



Fund Raising 2012

- General Fund Raising: £3865
- Centre Hire: £2692
- Evening Presentations: £284
- Donations: £4845
- Wood Sales: £401
- Gift Aid Refund: £1888
- Bank Interest: £927

A total of over £14, 900 and one of our best figures ever.

Thanks to everyone who made this possible in 2012

Inside this issue:

Wonderful Wetlands	1
Great Wall of Foxglove	1
Bird Ringing 2012	2
Dales School Visits	2
Species Recording	2
Volunteering at Foxglove Covert	3
Human Visitors to Foxglove	3
Sanctuary—the MOD conservation magazine	3
Message from the Chairman	4
Catterick Garrison and Foxglove Covert	4

Undergrowth

Issue No 32 Winter 2012

Wonderful Wetlands

The wetland, created in 2008, was designed to provide a habitat and breeding space on the reserve for wading birds and wildfowl. Soon after completion waders came in and began to utilise the bare banks and shallow pools. Redshank, Lapwing, Oystercatcher and Snipe have successfully bred. In contrast to the shallow sided pools, some steep banks were built; Water Voles have taken up residence and are thriving.

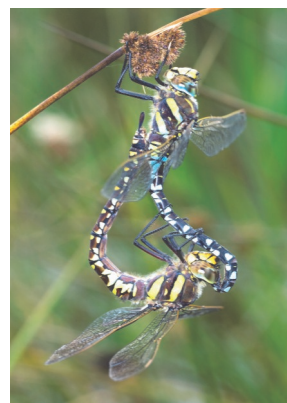
The area is also fantastically diverse in plant life. During one afternoon, ecologist Martin Hammond identified over 130 species of plant, notably, Blunt-leaved Pondweed, Autumnal Water-starwort and Delicate Stonewort, all uncommon and with only one other record of the latter in the county. Rare Sphagnum bog-mosses can be found through several pools. All these plants are indicators of top quality sites. Since completion some areas have become densely vegetated, with rushes dominating. This is a commonly found

problem in new wetland areas; each single rush flower spike can produce upwards of 10,000 seeds, making them very successful colonisers of bare soil. Management of this issue in such a delicate ecosystem can prove problematic. Rushes are unpalatable to most grazers, and the bunds between pools are easily damaged by heavier breeds of cattle. Dexter Cattle, a small traditional breed, were put on the area after volunteers cut back the old rush and grass growth. This has proved successful so far, and we are planning to put a lower number of Dexters on the wetland for a longer period during the summer next year.

Adam Edmond

Great Wall of Foxglove

In early November members of the Leyburn branch of the Dry Stone Walling Association (DSWA) commenced a CPRE funded project to construct a feature wall opposite the field centre. The curved wall will have a built in seat that will provide adequate seating for an entire class of school children.



Common Hawker dragonfly, one of the species that inhabit the Foxglove Covert wetlands. Dragonflies and damselflies are good indicator species as to the excellent quality of Foxglove's wetlands

Unfortunately the new wall will not be visible from space like the Great Wall of China but it will make an attractive addition for visitors to enjoy throughout the year.

A full report with photographs will follow in Spring's newsletter.

Stop Press!

The provisional CES results for 2012 have just been released. Unfortunately the news confirms that this year has been exceptionally poor for the breeding bird populations. The number of adult birds ringed indicates that their levels are only slightly down on previous years but the number of juveniles recorded is the lowest since CES records began!



Annual General Meeting

The 12th Annual General Meeting of Foxglove Covert LNR will be held at Foxglove Covert Field Centre on the 9th February 2013 starting at 1.30pm. All Friends and Volunteers are invited to attend to learn more about the management of the reserve during 2012. Please register your interest to attend with the Reserve Managers, light refreshments will be served before the meeting.



A Tree Sparrow was ringed for the first time on the reserve this year

Bird Ringing 2012

Much has been written and discussed already about the impact of the weather in 2012 on the breeding bird population; all there is space for here is a short summary now that most of the data has been computerised. There is no doubt that wet and cold conditions had a noticeable effect with the Constant Effort ringing regime clearly highlighting the reduced numbers of many species.

The summer migrants appeared to suffer the most but we also lost at least two Pere-

grine nests and many wader chicks to incessant wet and chilly conditions. Buzzard clutches were much smaller than usual and the nest box take up and success was significantly reduced with a split breeding season, much smaller clutches and fewer young surviving.

No young Garden Warblers were caught this year and the adults with one exception arrived and were gone within two weeks which is incredible. They hit a very bad period of rain and will have lost their nests and eggs. Meadow Pipit

numbers during the autumn migration were down and there is real concern for the Black Grouse which nationally raised very few young at all. Fortunately all these birds have the ability to bounce back so we must wait and see what the climate does in 2013. There will have to be some improvement if they are to recoup their losses and with the adult breeding populations somewhat reduced they will require all the help they can get.

Tony Crease

**“Foxglove
Covert provides
a perfect
environment
for students to
learn valuable
work skills”**

Dales School Visits

The Dales School at Morton on Swale is a school for students between the ages of 2 to 16 who have severe and/or complex learning difficulties.

Every Tuesday and Wednesday a group from the Post 16 Department work at Foxglove Covert. Their work covers curriculum areas such as work related learning, science and local environmental issues. They also learn about the safe use of specialist equipment such as secateurs, loppers, forks and spades.

This autumn the Tuesday group have been working with volunteers in a variety of different habitats, cutting out invasive willow, birch and gorse. They especially enjoy taking the cut branches, saplings, gorse and brash to the roaring crackling bonfire. They love to see their hard work going up in smoke!

Working alongside other volunteers gives the students a real sense of purpose and provides excellent opportunities for social interaction and the building of self-esteem and

confidence.

Foxglove Covert provides a perfect environment for students to learn valuable work skills in a realistic setting. They are able to stay focused for increasing periods of time, they learn to work as part of a team and discover that working means taking the rough with the smooth. All this helps prepare them for life after school. Above all being part of Foxglove Covert is fun!

Trish Tremayne / Bev Lawrence



Tanyptera atrata, a new species to the reserve

Species Recording at Foxglove Covert

For many years the species list has been kept as a word processor document and the monthly visitor observations recorded separately in a spreadsheet. A new database has been created which will allow all these records to be kept together in one place. This should improve our record keeping and allow for improved reporting. The new database is undergoing the final testing to make sure it fulfills Foxglove Covert's

needs.

Monthly flower walks have continued and surprisingly 2 new species have been recorded, although one may be a garden escapee. We will see if it re-appears next summer. The other, is Marsh Arrowgrass which was found on the fen and also noted on the wetland by Martin Hammond. Other new species to Foxglove Covert include the *Tanyptera atrata* (with amazing antennae). New moths identi-

fied include the Pale Pinion Moth and the Sprawler. Wood Hedgehog, a fungus, was recently seen growing near the moorland.

A survey was carried out in May looking at mosses, lichens and liverworts. Several new species to the reserve were identified by the expert. This will further increase the number of species identified at Foxglove Covert which currently stands at over 2150.

Elizabeth Dickinson

Volunteering at Foxglove Covert

There are only two salaried employees at Foxglove but they are supported by an active and enthusiastic group of volunteers. Throughout the year this dedicated group of volunteers attend either on a Tuesday or Thursday (some on both days!) and help out with the physical work around the site. Winter Worky Days are held on the first Saturday of each month from October to March to supplement this work often attracting over 50 individuals. Anyone attending a

Winter Worky Day can expect a hearty lunch and usually a bonfire to warm up by. However, there are a number of other volunteers who often go unnoticed but are as critical to the smooth running of the reserve. Helping out on coffee mornings or fund raising events, baking cakes, and biscuits, carrying out surveys and transects, maintaining the display boards, stocktaking, producing educational and publicity material, bird ringing, helping with school visits, welcoming visitors & even the

Management Group. The list is endless and Foxglove will always welcome new volunteers.

It is estimated that volunteers contribute over 10,000 hours of their time helping to maintain and support the reserve. This is the equivalent of having an extra 5 full-time staff!

If you are interested in volunteering but not sure then come to the reserve and talk to one of the reserve managers or volunteers. Alternatively visit the Foxglove Covert website to find out more.



A student from Dales School helping to gather gorse and bracken to go on the nearby roaring crackling bonfire (see page 2)

Human Visitors to Foxglove

The very first entry in the Visitor's Book for 2012 was written by a visitor from Moscow who said, "Thanks to all who are doing a great job for future generations". Visitors to the reserve have ranged from families and school groups to a wide variety of adult groups, as well as a Marquis and a Brigadier! Primary schools make up the largest number of school visits with a few comprehensive school groups, two public schools, and the Dales School

who visit every week (Ed – see article on page 2). Staff feedback is always very positive – "super friendly knowledgeable staff", "all round education in a natural environment".

The students themselves have commented "fun, amazing and cool – love the place". Recently the Army Welfare Service held their Halloween Party at the reserve and wrote "thank you for a fun Halloween – fantastic centre and lovely staff".

Adult groups include the RSPB, natural history groups, bird ringing organisations, Reeth Ramblers, WI and ladies groups and the Middleham Mafia!

No negative comments have been recorded either in the visitor's book or the evaluation forms apart from one young visitor who thought that more crisps were required! Everyone involved with the reserve can be justly proud.

Ruth Farrow

***"fun, amazing
and cool – love
the place"***

***"doing a great
job for future
generations".***

Sanctuary—The MOD conservation magazine

Sanctuary is the MOD's annual publication about conservation of the natural and historic environment on the defence estates and issue 41 has recently been published.

Of interest to the Friends of Foxglove Covert will be an article written by Tony Crease covering the annual bird survey and ringing expedition to the range at Cape Wrath. Operation Auk as it has become known completed

its 20th consecutive year of activity in 2012.

Cape Wrath is situated on the far-flung north-western edge of mainland Scotland. It is an outstanding Ramsar Site and is closer to the Arctic Circle than to London. It is home to thriving seabird colonies and other notable species.

Over the past 20 years more than 40,000 birds have been ringed gaining a valuable insight into survivability, productivity, site fidelity and the lon-

gevity of the key species.

Copies of Sanctuary will be available at the field centre or an online copy can be found by searching 'Sanctuary MOD' using Google or similar.

Also take time to study the photo on the back cover of Issue 41. The photo took the runners-up award in this year's Sanctuary photographic competition and shows one of Foxglove Covert's very own Common Frogs down on the scrapes.



Common Frog
by Richard Witham



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Events

Saturday 5th January 2013
January Winter Worky Day
10.00am—3.00pm

Saturday 2nd February 2013
February Winter Worky Day
10.00am—3.00pm

Saturday 9th February 2013
AGM Field Centre Foxglove
Covert 1.30pm start

Undergrowth

Opinions here are those of individual authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Foxglove Covert Management Group or the policy of the Ministry of Defence.

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Your local nature reserve at Catterick Garrison

Message from the Chairman

One way and another the late summer and autumn have tested us in ways we did not expect. The weather has on occasions been atrocious, requiring significant extra work by the Reserve Managers and volunteers: a number of very good friends have had to re-prioritise their time and can no longer be with us as much as they used to; the Management Group is re-considering its role, and behind-the-scenes, lurks an even bigger problem, more of that in just a moment. But throughout all of this, I am sure you will agree that Foxglove is looking very, very good, continuing to attract vast numbers of visitors and to the untrained eye, everything is a) as wonderful as it has been for a long time, and b): calm, collected and in control!

But let's be quite clear about this, the reason for that is that there are three people of note, and two or three more people as well, who give so much of their time to Foxglove to ensure that it looks at its best and does what it does best, despite all the adversity throughout the year. So let me say now a very big thank you to the treasurer, Tony Crease, and to the two Reserve Managers, Sophie and Adam. Without them doing what they do Foxglove simply would not be the same. Indeed, it may not even exist.

I would also like to thank Robert Longridge, Tom Dewdney, Beryl Bell and Roger Key for their contribution as Management

Group members over the years. Their expertise and enthusiasm, plus their diligence and wisdom have helped develop plans and direction for Foxglove Covert, and they can all pat themselves on the back for the changes that are/have been taking place and improvements made, in which they have been so closely involved. They are all going to remain close friends, but their involvement will be less than previously. The Management Group will still function much as it did before, although it does mean we have to be slightly clearer about the responsibilities that each one of us has towards Foxglove Covert Local Nature Reserve. But none of this is rocket science, and as ever, there is already a wealth of interest, talent and commitment amongst volunteers so we do not have to look very far for specific help on specific matters.

The Annual General Meeting will take place early next year, where I hope to see many of you there, but in the meantime, have a very Happy Christmas and very happy Christmas holidays too.

Guy Deacon



Catterick Garrison and Foxglove Covert

I have regularly warned everybody about problems the MOD (and the country for that matter) is going through at the moment and remain deeply appreciative that there are still people who protect us from the cuts being imposed elsewhere on the army. We do need to understand however it is not being done as a favour; it is being done because what Foxglove provides is unique and worthy of deliberate investment. And I happen to think the army is rather proud of the work done by volunteers and staff at Foxglove, for which it can claim some kudos. But all the time, the relationship with the Garrison requires managing. Although inconvenient for those visiting Foxglove, we have to be more disciplined about

leaving the gate open (or rather, not leaving it open), so we have not been irritating those people who live in barracks or the hierarchy of the Garrison. I ask you to continue to be vigilant and recognize that we are dependent upon their goodwill.

Guy Deacon



Editor's Corner

2012 has been an exciting year for Foxglove Covert, the weather has been a challenge but the Reserve Managers and all the volunteers have rallied to maintain the reserve as an enjoyable experience for wildlife and visitors alike. I hope you have found my first edition of Undergrowth interesting and like the new format. I welcome any feedback you may have.

I would like to thank all the contributors and apologise for often having to edit their content to fit the newsletter, hopefully without losing the article's intention. If you wish to contribute your own articles for future editions then please contact me via the Foxglove Covert office.

Richard Witham