

Undergrowth

Issue No 4. Spring 2005

The Newsletter of Foxglove Covert Local Nature Reserve

At this time of year the bird ringers are getting into Constant Effort Site (CES) ringing. This is where the same nets are put up as far as possible on the same day for the same length of time. The first of the days this year fell on the Bank Holiday weekend which meant a 5.00 am start and a finish at about 4.00 pm. They love it really.

We have had quite a lot of work done around the reserve in the past weeks. The steps at the start of the Woodland Walk have been completed as have a new set which link the paths which run down towards the lake with the path which runs through the woodland at the north end of the scrape area. As well as this, most of the trees which were blown down in the January gales have been cleared and the areas tidied up. We have also had another block of scrub coppiced, this time it was the turn of the area in front of and to the west of the Field Centre. Already these areas are beginning to look better as the plants begin to regenerate.

The new birdwatching hide is proving very popular with our visitors - especially now the paths up to it have been completed. Our volunteers have done some first class work in front and beneath the hide, tidying up after the builders. If you haven't been inside I can recommend a visit.

Sam

Open Day

Preparations for the Open Day on 28 May are continuing. We had a successful meeting in April at which a lot of people volunteered to help either before the event or on the day. Our thanks to all who came. For those who couldn't make it, there's still time to get involved - just ring Mark on 07754 270980.

We have finalised the programme for the day and we have included a copy with this issue. We want to make the day a real success for everyone who comes and we hope that we will get a good response from the public.

The key to success is publicity and we recently sent all our Friends and volunteers some material to display in their local area. Our thanks to those who have done so and particularly to those who have asked for more. We can still produce further posters and car stickers if anyone needs them.

Bird Notes

We have been looking at some of our bird ringing data and have discovered some interesting facts. The 26,450 records for Foxglove Covert on our database refer to 18,916 individual birds. Of these, 14,180 birds are ones which we have captured once and never seen again. The remaining 4736 birds are ones which we have caught more than once.

The individual record for most times captured goes to a male Robin, P105957. We first captured him as a juvenile on 12 July 2000 and, since then, we have recaptured him no less than 26 times! If we look at a chart of his captures we can see the following:

Dec	• • •			• •	
Nov	•		• •	•	
Oct	• •			•	
Sep	• •			•	
Aug					
Jul	• •				
Jun					•
May					•
Apr		•			
Mar		• •		•	
Feb			•	•	•
Jan		•			
	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004

This shows us that, over the past years we have recaptured P105957 between 3 and 9 times a year. We can also see that the most popular time of year for P105957 to fly into a mist net is December - is he the original Christmas Robin? So why is P105957 so different from the majority of our birds? Well, as

anyone who has a garden will be able to testify, male Robins are notoriously territorial and are prepared to take on all comers to defend their patch. Now, if P105957's territory just happens to be close to a mist net . . .

One other interesting question is: where does P105957 go in the summer? If we look at the captures we can see that we have mainly caught him between September and March and never in August.

But what about other birds? If we look at those we have captured 20 times or more, the list will look like this:

P1059567	Robin	27
CF85616	Great Spotted Woodpecker	24
P726685	Blue Tit	23
CF13071	Great Spotted Woodpecker	22
N924300	Coal Tit	22
9G9123	Treecreeper	20
N924287	Blue Tit	20

The real surprise here is 9G9123, a Treecreeper which we captured 20 times between 18 July 2001 and 26 June 2003. That works out as 1 capture every 5 weeks!

Sunday Market

On Sunday 8th May we were offered the chance to "shake the bucket" at the entrance to the Sunday Market at Catterick Racecourse. A number of people volunteered to do a stint and we would like to thank:

Alison Brown	Nigel Stanwix
Mark Conroy	Paula Lacock
Pat Crease	Wes Miners
Celia Dunkley	Ian Walker
Anne Flecchia	Lyn Walker
Richard Francis	Christine Whitehead

The total we collected was £535.68. Not a bad return for an outlay of 6 black plastic buckets.

Course Programme

The take-up of places on our courses this year has been disappointing with numbers barely reaching the minimum necessary for the course to run. As a result we have had to cancel some courses completely. Even those, like the Bird Identification, which attracted a good number of people last year, have failed to do so this year.

We have included all the courses starting between now and August in our Dates for Your Diary feature on page 4. Why not see if there is something which might interest you.

New RSPB Branch

In March the RSPB launched a new Branch in the area at a meeting in the Field Centre. The meeting was attended by about twenty people, some of whom can be seen in our photograph below with Ann Westerberg from the RSPB regional office in Newcastle.



The group have now chosen a committee and are proposing to hold some future meetings at the Reserve.

Anyone who is interested in joining the group should ring Carl Watts on 01748 812392.

Adopt-a-Box Scheme

Our Adopt-a-Box scheme has taken off like a rocket. We launched the scheme on 16 February when we let box number 42, now, just 11 weeks later we have let 97 boxes and raised a total of £330. We will be starting to check the boxes soon with a view to ringing and recording the chicks.

We have increased the number of boxes available very slightly. When we started the scheme we had about 133 boxes on the Reserve. This has now gone up to 151. The additional boxes are mostly woodcrete but we also added some new special boxes made of wood and Richard Francis, who suggested the scheme in the first place, has also made some more wooden ones. We used some of these to replace boxes which had become unfit for avian habitation.

We have been surprised at the number of people who wanted to sponsor our "special" boxes - those which don't have either a round hole or an open front. When we started we had 12 special boxes and, in response to demand we increased this to 23, all of which were snapped up in just a few days.

Many thanks to everyone who has sponsored a box and for those who haven't got around to it yet - we still have 54 available!

Friends Group

Our Friends Group has made some steady progress over the past few weeks and we now have 40 members. Our new members are:

Jane Anderson	Richmond
Richard Francis	Richmond
David Gray	Richmond
Elizabeth Nicholson	Stockport
Stuart and Elaine Robb	Melsonby
Les Rodgers	Sheffield
Midge and Val Spencer	Catterick Garrison

We hope they enjoy their membership and make as much use as possible of the Reserve.

We have also gained our first Corporate member - Hipswell C of E Primary School. We look forward to many visits from their children during the summer.

We have offered Corporate membership to schools because of the difficulty they have in collecting small sums from the children to cover the cost of visits to the Reserve. Although we don't make a formal charge for schools to visit we do ask them to make a donation of, say, £1 per pupil. By becoming a Corporate Friend a school will no longer have to request and collect donations from individual pupils. We hope this idea will encourage more schools to visit as it could save them a lot of administrative effort.

100 Club

The 100 Club needs you! This year there has been a sharp reduction in the number of people who have taken out membership of the 100 Club - down from about 36 to just 26. This is, perhaps, surprising given that the number of people involved with the Reserve, as Friends, volunteers and visitors has increased.

Club membership costs just £10 per year and gives members the opportunity to win £25 on no less than

four occasions in the year. Could we urge you to join if you can by ringing Jane Elliott on 01325 469518.

The latest draw took place at the Management Group meeting on 23 March and the prize of £25 was won by a certain Sam Hackett. How embarrassing!

Meet the Volunteers

Every Reserve in the country would like to have someone like Graham Hodge on their team. He has a wide and varied background in land management and has experience in horticulture, as a water bailiff and as a gamekeeper. He spent 14 years working for Scottish National Heritage in Dumfries.



With his experience of writing natural history articles, columns for newspapers, regular radio shows and leading guided walks, Graham is invaluable. He gives us flexibility by helping out with school groups and leading casual visitors around the Reserve.

Originally from Otley, Graham has worked locally at both Studley Royal and High Batts and brings a wealth of practical knowledge and experience to our volunteer group. Along with John Smith, Ann Luxmore and Caroline Stott he helps to form a core of weekday volunteers who ensure that work on the Reserve is always completed on time.

Birdsong Breakfast

We had a good turn out at the Birdsong Breakfast on 7 May with about 15 people braving the early morning air. There was also a better response from the birds this year with quite a wide variety singing. Anyone who was with us last year will remember that practically the only birds we heard were Robins. This year we had Willow Warblers, Chiffchaffs, Garden Warblers in addition to many of our resident species. We also had the biggest breakfast anyone had clapped eyes on for many a long day.

We are holding our Birdsong Supper on 4 June this year and already there are a number of people who have put their names down to attend. As this is at the more civilised end of the day, why not ring Mark and join us for the evening?

Dates for your Diary

Here are a few of the events which are taking place at Foxglove over the next few weeks:

14 May. The Garden as Nature Reserve course.

14 May. BTO Bird Survey Techniques course. Currently, this course is fully booked

21 May. Beekeeping for Beginners course. This course is fully booked.

28 May. Open Day. A fun day for everyone. See enclosed programme for details .

4 June. Birdsong Supper.

10 June. Foxglove Flowers Through the Seasons course.

9 July. Wonderful Wetlands course.

11 July. Woodland Wonders course.

13 July. The Folklore of Trees and Flowers course.

15 July. Foxglove Flowers Through the Seasons course.

Competition Corner

This month we have reverted to another wordsearch. Although we had a good idea for a new competition it proved too difficult to organise in the time available so we have put it aside for another day.

Can you find the names of 20 common wild flowers in the grid below. A slight change in the rules this time - to encourage people who can't find them all to enter, we will award the prize to the person who finds the most. So, if you only find 17 you might still win. Usual hat, usual prize. Answers to Sam Hackett at the Reserve address by 1 July.

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

A much better response to the crossword in the last issue with no less than three correct entries to put in the hat. The winner was Janet Hall so congratulations to her. The full solution is on the right.

1	S	M	A	L	P	L	C	O	P	P	E	R								
2	W	S	O	R	A	A	F	U												
3	A	L	P	I	N	E	F	I	R		V	O	L	E	S					
4	L	E	G	E	A	E	E	T												
5	L	I	N	D	E	N		E	D	E	N	T	A	T	A					
6	O			A				I				W		R						
7	W	A	D	E	R	S		A	S	T	E	R	O	I	D					
8		E	E		R			E		N		R								
9	K	I	L	L	D	E	E	R		S	C	O	T	E	R					
10	E	I						E		E					O					
11	R	I	C	H	A	R	D	S		S	P	I	N	E	S					
12	A		H	G		L				P		H	O		A					
13	T	H	O	R	N			I	C	E	L	A	N	D	I	C				
14	I		N		U			N		A		L		A		E				
15	N									S	U	G	A	R	M	A	P	L	E	S

And finally . . .

Why do bees hum?

Because they don't know the words.

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.