

# ***GARDENS FOR WILDLIFE***

**Issue 29 Autumn 2010**

**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.*

*You can now access this newsletter on the community web site [www.townclose.org.uk](http://www.townclose.org.uk)*

Welcome to our 9th year, which concluded with a very enjoyable AGM at Margaret's house with 22 attending.

I have recently installed a small pond in my garden and have learned a great deal about the fine balance that needs to be met in order to maintain its health. I didn't want to spend a lot of money on plants so managed to find bits and pieces in my own garden to plant around its perimeter and then was given a variety of pond weed from friends. It was surprising how many pond creatures came along with the weed, some of which I recognised such as pond snails. Some things were most peculiar, like the clear jelly-like structures attached to the weed which I assumed were eggs, but as yet have not been fortunate enough to find anything that may have hatched out!

Although the weed provides valuable oxygen and cover for secretive pond life, I soon learned which of the weeds grows the quickest. The blanket weed, which seems to have appeared from nowhere, has been the most irritating of all the fast spreading greenery and I was delighted to have found a cure! I have simply added a little bag of barley straw and in about a week all the blanket weed has disappeared!

There are however a large number of plants that can take over your pond and some are also damaging to our native plants in ponds, lakes and rivers. Watch out for and avoid water fern, parrot's feather, floating pennywort and an Australian swamp stoncrop. Also never underestimate the growth and size of some of our native plants as I learned the hard way when I planted

bulrushes at the edge of our school pond! It took a whole day and several willing parents to pull it all out!

The benefits the pond has given me far outweigh the drawbacks. There is hardly a day goes by when I don't go and stare into the pond to see if there have been any new visitors. I love to watch the many birds drinking from it on the hot dry summer days and the adorable frogs leaping in from the edging plants as I move the leaves gently away from the water. If you haven't already developed a pond in your garden and have always wanted one, do have a go, it's really worth it!

*Julie*



## ***Come to the PLANT SALE***

***Saturday 9th OCTOBER 2010  
10am to 1pm***

Our annual bring-and-buy plant sale is at The Ring in Trafford Road. We would welcome plants, apples or any other garden produce & jams. Plants for sale can be taken direct to the stall or left the day before at 35 Brian Avenue or 3 Hornor Close.

## **EVENTS .. EVENTS ..**

The TALKS in the Winter series will be held in Room A17 of the Hewett School. The entrance is 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: “ASPECTS OF NATURE” by Brian Macfarlane Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2010 at 7.30pm in Room A17**

**Brian is an excellent wildlife photographer in Norfolk and since his retirement has spent many hours observing and photographing wildlife (particularly in the hides at Strumpshaw and Cley). He was lucky enough to watch a bittern for 2 whole hours recently. He will include one or two audiovisual presentations. You will have seen a couple of his special photographs in the EDP newspaper. This will be a very entertaining evening.**

(Further talks will be advertised in the next issue.)

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### **NEW SECRETARY/NEWSLETTER EDITOR required in 2011**

At the AGM in September Dilys announced that she would carry on for one more year and then would definitely retire in September 2011. We hope that there is someone out there that would be interested in taking over the role. The newsletter goes out just 3 times per year, and there is a committee to assist. If you think you may be able to help please ring 454683.

### **WE HAVE A NEW TREASURER**

In the autumn of 2009 we reported that our longstanding Treasurer Jean had had to retire owing to poor health having given 8 years of tremendous support to the group. Our request for a new Treasurer was successful and we are delighted to welcome Brian to the committee.

### **MARJORIE CARLTON**

We were sad to hear of the death of Marjorie Carlton. Marjorie joined the group at the outset and did a sterling job as a newsletter delivery coordinator for many years and enjoyed coming on our outings.

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### **HELP THE GREENFINCHES**

At the AGM several of us reported that the number of greenfinches had declined considerably in the last 3 months. The RSPB say this is likely to have been caused by the parasite trichomonosis and greenfinch numbers have dropped by a third. It can also affect other finches.

Advice from the RSPB is to ensure good hygiene, specifically the regular cleaning of all feeders, bird baths and feeding surfaces. For further information go to [www.rspb.org.uk](http://www.rspb.org.uk)

## **REPORT FROM THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

It was a very encouraging AGM on 11<sup>th</sup> September with 22 attending, followed by tea and delicious cakes in Margaret's wildlife friendly garden in the sunshine.

There had been 3 excellent talks in the winter series. Our Garden Walkabout in May was popular as usual. We also had outings to Wheatfen, Marston Marsh and the Kenninghall Community Woodland Project, and it was good to see one or two new faces on each occasion.

We have now distributed 7 sparrow nestboxes in our area, but have discovered there is difficulty in getting them put up as they need to be 3m high in a shady position. We are working on this.

In May our Secretary attended a training session on Recording Local Wildlife run by the Norfolk Wildlife Trust. We were encouraged to submit records of plants, animals, insects and fungi found in Norfolk to the Norfolk Biodiversity Information Service. It is important to know what exists where, so it can be protected and conserved. We shall try and build in some recording at our future sessions.

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## **NEW MARKET GARDEN AT THE HEWETT SCHOOL**

This autumn you may be surprised to see two acres of the Hewett School playing field being ploughed up to grow vegetables. A new organic market garden at the school will provide a year-round supply of vegetables to the school kitchen and, we hope, a range of outlets in the local community (for example we hope to involve neighbouring primary schools in selling veg to parents). An important aim is to involve students from the school in as many imaginative ways as possible so that they can learn more about how food is grown.

The project is a collaboration between Transition Norwich and East Anglia Food Link, and involves creating a new co-op which will employ a farm manager etc. Funding has been secured from the Lottery-funded Local Food Fund for start-up costs including buying a small tractor and other equipment. The funding is also for three other projects in and around Norwich - a community-supported agriculture scheme based at Postwick, a flour mill, and a project to source local beans, oats and barley.

Although most of the heavy work will be done by employed staff with machinery, we would welcome support from local people both in terms of helping to grow or sell the produce, or in providing expertise in biodiversity, organic pest management etc. If you are interested in getting involved contact Tully at [tully@eafll.org](mailto:tully@eafll.org) or 07717 471 396.



## Carbon Conversations Course

With Juliet Wimhurst & Lois Hill  
At Ipswich Road – 6 fortnightly sessions. Total cost £20  
Dates and times TBA

Carbon Conversations is an inspiring, practical 6-session course on low-carbon living. It was recently featured in the Guardian as one of the 20 best climate change solutions.

- . based on the psychology of change
- . emotionally engaging
- . technically rigorous
- . up to date, attractive handbook, games and materials

The course engages people both emotionally and practically, helping them overcome the barriers often associated with making large carbon reductions. Members explore the basic climate change problem, their responses to it, their ideas for a low-carbon future and the four key areas of the footprint - home energy, travel, food and other consumption. Most members make reductions of 1 tonne CO<sub>2</sub> during the course and develop plans to halve their footprints over a longer period.

For more information tel: 01603 623816

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Early in May I was looking out of my kitchen window when I saw a blackbird pick up something quite large from the lawn and with some difficulty struggled to fly the short distance to the side flowerbed.

I decided I would check this out but as I was about to investigate, another blackbird flew from the other side of the garden with a large object in its beak, dropped it on the lawn and flew back into the beech hedge. I waited a few minutes and then decided to have a look. I found to my dismay that the objects were in fact dead blackbird chicks, one was untouched and the other had wounds that indicated it had been attacked. I subsequently found the first chick and that too had been badly mauled. It would appear the entire brood had been wiped out. I wonder what caused their untimely deaths. Why did the first bird seem to want to hide

the body while the second just abandoned them on the lawn? Any suggestions?  
*Graham*

### Visitors to Lady Mary Road

There is no pond in my garden, but I use an old rubber dustbin lid as a bird bath set in a hollow. This might attract frogs and toads as might the rather wild nature of the garden with plenty of undergrowth. I found a toad in a damp corner where the rain drips down. Sadly I found another stretched out dead in mid-leap under my wheelie bin – I must have run over him when I moved it. I rattle it around a bit now before wheeling it out.

At the end of June last I was looking out of my French windows at dusk watching a bat whizzing round, and saw what looked like a

leaf on the grass. Or was it a toad? I went out to investigate. It was either a frog or a toad and he kept stock still for ages then disappeared under a bush with one hop. Another evening I saw a toad sitting in my bird bath and he sat there for ages. He seemed to have a dead holly leaf stuck to his head. I did some weeding but kept an eye out as cats were on the prowl and a bucketful of weeds later he was still there. I slowly approached and gingerly reached out and pulled the dead leaf away, it was all cobwebby. He had a patch of cobwebs stuck all over his head and eyes and he let me peel it off. He might have blundered into the cobwebs in my greenhouse. He blinked a few times then hopped off to the flowerbed. He was a fine fellow about 3 inches long with stripy legs and very long toes on his back feet.

This spring I have heard Norfolk frogs (or toads – I am not sure which) croaking for the first time. There were lots of them in a pond and they sounded like geese honking in the distance!  
*Kate*



DIARY from the garden of a small terraced house 250m from the inner ring road. We were sitting in the garden on a beautiful day in April and my visitor remarked ‘This is like sitting in an aviary’. So I have tried to work out what makes this garden so popular for birds, that is house and hedge sparrows, blackbirds, collared doves, robin, wren, coal tit and blue tit. (There have been long-tailed tits and goldfinches in previous years.) Nationally there are reports of a huge drop in numbers of house sparrows, but they

have been in this garden in force for 20 years.

The garden is SMALL with high hedges and shrubs around a lawned area with a pond. It is mostly organic and there is plenty of cover. I feed the birds through the winter including rolled oats. There are good and much-used nest sites. The ivy clad shed and garage are very popular. House sparrows and swifts also nest in tiled roofs nearby. There is a pyracantha and the sparrows clear the berries completely before they are ripe. This year the sparrows cleared all the flower buds from my red spartan apple tree, but they don’t touch the bramley apple buds. The garden is mostly predator free – just the occasional magpie.

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### **Life in Brian Avenue**

While looking upwards for signs of wildlife I saw a bird hanging upside down with both legs entangled in the branch of a large bush approximately 10 feet from the ground. Every few minutes there was a feeble flutter of its wings. With a lot of help from neighbours, especially Roy who stood on top of a ladder to prune the branch, it was handed to neighbours waiting below. It turned out to be a female blackbird heavily entwined with cotton, and as we cut the cotton she became quite feisty which was a good sign! She was eventually released into a quiet part of the garden to recover. After an hour I saw her drinking and bathing in the bird bath – she had one lame leg but otherwise looked well. I haven’t seen her for a few weeks so hope all is well. Recently there have been very few birds in the garden. At this time of year they go into the countryside to feed on grain etc and hide away while they moult their summer feathers.

As I write this there is still no sign of her and I hope she has survived. Please ensure safe disposal of any waste material that may damage wildlife. (My thanks go to Rosalind, Roy, Elaine and Peter who helped in the rescue.)  
*Jenny*

## LAND WANTED

**The Grow Our Own Organic Gardening Project** off The Avenues now has a successful community allotment scheme with 150 members happily growing their own fruit and veg. The members range from complete beginners to skilled gardeners. The Project wants to expand and to develop a community centre in Norwich to promote healthy lifestyles. It needs 2-3 acres of land for growing food and a building with permission for business use, either separately or together. Contact Mahesh Pant on 455868 [www.grow-our-own.co.uk](http://www.grow-our-own.co.uk)

## LAKENHAM WAY

The Friends of Lakenham Way have organised several working parties this autumn to collect litter and to carry out scrub clearance (with Citycare removing the rubbish). Anyone interested in helping should contact Councillor Stephen Little (Green) at [s.little@cllr.norwich.gov.uk](mailto:s.little@cllr.norwich.gov.uk)

Want to know more about encouraging wildlife into your garden? The RHS and The Wildlife Trusts have produced [www.wildaboutgardens.org.uk](http://www.wildaboutgardens.org.uk)



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## 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](mailto: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.