

LODDON FISHERIES AND CONSERVATION CONSULTATIVE

Agenda

DATE 24th November 2022
VENUE Swallowfield Village Hall
TIME 7.20 pm arrive for 7.30 pm start, 9.30 pm finish.

Apologies received from: Mike Wharmby, Bernie Gaynor, Lou Sykes

Item:

1. Welcome MM, RH changes to LFCC website 10 mins

. MM welcomed all. Introduce the speaker, David Solomon. RH gave a website update; this has had a make-over. Also changed hosting arrangement to save money. Catches of marked barbel can now be reported on website. Important to know where stocked barbel are and how they survive. Some marked fish from Swallowfield may turn up.

2. David Solomon fish and fisheries of the Thames

DS worked in fisheries for MAFF and as an independent consultant. Worked for EA, predecessors and utilities. Thought it would be useful to write it down as often gets lost. Supported work on Thames Salmon Scheme. Long history of fisheries on the Thames, at least as far back as a Saxon fish weir at Chelsea. Eel bucks were mainstay of fisheries. At least 50 on main river plus many of tributaries but none left. Supported business making traps. Angling has long history. Size limits imposed due to commercial fishery, subsequently applied to angling. Many fish were killed regardless of whether eaten or not. Even killed fish in matches until 20th century. Otters were fairly common and often shot. Barbel may be susceptible to otter predation. Restocking was important when fish were killed or taken commercially. Mostly transferred from other waters e.g. gravel pits. Thames trout were famous at one time due to size. Supported by restocking once weirs were built which had led to a loss of spawning grounds. More or less ended after WW2 and restocking program ended. Water quality not bad but tideway is still a problem. Fishery much improved though and matches are held on tideway. CSOs major concern. Now a lot of chemicals being found in waters under WFD, but there is no clear plan as to what to do about this. It does mean more failures under WFD. Perch are now much larger than in 1960s and large perch are more common. When killed in past years were generally small. Similar with chub and barbel – much larger now. Night fishing was banned u/s of Staines by TC until 1976.

There are large carp but no small ones so possibly not breeding much. Carp get in during floods.

If you want to know more, buy the book [A history of fish and fisheries of the River Thames by David J Solomon – Institute of Fisheries Management \(ifm.org.uk\)](#)

Ewelme Brook enters Thames at Benson. Clear stream with trout breeding in it. Huge numbers of *Gammarus*. Were commercial water cress beds, now museum/water cress demo. Small trout used to be common but far fewer now. Even common while watercress farm was working.

If you want to know more, buy the book *Our Stream - The story of the Ewelme /Benson Brook* by David J Solomon fluvialbooks.co.uk

3. Break 20 mins

4. White claw crayfish and signal crayfish DNA studies (IW and MM)

eDNA work has not been conclusive but preliminary results indicate WCC are present but signals may be intruding which poses a serious threat. Will run analysis again when new reagents purchased. UoR Loddon Observatory got missed in COVID so trying to get it going again. Held a meeting with UoR and SERT to examine ways this can develop and discuss common interests. Hope to get a trial study underway with AT water quality work, possibly using this as a pilot for a wider study. Also might be possible to integrate RiverFly data.

5. EA news and fish stocking Ade Bicknell 15 mins

Trying to get stocking of fish spread out but can only do this if clubs have a site permit. Arborleigh got bream, roach, chub, dace. RDAA Whistley Mill 300 barbel all marked with blue dye injection. Different position from last year. Also roach cub and dace. A few 2+barbel with 2 dye marks. See LFCC website for details of where the marks are.

Tices Meadow habitat improvement. Top of Blackwater. River overwide quite muddy, needed to put some gravel in 3 tonnes, created 2 riffles and took out an illegal dam. Needs a bit of shade removal. Put in some flow deflectors using materials on site.

Bassetts Mead National Rail want to extend culvert. Might get some mitigation work in exchange. Hope to protect and improve small stream which may act as a nursery. Fencing to prevent cattle poaching.

Hot summer led to low DO problems. Still getting some in November. Mild weather and late algal crashes. Still officially in drought, some headwater streams still dry.

Floating Pennywort on the Basingstoke Canal at Fleet 3rd time done boat

survey. Went in Oct and found lots of sprigs of FP. Could then spread into Fleet Pond. Ditto Whitewater. MM reported Mill Lane was originally wall to wall now not seen any last 2 visits ditto Wisteria Pond. Wyndham's more complicated due to presence of native plants which means no spraying.

6. SERT update Lou Sykes including chalk stream consultation

LS - Unfortunately I've become double booked for this evening having been on leave last week so am no longer able to attend. Here is a Loddon update that I would have given.

As a Partnership we are rebuilding relationships with Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust and hoping they will have a bigger presence in the area. We are also finding new ways of engaging with Reading University and are finding new stakeholders to engage with to grow the partnership.

We are holding a Natural Capital workshop in the Swallowfield Davies Room on the 13th December that will be looking at some map models that have been put together to help us prioritise areas of the catchment for protecting and enhancing through future project work. Anyone that would like further details, please get in touch.

Following the success of Loddon Rivers Week this year, we are hoping to make next year bigger and better. Dates for next years week are from Monday 18th - Sunday 24th September 2023. Should you want to host an event or know someone that would like to get involved, please put them in touch with me.

SERT currently have a Chalk Stream Consultation open in which we are hoping to map every chalk stream in our area. We are aware that the upper Loddon is a chalk stream and are looking for input from locals to show us and find chalk streams that are currently not categorised on a map. Here is the link to the consultation - please send this around with the minutes and ask people to contribute if they can: <https://www.southeastrivertrust.org/help-us-identify-all-south-east-chalk-streams/>

I am getting out and seeing areas of the catchment that are unfamiliar and have a couple of walk and talks out with members - if you'd like to help me get to know your patch or have ideas for projects - please get in touch and we can arrange a catch up online or in person.

The Emm Brook - Following the update from the last LFCC meeting, we have shifted the schedule for delivery. We are hoping to have new funding in place early in 2023 with the hope for delivery in 2024.

7. AOB – news from clubs etc

Rivers week Greywell Fen walk. Surveys on Emm Brook and Charvil. Found 1 barbel 68mm TL at Charvil so cannot have come from EA stocking. Charvil backwater had decent number of small fish. Emm Brook had good numbers of fish, more than last time. See LFCC website for more details.

Robert West BVCP has agreed to fund fisheries survey on Blackwater. Will try to also test turbidity so looking for clear tubing 2" diameter to make Secchi tubes.

8. Date of next meeting

9th Feb 2023. Club meeting where clubs can give presentations. LFCC have some FIP money available so need some ideas on how to spend it.

END