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Waste Water for Wildlife



Young people from Littlehampton Academy planting the rain garden.

Littlehampton is leading the way in urban water management by building a wildlife-friendly rain garden in the centre of the seaside town.

Rain gardens are an exciting concept in landscape and garden design. They are small-scale features that capture rainwater runoff from buildings, pavements and other hard surfaces, and which then temporarily store, clean and slowly release that water back into the soil or drainage system, thereby helping our gardens and towns to deal more effectively with heavy rainfall.

Rain gardens were first developed in the United States in the 1990s, where they have become increasingly popular. In the UK, the mimicking of natural drainage in urban areas is officially encouraged and known as Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS).

The ARC project worked with Littlehampton Civic Society to develop the project. The Society managed to secure additional funding from Operation Watershed for this project which has transformed two bare grass verges into gardens planted with ferns, English Ivy, Dogweed, Snowball Trees and other small flowering plants. As well as helping to store some of the water that gathers on the adjacent Maltavers Road, the gardens will provide a haven for insects, bugs and birds.

Littlehampton Civic Society was formed in 1972 in order to protect West Beach from development. It is a registered charity and continues to play an important role in gathering local people's views on how the town is developed. They are now looking for their next rain garden project! Read more about their work here: <http://littlehamptoncivicsociety.org.uk/>

Fighting foreign flora

New team member

Jennifer Pollitt joined the ARC team at the end of March and is leading our invasive non-native species eradication programme.

Jenni has been flat out working with partner organisations and local communities to deliver our final season of work and helping to build a strong project legacy.

Beating the Balsam

Thanks to a massive volunteer effort in 2015 where six hectares of the invasive plant were cleared, we have almost eradicated Himalayan balsam from Monkmead Woods in West Chiltington.

Beautiful red campion and other native wild flowers have begun to flourish. We visited the site in early June expecting to find the new season's balsam growth starting to show, but there is very little coming up at all.

Once we have removed the final few remaining balsam plants from Monkmead Woods, we will then focus our attention on three other sites for the final season: Hurston Lane (Storrington), Warnham Local Nature Reserve (Horsham), and Wickford Bridge (Pulborough).

If you would like to join us and help beat the balsam, contact kate.whitton@rspb.org.uk.

Giant Hogweed

Growing to a lofty 20 feet and with leaves the size of dinner plates giant hogweed was introduced into the UK by the Victorians as an ornamental plant for lakesides and gardens.

However, it is highly invasive and harmful to humans. The sap contains toxic chemicals and when they come into contact with the skin, and in the presence of sunlight, they cause a reddening of the skin, severe burns and blistering. The burns can last for several months and even once they have died down the skin can remain sensitive to light for many years.

We have been re-treating this noxious invader throughout June, on the Upper Arun, new locations on the North River and in Climping.

Please do not touch giant hogweed. If you think you have giant hogweed on your land or you know someone who does or require advice, please contact: jennifer.pollitt@rspb.org.uk.



Fran Southgate standing next to treated Giant Hogweed.

Floating Pennywort

Floating pennywort, a strong contender for the worst aquatic weed, due to its ability to over-run water bodies and threaten habitats, native plants, fish and insects, has been identified in three locations within the ARC Project area.

Working with our partners, long-term plans for control are being developed for all three sites.

Control measures include the physical removal of the plant and preventative measures such as installing mesh sieves to catch plant fragments in outflow pipes from infested areas.

Parrot's Feather

Parrot's feather has thankfully remained an elusive weed within the catchment.

If you know the location of any infestations of Parrot's feather – we want to hear from you! Please contact jennifer.pollitt@rspb.org.uk.

After ARC

Having invested significant time and resources into controlling these invasive species, the ARC project is keen to ensure a strong legacy in this area once the project ends later this year.

Both the South Downs National Park and the Arun & Western Streams Catchment have strategies in place which identify the priorities for ongoing control of priority invasive species in the region.

The ARC project has also been training local champions and landowners to continue tackling some of these species after the project has ended.

A meeting was held in July where a number of organisations met to discuss and agree future priorities and projects.

Further updates will be provided towards the end of the project. If you have any questions in the meantime, do not hesitate to get in touch with Jenni.

Our valiant volunteers !

ARC volunteers have assisted on a variety of different tasks throughout the project but the one thing that has not changed has been their enthusiasm.

At the last count 976 volunteers had collectively contributed 1547 days of their time to the project, truly transforming the catchment for people and for wildlife.

We are now in the final stage of the project so it would be wonderful to get as many people involved as possible, particularly with our invasive species removal programme during the summer.

It's a fun day in the great outdoors, meeting inspiring people and eating cake. What's not to like?!

This massive volunteer effort also brings valuable match funding to the project – over £100K to date, allowing us to draw down more funds for project delivery. Read on to hear what our volunteers have been up to.

ARC at the Charity Awards



Fran Southgate (SWT), Mike Clarke (RSPB Chief Executive) and Rachel Carless (RSPB)

ARC was highly commended at the Charity Awards, the longest-running awards scheme in the charity sector, after being nominated for the Environment and Conservation award. First place in the category went to Keep Britain Tidy, for their innovative 'We're Watching You' poster campaign.

The ten category winners were announced at a glamorous ceremony and dinner at the Mermaid Theatre in London's Blackfriars on 9th June. The black-tie evening was hosted by former BBC Breakfast presenter, Bill Turnbull, and ARC was represented by Mike Clarke, Chief Executive of the RSPB, Fran Southgate of the Sussex Wildlife Trust and Rachel Carless, ARC project manager.

Tania Mason, editorial director at Civil Society Media, which organises the Charity Awards, said: "We had a record number of entries this year, and the standard was particularly high, so the ARC Project partners should be very proud to have made the shortlist". All 30 charities shortlisted were judged by an independent panel of sector leaders as having demonstrated exemplary best practice.



Graffham Down Trust and ARC volunteers created clearings for wildflowers and butterflies.

Scrubbing Down

In February, ARC partnered up with the Graffham Down Trust to remove trees and scrub on Graffham Down.

Designated as a Site of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCI),

Graffham Down has a range of habitats that include herb rich grassland, scrub and woodland, providing a home to notable butterfly and dormice populations.

The aim was to allow more light onto the reserve and encourage more species of wildflowers and butterflies. The trees had been felled beforehand so the

volunteers wasted no time in getting to work. The branches were burned and the rest of the timber stacked. After a great day's effort, a large area had been cleared (with thanks to everyone's dedication and determination boosted by Diane's delicious orange and chocolate flapjack!).

Restoring our heavenly heathlands

Also in February, the South Downs National Park and Sussex Amphibian and Reptile Group (SxARG) along with some hearty ARC volunteers carried out conservation work at Heyshott Common, a beautiful SSSI heathland near Midhurst.

Everyone pitched in to cut and burn the encroaching birch and pine and prevent the heather from being shaded out.

Heathland is becoming such a rare habitat so this team effort was doubly important to protect the native reptiles and snakes found here.

18 volunteers and over 70 hours of work later, participants were rewarded with sightings of the common lizard. Impressive work!



SxARG and ARC volunteers restoring heathland at Heyshott Common



Southern Water, Horsham Green Gym and ARC volunteers clearing a stretch of river near Bartholomew Way and Reedbed at Warnham Nature Reserve in Horsham



Wading into Warnham

ARC and Horsham District Council got their waders out of storage for the first time this year in February to carry out a river clean-up at Warnham Nature Reserve.

Stalwart ARC and Horsham Green Gym volunteers donned gloves and waders to brave the lake at Warnham and retrieve glass bottles, cans, clothing, plastic and even an entire car bumper.

A second cleanup was carried out at Bartholomew Way in Horsham with ARC and Southern Water volunteers. Everyone made a sterling effort and the council truck had to be emptied three times due to the impressive quantities of litter.

Plastic bottles and toys made up a significant proportion of the waste but there was also a bike, car bodywork and several wheelbarrows full of bound newspaper bundles.

Despite the hard work everyone went away happy and smiling – what great teamwork and what a difference this work has made to this wonderful reserve!



Riverfly volunteers identifying freshwater invertebrates from the Rother

Riverfly

The ARC supported Rother Riverfly Scheme began in autumn 2015. 24 volunteers have now been trained and are now monitoring 16 sites on a regular basis.

Most sites are along the Rother with a couple on the Arun as well. This scheme is part of the national ARMI (Angling River Monitoring Initiative). Volunteers carry out a monthly kick sampling survey on the stretch of river they have been allocated. Kick sampling involves kicking the river bed for a specified period of time whilst standing in the stream / river in wellies, whilst holding a mesh net a little downstream in order to collect the invertebrates that are released. Results are then recorded.

The presence of different riverfly species provides an indicator of the health of the river environment. This regular monitoring also enables the early detection of any river pollutants.

Some of the riverfly volunteers have taken on surveying two or three sites. Our hats off to all involved and their commitment to this important scheme.

Tree planting

Volunteers from ARC, South Downs National Park Authority, Arun and Rother Rivers Trust and the Petworth and Bognor Angling Club gathered one bright Sunday in March at the picturesque location of Coates Castle near Fittleworth.

The aim was to plant a variety of trees along the Rother to provide shade for fish and other wildlife and help stop river bank erosion and siltation. Once we had laid the trees out and decided the best place to plant them, the digging began in earnest! We fell into an easy rhythm with some people digging, others planting, more hammering in tree stakes and a further group responsible for placing the tree guards.

A contractor then arrived to fence in the saplings to further protect them until they are established. Teamwork was the order of the day with 300 trees being planted and secured in less than half a day – what a result! Well done everyone!

Get Involved

There are some exciting events planned for August and September - visit the website for more information:

<http://arunwesternstreams.org.uk/events>

Want to know what Himalayan balsam bashing actually entails? Then join us for a volunteer work party and discover how addictive it really is!

This plant is causing big problems on a national scale, damaging to our rivers and wildlife. Join the team in removing it and get some fresh air and gentle exercise in beautiful surroundings – it's a real buzz!

Bigger, better and more joined up: helping habitats across the Arun & Western Streams



Over the last three years, we've been working with people from all walks of life and many different organisations to help make the Arun & Rother valley a better place for people and for wildlife.

As we enter the final few months we are pleased to report that we have met, and in some cases, far exceeded the habitat restoration targets set out in our bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund.

We have now restored or created 5 hectares (ha) of woodland (target 3ha), 11.3 ha of species rich meadow (target 3ha), 3km of rare chalk and greensand streams (target 3km), 3.5 ha of flower rich fen (target 3ha), 4.45 ha of wet heath (target 3ha), 20 ponds created and enhanced with a surface area of over 10,000m² (target 10), over 350 rare black poplar trees planted (target 270), and over 100km waterways / ditches surveyed for water voles and dragonflies respectively.

That's not to mention the wide array of community led projects that the ARC community grants fund has supported which includes everything from creating habitat for breeding waders to orchards, river habitat workshops, hedgerows, boardwalks, school garden enhancements and more.

We have had snipe and other rare birds turn up overnight in our newly created wetland features and we are eagerly awaiting the show of flowers which will provide habitat for pollinating insects in our flowering fen next spring. Together we have created extra flood water storage and carbon storage for climate change, as well as some beautiful places for people to go to and relax.

A huge thank you to everyone who has been involved and to the hundreds of volunteers who have given up their time to make the Arun & Western Streams better for wildlife. It has been a privilege and a pleasure to work with so many passionate and enthusiastic people.

Stop press: £5K more for community grants!

To date over £30,000 has been given to support 40 local community projects that will benefit wildlife and improve access for people. We have been able to top up this fund and as such there is a final £5,000 available. If you have a project idea you would like to discuss or would simply like to submit an application we encourage to do so as soon as possible to access this funding.

In June 2015, ARC awarded a community grant of £1,000 to Rogate Parish Council to survey Fyning Recreation Ground and create a space that could be enjoyed by wildlife, local people and visitors.

This circular area of six acres was given to the village at the time of the enclosure of Fyning Common in the mid nineteenth century. It still belongs to the Parish and is set deep in private woodland. The grounds and access tracks are now registered as a Village Green.

It is very accessible from Rogate by footpath, bridleway, and a quiet road a short walk away. It is also close to the Serpent Trail, and the Sussex Border Path. Following the site survey, the parish council enlisted the help of local people to clear scrub, put up bird and bug boxes and added two beautiful wooden benches so that the space can be enjoyed by all.

Visit www.arunwesternstreams.org.uk/resources for more information and an application form.

Arun & Rother Explorer resource pack launched!

We are very excited to have finished The Arun & Rother Explorer resource pack which has been sent to 100 primary schools within the ARC project area and the South Downs National Park.

ARUN AND ROTHER RIVER EXPLORER
A CURRICULUM LINKED RESOURCE PACK
FOR TEACHERS OF KEY STAGES ONE AND TWO



Each school received a copy of the resource pack on CD along with a copy of Karen Wallace's wonderful children's story book 'Think of an Eel'.

The Arun & Rother Explorer resource pack is designed to support learning across a range of curriculum areas at Key Stages 1 and 2 including geography, history, science, maths and English.

The resource pack can be downloaded for free at: www.arunwesternstreams.org.uk/learning.

A series of case studies detailing four river locations in West Sussex where field trips have been delivered during the ARC project and will continue to be offered after the project ends will also be uploaded there shortly.

We hope the pack inspires local teachers to get children up from their school desks and out exploring their local rivers.

Pondemonium!

We love water, and so it seems, do a lot of people! ARC and the Arundel Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust (WWT) teamed up to put on a bumper family friendly pond day at the Wetlands Centre.

Nearly 300 visitors turned out to get stuck into pond dipping, receive pond advice, find out about pond surveying, explore volunteer opportunities and generally have fun. Many people left with information and inspired to do something great for wetland areas, however big or small. Huge thanks to all attendees, exhibitors and visitors and of course to the WWT team for hosting the event, a successful and thoroughly enjoyable day.



'Pete the pond' demonstrates how to create a pond

Get mobile to win 'app'ealing prizes!

The ARC Explorer app is launching not one but two competitions to find the region's top wildlife recorders. There are several exciting prizes to be won, read on to find out more!

Our first competition is aimed at those who are 16 or under. The young person who records the greatest number of correct species in this category using the ARC Explorer app will win a wildlife camera for their school and RSPB membership for their family for one year.

For those in the above 16 category, the prizes on offer are Afternoon Tea at the historic Spread Eagle Hotel in Midhurst and a fantastic nest box with integrated ultra-high resolution camera so the whole family can watch birds as they nest and feed their young via their television or computer screen.

Closing date 30th October.

Further details available at:

<http://arcexplorer.org.uk/>



RSPB state of the art digital wired nest box camera, one of the prizes on offer.

Wrapping up ARC

Image by www.photographersussex.com/

It's hard to believe the ARC project is coming to an end!

Here are some important dates in the countdown to the end of the project:

8th September - Amphibians and SUDS Conference, WWT Arundel

16th September - Volunteer thank you event, Pulborough Brooks nature reserve

17th September - Oral history exhibition, Pulborough Brooks nature reserve

30th September - Volunteer coordinator and Project conservation officer contracts end

7th November – end of project conference and evening drinks reception at Arundel Castle

30th November - Project manager and Project officer contracts end and project is formally closed

What happens after ARC?

After the project ends, many of the organisations that have been involved in ARC and many others



besides will continue to meet as part of the Arun and Western Streams Catchment Partnership. The aims of the Partnership are to:

- * **Reach a shared understanding of the catchment's priorities**

- * **Facilitate delivery of the Catchment Plan**

- * **Promote a community led approach to improving the water environment**

You can read more about the Catchment Partnership and Plan at:

www.arunwesternstreams.org.uk/about

www.arunwesternstreams.org.uk/plan

Contact the project team:

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