

Electrofishing Results at Preston Farm and Members' Recording of fish caught with intact adipose fin on all our fisheries 2019

Electrofishing at Preston Farm 2019

The EA electrofishing of the usual 100m stretch at Preston Farm did take place this year after missing last year, although it was postponed from May to June 5th because of the weather. Disappointingly there were no juvenile or wild trout found and just one stocked trout (we avoid stocking this area anyway to protect any wild trout). There were good numbers of chub, dace, gudgeon, bullheads, and stone loaches. By comparison in May 2017, 43 trout fry around 2 inches had been found which was a very good result, seemingly not to be repeated. This shallow gravelly and weedy area has also consistently been the most likely spot for trout fry to be found in our Hadlow electrofishing over the years.

On October 7th a team from Hadlow College electrofished nearly the whole length of Preston Farm. 97 brown trout and 2 rainbow trout were caught which is slightly less than the average for previous 8 years when the number ranged from 66 to 149. Sadly, as for last year, there were no wild trout under 6 inches, and only 2 wild trout in total, which were 9 and 10 inches. Taken together the results for 2018 and 2019 are the worst we have seen for wild trout since we started electrofishing in 2011 which is of great concern. There were plenty of coarse fish as usual, with 29 pike, 5 eels, 68 chub, 62 dace, 40 roach, 10 perch, and 5 tench being actually counted and many more of these different species released, as well as many gudgeon, bullheads and minnows, and one common carp spotted of 6-8 pounds.

Analysis of Brown Trout caught by members with Intact Adipose Fin 2019

This is the seventh year we have had the adipose fin of stocked brown trout clipped and asked for fish with an intact adipose fin to be recorded as such. I would again like to thank members for taking the trouble to record this information in the catch returns.

Total fish caught with intact adipose for all beats in 2019
(2018,2017,2016, 2015, 2014 and 2013 in brackets)

Up to 9" = 5 fish (20)(22) (30)(20)(26)(44)

10-12" = 10 fish (8)(21) (21)(23)(35)(31)

12" plus = 20 fish (22)(23) (21)(18)(23)(44)

Total Intact adipose catch = 35 (50)66)(72)(61)(83)(119)

Total catch all browns = 761 (928) (1026) (764)(728)(894)(681)

% of catch with intact adipose = 4.6% (5.4%) (6.4%) (9.42%) (8.38%)
(9.25%) (17.5%)

The last 5 years are the most reliable as previous years would have included overwintered browns stocked before clipping was introduced. There does seem to be a slow and steady decline of wild trout numbers over these last 5 years. Judging from the electrofishing and my own catches, I also have a suspicion that some of the larger fish identified as having intact adipose fins could be overwintered stock fish whose adipose fin has repaired or begun to repair, so please look carefully. Without repeating all the points I made about the reduction in wild trout numbers in last year's report, I will repeat that it may be that the one size fits all EA rule forbidding the stocking of fertile brown trout has not so far worked in favour of the Darent, with, in our beats, such small numbers of resident wild trout, which may not be native anyway.

Written by Colin Lambert (extract from 2019 River Manager's Report)

Postscript

The records for fish caught by members in 2019 at Preston farm only with intact adipose fin which are likely to be wild (i.e. bred in the river but not necessarily native) were as follows:

3 fish of 6 to 8 inches

2 fish of 10 to 12 inches

5 fish of above 12 inches