

Notts BAG E-Newsletter.

Notts Biodiversity Action Group, Chris Jackson. chris.jackson@nottscc.gov.uk

Happy New Year to you all and a warm welcome to readers of the second copy of the Nottinghamshire Biodiversity Action Group's e-newsletter. Again I would like to thank all of the organisations that have been kind enough to take the time to contribute to the newsletter and inform the partnership of their latest biodiversity work. For those of you who work with local groups I would appreciate it if you could forward the newsletter onto these groups so that they are able to keep in touch with the biodiversity community and also to encourage them to submit items for future newsletters (I would like the newsletter to touch all organisations working on biodiversity especially those dedicating their own time and working hard at the local level).

In November 50 members of the Nottinghamshire Biodiversity Action Group got together in Mansfield to enjoy the annual forum event – the Big BAG. The morning was packed with information about community involvement in nature conservation, the problem of dealing with off-road motor vehicular problems, the 'access to nature' grant scheme that will be rolled out by Natural England in Spring 2008 and the new 'biodiversity duty' part of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006.

In the afternoon those attending were treated to guided visits to Oak Tree Heath LNR and Strawberry Hill Nature Reserve (both sites being part of the larger Strawberry Hill Heaths SSSI). Thankyou for all those who were involved in the event.

A date and venue for Bioblitz 2008 has been decided. For those of you who are unfamiliar with Bioblitz, this public event involves the exploration of a location over a 24 hour period with the aim of recording as many species as possible. A key component of the event is to inform the public of the enormous range of life at locations that may otherwise be taken for granted and offer them the opportunity to get involved and find out more about local biodiversity. The event is to be held on Friday 11th and Saturday 12th July at Rufford Country Park and the BAG Awareness sub-group will be working hard between now and then trying to ensure the success of this day.

For those of you who were unable to input into the newsletter this time around, please let me remind you that the idea of the newsletter is to keep partners up to date with biodiversity work that is happening across the county (a chance for BAG partners to blow their own trumpets) and hopefully to be an inspiration to all in the wider partnership. It is also a chance for organisations and individuals to share ideas, discuss best practice, and most importantly, encourage dialogue between the BAG partners. I hope you find this useful and if you have any comments to make on the newsletter feel free to contact me. Can I also remind you all that if you would like to use any of the photos included in the e-newsletter for your own purposes you should first seek the permission of the author of the article.

Best Wishes to you all.

Chris Jackson

Bestwood Country Park. bestwood.country.park@nottscc.gov.uk

Management of Bestwood's heathland glades continues. This winter The Rangers have been working with volunteers to control scrub encroaching on existing heaths that represent quite small areas within the woodland. The trees are mostly pedunculate oak of up to 18" in height and the heaths probably provide favourable sites for the many jays to bury acorns. Other tree species also appear such as rowan, birch and sweet chestnut.

The trees are always taken to our tree nursery and heeled in for planting out later on (except the non-native sweet chestnut). These may go into planting schemes to replace sycamore-dominated woodland with species native to Sherwood. We always ensure that occasional small trees are left in situ on the heaths for some diversity. A coppiced goat willow during a recent summer was seen to have five different species of caterpillar on.

British Waterways, Deanne Gow. Deanne.Gow@britishwaterways.co.uk

The bird ringing project at Hazelford Lock, mentioned in the previous update, has produced some fantastic results. 1075 birds of 30 different species were caught between April and October 2007, with greenfinch, great tit and blue tit among the most common. Five (5) Red List species were captured: song thrush, marsh tit, willow tit, linnet, and bullfinch. Seven (7) Amber List species were captured: kestrel, kingfisher, green woodpecker, swallow, dunnoek, willow warbler, and goldcrest. In addition, many more species seen, but not caught, on the island are on the red and amber lists. This is great news, and demonstrates the management of the lock island, which is also a county wildlife site, is working for biodiversity. The survey results will inform future habitat management and improvement works on the site. In addition to the bird ringing 21 bird boxes were erected. The bird ringing survey will be repeated in 2008 and we eagerly await the results, and finding out what species are using the boxes. Our thanks are extended to John Martin, a boater and bird ringer who carried out the project on a volunteer basis.

We have received the results of our National Waterway Wildlife Survey for 2007, which asks our waterway users to record wildlife they have seen along the canals. The survey has returned encouraging results for kingfishers in urban and rural waterways throughout the country. In Nottinghamshire, kingfishers, grass snakes, otters, and bats were recorded. These records too will help to inform future management, mitigation during works and habitat improvement of our network.

We have carried out our biannual check of bat boxes at Stoke Lock, with help from South Notts Bat Group. Three (3) common pipistrelle were found in one box, two females and one male, and one soprano pipistrelle was found in another box. Six other boxes showed signs of bats (droppings) and the remaining five boxes showed evidence they had been used by nesting birds. Ongoing habitat management to the woods at Stoke Lock has since been carried out by BTCV to remove sycamore regeneration, create dead hedging, and re-stock saplings.

The Trent Vale Landscape Partnership has been successful in its application to the Heritage Lottery Fund for funding for a three year scheme which will link a number of small projects throughout the Trent Vale Area (Newark to Gainsborough). More information is available at: <http://www.ontrent.org.uk>. Applications for a project manager are underway.

Outside of Nottinghamshire work by British Waterways, Leicester City Council and the Environment Agency continues to remove Floating Pennywort from the Soar navigation, with the aim to reduce pennywort in the Soar and prevent its spread into the Trent Navigation.

Broxtowe Wildlife Forum, Steve Fisher and Andy Pooley.

Andrew.Pooley@broxtowe.gov.uk or steve.fisher@broxtowe.gov.uk

There is a lot of interest in wildlife in the borough but groups often operate in isolation and so in 2006 Broxtowe Borough Council organised an exploratory meeting to bring together like minded groups to see if anything could be gained by sharing information.

This idea was well received and we have held four meetings. The aim of the Forum is to raise awareness, share information, to deliver a coordinated approach to enhance the biodiversity in the area and encourage more collaborative working. It has been successful due to the local support. The idea for the group came from the Broxtowe Local Strategic Partnership and we looked at the Rushcliffe Nature Conservation Strategy Implementation Group who have been running for a number of years successfully for inspiration.

About 15 groups regularly attend and we mail to over 25 groups and organisations. Representatives attend from groups such as the Friends of Bramcote Ridge and The Friends of Colliers Wood, as well as the Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust, Nottinghamshire BAG, and Nottinghamshire County Council, to name but a few. The Forum has already highlighted the need to maximize the valuable habitat resources of the Erewash Valley and officers from Broxtowe Borough Council are looking to run an event to bring a range of agencies together to see what can be done.

This year sees the end of the current Broxtowe Nature Conservation Strategy five year action plan and it is hoped that the group will be central in developing a new more inclusive long term wildlife action plan, which reflects the aspirations of all wildlife groups in the Borough of Broxtowe.

For further information either contact Steve Fisher (Directorate of Technical and Works Services) on 9173634 or Andrew Pooley (Directorate of Planning and Community Development) on 9173742

Greenwood Community Forest Team, Gill Grievson & Nick Wort.

greenwood@nottscc.gov.uk

National Tree Week ran from 21 November to 2nd December and saw many events taking place across the Greenwood Community Forest Area.

In Mansfield, 270 school children planted over 2000 trees. The Crescent Primary School pupils planted trees at Bull Farm Park in an event organised by Mansfield District Council and the Greenwood Community Forest team. The children, aged three to 11 years planted native species, in line with the Nottinghamshire Biodiversity Action Plan, including Silver Birch, Oak, Scots Pine and Hawthorn for the special week.

Gill Grievson, Community Liaison Officer for Greenwood Community Forest Team, said: "Bull Farm is one of the seven Park Life sites and children from the school have already taken part in physical activity events here. It is great to get the school involved in different activities such as tree planting so that they are used to coming to the site, and will be more likely to look after the new woodland in future"

In Bulwell, A new 30-acre woodland which lies within the Greenwood Community Forest got a helping hand from employees of IKEA (Nottingham) who also planted trees during National Tree Week.



The project is part of a long term planting scheme at Highwood Cemetery in Bulwell, which is being developed by Nottingham City Council. The new community woodland is being planted as part of the multi-faith cemetery, which will link up with nearby Sellers Wood Local Nature Reserve creating a green corridor and improving biodiversity from the city and a gateway into the Greenwood Community Forest.

IKEA have supported the Greenwood Community Forest financially and part of the funding is being used to plant and maintain the trees. The Nottingham-based store are keen to involve staff in community projects and part of the agreement with the Greenwood Partnership has been to encourage employees to help local Friends Groups across the Greenwood area by taking part in practical tasks and events.

For further information and advice or to request an application form, contact the Greenwood Team on 01623 758231 or email

Mansfield District Council, Felicity Washbrook. fwashbrook@Mansfield.gov.uk

As part of the Sherwood Initiative funding, we have had a fungi survey at Maun Valley Park by the Notts Fungi Group. The information will be fed into the sites new management plan, and used as baseline data for future monitoring.

Grassland management has taken place on the wildflower meadows on the LNR's and Parks; involving a cut and remove to a local composting site. Several sites are scheduled for surveying in 2008, to provide baseline data and recommendations for future management.

We are having management plans written for two of our parks with lowland heathland and acid grassland habitats; King George V and Racecourse Park. Heathland communities have already expanded at King George, due to small alterations in management. King George is currently an active golf course, and Racecourse Park a disused pitch and putt course, both designated as SINC's for their habitats.

As part of the ERDF funding for access improvements to LNR's, a new bridge is being installed at Meden Trail LNR/ SSSI. A bat survey has taken place prior to the installation of the bridge and we are awaiting the report and any necessary recommendations.

Nottinghamshire Birdwatchers [David Parkin](#)

The Notts Birders major project over the next four years is a complete survey of the county's bird life; this will be based upon the British Trust for Ornithology Atlas of breeding and wintering birds. The survey will be based upon the National Grid, and our aim is to visit every single one of the 550 tetrads that are included within the county. Fieldwork will involve timed visits and roving records. The former will entail making one set of four visits in a twelve-month to each tetrad: two in winter (Nov/Dec and Jan/Feb) and two in summer (Apr/May and Jun/Jul). These will each last for a minimum of two hours during which every bird seen or heard will be counted. This will allow us to determine the relative abundance of the commoner birds in both winter and summer. Additionally, 'roving records' will be collected: any bird seen any where within a tetrad can be mapped to show the distribution of that species across Nottinghamshire. The project begins in November 2007, and local birders have already committed to surveying approaching 250 tetrads. While these will not all be completed in the first twelve-month, it is a very promising start.

In addition to filling in Nottinghamshire's share of the national picture, the results will be extremely valuable for regional conservationists. We will be able to identify local hot-spots of bird abundance, and develop these into Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation. The data will also be of direct help to conservation: not just in showing the distribution and abundance of the county's birds, but also by identifying individuals who have visited each part of the county during the survey period. They can be called upon for more detailed local knowledge when producing responses to proposals for Local Nature Reserves, planning enquiries and the like.

In the longer term, we are planning to write a book on the birds of Nottinghamshire. Austen Dobbs published the last county avifauna in 1975; an updated edition is long overdue. The results of the atlas fieldwork will form an integral part of this book.

NCC Country Parks & Conservation & Section Unit phil.kimbrey@nottscc.gov.uk

Some months ago we had been approached by John Coxhead, the inclusion officer at Ashfield school and also an active member of “The Friends of Quarry Lane” conservation group to see if we had sites available that pupils from the school and the conservation group could get involved with.

At this time of year there is loads of tree thinning and coppicing work to keep any group involved for a very long time, so in partnership with the Greenwood Community Forest Team we decided that the best approach would be to run a “coppicing using bow saws” training course aimed at leaders.

Approximately twelve people attended the course from four different schools/groups. The primary objective from the schools agenda is to engage with students whose attention span in the classroom is not always as it could be and to give them an alternative “outdoor classroom” in which to excel.

Since the training day in early November, Holgate school in Hucknall have enjoyed three tasks at Dob Park. This has involved woodland edge work. Some of this coppice from this will also be used by an artist running various workshop sessions at another school in Hucknall, so, lots of potential for further partnership working!



We have also identified three sites, Rookery Park, Sutton Meadows and the school shelterbelt that Ashfield pupils will be getting involved with early in the New Year.

The Friends of Quarry Lane have undertaken their first task on our managed land with further programmed for the New Year.

We feel that the potential, enthusiasm and the drive for schools in Ashfield to be involved on Green Estate sites and to learn about the environment and biodiversity is very encouraging and one that both ourselves in partnership with the Greenwood Community Forest Team most definitely wish to pursue.

We are also encouraged by the dedication by members of The Friends of Quarry Lane. It is to be applauded.

NCC Nature Conservation Unit nick.crouch@nottscc.gov.uk

The unit continues to spend much of its time advising on the ecological impacts of planning applications, and has also been involved at a national level in meetings about a new national indicator that will (hopefully!) be used to measure local government performance in relation to biodiversity.

Elsewhere, management of the Notified Road Verges (NRVs) occurred in September and October. All sites in the scheme that required were cut and the arisings were removed, as in previous years. Sites in the scheme include the SSSI verges at Gamston and Eaton, and the green hay from this site was given to a local farmer for grassland diversification that he is carrying out. All works were carried out by NCC's own Highways Division.

Management continues at Ransom Heath SINC in Rainworth, a remnant heathland site owned by the county council's corporate property section, and in urgent need of attention. In November, scrub clearance began, focussed on a large patch of gorse, and more work is planned for January.

Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust. emcdaid@nottswt.co.uk

'Bed & Breakfast' Scheme set to expand.

Thanks to new funding, including a donation from the Lady Hind Trust, Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust is delighted to announce that its pilot 'Bed & Breakfast' scheme for farmland birds is set to be extended. Working in partnership with Nottinghamshire Birdwatchers, The Wildlife Trust supports habitat enhancements on local farms and provides nest boxes and feeding stations to benefit a range of species including tree sparrows. The scheme has been well received by farmers and early indications suggest that bird populations are benefiting from the provision of the 'bed & breakfast' facilities! It is hoped that as local populations increase, birds will spread to colonise new areas of the county.

BAG members team up to restore valuable wetland site.

Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust has been commissioned by Nottingham City Council to manage the key stages of a major restoration project at Holme Pit SSSI in Clifton.

The Council has secured major funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund for a programme of de-silting and habitat improvements at this popular Local Nature Reserve and has enlisted the support of The Wildlife Trust to manage the site work and encourage more community involvement. Working closely with the Holme Pit Action Group The Wildlife Trust will supervise the removal of up to 6000 m³ of silt to restore open water habitats as well as working to improve important marginal habitats including willow carr. The work is due to start later this month.

Rushcliffe Borough Council, Paul Phillips. environmentalissues@rushcliffe.gov.uk

Rushcliffe Borough Council operates a Wildlife Pond and Wetland Grant, between April 2007 and the end of December 2007, two grants of £1000 have been paid out and another grant for £600 is awaiting the landowner completing the work. The Council also provides small grants for conservation groups, so far this financial year £832.21 has been paid out to 4 organisations. Detail and application forms for the grants are available online at <http://www.rushcliffe.gov.uk/upload/public/attachments/79/TAwetlandsggrant.pdf> and <http://www.rushcliffe.gov.uk/upload/public/attachments/190/TAsupportgrant.pdf> or contact the Environmental Sustainability Officer on 0115 9148595.

Forestry Commission and Sherwood Forest Community Rangers,
jo.lindsay@forestry.gsi.gov.uk

The Forestry Commission has now appointed Adrienne Bennett as Planning Assistant. Adrienne will co-ordinate environmental survey and monitoring work for Forestry Commission Sherwood. As many of you will know, Paul Barwick retired at the end of November, after many happy years with the Forestry Commission. His role has now been split between Andrew Powers (District manager - Land Use) and Jo Lindsay (District manager - Public Affairs). Andrew will take on Paul's environment/conservation role, whilst Jo will manage Recreation, education and Community Involvement across FC Sherwood District.

There have also been yet more changes at the Sherwood Forest Community Rangers team. Debbie Davey (Community Ranger) has left us to start a new life in Cornwall and Jo Lindsay (Partnership Development Officer) has taken on the new role mentioned above. Both these posts will be replaced in the new year.

The new SFCR events programme for January-June 2008 is now on the BAG website.

Sherwood Forest Trust, karyn.stander@nottscc.gov.uk

Each year, the Sherwood Forest Trust's Sustainable Landscape Project arranges a conference for local landowners, and BAG partner organisations such as the Wildlife Trust, Forestry Commission, Natural England and district councils, to learn more about the habitats of Sherwood Forest.

This year's conference was held in November at Goosedale Conference Centre in Papplewick, a very plush venue, and not the sort usually experienced by the 80 strong muddy boot audience!

The theme of the day was, **'Bridging The Gap- Ancient tree Habitats for the Future'**. Sherwood has a one of the highest concentrations of fantastic oak trees between 500- 600 years old in Europe however, lack of appropriate management and over grazing in the last 200 years, has meant that there are now very few mature trees coming on to be the next stock of ancient trees. The day hoped to provide information, and best practice on how to manage older trees (those about 150- 200 years old) and create niche habitats in younger ones to mimic the rot holes and shattered limbs, associated with ancient trees, part of the reason they are so valuable to dead wood loving insects and bats.



We had a really interesting morning of lectures kicked off by Norma Saunders, Chief Executive of the Sherwood Forest Trust who did a round up of the Trust's achievements over the last 5 years.

Professor Charles Watkins from the University of Nottingham enlightened us on the historic management of trees and woodland in Sherwood, making us look at the trees we see each day, in a slightly different light. We were lucky enough to be joined by Nationally renowned and respected Ted Green MBE, of the Ancient Tree Forum who enthused the audience with his passion for caring for the ancient trees we have. Andrew Cowan from ArborEcology Ltd followed with an excellent presentation on the risks and responsibilities surrounding tree management and vitally, some of the destructive techniques such as coronet cuts and fracture pruning, that can be done by tree surgeons on younger trees, to mimic the habitats found in the ancients. Particular mention was made to the creation of habitat for bats whilst ensuring that this, our only flying mammal, is not disturbed whilst any work takes place. Nic Broomhead, head of service for Notts County Council's Conservation and Country Parks group, gave a brief history on neighbouring Bestwood Country Park, once home to Charles I 's mistress Nell Gwynn and an important relic of the Royal Hunting Forest of Sherwood, which now has urban pressures to be balanced against the wildlife's needs.

In the afternoon, we went on a walk around Bestwood Country Park where contractors were on hand to demonstrate some of the techniques discussed in the morning. This included a tree climber undertaking coronet cuts in the end of tree limbs to create shattered ends, and also a giant machine mounted tree shear supplied free by one of our partners UPM Tilhill, which showed canopy height pollarding of trees and base felling with a controlled drop to the ground.

Historically, pollarding was a major way of managing trees in woodland for fire wood and fencing but the resulting cut stump, allowed the understorey vegetation to thrive as light was allowed in. The machine was used on Sycamore that would have been gradually felled (because they outcompete the characteristic oak and change the landscape) and so in this way, new standing dead wood and niches were created whilst still retaining the illusion of woodland cover.

A greatly informative day was had by all and thanks must go to all the speakers who gave up there time to talk for free about Sherwood in such a passionate and knowledgeable manner.