

Fox-henge

Anyone visiting Foxglove recently may have noticed we have installed a Stone Circle on the moorland. The site was chosen to give the stones maximum visual impact in the landscape yet cause minimal physical damage and disruption to the reserve’s varied habitats. Having been offered the stones, we felt it would be something new and unique for Foxglove, to enhance the experience of our visitors. CEMEX at Leyburn Quarry kindly donated the stones, and delivered them to Foxglove. Some of the CEMEX workers came to help install the stones as part of their Lend-a-Hand day, where staff can take an extra day of paid leave to volunteer on a community project. Before the big day the stone circle had to be precisely measured out, as we wanted the four largest stones to accurately point to the four points of the compass. For what seemed such as simple task it took a remarkably long time using bits of string, a tape measure and a



Placing the stones

compass to get this right! We removed the turf by hand from each stone site and the following day a digger was used to make a neat hole for each of the stones. The day of installation dawned sunny and bright and the stones arrived early in the morning. With a sling placed around one end of each stone, it was lifted using the digger, until it was hanging vertically before being lowered in to its hole. Stones and earth were then



Fox-henge – the finished circle

packed around the base to stabilise it, and the turf laid back on top. By the end of a long day all 12 stones, plus an additional central stone, were standing in a circle out on the moor. The next day a small amount of tidying was needed around the stones and then it was left for nature to take

its course. Hopefully it will only be a few weeks before the stones look like they have been standing there forever! The circle looks tremendous, standing proudly out on the moor, flanked by a carpet of bluebells and yellow gorse.

Stacey Adlard

A Dream Job for our Man with the Van!

Having worked as a volunteer for the reserve several years ago I was more than pleased to come back to Foxglove as a Reserve Manager, especially as I had always enthused about this unique place nestled in the middle of an army base. I was fortunate to be in a position to finish one job on the Friday, where I had been working as a Residential Ranger for Dorset County Council, and start full time as a Reserve Manager for Foxglove on the Monday. It was all a bit of a whirlwind, when on the Sunday I dropped some paperwork off at the reserve and found myself ringing birds for 5 hours before I'd even officially started! The next day I turned up for work and thankfully was instantly welcomed in to the Foxglove family. I had new unfamiliar systems to learn as well as familiarising myself with the habitats and the Higher Level Stewardship scheme. I was pleased to have arrived in early spring as this gave me a little time to learn the various species as they appeared. At first just finding my way around proved something of a challenge, and even now locating each net ride requires me to carry a map! Again I was grateful for support from both Management Group and volunteers. For me personally the position ticks a lot of boxes; I am able to use my practical skills and past conservation experience, as well as acquiring new knowledge. I feel privileged to be in a place of work where I have the opportunity to train as a bird ringer at the same time. When I look at the role of Reserve Manager one word comes to mind: ‘diverse’, and it is that constant change and diversity that stimulates me most. One day pond dipping with an education visit or giving a tour of the reserve, the next working alongside volunteers laying new paths, putting together a presentation or checking bird boxes.

In the past I have been labelled nomadic, constantly looking for change and learning; luckily this position has all that to offer. The condition of appointment was that I qualify to use a chainsaw and this I have now done. For me this is my dream job even though I feel I have hit the ground running! I wish to thank all at Foxglove for your warm welcome, your continued help and for making my position so rewarding!

Roger Foreman



Roger checking one of the owl boxes



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From the Editor

The cool spring has resulted in a slow start to the season for our wildlife, but the Foxglove Team has been hard at work, with lots of new projects as well as the continuing upkeep of the reserve. On a recent walk round I was impressed at the high standard of path maintenance which has been carried out by our valued volunteers – you really do make a difference! This is a bumper issue of Undergrowth as we have so much to share - with new staff, all the projects, and features on the education work at Foxglove. There is a lovely fact-filled article on the Foxglove Bees and an interesting update on the start of the bird breeding season. There are also lots of events going on over the summer at the reserve with something for everyone – take a look at the website or speak to the Reserve Managers for further information. Finally, we are seeking help with the fund-raising side of running Foxglove, with two vacancies which we urgently need to fill – please see the advert below. This is an essential part of keeping the reserve functioning, so if you know of someone who might be interested in supporting us in either of these roles, please get in touch.

Catherine Hayden

Message from the Chair

It has been an extremely busy few months at Foxglove since the last edition of Undergrowth. We have welcomed Roger Foreman to the Foxglove team as Reserve Manager. Stacey Adlard has also joined the team again as a Reserve Manager having spent the winter in Antarctica. To complete the team, Jennifer Care has recently started as Senior Reserve Manager and we wish her all the best. It is reassuring to have a full team of Reserve Managers who are totally committed and passionate about their role in keeping the reserve in tip-top shape for both wildlife and visitors alike. Our thanks go to them for all their hard work and dedication.



Reserve Managers Roger, Jennifer and Stacey

Foxglove has once again been in the limelight due to the construction of a stone circle on the moorland, which you can read about in Stacey’s article. There have been several

newspaper articles and some footage on the Look North News programme. The latter generated a lot of interest and on the Sunday after the TV show, over 100 visitors came to see the new feature on just one day! The education team has been hard at work too with the ongoing provision of high quality educational visits for schools and organised groups and much progress has been made in order to enhance these events with a wider variety of activities. However, it seems that the pond dipping, mini-beast safari and habitat walks remain the most popular sessions with our local primary schools. Some of the old favourite events are still taking place and this year’s bird song breakfast was another hit. Sadly though, each year shows a distinct decline in the birdsong, with fewer species being recorded. This was the first year with no cuckoo being heard during the early morning walk. New events are in the pipeline - for example, owl pellet dissection for adults - please keep an eye on the events section of the website for further information. The date has been set for the summer BBQ which is always a great evening, so do come along and support it with friends and family who are very welcome too. As always, book a place well in advance with the Reserve Managers. The bird ringers have been out on a daily basis monitoring the nest boxes (both large and small) and ringing the wader chicks out on the upland area surrounding the reserve. One noticeable change is a lack of Curlew chicks this year with fewer adults about than in previous years. In addition, many small woodland birds appear to be breeding approximately 2 weeks later than usual, a trend that has also been reported nationwide. Some woodland sites have had very poor results with a low uptake of nest boxes; read more about this in Tony’s report. Finally, due to issues beyond our control, yet again we are experiencing problems with access. Whilst we appreciate that security is paramount we need to be able to function as a Local Nature Reserve. The Management Group is doing everything that we can to ensure that volunteers and visitors are able to visit with the least difficulty possible. We are so grateful for all of the help and support from everyone and hope that you will be patient and understanding over the next few weeks.

Sophie Rainer

VACANCIES

We have two voluntary vacancies which we would like to fill as soon as possible:

GRANT-SEEKER

We urgently need someone to take on the role of Grant-Seeker for Foxglove, to research and apply for project grants for the reserve.

CAR-BOOT SALE CO-ORDINATOR

To help with our fund-raising, we need someone – or a team – to take on the responsibility for co-ordinating a car-boot sale.

We have the stock, we need YOU to help sell it!

For further information or to express an interest in either role, please contact the Reserve Managers or Tony Crease.



## Foxglove Covert's Patron

We were delighted to welcome our Patron, the Marquess of Zetland, to Foxglove at the end of May, to show him some of the developments on the reserve since his last visit.

I took the opportunity to ask Lord Zetland to share his thoughts on Foxglove and his wider interests.

CH: ***When did you first discover Foxglove Covert?***

Lord Zetland: I first visited about 4 years ago and fell in love with the place immediately. I was honoured to be asked to take on the role of Patron of the reserve, to support and help where possible.

CH: ***What draws you to supporting the reserve at Foxglove?***

Lord Zetland: Obviously the wildlife is fascinating and the conservation work which is carried out here is so important, but what strikes me is the tremendous enthusiasm of all of the people here – the management, staff and volunteers. They are all so talented, so full of enthusiasm and completely dedicated to their cause. The degree of expertise and the application of such talent to develop the reserve to encourage the wildlife, is commendable.

CH: ***Are there any aspects of Foxglove which you feel are particularly special?***

Lord Zetland: The variety of opportunities for such as the Dales School who come every week to help with the conservation work, or supporting the Defence Recovery Capability working with Phoenix House, offering personnel the chance to visit and connect with the natural world; these groups and many other individuals benefit tremendously from being able to come here.

CH: ***What are your other passions?***

Lord Zetland: I love music and am Senior Trustee of the Zetland Foundation which seeks to support young musicians in their early careers. Like the people at Foxglove, I admire their huge talent and dedication. I also enjoy walking my two dogs on the Zetland Estate and being able to appreciate the diversity of wildlife there.

Thank you, Lord Zetland, for sharing your thoughts with us, and for your valuable support of the reserve at Foxglove.

*Catherine Hayden*



Lord Zetland viewing the Stone Circle, with Stacey, Sophie and Catherine

## Eco Club

I have been helping with Eco Club for some years now, and as a retired teacher and nature lover, it is a good way in which to continue my interests in both the areas of education and natural history.

Eco Club runs on the last Saturday of the month for children aged 6-12 years, and aims to provide them with the opportunity to learn about a range of living things, life cycles and life processes in plants and animals in a variety of habitats, through observation and ‘hands-on’ activities. Foxglove Covert provides the ideal place for learning, with a huge diversity of habitats and wildlife, enabling the children to take part in sessions with varied themes such as ‘pond dipping’ and ‘seasonal changes’.

In this digital age, many young people have limited exposure to the outdoors and the natural world. Eco Club does an important job to ‘spread the word’ to future generations, encouraging support and understanding of conservation and the environment.

The children who attend the club come from a variety of backgrounds and have a range of knowledge, but all bring a willingness to learn. Some of those who attended the club a few years ago have come back to Foxglove on work experience, or to join in with the bird ringing, and it gives a good feeling to see their continued interest.

The most popular session is that on ‘mini-beasts’ with the pond dipping part in particular! Here the walk down to the scrapes echoes with excited chatter: “What will we see? Who is going to find something first?” The chase is on to be the first to find the most interesting - or ferocious - mini-beast! It is a triumph for any child (and their parent!) who finds a Great Diving Beetle larva; this always brings gasps of astonishment or shock - and yes, ‘awe and wonder’ is part of the curriculum! The feedback from the children and parents shows how much they have learnt and enjoyed the experiences, and it gives me a lot of pleasure to see their enthusiasm.

Foxglove Covert is an important site for bird ringing, and this has been included in Eco Club too. The children are absolutely thrilled to observe birds at such close quarters, to see them being ringed and processed and, under close supervision, to be allowed to release them afterwards; it is great to watch the expression of delight on young faces. I have lots of happy and amusing memories from the club, but my absolute favourite happened when we were ringing baby owl chicks. I will never forget the connection and concentration on the face of a child with autism when he touched a young owl which I was holding. That moment will stay with me forever.

Long may Eco Club continue!

*Sue Harper*



Invertebrate investigations with Eco-club

## Highs and Lows for the start of the season

The bird breeding season is late this year and many species seem to be up to two weeks behind with their egg laying. What is also apparent is that the small mammal population is low in this area resulting in seriously slow growth in the young Tawny Owls. Some of them at the three week stage have looked no older than they often do at a week, and this has resulted in many clutches being reduced to a single chick as the siblings have been eaten. This is not a new phenomenon but it has reduced the 2016 output somewhat. There are still three owlets in a box at Foxglove but it is unlikely they will all survive.



Ringling a Tawny Owl chick

So far on the owl front we have found 13 adults ringed previously, and we have ringed 4 new adults and 18 chicks – a total of 35 which is about 20% down on last year. Interestingly, one adult was 16 years old and another, breeding in Foxglove, was ringed there as an owlet in 2014.

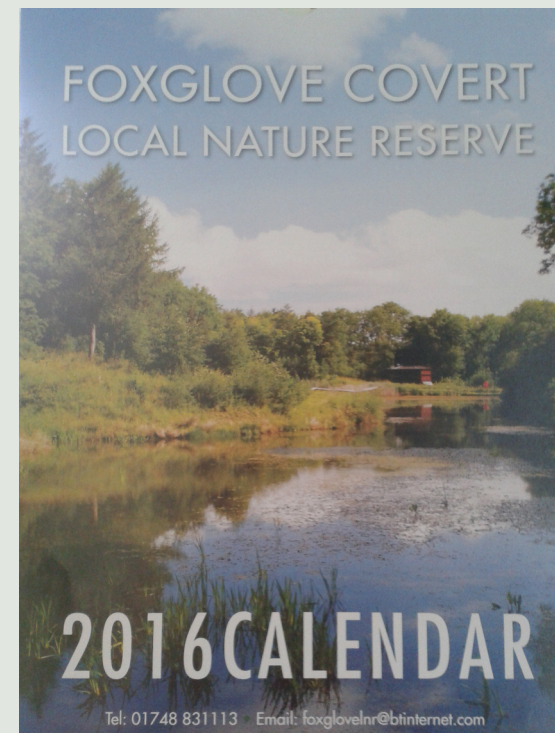
In the small boxes we have had very mixed results with the boxes in some woods almost entirely empty. Fortunately, others have fared better and there are several Pied Flycatchers and Redstarts to return to. Currently we have around 9 Kestrel boxes about to hatch and it was fun to process 3 Peregrine chicks in May.

On the moorland we have ringed a brood of Ring Ouzel and reasonable numbers of waders including 5 Snipe. Curlews have been late and hatched only at the very end of May, but Lapwings are in decent numbers although several chicks have died from the cold, wet weather.

On the CES front we have completed 3 of the 12 sessions. The first visit was remarkable with the highest number (401) of birds ever processed in a single day at Foxglove! Since then things have quietened down as the adult birds started laying. We will see the results and get a clearer picture as the young hatch over the next few weeks.

In summary, a fairly typical year with mixed fortunes as ever. A more detailed report will follow in due course.

*Tony Crease*



## Calling all Photographers ...

The Foxglove Covert Calendar has come to take a regular place on many of our walls and it's a great way to support the reserve. This year we are holding a competition to find amazing photos for next year's calendar.

The photos should be taken on the reserve at Foxglove or on the surrounding moorland. We will be looking for a suitable portrait photograph for each month, ideally illustrating the season and/or showing some wildlife. Photos should be landscape format for each month, although we will be looking for a suitable portrait format for the front cover.

We will be choosing 12 photos to be used in the calendar, plus a front-cover image. In addition to having your photos in the calendar, there will be a prize for the photos which the judges consider to be Best Adult photo and Best Child photo (16 years and under). Please submit your photos as prints (minimum 6" x 4") in an envelope marked “Calendar Competition” to the Foxglove Office by **Friday 21st October 2016**.

The competition is open to everyone, but to make judging as fair as possible, please attach your name and contact details in a sealed envelope to the back of your photo(s). You can enter as many photos as you like as long as you are happy for your photo(s) to be used in the Foxglove Calendar. All photographers will be credited.