

COLEORTON & NEW LOUNT VOLUNTEER GROUP.



MAY UPDATE.

It is now some time since the last update (November 2013) so there is much to tell:-

The work programme for MAY - JUNE is as follows:-

Saturday 3rd May – New Lount - Ranger Day
Tuesday 13th May – New Lount - Ranger Day
Saturday 17th May – Coleorton Wood – Non-Ranger Day
Tuesday 27th May – Coleorton Wood – Non-Ranger Day
Saturday 31st May – New Lount – Ranger Day

Tuesday 10th June – New Lount – Ranger Day
Saturday 14th June – Coleorton Wood – Non-Ranger Day
Tuesday 24th June – Coleorton Wood – Non-Ranger Day
Saturday 28th June – New Lount – Ranger Day

We have now reached the end of the winter/autumn period, which has been very productive and seen a great deal of progress. We are now in that time of year when we will focus on site maintenance across the two sites. We have a number of items that can be done in the workshop sessions, for which we have the following dates:-

Wednesday 14th May
Wednesday 28th May
Wednesday 11th June
Wednesday 25th June

These sessions will be held at the Ranger's Workshop at Snibston Discovery Park; they usually start at 9.30a.m. and finish around lunchtime (1.30p.m.)

Following the group's AGM on 8th February 2014 the group's committees are as follows:-

1. Management Committee

Chairman: John Macdonald
Treasurer: Jane Elson
Secretary: Brian Bartram
Operations: Mick Specht
Social and Fundraising: Jane Elson

2. Social & Fund Raising will be organised by:-

Jane Elson
Ann Bartram
Vera Macdonald

Woodland Management will be organised by:-

John Macdonald, Brian Bartram, Mick Specht and LCC Rangers.

Progress at Coleorton Wood.

This has been the first year of the two Woodland Improvement Grants and the group has now completed all of the work that was required for these two grants. However, the Parish Council have been unable to secure a contractor to carry out the thinning of the wood which should have been completed by the end of March 2014. The Parish Council has been given permission by the Forestry Commission to defer this part of the work to the current year (2014-15) and it is hoped that the thinning will take place in the autumn.

The weather has created a number of issues in the wood, mainly trees being blown down with the high winds. The group has monitored these and where necessary the trees have been taken down and made safe. Some very large trees were blown down in March this year and the group ably assisted by the LCC Country Park Rangers made these safe. As a result of this we have some very large pieces of timber which we need to make good use of.



Area cleared of the large fallen trees.

The group has completed the coppicing and clearing of ride-side shrubs according to what was required for Year1 of the management plan. This became very hard work as many of these 'shrubs' had been left so long that they were 'trees' and some of the stumps were very difficult to remove; there are still one or two that need to be removed. This has led to us looking at the possibility of a small number of volunteers being trained to use a chainsaw and we are actively looking to fund this training.



Area where ride-side shrubs have been cleared/coppiced.

The group has taken down, cleaned and put back up all of the bird nesting boxes in the wood. We were very pleased to find that all of the nesting boxes had been used last season. In anticipation of the wood being thinned we have also moved the owl nesting box and were very pleased to find, just last week, that the owls have returned and have at least two owlets; this the third year that the Tawny Owls have nested in the wood.

Another success area has been the pond, which the group have maintained throughout the winter, and with all the rain that we have had is very full going into the summer period. For the second year running the pond has been home to a family of Moorhens, and this year I have counted 4 chicks.



This is the current condition of the pond.

The group have ring-barked a dozen trees throughout the wood as part of one of the Woodland Improvement Grant requirements. The idea of this ring-barking is to create what is referred to as 'standing deadwood', which is necessary to encourage specific species of birds into the wood; species such as the Willow Tit and Lesser Spotted Woodpecker. We have also cut down a number of White Willow trunks that have fallen over in the area near the pond. We are hoping that this thinning will encourage the other Willows in this area to develop more successfully.

There are significant changes in the car park area of the wood where we have removed all of the small posts to make the area more open. We will also maintain the car park edges throughout the summer period to keep this area tidy and open to the wood. As part of the 'Access' Woodland Improvement Grant we have completed the stoning of all three kissing gates leading into the wood. These had become very worn and extremely muddy during wet weather; the access is now significantly improved.



The car park with posts removed.



One of the newly stoned kissing gates.

Progress at New Lount Reserve.

A great deal of the work sessions have focused on the thinning of a large area of Regenerating Woodland at the Melbourne Road end of the site. This area of woodland has had about 10% - 20% of the smaller trees removed and many shrubs have been cleared or coppiced. The many saplings have been removed and the trees stumps treated to prevent re-growth. The group have created a small number of 'dead hedges' to create some thicker habitat for invertebrates and possibly nesting birds. We have also planted snowdrop and bluebell bulbs throughout this cleared woodland to encourage some ground flora.



Part of the thinned woodland with the 'dead hedge' in the background.

There is a large concreted area within this cleared woodland which was where the canteen and pithead baths were during the life of the colliery. We have cleared most of the small trees from this area to open it out and make it more visible from the site inlet road. This area is rich in lichen and represents a very specific habitat. We have built two 'dead hedges' around two sides of the area, which will help to keep it separated from the cleared woodland.

We have taken down, cleaned and put back up all of the nesting boxes across the site. We were pleased to find that around 90% of the nesting boxes had been used during the 2013 season. We have also added a number of specialist nesting boxes; namely Willow Tit, Kestrel and Tawny Owl boxes. We will monitor these throughout the season to see if we have attracted any of these species.

The group has cleared the immediate perimeter of the small pond which is at the base of the pit bank. We have again used the waste material to create a 'dead hedge' along one side of the pond which will help to protect that side and will create a good habitat for both invertebrates as well as grass snakes. This pond represents another of the unique habitats that the site offers and is home, during the summer, to a large population of the Great Crested Newts, which is a European Protected Species.



The small pond after clearing.

The group has also further cleared the second picnic area and replaced the refurbished picnic tables in this area. This area has been sown with a mixture of wild flower and grass seeds to try and promote an improved ground flora, which we hope may spread to other areas of the site.

We have also had to spend some of our time clearing trees/branches that have fallen during the heavy storms that occurred during the winter. We have also unfortunately had to clean-up after some scrupulous individuals have been cutting down large trees, presumably to acquire fire wood.

Some of our work sessions have been spent assisting the Rangers with a boardwalk project which they had to complete in a short period of time at Snibston Country Park. This project has now been completed and those that took part have been pleased to be involved with such a worthwhile project. In return the Rangers have assisted the group with the large fallen trees at Coleorton Wood.



Peter working on the boardwalk at Snibston Country Park.

The group has also swept the top of the two mine shaft covers so that they remain available for the rangers' inspection.



Steve & Brian ready to do some sweeping?

3. Workshop Session.

The group has been very busy in the workshop having completed 2 new picnic tables which the Rangers will locate at another LCC Country Parks site. We have repaired a number of bird nesting boxes and created what we hope will be a squirrel-resistant bird nesting box; yet to be tested on-site (we have a couple at New Lount where we found the most squirrel damage). We have prepared a special (very large) 'Insect Hotel' which is now ready to be transferred to site. We are intending to place this 'hotel' at New Lount and will manufacture a similar one for Coleorton Wood next year. We have nearly finished refurbishing, and redesigning, a very large notice board, which we will put up at New Lount in place of the smaller notice board we made some time back. We have also been preparing the materials for the extended boardwalk at New Lount, which will be installed in the summer period. We have two picnic tables and two bench seats to make for Coleorton Wood and we will start on these over the next few weeks.

4. Social and Fund Raising Programme.

On Saturday 14th December, which was our work session at New Lount Reserve we had our annual "Christmas in the Woods". This was a well attended session and we had a very nourishing meal as well as just a little merriment.

On Friday 20th December a small number of the group had a Wine & Minced Pies at Jane's, which was the last social event for 2013.

The Group's AGM was held on Saturday 8th February at the Beaumont Centre, Peggs Green and was also very well attended. This meeting was followed by a social evening of 'Bingo and refreshments', which proved to be much more enjoyable than I had anticipated (I did win a prize!).

We are developing a Social & Fundraising programme for this year, and would welcome any suggestions and assistance with the organisation. The next proposed event is a Table-Top Sale at The Beaumont Centre, Peggs Green on Saturday 14th June.

5. NWLDC's Green Footprints Awards.

The group had been shortlisted for these awards in the Partnerships & Community Groups category and a number of us attended the Chairman's Gala Evening on Friday 4th April to find that we had been selected as the winners. This is another great achievement by the group and clearly demonstrates the hard work that we carryout is recognised by those who judge such community groups. The award will help to promote the group and raise the public awareness of the group – well done to all the volunteers.



Group Members receiving the winner's award (Very posh!)

6. Membership.

We have had a number of new members since the last update and attendances at both Tuesday and Saturday sessions have been very good. We have a great deal of work available to us at both site and would welcome new members.

If you are interested in helping in any way do contact us at coleorton11@gmail.com