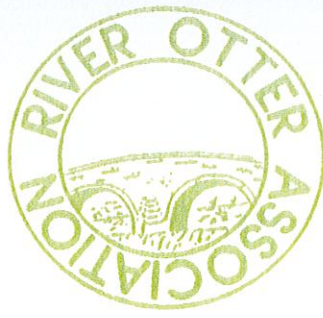


RIVER OTTER



ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER 2012

FISH PASS AT HEAD WEIR



CHAIRMANS REPORT

Welcome to you all and firstly thank you for your continued support of the Association. I am pleased to report that the unfortunate circumstances of last year with our treasurer have now been fully resolved, with all funds missing having been repaid in full. A chapter in the association's history that I hope will never be repeated.

Moving on to 2011 there has been little activity for the association with no capital projects or expenditure undertaken. The Environment Agency has completed the installation of the fish pass at Head Weir at Ottery St Mary over the last few weeks, which is a significant project costing in the region I believe of £250,000!. Whilst the works took much longer than originally anticipated it is hoped that it is a project that will further improve the passage of migratory fish up the river.

We continue as an association to support the South West Rivers Association, Angling Trust and Wild Trout Trust which I believe are all important organizations in protecting our rivers and habitat and are better placed for national lobbying. The implications of the water framework directive are continuing to be seen with funding becoming available for a number of projects throughout the country often as a result of improving the passage of elvers.

The Association is in a financially healthy position and I feel it is important to consider using some of these funds in a positive and productive way rather than sitting in a deposit account earning very little interest!. In addition I also feel it will provide focus for the association and membership. As a result we are looking at the costings and practicality of installing a fish counter probably at Otterton Weir. This would seem a fitting project which will allow us to accurately record the number of migratory fish moving up the river and help assess the success of all the works that have taken place over recent years. The total cost is likely to be well in excess of the current funds held and therefore other fund raising activities/sponsorship will be required. As soon as further details are to hand we will inform the membership.

As ever we are always seeking new members and names of those people that have moved into the area who may be interested in joining. This would also extend to the committee and we are looking to expand the committee membership to ensure that we have good representation from the source to the mouth of the Otter.

I wish you all a good 2012 and hope we see some rain shortly in order to raise the levels from what are currently record lows for the time of year.

ENVIRONMENT AGENCY WISH LIST

There are a number of projects which form part of a "wish list" and subject to bid funding. They are unlikely to be confirmed until at least May 2012 and are as a continuing result of the water framework directive and the need to improve water quality and the passage of migratory fish to include elvers. We are sure that they will be subject to change but come as a direct result of the "Otter walkover" which has resulted in the production of a project report and maps which highlight the various areas of failure. Projects that may be considered for the Otter in the near future are as follows:

There are a number of sites on the Otter coming out quite high on the fish pass prioritize list. The latest for next year is that the Environment Agency may look to construct a new fish pass at Tipton and they will also be getting designs done for Tracey Weir, Back Brook, three sites at Colhayes and Dragons Teeth.

The battle against Himalayan Balsam continues and they will be seeking secure funding and additional partners and a potential delivery body to try and develop a project to tackle Himalayan Balsam. This will be developing some principals developed through catchment work on the River Tale which has proved very successful. (see below)

The Environment Agency may be able to further elaborate on these projects at the AGM.

THE BATTLE AGAINST HIMALAYAN BALSAM

Himalayan Balsam is a significant problem along the River Otter and its contributories but it is hoped that with a co-ordinated approach there may be hope!. Tale Valley Trust has had quite a lot of success in significantly reducing the amount of Himalayan Balsam within the Tale and it is hoped that with a similar but larger project, similar progress may be made on other contributories. The Environment Agency has been in contact with Devon Wildlife Trust and it is hoped that they will be able to supervise the project as the Environment Agency are not able to apply for the Defra funding. Although the Devon Wildlife Trust are hopefully going to be involved, it will be key to have other organizations involved to support the project, help with the clearance days and provide coverage of the efforts in newsletters/websites/meetings and spread the word among people/recruit members.

As an Association we have indicated that we are willing to support and the deadlines for funding are coming up quite soon. However, it must be remembered that this is a battle that may never be won!.

HYDRO POWER UPDATE

Hundreds of applications nationally to install Hydro Power turbines continue to be submitted for planning permission and licencing by the EA. The majority will be very damaging to course and game fish stocks. Most have failed to even consider the impact on fish. It is hoped the influence by the Angling Trust can be given to influence the next version of the good practice guide lines for hydro power. It is believed that the government should not subsidize hydro power turbines that will damage rivers. Please see the attached article that appeared in the Country Life which further highlights the concerns and affect on fish passage.

DESMOND DIVERS DECEASED

The total sum of £494.50 by way of a memorial fund was collected following the sad passing of Wing/Cdr Desmond Divers on December 23rd 2010. Desmond Divers was a good supporter of the Association who lived at the Old Mill Cottage in Churchinford where we hosted the Egg Box project for a number of years. The Chairman on behalf of the Association has written to the family and Desmond Divers widow, Beryl thanking them for the generous donations. It is hoped that these funds can be put to a good cause/project in memory of Desmond Divers.

Alan Knights received a Christmas Card from Beryl Divers who still resides in Churchinford and was keen to make Alan aware that she had seen what she believed to be a migratory fish in the Churchinford stream and a very large head that had been chewed on the path probably by an Otter!.

CORMORANT WATCH – report it on line

Angling Trust members have recorded 4126 sightings of 27,760 fish eating birds since June 2011 following the launch of the organizations new micro site – www.cormorantwatch.org.

Feedback from members has provided the Angling Trust with excellent first hand evidence about the damage that Cormorants in particular have done to fisheries and the thousands of pounds worth of damage they have caused to angling related businesses and fishing clubs.

The Angling Trust is using this data to persuade Defra to take action to protect our valuable fish stocks. The aim is that the Government makes it less beaucroatic for fishery managers to control damage causing birds and to issue more licences.

WATER RAINFALL FIGURES

A dry 2011 and very dry start to 2012. Special thanks to Alan Knights MBE for collating these figures.

RIVER OTTER
RAINFALL AT HONITON- MID POINT OF CATCHMENT

BASED ON SEASON FROM OCTOBER 1 TO SEPTEMBER 30

	2003/4	2004/5	2005/6	2006/7	2007/8	2008/9	2009/10	2010/11	Average
	mm	mm	mm	mm	mm	mm	mm	mm	
October	71	155	190	161	43	155	98	95	121
November	105	27	167	130	84	105	205	118	118
December	112	75	74	101	34	71	94	58	77
January	134	64	35	85	224	139	94	59	104
February	69	21	69	149	24	67	94	78	71
March	65	63	105	103	137	53	61	33	78
Winter sub total	556	405	640	729	546	590	646	441	
April	74	101	126	10	62	57	38	25	62
May	57	57	61	159	84	52	18	45	67
June	63	126	111	139	26	57	40	86	81
July	69	81	23	99	138	138	39	28	77
August	99	51	45	78	178	178	89	92	101
September	39	48	60	32	112	112	66	63	67
Summer sub total	401	464	426	517	600	594	290	339	
Year total	957	869	1066	1246	1146	1184	936	780	