



Ripple News

Rivers Involving People, Places & Leading by Example

Edition 4 Winter 2009/2010

Working in the deep freeze

This winter has been the coldest in recent decades. With temperatures plummeting to -10°C, many of us were asking ‘do I really need to head out today, or will I stay in – in front of the fire?’ Meanwhile, in the Arctic conditions, the wildlife in our rivers struggled on and Ballinderry Fish Hatchery faced the challenge of preventing 1 million trout eggs and 20,000 fish from dying in freezing tanks.

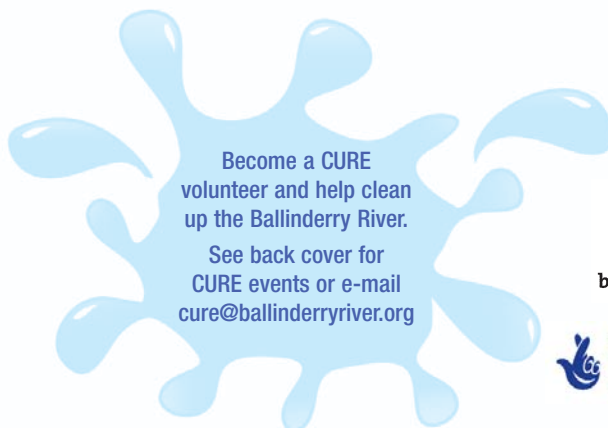


Alan Keys explains “Spring, for most people, signifies new beginnings and new life, however, where fish are concerned winter is the season of spawning and egg laying. Throughout the cold dark winter months trout and salmon eggs lie buried under piles of gravel known as redds. The development of the baby fish, inside each egg, depends on the temperature of the water. Each egg takes 500 degree days to fully develop, whereby the temperature of the water each day, from the day the egg is fertilised, adds up until 500 degrees centigrade are reached. When the water falls below zero, the eggs lie dormant, preventing the young fish from developing too quickly and hatching in the middle of winter, when food would be scarce for the young fry. This year has been exceptionally cold, meaning eggs will have not been developing and the hatch of fish will be much later this year.

Hatchery Technician Frank Mitchell says his biggest fear in the hatchery, during long spells of cold weather, is freezing pipes and no water reaching the tanks of eggs and fish. The water coming into the hatchery carries oxygen, vital to the survival of the eggs and fish. When the water stops, the oxygen in the tanks is quickly used up and, if not monitored, could mean the difference between life and death.

During the week leading up to Christmas, until Boxing Day, temperatures fell to such low levels that water froze as it hit the floor. Frank recalls “We had to use hot water to de-ice water pipes, to get the water flowing again. Whilst this was being done, air blowers had to be put into fish tanks to keep oxygen levels up. The thick ice that had formed on top of the egg tanks was left because, if we had broken this ice, the shock could have killed the eggs. We had to make careful decisions about which tanks to get defrosted first and, on rotation, which tanks needed our attention next, to keep the fish and eggs alive”.

Looking back now, staff at the hatchery can’t believe how cold it got and what impact it had on the day-to-day running of the hatchery. Alan concluded, “We had to work hard, but this time we were lucky. We will not know until the spring what affect this cold spell has had on our wildlife in the river, but one thing is for sure, where these exceptional weather events occur, high floods in autumn, low flows in summer and arctic conditions in winter, both the wildlife and us will have to learn to adapt to the ever changing conditions”.



Become a CURE
volunteer and help clean
up the Ballinderry River.
See back cover for
CURE events or e-mail
cure@ballinderryriver.org



ON THE RIVER THIS SEASON

The days are starting to lengthen but the winter still holds its icy grip on the landscape, bringing mornings of hard frost and temperatures barely peeping above freezing. All is quiet on the river, but not silent. The zipping sound of cracking ice, along the frozen edges of the river, gives way to the chattering of birds, picking through the undergrowth in a bid to survive another day. Beneath the glassy surface, fish eggs lie dormant, waiting for the temperature to rise, whilst fish, freshwater pearl mussel and white-clawed crayfish, lay low to conserve energy. The river is waiting for the bathing sun rays of spring. Visit places like the Lissan Water at Lissan House or the Killymoon River at Loughry to see parts of the river normally screened by the dense canopy of trees. There is activity; you just need to be patient to see it.

NEWS HUNT FOR RIPPLE

The RIPPLE project has been making big splashes across local and national media recently. From the Mid-Ulster Mail's 'Tales from the Riverbank'; the Belfast Telegraph's feature on the CURE group; to Lesser Spotted Ulster's Ballinderry special and BBC Radio 4's Open Country journey down the Ballinderry.

So did any of the volunteers imagine they'd be on local TV and national radio when they first put themselves forward??? We think not! But all involved have done marvellously well and RIPPLE proud.

When Joe Mahon visited for Lesser Spotted Ulster there was no holding him back as he got stuck in, putting up owl boxes and keeping his balance – just! Joe's laidback nature ensured everyone felt at ease, having a regular chat. When BBC Radio 4 visited,

Helen Mark was delighted to be working 'close to home' whilst her Birmingham colleague loved her first visit to Northern Ireland. Helen didn't hold back either as she managed to soak herself canoeing with Eddie Black. Whilst Iain McKenzie from the Mid-Ulster Mail was amazed to discover his local environment had so much to offer and enjoyed meeting his river-enthusiastic fellow Cookstonians. If you'd like to hear the BBC Radio 4 programme its available as a podcast on the RIPPLE website. You'll also see RIPPLE Champion Eamon Cullen talk at the Volunteer Services Bureau Creative Extremists Conference on the website. www.org.uk/ripple

The articles in the RIPPLE newsletters demonstrate how wide and varied your interests in the river are and it is this powerful mix that is making the RIPPLE project the beacon that people all over Northern Ireland and the rest of the UK want to follow.

Tales from the riverbank

Report: Iain McKenzie
iain.mckenzie@btinternet.com

The Ballinderry river runs through the heart of the Cookstown town and it also holds a special place in the hearts of many people in the area. It is a place where many people enjoy walking, fishing, canoeing and other leisure activities. The river is a vital part of the local community and it is important for us to keep it healthy and clean.

The RIPPLE project is a community-led initiative that aims to improve the health of the river. It involves a range of activities, including planting native plants, creating artificial wetlands, and installing water filtration systems. The project is run by a group of volunteers who meet regularly to discuss the river and its future.



commuters, but also anglers and he feels the groups can really do much.

The Ballinderry office is a fantastic resource for anyone interested in the river. It provides a range of information and advice, and is a great place to meet other people who are passionate about the river.

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Global charity joins our drive to give rubbish the brush-off

A team of volunteers from the RIPPLE project has been working hard to clean up the riverbank. They have collected a large amount of rubbish, including plastic bottles, paper, and other debris. The project is a community-led initiative that aims to improve the health of the river.

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GETTING INVOLVED COULDN'T BE EASIER

If you would like to get involved in the RIPPLE project or find out what is happening on the river in your area then please contact us.

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RIPPLE JOURNEY AT SPRING HILL

WWF Northern Ireland and Ballinderry Fish Hatchery took volunteers through a time tunnel of the RIPPLE project on the first night of snow back in December, showing the amazing journey the project, the people and the river have been on.

This event was to thank you – the many volunteers of the Ballinderry Community for all your hard work over the last couple of years to help local people re-engage with their local river.



Over 40 people attended the event representing a wide range of interests in the community, from artists to historians, anglers to walkers. The group were treated to mulled wine and mince pies whilst listening to a song about the Ballinderry River performed by Paddy Dargan, local musician. They then heard about how children at

Orritor Primary School are using the river as an outdoor classroom, learning about the plants and animals along the river and monitoring the quality of the water using the freshwater insects as indicators. Kevin



Johnston, local author and naturalist then read from his recently published book on the Ballinderry – O'Neill's Own Country, before his wife Maura read a poem she had written about the journey of the river from its source near Camlough to its end at Lough Neagh.

Geoff Nuttall, Head of WWF Northern Ireland said, "We are so proud of the RIPPLE Project, as it stands out not only in the local community but to policymakers across the UK. RIPPLE shows how giving power back to the community can reap rewards far greater than any of us could've hoped for.



The Ballinderry Community have shown such enthusiasm for their local river, sharing their knowledge and energy. The Ballinderry River has a bright future thanks to the RIPPLE Project and its volunteers."

On the progress so far Mrs Claire Sterling a teacher at Holy Trinity Primary School wrote "The project is up and running and achieving its visions, it's not standing still or static but going onwards and upwards". Colin and Glenda Clarke wrote "they were excited by the way in which so many groups of people have been able to work together to achieve so much".

OUR RIVERS N.I.

WWF Northern Ireland and the Ballinderry River Enhancement Association, along with the RSPB and Ulster Angling Federation, recently launched an internet campaign to help protect local rivers right across Northern Ireland.



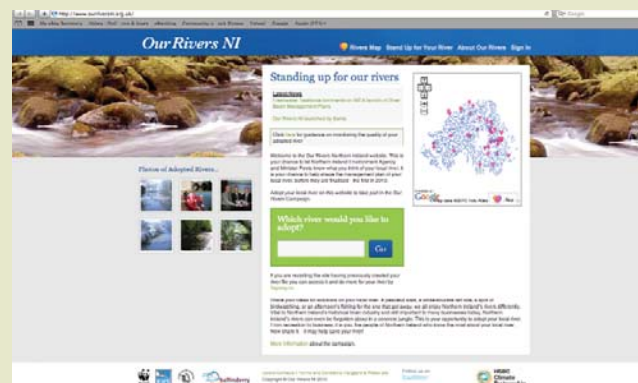
The Our Rivers NI Campaign is asking people across Northern Ireland to adopt their local river. From recreation to business, it is the people of Northern Ireland who know the most about their local river. Now is their chance to share it – it may help save the river!

The Our Rivers NI website provides a facility for anyone to demonstrate that they care about the status of local water quality by standing up for their local water body and 'adopting a river' online. There is also the opportunity to directly input to the development of local river management plans that will implement the European Water Framework Directive in Northern Ireland. Adopters are encouraged to comment on the state of their local river and suggest how they would like to see it managed. This information will be sent directly to the Department of the Environment, the competent authority for implementing the Water Framework Directive in Northern Ireland.

Much can be learned from the RIPPLE project about local river management, which is why it is featured on the website as a best practice example. Our community driven River Action Plan for delivering the Visions for the Ballinderry River and engagement with statutory bodies, agencies and other organisations and stakeholders, demonstrates what can be achieved when local skills, knowledge and interests come together.

The greater the number of people adopting rivers across Northern Ireland, the stronger the signal to our local decision makers that the people of Northern Ireland care about this issue and want to see action that will truly make a difference. Therefore, we are keen that all water users get involved in this campaign that centres around the shared vision of improved water quality.

To Adopt a River or find out more about the campaign go to www.ourriversni.org.uk



River Events

All RIPPLE events are **FREE** of charge.

Saturday 6 March 2010
CURE Event – Kildress
Clean-up Day
12 – 3pm

Join us on a tidy up day on the Ballinderry River at Kildress, just off the Lower Kildress Road. All are welcome but children must be accompanied by an adult. Rain coats and sturdy footwear recommended.

Saturday 17 April 2010
CURE Event – Glenavon
Clean-up Day
12 – 3pm

Join us on a tidy up day on the Ballinderry River at the Glenavon House Hotel. Litter pick and tidy up near the Glenavon Weir and along the old mill race. All are welcome but children must be accompanied by an adult. Rain coats and sturdy footwear recommended.

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A BRUSH WITH NATURE

County Down artist, Lorna Hamilton, visited Ballinderry Fish Hatchery in early September in order to observe the Freshwater Pearl Mussel. Her intention was to include the species in her forthcoming Wildlife Art Exhibition at Castle Espie Wetlands Centre in Comber, Co. Down.

‘Who would want a freshwater Pearl Mussel painting’ some may ask? Lorna said, “It is a species of great interest, one that truly warrants inclusion in my show. I intend to paint a Heron in the picture to give the viewer a familiar bird to relate to, but really the painting will be about what is happening underneath the water. Often we neglect what is happening in our rivers and seas because most of it is unseen; I admit to having done this. When I heard of the plight of the Freshwater Pearl Mussel, I was captivated by its story and knew immediately that I wanted to interpret it into a painting that would make people take notice.”

Lorna has been working as a professional artist for 15 years but she only began painting wildlife 4 years ago. Her work was quickly recognised in the United States. She was elected as a member of the ‘Society of Animal Artists’, New York and ‘Artists for Conservation’, Canada. She has had work juried into both shows, but most notably, her painting was chosen to be the front cover image on the ‘Artists for Conservation’ Show Book in 2008. The 36 year old artist has also had a painting chosen for the ‘Birds in Art’ exhibition in the prestigious and highly regarded Leigh Yawkey Museum in Wisconsin. Lorna said, “I was delighted to be accepted into ‘Birds in Art’. It is considered to be the very top of its field in wildlife art. It was a true honour”.

Lorna has also won a number of awards in the UK and has had her work shown on RTE Nationwide.

Her wildlife exhibition, ‘Art and Nature’ will begin on 26th March, running to 8th April, 10.30 am – 4 pm. Her painting of the Freshwater Pearl Mussels will be on show during this time. Video footage of the painting in progress will also be displayed, showing the canvas from start to finish. Lorna will be in attendance throughout the exhibition and will be demonstrating her skills for drawing during this time. The completed sketch will then be donated into a free draw and this will be open to anyone visiting Castle Espie during the exhibition.

The show is promising to be an enjoyable and memorable event. Whilst there, why not take in the new surroundings and coffee shop at Castle Espie Wetlands Centre. For further information please contact: Lorna via her website, www.lornahamilton.com or telephone: 028 448 30479.



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