

# DEVON

## ANGLING REVIEW

The Newsletter of the Devon Angling Association

Those who founded the Devon Angling Association well over a hundred years ago would be proud of the progress it has made over the years. I believe we remain on track in fulfilling the original reason the Association was established, that is to manage the river and the riparian environment as good pollution free habitat, sustaining trout, salmon and invertebrate populations for the future.

It has been a pleasure to serve as President of the Association over a period when many improvements to the river have been made. This could not have happened without good office bearers and a strong committee whose work has been tireless in pursuing better conditions on the river. The committee has good balance to it currently; there is a good mix of mature and young members, which it lacked for a few years. Everyone has a role to play - some have the local knowledge and keep the Association up to date on any matter that will affect the river and riparian habitat. Others are active in work parties who keep the river free of blockages, reducing the risk of flooding and enabling fish easy access up river to spawn, also keeping access along the riverbank clear for the anglers. Other members give up their time to serve on committees outwith the Association where it is in the interests of the Association to be represented. The committee members care about the river and its surrounding environment and do this work voluntarily. Without them there would not be a Devon Angling Association.

I would like to thank all the Committee for their dedication to the Association, which has helped make my term as President an enjoyable one.

**BRYAN ANDERSON PRESIDENT, DEVON ANGLING ASSOCIATION**

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### COMMITTEE COMMENTS FROM HON. SECRETARY DAVID MUDIE

Drew Jamieson's article 'Angling in Arcadia' published in the June 2008 edition of 'Fly Fishing and Fly Tying' magazine portrayed the River Devon as a unique place for fishermen and we would certainly concur with his opinion. His opinion is perhaps coloured, having fished the river himself at an early age, certainly more than fifty years ago. This does not alter the fact that many fishermen who are fairly new to the Devon are, in a more modern way, rediscovering the worth of a river, which can offer a wide range of experiences.

During season 2008, judging by catch returns submitted, many anglers enjoyed good trout fishing on the river and, while a great many small trout were caught - a good thing in itself to see so many young fish - a considerable number of fish over 1lb were taken. Some of these were fish stocked in the spring but many were native fish.

Many anglers, especially those fly fishing in the Taits Tomb to Dollar stretch caught vast numbers of salmon parr, evidence of good spawning over the last two years. As an additional bonus this year we saw good runs of

salmon before the end of the season, which gave some anglers considerable excitement.

Over the last two years we have been pleased to welcome on board several new members to the committee. This has allowed for an expansion of activities, most notably as regards work on the riverbanks. Favourable comments have been received from a number of anglers about improvements to pathways and/or access to pools, but the committee is conscious of the fact that not all areas deserving of attention are being dealt with. Hopefully, the work parties will be able to widen their activities to include some of the neglected areas but with Himalyan Balsam and Japanese Knotweed causing barriers to many pathways additional help in eradicating these pests is needed and currently such avenues are being investigated.

Glenquey Reservoir was at an unusually high level for almost all of 2008, which made fishing from the North Bank fairly difficult. However, the fishing was very productive, though the average size of fish was slightly smaller than usual. The best fish taken was 2lb and several anglers caught 10 or more trout in the day. It is noted however, that a very high proportion of fish were returned, so it may become appropriate to reduce the level of stocking at some time in the future.

**Many thanks to Kerry Menstrie for their assistance in printing this newsletter**

There have been a few instances of illegal fishing i.e. without permit or on a Sunday. It is in the interests of all

members of the Association to make it clear to such people that their behaviour is unacceptable.

The Forth District Salmon Fishery Board bailiffs patrolled the river several times in the autumn of 2008. The DAA appointed two members of the committee as additional bailiffs and, of course, all committee members have also been keeping a look out. The downside of all this may be that you as a bona fide member may be asked for your permit several times in the course of a day's fishing. This should not happen very often but if it does we hope that you accept it in the right spirit because we are interested only in trying to weed out a few people who take advantage of the rest.

The Constitution of the Devon Angling Association was written many years ago and consequently contains many clauses, which are not applicable to the current position. For example, references are made to that part of the river above Castlehill Reservoir, which the Association managed at one time. This is no longer under DAA control. The Committee therefore has been drafting and re-drafting a new constitution, which will be given further consideration and presented to the membership for acceptance at the AGM in 2010. Copies of the new proposed constitution should be available from the Secretary by October 2009.

## **SALMON ON THE REDDS (Contributed by Paddy Swan)**

If you visit the Devon from November through to December after spells of rain, you will see salmon jumping at the weirs and congregating in pairs on gravel beds where they will build their redds. Members of the committee working on the river to remove debris in early December watched fish up to 12lb on redds at Dollar. The salmon sometimes totally disregard humans on the banks as the cocks swirl about the river chasing competitors away from their particular hen and protecting their desire to fertilise the eggs the hen fish will lay in the redd.

The numbers of fish known to be taken by anglers seem a small fraction of those actually coming into the river. Unfortunately, since the Devon is a true 'spate' river it seems that many of our fish return in the November floods and even later when we have a dry autumn. We are still not sure how many fish actually come into the river. However, by counting the redds we could get some interesting information to help in managing the salmon fishery and it would help if members reported redds they can identify to the Secretary.

The word redd is Scots and is interpreted as 'clearing'. The hen salmon 'redds' a space on the gravel and digs a hollow down to a depth of 4 or more inches. Into this redd she lays her eggs in 7 - 10 'nests', the first 4 or 5 nests will contain 80-90% of her eggs, the remaining nests may have few eggs in them. The hen fish seems

to like runs in the river where the water is about 2 feet deep with plenty of gravel. Each hen salmon generally builds one redd. Hen salmon produce 800 - 900 eggs per pound of body weight.

Salmon in the Devon cannot run above the Cauldron Linn so redds may be created anywhere in the river or tributary burns downstream of the Linn wherever conditions are suitable. A redd can usually be identified by a 'dome' of gravel in its centre.

The small salmon fry are hatched with their yolk sacs still attached within the redd 90 - 120 days after they are laid and fertilised. Generally the colder the water the slower the hatching. The new fry (now alevins) will stay in the redds for about two weeks, they then leave and begin to actively feed on tiny invertebrates. This year's fry will develop into parr later in 2009 and by July 2011 will be heading down to the Forth and thence to the open sea, returning to the Devon as adult fish in 2012 /



2013.

There will always be Devon Angling Association members on the river ready to welcome salmon home from the sea and to take pleasure in watching them moving upstream to start the cycle once again.

## **RIVER AND SPECIES STEWARDSHIP**

With funding support from the River Forth Fisheries Trust (RFFT) and Clackmannanshire Council Biodiversity Partnership, fish population monitoring was carried out at 9 sites on the Devon and its tributary burns in September 2008. A small number of juvenile wild salmon were removed from the sites on the lower section of the river for use in a national project to produce a genetic map of salmon across the UK.

The results showed good levels of fish, both trout and salmon, at all key sites although anomalies were found at the A91 Fossoway Bridge. This site had unacceptable results when we sampled it in 2006. A number of farmed salmon smolts were found in the river at the Fossoway site and no trout were present. A subsequent, albeit small, fish kill (again salmon smolts) was reported downstream of the bridge later that month. In consequence of both these events the RFFT and Forth District Salmon Fisheries Board, with assistance from the DAA, did sample electro-fishing at a further 16 sites between Dunning Bridge and Crook of Devon.

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Salmon smolts were located at all but 2 of these sites, a matter of some concern as this part of the river is above the Cauldron Linn and is not accessible to wild salmon. The investigation is ongoing and may take some time to complete.

The bid for funding for the Clackmannanshire Rivers Project from the EU was not successful; however, alternative ways to fund this important project are being pursued,

**The DAA website address is given below, the site will be updated as soon as practical following the January 2009 Annual General Meeting.**

**[www.clacksnet.org.uk/hosted/daa](http://www.clacksnet.org.uk/hosted/daa)**