

**COCKERMOUTH ANGLING ASSOCIATION A.G.M. 2012
CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**

ANGLING REPORT

- In the past season, on Cockermouth Angling Association Waters 35 salmon were caught on the Derwent, 19 of these were returned to the water. There were 10 sea trout caught on the Derwent and all of these were returned. On the Cocker there were 5 salmon taken, all of which were returned.
- For comparison figures for Cockermouth Angling Association for earlier years are as follows:

Season	Derwent Total Salmon	Derwent Salmon Returned	Derwent Sea Trout	Cocker Total Salmon
2002	58	?	?	3
2003	20	?	?	0
2004	93	30	26	8
2005	55	33	10	6
2006	61	27	17	7
2007	121	53	4	22
2008	64	23	1	25
2009	82	44	14	11
2010	72	38	27	11
2011	55	19	13	13

- CAA total fishing effort on the Derwent was about 563 sessions and for the Cocker it was about 82 sessions, so, on average, on the Derwent it takes 16 sessions per salmon and on the Cocker it's also about 16.5 sessions per salmon.
- Our reduced catch this year is in line with other Derwent catches this year. The figures for salmon catches I have to date are Workington AA 192 Castle Rods 102, Isel Fisheries 74, The Fitz 16, Woodhall 40 and the Cradles 24.
- The overall figures for the Derwent are very low and a number of reasons for this have been put forward. For example, the high water we had from mid-June onwards meant that salmon always had a clear run through into the lakes, or this is a follow on from the 2009 floods when we lost so many young fish /spawning salmon. However, similar very poor catches are a feature of almost all west coast rivers in Scotland. Catches on east coast rivers, by contrast have been reported to be good. Therefore it seems that our low catches must be the result of something that's happening at sea, rather than being river specific. You may have seen the editorial in the Trout & Salmon about research which shows that that smolts migrating to the feeding grounds are being affected by sea lice from salmon farms and this is being put forward as a major contributor to the decline in salmon returning to west coast rivers.
- Another pressure on fish stocks is predation by fish eating birds. We have seen huge increases in numbers of goosanders and cormorants on the Derwent in recent years. Adrian Mills photographed over 350 goosanders on the Soddy Gap nature reserve in February this year. We organised a survey of the river on 18th March and we counted

167 goosanders on the Derwent from Ouse Bridge to Workington. Each adult bird eats between 10 and 20 ounces of fish per day, and a breeding pair produces about 12 young each year. So it is possible to calculate that each year goosanders are removing about 52 tons of fish from the Derwent each year. If only 30% of fish are young salmon, then we can show that this is equivalent to the loss of 1300 adult salmon returning to the Derwent each year. If the figure is as high as 70% young salmon then the loss equates to 3100 adult fish! The 60 year average number of salmon caught on the Derwent with rod and line is just less than 1000 per year! CAA, along with Isel fishings and Keswick AA have already been granted licences to shoot to kill limited numbers of cormorants and goosanders, as an aid to scaring the birds. We are also in the process of applying for a similar licence on the Cocker. Thanks to Adrian Mills for getting the licence on the Derwent and to Mark Hastings for progressing things on the Cocker.

- As another method of trying to protect fish stocks from predation, some small "artificial reefs" are being created in Bassenthwaite Lake by the use of plastic devices formed from rods and spheres, known as "hedgehogs". We are also planning to put some of these into Cogra Moss and Eric Brown will say more about this in his report.
- Yet more disturbing news is that an American Signal Crayfish, approximately 4 or 5 years old, has been found at Iron Bridge. David Hackley came across the dead crayfish in October; he passed it on to John Moses who informed Chris Addy of EA. American signal crayfish have been found in small numbers in St Johns beck and have been trapped by EA and Keswick AA. That population was "surviving" but not thriving as water conditions were not ideal for them. This is the first time we have had a report of crayfish being that far down the main Derwent system. We have no idea how it came to be there, puncture marks in its side suggest that it had been killed by an otter or similar predator. We will follow this up with EA to carry out further surveys by trapping. If anyone comes across a crayfish it is important that this is reported to Chris Addy.
- At an Extraordinary General Meeting of Derwent rods, held on 18th June this year, it was decided to increase the number of local rods from 35 to 40. These were allocated according to the waiting list. At that meeting, members were informed of a serious shortfall in the number of Outside Rode we had let on the Derwent. The meeting was told that the Committee were considering putting a rule change to the AGM to allow Outside Rods to be let to people living outside the CA13 postal district, rather than just to people living outside of Cumberland. This is encompassed in a Notice of Motion which we will be voting on later on.

FURTHER CONSERVATION MEASURES AND BYE LAW CHANGES.

- The introduction of the bye-law for the Derwent system for a 2 salmon per day bag limit and a requirement that all hen fish to be returned in October has been delayed yet again. Apparently EA did not realize that their own rules had changed about advertising the changes and they found that they did not have the budget for this! I am following this up with Derwent Owners' Association and Sir Tony Cunningham MP. Meanwhile, we are observing the spirit of the bye-law, together with an annual bag limit of a maximum of 10 salmon killed per angler.

- You will know that DOA asked members to operate a 100% catch & release for all salmon for the last few weeks of the season because of the particularly low runs of fish.

HABITAT IMPROVEMENT AND RIVER BANK REPAIR WORK

- We have continued to be involved in the habitat improvement work through our membership of the Derwent Owners' Association. Work has continued on the fencing off stretches of river to regenerate vegetation to minimise erosion through stock grazing etc. Work has also been carried out on improving fish migration into some tributaries and on tree management to create dappled shade etc. CAA has again made our normal annual contribution of £500 to support this work.
- We have had some repair work carried out on the bottom end of Barn Dub where the river was starting to undermine the last couple of logs we had used to repair the bank.
- We also started to do some tree removal work at Lancaster Flat. One large tree has been removed and there are another 3 to take out but the wet weather meant that we could not let the contractor go onto the farmer's field this Summer. The work will be done as soon as conditions permit.
- We have put 3 seats along the river bank at Lady Boat, Lancaster Flat and Cherry Tree. Thanks to Adrian Mills for getting the seats made and to all those who took part in the working party to put them into place.
- A major challenge we have got this coming year is to carry out repairs to Wood Bottom where the path and river bank have been made quite dangerous because of undercutting and landslips. We have previously carried out some repair work ourselves but it is clear that the entire stretch now needs to be repaired by a contractor. I have already had EA and Natural England to look at the job to see what might be possible. The view is that it can be sorted by a combination of Log Piling and interlocking stone. The next stages are to get the job properly schemed out and costed before we apply for flood defence consent. This will take place as soon as the river conditions allow it. The plan is to apply for consent in January or February with the work being done in the Spring. The job will not come cheaply as it is a much bigger problem than Barn Dub or Lancaster Flat.
- Eric Brown has continued to organise maintenance work at Cogra Moss with his usual and renowned enthusiasm. Eric will be reporting on this later. I cannot overstate the amount of effort Eric puts into the management of Cogra Moss and we acknowledge the thanks due from all our members.
- We have had the usual programme of "bush and sieve cutting" to maintain access to stretches of fishing. The "Guest water" on the Derwent was completed by David Payne and our thanks are due to Frank Hope for most of the work done elsewhere.
- You will also have noticed new boundary signs have been fitted at key points on our Derwent fishing to mark the start and end of various stretches. Thanks are due to Mark Hastings and John Smith for organising this.

CAA WEB-SITE

- I'd like to thank John Smith for his work in maintaining the Cockermouth Angling Society web-site and would encourage members to visit it at cockermouthanglingassociation.co.uk

ANNUAL DINNER

- Held again at Hundith Hill last February with a good attendance. This year's Dinner Dance will be at the same venue on Saturday 2nd March 2013 and Sue will be sending out details in the New Year. It's a good night out so please try and support it again this year.

FINALLY, THANKS

- Are due to
 - Our Secretary Sue Moses who has carried out these duties with great efficiency during the year, ably assisted by husband John.
 - Our Treasurer Chris Harris and to Vice Chairman Peter Laws. Chris has told the Committee that he will be standing down as Treasurer after today, so I would like to say a special thanks for all the hard work he has done in this capacity for many years.
 - Eric Brown has continued to do absolutely Stirling work at Cogra Moss and I really do not know what the Association would do without him.
 - David Coulthard and Michael Cleeland for running the guest schemes. Michael has had a serious back operation this year but I am glad to report that this seems to have gone well and he is recovering steadily.
 - The whole of the Committee which has worked very well as a team.
 - I'd also like to thank Dave Smith for his on-going help and support.
 - And, finally the members, for generally fishing in a sporting manner, looking after new comers and giving the committee very few problems!

Jack Abernethy
5th December 2012