

The Friends of Kings Norton Nature Reserve

Newsletter 52 – Spring 2022

Registered Charity No: 1122293

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Common Blue butterfly by Bill Edge



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Newsletter 52

55 Wychall Lane, Kings Norton Registered Charity No. 1122293

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Chair's Report, Spring 2022

At last, after a gap of three years when storms and Covid meant cancelling our annual Spring Day events, with fingers crossed we are planning to have our Community Litter Pick on Saturday 2 April and the Spring Day on Saturday 7 May. Please put these dates in your diary; further details will follow. The Spring Day is a great opportunity to meet the Volunteers/Committee Members and learn more about our work on the Reserve. You might possibly be tempted to come along and join a Tuesday WorkOut!

Fallen trees and very wet and muddy footpaths, amongst other things, have kept us busy recently. Special thanks are due to those volunteers who have spent much time shovelling tons of gravel into wheelbarrows, pushing them through the mud and then raking out the gravel to make the paths around the Merecroft side of the Reserve useable. The cycle path surface by the Wychall Lane entrance is deteriorating, making it dangerous for both cyclists and pedestrians. The responsibility to repair the surface lies either with the City Council or Sustrans. This needs to be clarified between the parties before work can commence.

Major work on Wychall dam is due to commence in the near future and will involve significant disruption in this area. See further details elsewhere in this Newsletter. We were so proud of the primrose display on the downstream face of the dam last year. This is to be completely re-profiled, so we have tried to rescue as many of the primrose plants as possible and have re-planted them elsewhere on the Reserve.

The Ranger Service continues to operate with minimal staffing levels due to financial restrictions until April, when plans for (yet another) reorganisation are supposed to be published. Thanks to the Rangers for continuing to provide their service as best they can. We look forward to a time when there may be more stability for them in their jobs.

If you have not been on the Reserve recently now is a good time to take a walk around. The wild garlic is coming out with its wonderful smell, and hopefully there will be signs of recently-scattered wild flower seeds germinating in our meadows.

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Amanda Cadman has worked for the Friends for many years, supported by her husband Peter Marsh, who attended many events and cooked the burgers at the Reserve Volunteers' Christmas barbeque! After a short illness Peter passed away peacefully at home in January. The Friends would like to extend their condolences to Amanda: Peter will be greatly missed by all who knew him.

Andrew Nabbs
Chair

Survey Of The FKNNR Membership 2022

Please let us know about your Experience of the Nature Reserve

We have devised a survey which will be made available to all members.

This survey aims to identify members' use of and views on the Nature Reserve.

Questions will be asked regarding your current use of the Reserve, what you like and what could be improved.

The survey will be sent to all members for whom we have an email address.

It will also be available as a hard copy by post/delivery, to all other members who contact the Membership Secretary Stephanie Hyde on 07578 669252.

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Annual General Meeting 2021

As a consequence of the restrictions necessitated by the Covid pandemic, it was not possible to hold an Annual General Meeting until 18 October 2021, two and a quarter years after the previous one in July 2019. The meeting was held at a new venue, the Triplex Social Club in Eckersall Road, Kings Norton, which proved to be very suitable for the purpose and has continued as the venue for meetings of the Friends' Committee during this year. Twenty-five people were able to attend.

The Chairman, Andrew Nabbs, opened the proceedings by welcoming those present. He expressed the hope that people found the venue accessible since we were likely to use it in the future if St Nicolas Place continued to be unavailable for community groups. Although the number of Friends' Committee meetings had been severely reduced and the Spring Event had been cancelled during the pandemic, many of the Tuesday WorkOuts had been able to continue due to being in the open air and volunteers being able to work within the social-distancing and other requirements. He expressed his thanks to all the volunteers who were committed to maintaining the Reserve.

At the end of November 2021, the Environment Agency would be undertaking significant work on the dam at Wychall Reservoir. In order to comply with current safety legislation, the Agency would remove and not replace all the trees on the dam, since it was considered that there was a risk of trees falling in high winds and thereby weakening the dam. The height of the dam would also be raised to reduce the risk of flooding over the top in the event of a "once in a thousand years" storm. Replacement trees were available, but the Friends were of the opinion that there were already enough trees on the Reserve so the replacements would be planted elsewhere in Birmingham. The Friends would instead be planting on a large quantity of wildflower seeds to improve meadow diversity.

A recording of birdsong taken on the Reserve by a local resident had been broadcast on Radio 3. The recording was available on the FKNNR Facebook page, which had a growing audience. The

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Chairman hoped that this would lead to more people joining as Friends.

The Chairman referred to the sad death of Derek Angus in September. Derek had been a member of the Birmingham and Solihull Mid-week Conservation Volunteers, who joined the FKNNR Tuesday WorkOuts each week. He had been a popular and willing worker and very skilled at his work, spending three days a week with the BSMCV caring for nature reserves. The Chairman had sent condolences to his family and a number of the Friends had attended Derek's funeral to pay their respects.

Volunteers are a very important factor in maintaining the Reserve to its current standard. Two of these volunteers, Peter Cage and Alistair Howard, were retiring from their roles. Peter had been a member of the Friends' Committee and a very active volunteer since 2008. In addition to the experience he had brought to the Tuesday WorkOuts, in more recent years he had taken on the duty of transporting the tools to and from the work site on Tuesdays and on any other working days, an essential and time-consuming role. He was a great advocate of the Reserve and also put in a lot of time helping on the annual Spring Events. Although reducing his active role, Peter would continue to assist in the production of the Friends' Newsletters.

Alistair Howard had held the post of Membership Secretary from 2010 to 2017, and also the post of Treasurer from 2011 to 2021. He was the only committee member in full-time employment but nevertheless succeeded in managing both posts effectively and efficiently until he was able to relinquish the Membership Secretary's role in 2017. However, due to the demands of his employment and of family life, he now felt it necessary to resign the role of Treasurer.

On behalf of the Friends Committee, the Chairman expressed his thanks and appreciation to Peter and Alistair for the hard work and support they had given to the Friends over many years. Some volunteers had been involved with the FKNNR since its inception in 2004. The maintenance of the Reserve was dependent on the work of volunteers and the City officers continued to say that without this support the Reserve would fall into disrepair. The

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Friends intended to develop a campaign to recruit new volunteers, but in the meantime, all offers of help or ideas would be welcomed.

As Treasurer, Alistair Howard, was pleased to report on a significant improvement in income during the year ending 31 May 2021 by comparison with the previous year. There had been an increase in donations, and he praised Stephanie Hyde, the Membership Secretary, for the work she had been doing in improving the collection of subscriptions by encouraging the use of standing orders and chasing up outstanding debts. Simply due to an increase in the number of subscriptions received, in donations and in the amount of Gift Aid reclaimed, income had increased by 35% over the previous year, from £2,042 to £2,695. Expenditure had been low, resulting in net surplus of £1,779 and total funds of £8,445 being carried forward to 2021/2022. He recommended that further projects should therefore be funded to show that income was being used for the benefit of the Reserve and the FKNNR. The Wychall Reservoir ("Hampson Barrier") project still had £1,705 allocated to it but that would leave a healthy balance of funds to allocate to other projects without putting the financial stability of the Friends' accounts at risk. In accordance with good practice, the accounts were normally examined annually by an independent person appointed at the AGM. However, owing to the unusual circumstances in 2021 and to Alistair having lost touch with the usual examiner who provided the service at no cost, the accounts presented had not been examined.

The Membership Secretary, Stephanie Hyde, advised that there had been quite a number of changes to the membership during the previous 15 months, mainly due to relocation. However, 24 new members had been welcomed and the current membership stood at 212, of whom 73% had signed up to Gift Aid. Membership payments came in throughout the year, which was from 1 June to 31 May. Payment by standing order made the process easy for members and the proportion paying by S/O had increased to 66%. She anticipated that 76 of the 89 payments then outstanding would be fulfilled by 31 May 2022. She continued to chase up and clear overdue payments, of which 13 were then outstanding by 2 years or more.

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As Volunteer Co-ordinator, Amanda Cadman expressed thanks to everyone who worked on the Reserve, including people who simply walked the Reserve for recreation and collected litter on the way, and to the birdwatchers and observers of wildlife, some of whom had provided excellent photographs and notes which found their way into the Newsletters. She particularly thanked Sarah and Peter Cage for their work on the Newsletters, and Brian Hewitt for his organisation of the weekly Tuesday WorkOuts. She thanked Ian Freake and his colleagues in the Birmingham and Solihull Mid-week Conservation Volunteers for their advice, experience and support, and she endorsed the Chairman's words on the sad loss of Derek Angus. She had been pleased to welcome a number of new volunteers to the WorkOuts. She thanked David Hampson for devising, negotiating with the Environment Agency and the City Council, and project-managing the system of environmentally-sound silt traps, fondly known as the "Hampson barriers", along the water course flowing into Wychall Reservoir. Finally, she thanked the members of the Local Nature Reserve Management Committee and of the Friends Committee for their continuing support.

With regard to membership subscriptions, the Treasurer, Alistair Howard, reported that the amounts of £7.00 per household and £5.00 for senior citizens or concessions had remained unchanged for several years. In view of the present healthy state of the charity's funds, however, he recommended that there should be no change in the present policy. Accordingly, it was agreed by the AGM that for the year 2022/2023 a minimum annual subscription of £7.00 per household or £5.00 for senior citizens or concessions be requested and that, if necessary, the eligibility of individual cases for the concessionary rate be determined jointly by the Chairman and the Treasurer.

The Secretary, Graham Layton, presented a report on the election of the Honorary Officers and Ordinary Members of the Executive Committee (known as the Friends' Committee). The posts of Honorary Officer – the Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer and Membership Secretary – are elected for a term of two years. As mentioned earlier, Alistair Howard was standing down as Treasurer. A new member, Brian Lee, had indicated his

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willingness to be nominated as Treasurer and Alistair had therefore submitted his resignation with effect from the AGM. Graham Layton was willing to stand down as Secretary if another person wished to take on the role. If not, he was prepared to be nominated for a further term. The following persons were therefore elected for a term expiring in 2023:

Chairman	Andrew Nabbs
Vice-Chairman	Ian Freake
Secretary	Graham Layton
Treasurer	Brian Lee
Membership Secretary	Stephanie Hyde

Under the constitution, one-third of the Ordinary Members of the Friends' Committee shall retire annually by seniority of election. The members who were due to retire in 2021 were Peter Cage, Valerie Saunders and Brian Wells. Valerie and Brian had indicated their willingness to stand for re-election if nominated. Peter was willing to stand down if another person wished to fill the post. Margie Hall, Valerie Saunders and Brian Wells were therefore elected to serve as members for a term expiring in 2024.

The role of Volunteer Co-ordinator was created in 2012 and has proven essential to the smooth functioning of the work of the FKNNR. Amanda Cadman had held the position since it was created and she was re-appointed to the post for a further term of two years.

The role of Education Liaison Officer was similarly created in 2012, to encourage local schools and their pupils to be aware of and to appreciate the Reserve, and for several years a number of schools did make use of the Reserve, supported by members of the Friends where appropriate or necessary. Unfortunately, the post had fallen vacant in 2018. However, a new member, Hannah Chidzik, had expressed her willingness to take on the role and she was appointed for a term of two years.

Having retired from the Friends' Committee in 2017 because he had moved to Wolverhampton, Matthew Wall had nevertheless continued to undertake projects for the FKNNR because of his background in ecology and the environment. He had been re-appointed at each AGM subsequently as a Co-opted Member but

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for the future, it was agreed to consider him as a consultant on environmental matters. He would continue to receive the agenda and papers for Friends' Committee meetings and be welcome to attend.

With the end of business, the Chairmen thanked those who had attended and closed the meeting at 8.22pm. After a brief break, a member of the Committee, Brian Hewitt, gave a short presentation of some of the activities of the Friends on the Reserve in recent years plus some wildlife pictures taken by contributors to the Friends' Facebook page and other sources.

Graham Layton
Secretary

Birding in and around Kings Norton

2021

I made fewer visits than usual towards the end of 2021, so just a few highlights to share from the back end of the year. I finished the year on 67 species of bird -- Dipper, Stonechat and Wood Warbler remaining the undoubted highlights.

3 Oct: A Meadow Pipit flew over Kings Norton Park, and another over Merecroft Pool. At least one Chiffchaff still around the reserve.



Meadow pipit by A Trepte

24 Oct: The largest flock of Starlings I've encountered locally: at least 150+ coming and going from the mobile phone mast (at the very end of Kings Norton station car park).

28 Nov: At Merecroft Pool: 3 Goosander back for the winter; 10 Teal flew in to Wychall Reservoir; heard Water Rail (and not again

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since); cracking male Bullfinch; Reed Bunting back for winter in usual spot (reedbed, adjacent Wychall Road).

4 Dec: pre-dawn: lots of Tawny Owl activity in Cotteridge - first one calling from behind the Fire Station then several minutes of loud kewicking and twit-twoo-ing heard from Kings Norton station. I'm yet to see a Tawny Owl around the reserve, but it was great to hear them at least. Perhaps those of you who are lucky enough to live adjoining the reserve catch sight of one from time to time? (*ed: yes, one has been visiting a garden in Woodglade Croft.*)

24 Dec: 3 male Goosander still at Merecroft Pool plus a pair of Teal which are far less frequent here, but seen throughout the winter at Wychall Reservoir.

2022

So far this year (as of 17 March) I have clocked up 16 visits and 59 species, but sadly no sign of any Dippers this year. I've recently extended the area I try to cover eastwards to Kings Norton Playing Fields and Lifford Reservoir - which has proved to be particularly worthwhile in terms of scarce birds as you will hear!

1 Jan: A slow-ish start to 2022. 40 species in total around the reserve - the highlights being: Kingfisher viewed from Wychall Road bridge heading down river towards Popes Lane, flock of 7 Greenfinch in that vicinity and flock of 11 Siskin at Wychall Reservoir.

6 Jan: Buzzard and Treecreeper in Kings Norton Park.



Kingfisher by JJ Harison

9 Jan: 5 male Goosander and 1 Kingfisher at Merecroft Pool. Buzzard, Little Egret, Grey Wagtail & 6+ Teal at Wychall Reservoir. Great Crested Grebe, 2 Cormorant, 5 Mute Swan, Grey Wagtail at Lifford Reservoir.

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16 Jan: at Merecroft Pool a pair of Collared Dove near the houses, plus Little Egret, Grey Heron, 3 Goosander still. In Kings Norton Park: Great Spotted Woodpecker, Treecreeper, Nuthatch, and the tiny Goldcrest were all active. Around Popes Lane a large mixed finch/tit flock which featured at least 6 Siskin and 1 Lesser Redpoll. A Buzzard and several Redwing also around the Peafields.

23 Jan: Reed Bunting again in the reedbed adjacent to Wychall Road.

29 Jan: Sparrowhawk in Kings Norton Park brought my 2022 patch list to 50. Also today at Merecroft: 2 Little Egret, 2 Grey Heron, 4 Goosander (3m,1f) and 160+ Black-headed Gull. At Wychall Reservoir a pair of Teal and 2 Siskin.

30 Jan: Great views of a Kingfisher again at the Wychall Road bridge for a good 10/15 minutes - diving in the river and changing perches, plus 6 Bullfinch nearby. At Wychall Reservoir I heard Green Woodpecker & Reed Bunting. At Lifford Reservoir: 1 Great Crested Grebe, 1 Greylag Goose with the Canada Geese, and Little Egret on the river.



Sparrowhawk by Pierre Dalous

5 Feb: 2 Sparrowhawk hassled by crows (Peafields), 3 Goosander at Merecroft Pool. A flock of 13 Redwing in the horse paddocks and another 18 in Kings Norton Park along with 2 Mistle Thrush, and a Buzzard. I concluded my usual walk at Lifford Reservoir around lunch-time. Having scanned through the usual flotilla of Mallard, Coot and Tufted Duck - I noticed a rather different looking

duck, one I had not encountered since childhood! I was 95% certain it was a female Ring-necked Duck (native to North America

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but this winter has seen a small but significant influx across the UK and Ireland). In a mild state of panic I sent out a tweet to local birders to see if anyone could pop down to verify my sighting. Thankfully 20 minutes later Chris Thomson arrived and confirmed my identification was correct! The duck was enjoyed and photographed by many birders from the West Midlands and beyond over the next week, and was present until at least 12/2, but not reported again since.

27 Feb: At Merecroft Pool, a lovely pair of Shoveler, my first on the reserve since 2019 plus a pair of Raven briefly. I caught up with the Raven at Wychall Reservoir - they did a great flypast 'cronking' as they went, such a distinctive sound!



Ring-necked duck from Wikipedia

6 Mar: The pair of Raven again around Wychall Reservoir, Lesser Redpoll flying over; at Merecroft now 2 pairs of Shoveler, plus 2 male Goosander, a Sparrowhawk passing over, and a Pied Wagtail in the horse paddocks. In Kings Norton Park a Green Woodpecker in full view and 5 Siskin.

12 Mar: It was well worth getting out early for my first Chiffchaff of the year in the Peafields; it really lifts the spirits to hear them singing again. 12/3 is the earliest I have encountered them on the reserve, on the same day as 2017. At Merecroft Pool 3 Shoveler remaining, and another Chiffchaff singing. The lone Mute Swan seemed to have acquired a mate, (but sadly it was gone again on my next visit). Lots of Raven activity in Kings Norton Park - with one pair 'seeing off' another pair which flew towards Cotteridge. Once again Lifford Reservoir delivered the goods in the form of a Glaucous Gull, a 'lifer' for me, a bird I had never previously seen. The bird had been present a few miles away at Frankley Reservoir since 28/2 but popped over to Lifford and I happened to be there at the right time. In the midst of tweeting the news the bird departed and was soon back at Frankley again. It has been back

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to Lifford at least once, on 16/3 seen by Chris Thomson, so worth keeping an eye out for this distinctive white-winger!

14 Mar: the first Little Grebe of the year back on Merecroft Pool - the very same day as 2021. 2 Raven in the horse paddocks.

I continue to share birding highlights via my twitter (<https://twitter.com/aplatt>) so feel free to follow me for the latest local bird sightings as spring migration gets well under way.

Butterflies, Moths and a Few Other Creatures Seen on the Reserve during 2021

In early January as I walked through Waterways Meadow I noticed a Bullfinch in one of the bushes bordering the little stream which flows from Merecroft Pool. On taking a closer look through my binoculars I was surprised to see 12 Bullfinches in the bush. There were 6 males with bright rose-pink breasts and 6 females, nowhere near as showy as the males but still beautiful. This was an unforgettable experience for me as I had never seen so many of these birds together before.

Grey Dagger moth by Bill Edge



I came across my first butterfly of the year on 27 February. It was a Small Tortoiseshell, sunning itself on the path between Beaks Hill Road and Meadow Hill Road. Another mild day, 24 March,

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revealed a Comma at the same sheltered spot. Three days later another Comma was flaunting its colours in the Old Orchard.

30 March was warm and sunny. During my walk through the Reserve, I came upon a Brimstone, Peacock and 3 Small Tortoiseshells near Merecroft Pool. Moving on to Waterways Meadow I encountered 2 Peacocks, 2 Commas and 5 Small Tortoiseshells. There was a Comma by Camp Lane entrance and I counted 4 Peacocks in the Peafields. The last day of March was very warm also. My garden thermometer peaked at 20°C. Peacocks were by far the most numerous of the butterflies abroad.

Whilst strolling through the Old Orchard on 18 April I was pleased to see an Orange Tip. A few minutes later, in Sheila's Meadow, I chanced upon 3 more in the company of several Small Tortoiseshells and Peacocks. A little further on, in Waterways Meadow, the stacks of dried grass and vegetation cut during the Tuesday WorkOuts the previous year had attracted Peacocks, Commas

Grey Shoulder-knot moth by Bill Edge



and several Bee-flies to their warm surfaces. Having crossed Wychall Lane I took the woodland walk where 2 Green-Veined Whites were also enjoying the warm sunshine. When I arrived at the Peafields 4 Orange Tips greeted me together with a Small Tortoiseshell. The following day I did the same walk but in reverse, starting at the Peafields where Speckled Woods flitted

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about in the dappled sunlight under the trees. I saw the previous day's butterflies with the addition of a Brimstone.

On 22 April I bought some Swan and Duck food and went to Merecroft Pool. Afterwards I took a quick look around Sheila's Meadow and was immediately glad I had done so as I spotted a Holly Blue, Small White and several Orange Tips and Peacocks. I also took a few minutes to admire the Fritillary wildflowers which look like tiny spotted lanterns or lampshades. Visits to the Reserve during the last week of May added Large Whites and Common Blues to this year's butterfly tally.

You may be interested in a happy ending to one of the items in my 2020 report. I had found 20 eggs of the Poplar Hawk moth on



Elephant Hawk moth by Ruth Crofts

the leaves of an aspen bush which was far too small to support the resulting caterpillars to maturity. So, in order to ensure their survival, I took them home and fed the caterpillars on aspen leaves until they pupated. After over-wintering the pupae in my garage, I gave six to Ruth Croft, who had expressed an interest in watching the moths emerge. When they did so, she released them in her garden which borders the Reserve. I liberated the rest of the moths on the Reserve and surrounding area. It's quite an experience to watch these large moths take off with a whirr of their powerful wings and disappear into the dusk. All had gone by the end of May.

Throughout June I continued to find Holly Blues and Common Blues. Their preferred haunts appear to be Pinehurst Meadow, Waterways Meadow and the Beaks Hill/Meadow Hill triangle.

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Meadow Browns and Ringlets also became a common sight among the tall grasses of the meadows. Additional dashes of colour were provided by striking blue Damselflies. I discovered several eggs of various moth species on the underside of aspen leaves adjacent to Merecroft Pool. I knew these to be the eggs of Poplar Hawk, Pale Prominent and Pebble Prominent. On 15 June at 8.30pm I walked through Waterways Meadow where a Red Admiral was frolicking in the evening warmth.

By 2 July I was regularly seeing Red Admirals both on the Reserve and around Kings Norton. In fact, I would say that 2021 was a good year for this butterfly. Around the middle of the month Hedge Browns (aka Gatekeepers) began to put in their annual appearance and impress observers with the bright orange patches on their wings. I stood in the sunshine on 6 July in Waterways Meadow watching Common Blues, Brimstones, Speckled Woods, Large Whites and Small Whites going about their business. It was a calming experience.

Around the middle of July I noticed the numbers of Small and Large Skippers were on the increase. These little butterflies dash madly about the meadows, occasionally landing to rest on grass stems. They are skittish insects and quickly fly off if I attempt to approach too closely.

I had a really enjoyable day on 17 July, totally exceeding my expectations. Butterflies were plentiful. In Pinehurst Meadow a Comma appeared and seemed, to me, to be much more brightly coloured than usual. Of course, it flew off before I could take a snap. In Waterways Meadow I spied a few Chimney Sweeper moths. They were a welcome sight as they were absent the previous year. The highlight of the day came during a visit to the Peafields. A Marbled White was fluttering around and I watched it, entranced, for 15 minutes as it flew to and fro over the meadow.

I had to wait until 4 August to bump into the next species of butterfly. This was a Small Copper clearly enjoying life as it explored the meadow alongside Beaks Hill Road. It kindly posed for its picture to be taken, as did a Common Blue on a nearby grass seed head.

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Butterfly numbers and species naturally decline as autumn nears and as October came along only a few Speckled Woods braved the elements. On warmer autumnal days there were sporadic appearances by Red Admirals and Peacocks.

I have mentioned several moths in this article but more have come to my attention during 2021. They were disturbed from foliage or were resting on tree trunks, fences etc. Rather than describe the circumstances of each sighting, I have listed them below with the dates. Two beetles are also included.

February	6	Twin-spotted Quaker
March	7	Chestnut
April	3	Brindle Pug
	10	Oak-tree Pug
June	7	Cardinal Beetle
	15	Burnet Companion
	30	Yellow Shell
July	15	Small Magpie
	15	Thick-legged
	23	Twenty - Plume
	24	Light Arches
	26	Freyers Pug
August	5	Lychnis
	7	Caterpillar of Elephant Hawk Moth found by Ruth Crofts
	12	Copper Underwing
	18	Caterpillar of Grey Dagger Moth
	19	Common White Wave
	22	Double-striped Pug
September	2	Flounced Rustic
	12	Common Marbled Carpet
	23	Plume (<i>Playptilia Gonodactyla</i>)
	25	Lunar Underwing
October	25	Grey Shoulder-knot
November	9	Winter
	9	Autumnal

Bill Edge

**Community Litter Pick,
Friends of Kings Norton Nature Reserve
Saturday 2 April 2022**

Meet at 10.30 a.m.
at the main entrance to Wychall Reservoir,
Wychall Lane, opposite Wychall Park Grove.

We hope you have discovered the value of Kings Norton Nature Reserve, right on your doorstep, during the lockdowns of the past two years.

Any time that you can spare will be very much appreciated.

- Litter pickers and bags will be provided.
- Safety advice will be given.
- You are advised to wear sturdy footwear and old clothes.
- Please bring your own work gloves.
- Children must be accompanied by a responsible adult.

For further details, contact
Amanda Cadman: 0121 624 3865,
Andrew Nabbs: 0121 458 6983
or Graham Layton: 0121 458 4712

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Tree felling on the Reserve

From time to time fluorescent spots have appeared, painted on the trunks of a few large trees in the Reserve. These are not due to vandalism, but are the marks of an Arboriculturalist (tree expert), James, whose job is to assess the health or otherwise of trees throughout the City. They spell doom.

In previous years there have been useful communications with James, usually resulting in a walkround with Reserve members to advise us of planned work. Regrettably, with lockdown intervening, and other personal difficulties and pressures on our time, this has not happened recently.



So it was with alarm that residents heard the sound of chainsaws and wood-chipping machinery, firstly near Merecroft Pool, where serious and sad work was in progress. Several large trees have been felled near the lake, and two of the avenue of old chestnuts, which were deemed to be diseased and dangerous. Some of the larger trunks have been left where they fell, and it is not certain whether they are to be moved to better places. They are certainly

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too heavy for us. The smaller branches all went through the shredder, or were cut into logs and carted away.

Other trees, including an ash, were cut alongside Beaks Hill and Meadow Hill Road. The shredding machine thoughtfully blew chippings along our new and unofficial track to the little bridge (sorry, plank) over the gully.

The latest work of the contractors was to fell two remaining poplars, which had been a feature of Pinehurst for over a hundred years, clearly visible in an aerial photo from 1928. The writer remembered seeing them cut to half-height in 1975, since



when many blew down in gales (including one along the fence, behind the Wychall Lane Surgery!). The reason for the felling is exposed when one sees they were entirely hollow, and it was remarkable that they lasted as long as they did.

The shredding machine used is a large tracked vehicle with a directional nozzle on top. As well as blowing the chippings where needed, the self-powered machine can be used to pull a tree with a rope to direct its fall, once sawn through - much safer than a man on a long ladder, as in 1975. Unfortunately, the contractors, unfamiliar with the geography of the Reserve, decided the only way into Pinehurst for their machine was through the hedge which we had been cultivating since we planted it as whips. If we had known they were coming, they could have used the gate....

There remains a hornbeam beside Westhill footpath, a poplar and an ash to be felled in Pinehurst, but we have no idea when the contractors will return. Meantime we will be occupied trying to tidy up the remaining logs, using some to strengthen the hedge line,

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and others to provide a habitat for bugs and beasts as the timber decays over the years.

We used more of the chippings along Westhill footpath and Waterways Meadow, though not a permanent solution for the mud, which has been such a problem recently, and for which we have already laid over £200-worth of stone aggregate along the paths. Westhill footpath is still officially closed, though we did try to prop up the collapsed fence, which is the responsibility of the house owner to replace and make safe. As it is a public right-of-way the Council can enforce repairs if it is not undertaken soon. We await developments with interest....

Brian Hewitt

Wychall Reservoir works

As a resident of Wychall Lane I received a letter in the post from the Environment Agency at the beginning of March providing "an update regarding upgrade works at Wychall Reservoir. The key objective of this maintenance work is to modify the reservoir dam to address the statutory 'measures in the interest of safety' recommendations made by the civil engineer appointed to inspect the dam."

You will recall that preliminary work was undertaken in the autumn to bring down the trees growing along the top of the earth dam, mainly to ensure that no birds would be nesting in them by the time that the main engineering works started in 2022. We now know that the detailed design of the works to be undertaken has been finished and ground investigations have taken place on site.

"The work to modify the dam will start in April 2022 and should take around eight months to complete. This means you will soon see staff working on site and may experience some disruption over the coming months. To protect members of public and comply with health and safety procedures, the road linking the park to the adjacent industrial estate (*ed: I think they mean Burmans Drive*) will be temporarily closed for the duration of the works. The Nature Reserve will still be accessible through a fenced corridor

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from Wychall Lane at the site entrance, before following the line of the wall and along the river. The park (*unclear what they mean by 'the park' as opposed to 'the nature reserve'*) will also be accessible from Popes Lane. The appropriate fencing will be in place, although we ask that you keep dogs and young children under constant supervision/control whilst we carry out the works. Traffic Marshalls will be on site at all times to control traffic movements accessing the site from Wychall Lane.

We apologise in advance for any inconvenience caused by these works. If you would like further information about the scheme, please email enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk."

Under the Government's new Environment Act the Environment Agency, along with other developments that go through the planning system in the future, will have to deliver a more structured case for addressing any loss of biodiversity in any given scheme through a Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) matrix linked to what that loss might be. Representatives of the Friends will be meeting with the Environment Agency's ecologist in the next few days to discover more about the Biodiversity Net Gain process, and how it will need to be applied to the Wychall Reservoir dam project.

Amanda Cadman
Volunteer Co-ordinator



Signs of spring by P Cage

The Friends of Kings Norton Nature Reserve

The Spring Event is Back!

After an absence of three years due to gales and Covid, the FKNNR Spring Event will be held on Saturday 7 May 2022, on Waterways Meadow at the corner of Meadow Hill Road with Wychall Lane, Kings Norton.

For the early risers, the day will start with the popular Dawn Chorus walk, to hear and hopefully see the many species of birds, and maybe animals, found on the Reserve. After the walk, those who wish to can go for breakfast at Molly's Café on Kings Norton Green, who open early for us by arrangement.

The morning's other events start from 10.30 a.m. and cater for all ages. There will be two guided walks – a Botanical Walk, which is not long in length but where you are guaranteed to learn some fascinating information about the flora (and fauna) around us, and a more general walk covering features elsewhere on the Reserve. Other activities include a Treasure Hunt, Duck Races along the canal feeder, Pond Dipping and a Tombola.

There will be a Children's Fancy Dress Competition. It is also hoped to organise a Photographic Competition and a Painting Competition, which will be judged at the event. Details of these will be emailed to members and put on the noticeboards and on the Friends' website and Facebook page.

On the evening, the Bat Walk will again take place, where you will learn about, see and hear the different species of bats around Merecroft Pool and elsewhere on the Reserve.

So put the FKNNR Spring Event, Saturday 7 May, in your diary, and keep your eyes open for more details of the competitions and for the programme which will detail the timing of the events!

The Friends of Kings Norton Nature Reserve



Thick-legged Flower beetle
by Bill Edge

Contacts

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Chairman	* Andrew Nabbs	0121 458 6983
Vice Chairman	Ian Freake	0121 681 1297
Secretary	* Graham Layton	0121 458 4712
Treasurer	Brian Lee	07773 720813
Membership Secretary	Stephanie Hyde	07578 669 252
Working Parties	Brian Hewitt	0121 458 2946
Education	Hannah Chidzik	07986 846 898
Volunteer Coordinator	* Amanda Cadman	0121 624 3865
LNR Founders	* Alan Bakewell Phil Evans	

(* Trustee of the Charity)

Environmental and Ecological Consultant: Mathew Wall

Committee Members: Amanda Cadman, David Fernie, David Hampson, Margie Hall, Brian Hewitt, *David Human, Brian Lee, Jean Perring, Paul Saunders, Val Saunders, Brian Wells

Newsletter Production: Amanda Cadman, Sarah and Peter Cage

Environment Agency Hotline	0800 80 70 60
City Parks Department Call Centre	0121 464 8728
Lickey Hills Rangers	0121 445 6036
W M Police Neighbourhood Team	101
Anti-Social Behaviour Hotline	0121 303 1111, option 5

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

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