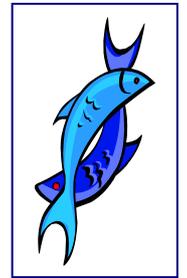


The River Taw Fisheries Association Newsletter



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Summer 2015

Chairman's Report



So far so good this season, with the Taw outperforming all other southwest rivers and producing an estimated 65 salmon by the end of May; all are fine, strong spring fish in the plus or minus 10 pound range. Interestingly, the Mole fish among them will be the first MSW progeny of Mole salmon which have not had to negotiate Head Weir. A pointer to the future as the effect of more recent weir work becomes apparent? We hope so.

Looking back though, we should perhaps draw a veil over the last two seasons, with the final three months lost through drought in 2013 and the final two months last year. Rod catch numbers suffered as a result. 2014 figures were 115 salmon (95 released - 83%) and 290 sea trout (218 released - 75%). In the interests of conservation we should use our best efforts to keep the salmon release percentage high and bring the sea trout percentage to the same level.

Sad to say the salmon netsmen again "outperformed" the fly-fishermen taking 32 salmon and 64 sea trout to our 20 and 72; an unsatisfactory situation which we are working hard to remedy in conjunction with SWRA and other bodies.

Sea trout catches continue to be worryingly low. Reasons are hard to fathom, but I wonder how much is due to the growing lack of specialist sea trout fishermen on the river, those who fish on into the darkness. On the other hand some very large sea trout were landed last season, including an amazing specimen of 16½ lbs and four other double figure fish that I am aware of. As for this season, maybe the sea trout runs have simply been delayed. We must hope so.

While droughts have been bad for fishing they have been good for weir work. North Molton, Filleigh and Rashleigh were completed last year. (Before and after pictures can be seen on the RTFA website under Current News.) Only North Tawton and Eggesford remain

outstanding of the 12 weirs on the main stem and they have been carried forward for completion this season.



The 3-year £1.8 million Taw River Improvement Project (TRIP) has now run its course and a huge amount of valuable work has been carried out. This is covered in detail by Laurence Couldrick, the new Westcountry Rivers Trust Chief Executive, in his report elsewhere in this Newsletter. No need therefore for me to double-up, but on behalf of the RTFA membership I must thank Laurence and his team, and in particular Adrian Dowding, for their tremendous efforts on behalf of our river. Thanks also to the EA, our other main TRIP partner, and to our other 11 partners. It has been a pleasure to work in such an effective and co-operative partnership.

Further work to build on TRIP will depend on funding availability in these difficult times. This will determine the size and scope of the priorities we have in mind; which include weir work in the tributaries, more debris dam removal, more gravel cleaning, more general habitat work and continuing juvenile surveys to expand on the surveys carried out by the EA. Any member who has ideas about new sources of funds should contact our Treasurer, Mac McCarthy.

We continue our efforts, working with our sister river, the Torridge, and also with SWRA and Angling Trust, to stop the practice of drift netting for bass and mullet in the estuary, which results in a by-catch of salmon and sea trout. The landfill at Northam Burrows is also a common problem for Taw and Torridge. Angling Trust's legal arm, Fish Legal, is looking into possible remedies on our behalf.

Elsewhere we continue to be an active member of Exmoor Rivers & Streams Group, supporting the Exe, Lyn and Barle in demonstrating to the Exmoor National Park Authority the importance of rivers to Exmoor and the need to protect them. With the completion of

fishpasses at Filleigh and North Molton there are now no barriers to Mole and Bray fish reaching the Exmoor headwaters.



A new initiative is our involvement in the Anglers' Riverfly Monitoring Initiative which Professor Gordon Murray of Exeter University has very

kindly written about elsewhere in this Newsletter. Three Committee Members have volunteered to act as co-ordinators, Pete Tyjas for the Upper Taw, Chris Taylor for the Mole and Andy Gray for the Bray. They are putting together their teams. Having read Professor Murray's article, any member wishing to volunteer should contact our Secretary, George Marsh, as a first step.

Returning to fishing, I hope the good results so far this season will encourage more members to get on the water. Let's also hope we have a full river this season. In addition to the enjoyment aspect, we will also get a much better handle on the health of the river and its fish stocks from a full seven months fishing than we have had from the last two seasons.



Alex Gibson
Chairman

Hon. Treasurer's Report

The Association

The FLAG project (Fisheries Local Action Group) has complicated our accounts. £10,000 was received from the Trust account as evidence of our ability to match fund the project. After spending £6.7k on gravel washing we received £3,305 back from FLAG. The balance of the £10,000 is retained to cover the remaining parts of the project. If we strip out FLAG, we show our normal working balance on the RTFA account. When the FLAG project is completed this year, surplus funds will be repaid to the Trust account.

Subscriptions were down £185 last year, but we received donations of £140. Costs were well contained. The net effect was an increased year end transfer to the Trust of £1,065.

Membership is down one despite our recruiting 9 new members. We need to work hard to keep up our numbers. This is a matter for all of us, not just the Committee. Please encourage those who fish the Taw to join.

The Trust

As mentioned above the Trust transferred £10,000 to the Association account in respect of the FLAG project. When the project finishes this year the unused balance, which should be at least £4,000, will be repaid to the Trust. At year end the Trust received £1,065 from the Association account where it will be ring fenced for river improvement. The auction proceeds were £3,309 the

second highest ever. We also received £160 under the Angling Passport Scheme.

FLAG

We received funding from FLAG last year for work on the Mole system and carried out gravel washing of impacted spawning redds at 140 sites on the Mole, Bray, Molland Yeo and Bentwithen. This is the final year of the project and we will be removing debris dams caused by fallen trees on these rivers when river conditions permit.

Finally

SUBSCRIPTIONS for 2015 are now DUE

They remain at:

Full Members (Riparian Owners)	£35
Associate Members	£15

- If you have not paid, think about a Bankers Order to save reminders in future. I shall be pleased to provide the instruction pro forma.

Otherwise send your subscription to:

Mac McCarthy,
Keepers Cottage, Mill Lane, Abbots Worthy, Winchester,
Hampshire S021 1DS.

Cheques should be made payable to:

River Taw Fisheries Association

Mac McCarthy
Hon. Treasurer

If you want to know.....

About the state of the river and for fishing reports visit the
River Taw Fisheries Association Web Site on
www.rivertawfisheries.co.uk
and click on Reports & Webcams.



River Taw Fisheries Association Committee

Chairman	Alex Gibson
Secretary	George Marsh
Treasurer	Mac McCarthy
Lower Taw	Mark Maitland-Jones Anthony Pope
Upper Taw	Simon Phillips John Smith Peter Tyjas
River Mole	Andy Gray John Macro Chris Taylor

Associate Members' Representative	Richard Nickell*
IT Adviser	Bryan Martin*
Newsletter Editor	Judith Kauntze*
Salmon & Trout Association	Steve Phelps*

* Non-voting Members

RTFA AGM and Dinner



River Taw Fisheries Association AGM
Friday 18th March 2016
Highbullen Hotel
Chittlehamholt.

Annual Auction: At each AGM an Auction is held to raise very important funds to support the work of the RTFA. Please contact the Chairman, Secretary or Treasurer with suggestions that can be included.

North Devon Fisheries Local Action Group (FLAG)

FLAG as it is known for those who like acronyms was set up to administer funds from the European Fisheries Fund and Marine Management Organisation to support North Devon local fishery related projects mainly on the coast, but also in river. Chrissie Ingle from FLAG provided help and guidance to enable us to succeed in our application and thanks go to her.

We were fortunate to obtain funding for the Exmoor part of the Taw system as it is in the qualifying area covered by FLAG. The Dartmoor element is handled under the Taw River Improvement Project.

In 2014, we undertook gravel washing of impacted spawning redds on the Mole and its tributaries. The sediment which washes off fields and roads, causing clogging of the gravels which in turn makes it difficult

for returning salmon, sea trout and native brown trout to spawn successfully. A total of 140 sites on the Rivers Mole, Bray, Molland Yeo and Bentwitchen were cleaned by our contractor Jeremy Weeks. I visited him on site and I can tell you it is hard work, so thank you Jeremy. The sites were agreed with Jerry Boyd of the Environment Agency who also obtained the necessary access agreements to enable the work to go ahead.



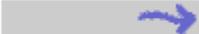
This year we are expecting to complete the project by clearing fallen trees which have created debris dams at sites already identified. That work will be done when river levels allow. The FLAG project itself finishes in 2015.

Mac McCarthy

Westcountry Rivers Trust (WRT)

The Westcountry Rivers Trust has seen substantial change over the past few years, with the most recent being Jonathan Bailey stepping down as CEO and myself being promoted in his place.

With this in mind let me introduce myself. I have been at the Trust since 2003 and was Dylan Bright's right hand man before becoming Jonathan's second in command. In my time at the Trust I have bid for and managed over £10 million worth of projects, including the delivery of over 100km of fencing and riparian management. Also I have been overseeing the investment of over £4 million of farm infrastructure to reduce diffuse pollution from smothering important spawning gravels, whilst also improving drinking water for South West Water. Hopefully, in my new position I will be able to usher in not only a period of stability at the Trust, but also draw in funding from across the region to continue delivering huge environmental improvements on the ground.

 Turning to more recent activities, 2015 sees the end of the Taw River Improvement Project (TRIP) which has, amongst other achievements, removed over forty barriers to fish migration, including 33 debris dams, resulting in the opening up of 246 miles of spawning habitat.

Additionally: 83 spawning gravel sites have been cleaned to remedy compacted beds; over 6 miles of coppicing has been delivered to increase light on riffle sections and provide more juvenile food; over 11 miles of fencing has been installed to reduce erosion and sedimentation; 425 acres of woodland planting has been granted to buffer agriculture from farming, as have 763 acres of culm grassland restoration. These amazing figures would not have been possible without the dogged determination of all our partners, but especially the Environment Agencies fisheries staff and the RTFA, with particular help from Alex Gibson and Mac McCarthy under TRIP, and previously Humphrey Wood with the removal of Head Weir under the Taw Access over Weirs project.

The work that has been achieved between the three organisations (EA, RTFA and WRT) is testament to what can be achieved through a strong working relationship

South West Rivers Association (SWRA)

This is a short summary of our work. Much of the Association's work is in support of the 20 individual member river associations, especially fighting developments potentially damaging to their interests. Increasingly initiatives and best practice on each river are being transferred to other rivers.

AGM: The AGM was held on 11 April. Roger Furniss gave an overview of the Association's activities. The keynote speaker was Sir Michael Wigan, Fishery

and I am keen not only to continue this on the Taw, but also to use it as an exemplar for other areas. The Trust has a proven track record of securing funding and delivering cost effective solutions to our sometimes chronic pressures; but we cannot do this without local support, whether this be through contributions towards project costs or valuable volunteer input. I have been working with Adrian Dowding (who was delighted to be given the opportunity to make a presentation to you at your AGM) to develop the next phase of works on the Taw to continue opening up and improving spawning habitat. We have already started getting local reports of spring salmon being caught further upstream and this should lead to increased spawning opportunities. We will continue our semi-quantitative electrofishing in order to backup this initial assessment with more objective evidence.

We have secured resources for Adrian to continue acting as your 'man on the ground' and along with completing work this season on the two outstanding weirs, Eggesford and North Tawton, he will be delivering riparian management volunteer events to reduce bankside erosion across the Taw. I know he would really value your support.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you all for your help and engagement in what has been a really inspirational project. I am keen to continue this.

If you would like to help with Adrian over the coming months please contact:

Adrian Dowding 01579 372140
or adrian@wrt.org.uk

or me:

Laurence Couldrick 01579 372140
or laurence@wrt.org.uk

Dr Laurence Couldrick
Acting Chief Executive Officer

.....

Manager on the Helmsdale and author of 'The Salmon – the extraordinary story of the King of Fish'.

CANOEING: Fish Legal used the Freedom of Information Act to force Defra to publish its legal opinion confirming that there is no general public right of navigation on non-tidal rivers or other inland waterways. Despite this and much 'diplomatic' activity by Angling Trust/Fish Legal, the British Canoe Union continued to promote uncertainty about the legal position on access to rivers and navigation rights. This effectively promotes

illegal canoeing. Fish Legal has sent the BCU a ‘letter before action’ demanding that they stop publishing misinformation. No formal response has been forthcoming, and Fish Legal is seeking ‘Declaratory Relief’ through the courts.

The evidence underlying this action is contained in a 42-page dossier ‘Conflict on the Riverbank’, much of which was contributed by SWRA members.

WATER FRAMEWORK DIRECTIVE

The Association continues to lobby for more ambition in the Environment Agency and Defra’s approach to the Directive which will be guided by the second River Basin Plan (2015 – 2021). The first Plan was so poor that Angling Trust and WWF threatened Judicial Review – the result was release of a further £92 million funding, some of which was spent on the Taw Access Over Weirs project. SWRA is now contributing evidence of continuing concerns to AT/WWF.

LICENSED SALMON NETTING

We wish to see the end of all licensed netting in support of our ambition to see abundant stocks supporting good angling. SWRA is lobbying the EA and Defra to take the opportunity afforded by the Marine Act to reduce netting in favour of the socio-economic benefits of better rod fishing.

SWRA has entered the Trout and Salmon ‘Save Our Salmon’ competition to establish a fund for a permanent buy out of all 24 remaining nets in the South West. This will not only help our rivers, but also help our Patron Orri Vigfusson’s efforts to end all high seas netting – a campaign undermined by continuing home water netting.

ESTUARY NETTING

As the Taw/Torridge estuary netting byelaws come up for review by the Devon & Severn Inshore Fisheries & Conservation Authority we are supporting both your Association and the Torridge’s, in their efforts to have netting for sea fish banned in the estuary; thereby putting an end to the damaging salmon and sea trout by-catch problem. We are also working closely with Angling Trust. They share our concerns and give us access to the support of recreational sea anglers who have a parallel interest in bass conservation.

I have met your IFCA and will be inviting them to the next SWRA Council Meeting to ensure they fully appreciate our concerns.

MARINE RAINBOW TROUT FARM THREAT DENIED – FOR NOW

Defra’s Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science (CEFAS), and the Crown Estates

which own the sea bed, planned to grow rainbow trout in an open net cage unit off South Cornwall - a similar system operated by the salmon farming industry off the west coast of Scotland.

SWRA opposed the scheme and led the coalition which lobbied CEFAS, Defra, and Fisheries Minister George Eustice, to squash the project on the grounds that it would be wholly irresponsible to jeopardise wild salmon and sea trout along the whole South Coast and the vital local economy and jobs they support.

Eventually the proposal was abandoned.

However, it is now apparent that this was a battle won, not the war, as a similar possibility is being considered in North Devon. It is obvious that the same CEFAS and Crown Estates individuals are involved – as recently as 2009 the lead CEFAS officer worked for the Scottish salmon farming industry. We are confident of seeing off this threat as well.

ABSTRACTION – A GROWING CHALLENGE

Abstraction poses an increasing threat to our rivers and their fisheries. Good flows are essential for fish migration, juvenile production, pollution dilution, and summer cooling. A number of factors are combining to increase pressure on water resources and hence river flows, including:

- climate change with the prediction of lower summer rainfall and higher temperatures;
- increased demand for water resulting from economic growth;
- increased demand for water resulting from population growth;
- the continuing pressure for hydropower development.

The Government is planning to reform water resources law by the early 2020s to ‘enable more flexible regulation by ... introducing a reformed water abstraction management system able to promote resilient economic growth while protecting the environment.’

SWRA’s input is to:

- support the national fisheries bodies contributing to the abstraction reform process;
- press local EA management for a more rigorous approach to enforcement, including the use of volunteers to be ‘eyes and ears’ on suspected licence breaches;
- increase focus on flow protection in the next round of River Basin Plans.

Roger Furniss, Secretary

Email: furniss740@btinternet.com

Environment Agency (EA)

I started my report in the RTFA summer 2014 Newsletter with disappointing news that after the retirement of Bob Collett, his post was not to be filled; that left Jeremy Boyd and me to manage the EA’s fisheries responsibilities on the Taw & Torridge catchments.

Just when you thought it couldn’t get any worse it did! The Agency, responding to shortfalls in funding, carried out a national review of employees and across the country many posts were lost. The effect of this for Devon fisheries was the early retirement of two more

officers. Thankfully, Jeremy and I retained our roles as the two Fisheries Enforcement Officers for North Devon, although we cover larger areas. I am now fully responsible for both Taw and Torridge and the bulk of the estuary; Jeremy covers the north side of the estuary and the streams that enter it plus the Mole, Bray, Lyn and as an addition the Exe from source to Tiverton.

 On a more positive note, all remaining Fisheries Officers have been transferred back to the Fisheries, Biodiversity & Geomorphology Team under the Team Leadership of Jay Rowntree and our role now covers purely fisheries duties. I have also retained my role as Fisheries Enforcement Coordinator for Devon.

I make no apology for repeating myself regarding your role as “eyes and ears” on our rivers. It is even more important now. If you see or hear of any illegal fisheries activities please call the Agency’s 24 hour hotline **0800 80 70 60**.



You can also contact: Jeremy Boyd on his mobile
07768 278561

or me (Paul Carter) on: 07768 007363.

Also I am always pleased to receive calls regarding catches and other river matters.

Over the last few years many of our Westcountry rivers have had salmon and sea trout appearing with ulcers and secondary fungal infections. If you see any fish showing signs of disease, please contact me.

On a more positive note, the Taw did end up with the highest salmon rod catch figures in Devon for last season and there have been encouraging catches in the early part of the season despite a very dry April. There has also been a very good run of smolts going down the river this spring.

Paul Carter

Fisheries Enforcement Officer, Environment Agency
(pj.carter@environment-agency.gov.uk)

Salmon & Trout Association (S&TA)

I am pleased to update you on the work of the Salmon and Trout Association and the Devon Branch in particular.

Fishing Instruction for youngsters



Firstly may I thank you all on behalf of the over 40 youngsters who have enjoyed an introduction to fly fishing during the last 12 months. Yours and River Torridge Association’s sponsorship makes a huge difference to what we can do in terms of juvenile training days.

It becomes ever harder in this litigious and safety conscious world for institutions to train youngsters out in the open, around water and using sharp hooks! We are blessed with a very professional team and this work will be expanding this year to 2 Basic Courses held at Exe Valley Fishery Exebridge on Sunday 7th June and Sunday 27th September. There will also be an Intermediates Day on Sunday 28th June at Bellbrook Valley Fishery. It has become plain that students with the background knowledge wish to be more “challenged” and this Intermediate Day will accomplish this.

If you wish to put youngsters forward please contact me and I will pass you on to our coordinator Fred Leach. Lastly on this subject we will be promoting youngsters’ membership to the S+TA. What a bargain for a Christmas or Birthday present from a parent or grandparent? It only cost £8 a year for youngsters under 16 years of age.

Supporting South West Rivers Association

When the S&TA adopted charitable status we undoubtedly lost some support, particularly in the South West, the new focus on the more “holistic” environment seemed to alienate fishermen who also saw, quite rightly

in my view, that the South West Rivers Association was a more suitable ally lobbying for us here in the South West. However this wider base has now been put to very good use and has made intervention possible in three very important local issues:-

Offshore Fish Farms: there has been a proposal for a rainbow trout fish farm a mile off the South Coast of Cornwall backed by a consortium of The Crown Estate, CEFAS and Sea Fresh Fish Wholesalers to raise 100,000 tonnes of fish, to be marketed as sea trout for supermarkets. The S&TA, Angling Trust and Wild Trout Trust made a very powerful lobby and the project was pulled. Well so we thought - until the consortium, noting that funds were available to support commercial fishing in North Devon, raised a new proposal at a meeting of the North Devon Biosphere. The potential disaster of a successful project would be immense for the fragile migratory fish stocks in our Twin Rivers. A possible area of 30 miles either side of the net cages would be adversely affected and, again, the powerful voice of the combined anti lobby quashed the project.

Anglers Riverfly Project: Formerly the Anglers Monitoring Initiative. This grew out of work done by the Natural History Museum, then promoted by several organisations and chaired by Paul Knight CEO of S&TA until last year with Steve Brooks of the Natural History Museum taking over from him.

A “South West” hub was established in 2014 with the North Devon Biosphere and Devon Wildlife Trust and the project is now established on the rivers Exe, Torridge and your River Taw systems. Altogether there are now over 100 teams across the UK

See Professor Gordon Murray’s excellent article in this Newsletter.

Water Framework Directive: In the South West there are very strong feelings regarding the approach to the implementation of the Water Framework Directive by the Environment Agency. The S&TA, through, again, the Riverfly Project, are proposing to monitor two specific conservation rivers: the Exe and the Camel in the South West, which are to be part of a national monitoring initiative of 10 rivers throughout England. The data will be used to challenge the methodology of the Environment Agency's interpretation of the Directive.

Lastly we would very much like to see you, members or not, at one of our Devon Country shows. We will have a presence at the Devon, the North Devon and the Mid Devon Shows over the summer.

“Tight lines.”

Steve Phelps

Chairman

Salmon & Trout Association, Devon Branch

Email s.phelps127@btinternet.com

Tel: 01837 811821

Riverfly – A ‘Tactical defence system’ for environmentalists and fishermen.

In the aftermath of one of the longest and most severe recessions in Europe since the first half of the 20th Century, it is not always easy to remain an optimist. Given the election results, and making the heroic assumption that we can trust pre-election statements, we are all likely to have to hunker down for a period of continued cuts to our public services including those agencies that protect our environmental security and health.

Severe restrictions on resources inevitably cut their future supply. For an example close to home, just look at the declining provision of Fisheries Officers on our rivers (as noted by Paul Carter in the Summer 2014 edition of this Newsletter). But constraints also force the suppliers and consumers of any desired product or service also to think ‘*What now? How do we cope?*’ In fact, empirical evidence suggests that hardship appears to make us all a lot more ingenious in finding new and sometimes radical solutions. It is a part of ‘the human condition’ to be innovative and resourceful - particularly under difficult circumstances. Academics have termed this behaviour - ‘frugal innovation’ or ‘innovation under conditions of austerity’. Most of us would see it more prosaically as ‘making do with less’.

 Critically, this coping phenomenon seeks to augment the State's diminishing efforts with voluntary participation. Enthusiasts are just not prepared to see valuable activities disappear. Accordingly, they organise themselves often with the ongoing support of those in the public sector still struggling to provide the coverage levels associated with more benign times. This volunteering effort is growing exponentially¹. Myriad examples can be seen in the public's participation with activities as diverse as astronomy (black hole identification), air quality (Open Air laboratories (OPAL) network), population surveys (birds, insects, flowers) and the monitoring of invasive species of both flora and fauna.

 The Anglers' Riverfly Monitoring

Initiative (Riverfly for short!) in an excellent example of what can rather grandly be called ‘Citizen Science’. A large number of organisations interested in nature, wildlife, angling - and above all the preservation of our rivers in a state of health that allows the continuing protection and nurturing of our native flora and fauna - have come together in the Riverfly Partnership. This Partnership has succeeded in orchestrating in common voice and action such diverse groups as anglers and entomologists or planners and wildlife charities. It has flourished beyond the most optimistic expectations of its supporters, and particularly its original sponsor the Environment Agency (EA). Here in the South-West, it was the Devon Wildlife Trust and the North Devon Biosphere that came together with the EA to create the local Riverfly network on the Torridge as part of their Nature Improvement Area project².

I doubt anyone in the EA or the Devon Wildlife Trust was prepared for the rapid uptake of volunteers for Riverfly particularly from among the county's fly fishing community. I also suspect neither organisation is much used to dealing with a waiting list of volunteers. Although Riverfly was created some years before the latest public service cuts, this logic of a concerted public contribution has assumed far greater salience in the contemporary world of diminishing public exchequers. The surprising consensus and outcomes that Riverfly has achieved is, above all, because of the close *alignment* of all of the different parties' interests in protecting the water quality of our river systems.

As fly fishermen, my peers and I are profoundly interested and committed to preserving environmental integrity. It is far more than just ensuring our sport. It is about the whole *raison d'etre* of being a part of, and at one with, the natural world we share. The Riverfly programme also cleverly exploits a strong British tradition of citizen science, gentlemen (and women!) naturalists and an intellectual inquisitiveness going back beyond Gilbert White and Isaac Walton.

¹ See, for example, <http://www.brc.ac.uk/recording-schemes>.

My thanks are due to Alison Smith, School of Biological Science, Plymouth University for sharing her presentation given to the North Devon Nature Improvement Area conference on the 3rd March 2015.

² See <http://www.northdevonbiosphere.org.uk/nature-improvement-area.html>

To this business school professor, Riverfly can best be seen as a highly tactical, early warning defence system. Don't think of Star Wars style attack-satellites or surface to air missile systems. Rather, think of a man or woman enthusiast, clad in waders and wet weather gear while armed with a set of white buckets and trays, a turkey baster (Yes. It helps catch individual invertebrates), a magnifying glass and a big strong net³. Every month (between April and September) on every nominated river system, volunteers will spend between one and two hours per visit monitoring a dedicated site on their chosen river. Eight 'signal' invertebrate species are sampled and counted⁴. The results are recorded and the volunteers download their data to a real time EA data base which has been operational since April 2015. The counted numbers of the eight species is used to determine a score which is referenced to a 'predicted trigger level' specific to each site. Thus, if a reading appears significantly lower than the trigger level for that site, an alarm can be raised by the monitoring volunteer as well as automatically from the software database. The Environment Agency can (and does) send a staff member to corroborate the sample reading. If the level is judged to demand action, an investigation of the cause of the damage can immediately be pursued. It should be noted that the EA with its wide legislative responsibilities has never, before the advent of Riverfly, been able to monitor its river systems on a monthly basis. Citizen Research in this respect is a 'game changer' in its potential (and actual) ability to dramatically enhance effective public governance.



Monthly monitoring at several points along a river allows every site to be sampled on average two weeks from any occurring negative event. As well as alerting the authorities to individual pollution incidents (for example, a recent barn fire in Devon caused significant damage to invertebrate life in the local river as a result of the run-off of harmful constituents in the flame retardant foam used by the Fire Service), Riverfly allows a significant long-term source of data to be constructed for use in the analysis of environmental trends and challenges to our freshwater river systems. Both immediate and continuous uses of these statistics are powerful additions to environmental protection. Data, and the resultant analyses, are power – to challenge, to change and to prevent future environmental threats.

Riverfly started on the Torridge in 2014. During that year, 32 volunteers were trained and equipped. Between

³ Here the generosity of the Fisheries Local Action Group must be acknowledged and celebrated. They part-funded the training and equipment for Riverfly on the Torridge. The nascent Taw group has currently no funding support from any party.

⁴ The eight monitored invertebrate groups are: Caddis (cased), Caddis (uncased) Mayfly Ephemeridae, Blue-winged Olive Ephemerellidae, Flat-bodied Heptageniidae, Olive Baetidae, Stoneflies and Gammarus (freshwater shrimp). Each group is sensitive to different aspects of river quality and this is reflected in the populations of each group present.

them, they sampled 30 different sites in the Torridge catchment and took 69 samples. These data now comprise the first local records on the EA database. In 2015, a further 18 volunteers were trained and equipped including 15 for the Torridge Catchment and 3 for the Taw. These volunteers have established 20 new sites and many have now taken their first readings.

For those of us who believe Nirvana is the ability to walk our local rivers, to observe the wildlife including kingfishers, herons and otters, and to have the privilege to cast a fly to a rising trout, the Riverfly initiative is a very tangible means for our fishing community to become directly involved in the present and future security of our biosphere.

Note: More information on the Riverfly project can be obtained at <http://www.riverflies.org/riverfly-partnership>

Professor Gordon Murray
Torridge Riverfly Volunteer

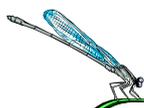
.....
And to close, a little light 'refreshment' sourced by the Editor!

Fisher Folke

I like to look at fishermen
And oftentimes I wish
One would be lucky now and then
And catch a little fish.
I watch them statuesquely stand
And at the water look:
But if they pull their float to land
It's just to bait a hook.

I ponder the psychology
That roots them in their place;
And wonder at the calm I see
In every angler's face.
There is such patience in their eyes,
Beside the river's brink;
And waiting for a bite or rise
I do not think they think.

Or else they are just gentle men,
Who love – they know not why,
Green grace of trees or water when
It wimples to the sky....
Sweet simple souls! As vain I watch
My heart to you is kind:
Most precious prize of all you catch
- Just Peace of Mind.



Robert Service
1874 - 1958



River Taw Byelaws

Seasons

Salmon 1 March to 30 September
Sea Trout & Brown Trout 15 March to 30 September

Methods

Fly fishing permitted all season
Spinning permitted until 31 March
No other method or bait fishing permitted

Limits

Salmon No salmon to be retained before 16 June
No salmon greater than 70cms in length
to be retained after 31 July

Salmon bag limits 2 fish in any 24 hour period
3 fish in any 7 day period
10 fish in a season

No rod caught salmon to be sold or offered for sale

Sea Trout bag limits 5 fish in any 24 hour period
15 fish in any 7 day period
40 fish in a season
Size limit 25cms

No rod caught sea trout to be sold or offered for sale

Brown Trout Size limit 20cms

Please remember our Voluntary Code:
return **ALL Sea Trout** under 1lb and over 4lb
and fish well within the bag limits.



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