



## **BART is delighted to support the *River Monitoring Scheme* annual meeting, Langford Lake, Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> January 2014**

On Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> January 2014, BART contributed to the annual meeting of the River Monitoring Scheme. The River Monitoring Scheme is a project of the Wiltshire Wildlife Trust (WWT). The annual meeting was held at the WWT's Langford Lakes nature reserve, encompassing a stretch of the River Wylde and a number of gravel pits at Hanging Langford, upstream of Salisbury.



Image: *Ephemera danica*  
- Ben Fitch, Wiltshire Wildlife Trust

BART is an active partner in WWT's River Monitoring Scheme, as are the Environment Agency and a number of other bodies. We are looking to increase our population of registered monitoring sites and volunteer riverfly surveyors across the BART region to take the pulse of our precious river resource.

Angus Menzies, River Monitoring Scheme volunteer for both WWT and the Dorset Wildlife Trust, opened and chaired the day.

Ben Fitch, WWT River Monitoring Scheme coordinator, commenced proceedings with an update of the Wiltshire River Monitoring Scheme, outlining progress and trends over the past half-dozen years. BART's participation and intent to increase monitoring effort was acknowledged. Ben is also an active supporter of BART.

Nick Wardlaw and Lewis Swift (Environment Agency) gave a presentation on registration of sites with the Environment Agency. This is important to ensure that monitored sites are representative and comparable, and also located where they can best account for impacts from development, confluences, sewage treatment works and other influences. Nick and Lewis also outlined how data are integrated into spreadsheets and how trigger levels are set using 'best judgement' based on historic data to take account of natural fluctuations in invertebrate populations.



Martijn Antheunisse and Lev Dahl (WWT) presented next on a range of partnership-based projects cumulatively contributing to 'Restoration and monitoring on the River Avon' (the Hampshire Avon). They outlined a number of techniques, such as channel-narrowing, dropping of trees and more structured live deflectors, and buffer zones. BART and other Rivers Trusts are actively promoting these types of river enhancement techniques.

Mitch Perkins (Freshwater Ecologist, Environment Agency) presented next on 'The Gammarid Enigma: the importance of shrimps as an indicator species'. Gammarid shrimps are one of the eight invertebrate groups classified by the River Monitoring Scheme. Gammarids have been in significant decline across the UK, though the reasons for this remain obscure.

My own presentation on 'River habitat use by coarse fish' concluded the presentations for the morning. In three parts, it addressed: (1) how coarse fish use river habitats; (2) habitats bottlenecks; and (3) what can I do about it? My talk encompassed recognising which habitats, and why a diversity of habitats, are important, addressing protective and restorative messages to enhance habitats for coarse fish. (I will be giving variants of this presentation at Marsh Farm, Surrey, on Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> March 2014 and also to the Barbel Society on Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> May 2014.)

There then followed an extensive period of discussion, chaired by Angus Menzies. Many good questions were raised by participants, and lively debate ensued not only from the speaker panel but within the room. The River Monitoring Scheme volunteers are an engaged and enthusiastic bunch!

It is all looking good for the continued expansion and value-add that the River Monitoring Scheme offers to river management, including expansion across the BART region.

If you want to get involved, please contact BART via our website:

[www.bristolavonrivertrust.org](http://www.bristolavonrivertrust.org).

**Dr Mark Everard**

**Director, BART**

Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> January 2014