



The National Anguilla Club

BULLETIN

NATIONAL ANGUILLA CLUB BULLETIN

VOLUME 22

NUMBER 5

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MAY/JUNE 1985

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Brian Crawford
Editor

EDITORIAL

Well members, by the time this edition reaches you you will probably have had your first few sessions of 1985 for eels and will probably be looking forward to the extra freedom by the end of the close season. My own efforts have been fruitless so far. Eight sessions with only one bootlace from Bala to show for it. I really miss Baston Fen now...

Due to great demands on my time I have had to make this issue a joint May/June one and I still have several articles in stock. Although I will also probably make the next issue a joint July/August one, I would like to see some contribution to the Bulletin from those few members who have done nothing yet. As we said at the AGM and SGM, we have no room for passengers. A handful of NAC members are doing all the work and that is just not good enough.

Speaking of Bala, it was good to see so many of our members there. I arrived with my family late on the Friday and just about managed to set up the tent and gear in very strong winds when it started to pour down at about 10pm and it continued all night and on and off on the Saturday. I was too shattered to fish on the Friday night so had a good nights sleep. On the Saturday lunch-time, I transported myself to the Bull's Head in Bala, hoping to meet some of the lads. However noone turned up. A right kettle of fish I thought - A NAC Club trip and noone in the pub but me. We are going downhill... Anyway, on my return to the camp, I stopped in at various bivs until I found our lads. The first person I saw was Jan, sat out in the pouring rain trying to catch baits. I also found Terry and Mark. I found out from them that Dan and a few friends had been there all week with no eels and that Dave Walker had also arrived on the Friday after spending Thursday night with Ernie. Ernie and his son arrived a little later as did Kevin Stephenson. That made seven members. I was told that John Sidley had joined the BEAC on Friday but had to return home due to family problems. He has since sent me his apologies. I also believe Neville Evens was with the BEAC but I didn't go round their side so didn't see him.

It was not a successful trip for eels with just a few boots being caught although both Dan and Terry connected with what appeared to be very good eels but lost them in snags. I chatted to a couple of NASA/PAC lads who were near my camp and they had caught quite a few pike to 18lb and eels to 21b.

I fished the shallow bay (about 4-5') by the mouth of the river running through the camp but only had the one bootlace eel. The camp became very crowded with most campers having boats and windsurfers. Fishing during the day was impossible.

By Sunday, the weather was much better with clear skies and little wind. Bala was showing its better side. As I fished that Sunday night it was in very good condition of clear skies and no wind. The lake was flat calm. There was just two things to spoil that session, one was the bright moon, the other thing was the row coming from the BEAC camp just across the lake from me. With it being a quiet still night, the noise was very clear and campers kept coming out to see where it was coming from and muttering that they would be complaining to the owners of the camping site and the Lake Warden about night anglers. I was getting quite a bit of abuse from them although I was on my own and obviously quiet. The BEAC appeared to be holding a singsong by a huge bonfire. The sing song lasted until at least 2.30am and I was getting quite cheesed off and disgusted. They were obviously not taking the eel fishing very seriously.

On a final point, on the Friday evening, Dave and Dan went into Bala for a few pints and were met with great hostility from a mass of locals. They appeared very anti visitors and therefore you should take care if visiting Bala in the future.

CHAIRMAN'S PAGE - MARK DAVIES

I was looking through a recent issue of the Shooting Times, when in the classified advertisements section, under 'Lake Management' I noticed the following small ad:-

Profit from your lake. Eels removed and paid for. Minimum disturbance to water. Coarse fish and pike also required. Otter Fisheries. Tel. 0572 822408.

For most readers of the magazine the above probably did not warrant a second glance, but for the eel angler the consequences are grave. What would have been the reaction of coarse fishermen if instead of the word eels, carp or tench had been substituted? Clearly eels great and small would find themselves in the fish markets. To us, a 7lb eel is something to marvel at, a fish that could be 20 years old or more. To a fishmonger or gourmet, it would cut up into 4 or 5 nice steaks. How can you persuade an owner of a lake that to allow trapping of eels in his water would be a detrimental step. It would clearly upset the balance of a water, even though this may not become obvious for some time. I remember reading in old Bulletins the effect of eel trapping in waters in East Lincolnshire. Profit before conservation would be the motto I'm sure.

I'm hoping by the time you read this, the misunderstandings that have arisen between ourselves and the BEAC and ESG will have been resolved. It seems apparent that the letters written by Mick Bowles and Kevin Richmond do not express the consensus of opinion in those organisations.

I recently managed to pay a visit to 'The Angler's Den', 26 Regent Street, Runcorn. The haunt of Ernie Orme, long time member of the National Anguilla Club. I was very impressed by the shop's layout and his stock. A.J.S. alarms were displayed prominently and seemed to be selling well. If Ernie hasn't got the goods in stock he can get them within a matter of days and I'm sure he'll do a good deal on anything you want. (Tel. Runcorn 67055)

The retail tackle trade is going through a difficult period but with the sort of service Ernie provides, he will make a great success of his shop.

I attended an auction of fishing on the Rivers Severn and Vyrnwy at Welshpool, Powys, yesterday. 13 lots of fishing were for sale with 3 stretches up for let. The fishing for sale had been put up by the B.A.A. They are obviously feeling the pinch and have had to sell waters to survive. All the waters are a good distance from the Birmingham area and the cost of travel has clearly meant they are not being fished. This is one of the reasons why none of the 13 lots were sold. None of them reached the reserve price and for some stretches no bids were received. Both Fred Jennings (the BAA Chief Executive) and the auctioneers were clearly embarrassed. The waters hold salmon but with no returns being stated (as to how many had been caught), valuation on the buyers part was impossible. I'd been instructed to bid by a North West Angling club but came away empty handed. I'd also intended to bid for a stretch of the Vyrnwy at Meitod which adjoins a stretch of river that is regularly fished by Ernie and myself. It was to be let for a 3 year period and I thought I might be able to get it fairly cheaply. I started off the bidding at £100 per annum and with only one person bidding it finally went for £225 per annum which in my opinion was cheap. The chub fishing is superb with a good many 4's and 5's coming out each year. I was disappointed not to acquire the lease but lady luck was on my side. When I heard the auctioneer announce the tenants name, Halton Angling Association, from Runcorn. This club has the stretch both Ernie and I fish already and I'm already a member. Membership costs £3.75 per annum so I saved myself a bob or two! I fished this stretch of water on a number of occasions in 1984 for eels, where the River Barwy joins the Vyrnwy. I had a good few fish with the best going over 2lb. The major problem here is bootlaces and to get around it this year I intend to try eel steaks. I believe material for the Bulletin is coming in steadily now. Let's make sure that this happens throughout the year....

WINTER EELING by Matt Johnson

As I joined the NAC on the 31st March, I suddenly received a pile of past magazines. While reading them I came across 'Winter Eeling' by Kevin Stephenson. This spurred me to write about my own winter eeling.

During January 1984, while piking, I started to get very fast abortive runs on sprats and large dace deadbaits. The dace often came back with all its guts torn out. This I put down to bootlaces. I never caught any eels but heard of a 5lb+ eel being caught on a sprat several seasons ago.

After an eventful summers fishing for eels I continued fishing for them up until 4th November. That trip was so cold there was a frost on the grass. I caught one eel of 1:2 on single lob at 4.45 am. I also missed 2 other runs all on my resistance rigs. There was a north west wind and the daytime temperature was 7 - 8°C and the temperature at night fell to 2°C. That was my last eel trip of the year. In January, I was piking and again I suddenly got a spate of very fast runs in the afternoon. This was while I was using large single hooks and wire traces. I scaled down my tackle but seemed to get less runs and still never hooked any. One thing I did notice was that I never had a pike in the afternoon when the eels were feeding. You might wonder how I knew all the runs I was getting were from eels. The reason I feel they were eels was that my small sprat deadbaits were coming back with a 'V' shape mark on the bait as well as my freshwater deadbaits coming back with their guts ripped out.

I tried fishing with lobs of all sizes, halves, whole or bunches but still had no joy. So the water is definatly a predator one.

Next winter is going to be different as I am going to catch a stillwater eel in the depth of winter and hopefully it's going to be a big one.

Good eeling.

Matt Johnson

THE ORGANISED ANGLER by A.J.SUTTON

An eel angler whom I knew was shot at when disturbing intruders at the Norfolk cottage of an alluring young lady. A tasty piece if ever ther was. The angler suffered severe injury leading to the loss of his penis. On agreeing to a transplant he adamantly rejected all those ancient wrinkled things donated by old men. 'Can you transplant an eel?' he asked the surgeon. The Doc said he could and as soon as a suitable eel was found, the operation was carried out. 'How do you like your new wepon?' the surgeon asked the angler. 'Well, it's a little strange, and more than a little lively.' replied our man. 'I get embarrassed when it pops out to have a look at the nurses, also it's a bit much having to feed it bits of sausage and bacon in the canteen.'

Out of hospital, our angler went to see the lady whose honour he had probably saved. She thanked him profusely and told him that despite her good looks she was a witch and could grant him one wish.

Eyeing the lovely lady up and down our eel angler said tentatively, 'Yes, I would like to see if I am still sexually capable.' There was a blinding flash and the angler found himself right in the middle of the Sargasso Sea....

SESSION REPORTING IN PERSPECTIVE

I hope that the Editor will be able to publish this little piece as soon as possible, as following John's article in Vol.22, no.4 "More on the Session Reporting", I think it very important to reiterate the purpose of the session reporting scheme and clear up several points which might help to put things in perspective.

Primarily, the scheme exists to record the overall effort of all members of the Club during a season. The fact that the scheme is used every year in one form or another means that we should be able to have a continuous record of effort and results, and if the right sort of information is included in the reports, we can use them to the very best advantage: to know where, when and how we can catch more or bigger eels. I hope that no-one will disagree with that!!

I would like to take up several points that John raises in his article and hope to show that the reporting scheme is of value no matter what the circumstances.

Firstly, the question of what size of eel do we consider worthy of consideration. Whilst it would be nice to just analyse the capture of 4:00+ eels in detail, in the majority of seasons, the numbers involved would probably mean that the analysis could be successfully completed on the back of a naughty postcard and would in all probability be wholly inaccurate. That is why we agreed on the detailed analysis of 2:00+ eels. This should give sufficient spread of information to allow reasonably accurate conclusions to be drawn from the results. 2:00+ eels might not be the ideal size we would like to catch, but they are of sufficient size to provide reasonably accurate information where times, conditions and methods of capture are concerned for comparison with larger eels.

John also mentions a couple of exceptional waters that he has fished with tremendous results, namely EASTWOOD LAKES and WESTWOOD PARK. I was fortunate to fish a once exceptional eel water, ABBERTON RESERVOIR. We used to catch eels averaging about 3:00 at a truly alarming rate at times, and all during hours of daylight as no night fishing was allowed.

The important thing is that these exceptional waters are treated as such and have their own separate analysis done, which requires the maximum amount of information for each session fished. To include such information in the overall analysis can lead to grossly distorted results, because these waters do not conform to normal averages.

Some twelve years ago, when Dr Alan Hawkins was responsible for session reporting analysis, Chris Davy and I fished long and hard at Abberton with tremendous results and John Watson put a massive sole effort into fishing STANLEY PARK LAKE in Blackpool. Alan did a separate detailed analysis of both waters and then compared them, with the result that Stanley Park offered the best chance of catching a 6:00+ eel by a considerable margin. I disagreed with Alan on this point knowing that double figures eels had been trapped at Abberton. However with the amount of information he had available, Alan was confident of his results, and on reflection, I

had to agree with him. Although Chris and I were up to our eyeballs in three and four pound eels, we never caught a five from Abberton and Alan's reckoning suggested that a lot more eels would have to be caught before a five did turn up. However, John did get a five from Stanley Park that season and the weight distribution of the eels caught suggested that a six would turn up for John long before Chris or I caught one.

I hope that little story helps to illustrate just one of the important uses of the reporting scheme, and emphasises the point that the information must be in the reports at the outset.

I do not like to have to wield the "big stick" as it were, it was bad enough when I was Secretary of the Club. However, I want this reporting scheme to work as well as any other scheme we have had, if not better, and your collective efforts are the only thing that will bring any degree of success or failure.

If you all fish as often as possible and complete the report forms as the guide tells you, the rest will be up to me! However, if you don't get your reports to me at the end of each month, and you don't fill them in properly then you will be wasting my time, your time and everyone elses.

Terry Jefferson

SOME MORE VIEWS ON THE SESSION REPORTING SCHEME by JOHN SIDLEY

O.K., I'm a pain in the neck, yet I feel more must be said on this subject. At the head of the Club's letterheads it states that the NAC are eel angling specialists. Well, let's just be that. Let's not just sit on our back sides and talk about it. Let's prove to the outside world and more importantly, to ourselves that we are just what we say.

I feel Brian is wrong saying we need the details of eels in the 2 - 3 lb weight range. Our aim, well mine anyway, is to learn all I can on the capture of big eels. I want to know what makes those big eels tick. I want to know how I can improve my chances of getting my hook into one of those eels of four pounds and above. I'm not interested in 1, 2 or 3 lb eels. I feel one cannot put the information gained to any use with these fish. I know venues where I could take eels of that weight range in the dead of winter, yet big eels over 4lb do not show. As I have said, small eels are like jack pike and may feed in all conditions while the big pike do not. It is the same with big eels and much more noticable with eels above 4lbs weight.

I would be very interesting to see Terry compile a list and notes of all the 4lb+ eels he has on the records. Maybe then we could see some sort of feeding pattern. I've said before, I'm totally convinced there are more bigger eels swimming out there in our waters than we care to give credit for. It's now time they started to come to our rods. We all fish the waters where the big girls are. We all put in a lot of time and effort. Surely we are all not dim? There has to be an answer with all the info taken on eels over 2lb I think it is too easy to overlook the more important details on the bigger fish. It has been proven many times in the capture of big carp, tench, bream and pike, certain details have been taken by the angler and kept in a diary. He did not fill the pages with details of every fish including small fish taken. He just took notes of the ones that matter. From these notes he has been able to catch a higher average weight of fish than the next angler. I know I have in my pike fishing on the River Severn. I know the best times to fish, the best areas, the best baits and sizes of baits for certain times of day and for certain swims. My pike hauls and pictures prove my point. It does not always boil down to 1000 rod hours, it can all depend on the right time and place with the right method and bait in the right swim. I know these facts by taking notes when I was successful in getting among those big girls, not when I was knocking out jack after jack. So I feel strongly on my views that what we need more of is details of all those eels in and above the 4lb weight bracket. Could you or Terry really be honest and say you could tell me any hint of use it would be if I went to the River Severn or a couple of lakes I know where I could pile up a list of eels in and around the 2 - 3 lb range. Then try and compare my findings to a hard water where the eels are few but very massive. I think not. Even Kevin Richmond has not gained anything from his exploits in knocking out 100's of small eels each season. O.K., Kevin had a couple of 5's, he has learnt a lot in using different rigs and baits for eels on his waters. I know Kevin's aim is a six this season. I wish him the best. Yet I feel he may have bit off more than he can chew. It will be by more luck than design. I think Kevin will become more successful when he starts to put more effort into the details of his best eels. Kevin is about to do that this season, take my word for it, he will make a great improvement.

Well, There's my views on the subject. Some may be bold and sound a bit big-headed, but I am a big fish angler. I'm part of a specialist eel club. I'd like to see more of the names I know up there in that Top 50 Eel List. Therefore we need to know more about those eels that will get our names onto that list. It's a new year and a new season, let's start off on a new session reporting scheme. Views please - I'm getting tired of writing to myself. The Mrs. thinks I'm nuts and I aint taught the budgie to speak yet,...

(Ed. the session reporting scheme can only be changed in format at an AGM or SGM)

I was delighted with Issue 4 Volume 22. Although the material therein largely stemmed from three contributors, the standard was high and much of what was written demanded a 'follow up'. This leads to a series of debates within the Bulletin which are of far more value to the Club than if we were to meet every month to discuss the same subjects. With our debates within the covers of the Bulletin, one has time to think carefully about the subject and once written down, it could not be more permanently recorded.

Before pressing on I would remind you that all I said about Brian Crawford is coming true, and you will all realise that he has already shown himself to be one of the best Club Secretaries we have had. Feed him with the material and he will not let you down. Thanks Brian - a wonderful start!
Now to a couple of subjects about which I claim to know a little.

Deeply Hooked Eels

Most anglers knowing little about the subject, wrongly take the 'safe' course in stating that a deeply hooked eel is as good as dead. I do know anglers who would not give the eel the benefit of the doubt - and retain on the bank any eel which has not got the hook clearly sticking out a mile. I know they are wrong and am pleased to learn that there are others who feel similarly. Once an eel is dead, then even I wouldn't rate its chances as anything higher than nil. But where there is life there is hope. John, you come second when it comes to the amount of effort in bringing deeply hooked eels home to be studied and nursed. The number of years I have been at it leaves you as 'runner up', although I reckon you may pass me by when I finally make bean poles of all my rods!

Suffice to say that for a long time I brought home everything above about 1½lbs, deeply hooked or otherwise. True, some were devoured, but as time went on I was loathe to kill any, relying on the occasional one which died to satisfy the family lust for dishfulls of 'jellied eels'. I noticed often that the eel which died was one which had only been lip-hooked.

From an early age I commandeered the bath. Any member of the family requiring a bath (mostly my sister - bloody nuisance) had to make a prior appointment. Then came a major operation, for I often had ten or more 4lb eels in the bath along with others. I had two air pumps which served four aerating blocks. If these were turned off, the eels would show distress within minutes.

Many of those big eels became pets and survived to the point where they were feeding regularly. When that happened I would carefully take the fish to my local canal (Lee Navigation at Tottenham) and release them. I am confident that most of those eels survived.

Much later, during the early life of this Club, I again took to keeping selected eels in the bath in an effort to quell the doubts of Dr. Terry Coulson and others. At that time I knew a certain Roger Stanton who, as well as being interested in fish (but not fishing) was also radiologist at the local hospital. Roger agreed to periodically X-Ray an eel for me. So we chose an eel which had been taken by a friend of George Moss, which was known to have a big hook deep down. We believe the hook was a size 2 round bend long shank. The X-Ray showed the hook clearly and its position was such that it had penetrated the stomach and was only just clear of the liver. That eel received the best 'out patient' treatment, even being brought home by ambulance on one occasion!

After three X-Rays we saw that the hook was disappearing. Slowly dissolving away. At six months exactly, the hook had completely gone. We believed that the remains of the hook passed through the eel in a normal manner. And so the disbelievers had to admit that a deeply hooked eel could live on.

Nowadays, I only bring an eel away regretfully, if it is pumping out blood with every movement of its gills. I cannot believe that an eel doing this will survive, for a number of reasons and it would appear humane to dispatch the fish quickly. Perhaps I've answered that one adequately, except for a plea to outlaw stainless steel hooks.

Why Does A Water Die?

We have mostly all experienced the same thing. You find a quite productive water, fish it like hell for all the hours you can muster and do very well, only to find that after three years that water 'dies'. Try as hard as you like, you cannot get any sort of take. For all your success, you know that you haven't taken all the eels and there must be eels in that water which have never seen a baited hook. So what has happened?

I would be a fool to pretend to know the answer although I now firmly believe that the eels go through a quite drastic change of feeding habit. What I hope to show is that it is very unlikely that the eels have left the water.

Some years ago this Club was endowed with a very strong membership in Lincolnshire, mostly from in and around Grantham. As Secretary, I got to know these lads very well and it was my habit and great pleasure to point the van in the right direction and go like hell every Friday, direct from work in order to fish with them. They were well endowed with eel waters, many of which had been never fished. One particular water I remember very well was Lake Helen in Lincolnshire. Named after the wife of the owner, that water was like paradise for me. The owner was a R.A.F. officer, mostly always away from home leaving his young, blonde, extremely vivacious wife at home on her own. Still, he knew that she was being looked after by the Anguilla Club. A pause while I rebuke those of you who are drooling (Dan) - it wasn't like that....

Lake Helen was about $4\frac{1}{2}$ acres in extent, rather narrow and long. It could be cast across in most places. It's westerly bank had neat trim lawns and flower beds surrounding the pretty cottage, while the opposite bank was an impenetrable wilderness, completely overgrown and with many branches growing parallel to the water. The banks at either end were comfortable and very fishable. Yes lads, Lake Helen had everything and the fishing was good too...

Suffice to say that one could catch all the eels one desired, with many from $3\frac{1}{2}$ to 4lb. I took the largest eel caught there on rod and line at 5lb 4oz, although the owner had several better than that on deadlines. The best we saw there had been dead for several days, but we estimated its weight to be 9lbs.

That first season was madness. The eels fed day or night on whatever bait one chose. The second season was nearer the mark, with the eels hardly ever feeding during daylight and becoming selective as regards baits. The third season, or rather, close season - for we had started at the end of March, found the eels feeding but difficult. One now had to really concentrate and pay attention to what one was doing. Gone were the nights when you could cast out, settle back and wait for the projected shadows on the curtains of the cottage bedroom, as the lady prepared for the night. I thought I would throw that in for you over-sexed lot...

Live baiting became the order of the day (or night) for by the middle of that third summer, it was the only method to produce a run. A single run during the night became something to talk about the following morning. Many were the discussions as to why the eels did not respond, and it was generally agreed that the eels had gone. Such an exit was feasible for the lake had a small drainage dyke connected at one end.

However, when we suggested this to the owner during one of his rare Saturday visits, he laughed his head off. They are still there my friends he kept on

insisting - but we had made up our minds. At mid-morning on the Sunday he strolled from the cottage calling out 'Come, I will show you the eels'. In utter disbelief we followed him round to the overgrown bank. Cutting away the odd small branch which hindered our progress he led us to a point where three great tree trunks grew out parallel to and fourteen inches above the surface of the water. 'Crawl out there with your polaroids on and you will see all the eels you want to.' said he. This we did. Three of us crawled out, looked down then scuttled back as quick as possible to let someone else see the sight. There were eels everywhere - all shapes and sizes and mostly with their tails in the mud. That sight I will always remember. I recall asking 'so many eels - are they all packed in this one spot?' The owner replied that the eels could be seen at every spot along that wooded bank. 'What they are feeding on God only knows' he said. 'But now they have adopted this particular tactic it will be years before they go back as they were before.'

How did he know this? Well it seems that he had held a couple of properties in Lincolnshire, each with its own small lake. Exactly the same thing had happened on each of those lakes and on one of them it had occurred after being fished by just one angler for four years. That water was one of 3 acres and again connected to a dyke.

Along the same lines, there was this smallish river in Norfolk. The river was connected at its lower end to the Wash through a series of dykes. I was always the guest of the farmer whose farm supplied milk and dairy produce to the Royal Family at Sandringham. I regularly stayed at the farm to fish the river for its eels, of which there were a great many. Good sport was enjoyed until another farmer turned to eel fishing and trapping. The trapping was done on MY stretch of the river, but a great many were taken on baited lines set in the dykes out in those Norfolk marshes. These were collected by farm hands, brought back to be sorted out and the unwanted ones thrown into the river. After two years of this, not a single eel could be taken on rod and line, although the traps produced as many if not more eels than before.

What I have attempted to show is that the eels will not have left that now difficult water that most of us know of, but more important, I hope I have illustrated how little we still know and our need for more knowledge of our subject. Whatever we do in the way of reporting MUST be of some value.

Those Missed Runs

I can easily believe John Sidley and his experience with the bootlace eels and the deadbait in the margin. I have always been in favour of our mounting 'bootlace' catching campaigns in order to stock a water. During my eel fishing career I have often gone 'babbling' for eels. As most of you will know, the babbling set up is attached to a cord and when the thing is cast out the cord is usually tethered to the bank. Mostly the set-up remains stationary and quiet, but every so often there will be a series of somewhat violent tugs which leave you with the impression that were it not for the gear being tethered, the whole thing would be OFF downstream. Were the babbling rig to be replaced with a normal deadbait, the result must surely be a belting run.

Deep Water and Sub-Surface Tactics

I would agree with Dave Walker about sub-surface baits being used over deep water. Latterly, on our local waters, we chose to fish our sub-surface rigs right under the rod tops. Now our gravel pits do not resemble normal lakes. Our pits are dug in such a way that the water near the bank is often the deepest in the pit. The result is that when fishing as described our baits set at 12" deep are upwards of 18 feet off the bottom. That is where we score. On the subject of moonlight, I am not convinced either way, although it does now seem to me that the dark nights have the edge, possibly because there is a little less disturbance on a dark night. Incidentally, a night having a full moon and a 'moonlit' night are not necessarily, one and the same..

Since I joined the NAC way back in 1978 (I think) I have used various types of additives and flavourings to try to improve my ability to catch eels. In 1978 I became aware of the 'supposed' effectiveness of pilchard oil. Naturally I had to give it a try so I purchased two large tubs of the stuff and proceeded to inject worms and deadbaits with it. To be frank, there was no clear evidence that this improved my eel catches. The effectiveness of pilchard oil is substantially reduced by its giving off a slick which floats to the surface where it is less likely to attract eels. Realising this led me to the use of emulsified pilchard oil. Dave Holman had been using EPO and found it to be effective so I scrounged some emulsifier and mixed this with my pilchard oil and began to use EPO. Again using it mainly injected directly into worms and deadbaits, including section baits. I experimented with EPO a lot over a period of two years but again I had no evidence to link EPO with my catch rate. This view, I know, is contrary to the experience of others, but on my waters in Cheshire and Shropshire, there was no indication that EPO worked.

In 1984 at the suggestion of Dave Holman, we decided to pre-bait our syndicate water with small boilies. These were coloured (pink) and flavoured with various additives, principally maple. As it happened, due to the lack of time, I didn't manage to do much pre-baiting and only fished the water on two occasions so that I had (and still have) a large stock of high protein ingredients and bottles of flavours. During my eel fishing sessions in 1984, I began to use a homemade flavour called 'Seafood blend' (not very original I know). This was made up using various fish type flavours diluted in a weak mixture of water. This was used both injected into baits and with baits dipped into it. It smelt dreadful and if accidentally spilt on clothing it seemed to penetrate right into your flesh. Ernie Orme said it smelt like something which I dare not repeat. However, it seemed that the use of seafood blend did attract eels and I caught more eels on baits using this additive than rods with plain baits on them. I also experimented with using the stuff in swimfeeders using cotton wool soaked in it. This worked and bites were more frequent although many abortive runs were experienced due to the drag problem. It was also fairly obvious that strong solutions were less effective than weaker ones and 1 to 100 parts water is what worked best. Sweet flavourings didn't work at all. Unusually I caught no other species on seafood blend injected worms. It could simply be that in the locations I fished and at the times I fished, I was less likely to catch other species.

I've every intention of continuing with the experimentation in the 1985 season. I read with interest in a 1984 Bulletin, that Arthur Sutton was experimenting with fresh bulls blood. I would like to give this a try but firstly I would find it difficult to obtain and secondly my wife would divorce me if I brought it into the house. Come on Arthur, you've been watching too many horror films. I had intended to join AJS on the meres this summer but now I'm having second thoughts. I have had a horrible dream that I am woken up in the middle of the night with a pain in my neck only to find AJS with his fangs impaled in me, wanting some fresh blood for his baits... So you will see me at Ellesmere, Arthur, with a wooden cross and garlic round my neck.

If any other members are actively using flavours perhaps they would like to give their views via an article for the Bulletin.

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE STORY by JOHN SIDLEY

I'm not really sure if I should write this article for you all to read in the NAC Club, but I know there are still members present in the Club who have read articles about my eel captures by ex-members such as Bob Jackson and Bob Croxall. First let me say that all my eel captures in those early days were either witnessed by fellow eel anglers such as Pete Burton, Steve Meadhurst, Mick Bradley, Gliff Tippton, Bill Dolphin, the man who runs the three lakes at Earlswood, Dot Palmer, the woman who collects money for day tickets on the lakes, Angling Times or Anglers Mail.

In those very early days none of us had a camera and to tell you the truth it never really bothered us. It was not until the angling press came down to take pictures that we did start to bother. We all liked to get into the press in those days, me more than the rest. Until those Earlswood days, most, if not all of my eeling was done on the River Severn and River Avon in their lower regions. My first 5lb eel was taken from the River Severn at Stoke on cheese and that took over 10 years to catch. I feel Bob Jackson, along with other anglers, failed to tell the full truth about the 3 lakes at Earlswood. When Bob and the rest fished there for eels they all poached the water at night. The only lakes they fished were the two large ones. None of them had ever fished the small lake known as the Private Lake, for Bill's house was on the banks of this lake which made it impossible to poach during the day or night. Over the years that I spent pike fishing the small lake I made a very close friendship with Bill and it was Bill who told me to fish for the eels on his lake. After seeing old pictures of two eels in Bill's photo collection, I soon made up my mind to hit that lake hard. Yes, I was the very first ever to fish the Private Lake at night for eels. The going was very hard even from the first night, but over the years that I fished it I was the only one to score. Why? Because I am an all out eel angler. I devote over the 100% needed to be successful in capturing big eels. As I've said before, there are two types of eel anglers, some only play at it. Many of the lads would not stick it out on the private lake, it was too hard. The other two lakes were more easy but the size of the eels less. I did not want to be part of that eeling scene. I wanted the best and the Private Lake held the goods. Bob Jackson himself came round to my home to take a photo of a 5lb eel. The next day I phoned his best mate, Mick Brown to come over again for I had taken another eel of 5 $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. They never came round. I had to get Ron Felton to take the photos. I also phoned Mick to come and take photos of my 7lb 14oz eel. His reply was that he was too tired. The next saga was with Iann Mann and myself. Why he doesn't like me I'll never know. I have never said that his eel weighed less than what he told us in the pub the next day. Anyway, what right have I to say different. I was not present when he landed it, so what right have anglers got to call me a liar. Of all my big eels from six pounds upwards, there has been somebody there to see them weighed, some of my friends weighing them for me, except my 8lb 3oz eel. I was alone when I took it and returned it by mistake. I went too much into some of my big eels for you can read it all in my book being published by Brian Crawford (Successful Eel Fishing - £5.00 plus £1.00 p & p) In fact you can read all about my exploits on the small lake at Earlswood and of my famous prebaiting methods which work even today, for Gerry's two 6lb eels and his 4:7 came from a prebaited swim the Sidley way.

I have never made out I am the best in the angling world, we all know how the angling press like to highlight the angler. Maybe I was wrong in going in the press near on each week with big girls, but why not, I did the homework on those waters and put the time and effort into catching the eels. I did it mainly because of seeing my dad's face every time I went in the papers, made me proud. He was like a dog with two Now he is fed up with it all himself.

I once sent some photos to Alan Billington (an ex-NAC member) after fishing with him at Patshull Park for pike. He was with John Watson. John was very impressed when I showed him my photos. Just prior to that Alan had written a letter to the magazines saying that I was in the papers more with big eels than Crossroads was on T.V. After seeing my photos Alan changed his view. I asked him to retract his letter but he said no. That was the price I had to pay for being so good. Kevin Richmond said the same, so did many others.

At the start of this somewhat cocked-up article on myself, I said I didn't know if I should write it, but I have because I have nothing to hide. My pictures are there in my home for you to view at anytime, just give me a ring if you wish to come over. You are all most welcome to come. I could even try to get some of the lads who fished Earlswood and a couple of Northampton pits to come and speak to you. They have no reason to lie. Why I am so successful I can not say, maybe one of you can tell me. All I know is that I am a devoted eel angler. I put more than 100% effort into my fishing. My aim is to catch big eels. I fish the waters where I think they are. If I'm wrong in doing that I make no apologies. I have been asked to do talks on big eels at Conferences. As yet I have said no, my reason is that I would be scared to death to get up and talk in front of so many anglers. How do you tell other anglers that you get these gut feelings when fishing a new water? How do you explain how your friends blank yet you are knocking good eels out from the same pit? How do you tell others that you try to become an eel when fishing for them? Tell me the answers and maybe my good friend, Phil Smith can talk me into going to one of the NASA Conferences. I well remember another good friend, Merv Wilkinson telling me at his home that there are people out there who will never believe me, even if I walked into the Conference with a big eel hanging from my Avons. Merv once said I should have killed my 7lb 14oz eel and shoved it up the noses of the people who have called me a liar. No way. I think I would rather be called a liar. Well I hope I have not bored you to death. Read my book. It tells a lot more on Sidley's eeling methods.

Until I see you all again - good eeling.

WE NEED NASA HELP by JOHN SIDLEY

My phone rang twice the other week, on the other end was the secretary of the BEAC, Mick Bowles the first time. The second time it was another member of the BEAC, Mark Reed. Both were very angry and upset and who could blame them for the news they gave me caused my blood to boil.

Mick was the first to tell me about a lake in Kent where a load of fyke nets had been found when the club who owned the water was cleaning it up. Mick was not too sure as to the exact amount of eels found in the nets and there is no prizes to be given for saying that the nets were put into the water without the club's permission. Eel poachers had been at work again.

A day later Mark was on the phone to give me the facts, once again his news upset me a great deal. All told 25 nets had been taken out of the water with an estimated 250lb of eels trapped inside, some of them around the 4lb mark. The police had been called in and the nets handed over to them on behalf of the club and the BEAC. Mick has sent a letter of protest to the water authority concerned, for is there had been close season eel fishing allowed the poachers would have had no chance of placing their nets in the lake. The lake is tucked away so keeping an eye on it is impossible, yet if there had been no close season for eels, there would have been at least one or two eel anglers on the water.

Mark went on to tell me that this lake over the past few season, had shown a great decline in the number of eels taken, both in size and number, so one can only think how long has the netsmen been reaping the eel stocks from the water.

I am quite sure that this is going on on other lakes throughout the country for I have had letters off other eel anglers who have told me of their lakes not fishing as good as they did in earlier years. At first they put it down to angling pressure for we all know how a water can decline when fished for several seasons. They may put it down to poor summers but not me. It sounds like eel trappers for not only was the eel fishing poor, the tench and carp did not show as they have in past years. Believe me it is not only eels that the trappers take, there is big money to be made in selling tench, carp, bream and even pike. These are all worth the risk for a poacher.

I now put forward that a letter from BEAC, NAC and ESG be sent to NASA informing them of what is or could be going on on their own members waters. I also put forward that a code of conduct be asked to be printed in Specialist Angler. A code which will help protect the eel from abuse for it is not always the nobby angler who abuses the eel. I know of and have seen big fish angler abusing the eel. I'm quite sure that if we treated other fish species in the way I have seen other anglers treat eels, there would be an outcry in the big fish world. Yet I feel it is all one sided. Noone seems to care if an eel is thrown up the bank or taken home to eat or in most cases just shown off to their family and friends then chucked away in the dust bin. It's all too easy for the anglers concerned to turn round and say 'The eel died while being retained' Rubbish I say. A lot of those big eels died because most of the anglers concerned did not show them the same respect they would for other species. Why should they, its only a slimey eel. There's loads of them, another dead one will not hurt. God, if only they knew how rare those big eels are. I know of a few anglers in the three eel clubs who have taken their fair share of big eels yet the eels that have died on these anglers can be counted on one hand. In fact I know of only two eels which have died. So I say let's get off our back sides and start talking about this problem. Let NASA hear our feelings. Let's put our side of the story forward to the eel anglers who write for the papers and Mags. Let's see more on the subject of protecting the future stocks of our eels. I plus others have fought for many years to get the eel the respect it so rightly deserves, but we can not do it alone. We need all your help.

CODE OF CONDUCT (proposed)

1. All eels weighing over 2lb should be returned alive to the water.
2. If retained in the net for weighing or photographing, the net should be placed in a quiet, shaded deep area.
3. The removal of the net and eel from the water should only take place when the angler has his scales and a camera ready. After weighing and photographing the eel should be returned to the water immediatly.
4. Great care should be taken when the eel is on the bank. Do not place the eel on a stoney or gravel bank, grass or moss is ideal, if not use a wet keep net or ones coat.
5. Always use a large landing net to net your eels. Do not drag them out of the water or try to lift them on the rod or by means of holding the main line.
6. Do not use a gag to try to remove a hook which is deep set. Use two forceps, one to hold open the eels mouth, the other to extract the hook.
7. Depending on the angler's conscience, if the eel is deep hooked, no attempt to be made to remove it but the trace be cut as near the eel's mouth as possible. Unless the eel is showing obvious signs of distress or is bleeding, it should be returned to the water as soon as possible.

This Code of Conduct should be sent to NASA.

(Ed. Comments/amendments please if you think it a good idea)
 (Members who have been in the Club for a few years will know of the joint NAC/NASA campaign against eel netsmen carried out a few years ago. When I was Chairman of NAC, I contacted all water Authorities and had a detailed dossier of their attitude to eel netsmen. Although we had the backing of NASA, many angling Consultative Associations, the NFA and many clubs, the problem of poachers will always be there. I have enclosed the latest Severn Trent proposals)

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Brian,

What a remarkable and enjoyable recovery the Club is making. I realise that one really good issue of our magazine does not in itself, make the Club successful. Nevertheless, with the Bulletin so essential to us as a Club, it is with a hearty sigh of relief that we receive issue No 4, Volume 22.

That issue was without doubt a fine example of what the Bulletin can do for us. I for one, feel very proud when reading the Bulletin and very thankful for the effort put in by the writers and your good self.

Many thanks to you all.

Arthur J. Sutton
President

P.S. Could we please have the issue and volume numbers somewhere on the front cover, making it much easier to find a certain issue?

(Ed. Thankyou for your comments Arthur. Unfortunately I am unable to add the issue and volume numbers at present as I have been using already printed front covers. I'm afraid you will have to number them yourself using Lettraset or similar if you wish the data on the front.)

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Members,

While I am pleased with the response from several members regarding contributions for the Bulletin, typing them out is very time consuming and is a luxury I do not have much of at the present time due to pressures at work, a new home and garden to sort out and a family to see occasionally as well as trying to get in some eel angling - not to mention the time I have to put into NASA and local clubs. It will be of a great help to me if it is at all possible for you to get your articles typed. I think we can tolerate the odd spelling mistake or poor punctuation, I make several and am not perfect. I would however ask that if you do type them then bear the following in mind.

1. type on only one side of the paper.
2. use A4 paper (this size)
3. leave a large margin on the left like on this page to allow for when the sheets are stapled.
4. set the article out with headings in a similar manner to those in this issue.
5. do not number your pages, I can add them later.
6. if your article does contain a great many errors then I will have to retype it as we do have a reasonable standard set for the Bulletin.

Thankyou for your cooperation

Brian Crawford

P.S. Arthur informs me he has acquired a new duplicator for the Club which should be a big help. All we will want then is a decent typewriter....

SEVERN-TRENT WATER AUTHORITY

Proposed Fishing Licence Duties from 1 January, 1986

<u>Licence Category</u>	<u>Proposed 1986 Duty</u>
1 <u>Rod & Line</u>	
1.1 <u>Trout Freshwater Fish & Eels</u>	
1.1.1 Annual*	4.20
1.1.2 Twenty-eight day*	1.70
1.1.3 Annual-(concessional)*	.85
1.1.4 Temporary block licences for 20 or more persons (per head)	.85
1.1.5 Temporary one site licence (per head)	.95
1.2 <u>Salmon</u>	
1.2.1 Annual	32.65
1.2.2 One day	
1.2.3 Annual (concessional)	6.55
1.2.4 Twenty-eight day	13.05
2 <u>Commercial</u>	
2.1 <u>Salmon</u>	
2.1.1 Lave net (full season)	37.45
2.1.2 Lave net (half season)	18.75
2.1.3 Draft net (Severn area)	100.10
2.1.4 Putt	3.40
2.1.5 Putchers (per group of 50)	26.10
2.1.6 Leaders to putts & Putchers not exceeding 90 m in length	30.10
2.1.7 Leaders to putts & Putchers exceeding 90 m in length - for each additional 20 m	8.75
2.1.8 Stop net (boat)	61.20
2.1.9 Draft, hang or seine net (Trent area)	11.25
2.1.10 Stand, bow, click or topping net (Trent area)	2.50
2.2 <u>Eels & Elvers</u>	
2.2.1 Gloucester type eel wing net	6.55
2.2.2 Fyke or D net exceeding 4 m in length or with wings or leaders of total length exceeding 10 m	6.55
2.2.3 Fyke or D net from 2 m to 4 m in length with wings or leaders of total length 10 m or less	4.55
2.2.4 Fyke or D net not exceeding 2 m in length with or without wings or leaders - per group of 5 or part thereof	3.40
2.2.5 Putcheons, wheels or baskets - per 20	6.55
2.2.6 Putcheons, wheels or baskets - for each additional 20	5.45
2.2.7 Weir trap	16.35
2.2.8 Night or bank line for eels (downstream of Tewkesbury weir only)	8.15
2.2.9 Elver net	6.55
2.2.10 Elver net (concessional)	1.35

* Includes fishing for salmon in Trent area