

3 Brooks Nature Conservation Group Report on activity 2007-08

This reports on the Three Brooks Nature Conservation Group's third year of activity since its official constitution on 13 April 2005.

Workdays and events

(A full list of the year's activity is attached as an appendix.)

The group has now settled into its annual cycle of practical conservation work. We visited all three of our main woods again (although Sherbourne's Brake didn't get much of a look in) and these are now in pretty good shape, so we began to thin out some new areas of plantation which was a nice change of scene. Our now annual hedgelaying weekend was very successful and much enjoyed by all. We carried out two haycuts in our species-rich area by Webb's Wood, pulled various horrible things out of the brooks and there was another chance to get muddy in the marsh.

We continued our "educational series" with Rupert Higgins, concentrating this year on the reserve's plants, and also enjoyed a visit from Ed Drewitt, who led a Dawn Chorus walk for those brave enough to find out if there really were two six o'clocks in one day. These events are a good way to involve a wider range of people who may not want to come to our more practical sessions.

Once again we ran a stall at the community fair in June. This year's activities were pencil and badge making and the stall was completely manic! Although we spoke to a lot of people we didn't manage to convert these into additional volunteers, which is a pity, but hopefully we raised the group's profile in the town. We also had a stall the following week at the Avon Wildlife Trust's "Wild Savages" event in the meadow. Going from one extreme to the other we hardly saw anybody at this event, but we were rather upstaged by a barn owl.

Two other long-awaited milestones were achieved this year; the launch of the group's own website, and the purchase of a tool store which is now in place at the leisure centre.

Grants and awards

We were very pleased to be awarded £9820 from the Big Lottery fund Breathing Spaces grant. The funds are being used for:

- Path improvements in Savage's Wood
- Nature/orienteering trails
- Wildflower planting
- Wildlife monitoring events
- Guided walks
- Printed educational material
- Promotional material
- Tools.

Some activity such as the path improvements have to be contracted out, but others, e.g. the wildflower planting and guided walks, will involve the group – and of course we will receive ongoing benefits from the tools! Funding has to be spent by June.

We have applied to B&Q for some tools to support wildflower planting. Unfortunately they are taking a very long time to process the application. We have also applied to Bradley Stoke Town Council for tools to support stream clearing and haycutting and are waiting to hear about this. We are considering requesting annual funding from BSTC under a service level agreement and will take this forward when the Breathing Spaces work is out of the way.

The Three Brooks LNR won a “Planting Places” award from Sustainability South West. The reserve was one of ten examples of urban greenspaces in the region that are making a variety of contributions to sustainability - from supporting biodiversity and local food/energy production to improving community well-being and inclusion. John Morris and Dave Baker collected the award at a ceremony in Weston on 6th March.

Meetings

We held a general meeting in December to plan work and discuss the breathing spaces grant.

The committee met in May, September, November and January. Meetings have been dominated by the Breathing Spaces grant and the website, plus some festival planning.

Our meetings have been transformed by Andy Cole, General Manager at the Ramada Grange Hotel, who offered the group meeting rooms for free. We are very grateful to Andy as this resource has made a tremendous difference to us.

Other events

On 17 November, as part of the Engage Festival in Bradley Stoke, there was a “community tree planting event” to plant an orchard outside the school fence. As it turned out the “community” in this case was made up of half a dozen stalwart 3 Brooks members, so we now feel a certain sense of ownership!

The Green Gym led by Jenny Darwin continues to meet weekly. Sara, Dave and Rachel are our “cross-over” members and it is very useful to have this group help us prepare for or complete work, such as the hedgelaying. Paul has also had several other groups out on the reserve, including corporate team-building days.

Membership

As of 24 March 2008, we have 19 full members; this is a continuing decline from 21 last year and 25 the year before. Only 3 new members joined during the year,

(although we have very recently had several new people come along). There are a further 30 people on the mailing list.

Although most of our members are those who reliably turn up to workdays, we cannot be complacent about membership and must continue our efforts to publicise ourselves at all available opportunities! Judging by an informal check, notices in the reserve itself are still a good way of reaching people, but our listing on the Bristol Volunteers website has also created quite a lot of interest.

Concluding remarks

At the end of our third year, with the tool store finally in place and some tools actually purchased, we are beginning to be more independent and can consider running some workdays on our own. We will still be heavily dependent on our friends in BTCV for much of our activity though, especially for those trees that just refuse to fall over.

As ever, I would like to take the opportunity to thank all the people who have supported the group over the last year:

- Paul and Jenny at BTCV, for tools, expertise, tea & biscuits and patience
- John at SGC for representing our interests, finding us funding, printing our leaflets, shouting at the leisure centre and sorting us out generally
- Andrew Cole, General Manager at the Grange Hotel, for the free rooms
- Bradley Stoke Town Council, especially Lesley, for support and hosting our web page until we got our own site sorted out
- Robin for being our wonderful Webmaster
- And of course everyone who comes out to our workdays and makes it all happen – it would all be pointless without you!

Looking forward to another year of conservation in Bradley Stoke!

Emma Creasey, Secretary
April 2008

Appendix - Record of workdays/events 2007-08

Date	No. of volunteers	Event
2007		
7 th April	am - 13 adults, 1 child pm - 11 adults	Wildflower walks with Rupert Higgins from the Wessex Ecological Trust.
5 th May	Dawn Chorus - 15 adults Flower planting - 13 adults	Very early start for Dawn Chorus walk, 6-8 am, led by Ed Drewitt from the Bristol City Museum. 29 species identified included whitethroat, willow warbler and reed bunting. 300 native plants planted on Tump - early finish! Planted: Oxeye daisy, Lesser knapweed, Fleabane (<i>Pulicaria dysenterica</i>), Wild carrot (<i>Daucus carota</i>)
2 nd June	8 adults	Stream clearing
9 th June	5 adults	Stall at Bradley Stoke Community Fair - pencil and badge making, raising awareness
17 th June	4 adults	Stall at Avon Wildlife Trust "Wild Savages" event in the reserve
7 th July	11 adults	Haycut in grassland next to Webb's Wood
4 th August	14 adults	Continuing the haycut next to Webb's Wood and down the bank.
1 st September	10 adults	Irrigating the marsh.
6 th October	14 adults	Bramble bashing north of Savage's Wood.
3 rd November	10 adults	Coppicing/clearing in Webb's Wood.
1 st December	7 adults	Attempting to coppice/clear areas in Sherbourne's Brake but with terrible weather we had to admit defeat around 1.30
2008		
5/6 th January	Sat – 11 Sun – 10	Hedgelaying in woodland near Primrose Bridge. Site had been prepared by Green Gym so could get straight to work. Lovely job.
2 nd February	16	Tree felling in plantation next to the school fence. 4 new volunteers!
1 st March	12	Continuing tree felling.