

Bristol Water Fishery Report

July 1st – 31st



BW Lakeside

July brought with it soaring temperatures, with some days reaching well into the 30s as the third heatwave of the year arrived. Following on from what was officially the warmest June on record, July shaped up to be much the same. Understandably, the extreme heat left many of us reaching for the sunscreen and a cold drink rather than our fly rods.

The combination of high temperatures and strong UV levels resulted in substantial weed growth across both Chew and Blagdon. This, coupled with falling water levels, has led to a significant reduction in accessible bank space. As a result, we made the difficult decision to suspend bank day ticket sales until further notice. At the same time, elevated water temperatures posed challenges for fish welfare, prompting us to suspend predator fly fishing in June, followed by the suspension of catch and release trout fishing from the 11th of July.

Despite these challenges, the lakes have remained well-oxygenated thanks to the weed beds photosynthesising through the long bright days. While angling has been quieter, our team of rangers has stayed busy behind the scenes. From improving access routes and maintaining facilities around the lakes to fish rearing and stocking at the fish farm, their continued hard work ensures we're well prepared for the rest of the season.

As of late July, more changeable conditions and strong winds have started to break up the weed beds, and we're seeing the first signs of change. We remain on a catch-and-kill only basis for the foreseeable this will continue to be reviewed as water temperatures change.

We'd like to extend our sincere thanks to all anglers for their understanding and support during what has been a difficult month. We're hopeful that with improving conditions, better fishing is just around the corner.

Safe Catch and Release Practices:

In readiness for when catch and release is reinstated, please familiarise yourself with our suggested practices.

Practice Safe Catch and Release

As we move into July, it's critical to revisit the best practices for catch and release. Elevated water temperatures and reduce oxygen levels, can significantly increase stress on the fish during and after capture. While safe catch and release should always be a priority, it becomes especially important in the summer when fish are more vulnerable to handling.

- Barbless hooks are mandatory for catch and release fishing on our lakes and help reduce time out of the water.
- Use Proper Equipment: A knotless, rubberized landing net of appropriate size helps prevent injury and scale loss.
- Minimize Handling: Avoid touching the fish if possible. If handling is necessary, always wet your hands and avoid using gloves, towels, which can damage or remove the fish's protective slime coating.
- Keep It in the Water: Whenever possible, unhook the fish while it's still in the net. Consider taking photographs or measurements without lifting the fish out. This greatly reduces stress and improves survival.
- If removing the fish from the water is necessary: Ensure your weigh sling or mat is cool and wet beforehand. Keep the fish out of the water for the shortest time possible and always allow for extended recovery time in the water before release.
- Quick and Calm Action: Time is critical. Make your handling smooth, efficient, and calm to prevent additional stress or lactic acid build-up, which can be fatal hours after release.

Remember, practicing safe catch and release is not just for hot days or select species—it should be the standard for all anglers, in all conditions, across all waters. It's our collective responsibility to protect the health of our fisheries for future generations.

Water Levels and Access Update

As is typical during the summer months, water levels across our lakes have seen a significant drop. However, this year's situation has been further complicated by an exceptional level of weed growth driven by prolonged heat and high UV exposure. This combination has made bank fishing increasingly unviable, particularly on Chew and Blagdon, where heavy marginal weed rendered much of the shoreline inaccessible to anglers.

In response, we made the difficult decision to suspend all day permit bank fishing on both Chew and Blagdon, with Barrow Tanks remaining the only venue available for day permit bank anglers. To support our All-Waters season ticket holders during this period, we've offered four complimentary boat sessions to be used before the end of August, allowing access to clearer areas of the lakes. This is a rare offer, last implemented in 2021 under similar weed conditions, and reflects our commitment to ensuring quality fishing opportunities even under challenging circumstances.

We're hopeful that, as the weed begins to fall back and conditions stabilise, bank angling on Chew and Blagdon will resume soon. Thank you to all our anglers for your continued patience and understanding.

Stop the Spread of Invasive Species

We'd like to remind everyone who enjoys our Lakes. Anglers, boaters, or walkers of the serious risk posed by invasive species to our waters. An invasive species is any non-native plant, animal, or microorganism that, once introduced, can rapidly spread and cause ecological or economic harm. In freshwater environments, examples include zebra mussels, killer shrimp and signal crayfish. Plant species such as

Canadian pondweed and Himalayan balsam are also common invaders that choke native habitats and displace local wildlife. Recently, a confirmed sighting of *Crassula Helmsii*—commonly known as New Zealand Pygmyweed—was recorded in one of our lakes. This highly aggressive aquatic plant forms dense mats that deplete oxygen, smother native plants, and make fishing and other water activities difficult. It spreads easily via fragments carried on damp clothing, equipment, and footwear. We urge all lake visitors to thoroughly check, clean, and dry all gear, boots, boats, and nets before and after visiting any waterbody. Alternatively, we now have the use of DIP tanks at both Blagdon and Chew Lake, these can be used to dip tackle to eliminate the risk of invasive species spreading. Even a single fragment of an invasive plant is enough to start a new colony, so vigilance is essential in protecting our lakes for both wildlife and recreation.

If you do sight any invasive species, please inform a member of staff and include a precise location and a description of your findings.



Champion of Champions postponement

Another tough decision made this July was the postponement of our Champion of Champions competition, which was originally scheduled for the 20th of July. Due to high water temperatures and the ongoing suspension of catch and release, we have rescheduled the event to take place on Saturday the 31st of August. This decision, though difficult, was made in the best interest of both the anglers and our current fish stock, prioritising welfare and fair competition. We are now excited to announce that Wychwood are sponsoring the event for over £1000 worth of prizes! If you have qualified for the Champion of Champions and would like a practice boat for Friday the 30th, please give us a call on 01275 332339 with the name of the angler you will be fishing with to book your slot.



Shop restocking

We're pleased to report that our Woodford Tackle Shop has been fully restocked and is looking better than ever! We've replenished our full Veniards fly-tying range, including the complete selection of Fario hooks for all your tying needs. In addition, we've restocked both Rio Copolymer and X-Line tippet materials and are excited to have the ever-popular Rio Gold fly lines back on the shelves. Whether you're topping up your tackle box or gearing up for your next session, now is the perfect time to pay us a visit – pop in and see what's new!



Fly Fishing Tuition Days – Building Skills & Confidence on the Water

Our fly fishing tuition days continue to be a standout success this season, with fantastic feedback from attendees and some brilliant results on the water. These courses are run in small groups of just 6 anglers, guided by 2 experienced instructors, ensuring everyone gets hands-on, personalised coaching throughout the day. The sessions cover everything from essential fishing knots, fly selection and casting techniques, to reading the water, leader setup, and of course, putting it all into practice out on the lake.

A huge thank you goes out to our dedicated guides, whose passion and knowledge make these days such a valuable experience. And thank you as well to all who have attended so far. Your enthusiasm has made every course a pleasure to host.

One of our proudest moments came recently when Tom, a participant on our latest tuition day, landed a cracking rainbow trout estimated between 3 and 3.5lb! His success, featured in one of our Facebook posts, perfectly captures what these courses are all about: building confidence, learning new skills, and enjoying the fantastic sport our waters have to offer.



Pike Fly Suspension

Pike fly fishing remains suspended across all waters due to the continued high water temperatures, which pose a risk to fish welfare during handling and release. We are closely monitoring conditions and will look to resume predator fishing as soon as it is safe and responsible to do so. We understand this is disappointing for many anglers, but ensuring the health of our fish stocks is our top priority. We look forward to welcoming predator anglers back once conditions improve.

Chew

Chews levels have dropped as expected during the heat, pushing the fish out into the lake, previously productive areas such as Herons Bay and Villice have been left rather weedy and shallow. Areas such as the Sailing club, Walley, the Dam and the spit at picnic area one in front of the Salt and Malt have come to the forth! Walley seems to be arguably the most productive area of the lake as the recent stockings seem to have stayed local but have also encourage some of the resident fish onto feed. Dry's and Washing lines particularly when fished with Hoppers and Daddys will still pick up fish but the mainstay are falling to sinking lines such as a Fast intermediate and Di3 paired with Cormorants and Blobs.

The Fishing has been extremely testing with feast or famine results, Martin Downton took a boat this month and described how he was fishing all day for little results on to land four fish in very quick succession, Others have reached there bag limit in recent days but the fish do seem to be in small pods, so all is to play for and keep going until they arrive!

- **Top Patterns:** Hoppers, Foam Daddies, Damsels, Blobs and Cormorants
- **Best Areas:** Sailing Club, Walley, Dam, PA1 Spit
- **Rod Averages:** 1.53

Blagdon

Blagdon much like Chew has suffered in the recent heat wave with rapidly dropping water levels, Our team have been working hard to try and keep the boats going with the Jetty's needing moving constantly and using heavy chains to clear weeds around the entrance to the harbour.

Stocking has been increasing difficult in the heat for fish welfare also finding suitable locations to stock, we will go into this in more detail in our stocking section.

In overcast conditions especially after a prolonged cool South westerly wind fish have been found up the top to much of our surprise. Fishing single dry flies on a floating in the clear areas around the weed has produced fish. The weed beds on Blagdon really are a haven for food with Corrixa and Damsels still being found! This has been one of the longest periods Damsels have been seen on Blagdon for a long time!

Out in open water especially in the Dam area we are hedging our bets that small lure patterns, blobs and cormorants will all start to produce much like Chew pair these with sinking lines.

We expect the dam to switch on in the coming weeks after the recent stockings. Fish have been regularly spotted in the bowl out in front of the entrance of the moon pool, an area often overlooked by many.

- **Top Patterns:** Hoppers, Foam Daddies, Damsels or Blobs and Cormorants
- **Best Areas:** Mouth of Butcombe, Home Bay, Dam basin
- **Rod Averages:** 1.77

Barrow Tanks

The Tanks have been put under strain again this month as the heat has continued to rise, feeding windows have been incredibly short often limited to early morning. Some of the larger residents have been seen feeding on the stickle back right in the edge of No1 and No2 just after dawn.

Water levels have stabilised on Tank 1 and 2 as water has been moved back into both lakes although this did create a period of turbidity reducing visibility last week. No 3 remains low so please use caution when navigating the margins.

We have been busy stocking all three reservoirs over the past week. Now we are seeing cooler nights we are hoping this will lower the temperatures of the lakes.

Targeting those fish feeding on the stickleback could bring great sport on lures or attractor type flies such as Mini-Snakes and Minkies. The inflows will always hold fish at this time of year and a nymph drifted out in the flow has proved effective recently.

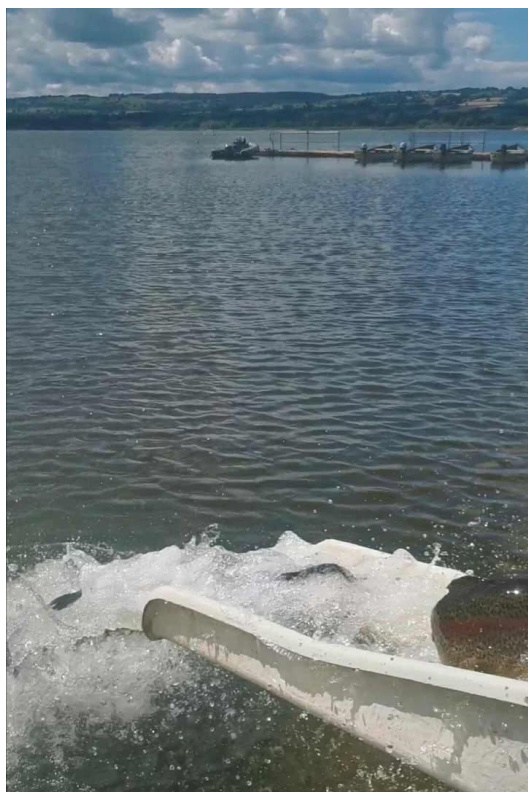
Stocking

Chew

Due to the water levels accessing suitable stocking locations is becoming more difficult. We have been hard at work stocking an additional 2000 Rainbows this month.

Blagdon

Earlier in the month 800 fish were stocked from Green lawn, as the month has progressed the receding water levels meant green lawn was no longer viable. The Dam has become the main stocking point for the rest of the month. Another 1200 have been stocked bringing the rolling total to 2000 for the month.



Barrows



The Tanks received a healthy stocking this month with 500 going into number one and 500 into two with a further 1000 going into number three.

Upcoming events

The BRFFA spring shield, this is a Catch and release competition with a 16 fish catch total fished from 10am to 6pm Originally scheduled for the 1st of June now moved to the 17th of August.

Wychwood individuals

The 2025 Wychwood Individual Fly-Fishing Championships will be held on Chew Valley Lake this year on Sunday 24th August.

International rules and flies from drifting boats with “Rolley Poley” allowed.

With a £1000 top prize this is one for the competition angler’s calendar!

Bristol Water Champion of Champions

This invitational competition, held on Chew on the 31st of August is filled with some of the best anglers in the game, to qualify you must have placed in a previous competition held on Chew or Blagdon.

Fished to International rules- “Rolley Poley” allowed- with a 2 fish kill and 12 fish catch and release format fished from 10am - 5pm