

Bristol Water Fisheries 2025 Report



As we draw the curtains on another year at the lakes, we would like to take the opportunity to reflect on the 2025 season and extend our sincere thanks to every angler, club, competition organiser, and lake user who supported Bristol Water Fisheries throughout the year.

The season began in spectacular fashion and carried genuine optimism into the spring. February's Pike Trials were exceptional, producing multiple fish over 30lb and 40lb, two new lure-caught lake records, and a remarkable 44lb pike from Walley Bank. Early season trout fishing followed suit, with prolific buzzer hatches delivering some of the finest dry-fly sport seen in recent years. That momentum continued into Blagdon Pike Fly, where the PFFA's "Valley of the Giants" event recorded 69 pike landed, including seven fish over 30lb in a single day, the highest number of fly-caught 30lb-plus pike ever recorded at a single venue. June rounded out this strong start, with outstanding sport as damsel flies emerged in force across both lakes. From mid-summer onwards, the season became increasingly challenging. Exceptionally dry conditions, falling water levels, persistent weed growth and elevated water temperatures placed considerable pressure on the fisheries. These factors led to difficult operational decisions, including suspended catch-and-release tickets, complete boat cancellations on Chew and Blagdon, and increased demands on fish farm operations. Reduced flows and warm-water conditions at the fish farm pushed the team's experience and ingenuity to the limit, as staff worked tirelessly to safeguard stock and protect the future of the 2026 season. Despite these challenges, bank anglers continued to find success, particularly along Blagdon's south shore, while pike anglers on Chew showed great perseverance and were still rewarded with outstanding fish in the October/November trials.

Competitions such as the BRFFA Open, Garafit Cup and the Cortland Team Championships, along with many others, showcased both the quality of the fishing and the strong sportsmanship within the angling community. Local club competitions, particularly those run by the BRFFA, continued to grow in popularity and attendance, highlighting the strength and enthusiasm of local angling groups. Our closest clubs, Blagdon Fly Fishers and the BRFFA, remain fundamental to the success of the fishery, and we extend our thanks to them both.

Beyond fishing alone, the wider angling community continues to invest in the next generation. Initiatives such as the BRFFA Youth Development Pathway, Women in Fly Fishing and the Fly-tying evenings play a vital role in nurturing new anglers, and we regularly encourage newcomers to join local clubs to gain the support and knowledge needed to thrive in the sport. The Bristol Water Evening League also went from strength to strength in 2025, offering a relaxed, social midweek competition format that has proven hugely popular.

Our competition programme faced constant adaptation throughout the season, with alterations, postponements and cancellations required as water levels and conditions changed week by week.

We are extremely grateful to every club, group and organiser who worked with us through these challenges, as well as to all competition teams, qualifiers, guided-day hosts, instructors and the many new anglers who joined us through beginner sessions. Your cooperation, flexibility and respect for the fisheries are essential in preserving the traditions of Chew and Blagdon.

- **For more information from each month from the fisheries please be sure to check out the individual monthly reports on the Bristol water website under Fisheries – Latest fishing reports.**

February:

As mentioned, the season started off with a bang as the February Pike Trials produced some incredible catches for our anglers, with multiple 30's and 40's and countless 20's being caught off the boat and the bank.

With the success of Lloyd Watsons record breaking 47lb and 5oz Pike in the previous year, the tickets for 2025 sold out in an astonishing 19 minutes for the entire year. With anglers keen to have a go at breaking this record, the February trials saw some fantastic fish, here are some of the stand out specimens from Feb:



The magic started on the 18th of Feb when Steve Butcher, landed a monstrous 41lb 9oz. Steve and his boat partner, Alan Grainger, have been fishing at Chew since the trials began in 2001. Despite catching 30s elsewhere, they had never broken the 30lb mark at Chew. The pair were fishing between Wick Green and Spring Bay, casting a sardine 15-20 feet from the boat into shallow water. Their hunch paid off in spectacular fashion when their bait was taken by this true Chew giant! A well-timed early strike set the hook perfectly in the scissor of the fish, which immediately powered into deep water, giving the anglers time to prepare their net and clear

space in the boat. After a quick photo, the fish was carefully returned to the water to rest and recover, before swimming off strongly. This catch was even more meaningful for Steve, who sadly lost his father last year. On the day of the capture, he was wearing his father's waterproofs, life jacket, woollen hat, and watch, keeping his dad's spirit with him for this incredible moment.

We also had some very strong weather leading to 2 days being rescheduled on the second week for the boats. However, this didn't stop Catalin Rusu from landing another massive 44lb pike from Walley Bank despite the adverse conditions on the 21st of Feb. Fishing alongside bank partner Alexandru Stoica. A lifelong lure angler with a passion for pike fishing, he has caught multiple 20s and a 30lber, but this fish was on another level! Despite only fishing at Chew for the past two years, mostly from boats, he made the bank count in spectacular fashion. Catalin cast a whole mackerel 50m out. At around 3 PM, the rod screamed off, and he was locked in, with the waves pushing it toward the lodge. With skill and patience, he guided the pike safely to shore an incredible moment for any angler!





The next day saw yet another 40lb pike caught at Chew. Barry Maksymczuk, who landed an incredible 40lb 4oz pike on Saturday, 22nd February. Fishing with his brother Chris, a lifelong angling partner, the pair targeted Wick Green after hearing of recent big catches. Barry launched a Savage Gear Trout imitation lure into the wind, allowing it to settle as the boat drifted over the deeper gutters near Wick Green. As he retrieved the lure, he suddenly felt a powerful hit. Instantly, he knew he was into something special. The pike stayed deep, eluding its true size as it used the wind-driven drift to its advantage. When it finally surfaced, both brothers were stunned at the size of the monster

fish. Acting quickly, they guided it safely into the net, ensuring it was well-rested before lifting it aboard for a swift, respectful photo. After a few moments of admiration, the Chew giant was placed back in the water, where it recovered strongly before kicking away into the depths. In the first week, we saw a 39lb lure-caught pike by Ben Humber (Photo included in page 3), believed to be Chew's biggest lure caught pike, but this beast takes the crown! To make it even sweeter, Barry's previous PB was 27lb. Besting it by a massive 13lb and 4oz.

As we approached the end of February, our ranger team worked diligently behind the scenes to prepare for the fly season, stocking Chew Valley Lake, Blagdon Lake, and Barrow Tanks 1, 2 and 3 with a total of 19,000 high-quality pre-season trout. This work ensured a strong and exciting start to the year across all waters. With many anglers having already secured season tickets, anticipation was high as final preparations were completed, and we were pleased to welcome everyone back for another season of excellent fishing.

March:

The end of February marked a period of change as we said farewell to several long-standing members of the team, all of whom were greatly respected and valued within the fisheries.

- Paul Barnfield (Barney)
- Toby Leighton-Trew
- Lisa Draper
- Alan Dymock

Each played a key role in the day-to-day success of the fisheries and contributed enormously to the experience enjoyed by anglers and visitors alike. They were all highly committed members of staff whose knowledge, professionalism and passion have been sorely missed in the 2025 season.

The season opened under mild conditions with light winds, providing an excellent start. Bank fishing at Blagdon was particularly strong during the first week, with a rod average of six fish per angler and an average weight of 3.8lb, most notably from Green Lawn and Rainbow Point. Chew bank anglers also enjoyed productive fishing, averaging 8.4 fish per angler at 2.8lb, with Woodford and Wick Green proving most successful.

One of the first events in the fly season was the BRFFA Barrow Bash, held on 2 March and attended by 40 anglers. It soon became clear that fishing deep was key, with anglers using fast-sinking lines and working flies close to the lakebed enjoying the most success. While action was sporadic, those who applied the correct tactics were rewarded. In the senior category, James Rice took first place by

recording the quickest catch of the day. Sean Glover finished second, closely followed by Garry Wharton in third.

Following the Barrow Bash, fishing returns improved notably. Tank 3 began producing double-figure numbers in catches, while Tanks 1 and 2 continued to fish consistently. Regular casting and moving proved the most effective approach to covering water and locating fish. One of the standout catches from the tanks at the start of season was from Bernie Weaver with this amazing 6lb 12oz rainbow from tank 1:



Boat fishing on Chew resumed on 6 March and delivered impressive returns. A brief spell of cooler, windier weather slowed Blagdon bank sport and the early boat fishing, but conditions soon improved. By 26 March, Blagdon boats were averaging 9.6 fish per angler, supported by one of the strongest chironomid hatches seen in recent years, resulting in excellent buzzer fishing across all waters.

As the weather warmed toward the end of March, Blagdon produced excellent sport, with reports of up to 40 catch-and-release fish in a day, alongside full 16-fish bag limits. The combination of rising buzzer hatches and settled conditions promises further strong fishing into April.

Six 'Fly Fishing Catch Return' forms from Blagdon Waters are displayed on a wooden surface. Each form has a 'b' logo in the top left corner. The forms are arranged in two rows of three. The top row forms have Boat Numbers 4, 60, and 21. The bottom row forms have Boat Numbers 6, 11, and 60. Each form contains fields for 'Permit Type', 'Booking Name', 'Date', 'Fish Returned', 'Fish Dispatched', and 'Total Bag Weight'. Some forms have handwritten notes in the 'Comments' section. For example, the bottom-left form (Boat 6) has '40' in 'Fish Returned', 'average 3 1/2 lb' in 'Total Bag Weight', and 'Bobbies Fleaton / Tip Lines' in 'Comments'. The bottom-right form (Boat 60) has '30' in 'Fish Returned', '2' in 'Fish Dispatched', '7LB' in 'Total Bag Weight', and 'WOOD BAY INTO RUGBOW 3 TID LINE SLOW' in 'Comments'.

Other Events in March:

The return of boat competitions on Chew Valley Lake took place on 22nd March with the opening round of the Celtic League, featuring 24 boats and teams of four anglers in a catch-and-release format set to a 16-fish limit. Chew fished exceptionally well, with seven anglers reaching their limits and Matt Russell the first to complete his bag by 12:45pm. Team Tightlines secured the win, followed by Funky Fly Fishers in second place and Fluff Chucker's in third. Thanks are extended to the lovely Mike Kayes for his efforts in delivering a smooth and successful start to the 2025 competition season.

The first BRFFA Boat competition of the season was held on Chew Valley Lake on Saturday, 29th March, with mild spring conditions and an early buzzer hatch providing encouraging prospects. The most consistent sport came from the Boot at Herons Green Bay, where many anglers remained throughout the day to avoid strengthening afternoon winds, while others found limited success in more sheltered areas such as the back of Denny Island as conditions cooled. Paul Golding secured 1st place with an excellent return of 12 fish, winning an Airflo Airlite V2 Comp Rod, followed by Graham Currie in 2nd place with 8 fish. Third place was decided by just one minute, with Tim Wellman edging ahead of Jay Curry, both anglers landing 7 fish. Junior angler Louie Pearn topped the junior standings with 4 fish. In total, 131 fish were caught, producing a rod average of 3.6.

April

April 2025 brought a varied mix of spring conditions, ranging from warm, calm days to heavy rain and strong winds, with three days of boat fishing cancelled at Chew and Blagdon due to high winds in the interest of angler safety. Temperatures fluctuated widely from early-morning lows of 3°C to afternoon highs of 25°C, with predominantly southerly winds and occasional easterly and northerly spells. Despite wind disruption, the month was largely dry, resulting in strong hatches, falling water levels, and periods of excellent fishing.

At Chew Valley Lake, nymph patterns dominated throughout the month, with Diawl Bachs and buzzers proving particularly effective; anglers often fished a coloured fly on the point in shaded conditions or straight-lined when bright sunshine prevailed, using predominantly floating and intermediate tip lines. The most productive areas were Wick, Moreton, and Herons, and rod averages reflected the strong sport, with 4.69 from the bank and an impressive 6.34 from the boats.

At Blagdon Lake, buzzer patterns again proved highly effective, producing excellent returns and some aggressive takes throughout the period. The most productive areas included the Top End, Bells Bush, Wood Bay, and Pegs Point, while rod averages showed stronger sport from the boats at 5.37 compared to 2.38 from the bank.

April at Blagdon Lake saw exceptional brown trout fishing, highlighted by Rhys Davis' (shown in image) impressive catches during the Osprey Competition on the 20th of April and Ranger Rich Walker landing a well-conditioned brown trout on the 22nd during the Evening League, showcasing the high-quality fish being produced this spring.



Another notable moment for April 2025 was on the 20th April, when Nick Clarke landed a remarkable 29lb 5oz pike on the fly at Chew, despite rain and forgetting his tackle bag, using only a few flies from the lodge and a Greys 9# Prowla rod.



Just a week later, Andy Brown caught a superb 26lb pike, followed by a 21lb fish the next day, highlighting Chew Valley Lake's status as one of the UK's premier pike fly fishing venues.

In April at Barrow Tanks, small dries such as Bobs Bits worked well during late-evening rises. The most productive areas were from the tower to White Wall on Tank 3, the popular Pipe, and the natural banks of Tanks 1 and 2, producing a rod average of 1.23. Notable catches included Louis Pearn landing an approximate 6lb rainbow on a Sunburst FAB from Tank 3 on 29th March.



WOMEN IN FLYFISHING
It's not just for the boys...

Fly fishing is a sport everyone can enjoy.

BRFFA would like to invite aspiring, improving or expert women Fly Fishers to a lunchtime social get together at midday on 21st of April 2025 at Woodford Lodge, Chew Valley Lake. BRFFA is keen to promote the sport and find ways to encourage more women to join our club and share the fun.

There will be a short presentation, casting demonstration and an opportunity to discuss all things fly fishing. A complimentary cream tea will be provided. Please register your interest by emailing rc.howard@hotmail.co.uk

Woodford Lodge, Chew Stoke, Bristol BS40 8XH
www.brffa.com

On 21st April, the BRFFA, in partnership with Bristol Water, hosted their first 'Women in Fly Fishing' day, welcoming a group of women to enjoy casting tuition, fly tying, and guided time on the water. The event was friendly, inclusive, and highly positive, providing a hands-on introduction to fly fishing. Thanks to the dedication and organisation of the BRFFA committee, the day ran smoothly and successfully, creating a memorable experience and promoting greater accessibility and participation in the sport.

May

The start of May brought bright, clear conditions with steady north-easterly winds, creating consistent drifts but making fly fishing more challenging, with mornings and evenings proving most productive. Despite the sunshine, anglers enjoyed good sport, particularly at Chew, where the eastern side from Hollow Brook to Moreton Bank fished well, aided by NE drifts through to Wick Green, while buzzer hatches and floating or tip lines remained effective. More unsettled weather later in the period saw fish move into slightly deeper water, bringing areas such as Woodford, Walley, the Sailing Club, the Cages, and Nunnery into play for both boat and bank anglers.

At Barrow Tanks, a small black booby on a slow-sinking line proved most effective in bright conditions, while in lower light, fish often rose in the water, favouring washing lines and dries such as Bobs Bits and Carrot Flies, with added movement recommended by Bernie Weaver. The most productive areas were the road bank of Tank 2 and the Pipe of Tank 3, producing a rod average of 2.39.

At Chew Valley Lake, fishing returns were steady, with small buzzers, Muskins, and Diawl Bachs proving most effective on floating or midge-tip lines, particularly slow 3–4ft tip lines. Some anglers also enjoyed success using Di3 lines with Blobs and Boobies on a fast retrieve to target recently stocked fish. The most productive area was from Hollow Brook to Moreton Bank, with rod averages of 3.43 from the boats and 3.15 from the bank.

The second round of the 2025 Airflo Celtic League was held at Chew Valley Lake on 4th May, with clear spring conditions and changeable pressure providing a challenging day for anglers. Team Tightlines claimed the top team spot with a strong, consistent performance, while individually Graham Currie of Team Snowbee led the day with nine fish. Other notable catches included seven fish each for Mathew Griffiths, Dale Burgess, and Jeff Thomas, with Scott Graham and Tony Baldwin adding six each, making for an exciting and competitive round.

The 2025 BRFFA Open at Chew Valley Lake on 5th May was held in largely favourable spring conditions, with light morning breezes and temperatures of 15–19°C. Chew's hard-fighting trout provided excellent sport, particularly around Spring Bay and off Wick, with nymphs and buzzers on floating and tip lines proving most effective. Mark Miles claimed the Open title and £1,000 prize with a consistently strong performance, while junior angler Will Wellman led the youth competitors with five trout, finishing 14th overall.



At Blagdon Lake in May, Muskins, Diawl Bachs, and buzzers were the most effective patterns, with smaller sizes and lightly weighted or buoyant flies proving best when fish were less active. Floating lines or 3ft tips helped present the flies slowly through the water. The most productive areas were Pegs, Rugmore, and Wood Bay, with boats also finding success around the spit in front of the lodge, while deeper waters at the Dam and Cheddar began to fish well later in the month. Rod averages were 3.53 from boats and 2.6 from the bank.

Blagdon lake in May is also the time that Pike Fly anglers take to the water to target the beasts! The May Blagdon Pike Fly days got off to a spectacular start, with tickets selling out early and anglers enjoying outstanding sport on the lake. Blagdon once again proved its reputation, producing multiple pike over 20lb, including a 36lb 7oz fish caught by Glen Malpass on a small baitfish imitation and a 31lb 4oz specimen landed by Alex Mason and boat partner Robbie Northman, alongside five other 20lb+ fish. The combination of prime spring conditions and skilled anglers ensured a thrilling opening to these highly sought-after sessions. On the 24th of May the PFFA held their Valley of the Giants competition at Blagdon which saw some incredible catches including 7 fish over 30lb, the highest number of fly-caught 30lb-plus pike ever recorded in one day by a single venue.



Back at Chew the 2025 Tony Donnelly Memorial Match was held on 31st May in honour of the late previous BW Fisheries manager, Tony Donnelly.

Warm, muggy conditions with early cloud cover and a light south-westerly breeze provided ideal fishing, with dry fly and Di3 booby tactics proving most effective. Blagdon Fly Fishers led at midday and went on to secure victory thanks to standout catches from Mark Miles (15 fish), Graham Currie (14), and Paul Morris (11). The day was filled with friendly competition,

sportsmanship, and shared memories, made even more special by the presence of Tony's family, with thanks extended to all anglers, organisers, and the Bristol Water ranger team.



June

The opening week of June brought strong westerly and south-westerly winds, leading to cancellations of several boat sessions and delays, including disruptions to the BRFFA Spring Shield and ATTEFF England Qualifier at Chew. Bristol Water remains committed to angler safety, prioritising cautious decisions despite the inconvenience. Early June saw promising fishing, with Chew producing Damsel nymphs and Bloodworm catches, Blagdon responding well to buzzer tactics, and Barrow Tanks offering success on snails and black Boobies in the margins. As the month progressed and temperatures rose, fishing became tougher across all waters, with low returns and no single tactic proving consistently effective, challenging anglers to adapt their strategies.

Increasing sunlight and heat altered fish behaviour, with early morning feeding giving way to retreat from the bright conditions. The first two weeks fished well, but mid- to late-month required skill and adaptability. Floating lines with dry flies such as Claret Bobs Bits, Carrot Flies, Hoppers, and Foam Daddies worked in calm, overcast conditions, while slow tip lines with damsel nymphs retrieved in a figure-of-eight were effective in breezier weather. Productive areas included Villice, Herons, and the Cages, with rod averages of 5.46, and anglers began targeting pin fry as trout feeding patterns shifted.

A green 'Fly Fishing Catch Return' form from Bristol Water. The form includes fields for Boat Number (32), Permit Type (Predator Fly, Trout, Barrows), Water (Blagdon, Chew, Barrows), Booking Name (GRISEDAL/MORRIS), and Date (24/06/25). It also has checkboxes for Single, Double, Full Day, and Half Day. A table shows Fish Returned (25), Fish Dispatched (4), and Total Bag Weight (10-00). The comments section contains handwritten text: 'Villice Bay. Slow/stepped hoppers now needed. Bigger lot 3.1/4/1000 Q'. At the bottom, it says 'Please place the completed return in the permit letter box'.

Fish Returned	Fish Dispatched	Total Bag Weight
25	4	10-00

Comments: (Flies / Lines / Areas Fished / Noteworthy Fish)
 Villice Bay. Slow/stepped hoppers now needed.
 Bigger lot 3.1/4/1000 Q

At Blagdon Lake, dry fly fishing remained productive under calm or overcast conditions, with Hoppers and CDC patterns providing top-of-the-water sport when fish were rising. Nymphing with Diawl Bachs and Damsel Nymphs on slow tip or floating lines was also effective, particularly near the Lodge and Green Lawn, and the top end of the lake held promise for larger resident trout. Success often depended on a stealthy approach, precise presentation, and fishing the first and last hours of light.

Fishing at Barrow Tanks was more challenging, with anglers finding success by adapting to the conditions. Lower water levels and flowing areas offered richer oxygen and shelter from bright sun. Effective tactics included small pin fry imitations on floating or slow tip lines, slow or naturally drifting

snail patterns with a Black Booby dropper, and fast-retrieved lures or attraction flies like Minkies and Cat's Whiskers. These approaches provided reliable results for both regular visitors and newcomers alike.

The third round of the 2025 Airflo Celtic League took place at Chew Valley Lake on 14th June, with 52 competitors facing bright, testing conditions. Anglers fished across Herons Bay, the Net Cages, and False Island, with dry flies such as Claret Hoppers, Carrot Flies, and Shuttlecocks proving effective, alongside nymph patterns like Diawl Bachs and Damsels. Villice Bay came alive in the final hours, highlighted by Allen Hughes landing seven fish. Team Tightlines secured another team victory, while individually Tom Pitchford (Fulling Mill Nymphomaniacs) led with 12 fish, followed by Martin Burgess and Stewart Watkins with 10 each. The day also celebrated Iain Shanahan's dry fly milestone, showcasing both the skill of the anglers and the quality sport Chew provides, with thanks to all participants and organisers.



One key event that Chew hosted this year was the ATTEFF Qualifier on the 22nd June. This brought together 26 anglers competing for national team qualification under challenging conditions, including a steady westerly wind, passing rain showers, and occasional sunshine. John Braithwaite claimed victory with five fish, followed by Jeff Mason in second and Mark Kennedy in third, while the top ten anglers secured their places for the ATTEFF National. Bristol Water thanked all participants for their professionalism and John Horsey for his support in organising the event.



On the summer solstice, Chew Valley Lake's North Shore produced outstanding pike fishing, highlighted by Tom Harvey landing a 22lb+ specimen. Andy Cheetham caught five double-figure pike, including 32lb and 33lb fish, while his boat partner Adam Chambers landed four doubles, including a 27lb fish, showcasing both angler skill and the exceptional quality of Chew's pike fishery.

Following a warmer period in June, Pike Fly fishing at Chew was temporarily **suspended** due to elevated water temperatures, despite previous excellent oxygen levels. This precaution, guided by ranger-monitored temperature and dissolved oxygen readings, prioritised fish welfare and the long-term sustainability of the fishery, though trout angling remained unaffected.



July and August

July and August brought challenging conditions across all reservoirs, with July seeing extreme heat during the third heatwave of the year following the warmest June on record. High UV levels, strong weed growth, and falling water levels led to reduced bank access and the suspension of bank day tickets, predator fly fishing and catch-and-release trout fishing from 11th July. Rangers maintained access, facilities, and fishery management, while late July's changeable conditions and strong winds began breaking up weed beds. In August, water levels remained low, and fishing continued to be difficult, though anglers found some success at The Dam, The Boils, and along Walley Bank's weed edges. Cooler weather helped drop water temperatures, encouraging more comfortable daytime feeding, with early mornings and late evenings remaining the most productive. Early morning hatches, active bird life, and fish around the cages suggested promising conditions for the weeks ahead, while fishing remained on a catch-and-kill basis with ongoing monitoring.

Due to exceptionally low water levels at Blagdon, management made the tricky decision in late August that all trout boat fishing was to be cancelled for the rest of the season to protect both angler safety and the boat fleet. Pike Fly Days were unaffected at the time, though the situation continued to be monitored into September.

This summer, water levels across our lakes dropped significantly, compounded by exceptional weed growth from prolonged heat and high UV, making much of the shoreline on Chew and Blagdon inaccessible for bank anglers. While the weed was frustrating, it provided a vital lifeline of oxygen for our fish, helping prevent weather-related oxygen crashes often seen in summer. As access was severely restricted, all day permit bank fishing on Chew and Blagdon was temporarily suspended, with Barrow Tanks the only available venue, and four complimentary boat sessions were offered to All-Waters season ticket holders as a gesture of good will.

Chew Valley Lake: Water levels at Chew dropped further during the heat, pushing fish into deeper parts of the lake and leaving previously productive areas like Herons Bay and Villice weedy and shallow. Areas such as the Sailing Club, Walley, the Dam, and the PA1 Spit became more productive, with Walley proving especially effective due to recent stockings encouraging resident fish to feed. Dry flies and washing lines with Hoppers and Foam Daddies still took fish, but most were caught on sinking lines such as fast intermediates and Di3 paired with Cormorants and Blobs. Fishing was challenging, with feast-or-famine results; some anglers struggled all day before landing several fish in quick succession. Rod averages were 1.53.

Blagdon Lake: Blagdon also suffered from rapidly dropping water levels during the heatwave, with staff working hard to keep boats operational and clear weeds from the harbour. Stocking proved difficult under these conditions. In overcast conditions following cool south-westerly winds, fish were found in the top end of the lake, feeding among the weed on dry flies in clear patches. Open water, particularly in the Dam area, responded well to small lures, Blobs, and Cormorants on sinking lines, and fish were regularly seen in the bowl in front of the Moon Pool. Rod averages were 1.77.

Barrow Tanks: The Tanks faced strain from the ongoing heat, with feeding windows limited to early mornings. Larger resident fish were seen feeding on sticklebacks near the edges of Tanks 1 and 2 at dawn. Water levels stabilised on Tanks 1 and 2 after inflows, though this temporarily reduced visibility, while Tank 3 remained low. Stocking continued across all three reservoirs, and cooler nights began to lower water temperatures. Targeting stickleback-feeding fish on lures or attractor flies like Mini-Snakes and Minkies, or drifting nymphs in the inflows, proved effective.

At the end of August, after a period of cooler weather it was announced that the suspension on catch-and-release pike fly fishing had been lifted. The temporary measure, introduced in late June due to extremely high water temperatures, had been necessary to protect the health and welfare of the pike. After careful monitoring and recent cooler weather, conditions were deemed safe again, allowing anglers to resume full catch-and-release fishing. Thanks were extended to all anglers for their patience during the restriction, with the cooler conditions providing an excellent opportunity for late-season predator fishing.

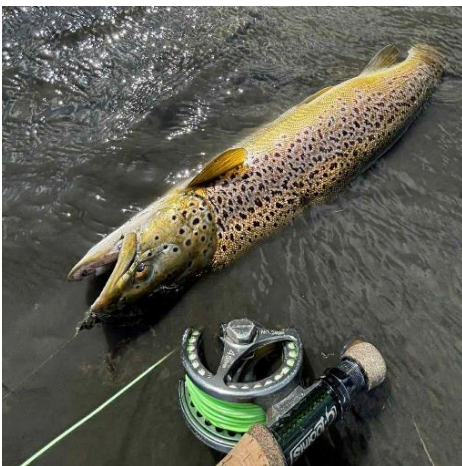
A brilliant part of August was in the birding world, as Chew Valley Lake saw the rare sighting of a White-tailed Eagle, Britain's largest bird of prey with a wingspan of up to 8 feet. This spectacular visitor highlights the high-quality habitat of Chew and its importance as an SSSI-designated site, supporting diverse and iconic wildlife. For birdwatchers, it was a once-in-a-lifetime experience and a reminder of why Chew remains one of the UK's premier birding destinations.



September and October

Exceptionally low water levels persisted through September and October, reaching levels not seen since 1976, forcing the cancellations of boat fishing at Chew Valley Lake on the 18th of October and the cancellation of all remaining boat competitions and bookings after the 18th for the 2025 boats. This included major events such as the BW new competition, the Champion of Champions and scheduled Pike Trials, resulting in a significant administrative and financial impact as hundreds of refunds were processed. Bristol Water sincerely thanked all anglers for their patience, understanding, and support during this exceptionally challenging period for the fisheries and the team.

Blagdon Lake: Blagdon remained closed to boat fishing but continued to be open for bank anglers, with exceptionally low water levels requiring extra care when accessing the shoreline. Despite challenging access, fishing stayed productive, particularly in front of the Lodge, Green Lawn, and Cheddar Water, with sheltered areas fishing well during northerly winds. Foam Daddies and Hoppers worked best when fish were high in the water, while small lures and nymphs just below the surface proved effective in less settled conditions.



Gareth Jones's 4-5lb Brownie
on the 13th of September from Blagdon!



Jeff Hurst
landed a
stunning 5lb+
Brown Trout.
Caught on a
floating line
using a small
black tinsel
booby on
Blagdon.

Chew Valley Lake: The final weeks of boat fishing at Chew brought mixed conditions, with fluctuating water clarity, yet anglers who adapted continued to enjoy good sport. Washing line tactics with Boobies, Cormorants, Hoppers, and small lures were effective, and several competitions, including the Airflo Shield Final and BRFFA events, fished well. Pike Trials and bank fishing also produced strong results, particularly from Woodford, Nunnery, and Walley Bank, with the trout season remaining productive into November.

Barrow Tanks: Fishing at the Barrow Tanks improved from mid-September, with all three tanks producing well and anglers once again reaching their limits. Tank 3's inflow and White Wall were particularly effective, while Tanks 1 and 2 fished consistently along the natural banks using fry patterns and lures. Due to fluctuating water levels and safety concerns, Tank 3 was closed on 9th November, and anglers were asked to observe the closure until levels improved.

Before the cancellations, there were still a few major events that took place in September and October including the Cortland team Championships, Airflo Shield, BRFFA events, Pike trials, Predator competitions, and the Garafit Cup.

Despite high winds forcing the cancellation of day one, the Cortland Team Championship competition went ahead on day two, the 7th of September and delivered excellent fishing in a shortened format. Team Elinor claimed victory, securing their third championship title, while Andy Stones of the BRFFA took Top Rod with eight fish. Northern Drifters came in second and the BRFFA Emergers claimed thirds place. Peter Moruzzi landed the biggest fish at 5lb 2oz, and Jesse Gale was named Top Junior with three fish for 6lb 9oz, closely followed by Wilbur Leoviriyakit on 6lb 5oz. The event's success was thanks to the dedication of all involved, with particular thanks to organiser John Horsey for maintaining the competition's high standards.



The Airflo Shield Final was held at Chew Valley Lake on Saturday 13th September, with 10 teams and 60 anglers competing in challenging but rewarding conditions. The Northern Drifters claimed victory with a strong team performance, landing 16 fish to secure first place, £1,000 in prize money, and Switch reels. Top individual honours went to Marco Orsi of Team Hogs, who landed eight fish on his birthday. In total, 117 fish were caught,

giving a rod average of 1.95, an impressive return given the conditions, and thanks go to Airflo, Kieron, Gareth, and all anglers for making the event such a success.

The BRFFA Hidden Pairs competition was held at Chew Valley Lake on Saturday 20th September 2025, with 18 anglers enjoying a calm start before increasingly challenging conditions forced an early finish. After a promising morning with early fish landed by Dave Reynolds and Mark Thomas, strengthening winds led to the boats being called in at 3pm for safety. Despite the shortened day, Dave Reynolds and Paul Golding each landed three fish, with Dave taking top individual honours on time, while Paul Golding and Ron Howard secured overall victory. Thanks go to Airflo Fishing Products, Kieron Jenkins, the BRFFA organisers, and all anglers for another well-run and enjoyable event.

	NAME	No Fish	Total	1st fish	4th Fish
1	Paul Golding C	3	4	11:12	
	Ron Howard	1		12:15	
2	Dave Reynolds	3	3	10:04	
	Anthony Coxhead	0			
3	Mark Kennedy	2	2	11:50	
	Joe Donlin	0			
4	Mark Thomas	1	1	10:10	
	Jesse Dominguez	0			
5	Paul Bond	1	1	12:22	
	Ron Thomas	0			
6	Alan Williams	0	0		
	Paul Brace	0			
6	Rik Anderson	0	0		
	Stephen Ellis	0			
6	Pete Bessell	0	0		
	A Maisy	0			
6	Sean Glover	0	0		
	Steven floyd	0			



The Fluff Chuckers Multi-Species Event returned to Chew Valley Lake on Saturday 27th September 2025, welcoming 32 anglers for a fun and light-hearted competition targeting pike, perch, rainbow, and brown trout. Despite challenging post-summer conditions, spirits remained high, with points awarded for each species and multiple catches. Our own fisheries manager Luke Cox claimed the individual win with 2 pike, 2 perch, and 2 rainbow trout, while the top boat pair went to Keith Burnett and Steve Retallack. Paul Thomas, Jim Lockyer, and Tony Milano landed the biggest pike, perch, and rainbow trout respectively. Following the prize-giving, anglers enjoyed drinks from Lakedown Brewing Co. celebrating a day of camaraderie, sportsmanship, and enjoyable fishing.

The Pike Fly Fishing Association (PFFA) event at Chew Valley Lake on 28th September 2025 was a memorable day for predator anglers, with action fast and furious. A total of 150 pike were caught, including a standout 28lb 8oz, 111cm specimen. Jack Welshman and Gary Jarvis won the Best Boat award, while Jack also landed the most fish. Supported by Savage Gear, the event celebrated skill, camaraderie, and some fantastic pike fishing. Thanks goes to the PFFA and to Ollie Cullingford for such a well run event.



The BRFFA Hidden Teams Competition at Chew Valley Lake on 12th October 2025 delivered a fantastic day of friendly rivalry, with anglers persevering despite low visibility. The event produced consistently good catches across the lake, yielding a rod average of 4.6 fish per angler. Victory was decided on time, with John Braithwaite, Andrew Weeks, and Will Wellman taking first place after Will landed his team's fourth fish just 1 hour and 30 minutes ahead of rival junior Jesse Gale. Mark Miles, Jim King, and Jesse Gale finished second, while Ron Howard, Bill Pugh, and Sean Torrington took third. The event showcased the skill of seasoned anglers and the promise of talented juniors, highlighting the camaraderie and dedication of the BRFFA community.

The Garafit Cup 2025, held on Saturday 18th October, brought Chew Valley's boat fishing season to a memorable close, with 80 anglers enjoying a highly successful day on the water. Despite falling water levels, the lake produced 291 trout at a rod average of 3.63. Matthew Griffiths claimed Top Rod with 13 fish for 26lb 12oz, followed by Paul Roach and Mark Miles in second and third. Four junior anglers also competed, all going home with prizes, highlighting the sport's bright future. Generous support from numerous sponsors and the



dedication of organisers ensured the event was a fitting finale to the season, celebrating both excellent fishing and the strong community spirit at Chew Valley Lake.

Other events of the 2025 season

Evening League 2025

The 2025 Evening League witnessed a record turnout, with 254 anglers participating across 12 sessions. Despite challenges faced by the fisheries this year, the league provided a competitive yet friendly environment for anglers to enjoy floating and tip-line fishing during the season's lighter evenings. The league comprised 14 scheduled matches, testing skill, patience, and timing under varying conditions.



Each match was scored on points based on both fish numbers and catch times. Points were awarded from 22 for 1st place down to 1 point for anglers landing fewer than 10 fish. For overall league standings, the best seven results from each angler were counted.

- Total anglers: 254
- Total fish landed: 531
- Highest rod average for a session: 5.5 fish per angler (over 4-hour matches)

Final Results (14th October):

1. Graham Currie – 164 points (Evening League Champion)
2. Alan Williams – 117 points
3. Adam Drescher – 85 points

Bristol Water extends sincere thanks to all participants for their enthusiasm, support, and sportsmanship throughout the 2025 Evening League. Special recognition goes to Graham Currie for his invaluable help in organising the league, as well as for achieving a well-deserved back-to-back championship. Anglers interested in joining the 2026 Evening League are encouraged to contact Woodford Lodge Tackle Shop at the start of the 2026 boating season.

BRFFA Youth Development Pathway

The BRFFA Youth Development Pathway continued to go from strength to strength throughout the season, building on its successful launch and further establishing itself as a vital route into fly fishing for young anglers. The initiative remained focused on teaching, nurturing, and inspiring the next generation through a structured bronze, silver, and gold award system, guiding juniors from the very basics through to more advanced angling skills. Participation continued to grow, with more young anglers being introduced to fly fishing and progressing through the pathway under the guidance of experienced instructors. Supported by Bristol Water Fisheries and valued partners, the programme benefited greatly from the involvement of some of the best anglers in the UK, whose knowledge and enthusiasm helped pass on not only technical skills from tackle setup and casting to bank and boat fishing and fly tying but also a deep respect for the fisheries and the wider environment. This ongoing development highlights a strong and promising future for junior fly fishing at Chew and Blagdon.



Bristol Water Tuition Days

Throughout the season, Bristol Water Fisheries continued to offer popular tuition days aimed at introducing new anglers to the art of fly fishing. Held at Woodford Lodge and delivered by experienced instructors Martin Cottis, Dave Green, and Bernie Weaver, each course provided a comprehensive five-hour introduction covering the essential techniques, equipment, and watercraft required to get started. Importantly, participants were given the opportunity to put their new skills into practice on the lake at the end of each session, helping to build confidence and enjoyment. In 2025, a total of 19 tuition days were successfully delivered, welcoming over 100 new anglers to the sport. A sincere thank you goes to Martin and Dave for leading the sessions, with valued support from Bernie Weaver and Tim Kamei, whose expertise and enthusiasm played a key role in the continued success of the programme.



2026 Tuition Days



 **Discover the Art of Fly Fishing with Bristol Water!**

Whether you're completely new to the sport or just curious to give it a try, our **Beginner Fly Fishing Classes** are the perfect way to get started. Led by expert instructors in one of the UK's most iconic fishing locations, this is your chance to learn a lifelong skill in a fun, relaxed, and supportive environment.

☆ What's Included?

- ✓ All equipment and licenses provided
- ✓ Friendly, qualified instructors guiding you through the fundamentals:
- Casting techniques
- Essential knots
- Choosing the right flies
- Understanding watercraft
- Leaders, tippets & modern materials

Please check the weather forecast and dress accordingly. For safety, you **must** bring: a **cap/hat, sunglasses/protective glasses**, and suitable non-slip footwear. These protect you from flies while casting and help prevent slips on wet surfaces.

And to finish the day...

 **A guided session on the lake**, where you'll put your new skills into action alongside our experienced team.

☆ 2 complimentary bank tickets for any attendees! ☆

📅 Prices & How to Book

£85.00 per Adult (18+)
£40.00 per Junior (12—17 years old)

 Classes run throughout the season, to check available dates:

 Visit our events page: bristolwaterfisheries.com/events

 Call us: **01275 332339**

 Or pop in and see us at the front desk!

Come and experience fly fishing in a setting like no other 

 **Location**—Woodford Lodge, Stoke Hill, Chew Stoke, Bristol, BS40 8XH

 **BristolWaterFisheries**

 **01275 332339**

www.bristolwaterfisheries.com

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Due to the extreme challenges faced in 2025, several competitions on Chew Valley Lake were unfortunately cancelled. With the closure of all boats in the latter half of the year, the Champion of Champions, originally scheduled for 20th July and then rescheduled for 31st August and 1st November, had to be called off for the third time due to heat, high winds, and ultimately critically low water levels. Similarly, the Bristol Water End of Season Competition and the Bristol Water Pike Competition, which was set to return for the first time since 2019, were also cancelled. Thanks to Fox Rage's continued sponsorship, the original draw for the Pike Competition will be carried forward to 2026. Looking ahead, both the Champion of Champions and the Wychwood Individuals will now be held in 2026, allowing anglers to compete safely and enjoy the prestigious events under more favourable conditions.



October and November Trials:

October saw the return of pike angling at Chew Valley Lake, bringing excitement back to the fishery despite challenging conditions and falling water levels. The start of the trials produced some exceptional catches, including David Rossiter's 37lb 7oz pike, Andy Carpenter's 35lb 4oz bank-caught giant, Gavin Fudge's 31lb 11oz lure-caught personal best, and Carl Garratt's 31lb 14oz dead-bait capture off Nunnery. Bank and boat anglers alike made the most of the opportunities, enjoying camaraderie and memorable days on the water. The Pike Trials attracted a strong turnout, though the start of the season was marred by a few rule breaches, with some anglers using banned baits or fishing outside allocated times; those involved were excluded under our zero-tolerance policy to maintain fairness and fish welfare. Despite this, the season featured many outstanding catches and reinforced why Chew remains one of the UK's premier predator venues.

Once the boat angling had be cancelled, only the bank continued for the trials with a lot of anglers catching high 20s and a few 30lbbers! Here are some of the catches from October and November.

David Rossiter – 37lb 7oz





Toni Fletcher - 28lb



Andy Carpenter - 37lb 7oz



Stephen Cotton - 29.5lbs



John Sturt - 31lb



Carl Garratt - 31lb 14oz

Stocking and Fish Farm:

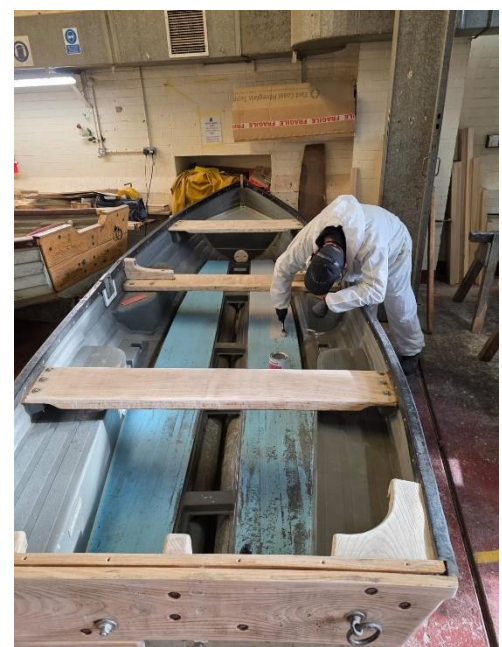


Stocking remains one of the most important responsibilities of our ranger team, with the rearing and husbandry of high-quality trout forming the backbone of our fisheries. This complex process involves continuous monitoring of water quality, fish health and growth rates, careful control of feeding regimes, and the safe grading and transportation of fish once they reach the required size. The 2025 season presented significant challenges, particularly during prolonged hot spells in June, July and August, which placed additional pressure on the fish farm and restricted our ability to stock during peak temperature periods. Despite this, we successfully stocked approximately 35,000 trout into Chew Valley Lake, 25,000 into Blagdon Lake, and over 10,000 into the Barrow Tanks, managed on an individual basis with a 50/25/25 split between Tanks 3, 2 and 1, depending on water quality, weather conditions and access. A special thank you goes to our fish farmer, Alistair Pearson, in his first year in the role, who,

alongside Fisheries Manager Luke Cox, has made significant improvements to the farm and delivered a consistent supply of high-quality, hard-fighting fish that will continue to benefit the fisheries into the 2026 season.

Winter Boat Maintenance Program

Each winter, our full fleet of boats was taken out of service and put through a comprehensive maintenance programme at the Blagdon Pumping Station carpentry workshop. Every boat was carefully inspected to ensure it met the high standards required for safe and enjoyable angling. While some only required a deep clean, repaint, and routine checks, others underwent more extensive work, including the replacement of worn components, new fittings, and structural repairs. Thanks to the skill and experience of our carpentry team, each boat was restored to excellent condition and made ready for another demanding season. This vital winter work not only extended the lifespan of the fleet but also ensured anglers continued to receive the highest possible standard of service at Bristol Water fisheries.



Finally, we extend our sincere thanks to every angler, visitor, walker, birdwatcher and supporter who engaged with the fisheries throughout the season. Your patience and understanding during periods of low water levels, boat disruption and operational pressure have been greatly appreciated. We also wish to recognise the exceptional efforts of our lodge teams, wardens, rangers and fish farm staff, whose dedication and professionalism ensured the fisheries continued to operate safely and effectively through another unpredictable year. Their commitment remains fundamental to everything we do.

A special mention to our head of fisheries and recreations, Luke Cox for managing the ranger team and all workers involved in sustaining the fisheries in what was an extremely challenging year.

Looking ahead to 2026, water levels are now rising steadily as the lakes enter their winter rest period. Preparations for the coming season are already well underway, with extensive boat maintenance taking place and the fish farm fully engaged in planning for winter care, stocking and spring operations. The quality of fish currently being brought on over the winter gives us real confidence for the year ahead, reinforcing our belief that the true measure of success is always seen in the stock itself.

With improving conditions and renewed opportunities, 2026 is shaping up to be a season full of promise. Thank you for being part of this remarkable angling community. We very much look forward to welcoming you back to the lakes in the year ahead.

Paying our respects

We also wanted to mention 4 anglers that we sadly lost in the 2025 season:

Keith Rooms

Ian Thompson

Tyson Jackson

Keith (Keefer) Brown

All were beloved by the angling community and had fished with us for a large majority of their lives. We send all our love and thanks to them and their families. May they all rest in peace.