



Newsletter

The Ouse & Adur Rivers Trust

Summer 2018





The Ouse & Adur Rivers Trust (OART) was formed in 2011 from the amalgamation of the Sussex Ouse Conservation Society and the River Adur Conservation Society. For more information on our work visit: www.oart.org.uk

Chairman: Dr Hew Prendergast
hew.prendergast@oart.org.uk

Vice Chairman: Sam St. Pierre
st.pierre@oart.org.uk

Membership: Neil Pringle
neil.pringle@oart.org.uk

Project Officer: Peter King
☎ 07881 458 134
peter.king@oart.org.uk

Project Officer: Rachel Paget
☎ 07789 442 687
rachel.paget@oart.org.uk

Field Officer: Jim Smith
☎ 01825 750366

Task Force enquiries:
taskforce@oart.org.uk



www.facebook.com/OuseAndAdurRiversTrust

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Cover image: Dave Gilbert and Patrick Murray, Environment Agency West Sussex Operations Team.

TASK FORCE NEWS

This summer we have plenty of river projects lined up and we are always grateful for help from members of the Task Force. Check the website for up to date event information or email: taskforce@oart.org.uk

During August we are planning to install gravel at several sites and need volunteers to rake out the stone to create new spawning areas.

**Sunday 19 August
Honeybridge Stream
Gravel installation**

**Sunday 2 September
Northend Stream
Gravel cleaning**

**Sunday 23 September (tbc)
Tanyard Stream
Habitat enhancements**

**Sunday 7 October
Black Sewer
Gravel cleaning**



The Honeybridge Stream

HLF UPDATE

As regular readers will know, over the past 14 months OART have undertaken the mammoth task of putting together our first Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) application. It is great to be able to report that the completed application was submitted at the end of May for consideration by the next HLF committee meeting in September 2018. If successful, our application will deliver much needed improvements to the Broadwater Brook tributary of the Teville Stream and enhance the surrounding landscape. In addition we will create public access to a fascinating landscape between the South Downs and the coast.

Whilst OART are delivering this in partnership with the Sompting Estate Trust, it would not have been possible to develop this without the input and assistance of many individuals and organisations and we especially thank the Environment Agency, Adur & Worthing Council, Sompting Parish Council, Southern Water, Rampion Offshore Wind Ltd, West Sussex County Council, Operation Watershed, Sustainable Sussex, Transition Town Worthing and the Adur & Ouse Partnership. Please keep everything crossed for decision day in September and keep an eye on our Facebook page for updates.

Peter King



Extremely low flow in the Bevern Stream in July 2018



Welcome from the Chairman

The current dry spell reminds us not only of the vagaries and uncertainties of our climate but also that the concerns we have for the Adur and Ouse catchments are similar to those of others elsewhere - not least of course OART's 49 fellow members of the Rivers Trust movement in England and Wales. That there are now ten further trusts south as well as north of the border in Ireland may signal a first step towards an international dimension.

Talks at the July AGM of the Rivers Trust in Birmingham (see www.riverstrust.org/events/rivers-trust-agm) put problems into context. In 2017 only 14% of rivers in England and Wales were defined as meeting 'good ecological status', down from 25% in 2009 and 17% in 2015. How – a question not answered

- will the 2027 target of 75% be reached if, for example, Defra's budget continues the trend (50% reduction) of the last ten years?

While, one talk said, 86% of rivers are apparently 'unhealthy' with agriculture the main cause, water companies are responsible for 50 serious pollution incidents a year. Perversely, it may seem, there may be an opportunity for rivers trusts to undertake mitigation works for such incidents under so-called Environmental Undertakings approved by the EA; these EUs may be used to, in effect, replace court action and fines.

Water companies reappear in this week's newspaper reports about leakage in their pipe systems, the current level of 20% being unacceptable to Ofwat (the Water Services Regulation Authority)

and perhaps to most of the rest of us as well. As individuals we can also play a part in conserving valuable water resources. We can surely put up with a brown lawn (it will recover) even if no hosepipe ban is imposed; and reducing our average daily domestic usage has to be a long-term priority too.

The lack of rain will have adverse impacts on our aquatic wildlife but it is something that we will survive. Will it also – as with flooding – re-focus public attention on our rivers and streams and will it help OART to "Connect with natural supporters", a theme of the River Trust's new strategy? Whatever the case, do visit us at the Lewes Societies Fair on 1 September!

Hew Prendergast

What a scorcher

Only 2% of the Adur catchment has tree cover compared to a national average of 12%



What a glorious summer we are having and I am sure we are all basking in the fantastic weather which has seen temperatures remain above 25°C for long periods of time. However, I am sure I am not alone in hoping that we soon see a short respite in the weather and the falling of some much needed rain. This would go some way to relieving the current “dust bowl” status of my lawn which crunches under foot and maybe encouraging some of my flowering plants to grow rather than continue their crispy decline into, I suspect, a terminal expiration of life. More important than my gardening worries, would be the much needed relief some rain would give our rivers and their inhabitants.

Regional rainfall records taken from the Southern Water website show that average monthly rainfall in June is around 53mm with 58mm

in June 2017. However, June 2018 produced just 3.3mm (6% of the average) and July is unlikely to hit anywhere near the monthly average of around 48mm. The combination of exceptionally low rainfall and high temperatures can have a hugely detrimental impact on our rivers and the wildlife which depends on them.

It is pretty obvious that having no water in a stream is detrimental to its function and the survival of the species within it, but what about temperature?

We know that water temperatures over 22° for seven consecutive days can be lethal to brown trout (Elliot and Elliot, 2010) and we know that in-stream water temperatures in the south east have reached 31°C. In fact we know that water temperatures affect all the physical, chemical and biological processes in the

freshwater environment. Daily fluctuations are more pronounced in small streams, particularly if they are not shaded, and, in freshwater streams, most species require specific temperature ranges (for salmonids this is between 5°C and 15°C for normal growth). Whilst diatoms (which are found in all water and soils, produce an estimate 20% of the Earth’s oxygen and consume nutrients) appear to thrive between 15°C and 24°C, temperatures exceeding this are favoured by algae with green algal blooms most often seen between 25°C and 30° (algal blooms reduce oxygen content). Furthermore, many toxic substances found in freshwater systems have been observed to exhibit higher toxicity at elevated temperatures. Even from these few basic observations, it seems obvious that the effects of rising water temperatures will put huge amounts of pressure on our freshwater ecosystems.

But what can we do? Whilst we can’t reduce the air temperature, we can do something really simple to reduce in-stream temperatures—plant some trees to give shading to the channel. Research has shown that channel shading can reduce summer mean and maximum water temperatures by 2° - 3°C (Bowler *et al.* 2012 and Caissie, 2006). With predicted temperature increases of 2° - 4°C by the 2050s, some of our freshwater streams may become uninhabitable.

Looking across our catchment, there is a distinct lack of tree cover, especially on the River Adur. This became particularly evident to us at OART when, having planted 4.5ha of floodplain woodland as part of the Twineham project, it was calculated that this increased tree cover by 2% within the catchment’s floodplain. It is true that many of the places we visit on the Adur are devoid of any tree cover whatsoever. Following discussions with the Woodland Trust, we set up the partnership Trees for Trout project which enables us to provide grants to landowners for trees and additional infrastructure which may be required such as fencing and gates.

Of course, trees take some time to grow to the point where they are providing shade and it is vital that more tree cover is quickly established on the Adur if it is to continue to function in our changing climate.

Planting trees along the river and streams is a no-brainer; it is low cost and has low impact on surrounding land use, in fact in many ways it would be just as beneficial for the surrounding landscape as it is for the river system. So even if you’re not interested in trout or don’t believe that the climate is changing that’s OK because there are plenty of other benefits which trees provide. We are putting out a call to all those



OART can help with tree planting costs on the River Adur

The benefits of trees

- Trapping and retaining sediment and nutrients, such as phosphate and nitrate, before they reach the river.
- Acting as a barrier, preventing spray drift from pesticides reaching the water.
- Water penetrates deeper into woodland soils due to higher infiltration rates, leading to less surface water run-off.
- Trees and resulting large woody debris act as a drag on flood water, slowing flows and increasing water storage.
- Protecting soils from erosion and reducing sediment run-off which helps the passage of water and reduces the need for ecologically destructive dredging.
- Stabilising river banks and creating structurally complex habitat.
- Slowing the rate at which rain reaches the ground. Even in winter, native deciduous trees intercept up to 12% of rainfall.
- Providing habitat linkage across the landscape.

who live or own land on the Adur catchment, next to a watercourse, to get in touch and find out more about what we can offer and how we can work together to protect our freshwater environment into the future.

For more information or to arrange a visit contact us:

rachel.paget@oart.org.uk
peter.king@oart.org.uk

Peter King

References:

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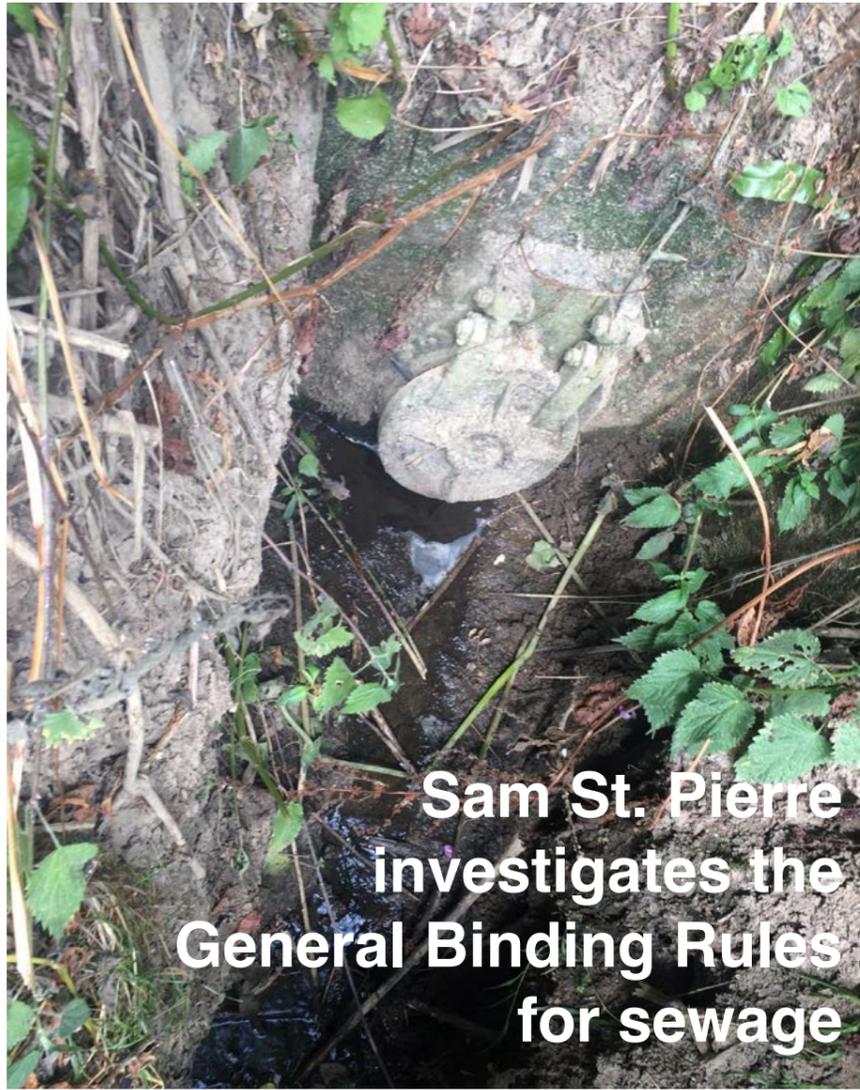
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Planting tree whips on the floodplain



Sam St. Pierre investigates the General Binding Rules for sewage

The other day, I was contacted by a River Ouse fishery bailiff and asked if I would meet him at Barcombe Mills to look at a discharge of bad smelling effluent. In fact there are two pipes discharging effluent into the river just upstream from the Barcombe Mills Road bridge and indeed the smell was overpowering. Whilst we were aware that these discharges had been going on for years, the hot weather and very low flow in the river highlighted the seriousness of the effect. We informed the Environment Agency and one of their Officers attended the scene. Because there was no fish mortality or any other obvious damage this was classified as a category 3 pollution, which means that it is of lowest priority for attention. In all probability no action will be taken in the foreseeable future. The

Environment Agency is severely underfunded and in consequence just does not have the resources to do anything other than attend to mostly category 1 incidents which are severe in nature. However, there is new legislation in place that may alter the situation and is called the General Binding Rules.

I expect most readers will have no idea what "General Binding Rules" are. They are in a piece of legislation, which formed part of the Environmental Permitting (England and Wales) (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2014, which came into effect in January 2015.

The rules set out revised conditions required for new and existing small domestic sewage treatment facilities. They apply to

systems that discharge either in to the ground (a drainage field), or to surface water, i.e. a river or stream. Discharges from septic tanks directly to a surface water are not allowed under the general binding rules. So, any person having a septic tank that is discharging to a river or stream must replace it with a mechanically operated package sewage treatment plant by 1st January 2020. If they do not do so they will be breaking the law.

There has been virtually no publicity about these rules, but the implications for householders who have septic tanks discharging to surface waters are significant. I understand that installation of a suitable treatment system that complies with regulations will cost thousands of pounds. If the house owner does not comply there will be penalties, but the exact nature of what these will be is not yet clear. However, failure to install a treatment facility complying with the regulations would make it impossible to sell the property, as it will be a legal requirement of sale that an approved system is in place.

It is hoped that for the sake of our aquatic environment these new regulations will be robustly enforced. For far too long our rivers have been degraded by effluents of sub standard quality from archaic sewage disposal methods.

FURTHER INFORMATION on MANAGING YOUR SEPTIC TANK

For more information about septic tanks and small sewage treatment plants visit:

www.gov.uk/small-sewage-rules

Best Practice Guidelines

- 1 Get to know your system**
 Where is your tank? A metal or concrete lid should be visible, usually in the ground downhill from your property. Is it shared? Ask your neighbours.
 Where does it discharge to? Locate your soakaway. This gravel or grassed area cleans and filters the liquid effluent from your tank.
- 2 Check your system**
 Check that the soakaway isn't waterlogged, and that there are no pools of water running in to ditches or watercourses. Effluent inside the inspection chamber should be clear or pale, and odour-free.
- 6 Don't upset the balance**
 Using products marked as 'suitable for septic tanks' or 'environmentally friendly' will keep the bacteria in your tank healthy. The bacteria break down your waste, so the tank could cause health risks and environmental problems without them. Avoid harsh chemicals like bleach, caustic soda, disinfectants and anti-bacterials, and use cleaning products and detergents sparingly.
 Domestic sewage systems can't remove phosphates from the effluent, so using phosphate-free products will help to protect your local rivers and streams.
- 7 Bin your waste**
 Household waste can block or damage your system and should be binned instead of flushed. Kitchen towels, 'flushable' wipes, tissues, cotton buds, nappies and sanitary items will all block your tank or pipes leading to expensive repair bills. Oils, fat and grease will solidify and block pipes and soakaways. Use a kitchen sink strainer to prevent food waste filling up your tank, or it will need to be emptied more frequently. Paints, solvents and chemicals can kill your tank bacteria and should be disposed of at a civic amenity site. Medicines can also kill your bacteria.
- 8 Don't over-water!**
 Large volumes of water can overwhelm your tank, flushing out untreated sewage. Ensure that roof gutters carrying rainwater aren't connected to your system, and avoid running dishwashers and washing machines several times in one day.
- 9 Keep good records**
 Keeping a record of maintenance, emptying and servicing will help contractors to fix any problems that arise, and will be useful if you want to sell your home.

General Binding Rules

These rules must be complied with by law

3 Follow the law
 Calculate how much your system is discharging at www.gov.uk/small-sewage-rules - if you discharge more than 2,000 litres of treated sewage / day into the ground or 5,000 litres to flowing water, you will need a permit.
 If replacing or installing a new system, choose equipment that meets British Standard BS EN 12566 and speak to your local council to check that it will meet planning requirements and building regulations. You will also need to contact the Environment Agency to find out whether your new system will need a permit.

4 Fix Faults
 Gurgling pipes, discoloured effluent, odours, foam, a swampy soakaway, lush grass growth, and sewage fungus (that looks like grey cotton wool) in local waterways can all indicate that your system isn't working properly. The most common problems are that tanks are full and need to be emptied, or that pipes are blocked - these can be cleared with boiling water or drain rods. Problems must be fixed immediately, preventing pollution, health risk, and escalating repair bills. Accredited engineers can fix more serious faults and carry out servicing.

5 Get it emptied regularly
 All systems need to be emptied of sludge on a regular basis. Frequency will depend on levels of use, and on how well you treat your system, but having it emptied annually by a registered waste carrier will help to ensure that it functions properly and doesn't cause pollution.

10 Buyer beware
 If you sell your property, you must inform the buyer in writing that it has a septic tank or small sewage treatment plant. Being able to provide them with records and a maintenance guide will reassure them that the system isn't a liability.

There are many thousands of private sewerage systems in the rural parts of southern England and their collective impact on local waters can be substantial. But following the 10 steps above can ensure that you're minimising the nitrogen, phosphorus and other pollutants invisibly entering our waters from your home. **Take care of your tank,** and avoid contributing to our rivers' 'dirty secret'.

FOR SALE



Fancy a dip?

Whilst activities such as swimming are no doubt good for our physical health and mental well-being, it is useful to be aware that local rivers receive inputs from numerous sewage treatment works (over 38 along the River Ouse), leaking septic tanks, soakaways and non-human faecal matter from livestock and wild animals. Consequently, river waters typically contain a range of microorganisms, many of which form an important part of the ecology of fresh water ecosystems. Fortunately, the vast majority of these microorganisms pose no risk to human health or the environment.

However, there are a few 'pathogenic' microorganisms which are capable of making us sick. These may be bacteria, viruses or parasites and their presence, or levels, in river water depend on several factors including the volume of wastewater

entering the river, the amount of rainfall and flow, which determines the amount of dilution and resuspension of contaminants which takes place. Whilst the River Ouse is not designated as an inland bathing water (according to the EU Bathing Water Directive), levels of indicator bacteria used to monitor water quality suggest that most sites tested (especially in the non-tidal stretches during periods of low flow, or following heavy rainfall) would fail to meet the 'Good' quality standard. Therefore, contact with such waters could potentially pose an increased risk of gastrointestinal illness (gastroenteritis) amongst swimmers.

Dr James Ebdon
University of Brighton



TONY BARNARD SHIELD

The Tony Barnard Shield is presented each year at the OART AGM to a person or group who have given outstanding support to the Trust. This year the Tony Barnard shield was awarded to John Aitkin by OART's Field Officer, Jim Smith, for his long service and contribution to the work of the OART Task Force.

Tony Barnard was one of the original founders of The Sussex Ouse Conservation Society, which joined with the River Adur Conservation Society in 2011 to form OART.



Continuing to Slow the Flow in Hassocks

OART are continuing to work in partnership with Hassocks, Keymer, Ditching Transition (HKD) and Hassocks Community Organisation (HCO) on the development of street rain garden, funded by Operation Watershed.

In Hassocks surface water from roofs, roads and other hard surfaces runs via storm drains into the stream, and compounds the effect of extreme rainfall events. With help from Dusty Gedge, an international green infrastructure expert, we have identified areas of the village where the maximum impact on surface water flooding could be achieved from developing Sustainable Urban Drainage (SuDS) schemes, such as rain gardens.

The project, which is still at an early stage, plans to create a rain garden, on a grass verge, in a

residential area north of the village park. Appearing as a shallow depression in the ground, the rain garden will be and dry for much of the year, but during prolonged or extreme rainfall would be able to hold approximately 7,000 litres of water. Not only would this increase the time taken for surface water to reach the stream, lessening flood peaks, but the water will arrive in the stream cleaner, as pollutants are filtered out. Local residents are currently being consulted and we welcome all comments.

For more information on our SuDS work in Hassocks you can email: info@oart.org.uk for a copy of our leaflet 'Slow the Flow'.

Rachel Paget



OART POLO SHIRTS

Buy an OART polo shirt and help raise our profile and much needed money for our river work



OART polos come in deep navy with an embroidered logo. The price of £20 includes postage and the following sizes are available:

Small	35-37" chest
Medium	38-40" chest
Large	41-43" chest
XLarge	44-46" chest
2XLarge	47-49" chest

Name:

Address:

.....

.....

.....

Phone:

Email:

Size & Quantity:

Please post your completed form, along with a cheque for £20 payable to *The Ouse & Adur Rivers Trust* to:

Neil Pringle
Little Knowlands
Spithurst Road
Barcombe
BN8 5EF

Improving fish passage on the Adur



The pass installed at Haterell's gauging weir

OART have installed a new fish pass at Haterell's Bridge, removing a significant barrier to fish passage on the Western arm of the River Adur and facilitating increased, multi-species, fish movement through an additional 2.2km of river.

The project, which was funded by the Environment Agency, used a novel new solution developed by Daniella Montali-Ashworth, a postgraduate researcher at the University of Southampton.

The new pass design which has been developed for triangular gauging weirs consists of staggered clumps of flexible brushes fixed on 12mm plastic board which together create a unique hydrodynamic environment where fish passage is still improved without compromising the hydrometric properties of the weir. Low velocity areas form downstream of the cylinders which provide resting areas for ascending fish.

Manufactured in 1.5m sections, for easy transport the pass required some small adjustments (a section had to be sawn off the side!) before being fixed to the cleaned concrete bed of the weir with expansion bolts. The simple materials make it extremely low cost and quick and easy to fit. The only difficult consideration is careful siting of the upstream board to maintain the gauging accuracy of the weir.

The pass at Haterell's is only the second of its kind to be installed in the UK. The first being installed at Sakeham weir in 2017. Already results from the Sakeham trial have informed and improved the specification for Haterell's and metal washers were situated underneath the pass to create a small gap which will allow for the movement of elvers. The boards which are currently white/grey will soon colour up with algae and naturalise into the river over the coming months.

Looking to the future the Environment Agency are currently investigating whether single clusters would be better than fixed boards, so that the bases don't need to be trimmed and the fish pass can work for any site geometry.

The free passage of migratory fish is a key requirement of the Water

Framework Directive and the River Adur supports a good population of resident brown trout along with migratory sea trout which move in from the sea during the summer months up into the upper reaches where, during the winter months, they will spawn on gravels in the channel bed.

Many thanks to the landowners for their support for the project and for allowing easy access to the river and to David Gilbert and Patrick Murray from the Environment Agency West Sussex Operations Team who installed the pass. A brilliant job and a great result for the fish population.

Rachel Paget

Coarse fish passage at gauging weirs

Low-head gauging weirs are extensively used to monitor river discharge and are essential for management practices. However, they also prevent, limit or delay upstream fish migration. In England, the Environment Agency operates a network of over 1000 gauging weirs and mitigating their impact on fish movements is considered a priority. There is need for a fish pass solution that is effective for a wide range of fish species (including weaker swimming non-salmonids), does not interfere with gauging accuracy or accumulate debris and that is low cost.

Research at ICER aims to meet these requirements by developing an innovative solution consisting of a staggered array of bristle clusters. Developed through the application of hydraulic theory, extensive open channel flume experiments are being conducted alongside field studies employing Passive Integrated Transponder (PIT) telemetry. Preliminary results from studies with coarse fish (including roach, *Rutilus rutilus* and chub, *Squalius cephalus*) are encouraging. The project is funded by the Engineering Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC) and the Environment Agency (England).

Reference:
<http://www.icer.soton.ac.uk/coarse-fish-passage-at-gauging-weirs/>



Daniella Montali-Ashworth



In conjunction with, and funded by, the Adur & Ouse Catchment Partnership, OART are co-ordinating a series of walkover river surveys on the River Adur. Following the success of our efforts on the River Ouse, which has seen over 160km of watercourses surveyed, we are beginning a similar programme on the River Adur. Based on the Partnerships priorities and considering their “poor” ecological status under the Water Framework Directive (WFD), the three targeted sections for this year are the Knepp Mill Stream, Adur West and Herring Stream, which amount to approximately 40km of watercourse. The surveys will collect data on the physical features (geomorphology) of the river channel and surrounding landscape, identify barriers to fish passage, map the presence of invasive species, undertake transects to test water quality and identify areas where opportunities exist to enhance the function of the water environment. To date the Knepp Mill Stream has been completed with surveys just beginning on the Herring Stream to the north of Hassocks.

The resulting reports from the River Ouse have proven to be very useful in developing funding applications which are focused on delivering improvements to entire sub-catchments rather than individual sites and we are confident that we can replicate this on the River Adur. For more information on the whole catchment and individual waterbodies there is a great online resource which highlights reasons for failures under WFD legislation along with objectives to make necessary and often vital improvements:

<http://environment.data.gov.uk/catchment-planning/ManagementCatchment/3000>



Tuesday 1st May

May the first and it's the start of the Ouse sea trout season but the Ouse is very low with little flowing in this hot dry weather. Nothing around but a couple of sea lamprey observed in the Andrews Stream at Barcombe Mills and some brook lamprey on new gravels - a rare sight as this stream was polluted with waste from the reservoir.

Wednesday 2nd May

Saw a return to the river and as well as the sea and brook lamprey I saw a few chub and roach and a large barbel; the fish were gathering no doubt for spawning.

Sunday 6th May

A warm and sunny day with a quick look around at the Mills where the hoards were gathering with their mobile BBQs. The flow of the river is low and made up from treated water from the sewage works at Uckfield and the discharge from the Haywards Heath works at the Sloop along with other minor works all along the Uck and Ouse system.



A large barbel spawning in the Andrews Stream

Thursday 10th May

A short walk along the Uck and at dusk I heard a buck calling and later a barn owl. Some large carp were splashing about in the water lilies no doubt spawning and a nightingale singing in a patch of thick blackthorn.

Sunday 13th May

An early morning walk along the Ouse, leaving at 4am to beat the heat, as I wanted to check for blue green algae in this hot weather. Others were up too including two early morning dog walkers and two ladies taking a 6am dip above the Mills with no clothes on. I am never surprised at what I come across on my patrols. I've seen all sorts over 50 years of walking the river. I stop and talk to a sea trout angler, but no sign of any fish.

Tuesday 15th May

A few days fly fishing in the clear waters of a Hampshire chalk stream, with a very good fishing friend of mine. I caught my very first sea trout of 2018 and we had a red letter day between us with all the fish returned to the river.

Sunday 20th May

Another 4am morning and I sit at White Bridge for a while and listen to the dawn chorus. I surprise an early morning fox on the Brooks. Returning I find litter and glass bottles by the river. I do not understand why the council can't provide bins in the car park.



The wings of mature male beautiful demoiselle are dark blue-black while those of the female are an iridescent brown-green

Monday 21st May

Time for a clear up around the village. I pick up bags of dogs mess thrown down in all sorts of places by inconsiderate dog owners. A sackful sent to the dustbin along with some dead birds hit by the ever increasingly speeding traffic.

Tuesday 22nd May

Heard an early morning disturbance at 3.24am - a badger with its head stuck in the fence. I got large pair of gloves and released it - a large brock badger. Later heavy thunder at 4.30am produced a quick shower but nothing more. Earlier in the evening a bat flew in through an open window. I caught it with a fishing net and released it out of the window unharmed.

Saturday 26th May

A warm misty start to the day and I'm disturbed that there are very few house martins nesting on the house this year and few swallows about the villages and Ouse valleys. I wonder why. All night and into the early hours violent lightning and thunder but no rain.

Sunday 27th May

Lunch with friends of many years and talk of things long past.

Tuesday 29th May

More thunderstorms, this time with heavy rain but little effect on the rivers so my main concern in weather like this is that the sewage works won't cope with the sudden deluge and will overflow into the river, as has happened quite a few times to my knowledge.

Thursday 31st May

The AGM at Isfield parish council and I was elected Vice Chairman for another year. I've now served 38 years on the parish council and my remit covers all things environmental - litter, footpaths, and tree warden duties.

Sunday 3rd June

Whilst walking along the Ouse and Uck it was good to see small hatches of mayfly and quite a few dragonflies and damselflies with some fish basking in the weed and water lilies. Unfortunately the flow is low in both rivers.

Wednesday 6th June

I saw my first sea trout at Hamsey but I worry about the water quality.



Saturday 9th June

I'm sure you will all have seen the wonderful display of wild flowers on the verges and grass banks, orchids in particular.

Sunday 10th June

An early morning walk along the Ouse and just above White Bridge I found a spot where a boat had pulled up on the bank. Five wine bottles and some other rubbish were thrown about. It makes me so angry but I cleared it up and took it back to my own bin.

Saturday 16th June

The coarse season opens on the river and there are a few about giving it a try. There is a move afoot to do away with the rivers' closed season, something I will never agree to as the fish need a break. I am worried that over-abstraction and continued hot weather with very high temperatures in water and air will cause an outbreak of furunculosis - a highly contagious disease that is very common in sea trout, which is caused by a bacterium that lives in the fishes' blood. Fish become stressed when the water temperatures are high and dissolved oxygen levels are low. We had a serious outbreak on the Ouse in the 1960s when I walked the Ouse with a large gaff on a long pole. We buried lots of fish in quicklime - it was heartbreaking. But so far so good but if this weather continues it will stop all sea trout fishing.



Friday 22nd June

A trip to look at the Ouse near its source but it was dry as I expected it to be. No flow out of Slaugham Mill which is set among the heart of the long gone Sussex iron industry.

Sunday 24th June

I walked back in the dusk on the old railway line. Glow worms used to be plentiful but I did not see one.

Tuesday 26th June

Walked below the Mills to see any signs of sea trout with furunculosis and found none in the flow over the Mills. It was miserable but had pleasure in watching a pair of owls hunting near the old boat house at Wellingham.

Wednesday 27th June

Attended a meeting with the Angling Trust and Environment Agency on a proposal to do away with the closed season on the river.

Thursday 28th June

I ring the permit secretary of the Ouse Angling Preservation Society (OAPS) and sea trout fishing is stopped in all waters under their control. The Ouse is suffering, like many other rivers, from low flows and what is flowing is the treated water from the sewage works. None of the discharges are screened for viruses or to remove phosphates.

Saturday 7th July

I take a quick look at the river. People are swimming. When you explain to them about the water quality and viruses, they answer, so what?

Monday 8th July

Its 85 in the open again and the farmers are working hard with hay and silage production. But the weather is causing a problem for dairy farmers as the grass is not growing in these scorched fields. This morning I saw five white admirals on blackberry flowers. Over the oakwood I was fortunate to see high in a tree a pair of purple emperors where they feed on aphid honeydew and tree sap.



Mallard like to rest close to the water, building nests from leaves and grasses and lined with down



Leaves of the cuckooflower have a peppery taste and can be used like cress in sandwiches and salads

Again lots of teasel plants this year which will provide seed for the finches The river is in a pitiful state, such low flows that things are getting serious if this drought continues. In the Ouse and Uck valleys patches of lady's smock or cuckooflower grow in the shallow water; the leaves can be eaten as an alternative to water cress. Plenty of hemlock growing too. It is one of our most deadly plants. How sad it is to see young elms falling to Dutch elm disease in our hedgerow and woodland edges, I was called about a plant that was growing in a flower bed, it was that I thought - a thornapple. I dug the plant out with gloves as the fruit, which looks like a horse chestnut with spike, is poisonous to humans and many animals.

I will end this diary and wish all our landowners well and our farmers good crops but I wonder how they are fairing as we have not had rain to swell the grains.. Thanks for all their help over many years.

Jim Smith
OART Field Officer &
Honorary Bailiff of the River Ouse



**Will you help protect
your local river and
its wildlife?**



***New volunteers
welcome***

***For details email:
taskforce@oart.org.uk
or call Rachel on:
07789 442 687***