

# Newsletter

of Harlow Conservation Volunteers and Harlow Wildlife Projects



January 2013 edition



Welcome to the Harlow Conservation Volunteers and Harlow Wildlife Project biannual Newsletter, which summarises the work carried out by both of these volunteer groups over the past six months.

- Quick Quiz -
1. How many visits would a bee have to make to a flower to produce 1kg of honey 5,000 – 20,000 – 35,000?
  2. Which of these birds is a summer visitor Redstart, Fieldfare, Hawfinch?
  3. How many bat species are found in Britain 9 – 17 – 22?
  4. Which bird leaves footprints exactly like arrows Crow, Robin, Pheasant?
  5. How many earthworms would a Badger eat in a day 100 – 200 – 350?

Harlow volunteer Groups caring for the natural environment



## CHAIRMAN'S CHAT

### Harlow Conservation Volunteers

The last 8 months has seen HCV return to its usual pattern of work. After last spring in which we focused on achieving major projects, the mesh path for Harlow Wildlife Projects' Stort Valley Meadows (SVM) project and the Marshgate Spring Bridge, with the inevitable changes at short notice, recent work has been doing fairly small jobs on a whole range of sites.

There were a couple of tasks finishing off work on the SVM project –see under HWP below– plus a few other tasks nearby on the Harlow Marshes LNR complex. We returned to Brenthall and Barnsley Wood to do a small repair to the rustic bridge, and then on Remembrance Sunday cleared the “secret” pond and cleared back one of the rides. Other woodland work over the winter has included glade opening at Latton Woods and coppicing at Hospital and Risdens Wood and for the first time for HCV at Maunds Wood as well.

At Stewards School (I should say Academy) we did the annual meadow cut in October with plenty of students, and then just before Christmas I started off a section of hedge laying along the front boundary as a school day event, which was continued on the recent HCV task day. The project with the school continues to be very positive: the school has a useful focus for some science lessons and extra-curricular activity, and we get to work on a Local Wildlife Site that might otherwise deteriorate, and hopefully some of the young people involved will in time want to come and help out on other HCV tasks.

### Harlow Wildlife Projects

The main focus of HWP over the second half of 2012 has been finishing off the Big Lottery funded Stort Valley Meadows project and holding the “project launch” event. It was a condition of the Lottery funding that a so-called “project launch” event should be held to mark the completion of the capital works (delivery phase) and launch the project as something the public can use and also get involved with. We decided to hold a Wildlife Day, There was some last minute volunteer work to get the site ready for the event: HCV installed the two interpretation boards (designed by Colin); myself and Colin installed the wooden willow leaf sculpture holding the official plaque; and Greenteam mowed and cleared the site. After a lot of work by members of the group getting local organisations to participate, publicity, and organising the site with a marquee and displays, in the end the attendance was a bit disappointing. However, we did get some coverage in the Harlow Star with Cllr Jon Clempner, then portfolio holder for the environment, formally opening the new path.

As part of the publicity for the wildlife day, I finally got round to putting together the group website <http://www.harlowwildlife.org.uk/hwp/>, while Jenny put together a Face-book page for the group – these of course will need maintaining, and we need to make better use of the various local events and listings websites.

The volunteer contribution to the delivery works on the project have generally worked out well – the mesh path across the orchid meadow has provided a not too muddy route, which looks completely natural.

Having been told very firmly that the contingency money was just that and could not be spent except in unforeseen circumstances, and that it was expected to be ploughed back to help fund other projects, all of a sudden with the project all but finished and about half the contingency remaining, we were requested to find ways of using up the unspent money! We purchased 3 picnic benches thus finishing off the picnic area.

The group has successfully applied for a £3,500 “sustainability” grant for the SVM project, to be spent this year: this will pay for some volunteer training, publicity, public events, and some maintenance equipment and tools for volunteers.

Looking ahead, with funding and planning issues around soil removal resolved, the Stort Valley Meadows phase 2 project (headed by Essex Biodiversity Project), comprising the creation of a new reed-bed and an area of shallow open water, will finally happen this year.

**Andrew Tomlins**





Bluebells emerging around volunteer coppiced hazels, Marshgate Spring



Stort Valley Meadows phase1 – launch day



Steward's School – Sunday working party



Stort Valley Meadows information boards



Starting to lay the hedge at Steward's School



Securing picnic benches into ground (S V M)



Stewards School – installing willow screen



## RESERVE SPOTLIGHT



### Maymeads Marsh Nature Reserve

Created in 1982/83 this 5.5 hectare marsh has been developed from a damp grassy field where over the years the site has changed with the growth of trees and reed-beds into the very mature looking marshland habitat that we see today. The reserve has an observation hide overlooking open water and is a good place to observe the wildlife that lives there; since its conception over the years 95 species of birds have been recorded there, and it is an excellent place to watch Kingfishers catching small fish.

The Water Rail through its squealing call is often heard more than it is seen, Grey Herons can be observed stalking for food in the shallow water, and in summer, migrants like Reed Warblers chatter away in the reed-beds, together with Reed Buntings, Blackcap, Willow Warbler. Occasionally during the winter months a Bittern is seen on the reserve, and other wintering birds recorded are Woodcock, Snipe, and Stonechat.

Many Dragonfly species inhabit the marsh such as Migrant Hawker, Emperor, Southern Hawker, Ruddy Darter, and Blue-Tailed Damselfly.

Continuing work has to be carried out to control the spread of rushes and reeds to keep an area of open water in front of the hide, but time spent here may produce the view of a Grass Snake swimming across the water or Fox looking for a meal, and maybe a Cuckoo seeking a suitable warbler nest to lay an egg in.

The reserve meadow and hide have open access at all times.



**There are  
wild things  
going on  
in**

**Come and learn  
about its  
wildlife**

# HARLOW

**Meet the  
wild bunch**

You may find them lurching in the bushes  
or under a tree,  
Maybe sometimes up to their knees in mud and water,  
Perhaps digging up the ground,  
They may have a wild look in their eyes,  
But don't be scared! Most of them will not bite,  
They are all doing it voluntarily, Come and join them, and go wild!

**hcv**

Harlow Conservation Volunteers - Working on various environmental tasks every other Sunday throughout the year, 10am – 3.30pm



Harlow Greenteam Volunteers – Meeting to carry out work at a variety of locations every second and fourth Wednesday in the month, 10am – 3pm



Harlow Wildspace Volunteers – Based mainly at Parndon Wood nature reserve they carry out woodland maintenance work every Tuesday 10am – 1pm



Harlow Wildlife projects – A local community group formed to seek funding for various projects in the Harlow area, meetings held on announced dates

Harlow Biodiversity  
partnership

Working together with the community, wildlife groups, and commerce,  
all caring for the natural environment in Harlow and Essex.

Harlow Biodiversity partnership – Meets three times a year at Parndon Wood to discuss any natural environmental issues in the Harlow area, 2pm – 4pm

[www.harlowwildlife.org.uk](http://www.harlowwildlife.org.uk)

# Back page bits and pieces

**Interesting Facts - 1** The **Little Owl** was introduced into southern England in the 1800's by the Victorians as a hunter to control Cockroaches in their kitchens; it is the most commonly seen Owl in Britain today because of its habit of sitting out in the open during the day.

**2. Rabbits** were brought to Britain in the 12<sup>th</sup> century by the Normans for their skins and a source of food; today in the pre-breeding season it is estimated that there are at least 40 million Rabbits living in Britain.

**3.** The North America Grey Squirrel was brought to Britain in 1876, and more introduced later to Woburn Abbey by the Duke of Bedford. Because of their aggressive behaviour they had a big impact on our native **Red Squirrel**; this was not helped by the fact that reds were still being hunted up until 1927. There are estimated to be 150,000 reds in Britain today.



Glenn Mulleady

**Glenn Mulleady** Harlow's Biodiversity Officer for six years moves to a new job as a forest keeper with the City of London, administrators of Epping Forest: we wish him all the best. Later in the year we are planning a visit for a guided walk around his area of the forest.

Based at Parndon Wood at the present time are two new wildlife assistants who have been carrying out conservation work with the volunteer groups at various sites in Harlow.

**Ella Barnett** and **Lenny Collins**



Quiz  
answers:

1. 20,000. 2. A redstart. 3. 17.  
4. A Pheasant. 5. 200. 6. John Luther.



Who is this mystery man?

All volunteers are invited to contribute to the next newsletter, so why not send us an article about a wildlife encounter, an interesting fact, a poem, or a place visited, maybe a photo taken on a task.

New members are always welcome — contact number or email below for details.

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