

Welcome to the Summer 2019 Island Rivers Partnership newsletter. Once again its been very busy, and there is lots to tell you about, and of course opportunities to help protect, improve, enjoy and celebrate the Isle of Wight watercourses. This time we have split our newsletter into three sections—East, West and Central Wight.

### **THE EAST END—Eastern Yar, Scotchells Brook, Wroxall Stream, Monktonmead Brook and Blackbridge Brook**

#### **Wetland Restoration**

A Hampshire & IW Wildlife Trust project. This year they have continued with habitat improvements at Sandown Meadows, Morton Common and the Donkey Sanctuary, and also added Bohemia Bog to their repertoire, home to the Island's only known population of pale butterwort.

At Morton the Trust were very pleased with the discovery on the margins of the Marsh of *Carex acuta* (Slender Tufted-sedge), which had previously thought to have become extinct on the Island. One of the most significant land management achievements here has been establishing cattle grazing for the first time in nearly 20 years. Hants and IW Wildlife Trust is using pedal powered drinkers to help run a small herd of Highland yearlings, which saves significantly on the cost of installing mains water drinking troughs. Fencing has also been erected at Alverstone SSSI and Chiddles Moor to enable grazing with cattle.



It is hoped that this year the Trust will establish a number of scrapes on the western half of Morton Marsh to extend habitat for wetland birds and construct a new viewing platform.

#### **Gateway to the East and Yar River Trail**



These projects have occupied a lot of our time, but at the moment we have little to show. However in the next year we hope to make improvements to fish passage in the Alverstone area, revamp the Yar River Trail leaflet, and make two new trails linking Shanklin and Ventnor to the Eastern Yar via Scotchells Brook and Wroxall Stream.



#### **Catchment Sensitive Farming**

Led by Hampshire & IW Wildlife Trust this project provided advice to farmers to minimize impact of nitrates, phosphates, pesticides to surface and ground water. As well as 12 farm visits, an event was held to promote the Clean Air Strategy and Reduced Transport Farming.

An Eastern Yar Farm Cluster has been established with the aim of working together to carry out small-scale improvements to improve the water environment. This project is being assisted by Wight AONB.



### **Invasive Non-Native Species Activities**

Led by Natural Enterprise and

delivering intensive control of Himalayan Balsam in Eastern Yar catchment including Scotchells Brook and Wroxall Stream. The project is now in its 7th year and on previously treated sites there are considerable improvements with both a reduction in density and an increase in biodiversity. This is particularly noticeable along Wroxall Stream.



*Much work in East Wight has been made possible with funding from Down to the Coast. To see a full range of projects please visit <http://www.downtothecoast.co.uk/>*

## **STRAIGHT DOWN THE MIDDLE—the Newport Rivers and beyond**

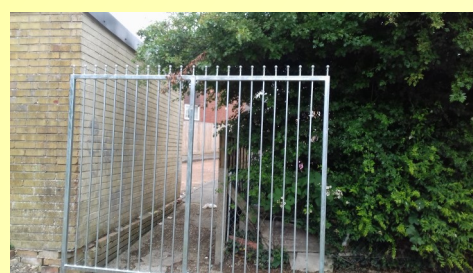
### **Restoration works at Dodnor Creek**

Gift to Nature have been busy restoring Dodnor Creek which is highly designated with Ramsar, SSSI and SINCE designations, as well as being adjacent to an SPA and SAC. It is particularly important as a high roost for wading birds in the winter. Whilst most work was focussed on the adjacent site and its historic cement kilns, with the help of Green Gym, footpaths within the Nature Reserve have been improved, to prevent people trampling its valuable flora in wet weather, and willow which was encroaching into the creek was removed.



### **Newport Rivers Fly-tipping**

Over the last couple of years Natural Enterprise have directly engaged with householders and delivered small-scale works to clear dumped rubbish and reduce future opportunities for fly-tipping. One site, on Lukely Brook now seems to be resolved but Pan Stream has been more tricky. Last year we cleared an area prone to fly-tipping and made some alterations to access to make it more tricky to dump larger items, which has worked. We have done another clearance of smaller items this winter, and much of the waste removed was historic. We continue to work with IW Council to seek long-term resolution.



Fly-tipping of small items / Locked gate prevents vehicle access / Barrier to prevent dragging large items / Clearance

### **Invasive Non-Native Species Activities**

Natural Enterprise and the Environment Agency are continuing to tackle Himalayan Balsam on Merstone Stream and the Medina, and Japanese Knotweed on Lukely Brook and the Medina. We are fairly confident we know where all the sites are now, and will continue with our plan to reduce the occurrence of these plants. We have successfully eradicated Azolla, also known as Water Fern from two ponds in Niton by introducing weevils.

## Lukely Brook Enhancements and Plaish Meadow Investigation

Lukely Brook is a chalk groundwater fed stream and groundwater abstraction depletes its flow. Carisbrooke Mill Pond and Waterworks Pond are designated as Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC). Southern Water will be enhancing the river upstream of Westminster Lane to enable fish passage over structures that prevent migration. The Environment Agency are seeking to tackle issues downstream of this point.



### Medina Valley Brand

The Medina Valley Coastal Communities Team spawned from Newport Rivers Group and has developed a plan to enhance the visitor economy. Key to this is the Medina Estuary. A brand has been developed for businesses to use, and a full toolkit is available from Natural Enterprise.

<http://www.naturalenterprise.co.uk/pages/economic/137-medina-estuary-coastal-community-team--consultation>

### New Activities

We are investigating opportunities to enhance the Newport's five water-courses, engage people in their care and enhance their amenity value. **We welcome any suggestions you may have.** We are also investigating opportunities to enhance the Medina from source to sea.

## **OUT IN THE WILD WEST WIGHT—Western Yar, Newtown Rivers and Brighstone Stream**

### Catchment Sensitive Farming and Catchment Planning

Hampshire & IW Wildlife Trust have been surveying farms in the Newtown Catchment. This is a repeat of an exercise last year in East Wight and information provided will enable us to better understand the issues affecting water quality. Once the returns are analyzed, this will be fed in to farm advice specific to this area.

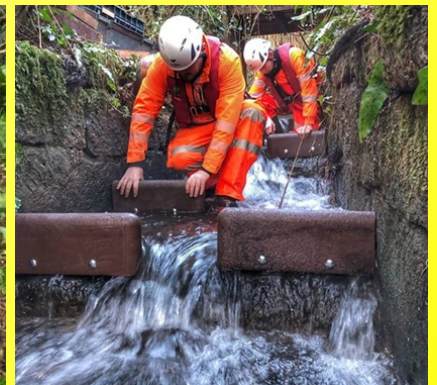
Island Rivers Group have been reviewing the data held for the Western Yar, Caul Bourne, Rodge Brook, Thorness Stream and Gurnard Luck. We will be updating our on-line catchment plan for these rivers during the next six months.

### Invasive Non-Native Species Activities

Natural Enterprise have eradicated outbreaks of Himalayan Balsam in Calbourne and Afton Marsh, but Brighstone Stream remains a concern. There is an outbreak there but we have no funding in place to tackle it, so the time we can put in is limited.

### Caul Bourne Fish Pass

The Environment Agency have tackled an impassable barrier at Shalfleet Sluice on the Caul Bourne. Low cost plastic baffles were installed to create a pool/traverse type fish pass. This has opened up more than 5km of habitat to salmonid species.



## FORTHCOMING EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

**06 MAY: All Along the Riverbank**—a series of events along a 2 mile stretch of the Eastern Yar between Sandown and Newchurch

**09 MAY: Pig Leg Pootle**—a very short walk along Monktonmead Brook at Pig Leg Lane Nature Reserve

**14 MAY: Return to the Mummies Caves**—a walk along the Medina Estuary from Newport, to include a visit to Dodnor Creek and Dickson's Copse Local Nature Reserve and the historic cement kiln site

**16 May: Thursday Night on the Pull**—a stroll along the Eastern Yar from Sandown, with a spot of Himalayan Balsam controlling

**18 MAY: Riverfest**—celebrate Newport Quay's 900th anniversary

**Details of all these events are on the Island Rivers website**



In May Natural Enterprise will start their Himalayan balsam campaign on the Eastern Yar and Wroxall Steam. New volunteers are very welcome., but you do need your own transport.

We are out at least twice a week, sometimes more, and you can join us all day, or for a shorter morning or evening session.

It's a fabulous way to exercise, de-stress and get some fresh air. If you are interested please contact us using the details below.

The organisations helping to steer this project are the Environment Agency, Natural Enterprise, Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust, Wight AONB, Isle of Wight Council, Southern Water, Natural England, CLA, NFU, Isle of Wight Estuaries Project and Arc Consulting. The Island Rivers Catchment Plan is on our website.

**FOR FURTHER DETAILS ON ANY ITEMS IN THIS NEWSLETTER CONTACT**

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*Island Rivers are hosted by Natural Enterprise*

**VISIT OUR WEBSITE**

for useful information including best practice if you live or work alongside a water-course, links to walks and cycle-rides, a picture gallery, volunteering opportunities and details of current and past projects.

**[www.islandrivers.org.uk](http://www.islandrivers.org.uk)**

**AND OUR FACEBOOK PAGE**

for up-to-date information on Island Rivers. See what is happening, and glorious photos posted by local people. Find out about volunteering opportunities and events.

**<https://www.facebook.com/islandrivers/>**



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