

## NEWBURY ANGLING ASSOCIATION



Founded 1878

**CHAIRMAN** - David Marshall

**VICE CHAIRMAN** – Dougie Hull

**SECRETARY** – Currently vacant

**FISHERY MANAGER** – Currently  
vacant

**PROJECT MANAGER** – Paul Fitcher

**MEMBERSHIP SEC** - Dave Smith

**MATCH SECRETARY** – Henry Sadler

**TREASURER** – Martin Strike

**NEWSLETTER & WEBSITE EDITOR**  
- Martin Strike

See permit for contact details

Website - [www.newburyaa.org.uk](http://www.newburyaa.org.uk)

# NAA NEWSLETTER

## Spring 2023

Welcome to our latest quarterly newsletter. I was typing this up thinking what a boring title it had when it hit me. The name for future issues will be the NAAN.

At the time of writing, Bellwood has only just reopened after flooding and many venues have spent much time with ice 'caps' during what has been at times a proper winter. Today it has snowed overnight, so roll on Spring.

By the time this issue comes out in mid-March all this will hopefully be long forgotten, and the fish will be waking up very hungry.

A reminder that this issue has been emailed to all, but of over 800 members we only have around 100 addresses, so if you're reading a paper or website copy, then please help spread the word and reduce our printing costs by emailing us your permission to add you to our mailing list. Please also check your spam in case we've landed there.

Remember we'd like this to be YOUR newsletter, so please send in ideas for content, brags about your catches and photos old and new to us at [comms@newburyangling.org.uk](mailto:comms@newburyangling.org.uk)

The Editor



## AROUND THE FISHERIES

### Winter



As mentioned in the introduction, Berkshire was hit by long spells of unbroken heavy frost before and after Christmas, either side of a very wet spell in January. This led to significant flooding of the entrance to the Widmead carpark, restricting access to the lakes and rendering their east banks largely inaccessible for some weeks. Bellwood had to be closed on 9th January due to the water level busting the banks and making swims unfishable and dangerous. Despite very low levels

of subsequent rainfall, it was early March before the water level receded and dried out enough to make the banks safe enough to reopen. Members are thanked for their understanding during this time and observing the closure notices. Members will know that his area has been susceptible to flooding in the past, during which time fish were lost from Bellwood and Pallets into the nearby Kennet. The installation of otter fencing to both lakes has ensured our larger fish will have remained in place.



*Bellwood no-go zone*



*Submarine conditions at the Widmead car park*

The club has been looking at the causes of the flooding and what can be done to alleviate future flooding. With the railway bridge access owned by Network Rail and the restrictions of much of the site being a SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest) it is very difficult to design and complete any effective solutions. The inevitable major cost to any significant drainage works would also be prohibitive.

### **Smile Please!**



The club has purchased a couple of small-sized mobile cameras with on-line viewing and image recording facilities. The intention is to place these at sites where anti-social behaviour is suspected, to oversee car parks where suspicious activity has been identified or where otters have been reported etc. If successful, further cameras may be purchased to further protect our waters, potentially in fixed locations such as the Bellwood store etc. You may not notice the cameras as it is envisaged that they will be camouflaged and discreetly positioned in order to be effective, but should you spot one, please smile then leave it alone.

### **More Swim Repairs Planned**



After the work undertaken at Knotts, Collins, Dobsons and Dixons last year, a further 80 swims are earmarked for repair this year. These are planned for Willows, Bellwood, Alders and possibly Pallets. Should any member know of any contractor who might like to tender for this work, please contact us at the email at the top of this newsletter.

Having allowed time for the soil in the recently repaired swims to settle, it is intended to fill the wooden frames to complete the process while also clearing the piles of materials stacked from removing previous broken swims.

## Mammoth Brownie from the K&A

Our river anglers will be used to gradually loose feeding to build up a swim only to have it trashed first cast by an acrobatic trout, sending all chub dashing for the snags in an instant. But what if that trout weighs 10lbs? NAA member Joshua Golding caught this beauty on the town centre stretch of the K&A canal close to Victoria Park. A regular captor of big fish, carry on reading to find Joshua's excellent Spring tips further in this issue.



## New Regulations for 2023/24

Two new regulations have been proposed, voted on and are to be introduced for next winter.

Pike fishing season. It has been agreed that fishing specifically for pike will only be allowed on NAA waters between 1<sup>st</sup> October and 15<sup>th</sup> March annually. This is to minimize potential damage to fish in the warmer months when these fearsome yet fragile fish are more vulnerable. For lure fisherman targeting perch, a maximum lure length of 10cm will apply outside of these dates.

Collins lake. A 3-rod allowance (for Specimen permit holders only) to be introduced as an experiment from 1<sup>st</sup> November 2023 to 1<sup>st</sup> February 2024 ONLY. We notice the lake is virtually empty through most of the winter months. The hope is to encourage a greater presence to help deter cormorants while keeping a level of bait into the lake to keep fish feeding longer (note: a low maximum baiting limit of 1kg from the standard 4kg during the experiment is also being introduced to reduce the possibility of uneaten bait rotting in the water). Members utilising this change must ensure they have a three rod EA rod licence. The committee are aware that there are reasons both for and against bringing in this regulation which is why it will be initially run as a single season experiment. A review will take place after the 1<sup>st</sup> February expiry and a decision made whether or not to repeat this change in future winters.

## FORUM FOIABLES



While the majority of members use the club's members-only Facebook page to communicate with other members and keep up to date, some prefer to use the NAA Forum via the website.

If you've not seen it – go on to the website and have a look. There is a moderation process, so your request will have to be accepted, but once in, you will find the Forum a bank of knowledge for previous NAA business and developments, as well as a way to communicate with the membership or individual members.

This said, some members have reported that their device no longer lets them on the Forum, the page refusing to open saying 'Your Connection Isn't Private'. This is due to a permissions issue with Microsoft Edge. To access the Forum either use an alternative browser (say Chrome, etc) or load the address direct – <https://naamembers.proboards.com>

# CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

by David Marshall



David Marshall

Another busy period since our last Newsletter which unfortunately this year due to flooding forced us to close a number of our venues. We seem to suffer from this every 2 to 3 years. Whilst we have over the years taken some measures to help this, with most of our waters in the Flood Plane we have to accept that flooding will at times affect us. At least now we have most of our waters Otter Fenced we are able to prevent the fish from escaping to the River.

You will see in the Newsletter we are going to use Clubmate for our renewals and new memberships as well as the many other benefits this will bring regarding communication and a new Web Site. We will in the future be able to reach all our members at the touch of a button. Although undoubtedly there will be teething problems in the first year whilst members get use to this new platform I believe ongoing this will have huge benefits for the Association.

Now we are coming out of winter work will be starting again around the fishery. The major jobs include Swim building at Rawlings Retreat & Bellwood and Tree work at Widmead which will require consent from Natural England. We also have a lot of general tidying up around the fisheries where work has been completed over the last year.

On a personal note I will be standing down as Chairman this year, a post I have held since 2005. The time is right for a change and all being well our Vice Chairman, Dougie Hull, will step into this position. We have a number of other vacancies which will be detailed in the AGM letter you will receive shortly. As always I encourage any of you with a few hours to spare to consider some of these vacant positions.

It just leaves me to thank everyone who has been involved with the running of the Association over the 18 years I have been Chairman and to the membership who continue to remain loyal, and as I have said before, enjoy some of the most varied fishing venues in the south of England. I am sure the Association will go from strength to strength ongoing.

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Looking at the back issues of this publications predecessor, FINS magazine, the Editor was delighted to come across this picture showing David as winner of the Keith Scrivener Memorial Match at Willows on 4<sup>th</sup> September 2004. Pictured here with Marion, Keith's widow, David won the match with an impressive weight of 58lb 14oz. Dave, you haven't changed a bit!



## AGM & Open Forum– 4<sup>th</sup> May

All members are being written to inviting them to the Annual General Meeting and afterwards, an Open Forum at Thatcham FC on Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> May. Full details will be included on the letter, but should you have any query please contact us at the email address at the top of this newsletter.



Members of other Associations such as Reading & District AA or indeed over 200 fishing clubs across the UK may have noticed that much of the administration of their club has been passed to Clubmate in recent seasons.

Backed by the Angling Trust, this corporate company have been helping clubs and members by streamlining and automating many of their key activities. The committee have voted to adopt the services of Clubmate from the forthcoming season. The benefits will be many, but among those most likely to be of interest to members will be:

- The ability to purchase permits and guest tickets on-line\* at any time of day without having to visit Thatcham Angling or the Membership Secretary, or printing an application form or obtaining a passport photo.
- The Clubmate App, which doubles up as evidence of membership on your Android/Smart phone and provides on-bank access to club communications, rules and regs etc.
- A modern, streamlined website to replace our somewhat tired site.
- Members will now receive newsletters/important updates (such as lake closure openings etc) direct
- A club shop with a large range of NAA-monogrammed merchandise.

WOULD ALL MEMBERS WHO DO NOT CURRENTLY RECEIVE THE QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER VIA EMAIL FORWARD THEIR EMAIL ADDRESS, ALONG WITH THEIR NAME AND CURRENT MEMBERSHIP NUMBER TO THE FOLLOWING ADDRESS – [enquiries@newburyangling.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@newburyangling.org.uk) This will help in getting the system set up and running, plus allow you to login into Clubmate as a current NAA member. Otherwise, you will be asked to join as a new member with the added expense that involves.

\* We appreciate not everyone will be able to use this system. So, we will be at the Bellwood Store from 10 am to 1 pm on 27th May and 3rd June to assist any members who are having difficulties. You will also still be able to purchase permits/tickets from Tony at Thatcham Angling. We are looking to enhance the club for members, not make life harder for those who might not have smart phones or be computer literate. Further information will be provided via direct emails & Facebook prior to Clubmate going live.

Membership of Clubmate will also substantially reduce some of the labour-intensive tasks that the volunteer committee undertake behind the scenes. There is a cost to the club of membership to Clubmate, but it equates to a very small proportion of total club income and the committee feel the benefits to the club and members are strong value for money. Much of the cost will be offset by the expected saving in postage and printing costs.

Inevitably as when introducing anything new we anticipate some teething problems. However, we aim to keep these to a minimum, and all members, whether comfortable with tech or not, will benefit.

## END OF THE SEASON BARBEL

A reminder that all of our running water venues are now subject to the close season until 16<sup>th</sup> June. The one notable exception is Avington, where as no part of our fishing rights are considered to be part of the river Kennet, so year-round fishing is allowed. The season ended with two great barbel for committee members Dave Taylor and Martin Strike. Dave's stunning *Barbus* came in at 15lbs, whereas Martin's a measly 9lb 8. Dave wins the prize for floppiest hat, while Martin's barbel an entry in the year's least impressed fish.



# HEAD BAILIFF'S REPORT

by Rob Allen



We now have a total of fifteen official bailiffs, all of whom have been issued with bailiff warrant cards and report books. They look a smart bunch too in their new NAA logo'd Carp Couture clothing and lanyards displaying their bailiff warrant cards, which will make them and the purpose of their role more identifiable to those on the bank.

We have already had some positive feedback from members regarding the new bailiff clothing.

New notice boards have now been installed in Dobsons and Bellwood car parks. Please check these notice boards for updates before you start fishing as they may contain temporary situations such as closures due to conditions or fish spawning etc.

A lockable storage unit has been installed at Willows/Alders with the other is to come at the Widmead. Both are to contain items which will assist the bailiff team with their general duties such as removing and burying dead fish, litter picking and line removal from snags etc.

The lake maps for Bellwood, Knotts and Collins mentioned in the previous newsletter have been completed. These are on the clubs website and the NAA Facebook group. They have also now been laminated and have been added into the new notice boards.

The maps have been created to;

- Give an overview of the lake, it's swims/name where applicable, footpaths, aerator heads and the lakes specific features such as islands and pads.
- Identify the locations of the disabled access pegs on Knotts and Bellwood.
- Highlight hidden snags (to be avoided), no fishing zones and out of bounds areas specifically relating to Bellwood and Knotts. Please pay particular attention to the maximum wraps permitted before reaching the hidden snags in the middle of Bellwood, this is no fishing zone and should be avoided. Please DO NOT cast past the stated wraps.
- Provide peg numbers which is not only useful to members but to bailiffs also as it assists them in providing accurate bailiff reports whilst out on the banks checking permits.
- Provide swim boundaries for all members to adhere to if the lake is busy.
- Resolve any disputes between anglers if someone has strayed into your swim, swim boundaries should not be crossed if you have an angler adjacent to you or opposite you.
- Informing members that there are no double pegs on any NAA waters.
- Allow new peg numbers to be placed in the swims or on the fence behind.

I'm also in the process of producing a lake map for Pallets which I'm hoping to have ready for the new season.

Tight Lines to you all.

# MATCH NEWS AND UPDATE

**By Dave Smith**

A look back at the NAA match scene for this season. Last season, it had been reported that there were no matches for the under 60's(!) so it was decided to re-introduce the Club Championship for a trial period of 5 matches. Sadly, as predicted, no new match anglers came forward and the series petered out with only 3 and 5 anglers fishing the last 2 matches. However, the series was won by Richard Faithful who became Club Champion again after many years. The regular anglers in the Over 60's and 70's categories fought tooth and nail just to get to their pegs let alone fish!

In the Over 70's series, which was won by Brian Pallett, some notable results included, 17-14-0 caught by Roy Spiers from Willows in July, 13-12-0 caught by Steve Pallett from Knotts in September and 23-2-0 of Bream and Carp caught by Dave Smith from Dobsons in October.

The over 60's series is not yet complete at time of writing, with the last match to take place in March on the canal at Avington. However, having had a very successful series Bill Bowsher cannot be caught and is already a very well deserved Champion. Some of the notable results from the series so far are, Bill Bowsher with 19-12-0 from Dobsons in early July, Ken Rolfe with 52-8-0 from Willows later in July, Dave Smith with 12-14-0 from Enborne Canal in October and Bill Bowsher again, with 12-2-0 from the Canal at Avington in November.

Some of the other matches fished during the season include the annual Help for Heroes match on 2nd October on the Canal at Enborne which, with the help of a charitable donation from NAA raised £1000. The match was won by Richard Faithful with 8-0-0. NAA ran a Silver fish only match on Willows in late August which was won by Steve Myers with 12-8-0 who narrowly beat Steve Thame who caught 11-10-0 which included a 6-8-0 Bream. The annual Memorial match which was held on Willows in September had 15 anglers turn out and was won by Richard Faithful with 17-10-0. He narrowly beat Henry Sadler who had 16-8-0 which included a Carp of 13-8-0. The Xmas match had 17 anglers turn out and was won by Brian Pallett with 5-2-0 from the River which saw him with the River Hamper. The Lake Hamper was won by Richard Wiggins and the Canal Hamper was won by Henry Sadler. Finally 8 anglers braved the cold and hangovers to fish the New Years Day Shield on Enborne Canal. The match was won by Richard Faithful, who completed a memorable season, with 11-7-0

## NOT A PATCH ON THE OLD DAYS?



In a bored moment at home when he should have been washing up or tying some rigs, the Editor typed NAA into Ebay. One item came up. A £5 bid and a nervous few days later, purchase was secured of this splendid cloth patch.

It's around 10cm long and imagined to be quite a few years old. If any member can give any information about the era it came from, or whether any other 'merch' still exists, we'd be delighted to hear from you.

# MY SPRING FISHING TACTICS

By Joshua Golding

Spring is one of my favourite times of the year to target carp as they are up in weight and looking mega. However, it can be a difficult time as the carp are just waking up from winter and are still not up for a proper munch. My most successful approach at this time of year is normally a bright single pop-up, fished on a Ronnie rig or a match the hatch pop-up fished over 10-20 boilies.



## Bellwood:

Bellwood is a great Spring water as it has plenty of carp which do normally get caught at this time. I had a string of captures there throughout Spring last year, catching a good head of fish and a few cracking 20's. I



tended to use 12mm yellow pop-ups or match the hatch pop-ups, fished on top of the marginal shelves which normally produced a bite every session. The little bay is a great area to target as it has a 'safe zone' for the carp but they tend to move in and out of it at first light and just before dark. I tend to find at Bellwood that if you can get a few bites, don't be shy to introduce bait even if you caught them on a single, but don't 'fill it in' as even in the summer I find they don't like big beds of bait. Topping up the spot after every fish with a couple of spombs or a small hopper of bait from a bait boat is the best way on there. Watercraft is very important as well - sometimes you

might get to a lake and decide to set up where you saw fish the previous week, but that's not always the best way as they could well be at the other end of the lake this session. I find walking a good few laps of the lake looking for anything from a few bubbles to fish showing is the best way to ensure you're gonna catch a few. If I'm fishing on a spot in there, I'll prefer to use a 3oz lead on a lead clip as I'm confident if the fish picks the rig up it's gonna be nailed, but if I'm casting to showing fish a 1.5oz lead is what I'd use as it's less likely to spook the fish. Depending on the spot you're fishing, in my opinion the shorter the rig the better - though not too short. If I'm fishing on a hard bottom such as gravel, I'll use a 4 or 5 inch boom on a Ronnie rig but if it's silty I'll use a 7 or 8 inch boom. The fish will still get caught using a wafter or bottom bait but I think pop-ups are a better tactic to use in Spring. Most people on our lakes are more than happy to help each other out, so asking others what they've seen or caught can usually help put you onto the right track to getting into the right area. My most memorable Spring session on Bellwood would be either when I had 'the Woodcarving' at 26lb 2 (which was a pb at the time) and 'Bronson' at 22lb, or the time I had three carp, the biggest being a mirror at just over 25lb, a 18lb common and another 16lb common - but I've known people to have five or six fish in a Spring session. I remember once me and my Dad went down for a social and he managed to catch a trout! It's the most surprising catch I've seen from Bellwood.





## **Knotts:**



I haven't done lots of Spring fishing on Knotts, but the sessions I have done on there have been successful. I tend to find fishing tight to the island from the first point as you come in from the car park, and fishing from the canal bank are good for a bite. My most successful hook baits on there are 12mm washed out pink pop-ups fished on a Ronnie rig, or a double tiger nut fished on either a standard hair rig or else I like to drill out the tiger nuts and put some cork in there so they sit like a wafter. When I do this I like to fish them on a German rig. There are a lot of fish in Knotts so if you're looking for a few bites with the potential of catching a bigger fish it's a great lake to target throughout the year. Knotts has some really nice fish. The majority of them are Commons and some of them are mega. My favourite capture from there was a 22lb Common whose colours were unreal, with an orange/pink colouring on the underside and it had a black eye.

I used to get to the lake with a swim in mind and then wonder why I blanked, but again I learned that it's always good to have a walk around the lake and try to find the fish before just picking a swim and setting up - even a quick lap can give you an indication of where the fish are holding up, especially in the colder months where the fish are more dormant and are less likely to be moving around the lake.

Hopefully I'll see a few of you on the bank this year and I hope to hear of a few new pbs being caught.

## **BEN'S A NATURAL**

**By Ben Greenroyd**

Here at the NAAN we like to give space to our younger members to show us old fellers how to do it. This issue it's the turn of Ben Greenroyd who has made an incredible start to his angling career. I think for most anglers of creaking age like me, our first fish was probably a tiny roach or perch maybe (mine was a 1oz roach and I'll never forget it), but for Ben, well he's only been fishing a year even now and already has some incredible fish under his belt. Take it away, Ben...



I first went fishing with my Dad, a NAA member, when I was 15. It was an amazing start as I caught a 17lb 3 Common on my first trip, and that was that – I was hooked for life. Immediately, I set my heart on hunting my first 20lb+ fish, which didn't take long. It was a cold and slow March morning last year at Pallets. A run finally came to warm my hands and straight away I could tell it was a bigger fish. It held deep for ages before playing me under the rod tip for a good 20 minutes – I thought it would never give up, but eventually I got it into the net – a beautiful Common of 26lb 4. After that I couldn't wait to go fishing again, so three days later we went to Bellwood for 48 hours, targeting the big Mirrors that we'd seen moving in the margins. I couldn't believe it – I landed two big Mirrors, both over my 20lb target, the biggest at 23lb 3 and the other being 22lb on the nose. After catching them I thought

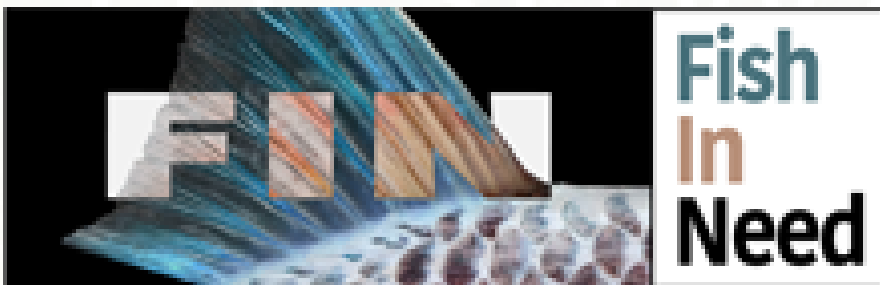
I'd lie down in the bivvy and have a rest, but something changed my mind and I cast again to the same spot. I'd just turned my back and was clipping up the bobbin when it got ripped off again. This time it was a fully-scaled Mirror of 21lb 2. Three big carp, all in one action-packed night in the margins. All three fish brought screaming takes and fought madly as they tried to get into the snags. Slowly pulling them back with my rod tips down they finally all graced the net.

But it's not all about Carp. I love all kinds of fishing. Here's me with a nice pike from Enborne a few weeks ago.



## FISH IN NEED

By Professor Mark Everard  
Trustee of FIN



You may (or may not) have heard about a new conservation and educational charity – Fish In Need (FIN) – established in 2021 of by a group of fish-lovers. The principal aim of FIN is to revive, rescue and restore fish populations across the UK. Our primary focus is to secure resources to support initiatives, generally 'grass

roots' initiatives driven by local people, to improve habitats for freshwater fish.

This emphasis on improving habitats is important as we are a charity, and so we have to ensure that the beneficiaries of these efforts are public rather than private interests. A primary focus on habitat enhancement also generates a wide range of public benefits including more general improvements for wildlife, public enjoyment and education, water quality and flows. We do not exclude reintroducing stock where appropriate, but there is no point in putting healthy fish into sick rivers where they will not automatically prosper.

Another important strand of our efforts is to enhance public knowledge about freshwater fish species, and the importance of and means for protecting or enhancing the ecosystems that support them.

Aside from me, other founding Directors of FIN are John Bailey (renowned angling expert and author), Paul Whitehouse (actor and comedian), Richard Hewitt (a passionate angler and ex-chairman of Farlow's), Simon Clark (ex-City lawyer) and Kirsty Hewitt (public health specialist).

Visit our website <https://www.fishinneed.org.uk/> for more information, including key points about why fish matter (beyond our recreational enjoyment).

We are interested in hearing from anyone who would like to chip in with some funding for allocation to suitable fish-focused enhancement projects, or who has in mind a scheme where a small injection of FIN funding might support the efforts of local interests in enhancing rivers and fish stocks for wider public benefit and enjoyment.



## CRUCIANS – A TASTE OF SUMMER TO COME

**By Chris Plumb**



If I were to describe my ideal summer angling idyll it would be something like this. It would be a benign June morning, an hour before sunrise, wisps of mist rising above a lily lined lake and snaking across the surface like ghosts. I'm staring intently through the gloom at the bright red tip of a float dotted right down and adjacent to said lilies. Something, moving through the lily stems, sends circles of vibrations across the otherwise still surface of the water. Tiny pin pricks of bubbles start to rise around my float – which starts to dither and dance as fish brush against the line. I've picked up my rod expecting a proper bite at any second – but we're after crucians here and bites can be subtle. After a couple of false alarms – probably striking at liners – a dip of the float results in a hooked fish – the fight is a brief one but always fraught – big crucians don't give you many

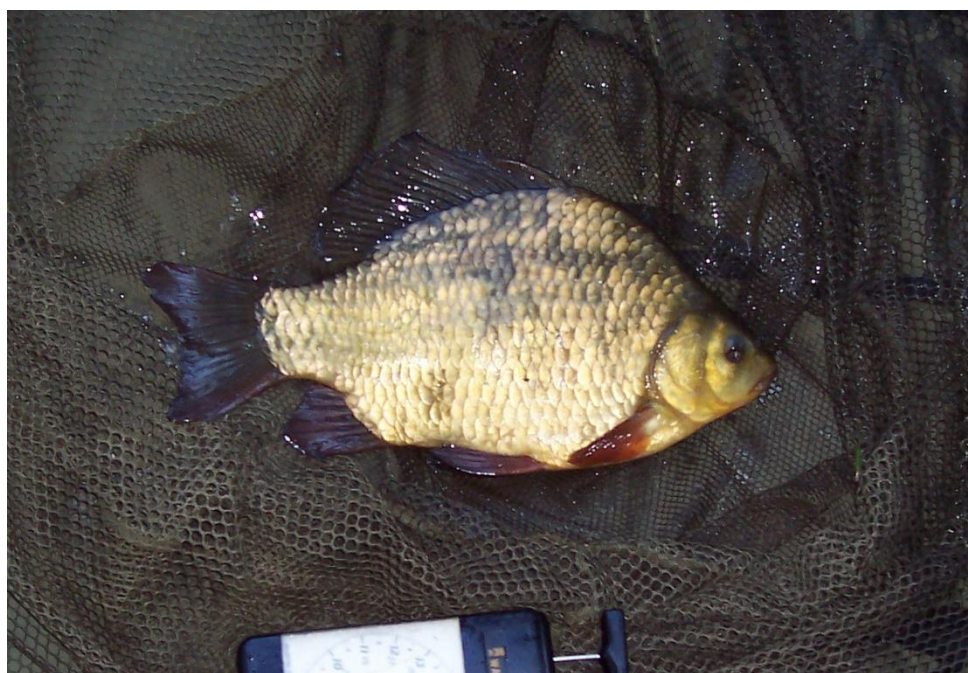
chances. If I lose this it might be my only chance of the morning. But, once steered away from danger the fish pops up to the surface like a cork – a bar of buttery gold to be steered gingerly into a waiting net. Such is my idea of angling bliss!

Crucians (along with Tench) are without a doubt my favourite summer species, though fishing for them can be infuriating and exhilarating in equal measure. They are often very finicky in their habits so the challenge is always in hooking one in the first place. And, being something of a traditionalist, there's nothing sweeter than getting them on the float. Today many serious Crucian anglers (and there are such fisher folk) resort to small method feeders – a tactic even I have reverted too when bites have been at a premium. My default method, however, is still to float fish for them. As for baits, I've experimented with a variety of pastes and pellets in the past two decades but have now settled on just two that have proved the most reliable – the

humble maggot and very small sections of chopped prawn. Tackle is always as fine as a dare based on what else might take my offerings (usually tench) and hook size is never bigger than a 16. Also, I've found that VERY accurate plumbing is the key to success – with your bait fished at dead depth.

In the past most NAA lakes had crucians in them. Dixons used to be THE venue for them and for around fifteen years you could arrive on a summer's morning and have a reasonable expectation of half a dozen 2lbbers before breakfast. My biggest from there is 3lb 13oz caught in 2011, a PB at the time and still 3<sup>rd</sup> on my all-time list. This has now only been bettered by two fish from the home of big crucians (and the home of the British Record), Johnsons Lake in Milford, Surrey which provided me with my first 4lber last summer. Knotts and to a much lesser extent Dobsons also used to have few big Crucians in them – my best from Knotts being a fish of 3lb 10oz (this from way back in 1999). My late friend Paul even had good one from Bellwood once – again around 20 years ago. Alas, the Widmead Crucians have all but disappeared, poor or non-existent recruitment plus the introduction of pike being their downfall. Research suggests that crucian carp are the prey of choice for pike so once Mr Esox got established in these lakes they never stood a chance. (More on Crucian research to follow!)

The lakes at Rawlings Retreat are now your best bet for a bar of gold from an NAA water. Warwicks – which always used to have the species resident in it, is being nurtured as a crucian fishery. It was drained, had all the common carp re-housed and then stocked with crucians in 2014. Lilies were planted up and more stockings have taken place since then – though they are still proving to be somewhat shy! Willows and Alders have also been stocked recently with the species. Willows already had a



long established but small population of big fish (my lake record is 3lb 7oz from 2012) and the recent additions are showing well and packing on some weight – you just need to avoid the resident common (and mirror) carp which is easier said than done.

Crucian carp are a fascinating species and the subject of much research – especially in Scandinavian universities. The species has the highest levels of glycogen (per body weight) of any animal on the planet. This allows it to survive long periods of anoxia (oxygen starvation). The stored glycogen is converted into sugars and ethanol (quite literally – anti-freeze) and this process allows crucians to survive for months under the winter ice in Scandinavian lakes, providing its stores of glycogen are not exhausted. This explains why in some lakes in Sweden and Finland, crucian carp are the only species to survive long term – and in some waters with low density populations and with the absence of predators they can grow very big indeed. The Swedish record crucian is over 6½lbs!!

Another survival strategy and an attempt to counter their role as 'food of choice' for *Esox Lucius*, is the deployment of the gape defence. They display a remarkable capacity for phenotypic plasticity – and have the ability to change shape (i.e. become much deeper in profile) in response to the presences of predators. This change can happened quite rapidly too. Researchers in Sweden kept perch and crucians in the same

tanks – though they were kept apart by a very fine mesh – so that they shared the same water but not the same space. In one tank the perch were fed a non piscivorous diet (worms etc.) whilst in the other they were fed a diet of live fish. The crucians in the 2<sup>nd</sup> tank with the piscivorous eating perch changed their body shape and became deeper in profile in a matter of weeks. They were responding to chemical cues from these perch so in effect *Perca halitosis* was the trigger for their phenotypic plasticity!

Crucians are also very fecund (I suppose you could say this is yet another survival strategy!) This can lead to a number of problems. Firstly if they get very established in a water it can lead to lakes and ponds with very large populations of stunted individuals all competing for limited food. I once fished such a pond as a youngster and remember quickly getting bored constantly pulling out 4-inch fish. A bigger problem though is their propensity to hybridise with common carp and with 'brown' goldfish. Common carp/Crucian hybrids are often referred to as FIs and are quite common – especially on the match circuit and are deliberately bred for this. Identification between crucians, brown gold fish and common carp is relatively easy – it become much less so between hybrids – especially crucian/goldfish crosses.

Here is my 'on the bank' ready reckoner for identification.

Lateral line count – Crucians almost always have 33 scales on their lateral line. 32 or 34 'may' be ok if everything else is right! More than this and it is likely to have common carp in its parentage, less than this indicates it's a goldfish or goldfish cross.

Check the mouth, crucian/common crosses often have vestigial barbules – pure crucians never do.

Look at the dorsal fin – It will always be convex on a crucian and concave on commons and goldfish.

Caudal fin – True crucians have a 'paintbrush' like tail, commons and goldfish have a more pronounced V shape.

There are other more nuanced indicators but If I caught a fish that passes those 4 'tests' and the overall 'gizz' is right I'd be happy to call it a crucian. Of course the only way to truly know would be to a DNA test – something I'm clearly not advocating.

And finally we worry about alien species today yet crucians are probably a relatively recent introduction in the UK. Actual dates are impossible to pin down but their arrival probably happened in the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Izaak Walton made no mention of them in the *Compleat Angler* and as he talks of even the UK's mini-species in the book, I would have expected him to mention crucians if he knew of them. The first reference in the UK to Crucians is in a 1766 book - *British Zoology* by the naturalist Thomas Pennant – who describes them as common in fish ponds in London and South of England and goes on to state that it is his belief that it is not a native fish. They were probably introduced as ornamental fish alongside or instead of goldfish. This was after all a time when garden and estate design was increasingly popular amongst the landed gentry. The first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century saw the rise of the landscape garden – which invariably featured lakes and/or ornamental ponds. These had to be stocked with ornamental fish! The biggest clue to their origin, however, is in their nomenclature – at the time they were known as German or Prussian carp which clearly points to their likely ancestry.



So there you have it – a fascinating fish and well worth an angler's attention.

# ALDERS

By Dave Clarke

Alders is the smaller lake that sits next to Willows on the Rawling's Retreat. At just over one acre in size this is a pretty lake characterised in summer by a large lily bed that runs down the middle of the lake, essentially providing a marker of the shallow bar that sits beneath (2-3ft). This was created when the lake was dug out in 2006 and the silt was piled up in the middle of the lake. Elsewhere the existing lake is a decent depth with 6ft or more at a couple of rod lengths out in most pegs. The deepest part is in the southern corner near the car park, in front of the wooden bench, where it's maybe 8ft.



This water holds mainly tench and bream with some silver fish (roach, skimmers and rudd) crucians and perch. This water has purposely not been stocked with carp, but there are few rogue fish whose origins are open to debate. Alders is probably Newbury AA's most reliable lake for tench. This said, it can be a hard water but if you get the right method on the right day some very good catches are possible. The tench are a decent size with most fish typically in the 2 to 4lb bracket, with the better fish just over 5lb. The bream tend to move in two large shoals with most fish typically in the 3- 5lb bracket, with the best I have had being close to 6lb. They will often give their presence away with line bites and the skill here is not to strike at every rod movement but to try and understand the difference between fish swimming into the line and fish that have taken the bait. I did hear one report of a bream catch last season well in excess of 50lb.

The water can be clear and is this something to be aware of when considering your approach. This makes the fishing hard in the winter months when the lake is targeted by cormorants. Good catches can still be



caught in the colder months but the fishing becomes more reliable when the water warms up from April onwards. Don't be afraid to move to locate the fish. Once you get that first bite you will normally get more action. It's a water where you can try different things and sometimes be rewarded immediately.

Popular methods include casting a small method feeder close to the lily pads using groundbait or micro pellet and a small wafter or sweetcorn hair-rigged on the hook. This really does seem to target the tench and the bream with savage takes being the norm. The lily bed always provides a marker to aim for but sometimes it pays to drop the feeder a yard short of the lillies and fish on the slope or at the bottom of the shelf.

However whilst this approach can be effective it really misses out on the attraction of fishing a float in such lovely surroundings. For those that are prepared to wield the long pole the ability to place your bait accurately and close to the lilies in some pegs will bring rewards. But this approach is not for the faint hearted, and strong elastic and an element of luck is required to steer the fish away from the lilies! Fishing the length of the float over depth is normally best. Strong elastic is required, maybe 10-12's with a puller kit to get the fish out safely.

It is always worth casting tight to any gaps in the lilies on the top of the shallow bar, which can be a good approach in summer when the water is warmer.

I have found worm to be an excellent bait I have found that at certain times of the year alternatives are sometimes required as small perch can be a nuisance. Pellets and corn good backups in summer. Loose fed maggots and casters using the waggler is the best approach for the silver fish.

There are times however when Alders will just shut up shop and clear bright days coupled with the clear water can sometimes make for hard going. When conditions are like this making the effort to fish early morning or late evening can be more productive.



This is the place to escape from the hustle and bustle of Willows, and if you want some peace and quiet in stunning surroundings this is the lake for you. Quite often you may see Willows opposite crowded with anglers while you will have the Alders to yourself!

## THE GRANNOM AT NEWBURY

By Martin Strike

Our quarterly dip into the 145-year history of NAA brings to the surface an article from the 9<sup>th</sup> May 1891 issue of *'The Field, the Country Gentleman's Newspaper'*, a weekly paper first published in 1853 and is still running today as the monthly magazine *'The Field'*.



The Grannom is a small sedge, or caddis, which hatches in astounding numbers for ten days or so in Spring, causing great excitement to fish and fly fishermen alike. Trout in particular gorge on the swarms that hatch in April particularly on chalk streams and rain-fed rivers, and the use of an artificial fly that emulates a single Grannom means that even the least skilled angler is likely to catch during one of the hatches on what is known rather unkindly as a 'Duffer's Day'.

May 9, 1891.—No. 2,002.

THE FIELD, THE COUNTRY GENTLEMAN'S NEWSPAPER.

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### THE GRANNOM AT NEWBURY

The Kennet and Lambourne, especially those portions that are under the jurisdiction of the Newbury & District Angling Association, are generally well-stocked with Grannom in their season, and, as the fly has been a little late this year, the steady old frequenters of the Swan, near the bridge, who went down for the opening on May 1, found themselves at the beginning of a remarkable hatch of that insect. For many years past the Grannom has been as disappointment in Berkshire as in Hampshire, and though it has swarmed more or less in its season, very little sport has been produced by the imitations that have been presented to the trout. On Friday and Saturday last they were, however, some red-letter hours enjoyed in that splendid bit of the Kennet that is rented by Mrs Baxter, independently of the Association water, and is let to her by two or three "rods" – familiar and pleasant faces that one may make sure of seeing in the fisherman's sanctum of the Swan at the opening of every season, during Mayfly time, and at odd periods during the remainder of the summer. One gentleman on May 1, which was rough and blustering, had, besides

some losses, two brace of trout that weighed nearly 12lb, and that they were in splendid condition. On the day succeeding he had almost identical luck, and other anglers enjoyed sport, one of them deploring the loss of a fish that was generally put down as 5lb or 6lb, and which broke its hold after an exciting spell of play. On Monday afternoon the Grannom was so thick that it swarmed in through the windows of the railway carriage at Theale, and on coming on to the Lambourn stream I found the water, from the Swan garden up to the railway bridge, in a boil with the splashing of fish. It was altogether a false rise as far as the trout were concerned. The big ones did not seem to be moving at all, but the half-pounders were plopping up in scores after the dancing insects. It was one of those perplexing and maddening times when the angler is in danger of losing nerve through an embarrassment of riches. After hooking, landing and returning a few half-pounders, I gave up fishing coming (as I found quite rightly) to the conclusion that the big fish were not



to be coaxed. Walking with a friend down to Mrs Baxter's length, I found the most fortunate of a trio of anglers in the middle of the stream laying siege to a fish with the pertinacity of an invader that makes siege determined to persevere until the fortress is taken. But though fishing dry with a pretty large Grannom (the same fly, in fact, with which he had taken the big fish), the trout refused his fly steadily. It was not put down by it, and for twenty minutes went on rising. The angler then waded out of the stream, remarking that it was very hard to leave a fish that was rising in that way; and we encouraged him to try again, pointing out that the fish was apparently meaning business, and was still rising to the Grannom. There upon our friend

returned to his position in the bed of the Kennet, and after five minutes careful casting hooked and killed his fish, a lovely Kennet trout of two pounds and a quarter, and literally chock-full of natural fly. On the following morning, I myself, in the course of a quarter of an hour, killed a brace of pound fish that seemed almost as broad as they were long, after four or five days gorge on the insect. Dace were also taking the fly madly, and such a swarm of Grannom I never saw in my life. It came up before the light easterly breeze in perfect clouds, The rise, however, of fish only lasted about half an hour, and the fly about midday also started to disappear. Anglers who are fond of strolling down to the water about noon, thinking there is time enough for a rise, may take this hint from me, for the rise had come and was over before half-past ten o'clock, and anyone coming down half an hour after that would have supposed that it was a perfectly blank day. Whether the fish came on again in the afternoon, I cannot say, but it looked very much to me as if that was the last of the Grannom for 1891. The subscribers to the Newbury and District Angling Association are full of hope this year, from this auspicious commencement of the season, and if the Lambourn itself did not yield as many fish to the Grannom as did the Kennet, the river was at periods literally alive with trout; and I learned from Mr Dorant that since last season as many as ninety brace of sizeable trout have been put into this mile of stream. This part of the Lambourn, always capricious, on account of the peculiarity of its springs in the upper water, has suffered a good deal from the incipient water famine which is still causing anxiety, but should there should be high doings here when the Mayfly comes, and afterwards a small sedge in the evening is a very killing fly. The water is well watched, but the fish, like all the inhabitants of clear streams of this kind, require careful fishing if a basket is to be made. The study of the which I was able to indulge in on the Kennet convinces me that Mr Halford, in his "Dry Fly Fishing," is right in the remarks he makes about the Grannom in his chapter on the selection of flies; and I never before witnessed such a strong illustration of the description he gives of the activity of the trout when the Grannom really is up. The appearance, as he says, is exactly like that of a trout bulging about after larvae. The Lambourn would be immensely benefitted if one or two waterfalls could be made in the meadows between the railway and the Swan.

*Rambler.*



# Thatcham Reed Bed SSSI – a Beginners Introduction

By Martin Strike

You may well be aware that since 2002, Thatcham Reed Beds has been designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), but why should this be, and what does it mean for NAA and the management of the waters within it?

Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) can cover any part of the UK including that covered by freshwater that are considered by Natural England (NE) to be the finest sites for wildlife and natural features.

Having been first introduced in 1949, NE today administers over 4,100 SSSI's in England alone covering over 4,200 square miles, or 12%, of the total landmass. These areas represent our best wildlife and geographical sites supporting plants and animals that find it difficult to survive elsewhere in the countryside. Under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981, SSSI status gives an area higher levels of protection than other designations such as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) for example.



NE's objective is to achieve 'favourable condition' status for all SSSI's. This means that their habitats and features are in a healthy state and are being conserved by appropriate management. The owners of land designated as a SSSI are legally obliged to manage the site within any restriction that NE may impose to conserve its special features or face substantial penalties.

## **Why Thatcham Reed Beds (TRB) are considered an SSSI**



TRB is important nationally for its extensive reedbed, species rich alder woodland and fen habitats. The latter supports the Desmoulin's whorl snail, named in honour of the early-19th-century French naturalist Charles des Moulins. This snail reaches a shell height of only 2.6mm – you would barely notice this diminutive mollusc climbing the side of your bivvy – but is of national and European importance and is listed on the British Red Data Book. TRB also has a range of tall wetland plants and Alder floodplain woodland that is rare

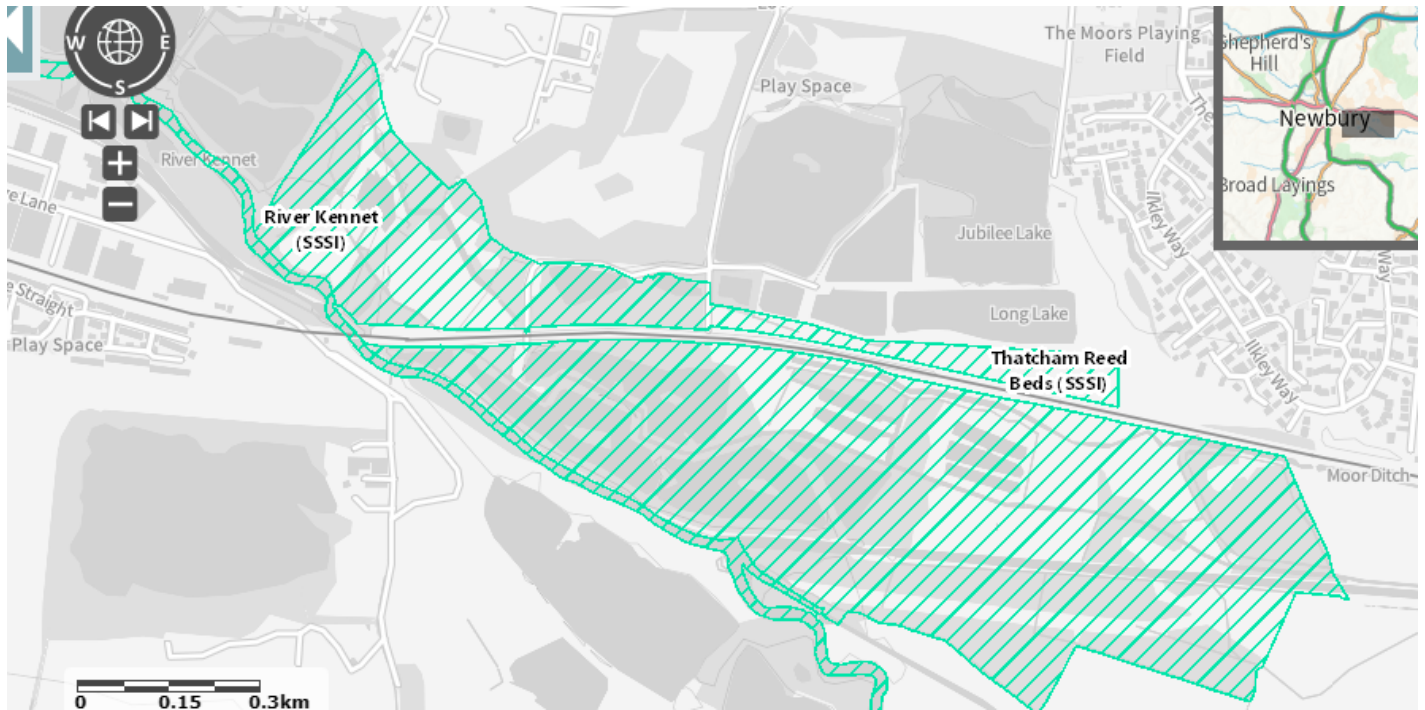
throughout Europe and a priority for conservation purposes. Our neighbours at the Discovery Centre recorded 61 different bird species in 2022 including the nationally-rare Cetti's warbler and the site is of county importance for its moths, such as the dentated pug and obscure wainscot (we've not made them up!) as well as a number of rare flies.

## **What part of our venues are SSSI?**

TRB SSSI covers a stretch of the K&A Canal from Hambridge Road through the Widmead lock and land immediately beyond the north bank, as well as the land behind Alders & Warwicks to the railway line. Four of our lakes fall within the SSSI boundary. ie: Collins, Dobsons, Knotts and Dixons. Natural England visit SSSIs or appoint expert contractors carry out



condition assessments if they (1) consider it necessary or (2) the condition of the site may change.



### **How does being a SSSI affect our management of land contained within it?**

Though NAA may own much of the land, there are many management activities which it cannot undertake without first seeking and receiving consent. These include mowing or other methods of cutting vegetation, application of pesticides and herbicides, burning of vegetation, and cutting or removal of any tree or shrub. It is also very prescriptive in stocking and moving of fish, both in terms of species and numbers. For example, carp are not considered a native species so the numbers NE will allow in a designated SSSI lake are very limited, and certainly less than NAA would probably like. Furthermore, bream (though native) are considered to have the potential to damage the lakebed to the detriment of other species of wildlife if present in sufficient numbers, so stocking of bream is tightly controlled. NE can take enforcement action (including unlimited fines) against land owners such as ourselves that they consider have intentionally or recklessly damaged an SSSI, destroyed any of the features of special interest, disturbed wildlife for which the site was notified or carried out listed operations without consent. Such restrictions mean that we can't have any permanent structures, such as portaloo in the Widmead car park like we have at Bellwood and Rawlings.

### **Our Management Plan with Natural England**

Every 5 years, a Management Plan is agreed between NE and NAA detailing what we can and cannot do without additional consent.

### **How are Thatcham Reed Beds currently rated by NE:**

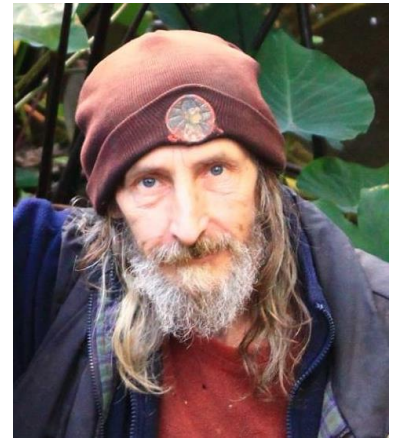
As at January 2023, Natural England rated 49% of TRB to be 'Favourable' and 51% 'Unfavourable – recovering.' The agreed Management Plan will take into account any actions that NAA can take to increase the proportion of 'favourable' score.

The current Plan is due to be renewed in 2023. The restrictions of Covid 19 and the level of resources available to NE restricted the number of planned reviews that took place in the last 5 years, and we are now entering into a period of consultation with NE about the contents of the next plan. We aim to publicise the main elements of this when agreed to the membership. However, the consultation process can be a long drawn-out procedure...

# INTRODUCING...KEN HAINES

If you've fished NAA waters, particularly around the river or lakes at Widmead, chances are you will have met Ken Haines. As bailiff, and one of the club's great characters, we thought we'd ask 'Catweazle' to tell us a bit more about him. He kindly invited the editor into his home and – wow – what a guy.

Ken's earliest fishing memories are as a 5 year-old catching minnows with his Dad. 'My brother and I were a bit of a handful,' he admits. 'I shot him, you know – with an air rifle, after he tried to stab me! That was the sort of kids we were.' They both survived, and as he grew older, Ken started fishing the Kennet, then entering- and winning - matches, mostly for Thatcham AA, even becoming their Match Secretary for a number of years.



Ken showed me this picture of himself in 1976 with the barbel. This led on to another of his many anecdotes: 'In the late '90's I caught a 10lb 4 barbel from the wharf bridge on a 2lb bottom and size 16 hook while fishing for roach,' he told me. 'Took forever to land. Next day I hooked an even bigger one, but had forgotten my big landing net, so only had a small pan one. My brother reached out with it and in the struggle to get it in, knocked the hook out, and it was gone. My brother - probably remembering the air rifle shot - jumped back in alarm, 'I thought you were going to knock me out,' he said when the anticipated retribution never came.

"Nah," I said. "Shit happens."

This gentler side is reflected in Ken's passion for wildlife. His house, or 'zoo' as he calls it, is stacked floor to ceiling in tanks and cages, housing thousands of amphibians, reptiles, insects and spiders. From giant stick insects and a large boa, to the baby axolotls and salamanders which he breeds and sells as a side line, they make quite a site. We talk terrapins. Those who fish Dixons will know of 'Terry', but did you know there's also another in Dobsons. 'A different species,' Ken tells me, rattling off their Latin names. For someone diagnosed with dyslexia he has an amazing ability to retain information. But it's not all been fun and games. 'I've been stung twice by scorpions and bitten by an adder in 1971,' he tells me nonchalantly. 'I'll always remember the day as we were going to see Rod Stewart at the Reading Festival, but instead I ended up in Newbury Hospital while they waited for the antivenom to be delivered. In the end it felt a bit like a bad cold - I went hot, then cold a few times and came out of it.'

He might not have seen Rob Stewart that day, but as a huge fan of prog rock, Ken saw all of his favourite acts – Cream, Black Sabbath, Frank Zappa, Emerson, Lake & Palmer, the early ACDC and many more. 'I still have over 1,000 albums' he says. I see them all caringly stacked between yet more tanks of insects. His work as a courier rider for the stars meant he met a lot of his heroes. 'I met Lemmy,' he tells me, 'and Des O'Connor invited me into his outside pool once, but I told him my motorbike trousers would make the water all greasy. Oh, and I was recognised by Rick Parfitt who came over to say hello and have a chat when he saw me having a drink outside a pub with my mates. You should have seen the look on their faces!'



*Terry the terrapin - Dixons*



1 *some of Ken's baby axolotls*

But it's wildlife that is closest to Ken's heart. 'I've only fished four times this season, most of my trips when I'm bailiffing are an excuse for my bird watching. I get to see all sorts, but amazingly, I've never seen an otter on Newbury waters. When I asked what he considers his best fish from NAA waters since he re-joined 3 years ago, he says 'A 14 ounce dace. The 2lb+ roach from the past have all gone thanks to the black devils (cormorants), but it's still worthwhile trotting on the Kennet behind Knotts and Collins. There's a good pace there and a uniform depth of around 5ft. I also used to

love tench fishing, but the carp seem to bully them out the way for food.'

You may well see Ken removing crayfish from our waters. At Bellwood he can pull out 20lb in a day in summer. He started when they first became a problem in the early 2000's. Ken asked me to pass on the following requests to members:

- If you find a crayfish trap in your swim, I don't mind if you move it if it's in your way, but please, please put it back as you found it when you leave.
- If you hook a trap, please don't cut the netting to get the hook out. A hook costs pennies, a new net much more.
- The nets are pegged to the bank by strings. Please don't untie them.
- 

It's a fair cop, Ken. Thanks for all you do with the bailiffing and crayfishing, and if anyone wants to buy a baby salamander, we'll know who to ask!

## SPRING FORWARD/FALL BACK

By Martin Strike

Ah, Spring. We may lose the rivers to the close season, but as the hours of daylight increase many anglers start coming out of hibernation after the long, chilly winter. But Mother Nature hasn't done quite with us yet. The weather can turn faster than a barracuda on a motor-pike and a glorious sunny afternoon revert to sub-tundra temperatures. But as well as making us wish we'd kept those long johns on after all, what does Spring's sun, rain and wind do for fish?



All coarse fish species are cold-blooded so can't regulate their body temperature. This means that they're forced to adjust their metabolisms to the temperature of the water around them. In colder waters, fish tend to slow down, and generally need less food to support themselves. If lure fishing, you rate of retrieve should reflect this. In warmer waters, fish are much more active, and as a result, need significantly more food to survive so are more likely to chase a faster-moving meal.

A sudden, hard overnight frost is likely to put fish off the feed. On such days they are most likely to take an angler's baits in the mid to late afternoon when they have warmed up a fraction, or acclimatised. Look for the deepest swims to fish in frosty conditions, but be aware that the warmest zones may not be on the bottom. Experiment with depths until, hopefully, you find where the fish are on that day. This said, Spring sun hitting the water may warm up the top layers and shallower marginal areas of a fishery. Carp for example, love to be warm, being prepared to move to take advantage of a higher water temperature as little as half a degree in cooler conditions, and on such mornings carp anticipating direct sunlight often head for shallow areas where the sunlight will warm the water much faster than other parts of the lake, even if there are thermal layers within it. Under gloomier skies, they'll generally see it out in the warmer thermal layers of the lake. Thermal layers will be present in most lakes, especially the deeper, high water volume lakes. The depths of these thermal layers will also vary depending on the depth of the water and the temperature of the air. Shallow water pools may be devoid of its thermal layer, but if it receives direct sunlight it will warm up much quicker than other parts of the lake.

Target these shallow areas in the afternoon when fish may have moved into them to feed – but do remember that water that is closer to the surface will drop quickest along with the air temperature in the evenings, sending fish back to the deeper areas where temperatures are more consistent.



But mostly, Spring brings slow season changes, with water temperatures mainly influenced by the amount of sunlight each lake receives over an extended period of time. These changes don't have a tremendous impact on water temperature in the short term. If the weather suddenly goes cold it doesn't necessarily mean the water temperature will immediately drop. The air temperature will often have to stabilize and remain cold for a few days in order for it to transpose through to the entire water depths. Therefore, the deeper a lake, the more time it takes to change the water temperature. So even if you're fishing a small pond, a passing cloud won't realistically change the temperature by a significant amount, but what can drastically change the water temperature, however, are wind and rainfall.

The power of the wind (wind chill) can reduce air temperature by 10 degrees C or more. Water that is directly wind-driven will also become colder faster than water that is wind-protected. It's also not the wind itself that's important - remember that fish cannot actually feel the wind below the surface of the water - but the effect it has on the water and therefore the fish. These include changing the light level, the oxygen content and the temperature of the water. Northerly or easterly winds are bad at this time of year, especially if they carry rain. They will send air (and water) temperatures tumbling, putting the fish off their food and making fishing uncomfortable for the angler. In these conditions try to find a sheltered swim with

the wind on your back. Never fish at the end of a pool with a north or east wind blowing directly in your face. Water temperatures here will be the lowest in the lake, with any chop on the water adding to the speed in which warmth is lost from the water. However the surface agitation caused by a warm wind may bring fish closer to the surface to feed.

A warm south-westerly springing up will almost certainly have a beneficial effect if the water is cold due to a previous cold snap. Fishing into the wind would then be a good bet. In hot weather a breeze may have the effect of both increasing the oxygen content of the water and lowering the temperature. This is usually beneficial, as is the reduced light which gives the fish confidence to feed unmolested from predators. So fishing into the wind in these circumstances can also be good. Conversely, a cold wind after a warm spell will have the opposite effect. Here, you're likely to do better to fish with the wind at your back.

The strength of the wind is also important. For example, to a degree the stronger the wind blows the better carp seem to feed. This is because the stronger the wind the more food items will be pushed in the direction



of the wind by the current. This is one of the reasons why fishing with the wind into your face can be more productive. It has been stated that an undertow current will carry suspended food particles back in the opposite direction, though many think this unlikely to be of real significance. However features within the lake such as weeds, gravel bars, varying depths, etc, will help to hold food items from travelling back with the undertow.

To confuse the picture further, different species of fish prefer differing light, oxygen and temperature levels. The optimum water temperature for carp feeding is around seven degrees centigrade. The more the water temperature drops below this level the more they tend to slow down and prefer to shoal up in warmer areas or any thermal layers present in the water.

As a very broad generalisation, if the wind improves water conditions towards that what a particular species prefers there'll be a positive effect on the fish feeding and vice versa.

When it rains, fresh water pours into a body of water, changing its temperature. This change can happen quickly, especially if we're talking about a small body of water. Rain can be good for fishing if it is mild and warm and brought from either a westerly or south-westerly direction. In addition, rainfall changes the turbidity (clarity) of the water and can wash large quantities of nutrients into it. When all these changes occur at the same time, they can significantly change the way resident fish behave – take the K&A canal Guyers Bridge for example, where run-off from the fields can make the stretch below the bridge as thick as a rugby player, while the water above it can be as clear as a vodka Martini making it harder to tempt fish from their hidey-holes. Fishing is generally considered easier in cloudier water, where a smelly bait is likely to be more attractive. In clear water, the visibility of say sweetcorn, bread or a day-glo boilie might be better options. For the most part, perch and pike are sight hunters. When they can't see, they'll rely more on their lateral line to find prey. This is where fast action lures can come in handy. The flutter these lures make is the perfect attention-grabber in such situations.

You can see that a degree in meteorology may be a useful attribute to Springtime anglers watercraft. For example, you might then know that a sudden spell of super-clear weather before a warm front means it will be raining in a few hours, which might sway your tactics or even whether to fish at all. This air clarity is due to dry polar air which travels before a warm 'n wet front arrives. You may also learn that the length of aeroplane trails (also known as contrails) indicate weather. Short ones show dry air as the trail evaporates quickly, while longer trails mean moister air and hence a weather front approaching.

But if like me, you're more likely to be mistaken for Dannii Minogue in the street than take a BA in weather forecasting, then why not rely on some of the old wives tales? (or husbands tales – NAA is nothing if not inclusive). But is there any truth in them?

*Mackerel sky and mares' tails make tall ships carry low sails.* **TRUE** The build-up of cirrocumulus cloud (mackerel sky) can often indicate a front approaching, carrying wind and rain.

*When the wind is in the west, the fish bite the best. When the wind is in the south, it blows the bait into the fishes mouth. When the wind is in the east, the fishes bite the least. When the wind is in the north the fish don't go forth.* **TRUE** South and west winds are warm and mild. North and east are cold and put coarse fish off the feed and make them lethargic.

*If cows lay down in the fields, it's going to rain.* **RUBBISH** They're just tired and chewing the cud, or just trying to confuse anglers!

*Give a man a fish and he will eat for a day. Teach a man to fish and he will sit on the bank all day drinking beer\*.*  
**NEVER A TRUER WORD SPOKEN**

\* Thanks to Newbury's Town Crier, Brian Sylvester for these words of wisdom.

But that's not the prevalent water temperatures that can affect fish. In order to breathe, fish rely on their gills to extract dissolved oxygen from the water. It so happens that the amount of dissolved oxygen in the water depends almost exclusively on the surrounding temperature. As a rule of thumb, colder waters have more dissolved oxygen, and warmer waters have less.

So, what's the big deal? Simply put, each fish species has a minimum water temperature under which it won't feed, and a maximum water temperature over which it can't breathe. As a fisherman, you don't need to know the exact numbers. However, knowing why and when water temperatures change can make all the difference when trying to catch fish.

The volatility of our warming Spring temperatures can bring storms. Fishing ahead of an upcoming storm can produce incredible results. There are countless stories of fishermen cashing in on the feeding frenzy while other anglers are sitting at home watching recorded episodes of *Homes Under the Hammer*. Still, as much as it would be cool to be the star of "Twister 2.0," no fish is worth losing your head over. Read the weather and fishing reports carefully, and give yourself a time cushion to leave the area in case you get held up. Excessively strong winds, like hurricane gale force winds, are not going to be enjoyable for anybody or anything.

Another fact of life at this time of year is that different fish species can suddenly switch off. This is not the time or place for a close season debate- but suffice to say that on waters that are open all year round, the fish will inevitably spawn at some stage. You can't blame them for not wanting to eat- after all, you don't munch a peanut butter sandwich when you're doing the business (do you?) so why would they? and even if you could catch them, it's best to move on to something else!

The mercy here is that coarse fish species spawn at such different times. Pike on shallow venues can be done and dusted by March, while tench can still carry eggs into late June. Better take a Fish Biology degree along with the meteorology one.

As Spring develops, the margins finally start to come alive again. The basic reasons are simple- shallow areas



near the bank start to become rich in natural food, while cover also grows back to afford fish more security. One great tip here on any water is to get stuck into spots beyond the usual pegs and hit the spots where fish feel safe and keep it simple with just one rod, rather than tackling those where everybody else fishes.

As you can see it's very complicated, but I hope you get the general picture. Experienced anglers still get it wrong sometimes, but if you understand the reasons behind the effect you'll get it right more and more often.

# IMPROVE YOUR COARSE FISHING

*How to fish in the city:*  
**NEWBURY**


I was supposed to showcase the urban angling on offer in Basildon, Essex. However, the weather decided to freeze all the park lakes! A last-minute change of plan saw me tackle the waterways of historic Berkshire town of Newbury

Words Tom Humphreys. Photography Tom Humphreys & Laurence Beaumont

**W**ITH the heavy frosts blanketing the country scuppering my initial plans of a trip over to Essex, Newbury, a charming little town nestled in the heart of rural England, is a veritable anglers' paradise. A quick glance on Google Earth (the anglers' secret weapon) shows a town dominated by waterways. From the sparkling waters of the Lambourn and Kennet, to the tranquil gravel pits belonging to the local angling clubs, there's no shortage of prime fishing opportunities. Both rivers have had their fair share of pollution incidents over recent decades. Thankfully, however, by all accounts, they are on the up again with brown trout, grayling and dace in abundance. While the town itself no longer has its own tackle shop, anglers are well served by the nearby Thatcham Angling Centre – an open and friendly independent tackle shop with an eye-catching retro-looking frontage. Tony, the owner of the shop, is a fountain of angling knowledge and certainly possesses the intel required to spend a fantastic day fishing the waters of this bustling town.

*"Welcomed by a glorious sunrise I spent a delightful morning trotting maggots in search of an elusive grayling"*

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We know most NAA members don't need any help in sharpening their skills, but the Editor clearly does, being a subscriber to Improve your Coarse Fishing magazine.

One of the features in a recent issue included a write up on fishing in the 'city' of Newbury, giving the club and Thatcham Angling a healthy mention. While they did not choose to fish any NAA venues, it provided an interesting article.

Highlight had to be a photo of an angler walking past Donnington Castle, one of the highest points in the area and probably the furthest from any fishable water.



## THAT'S ALL FOLKS!

As ever, we hope you enjoyed this issue. We do try and provide a mix of topics regarding our great sport and amazing range of venues. Should you wish to make comment (or even better, submit something for publication, please do so at [comms@newburyangling.org.uk](mailto:comms@newburyangling.org.uk)

Clubmate will make the purchasing of memberships and guest tickets easier for us all in due course, but again please bear with us and them while we make the change. PLEASE DON'T FORGET TO SEND US YOUR EMAIL ADDRESS TO ENSURE SMOOTH MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL.

We look forward to seeing you all at the AGM on 4<sup>th</sup> May.

**The Editor**