

Newsletter 35 - Summer 2014

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Mute Swan, three cygnets and the rain at Merecroft Pool on the last day of May 2014. The female Swan is actually standing on the bottom of the pool! (*PRE*).



The Friends of Kings Norton Nature Reserve

Chairman's Notes.

August passes by and the end of summer approaches. The brilliant fine weather has now deteriorated into gloom and drizzle but the Local Nature Reserve looks well and relatively healthy. I can commend the wildlife report later in this newsletter since it demonstrates that the combination of good weather and an improving habitat does wonders for us all, especially the butterflies and moths. However, there is always room for improvement and a gallant band of volunteers strives every Tuesday to maintain and develop all parts of the Reserve for the benefit of people and wildlife. Come and join in.

So what are the current challenges? The usual battles are being fought against invasive species and anti-social behaviour. The treatment of Mute Swans, as reported elsewhere, proves that certain members of our own species also need to be treated as invasive. The quality of the River Rea needs to be improved and Wychall Reservoir itself now requires some serious work. Issues surrounding the dams at both Wychall and at Merecroft Pool refuse to go away and the development of the next five-year Management Plan for the Reserve seems to be stuck within the reducing boundaries of Local Government. The designation of the Peafields extension area as part of the LNR seems to be an intractable problem for the City due to a diminishing staff resource. Discussions proceed with the Environment Agency (EA) who have, yet again, mown the grassland on the Wychall dam at the wrong time, several on-site meetings, emails to Agency staff, all to no avail. We shall persevere and get the wildflower meadow we deserve despite the know-it-all EA sowing the seed and then ignoring its proper management.

So what can we do as 'Friends' of the Reserve? We can continue to lobby for the improvements we require – please write to your local councillor or respond to the circular from our MP. Do spread the word. Do take an active interest in the Reserve by visiting or taking part in our activities – yes, volunteer, there is always something you can do. Send the Treasurer a donation – put a smile on his face. Report that anti-social behaviour, not to a Committee member – but to the Police – we have a good relationship with them and the Community Support Officers, and it is better to use them than to lose them. Report pollution incidents to the Environment Agency. Remember 0800 80 70 60.

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So what about recent events? The spring event we held in the Waterways meadow was a great success. It transpired it was 10 years to the day since one Alan Bakewell, supported by Shirley, called upon the locality to work together on a cleanup of Wychall Reservoir. That single event led onto the inevitable formation of the 'Friends' and the formal designation of the area as a Local Nature Reserve. A lot has happened in those ten years and we will recall some of the achievements in the next newsletter. The AGM has come and gone. We have visited two other locations to learn about woodlands and grasslands for our own benefit. Your Tuesday working parties have continued to keep the place in order and the battles against litter have, I believe, started to produce that cleaner environment we all desire. The City's initiative against inconsiderate dog owners has also had a noticeable effect. The change in the management of the grazing meadows is also producing positive benefits and the sight of horses in situ again certainly pleases many including my own grandchildren. Moves are afoot for us to have an interest in part of those meadows – watch this space.



The Spring event and Alan & Shirley Bakewell cut the cake to celebrate 10 years of the FKNNR. We owe Alan a pint or two. Yours truly in attendance. (AC)

Finally, a mystery that has to be addressed. Recent surveys of the River Rea show a downward trend in its condition. Why? Work undertaken in the Northfield area appears to have eliminated those bad sewerage events and work up at Longbridge has definitely reduced the flotsam. Maybe the EA will be the key partner after all and can assist to solve this one? Thank you for your continued support.

Phil Evans, Chairman.

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Wildlife Report – Summer 2014.

The summer of 2014 has certainly resulted in large numbers of invertebrates and we can report a bumper year for Butterflies (see below). Insects have been plentiful and thus many bird species had very early broods of young. The confirmed early breeders were Robin, Blackbird, Dunnock, Long-tailed, Blue and Great Tits with Mallard not very far behind. In fact as August progressed there were still new broods of Mallard appearing to add to the numbers of young Moorhen at Merecroft, Wychall and the new scrape in the Peafields extension area. Up to 50 Mallard Ducks have been observed on Merecroft at one time where one pair of Coot also had a successful breeding season. The star attraction was undoubtedly the successful breeding of a pair of Mute Swans on Merecroft Pool with three cygnets appearing in May – then there was tragedy, but more of that elsewhere in this Newsletter.

Returning to the other many and varied birds on the reserve, the first Chiffchaff was seen on 15th March and on 5th April a Blackcap was heard singing for the first time. Greater Spotted Woodpeckers were much in evidence earlier in springtime, drumming on trees and demonstrating their characteristic undulating flight. Kestrels seem to be being sighted more often and it is now unusual if at least one Buzzard is not seen soaring over the Reserve during the afternoon. There have been plenty of sightings, and sounds, of Nuthatches right across the Reserve and large numbers of Corvids continue to use Wychall Reservoir as an overnight roosting location. Redpolls were observed on the edge of the Reserve and visited bird feeders in at least two local gardens – very unusual summer visitors indeed. A Cormorant was observed fishing in Merecroft Pool on the last day of May and it can be assumed now that this location will be visited by this species on a more frequent basis. Keep watching!

It has also been a good year for flowers, but unfortunately also for Himalayan Balsam, which appeared all over the Reserve particularly in dense patches where none had been seen before – thus action to remove it has been an FKNNR Working Party priority. The Waterways meadow in July was the home for many flowering thistles that turned one corner in particular into a sea of

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beautiful purple. Isolated Ragwort plants and Rosebay Willow Herb also added to the colourful scene. A look at Sheila's ponds and the adjacent area in spring and early summer revealed the usual Snowdrops on the bank which were followed by a mass of Red Campion (an important plant for wildlife – its nectar attracting hoverflies and butterflies) – with various white Umbellifers and Yellow Flag Iris in the damp ground. It had become a bit muddy but the colourful scene is always well worth a look. Early summer also saw the amazing pink climbing roses (garden escapees) that have reached incredible heights by clambering up some of the neighbouring trees. They burst into flower producing the most jaw-dropping display.



Late spring and a solitary Grey Heron seeks that meal of a frog in the small pool in Pinehurst meadow (BH).

Spring butterflies were out and about in good numbers from the second week of March. Commas, Brimstones and Speckled Woods regularly came to notice but the most plentiful were Peacocks. Eight were counted in one small, sheltered spot near Merecroft Pool. Small Tortoiseshells began to show themselves from 16th March, the first observation being in Pinehurst. Garden thermometers soared in late spring and into summer and many

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Peacocks, Small Tortoiseshells and Brimstones took advantage of the warmth. A Twin Spot Quaker Moth was seen on a fence post. April did bring some chilly mornings but the days began to warm up during the second week and Orange Tips made an appearance, initially in Sheila's meadow, and then throughout the Reserve over the next few weeks. The first Large White was seen on the 14th April with Small Whites and Green Veined Whites appearing over the next few days. All the other spring butterflies continued to crop up in appreciable numbers during the month. Common moths recorded were Early Grey and the ubiquitous Angle Shades.

It became clear during early May that this was going to be a bumper year for butterflies. It is some years since they have been in such numbers. Holly Blues were on the wing in the Waterways meadow on 19th May and were joined by Common Blues on the 21st. A stroll through the Peafields extension on the same day revealed Latticed Heath Moths in abundance in the long grass and two Popular Hawk Moths on low foliage. On 26th May a Red Admiral was seen on the mown path and a Scalloped Hazel Moth rested nearby. Nests of caterpillars of both Peacocks and Small Tortoiseshells defoliated nettle clumps at the sides of the path.

The first week of June saw Ringlets, Common Blues and Red Admirals flying in the Waterways meadow in company with Chimney Sweeper and Burnet Companion Moths. Small and Large Skipper Butterflies were observed near the Camp Lane entrance. Ghost Moths hovered over the long grasses at dusk. A Humming Bird Hawk Moth was seen feeding on the Red Valerian flowers in a garden approximately 400m from the reserve. A rare sight indeed! Butterflies continued to fly in large numbers for the remainder of June supplemented by the emergence of Hedge and Meadow Browns from the middle of the month.

In the Peafields, White Butterflies visited the Horseradish in order to lay their eggs and Burnet and Cinnabar Moths flew amongst the stems of grass. Ringlets fed on bramble blossom in Waterways meadow where Commas and Holly Blues searched for other wild flowers. Damselflies danced around the banks of Merecroft giving dazzling blue displays. Other moths noticed whilst walking through the Reserve included the Heart and Dart, Yellow Underwing, Herald, Small Magpie and Miller. In July, the weather was hot and dry for the whole month. Scorching days may not

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agree with everyone but the butterflies love them and have clearly flourished judging by their abundance. Dragonflies have also thrived and it is a pleasure to encounter so many hawking around the Reserve. During each of the last four years a single specimen of a Marbled White Butterfly has turned up on the Waterways meadow. This year seemed to be drawing a blank until 5th July when, again, a solitary individual was seen by the Camp Lane entrance. Moths which have been spotted this month are the Single Dotted Wave, Silver Y, Peppered Moth, Purple Thorn, Mother of Pearl, Pebble Prominent and Shaded Broad Bar.

So we come to the end of an eventful summer. The development of the habitat on the Reserve continues but I think we can say that after ten years of conservation activity we are now beginning to see the fruits of our labours. We repeat, keep watching and recording.

BH, PB, JB, BE, PRE.



The Cormorant at Merecroft Pool on 31st May 2014. A good location for small fish? (PRE).

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WatersideCare & FIN.

We reported in that last newsletter that the 'Friends' had joined the two above organisations. Several surveys have now been undertaken on the River Rea with some revealing results. Whilst water quality remains consistently poor in terms of turbidity, pH and ammonia readings there has been a dramatic reduction in life content. We were pleasantly surprised in March that we found plentiful numbers of 10 different taxa. By August that number had dropped to only 5 although we did discover a lone Stickleback.

The BMWP (? Yes! Google it!) Index has dropped from 41.9 to 16.6. Some serious thought is being given to this issue. Several other 'Friends of groups' along the Rea and its tributaries have also become members, and we welcome the 'joined up' nature of the statistics that will be achieved for Birmingham's waterways.



In the Rea.

A survey in progress and H&S considerations require plenty of attention to clean hands and equipment following such activity. The Rea is far from being a trout stream yet. For a sight of the April process & survey form please turn over

STOP PRESS

- Motorbikes: Noted again using the Wychall cycle path. If seen, do not delay, call the Police.
- Lease: Soon to be signed for an area of a grazing meadow plus shed for the use by FKNNR as a tree & plant nursery and for educational purposes. All those gardeners can now volunteer without fear.
- Garage Sale: A sale of unwanted bits and pieces raises £250 for FKNNR funds. Anyone want to do a repeat?
- Large Corsican Pine tree: This had to be felled on Wychall Lane. The cut wood was left for our use but disappeared between 12.30 and 14.30 on the 14 August. Any witness please contact Amanda or the Police.
- Any pollution incident: Please call 0800 80 70 60 immediately.

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Report on Volunteer training, Summer 2014

Volunteers have had a number of opportunities over the past few months to enhance their surveying skills on the Reserve.

On 25 March Ellen Pisolkar of The Wildlife Trust & FIN supervised our first attempt at identifying the invertebrates in the Rea with our 'survey pack' of a long-handled net, trays for our finds and magnifying glasses to help us identify them against a clear checklist. We have chosen a site just upstream of the footbridge at the bottom of Meadow Hill Road. The surveyor with wellies and the net has to kick up the river floor over a measured length of the river so that whatever was living there was caught in the net. This was then emptied into a tray of water to watch what was scudding around. We also searched with the net around the water's edge and picked up and inspected stones from the bottom of the river, our searches identified a good range of invertebrates, with high populations of Olive Mayfly and Plume Midge larvae, together with high numbers of Freshwater Limpets on the underside of the smooth cobbles. The creatures most sensitive to organic pollution were the Caseless Caddis fly larvae. In all we found evidence of 10 species of invertebrate, showing, so Ellen told us, that the Rea's water was of "moderate quality" on our patch. This process is to be repeated three or four times a year in the same location. Why did we not find the Bullhead fish, which our neighbours at Kings Norton Park have found just downstream of us?

We have also been taught recently to measure the chemical health of the water. On 3 June Lee Copplestone of WatersideCare showed a group of us how to take a sample of the water and to test its Temperature, Turbidity (sediment/cloudiness), Ammonia and pH (TTAP). This testing should take place on a monthly basis and the figures recorded. Once again, the results of our testing showed that the water in the Rea as it flows through the LNR was of moderate quality. While its upstream travels will of course affect the water quality, we aim to ensure that everything we do helps to keep the river in the best possible condition.

Friday 20 June was wonderfully warm and sunny, giving ideal conditions for Andrew Nabbs and me to learn how to monitor the grasses and wildflowers in our meadows. Specifically we were

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looking at the new meadows created last year as part of the Birmingham and the Black Country NIA.

Wildflower-rich hay from an SSSI near Bromsgrove had been strewn at various locations across the City and it was now time to see what seeds had set from that process. Our tutor was Professor Ian Trueman from the University of Wolverhampton, a renowned plant biologist with a particular enthusiasm for grasses. The main training took place on Kings Norton Park where a previously close-mown area of grass was now being managed with a yearly conservation cut. Ian taught us to assess the general quality and composition of the vegetation by taking a pre-determined and structured walk around and through the meadow, noting the existence of different plant species and assessing their frequency on a DAFOR scale (*Dominant, Abundant, Frequent, Occasional, Rare*). We also marked out a two-metre square on a pathway through the meadow, and got down on hands and knees to identify all the plants in that area. Plants that are positive indicators of a good meadow are Field Scabious, Yellow-rattle, Orchids, Common Knapweed, Ox-eye Daisy, Cuckooflower, Betony, Great Burnet, Meadowsweet and Ragged Robin, all of which (except the orchids I believe) can be found at various locations across the LNR. **BUT** .. when we had finished our monitoring on the Park we took Ian to see our new NIA meadow area -- in fact the spoil heap from the digging of the new scrape in the Peafields. The meadows are quite plant-rich, including Yellow-rattle for which we had scattered seed the previous year, and a splendid display of *Lathyrus arvensis*, the Field Pea no less! However, a structured walk around our new meadow area, while showing obvious signs of gaining some interesting plants from the strewn hay, also exhibited a massive array of plants which are negative indicators in meadowland, showing that the soil here is over-fertile and must have its fertility much reduced if we are to ever to develop it: Broad-leaved Dock, Creeping Buttercup and Spear Thistle. The seed heads on the docks were about to scatter their load and, as we promised Ian, we cut them down before that could happen. We now need to scythe the whole area twice and Ian is sure that the docks should be dealt with once and for all with glyphosate! Then perhaps we can have a new meadow to be proud of!

Amanda Cadman, Volunteer Co-ordinator

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Survey Results Form

Name of stream		River Rea, Wychall Lane		Date(dd/mm/yyyy)	25.03.2014			
Location Details		Off Wychall Lane, foot of Meadow Hill Rd and west of footbridge		Surveyor name(s)				
				A. Cadman, P. Evans, Graham Layton, Peter Cage, Brian Hewitt, E. Pisolkar, Alex Hale				
Postcode or grid reference		SP04285 79089 B38 8TB		Length of survey (Time – if less than 3 min)				
Substrate in stream channel Please tick the main ones		Bedrock	Boulders (>25 cm)	Cobbles (6-25 cm)	xGravel or Sand (0.2 - 6 cm)	>Silt or Clay (No particles visible)	>Organic material	
Vegetation Cover Please circle/underline ONE value for each veg type below:				Invasive Species Please tick any that are present				
Emergent plant cover: none 1-30% 31-60% 61-100%				Japanese Knotweed				Himalayan Balsam
Submerged aquatic plant cover: none 1-30% 31-60% 61-100%				Azolla				Floating Pennywort
Filamentous algae cover: none 1-30% 31-60% 61-100%				Other:				
Sewage fungus cover: none 1-30% 31-60% 61-100%				Comments:				
Overhanging trees / shrubs: none 1-30% 31-60% 61-100%								
Has there been any rain in the past 24 hrs? please circle/underline ONE: none light heavy				Colour of water				xClear >Brown Green Other:
Describe any pollution/ litter:				isolated pieces of litter				
Water Quality Measures: e.g. Ammonia, pH, Conductivity								
Notes (e.g. any changes since last survey, changes to survey methodologies, etc.)								

Animals

For each species, please indicate the number of individuals using the relevant letter code:
A = 1-10 B = 11-50 C = 51-100 D = More than 100

	Tick	No.		Tick	No.		Tick	No.
Cased Caddisfly larva(Trichoptera)	-		Water Scorpion(Ameghinidae)	-		Other animals		
Tortoise Cased Caddisfly larva(Trichoptera)	-		Freshwater 'Shrimp'(Gammaridae)	x	C	Predatory fly larva		1
Caseless Caddisfly larva(Trichoptera)	x	A	Water Slater(Aseletrisp.)	x	B	Wandering snail shell		1
Stonefly larva(Plecoptera)	-		Water Mite (Acari)	-				
Alderfly larva(Zygoptera)	-		Leech(Viridinea)	x	B			
Damselfly larva(Zygoptera)	-		Flatworm (Tricladida)	x	B			
Dragonfly larva(Anisoptera)	-		Worm(Oligochaeta)	x	B			
Olive Mayfly larva (Serratidae)	x	D	Plume Midge larva(Chironomidae)	x	D			
Blue-winged Olive Mayfly larva (Stenonema)	-		Blackfly larva(Simuliidae)	-				
Flat-bodied Mayfly larva (Psephenidae)	-		Cranefly larva(Tipulidae)	-				
Water Beetle(Coleoptera)	-		Freshwater Limpet	x	C			
Riffle Beetle(Embiidae)	-		Pea Mussel(Sphaeriidae)	x	I			
Diving Beetle larva(Dytiscidae)	-		Ram's-horn Snail(Planorbidae)	-				
Backswimmer(Nesobembryidae)	-		Wandering Snail(Radix bathica)	-				
Lesser Water Boatman(Cerithiidae)	-		Bladder Snail(Physidae)	-				
Pond Skater(Gerridae)	-							

Results

We found a good range of invertebrates with high populations of Olive mayfly and plume midge larvae. High numbers of Freshwater Limpets on the underside of the smooth cobbles. The creatures most sensitive to organic pollution were the caseless caddis larvae.

Number of taxa: 10

BMWP Score: 41.9

A BMWP score of:

Less than 10
11 to 40
41 to 70
71 to 100
More than 100

Very poor water quality
poor water quality
moderate water quality
good water quality
very good water quality



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Welcome to spring event.

Saturday 17th May was a bright, sunny and very warm day. It was also the date for our 'Welcome to Spring' event, held on the Waterways Meadow at the junction of Meadow Hill Road and Wychall Lane.

The event started very early with the dawn chorus walk. Covering many parts of the Reserve, the intrepid group identified 35 different species of bird plus a Muntjac deer. The walk then finished with a BBQ breakfast – what a great start to the day. Our main event started on the meadow mid-morning with many gazebos housing local groups, national groups as well as some fundraising activities. Every stall was well attended including; making bird feeders with Kings Norton Nursery, investigating what's in the water with Waterside Care, the Canal and Rivers Trust, the botanical Treasure Hunt, the RSPB and the Rangers Service, to name but a few.

During the day several guided walks were taken which was a great opportunity to share with Friends and local residents the latest changes on the Reserve. As popular as ever the duck race attracted a big field and adding to the excitement our local MP started the race – fortunately no false starts to contend with. During the day a demonstration of Tai Chi took place and classes are now being held as part of the Active Parks programme.

The Friends stall included a timeline showing the milestones achieved in the 10 years of the FKNNR. This was a great reference for us all to appreciate how much hard work and effort has been put into the Reserve over the years and as noted in the Chairman's comments at the start of this newsletter a fantastic cake was presented to Alan Bakewell. A small token to someone who has led a massive change to our local environment. Thank you once again, Alan.

The day did not end there. In the evening a bat walk was undertaken around some of the regular bat haunts on the Reserve. Several species of bats were seen and heard such as the Common Pipistrelle, Noctule and Daubentons. A lot of very positive feedback as always on these popular walks.

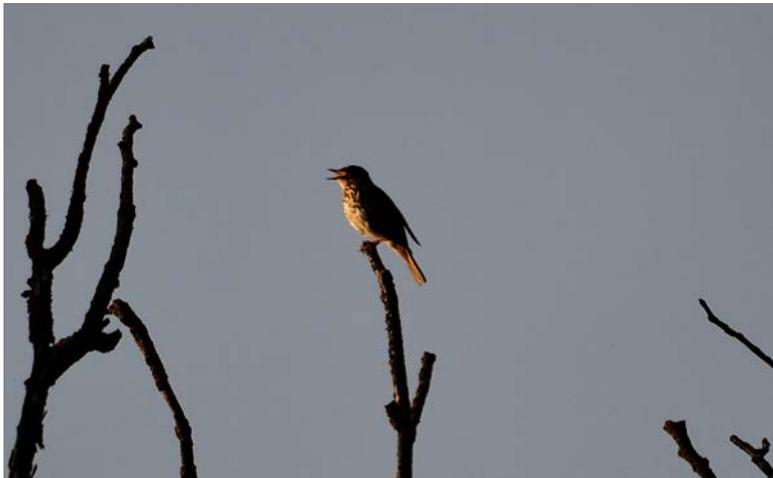
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Two of the activities at the 'Welcome to spring' event involving those younger generations who will inherit the delights of the Reserve (AN).

It was another successful day on the Meadow, welcoming the spring with friends and neighbours of Kings Norton. Throughout the day contributions were made at the various events and activities, and with the sales at the refreshments tent, tombola etc. we made over £300 profit, which will be invested back into the Reserve. Finally many thanks to everyone who made the day happen, to everyone who helped on the stalls and also to everyone who attended the day.

Your Committee



The sound of spring before our event. Wychall Lane and a Song Thrush monopolises the Reserve with his song. (PRE).

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Education Update – Summer 2014.

The summer term has seen the introduction of two new children's user groups to the Reserve. Firstly, a group of home tuition parents and children from the region including: Worcester, Moseley, Edgbaston and North Staffordshire. There were six families and twelve children ranging from those in buggies to teenagers. The tour included the Waterways Meadow, Sheila's Meadow, Beaks Hill Triangle and finished at Merecroft Pool. Here time was spent pond dipping for which they had come very well prepared, with all "creatures" being safely returned to the water at the end of the session. The group very kindly made a donation to the reserve of £19. Many thanks.

The second new group were Year 10 pupils from ARK Kings School, seven boys and one girl. These children receive extra support due to behavioural or emotional difficulties. The children had requested a "day out" to mark the approaching end of term and had suggested Alton Towers! The school's Principal (who I had met previously to discuss the Reserve) suggested in return that they would benefit more from a day on our Reserve! The group walked, complete with picnic, from Shannon Road to the Beaks Hill entrance, then on the cycle path to the end of the Reserve and onto the Rea Valley section where they stopped for lunch and a few ball games. Teachers reported that the children had a great time. If nothing else they got a lot of exercise as they then walked the same route back to school.

Both these groups were on the Reserve when the Swans and their cygnets were regularly crossing Beaks Hill Road to sit and feed on the well-kept lawn of the "For Sale" bungalow. The children were fascinated by this and concerned for the safety of the birds away from the Reserve. [See next article – Ed].

Current users, Kings Norton Boys School will have a new Year 7 Special Needs intake in September and it is planned that they and the current Year 7 pupils will again use the Reserve on a Tuesday – joining a 'TWO' working party and on a Thursday for another activity. Kings Norton Nursery and Children's Centre continue to make good use of the Reserve and as part of their recent "Dads Week" I took a group of fathers and children along the cycle path from the West Hill Road entrance to half way along the reservoir.

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As ever there was a lack of awareness of the extent of the Reserve. The improved weather meant that as a detour we took the woodland path by the sharks tooth weir, which was flowing fast with lots of debris trapped in the teeth. Two of the children had been on the Reserve before and were looking for a Gruffalo Cave – they were also disappointed that this was not marked on the Reserve map.

Special thanks to Deputy Head Gemma Weaving who once again gave up her Saturday to organise the Nursery stall at the Spring event day with bird feeders, sunflower planting and play dough – all very popular with the children (and some adults!)

Andrew Nabbs, Education Liaison.

Merecroft Pool and the Mute Swans 2014.



The male Mute Swan *Cygnus olor* guards the nest site at the south end of Merecroft Pool in May 2014 (PRE).

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Regular visitors to Merecroft Pool over the past two years will have noted the appearance of a solitary male Mute Swan. This year he appeared with a mate who was probably a younger bird and a nest was constructed at the south end of the pool. Three cygnets appeared in May following an incubation period, which is usually 35 to 41 days. We can assume that their problems start in June. Mute Swans are vegetarians relying on a wide range of aquatic plants obtained from water up to 1m deep and by dabbling at the water's edge. The daily food requirement of adults can be up to 4 Kg of such food per day. Herein lies a problem – there is not much aquatic vegetation in Merecroft, which is slowly, but surely silting up. Whilst cygnets may benefit from other than vegetarian food for a few weeks there will come a time when the whole family will need to search further a-field for sustenance. Thus our family of Swans were regularly seen on 'walk-a-bout' elsewhere on the Reserve and in gardens in Beaks Hill and Meadow Hill roads. One cygnet soon disappeared and a second appeared to have foot or leg problems. It is believed that a resident then called the RSPCA and the family were moved to the canal at the other side of Kings Norton.

This move has had disastrous consequences since it is now known that the remaining cygnet was shot dead by a person with a high-powered air rifle. The male swan also suffered with 9 pellets in its neck and body possibly obtained whilst defending the family. The RSPCA would welcome any information relating to this incident since they have resolved to prosecute the person or persons involved. Will the male survive? Will it return to Merecroft next year? If they are given a second chance maybe we ought to be prepared to feed and protect them. They are after all a mainly feral species, which has switched from natural to humanly influenced habitats and patterns of living. PRE.



Swans at large: Left in Beaks Hill Rd (AN) and right in Pinehurst meadow (BH).

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An Update On Our Membership.

Each quarter I am pleased to extend a warm welcome to new friends and this quarter we can say welcome to Yolanda Rueda, Matthew Wall and Jason Lowther. I hope you all enjoy the Reserve and the activities that take place throughout the year.

One of my tasks each month is to update the membership records for all those Friends who have sent in their subscriptions. 1st June is the start of our subscription year (the accounting year is from 1st April) and so I receive a bumper bank statement at the start of July with all of the standing orders paid in June. It is a rewarding job processing these renewals but it does highlight the number of Friends who are still owing for last year, and in some cases the year before that. At the AGM we agreed to keep the membership at its current level yet again. As a reminder that is £7 per household, £5 for senior citizens and concessions. Of course donations over and above these amounts are gratefully received. If you are unsure whether you are up to date, please email me at FKNNR.membership@virginmedia.com and I can let you know, I can also send you a standing order mandate.

Some exciting news about donating to the Friends without actually costing you a penny. We are in the process of registering FKNNR with 'Give as you Live'. This is a fundraising platform which allows you to turn a percentage of your online spend into a free donation to the FKNNR. The very long list of participating online stores includes some very well know names from booksellers to holiday providers. Please look out for further information in due course.

Finally, we are communicating with you more frequently nowadays via email. However of the 220 members, I only have email addresses for 130. And of those, it would appear that roughly only 75 open the emails from us. I can only assume that the addresses that I have for those who do not open the emails are either inaccurate or no longer used. If you do not receive emails from us (and you would like to be kept informed) could you please email me at FKNNR.membership@virginmedia.com and I will add you to the distribution list.

Many thanks

Alistair Howard, Treasurer & Membership Secretary.

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The 'Batlas' Project

The 'Batlas' project is a study of UK bat populations including Birmingham and the Black Country. An introductory session took place at Sandwell Country Park, hosted by Brumbats with our FKNNR friend Lisa Worledge as presenter. About forty volunteers assembled; we were played recordings of the ultrasonic calls of four major UK bat species, and asked to practice identification by pitch, speed and rhythm of the pulses of sound – which is extremely difficult!

Volunteers have been assigned a two-kilometre OS 'Tetrad' square to monitor and part of our Reserve falls into my square - which also includes Lifford Reservoir and the canal from Primrose Hill as far as Lifford Lane. The next task was to identify fifteen spots in the square that might be likely to have some bats! The 15 locations had to be recce'd using 'GPS' during the day to ensure access on foot, the exact 8-figure grid references noted and a route worked out to enable all spots to be visited in a three-hour period starting at sunset! Some bats emerge to feed at dusk; other species wait till much later.

Bats emit calls above the limit of human hearing, some higher than 40kHz, and they use this to echolocate, avoid obstacles and to home in on their insect prey, of which they must eat a huge number every night. So an electronic 'bat detector' is used, usually working on the 'heterodyne' principle whereby the bat's ultrasonic 'shout' is mixed with another note, and the 'difference' between the two signals can be heard on headphones or a speaker. The 'Batlas' Project had more sophisticated bat-detectors to borrow, which produce two channels of sound - a Heterodyne signal to help identification in the field and also 'Frequency Division' – in musical terms, halving a given frequency produces the same note, but an octave below, which would bring an inaudible tone within our range of hearing. The actual monitoring required a four-minute recording to be made at each of the spots in turn, a digital 'Zoom' recorder with SD card connected to the bat detector and timed with a stopwatch. We noted down all details on a chart as well as operate the detector and recording gear. There were bats at Merecroft, a few at Wychall Lane and an amazing cacophony at Lifford reservoir and near the canal stop-lock. Pipistrelles were the most commonly heard, but also many Daubenton's bats were feeding over the water surface, glimpsed in a torch beam, which we briefly shone. Noctule bats were identified at Merecroft. It was midnight before we finished our survey and the recordings have now been sent for analysis at 'Batlas' HQ. It now remains to do the whole exercise again before the end of September!

Brian Hewitt

The Friends of Kings Norton Nature Reserve

FKNNR Diary Dates 2014.

Changes to the schedule may be made at short notice, so please check the web site www.fknnr.org.uk. Unless otherwise stated, all events start at 10.30.

Date	Location	Details
5 August	Old Orchard/Beaks Hill Road	Cut Laurel, litter pick & Tracmaster/scythe
12 August	Wychall Reservoir – cycle path	Balsam & entrance clearance/Bench maintenance
19 August	Wychall Reservoir rear	Balsam clearance/ Grass rake/ Path maintain
26 August	BW Meadow	Tidy up/Tracmaster work
30 August	Guided Walk	
2 September	Pea Fields – New scrape area	Balsam clearance/ litter pick & scythe
9 September	Pinehurst Meadow	Tidy up, Litter pick & Tracmaster/scythe.
16 September	River Rea – North + South Bank	Balsam clearance/Path maintain
23 September	Old Orchard/Beaks Hill Road	Tidy up, litter pick & Tracmaster/scythe
27 September	Guided Walk	
30 September	BW & Sheila's Meadow	Tidy up, Litter pick & scythe
7 October	Pea Fields extension	Scrape/Hedge lines – weed/prune
14 October	Wychall cycle route – 2 ponds	Bench seats & reedbed maintenance
21 October	Pinehurst Meadow	Tidy up, Litter pick & Tracmaster/scythe.
25 October	Guided Walk	
28 October	Wychall Reservoir – EA Scrapes	Maintenance/scythe surrounds
4 November	Wychall Reservoir Rear	Hazel hurdles/Move silt.
11 November	Wychall Reservoir Rear	Hazel hurdles/Move silt.
18 November	Camp Pub Entrance	Cut Dogwood & sycamore
25 November	BW & Sheila's Meadow	Tidy up, litter pick & scythe
29 November	Guided Walk	

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 LNR Management Plan. All dates – weather permitting. Instruction provided.

Tuesday Working Parties – 10.30 to 13.30 hrs.

The Friends of Kings Norton Nature Reserve

Dryads Saddles *Polyporus squamosus* appear on a tree stump near the bus stop on Wychall Lane. Photograph taken on the 16 July. *They were destroyed soon after (PRE).*



Contacts.

The FKNNR, 55 Wychall Lane, Kings Norton, B38 8TB Honorary Officers, Committee Members and Advisors

Chairman	*	Philip R Evans	0121 628 6769
Vice Chairman	*	David Human	0121 458 1300
Secretary	*	Graham Layton	0121 458 4712
Treasurer and Membership Secretary		Alistair Howard	0121 451 3082
Education		Andrew Nabbs	0121 458 6983
LNR Sage	*	Alan Bakewell	0121 603 1127
Volunteer Coordinator	*	Amanda Cadman	0121 624 3865
(* Denotes Trustee of the Charity)			

Committee Members: Peter Cage, David Hampson, Brian Hewitt, Mike Lawrence, Jean Perring & Val Saunders.

Newsletter: Peter Cage (0121 433 3486) plus Phil and Amanda.

Environment Agency Hotline	0800 80 70 60
City Parks Department Call Centre	0121 464 8728
Northfield Rangers	0121 445 6036
West Midlands Police	0345 113 5000 ext. 7826 6363
Anti-Social Behaviour Hotline	0121 303 1111

<http://www.facebook.com/knreserve> enquiries@fknnr.org.uk www.fknnr.org.uk

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55 Wychall Lane, Kings Norton

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