

The Hogsmill in March 2022

A taste of spring along the Hogsmill this month that has produced a rapid switch from grey/brown to bright colours in the meadows and even a “yellow and blue” combination beside the Tolworth Brook!



There’s been a changing of the guard in the skies: winter visitors have passed through on their way north and warblers have returned from warmer climes and begun singing loudly from the treetops.



“Back (hopefully not) to the USSR...”

“Out of Africa...”

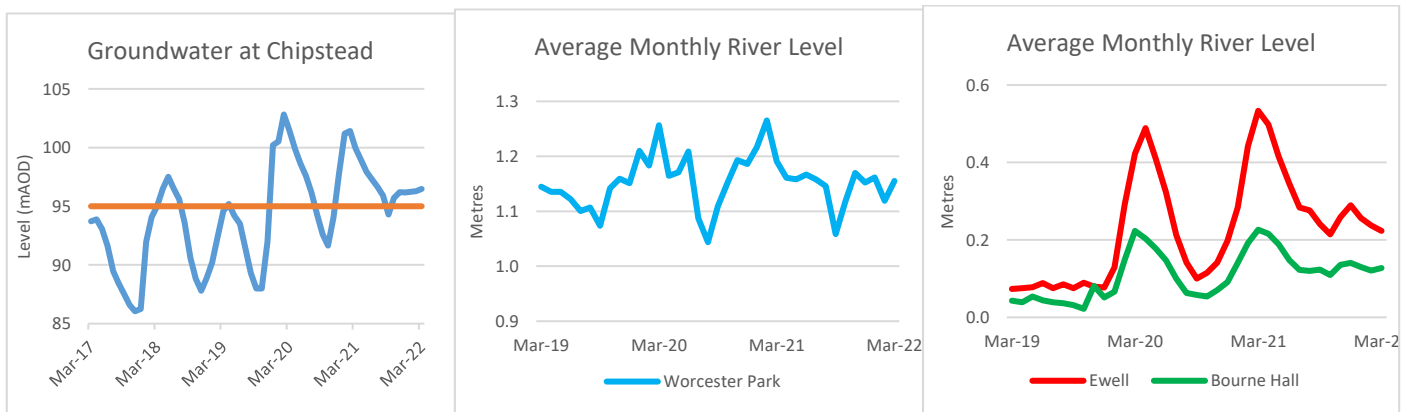
Elsewhere it has been mainly “two-by-two”, though the poor Bourne Hall swan still looks sad and lonely!



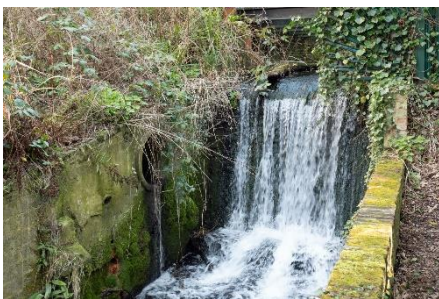
This newsletter looks at what is happening to the natural world along the Hogsmill, including the problems it faces and volunteer activities to monitor and restore its habitat, working with the South East Rivers Trust (SERT) and other local groups and alongside the Environment Agency (EA) and local water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

The Hogsmill in March

After some early spells there's again been little rain this month, adding to what has been a dry winter: since November total rainfall in the region has only been about two-thirds of the long-term average. So far the impact on the Hogsmill seems limited, with water levels in the aquifer and at the gauging stations fairly stable, perhaps still benefitting from a wet summer last year. But the picture varies along the river and there are signs that conditions could change, especially if the dry weather continues.



The Ewell springs continue to flow quite strongly producing a good supply of water to the upstream stretches, a contrast to the situation 3 years ago, and a lively and clear appearance for the river. But the water level in the aquifer is much lower than in March in the last 2 years and not that far above the “trigger level” below which the springs tend to dry up, so the margin to cope with more dry weather is fairly small.



Mar 2022



Ewell “Falls”

Mar 2019



By Ewell stepping stones

The river level has held up downstream but the flow has fallen, highlighting the problems created by artificial straightening/widening/deepening. There are large deposits of silt on the riverbed and patches of stagnant water attracting scum and rubbish that are usually only a feature of dry spells in the summer. One of these, alongside Worcester Park Road, seemed to “trap” oil that had somehow found its way into the river.



Elmbridge Meadows



Southborough Drive



Worcester Park Road



Long Meadow

But at least the fishing has been good: the river's "hunters" have been busy and seen to be successful!



As for pollution, it must have been a big month for washing as a number of outfalls with misconnected laundry appliances have been "caught in the act" discharging into the river, including a large flow at Green Lane New Malden, while the dry spell has again highlighted the large amounts of pollution at several outfalls.



Green Lane
(Photo thanks to Patrick)



A240 downstream



Malden Way South



Malden Way North

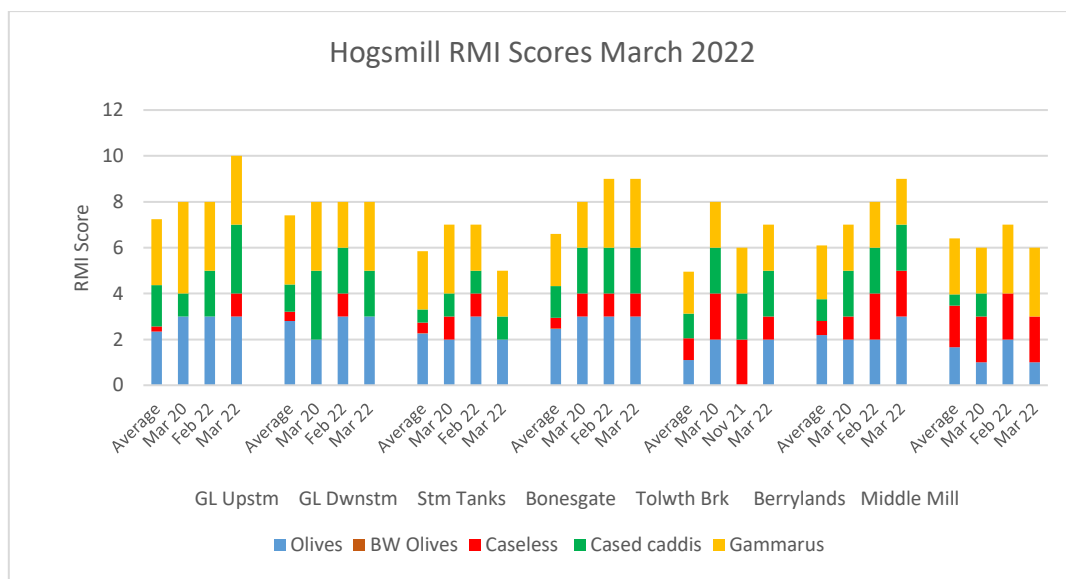
If you see pollution in the river or indications of possible pollution, such as dying fish, please call the EA Hotline: 0800 80 70 60, and ideally take a photo. You can also contact Thames Water on: 0800 316 9800 (option 2); on: www.thameswater.co.uk/help/emergencies/pollution; or on twitter: [@thameswater](https://twitter.com/thameswater).

Hogsmill RMI In March

The River Monitoring Initiative (RMI) is a national scheme for monitoring river health that uses “scores” based on counts of certain “water quality sensitive” invertebrates in net samples to assess water quality.

All 7 Hogsmill sites were sampled in a narrow window between March 17th and 19th, though in variable river conditions as heavy overnight rain produced a short-lived surge in water level/flow for the first 3 surveys.

The results were more variable this month, but again mostly good with an overall average score of 7¾, the best ever when all sites have been sampled, albeit something that has not happened often in the last 2 years:



- the highest score this month was the “10” upstream at Green Lanes, only the second time such a score has been achieved here. This was based partly on the usual spring surge in cased caddis numbers, but also on finding a single caseless caddis, this time a large *rhyacophila*;
- there were scores of “9” at both Bonesgate and Berrylands, though both based on counts that only just tipped the score into a higher band. These continue a series of good results at both sites: for at least 6 months all 4 species have been found usually with double-figure counts of cased caddis;
- scores were down to “6” at Middle Mill and “5” at Ewell Storm Tanks, with counts also substantially lower. Both were surveyed soon after heavy rain, which *might* have affected the sampling, though this didn’t seem to affect Berrylands where conditions were similar. This month’s scores were both broadly in line with those found in previous surveys in March so they are not that surprising;

- the Tolworth Brook site was surveyed for the first time in 4 months. The score of “7” is good for a small tributary, and well above those found 3-4 years ago, though early spring seems to be a high scoring period here as there have been similar good results at this time in the last 2 years;
- again the highlight amongst the critters was the large number of cased caddis, with counts of over 20 at 5 sites, and the range of different types.



Green Lanes Ewell

Tolworth Brook