

Another Successful Fly Fishing Course at Letton Court

Our first one day fly fishing and casting course of the year took place at Letton Court on 28th May. The course, supported by professional GAIA casting instructors & guides led by Mark Roberts was well received by 30 participants including 14 juniors and 2 ladies. There were over 50 anglers in attendance. They were taught the finer points of casting during a morning session and after a BBQ lunch the afternoon provided them with an opportunity to practice what they had learned on the Letton beat under the watchful eyes of Mark and his team. Vision Fly Fishing and Sportfish provided a selection of tackle for viewing and demonstration and Jim Williamson, Brand Manager for Vision Fly Fishing demonstrated various casting techniques and lines during a 20 minute session after lunch. There was a demonstration of fly tying



by Geoff Franks and a sale of used tackle in aid of WSA project fund. Fishing equipment for the juniors was supplied by kind permission of of Monnow Rivers Association (www.monnow.org) and Letton Court was provided for the event by owner Brian Powell.

Our next courses will take place on Sat 23rd August 2014 at Whitney Court and by popular demand they will again include another free junior course. If you or your children are interested contact Mick O'Keefe on 07903480423 or Stuart Smith by phone 07789133263 or email at stuartsmith@wyesalmon.com

NRW Hatchery Consultation

The consultation period ended on 27th May and we now await the outcome. Both WSA and WUF made responses and we have picked some of the key phrases and paragraphs from each to highlight the differences in our positions. Submissions from WSA and WUF can be seen on their respective websites.

Q1: Do you agree or disagree with the definition of effectiveness used for the review and with the conclusion that there is little evidence available to demonstrate that mitigation and enhancement stocking is effective?

WUF said.... Agree absolutely....With the definition of effectiveness. There is more than enough evidence available showing how ineffective hatcheries are, especially for mitigation.

WSA said.... We disagree. There are many examples of where hatchery programmes can maintain genetic variability. The Spey Fishery Board in their recent report suggest the hatchery could in fact 'generate more than twice the number of returning fish as had been taken from the river for broodstock'. The NRW assumption that hatchery fish don't survive as well as wild fish is misleading.....although hatchery fish may not survive as well, overall their greater success means that 3-20 times more returning adults are produced from a batch of eggs taken into a hatchery than if they had been left in the wild.

NRW Hatchery Consultation Continued

Q2: Do you agree or disagree that there is enough evidence available to influence a substantial change to NRW's existing salmon stocking activity?

WUF said....Agree... provided the planned change is to cease salmonid stocking in any form (eg. including brown trout into SAC salmon rivers) and use the released funds to restore lost and damaged habitats, water quality and adjust exploitation to appropriate levels.



WSA said.... We agree there is sufficient evidence to influence NRW to continue support of the current River Wye mitigation stocking through the SNR program. Peter Gough, then of the Environment Agency Wales [EAW] in his 2011 report advocating a policy of 100% Catch & Release concluded 'The most recent assessment of the stock indicates that compliance with the conservation limit is very poor and the stock continues to be assessed as "at risk" with no evident trend of improvement. It is predicted to continue to remain "at risk" until at least 2015.

(Editors Note: CEFAS report 'Annual Assessment of Salmon Stocks and Fisheries in England and Wales 2012' states, Wye is likely to be still assessed as 'At Risk' in 2017. However, this is likely to slip again if the reported catch, upon which population count is based, falls this year.

Q3: Do you agree or disagree with our interpretation of the Habitats Directive as it may apply to all our own and third party salmon stocking on rivers designated under this legislation?

WUF said.... Agree with your interpretation. However, given that it is unacceptable to stock SAC Rivers because of the risk of damage, it surely must be unacceptable to stock any river for that very same reason.

WSA said....We disagree with your interpretation as it is only applicable where you have self sustaining populations of protected species. Salmon on the Wye achieve only 50% of their required conservation levels and should be assisted, until their future is secure.....we would suggest that stocking is a necessary part of the management of the SAC.

Q4: Do you agree or disagree that mitigation and enhancement stocking are not consistent with an Ecosystem Approach?

WUF said.... Agree We fully support the ecosystem approach and we believe that enhancement stocking is inconsistent with this.

WSA said.... We disagree.....stocking is consistent with an ecosystem approach. The ecology of a river involves a balance between water chemistry, fish and other wildlife....mitigation stocking practise on the Wye does not introduce fish but makes better use of native broodstock eggs, compensating for a problem [Elan Reservoirs] that cannot be removed. The current SNR programme has been demonstrated to achieve best practice in juvenile salmon survival to smolting and should be given time with its proposed DNA testing regime to prove this.

Q5: Do you agree or disagree that it would be more cost effective for NRW to improve habitats and thereby secure further reductions in mortality of wild fish as an alternative form of mitigation to stocking?

WUF said.... Partly agree: The loss of any area above reservoirs would be an absolute loss in a pristine river system which no amount of conservation work could replace. However, there are sites where natural barriers are partial and even total barriers; sites depleted by legal, regulated and unregulated abstraction and sites suffering from excessive predation where action could be taken to actually mitigate the effects of lost habitat at no great cost that are permanent and not part your statutory obligation. We whole heartedly agree that habitat restoration is one of a number of actions to reduce mortality of wild fish

WSA said.... We strongly disagree.....until you have a self sustaining population, habitat alone will be insufficient to kick start that population growth. This we believe to be due to the significant levels of predation existing. EA/CEFAS reports demonstrate the population of Wye salmon has remained largely unchanged over the past 15 years, despite numerous habitat initiatives carried out by the Wye and Usk Foundation throughout this time. The salmon's natural defence is absolute numbers, why else would hens lay circa 6000 eggs. Without these numbers losses to predation during juvenile growth, smolt runs and at sea will decimate the species.

Q6: Do you agree or disagree with the recommendation that NRW should bring all our own mitigation and enhancement stocking in Wales to an end and work with others to end all salmon stocking in Wales? What would you regard as a practical timetable for achieving this?

WUF said.... Agree +++ This should have happened decades ago. Once any remaining 'tank' fish have been released into the wild, closure should follow immediately. There should be no intermediate options either. To date we have felt that important fisheries decisions have often be attenuated or changed by those who shout loudest often conflicting with science and fact: we hope this consultation signals the end of this approach and a victory for science and common sense.

WSA said.... We register our strongest disagreement with this recommendation. We would point out the current SNR programme has received major support from all categories of the angling community joining forces to support the project both physically and financially in a way not achieved for many years. The angling community on the Wye has been blighted by political warfare, infighting and disengagement. This project has seen the development of real meaningful partnership in a common cause.

Q7: Do you agree or disagree that NRW should focus its efforts and resources on improvements to habitat? What mitigation and enhancement measures would you suggest NRW and partners adopt as an alternative to stocking?

WUF Said....Definitely Agree, the following actions should be considered where appropriate:

Barriers to migration – all should be removed, ease or fitted with passes. Repair and or restoration of damaged juvenile habitats – this often means just fencing but could



require in stream work. Wider catchment restoration e.g. forestry drain blocking, Pontbren type activity. Water quality improvements: Tackling acidification, farm diffuse pollution, siltation, phosphates, ammonia, pesticides metals etc. Water abstraction and Hydropower

However, all this investment could be wasted if the number of adult fish is insufficient to fill the catchment. Exploitation control is equally important. There simply is no justification for persisting with commercial netting or the exercise of other instruments if stocks are below NRW's calculated conservation targets. Equally, rod fishing effort and methods should be adjusted to be appropriate to numbers of returning adult salmon (and sea trout). Equally, predation and poaching needs better (i.e. some) management to take advantage of proposed improvement works.

WSA Said.... In our view why does it have to be either or? A true Ecosystems approach would suggest a combination is the best method for restoration of salmon. Habitat restoration is the ultimate goal but has been proven to be a very long-term aspiration, why not use salmon stocking to boost and maintain a viable population whilst environmental problems are being fixed. Mitigation stocking, including SNR projects should continue until their efficacy is proved by such measures as smolt counting or DNA testing and/or the salmon population is proven self sustaining.

Q8: Do you agree or disagree that NRW should reduce its hatchery capacity and investigate the feasibility of adapting the Cynrig facility to develop a broad-based freshwater and fisheries research facility for Wales, in partnership with other interested bodies? We would particularly welcome suggestions from relevant organisations about potential collaboration opportunities at Cynrig.

WUF Said.... Agree: WUF already has an interest as our joint Life + project set up Pearl mussel and crayfish rearing facilities. The building is a useful meeting place and the whole site could be designated as an education area (not in aquaculture perhaps!)

WSA Said.... We agree.....given the caveat that the SNR program with its volunteer funding and support could be integrated to the hatchery operation, Cynrig capacity could be reduced to circa 100,000 parr..... and developed with partners as a centre of ecology and angling education excellence.

We judge it important to maintain a fish rearing facility that has the capacity to produce juveniles in the event that a major pollution or disease event (e.g. Gyrodactylus)

The current SNR program is an excellent blue print of the type of partnership that could be forged with other angling organisations on the river. Receiving as it has major support from the angling community the project has seen real meaningful partnership in a common cause! The project in its first full year of operation has had little time for its success to be measured. We and many others believe success of this project is vital for the future of the river and would wish to explore with NRW and other bodies such as WSFOA its integration, funding and monitoring for a determinate time [such as one salmon life cycle] into the Cynrig operation.



Campaign to put More Salmon Rods on the River

Once again this season WSA are running our 'Get More Rods on the River'. For the third year running we are offering salmon anglers, with the kind permission of a number of owners, the opportunity to reacquaint themselves with the river by offering beats free specifically to

those who do not have regular fishing on the river. Take up this season has been slow,

we suspect as a result of the slow start to the season with fish few and far between. However we are now well into prime months of season and with catches improving now is the time to get a good bargain. Two anglers [see photos] fishing one of these beats on the upper river last week both ended the day with a brace of fine Wye 2SW fish.

The fishing is available to all WSA members and subscribers on a first come first served basis. You can subscribe to WSA online at www.wyesalmon.com/join us.html it costs £10, or by sending a cheque to Wye Salmon Association, Penyhil, Felindre, Brecon, Powys LD3 0SU. If you wish to take up the offer contact Stuart Smith on 07789133263 or by email to stuartsmith@wyesalmon.com



SNR Results Monitoring Fin Clipped Smolts....We need your help



Smolts from the second stocking of our our pond at Nant Gwyn are likely to return to the river as grilse this season, along with 2SW fish from the first stocking. In order to monitor the results of our efforts we need to establish if any of these grilse, 2SW fish are caught. They can be identified by the absence of an adipose fin in front of the tail, removed by EA staff at the parr stage [See photo]. If you catch such a fish we would ask you send details by to us, either by email to enquiries@wye-salmon.com or by mail to Penyhil, Felindre,

Brecon, Powys LD3 0SU or by phone to 07789133263. We need details of date and time of capture, where caught [Beat and pool if possible], length of fish from nose to fork of tail, bait used, water conditions and air temperature [approximate] and most importantly a photo showing missing fin. Any data collected will be passed onto SNR Team and EAW Scientists at the Cynrig Hatchery. Results will be posted on our website and in our newsletters later in the year. Last year only one fin clipped fish was reported, but we are hoping for more results this year. Thank you in anticipation.



SNR Ponds

As I am sure you are by now aware the river Wye Semi Natural Rearing pond project [SNR] continued through 2014, with the first pond at Nant Gwyn near Builth Wells being joined by a further 5 ponds at various locations. 49,000 parr were stocked to the ponds in November last year to grow on during winter ready for release this year.



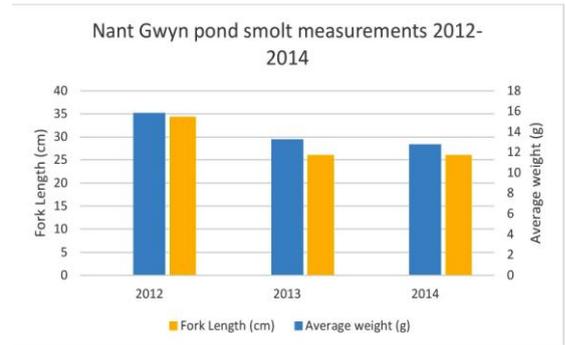
Fish in all of our ponds have been observed voluntarily migrating naturally for a few weeks now, along with other smolts in the river. The exception being Nant Gwyn, where migration is controlled by NRW Hatchery staff opening sluices when they are happy fish are ready to go. This was determined to be last week [3rd June] and the release of the strong healthy smolt population was managed by them, supported by WSA volunteers. Spring fed the waters in Nant Gwyn are significantly colder than the main river and this is believed to have delay smolting of these fish, about 10% of our total, by a week or two.

Sample of smolts monitored by NRW staff during Nant Gwyn

release were measured as slightly smaller than in previous years with a higher percentage of parr. The



parr were noted with red spots and red tinges to fins, a phenomenon never observed in tank reared fish. All the parr sampled showed the same characteristics and demonstrates feeding on natural invertebrates and developing camouflage/territorial colours. They were also showing the nice olive colours again not observed previously. The main point being that is what you find in the wild and it can't be bad to follow that blue print.



The current NRW hatchery and stocking review has caused further development of our project to be suspended until the outcome is known. However

juvenile salmon from 2013 season broodstock are currently being held in Cynrig hatchery and our expectation is that we will be allowed to run the SNR project for another year with this stock.

Whilst further development is pending WSA members will continue with site maintenance and ongoing support for our existing ponds in readiness for a further years operation.

The DNA sampling and monitoring planned to run alongside is at an advanced stage with results of the trial by a number of anglers and gillies in hand with NRW staff. We await their feedback on its roll out.

Angling Trust



Wye Salmon Association have very recently become Associate members of Angling Trust. AT campaign to protect and improve fishing stocks, fight predation, poaching, pollution, commercial over fishing and other threats to our sport. They promote the benefits of angling and help more people to go fishing responsibly. If they are to influence government policy and secure more funding for angling they need to grow not only their club and association membership but their individual members. The

more members the more power- ful their voice. We would encourage you to support them by becoming a member yourself. You can find out more about them and join at www.anglingtrust.com

Wye Salmon Association.

You can subscribe to WSA at <http://www.wyesalmon.com/join us.html> ,

Please join us and help support our aims.

