

20/06/2015

Dear Riparian Neighbour,

We thought you might be interested to have an update from the Riverbank Nature Reserve Committee. There has been the occasional sighting of a mink passing along the river. This is bad news because they are predators and will kill our water vole population, as well as young nesting birds and fish. Water vole populations are nearing extinction in some areas so to have a riverbank nature reserve that provides the perfect habitat for them is something very special.

In conjunction with Tom Reid, from the Environment Agency, and Sam Thomas from the Kent Wildlife Trust a small mammal raft has been placed on the river. We are grateful to the Parish Council for funding the purchase of the raft. In the centre of the raft is a dampened clay pad that will take the impression of small mammal footprints. So, not only can we see when the mink has passed but we may also be able to use it to record water vole activity. Once we see evidence of a mink presence then a trap will be placed inside the cover and the mink removed. If you see the mink swimming along the river please let me know on 01227 722132. I promise that you are not seeing an otter. However, there is evidence of an otter presence at Westbere, so hopefully one day we shall see them on our stretch of river.

Last year Piers Paterson and his colleague cut back some of the nettles on the riverbank in a careful mosaic pattern to ensure the water voles retained their cover, and planted indigenous wild flower seed. The blue flower that has done so well this year is blue water speedwell and the white plant, similar to cow parsley, is hemlock water dropwort. (Thanks to Sam for identifying them.) We shall be undertaking some more sensitive trimming in the next few weeks. We extend a big thanks to Barbara Timlett, whose industrious and vigilant presence on the river has seen off most of the Himalayan Balsam.

We have also been bat monitoring around the village and there is a good presence of bats feeding along the river at night. Mostly they are Pipistrelles which fly in a darting movement above head level, but there are also Daubenton bats that skim the surface of the water to catch insects. If you flash a torch across the surface of the river after sunset you might see the Daubenton with its pale flash of underbelly.

If you have any river photographs you would like to share on our village website we should be pleased to have them. They can be emailed to me on pamelaevans4@btinternet.com

Does anyone know what species the two large fish are that are currently swimming together in the river? They look too slim to be trout.

Finally, a fish pass has been installed by the Environment Agency at Seaton Weir, so we can look forward to seeing many more large fish, and hopefully eels, arriving in our stretch of river in the future.

I hope this update is of some interest.

Pamela Evans

Chairman, Littlebourne Nature Reserves