



# A ROBERT'S REEDS JANUARY 2015 No.5

Rudolf learning about  
cousin Roe Deer at  
Wildlife Club →



- ✚ Newsletter of the Anne Carpmael Charitable Trust (ACCT), run by volunteers
- ✚ ACCT conserves our wonderful but declining local wildlife, & inspires others too
- ✚ Owns and manages Withymead Nature Reserve and Little Meadow Reserve
- ✚ Hosts Forest School, runs Wildlife Club for children, puts on events & courses

## WILDLIFE : A Robin at Withymead for Christmas!

A Robin usually accompanies *Shirley* gardening at the Monday Morning Brews Club (see Forthcoming events section).



In the prehistoric past Robins would have instead followed Wild Boar in the Wild-Wood which once covered much of

Britain - these native wild pigs grubbed up the forest floor for roots to eat and thereby disturbed insects for Robins in much the same way as gardeners do now.

On the continent Robins are shy birds of the forest & still follow wild boar. They are very territorial, aggressively chasing others away; the red breast is literally 'like a red rag to a bull'. Bulls don't have colour vision in fact, but robins really do see red - a red rag on a stick is attacked mercilessly by the resident Robin. Still, it's great to have a bright-eyed robin in the garden. Meal-worms on your bird table will encourage them - live ones are best, dried ones will do. Open-fronted nest boxes need to be hidden away between 1 & 2 metres off the ground. At Withymead these boxes were used as soon as placed deep in thick ivy on trees.

## Merry Christmas everybody!



**Christmas Volunteering and party**, Outdoor cooking, Singing and Dancing, Decorations (see Christmas tree + *Shirley's* fabulous advent wreath below left)!



**Lots and lots of people** (thank you!) expertly planted + protected 300 native plants put in to continue the long hedge along the Ridgeway National Trail - to provide food, shelter & a 'wildlife corridor' to help wildlife disperse & stay

connected to other meta-populations. Groups isolated by open ground are doomed to extinction, so everyone did their bit to keep wild things connected. We had a

great time doing it too!

**Volunteers** also decorated a Fir tree to festively grace the Ridgeway Path - it's to be planted behind the Study Centre in the New Year & will provide cosy winter roosting for passerines eventually.



**Christmas Guided Walk and Party.** Volunteers & Friends enjoyed: a guided walk to hear about new developments at Withymead Nature Reserve, each other's company, party food and a roaring fire inside. Keith's Christmas Punch was popular - see the recipe on the website 😊.

## Reintroducing the White Admiral butterfly ...

13 honeysuckle have been planted across Withymead's grounds as **Tiegan's** 'Bring back the White Admiral' project gets underway. Tiegan raised the funds for these and will nurture & monitor them to establish the best places to grow more. Native *Lonicera periclymenum* is the sole food plant of the larvae; the aim is to grow enough to sustain an introduced population in a few years' time. The task will be challenging. White Admiral caterpillars only thrive on spindly, ailing Honeysuckle growing hanging down from trees in shade, but close to sunny places too! Tiegan can do it - she's also experienced in raising caterpillars.



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**Dormouse Nut Hunt!** Join the **Oxfordshire Mammal group** and ACCT at Little Meadow Reserve on **Saturday 17th January** from 11am - 2pm to look for evidence of Hazel Dormice. These endangered mammals have once been recorded at the reserve, and it will be good to know if they are resident to inform practical management to help them. Dormice characteristically eat nuts in a certain way - come and find out how + join in this survey. **Free event, donations welcome - Booking Required please 😊**

**Kingfisher follow up** - The male (black bill - female has red on lower mandible) which started perching on a branch over the inlet cleared of tree tangles, didn't stay long. However it re-appeared when the last bit of clearance was finished. Another new perch had inadvertently been created. Kingfishers check these in their territory - it often indicates disturbance of the bed & its insects so small fish may be attracted too.



**New Work Area delineated** 😊 **Robert's** skill, effort & materials for the new fenced-off work & bonfire yard have yielded a safely separated work area + more picturesque and interesting route round the reserve for visitors.



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**'BRING BACK THE SAND MARTINS!' PROJECT** - Thanks to a generous donation from the **'Trust for Oxfordshire's Environment** we will be building artificial breeding 'banks' for Sand Martins on the river edge at Withymead in 2015. Sand Martins, closely related to House Martins & Swallows, are colonial, nesting naturally in vertical, sandy river banks. This -



habitat is rare now so Martins can be very short of suitable breeding places on arrival in March from their West African wintering grounds. We're looking forward to welcoming them back hopefully, after an 80 year gap! See the photo of Sand Martin homes at Withymead in the 1930s. A colony is a fascinating spectacle. Much research has already been done giving this exciting project a good chance of success - thanks Robert!



**Forest School Christmas Party** - Lots of interesting activities went on with outdoor cooking too and a presentation to each of the children to celebrate their achievements.



Forest School leader, Kate, congratulated everyone individually on their positive qualities and gave them a hand-made 'medal' with their own special word on it to keep - 'considerate', 'helpful', 'inventive' etc. The group had been studying literacy in the outdoors this term and had obviously thoroughly enjoyed it and found lots of inspiration in Nature.



**Wildlife Club members** have just started their Wildlife 100 Badge (they need to collect 1000 points to gain the badge, partly by completing their Wildlife 100 books →) and have been learning about Fieldfares, Redwings, Roe & Muntjac Deer, Foxes and Moles so far. They



found some amazing facts: did you know that moles have toxic saliva!



**VOLUNTEERS ☺ - Thank you to...**

...**Jo** who has volunteered to redesign and launch a new Friends Scheme for the Trust, and to **Alan** who has stepped up as a volunteer 'Volunteer Coordinator'!  
 ...**Helen** and **Janet** for volunteering as project planners for biodiversity-boosting in the local area, to **Peter** for the new whole-group set of garden tools + Study Centre tablecloths and to **Claire** for all sorts of help including party setting up / catering.

**Fair for Frogs!** - Calling all crafty people! ACCT will be at the 2015 South Stoke May Fair to promote nature conservation and fund-raise to buy native pond plants to boost the wildlife value in the Trust's new ponds. Freshwater ponds are amazing, but nationally they and the wildlife they support, have been declining for a long time. We have new, clean ponds and a good population of amphibians unusually these days, so it makes sense to provide them with the best habitat possible. Native pond plants provide food, shelter & oxygen for invertebrates on which frogs, toads & newts depend. So...could you make or paint something for us to sell next May please - all forms of art and craft very welcome ☺ Please contact us if you'd like more details.

**Feedback.** The team is enjoying producing the newsletter but please provide feedback about what you want featured within the 4 pages. Please email suggestions. THANKS ☺

**Preliminary Moth Monitoring interesting results:** Moth light trapping has been enjoyably going on at Withymead every month for two years (thanks to volunteer experts **Paul**, **Roy** and **Peter**). We have started tentative comparisons of the records but...the time period + data sets are small, moths are affected by the weather and the 'mothing' technique is not standardised so trends will take time to really emerge. Even so results are interesting and could give food for thought for reserve management - 2/3 of UK moths are decreasing quite rapidly & <1/3 are increasing so any long-term local trends becoming apparent over the next few years will need analysis in view of this. From our present records:

**Flame Shoulder Moth** → seems to have increased quite a lot - possibly due to our converting of lawns to meadow - the larvae feed on plantain, bedstraws and ragwort which have all increased.

**Scarce Footman** → despite the name is increasing nationally but we had 31 records in 2012, 1 last year and none this - 'early days and the data could be aberrant but 'one to watch'.



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**Bird Monitoring 2015** - here's wishing all birders a good start to their year's traditional list on January 1<sup>st</sup> ☺ We would very much welcome anyone who could bird-watch for an hour every quarter (or more often) at Withymead or especially at Little Meadow - it would be great to build up a picture of birds using the reserves to feed into management.



### WHAT'S HAPPENING SOON...

**Tues 30 December: 10am - 1pm** Help plant Wildlife hedge with Wallingford Green Gym

**Thurs 1<sup>st</sup> January: 9.30 - 12.30** Help plant Wildlife hedge with Sonning Common G.G

**Friday 2 January: dusk 'til late** Moth monitoring at Withymead NR

**Saturday 3 January: 10am - 1pm** ACCT's Own 1<sup>st</sup>-Saturday-in-the-month Volunteer Morning. Clearing felled trees + bonfire (refreshments provided).

**Saturday 17 January :11am -2pm** Oxfordshire Mammal Group at Little Meadow Reserve. Dormouse Nut Hunt (see page 2) **Booking required.**

**Saturday 24 January 1 hour Withymead 'Special'** from 1pm - 2pm. We'll be painting sections of Robert's picket fence for the pet memorial garden (refreshments provided)

**Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> February: 10am -1pm** Coppicing at Little Meadow. We will be working with Wallingford Green Gym- Anyone can join in for all or part of the time. We'll be having a BIG bonfire with potatoes.

**Looking Ahead - Dates for your diary and to book (BE : Booking Essential )**

**Saturday 14 February: 10am - 12 noon** 'Tracks, trails & signs' event. **BE**

**Saturday 14 March: 7- 9pm** 'Looking Back, Looking Ahead' Slide-show presentation **BE**

**Saturday 25 April 10am - 12 noon** Bird Song ID Talk & Walk with Mike Rogers **BE**

**Monday 4 May** South Stoke May Fair ACCT 'Fair for Frogs' stall.

**Saturday 23 May** Invertebrate Monitoring Event with Ivan Wright ,Shotover Wildlife **BE**



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