

NEWSLETTER EDITOR
Graham Matthews
editor@
friendsofwarnhamlnr.org.uk
Tel: 01403 256478

CONTACTS

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY

Lyn Whale
Friends of WLNR
61 Crawley Road
Horsham
RH12 4DS

FORMS

Application forms also
available from the
Visitors' Centre at
Warnham Local Na-
ture Reserve

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The Reedbed

Newsletter of the
Friends of Warnham Local Nature Reserve

VOLUME 1 ISSUE 3

SUMMER 2007



Messing about in a boat

Wardens Sam & Sarah servicing nesting platforms. Fortunately (and surprisingly) neither fell in!

Photo: Neil Henry

Whispers in the reeds

It seems like only yesterday that I was preparing the last Newsletter, but so many things have happened since that issue. We have had a whole series of exhibition stands, both at the Reserve and around town. We were very pleased to be able to assist Horsham in Bloom at their launch event in Swan Walk and hope to continue with this productive relationship. It is therefore with great pleasure that we welcome an article from the Horsham in Bloom chairman, Christine Costin in this issue.

We also have to become accustomed to the new name for our Newsletter. I leave you to pon-

der the subtlety (or not) of any possible punning, unintended or otherwise.

A great time was had by all at the Warnham Wildlife Day, and again the Friends were delighted to be closely involved. I hope you enjoy the brief report and the photographs.

Much interest was generated by our family of blue tits who put on a good show for the nest box camera. Lyn, our treasurer, tells me their names are Bessie and Bertie, and my daughter has named all the youngsters!

Your Committee continues to develop a lively programme of

events, and as Mick our Chairman says, we very much want you to come along and meet the Committee and of course, each other.

One sadder piece of news is that Vivien Hodge has resigned from the Committee due to pressure of work. Even so, I'm hoping that Vivien will continue to provide her wonderful pictures and articles for the newsletter and website. Thanks are due to Vivien for all her hard work on Committee.

Finally, I hope you enjoy this latest edition of The Reedbed.

GM

Meet the Committee

With their interests

OFFICERS

Chairman: Mick Hillman

Photography, wildlife in general, beetles, hoverflies.

Treasurer: Lyn Whale

Photography, wildlife, bird watching, working with children.

Secretary: John Wilks

All wildlife, especially birds.

ORDINARY COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Kevin Attree

Bird watching and photography.

Local knowledge of WLNR .

Mike Attwood

Professional photographer with interests in wildlife photography and raptors.

Neil Henry

Photography, wildlife and travelling .

Graham Matthews

Microscopy/photomicrography (mainly pond life, insects and some plants - anything small!).

Rosalind Priestley

Birds, flowers, trees and pho-

tography.

Jacque Smith

People, including kid's groups. Compiling a history of WLNR in its various forms since the 1300s.

Aston Trelford

Photography and wildlife especially birds. Has experience of game keeping learnt from childhood.

Nest Box Camera

Mike Attwood

About eighteen months ago, I was asked to check a nest box on the Reserve for suitability of replacing a camera. On inspection it was found to be in such a poor condition nothing was done. So, when the Friends group was formed it was decided the replacement of this box would be our first project.

After many problems, we found Box Watch of Cowden in Kent. They were extremely helpful and in a matter of days we had a new box complete with colour camera and all the necessary bits to make it work. The existing cables were checked and found to be O.K. With the help of Nick of Trafalgar T.V. the camera was soon transmitting live pictures of an empty box back to the centre.

We did not have long to wait before a pair of blue tits took up residence and began using the box as a night roost. Bits of moss and other nesting material began to appear and on the 18th April they began to build their nest in earnest.

During a committee meeting on the night of the 24th April, the first of eleven eggs were laid. With perfect timing, eight hatched on Bank Holiday Monday 7th May.



The eggs hatch

Many visitors that day enjoyed watching the eggs crack open and the young chicks emerge. Unfortunately, three eggs failed which is not uncommon.



Feeding time

Both adults were very attentive and fed the chicks well. On Tuesday 15th, the chicks were ringed. The nest pictures were very popular, with some visitors calling in daily to see progress. Again, with perfect timing on Saturday 26th May they began to leave the nest, watched by visitors.



Time to leave

Over the last few weeks the young birds have been observed around the Centre still in their little family group.

In future we hope to have more nest box cameras around the Reserve. By choosing the right type of box and site, it is possible to attract a variety of birds.

Photos: Mike Attwood



Over the last few weeks the young birds have been observed around the Centre still in their little family group



Horsham in Bloom



Christine Costin

Chairman Horsham in Bloom

Warnham Nature Reserve is a very special place which has played a positive role in the successes that have been achieved by Horsham in Bloom. The 'in Bloom' competitions are not simply about flowers; the emphasis is to encourage local communities to work together to care for their immediate surroundings. The aim is to provide a clean and beautiful environment for residents and town businesses whilst taking active steps to uphold a green and flourishing environment in our parks and natural open spaces. Horsham in Bloom is constantly looking towards the future; we try to encourage people to learn more about our natural ecosystems so that the local floral and fauna can survive to bring pleasure to future generations.

We have found that 'in Bloom' judges are overwhelmed by the beauty of Warnham Nature Reserve; they find it hard to believe that this secret oasis can be so close

to the town itself. It is no exaggeration to say that most of them can't stop talking about it!

Over the years our team has noticed an increasing interest in wildlife habitats and photography which is just great! Now that the Friends are formed we can already see that the ripples of interest are gaining momentum. There is so much to interest people in and around the nature reserve - your special events support and active ecological interest is gaining strength all the time. In fact what great timing it is because this year the Royal Horticultural Society, which runs Britain in Bloom, has chosen the theme "Bloomin' wild" for Britain in Bloom.

The intention is to stimulate interest in wildlife and to protect species that may be endangered. Even in people's own gardens there are opportunities of supporting birds, mammals and insects. By observing

the work that is done at Warnham people can actually find out how they can go about providing suitable shelter and food to their wild visitors at home.

The town has been put forward to represent the South East in the national final and will be judged on Friday August 3rd. Please spread the message across Horsham that the town must look florally fantastic but it also needs to have a population that is environmentally keen, green and active. Looking at all the activities that are happening at the Nature Reserve, in our local gardens and in local Schools it seems that the whole town is seriously going wildly green!

Many thanks to all of our supporters.

Reed Bunting

Kevin Attree

The reed bunting can be seen at Warnham Nature Reserve all year round and it is a common and widespread bird in the UK. It can be found in almost any marshland area and loves to breed in overgrown lake and river margins having reed and sedge beds with willow scrub, just like those found around Warnham Mill Pond.

The male sports a pure black head with matching bib, a white collar and matching moustache stripe. These markings tend to be obscured in the winter by brownish feather tips.

The female and young birds have camouflaged plumage and also

sport prominent black and white moustache markings.

The reed bunting feeds on insects, small crustaceans, snails and also grass seeds.

The breeding season is April to August and there may be two to three broods.

The nests are large and made of reed leaves and stems, often found low down amongst reeds.



Reed Bunting
Emberiza schoeniclus

Photo: Kevin Attree

Chairman's Corner

Mick Hillman

The Friends of Warnham Local Nature Reserve has now been in operation for the past seven months. As Chairman, I thought I would like give you an idea as to what we have done and what we are doing at present.

Our first task was to recruit new members. We started to do this at the outset by having an exhibit of photographs and literature at the reserve at weekends, which I am sure many of you will have seen. These being successful, we were given a site at Piries Place market at no cost to us. This again proved successful as we were getting the message across that the reserve was there and was well worth a visit.

Membership was rising slowly and so we have carried on with these promotion days not only at the Reserve but also at other places in the town. We were asked to do an exhibit in Swan Walk to help the Horsham in Bloom launch and will help out again later in the year when it comes to the judging.

The first project that we undertook was to provide and erect a bird nesting box on the Reserve complete with colour camera linked to a television set in the Visitors' Centre. This was a huge hit with the visitors as we had a family of Blue Tits nest and have their young there. (see separate article).

With a steady increase in membership we are now

planning to put on more events for the members with monthly meetings of walks and talks. An evening walk around the reserve is due to take place on Tuesday 26th June.

Two dates for July:

Firstly, Professor Maurice Moss will give us a talk on Moths on Tuesday July 10th starting at 19:45 at the Visitors' Centre: members free, guests are asked for a donation.

Secondly, a members' get together has been arranged for Saturday July 14th at the Visitors' Centre, 18:30 - 21:30, and all members will receive an invitation. Refreshments will be provided. I do ask all members to try and get along to this event as it will give us the chance to meet you and find out from you what we can do to make your membership more enjoyable. It also gives you the chance to tell us what you like or don't like.

Finally, an event that is coming in September which promises to be a sell out is Jenny Clark and her bats. Those of you who saw her at the Wildlife Day will remember that what she does not know about bats is not really that important. I hope to meet as many of you as possible at one of these events.

Despite their
name slow worms
are neither slow,
nor worms

Lizards at Warnham

Kevin Attree

Despite their name, slow worms are neither slow, nor worms. In fact, despite looking like snakes, they are actually lizards without legs. Like all lizards, they can shed their tails to escape capture and they can close their eyes - a thing that snakes cannot do.

Our most widespread reptile, however, is the common lizard. They enjoy a wide variety of habitats, from dry moors to marsh edges and town and country gardens.

Lizards emerge from their winter hideouts in spring when the weather is often still quite cool, but they make the most of the sunshine by waking up late and retiring early.



Slow worm
Anguis fragilis

They may often be found basking in the sun in small groups, making the most of the warmth.

Both of these species of lizard are found at Warnham Nature Reserve. See if you can spot them.



Common lizard
Lacerta vivipara

Photos: Kevin Attree

Easter Events 2007

Neil Henry

Lyn had a bright idea! 'Why don't we have a display at the Nature Reserve over the Easter holiday weekend...We could put up our stall, like we did in Piries Place, and raise some money for the Friends' projects.' Word was circulated and a group of the Friends did precisely that.

A few of us met at 10 o'clock on Good Friday and the stall was set up, using two tables outside the Visitors' Centre, with a display of photographs and items for sale. Another table was borrowed and a substantial number of donated natural history books were displayed for sale. During the day other volunteers came and went, according to their other commitments, and introduced the Reserve and the Friends group to a steady stream of visitors.

Early in the day, it became apparent that many visitors, some of whom admitted to being 'regulars', had no idea that the admission to the Reserve was by permit. Similarly, those seeking picnics or arriving with carrier bags of stale bread 'for the ducks' were politely declined. Consequently, Neil took over the ticket sales

from the café staff and did some 'educating'.

Learning from the experience of Good Friday, the stall was set up again on Saturday, Sunday and Monday, with similar success. The prime reasoning was to encourage people to enjoy the Reserve, as well as making funds for the Friends' projects.

Several of the volunteers performed a low key selling job by chatting to the visitors. During the weekend, we spoke to people from all over Horsham District and many from further afield: Worthing, Littlehampton, Burgess Hill, Haywards Heath, Chichester, Guildford, Cranleigh, Dorking, Aldershot, Epsom, Croydon were all represented. There was even a couple from the Netherlands, another from France and a young chap from Poland. (although the latter may have been working locally).

With the Friends providing support at Warnham, the Wardens were free to spend some time at Southwater Country Park, although they did make it back for occasional appearances. Just as well, since the day permits ticket roll was expiring and the annual permit booklet needed

replenishment. Between 10 am. and 4:30 pm on all four days, almost all visitors were asked if they had permits: This totted up to about 200 adults and uncounted children on each day. The café staff were very busy throughout and could not possibly have coped with permit sales as well as their primary business.

The weather for the whole weekend was fine and sunny and the rival attraction of an 'Italian fair' with exotic motorcars in Piries Place did not seem to affect attendance.

By Monday evening, we had achieved a goodly amount of permit sales, steady business on the sales stall and had spoken to dozens of people – some of whom were repeat visitors on successive days. Putting the stall away for next time, we were exhausted and could hardly believe that some of us had spent four days on our feet! Nevertheless, it was a rewarding experience, has raised a lot of interest in the Reserve and hopefully gained several new members for the Friends.

Butterflies and Orchids and more to come...

Graham Matthews: report on an evening talk by Don Wilks on May 17th, and future events

Our very first organised evening event for the members was a talk on butterflies and orchids held at the Visitors' Centre and was well attended by a selection of members and guests.

Don proved to be a lively, slightly risqué and very entertaining speaker.

He described a wide range of British orchids and butterflies, illustrated with superb photographs taken mainly around Kent, but very relevant to the species we encounter in Sussex. The evening was rounded off with refreshments and a chance to chat amongst ourselves.

This was a very enjoyable evening, and we

have a number of other events planned for evenings throughout the year.

Coming up in July, we have on **Tuesday July 10th, Prof. Maurice Moss giving a talk on Moths, 19:30**, Visitors' Centre. I understand Maurice is keen to have a look around the Reserve before he starts, as this will be his first visit.

Another event not to be missed is the **Members' Social Evening and Buffet on July 14th**, also at 18:30 in the Visitors' Centre. We are very keen for members to attend and to get to know each other at what should be a relaxed and enjoyable evening.

On **Friday September 14th, Jenny Clark, who runs the Sussex Bat Hospital will be speaking at the Millennium Hall Roffey**. Jenny is well known for her bat rescue work and for broadcasts and presentations about everything concerned with bats. Attendance will be free for members, with donations greatly appreciated. Guests, £4.00 per head.

Graham Matthews will be giving a talk on **Natural History under the Microscope on Tuesday October 23rd, 19:30**, Visitors' Centre.

Please remember that pond dipping and collection of samples is only allowed with special permission from the Wardens

...it is good to add to the species tally for Sam's Warden's Report...

Pond life: Grooved water beetle larva

Graham Matthews

This fascinating beast was found in the pond by the Reserve entrance. The picture shows it coming up for air, which it takes through its tail. This 3 cm long larva, like that of the diving beetle, is a fierce predator. Watch out, tadpoles!

I understand that this larva leaves the water to pupate, and makes a sort of mud igloo by building circular courses of grit or sand grains from which the adult insect eventually emerges.

It is the only insect I have seen swimming by "doggy paddle", albeit with six legs!



Grooved water beetle larva
Acilius sulcatus

Photo: Graham Matthews

Pond life: Water fleas from Heron Hide

Graham Matthews



Ceriodaphnia reticulata
(also below)



Note: 100 µm is 1/10 mm
50 µm is 1/20 mm

Every now and then I find it interesting to obtain specimens by dropping a sample bottle on the end of a piece of string out of the window of Heron Bird Hide. This is just about the only location where there is easy access to the body of the main millpond. Usually, the haul consists of various mud-dwelling plants and creatures plus a few *Cyclops*, but back in May I found that there were a lot of water fleas in my samples. Furthermore they were species I had not seen in the dipping ponds. True, none of them are rare, but it is good to add to the species tally for Sam's Warden's Report, and interesting that this illustrates the different creatures to be found in varying habitats. The main pond is indeed a very different habitat to the dipping ponds.

All these pictures were taken through a Zeiss Standard 16 microscope with a Canon Powershot S50 camera.



Bosmina longirostris



Pleuroxus uncinatus

Photomicrographs: Graham Matthews

Warnham Reserve Wildlife Day, June 17th

Graham Matthews



The Friends' Exhibition Stall

Photo: Noi Matthews



Grasshopper hunting in the meadow

Photo: Graham Matthews

The Friends were asked by the Wardens if they could assist with the Reserve Wildlife Day. We were delighted to be involved and were able to provide members to assist in the car park, help with a telescope set up to view the wildlife on the pond, accompany a guided walk led by warden Sam Bayley and provide support for the Wildlife Explorers' pond dipping, led by Tim of the Explorers. Naturally, we set up our exhibition stall in the yard of the Visitors' Centre.

The day did not start well and it rained on me as I walked up to the Reserve. Fortunately, the weather cleared between ten and eleven o'clock, and by the time the open

day started at eleven, we had seen the last of the rain.

Jenny Clark's bat exhibit proved a great success in the Visitors' Centre. The wood carving exhibit was also popular, and Sam seemed to do well with his moth exhibit.

I was involved in the pond dipping, and this proved to be very popular indeed and not just with the children. At one point it was almost impossible to actually get to the water at the dipping pond owing to the numbers of children and adults.

All in all, this was a very successful and very enjoyable day out and provided some great publicity for the Reserve and for the Friends.



Sam and his moths

Photo: Noi Matthews



Bat

Photo: Noi Matthews



Pond dipping

Photo: Noi Matthews



Friends of Warnham Local Nature Reserve

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY

Lyn Whale
61 Crawley Road
Horsham
RH12 4DS

SECRETARY

John Wilks
sec001@friendsofwarnhamlnr.org.uk
12 Blunts Way
Horsham
RH12 2BL

NEWSLETTER EDITOR

Graham Matthews
editor@friendsofwarnhamlnr.org.uk
Tel: 01403 256478
101 Trafalgar Road
Horsham
RH12 2QL

OBJECTIVES

To foster and promote an appreciation of the Reserve at all levels, for the benefit of the wildlife and the natural history of the site and for the enjoyment of members and the public.

To support the wardens in their work on the Reserve by raising funds, and to provide lectures, learning opportunities and social activities for the members.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

The membership year runs from 1st April to 31st March. The committee may use their discretion over the cost of joining within the last three months of the membership year. Currently subscriptions stand at £10 and cover the period to 31st March 2008.

NOW ON THE WEB:
www.friendsofwarnhamlnr.org.uk

News & Forthcoming Events

WLNR EVENTS

(Visitors' Centre, except as noted)

Sun 1 July - Friends' stall at ParkFest in Horsham Park

Tues 10 July - Friends' evening talk.
Moths: Prof. Maurice Moss. 19:30. All welcome.

Sat 14 July - Friends' Buffet & Chat evening. 18:30

Tue 24 July - Countryside Crew: Woodcrafts - Building Bird Boxes 10:00 - 15:00 (HDC)

Sat 8 Sep - Wildlife Explorers: Migration. Ages 7 - 12 10:00 - 12:00 (HDC)

Fri 14 Sep - Friends' evening talk. Bats:

Drop in at the Visitors' Centre between 11:00 and 12:00 on a Sunday morning for a coffee and a walk - this is becoming quite a regular event, and an opportunity to meet members of the Friends

DEADLINE FOR NEXT NEWSLETTER

All articles, news, photos etc. to the Editor by Friday September 21

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Jenny Clark. Millennium Hall Roffey. 19:30 Donations appreciated from members. Guests £4.00 per head.

Sun 16 Sep - Guided Walk: Twigs Trunks & Leaves 10:30 - 12:30 (HDC)

Tue 23 Oct 19:30 - Natural History Through the Microscope. Graham Matthews. All welcome.

NOTE: Some items marked HDC require booking (01403 215263): Leaflet available from the Visitors' Centre.

Donations appreciated from guests at Friends' evening events.

See Website for latest updates