

# The South Humber Bank Wildlife and Heritage Partnership

## Wildlife Wonders



Geoff Trinder

Bittern

### The South Humber Bank Wildlife and People Project

- Wildlife Wonders
- Taking Alkborough Flats Forward
- Waters' Edge
- Countess Close, Alkborough
- The Restoration of Countess Close
- Forthcoming Events



Geoff Trinder

Pipistrelle Bat

The previous editions of this newsletter have largely focused on what the Project involves and what the various organisations are doing in North Lincolnshire. We thought it appropriate to highlight some of the interesting wildlife seen recently and what you might see if you step outside now that spring upon us.

The new site at Alkborough Flats continues to amaze us with the numbers and variety of wildfowl and waders. There have been thousands of golden plover & lapwing roosting finding refuge from the high tides. Barn owls are often seen at dusk and a small population of roe deer also use the site. One can only wait with high expectations to see what wildlife will use the site in the breeding season.

Further downstream at Read's Island, near South Ferriby there is a healthy population of the beautiful avocet that breed there each year. If you have a good pair of binoculars or a telescope is also an excellent place to view waders at low tide

As the spring progresses and the weather improves there are more obvious signs of the unusual wildlife that we have around us. Take a walk along the Humber bank from the Waters' Edge to Far Ings and you just might see a common porpoise, grey seal or even minke whale! All these incredible animals have been seen on the River Humber. Go on a calm day to maximise your chances of seeing them.

Summer migrants such as blackcap, willow warblers and chiff chaffs can be seen or heard at all sites. Marsh harriers, bitterns and bearded tits will be setting up territories. Once feeding young, the adults can be seen most days.

The South Humber Bank is also home to a number of different species of bat including pipistrelles, daubenton's and brown-long eared. Last year a rare natterers bat roost was found at a secret location in North Lincolnshire.

One of our other rare mammals found at the Waters' Edge and Far Ings is the water vole. In spring they will be active eating vegetation on river banks. The water vole is often confused with rats but unlike rats it has a short muzzle and a hairy tail. If you walk around a reserve and hear a 'plop' in the water keep your



Geoff Trinder

Lapwing

eyes open for this furry friend.

A number of events are planned for the summer (see back page for details) so come and join us to see and learn about the wildlife wonders in North Lincolnshire.



Grey Seal

Dean Edes



Anna Moody



Sarah Pimm

## Taking Alkborough Flats Forward

Two new members of staff have been appointed to take forward the Alkborough Flats site.

The Site Manager, **Anna Moody** and the Assistant Site Manager **Sarah Pimm**, started working for North Lincolnshire Council on the 22nd January.

Anna was born and brought up in Walcot but travel, study and employment took her away from North Lincolnshire for a number of years. After completing an MSc in Environmental Management at Stirling University in September 2000, Anna worked for an environmental consultancy group monitoring the environmental impacts of fish farms. In 2001 she moved on to work for the RSPB, initially managing the Volunteer and Farmer Alliance project in Scotland. In 2003 Anna moved to Newcastle and became the RSPB's Conservation Officer for North East England. A post she held until leaving to become the Site Manager at Alkborough Flats.

Sarah is originally from Bath in Somerset. Having gained a degree in Countryside



Management from Bishop Burton College, Sarah began work in 2004 as a Ranger in London's Lee Valley Park. In this role she was responsible for helping with the day to day running of the site and delivering an education and events programme. For the last two years Sarah has worked on the Isle of Man. Firstly as a countryside warden at a bird observatory on the Calf of Man and then as a surveyor for the Manx Bird Atlas. Sarah is a keen bird watcher and is actively involved with bird ringing in the Humber area.

At 440ha (just over 1000 acres) Alkborough Flats is a huge site. Consequently there is a lot of work to do. Over the next few months the site staff will be focusing on getting to grips with the

complexities of the site, deciding on priority areas of work, implementing a monitoring programme for the site and drawing together the site management plan.

Other aspects of work will include community engagement, improving visitor access around the site, installing bird hides

and working with the tenant farmers to create new habitats for a variety species. Over time a volunteer network and an events programme will also be established.

New footpaths within the site will be created and will be opened to visitors in due course. Until then would all visitors please ensure that they only use the sign posted public footpath and do not venture off into other areas of the site where there is currently no public access. This will help ensure that the wildlife present on the site is not disturbed and that the safety of visitors is not compromised.

The site staff can be contacted on: 01724 721269 or by e-mail: [anna.moody@northlincs.gov.uk](mailto:anna.moody@northlincs.gov.uk) or [sarah.pimm@northlincs.gov.uk](mailto:sarah.pimm@northlincs.gov.uk)

## Waters' Edge

Waters' Edge is teeming with wildlife in the spring and much of it we have caught on camera.

Our technicians have placed cameras in the nesting boxes of a number of birds so that you can experience the excitement of feeding time, see the parents come and go, watch the fledglings leave the nest and all without any fear of disturbing them.

Many of our other cameras are placed about the Park to gain good coverage of the other wildlife, the bats, the water voles etc. Where the creatures to be covered are particularly shy we often have recorded footage in addition to the live cameras.



We also have cameras about the park that you can control. So that you can pan and zoom onto the water birds that you want to watch. Our Humber bridge camera (which you may also control) gives a birds' eye view of the park and adjacent river and wetlands. At the time of writing, we are installing a

new camera at the top of Spurn Point Lighthouse, with yet more wildlife for you to view in the Visitor Centre.

Best of all, when you visit us you can get out and about in the 86 acres of wildlife parkland and see it all for yourself.





## Countess Close, Alkborough

Countess Close is a scheduled ancient monument located to the south of Alkborough village. This large rectangular embanked earthwork has always been something of a puzzle to the archaeologists. One of the aims of the SHWAP Project was to solve the mystery of Countess Close and provide interpretation for the public. For the first time, modern archaeological techniques are being applied to this scheduled monument, and its secrets are being revealed.

The aerial photograph shows how Countess Close appeared until very recently – the great ditches are mostly obscured by trees, and the southern bank of the earthwork was bulldozed flat in the 1960s. The great antiquarian William Stukeley visited Alkborough in 1724 and was impressed by Countess Close. He wrote that it was

‘A Roman fortification’, and the theory of a Roman origin persisted into the 19th century. However, trenches dug in 1879 found only medieval material, so what is the true age of the monument?

The first phase of the recent investigations began in 2003 with a fieldwalking survey. The results were surprising – there was a lot of Roman pottery all along the top of the slope. Was Countess Close a Roman earthwork after all? Perhaps the late Saxon pottery was a better clue, as most of it was found within the area bounded by the earthwork.

The sure way to get more information about the monument was to dig. In 2003, two trenches were dug across the bulldozed area. The results showed that the bank and ditch was indeed a medieval construction dug in the late 12th or early 13th century. The

archaeologists also found a causeway supported by stone walls dating from the late 13th century at the southern entrance to the enclosure. It now seems clear that the earthwork was a large and impressive dry moat, which probably enclosed a manor house.

In June 2006, in a bid to find out more, SHWAP volunteers joined Humber Field Archaeology to dig trenches inside the area of the enclosure and across the surviving ditches. The results confirm that the bank and ditch were dug in the medieval period, although much of the medieval occupation inside the enclosure has been ploughed away in the last 40 years. The earliest remains found are Roman, part of an extended settlement which existed 1,000 years before the earthwork was built. Stukeley would be pleased!



## The Restoration of Countess Close

The bulldozing of the southern bank in the 1960s is a now infamous event much regretted in the village; only the north bank survived to the original height. SHWAP aimed to reinstate the bank around Countess Close by digging out the spoil from the ditch and bringing up material from the Flats to form the bank. In

October 2006 a group of local farmers used their tractors to transport some 1300 tonnes of clay up to the site and the archaeologists guided the reconstruction. The newly constructed bank is about 1.5m high and contains upto 700 cubic metres of clay. It only took a few days to build with modern machinery; but visit

the site today and imagine digging this with just picks and spades as the medieval labourers would have done! A public footpath runs beside the east and west sides of the monument and an information board will be placed on site in due course.



## Outreach Services

Since publication of the last newsletter the Project has become involved in working with Berkeley Infants schools in Scunthorpe. The school takes part in the extended schools programme offering its students a whole host of after school activities. We have conducted a number of workshops where the youngsters are given a short talk about a specific animal followed by an arts and crafts session. These events have proved extremely popular with all involved and are often over subscribed.

This service is available to other schools within North Lincolnshire. Please contact us if you would like further information.

## Volunteer Days

Following successful volunteer days in January and February the following dates have now been assigned for volunteers to come along to one of our sites and try their hand at some practical tasks.

Saturday 28th April

Sunday 27th May

The session runs from 11 am until 3pm and we meet at Far Ings NNR, Far Ings Road, Barton upon Humber. Please wear suitable clothing and bring a packed lunch.

If you are interested in any aspect of this project and require further information please contact Natasha Estrada (Project and Education Officer) on 01652 660445 or email [nestrashwap@googlemail.com](mailto:nestrashwap@googlemail.com)

## Forthcoming Events

Tuesday 10th April 2 – 4 pm  
Far Ings National Nature Reserve  
**Amphibian Antics**  
£2.00 per child

Thursday 12th April 2 - 4 pm  
Waters' Edge Country Park  
**Easter Treasure Hunt**  
£2.00 per child

Wednesday 18th April 10 am – 4 pm  
Far Ings National Nature Reserve  
**Freshwater Reedbed Management Course**  
£25.00 per person

Sunday 29th April, 10 am – 4 pm  
Far Ings National Nature Reserve  
**Water Vole Ecology Part One**  
£25.00 per person

Sunday 13th May, 10 am – 4 pm  
Far Ings National Nature Reserve  
**Water Vole Ecology Part Two**  
£25.00 per person

Saturday 26th – Monday 28th May,  
9 am – 5 pm  
Far Ings National Nature Reserve  
**Optics weekend**  
Free - no booking required

Sunday 27th May, 4 am start!  
Far Ings National Nature Reserve  
**Dawn Chorus**  
£5.00 including cooked breakfast

Tuesday 29th May, 10 am – 12 noon  
Far Ings National Nature Reserve  
**Bird Bonanza**  
£2.00 per child

Saturday 2nd June, 1 – 4 pm  
Far Ings National Nature Reserve  
**Open Day**  
Free

Saturday 16th June, 1 – 4 pm  
Far Ings National Nature Reserve  
**Plant Identification**  
£1.00 per person

**Advance booking is essential unless specified. Contact 01652 660445 for more information and to book a place.**



Neil Smith

## The South Humber Bank Wildlife and People Project

The Old Boathouse Waterside Road Barton upon Humber North Lincolnshire DN18 5BA  
Website: [www.lincstrust.org.uk](http://www.lincstrust.org.uk) Tel: 01652 660445