

Head Keeper's Pre-Season Report 2010

The snow and cold temperatures have made working on the river far more difficult this winter, with a foot of snow lying on the ground for the best part of a month and temperatures below freezing for long periods. A low of minus 11 was recorded on a couple of nights. This has obviously hampered our work programme but members will be glad to know that we have just about caught up, with the few jobs left being done just after the start of the season.

Chris and I have been busy this winter doing several large jobs, which include coppicing trees above Harry's Weir, on Signposts, below Freddie's Weir and above Lock Bridge. We've been removing small trees from the edge of the bank and behind to open up a casting area on Cressbrook Lake, shoring up the riverbank above Duffer's, on Presidents, above Bobbin Mill and on the day ticket water. We have also widened the steps and gate upstream of Bobbin Mill for limited wheelchair access. We have also put some stepping stones over the stream above Lock Bridge.

Chris has also put up two new benches below Upperdale. We have also removed several diseased alders on the lower stretch, as well as planting a good number of willows where we need more shelter.

Members might be interested to know that there are plans to open up the old railway tunnels on the Monsal Trail, with a view to making a bike/horse trail between Buxton and Matlock. We shall be meeting with the Peak Park to discuss how this will affect the fishery.

With the river being low and clear due to the frozen conditions this winter, it has been possible to witness good numbers of fish spawning and also to see the large number of particularly mature fish which have managed to overwinter so well this year, with very little post spawning disease (Saprolegnia) in evidence.

Members may not have noticed the recent press release by the Environment Agency confirming what we had long suspected – that the replacement of the Buxton Sewage Works in 2004 has resulted in a distinct improvement in water quality in the Wyedale to Millers Dale area, with remarkable increases in the BMP scores in this length of the river. This has been evidenced by an upsurge in wild trout numbers (see my earlier reports) and by increases in the numbers of stoneflies and other flylife. A link to the press release can be found on our website.

On the 2nd of March Chris and I were joined by a volunteer group (13 volunteers) led by Julia Gow from the Derbyshire Wildlife Trust, two members and one member's wife, to help us litter pick through Cheedale. We chose the best day of the year so far and managed to clear a far longer stretch than we had anticipated: from Topley Pike to the abseiling viaduct at Miller's Dale. All concerned enjoyed the day and agreed to make it an annual event. Our thanks go to all concerned - a great day....

David Marriott and I have been having discussions with the Environment Agency with a view to setting up disinfection points at the Huts to reduce the risk of diseases coming from other waters in the UK and particularly from abroad where many members now fish. Unfortunately the guidelines set down by the Agency make it nigh on impossible to go ahead within the rules, being so close to the river. It is therefore my suggestion that members and their guests take extra care and treat their waders (particularly felt soles), nets etc either with a disinfectant or by freezing for 24 hours and to make sure their tackle is dry before they come to the river. It ought not be too much of an imposition for members who fish other areas and especially abroad to purchase a separate landing net for use on the River Wye. A small outlay compared to the cost fishing holiday.

To finish on a lighter note there have been a few large dark olives hatching on the few warmer days and I saw the first stonefly (February Red) on the 20th February. Whilst I was litter picking on the same day on Cressbrook Lake stretch I saw at least 150 fish regularly rising to hatching midge !!

Tight lines for the new season.

Stephen