

Reserves New January 2011

Forthcoming events

26 February 2011 14:00 - 15:00 – Photographic and Social Afternoon St Barnabas Church Hall Fromond Rd Winchester 2pm -4.30pm

This is always a good opportunity to meet both old and new friends. Hope to see you there.

Looking back to 2010

I forgot a significant bit of news – good news for one of our younger visitors to Bentley Station Meadow. Back in the summer when I got details of the NFU's Young Countryside Reporter Competition I instantly thought of Jack – an enthusiastic 10 year old who often comes along to walks at Bentley with his mum & sister. The object was to write a 200-word story about their farm visit. Jack wrote about our reserve and won the runner up prize of a large remote control John Deere tractor.

I probably forgot lots of other significant things too so for that reason I will endeavour to do this news letter at the end of each month.

Work Parties and other visits

A number of work parties have taken place during October, November and December & these have been well supported. The Magdalen work party was rearranged from 7th January to 14th January due to rain. Sparsholt students came with Andy Barker to MHD on 19th January and undertook a range of activities learning about chalk grassland & the work that has to be done to look after a reserve.(Pic below)



We had to cancel the Bentley SM work party on 12th January due to wet conditions underfoot & further rain forecast for the day. The Bentley Scouts came to BSM on 29th January and undertook a variety of activities including the RSPB Big Garden Bird watch and learning about looking after habitats for butterflies.

Any more work parties will be fixed by email so please contact Lynn to sign up to the Conservation Work Party email group.

The cattle

In addition to the volunteers who come to work parties our other conservation workers are The cattle. Thankfully the snow & ice did cause as many problems as in December 2009 and January 2010. The cattle left Yew Hill on 23rd January and Magdalen Hill Down on 26th January. Both reserves have been grazed most satisfactorily. We expect to have sheep at Magdalen Hill Down North roadside field in late February/March in order to graze it shorter.

Membership Update – News From head Office

The half price gift membership offer in December proved very successful and resulted in over 200 new members – bringing the total number of individual members as at 31 December to a record 15,309. Thank you to everyone who purchased Gift membership for a friend or loved one for Christmas. We are planning to run a similar offer on the website during March for anyone wishing to buy gift membership for Mothering Sunday on 3 April. Lynn adds of course it can be used for non-mother's day gifts too - birthdays or just a gift to start bringing the joy of butterflies to a friend or family member. At £12 it's a great bargain.

National Moth Conference. Birmingham 22nd January 2011

The full account of this is on the main web site. Dr Mark Young's talk about conservation work in Scotland struck a chord with me. The Slender Scotch Burnett is in danger of dying out through lack of grazing as the habitat becomes unsuitable. On the other hand the New Forest Burnett was at an all time low until a reduction in grazing pressure enabled it to increase as its larval food plant thrived. Grazing is an important part of the way we manage all our three reserves to achieve the right balance between under & overgrazing. On a large reserve like Magdalen we are able to graze different parts at different intensities. There are other areas that are not grazed at all but managed by cutting on a rota basis i.e. not cut every year, When cutting is employed as a management technique it is important not to cut the whole area but to leave standing vegetation. Many species of moth and some butterflies have life stages that need this sort of vegetation. And of course the seeds are good for birds.

Sharon Hearle Regional Officer for East of England spoke about how habitat had been improved by ploughing & work with a bulldozer. Many wild flowers had grown on the disturbed ground. We had a good example of this at MHD last year when the new scrapes were created the topsoil removed by the JCB was formed into three banks – one at the bottom of each scrape. They rapidly became covered in flowers and provided nectar well into September. It will be interesting to see how the three new scrapes progress this season.

Lynn Fomison.

Reserves Who's Who

Reserves sub-committee Chairman and Transect co-ordinator MHD

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