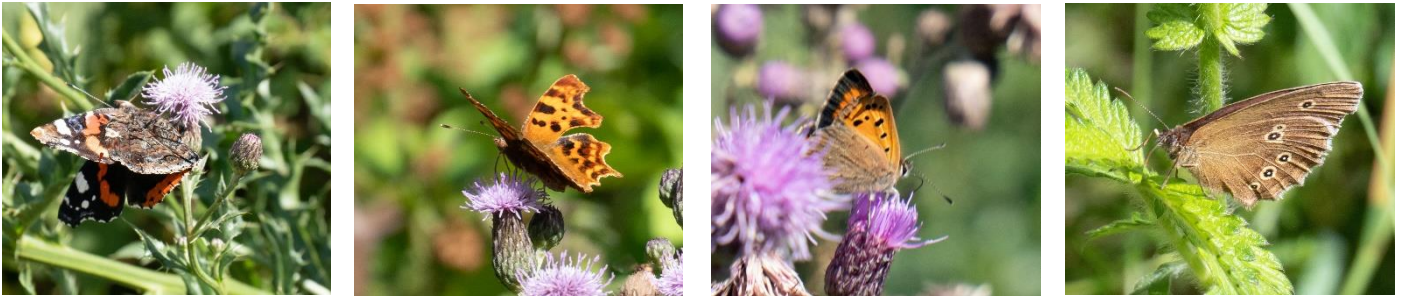


The Hogsmill in July 2023

After the heat of last July and the weather extremes since, it's been a relief to have something like a typical English summer this month. With it have come positive signs of the resilience of nature: after the scarcity so far this year, there was a sudden boom in butterflies in early July with counts on the Hogsmill transects almost twice those of last year; and plenty of colourful species as well as the usual whites and browns.



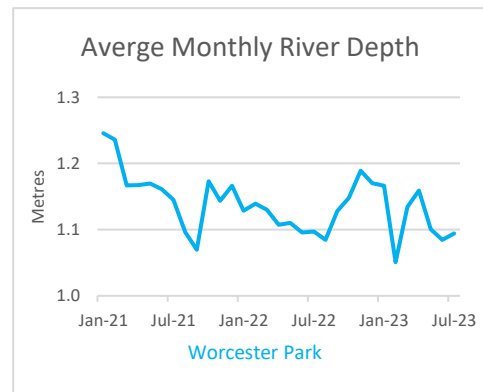
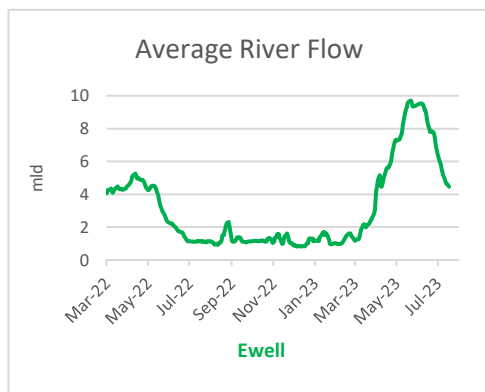
The riverside landscape is already looking brown and tired in places, perhaps auguring an early autumn, but there are still islands of flowers that seem especially vivid this year, many of which are attracting a range of small creatures; and a new arrival in Six Acre Meadow looks to be settling down well!



This newsletter looks at what is happening to the natural world along the Hogsmill, including the problems it faces and volunteer activities to monitor and restore its habitat, working with the South East Rivers Trust (SERT) and other local groups and alongside the Environment Agency (EA) and local water companies.

The Hogsmill in July

There's been more rain about this month but so far the heaviest seems to have avoided the Hogsmill, so it hasn't made up for a couple of dry months. The flow from the Ewell springs has dropped sharply from about 9 mld at the start of June to about 4 mld. The rain has topped up the river further downstream but at our monitoring sites the water level was noticeably down on last month, though there was still a reasonable flow and the water has remained particularly clear, so that even our "river monsters" have been easily visible!



Green Lanes Ewell



Bonesgate confluence



Green Lane New Malden



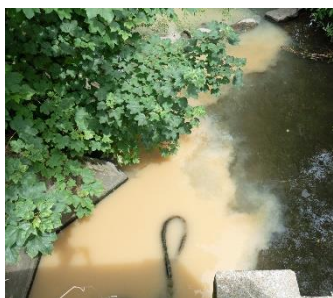
Clattern Bridge

On pollution, a short spill was recorded at the Hogsmill STW Combined Sewer Overflow on July 4th, this time on a day with significant rain, but for much of the time since then the monitor has not been operating. A burst water main led to a large discharge of sandy material from the outfall by the A3; this was quickly fixed but added to the already substantial layer of silt on the bed of this stretch of the river.

If you see pollution in the river or indications of possible pollution, such as dying fish, please call the EA Hotline: 0800 80 70 60, and ideally take a photo. You can also contact Thames Water on: 0800 316 9800 (option 2) or on twitter: [@thameswater](https://twitter.com/thameswater).

Another form of pollution - that from invasive species - has also been particularly obvious this month. Himalayan balsam plants have grown massively to a scale that seems greater than recent years, and in new places where it is becoming more visible now it is in flower. But the fight against it continues strongly with

“bashes” having been held along the Bonesgate, in Kingston and Six Acre Meadow amongst other places. Japanese knotweed, which is harder to tackle, has been found at a second location along the riverbank.



Tolworth Rise South



Elmbridge Meadows



Balsam



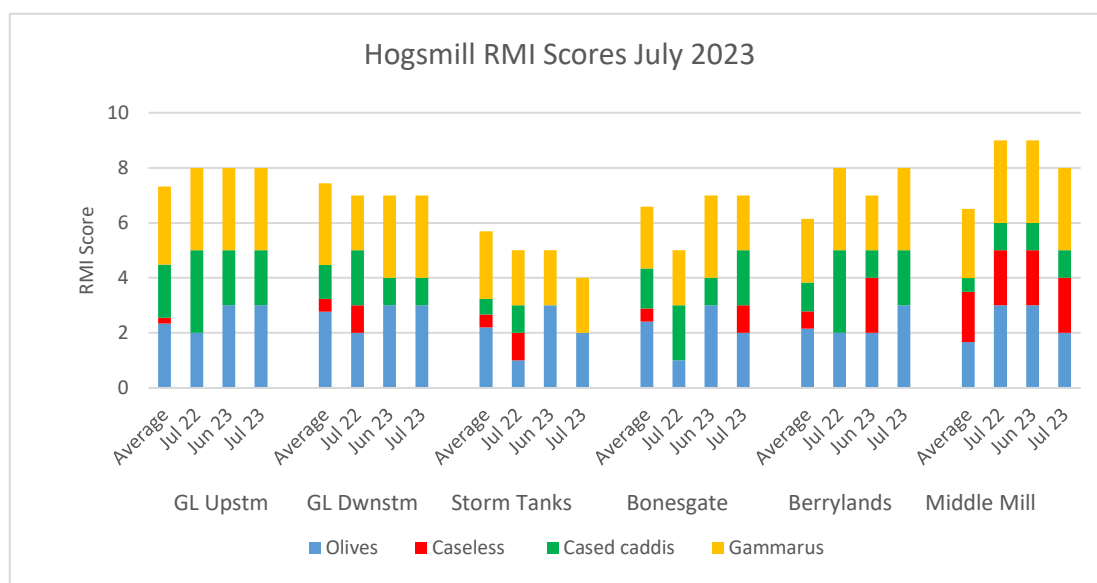
Kingston “Blue Bridge”

Knotweed

Hogsmill RMI in July

The River Monitoring Initiative (RMI) is a national scheme that uses “scores” based on counts of a few “water quality sensitive” invertebrates collected in net samples to assess river health. Each site has a “trigger” below which scores could indicate problems and these are reported to EA for possible follow-up action.

The 6 main-river sites were surveyed between July 13th and 15th. There were a few changes in scores in both directions, but the overall average was similar to June and also to July last year. But the trays were less lively than last month, with the total specimen count down by about a third:



- The score at Ewell Storm Tanks of “4” was technically a trigger “breach”, but this reflected a very small fall in counts so was not a significant change. Caddis have largely disappeared from this site and scores consistently hover around the trigger. This doesn’t look to be linked to the nearby storm tanks as these have only overflowed once this year; it seems more likely to be the result of a poor environment from, for example, a concrete-lined bank;

- Upstream at Green Lanes, counts were similar to June so there was no obvious impact from the slowing of the springs, though last year’s experience suggests this might take longer to emerge;
- Elsewhere the most notable feature was the massive turnaround in olive numbers at both Bonesgate and Middle Mill. These soared from a total of about 200 in May at the 2 sites to nearly 900 in June, but this month fell back to under 30. Olive counts tend to fluctuate at individual sites, perhaps reflecting low survival rates of what are often tiny creatures, but these swings were exceptional;
- Amongst the species, there appears to have been a “changing of the generations” amongst cased caddis this month, with a decline in the number of the larger ones that tend to be found in the spring/early summer, especially at Green Lanes, and a rise in “tiny sticks” that have recently appeared in sizeable numbers at several sites later in the year. But the “critter of the month” was a large darter dragonfly nymph; quite “common” in the air but a very rare find in the trays.

