Railway Land Wildlife Trust

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Editorial:

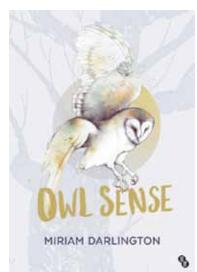
Three Cracking Events!

We welcomed chanseuse 'Fleur de Paris' on April 22nd to the Linklater. Our special thanks to ex-trustee, Jean Cash whose idea this was, and who funded our musicians. The Mettyear Room had been transformed into a french cafe with flags, bunting and red topped tables thanks to great teamwork from nine volunteers. Lo Polidoro, aka Fleur, and Nigel, her husband who plays the accordion were a huge success. At the end, in keeping with the spirit of the evening, lots of guests chipped in with clearing up. All the tickets had been sold well in advance, and those of you who missed this treat will get a chance to enjoy another performance by this talented duo on **Sunday July 15th, at the 30th Anniversary Festival.**

An annual event the **Dawn Chorus bird walk** was held on May 7th. Twenty five hardy souls met at the gate at 4.30am. We were blessed with perfect weather and were greeted by a male cuckoo!

The walk was led expertly by Thyone and Neil. We really appreciate the extra efforts that our Specialist Advisor (Ranger) makes to support the Railway Land and the RLWT. The response from the walkers was so positive, and I particularly liked the following comment...."it was lovely, a great start to the bank holiday. We are so lucky to have the reserve and people who share it with us."`Everyone came back to the Linklater for a continental breakfast prepared by four volunteers.





An illustrated talk on the recently published book 'Owl Sense' by Miriam Darlington was held on May 25th

Approximately 70 people attended an excellent and enthralling talk by Miriam, interspersed with readings from her book and backed up by some brilliant anecdotes and pictures. Once again there was plenty of help before and at the event, and family members and some RLWT supporters 'set to' at the end to help clear up. As usual we attracted new visitors to the building and received many favourable comments at the end.

These three events raised £1054.04 for the Trust thanks to the support of members and their friends, people who pick up on our advertising on social media and the volunteers who make them happen!

Could you help raise funds for us whilst having fun at the same time - by becoming a volunteer?

Miriam and I were speaking about having bees on the Railway Land, something we would like to support.

She has written in her nature notebook about **Beekind Hives**, and how bees love to be in trees, and need to be 'rewilded' so that they can regain their health and resistance to the pressure we've subjected them to. She feels this is about helping the bees, but also a little about making good some of the damage we are doing to our environment.

If you would be interested in taking this idea further - perhaps as a bee volunteer - look at Matt Somerville's website, the man behind these bee friendly hives at https://beekindhives.uk/ and speak with Helen Meade.

The Linklater Pavilion has been buzzing with activity these last few months, and we have some exciting projects and activities in the pipeline!



News from Helen Meade, RLWT Programme Coordinator

Summer Festival – Railway Land Past, Present and Future

Our festival this year celebrates the 30th anniversary of the Railway Land Wildlife Trust. We have put together a wonderfully diverse programme of activities that aim to both mark how much has been achieved in this time and also looks to the future. There will be a full programme available on the website soon, and will include timings for:

- Live music from 'Fleur de Paris', 'Lewis and Clark' and the 'Angels with Attitude' choir
- An exhibition displaying many of the photos and resources that we have used over the years, and marking key moments in the Trust's history
- Talks and guided walks, covering the history of the nature reserve, the story of the signal box, an interactive exploration of the amphibian life on the reserve, and a look to the future of the Trust
- Bug hunts and nature trails
- The opportunity to use our digital microscopes
- Wishworks puppet theatre performing a selection of their idiosyncratic fairy tales
- Food stalls, information stands and craft activities

The Signal Box will also be open and we will be gathering interest and support for bringing it back into use



Extending Learning project

Funded by the South Downs National Park Authority's Sustainable Communities fund, this project will bring some of the excellent resources we use for school visits to a wider audience. We will be developing three learning resource packs for community use focusing on the chalk aquifer; waste and particularly plastic waste; and the habitats on the reserve. We will be improving the flow tank and revitalising the chalk aquifer model.

This project will also support the development of our volunteer programme, and there will be training available for volunteers who would like to support the use of resource packs and run events that use them.

The funding is also enabling us to begin to work in the area of mental health support, which has been an aim for the Trust for some time. This part of the project will bring together people experiencing mental health

issues and the organisations that support them, explore and trial ways in which they can engage with nature, learn new skills and make use of the resources developed by the Railway Land Wildlife Trust.

This area of work is based on the huge evidence base for the benefits that being outdoors in a natural environment can bring to people's mental health (eg Natural England's 'A review of nature-based interventions for mental health care' 2016). The Linklater Pavilion and Railway Land Local Nature Reserve are ideally placed to contribute to this area of work, as their location in the town centre means that one of the most significant barriers to participation, ie transport, is relatively easily overcome.



Friends of the Railway Land Scheme

We have relaunched our membership scheme, renamed it as 'Friends of the Railway Land Wildlife Trust' and will be launching an appeal encouraging people to become Friends.

As you all know, funding is increasingly hard to come by and there is more competition for less money. We are working hard to become as self sufficient financially as we possibly can – this is indeed core to a really sustainable organisation. Our 'Friends of' scheme is an important part of this, so please do encourage friends and family to join – it is easy to sign up through the website https://www.railwaylandproject.org/friend, or if you would prefer contact Ruth Collens at admin@railwaylandproject.org using the attached forms.

Volunteers

Voluntary action has always been the lifeblood of the Railway Land Wildlife Trust, and this continues to be the case. We now have an excellent programme of volunteer training and support and are keen to hear from people who would like to be involved. We are particularly looking for people to help with fundraising, planning and helping to run events, graphic design and digital marketing. There is more information about volunteering on the website at https://www.railwaylandproject.org/volunteering or contact Helen Meade at coordinator@railwaylandproject.org

Helen Meade, RLWT Programme Coordintor

Swift Caller

Huge thanks to **Elizabeth Clifford** for sponsoring our swift caller! We now have the sound of swift chatter encouraging swifts to nest in the nesting boxes under our eaves.

Due to a shocking decline in the numbers of nesting swifts (around 50% in the past 20 years!), two swift next boxes were installed on the Linklater a few years ago. Swifts however are social nesters and are attracted where other swifts nest, so experts recommend using a 'swift calling device' to attract swifts to new nesting sites.

Thanks to the generous donation by Elizabeth Clifford we were able to purchase the equipment needed, and have had our calling device installed since mid-May.



The swifts arriving earliest in the season are experienced nesters and already know where they will be nesting, however from mid-May, first-time nesters will arrive and so experts recommend playing the calls

from then until July, when they are on the lookout for suitable nest sites to return to next year.



If your house is near an existing nesting area for swifts, please consider installing swift nest boxes; more information from https://www.swift-conservation.org

If you are on the Railway Land and spot any swifts in the area, we would love to know!

Milly Hawkins

© RSPB

What's a 4-6-8 day on the Railway Land like for school children and their teachers?

Jennifer Burrows of Southover School writes: thank you for such a happy and informative visit to the Railway Land. All the children enjoyed the visit and felt it was different to most other trips they have done. In Olly's words this was because they were 'in an open, natural environment.'

Lots of the children commented on the how peaceful it felt and how they loved being able to hear birdsong and Tom said he felt like he 'had gone back in time.' Many felt excited by the idea of revisiting their work in 2 years time and Matylda said that she was looking forward to 'seeing how her mapping skills have developed.'

All but two of the 27 children in my class had been to the Railway Land before and all said they would like to go there more. As a teacher, it was interesting to see how the children responded to being outside and to hear them try and develop language that matched their experience. Some found this idea a little difficult to engage with at first but once they started, it quickly developed.

I was interested to see how the afternoon walk would work out with 'leaders' and 'guests' as most children wanted to go on a different walk rather than repeat the one they had done in the morning and there was a little bit of disappointment about this. They hadn't realised how different it would be leading it themselves and in reverse and to my delight, Akira said it was much better than she thought it would be and she even preferred it to the first time round!

Thanks for all your care getting their maps onto the data store. I know it was a bit tricky to read some of their names and just to help with this for future groups, it might be useful for you to mention to the children that you will be working with their maps later on that day and so to write their names really clearly. They were just not really aware that this was necessary.



Southover pupils enjoying watching live a blue tit feathering its nest during one of the lunch breaks of project 468.

Thanks again for everything you are putting into this project.

Jennifer Burrows Southover School

RLWT Plastic Action school visit

In May, we piloted our education sessions supporting the Plastic Free Lewes campaign with a mixed aged group of children from Western Road School. Through a series of games and activities we explored some of the issues around the problem of plastics.



The main focus was on simple actions that the children can take, aiming to leave them inspired and empowered to be part of the solution, rather than weighed down by the size of the problem. The children cared greatly and were keen to learn more. They planned to share their knowledge back at school with the rest of their classes, with the hope of making change on a whole school level. Well done to Western Road for taking the initiative!

If you know another school that may be interested in 'Plastic Free' Education, or any other of our wide range of education sessions now on offer at the Railway Land for both primary and secondary pupils, please get in touch. education@railwaylandproject.org

Milly Hawkins, RLWT Education Officer



Holiday Club

The May half term saw our first Holiday Club at the Railway Land. We received some very positive feedback, with comments such as "loved it", "huge success" and "It's hard to find a club that they are that enthusiastic about, but you nailed it!"





So, over the four days of the club, what did we do to deserve such comments?

We ran, we hid, we swung from trees, we stalked, we explored, we played, we lit fires skilfully, and we screamed with excitement splashing in a puddle that appeared after a torrential downpour.



We saw grass snakes, toads, newts, tadpoles, huge diving beetles, water scorpions, and observed the large larvae of an alderfly eating a newt tadpole! We heard the riot of birdsong that is our woodland in spring, and our male cuckoo calling for a mate, likely eyeing up our reed warblers' nests.



We used tools and made toys from wood, and tested our model boats out on the pond (with the help of pirates!)

We conducted two real scientific surveys, the results of which have been fed back to a national database.

Two of the group, Vincent Clark and Ivar Davies-Seaton also completed their **John Muir Award** at Discovery level which, although very broad, required them to discover, explore, conserve and share their experiences of the week.

Most of all though, what I hope we did - was to lead participants a little deeper into knowing and caring about nature, and our beautiful reserve in particular, so they will become adults who will take action to protect it.

For more information about our future holiday clubs in the summer holiday and Autumn half term - 23 - 26 July, 30 July - 2 August, and 22 - 25 October please see the website or email me - Milly Hawkins - at education@railwaylandproject.org



Steady progress on the Egret's Way



Planning permission has now been granted for the Linklater to Ham Lane section of this multi-user path between Lewes and Newhaven and much work is going into securing the funding not only of this northernmost section but of the entire safe cycle route beside the West bank of the Ouse.

Work is also going on by several people in memory of the 'eco-system services' approach championed by the late Colin Tingle and my contribution has been to explore the possibility of a section of path to be referred to as 'Tingles Way' on social media which would connect the South Downs Way to the Egrets Way via Lewes and the Linklater. So far this has obtained the support of the South Downs Way Officer, Andy Gattiker, to become an official South Downs Way Link route and we are hopeful that the National Trust will also endorse this.

I am so pleased with the support given by the RLWT to the Egrets Way project and am delighted that the Linklater will be one of the venues of an Egrets Way Art Trail in Artwave 2019. There are exciting publishing plans afoot as well as a postcard event and thanks to the help of Susie M, there is now a developing Instagram page with a growing number of followers which I hope might start to include some keen photographer members. Do have a look! https://www.instagram.com/egrets-way/?hl=en

John Parry

Pre-school Activity on the Railway Land - run by 'Talking Trees'

Come to explore the magic of the seasons and natural world with your children. For children aged 2 - 5 years and their parents /carers.

Friday 10am - 11.30am in term time on Lewes Railway Land (Follow the red ribbons from the Linklater Pavilion)

Nature crafts, games, seasonal songs, stories, free play and healthy outdoor cooking over a fire!

£7 per session if you book and pay for a term £8 drop-in price

Please speak to us about concessions for low income families

It is essential to book to secure a place for your child. To book and for more information contact

Talking Trees: talkingtreesinfo@gmail.com

or

Laura Warren: thislaura@gmail.com







Pictured above are RATS members Oliver Cornish, Daisy Willats, Jemima Ainsworth, Francesco Coppola, Maxwell Swinburn, Edward Cottingham, Martha Swallow, Ethan Hadgkiss, Alice Meggison-Hill, Mia Vagdo and Louis Attwood with emergency planning officer Steven Clare (right) and Dr John Parry (left) who set up the project in 2014.

A group of students from Ringmer Academy and Priory School called the Linklater RATS (Raising Awareness of Tides and Sea levels) recently had a masterclass from East Sussex Resilience and Emergencies Partnership emergency planning officer, Steve Clare, about the specific risks to young people in times of serious flooding. Steve explained '...being able to plan for emergencies, such as flooding, with a community or family emergency plan, means that when the worst happens, young people, their families and communities are more resilient, self-sufficient and better able to respond to what has befallen them. In turn, they are far better placed to bounce back.'

Daisy Willats commented 'I had no idea that so much work and planning went into floods. I also didn't know that there are lots of things I can do to help at home. Also, I didn't realize that so many people helped with so much. I loved this exercise because it taught me lots about what I can do to help.'

Oliver Cornish said, 'it was an amazing experience with Steve because it has triggered so much thought and it has taught us about things like the SARAH Act - the 2015 Social Action, Responsibility & Heroism Act. The exercises were fun and imaginative and stimulated thought into what we could do in a flooding situation.'

Above - 'Action Now' - Below - 'The Next Generation'

University of Sussex Geography PGCE students spent an inspirational day at the Linklater with Dr John Parry on 4th May, exploring sustainability education.

As they reach the end of their intense nine month classroom training, the day brought them back to their

underpinning values and sense of purpose for coming into geography education.

Geography teachers have a particular role within schools to promote an understanding of environments and how people interface with them, including education for sustainability and climate change.

Dr Parry encouraged them to promote pupil engagement with environmental issues both in and outside the classroom. Many University of Sussex geographers go on to teach in schools across the county.

For more information about training to teach Geography at Sussex, contact Dr Robert Rosenthal r.d.rosenthal@sussex.ac.uk



Our Mission Statement

'The Railway Land Wildlife Trust inspires environmental sustainability by bringing nature to the heart of Lewes through:

- Interpreting, conserving and caring for the Railway Land Local Nature Reserve in partnership with the local authority
- Providing inclusive outdoor learning and community events
- · Running the Linklater Pavilion as a community hub
- Providing a thriving 'Friends of' membership scheme and accessible volunteering opportunities'

We are delighted that these two local organisations that use the Linklater have contributed to this newsletter, and our educational programme, events and talks are attracting new visitors. Please use the attached forms to enourage your neighbours and friends to become Friends of the RLWT. Pat Rigg

Plastic Free Lewes



Plastic Free Lewes has attracted an amazing amount of support since it formed in mid December 2017. We are very grateful to have been able to hold our regular monthly meetings at the Linklater Pavilion, this adds a consistency for a regular core of about

15 members to come regularly and an additional 15 to 25 to feel comfortable to drop in when they can or just pop in to see what we are doing. From this base we explored local, simple solution from diverse angles, in fact 8 different small groups formed and met to plan their own events. So far this seems to be working well and they all come together at the monthly meeting to report on progress and share their future plans.

The Recycling group put on a well-attended talk on a wet night in March, at the Town Hall, on the new recycling plans of LDC and Viridor. The education group are devising lesson plans and making contact with local primary & secondary schools. We supported an inspiring project with the Princes Trust students at Sussex Downs college in April.

The Drinking Water group made a grand splash with their launch of the Refill scheme at Pells pool – encouraging people to take their own refill bottle to stores who are part of the Refill scheme. You may have spotted David Attenborough, or his cut out lookalike, outside Waitrose in May drawing attention to the amount of waste plastic packaging supermarkets generate. Another group is supporting local retailers to make the best choices when it comes to disposable coffee cups and take away packaging. A group of 30 local retailers turned up to the Depot to discuss and share ideas in June.

As we go deeper, the issues are not getting any simpler because - as always - the underlying causes are complex and entrenched. Plastic is a fantastic material and 60 years ago, it cut back on the use of ivory, tortoiseshell and the poor old beetle shells in shellac. Looking at a film set in 1950s I recall how dull and drab colours in the home were before bright, light, versatile plastic came along. What we didn't realise was that the first manufactured plastic would still be with us now and for hundreds of years to come. It is a precious material but dangerous when left to break down in the environment. The fact it is cheap to produce means we need to be even more careful how it is disposed of. Recycling is far too inconsistent, we need industry standards. For compostable materials to break down we need facilities to heat materials to 50-70 degrees and biodegradable remains a challenge needing sunlight and oxygen in order to break down.

The best advice I have come across for Single Use Plastic is:

Refuse, Reduce, Re-use more and Recycle the rest

'Ouseday' - Raft Race on Sun July1st:

Come and support the Plastic Free Lewes stall at Ouseday on the riverbank outside Tesco. We have been working with the Ouseday organisers to stop plastic and eggs being thrown into the river. Our campaign, *Think Before You Throw*, encourages people to make or buy from us 'Jelly Bombs', made from Agar jelly - a plant based, biodegradable jell, that won't pollute the river – we hope!

Wildflower Lewes are getting into the swing for Summer

Mary Benjamin's Monitoring training sessions in the Grange have proved popular and we are acquiring a group of trained volunteers for the super job of getting up close and personal with wildflowers.



We use a simple method marking out a quadrat with string and skewers, and allocating a species to one of the following categories: Dominant, Abundant, Frequent, Occasional, Rare (DAFOR) . This builds up a record which will help to identify which plants are doing well.

One of our favourite spots at the moment has to be the verge on Nevill Road. We found 44 wildflower species, including a Pyramidal Orchid, plenty of Lady's Bedstraw and Red Clover and Bird's Foot Trefoil. These are important plants that support a variety of insects and butterflies.

left: Mary is one of our flora experts and we encourage our keen botanists to join in the Wildflower Lewes Group's surveys

below: A privet hawkmoth spotted resting on a telegraph pole. © Wildflower Lewes



If you would like to volunteer to monitor wildflowers, contact Lesley Healey: lesleyhealey267@btinternet.com

Jo Carter, Chairwoman of Wildflower Lewes, says:

'I know Lewes has the potential to be a real leader on this issue - if Brighton can, we can surely do it better! We are uniquely placed to make a difference to wildlife. As we are nestled in the South Downs on internationally scarce chalk grassland habitat, we have the opportunity to do something that makes a real difference to rare wildflowers, butterflies and bumblebees - and provide people in Lewes with the opportunity to enjoy the beauty of this wildlife on their doorstep'.

Our thanks to Imogen Makepeace for this update and photos. Editor.

Kim Dawson our Specialist Advisor Ranger's Report

Management / Maintenance

Repairs have been completed to the front gate, and the JMB entrance benches, with the idea to replace the benches in the longer term. We're currently looking at a gabion basket bench design, as they have the added value of providing a rocky



habitat for animals to seek refuge within. The front area and paths were cut in May, however, due to the perfect growing conditions the vegetation has shot up, and so an extra bit of work at the front entrance and along paths to try and tackle stray bramble arms was completed last week.

The BCV Volunteer group was out last month pulling thistles, nettles and ragwort from the wet meadows. Cattle are still grazing on the meadows too, and the farmer has also, as part of our agreement, 'topped' the fields.

The Meadows Minders volunteer community group, who meet with the LDC Reserves team on the first Sunday of the month at 1.30pm, have also been helping to regularly undertake management of the nature reserve. The group complete a varied array of tasks including planting, pond works, vegetation management, wildlife surveys etc. The group is very welcoming, with tasks designed to be open to all ages, abilities, backgrounds with the main joy of getting out onto the reserve and connecting with nature. **We would love extra hands – so do come along if you can. Next meeting is Sunday 1st July with Thyone.**

New Neighbourhood First Team Introduction

The Neighbourhood First team, made up of Neighbourhood Advisors, is now fully operational across the Lewes District (set up at the beginning of April 2018). The approach of having Advisors, who are based within the community and have dedicated areas, has been tried and tested successfully in Eastbourne for the last 4 or so years. The teams are there to engage with local communities, with the aim of proactively dealing with issues on the ground, such as litter, fly tipping, dog fouling, graffiti etc.

If you need to contact the Neighbourhood First team about the reserve for any reason please use the email NeighbourhoodFirstEngagement@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk in the first instance. Please find below a plan showing your local Advisors and their designated zones:



Practical Volunteer at Railway Land

1.30pm 1st Sunday of every month



Join the Meadow Minders Group to carry out a variety of practical work including habitat creation, step building, wildlife surveying and much more!

The Ranger will provide all tools and gloves. Wear old clothes and sturdy shoes.

Meet at the entrance, in front of the Linklater Pavilion building.

For more information contact: Rangers@Lewes-Eastbourne.gov.uk









Preserve your Reserve! July is a good time to see left - a cinnabar moth, centre - a damsel fly and right - one of our noisiest residents

© Steve Homewood

Programme for 2018

Details of booking & tickets for each event will be emailed each month to all who receive this on-line newsletter. **Date**Event

Sun July 8th 12-4pm Patina Moving On Exhibition 'Spread Your Wings and Fly!' Come and wonder at the

costumes and 'big builds' from this year's Patina Parade.

Sun July 15th, 11am-5pm 30 year anniversary festival!! See page 2 for details.

July 23rd - 26th Holiday Club

July 30th – Aug 2nd Holiday Club

Sun Sept 23rd 11am to 4pm. Fossil Festival. Dinomania returns to Lewes!

A day of family fun-filled activities on a theme of fossils and dinosaurs returns for the 3rd Annual Lewes Fossil Fest at the Linklater Pavilion on Sunday 23 September from 11am to 4pm. This year there will also be a guided geology walk around the town to

tie in with the festival.

https://eastbourneandleweswalkfest.org/walk/the-building-stones-of-lewes-lewes-fossil-festival-geology-walk/

Wed Oct 10th 6pm Railway Land Wildlife Trust AGM

October (date TBC) Pop up supper at the Linklater as part of Octoberfeast

Sun Oct 14th, 3pm 'Framing the Railway Land – a personal perspective', an illustrated talk by John Parry.

Oct 22nd - 25th October Holiday Club

Fri Oct 26th 10am-12.30 Half term Children's event – a hibernation themed activity morning

Sun Nov 18th 3pm Tom Walker - Pastellist - an illustrated talk

Sun Dec 2nd Tree Day at the Linklater, times TBC

Nov 24th – Dec 2nd 2018 is National Tree Week, and culminates with National Tree Dressing day on December 2nd. Join us at the Linklater to celebrate the trees on the

Railway Land and to recognise the immeasurable value trees bring to us all.

Plastic Free Lewes dates:

Wed 18 July 7.30pm-9pm Wed 15 August 7.30pm-9pm Wed 12 September 7.30pm-9pm Wed 24 October 7.30pm-9pm Wed 21 November 7.30pm-9pm Wed 12 December Christmas drinks!

to contact the Railway Land Wildlife Trust & Programme Coordinator

Helen Meade

Email: coordinator@railwaylandproject.org

Linklater Pavilion
Railway Lane, Lewes BN72FG

Tel: 01273-477101 (answerphone only)

for bookings and membership

Ruth Collens

Email: admin@railwaylandproject.org for school visits and holiday clubs

Milly Hawkins

Email: education@railwaylandproject.org
to contact Lewes District Council Specialist Advisors

Kim Dawson & Thyone Outram

Tel: 01273-471600 m 243343 07917

Kim.Dawson@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk

for access to past newsletters go to www.railwaylandproject.org and click on 'About' / Newsletters

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