

Grimsargh Wetlands Newsletter

Winter 2018



Welcome

Dear Member,

Welcome to your Winter Newsletter! Firstly, may we take this opportunity to thank you all for your enthusiastic and positive comments and feedback on our first Newsletter. As you will know, in recent weeks, there has been a great deal of activity on the Wetlands. In this Newsletter, we will update you on the work being done by contractors and volunteers. We will also describe some of the exciting wildlife that has been recorded.

We hope you enjoy reading your Newsletter and wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. Finally, please remember that on Wednesday 19th December there will be a 'Wetlands Christmas Evening' for members and volunteers at The Plough in Grimsargh, we hope to see you there!

With best wishes,

The Trustees

News

Lancashire Environmental Fund 20th Anniversary Awards Event

As reported in our last Newsletter, the Trust has recently been successful in obtaining funding from the Lancashire Environmental Fund (LEF - <http://www.lancsenfund.org.uk/>). The funding awards were presented to the Trust at the LEF's 20th Anniversary Awards Event, held at the Brockholes Nature Reserve, Preston on Friday 28th September, 2018. David Hindle

(Chair, Grimsargh Wetlands Trust) and Jayne Woollam (Secretary, Grimsargh Wetlands Trust) received the awards from Andy Rowett (Fund Manager, LEF) and John Wilkinson (Regional Director, Energy North at SUEZ R&R UK Ltd). Also present, was internationally-renowned wildlife photographer and naturalist, Simon King OBE who enthralled the attendees with a thought-provoking and inspirational presentation.



David Hindle with Simon King OBE at the Brockholes Nature Reserve for the LEF's 20th Anniversary Awards Event (photo by Jayne Woollam).

Commenting on the award, David Hindle said *"I feel honoured to be associated with this ongoing conservation project. Over the last two decades I have worked closely with landowners, conservationists, scientists and local authorities. I would like to thank all the many organisations and individuals concerned. I am especially grateful to Lancashire Environmental Forum, Grimsargh Parish Council, Preston City Council, United Utilities, the RSPB and the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust*

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for all their help. Grimsargh Wetlands is now managed by the Grimsargh Wetlands Trust who, in a remarkably short period of time, have achieved so much in restoring this crucial habitat. With this generous level of funding, we will now be able to share with the public, an improved footpath, improved access and viewing facilities and crucially a new and significant nature reserve for Lancashire.”



Volunteers and Trustees celebrate the LEF's awards at a recent work party (photo by Geoff Carefoot).

On hearing of the awards, Lindsay Philipson, Chair of Grimsargh Parish Council, commented “From the outset, the vision has been to enable the whole community to share in the beauty and serenity of the Wetlands. That this has so far been denied to the less mobile, those who use wheelchairs and families with prams and pushchairs is a source of regret. So it was top priority to put this right. This generous award means that not only will the public footpath see huge improvements in access, but the next stage in the planned improvements is also assured. It also enables us to fulfil a commitment made to Preston City Council Planning Committee, at the time of battling for planning permission to go ahead, that access for the community would be improved.”

Contractors on the Wetlands



The Wetlands has been closed to visitors while contractors are on site (photo by Jayne Woollam).

As you will all know, the Wetlands has been closed to visitors throughout November. By the time you read this Newsletter, we hope that the work done by contractors (Landscape Engineering Ltd.) will have been completed and that the Wetlands will, again, be open to visitors. The aim of this ‘Phase 1’ work on the Wetlands is to undertake major, and much needed, improvements to access for visitors. Specifically, work has been undertaken to improve the public footpath onto and through the Wetlands. In addition, steps have been replaced by ramped areas to enable full access for wheelchair users, prams and buggies.



Work in progress to improve the footpath on the Wetlands (photo by Jayne Woollam).

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Collaboration with the Ribble Rivers Trust

Volunteers will know that one of the most significant problems facing us is the spread of willow throughout the site. A great deal of time and effort is put into clearing willow in order to let other plants, and wildlife, become established and thrive thereby increasing the quality and biodiversity of the Wetlands. You may ask – what happens to all that willow waste that is generated? Some of it is used, on site, to create sanctuaries for small mammals and other wildlife; however, the bulk of it must be disposed of. Trustee Ken Maylor has coordinated a collaboration between the Wetlands Trust and the Ribble Rivers Trust that ensures that our waste willow, and other scrub material, can now be productively recycled in other local projects.



Volunteers from the Ribble Rivers Trust and the Grimsargh Wetlands Trust take a break from willow clearance and brash bundle production at a recent work party.

Over the last couple of months, Ken has organised several visits by employees and volunteers from the Ribble Rivers Trust who have helped with our ongoing programme of willow and scrub clearance on the Wetlands. The waste has been gathered up into 'brash bundles' and taken for use in projects to prevent bankside erosion at Bashall Brook, Bashall Eaves and Holden Beck in Clitheroe.



Brash bundles from the Wetlands used to prevent bank-side erosion of Bashall Brook (photo courtesy of Ribble Rivers Trust).

Watercourse banks that are susceptible to erosion are lined with wooden stakes and brash bundles are wired into place between the stakes. The brash protects the banks because the water loses energy while flowing between and around the individual pieces of brash or branches. An additional benefit of slowing the flow of water is that silt is deposited within the brash – thereby helping to build up the bank. You can find out more about the work of the Ribble Rivers Trust from their website (ribbletrust.org.uk) or their Facebook page.

The Wetlands Wildlife

The late summer and autumn have seen a number of, locally rare or unusual, visitors to the Wetlands. The early part of the summer was, as you will recall, extremely hot and dry and we were only days away from a hosepipe ban before the rain returned. This meant that the levels of water in the Wetlands were significantly reduced and, as a consequence, large areas of mud were exposed for a prolonged period in the summer and early autumn. The exposed mudflats provided ideal feeding grounds for a number of waders and other birds. As a consequence, visitors to the Wetlands were treated to some of the best 'birding' opportunities for several years. Birds recorded included a little egret, black-tailed

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godwit, little ringed plover, redshank, greenshank, dunlin, green sandpiper, common sandpiper and ruff. The group of 7 green sandpiper was a record for the Wetlands.

Of course, once the autumn rains had replenished the water levels in the Wetlands these birds, attracted by the rich pickings in exposed mud banks, left the site; however, at the end of October we were treated to perhaps our most spectacular avian visitor. A Great White Egret arrived on the Wetlands and remained on site for almost a week. This magnificent bird is significantly larger than the resident grey heron and although now relatively common on the Ribble marshes (particularly at Crossens, Southport and Warton, Preston) it remains an extremely rare visitor at inland locations such as the Wetlands.



The Great White Egret on the Wetlands (photos by Richard Moss and Geoff Carefoot).

We were particularly lucky to be treated to close-up views of the egret, as illustrated by the

above photos. These birds can be particularly elusive and distant on the Ribble marshes where they are commonly, simply, referred to as 'the big white blob' due to their extremely distant location!

Hornets

In early October, Lancashire was subject to a 'mini-invasion' of European hornets. There were numerous sightings reported at the Brockholes Nature Reserve and at least two were also positively identified in gardens backing onto the Wetlands. The European hornet, at around 25 mm in length, is significantly larger than common wasps and is not to be confused with the Asian hornet. The Asian hornet, a non-native species, is considered to be a serious threat to our honey bees. In contrast, the European hornet, a species which helps keep numerous 'garden pest' species in check, is in sharp decline. Again, we have the hot, dry summer weather to thank for these sightings. Not so long ago, the European hornet was confined to southern counties of Britain; however, climate change has seen them extend their range ever further northwards.

Unusual flower on the Wetlands



Round-leaved Wintergreen on the Wetlands (photo by Dave Bailey).

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Although most visitors to the Wetlands focus their attention on the birds and mammals, there is much to be gained from careful perusal of the Wetlands flora. During the course of one of the recent work parties, volunteer Dave Bailey noticed, while collecting orchid seeds, a rather unusual flower. Preliminary analysis suggested that it was a Round-leaved Wintergreen and this was subsequently confirmed following independent botanical review of the above photograph. The Round-leaved Wintergreen generally flowers between June and September but remains in leaf throughout the year. It is most commonly found in bogs, fens and woods although a sub-species is often found in dune slacks and, consequently, is found locally along the Sefton coast.

Fund-raising activities

The work undertaken by volunteers is entirely funded by your subscriptions, donations, sponsorships and our own fund-raising activities. For example, the tools and protective/safety clothing needed by volunteers while working on the site need to be purchased and maintained.



Trustee Ken Maylor in 'strimming mode'. The purchase of the strimmer, harness and ear protectors etc. was only made possible by the success of the Trust's fund-raising activities (photo by Jayne Woollam).

The Trust is therefore delighted that our stall at the Grimsargh Farmers Market events continues to be tremendously popular and, again, we thank everyone for their generosity. As a reminder, if you have any books, cds or DVDs that you would like to donate for the stall, please contact Andy Small (07870 294158).

It is now also possible to buy your 'Wetlands Mug' at the Farmers Market. The mugs cost £5 each and, as a consequence of the generous sponsorship of the mugs by Lee and Victoria Barker at Alderbank Physiotherapy and Sports Injuries Clinic, Grimsargh (<http://www.alderbankphysio.co.uk/>), all proceeds from the sale of mugs are available to support the work of the Trust.



The Trustees are enormously grateful to Lee and Victoria for their generous and enthusiastic support of the Wetlands.

Membership information

Current membership fees are as follows:

- Individual - £20
- Life - £100
- Corporate - £50
- Volunteers - £10 – (if a member attends 3 volunteer days per year).

Membership is for a 12 month period from when the member joins. If you need to update your contact details or have any other queries about membership (e.g. requests to upgrade to Life membership) then you should contact Jayne Woollam (email: jaynewoollam@hotmail.co.uk).

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Volunteer days

The list of forthcoming volunteer days is shown below:

Sunday 16th December

Saturday 12th January

Sunday 3rd February

Saturday 23rd February

Sunday 17th March

The arrangements for the day (start time, where to meet etc.) is always announced on the Wetlands Facebook page. Additionally, if you would like to be added to the volunteers mailing list, then please contact Jayne Woollam (email: jaynewoollam@hotmail.co.uk).

Please note that it is now possible for young people, under 16, to volunteer and families are welcome to attend volunteer days. The team-leaders will ensure that everyone is able to contribute to the volunteer day, irrespective of age, experience or fitness levels!

Please ensure that warm waterproof clothing and strong boots/wellingtons are worn. Appropriate tools will be supplied along with plenty of refreshments. If you have any queries about volunteer work, please contact Andy Small, 07870 294158 or Ken Maylor, 07398 279841.

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