

Confluence

The Journal of the Westcountry Rivers Trust

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Autumn 09 - Issue 10



*Detail of painting reproduced with the permission of Kurt Jackson -
Warm winter sunlight, birdsong, young Tamar.
Lodgeworthy, Bridgerule.
February 2008 Mixed media 57.5 x 57 cm*

Director's Comments

We are very sad to report the deaths of Andrew Baylis and Teddy Goldsmith who, as Founders and Trustees, contributed to the birth and development of the Westcountry Rivers Trust and whose influence and inspiration will be greatly missed.

Land management and river management are finally being viewed as interconnected issues by the great minds of the nation and we are also starting to look seriously at wider issues which impinge on them, such as the desired level of food independence of the UK, population growth and the local implications of global climate change.

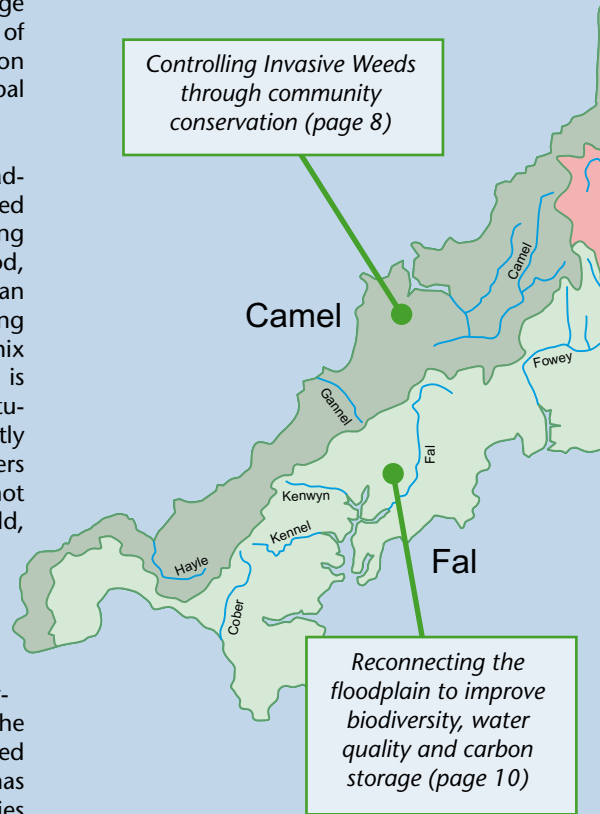
All in all, I optimistically feel we are heading for a period of long-overdue 'joined up thinking' which will see us assessing what we get from the UK's land (food, biodiversity, landscape character, clean water, flood defence etc.) and paying land managers to deliver a strategic mix of these 'environmental services'. This is a radical step away from the present situation where these services are not jointly planned or enacted and where farmers only get paid for food production and not for all the other services they do, or could, provide.

The Westcountry Rivers Trust has always prided itself on its capacity to innovate and the speed at which we turn innovative ideas into practical delivery on the ground (or in the water). The anticipated 'paradigm shift' described above will be no exception. The Trust has been fortunate enough to win a series of interconnected projects, described in

this issue, which will develop markets for other land uses such as carbon capture, water purification and flood defence and thus allow us to get funding to farmers to deliver more than just food production in certain small targeted areas of their land.

As usual we will do it efficiently, directly and in an uncomplicated manner using local trusted businesses and advisors. I hope, when the great minds of the nation formulate their joined up strategy, they remember this winning recipe.

Dr Dylan Bright
Trust Director



Extending the Westcountry Angling Passport scheme across the whole of the Westcountry (Pages 6 & 7)



Developing future projects to remove barriers to fish migration (coming soon)

Taw and Torridge

Working to develop a carbon off-setting project that restores and protects riverside areas (Page 5)

Exe and Axe

Developing long-term protection mechanisms for wetted land across the catchments (pages 4 & 5)

Dart and Teign

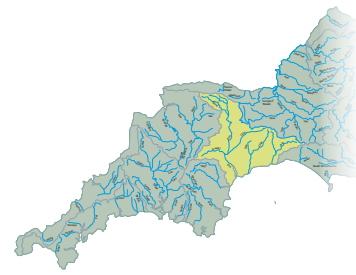
Improving fisheries potential by fencing, coppicing and surveying

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WATER – Wetted land: the Assessment, Techniques and Economics of Restoration



The History of Conservation

River ecosystems provide many services to society such as producing food and clean water; regulating floods and drought; supporting nutrient cycling; and permitting recreation. There is no doubt that we need to make river catchments more secure and resilient as 60-70% of the world's ecosystem services are being used unsustainably or being degraded. Addressing this degradation has led to several approaches to conserving catchment ecosystem services:

Fortress conservation (the fence and forget approach), where important habitat has been protected by designating areas such as nature reserves and national parks, has provided protection for several important sites but they do little for large-scale habitat linkage and require substantial funding to maintain them.

Community conservation (finding winners for owners of valuable areas) has been an increasingly important approach in the Trust. The Cornwall Rivers Project showcased what could be achieved through providing one-to-one 'on the ground' advice to farmers and demonstrated how changes in nutrient, soil and general management could save money and reduce ecosystem pressures and impacts.

However, whilst this approach saw significant improvements in farm management the scheme was non-obligatory and the implementation of savings could be affected by changes in global costs of materials and food prices.

Paid Ecosystem Services (PES) is now regarded as a future way of safeguarding areas where they are too important to be left to fluctuating world economics and changes in farming interests. A sustainable approach is needed that identifies both the willingness of the farmer to be paid for removing important areas from long-term production and the willingness of interested organisations to pay for such services.

A PES example from across the pond

The water quality for New York was falling below the standards required by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Rather than develop expensive ways to treat the water the authorities opted to restore the Catskill Watershed. Under U.S. law they did have the ability to make a compulsory purchase of the catchment but opted for the less controversial system of paying farmers to farm extensively. Input of agricultural wastes and pesticides was reduced, natural abiotic and biotic processes were reestablished and water quality improved to levels that met government standards. The investment in natural capital was estimated between \$1-1.5 billion compared to the estimated \$6-8 billion cost of constructing a water filtration plant (plus the \$300 million annual running costs)!

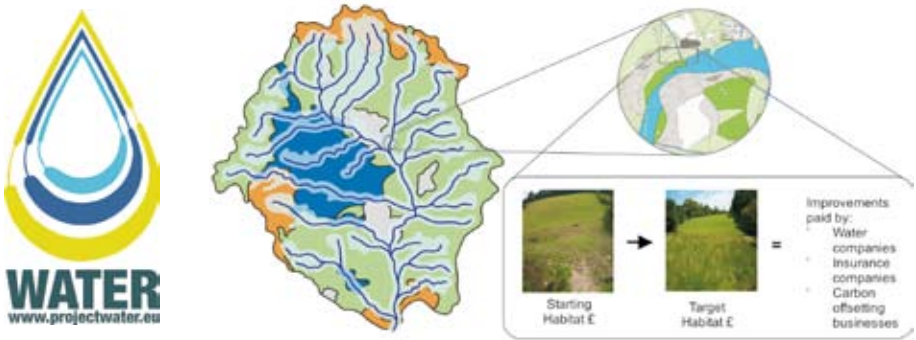


The WATER project

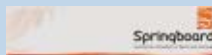
The WATER project is a new EU Interreg IVA England (Manche) France funded project that is being led by the Trust. It has partners across the south coast of England and the north coast of France and aims to improve river ecosystem function by creating a working Payments for Ecosystem Services model.

We will be assessing current and former wetland usage to establish a map of hydrologically important areas which need a greater degree of protection than that afforded by current schemes. Once this area is identified we will calculate what long term benefits protecting and restoring this area will have and how we can sell these to the main beneficiaries (water companies wanting better water quality, businesses wanting to offset their environmental footprint, insurance companies interested in reducing flooding, etc...).

This project is probably the most innovative and cutting edge project the Trust has ever run and we are one of the leading groups in the UK showing how this ecosystem approach can be run on the ground.



C-Plus



Alongside the WATER project the Trust has been developing, with the aid of the Springboard fund, the C-Plus Project. The project bears some similarity to a standard carbon offsetting project but, as the title 'C-Plus' implies, it is much more.

The project will develop a system whereby money will be raised from regional 'environmental off-setters' (businesses or people who, for one reason or another, want to redress some of their environmental impact).

The money will be used by the Trust to restore strategically targeted areas of former wet-land and river corridor, back to their natural state. To achieve restoration, landowners will be invited to join the scheme voluntarily and will receive a significant one-off payment to take these small areas of marginal land out of intensive production.

The scheme will mostly involve areas with limited value in terms of food production but which could provide much in terms of the environment and resource protection. This is why we call the project 'C-Plus' - it is much more than a simple carbon offsetting project.

Collabor8 Launch



The Trust launched the EU Collabor8 Project at Hotel Endsleigh on 31 March this year and the meeting was attended by representatives from South West Tourism, South West RDA, Environment Agency, South West Lakes Trust and the Association of Rivers Trusts. The meeting provided the chance to hear how the Welsh partnership approach had made 'Fishing Wales' such a success and set out how the Trust and its regional partners can help develop the Westcountry Angling Passport as a means to developing and enhancing the South West 'angling product'.

Through the Collabor8 project, WRT is seeking to develop 'clusters' of businesses that, by working better together, can develop new products or services and exploit areas such as marketing and promotion.

The Trust has recently been working with a new guiding association (the Devon Fly Fishing Guides Association), an enterprise which is installing a network of angling webcams on rivers across the region and we will be working closely with clusters of accommodation providers in the lead up to the 2010 season.



The Westcountry Angling Passport Scheme



As we near the end of the first season of the new Westcountry Angling Passport, we would like to thank all those anglers who used the scheme and those that have taken the time to comment on the new information and marketing materials.

The Trust is very pleased with these developments and although the new



website has taken some time to get fully operational, we think it will provide an excellent resource for both local and visiting anglers.

The Westcountry Angling Passport is part of a growing family of Rivers Trust angling schemes with the ongoing agreement that tokens are interchangeable; one of our Passport tokens now provides access to 260km of fishing across the UK! All anglers should make sure they have a book of tokens in their fishing bag when going on holiday.

The Booking Office

A new and easy way to reserve fishing for salmon, sea trout, brown trout and grayling has been made available through the WRT Booking Office. Anglers simply use the website (www.westcountryangling.com) or call the office (using Credit/Debit cards) to reserve and pay for their fishing.

Once a booking has been made, the fishing information and directions to the beat are emailed or posted to the angler. Importantly, should the river be in spate when an angler turns up, we'll make a new reservation for the same beat in the same season.

As many anglers have found out, it really is a very easy system to use and the online



booking service means a reservation can be made 24hrs a day. Anglers should use the website to view the fisheries, or make sure they are on our database to receive free fishing information at the start of each season.

2009 Season

The season has had a similar feel to the past two years - a mix of ups and downs! The season started well with a warm dry spring and early summer and this resulted in a flurry of activity across the scheme's beats, with many anglers recording successful trips.

Of note, a Mr B Jenkins from Tewkesbury had 10 brown trout to 2lbs during a good hatch of mayfly one afternoon. A number of grayling have also been caught including this 1³/₄lb fish from the River Lyd. Just when we were thinking it could

be a really good year for trout fishing, the wet weather descended and fishing was sporadic through mid and late summer, although this did bring some sea trout into the main rivers which provided good day time fishing, especially on the Tamar system.

Fishing for salmon has been slow this season, and ironically we now need some wet weather (at the time of writing it has been a dry September) to bring fish into the rivers. A full round-up of the season's catches will be made available on the Passport website later this year.



The perfect gift for every angler!

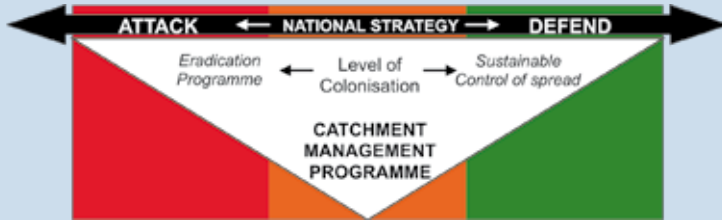
Angling tokens make the perfect Christmas present - available in books of five or ten, these will be sent in a special gift box in time for Christmas.

Invasive weeds – Attack or Defend?

The Invasive Weeds programme on the River Camel, funded by the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, is now in its second year. We are busy out in the sub-catchments of the River Camel treating Himalayan Balsam and Japanese Knotweed. We have been trialling several methods of control, from contractors spraying large areas that are easy to access to community volunteer groups pulling stands of Balsam that are in their community and are growing on rough ground.



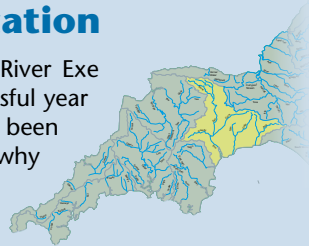
We have found that a variety of methods are needed and whilst we are able to attack and potentially eradicate invasive weeds in the upper catchments, where recolonisation is minimal, we are only able to defend against the spread from upstream in the lower catchments.



A schematic for our Invasive Weeds Strategy (adapted from Ronald Campbell pers. com., (approaches to environmental management))

‘Exe’cellent restoration and education

The work on the river Exe, funded sustainably by the River Exe and Tributaries Association (RETA), has had another successful year of on the ground restoration and education. The Trust has been working with schools across the catchment to highlight why the river is so important and what bugs and beasts can be found by sampling their local stream.



Despite the difficult weather we have undertaken selective coppicing works on the Little Exe through two volunteer coppicing days where we trialled a new technique for the introduction of woody debris to enhance the instream cover available for juvenile salmonids.

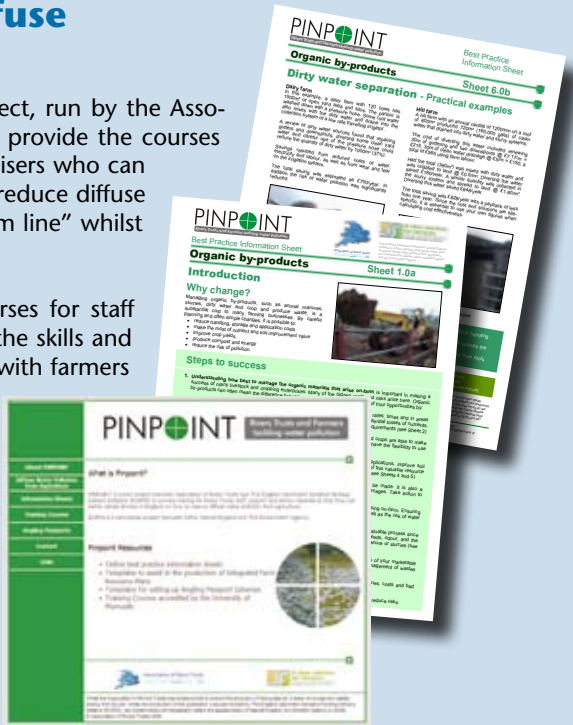


How to 'Pinpoint' diffuse pollution?

The Trust is a partner in a new project, run by the Association of Rivers Trusts, which aims to provide the courses and information necessary to train advisers who can work with farmers and landowners to reduce diffuse pollution, thus improving their "bottom line" whilst protecting the environment.

We will be running week long courses for staff from other Rivers Trusts to give them the skills and experience necessary to start working with farmers and identifying causes of diffuse pollution.

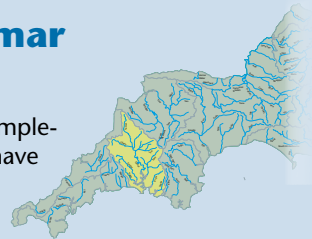
The Trust's experience has been built up over the past 15 years through projects such as the West-country Rivers Project and the Cornwall Rivers Project and over that time we have developed a wealth of practical advice that identifies win-win solutions for both the environment and the farmer.



Improving habitats within the Tamar Lakes Catchment!

The Trust is delighted to report that after the successful implementation phase of the Tamar Lakes Catchment Project we have been monitoring improvements in diversity. Working with all the farmers within the small catchment that feeds into the Upper Tamar Lakes has improved several important habitats as well as reduced nutrification within the lakes. The newly protected areas have been monitored to detect changes in both plant and animal diversity. In all of the protected areas an increase in populations and water quality has been observed.

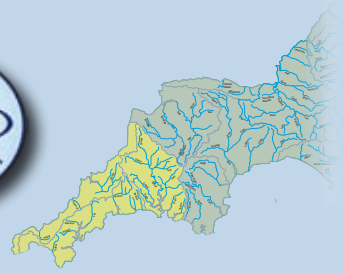
One of the most important outcomes has been the continued growth in a positive relationship between the farmers and landowners within the Tamar Lakes Catchment and the Trust.



Araneus diadematus. Garden Orb Spider recorded at newly protected wetland area at the Tamar Lakes.

Cornwall Wet Feet doubles up...

The first year of the Cornwall Wet Feet Programme, funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, has been a massive success as we have worked with nearly double the number of children and community groups we first thought!



We have worked with over 1500 children so far in year one (the HLF target was 1800 in two years). Through working with a handful of individuals, the Trust has also managed to develop a small network that aims to continue delivering similar educational events. As such the programme already has two 'Wet Feet Champions', one on Bodmin Moor and the other at Ladock, both of whom now run 'Wet Feet' activities.

Besides school groups, we have also worked in partnership with other local organisations and authorities to deliver Wet Feet activities and displays at a number of public events – reaching a wider audience and raising awareness of the project.



Reconnecting the Fal Floodplain

The Trust has just been awarded a Natural England Wetland Vision project to re-wet part of the Floodplain on the river Fal. The work will see three large parcels of land reconnected with the river through a series of sluices, ditches, ponds and scrapes. Alongside the habitat work, the Trust will also be setting up management agreements on each parcel so we can assess the likely long-term impacts on the area. This will

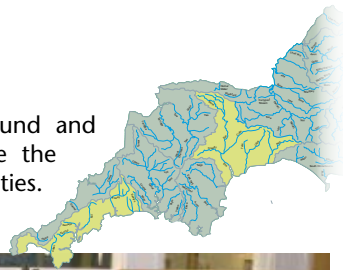
include estimating the available habitat for Eels, the reduction of suspended sediment in flood and the build up of carbon within the soil.



Although the work along the floodplain would increase the flooding and water-logging of the currently grazed area and thus limit grazing potential, the landowner would be compensated for this through evaluating the economics of the potential benefits of the scheme.

Trout in the Classroom

Funding from the Cornwall AONB Sustainability Fund and Exmoor National Park allowed the Trust to purchase the equipment necessary to run Trout in the Classroom activities. The grants allowed us to purchase tanks, cooling units and the gravel needed while integration with the Cornwall Wet Feet project allowed us to bring Trout eggs into the classroom.



The children tended to the eggs until they hatched as fry and after a month the children helped release them into their local streams. This type of work is a vital way of enthusing the children about their local environment as well as discussing the problems caused by pollution smothering spawning habitat.



Cooling tanks under the table help to maintain ideal conditions for the Trout

Degree Scholarship

The Trust awarded its scholarship for Outstanding Achievement in the field of Environmental Management to degree student Phillipa Spicer.

Due to popular demand, modules within the Sustainable River Basin Management degree course are now being taught as stand alone Continual Professional Development modules, as well as being offered through the Pinpoint project to Rivers Trusts around the UK.



ENVIRONMENTAL CONSULTANCY SERVICES

Are you in one of the new Nitrate Vulnerable Zones?

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All profits are covenantated to support the work of the Trust on local rivers

Royal Rename for WRT Offices

The Westcountry Rivers Trust was delighted to welcome HRH the Duke of Gloucester to rename the office 'Rain-Charm House' in memory of the late Ted Hughes. He wrote a poem called 'Rain-Charm for the Duchy' to celebrate the christening of Prince Harry. Ted Hughes was a poet laureate and a founder of the Trust and his poem evocatively describes a rainstorm over a parched Westcountry and the raising of a flood of many of our wonderful rivers after a summer asleep.



The Director shakes hands with HRH the Duke of Gloucester

The renaming was a wonderful time to celebrate what we have achieved over the past 15 years and ponder upon the exciting and turbulent future ahead of us. We are entering into a time where our approach of treating rivers as living and breathing ecosystems of which we are just one part is becoming more evident in political thinking than ever before. HRH the Duke of Gloucester and many of the people we have worked with over the past 15 years were there to celebrate.

The Trust is funded through its projects and the kind help of its founders and supporters - Thank you for making this invaluable work possible.