



Institute of Fisheries Management

Nature and Fisheries

Following the temporary closure of fisheries due to Covid 19 many waters have seen a boom in wildlife that isn't normally so prominent due to the presence of anglers. We have received reports of Marsh harriers and Bitterns turning up for the first time on waters, as well as sightings of Ospreys, Hobby's and other wild birds* of interest to nature conservation. These birds sit alongside a list of other animals that have also been recorded on fisheries for the first time.

We are in nesting season now and many birds have taken the opportunity to nest in areas that would normally be occupied, or disturbed, by anglers in normal years, and as such anglers need to take extra care when turning up at those stillwaters which are resuming angling in England starting from tomorrow (13/05/2020).

Social distancing guidelines will ensure more space between anglers, and this will help to minimise disturbance to this flourishing wildlife. Please be extra vigilant to where you are putting your seatbox, rodbag and bivvy.

The recent warm weather has also led to fisheries reporting seeing carp and other fish spawning. This means that we will see fisheries supporting a large mass of eggs and fry in weed, reed beds and tree roots.

Due to the temporary cessation of angling at fisheries, some of them have become overgrown this spring which has reduced space for anglers. If you are considering undertaking aquatic or terrestrial vegetation management before anglers return in the coming days and weeks please consider nesting birds, and when removing aquatic weed please be aware that it may contain thousands of fish eggs and/or fry.

Again, if fisheries follow social distancing guidelines then it should be possible to leave pegs that are heavily weeded, for the time being, rather than pulling it out and risk losing eggs and fry. This could be a very good year for recruitment and it is always best to grow your own rather than spend money on buying fish for stocking, which comes with its own risks.

The return of angling to stillwaters, and some canals, in England will come under great public scrutiny in the coming days and weeks. Anglers and fishery managers rightly portray themselves as guardians of the bankside, let's all ensure that our actions show ourselves in a positive light and maintain the sports and fishery industries reputation.

If anyone would like any advice or guidance on activities then please get in touch with us at the IFM

*N. B Under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, a wild bird is defined as any bird of a species which is resident in or is a visitor to the European Territory of any member state in a wild state.

All birds, their nests and eggs are protected by law and it is thus an offence to:

- Intentionally kill, injure or take any wild bird.
- Intentionally take, damage or destroy the nest of any wild bird while it is in use or being built.
- Intentionally take or destroy the egg of any wild bird.
- Intentionally or recklessly kill any wild bird listed on Schedule 1 while it is nest building, or at a nest containing eggs or young, or disturb the dependent young of such a bird

Under the Salmon and Freshwater Fisheries Act 1975 subject to subsection (5), any person who, except in the exercise of a legal right to take materials from any waters, wilfully disturbs any spawn or spawning fish, or any bed, bank or shallow on which any spawn or spawning fish may be, shall be guilty of an offence.