

Poaching Scandal

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Photo Bill Cunningham

This horrific picture shocked us all back in June when sixty sea trout, the smallest 4lb, the largest 12lb, were caught in a poacher's net near Hailes Castle.

Otters Killed

Despite the dedicated efforts of anglers, police, bailiffs and the public over the years, these wildlife crimes still take place, and not long after this incident we were further shocked to learn that three otters (a mother and two young pups) had been killed in an illegal fish trap set at the Cascades weir in Haddington.

Despicable Wildlife Crime

Sadly there will always be people who are willing to commit these despicable wildlife crimes. As anglers we know that poaching on the Tyne is not the harmless rural pursuit of popular imagination. It's not "one for the pot": it is the organised, illegal taking of fish for financial gain and just as serious a wildlife crime as poisoning birds of prey, stealing eggs or badger baiting.

Vigilant

We may never stop wildlife crime completely, but we must continue to be vigilant, to raise awareness wherever we can and to pass on information to the authorities. We must try to make it as difficult as possible for the perpetrators to get away with it.

Anglers play an important role in the fight against poaching.

Please report **anything** suspicious or **any information** relating to poaching and wildlife crime (in confidence) to:

Police Scotland

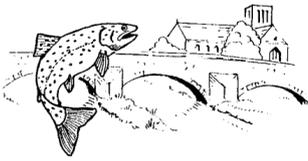
101

or

Bill Cunningham

Forth District Salmon Fisheries Bailiff

07887835549



2014 Season Review

Clearly the biggest news of the season was the terrible poaching incident which occurred in June (see previous page). We cannot emphasise enough the value of reporting any suspicious activity or any information to the Police or the Bailiff.

Catch Returns

On a more positive note, we are able to report encouraging catch returns for 2014. A total of 364 permits were sold and 57 returns were submitted.

These showed a total of 1027 **brown trout** caught, with 994 being released. The best rod had 200 fish, and the best weight reported was 2½lbs.

19 **sea trout** were landed (18 released), The best rod had 9 fish. No weights were given for seatrout apart from one at 4½lbs. One **salmon** was landed (and released).

The most popular fishing locations were Abbeymill Bridge, then Clerkington. Two other sightings were reported, both below Haddington.

Many thanks to all those who sent in their catch returns. They provide valuable information on fish populations. Their return is in fact a legal requirement and a condition of the issue of permits for the Tyne. Thanks also to Steven Dora for preparing the figures, having taken over Tony Hawkins' role as ELAA's Chief Number Cruncher.

Changes

Last season, despite some significant changes, particularly the sad news of the death of John Knox, the Committee continued to carry out its duties to support and promote angling on the Tyne.

These included the administration of permits and stocking the river, representing ELAA at Haddington Show, while several members were involved in pruning trees and clearing debris and obstructions to fish passage at Preston Mill and on the Bearford Burn.

Committee member Brian Davidson is liaising with SEPA and other organisations to progress a solution to the weirs, and 2014 saw ELAA going on to Fishpal to sell permits for the Tyne. It is still early days and we expect it to take a while before people take full advantage of the convenience this service offers.

Help ELAA save your money, save trees and the planet.

Please let us have your email address so we can send you newsletters and other Association matters by email instead of buying stamps, paper and envelopes. We promise we will never give your email address to anybody else, and we won't fill your inboxes with spam.

Just send an email to fishing@elaa.co.uk saying you want to be on our mailing list.

Thanks very much

2015 AGM

Monday

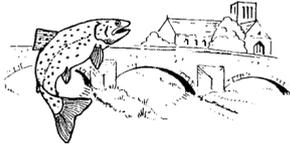
**January 26th
7:30 PM**

**The Town House
Haddington**

**Guest Speaker
Peter Maitland
Fish Biologist**



Photo: Nick Main
Bearford Burn: Getting Stuck In



Committee Update



Tony is presented by ELAA President Scott McIntosh with a picture of Abbey Bridge

Tony Hawkins stepped down from the Committee in 2014 after an astonishing 30 years of service. Tony held a number of roles in the Association and took a particular interest in monitoring juvenile fish populations. For many years he was the ELAA Number Cruncher, processing the annual catch returns.

In addition to these specific responsibilities, Tony would also make himself available for extra duties such as stocking the river, clearing debris from spawning burns, tree pruning and attending the ELAA stand at Haddington Show.

We would like to thank Tony for his significant contribution to the work of East Lothian Angling Association over all those years and we send him our very best wishes for the future.

Tony has moved to the Isle of Man and we understand that as well as taking his fishing tackle he has also taken his frying pan, so the island's trout had better beware!

John Knox

It was with great shock and sadness that we learned of the sudden death of John Knox on August 26th 2014.

John served on the Committee for over 10 years and during that period he made a very valuable contribution to the work of the Association. He took on the considerable responsibility of liaising with riparian owners to secure and maintain access to the river for ELAA members. This is an important and often complex job which requires the ability to organise and to communicate. Without this work there would be no angling on the Tyne.

John's personable, friendly manner was coupled with a quiet determination that enabled him to get the job done very effectively, while at the same time maintaining good relationships with everyone involved.

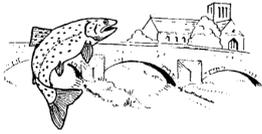
John was also a regular attendee of workdays to clear debris from the river and on the ELAA stand at Haddington Show where he enjoyed meeting the public and offering hospitality to the riparian owners and other visitors.

He will be sorely missed in East Lothian angling circles and we extend our condolences to his family.



Photo courtesy of YouthLink Scotland

John Knox.



Nymphing for Trout on the Tyne

Chris Thomas

I find nymph fishing very attractive for several reasons, simplicity chief among them, and, this last season, have used it much more than any other technique, right from the opening day, when I had four herling in very blustery and cold conditions. The nymphs I use are beguilingly simple, as is the rig, which allows me the opportunity to switch quickly to a dry fly if a hatch and rise comes on. I generally fish a 9ft tapered leader with a 6X tip, tied to a tiny tippet ring. On this ring, I tie about 3ft of 6X tippet. Most of the time, I fish a single nymph, though occasionally, I'll go 'semi-Czech' and put on a dropper when I want to fish deep runs and need to get down quickly at the head of the cast; this is how I caught the herling. With a single nymph, I fish upstream, or upstream and across, and to feeding fish if there are any in evidence.

The nymphs I use vary from essentially unweighted Gold-ribbed Hare's Ear (GRHEs) nymphs, through copper-wire weighted Pheasant Tail nymphs (PTNs) to my own very simple tungsten-beaded nymphs. The heaviest might have a single under-layer of lead foil too. I like to tie on dark, barbless hooks with a good gape – like a Kamasan B160 or some of the Tiemco hooks. I've found gold beads the most effective. Sizes range from 14 to 18 and generally not too heavy in the wire; I like a longer shank for GRHEs and PTNs, but use standard shank hooks for my tungsten-beaded nymphs, on the whole.

My simplest flies are just coarse, dark seal's fur dubbed onto dark 8/0 thread to form a tapered body behind a bead. Some slightly more complicated flies have a greenish abdomen and a dark seal's fur thorax, picked out a little; sometimes I add a wire or a krystal flash rib, and also sometimes include a couple of strands of krystal flash in PTN tails. On brighter days, flies with a little krystal flash seem particularly good, as do those dubbed with ice-dub Hare's Ear, which has a nice sparkle. But dark nymphs like PTN or black seal's fur do well too. You can tie them in a minute or two with readily available and cheap materials.

Key for me is using a long, light rod even on a small river like the Tyne – I use a 10ft 3/4wt. This gives me good control, especially when fishing short and with very little fly line out beyond the rod tip. It's crucial to stay in touch with the nymphs, whilst giving as much freedom as possible for a drag-free drift, just off the bottom.

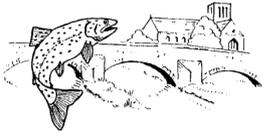
Sometimes I use an indicator, but increasingly I don't, relying on growing experience in line control and watching the line on the water like a hawk; spotting takes is beginning to become more natural. I sometimes grease the leader to help with depth if fishing a longer line, but often, with a short cast and drift, I'm controlling the depth and drift pace with the rod tip. Takes are often lightning-quick, so concentration and coordination are critical.

A particular pleasure with nymph fishing is that you discover just how true that truism – that trout can be found almost anywhere – can be. This last season I've winkled trout out of all sorts of surprising lies, and quite often in water that might not be so readily fish-able by other means. What it does show is that the three-dimensional world of the trout stream is a very complex place indeed hydrodynamically – with lies for trout in all sorts of places one might not suspect. Nymphing is an ideal way to explore it!

Chris Thomas



Photo: Kristian Kent



Six Tips for Responsible Angling

For most of us angling is not just about catching fish. It's also about the appreciation of nature, escaping from the hustle and bustle of everyday life and enjoying the peaceful surroundings of the river. But with these pleasures come certain responsibilities towards the river and the welfare of its inhabitants. Here are a few common-sense suggestions from East Lothian Angling Association for responsible angling which reflect current best-practice advice from biologists, angling experts and fishery scientists. By following these practices we can enhance our angling experience and at the same time demonstrate our commitment to act responsibly and respectfully towards the river and the wider environment.

1. **Catch-and-release.** ELAA strongly recommends catch-and-release, particularly in the wild fishery upstream from Westmills Weir, Haddington. Returning your catch to the river is now widely accepted by scientists and other fishery experts as the best way to ensure healthy, natural fish populations. It couldn't be more obvious – if you don't take fish away you don't reduce the number of fish in the river.
2. **Barbless hooks.** These are much easier to remove from fish (and from your clothing and landing net) than barbed hooks. Barbless hooks will set more easily because the hook is not required to push past the barb before it takes hold and they also allow you to release fish without removing them from the river. Simply slip the hook out under the water with a twist and if you tie your own flies, press down the barb with fine pliers before you start tying.
3. **Try to land fish quickly.** We all enjoy the thrill of a good fish fighting on the end of the line, but try to avoid tiring fish by playing them unnecessarily. You should aim to net your fish as soon as it's safe to do so and release it as soon as you can. Research has shown that the sooner a fish is allowed to recover from being caught and then released, the better its chances of long-term survival.
4. **Reduce fish handling to a minimum.** If you do need to take a fish out of the water try to return it as quickly as possible. Always wet your hands before touching a fish, and if you want to photograph your catch, lay it on to wet vegetation or a wet landing net and take the picture as quickly as you can. Don't stroke the fish and don't grip it too tightly, you could damage its internal organs.
5. **Allow the fish to recover.** Fish need time to recover from the struggle of being caught. Don't just toss your fish back into the river. Cradle it gently in the current with your hand under its belly and let it swim away when it's ready.
6. **Respect the river environment.** Anglers are not the only people who use and appreciate the river, so clear up after yourself. Respect wildlife and other river users by not discarding fishing tackle (particularly nylon and hooks), or litter on the bank. Leave the river as you would like to find it when you come back.



Food for Thought

What do we really know about riverfly populations?

How often have you heard someone say “**We don’t get the fly hatches like we used to.**” but is that true? Are there really fewer flies on the Tyne these days, or does it just seem that way? It may be a case of nostalgia clouding the facts, or perhaps in the past we only noticed the really big hatches. Also, we must surely have missed a lot of hatches simply because they occurred when we were not on the river to see them, and some species emerge at night. Do we tend to look only for upwing flies or caddis and ignore the presence of less conspicuous invertebrate food items? Remember, the winged adult fly on the water is only a brief phase in the life of an aquatic insect.

Natural Factors

We know that insect populations can fluctuate naturally: they have done over millions of years of evolution, and they always will. Populations can be influenced by both man-made and natural factors and the presence of flies on the water can vary by the season, the day or even the hour for many reasons, including temperature, water quality, and river levels: some species are simply less common than others.

Weather

While we tend to think of pollution as the major threat to fly populations, this is not always the case. Consider the weather as a factor: a long period of persistent rain, wind and low temperatures could inhibit many species from emerging, mating and laying eggs, potentially depriving the river of millions of flies in future seasons. However, if conditions are favourable, flies would be abundant and we would all be happy anglers again. So the reasons for variation in fly populations are not always clear and not always man-made.

Tyne: Rich in Species

Luckily for ELAA permit holders, the Tyne is rich in invertebrate species, several of which are indicators of good water quality. There are at least ten species of upwing fly, five species of stonefly, as yet unknown numbers of caddis species, together with shrimp, midges, smuts and huge numbers of terrestrial invertebrates.

There is no shortage of insects on the Tyne, and catch returns and electro-fishing statistics show that they feed a healthy population of trout. What’s food for the fish should also provide food for thought if you are an observant angler.

Look More Carefully

So next time you’re on the river take time to look more carefully than usual and you’ll be amazed at just how many insects are about: and that’s just on the surface. There are even more invertebrates living under the water!

For more information on this subject:

www.fba.org.uk

Entomology for Anglers courses with Stuart Crofts and Andrew Dickson are excellent and highly recommended. See: <http://www.pennineflyfishingguides.co.uk/torrentis.htm>

www.riverflies.org



Photo: Ali Irving

**Thank you for supporting angling on the Tyne.
We hope to see you on the river in 2015. Tight lines!**