

The Tweed Trout & Grayling Initiative

Federation of
Border
Angling
Associations



Free Newsletter No. 7

(Winter/Spring 2009)

2008 Brown Trout & Grayling Catch Report

The Tweed Trout & Grayling Initiative (TTGI) would like to take this opportunity to thank all of those who filled in catch log books during 2008 and we hope you continue to do so in the future.

What follows is a short summary of the Brown Trout and Grayling catches in the River Tweed system during the 2008 trout fishing season with comparisons to the catches in 2006 and 2007. The data the report is based on comes from catch log books handed out with season tickets for 12 Tweed Angling Associations and filled in by Tweed anglers. In total 78 log books were filled in during 2008, covering approximately 720 fishing trips and over 2,000 fishing hours around the Tweed catchment.

*Note: So that all different areas of the Tweed catchment can be compared within this report the size limit for all log book data has been standardized at **10 inches**. Therefore all fish referred to as "Undersize" are less than 10" and all fish referred to as "Oversize" are 10" and over. All information on fish sizes is based on angler estimates and where results are referred to as "all Tweed" they refer to the whole Tweed catchment and not just the River Tweed itself. The results from the Gala Angling Association's stretch of the River Tweed have been included in the results labeled "Upper Tweed". The Association's stretch of the Tweed falls across the Middle Tweed/Upper Tweed boundary and the decision to include them with the Upper Tweed is on the basis that their catches most resemble those of the Upper Tweed.*

Section 1 – Average Catch Rates for the Tweed Catchment during 2006, 2007 & 2008

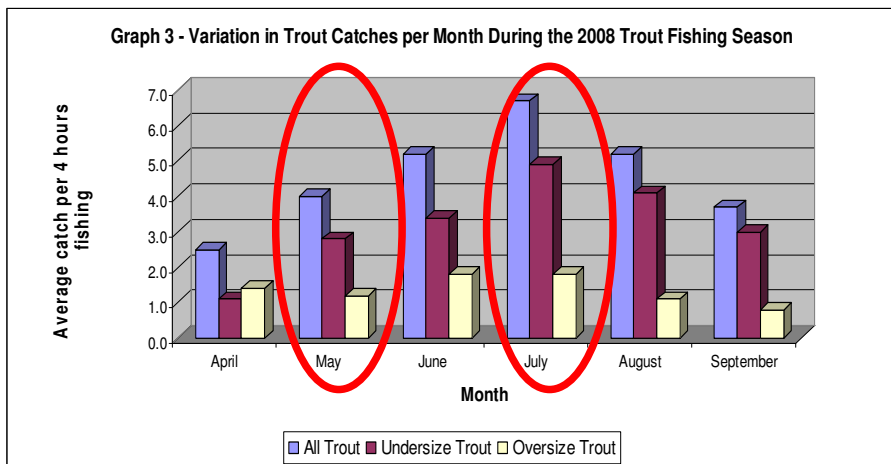
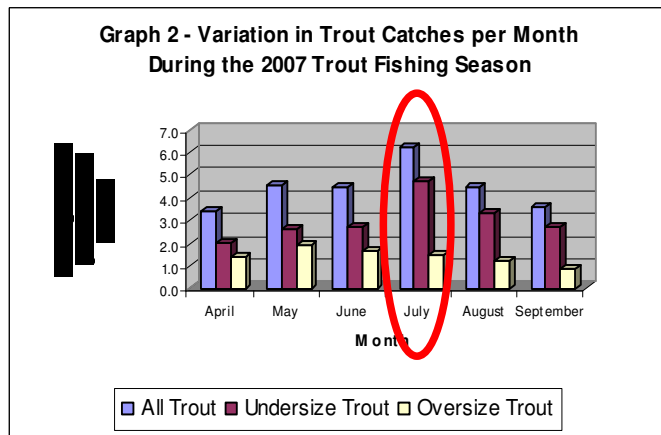
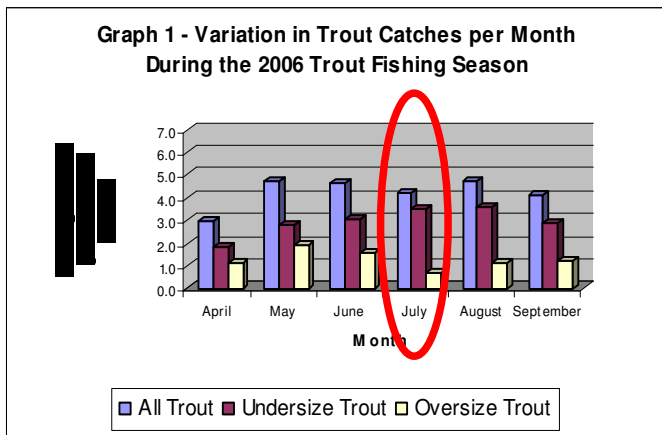
Table 1 – The catch rates for Brown Trout and Grayling for different parts of the Tweed catchment during the 2006, 2007 and 2008 trout fishing seasons (expressed as the average time taken to catch a fish)

	Brown Trout Under 10"			Brown Trout Over 10"			Grayling		
	2006	2007	2008	2006	2007	2008	2006	2007	2008
All Tweed Results	1h 24m	1h 24m	1h 17m	3h 6m	2h 42m	2h 49m	6h 36m	11h 48m	13h 11m
Blackadder Water*	No data	30m	25m	No data	54m	2h 14m	n/a	n/a	n/a
Eye Water*	No data	30m	22m	No data	3h 12m	5h 54m	n/a	n/a	n/a
Jed Water*	18m	No data	13m	1h 6m	No data	0 caught	5h 36m	No data	4h 10m
Gala Water*	No data	42m	1h 2m	No data	15h 18m	9h 45m	No data	30h 30m	19h 30m
Leader Water*	1h 6m	20m	27m	0 caught	3h 24m	5h 23m	7h 12m	5h 6m	3h 4m
Ettrick & Yarrow*	15h 48m	No data	1h 41m	7h 54m	No data	2h 21m	31h 30m	No data	3h 49m
River Teviot	35m	1h 6m	1h 24m	1h 20m	3h 54m	3h 55m	6h	2h 12m	4h 42m
River Whiteadder	1h 10m	42m	52m	4h 50m	4h 42m	4h 34m	161h 30m	331h	0 caught
Upper Tweed	1h 54m	1h 48m	1h 28m	6h	4h 24m	3h 48m	15h 54m	20h	28h 5m
Middle Tweed	2h 48m	2h 24m	2h 7m	2h 12m	2h 6m	1h 59m	4h 36m	7h 54m	9h 40m
Lower Tweed	1h 35m	1h 42m	2h 39m	1h 45m	1h 24m	2h 23m	4h 48m	7h 36m	11h 13m

(* the results are taken from a relatively small number of catch records and therefore may be heavily influenced by angler ability, weather, time of year, etc.)

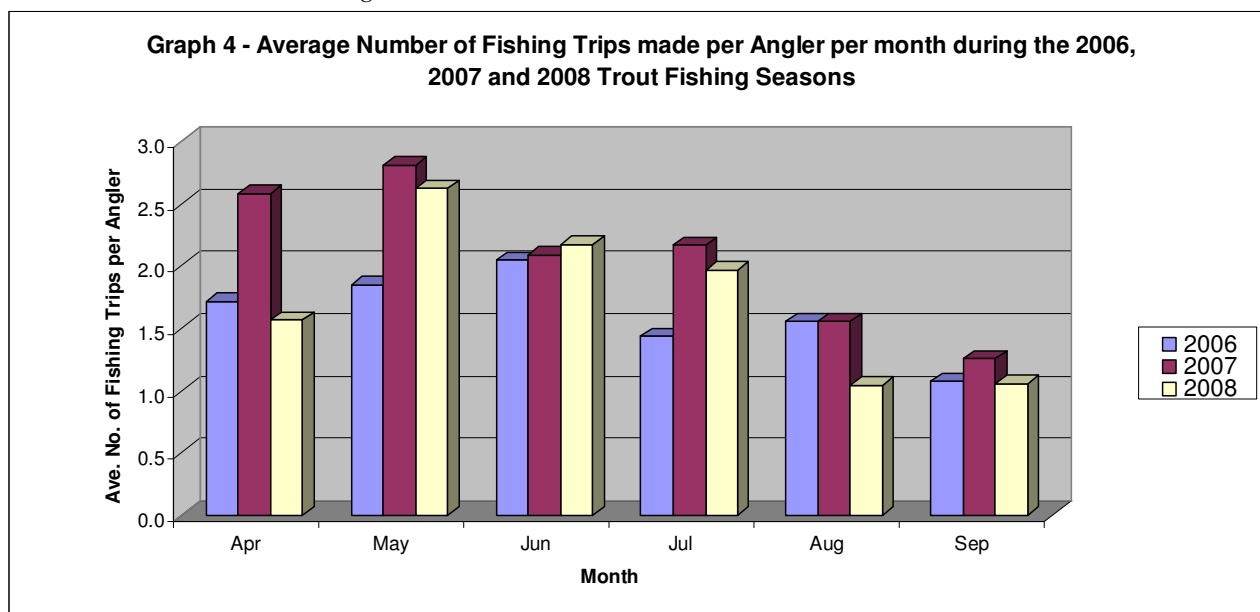
The 2008 trout fishing season produced average Brown Trout catch rates very similar to those of 2007, with both 2007 and 2008 showing a general increase in average Brown Trout catch rates when compared to 2006. This increase on the 2006 average catch rate, as is shown later, is most likely a result of the wet summer in 2008 (as was the case in 2007) which, in the most part, appears to have offered better fishing in the summer months. Interestingly, when compared to 2007, the 2008 catch rate of oversize trout increased or stayed roughly the same in all of the major fisheries within the Tweed system (Whiteadder, Teviot, Upper & Middle Tweed), with the exception of the Lower Tweed which saw a decline in catches. This is most likely as a result of the very high water flows experienced at times during the wet summer in 2008 when the water would have been higher, and less suitable for angling for longer (the lower reaches of rivers naturally take longer to run off from floods). It may have been the case that, as a result of the frequent rainfall, the lower river was unable to reach levels low enough to be fished properly and anglers were forced to fish in sub-optimal conditions, while in the other parts of the catchment anglers were able to fish falling water that would fall low enough to be fished properly. The 2008 catch rates from the medium sized and smaller tributaries in the Tweed system (Gala, Leader, etc.) differ in their comparisons to 2007, with increases and decreases seen in the catch rate of both oversize and undersize Brown Trout. This most likely represents the fishing conditions within each water during 2008. However the results do come from a small number of catch returns and angling habits/methods may affect them (large numbers of catch returns “average out” biases caused by angling habits/methods, etc.). An example of this is from the Ettrick & Yarrow. Average catch rates from both waters are available for 2006 and 2008 with the 2008 catch rates showing vast improvements on those from 2006. In reality this does not represent a dramatic increase in fish numbers but an increase in angler catch returns. A small number of catch returns were received for 2006 and as a result the catches most likely represent specific times of year, angling methods and angling habits while in 2008 several log books were returned giving data from far more fishing trips and therefore give average catch rates that are more likely to be representative of this part of the Tweed catchment.

Graphs 1, 2 and 3 - The average catch per four hours of fishing effort for each month during the 2006, 2007 and 2008 Brown Trout fishing seasons



Graphs 1, 2 and 3 show how average catch rates for the whole Tweed system vary between different months during 2006, 2007 and 2008. There are considerable differences within these graphs, the most significant of which have been circled. The 2007 average catch rates, when compared to those of 2006 were very similar, though July 2007 was considerably better as a result of a wet summer (while the summer of 2006 was particularly dry). This suggests that wet summers are generally better for angling, for those that can take advantage of falling water, and that low water flows, in summer months, provide poor angling. It should be noted that there are variations within this from place to place, with small and medium sized waters, where floods run off faster, benefiting most, and the largest channels, e.g. Lower Tweed, which maintain high water flows longer, possibly experiencing poorer fishing conditions depending on the frequency of the rain. As 2008 again saw a wet summer there was a significantly better July than experienced in the dry summer of 2006. Interestingly, July 2008 was the best July of the three years recorded and was the best month for both undersize and oversize trout in 2008. It was also the third best catch rate of oversize trout of any month during 2006, 2007 and 2008 which is significant given that the dry July in 2006 provided the worst catch rate of oversize trout of any month. In addition the catch rate for May 2008 was poor compared to 2006 and 2007, when it was the best month for catching oversize trout during both years. In 2008, May was only the fourth best month for catching oversize trout. Anecdotal evidence from anglers would suggest that the poor catches were a result of a frequent cold North East wind experienced during May 08 which “put fish down”. The fact that the average Brown Trout catch rate in 2008 held up when compared to 2007 and was generally better than 2006 shows how good July 2008 was, as it is the increase in catches during this month that compensates for the poor May. As the average Brown Trout catches during 2006, 2007 and 2008 seem to respond to weather conditions and river levels this suggests that the Brown Trout numbers are fairly stable during these three years as, had there been a decline in numbers, the catches in 2008 would not respond to “good” fishing conditions with a significant increase in catches when compared to poorer conditions in other years.

Graph 4 - The average number of fishing trips made per month by Tweed anglers during the 2006, 2007 and 2008 Brown Trout Fishing seasons

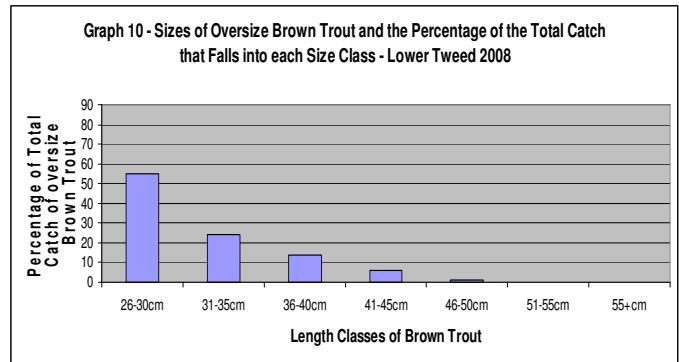
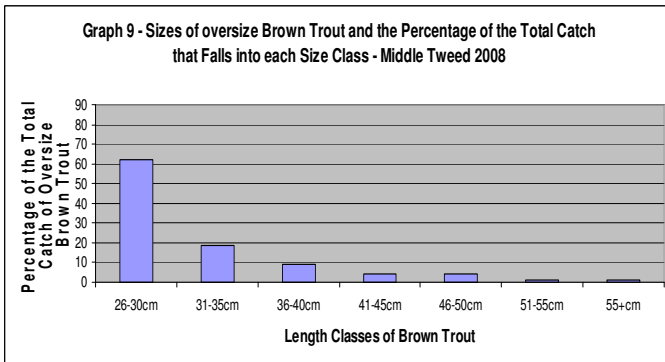
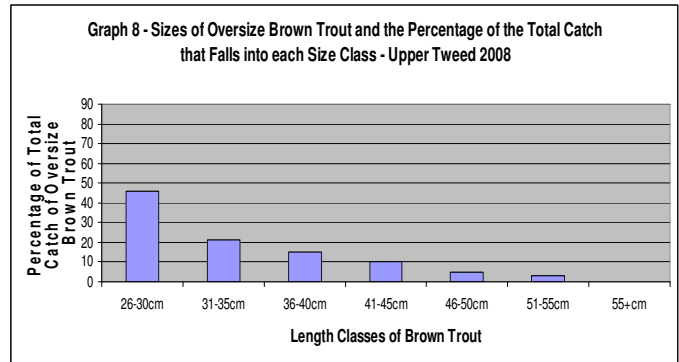
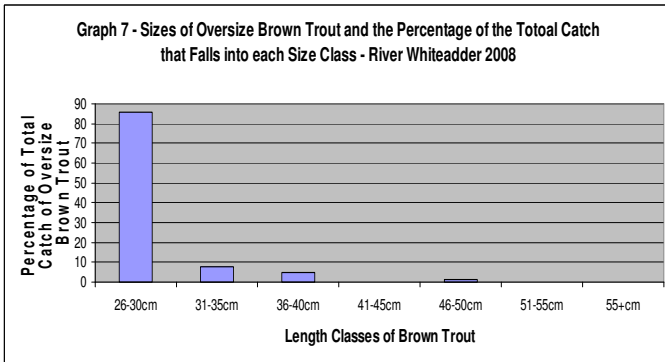
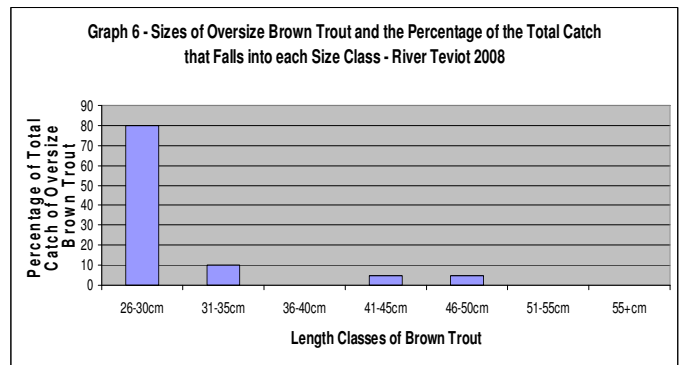
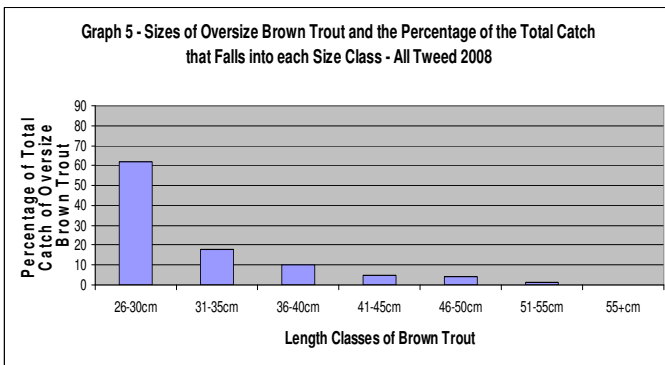


Graph 4 shows the average number of fishing trips made per month by Tweed anglers during the 2006, 2007 and 2008 Brown Trout Fishing seasons. This is significant because while Table 1 shows the average catch rates, information on the number of fishing trips made is also needed to get an idea of the total numbers of fish caught. This is because if the catch rate is identical between two years, but anglers fish more often in the second, more fish will be caught (i.e. though the average catch per hour is the same, more hours are fished in the second year so more fish are caught in total). While the average catch per trip is probably the most important statistic to anglers, information on the total catch is needed by Angling Associations/fisheries managers to help make conservation decisions. As Graph 4 shows significantly more fishing trips were made during April 2007, compared to 2006 and 2008. As the average catch rate

was also good for that month (by comparison with 06 and 08 – Graphs 1, 2 & 3) the total number of trout caught would have been significantly higher than in 06 and 08. In addition more trips were made in May during 2007 and 2008 so when combined with the catch rates this suggests that the total trout catch in May 2007 was significantly higher than 2006, despite similar average catch rates while the total catch in May 2008 may have been similar to 2006 despite a lower average catch rate. Most significantly the wet Julys in 2007 and 2008 also saw increased numbers of fishing trips which, when combined to the increased average catch rate (Graphs 1, 2 & 3), would have resulted in significantly more Brown Trout, in total, being caught. The drop in fishing trips in August 2008 will have resulted in slightly less trout being caught in total despite similar average catch rates to 2006 and 2007. This drop will have been far less than the increase in total trout caught experienced in July 2008. These results suggest that the total Brown Trout catch, both undersize and oversize, for 2007 and 2008 will have been far higher than that of 2006 and that the total catch for 2008 would have been slightly less than that of 2007. Significantly, from a management point of view, the total number of Brown Trout killed in either 2007 or 2008 would have been greater than the number of Brown Trout killed in 2006 despite the percentage of oversize Brown Trout being released by anglers increasing (shown later on in Graph 11). This is because of the higher total numbers of oversize Brown Trout caught in 2007/08 and as a result the 14% of the total catch that was killed in 2007 will have represented a greater number than the 17% of the total catch killed in 2006.

Section 2 – Size Classes of Takeable Brown Trout caught during 2008

Graphs 5 to 10 – Sizes classes of oversize Brown Trout and the percentage of the total Brown Trout catch during the 2008 trout fishing seasons that fell into each class

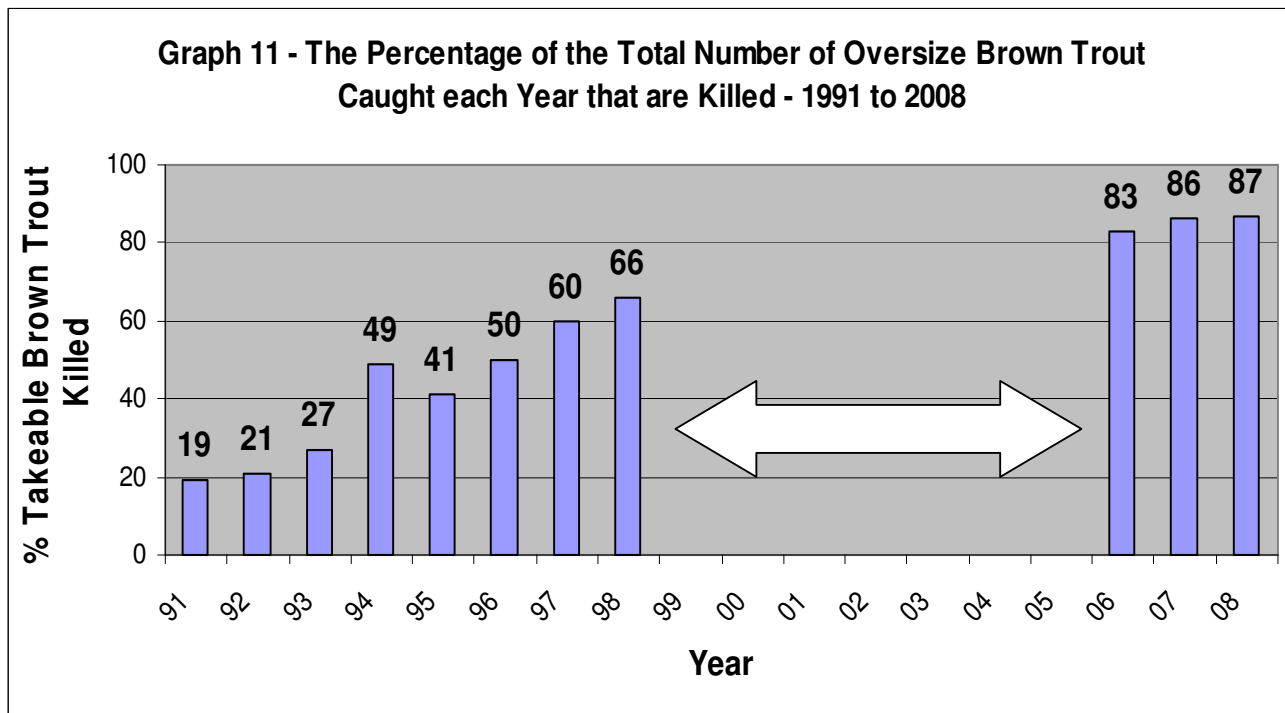


Graphs 5 - 10 show how the sizes of oversize Brown Trout vary between different areas, with the main stem of the River Tweed having more trout over ¾lb (30cm or 12”+) than tributaries such as the Whiteadder and Teviot (note: these were the only two tributaries of the Tweed where enough catch returns were received to allow fish lengths to be assessed given the large number of individual fish lengths needed). Although there is not enough space here to show the Brown Trout size data from 2006 and 2007 there are some interesting changes between the 2006 and 2008. The increases in catches experienced in the wet summers of 2007 and 2008 appeared to be mostly in the form of oversize Brown Trout in the smallest size category (26cm to 30cm or 10” to 12”). This possibly suggests that in wet summers, when low summer flows are not reached, the survival of “small oversize Brown Trout” is increased (possibly as a result of there being more space and food because of the extra water), although much more data is needed from both wet and dry summers to say if this is definitely the case. In 2006 and 2007 the Lower Tweed caught the highest percentage of larger oversize Brown Trout (¾lb or 30cm+) suggesting considerable downstream movements (and therefore in-river migrations) of Brown Trout, as the Lower Tweed does not have a great amount of Trout spawning within its vicinity (trout spawn in burns averaging 2m in width and smaller which are generally more common in headwaters). In 2008 this changed with the Upper Tweed (the Gala AA and Peeblesshire TFA) recording the highest percentage of ¾lb or 30cm+ Brown Trout, although the average catch rate was higher in the Lower Tweed so the total number of these Brown Trout caught will still be higher in the Lower Tweed. Therefore both the average size, and catch (Table 1), of Brown Trout increased in the Upper Tweed in 2008.

Section 3 – The Percentage of Takeable Brown Trout Caught in the Tweed Catchment that are Released – 1992 to 2008

Graph 11 shows the percentage (i.e. numbers out of every hundred) of the total number of takeable trout caught each year that are released. The graph continues to show a trend amongst Tweed anglers towards releasing takeable Brown Trout, possibly showing a change in attitudes towards trout stocks. Even in the relatively short time period between 1992 and 2008 the increase in the percentage of takeable trout released by anglers has been quite dramatic, with an extra 68% of the total oversize Brown Trout catch being released.

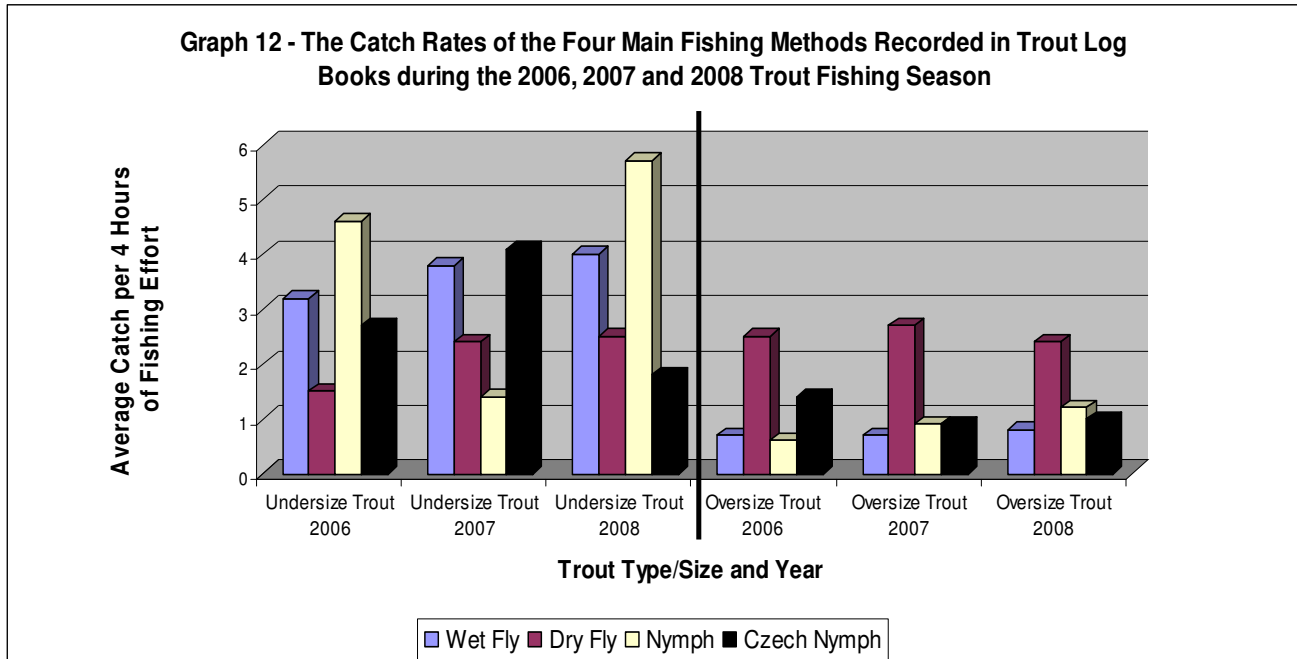
Graph 11 - The percentage of the total number of takeable trout caught in the Tweed Catchment each year that were released from 1992 to 2008. The 1992-98 results are from TF log books.



Section 4 – Angling Methods used in the Tweed Catchment during the 2006, 2007 & 2008 Trout Fishing Seasons and their Effect on Angler Catches

Graph 12 shows the average catch rates for four of the main fly fishing methods used during the Brown Trout Fishing season. Dry Fly fishing consistently provides by far the best catches of oversize Brown Trout (10”+) and remains one of the most popular methods amongst Tweed anglers. Its catches of undersize trout however are relatively poor. The second most popular method of fly fishing with Tweed anglers, Wet Fly fishing, remains one of the best methods for catching undersize trout but provides relatively poor results for oversize trout (it was the worst method in two out of the three years recorded and second worst in 2006). This would appear to create a dilemma for trout anglers on whether to fish for quality (relatively smaller numbers of oversize Brown Trout) or quantity (relatively larger numbers of undersize Brown Trout). As the size of fish varies from place to place, this will undoubtedly also have an influence on angling decisions regarding fishing methods. The effect of the other two fly fishing methods listed (Nymph fishing and Czech. Nymph fishing) varies for both undersize and oversize Brown Trout over the three years with no obvious trends in their catches. With possible significance, heavy “Czech. Nymphing” was the only method that was “anywhere close” to being as effective as Dry Fly for oversize Brown Trout in the dry year in 2006. As this method can involve getting flies to the bottom of the river very quickly it may be that trout are reluctant to come to the surface in low summer flows for much of the day. Although there is not enough space to display the results on this summary “Czech. Nymphing” was by far and away the most effective method of capturing Grayling suggesting that on most occasions flies have to be on the riverbed to stand any chance of catching these fish. Therefore a different approach is needed if Tweed anglers wish to exploit Grayling as most catch records are dominated by “Dry Fly” and “Wet Fly” anglers. Although both methods most likely have their time and place in regards to capturing Grayling they are both considerably less effective than “Czech. Nymphing”.

Graph 12 – The catch rate for undersize and oversize trout of the four main fishing methods used during the 2006, 2007 and 2008 trout fishing seasons



The TTGI continues to study and enhance the wild Brown Trout and Grayling populations of the Tweed Catchment. If you would like to assist the Initiative during the 2009 Brown Trout fishing season your help would be greatly appreciated. For more information on the Initiative, or to request any details, visit our website at www.ttgi.org.uk or phone the TTGI Biologist at The Tweed Foundation 01896 848 271, or e-mail him at kgalt@tweedfoundation.org.uk. The full report that this summary is based upon will soon be available on the TTGI website or on request from The Tweed Foundation in paper format.