

Fish refuges created to protect vital fish populations across the East Midlands

- Environment Agency fisheries team creates refuges for fish
- Protection from predators, increasing juvenile survival

Fish refuges have been created across the East Midlands by the Environment Agency's area fisheries team to offer a haven to vulnerable fish populations.

The project to create and improve existing fish refuges across the East Midlands provides protection for fish, offering habitat, shelter from extreme weather and good spawning opportunities.

Fish refuges help to maintain good fish populations and provide a number of benefits such as shelter for fish, including fry (young fish) and eels, during times of high flows and flood; good spawning opportunities; and sanctuary for fish from potential predators. The shallow waters warm up quickly in spring, giving fry an improved survival rate so they have a better chance of reaching adulthood.

In total the East Midlands area boasts 16 areas in various rivers, some of which are now 20-years old. The design of the refuges allows the movement of fish into the refuge throughout the year, encouraging spawning activities and juvenile survival. They also provide areas of high vegetation, giving fish protection from predators.

The Environment Agency carries out a maintenance programme of its fish refuges and the 2021 review revealed that a site at the Glazebrook Pond in Sawley, Derbyshire showed a decline and was in need of improvements.

Dan Ellis, Fisheries Technical Officer at the Environment Agency said:

Over a number of years the East Midlands fisheries team has been creating fish refuge areas to boost fish stocks in many of our rivers including the Trent, Soar, Derwent and Maun, which has helped to improve the resilience of our fish populations.

We are also hoping to join with partners in creating new fish refuges in a number of locations across the East Midlands in the near future.

To carry out the work to the Glazebrook Pond, the Environment Agency worked closely with land owners and the local angling club. The work, which was completed in October, has greatly improved fish access in and out of the area, providing benefit to the river fish species and wildlife in the local area.

The project is an example of how local fisheries staff are working hard to improve fish populations and their habitats across the East Midlands, funded by anglers' rod licence income, for the benefit of all anglers.

Notes to editors

- Funds from the Fisheries Improvement Programme is often used to carry out fish refuge work.
- The Fisheries Improvement Programme allows the Environment Agency to identify and invest in work supporting a local, sustainable future for angling. The programme is a great demonstration of partnership efforts, many of the projects completed with the support of land owners, local businesses and fisheries.
- Fish refuges are off-river areas of open water that are connected by inlets to the river. The refuges can be purpose built or established ponds which are then connected by a channel. These refuges mimic the conditions of a natural floodplain, where there are many such connected waterbodies.
- The performance of the refuges is continually monitored and reviews are carried out on the sites to see if improvements are needed. Data collected from previous monitoring has shown that these refuge sites have provided a variety of benefits for local fish populations, and have proven to be successful.