

What's Beane Happening?

The newsletter of The River Beane Restoration Association
Issue No 39 Winter 2023



Welcome

The picture to the left (from Peter White, most of the photos in this issue are from Peter unless otherwise stated) shows a little known section of The Beane where it flows past Hartham Common just before it joins with The Lee.

From the Chairman

Since the last newsletter back in August, it turns out quite a lot has been happening on and around 'our' river. A lot of this



has involved members of the wider River Beane Catchment Partnership, including Affinity Water and the Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust (HMWT)

During Rivers Week in September, which culminated in World Rivers Day on the 24th, we posted every day to our Facebook page (facebook.com/riverbeane) and some of you may have seen my guest blog on the HMWT website that week too. Our involvement with the national CaSTCo citizen science programme has been strengthened through HMWT appointing Nicola Thompson as a Rivers Officer to support delivery of this project, supported by funding from Affinity Water. Nicola introduces herself later in the issue. Following our last open meeting where a number of you stepped forward to be volunteer citizen science Riverfly monitors, a training session was well attended in September, and couple of weeks later we also hosted an Extended Riverfly taster session to see what's involved in taking this monitoring to the next level (See the photos to the right). Affinity Water are drawing up plans for a third stage of major river restoration within the Woodhall Estate, this time in an area with public access so we will all be able to see the benefits this brings to the river. We'll invite Affinity to present their plans, with a chance for everyone to comment on them at our next public meeting, pencilled in for late January 2024.

Finally, as you'll read further on, our water voles are doing really well in their new home on the Beane. 2023 has indeed been a good year for the Beane... here's hoping for even more great things happening in 2024!



Damage to a bore hole monitoring site

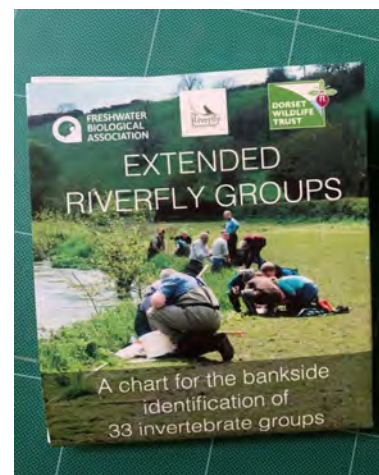
(Photo by Dave Ashby)

This is a mystery! Considerable force would be needed to bend the vanes up like this. Obviously done by someone without the correct tool to gain access. Yet no damage was done to the cover or the sensitive equipment inside. Dave found it on his rounds, and no one who knows him will be surprised to hear he just happened to have a peening hammer on him which he used to repair it. Anyone any ideas? Many thanks Dave for all you do

to ensure the monitoring goes smoothly.

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A group of volunteers receiving training in extended river fly monitoring.



Welcome to Nicola Thompson

New rivers officer and CaSTCo project support for the Beane

It's been an exciting few months in my new role as Rivers Officer with Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust (HMWT). My main focus is the innovative monitoring project on the river Beane, which is part of a nationwide project called Catchment System Thinking Co-operative, or CaSTCo. The River Beane was chosen as one of eight rivers around the country to pilot a new collaborative way of working to monitor rivers. This will involve increasing the use of current monitoring methods and developing citizen science methodologies to provide us with robust and reliable data to help us to understand the conditions along the whole catchment

including the impact of the Stevenage Brook. HMWT are working with Affinity Water, the Environment agency, the RBRA and others to create and fulfil a comprehensive monitoring plan for the river. The information we collect will then be analysed and used to prioritise improvements to the catchment. We will be looking at issues such as outfalls (pipes releasing into the river) runoff, (rainwater coming from roads and farmland) and increasing the Riverfly monitoring.

I have met a few of the RBRA already, thanks to Bob and Pete who kindly took turns in walking me along (almost) the length of the Beane, which was a real treat, despite the heat, and I'm looking forward to revisiting areas and looking at them in more depth while monitoring. I was also really happy to be able to join RBRA volunteers on the ARMI Riverfly course run by Bob in October, I never tire of watching the tiny beasts and trying to remember what they all are! Thank you to all the new volunteers who are getting started on the new sites and to the existing volunteers for all the hard work that has gone into monitoring over the years. Long term data is really helpful in understanding the health of the river through changing conditions.

We are looking for people with an interest in citizen science to join the team in monitoring over the next year. Please get in touch with me if you would like to find out more.
Nicola.thompson@HMWT.org

Along with members of the RBRA I am holding an informal chat about the CaSTCo citizen science project happening on the River Beane, come and find out about the methods we will be using to monitor the river. It's a great opportunity to find out what is involved, when it's happening and if you want to be a part of it.

So please join us at Watton at Stone Community Centre in the Pavilion Room (School Ln, Watton at Stone, Hertford SG14 3SF) for tea/coffee and a chat on Monday 11th December 10.30-12 am. I look forward to meeting you soon.



Rainfall

To the left is a picture of the river between Walkern and Aston End. It was taken after a lengthy period of heavy rain in October that carried on into November. As you can see the river is very full and murky. Sustained rain throughout the autumn and winter period is very important for the health of the river the following summer. So far the winter looks like it is being kind to us.



Peter White and yours truly digging in the new notice board at Aston Ford. My thanks to Dave Standing who did the majority of the art work for it. The river is so degraded here that people often don't realize it is an important chalk river. Hopefully the board will help to address that.



...and the above picture appeared on Facebook recently courtesy of a group of CMS volunteers who came across it on their travels.

So ... How are the Water Voles getting on? Answer ... Great!

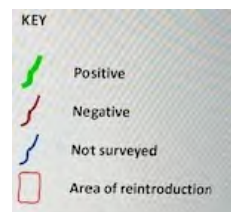
The autumn survey of our newly introduced water voles was carried out in mid-October. 24 volunteers, including 4 very young enthusiasts, carried out the survey over 2 days. You can see from the map how they have spread over the last year. We are delighted with the progress the population has made.

So look carefully at the photos of the tic tac sized poos in the latrine and the feeding signs. If you think you may have seen evidence like this, photograph it and let us know by emailing: rبرا.secretary@gmail.com



Water voles use their latrines to mark their areas and collect together freshly cut vegetation near to their burrows for an easy snack later on. Stems will be cut at 45 degrees, only water voles do this.

A group of RBRA and HMWT volunteers meeting to survey water voles on the River Beane.



You can see from the above map that you can introduce a vole where you think it will be happy, but it will make its own mind up thank you very much! The river is on the right and a drainage ditch is on the left. Voles were introduced in both areas within the red rectangle. As you can see, they have shunned the main river where released and moved up stream to populate the Broadwater lake. They have also moved a considerable distance down the ditch. We don't mind, whatever makes them happy! Wherever they are it's evidence of a thriving and expanding population, which is great!

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