

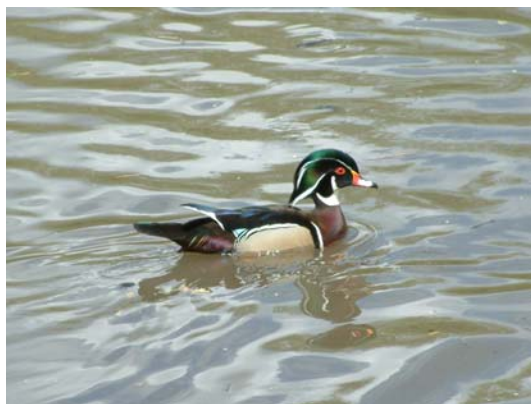
FKNNR

The Friends of Kings Norton Nature Reserve
55, Wychall Lane ~ Kings Norton ~ Birmingham ~ B38 8TB

Kings Norton Local Nature Reserve

From the Editor-cum-Chairman

I moved to Kings Norton in 2002. The lady we bought our house from told me about the walk to the Green across the meadows (remarkably rich in wild flowers), but I simply didn't know about Wychall Reservoir until Peter and I walked there one day shortly after the move. We saw a group of Long Tailed Tits – great! But we also saw silt, shopping trolleys and traffic cones. Now, though far from being a major wildlife haven, the improvement for wildlife, and for those of us who enjoy open space, is already obvious. That improvement is to a great extent, I believe, the result of one man's vision. Alan Bakewell saw the potential beyond the silt and the shopping trolleys, and he used his powers of persuasion to bring others with him to develop this marvellous area for the future of Kings Norton and the surrounding area. We owe an enormous debt of gratitude to Alan – and to his wife Shirley – for all he has done to bring the area to the attention of the City Council and others further afield, and for the inspiration he has given to carry his vision forward.



Wychall Reservoir – 27 May 2005.
A Wood Duck takes up residence for a few days.

Through Alan's vision and the expert knowledge of our Secretary Phil Evans (who is also a Trustee of the Urban Wildlife Trust) the Reservoir, Merecroft Pool and the surrounding wild areas have now been brought together as a Local Nature Reserve.

They are ripe for environmental enhancement, and we are now in a very much-improved position to develop their wildlife potential. Now Alan wants to stand back, and I am honoured to be elected to succeed him as Chairman at the Annual General Meeting. I am grateful also for your confidence, and I hope that I will be able to help move forward the development of the LNR during my time of office. While I recognise that the City wants the primary function of Wychall Reservoir to remain as a place to absorb flood water from the river, I would love to see it very much enhanced as a wetland reserve for Birmingham,

with water levels flexibly controlled to serve the feeding and nesting needs of a wide range of water birds and waterside mammals. I would like to see the river regularly cleared of rubbish and with wildflower meadows alongside. Can't we aim to develop something like the London Wetlands Centre here in Birmingham? Now that the LNR is up and running we are waiting for the first meeting of the City's Management Committee to take place. Councillors Margaret Sutton and Geoff Sutton will represent the City Council on this body, and, the 'Friends' will be represented by two of your Committee for the next two years. The first jobs will be to ratify the Constitution and the Management Plan. In the meantime we are preparing an application to the City Council's 'Community Chest' for funding in order to apply for professional help from the Wetlands Advisory Service (a subsidiary of the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust established in 1989 at Slimbridge) in order to conserve, improve and manage our wetlands. Backed by over fifty years of experience in conserving wetlands and their biodiversity, WAS promises to have the breadth of skill and experience to provide advice on habitat enhancement and to provide long-term management advice, and I very much hope that we can bring that experience to bear on our local needs in Kings Norton.

Alan has asked me to thank everyone involved with the development of the LNR during the past year. In particular he gives grateful thanks to our Service Team, to Rea Valley Ranger, Chris Mansell and to Community Wardens, Adrian and Paul. He says he has very much enjoyed his time as chairman, and looks forward to seeing the LNR go from strength to strength. All thanks to him and all who have helped to get us to where we are now. I hope we can, in the next few years, ensure his vision is brought to fruition.

Amanda Cadman, Chairman

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Working Party news (1)

We have explained previously how we hope to transform the meadows between the bottom of Meadow Hill Road and Camp Lane into wildflower meadows. This requires time and patience. Regular walkers/cyclists along the River Rea cycle route will have noticed that the grass has now been mown, the cuttings bailed up and removed from site. These changes in the mowing regime will over time deplete the nutrient levels in the soil and allow wildflowers to grow where only docs, thistles and nettles currently grow within the grassland.

The large fallen Willow tree has been cut up and is being removed from site and used to create log piles elsewhere, Balsam has been destroyed and the area cleared for future mowing. This work complements the scrub clearance and training exercises undertaken last February. The trial planting area was not sustainable during the dry periods this summer but we can look to repeat the exercise next spring when (hopefully) we will have some home grown specimens to relocate. The wildflower experts amongst us have already recorded Red Campion, Bush Vetch, Comfrey, Meadowsweet, Herb Robert, Greater Celandine, Cuckooflower to add to the usually observed Bluebells and Ramsons.

We are extremely grateful to BTCV for the training sessions and grant to cover these activities with £3,740 being made available from the 'People's Places Award Scheme'.



August 2004 - View east from the path junction showing the fallen tree.



July 2005 - The same area now minus the tree. Some young volunteers enjoy the sun.



August 2004 - View West



July 2005 - Amanda Cadman surveys the mown area.

We mention elsewhere the construction of floating islands. One short working party day involved two men in a small boat trying to do something similar on Merecroft Pool. They established that if they both stood on the same side of the boat at the same time then they get an early bath but a short working day. No guesses to establish whom these two wet individuals were but the garden of one of them backs on to the pool and the other usually stands on the bank and counts the birds. They are already quite old but

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now they are wiser.

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Working Party news (2)

As reported in the last newsletter a bid was submitted to the Heritage Lottery 'Awards for All' scheme for funding which would allow us to restore a small area of the reedbed at the reservoir site as a practical demonstration of something that would improve the wetland habitat considerably. This bid was successful and we duly received £3,420. The initial work has been started on site and we secured the services of a large excavator on the 27 April. Two large but shallow areas of the former reedbeds have been cleared and some 600 Norfolk Reeds were planted by a 'Friends' working party on the 18 May. This has been the focus of recent activity at this end of the LNR. Further planting is required in the first lagoon and then we shall proceed into the slightly larger, but deeper area. An interpretive board will be erected on site. Plans to finish the site are now to hand following a couple of abortive exercises when the area fulfilled its primary function as part of Birmingham's flood defence system. The water level certainly rises quickly when the Rea is in spate! (it came over the top of the bank shown in the bottom right photo)



Above: The area to be cleared of silt and rubbish as it was in November 2004



April: The excavator gets to work.



Its now May (above): The water depth is adjusted and the planting process commences.



A big thank you is due to the small group who were prepared to get very muddy and wet in the above exercise. For the record they were: Jil Bromley, David Hampson, Meredith Andrea, Geoff Ray, Diane Kelly and Phil Evans. Special thanks to 'Awards for All' for the generous grant.

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Membership details:

Jil Bromley

Three or four weeks ago I could have reported that our membership had increased from 9 to 85 households during the year. This is remarkable progress, and shows how support for the LNR is growing locally. Now, however, boosted amongst others by 14 households recruited just this last Saturday on our stall at the Kings Norton Festival, membership is comfortably over the 100 households mark. We are enormously grateful for this increasing support, which is essential to the success of the Local Nature Reserve. We do, however, need to continue and widen the recruiting. If you can help us by signing up friends and neighbours, and could use a supply of our attractive information leaflets, do please contact me or any other member of the Committee.

Several of the new recruits from the Festival were younger people – they are the future of Kings Norton, and they can play a hugely significant role in developing both the site and general awareness of its importance within their peer group. Please keep the younger members rolling in!



Heron

Future event

Saturday Sept 17 at 11 am:
Rea Valley Conservation Group Annual Walk
from MAC, Cannon Hill Park.
Cannon Hill to Stirchley via River Rea, Stirchley
to Selly Oak via Birmingham and Worcester
Canal, Selly Oak to Woodgate Valley Park via
Bourne Brook (approximately 8 miles).

Education Activities ... getting mucky,
learning a lot!

Nicola Human and Meredith Andrea

In the last Newsletter we told you about the birdboxes which had been made with pupils from Wychall Primary School. The children have named their boxes, and they have duly been put up on the Reserve. Who knows which have already been used: the local birdlife will be delighted with these extra homes! We've also helped pupils at Hawkesley Primary School to do some pond dipping.

Looking to the future, we expect that the initial contact with schools will, as now, be via Chris Mansell, the Rea Valley Ranger. He will ensure that we know as soon as possible about all his planned dates for visits to schools or to the Reserve so that we can, wherever possible, help him on the day. We will ensure, too, that schools are told well in advance about our working parties so that younger people – and their families – can get actively involved. Information about the Reserve is about to be distributed to all local schools and younger members – and we hope they will be prepared to get involved on the Friends' Committee and on the LNR Management Committee.

And young people know much more about web site design than we do ... and we are looking for someone to help us design and run one for us. Maybe a school would like to help ...?

Kings Norton Festival- 9 July

On a beautiful hot day we took our elementary display boards and stall to the Festival & farmers market. There was plenty of interest in our plans and objectives and we recruited new members (see above). This additional income plus the profit on a quickly assembled collection of bird boxes is very welcome. The view is that we need to improve this aspect of our activity.

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Correspondence by email is preferred:
KingsNortonLNR@aol.com
Summer 2005

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Situations Vacant – Yes your Committee needs your help.

These are unpaid volunteer activities. Job sharing would be ideal. If you are a member of the 'Friends' and can help in any way please let Amanda or one of the Committee know.

<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Working Party Organiser.</u></p> <p>Would you be willing to muster up volunteers for a series of working parties throughout the coming winter? Are you a diplomat who doesn't mind a bit of hard work? Could you schedule the available resources and assist our Ranger and other trained staff to implement the Management Plan for the LNR? The more working parties we have the more we can achieve together.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>First Aiders.</u></p> <p>We have recognised the need for a little part-time assistance on the medical front. It will never be needed – hopefully, but working party activities may sometimes result in minor mishaps. We are able to put a couple of members through first aid training courses if they are willing and able to use the skills so gained when we have events on site. Ideally suited to those who prefer not to wield the axe or the bowsaw.</p>
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<p style="text-align: center;"><u>A Quartermaster.</u></p> <p>Yes we do mean this. The 'Friends' are now accumulating a large number of tools and an amount of safety equipment. Have you space to store this? Could you maintain an inventory and look after these assets and other rations? We will ensure that the willing volunteer(s) for this task go on appropriate training courses related to tool maintenance and all costs will be reimbursed.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Display Stand Organiser</u></p> <p>The 'Friends' will be attempting to attend open day events, galas, the local farmer's market and other occasions where we can promote the LNR and recruit new members. We need a good display stand and volunteers to staff it. Have you the ability to acquire and develop this facility? If so we would like to hear from you.</p>
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<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Health & Safety Advisor</u></p> <p>Are you well versed in current H&S jargon? Or are you willing to learn? The risk assessment process is with us whether we like it or not. We need to review our requirements and provide guidance and briefings to working party members. Again, training will be arranged for an enthusiastic volunteer.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Newsletter Editor</u></p> <p>Why do we need someone else to do this job 4 times a year? Simply because your Chairman, Secretary and other Committee members have plenty of other things to do. We need assistance. This job would certainly suit someone who prefers the office to the physical on-site work. Computer literacy would be useful but training and plenty of advice and encouragement will be given.</p>
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And Finally: We need volunteers to grow native wildflowers and trees by the vanload for planting around the LNR next year. Native plants are expensive and if we can grow them from our own seed, so much the better. It has been suggested that seeds, acorns, etc, collected in the next few months would provide a good start. Plants must meet Management Plan criteria (so, please, no conkers). All costs to the individuals concerned would be reimbursed.

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Wildlife Corner: The following observations have been reported on or about the LNR.

Spring appears to have come and gone relatively quickly this year but there has been plenty of activity in and about the nature reserve in the three months to the end of June. The installation of the 'trial' floating islands previously reported as a wildfowl refuge on Wychall Reservoir appear to have been a successful experiment since they were taken over by a pair of Coot who then successfully reared a brood of seven. The long anchor chains have proved to be adequate to deal with the violent rises in water level which occur when the river Rea floods. Another pair of Coot was less successful and their nest and eggs was swept away on three separate occasions when the water level rose. Other successful breeding has been recorded for Moorhen and Mallard. The grebes, both Little at Wychall and Great Crested at Merecroft have been noticeable by their absence this year. We aim to plan for both species next year and more nest platforms will be constructed and installed over the coming winter. Warblers have also bred successfully again this year and young Chiffchaff, Blackcap and Whitethroat being noted.

An exotic visitor to Wychall Reservoir is recorded in several photographs in this newsletter. A Carolina Wood Duck (*Aix sponsa*) took up residence with the Mallard for a week in May but we can assume that it was an escapee from a collection somewhere since its liking for soft wet white bread indicated that it was probably used to being fed such a delicacy!

Those who look out for birds of prey will not have been disappointed with the continuing appearances of the local Sparrowhawks and the regular view of Kestrels in and about Kings Norton. The request for further details of a Peregrine Falcon resulted in an email from one of our members who lives on Westhill Road.

"I have read in your newsletter that the recent sightings of Peregrine around the LNR are 'unconfirmed'. I would like to confirm that a Peregrine (probably female) took up residence around the church during April and was seen many times by myself, my wife and my son until late May. It is likely that the bird would have fed around the LNR regularly as pigeons and ducks form a large part of its diet.

n.b This may be the same bird that had spent most of the winter around the Cadbury factory at Bournville. Best Wishes, Clive Griffiths"

The request for further details on Woodcock also elucidated a reply and a dead bird (now in the Secretary's freezer! (for further scientific study)). This individual appears to have been finished off by crows in Goodby Road, Moseley. There is a supposition that this species does over-winter in South Birmingham locations and has done so for many years, so we shall have to keep a watch out for them in the future.

An early morning walk through the LNR took place on the 8 May as part of the 'International Dawn Chorus' event. An impressive number of 32 different bird species were seen or heard. A little bit of TLC to the habitat may result in higher numbers in future. We shall see.

Foxes continue to be noticed quite regularly along the river and there have been many reports from gardens around the LNR. Muntjac Deer have also been seen on several occasions but we have to record the demise of one of them – hit and killed by a car on Wychall Lane during June [we can but hope for some form of speed control system along here eventually- so pleads our Secretary – he wants to borrow a yellow 'bird box' from Meadow Hill Road as seen on TV]. The occasional appearance of Water Vole in the river has been followed by several sightings of

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Mink. This does not bode well and it maybe that a more detailed mammal survey may be useful right across the Local Nature Reserve.

A pond dipping exercise at Merecroft pool during April revealed the following:

Non-biting midge lava	Glossiphoniidae leech
Swan Mussel (<i>Anodonta cygnea</i>)	Erpobdellidae leech
Water mite	Damselfly lava
Cyclops	Crangonyctidae water shrimp
Cased caddisfly lava	Mosquito pupa
Caenidae mayfly lava	Fatworm sp
Water flea	Slug sp
Water slater	Tadpole
Lymnaeidae wandering snail	
Whirlpool ramshorn snail (<i>Anisus vortex</i>)	
White ramshorn (<i>Gyraulus albus</i>)	
Flat ramshorn (<i>Hippeutis complanatus</i>)	
Common Bithynia (<i>Bithynia tentaculata</i>)	
Larger Noterus Beetle (<i>Noterus clavicornis</i>)	

Thanks go to Ellen Pisolkar from the Birmingham & Black Country Wildlife Trust for her time and expertise in the above exercise. We would welcome volunteers to take this survey work forward. We can arrange suitable guidance and training for such activities.



Merecroft Pool on the 14 April with the delicate process of 'Pond Dipping' being demonstrated Ellen Pisolkar.



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Bats: Please highlight the evening of the 9 September in your diary. Under the guidance of our Ranger, Chris Mansell, a bat walk will take place on the LNR. Meet at 20.00 hrs at the entrance to Wychall Reservoir on Wychall Lane. There is now added interest since a Long Eared Bat decided to object to the goings-on in the Saracens Head on the day of the Kings Norton Festival. Professional help was needed then to look after it and we now trust that we can pick that species up with the bat detectors. Chris would also draw your attention to his walks on the 21 August and on the 16 October, which will follow the River Rea from Kings Norton in two easy stages to Cannon Hill Park. Further details are published in the City's "Out & About" publication for July to December 2005.

How others do it: In the last Newsletter we suggested a visit to another reserve to see what other people have done to improve their local habitats and to encourage wildlife. We have missed the nesting season for various reasons, but we are planning a day trip, in August or September, which will take us in the morning to Ryton Organic Gardens (the Henry Doubleday Research Association gardens near Coventry). You will have opportunities for lunch in their excellent restaurant and to stock up on organic goodies in the shop. We will then move on to Brandon Marsh (Warwickshire Wildlife Trust) to learn about their vision and how they have developed and managed this wetland area for wildlife. The date for this trip is to be fixed very shortly, so please expect a notice very soon.

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ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS

Please note that these fell due on the 31 May for all those members who joined before November 2004. Please send £5 (£3 Concessionary rate) to the Treasurer at 27 Meadow Hill Road as soon as you are able. Extra donations would be gratefully received. All such sums are being used to protect our local environment through the development of Kings Norton LNR. Your continued support is appreciated very much.



Cuckoo flowers in abundance around Wychall Reservoir on the 29 April.



The resident Coots utilising our home made floating islands also on the 29 April.



And a final view of the Wood Duck in the company of the local Mallard.

Please keep the following number to hand – 0800 807060. It is the Environment Agency Hotline for pollution/damage or danger to the natural environment. We had to make use of it on the last weekend in June when heavy rain and flooding appears to have washed an unknown substance into the old millstream and into the Rea. We shall monitor this pollution incident – Number 521156, if anyone wishes to enquire about it on the 0800 number. AND Don't forget that anti-social behaviour can be reported on 0121 303 1111.

The FKNNR honorary officers & advisors

Chair	Amanda Cadman	0121 624 3865
Vice Chair	David Barraclough	0121 458 2244
Treasurer	David Human	0121 458 1300
Secretary	Phil Evans	0121 628 6769
Membership Secretary	Jil Bromley	0121 244 7483
Newsletter	Amanda Cadman & Phil Evans	0121 624 3865
Education	Meredith Andrea & Nicola Human	0121 451 3243 0121 458 1300
Press Liaison	Alan Bakewell	0121 603 1127
River Rea Ranger	Chris Mansell	0121 447 7106

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