

Ems and Lavant Fish Data

From disparate sources I have found formal fish data from very few surveys –EA confirmed no more.

	Sea Trout	Brown Trout	Eel	Bullhead	3 Spine Stickleback	Flounder	Gobi(y)
Ems							
Lumley 2001	1	27	many	p	p		
Westbourne 2001		11	63	56			
Walderton 1 – 2004#							
Walderton 2 – 2004#			1				
Lavant							
Appledram 1999			75		46	23	60
Mid-Lavant 2004#					4		
Preston F 2004#							
Singleton 2004#							

Redd survey done in 2004 – found no evidence on the Lavant but numerous locations in the lower Ems. This info, plus info on obstructions to migration, done by Sean & Damon and reported in Ashworth 2004.

On basis of reports I have, for ease of reading for others, I would suggest I reference the EA database and just the 2004 Report – Ashworth S (2004) *Sussex Chalk Streams and Springs Project*. EA Worthing. I will also review any historical info from books etc.

Sean provided me with a map of Ecological Appraisal monitoring sites for both the Lavant and Ems. For the Lavant its shows the location of the three sites # cited above – the middle one at Preston Farm is shown as a ‘Routine Fish Monitoring Site (NFMS)’, as is a new location close to the Lavant discharge.

Sean’s map showing info for the Ems shows the location of the two 2204 sites # cited above – none are shown as a ‘Routine Fish Monitoring Sites’, but there is a ‘blob’ showing one of these u/s of the Ems on the Aldsworth (west- arm). There is also a NFMS blob d/s Lumley coincident with a routine invert monitoring site.

Notes re fisheries from Halcrow report 1994

"Ems rises above Racton, where is good trouting, but preserved:" (Where to Fish, 1928).

"...on the River Ems, the fishing appears to be preserved and the fishing rights let and for this purpose there are small dams and other obstructions to hold up the water..." (Letter from Clerk of the South West Sussex Rivers Catchment Board to MAP, December 1940, held at County Records Office).

"...on the Stansted Estate from which trout up to 4 lbs are taken. A pool above Stansted in a few hours produced eleven and a half brace from 3/4 lb to 3 lb, taken by the writer...." (GF Salter, writing the Victorian County History of Sussex, 1973).

Trout are known to have survived in the lower river until recent years. The NRA are planning an electric fishing survey within the next few weeks to establish the current status (Ian Johnson, Sussex area Fisheries Officer).

" The rivulet rising in Stoughton, called by Mr. Longcroft the Ems, is, in fact, the old Racon, whence Racton. The Emille, or modern Ems, rises somewhere in Idsworth, finds its way through Stanstead, and joins the other stream in the upper part of Westbourne village, where the Stanstead forcing-engine now stands. **Both streams were formerly more considerable than at present. Old people can remember trout-fishing where there is now only rain water-shed in winter. This change has, in part, been brought about by drainage.**

There is little fisheries interest in the Lavant due to its intermittent nature. A pollution incident some years ago in the lowermost reaches killed numbers of sticklebacks and eels, and Newbury (1987) records the following extract from the Brighton Gazette of February 24 1825:-

"On Saturday last a fine trout was caught in that part of the River Lavant which runs through the garden of Colonel Brereton under the walls of the south part of the city. The fish was taken by gardeners. It weighed upwards of 4 lb and was 22 inches in length; three others were observed in company, but they decamped when we consider that this river is dry for four or five months of year, the circumstances are worthy of notice."

It is likely that the fish were sea trout; those fish are often seen in the lowermost reaches of rivers even where they do not spawn.

Phil Maber – Note to Chris Lee, copied to David Solomon - stressed not a fishery survey, a 'look see'.

Introduction : The **RIVER EMS** has deteriorated very significantly.

Principal causes being drought; and over abstraction (compensation flow via six inch pipe accounting for virtually all the water for long periods - such *mechanical* compensation flow by definition cannot be totally reliable).

The new A27 road works have destroyed a significant potential.

The various courses of the river, and numerous conflicting private riparian aspirations are a nightmare to any constructive management.

Many other problems of obstruction and development exist.

Bearing in mind that not one suitable site could be found for a fish survey in Summer due to low flow, and being overgrown - including duckweed; To-day's findings were extremely pleasing and reassuring of nature's ability to *come back* !

(I have previously found dead salmon (.definite identification) in Dolphin Quay area, on the mud at low tide. Full of spawn, apparently unable to ascend. Remember also specimen roach population u/s Lumley Mill (lower watercourse.) 1975.)

First Site : East branch Just upstream of Peter Pond : approx SU 752-061

Alongside Lumley Road.

Found : small trout in VGC in fair number; and one scrawny - probably salmon.

Migratory fish can enter this stream with difficulty, via the Slipper Mill gate (at high Spring tide), then through Peter Pond.

Access further up the stream is blocked by renovated private gates of "Constant Springs"; although a leat off another arm of the water course (also under the control of "Constant Springs") joins; and allows some potential for U/S migration under high flow conditions.

Slipper Mill Pond is owned by a consortium of neighbouring residents, and managed as a nature reserve. It is occasionally drained for management, when Salmon have been found. It is said to be a very unusual semi brackish habitat, with very rare tube worms and other fauna.

Peter Pond is owned by Mrs. Cinlock? Managed by Chichester Harbour Wildfowlers as a nature reserve.

Several locals, Cine Mr. Sadler of "El Rancho") remember large numbers of salmon and some sea trout (splashing heard all night) before the War.

Up to few years ago sea trout frequently spawned in "Constant Springs" garden - which route these fish took is unclear. Mrs. Mitchell owner.

Small flounders also been reported seen in the stream.

Second Site : on the main river Car park up to Gasometer area. SU 750-060

Found : small trout VGC, numbers better than expected. Migratory fish severe difficulty in reaching this area.

Some years ago the water course was re-routed away from the Flour Mill (severe hydraulic problems with the structure!). The "new" route into Dolphin Quay is wholly unsuitable in construction and is necessarily screened - NRA maintain. This "new" route is currently being partially re-routed again.

Structural information suggests that historical passage of fish (via the Flour mill) would have been virtually impossible.

I believe Sea Trout were spawning in this general area up to around 10 years ago.

Third site : Hampshire Farm - Wier fish pass and upstream. SU 755-074

Found : Good number of trout - rather on small side, VGC. one pike approx 1.25 lbs.

The construction of the fish pass is praiseworthy.

Fourth site : U/S of Watersmeet - below compensation water outlet. SU 762-079

Found : No fish even though water deep in "Canal" section.

There was a trout mortality downstream of "Watersmeet" in recent years caused by drought, but I had hoped to find some fish in this deeper haven area.

The bifurcated "Canal" watercourse is manually kept open by pulling rushes. The farmer wishes to desilt and restore the former water depth and width. (Mr. Checketts 0243 799407).

Conclusion s This wet Autumn has given the River Ems a reprieve, Probably 95% of the historic fishery potential is lost - much of it unretrievably so. The remnants are barely hanging on; although in much better shape than might have been expected.