

Keepers mid season report 2011

The river conditions this year are identical to last season, with low clear water and bright sunny skies for the first 2 months. Westerly winds in May improved the hatches of fly and helped the flows, but the flies of preference for the feeding trout were Greenfly and Black Gnat for a good 3 weeks ! The Mayfly hatch this year, except for the 4th June, was more or less a non-event, with very few seen after that date. At present the river height is holding up fairly well, with help in places from the growing Ranunculus. There are steady hatches of Olives, particularly BWO's, good numbers of sedges hatching and large numbers of Yellow Sallies coming off. What we need now are some warm still evenings to produce some good spinner falls and sedges into the darkness.

Both of the Courses were well attended and the weather just about behaved itself. I have had several comments from Members about how much they had enjoyed themselves and had learnt a lot from the knowledgeable instructors. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank Stuart Crofts, Steve Yeomans, Don Stazicker and Catherine Johnson and helpers, Chris Dore and Dave Percival for making these events so successful.

Poaching activity has increased from last season with 22 caught so far and another 7 incidents known to have taken place, one of which concerned 2 men who I caught a month after I had missed them fishing on Lenzini's - very satisfying. Whilst on the subject of pests, we had an elusive mink on the river, which we eventually caught, and it turned out to be a non-breeding adult female, only to hear a week later another one had been seen at Lock Bridge.

Chris and I have just returned from our first Balsam check this year on the "Tip" at Buxton where 4 years ago we found thousands of plants. After an extensive search amongst the nettle beds we found just 2 plants.

Some of the summer work this year includes planting Ranunculus weed above Lock Bridge, Freddie's, Iron Bridge, President's, Lenzini's and above Harry's, where I have also put in 3 low stone weirs to back up 8-10" of water, which is enough to create some new pools. I have also repaired Harry's Weir and several weirs at Slitherford. Meanwhile Chris has been busy spot spraying Ragwort, Thistles and Nettles so that we comply with the farmer's management agreement for the fenced off areas in Monsal Dale.

When Members and Guests arrive at the water can they please remember to use the Virkon spray provided if needed and as per the instructions in the huts? Members also needed to be aware of the 7,000 volt electric fence wire in the Bobbin Mill area.

The River Derwent Balsam control project is now underway and anyone wishing to get involved with clearing the Derwent catchment from its source to Rowsley, please contact me on 01298 871676.

Nature Notes

The bad winter seems to have badly affected several species of birds including Owls, Kestrels, Grey Wagtails and Kingfishers in our area, with few being seen this summer. The Dippers on our water have done very well, with 53 chicks being ringed and 5 nests missed which were successful. This is a very good sign, showing how healthy the river is and that it is very much driven by the aquatic invertebrates.

The early spring this year brought in many migrant birds 10-14 days early, with good numbers of Warblers and Redstarts in the dales. I have also heard 2 Cuckoos on the tops which are the first for 9 years.

After the severe temperatures it's nice to report that Frogs and Toads have done well in the valley and there are also good numbers of Great Crested and Smooth Newts in the dew ponds in the area. The cooler weather over the last few weeks hasn't been very conducive for butterflies, but the warmth of the last few days has brought out Brown Argus, Meadow Browns, Common Blues and the first Dark Green Fritillaries.

As I finish writing this on the 3rd July, there have been a couple of large falls of Sherry Spinners on the river around 8.30 – 9.30pm so enjoy the evening sport and if you are fishing in Monsal Dale keep your eyes open for Kingfishers as I have now found an active nest.

Tight Lines
Stephen