

**Welcome** to the spring edition of the WNCF newsletter. I'm a bit late this year as it's the beginning of March as I'm writing this but today, it actually did feel like spring. We saw our first daffodils flowering, mallards chasing and bullying each other, the sightings board at Risley Moss said a brimstone butterfly had been spotted, there was talk of the first bumblebee appearing and my middle boy went without his hat for the first time in months! It's just so nice to feel the sun warming you up and it must be the same for all those creatures that have made it through the winter without central heating and extra clothes.



So, when does spring actually begin? This is fairly easy to answer - it starts on the first "equinox" of the year. This comes from two Latin words - "equus" (equal) and "nox" night. At this time of the year, the centre of the sun is directly over the equator and daytime is therefore exactly equal in length to night time. The spring equinox happens either on 20 or 21 March. But the equinox isn't just a date but a very precise time - and in 2009 it will, apparently occur at exactly 11.44 on 20 March. Spring then lasts for exactly three months!

As far as wildlife is concerned, however, the timing of spring is very different and its definition is very complex indeed. For many living things, spring is the season for re-awakening and growth. This is very obvious with some plants, some of which do indeed seem to "spring" out of the ground. Some, like coltsfoot, which grows in places like road verges, are in such a hurry that they produce their flowers – bright yellow and rather like those of the dandelion - even before the leaves have appeared. This is usually in February. Most, however, go about their development at a far more leisurely pace and stay below ground until warmer weather is guaranteed.

Finally! my bird feeding efforts are beginning to pay off. After starting from a lone blackbird visitor in November, the garden at our new house is now attracting a satisfying range of the common garden birds including my favourite long-tailed tits. I think they're coming for our bird feeders with a special added ingredient – rice crispies – put in by my eldest boy as a way to get rid of them so he didn't have to eat them.

This edition of the newsletter is full of nature conservation things you can do if you've got some free time. Please join in with the Forum survey sessions if you can. They are a great opportunity to visit somewhere new, learn something new (or practice your skills) as well as meet new people. Check out the worm survey online - I think soil and worms might go down well in our house, and inevitably, some creatures will end up *in* the house. My latest dilemma with my middle boy is how to communicate the flower-picking rules. Daisies, dandelions and assorted bits of trampled flowerbed blooms can be picked and made into bunches for me, but parkland daffodils, snowdrops and things growing in front gardens tantalisingly within reach should not be wrenched from the earth and squashed together in little hands! Oldest boy sternly refuses to pick anything (including strawberries at the pick-your-own farm in the summer). I was obviously too strict with him and have scarred him for life!

Anyway, enjoy the next few months of wildlife activity, noise and general excitement, in your garden, local park or further afield. If you have any articles or items of interest please email [mel.bradley@sky.com](mailto:mel.bradley@sky.com)

**Contact the Forum!** We'd love to know your thoughts on the newsletter or meetings, if you have any comments or questions please get in touch with Helen or Melanie. The forum is only as strong as its members so have your say and make a difference!  
Helen Lacy 01925 442839 [hlacy@warrington.gov.uk](mailto:hlacy@warrington.gov.uk)

# Amazing Amphibians!

Spring is a great time of year for seeing one of wildlife's best spectacles- our native amphibians returning to ponds to breed. All across the town ponds are becoming a hive of activity as frogs, toads and newts return to mate and lay their eggs. Spotting them is quite easy and this is an activity the whole family can get involved in no matter what age, or simply check ponds whilst on your way to work or walking the dog/cat/rabbit etc!



The common frog is probably our best known amphibian. The body is up to 10cm long and is usually **green-brown**, but vary between yellow and brown, with darker markings. The skin is **smooth** and moist, and there is a **dark patch** behind the eye, frogs have notably **long back legs** for jumping and a slight hump on their back. **Clumps** of spawn are laid in February or March. Newly hatched frog tadpoles are black but after a short while become mottled brown.



The Common Toad has **warty** skin with a noticeable bulbous gland behind the eye and **shorter back legs** than the common frog. It has no distinct hump on the back. Toads are usually dark brown, but may vary between yellow and almost red in colour. Males grow to about 8 cm, females can be up to 13 cm in length. Spawn is laid in **strings**, each with a double row of eggs in March or April. Toad tadpoles are black.

Take care of frogs and toads:

- Don't move frogs or toads from one pond to another- this spread's disease. The best way to get frogs or toads into your garden is to provide the right habitat for them.
- Some ponds can seem to have 'too much spawn' but laying a large amount is necessary for them to survive into adult hood. Natural predators and processes keep numbers down.
- Create log piles around garden ponds for amphibians to seek refuge in.

**What have *you* seen?** Do you have amphibians in a pond near you? Let us know what you have seen (amount of spawn, numbers of frogs or toads) and either send your information to us:

[http://www.warrington.gov.uk/images/Spawn%20Survey%2008\\_tcm15-23988.pdf](http://www.warrington.gov.uk/images/Spawn%20Survey%2008_tcm15-23988.pdf)

or of course record it straight onto RODIS at: <http://www.record-lrc.co.uk/>

**Want to know more?**

For further information and some very useful fact sheets see: <http://www.froglife.org/>



# News & updates

**Service level agreements** with Cheshire Wildlife Trust and rECOrd have been terminated by the Council. The Forum, along with other affected parties, wrote to the Executive board stressing the importance of these agreements, which cost relatively small amounts per year. The result of this decision means problems for the management for our SINC system and no source of funding to get any survey work done. Without surveying sites it is impossible to maintain an up to date evidence base. This may affect any sites if they were to be under threat from development. Also without an SLA with rECOrd, Helen would have to pay for any data searches on a case by case basis, so any information needed in relation to a development site or nature reserve/SSSI or SINC or anywhere would have to be costed on an individual basis. The decision to cancel the SLA's seems a short-sighted one and the Forum Committee will be writing to the Executive Board to ask how the Council intend to fulfil its statutory duty to further biodiversity without this agreement.

**Wildflowers at the Cemetery** After advice from Landlife, Helen and the WNCF, Warrington cemetery staff will be introducing some areas of wildflowers this year along with bird and bat boxes. If you want to help with the siting of the boxes please contact Helen.

**Sankey Valley Park Recreation Study** The Council has commissioned consultants to carry out a recreational study into the Sankey Valley Park area. As a consultee group the Forum have responded to the study questionnaire and will be involved in the next stages of the study. If you'd like to see the Forum response please ask Helen or for more information on the study please contact The Project Delivery Team at New Town House 01925 442794.

**Bewsey Meadows** - lots going on and it looks quite traumatic as the paths go in! The planning application by United Utilities to install new pumping chambers will need extensive earthworks and will delay the completion of the footpaths. New interpretation and signage is also under development.

**Paddington Meadows** has seen more hedgelaying taking place around the site as Mersey Valley Groundwork get busy.

**Ranger Service** There is no longer any staff at Orford Park or Black Bear park although Culcheth Linear Park has regained a ranger.

**Mersey Gateway news** Many of you will have heard about the new bridge which is to go across the Mersey near Wigg Island in Runcorn. Still in the early planning phases there is to be a full Public Inquiry starting on May 19<sup>th</sup> and is expected to last several weeks. The Inquiry will consider the impacts that this will bring but construction of the new bridge is expected to begin in 2011 and to be open by 2014. Through the Inquiry there should be a better understanding of the environmental impacts of the creation of this bridge on the estuary (a designated RAMSAR and SPA site up to the current Runcorn Bridge and part SINC in Warrington). This will include an examination of the Environmental Statement which was submitted as part of the original planning application.

The Halton Natural Environment Roundtable group (similar to WNCF) has taken a keen interest in all the planning stages up to now and, along with members of the public, will be able to have their say.

## **Why should we be interested?**

Well apart from traffic aspects, the new bridge has to be placed in the context of the estuary system which we share. Cast your mind back to Jeff Clarke's talk back in December 2007 and he spoke of what fantastic habitats there are along the 'Mersey corridor' and which do not stop at administrative boundaries. Any effects on the different estuarine and terrestrial habitats would require appropriate mitigation.

Once the enquiry has been completed we shall have a far better idea about the environmental impact on the estuary and our hopes for a reserve covering all the area as far as Moore, but at the moment that is still a dream. The web site for information is [www.merseygateway.co.uk](http://www.merseygateway.co.uk)

## Bittern found wandering on road released at Leighton Moss

One of Britain's rarest and most elusive birds has been rescued by the RSPCA after it was seen walking along a road in Bamber Bridge, near Preston. The magnificent black and gold-coloured bittern was spotted by a member of the public in Bamber Bridge on January 24th. The RSPCA were contacted and the bird was caught and taken to RSPCA Stapeley Grange Wildlife Centre.



The bird was examined and found to be uninjured but considerably underweight at only 900g; it is believed it had been unable to find sufficient food during the recent cold weather snap. RSPCA staff fed it a hearty diet of sprats and, by early February, it increased to a healthier weight of 1200g.

The bittern was then released at the largest remaining reed bed in the north-west of England at RSPB [Leighton Moss Nature Reserve](#) in Silverdale.

Dr. Andrew Kelly, manager of RSPCA Stapeley Grange said: "It is fantastic to have been able to rescue this rare and enigmatic bird and get it back to full health; for species like the bittern every individual one counts. We don't know whether it is one of the breeding birds from Leighton Moss or a winter visitor from elsewhere.

Although currently confined to England, the bittern, a member of the heron family, was formerly widespread across the UK, where it has endured a boom-and-bust history. In 1886 the bittern stopped nesting in the UK after drainage of wetlands, and persecution pushed the bird to extinction. Bitterns recolonised in the UK in 1911, when birds were found breeding again in the Norfolk Broads. The population hit another low-point in 1997 when there were just 11 males in the UK, all in England.

2008 saw 47% increase in booming bitterns - bittern numbers are assessed by listening for the male bittern's distinctive 'booming' song. In 2008, 75 'booming' male bitterns were recorded in the UK, an increase of 47 per cent on 2007's figures. So things are now looking more positive for the bittern but there's still a long way to go."

How lucky we are in Warrington to have these birds wintering at Moore Nature Reserve. Thanks to Mike Roberts for his excellent talk about these bitterns and for showing us his fantastic photographs at the last Forum general meeting.

## Look out for ladybirds

Jeff Clarke announced at the last Forum general meeting that he is at the first stages of compiling a ladybird atlas for the Cheshire region. Jeff asked if Forum members could make a special effort to look out for ladybirds (even in your garden) and send their sightings to rECOrd. If you're not well-up on ladybirds you might need to get yourself a good key as different ladybirds don't always look so different at different stages of their lives!



*Harlequin (top) & seven-spot ladybirds*

# Help! Bumblebees still declining in numbers

news from UK Safari

Furry, friendly, noisy and possibly the most important pollinators, our native bumblebees are under serious threat. Intensive agricultural practices and a decrease in the number of insect-pollinated crops have led to a drastic decline in bumblebee numbers over the past seventy years, with one species, *Bombus subterraneus*, recently driven to extinction. This is bad news for us as bumblebees are responsible for a sizeable proportion of our food production with many arable and horticultural crops dependent on them for pollination.



**The Importance of Gardens** As a result of drastic changes in land use, gardens have now become increasingly important refuges for bumblebees. Gardeners have a vital role to play in creating the right habitat to help our humble bumbles survive. But what is the right habitat for bumble bees?

**Nature's Nest Sites** When you watch queen bumblebees at this time of year you'll see why. They fly low along hedge banks, ziz-zagging and buzzing their way through tall grasses to find the ideal nest hole. It looks very random, but they're quite selective about where they lay their eggs. Generally, if they're given the choice between a grubby old mouse hole on a raised bank, and a shiny new 'Bumblebee Hilton' from the local garden centre, they'll choose the mouse hole every time.

## Do something!

If you're serious about wanting to provide homes for bumblebees then a raised bank sheltered by a hedge, covered in rough grass, with plenty of mouse holes seems to be the ideal habitat! The easier option is just to provide them with food and let them get on with the business of nesting. Bees will always settle at a site which has plenty of food nearby. Since bees feed on pollen and nectar, the best nest site will have plenty of flowering plants nearby - preferably flowering right through their active season from early March through to late October.

It's believed that bumblebees can see ultraviolet colours because the flowers they favour are mainly white, blue, purple or yellow so help bees by growing some of these plants: bluebells, dead-nettles, geraniums, foxgloves, honeysuckle, monkshood, lavender, bugle, rosemary, buddleia, knapweed, red clover, yellow rattle, yellow archangel, Michaelmas daisy and comfrey.

**JOIN IN!** If you want to DO SOMETHING practical for nature conservation in your town, there are always opportunities to join in with other people or groups doing a range of environmental activities. See the events page for more details of some events happening soon. A special request has come from Sankey Valley Park Rangers, who for many years have been encouraging local people to get involved with some of the practical work necessary on such a large diverse park. **So if you like nature conservation and want to try some practical tasks, why not join the Sankey Valley Park Volunteer Group?** The group is open to everyone, from any walk of life, who is over 16, with an interest in conservation or who just wants to lend a hand in the park.

The group meet once a month usually on a Sunday and you can stay all day or come along just for a couple of hours it's entirely up to you. If you are interested in joining or would like to find out more information please call Dave or Andrea at Sankey Valley Park on 01925 571836.

# £213k Woodland Trust bonus

<http://www.woodland-trust.org.uk/index.htm>

The Woodland Trust have successfully won an Access to Nature grant totalling £213K, allowing the Woodland Communities project to launch in the coming months with the aim of re-connecting local people with their environment and reversing elements of anti-social behaviour in the process.

The Trust wants to increase local appreciation of woodland and tackle attitudes behind current antisocial activities and dumping of rubbish, according to Trust woodland officer Tim Kirwin, who has been instrumental in developing the project. The aim of the project is to restore the woodlands to serve and inspire the community, providing a focus for family leisure and wellbeing, he explained. "We want to instigate a wide range of community events in the woodlands, set up woodland discovery sessions for local schools and organise conservation work parties, helping to make the sites an asset to the area rather than a blight", he said.

Thousands of people will be directly involved over three years, with many more benefiting in the wider community. The woods in Runcorn to benefit are Windmill Hill Wood, Haddocks Wood, Murdishaw Wood, The Gorse, Railway Plantation and Fountains Wood. In Warrington the woods are Mary Anne Plantation (Westbrook), Small Wood in Oak Wood, Gorse Covert Mounds and Seeds Plantation (Callands).

"This is a really exciting project designed to inspire people living near 10 of our sites to use their local woods as places to exercise, enjoy nature, spend time with family and friends, relax, learn and play", he said. "A lot of people live within one mile of the project woods and we want to help a substantial proportion of them use their local woods in a more positive manner. There are also more than 30 schools within the same area, and we want to explore outdoor learning with their pupils."

Two part time posts will be created to launch and help deliver the project and there will be a range of opportunities for people to volunteer.

## Warrington woodlands to visit

Unfortunately in Warrington we don't have a huge unspoiled area of woodland but what we do have is lots of smaller woodlands often linked by parkland, footpaths, housing estate cut-throughs in the New Town areas and even following road lines. Semi-natural ancient woodland remnants exist in the town, in the Sankey and Lumb Brook areas, and these can give us a real glimpse into the complexities and wonders of established woodlands.

Lots of newer woodlands, planting belts and small local areas of trees and shrubs shouldn't be over-looked as they provide homes for a variety of wildlife as well as some greenery for us to enjoy and feel better for visiting. Check-out Risley Moss birch woodlands of course, Sankey Valley new bits as well as old, Lymm Dam for its impressive mature trees, Walton Gardens for the non-native specimens and even Woolston Park for it's sometimes unusual plantings!



## Swifts in Warrington – 2009 survey

WARRINGTON  
FORUM NATURE  
CONSERVATION



Brian Martin first surveyed Warrington swift populations in the mid-1980's, estimating the breeding population at 150 pairs across Grappenhall, Stockton Heath and Westy. In 1992 Brian went borough-wide and found that closer to 250 pairs was a better estimate. Significantly, over 50% of the town's birds were breeding on the pre-war Council estates of Westy and Orford. Members of the WNCF started to re-survey the town for breeding swifts last year and will be trying to increase the coverage of the survey this year. Here's your chance to get involved and discover some screaming swifts doing their amazing aerial acrobatics!

Brian is passionate about swifts and when writing about them has this to say: The swift (*Apus apus*) is one of my favourite birds and like many others I eagerly await its return each spring. Summer seems finally to have arrived when the first swift is seen with its magnificent and seemingly effortless flight over towns and villages which it left almost nine months earlier. Swifts winter in Central and Southern Africa (ringing recoveries suggest mainly the Congo and Malawi) and spend only about sixteen weeks in Europe, the shortest period of any of the summer migrants.

In former times swifts bred in cracks in cliffs, caves and probably also in holes in trees, where some are still reported to breed in parts of Eastern Europe and the former USSR. In this country, however, the swift now breeds most exclusively on houses and other buildings, constructing its fairly simple nest inside the roof space. The fact that the nest is hidden from view makes it difficult to census the breeding population of swifts and studies have only progressed in the last decade. *Taken from: 'A Survey of the Population of Swifts in Warrington 1992' By Brian Martin*

The biggest threat to our town's swift population is unsympathetic roofing works where the eaves are sealed. Swifts are not 'messy' birds and can help to keep the insect numbers down around your house and garden. Around Warrington many new builds are now being encouraged to use swift 'bricks' within the design of buildings to provide new nesting sites.

This survey is simple to carry out, doesn't take very long and requires only a basic knowledge of bird identification. Surveys need to take place between May and June (that's what the Bank Holiday weekend is for!) and around 8.30 to 9pm. Take the dog or even do it from your car as I did last year. Training can be provided. The swift is the logo of the WNCF and with a little effort from us, the information available on their breeding numbers and sites can be vastly increased, helping to support the inclusion of swift bricks in new builds and also provide an updated picture of the status of the bird across the town, as like many species they are in decline.

If you can help contact Helen or email with the details of the area you can survey so we are not repeating ourselves.

Helen Lacy, Natural Environment Officer, New Town House, Buttermarket St, Warrington, WA1 2NH [hlacy@warrington.gov.uk](mailto:hlacy@warrington.gov.uk)

Further information on swifts is available at : <http://www.swift-conservation.org/>

## Otter holt constructed at Manchester Airport

Cheshire's otters had a new home built for them at Manchester airport in February as part of the Cheshire region Otter Biodiversity Action Plan. Although otter numbers are starting to increase in the region since their decline in the 1970s, they still rely on the helping hands of conservationists to make up for the lack of natural breeding sites.

### Road casualties

Road casualties and pesticides are amongst a long list of factors, which have contributed to the otters' demise over the years, and although Cheshire has a wealth of waterways, the otter population is still lower than would be expected. The species is currently listed in the International Union for the Conservation of Natures' (IUCN) Red Book as 'vulnerable to extinction'.

The initial idea for the otter holt came from the Manchester Airport, who as part of their commitment to support biodiversity around the airport, wanted to provide a resting opportunity for otters in the area. The airport identified the site along help from the Environment Agency, and supplied the contractor and materials. Members of the Riparian Mammal BAP collected the materials and carried out the construction along with Forestry Commission staff.

The team spent a day building the artificial otter holt on the edge of the airport to support the species as it passes through the area, both as a resting place and as a possible breeding area. The holt has been sited at a secret location away from human disturbance and will be monitored on a regular basis.



The underground chamber will be hardly visible from the ground, but will be monitored for activity under the artificial holt monitoring regime.

An otter's diet mainly consists of fish but can also include birds, insects, frogs, crustaceans and sometimes other small mammals.

To find out more about the Cheshire region Otter Biodiversity Action Plan visit [www.cheshire-biodiversity.org.uk](http://www.cheshire-biodiversity.org.uk)

What about otters in Warrington then? They need an unpolluted body of freshwater (including lakes, streams, ponds and rivers) with a good supply of food. Their diet consists mainly of fish, but they will also eat birds, frogs, crustaceans and sometimes small mammals. The National Otter survey of England has shown that in favourable conditions, such as cleaner rivers and waterways, greater fish stocks, sympathetic wetland and riverside management and the creation of new bankside habitat, a healthy breeding population can recolonise large areas relatively quickly. Perhaps a species to aim for in the future?

Seen a dead Otter? Cardiff University want to know [www.otterproject.cardiff.ac.uk](http://www.otterproject.cardiff.ac.uk)  
email [chadwickEA@cf.ac.uk](mailto:chadwickEA@cf.ac.uk)

# WHO'S AFRAID OF THE DARK? By Andrea Radcliffe

Walk through any of the parks in the evening at this time of year and your senses will be tingling. A few mammals are just beginning to become active after a dormant or reduced activity winter period. Walk through woodland and you may hear a "twit -twoo" as a pair of tawny owls call to each other to define territories. In the more open parkland you may catch a glimpse of a barn owl, highly distinguishable from other owls it's pure white under parts



An animal you may be lucky enough to catch a glimpse of is the badger. They can be inactive for long periods during the winter months and even longer if it's wet! They are very shy and nervous animals and rarely venture close to people.



The fox, however, is far bolder and at this time of year can be heard calling. Their distinctive call can be blood curdling, especially if you've never heard it before. Spring is breeding time for foxes, with the males becoming very aggressive and vocal as they defend their territories from other

males and try to attract a female. You can also begin to notice the very pungent smell of urine, which helps to identify areas where foxes visit frequently. So even if you don't get to see a fox, you can often tell there is one in the area.



Although they are not supposed to be out and about just yet another mammal which can be sometimes seen is the bat. Bats, unlike many other animals which hibernate, do wake up and feed if there is a



warm spell. In Warrington we have at least 7 of the 17 British species; these are Brandt's, brown long eared, two pipistrelle species, daubenton's, noctule and whiskered. If you want to know more why not look out for a bat walk in your local park organised by the park rangers.

Another good place to look for animals are ponds. These can be very active places at night so take a torch and shine it over the water to see if can catch a glimpse of tiny yellow eyes looking back at you.

Frogs will feed around the edge of ponds using their long sticky tongues to capture prey whereas toads will often travel longer distances to obtain their food which consists mainly of ants. Newts spend most of their time on land, returning to ponds in springtime when the water temperature has raised high enough for them to breed. See the amphibian article for where to send records of your sightings.



# Soil and Earthworm survey

Got a free few

hours? Then try something slightly different & survey some soil & earthworms!

This national survey is running until May and aims to see if different worms are found in different soil types. I have some recollection of doing worm charming experiments at school with water and washing-up liquid, but I don't think we paid much attention to the worms themselves.

The survey comes with a downloadable soil and earthworm field guide including a factfile of all the worms in the survey and some information on less common worms. The comprehensive workbook taking you through each step of the survey with illustrations and keys is well designed and useable by all ages and experience levels. If you can't download, printed copies can be sent for.

There are 26 different species of earthworms in Britain. Some are common and found in lots of places whilst others are rare. Earthworms are sensitive to many environmental factors, and these will influence where they live. If you find lots of earthworms in your soil it can be a sign of good soil quality.

## Top 12 worms – how many have you heard of?!

1. **Compost worm** *Eisenia veneta*.
2. **Brandling worm** *Eisenia fetida*.
3. **Green worm** *Allolobophora chlorotica*.
4. **Redhead worm** *Lumbricus rubellus*.
5. **Black-headed worm** *Aporrectodea longa*
6. **Lob worm** *Lumbricus terrestris*.
7. **Octagonal-tailed worm** *Dendrobaena octaedra*.
8. **Chestnut worm** *Lumbricus castaneus*.
9. **Little tree worm** *Satchellius mammalis*.
10. **Rosy-tipped worm** *Aporrectodea rosea*.
11. **Grey worm** *Aporrectodea caliginosa*.
12. **Blue-grey worm** *Octolasion cyaneum*.
13. **Green worm** *Allolobophora chlorotica*.



Compost worm



For more information visit the  
OPAL website:  
[www.OPALexplorenature.org](http://www.OPALexplorenature.org)

Redhead worm

# Upper Mersey Valley Forest Park



'Where?' I can hear you say. Well you've probably already visited the Park, bird-watched, cycled, walked and had your picnic there. The Mersey Forest Team is leading on this initiative and I've taken some key information from the draft version of their information leaflet to give you a few details.

The idea of the 'Forest Park' is to bring together existing and new community woodland sites and other habitats under one name to help promote a more recognisable and positive image for the area. The Forest Park vision is for the woodlands within each Park to be inter-linked and equipped with visitor infrastructure and amenities; for nature and recreation to combine to form high quality, sustainable destinations for the benefit of people, business and the environment.

Wow, this sounds very worthy! But what does it actually mean? Well, to start with, the Upper Mersey Valley Forest Park runs from the Runcorn-Widnes Bridge up the Mersey estuary to the southern edge of Warrington at Sankey Valley Park. There are two nature reserves in the Forest Park, Moore and Wigg Island, as well as Spike Island, Widnes Warth and Upper Moss Side. Along the northern part of the estuary runs the St Helens/Sankey Canal while as a mirror image to the south runs the Manchester Ship Canal. The Forest Park also covers an area south of the estuary that takes in the village of Moore and Daresbury Firs.

## Why has this area been chosen and what are the plans?

### **It's a regionally important, high quality bird-watching haven**

Almost 130 different species have been sighted in the Forest Park area in recent years, thanks to the area's diverse habitats. The aim of the Forest Park is to develop this resource in a sustainable manner which will maximise the bird watching opportunities and the accompanying potential to increase visitor numbers, whilst protecting the habitats and environments that encourage the many bird species to thrive in the area.

### **New image for the area**

Visitor numbers to the Forest Park have the potential to be significantly increased with the establishment of a more recognisable and positive identity for the area. With the bird watching opportunities already providing a high quality visitor offer, a co-ordinated and focused marketing plan promoting the estuary as an informal recreational area rich in wildlife can be highly effective.

### **Improved access to the sites on offer**

With the Trans Pennine Trail running along the northern boundary and footpaths throughout, there is the opportunity to develop a circular route around the estuary to improve access to the Forest Park as a whole as well as between the different sites. The circular route should be made accessible for both the walker and cyclist, linking up many of the key sites and providing an extremely attractive visitor experience. Work is taking place at the moment to look at access improvements, including greenways, and signage requirements and proposals should be complete by later this Spring 2009. Watch this space!

**To find out more please contact Paul Nolan or Clare Olver at The Mersey Forest Team.**

Paul Nolan (Director)  
Email: [paul.nolan@merseyforest.org.uk](mailto:paul.nolan@merseyforest.org.uk)

Clare Olver (Project Development Officer)  
Email: [clare.olver@merseyforest.org.uk](mailto:clare.olver@merseyforest.org.uk)

# Events and Activities

**Mid May- Mid June Swift survey time.** If you can survey areas around where you live or work this would be a big help. If you'd like to know how to carry out the survey contact Helen for details and a survey form.

**Summer General meeting:** Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> June 7.30pm This evening we will have a site visit/survey, please keep the date free until we can confirm the location.

What are you waiting for? Join in!!

## CHESHIRE MAMMAL GROUP:

- Malpas – Friday 17<sup>th</sup> April at 10am. Grid reference SJ487 474. Details tbc
- Lyme Park – Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> May at 10am. GR SJ972 846 meet at Disley Station car park, Buxton Road West. Further details tbc
- Ecclestone – Monday 8<sup>th</sup> June at 10am. GR SJ415 622. Details tbc

These sessions will provide an opportunity to improve your knowledge, field craft, species identification and recording skills. Recording sessions are scheduled for all day but feel free to stay for as long as you can. We suggest you bring notebooks, ID guides, binoculars, cameras, plastic bags (for samples!) and GPS if you have them as well as a mobile phone and light refreshments. Stout walking shoes and appropriate clothing are also advisable. For further details contact Rob Smith at [robs.seven2@toucansurf.com](mailto:robs.seven2@toucansurf.com)

## moore nature reserve <http://www.wrg.co.uk/moorenaturereserve/>

Moore Nature Reserve, Arpley Landfill Site, Forrest Way, Sankey Bridges, Warrington, WA4 6YZ,  
Tel: 01925 444689 Plenty of great events to choose from, call for further details or see web site.

26/4/2009 **Arpley Landfill Site Tour** a rare chance to visit the restored areas of Arpley Landfill Site,  
9/5/2009 **Dawn Chorus Walk** Experience the sights and sounds of Moore Nature Reserve at dawn, with local experts  
16/5/2009 & 24/5/2009 **Great Crested Newts** A chance to see the Great Crested Newt plus pond dipping  
3/6/2009 **Arpley Landfill Site Tour (Evening)**

## Events in Warrington parks

A new events booklet should be available very soon see the council website [www.warrington.gov.uk](http://www.warrington.gov.uk) or call 01925 442495.

## Cheshire Wildlife Trust Warrington events

### Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> May **Holcroft Moss**

Meet by Ferndale Nursery, Holcroft Lane (SJ688935) 7pm Guided walk around one of the few remaining mossland areas in the North West.  
Contact Tony Parker 01925 726986 if you want to come along

### Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> December **Gatewath and St. Helens**

**Canal** Meet Ferry Tavern car park (SJ564868) 10am. Walk along one of Cheshire's oldest canals & the former Gatewath landfill site, both areas attract a good variety of wintering water birds

## Woolston eyes Open Day Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> June 10am-4pm

*A day not to be missed! There will be guided walks with experts plus bird ringing and moth trapping with the opportunity to see live birds and moths at close quarters. There will also be guided tours of No.3 bed, which is not normally open to the public with views of Black-necked Grebes hopefully with young. See web site for details <http://www.woolstoneyes.co.uk>*