

RUTLAND WATER FLY FISHERS

Affiliated to Federation of Midland Fly Fishers (Anglia) & A.C.A.

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JANUARY NEWSLETTER 1999

Dear Member

Christopher Robinson on Fishing Holidays we can all afford - Tuesday 2nd February 1999

Just a reminder that the next meeting will be at The Victoria Hall downstairs rooms at 7.30pm on Tuesday 2nd February 1999 when we will be entertained by Christopher Robinson of Roxton, Bailey, Robinson of Hungerford. Their offices is adjacent to one of the loveliest chalk streams - the River Kennet. Christopher is a very keen fisherman and no doubt knows all the best places to go at the right prices. I am sure you will have lots of questions on the subject of fishing holidays. Rest assured that this will *not* be a sales pitch. Our thanks to the Chairman for putting him up for the night.

Tackle Auction - Tuesday 16th February 1999 - Victoria Hall upstairs room - 7.30pm

The hall will be open from 6.00 pm so please come as early as you can so that items for sale can be logged in and given a lot number. As agreed, there will be a flat rate fee of only £1 - 00 charged for unsold items with a reserve on them - not 10% as in the past.

There will be free admission for juniors who will I hope be given advice on what to bid for.

Jeff Dale has again generously offered his services as auctioneer for the evening and will kindly be donating his fee to LOROS.

Notices of this function will be posted at various places and in the local press. It will be open to non members upon payment of £2 - 00 including a raffle ticket.

Fly Tying Evening - January 12th 1999

This was obviously a popular event as some 52 members turned up. This is the best turn out for some time and all the more gratifying as there was still snow lying at 3.00pm!

The prizes were given away to the winners one of whom had taken the trouble to travel from Sheffield to receive his. The prize winners will be featured in the Rutland Times sports column.

It seems to be a good idea to have this type of function as it allows people to circulate and chat as well as being quite educational. So if you have got any ideas for this type of meeting please contact any member of your committee. Our thanks to the fly tiers who passed on their skills and their and know how free. Our thanks also to the committee members who provided the excellent food out of their own pockets.

Someone was heard to say that we have a good hard working committee. This has been borne out by their undivided willingness to volunteer for jobs to support the club effort.

Competition Meeting Tuesday 9th February 1999 - 7.30 pm at the Victoria Hall, Oakham

It would greatly assist Sean Cutting, our hard working Competition Secretary, if as many members as possible could come and participate so as to ensure smooth running of the Summer Programme. A lot of work goes into organising these events. If you want anything raising and can't get to the meeting please contact Sean on 01780 720833

National River Fly Fishing Championship -1999 Eliminator

This will be fished on the Llangollen A.A. water on the Welsh Dee. It is a Grayling only match and you may not fish the beat for practice after 14th February. Should there be a flood then 27th February will be the reserve date. Further details and entry forms are available from Tony Curtis, 36 Clare Road, Northborough, Peterborough, PE6 9DN or phone him on - 01733 344730. Closing date for entries is 5th February.

Cooking Evening - Monday March 1st - Jim Meikle

Jim who is one of our long standing members will very kindly be coming to give us the benefit of his culinary skills in preparation and cooking of all manner of game for the table - note that this is on **Monday** not the customary Tuesday. Those who have tasted his cuisine will testify to his skills in the kitchen.

Litter Pick up day - Rutland Water - Sunday 7th March 1999

Having recently taken a walk round the banks it is quite clear that despite our best endeavours last March, Mr Joe Public seems to have provided us with plenty to do! So as many volunteers as possible would be welcome. You get a bacon sandwich and coffee to see you through. Then you are allocated a zone and a bin liner. More details in February newsletter. Proceeds will be donated to the R.A.C.S (Rutland Accident Care Scheme) which is the brainchild of Dr Gray from the Oakham Medical Practice on Cold Overton Road. The organisation is similar to a landed "Flying Doctor" service. A very worthy cause which you or I may need one day.

Fishing Report 1998

Space and time preclude a blow by blow account of the 1998 season. However, a monthly summary will I hope give an idea of how it progressed.

April

The marginal water temp started at an all time high of 11 deg. C. This is bad news as the customary April cold snap can lead to a fall in water temperature putting the fish off feed. The month started off with some quite warm days but as usual the cold spell came just before Easter with the added problem of a massive influx of icy water following the heaviest rainfall ever recorded in April. This coloured up the tops of the Arms and Whitwell Creek. The weather thereafter was more reminiscent of January with snow on most days over the Easter break and by the 26th of the month the water temp had dropped to 7 deg. C with a consequent slump in sport and the disappearance of the resident fish presumably to deeper water. However, on the 26th and 27th it warmed up a bit and some fish were caught especially on the Stones/Green Bank area.

Whitwell Creek was where it all happened in the first fortnight. Some tremendous fish were caught which had been grazing on Roach Fry for some time before the start of the season. Numerous superb over wintered 5lb Rainbows were caught along with some very large Browns up to 9lb. Barnsdale Creek, where the fish were also on fry, produced some large fish with Andy Flitcroft catching his personal best Brown of 7lb 1oz. Some fine fish were also caught in the boat dock at the Lodge. Dave Rix capturing the best specimen, a Brown of 8lb 13oz. In the middle of the month the large head of stockies up to 2¾lb were introduced at the Transformer and elsewhere but as of old these fish found their way to Whitwell Creek within 24 hours where there was already heavy angling pressure. Consequently a large number were caught. The fish had evidently been touring the margins and seen the copious numbers of dying roach fry being blown out of Whitwell Creek in the Northerly winds. This carnage was to some extent marred by a few greedy anglers hogging spots and keeping the biggest 16 fish. One fellow asked the Secretary how many he had caught so far this season. "Five" he replied. Well where have you been all season? I have caught 15 today and thrown nine back! "And".... came the reply. The secretary removed the bass bag covering his recently caught 5lb over wintered fish and quipped "Were they all like that". "No comment" came the silent reply. Seriously, though, if you can, it is well worth having a recce. pre - season to find out where these bigger fish are so that you don't fill up your freezer with stockies in the first week!

After a long absence, fish were at last being caught from the Green Bank and Stones area.

The largest fish caught by a club member in April was a 16lb Pike taken from Whitwell Creek by Roger McCarthy. A visiting angler caught one of 42 ins from the bank in Barnsdale Creek on a black buzzer. According to Mona's weight for length Pike scale it should have weighed about 26lb. Constant changes of wind direction in April made location of fish difficult on some days.

Needless to say, floating fry patterns and Minkies proved most useful for the resident fish. These residents soon wised up to the pressure and only made brief visits to the bank except in coloured water.

The boats generally though had a good month with an average of 10 fish per rod at one stage. However the over wintered fish seldom featured in their catches. Some well known boat anglers took to the bank. All methods proved effective with many catching on floaters in the middle of the lake.

Following the flooding of the littoral zone the previous winter the fish were very close into the banks which meant that boats had to find angler free banks so that could get close enough to the feeding area.

All in all a very good month for both the boat and bank angler.

May

The bank fishing slowed up considerably due mainly to fishing pressure, very clear water and rotten weather. However the boats prospered and some grand over wintered fish were caught.

The buzzer hatch seemed to occur over "last years" reservoir. So, now, many bank fisherman took to the boats and very good fishing at the top of both arms was enjoyed. Especially on the deep fished buzzer. Some fish containing upwards of 200 large specimens. 10,000 fish were stocked in 12th may and just bunked off somewhere! Are these the crocs which we caught in October, November & December?

Fantasy Island opened this season and proved a real winner with many great catches being taken here. Burley Reach again showed signs of fishing for the first time for two years. The action started here with Bob Garratt taking a fine 6lb 4oz fish. The Green Bank & Stones also produced the goods with numerous club members taking their career best fish from this area. Towards the end of what was quite a sunny month blanket weed became a problem for bank anglers. This stuff is diurnal and to some extent dies back during the night. Moral - fish early or bring a rake. Also, you fished droppers at your peril. With so many rotting submerged thistle/dock stems many fish were lost in these. Use stronger nylon. They don't mind. Bob Garratt and Ted Kuzniar to name only two well known bank fishermen use 8lb B.S. And they catch a tremendous amount of big fish and are seldom broken.

There were tremendous rises of uncatchables. One was heard to say "I would rather wait until they have grown a bit". Little could he have known how quickly they grew. I hope he was able to fish in November and reap the rewards of his patience!

The Boats had a bonanza at the top of both arms. It was interesting to see that while travelling up the South Arm you did not see the buzzers until you got within 800m of Lax Hill, Manton Bay and the Bunds. What an incredible sight. Reminders of the great hatches of the early eighties. Fish were caught mainly on the deep nymph but many good fish were taken on CDCs.

The rudder men also made hay in this period but mainly with big browns and some big rainbows but the nymph men at anchor had the best of the Rainbows.

June

Flaming June it certainly was not! The month was cold and windy with the air temp only 9 deg. C on some days. One thing fish like is settled weather and, in the absence of this, the fishing was consequently mixed for the bank angler. For the Wadham trophy it was a cold bleak evening but plenty of fish were caught twelve year old Charles Bowers had his first fish from the bank and as usual Lin Walters won the match! The open day for the disabled was a great success and our club members were kept very busy. At this time The North Arm shallows, Tim Appleton's and Burley started to produce the goods and some good fish were caught with Dick Stephen's 6lb 11oz being the best fish.

Heavy rain soon brought the lake level up to full with the usual temporary slump in the fishing.

The boat harbour continued to produce some monster Browns & Rainbows mainly to fry patterns. This was definitely the month of the dry fly with Shipman's, C.D.C. and standard dries all doing well especially late evening. The speedy palmer failed to attract more than the odd fish.

The Boats had a wonderful month with some tremendous bags of fish being taken by every conceivable method. Graham Pearson taking the best rainbow of 7lb 11oz on a pheasant tail in front of the boat during a match. Main diet seemed to be the large Buzzer with Corixa already featuring high in their diet. Due to the unseasonably cold weather, the best fishing was during ""gentleman's hours" i.e. 10 till 4.

This year so far it seemed that the North Arm was on song unlike 1997 when it seemed devoid of fish!

All in all a good month but of mixed fortunes with the boats perhaps catching the lion's share of the fish.

July

This was a frustrating month for the bank angler. Not only did the fish remain out of reach but the persistent Westerly's severely limited catches. This was a pity because the lake fished well on the few days when the wind changed or dropped. Gales are a rare commodity in the East Midlands but to have three in July is a bit too bad. However it was not all doom and gloom and some great fish were caught. The main basin was very productive and the fish were able to graze freely on the daphnia in unseasonably cool weather. There is no doubt that this very cool July allowed the fish to feed without interruption. Hence our 10 pounders in November. In many previous years fish have lost condition in the "hot" months. The short warm spell at the end of the month really brought things almost to a halt. However the very brief spell of North Easterlies did bring some fish to the Dam for two days. Then it was back to the dreaded Westerly's.

The boils however were always going to be productive in this weather and with so many fish already in the body of the lake, this area fished very well. Fishing was mainly with Hi - D lines - sometimes at great depths. It is curious to reflect that if the giants which turned up in November were feeding deep why weren't they caught then? So, therefore, where did they all come from?

July (Contd.)

During this period R.W.F.F. were, thanks to some very skilled angling, gradually creeping up to reach second place in the Major Clubs points list. This was achieved by our very convincing win in Round Three at Grafham.

Again in summary this was a month to be out in a boat.

The turn out for the club matches was very disappointing with the lake fishing so well from the boats

The Juniors Evening was a tremendous success. Thank largely to the hard work and organisational skills of Roger McCarthy. Three carbon rods were awarded to the First, Second and Third places. The Junior angler accompanied by the most incompetent boat angler in Europe being the winner! We hope to repeat this for 1999. Sadly Roger has, due to many other commitments, had to stand down. Andy Flitcroft has generously agreed to take on the mantle of coordinator of the Junior Events and already has things well in hand for 1999. There are many boys and girls who had a great time last year and are no doubt looking forward to the event on 1999. Lets not disappoint them. If you can help please contact any member of your committee and between us we can ensure that they have a great time. Remember they represent the future of our sport. Roger has agreed to act as advisor.

August/September

At about the middle of the month, after a very lean spell, the reservoir suddenly came alive for the bank angler and some great catches were made. There were some of the best green buzzer hatches seen at the lake since the late seventies and early eighties. The hatch was very late evening and for those who stuck it out there were great rewards with a number of 5lb fish being caught - especially from Burley Reach. Two lads from Mansfield who only come on Sundays caught at least one or sometimes two 5lb Fish. The secretary being on hand to take some shots or weigh the fish for them. The key food item apart from the ubiquitous Corixa was an abundance of Bloodworms. These were either taken as they floated away downwind from where anglers were or in places where the incoming wind kept them on the move in suspension. I think is reasonable to attribute the plethora of Bloodworms to the absence of the former hoards of coarse fish which would have consumed them. These have perhaps gone the way of many of our smaller stockies - down the "black cake hole".

One rather remarkable factor is that some of the 5lb fish caught in September were this years $2\frac{3}{4}$ stockies. This means that they have almost doubled their weight in three months. This speaks volumes for the bio-mass of the lake. i.e. the fauna available to the fish. Stocking with larger fish has of course ensured that the stockies have a reasonable chance of avoiding the "black death".

The fry were now well established in the margins. Especially in Stockie Bay and the Harbour where some monster rainbows up to $8\frac{1}{2}$ lb were caught. The absence of weed beds made locating fry feeders very difficult. However, perversely, many of the fry caught fish were in fact feeding on Corixa, Bloodworms and Daddies. The main fry available to the fish were 10 spined sticklebacks. These little rascals live in the marginal weed and graze on daphnia and green buzzers with the trout where the wind is coming in. However where the wind was offshore, because of the clear water the fish did not dare to come in to feed on them until it was nearly dark. So it paid not to wade out too far or try and find some slightly coloured water.

An indicator of how hard the fish were feeding was that you could catch on almost everything provided that you fished at the right time of day. Ideally 3pm to 6pm was best. Not much good for the evening fisherman except the last twenty minutes when the inevitable tangle guaranteed frustration!

The one pattern which caught above all others was the "Chelsea Bun". This was a bloodworm worm floating on the surface curled like a caterpillar when you touch it. A useful pattern was a b/worm pattern tied with a small square of foam at either end and the tail of the worm drawn back over the shank and tied in a loop above the shank.

The boat fishing was also brilliant with two season best fish being taken. Mike Barrett with his 11lb 11oz Brown and Graham Pearson with his 7lb 11 oz Rainbow.

The Tuesday Night boat league was won by Leon Smith with Sean Cutting in Second Place one point behind

This was probably one of the best fishing months in the history of the lake with the early stockies and the lovely recent stockies making for superb fishing.

All through these two months the wind played a major role with the dreaded Westerly turning the lake to soup on many occasions. However you might be surprised to learn that September 1998 was the warmest since 1961 and despite the very cool summer was a year with above average temperatures. Remember the glorious sunny February days with temps in the sixties! Mark you! Some of these days were not free of wind. Chub fishing with a fly was more effective in canals and Stillwater's than it was in June!

There is no doubt that the warmth in September warmed up the water and delayed the arrival of the Browns into the margins.

October

This month the fishing looked like continuing in the same vein as September. Then the fish just did a bunk. They soon returned, however, and there were some quite remarkable catches towards the end of the month. Many club members got among the big fish. The best fishing was in the body of the lake with Fantasy Island, the Dam, Sykes, and the Normanton bank producing a string of large fish. Where did they go in the meantime? Well, some wisecrack said that "while you can't catch them they are growing". Not so daft as it seems, is it? They must have been fattening up somewhere. The Fantasy corner of the dam produced some of the best catches. The fish were feeding hard on sticklebacks but could be caught on anything from CDC to large Floating Fry.

The weather which was horrendous definitely spoiled what promised to be a back end bonanza. Many days the boats could not go out. But most times, even in the westerly gale, fish still visited the Fantasy Corner for the chap prepared to sit it out. The Secretary sat it out for two five's and a six pounder. But only one per visit. i.e. one fish every 6 hours!

The rudder men were still catching when the boats could get out when the wind allowed. Some huge bags of fish were caught.

The best of the fishing was towards the end of the month when some real giants were seen off the dam

The floating fry bonanza really came to nought. The fish being much inclined to eat Corixa, bloodworms and tiny sticklebacks - some less than ½" long. Despite the poor showing by the daddy longlegs some grand fish could be tempted by them no matter what they were feeding on at the time. A daddy hardly resembles a stickleback! But try pulling it and it must resemble something similar as that's what they were eating at the time. So much for good imitations.

November/December

Those who decided to take out the winter brace ticket were rewarded with the best bank fishing since the lake opened in 1977. We were fortunate in having slightly calmer weather than in October. However there were still very windy periods and no prolonged settled spell. There were many bank fishermen at the weekends when we were lucky with relatively light winds but some frosty days. This did not in any way put the fish off. The lightness of the wind enabled one to fish elsewhere and cover some "green fish"

The real giants recently seen in the body of the lake took an interest in our offerings. Some huge fish were landed and some sadly lost. The first double figure fish for many years coming from Stockie bay. Two others followed culminating in - one of 11lb. This was the largest Rainbow from the lake since Dave Dakers' 13lb monster taken in 1990. It was the second largest in the lakes history.

Many lessons were learned during this winter bonanza. Some other double figure fish were lost or ran anglers out of backing. This winter we should check our tackle very thoroughly. It wasn't too hard to get takes from these big fish. The hardest thing was putting them on the bank. Their mouths were as you would expect very hard and the sheer length of some of the battles meant that hook holds could give way. So, 100m backing should be regarded as a minimum and should be checked regularly for damage where it may have been trapped in the reel frame during the season. So lets get our kit in good order for the start of next season because there is no doubt that these very large fish will still be there for us in April - but where? That's the best kept secret in Rutland!

Conclusions

Well, what have we learnt from last season? A great deal; but, we all know, that, based on previous history, it will be all quite different in 1999! Surely this is half the magic of it. In the sixties and seventies at Grafham the fishing was much more predictable - Green & Browns and all that! Any way, with a good pair of binoculars you could see what was happening elsewhere and so take toll.

As suggested previously this was arguably the best season in the history of the reservoir as a fishery for large Rainbows.

The slump in sport after the Easter break highlighted the disadvantage of starting with the water temperature too high - at 11 deg.C. In March 1987 the lake had a 6" covering of ice. Consequently the res. temp was 2 deg.C at the start. There is only one direction from that level and that is up!

The fish soon responded to some lovely April weather and we enjoyed a very good early season. 1998 was rather like the proverbial curates egg - being either brilliant or very difficult. However, due to the cool mid - summer period the fish were able to feed right through. No hot weather starvation period this year. Hence all the large well fed fish in Autumn.

It was a very good year for surface fishing from both boat and bank with fish being taken in the middle the lake on surface fished flies in April. Mainly one suspects due to the unusually high water temp in the spring.

Conclusions (Contd.)

With such a wet June and Autumn, a high water level was maintained with only about a 4ft draw down. It is now up to within about of a foot of top level thus allowing an early re-colonisation of the margins.

The fauna population seems to have exploded. This may well be due to the reduction in the coarse fish numbers which has freed up all the food for the Trout. The 2¾ April stock rainbows had reached a weight of 5 lb by September and last years 5lb fish appear to have doubled in weight. Perhaps due to the very mild winter 1997/98. Hence the ten pounders.

Hanningfield have had a similar event with their Browns suddenly doing very well. However with the plethora of rearing cages there the fish do have an alternative food source! Does this make ours more truly wild fish?

This was undoubtedly the season of the North arm for both bank and boat angler. This was in stark contrast to 1997 when the secretary took only three fish from the arm until November. Numerous matches were won in this arm.

Only one draw back to the absence of coarse fish is the apparent increase in the number of Pike damaged trout. The coarse fish formerly acted as a buffer. Now that has gone. The secretary captured a fish of 7½lb which was well pike chewed. So we will have to see how it goes. Be sure to record all such damaged fish on your returns in 1999.

Good news to us is the Daphnia explosion: but not to the Wing W.T.W. as it clogs up their intake screens! Let's hope this rich food source continues on through to next season.

Another feature was the return of the Green Buzzer. This does however seem to be a late evening hatcher. But the large fish evidently find them very succulent. If you were patient you could be rewarded with a "biggie" at the death.

We have already mentioned the bloodworm. This is the staple diet of most species of fish and has featured large in the trout's diet in 1998. Any artificial proving very successful whether suspended, CDC or just plain sunk. For some reason they seemed to like it pulled. Ever seen a bloodworm moving through the water at speed?

The Canadian pond weed was conspicuous by its absence. Perhaps it is at the end of its five year cycle. This limited the cover for small fry. However the boat dock did offer some cover and was one of the most productive areas for artificial fry methods.

The most important fry source in 1998 was sticklebacks. These were the ten spined species. Not the prickly three spined with that lethal pelvic bone like a double headed dagger. It is interesting how some fish have two goes at a lure when they are on sticklebacks. Perhaps the hook point feels like a spine!

This summer blanket weed proved a problem for bank anglers. This may have flourished following the huge influx of nutrient rich water into the lake from the surrounding land in early June. It is diurnal. So, if you want to avoid it, try early morning. It does give the fish cover and they seemed to come very close especially on Burley in 1996. The secretary keeps a rake and rope in the car. If you clear a spot - as we used to do for Tench fishing in our local waters - you could have the entire bank to yourself! If in doubt and you are coming from afar ring up and check. The secretary and other members will be pleased to advise.

1998, apart from being the best year for big fish, was arguably the year of the big winds which benefit no one and caused A.W.S. some loss of income.

I don't suppose it matters what is forecast for the coming season. Absence always makes the heart grow fonder and we are all longing for April 1st.

The other opening days in 1999 are:-

Ravensthorpe February 26th

Pitsford March 13th - in the Main Lake below the Causeway only - until April 1st

Rutland & Grafham April 1st

The February Newsletter will only be mailed to paid up members. So if you have not renewed you had better look sharp!

Hope you all have a health remainder of the winter

Yours Sincerely

John Wadham - Hon. Secretary