Even though many of our Catchment Partnership plans for May have had to be put on hold, I am pleased that there are still some positive updates to share with you all. Project work is continuing behind the scenes and many of us are lucky enough to be spending time enjoying our local green and blue spaces. This coming month, why not think about signing up for #30DaysWild and give it your own wetland theme? And if you have a project in mind, don’t forget, there’s still time to apply to the Severn Trent Boost for Biodiversity Fund which closes on 12th June – there’s up to £200,000 up for grabs, so don’t delay!

A spotlight on... river restoration, lockdown style

Idle and Torne Catchment Co-ordinator Katie McNamara is starting river restoration lessons early! Even at a ‘Duplo’ scale, the basics are all there....can you spot a) the meanders promoting diversity of flow, b) riparian vegetation providing bank stabilisation, shade and shelter and finally c) some well-maintained stock fencing to prevent livestock poaching and sedimentation? The biodiversity benefits are also demonstrated with pollinator friendly flowers in evidence and a healthy population of water vole – all in all a pretty good stretch of river, I hope you’ll agree?

© Katie McNamara
Latest news from Spa Ponds

The Forest Town Nature Conservation Group (FTNCG) estimates that the number of visitors to Spa Ponds increased by 10 fold in late March, reaching a 20-fold increase by April. With the recent 'easing' of restrictions on car journeys we are now seeing a 50-fold increase in the number of visitors to Spa Ponds, with hundreds of people visiting the site each day. Our two wardens are doing their best to keep the site tidy - we have received much praise from local residents, and we recognise the need to provide more support for our wardens, e.g. by encouraging other FTNCG volunteers to visit the site wearing their tabard to send a clear signal to site visitors that the site is managed by volunteers, and that we expect people to maintain physical distancing and to respect fellow visitors and the wildlife. We are linking this effort to what we are calling 'potter sessions' - to distinguish them from the organised 'work sessions' that can no longer take place. And there is no shortage of tasks for volunteers, including pulling balsam, removing bramble, clearing 'round recently planted whips, removing young sweet chestnut and sycamore, and recording wildlife sightings. We have seen plenty of wildlife on site, despite the increase in human visitors, including buzzards, wren, skylark, greylag geese, and tadpoles galore!
Undersown maize trial—building on 2019

Severn Trent’s Catchment Agricultural Adviser Phil Billings has been busy setting up for a new season in the undersown maize trial at Thoresby with help from his ‘dogronamist’ and a whole host of tractors! Building on last year’s promising results, the field has now been prepared with different treatments of digestate application, cultivation, spraying, mowing and drilling to enable further investigations into the water and soil quality benefits of each approach.
Join Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust for

30 Days Wild

Can you do one wild thing a day throughout the whole of June? We believe you can! Join thousands of people taking part in our annual nature challenge, 30 Days Wild! Do it for your health, wellbeing, wildlife and the planet!

30 Days Wild is a fun, feel-good challenge run by The Wildlife Trusts every June. Back for its sixth year, it brings people closer to nature where they live, taking small actions that can collectively have a big impact! From little things such as watching a bee from your window or feeding the birds, to giving up single-use plastics for a month or digging a pond in your garden: every Random Act of Wildness counts. If you want to see what others are getting up to, just check out #30DaysWild on social media.

Why take part?

While nature needs us more than ever, the reverse is also true. We’re all part of nature, and it should be a part of our lives.

Over the past five years, we’ve been working with the University of Derby to find out about the impact that 30 Days Wild has on participants. The results show that people feel happier and healthier after taking part, and for months after too!

If you do get involved, please do send me your photos and stories so that I can add them to the next newsletter! Just email csambridge@nottswt.co.uk

Sign up for #30DaysWild
Review and update of the river basin management plans

Environment Agency Update 14 May 2020

We are working with partners to update the current (2015) river basin management plans (RBMP). In October 2019, we launched a consultation seeking views on the challenges our waters face and the choices we all need to make to improve and protect this precious resource.

As a result of the ongoing coronavirus outbreak and following feedback from stakeholders, the deadline for submissions to the consultation has been extended to 24 September 2020. We have notified our stakeholders of this change.

We are also reviewing the timetable for updating the draft RBMPs. The consultation on the draft updated plans was due to start by 22 December 2020. Achieving this date is no longer possible. Whilst a revised date has not yet been set, our current working assumption is the delay may extend until July 2021. As part of our ‘restart’ planning, we will consider how and when to resource the work needed to prepare the draft updated plans alongside the Environment Agency’s other priorities.

Because of this delay, it is unlikely that updated plans will be approved and published by December 2021. We will minimise this delay as far as possible. However, we are not planning to reduce the length (6 months) of the consultation on the draft updated plans. We will also ensure we take sufficient time to consider consultation responses before preparing and submitting the final updated plans to the Secretary of State for approval.

Our joint working with Natural Resources Wales (NRW) and the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) on the cross border plans has also been delayed. We have developed an approach with NRW for the draft updated Dee RBMP which we hope will mean consultation could still start in October 2020. Work to prepare the draft Solway Tweed RBMP is more complicated. While we hope to be able to support the start of the consultation in December 2020, this has not yet been confirmed.

The coronavirus outbreak has also resulted in a delay to the work to complete the latest set of water body classifications. Our aim is to complete and publish them as soon as possible. However, we don’t have a firm release date at the moment. We will be considering this alongside other priorities as we prepare for the ‘restart’ phase of the coronavirus outbreak.

We will inform stakeholders as soon as we have more certainty about the future timetable for updating the plans.
Idle Washlands baseline bird survey

Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust’s Mark Speck has been carrying out baseline bird surveys in the Idle Washlands to enable us to monitor the impact of future work, including the Severn Trent funded ‘Boost for Biodiversity’ project. Not a bad view from the office and some great sightings of avocet and lapwing. NWT and partners are working hard on developing plans for progressing the project, within current guidelines, and hope to have more of an update soon.

Caption competition...

Send through your captions for this great image taken at Spa Ponds and we’ll publish them in the next newsletter!
Warsop water voles (and no balsam!) update

Steve Horne reports that the results of this year’s water vole survey along a kilometre stretch of the River Meden between the Mill Dam and Stone Bridge in Warsop are more positive than anticipated during the floods but there may have been an increase in visible evidence due to recent dry weather and the lower river level.

It appears that the areas of water vole activity suggested by the 2019 results are still occupied with increased evidence. There are signs of continuing recovery in the western section but the eastern section has fewer signs of recovery. This year’s survey has been carried out several weeks earlier than usual taking advantage of a period of dry weather. This may have contributed to an increase in evidence due to shorter grass and lower water levels providing more latrine sites. There have been two unconfirmed sightings of water voles.

Once again no Himalayan balsam was found along this stretch of the river during the survey!

UK Water Resources portal – rainfall, river flows and soil moisture data at your fingertips

The UK Water Resources Portal is a newly published interactive tool to monitor the UK hydrological situation in (near) real-time at a range of spatial scales. The portal brings together rainfall, river flow, soil moisture and groundwater data in one place, and showcases the use of live river flow data from the Environment Agency and COSMOS-UK soil moisture data.

The home page includes a short video ‘how to’ user guide, or you can just head straight to the portal here: https://eip.ceh.ac.uk/hydrology/water-resources/

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