

October  
2010  
to  
December  
2010



Our website:  
[www.friends-of-rcp.co.uk](http://www.friends-of-rcp.co.uk)  
Ranger's Office  
0115 921 5865

Issue 49

# Friends Newsletter

## Honey flies off the shelf!



Our hive is really buzzing and producing tons of that sticky stuff. The extraction has proved quite straightforward using our new equipment and so far we have filled about 40 jars. These have been snapped up so quickly at £3.50, we have already decided to up the price next season. Many thanks to Sara and Helen who are masterminding everything at the moment and as we gain confidence it is hoped this responsibility will be shared amongst others.

# Edale - July 2010



During the last week of July, Zoe and Friends arrived at the beautiful Edale campsite of Upper Booth Farm, situated near the start of the Pennine Way in the Dark Peak. We pitched tents in time for a leisurely lunch and were then ready for action.

Following instructions/demonstrations from Robert the farmer and Zoe, we started the working week by dismantling and removing approximately 100 metres of old stock fencing. It was at this point that Roger, somewhat sheepishly, owned up to having 'dismantled' the fencing pliers, oops (this is the polite version of the tale).



Over the subsequent days the team completed the erection of a new gatepost and post and wire fence to be proud of. In the final photo, taken on our last morning, it is possible to make out the sheep's wool on the wire - did it have an itch or was it testing our endeavours?

Sections of the >400 year old dry stone wall (between the Pennine Way and the same field that we were fencing in) had become unstable - at one point the coping stones were supporting one another above thin air. This meant an 'interesting' start to the repair job, with Arron and Jack valiantly trying to prevent the inevitable once we removed the first stone (with Arron's dog George observing and providing moral support).

It's funny how you never seem to have enough stones when you put it all back up, but with a combination of guidance from Robert (and Jean, who had done it before) we managed a respectable rebuild.

Let's hope our repairs stand the test of time and the elements.



Wednesday saw several of us braving the impending weather, climbing Jacobs Ladder and beyond with a group of farmers and their dogs in a well co-ordinated exercise to gather the sheep off the hills for shearing.

It was a real pleasure to see the expertise of man and dog, not forgetting Alice (Roberts daughter) with Sky, each working a section of the hillside, made more difficult at times by poor visibility during the showers.

Our donning of waterproof clothing drew wry chuckles from one of the farmers (dressed in shirt and jeans), who said “you get wet, you dry out, we were all born with our waterproof layer on”. Hmm, OK in the summer but what about the winter?

Another team were working the next hillside and all the sheep were driven down into the valley between, to the collection pens at Grindslow.

It seems a terrible shame that after all the combined efforts, the fleeces were worth less than the cost of the shearing.

Later in the week when our fresh food had run out, we had a pleasant and easy walk from the campsite along the Pennine Way to the village of Edale and a choice of two hostleries for an evening meal, drink and convivial conversation.

A superb photographic picture in The Old Nags Head, of a village scene with stone hump back bridge, brought a speculative gleam into Rogers eyes. First stop - dry stone wall, next stop - stone bridge?

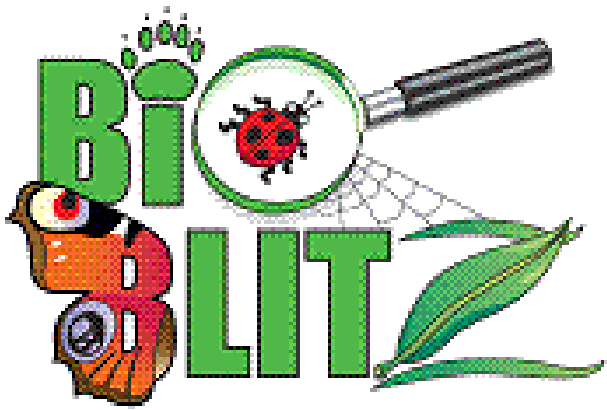
Particular thanks to Zoe, Robert and family for organising/advising/doing and also, to the rest of the team - Arron + George, Chris + Timmy, Colin, Helen, Jack, Jacob, Jean, Kate and Roger - for being such great companions.

An excellent week all round.

I enjoyed every minute and can't wait to go back.

Janet.





## Bioblitz 2010 at Rushcliffe Country Park

In July Bioblitz came back to Nottinghamshire to create an even bigger wildlife spectacular at Rushcliffe Country Park. The event started on the evening of Saturday 17th July and ran through until 5pm on Sunday 18th July.

The aim of BioBlitz is to count as many species of plants, animals, fungi and other organisms as possible at one site over a 24 hour period, and as with previous years, local scientists, naturalists and volunteers counted everything from bugs to bats.

At this year's event the Nottinghamshire Biodiversity Action Group partnership (made up of The Wildlife Trusts, The Open Air Learning Laboratories - OPAL, Notts County Council, Nottingham Trent University, The University of Nottingham and Rushcliffe Borough Council) were trying to count even more species than at previous events at Colwick Country Park (2006) and at Rufford Country Park (2008). The record number of species for a Bioblitz event in Nottinghamshire up to this year was 471 species. The weather was good and the wildlife, experts and members of the public were out in large numbers and the number of species recorded was a massive record-breaking 655! However, this number may still increase as further details are passed on.

The event included a range of activities to get the public involved, ranging from coming along to learn more about small mammal trapping to guided walks looking at butterflies, pond dipping to a range of talks on natural history.

This year's event was one of the ways that the Nottinghamshire Biodiversity Action Group will be celebrating the UN's International Year of Biodiversity.

On Monday 19th July there was further day of wildlife focused activities aimed specifically at local Nottinghamshire schools, and 8 schools took part. We looked forward to the day with not a little trepidation! The thought of that many children was a little daunting not to mention the logistics of getting them to the right place at the right time. With a large team of experts, rangers and willing volunteers the day went off smoothly and without a hitch. The children were involved in a variety of activities including: Woodland Minibeast Hunts, Meadow Explorers and Butterflies, Pond Dipping, Den Building, Orienteering, Tree Identity Trail, and Bird Ringing (spectator sport only!). The day was very hot without a cloud in the sky and all the children seemed to have a brilliant time.

Jack was very efficient at shepherding groups to and fro and looked very professional complete with Radio attached to his belt. It made his day when summoned on this radio to rush and help a lost group! Our Friends helped out with a variety of activities throughout the day and their help was invaluable to the success of the event. Jean, Jill, Sue and Chris used their expertise to guide the children round the Tree Trail. It was here that we realized that Chris has missed his vocation as a teacher! Sara spent the day baking by the lake helping the Wildlife Trust with the Pond Dipping.

Alongside the Tree Trail we positioned Roger with the new Snakes and Ladders Game and it was generally agreed that this was the big hit of the day.

Congratulations and a big thank you to all those people who helped on what was a very successful, and tiring, day.

A special mention goes to Roger and the Game - the Friends should try it sometime!

Heather

## A day in the Community Garden

After a spring clean up in the community garden, it was decided that the pathways and the 10 year old mosaics were badly in need of attention and repair. Three of the mosaics had to be lifted for a complete overhaul.

Jean and I volunteered for the job. New tiles, cutters, adhesive and grout were ordered and after renewing those mosaics capable of repair *in situ*, we set to work on the remaining three removing all of the loose and broken tiles, chipping away the old adhesive and grout back to their concrete bases.

After a lot of time, patience and occasional curses and mutterings, we painstakingly rebuilt all three mosaics restoring them to their former glory.

On the 11<sup>th</sup> August, we had a great turnout of volunteers including a surprise visit by two of our former friends, John and Mary. Zoe got us all organised and we spent the whole day working in the community garden re-installing the completed mosaics, fetching and laying a new top-dressing and raking, watering and tamping this down to form smart new pathways. Other helpers weeded and tidied the overgrown willow.

At the end of the day, the garden looked a picture, well worth all the hard work and effort everyone had put in.

Kate



# Mammal Trapping



Welcome back to Mammal Trapping Live! (it's actually live mammal trapping but I thought it sounded a bit more Kate Humble like that). "So Chris do you want to come mammal trapping?", "Yes!", "You'll have to be here early", "No problem", "By 5.30 in the morning", "Ok", "On Sunday", "..... Do Sunday mornings have a 5.30?"

It turns out they do but nobody else seems to know about them so the roads are clear. Anyway, an intrepid group of us tramped off into the undergrowth to check the traps Zoe had set the night before. My job was to record the details of the animals - species, height, weight, cuteness on a scale of 1-5 etc. while the professionals dealt with everything else. Our captives were then given a natty little haircut so we would recognise them if we saw them again and sent on their way. A few voles and mice had been tricked that morning and the traps were reset for later.



"I'll come quietly"  
- a field vole in the hands of a professional (Zoe)



"You just wait 'till I get out of 'ere curley!"

The next day (which also started surprising early - I found Sarah Kennedy by the way - she lives somewhere around 5 am) I was given the opportunity to try handling the wee beasties myself. After a quiet start a shrew was found in one of the later traps - my time had come. Having studied Zoe's technique carefully the previous morning I was able to open the trap in a sturdy bag while Zoe held the top closed, I then removed the trap after emptying the contents into the bag.

Then, with Zoe's example fixed in my mind, I utterly failed to get hold of the shrew, flinching away every time it leapt (huge teeth flashing obviously - they must make up 50% of its 8 gram mass). Zoe came to the rescue and transferred it to an empty bag where I terrorised the poor blighter for several minutes trying to get hold of its scruff before finally meeting with success. The shrew was recorded and released and I got to practice on two more with a little more confidence.



A not entirely unprovoked attack

The final day (getting weird being up at this time, I was actually asleep before my partner last night who practically lives in her pyjamas) the little blighters came thick and fast. Mice were in good supply and - having had plenty of experience of their capabilities before - I bravely wrestled them into submission. Field voles scored very highly on the cute-o-meter, turned out to be quite accommodating and strangely unfazed by the whole experience. More shrews too - including an old friend - were logged and released before all the traps were packed up and the small mammals of RCP were safe again (except maybe from the owls, kestrels, foxes.....).



Surrender!

Another fantastic opportunity thanks to Zoe and thanks to everyone else for helping and letting me grab all the fun. Thanks and apologies to our tiny prisoners - I'll get their photos on the website for you to coo over.

The mammals were trapped and recorded as part of ongoing national monitoring, not just for my entertainment. All were healthy and no animals were harmed in the making of this programme (well maybe some got a bit bruised, but only a bit). In total, 22 individuals were recorded comprising of - 10 Wood mice (*Apodemus sylvaticus*), 3 Field Voles (*Microtus agrestis*) and 9 Common Shrews (*Sorex araneus*).

Chris.x



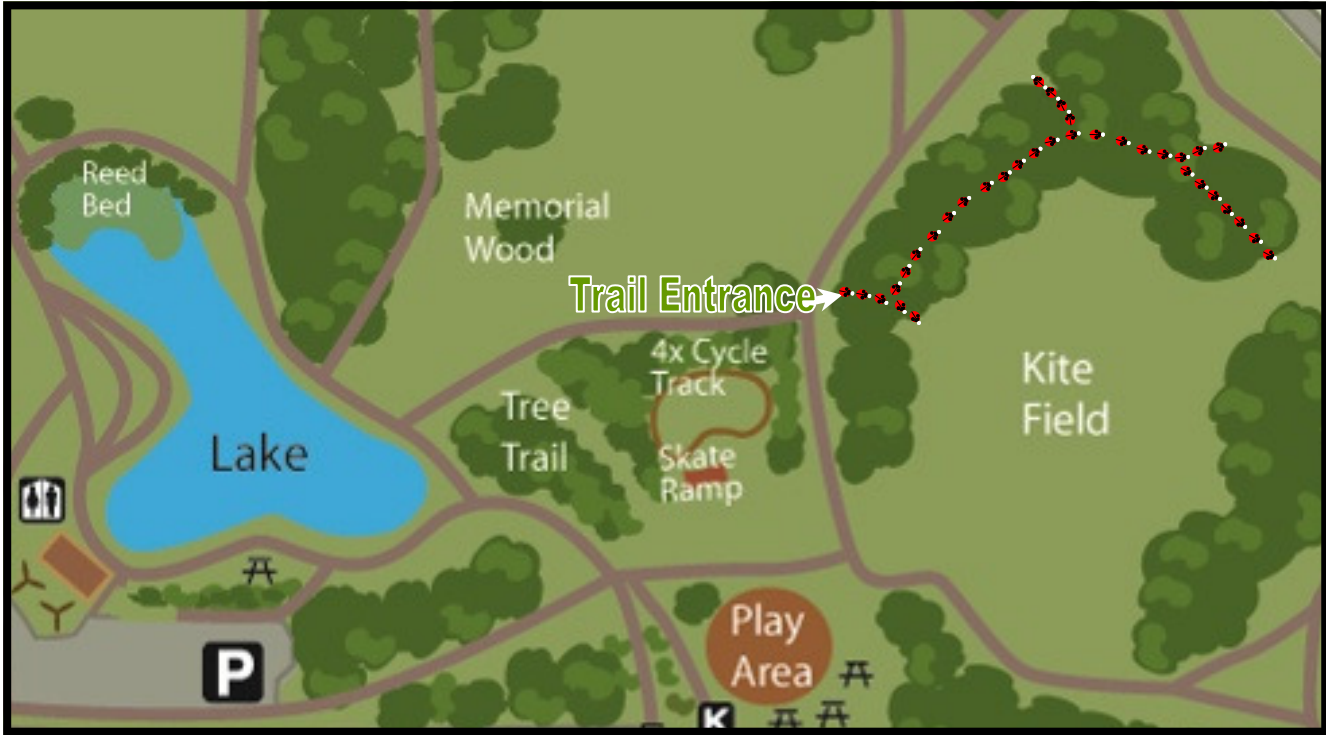
Teeth like daggers a yard long!



# Welcome to the Ladybird Trail



Over August the friends have worked very hard clearing a new trail. It starts at the top of Fowemer hill and winds along through the wood emerging at the far end of the kite field. Along it's length we plan to install 32 ladybird models mounted on concrete slabs. Each one shows a UK species. Visitors to the trail are invited to buy an ID sheet and as they come across each model tick off that species.



## Work Days

The Friends' work days will be held every Wednesday and Saturday.  
Meet at the Rangers' Office at 9.30 am.  
New volunteers always welcome



New Snakes and Ladders board

## Future Projects

Swan Bench

Ladybird Trail

Replace Grasshopper

Wooden Benches

We now have another activity to offer to schools and organised groups. It is a giant snakes and ladders board. Children start at any number on the board and everyone moves together when the giant dice is thrown. On reaching 100 they skip down to 1 and continue their journey back to their starting number. As a reminder they wear a red cap with their start number on. Along the way, if they land on the head of a snake or the base of a ladder they pick up nature quiz cards and answer to the group. Correct answers are then rewarded with moving up the ladder or not sliding down the snakes.

On Bio-Blitz day we tried the game out with four classes of junior school children and it worked very well.

Registered Charity No  
1079665

## Notable Dates

Wednesday 8th Sept FORCP meeting 1-30  
RCP

Wednesday 3rd Nov FORCP meeting 1-30  
RCP