

**COCKERMOUTH ANGLING ASSOCIATION A.G.M. 2014
CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**

ANGLING REPORT

- In the past season, on Cockermouth Angling Association Waters 24 salmon were caught on the Derwent, 20 of these were returned to the water. There were 45 sea trout caught on the Derwent and all of these were returned. On the Cocker there were 15 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
2012	44	22	10	5
2013	34	17	6	15

- CAA total fishing effort on the Derwent was about 256 sessions and for the Cocker it was about 67 sessions, so, on average, on the Derwent it takes 10 -11 sessions per salmon and on the Cocker it's about 4 -5 sessions per salmon. Angling effort was less than half of what it had been in 2013 but, perhaps surprisingly considering the type of year we had, the catch rates per session were increased above last year.
- Overall it has been one of the poorest salmon seasons on record for many years and the trend on the Derwent system has been replicated on most of our British West Coast rivers. As I reported last year, the biggest problem seems to be a much reduced marine survival rate, with fewer and fewer adult fish returning to their native rivers.
- For interest the other figures I have for other Derwent beats so far is as follows (with last year's figures in brackets) are Workington AA 76 (226 in 2013), Castle Rods 77 (207), Isel Fisheries 33 (49), The Fitz 60 (108), Keswick 20 (5), Woodhall 14 (37), Cauldron 14 (12) and the Cradles 14 (10).
- It would seem likely, based upon the figures I have so far, that the River Derwent will struggle to meet its Conservation Limit this year. This is of very serious concern. The River Eden has failed to meet its Conservation Limit for two years in a row and I believe that this has thrown into question its status as an SAC site.

- The extra conservation measures we introduced at the start of the 2014 season (to encourage more catch and release) seem to have been heeded and release rates on the Derwent last season will be the highest on record at over 91%.
- On a more positive note, the numbers of sea trout in the Derwent system has been very good this season. So far, I have had reports of over 400 sea trout being caught, almost 100% of which were returned. There have been reports of sea trout of over 10 lb weights being caught, with good numbers in the 2 – 3 lb range as well. This seems to have been the best sea trout season for at least 10 years.
- There is virtually nothing that local angling associations can do about marine survival rates. This will take action at national and international level. However, we can influence the numbers of smolts which migrate from our rivers. The Derwent Owners Association, working with the EA and Natural England, has put together a River Derwent Conservation Action Plan, which is aimed at halting the decline and then improving the salmon numbers on the Derwent. The Plan includes
 - **Increasing catches and release rates**, and as reported above, we have had some success in this area this year.
 - **Decreasing predation by fish eating birds.** We again have a number of control licences for goosanders and cormorants on the Derwent. However, we are disappointed that the total numbers of birds we are authorised to shoot, as part of the bird scaring programme, remains very low. It is about 25 per year for the whole of the Derwent. DOA is having further talks with Natural England and the Angling Trust's Fisheries Management Advisors, in the next couple of months to see if there is any scope for increasing the numbers we are authorised to shoot during the smolt run in April/ May. Adrian Mills will also be organising our annual counts of goosanders etc. on the river from March onwards and we would appreciate additional help to make this as comprehensive a survey as possible. Anyone interested in helping should give contact details to Adrian.
 - **Doing more habitat improvement work.** CAA has supported the DOA's involvement with habitat improvement work over many years. One new angle being implemented this year is the creation of woody debris in the river channels. Traditionally, anglers were always very keen to remove any dead or fallen trees from the river but recently it had been shown that careful creation of woody debris in the river enhances juvenile fish stocks by providing them with refuge from predators etc. We hope to get involved in some suitable locations on our water.
 - John Moses has been very instrumental in getting approval for some additional work to be carried out on bank maintenance, tree planting etc. at Iron Bridge stream and the confluence of Eller Beck. This will be started in the early spring.
 - If you have not already visited the Rivers Restoration Project organised by the West Cumbria Rivers Trust at Whit Beck, then this is well worth a look. Over a km of meandering stream has been created to replace the 200m or so of canalised stream which ran from below the road bridge into the Cocker. Already there are salmon and trout redds in the new stream.
 - **Enhancement of Juvenile Fish Stocks.** The debate about the benefits of running hatcheries to enhance juvenile fish stocks has continued and I know there are many local anglers with very strong views in favour of hatcheries.

However, the fact remains that we have been told unequivocally by the EA that it will not authorise the operation of Keswick Hatchery to increase stocking in the Derwent. EA did look at an alternative way of moving juvenile fish from St Johns Beck (which held very high numbers) into the Glenderamackin (where numbers were reported to be low.) However, electro-fishing operations on the Glenderamackin this July showed that stocks of juveniles were already very good. The trial therefore did not go ahead.

- **Control of Poaching and Illegal Fishing.** There have been several reports of illegal netting etc. taking place on the Derwent this season. Can I emphasise the importance of reporting any intelligence or even suspicion of illegal activity on the river to the Emergency Helpline Number on your licence **0800 80 70 60.**
- This type of “multi-faceted” approach to trying to improve salmon stocks seems to be considered to be “best practice”. No single measure on its own can halt the decline, never mind improve things. DOA is keeping abreast of developments in other areas. There is a Conference on “North West Salmon Stocks –What Can We Do?” at Lancaster University on Saturday 6th December and there will be a report on this at the next DOA Meeting on 8th December. All are welcome to attend at 7.30 pm in Cockermonth Conservative Club.
- I reported last year that we had found a number of American Signal crayfish between Redkirk and Iron Bridge. I have had no further reports on our stretches but a number of crayfish were removed from the Fitz Beat last season.

COGRA MOSS

- Eric will be giving his Cogra Moss report later in the meeting and I don't want to steal any of his thunder of what will be Eric's final report. Last year, Eric gave us notice that this would be his last year looking after Cogra Moss. Many times before, I have paid tribute to the tremendous amount of work he has done on our behalf. The debt that this Association owes to Eric for this cannot be overstated. No-one can follow in his footsteps and do the job quite like Eric did. And I will return to this at a later stage.

CAA PRESIDENT

- I am delighted to say that Lord Egremont agreed to become President of Cockermonth Angling Association when I asked him about this earlier this year. I have met him at Cockermonth Castle when we discussed Cockermonth AA, Derwent Owners' Association and fishing on the Derwent in general. Subsequently, Lord Egremont demonstrated his support by his attendance at the DOA meeting and making a significant contribution to the habitat improvement fund.

WEB-SITE

- John Smith has continued to maintain the Cockermonth Angling Society web-site and I would encourage members to visit it at cockermonthanglingassociation.co.uk

ANNUAL DINNER

- Held again at Hundith Hill last March with a good attendance. This year's Dinner Dance will be at the same venue on Saturday 28th February 2015 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 John Smith and to Vice Chairman Peter Laws.
 - John Moses, Sean Wilson and Frank Hope for organising and carrying out river bank maintenance work throughout the season.
 - Mr & Mrs Fazackerley, wardens at Ingle Nook Caravan Park for selling day permits for Cogra Moss on our behalf.
 - David Coulthard and Michael Cleeland for running the guest schemes.
 - The whole of the Committee which has worked very well as a team, not only in meetings but also when it comes to getting things done on the river bank.
 - I'd also like to thank Dave Smith for his on-going help and support and I recognise the difficulties and uncertainties which he is facing in his role as Castle Fisheries Manager.
 - All of our members, for generally fishing in a sporting manner, looking after new comers and giving the committee very few problems!
 - **Finally, I would like to return to the subject of Eric Brown's retirement as our Stillwaters Secretary at Cogra Moss. You will have heard that "still waters run deep" well the same can be said of our Stillwaters Secretary. He has put his own particular style into the post and I cannot thank Eric enough for the hours and hours of work he has done at Cogra Moss, day in day out, week after week for many, many years. Eric has always minimised the difficulties and "general hassle" he has dealt with at Cogra. His reports have always been understated and he has just got on with what needed to be done to make Cogra the unique fishery that it is. In addition to his tremendous ethic of hard work and dedication, Eric has a wonderful sense of humour and this has also been greatly appreciated at many a Committee Meeting! Eric, on behalf of all our members and particularly those who fish at Cogra Moss, can I thank you again for all your efforts. They really are appreciated!**
 - **As a small gesture of that appreciation, it is my pleasure to present Eric with a few retirement gifts!**

Jack Abernethy
3rd December 2014