



LOCAL NATURE RESERVE

NEWSletter

Issue No 191

February 2021

Spring has sprung...

Once again there was no official volunteers' day and not a lot actually happened because Michael and I have just about finished all the hard work that needs to be completed this season.

Events over the past month. On the 3rd February, Michael and I started to trim the car park hedge. The last time this was done was back in the winter of 2017/18 when we had an industrial machine blitz it. As a result the regrowth was quite dense at the top with a lot of height but also a lot of dieback. It took us two Wednesdays to finish one half as we made it a very severe cut. We decided to leave the other half until next season so there will still be some hedge for birds to nest in and also to permit the hedge to bloom and produce fruit. From now on these two sections will be done alternate years. Depending on how the hedge responds to this cut we may have to look at laying it again as it is 12 years since the last time.

On the 17th Feb Michael and I started on the hedge along the back of the allotments, managing about $\frac{3}{4}$ of the total that day. This again has been a very severe cut and will not need to be done again until the season after next. If we can establish a hedge cutting rota so that each section is clipped every 24 months it will be good for the wildlife and permit all the plants to flower at least once in that period. We finished the cutting on the 24th.

I hope everyone enjoyed the brief snow flurry last month and took the opportunity to see the reserve under a white blanket. There was a strange effect when most of the snow melted quickly from the ground but remained stuck to the sides of the trees which resulted in views through the wood that looked like peering through fog.

Due to the increased footfall in Foal Hurst, combined with the wet weather this winter, I deemed it necessary, with the council's permission, to close Allotments Way and the Orchard Meadow on the 18th until the ground dries up. Allotments Way was a mud bath while the Orchard Meadow path had formed sections of standing water and people were making alternative paths to pass them by. I think Allotments Way will require reseeded for it to recover properly, though there are already patches of new grass showing.

On the 23rd Feb I did a quick survey of the ponds and found 4 male and 3 female smooth newts plus 2 male frogs in the Orchard Meadow small pond. In the Dipping Pond I found 1 toad pair, 5 males and 3 unidentified amphibians. Numbers increased somewhat the next day including activity in the Wetland but there was hardly any activity as the cooler weekend arrived. I shall place a full amphibian report in the next newsletter.

The birds were keen on courting and preparing nests at this time with the great spotted woodpecker drumming his territory, and I saw pairs of nuthatch, blue tit, great tit, blackbird, and wren flitting around the trees and dead hedges. A pair of buzzards circled lazily over the Orchard Meadow and the deer have been wandering along the Allotments Way in spite of my closing of the path.

Unfortunate. Berkeley Homes have named their development ‘Foal Hurst Green’ which to me, and to some others, implies that Foal Hurst Wood Nature Reserve is either part of, or even specifically for the residents of the development. They have also written that their nature reserve, a five acre plot in the development, (presumably to be called Foal Hurst Green Nature Reserve, very confusing) is ‘adjoining’ Foal Hurst Wood Nature Reserve implying direct access between the two reserves. We have requested the word ‘adjoining’ be replaced with ‘adjacent to’. Berkeley homes seem very keen to make Foal Hurst Wood their main selling point and the council is looking into various factors of their advertising campaign.

Congratulations. Many happy returns to Wally on his special birthday, we hope this doesn’t stop him coming on volunteers’ days in the future.

And finally. The final volunteers’ day this season would have been on March 28th. However, due to the lockdown not being eased until the 29th this event will not take place. Fortunately nearly all of the scheduled work has been completed and what is left can be managed later in the year after nesting is over. It has been suggested that we could have a work day in April. However, normally we would be building a couple of beetle pyramids but moving the logs to the site is unlikely to take place due to lack of manpower. As a result I shall let everyone have a day of rest, seeing as it will be Sunday, and you can spend your time preparing celebrations for the relaxing of some restrictions on the 29th.

If I don’t see you before then, I wish you all the best and a **Happy Easter!**

Peter Prince

FHW Crossword No 158



Clues Across 1. Field, (6). 4. Small lake, (4). 7 & 16. Boundary, (4,5). 8. Lively, impish, (6). 11. Conjunction, (2) 12. Amphibians, (5). 16. See 7. 18. Exclamation, (2). 20. Adorned with blossom, (6). 23. Couple, (4). 24. Walkway, (4). 24. Heavy, intense, (6)

Clues Down 1. State of Allotment Way, (3,4). 2. Member of Rhododendron family, (6). Somebody had a special birthday, (5). 5. Cereal crop, (4). 6. See 21 down. 9. Anger, (3). 10. Porker, (3). 12. Place for Nature, (7). 14. Lout, (3). 15. Double act, (3). 17. Harm, (6). 19. 6 in the Orchard Meadow small pond and 6 in the Dipping Pond (5) 21 & 6. Would have been March 28. (4,3). 22. Cut off limbs from trees, (3).

Solutions to FHW Crossword No 157

Across 1 Covert. 8. AE. 7. Imp. 9. Coir. 10. Hedge. 11. Elms. 13 Otters. 15. Hyeana. 16. Fish. 18. Notch. 20. Null. 22. Ego. 23. ET. 24. Spring.

Down 1. CEO. 2. Virus. 3. Twenty. 4. Dig. 5. MP. 6. Acre. 8. Metres. 12. Laying. 14. Snacks. 16. Fungi. 17. Holt. 19. OOH. 21. Leg. 22. E.g.

Any News?

Items for the next Issue by
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