

The Friends of Kings Norton Nature Reserve

55, Wychall Lane ~ Kings Norton ~ Birmingham ~ B38 8TB



Welcome to our logo.

The Great Crested Grebe has been selected as the logo for the FKNNR. The Grebe has now bred successfully for three years running on Merecroft Pool (There are currently 2 young on the pool). Thanks to Meredith Andrea for arranging for such a professional finish.

From the Chairman

The first important piece of news is that, with all the legal issues about boundaries, rights of way, etc. finally sorted out, Wychall and Merecroft were formally, and publicly, designated as a Local Nature Reserve on 14 October 2005. So the first major hurdle is passed, and the site is as secure as it can be from development. Its future management is no longer via various different departments of the City Council but via the single route of a Management Committee, directly answerable to the City Council as owner of the land. The Committee's role will be to oversee and monitor progress against the Management Plan, and to address legal, planning, financial and community safety matters.

The Management Committee, as you know, includes representatives of all interested local bodies: the Chairman and Secretary of the Friends of the LNR, the Grazier, the Links Residents' Association, the Rea Valley Conservation Group, West Midlands Police, British Waterways Board and the Birmingham and Black Country Wildlife Trust. It also includes four individuals co-opted from the local community. Councillors Margaret and Geoff Sutton are the representatives of Birmingham City Council - Kings Norton Ward Committee, and Sue Cooper, Nature Conservation Officer at Birmingham City Council, services the Committee.

The Management Committee held its first meeting, before the formal declaration, on 14 September. An Elected Representative of the City Council is expected to chair the Management Committee, and it was agreed that Councillor Margaret Sutton would take the Chair, with the Chairman of the Friends' Group (i.e. me) as Vice-Chair. Phil Evans was appointed as Treasurer, but (since not all the Committee could be present at the meeting) it was agreed to defer the appointment of a Secretary. The Committee learned that certain boundary issues remained outstanding at that stage, leading to a delay in the declaration of LNR status. They ratified the draft Constitution and agreed to hold a further meeting in order to discuss the draft Management Plan in detail. (Scheduled to take place on 12 October, the night of the flood, this further meeting was postponed at the last minute because of the terrible weather. At the time of writing it has yet to be rescheduled.) Members also discussed an official opening for the LNR and the plan to submit a bid for funding for a full evaluation of the site in order to identify its potential for development as an enhanced wetland area. This will enable us to set an effective 'baseline' from which to seek to develop the site.

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Correspondence by email is preferred:

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Autumn 2005

And welcome

to our autumn Newsletter.



Wychall Reservoir - 29 September 2005.
A Tufted Duck passing through?

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*Living adjacent to Kings Norton Nature Reserve has advantages and disadvantages but it certainly makes you think about the local wildlife. Here **Rosie Human** puts down the spade and takes a camera inside the house and finds that monstrous bugs have also taken up residence.*



Amanda Cadman, Chairman



Sexton Beetle This colourful beetle lives throughout Britain feeding on dead animals like birds, mice and bats. The beetle can smell the dead animals from up to two miles away down wind. When they find the carcass they bury it and the female lays her eggs next to the carcass. She then looks after them until they're independent. We found this beetle in a dark corner of kitchen on a summer morning. I think these are mites living on it or they may be babies.

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Oak Bush Cricket: This little cricket lives in bushes and oaks in England and Wales. They are very fast at jumping and crawling. We found two, one in the bathroom and one in the bedroom. We also saw an article in the Wildlife Guardian Magazine of Spring 2005.



The unknown larvae

I found this larvae on the ceiling of the hall and I don't know what this is but here are some possibilities:

- Raspberry beetle larvae
- Large skipper caterpillar
- Silver spotted skipper caterpillar
- Dingy skipper caterpillar
- Grizzled skipper caterpillar

What do you think?

The Monstrous Bugs of Meadow Hill Road

So that's what is in my house. What's living in yours?

Rosie Human

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Work at Wychall Reservoir

Regular walkers or cyclists along the cycle route along the Rea and past Wychall Reservoir will have noticed the recent engineering work being undertaken by contractors to the City Council. This is essential engineering work as part of the role the site plays in the City's flood defence system. The work was required following an audit by the EA and involves de-silting the reservoir channel between the two outlet points (1), removal of excess vegetation from the face of the earth dam (2), clearance of the riverine outflow system (3) and the rebuilding of the failed concrete apron at the inflow point (4). The work is well advanced and has been tested to the full already since there have been at least six times in as many weeks when the Rea has overflowed into the Reservoir.



The excavator at work 13 October 2005 (1) and it gets stuck in the silt.



The riverine section on 19 October after its makeover (3).



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Grass cut 9 October (2).

Apron works at the end of October (4).

Membership details:

Jil Bromley

Membership levels of the 'Friends' continue to climb steadily and we have now reached some 121 households. This has been achieved following the appearance of our stall at the local farmers market on Saturday 10 September and by the recent membership renewals. Very few members who were due to renew have failed to do so and this response is extremely encouraging. We must do something right! We are enormously grateful for your continued support, which is essential to the success of the Local Nature Reserve. If you were due to renew your membership and have not done so then this will be the last newsletter you receive. 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.

Bishop of Birmingham charities: July 16 saw a joint exercise between the Ranger service and organisations associated with the Bishop of Birmingham charities. Over 30 children were shown parts of the LNR and given practical experiences with litter pickers, slashers and bow saws - Our local Ranger is certainly a brave man!



Education Activities ... going from strength to strength.

Nicola Human and Meredith Andrea

The past few months have been relatively quiet with school holidays. However, as soon as the schools returned we visited Wychall Farm School with the River Rea Ranger, Chris Mansell, and organised seed collections that were deemed a great success. We now hope to build on the relationship we developed last year and help the school and the pupils develop their own wildlife area within the school grounds. A further bird box construction exercise will also be undertaken.

We are now proceeding to develop a relationship with another local Primary School, talking to staff and providing every child with a leaflet to take home. In addition we will be supplying all local school notice boards with publicity for our working party days and we hope the children and their parents will be prepared to get involved with the 'Friends'.



A further joint exercise with the community Wardens on the 17 August saw several dozen children and their parents enjoy the walk through the LNR with Auntie Shirley & Uncle Alan Bakewell organising activities to keep them all occupied!

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Future events: Working Party Weekends on Saturday & Sunday 26/27 November and the 10/11 & also 15 December at 10.30 a.m. Everyone is welcome to come and undertake some healthy exercise, enjoy the fresh air and perhaps learn a new skill (dead hedges now a speciality!). Come along for one hour or as many hours as you wish but we do aim to finish by 3 p.m. Trees will be planted round and about Merecroft Pool on the 11 December as part of the Woodland Trust's 'Tree for All' programme.

Mid-week exercise can be obtained on Tuesday 29 November when we shall start to clear bramble etc in the Pinehurst field next to the public right of way between Wychall Lane and West Hill Road. Start 11.00 hrs and all are welcome.

From the Chairman continued: **Working Parties:**

A series of Working Party days were held at the Reservoir and along the Rea Valley to West Hill Road on Thursday 13, Saturday 15 and Sunday 16 October. We had hoped to finish planting out reeds on the Thursday, but the terrific rain the evening before, which raised the water level in the Reservoir by about four feet (and brought in loads of disgusting flotsam and jetsam from up-stream, including sewage) put paid to that plan. Willow trees were coppiced and dead hedges built with the off-cuts (See photos below). Much debris and litter was cleared out of the stream and across the whole site. June McCoy masterminded the clearing out of the millrace where it crosses the meadows to re-join the river. Alan Bakewell, together with four others, managed to fish out a waste bin, which had been uprooted by vandals and heaved into the river. I managed to wade in above my willies on the Saturday, soaking both feet, then on Sunday (wearing the Chairmanly waders, of which I am very proud) I slipped and sat down in the water, causing much amusement all round. The weekend weather was unseasonably gorgeous, and we had a great time. I am hugely grateful to everyone who turned up to help, including visitors from other conservation bodies. We managed to get a good deal of work done, and the site looked considerably better for our efforts. Particular thanks are due Shirley Bakewell who manned the reception desk and to Community Wardens Adrian and Paul who turned out to help us on both days.

BUT far fewer people turned up to help than for the previous working parties. I don't know why that should be, especially since the weather was so good. These occasions give us the chance not only to improve our local environment and 'do our bit' for the local community, but also to get fresh air and exercise, to clear our brains of weekday worries and to make new friends and to learn new skills – oh, and to get satisfyingly mucky and possibly, like me, wet!

I ask you please, therefore, to put the working party dates, on **26/27 November, 10/11 December 2005, 14/15 January, 18/19 February & 11/12 March 2006** in your diary now, if you haven't already done so. These events will take place throughout the LNR. We start at Merecroft Pool and Meadows, when we will start the process of rejuvenating the former wet grassland area adjacent to the pool dam, removing debris and silt, removing sycamore and tidying scrub areas, and coppicing willow, as well as the usual clean-up and litter-pick. Please give to us an hour or more of your time, dress appropriately and join us in November at the entrance to Merecroft Pool on Beaks Hill Road.

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Jo and Brian – part of the dead hedge gang.



Peter and David disassemble that Willow tree.

Here in Kings Norton we are extraordinarily lucky to have the open spaces, the flower meadows, the wetlands, the woodlands and the wilderness areas that make up the LNR. Your support as members – financial, physical and moral – continues to be critical to the Friends in advancing the development of Kings Norton's Nature Reserve. If you can help us to recruit more supporters and would like a supply of leaflets, please let Phil, David, Jil or me know. Bring your friends and neighbours to a working party to let them find out for themselves how satisfying it is to join together with neighbours old and young to look after our neighbourhood.

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Situations Vacant – A repeat request from the Committee.

<p>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>	<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. A one-day training course has been arranged for a volunteer on Friday 9 December (09.30 hrs) at FoE Meeting Room, Allison St, Digbeth. Please let Phil Evans know if you are interested.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Tool Maintenance</u></p> <p>The 'Friends' are now accumulating a large number of tools and an amount of safety equipment. Could you maintain assets such as axes, slashers and billhooks? 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. A course for 2 persons has been arranged on Saturday 3 December at 09.30 hrs at the BTCV centre, Shaws Passage, Digbeth. Please let Phil Evans know if you are interested.</p>	<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>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>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 still 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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Yes: A big thank you is due:

We had a excellent response to the request in the last Newsletter for assistance in specific areas, so thank you Elizabeth Parker, June McCoy and Gwenda Evans for taking up the challenge of growing wild flowers from seed - these will be planted out in the LNR during 2006. Thank you to John Smith who will be operating the mitre saw to good effect to ensure we have an ample supply of bird boxes. Thanks Suzanne Ashley for making space available within her stable/grazing area to locate a secure tool storage facility. Thank you Brian Hewitt for offering to prepare first class display material for a 'Friends' sales and information stand for staffing by the membership at local events and, last but not least, thanks to Peter Cage for the commitment to design and introduce a web site – this development really does have the potential to spread the message far and wide.

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

Last time we spoke too soon. In the end both grebes, Little Grebe at Wychall and Great Crested at Merecroft were observed and a pair of Gt. Crested at Merecroft finally bred successfully. The Grey Wagtails, which are seen regularly along the River Rea, also appear to have reared a successful brood this year with a pair with 5 young being observed in August. The first Teal arrived back at Wychall on the 21 August with the total rising to 14 by the end of October. Similarly Black Headed Gull numbers rose from 2 at the beginning of September to over 30 in October. The first Snipe was observed on the 25 September and our new small reedbed pool hosted a Common Sandpiper on the 21 September.

Both species of birds of prey previously reported also bred on the LNR and when the grass in the Rea Meadows was finally cut in July both Sparrowhawks and Kestrels were seen regularly. The two species provided a joint display on the 11 July, as they appeared to compete for food or territory. Wildfowl reports from Wychall include the regular Mallard, Coot, Moorhen, Heron and the occasional visitor such as Tufted Duck.

Foxes and Muntjac Deer continue to be reported although sightings of Water Vole were non-existent. This is a disappointment since the Management Plan for the LNR clearly states the importance of the Vole population to the Rea and Wychall Reservoir in particular. Perhaps this coming winter we should attempt to create more suitable habitat and plans are being drawn up to seek suitable funding sources to implement such works. On the other hand we do always see Grey Squirrels all the time – do we take them for granted?

We appear to know very little about the butterfly species that visit the LNR (or insects generally come to that – apart from monstrous bugs [see above]) – is this is yet another case for detailed survey work?

*On the left one Speckled wood seen on the 28
August 2005*



Bats: The evening of the 9 September was quite memorable for those who went for the bat walk although the weather was far from perfect. Under the guidance of our Ranger, Chris Mansell, a total of 36 members and friends walked through the LNR from Wychall Reservoir to Merecroft Pool with the bat detectors. Common Pipistrelles and Noctule bats were detected with at least one Daubenton's bat being observed flying over the water of Merecroft Pool.

Membership, Recruitment and Spreading the Message

We are seeking now to build up a corporate membership among local traders – on the Green and on the Business Parks – and we are grateful to John Smith who is spearheading this development. Following on from our very successful recruitment stall at the Kings Norton Festival in the summer, a number of us staffed the community stall at the September Farmers' Market, where we were able to meet and talk with a good number of folk interested in supporting our aims. We signed up several new members, sold wild bird food and a good number of bird and bat boxes, and handed out lots of leaflets and maps of the LNR. One of the new members even offered to help us on the administration side! Paul Adams has

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excellent management and computer skills, and we are delighted to welcome him to the editorial team of the Newsletter!

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS:

Please note that these fall due on the 30 November 2005 all those members who joined between May and 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.

Calling all Mycologists:

Is there anyone out there who has an interest in fungi of any kind?

The strength of any Local Nature Reserve is related to the data it holds on the flora and fauna within it. We need comprehensive data on all life forms. A long-term survey is required throughout all seasons of the year so that we can establish what lives in Kings Norton LNR including fungi. Please let us know if you are interested in recording and undertaking surveys.



October 2005 beside the River Rea.
Is this *Phellinus ignarius*?



January 2005 on Merecroft Dam.
Is this *Polyporus brumalis*?

The FKNNR Honorary Officers, Committee Members & advisors

Chairman	Amanda Cadman	0121 624 3865
Vice Chairman	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

Committee Members Jon Anson, Suzanne Ashley, Alan Bakewell, Peter Cage
David Hampson, Brian Hewitt & John Smith.

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River Rea Ranger

Chris Mansell

0121 447 7106

*Environment Agency Hotline
Anti-social behaviour*

*0800 807060
0121 303 1111*