

# Railway Land Wildlife Trust



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[www.railwaylandproject.org](http://www.railwaylandproject.org)  
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## Director's Introduction

Next year will be our 25th year as a Trust and it is perhaps fitting that this issue is such a bumper edition as we steadily find our feet now that the Linklater is up and running. All those years ago, we tended to be a lone voice, few had heard of urban local nature reserves, even Agenda 21 of the Rio Earth Summit had to be highlighted for some authorities – it was all rather hard work.

The work remains hard (it always is isn't it!) but the environmental landscape has changed hugely and one of the core developments has been the notion of partnerships which is why this issue is devoted to highlighting some of ours. We have a larger voice and can be more effective if we work alongside and with partners and the Linklater is providing us with the perfect neutral space in which to forge those partnerships. It is early days but I am sure you will appreciate the positive piece by Dan Ross on page 2 in which he not only celebrates the existing relationship but looks forward to 'another stage of the partnership' as we build our resources, contacts and expertise.

Another significant partnership is with Priory School (see Jenifer Barton's report of the joint Priory / University of Sussex activity week on page 5) and it is encouraging to read the Head teacher, Tony Smith, not only acknowledging the present but looking to the future by 'strengthening the bonds'. (see page 3)

Henri Brocklebank, Head of Landscape Strategy at the Sussex Wildlife Trust, also talks of our strong partnership based on sensitivity, mutual respect and co-operation (see page 2/3).

But these are not all – we are developing positive working relationships with the Environment Agency; the Brighton Biosphere bid; the School of Education and Social Work at the University of Sussex; the Water Efficiency in Buildings Network at the University of Brighton; the Ouse Valley Cycle Network and the Ouse and Adur Rivers Trust – more will follow including a report on our Madagascar project partnership in the next Newsletter.

Building relationships with such groups takes time and effort but is one of my core aims for the first three years of the Linklater as we develop its potential to be an environmental hub worthy of all the effort of our first 25 years.

## A Month of Sundays!

This Autumn sees another round of Sunday evening events which we hope will entertain as well as bring in a little income. All events start at 7.30p.m. and doors open at 7.00p.m. This year we have decided to keep the cost to a minimum by foregoing an alcohol licence which costs £21 but offering juices instead.

Tickets are £6 and can be bought from Harveys in Cliffe High Street, IEKO on School Hill and Lewes Framers in Walwers Lane.)

**Sunday 30th September** A bat evening celebrating the bats we have on site as well as stories of bats by expert Alexia Tamblin. This event will be inside as well as outside the Linklater.

**Sunday 28th October** The flint walls of Lewes by the Flintman, David Smith, who undertook the Linklater cladding of the Undercroft outside walls and we hope the story of flint by Rory Mortimore.

**Sunday 25th November** Changing Sussex Wildlife – a stunning presentation and comment of changes taking place to wildlife in Sussex by former Chairman of the Sussex Wildlife Trust, Alan Malpass.

John Parry, Railway Land Project Director



## Partnership - A Special Relationship

The partnership that exists between Lewes District Council (LDC) and the Railway Land Wildlife Trust (RLWT) is now stronger than ever. This is due in no small part to the emergence of the Linklater Pavilion, and the significant resource this brings to the Railway Land.



During its first official year of operation, the network of groups, specialists and public using the Railway Land and the Linklater for study, or recreation has hugely increased, allowing more people to understand the special nature of the Railway Land. Landscape scale ecological restoration projects such as the Nature Improvement Area Project, or the Biosphere Project, are beginning to utilise the Railway Land and the Linklater, because of the unique way in which it taps into the fabric of community life here in Lewes and the network of professional and community projects that it has inspired.

This network of interconnected projects and contacts is striving towards the shared goals of greater understanding of the local and wider environment; moving towards sustainable living; and improving the biodiversity of our locality that is the key to real value. The community who are developing around this project are strengthening and broadening, allowing the Railway Land to reach its potential.

LDC has provided specialist Ranger service for the site for 15 years now, and the shared knowledge that has emerged through working in partnership with the RLWT, has resulted in the successful delivery of several ambitious management plans. The habitats at the Railway Land are approaching favourable condition, and our ecological knowledge and recording is improving.

As we move towards the drafting of a new site management plan, there is now a significant opportunity to build on this success to date, and move towards incorporating the Railway Land Meadows into the wider site management. There are many barriers to this becoming a reality, but if the past record is anything to go by, I would expect a positive outcome to emerge and another stage in the partnership to establish.

Dan Ross, Summer 2012.

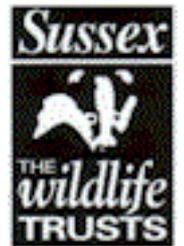
## Our Sussex Wildlife Trust partnership

The final stages of the building of the Linklater Pavilion offered a great partnership opportunity between Sussex Wildlife Trust and the Lewes Railway Land Wildlife Trust. Despite owning nature reserves in East Sussex and running numerous large scale and high profile projects in the East, we had always been perceived by many as a West Sussex centric organisation due to the strong identity of our office base at Woods Mill outside Henfield. We knew that we needed to put some firmer roots down in East Sussex and start delivering our aims and objectives in a fresh way.

We identified that Lewes was our priority area not least because of our extensive ownership of the Lewes Downs, which dominates the Lewes skyline. If we were to work from Lewes our only building from which to work (other than the reserves themselves) was a large barn.

Linklater and the partnership with an old friend (SWT and RLWT have worked alongside each other for many years) seemed like an obvious step for us. Working from Linklater provided Sussex Wildlife Trust with a venue where we could launch our messages of a Living Landscape, complimenting the excellent work by RLWT and the burgeoning relationships facilitated by the Linklater Pavilion.

Over the past year, we have had our Community Wildlife Officer, Michael Blencowe, based at the Linklater. He has been working within the Lewes Community sharing with everyone his knowledge of and enthusiasm for wildlife in a vibrant and exciting way. We hope that his work



brings something to the Linklater, to RLWT and to Lewes District Council too. For us, to be able to use such a remarkable venue, set in a Nature Reserve overlooked by our own Nature Reserve - is really important. Our message is of a Living Landscape. From the downland, to meadows of the river valley to the gardens of Lewes....each stepping stone is important and we run courses and events to that end.



Partnerships between organisations are macrocosms of human relationships. Sensitivity, mutual respect and co-operation are fundamental, similarly the opportunity to help each other develop and shine. RLWT have given us the opportunity to develop and blossom in the Lewes area [www.leweswildlife.org.uk](http://www.leweswildlife.org.uk) and I hope that our presence provides RLWT with similar benefits.

*Henri Brocklebank, SWT*

## The Linklater Pavilion Partnership with Priory School

Jenifer Barton's report on page 5 details aspects of Priory activity week but it is important to emphasise the strengthening partnership through two additional projects.



The first involves a working model by a group of talented pupils of how a ground source heat pump works – the school has secured a grant from the Physics Society to help with this and we look forward to unveiling it in the Undercroft in due course The second project involves the creation of a special leaflet for young people with an enhanced information technology addition that I think will surprise and impress a lot of people. The leaflet due out in the Spring will celebrate our 25 years as a Trust and it is privilege to work with the

talented team at Priory.

Meanwhile, this is how Tony Smith, the Head teacher sees the partnership:

*'Priory School is forging a strong partnership with the Railway Land Trust and the Linklater Pavilion. A small steering group has met once a term to explore, plan and implement a range of activities to develop our understanding of sustainability and ecological issues.*

*By starting small we have developed a range of high quality activities and projects. Each of the projects has involved a large amount of 'student ownership' developing skills of research, problem solving, teamwork, independence and reflection.*

*The school have benefited from the many experts who work alongside our students ensuring that a wide range of disciplines are involved in the learning about sustainability; including the creation of patchwork quilts, a model of the ground source heat pump, making products from beeswax and an environmental role play.*

*The school recognises the unique opportunities that are arising out of the partnership and looks forward to strengthening the bonds between us.'*

Tony Smith, Head teacher, Priory School



*Priory pupils doing measurements.*

## Community Mosaic Compass and Undercroft stirrings

We have been fortunate to attract the talents of Maia Eden and Martin Fox who helped to create our wonderful mosaic at the entrance to the Undercroft. Designed by Maia, created by Sunday visitors and eased into place by Martin Fox, the mosaic not only shows the direction of North which is always a surprise to people but hints at environmental change in the form of migrating egrets from the south and a drop of water depicting pressure on supplies.



There are iconic species such as kingfisher, teasel, reed warblers and vipers bugloss as well as humble earthworms keeping our soils in good shape and honey bees so vital for pollinating our vegetables and fruit. Once again we are very grateful to Martin Fox who not only helped Maia position the mosaic – no easy matter – but also, with Dave Sykes, laid the flagstones under the Linklater steps.

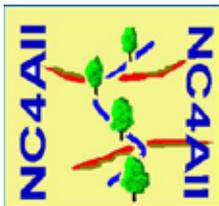


Within the Undercroft itself is a wonderful first stage of a geology display, generously supplied by Rory and Diana Mortimore of ChalkRock Ltd. Tom Crossett has also been busy working on the Winterbourne stream catchment exhibit that will help us all understand better the incredible aquifer under our feet and Ian Browne from Brighton City College is also due to complete the soil advent calendar display this Autumn. All these things take time, especially when being done by volunteers but we are so grateful for the time, care and energy that people are putting into these displays about difficult but important subjects.



John Parry

## Our Well Head Mosaic



Maia Eden has been doing mosaics for 3 years. She started by making plant pots with broken plates. This is the biggest mosaic she has done.

It has taken the team 7 weeks. 1 morning a week. We have worked in all weathers. Even wearing scarves and coats.

Alec said, 'I have liked all of it. I enjoyed doing the branches on the tree. I would like to do another one with different colours.' David said, 'I like sticking the tiles down. I helped with the red blossom and liked doing the blue colours.'

The final photo was taken by Simon as shown by Jackie's photo.

We hope people like our well head.

David, Simon and Brian.



Photos on this page by John, Simon and Jackie

# Priory School Activity Week 28th May to 1st June 2012

For the second year we welcomed groups of year 7-9 Priory pupils for a range of activities on the Reserve and in the Linklater. It was a gloriously sunny week in an otherwise dreary summer so most of the time pupils enjoyed being out of doors.

The activities on four of the days had been devised and were run by University of Sussex PGCE Science students, supported by their lecturers, John Parry and Jonathan Hare of the BBC TV Rough Science team. Jonathan provided much of the equipment and gave inspiring support at the preparation stage and during part of the week.



*Jonathan Hare working with Priory pupils*

Building a dome using wooden struts and connectors was a good way for pupil teams to get to know each other at the start of the day. Not surprisingly it became a race for teams to complete their dome and sit inside, but we saw collaboration between 2 teams who put their domes together to make a sphere. With a pupil inside, walking



carefully, the sphere rolled along. Spectacular! And links were made to the importance of such structures from the Eden project to emergency aid shelters in countries suffering famine or drought.

One student had devised a brilliant board game, shades of monopoly perhaps, but it was based on the Reserve and brought out important conservation principles and called for serious strategic thinking.



*pupils playing eco game*

In calm conditions pupils had to be ingenious in creating enough draught to turn the sails of their model windmills. The task was to see how many sails aligned at what angle, were most effective in generating electricity to light a small lamp. A complex scientific matter but one which it was possible to gain understanding of at several different levels. This was true of other tasks too.

For a treasure hunt with a difference, pupils were supplied with 3D spectacles with UV lights attached in order to read the clues scattered around the Reserve. The idea was to





replicate how we think honey bees see the world. The pupils, draped in white plastic sheets in order to keep out the sunlight so that their special spectacles would work, collected information needed to crack the code to open a treasure chest. No jewels were found inside, just something edible which quickly disappeared!



Our honey bees can be guaranteed to provide the awe and wonder factor. They performed their waggle dance thus enabling pupils to calculate the direction and distance of good supplies of nectar and pollen. The returning bees were loaded with pollen proving the abundance of the supplies. A quiet sitting down task followed, making a candle from sheets of coloured beeswax and pupils showed their creative skills by adding an often elaborate candlestick.



Thursday was different. The PGCE students could not be with us and so the activity was organised by John Parry. Pupils viewed the Nature Corridors video before being introduced to the participants who then talked them through their electronic portfolios detailing the contribution some of them had made over 7 years.

Then everyone was presented with a controversial planning proposal which aimed to solve some of the town's traffic problems but at a cost to the tranquillity of the Railway Land. They spent the morning in pairs taking on roles such as estate agent, café owner, taxi driver, school pupil and gathering information to support their case for or against the proposal for a 'transport hub' around the railway station.

They presented their case eloquently in the afternoon at a mock Public Enquiry chaired by John, also in role. The Nature Corridors group presented their 'evidence' in the form of their Forest school video which could not have taken place if such a bus route existed through the woodland. After the presentations, there was the opportunity to question each other, something they did with great vigour and enjoyment.

The days all ended with an evaluation, but this was an evaluation with a difference.

Each pupil had a student helper and together they provided an honest and detailed account of the pupil's responses to the day's activities. There were a lot of positive comments including a wish in the future to undertake some joint activities with the Nature Corridors group.



Further approval came when pupils were asked to draw the shape which best fitted the day's activities. There were several stars, even some with little stars sitting on all five points of the original. What could be better than this!

Jenifer Barton

# A day with Mark Greco & Michael Blencowe

by the Nature Corridors for All team

Michael Blencowe took us for a walk on the Reserve, he had his telescope with him and we saw a Peregrine falcon on the chalk cliff face. We all had a look and Michael told us that this pair had two chicks one female and one male. People sometimes try to steal Peregrine's eggs and sell them. Peregrines eat pigeons catching them in the air, they can fly at 200 miles an hour.

Michael showed us a stuffed otter that he had, it was surprisingly large. He said there were not any in the river Ouse at the moment but there are mink which have been released from a farm. Mink are not native creatures and are voracious feeders doing a lot of damage to wildlife.

There was a walk last night from the Reserve to look for glowworms up by the golf course. They found lots but when they got back to the Linklater there were a few on the river wall giving out a green light. They are not worms but insects.

Swifts fly for 3 years without landing, they feed and sleep on the wing. After 3 years they build a nest and lay eggs. We heard a crow 'cawing' very loudly. We saw a jackdaw over by the chalk cliff.

There are fallen trees in the reserve and Fungi on them help them to decay. We found snails that like wet weather. One came out of its shell and put its tentacles out. Insects like butterflies don't like wet weather, we only saw two - a large white and a meadow brown.

We also heard a grasshopper and Alec took a photo of it. He also took a photo of Michael standing beside a very tall teasel plant. It was about nine feet high.

Katie saw a beautiful white swan swimming against the current. Alec saw a moorhen swimming in a ditch on the meadows. It came out of the water and walked among the grass looking for insects and worms.

In the afternoon, Mark Greco showed us how to make prints. We each had a piece of polystyrene and drew a design on it with a crayon, pressing hard. We used a roller to put a thin coat of blue or black paint on the tile, then we put a sheet of white paper on it, turned it over carefully and smoothed it with our hands. We had a peep at a corner to see if we had a good picture! If we did, we peeled the paper off and put it on the wall to dry.

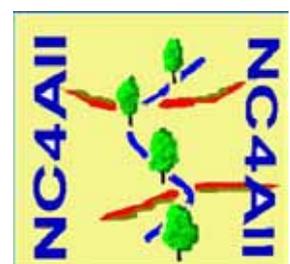
It was a good day.



Photos above by Alec



*This photo by Michael Blencowe of the group pointing to the sky was homage to the sun that came out just for them!*



## Linklater News

**Sustainability and Environmental Education: (SEEd)** is a registered charity that identifies, promotes, enables and supports environmental education and education for sustainable development in the UK. The SEEd team held an away day at the Linklater in May and Ann Finlayson, the Chief Executive wrote:



‘...there is always time to revisit a location as spectacular as this! The Linklater Pavilion is a social and ecological sustainability centre building on the work of the last 20 years and providing a local archive of change over the next 50 years. It is a great centre of environmental education and innovation, and the SEEd team thoroughly enjoyed exploring the Pavilion’s many examples of good practice in sustainability.’

Pat Rigg

**Painting revealed on the 18th June:** Liz Williams was a Trustee from 2003 to 2011 and this painting was purchased with the generous donations her many friends made to the Trust.



We commissioned local landscape painter Tom Benjamin to provide us with a fitting memorial to Liz - who had attended Tom’s classes, and he chose to paint the Winterbourne stream with its pollarded willows. We have hung it in the Woodland Room in the Linklater, overlooking the Winterbourne and its light and vigour provide us with a constant reminder of the enthusiasm and expertise which Liz brought to her involvement with the Railway Land.

Jenifer Barton

## Linklater Events: **STOP PRESS**

**Sunday 9th September:** Jess Gold and Luke Colcannon’s **Animated Earth Concert Tour** with live cartoonist – doors open at 7pm - tickets £9 from Harveys, IEKO and Union Music Store in Friars Walk.

**Friday 14th September at 7.30pm:** the Ouse Valley Cycle Network will hold its first AGM at the Linklater and will launch a stunning video detailing the plans to build a multi-user trail along the west bank of the river Ouse between Lewes and Newhaven.

The video uses aerial footage commissioned by the Trust many years ago and the evening promises to be entertaining with the unveiling of the name of the proposed trail, a logo competition and a talk about the wildlife of the lower Ouse by Michael Blencowe of the Sussex Wildlife Trust.

## Roger Beasley's well-deserved Heritage Civic Award

The scheme was developed from an idea suggested by the Mayor, John Stockdale, to reward the efforts of local individuals who had devoted their time to improving various aspects of Lewes life in connection with the Arts, Environment, Heritage and Community and perhaps encourage others. Roger has been an active member of the Friends of Lewes Civic Society since 1962 and the RLWT since 1991. He has helped campaign to save various buildings such as Star Brewery, Needlemakers, 224 High Street, Eastgate House and the Tree, and of course, our own Signal Box. Roger played a major part in the fight to save Lewes from the Relief Road. (1962 to 1977)



Roger, standing next to the Mayor, joins other recipients

*'The Mayor said some nice things about me at the ceremony on the 19th April which included a reference to my part in the Linklater and gave me a cheque for £100 to donate to the charity of my choice, The Oyster Project...'* said Roger in his typically self-deprecating manner.

On receiving his award he said *'...I would like to think that the Linklater and the Walls around the Bowling Green and Grange Gardens will become part of our heritage but none of these projects were just me. They were only made possible by the tenacity and passion of numerous individuals, which is as it should be in any true community, so as far as I am concerned this award is for a whole group of people who made good things happen. People like Jack Perkins, Maurice Breese, Peter Linklater, Elizabeth Howard and many others who are no longer with us and so many more who are still here to keep things going.'*

Roger also represented the Trust at the Sussex Heritage Trust Awards in which the Linklater Pavilion was Highly Commended in a strong field.

Pat Rigg

## Anne Pratt

It was with great sadness that we heard of the death of Anne who walked the Reserve every day – I would often give her a little wave or stop and have a word. But what I most admired about her was her anxiety about how the area looked once the Linklater had been built and she was rightly concerned that it all looked very bare and that the wild flowers were generally disappearing. I tried to assure her that we would get there in the end but I knew that she had very serious doubts. So it was very big of her one day to say that I had been right after all and that she just needed to be more patient. I thought that was so sweet of her and not called for at all! In fact, after many years we have glow worms back along the river frontage. On that score I should add that it will all soon be once again 'messed up' as the Environment Agency make repairs to the flood wall. But that is the story of our site – change and robustness – hand in hand – like



## Pestalozzi students enjoy work experience

Two students from the Pestalozzi International school near Battle undertook a week of work experience during which they learned about aspects of running a social enterprise as well as insights into building an environmental education programme. In return, they helped me create photo game cards to be used with the tapestry hexagons by school groups and the Malling Windmill nursery group - already a great success.

Sammy from Zimbabwe wrote, *'Thank you, John, for having us. We have had a very pleasant experiences and my knowledge has been challenged and increased. Please keep up the BRILLIANT work and the hospitable nature.'*

And Jyoti from Nepal wrote, *'We really enjoyed our few days' visit and work experience and had a good time. The knowledge skills we gained will be really valuable for us in our futures. You are one of the kindest men I ever had met. Please keep up your good works!'*

Contact with students of other cultures and insights into their environmental perspectives is both important and refreshing and I hope that in time we will build a useful partnership with Pestalozzi students who are so committed and were such a pleasure to meet. This is what their Student Programme Support Worker, Victoria

Wilson wrote about the experience: *'Sammy and Jyoti were thrilled to have the opportunity to conduct their work experience at the Lewes Railway Land Wildlife Trust. This was part of a new venture for Pestalozzi, as students had never been able to take part in work experience before. The girls were already interested in environmental issues and learned a lot from their experiences at LRLWT. Pestalozzi students have many experiences as a part of their two year scholarship; Sammy and Jyoti highlighted this experience as one of their best since arriving in the UK from Zimbabwe and Nepal. The experience and confidence they gained during this work placement will be invaluable for them when it comes to applying to universities or jobs in the future. We at Pestalozzi are very grateful for the time and thought dedicated to making Sammy and Jyoti's experience such a positive one and hope that the relationship between Pestalozzi and the Lewes Railway Land Wildlife Trust can continue to be a successful one. Many thanks once more to all involved.'*



Sammy and Jyoti with the participants and below the card tapestry game played by toddlers



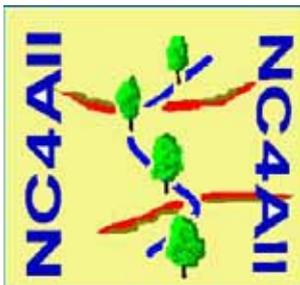
## Forum for the Future scholars visit the Railway Land Project



Forum for the Future was founded in 1996 by Paul Ekins, Sara Parkin and Jonathon Porritt as a charity with a mission to accelerate change to a sustainable way of life. Since 1996, their Masters in Leadership for Sustainable Development programme has been training the sustainability leaders of the future. Many graduates are already making their mark as think-tank directors and government advisers, and in July 2012 Forum celebrated the graduation of their 200th student.

Forum scholars travelled from London to visit the Linklater for an education workshop by John Parry who covered a wide range of topics from the theoretical underpinning of education for sustainable development, experiences of influencing policy and outlining the hands-on achievements of the Railway Land project and the thinking behind them such as the river tank in the undercroft shown in the picture. The day was a great success as expressed by some of the evaluation feedback: *'This was a phenomenal day out, really interesting and captivating and a chance to see someone really passionate doing sustainability in real life.... Such a privilege to learn more about what John is doing down in Lewes and a real insight into the challenges and benefits of running a project like this. ...A really useful and insightful trip, thank you! ...John's 20 year journey in sustainability and education, his deep subject knowledge and also national policy insight drew a lot of things together for me with passion and inspiration - perfectly timed at the end of the course.'*

## Nature Corridors Showcase - 30th Sept, 1st & 2nd October



The Nature Corridors team have had such a busy and successful time completing their floral hexagons, making a kingfisher model and working on the well head mosaic that we have decided to showcase their

work over three days in the Autumn.

The work includes a Forest school video made by the group and their own electronic portfolios of their contribution to the Railway Land Project (for some this is 7 years). The displays will be on show between 2-5pm on Sunday 30th September and between 1100 and 1700 on the 1st October and between 1100 and 1430 on 2nd October when the team will be at the Linklater to welcome visitors personally. **Do please come along and support their work as they are keen to share what they have achieved – and do spread the word to family and friends.**



## 25th Anniversary Festival a Huge Success

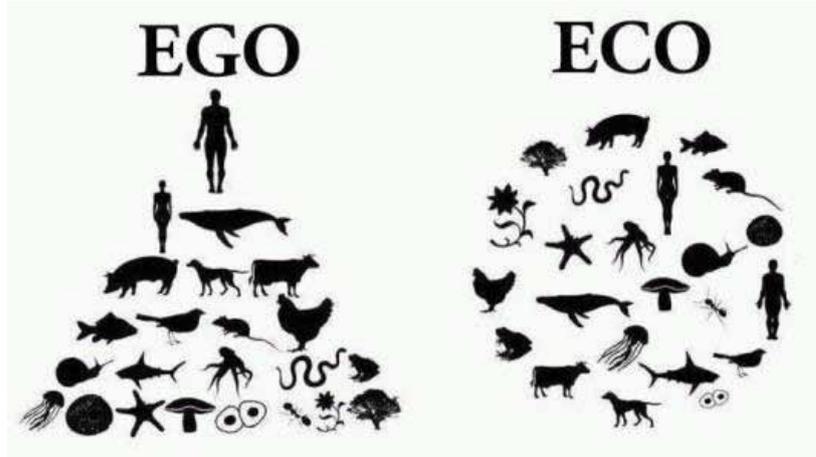
I've been visiting the Railway Land all my life. We had an allotment there when I was a child, getting to it via the old bridge from Lansdown Place. I hung out there as a teenager and I remember it as more wild than now. Some of the water meadows are owned by my uncle as my great grandfather was a farmer and butcher in Lewes and grazed his cows there. Then I've often walked and played there with my son since returning to Lewes and living in Cliffe High Street.

So it felt inevitable that at some point I'd get involved with the Trust and help in some way. This year provided the perfect opportunity - volunteering to organise the 25th anniversary festival to celebrate the land being saved as a treasure for Lewes. Our team - John Parry, Dan Ross and Matthew Bird and Trevor Watson from Lewes District Council - had a lot to organise over several months but we also had great fun all the way along. All the volunteers and staff were fantastic and the event was a great success, with about 2000 people and beautiful blue skies - a festival organiser's dream.

I loved this opportunity to volunteer with the Trust and LDC. I've met some great new people and I feel like I've really helped to celebrate a place that I've loved all my life. Here's to the next 25 years of the Lewes Railway Land!  
Vicky Lawrence



## Blood of the Amazon – a film by Nicola Peel, shown at the Linklater, 27th June 2012



Surely this was an invitation that couldn't be ignored. When Trisha Comrie circulated details of Nicola Peel's forthcoming fundraising visit to Lewes, I assumed the event would be oversubscribed. An archetypal event for which the Linklater Pavilion had been created; a place where issues of environmental concern could be confronted, information disseminated, ... with a superb vegetarian supper thrown in.

As a twenty year old, Nicola had accepted a challenge to go to a remote area of Ecuador and over a period of six-months document the threatened pink river dolphins in the upper reaches of the Amazon. Having been newly converted to environmental activism in fighting to protect virgin forest in Australia, Nicola felt compelled to become involved in the struggle for survival of this region of tropical rainforest and its people.

She went and she stayed. She went as a photographer, but over the years learnt the skills of filmmaker. Her latest film was an extraordinary document; beautiful, moving and powerful. This area is one of the most bio-diverse on the planet but has suffered as a result of oil extraction, a grab for oil which is directly attributable to our careless and profligate use of this precious resource. Seepage into the Amazon headwaters and subsoil has made them heavy with hydrocarbons, heavy metals and radio active waste. The indigenous people drink water from these rivers and from wells. In some villages as many as 80% of the population were suffering from cancers caused by pollutants resulting from exploitation.

Nicola contrasted the protestations of good practice by the oil companies with images of the actuality she discovered. Fetid groundwater lying thick and black. Indigenous people who spoke with distress of their experience since exploitation and extraction began. One of the loveliest things about the film was her determination to give as many of those people affected as possible a voice; not repetitious but cumulative in its effect. Innocent victims, bewildered and damaged, effectively asking us to recognize the impact our lifestyle choices have.

As well as highlighting ecocide, Nicola has involved herself in finding solutions. People needed clean water, so she invested her energy into making rainwater harvesting systems available. The evening at the Linklater raised £650 enough to purchase a further six. But dependency is not her aim. She has helped set up craft cooperatives where indigenous people make the most beautiful necklaces and other artefacts with which to raise money to buy equipment for themselves. She is also working to promote the use of fungi to repair and cleanse the soil of pollutants.

This is an insufficient summary of a memorable evening. It was a privilege to meet and listen to a highly committed, principled and exceptional woman determined to make a difference.

Networks are wary of her film and so far reluctant to broadcast it, but by sending a donation in excess of £10+ you can obtain a copy of the DVD and after viewing, pass it on. It will have impact if people are prepared to share it. All donations go directly to purchasing additional rainwater catchment systems for families desperately in need.

Take a moment to visit Nicola's website [www.eyesofgaia.com](http://www.eyesofgaia.com)

Jeremy Long

# A Floral Plus and minus

## Common Spotted-orchid, *Dactylorhiza fuchsii*

This one was found and photographed by a visitor to the Reserve on Sunday 1st June near the Dimbleby steps.

It's the white variant and unlike the more common pink flowered one does not always have dark spots on its leaves. Although not recorded in recent surveys of the Reserve, this orchid is as a good coloniser of a variety of newly available habitats, including railway embankments. They are perennials even though they may not flower every year.

So why do we prize orchids so highly? Perhaps for their rarity and the beauty, fragrance and interesting forms of their flowers.

The flowers produce large numbers of very small seeds but sustaining germination is difficult because there is little or no food reserve to sustain growth. Should it start however, an association with a fungus in the soil is used to supply nutrients, absorbed by the fungus or mycorrhiza, from decaying matter or humus. These nutrients support the seedling until leaves are formed and begin photosynthesis; from seed to flower can take 5 years or more.

The flowers often have what Darwin called "beautiful contrivances" to dupe male insects into visiting and pollinating them. Some secrete chemicals resembling the attractive pheromones produced by the female insect, while others mimic the appearance of the female suggesting mating opportunities. So we have bee, butterfly, fly, bug and spider orchids not to mention monkey, frog, lady and man ones. But I'll leave the reader to speculate on the last four!



## Fiddleneck, *Amsinckia micrantha*

This seems to be a new coloniser on the Reserve and a somewhat less welcome one than the orchid. It probably arrived in Britain in the early 1900s, having been imported in birdseed from western N. America. The drier climate in East Anglia has suited it and it thrives there in sandy soils as a weed of arable farmland and roadside verges. We think its seeds were probably brought here in compost round the roots of the Hawthorn saplings planted near the Linklater.

The strange name comes from the curved flowering spike which resembles the neck of a violin. The clusters of small yellow flowers are not unattractive and produce bristly seeds which catch onto clothing and passing animals but the rest of the plant which may grow to 1m is covered in sharp bristles capable of piercing the skin.

Fiddleneck belongs to the Borage family and related species on the Reserve are Forget-me-not, Comfrey and Viper's-bugloss.



Jenifer Barton

photo © [www.floralimages.co.uk](http://www.floralimages.co.uk)

# Bird Report - Reflections on a Survey carried out in August



*Great Spotted Woodpecker  
on the Linklater feeder*

The birds were mostly keeping quiet today. Just one strident green woodpecker broke the silence and shrieked off to find a shady perch on one of the willows by the Winterbourne. Fledgling robins and tits were spending their first days away from home, looking like balls of fluff as they hopped amongst the bushes; the young robins with their speckled brown breasts and the small blue tits with their yellow bums. Some families were still together - a female blackcap, sporting a fine ginger-brown head, was busy feeding elderberries to two rather dishevelled youngsters, and on the Leighside pond a handsome moorhen led two fluffy black chicks across the water.

When it is difficult to see the birds due to the dense summer foliage, and their characteristic mating calls have long since ceased to be heard, we have a thin time of it. We record what we can find on the two-hour walk through the Railway Land but there must be many that are missed. Overhead there are always gulls and pigeons to be seen, and on the meadows there is often a ragged flock of jackdaw. Today a successful magpie family, six striking birds sitting in a row on a fence rail, seemed unperturbed by passing walkers until at the last minute they flew up and moved on. Up on the chalk cliffs the Peregrine was perched on his favourite ledge and

across the meadows the heron was in his usual watery ditch. Visiting warblers were flitting across the reed beds, finishing off their breeding duties for the year, but we looked up in vain for other migrants, the swifts and the swallows, neither of which were seen flying over on this particular morning. Today's count was a fairly modest one of twenty two species seen, with finches and sparrows adding to the list as we walked back along the path beside the old allotments.

However it was the clear, flowing streams of the Winterbourne, the depth of fresh water in the ponds, and the riot of buddleia, brambles, teasels and willow herb that made the biggest impression. The flowering plants looked (and smelt) wonderful, the heavy rains and the recent summer warmth having kept many of the shrubs growing luxuriantly. There will be plump berries and fat seed heads to come; plenty in store for the Railway Land birds this coming autumn.



*Christine and her grandchildren turn their attention  
to pond life*

If you see any bird activity on the Railway Land that you think might be of particular interest or if you would like to take part in the regular bird surveys on the Railway Land, please contact Leonie Mercer [leonie.m@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:leonie.m@tiscali.co.uk)

Chris Roach, 14 August 2012

## Sunday Openings 2012

*Mia, Keira, Inara and baby Orrin and their mum Becky borrowed dipping equipment from the Sunday volunteers and set off for the dipping platform. They used the identification sheets to spot, water boatmen, fresh water limpets, cyclops with eggs, a jenkins snail, dragonfly larvae and a mayfly nymph.*

*Keira enjoyed paddling on the platform which remains under water, but suggested that the rail ought to be higher for younger children - as she managed to take an unexpected dip!*



*The kingfisher model made by the NC4All group has proved a huge hit with visitors and their puzzle showing the reedwarbler's journey to Africa engrosses grownups and children.*



*Regular volunteers, Pat Sexton, Tony and Jan Peplar, and Jean Heywood join Jenifer Barton and Pat Rigg in the Sunday sun!*



## Geoff Bush Volunteer Coordinator

The growing success of the Sunday afternoon opening sessions of the Linklater Pavilion is due to the enthusiasm and commitment of the volunteers. This year has seen a much greater number of people coming and giving their time on Sundays, I can only once again thank them for their sustained support. Numbers have been such that we have been able to open the signal box on several occasions. This provides a fantastic opportunity to observe the wildlife on the water meadows and watch them look for food or enjoy the rain! Chronicles of the fauna and flora, have been updated as the summer progressed, emphasising the variety of organisms that call the Railway Land their habitat and home. Visitor numbers already total 485 this year, (on average 40 per Sunday). They have been able to contribute to the species lists and also see the new displays inside the undercroft. Maia Eden's mosaic making, the Nature Corridors participants' Kingfisher model and Marc Greco's exhibition have been added attractions.

The Linklater will continue to be open until the 30th September.

If you would like to find out more and join the volunteer team in time for the next season, contact me, Geoff Bush, either by email at [g\\_bush@sky.com](mailto:g_bush@sky.com), or by phone 07731534449. My workshop 'Lewes Framers' is in Walwer's Lane at the top of School Hill, I am usually there between 10-2pm.

## Ranger's Report



*The Minders take a well earned rest on Sunday August 5th. The team from the left are Perry, Helen, Serena, Dan, Abi, Lesley, Julia and Jon, while Ethan Ross joins his dad and the gang for a picnic tea.*

*The group are looking forward to reedbed maintenance in September, and 'Slash and Burn' activities in October and November with the promise of baked potatoes to spur them on. You could join them - at 1.30, first Sunday of the month!*

The Railway Land has responded to the warm weather of late, with a flourishing show of wildflowers, butterflies and bees, all springing into life following a very wet spring and early summer. Following heavy rain during much of May and June, the Winterbourne Stream began to flow during July, for the first time in many years during the Summer. The consequence of all this rain, is that the wetland habitats are very healthy this year, with the meadow ditches, Leighside Pond and the Reedbed all having high seasonal water levels.

The timely arrival of summer has fuelled vegetation growth which has created considerable work for the Rangers. Not least with the willow trees that grow along the Winterbourne Stream. Many of these trees have required urgent attention as they have fallen or split near to paths, watercourses and the railway. There are plans to coppice or pollard a large number of these willow as soon as autumn arrives, to help prevent further collapses into the Winterbourne.

During the past few weeks, several large elm trees have succumbed to Dutch Elm Disease, and have been removed. Interestingly, the gaps that these trees have created are becoming useful woodland glades for reptiles and butterflies to colonise.

Over the past two years, we have been carrying out a reptile survey throughout the Railway Land which has resulted in some very high reptile numbers being recorded on the site. We now know that reptiles including grass snake, slow worm and common lizard are abundant throughout the Reserve, and not just in specific sites. It has also proved that we have good breeding populations of grass snakes and slow worms. The survey will conclude during the autumn, and a report will be available to anyone who is interested, including to our Sussex Biodiversity Records Centre, to which we send all our ecological data.

During the early summer, a brief respite from the rain contributed to a fantastic day at our Railway Land Festival in June. This wonderful day with over 2000 attendees, demonstrated just how

successful the partnership between Lewes District Council (LDC) and the Railway Land Wildlife Trust (RLWT) has become.

We have just installed a new oak kissing and field gate, between the Railway Land and Chilly Brook which was jointly funded by LDC and the RLWT. This replaces a worn out gate and provides a smart interface between the grazed and un-grazed parts of the site.



During the coming weeks, several activities are planned, including our annual sidings cuts, in which we bring in a specialist contractor to mow and collect the cuttings of the old sidings, to help maintain the diversity of flora, as well as maintain the open nature of the sidings. Other activities include strimming our footpaths and pruning the site hedges. I have recently strimmed and raked the meadow surrounding the Linklater, following guidance from the Weald Meadows Initiative. We should be in a position to remove the chestnut paling fencing during the winter as the meadow is becoming established.

I continue to work with a variety of volunteer groups, and this year we have had particular support from the South Downs Volunteer Rangers, and South Down Rangers who have helped with a number of projects on site.

Dan Ross, August 2012.

## A Bird's Eye View:

### Studio

The artist who stood by the river at his easel on 2 or 3 early sunny evenings, painting upstream towards Harveys, and followed it the next couple of nights painting downstream towards the cliffs.

### Grooming parlour

One morning a man was sitting on one of the benches firmly gripping a little chestnut brown dog and was pulling tufts of hair out of it. Looking more carefully I could see he was using one of those combs you use to remove nits. The little dog seemed glad to be released, and the clever owner had no clearing up to do.

### Kindness

On one of my walks last week I was trying to photograph a lovely maroon flower that I had looked up and identified as loosestrife, but I shirked walking into the long greenery for fear of falling. A friendly passerby whom I thought I ought to know but didn't - a quite frequent situation these days, agreed to take it for me, and a good picture it is too - and I think it was the same person who generously gave me half the blackberries she'd picked.



## Jennifer Mettyear

It was with huge sadness that we heard of the death of Jennifer Mettyear, one of the Trust's longest standing supporters. Jennifer and Peter, through the Mettyear Trust, were founding sponsors of the Linklater Pavilion and the main room is named happily after them.

Jennifer's steady, unswerving support for our vision was given so freely yet with neither fanfare nor pride. This is surely a gift and we are the poorer without her and send Peter and the Mettyear family our heartfelt sympathy.

John Parry on behalf of the Railway Land Wildlife Trust

*Jennifer and Honorary architect, Roger Beasley, share a joke at the official ribbon cutting of the Linklater.*



# DON'T FORGET!

## Railway Land Images 2013

The Trust will be running a second photo competition in 2013.

The categories for 2013 are:-

- **Railway Land over the years** - *Photos taken on or of the Railway Land from any time to capture its history and how it has changed over the years.*
- **People on the Railway Land** - *Photos that capture the enjoyment of the many people who visit the Railway Land regularly, or every so often. These photos must be taken during 2012.*
- **Railway Land over the seasons** - *Photos that show the seasonal changes of one of the habitats that is home to the wildlife on a permanent basis or as migrant visitors. These photos must be taken during 2012.*



*Summer Patterson's photo was the people's choice*

The two age groups are: Adult (over 16 at 1.1.13), Youngsters (under 16 at 1.1.13)

Prizes: Each age group in each category will win a small prize. Visitors to the competition exhibition will again be asked to vote for their favourite photo in each category, the three favourites winning prizes.

Dates and entry: The closing date for entries is Monday 21st January 2013. Entry forms will be available from November 2012. All details will be on the RLWT website The competition exhibition will be held from Saturday 9th to Sunday 24th February 2013, at the Linklater Pavilion.

For access to past newsletters or to see this printed version in full colour go to: **Contents:**

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

& click 'newsletters' in the left hand column

To contact the Railway Land Wildlife Trust  
email: [info@railwaylandproject.org](mailto:info@railwaylandproject.org)

Editor: Pat Rigg

contact: [rigg@patspur.demon.co.uk](mailto:rigg@patspur.demon.co.uk)

tel: 01273-487798

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