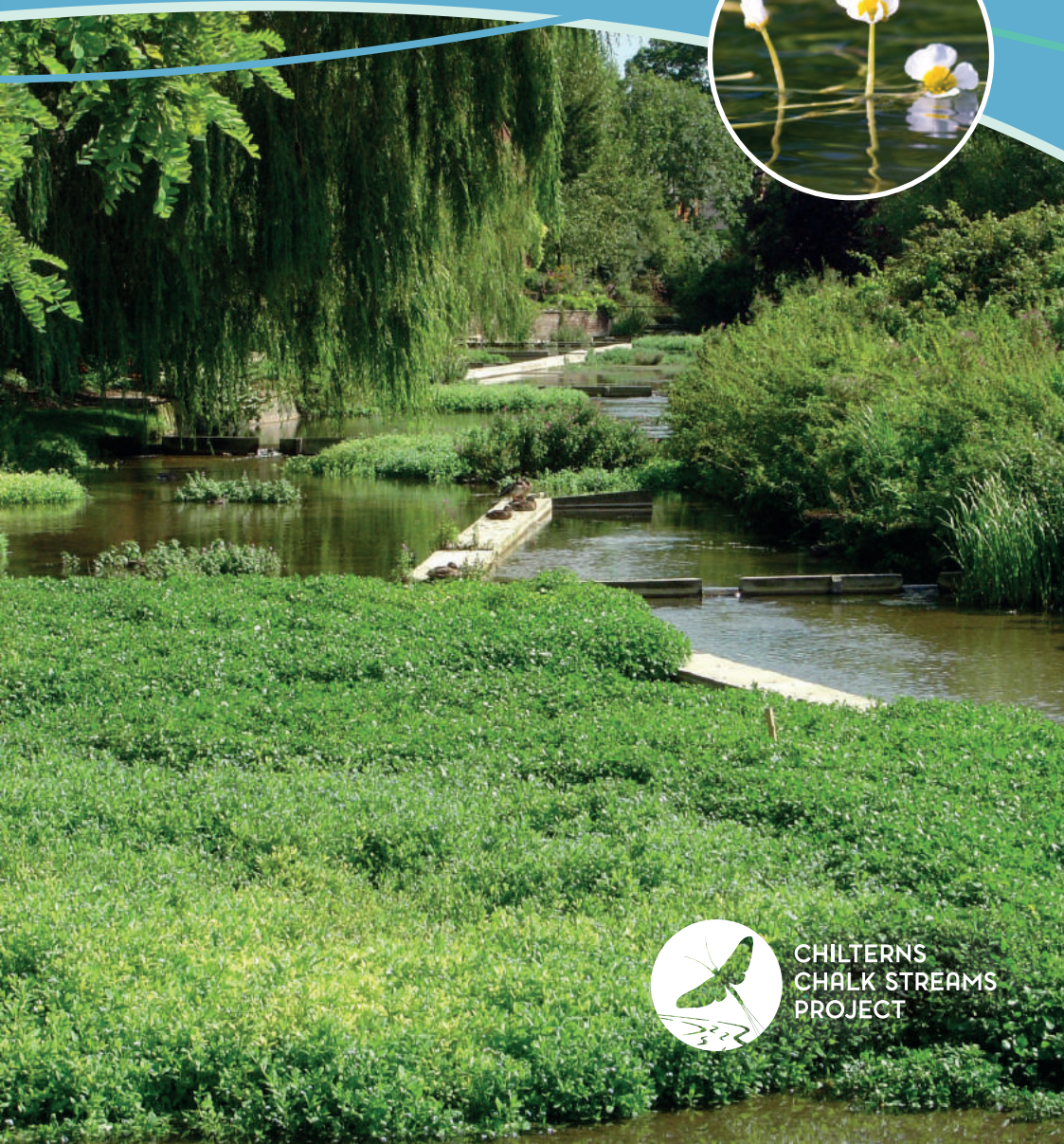


MANAGING EWELME BROOK

HOW YOU CAN HELP



CHILTERN'S
CHALK STREAMS
PROJECT



WHY IS THE EWELME BROOK SO IMPORTANT?

The brook connects people and nature from its source in Ewelme to its confluence with the Thames.



Chalk streams are extremely rare habitats

There are

283

in England.

Around

85%

of the world's chalk streams are found here



Chalk streams are a treasure. They are important habitats for wildlife and support a rich ecosystem. They are home to some of our most threatened plants and animals. They also have a fascinating history and supported many thriving industries in the past.

We are really lucky in Ewelme and Benson to have this spine of natural beauty running through our villages. But despite the rarity and value of chalk streams, these precious and unique freshwater ecosystems are at risk. The chalk streams in the Chilterns are widely regarded as amongst the most threatened in the UK.

CHALK STREAM IN MY GARDEN



RIPARIAN RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

If you own land or property next to a river, stream or ditch you are a 'riparian landowner' – with responsibility for your bank and the river channel to the centre. Any exceptions to this should be shown in your deeds.

Full information on riparian rights and responsibilities are available from the Environment Agency.

Rivers are protected by legislation. Modifications to the riverbed, banks and works within 8 metres of the river, including siting of new structures, require an Environment Agency permit.

The Ewelme Brook flows through or is adjacent to private gardens for much of its length. It might seem like your garden is a relatively small part of the puzzle, however small garden-scale improvements can collectively add-up to significant ecological benefits.

This leaflet provides advice on small steps you can take to make a big difference to your local brook. If you have any questions or need more support please see the back page of the leaflet for useful contacts.

ON THE RIVERBANK - THE MARGINAL FRINGE



The marginal fringe is the name for the vegetation lining the edge of the river.

WHY IS THE MARGINAL FRINGE IMPORTANT?

It provides vital habitat for wildlife, providing cover from predators. It's a wildlife corridor allowing animals to move up and down the river. It prevents bank erosion, traps soil and filters water that is running off the land and into the brook. In times of drought the presence of vegetation naturally narrows the channel and helps maintain flow depth and speed in the middle. In the winter, as water levels rise, the vegetation dies back leaving a wider channel to accommodate the higher flow.

Beyond the ecological and practical benefits, a marginal fringe can also be a beautiful addition to a garden setting. We're extremely fortunate that many of the native plants which we find on the banks of our chalk streams can be brightly coloured and utterly beautiful. After all, the marginal fringe is a part of your garden, so why shouldn't it look at its best?

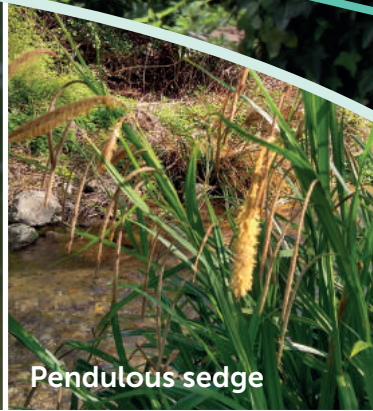
Here are just a few of the flowering species that grow particularly well on a chalk stream riverbank.



FLOWERS OF THE MARGINS



Purple loosestrife



Pendulous sedge



Meadowsweet



Water forget-me-not



Water mint



Marsh marigold



Yellow flag iris

MANAGING THE MARGINS



DO

- Leave 1 metre (or more) of undisturbed vegetation along the riverbank. Avoid mowing right up to the water's edge. If you need to remove tall vegetation this is best undertaken in autumn and winter – try to leave uncut areas to act as a refuge.
- If you have trees leave occasional overhanging branches as perching sites for kingfishers. Aim for dappled shade.

DON'T

- Modify the bank – sheer sided banks with boarding or 'shuttering' have little value for wildlife. As a rule soft banks with marshy edges are best. Sometimes banks need to be re-enforced to combat erosion but wildlife friendly techniques exist – please contact the Chilterns Chalk Streams Project for advice.
- Plant non-native plants on the river bank. They can suppress native species and reduce wildlife diversity.
- Use weedkiller or other garden chemicals close to the brook as they can wash into the stream killing wildlife.
- Don't dump litter, including garden waste and grass clippings, on the bank or in the channel. They smother valuable habitat and cause a flood risk. Please dispose of waste properly. Garden waste should be composted away from the river bank or removed to your local green waste recycling centre.

MANAGING THE CHANNEL

- **Weed management** – Aquatic plants like water crowfoot are an essential feature of chalk streams. They provide food and shelter for many species and also help to maintain flow depth in summer. If cutting submerged vegetation is necessary avoid clearing the whole channel. Cut a winding path through the weed, leaving the rest. Also avoid heavy autumn cuts as this is particularly harmful to wildlife.
- **Woody Debris** – avoid being over tidy. Unless it is presenting a flood risk, leaving some dead wood in the river and on the banks can be beneficial. This wood will provides ideal habitat for invertebrates and can help to provide spawning cover for fish.
- **Only rain down the drain!**
Roadside drains can discharge straight into the brook with no treatment or filtering in between. Please don't pour waste materials down roadside drains.

INVASIVE NON-NATIVE PLANTS

Look out for undesirable plants such as Himalayan Balsam and Giant Hogweed which are now causing great damage to river habitats countrywide.



The Chilterns Chalk Streams Project aims to conserve and enhance all major chalk streams in the Chilterns AONB and to encourage enjoyment and understanding of them.



Information about the Project can be found on our website www.chilternstreams.org

For further help and practical advice on managing the brook on your land please contact us on **01844 355500** or office@chilternsaonb.org

GET INVOLVED

There are lots of opportunities to get involved with practical conservation and wildlife monitoring locally.



Benson and Ewelme Parish Councils will be working with the Chilterns Chalk Streams Project on exciting restoration plans.

To get involved please contact **Benson Parish Council** on **01491 825038** or clerk@bensonpc.org.uk



This leaflet is based on the publication 'Looking After Your Garden Riverbank' by Wessex Rivers Trust. Produced with their kind permission.



**CHILTERN
CHALK STREAMS
PROJECT**



**CHILTERN
CONSERVATION BOARD**

Produced by Chilterns Chalk Streams Project, an initiative of the Chilterns Conservation Board

Environment Agency

If you see evidence of pollution in a river, fish in distress or other risks to river wildlife, call the Environment Agency Emergency Hotline on **0800 80 70 60**.

General enquiries – 03708 506 506 or email enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk

Thames Water

Report water leaks and sewerage issues to your local water company Thames Water on **(0800 316 9800)** or thameswater.co.uk where you can report a problem online.