

LEEDS

Countryside Volunteers

Newsletter

Issue 3 Autumn 2008



Funding update

Grassroots Grants for Leeds

Grassroots Grants is a newly-launched initiative which is managed locally by Leeds Community Foundation. There will be small grants of £250-£900 and Larger Grants of £900-£5,000. Your group needs to be constituted and be mainly run by volunteers, it will also have to show how it is meeting the needs of local people. For more information please telephone: 0113 2422426 or Email: carlos@leedscommunityfoundation.org.uk Website: www.leedscommunityfoundation.org.uk

Volunteering opportunities

Leeds Wildlife Volunteers

For practical conservation volunteering contact Dan Malster on (0113) 237 5268, or to get involved in wildlife surveys, contact Kerry Fieldhouse on (0113) 237 5326.

Leeds Wildlife Walks

If you enjoy walking, why not volunteer as a back marker on our wildlife walks? Please contact Dan Malster on (0113) 237 5268 for further details.

Meanwood Valley Wildlife Volunteers

Meet on the 2nd Sunday of the month at 10am, to carry out practical work and ensure the Meanwood Valley remains a great place for wildlife and people. By helping out, you will be supporting a huge array of local wildlife from lizards to birds, butterflies to crayfish, wildflowers to dragonflies. Please contact Steve Clavering on (0113) 237 5207 for further details.

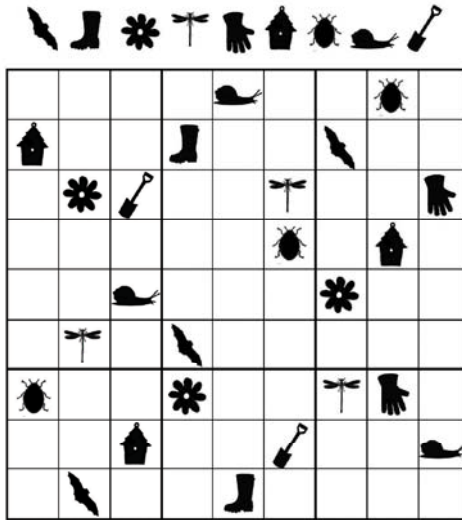
Voluntary Path Rangers

Meet every other Thursday 9:30am-4pm to help improve and maintain the rights of way network around Leeds. Transport is provided from Red Hall. Contact Rosie Watts on (0113) 237 5277 for more details.

Focus on.....

Temple Newsam has a huge array of volunteer opportunities. Please call Dave Thorpe on (0113) 2645535 to ask for further details about the following volunteer opportunities:

- **Estate Volunteers** Meet every Tuesday, undertaking practical Estate work such as Woodland Management, Fencing and constructional tasks at Temple Newsam and once a month at Lotherton Hall.
- **Friends Group** The practical arm of "The Friends", undertaking mainly Estate work one Sunday a month, in a relaxed atmosphere.
- **Farm Volunteers** A small Group restoring buildings and Farm Machinery every Monday on Home Farm.
- **Education Volunteers** A Vocational Group working up to five days a week, at Temple Newsam and Lotherton Hall on Educational Projects with local Schools.
- **Tudor Volunteers** A group who deliver Tudor Historical role-play to visiting schools at Temple Newsam. They work term-time only, for during March, April, May, October and November.
- **Garden Volunteers** A group responsible for our Tudor garden but tackling a wide range of garden tasks on the Estate and in the Rose Gardens. Flexible working arrangements but a small group meets on Tuesdays.
- **Friday Group** A small group of experienced volunteers.
- **Park-Watch Volunteers** Temple Newsam's "Eyes & Ears". Regular visitors who can keep a daily eye on the estate, reporting problems when they arise.



WILDLIFE SUDOKU

We've replaced the numbers 1-9 with things relating to wildlife conservation. Fill in the boxes so that each row, column and 3x3 square contains all nine items. Send completed entries to Jenny Watts at the address below for the chance of a prize. Winner of last issue's Wildlife Sudoku is Phoebe Rose Jackson - a big well done to you! Your prize will be winging its way to you shortly.

Good luck

We aim to make our publications readable for everyone.

If you require a translated version, clearer text or alternative format please call 0113 237 5312.

Please address any correspondence to 'Leeds Countryside Volunteer Newsletter'

Address: Countryside Rangers, Countryside and Access, Parks and Countryside, Farnley Hall, Hall Lane, Leeds, LS12 5HA.

Email: countrysiderangers@leeds.gov.uk

Phone number: 0113 237 5312 or 0113 237 5320

For all other parks and countryside enquiries, call 0113 395 7400 or email parks@leeds.gov.uk



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WELCOME!

Welcome to the third issue of the Leeds Countryside Volunteer Newsletter! Hope you've enjoyed the summer and have dodged the rainclouds to see the blooming wildflower meadows in all their glory, and invertebrate life out in force. Please drop us a line and let us know what wildlife you've spotted over the summer - we love hearing from you!

Best wishes

Leeds City Council's Countryside and Access team, Parks and Countryside

Snap of the season

This month's Snap of the Season was taken by Andrew Ramsay - thanks to all the other folks who sent their photos in but we just couldn't resist this little fellow: a long tailed tit visiting a garden in Chapel Allerton.

If you would like to enter a photo for the Snap of the Season please email it to us at countryside_rangers@leeds.gov.uk in JPEG format. The best one from each quarter will appear on the front cover of the next newsletter.





Get stuck in ...

The year has demanded early birds, night owls and volunteers willing to impersonate drowned rats to get through this survey season! Massive thanks are due to everyone who have volunteered and put in so much effort in looking for and after our local wildlife. We've achieved so much but here are some of the highlights:

1. The Leeds Great Garden Pond Survey

In conjunction with the National Amphibian and Reptile Recording Scheme, over 100 local garden ponds have been surveyed to add to our understanding of where our local amphibians are, why they choose certain ponds and how Leeds fits in to the national picture. It's not too late to download a form and join in!

2. The UK Chytridiomycosis Survey

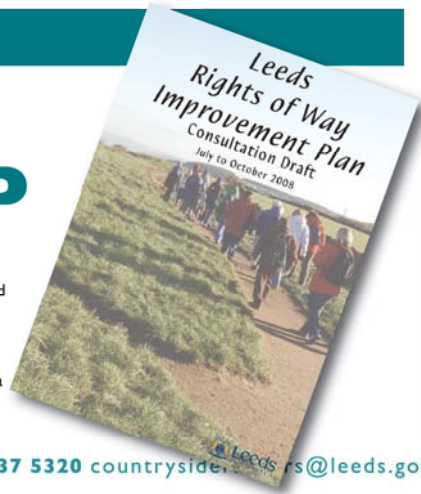
Chytridiomycosis or 'The Chytrid Fungus' as it is more commonly called is one of the biggest threats to amphibians world-wide, and is blamed for catastrophic declines in some Australian, American and Spanish species. It is unclear exactly how it is spreading and where it will be found next but we already know of 2 locations in the UK.

This year saw the launch of the UK Chytridiomycosis Survey to try and track the virus in the UK and understand more about it. Led by the Zoological Society of London and Natural England the project was entirely reliant on dedicated volunteers to sample local amphibians.

A team of Leeds Wildlife Volunteers put in a stalwart effort at Coburn Hill Wood to catch and swab 60 amphibians for the project over two evenings. They were late nights but rewarding with all three native newts (palmate, smooth and great crested), frogs and toads being found.

Launch of the ROWIP

If you enjoy lacing up your walking boots, climbing onto your bike or saddling your horse and enjoying Leeds' 500 miles of footpaths, bridleways and byways, then it's your opinions Leeds City Council wants! Leeds City Council has issued its Draft Rights of Way Improvement Plan, which makes recommendations for how rights of way such as footpaths, bridleways and byways could be improved over the next 10 years. The 'ROWIP' is available online via the Leeds City Council website (www.leeds.gov.uk), or you can call 0113 395 7400 to request a copy. You have until the end of October 2008 to comment on the document.



3. The LWV Bird Surveys

Following very popular, and very early, bird survey training mornings, a gang of willing volunteers have duly surveyed parks and nature reserves across Leeds, adding to and in some cases creating the first proper up-to-date records of our bird species in those areas. Many thanks to all the early risers and their dedication. The results have been shared with Rebecca Neal of Leeds University as she seeks to understand the distribution of our local birds species and what makes some sites so attractive.

4. The Wyke Beck Valley Bat Project

This was launched this year with support from the West Yorkshire Bat Group as we seek to understand which species of bat are using the Wyke Beck Valley and how we can enhance our green areas for these rare and vulnerable animals. Volunteers have been dodging the rain on evenings throughout the summer to record bat activity in Roundhay Park, Temple Newsam Estate and Swillington Woods near Oulton. Any computer buffs who might like to help us download the data and help us interpret it are very welcome to get in touch!

For information on the wildlife surveys contact Kerry Fieldhouse on (0113) 237 5326 or email kerry.fieldhouse@leeds.gov.uk

Wild places

In this section we aim to introduce you to the lesser known nature areas of Leeds. We hope to inspire you to visit and that the article will act as a guide if you do. Enjoy!



Beckett Street Cemetery

Beckett Street Cemetery is a quiet oasis in a busy part of Leeds, a hidden gem tucked away behind an eight foot high brick wall in Harehills. You might have seen it on your way to the Thackray Medical Museum or St James's Hospital. It is the oldest municipal cemetery in the country; an act of Parliament was needed to grant the Town Corporation the right to acquire land for this purpose. They bought 16 acres in 1842 and the cemetery, originally called 'Leeds Township Cemetery', opened in 1845.

There's a wealth of social history to see here, with some beautiful headstones and fascinating inscriptions. One historical feature is the row upon row of 'guinea graves' – for which people saved a guinea (£1.05p) so they could be buried with their name on a headstone instead of in a pauper's grave without. But they had to share the grave with many other people!

As well as being rich in history, this Leeds Nature Area is also a haven for wildlife, attracting a host of birds, bats, beetles in the leaf litter and the occasional fox. It is at its most glorious in Spring, when the trees are coming into leaf and the bulbs are flowering. The Butterfly Garden (beyond the South Lodge) has recently been rejuvenated by the Leeds Wildlife Volunteers, and will provide valuable nectar for invertebrates as well as a feeding ground for animals further up the food chain. Further improvements for people and wildlife are hoped for in the future.

The site is cared for by the Friends of Beckett Street Cemetery, who were established in 1984 and since then have helped maintain the site, as well as documenting its history. They meet on every 3rd Sunday to carry out work on site, lead guided walks on Heritage Open Days in September, and run a themed walk on Remembrance Sunday afternoon, laying poppies on the graves of those whose stories they tell.

Visiting the site

The Cemetery is open every day from 9am and can be accessed from Beckett Street and Stoney Rock Lane. A trail guide – 'Surprising Lives – A Trail through Beckett Street Cemetery' – is on sale for £1.25 from the Thackray Museum and Leeds Civic Trust.

Lynda Kitching, Secretary of the Friends of Beckett Street Cemetery www.beckettstreetcemetery.org.uk

Countryside and Access News

In this section we aim to keep you up to date with news from our section that may be of interest.

Volunteers organise fantastic fun day on their Local Nature Area

This summer the 'Friends of Gledhow Valley Woods' put on their 8th annual fun day. The event, now an integral part of the local community calendar, attracts hundreds of people every year – even when it rains!

This fun family- and wildlife-friendly day includes music, story telling, home made refreshments, guided walks, arts and crafts and stalls run by local businesses and community groups. The group really enjoy organising the event and it gives them a chance to use a wide range of different skills such as fundraising, designing posters, planning family activities and even baking cakes. It gives them a chance to show off their local woodland and the hard work they put into looking after it throughout the year.

Season finale on the Chevin!

The season ended with a bang(er) this year when the Chevin hosted its annual barbecue, this year celebrating the 23rd birthday of the Chevin Wildlife Watch group. This year the Watch group were joined by the Friends of Chevin Forest Park, the Otley Dry Stone Wallers and the Chevin Estate Officer, who very kindly provided and cooked the food – thanks! The revellers were showered with sunshine, and the odd bit of rain, as they gathered on the meadow for a good old-fashioned game of rounders and some hearty food, not to mention the beautiful birthday cake handmade for the Watch group by a local volunteer. What a brilliant way to start the summer holidays!

Rangers on Tour

This summer saw the launch of the Ranger Roadshow. Free drop-in activity sessions for children and their families were run on our major Local Nature Reserves, giving people a chance to hunt for minibeasts, solve wildlife murder mysteries, and investigate life on the bottom of a pond. These were a great success so keep an eye out for more of these events in the future!

Pure brilliance!

This year was a luminescent year for the glowworm and it's possible that Townclose Hills was visible from outer space thanks to the adult females, glowing with all their might on the summer evenings! Many thanks to the Friends of Billy Wood for their hard work on improving the limestone grassland habitat which our brilliant little friends seem to love. This year also saw an increase in the number of mating pairs found and – shame on us – we took photos!



Green Heroes

The Countryside and Access team have been awarded BTCV Green Heroes Award in recognition of our work with BTCV (formerly the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers) and our contribution to the local environment. We have worked with BTCV on several projects this year, including the creation of pond-dipping platforms at Rothwell Country Park, path works at Danefield (Otley Chevin Forest Park) and moorland management on Adel Moor.