

Undergrowth

Issue No 5. Summer 2005

The Newsletter of Foxglove Covert Local Nature Reserve

It seems a long time ago now but we should remind everyone that we had an Open Day at the end of May. And what a day it turned out to be. The Management Group had two major concerns: either there would be so few visitors on the day that we would end up talking to each other or, alternatively, there would be so many that we would be unable to cope. In the event we estimate that we had between 500 and 600 visitors spread more or less evenly over the six hour period.

The Reserve stood up very well with those numbers, as did the Field Centre. There may have been short periods when things got a bit crowded but, in general, things worked very well.

We would like to thank everyone who helped both before the event and on the day - without your hard work we simply could not have coped.

While we're on the subject of visitor numbers, 2005 has been a highly successful year. The figure for the year to date stands at 3950 compared with 2417 for the whole of 2004. In fact, the numbers have been so high and the calendar so full that next year we may have to be more careful about spreading the load, particularly where large groups like schools are concerned.

The popular Richmond Walking Festival takes place during the last week of September and the Reserve will be playing host to three walks whose dates we have listed on page 4. If anyone is willing to help out as guides for any or all of them, please contact Mark.

Funny how sights can take one back. The ragwort in the Reserve has some caterpillars of the Cinnabar moth on it - something I always remember in the first week of the Summer holidays in Ireland. Pity I don't still look 13 as well!

Sam

Adopt-a-Box Scheme

Those of you who have sponsored boxes will be aware that our results for the year were poor with just 57 successful boxes out of 151 (now, since we tripped over a fallen one near Risedale beck, 152). Between them they raised 288 chicks which wasn't a lot. We are, in typical British style, blaming the weather - the warm spell in the early Spring which was followed by a month of cold and wet is likely to discourage the hardiest of birds.

We are hoping for much better things next year.

Providing for Bumblebees

The resonant buzzing of bumblebees is one of the evocative sounds of a Foxglove summer. Several species are readily encountered within the reserve as they forage for nectar (primarily food for the adults) and pollen (used by developing larvae). These commodities must be available throughout the lifetime of a colony if it is to be successful (April to September for most species). Ideally they must also be available within a distance of 400m from the nest site. Foxglove Covert is home to many flower rich communities which cater for the dietary requirements of our bumblebees. There are also naturally formed nesting sites and hibernacula critical to healthy populations. The garden however, whilst providing a season long food supply, lacked these natural homes. We thus decided to create places for our bumblebees to live, and used simple techniques which could be followed in any garden to help guarantee the buzz of summer.

The queen bumblebee over winters underground or beneath the bark of a tree. She emerges between March and May (depending on species, weather, and geographical location) and feeds before finding a location for the new colony. It is quite common to see queens crawling amongst vegetation and flying low at this time as they search for a home. The colony will be located in a warm, well insulated location such as an old mammal burrow or birds nest. The queen forms a pollen lump which the first larval females use as they

develop. The quality of the surrounding nectar and pollen sources are critical to the rearing of these first workers.

After a few weeks the first adult workers emerge. The role of these bees is to forage for, and tend to, the nest. The queen can then lay the next batch of eggs. In this way the number of workers in the nest rises to between 40 and 150 individuals (depending on species and success). Towards the end of the season the queen produces new queens and males. The males, after mating with other new queens, die. Before the end of the autumn the old queen and her workers also die whilst the fertilised queens search for hibernacula.

The provision of a varied and continual food supply is critical for bumblebee success. Gardens thus frequently offer ideal conditions as we try to achieve season long colour for aesthetic reasons. However, many of the plants we choose are so highly bred that their double flowers cannot be easily accessed by bumblebees. It is thus a good idea to intersperse these plants with single flowered species such as our native flora or closely related domesticated varieties. The Foxglove garden offers many native flowers year round and this is reflected in the abundance of bumblebees. However we decided to further increase the value of the garden to bumblebees by providing hibernation sites.

By driving a hole roughly 4cm in diameter and 30cm long into a hedge bank, and lightly filling this with moss, we emulated the mammal burrows used as hibernacula by queen bumblebees. We made the bottom of the tunnel slightly higher than the entrance to stop water running in. We are now eagerly awaiting signs of use in the autumn, although we are not yet sure what these may be. Finally it should be noted that bumblebees will rather roll over onto their backs than sting an aggressor and that they do not sting unless persistently provoked. Why not see if you can encourage queens to hibernate in your hedge bank, plant some natives, and enjoy the sound of Foxglove in your garden next spring?

Richard Brown

Bat Box Survey

We have just completed our annual Bat box survey and, once again, the results were not as exciting as they might have been. Although there was some evidence of occupation, there were still 30 boxes out of a total of 50 which had not been used. A further 7

had been used by birds - as if we didn't have enough bird boxes to go round! A breakdown of the results is as follows:

Occupied	3
Bat droppings	6
Empty	30
Bird nests	2
Bird roosting	5
Active Wasp nest	3*
Abandoned Wasp nest	1

* We have recorded this as 3 boxes. Although the wasps were probably using only one of the boxes, our surveyors were a bit reluctant to climb up the ladder and check the other two, just in case.

One of the boxes which was occupied by a bat also contained bird droppings which seems to indicate dual use although we cannot say whether this occurred at the same time.

We have been asked by a number of people whether we can extend our Adopt-a-Box scheme to our bat boxes. Although there is no practical reason why we shouldn't do this we should be aware that our boxes do not operate in quite the same way as do bird boxes in that we only check them once a year for evidence of occupation. As we can see from this year's results, that evidence can be a bit thin on the ground so the results are likely to be similar. However, having said that, we will introduce a scheme for bat boxes in September and see what happens.

Ringling Course

Once again, Foxglove has played host to a very successful Bird Ringing Course which was held from 21 to 24 July. The course wasn't quite full because of a couple of last minute cancellations but 13 students finally attended. The variety of ringing venues was as wide as ever with no less than 6 sites in operation. As usual, students were rotated through the main sites of Foxglove, Ripon and Marne Barracks but were able to visit the Tees Estuary, a Tarmac gravel pit and Jenny's garden as added extras

The results were very encouraging with 1732 birds of 67 different species ringed during the four days. This compares with a total of 1575 last year. A full list of the species and number will be found in the ringing room.

Friends Group

We would like to welcome no less than 13 new Friends who have joined us since our last edition. They are:

Linda Baldry	Richmond
Maureen Bayles	Richmond
Anne Daykin	Askrigg
Colin and Julia Gouck	Middleham
Kenneth Hemmingway	Darlington
Joseph Hird	Leeming Bar
Gwyneth Hirst	Richmond
Marcia Howard	Richmond
Katherine Lart	Great Smeaton
Gail Nicholson	Purley
Timothy Forbes Taylor	Catterick Garrison
Jean Thomas	Askrigg
Jane Turner	Catterick Village
Peter Vickers	Catterick Garrison

We also have our second Corporate member – New Park C. P. School, Harrogate. We hope all our new members will enjoy using the Reserve as often as they are able to.

We should perhaps mention that Gillian Mackenzie, our very first member of our Friends group, has recently left hospital after a stay of nearly five weeks. We wish her well for a speedy recovery and hope it won't be long before we see her back at Foxglove.

Telephone Line

At long last our new telephone line has been fitted. This will allow us to contact Mark through the normal landlines on 01748 831113. We are still waiting for BT to fit the actual telephone itself but that should be done in the next few days. Mark will continue to use the mobile phone when he's out and about.

Website

Many of you may be wondering why the website appears to have gone to sleep for the past few months with not a single change since mid May. We would like to point out that the problem was not caused by any lack of action on our part. The site was hosted on the Army's Small Site Server but it appears that this was open to the dreaded hacker and was deemed to be too insecure for continued use.

The new hosting system is now up and running but the updating process is radically different from the previous system and we will not be given access until

we have completed a course on how we should manage it. We hope this won't take too long to set up.

We are trying to get the new system managers to update the website for us but have had no success at the moment due, probably, to the holiday period. In the meantime the site, as it was last updated in mid May, is still available to view at the address:

<http://usite.army.mod.uk/foxglovecovert/>

Crossbills

There was a bit of a stir in the bird ringing room on 1 August when a common crossbill was caught in net ride 13. Although not our first - 2 were caught some years ago, this is a species which is rarely caught in mist nests. We have been aware that they are using the Reserve as they have been seen fairly regularly over the years. However, this particular female had a well developed brood patch, which indicates that she was, or has been, nesting. It would be nice to think that they might become more common if their breeding is successful.



Foxglove Clothing

We have some Foxglove Covert clothing for sale. It is all high quality and comes complete with the Reserve logo in white on a dark green background. Prices are as follows:

Sleeveless fleece	£20.00
Sweat Shirt	£16.50
Polo Shirt	£14.00

They would all make ideal birthday or Christmas presents and each sale will make a modest contribution towards the Reserve's funds.

Farewell to CF85616

In our last issue we ran an article about a Robin which had been recaptured 27 times. One of the other birds we mentioned was CF85616, a Great Spotted Woodpecker which we had recaptured 24 times. Sadly, Mark and Richard Brown discovered the remains of CF85616 in the conifer belt last week. There was no indication what had happened to him and they were lucky to find the ring as he had been dead for some time.

To complete the record, we first ringed CF85616 on 10 July 2002 when he was ringed by Tony Crease as a juvenile. He was then recaptured a further 26 times, the last occasion being 3 April 2005.

On a happier note we continue to capture our Robin P105957. His record of 27 captures has now risen to 29. Once again he seems to be on his summer holidays because we haven't seen him since the spring

Dates for Your Diary

We are coming to the end of our 2005 programme of Courses so our dates for your diary have now dwindled to just one. However, the Reserve is going to play a part in the 2005 Richmond Walking Festival so we have added the dates of our walks in case anyone wants to join in.

17 Sep. The History of Trees and Hedgerows

25 Sep. Guided walk through the Reserve

27 Sep. Bat Watch at Foxglove Covert

2 Oct. Guided walk through the Reserve.

Competition Corner

Over the next few weeks we are going to run a competition to find the best photograph taken on the Reserve. The competition will be open to everyone

and we will mount an exhibition of the entries in the Field Centre. There will be exciting prizes for the best photograph and the two runners up.

The closing date for the competition is 31 October, judging will take place during the following week and the winning photographs will be displayed until the end of the year.

If the winners are willing to let us we would like to use the best photographs to produce either a Reserve calendar and/or a series of Christmas cards or notelets which we can use to raise funds for the Reserve.

Full details of the competition are shown on the enclosed leaflet.

We had a good response to last issue's wordsearch which was won by Caroline Stott. Those of you who did it, may be aware that there were actually 21 wild plants in the grid, "Dock" having got in there by mistake. We have, therefore, allowed any 20 from the 21 to stand as correct answers. As a result we had 5 entries, three of which were correct; (we refused to allow Jean Gabriel's suggestion of "Weed"!)

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

And Finally . . .

Why did the butterfly? Because the milkweed.

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.