

Barford Road Pocket Park Quarterly Newsletter

October 2010

Coming Up.....

In the last couple of months, you may have noticed someone wandering around the park looking at pieces of roofing felt laying around on the ground. In my last newsletter, I mentioned that ACD Ecology had been commissioned to undertake the survey and translocation of a population of reptiles from the "Poppyfields" site which is due to have houses built on soon. This is what these people have been doing. The roofing felts were put down to give reptiles somewhere to bask in the sunshine or take cover in the not so good weather. This enabled Fleur Oliver and her team to see just how many reptiles inhabit the park. With some quite positive results, it was decided that the park is a suitable "receptor site" to take the extra reptiles from the building site.

Where are all these slithery characters going to live I hear you cry?! Well, on Monday the 4th of October, work will start on building some **Hibernacula's** for the reptiles to take refuge in.

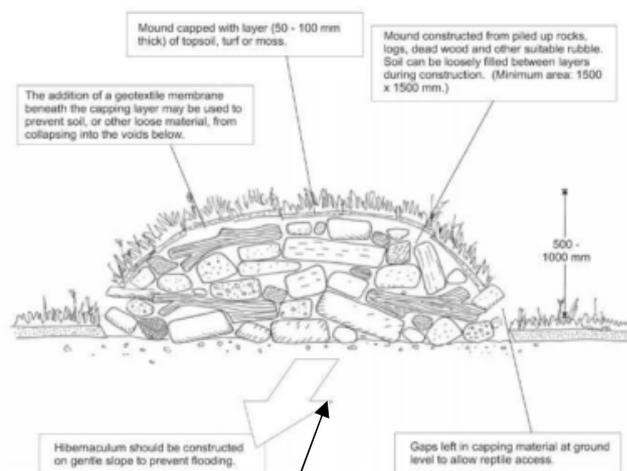
These structures will be above ground piles of rubble, logs and other materials covered with a turf roof to provide warmth in the winter months. I have previously built a small one of these to encourage frogs to hibernate and it works wonders! Over the next year as well, grass and brush piles will be piled across the park as nesting places for grass snakes.

The work will begin on Monday the 4th and will take approximately a week to complete. The contractors being used will be bringing in some diggers and dumper trucks to move materials around and will be setting up a small enclosure to keep machinery in near the school entrance to the park.

Remember to be very careful around any moving machinery you may happen to come across any on your walk.

Special points of interest:

- Have a look at the work being carried out by the Rangers and maybe let me know what you think!?
- Most of all, enjoy the park and respect the surroundings!



This is a commonly used design for Frog and Reptile Hibernacula's.



Winters On Its Way

The leaves have started falling and the air is becoming a lot colder. It can mean only one thing, that winter is well on its way which will bring with it winter birds and a lot of work. Most of the habitat management work in the park takes place between now and the end of February. By doing the work at this time of year, minimizes any damage to birds or animals as most have either migrated or hibernated by now. Some of the main jobs include:

- Managing the current lizard habitat to create basking spots.
- Cutting the island in the conservation lake for swans and other birds to breed on.
- This winter will also see the siting of a number of new birdboxes of different varieties to increase the number of birds nesting in the park.
- This winter, I will also be planting about 100 metres of hedge around the park. This will provide more nesting and feeding places for winter and summer birds.

All this work is necessary to ensure that the abundance of wildlife in the park continues to increase.

Fishing

This summer holidays has seen the return of our free fishing sessions for young people held on the park. We had a very positive response once again and all the sessions were fully booked this year. We ran nearly 20 sessions this year including some "one-off" sessions for groups, and a special session just for adults. Luckily the fish were feeding well too which meant that everyone caught something. There were several familiar faces from previous years which is a good sign that some of these young people will go onto enjoy fishing as a regular pass time.



Schools Out(side)!

As part of St. Neots Community Colleges' "Opening Minds" programme, some groups of students will be in the park in the next few weeks with their teachers using the site for some team building activities. This will include using a piece of willow woodland where the groups will be doing some den building and other activities. By undertaking these activities, the children not only benefit from the exercise and fresh air, but the main idea of the activity is to build the children's self esteem and confidence which should, in turn, help them to achieve more in school.

I try to take every opportunity to get students (and children of all ages) out onto the park either to work with me or just on an educational visit with their school. I have found that by doing this, the young people get to know me and the site which has resulted in me having incredibly low problems with vandalism and anti-social behaviour.



Getting the children outside helps with achievements in school too.

Winter Wildlife At The Park

The winter can be a fantastic time to enjoy the wildlife on the park. Although there will be a distinct lack of butterflies, dragonflies and reptiles because of hibernation periods, there will be a lot of winter migrant birds on the park.

From now onwards we will start to see **Fieldfares** and **Redwings** arriving and feeding on the mead-



ows. The **Redwing** is easy to spot due to its easily visible redness under its wings!

You can also expect to see a rise in the number of wildfowl on the lake and on the marina. Many wild-

fowl will start arriving now from the north and will include **Goldeneye**, **Pochards**, **Widgeon** and **Teal**.

If you listen very carefully around the marshy areas inside the conservation areas fence, you may hear what you think sounds like a



squealing pig! This in fact will be a **Water Rail**. This bird, along with **Snipe**, will feed in the shallow water around the edge of the lakeside feeding on the minibeasts that live in the silt.



You can also expect to see the interesting **Shoveler** Duck. Its beak is a shovel shape which it uses to scoop up weed and insects.

Forthcoming events...

WORK PARTY AND GUIDED WALK

Sunday 5th December 2010

Work Party

10 am till Noon

Guided Walk

1pm onwards

Join me for a good winters work party by helping to carry out the management of the park followed up by a walk around to see how the park is changing on this possibly cold winters day!

Bring warm clothes and good footwear! All tools and refreshments provided. Meet at the footbridge on the school entrance to the park.

For more information of forthcoming events or just more information about the park, please contact:

Phone: 01480 406 795

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Many thanks and see you around!

Matt Hall

Ranger, Barford Road Pocket Park