



Newsletter



Rivelin Valley Conservation Group

Summer 2012 no 83

Through The Chair

Welcome to the RVCG Summer Newsletter. It would be very difficult not to comment on the weather as for a third year we have experienced unusual weather patterns literally transforming the country from a winter of drought to a summer of plenty. How the wildlife copes with this is where you can help by reporting the insects and wildlife in your garden to Joan Buckland. Of particular interest are the butterflies, but also bees and birds particularly if you see something a bit unusual or if they are usually there and are now missing. The RVCG has had a very busy spring programme which for the most part was blessed by quite reasonable weather and even sunshine. This was more by luck than judgement and although attendances were affected, those brave enough to venture out had a pleasant and rewarding event; the details of some of them are included in the newsletter. Please support our events which are designed to be educational and interesting and we welcome your suggestions for any activities, visits or speakers for our forthcoming programme. We continue our task team events the last Sunday of every month and supported by the Sheffield City Council. The valley seems to have survived the recent bad weather fairly unscathed although we have been repairing footpaths that have been affected. There has also been an interest in memorial plaques and benches. If you are interested in this please contact Keith Kendall who will supply options and costs. Our current benches are of long lasting recycled plastic and are rustic looking.

Graham Appleby

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Donations

Once more we are grateful for the following donations.

Buckland, Colton, Coombes, Davidson, Fletcher, Heathcote, Habershon, Kitchen, Loasby, Porter, Richards, Sanderson, Soar, Staniforth, Sorsby, Tetchner, White, Woodhouse, Whiteley and Woollen. We have received £968 from your generous donations this year (the most we have ever had) and this money will be very well spent by our group and appreciated by everyone who visits the valley.

Task Day News 24th June 2012 We actually managed to find a day when it didn't rain and a good turn out from the team meant we managed to get quite a lot of footpath edged and re-surfaced down near the Holme Head Wheel.

A lot of banging in of steel pins and a lot of wheel barrow loads of topping, but the end result was superb and a big well done to all.

Well done to Peter (our resident drain cleaner). The effect of clearing a simple drain had a dramatic effect on the amount of water that was running across the footpath at Little London Wheel and to Robin for his efforts in trying to divert water that had been running down the paths and across the Nature Trail.

Well done to the small group that installed another of our new benches at Nether Cut Wheel and to Simon, visiting from Canada.

Simon has been on our last three Task Days and made a huge difference. He has now returned but his family in Sheffield can be proud of his efforts and now sit on the new bench and marvel at our valley.

The amount of rain we are having is playing havoc with the footpath network throughout the country and no more so than in the Rivelin Valley and we will be busy for quite a few months to come just patching up after/if it ever stops.

Welcome to new member Charles. I hope you enjoyed your first outing with us and we will see you again soon, sorry I didn't get much time to talk or get your details. Many thanks all

Keith Kendall

Do you have anything to say in this newsletter? We love to hear your stories of Rivelin whether it is childhood memories or perhaps you lived or worked there. Is there anyone who has memories of King Edward's or Lodge Moor hospitals? We would like to know. Please contact Margaret Sanderson – see contacts list.

Some Recent Events

Our only cancellation during Sheffield Environment Weeks due to inclement weather was the Rivelin Litter Pick on 29th April. Even then about 10 people turned up and insisted on doing some litter picking and so Avril, our local Ranger put them to work but everyone was drenched after an hour.

Rivelin Valley Walk

After many days of dodgy weather, the evening of 8th May was surprisingly pleasant. This was a walk led by Roger Kite from Rivelin Mill along the Rivelin Trail to Coppice House Farm. The butcher Mike Kilner kept Coppice Farm Shop open and donated a joint of pork for hot pork sandwiches and drinks were provided by Pam Revitt with her usual hospitality. £36 of donations from this event went to the RVCG. Thank you to Mike Kilner and Frank

and Pam Revitt.

The farm shop is open Tuesday to Saturday 9am – 5pm and Sunday 10am – 3pm. Meat is sourced locally, and includes Aberdeen Angus, Galloways, Herefords and Lincoln Reds, also Alison Twigg's rare breed sheep. You will also find other locally sourced products there.

Revelling in Rivelin

Sunday 27th May was our hottest day of the year. Rivelin Park was flooded with families sunbathing and swimming in the river. The paddling pools were closed as they were due for refurbishment and should reopen this summer. The RVCG put on two tents and with skeleton staffing ran four separate stalls including bird box building, pond dipping, a nature trail and quiz and our usual stall selling a variety of goods. A number of volunteers also arrived to litter pick and were sent to a variety of locations. The nature trail from the café to the S bend was remarkably free from litter. It was quite an exhausting day for us all so thank you to everyone for your efforts and we raised a total of £76.

Lord Mayors Walk

Saturday 9th June. This is a 6.5 mile walk from the Town Hall steps to Wyming Brook and was led by Terry Howard. The walk took us past a number of historic buildings, dams and footpaths as Terry shared some of its history with us including some of Sheffield's famous steel making ancestry. The walk also followed the route of some original dams that provided the city with clean water through the last century starting with Crookes Valley Park and up to Crookes Road/Lydgate Lane. From there we picked up the trail of the old original open water trough water feed from Lydgate Junior School up through Ranmoor where the original water trough can still be seen and up to its water source at Redmires Dams. The Sportsman at Lodgemoor has never looked so inviting. Thank you Terry for such an interesting and educational walk.

Graham Appleby

Evening Walk

Roger Kite led this evening walk on the 10th July. A handful of people and one dog ventured out on a rain free expedition up and down our hills. First, we walked across Clough Fields, once the site of a thriving little hamlet, with wonderful views across the valley and the extensive riding stables below us. To the east, on the horizon were Keppel's Column and Hooper Stand, once part of the Fitzwilliam estate at Wentworth. Then we descended to the public footpath, through the stables and on to Carver Fields. Here we looked in vain for the orchid but we know it is there somewhere even though it does not put in an appearance every year.

Thank you Roger

Margaret Sanderson

Look up not Down

Yes, we have to watch our feet on our steep, slippery slopes and watery environments in Rivelin but it pays to look up and you might see a buzzard (or two), flying high in wide circles on a hunting mission. Recently the DEFRA minister Richard Benyon hatched a plan to capture buzzards and destroy nests. The aim was to protect the rearing of pheasants for the shooting fraternity. The cost would have been £375,000 of our money. It failed because of a public outcry. Birds of prey are already under threat and illegally killed by some gamekeepers. Let's keep on protesting and keep these birds in our skies.

Margaret Sanderson

Down on the Farm

Back to the Revitt's Coppice View Farm for some more stories.

Some years ago, Pam started letting a holiday cottage next to the farmhouse. Her first visitor had a degree from Sheffield University where he met his French wife and he proposed to her in Rivelin, then they went to live in France. However, he can't forget Rivelin and he returns to the cottage whenever he has to come to England as a consultant engineer. Then there was Mr Wang who is an assistant to the chief prosecutor in South

Korea. He had come to study at Sheffield University and brought his wife and piano playing, singing daughters along too until they could find a more permanent home. Ever the good hostess, Pam ferried them around until they found a house to rent in Fulwood.

A couple and their child from Malta come every year and love paddling in the river, visiting Ladybower and having picnics and a family with two teenagers arrived from Australia having never seen snow. They made ice blocks and sunbathed in it wearing only their swimming trunks with no shoes and socks! This was an extra bonus for them. They were here on a course at Sheffield Wednesday's football academy. They didn't want to go home. Excitement came for a Florida family who arrived during the worst of our 'rainy season' when Rivelin Valley Road was flooded because the drains couldn't cope and had to close down. A fire engine and ambulance that came to the rescue of a car that had water up to its windows provided much entertainment for the children. Pam's cottage is popular with visitors who have Sheffield connections and return for weddings and other family occasions. There is plenty for families to see down on the farm.

Rabbits bounce around on the lawn, squirrels climb the large sycamore tree just outside the window and pheasants and a red kite can sometimes be seen.

Once, a wood pigeon was attacked on its head by an angry robin underneath the bird feeder and this year the cuckoo has been heard again after a few years' absence. Hares put in an appearance and recently roe deer have been seen and of course the farm animals are always a source of interest.

Contact for Pam Revitt's Cottage, Coppice View Farm 01142301753

The Farm Shop – Mike Kilner 01142308155

Margaret Sanderson

When did you last see a hedgehog in your garden?

Several years ago, two baby hedgehogs were born in my garden. Early one morning, a rustling noise outside revealed

a hedgehog collecting dried leaves. She was making a nest behind some black polythene bags in a cubby hole underneath my house. Later, she reappeared in daylight with two babies and together, they snuffled around the garden. She wanted to fatten them up, ready for hibernation. That was the last time I saw a hedgehog in the garden.

We know that sightings of hedgehogs are becoming rarer in gardens and also in the countryside and that they are susceptible to road deaths and modern gardening methods such as using slug pellets.

Badgers also are cause of their death as they are the only animals here that can fight through the prickles also as badgers are becoming more urban, they are rivals for slugs and worms. It is said that a fox can kill a hedgehog by running it into water where it is forced to open up and expose its prickle free belly.

A more recent threat is the loss of hedges both in the countryside and gardens.

Hedges are being replaced by fences or walls that do not allow the hedgehog to travel around searching for food. It would help if holes could be cut into fences or a brick or two taken out of a wall. My pregnant hedgehog could squeeze through a 7cm gap in the fence so it doesn't need to be very wide. They would also appreciate an untidy corner where they could snuffle around for food and collect leaves. I would love my RVCG hedgehog nesting box to be occupied.

Margaret Sanderson

Don't forget our new season of RVCG Open Meetings at Stephen Hill Church Crosspool. Everyone is welcome so please come along and you can bring family and friends. Contact Keith Kendall if you would like to join the Task Team.

THE RECORDER

It is the beginning of April and we have just had two weeks of beautiful summer weather. Like last March it has been very dry for the time of year, but much warmer, with temperatures reaching 23°C. This has instigated a flurry of activity in the natural world, earlier than usual. My frogspawn appeared 11 days earlier than last year and I have bluebells in flower. Bees and butterflies have also been busy. Unfortunately the weather is changing and frost and even snow is forecast, so some creatures/plants may suffer. Birds with young will need high energy food to keep them going during the cold snap, so keep up the supply of fat balls and sunflower seeds. Crows, magpies and jays are more frequent visitors to the garden – looking for eggs and chicks. I watched a couple of crows on a neighbour's chimney stack. The male performed a most delightful display. He spread out his wings, with his tail erect, and bobbed up and down making a soft chirruping noise, which I have never witnessed before. Keep a look out for buzzards which have been seen recently over the valley.

As well as looking after the birds we should also grow plants that will be beneficial for insect pollinators. More people are growing their own vegetables and about 83% of the food we eat relies on bees and pollinating insects; only a small percentage relies on other methods, e.g. wind. We are going to sow some wildflower seeds in the valley, and if every household with a garden sowed just one packet of wildflower seeds, this would make an enormous difference. Just a small patch of the garden in a sunny spot is all they need. Britain has lost 98% of its wildflower meadows in the last few decades, due to changes in farming practice, so the insects need all the help they can get. Roger Kite also sells wildflower plants, for charity, on the garden open day. Lilac, mauve and yellow are attractive to insects. Aim to have something in bloom every month of the year. Double varieties are too highly bred and do not have nectar and pollen, so choose single flowers. Look for the RHS logo on plants perfect for pollinators, in garden centres. My pond and

containers are full of frogspawn. If you think you have too much in your pond please do not be tempted to remove some – nature will even things out. Only about 2% of tadpoles survive to maturity. For the first time in 25 years I found 3 dead frogs on the lawn near the pond, minus their heads. I do not think it is the heron as my garden is quite enclosed. Visiting cats eat the frogspawn, but would they eat the head and leave the body (which you would think would be tastier).

Has anyone else experienced this?

Look out for Brimstone and Orange-tip butterflies and returning migrants. Also protect yourself from ticks when out walking by covering legs and using repellent.

Thank you to all who sent in their records

Vivian Falshaw S10 – 23.1.12 – a.m. – 50+ waxwings at junction of Manchester Rd & Den Bank Close.

29.1.12 – sparrowhawk in garden

5.2.12 – 6 redwings regularly in garden

9.2.12 – 25 redwings on cotoneaster

Roger Kite – 3.2.12

Mill Pond feeding station – Great Spotted Woodpecker, Blue Tits, Great Tits, 3 Nuthatch, Robin, 2 pair Mallard, 1 pair Moorhen. If anyone visits the Mill Pond the birds would certainly appreciate some seed putting on their table.

Roger also has 1 pair of Bullfinch, Long-tailed Tit, Blue Tit, and Great Tit in his garden, and his frogs were spawning from 29.2.12.

Paul Bradshaw – S6 – Rails Road – 8.2.12 – 100/150 Fieldfares at back of house.

Sally Turnbull S10 – 31.1.12 – Watched Treecreeper on lime tree in Cairns Rd. for 20 minutes.

Sue Shaw S6 – 3.2.12 = 2 Goldfinch in garden.

Keith Kendall – January – reports plenty of Long-tailed Tits and Treecreepers in the valley.

Joan Daines S6 12.3.12 – Pair of Goldcrests at Mousehole Forge and pair of Bullfinch in similar place 2 weeks earlier.

Joyce Green S6 – 3.1.12 – Sparrowhawk in

garden eating male Blackbird.
4.3.12 – 10 Lapwings, Moscar Top.
11.3.12 – frogspawn in pond.

Mrs. M Beck S6 – 9/2011 – Watched Humming Bird Hawk Moth on geraniums for 10 minutes in her back garden. (Look out for them this year if we get a warm summer).

Gillian Drinkwater S10 – 9.3.12 – 1am – male & female Tawny Owls calling on Tapton Crescent. Rd.

9.3.12 – Great Spotted Woodpecker hammering on tree on Long Lane.

Karen Austin – Mid Jan. Saw Kingfisher on Wolf Wheel Pond.

Michael Dyson S6 – 9 & 10/2/12 – Weasel crossing Rails Rd. below Whitegates bungalow at same time each day.

Doreen Best S10 – 8.1.12 – Nuthatch near Packhorse Bridge.

8.1.12 – Great Spotted Woodpecker on garden feeder.

13.1.12 – Dipper in Rivelin Valley.

4.2.12 – In garden - Long Tailed Tit, Coal Tit and Redwing (also seen on 8.2.12).

22.12.11 & 31.1.12 – Kingfisher in Rivelin Valley.

5.2.12 – Wood Mouse in Rivelin Valley.

Joan Buckland S10 – 8.2.12 – 50+ Fieldfares/Redwings in trees near Sportsman.
11.2.12 – 30 Fieldfares in Skimmia bush in garden.

20.2.12 – Goldcrest. 25.2.12 – fox on lawn 10pm. 21/22.2.12 – frog hopping on lawn.

26.2.12 – Red-tailed Bumble Bee. 28.2.12 – Honey Bee.

Regularly – Greenfinch, 1 pair Robin, 3 Pairs Blackbird, 1 pair Dunnock, 1 pair Bullfinch.

Graham Appleby S10 – regular flock of some 10 Sparrows and a few Dunnocks at his garden feeding station – but rarely any other birds except local nesting Blue Tits in the spring. More recently Greater Spotted Woodpecker on the fat ball feeder two days running.

Joan Buckland
RVCG Recorder

Dan Higbid Obituary

Sadly, Dan Higbid recently passed away

aged 75 after a short illness. He was a long standing member of the RVCG task team and had been a committee member and the RVCG treasurer for a good number of years. Dan had a very good sense of humor and a really relaxed persona that was quite refreshing in this sometimes mad world. Dan would finish his task and find the nearest bench, often one we had just installed, sit down and light up his pipe. This led to him being given the title 'RVCG Bench Tester'. Here he is at the forefront of this picture with a spirit level making sure it had been installed just right.



Dan Higbid 1937 – 2012

There will be a memorial meeting Sep 29th at the Quaker Meeting House St James St. Sat 2pm for 1hr with tea and cakes to follow. His wife Pauline and children Sarah and Richard would love to see as many of his friends as possible.

Their son, Richard, is also doing a 600km sponsored bike ride in Northern Spain between Sep1st–9th in support of the Macmillan Palliative Care Unit, Northern General Hospital. Website: www.justgiving.com/Dan-Higbid or please contact Pauline Higbid 01142303919 if you would like to sponsor Richard.

Graham Appleby
RVCG Chairman