Partnership Updates

This year has been a difficult time for everyone due to the Covid-19 pandemic. During this time, the Partnership only carried out field work that was deemed essential and ensured extra safety measures were put into place. Our Partnership Officer, Kate Bailey was furloughed for a period of 3 weeks as some project and partnership work had to be postponed.

Our Annual Report for the 2019/20 financial year has now been published and can be viewed on our CaBA website page https://catchmentbasedapproach.org/get-involved/yorkshire-derwent/. The report gives a more information about the exciting projects the Partnership and partners have carried out in the catchment.

‘Doing More for the Derwent’ Invasive Species Control

Giant hogweed treatment got underway in April, as part of the Environment Agency’s ‘Doing More for the Derwent’ project. Over 50km of treatment was carried out by Yorkshire Wildlife Trust and landowners, moving further towards the aim of eradicating this alien species in the Derwent Catchment. Small isolated areas of known Japanese knotweed were treated. The NYMNPA Ryevitalise programme has also carried out its first of four years of Himalayan balsam treatment across their project area in the Rye catchment.

Volunteers have been hard at work carrying out INNS surveys. This vital work will contribute to the catchment-wide control strategy, providing up-to-date information on the presence of INNS on the Derwent.

Barmby on the Marsh Wetlands

Sited at the meeting place of the River Derwent and River Ouse, this small reserve, which is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), has undergone much change in the past 18 months. Through the Environment Agency’s ‘Doing More for the Derwent’ project, over 400 volunteer hours and dedication from YWT staff has transformed the site into a wetland wonder!

The removal of willow scrub has opened up the reserve and allowed more standing water, perfect for wetland birds including a Spoonbill that was spotted in June making a pit-stop on its way to Blacktoft Sands.

This spring, the installation of visitor experience panels and viewing areas have turned this secret reserve into a place where everyone can enjoy the wildlife that’s thriving there!

We are currently applying for funding to carry out future work, including scrape restoration and sluice installation.

Beaver Re-introduction Trial

Forestry England’s Yorkshire Enclosed Beaver Trial has been running for over a year now. The project aims to ‘slow the flow’ and reduce flooding downstream of the enclosure. The family of four had been hard at work, repairing leaks and building a large dam in the river, reconnecting the flashy watercourse with its flood plain. Two new healthy kits were spotted in June this year, the camera trap footage showed the whole family helping out with the new arrivals!
Our Jugger Howe Restoration Project, which was initially developed back in 2017, is now complete!

Towards the end of 2019, we were successful in securing £55,000 of European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) funding through the Water Environment Grant (WEG) scheme to restore an area of degraded upland habitat near the very top of the Derwent catchment.

During World War Two, this area of moorland known as Jugger Howe, was used as a training site for military tanks and has never really recovered; before the restoration work took place, the ground was badly eroded with little vegetation cover. Historically volunteers from the North York Moors National Park have done a great job by installed heather bales on the site to help reduce erosion but it needed a more concerted effort to really make a difference.

The YDCP officer and contractors carried out work in August to restore an area of 1.6ha by using the following techniques;

**Slowing the flow - coir rolls**
Over 400 coir rolls were installed across the site to slow the flow of water off the moor, reducing erosion and trapping fine sediment. The rolls were secured in place by being dug into the soil and backfilled to ensure any rainwater does not scour underneath or around each roll.

**Slowing the flow - stone traps**
16 stone traps were installed in the deeper gullies and act in the same way as the coir rolls, slowing the flow of water and allowing fine sediment to drop out of the water before it enters the nearby watercourse.

**Re-vegetation - spreading heather brash**
Heather was harvested from several locations close to the site and the brash, containing thousands of heather seeds, was then spread onto the bare areas. The brash will also form a microclimate protecting the heather seeds as they germinate and grow.

**Re-vegetation - plug plants and grass seed**
Plug plants were planted directly into the soil; cotton grass behind the rolls as it prefers wetter ground and heather plants in the drier areas. A mix of upland grass seed was also spread over the bare areas, tailored specifically to the site following discussions with local botanists.

Thanks to the Fylingdales Estate for working alongside us in the development and delivery of this project, to the contractors Conservefor who have done an excellent job, Natural England for providing us the consent to carry out the work, and to Matt Cross (our previous Catchment Officer) who initially developed the work and drew up the restoration plan.

**North Yorkshire Crayfish Forum**
This year, the North Yorkshire Crayfish Forum formed and met to consider how to protect the native white-clawed crayfish Austropotamobius pallipes. The species is present in the Derwent Catchment but it is threatened by the invasive signal crayfish, Pacifastacus leniusculus. It will likely become locally extinct in North Yorkshire if no action is taken.

YDCP is a member of the Forum and has carried out spatial analysis on existing white-clawed crayfish data to identify areas that may be strongholds for the native species i.e. where no signal crayfish have been reported. As the data is not up to date, YDCP plans to carry out surveys of these areas identified next year to see if the current data is accurate.