



Nature Reserve Open Day

Saturday 13th September

River Rea cycle path near Wychall Lane

11am till 4pm

- * events
- * activities for all
- * live displays
- * birds and animals
- * guided walks
- * crafts
- * refreshments

£2

I understand that you had four hot days while I was on holiday in July, but the enduring impression of this summer, as last, is of rain, rain and more rain, lush growth and a full river. Not too much overflowing though – yet! I can only pray for a change soon so we can catch up with our work schedule and have the LNR looking at its best for the Open Day. Of course some areas of the reserve are loving this dampness, and we are very pleased with the way the amphibian ponds in Sheila's Meadow are maturing. The wet ground also makes pulling up Ragwort (deadly poisonous for horses) in the British Waterways Meadow quite an easy task. The Bromford Junior Wardens were going to join us in this task last week, but even they couldn't cope with the serial deluges that dogged our Green Gym.

Earlier in the year, you may recall, students from Herefordshire College of Technology joined us (yes, on a wet day!) to plant trees down by the Rea. They came back to inspect 'their' trees (those that had not been stolen or vandalised!) at the beginning of July on a much nicer day, and put their backs into a good stint of Himalayan Balsam-bashing before walking along by the reservoir to patronise the Wychall Road Fish Bar. Thanks guys, and good luck with your careers!

As part of our desire to involve people from further upstream in enhancing the Rea corridor for people and for wildlife, we have made two forays to 'the other side of the railway tracks'. I spent a happy morning with kids from the Masefield estate at their half-term play scheme, telling them something about the Reserve and answering a wide range of questions. A good number of them came on a walk along beside the reservoir, looking for birds and flowers and litter-picking as they went. In mid-July we had a stall at the Masefield Square Fun Day, giving a further opportunity for us to speak to people about our vision of extending the LNR.

We have circulated subscription renewal forms with the last two editions of the Newsletter. Unfortunately not everyone seems to have taken the hint that his or her subscription is due, and if you are one of these, you will find a letter enclosed with this edition. Please, do renew your membership of the FKNNR. We need your financial support to help fund our work to develop the Reserve; and we need your moral support for what seems to us an enormously worthwhile endeavour – benefiting local wildlife as well as the local environment for the local community. And much of our external funding relies on our being able to show community support for the LNR. The subscription is a tiny amount from the annual purse and, I assure you, punches far beyond its monetary value.

The Friends of King's Norton Nature Reserve

Another July Saturday saw us with the display board at the St Nicolas Festival. We were quite relieved to set up in the church, since the weather was very windy. The turnout, thanks to the recent opening of the Saracen's Head, was splendid and we had a satisfyingly exhausting day talking to a constant stream of visitors.

Ever since the Friends group was set up we have been collecting hand tools (scythes, billhooks, forks, spades, saws and the like) to enable us to work on site and to cater for any visitors to our working parties. We have a display stand and a gazebo too, not to mention sales goods and leaflets. The collection is by now large and space consuming, and has been living in Phil and Gwen Evans' garage, overflowing sometimes into their living room. Their patience has been almost inexhaustible, but the time has come to find a long-term home for our equipment, and at last we have found a lock-up garage on Pinehurst Drive. Some minor works are being undertaken to ensure its security and dryness, but very soon Gwen will be able to put her car in the garage again for the first time in years! Our heartfelt thanks are due to them both for their generosity, and to Phil, too, for maintaining tools in a clean and sharpened condition, ready to be brought out (by him) for every working party.

Please support us again at our 2008 Open Day (further details are set out elsewhere in this Newsletter). I am grateful to those who have been involved over the past few weeks in detailed plans for the day, and to Community Network South West who, once again, are supporting us with financial partnership. Local environmental and other community groups will be there to let you know what they are doing for the local community and the opportunities they can offer for volunteering and training for local people. Tours of the LNR, pony rides, face painting, competitions and refreshments: there is something for everyone. Falconry displays will again provide the highlight of the day. I look forward to seeing you on the Day.

It is a delight to have Matt Barker in post as Assistant Ranger for Northfield. It's a huge job, and we can't expect to have a great deal of his time, but we have very much appreciated the time he has been able to spend with us on our Green Gyms and doing much needed survey work on site. We look forward to developing our education programme with him over the next few months. It is apparent that a Northfield Ranger with responsibility for the Rea corridor as well will result in a thinly spread resource. If we all think that we should have additional Ranger support from the City then we will need to lobby for it – so everyone, please rise to that challenge and do your little bit, please write or email your Local Councillor – the more we press the more likely that local needs will be met.

Amanda Cadman Chairman

The Friends of King's Norton Nature Reserve

A Buzzy Life Away from the Crowd

The complex colonies of the honeybee (*Apis mellifera*) present a picture that is so familiar to us it is difficult to imagine other modes of life for these apparently highly social insects. Yet of the 250 British bee species over 90% are actually solitary, with each female building a small nest without the assistance of workers, although some (cuckoo bees) make up for this lack of help by parasitising other species.



Solitary species nest in a range of places and their common names can provide a clue to their particular preferences. The tawny mining bee (*Andrena fulva*) exclusively nests underground, usually in lawns, and its excavations form a small mound of soil. Other mining species prefer vertical surfaces or bare earth on sunny slopes in which to excavate their nests.

Cavity nesting bees may use existing holes in walls, in dead wood, the stems of plants or even empty snail shells (some species of bee are as small as 4mm in length). The blue mason bee (*Osmia caerulea*) builds its nest in walls whilst the wool carder bee (*Anthidium manicatum*) gets its common name from its habit of lining its cavity nest cells with the hairs from the leaves of lamb's ear and mullein.

Carpenter bees tunnel into plant stems and wood and are fairly gregarious, but there is no actual cooperation amongst the individuals and they will each have their own tunnels and cells in wood or underground. Not all underground nests belong to solitary bees though.

The Friends of King's Norton Nature Reserve

Whilst clearing a patch of nettles during one of the summer "Green Gym" sessions, we came across a hole in the ground that was being used by a succession of bumblebees (*Bombus species*). The chances are this was an old



mouse burrow that a queen had identified as a suitable site back in the spring. Bumblebees will also use man-made holes as this picture shows.

We can encourage a variety of bee species onto the LNR by providing the range of habitats they require for nesting, such as creating patches of bare ground on south facing areas, providing

hollow stemmed vegetation and dead wood, as well as maintaining a diverse mix of flower species to provide food.

So next time you are out and about on the LNR take a look around you and see if you can find where the bees go after they have visited the flowers.

Do you have any questions about the wildlife that you have seen on the Kings Norton LNR? Please email kingsnortonlnr@aol.com if there is something you would like to see covered in a future edition of the newsletter.

Lisa.

Help the 'Friends' to stay in touch with you:

Have you emailed us yet? Please send us one 'hello' message, so that we can maintain up to date address lists & email data. Recent mail outs have been returned to us from too many email addresses – obviously our records need updating but only you, the members, can help us.

Please join our "Green Gym" working parties:

Every Tuesday, as much time as you can spare between 10.30 and 13.30. One hour (or more) of your time makes a real difference. Please let us know in advance on kingsnortonlnr@aol.com or by ringing a committee member.. Next dates: Every Tuesday in September, October, and November 2008.

Please visit our web site at www.fknnr.org.uk. Do visit it and let us know what you think!

The Friends of King's Norton Nature Reserve

Wildlife Watch: observations reported on or about the LNR over the past three months. Please send to LocalNature@aol.com

The wet weather over the past three months has dampened much of the activity across the local Nature Reserve. These conditions appear to have suited the breeding bird populations and numerous young of our common species could be seen in June and July including, Robin, Blackbird, Great Tit, Wren and Blue Tit. One family of Moorhen included three young but the rise and fall of the water in Wychall Reservoir did not suit the Coots whose nesting attempts were washed away. However, Mallards appear to have been quite successful with a maximum of 45 ducklings being recorded at one point in time. This latter number included a brood of 14, which was transferred from Wychall Primary School by the RSPCA and 6 from a garden in Woodglade Croft. Other wildfowl observations include the usual sightings of Canada Geese, Herons together with Tufted Duck and Great Crested Grebes. Kingfishers, Gt Spotted & Green Woodpeckers, Bullfinches and Grey Wagtails continue to be seen at both Merecroft Pool and Wychall Reservoir.

There have been reports of other mammals this year including Voles, Foxes and Grey Squirrels. The Mink have not been reported but may still be present since young ducklings did disappear throughout May and June. The occasional warm weather did bring out the butterflies and twelve different species were recorded this year mainly on Tuesdays during "Green Gym" activities.

Speckled Wood	<i>Lasiommata aegeria</i>	May - August	Widespread
Gatekeeper	<i>Pyronia tithonus</i>	June - August	Widespread but scarce
Meadow Brown	<i>Maniola jurtina</i>	July	Pinehurst
Red Admiral	<i>Vanessa atalanta</i>	July	Wychall Lane
Peacock	<i>Inachis io</i>	April	Wychall Meadows cycle path
Common Blue	<i>Polyommatus icarus</i>	June	Sheila's Meadow
Holly Blue	<i>Celastrina argiolus</i>	August	Wychall Reservoir
Large White	<i>Pieris brassicae</i>	July & August	Wychall Meadows cycle path
Small White	<i>Pieris rapae</i>	May - July	Widespread
Orange Tip	<i>Anthocharis cardamines</i>	May - August	Widespread but scarce
Brimstone	<i>Gonepteryx rhamni</i>	June	River Rea south bank
Small Skipper	<i>Thymelicus sylvestris</i>	July	BW Meadow

The Friends of King's Norton Nature Reserve

Local Nature Reserve Open Day



A general view of the stands and displays in 2007 (above)

The site has been prepared and the grass cut (below left) for September.

We look forward to another success in 2008 and good weather.
So do our small animal friends who we hope will be able to make an appearance.



The Friends of King's Norton Nature Reserve

Your local Nature Reserve invites you to....



...a free event about safeguarding sixty green acres in your locality!

11 am till 4pm: a full programme of events and activities for all ages including:

**Falconry displays
Ranger Service
Street Champions
bees and birds
animals
craft exhibits
guided walks
face-painting
local group exhibits
duck races**

for more details contact :
0121 624 3865
or email :
KingsNortonLNR@aol.com
website: **www.fknrr.org.uk**

Visit us on 13th September in the meadows - but of course the reserve is yours to enjoy at any time...



The Friends of King's Norton Nature Reserve

Open Day: Saturday, 13th September 2008: 11.00a.m. – 4.00 p.m.

Programme of Events

<u>Time Start</u>	<u>Time Finish</u>	<u>Event</u>	<u>Location</u>
11.15	12.00	LNR Guided Tour (Wychall Reservoir)	From Information Point
11.15	11.45	Animal Encounters for Children	Own stand between marquees
12.00	12.30	Falconry Display	Falconry Stand, adjacent main site
12.45	1.15	Duck Race	Start location on the River Rea
12.45	1.30	LNR Guided Tour (Merecroft Pool)	From Information Point
12.45	1.15	Scything Demonstration	BW Meadow
1.00	2.00	Planting Event	Areas alongside River Rea
1.30	2.00	Animal Encounters for Children	Own stand between marquees
2.15	3.00	LNR Guided Tour (Merecroft Pool)	From Information Point
2.15	2.45	Falconry Display	Falconry Stand, adjacent main site
3.15	4.00	LNR Guided Tour (Wychall Reservoir)	From Information Point
3.00	3.30	Duck Race	Start location on the River Rea
3.00	3.30	Scything Demonstration	BW Meadow
3.45		Raffle Prize Draw	FKNNR stand, main marquee
4.00		Close	

All finish times are approximate.

Activities ongoing throughout the day:-

Ranger Service	Bird Ringing
Bug people / Food chain making	Wood Turning
Pond-dipping	Stone Polishing
Make your own Winter hanging baskets	Bee Keeping
Pony rides	Junior Wardens' Litter Pick
Children's Face-painting	Catering

The Friends of King's Norton Nature Reserve

Working Party Activities



Green Gym stalwarts (L to R) Amanda, Liz, Jean, Graham, Peter, Debbie & June at work and rest near Wychall Reservoir – January 2008

Below: Brian & AC near West Hill Rd in March together with reedbed/coppicing



A job well done on the South Bank of the River Rea – March 2008

The Friends of King's Norton Nature Reserve

Working Party Progress

The working party activity over the past three months has been difficult to sustain due to the continual wet weather. Routine work programmes were followed to control invasive species and keep areas free of fallen timber and accumulated rubbish as required by the Management Plan but water and the occasional warm spell caused rapid growth. However, we have kept the bramble and nettle in the places we want them and a major exercise was completed to remove an enormous quantity of Himalayan Balsam from along the banks of the River Rea. Tree management, scything the grass, keeping paths open and the inevitable litter picking are tasks which have kept the "Green Gym" regulars as busy as ever. These activities have occurred right across the LNR in all areas accessible to the general public – such areas are now even more accessible thanks to some excellent work by David Hampson who replaced the styles on the footpath between Meadow Hill and Beaks Hill roads with gates and linked this right of way to the informal path serving Merecroft Pool.

Preliminary clearance work in the old orchard adjacent to Beaks Hill Rd has been undertaken and another dead hedgeline created. This should afford some protection to the area containing English Bluebells next to Merecroft Pool. Further work in this area is now planned for November. Further work has been undertaken in Sheila's Meadow and in Pinehurst since these areas have attracted some vandalism. Other 'technical' work has occurred along the Wychall Reservoir cycle path where two benches have been installed and the small reedbed enhanced. Fallen trees following one particularly windy week-end required some effort to cut up and remove and thanks go to the 'Birmingham & Solihull Midweek Conservation Volunteers' for assisting with this and other clearance activities. The garage now leased for storage purposes has been waterproofed and made secure but proper shelving and racks will now be required to enable our tool stock to be kept in first class condition.

The BW Meadow (corner of Wychall Lane & Meadow Hill) has seen a bloom of Ragwort this year and this has had to be dealt with (see Chairman's piece) and we can thank Council contractors for the spraying of five invasive clumps of Japanese Knotweed. Time will tell if we are on top of this job!

So plenty of recent activity to keep on top of the necessary work. More is required on the Nature Reserve so please come and join us – an hour of your time will make a real difference.

Phil Evans

The Friends of King's Norton Nature Reserve



Garage:

Progress on the equipment front: A proper tool storage and maintenance facility is to be developed in our 'lock up' situated on Pinehurst Drive (see Chairman's piece).

Better storage is now essential for all our hand tools and we may need to consider acquiring some power tools such as strimmers & grass cutters together with the necessary training. The wet weather has demonstrated the need for better grass control.

The Treasurer would welcome donations or sponsorship for this development.



A summer's day – 12 August 2008 – several heavy showers, and one wet Chairman (assisted by 'JP') attack the Ragwort invasion.

The Friends of King's Norton Nature Reserve

The Chairman's Piece continued - An Apology

In the Chairman's Report for 2007-08 that was presented at the AGM and subsequently published in Newsletter 16, I stated that we had received "almost no professional support during the year" although, I said, we had received Ranger oversight from Joe Hayden, District Parks Manager. My intention was to point out that we had not had on-site active participation from someone we could call 'our' Ranger - no regular Ranger input to our working party days, no possibility to develop effective work with schools on our patch during the long vacancy. My concern was absolutely not directed at individuals, but rather at a system that allows those individuals to be very thinly spread, facing additional pressures when posts lie vacant for many months.

The fact remains that my statement caused considerable upset to a number of hard-working Council staff that have worked in various ways on our behalf during the year (details provided by them below). I very much regret the hurt caused. I am happy therefore, to put the record straight by noting the support they have provided during the year:

- District Parks Manager attendance at quarterly Management Committee Meetings
- Over 110 items of correspondence processed
- Review of Friends' work programme to ensure compliance with City policies
- Feedback on the Friends' Vision for the extension of the LNR designation into Northfield from Birmingham City Council's (BCC) Main Drainage section, Nature Conservation Officer and Ecology Officer
- Parks input into planning and delivery of 2007 Open Day and publicity in 'Out and About'. BCC Events Section assistance. Ranger presence at Open Day
- Annual risk assessment for LNR completed
- Annual Grounds Maintenance activities implemented and monitored, and additional tree works undertaken at Merecroft. Additional safety works undertaken by BCC Main Drainage/Environment Agency
- Input and consultation on Access Strategy
- Provision of timber to facilitate construction of new gates and benches
- Support for and completion of 'Trees for Life' bid. Planting of standard oaks (Trees for Life) via Service Team
- BCC Environmental Wardens involvement on site
- Three Estates New Deal for Communities Wardens involvement on site

We should also note that there have been close contacts between West Midlands Police and the FKNNR during the year, and that we have received support from Veolia (Service Team) at our Clean Up events. Kings Norton LNR does receive significant and regular input from the City Council, the owner of this important area of Public Open Space. But the Friends can be very proud of the regular work they undertake to maintain and develop the site as set out in the Management Plan, and to publicise its attractions to a wider public via events such as the Open Day. Kings Norton is much the better for our joint efforts.

Amanda Cadman Chairman

The Friends of King's Norton Nature Reserve

FKNNR Diary Dates

Date	Location	Details
9 September	Wychall Meadows/Rea	Prepare for Open Day
13 September	Wychall Meadows	Open Day
16 September	River Rea – North Bank	Clearance/coppicing
23 September	River Rea – North Bank	Clearance/path/planting
30 September	River Rea – North Bank	Clearance/path/planting
7 October	Pinehurst Meadow	Clearance & planting
14 October	Pinehurst Meadow	Clearance & planting
21 October	BW Meadow	Tidy up & dead hedge
28 October	Sheila's Meadow	Tidy up & dead hedge
4 November	West Hill Rd entrance	Tidy up & dead hedge
11 November	Merecroft Pool	Bluebell protection work
18 November	Merecroft Pool	Bluebell protection work
25 November	Pinehurst Meadow	Tidy up & dead hedge repairs
2 December	Wychall Reservoir	Clearance/path/hedges
9 December	Merecroft/Old orchard area	Willow removal
16 December	Merecroft/Old orchard area	View point/path/planting
1 January	Merecroft/Old orchard area	Tidy up & new year drinks
6 January	River Rea Wychall Lane	Green Gym: Clearance work
13 January	River Rea Wychall Lane	Green Gym: Tree/bulb planting – Woodland Trust day
20 January	Wychall Reservoir	Green Gym: Willow coppicing

For working party days - please meet on site and wear stout footwear and old clothes. The appropriate equipment & materials will be provided. Please spare one or more hours of your time to assist us in progressing the Management Plan.

*Tuesday Working Parties (The 'Green Gym') – 10.30 to 13.30 hrs
All dates – weather permitting. Instruction provided.*

**Support our weekend working party on
14/15 February 2009**

Subscriptions

There are several outstanding membership renewals from June 2008. Please send a cheque to (+ donation? or ask for a standing order form from) the Treasurer if you wish to continue your membership. Please gift aid your subscriptions if you pay tax – this will provide additional resources for the 'Friends'. We do appreciate all financial support that helps protect and enhance Kings Norton LNR.

Tools wanted: If you have any unwanted garden or workshop tools, spanners, screwdrivers, files etc then please let one of the Committee know (or phone 0121 6286769). We will collect.

The Friends of King's Norton Nature Reserve

Corporate Days

As reported last year on 25 September 2007 we hosted a second group of volunteers from Bristol & West B Soc/Bank of Ireland under the banner of their "Give Together" scheme. We said that:

"The volunteers experienced a range of activities including scything, slashing and nettle clearance in an area previously cleared of scrub by 'Friends' working parties in 2006. Two amphibian ponds now exist in this wetland location now known as Sheila's meadow. However the main activity on this particular corporate day involved the planting of water and wetland plants, wild flowers and bulbs in and about the two ponds. Some wild flower seeds were also sown."

Shown here are two views of the ponds at the end of August 2008. We can now expect much amphibian activity next spring.

We are now trying for more corporate activity on the LNR in the next 6 months.



The Friends of King's Norton Nature Reserve



Alongside the cycle path beside Wychall Reservoir there are now two cleared areas complete with simple style benches. These were installed during "Green Gym" activities using local timber supplied free of charge from the Lickey Hills. Note the simple fence using cut Willow and other clearance material.

The FKNNR, 55 Wychall Lane, Kings Norton, B38 8TB Honorary Officers, Committee Members and Advisors (* Denotes Trustee of the Charity No 1122293)

Chairman	Amanda Cadman*	0121 624 3865
Secretary	Graham Layton*	0121 458 4712
Vice Chairman	David Human*	0121 458 1300
Treasurer	Phil Evans*	0121 628 6769
Membership Secretary	Jil Bromley	0121 244 7483
Education	Matthew Osland-Barker	0121 447 7106
Newsletter Editors	Amanda Cadman & Phil Evans	0121 624 3865
Northfield District Ranger	Matthew Osland-Barker	0121 447 7106

Committee Members

Jon Anson, Suzanne Ashley, Alan Bakewell*,
Brian Hewitt, Peter Cage, David Hampson,
Jenny Bodycote, Nicola Human.

Environmental Agency Hotline	0800 807060
West Midlands Police	0845 113 5000 ext. 7826 6363
Community Police	07769 882113
Anti-social behaviour Hotline	0121 303 1111
Street Champions	0800 0730528