



The first ARC conference hosted by Brighton University

## Movers and shakers

Veronika Moore joined the ARC team at the end of July as project development officer (Arun and Rother Rivers Trust).

She will develop the Trust's capacity to deliver long-term sustainable river management in the Arun and Western Streams catchment. Her last role was in the RSPB water policy team.

Two office based volunteers have joined the ARC project in Brighton. Maggy Robinson is providing financial administration support and Jessica Gowers is our marketing volunteer.

## The ARC project is “inspiring” says Brighton MP Caroline Lucas

Connecting communities with nature through projects like Arun and Rother Connections is crucial to our future, said MP for Brighton Pavilion, Caroline Lucas, in her keynote speech at the ARC project's first annual conference at Brighton University in June.

Around 200 delegates attended the one day free conference and heard from 16 different speakers covering a broad range of topics. All speaker presentations and the text of Caroline Lucas's speech are available on the website -

<http://arunwesternstreams.org.uk/arc/conference2014>.

We welcome ideas for topics and locations for next year's conference. Feedback suggests next year's focus should be on closing the gap between nature practitioners and planners.

# Coultershaw Heritage Site hosts the first river field trips

As part of the ARC education programme two primary schools, St Catherine's Catholic School and Arundel Church of England School visited the Coultershaw Heritage Site in July.

The children from years 4 and 6 explored the site's history, environment and the river. RSPB field teachers, accompanied by Coultershaw Trust volunteers led the sessions.

The Coultershaw Trust now hopes to offer a similar programme to other local schools to meet the needs of the "River" theme in the new national curriculum.

Robin Wilson, Chairman of The Coultershaw Trust said: "The Trust is grateful for the guidance and support received from the ARC project in arranging the school visits to Coultershaw. Schools visits were one of the objectives of the Site Restoration Project.

We have been provided with the learning materials and the confidence to work with primary schools in the future and we have our first local school booked for a visit in September. Special thanks go to Jackie Day for recognising the potential of the site and enabling us to be part of this programme."

**Elaine Samson, Coultershaw Trust trustee**



RSPB field teacher Sue Gee with a school group at Coultershaw.

## Getting to know otters and voles

Holbrook Primary school in Horsham sent two classes of around 60 pupils in early July to participate in an otters and water voles day. Led by Sussex Wildlife Trust's Forest Schools expert, Mike Murphy, the children investigated bird and mammal skulls and discovered the amazing adaptations which help otters and water voles live in the water.

Pupils learned to hand saw and produce 'mammal tracker discs' to aid field sign identification. They also observed river features and measured river velocity at Chesworth Farm Nature Reserve.



Mammal tracker disc

If you are interested in an otter and water vole day for your school, please contact [deborah.coggles@rspb.org.uk](mailto:deborah.coggles@rspb.org.uk).

## The ARC mobile app is on target

The ARC project team is busy sending content, including information about species and trails in the catchment, to the mobile app developers. Volunteers from our target user groups took part in a half day of usability testing and provided feedback on the designs. The app will be tested 'in the field' on Saturday 27th September as part of the Brighton digital festival. This will provide content for the marketing video for the launch in December. Please get in touch if you know anyone who might be interested in taking part.



# Beating the alien invasion

Work continues to identify and tackle invasive non-native wetland plant species, focusing on the upper tributaries of the Arun on the Sussex/ Surrey border, the headwaters of the River Rother in Hampshire and the Rivers Stor and Chilt.



Project Conservation officer Sarah McIntyre injecting Giant Hogweed.



Southern Water volunteers

Controlling giant hogweed on the Hampshire Rother using stem injection of herbicide, working with rangers from the South Downs National Park, has proved successful so far (see image, left)..

A work party from Southern Water tackled Himalayan balsam on a site near Pulborough Brooks Nature Reserve in July (image above).

Clearance will now be halted until the spring, when we will need an army of volunteers to come and bash balsam!

# Getting the better of the mink

A mink control workshop, delivered by Jonathan Reynolds of the Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust, was held on the Norfolk Estate near Arundel in August. Land managers and owners, gamekeepers, anglers, South Downs National Park rangers and local government staff attended for the training in mink control techniques and were provided with mink rafts and traps.



This is the first step in a co-ordinated catchment effort to reduce the impact of these voracious non-native predators and help to protect and expand endangered populations of water voles and wading birds.

# Dragonfly Surveying Training Day

The Arun and Rother valleys are host to nationally rare populations of Club-tailed dragonflies, as well as having a Site of Special Scientific Interest designated specifically for dragonflies.

Dragonflies and damselflies are indicators of high quality and unpolluted water in river catchments, and by monitoring them we can find out whether our wetland environments are healthy.

In July dragonfly expert Simon Curson trained 16 people to identify more than 30 species of dragon and damselflies. Participants also gained practical experience at Pulborough Brooks and Wiggonholt Common. The trained surveyors are now recording dragonflies locally.





# Creating a clear run for fish

## The Environment Agency (EA) has removed barriers to fish at Harsfold Farm

Harsfold Farm weir was the first barrier to fish passage into the River Kird, 150 metres upstream of its confluence with the River Arun. Now fish will be able to get in and out of the Kird. Contractors working on behalf of the EA with the co-operation of the landowner, were able to complete the project ahead of schedule. Work will now begin to fit a Larinier fish pass on the A24 weir – the third and final ARC fish passage project.



## Chithurst Dragonfly Safari



The Sussex Dragonfly Society led a group of 29 people around Chithurst Monastery and Hammer Wood on 12 July. Participants saw 12 species of dragonfly and damselfly, as well as some rare birds and butterflies.

Species spotted included: Azure damselfly, Emerald damselfly, Four-spotted Chaser, Common and Ruddy Darter, Large Red damselfly, and ovipositing female Emperors. In a nearby country lane overlooking the river Rother and a woodland pool, male and female Beautiful Demoiselles, Azure Damsels and Blue-tailed Damsels were seen. Other highlights were Silver-washed Fritillary butterflies and a nesting Spotted Flycatcher.

At a huge lake Downy Emerald, Brown Hawker, Red-eyed Damselfly and a Kingfisher, were spotted. On the open heath, visitors saw a parasitic plant called Dodder in flower and a mystery moth which turned out to be the rare Clay Fanfoot!



# Angling for more fishing

Ten 8-11 year olds took part in a free angling taster session at Walberton Ponds near Arundel in August. The event was organised by the ARC project in partnership with the Petworth and Bognor Angling Club. During the day the children learned to use lines and rods and caught a variety of fish including an eel and the biggest catch of the day – a bream.



Richard Burbridge of the Petworth and Bognor Angling Club in action.

Feedback forms showed that the majority were keen to do more angling. The club said it would investigate this option. Tracy, mother of Olly and Isaac said: "Neither of the boys will forget their angling in a hurry, and are really keen to get out there again - so thank you for the opportunity for them to do something they wouldn't otherwise have had the chance to do."



Olly and his award winning bream!

# Kayaking taster sessions

Twenty three young people took part in two free kayaking taster sessions on 11 August at Southwater Country Park near Horsham.



The sessions were led by experienced coaches. After a short tutorial, the young people took to the water. They all picked up the techniques very quickly and enjoyed playing a variety of kayaking games whilst sharing facts about wetland wildlife.



A couple of the young people were a little apprehensive as they had never tried the sport before but they all did amazingly well to overcome their fears. A young girl was overheard asking her father if she could go back again that week. Quote of the day: "Dad, can I kayak home?"

# Volunteer thank you event

Around 40 ARC volunteers gathered at Pulborough Brooks nature reserve on 16 August for a Thank You hog roast (plus vegetarian option) and a walk around the reserve led by RSPB warden Paul Spiers.



## Protecting water voles

The Arun Valley has one of only three remaining populations of water vole in Sussex, one of the UK's fastest declining mammals. Over 95% of Sussex water voles have been lost, and it was feared that they would become extinct by 2010. Thanks to concerted conservation efforts the water vole population appears to be expanding.

In June mammalogist Dr Dawn Scott from Brighton University and Sussex Wildlife Trust's Wetland Officer, Fran Southgate, helped 21 people to learn about water voles and how to survey for them at Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust in Arundel. The aim is to create a dedicated Vole Patrol to help protect the future of the water vole. The team has mapped the return of water voles into the Western Rother river valley, and has tracked them as far as Climping and Billingshurst.

If you are interested in joining Vole Patrol or you would like to have your land surveyed for water voles please contact [deborah.coggles@rspb.org.uk](mailto:deborah.coggles@rspb.org.uk)

## Submitting wildlife records

We would love your help in recording and submitting wildlife records. The recommended way of doing this is via iRecord. The goal of iRecord is to make it easier for wildlife sightings to be collated, checked by experts and made available to support research and decision-making at local and national levels. Join iRecord now to share your sightings with the recording community, explore dynamic maps and graphs of your data and make a real contribution to science and conservation! [www.brc.ac.uk/irecord/](http://www.brc.ac.uk/irecord/).

### Invasives records

We are encouraging people to download and use the Plant Tracker app for submitting records when out and about. This can be downloaded from [planttracker.naturelocator.org](http://planttracker.naturelocator.org). Plant Tracker feeds into iRecord. If you don't have a smart phone, then you can simply take notes and submit the record directly into iRecord when next at a computer.

For a list of the invasive species that are being targetted for removal please visit the Issues section of the catchment website <http://arunwesternstreams.org.uk>



# Create a floodplain meadow on your land

Over 97% of the UK's flower rich meadows have disappeared over the last century. They support an array of flowering plants, which feed bees and insects which pollinate crops and feed birds. Aside from benefitting wildlife these habitats also provide a range of other 'services'; natural flood water storage, helping the river to cleanse itself of pollution and silt and carbon storage. The ARC project is working with land owners to create three hectares of flower-rich fen meadow. If you have land that is 'wet' or in a floodplain that you would like to restore to fen or meadow then contact [fransouthgate@sussexwt.org.uk](mailto:fransouthgate@sussexwt.org.uk) for an informal chat.



## Upcoming events

### River clean up event – 17 September

The Arun & Rother Rivers Trust (ARRT) will be leading a clean up of the River Arun in Horsham on Wednesday 17 September 2014. Southern Water will be providing the labour as part of the company's commitment to staff volunteering.

### Photography and oral history exhibition 20 - 21 September

An exhibition will be held to celebrate and share the achievements of this year's photography workshops and oral history project on 20 and 21 September at Arundel Museum. Wetland wildlife photographs taken by young people will be on display along with quotes from people interviewed for the oral history project. Special thanks to wildlife and landscape photographer John Dominick for leading nine free photography workshops as a volunteer, and to the participants, volunteers and narrators, and the Arundel museum for hosting this exhibition.

### Archaeology walk, Saturday 25 October. 10am - 3pm.

A walk through the archaeology of Arundel Park with local archaeologist James Kenny. Only 12 spaces available so early booking is advised.

## Contact the project team

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