

NEW APPOINTMENT AT S&TA CONFIRMS IMPORTANCE OF RIVERFLY RESEARCH AND ANGLERS' MONITORING INITIATIVE

The Riverfly Partnership has moved to a new phase of development with the appointment of Director Bridget Peacock. The Partnership, which brings together a wide range of organisations with a freshwater, angling and conservation interest, is now based at the Salmon and Trout Association HQ in London with funding secured from a number of partners including the Environment Agency (EA), the Salmon and Trout Association (S&TA) and private sponsors.

Bridget, previously Coordinator for UK Biodiversity at the Natural History Museum London, played a lead role in the establishment of the Partnership in 2004 and secured national endorsement of the Anglers Monitoring Initiative (AMI) - an innovative programme enabling volunteers to monitor the water quality of their local rivers.

Bridget's first actions will be to establish the growing army of citizen scientists in the AMI across eight new catchments in England and Wales this year together with Coordinators Cyril Bennett (England) and Dai Roberts (Wales), secure core funds; and complete the suite of guides to the riverfly groups in collaboration with the Field Studies Council.

Since the launch of the AMI, at the Riverfly Partnership Conference held at the Natural History Museum last year, more than 300 volunteers have been trained, many of whom are anglers, and now monitor the biological water quality of their local rivers covering more than 200 sampling sites. In addition to providing baseline information, the activity is a highly effective means of direct action in registering instances of sudden pollution. Within ten months, in Wales alone, three major polluting incidents were picked up, which led to successful Environment Agency prosecutions with fines in excess of £35,000 to the polluters. This is a long awaited "neighbourhood watch" scheme for UK rivers, where the public works in collaboration with the statutory bodies to protect the conservation, sporting, recreational and intrinsic value of our rivers.

"This is a hugely exciting role to develop the instrumental work of the Riverfly Partnership and take it to the next level; for example, to see the recognition of AMI in the delivery of the EU Water Framework Directive in helping to ensure the Good Ecological Status of our rivers, explore the application of the initiative in other countries, and further the conservation work for riverfly populations" Bridget Peacock declares. "We will be implementing a national database for the biological information being collected, currently only available at a local level."

Comments Paul Knight, Chair of The Partnership and Executive Director of the Salmon and Trout Association, "this work by Bridget and her team is proof positive that anglers and partners are actively engaged in caring for the environment – an important objective of the S&TA, especially now we have charitable status. This launches our long-term commitment to fund and manage conservation projects for aquatic invertebrates, and we are extremely fortunate to have someone of Bridget's calibre and background heading this initiative."

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On behalf of the Salmon & Trout Association

Notes for editors

- Riverflies are defined here to include mayflies or up-winged flies (Ephemeroptera), caddisflies or sedges (Trichoptera) and stoneflies (Plecoptera) with 279 species in total. These groups represent the natural flies flyfishermen imitate with their artificial lures.
- The Riverfly Partnership brings together, angling, academic, conservation and environmental organisations to increase our understanding and conservation of riverfly populations and their associated habitats in the UK.
Partners including: Atlantic Salmon Trust, Biological Records Centre, , British Waterways, Buglife – The Invertebrate Conservation Trust, Riverfly Recording Schemes, Cardiff University Catchment Research Group, Clyde River Foundation, Environment Agency, Ephemeroptera Recording Scheme, Field Studies Council, Freshwater Biological Association and FreshwaterLife, John Spedan Lewis Trust for the Advancement of Natural Sciences, Lancaster University Institute of the Environment, Philosophy and Public Policy, National Trust, Natural England, Natural History Museum, Plecoptera Recording Scheme, Rhymney River Federation of Angling Clubs, Ryedale Anglers Association, Salmon and Trout Association, Test and Itchen Association Ltd, Trichoptera Recording Scheme, Wild Trout Trust, Wiltshire Fishery Association amongst others.
- The Anglers Monitoring Initiative (AMI) is commonly cited as an example of best practice in citizen science and is coined a neighbourhood watch scheme for rivers. The initiative enables trained groups to monitor the water quality of their local river using biological indicators. In addition to acting as a deterrent to incidental polluters the data collected highlights any severe changes in water quality and enables early action to be taken by the statutory bodies should falls in water quality be detected. The initiative is expanding rapidly, with more than 200 sites being sampled on a monthly basis in catchments across England and Wales.
- AMI demonstrates how publicly led conservation effort can help direct government spend.
- The EU Water Framework Directive outlines the requirement of partnership working to help meet good ecological status of our rivers. AMI is a prime example of such.
- See www.riverflies.org