

Anglers urged to protect fish stocks in warm weather

The Environment Agency has linked up with Angling Direct for a trial scheme to beam live water temperature data from a water quality device in the Broads to Angling Direct's tackle shop in Wroxham.

Shop staff can then use this information to help advise customers on safe periods to fish for pike in the Broads and some of the alternative fishing experiences available when conditions are too warm for pike. It is hoped this will also be available online, with a view to expanding coverage if the trial is successful.

Environment Agency officers have also produced posters to highlight the risks associated with warm water fishing for pike, which are being displayed in local tackle shops.

Prolonged hot weather can cause problems in rivers, lakes and drains such as low oxygen levels, low river flows, elevated water temperatures and algal blooms, which in turn can lead to increased levels of stress on fish populations and even fish deaths in extreme conditions.

Steve Lane, Fisheries Technical Specialist at the Environment Agency in East Anglia, said:

This is an important step for pike conservation in the Broads.

Here in the east of the country, the shallow waters of the Norfolk and Suffolk Broads can be surprisingly warm in the summer months, which can lead to problems for pike, an iconic and popular predatory fish.

Coupled with an increase in fishing pressure associated with large numbers of holiday makers visiting the area to go fishing, this means Broads pike are often under increased pressure in summer months. Pike anglers have long been concerned about a perceived decline in pike numbers on the Broads and this is one of a range of factors that could be contributing to pressure on pike stocks.

We're asking anglers to take particular care while fishing as the dry weather continues to help us protect fish stocks.

Please return fish to the water as quickly as possible and avoid using keepnets if practical to do so, particularly on lakes, the Broads and rivers with low flows.

The initiative is a partnership project between the Environment Agency, the Broads Angling Services Group (BASG), the Pike Anglers Club (PAC) and Angling

Direct. It builds on recent national guidance for anglers and a scientific literature review commissioned by the PAC, which advises anglers not to fish for pike when water temperatures in the Broads are at or above 21 degrees Celsius.

John Currie, general secretary of the PAC and director of BASG, said:

This is a very simple initiative that has been very successful. It allows the beginner and experienced angler to make an informed decision based on scientific evidence to decide if it is dangerous for pike welfare to fish for them.

A glance at a screen tells you all you need to know. I would hope anglers realise the 21 degrees Celsius water temperature cut off point should be seen as the maximum temperature anyone should be fishing for pike, but 20 degrees Celsius is not much safer. In these extremes we really should not be fishing for pike at all.

Phil Gray, Angling Direct's Wroxham store manager, said:

We are pleased to be helping the Environment Agency and PAC with their initiative to protect pike stocks through the warmer months.

We now have the visual tool to advise our customers of the risks involved in warm weather piking. We see a huge amount of holiday anglers fishing for pike in the summer and want to help create a more sustainable fishery by advising customers of other species that provide superb sport throughout the summer.

Any signs of dead or distressed fish, pollution or illegal fishing should be reported to the 24 hour Environment Agency incident hotline number on 0800 80 70 60.

For further advice and guidance on this issue contact the [Pike Anglers Club](#).