

Happy New Year everyone

...and thanks to these guys there could be some good ones to come!

NEXT time some know-it-all 'Keith Arthur-reader' type tells you Environment Agency fisheries staff aren't worth your rod licence money... just remember this picture!

We all want more – and bigger – fish in our rivers, and they could already be on their way to becoming a reality!

Throughout the past two years EA fisheries officers have been working on a unique experiment on the Ouse.

And it could be the key to dramatically boosting, and maintaining, fish stocks in a great many watercourses.

For years everyone has been puzzling as to why river fish stocks have been in apparent decline, some species more than others.

Abstraction, dredging, predators, chemical pollution and the march of alien species have all been branded, with probable good cause, as likely suspects.

But most agree that whatever the reasons, the result has been a severe fall in many species' ability to successfully spawn... and decreasing survival rates among



those fry which are produced.

Going back to basics EA central area staff realised that, while many species need well oxygenated beds of loose gravel to lay their eggs in, the availability of such areas was also in decline ...as lots of gravel beds had become anything but 'loose'.

Grit, and muck – possibly from massively increased housing developments and agriculture – has in recent decades been building up between the pebbles and turning them into hard, concrete-like masses.

So they began 'jetting' the gravels –

getting into the shallows and using high-pressure water jets to break up the lumps, washing out the silt and debris to recreate loose gravel spawning beds for the future.

That has often involved wading up to their sensitive bits in near freezing water – as Paul Wilkanoski (black hat and frozen grimace) and colleagues are shown doing at Ravenstone – for hours at a time.

Is it working? The autumn just gone saw a dramatic increase in small chub, dace, bleak and, in some areas, roach from above Stony Stratford down to

Olney, but it is still too early to say if jetting has been a significant factor, or if the improvement can be sustained.

But another EA experiment – involving a Hull University based post graduate research student – may yet answer that.

Your on-line column

WELCOME to another issue of **NewsCast MK** – the on-line magazine for anglers and angling in and around MK.

It can be read 24/7 on, or downloaded from, the MKAA website at www.mkaa.co.uk and a growing number of other websites.

It **IS** open to all and everyone is welcome

to contribute news, views, pictures and features. Any club/angler/fishery/tackle shop is welcome to make it available to others via links from their websites.

It can feature coarse, sea and game news, matches, specimens and happy leisure session results from a very broad area in and around MK and those made anywhere by people from that area.

Tight lines and enjoy your fishing.

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Matches, catches, even rough patches? If you've a tale to tell call Trevor Johnson 01908 270000 (office) or 07801 183381 – or email info@intermediauk.com (pictures welcomed)

A happy chappy

Kevin Hewitt has every reason to look happy.

This 7-8-0 Ouse chub boosted his personal best by almost half a pound! Finding an ice-free patch he had fished flake on a size 10 and liquidised bread-feeder right tight up to a tree stump, landing the fish on 5lb line.

Proving yet again that you don't always need loads of expensive gear, he said: "I used an old broken rod I'd found and fixed up. A really satisfying result."

That approach had worked the day before, too, when downstream towards Newport, he'd had fish of 4-9-0, 4-11-0 and 5-2-0.



The man with the golden grin

● Sporting his trademark great big chubby grin Den Reid shows off yet another magnificent Ouse perch.

This one went 3-10-0 and fell to a

small gold 'dace like' lure – the lad's only pull in an otherwise bite-less and extremely cold pre-Christmas outing on the river.



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In a project part-funded by clubs in the Upper Ouse Fisheries Consultative Association (with the EA fisheries department picking up the rest of the bill) – she is studying spawning and survival rates.

Though predominantly centred on the Ouse barbel population, her findings are likely to help determine what is happening to several other species as well.

That's another story in itself, but if you saw a lady running around the banks last summer waving a hand held aerial, that was her keeping tabs on radio tagged barbel.

EA fisheries officers? Worth their weight in gold those lads.