



The Bevern Stream

The Bevern Stream and its tributaries are at the heart of the parishes and carry most of the running water that flows through the parishes. The Longford Stream runs across the top of Plumpton parish and the North End Stream originates in East Chiltington below Watershoot Shaw and Warningore Wood; otherwise all water ends up in the Bevern. Like the North End Stream, a number of the main tributaries arise from the chalk of the Downs and such chalk streams can be extremely important for their range of invertebrates; in an earlier life I was involved in work on various midges of chalk streams in Dorset, where the diversity was extraordinarily high. Of course, one or two of our chalk stream tributaries have their incidents of pollution, but are still considered important enough to be designated as Priority Habitat under the Sussex Biodiversity Action Plan. Even where they are no longer chalk streams but become clay streams (or where they start as clay streams), they still have a considerable interest.

Apart from their value to wildlife, the Bevern and its tributaries do have great value to us; there's nothing like sitting by the stream or on one of the bridges over it for a little relaxation, whether it is barely flowing in the summer or a raging torrent in the winter.

Much of the land alongside the streams is also of great interest as wet meadows or wet woodlands that get flooded in winter and thereby provide an important habitat. One special case is the patch of woodland between East View Fields and the Riddens. This has a plant community of quite a scarce type in this part of the world with a high density of wild garlic in the spring followed by a very dense growth of cow parsley. There are some remarkable trees in there and the neighbours will be well aware of the well-established rookery there. Another area I like is just about visible from bridges over the Mill (or Gote) Stream between the path that drops down from Ashurst and the one that drops down from near the ridgeway house Eryl. The east end is where I usually see my first globe flowers or marsh marigolds for the year with tempting peeks of a large area of marshy grassland beyond (which is actually a Site of Nature Conservation Importance). The west end crosses one of the deepest 'gylls'

of the Bevern catchment through another interesting area of wet woodland. And one more habitat I would highlight is those little gravelly chalk streams that you cross at odd points on the Plumpton Stream that arises from Plumpton Place and the College.

From time to time we have discussed what to do about the purple-flowered Himalayan balsam that grows in the streams (e.g. where the Bevern goes under Station Road). A beautiful looking plant, but very invasive and one that can cause problems for wildlife and us. Managing it would be a huge task and perhaps it is even too late to think about it.

Tony Hutson
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