

# Harrogate District Biodiversity Action Group

Newsletter no.22 - February 2016

[@HDBAG](#) [Facebook](#)  
[www.biodiversityaction.org](http://www.biodiversityaction.org)

## Annual General Meeting

Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> March

[Horticap](#), Bluecoat Wood Nurseries

Otley Road, Harrogate HG3 1QL

1.00pm for guided tour of [Horticap](#)

1.30 – 3pm for meeting

1. Welcome
2. Approval of minutes of last AGM 7 March 2015
3. Chair's report
4. Treasurer's report
5. Election of committee
6. Guest speakers from two newly formed groups: Chris Beard of Hookstone & Stonefall Action Group (HASAG) and Catherine Baxter from the Woodlands Community Garden.

### What have we been doing?

Young Enterprise is a Europe wide competition for schools and the 2015 Ripon Grammar School entry titled itself 'Revelation'.

After much research they designed and manufactured on site their well-built bee hotel. As well as the hotel the kit included a pack of wildflower seeds to plant near the hotel for food for the bees and a brochure about the different types of solitary bees and their important role in pollination.

HDBAG is proud to endorse the bee hotel.



## Bee Hotels

Revelation - Young Enterprise



The bee hotel was successfully marketed at £12 at the Young Enterprise Christmas Fayre at Asda. For more information contact the team at [youngenterprisergs@gmail.com](mailto:youngenterprisergs@gmail.com)

Follow the links throughout the newsletter for more information

## Harrogate District Volunteer Oscars

Carolyn Rothwell and her team of volunteers have worked hard in the courtyard gardens at [Harrogate District Hospital](#) to turn them into delightful places for patients to look at as well as provide food and shelter for wildlife. Carolyn has also volunteered for many years at [Horticap](#). For all her hard work Carolyn was awarded Wildlife Volunteer 2015 – well done Carolyn.



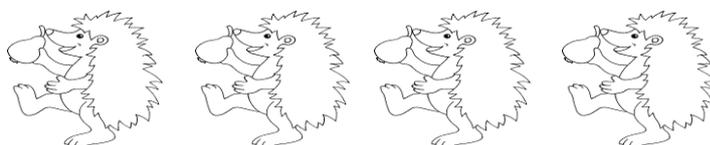
Congratulations also to Simon Warwick, Environment Volunteer 2015, for a well-deserved award in recognition of the vision and determination to establish and run the [Nosterfield Nature Reserve](#).

Audrey Sommersgill was awarded a Lifetime Volunteer award in recognition of just that - a lifetime of encouraging others in a love of nature and the countryside. Congratulations Audrey.

## Hedgehog Day at [Starbeck Library](#) in October

We were pleased to help spread the word about the plight of hedgehogs and encourage everyone to leave gaps in fences and hedges to allow these creatures to roam and feed at night.

£58 was raised for Teresa Marshall's hedgehog hospital here in Harrogate.



## Membership for 2016

Membership runs from January to December 2016 and we hope you will continue to support the group.

Fees have stayed the same at £10 single or £15 for a family.

Please send your subscription:-

1. By mail to HDBAG c/- 102 Leeds Road, Harrogate, HG2 8HB
2. Electronic Transfer to HDBAG, HSBC Account no, 12225778 Branch code 40-23-12 with your surname and initial as the reference
3. By PayPal - go to our website at <http://biodiversityaction.org>

## February 2016

School half term will soon be upon us. HDBAG will be at Harrogate Library on Wednesday 17th February from 2-3pm with several activities for children. We will be tracking animals, making fat balls and nest material balls for birds. Places are limited so drop into the children's library to reserve yours.

National Nest Box week is 14 - 21 February. [Horticap](#) have made six bird boxes for [Friends of Valley Gardens](#) to put on trees in the [Peat Garden](#), adjacent to the [Old Magnesia Well Pump Room](#), in the Valley Gardens. Join us at the Peat Garden on Tuesday 16th February at 10am to see how the [Arboricultural Team of Harrogate Borough Council](#) install bird boxes.

The birds will be out looking for suitable nesting material and we can all help by putting out supplies in our gardens or on our balconies. Moss, straw, fluff from the tumble dryer and pet hair are all to hand and well received.

To keep a track on what has been seen in the area now that [Nigel Heptinstall](#) is no longer with the Harrogate Advertiser go to his blog at <https://outdoors2015.wordpress.com>

It is good to know Nigel is still campaigning for the local environment and that you can keep a check on what wildlife is in the area without waiting for a newspaper.

If you regularly note birds you see in your garden why not put those details to good use and submit them to the British Trust for Ornithology's [BTO Garden Bird Watch](#). On their website the BTO assure that, if carried out in a systematic manner, these weekly observations of birds or indeed other garden wildlife can prove very valuable for researchers. [www.bto.org](http://www.bto.org)

## The Dingy Skipper



The [Dingy Skipper](#) (2007 UK BAP priority species) has suffered a sharp decline across the country as well as in Harrogate district where it was seen along the [magnesian limestone](#) grassland strip that runs north to south through the district (from Catterick to Rotherham). This butterfly's host plant is the [Birds-foot trefoil](#).



Last year Nigel Heptinstall discovered a colony of Dingy Skipper at the car park of a local reservoir.

The bad news was that aggregate for repairing footpaths was deposited there. The good news is that it has been agreed to cordon off the best areas for the butterfly to avoid vehicles driving on the overwintering larvae.

A plan has also been devised to utilise unused aggregate to create two areas of future butterfly habitat, scalloped to be south facing in order to trap the spring sun, this will be both where it was deposited and at another suitable location. Hopefully in the long term when the [Birds-foot Trefoil](#) colonises these new areas there will be a better range of suitable habitat that will improve the colony's resilience. [Fountains Forestry](#) and [Yorkshire Water](#) are working together on this project.

[Magnesian limestone grassland](#) is a habitat action plan (HAP) in the [Harrogate BAP](#).

Comments and contributions welcomed.

Please contact Pamela Millen:-

✉ [biodiversityaction@gmail.com](mailto:biodiversityaction@gmail.com)

☎ 01423 523233

## Musings of a wildlife gardener (a personal view)

### The state of nature and why I am opposing fracking

The stormy winter weather has afforded little opportunity to get outside into the garden, so I have been busy inside knitting a jumper decorated with owls for a new baby due in the spring. Delighted with the result I decided to get hold of a copy of Pat Hutchins' children's picture book classic, '[Good night owl](#)', to complete my gift. I remembered the pleasure my children and I had with this tale of Owl's difficulty getting to sleep because of all the noise made by his woodland neighbours during the day. It was so popular that nearly 30 years later I can still recite chunks by heart. An ageless story, or so I thought until my copy came and I refreshed my memory on who those neighbours were. The book was originally published in 1972 and back then amongst others disturbing Owl's rest were [sparrows](#), [turtle doves](#), [red squirrels](#), [starlings](#) and a [cuckoo](#). Obviously Owl might now be disturbed by new denizens of the wood such [collared doves](#) with their football supporter call of "United", but the point remains that some of the creatures listed are now threatened to such an extent that many toddlers might never encounter them. Should we just shrug our shoulders at this trend? Some things may go, but does it matter?

Coincidentally I am writing this during the week of [BBC's 'Winterwatch'](#), which features considerable debate about the plight of the [Scottish Wildcat](#) - the morality of saving it versus the cost of saving it! Isn't it sad that we seem to leave nature until it gets to the very brink before we decide to take action to save it?!

In 2013 25 of the UK's nature conservation and research organisations came together to publish the disturbing [State of Nature report](#).

Whish found that 60% of UK species studied had declined in recent decades, and more than 1 in 10 could disappear from our shores altogether.

That left the question: 'what needs to be done to improve the fate of nature in the UK?'

In October 2015 conservation organisations launched their '[Response for Nature](#)'. Details for the [England version](#) can be found at [www.rspb.org.uk/Images/responsefornature\\_england](http://www.rspb.org.uk/Images/responsefornature_england). It is surely difficult to just shrug those shoulders after a read of this. Its opening pages state:

"People love nature. Public attitudes and support for nature reflect the range of reasons why nature conservation is important:

88% of the UK population believe that biodiversity is indispensable for the production of goods, such as food, fuel and medicines.

90% feel that our well-being and quality of life is based on nature and biodiversity.

94% agree we have a moral obligation to halt biodiversity loss."

The report identifies 5 main pressures on nature:

- habitat change, (loss, degradation and fragmentation)
- climate change
- pollution
- over-exploitation
- invasive non-native species

When I look at this list I can only see these pressures being made worse by a commercially developed fracking industry. When people talk about fracking it is largely the possible effects on human health that are highlighted. Personally I wish more attention would be paid to the effects on the natural world. Even in the best regulated circumstances fracking will cause disruption, loss and fragmentation to habitat.

It is a fossil fuel and so should be left in the ground if we are to avoid runaway climate change. It will cause noise and light pollution for the duration of drilling, even if there are no catastrophic leaks of methane or chemicals which could react with what is naturally under our feet to produce toxic mixes or pollute our water courses.

It will certainly constitute over-exploitation in rural areas that are increasingly vital [wildlife corridors](#) for our nature under stress. Nothing I have read makes me feel any easier in my mind about the potentially devastating consequences of fracking. We are living at a time where we really need to face up to our moral responsibility to take positive action to support the rest of our natural world. We share the planet and depend on the health of all.

[Response for Nature](#) makes it very clear that "we all have our part to play in saving nature. Each and every one of us needs to care about, and take action for, nature - before it's too late." We must "care for places that we own or manage, and make improvements to benefit nature and, where possible, deliver benefits for people's well-being." We must (and this surely applies to the members and supporters of HDBAG?) "**speak up for nature and, wherever needed, play our role in holding the Government to account.**"

**Janice Scott**



Her Majesty the Queen celebrates her 90th birthday this year. A special occasion and a reason to spruce up the country.

Groups of people all over the country are adopting a patch near them and will be out cleaning up on the weekend of the 4th, 5th and 6th March.

To join the official clean-up project go to [www.cleanforthequeen.co.uk](http://www.cleanforthequeen.co.uk) where you can create an account and set up an event. (A tip when entering your event is to add street and town as well as the postcode).

Neil Hind of [Team Harrogate](#) and [Pinewoods Conservation Group](#) has volunteered to keep a list of all the events in Harrogate District and will be advertising the projects with the [Harrogate Advertiser](#) and [Stray FM](#). When you have entered your event on the website please forward your details to Neil at [neil.hind@hind.co.uk](mailto:neil.hind@hind.co.uk) to make sure your hard work is credited to you.

On Saturday March 5 [Starbeck in Bloom](#) are organising a giant litter pick as part of the national campaign [Clean for the Queen](#).

They plan to clean the old track from Starbeck to Bilton with groups starting at both ends Sticks, bags etc will be provided.

If you can join in and help please contact them via their website at [www.starbeckinbloom.co.uk](http://www.starbeckinbloom.co.uk)

[Pinewoods Conservation Group](#) are also holding their litter pick on Saturday March 5th. From 10am they will be cleaning the Pine Woods and surrounding area. Bring gloves and meet at the Council Nurseries on Nursery Lane East, off Harlow Moor Road (HG2 0FH).

Other groups logged on the [Clean for the Queen](#) website include:

- [Springwater School](#) on the 4th March,
- [Harrogate Spa Tennis Centre](#) on the 5th
- [Woodlands Methodist Church](#) on the 6th.

### **Yorkshire Dales River Trust**

Flooding and the importance of river and waterway maintenance has been newsworthy for many months now. A local group would appreciate more volunteers to help with their important work. At their website [www.yorkshiredalesrivertrust.com](http://www.yorkshiredalesrivertrust.com) you will find details of the work the group does and how you can help.

*"We aim to meet twice per month throughout the Dales and surrounding area for Practical Conservation Tasks. These activities will be outdoors and may be physically demanding.*

*We also need volunteers to help us with our [Invasive Species Watch](#). We are developing a programme to eradicate and tackle invasive species throughout the Dales, particularly in Wensleydale and the Upper Wharfe, but we are lacking information about how serious the problem is and how far invasive species have spread. If you notice any [Himalayan Balsam](#), [Japanese Knotweed](#), [Giant Hogweed](#) or other invasive species whilst you are out and about please send us record of it. An easy way to do this is to download the [PlantTracker](#) app on a Smartphone or computer. The location of your sighting will be automatically sent to a database. If you would like further information or a pocket ID guide, please contact: [caitlin.pearson@yorkshiredalesrivertrust.com](mailto:caitlin.pearson@yorkshiredalesrivertrust.com)"*

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