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LIST OF CONTENTS.

- Page 1 - EDITORIAL - - - - - Brian Crawford.
Page 2 - Things could have been a lot better. Terry Jefferson.
Page 4 - Eel Netting and the Future of our Sport. Steve Hope.
Page 5 - Comment on Steve Hopes article. - - - David Smith.
Page 6 - How far should we go. - - - - - Arthur J.Sutton.
Page 7 - Ditto.

EDITORIAL

At last... At last... At long B..... last, I have been invited to give you all the benefit of my literary knowledge in the form of an Editorial page. Now the occasion has arisen, I feel it is an attempt by AJS and DGS of SLASH fame to get me to swell the next edition of the Bulletin with an Editorial and a Chairman's page. They must be joking! I will combine the two into one - Mudman strikes again.

A fellow science master at school asked me why I thought eels were so special - the fool. "It is obvious," I replied. "They are mainly catadromous and may be either rheophilous or limnophilous. Usually eels are benthic but on occasions are pelagic." "Of course, of course," he stammered, "it was stupid of me to ask." He walked away muttering to himself. A few weeks later he wandered into my lab. on the pretext of borrowing my young female lab assistant, but I told him I was unable to oblige (him). With a multitude of well rehearsed excuses he persuaded me to translate my above simple statement. Simplified even further for his benefit, all I said was that the eel breeds in the sea but matures mainly in freshwater, and that they may live in rivers or still water. Usually eels stay on the bottom to feed but on occasions are free swimmers, feeding in mid water or near the surface.

General information: The freshwater eel was first classified as such and given the name *Anguilla anguilla* by Linnaeus in 1758, on the basis of it having 110 to 119 vertebrae to distinguish it as a separate species.

I hope all members read the editorial from the NASG Newsletter in the previous Bulletin. The information given is so very relevant. The theme is one taken by so many anglers concerned with the future of angling and I would like to assure all members that I will continue to offer our Club's support for so worthwhile a cause. Our Club is now affiliated to the NASG as a body and, therefore, I will be representing your ideas and decisions on angling matters. I therefore implore any of you who feel strongly on any item, to let me know so that the Club can decide on a general policy for the future.

The members who attended the AGM probably remember that in my opening address I stated that I am firmly convinced of the benefits to be obtained from a policy of eel conservation. That is, I mean, I hope, whenever possible, members will encourage others to return all 2lb+ eels to the water alive, unless they are badly injured. I realise, of course, that this may affect our growth rate studies, so I would like to hear members' views on this. You can decide if you want to fish a water out, or, in the case of large productive waters, transfer all 2lb+ eels to a much smaller water nearer home. In my opinion, too many fine eels are being killed. They are a very slow growing species and I feel we ought to be setting an example to the rest of the angling world by leading the way in eel conservation. I am also interested in an eel tagging experiment and hope that one or two of you will consider undertaking a project in this line during the coming season. Drop me a line if interested.

Due to several lagers at the AGM, and the effect of taking over as Chairman, I was rather lost for words in my opening address. Many of the things I should have said, I forgot to say, and I am ashamed to admit it now, I certainly did not do justice to the efforts of Alan during his years on the committee. He really has raised the Club's prestige during his terms of office and we all owe

him much.

As Chairman, I should have endorsed this view by proposing him for the Presidency of the Club. I now rectify this error, and, as Chairman, this proposal needs no seconder. I also suspend normal voting procedure (i.e. elections only at AGM's). Any objections? Alan has kindly accepted, so please amend your directories accordingly.

Congratulations, Alan.

Brian Crawford.

THINGS COULD HAVE BEEN A LOT BETTER
- featuring the one that got away!

By Terry Jefferson.

Having suggested that it might be an idea to run a series of articles by individual members on the type of season they had, I thought I might as well start the ball rolling. Before I divulge the gorey details, let me say that 1974 proved to be my worst year in search of eels since joining the Club. Also my session log has mysteriously disappeared, so I can't quote exact dates and details - not that there was much to remember anyway.

So, if you're sitting comfortably, bend your lug-holes and cop a load of this tale of woe.....

..... It all started back in June at Totham pit where I spent a lot of time in 1972. I fished with all the enthusiasm you would expect at the start of a new season, except for a couple of hour's kip - well, nobody's perfect. I had just one run all night, a real rod shaker on a six inch roach dead bait which really went. Needless to say, I Missed it completely, due mainly to my overenthusiasm to get my first eel of the season on the bank. I felt a little annoyed with myself. I tell a lie. I was fuming!

As things turned out, that was my only session at Totham in 1974, but I hope to get back there a bit more this coming season.

Except for the Club trip to Bala, of which more later, I spent the rest of the season fishing at Abberton plus one session at a new water to Chris Davy and I in this neck of the woods. This water is called Silver End pit - a gravel pit of about four acres. Unfortunately, water has been pumped into the pit all season long from an adjacent gravel pit and at the time we fished the pit the level was up by about nine or ten feet which meant that the usual swims were a long way under water. There was only one place left suitable for night fishing due to the steep nature of the banks.

I had three runs during that session. The first came just before dark on worm. It resulted in the capture of a great clump of matted silkweed in the centre of which I found something long and wriggly which weighed in at 1:10.

The bottom weed growth was quite dense and it was this which caused my second run to abort on a four inch bream deadbait. The third run was a real steady

plodder which just went on, and on, and on and must have been in the middle of the next field when it finally stopped. I hit it when it moved off again, though I needn't have bothered for all I got back was one 14ft length of Potomageton. Highly amusing; or at least Chris thought so.

As I mentioned earlier, I spent the rest of the season in this part of the world at Abberton Reservoir. Like everything else, it turned out to be my worst year at the place since I've been fishing there. That place can get really boring. When you sit there week after week staring at 1500 acres of water with just one rod to fish with, the whole effort begins to feel a little bit futile. I shouldn't complain really, there can't be many waters where good eels can be caught virtually on tap. All you do is huzz a bait out to the horizon and beyond, then sit back and wait for something to happen.

The undoubted highspot of my season was the Club trip to Bala. Despite the pretty lousy weather we had to endure during the week we were there, I thoroughly enjoyed myself.

Chris and I got there too late to make a start on the Sunday evening, so we got a good night's kip in our tent trailer and got ourselves organised the next day.

Our first session proved to be a bit of a failure. We fished midway along the SE bank of the lake and we got about six 'laces on worm before giving the bait up as a bad job. We failed to get a run on deadbait despite having a nice selection including perch, roach and trout - no questions please.

Things got better next morning when we got about 20 small perch on float fished maggot which meant that we had some fresh baits to use for the next couple of sessions. Unfortunately, the livebaits were not very hardy and soon became deadbaits, which meant that more fresh baits would have to be found.

The majority of members were fishing on the NW bank of the lake and they were catching a few decent eels. So, after a couple of days of rain, Chris and I decided to move over and join the rest. I wasted no time in commandeering the swim which Dave Ball vacated very kindly - cheers, Dave - and at the stroke of midnight on the Wednesday I had a real steamer of a run which just went on and on with no sign of stopping. The level of line on my reel was down to an alarming level and rapidly becoming non-existent. I was torn between the two options of swimming after it, or tying myself to the nearest tree and hanging on, when, the run stopped briefly, then went off again. I decided that it was now or never, so I belted it hard. The result was alarming. The tip of my "Muncha pole" was savagely wrenched over and I just managed to stop the fish pointing me. Then, for about twenty seconds, but what seemed like eternity, the fish took line off a tight clutch. The belligerent monstrosity had me feeling totally helpless, when the blessed thing let go of the bait.

I rememberswearing at myself and cursing everything in Wales, and I was still shaking and chain smoking half an hour later when my buzzer roused me out of my stupour. This time all went well and I duly netted a nice fish of 3:8. Something of an anticlimax all the same. Both fish took 5" perch deadbaits.

Thursday night proved to be an undisturbed sleep, but Friday night produced another nice fish of 3:7, again on perch deadbait.

As I said earlier, the daylight hours were spent in search of deadbait - except

for boozing sessions, that is. Our beloved, but dead jammy ex-chairman and I sat shoulder to shoulder on one occasion fishing the same spot with identical terminal tackle. Alan produced a string of fish pushing a pound and over with the occasional ten inch perch, while all I could muster was a succession of 4-5" perch. Well, someone had to catch the bait and Alan was enjoying himself so much.

Well, that's about all folks. Not the best of seasons when compared to previous years. But I think 1975 can only be an improvement. I hope it is for everyone.

EEL NETTING AND THE FUTURE OF OUR SPORT

By Steve Hope.

Eel netting has been taking place in this country for a great many years and never has it seemed to do any real damage to the eel population, for the simple reason that it has been practiced on rivers and streams, where the majority of eels netted are silver eels. The only way that that sort of netting could do any real damage to the species would be the lack of eelers returning to the British Isles: but as eelers were still returning in their millions, it didn't, in fact, do much harm at all.

Now let me turn to our day and age where people like us want to fish for specimen sized eels - ie. fish over fifteen years old and weighing more than two or three pounds (depending on what you call a specimen eel). Through the efforts of the Anguilla Club, we have found that the best waters for the very big eels are mostly totally enclosed lakes and ponds with the odd exception of some rivers and canals.

You are now probably wondering what the hell I'm on about: everyone should be happy because we fish the lakes and ponds whilst the nets are in the rivers and streams. In the past the netting of eels has never interfered with our sport. But if you think that that is how it is now, you are far from the truth.

A few years ago, a new type of eel fisherman appeared on the banks of our peaceful little eel waters - the semi-professional eel trapper. These blokes have found out what sort of money live eels are worth; and let me tell you, there's plenty of money to be had.

Take, for instance, my part of the world and a pond called Barton Broad.

A few years ago, one of these blokes asked the owner if he could net the pond for eels. Of course, the owner said he could. That night there were about twelve nets spread around the pond and the following morning he came to empty them. Believe me, it was an incredible sight. Every net was bulging with eels and every other fish you can think of (the Roach and Bream fishing has been dead ever since). He did this for a week. Then, for some reason, he left his nets in the pond and didn't return. So, after four or five days, we went to empty them and found hundreds of half dead fish, most of them small carp. That was his lot (I'm glad to say). The owner told him to take the eels and his nets and bugger off.

I should say that he went very happy because with him went 1500lbs of eels, including many over four and five pounds plus one over nine. A quick trip down the motorway to London made him over £800. Not bad for a few hour's work.

Since then, I'm afraid, it has got worse. Just about every pond in the area has been netted and netted, and, believe me, they don't leave many eels for us to catch as my '74 session reports will show over 2000 RH for only 35 eels - and most of those were bootlaces. I also had the good fortune to sit through seventeen blank all night sessions on these waters. I could put the blame for these poor results on myself for fishing these netted ponds. But when it comes o the point where these ponds are the only waters I can fish without travelling miles away, you've just got to fish them or not bother eel fishing at all. Being a lover of eel fishing, I cannot just give it up; and why should I? Why should you, for that matter? Just because these twits want a bit of easy money without caring what happens to the pond after they have done, or for the people who fish them for sport.

This sort of netting can only do damage to any lake or pond it is practiced on. Fish soon become stunted when the balance of Nature is upset by taking most of the predators from the water, as eel netting does.

So, in the long run it can ruin everybody's fishing and not just our own. I cannot see that it will do the eel population any good, as they must catch millions every year. And with people like Eric Birch about, thousands more will end up without a head.

As for the future of our sport..... fancy fishing for ten ounce eels?

If you do, drop me a line.

Editors comment: Despite the fact that I have handed over the editorial page to Brian Crawford, I could not resist the temptation to comment on Steve's article. Indeed, surely this is a topic that we should all be able to comment on.

It is very unfortunate that if the netsmen had carp as their quarry - and carp cost a few more pennies than eels - the angling fraternity would be up in arms. No, that is not really true. What would really happen is that the angling press would bring it to everyone's attention. And what a hue and cry there would then be. Even John Cadd's killing of Pike for his own pot raised quite a few rude letters. But eels? Alas, they are a joke that no-one takes seriously; and who expects eels to be returned alive? They are slimy unwholesome creatures that should be removed from every water because they ruin the fishing. Ask Eric Birch if you don't believe me. Funniest of all, of course, is that an Anguilla Club member can openly advertise that he's going netting and not a sole raises a voice in criticism.

The ball is firmly in our court. Certain moves have been made to educate the public - notably Brian Crawford extolling the virtues of conservation. But we must get this to snowball. Only by educating the average fisherman into accepting that eels are fish can we get anywhere.

As I said, the topic of commercial netting should elicit some response from every one of us. So, please, put your view on paper and send it to me. Only by getting everyone's opinion can Brian give our collective view - ie. the Club's view - to the NASG or the Angling press.

DAVID SMITH.

HOW FAR SHOULD WE GO.A.J.Sutton.

According to old Izaak Walton - Not the old Izaak Ernie Orme recently reffered to - all anglers are simple men and true. Well, we may all be true but I do not think that we are all simple men, just because we go angling. The very fact that we are all members of this Club tells me this is not so. Angling is no longer a simple meditative recreation, although, young as I am, I vaguely remember it being so. It has become a creative sport with plenty of scope for innovation and inventiveness on the part of the earnest participant.

In recent years we have seen nothing short of a revolution in certain spheres. Who would now be without their bite detector or alarm? Who would willingly go back to using greenheart rods? Or flax lines? Some keen types even take water temperatures and measure the depth of the water with instruments. Was it always so? Indeed not. Such things have come about through mans desire to get the best from what is available. In other words, science has been applied to what once was a non scientific pursuit.

If you accept that fact, and I feel that we must, sooner or later the question arises - 'How far do we go'. Most men of science will tell you that " We have only just started". Non scientific types may raise an eyebrow or two, but in the end settle back quietly with the thought that 'It had to come sooner or later'. Indeed, unless we all - the whole of mankind - decide that as from now there will be no more progress and things must stay as they are, then we must accept the fact that, no matter what comes along on the technological front, 'It had to happen sooner or later'.

Such thoughts were, and had been for some time, running through my mind when I fished at night for eels at Kingsmead gravel pit. I was alone, as my companion for most of the summer - Alan Hawkins - was on holiday. The night seemed fair and I had that certain feeling. Baited up and cast out - I waited for some hours. Nothing doing, and with work the following morning, I decided it was time I lay back on my bedchair ' just to rest my eyes'. I went into a really sound sleep and Gina Lollobrigida was just about to hand me another cup of tea when the alarm sounded. I vaguely concluded, from the internal lights on my alarm, that there was action on two of my three rods. I stumbled almost blindly from under my broolly - tripped over the cables leading from my sensors, whereupon two of my rods were pulled from off their rests. They, of course, had to be the two rods on which the action was taking place. I recall bemoaning the fact that I ever gave up using silver paper. When I had sorted out the mess I got round to striking one of the runs. For several seconds I was into something good - no, Alan, NOT a three pound pike! Then it was gone and the line was slack. I had the feeling that tripping over the cables and the ensuing commotion had prevented the eel from taking properly. The other rod yielded a small eel. Or should I say ANOTHER small eel.

The fact that from then on until early light I had fast and productive sport did not prevent me from thinking in retrospect on the way home. I HAD laid out those cables in neat fashion and certainly knew where they were. All the same, I had made a blundering commotion at a time when I was otherwise fishing carefully and quietly - with no Alan Hawkins pottering about on the chance of a cup of tea. (Sorry, Alan)

Those cables! My mind went back to a few weeks earlier, to the Bala Lake trip. Those cables! I had fractured two of mine on the sharp stones with which the forshore at Bala abounds. I know of two other members who suffered similarly. Those cables. What to do about them. Give up bite alarms altogether? No way.

So, back at work I got to thinking about the problem and various ways came to mind. I ignored the advice to give up fishing altogether on account of how it was costing the firm too much money. Then, in one of my all too few moments of pure genius, I decided on the idea on which I have been working, off and on, ever since.

The basic idea might be considered by some as 'going too far'- and fraught with magic. All the same, it is a logical way of getting over the problem of the cables which insist on wrapping themselves around your ankles.

The new concept is as follows.

The sensors remain the same, whichever type you prefer, but instead of the cables trailing all the way back to your broolly cum tent cum what have you, they connect into a unit at the waterside. This unit is an ULTRA SONIC transmitter. The alarm and receiver unit is housed with you in the protective environment of the broolly. There can be, with my system as it is at present, some twenty yards or so between transmitter and receiver. That distance should satisfy those feinds who are forever extending their cables. The system contravenes no ACT and is allowed within the present Post Office regulations. Therefore, no license of any kind is required. Of course, the system IS costly and may well be more than some would wish to pay just in order to eliminate those cables. Nevertheless, the system works well and will be demonstrated to members at the Spring General Meeting.

All the same, I do have a nagging doubt. I must, after all, be one of those simpler men. I would like to hear from you, either directly or through the Bulletin, through the good offices of Dave Smith, and would leave you with this question. "HOW FAR DO WE GO".

A.J.S.

A NOTICE re TRACE WIRE.

I apologise for including this notice in the Bulletin, but the news came just too late for inclusion in the Newsletter.

Ernie Orme informs me that when his present stock of trace wire runs out there will be no more. Apparently it will not be obtainable in this country. Ernie still has twenty packs of the Black Seal wire left, at 20p per pack. It will be 'first come first served' and limited to two packs per applicant. Please apply to Ernie Orme and include postage. Thankyou.