

# Broadland Pike Tagging Project

Progress update newsletter December 2013

## What's the Environment Agency doing to help Broadland pike anglers?

We are working in partnership with anglers through the Broads Angling Strategy Group (BASG) Pike Sub Group, following anglers' concerns about a perceived decline in the quality of the Broads pike fishery.

PROJECT  
SUPPORTED BY



[www.basgonline.org](http://www.basgonline.org)

This project is one of a number of initiatives planned and underway with BASG that should help address key areas of concern for pike fishing in the Broads. Many of these are a direct result of ideas and suggestions contributed by anglers who attended Broadland Pike Conference events held in 2010 and 2011. For more information see:

<http://basgonline.org/pike-subgroup/>

## What's the tagging project about?

The Broadland pike tagging project is designed to help us learn more about Broadland pike stocks and work with anglers to improve future pike fishing.

We are currently assessing the effectiveness of a unique fish tagging system that should help us to identify large numbers of individual pike quickly and easily. We can then learn much more about pike stocks, including:

- Growth rates
- Ages
- Population size
- Fishing pressure (e.g. frequency of capture)
- Spawning success

With improved information and evidence, we can more easily understand the often complex factors that may be influencing pike stocks. This will in turn enable us to make informed fisheries management decisions in the future, to help protect and improve Broadland pike stocks and pike fishing.

## What stage is the project at?

The project is nearing the end of its first phase. The main purpose has been to assess the retention of VI Alpha tags in pike. As this is the first time these tags have been used in pike anywhere in the world, we need to be sure that the tags remain in place for long enough after they are initially implanted into the fish. Just as importantly, the tags must continue to be readable, so we can identify individual fish long after they were first caught and track their subsequent progress. The remaining tagging sessions will be complete on the Trinity Broads by the end of December 2013. We are pleased to say the early results of this work are looking favourable.



Volunteers briefed and ready to go at a recent Ormesby tagging day – special thanks to everyone who has helped out so far

## The benefits of working together

We are delighted that so many anglers have already helped out with the project. Over 1,800 hours of volunteer effort have been contributed to the project to date. As a direct result of this effort, and the large number of pike caught by rod and line so far, we are now hopeful that we can also complete pike population estimates for Ormesby Broad – this is a real added bonus for the first phase of the project! These results will also help the [Trinity Broads Partnership](#) manage and look after this special corner of the Broads.



Catch return point at Ormesby Broad which enables anglers to contribute records of recaptured fish to the project

Working with Norwich and District Pike Club and the Pike Anglers Club of Great Britain, the project has installed the first catch return point at Ormesby Broad. This enables anyone fishing the Broad to report recaptures of tagged fish, providing valuable extra information for the project. We hope to install a further catch return point in the near future with the help of Filby Bridge Restaurant.

### Some interesting pike facts so far:

- To date we have caught and tagged over 400 pike on Ormesby Broad and 84 pike on Filby Broad
- Scale samples have been submitted to our National Fisheries Laboratory which will provide us with age data and growth rates
- The project has already generated one of the largest and most comprehensive site-specific pike scale samples ever recorded by the Environment Agency
- So far male pike have been aged to 9 years old and female pike to 11 years old
- Male fish appear to exhibit a much slower growth rate than female fish
- We are exploring the potential for the scale samples to be used for stable-isotope analysis. This specialist technique looks at the levels of carbon and nitrogen isotopes stored within the scales, which are influenced by the fishes' diet over time. This could potentially enable us to determine what the fish have been eating and if this is affecting growth rates and fishery performance.

The Broadland Pike Tagging Project is supported by:



Trinity Broads  
Partnership



### What's next for the project?

Once the remaining tagging sessions are completed, we will be analysing the data with a view to producing a project report early in 2014.

We are also liaising with the Home Office to ensure that the tagging procedure can be completed by specially trained and vetted volunteers. We will then run a training course in early 2014. This will enable selected volunteers to tag fish safely and lead organised Pike Tagging Project events around the Broads. We can then work with the BASG Pike Angling Strategy Group and PAC GB to plan the rollout of the project to the wider Broads area. This will mean that anglers can actively help the Environment Agency's Fisheries team to learn much more about pike across the Broads area than would otherwise be possible. Alongside this we will be exploring ways of engaging the wider angling public to contribute to the project and pike conservation by reporting their captures of tagged fish around the Broads.



The project team measures and takes scale samples from one of over 400 pike caught by volunteers to date – note the use of high sided unhooking mats to protect the fish

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0845 988 1188

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