



Newsletter

Bracknell Conservation Volunteers

Newsletter No. 29

21 June 2017

What we've been doing

20 June 2017

Lily Hill Park (Starch Copse)

Leader: Jon Munday

BFC ranger: John Morris

One group demolished a boardwalk, saving as many treads as possible for reuse and removing nails. Backfilling was done with material provided by the rangers. Other volunteers removed vegetation (mostly brambles and some *Rhododendron ponticum*) from around a ditch by the path. Cleared material was piled ready for removal by rangers. The weather was hot, sunny and humid. Eleven volunteers attended.

Previous visits

We last visited Starch Copse on 18 April 2017. The task was to continue clearing mostly brambles, holly and rowan to open up specimen rhododendrons.

Lily Hill Park

Lily Hill Park covers 56 acres. The site offers a wide range of habitats for wildlife including wildflower meadows, ornamental woodland and ancient woodland. The collection of specimen *Rhododendron* varieties is of historical importance, and has been largely untouched since 1922.

Lily Hill Park is an important wildlife corridor with links to neighbouring woodlands at Scott's Hill and Clinton's Hill.

See <http://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/lily-hill-park-leaflet.pdf>

Coming up next

27 June 2017

Peacock Meadows

Ragwort pulling and other tasks. Park at Swift Fields.

Ragwort - the background

Our task next Tuesday 27 June at Peacock Meadow is to remove ragwort. We have done this task before, since the rangers take a hay cut from Peacock Meadow to sell, and hay including ragwort is impossible (and may be illegal) to sell.

Ragwort (*Senecio jacobaea* or *Jacobaea vulgaris*) is a common wild flower in the daisy family (*Asteraceae*). It has dark green, divided leaves and yellow daisy-like flowers.

There are several other related species of ragwort; the most common is the Oxford ragwort (*Senecio squalidus*) which originally grew on Mount Etna and then escaped from the Oxford Botanic Garden in the 19th century. None of the other species of ragwort are significant sources of toxicity.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jacobaea_vulgaris

Ragwort is poisonous to livestock, especially horses, causing irreversible liver damage. There is some controversy about whether or not ragwort is a significant problem. Horses do not eat fresh ragwort in significant quantities because it is bitter and unpalatable. Dried ragwort is thought to be more dangerous if mixed with other plants in hay. It is not clear how many proven cases of toxicity from ragwort there have been, and it is possible that the dangers have been exaggerated by sensationalist press reports. From the conservation point of view dealing with ragwort is problematic, because it is a very valuable food plant for the cinnabar moth (*Tyria jacobaeae*) and many other insects:

<http://butterfly-conservation.org/11908-1319/cinnabar.html>

The ragwort controversy is discussed at:

https://www.foe.co.uk/blog/ragwort-poisonous-ragwort-mythbuster?gclid=EAIaIQobChMIInPaN6J_R1AIVhantCh1bSArQEAAAYASAAEgJ4d_D_BwE

Danger to horses:

<http://www.bhs.org.uk/welfare-and-care/ragwort-toolkit-country-selection/toolkit-dealing-with-ragwort-england>

What's On

Bracknell Forest Parks and Countryside

Himalayan balsam pulling at Garth Pond

Saturday 1 July

13:00 – 15:00

Meet at Garth Pond entrance, opposite Totale Rise, Bracknell RG42 2PW

Himalayan balsam pulling at Horseshoe Lake

Sunday 2 July and Saturday 8 July

13:00 – 15:00

Meet at Horseshoe Lake car park, off Mill Lane, Sandhurst, GU47 8JW

All Parks and Countryside events up to October 2017 are listed at:

<http://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/pc-events-prog-may-to-oct-2017.pdf>

Bracknell Forest Natural History Society

Evening nightjar walk, led by RSPB

Thursday 29 June (no further details available as yet), see website for further information:

<http://www.bfnathistsoc.org.uk/events.html>

Berkshire Conservation Volunteers

Invasive species control at Ambarrow Court

Sunday 25 June

Meet on site at 10:15, park in car park at grid reference SU825626.

See list of events at:

<http://www.berkshire-conservation-volunteers.org.uk/>

Contact Bracknell Conservation Volunteers

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