

East Yorkshire Chalk Rivers Trust

New appointment

At the AGM in January 2007 the board elected Simon Johnson as its Chairman. Simon originally worked for the Environment Agency (EA) in Norfolk. He has worked as a private consultant before gaining his present post with the Wild Trout Trust (WTT) as Director.

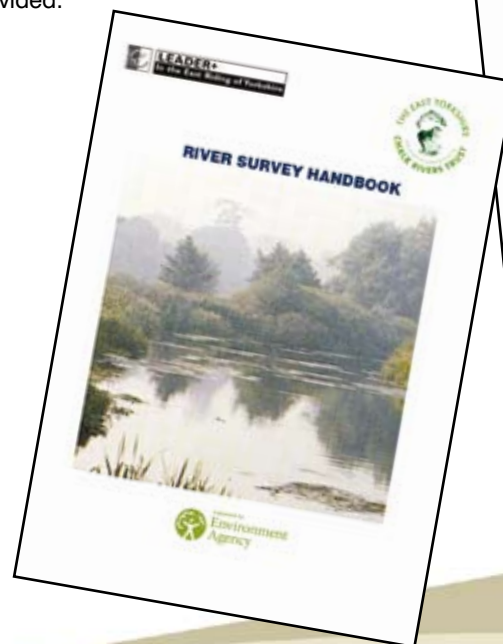
His experience in the aquatic environmental field will be of great benefit to the Trust in his new role as Chairman.



Educational Package

As part of a Leader+ grant, David Croft has researched and produced an Education Package for the Trust.

Since the Education Package was launched at the Driffeld Agricultural Show it has received great interest among local and regional schools and colleges. Sample CD Rom copies have been provided and feedback has been requested. Contact the Trust if you are involved in education and a trial copy will be provided.



Trustees

Due to boundary changes within the Environment Agency we have reluctantly had to accept the resignation of Karen Tait from the Trust Board. Karen has been a useful contact with the EA and greatly assisted in the provision of data for use in drawing up our Catchment Overview.

Elmswell Beck

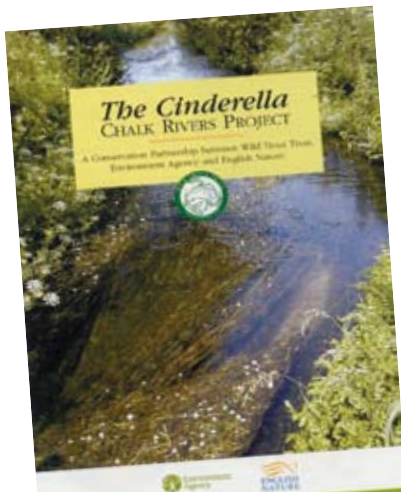
A weir was removed from this small stream in January. The weir was becoming unsafe and was causing erosion to the banks of this stream and was a barrier to migrating fish. This work was undertaken in partnership with the EA providing plant and machinery. The East Yorkshire Chalk Rivers Trust (EYCRT) reinstated the bank and created important habitat from much of the woody debris found on site.



Cinderella Chalk Stream Projects

The Wild Trout Trust sponsored a visit to a section of West Beck where the East Yorkshire Chalk Rivers Trust had identified habitat problems. These were due to previous maintenance and stock grazing that had caused over widening of the river. A report has been received from Vaughan Lewis of Windrush AEC Ltd. highlighting remedial action and suggesting various long-term solutions to the problems. The Rivers Trust has decided to take up the recommendations in the report and is in the process of consultation with the Environment Agency (EA).

Natural England (NE) is broadly in support of the scheme and the fine detail is being discussed at the present moment. An application is being made for funding of the scheme.



Gypsy Race

Another small winterbourne stream rising near Kirkby Grindalythe and flows east to the resort of Bridlington.

The stream has been subject to a planning application by a major gas storage company. The public enquiry determined that several thousand pounds should be put towards improvements to the stream and surrounding habitat in mitigation for the damage that may be caused by the proposed works on this small stream. An electro-fishing survey has been carried out by the Environment Agency to determine the status of the fish population.

Only sticklebacks, eels and minnows were found during the surveys.

Kings Mill

Public use of this popular local footpath alongside the Elmswell Beck is causing concern and the gross erosion of the bank is resulting in soil entering the stream.

The Trust gave a presentation to the Driffield Town Council discussing the various options for the repair and maintenance of the river bank.

The Council are to investigate the possibility of claiming the land as the present owner cannot be found.

Water Forlorns

We have also received a WTT report concerning this small stream that runs through Driffield town centre. The proposals are to enhance the natural features of the stream by the use of soft engineering techniques.

The report has been presented to the Town Council and if accepted, the Trust will bid for the necessary funding and involve the local community in the improvements.

Mires Beck

This small chalk-fed stream rises in Newbald and flows south towards Ellerker before joining the Humber at Brough.

Bishop Burton College are continuing to work on this stream under the guidance of the Trust. This ongoing partnership is providing a vast amount of field work opportunity for the Countryside Management students at this agricultural college.

Foston Beck & West Beck

A proposal is being developed to set back several areas of floodbank.

Discussions are taking place between the Trust, EA, NE and the riparian owners in a bid to create a wider flood channel. This will enable the creation of reed bed and wet woodland along these major chalk streams.

A 200mtr. section of the Foston Beck has been improved in partnership with the EA. This project involved the creation of a meandering channel and enhancement of the bankside habitat.

2007 Projects

Driffield Show & Wolds Country Fair

The Trust once again attended the Show on the Driffield Showground. Also this year a display was undertaken at a new event at Sledmere House.

A lot of interest was shown by the public in the work of the Trust.



Partnership Projects

The Trust is working with the East Riding Fisheries Consultative Association to develop fish havens on the lower River Hull at Eske. Designs have been drawn up and riparian owners are being contacted by this angler-led group.

We have again worked with the Bishop Burton College in assisting their Fishery Management students in gaining valuable experience with practical field work projects.



Students from Bishop Burton College recently carrying out fishery work on an East Yorkshire chalk stream

BAP Steering Group for Chalk Rivers – 2007 Meeting

A presentation was made to the Biodiversity Action Plan Steering Group at their Winchester meeting. The Group is made up of a wide area of expertise within the country concerned with the management of chalk rivers. The EYCRT represents the most northerly system of chalk rivers in Britain at this forum.

VIEW FROM THE RIVERBANK

The last year has certainly been a challenging one as far as wildlife goes. As I write this, memories of the devastating floods come back to me. Thousands of acres of rural land was inundated for as long as six weeks in some areas. The effects on wildlife will have been immense, but it is only now that we can start to look at those effects.

Just as we moved into the New Year we had a second bout of flooding, which went largely unreported, but much of the wildlife will have taken a second battering just as we were moving towards another breeding season.

The wildlife of the riverbank has a remarkable way of recovering after such events, but it is likely to take two or three breeding seasons to return to some sort of 'normality'. Early signs for species like the water vole and kingfisher are that they are still paddling around our waterways or whizzing along the bank top in search of favourite nesting and feeding areas. Many kingfisher nest holes were lost and similarly many water vole burrows flooded

Jon Traill - Trustee - June 2008

out. New temporary homes and patches of high ground would have been found and it is only now that they return to their old haunts.

Numbers of water voles do appear to have taken a downturn and more worryingly, we have had reports of American mink turning up in areas where they weren't present before the floods. The huge lake that formed in June last year will have provided an ideal opportunity for them to simply swim into new areas preying on native wildlife as they arrived. Mink are particularly bad news as they will slowly decimate numbers of water voles, waterfowl and ground nesting birds as well as taking large numbers of fish from the waterways.

The year ahead is a testing time for the animals along our riverbanks, but with time and more settled, 'normal' summer weather combined with continued support from positive management by landowners we will hopefully continue to see ratty and his friends as they go about their daily business.



The water vole was one of many species affected by the flooding events over the last year.



Flooded out !! West Beck flooded for a second time in January 2008 after the June 2007 floods.



supported by
Environment Agency

Riverfly Monitoring Partnership

Following a recent workshop given by the Natural History Museum, a group of interested fly fishermen have been formed into a monitoring group.

The group will cover many of the chalk streams and rivers in the area. The monthly monitoring programme is being developed by the Trust and the EA's Ecological Appraisal Officer. The group will be able to identify any water quality problems as they arise and have a contact with the EA to enable a rapid response.



The group collecting live samples



Examining and identifying the samples

Driffield's brown trout population to benefit from weir transformation

The population of brown trout in Water Forlorns in Driffield has received a boost thanks to the hard work of the East Yorkshire Chalk Rivers Trust and students from Bishop Burton College.

The fish, whose natural spawning grounds are located just upstream from the weir near the Exchange Street Bridge, were prevented from reaching the grounds by the original construction, which was too high and too deep for them to swim over.

Alan Mullinger, Director of the Trust was approached by the owner of the stretch of water containing the weir.

Alan said: "The riparian owner of this small section of Water Forlorns contacted the trust as he was interested in improving the aesthetic appeal of the stream.

"He had installed the original rock weir some years ago and wanted the advice of the Trust on further improving the stream.

"We advised him that the weir in its original form was acting as an obstruction to the spawning migration of the resident brown trout population. It was also causing siltation of the gravel on the stream bed."

The weir was causing a restriction in the speed and volume of flow, which meant that silt deposits were building up above the weir. Trout were attempting to spawn, but as they prefer clean gravel of a certain size in which to lay eggs, successful spawning would not have been possible.

The Trust called on the fisheries management department of Bishop Burton College, who had worked with



them on a number of other projects, to help them out with the redevelopment.

Lecturer Paul Coulson was only too pleased to help.

"I didn't hesitate in accepting Alan's offer of work. My students are always keen to develop their practical skills so I took six students along to see what we could do," said Paul.

"Work on the site involved moving the existing weir and converting it into a suitable form that would allow trout to access the upper section of the stream and improve the flow diversity."

Alan Mullinger explained further: "The rocks were reformed into an upstream-pointing 'V' and any spare

material was used to narrow the stream to create a bed suitable for the establishment of marginal plants."

"The resulting faster flow past this section would then remove the silt deposits and improve habitat."

The back of the new weir was built higher than the rest and as the water flows through the high, narrow channel that has been created, a scour forms, which keeps the gravel immediately downstream of the weir free of silt and other deposits.

This allows the fish not only to spawn there if they wish, but also to build up momentum to navigate the new weir.

Within minutes of the work being completed, trout were seen moving through the new weir on their way upstream and according to the Trust, this migration has continued, with large numbers of fish successfully moving through the system to the spawning gravels.

Paul Coulson said: "The fish were jumping as soon as we'd finished, which gave the team enormous satisfaction, and the fact that the work was totally sustainable, with nothing left behind and nothing taken away, is great.

"Hopefully this new system will enable Driffield's population of brown trout to grow."

www.bishopburton.ac.uk

www.eastyorkshirechalkriverstrust.org

