

# Undergrowth

Issue No 2. Autumn 2004

The Newsletter of Foxglove Covert Local Nature Reserve

Anyone who enjoyed a pleasant summer this year has clearly been living abroad. However, the high rainfall since our last issue has at least meant that the Reserve has looked as green as ever over the summer months. But now, as we move into autumn, the green is beginning to give way to brown as plants come to the end of their season. Last week on the Woodland Walk it seemed to be snowing under the larch trees as their needles fell.

We are in the process of developing a website for the Reserve. This will help to bring the Reserve to the attention of a wider audience. The site will be hosted by the MOD Army and will have links to and from other sites of interest. We hope to have the site up and running - in draft form - in the next few weeks. We will let everyone know the site address as soon as we are confident that it works correctly. Once you have had a chance to look at the site, please let me know if you have any suggestions of how we might improve it. In particular, if you have ideas for new pages which you feel would be of interest to people using the site, please let me know.

We have included a number of our newly-printed leaflets with this issue. They cover our Friends group, the 100 Club and the 2005 Courses. Please use them to encourage friends and neighbours to support our work.

*Sam*

## Meet the Volunteers



Anne Flecchia is one of the most active of our volunteers - in more ways than one. She has been helping us for well over two years and there are very few parts of the Reserve which do not bear the marks of her hard work. Like

all our volunteers, Anne is willing to turn her hand to anything and there are few people who can match her dedication and sheer hard work.

As you can see from our picture, Anne's trademark is fire lighting and all over the reserve you will find patches of ground where she has reduced another pile of brush to ashes. Sometimes her fires are so voracious that it takes the efforts of four or five other people to keep them fed. On still winter days one has only to look for smoke in order to locate her.

This year Anne's husband, Mark, was due to be posted to Wiltshire. Rarely has an event produced such a degree of panic among the quiet waters of the Reserve. Some of us felt that we might be overwhelmed by the encroaching undergrowth as soon as she disappeared. However, all was not lost as Mark's posting was later cancelled and Anne has returned to the fray with renewed vigour.

Thanks, Anne, for all your hard work.

## From the Records

The summer saw some new species added to our list of species using the Reserve. Notable among them was a Goosander which spent a day on the lake during September. Quite an unusual sighting as they are mostly seen on larger, faster-flowing rivers like the Swale.



We also have some confirmed sightings of Water Rails. Although this species is not new to the Reserve, sightings have been few until recently when it was seen on no less than three occasions, all within the space of a few days during October. It would be nice to think we might have a nesting population in the future.

At the moment our recording system is in a state of flux. In the past, all our sightings were recorded in Word documents as a series of lists. This, although relatively simple, had a lot of disadvantages and some time ago the decision was made to change over to a dedicated programme called Recorder. Until now, Recorder was never actually used but recently Jane and David Elliott have taken on the task of implementing the new system and converting all our 1300 or so records. This is a fairly large task and is likely to take some time but we all look forward to having available a system which will allow us much better access to the information we collect.

## B



One of the interesting things about bird ringing is the unpredictable results which we sometimes see. For no apparent reason birds which have been abundant suddenly become scarce and vice versa. Such a bird is the Brambling - the northern equivalent of our familiar Chaffinch. Bramblings spend their summers in northern

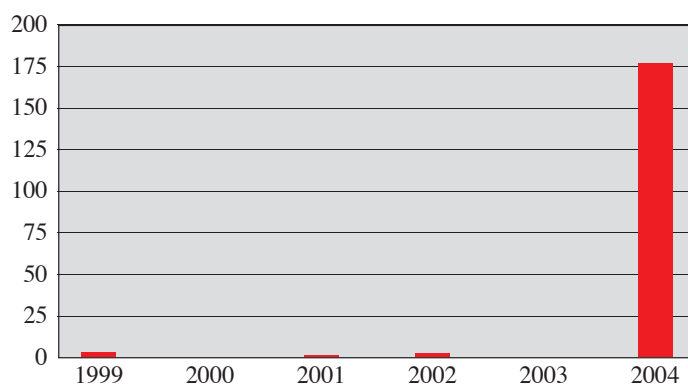
Scandinavia, Russia and some of the Baltic states but migrate to warmer climates in central and southern Europe to over-winter. Although they can be seen regularly all over the UK during the winter, in gardens, hedgerows and woodland, their appearance at Foxglove is marked by their unpredictability.

If we were to look at our captures of new birds over the past 6 years we would see a graph like the one at the top of the next column. Here we can see that between 1999 and 2003 we captured the grand total of 6 Bramblings but in 2004 that figure rose by nearly 30 times to 178.

The obvious questions which this raises are - where have they been for the past five years and what will happen during this winter?

No one can really answer the first question but there is no shortage of theories, mostly to do with global

**Brambling Captures at Foxglove  
1999 - 2004**



warming. The current wisdom is that Europe's warmer winters have caused a general movement of Bramblings to the east. As a result, when they migrate, they by-pass Great Britain. As to the second question - watch this space.

Another interesting fact is that we have caught all our Bramblings on the way home in the Spring - our earliest recorded date for a capture is 19 March and we have never caught one in the Autumn.

*Stop Press Stop Press Stop Press Stop Press Stop Press*

On 10 October we caught seven Bramblings at Foxglove - our first Autumn catches in six years.

## Volunteers Day

As we mentioned in our last issue we held a Volunteers Day on the Reserve on 5 September. This was an opportunity for anyone interested in helping to maintain the Reserve to come along to see what is involved.

The day was very successful with six new volunteers taking part. Mark was able to walk them around the Reserve and show them the areas and jobs which form part of this winter's maintenance programme.

Many thanks to everyone who joined in.

## Friends Group

Progress with our Friends Group has been steady over the past few months. We now have 23 members with one or two enquiries still outstanding. This puts us well on our way to hitting our target of 50 members in our first year.

Now that our new leaflets have been printed we are going to have a real push to see if we can boost the

membership during the run-up to Christmas. We have included a leaflet with this edition in the hope that some existing Friends may be able to persuade others to join.

In our Dates for Your Diary column on page 4 you will see an announcement about a buffet supper which we will be holding on 30 December in the Field Centre. We will be sending an invitation to all Friends and their families to join us on that evening. Please let us know if you are able to come.

The new members of our Friends group are:

Richard Brown	Romanby
Chris Carruthers (2)	Ripon
Joyce Chatham	Poole
John Gabriel (2)	Masham
Margaret Hertley	Ripon
Eric Robinson	Wirral
Ian Walker (3)	Great Langton
Sheila Wappat	Richmond
Patricia Whelan	Richmond

One of our new Friends, Richard Brown, is currently working on a project in Mauritius and has promised to send us a report on what he is doing. We look forward to hearing about the wildlife of this beautiful island.

Our thanks to all our Friends for your support.

### *Coffee Morning at Richmond Town Hall*

We held a coffee morning in aid of Foxglove in the Town Hall, Richmond on 14 October. This was a great success and raised some £210 towards the running of the Reserve, despite the fact that for some time the staff outnumbered the clients, see the picture below.



Our thanks to everyone who helped out on the day and a particularly big thank you to Winifred Hodge who bore the brunt of all the organisation and to Gillian Mackenzie who washed up tirelessly throughout the whole morning. We are hoping to hold a similar event in July 2005.

### *100 Club*

The 100 Club continues to gain new members with a total of about 30 people now on the books. Membership of the Club costs just £10 a year and is an important source of funds for the Reserve. We have included a leaflet about the Club with this issue and we would urge anyone who feels able to join to contact Jane Elliott on 01325 469518.

### *2005 Courses*

We are now in a position to publish our 2005 Courses programme, although one or two details are still outstanding. Our aim has been to provide a range of topics to suit as wide an audience as possible. You will see from the enclosed leaflet that we will be running some 24 courses over the 2005 season. Many of the courses have a theme of conservation but there are others which are of more general interest and some which combine a bit of learning with a more social event. Most of the courses are relatively short - just a few hours - but some cover as much as 3 full 6 hour days spread over a number of weeks.

The cost of the courses has been kept to the minimum possible to cover the expenses of the Tutor and those of the Reserve. Inevitably, these costs are higher when we have to bring in a Tutor from outside - some of our courses are operated in conjunction with Askham Bryan College - rather than using our own expertise. There is only one thing which is likely to prevent a course from running - lack of interest. In order to cover our costs we need to have a minimum of 10 people signed up for each course and this can, sometimes, be difficult to achieve.

If you would like to attend any of the courses, please complete the application form on the back of the leaflet and return it to the Reserve address. All places will be awarded on a first come, first served basis.

### *2005 Open Day*

They say it is never too early to plan and, with this in mind, the Management Group recently held its first meeting to discuss the arrangements for an Open

Day during 2005. The date chosen was Saturday, June 4th which fits quite well into the calendar as the next day is World Environment Day.

The theme for the day will be Wildlife on Your Doorstep and our aim will be to encourage interest in Foxglove Covert by making people aware of what it is and what we do. In particular we will be trying to reach out to people who have never heard of the Reserve and to those who, for what ever reason, have heard of us but never managed to visit.

We are hoping that the day will include a number of events aimed at showing people the conservation work carried out on the Reserve. These will include bird ringing, botanical and wildlife walks and discussions. We also hope to have a range of exhibitions and demonstrations of rural crafts associated with conservation. There will be a varied programme of events for our younger visitors which will include pond dipping, minibeast hunts, quizzes, nature trails and much more.

This will be our first Open Day and we want to make it as interesting and informative as possible. If anyone has any ideas which might enhance the day, or would like to become involved, please contact Mark Hewitt on 07754 270980.

### *Dates for Your Diary*

27 November - 5 December. National Tree Week. We will be holding a variety of events to mark this week. They will include activities with a woodland theme, talks about birds and trees with a demonstration of bird ringing (weather permitting), guided walks and practical work days. Everyone is welcome to take part in the events. For further details, please contact Mark Hewitt on 07754 270980.

30 December. Christmas buffet at 7.00 pm in the Field Centre. This is one of the social highlights of our year to which everyone is welcome and we would love to see as many people as possible take part. Please contribute by bringing food or drink.

12 January. Annual General Meeting. 7.00 pm in Lizzie's Bar, Piave Lines. We will have reports on

everything which has happened on the Reserve over the past year. Everyone welcome.

4 June. Foxglove Covert Open Day. Details will be published as they become available. We will need lots of help on the day so please keep it free.

### *Competition Corner*

What am I?

My first is in driftwood but never in trees,  
My second's in mousehole but never in cheese,  
My third is in homework but never in knowledge,  
My fourth is in Swindon but never in Swanage,  
My fifth is in tango but never in dance,  
My sixth is in sportsman but never in stance,  
My seventh's in plunder but never in spoil  
My last is in daybreak as I grow from the soil.

Send your entries to Sam Hackett at the Reserve address. I will award another £5 book token to the first correct entry drawn from my hat on 1 January. The winner will be announced at the AGM on 12 January.

There was only a small number of entries for the wordsearch in the last issue. The £5 book token was won by Linda Meller.

Just in case you didn't get all the birds, here's the full list:

Jackdaw	Wren
Robin	Dunnoek
Bullfinch	Woodpecker
House Sparrow	Blackbird
Siskin	Coal Tit
House Martin	Goldfinch
Goldcrest	Great Tit
Song Thrush	Brambling
Blue Tit	Nuthatch
Greenfinch	Swallow

### *And Finally . . .*

Why do birds fly south in winter?  
Because it's too far to walk.

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Undergrowth is published four times a year. Articles for inclusion in future issues should be sent to the editor, Sam Hackett, at : sam.hackett@btinternet.com tel: 01748 850966 or Tony Crease at tonycrease@aol.com tel: 01677 427 925.

Any opinions included are those of the individual writers and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Foxglove Covert Management Group or the policy of the Ministry of Defence.