



**Longhirst
Wildlife and
Community Trust**



NEWSLETTER

August 2024

Welcome to the summer issue of the **Longhirst Wildlife & Community Trust** newsletter. We are now coming to the end of our first year so this is a special issue which looks at what we have achieved since May 2023. This includes:

- News of recent events
- An inventory of all the Trust's assets and equipment
- Planning for next year
- A gallery of wildlife spotted in Longhirst Parish in the last year
- ... and we still have two more events to enjoy in August!

WHAT'S ON

Kim Woolhead

We have arranged two more events in the coming month. Everyone's welcome at all our events and they're all FREE so please do come along! If you would like to attend any of these, please book a place with Pauline Gilbertson by emailing her at paulinegilbertson@gmail.com.

"West Chevington Nature Reserve". Sunday, 11 August, 10.00-13.00. A guided walk around this Northumberland Wildlife Trust reserve.

"Moth Identification at Scotch Gill Woods". Tuesday, 20 August, 9.00am. Local naturalist, Mark Welfare, will set a (humane!) moth trap the night before and show us his findings. A great opportunity to get up close and personal with a variety of beautiful and often elusive moths. If time permits, we might also look for some day-flying moths in the woods.

NEWS OF EVENTS HELD RECENTLY

Pauline Gilbertson

GARDENING FOR WILDLIFE

Geoff Dobbins, Estates Manager at Northumberland Wildlife Trust, came to Longhirst Village Hall to give us an interesting, illustrated talk about how we can make our gardens more wildlife friendly. The audience were very enthusiastic and had many questions for Geoff which he was able to help with, in many cases using his own garden as an example.

SPRING WILDLIFE WALK

A dozen or so of us enjoyed an inspiring nature walk in Scotch Gill Woods on 26 April, led by expert naturalist Mark Welfare on behalf of the NHSN. We learned an enormous amount about spring-flowering plants, as well as some top tips about trees, bees and birdsong. Several 'ancient woodland indicator' plants were found including Wood Sedge, Dog's Mercury, Wood Speedwell and of course English Bluebell. For many of us it was our first visit to this fascinating local wood.



Scotch Gill Woods, Morpeth Photos: P Gilbertson



BIRD ID FOR BEGINNERS

In May a group of us met at Gosforth Nature Reserve for a guided walk led by the Natural History Society of Northumbria's (NHSN's) Senior Naturalist, James Common. The rain miraculously held off, and amongst other treats we had great views of several Pochard (increasingly scarce in these parts), a Moorhen assiduously gathering nesting material and a Kingfisher! The resident otters decided not to show themselves that day - but maybe next time.....



Pochard Photo: P Gilbertson



Kingfisher Photo: P Gilbertson

WOODRUFF WOOD 'EVENING CHORUS' WALK

On 26 May we arranged an evening visit to a private wood near Longhirst. The owners explained that Woodruff Wood is managed for nature and told us about their work to encourage red squirrels, white-letter hairstreak butterflies and a host of woodland plants and birds. We heard a pleasing variety of birdsong and learned about the mammals that visit on a regular basis. The wood is host to several ancient woodland indicator species. Amongst other flowering plants we found a few Bird's Nest Orchids - a red-listed plant which is rare in our region! This leafless plant is unusual in that it gets its energy not from sunlight but from its dependence as a parasite on tree roots. Its name comes from its own tangle of roots, whilst the actual flowers are a rather sickly yellowy brown. A drab plant which I found totally fascinating!



Bird's Nest Orchid Photo: P Gilbertson

LOCAL NATURE WALK

Fifteen of us gathered for a nature walk around Longhirst on 20 June. James Common from NHSN was again our excellent guide, pointing out a wide variety of flowers, trees and insects. We all agreed that there were fewer butterflies around this year than there should be, probably due to the wet winter weather.



Paddock Wood Photo: P Gilbertson



Large Skipper on Orchid Photo: P Gilbertson

However, we did see a Ringlet, a Speckled Wood, a White and several Large Skippers including a mating pair and another feeding on an orchid. Orchids were flowering in profusion, especially in the woods where we saw countless Northern Marsh, Common Spotted and hybrids. James pointed out some interesting grasses and found several different bees and hoverflies for us, including a *Platycheirus rosarum* hoverfly, of which there are not many records in our region. We heard a Buzzard, Goldcrest and Treecreeper (well, the invaluable Merlin app heard the latter) as well as all the usual suspects.

NORTHUMBERLAND ZOO VISIT

Our group enjoyed an excellent talk on Northumberland Zoo's Harvest Mouse breeding programme by keeper Claudia, whose enthusiasm for these tiny rodents was infectious! The zoo is passionate about helping endangered species and as well as breeding and re-introducing harvest mice into the wilds of Northumberland they are doing similar work with white-clawed crayfish, and have plans to expand this area of their work further. After Claudia's talk we were free to roam the zoo at our leisure.



Harvest Mouse Photo: P Gilbertson

WHAT NEXT?

Peter Coates

We were delighted to receive a grant of £10,000 from the National Lottery Heritage Fund in May last year. Since then, we have focused our efforts on building a substantial range of equipment for use by the Longhirst community in future and on organising an initial programme of events highlighting our local wildlife (flora and fauna). This was done despite a very dreary winter and a cold and wet spring.

The Lottery also insisted that we completed a planned 2-year events programme in 12 months which was challenging but we believe we achieved successfully.

For our second year we do not intend to bid for a further grant but will run a more modest events programme and encourage the community to make full use of the equipment that is now available (see below).

We also intend to work closely with the Parish Council to improve the island beside the church car park and make a start on improving the condition of the paths in Paddock (Millennium) Wood.

We would be delighted if more residents came forward and joined us. The Trust has been created to benefit the whole community.

RANGE OF EQUIPMENT AVAILABLE TO BORROW OR KEEP

Kim Woolhead

In addition to all the free events we have arranged (which we hope you have enjoyed) we have made several purchases, some of which are available to borrow, some are for residents to keep, and some have already been used around the village!

Equipment to borrow:

- 6 trail cameras (for garden wildlife watching)
- A handheld steam cleaner (for cleaning bird feeders and boxes etc)
- 4 bat detectors, 2 of which can be used with Android mobile phones (we hope to be able to have a training event on how to use these in the autumn)

These items are available for anyone in the community to borrow; please contact Pauline at paulinegilbertson@gmail.com.

Wildlife friendly items and information available for you to keep:

Animal Houses: Four swallow nesting bowls (not pictured); eleven nest boxes; eleven ladybird towers and eleven solitary bee nestboxes.



Wildlife Identification Guides: Five each of Butterflies, Park and Garden Birds, Garden Bugs and Beasties, Woodland Trees, Flowers and Fungi; four Flowers of Walks and Waysides and two Land Mammal Guides. We also have six copies of a Northumbrian Naturalist booklet 'Bumblebees of North East England'.



If you would like any of these (one per household to start with!), please contact me at kim.woolhead@gmail.com.

And Also...

We have erected a Barn Owl box, two Tawny Owl boxes and several bird and bat boxes around the Parish. See if you can spot them!



Our major project for the year has been to repair and refurbish the bird hide in Paddock Wood. We have also put up two feeding stations near the hide and will be feeding the birds very shortly. Do go along to have a look – we hope to attract a variety of woodland/garden birds to the feeders.



Photos: J Quinn

We have bought a laptop and accessories which we can use for presentations to link to a projector. It will also be used to store back copies of documents, photos and trail camera stills and videos for future reference. Two USB flash drives are also available.

WILDLIFE GALLERY

To celebrate the great diversity of wildlife seen in and around Longhirst over the last year or so, I have put together a number of photos taken by residents in the village. I've also added some photos of wildlife friendly activity in local gardens. There are so many great images, and it has been very difficult to choose, but below is a selection. They are randomly arranged so that it gives a flavour of what a wonderful, wildlife rich environment we live in. Let's keep it up and see if we can add even more biodiversity to our gardens over the next year!

Many thanks to all contributors, especially **Mark Davis, Oz Prey, Pauline Gilbertson, Richard Tordoff, Janet Quinn and the owners of Woodruff Wood** who have all taken some excellent pics over the year.



Sparrowhawk



Stoat (trail camera)



Broomhaugh Wildflower Meadow



Longhirst Hall Wildflower Meadow



Tree Sparrow



Yellowhammer



Hare



Hedgehogs



Garden snails



Roe deer (trail camera)



Red Kite



House Martins



Orchid



Southern Hawker



Redpoll



Peacock butterfly



Painted Lady



Red Squirrel



Honey Bee on Winter flowering Heather



4 Spotted Chaser



Mammatus Clouds



Aurora borealis



22 Spot Ladybird



Badger (trail camera)



Broad-leaved Helleborine



New garden pond



Bullfinches



Comma butterfly



Great Tit in flight



Ladybird



Jersey Moth



Yellow Wagtail



Greenfinch



Heron fishing (& Moorhen)



Buzzard in flight



Barn Owl



Otter



Great Spotted Woodpecker



Nuthatch



Little Egret



Roe deer with fawn



Garden Snail with young



White Letter Hairstreak butterfly



Wren



Wheatear



Solitary Bee Nest box



Tree Bumblebee



Willow Tit

And Finally... Just a reminder that we welcome everyone who would like to get involved or attend an event so if you would like more information about the Longhirst Wildlife & Community Trust, please email me at kim.woolhead@gmail.com.