

Biannual newsletter of
the Wessex Chalk
Stream & Rivers Trust



Wessex
Chalk Stream
& Rivers Trust

THE WESSEX WATERWAY

Issue 9 | September 2019



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WELCOME

Dear Supporters,

Most days this summer I have walked by the River Test, watching the level and flow reduce month by month. A fairly dry winter and spring only partially recharged the aquifer and the Test, like other chalk streams and rivers in WCSRT's area, is now running low and very clear. Every frond of weed can be seen distinctly, with trout and grayling holding in the deeper holes. The river and its surroundings look stunningly beautiful on a sunny day, but I would rather see more flow and less clarity, not to mention a lower water temperature. More rain is urgently needed across the whole of the south coast which seems ironic as we read of flooding in other parts of the UK.

The dryish spring and hot summer have worked wonders in other ways. The water meadows where I live have seen the best display of wild flowers that I can recall, starting with cowslips in the early spring, then a mass of buttercups, kingcups, ox eye daisies, mallow and many others, culminating with a tremendous flush of purple pyramidal orchids in late June. 20 years ago these water meadows were in permanent set aside after being ploughed for potatoes and maize before that. Under successive agri-environmental schemes sponsored by Natural England and their predecessors the meadows have gradually gone back to flower-rich grassland with a simple restorative regime: cut hay in July, graze sheep in the autumn and otherwise leave Nature to her own devices. It seems to be working fine.

This is the *Year of the Salmon* and we report below on some of the educational work in local schools carried out by WCSRT to highlights the plight of this iconic and inspirational fish. The decline of the Atlantic salmon has been rapid across its range: even countries like Iceland which have had huge runs in the recent past are seeing major declines. The small numbers of salmon now returning to the Test, Itchen and Avon make us all fear for their survival in the south of England. Much of the work of WCSRT and other charities is intended to prevent this potential catastrophe. We intend to redouble our educational efforts and in the coming year WCSRT will be raising funds specifically to expand our educational arm.

In this edition of our newsletter you will read how WCSRT continues to grow and hire more staff to handle major new projects. Chairing a Rivers Trust feels like a continuous process of seeking out new ways to finance the almost unlimited number of tasks which can be carried out to restore our water bodies to better health.

In the last five years WCSRT has deliberately diversified its sources of funding. Some are national bodies like Defra, the Environment Agency and the Heritage Lottery Fund, others are European like the Water Environment Grant scheme which is paying for two big sediment reduction projects. Still other money comes from local water companies to help fund our catchment partnerships, while vital funds for our core costs such as staff salaries and office facilities are most generously given to us by grant making charities at home and abroad. Supportive private sponsors fund projects in their localities, riparian owners give us fishing days on their beautiful rivers to sell and from time to time daring supporters jump out of planes or ride bicycles improbable distances to help us. We are tremendously grateful to them all. Without their help our rivers and their valleys would be poorer places.

George Seligman
Chair of Trustees



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CEO's foreword

Summer has come... and maybe already gone again when you get a chance to read the summer edition of the Trust's newsletter. Record high temperatures in July, general lack of rain following a relatively dry winter brought together a perfect storm. When writing this, flows in all rivers were in significant decline leading to low water levels due to very modest weed growths as well as high water temperatures. Southern Water has already started the process to acquire a Drought Permit – allowing them to continue to abstract even when this will impact the ecology of our rivers. It becomes more and more apparent that climate change is not a distant threat anymore but knocking very loudly on our door. Global as well as local action is needed now to prevent it from getting worse.

The job of CEO of a Rivers Trust is always a busy one, but the last six months were exceptional. Especially our dealings with Southern Water required a lot of time. There is a clear need to work with water companies to tackle the impacts of abstraction and discharge, but the fall-out of the (historic) failings of this specific one meant a lot of additional media interest and concern. The Trust worked with other NGOs such as the Angling Trust, Salmon & Trout Conservation and neighbouring Rivers Trusts to convey our concerns to Ofwat, the Environment Agency and senior management of Southern Water. We have demanded to be informed on the actual impact of Southern Water's failings and what the company has done and is planning to do to remediate the environmental damage caused.

Luckily there are also positive developments. We went through several recruitment processes and have welcomed new staff members to the team. Through developing a new Delivery Team – led by Mike Blackmore, former Wild Trout Trust – we can now further focus on delivering projects that matter and help tackle the problems faced by our chalk streams.

The project portfolio for the coming years is filled to the brim, with many projects proposed and developed on the Avon, Test and Itchen. Topics range from fish pass improvements, habitat quality increase to full blown river restoration. In addition, a further boost to the Trust's education and engagement work is expected as we have hired a new Education Officer and plan to further expand our remit.

Looking forward to seeing you all on the riverbank – or maybe even in the river if you are keen to do your bit and help out as a volunteer on one of our restoration projects. Contact us on info@wcsrt.org.uk to sign up and for more information.

Dr Martijn Antheunisse
CEO

WCSRT immersed in Watercress & Winterbournes HLF project development

Andy Blincow, WCSRT

The Watercress & Winterbournes landscape partnership project, led by the Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust and supported by WCSRT through the Landscape Partnership Board, is nearing the completion of the development phase during which partners have been focussed on gathering evidence, engaging communities and developing a wide range of project proposals for inclusion within the wider project. Shortly following the publication of this newsletter, a second bid will be submitted to the Heritage Lottery Fund detailing proposals for the main four-year delivery phase of the project, commencing spring 2020 if successful.

WCSRT has continued to provide support and guidance on elements of the project and delivered a number of projects including: riverfly monitoring, river restoration and sediment pathways walkovers and reporting, volunteer training events and schools' engagement.

Invertebrate Monitoring

As detailed in previous editions, WCSRT, led by our Scientific Officer Jon Bass, was commissioned to develop and deliver a biological water quality monitoring programme for the development phase of the W&W project. Capitalising on Jon's vast experience of winterbourne invertebrate monitoring, the Trust has devised a volunteer-based sampling strategy covering the life of the project to 2024 for both perennial and winterbourne reaches and designed a sampling strategy for the collection of professional baseline data.

WCSRT have now collected samples from approximately 18 perennial sites in summer and autumn 2018 and spring 2019, with results from Aquascience Consultancy now received for summer and autumn sample seasons. The data generated by this sampling strategy will provide a professional baseline against which continued volunteer riverfly monitoring can be compared – highlighting any improvements or declines in the biological water quality condition throughout the lifetime of the W&W project.

Over the last six months, several WCSRT staff members working in the Test & Itchen catchment have been involved in the delivery of various projects as part of the Watercress & Winterbournes (W&W) HLF-funded landscape partnership scheme.



In addition, our samples from the winterbourne reaches in April 2019 await analysis and should confirm whether the W&W headwaters which dry each summer also have the rare invertebrate species confined to this stream zone in adjacent catchments.

Volunteer Training Events

In spring 2019 the Trust's Education Officer Vee Moore and T&I Catchment Officer Andy Blincow developed and led a series of training events aimed at providing W&W project volunteers with the skills and knowledge required to undertake surveys to inform the development phase bid. Training was provided to over 60 volunteers including those from W&W Community Catchment Groups, local conservation groups, Parish Councils, landowners and anglers.

Training courses were run in Alresford, Andover and Whitchurch and focused upon identification and recording of Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS), undertaking Access Audits, performing field water chemistry testing, and undertaking riverfly monitoring. The riverfly monitoring was delivered in partnership with Matt Owen Farmer and Richard Osmond of the Riverfly Partnership and all courses were well received by attendees.

Since delivery of these training courses, dedicated volunteers have been out on the headwaters, collecting valuable data which is being used by project partners to inform and design plans for the delivery phase of the W&W project.

Walkover Surveys

In summer 2019 WCSRT teamed up with the Wild Trout Trust (WTT) to undertake walkover surveys of the project headwaters. These ambitious surveys aimed to collect data on a wide range of issues including the condition and management of river and riparian habitats, barriers to fish passage, opportunities for natural flood management (NFM), presence and abundance of invasive non-native species (INNS), sources and pathways of sediment input, and issues surrounding water level management.

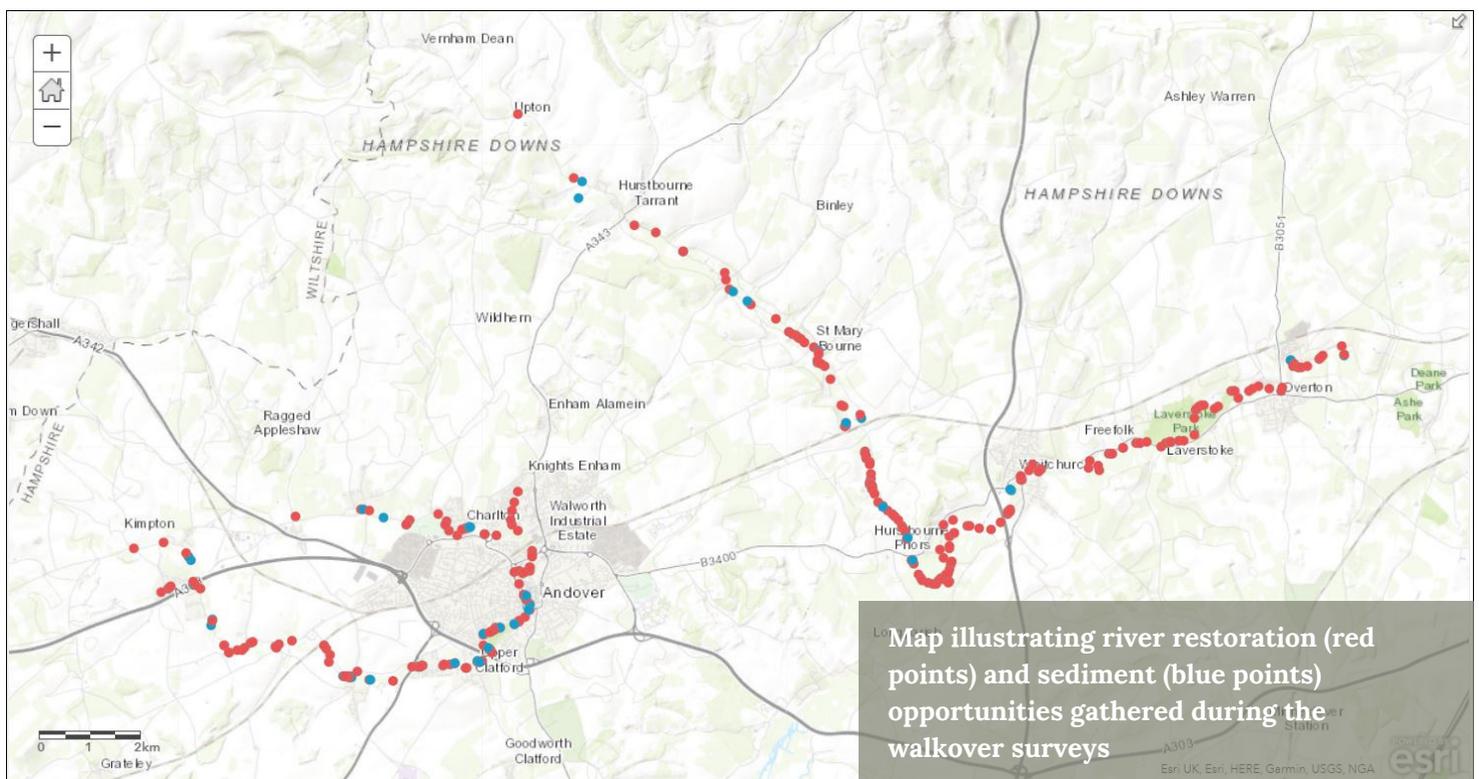
Recording this seemingly endless list of parameters was made considerably easier using tablets and a revolutionary new app 'Survey123' to record data in the field. Not only did this approach allow data, photographs and GPS location to be collected on a custom survey form, it also allowed almost instantaneous sharing of data with project partners. Undoubtedly it's the future of field surveying! The previously unrivalled access achieved at this catchment scale and the quality and accessibility of the data obtained by these surveys will provide a plentiful supply of project ideas for the duration of the W&W project and beyond.



Volunteers studying the W&W project area at the Whitchurch access audit training workshop in February 2019



Volunteers learning to identify invasive flora at the Alresford training workshop in February 2019



Map illustrating river restoration (red points) and sediment (blue points) opportunities gathered during the walkover surveys

Two WCSRT project proposals funded by the Water Environment Grant

Andy Blinco and Martijn Antheunisse,
WCSRT

The WEG scheme is offering a total of £27 million over a three-year period. It is designed to support delivery of projects that are currently funded through the Water Environment Improvement Fund (WEIF) and was open to a wider range of applicants including charitable organisations and land managers. In 2018 WCSRT submitted three project proposals on the Test and Itchen and Avon catchments as lead partner, whilst providing assistance in submission for a number of additional projects. Project proposals have been assessed nationally and WCSRT is delighted to have received offers for two of its project proposals.

Test & Itchen Catchment Technical Assessment of Channels (TICTAC)

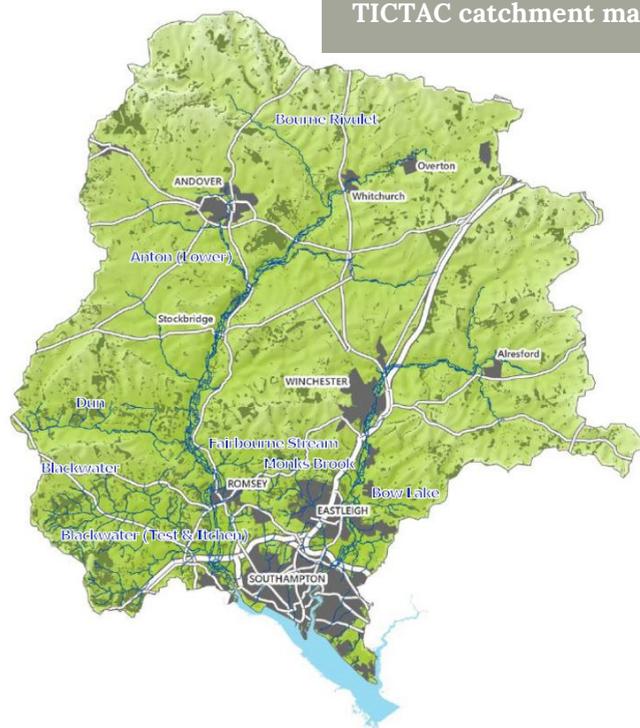
The Test & Itchen Catchment Technical Assessment of Channels (TICTAC) is a WCSRT-led project which aims to:

1. investigate the hydro-geomorphological and ecological status of waterbodies and subsequent delivery of targeted in-channel/riparian enhancement projects, and
2. identify, investigate and remediate specific sediment pathways causing sediment egress into the waterbodies.

TICTAC will be a two-phase project with feasibility and delivery stages. The eight tributaries included within the project have been chosen based upon a detailed selection criteria, including (not exclusively): Water Framework Directive overall waterbody classification, Drinking Water Protected Area (DWPA) status, water dependant SSSI/SAC status and threats, urban/rural catchment status, and extent of previous project delivery within the catchments (avoiding waterbodies previously delivered under the Test and Itchen River Restoration Scheme).

The Water Environment Grant (WEG) is a scheme developed under Defra, the Environment Agency, Natural England and the Rural Payments Agency to fund improvements to the water environment.

TICTAC catchment map



The tributaries selected for inclusion within the project are as follows: Bow Lake, Monks Brook, Anton – Lower, Bourne Rivulet, Blackwater, Blackwater (Test and Itchen), Dun, and Fairbourne Stream to Fishlake Meadows.

TICTAC will initially aim to address the waterbody reaches identified as most in need of river restoration/enhancement, as identified by the feasibility phase ‘technical assessment of channels’. The design of restoration and/or enhancement measures will be influenced by the management recommendations for the reach, as identified within the project technical/management report. Upon completion of the project, a minimum of 1km of river restoration/enhancement work will have been delivered to improve the hydro-geomorphological status of chosen reaches of waterbody.



The speed of runoff increases on steep slopes, which increases the power of water to break off and carry soil particles.

TICTAC will also aim to initially address the most acute problem sediment ingress sites in the catchments. The Trust will work together closely with local Catchment Sensitive Farming (CSF) Officers and Natural England staff to ensure there is no overlap and will give the opportunity to refer issues identified at the feasibility phase of the projects that can be better addressed through CSF. The location and type of interventions will be dictated by the results of the feasibility phase 'technical assessment of channels', however the project will aim to deliver a minimum of 1.5km of improvement within the catchment with the potential to have a positive impact on additional water bodies in the catchment further downstream.

Sediment Reduction Nadder (SERENA)

We propose to undertake work on several sites in the catchment of the river Nadder to tackle sediment pathway issues, focussing on headwaters. This year we will start with walkover surveys and a prioritisation exercise leading to delivery in 2020 and the first quarter of 2021. We envisage working on rural roads and road verges, especially river crossings, as well as tracks and other conduits. Interventions will include installing sediment traps, building heavy duty cross-drains, resurfacing rutted tracks and creating grips and bunds to control local water flows.

The Nadder catchment is large, and our budget not unlimited, but we are confident that by using money well, we can make a difference to sediment loading in the river. If you are aware of any key pathways for soil and sediment flowing into the Nadder, please send us an email via info@wcsrt.org.uk so we can include it in our walkover surveys.



**The European Agricultural Fund
for Rural Development:
Europe investing in rural areas**

More needs to be done to protect our rivers

Dr Janina Gray, Salmon & Trout Conservation

The Riverfly Census found a loss in mayfly species of up to 44% in our chalk streams, compared to 1998.

Chalk streams are England's rainforests; they are ecologically important and rare. The Census has also confirmed that chalk streams are biologically distinct, exhibiting different dominant groups of macroinvertebrate communities compared to non-chalk rivers. The current management, in terms of generalised Water Framework Directive (WFD) targets, is not achieving healthy chalk rivers. Bespoke species targets are a potential option to drive river improvements. In 2017, a minimum target of ≥ 500 *Gammarus pulex* in autumn and 10 mayfly species for the Test and Itchen was agreed by S&TC and the local Environment Agency, for the middle to lower reaches. These targets were based on a combination of historical records and our data, and a recognition that WFD 'good' is not good enough for these chalk rivers.

46% of the Riverfly Census autumn samples failed the proposed WFD standard for chemicals.

Chemical pollution is a major cause of degradation and biodiversity loss in aquatic ecosystems, yet it remains poorly understood and often considered too difficult to deal with. Rivers are net receivers of many different types of chemicals from a variety of origins, from pesticides in agriculture, to antidepressants in wastewater effluent. More than 300,000 regulated chemicals are currently in use, yet our rivers are only routinely checked for 45 of these.

Current monitoring only covers a tiny fraction of the chemicals entering our waterways, and extensively ignores the 'cocktail' mixture effects that fish and invertebrates are subjected to.

In 2015, Salmon & Trout Conservation (S&TC) launched the Riverfly Census to collect high resolution, scientifically robust data about the state of our rivers and the pressures facing them. We have found across the 12 sampled rivers that the three main pressures are **chemicals, fine sediments and phosphates**, and in particular our chalk streams are not faring well.

58% of our Census rivers indicated concerning pressure from sediment at three or more of their sampled sites, yet current WFD monitoring does not include a sediment standard.

Sediment loss from the land to rivers is a natural process. However, soil is being lost from land 10 times faster than the rate it is being created, which is clearly not sustainable! Too much fine sediment can choke wildlife, change habitats by reducing light and increasing turbidity, and increase concentrations of toxic compounds which become bound to it. The agriculture and land management sector accounts for approximately 75% of the sediment load in watercourses in England.



Male *Ecdyonurus* mayfly species (Brook-Autumn Dun), autumn 2017 © Nick Overall

100% of the chalkstreams we sampled exhibited concerning nutrient stress at one or more sites.

Phosphorus in freshwater is a major concern globally; it can cause algal blooms and eutrophication, which deplete oxygen. This increases mortality of invertebrate and fish eggs.

According to EA figures, concentrations of biologically available phosphorus, also known as orthophosphate, have decreased on the River Itchen since the 1970s, yet the invertebrate communities in the Census are still exhibiting nutrient stress and there is an abundance of filamentous algal growth. So, why is the ecology still suffering? We conducted daily water quality sampling and investigated the concentrations of different forms of phosphorus.

We have found:

- Large spikes in concentrations of biologically available phosphorus that lasted 24 hours or more, which are overlooked by the EA, who use monthly spot samples to create an annual average which sets the accepted standard. The impact of these short-term spikes is still not known, but laboratory research has shown that extended exposure to phosphorus kills mayfly eggs.

- Large quantities of other forms of phosphorus, such as particulate, which are not measured in current monitoring.

This suggests we are only dealing with part of the phosphorus problem, and raises the question as to how important to riverine ecology are these other forms?

Next steps: SmartRivers

We will be using the results from the Census to campaign for action to restore our rivers, but our work will not stop there. We need much more evidence from other rivers to maximise our impact, but we cannot do this alone.

We're calling on volunteers to extend the Riverfly Census's probing health check to as many rivers in the UK as we can with our SmartRivers initiative:

www.salmon-trout.org/smart-rivers.

We have the funding to help you make this happen. If you are up to the challenge, contact us at smartrivers@salmon-trout.org.



Volunteers learning to sample for invertebrates using the EA's 3 minute kick-sweep protocol
© S&TC 2019

An online repository for evidence, monitoring data and projects

Martijn Antheunisse, WCSRT

We have been working hard this summer to finalize an online map-based database that will eventually replace the Avon Catchment Plan and become the key platform to get all your information on the catchment, which is currently scattered across different websites or hiding in drawers. It will also contain ongoing and planned projects from various catchment partners, useful for the partnership, interested members of the public and investors who are looking for projects to put their money towards.

The tool will provide an easily accessible overview of plenty of catchment characteristics, such as geology, land-use, present condition such as Water Framework Directive status as well as detailed information on pressures and pollution. Most of the information is based on the Catchment Based Approach data package and is automatically updated at least annually.

The Hampshire Avon Catchment Partners started to put together a GIS-based Story Map to capture existing and new data covering the catchment of the Avon.

Excitingly, we will add a repository of all river-based projects that have been delivered historically on the Avon. This is something all partners have been trying to get in place for a number of years, and it looks like it will finally materialize. It will be easy for all to submit project ideas or data on historic projects using a simple on-line form. Any new input will go live on the mapping system will go live following validation by one of the Trust's staff members

A final draft of the Story Map will be presented at the autumn Hampshire Avon Catchment Partnership meeting. Please feel free to contact the Rivers Trust via info@wcsrt.org.uk if you have any suggestions or specific sets of data for inclusion.

Once live, you will be able to find the repository via www.hampshireavoncatchmentpartnership.org.uk.

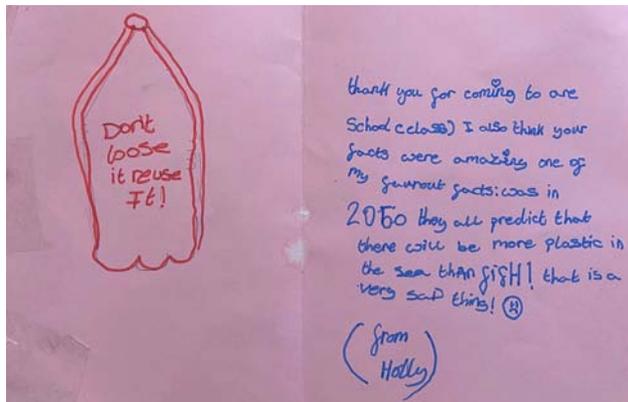
The screenshot shows the website interface for the Hampshire Avon Catchment Partnership. At the top, the title 'Hampshire Avon Catchment Partnership' is displayed, along with the text 'Hosted by Wessex Chalk Streams & Rivers Trust' and social media icons for Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn. The 'Hampshire Avon Catchment Partnership' logo is also present. Below the title is a navigation menu with buttons for 'Overview', 'Characteristics', 'Issues', 'RARP 2', 'Monitoring', 'Projects', and 'Partners'. The 'Overview' button is selected. The main content area is titled 'Catchment Overview' and contains two paragraphs of text. The first paragraph states: 'The Hampshire Avon Catchment Partnership (HACP) comprises a number of organisations all working together to improve the management of the Hampshire Avon's river catchments.' The second paragraph states: 'The partnership was set up in 2014 and is part of the national Catchment-Based Approach; an initiative that aims to take a holistic and integrated approach to catchment management, considering the needs of all local stakeholders. The HACP consists of dozens of partner organisations who represent fishery and wildlife interests, farming and' The text is partially obscured by a large image of a swan swimming in a river at sunset, with a church spire visible in the background.

A busy year for chalk stream education

Vee Moore, WCSRT

Here's a brief rundown of the education and engagement programmes and activities delivered by WCSRT during the summer term.

The summer term started with a microplastics-focussed presentation and debate with three Y4 classes at Stoke Park Junior School in Bishopstoke. The school invited us to talk about how plastic waste affects our rivers and seas. The local Lib Dem Councillor for Bishopstoke & Fair Oak Mike Thornton also attended the event. Below is a lovely thank you card from one of the pupils and on page 13 you'll find a report from Brownlee class on what they learnt.



St Swithun's School asked us to lead four of their wilderness afternoons for the Y1, Y3, Y5 and Y6 classes. The first two sessions were held in May in Clausentum Fen in Winchester and were focussed on chalk streams and aquatic invertebrate investigations. The rest were held in June in the Itchen Stoke water meadows near Ovington where Vee led a guided walk and an identification session focussing on floodplain meadow plants.

Our introductory programme to chalk streams, the *Story of Chalk Streams* continues to be a popular choice for schools. Vee delivered three sessions at the Whitchurch CofE Primary School in June (hosted and funded by the owners of Fulling Mill in Whitchurch) and a further session at Pilgrims School in the centre of Winchester in July. The lesson is now expanded to include various engaging activities focussed on aquatic invertebrate adaptations.

After a successful pilot in summer 2018 (and a generous grant from the Hedley Foundation), WCSRT has been able to offer the *Mayfly in the Classroom* lesson to six schools this year (multiple classes took part in most schools). The lesson involves the capture of mayfly nymphs and their rearing in the classroom environment. Upon hatching, the pupils release the mayfly adults back to their local waterbody, having experienced their lifecycle (aquatic and terrestrial).

Nicola Graham, a Y5 teacher from Fordingbridge Junior School sent us the following feedback: **"We have seen around six [mayfly nymphs hatch] and I was about to shut everything down when I noticed one last mayfly had developed over the weekend. All in all, a really interesting project and we would definitely be up for more. The children were really responsible, and, after all, it involves them in their local environment. Thank you so much for your help."**

Furthermore, WCSRT ran two river clean-ups in late spring – one on the Holly Brook in Southampton with Southampton University Conservation Volunteers and another on the River Itchen in the North Walls Recreation Ground in Winchester with the 7th Winchester Scouts. The equipment purchased for these events was funded by the TK Maxx environmental clean-up grant and a further small grant awarded by The Rivers Trust.

Spreading the word about the plight of Atlantic salmon

Vee Moore, WCSRT

Wild and Wonderful Family Day

On the 11th April, WCSRT had a stall at the Wild and Wonderful Family Day in Whitchurch, run by the Whitchurch Silk Mill. The event had a truly heart-warming topic: caring for animals. Our animal of choice was of course the Atlantic salmon and there were various family-friendly activities, including a salmon run mural and bugwatch, and crafts on offer focussed on salmon anatomy, life cycle and habitats.

Nature Watch Day

Twyford St Mary's Church of England Primary School asked Vee to lead on their Nature Watch Day in June. This all-day, all-school event was focussed on the Atlantic salmon. Younger children participated in our Salmon Grow on Trees programme whereas the older ones completed a salmon crossword puzzle (by finding clues along the banks of the Itchen in Twyford; thanks to the Bishopstoke Fishing Club for access), took part in our salmon poster competition and the salmon run activity. The latter was held outside in the school grounds where the pupils acted out the salmon's lifecycle, including the dangers salmon encounter during their migration out to sea and back to their native rivers.

Artifishal screening

On the 18th July, WCSRT held a screening of *Artifishal* at our offices in Salisbury. All supporters, members and colleagues of WCSRT were invited.

This docufilm, produced by Patagonia, is about people, rivers, and the fight for the future of wild fish and the environment that supports them. It explores the wild salmon's slide toward extinction, threats posed by fish hatcheries and fish farms, and our continued loss of faith in nature.

We had a great turn out even though the subject matter was difficult and clearly showed the damaging effect that humanity has had on the wild fish population, driving them closer to extinction.

2019 is the International Year of the Salmon and so WCSRT has been running various events and outreach activities since the beginning of the year to make communities and schools in our catchments aware of wild salmon and their struggle for survival. Here's a brief summary of what's been delivered so far.



Please email info@wcsrt.org.uk if you are interested in seeing *Artifishal*. If there are enough supporters keen to see it again, we will host another viewing in the next few months.

Salmon poster competition

In June, WCSRT ran a salmon poster competition. Pupils were encouraged to get creative and make a poster about the salmon's journey out to the sea/return to their native rivers, draw their entire lifecycle or some aspect of their anatomy. Thank you to everyone for their fantastic entries and congratulations to the winners.



Two interpretation panels installed on the Upper Itchen

Vee Moore, WCSRT

Two A1-sized boards were installed in the headwaters of the Itchen (Ovington and Chilland) on the 13th June as part of the first phase of the Upper Itchen Interpretation Project. The aim of the project is to:

1. encourage visitors to stop and look at the river and learn about its special qualities, and
2. convey to visitors the importance of protecting the river and offer them tips on water efficiency.

The content of the boards was designed to be interchangeable – summer and winter panels have been printed to offer seasonal content to passers-by. The initial feedback from the public has been very positive, and our local contacts have reported that the boards are generating interest, which is great to hear.

Fundraising for the second phase of the project, which will involve the design and installation of a further three boards, will begin in September 2019.

Thank you to our funders, Southern Water and the Nineveh Charitable Trust for the financial support, and the wonderful landowners, riverkeepers and parish councils in the upper Itchen for their time, feedback and enthusiasm.



Greenhouse Graphics installing the Ovington interpretation board

After 18 months of planning, fundraising and consultation phase 1 of the Upper Itchen Interpretation Project is complete. Next time you're passing Ovington or Chilland look out for our chalk stream signage.

Brownlee class learns about plastic pollution

On Thursday 25th April 2019, Vee and Lee (from the Wessex Chalk Stream and Rivers Trust) visited Stoke Park Junior School. As part of the school's topic 'Plastic Pollution', they provided the children with a wonderful presentation on micro-plastics. The councillor Mike Thornton also visited and improvements to the river area around The Hub (in Eastleigh) were discussed as well.

Before the visitors came into the school, the children were finding out about how plastic is polluting our planet. They watched a series of videos and began researching the topic.

During the presentation by Vee, the children followed the life of three different plastic bottles. One of the bottles had a 'good life' and was recycled effectively; unfortunately, one of the bottles ended up in the sea and harmed some sea life. Also, the children were amazed to find out how many products actually have plastic in them, including Coke cans and fleeces! Furthermore, they found out where plastic goes when it is thrown away or recycled.

After the visitors left, the children were packed full of information and able to write some detailed discussion texts about the use of plastics. Many of the children (and their parents) are now using plastic less and recycling more effectively as well. The visit had been truly inspirational!

Hello and goodbye

There has been a great deal of staff change at WCSRT over the last six months with new roles being created and current staff moving on to new opportunities. With WCSRT growing three new positions have been created to help with staffing capacity – Head of Project Delivery, Catchment Partnership Manager and part-time bookkeeper.

Mike Blackmore

In February recruitment started for a brand-new role at WCSRT – Head of Project Delivery. We are delighted to welcome Mike Blackmore who has taken on this role from August. He will support the staff with the management of projects and allow Martijn to carry out more of his CEO role at WCSRT. Mike has over 10 years' full-time experience in river restoration design and delivery. Mike began his career volunteering for Avon Wildlife Trust where he helped discover and catalogue the native white-clawed crayfish population that would eventually form the basis of the South West Crayfish Project breeding programme. Mike spent several years as a Site Manager for river restoration consultancy, Cain Bio-Engineering Ltd, before becoming a regional Conservation Officer for the prestigious Wild Trout Trust. Mike has designed and delivered river restoration projects across Southern England and South Wales, working with various government agencies, NGOs, angling clubs and community groups.

Alex Deacon

At the same time recruitment started for another new role – Catchment Partnership Manager. Alex Deacon started this role in July and will oversee both the Test and Itchen and Avon Catchment Partnerships. Alex is an environmental scientist with over 10 years' experience in the sector. Alex started his career with the Environment Agency's fisheries and environmental monitoring teams in the Thames region, before moving into ecological consultancy in the north west of England, undertaking impact assessments for a wide range of infrastructure and restoration projects. He enjoys working with stakeholders and the challenges associated with solving the often-complex environmental issues faced by our rivers.

Monica Howard

Due to the Trust's expansion the accounting of WCSRT has become increasingly complicated and it was clear to Martijn and trustees that WCSRT needed some professional bookkeeping help.

In March Monica Howard started as WCSRT's part-time bookkeeper to help with daily bookkeeping as well as accounting duties. Monica has already helped to set-up a new management account structure using the Xero accounting package and budget for 2019-20. Monica also works as bookkeeper for Winchester Rugby Club.

Liam Reynolds

Earlier this year Liam Reynolds – Hampshire Avon Officer - resigned after almost two years with the Trust to work for Wessex Water. Liam has delivered a significant number of projects on the lower Avon and has also helped to develop the Hampshire Avon Catchment Partnership. We are currently recruiting for his replacement.

Vee Moore

In June Vee Moore resigned from her role as Education Officer to take up an opportunity at United Utilities. Vee has helped the Trust tremendously in the last two years to develop WCSRT's education work.

Amy Ellis

Amy Ellis has been appointed to replace Vee and will start part-time in September. Amy has a BSc (Hons) in Environmental Science and has 13 years' experience in conservation and education. She has taught a wide range of environmental topics to children in early years education all the way up to adult groups. In recent years Amy established and managed her own business in environmental education and outdoor play whilst qualifying as a Forest School Leader. Before this Amy managed two large community engagement projects for the Wildlife Trusts and worked on many others.

Paddy Douglas-Pennant

After three years Paddy Douglas-Pennant has stepped down as WCSRT's Volunteer Treasurer but will remain as a trustee. Many thanks to Paddy who has worked tirelessly to keep the accounts of WCSRT in order over the last couple of years.

David Brookes

David has kindly taken over as Treasurer from Paddy. He is a Chartered Accountant in practice with an independent firm of accountants in Chandlers Ford where he is a director specialising in audit and accountancy. David grew up close to the lower Test where he spent a great deal of time during his formative years.

This newsletter is sponsored by Savills,
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The Savills logo consists of the word "savills" in a lowercase, sans-serif font, colored in a dark red or maroon hue. It is positioned on a bright yellow rectangular background.A photograph of two children, a boy and a girl, crouching on the bank of a stream. They are looking down at the water, with their hands near the edge. The background is a lush green field with some yellow wildflowers. The stream is in the foreground, with some debris floating in it.

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