

Manhood Wildlife and Heritage Group



Newsletter

Winter 2013

Volume 6 No 4

OPENING LINES

In October the Manhood Wildlife and Heritage Group was 16 years old and the HLF-funded Water Vole project reached its halfway point. In addition the group was greatly assisted by the arrival of The Conservation Volunteer Working holidaymakers, composed of a dozen people. Together with MWHG volunteers the holidaymakers performed a huge amount of work and the good news is that they wish to return next year.

Bill Martin and the publications group involving Peter White (maps), Sue Martin (illustrations), Carole Hampton and Pam Barnes (design and production) spent the greater part of the last year working on a *Walks Around Sidlesham* booklet. The walks were tried out as part of the SWALKS' (Sidlesham Walks and Lunch Klub group) programme and the first print run sold out in less than three weeks! Congratulations to all involved.

Bill and Sue at the launch



Photo © 2013 Jill Sutcliffe

In mid-October MWHG received funding from the Ernest Cook Trust for wetlands communication which is greatly appreciated. This money has been supplemented by funds from the Manhood Peninsula Partnership which will enable us to provide suitable educational materials in line with the recently issued National Curriculum; and, to produce a management plan for a Parish on the peninsula which will help us bid for a landscape-wide project to improve the condition of the network of rifes and ditches.

Unfortunately, not all funding applications have been successful and MWHG is grateful to both the CDC Environment Unit and to Sussex Wildlife Trust for their support and involvement in two such applications. The Mohamed bin Zayed Species Conservation Fund has just emailed me explaining that they have received nearly 500 applications for funding which they will be assessing before letting people know in late December if they have been successful. These are the sorts of pressures on funds these days – less money around and more groups seeking it.

The second Eileen Savill award was presented. Councillor Heather Caird, leader of CDC, attended and said how thrilled she was to be involved as practical conservation work is a passion of hers. All the recipients have contributed greatly to the environment on the Manhood Peninsula and Joe Savill outlines this on page 8.

In November, the Environment Agency (EA) celebrated the opening of the Medmerry open coastal realignment site, the largest such project in England. In timely fashion Adrian Thomas of the RSPB attended the MWHG AGM held at the end of October and outlined the project from the start to the present day. His entertaining presentation included some excellent moving images supplied by the BBC showing the peninsula from the air. These were supplemented by footage of the water rushing in once the beach had been breached!

As active participating members of the Medmerry Stakeholders Advisory Group we were invited to the formal opening on November 4th which was led by Lord Chris Smith, Chair of the EA and recently we have been invited to join the EA Catchment Planning partnership representing the MP.

Some members of MWHG are experiencing difficult times and our thoughts are with them. In particular, our former newsletter editor, Gina Scott, has just come out of hospital following a rather tricky knee operation. All best wishes for a speedy and effective recovery. Just no cartwheels yet.

Seasonal Greetings to all our members and their families.

Jill Sutcliffe



VICE CHAIR WRITES

I have been off the scene for almost a year, Jill insisted on calling it a Sabbatical. However reading the definition of this it came nowhere close to that.

Thanks for all the support and messages during that dark time. A special mention to the Boss (Jill Sutcliffe) who managed to turn up frequently clutching bottles of what appeared to be - and subsequent tests proved to be - alcoholic grape juice.

I have resumed my previous role as Vice Chair. We have decided to split the Chair roles as Jill has indicated she would like to stand down possibly in about May 2014. To this end it was decided that I would chair the Management Committee meeting and look after that side of things.

Personally I have also since March been co-opted as a Councillor at Selsey Town Council. So far I have managed to keep separate the MWHG involvement from my Council duties. However I have to ensure that there is no problem between the roles, this is not always easy.

Our Management Committee is made up of individuals with a host of knowledge. Most organisations would relish our expertise. One example of this was Bill Martin and his SWALK book signing. To see one of our own sitting signing copies was inspiring! It's Sidlesham Church Hall then next stop Foyles. Many thanks to Bill for all his efforts in this, and of course the funds generated.

I think it appropriate to give Gina a mention as when I had to depart she of course came forward to Chair and keep the meetings going, demonstrating a dogged determination and belief in our aims. Many of you already know of her recent health problems and the message from us all is stay calm, rest, and ensure that you return only when fully fit.

Hosting the TCV holiday group was rewarding but hard work, and showed our team at its best. Not only that but we were also able by a concentrated effort to complete a lot of tasks that normally would have taken ages. A great group of people who worked hard, the holidaymakers indicated how well they were looked after and how much they enjoyed working with the MWHG Team. My thanks to all of you who made this possible.

Good wishes to all our readers for the Christmas season and for the New year.

John Hiscock

Project Officer's Report

The autumn colours have been spectacular and remind me how incredible Mother Nature is. Wildlife is under constant pressure, whether it's from pollution (which can have a devastating effect on wildlife and habitat), development, (which squeezes wildlife into diminishing green spaces) or intensive farming (which can affect a matrix of habitat across our landscape). Our wild areas are so essential for our own wellbeing and we need to strike a careful balance in our own actions, so as not to disturb the wildlife that is sharing our environment.

Balance sometimes seems difficult, but working together for the benefit of people and wildlife is essential for our future. Volunteers, colleagues, friends, are the cream of society, a pleasure to work with and vital for the future of our environment and all the wonders and diversity of nature.

I am working with schools in the Southbourne area, producing a range of talks on the importance of hedgerows; biodiversity; recreational disturbance; and the positive impact we can have on wildlife. There I encounter young people whose enthusiasm and knowledge about their natural environment are evidence of the passion for this incredible planet in the hearts of the young.

The community of Southbourne reflects that of the Manhood. On the southern boundary lies the coast (a European Protected site for its 55,000 wading birds in winter) and to the north the barrier of the A27 (and the National Park). Chichester Harbour, Pagham Harbour and Medmerry are very important sites, especially when you reflect that half the world's population of oystercatchers rely on these rich feeding grounds.

Pressure from development and the reduction of our green spaces and buffer zones make it hard to get the right balance for wildlife and people. Understanding how our own actions impact on these oases and the wildlife they support is very important as is the positive effect we can have by making our own gardens wildlife-friendly. There are more than 15 million gardens in Great Britain, representing more land than all the country's nature reserves, so if we all do our bit for wildlife on our own backyard, what a difference we can make! Help our wildlife by filling up bird feeders, making sure there is fresh water and being aware of our impact on wildlife when out and about enjoying this lovely area. Take part in the RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch, 'counting the wildlife that's counting on you'. All you need to do is count the birds in your garden or local park for one hour over the weekend of 25-26 January 2014 and then record this with the RSPB. For further details see - <http://www.rspb.org.uk/birdwatch>

I did a survey of water voles at a ditch in the Hambrook area. The ditch, which runs from rich beds of watercress, behind houses and along the roadside, is rich in wildlife and supports a healthy population of water voles. This was an excellent opportunity to educate and train the local engineers on the signs of water voles and we were lucky enough to encounter one of the lovely critters, so a good day was had by all.

Work goes on at Graylingwell and Roussillon Park and I am hoping that in the near future we will be able to work on the 'Wild Area' (which is the land between South and North Lodges at Graylingwell Park). Meanwhile, work continues on enhancing biodiversity at the Graylingwell Community Garden with the bug hotel and wild corner.

Bug hunting at Graylingwell

Photo © 2013 Sarah Hughes



I led a guided walk to the west of Chichester, from Roussillon Park and ending up at Graylingwell Park. A wealth of habitats, including ancient woodland, hedgerows, wet meadows and ditches, supports over nine species of bats, including the rare Barbastelle bat *Barbastelle barbastellus*, water voles *Arvicola amphibius* and Barn owls *Tyto alba*. I hope to be inspired and impressed by the measures proposed for wildlife and the forward thinking demonstrated by the developers, if this site is developed for 1,600 houses.

Connecting wildlife and habitats is very important to enable species to migrate and expand safely, and we are hoping to put on a range of hedge-laying courses in the spring to help people acquire the skills to enable them to improve these wildlife corridors. Further details will be available on the web site.

I am looking forward to the working parties over the winter and spring, an excellent way to start the New Year.

Thank you for all your continued support.

All the very best and a very happy, healthy and wealthy New Year!

Sarah Hughes

THE CONSERVATION VOLUNTEERS (TCV) ran a working holiday on the Manhood Peninsula from **3-6 October** and it was amazing what a large, dedicated and enthusiastic group could achieve.

Jane Reeve selected Florence Pond, Sidlesham and Bushell's Farm Pond, Almodington as in need of attention. Dave Haldane had suggested Crablands but a group of roedeer was using the site and the scrub identified for removal so the task was moved to Selsey Common and involved taking out thistles instead.

With help from MWHG volunteers we rounded up the necessary tools and refreshments. The group of 12 TCV visitors stayed at St Andrew's Lodge and were supplemented by a number of MWHG volunteers to carry out the practical tasks.

While Ann and Richard Humphrey at St Andrew's Lodge could provide hearty breakfasts and large packed lunches they couldn't do evening meals. So I booked Selsey Town Hall and the kitchen. Originally six of us offered to help with this...but gradually, due to illness and other commitments, that number was whittled down to one. Jane recommended a friend of hers who cooks for the Weald and Downland Museum and Sharon Conway provided us with excellent three-course meals for two evenings and then the TCV volunteers and three MWHG volunteers joined the Sidlesham Parish Harvest Supper and had an excellent evening. Not only that, but the Town Hall put aside the Council Chamber for us which was a lovely venue.

Thank you to all involved – Jane, John, Felicity, Dave and Ann, Trev, Tony, Val, Pat and Veronica.

Outcomes: Excellent : conservation tasks completed and the entire TCV group said it was the best Working Holiday they'd ever been on, and want to come back! One visiting volunteer sent a cheque to MWHG for £100 and two tines broke on a cheap fork – no one hurt! Downside : TCV is stopping running their Working Holiday programme.

Jill Sutcliffe

WATER VOLE PROJECT OFFICER'S REPORT

Well, another busy season for the members of the Water Vole Patrol!

We managed to finish the work at the pond in Bracklesham that was full of parrot's feather as the dry weather meant that there was no water left in the pond. At the start of September a team got in and removed the rest of this invasive plant with relative ease. The pond was left looking open and with reeds around its edge. The rains in October have now filled up this pond but the removal of over 20 tonnes of biomass has meant that it is better able to hold water. Any invasive parrot's feather that returns will be easily controlled.



Photo © 2013 Jane Reeve

Working in the pond



Photo © 2013 Jane Reeve

Pond clear of parrot's feather

Ten members, and two leaders, came on holiday from the Trust for Conservation Volunteers for a Water Vole Weekend to carry out maintenance tasks on the peninsula. We started the weekend with a chat about how important water voles are in this area and then gave them an overview of the work they were to carry out. They were extremely hard-working and powered through the planned restoration tasks at Florence Pond in Sidlesham; resurrected a neglected pond in Almodington; and made a dent in work at Selsey Common. We were helped by fantastic weather, a great team, good food and company in the evenings and supportive landowners.



Photo © 2013 Jane Reeve

Florence Pond during



Photo © 2013 Jane Reeve

Florence Pond after

Bushell's farm pond had not been touched in 30 years and couldn't really be seen:



Photo © 2013 Jane Reeve

Bushells Farm Pond before



Photo © 2013 Jill Sutcliffe

Bushells Farm Pond after

October was a busy month with water vole trapping at Chichester Canal as well. Rowenna Baker and Peter King brought along 50 traps which we helped to set out for her field work. Water voles were more elusive this year and more difficult to catch. This may be due to the lower water levels in the canal, the rather over-trimmed banks of the canal and the invasive pond weed in the water. We did eventually get 7 water voles but this number is far less than previous sessions when we have caught 22 or more. It has been a tough summer for water voles on the peninsula as many of the waterways and ponds dried up. Water voles will either move to wetter areas or retreat into their burrows and wait for water to return. They are at risk from predators, especially mink, at this time so keeping these invasive hunters off the peninsula is increasingly important.



Photo © 2013 Jane Reeve

One outraged water vole

We have had a very busy season and I want to thank all my volunteers who come out tirelessly and help. Without your support and good humour we would not get all this work done and not have so much fun! Thank you.

Jane Reeve

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Ed,

I was interested to read about the Crows' Court in the last Newsletter (D. Haldane, Summer 2013) as I have witnessed something similar.

It was during the 1980s when I was living in Surrey, on the greensand just below Leith Hill. A busy Mum of four young children, helping my then husband run a business, I had all too little time for natural history observation, but one early summer day my attention was attracted by a continuous loud cawing from the front of the house, opposite which was a patch of mature trees. Investigation revealed forty (I counted) Carrion Crows in the trees in a rough circle, all facing inwards, bowing and cawing to each other in a kind of display. This was unusual as these birds are usually solitary or in small family groups, and I had never witnessed so many together before. The noise had been going on for several minutes and I watched the gathering for ten minutes or so before I was called away. When I returned they had dispersed.



I was not aware of an individual bird 'on trial'. I had heard of 'Crow Courts' and I assumed this may have been one.

Gina Scott

CLEVER CORVIDS - MAGPIE MISCHIEF

The Corvid family, including Ravens, Rooks, Carrion Crows, Magpies, Jays and Jackdaws, are highly intelligent. The following observation was made during the 1980s when I was living in a house with a large, rambling garden at the edge of the North Downs in Surrey.

One day in early summer, whilst gardening, I kept hearing a whistle. It sounded like a bird, and at first I thought it might be a Nuthatch. I quickly realised this was unlikely as it came in regular measured intervals, and just didn't sound right. Investigation led me to a wild area, and a Magpie was identified as the perpetrator; it was behaving oddly, hopping slowly – but not furtively – through the lower branches of the scrub, emitting this whistle. Further investigation revealed it was in fact following our cat; she had identified a Dunnock's nest, near to the ground, and was stalking it. She was interested in the birds themselves, but the Magpie would be more interested in the eggs or fledglings, and it appeared that it intended to cash in on the cat's efforts! I have no idea why it was making the whistle. I never knew for certain, as I interrupted the hunt and shooed them both away; but unfortunately, as in the Terminator, they would undoubtedly be back.



Gina Scott

THE EILEEN SAVILL AWARD 2013

The second Manhood Wildlife and Heritage Group Eileen Savill Award has been presented to Stephanie Robinson, 21, from Chichester. She was nominated for voluntary work helping the Education Officer at Pagham Harbour Nature Reserve. Her commitment to sharing her passion for nature with other young people was recognised as outstanding. She is an inspiration to others in another way too as she suffers severely from Crohn's disease, an inflammatory bowel disorder, which results in regular spells in hospital. That she chooses to spend time helping others whilst coping with ill health, is truly inspiring. Unfortunately she was unable to accept the award in person, as she was confined to hospital, so her mother, Jackie, accepted it on her behalf.

Runners-up prizes were awarded to Joshua Dobbins, 16, from Sidlesham and to the Spaceman Community Project in Selsey. Joshua was nominated for his enthusiastic hands-on conservation work in all weathers with Manhood Wildlife & Heritage Group volunteers. The Spaceman Community Project are a group of young people who were recognised for taking responsibility for combating anti-social behaviour at East Beach play area, as well as improving the area and its facilities.

The ceremony took place at the Selsey Centre with family members and Manhood Wildlife and Heritage Group members in attendance. Leader of Chichester District Council, Heather Caird, presented Stephanie with the award, which this year was a carved wooden Kingfisher diving for its prey, beautifully made by Peter Warren – an MWHG member. All the winners also received prizes and certificates to recognise their achievement



Heather Caird, Leader of Chichester District Council, Stephanie Robinson's mother Jackie and Joe Svail



Joe Savill, Heather Caird, Stephanie Robinson's mother Jackie, runners up and Jill Sutcliffe

The presentations were followed by a talk by Liz Kay from Fixers UK. This is a charity which supports 16 – 25 year olds who have a passion to tackle or 'fix' issues in their communities. After this there was an opportunity for the winners and their families to discuss issues with Liz and meet Manhood Wildlife and Heritage Group members whilst enjoying tea and cake.

This is the second year of this annual award, which recognises young people, under 25, who are caring for their local environment and hopes to encourage others to get involved.

The award is in memory of Eileen Savill, my mum, who was a founder member of the group. She devoted her life to encouraging young people while teaching at what is now The Academy, Selsey.

I would like to thank all members who supported the award by attending the ceremony, providing cakes or helping to promote it. Special thanks also go to Jill Sutcliffe for leading the presentation event and David and Gina Scott for working with me to organise the award.

The 2014 Award will open for nominations in the spring. We are still seeking sponsorship for the future, so do get in touch if you have any ideas.

For any further information about the award please contact me on 01243 607104 or email joesavill@fsmail.net

Joe Savill



ASHE GROUP

We have been very busy working on Morgan's, Hayden's and Florence ponds. In addition we have started work on two new ponds. Hutching's pond in Almodington and a lovely man-made pond at Three Oaks nursery which contains hundreds of exciting little dwellers.

Debbie, Howard and their son Jake, recent members of the group, are planning to build an eco house on their land in the spring. We will no doubt be moth trapping and pond dipping in the new year and all members are encouraged to see the house building as it progresses. It should be a fascinating project and we are fortunate to be able to see it all happening.

Trevor put a bird box with camera in Mary Brook's garden. We can't wait to see the little birds building their nest. Again, every member will be welcome of course. Watch this space.

Gina Scott and Veronica Wilkes

BEACHWATCH 2013

Saturday 21 September dawned grey and cloudy but thankfully dry and not too windy. The Community Wardens, Sue and Gareth, joined us at 8.30am to cone off the area of East Beach Car Park, needed for our HQ, the Selsey Lions' Barbecue and the Fire and Rescue Service's Community Bus. Special thanks are due to Sue, who gave up her rest day to help.

At 12 noon a great team of MWHG folk arrived to help erect the newly-purchased gazebos and to set up all that was needed to register volunteers. The usual information boards were displayed and a refreshment bar was in constant use throughout the afternoon. Sue and Gareth joined us again to set out the beach markers. Twenty volunteers signed up alongside the 'regulars' and they cleaned 1400 metres of beach, so together with Barbara and Gerry's team further along, and Francis Parfremment's FoPH team the day before on the Pagham Harbour side, a considerable distance of the Manhood Peninsula's beaches was cleaned.

The good news is that the volume of rubbish collected was considerably reduced from the year before. The main bulk was food-related, including tins and plastic bottles, lolly sticks, bottle caps and so on. Plastic and polystyrene also appeared regularly and dog mess continued to be a recurring problem. On the whole fishing-related rubbish was reduced, and sewage-related rubbish was noticeably less. The most notable item was a fisherman's waterproof jacket! A member of the public came to tell us she did a regular rubbish collection when she walked her dog, so it appears awareness of pollution is increasing.

The Lions' Barbecue was as usual very popular, with comestibles kindly provided by Natures Way and the Selsey Co-op. The food left over was taken to St Joseph's Hospice, and received with delight. Special thanks are due to Felicity, who helped us collect and transport equipment from Southend Farm as well as returning it the following day; she also provided the bulk of the refreshments. What a Star!

The Marine Conservation Society's analysis is not yet out but hopefully will be in time for inclusion elsewhere in this edition of the Newsletter.

Gina and David Scott

HAPPY CHRISTMAS

TO EVERYBODY

FROM THE

PUBLICATIONS GROUP



WALKS LEAFLETS OUTLETS

Our walks leaflets can be purchased from the following places:-

Chichester District Council, Selsey Office
Hunston Post Office (Tramway Walks only)
Raycraft, High Street, Selsey
RSPB Pagham Harbour Local Nature Reserve
St. Andrew's Lodge, Selsey
Selsey Printing and Publishing
Selsey Town Council Office

MWHG Website

www.mwhg.org.uk

At the moment, the only section which is regularly being updated is the "Current Programmes" page. New content and updates are regularly required for example on wildlife, heritage, etc.

All contributions welcome.

email: newsletter@mwhg.org

USEFUL WEBSITES

Manhood Wildlife and Heritage Group - <http://www.mwhg.org.uk>
Recording the changing seasons - <http://www.naturedetectives.org.uk/>
Local wood recycling - http://www.aldingbournetrust.co.uk/services_recycling.htm
Local - Bags made from 100% recycled clothing - <http://www.thegreendoor.co.uk/>
Sussex Bat Group - <http://www.sussexbatgroup.org.uk/>
UK moths - <http://ukmoths.org.uk/>
Bug life - <http://www.buglife.org.uk/>
Mammal Society - <http://www.abdn.ac.uk/mammal/>
Green shop - <http://www.greenshop.co.uk/>
Environmental calendar - www.countmeincalendar.info
Swift Conservation - <http://www.swift-conservation.org/>
Wildcare Shop for products relating to ecology, Park management or conservation. - <http://www.wildcareshop.com>

2014 DEADLINES

10 February (Spring)
10 May (Summer)
10 August (Autumn)
10 November (Winter)

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**The Queen's Award
for Voluntary Service**



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