



LOCAL NATURE RESERVE

# NEWSletter

Issue No 184

April 2020

## Of Frogs and Toads...

On the 29<sup>th</sup> March there was no volunteers' day extravaganza due to a certain globally available pathogen that has made itself very unwelcome. As a result I can only broadcast 'other news' and hope that satisfies.

Other News Da-da-da-da da-daaaa!

On the 26<sup>th</sup> Feb Mark and I finished the hedge we were laying during the February volunteers' day. I finished the second allotments hedge next to what we did last year, down the side of the Orchard Meadow, a few days later.



On the 26<sup>th</sup> Feb I went round all the ponds in Foal Hurst nature reserve and counted 183 clumps of frog spawn, 26 single toads plus 2 mating pairs and 6 lines of toad spawn in the dipping pond. In the small pond there were some 556 clumps of frog spawn, two of which were white. There were 9 clumps of frog spawn in the rookery pond. In the wetland there were 12 frogs but no spawn yet.

By the 2<sup>nd</sup> of March there were 3 new clumps of frog spawn at the rookery, 16 new clumps in the small Orchard Meadow Pond and 3 new clumps in the Dipping Pond, 5 toad couples had laid new lines of spawn. By the 3<sup>rd</sup> Mar. the frogs had laid 5 new clumps of spawn in the rookery pond. On the 6<sup>th</sup> I counted 112 clumps in the Wetland,

3 new clumps at the culvert and 29 new clumps in the small Orchard Meadow pond. Toads had upped their spawn trails to 12.

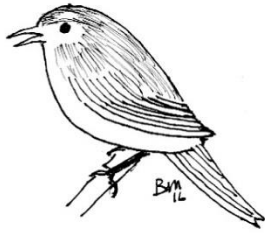
By the 11<sup>th</sup> Mar. the frogs had finished their business but the toads were just starting. There were 68 toads in the small pond including 11 mating couples, and in the dipping pond there were 57 toads including 7 mating couples. By the 15<sup>th</sup> Mar. the adult frogs and toads had departed from all the ponds in the nature reserve and the earliest frog spawn had hatched. By the 17<sup>th</sup> the spawn in the wetland was hatching and the rookery followed on the 19<sup>th</sup>.

There have been over 100 fatalities by the dipping pond where toads have been attacked and either just punctured by a round spiky object such as a beak or they have been totally dismembered losing legs and intestines. While that was probably animal activity, I have also found several scattered clumps of spawn up to 50 feet away from the water, apparently just thrown there for no reason which is obviously stupid human activity.

Rebecca, Simone and I took part in the toad patrol around Kiln Way in February and Steve said there was activity before February 20<sup>th</sup> but this disappeared dramatically after the 20<sup>th</sup>. Apparently, in many places around Kent the frog and toad situation has been disappointing this year but he is still receiving reports of findings so can't give a full account of the numbers yet.

# FHW NEWS *letter*

I heard a chiffchaff in the wood on the 4<sup>th</sup> of March. It seems that, like the black cap, some of these birds have decided to overwinter in England instead of flying to the continent. Looking at the various dormouse boxes in early February it seems many of them have already been commandeered by blue tits which seems a little early compared with normal.



The 2<sup>nd</sup> of March was the day that Berkeley Homes started to mark out the retention ponds on the old orchard next to Foal Hurst. I also saw a pair of roe deer stags at the wetland and three ducks flew from the water. I didn't see what sort of ducks because I was too interested in the deer! Roe deer are

smaller than fallow deer, they have narrower foreheads and the horns are shorter with a narrower spread. A single brimstone butterfly wafted over the wetland at midday on the 11<sup>th</sup> Mar. And I have seen both a peacock and a red admiral prior to that. On the 17<sup>th</sup> I saw 2 comma, 2 brimstone and 1 peacock butterfly and there was a male mallard resting in the oak tree at the entrance to the wood! The primroses have been lovely along Leaning Oak and the milkmaids in the Flower Meadow are doing well.

On 17<sup>th</sup> Mar. I finished resurfacing Muddy Way with wood chips supplied by the council. It will still be muddy but it should drain better now.

On 25<sup>th</sup> Mar. I went into the old orchard to the east of Foal Hurst and righted the trees planted by Berkeley homes last year. Many of the posts supporting the plants had been blown over in the various storms of last winter, but the reason for this was not so much that the wind was that strong but that the posts had been put into the anti-rabbit guards upside down so the post could not be driven into the ground far enough to do the job properly.

The new budget from 5<sup>th</sup> April will include a sum of money for a new, full species list of the reserve. Whether all the work will be done this year in light of the current lockdown is questionable but if it is started in say August it can continue through the seasons and be completed next summer. At least that is something to look forward to.

I would like to say a big 'Thank You' to Mark and Allison for continuing to provide refreshments at our volunteer days and a big 'Thank You' to Brian Mace for his continued production of the newsletter.

## Breaking News.

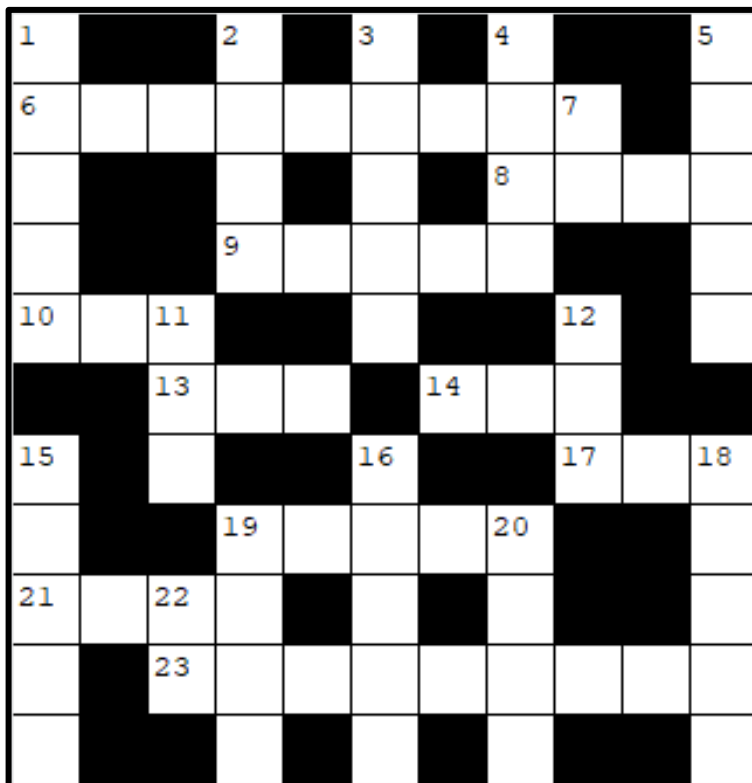
I don't usually manage to give you this sort of information until well after the event is over during my summer newsletter but I can now report the first bluebell opened on the 1<sup>st</sup> April.

## ENJOY !

The next volunteer's day is on **Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> September**, viruses permitting. I will write a summer newsletter to give you the schedule for the next season. In the mean time keep well, keep safe and hopefully we will all be able to get together in the autumn.

*Peter Prince*

## FHW Crossword No 151



### Clues Across

6. Leaning Oak 'lovelies', (9). 8 Transient astronomical event, (4). 9. State of soggy soil, (5)  
 10. Hard fruit case, (3). 13. Consume, (3). 14. Pigeons call, (3). 17. Pouch, bag, (3). 19. Collection  
 of spawn, (5). 21. Extinct bird, (4). 23. *Cardamine pratensis*, (9).

### Clues Down

1. Frog, Toad eggs, (5). 2. Islamic leader, (4). 3. Amphibians, (5). 4. Repudiate, (4) 5. Male Deer, (5).  
 7. Adverb, conjunction. (2). 11. Beverage, (3). 12. Distress signal, (1.1.1). 15. Natural barrier, (5).  
 16. Mallards, (5). 18. Small woodland. (5). 19. Coconut fibre, (4). 20. Strategy, (4). 22. 'Twitter'  
 Abbreviation, (1.1).

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### Solutions to FHW Crossword No 150

**Across** 1. Blackthorn. 4. Upset. 6. Proof. 9. Badger. 11. Ouch. 13. Eg. 15. Eg. 16. Lake. 18. Herons.  
 21. Sedge. 22. Tibia. 23. Protection.

**Down** 1. Bluebells. 2. Kittten. 3. Hips. 5. Sod. 7. Orc. 8. Frogspawn. 10. Aga. 12. Hen. 14. Hectic.  
 17. Kid. 19. Orb. 20. Newt.

# FHW NEWS *letter*