

Grimpsargh Wetlands Newsletter

Winter 2019



Welcome

Dear All,

Welcome to your Winter Newsletter! The last few months have been incredibly busy for the Wetlands with contractors hard at work on site, volunteer days in full swing, the successful launch of our first Wetlands calendar and some exciting autumnal wildlife sightings on the Wetlands. We hope you enjoy reading about all this, and much more, in your Winter Newsletter.

We wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. Please remember that on Wednesday 11th December there will be a 'Wetlands Christmas Evening' for members, volunteers and sponsors at The Plough in Grimpsargh, we look forward to seeing you all there! Finally, if you are still looking for last minute Christmas gifts, there are still a few 2020 Wetlands calendars available for purchase. Stocks are limited - so act quickly to avoid disappointment!

With best wishes,

The Trustees

News

New Viewing Screens

Any of you who have walked along Preston Rd, past the Wetlands Compound (opposite Oban Court), will undoubtedly have noticed a great deal of activity by contractors. During September, contractors (Mackay & Simpson Fencing Ltd., Southport) installed viewing screens and associated fencing on the embankment behind the compound. Following

completion of the screens, volunteers have been hard at work clearing scrub and trees to ensure unimpeded views from these screens.



Contractors clear the embankment ready for the new viewing screens.



Volunteers clear scrub from in front of the new viewing screens (photo by Lesley Walker).

At the same time, other contractors (John Dewhurst, Longridge), have been working creating step and ramp access to the new

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screens. The recent wet weather has proved to be particularly challenging for this work; nonetheless, progress has been steady and the remodelled site is beginning to take shape.



The beginnings of the new access ramp.



View from the screens (photo by Lesley Walker).

The final phase of this work will involve the construction of appropriate, secure fencing and gating to allow pedestrian and wheel-chair access from Preston Rd, through the compound, to the screens.

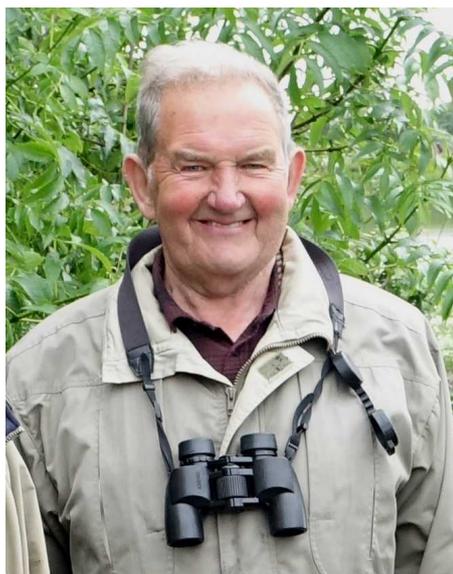
Commenting on progress, Project Lead, Geoff Carefoot said: *"Fencing and viewing screens have been erected by specialist contractors in a prime position overlooking two of the old reservoirs. Visitors using the screens will have a good view over the western reservoir which is*

preferred by diving ducks such as tufted duck and, in winter, goldeneye, and breeding little grebe in summer. The central reservoir holds dabbling ducks such as mallard, shoveler, gadwall and teal, along with coot and moorhen. The islands support breeding attempts by lapwing, oystercatcher and little ringed plover, but are perhaps just as important for passage migrants such as good numbers of whimbrel, black-tailed godwits and curlew in spring. Planned further management of the water level here should substantially improve the opportunity to view an increase in number and variety of wading birds throughout the year."

We envisage that, weather permitting, work on the screens and improving access will be completed early in the New Year. Upon completion, the viewing screens will be available for all to use. As always, keep an eye on our Facebook Page for all the latest information on progress with this project.

Prize Winner

As you may be aware, David Hindle (Chair, Grimsargh Wetlands Trust) was one of three 'Conservation Heroes' recently recognised with a 2019 Marsh Award for Wetland Conservation.



David Hindle, Marsh Award winner, 2019.

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The award, from the Marsh Christian Trust in partnership with the Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust (WWT), recognises an individual *‘whose sustained activities have resulted in a long-term change for wetlands or their wildlife’*.

Specifically, the award was made in recognition of David’s contribution, over many years, to the monitoring of wildlife on the decommissioned Grimsargh Reservoirs. The award ceremony took place at the WWT AGM in London on Thursday 10th October. Commenting on the award, David said: *“Most of all, I recognise the hard work and unfettered dedication of fellow trustees, our wonderful and enthusiastic local volunteers, the Parish Council and lots of other people too and of course, the magnificent Grimsargh Wetlands itself. It is a huge honour to receive this National Award and I was proud to do so. Moreover, I sincerely hope that you will see the award as recognition of your hard work and achievements too.”*

The award generated significant local interest and was highlighted by both the Lancashire Evening Post and BBC Radio Lancashire. A brief video on the Wetlands, and David’s contribution, is available on the WWT website (<https://www.wwt.org.uk/news/2019/10/14/wetland-and-conservation-heroes-the-marsh-awards-2019/17806>).

Volunteer of the Year

There were other prize winners this autumn. At our Calendar Launch Night on 17th October (more of which later), the joint winners of our first ‘Volunteer of the Year’ award were announced as husband and wife team Colin and Margaret Wells. Colin and Margaret have been committed and enthusiastic volunteers from the start of the Wetlands project. They have attended sessions throughout the year – braving the worst of the winter weather and the perils of horseflies and other biting and stinging ‘creepy crawlies’ in the summer months. Furthermore, they are often to be seen quietly working alone on the Wetlands, sweeping the footpaths, trimming the causeway vegetation or weeding

the planted wild-flower areas. In addition, they have both led guided walks of the Wetlands where their identification skills and knowledge of wild-flowers has been a real asset.



Colin and Margaret – joint ‘volunteer of the year’ award winners.

The announcement of their award was enthusiastically greeted by all. It represents just a small token of our appreciation for the many hours of hard work that Colin and Margaret have contributed to the Wetlands. More generally, it highlights the amazing contribution made by all our volunteers, without which the Wetlands would not flourish.

Away Day

On 1st October, we welcomed a group of workers, from the Environment Agency’s Nuclear New Build Programme Management team, to the Wetlands. The group was undertaking an Environmental Leave Day (an ‘Away Day’ from the office!) and chose to spend the day helping us on the Wetlands. The weather was kind and a good time was had by all. The focus of the work was on the removal of invasive willow from the site. This time, rather than cut or lop the willow, we were particularly interested in removing willow saplings ‘roots and all’.



The Environmental Agency's team with Trustees Phil Atkinson and Mike Fisher after a hard day's work on the Wetlands (photo by Ken Maylor).

The reason for this is that one of our partner charities - the Ribble Rivers Trust (RRT) - had asked for a supply of intact willow saplings that they could re-plant at one of their sites, Platts Lodge near Accrington.



Willow saplings ready for collection by the Ribble Rivers Trust.

The lodge is part of a local nature reserve (LNR) - Woodnook Vale. The project at Platts Lodge, involves the creation of a small wetland area and this is where the willow saplings from Grimsargh were subsequently re-planted. In addition, native wild-flowers, such as Ragged Robin and Water Plantain, grown by volunteers from Lancashire Wildlife Trust's Brockholes nature reserve were also planted.



Platts Lodge, near Accrington (photo courtesy of the Ribble Rivers Trust).

Jonny Walker (Volunteer and Apprentice Supervisor, RRT) explained: *"It's all part of a trial initiative, working in partnership with Hyndburn Borough Council and Prospects Foundation, to get more local people involved in the environment and at the same time improve the condition of the LNRs. We had some of our own regular volunteers as well as locals from the area, Friends of Platt's Lodge and the local fishing club. All in all, quite a few organisations and people involved on the day."*

More brash bundles

In addition to willow saplings, the Ribble Rivers Trust also needs cut willow in the form of 'brash bundles' for use in their various bank protection and erosion prevention projects. You may have read about this previously in our Winter 2018 newsletter.

Wetlands Warden, Ken Maylor has organised and coordinated several visits, by RRT volunteers, to cut and collect brash bundles from the Wetlands. These visits have proved to be highly successful with vast quantities of invasive willow removed from large areas of the Wetlands. For example, nearly 100 brash bundles were cut when RRT volunteers visited us on 6th November.

Our partnership with RRT represents a really impressive example of collaboration between conservation charities and is an excellent

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example of recycling – our willow waste is highly valued building material for RRT.



Wetlands Warden Ken Maylor with volunteers from the Ribble Rivers Trust.



Volunteers from the Ribble Rivers Trust working to improve banks using cut willow bundles from the Wetlands. Stakes are knocked into the water (right of photo), the willow bundles are placed in the water between the stakes and the bank and then hessian sacks filled with soil are placed on top (photo courtesy of the Ribble Rivers Trust).

Ribble Life Partnership Visit

The Ribble Rivers Trust hosted the Ribble Life Partnership Board Meeting at Grimsargh

Village Hall on Thursday 14th November. Attendees included representatives from Natural England, Environment Agency, RSPB, Lancashire Wildlife Trust and other similar organisations. Following the main business of the meeting, attendees took the opportunity to hear about, and visit, Grimsargh Wetlands.



Warden, Ken Maylor (left) showing Ribble Life Partnership attendees around the Wetlands.

David Hindle (Chair, Grimsargh Wetlands Trust) gave a brief presentation on the history and background of the Wetlands. Following this, Wetlands Warden, Ken Maylor, led people on a guided walk of the Wetlands in perishingly cold conditions! There was a great deal of interest in our site which was identified as an outstanding example of a community-driven project. Specifically, there was much praise for the work that had been undertaken by our volunteers and all that has been achieved in a relatively short period of time.

Fylde Council Coast and Conservation Team

We were delighted to welcome a team from the Fylde Council Coast and Conservation Team to the Wetlands on Wednesday 20th November. The team, comprised of Fylde Rangers and Lancashire Wildlife Trust staff, had volunteered to help out with our work on the Wetlands. Their hard work provided a massive boost to our scrub and willow clearance programme and a great deal was achieved. We were all particularly impressed with the tree ‘poppers’ that made such short work of so many willow saplings. Much of the willow will now be used

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to make Christmas wreaths – you can find out more about that project on the Fylde Ranger Service Facebook page.



Trustee Andy Small 'popping' willow under the watchful eye of Geoff Willets (Fylde Council, Senior Coast and Countryside Officer).

We owe the Fylde team many thanks for the hard work that was done. In return, there is a way we can all help the Fylde team. You will undoubtedly be buying your Christmas tree soon – what will you do with it after the Christmas festivities? Why not donate it to the Fylde Sand Dunes Project (<https://www.lancswt.org.uk/our-work/projects/fylde-sand-dunes>)?



Members of the Fylde Coast and Conservation Team at work on the Wetlands.

The trees are used to establish and stabilise sand dunes along the Fylde coast. Keep an eye on the Fylde Sand Dunes Facebook page for details of Christmas tree drop off points along the Fylde coast and details of the tree planting event early in the New Year.

Autumnal Wildlife Highlights

There have been a number of notable wild-life sightings over the past few weeks. One of the sure signs of autumn and the impending winter frosts is the arrival of large numbers of Redwing and Fieldfare from Scandinavia and elsewhere.



Wetlands Redwing (photo by Richard Moss).

They are often seen in mixed flocks moving through berry-bearing bushes and trees. As such, they are not permanent residents of the Wetlands but watch out for them making a 'pit-stop' with us as they move across the surrounding fields in search of food. Their predilection for berries is one of the reasons why, last winter, we undertook a tree planting programme that was focused upon the introduction of Mountain Ash/Rowan, Guelder Rose and Wild Cherry – all of which will produce an abundance of berries in years to come.

It is worth mentioning that, in recent weeks, there have been some remarkable local counts of Redwing. For example, over 20,000 were recently recorded at Kemple End (the car park by the quarry) as they made their way to roost on Longridge Fell.

Of course, the recent prolonged periods of heavy rain have meant that much of the Wetlands is saturated – ideal conditions for

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fungi. The most striking of which were the Stinkhorn fungi that put in an appearance along the walkway onto the Wetlands. The stinkhorn has an unmistakable smell, like rotting meat, and a highly distinctive appearance with a phallic, white, stem-like structure and a slimy brown head.



Stinkhorn fungi along the ginnel onto the Wetlands (photo by Richard Moss).

Although roe deer are frequently seen on the Wetlands, there have, in recent weeks, been a number of reports and photographs of a family group of four deer on and around the Wetlands. This is one of the largest groups of deer reported in recent times. A much more elusive visitor, reported last month, is an otter that was briefly seen moving along one of the embankments. The speculation is that with the recent heavy rain and, as a result, swollen River Ribble, the otter(s?) have easily made their way along the Tun Brook and then onto the Wetlands.

Finally, another elusive inhabitant of the Wetlands has been recorded by Wetlands Warden, Ken Maylor. On several early morning visits, Ken has seen a water rail on, or close to, the causeway. The water rail is a shy and secretive waterbird somewhat smaller than the rather similar moorhen. Some of you may have noticed that Ken has recently been recording occasional 'Warden's reports' on our Facebook page. It is well worth looking out for these reports. As a regular, early morning visitor to the Wetlands, Ken is often on hand to record unusual or unexpected wildlife sightings.

Fund-raising activities

Without doubt, the fund-raising highlight of the autumn has been the launch of the inaugural Wetlands calendar. Production of the calendar was led by trustee, Andy Small and, from a fund-raising perspective, has already proved to be a runaway success. Andy, not only collected together the best this year's Wetlands photographs for inclusion in the calendar, but also assembled an impressive range of local sponsors willing to sponsor each month of the calendar. This meant that, even before the first calendar was sold, the project was already making money for the Trust.



The 2020 Grimsargh Wetlands Calendar (photo by Andy Small).

The calendar was officially launched on 17th October at the Plough, Grimsargh. The launch night was a tremendous success and we are particularly grateful to Chris and Kelly, for the wonderful buffet they provided. Thanks also to all the calendar sponsors who took part in the event. The evening gave us the opportunity to celebrate the amazing photographic skills of Wetlands photographers, Richard Moss, Geoff Carefoot and Mark Ashmore. Of course, the evening also provided a reminder of the wonderful wildlife to be found on the Wetlands – throughout the year.

Limited numbers of calendars are still available for purchase (£6 each) from Grimsargh Premier Store and Blue Moon Computers in Longridge.

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Alternatively, you can purchase calendars from our stall at Grimsargh Farmers Market.

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. As a reminder, if you have any paperback books, cds or dvds that you would like to donate for the stall, please contact Andy (email: babdiane7@talktalk.net).

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 8th December

Saturday 14th December

Saturday 11th January

Sunday 26th January

Saturday 8th February

Sunday 23rd February

Saturday 7th March

Sunday 29nd March

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

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.

Finally

Trustee Geoff Carefoot makes a special plea to all volunteers and members. *"As we have progressed with our development of the site and, thinking forward to future requirements, there are some items which would be very useful to us. Items used very infrequently are not really worth purchasing and possibly not even worth hiring. In such cases we would be dependent on local supporters making items available if required.*

It would be useful to us to have a database of items that might be loaned temporarily, possibly for one day or over a weekend. To that end, we are looking for persons who might kindly loan any of the following items.

- 1. Petrol Flymo grass mowers to clear long grass from our proposed wild-flower meadow and some areas of the embankments in spring.*
- 2. Rotavators to turn over the wild-flower meadow prior to planting in spring.*
- 3. Long-reach 2-part ladders to enable us to fix both bird nest-boxes and bat boxes at the optimum height, over winter.*
- 4. Dingy, or small GRP boat, to access the islands in spring.*

If you are willing to loan us any of these items, please contact our Secretary (Jayne Woollam: jaynewoollam@hotmail.co.uk). Likewise, if you know anyone, with any of these items and who might be supportive, please ask them to contact Jayne. Thank you".

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Acknowledgements

We are grateful to Lesley Walker, Andy Small, Ken Maylor, Richard Moss and the Ribble Rivers Trust for allowing the use of their photographs. We are grateful to our sponsors and the Lancashire Environmental Fund for their generous financial support. A full list of our current sponsors can be found on the 2020 Grimsargh Wetlands Calendar.

LANCASHIRE ENVIRONMENTAL FUND