



# A ROBERT'S REEDS DECEMBER 2014 No. 4



*The Volunteer Newsletter of the Anne Carpmael Charitable Trust, which owns and manages Withymead Nature Reserve and Little Meadow Reserve in Goring .*

*Britain's wildlife is wonderful, but also sadly in decline. The Trust is run entirely by volunteers and aims to boost biodiversity in the area, both directly via practical conservation measures and indirectly by inspiring local people to enjoy wildlife and help to save it.*



## **NEW!** Withymead 'Specials'

*As well as our regular 1st-Saturday-in-the-month Volunteer days, we now have **short & sweet** 'Specials': **1-hour sessions** followed by tea, biscuits and a chat. The first involved planting 500 native Bluebell bulbs along the Ridgeway path at Withymead on 15th November - thank you to all those who came & got the job nicely done! Native Bluebells are endangered & also important nectar sources for bees - more details on the website Conservation & News pages: [www.withymead.org](http://www.withymead.org). See the events section on page 4 for the next 'Special' (30 Dec.)*

## WILDLIFE NEWS



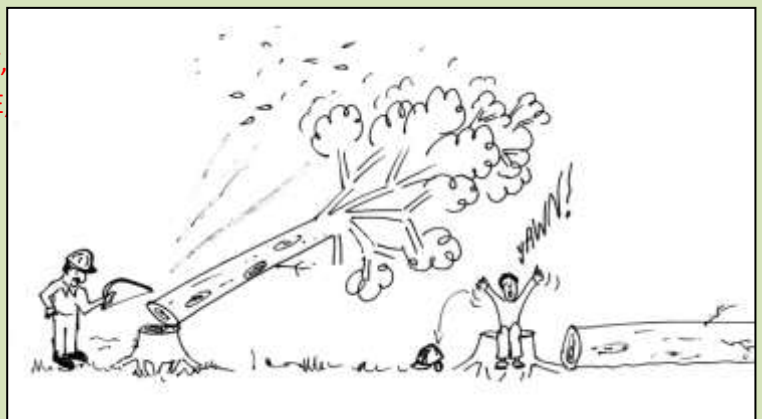
*The winter thrushes - Redwings with a few fieldfares, have arrived at Withymead from Scandinavia. Up to 50 are feeding on Hawthorn, Guelder Rose and Ivy berries, characteristically chattering as they go. Ivy doesn't harm trees and is very important for wildlife - it flowers late in the year providing crucial nectar for insects when other*



*flowers have finished, and has abundant berries for the birds in winter. We have a few little Goldcrests "see, see, see-ing" in upper branches too just now.*

*Top photo Redwing © Andreas Trepte; bottom Fieldfare © Arnstein Rønning)*

**TREE FELLING 'ELFIN SAFETY' - STAY ALERT, KEEP YOUR DISTANCE WEAR A HELMET! →**



**Book-keeper update:** Last month we asked for a book-keeper and three people volunteered. Thank you **Chance**, Michelle & Tracey,



## Fund-raising update and launch of new exciting Wildlife Project:

Photo ©Holger Gröschl Wikipedia



*Tiegan*, having raised over £50, has elected to spend it on Honeysuckle to be planted at the next Volunteer Day on 6th December. She will project manage a reintroduction programme at Withymead for

Photo ©Sannse



the *White Admiral* butterfly - this has declined greatly in the UK recently - the larvae are completely dependent on native *Honeysuckle* leaves. Ten experimental plants will be carefully positioned, tended & monitored; hopefully to be followed by many more. Once enough honeysuckle is established the reintroduction of the butterfly via eggs can begin, probably in 2 or 3 years time. Native honeysuckle is a fabulous plant for all kinds of wildlife too providing nectar & leaves for invertebrates in summer & berries for birds and mammals in winter.

**Fund-raising update: New Library and Mammal Surveying.** Thanks to *Tracey* for nominating us & 'The Country Neighbour Association' for donating £500. This will be spent partly on books for the developing Study Centre wildlife & nature conservation library (available for use on Mondays / Wednesdays (& Sundays in future) and will also be a lending library. We'll buy Mammal surveying equipment too to be used in conjunction with the newly-formed *Oxfordshire Mammal group* - it's great that they will do monitoring, training and events with us in 2015



**Little Meadow Reserve:** *Stephen* helped put up dormouse, bat & bird boxes in the native thicket. Dormice use boxes for breeding in the relative absence of large natural holes in trees these days. Watch out for an event with the Oxfordshire Mammal Group in the New Year - we hope to do a dormouse survey with them at the reserve. NB. Dormouse event in January - see next edition!

← Dormouse breeding box.

**Proper Willow Felling!** →

Thank you to *Mike*, *Bill*, *Richard* and *Robert* who worked together to remove big Willows overhanging our neighbours' garden.

Phew! That was a magnificent effort!



**New 'Friends' Programme Volunteer team members needed 😊:** Could you help plan & implement a new 'Friends' of the Trust launch? 'Friends' commit to a small annual, financial outlay to help their charity, & receive some exclusive benefits. This is good for publicising our cause & will help fund local conservation measures. It should be an interesting role creatively producing the whole scheme from scratch

## WILDLIFE CLUB NEWS:

Everybody achieved their 'Wildlife Team' badges this month, having worked together extremely well over an extended period.

Three members, Olivia, Abi and Beth, achieved their 'Wildlife Art' badges too. The children design their own badges for their Wildlife Club kit bags & receive a small prize on reaching 1000 points per badge. All other members are doing well too! The next badge will be their 'Wildlife 100' badge - a challenge to identify



Prize-giving



& know about 100 native wildlife species. Thanks to **Claire** for volunteering to help with the Club when needed.

See the Wildlife Club's **videos** on the new website 'Children's Page' or on the 'News Video archive' pages - watch 'How to make a booklet' + 'How to make an origami swan'. New videos every week! Coming soon - 'Making a cuddly Christmas decoration'.

← Thanks to **Shirley** for her cuddly, soft Christmas decorations which inspired the children & adorn the Christmas 'tree'.

### Monday Morning Brews Club:

We brew tea & coffee (+ eat cake), enjoy each other's company and do a nice mix of light gardening and conservation tasks from 10am - 1pm each Monday. We are currently tidying and refurbishing the long-standing pet graveyard at Withymead which has some nice features and garden plants. Next, Robert is going to make a neat picket fence around it with a gate and path - it will look good adjacent to the



wild annual flowers next Spring. We'll report on the picket fence progress next time.

Hedgehog memorial stone with a moss blanket round it. →

← Shirley tidying graveyard.



### LOCAL WILDLIFE 'HOTSPOTS' TO SPOT ... 'SPOT'

Do you know an area locally which used to be good for some particular wildlife but isn't anymore? Let us know & we'll investigate to see if anything can be done; we've 1 project already. to report back on next time...

.....As G.M. Hopkins said ↗

"What would the world be, once bereft  
Of wet and of wildness? Let them be left  
O let them be left, wildness and wet;  
Long live the weeds and the wilderness  
yet."

From the poem 'Inversnaid' (1881)

**WITHYMEAD WILDLIFE CLUB CHRISTMAS CARDS FOR SALE: ANY PROFIT will go to run the Club.** £5 for a pack of 5 large, colourful, beautifully-drawn cards by the children.

Sonning Common Green Gym, Wallingford Green Gym and our own volunteers all worked really hard getting the ground ready for the Cornfield Annual seeds to go in to 5 different, old lawn areas at Withymead Nature Reserve. The Corn Flower, Poppy, Corn Marigold, Chamomile and Corncockle should flower next spring and summer providing nectar for the invertebrates so important to the natural food-web. More details on archive News [www.withymead.org](http://www.withymead.org). **STOP PRESS: THE SEEDS ARE GROWING!**

It's bonfire season now as we gradually reduce the non-native trees, replacing them with planted native ones which provide food for wildlife. Volunteers enjoyed a well-earned, bonfire-cooked, jacket potato & trimmings lunch afterwards:



Wallingford Green Gym, Sonning Common Green Gym and Withymead volunteers

The opened-up view now



### The Inlet clearance programme:

David, Richard and Robert have begun clearing trees to let more light in & improve water quality. This dark channel, part of the launch chute for Saunders' boats 100 years ago had been surveyed by volunteers & during our freshwater invertebrates course - the results were not good prompting an improvement programme.

A non-native Horse Chestnut will be felled as the leaves poison ground & water, even leading to fish deaths.

**STOP PRESS:** KINGFISHER NEWLY OFTEN PERCHING ON INLET – NO FISH VISIBLE IN LEAFY SHALLOWS – IS IT JUST HOPEFUL OR CATCHING INSECTS? WE'LL INVESTIGATE & REPORT NEXT TIME...

### WHAT'S HAPPENING SOON...

**Saturday 6th December - Christmas Volunteer Session and Party 10am - 1pm** - We'll be planting the 2nd stage of our Bridleway Wildlife Hedge  
**At 12.15pm** Christmas festivities and food!

**Saturday 13th December - Christmas Guided walk (2.30pm), refreshments and slide show (3.30pm). Please RSVP!**

**Withymead 'Special' Tuesday 30 December 10 - 11am** (Wallingford Green Gym are also volunteering this day from 10am - 1pm. Everyone is welcome to stay for the whole session with them if they want to). The task is planting the wildlife hedge.

**Monday Morning Brews Club - 10.00am-1.00 pm weekly.** See piece on page 3.

**Friday 5th Dec. Regular, 1st-Friday-in-the-month 'Moth Night'** from dusk 'til late - join our volunteer moth experts at Withymead Study Centre to monitor these fascinating creatures by a harmless light trap.



Contact us at Withymead Nature Reserve, Bridleway, Goring on Thames, Oxfordshire, RG8 0HS  
 Tel: 01491 872265 or 01491 875357 (Mobile No. 07553 112447) [www.withymead.org](http://www.withymead.org)  
 Email: [info@withymead.org](mailto:info@withymead.org) for info. & to receive email newsletters monthly.