



3 June 2014

## Action for the River Kennet

### Otters return to Stonebridge Wild River Reserve

The latest Bat Walk held by ARK at Stonebridge Meadow revealed more than just the many different species of bat that inhabit this important wild river reserve. The 10 attendees of the Bat Walk and Talk, led by James Shipman of the Bat Conservation Trust were also treated to a rare view from the bridge of an otter swimming clearly toward the group before heading in to a sedge bed for cover.

The sighting of the otter is a positive indicator of the health of the river at Stonebridge. Just a few decades ago, the otter population in the UK was near extinction. Otter hunting was commonplace until the late 1970s although the widespread use of pesticides contaminating fish stocks was the major factor in their decline.

Local author and ecologist Peter Marren said 'How wonderful to know that otters have arrived at Stonebridge! In a troubled natural world the recovery of the otter has been one of the brightest beacons of hope. An otter is not only wonderful in itself but is an ecological compliment. The presence of otters is a kind of health check: clean water, abundant fish, sheltered, undisturbed banks, a stretch of river in fine working order.'

Charlotte Hitchmough, ARK's director said 'It will be interesting to see if the otter was just visiting or whether it is setting up home in the Wild River Reserve. A male otter can have a territory range of up to 40km, so he may be passing through, but it would be great if otters built a holt at Stonebridge'.

For more details contact Anna Forbes: 01672 511028

Notes to editors: about ARK's programme of events [www.riverkennet.org](http://www.riverkennet.org)

Stonebridge Wild River Reserve is on the east side of Marlborough by Stonebridge Lane footpath and Elcot Lane. It is open to the public all year round.

Image:



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|----------------------------|---|
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| <i>Hon. Treasurer</i>      | Martin Gibson, Durnsford Mill House, Mildenhall, Wiltshire SN8 2NG  |
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| <i>Ecological Advisers</i> | Peter Marren, John Hounslow   |
| <i>Committee</i>           | Richard Clarke, James Dallas, Sean Dempster, Don Harris, Kevin Light,<br>Dr Rodney Owen-Jones, Sir Nigel Thompson |
| <i>Director</i>            | Charlotte Hitchmough, PO Box 2919, Manton, Marlborough, Wiltshire SN8 4WE   |