

Harrogate District Biodiversity Action Group

Newsletter no.20 - May 2015

What have we been doing?

AGM 7th March

Thanks once again to RHS Harlow Carr for the use of the Bramall Learning Centre.

The formal business was completed and the 2015 officers of HDBAG are:-

Chair - Lynda Fussell

Vice Chair - Philip Woffinden

Treasurer - Rob Tipler

Secretary - Pamela Millen

Webmaster - Malcolm Jones

Membership - Bernadette Reid

Media - Sandra Mason

Facebook - Lynda Fussell

Planning - Carolyn Rothwell

Events/Newsletter - Pamela Millen

Valley Gardens - Penny Anderson

Rossett Local Nature Reserve - Jennifer Hall

Then followed a presentation '**Mitigation for Biodiversity and the Planning System**' by Dan McAndrew, Rural Strategy Officer for Harrogate Borough Council. Advice was given on how to make informed comments on the biodiversity aspects of planning applications, how to include the consideration of wildlife and help reduce the devastation of their habitats. The complete presentation is available for reading and download on our website. Visit www.biodiversityaction.org.uk, and follow the links to 'News' and '[HDBAG AGM](#)'.

Bird watch at Ripon Spa Gardens

27th April

5th Ripon Rainbows, Brownies and Guides all had a turn at making cheerio bird feeders and fat balls and then had a guided tour around the gardens looking for birds. The evening started sunny for the little ones but the guides really showed their metal by carrying on and enjoying the event despite heavy downpours of rain.



Dip into Nature

Harrogate Library 27th May

It was a privilege to work alongside Keith Wilkinson from Bilton Conservation Group who provided the 'Dip'. Children and parents were enthralled at being able to get their hands as well as nets into the tubs of water holding frogs and newts and so much more.

We provided additional activities making mini bug hotels and planting up nasturtiums to take home.

What next?

Wildcard Art Competition

Harrogate District libraries have acted as advertising and pick up points for entries to our Wildcard Art competition which is running from **1 April to 19th June**. There is still time to enter – request an entry card by emailing us at biodiversityaction@gmail.com.

Entries will be judged in three age groups with prizes as follows:

5-10 years: 1st - Learn to draw animals
2nd - Watercolour paint box
3rd - Set of brush pens

11-16 years: 1st - Learn to draw animals
2nd - Sketch pad
3rd - Sketching and charcoal pencils

17+ years: 1st - Wildlife painting by local artist Yvonne Elvin
2nd - Drawing and painting animals
3rd - Watercolour pencil set

All prize winners receive an annual membership to HDBAG.

One overall winner will receive an award from Harrogate in Bloom at their awards ceremony at the Old Swan Hotel, Harrogate in September 2015.

The best entries will displayed at Harrogate Library from July 4th.

Annual Moth Morning

Saturday 4th July 2015 9-11am

At Sawley nr Ripon with moth expert Jill Warwick

For details of the event please email biodiversityaction@gmail.com

Members: free Non-members: £2

Comments and contributions welcomed.

Please contact Pamela Millen:-

✉ biodiversityaction@gmail.com

☎ 01423 523233

Volunteer Opportunities

As usual at this time of year everyone can help remove just a little of the invasive Himalayan Balsam. It will never be eradicated but we can keep some selected places under control.

HDBAG will be attending to our patch in Valley Gardens on Sunday 7th June 10 – 12noon. We will be working near the entrance to Ebor Rise so please come along and remember to bring gardening gloves and wear long sleeves to protect arms from nettles. Keep a watch out for future dates via our website, Facebook and Twitter.

Countryside Ranger Sam Walker would be glad of your help at the following events.

Contact Sam on sam.walker@harrogate.gov.uk or mobile: 07525 988288 for details of volunteering opportunities.

Friday 12th June - Hell Wath, Ripon

We will be working near the River Skell to halt the advance of the balsam into the more wildflower rich areas of the site. Meet onsite by the playing fields at 10:30 or alternatively there is space in Sam's vehicle if anyone wants a lift – pick up at 10:00 from the loading bay outside the conference centre on Kings Road.

Friday 19th June - Grange Quarry, Harrogate

At Grange Quarry we will be following on from the progress made by a small number of committed volunteers over the last few years. Their hard work and dedication as had huge impact already. Similar to Hell Wath we will be focussing on protecting the wildflower rich areas of the site. We will meet in the Pets at Home car park at 10:30 or alternatively there is space in Sam's vehicle if anyone wants a lift – pick up at 10:20 from the loading bay outside the conference centre on Kings Road.

LOCAL GREEN SPACES

Proposals for Local Green Spaces Action Required by Friday 26 June 2015

Is there a green space near you? As part of the Harrogate District Local Plan you can nominate an area that is special to your local community. It is necessary to gather evidence from members of your community and submit them to the council by **Friday 26th June**.

If approved the site will be included within the draft Harrogate District Local Plan which is used to make planning and development decisions.

More information is available on our [website, biodiversityaction.org.uk](http://www.biodiversityaction.org.uk), including links to relevant forms etc. If you would like help please contact HDBAG. Information can be gathered via Facebook, Instagram, Twitter etc.

There are no restrictions on the type of green space which can be designated as Local Green Space. Allotments or urban spaces that provide a tranquil oasis could be designated. Land which is partly developed with structures such as sports pavilions, boating lakes or war memorials could also be appropriate.

The key characteristic for the designation should be the particular importance to the local community.

Information on how to proceed can be found via the links on our website www.biodiversityaction.org.uk along with direct access to the form which needs to be completed for the submission.

Finding a significant green space which has public support for designation as a Local Green Space is only the first step. The next step will be to collate the evidence to show the reasons for its significance to the community.

There are many artefacts which communities produce and can be used to show an area's significance. Take the time to think of individuals, clubs and groups who would use the area and who may already have documents (newsletters, blogs, minutes of meetings, photographs) which show how the areas are used and how often. They may also be easy ways of accessing large numbers of people for petitions and providing letters of support.

There are a number of beautiful green areas in and around Harrogate and across the wider District. Please get together with the local groups in your community and prepare a submission to have all the special areas designated as Local Green Spaces. It is essential for the local communities to show an interest and provide evidence of why an area should be designated.

As HDBAG, we would be very happy to support your proposal if you would like us to. Currently we are focused on preparing a proposal for [Killinghall Moor](#).



2000 view towards David Wilson homes over proposed local green space

Musings of a wildlife gardener (a personal view)

Springing into growth??

It's spring - hurrah! Time for all of us gardeners to start cultivating our patches. Or is it? We seem to behave more as if we were at war with nature, rather than wishing to nurture it. Whether it is the unnecessarily wide swathes of grass and wild flowers mown down in their prime on our highways, or the weed killer attacks on plants like cow parsley on the little lanes near me, when I venture away from home, I feel as if I am walking into a war zone. Just where are Philip Larkin's "[lost lanes of Queen Anne's lace](#)" now? Quite what do we fear from all these plants that if we don't maintain the iron hand of control, they will take over in some Little Shop of Horrors-type way?

At best we seem to do things because that's the way we've always done them. But to me, with climate change increasingly making its presence felt and many well-loved species of flora and fauna at threat of extinction, there has never been a more urgent time to take a step back and reconsider why we do things in the way we do and decide if in the 21st century there is a better way, a way of living in more harmony with the natural world, upon which at the end of the day, we are all dependent for our own survival.

I get the feeling that for many people our native flora and fauna are something we feel vaguely apologetic about. They're not glamorous or exotic enough. The flowers are too small and delicate, the birds are too brown, and the insects too boring and harmless. In a "super-size me" world of instant gratification and excess, our wildlife just doesn't cut the mustard.

As a British wildlife lover I find this profoundly sad. But, as was put to me recently, attitudes can change, and it is worth acting and speaking out as you think right, in the hope of slowly bringing about this change.

Plantlife have launched
[Road Verge Campaign 2015](#)



Is part of the problem that we are all in such a rush these days? We don't give ourselves time to look at things properly, to allow the beauty of the natural world on our doorstep to work its magic on us - it is something we are simply dashing past.

Perhaps we can fall in love with our own wild flowers and grasses all over again. Some have been celebrated by our poets for centuries. Take the daisy: Chaucer described it as his favourite flower, the only plant which could "soften all my sorrow", while Shelley likened daisies to earthbound stars. Now go and enjoy the daisies on The Stray before they are mown away; they certainly cheered my heart when I walked across yesterday.

The [dandelion](#) has perhaps had a more troubled relationship with us over the decades, but has it been too much maligned? [Dandelions](#) are an invaluable source of nectar to early flying insects. A field full of the little sunshines of dandelion bloom is a cheerful sight on the dullest spring day.

We can put the leaves in our salads and make wine/ coffee from flowers/roots. And how lovely is the name - a corruption of "dent de lion" or lion's tooth, referring to the shape of the leaf. All in all the dandelion is a survivor and worthy of some time and respect from us.



As a wildlife gardener I realise the artificial distinction between garden plants and wild flowers has become increasingly irrelevant to me. Little by little more wild flowers have crept into our garden, either by our planting them or by their own design. At worst we may have to do battle with the odd plant in the wrong place (AKA weed), at best we end up with some delightful planting combinations. For example, at the moment the unplanned arrival of [cowslip](#), [Welsh poppy](#) and shining [cranesbill](#) provides a harmonious group of flower, form and foliage. We mere humans couldn't have done it nearly so well.



I did a quick head count of plants currently flowering in our garden and I would say a good half of them are in fact British natives, but because they are combined in a garden setting most people wouldn't realise. Visitors here might well admire the fresh green leaves topped by masses of tiny white flowers which is garlic mustard lighting up a dark corner, but transplant it to a verge somewhere and I fear it would be abused as a weed and get the chop.

Many plants are now accepted as garden flowers but are in fact British natives: [bistort](#), [globeflower](#), [water avens](#), [marsh marigold](#), [primrose](#), [cowslip](#) can all be found in garden centres these days.



But we plan to rehabilitate many more by finding them a home in the wildlife garden, keeping them going ready for the day when the rest of the world is ready for their subtle beauty - [moschatele](#) or "[town-hall clock](#)" is an example of this. Do we wildlife gardeners have a role as guardians in this - find room for them in the garden and help more of the plants to survive that currently struggle out in the big bad world? I do hope so.

Janice Scott

Not yet renewed your membership for 2015?

Membership fees have stayed the same at £10 single or £15 for a family. Please send your subscription:-

1. By mail to HDBAG c/- 30 Lindrick Way, Harrogate, HG3 2SU
2. Electronic Transfer to HDBAG, HSBC Account no, 12225778 Branch code 40-23-12 with your surname and initial as the reference
3. By PayPal – go to our website at www.biodiversityaction.org.uk and follow the links.

We can then send you a renewal pack containing a free entry to RHS Harlow Carr and some seeds plus you will continue to receive this newsletter.



Are you inspired by Janice's musings? Your garden, your thoughts and your support for wildlife can make a difference.

Please join us and help our local wildlife.

Follow the links throughout the newsletter for more information