

Flooding can have a profound on fish – not to mention fishermen

NOTHING can compare with the misery the recent weather has caused to so many people unfortunate enough to have had their homes and other properties flooded in the past few weeks.

Driving or taking the train anywhere close to our two main local rivers means gazing out at fields under water – never mind actually seeing where the river is.

And being an angler deprived of some winter action, it always amazes me that eventually the river returns to its natural course and incredibly, and hopefully, most of the fish will have found their way back home.

Just how they survive in the river that's thundering along, highly coloured and



The Rother in flood at Coultershaw

carrying with it all kinds of debris is a mystery to me.

How can a fish determine if it's in a river or a field? They must have some kind of instinct that lets them know.

Sadly not all survive and some species do get lost: sea trout returning back to

a river to spawn are often found dead in adjoining fields; many of them fall victim to birds and other wildlife looking for stranded fish.

These floods are some of the worst in living memory and will have done considerable damage to the Arun and western Rother.

Trees and bankside shrubs will have been washed away, banks damaged and, of course, an enormous amount of silt washes away spawning grounds and causes blocked river arches and, in itself, can divert the course of a river or tributary.

There will be some who feel dredging will reduce the risk of flooding, but this is not the answer and would cause

more problems than ever and is certainly something that must be resisted. Some dredging to remove banks of silt is quite justified and helpful, but simply deepening a river causes enormous environmental damage.

The Arun & Rother Rivers Trust have made considerable progress to help keep the rivers clean and as somewhere for everyone to enjoy.

Angling is the most popular pastime and the many clubs on both rivers are invited to attend an event being held on Thursday, February 6, at the Lodge Hill Centre, Watersfield, near Pulborough, RH20 1LZ.

The event, hosted by the trust, is being attended by

many anglers and Petworth & Bognor Angling Club will host a stand and an angling presentation.

There is a great deal happening for the future welfare of rivers and elsewhere within this large catchment area.

It's a community-led range of charities and organisations as well as commercial interests are working within this partnership, and if anyone would like to attend, they should register at www.arrt.org.uk/events or come along on the day.

There are two event times - 1pm to 4pm and 5pm to 8pm.

In attendance will be: Downs & Harbours Clean Water Partnership, NFU,

Southern Water, Arun & Rother Connections, RSPB, Natural England, Sussex Wildlife Trust, South Downs National Park, Environment Agency, Angling Trust, West Sussex County Council, Petworth & Bognor Angling Club and the Arun & Rother Rivers Trust (ARRT).

A great deal of restoration work undertaken by these charities is funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Back to the rivers and thank goodness spring is not so far away – let's hope nature is a little kinder to us all this year.

May the water, along with the fish, stay firmly at home in the river, not the water and river in our homes.

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