

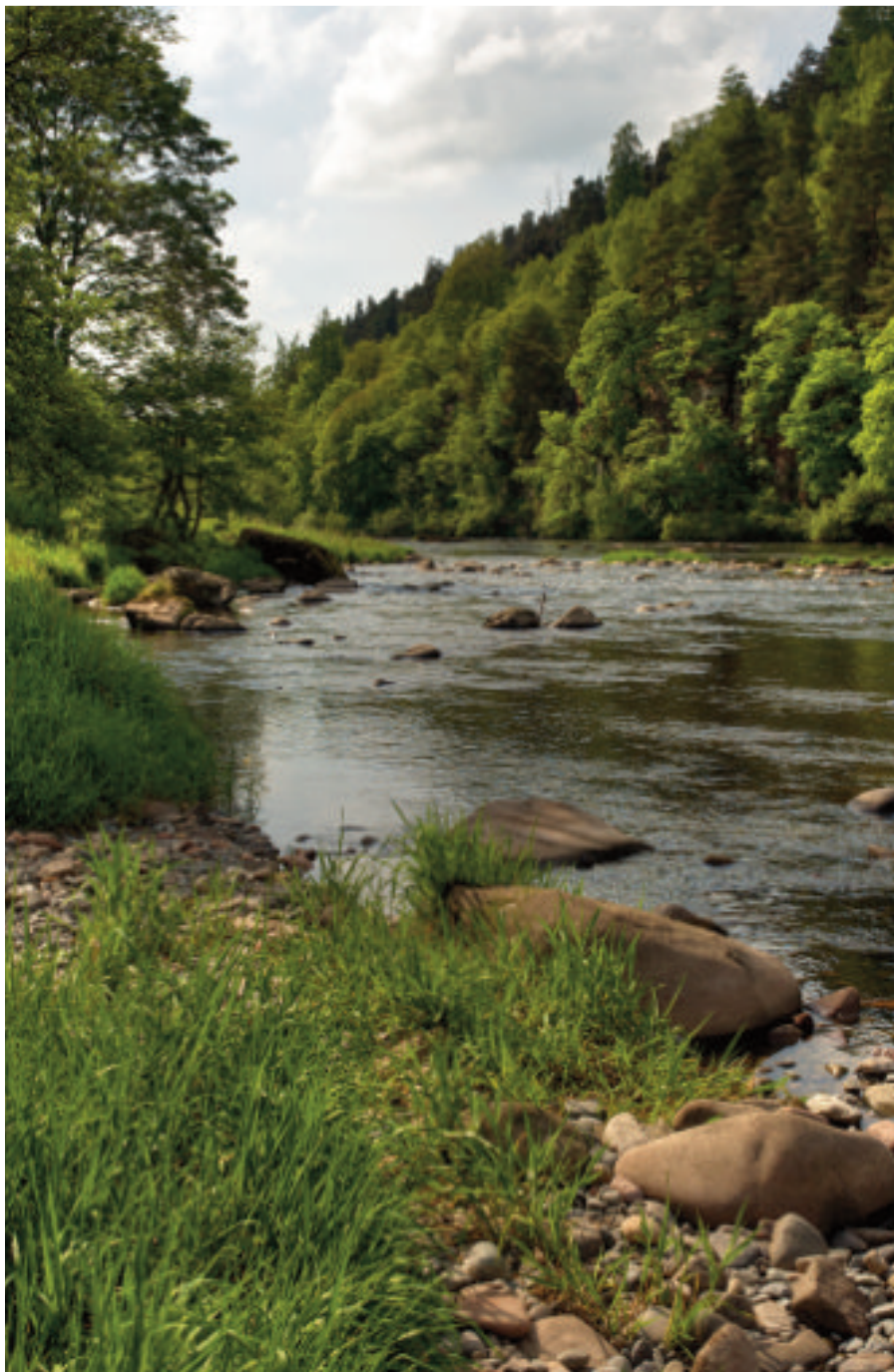


SUMMER 2012

# newsletter

OF THE WILD TROUT TRUST

## 70 MEMBERS in APPLEBY for 2012 WILD TROUT TRUST GET-TOGETHER



The Wild Trout Trust held its annual gathering on 2 June 2012 on the banks of the Eden in Appleby, Cumbria. The day included some excellent talks, corralled by the Trust's chairman, Edward Twiddy. Shaun Leonard kicked things off, outlining the Trust's successes in the last 12 months, headlined by over 60 Advisory Visits, 25 Project Proposals and 23 Practical Visits; over 80% of the Advisory Visits led to practical enhancements in the river or changes to management practices, like fish stocking. He described more than 20 projects the Trust is running, from urban rivers in Scotland, degraded Northumbrian and east Anglian rivers to the Ouse, Adur, Arun and Rother along the south English coast. WTT staff presented at over 20 events through the year and our conservation messages will be spread further through a range of media.

WTT will soon launch its habitat enhancement DVD, *Rivers – Working for Wild Trout*, a collaborative project with the Environment Agency, presented by WTT vice-president and angling writer, Jon Beer; this

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## LADYBOWER CHARITY EVENT

Ladybower Fisheries in Derbyshire held a charity fishing match over the weekend of 12 & 13 May 2012 which was much enjoyed by all. A total of £400 was raised from the entry fees, the barbeque and raffle, the prizes for which had been kindly donated by local businesses. WTT was delighted to receive a cheque from David Smith of Ladybower Fisheries for £200, the other £200 having been donated to Help for Heroes.

## WTT GRAYLING WEEKEND

The Haddon Estate has kindly offered us grayling fishing again this year on 27 & 28 October 2012. There are 15 places available each day.

Please contact Christina in the office to book a place for either or both days. Until 31 July, priority will be given to members who have not fished a WTT Grayling Weekend before; thereafter, members that have fished before may book. The cost will be £35 per person per day.

## WILD TROUT TRUST RAFFLE 2012 – FANTASTIC PRIZES!

This year's first prize is a night at the luxurious Peacock at Rowsley in the Derbyshire Peak District for two people, and two days' fishing on the Wye. Other prizes include top quality rods from Sage and Orvis and a voucher for £100 of meat from Rother Valley Organics (available by mail order).

Please buy a ticket (or 10), and sell some to your friends to support us. Tickets are £1 each.

To buy tickets, either complete the order form enclosed, or go to our website ([www.wildtrout.org](http://www.wildtrout.org)) and purchase from the shop.

The raffle will be drawn at 7pm, Tuesday 11 December at The Thomas Lord, West Meon, Hants.

## DIARY DATES

- 10 & 11 July 2012 **FBA Annual Scientific Meeting**, University of Glasgow ([www.fba.org.uk](http://www.fba.org.uk))
- 20-22 July 2012 **CLA Game Fair**, Belvoir Castle, Leics ([www.gamefair.co.uk](http://www.gamefair.co.uk))
- 3-5 October 2012 **Institute of Fisheries Management Conference**, Edinburgh ([www.ifm.org.uk](http://www.ifm.org.uk))
- 9 October 2012 **WTT & Orvis Conservation Awards**, Savil Club, London ([www.wildtrout.org](http://www.wildtrout.org))
- 20 & 21 October 2012 **Grayling Society Symposium**, Llandrindod Wells ([www.graylingsociety.net](http://www.graylingsociety.net))
- 14-16 November 2012 **The Rivers Trust Autumn Conference & Awards Dinner**, Newcastle-upon-Tyne ([www.theriverstrust.org](http://www.theriverstrust.org))
- March 2013 (dates t/b/c) **Rivers And Fisheries Trusts Of Scotland Annual Conference** ([www.rafts.org.uk](http://www.rafts.org.uk))
- March 2013 (dates t/b/c) **WTT Internet & Postal Auction**
- 8 & 9 June 2013 **WTT Annual Get-Together**, Dartmoor Training Centre, Princetown ([www.wildtrout.org](http://www.wildtrout.org))

## CLA GAME FAIR 2012

WTT will be in the Fisherman's Village, stand N848, at the 2012 CLA Game Fair at Belvoir Castle, Grantham, Leics on 20-22 July 2012 ([www.gamefair.co.uk](http://www.gamefair.co.uk)). Many of our usual features will be there including a beautiful water feature (courtesy of Wessex Land & Water), fly tying for adults and kids, expert advisers on trout and habitat enhancement and this year we will be hosting Fish On Productions including their expert team of anglers such as John Tyzack, John Pearson and Dean Andrews. Do come and see us – we would be delighted to welcome existing and new members.

## JOHN WILLIAMS 1936-2012

John Williams, a great friend of and volunteer for the Wild Trout Trust, died on 11 May 2012, his 76th birthday. These words are extracted from a piece written by his fishing buddy, Richard Cripps.

I, like so many others, met John through fishing, and it goes to prove that there is more to fishing than just catching fish. To John, the number of fish caught was not necessarily important, but more so the presence of fish, of fly-life, the company, the day, the water, balanced tackle and the way the fish were stalked and targeted.

John was a great fishing companion who had introduced and encouraged many within the sport. (Even as I write this piece there will be a small group of his friends fishing up in Scourie missing his company, humour and wit; they have promised to raise a glass). He kindly introduced me to the Hanging Langford syndicate on the Wylfe where he was a long established and respected member.

John was passionate and very knowledgeable about many of aspects of the countryside, wildlife, farming, landscapes and the people who worked in it, and for it. He was critical of its spoilers, polluters and detractors. He believed in the conservation of the iconic brown trout and in pursuing naturally wild fish in pristine or improving habitats. Many will know of John's role in the Wild Trout Trust: he acted



↑ John Williams proudly showing off his Bernard Venables Trophy 2011. John will be much missed.

as editor of *Salmo trutta* and our newsletter, reviewed books and DVD's and badgered people into submitting articles. John was active in recruiting on the WTT stand at game fairs and country shows and he ran the WTT Bugs and Grubs days for many years.

I like so many others have good memories of John Williams and much to thank him for.

## NEW WTT CONSERVATION OFFICER – MIKE BLACKMORE

Mike Blackmore joins WTT from summer 2012 as our latest Conservation Officer, funded through a partnership project with the Environment Agency in Sussex to work on actions in the South Coast Sea Trout Project. Mike's passion for rivers was ignited when he stepped into the River Chew in Somerset for a school Geography project. That experience led to an Environmental Science degree undertaking fieldwork from Dartmoor to the Malaysian rainforest, then voluntary work with endangered white-clawed crayfish and a career managing large-scale river restoration projects with Cain Bio-Engineering Ltd.

Mike is a big believer in 'wild rivers for wild fish'. He is passionate about re-wilding the UK's long over-industrialised rivers and aims to make river restoration part of the everyday language of fisheries management.

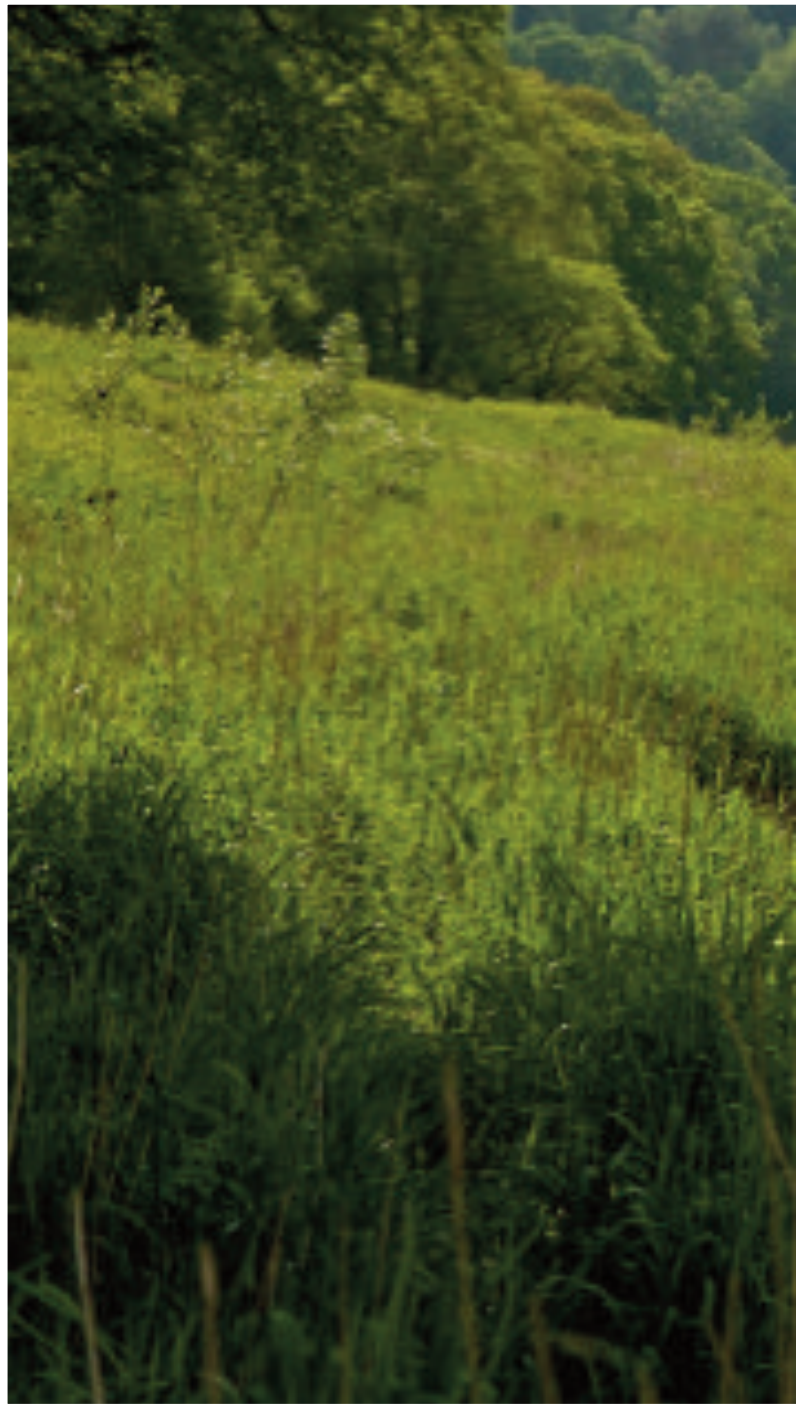


↑ New WTT Conservation Officer Mike Blackmore, sporting a suitable cap!

# annual get-together

...continued from front page.

light-hearted but hugely informative film lays out a series of conservation messages pivotal in the sustainable management of our inland waters. The Trust is also filming a series of short 'how to' videos on habitat enhancement techniques in association with Fish On Productions, for broadcast through the website. The updated *Wild Trout Survival Guide*, an excellent book on practical river enhancement and the product of another collaboration with the Environment Agency, will soon be available from WTT. The 2012 edition of Trust's annual magazine, *Salmo trutta*, is again an outstanding publication. WTT has also produced a series of information sheets on common fishery management work (trees, aquatic plants, gravel cleaning etc), designed to inform fishing clubs and their working parties – these too are available as free downloads through the WTT website. The website itself has seen a major redevelopment during this year and will provide a 'one-stop shop' for a host of information relevant to wild trout. As an example, a new trout stocking position statement has been published on the website that distils what science currently tells us about issues for wild trout from stocking of farm-reared brown trout – this has informed the thinking of other fishery and conservation NGOs and a number of clubs who are amending their stocking practices for the conservation of wild trout. Looking to the future, Shaun outlined the Trust's intention to retain the quality and value for money in its day-to-day conservation work, to spread its message to a wider audience, to contribute more extensively to work for trout in





Scotland, to seize the opportunities for trout conservation presented by the Catchment Restoration Fund in England and to appoint a Conservation Engagement Officer, supported through private donation, to extend the Trust's partnership working, including with schools using initiatives like Mayfly in the Classroom. Shaun thanked the many who support WTT's work including the ever-faithful WTT members, its volunteers, the Environment Agency and a number of companies such as Hardy Greys, Orvis, Patagonia, Sage and Severn Trent and Thames Water PLCs.

*The River Eden and its catchment have so much to offer. Sublime wild trout habitat like this (above) at Lazonby in the middle reaches and (far-left) a classic corrie tarn on the edge of the Lake District.*

*...continued on page 6*

# annual get-together

...continued from page 5.

The day continued with *Simon Johnson*, Director of Eden Rivers Trust, whose talk described the opportunities for wild trout conservation that come with funding aimed at improving our rivers to comply with the Water Framework Directive. Simon stressed the need for the rivers trust movement to buy-in people to the process. Eden Rivers Trust has launched a short film designed to highlight the importance of the river to local people and to join the campaign for its protection and improvement (see <http://savetheeden.org>). Simon's critical message was that whilst there may be improvements in the Eden valley, the entire community must take ownership of its river and be vigilant of future decline.

*Stuart Crofts*, angling guide, entomologist and Riverfly Partnership tutor, then gave us a peek into the amazing world occupied by the 199 (currently known) British species of caddis fly, plenty of them well-known to the angler and naturalist, some much less conspicuous but equally intriguing. Stuart talked us through the life cycle of caddis flies and showed us one or two of his fly dressings, which were striking in their simplicity. Stuart returned later in the day as the after-supper speaker, imploring us all to be involved as volunteers on our rivers; his story on the Yorkshire Don provided fitting inspiration for what can be achieved by people getting really involved and not taking 'no' for an answer.

*Will Cleasby* of Eden Rivers Trust and a part-time farmer gave a fascinating talk that emphasised the need to work with the farming community to foster more sustainable management of the land to improve riverine habitat. Will outlined a few quick wins in the farmyard and on the fields that could make a real difference to riverine ecology. Some of these are described in Eden Rivers Trust's *Water Friendly Farming Good Practice Guide* (available through the Eden Rivers Trust website, <http://trust.edenriverstrust.org.uk>).

*Roger Smith*, WTT founder member and author of the book *Flyfishing the Welsh Borderlands*, gave an interesting presentation on the story behind his book – his inspiration and information sources and some of the characters that have shaped trout fishing on the famous river systems on the Welsh-English border – the Welsh Dee, Severn, Wye and Usk.

*Paul Procter*, ace trout angler, guide, writer and WTT vice-president, described his approaches to

fishing for big wild trout on the dry fly. Paul's really entertaining talk highlighted the need for stealth on approach and detailed his philosophies on tackle and fish handling. His fabulous photography and passion for trout fishing and conservation provided an inspirational close to the afternoon's talks.

The entire get-together was great fun with Appleby (and specifically the Tufton Arms Hotel) proving to be an ideal venue. John Pearson and Dean Hodson of Fish On Productions filmed much of the event and that footage will feature in future WTT output, through the website and possibly too on a DVD of WTT activities. Some of us fished on the Sunday, though the chilly wind and river running thin and clear did not lack for challenge. We are already looking forward to next year's get-together on the Dart in Devon on 8 & 9 June 2013.





*Fish On film makers John Pearson and Dean Hodson capture some shots over the weekend with WTT Vice-President Paul Procter and Paul Gaskell. Fish On are making a series of 'how to' videos, soon to be available on the WTT website.*

*Patrick Lloyd and Paul Gaskell spotting a rise on the Eden at Appleby near the AGT venue.*

*...and maybe this was the fish!*



# conservation updates

## CONSERVATION UPDATE FOR THE SOUTH AND WEST FROM ANDY THOMAS

It only seems like a few weeks ago but it was probably around the end of March when I was forecasting Armageddon for many of our southern rivers. I can hear myself saying to one of my many chalkstream contacts that flows were going to “drop off a cliff” by the end of May! Well, it’s mid-May as I write and yesterday I spoke to a Hampshire farmer who tells me the water in his well has gone up by ten feet in the last week!

The vagaries of the weather, however, haven’t put the brakes on our efforts to get out there and improve trout habitat. Highlights for me have been recent Practical Visits (PVs) on the River Wey, Tichborne (upper Itchen) and the Whitewater and Blackwater, the latter two as part of the Loddon Rivers Week, which was organised by Dom Martyn of the EA. I have also enjoyed running a series of workshops funded by the South Downs National Park Authority on my local river, the upper Rother which has led to a flurry of interest from landowners and conservation groups for improving in-channel and riparian habitat in the Hampshire end of this lovely and severely under-rated trout stream.

The demand for help and support from Meon landowners, community groups and angling clubs seems to be insatiable. Just when I think I must have walked every yard of the Meon, somebody else pops in a request for an AV or an idea for a project. I like to kid myself that it’s me being ‘catalytic’ but I really think it’s the work of our Fundraising & Communications Officer, Denise Ashton who is absolutely determined to make all Meon landowners as passionate about improving brown and sea trout

stocks on her beloved river as she undoubtedly is!

Many of the AVs I carry out across the area are followed up with Project Proposals (PPs) which in turn are generating offers of funding. Recent PPs that are turning into funded projects include the upper Ouse with the Balcombe Fly Fishers, the Rother (again), this time at Shopham in partnership with the Arun Rother Rivers Trust and the Petworth and Bognor AC. It’s not just rivers in Sussex and Hampshire, as we also have plans to deliver improvements on a controlled loop of the River Exe (St James Leat) in Exeter in partnership with the EA and Devon Wildlife Trust. I’m hoping this will be a great project for our new Southern CO Mike Blackmore to cut his teeth. Not forgetting the far east, where we are working on plans to improve a reach of the Kentish Stour with the EA and our friends from the Stour Fisheries Association, who certainly has an appetite for improving winter holding habitats for juvenile browns.

## PONT & BLYTH PROJECT

WTT Conservation Officer, Gareth Pedley, describes a project to investigate and propose fixes for some major habitat problems on Northumberland’s rivers Pont and Blyth.

In 2010 Environment Agency (EA) Fisheries Officers in the north east began to develop a project to address many of the issues on the River Blyth catchment that were leading to lower than expected numbers of fish, particularly trout. Survey results for the River Pont (a tributary of the Blyth) have shown that many areas currently hold lower densities of fish and invertebrates than is expected.

Consequently, many of these areas fail to meet standards set under the Water Framework Directive (WFD), the much-mentioned legislation that aims to categorise and align the quality of rivers across European Union member states. The failures identified prompted development of a project involving the EA, Northumberland Wildlife Trust (NWT) and Wild Trout Trust (WTT), to identify issues like over-grazing, bank erosion, barriers to fish migration and other habitat-deficiencies that could be contributing to the failure.

As part of the project, WTT entered a partnership with EA and NWT to undertake walkover assessments on many waterbodies within the catchment to identify and assess these issues. The data gathered is used to produce advisory reports



WTT Conservation Officer Andy Thomas leads a Practical Visit on the River Whitewater.



for the waterbodies, with recommendations for how to address the issues and improve habitat. These recommendations will then be used to form a programme of works by NWT to improve habitat throughout the catchment.

The walkover surveys revealed that much of the catchment is subject to significant straightening and dredging, which has left the channel over-deep and lacking in natural bed-substrate, with little opportunity for spawning. Other significant issues encountered include excessive sedimentation of the watercourse and barriers to fish migration, with two significant weirs towards the lower end of the catchment limiting the upstream migration of both river-resident and migratory fish stocks.

To counter the rivers' problems, the habitat projects are likely to incorporate buffer fencing (to reduce the rate of bank erosion through livestock access), tree planting (to further stabilise river banks and increase the levels of both in-stream and aerial cover), flow deflectors (to increase flow variation in featureless reaches) and potentially, re-creation of gravel riffles in the more severely dredged and degraded reaches.

One further major issue highlighted was the presence of several weirs within the catchment that are restricting the ability of fish to access better-quality habitat. If these fish passage issues can be addressed it is likely that the health of current fish populations can be increased, safeguarding their future.



*The River Pont at a water transfer point – a significant habitat issue!*

## TROUT IN THE TOWN PROJECTS UPDATE FROM PAUL GASKELL

As well as continuing the support and guidance for each of the Trout in the Town local chapters, TinTT has been developing and making further progress on plans for habitat works on urban rivers in areas such as Wigan, Birmingham, Sheffield and Rotherham. These include in-channel adult and juvenile trout habitat construction (Wigan), adult, juvenile and spawning habitat creation with improved connectivity (Birmingham), improved marginal vegetation and in-channel cover (Rotherham) and connectivity improvement (Sheffield). In addition, a very promising start to partnership and support with the Aire Rivers Trust was made by providing a walkover survey and guidance report on feasibility for fish passage improvements on tributaries and the main stem of Yorkshire's River Aire.

We have begun to assemble a considerable library of footage and a consequent collection of short films covering subjects such as a 'how to' series on habitat works, supporting guidance for obtaining relevant permissions and paperwork, case studies, fishing interest and events coverage. The project, working with Fish On productions, promises to be an exciting and invaluable addition to our work of spreading best practice and generating passion and engagement from both existing and 'future' members of the Wild Trout Trust. This latter demographic (including the people who don't yet know why they would even want to join and support the Trust) is the one to which the medium of short video clips could be perfectly suited.



*Cold view of a 'dark satanic' mill and habitat opportunities in Wigan.*

## SEA TROUT GENETICS

There is an increasing library of genetic analyses from around the British Isles that is pointing towards the complexity, uniqueness and structuring of trout populations. Some of the work, such as those projects on Celtic Sea Trout ([www.celticseatrout.com](http://www.celticseatrout.com)), the Living North Sea ([www.livingnorthsea.eu](http://www.livingnorthsea.eu)) and Atlantic Aquatic Resource Conservation (<http://aarcproject.org/>) are on a huge scale. Others, no less important, are focusing at a more local level. This report from Shona Marshall of the West Sutherland Fisheries Trust, summarises a genetic assessment of sea trout populations within west Sutherland; the full report is available on the Trust's website at <http://home.bt-connect.com/wsft/>

Samples were collected from trout throughout west Sutherland. These samples included both river and estuarine sites, together with juvenile samples from two systems outwith the area. The aim was to provide information on the nature and extent of genetic structuring of brown and sea trout in the area into breeding populations, in order to help inform fisheries management.

These analyses indicate that each river has its own unique breeding population(s), based on significant genetic differences between juvenile populations in different rivers. Each estuary was also significantly different from the others, with multiple genetic groups present in some of the estuaries, suggesting that the sea trout originated from a number of different breeding populations, either from the river whose estuary was sampled or from different rivers using the same estuary.

No genetic differences were found between sea and brown trout samples in the Laxford, which could be due to lack of power because of small sample sizes, the inability of the microsatellite markers used to resolve differences between the two forms, or the possibility that those two life history strategies do belong to a single breeding population.

These early findings provide some insight into the population structuring within the stock and are essential for effective management.

## BLACKWATER TROUT PROJECT

This really interesting snippet from Richie Miller, senior biologist with the Deveron, Bogie & Isla Rivers Trust, highlights how our knowledge of trout ecology is developing all the time and how we meddle with these extraordinary populations at our (and the fish's) peril.

The Blackwater tributary of the Deveron has long been believed to support a productive population of sea trout, and as such, has historically been used to stock the Deveron hatchery. However, four successive years of scale collection and analysis funded by the Moray Firth Sea Trout Project has suggested they might not be sea trout at all! The trout sampled from the Blackwater by the Deveron, Bogie & Isla Rivers Trust, show many sea trout characteristics: they are relatively large (49cm on average), the majority are female (72%), they look like sea trout and make a clear, distinct migration. However, the majority of the scales taken from the 168 fish over the four years are not typical of sea trout but rather suggest fast growing river or brown trout. Stable isotope analysis conducted on a sample of fin clips from the population suggests that the fish are feeding quite far up the food chain, i.e. not on insects but on other fish and also that there is some, though, minimal evidence of marine feeding. In 2010 and 2011, 85 adult trout were tagged from the Blackwater with floy tags during September and three have already been caught in the Deveron Main stem (Avochie, Huntly and Rothiemay) which suggests the Blackwater population is making a significant contribution to the Deveron trout fishery. This work is ongoing and we hope to start a project to help us better understand this population and their life history, if funds can be secured. More information is available from Richie Miller: [richiemiller@deveron.org](mailto:richiemiller@deveron.org).

*A fabulous looking Blackwater trout; not, it seems, a sea trout after all.*



## NEW WTT WEBSITE

The new website is up and running, at last! The intention was to create a website that had much simpler navigation than the old site, with fewer pages and more succinct, up-to-date content and a cleaner, more modern look and feel. I hope we have succeeded – let us know!

Highlights of the new website include:

About Trout – a summary of the trout lifecycle with habitat needs at each stage, threats and challenges to wild trout and how we work to address those threats. There is also a page of 'trout facts' which lists some of the things you might not know about trout. Buried at the bottom of this page is a little challenge on trout identification!

Advisory Visit map, list and reports – a zoomable map shows the location of all the Advisory Visits we have carried out since 2001, with a link to access the report. There is also a complete list of all the Advisory Visits and associated reports, which can be sorted by any column (date, river basin, county, author etc.). As a part of our agreement with the recipients of AVs, the reports are only available if you register on the website with your email address, username and password. These details have not been transferred from the old website so please register as a new user.

Projects and Trout in the Town – there are a number of project case studies that illustrate the type of practical work we do and the regional sea trout projects. We will refresh this list with new case studies from time to time to keep the information current. All of the Trout in the Town projects are described, and again we will keep this up to date with new projects and progress.

Library – this is very much work in progress. It currently has our own publications such as the habitat manuals, stocking policy, our strategy and business plan. We also have a section on the main policy documents that affect us, such as the recent Government white papers on water and nature conservation. The plan is to extend gradually the content to become a rich source of topical information on wild trout conservation.

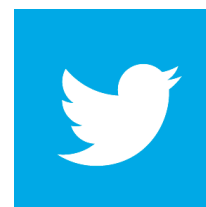
Videos – the new habitat video with Jon Beer and the Conservation team will be available to watch from the library section of the website. We also have a number of short 'how to' videos in development which will be available from the website and also on YouTube. By putting them onto YouTube we hope to reach a much wider audience



and spread the word about good habitat management.

The website also has a shop with our merchandise, publications and the ability to join and donate online; a page on how to get started in wild trout fishing; profiles of the WTT Trustees, Executive Committee and staff and a link to the ever popular 'Mayfly in the Classroom' guidance. Take a look at [www.wildtrout.org](http://www.wildtrout.org).

## TWITTER CAST



Twitter is becoming a great way to catch up on and follow a wide range of news and views of interesting people and organisations. We will use this space to recommend Twitter feeds to follow. If you are not familiar with Twitter ask someone who is to show you how to use it on your computer or smartphone. Or go to the Twitter website (<https://twitter.com>) and follow the instructions. Once you are using Twitter use the search to find these Tweepers:

The Wild Trout Trust@WildTroutTrust  
Riverfly Partnership@Riverflies  
Eden Rivers Trust@EdenRiversTrust  
Environment Agency@EnvAgency  
Angling Trust@AnglingTrust

# conservation updates

## WTT STOCKING POSITION STATEMENT: UPDATED AND EXTENDED

The update of WTT guidance on stocking practices and the implications for wild trout fisheries began with the identification, reading and comprehension of almost 80 peer-reviewed scientific studies. These studies investigated a huge spread of observed effects and were carried out to tackle a diverse range of disparate research questions designed for each separate research project. The final report directly cites over 40 studies, and the conclusions are in line with the full body of work consulted. It is overwhelmingly clear from these studies that a commonly voiced statement, “There is no evidence that stocking with fertile (diploid) trout causes any genetic damage to wild fish”, is totally wrong. Instead, it is known that fertile stock fish:

- Do not provide ‘fresh blood’ benefits to native stocks (in fact, they reduce survival and reproduction in ‘hybrid’ wild x stock fish offspring because the latter are adapted to life in captivity rather than life in the wild).
- Remove genetic variation among and within wild populations (this variation is the basis of the wild trout’s ability to adapt to their environment).
- Dilute inherited characteristics that can be of great value to the fish (and anglers, such as sea-migratory behaviour).

However, all is not lost because ceasing to stock with fertile fish has also been noted to have beneficial effects. It is also clear that, even in rivers

that have been heavily stocked for many decades, a significant and valuable proportion of the wild gene pool often still remains. The preservation of this remaining wild gene pool has demonstrably beneficial effects for the survival and reproduction of the fish breeding in those streams.

Get the full critical evaluation of the studies – and the guidance arising from the findings – on the WTT website library page:

<http://www.wildtrout.org/content/trout-stocking>.

The guidance is available in both full length and summary versions.



*Three trout from different parts of the same river system (South Yorkshire Don). Apart from the inherited differences that can be seen (spotting-patterns and fin colouration) there will be many invisible differences (such as pH tolerance) that are adapted to their locations. These are the differences that are amalgamated or lost by interbreeding with fertile stock fish.*



## CONSERVATION UPDATE FOR THE MIDLANDS, NORTH AND EAST FROM TIM JACKLIN

A recurring theme in my work recently has been improving habitat for juvenile trout to help get them through the crucial first winter of their lives. I am becoming more and more convinced that a lack of such habitat is the key 'bottleneck' limiting wild trout numbers in many of the rivers I visit. Improving the margins of the river and creating cover that persists throughout the winter, providing shelter during varied flows, can greatly improve trout survival; this has been the theme of Practical Visits on the River Dove (Okeover Fishing Club) and the Bentley Brook (Leek & District Fly Fishing Association), Derbyshire.

On the Dove, selected trees were felled and anchored in the margins along with conifer tops from a nearby plantation. Some hawthorn bushes were also used and whilst providing brilliant and persistent cover, they can extract a heavy price in punctured waders, gloves, fingers, etc! On the smaller Bentley Brook, brushwood bundles (expertly made by WTT supporter and contractor Charlie Horsford) were installed by two working parties of club volunteers. This was captured on film by Fish On Productions and will feature as one of forthcoming short videos on our website. The River Don in

Sheffield also benefited from a similar project to install re-cycled Christmas trees, masterminded by colleague Paul Gaskell who came up with a novel way of fixing the trees to large boulders.

Getting the habitat message out there and providing people with hands-on experience of techniques they can use on their own rivers is an important part of WTT work. My thanks are therefore due to Willow Brook Fly Fishers (Northamptonshire), for organising a demonstration day in March where attendees were able to get their feet wet, tackle some habitat improvements and enjoy an excellent home-made lunch. WBBFF also very kindly made a donation from the day to WTT funds. We are also working with WBBFF on plans to improve a tricky obstacle to fish migration, using the professional skills of architect and club Chairman, David Pitts, supported by funding from the Environment Agency.

Advisory Visits have been continuing steadily with visits to rivers in Anglesey, Warwickshire (Arrow), Northern Ireland (Lagan, Shimna), Staffordshire (Endon Brook) and Norfolk (Yare and Blackwater). Also, work is continuing on the Anglian Sea Trout Project on the rivers of north Norfolk and the Welland. There are some large and exciting projects in the offing here which will be reported in future newsletters – watch this space...

*World faggoting championships – the playoff!*



# conservation updates

## GOING NATIVE – A Project to Eradicate Himalayan Balsam

The Monnow Rivers Association has enjoyed considerable success with a project to eradicate the invasive plant, Himalayan Balsam, from its banksides. Here, Robert Denny, outlines their approach.

If print dates are anything to go by, when you read this your river might be one of the many unfortunate ones to have disappeared behind an impenetrable barrier of Himalayan Balsam (HB). If so, you have my sympathies but only so far, if you have not already started controlling it.

The Monnow Rivers Association (MRA) has developed a control regime to eradicate HB in three years if you follow The Rules.

Six years ago Patrick Lloyd and I felt that there had to be something that the MRA could do to stem the monstrous green tide. First, we established the uppermost HB sites on the various tributaries. The key to success is starting control at the top of each tributary so that no seeds can be washed down to re-infest cleared areas – that is Rule 1.

HB is easily and effectively treated by hand-pulling, cutting, spraying or a combination of all three. We started by hand-pulling with teams of wonderful volunteers. Despite Herculean efforts, we didn't even make a tiny dent in the 75km ahead of us. Patrick and I spent four hours spraying a 1-hectare site, a bi-culture of HB and nettles with a selective herbicide, Grazon 90 – active ingredient, Triclopyr. A week later both the nettles and HB were dead. We hand-pulled the sites we had worked on and did so three more times until the first frost so that practically none went to seed. Even the best pickers will miss some plants and new ones germinate. Each plant missed can equal 700 seeds. Rule 2 – keep going back, to remove every plant.

The following May we revisited the treated areas. What we found amazed and inspired us. In the sprayed, 1-hectare site, we found about 200 plants (three subsequent hand-pulls resulted in a total of 1000) – a tiny fraction of what had been growing there. Similar reductions were apparent

in the solely hand-pulled areas. Following regular inspections, no plants have been found on this site for the last couple of years. Rule 3 – revisit all sites several times for at least two years following initial treatment. HB has a maximum seed life of only two years.

On the strength of that initial experiment we felt able to begin control along the whole catchment, another 70km of river. We knew this mammoth task could only be done by initial spraying, in accordance with EA licensing, using Glyphosate near the water and Grazon 90 (now 'Woody'), a broadleaf specific weed killer, away from the river. In the next year, we treated 20km of river bank, fields and woods using paid contractors and hand-pulling with volunteers. Rule 4 – don't initially spray/treat what you cannot manage to keep clear subsequently.

The third year of treatment on the original sites revealed very few plants and in the fourth spring there were no HB plants and, for those concerned about collateral damage, the rapid return of our native broadleaf plants, freed from unwelcome and unequal competition, is great to see.

We have repeated these processes with the same results over the last two years and this June we will complete the initial treatment on the last part of the previously infested 70km of the catchment and have eradicated it entirely from the first 25km. Rule 5 – make a start – IT CAN BE DONE!

*Mature Himalayan Balsam plants.*



## RECOLLECTIONS FROM A WTT AUCTION DAY

WTT member, Paul Jennings, offers some reflections on a day he won in the WTT annual auction, with the Bentley Flyfishers on the Wey in Hampshire.

We had a great day on the Wey in Hampshire: fantastic little river, about the same size as the Chess but very bendy, so lots of deep holes and swirling currents. The river is fished by the Bentley Fly Fishers Club, established 90 years ago. Ironically, the Bentley Fly Fishers Club was set up by Lord Baden Powell whose motto was 'be prepared' which could not have been further from the truth when it came to my fishing partner, Iain Knott. I was due to pick him up at 9.30; I rang the bell, no answer. I was convinced he was at home – the drive was more like the lot of Auto Trader, someone had to be in with that number of cars outside the house. Eventually I got a response by calling him on his mobile; he opened the door in his pyjamas (yes, a strange place for a door). We eventually set off 30 minutes late. Having reminded him to buy his rod licence the day before, I felt it churlish to check but I did anyway. After a few expletives and comments about it not happening in Scotland, we established that he had forgotten to make the required transaction. A phone call to his son, bit of online shopping and the potential misdemeanor was averted. We arrive at the river and breathe a sigh of relief; after the introductions, we find out our host is also the river warden and keen to know if we have valid fishing licences. Now to tackle up, only to discover my fishing partner has failed to pack his reel and net. Not a total disaster, the reel is essential, but until now the net has always been superfluous. I supply a spare reel, a handful of flies and a knotless leader and our host supplies a net. It's like going fishing with a small child. Despite what can only be described as challenging conditions my fishing partner has two fish in his hitherto dry net before I have tackled up. Shocked is not the word. What followed was a magical day, including a long lunch at the Bull and nine fish between us, from 3oz to 1.5lb, mostly wild. Both nets are still drying as I write.

Fantastic guiding from David Darrah made this an excellent day. These WTT auction lots are always a jump into the unknown but they never disappoint. I have seen many waters I would never have got to and made some great friends.

## AN AMAZING AFTERNOON ON THE STOUR

This happy story from Keith Wallington who won a day on the Kentish Stour in the WTT annual auction, taken from his blog at <http://fliesandstuff.blogspot.co.uk>. Looks like the advice WTT has given on this water is really helping!

I was the lucky winner of one of the lots in the Wild Trout Trust auction. I bid on a few lots but the Stour was the one I wanted to win the most. I have been interested in visiting the Stour for a few years now after a number of people had told me such good things. The stretch I fished was really only a few metres wide in most places and suited my little 6ft 10in 3wt perfectly.

I timed it in the hope of hitting the mayfly hatch and boy did luck go my way! I started fishing just after 1pm as the mayfly started coming off. The hatch got heavier and heavier and continued through the afternoon. It slowed a little for about 30 minutes mid-afternoon and then the spinners started hitting the water. Duns coming off, spinners laying... it was mayhem. Early on, the rises were sharp and powerful and required a stout 4.5lb tippet but by late afternoon most of the takes were extremely slow and subtle. It was almost painful watching the fish sidle up and slowly close their mouths around the natural or my imitation.

I tested three new adult mayfly patterns. one was a Klinkhammer style, the other two extended body things. I constantly changed between the three and the 'Klinky' version was the clear winner. I was amazed how the frequency of takes shot up when this pattern was on the water. The extended body versions drew interest but not as much and a lot of the takes didn't convert to hook-ups because the fish were grabbing the extended body so the hook didn't find purchase.

A lot of the fish were holding in open water but some were tucked into the narrowest, fastest channels in shallow water, hemmed in by *Ranunculus*.

What a day on the water! Text book stuff. One of the best days I can remember in 30 years of hurling flies about. Thanks again Paul and friends, you guys have done an amazing job of rehabilitating this little piece of the Stour.

## FISHING CLUB UPDATES

Many of the recipients of our advice and practical help are fishing clubs or syndicates. We'd like to publish short articles on how the work is progressing. This first one is from Nick Gates of the Avon & Tributaries Angling Association. The club is looking for members, so please contact Nick on information@ataafishing.net if you are interested in joining.

The Avon & Tributaries Angling Association (ATAA) has water on the Cam and Wellow Brooks near Bath – beautiful small stream fishing in hidden valleys.

In 1998, the ATAA decided to move away from stocking to 'catch-and-release' for a section of the Wellow Brook, working with the Five Valleys Trust (FVT), which focuses on managing the habitat to establish a strong and healthy stock of wild fish. The site is a particularly beautiful one, close to the iconic village of Wellow.

After a Wild Trout Trust Advisory Visit in 2002, the FVT developed a rolling programme of rotational coppicing and pollarding of bankside trees to improve the light/shade balance on the water, which in turn stimulates weed growth and invertebrate populations to provide a solid foundation for the food chain. Some in-river work has also been done to increase the variety of the habitat available. Grants from the EA (partners in the FVT) have funded the fencing of most of the water, which protects the banks and vegetation from excessive stock grazing, and keeps the cattle out of the water. Grant funding has also allowed pollarding and coppicing of larger trees, allowing more light on to the water and giving a new lease of life to the trees themselves, which are important anchors of the banks, especially so given spate rainfalls in recent years. Volunteer effort has maintained a programme of coppicing smaller trees.

Thirteen years later the success of the ATAA's far-sighted decision is clear: there is a healthy and significant population of trout of all ages, and brook lamprey, minnows, bullheads, kingfishers, green woodpeckers, mayfly and many other species have also benefited. Recent reports of a large increase in the numbers of wild fish further downstream have been linked to the success of the project, showing that it is feasible to grow and maintain a strong wild trout population, which will then colonise other parts of the river. The river flies are excellent, with some species present in greater abundance than on the Wiltshire chalkstreams. Access to the river for

local people has been maintained by the use of regular gaps in the fencing, and the river is even more beautiful than it was before.

Following this success, the ATAA has decided to add to its 'catch-and-release' water with a further section of the Wellow Brook. This more than triples the wild trout project scope, and heralds a real shift in the ATAA's plans and ambitions. The work will involve all of the Association's resources twice-weekly working parties under the overall co-ordination of Fred Scourse, FVT Secretary. Fred says "This is a marvellous new challenge for everybody. I'm enormously encouraged by the reports of many more wild fish appearing in the Wellow, and this shows that with some carefully controlled and selective effort mainly on bankside trees, we will soon have a top-class wild trout fishery."

## HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE WTT STRATEGY MEETING, FEBRUARY 2012

We are not prone to too much navel-gazing in the WTT, but occasionally we take stock of our role and direction, to make sure we are still relevant and effective and adapting to new challenges and opportunities. The February 2012 Strategy Review concentrated on our conservation work, but also how we run as an organisation. The meeting was ably chaired by our founder and President, Charles Rangeley-Wilson, and included the Trustees, Executive Committee and Staff. Highlights included:

Organisation:

- We will continue our policy of 'sustainable growth' as an organisation, recruiting high-calibre staff when we have secure funding and can see long-term demand for our services.
- To maintain our independence and minimise risk, we will continue to maintain a balance of funding sources including private donation, fundraising activities like the auction, membership, charitable trusts and funding from the Environment Agency.
- We will recruit two new Conservation Officers in 2012 to meet demand in the South and West and to grasp the considerable opportunity to further develop areas including Mayfly in the Classroom, and partnerships with the growing number of Rivers Trusts.
- Our mantra remains 'minimum bureaucracy, maximum delivery' but as we grow to nine staff in



2012, some of our processes will need to be more formalised to maintain our track record of good governance, financial control and successful project management.

**Conservation:**

- We have in-depth, specialised knowledge of trout, trout habitat and practical habitat improvement – that is our ‘niche’ and we will stick to it, either in the form of the advice and practical help that we offer to clubs, landowners and conservation partners or in wider programmes such as Trout in the Town and regional sea trout projects.
- We will not expend significant resources on political campaigning in areas such as abstraction, hydropower or diffuse pollution, although we recognise these are significant threats to wild trout. We will address these issues by using our expertise to support groups like the Angling Trust, Rivers Trust and Salmon & Trout Association to lobby and campaign effectively, and we will extend our advice package beyond pure habitat issues to include guidance on how grass roots organisations can address issues related to water quantity

and water quality.

- The greatest demand for our work is currently in England, but we will continue to work across Scotland, Ireland and Wales and seek more opportunities to deliver in those areas.
- We are most effective when working with partners such as Rivers Trusts, Wildlife Trusts and other groups to deliver projects that link land use in catchments to the aquatic and riparian environment. We will do more of this.

Overall, no radical changes – a lot more of the same! We will continue to request feedback from the recipients of our advice and practical help, from our partners and funders. We must continue to strike the delicate balance between talking and doing, being responsive to opportunities and well governed, and most importantly, helping wild trout to thrive.

A copy of our strategy and business plan is in the library section of the website.

## HABITAT MANAGEMENT SHEETS

Balancing the needs of fishermen and trout is tricky. Tidy habitat with neatly trimmed banks, no overhanging branches to catch your fly and open water with plenty of big trout is ideal for fishermen who like a clear cast to a fish. But it’s not great for trout, even for stocked trout. Fishing working-parties that aim to keep the water fishable also need a good understanding of what habitat trout need to thrive, and to decide how much of the habitat is maintained for fishermen, and how much for fish!

Much of this information is available in our habitat manuals but we felt there was a need for explicit advice on ‘do, don’t, how and why’ regarding the main tasks of river management. So, we have produced six habitat management sheets that aim to do just this. Each topic is covered on two sides of A4, with the intention that it can be laminated or folded into a pocket and taken onto the bank. The topics covered are Managing Trees, Managing Bank Erosion, Managing Instream Vegetation, Gravel Cleaning, Controlling Invasive Plants and Managing Woody Debris.

The sheets are available as PDFs to download

from the ‘library’ section of the website under ‘WTT publications’ and you can also purchase the full set for £5 as high-quality printed copies from the website shop or by calling the WTT office.

The sheets were written by Vaughan Lewis, and their development was funded with the support of the South Downs National Parks Sustainable Communities fund.



## MASSIVE TROUT!

Alan Kettle-White, Senior Fisheries Biologist at the Argyll Fisheries Trust, took a 30lb 10oz wild brown trout from Loch Awe in the spring of 2012. This incredible fish was just(!) 95cm long – the photograph below shows how its vast weight is in its depth and breadth. The fish was returned to the loch carrying a radio tag; it is one of several fish tagged this year by Alan and colleagues in a study to identify ferox spawning sites around Awe. The Trust can then work to ensure access to these sites is kept open and protect the habitat of these extraordinary trout populations. A day on the Awe with Alan has also featured in recent WTT auctions – watch out for it in 2013! Alan's fish has prompted us to develop pages on the WTT website to the biology and ecology of these intriguing trout.



Alan Kettle-White and his enormous trout from Loch Awe.

## WTT AND AGRICULTURAL DIFFUSE POLLUTION

WTT has entered a new field of work, in a partnership with the Environment Agency and a farm advisory consultancy in Sussex. In this project, farm advisers will work with landowners on the Rivers Ouse, Adur, Arun and Rother to create and implement management plans to reduce diffuse farm pollution inputs to those rivers. This work is about identification of sources, then implementing fixes to reduce those inputs, to include measures like alterations to farmyard layout and operation,

water separation systems, soil nutrient assessment to influence fertiliser application, and management of the riparian corridor. This work very much dovetails with the usual WTT approach of enhancing instream habitat, but in Sussex we are taking a broader perspective to conservation of the catchment. More on this work will follow in subsequent newsletters.

## BOOK REVIEW

### *THE TROUT DIARIES*

*A year of fly-fishing in New Zealand*

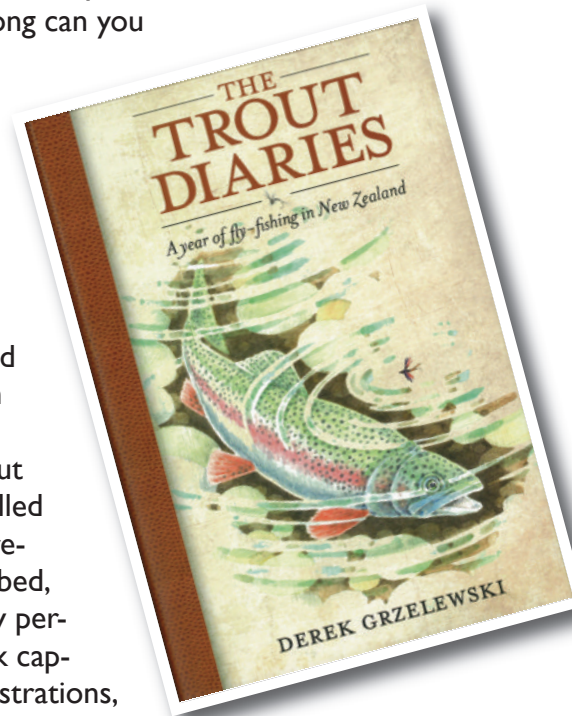
By Derek Grzelewski

Published by Stackpole, distributed by Quiller Publishing in the UK & Europe (Tel .01939 261616, [www.countrybooksdirect.com](http://www.countrybooksdirect.com)). RRP: £16.95 ISBN: 978-8117-1091-6

When I received this book for review I didn't recognise the author's name and I must admit my pre-judgement consisted of a diary full of rather tedious accounts of astonishingly large trout of which I would be unlikely ever to see the like. How wrong can you

be? I read the book in two sittings and enjoyed it more than any other fishing book I can remember for a long time. The chapters are based around months in the New Zealand fishing calendar, but each is an essay filled with, as another reviewer has described, anecdote and wry perception. The book captures the joys, frustrations, hopes, fears, friendships and much more that are associated with fly fishing for trout and I often found myself agreeing out loud with the sentiments expressed (much to other's amusement). In addition, I picked up many ideas which made me think "I must try that next time I fish at ...". Highly recommended.

Tim Jacklin



# merchandise

## CLOTHING

### ↓ SNOWBEE FISHING SHIRT

£35 + £2.16 p&p  
sizes M, L, XL, XXL



### ↓ ORVIS PRO GUIDE SHIRT

£59 + £2.16 p&p  
sizes M, L, XL, XXL



### ↓ ORVIS SIGNATURE POLO SHIRT

£30 + £2.16 p&p  
sizes M, L



### ↑ ORVIS FISHING CAP

£15 + £1.72 p&p  
one size fits all



### ↑↓ WHEATLEY FLY BOXES

12 compartments and a foam lid at £30 or the Double ripple foam inner at £19 + £1.72 p&p



### BADGES, STICKERS AND MUGS

Assorted badges, stickers (£1 to £4) and mugs (£9 + £2.16 p&p)



### ← CDs

#### The Uplands River Habitat Manual (CD)

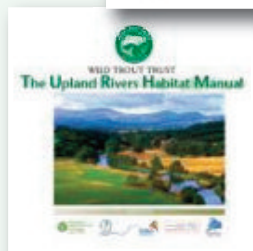
£10 + £1.72 p&p

#### The Chalkstream Habitat Manual (CD)

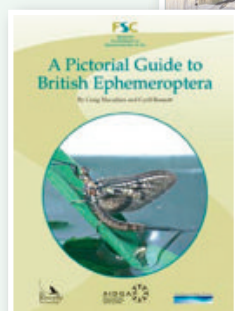
£10 + £1.72 p&p

#### Urban Rivers Restoration Guidelines

£10 + £1.72 p&p

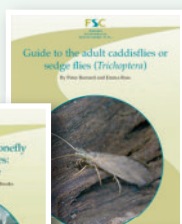
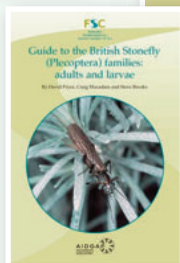


All WTT merchandise can be ordered via the Shop on our website at <http://www.wildtrout.org/>; by sending your order and cheque to the WTT Office; or by debit/credit card over the phone – call the WTT Office on 023 9257 0985. All postage prices are for the UK, please enquire for overseas.



### ↑ PAPERBACK A Pictorial Guide to British Ephemeroptera (Mayflies)

£15 + £2.16 p&p



### ← PAPERBACKS

#### Simple Guide to Caddis Larvae

£5 + £1.33 p&p

#### Guide to the Adult Caddis Flies or Sedge Flies

£3.50 + £1.33 p&p

#### Guide to the British Stonefly (Plecoptera) families

£3.50 + £1.33 p&p

### FOLD-OUT CHART →

Freshwater name trail (a guide to animals found in streams and ponds)

£2.75 + £1.33 p&p



## WTT AND THE BIGGER PICTURE

WTT has historically stuck to its knitting of offering practical advice and help to landowners, fishing clubs and other community groups, focusing especially on habitat protection and enhancement; we will continue to do this to involve people to make life better for our rivers and their trout. However, there is a plethora of really big picture issues associated with the environment and our political and sociological landscape. So, what is WTT doing to try to meet the challenges of climate change, less water, more people and more and more pressure on our rivers and lakes? Well, we are working at two levels:

- We are challenging and influencing the regulators on issues like abstraction and inappropriate hydropower development as part of a group representing fisheries and river conservation. This group comprises ourselves, the Angling Trust, Atlantic Salmon Trust, Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust, Rivers & Fisheries Trusts for Scotland and the Salmon & Trout Association and is hosted by the Fishmongers' Company. We meet with ministers, respond to consultations (e.g. Natural Environment White Paper, Hydropower Good Practice Guidelines) and, by working together, aim to lobby and influence decision-makers more effectively than we could as the WTT alone. Some of these groups have

resources devoted to campaigning on issues, so rather than duplicate that work, we see our role as providing the scientific and practical evidence on trout and trout habitat to support our arguments.

- At the grassroots, WTT's advice and practical work and its key messages on sustainable river management are at the heart of future-proofing, as best we can, our rivers and streams. Techniques like careful and considered management of riparian trees and marginal vegetation, use of woody debris and advice on removal of in-river impoundments seek to create properly functioning channels to give trout the best chance of surviving erratic flows and increasing water temperatures. Coupled with this, and disseminated through, the many talks we do and events we attend, is general awareness-raising about the perilous state of our water resources and the need for all of us to conserve the water we do have.

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Reg Charity No 1077041

[www.wildtrout.org](http://www.wildtrout.org)

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