



LOCAL NATURE RESERVE

NEWSletter

Issue No 216

March 2024

A Walk On The Wild Side

On the frog and toad front, not a lot more happened after the inspection on the 25th of Feb. There were another 36 clumps of frog spawn in the small pond but nothing further in either the Wetland or the Dipping Pond. In fact, all the clumps of frog spawn in the dipping pond disappeared by the 28th so I think someone must have collected it and taken it away for their own pond. So, the final score is Wetland = 81 clumps of Frog spawn, Small Pond = 139 clumps of frog spawn and about ten male toads which as far as I could tell did not mate, and the dipping pond had three strings of toad spawn and 5 clumps of frog spawn which subsequently vanished. These numbers are pretty pathetic considering the hundreds of toads we used to see.

I tried to investigate the Berkeley Homes holding ponds but they refused to let me on the site even on a Sunday. Neither were they interested in doing their own survey so we have no idea whether the population has moved to their ponds or not. It is possible that the majority of the toad population was killed off when all the foundations for new homes were dug. I say this because toads hide underground during hot weather and I often find them when I am digging ditches in the wood.

On March 22nd I wandered lonely through the wood and found a number of interesting items including the first open bluebell! This is about four weeks earlier than normal. In the south-west corner where we coppiced in 2020 there is a small pond that is only there because it is the joining of three ditches. There were freshly hatched tadpoles, which surprised me. I believe perhaps thirty clumps of frogspawn were laid sometime in late February or early March, well after the end of my official search for the frogs and toads. The two ducks that I saw on the Wetland earlier this month have moved to the largest of the Berkeley Homes holding ponds. I didn't see them but they were making quite a bit of noise such that they couldn't be ignored.

While tramping around the Orchard Meadow on the same day I disturbed a fallow deer stag. He was in his dark brown coat (almost black) standing a good metre at the shoulder with excellent head gear, which put his overall height approaching 2 metres. I suspect he was twelve or more years old, probably the head of his clan and a very fine specimen, and didn't he know it. He was reclining in amongst the grass and I was able to get to within about fifty feet of him before he decided to rise. He looked at me with disdain before trotting sedately away, head held high. There was none of the panic that a doe or young stag usually shows, leaping high and trying to put as much distance between us as quickly as possible. Instead, he made almost no effort at all even deciding to change direction half way through his departure before he slipped through the gate at the rookery and vanished from sight. I actually had time to switch on my camera and take a couple of photos before he was gone but they haven't come out well.

Not a lot else happened through March. The Wednesday team continued trimming the east hedge in the Orchard Field, the rain continued and we ended up working in puddles and thick mud. I had hoped we would finish on the 20th but amorous briar rose and blackthorn conspired to delay us, they do become very clingy. We eventually reached a conclusion on the 27th. There was still some dead hedging to complete as a means to sorting the removed vegetation but that can be finished any time.

FHW NEWS *letter*

The Volunteers' Day on the 24th was bright and sunny with scattered cloud. 13 people turned up expecting to work. Under normal circumstances we would have built Beetle pyramids but the wet weather prevented us taking logs to the site. Instead, we all went for a walk of discovery around parts of the wood most people see only rarely, if at all. We took in aspects of the Flower Meadow, the perimeter of the wood and certain trees which were of particular interest. We arrived back at the car park for elevenses and spent twenty minutes discussing various things before heading out again to inspect the Orchard Meadow and its gradual development into secondary woodland. It was very interesting to see the various coppice areas where we have worked over the year and compare them with each other as a progression of development from freshly cut to re-grown after 18 years. Not all the areas have reacted in the same way and some areas have refused to re-grow at all. And so we came to the end of the season. We all went home at 12.30 to a warm and sunny afternoon.

Thank you everyone who has come to volunteer in the wood, whether it was just one day or you have been every time. It all helps and keeps up the morale of the group as well as making the work move more quickly. The new season will commence on Sunday 29th September but as usual there will be the Wednesday team outings if anyone feels they have extra energy to expend. Please phone me on 836284 if you would like to participate on a Wednesday but be aware there will be no work at all until mid-May.

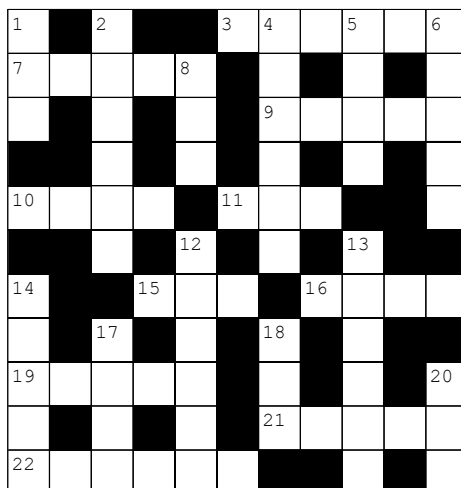
I also want to thank Mark and Allison for the regular supply of tea, coffee and biscuits.

P.S. Mark and Allison Noterman are holding a Music charity afternoon on Sunday 30th June from 3pm to 7pm. The charity is 'Space 2 be Me' and supports children from birth to 25 years old and their families. Tickets are £25 each, with two live bands, delicious food and good company. Bring your own alcohol. Parking is limited so please car share if you can.

Also at Mark and Allison's, there will be a Foal Hurst Wood Nature Reserve Volunteers' get together on Saturday 13th July similar to last year's event, more details to follow.

Peter Prince

FHW Crossword No 180



Clues Across 3. *Mustela Nivalis* (6). 7. See 13 Down.
9. See 10. 10, 9. Clumps of amphibian eggs (4, 5).
11. Slippery fish (3). 15. Sheep's cry (3). 16. Night flyers (4).
19. Variety of daisy (5). 21. Waterway (5). 22. Inner part of nut or seed (6).

Clues Down 1. Organ of sight (3). 2, 17, 5. Visitor to the Orchard Meadow (6, 4, 4). 4. Christian festival (6). 5. See 2.
6. Pertaining to the Moon (5). 8. Pig shelter (3). 12. Flower cluster (6).
13 & 7 across. Age of 2? (6, 5). 14. Small 21 across (5). 17. See 2.
18. Evergreen tree (3). 20. 'Dry' ironic (3).

Solutions to FHW Crossword No 179

Across: 3. Drench. 6. Spate. 7. OK. 8. Fungus. 9. Eden. 12. Abate.
13. Sewer. 14. Calm. 17. Drippy. 18. OK. 19. Brook. 21. Storms.

Down: 1. As. 2. Rainfall. 3. Deluge. 4. Nave. 5. Hope. 8. Franc
10. Downpour [*Sic*] 11. Nerve. 13. Shrubs. 15. Arks. 16. Memo. 20. KO.

Any News?

Items for the next issue by
May 7th please, to:-

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