

Action for the River Kennet River talk

A PARTNERSHIP OF PEOPLE WHO CARE ABOUT THE KENNET

We're back in business!

And its going to be a bumper year for ARK

Just before the 2020 Christmas break ARK volunteering was paused, to support the 'Stay at Home' government message. It was therefore a real pleasure to send out the Volunteer Programme for April 2021 and see the return of our regular organised volunteer tasks.

Socially distanced, our volunteers have been back in their waders resuming water vole surveying and refining their skills in mapping field signs. 210 additional native trees have been planted at Stonebridge Wild River Reserve as well as hundreds of native marginal plants on the Shalbourne.

All tasks were fully subscribed with a long reserve list. Knowing that we are contributing positively to nature makes us feel good. Getting outdoors, experiencing the sights and the sounds of the river and the wildlife that it sustains are life-affirming, as well as the chatting and camaraderie with fellow volunteers. These different elements not only bring us pleasure but also contribute to our wellbeing.

This year will be our busiest yet, with four new employees joining Charlotte and Anna, which means even more volunteering opportunities in connection with the exciting Green Recovery Challenge Fund projects we are



April was the month when the snake's head fritillaries (Fritillaria meleagris) bloomed at Stonebridge Wild River Reserve, bringing a delicate splash of colour and an early source of nectar and pollen to pollinators. All the bulbs have been planted by our volunteers. Credit: Zoe Cliffe

going to be working on with our partners.

First off, Mia Ridler will be helping the Thames Catchment Community Eels Project to increase our understanding of these fascinating but threatened animals.

Alongside her, Rupert Kelton and James Laurence-King will be working on our Sparkling Streams project to bring farmers, schools and the wider community together to improve two of our local chalk

streams, the Shalbourne and the Dun as well as habitat restoration on the Kennet at Hungerford.

Last but not least, Julie Parker is our new part-time Business Administrator, supporting the team and taking care of the bookkeeping and finances. You can read more about her and the others in the ARK People column on the back cover!

[Anna Forbes](#)

News from the Chairman

Every cloud has a silver lining



Covid-19 restrictions have meant for many a reduction in their ability to do their normal work and for some a complete cessation. This is not the case for ARK – indeed, we've been busier than ever.

In the last couple of months, the level of ARK's practical river and habitat work has reached new heights. We have taken on new projects, new people and are active in many new areas of the Kennet catchment.

From the coronavirus cloud a small but significant silver lining emerged; it is the government's Green Recovery Challenge Fund. In the autumn of last year, the Heritage Lottery Fund launched this new challenge scheme to stimulate jobs and deliver the positive environmental outcomes highlighted in the 25-Year Environment Plan.

Working closely with other partners ARK successfully submitted applications for two exciting new projects in the Kennet catchment – **Sparkling Streams** and the **Thames Catchment Community Eels Project**.

Sparkling Streams is a collaborative enterprise between the North Wessex Downs AONB, the Southern Streams Farmer Group, Hungerford Town and Manor and ARK. It is also a truly catchment-based project

that will be focusing on the chalk streams of the Shalbourne, Dun and middle Kennet. Working alongside farmers from the Southern Streams Farmer Group, ARK will be improving water quality and wildlife habitats as well as making it easier for fish to move up and downstream.

Thames Catchment Community Eels Project will share the fascinating and intricate life cycle and history of European eels with communities, schools and the general public. It is being led by the Thames Rivers Trust and will demonstrate the threats to this remarkable fish and what we as members of the public can do to help it survive. As well as workshops for schools and community groups, the project will seek to build collaborative partnerships to aid the long-term survival of eels in the Kennet. Citizen science will take a central role in monitoring and surveying eel populations and producing the robust data needed to guide future conservation work.

This new funding has allowed a real step change for ARK bringing more than £278,000 into the charity. With this we have employed new staff and purchased a vehicle that can help us transport people, materials and equipment onto site.

The one caveat to this exciting news is that the funding is only available for 12 months. This means the trustees and director are now

hard at work looking for ways to sustain our new enhanced capacity. In particular, we need to identify funding streams that will allow us to keep hold of these new staff and nurture our expanded ambition for ARK's future.

For those of you worried that all this practical conservation work may distract ARK from continuing to hold to account those companies and agencies that have an impact on river quality and quantity, I say fear not. Rest assured that we will still be making sure that any pollution events or over-abstraction will be robustly challenged. Better still, our increased resources and profile will mean our voice will not only be stronger but have greater credibility. With partners such as the Kennet Valley Fishery Association we will remain vigilant and vocal.

Richard Clarke



If you are lucky to see a small rodent in or by a chalkstream it might be a water vole. Water voles are easy to distinguish from rats – look out for a rounded face and small ears close to the body.

Rain gardens

The green way to keep our rivers clean



Rain gardens are a simple way for us all to reduce our impact on our rivers, by reducing both pollution and water use.

Our rain garden project at Shalbourne primary school as part of Sparkling Streams is well under way. The garden will intercept up to 6,500 litres of rainwater during a storm, slowing the flow of water into the drainage network and helping to reduce sewer overflows and river pollution. It will also capture and store rainwater for play and plant-watering, saving valuable tap water for drinking and other essential uses.

Ogbourne St George and Chilton Foliat Schools both have rain garden designs ready to be built, as soon as funding is available. We are actively looking for sponsoring partners, so please get in touch if you have any suggestions.

This year we are excited to be able to offer training workshops for everyone who is interested in



incorporating a rain garden into their own spaces at home, work or school. From installing a simple water butt or a rainwater planter to creating a more ambitious rain garden, we will show you how. The workshops have been designed with sustainable-gardening expert Wendy Allen of Wendy Allen Designs, and funded by Wiltshire Community Solar Fund and Thames Water. Dates and venues will be announced on our website and Facebook shortly.

Charlotte Hitchmough

Pollution patrol

Our members are our eyes and ears

Your reports are helping to keep our rivers cleaner by helping us map pollution hotspots and share the information with the Environment Agency, Natural England and Thames Water who have different roles in fixing problems. For instance, Thames Water are investigating potential misconnections in the Holy Brook, and Karen Davies (our local Catchment Sensitive Farming Advisor) is using the information to target farm advice to where it's most needed.

Thank you to everyone who attended our 'Muddy Walks Pollution Patrol' workshops over the winter and subsequently reported potential issues via the app. Meeting on Zoom worked well, and during lockdown many more people have been out and about, so we've been delighted with the results. But please don't stop now: information about the impact of summer storms on muddy runoff, sewer lids popping, or polluted outfalls is useful all year round.

Charlotte Hitchmough

*Photo top: Our rain-garden stakeholder event at Shalbourne primary school
Credit: Charlotte Hitchmough ARK*

*Photo bottom: Rain garden design and creation by Wendy Allen Designs.
Credit: Charlotte Hitchmough ARK*

Sparkling Streams

Creating cleaner rivers for a greener future

We are delighted to report that the Sparkling Streams Project is officially up and running and well on its way to achieving its aim of helping to restore cleaner rivers with more wildlife and connecting people with nature.

Sparkling Streams is a partnership between ARK, the Southern Streams Farm Cluster Group and Hungerford Town & Manor, co-ordinated by the North Wessex Downs AONB. The project is funded by the government's Green Recovery Challenge Fund, which is being delivered by The National Lottery Heritage Fund in partnership with Natural England and the Environment Agency.

With only a year to deliver an exciting and extensive programme of works the partnership team have hit the ground running and are pleased to have most recently been joined by James Laurence King, project officer for Sparkling Streams, who has already begun getting out and about to deliver our schedule of habitat works and volunteering events.



A catchment-based approach

Like the Kennet Catchment Partnership, Sparkling Streams is using a catchment-based approach, but in this case we have the benefit of working on an even more localised level, operating predominately in the Shalbourne and Dun sub-catchments and a small area of the main River Kennet around Hungerford.

So, while much of the project is targeting the river and riparian zone, we are also fortunate to be working with the Southern Streams Farm Cluster, a well-co-ordinated and motivated group of farmers and landowners who between them look after 25,000 acres (10,000 hectares) of land throughout and beyond the Shalbourne and Dun catchments. This farm cluster has a particular commitment to enhancing water quality in the rivers, streams and freshwater habitats on the land under their stewardship and so we are very pleased to be working alongside them to deliver a pilot programme of nature-based solutions to improve the water environment. We hope this will just be the beginning of lots more similar activities being undertaken by the farm cluster, long

after the Sparkling Streams Project is finished.

In addition to the farming community are the wider communities that call these catchments home and benefit from the ecosystem services our rivers provide. The Sparkling Streams has a couple of community-focused tasks specifically designed to engage local people with issues affecting their rivers and to encourage people to play their part in protecting and improving them.

More generally we are aiming to get as many people as possible involved, COVID permitting, and are working up a range of volunteer activities.

River restoration

The largest element of the river restoration within the Sparkling Streams Project is the delivery, with the Town & Manor of Hungerford, of a substantial restoration project at Eddington



Rupert Kelton talking to Rebecca Rooney from BBC Sounds. Credit: Charlotte Hitchmough ARK
One of the barriers to fish migration on the Shalbourne. Credit: Rupert Kelton ARK



Carrying out a walkover survey on the Upper Dun with the help of the Wild Trout Trust and Environment Agency. Credit: James Laurence King



Adding local sourced timber as habitat and play feature. Credit: Charlotte Hitchmough ARK

Mill on the Kennet, where the impoundment caused by the mill and the implications for fish passage have long been issues. The proposed works are therefore eagerly anticipated and will be another big win in helping towards the recovery to favourable condition of the Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) on the Kennet.

During the long time that the restoration project at Eddington Mill has been in the planning, the river

the mill. The Sparkling Streams steering group are pleased to have appointed Cain Bio Engineering to deliver the works on behalf of the Town & Manor of Hungerford and we will look forward to bringing you news on progress in the autumn.

Alongside this we have also been undertaking catchment walkovers on the Dun and the Shalbourne Stream and with help from the Wild Trout Trust and Environment Agency we have been working with riparian owners to plan and deliver a series of smaller-scale habitat restoration works.

Catchment solutions

We believe that deploying nature-based solutions at a catchment scale is key to tackling the big issues – like diffuse pollution and water resources – that impact river catchments in a modern landscape. Sparkling Steams is delivering a range of such measures with the Southern Streams farm cluster in a pilot that we hope will lead to similar activity in the future.

For example, in the Wilton Water Catchment, at the top of the Dun, we are working with RM Wetlands to design and build a wetland at Crofton and design another at

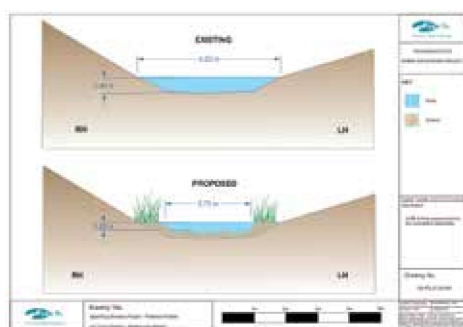
Wilton that will help improve the quality and slow the flow of water draining into Wilton Water and on downstream to the Dun and Kennet. You may have heard our piece about this on Radio Four's *Farming Today*. Alongside this we will also be constructing leaky dams, planting trees and hedges and listening to and supporting farms within the cluster as they seek to improve and share best practice on farming for the environment.

Community

Rain gardens are close to our hearts here at ARK, so we are thrilled to be installing another with the help of Wendy Allen, this time at Shalbourne Primary School where we will be engaging with pupils, parents and the wider community about the importance of water and the roles everyone can play in reducing their impacts in the catchment. With the help of volunteers we have also begun working to deliver habitat works and hope to have opportunities available for people to lend a welcome hand, so please watch this space or contact me for more news and information:

james@riverkennet.org

James Laurence King



A plan for Improving the habitat of a stretch of the River Dun at Chisbury Manor Farm. Credit: ARK

has managed to do much of the hard work itself. After a crumbling weir on the mill leat finally gave way to the forces of nature the river was able to flow freely again for the first time in several centuries. That said, there is still plenty of work to restore the main channel and reconnect the historic channel to improve fish passage around

Eel summer

Thames Catchment Community Eels Project



ARK is undertaking this important project to help the long-term survival of the European eel in partnership with Thames Rivers Trust, South East Rivers Trust and Thames21. The European eel, once a common species of huge natural and cultural heritage, is now critically endangered. This exciting project focuses on the Lower Kennet and the River Pang.

European eels have a fascinating and complex lifecycle that begins in the Sargasso Sea in the West Atlantic. Freshly hatched larvae begin their incredible 6,500 km journey across the ocean to the rivers of Europe. In Britain, successful arrivals to the Thames estuary then continue further upstream into the river system. Some make it to the Lower Kennet and the Pang to spend the majority of their lives in our local rivers.

The success of eel populations depends upon their ability to move freely up and down our river systems, which means navigating man-made obstacles such as weirs, sluices and dams. Such barriers have led to the eel's steep population decline in the last few decades. To better understand them, we are working closely with the Zoological Society of London and Thames Estuary Partnership to develop



a method for citizen scientists to record barriers to eel migration up and down rivers.

Throughout the coming summer we will be walking the length of the Lower Kennet and the River Pang with volunteers to assess and map barriers to eel migration. This will allow us to prioritise projects to improve eel passage and enable the full connectivity of the river for eel migration. If you would like to be involved in these walkover surveys, please get in touch!

Community engagement is at the heart of this project and we are offering a number of free community events in the summer. We are running eel-themed workshops and assemblies for schools as well as free eel talks and riverbank walks for community groups and the public. Participants will learn all about the European eel's mysterious life cycle and migration as well as the importance of the rivers Kennet and Pang to the

survival of this endangered species.

Please get in touch with mia@riverkennet.org if you are in the project area and are a teacher or parent interested in a workshop or assembly for your school, a community group interested in an eel talk or if you would like to get involved with volunteering for our citizen science eel walkover surveys.

This project is funded by the government's Green Recovery Challenge Fund. The funding is being delivered by The National Lottery Heritage Fund in partnership with Natural England and the Environment Agency.

Mia Ridler

Main Photo: A fully-grown adult European eel. Credit: © Jack Perks

Inset Photo: Young European eels are known as glass eels because of the transparency of their bodies. Credit: © Jack Perks

Talking about pollution

ARK continues its campaign for cleaner rivers



In our last newsletter we ran an article entitled 'We need to talk about pollution'. Later on, we asked you to sign a petition supporting Philip Dunne MP's private member's bill to clean up Britain's waterways by reducing spills of untreated sewage. The good news is that elements of the bill have been included in the Environment Bill, which was announced in May's Queen's Speech.

While not a complete victory, it represents a step in the right direction. Whether it amounts to government greenwash or a new attitude to protecting our rivers remains to be seen. At a local level

we are very encouraged that both Laura Ferris MP and Danny Kruger MP made time to join Charlotte Hitchmough, Anna Forbes and river keeper Sam Marshall by the Kennet at Chilton Foliat to discuss the many pressures that are damaging this fragile chalkstream habitat. This is intended to be the first in a series of meetings about the health of rivers in the Kennet catchment.

The topic of river pollution from sewage is also receiving welcome attention, particularly after Panorama's 'The River Pollution Scandal' was broadcast in April. The Rivers Trust published an updated

map of sewer overflow frequency and duration using the 2020 Event Duration Monitor data from the Environment Agency. It showed that within Thames Water's area, the River Pang takes line honours with 4111.95 hours (or 171.3 days and nights) of untreated sewage flowing into the river at Hamstead Norreys.

Also in the top ten worst-performing sewage treatment works are Burghfield, Mortimer (Stratfield), Marlborough and East Shefford, each discharging untreated sewage into the Kennet and its tributaries for the equivalent of between 120 and 134 days and nights. Sarah Bentley, Thames Water's new CEO, has been clear that putting untreated sewage into rivers in this way is unacceptable.

However, eliminating untreated sewage discharges is not going to be quick, easy or cheap. We need a renewed political will to support clean rivers and a regulatory framework that makes it necessary and possible. At present, ARK are frustrated by the slow rate of progress to implement improvement.

Charlotte Hitchmough

*Photo: Danny Kruger MP and Laura Ferris MP joined river keeper Sam Marshall, Charlotte Hitchmough and Anna Forbes by the Kennet at Chilton Foliat.
Credit: Edward Mather*

Farm advice

Charles Bentley from ADAS ran a good 'track management' workshop for our farmers on Zoom. Tracks often act as pathways for sediment pollution from the field to the river and managing them well can reduce river pollution. The workshop was based around real-world problems in Lambourn and practical ways to overcome them, supplemented by some more generic track management tips and tricks. Karen

Davis from Catchment Sensitive Farming was on hand to provide advice on routes to funding support.

By combining a site visit with a Zoom presentation we were able to work around the COVID restrictions, but we are looking forward to getting back on to farms for real. If you'd like to see a recording of the workshop please get in touch and we can send a link.

Charlotte Hitchmough



*Tarmac track creating a pathway for sediment from fields into the stream.
Credit: Charlotte Hitchmough ARK*

Wild swimming

Wild swimming isn't new, but its popularity has soared

Visitors to wildswim.com, a crowd-sourced online map started by the Outdoor Swimming Society (OSS), hit a record 151,000 last summer – three times more than usual. The site has since been taken down in an attempt to reduce overcrowding at locations across the country.

There were several pinch points on the Kennet. At Axford and Speen locals who had been enjoying a quiet dip for years suddenly found their havens of peace inundated by hordes of visitors looking for a beach-party venue. Not only did this disturb the wildlife, but also created problems of litter, noise, bank erosion and trespass.

A look at 19th-century maps of the Kennet and Pang shows 'bathing places' marked at several spots – not quite wild swimming, but a sign that people have been splashing about in the river for hundreds of years.

It's likely that wild swimming is here to stay, and as swim coach Joanne Jones of [@jo_swimsandthings](#) said 'when you are up to your neck in water you are very invested in what's in the water'. Wild swimmers were quick to support the joint Surfers Against Sewage and Rivers Trust campaign to stop sewage pollution, and several local groups have successfully pressed for improved water quality by asking for 'Bathing Water Status' for their rivers.

A member of one of the Kennet fishing clubs posted this Facebook question last month: 'Should angling clubs offer a stretch of river



Jo Jones enjoying a bracing winter dip in the Kennet. Credit: Joanne Jones

to wild swimmers?' In other words, if the river could be designated as 'bathing water' the quality requirements would be more strictly enforced in a way that would benefit not only people but also river wildlife.

The outdoor swimming association has some good advice for wild swimmers, and to that we would add:

- Most of the Kennet is a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), so swim quietly, take litter home and do not damage the river bed or banks.
- Make sure you are not trespassing. Most non-navigable parts of the Kennet and Pang are privately owned and there is some good advice

in the 'is it legal' section of the OSS website.

- Be considerate of wildlife. Birds will be nesting in reeds for most of the summer and bankside vegetation protects the river from erosion as well as providing a home for water voles. Disturbing the gravel riverbed will also destroy the nests where trout lay their eggs in late winter. Later in the spring and summer, coarse fish will be spawning on the downstream sections of river around Newbury and Reading, which is why it's 'closed season' for fishing from 15 March – 15 June.

Charlotte Hitchmough

Water Matters

ARK's year in the (virtual) classroom

Adaptability has allowed us to continue to excite students up and down the catchment about their rivers, even when stuck at home. Who would have thought we'd be Zooming with teachers in their front rooms and into 70+ students' homes at a time? It was sometimes very noisy, but actually worked rather well.

During lockdown Anna's kitchen hosted trays of freshly caught invertebrates and fish, a stuffed otter, a big soft toy trout and real-eel Margaret. These props helped keep Zoom learning fun and memorable for the students.

Our Water Matters project gives students a lot of information, but its spread out over three sessions and with plenty of time for questions and interactions. The topics include river features and habitats, what lives in your river and what constitutes a 'healthy river'. We also discuss abstraction and pollution – classes including the staff are

often shocked to discover that on average we each use 143 litres of water a day.

Pollution comes in many forms, but making sure no fat, oil or grease goes down the sink and that wet wipes are not put down the loo are simple ways everyone, including students, can look after their river. For some of our Water Matters workshops we are joined by Deena from Thames Water. She has been donning a fatberg engineer outfit to highlight the enormous issues caused by blockages within sewers. When sewer lids 'pop' the contents flow straight into our chalk streams.

We want children to get enjoyment from their river and to recognise that their behaviour can contribute to preserving it. Now with schools open again and restrictions easing we are back in person for the third and final workshop. These 'What live in my river?' sessions are outdoors in the playground, where we can help children study the small but



Students at the Downsway Primary School in Reading learning to identify 'what lives in my river'. Credit: Anna Forbes ARK

vital invertebrates that are usually hidden away in the gravel beds of their river.

ARK Water Matters is a partnership project with Thames Water.

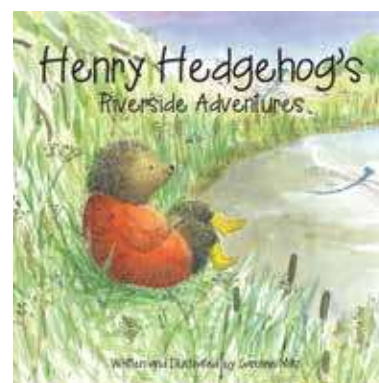
Anna Forbes

Henry Hedgehog

We are thrilled to share *Henry Hedgehog's Riverside Adventures* with you. This beautifully illustrated story book, written and illustrated by successful artist Caroline Mills would make a perfect gift for the children in your life.

Caroline began the book two years ago, and the lockdown of Spring 2020 gave her the opportunity to finish it. This wonderful book follows Henry in his adventures in a chalk stream and all the friends he meets along the way.

Caroline's grandchildren have enjoyed many ARK visits to their school, and she was thrilled to see her their love of the river inspired by ARK, so wanted to support us with the donations from the book.



You can order the book from our website (www.riverkennet.org) and all the profits will go to Action for the River Kennet.

Dredging

It does more harm than good

Over the last couple of years there have been three incidents of unconsented dredging in the Kennet catchment. In each case the person doing it believed that they were helping to reduce flood risk. In each case there was no reduction and in two cases the actions actually increased the risk of flooding. None of the work was consented (in other words it was illegal) and it all caused unnecessary damage to the chalk stream habitat.

Dredging removes the natural riverbed material, which destroys fish spawning habitat, leaves banks unstable and vulnerable to erosion, destroys water vole habitat and removes important bankside vegetation. It often makes flooding worse, particularly if the dredged material is piled up on the bank. If you want to find out more there is



Dredging on the River Kennet. Credit: Charlotte Hitchmough ARK

a literature review on the ARK website (www.riverkennet.org).

Taking action upstream to slow the flow of water, restoring channels to their natural state or creating safe spaces like water meadows for water to overflow into are all more effective ways to reduce flood risk. Rain gardens, sustainable drainage systems and wetlands can all help too.

If your home or community is at risk of flooding and you would like to explore what action you can take, please get in touch. To understand the official rules around dredging just type 'environment agency dredging guidance' into your web browser.

[Charlotte Hitchmough](#)

Upper Kennet Low Flows Study

At long last the evidence is on its way

In 2012 John Lawson wrote a report for ARK on the impacts of groundwater abstraction on flows in the Kennet, including a detailed look at Marlborough and the upper Kennet winterbourne. Since then the river has benefitted from a reduction in water abstraction at Axford and total cessation from the Og.

However, that still leaves the impacts of abstraction at Marlborough and upstream to look at in more detail. The ARK model results showed that abstraction caused the upper Kennet winterbourne to be dry for an

average of 14 days longer each year, and up to 56 longer in some years. What's more, if existing abstraction licenses were fully used those figures would rise respectively to 30 and 80 days. ARK has been asking for this to be properly investigated for nine years.

We are therefore pleased that a formal study into the impacts of abstraction in the upper river is at last being carried out by Jacobs, funded by Thames Water in partnership with the Environment Agency and ARK. Our project officer

Mia Ridler is collecting data on water levels to support the study, which will be completed in 2025.

Part of the work involves installing observation boreholes (OBH) to measure the fluctuations in groundwater level across the seasons. Several OBH have been drilled between Avebury and Marlborough, at each site a shallow OBH (about 5 m) and a deep OBH (between 25 m and 50 m).

[Charlotte Hitchmough](#)

Moth month

Moths are to the dark what butterflies are to the day

During July and August, ARK will be delighted to be working in partnership with the Rabley Drawing Centre to celebrate the lives of these beautiful creatures. The moth month will be centred around an exhibition of the artist Sarah Gillespie's meticulously detailed studies of moths. From her hand-engraved mezzotints the shimmering insects emerge humming from the darkness.

Rabley Drawing Centre is located on the Ainslie family farm in the parish of Mildenhall near Marlborough. The exhibition runs from 16 July to 14 August and entry is free, but pre-booking is essential.

Another highlight will be an illustrated talk by Peter Marren, the award-winning natural history author and longstanding friend of ARK. Peter is one of this country's



foremost experts on moths and all the proceeds from his Rabley lecture will be going towards ARK's conservation work. For Covid-related reasons we were still waiting for a finalised date when we went to press, so please visit our website and the Rabley website for updates. Tickets are £5 each and can be bought from the Drawing Centre.

And if you'd like the chance to buy one of Sarah Gillespie's beautiful moth prints, with all the proceeds being used to support ARK's conservation work at the Stonebridge Wild River Reserve, all you'll need to do is submit your sealed bid when you visit the exhibition.

To book and for more information about these events just go to www.rableygallery.com and click on the 'Visit Us' tab, send an email to info@rableygallery.com or ring Meryl Ainslie on 01672 511999.

Anna Forbes

*Sarah Gillespie's mezzotint engraving (18 x 13 cm) of a white ermine moth (Spilosoma lubricipedia)
Credit: © Sarah Gillespie.*

Old mills

Old mills are an important heritage feature of our rivers, a legacy from days when water was the source of power to drive corn and fulling mills. The Old Mill at Shalbourne is a fine example: first referred to in the Domesday book, it was derelict in 1581 but had been rebuilt by 1694 and remained in operation until 1929, when watercress beds were established in the mill area. Subsequently it operated as a bed & breakfast and today the building is being renovated as a family home.

Now that the mill workings are no longer functional, the mill is a

barrier to fish moving up the river. ARK, with some funding from the Environment Agency, has been working with the current owners to make the river passable to fish again. So far it seems to be working, with the first fish spotted upstream of the mill last month.

The Sparkling Streams project will be exploring how to bypass other barriers along the Shalbourne.

Charlotte Hitchmough

*ARK working with the Wild Trout Trust just downstream of Shalbourne Mill.
Credit: Anna Forbes ARK*



ARK People

Julie Parker



I joined ARK as Business Administrator in February, but having moved to Wiltshire when I was 11, I guess I can consider myself a local. I've always admired the work ARK do on the Kennet and have wonderful memories of rowing a small boat from River Park to the weir at Town Mill when I was a teenager.

James Laurence King



I'm the project officer for the new Sparkling Streams Project. I am a passionate conservationist and previously worked as a team leader for a company delivering habitat management in the commercial sector. During the year ahead we'll be delivering lots of habitat improvements, so see you out on the river!

Mia Ridler



I graduated from Cardiff University with a degree in Environmental Geography and my dissertation studied the environmental health of the River Kennet. I recently joined ARK as project officer for the Thames Catchment Community Eels Project I am now really looking forward to a summer of community eel events!

Rupert Kelton



I am the new part-time project manager for the Sparkling Streams Project having worked previously as Catchment Officer on the Test & Itchen with the Wessex Rivers Trust. Over the past month or two I have been getting to know the southern streams and their people and looking forward to an exciting year ahead.

Dates for Your Diary

Friday 23 to Sunday 25 July

ARK will have a stand at The Game Fair at Ragley Hall, Warwickshire.

August (date to be confirmed)

As part of the Rabley Drawing centre's moth month (see page 11), local naturalist and author Peter Marren will be giving a lecture on the 'Understated Beauty of Moths'. Tickets are £5 each and all the proceeds go to ARK's Stonebridge Wild River Reserve conservation work. For more information and to buy your tickets go to www.rableygalleries.com and follow the 'Visit Us' link.

Saturday 11 September

This is the date on which we shall be holding our 2021 AGM, though the venue and precise timings have still to be confirmed. For the time being, keep the date in your diary and your eyes out for further details on the ARK website.

Membership

And finally, a gentle reminder that membership renewals were due on 1 April – £20 for an individual or £30 for a family membership. For more details please contact julie@riverkennet.org



Learn how you can support ARK every time you shop online just visit:

www.easyfundraising.org.uk/arkactionfortheriverkennet

Websites Worth Visiting

Our sister charity and partner the Thames Rivers Trust has been



promoting an eco-system approach to river restoration on the Thames and its tributaries since 1986.

To find out more please visit: www.thamesriverstrust.org.uk



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Marlborough SN8 2BG

t: 01672 512 700 e: info@riverkennet.org
Registered charity number: 1120725



Members of ARK receive a copy of this newsletter either by mail or email.

If you'd like to find out more about ARK, volunteering opportunities or membership please visit our website at www.riverkennet.org or contact Anna Forbes: anna@riverkennet.org

We hope you have enjoyed this newsletter and if you have any comments or ideas for future issues, do please pass them on!

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