

Manhood Wildlife and Heritage Group



Newsletter

Spring 2014

Volume 7 No 1



Photo © 2012 Barbara Bond

OPENING LINES

These are my last notes from the Chair and I list below some of the achievements of the last four years, all made possible by the active involvement of and input from key volunteers.

- **Funding** of over £100,000 obtained mainly from trust funds; but also from local authorities; the Open Gardens events overseen by Ann Humphrey and Margaret Goodman, which contributed essential core funding; and regular business contributions from Natures Way.
- **Focus on wetlands and water voles**, helping integrate our work across the Peninsula. Each of the 11 parishes contains both elements and our involvement is establishing better contacts with others with an interest, such as parish councils.
- **Publications**, including this Newsletter; and the Annual Report, started in 2010-11 and now, since our registration as a charity, a legal requirement; various walks leaflets; and the newly-published Sidlesham walks booklet.
- **Promotional work**, including fine artwork and exhibitions.
- Mobile **displays and equipment** for presentations.
- Regular **public events**, including supporting organisations and local landowners.
- **BeachWatch** events with the Marine Conservation Society.
- An **Action Plan**, drawn up by Joe Savill, to guide the work of the Group.
- Enhanced **reputation**. The Group works with bodies such as parish, district and county councils, the Medmerry Stakeholders Advisory Group (MStAG), its sub-group Green Links Around the Manhood (GLAM), and the Manhood Peninsula Partnership.
- Increased **professionalism**, ensuring an audit trail for all funding and expenditure, maintained by our Finance Officer Gill Jennings and Hon Treasurer David Scott.
- **Sub-group funding** - All items on wish lists since 2010 have been obtained except a noticeboard for the East Beach Pond site.
- Initiating **training courses**, including first aid; hedge laying; water vole survey; ditch condition assessment; and butterfly monitoring.
- **Heritage** - for long purely an aspiration for the group but Bill Martin has now secured an HLF grant for a team to document the Land Settlement Association in Sidlesham.
- Improvements in **governance** for the Group as a not-for-profit company limited by guarantee and a registered charity, this work led principally by Rachel Huskisson and Maggie Smith.
- Changes to the **Constitution** ie Articles of Association.
- Drawing up **policies** to guide the Group and its activities.
- Establishment of regular quarterly **Team Leader meetings**, ensuring good communication between those working in the field and the monthly Management Committee which oversees the work of the organisation.
- The three **Trustees** who ensure legal and financial probity.
- **Awards** such as the Queen's Award for Voluntary Work; Gold and Silver awards in the SE Britain in Bloom competition; and the recent runner-up in the Selsey Business Partnership for the voluntary category. We have received so many prestigious awards that Selsey Town Council has had to obtain a cabinet to display some of them.
- Organisation of **publicity** and the website.
- Awards - **certificates** – designed by Carole Hampton – awarded at the AGM to those who have contributed particularly to the effective running of the Group.
- Recognising **young people's** contributions to safeguarding the environment of the Peninsula through the Eileen Savill Award. This will be the Award's third year.
- **Management plans** – using a template devised by Dave Haldane every site MWHG is involved with now has its own plan.

So, MWHG goes from strength to strength. 17 years old next October, MWHG came about in 1997 when Joe Savill first had the idea and approached me as the then Chair of the Selsey branch of the Sussex Wildlife Trust. However, the Group continues to miss a lead on **membership and promotion** to increase the volunteer base and raise awareness of the work we do across the Peninsula. If you can help, please let us know.

Finally, thank you to all who continue to make the Peninsula such a lovely place to live and work and to assist the MWHG to continue to flourish.

Jill Sutcliffe

Thank you, Jill for being an inspirational Chair and working so hard to raise funds through grants for MWHG. You will be missed, but we hope you will keep in touch and write for the Newsletter from time to time.

The Editorial Team

PROJECT OFFICER'S REPORT

By the time you read this, I shall have attended the Sussex Biodiversity Record's Seminar, which is held annually in Hassocks. This is one of my yearly treats and reminds me of the diversity and importance of volunteer groups across the county and what an essential role they have in safeguarding our wildlife for future generations. We all can make a difference by recording wildlife and listing it at the Sussex Biodiversity Record Centre - <http://sxbrc.org.uk/>

Work continues at Graylingwell and Roussillon Parks and I am still hoping that in the very near future we will have access to the 'Wild Area'. In early January we completed a guided walk in and around the site, which highlighted the importance of wildlife corridors and what we can do to enhance them.

Photo © 2014 Sarah Hughes

The RSPB Big Garden Bird Watch Event, which was held on Saturday 25 January 2014 at Graylingwell Community Garden, was a huge success and shows how important the site is for red status species. Even the weather was kind to us and we recorded the following birds:



No	Species	Latin	Amount	Status
1	Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	2	Green
2	Blue tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>	3	Green
3	Carrion Crow	<i>Corvus corone</i>	1	Green
4	Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	1	Green
5	Dunnock	<i>Prunella modularis</i>	2	Amber
6	Feral pigeon	<i>Columba livia</i>	2	Green
7	Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>	4	Green
8	Great tit	<i>Parus major</i>	2	Green
9	Greenfinch	<i>Carduelis chloris</i>	2	Green
10	House sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	4	Red
11	Long-tailed tit	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>	1	Green
12	Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	1	Green
13	Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	5	Red
14	Song thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>	1	Red

The UK's birds are split into three categories of conservation importance - red, amber and green. Red is the highest conservation priority, with species needing urgent action. Amber is the next most critical group, followed by green.

I hope that next year we will be joined by more families enabling us to inspire the next generation on the importance of our birds.

Remember to help local wildlife by being mindful of our impact on them. Disturbance in the cold months means that birds burn vital fat reserves when they should be trying to feed, rest and conserve energy. Look after your birds in the garden, by providing fresh water and food.

We would like to thank especially the Petfood Warehouse (at Runcton Farm Shop) for all their support with this project.

In the Bourne area, we launched 'Take Action for Wildlife in the Southbourne Area' where we signed up 40 local people to be involved in the project. We are working weekly at Southbourne Junior School and have covered 'the importance of hedgerows', and 'pond dipping', and made bird feeders. Once the CRB checks have been completed I will be supported by local volunteers, which will be a great help as we have loads of young people's projects planned.

One of the big projects for this year will be the 'Hedgerow Challenge', which will be run in and around the Southbourne area. We hope that this will be an opportunity to bridge the generation gap and provide important data for the Sussex Hedgerow Inventory Project. In addition to this, we also hope to put on a wildlife photography competition, further details to follow.

At Fishbourne soggy site checks are continuing and we are working with a local group that we hope to train in water-vole surveying.

There always seems so much to do, but working together we can move forward, achieving aims for the benefit of people and wildlife, even if the weather has been slightly against us sometimes. Working with the West Sussex Tree Wardens and a local farmer, we endeavoured to plant out a new hedge at Chalder Farm. We were lucky to have a trench dug to enable easy planting, but unfortunately due to the ground being waterlogged, it filled with water, but we got there in the end, enhancing and improving biodiversity.

This year we will be providing training in hedgerow surveying, butterflies and water voles. I hope to promote these courses on the website.

Sarah Hughes



Photo © 2014 Sarah Hughes

Hedgerow Planting at Sidlesham



WATER VOLE PROJECT OFFICER'S REPORT

This time of year tends to be a bit quieter as the weather brings its own challenges. Although it is a good season to carry out habitat improvement tasks, the weather has been so wet - banks very slippery, water treacherously high - that it has been a struggle to do much.

In mid-December we had the Water Vole Patrol Christmas Do with special guests Rowenna Baker (Brighton University and water vole trapping expert) and Pete King (Ouse and Adur Rivers Trust). We had a quick presentation to celebrate the achievements of the Group and gifts and awards were given out. The Group worked so hard in 2013 and continue to achieve amazing results in habitat improvement and surveying.

On Saturday 8 February we had Pete King hold a Ditch Management, Assessment and Water Vole workshop at Sidlesham Church Hall. The audience was made up of keen volunteers and, interestingly, lots of parish councillors who had come from far and wide to discuss the issues around flooding, water management and ditches. It was a very valuable session and a brave few went out in the driving rain to look at a ditch before running back to the hall. The contacts made at this event are invaluable as I now have plans to walk ditches in parishes I haven't previously had access to.

I have been cooperating very closely with Tony Burnand, the new Wetlands Officer, who is working on Education for all levels, and Ditch Assessment across a single parish – Birdham. We have been out to walk ditches and put into practice what we have been shown by Pete, as well as visiting a school and looking at how outdoor education can be improved.

Work in the Sidlesham parish, funded by Operation Watershed (OW), a WSCC initiative funded by central government, to join up ditches, open up ponds and get the network working, has been progressing and it is only the wet weather that has been preventing work on the ground starting. A ditch management booklet, funded by OW and authored by myself and Dr Jill Sutcliffe, is due to be published soon and will be distributed to all the local parishes; landowners with riparian responsibility; and groups applying for OW monies, so that they understand the legal responsibilities, appropriate time of year to carry out work etc.

We look forward to a busy spring and summer with access to the Medmerry site becoming possible and inclusion in water-vole-monitoring projects.

Jane Reeve



Photo © 2014 Jane Reeve

Florence Pond Sidlesham

FERAL BEE POPULATION IN NORTON PRIORY WOODS

Three years ago I did some work as a conservation volunteer for WSCC at Pagham Harbour LNR, removing rhododendron and sycamore saplings in this rather lovely private ancient oak woodland. In the course of our work we came across a large oak tree which had shed a huge limb from about 20ft up. On closer inspection we discovered wax cone and active bees (*Apis mellifera*, the honey bee) on the branch and also in the resultant crack in the tree.



The RSPB then took over the management of the reserve and we were unable to access the woods until a new management agreement was finally signed allowing us to come back in to the woodland this January. Now an RSPB volunteer, I went across to the tree to see if the bees were still there and – surprise, surprise - they were and seem to have been flourishing as the pictures show.

Trevor Gibson-Poole



Photo © 2011 Trevor Gibson Poole

Photo © 2011 Trevor Gibson Poole

DEAR EDITORS,

I loved the article (*Clever Corvids - Magpie Mischief* by Gina Scott in the Winter Newsletter) about our piebald friend, the magpie. I have noted similar behaviour in sparrowhawks waiting for birds to be flushed out by neighbouring cats.

Like the sparrowhawk, the magpie is part of the ecosystem of predators and prey, and some folks may not have realised that both birds work in symbiosis with nature.

The nesting sites of both the predators mentioned are patrolled on a regular basis, whereby squirrels, rats, and other corvids are not tolerated close to their nests. Local blackbirds and neighbouring pigeons on the other hand are a form of early warning system for both birds when nesting, and often seem to be allowed to go about their business unharmed.

I have seen sparrowhawks chase squirrels when close to their nest, and a magpie will attack a rat, even on the ground. Local birds therefore benefit from their protection.

Kind regards
Tony Burnand

***If you have had any interesting wildlife sightings or encounters, or if you would like to follow up any articles in the Newsletter, we would love to hear from you.
We love photos too. Email us at newsletter@mwhg.org.uk***

ASHE GROUP

The consistently high water levels so far this winter have severely reduced the maintenance work we have been able to carry out on the three Almodington ponds that we maintain. It has even prevented planting a new apple tree at Sidlesham Recreation Ground, to replace one that failed during the year. The new tree has been heeled in by Bert Wilkes in the garden of Silver Gates until conditions improve. We have used the work parties to dip in each pond and record the variety of invertebrates there. We included the large pond created at Three Oaks Nursery by Debbie and Howard Smith and were excited to find pea mussel (probably *Sphaerium*) both there and in Morgan's. What were two smooth newts doing out and about though? They are usually hibernating in a crack or under stones at this time; the mild temperatures are most likely responsible.

All our records are sent to the Biodiversity Centre, but copies are retained by Veronica and Felicity so if you are interested please contact them – see Diary of Events for contact details. This has been a tough time for our water voles; following a period of drought during summer 2013, when ditches and ponds shrank or dried up, they now have to contend with flooding of banks where they have their burrows.

Looking forward to better weather we plan to concentrate on bat surveys and moth trapping. All members are welcome to join us.

Veronica and Gina

Hutchings Farm Pond, Almodington which has been brought back to life by the efforts of the ASHE Group

Photo © 2014 Veronica Wilkes



Photo © 2014 Veronica Wilkes

This car was driven into Campbell's Ditch, Almodington which is part of Morgan's Pond. Fortunately, for the water voles, no oil leaked from it. At the time, the road was severely flooded.

DONNINGTON

The native hedgerow that we planted at Mile Pond Farm, Apuldram is now coming to the end of its third year. At our mid-January maintenance working party, four volunteers spent a morning tidying it up and transplanting suckers of blackthorn to fill in some of the gaps where whips had failed during dry spells.

Photo © 2014 Felicity McStea



We also laid the odd hawthorn and willow that had put on a growth spurt, thanks to more moisture at the lower end of this gently sloping site.

I carry a field notebook to record what we've done and seen in the way of wildlife. During this (so far) mild but extremely wet winter some dandelions, field speedwell, red and white deadnettle have kept flowering. A robin was our constant companion while we were digging and various birds flew over, including a sparrowhawk and two redwings.

For a Team Leader, activity out in the field is only half the story. At this time of year there is also plenty of admin. work to be getting on with. In addition to this Newsletter piece and an article for the Annual Report, there is an annual Monitoring Report to prepare for appending to the Hedgerow Management Plan and a survey form for the Sussex Biodiversity Record Centre. I now also provide the occasional Hedgerow Update for the Activities page on our website. Plenty to keep me busy indoors on all these rainy days!

Felicity McStea

Photo © 2014 Felicity McStea



We were delighted to see that some of the hazel bore its first ever catkins.

EAST BEACH POND

The site known as *The Spit* is a raised section of ground overlooking the pond. It was here in 2009 that volunteers created an eye-catching display of wild and cultivated flowers, attracting positive feedback from the local community.

Unfortunately, the site lost its appeal when on two occasions during 2011 and 2013 contractors deposited sludge, clay, reeds and roots extracted during pond clearance. This left a highly visible and unattractive scar on the Spit. Reclaiming the site has been challenging, with many hours spent digging out deeply buried roots which despite rough treatment, remained viable.

Photo © 2014 Dave Haldane



Photo © 2014 Dave Haldane



In the early stages we also uncovered dead and injured eels clawed up by the digger. Remarkably, a few survived their interment and were put back into the pond. We also encountered large amounts of stringy vegetation, large pebbles and pieces of masonry dredged up from the floor of the pond.

When the unwanted materials had been cleared and the reeds reduced to a manageable level, the site was turfed. We used turf from the car park verges where grass had grown beyond the boundary line.

At first the turf was of good quality but as demand outweighed supply we were forced to use what was available. This meant incorporating even the smallest divot to create our grassland mosaic. Wildflower seed and plugs have also been added to enhance the site and attract pollinating insects. A short meandering path topped with locally-sourced wood chips encourages public access.

Dave Haldane

Photo © 2014 Dave Haldane



RSPB PHLNR DISCOVERY AREA – Sea Inundation 5 December 2013

The huge tidal surge on the night of 5 December 2013 did not only devastate many areas of the East coast of the country - we here in Pagham had our own disaster!

The sea flooded in over the lowest parts of the harbour wall alongside the Ferry Channel. It flowed with some considerable force down the path past the hide and also came through the scrub area on the other side, scouring the surface of the ground as it went and killing off what must have been hundreds of thousands of worms.

The water came through the copse, washing away all the wood chippings we had laid on the path; flooded the small pond; moved all the log rounds from the children's seating area and dumped them up against the perimeter fence; and carried on, flooding out in to the entrance to the Visitor Centre, much of the overflow car park and the area to the rear of the classroom.

In January and into February heavy rain added to the standing water. In the copse eight large willows were uprooted or damaged by the strong winds due to their feet being in so much water. It has been an ecological disaster for our small pond too. No doubt much of the life therein has been destroyed. What will the spring bring? Our little Dutch-elm-disease-resistant elm sapling had been growing so well. Will it survive?

Trevor Gibson-Poole



*Photos © 2014
Trevor Gibson Poole*



SWALK

Our first Boxing Day SWALK was well attended and participants were treated to mulled wine and mince pies on the new Medmerry seawall near Ham.

There was no January date as Sue and Bill were Swalking in New Zealand! How time flies - March will be the 50th SWALK.

Sales of *Walks around Sidlesham* are going well with 150 copies sold to date as the second reprint looms!

HERITAGE

An application to the Heritage Lottery Fund was successful and now work will begin on developing a heritage trail in Sidlesham based on the Land Settlement Association which was established in the 1930's when unemployed miners and shipbuilders from the north-east were relocated to the area to work as a co-operative producing salad crops.

Another 'heritage' trail is being mapped in Selsey based on the former railway carriages which starting arriving about 1923. We have found 35 so far, including seven Pullmans. If anyone has a friend or relative who owns one and knows its history please let me know.

Bill Martin

WHAT THE SEA BROUGHT IN

The storm surge caused by the extreme weather conditions this winter has produced some interesting marine finds along the shoreline between East Beach and Church Norton. Debris left by the high water surge included many dead invertebrates, plus other marine remnants.

Among the debris we found samples of the Green Sea Urchin *Psammechinus miliaris*, Common Whelk *Buccinum undatum*, Banded Carpet Shells *Venerupis rhomboides*, Oysters *Ostrea edulis* and two examples of the Variegated Scallop *Chlamys varia*.

Although it is sad to see so many dead marine species washed up along the shoreline it does suggest there is a rich selection of life still living on the seabed within Pagham Harbour and the surrounding area.

Peter White

DEAR EDITORS

I would just like to thank all those keen volunteers who have made the Florence Pond look so good, it really stood out as having being tended to the other day, I hope you can keep up the good work.

I took this photo on a bright and sunny March day.

Wendy Devonshire



Photo © 2014 Wendy Devonshire

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: website@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>

NEWSLETTER DEADLINES

10 May (Summer)
10 August (Autumn)
10 November (Winter)
10 February 2015 (Spring)

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



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