

Grimsargh Wetlands Newsletter

Autumn 2019



Welcome

Dear Member,

Welcome to your Autumn Newsletter! After a wonderful summer, the highlight of which was the ‘once in a life-time’ invasion by countless Painted Lady butterflies, our thoughts now turn to Autumn. For the Wetlands, this means the restart of regular volunteer days and we would urge as many of you, as possible, to join us. There is much to be done! Details of the volunteer day schedule, along with a review of this summer’s key events, are included in this Newsletter and we hope you enjoy your reading. We look forward to seeing you on the Wetlands!

With best wishes,

The Trustees

News

Contractors on site again

In the weeks ahead, contractors will be returning to the Wetlands. Landscape Engineering Ltd. will be returning to complete remedial work on the footpath, steps and ramp. This work is scheduled to take place during the week of Monday 9th September and it is likely that access to the site will be limited while this work is taking place. For the latest information on the progress of this work, and any access issues, please consult the Wetlands Facebook page.

Over the last few months, trustee Geoff Carefoot has been leading the planning and preparations for our ‘Phase 2’ work. This is the

work supported by the, previously announced, grant of £20,000 from the Lancashire Environmental Fund. This work will involve the installation of a series of new viewing screens on the Wetlands. The screens (similar to those in use at Alston Wetland, along Pinfold Lane, Alston and at RSPB Marshside, Southport) will be erected on the embankment behind the Compound. Access to the screens will eventually be available via steps and a ramp in the Compound. Mackay & Simpson Fencing Ltd. have been contracted to install the screens and associated fencing and they will be starting work within the next few weeks. Other contractors will subsequently undertake work on the steps, ramp and access to the Compound. As always, for the latest information on progress with this work, please consult our Facebook page.

Lord Horam visits the Wetlands



Lord Horam (left) with David Hindle (Chair of the Trust) on the Wetlands.

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On Thursday 13th June, Lord Horam of Grimsargh, Patron to the Trust, paid a visit to the Wetlands. Notwithstanding the very wet conditions, Lord Horam, accompanied by David Hindle (Chair of the Trust), was able to review the recent work done to improve access to the Wetlands. He also had the opportunity to view some of the Wetlands wildlife. Lord Horam was greatly impressed with the work that had been done on the site by contractors and, in particular, all the hard work done by volunteers. He commented that the site really was a wonderful asset for the village and all local residents. During the visit, David Hindle highlighted the importance of the Wetlands as a refuge for local wildlife and, specifically, for ‘red-listed’ waders such as Curlew, Whimbrel and Lapwing. Lord Horam was greatly concerned to hear about the challenges faced by these birds and, especially, their ongoing lack of breeding success on the Wetlands.

Grimsargh Field Day

Grimsargh Field Day took place, in ideal summer weather, on Saturday, 22nd June. The Trust was represented in the procession from the Village Hall and had a display on the Green.



Awaiting the start of the procession in the Village Hall Car Park.

The procession was a real success, with children, parents and teachers from Alston Lane Primary School, dressed as Wetlands creatures, leading the Trust in the parade. The children

were awarded first prize in the large-group Fancy Dress competition.



Alston Lane Primary School Headteacher, Mr FitzGibbon (cunningly disguised as a Wetlands bat!) with trustee Lesley Walker – awaiting the start of the procession.

The Trust’s display again proved to be very popular with the public and, in addition to recruiting new members and volunteers, raised nearly £250 for the Trust, through donations, a raffle, ‘Hook a Duck’ and other competitions.



Trustees Lesley Walker and Phil Atkinson prepare the raffle and await the crowds.

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Longridge Show

Following on from the Field Day, the Trust also had a display, in the Community Tent, at Longridge Show on Saturday 6th July.



The Community Tent display – ready to go.

Although the main purpose of this display was to raise the profile of the Trust, it also represented the first opportunity for us to ‘sell guesses’ for the first Wetlands BioBlitz and over £70 was raised in this way. The Show also provided the opportunity to ‘network’ with other local community-based groups. It was particularly good to share experiences, of the problems and pitfalls associated with the successful cultivation of wild-flower meadows, with the people from ‘Let’s Grow Preston’ (<https://www.letsgrowpreston.org/single-post/2015/12/08/Lets-Grow-Preston-Website>). Equally, it was good to talk with volunteers from the Brockholes Nature Reserve and discuss the problem of invasive willow on our respective sites.

Guided Walks for Community Groups

During the summer, the Trust was delighted to provide guided walks, on the Wetlands, for a number of local community groups. On Monday 24th June, Broughton Beaver Scouts visited the site and were treated to the first sightings of the Painted Lady butterflies that were to become such a notable feature of the summer. Having said that, the young Beavers were much more interested in discovering the small froghopper nymphs that are responsible

for the abundance of ‘Cuckoo Spit’ on the Wetlands plants!



An ‘early’ Painted Lady butterfly – note the rather tatty and pale appearance. This is perhaps not surprising, given that this butterfly is probably one of many thousands to have flown all the way from the deserts of North Africa.

Grimsargh Brownies visited the Wetlands on 26th June with the Guides and Rangers visiting on 1st July.



Trustee Jayne Woollam leads a group of Brownies on a guided walk of the Wetlands (photo courtesy of Grimsargh Brownies).

The walks provided plenty of opportunities for ‘brushing up’ wildlife identification skills with everything from diminutive damselflies to the noisy Oystercatchers and graceful Lapwings being ‘ticked off’ their lists of target species.

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Finally, Grimsargh Cubs visited the Wetlands on Thursday 18th July and although they enjoyed their walk around the Wetlands there is no doubt that the highlight of their visit was the ‘end of term’ barbecue they enjoyed after their walk!

We are delighted that so many young people have been able to visit, and enjoy, the Wetlands. We are especially grateful to all the trustees who helped with the walks and to volunteers Colin and Margaret who led walks and helped people with their wild-flower identification skills! If you lead a community group and are interested in the possibility of your group having a guided walk around the Wetlands, please don’t hesitate to contact the Trust’s secretary, Jayne Woollam (email: jaynewoollam@hotmail.co.uk), in order to arrange your visit.

BioBlitz

On Saturday 3rd August, in baking hot summer weather, the first Wetlands BioBlitz was held. A BioBlitz is simply an attempt to record all the living species within a designated area, in this case the Wetlands, over a specified period of time. Of course, any such audit is limited by numerous factors such as the weather, the number of people available to record the wildlife and the availability of the relevant expertise to identify anything from fungi, to hoverflies, lichens to moths.



BioBlitz survey work underway (photo by Jayne Woollam).

Notwithstanding these limitations, a BioBlitz does provide a benchmark against which subsequent wildlife audits can be measured – thereby revealing the health and biodiversity of the Wetlands site and, specifically, any wildlife conservation successes or failures.

The BioBlitz proved to be a tremendous success with a final count of 295 different species recorded on the day. Amazingly, there were two people who correctly guessed the final total. This total included 46 species of bird, 65 species of plants and flowers and 43 different species of insect – not including butterflies and moths. Indeed, it was the butterflies and moths that proved to be the highlight of the day. The moth traps provided some stunning species, including the gorgeous Elephant and Poplar Hawk-moths. Many of us were completely unaware that these wonderful hawk-moths lived on site.



Elephant (top) and Poplar (bottom) hawk-moths found in the BioBlitz.

It was, of course, the butterflies that stunned so many of us. The weather conditions were ideal and, given the super-abundance of Painted Lady butterflies (conservatively estimated to be well over a thousand on site), we collected some of the most impressive butterfly records we are likely to see for many years to come. Buddleia

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shrubs (often simply known as the ‘butterfly bush’) were covered with double figure numbers of Painted Ladies, Peacocks, Small Tortoiseshells and Comma butterflies. In addition, there were multiple recordings of Common Blue butterflies that had also done so well in the prolonged hot and dry conditions.



A ‘late’ summer Painted Lady – note the pristine appearance compared with the early (June) butterfly, shown earlier. This butterfly is likely to be one of the offspring of the migrant butterflies seen in June.



A Peacock butterfly feeding on one of the many Wetlands Buddleia shrubs.

The BioBlitz provided us with some invaluable biological data and a remarkable insight into the biodiversity of the Wetlands site. More than this, it raised just over £500 for the Trust from all the ‘guesses’ that were sold. This is a remarkable fund-raising achievement and our thanks go to trustee, Andy Small who organised the whole event with such enthusiasm and professionalism.

An Update

You may recall that, in the last Newsletter, there was a brief comment about the House Martins that were nesting under the eves of a number of

the houses along Preston Road, just by the Wetlands. It is pleasing to report the first broods successfully fledged and many of the nests are now home to second broods. It is, of course, something of a race against time for these second broods to fledge in time for the mass migration of the House Martins back to Africa. Interestingly, the first brood offspring are believed to help the parents with the feeding and care of the second brood chicks before the family leaves the nest and prepares for migration as a group.



First brood House Martin chicks at 281A Preston Road. It is believed that 9 or 10 offspring from the first broods successfully fledged from the three nests at this site.

If you visit the Wetlands, on a warm, still evening, there remains a good chance that you will see the House Martins flying low over the water as they feed on the, still, prolific insect life.

Fund-raising activities

The Trust is delighted that our stall at the Grimsargh Farmers Market events continues to be tremendously popular and, again, we thank everyone for their generosity. In addition, as a one-off event on Saturday 27th July, trustee Andy Small manned a table-top sale of paperback books, cds and dvds under the canopy on the forecourt of the Grimsargh Club. Despite atrocious weather conditions, Andy still managed to raise over £100 for the Trust. As a reminder, if you have any paperback books, cds or dvds that you would like to donate for the

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stall, please contact Andy (babdiane7@talktalk.net).

Remember, it is 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 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).

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

There will be volunteer days as shown below:

Sunday 15th September

Saturday 28th September

Sunday 13th October

Saturday 26th October

Wednesday 6th November – joint work party with Ribble Rivers Trust (brash bundles)

Saturday 9th November

Saturday 23rd November

Sunday 8th December

Saturday 14th December

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, providing they are accompanied by a responsible adult, it is now possible for young people under 16 to volunteer. 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

We are grateful to Jayne Woollam and Grimsargh Brownies for allowing the use of their photographs. We are grateful to the Lancashire Environmental Fund and our sponsors, Alderbank Clinic, Grimsargh and Red Rose Blinds and Curtains, Preston for their generous financial support.

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