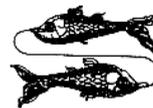


Maldon Angling Society

Newsletter No 22 January 2009

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Chairman's Message

Firstly happy New Year and as ever at this time I wonder how another year has passed so quickly. I genuinely don't know how long I've been a member of MAS but I'd guess at around 20 years (from his assiduously taken records I'm sure Kyff our excellent membership secretary could tell me down to the day but I haven't asked). I'm also not sure when I first joined the committee but I'd guess in around 1995. In that space of time there have certainly been some changes for the club, we have lost waters, gained new ones, have suffered from droughts, floods and any number of other environmental issues in between but there have been some common themes throughout. One of these has certainly been money. Landowners are increasingly trying to find alternative sources of income and as a result our fishery rental costs have gone up enormously as have the price of fish stocks. This means it has been a constant battle to find the balance between keeping subscriptions as low as possible whilst still providing quality fishing. Changes to the environment have given us problems like cormorants eating our expensive fish. We also have increased weed growth at a number of waters which we are now not allowed to control with chemicals (which in any case was always a contentious issue). Instead we have to manually extract literally tons of weed.

Another common theme in facing these issues has been the hard work put in by committee members past and present, without whom the club would simply have folded many times over. From the treasurer battling with the budget to the secretary dealing with innumerable letters and meetings, to the fishery management team up to their armpits in freezing water or digging any number of holes for erecting gates and fences there has been some outstanding effort. My thanks to all who have contributed over this last year.

What do I see for the future? Unfortunately I think more of the same - financial hurdles to overcome, a whole lot of hard work for the fishery management team and the rest of the committee but most importantly I see a club continuing to provide a wide mix of coarse fishing. If you want to catch specimen carp, trot for dace and chub, build a big bag of bream on the feeder, float fish for tench and crucians and anything in between then I hope that is the future. On that note I'd like to wish you all tight lines for 2009.

Hugo Bibby
Chairman

Notice of AGM

The 2009 AGM is to be held at Great Totham Village Hall on Sunday 25th January, starting at 1000 am. As has been the norm over the last few years the information will be presented in the form of a slide show. It's your chance to see how the club has been run over the last year, and vote in the committee members for the coming year. Most of the committee will be there so it's a great opportunity to ask any questions that you may have. You will be able to renew your membership on the day so please bring your cards and membership fees along.

Membership

As always the new membership fees will be formally announced at the AGM but we are pleased to announce there will be no increases for the coming season. We are acutely aware that for many finances are tight and a main focus of this years budget meeting was not to increase the fees. At the AGM the Membership Secretary will be on hand to renew memberships, night syndicate places and night permits. New members for the 2009/10 season may join from the date of the AGM onwards and may fish the end of the 2008/09 season free of charge.

Night Syndicate

Please note that if you are an existing member of the Totham Pit night syndicate your place will be reserved for next season until the 14th March 2009. Please re-join before this date to avoid disappointment. After this date any vacant places will be offered to members who have added their name to the waiting list (in the order they expressed an interest). Any remaining places on 1st April 2009 will be opened up to new members. Members who wish to add their names to the waiting list may do so now by either telephoning the membership secretary or by emailing the webmaster. In keeping with last season the number of remaining places in the Totham Pit night syndicate will be displayed on the website and updated each weekday from early February onwards until the syndicate is full.

Secretary's Report

Although I have not managed to fish as often as I would like this year (although my wife would beg to differ!) and my first hand information is therefore limited, I have, as usual, tried to present a digest of the information we have received about our waters.

Slough House- I am pleased to confirm that our bailiffs have reported no real problems as a result of the first full year's operation of this water as a night fishery, particularly following the fishery management team's sterling efforts to improve the car park. Never an easy water, it has nevertheless produced the usual crop of carp in the twenties, together with good bags of roach (though they again seem localised). The tench continue to show occasionally and whilst not in the numbers we would like, they are clearly growing, as a fish of 9lb+ was reported in the summer. Stocking of the water this year was restricted to three double figure carp.

Howell's- As usual, lots of twenties have been taken during the year and this water remains a popular night fishing venue. Recent reports have indicated that the fish are carrying an unusually high number of parasites and we are seeking advice on how (and if) this needs to be addressed.

London's Reservoir - The carp fishing here has been good with several doubles reported, but the quality of the silver fishing has remained patchy, with some members consistently taking good bags of roach and bream, whilst others blanked. This is a water that has received a considerable investment in silver fish and we were hoping for better things. We therefore asked the Environment Agency to try to establish what the fish population actually is. Unfortunately, a combination of excessive water depth and generally adverse weather conditions meant that relatively few fish were counted (these did, however, include a 3lb+ eel and a possible sighting of a catfish). The Agency will try again for us when the water level falls and the fish are less concentrated later in the year. In the meantime, we have decided to suspend any further stocking of the water.

Bog Grove- continues to live up to its reputation for reliability and remains deservedly popular. We intend to maintain it at a fairly high level of stocking and have therefore introduced 1000+ small carp, tench and silver fish during the course of the year.

Beckingham Hall- As reported last year, we have made efforts to remove the larger carp to other waters for security reasons. This has allowed us the opportunity to try to develop Beckingham as a "runs" water, with the introduction of around 70 carp in the 3-12 lbs range. We have not introduced any fish smaller than 3lbs in order to try to discourage cormorant predation.

This is a policy we hope to continue and one which appears to be producing results, with consistent multiple catches reported under most conditions. In fact, I walked around the lake a few days before Christmas and there were fish showing regularly. There was just one member fishing and he had caught five carp, four of them doubles.

Little Parks- The lower lake has fished less well this year than we would have expected with match results being disappointing. This may be a stocking issue. We therefore hope to approach the owner with new proposals to address this.

The upper lake has been further stocked with small carp. It remains an under-used fishery, but those few members who have tried it have had catches of hard fighting fish to 6lbs.

Canal- This remains a popular fishery for pleasure and match anglers. It is a welcome source of day ticket and match fee income for us and we have now negotiated a longer lease. Poaching remains a problem on this water although our bailiff did score a resounding success in the summer with the arrest of a handful of illegal anglers. Parking is always at a premium on the canal, but our bailiff has discovered an access route to the upper reaches via Allen Way in Chelmer Village. We are also exploring ways of restoring our parking facility at the Museum of Power.

Totham Pit - Kyff's Carp Column covers the activity in this water most eloquently and I would only add that it is good to see big bags of bream being reported once again. A further six double-figure carp were introduced during the year.

Rook Hall- This excellent fishery has once again fished well, with more roach showing than previously (including fish to 11lb) and the tench fishing remaining consistently good, with an eight pounder being reported. A further 1200 roach have been stocked into the lower lake. We continued our efforts to remove the carp from the lower lake (closest to the car park), with the larger fish going in the top lake and the smaller ones into the middle.

New Hall Reservoir - Much fishery management effort has been directed to clearing swims and opening new ones including a couple on the previously inaccessible south bank. Unfortunately, the water suffered an oil spill pollution early in 2008. The owner engaged a firm to clean up, but there remained a smell of oil and we were concerned for our fish stocks. No fatalities were spotted but we asked the Environment Agency to investigate. Their report is reassuring as regards pollution, with no lasting effects observed. The levels of dissolved oxygen were lower than might be expected and we are looking at ways of remedying this.

River Blackwater- The river has produced the usual bags of chub, roach and dace for those who are prepared to walk a little for their fishing. The new owner of the upstream stretch at Station Road has cleared much of the undergrowth on the banks making access easier, particularly close to the bridge.

David Spalding
Secretary

Kyff's Carp Column

For those of you who can recall my ramblings from last year's newsletter I signed off hoping to see you back on the banks of Totham Pit. Well after a few trips to Bog Grove throughout the winter months, where I landed a reasonable number of carp to low doubles in some really cold conditions, I was soon back in the familiar surroundings of Totham Pit. Actually I say familiar, but the fishery management team had put in a lot of time improving many of the swims and paths around the lake and I would personally like to thank them for their efforts in further enhancing our flagship water.

My fishing got off to a slow start but eventually came good when the carp ventured onto the shallows to feed up prior to spawning towards the end of May. Fishing one of my favourite methods, double critically balanced mini boilie over pellets, I landed my tenth ever Totham Pit twenty, a fine 21lb 9oz Common. Fishing the same swim over a couple of afternoon / evenings I added further Commons of 11lb 15oz, 13lb 15oz and 19lb 9oz along with an 11lb 6oz Mirror. My luck finally ran out when I changed swims to fish in Kyff's corner (whoever he is), one of the impressively revamped swims, and lost a big Mirror in the rain to a hook-pull. I had shown it the net once and having done the hard part (so I thought) of keeping it away from the lilies and the overhanging trees it made a last minute lunge and my size 8 hook fell out. No matter how many years you have been fishing it is those losses at the net after a mammoth struggle that hurt the most.

I must admit I did sulk for a bit (OK days) and be-moaned my misfortune to any poor unfortunate who got within range, but I was soon back on the shallows to try again. It was now early June and the Tench started to show in numbers. I caught a few around the 5lb mark and upped my (then) personal best Tench to 6lb 14oz on a cream cajouser boilie fished over a fruity groundbait, but apart from a 9lb 3oz Mirror the larger carp were playing hard to get.

It was at about this time that I mentioned my Tench catching exploits to John and Paul in JP Tackle but they seemed more intent on getting amongst the large Bream shoals that roam the deeps. They asked me for some pointers and I told them what I knew, which to be honest wasn't a lot as I'd not caught a Totham Pit bream all season. You can therefore imagine my surprise when I arrived to find them with bulging keepnets and 80-100lb+ bags of bream with the odd tench thrown in for good measure. They went on to catch several more in subsequent visits with tench to 7lb+ and bream to 10lb+ showing that Totham Pit isn't just about quality carp.

Admittedly the closest I got to the bigger carp in the lake was seeing them on the website or in Carp Talk, but I did catch a corker out of the blue in late August when a 24lb 12oz Common made off with my margin fished mini boilies. Willow had been out at 30lb 12oz that same morning so clearly the bigger fish were on the feed that day.

Fishing elsewhere I had some pleasant evenings at Little Park with carp to 13lb+ and landed some similar sized fish at the far end of Rook Hall. I even managed a pristine 14lb 9oz Common on a rare foray to Little London, but it was Howells that brought me my largest carp of the season (so far – I type more in hope than expectation!). Now I am fairly (alright mostly) useless when it comes to floater fishing but when there are two kind anglers opposite me firing out shed loads of floaters that eventually drift through my swim, even I have to take notice when large dorsal fins start breaking the surface and large pairs of lips are engulfing the chum mixers as they drift in front of me. One of the other anglers caught a twenty as I was setting up so surely I couldn't fail. Well I almost did as first cast my rubber chum was taken and the fish tore half way across the lake before I lost it in a weed bed. I had also lost, or so I thought, my last rubber chum mixer. Then I remembered I had one in the bottom of my tackle box that I had found floating in a reed bed earlier in the season (this sort of scavenging behaviour will come as no surprise to most of you that know me!). On it went and the next thing I knew I was attached to a real plodder of a fish, that considering I had hooked it on the surface did not want to come up off the bottom. Anyway to cut a long story short I eventually netted a 24lb 14oz Common. I later added a 16lb 11oz Common on a zig rig to notch up a 40lb+ brace in just three hours fishing – marvellous.

All the best for the remainder of the season, and in the hope that you rejoin for next season – don't forget those floaters!!

Paul Kyffin

Website

Those of you who visit the society website www.maldonas.co.uk will know we have a great new look website. It is a really good means of keeping up to date with club news. Our thanks to our new webmaster Ian for getting this up and going. If you have had a good catch please send in the details via the website– it would be good to get some silver fish pictures on there, even in the recent bitterly cold conditions some good chub are coming from the Blackwater let's see a picture or two.

Match Report

Hi lads and lasses, this is your match secretary reminiscing over this past years match scene. We had some excellent concessionary matches, some attendances reaching 18, from my perspective this is great- the more the merrier. On the down side illness and problems have taken their toll. I would like to mention Stan and Joan, Tony Druce, Pete Bird, Ron Witney and Fred Bottle, all of whom would have loved to have joined us on the bank. Hope to see you this year fighting fit.

I apologise for having to change some of the match venues last year but I try to take us to where the fish are feeding. I make a real effort to phone all concerned to let them know of any changes but my apologies if I ever missed anyone.

For this year there has been a change to the format of the points matches. We will still fish 15 points matches but they will be in a series of 5 instead of 3 so if you miss a match or two you still stand a good chance of taking the series. Also for 2009 I have booked two matches at the 'Cuton Lakes' and we have purchased a small cup which will be known as the 'Cuton Cup'. The joint weights from both matches will take the trophy for the year. This addition brings our trophy matches to 6, good news for those who like the silverware. The club matches have been a bit of a struggle but I'm sure that this is due to the fact that there are so many matches on Sundays in this area that it is hard to choose where to fish. However I really hope that this year I can tempt more of you out to fish our matches. I'll sign off wishing you a happy new year and I hope to see you on the bank.

John 'Woody' Woodhams
Match Secretary

Lottery

We are pleased to announce the winners of the 2008 MAS lottery are:

1st prize - Free membership for the 2009/2010 season - ticket number 71 - Stephen Robinson.

2nd prize - 50% discount on membership for 2009/2010 season - ticket number 125 - Sheldon Mair.

3rd prize - 25% discount on membership for 2009/2010 season - ticket number 59 - Eddie Hollis.

Congratulations to the winners!

Publicity

The main focus for our publicity work in 2008 was attending a couple of shows. The Blackwater Country show is an event we have attended over the last 3 years. We always pick up a few members but the weather hasn't always been kind and this year was no exception, indeed the main attraction of the day was watching the MAS gazebo take off in the near gale force winds. There was also an MAS stand at the country show at Woodham Walter- this also brought in some new members. We are keen to attend more events like this in 2009 so if you know of any suitable events please contact Paul Kemp- telephone number in the rule book. We also held a successful open day at Bog Grove. Our thanks go to the guys of the fisheries team at the Environment Agency who attended with some of their display material including a water tank containing some interesting wildlife, one of which was a signal crayfish- the size of a small lobster. These are a fairly well known unwelcome invader but the EA also had on display perhaps a less well known invasive species the Chinese mitten crab. Similar to the signal crayfish they cause damage to river banks and predate on fish stocks. They spend most of their lives in freshwater only returning to the sea to breed. There is a leaflet on subject on the EA website and any discovery of the mitten crab should be reported to the EA.

Fishery Management

Due to work commitments I haven't had time to write up the exploits of the fishery management team through 2008. As per usual there has been plenty of hard work, from improving the car park and gate at Slough House to weed removal at Rook Hall to a successful netting that provided good fish for Bog Gove and Beckingham there has been plenty going on. There is way more to mention but as I say I haven't been able to get it all down on paper. There will be a much fuller report at the AGM so please come along and hear all about it. Indeed if there is anything you really want us to undertake then the AGM is a great opportunity to let me know. No promises as the budget is always limited but if enough ask for the same thing then at least we can try to make it a priority. It just leaves me to thank anyone who has helped at any of the work parties over the last year.

Laurence Reeves
Fishery Management Officer