



IF YOU GO DOWN TO THE WOODS TODAY...



Welcome to the autumn edition of Durham Wildlife Trust's Wild Woods Project Newsletter. It's been a very busy first summer for the Wild Woods Project, with a variety of activities taking place across Durham and Gateshead, and lots of practical work being carried out to keep all of the woodlands looking at their best. A huge **THANK YOU** to each and every one of you who have given your time so generously to the Wild Woods Project - the project has been supported by over 200 volunteer days since April 2011!!!



I'm not sure about 'a host of golden daffodils' but the foxgloves in Milkwellburn Wood were quite spectacular this summer!



Fran Mudd, Wild Woods Project Officer: fmudd@durhamwt.co.uk (0191) 584 3112



News

Pelaw Wood Joins The Wild Woods Project

Pelaw Wood is an ancient woodland bordering the River Wear near the centre of Durham City which hosts a variety habitats.

The Friends of Pelaw Wood have been established for eight years and are a group of volunteers who carry out environmental

improvements including planting trees, making paths and removing unwanted vegetation (e.g. Himalayan Balsam). They have worked with local schools to involve young people in the Wood and to make a colourful information board. The Friends meet once a month on the first Sunday of the month at 10am at St Giles Close in Gilesgate. The sessions are from 10am to 12.30pm and conclude with refreshments in the Queen's Head public house. The next meeting is on Sunday 2nd October when wild flower seed will be gathered and sown. The November meeting will exceptionally be on Saturday 5th November at 10am, but subsequent meetings will be on the first Sunday of the month.



Pupils from Gilesgate Sports College unveil their illustrated map at the St. Giles Close entrance to Pelaw Wood.

New members are most welcome. The Secretary is Mike Flood who can be contacted at michael.flood8@gmail.com

Flass Vale Photography Competition



Do you have a beautiful photo of Flass Vale Local Nature Reserve? If not, why not?! Autumn is a brilliant time to get out into the woods and capture all those vibrant colours. Amateur or professional, recent or historical, we'd like to see them. 12 of the best pictures will be collated into the Friends of Flass Vale 2012 calendar, and each winning photographer will receive a £10 voucher and an acknowledgement. For further details, or to submit your entries, please contact Val Standen, valerie.standen@hotmail.co.uk



Training Days

Butterfly Monitoring

It was a slightly damp day for the butterfly monitoring training day in August, but this didn't prevent a fully booked session of committed lepidopterists heading to Blackhall Mill Community Centre for a highly interesting talk by Dave Wainwright of Butterfly Conservation, before investigating potential butterfly monitoring routes in Milkwellburn Wood.

It's not too late to get involved and if you'd like to join our now highly trained crack team of butterfly spotters, please get in touch!



Deciding which route to take around the wood...

Charcoal Making

Traditionally, coppicing was a key woodland management strategy. Woodlands were regularly coppiced and the timber used to make many products, for example walking sticks, furniture, fencing and building materials. Charcoal was produced from any surplus timber and supplied for use in the iron and steel industry. Coppicing woodlands over many generations has helped to create mature and diverse woodlands, rich in wildlife, and it is for this reason that Durham Wildlife Trust aims to continue this historical practice...





Splitting the timber



Stacking the kiln



Preparing to light the kiln



Ignition!



12 hours later...

Top quality sustainable charcoal!





The grading process



Quality control!



Weighing and bagging



The finished product!



...and we all went home happy, if a little mucky!

Wild Woods sustainable charcoal is still available to buy at Rainton Meadows and Low Barns visitors centres.

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Events

Moth morning

Over forty different species of moth were recorded at Milkwellburn Wood this summer, many of which with wonderful names; satin beauty, tawny-barred angle, July highflier, beautiful golden Y, rustic shoulder-knot and foxglove pug!

My personal favourite was the elephant hawk-moth, with its beautiful green and pink markings.



An elephant hawk-moth, *Deilephila elpenor*, and a large emerald moth, *Geometra papilionaria* warm up in the hand



Ella takes a closer look at a large emerald moth...or is it the other way round?



Forthcoming Works

Fungi survey

As the vegetation dies back, and the weather turns a little more damp, autumn is the perfect time to get out and about in the woods and spot fungi. In September, the North Eastern Fungus Study Group has kindly offered to survey Milkwellburn Wood and record any fungi found.



Volunteer Thinning Works

Last year, volunteer teams worked extremely hard over the winter at Milkwellburn Wood to thin invasive species such as sycamore and Corsican pine from areas of secondary woodland. These works have shown to be very successful, as the ground flora has shown a vast improvement. In spring time, dog's mercury, *Mercurialis perennis*, an indicator of ancient woodland soils, took advantage of the increased light levels and carpeted the woodland floor.

This winter, these works will continue, with teams of volunteers working in the woods from October until March. As always, task days will be advertised in the 'Dates for your Dairy' section, as well as on posters at the site entrances, and everyone is welcome!



Access

Following on from the completed work on the footpaths at Milkwellburn Wood, new gates have been delivered and volunteer teams have begun installing them at the entrances. Not only will this brighten up the appearance of Milkwellburn Wood, it will also help to deter access by motorbikes. Vehicle barriers will be horse-friendly and kissing gates will be provided for pedestrians.

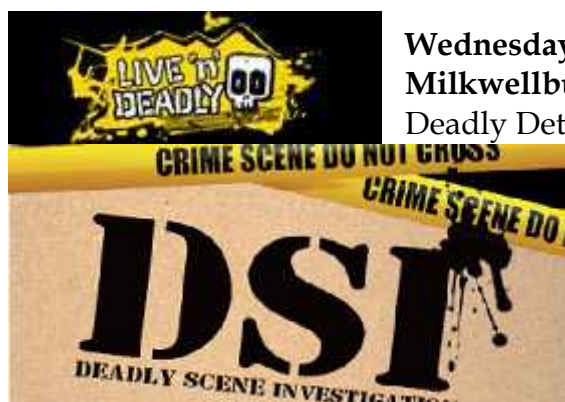
Dates For Your Diary

For further information about any of the events listed below, please contact Fran Mudd on (0191) 584 3112 or fmudd@durhamwt.co.uk unless otherwise stated.

October

Sunday 2nd - Practical task @ Flass Vale, 2:30-3:30pm - Meet at the bench on the Kingslodge path. This event is organised by the Friends of Flass Vale - for further information, please contact vale@fofv.org.uk

Sunday 23rd - Milkwellburn Wood Weekend Volunteer Team, 10:15-3pm. Join the gang for some hands on volunteering at Milkwellburn Wood. Booking essential. To book or for further information call Fran on (0191) 584 3112.



Wednesday 26th - Live & Deadly Detectives, 1-3pm,
Milkwellburn Wood southern entrance. Half term fun - become a Deadly Detective for the day! Come along and solve a wildlife crime with our special DSI: Deadly Scene Investigation activity, to receive a badge and certificate. Find the clues, solve the puzzles and enjoy nature while you're there. Suitable for ages 5 - 11. Children must be accompanied by an adult. Free, no booking required, drop in anytime.

November



Saturday 5th November - Solve a Prickly Problem Hedgehog Workshop, Chopwell Community Centre, 10am-12noon. It's a difficult time of year for hedgehogs, so why not come along and join Northumberland Mammal Group to meet the prickly hedgehog and find out the problems it faces. Then help to make some new homes to support hedgehogs in Milkwellburn Wood. Suitable for all ages. Children 12 and under must be accompanied by an adult. To book or for further information call Fran on (0191) 584 3112.



Sunday 6th – Practical task @ Flass Vale, 2:30-3:30pm. Meet at the bench on the Kingslodge path. This event is organised by the Friends of Flass Vale – for further information, please contact vale@fofv.org.uk

Monday 14th – AGM, Friends of Flass Vale, Waddington Street URC Church Hall, 7.30pm. A talk entitled 'Flass Vale's History' will accompany this meeting. For further information, please contact vale@fofv.org.uk

Sunday 20th - Milkwellburn Wood Weekend Volunteer Team, 10:15-3pm. Join the gang for some hands on volunteering at Milkwellburn Wood. Booking essential. To book or for further information call Fran on (0191) 584 3112.



Sunday 27th – Bat Box Workshop, Chopwell Community Centre, 10am-12pm.

Join Jonathan from Durham Bat Group to help construct bat boxes to be erected in Milkwellburn Wood, and help provide valuable opportunities for bats to roost in next year. Suitable for all ages. Children 12 and under must be accompanied by an adult. To book or for further information call Fran on (0191) 584 3112.

Details of further events will be circulated as and when they have been confirmed. If you have an idea for an event, or would like to learn about a specific aspect of woodland ecology, please get in touch and I will try my best to organise it.

Woodcraft courses with CEED at Chopwell Wood

A variety of traditional woodcraft courses have been organised in Chopwell Wood by CEED (Community Environmental Educational Developments). All courses are introductory, but more experienced participants are welcome.

- Spoon & Utensil Carving** – Sunday 9th October - £30 per person
- Shelter Building (Primitive)** – Saturday 15th October - £30 per person*
- Shelter Building (Modern)** – Sunday 16th October - £30 per person*
- Camp cooking (Primitive)** – Saturday 12th November - £40 per person[^]
- Camp cooking (Modern)** – Sunday 13th November - £40 per person[^]

* Book both together for £50 and save £10

[^] Book both together for £65 and save £15

Booking is essential for these courses – telephone CEED on 0191 549 8899/8844 or email davetully@tiscali.co.uk Meeting place and full details will be given when booking.

For further details, please contact CEED or visit the Friends of Chopwell Wood website, www.friendsofchopwellwood.org.uk



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Nature Notes - Surviving the Winter

As the leaves begin to tumble and cartwheel from the trees, and the warmth of the sun gradually ebbs away, a whole host of wildlife has already made preparations for the cold months ahead. Animals and plants employ a spectrum of techniques to cope with winter conditions, many of which are triggered by a combination of hormonal and environmental cues.



Redwings, *Turdus iliacus*, migrate in time for winter

animals that will spend the winter here, the timing of senescence and ripening of fruit and nuts is different among different tree species. Therefore, autumn offers a staged food resource for animals looking to stock up for winter. For example jays, like squirrels, are known to bury up to 4600 acorns during autumn for later retrieval in the cold winter months. Similarly to nuts, berries ripen on different plant species from late August and right through the winter - elder, hawthorn, birch, and holly all provide berries at different times, readily eaten by small wintering finches. Although wintering birds do not go into a state of torpor or long sleep, which we commonly associate with "hibernation", these birds slow down their activity and avoid energy-expensive activities such as breeding. Colonial roosting is another way to conserve energy and body heat. The wren has been documented to share a nest box overnight with up to 60 other wrens!

But what about those animals that don't feed on nuts and berries? For UK bats, all of which are insectivores, winter sees minimal insect activity and bats cannot obtain enough food. Therefore, UK bats hibernate until spring when insect activity increases with the onset of flowering. During hibernation bats can take as few as five breaths per minute and their heartbeat can drop as low as 20 beats per minute (from 400!) as the entire body slows down to save valuable energy. Bats can conserve 99% of their energy in this way. Hedgehogs and

Lower food availability is a strong factor influencing those animals which are able to migrate. By late September, summer bird visitors such as swallows and swifts have returned to Africa, where the climate is warmer. At the same time, winter visitors arrive in the UK from even colder places, such as waders and wildfowl from the Arctic, and thrushes, such as redwings from Scandinavia, which head to the comparatively mild climate of the UK.

For those animals without the ability to fly, migration to warmer climates is not possible. Luckily for



Greater horseshoe bats, *Rhinolophus ferrumequinum*, hibernate.



dormice are the only other two British mammals which truly hibernate. Badgers do not hibernate, but may spend multiple days in their setts during periods of very low food availability.

It's not just birds and mammals that must adapt to the winter climate, many



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The hummingbird hawk moth, *Macroglossum stellatarum*, spends the winter as a pupa.

Flowering plants such as bluebells, *Hyacinthoides non-scripta*, store energy in their bulb, enabling them to flower again the following spring when temperatures and light levels increase. And most noticeably of all at this time of year, deciduous trees prepare for the cold, dark months ahead by shedding their leaves and becoming dormant. Although this is thought to be a response to a lack of sufficient light required for photosynthesis, the process of leaf shedding, or abscission (from the Latin *ab*, meaning away, and *scindere*, meaning to cut) may also provide a mechanism for trees to expel toxins. In addition, these toxins littering the ground beneath the tree may inhibit growth of seeds from other tree species whilst allowing saplings of the parent tree to develop in the absence of competition.

butterflies and moths over-winter as eggs, caterpillars or pupae. Timing is crucial for these species, as emerge too early in springtime and a lack of food plants may result in starvation. Emerge too late, however, and competition may be intense or food plants may already contain high levels of chemical defences, making them less nutritious.

If you would like further information about any of the items in this newsletter or would like to contribute to the next Wild Woods Project Newsletter with articles, pictures, wildlife and wildflower sightings or just suggestions for articles please contact me at fmudd@durhamwt.co.uk or (0191) 584 3112.

Many thanks to the Friends of Pelaw Wood, the Friends of Flass Vale and the Friends of Witton Dene for their assistance in compiling this newsletter.

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