

# RAILWAY LAND WILDLIFE TRUST



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[www.railwaylandproject.org](http://www.railwaylandproject.org)

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## EDITORIAL

We have had an exciting start to 2019. I received this email from Thyone, our Specialist Advisor on the 4th January: *Kim and I saw a Water Rail on the Railway Land yesterday on the opposite bank to the Heart of Reeds! It is not the first time one has been seen.* - Volunteer, Mary Benjamin said 'I'd heard about it being seen at the end of November's Bird Survey, but it was not spotted in December. I have been down to try to find it - unsuccessfully of course - it's so lovely to hear about it. Must try again! I understand they have very distinctive voices of "grunts and squeals" according to the RSPB. They were present before the H of R was established in the old reed bed, so it is good to hear they are back and at least one is still around. It is still exciting to know that these shy birds still co-exist with the people, dogs, families, nature-lovers and everyone else who uses the Railway Land together'.



Then on February 17th during the 'Exploring Water in the Chalk Landscape' afternoon event, a seal was spotted in the Ouse hunting for mullet. Our annual gathering of hundreds of exhausted thin lipped grey mullet who use the cold freshwater outlet of the Winterbourne to clean their scales of fungal infections and heal their wounds has started. The seal was captured on camera by Holly Woodford and can be seen on the RLWT facebook page. The Trust provided free interactive walks and activities for all ages looking at how the chalk landscape makes our water system remarkable, the nature of threats it faces, and how we can protect the water we all depend on.'



As 2019 gets underway we'd like to let you know about some of the events we have coming up:

**24th March 2-5pm Community Extravaganza - Relaunch of the Undercroft**

**19th May Greater Brighton Cycle Challenge Fund Raiser**

**28-31st May Half Term Holiday Club**

**9th June 2-5pm Annual Festival 'Looking Out'**

Details of these events and news of our outreach work with pre-school, primary and secondary aged children can be found in this newsletter.

Enjoy your walks on the Railway Land and look out for herons, egrets, buzzards, peregrine falcons, grey lipped mullet by the Winterbourne outflow, and the elusive water rail. We would really appreciate it if you could please keep your dogs under control and out of the water in this nesting season.

Pat Rigg, Editor

## COMMUNITY EXTRAVAGANZA and RELAUNCH OF THE UNDERCROFT 24th March 2-5pm



This will be an action packed afternoon! Over the last six months or so our Education Officer, Milly Hawkins, has been developing resource packs focusing on the habitats on the Railway Land and the water system of the chalk landscape, as well as designing our Waste Awareness Trail.



Each resource pack has had one outing so far and, having tweaked them slightly, they will all be in full swing on March 24th with walks and activities on the reserve and in the Linklater. This will be an opportunity for young and old to come and explore and find out more about the amazing natural world that we are so lucky to have right here on our doorsteps at the Railway Land.



The Undercroft has now been refloored, redecorated, cleared out, cleaned up, cleared out again, and generally revamped. This was funded primarily with a LEADER grant from Rural Development Programme, with the remainder made up using the legacy kindly left to the Trust by Alison Jolly. To mark this we will be renaming the Undercroft after her as

### **‘The Jolly Room’.**

The ribbon will be cut at 2.15pm and everyone is very welcome to come and celebrate this with us.



### TALKING TREES WOODLAND PLAYGROUP - at the Railway Land every Friday morning in term time.

Spend Friday mornings in the woods! Singing songs, making nature crafts and cooking healthy seasonal snacks over the fire, go for walks, adventures, have stories and lots of free play.

Children and adults learn about our local wildlife, how to take care of it and experience the wonders of the changing seasons together in this lovely friendly and supportive group.

Friday 1st March - Friday 5th April

10am - 11.30am

£8 drop in

Six week term - Special offer £30 - £5 per session if you book and pay for the whole term

To book and for more info contact: Laura at [talkingtreesinfo@gmail.com](mailto:talkingtreesinfo@gmail.com)

### HOLIDAY CLUBS

Our very popular holiday club will be running again from May half term – book soon to avoid disappointment! Your kids will have the opportunity to rise to our fire lighting challenge, build dens, and discover amazing creatures in our ponds. They will share wildlife adventures, listen to stories, and join in games, craft activities, and campfire cooking. Older children with us for the full 4 days will also have the opportunity to achieve the John Muir Award.



Dates for 2019 are:  
28 May - 31 May  
29 July - 1 August  
5 August - 8 August  
28 Oct - 29 Oct

You can book for either 2 days or 4 days, through the website  
<https://www.railwaylandproject.org/holiday-club>



### 'LOOKING OUT' FESTIVAL 9th June 2 – 5pm

Our annual festival is a little earlier this year and has the theme of 'Looking Out'. This has two meanings. In one sense it means looking out from Lewes and is inspired by the work on The Egret's Way and Tingle's Way – both connecting the Railway Land with the broader landscape. In another sense it refers to looking out **for** something, be it wildlife, biodiversity, resource use, or our climate. There will be refreshments, music, information stands and nature based activities on the reserve, and the Lewes printmakers will be displaying their latest project based on the Egrets Way along the river Ouse. So do please spread the word!

The highlight of the festival will be an anonymous postcard auction at 4pm where it is hoped several hundred postcards will be donated by artists and young people, of which the top 10 – 15 attracting the most money pledged during the afternoon will be auctioned on the day. Each postcard will be displayed anonymously and the artist only revealed once it is bought! This tried and tested method is a lot of fun and barter and banter will be encouraged. The Railway Land Wildlife Trust is very grateful to artist Susie Monnington who has agreed to help organise the auction to raise awareness of the Trust as well as some money.

The general theme for the postcards is looking out whether it is from Lewes, the Egrets Way between Lewes and Newhaven or the newly designated Tingles Way from Lewes to Black Cap. Anyone can enter a card measuring 5 by 5 inches and packs of blank cards will be made available for local schools as well as in the Precinct on 5th May and 2nd June and also available from the Linklater from 5th May. Initial interest is being generated through this Instagram account [https://www.instagram.com/lewes\\_looking\\_out/](https://www.instagram.com/lewes_looking_out/)

### TINGLE'S WAY

Tingle's way will be a self guided trail through Lewes, helping us discover how natural ecosystems are our life support system, delivering essential services for free.

Tingle's Way is a tribute to Colin Tingle who played a key role in heightening our awareness of how our lives are intertwined with all of life and living systems and especially how ecosystem services benefit our economy and society. He achieved this through workshops and guided Naturegain walks he led in person as part of L&OVe (Lewes and Ouse Valley Eco-nomics).

Tingle's Way is a natural progression from Colin's work inspiring us and offering us the opportunity to strengthen our connections for a more sustainable future.



**Colin Tingle 1959-2017**

Many people are helping to make Tingle's Way and it is already evolving! New branches, circuits and tangents will develop with themed stories. Join the trail where you want – there is no end point!

Get involved: [tinglesway@gmail.com](mailto:tinglesway@gmail.com)

## EGRETS WAY

### OUR STRATEGIC AIMS 1 - increase our **influence** with key stakeholders



Funding has now been secured for a new section of the Egrets Way network of safe, shared paths. This will be available to people who want to walk or cycle to the Cliffe High Street area of Lewes. The path will be an extension of the one which currently terminates at Ham Lane, and will run for nearly a kilometre, passing under the railway bridge, continuing into the Lewes Railway Land Wildlife Trust Nature Reserve and finishing at the Linklater Pavilion.

The funding for this project comprises a £75,000 LEADER grant from the Rural Development Programme for England, £88,000 from the South Downs National Park Authority, £23,000 from S106 money allocated to Lewes Town Council and donations from the Jo Holden Trust and the Egrets Way Project Trust.

The delivery of this new route will be jointly managed by a project team made up of representatives from the SDNPA, Sustrans and the Egrets Way Project. Preliminary work is underway and construction work will begin later this year. An existing path, which runs from the Linklater Pavilion through the nature reserve, is to be widened and connected to the new section of path. When completed the Egrets Way will consist of a network of multi-user paths running from Lewes to Newhaven and connecting the villages in between. Nearly half of the planned network has been built and is in use, with sections of pathway now running between Lewes and Kingston, Southease and Rodmell, and Southease and Piddinghoe.



## TRUSTEE RECRUITMENT

Could **YOU** be a Trustee for the Railway Land Wildlife Trust?

Trustees play an essential part in guiding the work of the Trust. Three of our long standing Trustees retired last year, having served the maximum time allowed, and so we are looking for new people to join the Board. We are particularly keen to recruit people with skills in conservation, fundraising and law, although we would be interested to hear from people who have other skills to offer as well.

There are currently seven Board members who meet quarterly. Each Trustee is also a member of a sub-committee, that also meet quarterly or on an ad hoc basis depending on need. Our Trustees have varied backgrounds and lifestyles – some have busy work and family lives and contribute mainly in strategic decision making and overview, while others have more time to contribute. All are equally valued.



To find out more about becoming a Trustee, contact Helen at [coordinator@railwaylandproject.org](mailto:coordinator@railwaylandproject.org)

OUR STRATEGIC AIMS 1 - increase our **influence** with key stakeholders

OUR STRATEGIC AIMS 2 - get more local people **involved** with the Trust

OUR STRATEGIC AIMS 3 - provide **inspirational** and **innovative** learning activities and events

OUR STRATEGIC AIMS 4 - improve our **infrastructure** and resources

## WORK WITH SCHOOLS - 468 Project

### OUR STRATEGIC AIMS 3 - provide **inspirational** and **innovative** learning activities and events

The 468 project is now entering its third full year. Developed by John Parry, as it becomes part of our regular programme it is delivered by Education Officer, Milly Hawkins. Below is an overview of the project

The 468 Project run by the Railway Land Wildlife Trust is an innovative and original environmental education program that meets significant and wide ranging objectives. Although it does meet National Curriculum objectives – in science, literacy and citizenship, it is also designed to increase participants' understanding of the natural world and cultivate a **sense of agency to affect change**. Its development is underpinned by a thorough understanding of education theory, deep local knowledge, and decades of experience delivering environmental education.



#### *Year 4 – piloted in 2016 and rolled out to all Lewes Primaries from 2017*

Very much a grounding and introduction, the Year 4 visit deliberately works from the children's viewpoint, allowing interpretation of the reserve through their own language, including forming their own maps. The history of the reserve as a railway marshalling yard, and the considerable community efforts that led to the building of the Linklater and to it becoming a nature reserve are all be touched on.

#### *Year 6 – piloted in 2018 by Southover and to be rolled out to all Lewes Primaries from June 2019*

Work will flow from their Year 4 maps, on which we will reflect, draw out and build on common elements, to deepen understanding and connection to place. There is a strong structure to support this:

- Gleaning of more information about what lives on the reserve, including from unique art, video and photographic resources held by the Trust.
- A specific focus on our entomologist and how he has collected data over 30 years to inform us of the life on the Reserve, and why species recording, especially of insects, is crucial at this point in time.
- The introduction of a new word *Naturegain* (in the spirit of their Yr.4 maps) to introduce the idea of **provisioning, regulating** and **cultural** services provided by the Railway Land.
- Three carousel activities on site that re-inforce the thinking behind these three services, to be held in the woodland, Heart of Reeds and the signal box.

**Group responses** to these activities will be stored photographically and will be revisited in Year 8.

#### *Year 8 – to be piloted in Jan 2021 by all Year 8 Priory classes for roll out from Jan 2022*

Any pupil who did not take part in Year 6 should be teamed up with someone who did.

Early in the Spring Term. The emphasis will be much more on **futures thinking** plus the notion of **social agency** which will complement the current Geography content in particular. There will also be the chance to meet a professional involved in environmental work in response to Gatsby benchmark 5 which states **'Every year, from the age of 11, pupils should participate in at least one meaningful encounter with an employer.'**

## RATS (Raising Awareness of Tides and Sea Levels)

The current group of Linklater RATS are working on at least two definite ideas in response to a challenge from the last group of RATS to think of ways of engaging young people in the issues around sea level rise. One group is working with designer Chris Smedley on a book mark that will go into schools and libraries in the District and the other is a series of short vox pop videos of each of the RATS talking about the thing they would save in a flood if they could only take one thing – this will go on to the Environment Agency website. Both projects will be launched at the 9th June Festival. I am extremely grateful to the voluntary help given to support the RATS. This is from Priory teacher Lawrence Quinn, teacher Catherine Cardin from Kings Academy, Ringmer, Chris Janes from the Environment Agency, and always in back-up mode Steve Green from Kings Academy, Ringmer.

John Parry

## SCHOOL OUTREACH VISITS

### OUR STRATEGIC AIMS 3 - provide **inspirational** and **innovative** learning activities and events

Milly Hawkins has also been offering outreach visits for schools in Sussex designed to support the curriculum at KS1 and KS2. After a pre-site visit to get to know the school grounds, she provides one of our hour-long curriculum focused sessions looking at either habitats, numeracy in nature or creative outdoor literacy and story making.

- Habitats - Identify and classify plants and animals by using simple keys. Look at adaptations, food chains, life stages, or reproduction. Collect data. Distinguish between living and non-living parts of a habitat.
- Maths Adventure - Making maths active, purposeful and fun! We'll measure, count, estimate, sequence and calculate our way through your school grounds, collecting data that can be taken back to the classroom.
- Hunting for Stories - Stories lurk outdoors, just waiting to be found! Creative literacy and story making session inspired by the wealth of natural elements found in any school grounds.

The visits cost £50, which is then taken off the cost of a return visit to the Railway Land. There has been some enthusiastic take up from schools in Brighton, so please help us spread the word about this great offer!

**Please spread the News!!** Let your teacher friends know - Go to our website for more details and to get in touch.

## WELLBEING IN NATURE

### OUR STRATEGIC AIMS 2 - get more local people **involved** with the Trust

We are nearing the end of the second round of our Wellbeing in Nature sessions. These sessions aim to support people who struggle with their mental health by providing a friendly, welcoming environment and the opportunity to explore how connecting with nature can improve mental wellbeing. Run by Ellie Moulton, the Wellbeing in Nature project has taken a co-design approach and participants have really led the way in shaping the format and focus of the weekly sessions. Sometimes there will be an artistic or creative activity, sometimes there will be a more conservation oriented approach, but there is never any pressure to take part.

The outcomes for participants have been excellent, with one commenting that she felt, 'Much more connected, seen, valued, heard, empowered, part of a group'. Many participants have said how welcoming, supportive and warm the sessions are, and how they have really helped them to feel less isolated. Several participants have gone on to volunteer for the Trust in a number of ways, and to come along to other events we are running.

To date the Wellbeing in Nature sessions have been funded by the South Downs National Park Authority's Sustainable Communities Fund. As this funding period comes towards its end we have been submitting applications to other funders to keep this work going. While we are hopeful that we have made a good case for the value of the project, we do not want to be dependent on external funders, especially in the current economic climate. And so, we are putting a team together for....

## THE GREATER BRIGHTON CYCLE CHALLENGE 2019!!

### OUR STRATEGIC AIMS 4 - improve our **infrastructure** and resources

Taking place on May 19th 2019, starting and finishing at Preston Park Velodrome.

The Greater Brighton Cycle challenge is a collaboration between The Living Coast, (the Brighton and Lewes Downs Biosphere), and Brighton Housing Trust. This year they have invited charities to take part and raise money for their causes, so we would like to raise as much money as we can for our Wellbeing in Nature

project. It promises to be a great event, with routes that enable people of all ages and levels of fitness to take part:

#### The Classic – 60 miles

This 60 mile route closely follows the boundary of The Living Coast. Riders will experience the beauty of the chalk cliffs, river valleys and the glorious South Downs landscape.

#### Devil's Dyke Loop – 30 miles

This 30 mile route heads out into the Downs on the Dyke trail, taking in the spectacular views of Devil's Dyke before joining the Classic ride near Woodmanscote.

#### Around the World Cycle Challenge

This unique family friendly cycle challenge takes place on the country's oldest cycling track, Preston Park Velodrome. The aim of the challenge is to reach the combined target of 66,792 laps (40,075km) – the circumference of the world! Participants can turn up when they like to join in the fun and take to the track for as many or few laps as can be managed.

**If you would like to take part, please contact Helen at [coordinator@railwaylandproject.org](mailto:coordinator@railwaylandproject.org)** The Trust will pay the entrance fee for anyone doing 'The Classic' or 'Devil's Dyke Loop', with sponsorship money going towards Wellbeing in Nature.

**SPRING GLORIOUS SPRING!** Kim Dawson, LDC & EBC Specialist Advisor (Downland & Reserves)

Spring, glorious spring, seems to be upon us 'early doors' with unseasonably mild weather and all sorts of flowers already in bloom, with some having been so for quite a while.



The beautiful golden hanging chandelier-type catkins on the hazel appeared a good month or two back – I spotted some at the beginning of January. There is an interesting Woodland Trust blog asking the question to whether 'hazel is flowering earlier?' See: [naturescalendar.woodlandtrust.org.uk/blog/2019/hazel-catkins-what-they-tell-us-about-the-weather/](https://naturescalendar.woodlandtrust.org.uk/blog/2019/hazel-catkins-what-they-tell-us-about-the-weather/). Not sure if we've really had winter this year – is this a sign of things to come – the changing climate?

As the Reserve bursts back in to life, the birds are definitely starting to sing louder and prouder, with Greater Spotted Woodpecker really starting to 'drum' it home! With the birds, bees and amphibians, to mention just a few, having only one thing on their mind – breeding, we will start to ramp down the vegetation clearance and pond works that have been on-going over the autumn and winter. A massive Thank you must go out to the extremely hard working volunteers including the Meadow Minders, the SDNP VRS and BCV who have worked tirelessly to help keep the reserve looking so great.

Also helping to manage the Reserve are the Priory Forest School who often help pick up litter especially in the forest school wooded area, and who have recently helped trim back the younger trees at the front entrance.

Several of the mature willows along the Winterbourne Stream have been re-pollarded too, removing regrowth



and weight in order to hopefully pro-long the trees life as much as possible, retaining the main trunk and the associated high value habitat features such as holes, splits and cracks for the benefit of wildlife such as insects, birds and bats.

Talking of our amazing nocturnal bio-indicators, we have been generously donated four 'Kent' style bat boxes by South Street Bonfire Society, who hold their celebrations on the sidings area and have done so since the 80s. The bat boxes have been put up on suitable trees along the Winterbourne as it forms such an important and valuable blue corridor and foraging habitat – connectivity being the name of the game. Hopefully the boxes will provide a 'des-res' for the crevice dwelling bat species we know we have using the Reserve – such as

Common and Soprano Pipistrelles, and Myotis species such as Whiskered or Brandt's bats.

The Environment Agency (EA) also have been beavering away with targeted vegetation clearance along the Ouse river wall in order to improve and inspect their flood defences for the protection of local communities. In true partnership working, the EA have kindly made four new benches for the entrance to the Reserve, which are gleaming and ever so comfortable.



A gentle reminder, as we come into the main amphibian breeding season, with such important populations using the ponds and wetland ditches for breeding, it would be amazing for all dog walkers to please keep their dogs out of the ponds and ditches, so as to avoid disturbing and destroying spawn and young.

We have regrettably been noticing increasing amounts of dog mess, and again would politely remind dog owners of the absolute importance to pick up after their dogs everywhere on the Reserve.



Dog mess is really unpleasant, no good for wildlife or other dogs, adding unwanted nutrients and bacteria to the soil and thus changing the natural ecology of the Reserve's flora and fauna, not to mention how toxic and bad for human health it is – with a long list of diseases, infections, and parasites carried and spread by it. It really does detract from the enjoyment, not to mention the health hazard posed to children including our Forest School groups, to all visitors, to staff and our dedicated volunteers who walk and work in all areas.

Please keep an eye on your dog at all times. The whole of the District has a Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) for Dog Fouling (2017) in place, with our LDC Neighbourhood First team looking to start issuing £75 fines to any irresponsible owners caught not picking up their dog's mess.

## VERT WOODS COMMUNITY WOODLAND

<https://vertwoods.co.uk>

Saturday 13th April Bird Walk Charlie Peverett, one of VWCW CBS Committee Members and a keen bird watcher and educator, will be leading a walk in the woods to listen to Spring birds. Absolute beginners as well as Improvers welcome! From 8am-10am. For more details contact via their facebook page or website. Vert Woods is near the village of Laughton. Over 170 acres of woodland has been secured for community benefit.



### To contact the Railway Land Wildlife Trust & Programme

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