

# News

WILD TROUT TRUST  
AUTUMN 2017



## Annual Raffle

To be drawn at 7pm, Tuesday  
12 December 2017 at The  
Thomas Lord, West Meon,  
Hants. Tickets are available via  
the enclosed order form or by  
visiting [www.wildtrout.org](http://www.wildtrout.org).



# Wild Trout Trust Conservation Awards 2017

## Judges Report

By Paul Gaskell

**T**he 2017 awards yet again delivered a raft of fantastic projects over a vast range of conditions and scope. As ever, the judging and the scoring proved to be a daunting task – though this year we did witness a near unstoppable juggernaut of a project in the ‘Large Project’ category...but I’ll get to that shortly. First of all, please give your attention and admiration to all three category winning entries PLUS a special Judges’ Commendation award as follows:

Botany Bay Conservancy Restoration Project, Botany Bay Community Interest Group (WINNER – Contribution to Wild Trout Conservation Award)

**T**he extent of the works (weir removal, habitat improvements, land-management changes and community engagement events) achieved by this small, passionate group was extremely impressive. Tackling the connectivity and impoundment caused by the weir and infrastructure of a derelict fish-farming facility was coupled with creating new spawning habitat to allow wild trout to utilise new stream and lake habitat. In addition, the way that this work was integrated into the conservation management and engagement activities across the whole site is a brilliant example to all.



### Bringing Back the Bulbourne, EA (WINNER – Medium-Scale Habitat Enhancement Scheme)

**I**t may seem strange to say, but when it comes to the eight themed areas that are examined during the WTT Conservation Awards assessment process, Government-body projects are often constrained by standard procedures. However, here the EA showed exemplar partnership work with the Box Moor Trust: engagement of volunteers, decisive habitat interventions and great impact for quite a modest spend scored highly. This was compounded by excellent consultation with graziers and other Commons stakeholders – as well as post-project guided walks and many more creative solutions and approaches over and above the excellent habitat works themselves.



### Mill River Nature Reserve, Shingay-cum-Wendy Wildlife Committee / South Cambs. Conservation Consultants partnership (Judges’ Commendation)

**T**his project all but tied with the eventual winner in the Medium-Scale project category, and it was only differences in two key areas that the winning project edged in front. However, the depth and variety of creative solutions and commitment to creating and sustaining the strong partnership structure (and the associated excellent sustainability) were extremely impressive. The fortnightly meetings of the volunteer committee, partnership with adjoining

solar energy site and milestones approach to achieving ecological sustainability on the maturation of the 23-year lease on the 75-acre site were unmatched. Similarly, the project scored the only perfect 10 in any category (for specific benefit to wider conservation). Well done to all in the Shingay-cum-Wendy Wildlife Committee / South Cambs Conservation Consultants partnership.





## Swindale Beck and Haweswater Estate Restoration Scheme, EA & RSPB (WINNER – Large-Scale Habitat Enhancement Scheme)

**P**ut simply; a Very Impressive project. Examined from every angle the work carried out in restoring this remote, straightened section of Cumbrian river was excellent. Local engagement of stakeholders through pre-project meetings and volunteer works during delivery was very good (especially

given the remote location). The impact on the wider catchment, suitability of the techniques used and creative leveraging of funding to achieve greater benefits to wider society and general conservation benefits, as well as salmonid fish populations, all scored very highly too. Wider benefits included reducing water treatment

energy requirements while improving connectivity and more natural flow-regimes. The project is also acting to inspire others through the extensive communications efforts (including high quality video production).

## Shortlisted Projects

**I**t is absolutely vital to stress what an achievement it is both to complete a successful habitat improvement project and also to be shortlisted for these awards. The margins of difference across all projects are slim and the projects themselves are already exceptional before/without being entered into the

awards process. In fact, subjecting any of these projects to a standardised process of assessment is actually almost insulting, given that all submitted projects deserve huge accolades. Don't be fooled by the unavoidable bias in the reporting of successful habitat projects in social and traditional media. That is basically the same as imagining

that starved catwalk models give an accurate impression of average body type and shape. Well done to all shortlisted and winning projects and congratulations for having the grit and creating/riding the luck necessary to complete your works. Please be inspired by the following projects – listed alphabetically for fairness.

## ARK Bearwater Community Days (River Dun); Action for the River Kennet

**A**wonderful series of habitat works, engagement and monitoring events that used, not only ARK volunteers, but also residents of the retirement complex through whose grounds the River Dun flows. Further community awareness was also raised by partnering with the Scouts to carry out a 'yellow fish' surface water drain marking scheme in Hungerford (photo right).



### Healthy Churn Community Days; The Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group

Part of a much wider programme of works (which the judges would definitely like to see submitted in one of the larger-scale project categories in future), these community day events were a great component of a large patchwork of excellent projects. A series of five local volunteer days for direct 'wet-wellied' action in and around the River Churn featuring lake-habitat improvement, tree canopy restructuring and reinstatement of the river bank after poaching by cattle.



### Save the Sleia; Lincolnshire Rivers Trust

Miraculous improvements to a highly degraded and straightened stream using a combination of riverbed and riverbank redistribution, planting and brushwood structural installations with great involvement of volunteers in the delivery works. As well as trout now being sighted further upstream, new spawning grounds appear to have been created with redds appearing in the improved reaches. Creative and adaptive work in a highly challenging, developed setting (photo left).

### River Welland – Gretton to Barrowden; Environment Agency

Brilliant work to reverse the impacts of channel 'incision' (a river becoming separated from its floodplain) which leads to phosphate-rich sediment being retained in the river instead of being deposited onto (and fertilising) the adjacent land. Pulling back the steep banks, pinching the channel and re-establishing stone and gravel in the substrate, as well as diversifying the flow and structure within the channel, has imparted big improvements to a long section of the Welland (photo right).



### Evenlode Natural Flood Management Project; Evenlode Catchment Partnership

A bold combination of land-use changes, water and nutrient runoff interception, riverbed raising/riffle creation, woody material introduction and channel reshaping across multiple sites in the Evenlode catchment. Great examples of good practice for managing our land and waterways sustainably and for the benefit of both society and wider biodiversity (photo left).

## Wroxton Mill Rewilding Project; Mark Burgess Watson

**A**stonishing use of WTT guidance videos by owners Mark and Fiona in collaboration with Douglas Reeve of 4D Landscapes have transformed an over-deep, silted, straight ditch into great potential trout habitat. Sections formerly lacking a vegetated riparian buffer strip have been allowed to grow



(in conjunction with removal of colossal Leylandii) and a variety of riffle-creation and in-stream installations of root-wad, timber and stone structure. Creation of reed-bed areas to attenuate nutrient-rich runoff were also combined with influencing owners upstream and downstream – in a bid to further increase the viability of the streams for wild trout populations (photo right).



## Woodplumpton Brook Restoration; Wyre Rivers Trust

**A**gain – problems of extensive channel incision, coupled with widespread cattle poaching and associated faecal matter inputs, have been tackled with multiple kilometres of fencing and installation of natural material features in the channel. Winning material on-site (and achieving the necessary landowner buy-in) allowed an additional 330 metres of fencing to be installed with the savings made on materials procurement. A really inspiring project on what may have been tempting to deem too great a challenge.



## Parting thoughts

**A**ll that is left to say is, once again, huge congratulations to all shortlisted projects. It has been a privilege as always to be introduced to these works – and to be inspired by all the fantastic results that have been achieved.

Many thanks and well done from both myself and my fellow judge, Martin Janes at the River Restoration Centre.

**Paul Gaskell**

## Enter the 2018 Conservation Awards

**W**e want to hear about projects at all scales, from improvements to streams at the bottom of the garden, through to high finance catchment-wide initiatives. Our application process is simple, with a closing date in late July, so keep an eye on the WTT website for further details and plan to enter in 2018.

## WTT's Conservation Awards 2017, supported by Thames Water

**W**ell over 100 guests attended our Wild Trout Trust evening at the Savile Club in

London to present the 2017 Conservation Awards for the best river habitat conservation projects. The evening was introduced by WTT Chairman, David Fraser and Director, Shaun Leonard, with presentations by Richard Aylard of Thames Water, generous sponsors of the Awards for the fifth and their final year.

The 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.

The evening also recognised the Wild Trout Hero 2017, someone who has made a significant difference to the future of the UK's favourite fish – the wild brown trout.

The Judges Report above describes more on the winners which were:

The Contribution to Wild Trout Conservation Award: Botany Bay Conservancy Restoration Project, Botany Bay Community Interest Group

The Medium-Scale Habitat Enhancement Scheme Award: Bringing Back the Bulbourne, Environment Agency in partnership with the Box Moor Trust

The Large-Scale Habitat Enhancement Scheme Award: Swindale Beck and Haweswater Estate Restoration Scheme, Environment Agency and RSPB

For the first time, a Judges' Commendation was offered to Shingay-cum-Wendy Wildlife Committee with the South Cambridgeshire Conservation Consultants Partnership for their work on the Mill River Nature Reserve.

The Wild Trout Hero Award 2017 was Vaughan Lewis, bringing the cheer of the night! Read more on Vaughan and his award elsewhere in this newsletter.

**Photos on next page.**



WINNER – Medium-Scale Habitat Enhancement Scheme: Bringing Back the Bulbourne project.



Judges' Commendation: Mill River Nature Reserve project.



WINNER – Large-Scale Habitat Enhancement Scheme: Swindale Beck project.



WINNER – Contribution to Wild Trout Conservation Award: Botany Bay project.



# WTT's Wild Trout Hero 2017

**W**TT nominates an annual Wild Trout Hero, to recognise someone whose work has furthered the cause of wild trout conservation and management in Britain and Ireland. This year's Hero might already be a River Champion 2017, awarded by the River Restoration Centre in May, but he's overdue public recognition by WTT. He was working for wild trout

## Ed Eley – WTT's Assistant Conservation Officer

**W**e are delighted to announce that WTT's latest recruit is Ed Eley, our Assistant Conservation Officer, who's working especially closely with Mike Blackmore and Andy Thomas in southern England. We chose Ed from a field of truly excellent applicants, impressed by his passion for rivers and wild trout and his practical background, including some high-level chainsaw skills; he's also a very keen trout fisher.

Ed's post is inspired by Pasco James, a young man who died tragically in 2010 and in whose memory we hold our annual 3-Fly Fundraiser at Meon Springs Trout Fishery. The money this event has raised will fund Ed's post and hopefully allow him to absorb knowledge from Mike, Andy and the other WTT top-notch chaps and contribute to our work across the south.



Ed Eley on his first day with WTT.

on both sides of the Irish Sea long before WTT's inception, offering advice, lobbying and practically restoring rivers, the focus of his business, Windrush AEC. But, additionally, he works tirelessly and voluntarily for WTT and in his local patch in the Cotswolds to protect and improve rivers and their wildlife, including their trout. Our 2017 Wild Trout Hero is Vaughan Lewis (photo right and front cover).



## Conservation Awards sponsorship

**F**rom 2018 we will be seeking a new sponsor for the Conservation Awards. The awards recognise and encourage excellence in wild trout habitat management and conservation and celebrate the efforts, ingenuity and imagination of all those involved. We are very lucky to have had sponsorship from Thames Water since 2013, but there is now an opportunity for a company, individual or group to sponsor these high profile awards. The awards have historically been presented at an informal evening event in central London, but we are very open to suggestions regarding location, venue and type of event. If you would like more information please contact Denise Ashton on 07802 454157 or [dashton@wildtrout.org](mailto:dashton@wildtrout.org)

to bid by post, we will bid on eBay on your behalf so you are not disadvantaged. Many lots are won by postal bidders, so if the online process isn't for you, you can still take part.

We raised a fantastic amount in 2017 – the final total was £98,670. With your help, we will do our best to raise this much, or more (!) again. The auction is a very significant part of our funding. The money raised helps pay for the 'in river' practical habitat improvement projects which you can find described by our Conservation Officers in this newsletter. In particular, it helps pay for the design, planning and preparation work that is very difficult to fund from other sources.

We aim to make the auction accessible and affordable to everyone, so we have a huge number of lots that range in price from £20 to several thousand. Fishing days are very popular and make up the majority of the lots, but flies, art and literature are also on offer. If you or your club or syndicate would like to offer a 'lot', please get in touch. Many friends are made and clubs and syndicates joined as a result of auction lot fishing days.

There is a wonderful 'buzz' around the auction that helps to raise awareness of the WTT and our work with a very wide community of anglers. We very much appreciate the help that members and supporters give to publicise the auction, and our thanks go to the donors and bidders who make the auction such a success.

For more information, please contact Denise Ashton on 07802 454157 or [dashton@wildtrout.org](mailto:dashton@wildtrout.org)

## WTT Auction 2018

**O**ur 2018 fundraising auction will take place from Friday 9 to Sunday 18 March. Printed catalogues should be with members in early February, and the auction lots will also be on the WTT website. We will use eBay, as usual, as their service to us is free and they have good security and tried and tested processes for managing online auctions. If you prefer

# What WTT Got Up to in 2016/17

WTT is obliged to submit its audited accounts to the Charity Commission, together with a report on its activities, at the end of each year. This is the text of that activity report for the 2016/17 year (1 May 2016 to 30 April 2017), slightly amended to remove some of the many photos in the original. When approved by our Board of Trustees, we'll publish the accounts and report on our website.

**T**he Wild Trout Trust (WTT) is a charitable company limited by guarantee that works across Britain and Ireland to conserve, protect and restore habitats for wild trout and associated species. We provide practical help and advice, working with landowners, fishing clubs and other community groups, rivers and wildlife trusts and government agencies on sensitive and sustainable management options for rivers and lakes.

## The Headlines

In 2016/2017 WTT:

- ran 81 practical demonstration events, involving local communities in improving habitat in their river,
- carried out 196 advisory visits to river and lake sites, with around 50% of the visits yielding a follow-on report of recommendations,
- worked directly with over 3600 volunteers in more than 20000 hours of practical work across Britain,
- improved habitat on at least 365 km of river, evidenced by physical change in the river, the way people

manage their river and in some cases by measured, positive biological response,

- worked with a range of institutions on post-graduate projects & widely disseminated ongoing research on aspects of freshwater ecology,
- spread messages on aquatic conservation through a variety of media to an audience of many thousands of people.

## Practical help and advice

**W**TT works with river and fishery interests across Britain and Ireland in our core role: to provide practical help and advice to local community groups and landowners, through demonstration events, the drawing-up of technical proposals and advice on river habitat improvement techniques.

In 2016/17, we carried out 196 site visits to offer expert advice, with a written report of recommendations in around fifty percent of those visits. In many cases, our officers walked the bank with a small group of volunteers, but on several occasions during this year, that walk was followed by an illustrated presentation to a larger audience, outlining observations and thoughts from the day. Our advice produced action for the river by over 80% of recipients. For example, at sites in many counties of England, river-side fences were erected to exclude damaging livestock grazing and poaching, weirs were removed with machines, hand tools and bare hands and gravel and woody material introduced to create diverse habitats and niches that benefit not only fish, but plants, inver-

tebrates, birds and mammals that are reliant on more naturally functioning rivers. With WTT advice, many angling clubs changed the way they manage their fisheries, including reduction or cessation of stocking with farm-reared trout. Some of the sites visited were very short river reaches, less than 200m, but in other cases, such as on tributaries of the River Tyne in Northumberland, our Conservation Officer walked and reported on over 50km of stream! The WTT website ([www.wildtrout.org/avs](http://www.wildtrout.org/avs)) is now home to over 600 advisory visit reports, covering all corners of Britain and Ireland; these reports lay out in simple terms the work that can be and is being done to make life better for our rivers.

We also ran 81 practical habitat improvement events, across Britain, where over 900 volunteers, under the supervision of our team of six expert WTT Conservation Officers, saw demonstrations of simple but effective techniques for the river, then put those techniques into practice. These events ranged in duration from one to ten days and used habitat improvement techniques such as bank repair and reinforcement using natural materials, removal of weirs and introduction of gravel and wood. Those volunteers then further applied the knowledge they gained with WTT in caring for their own river reaches. Our Conservation Officers always remain at the end of a phone line to offer more advice and support when needed; this ongoing dialogue is an invaluable feature of WTT's work with its partners.

In recognition of the value of these practical demonstration days, Thames Water and separately Yorkshire Water, funded WTT to work with many local groups on a programme of Rivers & Wetlands Community Days, practical days of river and wetland habitat improvement, led by local volunteers. In 2016/17, this work in the Thames Water catchment funded 23 events with £75,000 of bursaries and involved over 1,200 volunteers in 33 events across 19 sub-catchments. In Yorkshire, during the pilot phase of the project, WTT led 3 events with 45 volunteers involving 12 angling clubs on tributaries of the Rivers Aire and Swale, with 4 further events planned in the next 18 months.

All of this advisory and practical





work has enhanced habitat on at least 365km of river and directly involved an estimated 3,600 volunteers in more than 20,000 hours of activity and we believe that we are making a difference to our rivers and the wider environment, not only for how those rivers function but also for their wildlife and the people that enjoy them (see below, *The Impact of WTT's Work*).

WTT prides itself on engaging and working with partners and we are greatly indebted to the many: the fishing clubs, other conservation volunteer groups, rivers and wildlife trusts, landowners, the Environment Agency (EA) in England, the Angling Trust and some water companies, most notably Anglian, Severn Trent, Thames and Yorkshire Water.

## Restoring Rivers

In 2016/17, we completed a number of river restoration projects, again with a host of partners. In Hampshire, working with excellent landowners and the local EA team, we designed and delivered a major river restoration project on 2km of the River Dever, narrowing the river, varying the depth of its bed and introducing gravel and woody material to create complex habitat. The project was extremely well-received by the people involved in this river reach and also immediately by its trout.

In Yorkshire, tributaries of the River Aire are riddled with weirs, historical legacies of milling, preventing the natural functioning of the becks and the free passage of their fish. WTT, working again with the EA and local Rivers Trust, started a programme of removal or notching of these weirs, in 2016/17 tackling six. A job for life remains to

tackle the rest!

In Staffordshire, WTT's work on small tributaries of the River Trent, in partnership with the EA, Groundwork and the Trent Valley Partnership, has restored habitat to these much-abused, straightened streams. Electric fishing surveys of the restored reaches have subsequently discovered trout in places where they've never previously been recorded.

Elsewhere in Hampshire and Staffordshire and also in Cumbria, Derbyshire, Lincolnshire, Somerset, Suffolk and Wiltshire, with the local rivers and wildlife trusts, EA, water companies and teams of local volunteers, we have contributed to significant river restoration work, to improve habitat for trout and many other plant, invertebrate, fish, bird and mammal species. WTT was a contributing partner to the River Avon: Hampshire, Wiltshire & Dorset Project that won the prestigious River Prize 2017 & Nigel Holmes Trophy, awarded by the River Restoration Centre.

## The Impact of WTT's Work

We can assess the impact of what we do by looking at physical alterations in the river and its habitats, through indications of how people change the way they manage their river reaches and in some cases, by measuring biological response e.g. whether there are more trout in a river after input from WTT and its partners. Much of WTT's work produces dramatic differences in the way a river functions. For example, raising the bed of once-dredged rivers with introduced gravel and woody material to add variety also allows more natural function and creates habitat di-

versity. Plants quickly colonise that new habitat and fish respond rapidly too; we've seen this across many of our improved river sites.

As noted above, over 80% of the recipients of WTT advice implement that advice, with informal feedback indicating the value gained.

## Research on Trout and Spreading the Word

Through our Research & Conservation Officer and links to a number of institutions, we are continuing to contribute to both ongoing and proposed research projects. Several of the restoration measures were completed on the Ribble Life Heritage Lottery-funded study in association with the Ribble Rivers Trust and Lancaster University, and so post-works monitoring is underway and sampling for food web changes will begin imminently. Sampling has also been ongoing in Lincolnshire to study the chemical make-up of large brown trout on the River Welland to discern whether these unusual fish are coming in from the sea, are river-resident or possibly stocked. The outcome of this work will have practical implications for how the water in this very heavily regulated river is managed and whether fish access to and from the sea is working. The EA and the Zoological Society of London have instigated several other sampling collections at similar rivers along the East coast to mirror this study. We have been in dialogue with the Fishmongers' Company, advising on knowledge gaps that could be exploited by smaller research grants made available by Masters by Research programmes, and we submitted research proposals to various academic institutes as potential MSc projects (e.g. 'An ecohydraulic approach to restoring riffle and pool mesohabitat structure for the River Holme' in collaboration with River Holme Connections).

Disseminating the outputs from many research studies that inform the management and conservation of our wild trout and our rivers has been a focus in the last 12 months. We continue to do this through our annual, widely-acclaimed journal, *Salmo trutta*, newsletters, the website (via the news pages), and bespoke information papers on particular topics, such as beavers and fish-eating birds (with an update on catch & release in prepara-

tion). There have also been articles in the Institute of Fisheries Management magazine (*Fish*) and the Freshwater Biological Association News, as well as presentations to conferences (e.g. The River Restoration Centre annual conference), workshops (e.g. EA Fisheries and FCRM seminars) and meetings of groups such as fishing clubs and conservation volunteers (e.g. Angling Trust regional fisheries fora). However, an extra push this year has been to open up one of our blogs to early-career researchers. Eight PhD students have used this venture to practise their scientific communication to non-technical specialists whilst keeping us abreast of current developments in research, from using genetics to underpin management strategies to the impacts of abstraction and invasive species on salmonids. Promoting this aspect via social media has no doubt contributed to the marked increase in traffic via the website (>20,000 visitors accessing 5 pages each per month) or via Twitter which now has >6000 followers (monthly reach >25,000 people with 1200 accessing WTT profile and 200 mentions).

### Fundraising

**W**TT's fundraising activities are vital in driving our conservation work. The Trust benefits from the generosity of our 2500 supporters and a number of fundraising events, the most significant of which is our annual, on-line auction. In 2016/17, 300 lots attracted donations of over £90000. The auction also raises the WTT profile and provides an invaluable opportunity for engagement with a broad community that actively supports our work. We

## Examples of feedback from recipients of WTT input in 2016/17

**T**he WTT really do know their stuff when it comes to creating this type of in-river feature and it was great to learn new techniques alongside the angling clubs and river keepers. What was achieved in one day was astonishing and this sort of support helps anglers continue to enhance and protect their waters in years to come. Westcountry Rivers Trust, July 2016

We think that really looking after the wild stocks from now on, including the sea trout, via the habitat restoration work recommended by the Wild Trout Trust, is much the best way to go rather than having to rely on expensive stocked fish artificially

compensating for a degraded habitat. Inler Angling Club, Oct 2016

I really do believe that you have moved forward understanding (indeed acceptance) of the case for more wild trout, more judicious stocking and more sensitive habitat management. Ness Flyfishers, Nov 2016

Following an excellent [WTT] instructional day...the Club has been seriously reassessing its current aims and practices...to cease stocking the river with farmed brown trout and focus on improving the river and its banks to the benefit of our trout. Danby Fishing Club, Feb 2017

are hugely indebted to all who take part in our auction and other fundraising work.

### Staff and Volunteers

**I**n the 2016/17 year, WTT employed a Director, a team of 5 Conservation Officers, a Research & Conservation Officer, a Trust Administrator, a fundraising officer and a Company Secretary. A sixth Conservation Officer joined the team at the very end of our business year, to work especially in Central and Eastern England.

However, the role of our volunteers is crucial to what we do, maintaining the Trust's presence with social media,

uploading lots and proof-reading the catalogue 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.

Thank you all.



# Lyme Brook – Latest TinTT Partnership Works PLUS Evidence of Wild Trout Recolonising!

Paul Gaskell reports on a Trout in The Town project.

**T**ake a bow Groundwork West Midlands (particularly Richard, Francesca & Chris) – myself and Tim Jacklin from team Wild Trout Trust really enjoyed working with you and the great volunteers from the National Citizens Service. Together, we turned what was possibly one of the straightest of any straightened sections of brook into a section with quite a lot more variety. This is what the section looked like in winter (photo: below top-left).

Though, in high summer, almost none of the water was actually visible when the 360 digger arrived on site ahead of the volunteers (I wanted a day to sculpt the basic shape of the brook before Tim, Francesca, Chris and the volunteers came on site for days 2 and 3). So, once we found the wet bit of the river, operator David and me could start to collaborate in remodeling the stream. I'm always in awe of how much control these folks have with a machine and bucket – and we soon got into a great working and

communication routine. It is fantastic to see the physical changes to the river taking shape before your eyes – and always amazing that what I can visualise mentally is possible for a talented driver to create in reality (photo: below top-right).

Re-casting the material won from creating the bend allows a shallow bench/small floodplain to be recreated within the incised channel. Using any existing root-masses on the opposite bank to each bench that we created let us steer the river left and right. Having created a new cross-sectional profile and plan-form at the end of the first day – that paved the way for the team of specialists and volunteers to consolidate and improve the basic skeleton of the wiggling brook. Having consolidated the bank toe along the deeper (scour pool) habitat on the outside of each bend with brash (which also produced instant cover habitat) – we could then create a framework to stabilise the shallow benches. This was done by installing a larger log towards the centre of each bench which would retain material on its upstream side. Then radial 'laths' of long, straight and

smaller diameter stems were staked over the top of a thin layer of brash (photo: below bottom-right).

As well as stabilising the redistributed material, this allowed us to plant native plant species (principally flag iris and sedge) in amongst this matrix. Over time, as well as providing valuable floral diversity, the root masses of those plants will also act to further stabilise the new path and profile of the brook.

Well done all – thank you for your hard work across all aspects of the project, and thanks for going along with my design ideas too. Watch this space for updates on how these works bed in over time (and any additional work we can do on the site when the opportunity arises)...And the big payoff is...

On a previously-completed section of works on the Lyme Brook (about 2 miles downstream of this latest phase of works), the EA have now captured the first two wild trout in a fisheries population survey since their records began...RESULT! (photo: below bottom-left).



## Heavy hooves and native crabs

Andy Thomas reports on a project on the headwaters of the River Itchen.

**W**e have just finished our first project on the Cheriton Stream, aka the Tichborne and also referred to as the official headwater source of the River Itchen. This little Hampshire chalkstream is an absolute delight and for most of its length is wild trout nirvana. Indeed, the Tichborne is one of only a handful of streams designated as a Wild Fishery Protection Zone, where the EA will not permit any trout stocking with hatchery-reared strains.

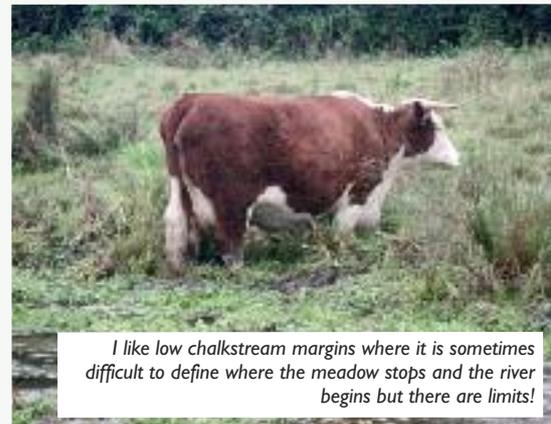
The two fishing clubs/syndicates that enjoy fishing rights on this stream do an admirable job in maintaining high quality-habitat synonymous with a chalkstream that is designated as a Special Area of Conservation and an example of the 'best of the best'. Along with the Candover Brook and the River Alre, the Tichborne also supports a small and incredibly vulnerable population of native white-clawed crayfish, in all probability the last viable populations left in Hampshire – unless you know otherwise?

I have for the last 20 years been keeping an eye on a lower stretch of this river where the valley is straddled by a main road I regularly use. It seemed to me that the river channel was gradually becoming wider and shallower over time and I thought a closer inspection might reveal some opportunities to give the river a helping hand. On closer inspection, I was greeted by some seriously heavy beef-burgers in the shape of a modest-sized herd of Herefords. Now the farmer who owns the cattle and leases the grazing from the estate is also in a conservation stewardship agreement with Natural England. The ecology of those river meadows is dependent on a tightly controlled grazing regime.

This is all fine and dandy for the meadows themselves but where the low chalkstream banks gently give way to the soft margin that forms the banks of the channel then one-and-half-ton Herefords might not be the

conservation grazing tool of choice! Fortunately, the farmer is a jolly good egg and he has been incredibly supportive of measures that will see both the meadows grazed sensitively but also the river given improved protection. Unfortunately, the consequences of these heavy animals trampling the banks has led to the channel losing definition, becoming over time excessively wide and shallow, so much so that it is possible to wade the full 500m of channel in wellingtons without any fear of a wet sock.

A chat with the fishing club revealed that they have virtually written this lower section off as a basket case. Another conversation with the local EA officers revealed a keen desire to try and find a solution which would



*I like low chalkstream margins where it is sometimes difficult to define where the meadow stops and the river begins but there are limits!*

task of annually cutting and removing all of the vegetation from the bank tops to reduce risks of nutrient enrichment from composted, cut plants. Taking on another long section of 'cut and collect' was simply not an option the club wished to take on, even if the fencing was free. The



*No classic wide-buffer zone here – grazing under the wire is to be encouraged.*

see the conservation status of the meadows retained, whilst also ensuring that the river channel itself could support improved populations of wild brown trout and native crayfish. An offer of some project funding was on the table if WTT could find a solution that was acceptable to all parties.

Simply fence it, I hear you cry. In this particular case, conventional fencing was deemed to be unacceptable because of the risks associated with the marginal zone turning to scrub and adversely impacting on the conservation status of the meadows. On other 'fenced' sections of the Tichborne, the club face the laborious

solution came out of one of those classic site meetings between all parties when it soon became apparent that the fishermen did not necessarily require a bank to fish from, being perfectly happy to fish the channel via wading. If the fence line could be situated very close to the water's edge then in theory, the cattle can graze the top of the bank, facilitated with a higher than normal bottom wire, but without the risk of heavy hooves bashing into the soft margins. It is anticipated that the classic chalkstream herbs and true aquatic plants will colonise the wet margins and gradually squeeze the channel width, thus

creating improved in-channel habitats for both trout and crayfish. The few pioneering trees and scrubs that might pop up in the future can be easily tackled by the fishing club.

Prior to the fencing, we spent a day creating three slightly deeper pool and run features through a combination of loosening the bed with a tracked excavator and laying in live tree trunk deflectors to ensure the shallow pool features remain viable. Changing the previously flat topography to a situation where slightly deeper pool habitats give way to an up-ramp of clean loose gravel is guaranteed to provide pre-spawning adult trout with improved holding opportunities immediately adjacent to ideal spawning sites. Hopefully, the long shallow runs between these features will now be extremely productive for juvenile trout, given the likely vegetative cover that is bound to develop now that the heavyweight cattle have been excluded.

A last touch has been to import a couple of trailer loads of large flint cobbles ranging from cricket to rugby ball size to dot around the channel. These will not only create desirable residences for native crayfish but also provide much needed diversity in the flow patterns over the long shallow glides and riffles that will undoubtedly



A freshly dug pool with associated spawning ramp on the tail.

also benefit juvenile trout. Many thanks to Ben Rushbrook from Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust for providing the guidance needed to ensure crayfish were not only protected during the pool and run creation but also in giving us a steer on how best to use the flints which were kindly donated to us from a farmer contact of our very own Ed Eley.

Will it all work as planned? I will keep you posted.



Ed sorting through the flints whilst the fencing contractor cracks on with making one of the water gates.

## Peter Lapsley's Legacy Going Strong

**W**TT members might remember that the late and revered Peter Lapsley bequeathed his fly tying kit to the Trust, the auction proceeds of which we used in 2015 to buy fourteen sets of Snowbee fly gear, for use at Peter's beloved Latimer Park Lakes.

Well, Paul Jennings of the River Chess Association reports that Peter's kit is still very much in use, teaching kids from Stony Dean School how to fly fish: "We are doing a weekly lesson at Latimer Park, with thanks to Restore Hope Latimer and the Latimer Fly Fishers for giving access to the fishery. As well as stocked rainbows, there is a good head of wild brown

trout and rainbows which breed in the lake. We are teaching in groups of 4 and by the end of this season we will have worked with 12 children. The plan is to start again next spring and hereafter to teach 28 children per season."

Peter must be chuffed.



## There Really is Snail Mail!

Christina in the WTT office recently received this letter from Royal Mail Exeter, proving that there really is such a thing as snail mail!

Dear Customer,

I am sorry that the enclosed letter has been damaged and subsequently delayed.

The item was found during a scheduled collection from a posting box and had been damaged by snails.

Unfortunately, despite regular cleaning

and placing pellets in the boxes, we find slugs and snails still occasionally manage to creep into the apertures, fall down into the box and start eating the glue/adhesive on the stamps and envelopes.

I am sorry for any problems caused by this unusual 'tampering' and while I am pleased to be able to return your letter, albeit in a damaged condition, I regret the understandable annoyance caused.

Your sincerely,  
Royal Mail Exeter

# News from the Midlands and Lincolnshire

Tim Jacklin, WTT Conservation Officer

It has been a very busy few months in this part of the world. In addition to advisory visits in Derbyshire (Mercaston Brook, Lea Brook, Repton Brook, Bentley Brook), Leicestershire (River Sence), Nottinghamshire (River Maun) and North Wales (Afon Elwy), project work has been progressing well....

## Letting the Dove Flow

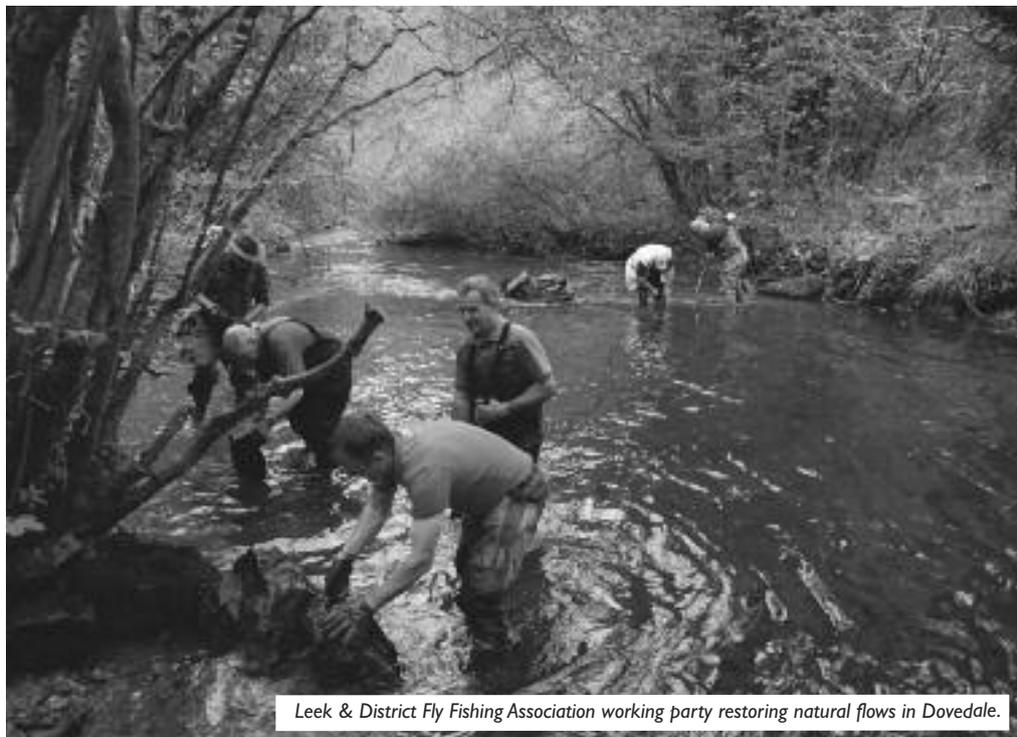
**W**ork on the Letting the Dove Flow project has been progressing apace this month with the removal or breach of five weirs in Dovedale. Wild Trout Trust are working in close partnership with the National Trust, Leek & District Fly Fishing Association (www.ladffa.com), Natural England and the Environment Agency to restore the River Dove back to more natural conditions. Two of the weirs were tackled with some mechanical help in the form of a small excavator, whereas three were removed by hand by a very hard-working party of volunteers from LADFFA. Further work is planned over the winter introducing large woody material to the river.

The long-time popularity of Dovedale as a beauty spot and walking destination was emphasised by the discovery on the river bed of a Victorian ginger beer bottle by volunteer, Irene Osborne. Working in such an iconic location means keeping local residents and visitors well-informed of what is happening and the reasons for the work. For further information see:

[www.nationaltrust.org.uk/ilam-park-dovedale-and-the-white-peak/features/letting-the-dove-flow](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/ilam-park-dovedale-and-the-white-peak/features/letting-the-dove-flow)

## Meanwhile, further downstream on the Dove...

**W**orking in close partnership with Birdsgrove Fly Fishing Club (birdsgroveflyfishing.com) and the



Leek & District Fly Fishing Association working party restoring natural flows in Dovedale.



Some mechanical help was required for the larger stones.



Old bottle found during the works. Compared with the modern plastic equivalent, the class of litter has definitely declined!

Environment Agency, Wild Trout Trust have removed a weir from the River Dove near Ashbourne, Derbyshire. The weir was built in the 1980s by the fishing club with the aim of creating some deeper water, but as with most impoundments, it interrupted the natural sediment transport processes in the river, trapping gravels upstream, forming a shallow glide.

The original construction drawings showed the weir was constructed from gabion baskets filled with stone, but when it came to removal there were also plentiful numbers of reinforced concrete lintels! These proved no match for the 21-tonne excavator, however and the whole removal took about five hours; this belies the several months of careful planning, consultation and seeking of approvals to allow the job to go ahead.

Water levels and river dimensions are being monitored before and after the removal to record the river's response and a time-lapse camera recorded the removal – watch the footage on the WTT website.



Weir removal from the River Dove near Ashbourne.

## Getting back to my roots...

**A** couple of opportunities have arisen this summer to complete some habitat improvement works using one of my favourite materials – the root plates from large trees. The size and complex structure of these make them ideal for restoring bank stability and providing 'instant' cover and refuge for fish. Unfortunately, the opportunity to use them is all too rare, because of difficulties and costs in sourcing and transporting – surprising for something that is often burnt or

chipped.

On the River Tean in Staffordshire, we have been working with landowner Jason Allen. The Tean suffered a major fish kill in 2014 and the Wild Trout Trust are seeking project opportunities along the river to boost habitat and aid the recovery of the fish populations. Much of the river has banks that were reinforced with stone during drainage works in the 1960s, meaning the river is 'strait-jacketed' and unable to fully establish the natural pool-riffle sequence vital for good fish habitat.

Around 20 tonnes of stone was removed from a section of bank and replaced with tree root plates to maintain bank stability yet allow the river to scour its bed, creating a deeper pool, flanked by good fish cover (photos 1 and 2 above-right). The bank will be fenced and planted with trees as part of a wider planting scheme supported by a Woodland Trust grant. As the newly planted trees become established, their root systems will provide continued bank stability.

If you know of other areas along the River Tean that would benefit from similar works, please contact WTT Conservation Officer, Tim Jacklin.

Not far away, similar work has been completed on the Brailsford Brook in Derbyshire, following on from the removal of five weirs in August 2016. A number of alder root plates from trees being removed from a nearby lake restoration project provided a great opportunity for using natural materials to stabilise the outside of a meander bend. A 10-m wide buffer strip is to be fenced and planted with trees. Further works at this site include the introduction of brushwood and hinging of trees to provide more cover for wild trout (photos 3 and 4 above-right).

### Lincolnshire

In Lincolnshire, work has been continuing on the Lincolnshire Limestone Becks Project in partnership with Lincolnshire Rivers Trust and The Environment Agency. Presentations were delivered to Welton Parish Council and to the directors of a large farming company, pitching the ideas developed for the restoration of two of the becks. These were well-received and a project involving volunteers from Welton village is now under development. Unfortunately, the project had some bad news in the rejection of the



Heritage Lottery Fund application for funding the wider project, which has for now restricted the scope for carrying out the larger restoration projects. On a positive note however, the application for funding to the government's Natural Flood Management grant scheme was successful and secured £50,000 for the delivery of a large scale re-meandering project on the Dunston Beck – watch this space in 2018.

On 24th September in Grantham, WTT were delighted to have a stand in Wyndham Park at an event celebrating World Rivers Day. As well as drawing attention and well-deserved accolades to the habitat improvement works carried out on the upper River Witham by partnerships between Lincolnshire Rivers Trust, Environment Agency, Wild Trout Trust, Grantham Rivercare and many others, it was a great chance for enjoyment and learning.

Tons of stalls, tours of the habitat works, invertebrate samples in tanks, Model Rivers, Fly casting with Peter Arfield and Tenkara casting with WTT's Paul Gaskell – even an epic pooh sticks race off the bridge in the park. The weather was kind too. Throughout the day there was a steady stream of visitors either strolling through the park and becoming engaged in the activities or folks who had seen the social media advertising and come along especially.

### Dam Removal Europe

Workshop, Birmingham, September 2017

With all the weir removals being carried out by WTT staff, it was timely that Dam Removal Europe held its second annual workshop in Birmingham in September. Tim Jacklin attended on behalf of WTT and it was inspiring to hear speakers describing projects from various countries including the USA, France, Switzerland, Spain as well as here in the UK. It was also sobering to learn of the thousands of dam building projects, mostly for hydroelectricity, that are planned for many of the last free-flowing rivers in Europe, largely in the Balkans.

The overall ambition of Dam Removal Europe is to restore rivers in Europe, which used to be of high natural or cultural importance, by removing dams in order to have once again healthy free flowing rivers full of fish for all to benefit. There are many rivers in Europe which would ecologically flourish if the dams and weirs which do not have any use anymore could be removed.

The Dam Removal Europe movement is one well worth supporting, along with the associated World Fish Migration Day. Check out the websites for more information and case studies at [damremoval.eu](http://damremoval.eu) and [www.worldfishmigrationday.com](http://www.worldfishmigrationday.com). Join the cause and spread the word!

# Habitat Destruction

A view from the river bank by Gareth Pedley, WTT Conservation Officer.

**A**s part of the Environment Agency's Salmon Five Point Approach, several WTT staff were invited alongside other NGOs to join working groups to cover many of the issues facing salmon (and to a lesser extent sea trout). The five groups focus on the issues of 1) Marine survival, 2) Exploitation, 3) Barriers and habitat, 4) Water quality and 5) Water quantity. With our work around the country, WTT staff observe many of the associated issues first hand, particularly barriers to migration and habitat quality. Being so pivotal to healthy, sustainable wild fish stocks (both resident and migratory), these are also the two key aspects we appraise in our advisory visit work.

This led to an idea that the WTT would produce a document for the barriers and habitat working group to highlight the wide range of issues we encounter on a daily basis and the significant habitat degradation that continues to be inflicted upon our rivers. Contrary to the belief of many, it is not just the mismanagement of watercourses in the past that has left them in a degraded state but also the habitat destruction and fragmentation that is ongoing. What follows is a few choice pictures to demonstrate the kind of issues we encounter.

Issues like these are regularly occurring all around the country and threaten the health of our rivers and their inhabitants, in addition potentially increasing flood risk to urban areas downstream. For these reasons, any suspected habitat degradation, along with pollution events and other bad practices should be reported so that they can be addressed and prevented from recurring. Anyone noticing work like this is advised to contact your local rivers trust, the Angling Trust & Fish Legal or your local Environment Agency officers. Pollution events should be reported quickly and directly to the EA's Pollution Hotline 0800 80 70 60.

Before (right): this barrier on the Black Lyne should be replaced with a clear-span structure to allow free fish and sediment movement and reduce the long-term maintenance. Fish passage is greatly restricted at low flows and at high flows, fish are likely to have to pass over the top of the structure to avoid high velocity flow in the pipes.



After (left): instead, additional box culverts were installed on top of the structure, raising the level and decreasing fish passability – a Salmon And Freshwater Fisheries Act 1975 (SAFFA) offence and waste of taxpayers' money that could have been spent rectifying the issue.

Settrington Beck (right) in January 2016, shortly after the local IDB's work (winter 2015/16). This watercourse has not only been severely dredged but also straightened; a previous meander (red arrow) has been isolated by the work.



Bankside trees (left) dug out and burned with ash and unsecured debris left to wash into the watercourse. The poor site treatment is alarming, but the wholesale dredging and straightening of the watercourse is worse. Red arrow indicates the previous meander path.

The Pow Beck (right: right of shot) has been very unsympathetically dredged both above and below the water line. Note the issues of fine sediment and excess nutrient/algal growth evident immediately downstream, and further downstream (inset). The main river (left of shot) lies within the River Eden and tributaries SSSI and River Eden SAC.



This picture (left) was taken shortly after (May 2017) a previously surface flowing tributary of the River Petteril in Cumbria was buried within a pipe (watercourse location identified by red line, with arrow to indicate the direction of flow).



# Jonny Grey's Northern News

**W**hat a frustrating summer! If only I had had all the necessary permissions and materials in place (and a good dollop of clairvoyance on impending weather) before the end of May for some of my Fisheries Improvement Programme projects. A hectic schedule towards the end of the summer, and extremely bouncy rivers in my local patch, have meant that any projects likely to last longer than 2-3 days were just not worth starting; a situation compounded by having already pressed my luck with the patience of various contractors by cancelling at late notice due to high river levels.

That aside, I have made good progress with a number of smaller weirs on tributaries of the Aire, between Bingley (Harden Beck) all the way up to Hanlith (Kirkby Beck). Beckfoot Weir on Harden Beck was especially satisfying. Identified by the Aire Rivers Trust as a potential site for improvement, the owner of the structure was incredibly amenable to the proposed plans. Pete Turner, the local EA Fisheries guru, has data demonstrating that the weir is a barrier to grayling on the system. The only slight fly in the ointment was consideration of whether the weir prevented invasive signal crayfish



Beckfoot Weir identified as a complete barrier to grayling receiving some attention....

mingling with native white clawed crayfish, but this was quickly thrown out. I accompanied Tim Selway, the EA's local crayfish expert, on an assessment of the weir and we also conducted a torchlight survey along the river, both up and downstream. Note to self: don't settle on 21<sup>st</sup> June as a date for a torchlight survey!

Tricky access prevented us using heavy plant to 'challenge' the weir. So, armed with a Stihl saw and a jack hammer, it took us the best part of a day to whittle a 2-tonne gritstone block (complete with several pieces of ironwork and lead fixings) into something manoeuvrable that we could relocate downstream. Compared to that first block, using block and tackle to relocate the second one

intact was a doddle! The resultant notch was very satisfactory, accommodating all the flow of the beck at normal discharge, and the redistribution of gravel and boulders trapped above the weir that probably hadn't seen the light of day for decades progressed nicely. I'll be looking forward to the next round of routine monitoring by the EA to see if grayling are now utilising the fantastic habitat further upstream.

Talking of using habitat, I initiated some electrofishing monitoring of habitat improvements made along with Bradford City AA on their sections of the River Aire. On straightened reaches of river that were essentially trapezoidal and featureless channels, keen members of the club have installed numerous woody deflectors, relocated boulders to form complementary features, and re-introduced *Ranunculus* to areas that were stripped of plant cover during the 15/16 winter spates. This is in addition to the installation and maintenance of several kilometres of fencing to exclude livestock and promote the development of a naturally vegetated riparian buffer strip – they're keen to get some trees back! The anglers that accompanied me were amazed to see just how the trout parr were distributed across the river; and most commonly associated with the specific features that were introduced; there were also countless stone loach and several lamprey that were enjoying better habitat diversity!

On the Yorkshire Water Habitat Workshop front, I am finalising plans for projects with Skipton Angling



No job too big. I need one of these! Block & tackle employed to relocate the second 2-tonne + block downstream; Harden Beck.



*Beckfoot Weir on Harden Beck, now with new notch and increased vigour, and increased passability!*



*A brook lamprey also benefiting from the woody deflectors installed by BCAA.*



*Stamp of fine trout parr found in close association with the woody deflectors installed on straightened sections of the R Aire*

Association (on a reservoir they lease from YW) and Wetherby Angling Club (on the mainstem Wharfe near Linton lngs). Please note, I have the possibility of funding two further projects via Yorkshire Water funding next year, so do let me know if you have any sites located near to YW holdings that are in need of some TLC!

With my research cap on, I have contributed advice to various organisations and individuals at institutions, but it is the WTT blog site that we have opened up to young researchers actively engaged in trouty related research which I would like to draw attention to. If you have not noticed it, check out the blog on the web-pages at:

<http://www.wildtrout.org/wttblog>

They cover all sorts of topics, from abstraction and low flow impacts to effects of invasive plant species, or how

we can use genetics to prioritise management of fish populations to the hidden cost of watercress farming. It's a great opportunity for us and you the membership to learn about the latest research in a reasonably approachable format, it helps us to keep abreast of the latest science underpinning our advice and practical approaches to river restoration, and it's a fabulous opportunity for the students to practise their scientific communication to a broader, non-technical audience, so please do engage with these researchers. There will hopefully be regular updates as their projects develop, and I'll be chasing supervisors at universities to make sure we are alerted to new projects as they arise. We are often approached by academics for input and support for proposed projects at the planning stages or when applying for funding

and there are some exciting ideas just below the horizon at present! I'm also soliciting articles from researchers overseas just to highlight commonalities and perhaps some different approaches to similar problems.

## Important information about Data Protection – please read

**Y**ou may have heard, or read, recently about charities buying and selling members' and/or donors' personal details. Please be reassured that this is not something we do, have ever done, or ever will do. Your details are recorded solely for the purpose of servicing your membership and we do

not analyse or profile this information in any way.

You may also have heard that a new regulation is being introduced – the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). We are currently investigating what this means for WTT and what we must do in order to be compliant, but in the near future we will need to con-

tact all our members individually by letter in this regard, and ask you to respond to that letter. In the meantime, should you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact me.

Christina Bryant  
([office@wildtrout.org.uk](mailto:office@wildtrout.org.uk) / 023 9257 0985)

# Old woody debris, new research outcomes....

Jonny Grey summaries some important new research.

**A**round the globe, the reintroduction of large woody debris / material is a common tool for river restoration schemes in an effort to promote biodiversity and enhance natural flood protection. Several reviews of the scientific literature have concluded that it is generally considered as good practice, yet results do vary (e.g. it is often difficult to demonstrate an increase in fish which is what most anglers want), and comparison across studies because of the various ways restorations have been carried out is occasionally tenuous. Those of you that follow the Science Spot in *Salmo*, my round up of scientific literature pertinent to WTT, may have noted me stating this in the 2015/16 magazine.

A new study published by Murray Thompson and colleagues provides valuable new insights, critically using a 'multiple before-after control-impact' study design to specifically allow such comparisons across different rivers. It's great to see this synthesis study come to light as it formed a part of Murray's PhD. Actually, the team (National Trust & Bickling Fishing Club) that 'rewilded' the site on the River Bure that Murray was monitoring was also the recipient of a WTT Conservation Award, Amateur category, back in 2010. Further work has continued at that site, focussing more on the geomorphological aspects, via Gemma Harvey at Queen Mary University London. One of her recent papers on the use of whole trees to restore river channels from an overwidened state is also of considerable interest to us (see reference below).

Anyway, back to this new research synthesis by Murray et al., the authors carried out biological, physical and chemical surveys of five UK rivers in the months before and after the addition of large woody debris: on the Bure, Loddon, Lyde, Test and Wensum. Three stretches were sampled on each

river: a 'restored' stretch where a large willow or alder tree was felled and tethered to the river bed; a 'control' stretch which resembled the 'restored' stretch before tree-felling; and a 'target' stretch which contained a substantial tree which had fallen 3 to 5 years earlier.

In a nutshell, populations of aquatic invertebrates and brown trout were higher in the restored and target stretches relative to the controls, and hence, the presence of large woody debris caused rapid and notable increases in riverfly and trout abundance.

While trout numbers went up, their population biomass did not. This was because there were greater numbers of juvenile trout in both the restored and target stretches, implying that large woody debris structure was used as refugia for weaker swimming life-stages.

Murray says: "Restoration of woody debris has been used to enhance in-river habitat throughout the world for over a century in tens of thousands of projects. Woody debris is increasingly used to reinstate natural processes, restore biodiversity and thus recover degraded river ecosystems. Yet, there is a striking lack of causal evidence to support this approach.

In the first experiment of its kind conducted across multiple rivers, we set out to test if, by felling trees in-river, biodiversity and food web metrics were restored relative to 'control' (i.e. unrestored) and 'target' conditions where naturally fallen trees were already in place. We were able to demonstrate causal links between

habitat restoration, biodiversity restoration and food-web responses. For instance, elevated species richness in restored areas relative to controls was primarily driven by the repopulation of rare invertebrate taxa which also had many potential predators.

We hope complementary approaches will be adopted in future studies, conducted across a range of restoration projects and river systems with extended temporal monitoring to better direct conservation efforts towards the most effective solutions."

This excellent piece of robust work (and that of Gemma Harvey and colleagues) contributes to the evidence base we rely upon at WTT so heavily to underpin our practical approaches to river restoration. Murray's paper abstract is available online early, and it is hoped the full article will be freely available to all via Open Access in due course.

Thompson, M. S.A., Brooks, S. J., Sayer, C. D., Woodward, G., Axmacher, J. C., Perkins, D. and Gray, C. Large woody debris 'rewilding' rapidly restores biodiversity in riverine food webs. *Journal of Applied Ecology*. Accepted Author Manuscript. doi:10.1111/1365-2664.13013

Harvey GL, Henshaw AJ, Parker C, Sayer CD. Re-introduction of structurally complex wood jams promotes channel and habitat recovery from overwidening: Implications for river conservation. *Aquatic Conservation: Marine & Freshwater Ecosystems* 2017; 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.1002/aqc.2824>



## News from the South West

Mike Blackmore, WTT Conservation Officer,

I've had to cut a busy season short this year as I'm expecting the arrival of our baby girl any day now. However, an early start has meant I've still managed to get a good few projects under my belt.

In August, I met up with Crediton Fly Fishers to undertake some habitat improvements just below Crediton where the River Creedy meets the Devonshire Yeo. A dwindling white-clawed crayfish population is just about clinging on here so we had to be particularly careful. Not an easy task when part of the project involved breaking through a large boulder weir. Unfortunately, we couldn't get an excavator to site so we were forced to undertake the weir work by hand. Working under a Natural England licence and the supervision and trapping expertise of crayfish ecologist, Nicky Green, we carefully lifted and winched out each boulder. A home-made 'boulder sling' (hobbled together copying an American gold prospecting design) was used to make sure the boulders slid sideways instead of rolling and potentially crushing any unsuspecting crayfish. It took two and a half days of constant winch-work but eventually the weir

was breached and the river set free. New riffles and bars (that had been submerged and locked in place for maybe a century) immediately appeared upstream. To finish the project off we dropped in several large trees and tethered them to their stumps with 8mm wire rope. These will provide excellent spate refuge as well as helping to reinvigorate channel morphology and improving habitat for trout and crayfish alike. A particular thank you goes to David Pope who not only showed up every day to help but also fixed the winch with his bottomless supply of split pins, nuts and bolts.

In September, I was joined by the Trust's new Assistant Conservation Officer, Ed Eley, on the Dorset Allen working with Dorset Wildlife Trust to restore a section of dredged and straightened chalkstream. As with the Yeo, the installation of naturalistic flow-deflecting woody habitat features was combined with the removal of some old weir structures. In this case, the structures were the remnants of old stop-log sluices which although not forming an impoundment or barrier to fish passage were nonetheless interrupting natural sediment transport and limiting movement of the riverbed. Freeing the bed up to move is as important (if not more) as re-introducing flow sinuosity and I'll take any excuse to rip out nasty old ironwork from such a beautiful and rare river habitat.

Next Ed and I met with WTT's



The stones start coming out (River Yeo).

other new kid on the block, Rob Mungovan, for our annual habitat workshops in Hertfordshire. On the River Misbourne and Lea, we got to grips with every technique we could think of and enjoyed the usual epic lunches provided by Affinity Water.

Finally, we headed back to Wiltshire for a week on the River Till introducing some much-needed diversity into the often flow-deprived lower reaches of this little chalky winterbourne. The Till holds a few nice fish in summer but its true potential is as a winter spawning and spring nursery habitat. The riverbed was hard as concrete so work was slow-going. However, by this time Ed's post-pounding skills were well honed and the Wessex Chalkstream and Rivers Trust's Liam Reynolds also slogged his guts out. We also had some hired help from Luke Kozak and his team of associates meaning we could squeeze in some bank re-grading where conditions al-



Breakthrough (River Yeo).



All kinds of nasty stuff coming out (River Allen).

lowed. There's plenty more to do on the Till so I expect to back there soon to finish off this project off.

Normally at this time off year, I'd spend a lot of time working with Wiltshire Wildlife Trust on the myriad of projects they have running. Alas, the one day I did manage to catch up with them I fell afoul of an old rugby injury and had to limp away in disgrace. I didn't even get to witness Lev falling in the river!



Big kickers going in (River Yeo).



A bit of re-meandering (River Allen).



Shining happy Lea-ple!

## Breaking News: WTT Annual Get Together 2018

Next year's highly-acclaimed WTT Get Together will be in Gargrave, near Skipton, N. Yorks on the weekend of 19 & 20 May 2018. The Saturday, based in Gargrave Village Hall, will be a day of likely dead interesting talks, followed by a river walk to look at the work of

WTT, the Environment Agency, Aire Rivers Trust and local angling clubs on Aire tributary becks. Then, Sunday will give us all a chance to fish some of the great rivers and streams of this neck of the woods. More details to follow on WTT website.

## So many rivers, but a start's been made

The first six months of WTT's newbie Conservation Officer, Rob Mungovan.

I'm now six months into my new role and it's still great. The first few months were spent doing a bit of networking and travelling round to see the different rivers that make up my patch – and I've still only really just touched the surface of it. However, from all of those visits, I'm now starting to find some real opportunities that can be worked up into projects.

My first advisory visit took me into Essex to explore over 3km of the River Ter. This little river has survived quite well in many places, mainly because the tree canopy appears to have held back machines that may have otherwise dredged its bed. So, the possibility of opening up the canopy in places and the trusted approach of hinge-cutting some trees to give immediate marginal cover may see this little river come into better shape. And the important point about the Ter is its potential to act as a spawning and nursery stream, which in turn should see fish populations improve downstream in the Chelmer and Blackwater; I've been reliably informed that there are Essex sea trout just waiting to run up these little rivers.

My second advisory visit saw me walk the entire length of Cambridge's Cherry Hinton Brook and Coldham's Brook. I was told by the local community that they weren't entirely sure where the Cherry Hinton Brook flows to. And having walked 3.7km, I can understand why; sadly, the main flow of the brook has sunk into the ground. But the nearby Coldham's Brook retained good flows (probably as it captured flow from the Cherry Hinton Brook) and had reasonable habitat and connection to the River Cam. My big idea is to explore connections between the two brooks so that trout and coarse fish species can move up from the Cam and on eventually towards Cherry Hinton.

More river walking saw me cover 18km of the River Welland in Lincolnshire, undertaking a rapid habitat assessment with ecologist,

Steve Brayshaw. We were basically looking along the middle reaches of the Welland to find areas of river that might have potential for habitat improvement works or measures that could be implemented to slow the flow and provide for natural flood management. The Welland was surprising as much of it had clearly been thoroughly dredged in its past and is now consequently choked up with aquatic plants, including the problematic bur reed and bulrush. But every now and then we came across a shallow reach with a riffle or a pacey glide. Is that how much of the Welland once was?

I've also been able to roll up my sleeves, pull on my leaky waders and start driving down some stakes in the name of habitat improvement. I had some unfinished work from my previous role on the Hoffer Brook, so a warm day in August saw me lead a small group of volunteers to deliver an enhancement by creating a long brushwood ledge on the inside of a tight meander. The ledge will be planted up as it traps silt.

Then in late August, I was lucky to join Andy Thomas on the Lark at West Stow. The river here had been the subject of some very significant dig and dump work many years back (led by the late Nigel Holmes), but the holes dug into the river's bed had never really naturalised to remove the square form of the digger bucket that created them. The plan was to work with the



The River Welland downstream of Barrowden showing some great trout habitat with riffles, water crowfoot and trailing branches. Then in places the river can hardly be seen.

Bury Trout Club to import approximately 200 tonnes of gravel and to use it to carefully shape the tail runs from some of the pools so that the natural up-ramps could be formed for the benefit of spawning trout. This work was carefully delivered over three days and saw a huge amount of gravel raking, leaving a river that certainly looks more natural than it was. More recently, I have worked with the Club again to pin down a lot of brushwood to help fix some of the aquatic plants that might otherwise be



Happy volunteers working to complete a brushwood ledge on the Hoffer Brook.



Members of the Bury Trout Club with Rob Mungovan having completed a brushwood and log revetment to keep the path of the Lark flowing along its newly gravel-lined course.

prone to winter washout; this all helps to keep the river on its course and to demonstrate that we don't have to have lowland rivers flowing in a dull, straight channel – that straight channel can become much more interesting without increasing flood risk.

In Norfolk, Charles Rangeley-Wilson introduced me to the Nar. The use of fallen trees to create bed scour in high flow periods was particularly interesting to see. The fallen trees also created a sense of wilderness not normally found on our lowland rivers. People often view fallen trees as flood hazards or simply as a mess and such features are often removed when in fact they are a really important component of natural river systems for kick-starting off erosion, deposition and sediment transfer, and they can actually aid flood management when enabling flood plain reconnection at locations where properties are not at risk. And, of course, trout just love the cover that fallen trees provide!

The same visit also saw me go on to the Bure, and to see the problem of crayfish erosion first hand. I am told that this productive river once had a good diversity of aquatic flies and river plants. However, countless numbers of marauding signal crayfish appear to be eating and burrowing their way through the Bure. I hope to lend the local angling club support in the future to devise a plan that can improve the river but not aid the signals, quite a challenge given that they can live almost anywhere.

The middle of September saw a couple of great days on WTT-led river habitat workshops on the River Misbourne at Denham Country Park and the River Lee at Stanborough Park. The days were generously funded



The attendees of the habitat work shop on the Misbourne at Denham Country Park.

by Affinity Water and organised in partnership with the local EA team. Attendees to the days were able to learn about the plight of our chalk rivers and learn why river fly monitoring is important, to see some previously completed works, to discuss what management is needed to chalk rivers and then to get hands on with practical work where the skill of hitting posts with hammers was shared and the dark art of using minimal wire to fix wood in place was demonstrated by Mike Blackmore. These days were especially valuable to me as I really enjoy working with volunteers and now I'll be taking forward two weeks of volunteer action on the Misbourne for the Berks, Bucks & Oxon Wildlife

Trust, and I hope to return to the Lee in the winter to undertake an Advisory Visit to initiate further work at Stanborough Park.

## Staff Changes at WTT

There are a couple of tweaks to our staff's working weeks. Andy Thomas has been working three days per week for a while now, to free up some time for fishing and pottering. Paul Gaskell is also going down to three days, to spend more time with his family and dedicate a more time to Discover Tenkara.

# A new Wild Trout Survival Guide

**W**TT's must-read book about wild trout conservation and management, the Wild Trout Survival Guide, was launched at the recent WTT Conservation Awards in London, as a 4th edition.

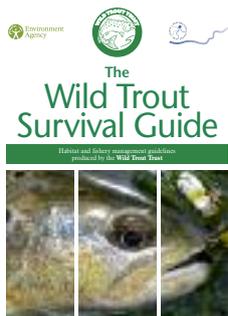
The book takes a step-by-step approach through aspects of natural river function, man's influences, good and bad habitat features, then design and implementation of habitat improvement techniques. It's a terrific, practical read for anyone interested in improving habitat for their trout.

The 68-page book includes updated content and many excellent new illustrations, including amazing images

from by wildlife photographer, Melvin Grey. Stunning graphic design makes the 2017 version of the Wild Trout Survival Guide a thing of great beauty, with rich, informative content.

The new Wild Trout Survival Guide is available through the WTT website for £10 + P&P: [www.wildtrout.org](http://www.wildtrout.org)

There could hardly be a finer Xmas stocking filler for the keen wild trout fisher who wants to know more about the river, its trout, their habitat and how things could be made better.



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possible and at all other times, please leave

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## Merchandise

WTT 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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- Urban Rivers Restoration Guidelines £10 + £1.50 p&p
- Rivers – Working for Wild Trout £10 + £1.50 p&p



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