

WILD TROUT TRUST  
AUTUMN 2015

# News

## ANNUAL DRAW 2015

Support WTT by buying a book of raffle tickets (just £5!) to win the fantastic prizes below. Purchase using the enclosed order form, from the shop on our website, or by phoning the WTT on 023 9257 0985.

**Orders must be received by Monday 7 December.**

Draw to take place at the Thomas Lord pub, West Meon, Hants at 7pm on Tuesday 8 December.

### FIRST PRIZE

Kindly donated by Sage, worth £669. A Sage One 9ft 6in, 4-piece, 4-weight Fly Rod.

### SECOND PRIZE

Kindly donated by The Peacock at Rowsley & Haddon Fisheries, worth £400. One night's accommodation in a large double/twin room for 2 with 3-course dinner and buffet breakfast, plus 2 low-season tickets to fish the Derbyshire Wye.

### THIRD PRIZE

Kindly donated by Orvis, worth £310. A day's trout fishing on Orvis's Itchen beat at Abbots Worthy for 2 rods in August or September 2016.

### FOURTH PRIZE

Kindly donated by Snowbee, worth £174. Snowbee Spectre 3-4 weight Fly Reel and an XS-Plus Spectre 4-weight fly line.

### FIFTH PRIZE

Kindly donated by Phoenix Lines, worth £80. 2 Phoenix Tenkara Lines, 2 Phoenix Braided Leaders and 4 Phoenix Furled Leaders.



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## WILD TROUT TRUST CONSERVATION AWARDS 2015, SUPPORTED BY THAMES WATER



Over 100 guests attended a Wild Trout Trust evening at the Savile Club in Mayfair to present the 2015 awards for the best river habitat conservation projects. The evening was introduced by WTT Director, Shaun Leonard, with the awards presented by Richard Aylard of Thames Water, which generously sponsors the Conservation Awards – but the process begins long before the awards night. Here, WTT's Trout in the Town Programme Manager, Paul Gaskell, wears his judge's hat to tell us something of this year's entries.

The WTT Conservation Awards recognise and encourage excellence in the management and conservation of wild trout habitat, celebrating the efforts, skills and ingenuity of projects carried out both by professionals and by grass roots voluntary organisations. It has been a privilege to work alongside Dr Jenny Mant for the past four years to investigate and judge the tremendous efforts of applicants.

A dozen great projects competed for prizes this year and I want to give just a small flavour of each of them – finishing up with the winners. Each and every project deserves a huge amount of recognition and the margins between runners-up and award winners is so small that it is really important to promote all of the projects that get through to be interviewed.

Here are the projects (and the category in which they were judged); each accompanied by necessarily scant descriptions of their scope.



Jeremy Paxman and Matt Wright.

## Contribution to Wild Trout Conservation

### Cumbrian Derwent, River Corridor Group

Lead applicant Jack Abernathy explains that "The project was originally set up in 2005 with the aim of delivering, through partnership, works to improve the river environment for the purposes of enhancing the conservation status of the SAC (Special Area of Conservation). Since this time the project has evolved to include a number of partners all working together to secure funding, deliver practical works and engage key stakeholders in the good work we do. The key objectives include works to improve riparian habitat through stock exclusion and riparian

planting, to improve in-river habitat for fish species through the introduction of large woody debris, spawning gravels and through assisted natural recovery projects." This group of stakeholders contribute significant financial support to ensuring that their goals are met – which, in addition to tackling environmental pressures, has seen a dramatic shift towards catch-and-release fishing away from a long-standing adherence to catch-and-kill.

### Leven, Hutton Rudby Fly Fishing Club

The application made under lead contact John Gifford explains that a logbook scheme was ratified by the club committee that allowed the impact and value for money of their fish stocking programme to be assessed. Coupled with innovative and low-cost, self-made fish passage easements and in-channel

habitat improvement, the logbook results led to the club switching to a wild, catch and release trout fishery that enjoys fantastic catches of wild fish. A tremendous case study and example for fishing clubs everywhere.

### Thornton Beck, Pickering Fisheries Association

Previous winners of a WTT Conservation Award, the Association continues to campaign for improved land-use, landowner engagement and, under this year's lead applicant Martin Smith and team, to expand in-channel habitat works to an area of Thornton Beck. The Beck endures a number of surrounding land-use pressures that include forestry and livestock production. Balancing the priorities of multiple interests whilst promoting and protecting self-sustaining wild brown trout populations (and making deliberate habitat provision for wider biodiversity) is a terrific undertaking and WTT looks forward to supporting the club in their current and future efforts.

## Medium Sized Projects

### Wellow and Cam, Bristol Avon Rivers Trust

Bristol Avon Rivers Trust (lead applicant Ian Mock) has worked to bring anonymous sections of river back to the attention of local community members. Along with improved access and interpretive materials, in-channel habitat improvements and greatly diversified tree canopy structure have brought direct benefits to the ecology and wild fish populations of these rivers. The indirect benefits by significantly increasing the awareness and engagement of local community members will help to generate ongoing benefits for these rivers.

### Upper Wandle (Carshalton), South East Rivers Trust

It is difficult to over-use superlatives to describe the transformation of this section of urban chalkstream in the London Borough of Sutton. A dedicated team of people headed by lead applicant Dr Bella Davies have overcome myriad practical, institutional and political

challenges to win huge improvements in geomorphology, connectivity, water-quality, riparian flora and in-channel habitat structure. A flagship project that sits in an even larger scheme (and narrowly edged out from the award by a single point).

### Welland, River Welland Rivers Trust

Lead applicant Lisa Smallwood explained that the river through Market Harborough suffered severe impacts to its modified physical form, poor ecology, poor connectivity to the floodplain and the local perception of a steady decline in environmental quality over the past few decades. The channel had been severely over-widened, dredged and straightened. Several weirs had been installed to maintain water in the channel in summer months. Working under significant constraints due to perceived flood risk, the Trust was able to install over 80 marginal berms, remove barriers and tackle choking vegetation whilst improving the energy and diversity of flows: an excellent achievement.

## Large Sized Projects

### Eden, Derwent and Kent – Cumbria River Restoration Strategy, Natural England and Environment Agency Partnership

An epic-scale project with lead applicant Rebecca Gray explaining that the Cumbria River Restoration Strategy (RRS) is a partnership project between Natural England, the Environment Agency and three Rivers Trusts (Eden, West Cumbria and South Cumbria). This partnership seeks to implement river restoration across three river catchments. The works included extensive interventions to land-use, uncovering and returning historically-diverted rivers into their paleo-channels and direct structural habitat improvements. It is impossible to capture the scale of this project in just a few sentences where objectives included (but were by no means limited to) reduction in sediment inputs, increased biodiversity, improved flood-water management, improved salmonid

fish populations and more.

### Tarrant, Environment Agency and River Tarrant Partnership

Lead applicants Sarah Guest and Roger Genge drove a project on the 15km long river – with significant challenges posed by periodic drying out of the channel (and the upper reaches being a winterbourne). In 2015, some 2,000+ fish were rescued, about half each from the upper and lower drying sections. Without this effort, these fish would have died or been predated on, as the pools in which they get stranded eventually dry out completely. The aims of the project have been to improve upstream and downstream migration by improving sinuosity between pools, reducing barriers to migration and extending the range of migration. Great improvements have been made in the face of substantial constraints due to flood risk and land-use imperatives.

### South West Catchment Restoration Fund, Westcountry Rivers Trust

In 2012 the Westcountry Rivers Trust (WRT) through lead applicant Layla Ousley secured CRF funding to deliver over £4 million of river restoration and catchment management work. This was executed over three years on river catchments across the South West under the following 5 projects: The Dart and Teign River Improvement Project (DTRIP), The South Cornwall Rivers Improvement Project (SCRIP), The South Hams River Improvement Project (SHRIMP), The Taw River Improvement Project (TRIP) and The Axe and Exe River Improvement Project (AERIP). All river improvement projects were specifically developed using a rigorous evidence-led, partnership approach to mitigate the pressure acting on these rivers and improve the health of these precious and vital river ecosystems. Yet again, the scale and ambition of the works completed during this project are not possible to convey in just a few words.

## Contribution to Wild Trout Conservation

Lough Derg Wild Brown Trout Conservation, Co. Donegal, Ireland.  
Pettigo & District Angling Association, in Partnership with the Loughs Agency.

Declining wild trout populations, including a rare and genetically distinct outlet spawning trout, prompted the local angling association to take action. Working with the Loughs Agency, Belfast University and the Wild Trout Trust, Pettigo & District Angling Association combined genetics, citizen science and hands-on habitat improvement to stop the decline. This project is a superb example of how an angling club can involve a wide range of other groups and organisations in a long-term and wide-ranging conservation project.



*Davy Stinson and Michael Stinson of Pettigo & District AA (centre and front right) receive their trophy from Richard Aylard of Thames Water (left) and WTT's Shaun Leonard (back right).*

## Medium Sized Project

River Lark at West Stowe Country Park, Suffolk.  
Bury St Edmunds Trout Club (BTC).

This project is a story of sheer dogged determination, with Glenn Smithson, Ian Hawkins and their supporters battling against widely-held views that what they were attempting (and have now achieved) was impossible. Five years after deciding that the wild trout in the River Lark deserved better habitat, the project was finally delivered by the late Dr Nigel Holmes in association with the BTC. The result is the transformation of a straight, dredged channel into a sinuous, lively river bustling with wildlife. As well as promoting a wild and self-sustaining population of wild brown trout, the project benefits all wildlife including damselflies, ground nesting birds, owls and water voles.



*An improved Lough Derg feeder stream.*



*Ian Hawkins and Glenn Smithson receiving their trophy for the Medium Sized project.*



*The River Lark in Suffolk, looking like a functioning chalkstream!*

## Large Sized Project

Upper River Aire, North Yorkshire, Malham to Keighley. The Environment Agency (EA) in Partnership with the Yorkshire Farming and Wildlife Partnership and the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust.

Although flowing through the beautiful landscape of the Yorkshire Dales National Park, the Upper River Aire is a troubled river, severely impacted by diffuse pollution from agriculture. Enthusiastic local Environment Agency staff established a partnership to tackle the issues with landowners and farmers. Starting with demonstration plots to prove the benefits, they have worked with 15 landowners to carry out work such as fencing buffer strips, visited over 50 farms to advise on nutrient management and planted 27 hectares of woodland. These actions will not only reduce pollution but will also help slow the flow of flood water and improve the quality of habitat for wildlife. Congratulations to Pete Turner and the EA team and the partners working on this flagship project.



*Pete Evans of the Environment Agency (centre) receives the trophy for the Large Sized project.*



*Prize winning riparian improvements on the Upper Aire in Yorkshire.*

## THE WILD TROUT HERO 2015

Mike Duddy

**T**his year, at the WTT Conservation Awards, supported by Thames Water, we presented the second Wild Trout Hero award to a person who, in our view, has pushed those extra yards to make life better for wild trout; WTT's 2015 Wild Trout Hero is Mike Duddy.

Mike Duddy is an indefatigable champion for wild trout in the north west of England, especially his native Irwell, Irk and beyond in the Mersey basin. He spearheads the Salford Friendly Anglers Society, reputedly the country's oldest (and a free-to-join) fishing club that seeks to have people campaigning and caring for (and enjoying fishing in) the Irwell.

Mike has been a great friend to WTT and established a strong partnership with our Trout in the Town (TinT) project, led by Paul Gaskell, helping us organise a highly successful gathering of



the TinT clans on the banks for the Irwell in 2013.

As Mike says "All we want is a river as good as everybody else's. We don't want anything better." He's doing his

very best to make that happen in and around Greater Manchester and WTT is delighted to recognise his achievements as our 2015 Wild Trout Hero.

### NOTICES

## 13-14 FEBRUARY BFFI

**P**lease come to the British Fly Fair and visit our stand.

Staffordshire County Showground.  
[www.bffi.co.uk](http://www.bffi.co.uk) or tel. 01782 388382.

## 4-13 MARCH ANNUAL AUCTION

**J**ust in time to buy some fishing at the start of the new trout season!

We'll run the auction again on eBay and by post and we hope to have over 200 lots, mainly fishing but also books, art, tackle and flies and some more unusual lots (for example, learning how to brew beer). If you are planning a fishing holiday, watch out for the overseas fishing section in the catalogue for some excellent offers. We will be sending out

the printed catalogue to members in early February and the illustrated version will be available to download as a PDF file or view online on the website around the same time. We had over 250 lots in 2015, so the catalogue is getting rather large! This year, we will divide the England fishing section into regions to make it easier to find the lots you might bid for near to home and away. The electronic version is easy to search and we have a map of fishing lots on the website so you will be able to zoom in to see what is available in a particular area. If you are new to eBay, please contact us for help and advice, or put in a bid by post to Christina in the WTT office and she will bid on your behalf.

The auction is an increasingly vital source of funding for us. We raised over £70,000 in the auction in 2015, and that money helps us to deliver more practical advice and in river-habitat projects. It enables us to buy basic tools and equipment like chainsaws and waders for our Conservation Officers to do their work in the river; provides us with match-funding to help release more project money from other sources such as char-

itable trusts and enables us to keep the team up to date with latest research, and help disseminate this information via the website. These purchases and activities would be hard to fund in any other way.

If you or your club or syndicate would like to offer a lot for the auction, please contact Denise Ashton: 07802 454157 / [dashton@wildtrout.org](mailto:dashton@wildtrout.org).

## 10-12 JUNE ANNUAL GET- TOGETHER

**F**ollowing on from truly memorable WTT Get Togethers in recent years, we are delighted to announce that our 2016 event will be based at Wiltshire Wildlife Trust's Langford Reserve on the River Wylye near Salisbury.

We hope to run an Anglers Riverfly Monitoring Initiative training day in association with the Riverfly Partnership on Friday, then a day of top quality talks and

a river walk on Saturday and a chance to sample some excellent chalkstream trout fishing on Sunday. Keep an eye on the WTT website and the next Newsletter for details in the New Year.

## LEAVE A GIFT IN YOUR WILL TO WTT

**F**or many anglers, fishing for wild trout on natural rivers and lakes has given us some of our most rewarding and memorable experiences.

Joining the Wild Trout Trust and perhaps starting some of our own habitat improvements are just two ways we can put something back into a sport that has given us so much pleasure, and ensure that the experience will still be there for our children and grandchildren to enjoy. Other valuable ways include making a donation to the Trust, or by leaving a gift in your will.

Finding the funds to carry on our work is a constant challenge, and we do live 'hand-to-mouth'. Any gifts we receive help enormously to allow us to bridge those periods when, inevitably, other funding is hard to find. Your gift can be designated for a particular purpose, river or catchment if you wish, or can support our day-to-day advisory work and practical projects. Advice on how to make a gift in your will is available on the website under 'Support Us', or contact Denise Ashton on 07802 454157 / [dashton@wildtrout.org](mailto:dashton@wildtrout.org).

## FISHING CLUB INFORMATION ON WTT WEBSITE

**W**e are often contacted by trout fishermen requesting information about clubs they might be able to join, and the WTT team answer based on their local knowledge on an ad hoc basis.

Our website receives over 10,000 visits a month and one of the popular pages is about wild trout fishing. We are

planning to enhance the content of this page by adding a list of clubs and syndicates that are looking for members, or willing to add members to their waiting list. It will be a PDF document that can be downloaded from our website and will hold some basic information on club name, location, website, type of fishing and a contact details. Anglers can then contact the club directly if they are interested in learning more.

If clubs are willing to offer guest tickets for prospective members, we will include that too. We will review the list every January.

We can't guarantee that all the people that get in touch will be WTT members, nor will we get involved in 'vetting' people in any way, but we hope that the connection with the WTT will help link up like-minded anglers and wild trout fishing.

If your club or syndicate would like to be included in the list, please get in touch with Denise Ashton on [dashton@wildtrout.org](mailto:dashton@wildtrout.org).

## DONATION OF KIT

**W**T T does a huge amount of work with volunteers in and around our rivers.

We are blessed by donations of money and sometimes kit to support that work and are delighted to report that Richard Hardy, a WTT Life Member, has donated a Stihl brushcutter and Hayter wheeled strimmer which we'll use carefully when the right opportunity arises. Many thanks, Richard.

### RIVER USK, DAN-Y-PARC, CRICKHOWELL

*A few 2016 season rods available.  
Excellent fly fishing for wild brown trout and salmon. Both banks are 1.5 miles long. Easy access and wading.  
For details please email Robert Melvin: [rm.a@btinternet.com](mailto:rm.a@btinternet.com).*

## IN MEMORY OF DAVE JENKINS

**T**he fisheries world mourns the loss of Dave Jenkins who died in August 2015 after a short illness.

In his early career days, Dave was Senior Fisheries Officer based at Oxford, appointed by Thames Water Authority at the time of the making of the 1975 Salmon & Freshwater Fisheries Act that mandated the Authority to maintain, improve and develop freshwater and migratory fisheries. He was almost the only one of the fisheries personnel with Thames Water who wasn't an angler but he used his education – having a degree in applied zoology – and his strong interest and knowledge in the natural world and was one of those who clearly understood that thriving fisheries need a good quality environment. Dave pioneered the holistic approach to fisheries management at a time when it was all too easy to rely on restocking to solve problems. His skills lay in breaking down barriers – people, ideas, entrenched views – and moving forward. He saw the bigger picture but was not uncaring of the smaller view – detail mattered.

One of Dave's legacies lies in the generation of young fishery professionals that he inspired, as a friend, mentor and moral touchstone: Greg Armstrong, Alan Butterworth, Pete Gough, Vaughan Lewis, Martin Moore, John Sutton, WTT's Andy Thomas and Godfrey Williams were all among Dave's earliest work colleagues.

In 1988, Dave moved back to his native Wales to take up the post of Director of Coed Cymru, championing sustainable forestry.

Dave's enjoyment came from being in the countryside and engaging with other country folk. He spent much of his spare time out with his dogs and ferrets and, during his years at Oxford, was also showing his interest in wood, producing some quality individual pieces of furniture and very fine relief carvings of birds and animals.

So long, Dave – even the mightiest of oaks have to fall.

## SOUTH WEST – MIKE BLACKMORE

### A Simply Staggering Summer of Work

The summer has been exceptionally busy in the South West: this season, I've worked in 7 different rivers on 8 different projects with 5 different project partners. On top of that have been a handful of one-day practical visits (PVs) and a few days over in the South East delivering River Habitat Workshop days on tributaries of the River Colne in Hertfordshire. As I type this, my poor chainsaw is in for multiple repairs and a service to recover from the beating it's received over the past month in particular (six of these projects have been undertaken in October). The van also needs a service and all my waders need patching!

The season kicked off with a couple of PVs followed by a fish passage and spawning enhancement project on the River Crane at Edmondsham in Dorset. Here, a small weir holding up a head of water to supply fishing lakes was a barrier, limiting the availability of spawning habitat to the Crane's annual run of sea trout. In addition, some of the existing spawning sites were in a state of deterioration, putting the population at risk of decline. The initial plan was to ease passage over the weir with timber baffles affixed to the wing-walls of the existing weir. However, fate would have it that the weir became breached during winter flows, giving rise to the opportunity to create a more natural and simple alternative. Logs were cut from nearby alders and used to formalise the breach and create a naturalistic pool and traverse-style fish pass. This low-cost solution was created in just two days with volunteers providing the elbow grease.

The next project was the first of four on the Hampshire Avon and its tributaries and the first of three providing graft and technical support to Martijn Antheunisse's river and wetland restoration team at Wiltshire Wildlife Trust (WWT). Situated on the upstream outskirts of Salisbury, the project at Butt's Sports field was relatively limited in terms of what Flood Defence Consent would allow. However, Martijn



*The completed pass.*



*Volunteers on the Hants Avon at Salisbury.*

has become more bold and ambitious with every restoration project and was determined to take every opportunity to introduce woody habitat features into the channel. An army of volunteers turned up to help improve the river and patch up eroded 'dog-slides' along the bank. The project was fully supported by Salisbury & District Angling Club who should start to see the benefits of the work by this time next year.

Other projects within the Hants Avon catchment have included three on

the River Nadder. The first was a habitat improvement project with WWT at Chicksgrove near Tisbury which included felling and hinging some trees down near-vertical banks into the previously dredged, over-shaded and overly-uniform channel. The new features have allowed more light into the channel, diversified flows and reactivated channel morphology.

The next on the Nadder was with Jacob Dew of Wessex Chalkstream and Rivers Trust (WCSRT) downstream at



*A restored spawning riffle on the Nadder at Burcombe.*

Burcombe, near Barford St Martin. The week consisted of hinging bankside trees to create an abundance of marginal coarse woody habitat alongside potentially productive spawning riffles. Followed up with a good gravel jetting, the result is an absolute textbook example of prime salmonid spawning and nursery habitat. This is part of a wider project across a number of other sites in the wider Avon catchment and it's great to see WCSRT delivering so much in-channel work.

The final Nadder project was also, in part, a project on the River Wylfe. Back helping WWT with an ambitious 1700m re-wilding project of the confluence of the Wylfe and Nadder at Quidhampton near Wilton. This has been one of the boldest projects I've worked on for some years and it has been an absolute joy to be involved. I've heard it said that when using woody debris for river restoration, "Go hard, or go home!". Very few people, however, have the guts to follow this through. Martijn Antheunisse's team, with the blessing of the Wylfe Fly Fishing Club and the support of the Environment Agency have gone all out. Monster-sized trees dropped into the river and created a really substantial change in flow. I can't wait to see how the Wylfe and Nadder adapt over the next few years but I'd

put money on it being one of the wildest and most diverse reaches of each river.

The final project with WWT was at Chisenbury on the Avon. A precursor to a bigger project planned for next year (watch this space). It was great to be back in the upper reaches of the Avon (I worked on a river restoration project up at Chisenbury in my previous life as a contractor). It'll always be a favourite part of the river for me. As with most of the other projects this year, it was a story of hinging and staking. Instant habitat for fish and setting the river up nicely to get some gravel on the move this winter.

From the Hampshire Avon to tributaries of the Bristol Avon, a couple of projects have had great volunteer turnout. Firstly, a project with the Bristol Avon Rivers Trust (BART) introducing sunlight and woody habitat features to Luckington Brook at Sherford, near Malmesbury. As with other BART projects I've helped with, the proximity of the Environment Agency offices in central Bristol brought out a variety of EA volunteers that would otherwise have been chained to a desk for the working day, including volunteers from the legal team and the climate change team.

Finally, a project on the River Biss on

the outskirts of Trowbridge. The Friends of Biss Meadows Country Park (FoBMCP) turned out in fantastic numbers with wheelbarrows full of enthusiasm. We had volunteers as young as 7 who got stuck into planting up brushwood berms and a welcome helping-hand from members of the EA Fisheries, Biodiversity and Geomorphology team out of the Bridgewater Office. (You just can't beat volunteers in dry-suits – you can send them anywhere!)

These projects have been on top of the usual Advisory Visits and I've even managed to fit in a belated honeymoon to Grenada and a road trip holiday around Scotland. This coming winter, I'm looking forward to slowing down just a little and getting ready to squeeze a few more projects into the tiny window between the end of the spawning season and the end of the financial year. I'm also looking forward to getting back into the day job and hopefully meeting more WTT members in and around the South West.



*EA volunteers help diversify Luckington Brook.*

# MIDLANDS AND EAST ANGLIA – TIM JACKLIN

Grange Farm, River Witham

**W**TT have been involved in a number of projects on the upper River Witham in Lincolnshire, the latest of which is the most ambitious undertaken... so far! In partnership with the local Environment Agency team at Lincoln, Grantham Angling Association and landowners Stoke Rochford Estate, a 600m reach has been restored to provide both superb trout habitat and access for fish around a previously impassable weir.

The redundant weir dates back to the mid-nineteenth century when it was used to drive a ram pump supplying water to nearby houses and farms. To create the differential water level over the weir, the river channel had been

moved to the side of the valley, widened and straightened. The original course of the river in the valley bottom was lost, apart from a few damp depressions in the field betraying its former route. Over the intervening years, the river channel filled with fine sediment trapped above the weir (to a measured depth of over a metre) and became uniformly shallow and silty.

During July and August this year, the river was restored to a route approximating its original (pre-weir) course. The new channel was designed by Gez Foster and Katie Murphy of the Environment Agency to ensure that natural river processes and habitats would be restored. I jointly supervised the construction and the overall project was expertly managed by Katie Murphy. The new reach is 600m long, an increase of

200m on the old channel because of the restoration of meanders. 24 pools were created and the same number of spawning riffles constructed from 400 tonnes of imported gravels. The excavated spoil was used to backfill the old channel.

Only around a dozen trout were found in the old channel during the planned fish rescue prior to backfilling. We expect to see a large increase in that number in the new channel as it matures.

## Bentley Brook

**T**he Bentley Brook, a tributary of the River Dove, Derbyshire, has recently benefited from the removal of an obstruction to fish passage.

A former packhorse bridge collapsed into the brook decades ago, the debris



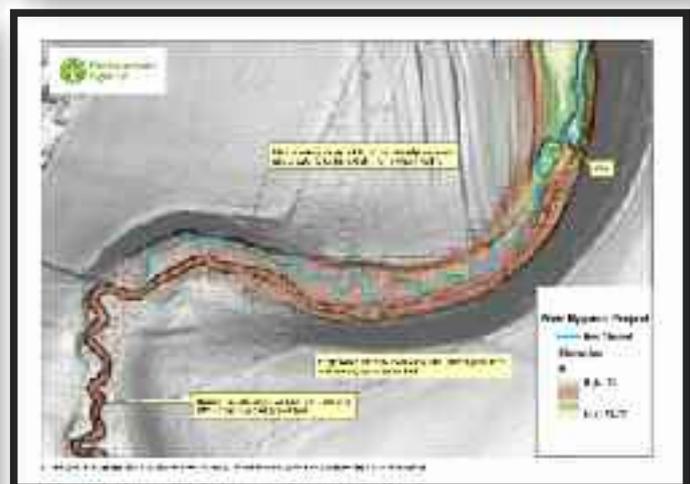
Grange Weir before: straight, wide, shallow, silt-choked channel upstream of the weir.



Grange Weir during: excavating the course of the new channel (the old channel is at the base of the tree-line).



Grange Weir after: water flows down the new channel for the first time.



The course of the new channel (blue line) alongside the old engineered section (flow left to right).

forming a swift-flowing cascade and impounding the brook upstream into a slow-flowing, silty reach. Working with the Environment Agency's Fisheries, Biodiversity & Geomorphology team at Lichfield, we removed the stone from the river and installed large woody debris at four locations upstream. The bed of the brook has since naturally regraded to expose gravel and create more varied and valuable habitat.

## Hoffer Brook

**The Hoffer Brook is an 8km long tributary of the River Rhee, a Cambridgeshire chalkstream.**

The Brook had been neglected for decades since it was dredged for land drainage purposes, resulting in the overwidened channel becoming densely overgrown and full of silt. Step in Rob Mungovan, Ecology Consultancy Officer with South Cambridgeshire District Council (and WTT stalwart), and Ruth Hawksley, Water for Wildlife Officer with the Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire & Northamptonshire (WTBCN). Building on work carried out on the lower reaches in 2014, this year the middle reaches of the brook have been improved by clearing scrub, narrowing the low-flow channel, re-profiling banks, introducing log flow deflectors and constructing cattle drinks. We were pleased to help by providing a demonstration day with WTBCN volunteers in August to demonstrate in-stream habitat techniques. The improvements will make the brook more resilient to floods and droughts, enhance the habitat for fish and wildlife and benefit users of the adjacent public footpath.

## Dunston Medieval Fayre

**In something of a departure from the natural habitat of a WTT Conservation Officer, I found myself dressed as a monk and manning a stand at a Medieval Fayre in the Lincolnshire village of Dunston in late September.**

As 'Friar' Tim I was accompanied by 'Sir' Matthew Parr (Environment Agency Fisheries) and 'Lady' Fiona McKenna (Lincolnshire Rivers Trust). The aim of the weekend was to publicise the habitat restoration work that these partners



*Installing large woody debris on the Bentley Brook.*



*Rob Mungovan and nephew Harry at work on Hoffer Brook.*

have carried out on the Dunston Beck and to make contact with local landowners and residents. This was successful with subsequent invitations from a number of landowners to visit their sections of the Beck.

The EmRiver river simulation model proved a popular attraction on the stand, as did the bugs and grubs sourced from the Beck in the village centre. Fol-



*Tim in the stocks – the result of admitting to once having fished down-and-across on a chalkstream.*

lowing on from this, Lincolnshire Rivers Trust are leading a project in local schools using WTT's Mayfly in the Classroom initiative.

## NORTHERN ENGLAND – GARETH PEDLEY

### Demo Day in North Yorkshire

**F**ollowing on from the success of previous practical demonstrations in the north, a workshop was held on the River Seph in North Yorkshire.

The potential for this work was identified during a Water Framework Directive investigation walkover of the River, back in November 2013, undertaken with John Shannon of the East Yorkshire Rivers Trust. Along with many issues such as poor fish passage, overgrazing of the banks and significant fine sediment input to the watercourse, the walkover identified potential conflict between the preservation of valuable in-channel habitat and the way that riparian owners and tenants manage large woody material that enters the river. This led to development of the workshop to demonstrate ways of managing trees and branches that enter the watercourse, to reduce bank erosion, but avoiding full removal so as to retain the habitat it provides.

The day began with a river walk to discuss the habitat that was currently available and issues that were impacting upon the river and adjacent land,

including several issues that were increasing bank erosion. This was followed by a demonstration of how a large tree within the channel, that was causing accelerated bank erosion, could be managed without full removal. The initial intention was to swing the tree round from its location, across the channel, so that it lay alongside the bank to which its roots were still attached, as would be the optimal solution. Unfortunately, this proved too much for the small hand-powered winch and a back-up plan had to be devised. To reduce the weight of the tree and allow it to be swung round, it was decided to cut the tree in half and remove some of the side branches. This allowed the top half (canopy) to be employed as a tree-kicker by cabling it to a nearby tree, just downstream and then, maintaining the butt section attached to the bank, swinging it round to lie along the bank and tree-kicker. This worked well and greatly increased the channel capacity, reducing the erosive forces acting upon the opposite bank while also retaining vital cover and structure within the river channel.

In addition to the tree work, brash mattress-type bank revetment was also

demonstrated on a large erosion bay a short distance downstream. This employed some of the branches removed from the fallen tree and some thinned from adjacent alder coppices. The technique was simply to create a diffuse structure along the base of the tall, steep eroding bank that would dissipate the flow energy acting upon the bank and also help to retain any material that slumped from the bank above, allowing it time to become vegetated and consolidate to form the new bank. This technique can be very effective and relies upon dissipating the energy of river flows to reduce erosion, rather than installing hard engineered structures that simply deflect the energy of scouring flows and cause erosion in other areas. There is some risk that it will wash out before the bank can become established with vegetation, as with any bank revetment, but it is relatively cheap and easy to install and can also provide good marginal habitat.

These techniques are regularly demonstrated by the WTT all around the country so it is well worth keeping an eye on our website and social media for workshops you may like to attend in your local area.

## SOUTH AND WEST – ANDY THOMAS

**T**he back end of summer and early autumn for a WTT Conservation Officer is a little like being one of Santa's elves in the first three weeks of December! Manic but extremely rewarding and for me, 2015 has been the busiest yet.

Our core work has, and probably always will be, to help others to improve habitat for trout through providing advice and support. Increasingly, we are delivering more practical work in partnership with other NGOs than ever before, as well as keeping up with demand for providing up to date advice. The demand for river habitat workshops and habitat management training has also surged and in the last three months. I have conducted proceedings on eight different river systems as far apart as the Suffolk Stour and Lark, to the Leach in Gloucestershire, down to the South

coast on the little Ems in West Sussex: getting into rivers and streams with dozens of volunteers to make a difference for trout. If you haven't attended one of our events and you feel like toning up your tummy muscles, then get in touch with your nearest WTT Conservation Officer to find out where the next event is to be held.

A slightly different project opportunity cropped up this summer when the EA suggested that the contractors working on behalf of the Highways Agency on a major road improvement scheme near the M27 in Southampton, might like to talk to the WTT about mitigation opportunities. Identifying habitat bottlenecks on the poor little Monks Brook (Itchen tributary) was not too much of a challenge for me, mainly because the 500m of channel running upstream from the road works have been lined in

concrete for the past 40 plus years! Agreeing what might constitute adequate mitigation and coming up with an affordable restoration plan was a little more difficult.

Following several site visits and some interesting meetings, I had managed to come up with a simple design that involved breaking out the concrete bed to create three discrete holding pools with long gravel tail runs where spawning could potentially take place for the first time in decades. Prior to the works being completed, the deepest water to be found could be waded in a size 10 Argyll welly. The work is now complete and we have three lovely holding pools which will provide a refuge for sea trout that are known to push up into the Monks Brook for spawning in the autumn and early winter period.

A bonus is that prior to the work

being carried out it seems the Monks Brook here was being used as an obstacle course for, shall we say, bored individuals in modified 4x4 vehicles...The weekend following the completion of the first pool we managed to trap one such vehicle, the driver of which wasn't expecting the concrete bed to give way into a four and half foot deep pool. Never mind, new engines aren't that expensive! Hopefully they will go away now and play somewhere else where there are no trout. Congratulations to the local EA officers for insisting on river enhancements, to the Highways Agency for stumping up the funding and to the contractors who seemed to enjoy the challenge after a slightly shaky start.

After briefly whizzing up to the

Suffolk-Norfolk borders for a week where I helped the Suffolk Wildlife Trust and local EA team complete a river enhancement project on a the Little Ouse, it was back down to the West Sussex-Hampshire borders to tackle a channel restoration project on the River Ems.

This project built on the fruitful partnership WTT has developed with the Arun Rother Rivers Trust and involved three phases of work to restore a section of channel adversely impacted by abstraction (funded by Portsmouth Water), restore a varied and diverse channel shape to a previously straightened and diverted channel and build an easement on a weir to aid sea trout migration (both projects funded via the Catchment

Partnership Action Fund).

My 'flagship' project this autumn and the one that has given me some sleepless nights was to build a new fish pass on the River Hamble at Durley Mill. Until comparatively recently, sea trout had not been able to penetrate the Hamble due to a large milling impoundment at the head of the estuary. The EA set about building a novel naturalistic bypass channel several years ago and since then sea trout have been regularly seen pushing upstream. Unfortunately, full access to the 15km of high quality spawning and nursery habitat was blocked by the medieval mill at Durley.

Our very own Denise Ashton has been active at local Catchment Partnership meetings and it was Denise who got the ball rolling with suggestions that perhaps the WTT could help deliver the project. Some initial seed corn funding organised by Kerry Sims from the local EA team enabled the project to gain momentum. Catchment Partners, hosted by Groundwork, then bid for the necessary funding to build a state-of-the-art Larinier fish pass. With wonderful support from the Mill owners, a small project group was formed and it was our job to project-manage and oversee the fish pass installation. The topographical survey, engineering drawings and fish pass hardware were supplied by Dr Toby Coe at Fishtek and the supporting steelwork fabricated locally. Flood Defence Consents secured, National Fish Pass Panel approval in the bag, all that was needed now was to pop the thing in place!

One slight complication was the fact that we were to build the pass at the head of a small bypass channel which takes flow of the main mill leat. No problem except that we needed to build a ford across a second channel to gain machine-access for installation. Potentially this wouldn't have been a problem had it not rained very heavily the day before we were to start work on site. Unfortunately, the gaps in my diary are short and I was very worried that we would miss this season's window, with all the associated difficulties of making sure the funding wasn't going to be pulled. Fortunately, Sandra Atkins, the Mill owner, suggested that we forgo creating the ford (which



*Breaking out the re-enforced concrete bed on the Monks Brook.*



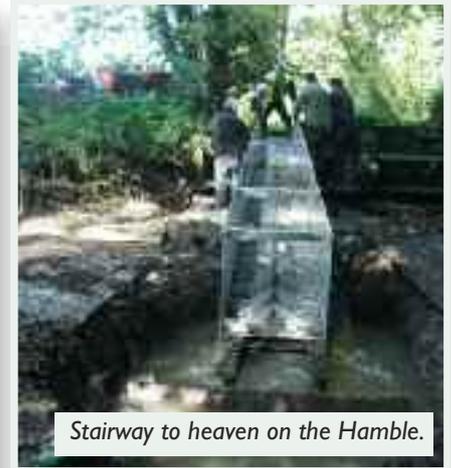
*A new home for Monks Brook sea trout.*

was due to be an asset for the household) in favour of taking the fish pass and 8m long supporting RSJs into the site by hand. This was to be our only viable option so the 360 was sent packing and more hands drafted in and in less than three days we had our newly installed Larinier super-active-bottom-baffle-multi-species fish pass installed.

As I write we are just waiting for a spot of rain to fully charge the pass and entice some silver tourists up to the virgin spawning territory that is the middle and upper Hamble.



*Post project with pinched pools, bends and runs on the Ems.*



*Stairway to heaven on the Hamble.*

## RESEARCH & CONSERVATION OFFICER UPDATE

### THE NORTH – JON GREY

**A** brief piece penned from my holiday across the Pond, chasing snook and Spanish mackerel.

Time seems to have flown since my first contribution to the newsletter when I had only been in post about six weeks. So, what has been happening in my corner of the North? I've continued to foster and develop relationships with various angling clubs and organisations like the wildlife trusts and rivers trusts stretching from the Lune in the West to the Rye more to the East. Almost everywhere I have gone, the eagerness to engage and the passion for helping rivers to perform naturally to the best of their ability has been heartening and welcome.

Although I am still yet to undertake any major practical works on my own patch, plans are afoot. I have made exceedingly good links with the driving force behind the Upper Aire Project, Pete Turner of the EA, whom you might

recognise because that outstanding partnership work scooped the large sized project category at the recent WTT Conservation Awards. Together, and with Yorkshire Wildlife Trust, we have secured two funding pots to tackle two different tributaries of the Aire: a very small beck within the Coniston Estate which we hope to improve for spawning and juvenile habitat (the subject of a 2015 Advisory Visit), and the Eastburn Beck. The latter was the focus of an Advisory Visit by Paul Gaskell for the Aire Rivers Trust some years ago, as it is regularly impounded by small weirs, and constrained by walled banks, a function of its historic (ab)use at the height of the milling industry. While we cannot remove the walls, we certainly hope to notch some of the weirs and use the remaining infrastructure to kick-start some more natural processes both in terms of physical and ecological connectivity. Obviously, with my science

background, we are undertaking some baseline surveys of invertebrate community and fish population structure, and so just a couple of days ago, I accompanied the local EA fisheries team as they electrofished representative 50m sections. Unsurprisingly, the majority of fish were stuck in the few weir pools as it is currently the only holding habitat. Those that were caught were in fine fettle though, so it is hoped by rewilding some of the channel and creating more contiguous, better quality habitat, we can boost the population of wild trout in this beck as well as make better feeding for the dippers, grey wagtails, and the resident pair of kingfishers. We will be taking regular fixed-point photography to document changes as we remove some of the weir structures.

I can't talk about weir removal in this neck of the woods without reference to the cracking work of Ribble Rivers Trust.



*Electric fishing survey.*



*EA's Pete Turner with a beautiful Eastburn Beck brown trout.*

I've had some long discussions with them, from the perspective of my WTT and my academic caps, to develop some novel metrics for measuring the success of restoration projects. We have hatched a plan to use some of my stable isotope metrics of food web architecture to not only characterise the ideal or target for restoration but also to measure how far

food webs might deviate from that ideal (the natural situation). This could be usefully trialled by a Masters student or the like, so I am on the hunt.

In my first newsletter piece, I made reference to several scientific projects on which I am involved with several research institutions and unfortunately, at the time of writing, they are still

ongoing with insufficient data analysed yet to tell a good tale. Plenty of interesting work to inform the readership in the future though. The wind is now dropping, the tide must be turning and the water beginning to slide off the seagrass flats. Time to check out if the redfish are holing up on the sandy pockets next to the mangrove.

## PROGRAMME MANAGER – PAUL GASKELL

### Trent Tributary Revival in Newcastle-under-Lyme.

**T**he Lyme Brook has now seen a series of significant works spread over two phases.

Progress has been rapid and extremely well-received by the local community. So much so, the local council have just installed a brown trout sculpture as an icon of the area. Me and Tim Jacklin designed, directed and carried out the modification of the channel and associated installation of additional habitat features along with volunteers provided by Groundwork and the Environment Agency. Permissions, logistics and contractor-hire were all brilliantly handled by Groundwork West Midlands (including Steve Cook, Lynne Morgan and Richard Schneider). Along with this organisational input, there are two other primary reasons that these works were moved rapidly and effectively from concept to delivery. One key

factor is found in the brilliant regional EA personnel (particularly Matt Lawrence in his position within the Trent Catchment Partnership). Another equally important asset is the willingness of Newcastle-under-Lyme council to embrace a bold and novel environmental proposal – with Becky Allen being central to that support.

The works completed so far in phases 1 and 2 (with a third to follow shortly) comprise spawning riffle creation using imported gravels, berm/meander creation using a mini-digger to complete 'dig and dump' riverbank and stream-bed reprofiling (and consolidating this new profile with large woody material and brash berms). Significant amounts of planting with native sedge and iris are also adding to the structural and ecological value of the new channel. In combination, these works have transformed a uniform channel with a bed of refuse sacks, broken brick, pottery and sand into a sinuous stream that now has scattered boulders, gravel spawning beds, scour-promoting large woody material and brash refugia.

The works have already been subjected to serious spate flows and the self-maintaining nature of the brash berms and large woody material have served to use the flow energy to main

channel with a bed of refuse sacks, broken brick, pottery and sand into a sinuous stream that now has scattered boulders, gravel spawning beds, scour-promoting large woody material and brash refugia.

The works have already been subjected to serious spate flows and the self-maintaining nature of the brash berms and large woody material have served to use the flow energy to maintain and enhance the scour pool and gravel bar depositional features. Just prior to going to press, the site now has a brand new interpretation board that explains how and why the habitat has been transformed. This is an excellent feature for such a well-used urban public park. Judging from the amount of interest and enquiry from passers-by during all of the habitat works events – the board will continue to provide welcome information to the local community for all the times that the workers cannot be on site.

Local resident and notorious River Trent trout-stalker Glenn Pointon had this to say after inspecting the section of stream (which is very close to his home) "The Wild Trout Trust have done a superb job on my Lyme brook that feeds the Upper Trent. For years I haven't seen a fish there and it's now no



*What the channel looked like before the works.*



*Same section of channel immediately after the first phase of works.*

longer a canal-type river. They have done a fantastic job to speed up the flow and it has created some lovely little food lanes! If you're not a member of the WTT you ought to be as they know what a river should be like. I have my eyes peeled for some spawning on the gravel! Good work Paul Gaskell, I might even smack the Tenkara about on it!"

### Porter Brook De-culverting and River Habitat Works: Car Park to Riverside Pocket Park Transformation

**A**nother major project that has been progressing over summer 2015 is the uncovering of a section of urban freestone stream in the centre of Sheffield.

The Porter Brook pops up to the surface in a staccato fashion throughout the city of Sheffield (finally joining the River Sheaf underneath platform 5 of Sheffield Railway Station). There is a short section that had some daylight reaching it just around Matilda Street Bridge – and until recently there was a car park along the left hand bank of that section. Until fairly recently, there also used to be an industrial premises whose concrete floor used to conceal the brook as it returned to a subterranean channel. Whether above or below ground, the brook is confined in an artificial (and artificially-straight) channel – often running in a smooth concrete chute. Despite this, where there are sections of natural substrate, the invertebrate communities have been found to be among the most diverse in the whole catchment of the River Don. With the demolition of the industrial premises,

the lifting of the concrete lid – and now the removal of the steel joists spanning the river at the site of the old building – the WTT has been working with Sheffield City Council and civil engineering contractors (ESH) to improve the channel. Along with the creation of a new pocket park (that will provide floodwater storage as well as an attractive amenity) beneath the site of the old car park, I have designed in-channel features that will be installed as part of a reprofiling of the channel. Additional contractors will also carry out planting on marginal berms that will be created in order to introduce more sinuosity into a straightened channel. The site is proving to be a very interesting and challenging one to work in – as there has already been valuable archaeological remains of buildings uncovered. This has been meticulously drawn and recorded before being re-buried throughout the pocket park construction process. Remarkably, the people working on site have seen some small trout darting be-

tween what scant cover currently exists in this channel. Hopefully in the coming months, the available cover and the topography of the channel will become a much more hospitable home for urban wild trout and other species of Sheffield's river corridors.

What with ongoing interests in the River Irk, River Douglas and all other existing Trout in the Town branches – there is lots to look forward to for our urban trout. There are some new potential projects that we are looking to develop on the Upper Dearne in South Yorkshire, the Penk on the outskirts of Wolverhampton among an interesting mix of other projects too. Check out the WTT Conservation Awards item in this Newsletter to see what else I have been up to over the last few months...

Any 'urban trouty' project queries can be sent to me at [pgaskell@wildtrout.org](mailto:pgaskell@wildtrout.org) or over the phone on 07919 157267.



## OTHER NEWS

### LAKE SPAWNING BY BROWN TROUT

**M**arcus Walters, of the Moray Firth Trout Initiative (MFTI), has been doing some intriguing work on brown trout spawning not in traditional river riffle areas, but on the gravel margins of lakes.

Over the last three years, the Moray Firth Trout Initiative (MFTI) has been using local volunteers to investigate lochs in the North East of Scotland

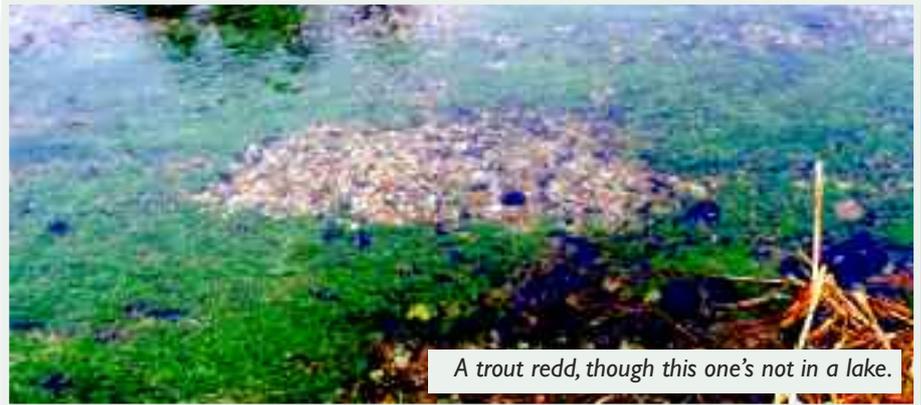
through walkover habitat surveys and angling sampling days. This work has highlighted a number of world-class brown trout angling lochs with naturally recruiting populations despite there being minimal or no stream spawning habitat. Further investigation in the autumn at one site revealed extensive spawning activity and redds in gravel at 2-3m depth in the loch, leading to the

conclusion that these were loch-spawning trout. Subsequent correspondence with other projects and biologists around the UK soon revealed that although this behaviour was widely suspected there was very little first-hand observation or solid evidence.

Brown trout, *Salmo trutta*, is predominantly considered a stream spawner and although there are

observations of lake spawning it is not well documented in the scientific literature and its relative contribution to recruitment is poorly understood. There are plenty of anecdotal reports where it is thought to take place but few of these have been thoroughly investigated and particularly in the UK, very few have been scientifically recorded. Considering the importance of good spawning habitat and its potential vulnerability to impacts from land use, it is essential we improve our understanding of the extent of loch spawning and the physical environment required for it to occur.

Lake spawning is a key strategy of many species with similar requirements to brown trout; Arctic charr spawn widely in lakes, as do brook trout and where Sockeye salmon have become landlocked they have formed entirely lake spawning populations known as kokanee. For spawning to take place successfully, appropriate substrate is needed for initial redd cutting and suitable conditions for embryo development through to the alevin and swim-up fry stages. This relies on the presence of gravel substrate and suitable conditions; good water quality with sufficient dissolved oxygen, adequate flow rates and stable temperature. These conditions are widely found in streams as the water flows through the gravel, but in a lake environment may be



*A trout redd, though this one's not in a lake.*

less common as a range of physical factors have to align to be suitable for spawning. Appropriate substrate or gravel in a lake will depend on the local physical geography but can result from rock falls on adjacent slopes, a flooded stream bed or shore gravels generated from erosive wave action. Adequate flow can be maintained in the loch where it is associated with the inlet or outlet but elsewhere groundwater flow or upwelling is necessary to provide adequate water quality and flow. Groundwater flow is reliant on an aquifer and the associated geology; typically occurring where alternating layers of permeable and impermeable rock exist, resulting in underwater influx and subsequent upwelling through the gravel. There is also some speculation that adequate circulation can be

maintained by wind driven waves particularly in shallow shore gravels. In Iceland, lake spawning occurs around areas of upwelling generated by vents from volcanic activity.

In summary, lake spawning by trout quite possibly occurs more widely than is reported and is likely a significant, if not the sole, contributor to trout recruitment in some locations. However, due to the difficulties in observing and studying this behaviour, it is widely underreported and poorly understood. To help us improve our knowledge and understanding of this behaviour and its relative importance in recruitment, we would be very grateful if you could contact us with any observations or thoughts from your local area: [walters.mfstp@googlemail.com](mailto:walters.mfstp@googlemail.com).

## CONKERS KNOCKING OUT TROUT!

Andy Thomas tells an intriguing tale.

**With WTT, I spend every working day exploring ways in which to make life better for wild trout and in particular their habitat. Before joining the Trust, I spent many years working for various Fisheries Departments of Thames Water (pre 1989), the National Rivers Authority and eventually the Environment Agency. Although my work in those days did occasionally extend to habitat improvement work, a big chunk of my time involved responding to in-**

**cidents, often where fish were lost through drought, disease and pollution.**

The list of issues and problems that can result in fish dying in a river is long and complex and I must admit I thought I had witnessed examples of just about all of them but during a recent Advisory Visit to the Chalgrove Brook in Oxfordshire, I was told about a small population of wild brown trout that met their demise this time last year as a result of crushed conkers!

The site I visited was called Chestnut Farm; possibly a clue in the title! At this location, the tiny but very attractive little Chalgrove Brook runs parallel with the chestnut tree-lined road route. Following a prolonged dry spell, a sudden break in the weather corresponded with a substantial fall of conker fruits onto the road where they were neatly

crushed by the rush hour traffic. During a rainfall event, it was reported that the road and road-side gully was temporarily full of light green foam. It was a short time later that the dead trout were seen and the incident reported to the EA.

Now I knew that conkers were mildly toxic because I had tried to eat them as a boy. I survived to write this piece but in all my years working on rivers I had never heard of a fish mortality arising from crushed conkers. I concluded the Chalgrove Brook incident must have been incredibly rare. But just how rare?

Last week, I took calls from two land owners who had reported the loss of their trout population in a very small tributary of the Western Rother in West Sussex. The EA were called and an incident investigation carried out. The dead trout had been seen following a classic

'first flush'; in other words, heavy rain following a prolonged dry spell. These conditions are known to put huge pressure on fish in small streams but usually only when the weather is exceptionally warm and flow and dissolved oxygen levels very low. For fish to die in cool conditions in October generally requires something pretty nasty to be picked up and flushed into the system. Despite the best efforts of the local EA team, the offending plug of pollutant had whizzed through the tiny system leaving no clues and certainly no evidence of organic pollution, which is the most common problem when an event like this occurs. It was only when chatting to the landowner that the conker incident I had previously been told about popped up into my head. Apparently, the landowner had seen some foaming and more to the point, the little stream runs adjacent to a bridge and small culvert immediately adjacent to a giant horse chestnut which had shed loads of fruits during some big winds the previous day – crushed conkers galore!

Now although this was a bit of a Eureka moment for all involved, the link

between the crushed horse chestnuts and the dead trout has not been proven but to their credit, Brian Gowdy (landowner) and Charles Bacchus (local EA Fisheries Technical Specialist) did a little bit of digging and it seems that our offending conker tree is probably the smoking gun.

Brian did a bit of research on the internet and came across a blog from a character called Tyra relating a story about a reoccurring fish mortality in the river near the town of Kolding in East Jutland. Apparently, the fish always died at the same time each year when the chestnut fruits fell down and were crushed on the road.

The active piscicide in horse chestnuts is a compound called saponin. This compound can be found in a range of plants including soapworts and is one of three known, naturally occurring toxins found in plant material that is lethal to fish. Having a dig around myself I found a reference to North American native tribes the Yuchi and the Creek, who are recorded as having used crushed horse chestnut material to stupefy fish in much the same way that South American na-

tives use plants containing rotenone to poison fish. It is thought the natives were originally using the nuts as a soap substitute and noticed that fish were coming to the surface and were easy to scoop out. I was a little surprised at this because the horse chestnut that we know in this country is a native of the Balkans. I couldn't imagine Balkan conker trees finding their way to the primitive river valleys of North America at a time when the locals needed to kill fish to survive but apparently there are at least six related members of the *Aesculus* (horse chestnut) family native to the Americas.

So what have I learned? Well, I always knew that horse chestnut trees are hopeless riverside trees and now I've got a valid reason to dislike them. The chances are that overhanging conker trees are nothing to worry about but it is worth keeping an eye on any site where there is the capacity for an undesirable outcome – an avenue of trees adjacent to a road and very close to any small stream containing our beloved trout! Food (fruit?) for thought?

## USING ANGLER CATCH DATA

**This is a summary of a BSc thesis by Matt Penny of Sparsholt College in which Matt worked with Portsmouth Services Fly Fishing Association to look at what happens to stocked brown trout in the Association's water on the Meon.**

In 2013, Portsmouth Services Fly Fishing Association (PSFFA) approached Sparsholt College seeking an undergraduate to help manage their new 'Stocked Trout Project'. The Project aimed to investigate the Club's routine stocking of farmed brown trout using data collected from anglers' catch returns. The study formed the basis of my BSc Fisheries Management & Aquaculture dissertation; this article summarises the approach and findings of the PSFFA's 2014 Project.

PSFFA manage 4.5 miles of the Meon, a lowland river with chalk stream

characteristics in Hampshire; five beats are located within three separate reaches. The fishery has been stocked annually with approximately 1100 farmed brown trout (ranging in length from 280mm to 305mm) to meet angler demand and supplement wild stocks (left-hand photo at top of page 19). The historically low angler recapture rates of farmed fish, alongside a perceived loss of these stocked fish from the Association's water motivated the investigation.

In the 2014 fishing season, all stocked brown trout (1045 fish in total) were individually marked to increase accuracy of identification on recapture. Previously, angler skill was relied upon to differentiate wild from farmed fish and there was no means of identifying migrant trout stocked by other fisheries. Four categories of fish were created using Alcian blue dye applied by jet-inoculator (commonly called panjetting) as dots on the belly of the fish; this marking scheme related to the beat where fish were released and was designed to investigate rates of retention and movement from sites of

stocking (right-hand photo at top of page 19).

The Club received 78% submission of catch returns for the 2014 season (n=172). Angler data showed:

- Angler recapture rate of marked stocked fish was 21% (224 out of the 1045 fish stocked).
- Members released 75% of stocked fish post capture; only 25% killed for the table (68 of the 224 recorded as caught).
- The majority (74%) of marked fish were captured in the same beat as they were stocked.
- Marked fish captured away from the beat of stocking moved at least 1.5km upstream and 7.5km downstream.
- Generally few fish were caught in the same beat where they were stocked (0%-21% of recaptures) but there was also little evidence of fish caught in beats other than where they were stocked (1-4% of recaptures).
- Approximately 40% of all marked fish were caught in the most habitat-rich beat; half of this number had been originally stocked into other beats.



Stocked (left) and wild (right) brown trout from the River Meon.



A panjetted stockie brown trout. Note two blue dots on the belly in front of the pelvic fins of the fish.

When analysing catch returns it is important to recognise the limitations of angler data. For example, bias to capture by rod and line, angler skill and underreporting may create trends that do not actually exist. However, if

limitations to accuracy are acknowledged, angler data can be a useful indicator of fishery performance. As the Project progresses the Club aims to improve the reliability of data with a more durable marking method,

improved catch return format and higher levels of angler engagement. If you'd like to contact Matt about his project, email him on [matthew.penny@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:matthew.penny@hotmail.co.uk).

## THE 2015 WTT 3-FLY CHALLENGE

**I**t just gets better and better. The sixth, annual WTT 3-Fly Challenge was run at the splendid Meon Springs Trout Fishery in Hampshire in June, in memory of avid Meon fisher, Pasco James. 31 anglers fished the event, raising an incredible £3770 for WTT and over £500 for the injured servicemen's charity, Fishing for Forces.

The competition allows anglers to fish with three flies – a Kite's Imperial, a buzzer and a GHE nymph – with different point scores awarded for fish size and each pattern. This year, the fishery contained some 'bonus' fish:

brown trout and golden rainbows.

WTT is hugely indebted to Neil Mundy, a WTT volunteer who yet again organised the day brilliantly, with generous support from Waitrose and the John Lewis Partnership Fly Fishing Club. The fishery at Meon Springs looked stunning and produced excellent fish and facilities, including a great lunch (details of the fishery at <http://meonsprings.com/>). Phil Marr, the silversmith, created beautiful commemorative silver salvers as prizes and Pasco's mum, Harriet Poland, presented the prizes at the day's end.

This year saw a new competition

winner, with Chris Hodge pipping to the post twice-previous winner, David King. In addition to second place, David also took the biggest fish prize.

For your diaries, the 2016 3-Fly Challenge will be on Saturday 18 June – if you'd like details, keep in touch with Neil Mundy at [ncmundy@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:ncmundy@hotmail.co.uk).

Pasco James was a super-keen fisher and riverman on the Meon, whose life ended tragically early in 2010 at the age of 22. Since then, WTT has run the 3-Fly Challenge in his honour and used the monies for habitat work on the Meon.



Chris Hodge (centre), winner, Neil Mundy, event organiser and Harriet Poland. Chris won a superb Sage One rod, a Phil Marr silver salver and a commemorative tankard.



David King (right) and Harriet Poland. David took second place in 2015 but still had the biggest fish.

## 2ND INTERNATIONAL SEA TROUT SYMPOSIUM, DUNDALK, OCTOBER 2015

**F**ollowing on from the first symposium in 2004, this event, bringing together 150 delegates working across the species' range, sought to update knowledge on what we know (and very often don't know) about sea trout. WTT Director, Shaun Leonard, shares some of his notes from the symposium.

The 2nd International Sea Trout Symposium, held in Dundalk, Ireland in October 2015, was convened by Inland Fisheries Ireland, the Atlantic Salmon Trust and Graeme Harris of FishSkill Consultancy Ltd, with support from a number of additional sponsors, including Northern Ireland's Department of Culture, Arts & Leisure, Salmon & Trout Conservation UK, the Institute of Fisheries Management and the Wild Trout Trust. We at WTT sponsored one of the keynote speakers, Steve Railsback, from Humboldt State University in California and produced a poster paper with the Environment Agency on our work with sea trout in southern England and East Anglia.

Here are just a few interesting snippets gathered during the event:

- In northern France, brown trout populations in Brittany include virtually no fish that migrate to sea, yet eastward into Normandy, there's an increasingly significant component of sea migrants. There is evidence of straying between rivers. Water depth, nature of the sea bed and the presence of the Contentin Peninsula influences the genetic make-up of sea trout populations. Sea trout feeding over areas of pebbles and gravel in the sea, which may be important sandeel, sprat and herring nursery areas, tend to stay closer to their natal river.
- In Northern Ireland's Shimna River, trout survival from egg to summerling (perhaps 6-8 months old) is 3-9%. Trout longer than 15cm tend to be female and at the downstream end of the river, more than 80% of the females go to sea as sea trout.
- Dr Ronald Campbell of the Tweed Foundation reviewed a number of sea tagging studies in the UK, some dating back over 50 years. Most studies recaptured sea trout close to their natal river though some studies from the

north east English coast (north of Flamborough Head) appear to show sea trout post-smolts moving southwards along the English coast before migrating eastward across the North Sea towards Jutland. This pattern of migration follows predominant ocean currents and takes sea trout into known sandeel spawning areas in the southern North Sea and along the Jutland coast. Maturing sea trout then have to make a counter-current migration to reach their natal river. Dr Campbell stressed too that there may in this migration pattern be echoes from a time before the last ice age when large areas now under the North Sea were land and streams and rivers flowed into an ancient North Sea much further north than today.

- Dr Ted Potter of Cefas outlined computer-based, hydrodynamic modeling work which can include 'particles' as a proxy for sea trout moving around in the currents of the Irish and Celtic seas. This work suggests that fish stay close to their natal areas, supported by genetic studies which showed 40% of fish recaptured close to home with mostly northerly and east/west movement.
- Work from Iceland, Norway, Scotland and Sweden reinforces the view that most sea trout stay close to home and the coast when at sea. Work in two Scottish sea lochs (Linnhe and Eil) suggests that whilst tagged salmon smolts headed out to open sea through Loch Linnhe (and the up into the North Atlantic), tagged sea trout went inland into Loch Eil. Only one of 13 tagged sea trout post-smolts was detected leaving Loch Linnhe for the open sea during the 50 days of the research. In Norwegian work, 68% of the tagged sea trout's time at sea was spent within 4km of the mouth of their natal river, though small numbers of fish migrated significant distances, up to 130km. This same work suggested that post-smolts returned to freshwater more than once in their first summer after leaving the river, coinciding (?) with times of high sea lice levels in the fjord (where there are salmon farming cages).
- Work in Devon and Cornwall suggests that the vast bulk of sea trout

returning to the Tamar are from that river, though in some years with 10-12% from the Dart/Teign, 80km distant along the coast. However, the heads of the Tamar and Dart/Teign are only 400-500 metres apart on Dartmoor, so maybe the trout are responding to some shared memory of home! This work, however, suggests this straying into non-natal rivers is temporary, genetic studies showing no reproductive contribution from the strays into the locals.

- Icelandic work shows the enormous growth rates possible for trout that do migrate to sea. One tagged fish was weighed at emigration at 2.9kg, returning 9 weeks later at 5kg!
- Several pieces of work hint at the risk of migrating to sea, a trade-off with the great feeding and growth to be had. In Sweden, smolt-loss rate in the estuary was estimated at between 26%-51% of the run. In Dorset's River Frome, 24% of sea trout smolts tagged in the river did not reach listening stations located at the mouth of Poole Harbour. Interestingly, for those WTT members that know Poole Harbour, this same work suggests that the Harbour is not used for feeding by sea trout.
- The often under-recognised importance of sea trout in migratory salmonid rod catches in Britain was highlighted by Dr Graeme Harris. In the period 1994-2011, sea trout represented 42% of the total reported rod catch; in Wales, 80% of the total rod catch was sea trout.
- In the Celtic and Irish seas, analysis of over 500 sea trout stomachs showed that 95% of the diet of those fish was fish, mostly sandeels, though in the Solway, 98% was sprat.
- Extensive studies are ongoing for tidal lagoon power in Swansea Bay, including potential impacts on fish. This will entail a 9.5km, horseshoe-shaped bund out into the bay, impounding an area of 1160 hectares. A gap in this bund will house a turbine, drawing energy from an in-and-out flow of up to 10,000 cubic metres/sec.
- Experiments on a hydropower (Archimedes Screw) turbine in Dorset's River Frome suggests a low level of entrainment of sea trout smolts into the

turbine; most used the bypass around the turbine, with little delay. Returning adults used the adjacent fish pass or weir, again with little delay. However, a small-scale experiment on the Ribble, showed four out of ten tagged salmon smolts were entrained into a hydropower turbine, causing probable fatal injury. Thus, the potential impact on fish from hydropower turbines is deemed to be site-specific.

- A group of scientists from Ireland, Scotland and Norway have studied impacts from salmon farming on sea trout populations, especially in relation

to sea lice infestation. It is thought that more than 13 sea lice on an individual sea trout post-smolt will kill it; this study looked at around 8,000 post-smolts, finding loads of up to 400 lice per fish. The work suggests that a sea trout river must be 30-40km away from a salmon cage farm for there to be no impact on the sea trout post-smolts from sea lice emanating from the farm. At less than 15km distance, lice emanating from the farm will kill 50-100% of the sea trout post-smolts. Salmon farming in Scotland and especially Ireland has many fewer

safeguards in place to try to protect sea trout, compared to the Norwegian industry and its regulators. That said, this study estimates that across Norway, 65% of rivers have sea trout populations whose numbers are regulated by salmon farms in the rivers' fjords.

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## WTT'S 2014/15 YEAR – SHAUN LEONARD

**W**TT publishes an annual report, the full illustrated version of which including audited accounts, is published on the Charity Commission's website. Extracted below are the highlights.

### What did we do in 2014/15?

- 118 Advisory Visits (AVs) to river and lake sites, with follow-on reports;
- 42 practical demonstration events, involving local communities in improving habitat in their river;
- worked directly with over 2,500 volunteers in more than 13,000 hours of practical work across the British Isles, contributing over £170,000 worth of time, to improve habitat for trout and other aquatic biota;
- improved habitat on at least 300km of river;
- completed nine significant river restoration projects in England, working with a range of partners;
- presented at 27 international, national and local events, spreading messages on aquatic conservation to an audience of over 800 people;
- our Mayfly in the Classroom educational tool reached over 1,000 pupils in 48 settings across Britain;
- raised over £70,000 in an annual auction to drive the cost-effective work of the Trust.

### Advisory Visits, Project Proposals and River Habitat Workshops

WTT's core conservation activity is the provision of advice and practical help to local community groups and landowners, through AVs and River Habitat Workshops.

In 2014/15, WTT's team of Conservation Officers worked with fishery and river interests across the British Isles, completing 118 AVs with follow-on reports and project proposals. In over 80% of cases, WTT AVs led to action in and by the river to improve habitat, carried out by community volunteers in angling clubs and conservation groups. This work involved, for example, more sensitive management techniques of riparian and in-stream vegetation or proactive habitat improvement through the introduction of woody material, retaining or creating vital habitat for plants, invertebrates and fish, as well as the birds and mammals that rely on a healthy river. Much of this work takes place in rural settings, though an important part of WTT's role, through its Trout in the Town programme, is the support of groups working in towns and cities across England to make life better for their rivers and people. The WTT website ([www.wildtrout.org/avs](http://www.wildtrout.org/avs)) is now home to over 500 AV reports, dating back to 2001 and covering all corners of the British Isles.

42 practical demonstration days, River Habitat Workshops, were led

during this year by WTT's expert Conservation Officers, giving local volunteers the opportunity to learn of good and impacted riverine habitat and to practise hands-on habitat improvement techniques under the guidance of the WTT staff. Feedback from these workshops has been extremely positive and there are many examples where local interests have taken the knowledge acquired with WTT and applied it further to improve habitat in their home rivers (e.g. Brent, Cale, Colne, Lark, Ver, Yorks Don).

All of this activity has enhanced habitat on at least 300km of river and directly involved over 900 volunteers in 5,100 hours of activity. It is estimated that an additional 600 volunteers have joined the working parties of angling clubs and local conservation groups, informed by the WTT Conservation Officers, adding a further 3,500 hours of work for the benefit of wild trout and other wildlife in and around the river. The monetised value of this voluntary contribution is estimated to exceed £112,000. Much of this work was supported by the Environment Agency (EA), using funds raised through angling rod licence sales, augmented by WTT co-funding from a range of sources e.g. individual Trust supporters, the WTT annual auction, John Ellerman Foundation, water companies, partnerships with other NGOs.

A partnership with Thames Water, EA and the Angling Trust saw WTT launch a three-year project of Rivers & Wetlands Community Days, which, in 2014/15, supported 20 projects in 18 sub-catchments across the Thames Water area, involving a further 1,000 volunteers in 6,000 hours of work. It is estimated that the initial year's funding of £50,000 has leveraged additional co-funding exceeding £230,000.

### River Restoration Projects

Working with dynamic, local partners, WTT completed nine significant river restoration projects during 2014/15. Examples include work on the River Glaven in Norfolk, where, overcoming multiple challenges, 1.2km of new stream length was created to bypass a large, previously on-line lake at Bayfield House. Trout spawned in the new river during the first winter of its life and monitoring by one of the project partners, Norfolk Rivers Trust, in summer 2015, showed that trout and other fish species of different ages had taken up residence.

In Hampshire, reaches of a tributary of the River Itchen, the Monks Brook, flow over concrete banks and bed. In partnership with the local EA fisheries team and the Highways Agency, WTT delivered a project to create pools, riffles and other features to make life better for the sea trout that use areas of this Brook for spawning (see Andy Thomas's report in this Newsletter).

In Somerset, the River Avill is a beautiful stream flowing through the Exmoor National Park, though the lower reaches have suffered from channel straightening and diverted flows. In an excellent practical collaboration between the local EA fisheries team, the parish council, the Angling Trust and the landowner (Crown Estate), WTT helped breathe a new lease of life into a recently dredged section of the channel. Monitoring by the EA in April 2015, revealed that the project had met with the approval of the trout population as large numbers of fish moved in after the work, benefiting from the improved habitat in the river.

In Lincolnshire, a major project on the River Witham was completed by a partnership involving WTT, EA, the

landowner and a local fishing association to create 600m of new trout habitat and bypass an impassable 2m-high weir. Pools and gravel riffles were created in the new channel which will be a good home, not only for the river's brown trout, but also its population of our native and threatened white-clawed crayfish (see Tim Jacklin's report in this Newsletter).

### Talks and Presentations

WTT spreads its conservation messages through talks in a range of settings, from international conferences to gatherings of local community groups such as angling clubs. In 2014/15, WTT's audience exceeded 800 people across all parts of the UK and beyond. A particular highlight was WTT's participation in the inaugural International Trout Masterclass, a gathering of contributors and students from 17 European countries who met in Slovenia to learn and share experiences on trout conservation.

Mayfly in the Classroom is an accessible educational initiative designed by WTT to allow pupils, especially at Key Stages 1 & 2, to study a range of topics around aquatic conservation. Pupils gather mayfly (upwinged fly) nymphs from a local stream and rear them in low-cost incubation systems in the classroom before release back to the stream corridor. This process not only teaches simple animal husbandry skills but allows teachers to explore with their pupils many aspects of aquatic conservation and management. WTT's Conservation and Engagement Officer, funded through a private donation, coordinated delivery of Mayfly in the Classroom to over 1,000 children in 48 settings across Britain during 2014. However, the Officer delivering this work moved to pastures new in December 2014 and the Trust decided not to replace the post and to forestall the programme at least in the short term.

### Fundraising Activities

WTT's fundraising activities are vital in driving its conservation work. The Trust benefits from the generosity of its 2400 supporters and a number of fundraising events, the most significant of which is its annual on-line auction. In

2014/15, 260 lots attracted donations of over £70,000. The auction also raises the WTT profile and provides an invaluable opportunity for engagement with a broad community that actively supports the work of the Trust. Sincere thanks to the many individuals and organisations who support our fundraising work.

### Staff and Volunteers

In 2014/15, WTT added two new technical staff to its team, both based in the north of England: a Conservation Officer and a Research & Conservation Officer. Both posts strengthen the geographical coverage of WTT's work with the latter adding further to the academic depth of the team, charged with translating and disseminating to a broader audience topical and relevant scientific information.

Volunteers continued to be a vital part of WTT's work in 2014/15, maintaining the Trust's presence with social media, uploading lots for the internet auction, creating newsletter artwork, manning stands at shows, providing technical input through advisory panels and working with the Conservation Officers in practical delivery of riverine habitat enhancements. In total, WTT and its charitable mission benefited from 2,500 volunteers contributing over 13,000 hours at a conservative monetised value exceeding £170,000. We are deeply indebted to all these volunteers.



## SEARCHING FOR A RISE

**E**xcellent angling author and Esteemed WTT member, Adrian Latimer's latest offering is *Searching for a Rise: Trout Fishing in the Footsteps of the Greats*.

Wild trout fishing is really on the up, with a growing band of devoted, avid fishers chasing their prize across the full range of the species. They don't come much more devoted or avid than Adrian Latimer and it's delightful to introduce Adrian's latest book, *Searching for a Rise*, as he travels and fishes a vast patch, from South America to Northern France, accompanied by an imagined pantheon of the all-time greats of fishers and fishing writers.

In addition to his prowess with a rod, Adrian has conservation writ through his bones. As with all his other books, Adrian is very generously donating the royalties from *Searching for a Rise* to the North Atlantic Salmon Fund (NASF; [www.nasfworldwide.com](http://www.nasfworldwide.com)) and the Wild Trout Trust ([www.wildtrout.org](http://www.wildtrout.org)); we will be sure to use those royalties well in our conservation work.

Adrian's writing is always a treat: breezy, humorous and evocative and his latest offering is every bit as good. Make a great Christmas pressie for a keen fisher.

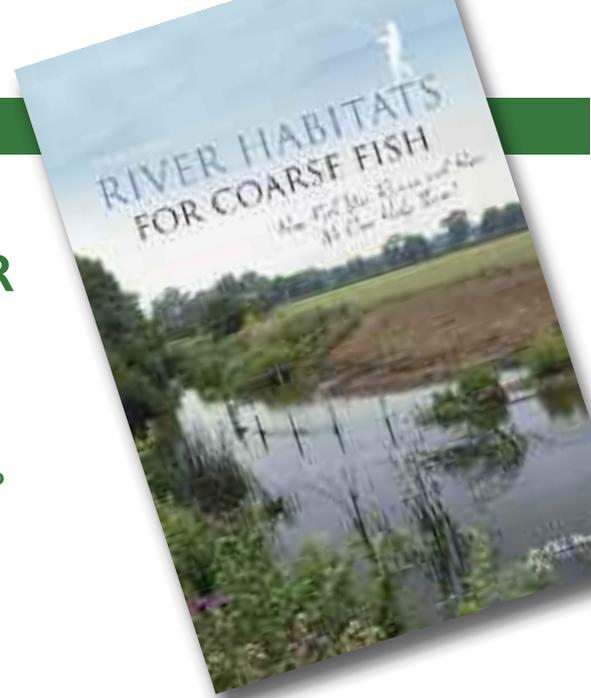
## RIVER HABITATS FOR COARSE FISH

**W**hilst not the usual domain of the Wild Trout Trust, this book from Dr Mark Everard seeks to bring sensitive habitat management to rivers where coarse fish might dominate but in many cases where adult wild brown trout might lurk too.

This is the latest offering from the prodigious stable of Dr Mark Everard: a pictorial guide to the habitat needs of coarse fish in the UK and what can be done by the practical fishery manager to make life better for those fish species.

The book addresses something of a hole in the literature, following on from the likes of WTT's *Wild Trout Survival Guide* and applying that same practical focus for coarse fish. So, Mark leads us through the habitat requirements of species like roach and dace, what it is that is impacting on their lives (e.g. channel modification, intensive agriculture) and the work that can be done in and by the river (mainly) by the fishery manager to improve those lives.

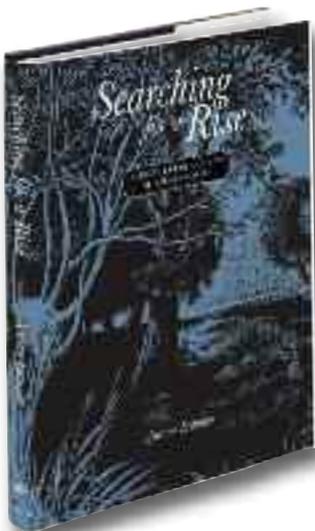
As with all Mark's books, *River Habitats for Coarse Fish* is a good, informative read. It would be excellent if every landowner, regulatory authority, angling club working party and even angler read it and heeded its words. As Mark notes, "we live in a tidied up



world" though "fish evolved in a far more ragged world"; critically, he goes on to make the link between the vitality of fish populations and that of all the other plants and animals (including ourselves!) comprising the wider ecosystem. So, if our fish species are in good order, so are our rivers and so by default is the land they drain.

Being picky, some of the illustrations in the book are a little small for total clarity and Mark mostly uses his other books as reference material, but the messages in *River Habitats for Coarse Fish* are very well made and very, very important. It's a snip at £11.95 and you should add it to your bookshelf.

*River Habitats for Coarse Fish*. By Dr Mark Everard. Old Pond Publishing. [www.oldpond.com](http://www.oldpond.com). 114pp. Paperback £11.95.



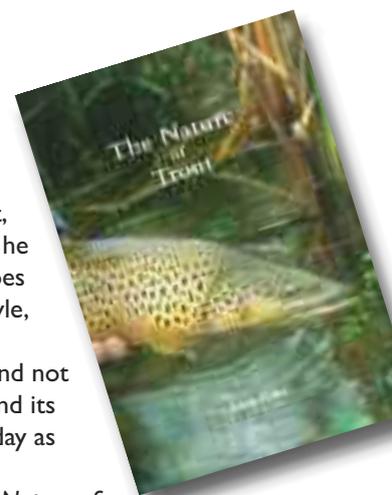
## TREASURE REDISCOVERED

**A** book oft remembered but not revisited for a decade.

In 2005, Dr Nick Giles published *The Nature of Trout* (or as he calls it, *The Nature of Sprouts!*). I read it then and loved it. Whilst recently excavating a cupboard, I came across my copy of *The Nature of Trout* and have re-read it. I cannot recommend this book to you highly enough; I think it should be vital reading for anyone who claims to love wild trout and/or wild trout fishing. Whilst over a third of the book is the super-long chapter 'Gone Fishing', the whole thing is about so much more.

Nick covers the habitat, biology, conservation and management of brown trout, basing the vast bulk of what he writes on science. But he does this in his own, inimitable style, creating something that is enjoyable, utterly readable and not the least bit dry. The book and its messages are as relevant today as they were a decade ago.

The only snag is that *The Nature of Trout* is out of print. But, it is available through Amazon and other reputable book suppliers for as little as 1 penny. You'll not spend a better penny. Or even £25 if you buy it new.



## WTT SHOP

Solve your Christmas present crisis with a gift membership or something else from the shop.

**W**TT memberships and merchandise can be ordered via the Shop on our website at <http://www.wildtrout.org/>; by sending your order and cheque to the WTT Office; or by debit/credit card over the phone – call the WTT Office on 023 9257 0985. All postage prices are for the UK, please enquire for overseas.

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**Car stickers and mugs**

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Mugs – £9 + £3.20 p&p

### CDs

- The Uplands River Habitat Manual £10 + £2 p&p
- The Chalkstream Habitat Manual £10 + £2 p&p
- Urban Rivers Restoration Guidelines £10 + £2 p&p
- Rivers – Working for Wild Trout £10 + £2 p&p



### Paperbacks

- Simple Guide to Caddis Larvae – £6 + £1.50 p&p
- Guide to the Adult Caddis Flies or Sedge Flies – £3.80 + £1.50 p&p
- The Wild Trout Survival Guide – £10 + £2.16 p&p



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