



RED RIVER LNR

Combined Quarter 1, 2 & 3 reports April – end December 2023

General background aims and objectives.

The aim is to work in partnership with the Friends of Red River community group to deliver an annual work programme, agreed with Heanor and Loscoe Town Council representatives, on the Red River Local Nature Reserve at Loscoe.

The intention is to improve the site for the benefit of the local community by ensuring public access, and to manage, maintain and develop the site to improve habitats and encourage biodiversity of species. The Local Nature Reserve is home to a variety of both local and visiting wildlife. Regular wildlife recording visits are made to record the changing wildlife throughout the seasons.

Additional funding will be sought to deliver a selection of environmental events, activities, and guided walks to ensure ongoing public interest and involvement.

Summary of Volunteer Practical Tasks, Events and Wildlife Recording Visits

From April to the end of December 2023 we have carried out 10 conservation tasks, 2 events (Coronation event bank holiday Monday 8 May, 9 December Christmas Wreath making) and 3 newt surveys (and bats) 18 April, 16 May, 20 June in this period. The details of these are shown below. These have been very well attended with 16 individuals taking part and 43 volunteer days carried out.

Conservation Task Day Details and Events

Marion Farrell (Groundwork) has provided guidance and support for the volunteer on all task days and events:-

April 2023

No Friends of Red River task day was held due to family commitments. However a newt and bat survey was held in the evening on 18 April – see more detail under the wildlife section.

MAY 2023

On 3 May in preparation for King's Coronation event to check that there was sufficient suitable vegetation for making crowns.

Coronation event was held on Bank holiday Monday 8 May 2023. The event was with St Luke's Church who had stalls as well. Unfortunately, it rained so all the activities were held in the church. However a good attendance of approximately 150 adults and 12 children came to the event. Display of the work of Friends of Red River was put up and helped to engage the public. Please see below activity making natural crowns with leaves etc from Red River. 4 volunteers and Marion were present at the event. 1 new volunteer was recruited.



On Saturday 13 May (the normal date for a task day) was an opportunity for a site visit/discussion as to how to manage the site better for the Great Crested Newts. All had been concerned that the lack of water during June/July several times in the last decade. After discussion at Committee meetings Marion contacted Chris Monk from Derbyshire Amphibian and Reptile Group and invited him to see the site again. Chris has helped previously survey work at Red River. It was good to see him to meet with the Friends of Red River (8 present) and gain his experience of what the best course of actions would be. All were very appreciative of his time and guidance. Chris kindly said he would put his advice down on paper and send it to the group in the next month.



JUNE 2023

We pushed the Friends of Red River conservation task back by a week to Saturday 17 June to avoid the yearly annual large football tournament (90 teams) which in previous years has made parking and working on the site difficult. 7 volunteers with Marion. The volunteers trimmed back the hedge by the entrance by the road and at the far end by the stile. Brambles were cut back along all the paths and around the hazels (coppiced in the winter) to have the best survival.

We were pleased to note that the water quality was much better than in May. The dark black slime/algae has gone. The yellow rattle we sowed last September on the sloping meadow has taken well although the very dry weather is taking its toll.



JULY 2023

On Saturday 8 July 2023 it was a very hot and humid day (23 degrees centigrade) 7 volunteers and Marion met to carry out a wildlife surveying across the site. This work is important as part of the ongoing monitoring of the site and great for the volunteers to learn new skills.



AUGUST 2023

On Tuesday 8 August 2023 all of the meadows were cut using Groundwork's special reciprocating mower, brush cutters and strimmers. It was hard work but thankfully we had 5 volunteers to help and both Marion and Charles from Groundwork attended. This late summer hay cut is crucial to ensure the correct management of the meadows. The weather was perfect 21 degrees centigrade and dry. Wildlife was also noted as we worked which included Swallow and Goldcrest, amongst others.



On Saturday 12 August 2023 we held a Friends of Red River conservation task. This was very well attended by 9 and Marion. The main task was to rake up the grass of the meadows we had cut on the previous Tuesday. Half a bag of litter was also picked from the site.



SEPTEMBER 2023

On 11 September Marion carried out a site visit to check the conditions of the site and to confirm the exact boundaries.

See the difference in water levels from 11 September to 16 September 2023 – we had a lot of rain!



On Saturday 16 September 2023 seven volunteers and Marion worked on reed pulling. Unfortunately, the level of the water was high due to recent heavy rain so this hindered our work. We focussed on pulling reeds around the platform and also at the far end of the pond. We also sowed yellow rattle on the middle meadow and picked 2 bags of litter.



OCTOBER 2023

On Saturday 14 October we held a Friends of Red River conservation task in conjunction with the church. The tasks focussed on the grounds within the church yard and also the bank on the edge of the church car park. The annual vegetation clearance, included pruning and shaping bushes, cutting back willow, elder etc and making habitat piles. Some of the willow will be used for the centre of the Christmas wreaths. This conservation task was well attended by 6 Red River volunteers and 1 volunteer from the church. Great work achieved.



NOVEMBER 2023

On Saturday 11 November 2023 at the Friends of Red River conservation task we coppiced 3 hazel opposite the middle meadow. Coppicing is a traditional way of managing woodland that has been carried out for centuries. By cutting back the hazel trees carefully to the ground in the winter. This promotes growth of straight useful sections of timber. Coppicing is usually carried out every 7 to 9 years in rotation. We have ensured that we have followed this format and across the whole of Red River and we have hazel trees at different ages to increase the value for wildlife. A willow had fallen over at the far end of the site near the path so this was cut back and habitat piles made. A further willow was pollarded as suggested by Chris from Derbyshire Amphibian and Reptile Group. A bag of litter was picked including lots of plastic from the bail of hay that has rolled on to the site from the neighbouring field. 5 volunteers and Marion took part in what was a lovely cool but sunny morning.



An extra Friends of Red River conservation task was held on Saturday 25 November 2023 to give more time for preparing for the Christmas Wreath making event. 6 Volunteers attended. The volunteers helped to bend willow into circles for the central shape and to collect ivy and more willow. A bag of litter was collected from across the site and we planted 8 silver birch trees near to the church car park. The trees have been kindly grown and donated by one of the volunteers.

DECEMBER 2023

On the morning of the event due to the very wet weather, the Friends of Red River and Marion made the decision to hold the Christmas Wreath making Event in the church. The church had earlier in the year had the idea to coincide a church event with the Wreath Making. This worked out well and there was a very good attendance of 55 visitors and 10 volunteers helping with the event. £120.39 donations were collected. (£50 of which was donated to the church in thanks for use of the top room for the event). The Mayor and Mayoress of Heanor & Loscoe Town Council attended the event. It was very successful event with good attendance.



Meetings

The Friends of Red River held their AGM followed by Committee Meeting on Wednesday 13 June 2023, at 7pm at The Gate Inn. All posts remain the same. The meetings went well and many details were discussed. Further Committee meetings were held on 19 September and 7 November 2023. One of the items on the agenda is to continue to investigate what is practical to do to ensure that at least a part of the pond remains in water when we have hot summers. There is a concern that if there are too many occasions when the pond dries out completely in the summer this will have a negative effect on the Great Crested Newt. Marion and the Friends of Red River are taking advice from Derbyshire Amphibian and Reptile Group.

Publicity

Publicity posters have now been updated will are put up in local notice boards. Websites have also been updated. Dates of our published task programme are now on various websites and volunteers are now

being actively engaged in conservation tasks, and wildlife recording. All events have been promoted by Groundwork's social media and has linked to Heanor & Loscoe Town Council social media.

Funding

The committee members and Groundwork staff continue to seek out funding opportunities to support our work on the reserve. We are looking into funding for a potential partial desilting of the pond.

Statistics

Summary Statistics - Quarter 1, 2 & 3	
No. of individual volunteers on practical tasks and events	16
No. of individual volunteers on wildlife recording and specialist survey	7
No. of Practical volunteer days and event contributed by adult volunteers (258hrs divide by 6hrs) = 43	43
No. of volunteer days contributed by volunteers on wildlife recording (43 hours divide by 6 hours) =7	7
No of activities/practical days delivered by Groundwork Staff	18
No of wildlife recording visits delivered by Groundwork Staff	4

Wildlife Recording

Groundwork staff look and listen out for wildlife on most of the task days on the reserve, but often we are too involved with supervising the volunteers to systematically, record everything seen or heard. We are helped on these recording sessions by our regular volunteers which include Gary, Ben and Claire who help with this. In addition, 4 different volunteers were involved in the evening Newt and Bat surveying.

Recording visits took place on 18 April, 6 May, and 20 June 2023. These recording visits help to build up a picture of what is likely to be seen during the year giving a good indication of the wildlife to be found on the reserve in the different seasons. These types of records become more valuable over time and help to influence the habitat management on the reserve. Due to ill health and holidays some of the months have not been covered as well as in previous years.

Monthly Records - The month by month summary is shown below:-

April 2023

Newt and Bat surveying recording visit took place on 18 April 2023. We recorded 8 Great Crested Newts, 23 Smooth Newts and heard a Tawny Owl. 4 volunteers and Marion took part - a wonderful evening.

On 26 April 2023 Gary and Ben recorded wildlife at Red River Local Nature Reserve. 23 species of bird were recorded including Chiff Chaff and Blackcaps (summer migrants) and the often hard to see Tree Creeper. Unfortunately no butterflies seen but plenty of Bumblebees were on the wing. 2 Grey squirrels were also recorded.

Plants in flower included:- White Dead Nettle, Yellow Archangel, Dandelion, Daffodil, Bluebell, Dog Violet, Cowslip, Ramsons, Wood Anemone, Dogs Mercury, Lesser Stitchwort, Primrose, Daisy, Meadow Cranesbill, Snakes Head Fritillary, Forget me not, Lady's smock, Germander Speedwell, Tulip, Marsh Marigold and Stinging Nettle.

May 2023 - Wildlife was recorded on 3 May 2023 by Marion and Sharon. Lovely weather meant that orange tip butterfly, green veined white and speckled wood were spotted. More wildlife was recorded on 13 May 2023 by Marion and 8 volunteers. 15 species of bird including skylark heard over the neighbouring farmers field. Also we saw young blue tits, they have got a fast start to the year. We were lucky to spot 3 male Smooth Newts in the water.

On Tuesday 16 May a wonderful evening looking for newts and bats. (2 volunteers and Marion) By the waterfall and bridge the water was very clear and 16 Smooth Newts and 2 Great Crested newts (1 male, 1 female) were recorded. Despite the poor visibility (40%) through the black algae around the pond dipping platform 6 more Smooth newts were recorded so totalling 22 Smooth newts for the evening. 3 Common Pipistrelle bats were seen and heard via bat detectors in and around the open water and woodland.

June 2023 - On Saturday 17 June wildlife was recorded including noting that the yellow rattle we sowed last September on the sloping meadow has taken well. 18 birds were noted including Bullfinch which is more often heard than seen. Please see list below of all the bird species seen. The Elder blossom was beautiful. On Tuesday 20 June we again went out in the evening to see if we could spot newts and bats. 3 volunteers and Marion took part. Thankfully the black slime that had been on the water in May had gone and visibility was good. We saw 10 smooth Newt, 4 baby newts, 0 Great Crested Newts, 2 baby frogs and 1 Common Pipistrelle Bat. It was a very hot evening and we were pleased to see that there were plenty of water beetles and larvae in the pond. There were lots of earth worms slurping back into their holes as we walked around - fascinating!

July 2023 - Detailed wildlife recording on 8 July with 7 volunteers focussed on providing tips on how to identification wildlife. This included a wide spectrum – plants, amphibians, butterflies, dragonflies, birds etc. We only recorded 12 bird species as we were more focussed on the plants and insect butts were pleased to see Moorhen with 3 chicks. The hot weather meant that although dragonflies/damselflies were present it was quite hard to identify them as they were very active. However we recorded Brown Hawker dragonfly, Southern Hawker dragonfly, Common Blue damselfly and Blue-tailed damselfly. Likewise there were plenty of bumblebees about but again hard to identify – only 3 species Tree bumblebee, Common carder bumblebee and Red-tailed bumblebee were identified. 9 Species of butterflies were recorded:- Meadow Brown (4), Gatekeeper (3), Ringlet (5), Speckled Wood (2), Large White, Small White, Small Skipper, Comma (3) and Red Admiral. We looked in detail at the plants on the individual meadows and it was good to see flowering plants Betony, Black Knapweed, Burnet Saxifrage, Yellow Rattle, Meadowsweet, Oxeye Daisy Selfheal, Tufted Vetch, Purple-loosestrife, Field Scabious etc. We also saw a young frog.

On 8 August 2023 whilst mowing the meadows we noted Swallow, Goldcrest, Blue Tit, Robin, Wren, Chaffinch Woodpigeon. On the Saturday 12 raking up the meadows we saw Mallard and Coal Tit

On 16 September 2023 whilst pulling reeds we noted a few birds including Raven and Grey Wagtail. No recording of wildlife took place in October, November or December 2023 by the volunteers due to ill health or taking holiday.

Birds

The bird species seen or heard during quarter 1 and 2, (April to the end of September 2023) are shown in the table on next page. The table shows a list of all the species seen in the previous 24 months. The number of bird species recorded in across both quarters 1 and 2 = 32.

Bird Species 2023 at Red River LNR	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept
Bullfinch	Y	Y	Y			
Chaffinch	Y		Y	Y	Y	
Goldfinch	Y		Y	Y		
Greenfinch	Y		Y			
Buzzard						
Sparrow Hawk						
Kestrel			Y			
Dunnock				Y		
Robin	Y	Y	Y		Y	
Wren	Y	Y	Y		Y	Y
Grey Wagtail						Y
Pied Wagtail						
Great Tit	Y	Y	Y			Y
Blue Tit	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Coal Tit					Y	Y
Long Tailed Tit	Y	Y	Y			
Mallard	Y		Y	Y	Y	Y
Moorhen	Y	Y	Y	Y		
Pheasant	Y	Y				
Chiff Chaff	Y	Y	Y	Y		
Blackcap	Y	Y	Y	Y		
Willow Warbler						
Crow	Y					
Magpie	Y		Y	Y		
Jackdaw						
Jay		Y	Y			
Starling						
House Sparrow				Y		
Nuthatch						
Goldcrest	Y	Y			Y	
Lesser B. B. Gull						
B. H. Gull						
Wood Pigeon	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Stock Dove	Y					
Feral Pigeon						
Collared Dove	Y					
G. S. Woodpecker						
Green Woodpecker						
Mistle Thrush						
Song Thrush	Y					
Blackbird	Y	Y	Y	Y		
Swallow					Y	
Swift						
Field Fare						
Redwing						
Tree Creeper	Y					
Skylark		Y				
Raven						Y
Rook						
Lapwing						
Tawny Owl	Y					
Herring Gull						
Heron						
Siskin						
Ring Necked Parakeet						
Monthly Totals	24	15	18	12	9	8
Quarterly Total	26 species			20 Species		