

Fishing during the current hot, dry weather

August 2018



In collaboration with

Advice to anglers

Prolonged hot and dry weather can pose a risk to some fish species. We have therefore provided this advisory note to help and support anglers to continue fishing through the summer in a way that will minimise their impact on valuable fish stocks.

Why is it important?

The hot and dry weather is continuing across much of England. It was the driest June since 1925, a trend that's continued throughout July, as we have only seen 11% of the long term average rainfall so far.

Prolonged warm dry weather can affect fish both in rivers and still waters. Reduced water levels combined with high water temperatures reduce the amount of dissolved oxygen in the water. Low dissolved oxygen in a river or lake often means that it takes longer for fish to recover from being caught, this is especially the case for the larger, harder fighting fish species. The combination of high water temperature and low dissolved oxygen levels can also make fish more susceptible to disease and parasite infections, so they need particularly careful handling.

Different fish species need different amounts oxygen but, in general, for most freshwater fish the dissolved oxygen needs to be:

- above 7 mg/L for coarse fish;
- above 9 mg/L for salmon and trout.

There is no specific lower limit of dissolved oxygen levels because different fish species have differing oxygen requirements. This requirement also varies with temperature, time of day and whether fish are actively migrating or in the process of spawning. Some fish species are also able to acclimatise to low dissolved oxygen or may seek out areas of higher dissolved oxygen such as weir pools. Dissolved oxygen concentrations of less than 5 mg/L are more likely to present a problem for most species that anglers normally fish for.

It is important to remember that dissolved oxygen and water temperature are closely linked: the higher the temperature, the lower the dissolved oxygen.

Dissolved oxygen levels may also be affected by the presence of algal blooms which can significantly alter the level of dissolved oxygen levels within a water body. Algal blooms can result in high oxygen levels during daylight hours but then result in much reduced levels of dissolved oxygen at night. Algal blooms can therefore place additional stress on fish species and angling should be avoided where significant algal blooms are observed to be present.

Different fish species can also tolerate a range of temperatures. However, the water temperature in many rivers is currently exceeding 20°C, with several rivers exceeding 25°C. Still waters are likely to be several degrees warmer. At these temperatures, dissolved oxygen levels are likely to be low. The map below shows the highest recorded river water temperatures from monitored rivers in England over the last few weeks.

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Highest recorded river water temperatures recorded across England in July 2018.

To assist anglers determine whether local river water temperatures are likely to be suitable for the angling they wish to undertake, we are now able to provide current, "live" water temperatures for a range of English rivers by following this link

[Telemetry temperature data.](#)

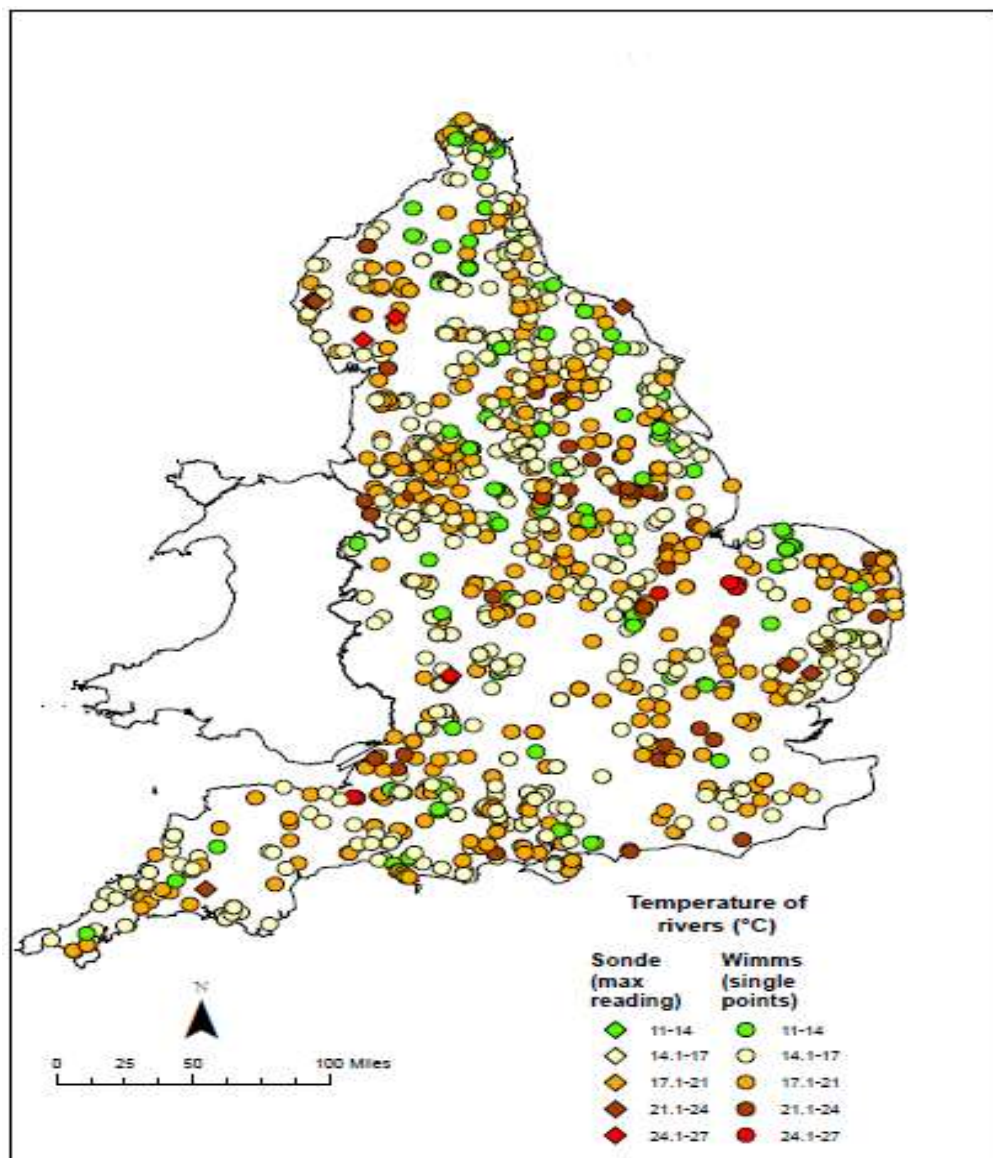


Figure 1: Highest recorded river water temperatures recorded across England in July 2018.

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What can anglers do to help?

Anglers can help protect valuable fish species and stocks during the current hot weather.

- You can't easily check dissolved oxygen levels, but you can check the water temperature. The river temperature monitors provided in the link above, provide the [current temperature data](#) for a number of rivers around England. You can also use a handheld thermometer to measure the temperature where you fish.
- If river water temperature in the margins exceeds 19°C by 9am you may choose not to fish or target less sensitive species. For still water fisheries, please seek specific advice and guidance from the fishery owner or fishery manager.
- If water temperatures are likely to have fallen overnight, consider fishing earlier in the morning. Keep an eye on the water temperature and be prepared to change your plans if it gets too high.
- Avoid targeting more sensitive and larger fish where water temperatures are likely to be in excess of 19°C. Salmon, trout, grayling and large chub, barbel and pike can be particularly vulnerable to high water temperature and lowered dissolved oxygen levels.
- Minimise your use of ground-bait. As it decomposes, this can further reduce the amount of dissolved oxygen in the water.
- Handle all fish with care, use wet hands when holding and unhooking fish. Wherever possible, keep fish in the water while unhooking and release them as soon as they've recovered.
- If you plan on taking photos, try to take them with fish still in the water.
- Avoid using keep-nets. If you choose to use a keep-net, place it in deeper water, rather than parallel to the bank. Deeper, cooler water will hold more oxygen than shallow marginal water.
- Where possible, release fish into deeper, faster flowing water, where it is safe to do so. This will hold more dissolved oxygen and speed up their recovery.
- If fish need help to recover, hold them upright and with their head facing into the current. This will allow clear, oxygenated water to flow across their gills. You can also hold fish in a landing net in the river current until they show strong signs of movement. This may take several minutes, but it is best if the fish is fully recovered before being released.
- And remember, if you see dead fish, fish in distress or gasping at the surface, please contact the Environment Agency on **0800 80 70 60** and alert the fishery owner or angling club.

***Thank you for your support.
Environment Agency Fisheries Team***

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