

# Jan/Feb 2015 Newsletter



## Three very good reasons to be out and about on our local rivers and streams...

We have been very busy since the last Newsletter, out on the river running various projects. We have been delighted by the birdlife we have seen while we have been there, brightening up the dull days leading us into what we hope will be a bright and warm Spring. We saw ALL these on the Wellow in the heart of Radstock – Midsomer Norton and have seen them again on our walks along the By Brook. What they all have in common is that they rely on the river to produce their food and will soon disappear if water quality deteriorates to the detriment of the invertebrates and small fish populations living in the streams.

When we cannot quite see into the water to spot fish it is great to have the company of birds along the riverside particularly the long tailed tits and wrens which busy themselves in the bank-side scrub and the beautiful bullfinches we saw in the gardens bordering the Wellow.

## Wellow and Cam Projects

We are now coming to the formal end of the project which was funded by the Environment Agency on the river near Welton Rovers Football club. This forms part of our wider Wellow and Cam initiative. Some of the work we have done is described below but we have not finished yet as we have lots more planned and have met a lot of interested people who we hope will help us take these opportunities forward. The work completed so far has been carried out by BART in partnership with the Wild Trout Trust as well as both local and BART volunteers and teams of very enthusiastic volunteers from the Environment Agency.

Our work began with coppicing a number of trees to allow light into the stream to encourage growth of aquatic vegetation including water crowfoot and to open up views of the river for the enjoyment of local walkers to appreciate. We then used much of the resulting brash to create brushwood berms. These have introduced some sinuosity of the river within it's existing channel making for a very attractive and vibrant look. We hope to see more juvenile fish and increased invertebrate populations as a result. The benefits of this work were near immediate, with increased flow and scouring of the riverbed.

Many of the houses adjacent to the brook have been leafleted to let people know what we have been doing and to seek feedback. We have had some great feedback on this work, with many people commenting that they are enjoying being able to see the river more clearly and are looking forward to seeing an increase in wildlife in the area. We have also had offers to get involved in future work which we will certainly be taking advantage of.







Our access point in use by locals.

In a popular area a little downstream we created a gravelled access point into the river. This replaces the previous stretch of bank that was badly worn and slippery from frequent usage by people and dogs accessing the river showing how popular this stretch is as a local amenity. We know this spot has been used by local schools for nature trips and hope the improved access helps this important opportunity for children to be carried out even more in the future.

We used this stretch of brook for an invertebrate training day – reported later - at the end of March, and are planning an open day here for local people to explore invertebrate life below the waterline and many other aspects of BART'S work on rivers and streams in the area. Whilst we were completing this work we had many parents stopping to comment on how they are looking forward to using the area with their children.

We have completed two riverside litter picks and have also commissioned an advisory visit by the Wild Trout Trust's urban river specialist to give us more ideas on how we could help make the river stretches running through the town even more attractive and wildlife friendly.

On our latest visit to the Wellow we were pleased to see parents and children using the gravelled slope and that our structures are already collecting sediment and becoming part of the natural bankside. We look forward to watching this progress!

Look out for dates on our website and Facebook – Twitter or just let Ian or Harriet know you want to be added to our Wellow and Cam mailing list.

## **By Brook Project**

The second phase of the project was completed at the end of March. This has now provided BART with a catchment wide assessment of what will be required to help this category 1 brook reach good ecological status as required by the EU Water Framework Directive. The reports commissioned include ecosystem assessments of the brook, assessments of options to improve fish passage and costings, an evaluation of other impacts on water quality within the brook and an outline plan of what might be tackled in what order over future years.

Over the rest of this year BART will be working with local stakeholders , Natural England and the Environment Agency to refine this plan to reflect what local people want to happen as well as what must be done to meet directive requirements and to research all funding options available to take this work forward in partnership with interested groups.

The By Brook is another beautiful local amenity rich in birdlife and wild flowers which exists close to the city of Bath, helping set the world heritage City amidst some of the loveliest places you could wish to spend your time in.



### **Lackham College DWPA event**

In January, BART ran a Diffuse Water Pollution from Agriculture event at Lackham College. The day was a great success, with a large turnout of future and current farmers and gamekeepers listening to speakers from the Environment Agency, FWAG , BART and Natural England and completing on site farm training on how to reduce agricultural pollution.

### **Pinpoint training course**

We also hosted a two day Pinpoint course for Rivers Trust and Catchment Sensitive Farming officers on how to identify DWPA issues and how to work in partnership with farmers to design and develop practical solutions in terms of economic and environmental savings. Both courses received great feedback!

## Bristol Avon Rivers Trust (BART) Riverfly Hub.



The first stage in our plans to take the hub forward was to complete the training of our first assessor – Martyn Hale who will be running the hub for BART. This was successfully completed at the end of March with our first Riverfly event of this year. Martyn will now be able to organise and train volunteers in Riverfly techniques and help them set up formal monitoring sites.

At the event on 28th March, Martyn trained 12 new Riverfly volunteers with an interest in seven different rivers within the Bristol Avon catchment and will follow up to set up formal sites with them during the Spring and Summer.

Next steps will be to expand the interest in Riverfly across the catchment and to arrange support mechanisms and events to support volunteers and to increase the social, education and networking opportunities for volunteers. Further training and exhibition events are planned during the year so please contact us if you would like to be involved either to take part or just to help in the organisation and running of the events.



### Working with students

BART is currently working with a number of students throughout the catchment. One of our volunteers from Sparsholt College is currently working for us on a work placement, carrying out a walkover survey on the Cam Brook to assess barriers to fish passage.



We have also been working with a number of UWE students on catchment management plans for pollution, flooding and biodiversity.

We are looking forward to seeing some interesting reports from these young people!



## BART's new Catchment Restoration Project Officer

At the start of the year BART reached an exciting milestone—we took on our first full time paid member of staff, Harriet Alvis. Harriet graduated from Swansea University with a Masters degree in Environmental Biology, where she worked with Natural Resources Wales to assess the success of stocking programs and the conservation status of the Atlantic Salmon in the River Taff, Cardiff. Harriet



has also worked in Scotland with the Clyde River Foundation, where she conducted electrofishing surveys, freshwater invertebrate sampling and researched the habitat preference of the common bullhead. In her free time, Harriet is a keen kayaker, surfer and horse rider and also helps out on local farms, particularly during the lambing season.

Harriet is already enjoying working on existing and new BART projects and is looking forward to meeting our volunteers in the coming months. You can contact Harriet to get involved with any of our projects by emailing [harriet@bristolavonrivertrust.org](mailto:harriet@bristolavonrivertrust.org)



### Heritage Lottery Funded Project at Blaise Castle Estate

We have been busy planning a series of inspiring heritage and ecology walks, interactive workshops, educational talks and Riverfly training events along the Hazel Brook, a tributary of the River Trym through Blaise Castle Estate. These events will give participants the chance to learn a range of new information and skills, with the aim of inspiring them to fully appreciate the history surrounding their river environments.

The first two dates for heritage and ecology walks have been confirmed as the 9th for adult participants and 23rd May for parents and children., meeting outside Blaise Castle House Museum at 10.30am. If you would like to come along as a participant or volunteer, let us know!

*We are grateful to the Heritage Lottery Fund for funding this project.*



## Volunteering with BART

This Summer we are going to have plenty of opportunities for volunteers to get involved in supporting events or leading them in their locality. Look out for dates on site, or if you have something going on in your local stream where you would



like support, we can help you do it or provide some display boards or advice. We can also help by showing you what can be done to improve your local stream and perhaps raise the local interest to start the ball rolling on a local project. Let us know if you need any help or want to be involved in any events we are already running.

There is also always the opportunity to become a BART Beacon—our ‘eyes and ears’ of BART, identifying problems or opportunities on their local stretch of river or stream. Local knowledge and interest is all you need to become a beacon; and whether you are an individual who has something to share or a community or interest group we would love to hear from you. If you know of clubs, community groups, walking groups or indeed any groups who care about our rivers and streams and who might wish to become beacons please forward this newsletter to them.

### One liners.

Exciting news—a determined sea trout has been found by a local angler on the middle Avon above several significant barriers. You can read more on our website—[www.bristolavonriverstrust.org/news/](http://www.bristolavonriverstrust.org/news/)



BART are progressing plans to carry out some restoration work on the Sherston Avon, including helping create a wildflower meadow. Great support from volunteers and landowners has helped us reach this stage.

BART will be involved in the Bristol and Bath Festival of Nature events this Summer – let us know if you want to be involved in running these events..





### ***Dates for your diary...***

**-9th May:** Blaise Castle Estate heritage and river ecology walk, outside Blaise Castle Museum at 10.30 am.

**-23rd May:** Blaise Castle Estate heritage and river ecology walk (Parents & children), outside Blaise Castle Museum at 10.30 am

**-13th & 14th June:** Bristol Festival of Nature, Bristol Harbourside

**-5th July:** The BART Yeo group are arranging an event on the Congresbury Yeo with YACWAG (Yatton and Congresbury Wildlife Action Group ) - look out for posters and more info on the website.

**-11th July:** Sherston Boules and Carnival, where we will have a stand to advertise a potential local project!



Please take a look at our website – **[www.bristolavonrivertrust.org](http://www.bristolavonrivertrust.org)** and follow us on Facebook or Twitter (@bristolavonrt) to keep abreast of news and events and please share this Newsletter with any friends who have an interest in our rivers.