

ARK People

Sam Marshall



The Kennet to me is the epitome of a chalkstream. I feel privileged to be one of the handful of keepers who get to nurture its banks every day. Taking over the Chilton Water at the end of 2015, I strive to improve the habitats for fish and invertebrates.

Glyn Horn



It's nearly two years since I donned waders and Anna, with great patience, showed me how to wire faggots into revetments. Now I am a river fly monitor and a water vole surveyor. My latest venture is going early in the morning to check mink rafts. My horizons have been really widened – retirement is great!

Adam Hilliard



I am the Environment Agency's Fisheries Officer for the Kennet. My job is very varied; one day I can be giving advice to a fishery owner and the next responding to a fish kill. My primary role is to improve the fishing through external funding or getting my own hands dirty. I love the Kennet and I feel very privileged to be given the opportunity to make a difference.



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

www.easyfundraising.org.uk/arkactionfortheriverkennet

Dates for Your Diary

Sunday 7 August, 2–5pm

Life of the River at Marlborough College Science Department.

Friday 19 August, 7pm

Drinks by the River at Howe Mill, Ramsbury. ARK members and guests only. £25 per ticket. Limited places, advanced booking essential, 01672 861 444.

Wednesday 17 August, 8.15pm

Moth Night at the Scrub Area, Stonebridge Meadow, Marlborough.

Saturday 27 August, 2pm (last starting time 3pm)

Summer River Walk with tea and home made cakes. Start at Elcot Mill, Marlborough walking to Axford. Return transport available throughout the afternoon.

Monday 19 September, time to be confirmed

Moth Night at the Scrub Area, Stonebridge Meadow, Marlborough.

For more details on all these events see our website or contact anna@riverkennet.org

Websites Worth Visiting



riverobstacles

River Obstacles

There are thousands of man made and natural obstacles in the rivers of the UK. Many of them perform important functions but they can restrict the movement of fish and damage river banks and beds. River Obstacles is a brand new mobile app that allows people to send in photos and details of obstacles that they see when they're out and about either on, in or by the UK's rivers. www.river-obstacles.org.uk



Action for the River Kennet

Upper Office, The Dutch Barn, Elm Tree Park, Manton, Marlborough SN8 1PS

t: 01672 861 444 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 email 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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Printed on 100% recycled paper



Action for the River Kennet

River talk

A PARTNERSHIP OF PEOPLE WHO CARE ABOUT THE KENNET

Save water to help the Kennet

That's the message that ARK is sending to local children and their families.

Save time and money with these top tips from Thames Water. And help the Kennet's flora and fauna to flourish as well with more water in the river!

Turn off the tap when brushing your teeth

– a running tap can use 6 litres of water per minute. By turning off the tap while brushing your teeth, a family of four could save up to £36 on metered water bills, and 17,520 litres of water per year.

Take shorter showers

– we recommend four minutes. An average shower uses 10 litres of water a minute.

Skip the car wash

– a dirty car shows you're doing your bit to save water and saves time too.

Fully load your washing machine

– a full load uses less water and energy than two half-loads.

Only flush the toilet if you need to

– on average, each flush uses 7 litres of water.

Make your garden water efficient

– less watering doesn't have to mean less gardening! Opt for plants that don't mind going without a drink for a while. Garden centres can recommend drought tolerant plants.

Fix leaking taps – a dripping tap can waste more than 60 litres of water per week, increase scale on the tap and add to your water bill.

Keep a jug of water in the fridge – planning ahead means there is no need to run the water until it gets cold.

Don't leave the tap running to clean dishes or vegetables – use a bowl of water instead, dirty veg cleaning water can water your plants too. A running tap uses 6 litres of water per minute.

Order a water butt – collect rainwater to use on your plants and lawn.

And finally, here is ARK's own special tip for helping the environment. Check your loo to see if water is leaking from the cistern into the bowl after the flush has stopped. Leaky loos are almost invisible and they waste up to 400 litres of water a day and can add £300 to your annual water bill for metered customers.

Thames Water are offering free leaky loo fixes in the Kennet Valley for a limited time. Call **0800 043 3277** to book.

Juliet Bonser

Unique treasure opened



In May ARK Chairman Geoffrey Findlay welcomed Claire Perry MP to declare the new integrated Wetland at Stonebridge Wild River Reserve open. Over fifty people joined us and Marlborough Town Council for drinks to celebrate this wonderful asset to the community and haven for wildlife. Claire described Stonebridge as a 'unique treasure'.

Anna Forbes

News from the Chairman

The Referendum vote to leave the EU has created uncertainty over the UK's future environment policy.

So we must recall how much the EU's Environmental Directives have helped to protect the UK's rivers and vital water supplies. Accordingly we devote this page to this one issue rather than our usual round-up.

“EU Directives have created the context for most of the UK's most valuable environmental protections.”

Tony Juniper
(Distinguished writer and sustainability adviser)

In the early 1970s, before the UK joined, the EU started to establish a series of Directives on water. A Directive is a legal act that requires member states to achieve a particular result without dictating how it is to be delivered. The Directives that most concern us in ARK are 'The Urban Waste Water Directive'; 'The Drinking Water Directive'; 'The Water Framework Directive'; and 'The Habitats Directive'. The first two have led to substantial improvements in the quality of water in the River Kennet. The latter two are vital to our work in restoring river habitats and seeking reductions in abstraction.

As well as enshrining the public benefit of healthy rivers in UK law, the Water Framework Directive gives interested NGOs such as ARK the right to challenge government for not taking these requirements seriously enough in their River Basin Management Plans. This has already resulted in several rounds of government funding for third sector organisations, mainly Rivers Trusts and Wildlife Trusts, to deliver river-related improvements in a highly cost efficient way. It has also led to ARK being invited by the Environment Agency to play the lead role in the Kennet Catchment Partnership (www.kennetcatchment.org).

One early response to these EU Directives was the privatisation in 1989 of the former water authorities. Another has been the expenditure of £100bn by the water industry on improvements to wastewater disposal and the quality and reliability of water supplies – all funded through customer water bills rather than the taxman.

Since their establishment, the monopolistic activities of the water companies have been heavily regulated. Environmental protection was initially the responsibility of the National Rivers Authority, formed out of the previous regional water authorities, but in 1994 the NRA was merged with the waste management



and pollution control authorities to form the Environment Agency. In parallel, the Drinking Water Inspectorate was formed to regulate water quality, while OFWAT was created to regulate the commercial aspects of the water industry. The combined effect of all these measures has been a dramatic improvement in rivers, coastal waters and water supply over the last three decades.

What next?

The EU Directives have until now been vital to pressure groups such as ARK in challenging this country's policies and achieving local improvements. At the time of writing (late July) it is too early to predict how far future environmental policy under a new Government will build on this EU model in the wake of Brexit. What is certain is that all those interested in the environment – in particular NGOs such as ARK and the Rivers Trust – must urge politicians to ensure that the best features of EU policy, especially the key long term Directives, are reflected in future national UK legislation. ARK intends to play its part.

Meanwhile as ever I extend ARK's sincere thanks to Charlotte and her team, and our members, volunteers, partners and supporters for their continued support.

Geoffrey Findlay

Dangerous insecticide Chlorpyrifos banned

From 1 April 2016 the only permitted use of the organophosphate insecticide Chlorpyrifos will be 'protected brassica seedling drench treatment applied via automated gantry sprayer'.

NEVER POUR PESTICIDES DOWN DRAINS



All other uses are now revoked in the UK. Chlorpyrifos has been widely used as an insecticide by lawn care specialists, groundsmen, pasture managers, arable farmers and fruit farmers, although it was readily accessible to anyone to buy online. It had several trade names including Dursban and Lorsban.

Chlorpyrifos is the pesticide that polluted the upper Kennet in 2013, killing invertebrates for a 15km stretch of the river. The pollution was discovered and tracked by ARK's team of volunteer riverfly monitors, who have also been monitoring the river's recovery.

The Chlorpyrifos ban is good news for the environment and for human health. Anyone who still has products containing Chlorpyrifos should dispose of them safely via their local household waste recycling centre. To find your nearest safe place to dispose of garden chemical see: <http://gardenchemicaldisposal.co.uk/>

Charlotte Hitchmough

Tesco Bags of Help

Earlier this year, ARK was the most popular choice with Tesco shoppers in this area under the new Tesco Bags of Help scheme.

Our Ramsbury Community River and Wildlife Project has been awarded £12,000 of funding. The money is available thanks to the new 5p charge on carrier bags.



The ARK-led project is collaborating with Ramsbury Parish Council, Ramsbury Recreation Ground, Ramsbury Meadow (owned by Wiltshire Wildlife Trust) and Ramsbury Scouts. This money will enable important river conservation and restoration work to be carried out at the Ramsbury Triangle where the eroding public footpath will also be improved. The recreation ground will be supplied

with native Yew tree hedging to enhance this area both visually and for biodiversity. Two new recycled-plastic dipping platforms, one for the pond and another for the river, along with new steps will be installed at the Ramsbury Meadow. The Scouts will also have a safe and

permanent new fire pit within their grounds.

All of these improvements will have aspects of community involvement and practical volunteering. Contact anna@riverkennet if you'd like to be part of this project.

Anna Forbes

New Zealand Pigmy weed (*Crassula helmsii*) found in Wilton Water

Classified as an invasive species New Zealand Pigmy weed is very difficult to get rid of once it has a foothold.

A tiny fragment (10mm) can easily be transported on a boot or by wildlife and that's enough to re-establish it.

The plant grows around damp margins. It first appears as small light green tussocks that spread rapidly to create dense mats of vegetation that out-compete all other aquatic vegetation. Chemicals aren't effective



and mechanical removal has the potential to spread the stems to other bodies of water. The best option is containment, and this is how it's being dealt with in Wilton Water. For more information visit www.nonnativespecies.org

Linda Nemeth

The Lambourn: a case for treatment?

A new report shines disturbing light on the health of this nationally important chalk stream.

The River Lambourn is one of the largest tributaries of the River Kennet. It rises near the village of Lambourn and flows south-south-east for around 30km through the Kennet Valley to its confluence with the Kennet in Newbury.

A report released by Salmon & Trout Conservation revealed that the River Lambourn ranked a lowly 10th out of twelve English rivers studied in terms of ecological health. The study, described as a Riverfly Census, showed worryingly low riverfly richness and abundance in the Lambourn despite its status of one of England's most highly protected chalkstreams.



The work complements the regular surveys our riverfly volunteers have been doing but takes the study of riverfly to a more detailed level.

The Riverfly Census report came out just as the first draft of Natural England's pollution risk assessment for the Lambourn Catchment was released for consultation. The preliminary findings confirm that sediment and phosphate are the main causes of river pollution, coming from farming and treated sewage. There is growing evidence to suggest that small domestic discharges, in practice mainly from septic tank systems, may pose a significant environmental risk to freshwater habitats in certain situations and under particular conditions. The Natural England study showed that in the Lambourn catchment almost 500 of a total of

9,500 properties were at moderate or high risk of causing phosphate pollution, with a further 2000 at low risk.

Householders can play their own part by choosing phosphate-free products. This is particularly important for those on septic tanks or small domestic sewage treatment units. Thanks to our friends at Ecover we have another three packs of Ecover products to give away this summer. Just email hello@riverkennet.org with the title 'no phosphate' for your chance to win. The closing date is 30th September.

It's not all doom and gloom, however. Catchment Sensitive Farming has a big role to help improve the river, and ARK's farm advisor Tim Clarke and Natural England's Karen Davies are working with farmers in the

catchment to help them to farm in the most river friendly ways. There is also plenty of positive work happening on the Lambourn itself, particularly in terms of habitat restoration, with major projects completed and more planned by the Environment Agency. As we know from our experience on the Kennet, rivers can recover if we treat them well.

These new reports provide us with a much clearer understanding of what the problems are and about the kinds of direct action that now need to be taken by statutory bodies, businesses and communities to make sure that our chalkstreams are in the best possible health.

Charlotte Hitchmough

Lending our expertise and knowledge



ARK is working in partnership with Newbury-based charity The RENEWAL Project to restore a 2.4km (1.5 mile) stretch of the River Lambourn.

Over twelve months we are lending our expertise, knowledge and experience of river restoration techniques, along with our equipment and volunteers to work alongside the RENEWAL staff and volunteers on a monthly basis. Both charities with their volunteers are playing a key role in maintaining and improving the riverbank along a public reach of the river by restoring revetment work installed by the Environment Agency about six years ago. The revetment helps improve the flow, which in turn means the water is properly oxygenated – an essential requirement for many chalk-stream indicator species. The riverbed gravels are kept clean and fish are able to successfully spawn.

Coppicing sections of riverbank to create a balance of light and shade and planting up the brushwood mattresses with native flora helps establish a more natural and sinuous riverbank. Silt gets trapped

in the revetments so you not only have a cleaner river but a good marginal habitat of established plants, including flag iris and marsh marigold. Lampreys will live within the silt and small fish including young trout hide amongst the stems of the marginal plants that provide a safe haven from larger predators.

Creating better habitats for chalk stream wildlife is hugely rewarding and fun; you meet new people and learn new skills. We are also looking for local people around the Newbury area who would like to help with water vole surveying and riverfly monitoring. Training workshop days are running in August and September. To find out more, to book a training place or become a Lambourn volunteer contact lauren.king@growing2gether.org

Anna Forbes



Eels on the Lambourn!

Three schools in Newbury and Thatcham have been taking part in our Eels in Schools Project.

In April, Spurcroft, Whitelands Park and Shaw-cum-Donnington Primary Schools each received a batch of around 100 eels caught by elvermen in the Severn and kindly donated by UK Glass Eels. Since then students have learned about the amazing lifecycle of the European Eel which begins in the Sargasso Sea.

In a two-year journey the tiny and translucent leptocephalus (larva) is transported 7000km on Atlantic Ocean currents to European coastlines. Bio-chemical changes enable the two-year-old glass eel to transition from salt to fresh water then darken and develop adaptations as an elver. It then lives for up to 15 years in our rivers until it matures as a silver eel, when it then returns to the Sargasso to spawn and die.

For over two months this captivating story has inspired nearly 400 children to visit and value the Kennet or Lambourn and their wildlife and environment. Each school organised a release event, including one at this site on the River Lambourn where dozens of young elvers have enriched the river's eco-system.

Juliet Bonser

Restoring Foudry Brook to better health

ARK is leading a new programme of work to enhance this urban tributary of the River Kennet.

Foudry Brook rises on heathland east of Tadley and flows through the villages of Stratfield and Wokefield before joining the River Kennet below Fobney. On the outskirts of Reading it flows through the Green Park industrial estate and is the backdrop to offices and conference centres. Foudry Brook is joined by its own tributary, the West End Brook, just upstream from Stratfield Mortimer.

Its fish populations have been dramatically reduced by two pollution incidents at Silchester Sewage Treatment Works in 2010 and 2013, both causing extensive fish kills.

With the Kennet Catchment Partnership, ARK embarked on two projects to help the fish population recover by removing barriers to their movement up and down the river, and two projects to improve water quality.

Charlotte Hitchmough

Keeping the river clean for wildlife

Keeping the river clean usually means identifying a source of pollution and then looking for pathways into the river.

At West End Brook just upstream from Stratfield Mortimer, a bridleway leading from Simms Farm down to the river was providing such an effective pathway that it looked like a river itself when it rained. This was a problem not only for the users of the bridleway but it also meant that the river was receiving dirty water from the stables as well as sediment from the eroding track.

The solution was to divert water off the bridleway at regular intervals into an area of natural wetland that will filter out sediment and nutrient allowing clean water to seep gently into the ground and the river.

In urban areas, the most direct pathways for pollution to reach the river are road drains. Not everyone is aware that road drains are designed just to manage rain water. The downstream section of Foudry Brook is surrounded by houses and businesses and is very urban in



character. To help keep water clean in this area we have begun to mark drains with our 'Yellow Fish' logo to alert people that drains are for rainwater only.

Our grateful thanks to Englefield Estate, particularly Richard Edwards who provided excellent support through both of these projects, and to the Thames Water volunteers who will be helping to mark drains.

Charlotte Hitchmough

Opening the river for fish to move freely again

Adam Hilliard, Environment Agency Fisheries Officer for the Kennet and Pang, identified two structures that were preventing fish from moving freely along the river. The first, by the church at Stratfield Mortimer, was a weir that was no longer required. Rather than removing the structure Windrush AEC Ltd designed a solution that created a series of pools and riffles, gradually raising the water level and removing the leap that fish had to make.

The second barrier was created by a pipe that had been sunk into the river to allow farm vehicles to drive over it. This piped culvert had been set slightly too high to allow fish to swim through it when river levels were low. We adopted the same technique of building a series of stepped pools to solve this problem.

Charlotte Hitchmough

What on earth are SuDS?

Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (or SuDS) are fantastic, but have a terrible and uninspiring name.



Once built, they are rain gardens, flowerbeds, wetlands, ponds, green roofs, permeable paving or pocket parks and they add green beauty whilst providing incredible benefits. They prevent water pollution, slow down surface water run-off and reduce the risk of flooding. They also recharge groundwater to help prevent drought; provide habitats for wildlife, and create green spaces for people.

Most importantly, good SuDS are not a water-filled, fenced-off hole in the ground in the corner of a new housing development. When designed imaginatively they make water a feature and an asset instead of a threat.

Philadelphia is leading the way with their 'Green City, Clean Waters' programme, but there are plenty of excellent UK examples. One of my favourites is the Springhill Cohousing Project in Stroud Gloucestershire (pictured above), where planted rills, dramatic cascades, and a communal pond all celebrate the flow of rainwater through the site. Another is the Pymmes Brook catchment in London, which includes 10 schools that have been retrofitted with SuDS. These have reduced localised flooding,

kept urban runoff out of the Pymmes Brook and created amazing new spaces in playgrounds.

In a natural system, rainwater doesn't travel very far. It soaks into the soil and is taken up by plants and recharges aquifers. This natural infiltration prevents water from transporting contaminants, diminishes flash-flood risk in rivers and reduces the threat of overloading combined sewer networks.

Our wetland at Stonebridge Meadow is an example of SuDS – it was built to clean road runoff before it reaches the river – but SuDS can be applied at any scale from a single planter to deal with runoff from a roof, to a whole system of streams and wetlands for a housing estate.

If you'd like to find out more about good SuDS CIRIA (www.ciria.org) has produced an excellent free manual which you can download and the landscape architects Robert Bray Associates have details of innovative schemes on their website www.robertbrayassociates.co.uk

Charlotte Hitchmough



Could you be a water quality tester?

We are looking for volunteers to test water quality in the river near where they live four times every year.

We are particularly interested in finding people to test sites around Reading, Newbury and Thatcham, as well as any of the Kennet tributaries.

Testing is very simple and takes only around 15 minutes to do. Before you start there is a short online training video to complete and then you will be able to upload your data either via a smartphone or a computer (or if you prefer you can just send it by email or post). The tests show Nitrate, Phosphate and turbidity levels.

The information you collect will be used on two levels. At the global scale it will become part of the international Freshwater Watch project, and at a local level ARK will use the information to better understand the health of the river and to target work to improve water quality.

If you would like to take part please email charlotte@riverkennet.org

Charlotte Hitchmough