

# Fisheries and Biodiversity News

What's new in the North West

December 2012

Welcome to the November edition of the Environment Agency, North West Fisheries and Biodiversity News. Our following on social media continues to grow and we continue to get great feedback. You can now find up to the minute news on Twitter, facebook and the Environment Agency TV on YouTube. In the next few weeks, we will create a new Twitter account @NWFishEA that focuses on our day-to-day fisheries work so keep a look out for it by following us on twitter @EnvAgencyNW.

## Poacher gets his day in court

In previous editions, we have talked about our role in fisheries enforcement and how we use the Solway Shepherd (our offshore boat) to undertake patrols along the cost line. In November, an offence was brought before Workington Magistrates court.



The defendant a Mr. William Kirby of Gosforth was found removing migratory trout, know as sea trout, from Braystones beach.

The fish had been caught using a static beach gill net, that was unlicensed. The nets he was using were seized and used in evidence during the case. On conviction, magistrates fined Mr. Kirby £500 and ordered him to pay £200 in costs.

The team continues to work closely with the North Western Inshore Fisheries Conservation Authority to combat illegal activities along the coast with the assistance of Solway Shepherd.

For more information, please contact [steve.powell@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:steve.powell@environment-agency.gov.uk)

## History revealed at Lunt Meadows



Working with Lancashire Wildlife Trust and volunteers, over 20,000 young reeds have been planted to improve the water quality of the River Alt and establish a flood storage basin in the catchment.

The newly dug wetland network of channels and ponds is already attracting new wildlife to the site such as Barn Owl, Tufted ducks and Whooper swans. Work to create further habitats will be completed by March 2013.

During the course of the work at Lunt Meadows, some interesting and significant archaeological discoveries have been made. In partnership with Liverpool Museums, we uncovered evidence of structures which have been carbon dated and found to be from 5800BC. Archaeological



investigations have also found fragments that indicate that the settlers were using plant material, similar to the reeds being planted for food and heating. These findings tell us that the habitat we are creating in 2012 replicates what was there nearly 8000 years ago.

For more information on the project, please contact [lindsay.ward@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:lindsay.ward@environment-agency.gov.uk) or site the BBC news site that [Here](#) reported on the project.

### Bassenthwaite Hedgehogs saving fish



Hedgehogs are coming to the rescue of fish in Bassenthwaite Lake through an innovative project being used for the first time in an English lake.

Working with partners we have created a safe haven for fish at Cumbria's Bassenthwaite Lake by installing three separate artificial reefs on the lake bed using 'hedgehogs' to provide shelter and create safe places for the fish to hide from predators. The spiky constructions are between 1 and 2 metres in diameter and they are being placed on the lakebed to create a complex matrix of space that any size of fish can hide in.

The hedgehog refuges were designed in America and have been installed as part of a partnership project between the Environment Agency, Bassenthwaite Sailing Club, Carlisle Diving Club, Derwent Owners' Association, Lake District National Park and Natural England.

We are always looking for innovative ideas on how to protect the biodiversity of our rivers and these hedgehogs are one way that we can do this. Anglers have been concerned about fish stocks along the Derwent catchment for some time and we have taken this approach as it gives the fish cover and protection against predators.

The hedgehogs will provide a welcome refuge for valuable native coarse and game fish stocks that will benefit anglers and the wider community.

For more information, please contact [mike.farrell@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:mike.farrell@environment-agency.gov.uk) or look at the Environment Agency TV channel on here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W3po744Q2WM>

### Community Lake revival

Working with our partners, Wigan Leisure and Culture Trust we are breathing new life into a community park in Leigh. Committing initial income generated by the sales of rod licences in the North West the project board has been able to raise funds from a wide range of other sources that include WREN, Leigh and District Anglers and the ward councillors Myra Whiteside.

The restoration project will see this popular lake restored and its future is safeguarded for the local community to enjoy. The project will focus on desilting, the improvement of access to provide a high standard for young anglers and wheelchair users, as well as replacing the existing bank side to prevent against erosion.

The developments will provide improved access opportunities for all anglers, as well as other educational activities such as pond dipping. This has been planned over a number of years with partners and the project is now coming to fruition. Once complete it will provide the very best access for those who wish to give angling a try in a safe family friendly environment.

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*(Pictured) Firs Park lake before the colder weather, the de-silting operation in full swing and Fisheries and Biodiversity officer Ian Wood with Michael Fishwick (WLCT), Frank Parkington (Leigh & District Anglers) and the Mayor and Consort of Wigan Council for 2012/13, Councillor Myra Whiteside and her Consort, Mr John Hurst.*

For more information, please contact [ian.wood@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:ian.wood@environment-agency.gov.uk) or visit the Wigan Leisure & Culture Trust web site by clicking [Here](#)

### Partnership Delivering Results



Fisheries and Biodiversity officers have been working closely with the Lake District National Park Authority on Ullswater. Joint fisheries enforcement patrols with National Park wardens on their enforcement boat are now a permanent fixture on Ullswater throughout the year.

While checking for local byelaw and rod licence offences anglers have been caught breaking byelaws by using maggots as bait at a time of year when they are prohibited. The byelaw is in place to protect vulnerable migratory salmon smolts when they are migrating to sea.

On discovery of the offence, officers seized two trout that had been caught that day. Byelaws protect fish stocks and fisheries in England and Wales. They apply to all waters, whether they are owned by angling clubs, local authorities or private individuals.

Working closely in this way with the National Park Authority will help us safeguard the valuable fish populations in these iconic natural environments.

For more information on rod fishing byelaws please take the time to look at our web by following this link [Fisheries Byelaws](#) or contact [Steve.powell@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:Steve.powell@environment-agency.gov.uk)

### Build it and they will come

Work is starting on the construction of two large fish passes on the River Goyt near Disley and the River Bollin near Styal. Both schemes were identified through the Mersey Life Project and are now coming to fruition.

Over the past 30 years, more than £1bn of investment has been made in sewage treatment and industrial processes in the Mersey Basin. This has improved water quality and increased the

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abundance and diversity of aquatic flora and fauna. Weirs left from our industrial past restrict the access to migratory fish and eel to suitable spawning and juvenile habitat.

As part of the North West Environment Programme removal of weirs or installing fish and eel passes opens up new habitats for fish to exploit thereby supporting sustainable and healthy fish populations.

**Quarry Bank** - Working in partnership with the National Trust we plan to install a Larinier fish pass on this 4.2m weir, which is currently impassable for fish and eel.

The Trust also has ambitions to install a micro-hydropower, both schemes have been submitted to the local authority for consideration. If planning is granted construction will start in the New Year for completion in summer 2013.

**At Disley** weir a similar Larinier fish pass is currently under construction. Once complete this fish pass will open up access above the weir for the first time since its construction in the 18th century, providing access to top quality habitats.

For more information, please contact [Ben.bayliss@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:Ben.bayliss@environment-agency.gov.uk)

### River Irwell recognised across Europe

As part of our North West Environment Programme the river Irwell catchment has undergone a real makeover over the last 2 years.



Barriers such as Goshan weir on the River Roch close to Bury (pictured) are being removed to reconnect sections of the river. Providing these connections allow the river to work more naturally improving silt and gravel movements and increasing the diversity of habitats available within the river. Fish and the insect life they feed on, together with otters, water voles and birds such as the kingfisher and the dipper all exploit these habitats.

Our efforts in the river Irwell catchment have been recognised by the European river restoration centre that have used the Irwell as a successful case study to show others across the whole of Europe about effective river restoration methods.

To find out more follow the link to the European Centre for River Restoration (ECRR) <http://www.ecrr.org>.

To find out more about the Irwell improvements contact Project manager Olly Southgate on [Oliver.southgate@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:Oliver.southgate@environment-agency.gov.uk)

### Rod licences to trees in single step

Our Fisheries and Biodiversity officers have been working closely with key partners and the local community to deliver some great benefits for the environment.

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Using project income generated through the sale of rod licences to North West anglers, we have been planting trees with the help of local schools and fishing clubs along the river Derwent in Cumbria. The trees help prevent erosion, provide shade that keeps the river cool and at the same time increases habitat beneficial to fly life and fish.

Working in partnership with the Woodland Trust, Forestry Commission, Lake District National Park and Natural England, landowners are agreeing to tree planting schemes and fencing off buffer strips at key sites along the river. These provide great benefits for the environment and link the local community back to the environment on their doorstep.

Fisheries and Biodiversity Officer Mike Farrell has also worked with the Woodland Trust to produce these fantastic film clips to promote the work he has been doing.

[Living Waters: Trees for healthy rivers on Vimeo](#)  
[Holding Ground: Trees, water and farming on Vimeo](#)

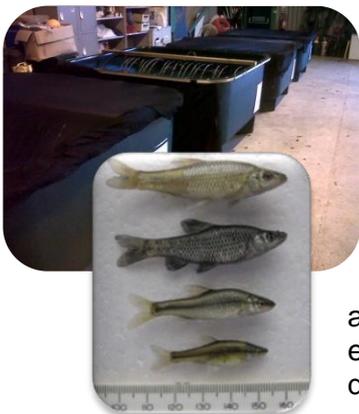


*Photos show Chapel Beck on the Derwent Catchment before and after works, which withstood the June 2012 floods. Local children from Bassenthwaite school helped with the tree planting alongside Lake District National Park volunteers.*

For more information, please contact [Mike.farrell@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:Mike.farrell@environment-agency.gov.uk)

### **New fish holding capabilities**

Fisheries and biodiversity teams across the North West have improved facilities for holding and retaining fish. This comes with the acquisition of four new purpose built fish holding tanks and state of the art aeration units providing us with an increased ability to hold fish while we look for new homes.



This gives us the ability to hold fish during major pollution incidents and species such as the European Wels Catfish, Sturgeon and Top Mouth Gudgeon in our battle against alien non-native species.

The tanks will also be used to support our fishery management programmes with local angling clubs. Working in partnership with the angling clubs we are improving the way stillwater fisheries are managed to establish healthy fish stocks which reduce the chances of fish mortality's and disease.

For more information on the tanks, our fight against non-native species or our fishery management programme please contact [Paul.breslin@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:Paul.breslin@environment-agency.gov.uk)

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## River Weaver gets a helping hand

Following the fish kill on the river Weaver in August we have worked closely with local angling clubs to assess the remaining fish populations. During October, we introduced 11,000 young chub from our Nottingham based fish hatchery. These young fish will give the river a boost and help it recover from the impacts of the incident. Some quality roach are also being introduced over the winter.

Our investigations during the time of the incident suggest the low dissolved oxygen levels recorded in the river were caused by the biological breakdown of organic material. Prior to the incident, the Weaver catchment experienced exceptionally heavy rainstorms that flushed organic material from roads, agricultural land and overwhelmed the water treatment works.

Algae and other microprobes present in the river take advantage of the increased organic material by using the oxygen present in the water to grow and multiply. This activity quickly removes oxygen leading to fish deaths.

We continue to work closely with farmers, landowners and United Utilities to improve land and water management practices in the whole of the catchment.

For more information, please contact [paul.breslin@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:paul.breslin@environment-agency.gov.uk)

## North West Salmon Runs

There has been some discussion recently around the numbers of salmon returning to our rivers this autumn. Talking with clubs and associations, we appear to have seen short runs of fish through the season that have provided some sport for anglers. The average size of salmon has been high in 2012, but the run appears to have been poor on most rivers in the North West.

Analysis of the data from our fish counter and trap sites has helped us to understand this better.



- October salmon counts on the Lune would typically be in the range of 2500 to 3000 fish. October 2012 saw 700 fish moving through.

- The River Caldew trap in Carlisle would typically show around 700 fish entering during October. In October 2012 just 60 salmon was recorded.

This data also shows a lack of grilse coming through and highlights just how important grilse are to these rivers. Norwegian scientists believe the poor grilse runs are due to a dramatic increase in the herring, mackerel and blue whiting stocks in the West Norwegian sea, which is where our post-smolts go to feed. These fish compete with our salmon for food so they grow slower, stay at sea for longer and return as multi-sea winter fish, which is what we appear to be seeing in our rivers.



This means getting adults spawning and producing as many juveniles and smolts as possible will, as ever, be critical to maintaining sustainable populations over the coming years.

For more information, please contact [Brian.shields@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:Brian.shields@environment-agency.gov.uk)

### National awards for Wild Trout

Two North West based projects were recognised in the 2012 national Wild Trout Trust conservation awards. Projects on the river Eden and the river Irwell picked up an award.

In the trusts Professional Category the River Irwell's, good ecological potential project that was delivered in partnership with the Irwell Rivers Trust swooped the runner up award. This project aimed at naturalising the heavily modified river Irwell in Greater Manchester has removed 15 weirs in the last year. This helps the river return to a more natural function and opens up the river for resident brown trout.

In the same Professional Category another North West based project on the River Petteril in north Cumbria beat off all the competition to take the top prize. The project was described as a fantastic example of partnership work that is providing benefits for the local community while establishing sustainable fish populations in the river.



For more information contact Project manager Olly Southgate on [Oliver.southgate@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:Oliver.southgate@environment-agency.gov.uk) or visit the Wild Trout Trust [Here](#) and the Eden Rivers Trust website [Here](#)

### National News Update

New live fish movement regulations should have been introduced in April 2012, however, this has now been delayed until October 2013, at the earliest. Existing fish movement legislation and processes will remain in place until the new system is introduced. Fish movements are regulated to prevent the spread of disease and damage to fisheries and the environment. Find more information our 'E-consenting' tool click [Here](#). It is an offence to move fish without consent.

The 'demon shrimp', a close relative of the 'killer shrimp', has recently been reported for the first time in the UK. Demon shrimp have been found in the River Severn, the Staffordshire & Worcestershire Canal and the Worcester & Birmingham Canal. We do not yet know what impact demon shrimp will have on native species. Please follow the [Check, Clean, Dry](#) guidance to prevent the spread of non-native species.

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs has published a [progress report](#) detailing how the UK is putting its [Eel Management Plans](#) into action. The Environment Agency's work to halt and reverse the decline of eels in England and Wales includes monitoring eel stocks, regulating eel fisheries and restoring migration routes, as well as improving and increasing wetland habitat.

We have recently published an updated version of our [Living on the Edge booklet](#). This is for 'riparian owners' - people who own land or property next to a river, stream or ditch. It explains the rights and responsibilities of riparian ownership, consents you may need to work in or near the watercourse, who is responsible for flood risk management and flood defences and how to help protect and improve the natural environment.

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If you would like to see comments received on the consultation we ran earlier this year seeking people's views on hydropower schemes, these can now be downloaded from our [website](#), along with our responses. The consultation formed part of the writing of a new edition of our hydropower [Good Practice Guidelines](#). We will be holding a second consultation next year to address remaining concerns about flow and abstraction standards. We aim to publish our revised Good Practice Guidelines in 2013.

### **Don't ignore it, report it!**

At the Environment Agency we rely on everyone to do their bit for the environment and to report environmental incidents. People sometimes hold off reporting things they think they should because they are unsure of our role, but if in doubt call it in.

The Environment Agency incident hotline number is 0800 80 70 60 (a Freephone\*, 24 hour service). You should not use e-mail to report incidents or contact numbers you may have for our staff, as this could delay our response. \*Calls from mobile phones will be charged at normal network operator's call rates.

For further details please visit our web site at [Incident Hotline 0800 80 70 60](#)

### **Building better links with you**

In order to keep people better informed about the Environment Agency and our work, we are constantly looking to improve the way we communicate with you, our customers. It is very important for us to understand what you think about the work we do and how we can improve our communications to meet your needs.

This newsletter for example, is still an evolving work area, so we value your feedback on it. What have you liked? What would you like to see more of? It is only with your feedback that we will continue to improve the information we provide and tailor it to meet your needs in the future.

To help us evaluate the usefulness of this update please feedback your comments to me at [steve.powell@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:steve.powell@environment-agency.gov.uk)