

# Harrogate District Biodiversity Action Group

Newsletter no.15 - February 2014

## What have we been doing?

The first event of the year was on January 18th when we worked with Starbeck in Bloom at their Winter Bird event. Not being prepared to rely on the live variety to cooperate on the day we set up a trail around Belmont Park using pictures of migrant and resident birds that are noticeable at this time of year.



Both local MP Andrew Jones and Harrogate Mayor Mike Newby were escorted round the trail by young enthusiasts.

The weather was not so kind on the Sunday morning of January 26th, at the time we said we would be taking part in the RSPB's Big Garden Bird Watch. We had decided to count beside the part of Killinghall Moor that is a rare example of Lowland Heath. It is a habitat that will be at risk if the proposed building of 600 houses on the part of the moor bounded by the B6161 and Penny Pot Lane goes ahead.

We are trying to build up a picture of the habitat which might help secure consideration of this special area should planning permission be granted. A decision was deferred at a recent council meeting.



Harrogate and District Naturalists Society has been involved in observing and recording all aspects of natural history in the Harrogate district for many years. Many members are recognised experts in their particular fields/species. It was with some trepidation therefore, that our chair, Lynda Fussell, accepted the invitation to give a talk about HDBAG our history, achievements and our future plans. Her presentation on 5th February 'did us proud'. A sign of success is the amount of comments received afterwards. There were several suggestions we will be discussing at future committee meetings.

## What's Next?

### 13 and/or 14 March ~ Grange Quarry

Sam Walker, the new Ranger with Harrogate Borough Council's Parks Department, has 12 standard trees he intends planting at Grange Quarry (near B&Q) on the 13<sup>th</sup> and/or 14th March. If you can help please contact him for details [sam.walker@harrogate.gov.uk](mailto:sam.walker@harrogate.gov.uk).

### 22 March 10-12pm ~ Rossett Nature Reserve

Saturday morning on the 22nd March at Rossett Nature Reserve is when we will be helping to spread gravel to level path ways around the site. Sam Walker is again the person to contact if you can help.

### 25 March 7pm-9.30pm ~ HDBAG AGM

The HDBAG AGM will be held on at the Bramall Learning Centre at RHS Harlow Carr. We will keep the official business as short as possible so you can enjoy our two speakers for the evening.

**Dr. Mark Goddard** is based at Leeds University and is a Research Assistant on the Urban Pollinator Project. He is focusing on the interaction of people and wildlife in an urban environment and how everyone can be encouraged to enhance urban habitats for pollinators in both gardens and other green spaces.

**Sam Walker** - will talk about what he has achieved so far and his plans for the future. This is a good opportunity to meet and talk with him about your area of Harrogate district.

We are looking for new committee members so please let us know beforehand if you would be interested. There are also plenty of projects where you can choose to be involved on a more regular basis if desired. Come along and hear about these too.

Comments and contributions welcomed.

Please contact Pamela Millen:-

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

☎ 01423 523233

## Diary Dates for other Local Groups

### 2 March 1.30pm-4pm ~ Hedgehogs

An illustrated talk and workshop, will be held by Toni Bunnell at the Black Swan Inn, 23 Peasholme Green, York, YO1 7PR.

Course content:

- Reasons for the decline of hedgehogs in Britain
- First aid treatment for new arrivals
- Further treatment of sick or injured hedgehogs
- Caring for baby hedgehogs
- Attracting hedgehogs to your garden
- Monitoring hedgehogs in the wild

To secure a place on the course, please send a cheque for £10 (made out to 'T. Bunnell') to; Toni Bunnell, 5 Beech Avenue, Holgate, York, YO24 4JJ.

### Saturday Work Parties ~ Millie's Green

Woodfield Millennium Green, now to be known as 'Millie's Green', is on Albany Avenue – just off the Skipton Road end of Woodfield Road. From the 1st March there will be working parties there every Saturday morning from 10am-12pm.

Plans include:

- Cutting carpet into strips to lay out pathways to enable exploration of the wildlife habitat
- Lay bark mulch to limit the damage done by the weed suppressant material (which was laid down some years ago and has created a barrier between the soil and the plants above ground)
- "Layer" the beech hedge which was cut back last year, so as to keep it under control and to make a good looking backdrop to the garden.



There will be the regular tending of flower and vegetable beds throughout the year with the produce being freely available to residents in the vicinity and all volunteers.

### Harrogate District RSPB Local Group

Indoor meetings take place at Christ Church Hall, Harrogate on Monday evenings at 7.30pm. £3 for members, £4 for non-members.

**March 10<sup>th</sup>** Snowy Owls by Gordon Yates

**April 14<sup>th</sup>** RSPB and Farming by Chris Thomson

**Harrogate District Naturalists' Society** indoor meetings take place at St. Robert's Centre, Harrogate on Wednesday evenings at 7.30pm. Non-members £3.

**March 5<sup>th</sup>** Black Grouse Recovery Project by Philip Warren

**March 19<sup>th</sup>** Regeneration of a Quarry by Bob Orange

### Flower Research Shows Gardens can be a Feast for the Eyes – and the Bees

Researchers at the Laboratory of Apiculture and Social Insects ([LASI](#)) at the University of Sussex have completed one of the first scientific studies to put the business of recommending pollinator-friendly garden flowers on a firmer scientific footing. The study's findings were published in the journal *Functional Ecology*.

The study was carried out by Professor Francis Ratnieks, director of LASI, and PhD student Mihail Gaburзов, with funding from the [Body Shop Foundation](#). The study is one of several research projects that form the [Sussex Plan](#) for Honey Bee Health and Well Being – a five-year research programme to help us understand better the honeybee and the challenges it faces.

Plants that the researchers can recommend to gardeners include lavender, marjoram, open-flowered dahlias, borage, and Bowles Mauve Everlasting Wallflower. Marjoram was probably the best all-rounder, attracting honey bees, bumble bees, other bees, hover flies, and butterflies. Borage was the best for honey bees. Lavender and open-flowered dahlias were very attractive to bumblebees. Bowles Mauve was the best for butterflies. But all attracted a range of insects. The least attractive flowering plant to insects was the pelargonium – a popular garden plant. For more details go to [www.sussex.ac.uk](http://www.sussex.ac.uk) and search on the title 'Flower research shows gardens ...'



At RHS Harlow Carr it is planted in the 'Gardens Through Time' among the Lavender and Artemisia, where it looks great all spring and summer.

It's best treated as a short lived plant, looking good for two to three years, however in a hard winter they can be killed by the severe cold.

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

### Vandalism on our lanes

Is it a common experience for those of us who garden for wildlife that we find our involvement in our local flora and fauna grows? I pay more attention to what is happening in the natural world around me. When I go walking it is no longer so much about the lovely distant view, as the wildflowers at my feet and the insects feeding on them. I suppose I could describe it as a bottom up appreciation of all the elements that fit together to compose our Yorkshire landscape and of which I am a part.

There is a lovely country lane near me which is often our destination for a blow of fresh air and exercise. It has various delights to look forward to through the year: spring brings a lovely patch of sweet cicely with its unmistakable scent of aniseed; late autumn sunshine brings out the last bees and butterflies nectaring on a mass of ivy scrambling over a dry stone wall. Or it did...!

Just before Christmas we took a break from all the preparations and went for our walk only to find a scene of devastation. Saplings and mature trees alike had been mutilated, branches splintered by inappropriate heavy machinery.



And my poor old ivy? Even though it stands several feet back from the road and was not thinking of trespassing onto the highway anytime soon, it had been horribly attacked and cut back to the bone. It made me want to weep.



It certainly made me put pen to paper to my local councillor and to the Highways Department of NYCC. I can understand the wish to cut back vegetation for road safety at junctions, but to treat it with such disrespect along a little used country lane defeats me. And to do it in such a barbarous fashion!

Once again I am left wondering why this has to happen at all. Certain lanes seem to be on the programme for mutilation, while others are allowed to carry on their life unscathed. At the very least a review of the cutting policy is urgently required.

Hard-nosed Yorkshire types may accuse me of being sentimental and anthropomorphic or animistic. I am unapologetic. I was reading an article in the periodical *Resurgence* recently that referred to Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind" and described the poem as bringing us back "to a deeper sense of being in Nature - not 'looking at' Nature or 'appreciating' it but 'being identified with' it.

The poem evokes a living relationship with a living world and the article's author posited our need to rediscover our instinctive animistic attitude to Nature. The sadness is that increasingly we feel superior to Nature, until something like the recent floods happens to remind us of the fallacy of this approach.

Perhaps mine is a hopelessly idealistic approach for our modern complex world, but having woken up to the natural world of which I am just a part, it is the only way forward for me.

**Janice Scott**