



The Henley Wildlife Group



Report for the Annual Town Meeting 22 April 2010

Mill Meadows

With the onset of Spring we look forward to another season of wild flowers. The Fritillaries are flowering well. Over 100 flowers were counted at the work party on 7 April. The Marsh Marigolds, Cuckooflower and other plants should do well in the coming months, if somewhat later than usual due to the severe winter.

Our management of the wildlife areas continues to focus on controlling non-native invasive plants, e.g. Himalayan Balsam and Japanese Knotweed, and managing habitat diversity by reducing some species that would otherwise become too dominant and crowd out more attractive ones.

The stepping stone crossings provided in 2004 continue to be well used by the public. We hope they enable people to enjoy the wildlife areas more easily.

The wildlife trail leaflet published in 2009 seems popular. Copies are available from the River & Rowing Museum, the town hall and the library. If you would like multiple copies please contact Sally Rankin. It forms a good basis for encouraging people to explore further after going on one of the conducted tours we lead of Ratty's Refuge, the Museum's wildlife garden, and our conservation area.

Valley Road Chalk Bank

We have continued the selective rotational cutting of herbaceous vegetation and scrub to encourage maximum diversity of the wildlife already present; e.g. brush cutting nettles to encourage new growth for butterflies. We hope this will encourage the more attractive flowering species like Common Toadflax, Hoary Plantain, Dwarf Thistle, Wild Mignonette, Bladder Campion and Perforate St John's-wort; also the butterflies the site is noted for.

Worn paths on the site indicate that it is quite well used by local people. Interpretation signs are in production.

Gillotts Field

Over nine years on, the trees and shrubs that were planted to mark the Millennium are doing very well. Shrubs like Spindle are producing a lot of fruit, adding to the very attractive autumn colours in the field. Some good sized patches of Bramble are developing providing excellent blackberries in the summer.

We look forward to another flowery summer in the field – hopefully the Pyramidal Orchids will flower again along with Musk-mallow, Musk Thistle, Fox-and-cubs, Common Toadflax, etc., provided sections aren't cut at the wrong time. Unfortunately Common Ragwort continues to be a problem but the combination of spraying or cutting (thanks to the Town Council) and hand pulling (thanks to the Green Gym and others) should reduce it before long.

Continued ...



British Trust for Conservation Volunteers

An independent group affiliated to the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers,
a registered charity

The field was designated a Town Green last year which should ensure that it is protected from development. An interpretation sign has been ordered.

Other Points

The Group thanks the Town Council for all their support throughout the year.

If anyone would like to know more about the work of the Group they would be very welcome at our AGM on Thursday 13 May at 7 p.m. We will be continuing our theme of *alfresco* meetings. The venue is the Greys Green cricket pavilion. A brief AGM will be followed by a walk, weather permitting.

We would also be pleased to welcome people to our work parties. We work on Mill Meadows on the first Wednesday of the month, meeting in the River & Rowing Museum car park. There is also a ragwort pulling session on Gillotts Field on Saturday 26 June and a work party on the Chalk Bank on Wednesday 14 July. All work parties run from 9.30 a.m. to 12.30.

The annual toad rescue was mounted again this year on the Henley to Marlow Road outside the Henley Business School. Helpers transported 10,500 toads safely across the road during the annual migration to their breeding ponds, as well as a few frogs and newts. The previous record was 6,600. Figures have been recorded since 1999.

Copies of our report "Wildlife and its Conservation in Henley-on-Thames" are still available. It is a 70-page book with 28 colour photographs that describes various aspects of Henley's wildlife. There are accounts of the wildflowers, birds, butterflies, mammals, reptiles, amphibians, trees and hedges that have been recorded within the parish boundary. Areas of particular wildlife interest are highlighted. In return for a donation to Henley Wildlife Group, it is excellent value and we hope that it will be a useful source of reference for many years to come. Copies can be obtained direct from David Whitehead at 91 St Mark's Road, Henley, RG9 1LP, phone 01491 573635, e-mail dcwhitehead@thamesinternet.com. If enough participants can be found we would like to repeat the bird survey again this year.

Along with many other organisations we would welcome more members.

For further information please visit our web-site <http://www.map-reading.co.uk/hwg> or contact Sally Rankin on 01491 578633 or via e-mail at s.rankin@btinternet.com.