

Nature Report AGM 2024

First the good news! Since our last Nature Report, we have installed the 5 bat boxes constructed and donated by Howard Williams. The Merseyside Bat Group will help us to monitor whether or not the, mainly pipistrelle, bats which hunt for insects on the Dales, find them a satisfactory haven for winter roosting. The vast amount of building work in our immediate local area, often preceded by the demolition of an older house, has affected many long established bat roosts.

Other good news, already mention by Neil in his Chairman's summary, is that with the support of Councillor Graham Davies, we have been able make progress on the Dog Fouling issue by presenting our petition to WBC. A plan of action has been agreed whereby Heswall Dales will become a pilot for Wirral's 12 Sites of Scientific Interest to enhance public awareness of the immense harm posed to the natural environment by uncollected dog waste. Look out for the new signs soon!

It is customary to include in the nature report lovely photos of the plants, fungi, insects, birds, amphibians to be found on our precious site and the back catalogue of our Newsletters and Annual Reports is available at www.heswalldalesfriends.co.uk. Better still, come and look for yourself and let us know what you see!

The recent extensive clearance of Birch and European Gorse by the ranger team and our trusty volunteers is slowly leading to the re-establishment of heather and bilberry but also other nutrient poor plants such as sorrel. Our rangers continue to monitor the vegetation as it evolves. Unfortunately these areas are now more accessible to dogs straying from the footpaths so the new plant growth is exposed to the damaging effects of dog urine.

Firmly in the "bad news" section is the vexed issue of cycling. During our wet winter it was always possible to spot bicycle tyre tracks in the mud and many of our valley slopes are bare of vegetation as a result. Notices which point out that it is an offence against the Countryside Act to cycle in a S.S.S.I. have been vandalised.

The weekly volunteer litter pick continues to amass an assortment of empty drinks containers (half bottles of vodka being curiously prevalent!), snack wrappers (usually bearing a Tesco logo), empty dog poo bags, soiled tissues and a myriad of other detritus.

So the battle to give nature a helping hand against the continuing onslaught from thoughtless humanity continues.

Catriona Irving

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