



The National Anguilla Club

BULLETIN

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The National Anguilla Club, 1969

EDITORIAL

What a start to the season!

Greystone Lake has turned out to be a very special 'fruit machine' indeed and our members Bob Jones and Pete Climo have 'hit the jackpot' time and again. Pete started by getting his hand in with a fine eel of 4:13 $\frac{1}{2}$ on May 1st., and then topped Bob's existing British Rod-Caught Record by 7 oz. with a tremendous eel of 7:15 on May 11th. Almost exactly four days later, to the minute, Bob got his nose in front again by 1 oz. with a superb eel of 8:0. Bob has also accounted for lesser eels - though still fine specimens by ordinary standards - of 3:8, 3:10 and 4:4.

Other promising eel waters pin-pointed by our investigations have also produced fine specimens for other Club members. Dave Goodrum's first session of the season, at London Rd. Pit, Lincs., yielded fine eels of 4:12 $\frac{1}{2}$ and 3:0 $\frac{1}{2}$. Taking a preliminary look at the venue for the Club's Whit Holiday outing on the G.U. Canal near Rothersthorpe, Terry Coulson had a nice specimen of 4:2 in the bin within an hour of casting out. So, with the month of May still not out, the tally stands at no less than six 4 lb.-plus eels - more than the Club accounted for in the whole of the 1968 season.

What a start to the season! Let us hope that it continues in the same exciting form.

Of course, the remarkable score is largely the result of the efforts of Bob and Pete at Greystone Lake, and what a remarkable water it obviously is. These results should give a wonderful fillip to the enthusiasm and confidence of all Club members, for it seems to me that they demonstrate very clearly that we have been working along the right lines in making the problem of 'location' our top priority for investigation. I well remember writing about three years ago that while a record eel might turn up in almost any water, the probability of a record eel from an average water was microscopically small; and that we therefore needed to concentrate on trying to locate a few "Eel Redmires". Bob's and Pete's results plainly show that "Eel Redmires" are no figment of my imagination - they really do exist; Bob and Pete have the good fortune to have one close at hand, and have shown the acumen to recognise and to exploit it.

It seems to me, therefore, that we should leave no stone unturned in investigating the characteristics of Greystone Lake, so that we are in a position to compare it in detail with other waters and so try to discover on a factual basis which of its features are chiefly responsible for its remarkable performance as an eel water. We would then be able to seek out other waters showing similar features - perhaps to an even more marked degree - and the 'location' of eel waters would have taken a great stride forward. For example, I recall writing in 'Fishing' (August 1966, p. 17 - 19) that a really promising big-eel water would have notably rich feeding and probably some degree of 'prison-water' characteristics, too. Bob Jones has told us that Greystone Lake is in limestone country (and so, presumably, is richly productive of invertebrate food-forms for the young eels), that its indigenous trout and incoming elvers provide rich feeding for the larger eels, and that it is indeed something of a prison-water.

If Bob and Pete can be prevailed upon to carry such investigations into greater detail, we shall soon be learning things of value to us all, especially when data from session reporting can also be taken into account. In this connection, it is already clear that Greystone Lake stands head-and-shoulders above any other water we know in the average weight and spread of the catch. On my preliminary reckoning, Bob's and Pete's combined catch of ten eels to date, which I believe has been largely if not wholly on worm baits, has a median of 4:10 and an IQR of 3:10 - 7:8 (that is, a spread of 3:14). Compare

these data with those for the G.U.Canal, the best of our 'other' waters, where the average weight has been only 3:2 on worms (no less than $1\frac{1}{2}$ lb. below Greystone Lake) with a spread of 2:3 - 4:11.

I have suggested once or twice that although a high average weight may not necessarily indicate the best prospects for the very biggest eels, yet it is not a bad pointer; and that whether our personal sights are set on a record-breaker or only on good sport with good eels, it is common sense to increase the effort on waters which give better-than-average results, and reduce it on below-average waters. The wisdom of this plan seems to me to be well borne out by what we now know about Greystone Lake. The more we learn, the more effectively we shall be able to put this plan into effect; but isn't it already clear that many of the waters to which we have devoted a great deal of time are not really in the right ball-park? If you are like me, you will be itching to get on with it!

Moving on to rather more mundane thoughts, Dave Goodrum and I were chatting the other day, and we both remarked that we had spent less time eel-fishing than at the same time last year - but with much more satisfactory results. In fact, we had both taken to heart some of the many lessons to be learned from the Club's session reporting work: we were being more selective in our fishing, by making practical use of the Club's findings about the merits of different waters, bait choice, water temperature, and so on.

I hope that each and every member will be able to apply the lessons we are learning, and improve his results and increase his enjoyment this season.

- Terence Coulson.

BOOK REVIEWS

'Making Fishing Tackle As A Hobby', Harry Brotherton (Stanley Paul & Co, London, 1962). This book contains nothing specific appertaining to eels and eel-fishing except a brief chapter on the construction of an inferior electric bite detector. The remaining chapters contain too many varied subjects to elaborate on in this short review but I can give high recommendation to the articles on hooks and hook tackles. Another good chapter worth mention here is the one giving instruction on the making of a sturdy but light landing-net frame. A fair buy at sixteen shillings. - Brian T. Knott.

'The Angler's Make And Mend Book', H.T.B.Bentley (The Technical Press, 1962). A chapter on eels entitled 'Catching them, skinning them, cooking them' will not teach members of the National Anguilla Club anything they do not already know or can learn from the Bulletin, but plenty of other interesting features in this book make up for it. The book is written in a very personal manner by the author which makes it enjoyable reading. Apart from the make-and-mend aspect, a lot can be learned from this book about the raw materials used in tackle-making. An excellent book. Price unknown. - Brian T. Knott.

pH

by Brian T. Knott

Like many other Club members, I have not got a particularly scientific turn of mind, but with the encouragement of Terry Coulson's articles in previous Bulletins, I have learned to investigate and to improve my knowledge. One of the things which puzzled me at first was the mysterious symbol 'pH' and set out below are the facts I have gleaned from various sources on this subject.

The symbol pH represents the quality of the water in terms of its acidity or alkalinity, this quality being determined by means of a chemical test on a sample. Chemists have various methods of carrying out this test. In one form of the test, one drop of a solution of a special dye called Bromothymol Blue is added to twenty drops of the sample of water. If the water is acid, the mixture turns yellow and, roughly speaking, the more acid the water, the stronger the yellow colour. If the water is alkaline, the mixture turns blue; the stronger the blue, the more alkaline. If the water is neutral - that is, neither acid nor alkaline - then the mixture turns pale green.

These tests can be carried out using a little gadget called a 'Comparator' provided by chemists and manufacturers of aquarium equipment. Using the Comparator, the colour of the mixture can be matched exactly with one of a set of numbered colour-standards, so as to assess the pH of the sample on a numerical scale. On this scale, the pH of neutral water is fixed at precisely 7.07. Water which is acid has a pH of less than 7.07, and the more strongly acid it is, the lower its pH number. Water which is alkaline has a pH greater than 7.07 - the more alkaline, the higher the pH number.

The standard colour matchers supplied with Comparators are usually graduated in shade corresponding to intervals of 2/10ths. on the pH scale. Shown below is a small section of the pH scale, sufficient to illustrate the range we need concern ourselves with, and an indication of the colours given using Bromothymol Blue:

	<u>Acid</u>			<u>Neutral</u>			<u>Alkaline</u>	
6.0	6.2	6.4	6.8	7.0	7.2	7.4	7.6	
	Yellow			Green			Blue	

Another form of the test can be carried out using booklets of specially prepared papers, similar to the style of Litmus papers. The paper is dipped into the water, and its colour turns to a shade which has to be matched with one of the colour standards printed on the cover of the booklet and numbered with the pH the shade corresponds to. The booklets are easy to carry around and quick to use, but the result is less reliable than with the Comparator.

The quickest and most reliable results can be obtained using electronic devices, some of which are specially made for field work on fisheries, though this is perhaps beyond the scope of most members.

These are just basic facts concerning pH, but I hope they have increased the knowledge of some of my fellow members to the same extent that my own knowledge was increased in the process of accumulating the information.

*

** Alkaline (high pH) waters are usually those like chalk streams and limestone lakes which are well-charged with calcium, which favours the growth of many of the invertebrate creatures on which fish feed - so high pH often means good fish growth. But pH data need interpreting with caution, because some low pH waters can be highly productive, too. - Editor.

REVISION OF THE GREAT OUSE RIVER AUTHORITY BYE LAWS:LATEST DEVELOPMENTS

by Brian T. Knott

On Wednesday, April 2nd., 1969, Rian Tingay and I were the guests of the Cambridge Specimen Group at their monthly meeting held at the White Horse, Milton. The Cambridge S.G. was aware of the work we had been doing and the representations we had made to the Authority in connection with their eel-fishing regulations, and the Group invited us to their meeting to see whether we might usefully join forces. This, indeed, proved to be the case.

At the close of the Groups ordinary meeting, the revision of the local bye laws was raised as a special item. The Group was concerned about the proposed revision because, whilst they had been working in close conjunction with the Authority on a Zander project, they feared that the bye laws appertaining to pike-fishing were likely to be altered and also extended to embrace the zander. The Group felt that this would be unwise because not enough is known yet about this new-comer to British waters, and the pike laws themselves were considered to require no change. Rian and I were invited to express an opinion on this subject, which was heard and noted.

The Cambridge Group then indicated that they were aware of our efforts to get the eel-fishing regulations amended so as to allow eel-fishing during the coarse-fish close season, and thought that the time was opportune to join forces so as to consolidate the representations to the Authority on these two related subjects, and to press them forward as effectively as possible. Arrangements were accordingly made for a further meeting to go into the matter in more detail, on Easter Monday, April 7th., 1969, again at the White Horse.

Rian and I duly arrived at this meeting, armed with relevant papers on the eel-fishing aspects. One of our main documents was the detailed case in support of close-season eel-fishing originally written by Terry Coulson for the NASG's representations to the Thames Conservancy Public Inquiry last year. This document* marshalls the arguments and presents the facts, backed by detailed references to the scientific literature, in support of close-season eel-fishing, in the factual form needed to carry weight with a River Authority. After assisting in the work on the pike regulations and the zander, we presented our papers on the eel case to the Cambridge Group members. After discussion, it was agreed that the case could not be improved upon; in fact, the meeting considered that the case made out was overwhelmingly strong to any impartial consideration. The meeting thus resulted in the drawing up of a consolidated manuscript, of impressive weight, for presentation to the Fisheries Officer and Committee.

Of course, these moves represent only the first steps along what may well prove to be a very long road. However, for our part, we are firmly determined to carry it through - if necessary, to a Public Inquiry. It is reassuring to know that we have not only moral support from the Club, but also real and practical help in the preparation and presentation of our case in a form which cannot be lightly brushed aside. It is reassuring, too, to have been able to join forces with the Cambridge S.G. so cordially, and we are indebted to them for access to their close contacts with the Authority, which can only help us to make our case heard.

Join us in thanking the Cambridge S.G. for their assistance - and wish us luck!

* This document is available to members wishing to make representations to their local River Authority. - Editor

Notable Eels: NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

<u>LOCATION</u>	<u>CLASS</u>	<u>WEIGHT</u>	<u>LENGTH</u>	<u>GIRTH</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>TIME</u>	<u>BAIT</u>	<u>CAPTOR</u>	<u>SOURCE</u>
'Peterborough River'	1.	?	63		1667				Mentioned by Izaak Walton, 'The Compleat Angler', Chap. XIII.
Overstone Lake	2.1	5:12	42 $\frac{1}{4}$		Jun 56	dusk	Worm	N.Woodward	via J.Ellis
		5:4 $\frac{1}{2}$			8 Jul 61	night	Lobworm	R.Date	AT 14.7.61, p. 1 (P)
		4:4			Jun 56		Deadbait	S.E.Simmonds	AT 29.6.56, p. 2
Thrapston Gravel Pit	2.1	4:13	38	ca 36 ca 8	24 Jun 61	01.15	Gudgeon db	B.Rowlett	AT 30.6.61, p. 17
		4:12			Oct 62				AT 19.10.62, p. 2
		4:6	38		Jun 67	03.15	Bleak db	G.Swailles	G.Swailles
Billing Aquadrome	2.	5:4						R.Reynolds	R.Reynolds
Ditchford Lakes, Rushden	2.	4:0	36		Jul 66	night		E.Dimmock	AT 12.8.66, p. 21
G.U.Canal, Flore	2.3	6:4	43 $\frac{1}{2}$	9	9 Jun 68	02.30	Gudgeon db	P.Bunce	(AT 20.6.68, pp. 14,15(P) (AM 21.6.68, p. 22 (P))
Hunsbury Hill		6:0			Supposed to have been found on towpath			J.Gibbinson	
Stoke Bruen		6:0			196X		(N.of W. prizewinner)	J.Gibbinson	
Whilton lock		5:12	43	8	Jun 59		Lobworm	W.W.Starmer	AT 26.6.59, p. 1
Bugbrooke		5:8	40	9 $\frac{1}{2}$	15 Aug 66	22.55	2 x lobworms	R.Church	AT 26.8.66, p. 10(P)
Weedon		5:5	43	8 $\frac{3}{4}$	30 May 66	02.00	Lobworms	R.Rolph	R.Rolph
Bugbrooke		5:4			17 Aug 66	03.00	2 x lobworms	R.Gibbinson	(AT 2.9.66, pp.1, 24(P) (AM 2.9.66, p. 21(P))
Bugbrooke		5:4	41 $\frac{5}{8}$	8 $\frac{1}{2}$	8 Sep 66	22.45	3 oz perch db	R.Church	AT 23.9.66, p. 6(P)
Harpole		5:1			4 Aug 68	01.10	2 x lobworms	P.Shatford	P.Shatford
Heyford		4:12	41	7 $\frac{3}{4}$	3 Jul 66	23.30	2 x lobworms	R.Church	R.Church
Flore		4:10	39 $\frac{1}{2}$	8 $\frac{1}{4}$	3 Sep 66	02.00	Gudgeon db	J.Gibbinson	J.Gibbinson
Weedon		4:3 $\frac{1}{2}$	37 $\frac{7}{8}$	8 $\frac{3}{8}$	11 Jun 66	02.00	Lobworms	R.Rolph	R.Rolph
Rothersthorpe		4:2	38 $\frac{7}{8}$	8	10 May 69	22.00	1 x lobworm	T.M.Coulson	T.M.Coulson
Hunsbury Hill		4:0+			1963	day	Lobworms	A perch angler	J.Gibbinson
Calcutt locks		4:0			Jul 65	06.00	Lobworm tail	E.Watson	J.Gibbinson
Oxford Canal, Heyford	2.3	4:0			Aug 63		Minnow	B.Mortiboy	AT 30.8.63, p. 13
A dyke, Little Houghton	2.3	8:2	47	9 $\frac{1}{2}$	7 Sep 67		Taken in a dredger		N'apton Chronicle, 8.9.67, p.1(P)

CORRESPONDENCE

HOLDING PLACES

From Brian Knott: 'I have given this subject considerable thought but in the case of Roswell Pits I can come to no definite conclusions. I feel the reasons for this probably lie in the geography of the water in question. Much of the bankside is unapproachable, yet the accessible pitches present such vast open areas of sameness. Consulting past records has not revealed any sort of pattern. If, during future seasons, these vast areas were mapped out into smaller areas, and then investigated from the point of view of 'holding place' ideas, then it might be possible to get something more definite down on paper. My own tentative feeling on this subject is that the 'holding place' concept only applies to certain types of water. This has already been illustrated by the experience of members on the Grand Union Canal, which is a good example of a water with lots of potential holding places, i.e. tunnels and bridges, etc. But I suspect that other kinds of water may not have well defined holding places.'

FENLAND EELS

From Peter Tombleson: 'I always read your National Anguilla Club Bulletin with great interest and wondered whether you would be interested in the following comments on eels given by Wentworth Day in his book "A History of the Fens". "Eels have been taken for many years in nets and traps placed in the flood gates at Hemingford and Houghton Mills and also at St. Ives Staunch. Many large eels of from three to five pounds in weight have been taken particularly when they are running to the sea on dark nights in autumn, and it is by no means uncommon to take several bushels in the night. One monster, caught at Hemingford Mill, weighed seven pounds (p. 158)" "I remember when 30 stone of eels were taken at West Row Staunch (p. 174)." "A 25-pounder was once shot in the Welland (p. 249)."

As a Lincolnshire man I have always thought that the Fens hold very large eels which are seldom pursued seriously by anglers. There are miles of small drains which are unfished but which I am sure hold large eels. I remember when fishing the Counter Drain at Spalding some years ago a large eel surfaced and attacked my keep-net which at the time contained some small roach. I think too that on the Nene near the town bridge at Peterborough where anglers sometimes complain of being broken by large fish, usually considered to be carp, the real culprits are very large eels.'

** Thank you for your interest, Peter. See top of p. 5, this issue, regarding Walton's mention of a 63" eel from the 'Peterborough River'. Now, as in 1667, perhaps?

CASTLE HOWARD

From Chris Bowyer: 'It is my opinion that the week's outing to Castle Howard will be as good a trip, eel-wise, as any the Club has been on. I have been talking to an old chap who used to fish this water some 20 years ago, and he said that at that time there was no shortage of 3 lb.-plus eels. He and his pals had taken eels to over 5 lb., although he could not remember exact details as it was so long ago. And these eels were taken while tench fishing!'