

GARDENS FOR WILDLIFE

Issue 24 Spring 2009

Supported by Marsh Ltd

Gardens for Wildlife is a local initiative (which operates in the area between Newmarket Road and Lakenham Way and between the inner and outer ring roads). We distribute newsletters free to all houses in this area and we welcome everybody to talks and outings.

Reminder: You can now access this newsletter on the community web site www.townclose.org.uk

This winter has seen some of the most sustained periods of cold weather we have had for a long time and this has brought some problems for our gardens.

Those hardy plants that used to survive the winter easily have shown some signs of its effects, and some may have even died. Even a thick covering of garden fleece hasn't always been sufficient! I have also noticed several of my clay pots have suffered from the low temperatures and have shattered. I wish I had remembered to wrap some fleece around them too!

Ponds have remained frozen for days on end which can create difficulties for the wildlife living in them, but more so for visiting creatures trying to find water. Bird baths too may need to be unfrozen regularly as the availability of free water becomes a serious issue for wildlife. Just boil a kettle of water to pour over the ice in your bird bath and do the same to melt any ice at the edge of pond or water features. It's also a good idea to scrub out the bird bath regularly to clean away any dirt and help prevent diseases spreading to other birds.

Don't forget to keep your bird feeders topped up as once all the berries and seed heads etc have been devoured, the birds do depend on supplements provided by us.

There are also some great bird food recipes available. I've noted one down to share with you.

You will need : some large pine cones
some mixed wild-bird seed
mixed dried fruit and nuts
lard, suet or vegetable fat

Once all the seeds, nuts and fruit are chopped into small pieces, place in a large bowl and pour in the melted lard. Mix thoroughly and push into the spaces between the open scales of the pine cones. Tie string to the top of each cone and hang them in trees beyond the reach of any cats!

Julie



EVENTS .. EVENTS see over

EVENTS .. EVENTS ..

The following TALK will be held in Room A17 of the Hewett School. Use Gate 1 in Cecil Road opposite Trafford Road. Inside the entrance of the building turn right down the corridor and Room A17 is on the left. (There is plenty of parking close to the entrance.)

Everyone welcome.

TALK: Tuesday 3 March 2009 at 7.30pm

“THE WILD FLOWERS OF NORFOLK”

by Richard Hobbs. Richard has spent a lifetime studying flowers. He gives many lectures around the county and also leads wildflower holidays both at home and abroad.

OUTINGS

Saturday 2 May 2009 at 10.30am

GUIDED WALK around the Hewett School grounds

In our last issue we reported on the ‘Hewett Sustainable Grounds Development Pilot Project’. An update appears in this newsletter, and Paul and Elaine from ‘Landscaping for Biodiversity’ have kindly agreed to walk the grounds with us to introduce us to the plans. Meet at Gate 1, Cecil Road opposite Trafford Road.

NB It is a requirement that the school have the names of all visitors, so if you wish to attend this walk please email Dilys at www.dilys.jones2@btinternet.com or telephone her on 454683.

Sunday 31 May 2009 at 2.30pm

WALK at Hoveton Hall Gardens to see the rhododendrons and azaleas. Meet there at 2.30pm

(Directions in next newsletter)

There was a very good audience when the Warden of THE TED ELLIS TRUST RESERVE came in November to tell us about the history and conservation of Wheatfen. Our planned walk there had to be postponed because of heavy rain. As it was a wet summer in 2008 few swallowtail butterflies were seen which means few eggs were laid so this coming summer’s crop of butterflies will be very small. The Warden has agreed that we should visit in 2010.

The Hewett Sustainable Grounds Development Pilot Project (SGD) Overcoming ‘Nature Deficit Disorder’

Landscaping for Biodiversity, with grant funding from the Broads Authority Sustainable Development Fund has been working with the Hewett High School for 7 months. Our aim is to help the school to develop their grounds in a ‘sustainable way’ encompassing stakeholder participation, curriculum enrichment and biodiversity. This pilot project is to run for 18 months in total.

Much of our time so far, has been spent in establishing ourselves within the school, working with student groups and teachers. We are moving forward on two projects; an amphitheatre/outside classroom and a vegetable garden. Our Amphitheatre committee has shown real dedication in running publicity events within the school and organising a competition to prompt design ideas from their fellow students. A public consultation event will be organised displaying the best ideas and this will be a great opportunity for local people to contribute. The vegetable garden is likely to be sited down towards Harford Manor as this project intends to also include Harford Manor staff and pupils. We are working with Mahesh Pant who runs the “Sustainable Living Initiative” at Bluebell South allotments. Mahesh believes passionately in growing and cooking our own produce and he is helping us to plan and set up this project to be running in time to hopefully sow some seeds this spring. As the main issue with school growing projects is the watering and maintenance (not to mention the harvesting) during the summer holidays it is hoped that local volunteers may like to help out during this time.

We have also been busy gathering baseline data. A questionnaire for staff and students has revealed interesting insights in to how they view the Hewett’s grounds; what they like and what they don’t, how they use it and their attitudes to the environment and wildlife. We have carried out biodiversity surveys and 71 species of plant and invertebrate have been identified and recorded to date (from approx. 10% of the site). We are working out ways to improve and extend habitats, including a recommended maintenance schedule and a long term strategy to encourage wildlife onto the school’s extensive grounds.

We visit the school regularly and we always try to make a point of taking students outside the classroom, devising exercises to help them develop an appreciation for their natural surroundings. We recently held an assembly for the 6th form to promote the proposed amphitheatre/outside classroom project. The idea was to form the shape of an amphitheatre using their bodies. So we took them onto the field and, after some initial complaints, (the weather wasn’t great) the exercise was completed successfully. There were smiles all round and a spontaneous “Mexican wave” broke out. The benefits of being outside for those 88 young people were plain to see.

We hope to be able to invite your members to walk the grounds with us in May. Please feel free to contact us if you would like to find out more or if you feel that you have something that you can contribute to this project.

Paul and Elaine – Landscaping for Biodiversity

pwoodmin@toucansurf.com tel: 07832 383074 or 07796 553838

The project is supported by the Broads Authority Sustainable Development Fund with a grant provided by the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra)

**Once-common bird needs insects rather than seeds.
Where have all the SPARROWS gone?**

The RSPB has reported the findings of a scientific study that the 20-year decline of house sparrows in towns and cities is because of the removal of trees from urban spaces, the popularity of dense hedges like leylandii and the conversion of front gardens into parking.

House sparrows have declined in Britain by 68% since 1977. A house sparrow must rear at least 5 chicks every year to stop their numbers falling. Young sparrows need insects rather than seeds, peanuts or bread to survive. Most insects are collected from deciduous woody vegetation, trees and grassland. Ornamental evergreens such as leylandii are less attractive to native insects.

The study highlights the importance of using native species in our urban green spaces. The RSPB has launched a scheme Home for Wildlife and recommends that gardeners plant honeysuckle, hawthorn or fruit trees, and have some long grass in summer and a small pond.

We wonder whether there are some other reasons for the decline in sparrows. Is it because we line our roofs with felt these days? Some feel the sparrows have declined in open areas/larger gardens.

We think it would be interesting to have feedback from this area and invite you to complete the following:

To Gardens for Wildlife

PLEASE RETURN this slip to 148 Trafford Road or 3 Hornor Close (off Ipswich Road)
Or email: dilys.jones2@btinternet.com

SURVEY ON SPARROWS

Do you see sparrows regularly in your garden YES/NO If so how many?

Do you put out food for them?

Do you know where they nest?

Do you have your roof lined with felt?

Whereabouts do you live?

Any other comments

Our Garden in Josephine Close

Although we live in a flat we feel very lucky that we have two lovely gardens. We are in the process of trying to re-establish some order, but in reference to “no nettles required” in issue 21 we want to be wildlife (in all its forms) friendly. So far we have a compost bin and multiple bird feeders. Already we have lovely trees, ivy and shrubs. We hope to add a pond and I love adding colour with summer flowers for the bees and hoverflies. We will have been here a year in April and so far have seen bats, sparrowhawks, woodpecker, long tailed tits, blue and great tits, jays, a regular hedgehog and the visitings of a fox and a few dragonflies resting their weary wings. I hope to keep a patch of long grass with nettles, a rockery with a birdbath and a bee and insect box. It is going to be a long process and already I have been sawing, training, pruning, digging and planting, and I am sure it will be worth it and is a cheap way to keep fit.

Six months later – I have to report there has not been a huge amount of progress, but we have got rid of a skip of garden waste. For winter I have made a variety of bird mixes and as a result have a very feisty female blackbird that guards one of the feeders and will not let the male blackbird get a look in. There are a regular pair of dunnocks, dozens of starlings and a regular flock of long tailed tits. I enjoy watching these garden visitors and find their antics amusing. We hope to add a pond at some point this year.

Lisa



Notes from Brian Avenue

The weather last year has been very mixed – as I’m sure you’ll all agree – with rain and cold spells for most of it.

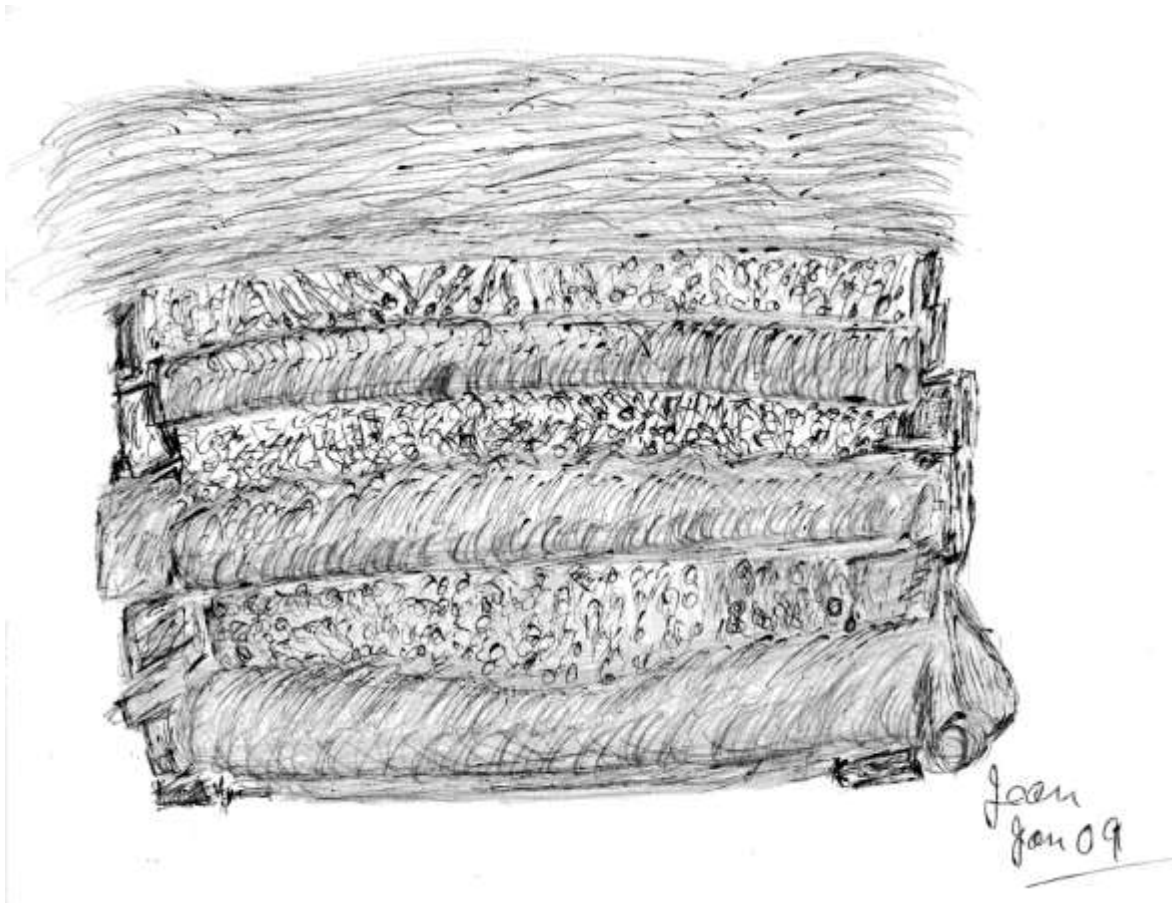
I noticed many less spiders in my house and garden this past year. I used to love seeing their webs covered in dew and strung around my garden – often becoming entangled in them whilst deadheading and pruning plants.

One new addition to my garden in the autumn was a male fox. He was also seen by Peter further round Brian Avenue rolling in the fallen leaves which had gathered near his front wall. He repeated this exercise more than once, leaving us wondering whether he was scent-marking or just enjoying autumn’s bounty. I had another up close and personal appearance during all the snow in November when he was digging for scraps in the garden.

December 21st was the shortest day so hopefully we’ll soon notice the days lengthen and there will be more activity in and around the green spaces. The male blackbirds are quite sociable at the moment feeding together on the lawn, but by the end of January they will become more aggressive with each other as they compete for the females. It has been good to see and hear the twittering of sparrows as a few have now returned to my garden. A neighbour opposite has allowed her shrubs to grow up at will, which has allowed them plenty of cover and hopefully food. Goldfinches and tits continue to use my feeders and the squirrel persists with burying nuts all over the lawn!

In this cold weather please put out spare/leftover food and clean water for wildlife. If you have any apples that are past their best then blackbirds and starlings enjoy these, or if you are baking any potatoes in the oven put in an extra one – these go down really well with all birds.

Jenny



A Winter Hotel for our friendly insects. It was built by my gardener Paul from the collection of debris at the bottom of the garden. He was pleased with the result, as I am.

Layers of logs were interspersed with a layer of leaves and sticks, and it was topped with bamboo and larger sticks.

Jean

Four Robins!

In December Diane reported to us that “contrary to what seems to be a common theory that robins are territorial, I have four robins sharing my bird table at the moment. True they are not exactly pally, but nevertheless . . . “

We asked our expert Peter, and he confirmed that four robins sharing a territory (and bird table) would appear to be very unusual, except perhaps around the time of moult (which usually lasts about 60 days between early June and late September) and during severe winter weather.

CALLING ALL CONTRIBUTORS AND ILLUSTRATORS

We are an informal group and we rely on your input and participation. If you can write a short article or even just a snippet, do please support us and get in touch: Ring chairperson Julie on 627681 or contact the Newsletter editor Dilys at 454683,

Email dilys.jones2@btinternet.com

If you would like to be on our membership list (free) in order to receive notification of our AGM ring Giti on 662146.