

Catch Returns 2006

It's not due to the weather this time. Blame this summary of last years fishing on the fact that one partner has a prior arrangement and one pup had dew claws removed five days ago, seems to have some great desire to remove the stitches before the due date and needs a baby sitter to prevent that happening. Trust me, it's glorious outside and I'd much rather be on the river.

By introducing a new catch return form for 2006 I can now provide more than just a bullet point list of the highlights. We now know which areas get the greatest fishing pressure and can get some idea of what's happening with the trout stocks in each stretch of river. We may even have an idea of what we need to do to improve the quality of fishing available to members and visitors.

However, please bear in mind that the following information is based on only 18 catch returns. Many thanks to those that submitted them and if you didn't send back your catch return don't forget that, **starting this season, all submitted returns will go into the hat and the first one drawn out gets half price membership next year.**

I'm aware that fish of 4lb 9oz and 5lb 2oz were caught last year, another angler caught and returned more than 20 fish that were 2lb+ (at least 3 of which were over 3lb) and I've not had a catch return from Barrow anglers (who were responsible for a lot of the bigger fish in 2005). None of these are included.

As a reminder, the table below shows the boundaries of each stretch

Area No.	Location
1	Downstream of Warcop Bridge.
2	Warcop Bridge to Ploughlands.
3	Ploughlands to Musgrave Bridge.
4	Musgrave Bridge to Blandswath.
5	Beckfoot to Eastfield Bridge.
6	Eastfield Bridge to New Bridge.
7	Franks Bridge to Stenkrith.
8	Stenkrith to Birkett Bottom.
9	Birkett Bottom to upstream limit.
10	River Belah.
11	Scandal Beck.

Fishing pressure

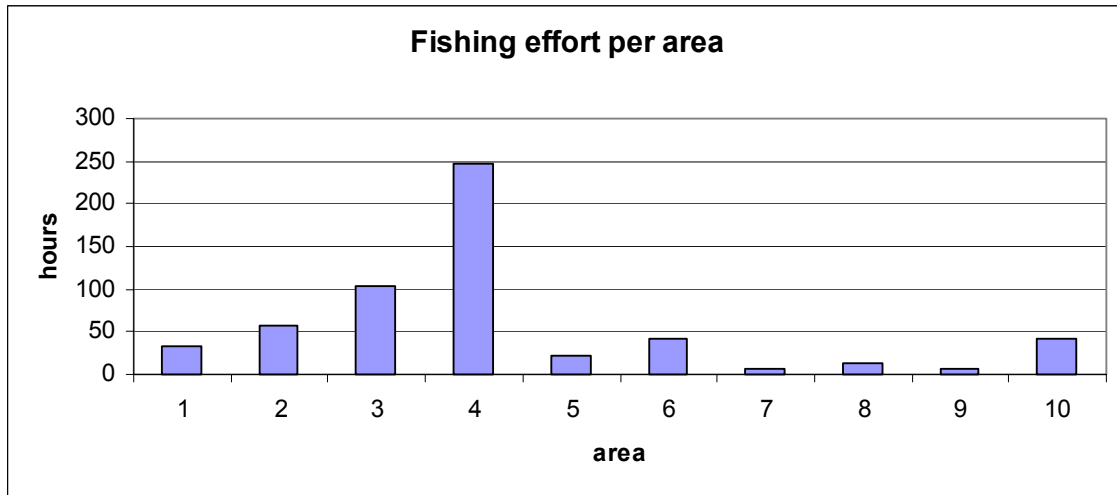
It will probably come as no surprise to anyone that knows our water that area 4 received considerably more pressure (and I'm as guilty as anyone else) than any other area and, as would be expected, produced considerably more trout of all size classes (and grayling).

For those that don't know it, without any habitat survey details, this stretch contains a good mix of pools, riffles and runs providing plenty of habitat suitable for all trout life stages. Add to that plenty of bank side cover for fish and relatively easy fishing and it's pretty obvious why it gets fished relatively heavily and still produces the goods.

What was particularly interesting was that only one catch return recorded any time spent on area 11 (Scandal Beck) and that was only for a part of one session that totalled one and a half hours. Bearing this in mind area 11 does not feature on any of the following charts.

While I'm aware that 2006 weather and water levels were pretty unusual and the low use may be due to this, it makes me wonder why we continue to pay for this fishing.

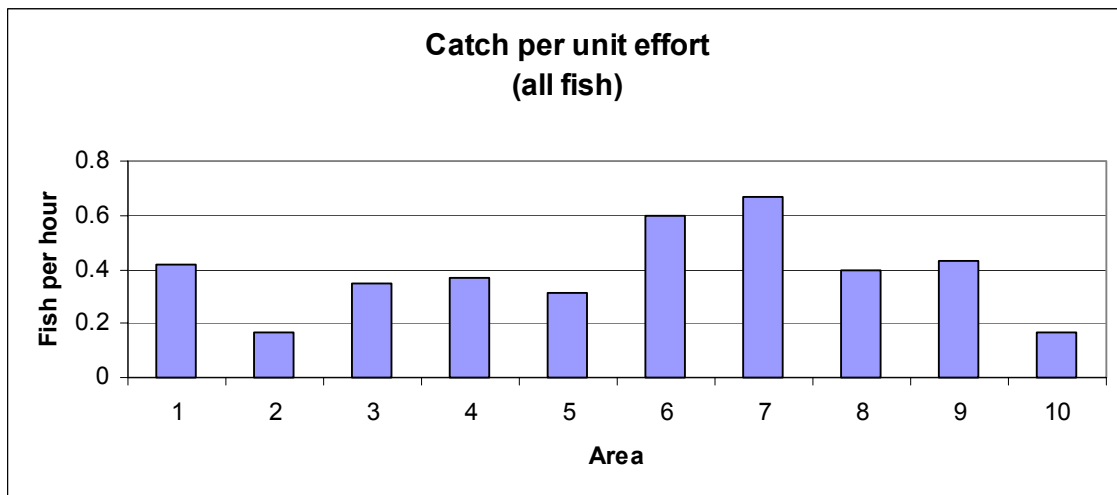
The chart below details the fishing pressure on each section.



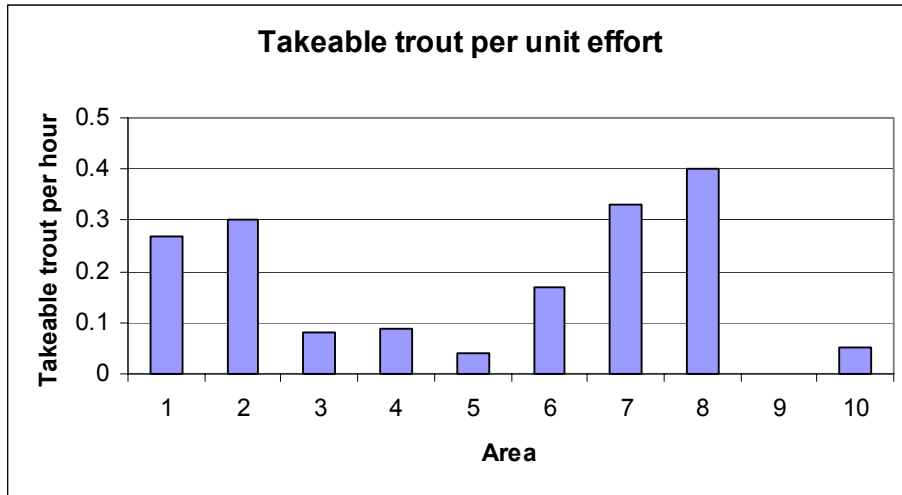
Catch rates

As would be expected for the amount of effort spent there, more fish were caught from area 4 than any other area. However, there were 5 other areas that produced more fish per hour fished than this. Perhaps the message from this is that the easiest fishing is not necessarily the most productive.

The chart below details the catch (trout and grayling, takeable and undersized) on each section.



If takeable trout are your priority, again, 2006 saw 5 stretches produce considerably more than area 4 per hour of effort spent chasing them. While some of these areas are nowhere near as easy to fish, the chart below perhaps suggests that it's well worth putting in the homework and/or legwork and learning how to fish the more difficult situations.



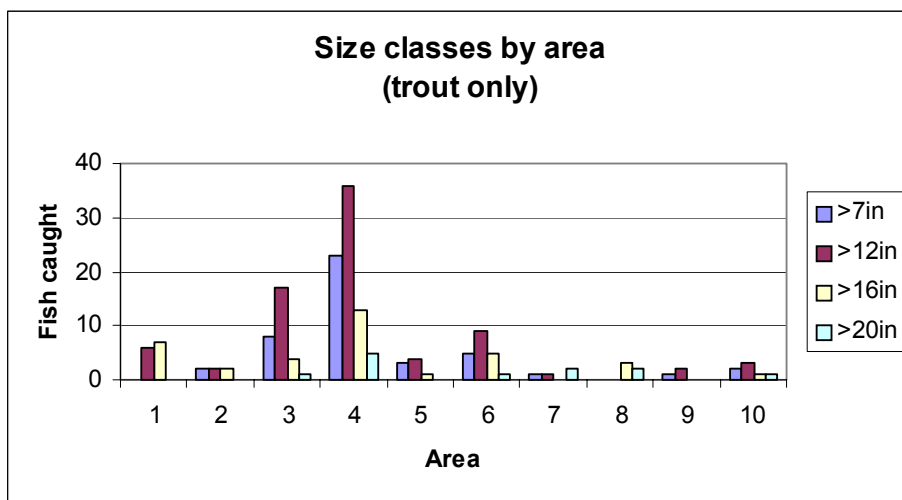
Age Structures

At least one member has previously expressed concern regarding a lack of smaller fish. While my personal experience did not justify that concern we now have proof that, in most areas, there are small fish present as a reasonable proportion of total fish numbers. Despite normal fish populations having considerably more small fish than large it is likely that most anglers do not target the small ones and they are likely to be under recorded in an angling survey.

Additionally, there are some areas that contain very little spawning or juvenile habitat and it is likely that fish in these areas have been reared in other reaches of river and present due to inward migration from other areas as a result of competition for adult habitat.

Area 1 is single bank fishing with the opposite bank being fished by Appleby AA. Their policy of annually stocking this section is also likely to result in a false impression of the population structure in that reach.

The table below shows the number of fish in four size classes caught in each area.



Hopefully, the above may help you to decide where your next trip should be. However, if the above doesn't answer your questions or you feel that I've missed something important please feel free to drop me an e-mail.

Please don't forget that it only relates to the trout season, it's based on only 18 catch returns and last seasons weather/water conditions were not quite what we're used to.