

WTT Annual Report and Accounts 2012/13 – Activities

Activities of the Wild Trout Trust in 2012/13

WTT provides advice and practical help to landowners, fishing clubs and other community groups, Rivers and Wildlife Trusts and government agencies on sensitive and sustainable management options for rivers and lakes, employing during 2012/13 (in full-time equivalents), a Director, 5.5 field staff, 0.5 administration officer and 0.4 fundraising officer.

In 2012/13, WTT:

- completed 59 advisory visits and reports, 33 project proposals and 28 practical demonstration events, enhancing habitat on at least 215 km of river and engaging approximately 460 volunteers and 2400 volunteer hours;
- with a range of partners, completed 4 significant projects in southern and eastern England, enhancing habitat along at least a further 8 km of river;
- presented talks at international, national and local events including conferences, fishing club meetings and to student groups, spreading messages on aquatic conservation to an audience of approximately 1350 people;
- deployed Mayfly in the Classroom as an educational tool with 38 teachers and volunteers and approximately 800 schoolchildren, from north-east Scotland to Cornwall;
- developed the WTT website as an information-rich resource, including a range of informational videos and technical papers;
- employed 2 new staff members to deliver more habitat enhancement advice and practical help and to extend the reach of its Mayfly in the Classroom programme and expand technical information and advice available through the WTT website;
- raised £55000 in an annual auction to drive the cost-effective work of the Trust.



Figures 1 - 4: volunteers on WTT practical demonstration events in 2012/13

WTT's core conservation activity is the provision of advice and practical help through advisory visits (and follow-on reports), project proposals and practical demonstration events. In 2012/13, the Conservation Officers worked with fishery and river interests across the British Isles, from Sussex to Argyll and Norfolk to County Cork, completing 59 advisory visits and reports. The recommendations in advisory visit reports were acted on by over 80% of recipients, leading to habitat enhancements or beneficial changes to river management e.g. alteration of working party or fish stocking practice. Advisory visit reports are accessible through the WTT website (www.wildtrout.org/avs), after a simple log-in process; the site now includes over 400 reports, dating back to 2001. In 2012/13, 33 project proposals were drawn-up by WTT Conservation Officers, often developing in greater detail recommendations in advisory visit reports and used in gaining consent, funding and implementation of practical enhancement works (e.g. Great Stour and Gwash project examples below). Especially noteworthy was the number of practical demonstration events carried out in 2012/13, where local volunteers learned to recognise good and impacted riverine habitat and practised habitat enhancement techniques under the guidance of WTT staff. Feedback from those involved in the demonstration events was extremely positive and there are many examples where local interests have taken the knowledge acquired with WTT and applied it further on their home river (e.g. Chess, Ver, Wey). All of this activity has enhanced habitat on at least 215 km of river and involved an estimated 460 volunteers and 2400 volunteer hours, for the benefit of wild trout and other wildlife in and around the river.



Figures 5 & 6: the mill pond on the River Glaven, before (left, upstream view) and after (right, downstream view) the WTT-led channel restoration work

WTT, working with a number of local partners, completed four significant habitat enhancement projects during 2012/13. In Norfolk, the River Glaven was impounded above an ancient mill house, but a WTT-led project, funded by the Environment Agency (EA), has renaturalised the river within the former pond bed and installed a fish pass and monitoring system under the mill house; sea trout and eels can now pass up and down the river with ease (Figures 5 & 6). In Kent, the River Great Stour has been unsympathetically dredged in the past, leaving a straightened and over-wide channel, choked with reeds; WTT and a group of dynamic partners, has recreated self-sustaining, diverse riverine habitat along a 2km reach (Figures 7 & 8).



Figures 7 & 8: the River Great Stour before and during this WTT-led channel restoration

In Rutland, a WTT project proposal was developed with the Welland Rivers Trust to reinstate meanders to the River Gwash, adding habitat diversity to this previously straightened and impounded river (Figure 9). On the River Itchen in Hampshire, a collaborative, phased project with the local EA is progressively enhancing the habitat for fish, invertebrates and plants where cattle poaching had over-widened and degraded the river channel (Figure 10).



Figures 9 & 10: Habitat diversity restored to the Rivers Gwash (left) and Itchen (right).

WTT disseminated its conservation messages through talks at 30 events across the UK during 2012/13, to a total estimated audience of approximately 1350 people, including international conferences, government agency workshops, many fishing club meetings and student lectures (Figure 11).



Figure 11: Plumpton College students in a WTT practical 'talk' in the river



Figure 12: Mayfly in the Classroom training in Scotland with the Moray Firth Trout Initiative

Mayfly in the Classroom (MiC, www.wildtrout.org/content/mayfly-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. In August 2012, WTT employed a Conservation and Engagement Officer, funded through a private donation, with the responsibility of disseminating MiC, training 38 teachers and volunteers who in turn used the tool with an estimated 800 school children (Figure 12). Additionally, in June 2012, WTT employed a new Conservation Officer, its fifth such post, to expand delivery of advice and practical help.

The new WTT website is an open-access, information-rich resource for aquatic conservation. The site houses a wide range of material including previous advisory visit reports, project case studies, technical CDs as pdfs, information papers synthesising primary literature (e.g. Figure 13) and an expanding list of 'how to' videos (Figure 14), adding to the hard copy *Wild Trout Survival Guide* (on paper) and the DVD, *Rivers: Working for Wild Trout*. In 2012/13, the website attracted approximately 5000 unique visits per month with over 40000 downloads, 52% of which were for

WTT advice and guidance. WTT had active followers of its blogs (e.g. Trout in the Town at www.wildtrout.org/blog), facebook pages (www.facebook.com/pages/The-Wild-Trout-Trust) and twitter feeds; much of this social media activity is coordinated by a volunteer.

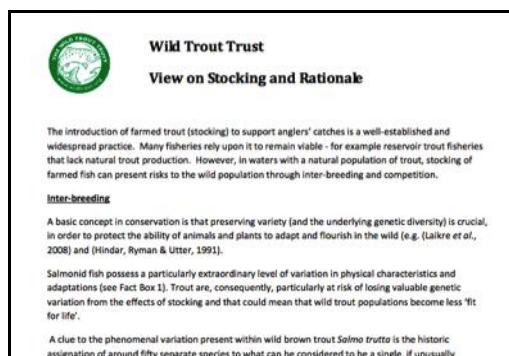


Figure 13: excerpt from one of the WTT information paper on its website



Figure 14: one of the growing library of WTT 'how to' videos

WTT's annual auction of 220 lots attracted donations of over £55000, significant funds to drive the Trust's conservation work. The auction raises the WTT profile and provides an invaluable opportunity for engagement with a broad community that actively supports the work of the Trust.



Figure 15: success in the WTT auction 2013

WTT is indebted to its many partners for their invaluable contribution to our work. The Environment Agency continued its essential support of WTT during 2012/13, with further important contributions from Thames and Severn Trent Water, the fishing tackle manufacturers Orvis and Sage, the Ninevah Trust, the Fishmongers' Company and many private donors and supporters.

Volunteers

Volunteers continued to be a vital part of WTT's work in 2012/13, 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 benefitted from approximately 3000 volunteer hours at a conservative value of £100000. We owe all these volunteers our grateful thanks.