

Chapter 28

Rutland Water Fishing

John Wadham

The Lake

Rutland Water, despite being a water supply reservoir, has the appearance of a natural lake. It is a great attraction to anglers and they travel from all over the world to fish here. Local anglers are therefore very lucky to have access to such a beautiful spot on their doorstep.

Right: Rutland Water has the appearance of a natural lake. It attracts anglers from all over the world (John Nowell, Zodiac Publishing)



Below: Yellowstone Bay, on the south shore of Hambleton peninsula, is a popular location for bank fishing (RO)



Ecology

From an angler's point of view, Rutland Water is a lake of many moods. Every bay and open bank has its own ecosystem and consequently they appear to be separate fisheries. As any Rutland Water fisherman knows, if fish are not found in one location, the answer is to move on. The fishing could well be very different a few yards away.

To those used to the smaller fisheries the sheer size of the lake can appear quite daunting. At over 3,000 acres the water in the lake takes a long while to warm up in spring and, conversely, takes a long time to cool down in the autumn. The water temperature in late May is generally around 11°C (52°F) and equates to that in mid-October. This is the optimum temperature for Trout to feed and therefore the most productive time to fish.

The main diet of the Trout is the non-biting midge in its various life stages from larva to adult, as it hatches out at the water's surface. The density of this springtime hatch, the peak of which is generally mid to late May, varies from one season to the next. In some years, the hatches of these insects can be so prolific that in the evening the trees around the lake where the insects gather in swarms can appear like smoking chimneys.

The Sedge, or Caddis Fly, is seldom eaten by the Trout despite the vast number that hatch from June to September. The *Caenis horaria*, a tiny white Mayfly that appears in June, is known as the 'angler's curse'. It hatches in billions, again forming white clouds. With so many to choose from the fish become preoccupied feeding on this source and consequently can prove very difficult to catch.

The other food item particularly important to the Trout is *Daphnia*, probably better known as the water flea, which grazes on various species of algae on overcast days. These tiny crustaceans also bloom in vast clouds and concentrations can make the water appear pink locally. This rich food source,

Rutland Water, near Old Hall, Hambleton at low level. The resulting exposed shore area is quickly colonised by land-borne rather than water-borne insects (RO)



which is available for most of the warmer months, causes the fish to put on weight rapidly.

During the summer months when the water level drops the resulting exposed shore area is quickly colonised by land-living rather than water-borne insects. As the water level rises again the fish are able to take advantage of this harvest and bank fishing becomes particularly rewarding.

Trout in Rutland Water also eat many other things. Examples include Hog Lice, found on the bed of the lake and under stones, *Corixidae*, or Water Boatmen, which are free-swimming, Damselfly larvae, which crawl up reed stems to hatch on sunny days in June and July, and coarse fish fry such as Perch, and Daddy Long Legs, snails, Caddis Fly larvae and other land-living insects that fall onto the water. Close inspection of the stomach contents of Trout will reveal all manner of items in addition to their normal diet including, for example, cigarette ends, Mars Bar wrappers, deflated balloons, sticks, stones, feathers, silver paper, shrews and moles.

Fishing Tales 1

'The hatch of the larger buzzers, which started on the 18th of the month [May], coincided with a temporary *Daphnia* crash. However the *Daphnia* has now bloomed again and the fish are spoilt for choice and appear to be ready to consider anything in the way of food. Typical was a 3lb Rainbow caught from the Old Hall Point, which contained: *Daphnia*, various sizes and colours of buzzers, green & red larvae, larger Bloodworms, snails, Caddis, Ostracods (tiny free swimming mussels the size of *Daphnia*), amber Sedge pupae and assorted flies. Another fish was found to contain about 300 large buzzers all the same size & colour. This is one of the most interesting parts of the sport which the catch and release anglers miss out on.' (*RWFF Newsletter*, June 2005)

Fly Patterns

Popular fly patterns, or lures, for general use are Gold Ribbed Hares Ear (GRHE), Diawlbach, Cove Nymph and Pheasant Tail Nymph. These lures can represent many different food items including Water Boatmen, Hog Lice, various insect nymphs and even tiny fish.

The angler attempts to imitate the various life stages of the midge with three patterns known as 'bloodworms' (the larval stage), 'buzzers' (the pupal stage) and 'emergers' (the hatching stage on the surface of the water).

To catch Trout feeding on such tiny food items as *Daphnia*, lures that act as attractors will draw fish. In general these are in the colour that roughly represents that of the *Daphnia*. They are available in many different shades and have many different names. Dawson's Olive, Black & Green Tadpole and Orange Blobs are three of the most commonly used patterns. For deep fishing from boats flashy 'sparkler' lures tied on tubes are used.

Popular Lures used by Rutland Water Fly Fishermen



1.



2.



3.



4.



5.



6.



7.



8.



9.



10.



11.

Photographs courtesy of Cliff Waters Design.

- | | |
|--|------------------------|
| 1. <i>Black Buzzer</i> | 10. <i>Minkie</i> |
| 2. <i>Booby Minkie</i> | 11. <i>Orange Blob</i> |
| 3. <i>Cove Nymph</i> | |
| 4. <i>Cruncher</i> | |
| 5. <i>Daddy</i> | |
| 6. <i>Diawl Bach</i> | |
| 7. <i>Damsel Nymph</i> | |
| 8. <i>Perch Fry</i> | |
| 9. <i>GRHE [Gold Ribbed Hares Ear]</i> | |

Stocking

Trout only breed in running water and consequently they do not spawn naturally in Rutland Water. Artificial stocking of both Rainbow and Brown Trout is therefore carried out by Anglian Water.

Young fish with an average weight of 2lb are introduced at regular intervals throughout the season. A good summer's feeding can double their weight. After some time in the lake both species take on a silvery hue and are a joy to behold. Brown Trout live much longer than Rainbows and consequently can reach great weights. Brown Trout of up to 17lb have been found swimming in the margins. Although they have shorter lives, Rainbow Trout tend to grow more quickly and specimens up to 14lb have been taken by fly fishermen. Such fish have probably been in the lake for no more than three years, having prospered on the abundance of food available.

Laurence Ball and Jamie Weston of Gwash Fish Farm delivering good-sized Rainbow Trout to Rutland Water ready for the first day of the fly fishing season (Anglian Water)



Fishing Tales 2

'During the warm spell mid-month [May] the lake fished very well from both boat and bank. Some superb browns were caught. Of particular note was the fish weighing an estimated 14lb caught by Paul Friend on one of his "Friendly" tubes. The fish, which was very deep in shape, was returned unharmed to the water.' (RWFF Newsletter, June 2005)



Rainbow Trout
(Wikipedia)

Many of these larger specimens are caught from the bank, spring and autumn being the best times. They come in for the buzzer in April and May and in autumn for the fry. In the warmer months fishermen in boats find these fish in deeper water. Trout, particularly Rainbows, tend to feed mainly near the surface and are therefore guided by the wind. They will travel miles in search of food, and fish stocked at Hambleton can swim to Whitwell overnight.

Fishermen are allowed to take their catch away, up to a specified limit. Alternatively a catch and release ticket is available for those who return the fish to the water. In order for Anglian Water to keep track of fishery performance and to be able to calculate future stocking levels, anglers are obliged to submit daily or weekly catch returns.



Above: A fine catch by G Pearson at Rutland Water. Superb specimens of Brown and Rainbow Trout (Anglian Water)

Left: Brown Trout (Cliff Waters Design)



Permits to Fish

Permits for day and season fishing and boating hire, details of the fishery, and rules and safety information are available from the Fishing Lodge at Normanton, where there is a tackle shop as well as catering facilities.

The tackle shop at Normanton Fishing Lodge (RO)

Other Fish Stocks

Rutland Water also supports a head of fish other than Trout. Some notable specimens, especially Pike, Roach, Carp, Bream, Zander, Rudd and Perch, have been caught by fly fishermen. In their early stages, the offspring of these coarse fish, especially Perch, provide an essential part of the Trout's diet. This is particularly so in the early summer soon after they have hatched from eggs to appear as 'pin fry'. They are also consumed in the autumn when they have grown to two inches or so in length and congregate in vast hordes around the bank-side structures. Trout know about this food source and can be seen charging these shoals all day from October onwards.

Right: Perch spawn at the end of April or beginning of May, depositing their eggs upon weeds or branches of trees immersed in the water. Perch fry provide an essential part of the Trout's diet (Wikipedia)



Above Right: A typical mature Pike is three feet in length and weighs about 25lb, although specimens twice this size have been caught. Their primary food source is other fish, particularly Roach, Perch and Trout, and other Pike smaller than themselves (Wikipedia)



Rutland Water Fly Fishers

Rutland Water Fly Fishers is open to all and draws members from as far afield as Orkney. It organises bank and boat matches for members as well as being involved in fund raising activities for various charities. One of the most important annual events at Rutland Water is the Anglian Water Fly-fishing Challenge. The club helps to run this boat-fished competition as well as providing volunteers and ghillies. In 2006 the Challenge raised over £20,000 for Water Aid. Another important activity is an annual litter pick around the lake perimeter every March which is sponsored by Anglian Water. The club also organises out-of-season winter events, and publishes monthly newsletters to keep members in touch with the fishery.

trout catch return
all catch returns will be entered in weekly draw for a mid-week boat

| rainbow | | brown | |
|---------|-----|-------|-----|
| lbs. | oz. | lbs. | oz. |
| 1. | 3 | 4 | |
| 2. | 3 | 2 | |
| 3. | 3 | 1 | |
| 4. | 2 | 4 | |
| 5. | 2 | 6 | |
| 6. | | | |
| 7. | | | |
| 8. | | | |

no. of fish returned (c & r only) ☐
no. of fish with cormorant damage ☐
no. of fish with pike damage ☐
boat no.

name *John Simpson*
address *Northampton*
.....
..... post code
tel. no
signature
warden's signature

Above: A typical catch return (RO)

Below: Members of Rutland Water Fly Fishers who took part in the Anglian Water Fly-fishing Challenge in June 2005 (Anglian Water)



Fishing Tales 3

'Litter Pick Sunday March 5th 2006

. . . we had a record turn out. Some thirty-five members and their families gathered at the Lodge on a sunny but icy March morning for a delicious bacon sandwich and coffee. Before setting off with gloves and bags waving in the wind, the assembled group was photographed. Thirty-five bags of litter were collected . . . At the first event some years ago twenty of us collected 80 bags of litter. Either, we are now well on top of the job, or people are more litter conscious!

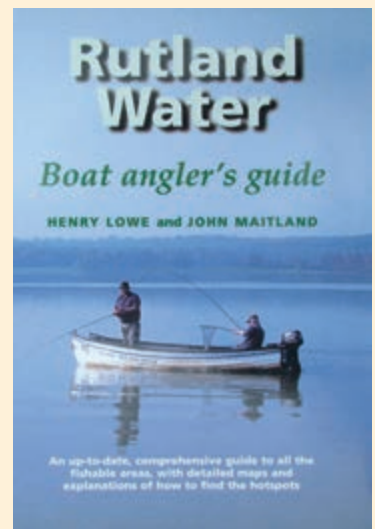
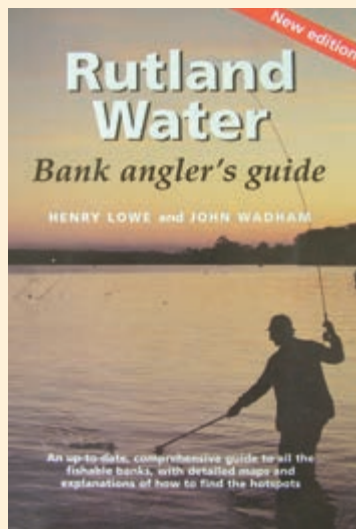
RWFF and Anglian Water would like to thank all those who took part. A presentation will in due course be made to the Rutland Memorial Hospital.' (*RWFF Newsletter*, April 2006)

*John Seaton,
Anglian Water
Senior Warden,
Mary Ward,
Ward Manager
at Rutland
Memorial
Hospital and
John Wadham
of Rutland
Water Fly
Fishers after
the 2005
sponsored litter
pick at Rutland
Water (Cliff
Waters Design)*



Learning to Fly Fish

For those who wish to learn the techniques of fly fishing Anglian Water run frequent fly-fishing day courses at the Normanton Fishing Lodge. Local anglers are also always willing to lend a hand to those newcomers who are struggling to cast or who are looking for fish. Two essential guides are available for the new or visiting angler: *Rutland Water Bank angler's guide* by Henry Lowe & John Wadham and *Rutland Water Boat angler's guide* by Henry Lowe & John Maitland. These are available from Anglian Water fishing lodges or on line at www.hiredseal.co.uk



Safety

Safety has to be in the minds of all who fish at all times. Life jackets are compulsory under Anglian Water regulations and must be worn when out in boats and on the boat-dock. Also, fly-fishing rods, which are almost exclusively made from carbon fibre, are extremely efficient lightning conductors. They must be laid down at the least hint of a thunderstorm. Wave action, which results from strong winds occasionally experienced on the lake, has caused some bank erosion over the years. This has resulted in some undermining of the banks and care has to be taken when approaching the water's edge.

Rutland Water on a stormy day. Wave action such as this has caused some bank erosion (Tim Hawkins)



Methods

Fishing is by fly only from the bank, usually with floating fly lines, or from one of the large fleet of motor boats. Many fly-fishing methods are used at Rutland Water and these will vary with weather conditions, the depth at which the fish are feeding and their current diet. Rutland Water has some fifteen miles of bank available for fishermen and local knowledge is invaluable when deciding where to fish. Anglian Water fishery staff and local anglers are always willing to share information with newcomers on location and method of capture of the fish, whether from bank or boat.

Bank Fishing

Fishing on Rutland Water is totally governed by the speed and direction of the wind. The westerly wind can cause the water to become quite turbid in the margins which may limit bank fishing space to just a few hundred yards, whereas a north-easterly wind gives access to most banks. There are, of course, many regular hotspots. Examples include The Mound, Stockie Bay, Fantasy Island, Normanton Blue Pipes, East Creek and New Zealand Point, and on the Hambleton peninsula, The Finches, Barn Hill Creek, Yellowstone, Old Hall Bay, Old Hall Point and Green Bank.

Right: Tony Bokenham enjoying bank fishing at Rutland Water (Anglian Water)

Below: Late evening fishing. Casting from the bank at Rutland Water (Tim Hawkins)





Left: Bank fishing near Armley Wood in the northern arm of Rutland Water in 1979, the first year that the reservoir was full to capacity (Brian & Elizabeth Nicholls Photography)

Below: Basic tackle for fly fishing from the bank at Rutland Water (Cliff Waters Design)





Rutland Water Anglers' Map

1-3 Burley Reach
 3-5 Dickenson's Bay
 5 Barnsdale Road End
 6 - 8 Barnsdale Steep Bank
 8-10 Barnsdale Bay
 10-11 The Mound
 12 Willow Bay
 13 Ernie's Point
 13-15 Whitwell Creek
 15 Tombleson's Point
 15-18 Sykes Lane Bank
 16 Stockie Bay
 17 Sykes Lane
 18-19 The Dam
 19 Fantasy Island
 20 Mow Mires Reach
 21 Three Trees
 22 Normanton Church

23 Normanton Frontage
 24 Pontoon Bay
 25 East Creek
 26 Sailing Club East
 27 Sailing Club West Bay
 28 New Zealand Point
 29 Berrybutt Spinney
 30 Gibbet Gorse
 31 Green Bank
 32 The Stones
 33 Dalton's Point
 34 Old Hall Point
 35 Old Hall Bay
 36 Old Hall Flats
 37 Hambleton Wood
 38 Yellowstone Bay
 39 Yellowstone Point
 40 No Wading Bank

41 Hinman's Spinney
 42 Spud Bay
 43 May Tree Bank
 44 Half-Moon Spinney
 45 Barnhill Creek
 46 Barnhill Point
 47 Carrot Creek
 48-49 Armley Wood
 50 Saville's Travels
 51 The Finches
 52 Tree in Water
 53 Transformer
 54 The Dead Elms
 55 North Arm Shallows
 56 Tim Appleton's
 (Anglian Water)

Fishing Tales 4

'... I had spent an unproductive time up on Old Hall Point and needed a pee, so I cast out, put the rod down and started the rigmarole of taking off jacket and lowering body waders etc before getting down to business. Halfway through, the reel screeched and the rod shot off down the bank and into the water before I could get to it. I saw it disappearing for at least a hundred yards on a course for Gibbets Gorse until it disappeared from sight. We tried to hail some boats for help but none heard us. At this point my fairly new rod and reel and the new line which was making its debut today was feared lost. Some ten minutes later, however, an angler on the right hand side of the Point shouted – he could see a fly line travelling in the direction of Green Bank and parallel to us. He managed to cast out over my line and drew it in so I could wade out to get hold of it – which I did, and, with great aplomb I thought, hand lined first the fish and then my rod in safely. What a relief!!' (RWFF Newsletter, June 2005)

Boat Fishing

In the warmer months fishing from the bank can be difficult because the Trout prefer to retire to cooler water in deeper parts of the lake. Boat fishing then comes into its own.

Floating or sinking lines are used either from a drifting boat or at anchor. From mid-May onwards, there is a tendency for the shallower waters at the Manton end of the south arm to provide the best midge hatches and thus the best fishing. This area can only be fished from a boat.

A number of major boat competitions are held throughout the season and the results of these give a good idea of the performance of the fishery.



Above: The fishing boat fleet moored at the Fishing Lodge jetty (RO)



Left: Fly fishing from one of the motor boat fleet near Rutland Water Sailing Club (Cliff Waters Design)

Left: Early evening boat fishing near Normanton (Tim Hawkins)



Below: Launching the Wheelyboat. This boat enables wheelchair users to enjoy fishing on Rutland Water (Anglian Water)



Conclusion

No two seasons are the same and that makes the fishing at Rutland Water fascinating, challenging and very rewarding. It is a beautiful place to fish. The fishermen are very sociable, environmentally friendly and helpful people and one can make many friends here over the years.

Left: This Rainbow was caught on 31st December 2004, the last day of the fishing season (Anglian Water)



Below: A young angler proudly displays his catch (Anglian Water)

