

Summary of investigation into angling pressure on section of lower Tauranga-Taupō River

Method

An eight-month study was carried out in 2024 (between March and October) to monitor angler numbers on a 600m section of the lower Tauranga-Taupō River below the SH1 road bridge.

The study took the form of a simple random survey. DOC Fishery staff slowly drove along the section of river and carefully recorded the number of anglers seen fishing. Staff recorded the date and time, whether it was a weekday or weekend, the river level, flow rates and water colour. Times of visits were random and varied, reflecting fishery staff availability – driving past while undertaking a variety of other work in the district.

Results

A total of 199 individual surveys were conducted between March and October with 73 anglers being counted fishing along this 600 m stretch of river. That equates to 0.37 anglers per visit or 1 angler every 2.7 visits (Table 1).

Table 1. Overall visits, anglers counted, and anglers encountered per visit.

Month	Number of visits	Number of anglers counted SH1 to lake	Frequency of angler encounter
March	15	2	1 angler every 7.5 visits
April	39	9	1 angler every 4.3 visits
May	47	13	1 angler every 3.6 visits
June	32	22	1 angler every 1.45 visits
July	25	5	1 angler every 5 visits
August	16	10	1 angler every 1.6 visits
September	14	10	1 angler every 1.4 visits
October	11	2	1 angler every 5.5 visits
TOTALS	199	73	1 angler every 2.7 visits

Weekday visits – Overall, weekday visits completed outnumbered weekend visits by a factor of 4 with a total of 160 weekday visits completed. During the weekdays approximately 1.5 times more visits were completed during the afternoon period (95 visits) compared to the morning period (65 visits). A total of 65 morning weekday visits produced a total count of 18 anglers or 0.28 anglers per visit. In simpler terms, 1 angler was encountered every 3.6 morning visits. During the afternoons, 95 weekday visits produced a total count of 40 anglers equating to 0.42 anglers per visit or 1 angler every 2.4 visits. There were 122 visits out of 160 (76.3%) where no anglers were observed during weekdays. The highest number of anglers observed during a single visit was 7 and this occurred on 26 June at 10:55 am when the river was up and coloured and fish were being caught.

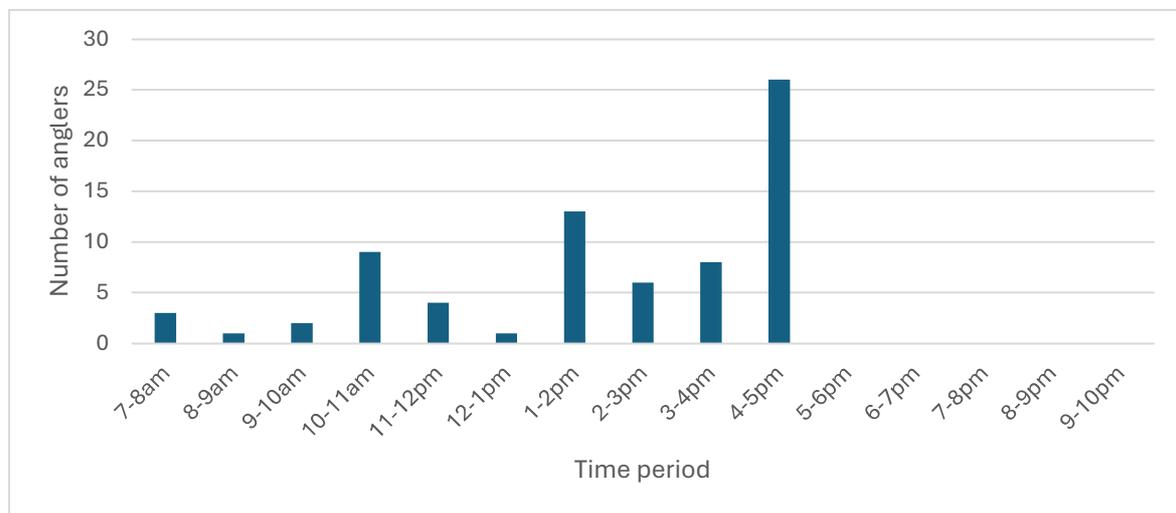
Weekend visits – There were 39 individual weekend visits completed, 2.25 times as many visits were completed during the afternoon period (27 visits) than the morning period (12 visits). The

12 weekend morning visits produced a total of just 2 anglers or 1 angler every 6 visits. The 27 weekend afternoon visits produced a total count of 13 anglers equating to 1 angler every 2.1 visits. There was a total of 27 weekend visits out of 39 completed (69.2%) where no anglers were observed. The highest number of anglers observed during a single visit during weekend days was 2 and this occurred once each month between May & July.

School holidays – Three school holiday periods fell within the March to October sampling period. We expected to see an increase in angler numbers during the school holidays especially during the winter months, but this was not the case with relatively low numbers of anglers encountered (1 angler every 6 visits).

Timing – The two peak periods are between 1-2 pm (17.8%) and between 4-5 pm (35.6%) accounting for 53.4% overall. This was followed by mid mornings (10-11 am) on 12.3% and mid-afternoons (3-4 pm) on 11%.

Figure 1. Anglers counted per time period between March & October 2024.



River conditions – The influence of river height and condition was also analysed to determine whether certain river conditions resulted in more anglers. This area can be notoriously difficult to fish when the river is low and clear with groups of trout often seen splitting as flies were floated through them. As anticipated, angler numbers were found to be higher when the river was coloured and running higher.

Conclusion

Data suggests fly-fishing pressure throughout this lower section of the Tauranga-Taupō River was much lower than expected. There were situations that attracted a small number of anglers, but even then, angling pressure remained low.

Therefore, we propose changing the Taupō Fishing Regulations to allow spin fishing on this specific, underutilised section of the Tauranga-Taupō River.