

How can we make the river better for wildlife?

Chalk rivers and streams provide important habitat for wildlife. Their clear, fast flowing water helps to create homes for many rare species not found in any other river.

WHY improve it for wildlife?

Rivers have been managed by people for centuries, which can mean that little room is left for plants and wildlife. River work, such as flood defence or drainage improvements, has often led to engineered river banks that are unable to support bank side vegetation and provide wildlife habitat.

Most people would love to see more wildlife in and around the river. There are certain popular species such as dragonflies and damselflies, or fish like brown trout and salmon, that people are particularly fond of. Simple things can be done to help them and other wildlife.

WHAT can be done?

The best starting point is to find out what is living in the river already to make sure that any proposed work will not harm existing wildlife. Contact the local environmental records centre.

There are many easy habitat improvements that can have amazing effects. Securing some logs or small branches into the river bank, for example, will alter the water's flow and provide sheltered areas and different habitats for various species.

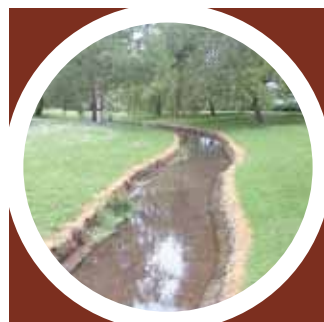
Creating some shelves and planting them with water loving plants of local provenance is another easy measure to make the river a more inviting place for wildlife. Even simply relaxing mowing and cutting of bankside vegetation will allow for more natural habitats to develop and attract shy species such as water voles.

A good place to look for inspiration is the River Restoration Centre's 'Manual of River Restoration Techniques', the STREAM project's 'Layman's report' or the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (BTCV) handbook 'Waterways and Wetlands' (see overleaf). They provide lots of ideas, explain techniques and show a number of projects that have successfully brought wildlife back to rivers.

WHO can do it?

Small scale restoration could be carried out by developing a community project involving volunteers. Larger scale works may need to be carried out by contractors used to working in river environments.

Living River volunteers making the River Avon in Salisbury a better place for plants and wildlife



Churchill Gardens, Salisbury
– before work



Installing pre-planted
coir rolls



Now better looking and
better for wildlife

WHAT needs to be considered?

- ▶ Before planning any work find out who owns the area of river concerned and contact everyone who has an interest in the river: landowners, farmers, river users such as fishing clubs etc. A coordinated approach yields the best results.
- ▶ Get the necessary consents and permissions for work in the river and along the river bank – early contact with the Environment Agency, Natural England and your local authority is vital.
- ▶ Cover insurance and health and safety issues. Risk assessments are crucial at the outset of any work in and around the river. The BTCV handbook 'Health and Safety Overview' provides useful advice for community groups (see right).
- ▶ Avoid disturbing protected species such as otters or water voles. Plant and animal surveys may need to be undertaken by an ecologist. Your local Wildlife Trust or Natural England can provide advice. Any sightings of protected species should be reported to your local biological record centre (see right).
- ▶ Ensure that any plants used are suitable for the location and of local provenance. Only take them from places where you have the landowner's permission and will not harm existing habitats.
- ▶ Have a good look for funding – local authorities can often provide funding advice.

WHO can help?

There is plenty of written and direct help available from the organisations listed right.

WHERE can I get more information and ideas?

- ▶ **River Restoration Centre:**
www.therrc.co.uk/rrc_manual_pdf.php
- ▶ **Wessex Chalk Streams Project:**
www.wiltshirewildlife.org/standingup/wessexchalkstream/emailform.aspx
- ▶ **British Trust for Conservation Volunteers:**
www2.btcv.org.uk
- ▶ **BTCV handbooks:**
'Health and Safety Overview',
'Waterways and Wetlands' and
'Environments for All' (<http://handbooks.btcv.org.uk/handbooks/index>)
- ▶ **STREAM project:**
'Layman's report' (www.streamlife.org.uk/resources/publications)
- ▶ **Wild Trout Trust:**
'Chalkstream Habitat Manual'
(www.wildtrout.org)
- ▶ **Environment Agency:**
www.environment-agency.gov.uk
- ▶ **Natural England:**
www.naturalengland.org.uk
- ▶ **Councils:**
Wiltshire (www.wiltshire.gov.uk);
Hampshire (www.hants.gov.uk);
Dorset (www.dorsetforyou.com);
New Forest (www.newforest.gov.uk)
- ▶ **Wildlife Trusts:**
Wiltshire (www.wiltshirewildlife.org);
Hampshire (www.hwt.org.uk);
Dorset (www.dorsetwildlifetrust.org.uk)
- ▶ **County biological records centres:**
Wiltshire and Swindon Biological Records Centre (www.wsbrc.org.uk); Hampshire Biodiversity Information Centre (www3.hants.gov.uk/biodiversity/hbic); Dorset Environmental Records Centre (www.derc.org.uk)

