

# Annual Fisheries Report 2016 to 17: Northumberland, Durham and Tees



We are the Environment Agency. We protect and improve the environment.

We help people and wildlife adapt to climate change and reduce its impacts, including flooding, drought, sea level rise and coastal erosion.

We improve the quality of our water, land and air by tackling pollution. We work with businesses to help them comply with environmental regulations. A healthy and diverse environment enhances people's lives and contributes to economic growth.

We can't do this alone. We work as part of the Defra group (Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs), with the rest of government, local councils, businesses, civil society groups and local communities to create a better place for people and wildlife.

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# Foreword

In each of our 16 areas we carry out a wide range of work in order to protect and improve fisheries. Below are some examples of what has been happening in the Northumberland, Durham and Tees (NHUDUT) Area, much of which benefits fisheries from funding from both rod licence fees and other sources. For a wider view of the work we do across the country for fisheries please see the national [Annual Fisheries Report](#).

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# Rod licence checks and prosecutions

During the 2016 to 2017 financial year a total of 57,703 (the last complete year of data) rod licence checks were carried out by our fisheries enforcement staff across the country. Our checks show us that evasion was relatively low with a national average of 5.8%. Below are details from NHUDUT:



**43,763** rod licences sold



**£719,449** income generated from rod licence sales



**2,688** rod licences checked



**50** successful prosecutions



**£14,553** fines collected from prosecutions

## An intelligence-led approach to rod licence checks

Licence check patrols in NHUDUT area are intelligence-led using information from our intelligence data base 'Memex', the national incident recording system, direct reports from anglers, members of the public and our partners in the Angling Trust.

During the 2016 to 2017 season 2,688 anglers were checked, of those 2,586 were found to be fishing legally with 102 anglers being issued with Offence Reports for offences ranging from unlicensed fishing through to illegal baits, close season offences and failure to return foul-hooked fish. Nationally, the coarse fish close season is of great importance and the team in the North East have recognised this and identified locations worthy of closer attention during that period. To those ends, team members carried out 72 patrols dedicated to detecting close season offences resulting in 22 close season offences and 10 further associated offences being identified and dealt with in accordance with our policy and procedures.

Forty-nine offenders were dealt with by the courts in our area during this period with many higher than average fines being handed out by magistrates. A number of offenders received penalties, including cost and victim support, of between £450 and £650 for unlicensed fishing.

In one particular case during an intelligence-led patrol an angler was seen fishing at a vulnerable location in Durham, during the hours of darkness in August. Enforcement officers were aware that migratory fish were present in the river and held up below a set of weirs. As an immediate response to the situation the angler was observed covertly, using night vision equipment, the information gained being passed to other members of the team allowing them to respond if needed. The angler was observed as he hooked a fish, it was obvious to the enforcement officers, from the way the fish was played and the fact it was brought to the bank tail first, the fish had been foul-hooked. The angler killed the fish and after a few moments packed up and left the river bank with the fish. Team members moved in and stopped the angler before he left in his car. In a voluntary interview the angler admitted he had foul-hooked the fish and knowingly retained it. An examination the following day by one of our Fisheries Scientists confirmed the fish had been foul-hooked. The case was heard at magistrates on 23 January 2017 where the Angler was found guilty and received a total penalty of £1,575.

The Team always ensure Rod Licence Blitz results and particularly high penalties are given maximum publicity through tweets, press releases in local papers and by way of the Angling Trust web site.

## Illegal fishing

Illegal fishing remains a threat to game and coarse fish stocks in England and the fisheries they support. The Environment Agency uses a combination of covert and overt patrols to deter and detect poachers, as well as responding to reports of illegal fishing where there is a credible threat to fish stocks and where we have a realistic chance of apprehending the alleged offenders. We cannot respond to every report of illegal fishing so we must prioritise where we focus our efforts. For NHUDUT:

**78** illegal fishing incidents  
were reported to our incident  
hotline (0800 80 70 60)



### Cracking down on illegal fishing

A car used by poachers has been crushed after a court ordered that it be destroyed. The Ford was crushed at a Gateshead scrap yard which specialises in destroying end of life and seized vehicles. It had been seized by Environment Agency North East Fisheries Enforcement Officers after it was used for poaching in Northumberland.

The incident happened in July 2015, when an Environment Agency enforcement officer carrying out targeted covert patrols saw three men in the Haggs Bank area of Wylam just before midnight. The men were seen to set two nets, before returning at 4am the following morning, when they hauled the nets, which had migratory fish – salmon and sea trout - caught in them. At 4.20am the men were stopped at the request of the Environment Agency by police at Wylam Wood Road and arrested.

During sentencing in May 2016 at Newcastle Magistrates' Court, they were fined £80, ordered to pay costs of £100 and a victim surcharge of £20. However the court also ordered the forfeiture and destruction of the fishing equipment used in the incident, as well as the vehicle. Arrangements for destruction were made with a local recycling plant and on Dec 7 2016 the vehicle was depolluted and then passed through the crusher. Although the fines and costs were minimal the loss of the vehicle will have had a greater deterrent effect upon those poachers and others who will have seen the press release and tweet that followed the crushing of the car.



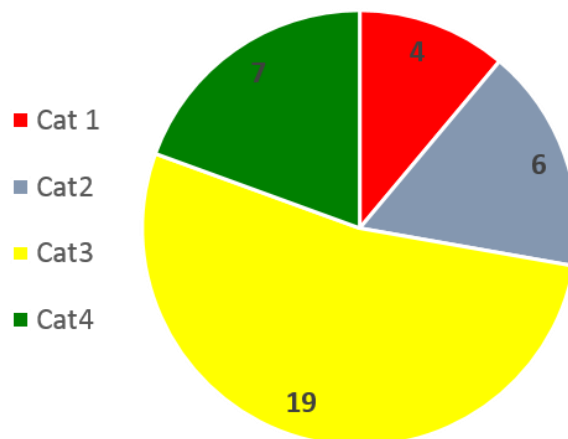
From this .....to this

# Incident management

Responding to fish kills and other environmental incidents is a vitally important part of what we do. We respond to thousands of substantiated incidents annually. Members of the public report incidents through our Incident Hotline (0800 80 70 60) and we are able to respond 365 days a year and on any day, at any time, providing an effective and proportionate response. For NHUDUT:



All incidents are categorised according to potential and actual impact on the environment and the impact on our resources. We can then break this figure down into categories of incident as shown below. Category 1 is the most serious and Category 4 is a reported incident with no impact.





# Fisheries Improvements

The boxes below highlight some projects we have delivered followed by the table below listing many of our environmental improvement projects that have helped to deliver benefits to fisheries; many in conjunction with our partners. We have included the time of our fisheries officers in the funding considerations for the projects as their posts are funded by rod licence income. Considerable amounts of their time and expertise has been provided for the projects. Many projects have also received funding from government or from other parts of the Environment Agency e.g. flooding, the Environment Programme or Water Framework Directive budgets however where contribution has included rod licence income, this has been noted.

$$\begin{array}{rcccl} \text{£27,500} & + & \text{£12,500} & = & \text{£40,000} \\ \text{EA Funding} & & \text{Match Funding} & & \text{Fisheries Improvements} \end{array}$$

In 2016 to 2017 NHUDUT installed 8 fish passes and opened up 80 km of habitat or spawning ground for fish.

## Clow Beck fish passage improvements

A large 1.2m head weir on the Clow Beck at Carlton was built in the 1960s to power a water supply ram-pump to the local farm. The beck has improving populations of brown trout, grayling and rheophilic coarse fish but the weir is a barrier to fish passage at almost all flows. We worked in partnership with the Tees Rivers Trust to install a Low Cost Baffle system to improve fish passage.



## Improving fish passage at Harelaw Bridge

A joint initiative with Durham County Council has resulted in improved fish passage at Harelaw Bridge, Co. Durham. Essential bridge repairs needed to be carried out and a rock ramp easement was installed during the repairs with advice from Environment Agency fishery officers.

### Lintzford Fish Pass, River Derwent

As part of the Land of Oak and Iron Heritage Lottery Fund project a new rock ramp fish pass was installed on the River Derwent at Lintzford, this was delivered in partnership with the Tyne Rivers Trust with design and project development advice, and support from the Environment Agency.

Recent Environment Agency electric fishing has already shown juvenile salmon upstream of the structure, showing the success of the rock ramp fish pass.



Project Title	Outcome or benefit	Partners	EA Funding (£)	Match funding (£, in kind benefit)	Total Cost
<b>Brancepeth Beck</b>	Two baffle easements on barriers to fish passage	Wear River Trust	£11,000	£3,000	£14,000
<b>Tyne Tributary Walkover Surveys</b>	Walkovers of tributaries underperforming for fish to better understand the issues affecting stocks	Wild Trout Trust	£10,000	£8,000	£18,000
<b>Humford Dam</b>	Feasibility report into removal of Humford Weir on the River Blyth.	Northumberland Rivers Trust, Local Community Groups	£6,500	£1,500	£8,000
<b>Total</b>			<b>£27,500</b>	<b>£12,500</b>	<b>£40,000</b>

# Monitoring

Monitoring of all fish species is vital to our assessment of the condition of the environment. Surveys of fish populations, including coarse fish, are used to assess the status of stocks and contribute to the overall assessment of ecological status of a water body. In NHUDUT:

**202** Waterbodies  
assessed for  
fish 2016/17

**50%** of waterbodies  
assessed were at  
good status or above  
for fish

You can look at our [Catchment Data Explorer](#) for more information.

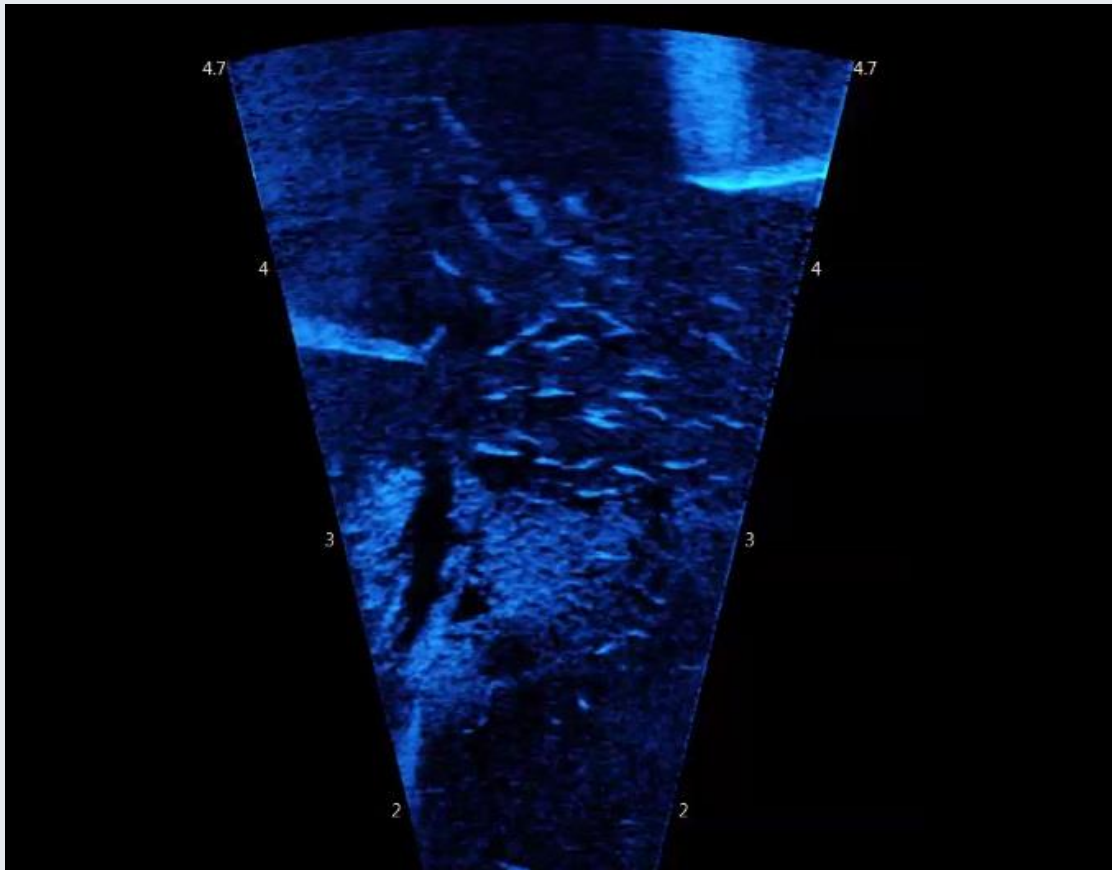
## Using sonar to monitor smolts

We carried out smolt monitoring in and around an Archimedes screw turbine on the River Wear which was also linked to World Fish Migration Day. ARIS sonar was also deployed that showed large numbers of smolts using the new fish pass as a route downstream.



**Fyke netting for smolts**





**ARIS sonar image showing passage of smolts**

Our fish count data is now available online: <https://data.gov.uk/dataset/freshwater-fish-counts-for-all-species-all-areas-and-all-years>

For information on what we are doing across the rest of the country read our other [Area reports](#)

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