



NATIONAL  
ANGUILLA  
CLUB

BULLETIN

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Arthur Sutton

I am, as you may well know, inclined at this time of year to write about the delights of spring. So I do so at this time without apology, for who, despite their age, does not experience that certain feeling when at last winter relents. As I write, the first of the spring flowers have opened and the daylight hours are clearly lengthening.

Even the most lethargic among us will be thinking in terms of new nylon line and of how many hooks to buy in readiness for the warmer months ahead of us, and of course we will have made plans which are bound to bring success. The whole atmosphere is laden with optimism.

You will have read the first Bulletin of the year and I hope you found it as refreshing as I did. I must mention here the praiseworthy efforts of Terry Jefferson, aided in no small way by his fiancée, in getting the Bulletin prepared and in the post in a mere few days after I had handed over the material to him. Well done Tel. Terry is obviously pleased with the new scanner and we can look forward to plenty to read if you play your part.

Shortly, we have our two big events with which to start the Spring. I refer to our own Spring meeting at the Falconers and to the NASG Conference. We can look forward to a good gathering for our own meeting and we already know that over half our membership will be attending the Conference.

So, all is set fair for a good start. You will recall that Brian said that this year we need to prove ourselves. No one must be found lacking and that means a good effort from all of us - Clubwise as well as Anglingwise.

I am looking towards new pastures this year, the accent being on quantity rather than quality. The reason behind this apparent change is that I wish to experiment a fair bit. When one is taking only ten or eleven eels in a season, even though they may be good fish, it does not leave room for experimentation. I aim to be fishing for good eels for some years to come and I want to get a few experiments over and done with so that I can see clearly which way to go. My wife has said that I have a young boy inside of me who will ensure that I keep going, and of course she is right. I plan also to fish again with my friends in Cheshire, later in the Summer.

I do ask you to remember that we need to make the NAC heard. One way in which you can all assist is by sending reports of worthwhile catches, together with photographs, to our PRO Alan Mitchell. Alan will then do all that is necessary. Should you write to the Angling Press yourselves, do please mention the Club.

One think I never tire of reading is a good account of the capture of a 4lb+ eel and all that led up to it. This year we are pledged to report such captures in greater detail than ever before. Dave Holman has shown the way admirably, on more than one occasion. So do note every little detail when fortune smiles on you. We want to know everything - even small and seemingly unimportant details like which birds were about and what flowers were bountiful in the meadow.

Mention such small things and you will be unlikely to miss out anything important.

Go out and do your stuff. In doing so I hope you all enjoy yourselves, and may good fortune reward your efforts.

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ADDITION TO EDITORIAL

Since writing the Editorial notes, it has been my great pleasure to attend the Course Fishing Conference organised by the NASG. Apart from feeling rather unwell on the Friday evening, because of my ulcers, I survived to enjoy an outstanding Conference and the good company of quite a few of our members.

While there, I had the pleasure of a lengthy and purposeful chat with my old friend Eric Hodson. Eric spoke at length of the plans of the NASG, and promised that things would not be allowed to deteriorate again. He was full of praise for our Club, and promised what help the NASG could give.

I feel that the meeting did much to kill the lie that the Anguilla Club was on its last legs. I wish to thank those members who answered our call for posters etc on eel netting. The posters were there in plenty and must have commanded the attention of a lot of anglers and people who matter. Through Eric Hodson, I learnt that NASG are to mount another Conference next year. I look forward to it.

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CHAIRMAN'S PAGE

Brian Crawford

So far - so good.

I have been very impressed with members' attitudes and efforts since the AGM.

The SGM and NASG Conference were both very well attended and the atmosphere has been great. I sincerely hope this continues and all members are very determined to make 1980 a good year for the Club. I realise that good results are only obtained with the help of the Anguilla Gods, but all of us are very capable of putting in the required effort, in the waters of potential, to try to ensure reasonable results.

Regarding the Conference, I hope it is a case of third time lucky, as apart from the effects of too much whisky, no serious problems were encountered.

CHAIRMAN'S PAGE - continued

Well, onto things concerning eels. The book I had at the SGM was the following:

EELS, A Natural and Unnatural History, by Christopher Moriarty, publishers are David and Charles, Newton Abbot, & London. Price about £5.50. Date of publication is 1978.

I fully recommend the book for members either to buy or to try to obtain from their library. It does contain a good deal of useful information about the life of eels and their background.

The book begins by justifying the belief that the eel is a true fish and goes on to illustrate several of its peculiar features such as its ability to live for up to 48 hours out of water, provided it is kept moist. The author then goes on to give all the latest known facts concerning the life cycle of the eel. On page 15 is a picture of an eel of about 1 lb aged 23 years, one that must have come from a water low in natural food.

Chapter 2 deals with Lore and Legend concerning eels, both freshwater and marine. It also includes information about monster eels reported in the past.

Chapter 3 deals with the Facts of Life concerning eels. One interesting fact is that in the warmer waters of the Mediterranean, eels usually come to maturity after about 8 years but as one travels north, the time required increases and in Ireland specimens of 30 years and over are frequently found and in many waters maturity is less than 15 years old is unusual. The record is held by an eel called Putte in the Museum of Salsingborg and lived for 85 years.

This life span of eels in northern colder waters is interesting. If we were to assume eels average 15 years in a lake or pond, and if the pond had a high food content, then the eels could grow to a very high weight, especially in the case of the eels who take longer to mature - say another 5 or 6 years. As we discussed at the eel forum at the Conference, good tench and carp waters have the potential food to produce big eels also, and indeed the book illustrates that the great majority of eels eat small invertebrates, shrimps, caddis larva fish eggs, dragonfly nymphs, etc. The author says that the eel is not the voracious predator considered but feeds mainly on small organisms until full then often burrows in the bottom for several days until all the food is digested and it begins to feel hungry again. The warmer the water - the quicker the digestive process and the sooner it begins feeding again.

Perhaps instead of considering 6" roach as bait on size 2 hooks, we ought to be considering extensive particle groundbaiting with casters or chopped-up worm and fishing with maggots on size 10 hooks. The chapter certainly indicates that most eels become preoccupied with small food items, just as carp and tench do. Perhaps we need to adjust our methods to succeed in catching up on other species.

I hope to be reading members comments on this topic soon and I will continue to assess aspects of the book in future.

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"WALKERS WAY WITH EELS"

TACKLE

Dave Walker

As some of the members will know, I am very much a "piscatorial packmule". The sight of me waddling along the bank with mountains of gear has often sent people into hysterics. Try as I might, I cannot reduce the volume of my gear in any way and I still have to drop parts of my rubbish en route to my swim, and go back and collect them later. I well remember leaving a trail of gear along the bank of Kingsmead and returning to pick it up, just as AJS was making his way along the bank. As I vainly searched for my giant-sized water cannister, I called out to Arthur, asking if he could see it, "No" was the reply, just as he tripped up on it sending our president and his tackle crashing to the floor! Nowadays I drop my gear behind Arthur.

The point of this article, however, is not to ask for advice on how to cram a weekend's eel gear into a wheelbarrow but to describe the parts of this travelling tackle show that I actually use when pursuing eels.

Rods (poles)

These are something that I have too many of (who hasn't!). My basic eel rods are two pairs. One pair started life as a 12ft conoflex fast taper pike blanks, with horrible 36" parallel handles, but a quick job with the hacksaw soon reduced them to 11 ft 7 inches. These blanks were withdrawn by Carroll McManus (conoflex) for a while and then reappeared as 1-3 oz. bass blanks, but are now back as the 12 ft fast taper pike, although they do feel different to me. These rods have got Fuji real plate fittings and 9 hard chrome rings. I use them for very long range fishing with 1oz+ leads or where fish have to be stopped and hauled out of snags. They will snap any line under 10lb BS like cotton as a result of the way I fish, and are normally used with 11 to 15 lb BS line. They will also chuck half a mackerel 80+ yards.

The second pair (nicknamed Pokey Poles) are of unknown origin although they are probably sportex blanks. I purchased these 11 ft rods from Bill Philips of Ashford, Kent, who had been using them for long-range winter carping, my intention was to use them as pike rods, but they have proved to be excellent eel rods. They are a semi-fast blank with approximately 2½ lb T/C and 9 hard chrome rings. I have found them very good general eel rods capable of chucking a 1½oz lead and lobs 70 yards as well as being sensitive enough to last a half roach feelined bait a few rod lengths out. They have an advantage over the conoflexes of not snapping lightish lines and can safely be used with 7 lb line, while still being capable of exerting the power need to use 12 lb line properly at close range. Although very untidy and tatty these green poles are my constant companions when exploring new waters or where the eels do not live in trees or sunken ears etc.

I also sometimes use a set of 3 12 ft fast taper carp rods (nicknamed Green Wonders) for fishing past baits for eels (that has got you all thinking hasn't it!!) and a set of two 10 ft 2 lb T/C medium taper carp rods. The latter set is normally used for close range work when I fancy a change from the "green wonders"!

WALKERS WAY WITH EELS - continued

Reels

Again I have too many, collected over the years and never discarded. My old faithfuls are three Mitchell Matches, these have been superseded by three South Bend Classic 930s. I have always been very fussy about my reels in particular, but cannot fault the South Bends in any way. For very heavy work with 13 lb BS+ line I use a pair of Shakespeare Ambidex 2430s. These excellent reels are no longer made by Shakespeare and I expect them to be sadly missed by a great many anglers. They were a bargain at any price as are the South Bends.

Line

Unlike many anglers I am not too choosy about my line, although I do have a preference for Maxima and Milbro lines. Slycast I will use, but prefer to use it for piking, don't ask me why, I just do. Incidentally I normally use Platil for my carping! The Maxima I use in 12 lb, 14 lb and 15 lb breaking strains and the Milbro in 6 lb, 8 lb and 10 lb breaking strains. The only problem I find with the Milbro is that it can be very dodgy when tying knots, otherwise for a cheap line it is very reliable indeed.

Trace Wire

I think I have been through every type of wire on the market over the last five years and have finally settled on the following three types. Single Strand Alsticum I use in short lengths in 10 lb BS for a very special purpose that ex-member Jack Belamay first pioneered many years ago. Berkley Steelstrand in 18 lb BS was my standard wire for nearly two years until I stumbled across what I now use. I still have total confidence in it but now prefer to have it as a second string.

The wire I rely on is known as "Alloy Trace Wire" (original eh!). It comes in five metre coils and is VERY supple, but rather thick, available in 7 lb, 14 lb and 25 lb BS. I tend to stick to the 14 lb BS wire and find it as supple as most 20 lb BS monofilament lines. Because of its suppleness this wire has to be turned back for a slightly longer length than the steelstrand but once done properly a trace made out of "ATW" is as good as any I have ever seen or used.

You may notice that I do not use plastic coated wire. I have never liked plastic coated wire and cannot see any advantage in using it in any form.

Hooks

One of my favourite objects these, I seem to be able to find some fault with any hook anyone uses. Having tried various patterns over the years and slowly discarded them all I find myself in the same situation as I do with lines, in that I use one for one purpose and another for something else. The hooks I currently use for eels are the following patterns. Musterel 4826 (bronze), Sealey 1703G (gold), Au Lion D'or 1534 (bronze) and Mustad 39855 (bronze).

The 4826s are my general eel hooks, they are a long shank, forged, round bend eyed hook, not offset and with a fairly long straight point. I use sizers 1/0 to 6s, for everything from whole perch deadbaits to single lobs and brandlings. I am very partial to these hooks because they are very strong and well-made, with excellent points and well formed eyes. Sealey 1703Gs are no longer made (as far as I

WALKERS WAY WITH EELS - continued

know) but are a variation on the speedbarbs (Sealey 1701) pattern. They have turned-in needle points and are offset, a slightly longer shank than the speedbarb improves the hooking quality. The turned-in eyes are an aesthetic problem only and in my experience they do not detract from the overall effectiveness of this pattern. I use them for small half baits and lobs as well as paste baits in sizes 2, 4 and 6.

Au Lion D'or 1534s are probably the most popular specimen hunters hook in use today, especially in carp angling circles. My own usage of them is confined to lobs and deadbait strips. I am not too keen on them as eel hooks but sometimes use them instead of the 1703Gs in sizes 2/0 to 8. It must be remembered that these French, offset, heavily forged, eyed hooks are one size smaller for the stated size, than most hooks; i.e., a size 2 1534 is actually the same size as a Mustad or Sealey size 3; a size 4 is the same as a size 5 etc.

39855s are a recent addition to my eel hooks, having previously been used mainly for tenching. They are a longish shanked forged hook with an offset point that is long and sharp, they are the only spade end hooks that I use for eeling. Now how does a crafty old Walker get spade ends on wire you are thinking? The answer is I don't! This pattern is used when I feel very reckless and try a nylon trace, normally in conjunction with worms or pastes.

That just about sums up my hooks, but I must stress that I am quite likely to change these patterns for others as and when I find suitable ones.

Nets

Sometimes I wish I had a 100 yard square net, just to prove if there are any eels in some of the waters I fish. Unfortunately I don't and have to make do with the following:-

My landing net consists of a 5 foot alloy pole with PVC grips as a handle, and 40" wooden arms that lock together by means of two flat metal strips, rather like the excellent wooden nets that Perry used to make. This net has a 40" deep black keenets mesh of the Freeflo type, undoubtedly the best netting that I have ever seen or used.

Keep nets are an essential part of my gear and I carry two, one is a 6 ft Minnow mesh net that is almost as old as me and is used for keeping baits. I prefer a net to a bucket but carry both. The second net is a 10 ft 1" meshed, 21" diameter keep net that is for retaining eels after capture, this net is soon to be replaced by a 10 ft, 21" diameter Keenets keep net.

I also carry two weighing nets, one is an old landing net mesh (for carp and pike mainly) and the other is a matchmans type weighing net consisting of two rectangular polythene rings 15" X 10" separated by 11" of netting, pursed at the bottom with a string from all four corners of the top ring for hooking over the scales. This is an ideal eel weighing net and a good investment for any club member.

I useful extra net that I carry is a nylon carp sock, rarely used for the retaining of eels, it is very useful for placing under the rods when the ground is like a jungle.

WALKERS WAY WITH EELS - continued

Scales, forceps, bite alarms etc.

All the items that are to follow I tend to class as assorted junk. All very useful and that, but still assorted junk to me.

Aron Mk 7 dial scales (of course) kept in an iron carrying case and a Sattler Model 15 tubular balance takes care of weights. AJS Mk 4 Buzzers are my totally reliable bite indicators that have served me well for four years. As I tend to shun all indicators on the line I carry a selection of devices for stopping the line falling off the open spool. My favourite method is to put an elastic band round the rod above the reel and either slip the line underneath it or place a matchstick or similar object under the band and clip the line under that. Alternatively I place a stone or thin plastic strip on the line on the spool, the plastic strip is an old indicator that just clips over the spool but is easily dislodged by any pull.

Unhooking tools are something that I am very adept at losing just as an eel reaches the bank, but if I do manage to find them they are a pair of 6" stainless steel forceps, a 5" pair of stainless steel scissors and an 8" long pair of chrome-plated forceps. Other metalwork that I carry is mainly for baiting up, namely 3 baiting needles, 1 small pair of s/s scissors, 1 scapel and a very sharp brss lock knife.

Rod rests come into my category of assorted junk in that I carry enough of them to put up 7 or 8 rods. I also carry 2 sets of BK multiple rod rests - a double set and a triple set, invaluable for quick sessions where the swims are cramped.

Bait buckets are something I normally carry but don't always use. The best type are long and slim because they can be carried a long way in comfort, attached to the bucket is an air pump made by DAM.

Bits and pieces

Most of these are the contents of my tackle box, a Stewart of the old type with metal clips on the sides. Leads I use from single shots to 2 or 3 oz bombs, 1/2 oz and above are normally pear leads. Syringes, swivels, split rings (s/s not nickel or copper), barrel leads, drilled bullets, floats, pivot floats, beads and link swivels are all packed into the grey Stewart. Syringes are for air or oil, the barrel leads for pushing down the throat of whole deadbaits and bullets for small link legers over soft weed. My link swivels are hybrids made out of the link from a size 6 or 8 American snap link swivel attached to a size 12 or 10 Sam Woo swivel. French swivels are probably the best around but recently the quality of the ones imported to the UK has not been too hot. Berkley swivels are my favourite type, but almost unobtainable in my area, even as a tackle dealer I find them hard to come by. While I think of it, Berkley have just brought out a new type of snap link called the Cross-lok. These new swivels (if I can get them!) will, I am sure, prove very popular amongst members, the link part can be bought separately and clipped to any swivel, they are also much stronger than the American snap links or Berkleys normal link swivel.

Leger stops are an item that often provokes some comment I am not referring to those little green and white plastic monsters but any method used for stopping leads or links. I prefer to use the link swivel at the top of the trace as a stop for leads that are directly attached to the line and another swivel tied into the main line for link leads. Both methods have a bead between the lead/link and the

WALKERS WAY WITH EELS - continued

stop, for very long distance work I also add a length of silicone tubing between the bead and the lead/link. That, I think, sums up my eel tackle.

Before you all start saying "Why did Walker write all this", let me tell you why. I thought it might be of interest to members to read about the type of gear used by a fellow member in his search of our common quarry. I hope you comment on the above, I am sure Terry and Arthur will appreciate the copy.

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MY RETHINK ON BALA LAKE

Ernie Orme

As usual during the long dark cold miserable inactive winter months, yours truly has been reading back on angling literature, mainly eel articles going back 20 years, and reminiscing on my own eel fishing in the past.

But what of my future eel fishing. Well, on reflection, I confess I am not very impressed with my results of 15 years serious eel fishing, neither I suspect is anyone else!

I have never broken the four pound eel barrier (if barrier is the right word). What am I going to do about it? Well, in recent years, Bala Lake has been foremost in my mind. There is no doubt to me there are many eels in excess of four pounds in Bala Lake, right Terry? and I reckon Bala owes me a four plus eel, and Bala is in my eel thoughts now.

It was what Ken Goward said in an NAC Bulletin commenting on his visit to Bala - "Ernie dropped short and caught a lovely big three pound eel". Ken's quote has stirred me to a rethink on Bala Lake.

I was not fishing long distance the night I caught my four threes and my other eels weren't caught at long distance either and I recall that all my eels were taking in less than twenty feet of water (Bala is 140' in the deepest part).

I recall asking a chap with a boat on the eastern bank to take out my four perch dead baits 100 yards out and drop them in the fifty foot water. He did, I blanked!

I am not convinced that when I have been eeling at long range in Bala that those express train runs I experienced were in fact eels.

But you could convince me that they were either very big wild brown trout (Bob Randell, Chris Binyon's mate, had one 8½lb on gudgeon deadbait) or very big perch. The unofficial perch record originates from Bala a fish of 10lb.

I can't help wondering whether while livebaiting for Bala pike, when I have had unmissable pike takes, which I missed! were in fact big eels.

MY RETHINK ON BALA LAKE - continued

Many times at Bala, in the warmer weather, my two sons have gone wandering off with a bait bucket and a small net each, mucking about in the feeder streams and shallow margins of the lake and come back with enough natural bait to last me a week, bullheads, stoneloach, lamprey, fish fry, minnows and 3" to 4" trout. I only used the trout for deadbait and caught eels on them nearly every time.

You may be wondering by now what the hell is Ernie rambling on about, well I have come to the conclusion that I ought to have got to grips with Bala years ago, right! Hell, if I want food I go to the pantry!

And where is the pantry at Bala, in the shallower water of course!! and that is where my baits will be on my future trips to Liyn Tegid.

I have several swims in mind. I am thinking about the tackle, methods and tactics that I may have to apply.

So is Ernie going to be a big eel catcher? That is another story isn't it! Ah, well, I will keep you posted.

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EDITOR'S NOTE

Well done Ernie, nice to see you in print again. You and I are similarly placed in that time is not on our side and methods which have not worked in the past are hardly likely to work now. Hence the rethink.

All the good fish I have seen taken at Bala came from reasonably short range. I think many made a mistake in that because Bala is extensive in size they have to reach the middle or bust. I think Ernie that on the subject of natural bait you are on the right track. Stoneloach or bullheads from around the feeder streams should score over all others, with the exception of a bunch of plump minnows. Lampreys and elvers would be well worth an extensive trial.

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EEL FISHING ON "THE EDGE OF THE WORLD"

Mark Davies

I think that without fear of contradiction I can lay claim to have been one of the few people to have fished for the fresh water eel in the most Northern part of the British Isles as well as on the most isolated populated islands in the British Isles; the so-called "edge of the world".

It was in 1968 that I first made the long journey by rail and sea from my home in the Midlands, via Aberdeen to the Shetland Islands.

EEL FISHING ON "THE EDGE OF THE WORD" - continued

I was to spend a fortnight on an Island laying 24 miles due west of mainland Shetland, far out into the Atlantic, called Foula, a name derived from the wealth of seabirds that inhabit the islands cliffs, the name Foula being a derivation from its original title, the Isle of Fowls. I had in 1967 spent three months on an outward bound course at Brathay Hall on the banks of Windermere and have been selected by the Brathay Exploration Group who have a croft house on Foula, to spend a fortnight there, principally to continue their research into the birdlife of the island.

The approach to the island is truly spectacular, especially as the weather at the time of my visit was very stormy. After consuming a huge cooked breakfast in Scalloway on the west coast of the Shetland mainland I along with my fellow travellers at least felt that we would be able to pass on our bacon and eggs in digested form to the hungry seagulls who followed the boat for the full journey. The sea creates a magnificent back drop to the three great peaks of the island, the greatest of which The Sneug rises 1373 feet from sea level in the centre of the island, the others peaks The Kane and Soberlie, falling away to the North and the Noup to the South.

To cut a long story short, we arrived safely on the island and the seagulls on route fed well on bacon and eggs. We settled in at the croft and I went to have a good look around the island.

I had noticed when the boats had chugged into the island's small harbour that a burn tumbling its clear waters into the sea and I was able to follow this burn up to a loch of about five acres this loch being called Mill Loch. Entering this loch was a small river Mill Burn which flowed down towards the sea from the North of the Island (see map) like other highland streams flowing over peaty ground the water had the hue of weak tea and due to the mineral deficiencies in the water there was little weed growth although a search amongst the stones in the stream bed revealed rich animal life made up principally of varieties of caddis larvae. The stream at its widest was perhaps 12 feet and the fast flowing stretches were interspersed with brown peaty pools of various depths. I was certain that it held the small wild brown trout that occupy every river, burn and trickle in the highland and islands. With this in mind I had managed to drag along a Mark IV Carp Rod and a Mitchell 300 with the usual accessories. As I had anticipated there were brown trout in plenty and during my two week stay they provided me with plenty of meals but even more surprising was that this stream was also the home of countless eels. It always seemed to be a matter of luck whether an eel or trout took my free line worm. Eels were caught by me from the source of the stream right from where it entered the sea in the island's harbour. None of the eels caught were half a pound and were like no others I had ever seen being practically jet black apart from a slightly lighter tone on the belly. As a matter of interest Mill Loch was netted by the group to ascertain the fish life presence. All that was revealed was a brown trout of one and a half pounds and an eel of similar weight.

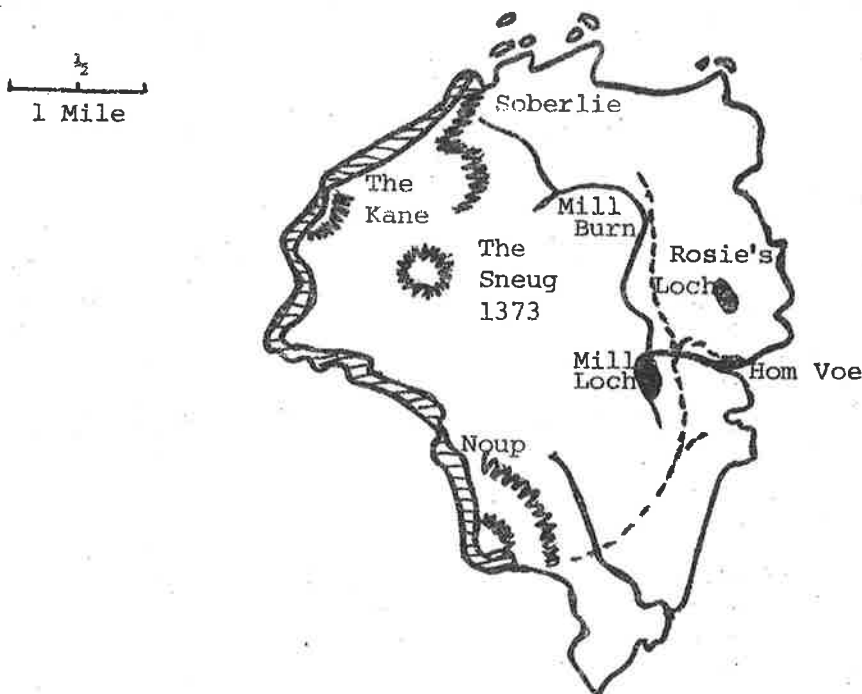
As one could imagine these eels were not at all cautious and would take a free line worm with complete confidence, not for them the delicate temperaments of their southern counterparts. From information I gleaned from an islander whose croft was dissected by Mill Burn there was a run of elders every year and on occasions he had been able to trap large numbers as they climbed a waterfall near his home. He also stated categorically, that these elders were always caught on very bright moonlit nights and was firmly of the view that this had a definite connection with their migration.

EEL FISHING ON "THE EDGE OF THE WORLD" - continued

Since first visiting Foula in 1968 I have returned on five occasions and have also spent some seven separate holidays on the mainland of the island group. Again whilst fishing for brown and sea trout in the lochs and streams I often encountered fresh water eels. They are invariably under half a pound with the majority being true bootlaces. Needless to say this is not the territory for the battery of four rods, buzzers and broolly tents. Travelling light with a rod and a rucksack I have fished up to twenty lochs and streams in a day, places that are only accessible on foot but with one thing in common they abound in trout and eels. On my last visit to the mainland in 1978, from a pool on a small stream no more than 10 feet wide I caught (again on the free line worm) a fresh run sea trout of four pounds.

I hope that after reading this, and a cry will go up at the November AGM "What about a club trip to the Shetland Islands" the only thing I could guarantee is that we would all catch eels, providing that size was not a consideration. Contrary to popular opinion the discovery of oil in the Shetland Islands has not spoilt the beautiful scenery. One big drawback as far as NAC members are concerned is that the ten bars on the various islands are often up to 15 miles apart.

FOULA



THE REAL DANGERS OF EEL NETTING

Alan Mitchell

With the increase in demand for produce many merchants are only too willing to sell whatever comes their way. In recent years eels have become a very desirable commodity. They fetch £1-£1.50 per pound and commercial netters are all too ready to capitalise on this situation. Water Authorities seem to condone the activities of these netters.

THE REAL DANGERS OF EEL NETTING - continued

We all know the situation by now. The clubs work to improve their waters. They restock with good quality fish and hope to reap the rewards of their efforts. When the authorities are asked to restock they get any old rubbish from over-stocked ponds etc., with no real cost to themselves. So why should they worry what these so-called EEL NETTERS do?

From various sources, some from within the Anguilla Club, we have startling reports of netting different waters.

Now I will ask you to use your imagination a little. Put yourselves in the position of the nets men. You pull in your nets. You find perhaps 20 eels and 5 to 6 cwt of other fish. These fish have no other interest for you than fs in the bank. You might hesitate but the nets man will not - he loads the whole lot into his van and he is off. Don't imagine they have difficulty in disposing of your precious carp, pike etc. Many wet-fish shops in London have coarse fish at modest prices on display. Cod and haddock are very pricy but pike and carp are quite reasonable. Many continentals live in England and they have always eaten vast quantities of carp.

When you are next sitting waiting for that next run from one of those 20lb+ carp on your private lake turn this over in your mind. Were the nets men doing a midnight job on your lake? Are all those fat carp now lying on a fishmonger's slab in London, Cambridge or any other town or city?

Don't think "It can't happen to me" - it can! These people do not consider you one little bit. Pound notes are pound notes. Sport does not even come into it.

Now we come back to eels in general. They are, we all know, good to eat. In a fishery however they are a factor that can at times decide whether your lake provides good or poor quality fish. Redmire is a prime example. The only predators there in any numbers are eels. They mop up the spawn and also hunt and eat quantities of small fish. This to the match angler may be a dismal prospect but a vast lake of 1 oz fish must be a more dismal prospect. The survivors have more to eat and grow fast. Therefore out growing a food item size for the eels very quickly.

By now you may be asking yourselves what the remedy is.

Well to net eels commercially the permit costs about £1. Armed with this expensive piece of paper the nets men then decimates all the stocks of fish he can get away with.

You pay between £2.50 and £4.00 a season and he comes and takes your fish. So speak out now and get this practice stopped. If your local club membership is 500 thats £1,750 to fish empty waters. It can and is happening.

At the recent Angling Conference the Anguilla Club put its views on show for all to see. However how many anglers present took the trouble to really read and digest what all the posters had to say. We in the Anguilla Club can foresee real problems. We will suffer first but as the eel becomes scarce we will suffer more and more. Don't sit and do nothing - we provide a lot of revenue in rod licences and to tackle dealers. We won't in the future as our fishing declines as it surely will.

THE REAL DANGERS OF EEL NETTING - continued

These nets men are widespread so please don't sit back and let other people fight your battles. Get stuck in and protest at every opportunity. EEL NETTING MUST STOP!!

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GOSFIELD - I DID IT MY WAY

Bob Layland

The first time I saw Gosfield I was only about eight years old. The lake itself was once situated in the grounds of a large stately home, but now it is a private lake bordered with a camp site on one side and an unfishable bank on the other.

It is a dammed up brook which is causing the lake to silt up slowly. The first look at the lake, which is from the road across the dam, it looks old and deep. It is old, but not deep. Over its acres it has an average depth of about 3-4 feet but in a few places it plummets in depth to about 5 feet. This becomes apparent when waterskiers come a cropper and then stand up on the bottom.

I spend a few years fishing on the lake with Chris Lee (what has happened to Chris) before I became a member. A few eels were taken by Chris, they went to about 4 lbs but the biggest taken by myself in about three years was 3 lbs.

I left the lake alone because of no transport and returned to have a two week session solid just for eels, in the first few weeks on the season in 1978. I was dropped off and told I would be picked up in 13 days time. Great, I thought, peace for all that time. What a lovely feeling it is to know you have all that time fishing in front of you. Setting up on the first day I caught my finger in the broolly top tilt, and cut it open. After coming round after passing out I tied my clean handkerchief around the finger and there it stayed for almost a week. After 13 days, 3 eels, biggest 2 lb 1 oz plus 1 tench 3lb 12 oz later. I went home. You don't half do some strange things after 13 days on your own.

In March 1979 I passed my driving test, this was it I thought, fishing anywhere, anytime, I could even come home if I cut my finger again! I had forgotten about taking mum shopping and other taxi jobs which I have to do.

So the eel-mobile or is it willy-wagon was on the road and I was free - I could fish anywhere in the country. So I went back to Gosfield for almost two weeks!

With a female as a companion I managed to find a small space in the van for the fishing gear owing to the vast amounts of clothes, food, make-up and washing equipment (she did, I didn't!!).

It was a great holiday, fish were hard to come by, but I did catch a couple near 3lb and a few twos. I enjoyed myself immensely (fishing).

GOSFIELD - I DID IT MY WAY - continued

Later on in the year I had to take my mother to my cousin's house in Braintree, about 3 miles from Gosfield. So with the gear in the back and mum in the front (or was it the other way round?) we set off.

The skies were black and rain forecast, but I had made my mind up. The planned cup of coffee at Braintree turned into a full meal, so when I set off to fish it was dark. Then it dawned on me I had no bait only maggots. I would have to pounce some. I arrived about 19.15 to find I was the only one there. I set up a float rod and cast out, leave it five minutes then striking at it. After about six casts I felt a tuck and reeled in. Just my luck an 8" roach, with no more fish caught this was my bait for the night.

I felt very guilty cutting the fish up, but I needed the bait. Just at that moment the heavens opened and down came a torrent of rain. The broolly-camp was thrown over a handy bush and I baited up and managed to cast baits out in the vicinity of the landing stage in about 5' of water. It was now 20.30 and I was soaked, the time soon passed to 00.30. I was really enjoying myself, soaked, cold, no runs and it had not yet stopped raining.

Then as I sat watching the rain fall past the entrance of the 'biv' one of my indicators twitched and slowly moved towards the butt ring.

Forgetting to put my hood up I fell out of the biv causing all the rain trapped on top to find its way down my neck.

I picked up the rod, pulled a foot of line of the spool, closed the bailarm, waited for the line to tighten then woomph, I was well and truly "in". After the best fight of my life with a fish, I got that warm feeling you get in your stomach when you know that you have landed your biggest fish to date.

With a keepnet ban on the water, what do I do now? No way, do I return it without a picture. So I waded out into the deeper part of the water, sunk the keepnet with the eel in it and tied string around the neck of the net and sunk it.

As I sat afterwards nude in my sleeping bag due to being quite wet I kept smiling. I waited until about 10.00 the next morning before 2 young boys came along to take the photos, with the eel returned I set off home.

On the way home I kept smiling to myself. I don't know what the young girls in the back of the coach I was stuck behind for about 20 minutes must have thought but I could not help smiling. I did not even mind being wet. Oh yes, it weighed 5lb 5oz I almost forgot to tell you in my excitement of reliving the event.

P.S. Has anybody spotted Chris Lee on their water, he has not been seen since last year, or has he run off with CAPTAIN BEAKY!!!

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THE GRAND UNION CANAL - WARWICK TO NAPTON

Mark Davies

It is during the cold months of dark nights and frosty mornings that I look forward to the warm summer nights in pursuit of the fresh water eel and look back to my boyhood when my appetite was whetted for the first time by Anguilla Anguilla.

I was fortunate, that at the age of four, my father purchased for me a bamboo rod and a centre pin wheel and took me out for the afternoon on the north bank of the Nene during a weekend visit to my grandmother, who lived in Peterborough. He continued to take me out fishing until I was able to swim, when I was allowed to cycle, with a friend, to a stretch of the Grand Union Canal five miles away from my home near Warwick. If ever I yearn again for my days of childhood it is because of the school holidays, which, during summer months, allowed me to fish for ten weeks day in day out. Do I ever get bored with fishing? Never. If the fish were not biting there was plenty in and around the canal to interest a couple of small boys. The stretch of the GUC that I refer to between Warwick and Napton was and still is largely untapped as far as quality fishing is concerned. It was and is probably still fished regularly by Matchmen using fine tackle, but rarely did one meet anyone concerned with the pursuit of larger fish.

It was on this canal at the age of 12 years that I first went out night fishing. This was a great adventure. Myself and my friend had camped many a night on the banks of the canal, but we had never considered fishing through the night. My friend had won a school prize and had selected Dick Walker's Still Water Angling as his prize. Every word and chapter of that book was read and re-read. Walker's advice was put into practice as far as our pocket money would allow. During the big freeze of 1962 the GUC had been frozen for many months. Lengths had been drained and large eels could be seen swimming underneath the ice and in the clear shallow water in the entrance to the locks and the overflow cuttings. This prompted us to try our hand at night fishing for eels one very hot evening in July. Lob worms were the bait and white plastic empty line containers were the indicators, the line being lodged under the lip which was placed slightly away from the rod. The novelty of this first outing was undoubtedly overawing as many bites were missed and I recorded my first of many eel fishing blanks. Nevertheless my appetite was whetted. I still do get enormous satisfaction spending the night out of doors in the countryside.

After my first eel fishing session many more nights were spent on the banks of the GUC right up until I left the area to move north at the age of 21 years. I am convinced, although I was never lucky enough to catch them, that eels well over six pounds live in the stretch of canal I refer to. On a large number of occasions usually fishing in the entrance to a lock or in the overflow cutting I have connected with and been broken by large eels that made light work of fairly stout tackle. It was not until 1970 that I was able to afford better tackle and concentrate more successfully on my eel fishing on this stretch of canal and large numbers of eels over three pounds were caught by me and my fishing colleague.

If the NAC were to consider this stretch of the GUC for a club outing I am sure they would be well rewarded with quality eels.

THE GRAND UNION CANAL - WARWICK TO NAPTON - continued

Perhaps some members past or present have spent some time already on this length. The canal is set in the midst of the pleasant Warwickshire country side is readily accessible and within easy reach of some fine hostleries, indeed some of these are on the very banks of the canal. As an added bonus for me it would bring back some happy memories. As always, these days, boats will be a problem.

P.S. On the whole of this stretch of canal cray fish are a problem and dead baits are quickly stripped of all flesh false and bites registered.

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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Mr. Editor,

Firstly, through the pages of our bulletin I would like to say how enjoyable I found the Spring meeting. We were asked to write articles for the bulletin or if this was not possible by way of not having any subjects to write about, to write comments on other members' articles. This may prove beneficial as long as we respect other anglers' feelings in making adverse comment on the said articles.

OK anyone can criticise but please if we must let this criticism be constructive and not destructive. We are all here to help each other and pull together.

Some people can very easily be offended and I trust all letters or articles will be of a moderate nature. If we must disagree lets do it nicely.

In recent articles in the bulletin I personally would have liked to have made comments of an adverse nature but felt I really couldn't. I did however contact personally the member involved. I will also write to him and make my feelings on his approach known. He can then air his views on my comments. Surely this is a better system. If together we find a solution then later the results of our mutual efforts can be published.

I feel we are at present in a good position as regards relations between members. To jeopardise this may be foolish.

If anyone disagrees with my views on this point I won't mind if they make comment on it.

Signed: Alan Mitchell.

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LETTERS TO THE PRESIDENT

Dear Arthur,

On behalf of the National Association of Specimen Groups and

LETTERS TO THE PRESIDENT - continued

myself we wish to express our thanks both for the support the Anguilla lads gave us and in particular the digital clock you personally donated to the raffle.

It was nice to meet you all again.

Regards as always,

Signed: G.E.Hodson  
Hon.Sec. of the National Association of  
Specimen Groups.

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Dear Arthur,

We are already planning to run the Eight British Angling Conference for next year probably at Loughborough again. I write to ask if the National Anguilla Club would be prepared for one of its members to read a half hour paper on Eels followed by a quarter of an hour for questions.

I look forward to hearing from you in due course.

Signed: G.E.Hodson  
Hon.Sec. of the National Association of  
Specimen Groups.

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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Mr.Editor,

I am writing to thank you and all the members of the National Anguilla Club for the sweatshirt which was given to me. I was very pleased and I will wear it with pride - I know I am the only non-Club member to have one!! Thank you all very much.

Yours faithfully,

Miss J.L.Tester.

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