

Notts BAG E-Newsletter.

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

Welcome to the May edition of the NBAG e-newsletter. Firstly I would like to thank everyone who has taken the time to write an article for the newsletter. I would love to hear of work other partners are undertaking also for inclusion in the next newsletter - it only takes a short time to get something together and this then helps to keep the rest of the partnership in touch with work being undertaken to help maintain and enhance the biodiversity of Nottinghamshire and Nottingham City.

Much of BAG's work in recent months has been focused on establishing some good mapping data for the partnership. I am working hard with partners to try to establish GIS based mapping layers for each of the LBAP habitat types. By doing this it will give the partnership a much more accurate picture of the extent of LBAP habitat within the county and it should also enable future target setting for these habitats to be a far easier process than in the past.

I am also working with individual partners to map their land holding to LBAP habitat. This is very valuable work as it will aid partners to quantify the extent of LBAP habitat within their estates and enable them to report their work against the Local Biodiversity action Plan much more easily. Work is currently being undertaken with the Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust, Nottinghamshire County Council, the National Trust and Center Parcs but I am keen to extend this mapping process out to the rest of the partnership in the near future. During April the partnership were lucky enough to have the voluntary assistance of Lucy De Wesselow a recent graduate from Nottingham University. As part of the volunteering opportunity Lucy was given a comprehensive introduction to using GIS and in return she produced a GIS mapping layer showing all the LBAP habitat currently in the ownership of NWT. Many thanks to Lucy and best of luck to her as she seeks a career in Nature Conservation in Bristol.

On May 22nd it was international biodiversity day and the theme this year was alien invasive species. In Nottinghamshire the day was celebrated through promotion of the countywide Japanese Knotweed survey currently being undertaken by the partnership. We are hoping the



survey will establish some good baseline data for this species across the county. It will also help to raise awareness of the problems caused to native flora by this species and how through good management its spread can be checked and existing patches controlled. Currently 140 records have been received but it is felt that there are many other stands that have yet gone unreported. Survey forms can be downloaded from the BAG website's (www.nottsbag.org.uk) and records can be sent to BAG either electronically or in paper form.

Finally, this year's priority habitat and species are hedgerows and two species of moths that are associated with hedgerows (the scarce vapourer and small eggar). During June there will be a series of press releases promoting the BAG hedgerow guidance leaflet and also providing information about the two moth species that are associated with hedgerows well managed for wildlife. Since 1990 the scarce vapourer moth has only been recorded in five counties; one of these being Nottinghamshire and the nationally scarce small eggar moth also has recent records for Nottinghamshire. More details of these species will be posted on the BAG website in the near future. If you are fortunate to have sightings of either of these species then please feel free to send your records through to the Biological Records Centre at Wollaton Hall (sheilaw@ncmg.org.uk).

Best Wishes
Chris Jackson

Bestwood Country Park, Sue McDonald. bestwood.country.park@nottscc.gov.uk

The Bestwood Ranger team have been busy managing the country park. The site includes a diverse range of BAP habitats and a brief summary of some of the work that's been going on is included below:

Ferny Wood - This project is now complete, all the felling has been carried out, most of the excess timber removed, brash piles, winrows and habitat stacks constructed & some planting carried out. Unfortunately the time of year has once again beaten us, so further planting has been postponed until the autumn.

Dipping Ponds - A lot of felling work has also been carried out at the dipping ponds area of the park and all the crack willow in the area felled. Whilst it was mostly done from a health & safety point of view, it does mean that in a couple of seasons the high coppice/low pollard stumps (take your pick which term applies most) will have put on sufficient growth to be excellent habitat for birds, particularly reed warbler which likes to feed in the juvenile willow. Also, in future, if the growth is suitable, we may also use the willow as a resource to harvest binders for Hedgelaying. A win, win situation!

Reed Bed - colleagues have also completed the ongoing management of the reed bed area with another plot being cut & removed this year to continue with the 'chequerboard' management adopted for this area.

Hedgelaying - An area of hedgerow which we have worked away at for several years has finally been completely laid. The hedgeline which runs parallel to the Rise Park boundary & is approx 300 meters'ish', has been laid over a few years with volunteers, community groups & mostly during our Hedgelaying courses. The great thing about the hedge (apart from that it looks great!) is that it is highly visible to all park users & you can see the progression of the growth over the years. A great educational tool & a big draw for wildlife!

Greenwood Community Forest Team, Gill Grievson. greenwood@nottscc.gov.uk

Greenwood Grant helps improve biodiversity

Over 500 people took part in tree planting events this year as part of the Greenwood Community Tree Planting Grant Scheme. Orchards, kitchen gardens, chill out zones and magic forests have all been created thanks to the Greenwood grant.



The scheme provides funding and advice to help schools and groups carry out small-scale tree planting in their community. Now in its 8th year, over 100 schools and groups have received grants and been able to plant 1000s of native trees to improve biodiversity and help create the Greenwood Community Forest.

This year the scheme was oversubscribed and a record 22 groups and schools were successful in receiving grants. In total over 2500 trees were planted in schools or on publicly owned land.

Over £5,000 in grants has been given out this year with over 500 participants from 7 groups and 15 schools getting involved across the Greenwood area, helping to improve their environment. Groups and schools taking part included:

- Joseph Whitaker School, Rainworth, who planted trees in an area that will be used to study and assess the value of carbon offsetting.
- The Friends of Moor Pond Wood, who planted 750 trees to improve hedgerows at Moor Pond Wood, Papplewick
- Coppice Farm Primary school, Arnold, planted a small copse including shrub willow to produce willow for craft work and also help to reduce wet conditions on site
- Beeston Transition Initiative planted trees and hedges to encourage wildlife and also provide fruits and nuts from the kitchen garden.
- Friends of Colliers Wood planted 1½ kilometres of new hedge to protect nesting wildfowl and attract more birds to the site.
- Fairfields Primary, Stapleford, planted trees to improve biodiversity and make the school grounds more attractive.

The Greenwood Community Tree Planting Grant will be available again for this year's planting season. Contact Nic Wort on 01623 827328 to receive details.

Nottinghamshire Birdwatchers, Carl Cornish. ccornish@nottswt.co.uk

MAPPING NOTTINGHAMSHIRE'S BIRDS: AN EXCELLENT START.

March 2008, and the first winter season of the Atlas is complete. Time to take stock of where we are, both nationally and in Nottinghamshire. The BTO Atlas Newsletter for February 2008 (which can be viewed on the Notts Birders website <http://www.nottsbirders.net>) reports that

12,000 tetrads have been visited and 24 million birds recorded. Locally, we have also done extremely well: far better than we hoped and a super springboard for the rest of the project. There are 550 tetrads in Notts and we have four years to complete the field work. The tetrads cross a variety of sites from city centres through the suburbs, to villages and the rural expanses of the county. Within these sites, there are: woodlands (both conifer and deciduous), parks, gardens, lakes, gravel pits, rivers, heaths and farmland. Every tetrad has to be visited, surveyed and recorded. It is a daunting prospect, but there are about 400 members of the Notts Birdwatchers, almost 100 BTO members, hundreds of RSPB members, plus members of wildlife groups. Anyone can play a part – from simply recording the birds that come into their gardens (believe it or not, these are ‘roving records’) to detailed timed visits to tetrads across the county. Copies of the forms for roving records and timed tetrads can be downloaded from the Nottinghamshire Birdwatchers website, or you can ask for copies to be mailed to you. We prefer the former to save postage!

According to the BTO records, by 1 April 2008, 147 Notts tetrads had received timed (winter) visits, and 131 of these had been visited twice. That’s a quarter of the county. But, it’s better than this. We know that there are some observers who have not entered their results directly onto the BTO web site, but have transcribed them onto paper forms for BTO entry. We are not sure how many of these there are, but the BTO Regional Representative (Lynda Milner) thinks that it may be between 60 and 80. If we take the lower figure, it will still mean that over 200 tetrads have received timed visits: almost 40% of the county! This is excellent and a similar effort next year will see us over three quarters of the way to complete coverage. The final two years can be used to fill in the gaps.

We have produced a Notts Newsletter that can also be found on the Birders website; this shows that we are already beginning to get a picture of where our birds are in winter. There are maps showing different species: House Sparrow, Blackbird, Skylark, Meadow Pipit and Oystercatcher. The first two are ‘common’ garden birds, though Blackbird is much more widespread. Similarly, Meadow Pipit is more widely distributed than Skylark in winter. Oystercatcher is pretty rare in Notts during the winter, being restricted to a few gravel pit sites. No doubt there will be many more recorded during the summer. Finally (and perhaps less seriously), despite the efforts of conservation agencies across the county to recreate the lowland heath that used to be so extensive, we still have no Red Grouse in Notts!

Recording the breeding birds starts in April, and again this again will be a combination of timed and roving visits.

Timed tetrads are vitally important to allow us to estimate the relative abundance of our birds across the county. If you now think that you can help with timed tetrads, it is not too late. There is no reason why recording a tetrad has to begin in winter. You can start the field work in April and continue it through until next February. Have a look at the BTO website to see which tetrads are still available and make your choice – or ask Lynda and she will direct you towards a square near where you live. I say ‘square’ in the singular, but there is no reason why you have to do only one! And remember that you only have to visit the tetrad four times: you do not have to return every year.

Roving records are especially important during the breeding season. Those of us who are doing tetrads cannot expect to connect with every species that is breeding in a square. Some species are shy or secretive and easily missed. Others like owls, Nightjars, Woodcock need special visits at night. There is the added bonus of having to record the state of breeding for each species in each tetrad. The criteria are as follows, and there is space on the forms for these details:

It is obviously important for us to confirm breeding for as many species as possible in as many tetrads as possible. So, please keep every record and submit them either on line or as paper copies to the BTO.

NCC Green Estate Team, Phil Kimbrey. phil.kimbrey@nottsc.gov.uk

The following is an account of some of the contributions made by NCC Green Estates Team to Biodiversity during Winter 08/09

Moor Pond Woods, Papplewick

Approx 250m of hedgerow restoration (Coppicing & replanting)

Woodland restoration (Coppice clearance & introduction of wildflowers) approx area 0.15ha.

Native wildflowers introduced - wood anemone x 100

All work undertaken by project & local community volunteers.

Planting of new, species rich hedgerow alongside footpath to the north of Papplewick Dam. 100 metres in total. Planting by contractors as part of a grant-aided project

Daneshill Energy Forest

Thinning of over 50ha of Corsican Pine. Clear fell of areas to create rides & replanting of areas with native broadleaf species to diversify habitat, improve woodland structure & visual amenity.



Daneshill Lakes LNR

Small sections of hedge laying, scrub clearance & hedge planting as part of ongoing works

Cotgrave Country Park

Woodland replanted, using diverse range of native species common to the area.

Approx 2ha – an area close to the main car park cleared of over mature & dangerous hybrid poplar trees during winter 2006/7 & left to slowly recover by selective regeneration (Planting was undertaken by **E-on contractors** replacing trees that had to be coppiced due to their proximity to power lines. The opportunity was taken to replant & diversify the woodland area). Wildflower introduction into woodland plantations (Ransoms, wood anemone & bluebell, totalling about 400 plants).

Amenity grassland also being improved as wildflower rich habitats & the introduction of 100 wild daffodils.

The work is being undertaken by project volunteers & the Friends of Cotgrave Country Park.

Thoresby Tip (Rotary Wood)

Planted 1000 oak & birch with students from the Dukeries Complex & Maun Infants as part of BBC/Legacy Tree Planting Scheme

Cockglode Wood

Hosted a five week hedge laying course from Dukeries Complex at Cockglode Wood



Ashfield Trails

Implementation of Phase II management works on the newly opened section of the network including laying over 400 metres of hedge on the Brierley Branch to open up south facing former railway embankment for calcareous grassland restoration/dingy skipper habitat.

Linby Trail

Scrub clearance to conserve the species rich calcareous grassland at this important sinc site.

The work being carried out by volunteers as well as internal staff as part of a team building exercise.

Hedgerow restoration - Following on from a drainage works project approx 100 metres of mixed species hedge was planted as part of the restoration works.

Tippings Wood

A number of isolated pockets of Corsican Pine suffering from red band needle blight have been felled by The

Friends of Tippings Wood group. (Larger compartments have been identified for felling by contractors this coming winter)

Over 100 oak trees were planted by the group to replace the pine. Approx 400, bluebell, wood anemone & wild garlic were also planted by the group to further improve woodland biodiversity. Approx 100 wild daffodil were also planted.

The Ranges

A number of alder, ash & field maple were coppiced to improve age structure & to open up views. The work being carried out by volunteers

Dob Park

Woodland edge coppicing was carried out by volunteers to improve age structure & also to provide coppice produce for other projects.

Kimberley Public Footpath & GNR path

Approx 150 metres of hedge was laid & a number of trees were coppiced at the above sites to open up the site, create age structure & to allow light in & to improve sight lines along the length of these two paths.

Local Volunteers, local Town Councillors & college students were all involved in the works.

Southwell Trail

Approx 30m of hedge laying

(Carried out by The Friends of Southwell Trail)
Coppicing & thinning works.

Rookery Park

Coppicing within one of the woodland compartments to diversify age structure

NCC, Nature Conservation Unit, Katherine Garton.

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Habitat mapping

LBAP habitat mapping

The unit have begun mapping the County Council's landholding to LBAP habitat on our GIS system. Priority sites such as Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation, Country Parks and Green Estate sites will be mapped initially with the aim of mapping our entire landholding. So far, Green Estate sites which are also designated SINCs have been mapped.

Mapping of our sites is proving to be tricky in cases as there is a certain amount of interpretation involved! Some habitats (e.g. woodland) do not at present necessarily fit into the local LBAP definitions, but may in the future as they mature, so there has been debate as to whether they should be mapped as LBAP habitat. Mapping our landholding will enable us to determine how much LBAP habitat we have in order to report annual management, as well as gains (or losses), back through BARS in the future.

UKBAP habitat mapping

We have also created a GIS layer for the UK level HAP 'open mosaic habitat on previously developed land'. This habitat is described as 'comprising a mosaic of bare ground with, typically, very early pioneer communities on skeletal substrates, more established open grasslands, usually dominated by fine leaved grasses with many herbs, areas of bare ground, scrub and patches of other habitats such as heathland, swamp, ephemeral pools and inundation grasslands'. Previously developed land data for Nottinghamshire was retrieved from the National Land Use Database (NLUD). Sites which met the habitat definition were selected through use of aerial photography and site visits. Twenty one sites, which predominantly consist of old colliery stocking yards and railway sidings, have been mapped in total, with a total of 175 hectares mapped as this habitat type.

National Indicator 197

The unit has been working hard to gather baseline data for reporting under National Indicator 197 (a performance indicator imposed by central government). The indicator measures the proportion of Local Wildlife Sites (in Nottinghamshire called Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation) that are under favourable management (or have been within the last 5 years). Many BAG partners have provided data, for which they are thanked. An initial figure will be available towards the end of April.

Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust, Erin McDaid. emcdaid@nottswt.co.uk

Rebirth of the Reedbed: Besthorpe Nature Reserve gets a new lease of life

The Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust's efforts to create a Living Landscape in the Trent Valley have moved at a dramatic pace over the past few months and 2009 is set to be a year of real progress with plans to dramatically enhance the wildlife value of our Besthorpe Reserve.

A Landfill Communities Fund grant of £57,000 from Lafarge has enabled the charity to make swift progress with the removal of scrub which had, over many years, invaded the reedbed, threatening its future. The establishment of willow and other tree species had accelerated the drying out of the reedbed, seriously jeopardising its future.

The other key problem facing the reedbed is that the water table has dropped by approximately two metres since gravel extraction stopped some 17 years ago. As a result the reeds are struggling to compete with species which favour the drier conditions.

In planning for this ambitious habitat restoration it became clear that simply lowering the reeds closer to the water table wouldn't be sufficient to guarantee the project's success. To give the reedbed – currently the largest in the county – a real future means of managing the water levels was needed. So the charity were delighted when power company E.ON agreed to back the scheme.

Thanks to a donation of almost £40,000, it was possible to install a water management system which enabled the former settling lagoon to be used as a water store. A controlled flow of water will be drawn from the Trent into the lagoon when water levels are high and this will then be channelled to the reedbed via a system of specially excavated ditches.

Additional major funding from the Environment Agency has also enabled the Wildlife Trust to clear scrub to improve wet grassland and reed bed elsewhere on the reserve – moving the project further forward than previously hoped.

Over the next year the Wildlife Trust will be using the material excavated from the reedbed to create large areas of new reedbed and wet grassland in the Monspool area of the reserve. With an overall capital budget in excess of £500,000 this is the single largest habitat creation scheme the charity have ever embarked upon.

The enhancement of the Wildlife Trusts Besthorpe Reserve forms a key element of the wider Trent Vale Landscape Partnership programme which over the next three years will enhance not just the wildlife value of large parts of the Trent Valley between Newark and Gainsborough but will also boost tourism and recreational opportunities. The charity has been working with other landowners in the area in an effort to create and enhance even more wildlife habitat. Much of this work has focussed upon land adjacent to the River Fleet where they are hoping to enhance habitats for both otters and water voles – The charity have also established good links with local farmers and over the next three years they hope to work with many local landowners.

The Wildlife Trusts work with local landowners and local communities is currently being supported by the Benoy Foundation and this activity is set to expand considerably later this year as the wider Trent Vale project gets under way.

From Cricket Bats to Roundhouses: Restoration of Farndon Willow Holt a great success

Staff and volunteers at Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust are really beginning to see the rewards of 10 years' hard work in restoring Farndon Willow Holt Reserve near Newark. A key element of the restoration was the re-establishment of the site as a working willow holt to provide willow for traditional crafts. Following years of planning and restoration, not only is the well-established collection of willows a joy to visit, but it has been sought out as a source of wood by a Nottinghamshire cricket bat manufacturer.

Gun & Moore, a long-established maker of traditionally crafted professional cricket bats, will soon be putting the finishing touches to eight high quality bats created from timber felled on the

reserve back in 2006. It is hoped that these will be of sufficient quality to be used by top players including Nottinghamshire and England all-rounder Stuart Broad! After the felling of the cricket bat willows, new trees were planted to replace them, which will be ready for harvesting in about 20 years.

In another welcome but unexpected development, willow from the site is now being used in the construction of a replica Iron Age roundhouse at Heeley City Farm in Sheffield. The staff and volunteers at the City Farm were delighted to find such an accessible source of willow relatively close to their site. Iron Age Roundhouses were one of the earliest forms of housing to appear in the UK, and are constructed from willow and clay. The willow is weaved to create panels (known as 'wattle') and then a mixture of clay and straw is placed over the top to seal it (this is called 'daub'). Once completed the roundhouse at Heeley Farm will house a reconstructed Iron Age smelting. Iron will be smelted using local rocks in a way that has not happened in Sheffield for over 500 years!

Rushcliffe Nature Conservation Strategy Implementation Group, Gordon Dyne.
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Rufford Country Park, Leanne Diver. leanne.diver@nottscc.gov.uk

In 2006 Rufford had a full management plan drawn up for the whole site which brought some areas of the park to our attention, one area in particular was a section of grassland called Abbey Meadow. Unbeknown to the Ranger team we had an ecological gem on our door step in the form of a Dry Acid Grassland: U4b Sheep's Fescue - Common Bent - Heath Bedstraw sub community Yorkshire Fog - White (Dutch) Clover. As you all probably know Dry Acid Grassland is a Nottinghamshire BAP habitat and a scarce community in the lowlands so having it onsite makes a significant contribution to the ecological interest of the park.

Unfortunately due to staffing levels and site pressures it has been a little bit neglected over the last couple of years with a few undesirables creeping in and the desired management not taking place. So, starting last September, along with the landscape team and our volunteers we decided to reintroduce a more practical management regime. This consisted of an annual mow with arisings being removed in September, followed by harrowing every 2 years in late February and surveying in June. We had a slight set back at the start with a small machinery malfunction (we couldn't remove the arisings) but luckily our volunteers waded in with a large amount of hay rakes and an even larger amount of enthusiasm and got the project back on track.



Having done all the hard work and set the wheels in motion we look forward with anticipation to see the results of our labour.

Rushcliffe Nature Conservation Strategy

Although Rushcliffe is not blest with the countries greatest biodiversity it does however have a strong community of people who want to look after what we do have and create opportunities to enhance it where possible. The Nature Conservation Strategy seeks to recognise, support and

develop that work and represents a combination of both “official” interests and local groups through the grandly named Rushcliffe Nature Conservation Strategy Implementation Group.

An important element of the strategy is the Service Level Agreement funding Notts Wildlife Trust to carry out work in Rushcliffe to help develop Friends Groups. Sharphill Wood is now well established and work is continuing with a group on The Hook at Lady Bay. In addition with the Service Level Agreement extended for another three years we are hoping that something similar can be achieved at Gresham Marsh and Orston Plaster Pits. In addition Notts Wildlife Trusts Education Officer has or will in 2009 have worked with over a third of the Borough’s primary schools.

Members from Strategy Group continue to provide an input into plans for the Grantham Canal hoping to ensure that in the plans to reopen the canal to navigation the interests of the wildlife that has now colonised the abandoned waterway are not ignored. We are also seeking to influence the Fairham Brook Internal Drainage Board’s environmental policies.

This year has seen limited progress on the Bingham to Melton Wildlife Corridor Project as a number of attempts to engage with farmers have come to nothing. We are investigating the setting up of an East Leake Targeted Area scheme, but that is in early stages. However so far we have been unable to create a real landscape conservation scheme.

Planning and development continues to be a major issue in the area with the A46 now going ahead and will have a significant impact, whilst the A453 widening also look likely to go ahead and the Tram line enquiry result is awaited. Housing development is also a major issue – Sharphill Wood, Clifton Pastures, Cotgrave Country Park, Newton all the subject of ongoing or potential planning applications.

In looking after its own estate Notts Wildlife Trust have carried out significant projects at Skylarks and Wilford Claypits. And Wilwell has seen the introduction of cattle grazing. But of course much of the conservation work is carried out by volunteers contributing nearly 1,000 hours over the year, plus wardening and surveying.

Plans by Keyworth Meadows to improve its management through grazing unfortunately came to nothing. But on the bright side Friends of Bingham Linear Park quietly continue their good work. Another piece of good news is the designation of Rushcliffe Country Park as a SINC recognising its growing contribution to biodiversity. For the Rushcliffe Barn Owl Project 2007 was a record year for chicks, but 2008 was less successful in part due to a drop in small mammal populations.

Notts Wildlife Trust’s Local Group continued to promote wildlife and conservation through a programme of walks, talks, visits to summer fetes, library displays and articles in the local press. With funding obtained from Severn Trent Water the Group has been able to fund the purchase of biological recording equipment for use by local groups (with assistance from Notts Birders) and is planning to use 2009/10 to promote wildlife gardening.

The Strategy Group has been a bit of a trail blazer and we have been talking to the Broxtowe Wildlife Forum about lessons learnt over the years. In addition Broxtowe and Gedling are copying Rushcliffe by cooperating with NWT to print Wildlife Gardening leaflets for local use.

See <http://www.rushcliffe.gov.uk/doc.asp?cat=1418&doc=310> for more information about the strategy.

Gordon Dyne
Chair – Rushcliffe Nature Conservation Strategy Implementation Group

Sherwood Forest Trust, Karyn Stander. karyn.stander@sherwoodforesttrust.org.uk



As in previous years, the Trust was asked to deliver the small scale conservation grants scheme on behalf of Notts County Council over the winter. The Building Better Communities Programme funding enables landowners in the Sherwood and Greenwood Forest areas, to undertake capital works for wildlife and landscape benefit.

Not all the schemes have been checked and paid quite yet, but the outputs achieved so far with the 27 landowners are:

- 3.5 kilometres (!) of new native hedge planting or gapping up.
- 904 metres of hedgerow traditionally laid.
- 107 orchard trees planted, most of which were historic Nottinghamshire varieties.
- 0.3 ha of BAP woodland created (oak- birch mix).
- 341 native trees in keeping with the local character of the area, planted along driveways and into hedgerows.

Not only does the scheme provide biodiversity benefits, it helps employ farm workers and local contractors to do the work, providing a small input into the local economy.

Since the Trust started delivering the project in 2002, a total of 35km of hedgerow has been restored, providing links across farmland and reducing fragmentation.

Thanks to NCC for the funding to enable this work to happen and also to the great enthusiasm of the landowners involved.