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### Water Voles, Bats and Riverbank Management

Frances Jannaway

We are very fortunate to have Water Voles, the most highly endangered mammal in Great Britain, living in our town along the banks of the River Ems. However, the lack of Water Vole sightings both this year and last year is a great cause for concern.

A survey combined with a training session for six volunteers from the Brook Meadow Conservation Group carried out at the beginning of June found a number of signs of Water Voles, including burrows, latrines and feeding stations. Almost all of these were in the area between the two bridges mainly around the sluice area, where voles have been seen this year, with few signs elsewhere along the river. The very few signs of activity, given the time of year, suggests quite a small isolated population. Another survey will be carried out in September/October.

According to Graham Roberts, SE Otters & Rivers Project Officer, Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust (HWT), the populations do vary from year to year. The lack of sightings may also be because it is difficult to see them due to the verdant growth of vegetation in the river, especially Watercress. Graham Roberts, guest speaker at our AGM on 3 October, will give a talk about Water Voles (see page 5).

Water Voles are not the only Biodiversity Action Plan species living and feeding around the River Ems. BAP species are a cause for concern in terms of biodiversity conservation both nationally and locally. A survey in early September, recorded at least two species of Bats, Common Pipistrelle and Soprano Pipistrelle with possibly also Serotine and Brown Long-eared Bats.

At a recent site visit with Charlotte Murray of the Environment Agency (EA) and Graham Roberts (HWT) to get their advice about the management of the River Ems and its riverbanks, a mosaic pattern of cutting was decided on to create a variety of habitats for Water Voles, Bats, Kingfishers, and other wildlife. The objective is to reduce the dominance of Stinging Nettles and Brambles by removing the cuttings and so reducing fertility and encourage grasses to grow, which are preferred by Water Voles. This will be combined with a pollarding and coppicing programme on the Willows lining the riverbank, this year cutting back several overhanging branches to reduce shade but leaving some perches for Kingfishers. A channel will be cut through the in-stream vegetation, removing mainly Watercress. This work will be carried out by the EA in late September. We are also working with the arborist at HBC to get the large Crack Willows along the northern riverbank path pollarded this winter. Finally, we are seeking funding for further riverbank enhancement work.



Water Vole, River Ems in  
Brook Meadow (March 2007)

### Friends of Hollybank Woods - Summer Party

Pauline Bond

Despite the severe weather warning and torrential rain during the day, the evening of Friday 20th July turned out warm and dry to allow 64 people to enjoy the Summer Party in Hollybank Woods.

The evening began with face painting for the children by Marnie Bond, paper butterflies coloured to hang on trees, and magical story telling by



Children and adults in party mood enjoying the moths of Hollybank Woods

### Plastic Bagless in Emsworth

Ann Jolly

Determined to do their bit to cut down on the number of plastic bags contaminating our sea and soil, the Emsworth Business Association has come up with a terrific idea to kick-start this reduction locally. Before Christmas they will deliver a free, reusable canvas shopping bag to every household in Emsworth. The bags, funded through a substantial investment by the EBA, will be decorated with a logo specially designed by John Tweddell. It will include a swan and a reminder to people that great local shopping is available in Emsworth. Perhaps these bags will become collectors' items?

Why are the EBA doing this? Well, on average, a person uses a plastic bag for only twelve minutes, there are approximately 46,000 pieces of plastic debris floating on or near the surface of every square mile of ocean and each bag takes from 500 to 1000 years to break down in the environment. Recognising this as throwaway living, EBA members want to persuade local shoppers to avoid the ubiquitous plastic bag and affect environmental damage at origin.

Roz Oakley from Pantry Weigh has put considerable effort into sourcing appropriate bags and members of the EBA committee have debated the best way to convince customers they are serious about this project. Later this year they hope to hold a seminar for traders and residents to consider how using cornstarch or biodegradable bags might extend the current approach.

So when the canvas bag with its logo arrives at your house, remember to take it with you when you go shopping in Emsworth. By using it, you will be protecting the environment and supporting great local shops.

### Friends of Nore Barn Woods - Bluebell Recovery Project

Roy Ewing

Saturday 20th October will be "Bluebell planting day" in Nore Barn Woods. As part of the Bluebell Recovery Project being run in the woods, 2000 native Bluebell bulbs will be planted. Turn up with your trowel and join in! Meet at the shore end of Warlington Road at 10am.

Sponsors this year are the Lottery "Awards for All" programme and the Tree Council, to which the Friends are indebted. Sponsors in 2006 were the Emsworth Business Association, and Chichester Harbour Conservancy "Sustainable Development Fund". This enabled over 1,000 bulbs to be planted. With this continued sponsorship the target of replacing all non-native Spanish Bluebells in the woods with their native counterpart is being achieved.

### Beach Watch 2007

Jennifer Rye

A team of nine local volunteers cleaned Emsworth West Foreshore on Sunday 16th September as part of the Marine Conservation Society's annual Beachwatch litter survey and clean-up, an event carried out on beaches all over the country. We removed a total of 444 items, weighing 3.25kg from the stretch of foreshore between the end of the Warlington Road and the Sailing Club.

Bits of glass and plastic were the commonest items, but we also recorded a "giant flip-flop sole", a Max factor mascara wand and a length of electric cable. If you fancy getting involved in regular clean-ups in the future, get in touch with Jennifer Rye 01243 376926.



Volunteers taking part in  
Emsworth Beachwatch 2007

Jonathon Huet, that enchanted the children (and adults too). Then followed a delicious picnic supper, which was enjoyed seated around the glade on hay bales. The food was sponsored by an 'Awards for All' lottery grant obtained by the Havant Conservation Action Project to promote local events.

Dusk was falling, a cue for three nocturnal activities. Firstly, a fascinating talk about bats by Andrew Brook followed by questions and answers. Mike Perry and Robin Storkey then showed the moths collected the previous night before a moth trap was set up for the evening's catch. The moths caught were identified and then released; the children were delighted with the large Hawk Moths that were happy to sit on their fingers. Lastly, the scary walk led by John Bond which wound through the woods in the dark with skeletons, gravestones, spiders and bats lit by torches. In summary, a very successful evening enjoyed by 'Friends' and visitors alike.

### Fungus Forage, Sunday 21 October

Discover the Autumn fungi (toadstools and mushrooms, etc) that will be appearing in the woodland at this time of year. A local expert will lead the walk and explain the differences between the various types of fungi seen. Meet at the top of Hollybank Lane at 10am. Walk lasts about 2 hours.

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