



The RGCG exists to protect and enhance the River Glaven, its tributaries and its flood plain

We aim to work in friendly collaboration with landowners and farmers, conservation organisations and relevant public bodies.

RGCG Web Site

The RGCG now has its own web site: www.riverglaven.org.uk. Our aim is to raise awareness of the wildlife and landscape of the River Glaven and its valley. Through this, we seek to generate a wider interest in the conservation concerns and opportunities that we wish to address.

We hope that the web site will widen our membership base. We also seek to provide a source of information for the younger generation; and for all, to highlight the links between the pressures we collectively put on our countryside, and what we see and value at the local level.

Our web site includes some general information on the area. The intention though is that conservation issues are the core of our interests and as we gather more information, and over time make progress on specific projects, this will be added. In other words, what we have now is a good start-point rather than a job done and completed.

We do of course welcome any comments and suggestions you may have on the site and its content. You can either contact a committee member direct, or make an entry on the 'notice board' section.

Finally, please note that there will continue to be a Newsletter posted to our members, in Spring and Autumn.

We depend on membership subscriptions to cover the costs of our Newsletters and web site.

Conservation Issues.

Within the RGCG we have debated what we consider to be the "top ten" conservation issues facing the Glaven Valley, based on a collective experience of the river and our countryside over many years.

Our list is:- water quantity; water borne soil erosion; water quality, and diffuse and point of pollution sources; river habitat degradation, including over deepening or widening, and disconnection from the meadows by dredging spoil banks; loss and change of use of meadow habitat; difficulties in grazing meadows; insufficient management in some areas, the river, lakes and ditches; fishing lakes and the stocking with non-native species; alien and invasive species such as

aquatic and bank side plants, mink and signal crayfish; inappropriate development; disruption of normal flow regimes.

The ways by which we seek to make headway on these is given in some detail on the web site, but we will also feature items over time through the Newsletter.

It is gratifying, but not surprising to us, to see that our conservation concerns feature heavily in a recent report by the Environment Agency on "The State of England's Chalk Rivers". The report states that there are more chalk rivers and streams in England than in any other country of the world, albeit in varying degrees of health.

Contd over

Contents

RGCG web site
Conservation issues
page 1

Himalayan Balsam
page 2

Himalayan Balsam
contd.
Stoneworts
page 3

News in brief
We see what we eat
Silt at Letheringsett
Member's matters
page 4

Two specific quotes from the report that chime well with the ambitions of the RGCG are:

“Our vision for chalk streams and rivers reflects their priceless importance in our national and international heritage.

The principal objectives of the UK Biodiversity Action Plan for Chalk Rivers are to:

- 1. Maintain and enhance the characteristic habitats, plants and animals of chalk rivers.***
- 2. Restore water quality, flow and habitat diversity.***
- 3. Identify cost-effective means of restoring damaged river reaches.”***

“Engaging local people in valuing, protecting and enhancing chalk rivers is and will be essential for the future well-being of chalk rivers and goes to the heart of the Biodiversity Action Plan”

Himalayn Balsam

Members of the River Glaven Conservation Group found [01-08-2004] about a dozen plants of Himalayan Balsam on the banks of the Glaven some 300 yards upstream from Letheringsett ford. This has a rather pretty flower, looking like something like a sweet pea, the pink colour fairly close to that of the native giant willow herb, so that at a casual glance it does not register as an altogether different plant. A closer inspection shows it to have a red square stem, hollow in the centre.

In parts of the country, particularly in the southwest, the plant has become a menace, covering long stretches of the riverbank and blotting out everything else. It does especially well where there are bare areas of soil, caused by bank damage in flood.

We carefully removed those parts of the flower heads where seed was ripening, and consulted the Environment Agency on how best to deal with it. Their advice was, in a situation like this, where the plant had yet to get a major hold, it was best to trace the stem back through the grass and pull the plant up; it is rather lightly rooted. Although an annual, where beaten down by wind and rain, at the “bend” it will root and perhaps flower again in the same season if not completely removed.

In this case we returned to the site two days later, armed with large plastic bin bags, a light rake, and some garden canes. The rake was used to gently tease upwards some plants that had fallen part into the river, and the up-rooted plants pushed carefully head first into the bin bags. The seeds of this plant are heavy and after an explosive “pop” from the pod may land two feet away and work their way down through the grass to the ground. The affected area, about 4 yards across, was marked out with a couple of canes to keep an eye open for any further growth, this season or next.

Himalayan Balsam has been seen in one or two local gardens in “contained areas”. But two days after the removal of these plants I bought a bunch of flowers in the local WI, one of a number of similar bunches containing a number of different flowers. And yes, they contained Himalayan Balsam, and the lady lives in one of the villages through which the Glaven flows, about two miles upstream from this escape. Her garden was full of it she said, having brought seed from her previous home. I explained the problem, and she felt where she was there was no risk of plant or seed getting washed into a ditch and river. But clearly there is a need to get the message out, particularly where a garden is near the river or a watercourse.

Contd over



**Himalayan Balsam
at Stody Beck**

This was further emphasised by a new sighting at Stody Beck where it crosses the Hunworth Road, a few yards short of the Glaven. Some forty/fifty plants were removed from a few yards of bank. It has also been seen in Cley.

If you see outbreaks of the plant elsewhere, please, do let us know! !

Ian Shepherd

Stoneworts – have you seen them?

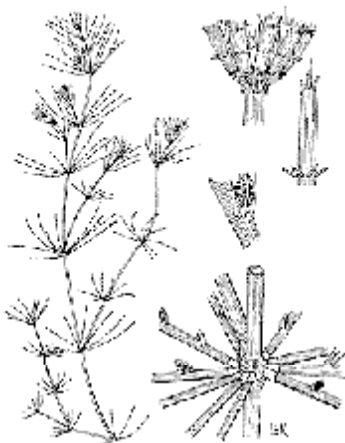
Stoneworts (or charophytes) are complex algae that grow in unpolluted fresh and brackish stillwaters. They are easily recognised as being up to around 1 metre in height with regular slender branches arranged in whorls (see picture). Often they are encrusted with salts which gives them a brittle feel and perhaps even more distinctively when crushed they smell strongly of garlic - although I would not recommend that you use them in cooking!

In lakes and ponds, stoneworts can form dense, light green underwater meadows – one of the most beautiful sights in the plant world. Through encouraging sediment deposition, substrate stability and by acting as a sink for nutrients such as nitrate and phosphorus, stonewort-dominated vegetation plays a key role in promoting clear and healthy water in lakes.

However, due to their sensitivity to pollution (particularly eutrophication), they have undergone a substantial recent decline. For example, of the 30 or so known UK species, some 17 are now deemed nationally rare or extinct and others have fragmented distributions. Furthermore, in many former strongholds (e.g. the Norfolk Broads) eutrophication has caused the loss of previously extensive populations and consequently stoneworts have increasingly become the concern of both lake managers and conservation bodies.



The catchment of the River Glaven would appear to be an excellent place for stoneworts with records for several sites, particularly in shallow lakes associated with the river. In fact on this basis, the 'Holt to Melton Constable Area' has recently been defined as a site of National Importance for them (Plantlife, 2004). Perhaps the finest site is Selbrigg Pond, near Holt which this year (2004) was full to the brim with stoneworts. In fact if you go and have a look now (and



throw in a small grapnel, or something similar!) you may still find some! Other good places for stoneworts are Bayfield Hall Lake, Brinton Hall Lake and the lakes in 'The Hangs' area near Kelling. Also several small marl-pits and recently excavated ponds along the Glaven are known locations.

Given their conservation importance and because so little is currently known about their distribution in the Glaven valley, the RGCG would be very glad if you could let us know of any sightings, past or present.

In this respect please contact Carl Sayer (01263 588 266, 07766717245, c.sayer@ucl.ac.uk).

News in brief.

- v An Open Day was held on the 25th July on the Bayfield stretch of the river. This was a very successful event with 84 attending and eleven new members joined us.
- v A plant survey was carried out on the river and bank side at Thornage Meadows on 1st August. A large number of species were catalogued by Tony Leech and Carl Sayer, including the unwanted Himalayan Balsam.
- v Members of the committee showed the team leader for Environmental Services for Anglian Water around the lakes and water courses at Baconsthorpe Castle on 3rd August. This was the first step in seeking to remove nutrients from the STW effluent by use of a reed bed intercepting the flow into the lake and river.
- v Plans for two large fishing lakes at the headwaters of the Glaven were rejected by the District Council on landscape and biodiversity grounds. The applicant is appealing on the decision.
- v An application for a stud farm and large house overlooking the valley at Wiveton, to which we also objected, has been rejected.
- v The report "The State of England's Chalk River" can be viewed at www.environment-agency.gov.uk/subjects/conservation . Alternatively it may be possible to obtain a printed copy by calling Marion Pink on 01962 764812.

We see what we eat!

For some years in this country, we have suffered the impact of the economics of global food retailing, causing a decrease in the viability of livestock in East Anglia. BSE and now some loss of subsidy on beef have taken us further into a crisis situation. It can now be very difficult to obtain grazing on river meadows. There are some on the Glaven that are seeing the adverse impact of encroaching rush and rank vegetation, to the detriment of both appearance and flora.

So when you look upon such a habitat, think whether it is not worth more in a shop or restaurant to "eat local" rather than beef from Brazil, USA, Argentine or Botswana.

Subscriptions.

We enclose two copies of the membership standing order form. Subscriptions are due by 1st January, but please action ASAP. One form for yourself and the other for a friend you have persuaded to join! A copy of the Newsletter will be sent to new members. Please return the completed form to **Barclays Bank, Holt**. See form for address. The bank will advise us of your payment.

Robin Combe Chairman 712058; Ian Shepherd Secretary 713370;
Len Bentley Treasurer & Membership Secretary 741076. magavelda@freeuk.com

Lane to Letheringsett Ford



These photographs show the aftermath of the torrential rain that occurred on Friday 15th October 2004.

The silt is approximately three inches in depth.

How many other roads and rivers were similarly affected?



Next committee date is 22nd November.

Contact a committee member with any issues you wish to raise before then.