



## Westcountry Rivers Trust

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Dear Mr Reavell

### WESTCOUNTRY ANGLING PASSPORT – RAKE WATER

Thank you very much for your continued support of the Westcountry Angling Passport during the 2010 season. Please find enclosed your cheque for last season's angling visits. My apologies for the delay in sending your cheque out; the wrapping-up of last season coupled with starting off a new project has meant there has been a lot going on behind the scenes. *We would like to remind you that you are responsible for any tax payable on this amount.*

#### ***The 2010 season***

The weather pattern last season was in stark contrast to the previous two years and we had long spells of dry weather which meant rivers were at times very low, especially during high summer. What this meant for salmon fishers was that success had been fairly sporadic by mid-summer, with the odd fish appearing following the short-lived spates. Towards the end of the season however, the fishing really picked up and there were good runs of fish appearing in many rivers. Indeed, across the region it seemed that fish were running from the end of September through October and in many rivers fish were seen running for some time beyond the end of the season. A number of these fish had started to mature and 'colour-up' although Mr Johnson had what he described as a 'sparkling blue' grilse of 6lb on the Tamar in the last few days of the season. This was amongst several good fish recorded, including two grilse by Tony Simpson (to 7lb) on one September morning on the West Dart.

Sea trout fishing was at times very good with fish being caught across the upper Dart and Tamar beats (there were good numbers through the Gunnislake fish counter last year) as well as on other individual beats. Again, some rain during the key summer months would have helped the fishing. The Dart produced some good sea trout with a best fish of (an estimated) 8lb to Jim Sheaves during July and plenty in the 3 to 5lb mark. We had reports of good sea trout from the Lyd including a fish of 3lb and 4lb in one night to Mike Jones. Passport regular Ben Garnett had two sea trout of 2lb and 2½lb on two visits to the Lynher showing that light fishing for sea trout in the day can provide great sport.

Angler returns showed that brown trout fishing during May and June was very productive, with too many notable sessions to list. We were very pleased with the good numbers of fish in the 10" to 12" bracket as well as several larger fish being caught, including a 14" fish from the East Dart and several of the same size from the Torridge beats.

When looking at the scheme as a whole, we were encouraged by the returns being made, both in terms of the *quality of catches* and *individual fish* caught. Anglers' returns indicated more than 2,000 brown trout to 16", grayling to 2lb, 105 sea trout to 8lb, 38 salmon to 11lb and carp to 14lb were caught across

the scheme's fisheries. In keeping with previous years, we saw a very high proportion of fish returned and we continue to encourage anglers to practice catch and release to protect fish stocks.

When looking at the number of angling visits across the Passport last season, it is clear there has been a drop on 2009 figures. When analysing the data, the decrease in visits appears quite consistent across the scheme, suggesting that the recession may have resulted in fewer anglers visiting the Westcountry. We noticed, in particular, that there were fewer groups of anglers (i.e. those specifically visiting to go fishing) in 2010 and there were far fewer calls and email enquiries during holiday times (July/August) suggesting that there were simply fewer holiday visitors (i.e. those who fish as part of a family holiday). What this means for the 2011 season is that the Trust needs to keep up with the promotion of the scheme and in particular to keep sending out the message about its value for money, wild fishing.

### ***The Rake Water – a summary of 2010***

#### *Fishing returns (catches)*

Angler's returns showed your fishery produced 3.2 brown trout per rod/day with a best fish of 12". The best fishing session was had by a Mr Deacon who got a 12" trout as part of 10 fish landed in a four hour session. Also, several sea trout were caught during the day, the best a 4lb fish on 4wt tackle and a size 18 goldhead nymph, which must have been quite exciting!

However, it is clear that the catches last season were dominated by brown trout in the 6" - 9" bracket – i.e. smaller fish. Indeed, returns indicated only 12 fish of 10" or over were caught (of which several fish may have been caught more than once). It is very hard to compare your fishery to another, even on the same river, as habitat, access as well as other variables dictates the carrying capacity of the section of river in question. However, having had time to reflect on adult trout habitat in the Rake Water, it is clear that whilst there are several pools and deeper runs, there are also long 30m+ stretches of fairly featureless water (i.e. lacking diversity). Indeed, during times when I have walked the beat, I have seen larger fish darting around looking for cover, which suggests that in certain areas, there is a dearth of good refuge. Adult brown trout require deeper water with lots of instream and marginal cover – both acting as cover for fish and habitat for important food sources. Various studies have shown increases of 200-300% in brown trout densities when measured in areas of river with high levels of Coarse Woody Debris compared with sections of little woody material. When considering what large fish need, think of the three C's: Comfort, Cover and Consumables – you need these in concert to provide habitat for large trout.

#### *Actions for the Rake Water*

Work carried out as part of the River Avon Project in 2010 will certainly help improve habitat, however I think actions to improve bankside, marginal and instream cover will be hugely beneficial. I think that utilising some of the large mature timber; A) along the river margins to narrow the channel encouraging scour and deepening sections of river and B) in-river to create diversity, scour and localised habitat would all help. It is also important to retain as much in-channel woody material as possible. It may also be possible to install large boulders, but you should be aware this would increase costs substantially and call for more detailed plans and application process potentially coupled with a Flood Risk Assessment.

#### *Progress in 2011*

We recommend the AFA utilise the additional revenue from the Passport sales as well as volunteer help to target habitat improvement to enhance adult brown trout habitat. WRT can assist with advice and training support to get things going. The Association should be clear about its objectives for the Rake Water – e.g. to increase adult brown trout numbers by xx%, as reported by anglers using the water (as a measurement albeit coarse) and make sure that works are focussed on discrete sections of the river. WRT will of course keep an eye out for funding but we need to be clear that in times of uncertain funding as we are now, we need to ensure a good return on investment i.e. in my opinion

there is a strong case to look for projects at the catchment scale, not simply on isolated sections of river (of course where funding allows).

Please feel free to call me to discuss the options for Rake Water in more detail, and maybe we should try and arrange a site visit as well.

### **'Westcountry Angling Passport' developments**

During 2010, the Trust has continued to develop the Passport scheme utilising funding through the **Collabor8 Project**, which is a partnership project funded through the North West Europe Interreg 4b programme. The Collabor8 project has allowed WRT to: develop the new Passport website, work with accommodation providers and fishing guides as well as developing a host of other useful information for anglers. The online booking system has been a great success with anglers and now South Kerry Development Partnership (the Irish project leader in Collabor8) 'taking a leaf out of our books' and developing their own booking system.

On other fronts, the Trust, in partnership with Farson Digital, has installed 16 webcams across the region, to provide anglers with up-to-date images of water height and conditions. These webcams are an essential asset for visiting and local anglers and the network has continued to grow across the UK and Scotland with nearly 50 webcams all now showing live river images ([www.farsondigital.co.uk](http://www.farsondigital.co.uk)).

After some time in development, we are pleased to let you know that the Trust has secured funding through the **Country Sports South West Project** to develop new fisheries across the region, and expand the Westcountry Angling Passport. This is a really exciting three year £1.6m project which is being run in partnership with the British Association for Shooting and Conservation (BASC) and is funded through the Regional Development Programme for England *Sustainable Tourism* strand. The project broadly aims to develop the full potential of the country sports sector including shooting, fishing and horse riding in order to make the region a key destination for country sports enthusiasts.

If you have a shoot, equine or food business or are involved in any country sport that you would like to develop / promote or you simply would like to talk about opportunities through the project, please give me a call and I will provide you with more details and pass you on to the relevant BASC project officer.

As an overview of what WRT will be doing in 2011, we will:

- Continue to host stands at regional shows (such as the Royal Cornwall Show and Devon Show) and national events such as the CLA Game Fair. This is essential for us to promote the scheme face to face with the angling public and we generate many new Passport contacts this way. Please come and find us if you are at these events.
- Continue to promote the scheme through the angling press. Mike Weaver and Dominic Gamett have really helped us promote the scheme and we provide them with free access so they can generate articles about the scheme. In 2010, we had two articles in Trout and Salmon and already, in 2012, we have an article due out in The Field (April edition) which has been produced by another keen angler called Toby Coe.
- Run a number of 'angling taster sessions' with local fishing instructors to introduce new people to the sport.
- Run training events, courses and workshops for fishery owners. The first of these will be several workshops which are being run with the British Disabled Angling Association and will focus on how businesses and clubs can make their fisheries more accessible.
- Continue to expand the scheme. We are delighted that the Duchy of Cornwall fishing on Dartmoor is again part of the Passport scheme and hope to see many more fisheries sign up over the coming year.
- Carry out research, with our partners, to look more closely at the importance of angling tourism in the region and will use these results to inform our marketing and promotion.

- Develop a new online angler database which will allow us to communicate much more efficiently with anglers who enjoy fishing in the Westcountry (by letting them know about how rivers are fishing, catches, promotions etc)

As you can see, we are continuing to develop and grow the scheme, as part of our commitment to improving angling opportunities in the region. I am always available to discuss any queries you may have, so please do not hesitate to call – my phone numbers (including out of hours) are listed below.

With best wishes for 2011



**Toby Russell**  
**Head of Fisheries**

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Country Sports South West is a three year Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE) jointly funded by the EU & DEFRA, in partnership with the British Association for Shooting and Conservation (BASC) and the Westcountry Rivers Trust (WRT).



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