

Head Keeper's End of Season Report For 2009

Weather conditions again dictated the outcome of this Season with very dry, bright conditions at both the beginning and end, giving us very clear low water, with the result that fish were easily spooked. The rest of the Season was cool and wet with very unsettled conditions, which isn't ideal for hatches or good falls of spinners, so you might expect me to report that the fishing has been poor. Far from it. The Members and their Guests have caught 16,800 fish this season, some 2,000 more than last year which was itself a good season, so what could be caught if conditions were perfect?

As for illegal fishing, we've had a quieter year than we expected, apprehending 38 poachers, mainly those of no fixed abode, "people having picnics" and a couple of Latvians and a Lithuanian. On the poacher deterrent front, our Alsation is coming on well with basic training at present. With police training due in the New Year, it will be interesting to see how poachers respond.

On the subject of pests, two mink have been caught so far this year, one early in the season and one recently.

The mayfly hatch was fair to good but much better than the kick samples indicated, making me think that kick samples aren't that accurate for this species (deep burrowers) on our stretch, with limited ideal habitat within the sample area. The kick samples in general this season have been good to very good for some species, the one with lower scores this year being the BWO. I think is down to poor summer conditions with a lack of still warm evenings. However, the BWO frequently hatches under cover of darkness, when we are back home or in the Hut. See the end of the report for the latest kick sample results.

We have carried on with our vendetta against the Himalayan Balsam with very positive signs at the source, Buxton tip, with plants numbering only in the hundreds now. We are still checking fortnightly from the tip all the way down to our bottom boundary and I'm pleased to say that very few plants are being found except for a few groups where we probably missed a plant last year.

As mentioned in a previous report the feedback from the Rivercraft Courses for members was very positive and they will be carried on in the same format next year. Members wishing to have one on one instruction/guiding/entomology tuition can contact a number of instructors whose links can be found on our web-site. These include Steve Yeomans, Stuart Crofts (entomology & guiding), Philip White, John Tyzack and Peter Arfield. All offer reduced rates for members on our water.

The Environment Agency recently did an electric fishing survey on a 100m stretch in Cheedale, which, as many of you will appreciate, has been a wild stretch for many years. The results were outstanding, with some 95 browns and 49 rainbows being caught. When

you consider that all the fish were wild and that the fishery officers expect to catch only 40% of the population in this type of survey, it makes the results even more remarkable and is a testament to the quality of the water.

As you are reading this we are now busy with the winter work (not sunning ourselves in the Bahamas!) which includes coppicing trees back above Lock Bridge, below Freddie's and Signposts and also finishing off the work above Harry's. We are also trimming back the trees to open up Cressbrook Lake and removing diseased trees. General bank maintenance, along with litter picking from the expected winter floods should keep us busy until the 18th.

As all members will know, Dave Percival has just celebrated his 65th birthday and will be retiring at the end of the year. Dave has been the Head Keeper for over 25 years on the original Cressbrook & Litton stretch. As a colleague and friend I would like to wish him many happy years of retirement, fishing and playing golf and would like to thank him for looking after the river so well and passing on this little gem for me to care for in the future. I know that we will all miss him, staff, members and guests alike for his politically correct remarks(!), his witty repartee and of course his bacon butties.

On behalf of the keepers and myself, we look forward to seeing you at the beginning of the 2010 season and don't forget the grayling, their season having now been extended to 14th March 2010.

Kick Sample results

Upperdale 28/09/09	Lockbridge 29/09/09	Duffer's 01/10/09
Heptagenids 30	Heptagenids 14	Heptagenids 12
Stonefly 14	Stonefly 5	Stonefly 12
Baetis 1120	Baetis 1200	Baetis 340
Cased Caddis 94	Cased Caddis 15	Cased Caddis 28
Caseless Caddis 20	Caseless Caddis 28	Caseless Caddis 16
Mayfly 23	Mayfly 25	Mayfly 12
BWO 85	BWO 60	BWO 35
Shrimp 485	Shrimp 450	Shrimp 240

There are some interesting results, the lower figures for some species are just because they have already hatched this season and next year's generation is too small to identify. There are promising numbers of Mayfly nymphs for this time of year and fantastic numbers of Baetis.