



Newsletter



Rivelin Valley Conservation Group

Winter 2017 no 101

Through The Chair

Happy New Year and welcome to 2017. I don't suppose our wildlife would have appreciated all the fireworks and unfortunately for them, an increasingly popular way of celebrating events. As if all the human distractions are not enough there are also the unusual weather patterns creating an element of confusion for our fauna and flora. I guess by feeding the birds and providing as many wildlife habitats in our gardens as possible, we are compensating a little for the other inconveniences they have to suffer.

I have no update on the threat to our Rivelin trees or the proposed flood retention dams at the moment as any announcement has been postponed until the middle of February. The government is being accused of not doing enough to prevent flooding in our cities and so I fear the outcome may not be in our favour but we have done as much as we can for the moment and will continue to monitor the situation. All this has helped boost our membership and particularly our task team volunteers which is becoming quite a logistical challenge for Keith Kendall on task days. Keith has been successful in applying for grants which will help us to purchase some more benches for our bench replacement programme which will keep the task team busy for a while.

We are inviting you to renew your membership in this newsletter and I thank you for your magnificent support that allows us to make such a huge contribution to the Rivelin Valley environment.

Graham Appleby
RVCG Chairman

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Donations

At the time of writing we have had donations from Edwards, Hatton, Reid, Barnette, Smith, White and Drinkwater, amounting to £145.

Thank you very much for this. It will be put to good use.

Some Rivelin Memories

Many thanks to Mrs Green for the following article

A Tale from the Valley

My best friend when I was 8 or 9 years old was Margaret Gosney who lived in a bungalow on Moorbank Rd. She had "well to do" parents. They had a car and telephone. Her father was a quarry owner, whereas my father was unemployed. When working he was a cellist and played at the Grand hotel in a trio but things were changing and radio was taking over from live music. He subsequently got a job as a clerk at the Labour Exchange. Round about 1938 he got a job at Hadfield's as a clerk. To get back to my story, Margaret who attended Lydgate Lane School with me was to walk with me to visit her grandparents and wander across Rivelin Valley. They lived in Long Lane in a bungalow, a similar style to the bungalow on Moorbank Road. Now someone had given me a "hand me down" blue mac. As it was a rainy day, I was wearing this to cross the valley. It

started pouring with rain as we walked. Alas, all the blue dye from the mac started running down my legs. I arrived looking a very sorry sight.

I still remember this after 80 years.

Mrs Joyce Green

We do like your Rivelin Stories. Please contact Margaret Sanderson.

See contacts list.

Notes from our early days

On September 24th 1992, 27 members gathered together for a night time bat walk. We had the advantage of an expert from the Sheffield Bat Group who brought two bats that had been injured by cars and were being nursed back to health. We were reassured that bats do not get stuck in your hair or suck your blood.

They fly by using echo-sound location – a series of clicks that bounce off solid objects and prey though we cannot hear it.

We started near Rails Road. Our bat expert soon identified noctules and pipistrelles with her own sound locator though we were only dimly aware of them flying around.

Pipistrelles need up to 2,000 insects per night to survive.

We followed the path to Wolf Wheel and used our torches to spot a ghostly shape flying over the water – a Daubentons bat searching for insects. A clicking noise from the detector told us when it caught insects.

Do you see bats? (when sober) Please let Joan Buckland know. (See contacts list)

Open Meetings

October 11th 2016 –

Paul Iseard – The Sheffield Shop.

A history of Sheffield Cutlery

Although not born in Sheffield, Paul is an expert in Sheffield cutlery. He runs the well known Sheffield Shop on Ecclesall Road. He came here after being made redundant in Bournemouth.

His interest in Sheffield cutlery started when he found a knife with a 1913 Sheffield hallmark on the beach in Bournemouth. In the 16th century we did not use much cutlery. The servants in big houses would hold a joint of meat with a fork and carve

off slices of meat that would drop onto your plate. You would bring your own knife and eat from a wooden trencher. Fingers were the best tool for feeding yourself. If you were rich the knife handle would be made of ivory but the poor would have to make do with cow bone handles.

Over the years forks progressed from having two prongs, then three, then four. The growth of steel making in Sheffield was aided by our fast moving rivers to turn the water wheels for mills, also Huntsman's crucible furnaces that made high class steel. We soon became famous for tools with a sharp cutting edge.

A Sheffield "twitel" (knife) was found in the Thames around 1624.

Geoffrey Chaucer, born around 1342 wrote-"There was no man, for peril, dorst he touche,

A Sheffield twitel baar he in his hose".

Though much of our traditional industries have gone from our city, the memories live on.

November 8th 2016

Steve Drinkall – Nature's Wonders on Our Doorstep

Wildlife photography became a hobby after Steve was made redundant several times. Sheffield is thought to have two million trees. (Were these counted before the big cull?). We are deemed to be the greenest city in Europe with plenty of open spaces and gardens. He pleaded for people to keep their hedges and not replace them with fences. They are not only valuable for hedgehogs but for many insects and of course birds, not just for nesting but also for shelter.

Steve had a long list of "visitors" to his garden including a nuthatch (they like niger seeds). He includes in "his garden" the wider circle of our wonderful green surroundings such as in Rivelin Valley and including our parks and countryside.

Watch out for the dipper in Rivelin that paddles on the riverbed and the gold crest that weighs less than a 50p coin. Look overhead for a hovering kestrel or the buzzard and listen for the tapping of the woodpecker.

November 27th 2016
The Annual Craft Event – Wood Lane Christmas Fayre.

This is an event well worth visiting. There are lots of stalls with a huge variety of crafts on sale and lots of food! A good place to go to find Christmas presents. RVCG had a stall. Sue was selling our "Walking the Rivelin" book. Joan and I had a table to make cards and Christmas decorations with children. Although we were in a rather squashed corner, we were visited by lots of children of all ages. Most parents gave a generous donation to RVCG and we got a few new members.

At least it was better than last year when the wind threatened to blow us and the marquee away but fortunately we were escorted out of danger just in time to watch from a window as the marquee was flattened by the weather.

Do try to visit the next Wood Lane event at the end of the year and remember to try their pies, including homity pie which must be the best vegetarian meal around. (Meat eaters like it too.)

January 10th 2017

Dave Aspinall SCC Woodlands Manager
A Talk on Sheffield Woodlands.

Dave helps to manage Sheffield Woodlands. 10.4% of the city is woodland on 180 sites so one will not be far away from you wherever you live in the city. It is estimated that there are two million trees in the city, both broadleaved and coniferous, managed by our tree officers. Many of you will know Ecclesall Woods that has a Discovery Centre with children's activities, and a bird sanctuary. You can also buy your firewood here.

In the Rivelin area, we have Wyming Brook, Blackbrook and Walkley Bank Plantation that is now overcrowded and due to have its canopy opened up.

Lady Channing's Plantation on Ringinglow Road produces fencing posts. Shavings are used in stables and good straight pieces are used for benches. Trees are constantly being replaced.

In the Ewden area £100,000 has been agreed for investment in broad leaved trees.

Officers also have to manage diseases such as ash dieback disease and attacks by insects.

Sheffield place names reflect how important wood was in the past such as "ley" as in Barnsley or "Storrs" as in High Storrs. Both words are ancient indicators of how important wood was for our ancestors. Trees also have a major impact on holding back water.

Many thanks to Dave Aspinall for an informative talk on Sheffield woodland.

Do try to come to our events – mostly at Stephen Hill Church, Crosspool. You don't have to be a member. Everyone is welcome so bring a friend. Afterwards you can also have a cup of tea or coffee with biscuits included in the entry price

Blackberries (again)

In the last newsletter, I asked if anyone still made blackberry jam or Jelly. The valley does have plenty of blackberries. Our chief Open Meeting tea maker. Mavis Roadhouse does. She also makes blackberry and elderberry jelly but elderberries have to be frozen as they ripen before the blackberries. I don't have to go far to pick blackberries as my garden sprouts the wild variety as well as Himalayan Giant but the wild ones have a better taste. I also remember my grandmother making wine from elderberries that the family picked in Rivelin. It turned out to be so potent that whenever she gave my father a glass after he cut her lawn, it made him tipsy.

M Sanderson

Ash Dieback disease

This deadly fungus disease has been in the news for a while and has been found in England. It has affected 90% of trees in Denmark and could wipe out trees in our country. Scientists are working to breed trees resistant to this disease. Symptoms are cankers on the bark and damaged leaves. Has anyone seen dead or dying ash trees in our area? We would like to know.

Also

We thank all our committee members who keep the cart on its wheels with specific jobs and not forgetting Keith's Task Team who turn out in all weather for free. They have to – he keeps a big whip! Also thanks to all who are involved in producing and printing this newsletter including our deliverers who trek up and down hills to deliver it to you, our speaker organiser, and Mavis who produces our refreshments at RVCG Open Meetings. They all do it for free. RVCG could not exist without this voluntary help. Also, we have still kept the same membership price as in our beginnings in 1990.

Banned Plants

There has been an EU directive on banned plants, mainly water plants – the invasive skunk cabbage, floating pennywort and water hyacinths. They are invasive and threaten native plants. The Cairngorms, Snowdonia, the New Forest, the Cairngorms are mainly affected. Gardeners also like them in ponds.

The Recorder

January is almost over and we still have not had, what I call, a real winter. We have had a few frosts and a couple of days with some snow that did not last very long. Once again weather records have been broken with Sheffield having its driest December since 2010 – 32.5mm of rain fell and the monthly average is 93mm. 2016 was the third consecutive warmest year ever recorded. The evidence is all around us and plants that should have died off by now are still in flower. I have roses and marigold and a nearby garden has *Osteospermum* in flower. Some birds are even singing spring songs. We have had some good clear views of Venus and lovely full moons in November and December. On the night of 15th December the moon had a corona that was almost like a rainbow with red and yellow being clear and some signs of blue and green, which I have never seen before. If you do not look up at the sky, day or night, you could be missing some

beautiful phenomena. Another occurrence, which is not very pleasant, is the burning of the heather on the moors. At the beginning of October and November, on lovely days with clear blue sky, the smoke from the fires covered the whole horizon. Burning is undertaken solely for the benefit of Red Grouse which feed mainly on young Heather *Calluna vulgaris* shoot tips. Patches are burnt on a rotation basis, every 10 -30 years (but it is becoming more regular) so that there are different ages of Heather. The burning may be managed but the pollution was appalling and lasted a long time spreading particulate carbon over a vast area. Burning does not have many benefits for other species that should inhabit moorland, such as birds of prey, particularly the Hen harrier, the Skylark and Meadow Pipit. Burning also has hydrological impacts including increasing runoff after heavy rainfall, which impacts on areas downstream, and pollution of watercourses. It was very windy on 10 and 11th January. Several trees blew down in Sheffield and the wind reached 93 mph at Bradfield, which is not far away as the crow flies.

This year we have had an influx of winter migrants from Scandinavia due to the cold weather there. Neil Porter, who keeps bird records for the BTO, saw good numbers of Waxwings in Crosspool from Christmas Eve and every day up to 5th January, with 110 being counted on New Year's Eve. There was a count of 345 on 2nd January at Redmires where the birds were roosting. Since the middle of October a flock of 30-40 Redwing was flying round Den Bank but has moved on now all the Rowan berries have been eaten. I have had seven Blackbirds in the garden lately; one dark-billed bird has a silver ring on its right leg but I cannot read a number. Another Blackbird, which I have called 'bare back', has a bare patch on its lower back and no tail feathers. It has been coming into the garden for a week now and seems to be coping well and is gobbling up the sunflower seeds. It should survive if we do not have any prolonged periods of cold weather. Roger Kite (next door) reported to me that on the 20th January a male

Sparrowhawk caught a Blackbird in his garden. The Blackbird was under some mesh and eventually managed to escape – could this be the same plucky (no pun intended) bird?

Moths, which are in decline, play an important part in pollinating plants. A recent study into the impact of street lighting on moths has evidence that as the moths are attracted to the lights they are spending less time flying near the ground and therefore potentially impacting on pollination. This is yet another case of human impact on nature. Well, to end on a bright note – the days are getting longer and the sun a little warmer. I have Snowdrops in flower and have seen daffodils in bud. It will not be long before the frogs are spawning and the birds collecting nesting material, bees will be emerging and our summer migrants will be winging their way back. Several people have told me they have ladybirds becoming active in their houses. Keep a lookout and let me know what is happening in your garden.

Thank you to all who send in records:-

Roger Kite S10 - 21.10.16 3pm Pink Footed Geese going SE

Vivien Falshaw – 12.11.16 10.30am – Grey Heron on Frank Wheel.

Bob Townrow S10 – In garden at end of Nov. – 8 Bullfinches in Rowan; Goldcrest in Apple tree; Redwing in Willow tree. 6.12.16 – Green parrot in Rowan chased off by Magpie. Anyone else seen the parrot?

Sallie Tetchner S10 – 3.11.16 – A Green Woodpecker flew to the trunk of very old willow tree in garden. One used to visit regularly over 17 years ago. Lone Song Thrush visiting regularly but no sign of flocks of Bullfinches and Long-tailed Tit that usually visit. 1 – 6th Jan. Flock of 9 Redwings in gardens around top of Hagg Lane, late morning each day.

Chris Roe – S10 – 23.12.16 – Had a rare visit to the garden by a Grey Wagtail which 'spent 10 minutes or so fossicking around the edges of our pond'.

Vin Knowles S10 – 5 – 7th Jan. Small flock of Redwing sheltering in Holly tree in front

garden and eating berries.

Gill & Peter Wright S6 – 5.1.17 - Whilst drinking coffee in their lounge had a wonderful view of a flock of 30 Redwings, which were joined by a large flock of Waxwings, eating the berries of the Rowan tree.

Neil Porter – As well as the many sightings of Waxwings in Crosspool up to the 2nd Jan. Neil says 'clearly Redwings were very apparent in the trees too and a single Mistle Thrush guarded the yellow berried Rowan ferociously and let nothing near it. Around the 30th Dec. good numbers were around Acorn Hill, Stannington, presumably the same flock.' These birds travel round an area until the berries are exhausted and then move on.

Mary Brazil S10 – 22.1.17 in trees around Den Bank, four Fieldfares. 23.1.17 Large group of Waxwings. 25.1.17 Four Waxwings.

Joan Buckland S10 - 18.10.16 On a walk down the valley with the Don Catchment Rivers Trust we saw a Heron at Wolf Dam, Dipper at Uppercut, Grey Wagtail, Tree Creeper at Mousehole and Long-tailed Tits, Songthrush, Nuthatch and Great Spotted Woodpecker. The walk ended with the beautiful sight of the Heron flying down the river.

As well as the usual Sparrows, Goldfinches, Blue Tits, Great Tits, Magpies, Jackdaws, 2 Robins, Dunnock, Blackbirds, Collared Doves, Wood Pigeons, Chaffinches, 2 – 4 Bullfinches, Wren, there are occasional visits by a Goldcrest, Coal Tit, Jay, Female Tawny Owl calling and 2-4 Greenfinch. 16.12.16 - S10 – 100 Pink footed Geese, flying high noisily and going NE.

Joan Buckland 27.1.17