



## News from the Monnow Catchment

### Balsam in 2016

We have been out on 56 days since the middle of June this year, treating the Himalayan balsam. Every part of the catchment has been visited at least 3 times.

These efforts have cost the Monnow Rivers Association approximately £10,000 this calendar year – the lowest spend for 6 years and less than half the average annual cost from 2011 to 2014. I would like to thank all those who generously contributed once again. It is especially vital that clubs, syndicates and fishery owners are prepared to support catchment-wide initiatives such as this to improve and protect our river.

I think it would be safe to say that control has now been achieved - balsam is no longer causing access problems nor is it presenting a notable threat to the stability of the riverbanks - but there are still some plants and, if neglected, the situation could be completely reversed in not many years. Those of you who remember our river 10 years ago or indeed have visited the banks of the Wye recently will understand how undesirable that would be. Apart from which it would be nothing short of criminal to be guilty of wasting the 12,000 man hours that have been expended on this project to date and their associated, not insignificant, costs.

Control has to be maintained and this will continue to be costly for at least the next couple of years. To assist us in this process it would be really helpful if all anglers (and other river users) were to adopt an **attitude of intolerance**. Visitors to the river should consider it an affront to see an invasive weed!

If you see a few HB plants, please pull them up at the roots and hang them up to dry. If you see more than a few plants, please report the sighting to me (07768 366660 or [info@monnow.org](mailto:info@monnow.org)) The chances are that we will be aware of them but you never know - even this year (our 7th!) 2 new outbreaks have been discovered.

If we are to succeed in our mission "to be the first significant, previously infected, catchment in UK to eradicate Himalayan balsam", we will need everyone to be committed to never again seeing balsam on the Monnow in the future.

Our energies can then be directed at more positive improvements to our catchment - such as the re-establishment of ranunculus and some more habitat works to encourage a greater production of trout and trout food and to attempt to counter the effects of predation.

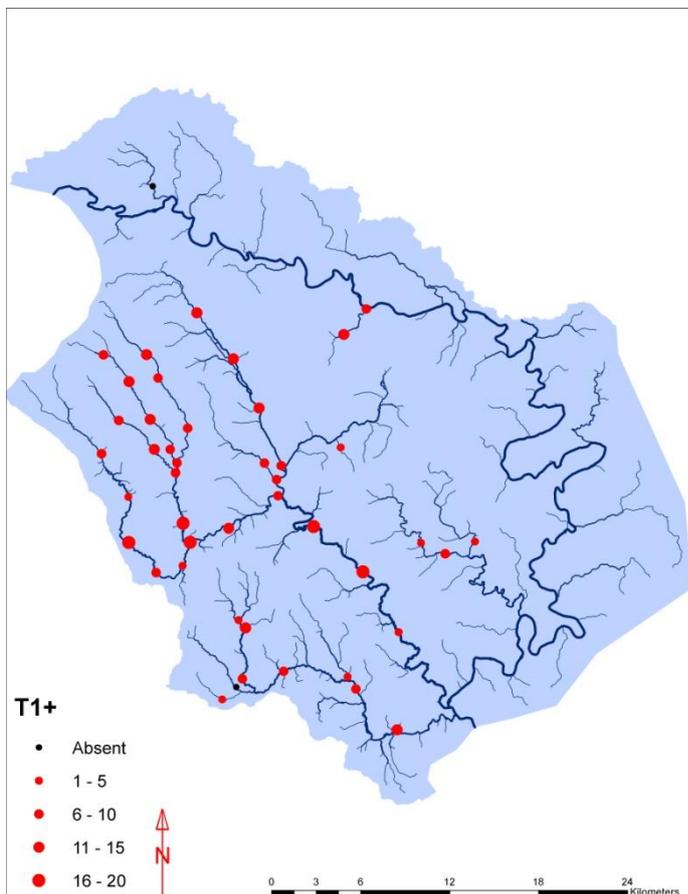
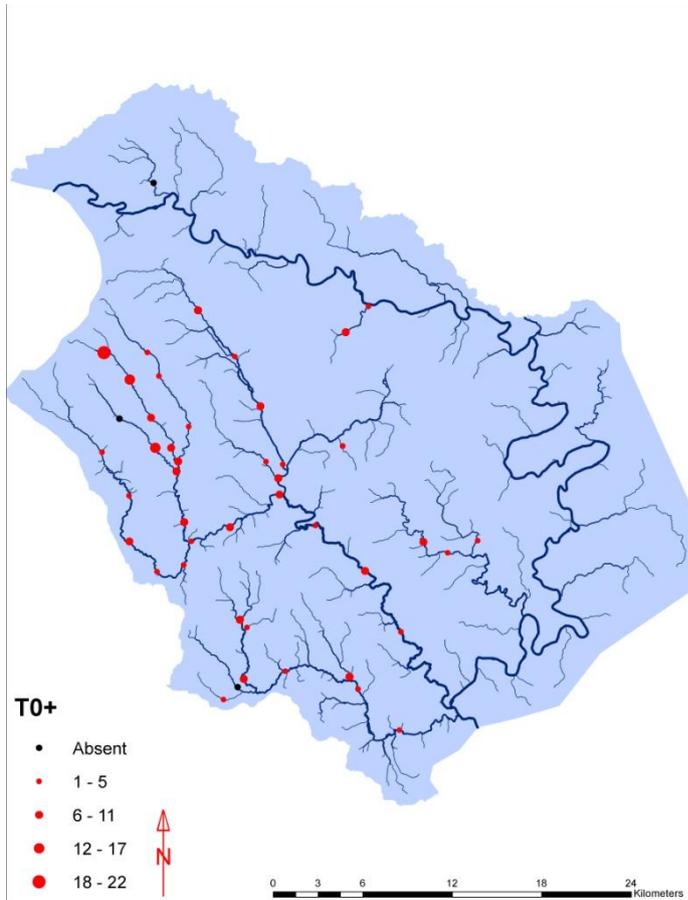
### Monnow River Gauge

Before planning your fishing trip, check whether the river is at a fishable height. This site provides up to date information: <http://www.gaugemap.co.uk/#!Map/Summary/785/804>

## ElectroFishing

The EA did not undertake any electrofishing on the Monnow catchment this season. NRW had one site on the Honddu, which showed similar numbers of juvenile trout to previous years.

The Wye & Usk Foundation did some 5 minute sampling for juvenile trout and found good numbers throughout our catchment. Many thanks to them for providing these maps.



## **Passport Beats**

The fishing beats on our upper tributaries, marketed through WUF, were less well attended in 2016. A couple of us have spent a few days “pruning” them this autumn, in an attempt both to make them more fishable and to provide more cover for the trout. These beats offer marvellous value for money and provide a great chance to remind ourselves why we became so captivated by the pursuit of wild trout. I urge you all to give some a go next season.

## **Fish-Eating Birds**

Cormorants are being seen increasingly regularly on our river. A resident near Skenfrith saw 30 one afternoon and a farmer near Kentchurch has reported watching 10-15 flying upstream early every morning. Considering these birds can eat about 1 lb of fish per day each, this cannot be good news for our fishery. Combined with the equally voracious goosanders, they may well be one of the main reasons anglers found their catches reduced this season. (Winter grayling anglers are also reporting reduced catches)

I am currently in touch with an advisor from the Angling Trust to investigate the possibility of obtaining a licence to control these predators. In order to be successful any application for a licence will have to be backed up by recorded sightings of birds, flying, fishing or roosting, and more importantly any evidence of damage to fish that anyone notices. Please let me know a date and time of any sightings and, where possible, provide photographs in confirmation.

## **The Fish Pass at Osbaston**

There has once again been a net upstream migration of trout this year:

123 trout – mainly between 8” & 12”

36 salmon up to 19lbs have ascended the pass, the best year since 2013 when 53 came up. A total of just under 200 salmon have entered the Monnow above Osbaston since the pass was built in 2008.

1 grayling (first ever confirmed ascending)

1 enormous common carp (first coarse fish registered on counter)

## **Mink update** from “Nick the Mink”

It has been a frustrating year.....a bit like the Curate’s egg, so good in parts!

Our one-man mink controller on the lower Monnow has been weaving his magic for yet another year and has caught a number of mink on their way upstream from the Wye. Well done, Peter! I finally managed to catch one on the upper Monnow earlier this month. I have spent quite a lot of time this year chasing shadows where there seem to have been mink prints yet I have caught nothing. I do wonder if those “ghosts” were, in fact, polecat prints as they are similar in size to mink.

In many ways we have been fortunate that, until recently, we have had very few spates on the catchment which has meant less loss of rafts; the downside has been that the rivers have spent weeks at a very low ebb so you can’t win! However I am now running out of rafts so, if you have asked for a new one, please bear with me as I will be building more in the early New Year. Even in the best of conditions, rafts deteriorate quickly so, even if yours is still afloat, please keep an eye on it and let me know if there are any bits missing e.g. clay, tunnels etc.

Please, keep checking your rafts every 7 to 10 days, even if the weather gets very cold. Mink don’t hibernate and, at this time of year when adults are looking to pair up and breed and next April/May when young are born, they will continue to be active. Thank you all, as ever, for your commitment to your role and please keep checking those rafts.

## INCOME & EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT

		2015/16	
		£	£
<b>INCOME</b>			
Subscriptions			845
Sponsorship			831
Owner Donations			2,600
"Unrestricted" Grants/Donations			4,845
Fundraising			
	Social 2016	3,888.00	gross
	Auction 2016	5,392.80	
	Social 2015	262.00	
	<i>total fundraising</i>		9,543
<b>Total "unrestricted income"</b>			18,663
<b>Grants "restricted" to specific projects</b>			6,119
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>			<u>24,782</u>
<b>LESS: EXPENSES</b>			
Admin		0.00	
Marketing & Comms		30.55	
Event Costs (inc Social)		1,611.63	
Materials & Equip't	see equipment list	0.00	
Membership & Licenses (insurance)		0.00	
Website		301.97	web host 3yrs
Bank Charges		0.00	
			<u>1,944</u>
<b>PROJECTS (restricted funds used)</b>			
	WVP/SITA	5,000	
Donations Paid	Wye & Usk Foundation	0	
	accrued 14/15	1,119	
			<u>6,119</u>
<b>Independent Project Works</b>			
<i>Going Native (HB &amp; Mink)</i>		12,098	
			<u>12,098</u>
<b>OPERATING SURPLUS</b>			4,621
Bank Interest Received			0
<b>Net surplus for the year</b>			<u>4,622</u>

# BALANCE SHEET

at 30 June 2016

		2015/16	
		£	£
<b>Current assets</b>			
Bank deposit accounts		5	
Bank current accounts		10,041	
			10,046
<b>Commitments</b>	"Restricted" grants unused at year end		0
<b>Net current assets</b>			<u>10,046</u>
Represented by:			
<b>General Fund</b>			
At 1st July		5,424	
Surplus for year		4,622	
	accrual (balance of "restricted funds")	0	
At 30 June			<u>10,046</u>

## Postscript

If any readers have any questions on the above or indeed any other issues on the Monnow catchment, please contact the association at [info@monnow.org](mailto:info@monnow.org)

This year we were very lucky to attract funding from Greggs, the bakers - £2,000 came from their Foundation's Small Environmental Award fund, funded by their 5p levy on plastic bags. Our continued works to improve the wildlife on the river Monnow are however mainly dependent on the generosity of anglers and visitors to our catchment. If you would like to make a donation to our cause or know someone who would like to be a member of our association please make payment directly to our bank account.

A/c name: Monnow Rivers Association A/c no: 02433069 Sort Code: 30-00-03

Our main fundraiser each year, responsible for some 30% of our income, is our annual auction, held online in February. I will email a catalogue to you all nearer the time, with a link to bidding. If there are any lots you would like to donate (fishing days, unwanted tackle, flies, or indeed anything else that might attract a bid) please let me know details asap ([info@monnow.org](mailto:info@monnow.org))

Many thanks for your continued support – we will endeavour to put any funds raised to good use, keeping our catchment free of invasive non-native species and trying to improve conditions for our wild brown trout and grayling.

We wish you all a Happy Christmas and a successful and enjoyable season in 2017.