

Bristol Water Fisheries – May 2026 Report



We also welcomed our Pike fly anglers back on to Blagdon this month!

Last May brought some of the best Pike Fly fishing ever recorded during the “Valley of the Giants” Fly event and after the cancellation of our October dates due to low water levels, May 2026 has been very eagerly anticipated!

As we write this, we are seeing the first few days of real heat coinciding with the May Bank Holiday, this has accelerated the rate of Damsels coming off no end; to the point where we have swept the shucks off the boats in the mornings!

We are also starting to see some very early “pin” fry around the jetties at Chew; these two very mobile food sources might signal a faster retrieve could start to pay dividends!

Blagdon Fishing

Blagdon has continued to fish in fine form with plenty of fish coming to “Static” buzzer fishing and even the “Bung” on very calm bright days! The key has been getting the flies down into the feeding zone which has been around half depth the past few weeks. The ever-faithful “Super Glue” Buzzer has been essential this month! When the fish are on the buzzers many takes can come right at the side of the boat so don’t ignore leaving your flies on “the hang” for a good 30-40 seconds before making that next cast.



Our average size from Blagdon is a whopping 3.54 with a rod average of 6.42!

As the month has progressed we have seen a shift in the fishing with slightly quicker retrieves producing with colour coming to the fore. This is probably due to recent stockings stirring up the residents and the arrival of more mobile food items!



Blagdon isn’t all about the jumbo rainbows, we are seeing some of the resident browns making an appearance.

Our bank anglers have found success in the majority of areas with Butcombe providing excellent sport as has the North Shore! Green Lawn has arguably been the most productive spots on the South Shore especially when fishing off the point or even back into Long Bay.

Slow Nymphs on a floating line along with Damsel patterns have been the most productive from the bank. Look for areas with a good amount of reeds as the Damsel Nymphs seek this out in order to climb up and emerge. Wood Bay, Pipe Bay, Butcombe and Pegs Point/Rugmoor are great areas to target at this time of year.

Blagdon Pike Fly



This spring we saw the eagerly awaited the return of the Blagdon Pike Fly after the huge success of May 2025 where we saw 7 30lb+ pike caught in a single day!

October 25 was a real heart breaker as the low water levels stopped play so this has been the first time we have pike fly in a year!

The first few reports started coming through and was clear it was going to be a numbers game! The sport was phenomenal with some boats landing over 20+ fish in a day! The Jacks seemed to be beating the big girls to the flies! Oliver Cullingford and Gary Jarvis showed it could be done, landing several larger pike to upper 20s!



The Valley of the giants competition followed suit organiser Olly Cullingford got in touch to let us know how they got on.

“Another great event with large numbers of fish landed all the boats finished on 10+ fish with a few reaching 20+! The big girls didn’t put an appearance in this year with the largest fish falling to Chris Low at 23 lb 4 oz then Michael Haxton-Rose with a 22lb specimen. Other fish of note was a 20lb 4oz pike to Alan Ferguson. A great place to fish you can’t expect to catch monster every day but at least you know there in there waiting for you!

Many thanks, Olly”

Chew Fishing

Chew really has been incredible the past two weeks. The bays have provided some amazing sport! Villice has been a favourite with those who are willing to wade out on the margins. And Herons from Oaktree down to the causeway has also been on top form!

Methods have been more varied than on Blagdon with Dries, Nymphs and more recently pulling colour all producing fish!

Ranger Richard Walker offered a blob pulling masterclass on the last evening league which we will go into more detail below.

Now the weather has warmed up we are seeing fish gravitate to the dam basin and aerators. The cooler water temperatures and cycling on the layers makes for a comfortable stable environment for the fish as well as the odd, tasty morsel pulled up in the air streams!

We are starting to see Pin fry shoaling around the Jetties and Margins along with Damselfish. Both these food sources are very erratic at this stage so consider this when you're retrieving your flies, swapping the static tactics to a paused figure of eight or short strips can really be effective at this time of year!

Evening League

The Bristol Water Evening League is now well underway for the 2026 season this informal "Loch style" event is hosted on both Chew Valley Lake and Blagdon Lake, this is a great way to keep your eye in and hone your skills fishing alongside some of the best in the game.

The league upcoming fixtures are as follows: 2nd June, 16th June, 30th June, 14th July, 1st September, 15th September, 29th September, 12th October and 18th October.

Competitions are structured around the last four hours of daylight, with start times varying according to sunset times. The entry consists of a £15 league fee and £25 per individual evening match, with participation on floating and tip lines only. After each evening league event anglers attend the Stoke Inn for post-session meal at £6 a head and a trade of information on the evening's successes and failures!

So far this season, four league rounds have been completed, with Stephen Ellis taking 1st on the 5th May and Richard Walker on the 19th joining Adam Drescher and Paul Roach on the list of "Top Rods."

May 5th Blagdon

We saw another great turn out with 30 anglers all willing to test their wit against the Trout that reside in Blagdon!

Blagdon has been in amazing form so far this season with its amazing stock of jumbo rainbows and electric buzzer fishing! With the days prior being dominated by static techniques and fishing the bung many went out with preconceived notion of what the fish would want and where they would be! As always fishing has a habit of ruining the plans of anglers! The Blagdon fish were feeding and a moving fly seemed to be the way forward or even as Gordon Smith found a fast retrieve provoking a response! Gordon put on a fine display fishing around Butcombe as did John Piper. Most of the field were sure it was down to John and Gordon to battle it out for the top spot but little did they know that Stephen Ellis was slowly working away further up the lake. As the boats started to move around, Stephen stuck to his guns on an area he knew was holding fish and as the evening progressed and the angling pressure lifted it all came good!



Stephen finished with 9 fish to Gordons 8; John Piper was also nipping on his heels with 8 fish!

Fish of the match probably goes James Roberts who finished in a respectable 8th place for 6 fish but one being this Blagdon bruiser!

May 19th Chew

26 Rods fished the 19th of May, this time on Chew. The weather was grim with rain showers and some big south-westerly gusts. Fish had been caught consistently in the Bays and the Dam, so the boats all scattered to find fish at the start of the competition. A few boats found fish early along the causeway in Herons, fish were also being caught in Villice and down the Woodford Bank. Herons Green turned out to be the hotspot with a localised group of fish who were up for a chase! With Richard Walker realising early in the match that they were responding to a faster retrieve he adjusted his cast to suit!

Rich rigged up with a couple of bright blobs paired with two pulling hoppers and set to work! Finishing with 14 fish, that really is some going for just four hours fishing! The ever-consistent Adam Drescher and local legend Paul Roach took second and third with 8 and 7 fish respectively. Another great heat fished and the league table is really starting to hot up!



Celtic League

2 Celtic league events were held on Chew during May:

On 3rd May 2026, Chew Valley Lake hosted Round 2 of the Airflo Celtic League, with teams greeted by flat calm conditions and large numbers of buzzers hatching across the lake. Fish were seen rising throughout the day, although converting those opportunities into catches proved challenging at times. Despite this, competitors enjoyed excellent sport, with Mathew Griffiths leading the way with 13 fish, closely followed by Martin Burgess, Peter Moruzzi and Allen Hughes on 12 fish each, while Scott Graham finished with 10 fish.

Productive areas included Herons, Stratford and Woodford Bank, where anglers encountered some exceptional quality trout. A variety of tactics proved successful, ranging from teams of nymphs fished on floating and tip lines through to faster-paced methods using glass lines and attractor patterns, with covering actively rising fish proving key.

Conditions deteriorated later in the afternoon as forecast rain arrived shortly after 3pm, bringing a dramatic change in weather. Nevertheless, catches remained strong throughout the match, with a total of 210 trout landed and an impressive rod average of 4.38 fish per angler. The event once again demonstrated the quality of fishing available at Chew Valley Lake and set up an exciting battle in the Airflo Celtic League as the season progressed.

AIRFLO CELTIC LEAGUE 2026							
Chew Valley Lake							
Team Placings							
		21st Mar	02nd May	23rd May	13th June	19th Sept	
Pos	Team	R1	R2	R3	R4	R5	Total
1	TEAM TIGHTLINES	39	65	0	0	0	104
2	AIRFLO NYMPHOMANIACS	84	47	0	0	0	131
3	OSPREYS FFA	77	73	0	0	0	150
4	FUNKY FF	79	94	0	0	0	173
5	SNOWBEE	70	119	0	0	0	189
6	TEAM EGLWYS	96	96	0	0	0	192
7	BRFFA RED EMERGERS	103	91	0	0	0	194
8	E.N FLUFF CHUCKERS	109	91	0	0	0	200
9	VALLEY CORMORANTS	119	87	0	0	0	206
10	DRIFTERS	105	131	0	0	0	236
11	RED LION	144	132	0	0	0	276
12	WELSH WIZARDS	147	149	0	0	0	296

Chew Valley Lake also hosted Round 3 of the Airflo Celtic League during May, attracting a strong field of competitors for another highly competitive day's fishing. The event proved pivotal in the championship standings, with Airflo Nymphomaniacs producing an outstanding team performance to take over at the top of the league table. Individually, Tom Pitchford led the way with an impressive 12 fish, followed closely by teammate Allen Hughes with 10 fish, underlining the team's strength throughout the competition. Mark Miles of Funky FF secured third place with nine fish, while Martin Burgess and Tim Wellman completed the top five. The event showcased the quality of sport available at Chew and highlighted the competitive nature of the Airflo Celtic League, with several teams remaining firmly in contention as the championship heads into its final rounds. With two matches still to come, the battle for league honours remains wide open and promises an exciting conclusion to the 2026 season.

AIRFLO CELTIC LEAGUE 2026							
Chew Valley Lake Overall Team Placings							
		21st Mar	02nd May	23rd May	13th June	19th Sept	
Pos	Team	R1	R2	R3	R4	R5	Total
1	AIRFLO NYMPHOMANIACS	84	47	23	0	0	154
2	TEAM TIGHTLINES	39	65	75	0	0	179
3	FUNKY FF	79	94	45	0	0	218
4	BRFFA RED EMERGERS	103	91	60	0	0	254
5	OSPREYS FFA	77	73	126	0	0	276
6	TEAM EGLWYS	96	96	91	0	0	283
7	SNOWBEE	70	119	106	0	0	295
8	E.N FLUFF CHUCKERS	109	91	97	0	0	297
9	VALLEY CORMORANTS	119	87	128	0	0	334
10	DRIFTERS	105	131	135	0	0	371
11	RED LION	144	132	153	0	0	429
12	WELSH WIZARDS	147	149	133	0	0	429

A big thanks goes to organisers of the Celtic league and to all participating anglers! Especially to Mike Kayes and the ranger team for the smooth running for of the comp.

The BRFFA Floating Line

The BRFFA Floating Line Competition, kindly sponsored by Red Lion Carpets, took place at Chew Valley Lake during May and attracted a strong field of 26 anglers. Despite calm conditions, broken cloud, and warm spring sunshine creating an inviting scene across the reservoir, competitors still faced the challenge of locating and consistently catching fish. Local knowledge proved invaluable, with eventual winner Ron Howard making the most of productive areas around the cages before building his catch elsewhere on the lake throughout the day. Consistency was the key to success, and Howard's impressive return of 12 fish secured victory in a closely contested competition. James Graham and John Braithwaite shared second place with 11 fish each, while Paul Bond and Dave Reynolds completed the top five with 10 fish apiece. The event demonstrated the excellent sport available at Chew, with every angler catching fish and an impressive total of 130 trout landed, producing a rod average of 5.0 fish per angler. The competition was another successful BRFFA event and highlighted both the quality of the fishing and the strong support the club continues to receive from its members, sponsors, and the Bristol Water Fisheries team.

BRFFA V Blagdon Tony Donnelly Memorial Match



The annual Tony Donnelly Memorial Match took place at Chew Valley Lake on May the 30th, bringing anglers together to remember Tony, the former fisheries manager and celebrate his lasting contribution to fly fishing, and raise funds for his family. The match consists of 2 teams – BRFFA (Shown left) vs the BFFA (Shown Right)

Warm weather and challenging conditions made for a testing day's sport, with both teams working hard to find fish throughout the competition. As always, the event was characterised by friendly rivalry, good humour, and the opportunity for anglers to enjoy time on the water with friends old and new.

Following a closely fought contest, Blagdon successfully retained the Tony Donnelly Memorial Shield with another strong team performance. Individual honours were shared by John Piper and Matt Russell, who both topped the catch returns with eight fish apiece. The match once again proved to be a fitting tribute to Tony's memory and highlighted the strong sense of community that continues to exist within the sport he loved.

Tony Donnelly 2026 Team Scores

BRFFA	TOTAL NO. FISH		BFF	TOTAL NO. FISH
Tim Wellman	4		Paul Golding	6
Ron Howard	4		Jeff Mason	1
Bill Pugh	0		Paul Morris	6
Jesse	6		Dale Burgess	2
Steven Ellis	2		Nik Long	0
Fony Torrington	0		John Piper	8
John Gumbleton	1		Joan Russell	0
Paul Bond	3		Sean Glover	1
Ron Thomas	1		Mark Stevens	4
Tim King	0		John Humphry	0
Andy Stones	4		Dave Reynolds	4
Andrew Weeks	1		Alan Clark	1
Mr W	1		Steve Pope	1
Mark Miles	2		John Harris	2
Matt Russell	8		Sean Torrington	5
Total Fish 37			Total Fish 41	



BRFFA Spring Shield

The month concluded with the BRFFA Spring Shield Competition at Chew Valley Lake, where 24 anglers took to the water for a closely contested day of fishing. Conditions were markedly different from the previous day's sunshine, with a fresh south-westerly wind and overcast skies creating a challenging environment that required anglers to adapt their tactics throughout the day.

Despite the difficult conditions, several competitors remained in contention until the final weigh-in, highlighting the competitive nature of the event. Following the match, anglers gathered at The Stoke Inn for the results, where Paul Golding was crowned 2026 Spring Shield Champion with six fish. Tim Wellman and Alan Clarke shared the remaining podium positions with five fish apiece. The competition provided a fitting end to a successful month of angling on the lake, and thanks go to all 24 participants, the BRFFA, The Stoke Inn, Airflo, and everyone involved in making the event another great success.

BRFFA SPRING SHIELD 2026				
	NAME	TOTAL NO. FISH	TIME 1st FISH	TIME 4th FISH
1	Paul Golding	6	11:54	15:24
2	Tim Wellman	5	10:45	14:55
3	Alan Clark	5	12:58	17:29
4	Gordon Smith	4	11:24	17:05
5	Jeff Mason	3	10:01	N
6	Mark Miles	3	11:12	N
7	Paul Brace	2	10:10	N
8	Martin Barrett	2	10:30	N
9	Dave Reynolds	2	11:00	N
10	Paul Bond	2	13:49	N
11	Craig Thorburn	2	15:10	N
12	Stephen Ellis	1	9:55	N
13	Graham Currie	1	10:40	N
14	Jim King	1	10:58	N
15	Ron Howard	1	12:09	N
16	John Harris	1	12:44	N
17	Will Wellman	1	13:20	N
18	John Humphreys	1	15:50	N
19	Ron Thomas	1	17:19	N
20	Alex Bobba	0	N	N
21	Joan Russell	0	N	N
22	John Gumbleton	0	N	N
23	Lee Williams	0	N	N
24	Louis Pearn	0	N	N

Stocking in May

Early may saw stocking going ahead as planned with over 1000 healthy fishing going into Chew and over 1800 going into Blagdon. Barrow Tanks also received a Healthy stocking of 850 fish between the 3 tanks. As the month progressed and the temperature saw a sharp increase, this led to the decision to postpone stocking in the heat in the interest of fish welfare and their recovery. These fish will now enter the lake in June where we are now scheduled to stock a further 7550 hard fighting quality rainbows into the Bristol waters!

Looking forward into June

As we close the chapter on a fantastic May and move into June, there is plenty for anglers to look forward to across Bristol Water Fisheries. With the longest days of the year upon us and fishing continuing to improve, the coming weeks promise some exciting sport and a packed calendar of events. The month begins with the ATTEFF Qualifier at Chew Valley Lake on 7th June, marking the second time the association has chosen Bristol Water Fisheries to host one of its prestigious qualifying events. This is followed by Round 4 of the Airflo Celtic League on 13th June, which will be the final Celtic League fixture held on Chew before the competition returns in September.

The highlight of the month will undoubtedly be the Champion of Champions competition on 28th June, with an official practice day taking place on 27th June. Originally launched in 2025, this invitational event brings together anglers who achieved outstanding competition results during the previous season and has quickly established itself as one of the most anticipated events in the calendar. With a prize table that includes a £1,000 Bristol Water Fisheries All Waters, All Week Season Ticket, a £500 gift card, a £250 gift card, tackle prizes, Wychwood Game vouchers and much more, there is plenty at stake.

Anglers who have been fortunate enough to receive an invitation are reminded to contact the lodge to confirm their place. We look forward to welcoming everyone to the fishery throughout June and wish all anglers the very best of luck in the competitions ahead.

A promotional poster for the 'Champion of Champions Invitational 2026' fishing competition. The background is a teal-colored image of two anglers in a boat on a lake. The text is white and yellow. At the top left is the 'Wychwood GAME' logo. At the top right is the 'b BRISTOL WATER' logo. The main title 'CHAMPION OF CHAMPIONS' is in large, bold, white letters, with 'OF' in smaller letters. Below it is '* INVITATIONAL 2026'. The subtitle 'TEST YOURSELF ALONG SIDE THE BEST IN LOCH STYLE TROUT FISHING ON THE 28TH JUNE 2026 AT CHEW VALLEY LAKE' is in bold, white letters. Below this is a line of small text: '* INVITATIONAL ANGLERS HAVE QUALIFIED FROM 2024 & 2025 MATCH RESULTS AT CHEW & BLAGDON'. The prize list includes: 'FIRST PRIZE - £1000 ALL WATERS ALL WEEK SEASON TICKET', 'SECOND PRIZE - £500 GIFT VOUCHER AT BWF', 'THIRD PRIZE - £250 GIFT VOUCHER AT BWF', '£55 ENTRY FEE', and 'PLUS ££££ WORTH OF OTHER PRIZES FROM'. The 'Wychwood' logo is in the center, flanked by two circular icons containing a stylized tree. Below the logo is the format: 'FORMAT - 2 FISH KILL, 12 RELEASE BARBLESS COMP INTERNATIONAL RULES WITH ROLLY POLLY FISHING FROM 10 AM TO 17:00'. At the bottom, contact information is provided: 'PLEASE CONTACT WOODFORD LODGE ON 01275332339 FOR OFFICIAL PRACTICE DAY BOATS ON THE 27TH JUNE, & HOW YOU COULD QUALIFY FOR NEXT YEARS EVENT'. In the bottom left corner is the 'FISH LEGAL' logo, and in the bottom right corner is the 'ANGLING TRUST' logo.