

WAYMARKER

Northamptonshire

For all who enjoy the peace and beauty of the Northamptonshire countryside

JULY 2007

Summer Leys hosts the first Wildlife Trust Road Show event

The first family Wildlife Trust Road Show event for this year was held at Summer Leys Nature Reserve on 3 June 2007, providing a wealth of activities for people to join in with.

Pond dipping was a success, with many creatures being caught, and excitement broke out when two baby newts were seen. Sweep netting was also very popular, with people of all ages having a go. The guided walk was well attended and everyone had the chance to find out more about the reserve and the wildlife that lives there. Craft activities such as 'make a spider' and minibeast hotels were a massive hit on the day too.

The day raised £120, which will go towards helping conservation projects across the three counties of Northamptonshire, Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire.

Further Wildlife Trust Road Shows will be held on at Kings Wood on the 22 July, 26 August and 23 September; see 'Things to do' section on our website for detail.

Volunteers needed!

Rockingham Forest Trust needs new volunteers to help out at its office in Oundle. Anyone who has a few hours a week to spare and fancies getting involved with an environmental charity is urged to get in touch. Tasks range from the

purely administrative to more creative project involvement.

To find out more please contact the Trust on 01832 274278.

Separating bark from bite

Councils throughout the county are looking at new dog control legislation.

The new powers are part of the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005 and can be used to encourage dog owners to act responsibly when walking their pets.

The new powers cover dog fouling, when a dog must be kept on a lead, restricting the access to dogs in certain sensitive areas and limiting the number of dogs that can be controlled at one time.

The Northampton Borough Council is currently conducting a preliminary consultation with a number of organisations to assess whether or not there is a need for the new dog control measures. Every park and green space will be considered and council officers will be looking for evidence to support the need for additional powers.

Wellingborough Borough Council is closer to finalising their powers having drawn up draft orders which they are putting out for public comment.

Comments for NBC should be sent to ehealth@northampton.gov.uk

For WBC go to www.wellingborough.gov.uk and

find Dog Control Orders in their index of services.

Vandals attack Irchester Country Park.

Normally we think of vandalism as a quick mindless act requiring little energy, yet at Irchester Country Park vandals must have spent at least 30 minutes of hard work with axe and handsaw in order to cut through the 18 inch trunk of a poplar tree.

It was fortunate that no one else was about at the time as the 60ft, 40 year old tree fell, otherwise serious injury could have resulted to others as well as the vandals themselves.

Apparently this isn't the first case, though nothing quite on this scale has happened before.

Police are appealing for information on 0845 700700.

Northampton Badger Project

One of the last places you might expect badgers to live is within the busy town of Northampton. But there are a surprising number of badgers within the Borough boundaries, from the undeveloped fringes to within a mile of the town centre.

On June 16th Brockwatch launched its project to learn more about badgers in the Borough. They want to know where they live, where they feed, and what they feed on. They also want to learn about the problems Northampton's badgers face - and what problems they cause.

Through this project they are asking people to pass on information about badgers in Northampton. In particular, they are asking people to tell them if they know of any badger setts in the

Borough (past or present), if they have seen a badger within the town (live or dead) or if they have found any other evidence of badger activity.

An important part of the Northampton Badger Project is the Garden Badger Survey. How many people in the town have badgers visiting their garden, and what do they think about their black and white guests? To answer these questions (and more) they have prepared a simple survey form, and want as many Northamptonians as possible to fill it in and return it.

Details on their web site at www.badgers.org.uk/brockwatch/survey-northampton.html

Rectory Farm pocket park official opening

Herbalism, pond dipping and a bouncy castle were just some of the activities that took place at the official opening of the Rectory Farm Pocket Park in Northampton on Saturday 23rd June.

The pocket park is owned and managed by the local community, which provide free, open access to the countryside at all times. It helps to protect and conserve the landscape, heritage and wildlife, as well as giving local people the opportunity to enhance the place in which they live or work.

Rectory Farm Pocket Park is a valuable habitat corridor running along the eastern edge of Rectory Farm Estate and following the course of Ecton Brook. The varied habitats include a marsh, pond and wet woodland as well as a good variety of trees and scrub.

Local herbalist and naturopath Julia Milner discussed the medicinal properties of plants growing in the park while Amy Robinson from The Wildlife Trust led children in pond

dipping and finding out what mini beasts they can catch.

The pocket park can be accessed from the lower ends of Fellmead Road, Crowthorpe Road, Ermine Road, Bentley Close, Huntsmead Road, Berrydale, Snapewood Walk and the Ridge Walk from Ecton Brook.

Thornton Hall Development

Thornton Hall sitting just opposite the Cock Hotel, Northampton, where Mill Lane joins with Harborough Road, is being converted into five luxury apartments. This is probably no bad thing as the Hall has been in a poor state of repair for many years and better this than it be allowed to deteriorate further and finally collapse.

However, the developers also want to fence off 1.7 hectares of the park to be used as private gardens for the apartments, claiming that the park is little used. Fortunately the application has been refused. Perhaps now they will use the money they would have been spent in laying out two football field size gardens for private use to work with the local community to upgrading the park for the enjoyment of all.

Fineshade Wood Eco-Centre

£1 million has been spent at Fineshade Wood, as part of the River Nene Regional Park initiative, converting a former 18th century barn into a visitors centre which includes a recreation and information area.

The complex, which has been renovated using local and natural materials, will enable visitors to find out about the local environment, wildlife, crafts and the woodland heritage.

The roof has been insulated using sheep's wool and the reed bed sewerage system is one of the largest in the country.

Even before its opening at the end of June the site had attracted over 2000 visitors.

Podding Windfarm Refused

Application for a wind farm on the Northants/ Bedford border near Wollaston has been turned down by Bedfordshire County Council on a vote of 11 to 1. The scheme for nine 125m high turbines was vigorously opposed by Campaign to Limit Onshore Windfarm Development (CLOWD) but had the support of Friends of the Earth.

New Kingsthorpe Pocket Park

After more than a year of hard work an old graveyard in Vicarage Road Kingsthorpe, which formed an extension to the St John the Baptist graveyard, has been turned into a pocket park for the benefit of the local community. After 13 months of hard work the overgrown land has been transformed with paths, benches and bird boxes.

Northamptonshire Neglected

A new report from Natural England, English Heritage and DEFRA placed large section of the Northamptonshire landscape into the neglected category; this is defined as *"the character of an area has been weakened or degraded by past change, and the changes observed in the 'key' themes have not had the effect of restoring the desired qualities that made the area distinct."* The report also concluded that the neglect was long term.

For landscape assessment the county is divided into four Joint

Character Areas (JCA) - Rockingham Forest centred around Corby; Northamptonshire Uplands taking in the western part of the county and arching over towards Market Harborough; Yardley - Whittlewood Ridge which runs along the border with Buckinghamshire and Bedfordshire; and finally Northamptonshire Vales which includes the head waters of the Tove from Towcester to Northampton and then along the Nene Valley and up the Ise valley. It is the last two areas that have been found to be neglected in 4 of the 7 indicators measured. The character of the Northamptonshire Uplands was found to be maintained by all indicators whilst Rockingham Forest met maintained levels in 4 categories.

The full report can be found at www.cqc.org.uk

Nottingham Declaration on Climate Change

We have all heard of the Kyoto Protocol but who's heard of the Nottingham Declaration? In 2000 a meeting of senior members of local councils made a broad statement of commitments to support the government's efforts to fight climate change by drawing up plans to reduce CO2 emissions and waste. No specific targets are set other than to assist the government in meeting its targets. The declaration has been signed by the County Council and all district and borough councils in the county. Let's hope that these are more than just pious words making the local authorities feel better.

£2.5 million Visitors Centre for Stanwick Lakes

If it receives planning permission, Rocking Forest Trust which manages Stanwick Lakes intends to build a visitors centre incorporating a cafeteria, shop, indoor play area as well as a conference and exhibition space. Currently the lakes attract 75,000 visitors a year but this is expected to rise to 200,000 with the new centre. As tasteful as we're sure the new centre will be, one wonders whether £2.5 million which includes a grant from East Northants Council could not be better spent on providing improved facilities over the whole of East Northants.

Help Needed

East Carlton Country Park is looking for a volunteer to lead a team creating a sensory garden; if you are interested then phone Nick on 01536 771371

More Help Needed

Brigstock Pocket Park is looking for a co-ordinator; if you can help then contact Ruth Douglas rdouglas@northamptonshire.gov.uk

Remember; send any news stories to northants@waymarker.co.uk by 27 July.

If you have outdoor friends without access to the Internet then why not print them off a copy of this newsletter.