

Fishery Plan for Soake Pond, Denmead, Hants.



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by
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Description of water

Soake Pond is a stream fed sand pit of about 2 acres, and is historically managed as a specimen water for roach, perch and carp, but also holds a good head of other species such as tench, eels, rudd and pike, giving the club member the chance to catch a mixed bag of fish in a session.

The Club purchased the lake in the 90's along with some of the surrounding land, and to his end built a secure car park nearer the lake. Recently a container has been purchased and sited within the car park to store the tools and boat etc.

The lake varies in depth from about 6 ft to 2ft in the shallows. The swims are mainly dug into the bank and are all separated by vegetation etc. There is access to both sides of the lake, which has benefited with a recently improved path.

A central causeway separates the pond from the neighbouring water known as Borrows. The water has been known to bridge this causeway, and it also is showing signs of natural wear and tear.

The adjoining land, which the Club owns, has had test holes dug several years ago with a view to enlarging the existing pond or building another smaller pond. There is also a fund known as the 'Little Owl' project, which was set up in the memory of the late Mr Rick Jones. It was envisaged that this fund could be used to finance some of the above work, but as yet, no plans have been made to do either.

The trustees are Mr Dave Jones and Mr Barry Pascoe, and Ricks widow Evelyn.

Stocking Levels

The lake was stocked in the 90's with approximately 50 king carp of about 2lb to 5lb from the Sutton at Hone and Priory strain, both being known as a fast growing strain of carp. However, these fish have still to show their full potential as the growth rate is very slow due to the head of bottom feeding fish that reside in Soake, especially when you consider that these are the same strain of carp that were stocked into Brownwich, which most have now achieved around 20lb. Alongside these new carp still live a few of the original fish from the Leney and Galician strains, whose weights are either down or static on the normal growth rates that they are capable of achieving.

At present there is a large head of tench of all sizes, a large head of roach and a smaller head of rudd. The tench have thrived in Soake and are regularly caught by carp anglers on carp baits such as boilies. It is considered that this explosion of tench is part of the reason for the slow growth of the stocked king carp.

The head of perch is unknown although it is thought to still hold a few good specimens of over 2lb plus.

The lake also contains a head of pike of various sizes, which with the perch should provide the natural predation that is necessary in a small pond.

However, there seems to be an explosion of small fry and fish that evade these predators and continue to thrive in Soake.

Current Status

Soake Pond is currently an established mixed fishery, which is failing to meet the specimen status for roach, perch and carp that is expected and once renown for.

There are approximately 14 swims at present, but some are near unfishable at certain times of the year due to the weed and/or algae growth. This problem is enhanced with low levels of rainfall and prolonged periods of sunshine.

There is a 24hr maximum stay on the water due to past problems with human excrement and litter. No one under the age of 15 can night fish without being accompanied by an adult as stated in Club rule no 2.

There hasn't been a full recognised 'close season' on the lake for several years now, and this has made managing the lake a very difficult process. The weed is able to grow unmanaged, which has enhanced the problem of water quality, and some of the banks and swims showing signs of erosion and permanent damage.

There is a problem with security on the pond as it borders farmer's fields, which lead to the nearby notorious Wecock estate. There is no existing fence of our land and pond, only a natural one of trees and vegetation, which is very thin in the winter period. Trespassers have been seen on the lake on many occasions, and some have been known to shoot the wildlife such as rabbits and squirrels etc with air rifles.

Identified Problems

Several problems exist at Soake Pond, which holds it back from achieving the status it was once was proud to hold in the Club.

Among the problems are as follows:

- Excessive weed growth leading to stagnant conditions and poor water quality.
- No close season at the right time of year to prevent damage to the pond and its banks and paths etc. This has also enhanced the above problem, as the weed is not present when the lake is closed in January and February.
- Excessive leaf debris from its many surrounding trees.
- Security of the site, which endangers the safety of the Clubs members, and leaves the venue open to vandalism and poaching.
- Too many bottom feeding fish leading to smaller sized fish and no specimens being achieved of any species.
- Too many tench are present which is holding back the potential growth rate of the king carp.
- Too large a head of king carp for the size of the pond. This combined with the above problem is the reason why Soake cannot maintain its present specimen status in king carp.
- Car park is too small for the potential number of anglers that could fish in one day/night session.

Long Term Plan

The long-term plan for Soake Pond is to continue to manage it as one of the Clubs specimen waters, and although this has been historically carp, roach and perch, this may need to be broadened to include the tench, some of which have achieved specimen status.

The biomass of the lake is far too high at present, and this will need to be reduced and monitored.

The stocking level will need to be reduced in many species to re-gain the balance in habitat and natural food available, which in time will improve the water quality. At present, the carp are suffering due to the large number and size of tench, and this situation needs to be addressed.

The surrounding trees will need to be continually pruned and removed to decrease the amount of leaf litter into the lake, which decays and produces low levels of oxygen. This problem is enhanced with the weed, which is abundant in the warmer months and needs to be continually managed during the season. At present this is made difficult because of the present close season, which exists on the lake.

Swims will be improved by a programme of improvements such as a covering of wood chippings, new swim fronts and steps.

The car park is proving to be too small and consideration to enlarging it must be given.

The surrounding boundary fence-lines are at best, very thin and transparent, and consideration to new fencing should be given as the Club owns this water and we need to ensure the safety of our members and property.

Requirements for successful instigation of plan

These requirements are discussed in full above, but below is a list of reminders, which are necessary to improve this lake.

- Weed and surrounding trees to be carefully managed to improve water quality and environment for the fish stocks.
- Removal of some king carp to leave a head of around 25 to 30, which will allow a faster growth rate. Pond Warden to identify the carp to remain.
- Removal of a high percentage of the tench leaving the specimens to grow on in Soake.
- Reinstate the recognised close season of March to June to allow the correct management of water and weed growth. Would accept April to June as a compromise.
- Club to seriously consider the erection of a boundary fence to improve safety of members and fish stocks. This will also safeguard a potential future claim of an injury to a member of the public who has wandered onto Clubs property.
- Consideration to some supplementary feed being applied in close season to help in achieving and maintaining specimen fish.
- Car park to be enlarged to allow more vehicles
- Continue to monitor fish stocking and breeding levels and reduce and increase where necessary to maintain specimen water status.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this water is at present not meeting the expected status of a specimen water, and this is not through any neglect or lack of effort on my behalf.

I am of the opinion that much of the problems are as previously discussed, too many fish and a poor choice of close season. The latter has caused weed growth to take hold in a period when people are fishing, and not when the water is being rested and maintained.

A reduction of the fish biomass will hopefully reverse the present problem of slow and retarded growth of fish, especially king carp. A small programme of close season supplementary feed should also help this reversal process.

These two actions alone will improve the quality of the water and the fishing to the membership, and hopefully help reinstate the specimen status of this fishery, which it was once known and loved for.

Also too much of my time is spent continually repairing and reinforcing the waters boundaries, and much of this time and effort would be better spent on the actual water.

Consideration must be given to a professionally erected fence to safeguard the water and our members.

I am of the opinion that some of the larger scale work should include the employment of outside contractors.

This also applies to enlarging the car park.

I respectfully submit this plan in the hope of approval and support of the committee and the Fishery Team, as I am positive that with their support I can and will return this fishery to the once prolific and tranquil water it once was.