

CONSERVATION

BURTON



VOLUNTEERS

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Burton Conservation Volunteers
Annual Report 2011

It has been a slightly quieter year as summer was not so busy and although not quite so many young people joined with us, we did still have an encouraging number working with us. We carried out 596 work days by BCV plus 131 days by others including local Lichfield and Burton residents, The Kingfisher Project and local Parish Councils. This gives a grand total of 727 volunteer days carried out on a total of 46 different tasks.

Of these, 549 task days were within the National Forest, 575 in East Staffs and 120 in the Lichfield area and 15 in Tamworth, unusually with the exception of the weekend working in Herefordshire (17 volunteer days) all work days were in Staffordshire.

As in previous years I have not counted in time for committee meetings, admin work, site surveys, and general organisation like tool collection or sorting out car share. The many hours of work on the allotment have not been included, not because it is not highly valued, but because we do not have a proper record of volunteer numbers. Nor have I included team-building socials/walks, manning displays, educational talks etc. so the basic figures do not reflect the total amount of commitment given to the group by volunteers. I did include the National Forest Walking Festival walk, as it was organised for others, but not the risk assessment walk. We have also worked with Community Punishment Order workers, Youth Offenders, Schools, East Staffs. BC Parks dept, Lichfield DC and numerous Parish Councils. We have also provided support for local landowners like Yoxall Lodge and the vets at Alrewas other orgs. like Staffordshire Wildlife Trust, Natural England Burton and District Wildlife Group, Lichfield Gardening Group, Saxon Hill School, Duke of Edinburgh Awards, Scouts, Lichfield & Hatherton Canal Trust and the National Society of Hedgelayers.

Other clients this year have included British Waterways and Broome Cider Farm nr Ross on Wye. We have been heavily involved in a big

(400+trees) orchard project with Paget school in Burton and one volunteer now also works one day per week for the school as part of the project. The major project of the year 'Reap What You Sow' involved working closely with ESCVS and Burton Civic Society and a corporate team from DHL.

Thanks also go to the volunteers who help to organise walks, theatre visits, quizzes, meals website etc. who help making working with BCV an enjoyable and social experience as well as a fulfilling and productive one for volunteers, clients and the environment.

Although we are not a 'carers' type group we do care and over the years a number of volunteers with learning disabilities, social or drink/drug related problems have been able to gain a lot from working with BCV and the confidence, acquired skills and improved CV they have gained from working with the group, has helped a number to find jobs and careers.

Highlights

It is difficult to pick out highlights from so many successful tasks, but again it is great to revisit many of our previous projects either for work days or on walks and to see them growing and taking effect (some will be nearly 19 years old now). We have continued to work on the Kingfisher Trail Local Nature Reserve, installing paths between the cycle track and the towpath, to improve the feeling of security for walkers and weeding around the many fruit trees that have survived, despite the initial pessimism and predictions of vandalism. Branston Water Park, another of our long-term sites is always a pleasure to revisit and work on and hedgelaying, coppicing reed bed work kept work varied. With the reintroduction of grazing on the Trent Washlands in Burton, we have been carrying out a lot of work within the old Upper Mills area of the Washlands and this site is now

becoming increasingly popular with the public and attracting more wildlife and it was the inspiration for our big project of the year 'Reap What You Sow'. This involved a successful joint bid with ECVS for a Veolia grant, enabling us to install 6 interpretation boards explaining the unusual history of the site and involved the planting of approx. 100 Black Poplar trees and a similar number of mixed fruit trees, forming welcoming features at the site entrances and creating a living map of all the old watercourse that have now disappeared.

The Paget orchard project promises to be a major asset to local wildlife and people and will hopefully encourage more of the next generation to take an interest in the natural world. Again I did not have proper numbers of volunteers who helped the 800+ pupils to plant the orchard, over 2 weeks.

BCV continue to excel at sourcing materials locally, by recycling arisings as stakes, binders and withies etc. for different tasks and recycling fence posts and rails and even tools.

The genuine welcome we received at Broome Farm in Herefordshire (including their award winning cider and perry) showed how much the group is liked as well as valued.

Awards

Following BCV's success as regional winners in the BTCV Green Hero Awards last year, we won the 'Best Established Volunteer Team' at the ECVS Star Volunteer Awards and the Burton Civic Society commended the 150metre+ hedgelaying project at Upper Mills Farm, highly commended the Paget Orchard project in which we had a major involvement and awarded BCV their highest environmental accolade, the Olga Lloyd Award for 'Environmental improvements and raising public interest in conservation.

Socials

We have continued the very enjoyable trips to the Globe Theatre in London plus seeing other theatre companies like Oddsocks at local venues.

The camping/walking holiday from Monyash to Ilkley was hard work, but we were rewarded with some amazing wildlife sights, including two young badgers playing around our feet! Little Shaun (not so little now) was, as always great company.

The well organised evening meals at a variety of venues have again proved to be popular and long may they continue.

It is again difficult to categorise the hedgelaying at Broome Farm, whether work or play, but everyone had a brilliant weekend camping and have enhance BCV's reputation even further afield.

We also provided a number of the models for a second One World Week Fairtrade Fashion show in Burton and this also gave us chance to publicise our new Fairtrade Organic hoodies and polo shirts with the BCV logo.

Training

We continued to pass on skills vital for the emerging woods of the National Forest, like 'new wood' management, fruit tree pruning, formative pruning and the group also provided hands on training for many other volunteers with hedgelaying, willow weaving, coppice and woodland work days. Lynn and I gave a number of talks and guided walks to a number of groups and public events.

The Government focus on volunteering enabled us to access funding to put 13 volunteers through their First Aid training.

We also learned how to build Tern rafts and how to move a herd of Hereford cattle, so a very interesting year.

Summary

We have continued to work on some old favourite sites and observed the effects of our work at places like, like Branston Water Park, Kingfisher Trail, Monks Walk etc. whilst adding new ones like Upper Mills farm and Tower Woods.

It has been a fruitful year, continuing to help East Staffordshire Borough Council to plant fruit trees as a welcome onto parks and open spaces, maintaining previous plantings on areas like the Kingfisher Trail, pruning neglected fruit trees at Tower Wood, completing the Paget orchard and laying a Hazel hedge on a Cider farm. All this has enabled us to improve our Wassailing skills as well. The ESCVS and Civic Society Awards recognise the value and genuine cost effectiveness of employing a committed and experienced group like BCV and also the high quality of the groups work. With these advantages am sure, that the group is well placed to ride out the recession.

So thank you to everyone who has taken part in the group, making Burton Conservation Volunteers such a happy team and a successful organisation.

Lawrence Oates Chair and Project Officer 6-6-2012.

Looking forward to a successful 2012

