

WILD TEES

The Magazine of Tees Valley Wildlife Trust



July 2017 - Issue No. 20

Our Batscape project has reached twice as many people as predicted, and they are all spreading the word about our region's fantastic bats!

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Protecting **Wildlife** for the Future

Welcome

www.teeswildlife.org

Trust Notes...



Dear reader,

Welcome to the summer issue of Wild Tees, with news of some of the wonderful activities in which our volunteers and staff are involved.

One of my tasks at this time of year is to help with the production of our Annual Report and Accounts. This is an essential part of running any business or charity and while there are some stringent rules on its contents, we try to make the document an informative and readable summary of our activities and achievements during the year.

You can find a copy of the Annual Report and Accounts on our website – www.teeswildlife.org

One of the clear messages from our Accounts is that we are very dependent on the financial support of membership subscriptions and donations. Nothing that is reported there, or here in Wild Tees, would have been possible without your support. Thank you!

This year our Annual General Meeting takes place on Thursday 5th October at 6.00pm and all members are welcome to attend. It will be held at the Margrove Heritage Centre and will include a short presentation on our work during the past year.

The Annual General Meeting is also an opportunity for members to become a trustee of the charity and help to guide and oversee our work. This is not onerous; the trustees meet just five times a year and are all friendly, enthusiastic people. We currently have vacancies for new trustees and would be very pleased to hear from anyone who is interested in helping in this way. If you would like to find out more, please contact me or Diane Hatfield at the Margrove Heritage Centre.

Lastly, I'd like to thank everyone who has kindly donated tools to our 'used tools' appeal. It has been a great success and has really made a difference to the activities we can offer.

I hope you enjoy this issue of the magazine.



Jeremy Garside, Chief Executive

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THE ISSUE *at a glance...*



Photo credit: Natterer's Bat by Tom Marshall



By Steve Ashton

Harrington's POND

SO WHERE EXACTLY IS HARRINGTON'S POND? It's a question we have been asked quite a lot recently; even people in Billingham didn't know where it was! Well, this small pond is situated behind Billingham Town Football Club. It has received a bit of a make-over recently, with the help of Tees Valley Wildlife Trust, Billingham Youth Council and a number of other groups, all courtesy of a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund Young Roots programme.

The pond has an interesting history as, originally, there were two houses on this piece of land, which is close to old Billingham station. One of the houses was owned by the North East Railway and was known as 'Lancaster's Cottage'. It was demolished in 1954. The Harrington family lived in the other house, called 'Brickyard Cottage' and later renamed 'Pond House'. Pond House was built of single brick and had no electricity or gas and the cottage was demolished in 1967. When Lancaster's Cottage was demolished, Len Harrington took over the land. Over the years, he built sheds to house various bits of machinery including a homemade steam engine. The bricks for the sheds were taken from old brick kilns situated not far from the 'Tin Lizzie' (the footbridge over the railway). There was a small

pond in front of the house, which Mr. Harrington widened, supporting the sides with old railway sleepers. The pond had an island in the middle with a bridge across to it. Len bred chinchillas on the island and maintained the land as a small holding with goat's, geese and hens.

In recent years, the area had been a little neglected and was becoming heavily overgrown before it came to the attention of the Billingham Youth Council. They worked with the Trust to put in a grant bid. It was great to see young people wanting to do something positive to help their local environment. Urban green spaces like Harrington's Pond are important for a number of reasons: they are wildlife habitats, they act as wildlife corridors (this space links to the railway land) and they are places for people to walk and enjoy the fresh air.

During the project the Trust worked with a number of other groups including Abbey Hill Academy, self-named 'Billingham Bad Boys' – a local group of NEET's (Not in Education, Employment, or Training), Roseberry Primary School, Northfield School and Sports College and National Probation Trust (Tees Valley Region) to improve the paths, manage some of the scrub, put up bird boxes and generally

improve the habitats found on the site. As usual, a lot of work was done by our own Tees Valley Wildlife Trust volunteers; in particular, Amy's Wednesday group.

Billingham South Primary School were heavily involved in the project with nine pupils doing their John Muir Award on site. They did a range of activities including bird and pond surveys, mini-beast hunts, making colour palettes and constructing a giant insect hotel. The culmination of their project was doing an assembly for the rest of the school and their parents, sharing what they had learnt and how they had improved the habitats at the pond. One of the teachers at the school said, *"Being in that environment was quite unique in the way that we could have more 'adult' conversations that maybe they wouldn't get to have here at school or at home because they were all working together to do a job. We've even seen some of the children taking on leadership roles that we hadn't seen before, and they were spreading knowledge between themselves"*.

The final stage of the project was to involve some of the young people, including the Youth Council, to put together an interpretation board and this is now in place at the pond. During the project the site had a special visitor – who sent the Trust an e-mail about his visit:

Hi, I write concerning the work which you have done around Harrington's pond in Billingham.

I am the grandson of the last owners of Pond House (Leonard & Hilda Harrington) which used to be located on the site. The house was demolished a few years before I was born, but my father, Ivan Harrington, used to regularly take me to the pond and tell me all about how great it was to grow up there.

I no longer live in the area, but occasionally return to visit family. I was in the area today and took the opportunity to visit the pond.

WOW!!!!

What a difference since the last time I visited a year or so ago. The whole site looks fantastic, and the new pathways make it far more accessible.

Can you please pass on my heartfelt thanks to all those who have been involved in this project. Knowing how the site looked a year ago I can appreciate just how much work must have been involved to get it into its current state.

Keep up the excellent work.

Kind regards, Glynn Harrington

So the next time you are in Billingham, it's well worth your while escaping the hustle and bustle to take a stroll around this small but important green space.



volunteer Spotlight

By Jen Hagan

IN THIS ISSUE THE SPOTLIGHT IS ON PIPPA HILLS, from Middlesbrough, who joined our Trust in Spring 2017 through contact with the One Planet Pioneers Project; which led on to her taking part in our Life Skills project for 12 weeks. Pippa has only been with us a few months, but she has achieved so much for herself and for others, overcoming personal challenges and of course improving so many of our nature reserves for people and wildlife.

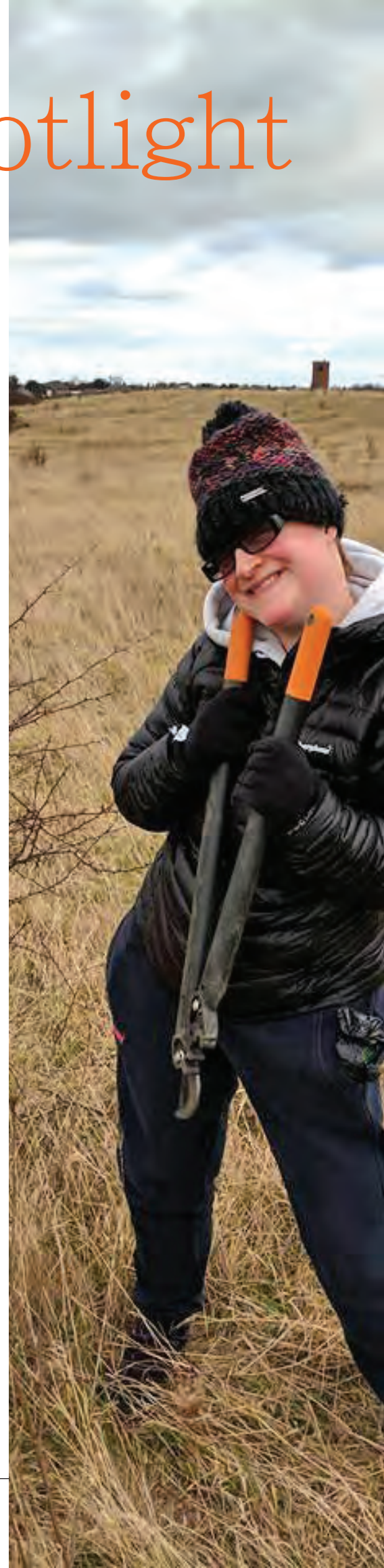
"I was looking for something outdoors but I'd never done anything like this before. I need to be out. I haven't got anything to do in Summer usually as some other groups I work with close down then, so I'm glad I can come out with the Trust now."

So far, Pippa has learned the basics of green woodworking, dry stone walling (which she admits she isn't actually that fond of!), surveying, bush craft, wildlife gardening and nature reserve maintenance. She has achieved her silver and gold volunteering awards, as well as the John Muir Discover Award. Pippa is always looking for the next challenge, but for her, taking part isn't just about gaining new skills and a lot of her influence has been to do with people rather than wildlife:

"I wanted to find something to do with other people...I just like being with other people...it's really a joy that there are lots of people that help you. I love supporting people, even Jenny sometimes! Anything that comes up now I want to help with it. I do think I bring a bit of a female influence to some of the groups, because even though I don't mind working with the guys, I'd like to get more girls interested too."

Pippa has faced barriers in volunteering before, but thankfully this has never put her off and both she and her mum, Judith, feel that she has finally found something that meets her needs.

Judith tells us: *"She's had challenges before in volunteering with the way people asked her to do things. Also she has*





put her name down for so many things in the past and they haven't been followed up and she's been very disappointed. We knew exactly what was happening with this project so there wasn't any disappointment."

Pippa had volunteered in a pet shop before and learned about animal care. *"I used to clean the birds out, but the day I asked for a t-shirt and I couldn't have one I was disappointed. That's why I'm so glad I have a Wildlife Trust t-shirt now - it's like I'm really part of things."*

Pippa had attended Life Skills sessions with a support worker initially, but progressed quickly to the point where she no longer needed this. Not only does this show her independence and confidence has increased, but she has also helped to open up another place for someone who needs it. One of our goals for the Life Skills programme is to work towards supporting the sessions through alternative forms of funding that are more sustainable than short-term grants, such as social prescribing and personal health budgets, as many services now do. Pippa and her mum Judith are leading the way for us on this alongside Beverley School in Middlesbrough and Newstead House in Redcar, who have all recognised the value in what we do and are helping us to keep it going with regular contributions to the charity.

Pippa has single-handedly, though, in just a few months, shown that with just a small amount of commitment, everyone can feel happier and healthier, take control of those things that might seem to stand against them and overcome things they may never have thought they could.

"I was a bit nervous on my first day, but I know everyone now and Mat tells me jokes and things. I like being on the bus with everyone and I've made some really good friendships... I feel great when I come home, enthusiastic and fantastic. I feel like I've really achieved something and I want to go back the next day. Whenever I feel like just sitting watching the telly all day I know I need to get in touch with the Wildlife Trust and I'll feel better. My mood is getting better too. If I'm at home I often have anxiety but if I'm out I don't have it as much. I feel much better coming home tired after a day out."

Judith says that another thing that changed was Pippa started to get up early. *"If somebody had said a few months ago that she would be out there standing waiting for a minibus at quarter to nine in the morning twice a week we would have laughed!"*

The most amazing thing about Pippa's time with us though, is how much she has used the lessons she's learned in her everyday life.

"I never knew any of the nature reserves before, I just got lost really. Wherever I went with the group it was all new to me to go and explore. I love walking, and making tents. All the sessions we've done have made me do things at home and look for things to do more, like collecting pine cones. I love taking photographs; I could just stand there all day taking pictures. I'd like to help encourage more people to volunteer too".



Pippa and her Life Skills chums helping to renovate a disused bit of ground at the back of our Margrove Park offices.

"Everywhere we go she wants to pick litter up now it's great. She looks for nature reserves wherever we are and she's always talking about them. Every session has given her something to talk to people about too", Pippa's mum tells us.

Ultimately, Pippa has not only shown us that our work in health and wellbeing is working and in exactly the ways that we knew it did, she has simply been a really positive influence on everything we do (as I'm sure you will be able to tell from the photographs) and we would like to take this opportunity to say thank you!

The Life Skills project runs until June 2018 – if you think you or anyone you know could benefit from this project please contact Jenny Hagan on 01287 636382 or email: jhagan@teewildlife.org or for more details just look for the 'Life Skills' project page on our website.

WILD DAYS OUT!

Our new Ageing Better Middlesbrough project will be holding a series of events over the next year designed to encourage people over the age of 50, who may be lonely or feel isolated, to overcome these challenges by volunteering for nature. These events will involve activities that test what people might think about volunteering. So if you are looking for something flexible and fun that you can do with friends or family - and even on your own doorstep - then please come along to one of the events below to discover more!

Become a Meadow Maker II

Friday 1st September – 10am – 3pm All Day Event - Maze Park Nature Reserve, near the Tees Barrage.

Our last meadow-making event proved so popular we have had to organise another one! Learn new skills about local wildflowers and how to collect seeds on your doorstep to help bees and butterflies across the Tees Valley...

Are you a VolunTourist?

Friday 11th August – 10am – 3pm All Day Event - Redcar and Saltburn Coastal Nature Reserves.

Join us to discover wild places outside Middlesbrough, discovering coastal wildlife. Find out how you can help wildlife, find out more about them and get away for a day at the same time...

These events require booking; please contact us for more details. Transport is available, but book early to avoid disappointment! Refreshments will also be available so let us know your dietary needs when booking. Please contact Jen Hagan or Amy Carrick on 01287 636382 or email info@teeswildlife.org

Enter our

CHRISTMAS CARD COMPETITION

YES, I KNOW IT'S THE SUMMER ISSUE OF WILD TEES, but if you'll bare with me, I'd like to talk Christmas cards for a minute. Many of you very kindly buy the nationally available set of 'The Wildlife Trusts' Christmas cards every year. But this year we thought we would bring things back to a more local level -and we'd love you to get involved!

For many years now we've been at the heart of the annual North East Wildlife Photography competition and we know that there are many of you out there taking great photographs of our amazing wildlife across the Tees Valley. This year, through our Woodland Diaries and Talent Match projects, we have seen many of our volunteers and supporters demonstrate fantastic skills in drawing and painting their local wildlife too.

We want to celebrate all of that talent, so this year we are inviting you to submit your images to us with a chance to feature in a set of Tees Valley Wildlife Trust Christmas cards, which will go on sale from November. The final selection will also feature on our website, at stalls and events right across Teesside through the Winter period and beyond, as we will be getting cards printed that will be blank inside so they can be used for any occasion – seen and sold all year round. The overall winning image will take pride of place on the front cover of our November issue of this magazine. It's a great way to exhibit your work to a wide audience and all the proceeds from sales will go straight back into our work improving the environment for wildlife and communities.

Please see the rules for all submissions before entering. They are available on our website at: www.teeswildlife.org/what-we-do/ (please click on the 'Card Competition 2017' tab). The closing date is Friday 20th October, 2017.

Naturally we would like a range of images that represent different times of year, which is why we are opening the competition now!



Picture credit: Alder trees in Saltburn Gill by Audrey Barnes



Picture credit: Crab Apples by Malcolm Cowdry

WE'VE DELIVERED:

20 TRAINING SESSIONS ON BAT SURVEY TECHNIQUES AND ACOUSTIC DATA ANALYSIS

TRAINED 95 VOLUNTEERS TO UNDERTAKE THEIR OWN BAT SURVEY AND ANALYSE THEIR OWN ACOUSTIC DATA

ANALYSED OVER 10,000 DIFFERENT ACOUSTIC BAT DETECTION FILES

PROVIDED 77 PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT EVENTS

ENGAGED WITH 1693 MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC FROM AGES 1 TO 80 YEARS OLD!



By Sarah Barry

The last squeak **BATSCAPE**

CAN YOU BELIEVE IT IS 2 YEARS since we started the East Cleveland Batscape project? Sadly we are now wrapping things up, but what a fantastic project it has been! Heritage Lottery and Northumbrian Water's 'Branch Out' fund have funded the project and many of the targets we agreed with them have been surpassed; most exceptionally we have engaged more than double the number of people initially expected.

HERE ARE SOME OF THE DATA HIGHLIGHTS:

We have made 17 new recordings of Nathusius pipistrelle bat in East Cleveland. The Nathusius pipistrelle is a rare migratory bat (recorded travelling from Lithuania, over 1400km away). Previous to the project there has only been one recording that had been verified by an acoustic data file. This is fantastic news and highlights the need for further data collection. These recordings were made at four different locations, so plenty of scope for further surveys.

We've made a few possible detections of bat species that have never even been recorded in East Cleveland. One being the Leisler's bat, which can be found in Northumberland and Yorkshire, so no reason why they should not be found in Cleveland.

They may have always been here, albeit in low numbers and perhaps not hanging around (pardon the pun!) for long, but as there has previously not been such a big effort to survey for bats in this area, they have been overlooked.

We have recorded the Serotine bat in our area. This was most exciting as previously Barnsley was the furthest North this species had been recorded. In support of our identification the North Yorkshire bat group has also recently confirmed a recording made near to Whitby.

A possible reason why both the Leisler's and Serotine bat have never been recorded here in Cleveland before, is because their calls can be similar to the Noctule bat. They could have been overlooked, but to support our identification we (the volunteers!) went through the data in fine detail and all data was *Quality Controlled* by an experienced bat surveyor (Tina Whiffen).

We discovered some brilliant new bat hotspots. Namely the pond at Skelton Castle and Roseworth Woods, Loftus and Huntcliff. We were actually quite surprised to find large numbers of bats along the coastline in general. They were recorded along the Cleveland Way, at the cliffs between Loftus and Boulby (the highest cliffs on the

east coast of England). Bats have previously been recorded in East Yorkshire and Wales along the top of cliffs, but nowhere quite as high as the cliffs at Boulby.

SO, WHAT NEXT?

The funding has been and gone for this project, yet we have shown there is so much more we could do! I'm sure there are a whole load of people out there that do not know it yet, but are just waiting to fall in love with bats!

At the end of the project we put on two events at Loftus and Saltburn to deliver our results to the volunteers and the public. The event at Saltburn attracted a whole new audience, eager to learn about bats that had not been aware of the project previously. We were asked to return to most of the places we delivered events, with feedback being highly positive - most people commenting they would like to attend further events.

There are also all the volunteers that we have trained and who have, in turn, given up their time and energy for the project. They are all still super keen to be involved and have well and truly caught the bat bug; so much so, I am working on developing our own Bat Group. Up and down the country there are now over 90 different bat groups; the closest being North Yorkshire and Durham. I have been a member of both for several years now, yet have always had to travel rather far to assist with any projects or go to winter meetings and lectures. One of the main aims of a local bat group is to train up local people to become bat carers, to look after sick or injured bats and to release them back into the wild on recovery. Another role of a local Bat group is to provide volunteers who can undertake 'Voluntary Bat Roost Visits' on behalf of Natural England and the Bat Conservation Trust. This involves surveying a building where there may be bats roosting and giving advice on the best course of action if there are bats present and if the owner of the building has concerns. We are a long way off completing any training to provide volunteers with these skills, as it is a slow process, but I am happy to say we have started the ball rolling. As part of the new bat group we will also be running more guided bat walks and there are bat detectors to loan out to volunteers if they would like to continue with more surveys.

I would like to finish by offering my greatest thanks and appreciation to our amazing volunteers. The truth is, without the volunteers, this project would never have hit (and surpassed) the targets outlined

at the beginning. Seeing their enthusiasm reflect my own, and watching their knowledge grow, is perhaps the greatest feeling I have gained from the whole project.

I would also like to thank the Heritage Lottery Fund. Not only has it facilitated my employment for the past 2 years, but they have allowed us to spread the word, far and wide, that bats are great (and not at all like the films would have us believe). Now I'm one of many more who see them as endearing little critters that play a huge part in our local ecology.

Please do visit www.clevelandbats.org to learn more about the new Cleveland Bat Group and how you can get involved! We are planning on putting together a series of maps to show where each bat was detected throughout the East Cleveland Batscape and these will be on the website in due course.

Thank you to all involved.



Photo credit: Bat photos by Tom Marshall (inset and left) and Bat Conservation Trust (Below).

OUR NATURE:

Your Tees Partnerships Conference

2017

By Rachel Murtagh

A LOT HAS HAPPENED IN A YEAR since the Partnership reformed and our first article in *Wild Tees* in July 2016.

We welcome new members, adding to the existing national agencies, local authorities and larger organisations. We now have amongst our membership smaller local groups including The Cleveland Hedgehog Preservation Society, Teesmouth Field Centre, Durham County Badger Group and the Cleveland Beekeepers Association. We are keen to make sure that all the groups and organisations with a genuine interest in the nature of the Tees Valley come on board so we can truly be a representative and effective unified voice to champion the Tees Valley's natural environment.

"This has been a very good foundational start for TVNP to provide the opportunity for all partners to network & look to create new opportunities"

Amongst all our activity we committed to hosting an annual conference to bring everyone together to find out and celebrate what is already happening and shape the focus of the coming year for the partnership. This year we teamed up with Your Tees Catchment Partnership to host a joint 'partnerships' event. We held it at Preston Park Museum and over 90 people attended the day. The event was a mixture of presentations, varied workshops, networking, yummy food (the cream scones were particularly good) and even a spot of Tai Chi and meditation!

The day was split into three parts. The first section introduced by Dr. Weeks from Teesside University was Natural Assets and had workshops on honey bees and pollination, tackling invasive species on the Tees, Tees Valley green infrastructure planning, as well as a popular workshop hosted by the Wildlife Trust's Sue Antrobus, on the role of volunteers and friend's groups in the management of green spaces.

The second section was on Natural Growth and introduced by the new head of Culture and Tourism at the Combined Authority, Linda Tuttiett. She introduced us to the potential of outdoor activities in the Tees Valley

to develop our local tourist economy. The workshops included contributions from the National Flood Forum, with discussions on community involvement, partnership and leadership and our local Industry and Nature Conservation Association (INCA), updating us on the nature developments in the Tees estuary, including the proposed extension to the Special Protection Area (SPA) and the work of the Tees Estuary Partnership.

Following lunch, we had some 'PechaKucha' style presentations in which presenters show 20 slides each lasting 20 seconds, allowing for some quick-fire inspiration from River Tees Rediscovered, One Planet Pioneers Middlesbrough youth project (part of which is run by the Wildlife Trust's Becky Stanley with her four apprentices) and Paul Harman of Friends of the River Skerne talking about small sites and pocket parks. Paul Leadbitter came downstream from the North Pennines AONB to talk about peatlands - our very own 'Amazon rainforest' of biodiversity, carbon stores and historic landscape of international importance.

"Very happy with the whole day - wish I could have split myself in two & attended other sessions. Good range of content looking at natural heritage from a range of viewpoints"

Natural Health and Wellbeing, our third and final section, was introduced by Denise Orange from Public Health England. She highlighted that *"there is significant and growing evidence on the physical and mental health benefits of green spaces"* and *"exercising in green spaces versus exercise indoors is also associated with better mental health and wellbeing"*. The workshops to follow on 'social prescribing' - the contribution of the natural environment to tackling health inequalities and organic farming and local food, all inspired us further. Topping the day off with a tai chi taster, allowed us a moment's reflection and was great fun to-boot!

We hope to see volunteers, members and staff, from any of the partnership organisations, at next year's conference 2018!



Tees Valley Nature Partnership (TVNP)

is one of 47 local nature partnerships across England designated by the Secretary of State. We work strategically to conserve and enhance a healthy and robust natural environment, proven to aid our well-being and provide the natural assets vital for a healthy economy. Linking organisations in the Tees Valley's environmental, business and health and well-being sectors we form an influential partnership.



Your Tees Catchment Partnership (YTCP)

embeds collaborative working at a river catchment scale to deliver cross cutting improvements to our water environments. The essence of YTCP is to drive cost-effective practical delivery on the ground, resulting in multiple benefits including improvements to water quality, enhanced biodiversity, reduced flood risk, resilience to climate change and greater community engagement with our local river.



RARITIES

By Steve Ashton

YOU NEVER KNOW WHAT might turn up either in your garden or walking around one of the wildlife-rich nature reserves we have in the North East.

A friend and birder who was walking around Tees Valley Wildlife Trust's Bowesfield nature reserve in Stockton heard, coming from one of the reed beds, what he initially thought was either a reed warbler or a sedge warbler - both small brownish/green birds that can be found on the reserve. The sound was coming from a bird hidden in the reeds, it then changed and sounded like a blue tit, then a great tit, then went into a chorus which sounded like a nightingale and finished off with the mew of a buzzard. It was in fact a marsh warbler (pictured below right) - a very rare summer visitor to the UK, with approximately 5 pairs breeding in a small part of south east England (otherwise they are widespread across middle Europe). Since the discovery, lots of people have been to hear the sounds of this bird's amazing act of mimicry.



Rare birds do turn up in the most interesting places – a member of the public posted a picture on twitter @clevelandbirds asking what was this strange pink and black bird they had in their garden feeding in the cherry tree. It was quickly identified as a rose-coloured starling (above left) – it looks a bit like a starling which has been dipped in pink paint. This visitor, probably from Eastern Europe, had turned up in a suburban garden in Billingham. The bird stayed for nearly a week and the owners of the garden were very accommodating to the tens of people who have been to see it. Ironically a rose-coloured starling was also discovered in 1973 (by the same person who found the marsh warbler). If you do see something interesting in your garden share it on twitter with @teeswildlife you never know it might be a real rarity - and even if it isn't, we'd still like to see your pictures of wildlife in your area.

The ^{that} Worm Turned

...into a whole curriculum project

By Jacky Watson

WE DON'T OFTEN GET TO SEE the classroom work that follows a school visit to a nature reserve, so I jumped at the chance when Zetland Primary Nursery invited me to drop in after their visit to Coatham Marsh, in March.

During the visit, we looked for signs of spring. We thought about the birds nesting in different habitats and about the food they would need for chicks. Would the blackbirds find enough worms? To find out, we went worm charming. If you haven't tried this, you need a garden fork, a trowel and some friends. Bang on the fork handle with the trowel while your friends dance and stamp around, just like the gulls on a school field.

Zetland Primary kids and parents proved to be excellent worm charmers! Soon, we were surrounded by worms and both teams had full trays. We held up the worms and saw the soil going through them. We talked about their FIVE hearts and noticed that worms don't have eyes.

Well this was just the beginning. When I visited the nursery, back at school, what did I find? Worms across the curriculum! Here are just some of the things they got up to.

Teachers, if you would like to arrange a tailor-made environmental education session to inspire or enhance your topic, please call me on 01287 636382 or e-mail: education@teeswildlife.org



Children measured three metres to see how big this giant Australian worm is!



You can watch real worms mixing up the soil layers in Worm World

Wriggly Worms



Above: The children measured and cut wool to make annuli (rings) on the worms for this Wriggly Worms display. Below: This lovely art work captures memories of the marsh but also helps to develop pre-writing skills: children learnt about vertical lines to paint the reeds and draw annuli on worms. They made ducks using hand prints and circles and triangles.



VOLUNTEERS, like elephants, never FORGET!

Mal Liddell recalls some moments from his time volunteering with the Trust

NEARLY TEN YEARS AT THE TRUST and so many happy memories! It's very hard to know where to start. For one thing you meet plenty of characters on the Trust's volunteer teams and this diverse combination of people, from all backgrounds, leads inevitably to many moments that will never be forgotten (no matter how hard I try).

It all started at Coatham Marsh, when my wife and I came down for a volunteer 'taster' day. Looking back I think this moment must have been preordained by cosmic fate (or perhaps some lesser coincidence), as my wife and I read the article advertising the event not long after I had retired from a teaching job in Middlesbrough and was looking for my next challenge.

Somehow, after 30 years in Redcar, we had not once visited the marsh, but that streak was about to be broken by our first experience of volunteering with Tees Valley Wildlife Trust. The day was very enjoyable and rather tiring; my wife declined any further involvement, but I was quite sure that this was for me!

As I said, happy times and great people. Kenny, Dan, Steve, Dave, Jen and all the TVWT head-honchos that guided me and my pals through the next ten years, seemed to be blessed with their own special skills. Our team worked tirelessly to improve habitat, increased diversity wherever we went and constructed endless miles of paths and boardwalks; my back aches just thinking about it. But most of



Mal (happy Santa, left) and Steve (the grumpy elf, right). A Christmas ritual of wearing silly hats - supplied by Mal. Why he had a dozen daft hats, we never asked!

all, it was the great group of people I shared these volunteer experiences with, growing our own skills, week by week, and founding firm friendships along the way. Barry, Anne, Gill, the two Steve's, Kelvin, Matty and all the rest, are fixed in my memories of these times. I have a few special moments I'd like to recall for you.

As a team of volunteers, we laid a great deal of the boardwalk at Coatham Marsh. We would always try to match or exceed our best efforts from the week before. The best we ever managed was 30m of boardwalk laid in one day. I also distinctly remember wading into a frozen lake to cut winter reed that would later create a thatched roof on our roundhouse at Margrove.

While I always felt Coatham was my main reserve, we also visited many, if not all, the other Wildlife Trust reserves in the Tees Valley; as well as enjoying several work tasks that took place on non-Wildlife Trust land (for local land owners, Friends of Groups

or the Local Authority).

At Hardwick Dene we frightened the residents by burning some of the meadow cuttings and got a visit from the fire brigade (even though our leader had called them to let them know our intentions ahead of time). On another occasion, we were summoned, *en mass* to Marton West Beck to help extricate one member of staff (names have been omitted to save embarrassment) and the digger he was driving from the beck, where it was sinking badly. We arrived armed with railway sleepers, corrugated panels and the like, in an effort to give digger and driver something to purchase on. The machine chewed them up effortlessly and was no further out than before we got there. The situation was eventually resolved by getting in a bigger digger to dig him out. We spent the rest of the day, tidying up the mess. I can assure the readers that we volunteers reminded the poor chap just as often as we could get away with.

There were other events of course, often named after the offender, such as 'The Broadfoot' - a sign that was erected by that volunteer and a good six inches higher on one side than the other; 'Toorn's Magical Mystery Tours' - describing the unerring lack of direction expressed by our minibus driver (HINT: and editor of this magazine); and 'The Scase Effect' - for those moments when an inanimate object suddenly becomes a weapon of minor self-destruction in the hands of someone (anyone) who has lost coordination or control of their motor skills for a second.

From these accounts the reader might assume that we needed closer supervision, but the truth is that these events are all part of the fun, all part of the opportunity to learn, and most importantly (in my opinion) a chance to come together as a team. I have also enjoyed the opportunity to encounter wildlife - everything from reed buntings to bearded tits and marsh harriers (this latter one on a field trip to RSPB Blacktoft Sands).

In 2013, I gave up volunteering after being diagnosed with Motor Neuron Disease. I'm still mobile and, as I said to Dan (our Reserves Officer), "*I'll keep going till I can't manage any more*". My last task was at Coatham - having come full circle. I would recommend volunteering to anyone. You don't have to have a good reason, though there are so many good reasons; you just need to have a few spare moments and the desire to do something positive

with that time. I feel like I have completed many projects with TVWT that will last far into the future and can still visit the places we have worked and see my metaphorical thumb print on those landscapes, in the paths you walk on and the wildflower meadows you sit by on a summer's day. In the words of Nike 'Just Do It!'



Above - Auditioning for a slasher movie (actually bramble clearance at Saltburn as part of a meadow restoration project).

Below - Receiving an award and token of appreciation at the 2013 AGM (presented by John Dear).



The HOLLY and the Ivy



By Sue Antrobus

OUR HUMBLE IVY IS A PLANT THAT DIVIDES PEOPLE. Most conservationists consider it to be a valuable component of our landscape, providing an essential habitat for a wealth of wildlife. Others view it as a pernicious weed that smothers and strangles trees. So is ivy an ecological star in our countryside and gardens or a rampant pest in need of eradication?

I feel I should lay my cards on the table at the outset and tell you that I am an ambassador for ivy and every time I see well-meaning people strip ivy from trees I feel I must say something, though it is hard to change minds on this subject. In writing this article, however, I've had to ask whether my view is valid or if I've just got a bee in my bonnet?

We have only one native species of ivy (*Hedera helix*) and it is widespread throughout Britain. This shade tolerant climber, with its evergreen foliage, has two growth forms. Its juvenile form has the classic ivy shaped leaves and grows in low light levels. When light levels are higher it produces bushy branches with elliptical leaves - it is only this mature form that produces flowers and fruit.

A CASE FOR CHERISHING IVY

Ivy flowers may look inconspicuous, with their five tiny green petals, but they produce nectar and pollen in profusion. It flowers late - September through to November - so is a valuable source of nectar for insects such as bees, hoverflies and butterflies, when other sources are scarce.

During the winter, its dense foliage offers shelter for birds and hibernating butterflies. In spring, it provides ideal nesting locations for songbirds such as robins, blackbirds and wrens and also creates many nooks and crannies where bats can roost during the day.

As ivy flowers so late in the year it means that it fruits in late winter and early spring, providing much needed fuel for birds. Ivy berries have a high fat content so are especially nutritious at this lean period. Some insect species depend on ivy too; the beautifully diminutive holly blue butterfly has two generations each year and, while its spring caterpillars feed on holly, the later summer one prefers ivy. This is possibly why nature reserves such as Linthorpe Cemetery in Middlesbrough, which has both holly and ivy, is a great place to spot this butterfly.

DOES IVY KILL TREES?

When questioned why people remove ivy, many give the reason that it kills trees or just looks untidy. But nature is untidy! As conservationists, we try not to 'garden' in the sense of making everything neat. Our woodlands and hedgerows are semi-natural habitats and, while most of us like our houses clean and ordered, when it comes to our green places and nature reserves, we have to be careful not to transfer our tidy minded attitudes to these wild habitats.

Contrary to popular belief, ivy is not a parasitic

plant. It is rooted in the soil and takes its water and nutrients from the soil. What some consider roots are masses of tiny adhesive suckers that ivy uses for support as it climbs. These suckers do not penetrate the bark or take any nutrients from the tree.

So what is the stand of national organisations like the Woodland Trust and the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS)?

The Woodland Trust says, *"We value the wildlife benefits of ivy and in general do not advocate cutting or removing ivy from trees. Ivy does not damage trees and its presence doesn't indicate that a tree is unhealthy or create a tree safety issue in its own right. In some cases it may need to be removed, but we assess each case individually."*

The RHS is well respected by gardeners and conservationists alike. Its website is generally positive about ivy. *"Ivy growing on trees is often thought to be a serious problem, endangering the health of even very large trees. However, its presence on the trunk is not damaging and where it grows into the crown, as ivy is not directly harmful to trees and is beneficial to wildlife, control is not usually necessary. However, where it is undesirable either by obscuring attractive bark or adding weight to an ailing tree, control will be needed. This is usually only because the trees are already in decline or are diseased and slowly dying"*.

Elisabeth Airey, who is a Freelance Arboricultural and Woodland Advisor says, *"Typically, arborists manage trees in areas where risk has to be managed and reduced - trees in gardens, highway trees, trees in public open spaces and trees near buildings. In order to effectively assess risk, we need to see what is happening to the tree. Ivy can mask this by covering cavities, hiding decay pockets and fungus, and making structural weakness difficult to detect. Dense ivy growth on a tree will also gradually reduce the efficiency of the tree to photosynthesise. On light demanding species like ash and oak, this canopy shading is more significant, causing a significant decline over time. In a woodland or a little used area, ivy can be left on trees to support biodiversity, however trees bordering a woodland footpath that has regular usage may need the ivy removing so that the tree's health, and ultimately the risk, can be correctly assessed."*

So although ivy does not directly affect the health of trees it can influence it and, for an arboriculturist, I suppose that it's a bit like a doctor examining a

patient with their clothes on.

The main threat it poses is that its weight and wind resistance can help bring a weak tree down. A heavy growth of ivy on a tree usually occurs on older trees as they go into a natural decline. Ivy growth on the trunk does produce a humid microclimate which favour wood decaying invertebrates. But this should not be considered as a negative thing. Dead wood, especially in standing old trees, such as rot holes, are critical habitats for a wealth of specialised invertebrates, many of which are becoming rare in Europe. It's worth noting that in the storms of 1987, that it was the older trees that survived whereas many tall and slender healthy trees toppled in the winds.

So what do I think now?

Without doubt ivy has considerable value for our wildlife and there is no disputing that a considered approach should be taken before its removal. I am still of the mind that ivy should be cherished and not persecuted, but I do recognise that in some specific circumstances controlling ivy is required. So before your fingers reach for the secateurs, consider whether you value a tidy tree or one that has much





Bee a **friendly** gardener

Habitat loss and pesticides are hitting wild bees hard. But whether you've got a window box, a patio or a whole garden, a few simple actions can make a difference



Plant nectar and pollen-rich flowers

Provide a water source



Monty Don is a gardening author and speaker, and presenter of BBC Gardener's World @TheMontyDon

It has been estimated that 80 per cent of the western diet depends on pollination by bees. So their steady decline is a cause for real alarm.

But British gardeners can actively nurture and conserve the wild bee population. Gardens are always a rich source of food for wild bees and with a little care can be made even better for them without any trouble or loss of pleasure to the gardener.

You do not need rare or tricky plants. In fact the opposite is true.

Bees need pollen and the smaller flowers of unhybridised species are likely to be a much richer source than huge show blooms on plants that are the result of elaborate breeding. Any flower that is open

“ You do not need tricky plants. In fact the opposite ”

and simple, such as members of the daisy family, or any that are set like a lollipop on a stick, such as scabious, and all members of the thistle family, are ideal for attracting honey bees, which have rather short tongues so need easy access. Bumble bees have longer tongues so are better adapted for plants that have more of a funnel shape, such as foxgloves.

Bees love any flowering trees, so an apple or a pear is a huge bonus. All legumes such as peas, beans, clover and sweet peas, as well as



Create potential nest sites

Encourage natural predators

Have long as well as short grass

Bees don't just need nectar and pollen. Nest sites and water are just as important

dandelions, blackberries, asters, ivy, and willow, are as attractive to a foraging honey bee as your carefully cultivated borders.

A garden without bees not only reduces its fertility but also diminishes its beauty. You can keep bees as I do, or simply provide a source of food for them. But one thing is certain: we cannot do without them. So as gardeners we should do everything we can to welcome them as an integral part of a beautiful garden.

Download your free Wild Bee action pack

To make it easy for everyone to help wild bees, we've produced a short e-booklet. In it you'll learn how our many different types of bees live, why they are threatened - and what you can do to help them flourish. For example, you can revive a tired bee with sugar solution. Find the booklet on wildaboutgardensweek.org.uk, our long-running collaboration with the RHS.



Wildlife areas on school grounds

Wild play areas for young people

A new way to build

New developments don't have to squeeze out wildlife. In fact, they can enhance it – and benefit people at the same time

The Wildlife Trusts are calling on developers, local authorities and Government to embrace a new, more holistic way of building: one that avoids damage to protected sites, and works with the natural surroundings to create gains for nature, and better health and well-being for residents.

ILLUSTRATION: NIK POLLARD

Existing trees, water and meadows integrated

Wildlife permeable barriers between gardens and public green spaces



Rachel Hackett is Living Landscape Development Manager at The Wildlife Trusts @RachelTassell

Sustainable Urban Drainage for biodiversity and flood relief

Green spaces joined up in large connected blocks

Integrated bat and swift boxes

Wildlife-friendly planting and landscape design

Green roofs and walls to provide habitat, and regulate pollution and rainfall

Top Reasons to Join Us (There are Many More)

For You, Your Family and Your Community

- 1** We help over 40 Teesside Green Places be more **accessible, informative** and **enjoyable** for visitors.
- 2** We have measured and proven that taking part in **nature-based activities** with us can make you **happier and healthier**.
- 3** We hold **workshops, volunteering sessions** and offer **conservation awards** all year for all ages and abilities.

For Our Wildlife and Green Places

- 1** We have **lost 50% of hedgerows** and **98% of meadows** in just 100 years. **We help to restore them.**
- 2** **1 in 10 UK Species** are heading for **extinction**, including hedgehogs and water voles. **We work to protect them.**
- 3** Nature care budgets have been **almost halved, with plans for more reductions.** **We are taking up the challenge.**

*But we can only do all of this with support from you!
(Please pass this magazine on to a neighbour or friend when you've finished with it)*

Why Join Today?



You will receive a welcome pack with your **membership card**, a **guide to our nature reserves** and lots of information on **local wildlife**.

You will receive our **magazine** three times a year and invitations to **special events**.

We offer support to complete **conservation awards** available to all ages.

Explorer Families and Wildlife Watchers get access to hundreds of **online resources, games and downloads**.

Guardians can choose from one **walk, talk or bespoke activity** per year just for their group.

Thank you... because of you we can make sure wildlife always has a home in Teesside, and our green places are always here for you to enjoy.



TEES VALLEY

TEES VALLEY WILDLIFE TRUST IS A REGISTERED CHARITY NO. 511068

10,000 PEOPLE ACROSS TEESSIDE

(£ Millions of birds, bats, bugs and buttercups)

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Whether you want... Bushcraft & Butterfly Surveys at **Bowsfield**,
Hedgehog and Honey Bee Homes at **Hardwick OR...**
Crafts and Conservation at **Coatham**

Membership makes it possible!

