

# Harrogate District Biodiversity Action Group

Newsletter no.6 November 2011

## HDBAG receives an Award

Harrogate in Bloom was formed in 1990 to promote Harrogate through the Britain in Bloom competition. They receive support from local residents, businesses and organisations and every year show their appreciation at their annual awards ceremony. This September HDBAG was invited to provide a stand highlighting our achievements and give a short talk about our work with children and our Wildlife Friendly Garden Award scheme.

It was a surprise and great honour to be presented with the Christine Dean Trophy for work with Children for 2011. We know we spend a lot of time with children at schools, shows and events but it is most heartening to have this work recognised by another organisation. Thank you Harrogate in Bloom for your support.



Meanwhile we are still receiving successful entries for our Wildlife Friendly Garden Award Scheme. You can apply on-line or by post by simply ticking the boxes of the features in your garden and sending photos as proof. There are bronze, silver and gold levels depending on how wildlife friendly your garden is. HDBAG website is at [www.biodiversityaction.org.uk](http://www.biodiversityaction.org.uk) for ideas on how to improve your garden and download the application form.



## Ripon Workhouse Museum and Gardens

It was with great pleasure HDBAG was able to give a Gold Award to Ripon Workhouse Museum and Gardens. Workhouse gardens are rare survivals and volunteers have recently restored this one using fruit and vegetable varieties that were around in the 1890s. They are also busy making a wildflower meadow. You can meet the volunteers on Tuesday and Saturday mornings and buy their produce from the Workhouse Museum Shop. The Museum and the Gardens have access and facilities for wheelchair users.



## Gold to Tate House

Another Gold award was presented at Tate House on Wetherby Road. A crack team of volunteers from Age Concern UK had taken only a few months to whip the large gardens into fantastic shape for wildlife and residents alike. As well as a vegetable area and a pond there is a sensory garden courtyard that attracts residents, bees and the kitchen staff to its herbal delights.

HDBAG hopes to work closely with the garden volunteers of Age Concern UK in the future.

Comments and contributions to:-

✉ [biodiversityaction@gmail.com](mailto:biodiversityaction@gmail.com)

☎ 01423 523233

## Insect Hotels

Jennifer Hall continues to build fantastic insect hotels. Helen McCallum representing Swinton Court Good Neighbour Association requested help from HDBAG to build an insect hotel, thereby increasing the work that is going on to make the grounds of this housing area more wildlife friendly.

With the help of residents, both adults and children, the result was this magnificent structure. With supplies ready and help at hand it still takes a few hours to complete.



*First sort your supplies*



*Then work on the structure*



*Fill in, step back and admire*

## Busy, Busy ...

October was a busy month with several events offered and attended.

On the 15<sup>th</sup> Jill Warwick, a local moth expert, agreed to help us trap and identify moths at Pine Woods and in a typical urban garden in the Jennyfield area. Unfortunately it was a cold night, so cold the white ground sheet was icy, and not surprisingly the moths didn't come out to play and be counted.

At the Harrogate Central Nurseries in the Pine woods there was 1 Chestnut and 2 November moth to record. Jennyfield fared slightly better with 2 Silver Y, 2 November moth and 1 Blair's shoulder-knot identified.

Not many moths but it was a great morning thanks to Jill Warwick answering our many questions and sharing her enthusiasm for moths.

RHS Garden Harlow Carr invited HDBAG to provide a stand advertising our group at their Taste of Autumn Festival held on the 22 -23 October. We weren't present to answer questions but many brochures were taken so 'job done' in our aim to spread the word about being wildlife friendly in your garden.

For 'CSV Make a Difference Day' we revisited Birk Crag to clear more rhododendrons. Inspection of the cutting back of these invasive plants that was carried out in October 2010 showed we had succeeded in opening up the area for re-growth of native species of bilberry. Letting in light will also improve the habitat for the rare Chestnut Click Beetle which has been seen here.



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## Musings of a Wildlife Gardener (a personal view)

### Choosing my plant of the year

Dark November, season of mists, a time of the year to reflect on what each season in the garden has brought, and look forward to next year. And immediately brought to my attention if I look out of the window today, is my plant of the year: *Calamintha nepeta*. Mid November and it is still flowering as it has been since late August. Now I know it's been an unusual summer and autumn, but surely that is a plant which speaks excellent value for money? The bees and butterflies definitely agree with me as it has been covered in them.

*Calamintha nepeta* (or lesser calamint) is a neat plant covered in tiny scented flowers from late summer. Their colour is a delicate pale blue - to be "Strictly" topical the sort of colour for dancing a Viennese Waltz, certainly not an Argentine Tango. The plant doesn't become unruly, its tiny leaves and flowers growing to no more than a foot in height. It revels in a sunny, free drained site such as a wall top. The flowers are simple, but lots of them. I understand it is a wild flower only found in east and south east England, favouring sands and gravel.

Many years ago I lived in a house whose garden boasted a wall topped with this plant. I delighted in it then and carried the memory of the flower with me for many years, vowing that



one day I would look out for it again. It's not a plant that's easy to find admittedly. It deserves to be more widely known and appreciated. The plant we have now tapped me on the shoulder in the Plant Sales section of a National Trust property and begged to come home with us. As confirmed plantaholics what could we say? Back it came and hung on in a pot for a couple of years until we found it a permanent home this summer, since when it has rewarded us with the prettiest of displays much enhanced by Tortoiseshell butterflies and bumblebees.

My recommendation is keep a look out for it, and if it takes a while to track down it is well worth the wait.

Janice Scott

☺ Send us your thoughts and ideas ☺

✉ [biodiversityaction@gmail.com](mailto:biodiversityaction@gmail.com)



## The pen is mightier...

There has never been a better time to look for information on how to be wildlife friendly, eco, green etc. Regular columns appear weekly in local and national newspapers and then there are magazines with 'how to' sections.

In the November issue of Gardeners' World an article titled 'Take the wildlife garden challenge' posed questions about 10 key garden features. Your answers won points and as we know 'points mean prizes'. The prize in this case was the self awarded title of wildlife champion.

Don't forget HDBAG also has bronze, silver and gold Wildlife Friendly Garden Awards for you to apply for.

In The Guardian Weekend for 22 October, Lia Leendertz advised how to keep a lawn and be eco-friendly. The use of a push mower, regular mowing of weeds to keep them down rather than the use of toxic weed killer, growing micro clover as a fertilizer, physical scarifying and aerating of the lawn were all part of her regime.

(Personally, I justify my lawn as being wildlife friendly as it is an open space for birds to come and peck at apples and meal worms and hunt for garden worms. Allowing the self heal, speedwell and clover to spread keeps it all quite low level and I get more buzz from bees than the lawnmower. Ed.)

There is much on-line information for those with a computer. The Royal Horticultural Society and The Wildlife Trusts have got together to produce a very interesting monthly newsletter called 'Wild About Gardens'. Find it at [www.wildaboutgardens.org](http://www.wildaboutgardens.org).

## 2012

We are currently working up a calendar of events for 2012 that we hope you will partake in and enjoy.

To start the year right and blow away some cobwebs please join us at 11am on 2<sup>nd</sup> January 2012, outside the Harrogate Arms pub on Crag Lane at the back of Harlow Carr Gardens. We can either inspect the rhododendron work or walk the outside of Harlow Carr Gardens – weather dictates.

## Opportunities

We are always looking for people willing to help out for a few hours a month and support our many activities. In 2012 we are looking for support for a number of new initiatives. A variety of skills are needed but any willing hands are gratefully welcomed.

Examples:

- Preparation of business cases to present our initiatives to various organizations offering funding for community and conservation work.
- Marketing expertise to support, and guide, our busy team.
- Engagement of various groups of organizations and businesses throughout the District.
- Support for our schools officer, engaging with local schools and developing hands on activities, including the building of the marvelous insect hotels.
- Presentation material development to showcase all the wonderful things going on across the region.
- Running talks, presentations and activities at local shows and events.
- Engaging with other local groups and organizations ensuring the best efforts in co-operative working supporting all the positive work.
- Dog-walkers, bird watchers and anyone who enjoys being outdoors to provide feedback on special areas and sightings.
- Help with practical tasks.

The list of opportunities and possibilities is endless, so please chat to us about how you could be involved.

Contact us on:

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Visit our website for more information:

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