

Gwent Wildlife Trust Wildlife Winners Update for 2015



The River Trothy Project

Thanks to Wildlife Warriors one of the innovative Living Landscape initiatives we have progressed this year has been the River Trothy Project.



Male Bullfinch, or Lee Parsons

The catchment of the River Trothy lies west of Monmouth and close to the English Welsh border. A sub-catchment of the Wye it flows for 36 kilometres through a typically undulating landscape before entering the River Wye in Monmouth. The countryside is a stunning patchwork of fields, small copses, hedgerows, streams and ancient trees. However, this beautiful landscape belies a problem.

Currently only 36% of water bodies in Wales achieve 'Good Status' as required by the Water Framework Directive and sadly the River Trothy is not one of them. The river is polluted by nutrients (phosphates and nitrogen) and sediment, both of which come predominantly from agriculture. Invasive species are also a problem with stretches of the riverbank smothered in Himalayan Balsam and Giant Hogweed.

These problems are largely symptomatic of the way we manage our land and how we live our lives. Over the past 50 or more years there have been increasing pressures on our natural environment and the services it provides. Non-native invasive species, agricultural intensification, land abandonment and urbanisation have all taken their toll. Once widespread, wildlife-rich habitats have declined and are becoming increasingly fragmented across the landscape. This has had a detrimental impact on our wildlife and the wider benefits that we all receive from the natural environment.



Otter, or Elliot Smith

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The River Trothy Project is one initiative that is attempting to address some of these problems: by creating new priority habitats within the catchment we can provide space for wildlife, improve connectivity but also improve water quality and management by reducing overland flow of water.

The project has been delivered in two phases. In 2014 developmental work was undertaken through mapping of the Trothy catchment. This study of the habitats and species within the catchment enabled us to identify those areas where habitat creation would be most effective e.g. by linking two existing habitats together or where it will help protect and stabilise riverbanks. This work provided a starting point, informing future conservation activities.

Where has your money been spent?

In 2015 the project moved into a delivery phase actively creating habitats and initiating conservation activity. In March we ran a two day volunteer task to litter pick along six miles of the watercourse resulting in 21 bags of rubbish collected along with traffic cones, car wheels and other paraphernalia! But more excitingly we have been able to create new habitats at a variety of locations across the catchment. In total this year we have managed to create:

- 3 hectares of woodland and wet woodland
- 1.7 hectares of traditional orchard
- 2.5 hectares of floodplain hay meadow

We also have a number of sites lined up to be worked on before March 2016. This includes a further 2.4 hectares of traditional orchard and a potential floodplain arable reversion (changing crop fields to permanent wildflower meadow) site of 6.5 hectares. Following 2016 the project will continue for another year with an aspiration to create a further 10 hectares of priority habitat that will deliver biodiversity and water quality benefits along with the wider ecosystem services we need and enjoy. If you would like to know more about the project then please contact Andrew Nixon on 01600 740600 or email anixon@gwentwildlife.org



Rubbish, cr Andrew Nixon



Grey heron, cr Andy Karran



New Traditional Orchard, cr Andy Karran