



ACCESS IMPROVEMENTS

Last winter access in three sections of the Blackwater Valley were improved thanks to a grant from Natural England through Defra's Aggregates Levy Sustainability Fund (ALSF). The project involved upgrading two sections of the Valley's footpath network – one in Farnham, adjacent to the Shepherd & Flock roundabout, the other along the BV Path in Farnborough just north of North Camp station – resurfacing a stretch of bridleway adjacent to Moor Green Lakes and buying new machinery that will help improve maintenance of the Valley's paths in future. In total the project was worth over £70,000 with ALSF contributing £54,000, 75% of the total cost. The remaining 25% was match funded by Rushmoor Borough Council, Wokingham District Council, Surrey County Council, the Blackwater Valley Countryside Trust and minerals extraction company CEMEX, with a significant contribution also being made through volunteer work.

ON THE HEDGE

They say actions speak louder than words, so we're delighted to be able to support a traditional countryside craft: hedgelaying. This type of management has a positive impact on the area's landscape, whilst being best practise for nature conservation. So far three sections of hedging in the southern part of the Valley have been laid in this way, thus contributing to Surrey's new Road Verge Habitat Action Plan (HAP) with more on the agenda. Much of the work has been done by the Surrey Hedgelaying Group.



OUR BIG 30!

The summer has been a busy one with our special anniversary roadshow going to events in all areas of the Valley. Designed to inform and educate local residents about who we are and what we do, through our information boards, whilst developing the interest of children to both wildlife and the Blackwater Valley, the roadshow has been very successful.

We were able to buy some super new promotional materials at the beginning of the year, thanks to a grant from Natural England through Defra's Aggregates Levy Sustainability Fund (ALSF). These included a fabulous giant-sized dragonfly model, a special Valley 'Where's My Home?' magnetic game, a laptop with Digiscope microscope plus display materials and some exclusive promotional postcards.

NEW VOLUNTEER GROUP

If you live anywhere in the area of Southwood Woodland, Farnborough you might like to consider joining the new volunteer group we've set up there.

The wood is owned by Rushmoor Borough Council who are improving the area to make it more accessible for people to use. A series of footpaths have already been developed but this is only the first element of a major improvement scheme to balance the requirements of wildlife and amenity to provide a valuable natural resource for the community. ►

Pictured from top: Our giant dragonfly model. The 'official' opening of the resurfaced bridleway at Moor Green Lakes. One of our traditionally laid hedges. The special valley game, created especially for our 30th anniversary.

We are working in partnership with Rushmoor Borough Council to establish the local community group to look after the site, which is designated a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC). The group meets on the fourth Sunday of every month. If you're interested ring our Ranger Stuart Croft at BVCP for more details.

SIMPLY GRAZING

Grazing is a traditional way of meadow management and last November (2008) two Highland cattle, Ruby and Kayla, were introduced to the site at Snaky Lane in Ash. They remained there until February, chomping their way through the rough grass, scrub and bramble.

The cattle were checked daily by a dedicated rota of 'lookers' and were perfectly happy despite the heavy snow we had in February. They left in February but are due to return later this year.

Last year the Snaky Lane Community Wildlife Group were awarded a grant of £9,125, by the BBC Breathing Places. This covered the cost of installing stock-proof fencing around part of the site to enable the cattle to graze safely.

IN GOOD COMPANY

This summer we've been hosting a great number of corporate and local community conservation days. Companies who have come out to help us carry out tasks – from hay raking and scrub clearance to coppicing and fence building – include Eli Lilly, the Environment Agency and 3M. We welcome the opportunity to introduce what are normally office workers to conservation work – although why does everyone want to come out in the summer!

If you would like to find out more please ring us here at BVCP and talk to Ranger Stuart Croft.

STAFF CHANGES

Since our last newsletter there have been some staff changes.

Tim Mockridge who had been with us for 4½ years, left in September 2008 to work for the National Trust. His replacement, Stuart Croft, arrived in December. Stuart previously worked for Wokingham's Countryside Service.

Manager Steve Bailey was seconded for six months between October 2008 and March 2009 by Hampshire County Council so we recruited Alex Newman as Project Ranger to help Acting Manager Sue Dent on a variety of different projects. Steve currently has a dual role and is working for BVCP on strategic



Pictured, top: Volunteers of the newly formed Southwood Woodland group. Above left: Ruby and Kayla the two Highland cattle that grazed the Snaky Lane meadow over the winter. Above right: Enjoying a walk, members of the BV Walkers' Link.

issues two days a weeks, whilst Sue Dent continues as Acting Manager.

FOR WALKERS

Are you a member of the Blackwater Valley Walkers' Link? We set up the group last year to act as a one-stop information point for walks and walking groups in the Blackwater Valley area. Annual membership (which includes all four of our Blackwater Valley books) costs £15, or £7 without the books, and runs annually from 1st February. Although we try and do our own monthly walks, the aim is to let members know about all the walks in the area so they receive a monthly walks programme. If you're interested full details are on our website or ring Christine Reeves here at BVCP.

DIARY DATES

- As part of our 30th anniversary celebrations we are working with Surrey Heath Museum in Camberley to stage an exhibition called **Tales of the Riverbank** illustrating the Valley's history and wildlife. It runs from October 24th to 16th January 2010.
- Inspired by Hampshire Council Council's 'Culture All' initiative we are working with the West End Centre in Aldershot to stage a special one-day family event on Saturday March 20th. **Step into the Country** is aimed at promoting local countryside sites and traditional country crafts. There will be plenty of hands-on activities as well as demonstrations, workshops, storytelling and a guided walk.
- **Walk the Path** weekend Saturday 8th and Sunday 9th May 2010.

