

The Friends of Kings Norton Nature Reserve

Newsletter 46 – Spring 2019

Registered Charity No: 1122293

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Interpretation Panel at Wychall Road entrance
kindly funded by Veolia



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Newsletter 46 55 Wychall Lane, Kings Norton Registered Charity No. 1122293

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Chair's Report

As a Tuesday volunteer I spend a lot of time on individual patches of the reserve but seldom take the opportunity to walk the full length of it. So, on a warm, bright February afternoon I walked the whole of the reserve – and how great it looked after all our winter work.

The Wychall Road entrance to the Peafields extension now has an Interpretation Panel, very kindly funded by Veolia and this can be seen on the front cover of this magazine. The panel was installed on a bitterly cold November day and thanks must go to Brian Hewitt for his design and art work. This means that we now have Interpretation Panels across the reserve.



Network Rail working group 17.7.18

Walking across Peafields to the Popes Lane entrance the hedge line that we planted several years ago is now well developed, neatly trimmed for next season and, with evidence of last year's birds' nests in it, is now proving its worth.

Across the road to the cycle path at Wychall Reservoir there is evidence of huge amounts of work completed over the winter with

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new dead hedges, all benches replaced or restored and the willow fencing behind them put in good order.

View points have been expanded but the lack of water in the reservoir is still a significant issue. Negotiations with the Environment Agency to obtain the necessary permit in order to carry out our plans seem to become more complicated the more we ask. David Hampson is continuing to try to get a resolution to this, and we hope that he will be successful. If he is, we will have more water to encourage wild life and improve the view.

In the woodland walk a large fallen tree has been cleared and new native trees will be planted in the spring.



Hay collection Wychall Meadows

Crossing over on to Waterways Meadow, the usual general maintenance has been carried out and this will be the venue for our **Walking on the Wildside** Day on Saturday 27 April. The day will follow the usual format of a Dawn Chorus Walk, Pond Dipping, Duck Racing, Treasure

Hunt and a Botanical Walk in the morning, with a Bat Walk in the evening. Please put this date in your diary.

Pinehurst Meadow is well prepared for the spring with all hedges trimmed and grass cut. This is a lovely spot for an afternoon picnic in the spring or summer.

Moving on to Merecroft Pool, last year's mud-bound paths and the effort of laying tonnes of gravel have been rewarded by firm mud-free walking. Merecroft itself we are hoping will host nesting birds this year, be it herons or swans and the view point has been restored from the bench by the Beaks Hill Road entrance. This gives a wonderful view right across Merecroft which can be enjoyed at any time of the year.

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We continued on to the Meadow Hill Road entrance, past the Beaks Hill Triangle where we scattered wild flower seeds in the summer. Keep an eye out for these beginning to grow in a few months' time.

Exiting on to Meadow Hill Road itself, last summer we began painting the railings and we will finish these off in the next few months. This has been quite an expense and we will therefore be approaching local residents to ask for donations towards this in the near future.

This walk reminded me of how much time and effort is put in by the volunteers to maintain and develop the reserve. It is truly a great local asset and thanks goes to everyone who has played a part in supporting this work.

You may be aware that the Kings Norton Bowling Club has closed due to lack of funds. For a good number of years this has been the venue for our AGM. And it has been a very convenient location. Thanks must go to the Club for their work in supporting the reserve and providing use of the building without charge. Our next AGM is on Monday 8 July 2019 at 7.00 pm. So again, put a note in your diary and please do attend if you can. Venue to be confirmed.

Thanks to everyone who has reported sightings of the little egrets either on the reservoir or on Merecroft. It seems that there are at least three as they were recently seen by the volunteers near to the reservoir.

So, as ever, there continues to be plenty to do and enjoy for everyone on the reserve. Please get out there and enjoy it and support us in whatever way that you can.

Andrew Nabbs. Chair

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Reptile and Amphibian Survey

The reptile and amphibian survey at the Kings Norton Nature Reserve ran from April to October 2018. The summer was generally hot and dry with the main heatwave running through June, July and early August.

20 bitumen refuges were placed around the reserve. The survey



Sheltering under refuge number 3 in Pinehurst Meadow

has revealed no reptiles (typical lizards, grass snakes, adders and slow worms) but several amphibians: frogs, toads and newts. The frogs have generally been found near the Wychall Reservoir except for two that have been in the meadows near Mercroft Pool. The toads and newts have all been in the meadows near Mercroft Pool.

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Slow worm – not found here yet, unfortunately

The survey has not been without problems. All but one of the reptile refuges that were placed to the west of Wychall Reservoir behind St Thomas Aquinas School have been lost in very rampant vegetation. One refuge at the bottom of the bank to the east of the Reservoir was shelter for four frogs.

In the meadows near Merecroft Pool, the refuges have generally been undisturbed and easy to find. They have hosted many small toads. (In most cases this year's toadlets). Some larger toads were also found. There have also been some young newts, one larger newt and two frogs.

The frogs and especially the newts have tended to turn up mostly in spring and early summer but the toads been found throughout the season.

Summary

A total of 40 toads have been found. They have all been in the meadows around Merecroft Pool. Most of the toads have been very small and presumed to be this year's.

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Six toads were older and have been estimated to be 1 year old to adult.

Altogether, 8 newts have been found in the meadows around Merecroft Pool. All but 2 have been in Sheila's Meadow. The newts have been a mixture of very young ones to individuals that are thought to be one year old to young adult.

A total of 8 frogs were found. Six frogs were found near Wychall Reservoir. Of the 4 that were found under refuge 20 at the east end of the reservoir, one was a large adult. The other frogs discovered were young but not from this year's spawn. Near to Merecroft Pool, a frog was found under refuge 3 in Pinehurst and one medium sized one was under refuge 10 in the Triangle.

The amphibian species were:

Common toad

(*Bufo bufo*)

Common frog

(*Rana temporaria*)

Probably, smooth newt

(*Lissotriton vulgaris*)



The youth of the newts and the limitations of seeing them in water prevented a positive identification that separated smooth and palmate newts although it was very apparent that no great crested newts were found.

A newt under refuge 2 in Waterways Meadow

M Dobson 6/10/18

[Editor's note: the survey is running again in 2019, and Margo is setting out the refuges now. Some in the same places, others moved to new locations. As before, please do not disturb them so that we can get an accurate picture of what reptiles choose to live on the Reserve.]

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Butterflies, Moths and a Few Birds

My last report covered the months up to the end of June 2018. I spent the first week of July in Torbay. What a contrast to Kings Norton! Butterflies and moths that would be considered rare or non-existent here are commonplace. For example, you may recall that I found a Scarlet Tiger Moth on the Reserve last year, having



never previously been aware of its existence in Birmingham. Well, In Torbay they are to be found everywhere. You cannot miss them. They sit on shop windows and in doorways. They fly past in the streets, their bright scarlet underwings announcing their presence.

On 10th July, I returned from shopping at midday. I have a few red valerian plants growing by my front door. Their flowers are very attractive to insects and I noticed a butterfly on one of the blossoms. At first glance I took it for a Comma but on closer inspection I could not believe my eyes. It was a Silver Washed Fritillary. I managed to photograph it with the camera on my mobile phone. The photo is reproduced in this article. I am aware that this butterfly is to be found in a number of large stretches of woodland in the Midlands, but to my knowledge it has never previously decided to grace Birmingham, let alone Kings Norton, with its presence. I should add that my house is only a few hundred yards from the Reserve and that this butterfly's favourite food plant is the Dog Violet. This flower is found to be growing on the Reserve. Perhaps it may decide to take up residence. Wishful thinking?

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Strolls through the Reserve over the next week showed that Gatekeeper butterflies were beginning to emerge. Other butterflies were out in good numbers. These included Peacocks, Commas, Holly Blues, all three Whites, Meadow Browns, Small Tortoiseshells and Ringlets. In the Peafields I saw plenty of pretty red and black Six Spot Burnet moths as they flew low over the tall grasses. Dragonflies hawked for small insects around the borders. I spoke to a lady who was walking her dog. She told me that she had seen two Marbled White butterflies over the last few days.



Silver Washed Fritillary

Common Blue butterflies were plentiful during July and the first two weeks of August, especially in Waterways Meadow. A small patch of buddleia in Pinehurst was particularly attractive to Red Admirals. I regularly spotted them on its long purple blooms.



Burnet Moth in flight

As is always the case, butterfly numbers dwindled away during September and by October only Speckled Woods were out on a regular basis supplemented by the odd Red Admiral, Peacock and Small Tortoiseshell.

Throughout last year I came across many moths during my walks on the Reserve. Most a very common but a few are worthy of mention. The star, of course, was the

Scarlet Tiger described in my previous report (Newsletter 45 – Summer 2018).

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A small selection of others, by month, are as follows:-

March	Oak Beauty
May	Small Magpie, Sycamore Moth
June	Silver Ground Carpet, Foxglove Pug, Large Fruit Tree Tortrix
July	Green Silver Lines, Pale Prominent, Swallow Prominent, Pyrausta Purpuralis, Eudonia Truncicolella
August	Narrow Winged Pug, Ash Pug, Copper Underwing, Yellow Shell, Common Rustic, Common Swift, Udea Lutealis, Purple Thorn
September	Light Arches
December	Winter Moth, November Moth

I usually carry a small pair of quality binoculars with me and if I see a bird which, to me, appears worth noting I keep a record. The ones I recorded in 2018 are:

- 16 January A Greylag Goose on Merecroft Pool
- 18 January 12 Goosanders and 2 Shovelers on Merecroft Pool
- 26 January A Buzzard being mobbed by Crows above the Horsefields. A male Bullfinch in Sheila's Meadow
- 18 March A Redwing and a Fieldfare in Waterways Meadow

Bill Edge

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Guided Walks

The Friends have scheduled walks around the Nature Reserve on three dates during this year. Two or more regular volunteers will act as walk leaders, and the walks will be more particularly themed around the season.

30 March **Spring Awakening**

27 April **Walking on the Wild Side**

12 October **Berried Treasure**

As before, unless otherwise stated all the walks will start at 10.30 a.m. from the Reserve entrance at the junction of Meadow Hill Road and Wychall Lane, and sensible waterproof footwear is recommended.

The FKNNR Spring event starts with a Dawn Chorus Walk, ends with an evening Bat Walk and will offer a number of other walks and other activities during the morning. Details of starting times will be available closer to the day.

There will probably only be one walk on the two other dates, although with more than one leader it may be possible to offer a range of lengths of walk or two different routes if those attending on the day so desire.

Please note that we are always happy to arrange group or individual visits to the Reserve at mutually agreeable times. Contact Amanda (624 3865) to discuss details.

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Grazing Meadows by Barry W

Contacts

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Honorary Officers, Committee Members and Advisors

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Volunteer Coordinator	*	Amanda Cadman	0121 624 3865
LNR Founders	*	Alan Bakewell	
		Phil Evans	

Committee Members: Peter Cage, David Fernie, David Hampson, Brian Hewitt, *David Human, Jean Perring, Paul Saunders, Val Saunders, #Matthew Wall, Brian Wells. (# co-opted) (* Trustee of the Charity)

Environment Agency Hotline	0800 80 70 60
City Parks Department Call Centre	0121 464 8728
Licky Hills Rangers	0121 445 6036
WM Police Neighbourhood Team	101
Anti-Social Behaviour Hotline	0121 303 1111, option 5
Newsletter Production:	Amanda Cadman and Peter Cage

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