

DONINGTON & ALBRIGHTON LOCAL NATURE RESERVE

We had our very own Springwatch moment in the Meadow last month. It was during the very well attended Tree Walk our tree expert Bob put on for us. Whilst Bob was waxing lyrical about all things arboreal a blue tit flew into one of the very recently erected nest boxes right behind him. It hung around for quite some time so definitely seemed interested. Such a rewarding sight for those of us who try so hard to encourage wildlife to our Reserve. Realising he had been upstaged Bob soon got our attention back, though not until one of the Meadow's frequent canine visitors ran off with a small branch Bob had snapped off for our inspection. It was a great talk, thank you Bob.

Further efforts to encourage wildlife were on show in the Conservation Area where the Bird Hide was opened for the first time. Several squirrel proof bird feeders have been erected nearby and have already encouraged a variety of birds, photographs of which can be seen on our Notice Board by the Kissing Gate on Rectory Road.

We nearly did the opposite of encouraging wildlife on a different site in the Meadow. Epicormic growths were discussed in last month's article (I did go on, sorry) where their removal from the lime trees was discussed. This was to prevent people getting poked in the eye. We were about to perform the same procedure on alder trees in the Meadow. However, in this instance the growths weren't in a position to cause a problem and were in fact providing a very useful environment for wildlife. This was well illustrated by the discovery of an old bird nest within the growths.

Another excellent wildlife resource is ivy and this too led to discussion during our last Volunteer Day. Our suspicions were confirmed by Arboreal Bob who said under no circumstances does ivy adversely affect the health of trees and cutting it down in an effort to preserve the tree is misguided.

The ongoing maintenance of the Reserve continues. The removal of the rest of the willow carr from the Pool was a major event with a bigger digger being employed than last time. The Pool now seems in good health and its depth has recently been measured at around four feet in the middle which is excellent. Several trees have been cut back for safety or access reasons and we are hoping to resurface some of the paths in the Meadow, in particular the one that slopes down from the Kissing Gate.

Plans have been discussed to improve the state of the Dipping Pool. At the moment it is basically a mud pit covered in green stuff which seems irresistible to most dogs but not a lot else. We are hoping to create a flow of water through the Pool and also remove a load of silt from it. The Pool has a clay liner so care must be taken during this process.

The Conservation Area, accessed round the back of Donington Pool, will be open on the first week end of every month, weather permitting, from now until further notice. Please take advantage of this opportunity, but if bringing dogs do keep them on leads so any disturbance is kept to a minimum. The Bird Hide will also be available on these days.

Our next Volunteer Day is 5th March. It's a great opportunity to be outside doing something worthwhile and we would love to see you. Paul Fallon (paulfallon6@gmail.com) will give you more details.