

Riverfly Partnership press release
9 March 2011

Rivers Big Society Science

Rivers Big Society Science is in action - 200 delegates from the Chairman of the Environment Agency through to local anglers from across the UK unite in an innovative collaboration to protect and improve Britain's rivers

A capacity audience of 200, is gathering at the Riverfly Partnership conference *Your Rivers – their future*, at London's Natural History Museum to further develop the expanding collaboration, known as "the Anglers' Monitoring Initiative". More than 50 trained volunteer groups regularly monitor over 350 British rivers, monthly using a three-minute health check with riverflies as a barometer for water quality examining:

- the abundance of pollution sensitive riverfly larvae.

The Anglers Monitoring Initiative enables statutory bodies such as the Environment Agency and Scottish Environment Protection Agency to respond quickly to sudden, severe water quality issues such as pesticide spills. Frequent sampling also acts as a neighbourhood 'river watch' scheme deterring would-be polluters. The conference reports on three successful Environment Agency prosecutions of those responsible for the falls in water quality with fines in excess of £40k.

In addition to helping address acute pollution events, AMI groups also have the potential to make a significant contribution to long term plans, for example local delivery of Water Framework Directive outcomes. Riverflies, including mayflies, caddisflies and stoneflies, are a vital part of rivers - the canary of our river system. As well as providing food for fish, birds and bats riverfly numbers are a sensitive indicator of the health of our watery environments. Populations may be damaged by a variety of factors, such as low river flows, poor land management, acidification, siltation, pesticides, climatic change and pollution.

Community groups are long the river custodian. 'Local stakeholders have a unique knowledge of their local rivers, and using a robust scientific health check their expertise makes a real, noticeable difference to how we monitor river quality,' said Bridget Peacock, Director of the Riverfly Partnership 'Healthy riverfly populations are a sure sign of healthy rivers, which means better water quality for everyone.'

Your rivers – their future - Thursday 10 March at The Natural History Museum, 9.30 registration for 10.00 start and key note speech.

Ends

Notes for editors

- Riverflies include mayflies or up-winged flies (Ephemeroptera), caddisflies or sedges (Trichoptera) and stoneflies (Plecoptera) with 280 species in the UK. These groups represent the natural flies flyfishermen imitate with their artificial lures.
- *Your rivers – their future* brings together the country's most experienced and knowledgeable aquatic entomologists and representatives of a wide range of environmental, angling and government bodies. Discussions will focus on the conservation of riverfly populations and the associated impact of river management, farming and climate change.
- The Riverfly Partnership enables volunteer groups to work with scientists and environmental organisations to increase our knowledge, understanding and conservation efforts.
- *Your rivers – their future* conference is sponsored by The Natural History Museum, Thames Water, Fishmongers' Company, Salmon and Trout Association, Wild Trout Trust, Freshwater Biological Association, Natural England, Scottish Environment Protection Agency and The Environment Agency
- Speakers include: Chairman of the Environment Agency, Rt. Hon. Lord Smith of Finsbury; environmental scientist Professor Steve Ormerod; Anglers' Monitoring Initiative leads Will Tall (Wandle Piscators), mayfly expert Cyril Bennett and international fly fisherman Stuart Crofts amongst others. The panel discussion is chaired by Tom Fort.
- The Riverfly Partnership www.riverflies.org is hosted by the charity The Salmon and Trout Association www.salmon-trout.org.
- Winner of Visit London's 2010 Evening Standard's Peoples Choice Best London for Free Experience Award and Best Family Fun Award the Natural History Museum is also a world-leading science research centre. Through its collections and scientific expertise, the Museum is helping to conserve the extraordinary richness and diversity of the natural world with groundbreaking projects in more than 68 countries.

- The Water Framework Directive (WFD) is European legislation which takes an approach to managing water called River Basin Management Planning, looking at the water within the wider ecosystem and taking into account the movement of water through the water cycle.
- The WFD encourages everyone with an interest in water to work together to protect and improve the quality of every aspect of the water environment. It will help us improve and protect inland and coastal waters; drive wiser, sustainable use of water as a natural resource; and create better habitats for wildlife that live in and around water.

www.environment-agency.gov.uk/research/planning/33106.aspx

For more information or images, please contact: info@riverflies.org