



LOCAL NATURE RESERVE

# NEWSletter

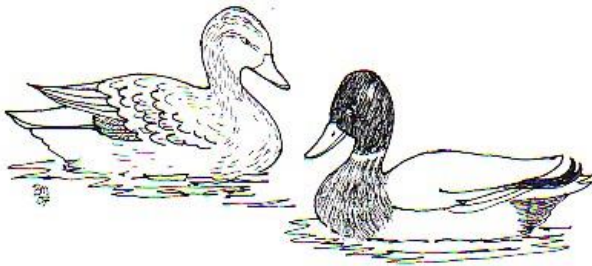
Issue No 215

February 2024

## Another fine hedge you got me into, Stanley!

From the beginning of February it was very noticeable that spring was on the way. The catkins dropped and pussy willow burst forth with its tight furry buds. The Blackthorn came into bloom, a little bit at first but it saddened me to be cutting back hedges where it was so in evidence. The bluebells sprouted and the first primroses produced buds. The pigeons were mating and many birds could be seen looking for nest sites. On the 11th I went looking for frogs and found none but there were 2 female smooth newts in the Wetland and at least one in the Dipping Pond.

By the 14th there were toads in the dipping pond. Only five males but obviously they were starting to move. By the 15th there were 21 male toads, all trying to hide from me. There was also a pair of mallard ducks



prospecting on the Wetland. By the 17th there were over 40 male toads and two mating couples. The Wetland had 4 clumps of frog spawn. On the 18th this had increased to 29 clumps of frog spawn in the Wetland. There was no change in the other ponds.

Monday the 19th there were 2 trails of toad spawn in the Dipping Pond but there was no other activity there or in the Small Pond. In the Wetland there were 62 clumps of frog spawn and another 25 frogs, 16 of them as couples. There were 18 new clumps of spawn in the Wetland on the 21st but no change in the other ponds.

On the 25th I was back inspecting the ponds and found five clumps of frog spawn in the dipping pond and 103 clumps of frog spawn in the small pond in Orchard Meadow. The frogs were still there working away but the numbers were low so I only expect a few more clumps this year. I will give a final report in the next newsletter.

Wandering around the reserve at one's leisure, as one does sometimes, it is amazing what one can find in the hidden corners. On the 19th I found in the Orchard Meadow, a section of spine consisting of five vertebrae. The section measured about 30cm long and 5cm wide and still had a bit of gristle attached. I thought it must be from a deer but I didn't have my gloves with me at the time so didn't want to investigate further. It was a newish deposit because I have walked that way many times and not seen it before, it was tinged with green algae so not necessarily fresh kill. When I did return with gloves I found that one end was cut cleanly through indicating a butcher had been at work. There's bound to be a story, but it's one that will never be known.

# FHW NEWS letter

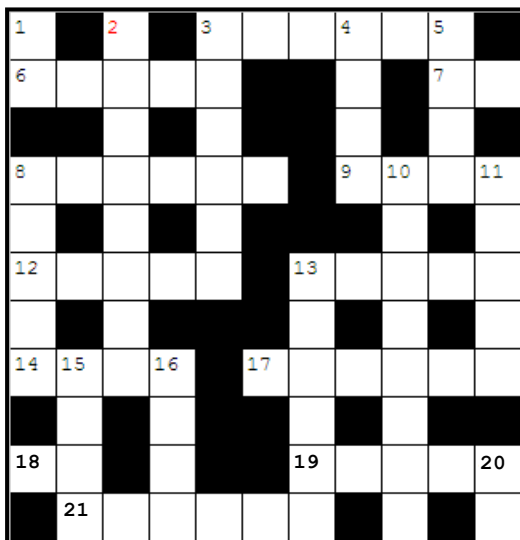
Throughout February we continued cutting back the thick hedge between the Flower Meadow and the allotments. The work went well to the point where it was nearly finished, despite being accompanied by drizzle most of the time.

So when the Volunteers' day arrived we went around the allotments and attacked the wide hedge on the other side. It was a dry day except underfoot. Ten willing volunteers set to, and we hacked and hewed, cutting back all the suckers from the blackthorn roots which had spread some ten to twelve feet into the meadow. Once we had a clear walk way along the hedge a start was made on trimming the hedge back to its height when it was last laid some six years ago. It is a difficult hedge to cut because not only is it five plants thick with a ten foot gap down the middle but there seems to be more briar rose than in the other hedges which tangles everything up. The briar also has a tendency to whip at you as it's pulled out and its thorns catch everything. It can be quite painful. However, it was a good day's work and we have made a fine start. All the spoil was made into a dead hedge about ten feet away from the growing hedge, which expect will have all but vanished by the end of next year.

The last Sunday in March is 'Easter' when everyone will be indulging in chocolate! So rather than spoil your fun, the next volunteers' day will be **Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> March**, one week early. We shall meet as usual at 09.30 in the car park when we may be hedge cutting or we may be having a scenic wander around the wood. See you then.

*Peter Prince*

## FHW Crossword No 179



**Clues Across** 3. Soak (6). 6. River, Flood (5).  
7. Correct! (1.1). 8. Mushroom, toadstool (6).  
9. Back to the beginning (4). 12. Diminish or lessen (5)  
13. Drain (5). 14. Comes before 22 across (4). 17. State after 22 across (6). 18. Repeat of 7 across (1.1). 19. Small stream (5). 21. Strong wind and rain (6).

**Clues Down** 1. Adverb (2). 2. Shower (8).  
3. Inundation of water (8). 4. Centre aisle of church (4)  
5. Desire or expectation (4). 8. Former European currency (5).  
10. Similar to 3 down (8). 11. Having an excessive or obsessive interest in a subject (5). 13. Woody plants (6) 15. Noah had only one of these (4)  
16. Reminder (4). 20. Negative (2).

### Solutions to FHW Crossword No 178

**Across:** 1, 3, 16, 17 & 11 down. Seven Point Fallow Deer Antler  
5. Owls. 7. Skipper. 10. Larva. 12.8. Prickly Shrub. 15. Foal.

**Down:** 1. Storms. 2. Vole. 3. Park. 4. Car. 6. Spur. 9. Rain.  
11. Antler. 12. Pip. 13. Logo. 14. Mole.

### Any News?

Items for the next issue by  
April 7<sup>th</sup> please, to:-

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