

Cressbrook & Litton Flyfishers Club

Head Keeper's Early Season Report 2009

After one of the coldest, driest winters for many years the season has started with the river very low and clear. Add in the raw weather conditions at the beginning of the season and a couple of weeks of bright sunshine and northerly winds, this was no good for anything, let alone fishing! These conditions were more akin to August with the fish very wary and particularly hard to tempt to dry flies on the surface. Stalking fish with small nymphs on long, fine leaders often paid dividends however. Saying this, some very good fish were caught in the first few weeks, including several in the 4 – 5 lbs range. Many members struggled to catch fish in any numbers, with several blanks, which is most unusual for the Wye. My advice is to fish fine and choose your time – some very creditable catches have been made in the evenings when the low angle of the sun has helped to conceal the angler. Don't despair however, because improving temperatures and hopefully some rain will bring about increasing hatches of olives and sedges which will lead to better sport in the next few weeks.

Many of you will have seen the tree work undertaken by Chris, David Shaw & I during the winter, letting in light to several stretches. We now intend to plant ranunculus weed in these areas in the next couple of weeks to improve the aquatic habitat.

On the poaching front we tried to detain a man, firstly at President's and two hours later just below Lock Bridge, where he became very aggressive and attempted to ram my vehicle. Unfortunately he escaped before the Police arrived. Another poacher from the "Price" family, fishing with his girlfriend, wasn't so lucky. Chris crept up on them, commando fashion, and apprehended them in a perfect pincer movement with the Police. Both were accused of poaching and taking three fish, which they admitted and eventually agreed to pay the Club compensation. I have just been informed by the Court that another member of the same family, again apprehended with his girlfriend last season, has pleaded guilty. Both received heavy fines and were ordered to pay the Club compensation. Unfortunately, I suspect that it may be the same people who got their own back by stealing our brand new picnic table from Duffers.

I conducted the first invertebrate 3 minute kick - samples last week, which produced excellent results, especially for heptagenid nymphs and stoneflies. These indicate very good water quality as they have the highest score (10) in water quality sampling and invertebrate monitoring. High numbers of baetis nymphs indicate the likelihood of very good olive hatches when the current weather pattern changes. The only disappointment is the lack of mayfly nymphs

which is what I would expect after two wet, cool summers and floods during and after egg laying. However, mayfly nymphs can burrow to great depths and hopefully I will be proved wrong! The low scores or complete lack of blue winged olive nymphs in these samples might alarm fishermen but at this time of the year the nymphs are extremely small and consequently hard to identify especially amongst a couple of thousand other nymphs. Their numbers should hopefully increase dramatically in the next two months as they have a major growth spurt.

The results of the kick – samples are shown separately in the new web page “Riverfly Surveys”.

Tight lines!

Stephen