



Catchment Plan launch

The Arun and Western Streams Catchment Plan and the ARC project were officially launched on 6 February at two events at Lodge Hill near Pulborough.

Talks were held about a range of projects and initiatives due to be delivered across the catchment and participants were given information about how to get involved.

There was also a 'Community Market Place' – a space where groups were able to display their projects and interact with participants.

The events also launched the Catchment Management Plan and a new website for the catchment. Despite torrential rain which led to road closures, around 180 people attended the two events.

Caroline Lucas MP is keynote speaker at free Ecosystem Services Conference

The first of three annual conferences being delivered by the Arun and Rother Connections project (ARC) is being held at Brighton University on 24 June.

It is being held in partnership with Brighton University and is supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund and Southern Water.

The conference, with a keynote address by Dr Caroline Lucas MP, aims to spread the word about green infrastructure and the wider services that ecosystems provide, to help people make best use of them.

The conference aims to provide information for:

- local communities
- planners
- architects
- students in higher education
- the private sector (especially housing and construction)
- Local Enterprise Partnerships.

Experts will cover a broad range of topics, including reducing flood risks, improving biodiversity and designing a rain garden. You can attend part or all of the conference – choose when you register.

For details and booking information, go to www.arunwesternstreams.org.uk

Declaring war on a threat to native species

Volunteers are needed to help remove non-native invasive species which threaten habitats across the ARC project area this spring and summer.

A team of Southern Water staff will be removing Himalayan Balsam on a site near Pulborough Brooks RAMSAR and Special Protection Area (SPA).

The work will target high priority areas in West Sussex and the volunteers will be asked to champion invasive species control in their area.

They will also be encouraged to record the location of invasive species and submit them to the online recording site iRecord:

www.brc.ac.uk/irecord/

The ARC Conservation Officer and partner organisations are working with the local community and landowners and they will be trained in invasive species control methods. For more information contact:

Deborah.coggles@rspb.org.uk

In a victory in the fight against non-native invasive species, DEFRA has banned the sale of five of the most invasive aquatic plant species throughout England from 6th April. Any retailers selling these plants face a £5000 fine or 6 months in prison.

More information can be found in the News section of the GB non-native invasive species secretariat website – www.nonnativespecies.org



Himalayan Balsam

Image by Sussex Wildlife Trust

Grants to give nature a home

Birds, beasts and the countryside to benefit from funds

The Wetlands Enhancement s Community Fund of £24,000 aims to deliver 50 wetland improvements throughout the project area at an average cost of £480. Ideas for possible projects include; installing barn owl boxes, otter holts, hedges and shaws, planting black poplar and creating scrapes for breeding waders. The fund could also be used to restore community ponds or help to pay for developing management plans on wildlife sites such as Sites of Nature Conservation Importance (SNCI's).

Help improve wildlife habitats and get people out into the country

Communities can bid for up to £300 for materials and equipment for a project that will deliver habitat or access improvements from £9,000 provided by the Community Supported Enhancements Fund. Examples of small projects that could be funded include fencing, wood for stiles, trees, small tools and leaflet printing.

Community fund creates flood meadow at Warnham Nature Reserve

The friends of Warnham Local Nature Reserve received £500 for a project to re-wet a seasonal flood meadow by creating a 20 by 30 metre wader scrape in the upper Arun floodplain as part of a wider river, wetland and floodplain restoration project across a large area of floodplain.

So far, we have allocated funding to four projects from the community wetland enhancement fund and just two projects from the community grants fund. Community groups and parishes can apply to fund local improvements. Contact the ARC project team for guidance.

Free training on offer for wildlife volunteers

Would you like to help carry out wildlife surveys and conservation work in West Sussex? Volunteers from the local community will receive free training in survey techniques. Contact Deborah.coggles@rspb.org.uk for more information.

Please see below for details:

Dragonfly training day – Monday 9th June, 10am – 4pm, RSPB Pulborough Brooks nature reserve

Become part of our Dragon Hunters team and be trained in identifying, monitoring and managing dragonflies. We are hoping to train those who can commit to surveying 1 km or more of their local river landscape for at least a year, or longer.

Trained volunteers would need to be able to travel to local sites.



Image by Sussex Wildlife Trust

Water vole training day – Sunday 18th May, 10am – 4pm, WWT Arundel Wetlands Centre.

Become part of our 'Vole Patrol' team and receive training in surveying and monitoring water voles.

The aims are to help find out how the water vole has fared in the Arun & Rother valleys in West Sussex and surrounding areas. We would like people who can commit to at least a year of surveying, and preferably longer. Volunteers need to be able to travel to sites locally.

Say Digital wins app contract

The catchment website was launched on 6 February.

www.arunwesternstreams.org.uk

We have recently awarded a contract to Lewes based company **Say Digital** to produce an app (and mobile website) for the ARC project / catchment.

Say Digital specialise in building cutting-edge apps, websites and user experiences.

www.saydigital.co.uk

We are looking forward to working with them to develop a cohesive digital experience for the ARC project and beyond.

We'll provide more updates as this project develops.

ARC's first wildlife photography workshop

The ARC project's first wildlife and photography workshop for young people was held on 10 April, led by professional wildlife and landscape photographer John Dominick.

The group, aged 16 to 19, received tips from John about how to capture the perfect wildlife image. Memorable moments included; spotting four water voles, ducklings running across the path and a duck in a tree.

Lara Smith of Billingshurst captured this great shot of a water vole. (right).

Thanks to the WWT Arundel Wetland Centre for hosting the workshop.



Lara Smith

Work to welcome back eels and water voles

Bringing back flora and fauna to ditches at Waltham Brooks

Five hundred meters of ditch restoration has been carried out in phase one of the project at this Sussex Wildlife Trust managed site.

This work will improve the conditions for some of the important ditch flora and fauna, including water voles. Phases two and three of the project will see a further kilometre of ditch restored, and access improvements, as well as a new interpretation board and leaflet for visitors highlighting the trails and providing heritage information.



Baffle and eel pass to help fish negotiate Hardham Weir

Work to help fish move freely along the rivers is taking place at Hardham Weir, which is one of three sites benefitting from fish passage improvements as part of the ARC project.

This weir, along with Harsfold Farm and A24 weirs, is in the top 30 obstructions to fish passage, and thereby fish conservation, in the south of England.

The projects will allow fish to travel up-stream to spawn, which will improve fish populations in the Upper Arun for the benefit of wildlife and people. These are priority projects under the Water Framework Directive.

Quarry to provide a new home for sand martins

Members of the South Downs Volunteer Ranger Service have been helping to restore habitat for sand martins in a redundant quarry on the edge of Lord's Piece, east of Burton Mill Pond.

Together with one of the National Park rangers, the volunteers have removed scrub and trees away from the face of the quarry, which is owned by Bury Parish Council, to allow easier access for the martins to potential nest sites. The sand martins particularly like the soft, crumbly faces of old sandstone quarries for nesting, and an unrestricted flight path makes life much easier for them to find the new habitat. Further tree removal work is planned for the autumn.



Bringing back the rare black poplar



Top left: Head teacher Helen Martin helping pupils to plant the black poplar saplings.

Bottom: Petworth & Bognor Angling Club planting black poplar saplings along a new 60metre riffle.

Over the winter the ARC project has helped to support the conservation of one of our rarest native and most iconic wetland trees, the Sussex black poplar, by planting over 170 young trees.

There are now only 38 mature black poplar trees (*Populus nigra* ssp. *betulifolia*) left in Sussex and only around 7,000 trees in the UK. The genetic diversity of the remaining trees is very limited and natural reproduction is almost

unheard of. Without a concerted effort to protect existing trees, to plant saplings and restore habitats to enable natural reproduction, black poplars could soon become extinct in the UK.

By planting both male and female black poplar trees in new floodplain woodland plantings, a number of landowners this year have given black poplar trees future potential to reproduce naturally.

This includes a number of trees being planted as part of the Littlehampton Big Tree Plant at

Brookfield Park in Littlehampton, and as part of a river habitat enhancement scheme for fish at Shopham bridge.

Volunteers from the Petworth & Bognor Angling Club and school children from Graffham and Duncton Junior School helped to plant Black Poplar saplings along the Western Rother in December 2013.

This initiative helped to further complement river habitat improvement works undertaken on the Rother last summer at Shopham Bridge, South of Petworth.

Contact the project team

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