



RIBBLE CATCHMENT CONSERVATION TRUST

Welcome to our 6th Newsletter:

2009 was an incredibly busy year for the trust, we constructed five off stream spawning channels, planted thousands of trees, constructed two fish passes, one fish easement, and carried out more in channel flow improvements on Stock Beck. This is in addition to running trout in the classroom at 5 schools, and another round of electro fishing surveys, invertebrate sampling, and further investigation in to the impacts of signal crayfish and possible control methods for them – and that just lists our major projects!

A SELECTION OF OUR RIVER AND HABITAT IMPROVEMENTS CARRIED OUT IN 2009



The River Don weir before



*Ings Beck before the construction of the
off-stream spawning channel*



Bezza Brook weir before



The River Don weir after



*Ings Beck with the off-stream
spawning channel in place*



Bezza Brook weir after



TROUT IN THE CLASSROOM 2009

Trout in the classroom has progressed again this year with a further 2 schools coming into the scheme, Edisford primary school, Clitheroe and Whalley Church of England primary school. This brings our total number to 7. For the first time we took delivery and installed the 2 new tanks and chillers ourselves, which together with preparing the tanks and chillers in the other 5 schools has involved a fair amount of work, but when the children are releasing the fry in a few months time it will all have been worthwhile !



Pendle Junior about to release their fry in 2009.



Longridge school about to release their fry into the beck in 2009

The value of the trout in the classroom scheme continues to grow with the numbers of children involved increasing each year and the connection with school curriculum work providing new opportunities for the children to learn about their streams, what lives in them , what value they have to the environment and how they can ensure that the streams remain clean and healthy for the future. They also get a lot of fun out of it !!!

INVERTEBRATE SAMPLING

During 2009 our volunteers from 2008 continued to sample through the spring, summer and early autumn. Several samples led to us contacting the EA to investigate, and two of these resulted in positive outcomes for the river.

We carried out a further 2 training days with a tutor from the Riverfly Partnership. Funded by the Environment Agency and the Ribble Fisheries Consultative Association. The result was another 23 volunteers trained and equipped. Many have already been sending us regular results from their samples, which helps us to gather important information on where we might need to carry out work, as well as inform the EA of possible pollution incidents. This is a very successful scheme, and is informative to both the volunteer and us at the Trust, with many people astounded by just what life there is in even the smallest of streams.



Volunteers being trained in invertebrate recognition

If you are interested in being involved, visit our website for details.

Environment Agency Hotline

0800 807060

If you see any pollution problems please report it to the Environment Agency.



ELECTRO FISHING

The second year of the RCCT electro fishing programme was very successful with 243 sites covered across the three main sub catchments. Although the weather was better than that experienced in 2008 it was still far from ideal.

All three sub catchments showed a very significant improvement in trout fry populations in comparison to 2008. Although this is a positive sign, it is believed to be due to ideal spawning, incubation and emergence conditions that the 2008/2009 winter and spring provided – however the habitat improvement works that the trust have carried out will certainly have contributed.



Counting and measuring up – in the rain!



A beautiful wild brown trout from the Calder



An Adult Brook Lamprey

Salmon numbers on the Hodder showed significant improvements, with the number of “A” grade sites increasing from 1 to 12! The best results for both salmon and trout were found in the off-stream spawning channels created by the Trust, lets hope the new ones are just as successful! Calder salmon fry numbers remained very similar however we did find a salmon fry in the River Hyndburn, a once heavily degraded and still recovering sub-catchment! Ribble salmon fry numbers improved slightly but not as significantly as the improvements seen on the Hodder. The results again have shown us where we need to target our work, and allowed us to gather information on more than just fish, such as, over 70 impassable barriers to migration!

SIGNAL CRAYFISH

The trust continued to look at ways of eliminating Signal Crayfish from their only known location in the Ribble Catchment. Although the work was not 100% effective we hope that we will be able to continue to develop this method.

During 2009 crayfish plague was identified in this signal crayfish population, which was previously not infected. Now that they are carrying the disease the threat to our native whiteclaw crayfish is even greater. It is a reminder of how important it is for us not to spread this disease.

In addition to working towards eradicating signal crayfish, we undertook a weeks worth of electro fishing surveys to continue to study the impact of Signal Crayfish on fish populations. A significant negative impact has been identified and the results are soon to be published in a free online Crayfish Journal. For details please see our website.



A “small” selection of signal crayfish removed during survey work.



PROJECTS FOR 2010

2009 will be remembered at the trust as one of our busiest, that is until this time next year. 2010 will see us undertake construction of 5 fish passes, removal of two weirs, two fish easements, and hopefully a riparian fencing scheme. Not to mention the electro fishing, invertebrate sampling, ranunculus transplanting, trout in the classroom and a fishing passport scheme. But most importantly of all contributing to the removal of Padiham Weir.



A weir at Barrowford Weir before fish pass construction



Salmon trying to leap a weir where we will create an easement in 2010

SUPPORTING RCCT

The trust would like to thank all of our volunteers, members and contributors, whose help is essential to the trust in achieving it's objectives.



Litter Picking on Stock Beck



Pulling Himalayan Balsam on Bushburn Brook



IF you would like to help the trust please contact us at:

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Tel 01200 44 44 52, email: stephenh@ribbletrust.com or jack@ribbletrust.com

For more info on our work, how to volunteer or become a member of the trust please visit our website: www.ribbletrust.org.uk