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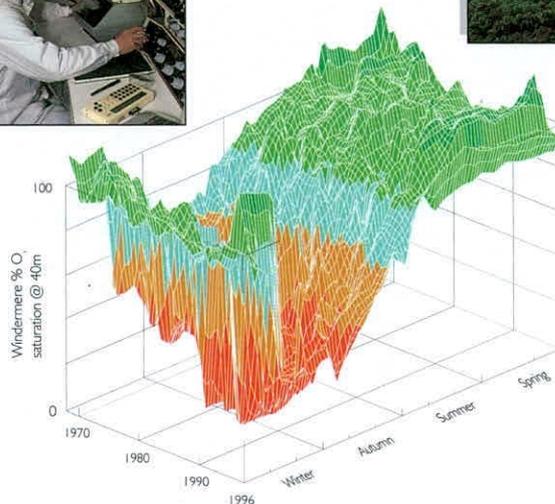
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# Angling Surveys within the South West Region

## Progress Report

J S Welton and A T Ibbotson

Progress Report to: Environment Agency  
IFE Report Reference No: RL/T11068H7/3



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## **Angling Surveys within the South West Region**

### **Progress Report**

**J S Welton and A T Ibbotson**

Project Leader:	Dr A T Ibbotson
Report Date:	July 1999
Report to:	Environment Agency
IFE Report Reference No:	RL/T11068H7/3

## **Commissioning Organisation**

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## **Environment Agency's Project Manager**

The Environment Agency's Project Manager for the Project is:

Rob Grew

## **INTRODUCTION**

This report covers the period to the end of July and gives the progress to date on the Wylve and Malmesbury Avon Angling Quality Surveys.



## WYLYE ANGLING QUALITY SURVEY

A board meeting was held on 12 April 1999 at the River Laboratory of the Institute of Freshwater Ecology. It was attended by Rob Grew (EA Project Officer), Julia Sherwood, Andy Strevens and Nicole Caetano (Environment Agency) and Anton Ibbotson (IFE Project Leader) and Stewart Welton (IFE).

The meeting decided that the Angling Quality studies be continued and that two new sites should be chosen, one with limited macrophyte growth and one where the macrophyte growth was controlled by regular cutting.

Following the meeting, IFE staff met with Robin Mulholland and David Hunt from the Piscatorial Society, owners of fishing on a long stretch of the Wylfe. Two sites were chosen, one at Boyton (NGR ST 950 399) where macrophyte growth was good and could be controlled and one further downstream near Stockton (NGR ST 989 386) where macrophyte growth was absent due to grazing by swans.

On 20 May, eight short reaches were chosen at each site. The area filmed was equivalent to that covered by a dry fly upstream cast. Each reach was filmed three times in sunshine using a polarising filter. A ranging pole was placed in the middle of the river opposite the camera to provide a reference for anglers in the subsequent viewing of the video. A photograph was taken of each reach to give a permanent record of the macrophyte cover. Following this initial visit, the keeper (David Hunt) was given a copy of all photographs so that he could keep the macrophyte cover constant by regular cutting.

To date the sites have been visited ten times. Trips were planned using the Met Office weather forecasting service and on the morning of a planned trip, the keeper was phoned for a local weather forecast. On six of the ten occasions, all reaches were filmed although not necessarily in sunshine. On a further two occasions, only one site was filmed due to deteriorating weather or turbid water. Good footage has been collected in all three months. Depth records were taken on each occasion at the position of the ranging pole.

**The target was 10-12 visits at different flow conditions by 15 October. Assuming that conditions will be suitable for filming, one visit per week for the remainder of the season will exceed the target.** Angling quality was considered by the keeper to be excellent on the original visit (at a flow of  $1.682 \text{ m}^3 \text{ s}^{-1}$ ) and visits have thus been concentrated on the lower flows when angling quality was expected to deteriorate. Table 1 shows the flows when recordings have been made. Flows have been  $<2 \text{ m}^3 \text{ s}^{-1}$  for 90 out of the 112 days.

Weed cutting on the Wylfe occurred between 12 and 20 June and clearing down was not finished until the 5 of July. The weed at Boyton was cut and cover has decreased. Marginal vegetation is now increasing in area and steps will be taken to remove the excess.

**Table 1** Flows at Stockton Park when video recordings have been made

Flow ( $\text{m}^3 \text{s}^{-1}$ )	Video recordings made	
	Boyton	Stockton
3.512	✓	✓
1.682	✓	✓
1.315	✓	
1.226	✓	✓
1.174	✓	✓
1.16	✓	
1.14	✓	✓
1.068	✓	✓

In general, the weather has been poor and cloud cover has been total for a large percentage of the time. Rainfall has been light apart from a severe thunderstorm on 5 July which coloured the river until the 9<sup>th</sup>. The depth has decreased 22 cm from a mean of 64 cm at Boyton and 67.5 cm at Stockton over the period 20 May – 29 July. The discharge over this period at Stockton Park (between the two sites) fell from  $1.68 \text{ m}^3 \text{ s}^{-1}$  to  $1.11 \text{ m}^3 \text{ s}^{-1}$ .

## MALMESBURY AVON ANGLING SURVEY

At the Project Board meeting it was decided to use anglers to assess the conditions on the Malmesbury Avon, downstream of Great Somerford weir (NGR ST 966 832) to the Brinksworth Brook (NGR ST 960 830). Rob Grew sent a list of 11 volunteer anglers interested in helping with the project on 18 April 1999. This list was compiled from a previous public meeting. All were contacted and 9 agreed to help. The other two no longer fish the river. A training day was organised (Sunday 9 May) to meet the anglers and individual instruction was given by Anton Ibbotson and Stewart Welton. Anglers were shown the different habitat types and given a protocol to follow for the walkover assessment. Six anglers turned up on the day. The other three were sent an information pack.

Anglers were asked to complete ten assessments spread out over the trout fishing season.

By the end of June, a total of ten completed assessments from six anglers had been sent to IFE. A general thank you letter was sent as a gentle reminder to those anglers who had not responded. A further six forms have been received in July and there are now only two anglers that have not taken part so far. A second reminder has been sent. Originally, the anglers were asked for ten assessments each, a total of 90 in the season. It is very unlikely, given the initial response, that this target will be achieved. **It is our opinion that, even with this second reminder, we will not receive enough assessments to link angling quality with flow with any confidence.**

Discharge records show that the flow on the Avon is falling. At present it is around  $0.6 \text{ m}^3 \text{ s}^{-1}$ . Video recording will start when the flow is low (nearer  $0.4 \text{ m}^3 \text{ s}^{-1}$ ).





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29 June 1999

Dear Angler

Thank you for agreeing to take part in the angler assessment of the Malmesbury Avon at Great Somerford. I hope you are all happy with what we are asking you to do. We have 9 anglers taking part and so far I have received 10 assessments. Thank you for those.

If anyone is not sure of any aspect of the assessment, please phone me and I will try and sort it out.

Thank you for your help.

Yours sincerely

Dr J.S.Welton

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29 July 1999

Dear Angler

### **Malmesbury Avon Angler Assessment**

Since my last letter at the end of June, I have received a further 7 assessments. To date, 3 of the 9 anglers have sent in 4-5 each (thank you to those), and a further four have sent one. I am concerned that we will not have enough to make a valued judgement of the relationship between angling quality and flow. If you have any assessments that you have completed, please could you send them. By the end of the season, we were hoping for in excess of 70.

The discharge of the river is now quite low and the angling quality will probably change over the coming month. Please could you make every effort to complete your assessments when you visit the river. The project is relying on them.

Thank you.

Dr J.S.Welton

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