



East Lothian Angling Association

Newsletter

January 2018

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Facebook

Promise of a Bright Future for the Tyne

In 2017 East Lothian Angling Association made significant progress in the ongoing task of improving the fishing on the River Tyne. Like many other angling associations around the country ELAA is now no longer simply a fishing club that collects permit money and stocks the river. Its new focus is on the conservation and improvement of the entire river ecosystem.



New Direction

The thinking behind this new direction is that to improve the quality of the fishing we need to improve the quality of the river habitat to create the right conditions for all life in the river to flourish; plants and invertebrates as well as fish. We aim to do this by using data collected through monitoring and research and then applying this knowledge through practical methods to improve the river as a whole.

Connections and Partnerships

So what's been happening? Well our President Chris Thomas has worked very hard indeed to develop connections and partnerships with the various groups and individuals who can make a difference to the wellbeing of the Tyne. ELAA now has forged strong links with SEPA and the River Forth Fisheries Trust, as well as the Wild Trout Trust and Stirling University.

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2018 AGM

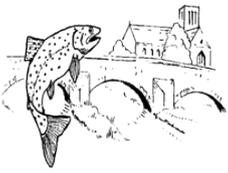
Town House
Haddington

24th January

7:30 PM

Guest Speaker

Gareth Pedley
Wild Trout Trust



President's Update

Reflecting on the work undertaken by the committee through 2017, it's clear that, although frustratingly slow, progress is being made in our determination to be part of a positive process of change for the River Tyne. In particular, I want to flag up our developing relationship with the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA).

Through the year, we have lobbied and had discussions with key people in SEPA, with whom we now have personal contact. This proactivity, alongside our strong working relationship with friends at the River Forth Fisheries Trust, has been noted as being instrumental by SEPA staff in making the Tyne a priority catchment for diffuse pollution assessment this last autumn. SEPA are also developing further the Tyne barriers project.

As part of this project, ELAA committee members met with SEPA staff and their consultants to press our views earlier in the year. We hope for positive news in the early part of the year. And SEPA staff have been tackling a significant point source pollution problem reported to them by committee members, engaging with Scottish Water who own the asset which is causing the problem. None of the impacts of diffuse and point source pollution and the barriers have yet been fully resolved, and none may be solved quickly, but the critical point is that these issues are now being investigated positively. While it may be easy to criticise SEPA, possibly with some justification on some issues, we have found that the people we have dealt with are professional, engaged, committed and of the same mind as ourselves with regard to the river, and are prepared to act accordingly. Fostering good relationships with such agencies is key to progress in improving the ecosystem of the Tyne and its connected landscape.

Nonetheless, ELAA will continue to press and to work with agencies (and politicians) to ensure that, as far as possible, progress continues through to positive actions and outcomes: better farming practice to control diffuse pollution,

more up-to-date methods of sewage and waste water treatment in rural areas and (hopefully) the removal of as many weirs as possible, or at least properly working mitigation. Some of our built heritage is important, but maintaining weirs which no longer serve any socio-economic purpose but which mess up the river ecosystem, can no longer be justified.

None of these things may look much like angling, but they have everything to do with it. Get the river ecosystems functioning as naturally as possible, free from over-management and undue interference, and pollution, and the river and its wildlife will look after itself. This is widely recognised in modern and enlightened river management practice, such as advocated by the Wild Trout Trust, and it informs the activities of the ELAA.

And, yes, I did go fishing. As last year, a cold, dry spring didn't help the early season, but through the summer with the rain that came in June and July, the season picked up and I had a number of good sessions – some of the best, ironically, in August – usually not such a good month. I hope you had a good season too, and I hope you will continue to support ELAA by buying a permit in 2018. We are grateful for your support.

Chris Thomas
President



Photo: Will Shaw



SEPA Activities in the Tyne Catchment

East Lothian Angling Association started to work more closely with SEPA in 2017 on several important issues affecting the Tyne, most notably weirs and the problems they present for fish passage and river habitat as well as point source and diffuse pollution. We will continue to work on these and other issues in the years ahead to improve the habitat and the fishing potential of the Tyne.

Dr Anna Griffin, Tweed and South Edinburgh Area River Basin Planning Co-ordinator provides the details.

Use of Tyne water (e.g. irrigation, micro-hydro generation, mill lades) requires licenses issued by SEPA. As part of the river basin planning programme implemented by SEPA, licences held on the Tyne have been reviewed and modified where necessary during 2017.

SEPA ecologists surveyed the catchment during summer 2017 using rapid assessment techniques to determine the effects and extent of rural diffuse pollution. Based on these results, SEPA's Land Unit, with the support of Scotland's Rural University College will begin a programme of raising awareness in agricultural communities with regard to good practice that prevents such pollution from early 2018. Farm visits are scheduled to start April 2018.

Mitigation of barriers to the movement of fish is an important issue in river basin planning. A feasibility study of the several Tyne barriers was carried out by consultants for SEPA during 2017, with input from ELAA. Planning of mitigation schemes is underway and/or barriers are being scoped for modifications or removal during 2018/19. In particular, discussions with regard to options for Knowes Weir are advancing, with support from ECOCO Life <https://www.ecoco-life.org.uk/>

SEPA's Edinburgh and Lothian Team carry out routine work across the Tyne catchment and can respond to notification of issues by members of the public via the pollution hot-line 0800 80 70 60 or via <http://beta.sepa.org.uk/PublicEnvironmentalEventForm/>

A recent example is the issue of point-source pollution caused by the East Saltoun septic tank outfall above Nisbet, reported by ELAA members. Above the outfall, the water quality is good, with a range of invertebrate families present (although there is some evidence of mild organic enrichment); the invertebrate assemblage includes several families known to be intolerant of organic pollution. In contrast, downstream of the outfall, fewer invertebrate families were present, with those most sensitive to organic pollution notably absent.

Scottish Water will be de-sludging the East Saltoun septic tank system more frequently, and will be monitoring the situation closely over the next few months; meanwhile, SEPA will continue to monitor the outfall. If there is no improvement, SEPA can discuss improvement of the system as part of Scottish Water's 2021 strategic review

Point source pollution: outfall at Nisbet.



Photo: Chris Thomas



ELAA's approach to improving the fishing on the Tyne is premised on the need to obtain good quality scientific data on which to base decisions. We have enlisted the help of Stirling University and have invited four final-year Environmental Science students and their supervisors to collect data on our behalf. Here they explain the work they are doing.

Anna Wishart (Supervisor: David Oliver)
Nutrient concentrations

Nitrogen (N) and phosphorus (P) are two nutrients from farming practices that can make their way into water bodies such as rivers. In some cases, these nutrients can cause issues with water quality and impact wider ecosystems. This project is monitoring Gifford, Humbie and Bearford tributaries. The aim is to determine how concentrations of N and P vary in space and over time (autumn through winter). Samples have been collected weekly, since September. Observed concentrations of N and P will be compared with predicted values from a model.

Amber Jay-Millard
(Supervisor: David Oliver)
Suspended sediment dynamics

The aim of my project is to assess and understand spatial and temporal dynamics of suspended sediment concentrations in different sections of the River Tyne catchment. Samples are being collected at the confluences of the Gifford, Humbie and Bearford tributaries with the Tyne. Water is collected from the joining tributary, the main flow of the Tyne and downstream of the confluence in an effort to determine hot spots of suspended sediment in the water column, as driven by rainfall and resulting runoff from surrounding land use. Sampling and subsequent analysis thus far has revealed very low concentrations of suspended sediment and correspondingly low turbidity. With a period of wetter weather perhaps the values of suspended sediment will increase with flow – monitoring continues until the end of December.



Joe Greene (Supervisor: Colin Bull)
Assessing the passability of river obstacles to fish migration under seasonal flow variation

Redundant anthropogenic obstacles in a river system can have a considerable negative impact on ecological connectivity. This dissertation project will assess the passability of two weirs near Haddington that potentially impact on the migration of adult salmonids at different times of the year, dictated by river flow. By recording various environmental parameters at each weir at different flow conditions, and using them in association with pre-existing long-term data sets, we aim to establish not only how much of a barrier these structures currently pose, but also how passability has changed over the last decade in response to climate change.

Christopher Burley
(Supervisor: Colin Bull)

Evaluation of the response in macroinvertebrate communities to fine sediment risk mapping

Benthic macroinvertebrate communities can be good indicators of overall water quality in a river. This dissertation project looks at the effects of fine sediment

on benthic macroinvertebrate communities in the River Tyne. We aim to investigate suspended sediment entering from key tributaries, and attempt to quantify its effect on benthic fauna over a range of spatial scales. Samples of interstitial fine sediment and macroinvertebrate communities have been collected from a number of sites focused at tributary confluences. Laboratory analysis will be performed over the winter to determine if suspended sediment is impacting on the benthic fauna of the River Tyne.

'Benthic': living close to, on or in the river-bed



The Ideal Habitat

We talk a lot about improving the river habitat, but what does good river habitat actually look like?

Water Quality

Well it starts with good water quality. Water needs to be clean, well oxygenated and alkaline to ensure the optimum levels of nutrients for plant life and invertebrates to flourish: chalk streams, for example, typically have a pH between 7.4 and 8. Also essential are low levels of sediment and other pollution, whether natural or the result of human activity. If these conditions are met and invertebrates can thrive, then fish and other animals will also thrive.

Riverbed

Another important habitat requirement is the condition of the riverbed. A clean rocky or gravel bottom provides territory both for fish and invertebrates. Rocks, woody debris and other instream features, as well as the quantity of water and flow characteristics all affect the way the river behaves and create the pools, runs and riffles in which fish can hide, feed and spawn. Woody debris also provides cover for fish, particularly young fish, to hide from predators.

Bankside Vegetation

Bankside vegetation is the final piece of the habitat jigsaw. The roots of trees and plants stabilise the banks and prevent erosion, which can introduce sediment into the water and also cause the river to become wide and shallow: this is a particular problem on some parts of the Tyne.

Bankside vegetation also provides partial shade and a safe habitat for terrestrial and newly emerged aquatic insects, thereby optimising the supply of food to the fish.

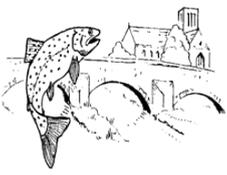
Ongoing Process

Habitat improvement is the best way to improve the fishing on the Tyne and this is the approach that ELAA is now taking. It is a long, ongoing process, but we have already made a start with the decision to cease stocking and to address the problems of fish migration due to the weirs. We plan to tackle the high sediment levels and other pollution issues over the next few years and our intention is to create the ideal natural conditions that will allow all life in the river to flourish. We can't turn the Tyne into a chalk stream, but we can try to make it the best it can be.

Water a little coloured after rain, but this stretch below Abbey Bridge had good flow rate, fish holding areas and abundant bankside vegetation.



Photo: Brodie Reynolds



Gold-bead bi-colour nymph

In previous seasons I had a great deal of success after I determined to fish predominantly with nymphs, and since then I have continued mostly to use nymphing techniques in my river fishing. Last season I used what is essentially a French Leader rig with 10' 3/4wt with an indicator tied in above the tippet: the fly-line never gets beyond the butt ring. The nymph pattern I've used very successfully is my own; its generic and very easy to tie. It needs some flow and turbulence to work best, mainly because trout need to react quickly and opportunistically to anything that looks like food rattling past.

Materials

Hook: barbless or de-barbed open gape, e.g. Kamasan B160s size 12 – 16

Bead: Gold tungsten, 2.4 mm

Underbody: (optional) one layer 1mm flat, self-adhesive lead sheet

Thread: Light Cahill or Tan 8/0 UNI-thread, waxed

Rib: fine gold wire

Tails: (optional) Three or four Coq-de-Lion or similar fibres

Abdomen: Oliver Edwards MC2 or MC3 (olives) or any light to medium olive dubbing

Thorax: Coarse chestnut/dark brown seal's fur

Method

1. Put the bead on the hook and the hook in the vice.
2. Add the lead if desired.
3. Start the thread at the bend, take forward in touching turns and build up behind the bead to secure it.
4. Build up a layer of thread in touching turns down to the hook bend.
5. Take the thread back up to the bead and tie in the gold rib on top, bind it back down to the bend.
6. Tie in the tails if used.
7. Wax the thread and add a small amount of olive dubbing, rolling it on fairly tightly.
8. Take the dubbing forward, tapering gently up the shank to about 2mm behind the bead.

9. Bring the rib up in four or five even turns and tie off at the front of the olive dubbing,

10. Re-wax the thread, dub on a pinch of seal's fur to just behind the bead, slightly wider than the olive abdomen.

11. Add a little head cement to the thread by the hook and whip finish behind the bead.



Photo: Chris Thomas

A Justified Purchase!

David Elder

A friend said to me that he thought my rod was on the heavy side for casting dry flies so, for once accepting another angler's advice, I bought one with a slightly lower weight with a lower weight floating line. When the time came to try it out for the first time I headed up to Clerkington.

As I got near the river on my way down from the Burns Monument I saw that it looked pretty dirty but once at the river it was just possible to see through it, ideal. I headed down to a pool where I'd had some success earlier in the season and tied on a Peter Ross. It took a short time getting accustomed to the new rod. There were no fish rising and then on one cast I got a take of a decent sized trout, about 8 oz, one of those that jump about trying to get away.

That was the start – I went on to get another the same size and a small one in that pool and then another 8 oz trout and a couple of small ones giving me a total of 6 – 3 large and 3 small. If ever there was justification for buying an item of fishing gear that new rod was it!



Salmon or Sea Trout?

The Tyne is classed as a Category 3 river under The Conservation of Salmon (Scotland) Regulations 2016. It is an offence to take salmon from the Tyne because the salmon population is deemed to be too low to allow the sustainable removal of fish.

ELAA strongly recommends catch and release for all species on the Tyne, and the limits for taking sea trout will change in 2018 from the current two fish per day to one, with all fish to be released after August 26th.

However, for any angler who does decide to take a sea trout, it is essential that they are able to distinguish between the two species, both to reduce harm to the fish population and also to avoid breaking the law. The Atlantic Salmon Trust has kindly given permission to reproduce their guide to identifying salmon and sea trout so we ask that anglers familiarise themselves with this illustration before they take a sea trout from the river. For further information please visit the Atlantic Salmon Trust website

<http://www.atlanticsalmontrust.org/salmon-and-sea-trout-facts/>

Salmon (I) can be distinguished from large sea trout (II) by a more streamlined shape, concave tail, slimmer tail wrist, upper jaw reaching no further than rear of the eye, few if any black spots below lateral line, 10-15 (usually 11-13) scales counted obliquely forward from adipose fin to lateral line – trout have 13-16.

