



OUR HISTORY

This Fishing Lark

"Caught anything?" "Nope." Ten minutes later: "Do you catch much here?" "Sometimes." Ten minutes later: "I never see anything caught." "You must come at the wrong times." Ten minutes more: "I cannot see what you blokes get out of this fishing lark." "Did you see that?" "See what?" "The kingfisher, it went by while you were talking." "Pull the other one, I've never seen a Kingfisher and I've been coming here for years." Ten more minutes: "I'm off now, I don't have enough patience for all this sitting around."

You might think this is a joke, but it happened to me on the Adur at Wineham.

I started fishing as a very small boy with my father about sixty five years ago on the rivers Lea and the Thames. My father was not a particularly good fisherman, but he was a very very good watcher. If anything moved on the ground or in the air around him he saw it. He never missed a thing. It was a knack he took to the grave even though his eyesight had almost gone. He did not have names for all the birds but could name all the four legged creatures, and I soon became the same. As a teenager I began to put names to all the birds and have continued to do so all my life.

There have been so many changes over the years. For example, I well remember seeing my first Canada Goose, it was flying low over the water meadows at Henfield before the river had been turned into an open drain and the fields all dry. I identified it when I got home and was so excited I told everyone. Now there are so many they are a nuisance for the Skylark and the Yellow Hammer. The Chaffinch, Bullfinch, Reed Bunting and many of the Warblers that also used to be so common are fast disappearing. I have not seen a Siskin these last twenty years.

One of our new visitors is the Cormorant a sea bird but their natural feeding grounds around the coast have been plundered by greedy inshore fishermen from all over Europe. They have come inland to find food. You cannot blame them they are only doing what comes naturally. Our inland waters can cope with predators like the Heron, Kingfisher, Grebe and Pike but the Cormorant is eating its way through the fresh water fish stocks.

Last summer in the Arun between Amberley and Pulborough a seal popped his head out of the water not ten yards from where I was fishing. It stayed around for half an hour then

