

What's Beane Happening?

The newsletter of The River Beane Restoration Association
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Welcome



Photo by Viv Jones

A Lockdown Bonus!

On 23 November, the River Beane at Waterford Marsh was awash with students taking part in a day trip from University College London. The first year geography students were getting their first taste of work in the field, using the River Beane as a study site to learn how to investigate water quality, interpret physical habitats and sample the biology of the river. In past years students were taken to rivers overseas but post-pandemic they are now exploring places closer to home – good for the future of UK geographers and the climate! Sarah Perry, Rivers Officer at Herts & Middlesex Wildlife Trust, visited the class on the riverbank to talk to them about issues and management of our chalk rivers, as well as give them some real-world examples of how the tests they were conducting – for pH, phosphates, nitrates and river invertebrates – were important for understanding the long term health of the River Beane and are regularly monitored by the RBRA and others.

River Beane River Wardens

Do you walk along the river Beane regularly? Yes? Then you're the person we are looking for. We are looking people who walk the same stretch of the river on a regular basis and would be prepared to observe and note anything of interest. This could include the flow in the river, sightings of wildlife, overgrown channel or banks, Invasive plants like Himalayan Balsam and Giant Hogweed. These observations are collated and are used to monitor what's going on along the valley and to plan RBRA work parties to improve the river and its banks where and when required. If you would like to volunteer or require more information, please contact Bob Thornton: antheaandbob@hotmail.com

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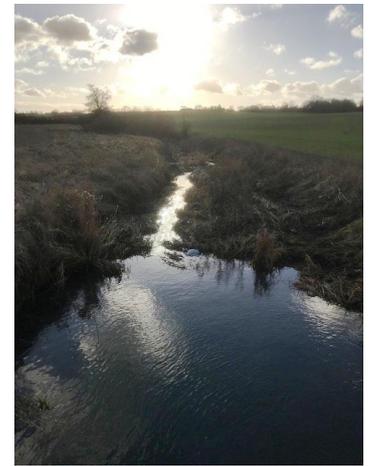
- Students at Waterford
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The two pictures below were taken at the ford in Walkern. There are always happy ducks here waiting for toddlers to come and feed them. Fortunately there is plenty of water in the river at the moment, something that is very important (see 'The Importance of Winter Recharge')



The Importance of Winter Recharge

We are currently in the middle of the vital recharge period when the chalk aquifer fills up over the winter with, hopefully, enough water to keep it flowing throughout the summer. The picture to the right is looking downstream from the bridge at Aston Ford. If we don't get a wet winter, this stretch from Aston Ford down to Whitehall, is the most at risk of drying up. It nearly dried up last summer and the reed bed, which can be seen in the picture, spread right across the river channel, slowing the flow of water and causing silt to be deposited. Some prolonged wet weather during October and December has enabled the river to cut a channel through the reed bed once more. The aquifer in this area is split into two, a shallow upper aquifer separated from the lower main aquifer by a layer of shale and clay. It would seem that there has to be plenty of water at Walkern for it to flow through the upper aquifer and maintain the surface flow in the river. If it drops too low then the river disappears below ground reappearing north of Watton. January has been very dry so fingers crossed for a wet February – sorry dog walkers!



Riverfly Monitors Retire by Bob Thornton

Malcolm Hadley and Peter Evernden have hung up their nets and division trays and have retired from their roles as riverfly monitors. On behalf of the ARMI riverfly project and the RBRA, I would like to thank them both for their loyal and sterling work over the last 9 years or so, sampling the river and passing on the RBRA message to the many passers-by who have stopped to chat.

2021 AGM Report by Dave Standing

Our AGM was held at the Methodist Hall, Watton at Stone on Thursday 18th November. It was our first face to face meeting for two years and was attended by about thirty people. The new committee for 2022 is Andrew Bott (treasurer), Dave Standing (secretary), Sarah Perry (HMWT), Marcella Randall, Malcolm Hadley, Phil Hewett (editor WBH), Neil Youngman, Terry Reed and Steve Shaw.

Topics of discussion ranged from the reintroduction of water voles to The Environment Agency's work on Waterford Marsh. Dave Standing explained the RBRA's new 'hands on' work. This is to become more involved with improving the ecology and biodiversity of the river. It is hoped that 2022 will see several work parties out along the banks carrying out a variety of tasks.

We would like to thank Sarah Perry from HMWT, Sophie Mortimer, Alex Sage and Alessandro Marsili from Affinity Water and Steve Shaw (RBRA) for their respective updates on their past, current and future projects along the river corridor. Lauren Naish from The Environment Agency unfortunately could not attend the meeting but sent us a presentation on the EA's projects on the river. Our thanks to them all for their time and ongoing support for the RBRA.

The evening was rounded off by a fascinating presentation from Dave Willis about his work looking after the reptile and amphibian life on Kingsmead. Thanks Dave. Copies of all the presentations except Dave Willis' are available as PowerPoints, from the secretary.

Phosphate and Nitrate levels in the Beane by Dave Standing

As part of the RBRA's role in trying to improve the quality of our river we are starting a monitoring programme to measure the levels of phosphate and nitrate in the Beane. We are lucky that we don't have any sewage treatment works on the river. However we do have a predominantly agricultural landscape north of Waterford that is a potential source of phosphate and nitrate leeching into the river.

We have purchased some inexpensive testing kit and will be asking some of our volunteers if they will test samples regularly from several points along the entire length of the river. The results will be recorded and analyzed to see if we have any problem areas that need further investigation. We will publish the results to everyone on the RBRA emailing list.



*There are two old chaps called
Peter and Malc,
They helped by sampling the
river.
Citizen science they made,
Should've Beane appointed to
Sage,
Now they've hung up their nets
with a shiver!*



Thanks Malcolm for this picture of the river flowing fast and high through Watton at Stone.

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