

# End of Year Report

## WADAA Ltd

### Message from the Chairman - December 2020

Under normal circumstances I would be working with the WADAA 'Team' to prepare for our AGM, which usually takes place in early December each year. The Covid-19 pandemic has ensured the phrase, 'normal circumstances', is totally inappropriate in 2020. Despite the difficulties we are facing, I want to reassure members that the new committee structure is up and running, and working productively alongside the Board and our professional staff - Nick Butterfield (WADAA Manager, Joanne Atkinson (WADAA Admin Officer), Jim Duncan (Fishery Officer).

**Game Committee** - Dave Farnworth (Chairman), Jim Duncan (Fishery Officer), Ian Plumb (Director), Simon Balderstone (Director).

**Coarse Committee** - Dave Hogarth (Chairman), John Birds (Director), Andrew Chapman (Director), Kevin Aitken, Mike Egner.

I am sure that most of our members will have been negatively affected, to a greater or lesser extent, by the restrictions to work, travel and social and household interactions. Indeed, some of our members will have experienced, first-hand, the terrible effects of the C-19 virus. Fishing will have been the last thing on their minds in recent months.

Angling has been spared many of the restrictions imposed on other sports, and as a result it is suddenly coming back into fashion - something we can confirm, as we have seen our waiting list steadily grow throughout the year. That should be no surprise when you consider what a privilege it is to be able to spend time in such glorious surroundings - rod in hand...if not always with a fish on the other end!

The pandemic has had an impact on WADAA from both a financial and operational perspective. We have not been able to benefit from the Government's Furlough Scheme to reduce our staffing costs, as we have been busier than every during this period.

Despite all the difficulties we have encountered this year, we have managed to increase our cash-in-bank position by approximately £3k.

Our Coarse Fisheries have benefited from improved infrastructure, through very significant multiple-grant funding, and improvements to our Game Fisheries will follow - **see WADAA Manager's** report below.

It is unclear how the effects of Covid-19 will play-out over the next year. Will more people take up angling? Will climate change and increased predation require us to spend even more to combat these in the future? We need to be in a position to respond to all of these challenges...and we are. Thanks to our prudence over many years, we are in a position to continue our improvement programme, whilst holding the Full Membership fee at £155. I believe this to be fantastic value for money. Coarse Membership will be raised to £85 - an increase of only £5.

Over 50% of our members (those who responded to the e-survey earlier in the year) stated that they would be prepared to see Full Membership increase by up to £20/yr in return for the improvements we have made, and will continue to make. This survey was conducted before the Covid-19 crisis hit, and we are mindful of the difficult and uncertain times facing us all. The Board has therefore decided to dip into our reserves, to help as many people as possible enjoy 'WADAA angling' next year. Indeed, we are going to allow a significant number of people (those already on the waiting list) to join the club from 1st January 2021 - this is earlier than normal and before we have exact numbers for renewal. We have added Farletonview to our list of waters since setting our cap on membership - we have High Fairbanks back as well, and we expect to add a new, smaller water, to our portfolio in 2021. Taking on additional members will provide income to help offset the practical and financial challenges facing us, but we must ask you to be prepared for a fee increase next year, once we get a clearer picture going forward.

We want to provide as much information as possible, so please read the following report from Nick, try to be optimistic about the future...it will soon be Spring...and stay safe.

David Blacow  
Chairman  
WADAA Ltd

## Nick Butterfield

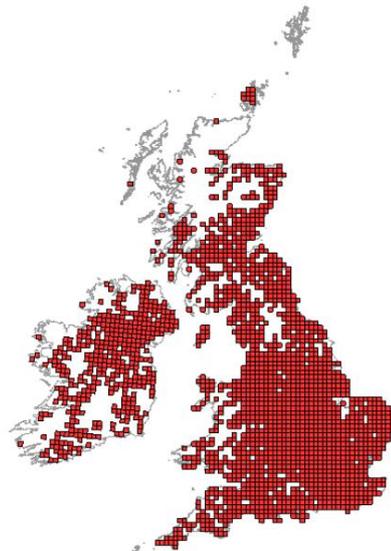
### WADAA Fishery Manager

2020 has been a very difficult year for everybody. I will not dwell on the Covid situation but explain the impacts to our fisheries and the plans for the future.

As lockdown lifted there was a huge surge of angling interest and we saw all our venues, coarse and game, increasingly busy. Unfortunately, there was a marked escalation in poaching events. This costs the club (and therefore our ability to invest in the future) in a number of ways – the most obvious being lost day ticket money. However, increasing our bailiff patrols also adds significant cost – especially on our more remote, natural waters where there can be quite a journey involved. Lots of members will have seen and benefitted by the increased presence of Jim Duncan, the Fishery Officer – please keep us informed immediately if you see anything suspicious.

Moving on to the challenges, let me share a few statistics:

- 59% growth in cormorant numbers 1998-2010 with increasing inland breeding colonies and a significant influx of a European sub-species. Remember each bird eats around 2lb of fish per day. This picture below shows the colonization by these birds:



- 12,000 (likely to be a significant underestimate) over wintering goosander spread across Scotland and Northern England, each eating over a pound of fish per day.

- Increasing annual average temperatures, with the top 10 warmest recorded years being between 2005 and 2019 (8 of which have been since 2010!)
- UK-wide spread of invasive weed species – especially *Elodia Canadensis* (Canadian Pond Weed), with a corresponding removal of licensed control herbicides post 2010.
- Significant infiltration of agric-fertilisers into water bodies accelerating weed growth and causing algal blooms and eutrophication
- Huge increase in the otter population – particularly in this area

And of course, all these factors work together to produce conditions extremely detrimental to fish-life and therefore angling. Across all of the WADAA waters, game and coarse, we have seen a rapid and significant onset of the impacts of all of these issues.

As an example, water temperatures at Bigland this year exceeded 24 degrees. This is a completely unsustainable habitat for trout. In worst cases the fish die in great numbers, at best they become torpid and certainly don't offer any sport. This often gives the impression there are no fish in the waters.

Though coarse fish are more resilient in this respect, we have suffered hugely from rapid and widespread weed growth:



Not only does this impact quality of angling, it is also very expensive. To give some examples, it costs around £1000/day to deploy a mechanic weed boat, the initial stocking cost of one of our main game waters would cost in excess of £9000 and 1 aeration solution (for about 1 acre) of water costs about £2000! For a club of our scale, these are massive on-costs.

These rapidly changing environmental conditions are completely altering the way that we have to manage our activities and amend our budgeting.

We have started a programme of work aimed at improving the resilience of our fisheries in the face of this onslaught. These are a mixture of short-term measures, which, whilst not addressing root-cause, give some immediate benefit and longer-term solutions which fundamentally improve the resilience of our venues.

### Short-term

- Use of blue dye to control algae and weed growth
- Mechanical, contractor-led weed harvesting
- Use of cormorant control licenses (where allowable)
- Deployment of barley straw to inhibit algal growth
- Purchase and use of rapid-deployment water pumps
- Use of dummies and scarers to deter birds

### Longer-term

- Purchase of club-owned weed cutting equipment
- Planting and buffer strips to reduce the impact of agricultural inflow
- Creation of controlled margin and in-lake planting to remove excess nutrient
- Installation of fish refuges to protect stock from bird predation
- Extensive aeration solutions to maintain dissolved oxygen levels – we have had to develop our own technology solutions here given the remoteness of our venues and lack of mains power
- Increasing natural cover and shade
- Structured and scientific water quality and condition monitoring
- A robust catch-return system to allow us to carefully monitor stock levels and make real-time adjustments as required
- Construction of otter proof fencing

We are already seeing some benefits from the measures taken, but these are both hugely costly and time-consuming to implement. And this has serious impacts for the club.

Available funds, in the short term have to be diverted to these activities and this undoubtedly leaves less money for more 'constructive' activities such as venue and stock improvements.

The club have a very detailed budget for the coming year and have worked hard to balance our expenditure against all the demands, whilst at the same

time, moderating membership fee increases, aware of the pressure created by this year's pandemic. Though banging a well-worn drum, we can both make rapid progress and minimize our costs when we have help and support from the members.

Whilst all this is going on, we are also working hard to make real improvements for our members too. The directors have made a number of changes to improve our communications and explain actions. The website has been completely rebuilt on a new, modern platform – this will provide the basis for us to expand its use in the years to come. The club Facebook and Instagram pages go from strength to strength and are always a source of valuable member-led information, we have produced detailed quarterly updates and have increased the use of email notifications to quickly inform members of notable events or emergent issues. Under the Chairman, we have worked hard to make the club more transparent.

One aspect of fishery management that every member has an interest in is stocking, and this applies equally to both game and coarse fishing. We have a broad and diverse angler base, with a huge variety of personal tastes, whether they be fish species, sizes or stocking densities. The directors have worked incredibly hard to build stocking plans which achieve the best fishing for our members – something for everyone. We will release some detailed information in January about these plans and in particular, a new approach to trout stock management.

Though the future holds some significant challenges, we should be confident that all of our waters are fundamentally high-quality venues offering some of the best fishing available.

Enjoy your Christmas and I look forward to seeing you on the banks in 2021.

Nick Butterfield

Manager

WADAA

## **Note from Dave Hoggarth Head of Coarse Committee**

I would like to start off by thanking those members who have helped over the past 12 months, without your help we wouldn't be where we are today.

Looking forward into next year I would like to see more of our members getting involved with club activities, this could be anything from work parties to helping with planned events for juniors or disadvantaged anglers. I think it would be great to see the club revive the match fishing from previous years too.

I could go on, but I won't.

My main aspiration for next year is that you all go and enjoy the fantastic fishing the club has to offer.

## **Note from Dave Farnworth Head of Game Committee**

Though the focus of fishery improvements over the last couple of years has been primarily on the coarse venues, a great deal of planning work has been going on for our game waters – a lot of good ideas were generated from this year's member survey.

There are 3 areas where we anticipate seeing improvements in 2021:

1. Following on from the eco-loos that we have built and trialled at Castlehead and Ratherheath Tarn, working with our landlords, we will begin the construction at some of the game waters.
2. We have to raise our 'game' regarding habitat and fish health in order to help trout during this period of climate change. We will begin to see increasing levels of biosecurity at our venues and increasing use of aerators to maintain dissolved oxygen levels.
3. We need to look to improve our venue access – not always easy on upland tarns and we'll start to see improvements for the benefit of mobility impaired and disabled anglers where it is feasible to do so.

We'll release much more detail in the New Year and really need our members to get involved with bringing these improvements to life.