

Harrogate District Biodiversity Action Group

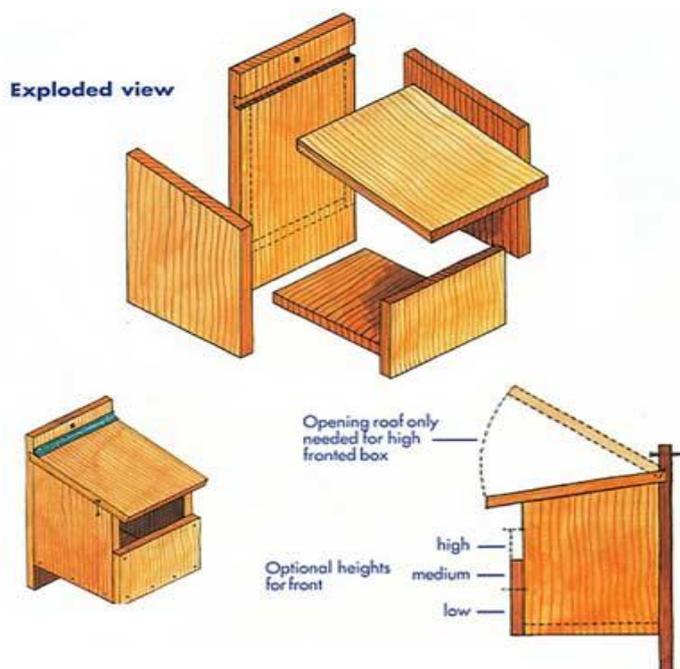
Newsletter no.8 May 2012

What have we been doing?

Since the last newsletter we have been following our 2012 Programme of Events and hope you have been able to join in on some of them.

In February at the annual General Meeting all the officers who were prepared to be re-elected were. This leaves us without a secretary so if you feel like lending a hand please get in touch. Duties are mainly attending committee meetings once a month and producing minutes and keeping a check on our email address and alerting committee members to relevant messages. So, mainly working from home but providing vital input.

February is traditionally the month to put up nestboxes – but first build your nestbox. Thanks to Marcel who cut out kits from donated outdoor quality plywood we were able to provide a nest box building afternoon at Harrogate Public Library. With help, fourteen children constructed their kits and excitedly took them away to put up in their gardens – definitely 'des res'.



If you would like to make your own nest box the instructions we used can be found at the [RSPB](http://www.rspb.org.uk) or British Trust for Ornithology websites. www.rspb.org.uk or www.bto.org

Comments and contributions welcomed.

Please contact Pamela Millen:-

✉ biodiversityaction@gmail.com

☎ 01423 523233

March is the month for planting young trees and we encouraged members to support Terry Knowles in his Rotary Carbon Offset project of planting trees in Nidderdale. Several of our members did help out working on sunny days and in driving sleet. Terry is raising funds for next year's planting and is one of the Waitrose Community Matters projects for the month of May. So, if you are shopping in Waitrose you can help by putting your green token in his collection box.

The indoor meeting for March was 'Gardening for Wildlife in springtime'. Many thanks to Andrew Willocks from RHS Harlow Carr for his interesting talk.

Newt Hunting by Torchlight was scheduled early in April at Rossett Nature Reserve. Many thanks to Dan McAndrew who found Smooth and Great Crested Newts for us to admire. It is good to know they are still there. Rossett Nature Reserve came about because of a young schoolboy finding the protected species of Great Crested Newt in one of the ponds before it was filled in for housing development.



April means Easter and school holidays and saw HDBAG back in the Harrogate Public Library with our 'Bug Hunt' and a seed planting session. We also had our information boards in the coffee area of the library for a couple of weeks which have generated interest in our group and activities.

Later in the month we were planting more pea seeds with children at St. Luke's Church on Leeds Road as part of their 'Let their be Light' event to celebrate the installation of their solar panels.

Unfortunately the Chestnut Click Beetle Hunt at Birk Crag in support of a Bug Life survey was postponed due to inclement weather (an understatement!).

It was a busy start to the year and there are many more events to come. We will be emailing reminders as their dates approach and hope you to see you at some of them. PM

What's Next?

May

Magic Moth Morning is Sunday 20th May, 9am – 11am. When we tried this last year the night temperature was so low we only had a few moths in the trap. Let's hope the weather picks up in the next couple of weeks. This event is in a group member's garden in Harrogate so numbers are limited. To book your place email HDBAG at biodiversityaction@gmail.com.

The following Sunday, 27th May 9.30am – 2pm we will be getting together for a Ripon Nature Walk. Sharing our knowledge of wildlife, we will walk around the various habitats.

For details of where to meet email HDBAG at biodiversityaction@gmail.com.

June

Saturday June 23rd sees us further afield, 'Exploring Nature' at Studfold with local naturalist Nigel Heptinstall

As part of National Insect week we will be offering a 'Bug Hunt' on Saturday 30th June with expert Robert Marshall.

July

Saturday 28th July join in a butterfly count at a Gold Award winning garden in Staveley.

Taking part in most HDBAG events is £1 for members, £2 non members.

Contact us at biodiversityaction@gmail.com for full details of events and to book your place.

A Wildlife Haven

Our Wildlife Friendly Garden Award Scheme acknowledges and appreciates the work that individuals and businesses are doing to enhance their own areas to work with nature. The regular events promote the idea of and ways of being wildlife friendly.

We have worked with Harrogate District Council and have the 'Harrogate District's Wildlife Haven Declaration' which was signed 15th July 2011. We are pleased to announce that HDC has given us permission to make a couple of their areas in Harrogate more wildlife friendly.

Rossett Nature Reserve has a public footpath running through it with closely cut grass verges on either side. We have been given permission to plant trees and wildflowers in the grassy area. We will cut the grass and flowers after they have had time to provide food for insects in the summer months.

Jennifer Hall, warden of Rossett Nature Reserve, has already started planting trees with funding from the Harrogate Soroptomists.



At the top of Valley Gardens, between the Ebor Rise entrance and the Pine Woods is an area that we are monitoring monthly to record what is already there and will be adding plants to increase food and shelter for insects.



On both projects we are working closely with council officers to maintain their high standard of care and attention whilst enhancing the habitats for wildlife.



National Insect Week 25 June – 1 July 2012

This event only comes along every 2 years so go to their website at

www.nationalinsectweek.co.uk

to see what is happening where, how to take part in insect surveys and download 'fun stuff for kids'.



Musings of a wildlife gardener (a personal view)

A view from my soapbox!

May I have a little rant? You may wish to dissociate yourself from my viewpoint, or it may give pause for thought...?

It seems to me paradoxical that at a time when we gardeners are learning to love wild flowers, incorporating them into our herbaceous borders or even making mini-wildflower meadows in our back gardens, we are seeing an increasing move to bring suburbia out into our countryside by planting up verges and banks with garden daffodils.

Has Wordsworth got a lot to answer for? I don't think so, because the daffodil he immortalised was the native narcissus pseudonarcissus, a much more restrained and delicate plant and a very different beast from the brassy, heavy thugs we see everywhere now and which take ages to die back. I have even read that Wordsworth's daffodils by Ullswater may themselves be under threat, out-competed by these bigger relatives!

A while ago I saw a photo of a daffodil covered in bees in the Bumblebee Conservation Trust newsletter. The caption said that daffodils are not very insect friendly and the fact that this one was so popular was a sign that the bees were starving. I have seen bumblebees visit daffodils in my garden but I don't think they are as popular as some of my other flowers.

It's not that I'm against the idea of planting up verges and banks to make them look floriferous and jolly, but let's choose some of the natives that would be better plants for our insects: primroses, cowslips, bluebells, ransoms, meadow cranesbill, hardhead, teasel, ox eye daisy, devil's bit scabious, etc etc. Many of these are now being sold by nurseries for us to use in our gardens and can make a wonderful, colourful contribution to the spring and summer scene.

I can't help but feel when I see a bank of primroses by the roadside, or ransoms clustered under a hedge bottom, they look far more attractive, with a delicate beauty that the big garden daffodil can never attain. As for the humble celandine, what can be prettier than a bank starred by these flowers?



So when it comes to planting up verges, let's go for it, but let's make the most of our native treasures and get everyone to learn to love them again before it's too late.

Thank you for listening. I will step down now.

Janice Scott

Bluebells – English or Spanish?

Another spring flower we love to see in the wild and in our gardens is the bluebell. The English bluebell with its narrower leaves and stems that bend over at the top are under threat from the larger Spanish bluebell and the hybrid of the two.

Native bluebells (*hyacinthoides nonscripta*) have a creamy white pollen not pale green or blue but need to be inspected as soon as the flowers open. Native bluebells also have flowers down only one side of the stem and the petals curl back tightly at the ends.

If you are getting rid of Spanish bluebells do not put them into compost heaps, recycle bins etc. Make sure they cannot reproduce and spread by putting them in a plastic bag and squashing and destroying the bulbs before putting the bag containing the pulp in the dustbin. **PM**

