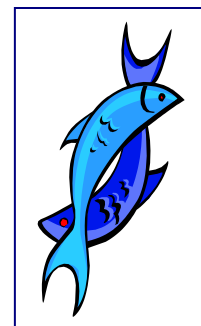


# The River Taw Fisheries Association Newsletter



**President:** Michael Martin MBE, Hookway Farm, Pennymoor, Tiverton EX16 8LU  
Tel: 01363 866 417

**Chairman:** Alex Gibson  
Lower Braggamarsh House  
Burrington, Umberleigh  
Devon EX37 9NF  
Tel: 07785 232 393  
Email: gibson2sms@btinternet.com

**Secretary:** George Marsh  
Buscott, 21 Station Road  
Ashcott, Bridgewater  
Somerset TA7 9QP  
Tel: 01458 210 544  
mrgeorgemarsh@yahoo.co.uk

**Treasurer:** E W McCarthy, Red Lion Cottage, The Square, North Molton. EX36 3HR  
Tel: 01598 740333

**Web site:** [www.rivertawfisheries.co.uk](http://www.rivertawfisheries.co.uk)

## Summer 2011

### Chairman's report

In the twelve months since the last Newsletter much has happened on our river - all of it good for fish and fishermen, I would suggest, except that is for the weather. I had spoken too soon about being a rainmaker.

We had a successful and well-attended AGM on 25 March, a summary of which can be found on our new website ([www.rivertawfisheries.co.uk](http://www.rivertawfisheries.co.uk)). The presentation by Dylan Bright of the Westcountry Rivers Trust on the removal of Head Weir and its replacement with a series of 11 rock ramps and 10 pools, now called Head Weir Falls, was particularly interesting. Before and after pictures can be seen on the website as well as the moment when the new structure was opened for the first time, some dramatic pictures.

So the Taw Access over Weirs Project is off to a good start as a result of excellent cooperation between riparian owners, Kings Nympton Park Estate, WRT, the Environment Agency and the efforts of Humphrey Wood who headed the project management side and to whom great thanks are due. Plans have been completed for improving Clapworthy Weir on the Bray this year; Colleton Weir and Rashleigh Weir, the first two on the Upper Taw, are in the planning stage. At the same time the EA is pressing ahead with improvements to the topmost weirs on the Upper Taw.

Connectivity is the word being used for our improvement aims for the Taw System. The weir programme should enable all riverine creatures to move freely up and down the river. For RTFA fishermen this means delivering more salmon and sea trout in better condition to the spawning grounds and allowing kelts and smolts easier access to the sea.



Another aspect of connectivity is habitat improvement and I am pleased to say that we now have to hand the WRT's Taw Catchment Fish Habitat Survey covering about 60km of our upper waters and tributaries. This survey was jointly funded by WRT and RTFA and as more money comes available we intend to extend the coverage. Specific problems and problem areas have been identified. The list is quite daunting. There is now a need to prioritise action in coordination with WRT and EA and see how much funding can be accessed. There could also be a role for volunteer groups for some of the work and thought will be given as to how this might be structured. The partnership approach will continue to be emphasised.

I am pleased to welcome our new Secretary George Marsh, at a busy and demanding time for RTFA and at the same time to thank our previous Secretary, Bryan Martin, for all the good work he has done for the Association over the last five years.

Turning to the fishing side it is true to say that last season had a beginning and an end, but with drought conditions for 3½ months, no middle. No surprise then that results were poor. No water equals no fish. There are signs that 2011 is going the same way. We had encouraging catches of spring fish in March, a few early sea trout and an unusually high number of kelts. This was followed by no proper rain for over two months and an unfishable river. As I write there are signs that the weather has turned with the river filling up again. Let's hope that we will all be fishing again successfully during the second half of the season.

*Alex Gibson, RTFA Chairman*

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## Secretary's Report

The 2010 fishing season was poorer than recent years throughout England. Reasons for this are no doubt complex, but crucially water levels fluctuated through the season, giving long spells of low water and periods of high water. This reduced the amount of time that good fly fishing levels were present in the river.

The published rod catch for was 178 salmon (2009 - 189) and 395 sea trout (2009 - 482). 129 salmon and 265 sea trout were released, being 72.5% and 67% of the respective catches.

The new website is now up and running. The address has not changed:

[www.rivertawfisheries.co.uk](http://www.rivertawfisheries.co.uk)

We will continue to update this to include topics of interest to members and also to non-members, who are encouraged to join the Association.

There has been no change during the last year regarding canoeing. The British Canoe Union continues to seek 365 day access. Our proposal of an out of fishing season arrangement on the Taw below Junction remains open should the BCU wish to restart discussions.



As regards hydrogeneration, the current enthusiasm for "green energy" is leading to more applications on our rivers. This is encouraged by favourable grants and "feed-in tariffs. We support fish friendly projects particularly those where we

see a win-win with hydro-scheme and new fish pass sitting side by side. (The scheme being contemplated by the Filleigh Estate in relation to Filleigh Weir falls into this category.) Otherwise we add our support to the Angling Trust and other organisations who are objecting to the current process of determining hydrogenation application.

The next Secretary's report will be written by my successor, George Marsh, who took over at our AGM in March. I wish him every success. I am sure he will be kept busy as I was.

I took over in January 2006 having been a member of the stakeholder group for the Taw and North Devon Streams CAMS through 2006. Major involvements have included canoe access and BCU negotiations, Water Framework Directive activity from the end of 2007 which led to the Environment Agency River Basin Management Plan in December 2009 and also the hatchery investigation in 2007 by Alan Sullivan which ironically promoted the current Taw Access over Weirs Project as the better way forward. Much has been done to bring RTFA into the 21<sup>st</sup> century in terms of email communication and website, though we will never be paperless as the Newsletter demonstrates.

I will of course continue to be an active supporter of RTFA and look forward to seeing the current initiatives being brought to a successful conclusion.

*Bryan Martin, Outgoing Secretary*

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## Hon. Treasurer's Report

In 2010 we recruited 5 new members, a record for the Association, though it only resulted in a net gain of 1. We think there are more Taw fishermen who can be persuaded to join. Please help us do this.

The overall result for the year was a surplus of £1,356 which was transferred to the River Taw Trust where it is ring-fenced for river improvements. We paid part of the set-up costs for our expanded website; otherwise we stayed in line with our usual good housekeeping.

The Trust once again benefitted from the auction at the AGM, this year to the tune of £1,990. Thanks to all those who so generously donated lots and in particular to Chris Taylor and Bryan Martin for marshalling the lots and running the auction successfully.

This meant we were able to provide financial support for the Westcountry Rivers Trust's walk over survey of our system's headwaters. The report has been received and will provide an essential data-base to assist our planning for future river works.

The Trust ended the year with £3,871 in the bank.

**Finally - SUBSCRIPTIONS ARE NOW DUE** and can be sent to:

Red Lion Cottage, The Square, North Molton, North Devon EX36 3HR

### Rates

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

**A special plea for members to renew without the need for reminders, which are costly both in terms of time and ££££**

*Mac McCarthy Hon. Treasurer*

## River Taw Fisheries Association Committee

President	Michael Martin MBE*
Chairman	Alex Gibson
Secretary	George Marsh
Treasurer	Mac McCarthy
Lower Taw	Martin Maxse Mark Maitland-Jones Humphrey Wood
Upper Taw	Rowan Peto Simon Phillips John Smith
River Mole	John Macro Chris Taylor Peter Twomey

Land Issues	Jeremy Holtom*
Newsletter Editor	Judith Kauntze*
Salmon & Trout Association	Duncan Michie*
Associate Members' Representative	Ron Warwick*

\* Non-voting Members

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### Westcountry Rivers Trust

Our joint work on the Taw Access over Weirs Project has taken great strides forward since the last publication. Head Weir is gone, Clapworthy Weir improvements should be completed by the end of the year and then we will move on sequentially to the next most problematic weir. In parallel to this WRT and partners have carried out extensive river habitat surveys on the Taw to identify fisheries habitat distribution, bank degradation, further migration obstacles, invasive weeds and any number of additional features we think are relevant. These surveys are designed to inform restorative **action** and give us an overview of the total functional area of the catchment for different stages of the salmonid life cycle. Already this work has allowed us to prepare funding bids for further restorative work, some of which have met with immediate success - watch this space!

Meanwhile, our boffins in their back-room laboratories at Exeter University are undertaking genetic research to establish where our Westcountry sea trout go when they migrate to sea. Early indications are that they have an extensive migration, many hundreds of miles, and are not always caught by anglers in their natal rivers. This research is part of a WRT-led,



multimillion-pound, European-scale project to map the whereabouts of all our migratory species at sea so that we can protect their migration corridors and their feeding sites using the increasingly powerful marine legislation available.

Finally, with the publication the Natural Environment White Paper and the Water White Paper we predict that the delivery role of Rivers Trusts will increase across the country. We hope that we are able to seize this opportunity on behalf of all those interested in the health of rivers and deliver significant improvements in an efficient and focused manner, but we can only do this with your continued approval and support, for which we thank you. Together we are the living and working embodiment of the government's vision for Big Society and we hope that our fantastic joint work will continue to command their attention and support.

Dr Dylan Bright, Trust Director

Westcountry Rivers Trust:  
Rain-Charm House  
Kyl Cober Parc - Stoke Climsland - Callington -  
Cornwall - UK - PL17 8PH

Tel: +44 (0)1579 372140  
Web: [www.wrt.org.uk](http://www.wrt.org.uk)

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## Updates from the Environment Agency

We are entering a period where, in spite of significant reductions to Agency budgets, much good work is being carried out on the Taw to benefit the fishery. I am pleased that we are able to work closely with the RTFA to achieve this, and look forward to good working relations through the regular River Taw Partnership meetings. These bring the Agency together with the fisheries and riparian interests to discuss and agree the important actions to focus on. I highlight some of the key work areas below:

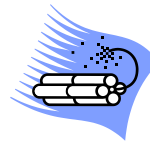
**Water Framework Directive:** In the coming months, the practical application of the Water Framework Directive (WFD) will start to take effect on the Upper Taw, which has been identified as a 'failing water body'. In simple terms, the WFD model suggests that in the Upper Taw there are insufficient fish present (namely salmon, trout and bullheads), and that levels of phosphate are too high. The challenge now is to identify the causes, and implement actions to address these. We have discussed our initial ideas with the Taw Partnership and are currently looking at the Taw habitat report produced by the Westcountry Rivers Trust and kindly provided by the RTFA. We want to make sure that any key actions which have been identified are incorporated into the WFD plan.



We have had many plans in the past, but have often struggled to raise the necessary funds to take the actions forward. It does seem that significant funds will be available through the WFD process and there is a real likelihood of getting many of the actions carried out. We welcome your input to the process, and hope to meet soon with Taw interests to finalise the list of actions that we need to take forward. If we can get actions in the plan we can bid for the funds. So we all need to get our thinking caps on!

**Obstructions:** Some excellent progress has been made with improvements to some of the major obstructions in the catchment, and with the promise of WFD funds the future looks very positive on this front, with a number of large weirs

still to tackle. On a smaller scale, we are dealing with some lesser obstacles on the upper Taw: Bob Collett has just had improvements completed to a gauging weir at Sticklepath, and plans are well underway to remove a former South West Water gauging weir at Irishman's Wall, making passage onto Taw Marsh much more straightforward.



Access to this site for machinery is so difficult, that we are looking to use explosives. I'm told that volunteers may be needed to hold red flags for this one!

**Enforcement:** We continue to put a lot of time into anti-poaching work. The particular focus in recent weeks has been the estuary where fish are accumulating during the prolonged low flows. We have recently successfully prosecuted 2 individuals found to be catching and retaining salmon whilst drift netting for sea fish. It is often reports from members of the public that lead to offenders being caught so please do report anything suspicious as soon as you are able using our Freephone Number 0800 807060.

**Net Limitation Order:** Many Association members will remember the buy-out of the net fishery almost 10 years ago which reduced the number of commercial netmen on the estuary from 14 to 3 and resulted in a marked reduction in the net catch. This pioneering agreement paved the way for several other buy-outs on SW rivers which collectively secured a massive reduction in commercial net catches.

On the Taw/Torridge, the buy-out was underpinned by a 10 year Net Limitation Order (NLO) of zero. (3 netmen were able to continue fishing because they had a legal right to do so). The current NLO times out in February of next year and we are in discussions at the moment with interested parties and DEFRA to decide upon the terms of a new Order to replace it. The RTFA will be closely involved with this, not least through Humphrey Wood who was instrumental in securing the original buy out.

Chris Lawson. Environment Agency

RTFA Annual General Meeting and Dinner

Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2012  
Highbullen Hotel, Chittlehamholt.





## South West Rivers Association

### Progress summary

2011 saw the retirement of Humphrey Wood from the Chair after many years of unstinting service. His successor, Henry Llewellyn, is Chairman of the Exe Association. The Taw continues to be well represented on SWRA through Alex Gibson, George Marsh and Mac McCarthy, the new Treasurer.

**2011 AGM:** 100 members and supporters were present. The highlight of the meeting was the presentation to Humphrey Wood of a painting of the new Head Weir Falls. The Secretary, Roger Furniss, reported on the year's work with the following highlights, updated where appropriate:

**HYDROGENERATION:** SWRA is not opposed in principle, but insists on proper protection of flows, wetted areas and fish passage, and has supported several rivers in opposing schemes or ensuring adequate protection.

**WATER FRAMEWORK DIRECTIVE:** The Angling Trust and WWF.UK's threatened Judicial Review of the inadequate River Basin Plans resulted in an increase in the plans' ambitions and an additional £92 million to achieve them. The Minister's announcement made clear that involvement of rivers trusts and river associations would be welcomed. The EA in the South West has already started holding partnership meetings to put this into effect.

**CANOEING:** A report by the Sustainability Committee of the Welsh Assembly Government confirmed our view that there is no general public right of access for canoeing and that the way forward is voluntary agreements – the law in England and Wales is the same. The British Canoe Union continues to insist on 365-day access in any agreements, but it is understood that a new policy announcement is likely shortly.

**NET FISHERY MANAGEMENT:** The 2009 Marine Act introduced two significant changes to the management of licensed salmon and sea trout net fisheries. To date there has been no policy change announced by either Defra or the EA to take account of these changes. SWRA has a long-term objective of banning all netting for salmon

(and sea trout) in home and international waters. Stock levels are no longer adequate to provide a significant food resource and the socio-economic value of rod-caught fish far outweighs that of net caught fish. A number of NLO's are due for renewal/revision in 2014, including the Taw and Torridge, both of whose river associations will be jointly involved in discussions.

**HATCHERIES:** The establishment of a regional Hatchery Best Practice Forum including SWRA, Westcountry Rivers Trust and the EA has already led to sharing of best practice and the EA is committed to all hatchery operations conforming to agreed best practice on such matters as broodstock collection and holding, target survival rates between life stages, stocking policies, use of medication; CEFAS registration, and stocking policy

**POLITICS:** The new Fisheries Minister, Richard Benyon MP has already shown a refreshing and genuine interest in angling by attending two Angling Summits and signalling a return to greater involvement of local interests in river management. He is also supportive of voluntary and charitable sector involvement to replace the dwindling resources of the EA. SWRA is pressing the EA to focus their resources on its essential regulatory and enforcement activities. Strong national representation is as important as strong local and regional pressure. Angling Trust, with its legal arm Fish Legal, is now recognised as the governing body for all types of angling and is a key player in the development of public policy towards angling and in the protection of fisheries and riparian interests – the Trust's involvement in the Judicial Review outlined above and in organising the Angling Summits exemplifies this. Details of the trust can be found at [www.anglingtrust.net](http://www.anglingtrust.net)

- If any reader would like more detail on these or other topics Roger Furniss can be contacted at [swra@furniss2733.fsnet.co.uk](mailto:swra@furniss2733.fsnet.co.uk)

Roger Furniss, SWRA Secretary

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If you want to know.....

About the state of the river and for fishing reports visit the River Taw Fisheries Association Web Site on

<http://www.rivertawfisheries.co.uk/>

and click on the web-cam  
for either the Taw or Mole



## Salmon & Trout Association

Those members of the River Taw Fisheries Association who attended the Annual General Meeting in March will have heard Paul Knight, the Director of the S&TA, outline the important work undertaken by the Association, much of it done in conjunction with other national and international environmental organizations. The achievement of charitable status by the Association some two years ago has enhanced its ability to influence government and others involved in framing legislation affecting our sport.



The Devon Branch continues to encourage children to take up the sport of fly fishing, as it has done for the last 18 years, and in 2010 two courses were held for children aged from 8 to 16 years. It is always our aim to ensure that the children catch a trout to take home and on both occasions last year this was achieved, with most taking home a brace.

My thanks, as always, go to both the Taw and Torridge Associations for their generous sponsorship, to the fishery owners and of course to our instructors John Dawson, Bryan Martin, Gary Pearson and Ian Sorenson.

Duncan Michie

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### Trout on the Taw...

The reputation of the Taw for its salmon and sea trout fishing makes it all too easy to overlook the salmonid that is always with us – the brown trout. Yet the Taw system offers endless miles of fishing for wild brown trout in beautiful surroundings, especially on the upper reaches and the numerous tributaries. Although brown trout are everywhere, the brownies are much easier to locate on the smaller streams, so for me that means the Taw from Eggesford upstream, the upper Mole, the Little Dart and the Bray.



So where can you find a day's trout fishing? For the angler without access to his own water the best opportunities are provided by the Westcountry Rivers Trust's Passport scheme on the Little Dart, while fishing on the Upper Taw is available at the Fox & Hounds at Eggesford and on the Crediton Fly Fishing Club water at Taw Bridge.

Finding rising trout early in the season can be frustrating but the Little Dart at Essebeare near Witheridge has given me some early action, even while insect hatches are still sparse. On one chilly April day the trout were rising to tiny dark insects and only a size 20 Black Midge took any fish until the conditions warmed up and a hatch of dark olives made it possible to use a size 16 Sparkle Dun. On a similar spring day I fished the Mole just above its confluence with the Molland Yeo and again found the trout taking tiny black flies and enjoyed an absorbing session with a small Black Klinkhamer.

With the arrival of summer the Little Dart can drop away to little more than a trickle, but I hit it just right one early July day when the afternoon produced a steady hatch of blue-winged olives and once again the Sparkle Dun did the trick.

Perhaps my most memorable visit to the Taw was a late May day when I fished the Fox & Hounds water at Eggesford. By early afternoon the mayflies were hatching and the trout were rising steadily – and better still coming readily to a variety of mayfly patterns. After each fish was released there was always another rising trout within easy casting distance and this went on for two glorious hours.

My most recent visit to the Taw was above Taw Bridge in late May. It was tough going for more than an hour until a single mayfly fluttered down the river, followed by two more – and then nothing. It was reasonable to assume that the trout had become accustomed to mayflies on the previous days so on went a Loopwing Mayfly and the very first cast produced a fish, as did many a cast over the next couple of hours.

Like any other river, the Taw can spring the odd surprise to make a visit memorable. I was fishing in low water at Taw Bridge when I came upon a pod of fish rising quietly in only inches of water at the tail of a pool. The tiny dimples suggested small trout, but when my first cast was sucked under the line was instantly snatched from my hand as a fish rushed upstream and, when netted, proved to be a lovely brown of 14 inches. On another occasion, I was fishing the Little Dart at Park Mill catching plenty of trout up to 10 inches, but it was only when I moved into its tiny tributary, the Huntacott Water, that I had a trout of 12 inches, the best of the day.

So, exploring the Taw and its tributaries for wild brown trout can be very rewarding and the fishing just keeps going when the rivers are far too low for the salmon angler.



Mike Weaver

## The Angling Trust - Our Mission:

- Promote angling
- Campaign for anglers' rights and the environment
- Lobby governments and agencies
- Protect our waterways and marine environment
- Develop angling as a sport for young and old
- Support angling interests

Read more and **JOIN NOW** at [www.anglingtrust.net](http://www.anglingtrust.net)

Promote us by visiting our Facebook page - [www.facebook.com/AnglingTrust](http://www.facebook.com/AnglingTrust)

Follow us on Twitter - [www.twitter.com/AnglingTrust](http://www.twitter.com/AnglingTrust)

The Angling Trust, Eastwood House, 6 Rainbow Street, Leominster, Herefordshire, HR6 8DQ

Telephone: 0844 7700616

## River Taw Byelaws

### Seasons

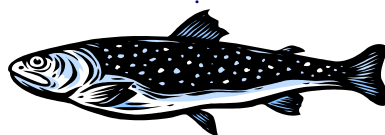
Salmon	1 March to 30 September
Sea Trout & Brown Trout	15 March to 30 September

### 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



**The River Taw Fisheries Association is most grateful for  
the financial support given towards printing of this newsletter by  
Strutt & Parker**



24 Southernhay West, Exeter EX1 1PR Telephone: 01392 215631

Editor: Judith Kauntze, Harracott House, Harracott, Nr Barnstaple EX31 3JT