

## Forest Town Nature Conservation Group (FTNCG) are monitoring Riverflies!

On April 10th 2019, I represented the FTNCG, at a one-day course presented by the Anglers' Riverfly Monitoring Initiative (ARMI). The course was organised by Les Warren and Lee Copplestone from Waterside Care/Keep Britain Tidy and the course tutor was Ian Hawkins from ARMI. The course was held at the beautiful venue of Ilam Park in Dovedale and the practical sessions were held in the River Manifold.

FTNCG own and maintain the Spa Ponds which feed into the River Maun near Forest Town. We are committed to protecting and nurturing the biodiversity of this site, both in and out of the water and saw this course as an excellent augmentation to our yearly training cycle.

On the course we learned that Riverflies, along with all other native freshwater invertebrates, are an important part of the freshwater ecosystem and crucial in the food chain. Riverflies are at the heart of freshwater ecosystems and are a vital link in the aquatic food chain as a food source for fish and birds. They live most of their lives as larvae in freshwater habitats before emerging as adult flies. They are good indicators of habitat health as they're sensitive to changes in water quality. Unfortunately, we learned that there is strong evidence that over at least the last few decades there has been a widespread decline in the numbers of Riverflies in some British rivers. These declines are worrying because they reflect the health of our freshwater habitats which are vital for the plants, animals and ultimately people who depend on them.

The morning session involved an interesting theory session covering the types of Riverfly we were intending to find and record plus an important talk on biosecurity regarding how we should wash down our waders and equipment to avoid cross-river contamination. After lunch, the group donned our waders and, fully equipped with nets and other water invertebrate catching equipment, we ventured out into the sunshine and towards the River Manifold. An excellent demonstration followed on how to coax the Riverflies into our nets and transfer them into our plastic bowls. As this type of activity is a serious Citizen Science monitoring exercise, there are strict time limits as to how long the collection process takes place to ensure that the data recorded can be compared to other sites in the country. The next session involved members identifying the Riverflies and transferring them into a segmented tray to allow for accurate counting. All data is then recorded on field data sheets from the Riverfly Partnership and uploaded to a national database.

The training day was very informative and enjoyable. Due to the excellent weather, and the fact that schoolchildren were on holiday, many families with young children were fascinated to see adults taking part in 'pond-dipping' on a large scale! At the end of the day, we set off back to our own water sites enthused to carry out similar surveys.



## FTNCG Riverfly Monitoring Survey

### River Maun at Spa Ponds

16<sup>th</sup> July 2019

Following on from the excellent training provided by Les Warren and Lee Copplestone at Ilam Hall, a band of dedicated FTNCG invertebrate recorders set off in earnest to carry out a Riverfly survey on our section of the River Maun, hoping to see that it was home to a wide variety of many happy invertebrates!

We were fortunate in having Les Warren with us to further guide us with the process. We successfully found a variety of Riverfly. Not in the abundance found in the crystal waters of the River Manifold but enough for us to be happy that our water course was home to these important invertebrates. With help from Les we are now registered with the national database and we have uploaded our first results.

More information on The River Fly Partnership and The Anglers' Riverfly Monitoring Initiative can be found at [www.riverflies.org](http://www.riverflies.org). If you are interested in attending one of the training courses please contact Les Warren and Lee Copplestone on [Les.Warren@keepbritaintidy.org](mailto:Les.Warren@keepbritaintidy.org).

Phil Goodall

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14<sup>th</sup> August 2019

