

# Derbyshire Biodiversity News

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Welcome to the summer 2011 issue of Derbyshire Biodiversity News.

This newsletter is aimed at anyone in Derbyshire with an interest in biodiversity including site rangers, planners, conservation staff, species recorders, local community groups, families and individuals.

Derbyshire Biodiversity News is produced four times a year.

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## Three more Local Nature Reserves for Derbyshire

Two former mining sites and a section of the Chesterfield Canal in north-east Derbyshire have been given a boost by being declared Local Nature Reserves (LNRs). The seal of approval comes after years of hard work to transform Derbyshire County Council-run Williamthorpe Nature Reserve, Pleasley Pit Country Park and the Bluebank Pools section of the Chesterfield Canal into havens for wildlife popular with local people and visitors. These latest declarations bring the number of Local Nature Reserves in Derbyshire to 46.



Orchid area at Williamthorpe

Each of the new sites are well known for its particular range of habitats and species. Williamthorpe has one of the largest reedbeds in Derbyshire, and has over 200 species of bird records on site. Pleasley Pit Country Park's ponds provide an ideal habitat for dragonflies and damselflies, with 18 species of dragonfly recorded there. The magnesian limestone grasslands support several orchid species including the Common Spotted Orchid. The Bluebank Pools contain a complex variety of habitats such as wet meadows, ponds and canal which host a variety of wildlife, including the elusive Water Vole.

Derbyshire County Council's vice-chairman and countryside ambassador Councillor Chris Jackson said: "To have three new nature reserves on our doorsteps in Derbyshire is great news. Even more remarkable is that all of these sites have been reclaimed from industrial use or dereliction.

"The declaration is recognition of many years effort by the county council, the Bolsover Countryside Partnership, the Chesterfield Canal Trust and volunteers in the restoration and management of these sites. The declaration may help to secure further external grant funding to further improve them for people and wildlife."

To find out more about the three sites go to [www.derbyshire.gov.uk](http://www.derbyshire.gov.uk) and click on the "countryside" link.

Williamthorpe Local Nature Reserve is at Holmewood. To get there use the car park on Mansfield Road at Temple Normanton. Pleasley Pit Country Park Local Nature Reserve is at Pleasley. To get there use the car park next to the colliery buildings off Pit Lane at Pleasley. Bluebank Pools Local Nature Reserve is at Brimington. To get there use the car park on Station Road, next to the Mill Pub in Brimington.

To find out more about either site contact Tupton Lock Visitor Centre on 01246 551035 or email; [countrysideservice@derbyshire.gov.uk](mailto:countrysideservice@derbyshire.gov.uk)



**DERBYSHIRE**  
County Council  
Improving life for local people

## UK Biodiversity News

### Natural Environment White Paper

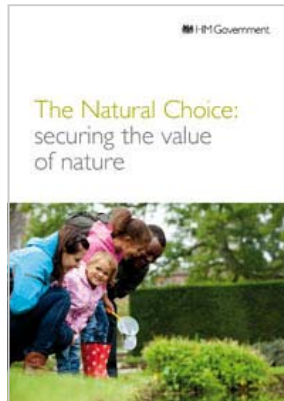
An important and ambitious statement has just been published which outlines the government's vision for our natural environment over the next 50 years.

It's called "*The Natural Choice : Securing The Value Of Nature*" but already it's being abbreviated simply to "**NEWP**" - for Natural Environment White Paper.

It builds on a number of recent important reports on the declining state of our environment, as well as the growing awareness of the financial value of the many goods and services our natural environment gives us.

In her introduction, Secretary of State for the Environment, Caroline Spellman, says this will be the first government that will leave the environment in a better state than its predecessors. To achieve this, the White Paper states the environment can't be treated in isolation, and proposes work in four important areas:

- Facilitating greater **local action**
- Creating a **green economy**
- Strengthening the **connections** between people and nature
- Showing **leadership** in the EU and beyond.



The White Paper itself contains over 100 actions, but the main new initiatives include the development of:

**A) Local Nature Partnerships (LNP)** – these will be high level, strategic partnerships linking businesses and communities to the environment. Possibly resembling Local Enterprise Partnerships, their purpose would be to embed the natural environment into decision-making at all levels and would show vision and leadership. There might eventually be around 50 LNPs across England. Outline proposals for a Peak District LNP and a Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire LNP were submitted by the deadline of the end of July.

**B) Nature Improvement Areas (NIAs)** these will be large, landscape-scale areas of between ten to fifty thousand hectares, each identified by local partnerships for ecological restoration and improvement. Twelve pilot areas will be set up in 2012 with £7.5 million shared between them.

**C) Biodiversity Offsetting** – these are intended to be specific conservation activities designed to compensate for biodiversity losses caused by developments elsewhere. Pilot schemes for a voluntary approach to Biodiversity Offsetting will initially be set up.

Both the full White Paper and a summary of the key points can be found online on the [DEFRA website](http://DEFRA website).  
(Short Link: [www.bit.ly/defrawhitepaper](http://www.bit.ly/defrawhitepaper))



## Valuing our Environment

Do you think we take our environment for granted? Well, the government does, and it has tried to work out the cost of everything our environment gives us.

The **UK National Ecosystem Assessment** (UK NEA) is the first analysis of Britain's natural environment in terms of how it benefits society and our prosperity.

Over 500 UK scientists and economists were involved in the assessment, funded by all UK governments to the tune of £1.3m

Amongst the key findings are that  
A) the natural world is critically important, but undervalued by most decision-makers.

B) ecosystems have changed



markedly over 60yrs; some are delivering well, whilst others are in long-term decline.

C) The UK population will continue to grow, as will the demands on so-called "ecosystem services", so decisions taken now will impact far into the future.

The term "Ecosystem Services" include everything from the value of crop pollination; the regulation of pests; flood control and water quality regulation; the actual foodstuffs produced and of course the importance to tourism, recreation and our spiritual well-being.

This document is already profoundly influencing national thinking on the environment (see article above), and its summary really is well-worth reading.

Visit the [UK National Ecosystem Assessment website](http://UK National Ecosystem Assessment website) to view either the full report or just the summary.

(Short Link: [www.bit.ly/uknea](http://www.bit.ly/uknea))

## Lowland Derbyshire Update



### World Heritage Site gains HLF support

A £2.5 million plan to safeguard and restore the iconic landscape setting of the Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site has just received a boost from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF). Over £100,000 funding has been awarded to help the Lower Derwent Valley Landscape Partnership work with communities and develop more detailed plans in order then to apply for the full, earmarked amount.

The Derwent Valley is where the first factory system began at the start of the Industrial Revolution. The World Heritage Site extends from Matlock Bath, with its dramatic carboniferous limestone gorge, south through a stunningly beautiful wooded river valley which broadens into a wide floodplain as it approaches and then enters Derby city centre.



Bluebell woodland in the Lower Derwent Valley

Whilst the World Heritage Site is now globally recognised, the significance and state of the wider landscape has been rather overlooked. As a result, features such as ancient woodlands and archaeological sites have been slowly deteriorating, often due to unintended damage or neglect.

The project aims to ensure that both rural and urban communities can feel proud of their landscape, and to appreciate its importance. This will include:

- Restoring, linking and extending wildlife habitats
- Providing grants for landscape improvements
- Providing access and interpretation so that people can experience and enjoy the Valley to its full
- Training in a variety of traditional skills, centred on the new Derbyshire Eco Centre near Wirksworth
- Protecting and restoring landscape features like dry stone walls, hedgerows and ancient trees

Further details from Matt Cronney at Derbyshire Wildlife Trust 01773 881188 [mcronney@derbyshirewt.co.uk](mailto:mcronney@derbyshirewt.co.uk)

### Personnel Changes

In the last issue it was announced that Debbie Alston, the Biodiversity Project Officer for the Lowland Derbyshire BAP, would be halving her working hours in order to expand her other interests. The recruitment process for her part-time replacement has now been completed. In a curious twist of fate, Nick Moyes (whose redundancy from Derby Museums was also noted in the same issue) has been appointed as the other part-time Biodiversity Project Officer. Debbie will continue to work on Mondays to Wednesdays, with Nick working Wednesdays to Fridays. They will both share the same contact telephone number of 01629 539771.

Nick's direct email is: [nick.moyes@derbyshire.gov.uk](mailto:nick.moyes@derbyshire.gov.uk)

Debbie's direct email is: [debbie.alston@derbyshire.gov.uk](mailto:debbie.alston@derbyshire.gov.uk)

### LBAP Conference

This year's Annual Forum will be held on **Saturday 5th November** at Derby University. The theme of the event will be landscape delivery and will include talks and workshops as in previous years. The event is being funded jointly by the East Midlands Biodiversity Partnership (via Natural England) and catering and the venue is kindly being donated by Derby University. Details are currently being finalised and programme fliers will be put on the website and sent to all partners and local groups soon.

### LBAP Update

The main task now facing the two part-time Biodiversity Project Officers is the huge job of finalising the Lowland Derbyshire BAP in readiness for its launch at the next Annual Conference at Derby University on November 5<sup>th</sup>. During the consultation stage at the start of the year more than 500 comments were received from over 40 partner organisations and individuals. All have been considered and the majority of suggestions incorporated. Debbie and Nick are now working on the final content, wording and layout of the Action Plan documents.

### Grants

Two grants from the East Midlands Biodiversity Partnership (via Natural England) have been received to support parts of the LBAP work outlined above. One will fund the planning and delivery of the annual conference at Derby University; the other enables us to develop supporting materials to promote awareness and understanding of the BAP process to new and wider audiences. This will include schools, individual landowners and businesses. A new illustrated talk for local groups will be prepared for delivery later in the year, as well as workshops for planners. So if you want Debbie or Nick to talk to your group early next year, do get in touch.



## Pennytown Ponds Local Nature Reserve

Pennytown Ponds is an important Local Nature Reserve located in the middle of the Cotes Park Industrial Estate. It acts as a green oasis for the people of Somercotes and neighbouring settlements. The reserve lies in a wooded valley and contains a series of four ponds linked by a small stream. The ponds are framed by woodland, which has an impressive display of spring flowers, including the bright yellow Lesser Celandine, white Wood Anemone and the fragrant Bluebell. There are extensive grasslands, with one area managed as a wildflower meadow, giving a wonderful display of summer colour. Grasshoppers and butterflies love this area for the range of plants that grow here, including orchids.



The reserve, owned by Amber Valley Borough Council, is managed by Groundwork Derby & Derbyshire in partnership with the Friends of Pennytown Ponds.

Last year the Friends of Pennytown Ponds Group and their numerous partners received a Biffaward award for the many improvements made to the site and for the impressive level of community involvement. This year Biffa are creating a short celebratory film featuring the reserve and “Friends of” members, that will be shown at this year’s Biffaward ceremony in November.

During May we held a Family Fun Day event to celebrate winning the award, attended by 70+ local people. Activities included; tree dressing, face painting, a nature walk, a scavenger hunt and a woodland crafts exhibition.

The money received from the Biffaward scheme will be spent to further enhance the site, including improving footpaths and access, conservation work, tree planting, meadow management and organising events. A grass cutting & haymaking event will take place in late summer. Other activities and events planned include fun environmental activities for local children and a fungi foray in October.

The site was considered of sufficient standard to be entered for the Green Flag Award this year. The judges visited in early June and were shown around the site by many enthusiastic “Friends of” members. We expect to hear the result in late summer and are all hopeful of gaining this award.

For further information on the site, or if you are interested in volunteering to help us manage it, please contact Gary Wain at Groundwork Derby and Derbyshire on 01773 841566 or [gwain@groundwork.org.uk](mailto:gwain@groundwork.org.uk).



## Project Slot... Limestone Journeys



Limestone Journeys is an exciting new Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) programme which aims to conserve, enhance and restore the distinctive landscape character and heritage of the Derbyshire Magnesian Limestone, which is mostly located in Bolsover District.

The scheme aims to act as a lever for regeneration in the Bolsover area. This will be done by creating experiences for individuals that will improve lives, prosperity, and protect this very important historic and natural landscape.

The Partnership is led by Creswell Heritage Trust and made up of: Bolsover Countryside Partnership; Bolsover District Council; Community & Voluntary Partners; Derbyshire County Council; Derbyshire Wildlife Trust; The Forestry Commission; Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group; Groundwork Creswell; Junction Arts; National Trust and Natural England. It has been successful in gaining £1.9 million in funding from HLF. Limestone Journeys was officially launched on the 27 May 2011.

There are three members of staff based at the Scheme Office; these are Cal Warren, Scheme Manager; Andy Cranch, Development Officer and Emma Hancock, Administrative Support.

The scheme has 4 main areas:

- **Conserving and Restoring Landscape Journeys**
- **Personal Journeys: Engaging Communities**
- **Gateway to Landscape Journeys: Access and Learning**
- **Journeys of Discovery: Training and Skills**



Protecting and enhancing habitats and species in the Magnesian Limestone landscape is a priority, and there are a variety of sub-projects which aim to do this. These range from grassland surveying/creation, hedgerow planting, tree planting, hedgelaying as well as the construction of a sand martin wall.

A **Limestone Boundaries** project focuses on restoring and managing trees and hedgerows. This will be done through laying hedges where appropriate, "gapping up" and planting trees into the hedgerow to give structural diversity. There are lots of opportunities to get involved and learn new skills with volunteering and training events starting in the autumn.



Other projects include three different grant schemes, these being:

- Community Conservation Grants.
- Small Grant Scheme for Landowners.
- Small Landscape Community Grants.

The grants are open to land owners/farmers and community groups. The grants were officially launched in July. Deadline for the landowners grant is **5th September** and for the community grants it is **12th September 2011**.

For more information on the grants and to find out how to get involved with the Limestone Boundaries project please contact the Limestone Journeys Scheme Office at Creswell Crags on 01909 720 378

or email [limestone.journeys@creswell-crags.org.uk](mailto:limestone.journeys@creswell-crags.org.uk).



As part of the Limestone Journeys Project, Derbyshire Adult Community Education Service will be putting on more than 60 adult education day courses, longer course, walks and taster events in archaeology, art, wildlife and hedgelaying. There will also be events for families and children during school holidays. For more information about the courses contact Bolsover Adult Community Education Service on 01246 241 926 mentioning the Limestone Journeys project.

## Is Yours a Hedgehog Street?

Hedgehogs are instantly recognisable and much loved creatures. But an alarming new report shows that hedgehog numbers have declined by over a quarter in just 10 years. This really confirms their status as a conservation priority species, and has led to action being taken to enlist Britain's army of householders to come to their aid.

*Hedgehog Street* is a clever idea, hoping to empower whole communities to take small steps to improve their neighbourhood for hedgehogs. The aim is to link gardens and create a giant patchwork of hedgehog-friendly areas across the British Isles. And if you really want to encourage your neighbours, you can sign up to be a Hedgehog Champion for your whole street, too. The scheme is run by the People's Trust for Endangered Species and the British Hedgehog Preservation Society.

This is real action for biodiversity that anybody can take at the micro or "hyperlocal" level. And it's one that I've just signed up to after writing this piece for the newsletter! Will you do the same in your road?

Contact the LBAP Partnership and we'll report back on how many of you have signed up to become Hedgehog Champions where you live. E-mail [nick.moyes@derbyshire.gov.uk](mailto:nick.moyes@derbyshire.gov.uk) or tel 01629 539771



### What can you do to help?

- Visit Hedgehog Street at [www.hedgehogstreet.org](http://www.hedgehogstreet.org)
- Follow their suggestions for making a garden more hedgehogs-friendly (and never give them milk!)
- Request a free Hedgehog Street pack for your street
- Sign up to be a local Champion and get your friends and neighbours involved.
- Tell us if you decide to participate in Hedgehog Street so we can report back to everyone.

## River Ecclesbourne in national scheme



The River Ecclesbourne has been included in a national pilot project which encourages community groups to get involved with cleaning waterways.

The scheme aims to get local people and councils working together to reduce pollution in rivers, lakes and streams across the country. It began last April, and is being led by the Environment Agency.

Ten areas in England are in the pilot, including the River Ecclesbourne which springs from the ground in Wirksworth, flows for nine miles down to Duffield, and then opens out into the River Derwent.

Environment Minister Richard Benyon announced the launch of the project earlier in the year, saying:

*"There are many challenges facing our rivers and streams. We know we need to do more to clean them up, which is why we want to try a new way of doing things." "That means seeing how a more local approach will work to significantly improve water quality and how it could be rolled out across the country. "*

DEFRA says that only 26% of England's waterways are considered as 'Good' under the Water Framework Directive. They aim to get all our water bodies to at least that level over the next 15 years.

To get involved in the Ecclesbourne [Pilot Catchment Project](#) (Short Link: [www.bit.ly/psHhTv](http://www.bit.ly/psHhTv))

please contact [tim.pickering@environment-agency.org.uk](mailto:tim.pickering@environment-agency.org.uk)



River Ecclesbourne

## Grounds for a Change Project



The Grounds for a Change project began life in 2007 as the brainchild of former Derbyshire Wildlife Trust Education Manager Nick Brown. The project's main objectives being to increase biodiversity in school grounds and to inspire children about the natural world around them. The project also wanted to give teachers plenty of opportunities and ideas to use those grounds for outdoor learning and play.

The two project officers worked intensively with a total of 42 'Hub' schools that each received around 12 visits over the course of a year. They also worked with 42 'Support' schools that each received around four visits during a year. Finally a further 120 schools each received an advisory visit. In total 204 schools were engaged, reaching thousands of children. On top of this, 46 free teacher training events were organised, which were attended by 518 schools. So what exactly did the project do?

Help and support was given in planning, implementing and using school grounds developments to benefit wildlife and engage the school communities. This involved working with schools through a process of change. The first step was to get together with children, staff and others involved with the school to work out how they wanted to develop their grounds for wildlife. Mapping activities and wildlife surveys were carried out with the children, to get an idea of what they wanted and what scope there was to develop the grounds.



Pupils making homes for wildlife

Some schools were lucky enough to have huge playing fields and a blank canvas to work with. At other schools the project officers had to think creatively in order to develop wildlife features on small areas of tarmac. Plans of action were drawn up then implemented. Schools were helped to create ponds, bog gardens, wild flower meadows, butterfly gardens, fruit orchards, vegetable plots, bird feeding areas, willow dens and to plant hedges.

The project helped particular wildlife species by making bird boxes, bat boxes and hibernation homes for hedgehogs. Some of the more unusual features that were created included a 'giant's head animal house' and 'wildlife hotels', both designed for a range of animals including amphibians, small mammals and invertebrates.

The project primarily helped children to do the practical work to put in these features and have been out in the grounds in all seasons, whatever the weather. It has been a fantastic opportunity to promote the concepts of sustainability by designing in water butts, composting and recycling areas; cycle sheds and shelters for parents to encourage cycling and walking to school and reducing food miles through growing their own fruit and vegetables. It enabled lots of schools to progress with their ECO-School status.

The final job for the project, has been to make sure that schools are able to manage and use their features for years to come. Where possible, features have been entered into grounds maintenance plans. Sometimes parent volunteers and the local community have got involved in looking after habitats. The project also given teachers ideas on how to get the children maintaining features through lessons and extra-curricular clubs. So as a result there are grounds contractors mowing meadows, grandads annually clearing out nest boxes and children counting the weeds they remove from the vegetable plot to draw a graph in maths. The project also provided training workshops to inspire teachers to use the school grounds more often for the delivery of the curriculum, and to encourage outdoor learning and play. Whereas the grounds were once only used to deliver PE and the odd science lesson, they are now more regularly being used for music, history, English, art geography and maths.

Derbyshire Wildlife Trust would like to thank the Heritage Lottery Fund and all of the other funders, in particular the Opengate Charitable Trust, Derbyshire County Council, SEEDS and the Peak District National Park Authority Sustainable Development Fund for their valuable support.

For more information about the Grounds for a Change project contact Tim Brooks, the People and Education Manager at Derbyshire Wildlife Trust 01773 881188 [tbrooks@derbyshirewt.co.uk](mailto:tbrooks@derbyshirewt.co.uk). Or visit the Trust website at [www.derbyshirewildlifetrust.org.uk](http://www.derbyshirewildlifetrust.org.uk).

## Gently does it at Bentley

**Stancliffe Stone** have been helping Derbyshire Wildlife Trust's **Water for Wildlife Project** with a demonstration scheme to highlight best practice in dealing with riverbank erosion issues at the Bentley and Henmore Brooks in South Derbyshire.

Bentley Brook is the last remaining strong hold for water voles in the upper Dove catchments, but bank erosion was threatening the watercourse and the wildlife along it, including a colony of sand martins.

Because soft engineering is always preferable to hard revetment works, Stancliffe donated 20 tonne of random sandstone blocks, known as 'rip-rap'. These large, angular boulders were placed into the base of the bank, where they lock together and cannot be washed away. Nooks and crannies between them accumulate silt and increase the amount of area for colonisation by aquatic insects. Plants can take root between the rocks, whilst ledges can be used as a resting place for waterfowl and small mammals.



Stancliffe is a corporate supporter to the Derbyshire Wildlife Trust - for further information on Bentley Brook and the Water for Wildlife Project go to [www.derbyshirewildlifetrust.org.uk](http://www.derbyshirewildlifetrust.org.uk)



## Latest OPAL survey pack available



Do you know what invertebrates are living near you? Take part in Bugs Count and discover the incredible variety of invertebrates that make their home around us. Your findings will help scientists learn more about the distribution of invertebrates across the country and how the urban environment may be affecting them. Find as many bugs as you can in our timed challenges and keep a special eye out for the six "Species Quest" bugs:

- Two-spot Ladybird
- Devil's Coach Horse
- Small Tortoiseshell
- Tree Bumblebee
- Green Shield bug
- Leopard Slug

The survey packs include

- a field notebook that includes background information, instructions for how to carry out the survey, ideas for where to look for bugs, recording sheets, and details for where to send your results
- a Species Quest sheet with information on each one, and how to identify them
- a pocket ID guide, a Bugs Count poster, an OPAL magnifier and a pencil



For more information on the survey, and to download copies of the OPAL documents associated with this survey, visit the OPAL website at [www.opalexplornature.org](http://www.opalexplornature.org). You can also upload survey results to the website.

If you would like a copy of the pack itself contact initially Debbie Alston who has a few to distribute around the partners. [Debbie.alston@derbyshire.gov.uk](mailto:Debbie.alston@derbyshire.gov.uk), 01629 539771.

## Local Group Focus.... Derby Tree Warden Network

The Derby Tree Warden Network (DTWN) is part of The Tree Council's UK-wide Tree Warden Scheme and is the newest conservation group to form in Derby.

The Tree Council launched the volunteer Tree Warden Scheme in 1990 as a national force of local tree champions dedicated to their communities' trees - in town, city or countryside. Today there are around 8,000 Tree Wardens in over 150 local networks throughout the UK.

The group's purpose is tree conservation in Derby with four main aims:

- Locate, survey and record significant trees
- Raise awareness about trees and tree care
- Monitor and protect trees
- Plant and care for trees

Acting on these aims should help to develop an ongoing legacy of trees in Derby. There will be an emphasis on protection and management of veteran trees.

The members of the group are continuing the survey work done in the last few years by DWT volunteers working on the Great Trees of Derbyshire project. When the survey of Derby is completed there will be a wealth of baseline data that can then be used for monitoring the state of trees in the city. Without this information it is difficult to tell whether veteran trees are in decline and need help, although it is likely they are already under threat from development pressures.

Surveying so far has concentrated on Darley Park, where there are now over 40 new veteran trees. It is now expanding into other parks, nature reserves and public open spaces, as newly trained members work their local patch, occasionally assisted by BTCV NVQ and Diploma students.



Oak at Darley Park

The group will provide regular training sessions in surveying and identification and occasional trips to look at interesting trees and woods. Look out for them at the Free Garden Tree Giveaway in Derby's Market Place on 5th November and at other 'green events'. Residents and landowners should note that the group has no intention to publish data about privately owned trees.

Kelvin Lawrence, chair of the Derby Tree Warden Network, said "We want to work in partnership with other organisations and people who care about trees. We already have representation from a number of nature reserves. Our key partner is WildDerby, which gives tremendous support to a number of conservation groups in the city. We also want to continue the efforts of many people and groups who have helped to make Derby a green city.

*Trees are enjoyable in their own right, but they are very valuable from a biodiversity point of view for the sheer amount of other life they can support, which is particularly important in an urban environment. Some trees also form part of our heritage. Derby has almost a quarter of the (human) population of Derbyshire living on just 3% of the land. If we can engage more people to take an interest in trees we will be able to make a meaningful contribution to Derbyshire's biodiversity".*



Veteran tree at St Werburghs in Derby

Anybody who wants to know more about the DTWN or is interested in helping in any way should contact Kelvin Lawrence at [dtwn@btinternet.com](mailto:dtwn@btinternet.com) or on 01283 730790.

For more information on the Tree Council please visit [www.treecouncil.org.uk](http://www.treecouncil.org.uk)

## Project to control Himalayan Balsam on Derbyshire's rivers

A project is currently underway to tackle the spread of Himalayan Balsam in parts of the Peak District BAP and the Lowland Derbyshire BAP areas. It is a collaboration of fishing clubs, nature conservation groups and landowners, and it asks local landowners, tenants and other interested parties to assist in controlling this invasive alien along our watercourses.

Although rather attractive, and quite popular with bees, Himalayan Balsam plants grow in such dense stands that it suppress the growth of native grasses and other bankside plants. When Balsam dies back in autumn, the ground is left almost totally bare and liable to erosion.



This summer a series of Balsam-pulling events has been organised by DWT's Water for Wildlife project, tackling the problem in the upper reaches of the River Derwent, downstream of Hathersage. The last of this year's events are scheduled for **2<sup>nd</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> September**.

For more details of these and other pulling days, contact Chris Wood at Derbyshire Wildlife Trust on 01773 881188 or see the volunteering page on their website [www.derbyshirewildlifetrust.org.uk](http://www.derbyshirewildlifetrust.org.uk)

A simple illustrated leaflet and poster has been produced for circulation containing identification and guidance on disposal. This is available to download from [www.peakdistrict.gov.uk](http://www.peakdistrict.gov.uk), or contact Rebekah Newman on 01629 816200



## Derbyshire gamekeeper guilty of bird of prey crimes



In August I attended the national Badger Trust's weekend conference in Sheffield where I ran a small workshop on using social media to engage people with wildlife. Although attending in a personal capacity, I found the whole day to be full of fascinating speakers, many with sad and horrific stories of animal persecution and wildlife crimes, from lamping with dogs to badger digging. So it was a delight to hear RSPB staff tell of how they recently secured one small victory against the continued persecution of birds of prey in Derbyshire.

Gamekeeper Glen Brown of Upper Derwent Valley had been filmed by RSPB undercover cameras illegally setting a trap for sparrowhawk in Howden Moor. He used a live homing pigeon as bait which RSPB detectives invisibly marked and which was later recovered at Mr Brown's home. Found guilty at Chesterfield Magistrate's Court in June of illegal trapping of birds of prey and other wildlife crimes, he was ordered to do 100 hours community service with £10,000 costs.

Speaking to the press, RSPB investigator Mark Thomas said: "We welcome this conviction as it sends a clear message that bird of prey persecution remains a serious and orchestrated crime. "Bird of prey persecution is a UK wildlife crime priority, and it is vital that government and

*the police lead a renewed and concerted effort to afford birds of prey the protection they are due."*

What came across clearly in all the presentations was not only the remarkable job that undercover wildlife officers can do, but also the contribution everyone else can make by effectively recording and reporting likely wildlife crimes to the police for investigation. The number of incidents formally recorded and successfully prosecuted by the police is shockingly low compared to what is actually known to be happening across the country.

What also came across from the RSPB speaker was the extraordinary level of high-powered and expensive legal support made available by the shooting fraternity to any gamekeeper facing prosecution for wildlife crimes. Draw your own conclusions!

- Read or watch a BBC news article with this shortened link: <http://bbc.in/mSEfaa>
- Fact: The RSPB's *Birdcrime 2009* report names Derbyshire as the third worst county in the UK for reported incidents of crime against birds of prey

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01629 539771

## Tools for Action-Takers

### Amphibian Habitat Management Handbook

This new guide has just been published by Amphibian and Reptile Conservation (ARC). It promises to be an incredibly useful resource for a range of users, including conservation professionals, site managers, community groups and interested volunteers.



The Handbook covers six of the seven amphibians native to Great Britain. Of these, the **great crested newt** and **common toad** are Biodiversity Action Plan priority species. The only species omitted is the pool frog as it is currently subject to a separate reintroduction project. Amongst the topics covered in the Handbook are Pond Creation, Pond Restoration, Disease and Mortality and Reintroduction.

Contact ARC for a free hard-copy (£3 for p&p) or download a copy from their [website](http://www.bit.ly/qzRmTJ).

(Short Link: [www.bit.ly/qzRmTJ](http://www.bit.ly/qzRmTJ))

### Pond Creation Toolkit

A new, updated version of the Pond Creation Toolkit was published this summer by The Million Ponds Project and is available for free download.



The Toolkit includes many simple-to-use Factsheets and Species Dossiers for anyone involved in creating new ponds, whether large or small. Whilst there is a degree of emphasis towards those in the aggregates industry working at a large scale, there is nevertheless much of interest and value for everyone working in this area.

A clever feature of the website is an online BAP Species Map which allows workers to identify which key species are present in a given area (English BAP species only)

For further information or advice on creating ponds email [info@pondconservation.org.uk](mailto:info@pondconservation.org.uk) or call 01865 483249

Download the [Pond Creation Toolkit](http://www.bit.ly/pondtools)  
(Short Link: [www.bit.ly/pondtools](http://www.bit.ly/pondtools))

## A history of wildlife monitoring at Forbes Hole

Forbes Hole Local Nature Reserve is a small reserve in the eastern part of Long Eaton. The Friends of Forbes Hole have been involved in the site's management, monitoring and interpretation for many years and includes a number of individuals who were instrumental in it being saved from inappropriate development in 1991. It is one of a number of sites owned by Erewash Borough Council and managed in partnership with Groundwork Derby and Derbyshire and local community groups and volunteers.

Forbes Hole is one of a series of borrow pits dug in 1839 during the construction of the railway network. Gravel removed from these pits was used as ballast in the building of the railway embankments. It is a very important wetland site as it has good plant records dating from 1923 by Sir Harry Godwin. It is a thought to have been named by Edward Lowe, a Nottinghamshire based naturalist and meteorologist after Professor Edward Forbes whom he visited the site with in the 1840s or early 1850s.

Chair of the Friends of Forbes Hole, Alan Heath, has carried on the site monitoring by routinely recording wildlife, especially the pond life at Forbes Hole for the past 50 years. Regular reports are submitted to the British Library for future ecologists to study.

The Friends of Forbes Hole in conjunction with Groundwork Derby and Derbyshire regularly hold events on the site to help continue recording the site's wildlife.

The pond on site is one of very few locations in the county for water violet. Common clubrush and fine-leaved water dropwort are also found there. On the edge of the wet woodland marsh bedstraw, water mint, skullcap and ladies smock can be found. There is also a small meadow area which has a varied list of species including soapwort an unusual plant of roadsides, waste grounds and grassy areas.



Forbes Hole Local Nature Reserve can be accessed off Fields Farm Road in Long Eaton.

For more information on the site and events contact Marion Farrell at Groundwork Derby & Derbyshire on 01773 539 434, Mob: 07800 752259, E-mail: [mfarrell@groundwork.org.uk](mailto:mfarrell@groundwork.org.uk).

## Carr Wood Local Nature Reserve

Carr Wood is a small Local Nature Reserve situated at the edge of Ripley. The site is framed by a large housing estate and a major road, so it serves as a green space for a large number of people.

The site is predominately woodland, bisected by a small stream and criss-crossed with footpaths, but also features a well-established wildflower meadow and a recently constructed glade, which we are going to manage as a meadow to encourage wildflowers.

The site, owned by Amber Valley Borough Council, is managed by Groundwork Derby & Derbyshire in partnership with the Friends of Carr Wood & Hammersmith Meadows.



Recent work at Carr Wood has mostly focused on keeping the new meadow area clear from encroaching brambles, clearing the blackthorn scrub and thinning the trees around the meadow to let in light. Both the established meadow and the new glade will be mown this year and the grass cuttings removed in order to create nutrient-poor soil, a habitat favoured by wildflowers.

Part of the wood contains a Hazel Coppice. The hazel trees are being coppiced on a rota over a number of years, to maximise the value of the coppice as a resource and as a habitat for bird and insect species. Recently several trees have been planted in order to extend the coppice. Harvested wood is used on-site to repair and improve fences and paths.

Groundwork and the Friends of Group are seeking advice on the best way to manage a small pond on site, which has had problems with heavy silting for many years.

Groundwork Derby & Derbyshire organises a number of events throughout the year including both Spring and Autumn Nature Walks, Environmental Education sessions with local schools and children's centres, plus the very popular annual Christmas Wreath Making event which the Friends of Group help to organise.



For further information, or if you are interested in volunteering to help manage the site, please contact Gary Wain at Groundwork Derby and Derbyshire on 01773 841566 or [gwain@groundwork.org.uk](mailto:gwain@groundwork.org.uk)



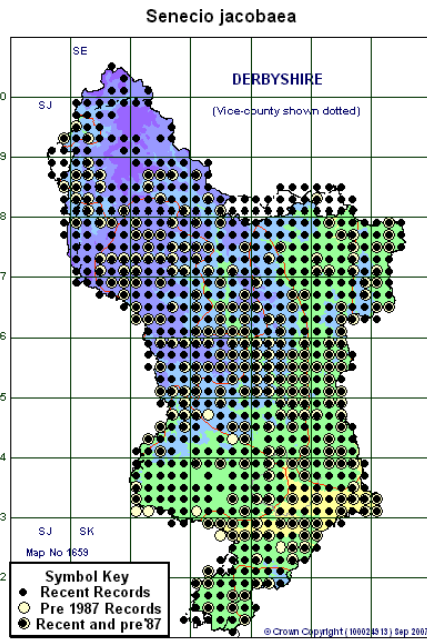
## Species Focus... Common Ragwort

Whenever we read in the press of harmful plants or animals spreading and doing damage in our countryside it usually relates to non-native species introduced by man. Concerns are normally based around the damage these aliens do to our natural habitats. But for one plant – Common Ragwort (*Senecio jacobaea*) – the opposite is the case.

Not only is Ragwort a British native, but concerns over its presence come not from conservationists, but from the farming and livestock community. Numerous letters and scare stories appear every year warning of the harm this poisonous plant does to farm animals, sometimes calling for all-out warfare by local authorities or landowners. As a result, much misinformation abounds, some of it suggesting there is a legal obligation on every landowner to eradicate Ragwort on sight. This is entirely wrong. So what is the true story?



Common Ragwort offering a valuable pollen source to a Derbyshire bumblebee.



Common Ragwort is one of a number of closely-related species – a cousin of the daisy - whose bright yellow flower heads are often seen standing tall and isolated in grazed fields and hedgerows. It is widespread and native in the UK, and is found throughout Derbyshire except from the highest northern moorland areas.

### How harmful is Common Ragwort?

Like many other British plants, Ragwort is certainly toxic, and can cause liver damage. The fresh plant is avoided by horses and cattle unless there is nothing else to eat. But animals are less able to discriminate when it is present in hay. It is listed as a noxious plant in the Weeds Act 1959, but there is no legal obligation on landowners to remove it. Only the Secretary of State for the Environment (or Natural England acting as their agent) can demand landowner action where there is a high risk to grazing animals or forage production.

Whilst direct skin contact should be avoided, Government research shows risks to humans by contamination of milk, honey or grain is insignificant.

A DEFRA Code of Practice on How to Prevent the Spread of Ragwort gives guidance on control measures, but the insensitive use of broad herbicides on some UK SSSIs has already caused significant damage to local biodiversity.

In the absence of adequate data on horse deaths or on the spread of the plant, Wildlife and Countryside Link (of which Buglife is a member) do not endorse the code.

### How beneficial is Common Ragwort to Biodiversity?

Invertebrate charity [Buglife](http://www.buglife.org.uk) lists many of Ragwort's benefits to our ecosystems. These include:

- At least 30 insect species (and 14 fungi species) are entirely reliant on Ragwort, and nothing else.
- About a third of these insects are scarce or rare in the UK.
- It is a vital nectar source for hundreds of species of butterflies, bees, moths, flies and other invertebrates.
- It helps maintain what remains of much-declined invertebrate populations in the UK countryside.
- The presence of Ragwort is sometimes the only source of nectar for a Biodiversity Action Plan species.
- Many other insects eat Ragwort or need the nectar and pollen from its flowers.

"... in the right place, and where there is no risk to animal welfare, ragwort contributes to the biodiversity of the flora and fauna in our countryside." Alun Michael MP from Ragwort Code of Practice 2003

Information Sources:

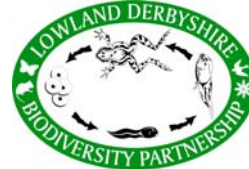
[Buglife Ragwort page](http://www.buglife.org.uk) (Short link: [www.bit.ly/senjac](http://www.bit.ly/senjac))

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**Deadline for articles for the next issue:  
7th October 2011**

## Funding Corner... Community Action Grants



Derbyshire County Council is offering Community Action Grants of up to £1000 to help small groups run projects that improve life in their local community.

To be successful, your application will need to show how the project will help to achieve one or more of the key priorities set out in our council plan '[Derbyshire – Leading the Way](#)'. These are:

- Working with local communities to help them flourish
- Giving Derbyshire children the best start in life
- Helping local people achieve their full potential
- Encouraging healthy, active and rewarding lifestyles
- Choice and flexibility to lead independent lives
- safeguarding and providing excellent support to those who need it most
- confident and safe communities
- making places easier to reach
- a resilient economy
- rich, diverse and protected environments
- a county of cultural opportunity.

You also need to consider:

- A) How you have identified a local need for your project
- B) How your project will continue to benefit local people in the future
- C) How you are providing excellent support for those who need it most

### What can a grant pay for?

- Buying and hiring equipment
- Hiring a venue
- Travel (such as getting people to an event)
- Training fees
- Materials for your project
- Publicity costs for your project.

You should, where possible, support Derbyshire businesses by spending your grant on goods and services from local suppliers.

Groups applying must be formally constituted with a bank account with at least two independent signatories as well as a governing document/list of governing members and a set of rules.

You can apply anytime until 14 December 2012. A panel will consider applications approximately every three months.

The deadlines for the next two panels are:

- 28 October 2011
- 27 January 2012

For a downloadable form and more information visit:

[www.derbyshire.gov.uk/cag](http://www.derbyshire.gov.uk/cag)

or telephone Call Derbyshire on 08456 058058

## Acknowledgements

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