



Wessex Chalk Streams Project

The River Avon is one of the most biodiverse chalk streams in the UK and an exceptional part of the Wessex region, which is characterised by a unique wildlife community suited to the unusual geology. The international importance of the river and its major tributaries is recognised by its designation as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC), reflecting the river's rare habitats and species, including flowing water vegetation (*Ranunculus*, water-crowfoot), populations of Atlantic salmon, bullhead, Desmoulin's whorl snail, as well as brook and sea lamprey. The river is also an exceptional chalk stream fishery for wild brown trout and important for populations of water voles and otter, which are both making a recovery following years of decline.

The Wessex Chalk Streams Project (WCSP) is a partnership between Wiltshire Wildlife Trust, English Nature, the Environment Agency, Wessex Water and the Wiltshire Fishery Association. The project acts as a 'one stop shop', working with riparian landowners and managers to promote wildlife-friendly river enhancement and management of the River Avon system Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) in Wiltshire, which includes the tributaries, Wylye, Nadder, Till, and Bourne. It also focuses on the River Ebble as well as associated wetlands and areas suitable for wetland restoration.

The catchment land use of the Avon is extremely varied, with agriculture and military use the dominant activities. The system is particularly vulnerable to a variety of threats including excessive water abstraction, physical modification, pollution and unsympathetic fisheries management. Much of the project's work focuses on driving the development, appraisal and dissemination of river habitat enhancement projects, with a key principle in promoting a strategic approach to river restoration that is compatible with the conservation objectives of the river and wider integrated land management. Help is also provided in securing funds to undertake works.

The WCSP has supported a diverse range of projects offering a broad inventory of case studies that demonstrate a variety of techniques available to river managers and conservationists alike.

For more information on this project contact:
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