

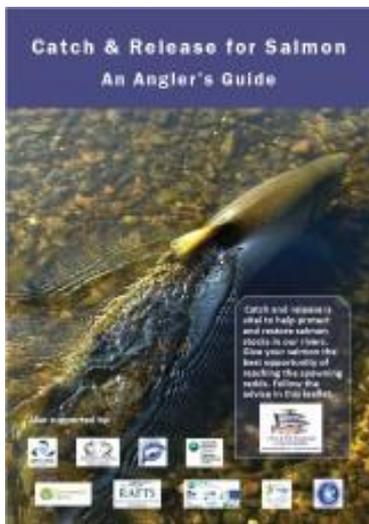
North East Fisheries Bulletin

August 2014



News

- Find out more about the work of Fisheries and the Environment Agency – read our [Blogs](#) to get an insight into what we do, and what your rod licence pays for! You can also follow us on Twitter @EnvAgencyYNE or on Facebook.
- Members of the public are a vital source of information in helping us to tackle crime and report incidents. **If you witness suspected pollution, illegal fishing, netting or fish movements call our 24 hour Freephone hotline on 0800 80 70 60.**
- The Environment Agency and Natural Resources Wales, with the angling and salmon conservation bodies and rivers trusts are urging salmon and sea trout anglers to follow the latest advice ‘**Catch and Release for Salmon – An Anglers Guide**’. More information can be found [here](#).



- It is a legal requirement that if you hold a licence to catch migratory fish (salmon and sea trout) you submit a return showing your fishing effort and catch for the season. This vital information helps the Environment Agency to manage, assess and report the status of, and conserve these iconic species. You can now submit your annual rod licence catch return online. You can also add and

save your catches through the season and then submit at the end (getting a copy for your records). The traditional paper submission will still be available although it is hoped that anglers will try the new service before submitting on the form through the post. The service can be found at: www.gov.uk/catch-return

- **Don't Cheat on Angling** - People found guilty of offences related to fishing are being named on the Angling Trust [website](#) as part of an on-going campaign to encourage all anglers to comply with the law.

Local Updates



Grayling being released

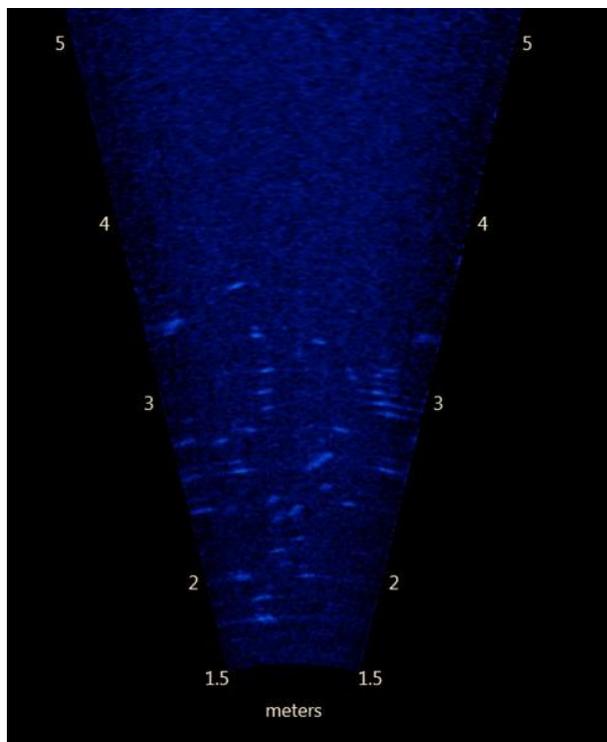
- In **July** we stocked 12,000 grayling fry into rivers across the region to help support river systems that are recovering from poor water quality, degraded habitat or where populations are restricted due to obstructions to fish passage, such as weirs. We introduced fish into the Langley Beck, the Pont and Blyth, Browney, Deerness and the Lumley Park Burn. In **August**, we stocked a further 10,000 grayling into the River Derwent. The grayling were reared at our national coarse fish farm, Calverton, which produces nearly 500,000 fish per year for stocking in England.

- Where possible, we carry out site visits with angling clubs to give advice on fishery management. Anyone seeking fishery management advice should contact the fisheries team:

Northumberland and Tyne - Chris Carter
chris.carter@environment-agency.gov.uk Tel. 0191 203 4154

Tees and Wear - Paul Frear
paul.frear@environment-agency.gov.uk Tel. 0191 203 4321

- We were recently contacted by two angling clubs where members were concerned about poor catches. We visited both sites and felt that water quality, poor habitat, predation and spawning stress were not the cause. Fisheries officers deployed ARIS (a kind of underwater camera) at one of the fisheries and were happy to find large numbers of fish, which was then supplied to the club and its members, easing concerns about lack of fish. At the other fishery the ARIS confirmed concerns that one species was dominating the fishery and the information gathered will assist fisheries officers and the club to manage the fishery. The ARIS is a very useful tool to complement other methods; however there are limits and specific conditions under which it can be used.



ARIS image shows a large shoal of fish

- If you have ideas for fishery improvement projects and need some advice about what to do, we may be able to help. We're happy to talk to you about funding opportunities; the type of work that we can help with; or we may be able to put you in touch with other people who have done similar projects.

Northumberland

- The Environment Agency is working with Northumberland Rivers Trust to deliver improvements to the rivers Pont and Blyth. This ambitious river restoration project is aimed at improving the ecological status of the river catchment through providing improved habitat. A large part of the project will involve opportunities for anglers and other people to become involved. We are also hoping to run a demonstration event of river habitat improvement techniques for interested people. If you are interested in knowing more about the project. Please get in touch with [Northumberland Rivers Trust](http://NorthumberlandRiversTrust.org).



Tyne

- Northumberland county council is working to cap holes in Hexham bridge footings, which were damaged by flooding earlier in the year. Fish were becoming stranded in these holes. Concerned anglers reported the stranded fish to us and we worked with the council to develop a plan to resolve the issue. The work will concrete over areas where fish were becoming stranded. It is hoped that a new fish pass will be installed on the structure next year.



Work to repair Hexham Bridge.

- The Tyne Anglers Alliance and the Environment Agency have worked together to install several fishing platforms at their fishery at Throckley Reigh. The fishery is also popular as it is a nature reserve. It is hoped that the improvement in facilities will encourage more people to take up fishing.



Throckley fishing platform.

Wear

- The fish pass has been installed at Freeman's Reach hydropower development. The pass will not be open for a couple of months as the fish counter is still being installed. We have been working closely with the developers to ensure that the scheme complies with very strict conditions.



Freemans Reach hydropower scheme

- We are working on plans to install a special eel pass at the Environment Agency river gauging weir at Chester-le-Street. This is the first obstruction on the river that migrating eel encounter. This work will mean the structure complies with the 'eel regulations', a legal requirement to minimise the impact of structures on this species. The new pass will be similar to the one shown below.



Eel passage tile

Tees

- In 2010 we stocked the River Leven with grayling fry, following improvements to habitat and fish passage. In July of this year an angler caught the first naturally recruited grayling from the Leven, indicating that our previous stock had gone on to breed successfully. This demonstrates how we can utilise stocking to restore river systems.



Young grayling from River Leven

- In July we released 30,000 sea trout fry to the Skelton Beck system. This is the second year of our Skelton Beck sea trout recovery programme. The beck was badly polluted with pig slurry in 2011 and fish were killed in over 8 miles of the watercourse. The Environment Agency successfully prosecuted the polluter and recovered costs to undertake a three year stocking plan. At one site on Chapel Beck in the middle of Guisborough, we observed several small trout, all thought to be from the previous years stocking and doing well. This was confirmed when our electric fishing survey team found small trout at sites that we had stocked, which had been hit by the pollution. The sea trout were reared at our Kielder Hatchery in Northumberland from broodstock obtained from the Yorkshire River Esk. The Environment Agency would particularly like to thank and acknowledge the support from the Yorkshire Esk Rivers Trust who allowed the broodstock to be taken from their river.
- A pollution incident which is under investigation killed an estimated 10,000 brown trout, grayling, bullhead, lamprey and minnow in the Aldbrough/Clow Beck system. Unfortunately, pinpointing the source of the pollution was hampered as the pollutant

passed through the area before we were able to respond. Had the incident been reported sooner, we may have been able react sooner. **If you see dead or dying fish, or suspected pollution, report it to our 24 hour Freephone hotline on 0800 80 70 60.**



Regular Features.

Fish Counts

- A total of **4,894** counts were recorded by the Framwellgate counter on the **Wear** at Durham during July. This brought the total for the year to the end of the month to 7,358 compared to a long-term average for the period of 6,943.
- The upstream count from the Fish Counter at Riding Mill on the **Tyne** in July was **5,793** making the count for January through to July 10,228.
- The counter on the **Tees** at the Tees Barrage recorded **111** fish during July, giving a total of 194 for the year to that date.
- The latest figures from all our fish counters can be found [here](#).

Fisheries Forum.

- The next Fisheries Forum meeting will be held on **19th September** in **Teesside**. This meeting is organised by the Angling Trust in consultation with the Environment Agency. If you haven't previously attended any of these meetings, they are an opportunity to discuss fisheries related issues with other interested people. If you would like to receive notification of the Fisheries Forum meetings, please contact John Cheyne at the Angling Trust. John.Cheyne@Anglingtrust.net

customer service line
03708 506 506

incident hotline
0800 80 70 60

floodline
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0845 988 1188

www.gov.uk/environment-agency

Special Feature- Smelt

The smelt is sometimes also referred to as 'sparling' and is similar to trout in general shape, with a rayless adipose fin. The mouth is large with strong teeth. The back is light olive green with a creamy white underside. When fresh, it has a strong smell of cucumber. Generally, they reach a maximum length of 30cm.

Smelt are a marine coastal species that enter rivers to breed. They gather in estuaries during winter and spawn in spring (Feb-April). They are regarded as a 'vulnerable' species and are regarded as locally rare despite previously being abundant.



Adult smelt captured from the Tyne estuary

In spring 2009, we successfully managed to catch adult smelt in the Tyne estuary. There was still a question whether they were spawning though. During spring 2014, officers from the Environment Agency carried out surveys to identify the spawning grounds of the once common estuary fish. Biologists timed their efforts to coincide with the once a year breeding cycle of these fish and searched for their spawning grounds in the Tyne estuary and the river Derwent.

By gently moving rocks and pebbles and catching sediment in a fine net it is possible to sample small areas of river bed with minimal disturbance.



Smelt egg with distinctive 'umbrella'

Eggs were found in a number of locations and positively identified. Now spawning grounds have been confirmed it will allow the EA to better protect this vulnerable species.

An added welcome surprise was the capture of glass eels, the first stage of eel development as they enter freshwater. It's unusual to capture glass eels in the North East of England. There is currently a lot of concern about eel populations throughout Europe and they are the subject of European legislation aimed at reversing this decline.



Glass eel captured during survey

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