

Message From the Chair

Firstly, the Trustees formally welcome Bob Black into his new appointment as the Reserve Manager. We are pleased to have Bob on board as part of the team and look forward to working with him. Bob is currently getting to know the place and people, and we know he will fit in well and be an asset to the reserve. Special thanks also go to El, who held the fort whilst the recruitment for the Reserve Manager position took place.

Throughout 2025 Joanne Vest has led a programme of activities as a volunteer, engaging schools, families and children. This has been so successful we are now looking at how these types of activities can develop, with provision being made in next year's budget to continue the work. In 2026 Joanne will be working as Education and Engagement Coordinator to develop and deliver this programme of activities. Our thanks to Joanne for taking the initiative and developing activities that bring people into the reserve to experience what we have to offer. This is much appreciated.

The entrance gate has been a topic of conversation since anyone can remember, and now a resolution is in hand with our new access route. A new entrance and car park has been constructed off Waithwith Road by Tilbury Douglas.

Whilst this might be a bit further to travel, it means that access into the reserve will no longer be dependent on Ministry of Defence (MoD) security requirements. Additional work is underway to improve the internal pathway links from the new car park.



Gate at the new entrance to Foxglove Covert.

Brown Tourist signs have been ordered to direct visitors to the reserve, and other necessary signage is all in hand. The costs of the new pathways have been supported by the MoD. It is hoped that the new entrance will be in use from mid-January, but this will be confirmed as soon as we know for certain.

From that point there will be no further public access through the barracks. For those with blue access fobs, arrangements will be made to return the fobs.

The Trustees held a meeting with some of the volunteers in October, principally to discuss the new access. Feedback is being taken into account and will be actioned during this process of preparing and improving this new entrance.

You may have noticed during the summer that Foxglove was one of the causes that could be supported through the TESCO Stronger Starts scheme. This was supported so well that Foxglove Covert was awarded £1500 to help towards our costs. Thanks to TESCO and everyone who made the blue token for Foxglove Covert their choice.

We hope everyone has a safe and enjoyable Christmas period with our thanks to everyone who helps make Foxglove Covert the special place it is.

Peter Simpson

Chair of the Trustees and on behalf of Trustees John, Nicola and Tony

Reserve Manger's Update

Wow! I've been here almost a full month now, and I must say, I'm absolutely delighted to be part of the Foxglove Covert team. I feel extremely privileged to have been entrusted with the responsibility for this wonderful, richly biodiverse Local Nature Reserve. I'm really looking forward to getting to know the reserve more and everyone associated with it.

Everyone I have met so far; staff, volunteers, and the groups who visit us regularly, have been nothing short of fantastic, and I'm sure our relationship will grow and bring about good things for both nature and the people who visit Foxglove Covert.



Reserve Manager Bob with his dog, Rab.

I am sure that together with EI, we will continue to manage and develop our reserve for the good of all. I feel there are many opportunities to improve Foxglove Covert's value for wildlife and for people.

I'm excited to be in this important position, on an amazing nature reserve that already has me captivated. It's a recipe for a dream post and I am over the moon to be here.

With our new, easier access soon to be opened in the New Year, and the potential to work with North Yorkshire Rivers Trust on an exciting project to breathe new life into Risedale Beck as it travels through the reserve, things are moving along nicely already. I am in no doubt that our future here at Foxglove Covert will be amazing.

At a time when we are facing a local and global biodiversity crisis, it is more important than ever that we can play our part by helping to make North Yorkshire and beyond a better place for nature.

Together, El and I will strive to deliver practical work on the ground and formulate future reserve management plans. We aim to work closely with our dedicated and knowledgeable group of volunteers to develop new conservation projects, manage and assist contractors, and help further develop our already hugely successful education and engagement activities.

These are indeed very exciting times, and we're all in it together.

Bob Black
Reserve Manager

Education and Engagement Activities at Foxglove Covert

Hi, I am Joanne and I have been volunteering here at Foxglove Covert since the spring of 2025. My husband and I have 3 grown up children and as a family we have spent lots of time exploring the countryside both in the UK and abroad.

We particularly love the Austrian Alps and have spent many winter skiing holidays and summer caravan holidays in the mountains.

I have always loved working with children and understand how important it is to connect children with nature and the world around them. I was a primary school teacher for 25 years and have also spent several years working on the learning team at a large nature reserve.



Education and Engagement Coordinator Joanne hiking in the Alps.

I have thoroughly enjoyed the time I have spent here at Foxglove Covert during 2025. I first came to help with schools and quickly became more involved with developing resources and running activities for visitors.

Some of my highlights are the school groups who visited, the pond dipping sessions we ran during the summer holidays, and the Halloween craft days in October. I love to see visitors, especially children, enjoying their time here and learning new things about nature and the world around them.

I am really excited to be given the opportunity to become a more regular member of the team as Education and Engagement Coordinator at Foxglove Covert, and to develop activities which will hopefully attract more visitors. It is really important to me that people who visit have a high-quality experience, learn more about the nature around them, and leave with a desire to come back for more.

During 2026 I am looking forward to continuing the work I have started and would like to develop some new ideas along with Bob and El so that we can continue to raise awareness and engage more people with the work of the reserve.

Joanne Vest

Education and Engagement Coordinator

Completing the John Muir Award at Foxglove Covert

“In every walk with nature one receives far more than he seeks” - John Muir

At the start of summer, I stood staring at these words on the wall of a tiny museum in Dumbar, Scotland, and they called out to me.

The museum, in the former childhood home of John Muir, told the story of his inspirational life, detailing how he became known as ‘The Father of National Parks’ in America. Also, how through his visionary campaigning and his exquisite writings, he instilled on generations the importance of natural landscapes. When I returned home, I felt inspired to learn more about this great man, and it was through my research I came across the John Muir Award.

This conservation focused award can be completed as part of an organised team or independently (I opted for the latter) and it asks that you fulfil four main criteria. Firstly, that you choose a wild space and discover what makes it special. Secondly, that you explore this space in greater depth and respond to what you learn. Thirdly, that you contribute to the conservation of the place in some way and research a key figure in conservation. Finally, that you share your experiences, which is what brings me to writing this article.

When searching for a wild space to support my award, I stumbled upon Foxglove Covert LNR and was surprised to find so much beauty right on my doorstep. Also, that it was possible to place a nature reserve in a military base.

This location added an unusual ‘human influence’ dimension to my award application and made me eager to share my discovery of the reserve with others; especially the wonderful opportunities for children, such as pond dipping, over the summer holidays.

I began my award by meeting with the reserve Ranger, El, who was supportive in answering my questions about what makes Foxglove special and suggesting volunteer opportunities I may be interested in.

Following this, I explored the many habitats within the reserve, from wildflower meadows to the woodlands; from the heathlands to the lake and ponds. I recorded visual characteristics in my nature journal, mapped soundscapes and observed landscapes with all five senses. I walked barefoot and nature watched, truly immersing myself mindfully in my surroundings for the first time in years.



A page from Kate's nature journal.

Once I'd familiarised myself with the layout of the reserve, I explored my surroundings deeper. Like a return to childhood, I learned names of new plants and species I observed from the bird hides. I marvelled at signs of seasonal change, cloud spotted, took photographs of things that sparked joy in me, and even felt inspired to do some sketching.

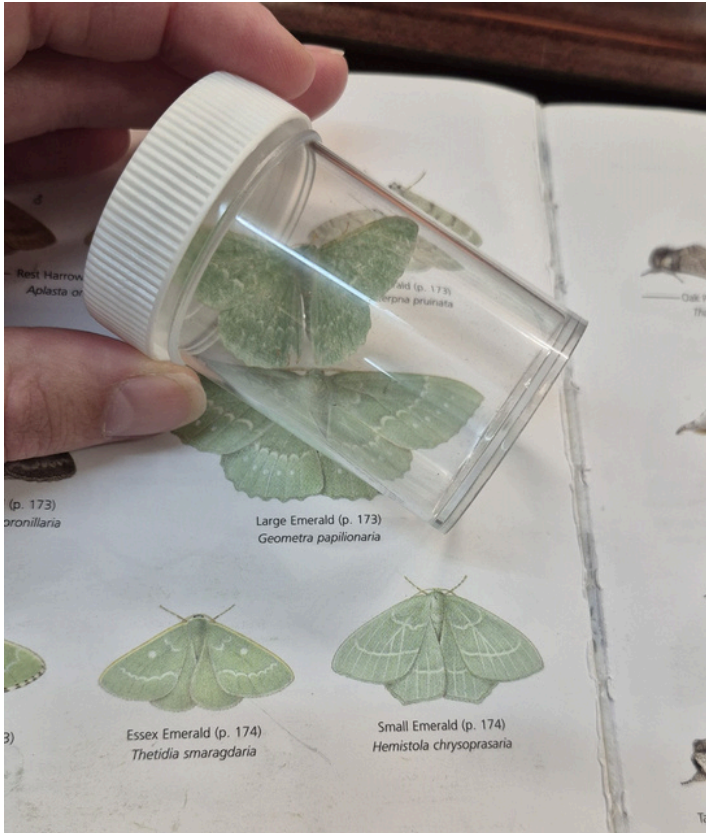
The beauty of the John Muir Award lies in how open ended it is, allowing you to explore in your own way and at your own pace. It became my unique journey in rewilding myself.

Pondering on the conservation opportunities at Foxglove Covert, I decided upon working with the moth team. I've always had a fascination with moths. I even once rescued a caterpillar from a lettuce, keeping it well fed until it spun a silk cocoon and emerged with wonderful wings weeks later.

I was made to feel incredibly welcome in the brief time I shared with the team. They meet voluntarily each Wednesday to identify, record and later release moths they have trapped. Then this data is provided to the country recorder and to create a picture of species numbers across the country and possible environmental impacts.

I was given the opportunity to get hands-on collecting and letting the moths go, also learning how to identify what moths were present from the around 2,500 species which can be found in the UK. I learned so much in such a short time.

One interesting fact I learned is that moths, like butterflies, are pollinators.



A Large Emerald moth in a pot, in comparison to drawings of Emerald moths in a moth identification book.

I thoroughly enjoyed my time at Foxglove Covert and I encourage others to go and explore the natural beauty, expertise and activities on offer. Also, if you are able, to contribute in donations to help support the wonderful work that is done.

If you too would like to complete the John Muir Award, all you need to do is first submit a proposal on their website. It is free to complete, open to anyone over the age of eight, and can be completed independently or as a family/group. You can set your own timeframe and it only requires a minimum of 25 hours commitment across all four award criteria.

The award has intilled within me a greater appreciation for wild spaces and a thirst to learn more about conservation projects in the UK and beyond. Now, in the words of John Muir: "The mountains are calling me and I must go!"

Kate McGowan

More information about the John Muir Award can be found at:

www.johnmuirtrust.org/award

More information about volunteering at Foxglove Covert can be found at:

www.foxglovecovert.org.uk/get-involved/volunteer

Get Involved!

If you are interested in contributing to species monitoring efforts at Foxglove Covert, a range of species surveys take place throughout the year. These include but are not limited to amphibian, reptile, butterfly, bee and dragonfly surveys and volunteer help is always welcome. Plans are underway to introduce new-to-the-reserve survey methods in 2026, which will also require additional volunteers.

Whether you are an expert with a specialist interest or a beginner at species ID, get in touch and find out how you can help with surveying at Foxglove Covert.

El Biggs

Reserve Ranger

Contact reserve staff to enquire about volunteering opportunities at:

www.foxglovecovert.org.uk/about/contact

Upcoming Events

For more information on any of our events and to book your place visit foxglovecovertlnr.eventbrite.com.

Please note all events must be booked in advance.

Little Explorers: Toddler Sessions at Foxglove Covert

Thursdays, 10:00am - 11:30am

Bring your little explorers to the nature reserve for a fun-filled session of investigation and discovery. Through hands-on activities, games, stories and songs, children will learn about the plants and animals that live in the reserve. This interactive experience encourages curiosity, outdoor play and a love for nature in a safe and welcoming environment.

This group is aimed at children aged 18 months - 5 years, but younger and older siblings are also welcome.

Upcoming Dates:

January 15th and 29th

February 12th and 26th

March 12th and 26th

Donation of £2.50 per child, adults free.

Winter Work Day: Practical Conservation Volunteering Sessions

Sunday, January 11th, 10:00am - 3:00pm

Help with winter habitat management tasks at Foxglove Covert. Tasks may vary but can include coppicing, pollarding, creating dead hedges, ring barking and clearing scrub.

No practical experience required. Work gloves and other PPE provided as needed, but bring your own waterproofs and sturdy boots or wellies, as tasks can get mucky!

Free event, donations welcome.

Keep in touch!

Find us on Facebook:

www.facebook.com/FoxgloveLNR

Find us on Instagram:

www.instagram.com/foxglovecovert

Read our blog:

www.foxglovecovert.org.uk/blog

Find us on Eventbrite:

www.foxglovecovertlnr.eventbrite.com

Articles for inclusion in future issues are welcomed by the editor at:

foxglovelnr@btinternet.com

Telephone: 01748 82616 Mobile: 07754270980 Website: www.foxglovecovert.org.uk

Registered Charity No. 1197745

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