

# Harrogate District Biodiversity Action Group

Newsletter no.23 - May 2016

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

## Annual General Meeting

After a tour of the Horticap grounds we settled down to the AGM on Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> March. Official business results are as follows.

### Office

Chair  
Vice Chair  
Treasurer  
Secretary  
Webmaster  
Membership  
Media(Twitter)  
Media(Facebook)  
Media (Public Relations)  
Awards  
Events  
Planning  
Valley Gardens  
Newsletter  
Schools/Community  
Fundraising

### Officer

Lynda Fussell  
Philip Woffinden  
Rob Tipler  
Pamela Millen  
Malcolm Jones  
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Sandra Mason  
Lynda Fussell  
Vacant  
Sandra Mason  
Pamela Millen  
Carolyn Rothwell  
Penny Anderson  
Pamela Millen  
Jennifer Hall  
Vacant

### Representatives:

Andrew Willocks RHS Harlow Carr  
Carolyn Rothwell Pinewoods Conservation Group  
Dan McAndrew Harrogate Borough Council  
Jennifer Hall Rossett Local Nature Reserve

Official business was followed by two very interesting presentations from new groups in the area.

Chris Beard from Hookstone and Stonefall Action Group ([HASAG](#)) gave a detailed talk about the area the group, which was set up in November 2015, has taken responsibility for.

[Stonefall Park](#) was a quarry and brickworks that was filled in and capped and has problems with subsidence and methane gas. However, the trees planted in 1993 have thrived and need trimming. There are plans to develop a wildlife area in the old BBX area and extend the footpath to make a circular walk.

For the narrow area known as the 'Panhandle' the record of wildlife seen over the years is a spur to maintaining and enhancing the habitat.

In the [Hookstone Wood](#) area work is being carried out to revive the old 'Living Bridge'.

Comments and contributions welcomed.

Please contact Pamela Millen:-

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

☎ 01423 523233

Catherine Baxter from [Woodland Community Garden](#) outlined all the work that has been achieved since 2013, with support from many local groups.

Out of sight behind the [Methodist Church](#) on Wetherby Road they have constructed and planted raised beds for fruit and veg. There is a sensory garden with a mosaic and there have been ecology projects started with 6<sup>th</sup> form biology students from [Harrogate Ladies College](#) and [Harrogate Grammar School](#) to assess what increases biodiversity.

Volunteers are welcome to help on the last Sunday of the month from 2-4pm but anyone can visit at any time to enjoy the peace and quiet.

We ended the meeting presenting [Horticap](#) with the Wildlife Friendly Workplace award for 2016. This is the third consecutive year that [Horticap](#) has received the award. A wonderful example of community, wildlife and business all working in true harmony.



## 2016 Membership

Members present at the AGM took advantage of renewing their subscriptions, if you haven't renewed yet we would love to hear from you.

Membership runs from January to December 2016 and we hope you will continue to support the group.

Fees have stayed the same at £10 single or £15 for a family.

Please send your subscription:-

1. By mail to HDBAG c/- 102 Leeds Road, Harrogate, HG2 8HB
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 <http://biodiversityaction.org>

## Hedgehog Awareness Week May 1st – 7th

Hedgehog numbers are declining but we can try to make their lives easier around our own homes.

In the garden there are several things we can do:-

- Remember metaldehyde slug pellets can kill – try alternatives or pick up dead slugs and snails before the hedgehogs get to them.
- Keep all netting a foot above the ground to allow hedgehogs to get under it and not get stuck.
- Provide escape routes from ponds and provide a shallow dish of water for all wildlife.
- Cover drain holes to stop them becoming blocked by hedgehogs and leaves.
- When using wood preservative protect the bottom 18 inches of fences and sheds from hedgehogs who love to lick it but are then poisoned.
- Out and about
  - Collect and discard the elastic bands left by postmen that can entrap a hedgehog.
  - Also be aware the plastic rings to carry cans can also be a hazard.

Hedgehogs come out at night so if you see one in daylight it is probably sick – for advice or the telephone number of a local carer ring 01584 890801. [www.britishhedgehogs.org.uk](http://www.britishhedgehogs.org.uk)

### Put in a pond

Open up a nature or gardening magazine or turn on a gardening show on the TV and you will be encouraged to add a pond to your garden. Yes, all manner of wildlife will benefit from water in your garden and yes, the thought of actually constructing one can be quite daunting. There is also the problem of safeguarding children from falling in. At HDBAG we have always recognised the need for the provision of water in a garden be it a bird bath or a pond and include it in the habitat list of our Wildlife Friendly Garden Award.

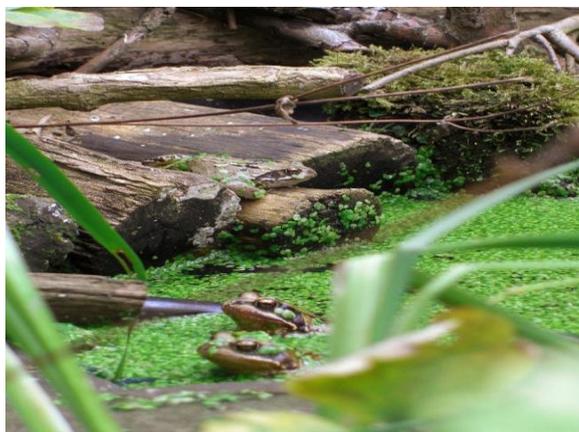
There are plenty of instructions around for building a pond of 60 – 100cms (2 – 3 ft) deep situated in an open, sunny area using either a preformed shape or a liner. An excellent site for instructions on how and why to build and maintain this size of pond can be found at [www.wildaboutgardens.org](http://www.wildaboutgardens.org).

Several years ago I decided I wanted a pond but did not have the vacant space for this size so I looked around for where and how I could fit something in.

The space I made available is in a border and although it is in semi-shade it has become a summer residence for frogs and a watering hole for birds and hedgehogs.

Indeed, when I am away in summer and not there to top up the bird baths I can rest assured there is some water always available.

Digging seemed like a good idea at first but enthusiasm and energy waned after a while. My pond finished at 100cm long, 70 cm wide and only 30cm at its deepest with sloping sides and a shelf to make it easy for critters that don't want to be in to get out. At this size the pvc liner was not hard to handle. The untidy edges of liner were disguised with logs, large pieces of broken pots and large stones which also provide shelter. Being in the border there are flowers and shrubs hiding it most of the year, visitors need to be told it is there. The plants and the log pile at the back between the pond and the hedge give plenty of cool cover and hibernating space. Between 7 and 11 frogs visit in summer to just chill. They arrived of their own accord, no doubt from neighbours' ponds.



Even though the pond is small it has never completely frozen, indeed one day last year whilst topping up bird feeders and ensuring there was water available I saw a frog under the ice. Rather than try to crack the ice and jolt the frog I did the 'boiling water in a container sitting on the surface to melt a hole into the ice' to ensure fresh air could get in. A tin kept back from recycling is ideal.

My little pond has given me hours of pleasure and I would recommend making the effort to find a place to tuck one into your garden.

**Pam Millen**

Follow the links throughout the newsletter  
for more information

### Wildlife and Farming

Wildlife conservation and commercial farming working together is the aim of the Countryside Restoration Trust. To find out more about their work, their farms and how you can help go to their website [www.countrysiderestorationtrust.com](http://www.countrysiderestorationtrust.com).

## Musings of a wildlife gardener (a personal view)

### Waiting for Spring

A friend of mine recently described her state of mind at this time of the year (April) as "waiting". She had seen swallows elsewhere, but it didn't count until they arrived back on her patch. It got me thinking about my own sense of anticipation at this time. 'Waiting' can be a word to fill me with a sense of dread (viz the dentist's waiting room), but this waiting for the return of summer migrants, for queen bumblebees to emerge from hibernation, for the veg seeds we sowed to pop up and show themselves, for the buds to appear on the fruit bushes, is a most pleasurable anticipation of spring. Factor in a little warm sunshine and blue sky (such as is outside my window as I type) and oh how hard it is to stay indoors!

As wildlife gardeners can we hasten that spring feeling along, by what we do on our own patch? I think so. If we feed the birds and provide bird boxes they may well decide to stay with us to build their nests. But what we plant can also make a big difference. We now have a large clump of ivy cultivated over 10 years and it seems set to provide hectic multi-storey living this year. [Blackbirds](#) have been busy taking nesting materials into the heart, while a very busy [wren](#) has been dashing in and out of another bit of the ivy with beakfuls of moss.

As well as providing thick cover for nests, we see it as vital to provide good flowers for the first insects of the year. We are lucky to have a wetland area where we can plant [pussy willow](#) - a much undervalued shrub/tree. With greater drainage there probably isn't so much of it in the wild, but on an early sunny spring day ours can be buzzing with [honey bees](#), [bumblebees](#) and other insects. This in turn brings in the tits and first migrants such as [willow warblers](#), combing the branches to pick off the insects. Pussy willow would definitely make it into my top 10 of spring planting.

Also on that list would be [snowdrops](#) and [primroses](#). Never mind the [daffodils](#), which everyone seems to major on, I think these characters are so much more charming.

Another spring plant that lends itself to a mass planting is the [pulmonaria](#) or [lungwort](#). Gardeners have developed many different forms of this plant over the years. Some have spotty leaves, some plain green. Flower colour can range from white through pink to a deep blue. All seem to be attractive to bees, and the more you develop drifts of [pulmonaria](#), the more you will find them buzzing on a sunny spring day.

We're particularly keen on '[Blue Ensign](#)'. With plain green leaves and deep blue flowers fading to indigo/violet, it seems to flower for ages and associates well with [primroses](#).



Many [pulmonarias](#) add to their attractions by the spotting on the leaves, as well as their flower colour. We (and our local bees) are also keen on '[Sissinghurst White](#)', *pulmonaria rubra*, *p. longifolia* and last but not least, '[Stillingfleet Meg](#)'. Why not plan an area given over to several different types so that you end up with a mass planting - always better for enticing the bees?



It is worth visiting [open gardens](#) at this time of the year to get an idea of [pulmonarias](#) in flower, e.g. [Stillingfleet Lodge](#) near York, where Vanessa Cook holds a national collection. This garden is open this Sunday 8 May ☺.

Of course there are many open gardens in the Harrogate district where pulmonarias will feature. So my advice is go and seek out those lungworts, decide which you like and buy, or beg from friends, as many as you can, to give next year's queen bumblebees a real treat when they buzz into your garden.

**Janice Scott**



## 'Till we meet again'

### Here are some dates for your diary

**May 23<sup>rd</sup> 7pm** at the Broadbelt Hall in Glasshouses a film entitled 'Living with fracking'. Members of HDBAG have been discussing what the possible effects the various processes of fracking may have on wildlife.

Joanne and Steve White live in Ryedale and are concerned about the proposed fracking in their area. They decided to make their own visit to Pennsylvania and went to meet many of the people that their MP had spoken to on his visit. The film, 'Living with Fracking', is the result of that trip. Steve and Joanne have been invited by Nidderdale Climate & Environment Group to show their film and answer questions about it. Coming with them is Dr Tim Thornton, a retired Ryedale GP, to talk on the health impacts of fracking.

Although wildlife hadn't been mentioned during their trip it follows that it will affect it, as well as children, water and loss of habitat. There are no licences as yet for the Harrogate district, but members have been told that landowners in Nidderdale have already been approached by companies with a view to moving in.

**June 1st 2 -3.30** at Harrogate Library, HDBAG and Ripon and Harrogate Beekeepers will be looking at all sorts of bees and how important they are as pollinators. Half term interest for 5 – 11 year olds.

**June 9 – 11** is national Moth night and the theme for this year is Hawk-moths. To take part go to [www.mothnight.info](http://www.mothnight.info)



**June 4 – 12** is [Cherishing Churchyards](http://www.caringforgodsacre.org.uk) week. [HDBAG](http://www.caringforgodsacre.org.uk) will be sending out a questionnaire to encourage you to sit for a while in a church yard of your choice and list what you see and then let us know. Churchyards often contain diverse plant and animal life and often have distinctive and veteran trees. For more information go to [www.caringforgodsacre.org.uk](http://www.caringforgodsacre.org.uk)

**July 23<sup>rd</sup>** HDBAG will once again be at Studfold for Bug Hunting day. This event is one of many of the Flowers of the Dales Festival and is held in National Insect Week which runs from **20 – 26th July**. For this and other events at Studfold (near Lofthouse) go to [www.studfoldtrails.co.uk](http://www.studfoldtrails.co.uk)

**July 15th – August 7th** is the time for the Big Butterfly Count. Plenty of time to download your identification sheet and then record your sightings at their website [www.bigbutterflycount.org](http://www.bigbutterflycount.org)



*Your garden, your thoughts and your support for wildlife can make a difference*

### 'Swarm of Bees' Printmaking Project

Artist and beekeeper [Laney Birkhead](http://www.laneybirkhead.com) is hoping to print 50,000 honey bees in an artwork aimed at raising awareness at the plight of bees and other pollinators. She is holding workshops where large numbers of people can enjoy hand printing bees onto fabric. The final piece of artwork will be a combination of all the fabric fragments done at each workshop, these will be sewn together to make one very large original print. [www.laneybirkhead.com](http://www.laneybirkhead.com)

The print will be exhibited at:

- Inspired by Gallery, North York Moors Centre, Danby July 22 – August 9, and
- Sunny Bank Mills Gallery, Farsley, Leeds October 22 – November 20.

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



Did you know there is a [National Pollinator Strategy](http://www.gov.uk). It is a Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) initiative that was launched in 2014. Many groups are working with Defra to improve and enhance food and habitat for pollinators. Network Rail and the Highways Agency are sympathetically managing their motorway verges and railway embankments. [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) [www.beesneeds.org.uk](http://www.beesneeds.org.uk)