

Dragonflyer



THE NOAK BRIDGE NATURE RESERVE SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

March 2002

THE SOCIETY AND RESERVE MOVE ON

Things are looking up now, and that is not only the new year's growth. The new access paths are settling down and are looking good. The path to the left at the junction, the 'Jubilee Trail', is completely mud free. The path to the right at the junction, the 'Chequers', is showing more grass growth as the weather warms up and will eventually have a nice covering of grass which will make walking, for us and the animals, much more comfortable.

By now you will have gathered that we now have some names for various areas of the reserve. This is to enable all of us to identify any part of the reserve at any time. Attached is a plan of the reserve with all places named. So, those of us that enter from Eastfield Road are walking down 'Plotlands Way' with the first pond immediately on the left being 'Rosebay Pond'. The next pond on the right is 'Willow Pond'. Now you have the idea. In time we will all know the names off by heart.

Your committee decided upon the names after a very long and interesting discussion. Obviously your comments on the names will be very welcome. Local historical names of the area have been saved, hopefully for ever. Most of the names have local connotations, with 'Puckles Pond' named after a farm which used to be not far away in Wash Road, about where The Lodge now stands. Kimberley Copse is named after Kimberley Road, which, as a part of the 'plotlands' ran from Wash Road through what is now Kimberley Drive, and up to the Southend Road. (A127) Kimberley Road was still there and in use by the residents is as recently as the 1960's.

Ron Francis, Chair

EVENTS FOR YOUR CALENDAR

Basildon Countryside Services Events

Sunday, 23 June 2002.

Open Day 2002.

Noak Bridge Nature Reserve Society will host an Open Day in the reserve.

Sunday, 21 July 2002.

10:00 a.m – 12:00 noon

Dragonflies and Damselflies

Noak Bridge Nature Reserve

Thursday, 11 July 2002

Annual General Meeting



The improvements to the reserve have been completed and we look forward to celebrating Open Day on Sunday, 23 June. At that time, we also hope to have installed a new notice board and a pond-dipping jetty! The easy access barriers were installed by Basildon Countryside Services, not the Basildon Group, as previously stated.



Name That Pond, etc! Your committee has reached a consensus on the naming of specific areas of the reserve. We hope you will like the ones we chose from the suggestions offered by our members. Some of the names have a historical background and some just sound right! A **Map** with all the details is attached to this newsletter.



Information Board. We have been successful in obtaining a grant of £119 from B&Q under their Better Neighbour Grant programme for the materials required to construct the board. Barry Ballard from the Motorboat Museum has constructed the board and it will be installed by Basildon Countryside Services and Society members.



Pond-dipping Jetty. We recently applied to Visteon, Basildon for a grant to cover the cost of materials (about £2,000) to construct a pond-dipping jetty on Puckles Pond (see Map attached to this newsletter!) We understand our bid was successful and are waiting for details of a formal presentation of the award. Basildon Countryside Services will construct the jetty, assisted by members of our Society.



Memberships. New members required! If you know anyone who would like to join our Society, please call one of the officers for information. Jan Francis, Membership Secretary usually carries membership forms on her weekend walks in the reserve! Membership subscriptions for 2002 are due after 1 June 2002. Jan will be pleased to receive them at the Annual General Meeting in July.



Open Day. Sunday, 23 June – 12 noon – 4:00 p.m

The committee is planning a fun day for all members and visitors. Events will include pond-dipping and guided walks. Refreshments will be available and other local reserves will be represented. Some of the events planned are demonstrations of country crafts and a bird and ferret exhibition. The event will be advertised in the press and posters will be displayed in the reserve and local shops. **Volunteers** would be greatly appreciated on the day!



Constitution. The Committee will present an amendment to the constitution to members at the Annual General Meeting in July, allowing officers to continue serving after three years, if there are no other nominations for the office, and the holder is willing to stand again. The amendment will be attached to the agenda for the Annual General Meeting and sent to all members.



Work Parties are now scheduled for Wednesday afternoons. Look out for new dates in the shops and on the community notice boards and at the reserve entrances..



Road Signs. Our perseverance has been rewarded! Basildon Council have put up the Nature Reserve sign at Eastfield Road.



Annual General Meeting

All members are invited to attend the third Annual General Meeting of The Noak Bridge Nature Reserve Society on Thursday, 11 July 7:30 p.m at Kenilworth Place. The items purchased for the Society with the grant received from the Community Champions Fund will be displayed and a full accounting will be available. Committee members will be elected for the coming year, so if you would like to serve or would like to nominate another member to serve (with their permission, of course) please forward your/their name to Janet Bircham, Secretary, at 42 Crouch Street or do so at the meeting.

Current Officers are:

Ron Francis, Chair;	Ralph Chapman, Treasurer	Janet Bircham, Secretary
Tel. 531152	Tel. 531333	526344
Jan Francis, Membership Secretary		Weed, Communicator
Tel. 531152		Tel. 289577
Committee Members: Lesley Zanco;	Yvonne Sannister;	Laetitia Lewis

Wildlife and Countryside of Basildon District

Will Farmer, Countryside Officer for Basildon District Council gave his evening talk to the Norsey Wood Society on 30 October 2001, providing a fascinating contrast between the good things and the bad things affecting natural life in the South East of England. In a wide-ranging coverage of almost every aspect of his subject he compared the region's nature reserves to islands in a desert.

Perhaps the worst feature of the modern scene, he said, is the way in which farmers have found it necessary to remove hedgerows in order to improve the efficiency of food production. This has taken away not only valuable nesting sites but also plants that provide nectar for a wide variety of insects. Dormice (*Muscardinus avellanarius*) have been badly affected by the loss of hedgerows too, because they need large areas of land on which to thrive, and the hedgerows serve as 'corridors' allowing them to roam from one woodland to another.

Will Farmer spoke at some length about the way in which some bird species are dwindling in numbers because their sources of natural food are no longer available. In the past twenty-five years, for example, the Yellowhammer (*Emberiza citrinella*) has suffered a 50% decline. Mr Farmer stressed the need for people to put out food for birds in the winter.

Bumble bees are struggling to survive, and a worrying number of other species are in serious decline. In fact, for every wild flower on the danger list there are ten species of insects at risk. For ground-nesting birds the traditional 'seasons' have changed as farmers adopt different crop-planting schedules. Antibiotics in animal feedstuffs have killed off 'bugs' in the dung that is the main food source for the Hornet Robber Fly (*Asilus crabroniformis*). The habitats of Barn Owls (*Tyto alba*) have been reduced by changes to farm buildings, and their food supplies have been drastically reduced because of the ways in which populations of small mammals have been affected by changes in habitat. The drainage of wet areas has had serious effects on the feeding and roosting habits of wading birds.

However, it is not always the farmers who are responsible for the depredations. Local authorities change the course of streams and thereby upset the habitat and feeding grounds of swimming and wading birds. (This could get worse if major drainage schemes are introduced to counter the increased risk of floods due to global warming). Birds get tangled in plastic lines left by anglers on river banks and in bushes. Gardeners use slug pellets and the poison finds its way into the food chain of the Song Thrush (*Turdus philomelos*). Some gardeners have been planting the Spanish version of the Bluebell (*Endymion non-scriptus*) in their gardens; it escapes into surrounding woodlands and interbreeds with the indigenous variety. Squirrels (*Sciurus calolinensis*) strip Hazel trees (*corylus avellana*) before the seeds have had a chance to germinate.

On the positive side, badgers are thriving as a result of favourable legislation. In the middle of Little Burstead golf course there is a flourishing natural pond. Laindon Common is home to fifty varieties of fungus, at Wat Tyler Park the Hawthorn thicket houses a tremendous number of insects, and the creeks and ponds there are being extended to provide better conditions for wading birds. Abandoned industrial sites in the greater Basildon region are places where insects, small mammals and rare plants can thrive, undisturbed by people and domestic animals.

Among the many slides of country scenes, birds, animals and flowers was the Wood Anemone (*Nemorosa*). It was commented that at least one young visitor to Norsey Wood had referred to this plant as the Wooden Enemy!

With grateful acknowledgement to Basildon District Council Countryside Services and the Norsey Wood Society.