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# Fisheries Byelaws for Thames Region



We are the Environment Agency. It's our job to look after your environment and make it a better place – for you, and for future generations.

Your environment is the air you breathe, the water you drink and the ground you walk on. Working with business, Government, and society as a whole, we are making your environment cleaner and healthier.

The Environment Agency – out there, making your environment a better place.

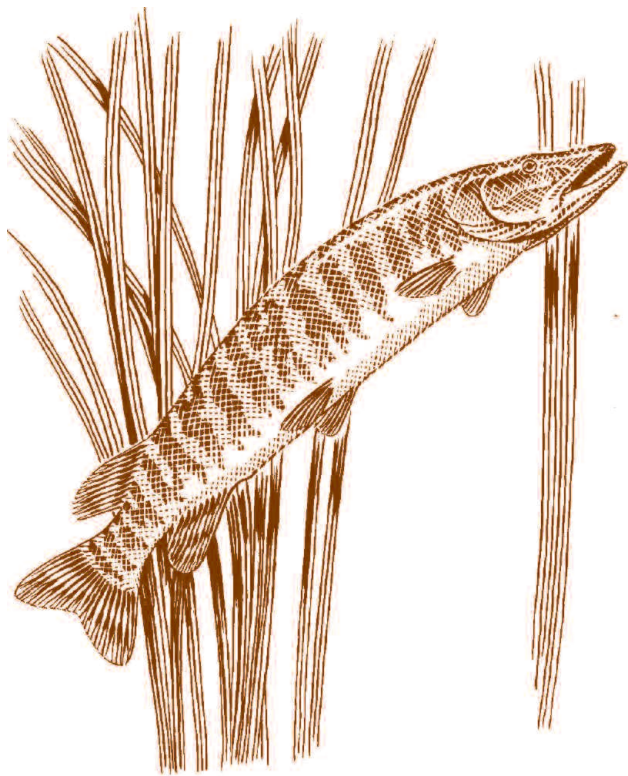
## Fisheries Byelaws for Thames Region

**This section contains all byelaws relevant to Thames Region and the Rivers Darent and Cray Catchment in Southern Region. All regional byelaws and national byelaws relevant to anglers in Thames region are listed. There are several other byelaws not listed here that relate to commercial fishing or the use of instruments other than rod and line. If you wish to know more about these or wish to know about byelaws in other regions, please contact us through the national enquiries number 0870 8506506.**

Byelaws by their very nature tend to be quite wordy with legal phrases and terms. For ease of use we have tried to simplify some of the terminology to ensure a clear understanding of how a byelaw can be applied. The original legal interpretation of the byelaws can be requested from the regional office if required.

Byelaws are the statutory rules and regulations put in place by the Environment Agency. They exist to prevent damage to fish stocks from insensitive fishing methods and to make sure that fisheries are sustainable for the enjoyment of current and future generations of anglers.

These byelaws will apply to all types of fisheries, be they owned by angling clubs, local authorities or private individuals. Whilst owners may impose more stringent regulations, they are not able to dispense with any byelaw that may apply to their water. They may, for example, restrict the number of rods a coarse angler can use to two, if they feel it is in the best interest of the fishery. However, they may not remove the Agency's maximum limit and allow more than four rods to be fished.



The byelaws have been divided up into five different sections to assist you in locating any that you are interested in. These sections are listed below.

**Section 1: Application and interpretation of the byelaws** – this covers the geographical extent of Thames byelaws and any legislation that has been used to make them.

**Section 2: Close seasons and restrictions due to times of year** – this covers fishing seasons and any times of year when restrictions to method or retention of catch will occur.

**Section 3: Equipment and methods** – this covers any equipment specifications that would make an instrument illegal and any restrictions on fishing methods that will apply.

**Section 4: Lures and baits** – this covers any bait or lure that is prohibited.

**Section 5: Catch** – this covers any byelaw that may apply once a fish has been caught.

Finally, please be aware that byelaws do change from time to time. Whenever changes are made, the Environment Agency makes every possible effort to bring them to the attention of anglers. If you are not sure of the current situation, please ask.

# Section 1: Application and Interpretation

## Regional Byelaw 1: Application

*Made 23 August 1976*

*Confirmed and implemented 6 June 1978*

This document includes all byelaws that apply to Thames Region as dated April 2005. All Thames Byelaws apply to all waters within Thames Region and the catchments of the Rivers Darent and Cray in Southern Region. Any entry that indicates it as a National Byelaw will apply to all waters within England and Wales.

- Throughout the Thames Region of the Environment Agency and within that Region they are now enforceable by the Environment Agency whose regional office is at Kings Meadow House, Kings Meadow Road, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 8DQ, Tel: 08708 506506
- In part of the Southern Region of the Environment Agency, namely the Darent and Cray Catchments, and within those Catchments they are now enforceable by the Environment Agency whose regional office is at Guildbourne House, Chatsworth Road, Worthing, West Sussex, BN11 1LD, Tel: 08708 506506

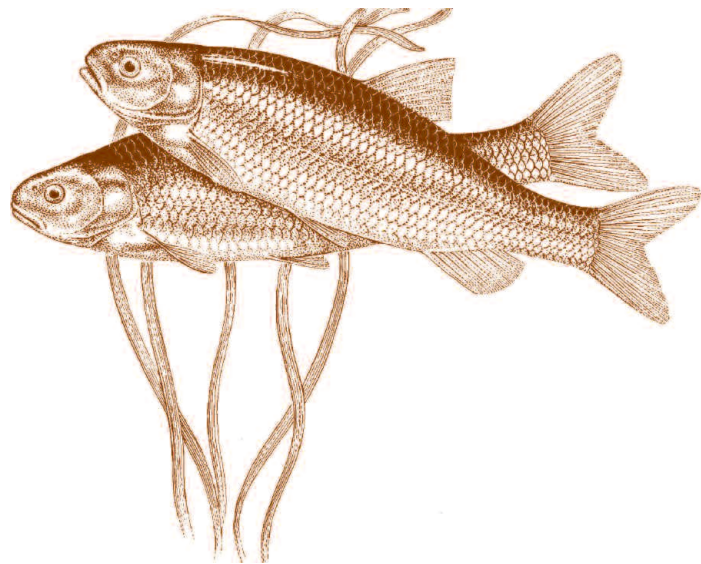
## Regional Byelaw 2: Interpretation

*Made 23 August 1976*

*Confirmed and implemented 6 June 1978*

In this guide the following terms have the following meanings:

- Authority means the Thames Water Authority – now Environment Agency, Thames Region
- Area means the fisheries area of the Thames Region.
- The Thames Region means all rivers, lakes, canals and drains within the catchment of the River Thames. This will include the rivers Darent and Cray and their catchments that fall within Southern Region.
- The terms used in these byelaws shall have meanings ascribed to them in the Salmon and Freshwater Fisheries Act 1975, the Water Act 1989 and within Section 210 and Schedule 25 of the Water Resources Act 1991.



# Section 2: Close seasons and restrictions due to time of year

## i) Coarse fish close season

*National Byelaw 6 Phase 1 (Amended)*  
*Confirmed 14 March 2000 (England)*  
*Date of implementation 15 March 2000 (England)*

The annual coarse fish close season (15 March – 15 June inclusive) applies to the following waters:

- (a) **All** rivers, streams and drains;\*
- (b) In all waters in the Specified Sites of Special Scientific Interest and the Broads; (for those within Thames Region please see Appendix 1).\*

**Note:** Eels - There is no close season on those waters where the statutory close season for freshwater fish has been dispensed with.

\*The following canals are closed in the Thames Region (refer to Appendix 2 for more details)

- **Kennet and Avon Canal downstream of confluence with River Kennet at Kintbury**
- **Lee navigation upstream of Aqueduct Lock**
- **Designated areas of the Basingstoke Canal**

## ii) Rainbow and brown trout close season

*National Byelaw 7 Phase 1*  
*Confirmed 14 March 1997*  
*Date of implementation 1 April 1997*

- There is **no** annual close season for fishing for rainbow trout by rod and line in all reservoirs, lakes and ponds.

*National Byelaw 9 Phase 1*  
*Confirmed 14 March 1997*  
*Date of implementation 1 April 1997*

- **All waters** are subject to an annual brown trout close season, although dates vary according to local byelaws. For waters within Thames region, these dates are as follows:

*Regional Byelaw 3*  
*Made 10 March 1981*  
*Confirmed and implemented 1 October 1981*

- For all rivers, streams, drains and canals of Thames Region, the annual close season for fishing for rainbow and brown trout with rod and line shall be from **1 October to the 31 March (inclusive)**.
- For enclosed reservoirs, lakes or ponds of Thames Region the annual close season for fishing for brown trout with rod and line shall be from **30 October to 31 March (inclusive)**.

## iii) Fishing for eels with rod and line

*Regional Byelaw 7*  
*Made 23 August 1976*  
*Confirmed and implemented 6 June 1978*

- There is no close season when fishing for eels with rod and line in the tidal River Thames downstream of the Thames Barrier.

## iv) Annual salmon and migratory trout close season for rod and line

*Regional Byelaw 3*  
*Made 10 March 1981, 1 October 1981*

- The annual close season for fishing for salmon and migratory trout with rod and line shall be from the 1 October to the 31 March (inclusive).

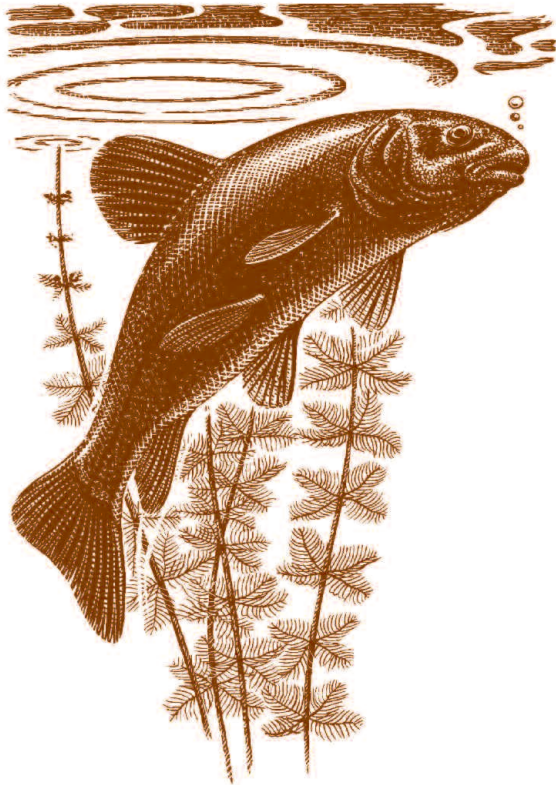
## v) Fishing for salmon and trout during the coarse fish close season

*Regional Byelaw 5*

*Made 10 March 1981*

*Confirmed and implemented 1 October 1981*

- During the annual close season for coarse fish (15 March – 15 June inclusive), no person shall fish with rod and line for salmon, trout, or rainbow trout other than with an artificial fly or lure. A minnow taken in a minnow trap for use as bait in the waters from which it was taken is also permitted but requires the previous written consent of the Authority.



## vi) Early season catch and release for salmon with rod and line

*National Salmon Byelaw 5*

*Confirmed 9 January 1999*

*Date of implementation 15 April 1999*

- Any person who removes any live or dead salmon taken by rod and line from any waters or banks without the previous written authority of the Environment Agency before the 16 of June in any calendar year shall be guilty of an offence.

**This Byelaw shall not apply to any person who lawfully takes a salmon and returns it immediately to the water with the least possible injury.**

## vii) Early season method restriction for salmon with rod and line

*National Salmon Byelaw 6*

*Confirmed 9 January 1999*

*Date of implementation 15 April 1999*

- Any person who fishes for, takes or attempts to fish for, or attempts to take any salmon with rod and line by any means other than an artificial fly or artificial lure before the 16 June in any calendar year shall be guilty of an offence.

# Section 3: Equipment and methods

## i) Keepnets, keepsacks and landing nets

*National Byelaw 5 Phase 1*

*Confirmed 14 March 1997*

*Date of implementation 1 April 1998*

(1) A person shall be guilty of an offence if, after 1 April 1998, he uses: -

- (a) A **landing net** with any knotted meshes or meshes of metallic material or
- (b) A **keepnet**-
  - (i) with any knotted meshes or meshes of metallic material; or
  - (ii) having any holes in the mesh larger than 25mm internal circumference; or
  - (iii) of less than 2.0 metres in length; or
  - (iv) with supporting rings or frames greater than 40cm apart (excluding the distance from the top frame to the first supporting ring or frame) or less than 120cm in circumference.
- (c) A **keepsack**-
  - (i) not constructed of a soft, dark coloured, non-abrasive, water permeable fabric; or
  - (ii) having dimensions of less than 120cm by 90cm if rectangular; or
  - (iii) 150cm by 30cm by 40cm if used with a frame or designed with the intention that a frame be used.

(2) Any person shall be guilty of an offence if, after 1 April 1998, if he retains more than one fish in a single keepsack at any time.

(3) This byelaw shall not apply to any keepnet or keepsacks used for retaining eels which have been legally taken by instruments other than rod and line.

(4) This byelaw was made taking into account the requirement for notification to the European Commission under Council Directive 83/189/EEC.

## ii) Use of a gaff

*National Byelaw 4 Phase 1*

*Confirmed 14 March 1997*

*Date of implementation 1 April 1997*

- The use of a gaff is prohibited at all times when fishing for salmon, trout, freshwater fish or freshwater eels.

## iii) Use of rods

*National Byelaw 8 Phase 1*

*Confirmed 14 March 1997*

*Date of implementation 1 April 1997*

## Summary table

Types of fish	Rivers, streams, drains and canals	Reservoirs, lakes and ponds
Salmon/Sea Trout (Migratory trout)	1 rod	2 rods*
Trout (Non-migratory) Char	1 rod	2 rods*
Coarse Fish and Eels	4 rods*	

### \* 2 licences required

- When fishing with more than one rod and line at the same time, the aggregate number must not exceed a total of four.
- When fishing with multiple rods and lines, rods must be placed such that the distance between the butts of the end rods does not exceed three metres.

**Note: The above rod limits are subject to the correct number of rod licences being held.**

- A salmon and sea trout licence authorises only one rod per licence when fishing for salmon, sea trout or trout, or two rods per licence when fishing for coarse fish and eels.
- A trout and coarse licence authorises one rod when fishing for trout or two rods when fishing for coarse fish and eels.

#### iv) Unattended rods

*National Byelaw 10 Phase 2*

*Confirmed 26 May 2001*

*Date of implementation 27 May 2001*

- Any person who leaves a rod and line with its bait or hook in the water unattended or so that the person shall be unable at any time to take or exercise sufficient control over said rod and line shall be guilty of an offence.

**When fishing with multiple rods and lines, rods shall be placed such that the distance between the butts of the end rods does not exceed three metres.**

#### v) The return of foul hooked fish

*National Byelaw 7 Phase 2*

*Confirmed 26 May 2001*

*Date of implementation 27 May 2001*

- It shall be an offence to fail to return immediately all salmon, migratory trout or trout, hooked other than in the mouth or throat, to any river, stream, drain or canal.

#### vi) Prohibition on use of lead weights

*Regional Byelaw 17*

*Confirmed 29 May 1987*

*Date of implementation 1 June 1987*

- No person shall use for taking salmon, trout, rainbow trout, freshwater fish or eels in any waters any fishing line to which is attached, directly or indirectly, any lead in the form of a lead weight.

#### This does not apply when:

- lead weight of 0.06 grams or less, commonly called Dust Shot (number 8)
- lead weights greater than 28.35 grams. This is a weight heavier than 1oz.
- For the purpose of this byelaw 'lead' includes any alloy or compound of lead. Lead-weight includes split shot or any other thing suitable for weighting fishing lines which is neither incorporated and fully enclosed in the core of a fishing line or in the construction of a swim-feeder, a self-cocking float or a fishing lure. A fishing lure is any device, including a fishing fly, which is designed to attract fish and which incorporates a fishing hook.

#### vii) Prohibited modes of fishing

*Regional Byelaw 5*

*Made 10 March 1981*

*Date of implementation 1 October 1981*

- Any person who fishes at any time with gorge bait or any other device, and does not allow fish to be returned without serious injury, shall be guilty of any offence.

# Section 4: Lures and baits

## i) The use of crayfish as bait

*National Byelaw 3 Phase 2*

*Confirmed 26 May 2001*

*Date of implementation 27 May 2001*

- Any person who in fishing for salmon, trout, freshwater fish or eels, uses as bait crayfish of any species whether alive or dead, or parts thereof, shall be guilty of an offence.

**This is to protect native crayfish and to prevent the spread of non-native species such as the American signal crayfish.**

## ii) The use of live fish for bait

*National Byelaw 8 Phase 2*

*Confirmed 26 May 2001*

*Date of implementation 27 May 2001*

- Any person who takes fish for use as live bait shall be guilty of an offence unless the fish was retained at and used only in the water from which it was taken.

**The taking of fish from any waters to be used as live bait at another venue is now illegal. This is to prevent the spread of non-native species and disease. This includes goldfish.**

- This byelaw shall not apply to any fish introduced as live bait under and in accordance with a consent issued under Section 30 of the Salmon and Freshwater Fisheries Act 1975

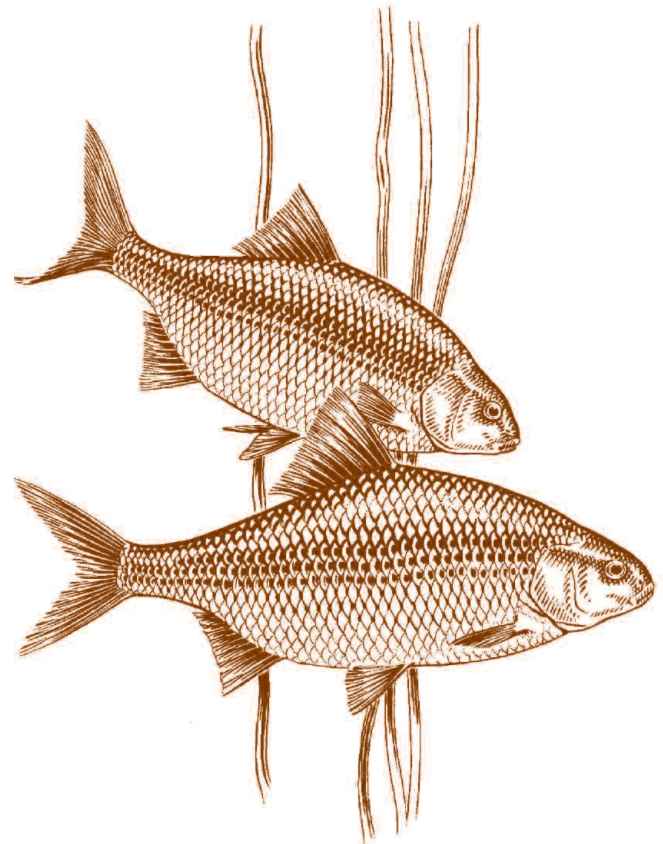
## iii) The use of a rod and line

*Regional Byelaw 10*

*Made 23 August*

*Confirmed and implemented 6 June 1978*

- No person shall fish with rod and line having more than three separate hooks attached thereto.
- No person shall use in conjunction with rod and line any device intended to hook a fish automatically.



# Section 5: Catch

## i) The prohibition on taking undersized fish

*Regional Byelaw 8*

*Made 23 August 1976*

*Confirmed and implemented 6 June 1978*

- No person shall take away from any waters within the area any fish of a kind and of a size less the following:

Barbel	40cm	Chub	30cm	Rudd	20cm
Bleak	10cm	Gudgeon	13cm	Tench	25cm
Bream	30cm	Perch	22cm	Brown Trout	25cm
Carp	30cm	Pike	60cm	Dace	15cm
Crucian Carp	18cm	Roach	18cm	Grayling	25cm

The size shall be determined by measuring from the tip of the snout to the end of the tail fin.

**This byelaw does NOT apply to the following:**

- any undersized freshwater fish if kept alive in a keepnet and returned alive to the water at the point of capture not later than at the conclusion of fishing;
- any undersized freshwater fish (not exceeding twelve in any one day) for use as bait in the water from which they were taken;
- any undersized fish for any specific purpose with the previous consent in writing of the Authority.

## ii) Bag limits

*Regional Byelaw 9*

*Made 23 August 1976*

*Confirmed and implemented 6 June 1978*

- No person without the previous consent in writing of the Authority when fishing with rod and line shall take away from any waters within the area in any one day more than two fish of which not more than one may be tench, carp, barbel, bream or pike.

**This byelaw does NOT apply to the following:**

- any enclosed reservoir, lake or pond into which or from which fish cannot normally swim from or to other waters;
- trout, zander or eels

**The riparian owner has the right to prohibit the removal of any fish. They cannot however exceed this bag limit on waters where this byelaw applies.**

## iii) Restriction on movement of fish

*Regional Byelaw 12*

*Made 10 March 1981*

*Confirmed and implemented 1 October 1981*

- Whilst fishing or at the conclusion of fishing with rod and line, the movement or transportation of any fish by means of a keepnet or container of any kind, other than fish permitted to be transported in accordance with regional byelaws 5 i), 8, 9 and 12 is hereby prohibited.

## iv) The weighing of fish

*Regional Byelaw 13*

*Made 23 August 1976*

*Confirmed and implemented 6 June 1978*

- Fish must be weighed as close as possible to the point of capture.

## v) The removal of crayfish

*National Byelaw*

*Made Nov 2004*

*Confirmed and implemented June 2005*

- Except with the previous consent of the Authority in writing no person shall remove crayfish from non-tidal waters.

## iv) Catching zander

*Regional Byelaw 15*

*Made 10 March 1981*

*Confirmed and implemented 1 October 1981*

- Except with the previous written consent of the Authority, any person who takes a zander by rod and line or by any other approved method of fish removal within the area, shall make a written return to the Authority. This should be within 14 days and include the number of fish caught and the place of capture.

## v) Migratory salmonid catch returns

*National Byelaw 3 Phase 1*

*Confirmed 18 December 1996.*

*Date of implementation 31 December 1996*

- (1) All licensed salmon and sea trout anglers must make a return by 1 January in the following year. This includes 'nil' returns. The return form is attached to the angler's rod licence.

### Notes

1. Unless permission in writing is obtained from the Authority, it is an offence to use any explosive substance, any poison or other noxious substance, or any electrical device with the intent thereby to take or destroy fish. (Salmon and Freshwater Fisheries Act, 1975 Section 5).
2. A person guilty of an offence against the Byelaws shall be liable on summary conviction to a fine on level 4 currently not exceeding £2,500.

# Appendix 1

A list of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI's) where angling is prohibited during the close season

## SPECIFIED SITES OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST (ENGLAND)

In this Schedule a group of two letters and six figures identifying or associated with any point represents the map co-ordinates of that point estimated to the nearest one hundred metres on the grid of the national reference system used by Ordnance Survey on its maps and plans.

**For the purpose of this document, only SSSIs in the Thames and Southern Region Darent and Cray catchments have been included. A full copy can be obtained by contacting the general enquiry line 08708 506506.**

### BEDFORDSHIRE

Houghton Regis Marl Lakes (TL008235)

### BERKSHIRE

Rapley Lakes (SU889653, SU901647) – Within Broadmoor to Bagshot Woods and Heaths SSSI.  
Heath Lake (SU829652)

Swinley Park and Brick Pits (SU895675, SU905670)

Thatcham Reed Beds (SU507665)

Wasing Wood Ponds (SU578636, SU583633)

Wraybury and Hythe Gravel Pits (TQ014737)

### EAST SUSSEX/KENT

Walland Marsh (Royal Military Canal) (TQ933227 – TQ991320)

### ESSEX

Epping Forest (TL475035, TQ405865)

Abberton Reservoir (TL970180)

Colne Estuary (TM075155)

## **GLOUCESTERSHIRE**

Frampton Pools (SO753073)  
Soudley Ponds (SO662112)  
Cotswold Water Park (SU000930 - SU200990)

## **GREATER LONDON**

Mid Colne Valley (TQ043896)  
Brent Reservoir (TQ217873)  
Denham Lock Wood (TQ055863)  
Ruxley Gravel Pits (TQ474700)

## **HAMPSHIRE**

Alresford Pond (SU593331)  
Avon Valley (Bickton-Blashford) (SU150100)  
Bramshill (SU766605)  
Fleet Pond (SU822551)  
Lower Test Valley (SU360153)  
Shortheath Common (SU775366)  
Southampton Common (SU415145)  
Titchfield Haven (SU539035)  
Warren Heath Ponds (SU769599, SU782588)  
Castle Bottom to Yateley Common (SU815587)  
New Forest (SU298081) – Hatchet and Cadnam ponds only

## **HAMPSHIRE/SURREY**

Basingstoke Canal (SU719514 – SU967575) and (TQ016597 – TQ046616)

## **KENT**

South Thames Estuary and Marshes (TQ770785) excluding Beckley Hill ponds (TQ717741)  
Holborough to Burham Marshes (TQ712618)  
Oldbury and Seal Chart (TQ571558)  
Romney Warren (TR085262)  
Sevenoaks Gravel Pits (TQ522569)  
The Swale (TR000670) excluding Murston pits southern three lakes (TQ931649)  
Walland Marsh (TQ960240)  
Dungeness (TR050180)

Orlestone Forest (TQ982350)  
Sandwich Bay (TR353585) excluding Cottington Lakes (TR357532) and Finglesham Ponds (TR340535)  
Scotney Castle (TQ690350)

## **OXFORDSHIRE**

Wychwood (SP335168)

## **SURREY**

Ash to Brookwood Heaths (SU920540, SU956545, SU958555, SU945537)  
Bookham Commons (TQ128565)  
Chobham Common (SU973648)  
Epsom and Ashted Commons (TQ181602)  
Hedgecourt (TQ355403)  
Langham Pond (TQ002721)  
Ockham and Wisley Common (TQ082585, TQ084592, TQ078595, TQ070585)  
Papercourt (TQ035563, TQ035569, TQ042565)  
Puttenham and Crooksbury Commons (SU915464, SU890453)  
Staines Moor (TQ040730)  
Whitmoor Common (SU985535)  
Thursley, Hankley and Frensham Commons (SU885405, SU915410, SU855405)

## **WEST SUSSEX**

Forest Mere (SU820300)

## **WILTSHIRE**

Coate Water (SU188820)

# Appendix 2

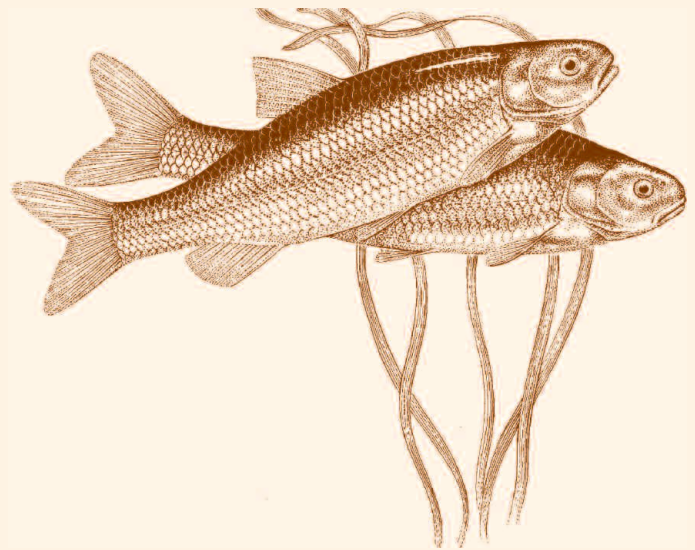
## Quick Reference Guide: Close Seasons within Thames Region\*

BYELAW	DATES	ADDITIONAL INFORMATION
National Byelaw 6: Coarse Fish Close Season	15th March – 15th June (inclusive)	Rivers, streams and any canal or stillwater that is listed as a SSSI
National Byelaw 7: Rainbow Trout Close Season	Abolished for enclosed waters	This refers to reservoirs, lakes and ponds
National Salmon Byelaw 5	Any salmon caught by rod and line up to and including June 16th must be released back into the water it was caught.	
Regional Byelaw 3: Rainbow and Brown Trout Close Season	1st October – 31st March (inclusive)	This refers to all rivers, streams, drains and canals
Regional Byelaw 3: Brown Trout Close Season	30th October – 31st March (inclusive)	This refers to reservoirs, lakes and ponds
Regional Byelaw 3: Annual Salmon and Migratory Trout Close Season	1st October – 31st March (inclusive)	

\* During the coarse fish close season – ie. 15th March – 15th June inclusive, all other permitted fishing on rivers, streams and canals may only be undertaken if the following is used:

- a) Artificial Fly, or
- b) Lure (including spinner), or
- c) With a minnow caught in a minnow trap from waters in which fishing is to take place.

UNLESS written consent has been issued from the Agency.



# Canal Close Season Guidance for Thames Region

The following Canals will remain **OPEN**:

- *Regents Park Canal*
- *Grand Union Canal*
- *Lee Navigation DOWNSTREAM of Aqueduct Lock*
- *The Oxford Canal*

The exact demarcation of the Lee Navigation was the result of correspondence between the Agency and the Lee Anglers Consortium.

The following canals will remain **CLOSED** (due to their conservation status):

- *The Kennet and Avon Canal downstream of Kintbury (NGR: SU381672)*
- *The Lee Navigation upstream of Aqueduct Lock*
- *The Basingstoke Canal where a SSSI applies. (NB. The Basingstoke Canal Authority have decided to retain the close season for the entire length of the canal)*
- The Wey Navigation **does not** come under the classification of a canal and therefore is subject to a close season.

**Any enclosed stillwater or canal that is not affected by the mandatory close season may be fished only with the permission of the owner, who still has the right to implement his own close season.**