

Undergrowth

Issue No 1. Summer 2004

The Newsletter of Foxglove Covert Local Nature Reserve

Welcome to the first edition of our newsletter, Undergrowth; we hope you find the contents interesting and informative. Our aim is to publish the newsletter four times a year but this may well depend on the amount of material which we have available. Undergrowth will be distributed free to all members of our Friends group and will be available to non-members at a cost of 25p. Further copies can be bought from the editor at a cost of 25p plus postage.

We will include a number of regular features in this and future editions - a diary of up-coming events which will include courses, talks and guided walks on particular themes, together with information about social events. We will also feature profiles of individuals who are closely involved with Foxglove - either as volunteers or members of the different activity groups who use the Reserve. There will be a regular feature which lists new species found on the Reserve and there will also be a section for our younger readers. We will also include information about our 100 Club and our Friends group.

So what have we included in this edition? Firstly, a profile of Mark Hewitt, our Community Liaison Officer. Although many of you will have already met Mark, we felt that a more formal introduction might be useful. We also have a profile of John Smith, one of our most active volunteers and a report on the Ringing Course which took place in July.

We would welcome your opinions of Undergrowth, good or bad, and are happy to accept any ideas or suggestions which will make future editions more interesting. We are also happy to accept articles for publication in later editions on the general theme of conservation, reports of events you have attended and advertisements for up-coming events which might be of interest to our readers. Please send them, by e-mail, to sam.hackett@btinternet.com or by post to the Reserve address. Articles for the Autumn edition should arrive not later than 31 October.

Sam

Meet EL10903

During a CES ringing session in July the Ringing Group captured an unusual bird - a European Turtle Dove (*Streptopelia turtur*). The Turtle Dove isn't rare in the sense that there are very few about - they can be heard every year in Foxglove - but they are not that often seen and are very rarely captured, particularly using mist nets. One reason for this is that they remain remarkably calm when they do fly into a net and so don't become entangled. As a result, they are often able to get themselves out before they can be caught.



How rare a capture are they? Tony Crease has been ringing for over 30 years and EL10903 was the first Turtle Dove he had ever seen in the hand. As Tony said "It's nice to have positive confirmation of what we knew - Turtle Doves are alive and well in Foxglove Covert"

Mark Hewitt, CLO

Mark Hewitt has been involved with the site as a bird ringer and member of the Management Group since the summer of 2001. However, not having heard the maxim "never volunteer" he applied successfully for the vacant post of Community Liaison Officer and started his in new role at the end of March 2004.

Marks role as CLO is very varied. He is responsible for the day-to-day management of the Reserve and

this takes a lot of planning and organising and includes a good deal of liaison work with other professionals and contractors. It also requires a close working relationship with the growing band of volunteers, prioritising their efforts to make the best use of their valuable time.



Mark's role also involves a considerable amount of PR work, spreading the message about Foxglove to potential users, welcoming visitors to the Reserve and helping them get the most out of the site through advice on what is to be seen. Mark also leads courses – the Bird Identification Course held in the early summer was a successful example, even if the Osprey was just a figment of one participant's fevered imagination! Mark also leads regular guided walks on a Thursday afternoon which are open to anyone who wishes to join in.

Education at all levels is a key part of why the LNR exists and Mark continues to work on a range of initiatives to take education forward on the Reserve by involving as many local schools as possible to use the facilities we offer. (See the article Education Initiative on page 3.)

From this list of tasks it is easy to see that Mark needs a great number of different skills and a broad knowledge base. His ability to relate to the needs of visitors and his obvious enthusiasm for Foxglove is well complemented by his wide knowledge of wildlife, habitats and conservation in general.

2004 Ringing Course

The ringing course this year took place between 22 and 25 July and was divided, in the main, between three sites - Foxglove, Marne Barracks and Ripon Parks Training Area with forays to Teesmouth for cannon netting and Catterick Village for a Sand Martin colony. As usual, the course was very popular, with students coming from as far afield as Southampton. In the end, there were 17 students and no less than 16 trainers and 'A' permit holders, giving a trainer/trainee ratio of just under 1:1.

All the students were rotated through the three sites during the course. This gave us the opportunity to see a wider selection of species and to experience ringing in a range of habitats. It also meant that we were able

to learn different techniques by being exposed to the ideas of a variety of different trainers.

The course was operated on the same lines which we have all grown to love - early starts at 4.30 am and, on Friday, a late finish of about 11 pm. These hours didn't seem to deter anyone from taking a great deal of pleasure from the event, even if we weren't prepared to admit it at the time. In fact, we understand that some students want to come back next year. Which just goes to show you don't need a long memory to be a bird ringer!

Although the weather was not as good as it might have been, there was no shortage of birds. We caught well over 1000 new birds and recaptured 500 in a grand total of 1575 birds in the four days. There was also a wide spread of species - 52 in all - ranging from waders like Knot and Dunlin to small passerines like finches and tits. Some notable captures include 3 Skylark chicks, ringed in a nest at Ripon, a Green Woodpecker and a Tree Pipit. Again, none of these species is particularly rare but they are unusual birds as far as we are concerned.

One interesting feature of the course was that of making direct entry of ringing data into the computer. The normal way this is done is to write all the information onto sheets of paper and then to update the computer at a later date. This is a lengthy process which puts a lot of pressure on Tony who manages the recording system. Direct entry would relieve some of that pressure by allowing more people to help with the recording process. Of course, it would still be necessary to keep paper records - just in case - but the time saved would still be considerable.

All in all the course was a great success and will further enhance the reputation of Foxglove as an excellent site for bird ringing.

Meet Our Volunteers - John Smith

John Smith worked for the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority until he retired and since then he has become a serial volunteer. Not only does he spend most Tuesdays at Foxglove but he is also a volunteer at Grass Wood near Grassington, where he does similar work.

John has been coming to Foxglove for nearly a year and has been involved with a wide range of projects. These include making two large extensions to the Heath, one on the north side of the road and one

at the eastern end, maintaining paths and net rides and helping out with visiting groups. This sort of flexibility is invaluable to the Reserve as it gives Mark the opportunity to allocate time to the things which are immediately important as well as those things which are longer term.

As Mark says "John is everything we could want in a volunteer, he is enthusiastic, comes on a regular basis and is willing to turn his hand to almost anything we need. What more could we ask for?"

Our thanks, John, for all your hard work over the past few months.

Education Initiative

Foxglove Covert offers outstanding educational opportunities to students and the general public of all ages. Up until now the majority of schools using the site have been primary schools while the number of secondary schools which have used the site has been very low. However, this autumn we are embarking on a new initiative with four of the local secondary schools – Mowbray, Risedale, Richmond and St. Francis Xavier.

Through an agreement with North Yorkshire Business and Education Partnership (NYBEP) the schools will each be sending 12 students to the Reserve for 4 days over the autumn and winter to take part in practical management tasks on the Reserve. The aim is for the students to find out more about conservation and the employment opportunities in this important sector. The students will be 14-16 years old and we all hope that this 'work experience' will encourage them to focus on their studies by showing them what might be available once they leave school.

Further opportunities with NYBEP which we are currently investigating include hosting teacher training days and running workshops at local education fairs. In fact, we are planning a whole range of education based projects and activities and we will report on them in later editions of Undergrowth.

Beekeepers' Day

On 5 June Foxglove played host to the Richmondshire Beekeepers' Association. This event was organised by and for the Beekeepers and they had a variety of talks, demonstrations and other attractions in a full day's programme. Apart from providing a venue for the event, Foxglove also put on a demonstration of

bird ringing and had a number of people on hand to act as guides and helpers.

In all some 200 people attended the day - not all beekeepers as friends and families were also there. From our point of view one of the more striking aspects of the day was to see how easily such a large number of people were accommodated in the centre.

Feedback from the day was excellent and many of the people who were there felt that they would like to see more of Foxglove when they weren't involved directly with beekeeping. As a result, some 30 people made a return visit on 9 August when Mark was able to recount the history of Foxglove, explain our bird ringing activities, and take them on a guided walk through the Reserve. Everything went well - except the weather and the walk took place in a truly spectacular downpour. However, the rain did little to dampen anyone's enthusiasm and everyone seemed to have a really enjoyable afternoon.

Scorton Ladies Choir

On 25 June the Scorton Ladies Choir gave a concert in aid of Foxglove Covert on the theme of nature. This was a splendid evening where an excellent performance by the whole choir gave tremendous pleasure to everyone who was there. The 14 ladies (and one gentleman) were accompanied on the piano by Gillian MacKenzie who is well known to everyone at Foxglove.

The repertoire of the choir was amazing and we had everything from Robert Burns to Fats Waller by way of Gilbert and Sullivan. All of us at Foxglove would like to thank Jean Bookie and every member of the choir for a most enjoyable event and one which raised no less than £460 for the Reserve.

Species Recording

We keep a record of all the species which we have found on the Reserve and this now totals over 1300. The different species range from mammals, through birds, amphibians and insects to plants. There are likely to be many more that have yet to be recorded and we would encourage anyone with a keen eye to help in the search. We are not just looking for rarities; but we are trying to build up a picture of what species are using the Reserve. Reporting sheets for any new sightings are available in the Centre.

The current list has some notable gaps. Until July

there was no record of hedgehogs and no one had positively identified the Common Wasp! Both of these have now been found although, sadly, the first hedgehog found on the Reserve was unwell and died almost immediately.

100 Club

The latest draw of our 100 Club was made at the Management Group meeting on 11 August and the winning ticket was found to belong to Winifred Hodge.

The 100 Club is open to everyone and there are still places available for anyone who would like to join. The cost is just £10 per year and draws take place every quarter with a prize of £25. Please contact Jane Elliott on 01325 469518 for further details.

Friends Group

Some of you who read this edition will be members of our Friends Group which we launched in July. So far we have enrolled 10 members which is an encouraging start. We hope to reach a target of 50 members within the year. Our current members are:

Gillian MacKenzie	Brompton on Swale
Sylvia Broadwith	Bedale
Alison Brown	Richmond
Celia Dunkley	Richmond
Nigel Stanwix	Newton Aycliffe
Caroline Stott	Richmond
Christine Whitehead	Leyburn
Wendy Griffin	Leyburn
Pat Anderson & Margaret McCord	Stanwick St. John

Our thanks to all of you for your support of our conservation efforts. If anyone else would like to join the Friends, there are application forms in the Centre.

Dates for your Diary

4 September. A short "taster" course on mammals, led by David Slater of English Nature. The day runs from 10 am to 4 pm and costs £5 per person.

5 September. Volunteers' Day. This day is specifically designed for those people who have expressed a wish to work as volunteers on the Reserve. The autumn/winter work programme will be available for discussion and there will be a demonstration of bird ringing (weather permitting). If you are a volunteer, please make the effort to attend this important day and meet some of your fellow volunteers.

14 October. Coffee Morning Richmond Town Hall. We have been given the opportunity to hold this event with all proceeds going to the Reserve. We will need as many people as possible to make drinks, serve, wash up, take money, sell raffle tickets, etc. We would also welcome donations of tea, coffee, biscuits and raffle prizes. Time: 8.00 am to 12.00 noon.

If you are interested in attending any of these events, please would you let Mark Hewitt know on 07754 270980.

Wildlife Wordsearch

Can you find the names of 20 species of birds which you might see in and around your garden in the grid below? Send your entries, with your name and address, to Sam by 1 October and he will award a £5 book token to the first correct entry drawn out of his hat.

T	U	G	F	I	L	C	V	U	P	Z	I	H	F	X	D	S	G	X	F	E
Q	Z	D	W	C	J	A	C	K	D	A	W	O	H	F	H	Z	H	V	S	C
P	O	E	R	B	J	S	S	F	B	J	R	Z	C	P	L	C	G	C	Z	H
H	S	E	B	O	D	M	E	G	L	B	E	D	E	U	N	W	I	P	U	O
L	F	G	Q	G	B	U	L	L	F	I	N	C	H	I	O	O	J	F	P	B
F	M	S	O	B	L	I	N	J	V	M	X	R	F	D	P	O	L	L	R	I
X	I	M	I	C	A	V	N	N	H	M	F	D	Q	P	V	D	I	H	B	L
H	Q	J	O	S	C	O	J	I	O	G	L	E	H	X	F	P	D	O	P	L
A	X	H	G	X	K	M	F	Q	U	C	F	F	B	U	H	E	B	U	P	O
O	F	O	C	Z	B	I	V	E	G	D	K	H	L	S	B	C	Z	S	O	M
C	S	U	M	J	I	Q	N	V	J	D	C	X	U	F	M	K	Q	E	S	X
O	X	S	L	C	R	B	L	Z	U	N	V	R	E	D	S	E	V	S	G	F
A	G	E	W	J	D	I	L	G	I	B	H	E	T	C	X	R	I	P	Q	N
L	Z	M	F	A	D	P	U	F	V	T	R	F	I	I	O	F	F	A	M	U
T	M	A	Z	F	L	Q	D	E	G	R	E	A	T	T	I	T	Q	R	L	T
I	S	R	E	U	H	L	U	N	C	L	Z	C	M	H	G	J	J	R	M	H
T	O	T	T	P	O	B	O	Z	M	P	D	C	G	B	O	F	U	O	P	A
B	V	I	Q	G	V	S	H	W	I	P	H	F	F	O	L	J	N	W	D	T
Q	S	N	G	R	E	E	N	F	I	N	C	H	X	S	F	I	K	B	U	C
G	X	X	G	O	L	D	E	N	E	A	G	L	B	S	I	U	N	S	C	H
G	O	L	D	C	R	E	S	T	J	V	Z	F	I	D	E	M	F	G	Z	H

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.