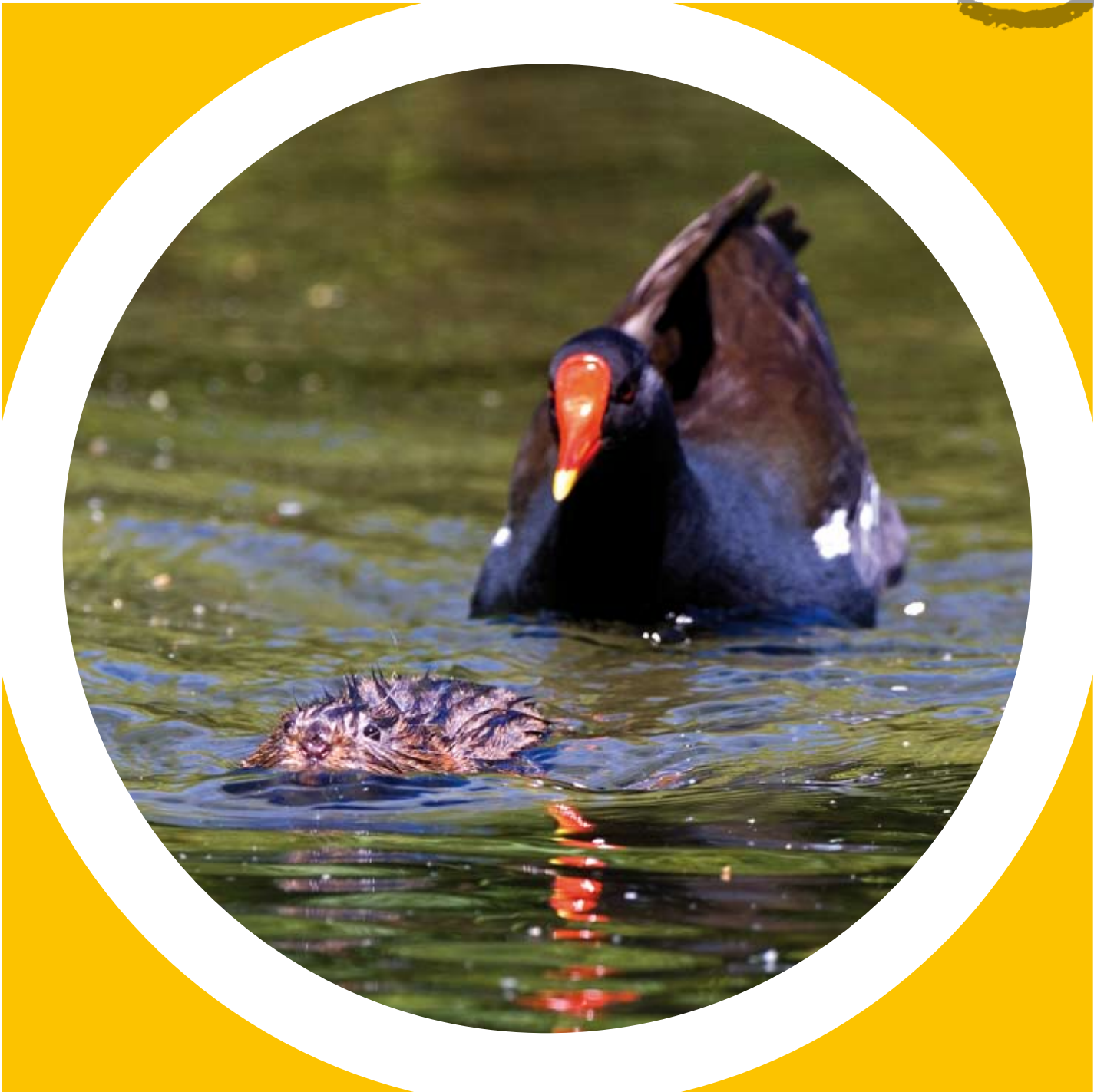




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THE **LIVING RIVER** NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2009



Supported by
The National Lottery[®]
through the Heritage Lottery Fund





Welcome to the Living River newsletter for spring 2009.

The Living River project aims to increase awareness and appreciation of the River Avon and its tributaries with a focus on how the special wildlife of the river has developed alongside the history of the area. The project will be working with local communities from the rivers' headwaters in the Wiltshire Downs to the sea at Christchurch and will involve people who live and work in the River Avon catchment in its conservation. The project, running for four years (2006–2010), will:

- Restore river habitats at sites the public can access and enjoy
- Enhance existing access to, and information about the river
- Hold public events, training and volunteer activities to help people understand their relationship with the river system and take responsibility for it.

Supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund and:

- Natural England
- Salisbury District Council
- Salisbury International Arts Festival
- Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust
- Wiltshire Wildlife Trust
- Hampshire County Council
- Wessex Water
- Environment Agency.



SCHOOL OF FISH

The Living River trout hatcheries, developed by the Wessex Salmon and Rivers Trust, have returned again this year at Sarum St Pauls School, Salisbury Library and Langford Lakes Education Centre. Each hatchery started with about 500 newly laid



brown trout eggs in January. The newcomers generated curiosity and huge interest from young and old. They have witnessed their transformation from eggs into baby fish, and are now eagerly awaiting their release into the River Avon around Easter.

STREAM LIFE

The STREAM project has now finished all its river restoration work. The last two bits were at Lord's Walk in Amesbury and Dockens Water, Blashford Lakes Nature Reserve.

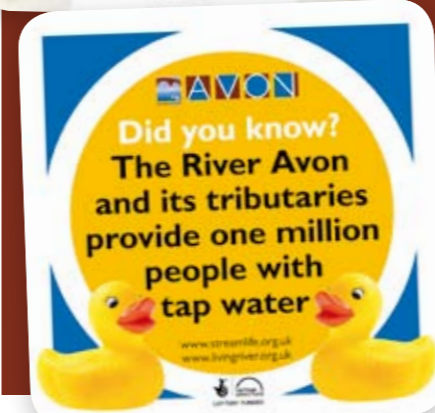
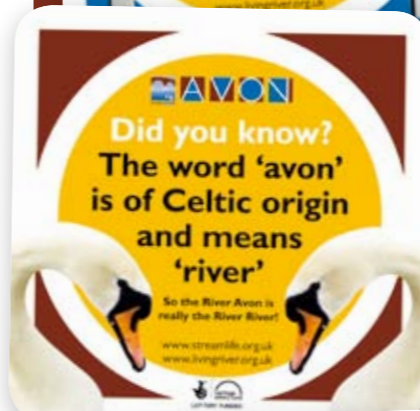
Dockens Water is predominantly straight and 'confined' by floodbanks and bank armoring as it flows between water-filled gravel pits and abandoned floodplain land. The work carried out was to join up the river and floodplain

by creating an important pool, which fills when the river is high. Pictured above is Dockens Water pool newly dug in August (left), and starting to blend in by November (right).

An important part of the STREAM project is to share the experience with others, so STREAM is running a workshop and conference for landowners and fishery managers (for details see the 'what's on' page).

THE RIDDLE AVON

Have you ever wondered; how many different kinds of fish inhabit the River Avon, how long the river is, and what secrets it might hold? Then keep your eyes open. The Avon is soon to reveal some of its most interesting facts and myths. Watch out for these river facts which will appear across Salisbury and Christchurch over the summer. Even if you thought you knew your local river well, you might be quite surprised to find out about its connection to Dracula or its hidden treasures.



VOLE REHAB

Wiltshire Wildlife Trust's Water for Wildlife project focuses on the 'Water Vole Recovery Programme'. Over the next five years the project will develop and drive forward a long-term strategy for water vole conservation in Wiltshire, largely using a network of trained volunteers to undertake surveying and monitoring duties. Anyone interested in becoming a water vole surveyor, or getting involved as a volunteer can call Tom Hayek (pictured) on 01380 725670 or email tomh@wiltshirewildlife.org

HOLT, SWEET HOLT



Living River has been busy over the last months building several otter holts. Staff from QinetiQ helped out on the Avon Valley Local Nature Reserve in January. In March we worked with Wiltshire Wildlife Trust and Wiltshire County Council Youth Services alongside young people from the John Ivie Centre to build a holt in Figheldean. Otter holts are important as a missing link in the needs of otters. Without a choice of hiding and resting places otters are unlikely to settle in an area, regardless of clean water or a plentiful supply of fresh fish.



TRUMPETING VOLUNTEERS

A huge **THANK YOU** to the over 700 volunteers that have so far provided their time and effort to support the Living River Project.

Our volunteers are people from all walks of life, from a range of backgrounds and communities, with different motivations and expectations, but with one common aim: to keep the River Avon and its tributaries a special place for people and wildlife. Here are some of their stories...



RYAN NICHOLSON FRIENDS PROVIDENT

"Eleven members of staff from Friends Provident tried on the latest in wading-boot style to play a part in helping improve the river in Salisbury. Our task was to create a section of artificial riverbank, which would, over time, become a home to various river plants and animals. This was not as easy as it sounds, each 'bank' being made up of bucketfuls of stones that needed to be transported alongside the river before being dropped off a bridge to those of us in the water! Having built up the banks, it was all hands on deck to help cover the stones with some matting before encasing the structure in mesh. All in all, a hard day's work – but very worthwhile! We've admired our handiwork while walking along the river since!"



SIMON BANTON FIGHELDEAN CONSERVATION GROUP

"Figheledean Millpond had been languishing in an unloved and largely unmaintained state for many years since the demolition of the Mill House in the late 1950s. It had degraded into an overgrown, litter-strewn eyesore. With help from the Living River project the initial litter pick and nettle plucking ideas rapidly turned into a fully-fledged bank restoration project. Upwards of three dozen village volunteers, aged from 3 to 83, took part in clearing the undergrowth, removing the rubbish, building a new marginal shelf framework and hand-barrowing over 20 tons of flint and chalk to fill it over the course of several days. The difference has been remarkable and we couldn't have begun to achieve these results without the outstanding help of the Living River project."

If you are keen to help out on the river and don't know where to start contact the Living River project who will put you in touch with a group near you.



ALISTER JONES STUDENT, SALISBURY

"As part of my course at Sparsholt College I went on work placement with the Living River project. I was educating people about the importance of trout in our rivers. This was done by taking hatcheries into schools and the local library to monitor the fish's life cycle – an education process that was fun and interesting for children and grown-ups alike. I also got some hands on experience on how to lay viewing platforms on the river. The structures enable people to get closer to the river at any time of year and gives them the chance to spot wildlife and plants."

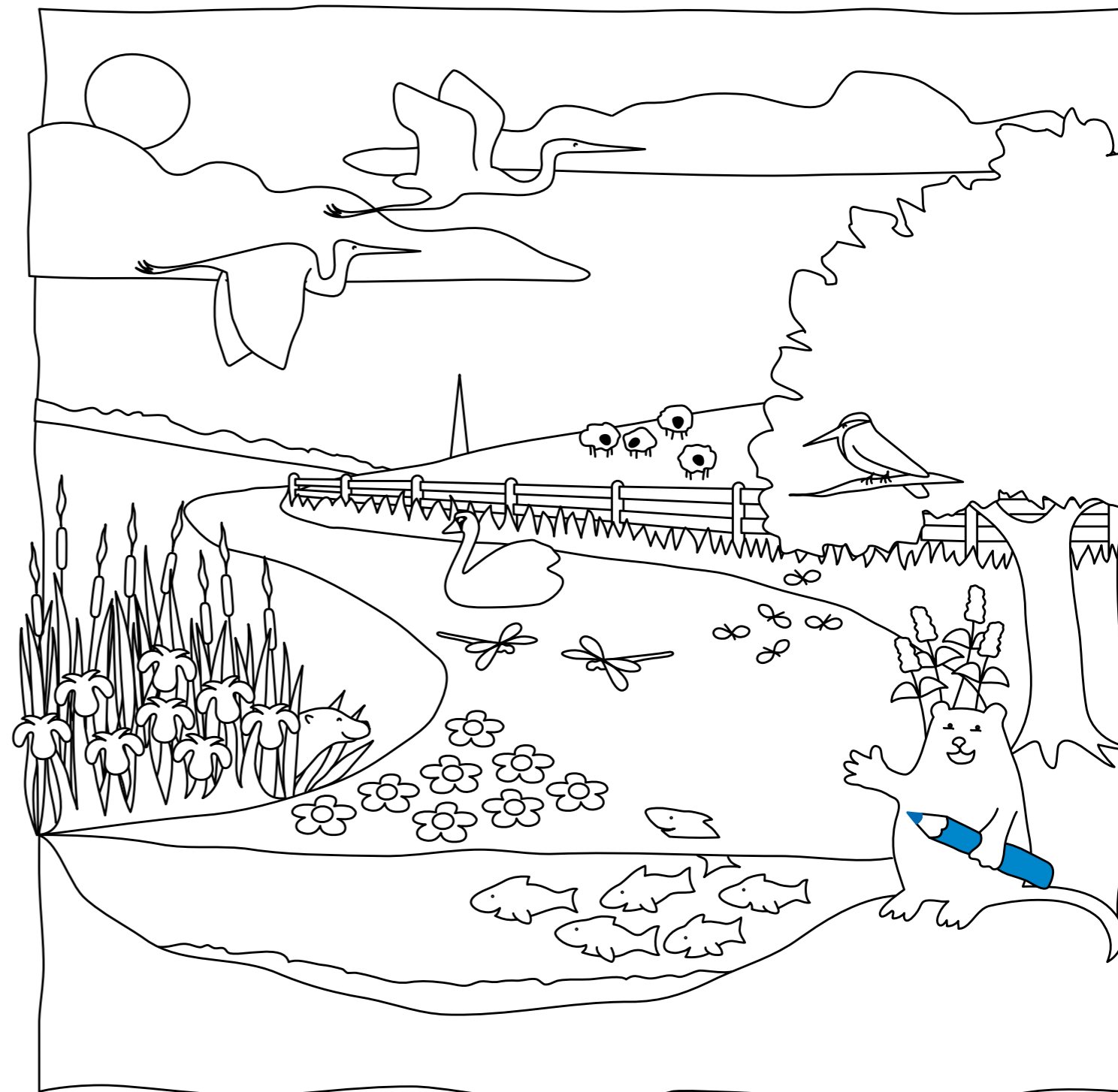


LIVING COLOUR

Lots more digging and shuffling will be going on in and around the River Avon in Spring and Summer this year. This will make the river a much better place to live for wildlife. Get your

crayons out and discover the wonderful world of a healthy river. We would be very pleased to receive your completed pictures. The first 50 of you who send their pictures to the

Living River office (at the address overleaf) will be rewarded with a **FREE** book of Elvis the Egret – where you can read about his life and adventures along the River Avon.



WATER MINT



KINGFISHER



YELLOW FLAG IRIS



TROUT



WATER CROWFOOT



WATER VOLE



DRAGONFLY

WHAT'S ON WHAT'S ON WHAT'S



10am–3pm
7, 8, 14 MAY
11, 12, 14, 18 JUNE
RIVER RESTORATION DAYS
SALISBURY

Come along and help restore the river as it flows through Salisbury City Centre. No experience is necessary and all equipment will be provided. Please wear appropriate outdoor clothing. Tea, coffee and biscuits will be provided but please bring a packed lunch if you are staying for the day. Meet at Avon Approach Bridge – or wander along the river by the Maltings /central car park and you will see us. And if you would like to get involved as a whole team with your work colleagues then please let us know and we will be very happy to arrange a date for your company.

To find out more or discuss details please call Martin Gilchrist at Living River on 01722 334856 or email martin.gilchrist@naturalengland.org.uk



THURSDAY 14 MAY
STREAM WORKSHOP
DINTON

For landowners and fishery managers, at Dinton Village Hall.

For more information and to book: www.streamlife.org.uk/actions/events or elaine.swiffen@naturalengland.org.uk



12 noon
SATURDAY 23 MAY
ALIENS ON THE RIVER
SALISBURY

Talk and demonstration day about invasive plants at Rose Cottage, Harnham Water Meadows Trust. www.salisburywatermeadows.org.uk or call Eva Thomas at Wiltshire Wildlife Trust on 01380 725670 or email evat@wiltshirewildlife.org

A WEEK OF WATER

10.30am
SUNDAY 24 MAY
TARKA THE OTTER
SALISBURY



One of the best-loved of all animal films, this children's classic returns to the big screen at Salisbury Arts Centre.

Tickets £2.50. For more information see www.salisburyfestival.co.uk

2–3.30pm
TUESDAY 26 MAY
GUIDED WALK OF
BLASHFORD LAKES
FREE

Come and explore the river at Blashford Lakes. Take a peek under the surface with our range of hi-tech gadgets and discover how the river has been looked after for the wildlife that depends on it.

Free, but please book on 01722 334856. Meet at Blashford Lakes education centre.



WED 24/THURS 25 JUNE
STREAM CONFERENCE
DINTON

An end of project conference for landowners and fishery managers at Dinton Village Hall.

For more information and to book: www.streamlife.org.uk/actions/events or elaine.swiffen@naturalengland.org.uk



Salisbury International Arts Festival

12–5pm
FRIDAY 29 MAY
PLAY DAY
SALISBURY
FREE

Join in the fun with Living River and STREAM during the Arts Festival Play Day. You will have the chance to explore the river with our chalk river fish tank. You can take your favourite finds to the Hi-Tek Wild Trek trailer to see the underwater world up close through the magnifiers and microscopes. Try your hand at fly-fishing (without the hooks) or tie your own giant fly.

For more information see www.salisburyfestival.co.uk

10.30am–12 noon
SATURDAY 30 MAY
GUIDED WALK OF
LORD'S WALK
AMESBURY
FREE

Discover this beautiful part of the River Avon and see the work that has been done to restore it. You will also get the chance to take a peek under the surface with our range of hi-tech gadgets and find out all about the wildlife that depends on it.

Free, but please book on 01722 334856. Meet at the entrance to the Lord's Walk on Countess Road, Amesbury.



SUNDAY 12 JULY
HIMALAYAN BALSAM PULL
SALISBURY

Help fend off this invasive plant at Churchfields Open Space. For information call Nicky Warden at Wiltshire Wildlife Trust on 01722 792015 or email nicolaw@wiltshirewildlife.org

WYLYE LIFE

During the 1950s and 1960s the River Avon starred in a series of television programmes following the relationship between the Avon and its famous river keeper, Frank Sawyer. Viewers observed a man's way of life beside the Avon in tune with his environment.

How little we are aware of the importance of the river keeper to the health of our rivers in real life. Adrian Simmons, river keeper on the River Wylde gives us a glimpse into his fascinating job:

"My passion for rivers, fishing and wildlife started at a very young age and since discovering that professional river keepers existed I knew that is what I wanted to do. Eight years ago I finally found myself moving to the lovely Wylde Valley to take over the job of full time river keeper for the Wilton Fly Fishing Club on the lower Wylde.

"The last eight summers have flown by and I have been surprised by the wide range of duties. There have been so many wonderful sightings of unusual things there is not space to mention them all. Anything from a glimpse of an otter working its way downstream, to a rare sighting of a tiny silver 'air' covered water shrew

underwater. The dabchicks, kingfishers, herons, water voles and a surprising variety of birds of prey all accompany me throughout my working day. My wife Frances and I were fascinated to watch the agile and fast flying hobby hawk feasting on the large mayflies as they hatched in great numbers from the river. I also had the exciting privilege to see one of the huge Salisbury Plain great bustards once flying away from the river.

"What goes on beneath the surface is equally gripping and strange. Apart from the wild brown trout and grayling there must be over a dozen other fish species inhabiting this part of the Wylde. The incredible life cycle of the salmon is completed on our fishery with regular sightings of spawning activity every winter.

"This is only a small part of what makes living and working on the Wylde so fascinating. I also get great pleasure from hearing from our fishermen after a successful or maybe not so successful day.

"I really hope the increased interest in Wiltshire's chalk streams created by Living River and STREAM will help to show the Wylde's potential once again as one of the south's premier chalk streams."



AVON ARRIVALS

The Living River team is up to full force again. Eva Stützenberger has taken over the role as project manager from Sarah Yarrow who headed back home to New Zealand last November. Once more at home with Alpine streams than meandering rivers, Eva brings her background of marketing and environmental consultancy to the project.

Together with the familiar face of Martin Gilchrist it is now full steam ahead again.

A very warm welcome also to Ruth Clarricoates, the new Wessex Chalk Streams project officer. Ruth continues the work of developing

a way of dealing with invasive plants in the Avon catchment.



LIVING RIVER

If you would like to find out more or get involved with the Living River project please get in touch:

Living River, Natural England, Salisbury Festival Office, 87 Crane Street, Salisbury SPI 2PU

T 01722 334856
martin.gilchrist or
eva.stuetzenberger
@naturalengland.org.uk

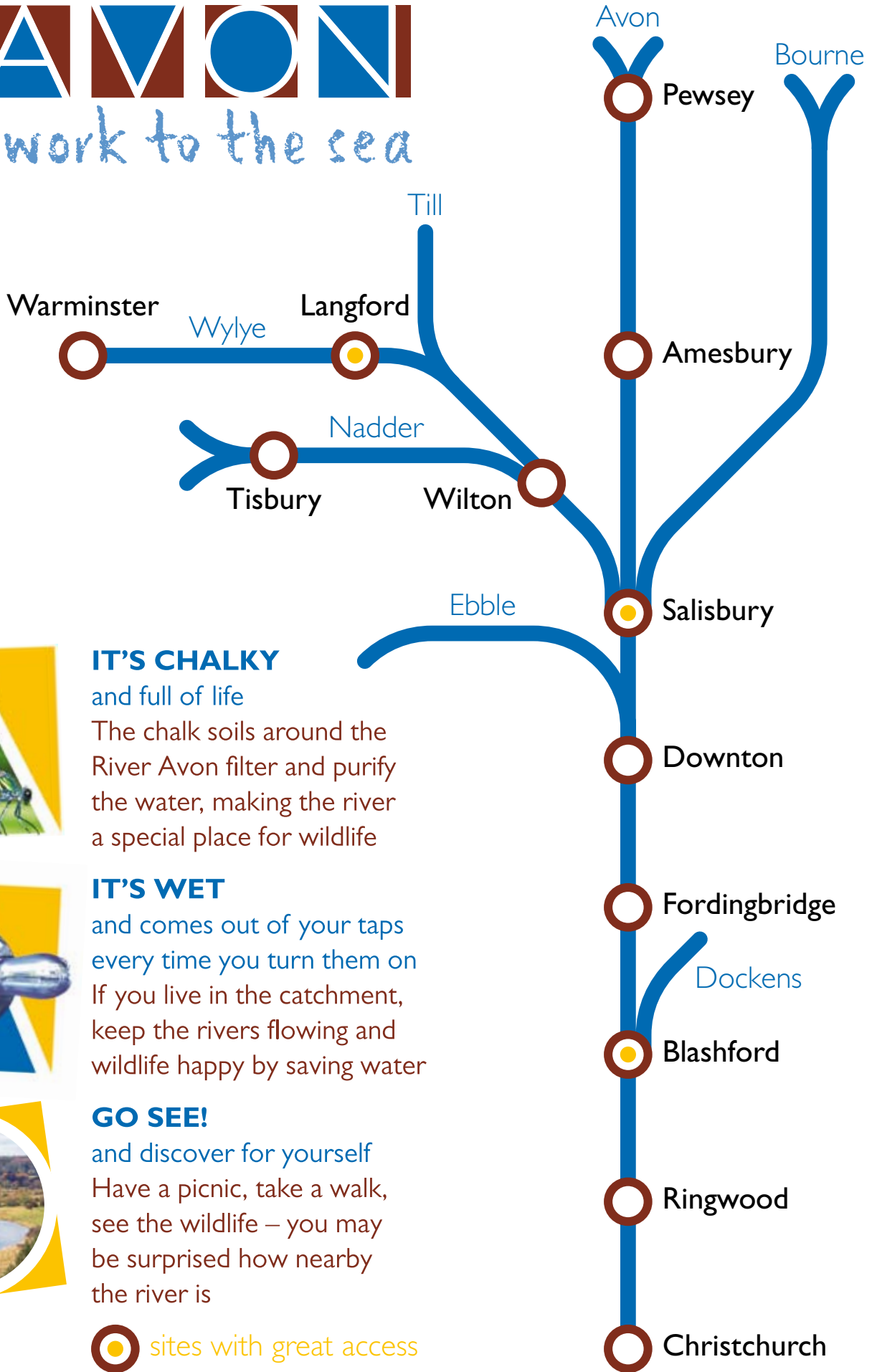
www.livingriver.org.uk



AVON

LIVING RIVER

a network to the sea



IT'S CHALKY

and full of life

The chalk soils around the River Avon filter and purify the water, making the river a special place for wildlife



IT'S WET

and comes out of your taps every time you turn them on

If you live in the catchment, keep the rivers flowing and wildlife happy by saving water



GO SEE!

and discover for yourself

Have a picnic, take a walk, see the wildlife – you may be surprised how nearby the river is

 sites with great access