



ark

ACTION FOR THE RIVER KENNET

Newsletter Number 20

River Restoration at Cooper's Meadow, Marlborough



Cooper's Meadow has been a hive of activity over the winter and spring as the river restoration progresses. Work started in December when David Oliver felled the Poplars, which had become too tall for their location close the river and houses. David tried an age-old technique for moving logs, using his horse 'Mr Horse' in place of machinery. Over the winter John Hounslow and his team have re-built the river banks and teams of willing volunteers have been steadily planting them up with native plants.

Continued on page 2

Spring River Walk & Teas Sunday 10 May 2009 2pm onwards

Starting at Manor Farm, West Overton, this new route will follow the River Kennet downstream to Lockeridge House and gardens. This is a beautiful winterbourne section of river, which is in unusually good health, following two wet years. There are stiles and some uneven ground so stout footwear is recommended. Sorry, no dogs.

The 'Ramsbury Flyer' will be available for people who would like to walk one way only (approx. 2 miles). The bus can also collect walkers from Ramsbury at 1.45pm and Marlborough at 2 pm and return them at 4.30pm. Please book in advance by email to bus@riverkennet.org.

Tea and cake will be served at Manor Farm.



Footbridge between West Overton and Lockeridge, in snow.



Volunteers enjoying a lunch break at Cooper's Meadow after a busy morning of planting at the Open Day on 29 March 2009

Continued from page 1

With over 50 tonnes of sarsen stone and soil to be moved, the work couldn't stay horse-powered, so John Hounslow and his team moved in with machinery and braved the icy weather to rebuild Mill Pool edge and repair the banks opposite Town Mill and around the meadow.

Beyond the Mill Pool, where reclaimed sarsen stones have been used, the new bank structure is 'soft engineered' and packed with riverside plants, including flag iris, marsh marigold and sedge. The green river's edge will provide good habitat for water vole and invertebrates as well as being more colourful. Towards Lady Bridge a new meander will create variation in flow velocity and river depth which improves the habitat for brown trout and grayling.

Students from **St John's School and Community College** and **Marlborough College** have replanted big sections of the bare banks and removed bags of litter from the meadow and stream. The students are helping with ongoing monitoring of invertebrate and plant species so that we can track the success of the project. Pupils at **St Peter's Primary School** released baby brown trout, which they had been raising in their classroom since January, into the river.

Managing the meadow

ARK and Wiltshire Wildlife Trust have presented the Town Council with a range of options for managing the water meadow, which would increase the bio-diversity and re-introduce characteristic plant species. One of these options would be to use a few Belted Galloway Cattle to graze the meadow for three months each year, instead of mowing it.



Fly-life volunteers wanted

We are looking for ARK members who can spare two hours every few months to help monitor the health of the river. Working in pairs, volunteers carry out a simple survey of fly life in a particular stretch of river and record the results. Full training will be given and all equipment provided. The fly life surveys are part of a national scheme run by the Riverfly Partnership (www.riverflies.org). ARK members have been involved for two years and we would like to survey more sites, so we need more help please. It's an interesting way to learn a bit more about the amazing creatures that live in our chalk streams.

If you are interested please contact charlotte@riverkennet.org and we will include you in the next training course.



ARK joins WWF and 'accidental angler' Charles Rangeley-Wilson to champion Britain's chalk streams

ARK is working with the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF-UK) on an ambitious project to champion chalk streams in the UK. Temperate chalk streams, including the Kennet, which emerge cool and clear from deep aquifers are 'Britain's rainforests': vibrant, verdant habitats which exist in only a few places on our planet. WWF argue that these spring-fed rivers should be regarded as our national treasures, not plundered for cheap drinking water and left unloved and neglected at the back of towns.

The writer, broadcaster and fisherman Charles Rangeley-Wilson visited the Kennet recently and we are working on a plan with WWF to develop a 'demonstration reach' to show people how good a chalk stream can be.

The project will be launched at the Houses of Parliament in May 2009. Charles' most recent



Michael Maude, Geoffrey Findlay, Martin Gibson and Charles Rangeley-Wilson looking at the Kennet in Mildenhall.

programme on fish can be seen on the BBC iplayer: http://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/b00jdw5k/Fish!_A_Japanese_Obsession/

Water Framework Directive

The Water Framework Directive is a significant piece of EU legislation which should be good news for European water bodies, including the River Kennet. At its simplest the legislation requires that all water bodies should meet 'good ecological status' by 2015. If this can't be achieved, the government must put a management plan in place to show how good ecological status will be reached by 2021 or 2027. The 'river basin management plans' have been published by the Environment Agency in draft form and are open to comment from the public (<http://wfdconsultation.environment-agency.gov.uk/wfdcms/en/thames/Intro.aspx>).

ARK is responding to the consultation. In addition, ARK has been commissioned by the RSPB to collect evidence and examine in detail the river basin planning for the Kennet. John Lawson and Charlotte Hitchmough have been visiting riparian owners over the last month to gather data and opinions from the people on the ground. Many thanks to everyone who has helped by providing information and access to their river. Our report will be submitted to the RSPB after Easter.

Gareth Rees

It is with great sadness that we record the death of Gareth Rees. Roger de Vere, who commissioned Gareth's work on the Kennet, recalled that he was a man whose understanding of water quality and dedication to detail brought major improvements to the river. The scientific evidence he produced to prove that there was a phosphate problem in the Kennet was one of the major drivers for the installation of phosphate stripping at Marlborough Sewage Treatment works, which means that sewage is now cleaned to a higher standard before it is discharged in to the River.

John Hills

We are also deeply saddened to hear of the sudden death in March of John Hills, Chairman of the Thames River Restoration Trust. John supported ARK, particularly the Cooper's Meadow project and the Trust has contributed significantly to its funding. John trained as an Artesian Well Engineer and spent his career in water-related industry. He was Director and Secretary of two water-related trade associations and a Liveryman of the Worshipful Company of Water Conservators.



Five schools take up the challenge of rearing brown trout from eggs to fry

Since January, pupils from Chilton Foliat, Hungerford, St Peters Marlborough, Preshute and Kennet Valley schools have all been busy rearing brown trout from eggs to fry. Using sophisticated aquariums, which replicate the cold, clear, fast-flowing water in a chalk stream, the children have been caring for the fish daily to ensure they have healthy fry to release into the River Kennet in March and April. Alongside caring for the baby trout, the children (and their parents) have been learning about Rivers, especially the chalk stream on their doorstep.

Funding for this year's project came from MADT, TH White, Waitrose and Roxtons. Thank you to all our funders, and to all the Waitrose customers who put their 'Green Token' into the ARK slot.

Photo competition

The photographic competition we mentioned in our last newsletter is now open. If you have any photos of the River Kennet as it is now and as it was once, we are inviting all members and others interested to:

- let us have any photos they have already got of the River, either recent or from previous decades; and
- to take new photos of any stretch or stretches at different times of year.

There will be a prize for the three best photos submitted. The deadline for entry is Midsummer Day 2009. Photos will be returned on request. Please either email photo@riverkennet.org or post your pictures to the address on the front page.

Autumn River Walk

Over 90 walkers joined October's walk, despite rain. The route from Elcot Lane, via Mildenhall to Axford covers some of the best chalk stream in Wiltshire. Many thanks to the Fishlock family for providing tea and cake, to all the riparian owners who opened up their river for the afternoon, and to Janice Clay for driving the Ramsbury Flyer.

Keep wildlife wild ...

The overpopulation of ducks in Marlborough continues to be a problem for the ducks, the other wildlife and plants. Food left on the bank is providing a good meal for the local rats. ARK have joined forces with the Environment Agency, Kennet District Council, Marlborough Town Council, RSPB and the RSPCA to produce stickers and leaflets to let people know about the problems that over-feeding ducks can cause. A leaflet is included with your newsletter, if you'd like more copies please call us. The sticker is reproduced below.

Keep wildlife wild...

The ducks on this river do not need feeding.

Ducks

There is enough natural food along the river corridor to sustain a healthy population of wild ducks.

Duck feeding causes these problems:

- unhealthy ducks,
- duck fighting,
- over crowding and unnatural behavior,
- healthy rats,
- damaged river banks,
- water pollution.

Please keep our riverbank rat-free. Don't leave food on the banks.

Rats

Rats live on the food people leave out for the ducks. Rats carry Weils disease (Leptospirosis) which can be fatal to humans and dogs.

This newsletter is published 3 times a year by Action for the River Kennet.

