



FRIENDS OF CALDY NATURE PARK

NEWSLETTER No 159

Winter 2022

www.caldyvalley.org.uk

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From Steph Hefferan CWaC Greenspace Officer Winter News

Whilst nature is taking a well-earned rest, this is the time that we spring into action with winter pruning and cutting back, rotational cutting of reed-beds, coppicing of trees and scrub, the list goes on.

This essential winter preparation sets the park up to lead us into the nesting and breeding seasons of spring, when the valley comes alive; so all the hard work over winter is invaluable to the wildlife of the area.

Working with the Friends of Caldly Nature Park volunteers, there's always a task to keep us all busy maintaining the nature park and making it a great place to take a stroll and enjoy nature and the great outdoors. With monthly working parties, everyone is welcome and no previous experience is required, so please feel free to enlist; it's a great way to get fit, meet new people and help maintain this precious community facility.

If you have any queries or suggestions, please do not hesitate to get in touch via the Council's number 0300 1238123 or email enquiries@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk

Working Parties take place on the 1st Wednesday of each month meeting at 9.30am at the car park. Finish by 12.30pm

All welcome!



Kingfisher on the canal near Waverton @ Richard Sayle

Norman Sadler, Leader of the Chester RSPB Group started the new year off to a brilliant start when he related that on 5th January:

I had an hour to spare this afternoon, and needed to go to Rightways, so thought I'd have a stroll through Caldly Valley. I had a brilliant hour!

Plenty of blackbirds (particularly at the car park end), wren, female great spotted woodpecker, jay and ten moorhens. But the highlight was really good views of a male kingfisher near the Celandine Close bridge. It perched up over the path, then flew down over the brook. When I turned the corner it was perched over the brook, then dived in and came back with a minnow that it proceeded to bash on its perch before swallowing it. It stayed for some minutes digesting it before flying off downstream into impenetrable cover. That's why I'm a birder!! On the way back, I met another guy called Norman, and we both had clear views of a water vole just upstream from the weir. I'm sure these encounters have been logged by others, but they are no less special when seen first-hand.



Sun Rising on 25th November @ David Coathup

Many of you will be members of Cheshire Wildlife Trust and so be aware of the excellent work they do including the release of 2 wild beavers into Hatchmere Nature Reserve. An extract from Cheshire Wildlife Trust's **A year in the life of our beavers:**

"During the summer the beavers seemed to favour vegetation rather than trees. Trails could be seen over the meadow with obvious feeding on plants such as common hogweed and Himalayan balsam. Both these plants can be dominant over wildflowers. However, the beavers will reduce their numbers and create space for wildflowers".

had me dreaming of beavers in Caldly Nature Park. Perhaps not realistic as they would need a much larger area and might cause problems with the water flows by building dams and blocking the brook but just imagine a wild animal eating our hogweed and Himalayan balsam – that would be so useful!

Something positive from COVID!

My name is **Jo O'Brien**. I have lived in Huntington for the last five years and grew up in Chester. I graduated with a Masters degree in Broadcast Media in 2020 and I am trying to build up a portfolio of videos.

Like most of my neighbours, I have been enjoying the opportunity to walk around Caldly Valley Nature Park during the pandemic. It has been one of the only good things in the last couple of years.

Over the last 2 years I've been taking photos and videos of the park for a short film. It's turned from a portfolio building opportunity to a long-term project, so many positives to highlight! I asked for assistance from Friends volunteers and the response was fantastic with members providing information and time.

I'm intending to have the video on YouTube and share from there. My focus will be on how beneficial the park is, for physical and mental health and obviously for the wildlife that lives there. But mainly I want to show how peaceful it can be to walk or stop and just listen to the birds.

Look out for it on YouTube soon!

WILDLIFE MUSINGS - Part 2

In the last newsletter we were treated to **Carol's** wildlife encounters whilst on her travels in 2021. She took us to Cornwall, Brighton, The New Forest and then to Scotland. Here are further notes of her experiences back in England and Wales

Moving on to Northumberland the following week proved worthwhile, not only for the beautiful scenery around Lindisfarne and Bamburgh but to see the hundreds of wading birds on the beaches. Watching the Sanderlings rush up and down the beach as the tide came in and out was so amusing. Beadnell Bay has a very interesting, rocky beach and the birds were dotted in little gangs in the rock pools and along the jagged shore. I'm not good at identifying them all, but there was certainly a large variety and I also counted 10 herons one evening sitting on different rocky outcrops! We also watched guillemots diving and swimming like little penguins and think we saw a fulmar. The saddest part was seeing four dead razorbills on the beach. We read later that thousands of these birds have been washed up on local beaches in Scotland and the North of England and experts don't know what caused them to die.

Finally, moving down to Stockton-on-Tees for our last week proved to be a real eye-opener. We were there to meet up with friends and wouldn't normally have chosen such an industrial, built-up place to stay but because of the very presence of the oil refineries, power station and oil rig graveyard, the wastelands in between



these huge eyesores had created a wildlife haven! The River Tees ran through the landscape and it was amazing to see dozens of common and harbour seals lounging on the mudflats when the tide was out. The power station was called Seal Sands and it was certainly



Carol's Seals on the Sands

an appropriate name for the area! The walks around the area had hides and we spotted a spoonbill, two marsh harriers, herons and a range of waders too. Deer have often also been seen there. It was such a contrast - looking one way to see birds and seals and another to see the ugly concrete buildings and stacks, yet raptors were using them as perches.

We saw more wildlife in this strange landscape than we had during two weeks in the Highlands of Scotland! We have also just had a week on the Llyn peninsula where we saw seals with their pups, plenty of buzzards, sparrow hawks and kestrels, hares and lots of huge and colourful fungi too.

Back home again, we do feel lucky that we have our very own reserve on our doorstep which we can visit every day and see the variety of nature that lives there. Thanks to everyone who looks after the park and makes this possible.

Carol Lawrence

EVENTS IN 2022 – A Welcome Return!

At our last Committee meeting in late November we agreed to take the plunge and re-start some events. Our Annual Meeting (in March) is likely to be online again but our first outdoor event will hopefully be the ever popular Duck Race



An eager audience gathered for our previous Duck Race!

during the school Easter holidays. At our next Committee meeting we will prepare a calendar of events and posters will then go up in the noticeboards giving details as well as the usual posters around the Nature Park in the week or so before each event.

Please note that everything continues to be subject to covid restrictions.

SUBS AGAIN!

Many thanks for those who have paid already, & also for donations which are gratefully received. In the next newsletter we hope to be able to report on some new projects which will be funded, at least in part by membership subs and donations. If you know you haven't yet paid & can pay by bank transfer but haven't got the necessary code please contact me at tika3@btinternet.com. Alternatively, please deliver or send your £5.00 subs, by cash or cheque (payable to the "Friends of Caldly Nature Park") to me, Jacky Creswick, Membership Secretary at , 3, Butterbur Close, Huntington, CH3 6BJ remembering to add your name, email & address. Please use the same procedure to advise me of any changes to your contact details.