



NEWSLETTER

Spring 2003

COME ALONG TO OUR MONTHLY WALKS OR TALKS!

Our events are held on the **second Monday of each month** but now (due to demand) in our new bigger venue at **Abbey Gates Primary School, Vernon Crescent, Ravenshead**. There is plenty of free car parking available in the adjacent Ravenshead Village Hall car park. Our interesting and informative talks start at 7.30pm in the main hall and refreshments and shopping opportunities are available. For our relaxing evening walks, we meet in the car park and leave at 7.00pm, or you can meet us at the walk location, where we will set off promptly at 7.30pm. Location details will be available at the meeting before, or contact one of the committee members (see last page) for a copy. Remember to wear suitable footwear and clothing, taking our unpredictable weather into account!

Why not come along and enjoy the following:-

Monday 14th April – talk on the wonderful Attenborough Nature Reserve - by Nigel Slater

Monday 12th May – bat detecting walk at Portland Park, Kirkby – with the North Notts. Bat Group

Monday 9th June – relaxing evening walk around Brierley Forest Park, looking at local flora and fauna

Monday 14th July – informative walk around Eakring Flash and Meadows, focusing on birds and flowers

Saturday 9th & Sunday 10th August - We will be attending the Ashfield Show instead of an event this month. Come along, we would love to see you.

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### OSPREY TALK - A DEFINITE SUCCESS! by Jill Carlyle

There was a good turn out for the first of our programme of events for 2003 when Trisha Galpin gave an interesting and informative talk and slide show about the ospreys at Rutland Water.

The talk followed the initial translocation of young birds from Scotland, monitoring the migration routes to their overwintering grounds in West Africa to the successful return and the hatching of the first osprey chick in England for more than 150 years. A success story indeed but one that is under a variety of pressures. Only the male ospreys return to their place of birth and then have to attract a female that may be passing overhead. The summer weather can be critical; the chicks that hatched in 2002 did not survive due to poor weather. Finally the routes chosen by the birds for the migration are crucial for the ospreys' safe return.



So a good evening was had by all. I look forward, not only to seeing these magnificent birds at Rutland Water in the summer, but also to the next event in our programme.

## HARVEST MOUSE SURVEYS – CAN YOU HELP?

Members of NUWS and the South Notts Local Group spent some time last year surveying for harvest mice and turned up some valuable records. I am hoping that there may be members in the Mansfield & Ashfield Group area who may be interested in extending this work by carrying out a 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Harvest Mouse Survey this year.



Harvest mice can be found in a variety of situations as any piece of tall grassy vegetation is suitable – all areas of rank grassland, reeds, sedges, rushes, cereals, etc. Suitable habitats include farmland, hedgerows, roadside verges, young plantations, bogs, marshes, salt marshes and scrubland. Whilst one will not be lucky enough to see many harvest mice their nests are reasonably easy to find and this is what the survey is really all about, counting nests.

Surveying is not difficult and probably the most difficult thing is gaining permission from landowners to undertake the survey, as we are not just interested in Trust Reserves. It is not essential that you are an expert on mammals or even grasses in order to be able to undertake a survey in your local area and a full set of instructions will be provided on request. It is more enjoyable if you pair up with someone else to cover your area and it would not take many people to cover suitable habitat in your area.

So, if you would like to help, please contact me at the Trust office by phone, letter or e-mail and I will provide you with a survey pack.

N.B. Whilst my job centres around records of wildlife on Trust Reserves anything you see of interest elsewhere would be welcomed. All I need is the species, number seen, site reference (e.g. Carlton Wood) or a six-figure grid reference, date and your contact details. All records are shared with the local county recorder for the species group and with the Nottinghamshire Biological Records Centre.

**John Ellis - Records & Information Officer**

Tel. 0115 958 8242. E-mail: [Jellis@nottswt.cix.co.uk](mailto:Jellis@nottswt.cix.co.uk)

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FANCY GETTING YOUR HANDS DIRTY?

If you like fresh air and exercise, and if you can spare some time on a Sunday, why not volunteer to do some practical conservation work to help maintain and improve sites in your area? Upcoming events include:-

Sunday 6th April – Teversal Pastures SSSI – Installing signs and removing scrub from meadow areas

Sunday 4th May – Bentinck Banks SSSI – Mowing grass verges to improve access

Sunday 1st June – Meden Trail LNR Part SSSI – Dry stone walling and path clearance

Sunday 6th July – Meden Trail LNR Part SSSI – Dry stone walling, mowing and general path clearance

The days run from 10.00am to 3.00pm approximately. Pick-ups are at 9.30am at the Old Ragged School, Nottingham, then at 10.00am at the pull-in at Newstead Abbey gates, Ravenshead (A60 Nottingham to Mansfield road). Bring sensible work clothes, packed lunch, drinks and plenty of enthusiasm!

For more details, and to check the planned days are going ahead, please contact **David Sutton**, Estates Assistant, on 0115 9588242 or 07740 871278, or e-mail on dsutton@nottswt.cix.co.uk.

APPEAL FOR COLOUR SLIDES by John Ellis

The Trust slide collection is steadily improving, but now that I am well into cataloguing it there are numerous deficiencies becoming apparent. If you are out and about with a slide film in your camera perhaps you could help fill these gaps. Alternatively, if you have some spare slides of your own that you would care to donate, all will be gratefully received. The slides are used by Trust staff and volunteers who give slide shows and talks but are also used to illustrate our newsletters and other publications. We regularly loan slides to other natural History groups and to other Trusts who need specific images. Our slides have also been used to illustrate Natural World magazine, Urban Wildlife magazine and various newspaper articles. We would appreciate any of the following subjects:-

RESERVES - We require panoramic views of most reserves but especially Spa Ponds, Meden Trail, Bogs Farm Quarry and Annesley Woodhouse Quarry.

TREES - Really need good clear shots of individual trees - anyone going to an arboretum?

Oak in leaf, Ash in leaf, Ash in winter, Scots Pine, Elm in leaf, Wayfaring tree, Wytch Elm in leaf, Black Poplar in leaf, Sycamore in leaf, Lombardy poplar, Rowan, Silver birch, White willow, Crack willow, any willow spp., Hawthorn & Midland hawthorn, Hazel, Blackthorn, Buckthorn, Small leaved lime, Beech and Sweet chestnut.

RIVERS - River Meden – anywhere, River Maun – anywhere, River Poulter - outside of bend, inside of bend, weir and cattle drink.

FARMLAND - Traditional small fields with hedges and crops, field in set-aside, fields at Gringley Carr/Misson, field with poppies, traditional small fields with hedges and cattle, prairie type fields, free range pigs, field margins - both good and bad.

MISC. LANDSCAPE - Power stations, hedge with standard trees, country lane with bank and hedge, roadside verges – both good and bad, badly flailed hedge, active railway line with train and disused railway line.

WILDLIFE GARDEN - Almost anything – also panoramic views. Ponds, individual plants, wildflower “meadow”, bird feeding station, wildflower border, etc.

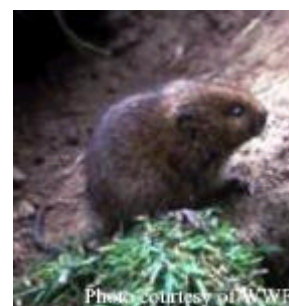
SPECIES - Good clear images needed of any fish, red squirrel, weasel, stoat, female peregrine, song thrush, yellow wagtail, yellowhammer, red kite, honey buzzard and northern wheatear.

If you have any slides of interest, please write to me at the Trust office, by phone on 0115 958 8242, or e-mail me at Jellis@nottswt.cix.co.uk. Many thanks.

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## TRY YOUR HAND AT WATER VOLE SURVEYING by Jeune Price

It's March and Trust members and staff turn their thoughts to voles (amongst other things). Despite the fact that vole surveying involves nose to ground, bent double poo-peering, and paddling in freezing cold streams (wellies **don't** keep out the cold!), it is a most enjoyable and satisfying exercise. The surveys also provide very valuable information on vole distribution and habitat preferences.



Eric Palmer, Nottinghamshire's Mammal Recorder, runs training days to show volunteers how to spot the often elusive signs of water voles being present. If you would like to develop your vole surveying skills, why not book onto the training session on Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> May (see Trust events calendar). There are still stretches of running water in the area that need surveying, so if there is enough local interest Eric may be persuaded to run a special event just for us! If you are interested in taking part in a separate training session please contact me, Jeune Price (contact details overleaf).

## NEST BOX TALK – A LEARNING EXPERIENCE! by Sarah Kelly

In February we were treated to an enjoyable talk by the very knowledgeable Chris du Feu, as a run-up to National Nest Box Week. In spite of it being a very cold and wet evening, we had an excellent turn out to our new venue at Abbey Gates Primary School, Ravenshead.

Chris started the talk with a brief history of nest boxes and their origins as "living larders". He went on to discuss the different types of bird boxes, ably demonstrating with slides and models "he had prepared earlier".

It was interesting that Chris's criteria of badly designed nest boxes seemed to match those of boxes which most of the audience appeared to possess! Feed tables with nest boxes unsuitably placed on top, roofs nailed down making cleaning of boxes difficult, not to mention those handy little perches on the front of many boxes, which are unnecessary for the agile birds, but make useful ladders for predators to gain easier access. Then there are the environmentally-friendly, "quick to make" flat pack cardboard nest boxes, where a degree in engineering may be necessary before construction, only for the box to disintegrate in the first heavy rainfall! I think many of the audience went home wiser and planning to make improvements to their nest box facilities!

As well as talking about the ideal nest boxes for attracting particular species, Chris taught his audience about the hazards of bird fleas when closely inspecting your nest boxes, especially for those keen birdwatchers with beards! Many thanks to Chris for a thoroughly enjoyable and informative evening.

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WHAT'S IN YOUR GARDEN? by Jeune Price

Frogspawn has appeared early in my boggy garden pond this year – 03/03/03 (there's a date to conjure with). The pond is overhung by *sorbus vilmorinii* (a type of rowan), which serves as a dining table for a variety of birds. Visitors include the local greater spotted woodpecker, a flock of siskins, accompanying bramblings and the usual flotilla of tits - great, blue, coal and long-tailed. There are also blackbirds, robins, nuthatches, chaffinches, starlings and the occasional mistle thrush - but never a sparrow.

If you have anything interesting or unusual in your garden, why not write or e-mail to us about it - photos would be great too. We hope to make "Readers' Gardens" a regular feature! Contact Sarah Kelly at 65 Lime Tree Road, Hucknall, Nottingham, NG15 6AY or e-mail to sedge101@hotmail.com.

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## FUTURE EVENTS

We are hoping to organise a day trip on a Saturday in June or July to one of the many excellent wildlife sites in the Midlands. Possibilities include Rutland Water or Gibraltar Point. Details will be available at the monthly meetings nearer the event, or contact one of the committee members (see below).

The next Mansfield & Ashfield Local Members' Group AGM will be held on **Monday 8<sup>th</sup> December 2003** at 7.30pm at Abbey Gates Primary School, Ravenshead. The AGM will then be followed by festive fun and games with a talk and quiz centred around "Wildlife Gardening". Watch out for celebrity guests!

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Your local group contacts:

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