

FISH FINDERS

In rivers, streams, ponds and lakes, fish are widespread and amongst the best-known animal life. Yet, because they are hidden beneath the water, they have been neglected by wildlife enthusiasts.

We know something about their distribution in Leicestershire and Rutland, but there are a lot of gaps that need to be filled.

This is an online survey and is available with detailed photographs at:

www.leics.gov.uk/fish_finders



Why Do We Need to Know About Fish?

Because fish are hidden beneath the water, they are often ignored and there is a lot more to discover about the sorts of places where they live. They need good aquatic habitat; they are also indicators of good water quality so a healthy fish population means a healthy environment.

For many people, fish are important for recreation; angling is the biggest sport in the country in terms of numbers of participants. Anglers need healthy fish populations, and they have often been at the forefront of highlighting water pollution incidents which can kill fish.

Like other animals, some fish are rare and protected. The Leicestershire and Rutland Red Data Book highlights four critical species which we need to look after; brown trout, brook lamprey, spined loach and bullhead. The last three are protected by legislation.

What Are We Looking For?

Around 30 species of fish are likely to be found in the flowing and still waters of Leicestershire and Rutland. Some of these are rare and unlikely to be seen (and some have even become extinct in recent times). Some are obvious if you come across them whilst pond-dipping, or just gazing into a river from a bridge. Many fish species, though, are rather difficult to tell apart – this is where we need the help of the experts - anglers!

How Do We Find Fish?

Pond-dipping or stream-dipping will turn up some of the smaller fish species which can be identified (with help from naturalists). However, the best way to find out what fish live in a river or lake is to ask anglers what they are catching. Most fishermen are happy to tell you what they have been catching, but try not to cause disturbance to the anglers, or the environment.

There are various sources of information which can help you. The following books are all useful:

Collins Pocket Guide: Fish of Britain and Europe (*Miller & Loates, 1997*)

Hamlyn Guide to Freshwater Fish of Britain and Europe (*Maitland, 2000*)

Pocket Guide to Freshwater Fish of Britain and Europe (*Greenhalgh, 2001*)

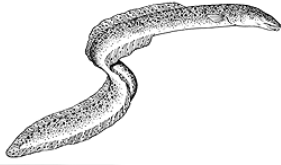
Freshwater Fishes in Britain: the species and their distribution (*Davies et al, 2004*)

Where Should We Look?

We know quite a lot about the fish in most of our rivers, from surveys done by the Environment Agency (though we don't know much about rivers in north Leicestershire, such as the Smite and Devon). However, we need much more information on the fish of small streams, canals and stillwaters (including ponds, lakes and reservoirs).



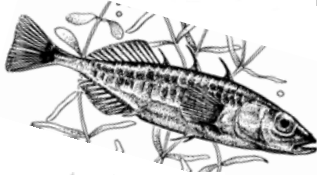
Fish to Look Out For



Eel: more like a snake than a fish, the eel has the ability to wriggle across land to reach new waters – so why does it seem to be missing from central Leicestershire?



Bullhead: this big-headed little fish, also known as the “Miller’s Thumb”, is a protected species as it is rare in Europe, though it seems to be widely scattered in clean rivers in our counties.



Stickleback: widely distributed in ponds and smaller rivers, the male stickleback turns bright red in the breeding season and builds a nest for his mate to lay her eggs in.



Pike: a highly efficient predator, common in larger rivers, the pike has been nick-named the freshwater shark.



Trout: trout need cool, clean, unpolluted waters, such as the Charnwood streams where they are found.



Common carp: a large bottom-dweller which breaks the surface when it is breeding, carp are found in large lakes and rivers, and have been stocked at many sites for angling.

Safety First!

Water can be dangerous, even if you can swim. It is best not to go near rivers or lakes on your own to do this survey. Be careful if you are around anglers – in particular, do not get near when they are casting, in case the flying hook catches you! If you get your hands wet, always wash them before you eat or drink. Cover any cuts or scratches with waterproof plasters to prevent infection.

The odd dead fish is natural, but if you see a large number of dead fish, inform the fishery owner or the Environment Agency (08708-506506). Do not touch dead fish!



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Community Heritage Initiative

Holly Hayes Environment & Heritage Resources Centre
216 Birstall Road, Birstall, Leicestershire, LE4 4DG
☎: (0116) 267 1377 ✉: chi@leics.gov.uk
🌐: www.leics.gov.uk/celebrating_wildlife

Rutland
County
Council



FISH FINDERS

Please record any definite fish sightings using this form and return it to the address overleaf. Feel free to photocopy it, or ask us for more copies of the leaflet.

Name	
Address	
Telephone number	
Email address	

Location	Date	Species seen															
		Eel <i>Anguilla anguilla</i>	Bullhead <i>Cottus gobio</i>	Stickleback <i>Gasterosteus aculeatus</i>	Pike <i>Esox lucius</i>	Trout <i>Salmo spp.</i>	Common carp <i>Cyprinus carpio</i>	Other species									
Name of place or body of water																	
Nearest Town/Village																	
Grid reference																	
Post code (if applicable)																	

What happens to records sent to the Environment and Heritage Resources Centre? The Centre holds the 'people's collection', keeping natural history information from Leicestershire and Rutland safe and available to all. The information you send to the Centre is checked and then added to the main database. It can then be used to interpret changes in our countryside and wildlife populations, and to inform local plans or conservation strategies. Anyone can ask to see the information, and data is often published online or in reports. The information is never sold, but organisations may be charged a fee to cover staff time spent searching and reporting on some data. Your personal details will be stored with your records. Your personal details will not be passed on to anyone else.

Can we contact you if we need to ask you about your record? Yes No If you would like to receive reports of the findings of this survey, please tick here