



Photo by Charlotte Elliott

Welcome to the second e-newsletter for the Loddon Catchment Partnership.

In this issue you will find articles from BBOWT about the water vole population in the Loddon Catchment; an introduction to the Hampshire Cultural Trust and various project updates from HIWWT.

Please note upcoming events, details of which can be found on the final page of this newsletter, which may be of interest and which are open to anyone with an interest in the Loddon Catchment.

If you have a project or are undertaking work in the catchment that would be of interest that you would like featured in a future issue of the newsletter please let us know. Contact details can be found on the final page.

### Invasive non-native species (INNS) Training Summary and Update

Invasive species training held on October 20<sup>th</sup> by HIWWT was successful in raising awareness of local issues regarding INNS and motivating communities to take action to continue tackling local problems species such as Himalayan Balsam. A wide range of people attended, making for an interesting discussion.

These events are designed to inform local people how to identify invasive species such as Himalayan balsam, floating pennywort, signal crayfish and American Mink; and provide accurate information on how to tackle infestations. Often, a problem is not realised until the extent is great, by which point taking action is often costly and time consuming. Through these training events we hope that problems can be identified sooner and be effectively managed to save time and money, contributing to tackling issues on a river basin scale.

There are already many local groups working to eradicate INNS such as Himalayan balsam. This involves hitting infestations hard, pulling plants methodically throughout the catchment year on year and monitoring for developing problems which are easier to eradicate whilst they are small scale.

If you would like to find out more, the next training event is scheduled for March 15<sup>th</sup>; please see the events section of this newsletter for details.

### Living Record Update

To help assess the extent of the current INNS problem, we have collated data of historic records of Himalayan balsam from TVERC and HBIC. However, the collated data has some geographical gaps and it is important to gain a more up to date picture of the current state of the extent of INNS in the area by using Living Record. Keeping records up to date enables us to identify problems and areas which are, so far, clear of INNS. This is a major help for local communities taking action against INNS as it enables work to be targeted effectively.

The Living Record web page will be set up in time for spring 2016. Anyone can register online to record survey data and ad hoc sightings of INNS, with particular focus on Himalayan balsam. The site also allows data recording for sites which have been surveyed and no target species found. This is an important feature because it shows that sites have been surveyed rather than just not visited yet; it is a useful tool for monitoring change over time and it flags up areas which need future monitoring, particularly if they are adjacent to areas with INNS present.

HIWWT will be holding a training session on how to use the website early next year with the help of Adrian Bicker, the founder of Living Record. Details will be published in due course, but if you would like to register your interest please contact [emma.hunt@hiwwt.org.uk](mailto:emma.hunt@hiwwt.org.uk).

Following the event, we would be very grateful of any records entered into the website or passed onto HIWWT to enable us to better deal with invasive species in the Loddon Catchment area.

### Website Update

As promised, the website for the Loddon Catchment Partnership Project is being developed and is currently in the design stage. HIWWT are working closely with the company boxChilli who have taken on the project as part of their charity partner scheme, in which they select a charity to collaborate with each year for mutual benefit.

The website will be a reference point for anyone with an interest in the catchment and for information about the partnership, its members and current and future projects in the local area. It will have up to date information about news, events and local issues and how individuals and communities can get involved to improve the condition of our watercourses and their associated wildlife.

### Loddon Catchment Project workshop

On 26<sup>th</sup> November we held a Catchment Project Planning workshop to which you hopefully all received an invitation. At the workshop we presented the work that has been undertaken by Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust on the Catchment Plan. In our role as host we have been working with others to bring together a strong partnership and have been communicating with stakeholders to identify the key priorities in the catchment. This information, together with actions identified in a number of other plans and strategies, has been collated to form the basis of the Loddon Catchment Plan. From this list of actions we have identified a number of potential projects which could help to tackle the issues that are a key concern within the catchment. Participants at the workshop were asked to consider which of these projects they would consider a priority to be taken forward as well as identifying how they may be able to contribute towards projects. The workshop was very successful and thank you to those who were able to attend.

We will continue with this prioritisation project to identify projects to develop and consider for delivery. This process will involve considering partner and stakeholder priorities for action together with a number of other factors including WFD priorities, available funding streams and the priorities of potential project leads.

The presentations from the event are available on Dropbox together with the project outlines and the spreadsheet of individual actions that forms the basis of the catchment plan [https://www.dropbox.com/sh/fc32jv1mfoh7jih/AABrbwnex2vzl66g\\_m0R-t-Ga?dl=0](https://www.dropbox.com/sh/fc32jv1mfoh7jih/AABrbwnex2vzl66g_m0R-t-Ga?dl=0) Please be aware that these are working documents and subject to change as we continue to work on and develop the plan.

## About the Hampshire Cultural Trust

Hampshire Cultural Trust, created by the union of the Winchester City and Hampshire County Arts & Museums Services, has just celebrated its first birthday - and a year of considerable change - as it discovers what life is like in the independent sector.

The new charitable organisation is run by a Board of Trustees and led by Chief Executive, Dr Janet Owen. Its principal aim is to bring a world-class cultural experience to the area, showcasing great work, empowering and connecting people and organisations, while at the same time inspiring pride in the locality.

The links with the local scene are fundamental and the collections and buildings are held in trust for the local authorities. Within the area of northeast Hampshire this means looking after sites and buildings as diverse as *Milestones* and the Willis Museum at Basingstoke, Aldershot Military Museum, and Basing House - the Tudor mansion ruined during the English Civil War. There is also the West End Centre at Aldershot, a buzzing venue for concerts, exhibitions and workshops.

The Trust may be young, but the things it cares for are as old as time. Geology and the natural sciences, archaeology, social and industrial history, and art in all its many forms, all feature in its displays and reserve collections. From the mammoth tusk dug up at North Warnborough to a Chieftain Tank at Aldershot, from a Wallis & Steevens steamroller made at Basingstoke to the flint tools of our earliest

ancestors collected by George Willis, so many aspects of Loddon Catchment Area history can be enjoyed at the various venues, or studied in more depth at Chilcomb House, the Trust's headquarters on the outskirts of Winchester.

The Catchment Area is steeped in local history and archaeology, to complement its vivid and varied natural history, and you can catch up with it by tracking down the Hampshire Cultural Trust.

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

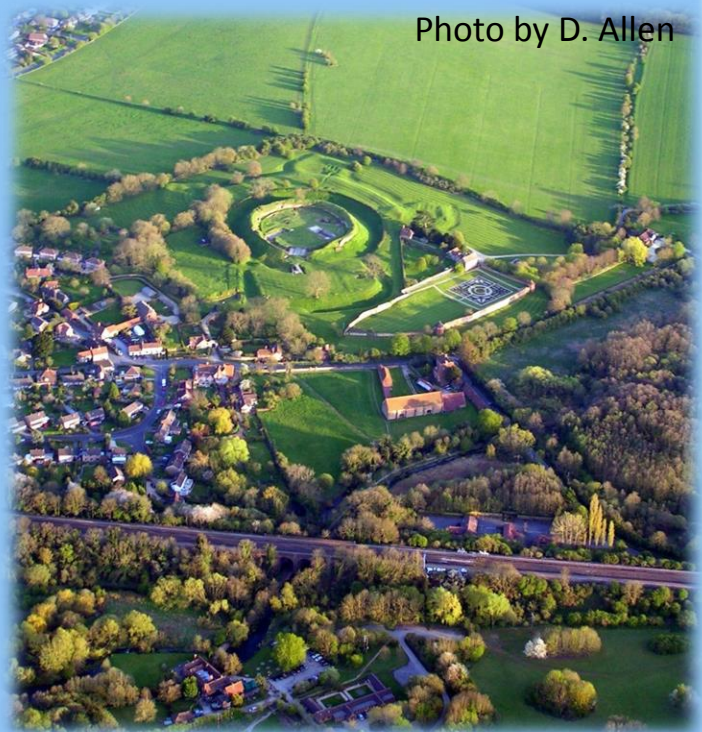


Photo by D. Allen

*(Above) An aerial view of Basing House – Norman ringwork castle, turned magnificent Tudor mansion, turned Civil War ruin. The ‘great survivor’, the brick-built Great Barn (centre) stands near to the River Loddon, here accompanied by fish ponds. The stream then flows beneath the railway viaduct and heads for Barton Mill, now a restaurant and public house.*

## Water Voles in the Loddon Catchment.

Water voles have undergone one of the most serious declines of any British mammal during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The intensification of agriculture during the 1950s resulted in the loss and degradation of much of their habitat. However the most rapid period of decline was during the 1980s and 1990s when the water vole population crashed by almost 90% as a newly introduced predator, the American mink, spread along our waterways. In recent years this decline has continued and last year the National Water Vole Mapping Project reported that water vole records for England and Wales had declined by nearly a fifth over the past 3 years.

In 1998 the Berkshire, Buckinghamshire & Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust (BBOWT), in partnership with the Environment Agency, began a pioneering project to reverse the decline of water voles. The project continues today, working to halt the loss of water voles in the three counties and aid their recovery. This is done through recording and monitoring water vole populations, advising landowners on managing and enhancing sites for water voles and co-ordinating mink control around known water vole sites. Against the backdrop of a national decline our local water vole populations have been steadily expanding. Over the past 8 years the total area of known water vole activity within the three counties has increased by 51%. (continued...)



Water vole by Paul Jeffrey

## Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust.

One area where our local water voles have [recovery-project-0](#)

not apparently been thriving is on the River Loddon and its tributaries in Berkshire. Our last confirmed water vole record on the Blackwater was in 2005 and despite annual surveys and extensive habitat enhancement works, the small population of water voles which inhabited a ditch system between Twyford and Wokingham have not been recorded since 2012. In recent years we have received reports of water voles on the Loddon downstream of Twyford and at Lower Earley although subsequent surveys have not been able to confirm their presence. It may be that water voles are still hanging on, remaining unrecorded, in small pockets of the Loddon catchment in Berkshire so if you suspect you see a water vole please do get in touch. Information on how to identify water voles and report sightings can be found at:

<http://www.bbowt.org.uk/what-we-do/protecting-wildlife/water-vole->

We know that mink are active on the River Loddon and that mink control is being carried out in some areas. To trap mink we advocate the use of special mink rafts which were designed by the Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust to trap mink with minimal effort whilst avoiding capturing non-target species. If we can identify any local mink hotspots and work to ensure a co-ordinated approach to mink monitoring and control through the catchment we may be able to get mink numbers under control. This would benefit a whole range of wildlife, including any water voles present. If you see a mink, know where current mink trapping is taking place or would like to find out more about monitoring and controlling mink then please do get in touch.

Article by Julia Lofthouse, BBOWT

## Upcoming Events

### INNS ID and removal training

Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> March at Mapledurwell Village hall from 4-6pm By HIWWT.

Contact [emma.hunt@hiwwt.org.uk](mailto:emma.hunt@hiwwt.org.uk) for more information or to book your place.

If you would like to know more about the work of the partnership or want to get involved, please get in touch: [amanda.ingham@hiwwt.org.uk](mailto:amanda.ingham@hiwwt.org.uk)

Hampshire & Isle of Wight  
Wildlife Trust

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