

Fishing the River Chess, Saturday 4th July

At the beginning of 2009 I decided that my target for the 2009 Trout Season was to catch a Wild Brown Trout in the Urban South East, this was to be my quest for 'urban wildies'.

The River Chess was to be my first port of call this quest for the Urban Brown Trout. Inspired by the Accidental angler a year or so ago, I was determined to follow in the steps of Charles Rangley-Wilson and achieve the same feat. Conditions weren't favouring me; I was going to be fishing for wild brownies which aren't favourable to warm weather and also, a grayling, which are renowned winter fish.

I arranged to meet a guy who lived on the Chess, and at 10am my dad and I met him at his house. The stretch of river he had the rights to had 3 weir pools, all small and would take only 1 rod each and perhaps 200m of river. Most of this stretch of the river was perhaps as wide as Marford Farm but few areas were deeper than 6". However, the few deeper holes, and by deeper I mean 2' holes, contained a fair head of fish.

Out came my favourite rod, my Greys Streamflex 6' 6" 3 weight rod and I set off on the top weir. Within 10minutes I had my first fish, however this was 1 of the many greedy Chub in the stretch of river, weighing in at around 6oz it was a small fish, but, nonetheless, an encouraging start to the day.

For the following hour, fish seemed to avoid my fly and I struggled, however, soon after, the fly was gobbled up and another Chub took my fly, this time, I estimate this Chub must have been a whopping 3oz. A mighty beast!

Below shows the weir pool where I fished for most of the day:



I had spent all my time until now on Pheasant Tail Nymphs in various forms, however I changed pattern to a Goldhead Olive Hare's Ear and within 15 minutes I had another fish, BUT, this time, as it scrapped around, I could see the spots and colouring of a Brown Trout. It came into my hands and I had caught my first Wild Brown Trout on the River Chess. It was a small fish, but it was stunning and it felt like I had won the lottery!



After I caught this, I thought I'd go and explore some more areas of the river, I ventured down to the second weir pool, perhaps half the size of the first and it had an awkward back cast even when in the middle of the river. I failed to even have so much as a knock here, so I quickly moved 100yds or so down to the final Weir Pool. This 1 screamed fish and at the tail of the pool there was a small gravel island which dropped off into deeper water. This was perhaps the deepest area I fished at perhaps 3foot deep.

First cast in, right down the middle, right as I was about to lift the fly out to re cast, a small chub snaffled but spat the hook very quickly, again the next 2 casts resulted in missed takes which frustrated me. I decided to therefore change fly and downsize, on went a size 16 Goldhead Pheasant Tail Nymph. First cast with this, WHAMMMMM! Some big fish had absolutely mullered my fly. With the rod being just a #3 rod, I am not joking in saying the rod had almost doubled over! The fish shook its head and shot downstream and then, the dreaded sound, the sound of line snapping! NOOOOO, a Brown Trout, in excess of perhaps 5lb, broke my 4lb fluorocarbon leader with surprising ease!

With the Swim spooked, I went back upstream and spent some time fishing in between the weirs, again I took more Chub up to and around 12oz or so, but the wild brownies seemed to disappear.

With my Polaroid's on, I eventually found 3 or 4 brownies around 6oz but as the fly hit the water, they had gone in a flash. However, behind where the brownies were, sat a lady of the stream, a grayling, this was a good sized grayling especially for such a small stream. It was at least 1lb 4oz and I flung a fluff but the grayling didn't seem to want to take whatever I put in front of it.

By this time it was 3pm and I decided to risk it and go to the middle weir and risk hitting the trees and getting snagged, however, I did manage to find a line where I could cast into the weir, I cast and instantly, my line made a curious movement, a jerk against the flow of water, I struck and as the fish came to me, I saw it was another Wild Brown trout, this time slightly smaller at around 2oz but it was the best feeling.



By this time, I had to go and I went off back home on top of the world having taken 2 urban wildie's.

In many scenarios for the avid angler, he strives to catch the 'biggest', the 'best' fish on the water; I was an angler who often did this. However, this mini quest proved something, yes, the trout were small, BUT, they were little bars of gold within a sprawling and polluted London. There ecosystems are faced with many adversaries and to merely catch a wild trout was an unforgettable feeling, one that shall not be forgotten for many, many years.

By David Smith