

# The Friends of King's Norton Nature Reserve

## Newsletter 23 - Summer 2010

Registered Charity NO 1122293

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Flat lands to scrapes – A part of the area of land to the west of the current Wychall Reservoir contains water once more following the works undertaken for the 'Friends' by the Environment Agency.

The Newsletter of the FKNNR

£2 to non-members

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*Another reminder of last winter: The Pine Trees on the edge of Merecroft Pool on Christmas Day 2009. The trees received a present of several bird boxes at the end of June. A photo from the Ian Wood collection.*

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**OPEN DAY 2010** - For some months now a small group of us have been meeting regularly to draw up plans for the Open Day, which will take place on Saturday 11 September, 11 am – 4 pm. Do please put that date in your diary now. As well as the ever-popular falconry display, pony rides, animal petting and face painting we will be offering guided walks and a number of competitions involving local schools. We need lots more prizes for the tombola (especially for children) and a good number of volunteers on the day, especially during the setting-up period. If you can help, do please contact Graham Layton or me. Amanda Cadman.

### 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.fknnr.org.uk**

**Visit us on 11th September in the meadows - but of course the reserve is yours to enjoy at any time...**



## The Friends of King's Norton Nature Reserve

### Chairman's Notes

Who would have thought, this time last year that I would be writing now in praise of rain! After so many wet summers our long period of dry weather has been very welcome, allowing the Friends to progress various aspects of our work, but enough is enough, and I'm sure the LNR, like our gardens and allotments, will really benefit from the good soaking we are getting this week.

I'd like to start with a nice story showing that we have our younger supporters. At the end of April a member's son and his friend on their way to school, found a fire that had just been lit on the LNR. They rang home and the parent called the fire service who put out the fire. It's all too easy to bang on about the graffiti and damage caused by some local youngsters, and so I'm delighted to learn of this marvellous instance of teenage boys acting so responsibly on behalf of the nature reserve. Thank you so much lads!

The Friends' display stand and stall has started its round of summer outings, receiving a good deal of interest at CoCoMAD in Cotteridge Park and our own Kings Norton St Nicolas Festival. You will find us at the community stall of Kings Norton farmers' market on the Green on 14 August. It is clear that more people are aware of our presence now, though awareness raising is still a very important priority. We are grateful to Brian Hewitt for developing the new promotional leaflet for the LNR complete with a much-improved map.

The Tuesday Work Outs have been able to take place regularly during this period and the regular crews as always have my warm thanks for their dedication and hard work, as do the Birmingham and Solihull Midweek Conservation Volunteers. We have been joined on occasion by a number of new volunteers who, made redundant during the recession, have been pointed in our direction by the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (BTCV) Volunteer Centre in Digbeth. They have certainly helped us a great deal, and I hope that working on the LNR helps to restore confidence and teach new skills.

The Tracmaster power scythe has really come into its own this spring, allowing us to make major inroads into the long and tussocky grass and brambles across the British Waterways meadow. The whole area looks so much better now, and I'm delighted that we have also been able to move the bramble-covered brush pile from the centre of the field. Peter Cage and me also spent what was probably the hottest day of the year with the Tracmaster up on the Fields Millennium Green, again allowing the cutting of a great deal of long grass and brambles in a relatively short period. The Friends of the Millennium Green returned the compliment by coming to work on the LNR the following Tuesday. This is a splendid bit of reciprocal working and both groups are enormously pleased to have the services of the Tracmaster – thank you Kings Norton Ward Community Chest!

## The Friends of King's Norton Nature Reserve

Avoiding disturbance to nesting birds is always an important issue at this time of year, but we have been able to keep abreast of maintenance activities such as repairing and building up dead hedges and tidying paths along the cycle path by the reservoir, at Mercroft and Beaks Hill Triangle. We have sought to develop a circular path in Pinehurst Meadow and are in process of setting up a bird-feeding station there. The time of year for balsam bashing is with us again (actually pulling up the Himalayan balsam along the Rea to stop seeds spreading). The woodland path, which we created on the north bank of the Rea, has proved hugely successful and is much used. Despite inevitable traffic noises from Wychall Lane the path is extraordinarily serene and peaceful. A work-in-progress is our attempt to restore the north bank of the river by the stepping-stones so that the crossing can be used again. This is all looking very strange at present, comprising bits of the old horse shelter in Pinehurst Meadow that was demolished last year, but this will be covered by ballast and eventually soil and should, we hope, have the desired effect!

But the major work undertaken by the Tuesday Work Out team and the 'Solihull boys' this spring has seen us clearing a previously impenetrable area of scrub and willow to the rear of Wychall reservoir, allowing access to remove litter and enhance the wetland areas for wildlife, especially dragonflies. Yes, a good deal has been going on at Wychall. Additional funding has been granted from Kings Norton Ward Community Chest to allow us to erect new interpretation boards, to create reedbeds and to maintain and develop inaccessible areas of the LNR. If only we could now get the reservoir itself cleared of detritus and silt (something the Friends are unable themselves to undertake), we really would have a wetland jewel in Kings Norton's crown.

The Friends held their Annual General Meeting at St Nicolas Place on 17<sup>th</sup> May. A major item for discussion was our financial situation: in common with other organisations and individuals the Friends' finances have felt the effects of the recession in increased costs and reduced income. A major concern was the slow receipt of membership subscriptions and donations during the year. This was being addressed and indeed by now the situation has been much improved. Nevertheless, I should remind you all that subscriptions fell due on 1<sup>st</sup> June: if you have not yet paid your 2010-2011 subscription, please do so now!

At the AGM we said farewell to Friends' committee members Jenny Bodycote and Jon Anson and to membership secretary Jil Bromley, their services have been vital to our well being since the first setting-up of the Friends. A big thank you to all three Friends. Alistair Howard was elected as membership secretary with Val Saunders and Elizabeth Parker also joining the committee. After the formal meeting Brian Hewitt gave an illustrated presentation on the work undertaken on the reserve by the Friends over recent years.

Amanda Cadman      Chairman

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**Wildlife Watch:** observations reported on or about the LNR over the past three months. Please send to [Kingsnortonlnr@aol.com](mailto:Kingsnortonlnr@aol.com)



The dry and warm weather over the past few months did bring out the butterflies and twelve different species have been recorded so far this year (2010). Photos - On the 4<sup>th</sup> July at Wychall Reservoir when the EA was due to commence work the adjacent photos of a Small Tortoiseshell (above) and Small Skipper (left) were taken.

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

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Take a walk through the LNR at any time or join in with the Tuesday Work Outs activities, you never know what will appear, that is the message that we have relayed several times in these newsletters. Some of the volunteers on the Tuesday Work Out activities have regularly seen a Kingfisher on the River Rea as well as a good selection of other birds. Our Dawn Chorus walk this year took place on Saturday 8 May and a total of 27 species were recorded.

The Saturday walkabouts have also resulted in some good wildlife sightings and it would be unusual if something interesting was not observed be it flora or fauna. For example on Saturday the 26 June as well as a discussion on the blue flowers of Brooklime we saw plenty of activity at Merecroft Pool with an uncommon view of a Herring Gull and a superb fishing display from a Common Tern.

Also, on 26 June, Northfield Parks Ranger Matthew Osland-Barker led a late-evening Bat Walk around the Reserve. The conditions were perfect – warm, dry and still, ideal for insects as we found to our costs with mosquitoes – but where were our bats? We started in the 'Peafields' meadow area on the proposed extension, moving back to Wychall Reservoir and then on to Merecroft Pool. With bat detectors in our hands and eyes wide open we located a number of Pipistrelles along the side of the reservoir and on Burman's Drive, but fewer than we've seen in other years. This year there were no Daubenton's bats to be seen in our torchlight across Merecroft. This was very disappointing, but the party – including a number of young children – was undaunted and enjoyed the evening greatly.

Whilst on the mammal front the reports of Muntjac Deer have increased this year and we believe that some of the sightings may relate to a female Roe Deer at Wychall Reservoir. The dense growth there at this time of year will delay any further work to confirm this appearance. However, we have also received further reports concerning the activities of Red Fox, Badger and Grey Squirrel.

We must also comment on the development opportunities now being provided by an enhanced LNR. This usually manifests itself in the growth in the number of species using the site at various times of the year and the breeding success or otherwise of those present in the Spring. This year we have observed two productive holes occupied by Greater Spotted Woodpeckers and have witnessed the presence of a young Green Woodpecker. Reed Buntings bred for the first time for many years at Wychall Reservoir but unfortunately the nest was predated – Rat, Cat or Magpie we shall never know. This also applied to a nest of a Blackcap with three damaged eggs which was discovered on the banks of the Rea one Tuesday Work Out day. On the other

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hand we have witnessed many successful broods of Mallard (April to July) at both Wychall Reservoir and Merecroft Pool. Coot & Canada Geese bred at Merecroft whilst young Moorhen have been seen in the Wychall reedbeds. The residents i.e. Robin, Dunnock, Blackbird, Magpie, Carrion Crow, Great Tit, Blue Tit, Long Tailed Tit and Song Thrush have all produced fledged birds. A further success was a brood of Mistle Thrushes and the two adults with three young were seen on the mown grass area facing Downcroft Avenue soon after fledging. A growing number of Goldfinches have also been observed.

The fine weather has resulted in fine Butterfly observations as follows:

Speckled Wood Gatekeeper	<i>Pararge aegeria</i>	April - July	Widespread
Small Tortoiseshell Meadow Brown	<i>Pyronia tithonus</i>	May July	Wychall Reservoir BW meadow
Common Blue Ringlet	<i>Aglais urticae</i>	July	Wychall Reservoir
Orange Tip	<i>Maniola jurtina</i>	June - July	Pinehurst & BW meadows
Peacock	<i>Polyommatus icarus</i>	July	Sheila's & BW meadows
Comma	<i>Aphantopus hyperantus</i>	June - July	BW Meadow & Wychall Reservoir
Large White	<i>Anthocharis cardamines</i>	May - June	Widespread
Small White	<i>Inachis io</i>	June July	Wychall meadows BW meadow
Brimstone	<i>Polygonia c-album</i>	June - July	Wychall & BW meadows
Small Skipper	<i>Pieris brassicae</i>	June	Wychall Reservoir
	<i>Pieris rapae</i>	May - June	Widespread
	<i>Gonepteryx rhamni</i>	May	River Rea south bank but scarce this year
	<i>Thymelicus sylvestris</i>	July	BW Meadow & Wychall Reservoir

On 1 June ten members of the 'Friends' took a day off to visit Upton Warren LNR between Droitwich and Bromsgrove, managed by the Worcestershire Wildlife Trust. This popular wetland reserve is divided by the River Salwarpe, with the Moors Pool to the north and the Flashes (which is saline, a relic of Droitwich's salt mining past) to the south. Despite a rather damp and murky day we were able to see a tremendous number of birds – from the Cetti's warbler that greeted our arrival in the car park to the real triumph of the day, a Bittern hiding up in the reedbed opposite our hide. Obviously from our point of view this was an excellent opportunity to check out the possibilities for

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developing areas on our own patch for the benefit of waterfowl, waders and reed-loving species and we came back full of ambition.



Greater Canada Geese *Branta Canadensis*. Successful breeders again at Merecroft Pool.



One Short-tailed Vole disturbed in the BW meadow by the Tracmaster in May.

**Ranger Changes:** In the last newsletter we drew attention to the splendid work the Northfield Ranger, Matthew Osland-Barker, was developing with various local schools, in particular working with students from Baverstock School to develop the LNR within the terms of our Management Plan. All the pupils of Fairway School have just spent a special science day on site undertaking small group activities such as photography, drawing, nature hunts, looking for different plants and flowers and pond dipping. Just as we felt the educational side to the reserve's development was really getting moving, therefore, it is a shock to learn that Matthew, while retaining a job after the current round of Ranger reorganisation, is being transferred to Sutton Park with immediate effect. He is to be replaced by Adam Noon, who has been working at the Shire Country Park. It is clear that Adam is an excellent, indeed award-winning, ranger, but it will take him some time to build up the many contacts and bank of local information that Mat has built up over several years working in and around Kings Norton. We are also losing Joe Hayden from the Lickey Hills base: he has been appointed Ranger Service Manager for the whole City (congratulations Joe!), and will be based at Kings Heath Park. His replacement as Constituency Parks Manager for Northfield has yet to be announced. So with regret and with many thanks for all their fantastic support over the years we say farewell to Joe and Matthew, and look forward to meeting Adam.

**Stop Press:** Kings Norton LNR now on Facebook courtesy of Ged Hickman. Please check it out.

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Red, White and Blue .... with a dash of Yellow! May Flowers.



Red Campion 25<sup>th</sup> May 2010 - Wyhall Cycle Route



Ranunculus 1<sup>st</sup> May 2010 - Wyhall Reservoir



Bluebell 25<sup>th</sup> May 2010 - Merecroft Pool



Buttercup 25<sup>th</sup> May 2010 - Beaks Hill Triangle



The result of working party activity - A redefined path with wood chip surface and a hazel & Hornbeam fence line. The meadow in the Beaks Hill Triangle in May with a show of Buttercups

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### The work of the Environment Agency 2010

You will no doubt have seen the work being undertaken by the Environment Agency on the dam at Wychall Reservoir in order to make it capable of resisting erosion in the event of a 'probable maximum flood' (this was fully explained in the last newsletter). This work has now been completed, leaving us with a rather higher dam and a reinforced spillway. The original topsoil has been spread back across the dam and a wildflower seed mix has been sown. A gate to the north side of the dam has been added into the fence line. And now, rather earlier than had been expected, the Environment Agency has men and plant on site on the north-western part of the reservoir site developing for us a series of scrapes (shallow, shelving pools) to be fed from the old mill leat to the north of the site at times of high water (see front cover photo); excess water will feed into an existing reedbed area. These scrapes and watercourses should attract a wide range of waterfowl and insect life, immeasurably enhancing the wildlife potential of the site. A 'trash trap' will be erected in the main inlet stream to the reservoir to trap larger debris before it can enter the open water area.



From flat featureless plateau to an area of scrapes: July 6<sup>th</sup> Left and July 18<sup>th</sup> right. Both shots looking eastwards. This environmental enhancement activity will provide the opportunities for greater biodiversity at the Wychall Reservoir site.

**Subscriptions:** *All to note:* Your 2010 subscription to the FKNNR was due on the 1<sup>st</sup> June. Thanks to the 105 who have renewed already. There are several outstanding membership renewals from June 2009! Please send a cheque to (+ donation? or ask for a standing order form from) the Treasurer, 21 Woodglade Croft, 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.

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### Wychall Scrapes & Pools



A land transformation by machine during twelve days in July 2010.

A succession of three scrapes leading from west to east in a former bed of nettles. The area will now need to be planted out with suitable plants and possibly reeds. A small woodland area can also be created.



The cuts by the excavator disclosed the bottom of the Reservoir when it covered a much larger area and we suspect that a large amount of clay was spread over this end when the first of the flood defence works were carried out at the eastern dam end. Many fresh water mussel shells are evident and a mystery **anchor!** If anyone can explain why this heavy-duty item was ever needed in the Reservoir then we would like to know.



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### Wychall Reservoir Dam



Progress works from May to July 2010 as the dam height is raised particularly on the side nearest Pilkingtons.

The strength of the structure was also strengthened by sheet piling. The middle section is now lower and will act as a spillway. A track way across the top gives access to the rear of the Reservoir via gates in both the north and south fence lines.

The final position is shown in the bottom photograph. We must now wait for the site to 'green up' again.

The dam area can be envisaged as a superb wildflower meadow due to its position facing west. We trust that we can get the correct management regime in place.



## The Friends of King's Norton Nature Reserve

### Some of the photographs sent to us by the membership.



We always welcome photographs of the local Muntjac Deer.

February 2010 and the smallest of deer grazes in a local garden. Comparison with the size of the family cat immediately gives us the scale of the animal.

Steve Shaw provided the photos from Pensford Road.



April 2010 and Brian Hewitt glimpses the Green Woodpecker in Pinehurst Meadow whilst a Heron is seen in trees at Wychall Reservoir in June 2009 by Phil Evans.

## The Friends of King's Norton Nature Reserve

### FKNNR Diary Dates

Date	Location	Details
7 September	Wychall Lane Meadows	Open Day preparations
11 September	Wychall Lane Meadows	Open Day
14 September	Pinehurst Meadow	Tidy up & dead hedge repairs
21 September	Camp Pub entrance	Tidy up & dead hedge
28 September	Wychall Reservoir Rear	Clearance/path/hedges
5 October	BW Meadow	Tracmaster, clear bramble
9 + 10 October	Popes Lane area	A big clean up; litter pick/coppicing
12 October	Wychall (Popes Lane end)	Clearance/Prune/log piles
19 October	Sheila's Meadow	Tidy up, scythe & dead hedge
26 October	Wychall Reservoir Rear	Clearance/path/planting
2 November	Pinehurst Meadow	Tidy up, tree work & grass cut
9 November	Wychall Reedbeds	Prune trees/Reedbed Maintenance
16 November	Wychall Meadows	Comfrey corner/Dead hedges
23 November	Old Orchard area	Prune trees/Dead hedges
30 November	Wychall Reservoir Rear	Clearance/path/planting
7 December	River Rea – North Bank	Path clearance & planting
14 December	BW Meadow	Tracmaster, clear bramble
21 December	Wychall Reservoir Rear	Clearance/path/hedges
1 January	Merecroft/Old orchard area	Tidy up & new year drinks

For working party days - please meet on site and wear stout waterproof 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 LNR Management Plan.

*Tuesday Work Outs (TWOs Working Parties) – 10.30 to 13.30 hrs.  
All dates – weather permitting. Instruction provided.*

**Please support our Weekend Tidy up on 9<sup>th</sup> & 10<sup>th</sup> October  
(start at 10.30 hours).**

### FKNNR Monthly Guided Walks

Once a month every month at 10.30 to 12.00 a.m. Meet at the corner of Wychall Lane & Meadow Hill Road (The BW Meadow entrance).

For all walks - please meet on site and wear stout waterproof footwear and oldish clothes (It can be wet and muddy!). We will alternate the walks between the South side of the LNR and the River Rea/Wychall corridor.

September 11 / October 30 / November 27 / January 1 (see above).

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**A May Tuesday Work Out in the BW Meadow and Brian Hewitt the ex School Master practises becoming proficient at his new career of Tracmaster.**



**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*
Secretary	Graham Layton*
Vice Chairman	David Human*
Treasurer	Phil Evans*
Membership Secretary	Alistair Howard
Education	Matthew Osland-Barker
Newsletter Editor	Phil Evans*
Trustee	Alan Bakewell*
Committee Members	Suzanne Ashley, Anne Price, Brian Hewitt, Val Saunders Peter Cage, David Hampson, Elizabeth Parker, Nicola Human. Co-opted: Ged Hickman.

<i>Environmental Agency Hotline</i>	<i>0800 807060</i>
<i>City Parks Department Call Centre</i>	<i>0121 464 8728</i>
<i>Northfield Ranger</i>	<i>0121 447 7106</i>
<i>West Midlands Police</i>	<i>0845 113 5000 ext. 7826 6363</i>
<i>Community Police</i>	<i>07769 882113</i>
<i>Anti-social behaviour Hotline</i>	<i>0121 303 1111</i>

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