

Tench (*Tinca tinca*)
(Doctor Fish – Old Red Eye)

Found throughout the canal in large numbers.

Fish below 500 grams in weight are rarely seen or caught and are thought to survive in the silt and weed beds feeding on small crustaceans and water insects.

Average size 1.5 kilograms with 2 kilogram fish common during the summer months when spawning takes place.

Venue Record: 8lb 0oz (1996 season)

National record: 15lb 3oz 6 dr (2001)

Numerous catches of over 100lb of Tench are documented (with the average fish being 3lb) would mean some 30 fish from a single swim. These catches tend to happen during the early summer months of June/July when females are carrying spawn.

Male identification made easy with angular pectoral fins. The male has a tendency to be smaller than the equivalent aged female. Visible sightings on the surface, in the summer months, of a mass of small bubbles some 450mm across would indicate that Tench are feeding. During spawning, they are most active. The males will pursue the females in large groups with much thrashing and disturbance in the marginal weed, a very common sight early morning and late evening during the first prolonged warm spell of the summer.

Captures of large fish have declined in recent years. With a potential life span of some 20 years being the exception, the NRA Fisheries Advisors suggested that a sequential stocking of new blood lines would help to strengthen the existing stock and boost numbers in the future. A 10 year plan was instigated in 1999 were annually, healthy, certified fish were sourced and introduced at various locations on the Canal.

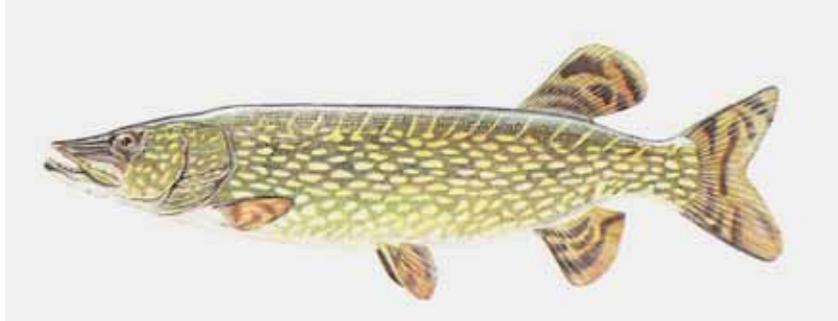
Autumn 1999: 400 fish 100-150mm were stocked at 4 locations (100 in each)

Autumn 2000: 300 fish 150-200mm were stocked at 2 locations (150 in each)

Autumn 2001: 450 fish 100-200mm were stocked at 2 locations (225 in each)

Autumn 2002: 300 fish 150-200mm were stocked at 2 locations (150 in each)

No scientific data available to date



Pike (*Esox lucius*)
Predatory Species (Primary)

Fry to 2 kilogram fish prolific throughout the Canal. Larger Specimens tend to be solitary female fish and territorial.

Average size in the region of 1.5 kilograms with 5-kilogram fish quite common.

Venue Record: 21lb 12oz (1997 season)

National Record: 46lb 13oz (1992)

The Pike is an instantly recognisable fish that is beautifully streamlined, with rearward dorsal and anal fins and a powerful body enabling it to make sudden, surging lunges at its prey. A large mouth laden with very numerous, sharp backward pointing teeth give it a formula for a successful predator.

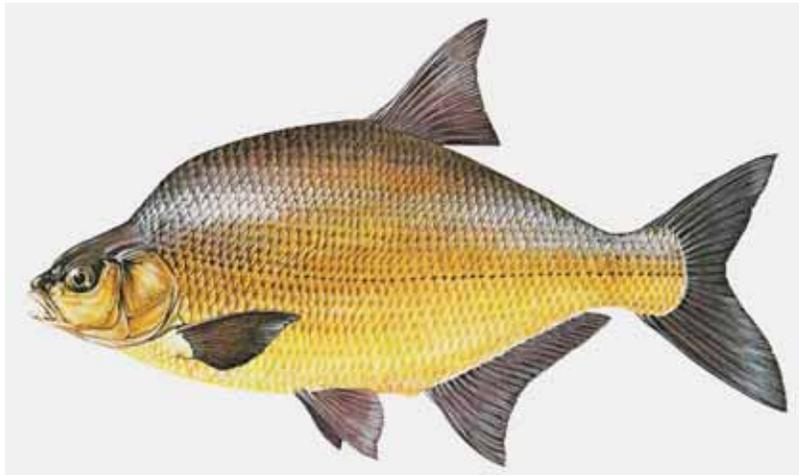
Male (Jack) pike are smaller than the female and seldom reach more than 5 kilograms in weight. It is said that Females devour their mates after spawning though this has not been scientifically documented. It is more likely that it is a response to hunger after all the physical exertion. The female will deposit up to half a million eggs in shallow weeded areas. After male fertilisation the eggs adhere to the weed for periods of up to 3 weeks. If the air temperature rises above 20C this period may be less than a week. Pike spawn earlier than other coarse fish (February to May depending on the temperature) so their fry have a head start over the other species and are always at the front of the food chain.

The young feed on minute organisms immediately after they hatch and by the time other species fry hatch they are ready to progress up the food chain. Cannibalism is common with small pike being a prey of the adults.

Pike rarely exceed 25 years of age.

In 1998, the NRA Electro-fished the stretch from Manly Bridge to Tiverton Road Bridge. 200 Pike (up to 10 kilograms in weight) were carefully removed, to boost stock in Kenworthy Reservoir. Subsequently the NRA, by way of an exchange, stocked Roach and Tench back into the canal.

Angling Methods: Dead Bait, Live Bait, Spin Fished Lures, Fly fished Lures.



Bream (*Abramis brama*)
(Young Bream – Skimmer)

Prolific throughout the Canal though recent years have seen a marked decline in the larger fish (2 kilograms upwards) being caught. Large catches very rare.

Average size fry – 200 grams with 1 kilogram fish quite common though not in any numbers.

Historically all bream in the canal came from 1 illegal stocking of some 20 fish in the early 1960's by Exeter and District Angling Association. The fish were rod caught from the river exe in Exeter and were held overnight in a garden pond in Tiverton (220 in number) these were to be stocked in Sampford Peverell Ponds the next day. All the fish survived but permission was only given for 200 to be stocked in the pond so the surplus was released in the Canal. For which we will be eternally grateful.

Venue Record: 8lb 0oz (1997 season)

National Record: 18lb 15oz 3dr (2004)

Bream are a shoal species where you will tend to catch fish of the same size and generation. Fish spotting is made easy when feeding fish leave a stream of fine bubbles as they travel along the canal bed searching in the silt for food.

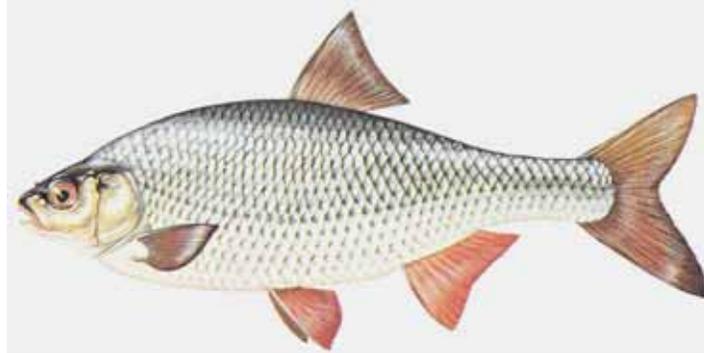
All common forms of bait are used. Bread; maggot; caster; worm; sweet corn.

Autumn 2001: 600 50mm – 250mm stocked in 1 location

2002: No stocking

Autumn 2003: 2500 50mm – 200mm stocked in 2 locations (approx. 1250 in each)

2004: no stocking



Roach (*Rutilus rutilus*)

The main species in the canal and found in every section in large numbers.

Fry – 4 oz most common with larger fish often caught in isolation.

A member of the carp family closely related to the Rudd and Bream. This commonality produces hybrids of all three species and these are present in the canal. Hybrids are purported to be sterile and not able to breed. This factor, if true, will have some effect on future stock levels.

A handsome fish, red iris to the eye, red fins and silver/grey flanks, the roach is probably the first fish a budding angler will catch.

Larger specimens are much sought after on the canal and a fish of 750 grams is very rare. Discussion with the NRA resolved that an active restocking policy would re-invigorate the species by the introduction of new bloodlines.

Some 20 years ago the local anglers developed a method of liquidising bread for feed and fishing bread punch over it. This proved a very successful ploy for roach primarily, and other species subsequently, though caster and maggot baits can be a useful alternative.

Autumn 1999: 4500 fish 50 – 100mm were stocked at 3 locations (1500 in each)

Autumn 2000: 2000 fish 150 – 200mm were stocked at 2 locations (1000 in each)

Autumn 2001: 3000 fish 50 – 150mm were stocked at 2 locations (1500 in each)

Autumn 2002: 8000 fish 50 – 150mm were stocked at 2 locations (4000 in each)

Venue record: 1lb 14oz (1997 season)

National Record: 4lb 3oz (1990)



Perch (*Perca fluviatilis*)
Predatory Species (Secondary)
Nickname “Old Stripey”

Fry to 6oz prolific throughout the canal. Shoal fish in juvenile stage with 12oz fish a ‘specimen’ for the water.

Usually caught with worm or spinner baits with larger fish taken on dead baits.

Venue Record: 1lb 11oz 1998 season

National Record: 5lb 9oz 8dr (2002)

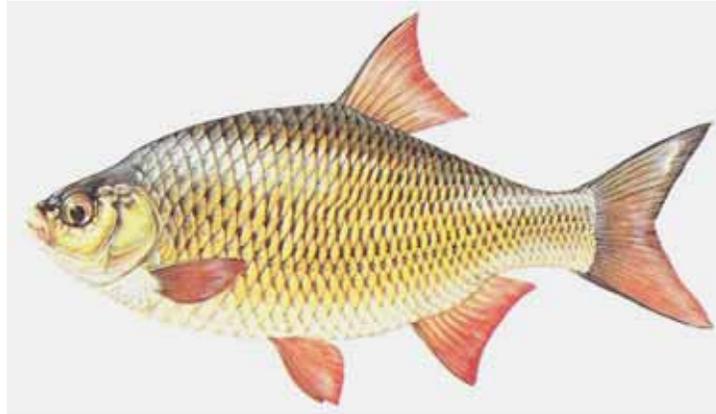
Whilst bigger fish have been recorded and indeed up to June 1967 the British record stood at 5lb 15oz 6dr, all have been discarded.

The species has been prone to stunting in enclosed waters with the appearance of 4oz full grown adult fish being a common site. However, in the mid 1970’s, the perch was decimated nearly to the point of extinction due to disease. *Aeromonas* was a virus that affected Perch over the whole of the country with the Grand Western Canal being no exception. Fortunately there has been a very slow recovery from those that survived and recent stocking has introduced new bloodlines to boost future spawnings.

Perch spawn April-May time with the female being followed by several males which shed milt as she extrudes her strand like eggs. Numbers of eggs produced vary strikingly with extremes of 950 to 210,000. They can take up to 3 weeks to hatch and usually have a very successful hatch rate. Growth rates obviously depend on food available but 12 – 25 centimetres can be achievable in five years with sexual maturity at around 3 years of age.

Males live for up to 7 years with females, continuing to grow slowly for a further 3 – 4 years. Thus it is virtually certain that all large specimens will be female.

Autumn 2003 500 fish 50 – 150mm were stocked at 2 locations (250 in each)



Rudd (*Erythrophthalmus scardinius*)

Found throughout the canal though in far lesser numbers than roach and perch.

Average size fry – 250 grams. Unprolific and usually a surprise appearance whilst roach fishing.

Similar in shape to the roach, the giveaway physical characteristic is the protrusion of the lower jaw in front of the upper mandible. Its golden flanks and red fins make it a truly spectacular fish.

Spawning from April to June, as do Roach and Bream, leads to hybridisation occurring and adding further confusion to identification.

It is generally thought that being mid-water feeders they are more readily predated by pike and perch.

Venue Specimen: 1lb 11 oz (1978 season)

National Record 4lb 10oz (2001)

Recent reports have indicated an increase in the number of fish of 500 grams and above being caught, though still not in great numbers.

No stocking data available. Not as 'popular' a species as Roach so no policy to improve current stock levels as can overpopulate to the detriment of other species.



Carp (*Cyprinus carpio*)

Common, Mirror, Leather: all *C. carpio*

Small number of very large fish throughout the canal in noted locations with solitary fish being the norm.

As far as we can ascertain all current stock have come from 1 source. These were a gift from South West Water during the mid 1980's. Some 250, 6-8 ounce fish were rod caught, by club members, from Craffhole Reservoir, Saltash and lovingly transported back to Tiverton in dustbins. All the fish were 'stocked' at Tidcombe Bridge, although the original intention was to spread them, in smaller groups, along the canal. Fortunately the fish appear to have found their own way around and have done exactly what we set out to do.

There do not seem to be any breeding stock in the canal as no very small fish have been caught since the original stocking took place. However with climate change and milder winters this may well change in the future. Unless stock is one sub-species any spawnings will eventually revert to Common (fully scaled) carp. Carp are elusive fish, with sightings on warm summer evenings of basking fish, just under the surface, the only visible sign of their presence. They are very difficult fish to catch and in the relatively shallow, weedy waters of the canal even more difficult to land once hooked.

Canal specimen's caught in excess of 24lb with numerous double figure (over 10lb) fish being caught. Indeed, during a competition in 2005 a fish of 24lb 6 oz was caught on a roach pole from the Basin.

*National Record 64lb 5oz (2004)

There is no policy to carry out any stocking of carp though Crucian Carp (*Carassius-carassius*) may be a future possibility. None presently exist in the Canal.



Eel (*Anguilla anguilla*)

Not a species to stock..... It just comes.... And goes... of its own free will.

Regularly caught throughout the canal on most 'meat' baits.

Until recently this species has not been targeted by anglers on the Grand Western Canal. The advent of Specimen Groups specialising in this species has seen a marked increase in interest in the pursuit of our 'slimy' friend.

The method tends to be dead baits fished after dark and requires a lot of time and patience with very limited reward.

The canal seems ideally suited to this species with plenty of 'feeder' streams passing by or under the canal to allow access for this nomadic fish.

The 'Eel' life story is an epic in itself. All adult eels (an average of 9 years old for males and 12 years old for females) migrate to the Sargasso Sea, near Bermuda, where, in mid spring, they spawn and, almost certainly, die. The offspring eventually make the 3000 mile return journey across open sea, swim up a stream and eventually reach the same water vacated some 3 years previously by its now dead parents.

Stocking neither necessary nor possible.

The Canal habitat will always support a limited number of fish provided a reasonable water quality is maintained.

Venue Specimen: 4lb 3oz (1998 Season) Though larger un-verified fish have been reported.

*National Record 11lb 2 oz (1978)

Tiverton & District Angling Club

(Founded 1976)

Angling on the **Grand Western Canal** is controlled and licenced by Tiverton & District Angling Club. Formed in 1976 the Club actively participates in the support and promotion of Coarse Angling in the community and surrounding district.

Angling is permitted over the majority of the canal (except for specific localised closures) for the whole year with no close season being imposed. Access is very good with limited on-road parking at most bridges. Specific **Car Parks** are located at the Basin, Tiverton Road Bridge, Greenway Bridge and Sampford Peverell. There are a number of **Disabled Persons Fishing Platforms** available, gratefully installed by Devon County Council.

Licences can be purchased from local Fishing Tackle shops or directly by mail order from the **Membership Secretary**, Stuart Veen (01884-256487) Both Day and Season Tickets area available. Membership offers coarse angling on the canal and many other local waters including Pond and River fishing.

Adult, OAP/Disabled and Junior membership is available with current charges being; -

£25.00 for adults; **£12.00** OAP/Disabled; **£8.00** for Juniors

Membership runs from January 1st to December 31st

A yearly calendar of angling competitions is arranged for 'Season Ticket' holders with many being located on the canal. A few Open Competitions are organised to which visitors are very welcome to enter. (The Xmas Match is a particular favourite) A full match list can be obtained from the current **Competition Secretary**, Bruce Hunt (01884-255821)

Tiverton based Tackle Shop, **Exe Valley Angling** (01884-254275) is a good place, locally, to get your bait, fishing tackle and, of course, your licence. Their friendly staff will offer sound advice on the best places to fish, how to get there and the types of bait required. The **Club Notice Board** is located in the shop and gives up to date information on match results, match dates and Club activities. This is where you will have to sign in if you want to enter a competition.

For further details contact the **Club Chairman**, Malcolm Trump (01884-820010) or any of the above numbers