

Red Kites - Update

At the Autumn talk in November last year, Doug Simpson gave us an update of the successes of the Red Kite introduction. 2008 saw the final year of the RSPB funded phase of the project as the population has reached its target of 50 territorial pairs.

Between the start of the project in 1999 and 2003, 69 birds from the successful initial

Chilterns program were released into Yorkshire. Up to 2008, these and their offspring have produced at least 430 young, just over a quarter of which were raised in 2008! Particularly encouraging features are the continued growth of the Red Kite population in the southern section of the Yorkshire Wolds and the doubling of the number of breeding pairs and young produced in North Yorkshire.

As always there are some casualties. Poisonings, both intended and accidental, shooting and nest disturbances continue to occur and anyone suspecting a poisoning incident should contact the Wildlife Incident Investigation Scheme on Freephone 0800 321 600, and/or contact the Police.

Extracted from Doug's Red Kite Newsletter; Whilst we have some way to go before Red Kites could be described as commonplace in Yorkshire, they have become an everyday occurrence in some localities. They attract much favourable comment and it is evident that the process of their re-introduction has awakened considerable numbers of people to nature conservation issues of which they were previously unaware.



Charcoal

Over the years that we have been making charcoal, our methods have evolved to enable us to produce more charcoal with the resources that we have. An example of this is the way in which we stack the dried wood within the kiln. We used to stack the logs radially outwards from the centre. This has changed so that we now align the logs in the same direction within the kiln. This enabled us to stack more wood in the kiln resulting in a greater production of charcoal. Where we used to manage to get about 30 bags, we now achieve up to 45 bags. These are sold locally and the proceeds go towards the maintenance of the Trusts reserves.

The picture shows a kiln shortly before the lid is fully lowered and sealed. A lot of smoke is produced at this stage and therefore we always advise the Fire Brigade of our activities...

We once had six firemen arrive looking for the fire. They had staggered through the wood fully laden with all their fire-fighting equipment!

If you would like to take part the next burn is on the weekend of the 16/17th May. Please bring your own food to cook on the fire.



AGM

**Wednesday 20th May
8.00 pm
East Keswick
Methodist Church
Meeting Room**

**Followed by
Sylvia Pinkney who will
give an illustrated talk
about her recent visit
to the Arctic**

**Refreshments will be
served and everyone
is welcome.**

Flies in Ox Close...

A survey by Roy Crossley F.R.E.S.

During 2008, Roy Crossley FRES visited Ox Close Wood to survey and record the number of true flies (*Diptera*) to be found there.

Diptera, meaning “two winged” is an enormous order of insects containing nearly 100,000 species. The hind pair of wings are reduced to pin- or club- shaped structures called halteres which act as balancing gyroscopes to maintain stability in flight. Nearly all adult flies feed on liquids, (a few flies do not eat at all and a few can crush pollen). Flies’ mouthparts vary with diet which ranges from nectar to blood and to eat solid food flies disgorge digestive fluids to liquefy the food. All adult flies have compound eyes.

Roy made seven visits during the year to Ox Close. Two aspects were of particular interest; those flies associated with the sand and shingle riverside banks and those that are indicators of “ancient woodland”. Of the latter, those species that were found were only “weak” indicators and many expected woodland species were not seen probably due to the cool and wet summer following an equally poor season in 2007.

But the river sand and shingle banks lived up to expectations at least for the first few weeks of the season after which conditions deteriorated badly with the persistent floods, consequently most of the late summer species were not found. During May and June a number of very interesting species were found amongst which were one Red-data book species



The Hoverfly
Volucella Pellucens

and five Nationally Notable species and others for which very few records for Yorkshire exist.

There are too many to list and they have only Latin names, but anyone wishing to see the full report, please email me (address at the bottom of p4) and I will send it.

In total, Roy found nearly 200 species but had anticipated 500 species!



The drone fly *Eristalis pertinax* is another type of Hoverfly

Winter Bird Survey.

by David Smith

As winter takes hold in Scandinavia, Russia and northern Europe, several of their resident summer species migrate to our shores to spend the winter. If winters are harsh on the continent of mainland Europe, birds will move westward to our island. As well as these movements, bird species which are more normally associated with our Pennine uplands move down to the lowlands and coast where a less harsh winter climate gives them a better chance of survival. This gives us the opportunity to see birds in our parish that would not be present during the summer months.

February 2009 was a memorable month for bird recording in the parish.

As part of the ongoing natural history survey of the parish, one day each winter and summer we try to cover all ten OS map one kilometre squares that make up the parish.

Our winter bird survey this year took place on 13 February. Nine members of the Trust met on a cold but pleasant morning to set off from Greenfields, off Whitegate, proceeding through the village via Keswick marsh to Moor Lane. By noon the group had only reached Burns Farm but had already recorded 37 species of birds – many of which had been seen at or near bird feeding stations in various gardens around the village. As well as the common garden species, six Siskin were spotted in the trees near the church and a Goldcrest near Manor Farm. Also seen were an unusually large group of ten Moorhen foraging together in a field bordering Keswick beck as well as a flock of 54 Lapwing feeding in the fields at Manor farm. Four Golden Plover were also noted flying over the upper fields.

At the end of the recording day we had 53 bird species on the survey sheet.

The RSPB magazine “Birds” recently featured an article titled “The Buzzard is back” – this is certainly true for East Keswick. After an absence of more than a century they have returned and are resident in our parish. We had three sightings of Buzzard during the survey, which should please local farmers as rabbits are one of their main prey.

... continued

During the survey we recorded a good number of Greylag and Canada Geese feeding on the beet tops in the fields bordering Keswick Fitts. These took flight and disappeared up the valley towards Harewood. It is always interesting to check larger flocks for anything unusual, so Melanie and I returned on the 15 February to see if the birds were still around. We were treated to a birding experience – more than 700 Greylag Geese and some 200 Canada Geese were now feeding on the beet tops along with two Bar-headed Geese (a species normally associated with the high Himalayas), one Pink-footed Goose and three white geese. The latter I hoped were Snow Geese but on closer examination they turned out to be either white Greylags or some farmyard escapees. We returned five days later and counted more than 600 Greylag and over 250 Canada Geese, with the two Bar-headed Geese now accompanied by a flock of 30 Pink-footed Geese.



Bar-headed Goose

While I sat in my conservatory later that afternoon writing up my records, I looked down the valley of Keswick beck to see a White Stork flying up the valley, which I was able to photograph.

On the 21st I returned again to Keswick Fitts, finding similar numbers of Greylag and Canada Geese but the flock of Pink-feet had increased to 54. As I watched them, three Buzzards circled nearby with a Peregrine Falcon diving and mobbing one of the Buzzards. Nine Red Kites were rising on the thermals higher up the valley and a Sparrow Hawk circled lower down the valley. It was later followed by excellent views of the White Stork, which slowly circled low over the Travellers Rest before gliding across the valley towards the ponds behind Carlton Hill on the north side of the Wharfe. To end a great month of birdwatching in the parish, on the 21st a Merlin sat for several minutes in the top of an ash tree in Frank Shires quarry before taking off with a dashing flight after a small bird before it passed out of sight over the War Memorial. Another first in the parish for me.



White Stork

If you have any records of birds in the parish, please pass them on to me. If you are interested in joining us on our summer recording day, meet us at the Post Office on 15 May at 10am.

David Smith david_canova@hotmail.com

Bat boxes

by Melanie Smith

There are 17 species of bats in the UK. Nine of these can be seen in Leeds and West Yorkshire. All feed solely on insects, mostly flying at night. A pipistrelle our smallest bat at 4cm in body length can eat around 3,000 midges and other small flies a night. Many bats are rare due to changes in the countryside including loss of roosting places and food sources.

Gardens are an important source of food, water and shelter for bats. During the day they roost in crevices in buildings (roofs and walls) caves and trees.

Bat boxes encourage bats into an area where there are few natural roosting sites. Boxes made from wood should be rough sawn and untreated. Bats cannot hang from smooth surfaces and can be poisoned by any timber treatment. Boxes made from woodcrete, a mixture of wood and concrete, have been successful in attracting bats.

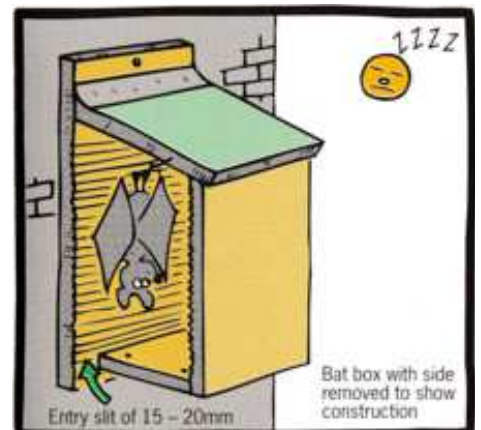
There should be no gaps in the boxes as bats do not like draughts. Boxes are more likely to be used if placed in areas where bats are known to feed. Gardens are ideal, especially if there is a pond. Ideally put two up or three boxes facing in different directions to give a range of temperature conditions. If possible they should be close to a tree or hedges line which are often used for navigation. The boxes can be placed on trees or on the eaves of buildings. Wherever they are sited they need to be high off the ground. To check if a box is being used look for urine stains and droppings. Watch a few hours either side of sunset to observe any bats leaving to feed.

There are some excellent websites showing videos and giving easy to follow instructions on how to build bat boxes.

www.gardenersworld.com/how-to/projects/bat-box/

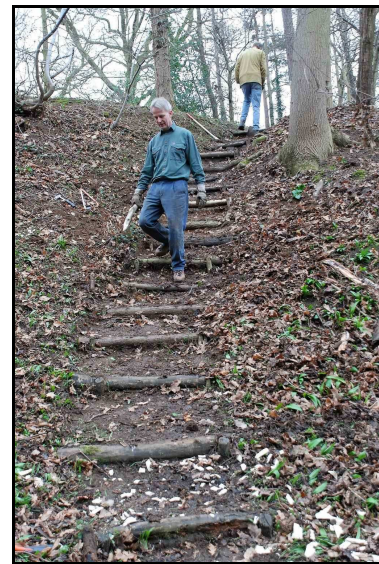
www.bats.org.uk/publications_detail.php/235/how_to_make_a_bat_box

We can also help support our local bats by growing flowers that attract the insects needed to sustain our bats. In the next newsletter advice will be given on how to choose the right plants.





Examples of work undertaken in Ox Close Wood during the recent winter months included repairing the steps up from near the river bridge (right) and coppicing Hazel trees, the brush from which was used to make coverings of twiggy wigwams to prevent Roe deer eating the re-growth. When they do grow, the new stems will be used for making greenwood furniture.



The next issue of the newsletter will include "How to make a coracle"

Forthcoming Events during 2009

Tuesday, 12th May.

Annual Bluebell Walk around Ox Close Wood. Meet at Crabtree Lane car park at 7 pm.

Saturday, 16th May.

Natural History Photography Course by Paul Miquel. To be held in Ox Close Wood. Participation is free but please contact Melanie (574140) to arrange attendance.

Saturday, 16th and Sunday, 17th May.

Charcoal Burn. Meet at Crabtree Lane car park 10.00

Wednesday, 20th May.



AGM. 8 pm.
East Keswick
Methodist Church.
Sylvia Pinkney
will be giving an
illustrated talk on
her recent visit to
the Arctic.
Everyone is
welcome
and refreshments
will be served.

Friday, 22nd May.

Path Cutting to maintain pathways within East Keswick Marsh and Frank Shires' Quarry. Meet 10.30 at the entrance to the marsh.

Friday, 17th July.

Path Cutting. A second visit to the marsh and quarry. Meet as 22 May.

Saturday, 18th July

Work party in Ox Close Wood; moving the logs that have been cut during the last 6 months up to the charcoal area. Heavy work but please come as all hands are needed. Meet at 10.00 at Crabtree Lane car park.

Friday, 11th September

Notice-board making day at Whitegates.

Sunday, 18th October

Fungus Foray in Ox Close Wood. Experts from the Mid-Yorkshire Fungus Group will again be joining us to help identify all the species that we find. Meet 10.00 at Crabtree Lane car park.

Natural History Survey

You are invited to join with the Trust's committee to contribute to the 10 year Natural History Survey.

Friday, 15th May .

Summer bird survey. Meet at 10.00 outside Post Office.

Sunday, 12th July.

Dragonflies, damselflies and thistle broomrape survey. Meet at 10.00 outside the Duke of Wellington.

Sunday, 9th August.

Lichen survey. Led by Albert Henderson, an expert on lichen identification. Meet 10.00 at the Post Office.

We need your help

Volunteers are needed for conservation work, even if you only have half an hour to spare your help would be invaluable. Please contact us if you would like to be involved in charcoal burning and/or work parties on the reserves.

For Updates of our events on the Web visit

www.eastkeswick.org.uk then click on **Wildlife Trust.**

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