorities – 2022-23

Our business priorities for this operational year will include fisheries incident response to both Enforcement and Regulation, Water Quality and Fish Disease management. In addition we will be bringing two new staff to the team who will require time to get to know the area and our partners. Our new staff will greatly improve our resilience, capacity and very much the quality of service we can provide.

Thank You's

We received a thank you from the residents of Newstead Mill on the River Gwash for the assistance the Fisheries Function has given them over the past two years. The Mill channel was subject to prolonged dry periods and often completely dried up in the summer. The team have conducted fish rescues and have provided invaluable advice to our Flood and Coastal Risk Management Team.

We have also received a thank you from Lincolnshire Police for assisting them with our sonar boat. This was in relation to a search operation on the River Witham.

Jake Reeds also gave a well-received presentation to the Pike Anglers Club and Fenland Pike Initiative in Bottisham to help explain some of the environmental pressures facing our fish populations.

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Please Note

The following information has been provided by our National Fisheries Laboratory based in Bampton. Bampton are happy to hear from fishery managers if they suspect this type of infection is effecting their fishery. Fact sheets are also available.

Background to Argulus

Argulus is a freshwater crustacean parasite most commonly found on the skin of fish. There are currently three species established in the UK. These parasites can have serious impacts and are one of the biggest disease problems in stillwater trout fisheries. They cause considerable damage to fish through their attachment and feeding behaviour, leading to loss of appetite and condition, lethargy, and in some cases, mortality. Persistent infections can cause economic losses and even contribute to the closure of fisheries.

About Argulus mongolianus

A. mongolianus is a newly detected species of Argulus originating in eastern Asia. There is very little information available about this parasite, with literature largely confined to a single description of a specimen from the 1930s. An additional report documents significant carp mortalities in a Russian fishery.

We have detected *A. mongolianus* in a limited number of fisheries to date - sometimes in association with fish deaths. This suggests it could pose a significant threat to fisheries. Unlike established species of this parasite, *A. mongolianus* appears to have a preference for the gills, gill cavity, mouth and head. It has been confirmed in common carp and their hybrids, roach and bream - but it is likely that the host range of this parasite is wider, with all freshwater fish species being considered potential hosts.



Figure 6 Female A. mongolianus full of eggs and in situ

Reporting

Reporting potential infections is vital to us being able to monitor the spread of this parasite and protect fisheries. Please let us know if you see or suspect any Argulus infections matching the descriptions above, or causing distress to fish.

These parasites can usually be easily removed with a fingernail or tweezers and sent to us for examination, so please get in touch with our National Fisheries Laboratory or your local Environment Agency fisheries officer, and we will be happy to arrange sampling.

Contact our incident hotline immediately to report dead or dying fish. For more information on *A. mongolianus*, or any other fish health condition, please contact the National Fisheries Laboratory:

Tel: 02084 745244 or 07825 111723

Email: fish.health@environment-agency.gov.uk

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For additional information on any of the subjects within this report or to arrange a fishery advisory visit or for general advice and guidance please contact Fisheries Technical Officer Hugh Bunker on 07818 454835 – hugh.bunker@environment-agency.gov.uk

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