



RICHMOND BIODIVERSITY GROUP SPRING 2005 NEWSLETTER



Welcome to another exciting edition of the Richmond Biodiversity Group Newsletter and yet again a lot of great work has been taking place throughout the borough and positive action is underway to protect and enhance many of the rare and important species that exist within Richmond.

Launch of Richmond's Local Biodiversity Action Plan

This spring sees the long awaited launch of Richmond's Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP). The BAP will consist of 8 Species Action Plans (SAP's) and 4 Habitat Action Plans (HAP's) in the first round. The official launch will be taking place at the London Wetland Centre (date to be confirmed) and I would like to take this opportunity to pass on my gratitude and many thanks to all those who have contributed to the LBAP over the years, helping to make it a reality.

Charlotte Williams (Chair of Richmond Biodiversity Group)



Richmond Schools Wildlife Garden Competition

Local school children have been going wild for conservation in the Richmond Schools wildlife garden competition. The competition has proved to be a great success, with over 700 entries from 13 different primary schools within the borough. The younger children were asked to draw their favourite animal, plant or local green space, and for the older children, the challenge was to design their ideal garden for wildlife.

A panel of judges selected individual winners for each age group, whose schools will each win a wildlife garden makeover. Richmond BTCV will be carrying out the transformation, in partnership with the school children, their parents and the teachers. Orleans House Gallery in Twickenham, is exhibiting a selection of the entries, including the 2 winners. Contact the gallery on 020 8831 6000 for directions and opening times.

This project was co-ordinated by Richmond Council's Parks & Open Spaces team as part of the EU LIFE funded SUN initiative. To find out more about the SUN project, and how to join in with some of the practical projects, contact **Paul Clay (SUN Project Officer) on: 020 8831 6115.**



Wildflower Meadows and Composting Green Waste at Archdeacon Cambridge's CE Primary School

North London River Restoration Project

The Friends of the River Crane Environment (FORCE) has recently submitted proposals for river improvements along the length of the River Crane in the borough to the North London River Restoration Project, which is managed by the Environment Agency and due for launch in April of this year. The Council has already included river improvements, such as the removal of concrete banks and replacement with more natural channels as one of its aspirations in the Crane Planning Guidance. Inclusion in this project will be a major step towards attracting finance sources for large-scale improvements to the river.

By Rob Gray (Chair of LA21 and FORCE)

New pair of eyes for wildlife in Kew *By Diana Hutchings (Kew Society)*

The amenity group, the Kew Society now has a sub-section to watch out for the local environment. This involves not only protecting green areas from development, but also implementing action plans along with Richmond Council (Charlotte Williams) and Richmond BTCV (Vicki Felgate). Our wildlife is quite varied as we have river banks with damp places, home to the two lipped door snail (*Balea biplicata*), vestiges of woodland edge where we have Ivy Broomrape, small plots which used to be market gardens and orchards

like Pensford Fields, where there are very successful Stag Beetle Loggeries. On one side there is Kew Royal Botanic Gardens and on the other two cemeteries nicely bordered by the River Thames.



Thames or Two-lipped Door Snail, *Balea biplicata*

Broad-leaved Woodland HAP



Do you like going for walks in woodlands or are you interested in many of the species that woodlands support? If so and you would like to get involved in writing Richmond's Broad-leaved Woodland Habitat Action Plan, which will help conserve and enhance the many woodlands within this borough, then please contact Charlotte Williams on: 0208 831 6125 or E-mail: C.Williams2@richmond.gov.uk

Duck spotting on the River Crane *By Keith Martin*



Moorhen



Kingfisher



Grey Wagtail

Members of Friends of the River Crane Environment (FORCE) have organised a team to contribute to the British Trust for Ornithology's Waterways Bird Survey, starting this spring. The three-kilometre stretch of waterway from Twickenham Stadium (Duke of Northumberland's River) to Crane Park Island Nature Reserve (River Crane) will be walked nine times between mid-March and mid-July, with observers recording the presence of bird species associated with riverine environments such as Little Grebe, Moorhen, Kingfisher and Grey Wagtail on premarked maps.

The WBS has been running since 1974 and aims to provide an annual index of population levels of several species that are not covered well by the Breeding Bird Survey (Common Bird Census). As the WBS only provides valuable data when a fixed stretch of river is surveyed on an annual basis it will be important to continue this survey work in subsequent years. Anyone interested in helping out on the River Crane survey should contact **Keith Martin on: 0208 755 2091 or e-mail: borsuk@clara.co.uk**

National Nest Box Week (February 14th – 21st 2005)

National Nest Box Week is launched every year on St. Valentine's Day (February 14th) and is organised by the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO). This year the London Borough of Richmond-upon-Thames as part of the SUN initiative held a 'Build a Bird Box day' at the White House Community Centre in Hampton. The aim was to encourage as many people as possible to put up nest boxes to provide places for birds to breed, nest and feed. Charlotte Williams said: "Building a bird box is very easy and all the family can join in. You can take your finished box home with you and put it up in time for the bird-nesting season, which starts mid-February".



Photographs opposite show children and parents building a bird box at White House Community Centre in Hampton

A good year for the Friends of Barnes Common *By Mike Hildesley (Friends of Barnes Common)*

The Friends of Barnes Common (FOBC) aim to preserve the Common as a common for future generations to avoid its becoming either degenerated or overly manicured and to seek to balance the enormous

pressures placed on such open spaces through sound management practices. In a sense they are most successful when their work goes unnoticed.

Works undertaken over the past year include; protecting the acid grassland from encroaching scrub, opening up the Beverley brook-side and the old tadpole pond, cutting back excess bracken and bramble (and knotweed), as well as beating back the boundaries of the cricket pitches, keeping the informal and formal pathways open, enhancing the access to and the glades within the Old Cemetery and restoring one of the old rustic benches near Mill Hill.

On March 13th this year, Friends of Barnes Common in conjunction with widespread help from the local Scout group and the Barnes Community Association (BCA) had another successful 'Clean Up Barnes Common' day. If you would like to join the FOBC for one of their regular workdays please contact **Mike Hildesley on: 0208 876 0321.**

Strange plant spotted in Kew - Ivy broomrape (*Orobanche hederæ*) By Diana Hutchings (Kew Society)



Observations of a strange purple-brown coloured plant (see photo opposite) on the

road leading to the towpath at the back of the National Archives raised enough interest to contact London Wildlife Trust. At first it was thought to be toothwort, but the Trust sent samples to the Natural History Museum and it was established that the plant was Ivy Broomrape (*Orobanche hederæ*) or Devil's root, a parasitic plant living off the roots of ivy (*Hedera helix*). The plant flowers in June and dries out so the stalks can still be seen

when the next year's crop comes up. The National Archives have even more broomrape in their garden, and luckily it was pointed out to them that they have a plant of conservation value, before they tidied up the flowerbed. Its status is lower risk or nationally scarce and it is actually very difficult to get rid of because the seeds last in the soil for several years.

Bat Boxes – Working in Partnership with Richmond's Youth Offending Team – By Richmond Youth Offending Team

Youngsters working with the Council's Youth Offending Team are building bat and bird nesting boxes to be installed in parks and conservations areas across the borough. There are currently 14 young people involved in the Youth Court reparation programme, making nesting boxes as part of their rehabilitation. Cllr Jane Boulton, Richmond Council's Cabinet Member for Social Services and Housing said:

"This programme is vital part of their rehabilitation and it makes an important contribution to the local environment. By participating in a positive activity such as this, young people who might not otherwise be spending their time productively will learn valuable skills that hopefully will help them realise their potential. "The young people build the nesting boxes from scratch. They are taught various skills including wood treatment, measurement, correct handling of tools and health and safety.

The boxes will be placed in various parks around the borough to encourage breeding of birds and bats." These workshops are part of a programme of activities aimed at diverting young people from criminal behaviour and encouraging them to put something back into the community. This work will also contribute towards actions being worked upon in the **Local Species Action Plan for Bats.**



Mistletoe Species Action Plan

Work is underway to finalise the Mistletoe Species Action Plan so that increased efforts take place to conserve and enhance areas such as Bushy Park, Home Park and Hampton Court Palace that is host to many trees that support mistletoe. Today the British host list stands at over 200 tree species, though apple is still the favourite, with Poplar and Lime close behind. Mistletoe is one of Britain's best known, but least understood plants. Familiar to everyone at Christmas, and with a history in folklore and legend extending back to ancient times, relatively little seems to be known about this strange parasitic plant in the UK. We have just one species of mistletoe in Britain - *Viscum album*. The Latin name refers to the berries - which are white (*album*) and contain a sticky viscous fluid (*Viscum*).

Installing Stag Beetle Nest Boxes in Richmond Park



Stag Beetle © Royal Parks Website



BTCV Volunteers

Richmond's Stag Beetle SAP has now been completed and work is underway already in Richmond Park! As part of the SUN project, volunteers have been installing nest boxes in locations around Richmond Park along with John Hatto & in conjunction with Royal Holloway College, which will help to monitor the stag beetle populations within the Park. For more information or to get involved please contact Richmond Park on: 0208 948 3209



borough this spring and latest programme and get involved, please contact Richmond BTCV on: 020 8831 6150

BTCV has a number of practical conservation projects across the throughout the year, if you would like to receive a copy of their

Call to Get Involved in Adopt -a-Tree Scheme

A new initiative has been launched by Richmond Council to maintain the borough's "fantastic asset" - its trees. Residents are being urged to "adopt a tree" as part of a new scheme to ensure the community plays a full part in making the borough's trees look their best.

Residents who take part will receive information and advice on tree care and a window sticker to show their support of the scheme. The initiative was launched on, appropriately, February 14th 2005, St Valentine's Day, with the slogan "Trees Need Love Too." New trees will soon have either an "adopt me" or "I have been adopted" label on their stakes. Cabinet Member for Planning and Environment, Cllr David Marlow, said: "London would not be the same without its trees and Richmond wouldn't be its jewel in the crown. "We see our trees as a fantastic asset, making our borough the greenest and most beautiful in the capital.

"We have increased the level of investment in our trees and in tree care. Now we are looking to our communities to help us maintain the momentum."

For more information about the adopt-a-tree scheme please call the Tree Section on: 020 8891 7808 or visit the website: www.richmond.gov.uk/trees

Japanese Knotweed Eradication – Ham Lands Local Nature Reserve



As you can see from the photographs opposite, Ham Lands Local Nature Reserve has been invaded by extensive stands of Japanese Knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*). However, work is finally underway to start controlling and eradicating this invasive plant as contractors will begin spraying the plant in May this year. Local volunteers have cut down a lot of the dead stems, which will enable the contractors to spray the new shoots more effectively. Japanese Knotweed was introduced to the UK in the mid nineteenth century as an ornamental plant, but since then it has become a serious problem in a range of habitats, particularly roadsides, riverbanks and derelict land, displacing native flora and causing structural damage. In the UK, although Japanese Knotweed plants produce seeds, these are rarely viable. Therefore spread is by vegetative means, either by rhizome (root) fragments, or by crown (base of the stem) and stem segments. The majority of Japanese Knotweed has been spread by riverbank erosion, and by mans' activities, such as fly-tipping garden waste, moving contaminated soil as well as mechanical flails and mowers. It is envisaged that this site will be the first of many to be tackled on a rolling programme of works.

Above: Japanese Knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*) on Ham Lands Local Nature Reserve

Richmond Environment Network Key Strategic Organisation for the Environment & Civic Pride

Richmond Environment Network (REN) is an umbrella organisation formed by the partnership of BTCV Richmond, the Environment Trust for Richmond and Thames Landscape Strategy as the Key Strategic Organisation for the Environment and Civic Pride.

The objective is to provide a one-stop-shop for support, information and guidance to organisations, groups and individuals working in the environment and civic pride sector within the London Borough of Richmond upon-Thames (LBRuT), with the overall vision of enhancing the long-term sustainability of this sector.

The aim is to form a loose network of local environmental groups, which REN will support the activities of, to help them build capacity and increase volunteer numbers through marketing, media campaigns and offering funding advice.

Richmond Environment Network currently has website and an events page giving details of forthcoming environmental, conservation and civic pride events happening locally. The event page is updated each time we are notified of a new event, giving the site users an up-to-date accurate listing of what's on. REN has recently started a new project to design and implement a new all singing all dancing website, which will greatly aid the network, and the groups it supports.

For more information, please contact **Colin Cooper at BTCV Richmond, Sheen Lane Centre, 74 Sheen Lane, East Sheen. SW14 8LP, Tel: 020 8831 6150 Fax: 020 8831 6142 E-mail: c.cooper@btcv.org.uk Web: www.richenvironmentnet.org.uk**

Good News for Farmers and Skylarks (<http://www.defra.gov.uk/news/issues/2004/bio06a.asp>)

It has shown that skylarks can thrive on British farmland without farmers losing out. The skylark is one of 40 globally threatened red-listed species. Its population has dropped by more than 50 per cent in 25 years. In England, skylark numbers are currently falling by one per cent (11,500 birds) every year. The decline is blamed on the intensive farming practices encouraged by the Common Agricultural Policy, before its reform last year.

Results of a two-year trial show that farm yields remain the same when small areas of cereal fields are left unsown or 'undrilled', despite an increase in weeds and seeds in those areas. The breeding success of skylarks improved by an average of 49 per cent in cereal fields with undrilled patches. If undrilled patches were adopted across the UK, experts say the 52 per cent decline of skylarks since 1970 could be reversed.

Skylarks thrive on undrilled patches because of the proliferation of food (insects) and because they can see any prey. Such patches are one of the options likely to be included in the new Entry Level Stewardship Scheme, to be launched nationally in 2005. This scheme aims to address countrywide environmental issues, including the decline in farmland birds, by encouraging farmers to deliver simple, effective management options. Farmers who join the scheme will receive a payment of £30 per ha across the whole farm.

Environment Minister Elliot Morley said: "Protecting biodiversity is an essential part of sustainable agriculture and an important objective for DEFRA. Everyone wins if farmers use these patches - not only do they provide habitats and feeding grounds for skylarks, but they could also help fulfil the requirements of the new Entry Level Stewardship Scheme. I hope farmers across the country will make the most of these patches so skylarks will once again become a common sight on British farmland."



Skylark © RSPB images

If you would like to be involved in a sub-group to help write, implement and develop a **Local Species Action Plan for Skylarks**, please contact Charlotte via any of the details below.

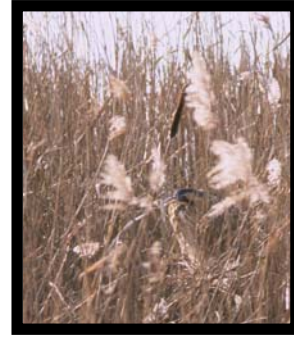
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As 2005 is Year of the Volunteer, I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone for all their time, effort and hard work in helping to progress and implement Richmond's Biodiversity Action Plan and to all of those that actively manage and maintain conservation sites within the borough. *Charlotte Williams*



Reedbeds and Bittern © Mike Waite

Reedbed Habitat Action Plan

I am happy to inform everyone we now have a Habitat Action Plan for Reedbeds, thanks to Richard Bullock from London Wetlands Centre. With the success of installing floating reedbeds on Leg O'Mutton reservoir last year, we hope to be creating yet another wetland habitat/reedbeds on the edge of Barnes Common adjacent to Beverley Brook this year and an application for Land Drainage Consent is currently with the Environment Agency. Any work that is taking place with the management and enhancement of Reedbeds will directly relate to actions within this HAP, so if you are interested in reedbeds and the many species they support such as water voles, bitterns, reed warblers as well as the array of invertebrates and amphibians and would like to get further involved in this work, please contact Charlotte via any of the details below.

Dates for your diaries.....

Monitoring Songthrush Territories on Ham Lands Local Nature Reserve

International Dawn Chorus Day on May 1st International Dawn Chorus Day, is an annual celebration of the world's oldest wake-up call – the dawn chorus – and the beauty of bird song. The day is now truly an International event, celebrated as far away as France, Italy, Pakistan, South Africa and New Zealand. The dawn chorus occurs because as winter retreats, male songbirds sing to attract potential females, protect their territory and to warn off other males. However, as soon as it is light enough to look for food, the dawn chorus comes to a close which is why you have to be an 'early bird' to hear it - that means as early as 4am!

On Thursday May 19th 2005 at 6:30pm Alison Fure (Ham Lands Honorary Ranger) will be leading a walk over Ham Lands Local Nature Reserve to highlight the calls of songthrushes as well as identify where all the territories are, so if you are interested in finding out more and would like to get involved in monitoring these species, please come along and meet outside the Thames Young Mariners site on Riverside Drive in Ham.

National Mammal Week in June (TBC) An event organised by The Mammal Society. For further information visit <http://www.abdn.ac.uk/mammal>

Volunteers' Week 1-7th June Volunteers' Week is a national celebration of volunteers and volunteering which takes place each year. The week aims to promote innovative ways to thank, recruit and involve volunteers and raises the profile of the work of the UK's 22 million volunteers. Now in its 20th year, Volunteers' Week is a major event in the UK's volunteering calendar

LNR Week –16th – 31st July 2005

English Nature and Countryside Agency are planning another 'national LNR celebrations' this year, entitled 'Waking up to Wildlife'. The (very) broad themes these celebrations will be: To promote the importance of LNR's in improving people's health and well being; and reaching out to new audiences. In order to encourage as many events going on across the country as possible, between 16th and 31st July, there is an opportunity to access funding to support LNR events. The maximum amount that can be applied for is £500. This is available to 'Friends of' groups and managers involved in LNR's. If you are thinking of holding an 'open day' over the summer it would seem this could be a great opportunity to access some additional endorsement.

If you would like to get further involved in any of the Species or Habitat Action Plans mentioned or are interested in joining the Richmond Biodiversity Group please contact **Charlotte Williams** via any of the details below: **London Borough of Richmond-upon-Thames, Room 213, Civic Centre, 44 York Street, Twickenham, Middlesex TW1 3BZ**

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