

Quarterly SLA Report for October - December 2020

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 and Wildlife Recording Visits

This year continues to be very much affected by the Covid-19 pandemic which has affected greatly the practical tasks completed on the reserve. The second Lockdown (5 November to 2 December) and then the move into Tier 3 has meant that less tasks than usual have taken place and lower numbers of individual volunteers have been able to be involved.

In October two conservation tasks took place, in November tasks were due to take place on 11th and 25th but due to the lockdown these were put on hold. In December, a conservation task took place on the 22 December. The details of these tasks are shown below. A wildlife recording visit was made each month during quarter three.

Conservation Task Day Details

OCTOBER

Wednesday 7th October, a good day of conservation work included cutting back two years growth of willow in the wet woodland area. This also included cutting back a snapped willow which had been caught in earlier winds - to ensure that it was safe. Preparation for the hedge-laying due to take place later in the month was also carried out. This included felling four tall willows that were leaning over the hedge. All the wood was stacked to make habitat piles.

On Tuesday 20th October, the hedge-laying began. This is the hedge that runs along the southern boundary next to farmland and within the wet woodland part of Red River reserve. Two sections were selected approximately 20 metres apart to ensure there were separate areas for hedge-laying to give appropriate social distancing and ease of working. The idea being of course for them to join. It is anticipated that at the end of this winter season approximately a third of the hedge will be laid. (The western section has been laid previously approximately a few years ago)



NOVEMBER

Tasks were planned 11th and 25th November to continue with the hedge-laying but had to be postponed due to Lockdown 2 (5th Nov to 2 Dec).

DECEMBER

We were in Tier 3 from 2 December onwards this allowed us to be in groups of 6 outside if social distancing was strictly observed and no sharing of tools allowed. We managed a full day hedge-laying on 22 December continuing from where we had left off from October. Great progress was made, with wonderful teamwork and all enjoyed this very satisfying task. We are fortunate to have volunteers with excellent skills and experience, particularly Adrian, Claire, and Ben.



Meetings

Due to the current government regulations concerning the Coronavirus outbreak, there have been no committee meetings held between October to end of December. The committee have kept in touch with each other and with Groundwork by telephone and email. Some committee members have attended the task days arranged.

Publicity

Existing publicity posters and leaflets are still present in local outlets, but additional publicity has been put on hold for the time being. We are limited to the number of volunteers allowed to attend practical tasks, so are not currently accepting new volunteers. There are also no events or activities planned due to current government regulations. Our published task programme is also on hold, as volunteers for activities are being invited by telephone or email to control the numbers attending.

Funding

The committee members and Groundwork staff continue to seek out funding opportunities to support our work on the reserve.

Statistics

Summary Statistics - Quarter 3	
No. of individual volunteers on practical tasks	6
No. of individual volunteers on wildlife recording	2
No. of Practical volunteer days contributed by adult volunteers (34 hours divide by 6 hours) =	5.6
No. of volunteer days contributed by volunteers on wildlife recording (12 hours divide by 6 hours) =	2
No of activities/practical days delivered by Groundwork Staff	3
No of wildlife recording visits delivered by Groundwork Staff	3
No of additional days spent on site by extra Groundwork Staff	3

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.

These monthly 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.

Birds

The bird species seen or heard during quarter 3, October to end of December 2020 are shown below in the table below. The species in bold (Pied Wagtail, Fieldfare and Redwing) are the new ones additional in this quarter to those recorded from the April to end of September 2020.

Redwing and Fieldfare are winter visitors from Scandinavia who come here for a warmer winter with plenty of berries. The number of bird species recorded in quarter 3 is 30. Which is slightly more than this time last year. This brings the total bird species recorded at Red River since April 2020 to 45.

Bird Species	Oct	Nov	Dec	Comments
Bullfinch	Y	Y	Y	Regularly present often heard rather than seen
Chaffinch	Y		Y	
Goldfinch	Y	Y		Regularly recorded 6 + flocks
Greenfinch				
Buzzard	Y			
Sparrow Hawk	Y			
Kestrel	Y	Y		Often sits in the large Oak tree
Dunnock				
Robin	Y	Y	Y	
Wren	Y	Y	Y	
Grey Wagtail				
Pied Wagtail	Y			
Great Tit	Y	Y	Y	
Blue Tit		Y	Y	
Coal Tit	Y			
Long Tailed Tit	Y	Y		Large 14+ flocks
Mallard	Y	Y	Y	
Moorhen	Y			
Pheasant	Y		Y	Heard more often than seen
Chiff Chaff				
Blackcap				
Willow Warbler				
Crow	Y	Y	Y	
Magpie	Y		Y	
Jackdaw			Y	
Jay	Y	Y	Y	4 seen looking for acorns
Starling				
House Sparrow				
Nuthatch	Y			
Goldcrest	Y			High pitched call heard
Lesser B. B. Gull				
B. H. Gull	Y		Y	
Wood Pigeon	Y	Y	Y	
Stock Dove				
Feral Pigeon				
Collared Dove				
G. S. Woodpecker		Y		
Green Woodpecker	Y			
Mistle Thrush	Y		Y	3 seen together
Song Thrush	Y			
Blackbird	Y	Y	Y	6 seen together
Swallow				
Swift				
Field Fare		Y		
Redwing		Y	Y	Good flocks of 12+ seen
Monthly Totals	26	16	17	
Quarterly Total	30			

Monthly Records

The month-by-month summary is shown below:

October

After a dry summer at last it rained this month helping the pond water levels to rise. Moorhens and mallards were noted on the pond. On 20th October we saw or heard 26 bird species a good total considering all the summer visiting migrant have gone to warmer climes. It was good to see top predators Buzzard, Sparrowhawk and Kestrel. We regularly hear the plaintive quiet call of bullfinches, though often difficult to see.



November

This year is exceptionally good for berries particularly hawthorn and holly. There are a tremendous number of acorns too, which the Jays have been busy hiding ready for harder times. 16 birds were seen or heard on 30 November. Good flocks of Redwings are present and a smaller number of Fieldfares. There are also more Blackbirds present. Like the Redwings and Fieldfares, many Blackbirds that live in Scandinavia in the summer do migrate in the winter to Britain. Fungi this month has been very good including the Jelly Ear which is usually found on Elder. Please see photographs below.





December

Wildlife records were taken on 2 and 22 December 2020 with 17 species of Birds seen or heard. Mistle Thrush were seen on both occasions toward the church end of the reserve. They have a rattling call which is very distinctive. 5 Grey Squirrels were seen busy collecting acorns. There are plenty of Rosehips for the birds. With the frost they become much easier for the birds to digest.



Future Tasks

Groundwork staff (and volunteers/Friends of Red River, if possible) will continue with conservation and maintenance tasks as Covid-19 restrictions allow. More hedge-laying and coppicing is planned.