



*Left, Kathleen's work area, with her saw-horse and sorted wood*

counts, so we can back up with scientific data what we think is happening.”

A redd is where a female salmonid scoops out a hollow in the river-bed and lays her eggs, covering them again with a layer of gravel: finding and recognising redds requires some practice, but can give an estimate of the number of breeding fish.

The over-wintering eggs hatch in April or May, but although the Crake is the best spawning ground it's not a good habitat for juveniles. “They're very territorial,” Emma says, “Even though they're very small. We need to supply new habitat for them where they can hide and survive – and woody debris is good, it has lots of nooks and crannies.”

Monitoring will show how the salmonid population is affected in the next few years – but the hope is that Hay

tangled heap of honeysuckle, its whippy, twisted shapes prized by basket-makers; sticks for hurdle-making; and the ‘wonky bits’ that she uses for furniture, especially rustic chairs. She also makes “treen – that's the name for the small things like hooks and spoons and gypsy flowers”.

Later we stand beneath an ancient yew tree whose drooping branches do indeed, as Kathleen says, “feel as though they're giving you a hug. I probably spend too much time alone in the wood,” she says with her quiet smile and self-deprecating humour. But with the peace, and bird-song, and the knowledge that one was doing something useful and productive, who wouldn't? ■

*To visit Hay Bridge Nature Reserve – [www.haybridgereserve.org.uk/Index.html](http://www.haybridgereserve.org.uk/Index.html) – you need to become a member*

An angler, fishing in private water, was accosted by a very irate land owner. He was told he should be fishing in the water half a mile upstream.

“Very well,” replied the angler, sitting back, “I'll just wait till that water gets here.”