

Grimpsargh Wetlands Newsletter

Spring 2019



Welcome

Dear Member,

Welcome to your Spring Newsletter! Spring is perhaps the most exciting time of year for wildlife watchers, with birds nesting, spring flowers making their appearance and other wildlife becoming increasingly vocal and more active. The Spring Flower Walk on Sunday 31st March, 2 pm is an ideal opportunity for you to see the Spring flora and fauna of the Wetlands and we very much hope to see you all then. We hope you enjoy reading your Spring Newsletter.

With best wishes,

The Trustees

News

Update on work done by contractors

As most of you will know, the work being done by contractors, on the footpath and access to the Wetlands, was completed at Christmas. Contractors will return to apply some 'finishing touches' in the better weather; however, 'phase 1' of our grant-funded work is now complete.

Andy Rowett (Fund Manager, Lancashire Environmental Fund (LEF), <http://www.lancsenfund.org.uk/>) recently visited the site to review the work to date and to hear about plans for phase 2 of the work which is due to start later this year.

We already know that the work done to date has improved access for many members of the community and feedback, about the

improvements that have been made to the Wetlands, has been extremely positive.



Andy Rowett, Lancashire Environmental Fund (left) discussing plans for phase 2 of work, to improve access to the Wetlands, with Trustees Geoff Carefoot (centre) and Mike Fisher (right). (Photo by Jayne Woollam).

During January and February, John Gornall Tree Felling Services (<http://www.tree-felling.co.uk/>) have been contracted to remove many of the larger willow from the site.



The southern bank of the middle reservoir has now been cleared of willow and other scrub (photo by Lesley Walker).

This work has already made a remarkable difference to the site, as evident in the above

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photograph. The primary reasons for this work were to reduce the opportunities for predation of wildfowl and other birds and to encourage the growth of wild flowers and grasses in the cleared areas. Of course, the cleared areas also give visitors to the Wetlands better views of the wildlife and, indeed, the more distant Bowland Fells!



The local Barn Owl has regularly been seen hunting along the recently cleared areas (photo by Richard Moss).

Review of 2018

It is interesting to review the wildlife records from the year gone by. Many people record their observations of birdlife on the ELOC website (East Lancashire Ornithologists' Club (<https://www.eastlancsornithologists.org.uk/index.aspx>)). Of course, such records only provide a 'snapshot' of the birdlife on the Wetlands with some people maintaining records of their observations elsewhere; however, an analysis of the ELOC records is instructive. Some of the highlights for 2018 can be summarised as follows.

1. Eighty different species of bird were recorded during 2018, ranging from the diminutive Goldcrest (Britain's smallest bird) to the magnificent Great White Egret that visited the Wetlands in October 2018.

2. Large numbers of geese were routinely counted on the Wetlands with a maximum of 65 Greylag Geese reported in May and 53 Canada Geese reported in February. Although 78 Pink-footed Geese were reported in February, these

birds were only seen flying overhead and only occasional birds were recorded in the flocks of geese resident in the fields surrounding the Wetlands.

3. The highest count of the, once prolific, Lapwing was 213 in July. The declining numbers of this iconic bird continue to be of major concern with predation and changing land use being ongoing problems. Predation on the Wetlands remains a major problem with little evidence of successful breeding by Lapwing in 2018.

4. The other iconic Wetlands species are the rather similar looking Curlew and Whimbrel. The highest count of roosting Curlew was 320 in March whereas the largest roosting group of Whimbrel was 42 in May. These counts are particularly impressive for Lancashire and do emphasise the importance of the Wetlands for these species.

5. There continues to be a healthy population of ducks on the Wetlands with 220 Mallard, 47 Shoveler, 30 Teal, 25 Tufted Duck and a particularly impressive count of 62 Gadwall being recorded at various times during 2018.

6. Of the summer visitors (Swallow, Swift and House Martin), the highlight was the count of 60 House Martin recorded in August.



Lapwing in the Wetlands Winter sunlight.

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These records confirm that the Spring and early Summer really are key times for the Wetlands, giving the best opportunities for visitors to observe large numbers of, for example, Lapwing, Curlew and Whimbrel. Again, we would encourage you all to record your observations of birdlife on the ELOC website or, alternatively, on the Wetlands Facebook page. The more records we have the better we can gauge the impact of the work being undertaken on populations of birds and other wildlife.

New Trustee



Our new treasurer taking time out from willow clearance at a recent volunteer day.

We are delighted to announce the appointment of a new Trustee. Lesley Walker has been appointed a Trustee and has taken on the role of Treasurer to the Trust with immediate effect. Lesley, a resident of Grimsargh, has been a passionate supporter of the Trust and enthusiastic volunteer since the start of the Wetlands project. A software development Project Manager by profession, Lesley brings a wealth of organisational and planning skills, together with much invaluable committee experience, to the Trust. We are delighted to welcome her to the team.

I Dig Trees 2018

The Trust was fortunate enough to be selected for an allocation of trees from the 'I Dig Trees 2018' initiative. This is a partnership programme between The Conservation Volunteers charity and OVO Energy

(<https://www.tcv.org.uk/communities/i-dig-trees>) and was responsible for the allocation of over 160,000 trees (as 'whips') to community groups for planting in communal green spaces across the country during 2018.



Tree planting on the Wetlands (photo by Lesley Walker).

One of our December volunteer days was devoted to planting the whips on the Wetlands. For many of the volunteers, planting trees made a welcome change from removal of invasive willow and scrub that forms such a large part of our on-going maintenance and development programme for the Wetlands. All the whips were planted with either plastic spiral or tube guards and stakes. The guards are essential to protect from damage by rabbits, deer and strimmers(!). Species planted included Mountain Ash/Rowan, Guelder Rose and Wild Cherry – all berry-bearing trees that will, in the long-term, attract an even greater variety of birdlife to the Wetlands.

Community Futures

The recent funding success of the Trust is in no small part due to the support and guidance of the Community Futures organisation (<http://www.communityfutures.org.uk>). This charity aims to promote all aspects of community development in Lancashire by working closely with volunteer groups such as

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the Wetlands Trust. The role of Community Futures in supporting the Trust was recently highlighted on Radio Lancashire's Sally Naden morning show in support of 'Village Halls Week 2019'. Trust Secretary, Jayne Woollam and Future Communities Chief Executive, Denise Partington were interviewed by Sally regarding the support that Future Communities have been able to give the Trust - all the way from the establishment of the Trust and the training of Trustees through to the writing and submission of the Trust's first applications for funding aid. Jayne paid particular tribute to Future Communities Business Manager, Donna Carney whose tireless work and support have been central to the Trust's recent funding success.



Community Futures Business Manager, Donna Carney.

The support provided to the Trust, by Donna, has been more widely recognised and is highlighted as a case study in the ACRE (Action with Communities in Rural England - <http://www.acre.org.uk>) network's annual report for 2017-18. The case study also forms an important element of ACRE's reporting process to DEFRA which provides financial support to ACRE. As a consequence, the work of the Trust has gained significant national attention.

Wetlands Nest boxes

Visitors to the Wetlands will, no doubt, have seen a number of nest boxes around the site. What you may not know is that these boxes are the result of much hard work, during the Winter months, by Trustees Phil Atkinson and Geoff Carefoot. The latest batch of nest boxes are now

ready to be located at appropriate sites on the Wetlands. The intention is that the use and occupancy of those boxes, during the coming weeks, will be carefully monitored by volunteers.



Trustee Geoff Carefoot with a batch of nest boxes ready for placement on the Wetlands. The boxes are camouflaged to avoid the attention of predators and are numbered to aid record keeping by volunteers (photo by Geoff Carefoot).

It is also anticipated that a limited number of boxes will also be made available for purchase. Please see the Wetlands Facebook page for further details. If you do site a nest box in your garden, please do make sure it is sheltered from the prevailing wind, rain and strong sunlight.

Fund-raising activities

The work undertaken by volunteers is entirely funded by your subscriptions, donations, sponsorships and our own fund-raising activities.

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 Trustee Andy Small (07870 294158).

Remember, it is also possible to buy your 'Wetlands Mug' at the Farmers Market. The

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mugs cost £5 each and, as a consequence of the generous sponsorship of the mugs by the 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.

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).

An important change is **that membership fees will now be due on the date of the Trust's AGM (July 2019)** and not 12 months from the original joining date. As a consequence of this change, members will simply be asked to pay a *pro-rata* fee in July depending on how long their current subscription has left to run. 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).

Volunteer days

At this time of year we need to be mindful of ground-nesting birds and this limits the type of work that can be done on the Wetlands. However, there will be volunteer days as shown below:

Sunday 10th March

Saturday 23rd March

Sunday 31st March – Spring Flower Walk

Saturday 13th April

Sunday 5th May

Saturday 25th May

The arrangements for volunteer days (start time, where to meet etc.) are 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.

Acknowledgements

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