

Winter Evening Report

Jack Perks – 10/12/15

Observing fish under-water



Jack is a pro photographer currently living in the Nottingham area. Consequently most of his talks in the past have been delivered to Camera clubs where the interest has mainly been in “fluffy” things ranging from voles to stags. He has a background in coarse, sea and game angling mainly from a spell in Cornwall. Nottingham is a fair way from the sea but there is an abundance of rivers, lakes and reservoirs. Consequently he combined the fishing with photography which has led to films appearing on TV including a session with Matt Hayes dealing with Zander and a series recreating the Mr Crabtree theme. We started with a few photos dealing with the problems experienced in our water ways. There was a stretch of

river where the bank had been trampled by cattle for use as a watering hole. Although it appears to be harmless, cattle trampling in the river soon muddies the water, not to mention the certainty of direct pollution. We now know what Himalayan Balsam looks like. This invasive weed has spread throughout English waterways and grows intensively smothering indigenous plants and blocking the free flow of water. I am not sure I have noticed it in East Anglia but I will look out for a weed several metres in height and festooned with clusters of pink flowers.

The native White Clawed Crayfish has been eliminated from the Fens by the invasive Signal Crayfish from the States. This beast not only clears any living creature from the water but when that source “dries up”, they end up eating one another. They burrow in the river bank and are a major source of erosion. Someone told me that the lake alongside the A14 at Histon is stuffed with the blighters.

His quest at present is to photograph every one of the 54 species found in British waters: he has currently reached 44.

Jack confessed that his favourite fish is the Grayling. We were watching a slide show but a movie made by Jack is available on <https://vimeo.com/139836003>

filmed with a DSRL camera secured in a waterproof housing, hand held by Jack clad in a wet suit. I am sure that the audience was enthralled by the number of Grayling which congregated in a shoal. Not only that, they are curious beasts and actually approach the camera rather than belting off downstream. It would have been very interesting to see their reaction to a lure.

Not all fish are so obliging. Brown trout are cautious and it required placing a camera in the water for some time until the fish came to accept its presence. He found that sea trout eat anything including Flounders and Glass Eels. I liked the picture of the Arctic Char as, following from recent talks, I was under the impression that they were a "foreign" fish!

A little knowledge is helpful. Hence a visit to the spawning grounds at the right time of year assisted in the photography of the only wild Rainbow Trout remaining in the UK, located in the Derbyshire Wye. Similarly, viewing Salmon ascending the weir on the Dove near Norbury, requires a visit in the autumn. Chub like berries so he sought them out beneath suitable trees where they were foraging for food. A pole camera was useful in these circumstances.

Murky water has proved a problem. The Tent for example, is full of Barbel in some areas but the visibility is poor. He had a nice photo of what he called the "tractor and the sea gulls" where a shoal of Minnows was following Barbel picking up morsels of food disturbed from the gravel. He got a good shot of a Carp which he reckoned was close on

30 lbs but he admitted that without a background it was difficult to accurately judge the weight.

Red colours progressively vanish to a depth of 5 metres which makes auto-focussing impossible. The last colour to go is blue. This must have implications regarding colours in flies.

It is not only vegetation which is regarded as invasive. Jack's involvement with Zander has already been mentioned. Channel Catfish are a favourite quarry in the USA and have entered the UK aquatic systems probably as discarded pets. Pink salmon, originally bred and released in Russian rivers, and cross bred with Atlantic Salmon. These are now appearing in Scottish rivers. The tiny Topmouth Gudgeon doesn't sound too harmful but this is another creature which eats anything and everything but also carries fish diseases deadly to trout and salmon.

Most of the fish have been photographed in their natural environment. However, some are "shot" in an aquarium. This particularly applies to the smaller species.

OK so what fish remain to be photographed? The smelt, burbot (extinct in the UK?) and the allis shad are just 3. We wish him well.

Note that this is a summary of a slide presentation and does not reflect the contribution made by Jack over the years. Look at his web site www.jackperksphotography.com for more details of his films and services

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