



Really Wild!!



The Newsletter of the Mansfield & Ashfield Local Members Group
of the Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust

Summer 2005

"Bringing the work of the Trust to your doorstep" Walks Season off to a Fine Start

By Carol Pritchard
Walk May 9 2005

led by Andy Lowe

Natural Connections Officer - Mansfield, Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust

Although I only live a short distance away in Warsop, I am ashamed to say I had never explored this beautiful place before. The village of Meden Vale is not instantly attractive being built around the Welbeck Pit and only a small area of the new Local Nature Reserve called Meden Vale Bottoms is visible from the road. It is, I am sure, in all the guide books used by birds and invertebrates. I anticipate they give it a 4 star rating.

The Meden river runs through the site and is delightful. In 1995 it was a grade C river (i.e very polluted), but through hard work and legislation it is now grade A (almost as good as tap water). It supports fish, kingfisher and water vole as well as invertebrates. The closure of the other pits along its course and improvements to the sewage works has led to the improvements in water quality. There are far fewer phosphates in the water now thanks to the efforts by adjacent farmers. There is a healthy level of weed in the river providing food, cover and oxygenation.

This is a wetland habitat and the leader of our walk Andy Lowe outlined the plan to enhance this and restore a larger area of wetland. There are already ponds and flat areas that are particularly attractive to winter birds such as teal, water rail, redpoll, siskin and gadwall. In the past there have been reed bunting on the site and it is hoped they can be encouraged to return. As with all such areas there are those who can make life difficult.

The western most end of the site borders the Industrial units leased from Notts County Council, and whilst the surrounding land is clearly of little use or value (it has been on the market for some considerable time) permission has still not been granted by Mansfield District Council who own the site for inclusion in the Local Nature Reserve.

Our walk started around 7.30pm so we heard many birds including mistle and song thrush, robin, wren, stock dove, pheasant, green finch, chaffinch and chaff. We saw swifts, heron, coot and their chicks, swan and mallard and despite the disturbance nearly a dozen pairs of feet cause we spotted a water vole out for his evening swim.

There was the familiar odour of ransoms as we walked along. We also saw figwort, meadow sweet, buttercup, colts foot, field mustard, red campion, herb Robert, hops, cuckoo flower and the wonderfully named veronica beccabunga!

The area is very well supported by the local Friends Group who are excellent fundraisers and have great plans for making this area a real asset to the community as well as those of us who like to visit. We wish them every success in their continuing restoration of this area and maintaining it in the future. We will return in the winter, if not before, to see the birds who visit.

YOUR GROUP NEEDS YOU!

If you have interest and/or energy, we need you! Our small band of volunteers needs extra hands. Enthusiasm for Nottinghamshire's wildlife rather than expertise is needed. -Join our friendly team.

Contact Rob 0870 748 4795

*'Really wild' is now received by over 1600 members. If you're new to us welcome! It's great to have you with us! Your local members' group has a great **website** to keep you up-to-date. We run an interesting series of **walks and talks** (see page 4). And we **campaign for local wildlife. Join us!***

Got a story to tell or comment to make?

Because of constraints of production and cost we are not able to publish all of our news in this newsletter. For those of you with access to the internet we do publish all of our news items on the web site, and our selection for this newsletter on the whole is taken from those.

We are interested to hear your views on wildlife issues or any interesting stories you have. Contact details are spread throughout these pages, so please make your comments freely.

Trouble in Paradise (well Warsop)

The end of May saw controversy in Warsop over the proposed Local Nature Reserve on the Carrs.

Six electors in the Parish called for a special meeting of the Parish with a view to gain sufficient support to demand that a referendum be held regarding the status of the area concerned. At a cost of £4000.

The meeting was held, there was no choice, and over 100 people turned up to the debate.

Whilst there was some comments that the area left to become meadow looks untidy, on the whole only the main protagonist spoke against the LNR, and he lost all credibility when he openly admitted he didn't object to the LNR as such, only to parts of the management plan. The vote was taken and only 3 people voted for the referendum.

Was this a waste of time? If you attended the meeting perhaps you will drop us a line and let us know your thoughts. There is more about this on our web site.

The Carrs Local Nature Reserve

The Carrs Local Nature Reserve is one of a number being established around the County with the assistance of Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust.

For many years since the river Meden was changed the Carrs had become a green desert used by local football teams and dog walkers, but very little wildlife. The river is now in excellent condition but the area seemed to be lacking balance. The Warsop Footpaths and Countryside Group did its bit to improve the area by creating two small wooded areas and a meadow area near the bridge to the BMX track, this area is now well on its way to maturity and a credit to the WFCG. What was missing however was the vital corridor to link areas like the Hills and Holes SSSI and Meden Bottoms (another LNR). The Carrs LNR and the meadow area alongside the river in particular helps fulfil that need.

We are only just over 1 year in to the 5 year plan for the Carrs and already it is clear to see the increase in the species of birds and small mammals that use the area.

It is thanks not only to Wildlife Trust and Mansfield District Council who have made this possible but also to the Friends of the Carrs Group who put such a lot of time and effort into canvassing opinion and balancing the needs of the community with that of the wildlife

SLUGS

a presentation by Chris du Feu

"They're not all black, slimy and revolting; they come in different colours"

We learned many useful things at the talk given by Chris

- ~ Slugs are hermaphrodite and sexual exhibitionists.
- ~ They breathe and excrete though the same hole in their body!!
- ~ Slugs are not cuddly.
- ~ Slugs were compared to octopus as they have evolved from having an outer shell to moving it inside in the majority of types.
- ~ There are at least 36 species in Britain, 2 of which have only been discovered in the last 2 years.
- ~ There are probably more to come.
- ~ There are many colours and types of marking. Some can be individually identified.
- ~ They are not all pests, some are positively beneficial to mankind as they eat and/or recycle unwanted garden waste or pests others are benign.
- ~ Many are nocturnal.

Slugs are under-recorded but from the records that have been, and are being, kept it is becoming apparent that their distributions are changing rapidly, partly because of climate change and partly because of human behaviour.

Apparently the loveliest creature on God's earth is the tree slug! (I am not convinced) These are found in damp ancient woodland and are not common in the East Midlands, but can be found in Treswell woods near Retford. They climb to great heights and graze on lichen, hence very beneficial to trees. Their bodies lose moisture through evaporation and so can only exist in damp woodland that is at least 100 metres wide due to the drying effects of wind.

We had been encouraged to bring our own slugs to identify and record, particularly as they are under recorded. There was great excitement as two specimens of the Spanish slug, *lehmannia valentiana*, were produced from a local compost heap. They were pronounced to be not only the first recorded specimens in the County, but also, the finest markings Chris had ever seen on that species. This species of slug has only been able to survive in Britain for the last 30 years as they cannot survive cold winters. Global warming has improved their lot and they are being recorded further north each year.

It was a fascinating evening. Slug spotting should be the next popular activity for naturists, or do I mean naturalists always get them mixed up.

"I took some from the freezer that I had a lot of"

Annual General Meeting

Now usually we have our annual general meeting just before one of the talks, around March or April and although they may sound boring there is actually only a small amount of official business that need to be carried out. So this year we decided to combine it with a walk along the newly designated local nature reserve that is the Southwell trail, followed by the meeting and lunch at the White Post Inn.

Our walk was led by Liz Fleuty from Notts County Council, starting from Kirklington and walking towards Farnsfield. Being early April it was unfortunate that many of the wildflowers were not out but we did hear a wide range of birds.

Now how many of us poo-poo the risk assessment talk prior to a guided walk? Whilst most of you will never witness any sort of incident, our walk turned out to be quite eventful.

Curiosity killed the cat or so they say and it nearly did for our Chairman. Whilst leaning over a guard rail on a bridge over a beck, looking for water voles, the whole rail and concrete side of the bridge gave way, depositing our Chairman several feet below the normal level of the path. Fortunately no injury was caused (except to the bridge) and the whole incident took on the air of a Laurel & Hardy stunt. But on a serious note, it is important to be aware that a walk in the Countryside can have serious consequences if you aren't prepared. So next time you are yawning when the risk assessment is being dealt with remember our Chairman.

Once at the White Post, which I have to say is a very nice place and enhanced by the fact it is entirely non smoking, we heard the reports from Chairman and Treasurer, then elected the officers. This of course was the last meeting at which Sarah our Vice Chair was to attend because of her move to the RSPB in Sandy, so congratulations and celebrations ensued to wish her well in her new job.

Chair's Report 2005

This has been a bittersweet year for the group. Sweet in that we have had another successful year of talks & walks.

Talks on fungi, deer, owls kept our interest during dark evenings & attracting audiences of over fifty people.

Walks in Warsop & Forest Town were enjoyed: our most popular walk attracted over thirty people.

Another success was the launching of the group website. Getting nearly 1000 visits a month, the site has proved much more popular than we had dared to hope.

Yet another reason to be cheerful has been the establishment of the 'Local groups forum' in which all local members' groups are represented & meet with Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust officers. The Mansfield & Ashfield group played the lead in establishing & organising the group. It is pleasing to know that Paul Learoyd Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust CEO is as keen as we are to see local groups playing an active part in the work of the trust. Our work will be the stronger for efforts we have all put in. We will do well to remember Catherine the Great's maxim: *'Praise loudly, blame softly'* in this, as in all things.

So, on to the bitter part of our year, this is the loss of two stalwart committee members. John Thorpe whose wry sense of fun will be missed. We well remember the hard work he put into our stand at the Ashfield Show in 2002 and his shopkeeping duties selling Trust goods at group talks. No one looked better in an Wildlife Trust T-shirt!

The second key team member we lose is Sarah Kelly. Sarah has been committee member, vice chair, newsletter editor & punchmaker since the group re-emerged in 2001. She has contributed a huge amount to the group & her loss to us is considerable. We will be the weaker for her going. We all wish her well in her new job & miss her immensely.

About our committee: over the past three or four years we have become more than a committee, we have become a group of good friends. The consequence is that our meetings are more social gatherings than 'meetings' but in my view they are the better for that. Team - you do a wonderful job & I want to take this opportunity to thank you for all your hard work over the past year: it is very much appreciated.

Special thanks to all those who have supported our walks and talks events throughout the year.

Send in your pictures

Derek, our web master is still looking for member's pictures to put onto our website galleries. If you have any pics you would like to share with the rest of the membership and indeed the whole world let Derek know by email or phone - he'll be pleased to hear from you



Visit our Web Site

<http://www.nottswildlifetrust.org.uk>

Design & Artwork by

Hartwood Communication 0870 747 6481

New Record for Web Site

by Fred Smith

April saw our new web site achieve over 1000 visits in one month. Since its launch in December 2004 the site has become more and more popular, with the number of visits increasing month on month. This milestone was almost reached in March but fell a little short at 983 visits.



Our Webmaster Derek says "It is truly a wonderful achievement considering it is very much a local site."

A visit to a web site is considered a more accurate way of measuring the traffic a site gets. A visit is defined as a single computer accessing any or all of the site within a 30 minute period starting from when the computer first enters the site. Hits are also used as a measure of the site but a hit is any and all clicks within the site and whilst the number can be huge, they are rarely indicative of the popularity of the site.

Our Chairman Rob says "Derek has done a marvellous job with the web site and makes sure it is kept up to date. We are finding our ranking on the major search engine getting better all the time. We thank Derek and his Company Hartwood Communications for providing us with such a valuable resource for the group".

If you have any comments or suggestions about the website and especially if you want to contribute any photos to the galleries please contact Derek direct by email at webmaster@nottswildtrust.org.uk or telephone 0870 747 6481

Life at the Lodge by Sarah Kelly

Here I am again, writing an article for our newsletter. But this time as your "foreign correspondent", now stationed in Bedfordshire! Why Bedfordshire? Well, I am in the lovely position of working for the RSPB, based at their UK headquarters at the Lodge in Sandy. The experience I gained as vice-chair of our local group and newsletter editor directly contributed to me being offered the job with the RSPB Countryside Conservation Advisory department. So many thanks to everyone who has been to our events, given us feedback, help or advice and the great team that helped bring new life to our local group. For those of you who are not familiar the Lodge it is a

beautiful 19th century house, surrounded by woodland, heathland and glorious formal gardens. The trees hum with all types of birds as you might expect, the heathland is alive with butterflies and insects, and the ponds are full of the spawn of natterjack toads - quite rare in the UK. In the summer a flock of Manx Loghtan sheep graze the heathland. A wonderful place to stroll around during my lunch break.

If all this sounds idyllic to you, then you'll be pleased to know that the Lodge is one of the RSPB's reserves. So if you fancy a day out, then why not come and see this wonderful place for yourselves, it is well worth the trip! For further details, why not visit the website at www.rspb.org.uk.

Forthcoming Events

Our programme of walks and talks continues throughout the rest of the year and though the dates below are set we still have to confirm the topic of some of the talks. For up to date information please look on our web site <http://www.nottswildlifetrust.org.uk/events.htm> or telephone any of the numbers displayed at the bottom of the pages of this newsletter. The Talks are held at Abbey Gates Primary School, Vernon Crescent, Ravenshead at 7.30pm. Entry to talks is £1.50 (including refreshments) to members and non-members alike.

Monday 11 July

Guided Walk Around Rainworth Water

7.30pm at Rainworth or 7.00pm at Vernon Crescent

Monday 8 August

Pond dipping for Children of all ages

7.30 at Tippings Wood or 7.00pm at Vernon Crescent

All Talks start at 7.30pm Abbey Gates School

Monday 12 September

Talk - Sparrow by Carl Cornish

Monday 10 October

Talk - Topic to be confirmed

Sunday 16 October

Conkerfest - Conker Competition & other events

Portland Park from 12.30pm

Monday 14 November

Talk - Wildlife Photography

Monday 12 December

Talk - Foxes - An Illustrated Talk

Visit our Web Site

<http://www.nottswildlifetrust.org.uk>

Chair - Rob Carlyle - 0870 748 4795 - chair@nottswilt.org.uk

Secretary - Mary Draycott - 0870 748 4797 - secretary@nottswilt.org.uk