

THE STRIPLING

Newsletter of the Upper Thames Protection Society



Issue 39, October 2019

Open Meeting and AGM

Wednesday 20th November, starting at 7.30pm

The Jenner Hall, Bath Road, Cricklade

Membership £2 a year. Non-members welcome

Upper Thames Protection Society - Registered Charity 299418

Chairman's Report

2019 has, again, been another busy year for the Society. Thanks again to all of those who have contributed in so many different ways whether it be by representation on committees, background work or writing articles for this, our annual newsletter.

Once again, Helen Goody has done remarkably well at producing an informative newsletter and I hope all of you are able to learn from this. We always welcome contributions and indeed involvement if there is a topic of interest to you.

The success of the society depends on voluntary contributions and new ways of looking at problems which appear to have been around for many years.

With that in mind, the weather seems another talking point. The demonstrations in various parts of the world about how the climate affects us are most clearly seen at local level with another dry summer and now, at the time of writing, eight inches of rain having fallen in September and October alone. This is a challenge for those that live and work on the land as well as those that have to manage the environment.

The catchment-based approach, led by Upper Thames Catchment Partnership in this region is an effective way to bring together all stakeholders and to address the issues. UTPS is part of that Partnership.

Finally, a thank you to Arthur Webb who has decided to step down from the committee having continuously served as a member since the society's foundation in the late 1980s. Arthur's commitment to the society has been steadfast for over thirty years and his knowledge of the river environment has been invaluable in helping inform and guide the society. We thank you Arthur for all your hard work.

I hope you enjoy reading this and we look forward to any feedback that you may have.

Chris Graham, Chairman, UTPS

The Cotswold Fly Fisher's Club, CFF

The Cotswold Fly Fishers is shortly to celebrate its 70th year. The Club began in Oxford, brainchild of tackle dealer Arthur Smith, who had frequent requests for trout fishing there being little available at that time in the locality. Founder members contributed the equivalent of a weeks' wages, ahead of suitable water being obtained in the Windrush valley below Burford.



River Coln below Whelford

Subsequently the Club sought fly-fishing on other Cotswold rivers and today rents water on the Coln,

Churn, Leach, Dikler, Ampney Brook and Glyme as well as still water fishing at Cornbury and Salford. Further diversification provided salmon beats on the Wye and chalk stream days on the river Kennet; part of an unrivalled game fishing package available at modest subscription for its current membership of 220 enthusiasts.

The Club has substantially changed its management practices over the last two decades by reducing stocking of artificially reared fish and concentrating efforts on improving habitat for wild brown trout. In 2008 and 2014 the CFF won the Wild Trout Trust Award for work undertaken by members to improve stretches of the Dikler and Sherborne Brook. Habitat enhancements included the introduction of spawning gravels, flow deflectors and cover blocks for juvenile fish. Work is on-going across the wide variety of water currently controlled.



Coln Mayfly imago recently emerged from sub-imago shuck



Wild Coln brown trout - CFF members are mandated to return all wild trout under club rules. A limited kill of stock fish is allowed but most members also put these back. As a consequence we are reducing the introduction of farmed fish on most waters where natural reproduction is significant.

Fishing in the Cotswolds is under increasing threat with the incessant demand for water and sewage facilities for new housing. Some rivers, including the once gin clear Windrush have been badly affected. Recent efforts by WASP (Windrush Against Sewage Pollution) have established problems at Sewage Treatment Works along the river. One of the biggest challenges for Cotswold Fly Fishers is effective engagement in the continuing battle to maintain water quality in the Cotswold watercourses.

David Reinger
davidreinger47@gmail.com

For further information contact or consult:
wildbrownie@yahoo.co.uk
www.cotswoldflyfishers.com

Navigation of the Upper Thames

One of the issues which has been of concern to many UTPS members is the accessibility of the Upper Thames between Lechlade and Cricklade. This has been the subject of a number of discussions, which have involved FWAG (Farming & Wildlife Advisory Group), the Upper Thames Catchment Partnership, the Environment Agency (EA) and riparian landowners.

The Environment Agency are responsible for the navigable stretch of the River Thames, which effectively starts from The Round House just outside Lechlade. However, from that point the river does not fall under the EA's responsibility to ensure that it can be navigated. That is down to a combination of the EA and local landowners. Those often are balanced between the objective to keep the water flowing and the maintenance of the environment, which sometimes considers that in-stream debris is important.

Joanne Leigh of FWAG, Richard Ruming and Chris Graham of this Society and Seb Cook of the Environment Agency took to the Environment Agency's boat to carry out an inspection from The Round House. Whilst this could not follow the river too far given the depth of draw and size of boat, nonetheless it was a useful opportunity for us to see first-hand the problems that were being encountered by the Environment Agency in maintenance etc. As a result of this, there is a dialogue with landowners on how to protect banks and an ongoing process to discuss with riparian owners what can be done, if anything, with in-stream obstructions.

Chris Graham
UTPS Chairman



Joanne, Richard and Seb on the Environment Agency boat inspecting the Upper Thames

Environmental Land Management Scheme (ELMS) Trial, with the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group, South West

What is ELMS?

The Environmental Land-Management Scheme (ELMS) is being developed by DEFRA as a potential new payment methodology that is planned to replace current Basic Payment Scheme and Countryside Stewardship. Future payments will be focused on delivering public goods and the 25 Year Environment Plan (25 YEP), based on Natural Capital recovery and regenerative agriculture.

What is Natural Capital and the key objectives of the 25 YEP?

Natural Capital is the economic value of ecosystem services provided by the natural environment across landscapes and catchments. Ecosystem services are delivered by managing land for clean air / water, thriving wildlife, mitigating climate change (e.g. carbon capture), enhancing beauty & heritage and reducing risk from environmental hazards.



Identifying and improving natural capital across Gloucestershire farms in Defra ELMS Test & Trails

As part of the development of ELMS, Defra are funding groups and organisations to undertake 'Test and Trials' to try out specific elements or processes that what could be part of the future ELMS.

FWAG SW will be undertaking one such ELMS trial over the next 18 months. The trial has been developed in conjunction with the Farmer Guardians of the Upper Thames Facilitation Fund group and other partner organisations.

What are the aims of the ELM trial?

1. To further develop an effective Natural Capital recording tool (The Land App) and survey methodology, and condition score the public benefit of the environmental measures on farmland.
2. To demonstrate the effectiveness and value for money of a local adviser that can bring together farmers, communities and stakeholders to offer multiple opportunities (funding / resource) to deliver public benefits at a local level.

The trial will be broken down into two phases over 18 months

Phase 1 (October 2019-March 2020):

Over the 6-months we will be creating a baseline Natural Capital assessment and land-use/management across the trial farms, using a combination of farmer knowledge and adviser guidance.

The trial will involve walking around each farm to start assessing the Natural Capital by recording what is on the farm. The focus should be on water, soil, habitats, historic environment and species. work with your adviser to map potential land management options to benefit the farm business and the environment. Participating farms will be encouraged to use The Land App to record this data and to help in the development of a National Capital recording tool.

As a control, 30 farmers (Phase 1 control group) will also take part who are not supported by an adviser. This is designed to highlight the level of support that might be required/appropriate in order for farms to assess Natural Capital.

Phase 2 (March 2020-March 2021):

By using The Land App and Ordnance Survey, we will build on this baseline assessment to create a land management plan. Interactive maps will be used for future land-use planning and how farms can collaborate with neighbours to link across the landscape and catchment to deliver public benefit.

The land management plan will provide farms with the strategic targeting layers of your land and what your data means. This information is key to understanding where your farm fits in with the landscape, and how it is best placed to improve Natural Capital and Public

Benefit. We will share the co-designed land management plan developed with farmers to assess usability and accessibility. We will present a final report to DEFRA on the cost benefit of investment from the Treasury into ELMS. This will demonstrate the economic value of good land management advice in helping farmers deliver public goods.

In Phase 2 all farms taking part in the trial will be supported by an adviser.

Outputs from the trial will be shared nationally across the farming community and environmental networks.

Sarah Wells, Land Conservation Advisor, FWAG
sarah.wells@fwagsw.org.uk

Japanese knotweed (*Reynoutria japonica*) and the riparian environment

Japanese Knotweed was sent by a Dutch plant collector to Kew Gardens in 1882. By 1885 it was established in a brownfield site in Wales. It did not achieve this through natural spread, but by human intervention and this is the primary story behind how Japanese Knotweed has become such an issue for the entire country.

At the height of the season 60% of the plant is underground, ie. what you see above the surface is the 'tip of the iceberg'.



We only have the female plant in this country and so the seed is not viable. The spread of the plant is due to the ability to regenerate from as little as the 70g (equivalent to nail on your little finger) of rhizome or, during the summer season, fragments of the stem and leaves.

The riparian environment is a classic pathway for spread.

Japanese Knotweed is listed on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) and, along with the law of Private Nuisance, these are the two key pieces of legislation means any riparian owner needs to consider seriously putting any Japanese Knotweed they may have within an appropriate management control programme. The two pieces of legislation effectively meaning that it is your responsibility to ensure that the Japanese Knotweed does not spread outside your property.

During 2018 Network Rail were successfully prosecuted under the Law of Private Nuisance, since then there has been an increase in land owners being

prosecuted for not putting their Japanese Knotweed into a recognised control programme.

In addition to the legislation there is also the flood risk presented by Japanese Knotweed within the riparian environment. The summer growth dies back during the late autumn and generates significant vegetation debris.

Key message is do not panic but do take it seriously.

Robert Mitchell ACIM CSJK, Invasive Weed Surveyor
Director, Conservation Land Services Ltd
www.conservationlandservices.co.uk

Upper Thames Catchment Partnership

UTPS committee members sit on the Upper Thames Catchment Partnership, hosted by Gloucestershire FWAG (key contacts are Jenny Phelps and Sarah Wells) chaired by Chris Short (Countryside and Community Research Institute) and the catchment coordinator from the Environment Agency is Stuart Malaure.



Delivering projects relies on the involvement of local communities and the knowledge and skills that are held at a local level. The partnership is keen to work with volunteer groups and parish councils as part of its integrated local delivery. Volunteer with:

- FWAG SouthWest
- Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust
- Cotswold Water Park Trust
- Wiltshire Wildlife Trust

Further information and links can be found <https://www.fwagsw.org.uk/the-upper-thames-catchment>

Thames Water Plan for 2020 to 2025 On 18th July 2019 Thames Water received feedback (known as the 'draft determination') from Ofwat on its enhanced business plan for 2020-2025. Thames Water aims to "do more for less - reducing the cost, improving our performance commitments and cutting customer bills". On 30th August 2019 Thames Water submitted its full response to Ofwat which is now under consideration. For further information see:

<https://corporate.thameswater.co.uk/about-us/our-strategies-and-plans/our-5-year-plan-for-2020-to-2025>

Minerals Local Plan for Gloucestershire (2018 – 2032) This is another important plan for our area currently under consideration. An examination webpage can be reached at: <http://www.hwa.uk.com/projects/gloucestershire-minerals-lp-examination/>

Note: The opinions expressed by correspondents are not necessarily those of the Upper Thames Protection Society. Please send contributions, letters, comments to Editor: helengoody@talk21.com

Upper Thames Protection Society - Registered Charity 299418