

News

WILD TROUT TRUST
AUTUMN 2016



ANNUAL DRAW 2016

To be drawn at 7pm, Tuesday 13 December 2016 at The Thomas Lord, West Meon, Hants. Tickets are available via the enclosed order form or by visiting www.wildtrout.org.

FIRST PRIZE

Kindly donated by Sage, worth £749. A Sage One 8ft 6in, 4-piece, 4-weight Fly Rod.

SECOND PRIZE

Kindly donated by William Daniel and Famous Fishing, worth £460. A day's fishing for 3 rods on 1½ miles of the Lambourn at Weston, Monday to Thursday, before 15 July 2017.

THIRD PRIZE

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

FOURTH PRIZE

Kindly donated by Paul Kenyon Esq, worth £100.

Wine Society six-bottle case.

FIFTH PRIZE

Kindly donated by Phoenix Lines worth £35.

A Phoenix Furled Tenkara line, plus two Phoenix Furled leaders.



2016 WTT CONSERVATION AWARDS

JUDGES' REPORT

Paul Gaskell reports back on the judging of the 2016 Conservation Awards, a pleasure he undertook with Jenny Mant and Martin Janes.

As hotly contested as ever – we have had the pleasure of assessing more fantastic projects for the 2016 competition, as you will see. It is not possible to accurately capture the full scale and detail of these amazing pieces of work. However, just some of the details have been recorded here, in recognition of the fantastic efforts made towards improving and protecting our wild river corridors.

After highlighting the winning entries first (as is only fair), the projects are then described in no particular order for your admiration and enjoyment...



Wild Ribble trout captured during the survey work that informed and guided this project.



Brand new river channel; dug to bypass Lowthorpe Mill.

RIBBLE 'GOING WILD' PROJECT, EA (WINNER – CONTRIBUTION TO WILD TROUT CONSERVATION)

Driven by much hard work (both paid and voluntary) from local EA Fisheries Officer, Neil Handy, a remarkable concerted effort by angling clubs encompassing the top 35 miles of Lancashire's River Ribble has now seen trout stocking stop and management focus on wild fish. The clubs are now enjoying wild trout fishing trips like the one described in a member's message to Neil that reported a catch (and release) of 27 fish including six fish over 2lb.

Among many impressive aspects of this project is the use of angler catch-return data, dye marking and netting surveys in which anglers and their families participated. This has allowed club committees to make informed, evidence-based decisions on the good use of their members' monies for the best possible angling experience. The tradition for high annual levels of stocking on these club waters was long-held and not easily altered. However, an initial assessment (made during the original, high-stocking conditions) indicated that around half of the fish captured each year were wild fish.

This was followed by a whole series of vital statistics such as:

- Mark-and-recapture studies that showed the disappearance of the vast majority of farmed trout after stocking;
- An increase in grayling captures from a maximum of 40 per year (during heavy trout stocking) to between 600 and 700 per year following the move to wild trout and no stocking;
- A rise, within three years of ceasing stocking, to an annual catch of 700 wild brown trout (up to 4lb in weight). This is compared to an annual catch of 454 trout (including 222 marked stock fish) during the last stocking season (where approximately 1,000 stock fish were added in that year).

There has also been a dramatic increase in the numbers of juvenile trout (to such an extent that it can sometimes be difficult to steer a fly to some of the larger adult fish!); but this is a great sign of robust trout stocks in a natural population structure.

The judges were impressed by the observation that this all began with members of Manchester Anglers taking up Neil's offer to produce catch log books for the club (and actually diligently filling them out). What is especially impressive is that it inspired the clubs of Settle, Bowland Game, Ribblesdale and Clitheroe also to convert to un-stocked/catch & release wild fisheries.

The wholesale shift in stock management policy has been coupled with fencing and river corridor habitat improvement projects to give the wild breeding populations the best possible chances in life.

LOWTHORPE MILL DIVERSION, FOSTON BECK (WINNER, MEDIUM-SCALE HABITAT ENHANCEMENT SCHEME)

Alan Mullinger of East Yorkshire Rivers Trust (EYRT) took on the challenge to create a new, naturalised channel to bypass the mill pool and water control structures at Lowthorpe Mill on Foston Beck in East Yorkshire. This obviously entailed protracted negotiations with multiple parties, including landowners and farm and angling tenants.

A variety of schemes had been proposed and discussed during consultative processes – including the option to do nothing. Multiple designs had been considered but a major challenge remained with proposals for the most direct bypass channel routes. This challenge was the steepness of the Beck and its relatively straight path: a slope of approximately 7m drop per km, far steeper than typical chalkstream habitat.

Along with the late Dr Nigel Holmes, Alan and EYRT designed and then dug a meandering channel with a longitudinal bed slope that would comply with the more normal chalkstream range of 1-3m per km. This was achieved within an impressively short timescale and at correspondingly excellent value for money.

The meandering channel was almost three times longer than other proposed

options and was deliberately designed to negate the need for silt removal (a previous maintenance cost in the mill pool), as well as managing flood-risk for adjacent property. The new channel will provide great fishing and habitat for the flora and fauna as it develops. Local angling club members are being specifically trained to monitor and manage the channel so as to maintain diversity in flow, cover and sediment transport. Planting, tree management and deliberate incorporation of features for broad ecological diversity are also central to this excellent project. Consequently, multiple societal benefits have been achieved in addition to the improved fish passage and habitat quality on Foston Beck.

Very soon after completion of the new channel, the Anglers Riverfly Monitoring Initiative score had risen from zero (the site was previously a field) to 15, with six out of eight target groups being identified. Blue Winged Olives, other Olives and *Gammarus* are particularly abundant and are being found in numbers over 1,000 from a 3-minute kick survey. These are remarkable numbers for a new stretch of river less than nine months old. Small brown trout were seen to move into the new channel within hours of its re-connection to the mill race. Overall, a great win for all concerned with the Beck.

RIVERS CORRIDOR GROUP PROJECT, RIVER DERWENT/BASSENTHWAITE SYSTEM (WINNER LARGE-SCALE HABITAT ENHANCEMENT SCHEME)

Jack Abernethy and the Derwent Owners' Association of angling clubs and riparian owners have achieved a massive change for the Cumbrian Derwent system through a remarkable cooperative effort to shift land-use and stream habitat. Significant attitudinal shifts are also in evidence towards catch & release in trout and salmon fisheries management within the system. More than 120 habitat improvement projects have been completed and have included measureable improvements (by a whole class division, from 'moderate' to 'good') in the Water Framework Directive Ecological Status assessment for the Trout Beck waterbody. An (incomplete!) summary of notable achievements includes:

- Erection of over 70km of river bank fencing, ensuring stock exclusion and reductions in sediment and nutrient input into the river;
- Planting of native broadleaf trees within all fenced-off riparian areas to allow the bank to stabilise and provide shade and an effective buffer to adjacent farmland. This also creates wildlife corridors along the entire length of the river system;
- Provision of spawning gravels to small tributaries;
- Leading demonstration days and guided walks to increase stakeholder participation and support for the projects;
- Delivering the West Cumbria Education Project to six local schools
- Championing catch & release fishing, which in the 2015 season, saw anglers on the Derwent returning 88% of caught salmon and effectively 100% of sea trout and brown trout;
- Completion of year one of a 5-year Catchment Characterisation / Semi-Quantitative Electrofishing Project.

This project has achieved impressive gains across a significant landscape scale by creating an innovative and efficient partnership. An excellent example to all.

So, those are our 2016 Wild Trout Trust Conservation Award winners, but we were blessed by a short-list of other outstanding projects; here are their highlights:

WIGGLE YOUR BROOK: GROUNDWORK/TRENT VALLEY PARTNERSHIP

A host of key personnel (including, but certainly not limited to, Lynne Morgan, Steve Cook, Matt Lawrence, Becky Allen and more) collaborated to complete an ambitious habitat improvement project on a stream in an urbanised environment that, typically, brings great challenges from perceived flood-risk.

A section of the historically-straightened, but potentially important, tributary of the Trent called the Lyme Brook (which gives its name to Newcastle-under-Lyme)

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Trout Beck before works.



Trout Beck after works.



Gravel addition, woody material installation and planting by volunteers in a well-used urban park on the Lyme Brook.

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received much-needed diversification of flow, substrate and cross-sectional profile through simple in-stream habitat works. In addition, volunteers planted native, herbaceous vegetation around and within the installed habitat features. Lots of community engagement and a really effective partnership made this a great project.

TWICE (TWINEHAM WEIRS AND IN-CHANNEL ENHANCEMENTS): OUSE & ADUR RIVERS TRUST

Pete King and a whole series of partners (including 80-strong volunteer parties) achieved a fantastic combined multiple weir removal and habitat enhancement project on the River Adur and Herring Stream (both were classed as 'poor' according to Water Framework Directive assessments).

This project aimed to mitigate the failings of these waterbodies through the complete removal of four weirs, complemented by a range of in-channel enhancements which included the creation of backwater/refuge habitat, installation of gravel beds to aid spawning and increase invertebrate abundance, construction of berms and the planting of 6,000 trees along the river banks and in the surrounding floodplain, to provide shade, shelter, natural recharge of in-channel woody debris and increased food-resource availability. All of this work needed to be completed against very tight budgetary constraints, implementing lessons learnt from previous projects.

MAXEY CUT HABITAT IMPROVEMENT TRIALS, WELLAND CATCHMENT: ENVIRONMENT AGENCY

Hugh Bunker and the team from the Environment Agency set out to determine whether methods could be developed and applied that would encourage the formation of more natural marginal features and channel dimensions within an artificial flood channel. The project put a series of large, partially submerged vanes into the channel and monitored their performance over a winter-flood period. The aim was to show that such designs can enhance or accelerate the existing 'natural' channel narrowing, while also creating a more diverse bed structure. All this work needed to conform to a high degree of stability due to the extreme nature of the flows in the Cut.

By initiating these trials in a 600m-reach, the methods can be extended to a 6-km reach. It is also hoped that the evidence being collected can show sea trout migrating to sea and back. This could then be used to classify the Welland Catchment as a migratory salmonid river system, adding greater legal protection.

AMPNEY BROOK ENHANCEMENT PROJECT: COTSWOLD WATER PARK TRUST

Petrina Brown and teams of volunteers tackled issues of over-shading, over-grazing/poaching and uniform channel morphology. The main objectives of the project included reducing dense shading which was largely caused by willow scrub and hazel coppice.

It was also important to stabilise the banks and trap silt and, in so doing, encourage narrowing. This was augmented by directly installing large woody debris for improved structural variety as well as directly narrowing the river in places using faggots to pinch the Brook and clean silted gravels. All in all, a great win for the Brook, achieved through the combined efforts of staff and dedicated volunteers.

QUIDHAMPTON PHASE I HABITAT IMPROVEMENTS: WILTSHIRE WILDLIFE TRUST

Martijn Antheunisse (along with the rest of the Wiltshire Wildlife Trust Water Team members, George Colley, Lev Dahl and Phoebe Weller) described how this project aimed to rehabilitate a stretch of the Rivers Wylde and Nadder, from Netherhampton Road, to over 1km below their confluence at Quidhampton (approximately 1,700m of river length). Unsympathetic historic management of the



river led to overwidening and had made the channel profile largely uniform. Additional historic bankside revetments have also started to fail, at some points causing significant erosion behind the structures.

Overseen by the Water Team listed above, the project aimed to restore the channel morphology and create/enhance habitat for plants, fish, birds and mammals. In addition to this, a number of potential spawning riffles had become compacted and silted up, making them unsuitable for salmon and trout to breed on. An important part of the project's aim was to restore the suitability of this habitat. The result has been two river reaches that are much more ecologically diverse and dynamic.

RESCUING RATTY, WATERVOLES ON THE RIVER COLN: GLOUCESTER WILDLIFE TRUST

John Field and colleagues at Gloucester Wildlife Trust, along with around 40 volunteers, delivered a great, multi-benefit habitat improvement project. A survey of the River Coln identified low densities of water voles along a 4km stretch, fished by Williamstrip Estate Fishing and Fly Fisher Group (Bibury Court Estate). Habitat improvement measures for water vole and wild trout conservation are very complementary: the introduction of large woody material, channel narrowing and measures to control the over-shading of the river.

The objective of these activities is to feed the food-chain, provide fish refuge, create variation in flows and clean gravel beds of silts. Thinning of trees and scrub along the river and adjoining wet ditches promoted marginal vegetation for water voles, whilst at the same time enhancing the fisheries of the respective estates.

In addition, planting of 250m of native hedge now impedes runoff and silt ingress into the River Coln from neighbouring arable land – a significant benefit to the whole system (including spawning success for salmonid species).

OAKLEY RESTORATION PROJECT: NATIONAL TRUST & ENVIRONMENT AGENCY

Neil Swift (National Trust) and Heb Leman (Environment Agency) provided an impressive account of the works to remove an impoundment – and at the same time re-establish a high-quality gravel bed at an appropriate bed-slope to promote good in-stream habitat in a famous chalkstream beat. The Oakley beat, one of four that form the Mottisfont fishery, has been managed by the National Trust since 2005. Implementation of a sensitive day-to-day management regime is designed to benefit the river, its surroundings and inhabitants, whilst providing high quality angling. The beat is important ecologically, as part of the River Test Site of Special Scientific Interest, and historically, through its association with author, Frederic Halford.

This project also included excellent involvement of expertise offered by the University of Southampton Engineering Department as well as enlisting the co-operation of the river management team responsible for the adjacent upstream fishery (Pittleworth Estate).

HONEYDALE FARM NATURAL FLOOD RISK MANAGEMENT SCHEME, RIVER EVENLODE: COTSWOLD RIVERS TRUST

Peter Walker and Vaughan Lewis explained an excellent partnership that was formed between Cotswold Rivers Trust and Cotswold Seeds and Honeydale Farm to deliver an innovative project that benefits the Evenlode catchment. It entailed the creation of new sections of channel (and wetland areas) featuring leaky dams that spread out the peaks of high-flow events.

The project will contribute to a reduction in the likelihood of flooding along the Evenlode Valley, create wetland habitat and reduce erosion and runoff which are adversely impacting upon the rivers' resident wildlife, including a struggling native brown trout population.



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Increased flood-peaks, low summer flows and increased pesticide and fertiliser burdens have all been identified as impacting the river. The project addresses all these issues. In addition, it improves local biodiversity, creating an important wet-land habitat for wildlife and there is a significant element of carbon capture associated with the planted trees, which will provide a sustainable source of firewood.

Now, the methods used to achieve these gains can inspire the adoption of best practice on a wider scale across this catchment and others.

PARTING THOUGHTS

The judges have been extremely impressed – yet again – with the range and quality of conservation projects that it has been our pleasure to assess for this year's competition. It is vital to stress the near impossibility of selecting the winning projects from such an inspirational and diverse collection of works. Every single one of the entries described in this report is a terrific addition to the cause of healthier, more diverse river corridors supporting a whole range of aquatic flora and fauna – including the iconic wild brown trout. We applaud each and every individual and organization involved in these efforts. Thank you.

Paul Gaskell



2016 WTT CONSERVATION AWARDS

AWARDS CEREMONY



WTT'S 2016 WILD TROUT HERO

AT THE WTT CONSERVATION AWARDS CEREMONY IN LONDON, SUPPORTED BY THAMES WATER, ROB MUNGOVAN WAS CROWNED OUR 2016 WILD TROUT HERO. HERE'S WHY...

Rob became a supporter of the Trust in its first year when it was the Wild Trout Society. In the late 1990s,

Cambridgeshire wasn't a county where you'd think to look for wild trout. However, Rob knew where they could be found and was able to motivate the locals to form a village conservation group – Friends of the River Shep. The Shep is only a small chalk stream but, as with many others, it could display many of the features found in larger and more renowned rivers and it would support trout.

Much of Rob's early work was campaigning to raise awareness of the

potential of the small Cambridgeshire streams. And since those early days, he's been lucky enough to become the Ecology Officer for South Cambs District Council where he has been able to mix his passion for small stream conservation with his day job.

Rob can now be proud to have delivered numerous projects on the Shep, the Mel, the Granta, the Hoffer Brook and the River Cam; he had the idea to deliver the first fish pass in the Cambridge area. At his last estimate, he has overseen the placement of 2,140 tonnes of gravel, 5,430m of improved bankside habitat, numerous flow deflectors and coppiced trees. Summertime sees him busier cutting river weed than cutting his lawn.

Rob's main skill is enthusing others to realise the potential of their streams. He has given many talks at local events and the RRC conference, takes villagers out on river walks especially to see the trout spawning on Boxing Day, has had youngsters out on the DofE tasks over many months and has been able to steer three friends on their career paths into ecology (which has often started from initially 'playing' around in streams).

The rivers of South Cambs now have more brown trout in them than coarse fish if you know where to look.

All told, the right man to be a Wild Trout Hero.



Rob Mungovan, WTT's 2016 Wild Trout Hero, putting nephew Harry through his paces.

MORE WTT SUPPORT FOR SCOTLAND

Mention Scottish rivers to most anglers, and the picture that springs to mind is probably salmon fishing in a river that looks healthy and wild. But 47% of rivers in Scotland are in moderate, poor or bad overall condition, with rivers in the central belt of Scotland and intensively farmed areas getting worse (source: Environment Scotland). Trout and sea trout remain the poor relation to salmon, in spite of the fact that some Scottish rivers (Deveron, Annan, Tweed and Don, for example) have enviable reputations for large wild trout and the loch fishing for trout in Scotland is tremendous. We

would like to make all Scottish rivers famous for trout!

The Wild Trout Trust has worked with many Rivers Trusts and Fisheries Boards in Scotland and our skills in practical trout habitat improvement are, in many cases, complementary to the skills in those organisations. There is demand for us to do more in Scotland, and so we are taking action to build a pot of ring-fenced funding that will allow our two Northern Conservation Officers – Gareth Pedley and Jonny Grey – to be able to say 'yes' to requests for advice or practical work in Scotland that will make a real difference to the health and resilience of trout and sea trout populations.

We're applying to funding bodies for support and we'll seek help from WTT members in Scotland.

If you would like to make a donation to our programme in Scotland, please contact Christina in the WTT office on office@wildtrout.org or 023 9257 0985 or you can donate online through the WTT website, www.wildtrout.org.

WHAT THE WILD TROUT TRUST DID IN 2015/16

This is an extract from WTT's Annual Report for the year, August 2015 to April 2016, a period made atypical by the Trust becoming a charitable company from 1 August 2015. The fully illustrated version of the report will appear on the WTT website and will be distributed to our key partners in the near future.

OUR VISION

We will see wild brown trout thriving in their natural range across Britain and Ireland and communities engaged in improving their water environment, increasing resilience to environmental challenges, for the benefit of wildlife and people.

We will work in partnership with others and be recognised as the leading scientific and technical authority for wild brown trout in Britain and Ireland.

WHAT DID WE ACHIEVE IN 2015/16?

In a year shortened to nine months as a consequence of incorporation of the charity, WTT has:

- Improved at least 300km of river habitat across 37 counties in Britain and Ireland;
- Raised awareness of aquatic conservation needs to an audience of over 20,000 people through a variety of media and worked directly with over 1,600 volunteers in more than 12,500 hours of practical work across Britain. This contributed over £196,000 worth of time, to improve the natural environment;
- Contributed over £467,000 of charitable expenditure in helping local communities to practically improve habitat in their river, including 48 demonstration events and 78 advisory visits;
- Continued to progress our understanding of freshwater ecology and conservation, collaborating with a range of institutions on seven post-graduate research projects;
- Raised over £72,000 in an annual auction and maintained a membership of 2,400 to support the cost-effective work of the Trust.



Ready to go to work in the river...

PRACTICAL HELP AND ADVICE

We work 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 2015/16, we visited 78 sites to offer expert advice; our recommendations were acted upon by over 80% of recipients, improving the way they manage their river and making life better for its inhabitants. For example, on Lancashire's River Douglas, local council plans to install a series of weirs were modified on our advice, to deploy alternative methods that are much better for the river and its inhabitants. In Derbyshire, a landowner has started the removal of 17 weirs to allow his stream to function in a more natural way. In Antrim, Argyll, Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Cambridgeshire, Cumbria, Devon, Dorset, Gloucestershire, Greater London, Hampshire, Hertfordshire, Kent, Norfolk, Somerset, Suffolk, Sussex, Warwickshire, Wiltshire and Yorkshire, local fishing interests, rivers and wildlife trusts have taken WTT advice and are creating habitat in streams ravaged by drainage schemes or land management. Such work not only benefits fish, but plants, invertebrates, birds and mammals that are reliant on more naturally functioning rivers. On many rivers, WTT advice is helping fishing clubs to move towards more natural

and sustainable fisheries, for example, by no longer stocking with farm-reared trout; we saw this happen in 2015/16 from County Down in Northern Ireland right down to southern England. The WTT website is now home to over 500 Advisory Visit reports dating back to 2001 and covering all corners of Britain and Ireland; these reports lay out in simple terms the work that we recommend to make life better for the river.

We developed the practical skills of over 400 local volunteers across Britain through 48 practical habitat improvement events. Simple but effective techniques for the river were demonstrated and the volunteers learned new skills to take back to their own rivers. As an example, a WTT-led demonstration held in Greater London catalysed ten subsequent days of habitat improvement work in the following few months, organised through the local catchment partnership; that work continues.

All of this advisory and practical work has enhanced habitat on at least 300km of river and directly involved over 1,600 volunteers in 12,500 hours of activity, contributing over £196,000 of co-funding.

We are greatly indebted to our many partners, including 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 Thames Water.

In recognition of the value of these practical demonstration days, Thames Water, in partnership with WTT, EA and the Angling Trust, has funded a three-year project of Rivers & Wetlands Community Days (RWCD) to kick-start grassroots conservation effort, led by local volunteers. In 2015/16, RWCD supported twenty-two projects across the Thames Water area, involving over 1,000 volunteers in practical river and wetland habitat improvement work, with £75,000 of bursaries, yielding co-funding of £250,000.

RESTORING RIVERS

We have completed a number of river restoration projects, again with a host of partners. In Sheffield, the City Council, with WTT expert design and on-the-ground advice, has started an ambitious project to bring the Porter Brook back to the light and life after a century of entombment under industrial buildings. The derelict buildings have been demolished, the Brook's culvert roof removed, in-stream habitat greatly improved and 'pocket parks' created to increase water storage capacity, habitat and amenity value. This project has subsequently won a prestigious Canal & Rivers Trust award.

In Hampshire, working with excellent landowners and the local EA team, we have designed and installed a fish pass to ease the movement of sea trout, eels and other fish along the River Hamble. Another outstanding feature of this project has been the cost-effectiveness of the delivery, the pass fully installed for £18,000, quite possibly 1/10 of what might be expected.

In Kent, Somerset, Sussex and Wiltshire, with the local rivers and wildlife trusts, EA, water companies and teams of local volunteers, we have contributed to large-scale river restoration work, to improve habitat for trout and many other plant, invertebrate, fish, bird and mammal species.

RESEARCH ON TROUT AND SPREADING THE WORD

Through our Research & Conservation Officer and links to a number of institutions, we have progressed seven research projects on trout and freshwater ecology. In

partnership with the Ribble Rivers Trust and Lancaster University, a project has commenced to study the effect of river restoration on food webs and to represent any changes in a visual, accessible way for a range of stakeholders, from primary schoolchildren to local politicians. In Yorkshire, a study has been completed on the ecological interaction in Malham Tarn between brown trout and introduced perch, leading to management recommendations where such introductions take place. In Lincolnshire, a project has started 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.

We raised public awareness of the pressures on our rivers and the need for the conservation of our wild trout and their habitats as key indicators of the state of our environment. We reached an audience exceeding 20,000 through our annual journal, *Salmo trutta*, newsletters, website (with two blogs), social media, bespoke information papers on particular topics (e.g. stocking of farm-reared trout; issues with fish-eating birds) and presentations to conferences, workshops and meetings of groups such as fishing clubs and conservation volunteers.

FUNDRAISING

WTT's fundraising activities are vital in driving our conservation work. The Trust benefits from the generosity of our 2,400 supporters and a number of fundraising events, the most significant of which is our annual, on-line auction. In 2015/16, over 300 lots attracted donations of over £72,000. The auction also raises the WTT profile and provides an invaluable opportunity for engagement with a broad community that actively supports our work. We are hugely indebted to all who take part in our auction and other fundraising work.

STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

In the 2015/16 year, WTT employed a Director, a team of five Conservation Officers, a Research & Conservation Officer, a Trust Administrator, a Fundraising Officer and a Company Secretary.

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. In total, we benefited from the contributions of over 2,500 volunteers working for more than 12,500 hours at an in-kind value exceeding £190,000. Thank you all.

DIARY DATES

13 December 2016 – WTT Annual Draw, 7pm, Thomas Lord pub, West Meon, Hants: 5 top-notch prizes, including a Sage rod, for just £1 per ticket. All proceeds go to support WTT's habitat improvement work.

11 & 12 February 2017 – British Fly Fair International, Staffordshire County Showground – <http://www.bffi.co.uk/>.

3 to 12 March 2017 – WTT Auction. A fantastic selection of lots including fishing, shooting, books, tackle and more, with all the proceeds supporting our work. Keep an eye on the website for details: www.wildtrout.org. If you would like to donate a lot please contact Denise Ashton dashton@wildtrout.org or tel 07802 454157.

6 & 7 May 2017 – Deveron Trout Festival – two days of fishing and some top talks on the Saturday night. More details to follow on the WTT and DBIT website, www.deveron.org.

13 & 14 May 2017 – WTT Annual Get Together – near Bakewell, Derbyshire.

WTT 2017 GET TOGETHER GOES TO... DERBYSHIRE

WTT's 2017 Annual Get Together will be with the Haddon Estate near Bakewell in Derbyshire on the weekend of 13 & 14 May 2017. We'll have a Saturday of likely super-

interesting talks and river walks and on Sunday, a chance to fish the special waters of the Derbyshire Derwent, Wye, Lathkill and Dove. Please pop the date in your diary and look out for

more details through subsequent newsletters, emails, social media and the WTT website.

MEMBERSHIP OF WTT

WTT is a gang of 2,400 paid-up members who support what we are about: making life better for our trout, their rivers and lakes and all the other plants and animals that share their habitat.

Annual:	from £35 to £39
Life:	from £300 to £350
Annual joint:	from £50 to £55
Full time riverkeeper:	unchanged at £20
Retired:	from £15 to £18
Junior:	unchanged at £10
Small club:	from £40 to £45
Large club:	from £60 to £70
Life club:	from £500 to £550
Trade:	from £50 to £55
Hotel:	from £250 to £270

We have tried to keep our membership subscription rates as low as possible, with no rise in those rates since May 2008. In that time, inflation has risen by approximately 22%.

From 1 January 2017, we are planning a rise in our subscription rates, equivalent to an overall average increase of 10%. So, our membership rates from next year will be as shown (left).

We remain passionate about ensuring that we don't waste money and that as much as possible goes into our core work; that commitment will not change. We very much hope you'll stay with us and maybe even encourage a friend or two to join us.

Please do not hesitate to contact WTT's Director, Shaun Leonard, if you would like to discuss this plan: director@wildtrout.org or 07974 861908.

NEW WTT TRUSTEE: DR JENNY MANT

Jenny joined the WTT as a Trustee in June 2016, but was already well-known to the Trust as a judge of the WTT Conservation Awards where she has used her wide knowledge of all elements of river management to assess some really fantastic initiatives over the last six years.

Following a degree in Geography she completed a PhD on sediment and vegetation in dryland rivers in Spain. She worked at the River Restoration Centre for 14 years as head of the technical team and now works as a principal consultant for Ricardo-AEA in their water sector team. In her 'spare' time Jenny enjoys walking, cycling, traveling, tennis and seems to always end up being involved with projects within her local community. She is never averse to spending time



Jenny Mant threatens a dawdling WTT volunteer.

along a river and is happy to get stuck in with the practical side of

restoration. Ultimately anything outdoors and she is happiest.

WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING IN THE SOUTH WEST?

MIKE BLACKMORE
REPORTS ON YET
ANOTHER FRANTIC
PERIOD OUT WEST

For many of us working in fisheries conservation and river restoration, the end of summer and the beginning of autumn is extremely busy. In part, this is due to funding becoming available in late spring (following the start of the financial year) and the time it then normally takes to get a project to the point of delivery. The rush is also due to the looming start of the salmonid spawning season and the desire to get finished and out of the river, lest we disturb our favoured charges at their most vulnerable life-stage.

This summer/autumn has been no exception and I once again find my home- and work-life blurring together as weekends become work days and finding time to maintain, clean and dry waders and tools between different projects becomes increasingly difficult. This late summer/early autumn I've been from Exeter to Hertford, working in spate rivers and chalk streams delivering restoration projects and habitat workshops. I've worn a chainsaw chain to nubs and even managed to put three holes in my 'virtually' indestructible cordura waders.

In Exeter, we finally got to grips with St James's Leat, a project four years in the making. The old mill leat is one of the few places on the River Exe where you can find salmon and trout alongside perch, roach, dace, chub, pike and even flounder. A variety of different woody features were installed to provide habitat and get some natural processes functioning in the otherwise uniform channel. With a good winter's flush-through, the leat should become a much more diverse place for its many inhabitants. Special thanks must go to Devon Wildlife Trust and the Environment Agency for their sterling efforts in helping deliver this project.

On the Somerset Frome, in the town of Frome, I've had another chance to work with the amazing

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Devon Wildlife Trust get stuck in to St James' Leat.



Tools of the trade.



Dog-slide makeover.



The Bourne at Hurdcott.

Frome Town Rangers, turning an eroded dog-slide into community access steps. This will not only eliminate a point-source of excess fine sediment into the river, but also help local people connect with the river which is the namesake of their town.

In Wiltshire, I've worked on three different projects with Wiltshire Wildlife Trust, including a section of the River Bourne managed by legendary keeper, John Drewitt, who somehow managed to sell me a fishing rod whilst I was post-pounding!

I've also worked with Salisbury & District Angling Club (SADAC) delivering a complicated project that involved blocking a redundant channel with woody debris and removing a weir so that additional flow could be diverted through newly enhanced spawning/nursery habitat. The SADAC lads were great to work with and had even more silly nicknames for their tools than I do! SADAC's hydraulic post rammer at first upstaged my trusty manual post thumper, Marilyn. But as such contraptions often do, the thing eventually shook itself apart and Marilyn got her chance to shine again.

At Ottery St Mary, Dulverton, Whitchurch (Hants) and various locations in Hertfordshire, I've helped deliver habitat workshops that will hopefully encourage local people to improve their rivers. These hands-on habitat days are always calendar

highlights but the two-course marquee buffet put on by Dulverton Angling Association will certainly take some beating! The workshop on the Test was also noteworthy. Felling trees across the river and trying to have them land exactly where you intend whilst a dozen or so experienced Test river keepers scrutinise your every move is a level of pressure I'm not particularly used to (being filmed at the same time wasn't much help either!).

It was whilst delivering the River Test habitat workshop that I was reminded of something I haven't thought much about since my contractor days. I was reminded how the different ways that we fish our rivers, influences the way that we manage, conserve and restore them.

For example, there'd have to be some pretty serious extenuating circumstances for the Environment Agency to permit a river project in the Hampshire Avon past mid-October, the end of the trout fishing season/start of the salmonid spawning season. However, travel east for half an hour into the Test catchment, and you'd probably need equally extenuating circumstances for the Agency to let you start before mid-October. To understand the difference between these two diametrically different policies, we need to understand some key differences between the two catchments. Both the Test and Avon are famous chalk streams with long fishing heritages and both are Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).



3 in 1 – a willow is hinged, cabled and staked as a demonstration of techniques in the River Otter.



SADAC hard at work.

However, whereas the Avon is predominantly fished by anglers that are members of clubs or syndicates, the Test has a significantly higher number of fisheries that are managed commercially on a day-ticket basis. When day tickets on parts of the Test cost as much as, or significantly more than, annual membership for a club such as SADAC, it is no wonder that a river restoration project with potential to temporarily colour the water of fisheries downstream could be a hard sell during the fishing season. The Avon, like the Itchen but not the Test, is also

a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and this extra level of environmental protection also influences river restoration projects.

My first ever river restoration project was on the Test back in 2008 and I've not undertaken any major projects in the catchment for at least five years. However, this November I'm once again back in the Test catchment, specifically on the River Dever, with diggers and dumpers and chainsaws and lorry-loads of gravel at my disposal. Getting my head back into 'Test mode' and the intricate politics of

a catchment with such a commercially-premium peace and quiet, exclusivity and gin-clear flows, has been sobering and somewhat nostalgic.

So, come the end of November, the late summer/autumn delivery season will have produced six projects and six habitat workshops. I'll then have a brief respite to catch my breath and catch up with advisory work before cracking on with three springtime projects to be delivered in the narrow window between the end of the spawning season and the end of the financial year.

I will also be taking some time off!

NEWS FROM THE NORTH

WTT'S RESEARCH & CONSERVATION OFFICER, JON GREY

And so it comes to pass... one of the main reasons I flung off the academic gown (although not completely, as I am still part-time) was that I wasn't spending enough time in the field and doing practical work.

It seems to have taken an age to come around but finally I can say that some of the ideas I have initiated since moving to Yorkshire have come to fruition. One of the key partnerships that I have developed has been with Pete Turner of the Environment

Agency. I arrived in Yorkshire too late to become embroiled in the Upper Aire Project, which you may remember won Pete and colleagues our prestigious WTT large project gong at the Conservation Awards last year. But, typical Pete, he wants to see things done, not talked about *ad libitum*, and I guess he found a kindred spirit in me.

Cue the Eastburn Beck project, a tributary of the River Aire, which was initially to tackle some old industrial step weirs by notching. That series was completed in early August and received a fair bit of press coverage and was the subject of Pete's very first blog! The project has been a bit of a

catalyst. I've secured money from Green Ports Hull via the Aire Rivers Trust for some fish easement work on more substantial weirs and culverts; that has allowed me to develop relationships with the Ribble Rivers Trust, tapping into their expertise on assessing fish passage by tagging trout with passive integrated transponders (PIT-tags) and using telemetry to quantify attempts at passage and ultimately success rates (or not). We are currently at the pre-installation monitoring phase which, as I write, has just been hampered up our way by the incredible flash flood of early September.

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Elsewhere on the same system, we have secured funding from Aire Rivers Trust and Don Vine of Yorkshire Wildlife Trust will oversee the re-establishment of some livestock exclusion fencing to keep cattle from trashing the vulnerable bank. We have fostered a relationship with the Woodland Trust and I am contributing to the management strategy of Lyndhurst Wood which is a heavily-used local amenity on one bank in Glusburn. A lack of recent management has resulted in a very mature canopy which has completely over-shaded any understory, riparian vegetation and tunnelled the Beck, in conjunction with heavy footfall and many, many dog access points, meaning the banks need some TLC.

Immediately following on from the publicity of the weir notching, two further weir owners have come forward and agreed to have similar notches placed in their structures. Another spin-off has been engagement with Lothersdale Parish Council, a village at the very top of one of the two headwaters of Eastburn Beck. They have secured a community group grant from the Woodland Trust to rehabilitate the woodland which forms the backdrop to the village's recreational area opposite the school. The site essentially follows the channel of Lothersdale Beck, and so I have been brought in to increase resilience of the banks and surrounding woodland, and install some natural flood management structures from locally-won materials to slow the flow. All of this, of course, benefits wild trout and other aquatic and terrestrial flora and fauna. There certainly seem to be trout where I have never observed them before, and to a decent size too as Alan Swann found out when I guided him there for one of my WTT Auction lots. News gets around... I have also just shared the Beck for a day with Andrew Griffiths, who writes stuff... and goes fishing (the only rational response, in his words) and Stuart Minnikin, who began his fishing journey on its banks.

Casting my net further afield, it has been great to get stuck into some work 'over the border' in Lancashire. Tom Myerscough at Wyre Rivers Trust helped coordinate an Advisory Visit with Wyresdale Anglers, a club with an astonishing history and a rather nice



Notching weirs on Yorkshire's Eastburn Beck.

residential clubhouse. Having secured some funding from the EA Fisheries Improvement Programme, together we have been focussing so far on some willow management on the mainstem Wyre, and the installation of a series of large woody material deflectors to help focus scour, retain gravel ramps, and generally rehabilitate a little spawning beck into a more natural shape. The workload was made that much easier following the arrival of my new trailer, a very gracious donation from the Flyfishers' Lodge, Ashbourne.

Slightly premature in that none of the practical elements have been undertaken yet, but I am pleased to report that a new partnership with Yorkshire Water has been established and that, with support from their Biodiversity Fund, I will be coordinating a series of practical

demonstration days across Yorkshire. Currently, we have work planned for the Nidd with Knaresborough Anglers, Skeeby Beck with Yorkshire Dales Rivers Trust, and the Aire with the National Trust, Yorkshire Wildlife Trust and Bingley Angling Club. While I have clear ideas and have already formed some partnerships for further projects in 2017, I am open to suggestion, so if your angling club, trust, or community group has access or rights to waters that are adjacent to Yorkshire Water infrastructure or holdings, and you have an idea for some restoration work that could be undertaken with volunteers, please do get in touch: jgrey@wildtrout.org or 07969 337808.



Headwaters of the Wyre.

GETTING IT RIGHT FOR EVERYTHING

WTT CONSERVATION OFFICER, ANDY THOMAS, MUSES ON TLC FOR PROTECTED SPECIES DURING RIVER REHABILITATION PROJECTS

In our desire to improve rivers and streams for our beloved brown trout, we have to ensure that our projects have wider ecological benefit. This of course makes perfect sense to us as wild trout fishermen and conservationists, but very occasionally we have to go the extra mile to ensure that species other than trout are fully protected when we are contemplating radical changes to river channels.

The desire to protect things other than fish is particularly pertinent when it comes to protected species, because if we fail to make the necessary concessions required to protect both the protected animals and their respective habitats, we could end up eating porridge and breaking rocks wearing arrow-patterned pyjamas! A slight exaggeration perhaps, but as a conservation charity, we must make sure that we lead by example and do our very best to ensure that in manipulating river habitat for trout, we don't adversely impact on other important species.

Generally, when planning project work, we automatically think about the consequences for other animal groups, the usual suspects being birds and bats (particularly with tree work) and water vole when considering bank work, especially with heavy plant machinery. Popping in a big brushwood mattress to protect an eroding bank isn't going to win us any friends if that particular site has a history of supporting nesting sand martins, for instance.

Two recent projects I have been involved with have necessitated special measures to make absolutely sure that both water vole and white clawed crayfish were given full protection. I certainly learnt some hard lessons when delivering channel improvement works on the River Lark in Suffolk. Long stretches of this river were completely devoid of water vole due to the unwanted attention of mink and



Marking Ratty's dens.



Vole gutter leaving the right bank of the Lark undisturbed.

the dredging bucket and it is only the sterling efforts of the conservation groups, landowners and angling clubs that have virtually eradicated mink and allowed voles to return. And on the Lark, wow have they returned! In fact, the piece of river bank that I wanted to reprofile was like 'swiss cheese', absolutely riddled with the little buggers. On employing the valuable services of local vole Tsar, Nick Oliver, whose role it was to keep me out of prison, it soon became obvious that the fundamental design of the project needed to be changed. The message here is to undertake your vole survey

nice and early and give yourself a chance to find a workable solution. Not great news if you've already mobilised your tracked 360! Once Nick had popped a cane and little red flag adjacent to every vole burrow, the whole bank looked more like a scene from a North Korean armed forces parade than a green riverbank.

Thanks to the pragmatic intervention of James Hooker of the EA, we were able to proceed with creating bankside berms from excavated river material, but with the essential addition of leaving a very

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narrow gutter between the existing bank and the new berm. Having a long-reach machine enabled us to work well back from, and over the top of, the undisturbed burrows and their residents. Where it was deemed essential to key in the upstream end of the berm to the existing riverbank we simply asked Nick to identify a short section of burrow-free bank. There wasn't much but there was some and together we managed to achieve our goals of improving the river whilst protecting the vole burrows. Where keying into the bank was impossible we simply plugged short sections of gutter with loose brushwood bundles; not big enough to stop the voles from exiting their front doors but complex enough to slow the flow and encourage sediment deposition.

Unfortunately, the presence of the native, white-clawed crayfish rarely crops up on many of the river sites located in the south east of the country, but recently I have had to ensure that a precious and extremely vulnerable population that is hanging on by the tips of its claws were given special treatment in a planned habitat improvement scheme on the Candover Brook, in the headwaters of the Itchen.

White-clawed crayfish have virtually disappeared from the Itchen system, but the upper river still holds valuable, small pockets of animals. Just turning up with dirty or wet kit poses a huge threat to this critically important population. The fungal spores of crayfish plague are carried by the numerous populations of non-native crayfish that inhabit many of the rivers we visit and work in, including further down on the Itchen. There has been much said and written about the importance of biosecurity in the last few years and there is a particular need to raise awareness about the risks posed to incredibly vulnerable native crayfish populations by anglers and conservationists pitching up with wet boots or equipment that has been exposed to plague spores. There's more on biosecurity on the WTT website, <http://www.wildtrout.org/content/biosecurity>.

Clean and well-disinfected kit is justifiably an essential element in planning any project. An added complication in our most recent phase

of work was the fact that a small number of crayfish were residing in the target reach, despite the fact that habitat for them was very limited. Although the project objectives would ultimately provide a better environment for crayfish, as well as brown trout, we are duty-bound to ensure that none are harmed when delivering the project. To this end we are indebted to Ben Rushbrook from the Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust, who went out of his way to help us find a way through securing the permissions required to work on this sensitive site.

In this particular case, we will again employ the 'gutter' technique to make sure that the highly sensitive ecotone in the river margin is left untouched. To encourage crayfish to march out of the impacted sections, we are planning to remove all vestige of cover a week prior to the work commencing, including a heavy weed-cut and temporary removal of any stones or cobbles greater than 40cm in size. All of the stones taken from the target areas are to be stored on tarpaulins on the riverbank and popped back in once the designed pool-and-run features have been created. Without their precious cover, the crays will simply march the few yards necessary to find an alternative, hopefully temporary,

home out of the target reaches. The low densities of individuals here should mean that any displaced crayfish will find some unoccupied cover reasonably quickly. To ensure that the final result is going to be even better for crayfish than it was before, we will be dotting big flints throughout the reach. A des res for a cray and a small spotty!

On rivers with mixed populations of both coarse and game fish we also have to consider the implications of our work for non-target species. It's second nature to us spotty folk to realise that wading around in shallow gravelly streams in the late autumn and winter isn't a great idea if we want to maximise trout and salmon egg conversion. I'm not sure we are always as careful at thinking about the impacts of our work on non-target fish species. I always think, for example, that it's rather odd that trout anglers get very anxious about winter grayling fishers marching through laid down trout redds but suggest that it's ok to wade in the spring time when grayling are laying down eggs. So, whether we are working on, or simply fishing in our rivers, perhaps we all need to give a little more thought about the wider implications for the flora and fauna that we all care passionately about.



The Director with a giant Fobdown flint – perfect habitat for a Ronnie or Reggy.

TROUT IN THE TOWN THROUGH THE SUMMER

AN UPDATE FROM PAUL GASKELL, WTT'S TROUT IN THE TOWN PROGRAMME MANAGER

It seems that the summer of 2016 has been an inspiring time to be involved with urban trout stream conservation. I hope I can be forgiven for being absolutely delighted that the complex partnership project to de-culvert and restore the section of the Porter Brook in the heart of the City of Sheffield (buried for 160 years) has been recognised with a national award for a 'Contribution to the Built Environment'. This was a multi-partner project with WTT inputting to design the in-channel habitat features for trout and the wider aquatic food web.

In addition to the de-culverting, the surrounding land has been

transformed into an urban 'Pocket Park'. Sometimes termed parkettes, mini-parks, vest-pocket or vesty parks, these are small green spaces accessible to the public. Pocket parks often use single, vacant building lots or small, irregular pieces of land. Sheffield is developing a track record for incorporating them into sustainable urban drainage systems and innovating by creating flood-plain storage capacity for urban rivers. The site now contributes to flood-risk management while creating valuable urban green space, increased biodiversity and puts the local community in direct contact with this previously buried stream. The whole project demonstrates that multiple benefits – including improved semi-natural river function – can be achieved through innovative partnership work with relevant expert consultation. Incorporating this advice at an early stage and identifying the

most appropriate partners enabled gains with minimal additional cost to the existing plans for de-culverting and park creation. This successful format was greatly facilitated by the existence of the Sheffield Waterways Strategy Group and its attendant network of practitioners, governmental bodies and stakeholders and made possible by funding through Interreg North Sea Region, SCC Breathing Spaces ('section 106'), EA and further funding by partners such as South Yorkshire Forest Partnership/SEEDS and Wild Trout Trust contributions.

The Sheffield branch of Trout in the Town 'SPRITE' are caring for the habitat as well as monitoring the aquatic life in this new section of daylighted urban stream. You can see a short and very professionally-produced film commissioned by the Canal & Rivers Trust on this link: <https://youtu.be/oexEIN4WwvU>.



This summer I also had the privilege of contributing to a great event that was set up by Phil Slater (Friends of the River Dearne) and hosted by both Don Catchment Rivers Trust and WTT. It was also (importantly) supported by the local branch of Tesco – whose car park and store front the River Dearne which runs past in the little West Yorkshire village of Scissett – and by the Environment Agency.

The concept was simple – invite local volunteers to join together and remove the invasive, non-native Himalayan balsam, clear up litter and also learn some simple river-habitat protection and improvement techniques.

This last part is why I was on site – to run a mini habitat workshop to explain the appropriate balance between light and shade, as well as the

huge importance of 'cover' habitat or refuge for different stages of a wild trout's life-cycle. When taken together, removing the competitive dominance of the invasive plants (which not only benefit native plants – but also the bugs and other wildlife that depend on those native plants) and creating a more varied habitat can have a great benefit to the species of river corridors.

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I would argue that this is especially valuable when those river corridors are surrounded by the tarmac and buildings of urban areas – but could the volunteers be found and convinced to attend? Well, it is a great compliment to the local village communities that well over 20 volunteers gave up their free time on a weekday to come down, learn and get stuck in. Many hands really did make light work. I had many interesting chats with attendees and I got to demonstrate some simple habitat-creation techniques that had multiple benefits for fish, birds and invertebrates alike.

Big thanks to Phil and all of the Friends of The Dearne and the host of people and organisations that turned out – a wonderful result.

More inspiration came from my privileged ‘judge’s view’ of the 2016 crop of WTT Conservation Awards’ project entries. You can see my full report elsewhere in this newsletter – but I wanted to mention the slight irony that the only project that I didn’t get to judge was (for obvious reasons of potential bias!) the urban Lyme Brook project in Newcastle-under-Lyme. This is an ongoing and ever-developing project that continues to use simple in-stream measures to improve the prospects for a wild trout recovery across the River Trent Catchment. I very much look forward to taking on the next phases of habitat works upstream and downstream of the existing efforts in Lyme Valley Parkway.

Another project that I’m very much looking forward to is the work planned for improving a section of the River Went that runs through the grounds of Ackworth School. Termed the ‘Living Went’ project, this will entail partnership working between WTT, Yorkshire Wildlife Trust, the Environment Agency and also Ackworth School itself. As well as in-channel habitat improvements, the school is acting as a hub for six further local schools so that teachers can be trained in the delivery of Mayfly in the Classroom as a means of connecting the curriculum with the local river corridor.

Finally for this update, Trout in the Town had a stand at the World Rivers Day celebration event held in City Park, Bradford – organised by the



Friends of The Dearne.



World Rivers Day celebration event held in City Park, Bradford.

Friends of Bradford’s Becks. Combining poetry, art and walks tracing the underground path of the Bradford Beck – the event had many stalls that were directly involved with the conservation of rivers and their catchments. Many local residents were astounded that, not only was there an underground river beneath their streets, but that sections of that stream support trout and other valuable wildlife.

MORE NEWS FROM THE NORTH

GARETH PEDLEY, WTT'S CONSERVATION OFFICER FOR THE NORTH

Following an Advisory Visit in 2012 and subsequent advice and support to Knaresborough Anglers, the WTT provided a practical workshop to the club, focusing on habitat management to promote wild fish populations. The club has already greatly reduced the number of fish stocked and is keen to assist the recovery of wild fish in their stretch of the River Nidd.

In line with previous advice, the club now undertakes less pruning and riverbank clearance, allowing healthy habitat to establish that will support a greater number of fish, rather than simply removing in-channel structure (like trees and logs) and cover to ease casting access. This switch is paying dividends with higher quality, low-level and trailing willow cover already present in many areas. The focus of the workshop was to demonstrate why retaining this cover is beneficial and how a minimalist approach to managing that habitat could and should be continued.

Employing willow-laying techniques, rather than simply cutting off low-hanging or trailing branches can be a good way to retain valuable cover while improving access; however, it should always be first considered whether removing or even moving such cover might destroy the habitat that is holding the fish in the first

place. There is no benefit in being able to cast to the location in which a fish used to lie, once it's left because it's cover's been taken out! Most of the attendees embraced this philosophy and the day provided a great example of how creating long-term habitat improvements can often be more a case of doing less than doing more.

The photograph below shows an example of the cover and associated high quality trout and grayling habitat that will naturally occur if pruning and felling of bankside trees is resisted. It should be remembered that over time, large crack willows will collapse under

their own weight, often ending up in the channel. While some see this as a mess or something to be winched out, it's exactly the type of cover and structure that will create new river features and make great refuge for fish from high flows and predators. In most cases, given time and enough water, a fallen tree like this will find a natural resting place and while it may restrict access to certain areas, it will more than compensate by the enhancement of others. However, none of this can occur if over-zealous tree maintenance prevents overhanging and trailing cover from ever establishing.



High quality trout and grayling habitat.

FISHING TV

Fishing TV is a Video On Demand platform for anglers. It's available on Smart TVs, Amazon Fire TV, as an app for smartphone and tablet, and online. In an online world that is flooded with poorly-made amateur fishing videos, Fishing TV stands out in seeking out the very best fishing content in the world and bringing it to you wherever you are.

In addition to a channel dedicated to the sport of fly fishing – packed with trout-related content from around the world – Fishing TV hosts a

dedicated conservation channel called Planet Fish, where you can find some of the WTT's own videos, as well as lots of other fascinating films and shows about the efforts of other organisations and individuals to conserve their favourite species and their habitats.

With a comprehensive mixture of fishing disciplines in their extensive and ever-growing library, divided into free and premium content, there's something for anyone with an interest in fish and fishing. You should have received a free Fishing TV gift card with this newsletter, which will allow

you to explore some of the premium content. If you've taken only an electronic version of the newsletter and would like a gift card, please contact Christina in the WTT office on office@wildtrout.org or 023 9257 0985.



WILD TROUT TRUST GRAYLING WEEKEND 2016

Ten years ago I attended my first Wild Trout Trust Grayling Weekend. This year, I was as excited as ever. Saturday 22 and Sunday 23 October saw 15 equally enthusiastic Wild Trout Trust members meet on the banks of the Derbyshire Wye at Haddon Hall, one of England's premier wild fisheries, to fish for the lady of the stream.

Heavy rain earlier in the week had freshened the river up and she was running clear. The mild weather meant that the grayling hadn't started to shoal up, so the challenge would be finding them. This year, almost everyone was new to the Grayling Weekend, so regular attendee, Charles Carr, and I set about briefing everyone and handing out maps along with sage advice.

The first decision was where to fish? With four miles of fishing available to the anglers, from Rowsley to beyond Bakewell, there was plenty of choice. A few of the group fished up from the Fisherman's Car Park towards Bakewell, while others headed downstream towards Rowsley. The remainder headed back to Bakewell to



fish the town waters.

We bumped into a few anglers over the weekend and everyone reported catching fish and that they had had a

great time. Most grayling were caught on nymphs but a hatch of small olives around lunchtime meant there was a bit of dry-fly action.

For those staying over, a few pints were enjoyed in the Rutland Arms before decanting to the Raja for a very nice Indian meal.

As always, many thanks to Warren and his team at Haddon Hall for their generosity and support.

Kris Kent

BOOK REVIEW

FRESHWATER FISHES OF BRITAIN BY JACK PERKS

Jack Perks, a good friend of WTT, is a rising star in the world of wildlife photography, especially freshwater fish. He was the instigator of the recent vote to find Britain's favourite fish, an accolade awarded to our own beloved brown trout (what else?).

An obvious outlet for Jack's superb photography is a book and here it is: *Freshwater Fishes of Britain*. The book aims to mix unique images with interesting information, facts and figures on our 50 or so freshwater fish species. It succeeds: Jack's first book is a triumph.

We get used to seeing 'grip-and-grin' fish pics and not seeing our local fish species in their true glory. *Freshwater Fishes* does this really, really well. There is, for example, an

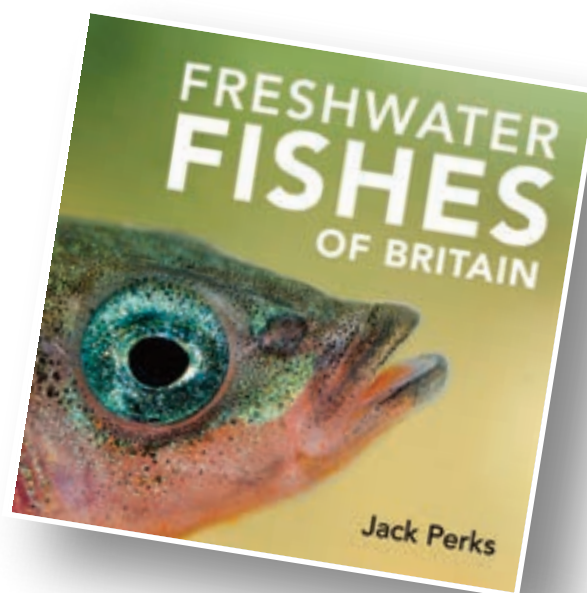
intriguing shot of a male pike nuzzling up to a larger hen, presumably trying to make him her only true love. Scattered throughout are plenty of interesting snippets on identification and life history.

If you are a slightly more mature fish type, like me, you'll just enjoy this book. Where it might be at its very best is capturing kids' hearts and minds, bringing them to our wonderful, fishy world.

Freshwater Fishes of Britain retails at £16.99, available through all good bookshops. However, the publishers, Reed New Holland (www.newhollandpublishers.com), have very kindly offered WTT members a discounted rate of £14.99, including P&P – call 01206 255777, quoting FFB2 for your discounted copy.

You may have just solved one Christmas pressie crisis!

Shaun Leonard



DBIT SCIENTIFIC ADVISORY BOARD

The Deveron, Bogie and Isla Rivers Charitable Trust (DBIT) recently announced its Scientific Advisory Board, including WTT's Conservation Officer, Gareth Pedley and one of our own advisors, Dr Andy Walker. This heavyweight panel will advise the Trust on the management of the rivers and their fish stocks, including some prolific (and large growing!) brown trout populations.

DR DYLAN BRIGHT

The world is a hugely poorer place after the death this summer of Dr Dylan Bright, formerly Director of Westcountry Rivers Trust.

Dylan was in the vanguard of the rivers trust movement, a pioneer for the principles of paid ecosystems services or natural capital and a fervent advocate for the health of our rivers and their catchments. Dylan possessed an awesome intellect but a self-effacing nature and a gentle capacity to put anyone at ease. I remember his humour and infectious laugh with great fondness. Many, many people are

mourning Dylan's loss, testament to what he achieved in our watery world and the breadth of his friendships. A rare fish – we'll not see Dylan's like again.

There's a fitting tribute to Dylan on the Westcountry Rivers Trust website: <http://wrt.org.uk/dr-dylan-bright-bright-by-name-bright-by-nature/>

Deepest condolences from all at WTT to Dylan's family and friends.



IT'S NOT FAR AWAY: WTT'S AUCTION 2017

As the 2016 trout fishing season closes, the Wild Trout Trust auction team swings into action. In 2016, the auction raised a final total of £71,810. Rather a hard act to follow for 2017, but we will do our best!

Clearly, this is a very significant source of funding for us, and it is also one of the main ways that we can involve a really large community in helping the Trust. Our thanks go to the donors and bidders who make the auction such a success. We also appreciate the help you give us to publicise the auction. There is now a wonderful 'buzz' around the auction that helps to raise awareness of the WTT and our work, and what a tremendous amount of support we receive. The feedback from lot purchasers also shows that the auction is a good 'matchmaking' service! Many friends are made and clubs and syndicates joined as a result of auction lot fishing days.

The process of gathering details and photos of over 300 auction lots is quite a long one, starting in early October and coming to a close by Christmas (well, that is the plan!). We then create the catalogue which is sent to members in early February, ready for the start of the auction in early March. The 2017 auction will take place 3-12 March, closing on a Sunday evening. 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 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; our auction catalogue explains how to do this.

We already have some exciting new lots – fishing for arctic charr in Coniston Water with Jon Beer will be a unique experience, and the Japanese gyotaku prints are rare and exquisite collector's pieces. Fishing days and flies tend to be the most popular lots, but the auction also includes art, books,

tackle and shooting. If you have considered donating a fishing lot but don't want to guide, please do get in touch. Many of our bidders are experienced fishermen who don't want or need guiding and we can set expectations clearly in the description including experience levels and dates. Or you may be happy to take a relative beginner and introduce them to the delights of your beat. If you would like to offer a lot to the auction, please contact Denise Ashton on dashton@wildtrout.org or 07802 454157.



Gyotaku print of rainbow trout.

NEWS FROM THE MIDLANDS AND EAST ANGLIA

TIM JACKLIN, WTT CONSERVATION OFFICER

The junior section of Saracens Head Angling Group, Staffordshire, got together on the banks of their local Gayton Brook in early July to learn all about habitat improvement and the aquatic life that inhabits the stream. WTT Conservation Officer, Tim Jacklin and Environment Agency Fisheries Officer, Judy Smith, joined forces to demonstrate some simple habitat improvement techniques and carry out some kick-sampling for invertebrates. There was even time for the juniors to get an introduction to fly fishing using tenkara tackle.

Neil Jennings, junior co-ordinator for the club, said "Both the juniors and the senior members were amazed with the afternoon, it was brilliant. I have had responses already from some of the mothers saying how much their boys enjoyed the afternoon. It was an incredible learning experience for all ages; we now have a greater understanding of what happens under the surface, to be able to collect bugs and grubs, see them close up and to be told the names of the underwater creatures was just brilliant, some of us were still talking about this day on Saturday night in Weston Village Hall. Thank you for taking the time on a cold and wet Summer afternoon, the experience gained of river habitat outshone the wet weather."

Following on from the successful day with the juniors, senior club members spent a day with WTT repairing riverside fencing and cattle drinks, to protect habitat works carried out at the site last winter. The results have been pleasing with the reduced grazing pressure allowing bankside vegetation to recover, and previous channel narrowing to colonise with vegetation. The Gayton Brook suffered a pollution and fish-kill in 2015 and these works will help to speed the recovery.

The Brailsford (or Bradley) Brook is a small stream in Derbyshire that ultimately joins the River Dove. In the early C20th, a long section of it was engineered and adapted for fishing,



Tim Jacklin explaining trout habitat to the Saracens Head juniors.



Saracens Head juniors – world champion bug hunters.

with the creation of numerous weirs and lakes and ponds fed by the brook. This is referred to in the book *Dancing Streams* by Douglas McCraith, published in 1929: *The Bradley Brook in its natural state is a tiny burn only a few feet wide, but money skilfully expended has converted it into a trout stream with pools and weirs. Mr. W.H. Radford, the well-known civil engineer and water authority, who owned the property at that time, was responsible for having effected the improvements, and only an expert could have done it as he did.*

A WTT Advisory Visit on behalf of the current owners in 2015 recorded

over 50 weirs on approximately 2km of the brook. Many of these were in a poor state of repair, not helped by the undermining of the banks by the prolific population of non-native signal crayfish. The weirs were preventing the natural movement of gravel through the brook, greatly diminishing spawning opportunities for wild trout. It was decided to remove the weirs from two sections of the brook to restore natural river processes and habitats.

WTT assisted the landowner in consulting the relevant authorities, securing the necessary consent to remove the weirs, and in August the first

block of five weirs was removed. Another 12 will be taken out next year. In the meantime, the effects of the removal will be examined with the expected results being a re-grading of the accumulated gravels into a pool-and-riffle sequence, an increase in wild trout numbers and a less favourable environment for signal crayfish.

On a similar theme, in July, two weirs were breached on the River Dove in Dovedale, by volunteers from Leek & District Fly Fishing Association, ably led by Alex Swann. This is the culmination of many months of consultation and planning under the 'Letting the Dove Flow' project, an initiative spear-headed by Trent Rivers Trust and sponsored by Natural England. The WTT are partners in the project and submitted the consent applications for the works to the weirs. The project aims to reduce the large number of weirs present throughout the limestone dales section of the Dove, restoring natural river processes and habitats. This is a much-visited and well-loved part of the countryside, with iconic locations such as the stepping stones in Dovedale, so careful consultation and explanation is vital to the success of the project. To that end, the National Trust, which owns the land in this location, is carrying out extensive publicity involving WTT, Trent Rivers Trust and Leek & District Fly Fishing Association.

Further afield, Advisory Visits have



Weir removal on the River Dove.

been carried out on a range of different waters including the Rivers Idle and Torne, Nottinghamshire; the Warwickshire Stour; the Knee Brook in Gloucestershire; the River Sherbourne, Coventry; the River Sence, Leicestershire; the River Noe, Derbyshire; the Branston Beck, Lincolnshire and the River Ceiriog, Wales. On the Bentley Brook, Derbyshire, an investigation into the distribution of non-native signal crayfish was completed, which will help to inform the design of fish passage improvements there (without helping the crayfish to spread). A substantial amount of planning work has also been completed for the River Gwash in Rutland and by the time you read this, two sites will have under-

gone habitat improvement works, complementing a third site tackled by Welland Rivers Trust. There are also some exciting developments in Lincolnshire, where we are working in partnership with Lincolnshire Rivers Trust and the Environment Agency on a Heritage Lottery Fund application centred on the beck flowing from the Lincolnshire Limestone aquifer. At present, we are focussing on landowner and community liaison, alongside planning and development of projects which, if successful, will lead to some substantial river restoration projects being undertaken.

BOOK REVIEW

NYMPHING THE NEW WAY – FRENCH LEADER FISHING FOR TROUT BY JONATHAN WHITE WITH OSCAR BOATFIELD

This book is a great introduction to the relatively new method of presenting nymphs on long leaders, collectively known as French leader fishing.

I say relatively new, because it is something that has been around for a number of years in river competition fishing but seems to have been slow to catch on amongst the majority of UK river fly anglers. Jonathan White is a fly fisher of 40 years' experience who underwent something of an epiphany, discovering the effectiveness of French

nymphing and becoming a convert to the method. In this respect, the book is ideal if you want to discover the method for the first time as it covers the practicalities of tackle, flies and techniques, clearly and comprehensively. The chapters then lead on to using the method in different types of waters and for other species including grayling. It is great to see contributions from talented young anglers from around the world including co-author, Oscar Boatfield (UK), Julien Daguillanes (France), Cody Burgdorff (USA) and Stanislav Mankov (Bulgaria). The book is profusely illustrated with some superb photographs and also contains an interesting history of the origins of the method and its development to outwit ultra-cautious specimen trout from the crystal clear rivers of Jura, France. If

you have yet to discover French nymphing – buy this book and give it a go. You won't regret it.

Hardback format 246 x 189mm, 160pp, Colour photographs and illustrations throughout, ISBN: 978-1-910723-22-7, Price £20, Merlin Unwin Books, tel. 01584 877456 www.merlin-unwin.co.uk

Tim Jacklin



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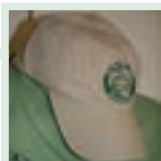


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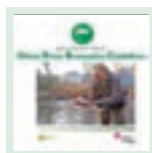
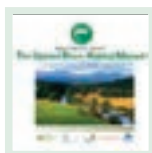


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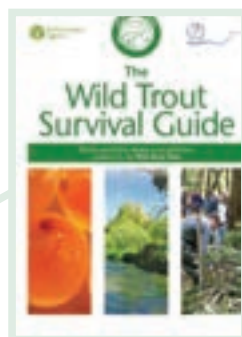
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- The Wild Trout Survival Guide – £10 + £2 p&p



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