

*Botany Bay News  
December 2016*

*by Anne Dennig*

This year in Botany Bay we are beginning to realize the aims that we established back in 2014, to return the Botany Bay area to a natural state after its use as a small fish farm. In this newsletter we'll show our progress towards each of these aims:

**1. Restoring the stream and ponds back to their natural state and encouraging water life to flourish.**



*Riverfly monitoring course 2016*

With help from many volunteers we have restored the stream, taking out barriers, pipes and rubbish, protecting banks, creating pools and pinch points. The increase in numbers of many small brown trout is one of the signs of improvement. We are also monitoring the stream through monthly kick samples and have been able to host one of the local Riverfly monitoring courses. The surveys have identified all of the eight indicator species: freshwater shrimp, stonefly larvae, up-wing fly larvae (mayfly, olives, blue winged olive, flat bodied) and caddisfly larvae (cased and caseless). The monitoring gives a guide to the health of streams and rivers as changes to the water quality are reflected in the numbers of and different invertebrates present.

Back in 2014 we were advised how to naturalize one of our still ponds which was artificially created at the time of the fish farm. We wanted to encourage water life in a shallow still pond with a dipping platform for use by school groups. We pushed in the sides of the pond and lowered the water level, moved plants from the stream to the still pond and constructed a platform. Slowly the pond

has naturalized and this summer we had our first school groups and learned the joys of pond dipping!



*Hands-on learning for Seaford Prep*

**2. Restoring the woodland and bankside areas and encouraging native species, taking out any invasive plants and improving biodiversity, and through this encouraging wildlife.**



*Despatching mink leads to more bird life*

In an effort to encourage water bird life and the return of the water vole we have continued to use a mink raft and trap; we've recently despatched our 8<sup>th</sup>! We have continued to battle against the dreaded bamboo but efforts to eradicate the cherry laurel have been very successful thanks to our SDNPA volunteers.



*SDNPA volunteers with Graham West*

We have tried to manage the woodland in a way that will encourage wildlife, including keeping old tree trunks with potential for bat roosting. In August the Sussex Bat Group



## **Botany Bay Restoration Project**

kindly surveyed the area. The species recorded were common pipistrelle, soprano pipistrelle, Daubenton's bat, whiskered or Brant's bat, serotine, alcatheo bat and other unidentified bats of the Myotis genus. We also have one mystery bat!



*David King and Sheila Wright, bat monitors*

### **3. Restoring pond meadow from pasture to wild flower meadow.**

We started to improve the field last year by cutting and taking off the grass. This year we put in fencing and 13 Southdown sheep. In autumn we spread yellow rattle and ox eyed daisy seed along the edge of the field and we are waiting to see the results next spring.



*First steps for the Southdown sheep*



*Matthew Sennitt spreading yellow rattle seed*

### **4. To provide an educational resource for local schools and an opportunity for students from Seaford College to learn about ecology and to acquire practical skills involved with the project.**

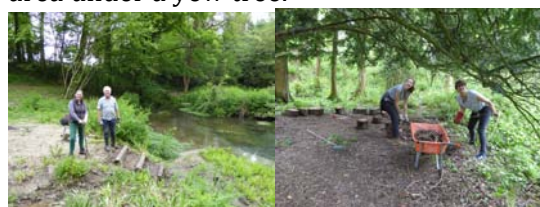
Our final aim was to create an educational resource. There was a lot of work to do in

preparation for school visits, health and safety and tree surveys and the resulting work including felling trees, putting up fencing, brash barriers and a new bridge to cover the breached dam. Artisans of Wood built a beautiful bridge and a dipping platform, with support from Seaford College and ARC. The bridge is built on a base of two western red cedar trees felled from Seaford's woodland by Graham West.



*A new bridge and dipping platform*

The ARC team also helped us to build steps down to the stream and make a seated area under a yew tree.



*ARC team gets stuck in!*

ARC's field teachers developed some excellent teaching materials for groups of Key Stage 2 school children and delivered a successful hands-on learning day with Duncton C of E Junior School. Since then we have hosted biology groups from Seaford's Year 6 and an environmental morning for Years 3-5.



*Nigel Lord with children from Duncton C of E Junior School*



## Botany Bay Restoration Project



*Pond dipping with Seaford College*

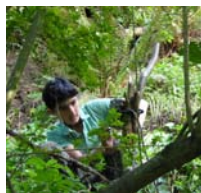


*A place to sketch*



*Mini beast hunting!*

Seaford's students have continued to help us and have been learning practical skills in countryside management for a new Btec course with Clive Thorpe and Graham West. Steve Batten (from PSFFC) has given fly fishing tuition on the lake with free "back to fishing" days for the local community funded by the Angling Trust.



*Josef setting a wildlife camera*

Josef Amin has now achieved his John Muir Explorer award, a UK-wide environmental award scheme focused on wild places.

Emma Amin, a local artist, delivered an inspiring art workshop. The theme was "ripples", hence the messages from the artists spreading their experience of Botany Bay to others.



*Botany Bay: find your calm!*

Finally this year we started Botany Bay Conservancy Community Interest Group, through which we intend to continue our work towards our aims for Botany Bay. We are now exploring the possibilities for building a small outdoor classroom and a much needed composting loo!

**Many thanks to all our volunteers, PSFFC, the Sussex Bat Group, all those involved with the ARC project, Emma Amin for her artistic help, Artisans of Wood, Graham West, Arun Trees and Seaford College.**