

DEVON

ANGLING REVIEW

The Newsletter of the Devon Angling Association

Hon. Secretary Comments - The Devon Year 2021:

Season 2021 has been characterised by excellent support from members with permit sales being very good indeed. Thanks are due to all those who have supported us in another difficult year of the Covid pandemic. Unfortunately, most members did not have a very good fishing season, mainly due to the weather. First of all, there was the massive flood in February which did some damage to the river itself, but probably untold damage to fish eggs and fry. This was followed by a very cold spring and it took a long time for the river to recover. There then ensued a long period of drought and high water temperatures, this coupled with the covid restrictions meant it was quite common that there was nobody fishing at all for days on end. The river reached a record low point (0.078m at Castlehill). It seems that a lot of the new season's trout are small and much later in developing this year. Latterly things improved but 2021 will not go down as one of our better years for trout. Very few sea trout have been caught although there were reports of considerable numbers in the river. Also it was noted that this year, for the first time over a few years, there were substantial numbers of eels in the river, as witnessed by some worm fishers later in the season.



As far as salmon are concerned this has been the poorest season for some time. Only three fish have been caught and not very many seen. There was no rain until near the end of October and then we were flooded out. The weir at Cambus has been closely monitored and seals have been seen, presumably chasing fish, but because of extremely low river flows and relatively low tides of only 4 metres, the fish have had to retreat to the Forth as the tide ebbed.

Glenquoy Reservoir was well patronised but fishing conditions were very variable, especially during the long dry spell with a bright sun. Results therefore were quite mixed with a good number of blanks experienced. Scottish Water kept the reservoir level high all year which made wading more difficult than usual.

Addition to DAA Lease holding agreed:

A new lease has been negotiated with Crown Estate Scotland for the East Gogar and Ditch Farm beat of the River Devon. This extends the lease holdings as far as the railway bridge carrying the main Alloa-Stirling line at Cambus. This adds almost 2 miles to the length of the river under DAA control. This new lease will run for 1 year and then be subsumed into the current lease for the salmon fishings when renewed from 2022.

Work parties and volunteering:

Members of the Association voluntarily donate much of their own time to protect and enhance the Devon. The Association's Committee carry out a considerable amount of work along the river both to ensure access to and the health of the riparian environment. Tasks undertaken by the DAA work parties often require significant physical activity and any help by volunteers from within the membership is valuable. Apart from seeing jobs well done, being out in the environment along with colleagues who share interest in the river is very satisfying.

The DAA maintains a River Management Plan and a separate 3 year Action Plan. The implementation of the Action Plan and the progress of tasks from the plan are reviewed annually.

The River Devon - a beautiful and dynamic river:

The River Devon is a beautiful and dynamic river, which is not only enjoyed by anglers, but also by the wider communities. Over the lengthy period of restrictions resulting from the coronavirus there has been a very marked increase in numbers of people walking the river not only for exercise but to connect with nature and improve their wellbeing. The river is home to a variety of wildlife species, some of which are vulnerable and it is important that their habitats and the river as a whole are properly managed and protected. The Angling Association is proud of its role in looking after the Devon, which helps to ensure that future generations can continue to enjoy the river and all that it offers.

An excellent book titled '*If Rivers could Sing*' - A Scottish River Wildlife Journey written by Keith Broomfield was published in 2020 and describes a year in the life of the River Devon. This book is available locally from a number of retail and online outlets and it is well worth reading as it gives a wonderful insight into the wildlife and riparian diversity of the river. Keith is an active committee member of the Devon Angling Association and is also a Trustee of the Forth Rivers Trust.

Impact of extreme weather, gales and flooding during 2021:

As commented on by the Hon. Secretary, the river has been affected by some extreme weather conditions during 2021, some of the problems resulting are as follows:

- The Bridge where the Devon Way path crosses Dollar Burn became blocked by tree debris, rubble and gravel causing significant diversion of the Burn onto the path. Heavy machinery was needed to clear the bridge and restore the water flow downstream
- The path (Core Path 181) from Rackmill (Dollar) through the Damhead Wood suffered damage in various places. The bridge that crossed the burn at the exit from the wood connecting to the path leading on to Vicars Bridge was destroyed. It has been necessary to make arrangements for construction of a replacement. This will be carried in the spring of 2022 due to access problems.
- Due to the accumulation over recent years of a substantial gravel bank to the east of where the Boghall Burn joins the river, the south bank is now eroding again. The posts in the picture below indicate the previous line of the bank and the new erosion is now threatening the walking path that leads on to Vicars Bridge. This gravel bank needs to be cleared of vegetation, reduced in height down to mean water level and be cleared from the opposite bank where the flow width is significantly reduced. This task requires authorisation from SEPA and is being pursued by the landowner who is hopeful that this can be carried out early in 2022.



Gravel Bank, current condition requiring work



Same location after previous works early in 2015

The following article is from Alloa Advertiser 8th February 1896:

The work of 'Tooking' or piling the sides of the River Devon with posts, began on Monday last, the supervision of the work being entrusted to Mr Coyle, Glasgow, who has a staff of seven men in addition to several Dollar men. The work is likely to continue for seven or eight months, as different parts of the River Devon (where the stream leaks through the banks when in spate) is to be piled. A hand hammer of about 15 cwt, in weight has been put into position on the South bank of the Devon immediately below the old Brickworks at the Lower Mains and by means of a chain and wrench is raised to a height which, when it falls, gives a blow of about 30 cwt, in weight to the posts used for piling. The posts used at the job are young spruce fir trees, from about 12 to 13 feet in length, the 'piling' will be securely backed with solid materials

Devon Angling Association Website

www.devonanglingassociation.org.uk