

Introducing a new member of Summer Staff

Hello, I'm Stacey. In May I will be coming to work at Foxglove Covert for the summer and I have been asked to introduce myself.



My background is in practical conservation and my previous work has been varied and fun - tracking seabirds in the Outer Hebrides, monitoring breeding Grey Seals on the Isle of May, wardening a Little Tern colony in Northumberland, and looking after a number of National Nature Reserves in Shetland and RSPB reserves in the Inner Hebrides.

Right now however, I am about 8000 miles away from Foxglove! My office is a garden shed, perched on a rocky outcrop above an iceberg-filled ocean, with a backdrop of snowy mountain ridges, icy peaks and glaciers tumbling down to the sea. Around my feet nest thousands of very noisy and smelly Adélie



Chinstrap Penguin adult and chick

and Chinstrap Penguins. I am on Signy; a tiny island in the South Orkney Islands, Antarctica, where I spend my winters working for the British Antarctic Survey. My role here is to carry on the long-term monitoring programme for penguins, seals and other wildlife that makes Signy its home. Data has been collected here since the 1970s and by collecting the same data every year we can monitor the trends in population and see how each species is faring in the long term. I spend a lot of time counting, measuring, and weighing penguins and collecting and analysing diet samples. My morning commute to work involves putting on my crampons, taking my ice axe and rucksack and hiking the three miles over the icecap and through the snow to my penguin study colonies. Each year I come to the small research station here for 5 months, living and working with up to seven other scientists and support staff. You can see more photographs and find out more about what I do by having a look at my blog:

<http://staceycinantarctica.blogspot.co.uk/>

I am very much looking forward to joining the friendly team at Foxglove and learning all about the new species and habitats on the reserve.

Stacey Adlard

Rishi Sunak visits Foxglove

On a snowy day in January we were delighted to welcome Rishi Sunak to the reserve. Rishi is the new parliamentary candidate who will stand in place of William Hague at the next General Election. He was welcomed by Lord Zetland, our Patron, before having lunch. A group of volunteers then had the opportunity to tell Rishi what a special place Foxglove is during an informal chat with him. He looked round the Field Centre and had a short walk up to the Scratches. As he left he said how much he was looking forward to returning with his wife and children.

Ruth Farrow



Foxglove's Patron, Lord Zetland, staff and volunteers show Rishi Sunak round the reserve

Articles for inclusion in future issues are welcomed by the editor at: foxglovelnr@btinternet.com
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undergrowth

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From the Editor

We have had a spell of cold, wintry weather in recent weeks but Foxglove continues to provide us with fantastic opportunities for observing wildlife. Recent films of Otter and Badger by Ken, available on the blog, give us an insight into the more elusive nocturnal residents of the reserve. There have also been frequent sightings of Roe Deer over the past few weeks - not forgetting our Water Voles, which you can read about on page two. The ringing group works hard throughout the year and Tony's report on page three certainly gives us some amazing statistics to digest. Regular ringing of our bird populations contributes important scientific data and monitors trends, which in the long term will hopefully help in finding resolutions to support those species which are nationally in decline. The hard work of all the volunteers and staff at Foxglove in maintaining and developing the habitats of the reserve, makes it possible for the plants and animals to live and thrive here. As always, we extend our thanks to you for your continued support in making Foxglove the jewel that it is.

Catherine

Winter Work on the Reserve - Coppicing

As usual, our volunteers have been working tirelessly to improve the habitats found on the reserve. Much of this effort has been spent coppicing willow found between the Scratches and the Voley Ponds. The area has now been completely transformed; many people have been left scratching their heads wondering where they are as they walk the familiar paths of the red route!



Coppicing Willow

The work has been completed to an incredibly high standard and it is testament to the dedication of our volunteers and the pride they take in their work here. A small section still remains to be completed, but we will be

finished well before the start of spring. It will be exciting to see what plants and insects can be found here taking advantage of the additional light now the canopy has been cleared.

We must reiterate our thanks to everyone who has helped over the past three months, you have made a fantastic impact on the reserve which we will all be able to enjoy over the coming years.

Adam Edmond

Touch Screen up and running

On the December Worky Day our new interactive touch screen was unveiled by Col. Mike Butterwick who we welcomed to Foxglove along with our Patron, Lord Zetland and Councillor Paul Cullen. Everyone enjoyed delicious cakes and coffee kindly made by Ann Hall before the formal part of the proceedings took place. After the unveiling Grace Morris demonstrated the screen with Simon Kendrew and Jef Maytom of Multimedia Partners on hand to answer questions.



From left: Ruth Farrow, Lord Zetland, Grace Morris, Cllr Paul Cullen, Col. Mike Butterwick

So far, visitors have shown great interest in the touch screen, have admired the quality of the photos and found the information about Foxglove species very useful and interesting. The Quiz appeals to all ages and the younger generation particularly enjoy trying to beat each other's scores!

It is still a work in progress but the advantage of it is that it can be updated whenever necessary. If you have not had an opportunity to try it out yet, do come along and have a play; please fill in one of the questionnaires to tell us what you think.

Ruth Farrow

Water Voles at Foxglove

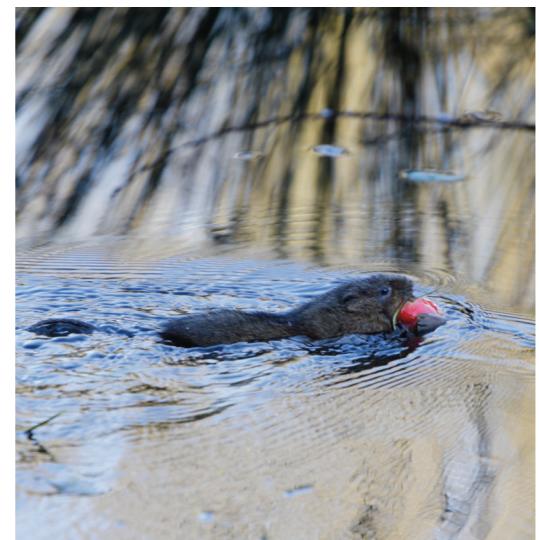
Back in 2007, after ensuring that the reserve was Mink free, the first releases of Water Voles took place. The release was filmed and appeared as a short feature on television, although the Water Voles seemed oblivious to the publicity and swam off quite happily into the Scrapes. Some more were also released into the "Voley Ponds", and as these voles had been bred in captivity they were used to people, so we could take school groups to stand and watch the voles swimming and feeding. Over the years however, the next generations of voles were more wary of humans and so sightings became fewer.



Swimming across the Voley Pond in January

engaging with the strong tendency for Water Voles to revisit the territorial behaviour. So despite being rarely seen on the wetland we know they are there as their latrines and feeding stations are easily recognised. The bunds are an ideal habitat for the voles, although their burrowing sees the water leave some of the ponds where it should not! Staff and volunteers spend many a happy hour playing in the mud to repair the damage. Signs of the voles have also been noted on the far moor and the lake, but in recent years the Voley ponds appeared to remain free of the Water Voles, with no signs of droppings on the latrine. Then at the end of 2014 people began reporting sightings of voles back in the Voley pond and pieces of apple left at the pond disappeared. One very cold morning in January this year, John spent several hours with camera at the ready and he was able to take fantastic photos of the voles. One was actually carrying a piece of apple back to its burrow. "Ratty" is very much in residence at Foxglove!

Elizabeth Dickinson with photographs by John Hayden



Carrying a piece of apple – a lucky find!

Worky Day – fun for all the family!

"It's worky day! Wellies, warm clothes, waterproofs (though we rarely need the waterproofs); Let's go". Foxglove Worky Day is a regular part of our family events calendar. As a family we come to Foxglove every month from October to March, to volunteer and offer our services coppicing, hedging, building dams, clearing thistles and gorse. In return we get a fabulous day out and lunch into the bargain! We have been coming to Foxglove worky days for three years and the boys love it. Conaire and Martin are now 13, supposedly grumpy teenagers, but they never grump about getting up for a "Worky Day", they consider Foxglove to be a major and very important part of their life. They get stuck in using loppers and saws to coppice, and enjoy being treated as adults and having responsibility for the tools they use. They were over the moon in January when given the responsibility to check the paths after a night of high winds, and remove any fallen branches - "Ranging" they called it. They even come to volunteer days during the school holidays, and get involved with other events, like "Fungal forays" and "Bodging".

We are also very excited about another Bioblitz weekend planned for the summer. We have learned a lot about conservation and about the various species of plants and animals at Foxglove. But it's not only the four of us, the boys' grandparents who got us involved in the worky days, are weekly volunteers at Foxglove; also cousin

Bird Ringing Update

Ringing is a dynamic process and weather permitting some activity takes place almost every week. It is only at year end that results can be produced and various submissions have to be made to the BTO before licences are issued for the following year. At this stage a realistic overview of the previous year is possible. Perhaps one of the most predictable outcomes is that no two years are ever the same and 2014 was no exception. The turn of the year saw the group database reach 200,506 birds which is remarkable. As a Constant Effort Site (CES) year it was poor and even the totals at Foxglove generally were moderate – a combination of cold and wet breeding seasons, reduced adult numbers, reduced egg laying and fewer young entering the adult population.

10,012 birds were processed in 2014 almost 8,000 of which were new birds. The auks at Cape Wrath did well as did the Storm Petrels and we ringed 1524 Meadow Pipits on Barden Moor, almost certainly the highest number anywhere in the country. Our top ten birds ringed by quantity were: Meadow Pipit 1524, Guillemot 879, Blue Tit 632, Great Tit 600, Storm Petrel 410, Chaffinch 293, Bullfinch 291, Blackcap 187 and Chiffchaff 160.

The only new species ringed in 2014 were the Water Rail ringed at Foxglove and a Yellow Wagtail on Barden Moor bringing the overall total for the year to 96 species and the Foxglove total to 82. Additional highlights were Stonechat, Firecrest, Long-eared Owl and Snipe all of which are rarely caught.

What is interesting is that despite ringing 1524 Meadow Pipits less than a mile from Foxglove we have only ringed 6 in the reserve in 22 years – which must say something for their habitat preferences and migratory stopovers. They are clearly not attracted to the feeders – or to Foxglove! Chaffinch remains our most common species with 7980 ringed. Willow Warbler which was second has been overtaken by Blue Tit at 4557 as the number of warblers has declined in the last two years. A catch in the Foxglove reed bed in January produced 25 Reed Buntings with many more escaping! This is the highest number ever in the life of the reserve.

For the future we have several new and younger ringers to assist us in 2015 and we look forward to better weather conditions during key periods of the year. Our sincere thanks go to all the volunteers who have helped with the net ride maintenance and we hope for continued success with the breeding Reed Warblers recorded for the first time in 2014.

Tony Crease



Juvenile Reed Bunting



Family get-together