

Otter
spotted at
Town
Mills pub,
Andover



Photo: Pete Richards



News snippet grows up ... hello e-newsletter!

Now that our scheme team is growing, our e-newsletter will be looking a little different. From next month, you'll receive the monthly Watercress and Winterbournes updates through our email service instead of directly from me. You'll also be able to tell us what you'd be interested in hearing about in the future; instructions on this easy process will be included in next month's update.

Know someone who would be interested in our updates? They can now sign up online: hiwwt.org.uk/winterbournes/enewsletter

Volunteer with us

Our scheme is community-led, and volunteers are crucial to making it a success. We've already had a wonderful response from our communities, and have been busy setting up ways for them to get involved. If you live in or near our scheme area, and want to learn new skills or meet other nature lovers, why not join us as one of our Chalk Stream Champions?

Our scheme is still in its early stages, and some of our activities have been affected by Covid-19. This means that there might be a short wait before you can get stuck in, but we'd still love to hear from you - in the meantime we'll get you set up and begin your training. Simply explore the various roles and fill out our short form to express your interest.

Tell us what interests you: hiwwt.org.uk/winterbournes/volunteering

Woody debris in rivers

We have completed one of our habitat restoration projects on the Pillhill Brook. With our Partner the Wild Trout Trust, we fixed some wood and branches in the stream and created some deeper pools. We have created a gravelly drinking spot for cattle where it had once been a muddy boggy area. All of these will improve the stream for our native brown trout. It will give them a mixed habitat in the stream with some deeper pools for shelter to avoid predation. The cattle drinking bay will stop mud (sediment) getting into the stream, which will allow the fish and invertebrate eggs to develop.



Otter holt construction

One of our Community Catchment Groups would like to build an otter holt on their stream. A "holt" is an area where an otter can take shelter. This will be either as a resting space in the day or evening whilst patrolling their territory, or as a natal nest or shelter. Holt availability affects the carrying capacity of a territory,

Holt construction will require an application for a Flood Risk Activity Permit (FRAP). I would like to know if other Community Catchment Groups might be interested in building an otter holt in their area, as I would like to apply for the FRAP just the once, if possible.

If you are interested, or would like to know what you will need to consider about otter holt construction and siting, please get in touch with me at maggie.shelton@hiwwt.org.uk or 07741 572366.

Daily walks with nature

If you are going on a daily walk and would like to identify wildlife on your device, one of our Scheme Partners has heard about a useful app which is supported by National Geographic. It helps identify all kinds of things – insects, mammals, plants, fungi etc. It's free and is called "Seek" and was developed by iNaturalist. She feels that it seems to be reliable. If you do decide to use it, please let us know how you get on!

Bankside planting to improve habitats

We have been busy with the Cheriton Conservation Volunteers, growing flowers for planting alongside the stream to improve the habitat. A heartwarming article about the project and how the village school took action is here: <https://www.hiwwt.org.uk/news/new-blooms-cheriton-stream>

"I'm proud to be working with local people to protect their chalk streams."

Maggie Shelton, Community Catchments Officer, Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust

Maggie.shelton@hiwwt.org.uk 07741 572366

Tweet #WatercressAndWinterbournes



The Interesting Lives of Some of Our Chalk Stream Fishes

Tuesday 8 December, 7-8 pm

Join us on Zoom for an illustrated talk by Shaun Leonard, Director of the Wild Trout Trust. He'll be speaking on how some iconic local fish species spend their lives, including where they live, how they find love, what they eat, and how they end their days. Please be aware that this talk includes many images of these beautiful fish and their environments, but a few may be slightly distressing for younger viewers.

Wonderful chalk stream plants

Thursday 25th February, 10 – 11.30am

Come on a journey on Zoom with ecologist Maggie Shelton from Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust to learn about the unique habitat of our chalk streams and how this influences their plant communities.

We will look at iconic plants that live in the running streams as well as bankside plants. We will discover the role they play in a wider chalk stream habitat.



Training opportunity: Redd Surveys

In January and February next year, Covid allowing, we hope to run small practical training sessions for people interested carrying out Redd surveys. (Redds are salmonid egg sites and can be seen with the naked eye from the bankside. We do not enter the stream in case the eggs they contain become damaged.) These Redd surveys will take place on sites within our scheme area over the next 4-5 years. Presence of Redds is a good indicator a healthy chalk stream - it means the habitat provides a complex mix of food, shelter and access to mates for our native brown trout and salmon. To express your interest in the Redd training please email winterbournes@hiwwt.org.uk

Selecting wood for river enhancement needs care.

You might be interested to read an article in the **habitat management news section of British Wildlife** (Volume 32, number 1, October 2020) that encourages us to be careful when selecting trees to be felled for the purpose of increasing woody debris in streams and rivers.

Putting wood in streams is a fantastic way of creating many new habitats and increasing biodiversity as was done in the Pillhill Brook. Turn over a log in a stream and you will find it teeming with Gammarus shrimp, mayfly larvae and caddisflies amongst other wriggling life. Look closely at how the water moves over and around wood in a river and you will notice there is a mix of eddies, heaps of grit and stones and then deeper areas. Having wood in a stream makes for a complex habitat. It provides food and shelter for invertebrates and everything higher up the food chain. It is dynamic, changing over space and time as the wood rots down.

This article by April Windle reminds us that there are other rare and threatened species to consider – the lichen and bryophyte communities that live along our humid streams and wet woodland.

Lichen and bryophytes grow slowly and are less able to colonise new areas. Because of this, older riparian trees have the richest communities. Lichen and bryophytes can take advantage of all the nooks and crannies, dead or decaying wood that an older tree can offer.

April asks us to be mindful of these communities and suggests some things to consider before felling riparian trees. **This might be useful to us as we care for our streams and headwaters.**

1. Collect existing lichen and bryophyte records (available on the NBN Atlas or from Hampshire Biodiversity Information Centre).
2. Use Plantlife's rapid woodland assessment tool.
3. Read Plantlife's handbook for woodland managers. **Not just for managers, this will be useful to our community groups who are managing riparian areas.**
4. Seek expert advice from a lichenologist or bryologist.

If you would like to read the full article and can't get hold of a copy, please contact me at maggie.shelton@hiwwt.org.uk



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Maggie Shelton, Community Catchments Officer, Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust

Maggie.shelton@hiwwt.org.uk 01489 774400.

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