

Autumn Newsletter



Autumn Festival Fun

Having missed holding our Autumn Festival in 2020, we were determined to make this year's event better than ever.

Photo: Elaine Rushton

It was great to be able to finally welcome people back to the moor over the weekend of 25th and 26th September and even the weather was kind to us! With more trade stalls than ever before, vendors selling delicious food and drink, activities and displays courtesy of our Environmental Awareness team and volunteers, have-a-go archery from Berkhamsted Bowmen, Dacorum & Chiltern Potters Guild workshop, wood carving demonstrations, tractors, ukuleles, a mini circus and even Alice & the Mad Hatter, the community turned out in force for a few hours of family fun. Thanks to all our volunteers, local groups and traders for supporting the event, and especially to those of you who came along with your families to enjoy it.

See you at our lambing weekend next spring!

For more news visit www.boxmoortrust.org.uk



2022 Calendar Competition

Winning images



Photo: Martin West



Photo: Iain Nibbsy



Photo: Graham Denney

Once again, we have been overwhelmed by the standard of entry in our annual calendar photographic competition. With almost 100 entries being received, the task of whittling them down to just 12 has been almost impossible.

The theme for this year was 'Box Moor Trust Land Through Lockdown'. Some photographers chose to concentrate on stunning landscape views, showcasing all the variety of the Trust estate. Others have taken amazing wildlife shots, featuring some of the birds, mammals and insects that can be found on our land.

The twelve finalists represent a range of different seasons, subjects and areas of the estate. We asked our Facebook community

to select the winners, and the images that attracted the most 'likes' were awarded first, second and third places.

The winner, with 273 votes, was Martin West with his unusual and beautiful study of a kingfisher on Station Moor, backlit by the early morning sun. In second place was Iain Nibbsy (143 votes) with a gorgeous close-up of a water vole, living proof that the Trust's recent reintroduction programme is starting to bear fruit. Third place went to Graham Denney with his fantastic kestrel, shot artfully through falling snow (133 votes).

Well done to all twelve, and in particular to Martin, Iain and Graham. Thank you for everyone who entered and to all those who took the trouble to vote for their favourites.

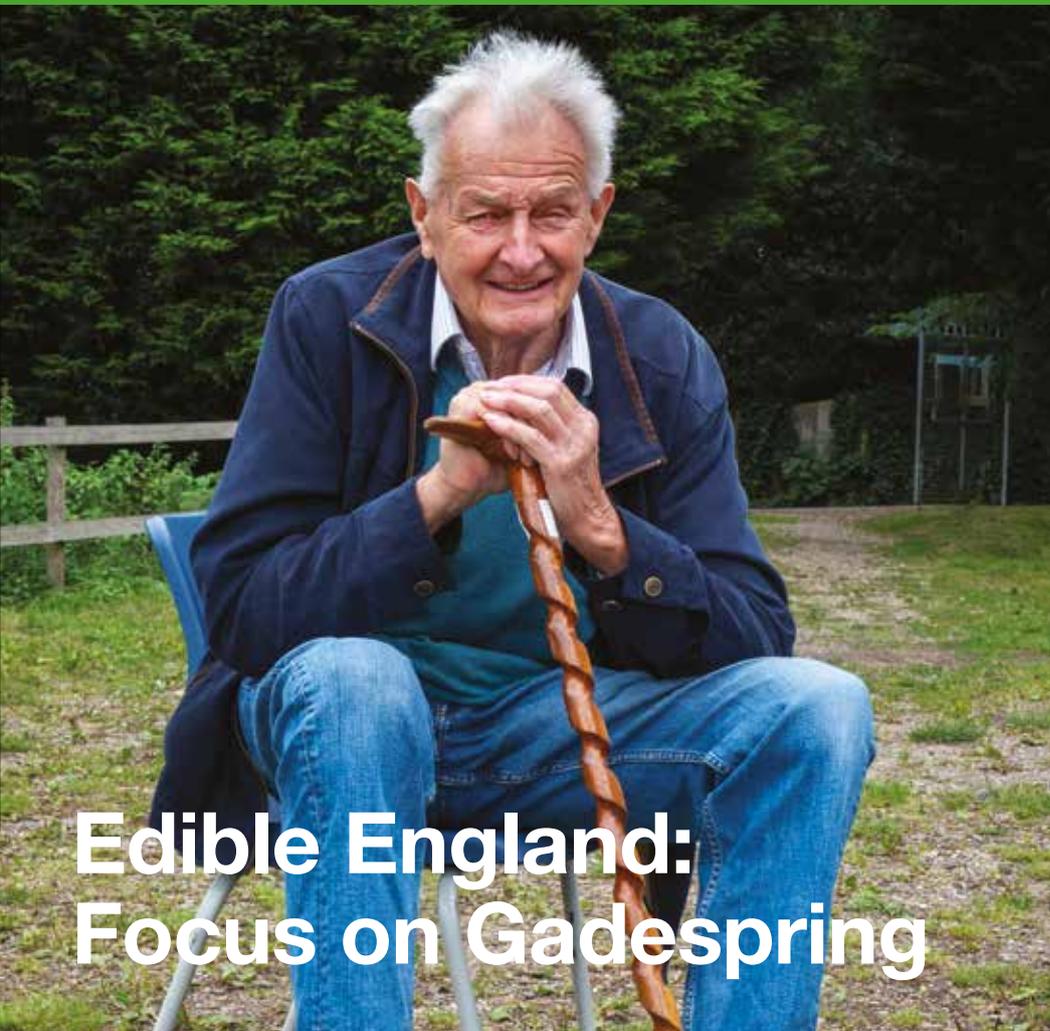
The calendar is available to buy from our website at www.boxmoortrust.org.uk at £6.00 + p&p. Alternatively, pop into our HQ in London Road and pick up a copy – they make great Christmas presents!

Herts Geological Society Visit

On 10th July, we were pleased to welcome Herts Geological Society to the Trust – the first actual meeting since lockdown started in March 2020! They looked at pingoes on Herdsman's and Fishery Moors and the Bulbourne restoration work, before going off to view the River Chess in the afternoon. Their visit was hosted by Box Moor Trustee Peter Ablett.



Photo: Peter Ablett



Edible England: Focus on Gadespring

On Sunday the 19th September the gates of Gadespring were opened to visitors, who were fascinated to meet Hubert Mills, the last watercress grower to farm watercress in Dacorum. Hubert, who worked at the Gadespring site, talked about his life as a watercress grower and the watercress industry in Hertfordshire.

The event was held as part of the annual 'Heritage Open Days' festival, which celebrates England's architecture and culture and allows visitors free access to historical landmarks that are either not usually open to the public or would incur an entrance fee. One of the themes to this year's event was 'Edible England' which encompassed a spectrum of activities and stories, from revealing culinary tastes of the past to going behind-the-scenes of modern production methods – and everything in-between! From early Victorian times until the 1960s, watercress was in great demand due to its perceived health benefits and this led to commercial watercress farms being established. Watercress was transported from the farms by train to London, the Midlands and the north of England.

Box Moor Trust volunteer Tim Edwin led a number of tours (both in Berkhamsted and at the Trust's Gadespring site) covering the local watercress industry, which was prominent across Hertfordshire up until the mid-1970s. Watercress growing locally was a common sight, with over 20 cress bed sites to be found in the Dacorum area. Gadespring was the last commercial watercress farm to exist in Dacorum, the site closing in the mid-1990s. As testament to this past industry, wild watercress can still be seen frequently growing in the river Bulbourne and the river Gade. The dominant area in the UK for watercress growing is now based in Dorset.

Established in 1994 as England's contribution to European Heritage Days, in which 49 countries now participate, Heritage Open Days attract some 800,000 people every year. Every September thousands of volunteers across England organise events to highlight the country's fantastic history and culture. This year, over 3,800 events were held between 10th and 19th September.

Photo of Hubert Mills by Elaine Rushton



Photo: David Winter

On the subject of Spiders

We know they're not everybody's favourite critters but with spider season now well and truly upon us, it's worth taking a closer look at these fascinating little arachnids.

Below we have a Wasp Spider (*Argiope bruennichi*), a recent arrival to the UK, first recorded 1922 in Rye, Sussex. The yellow and black striped colouration giving this species its name. You would typically find them in rough grassland, eating predominantly grasshoppers and crickets! This specimen was spotted and photographed by Heather Burrows, our Senior Ranger (Environmental Awareness & Community), in the meadows of Westbrook Hay.

The other photo was taken in the same area by David Winter on 6th September. This is a female Four-spotted Orbweb (*Araneus quadratus*), common across the UK, seen here wrapping her prey. The four spots are diagnostic but the abdomen colour can vary a lot depending on environment/background.



Photo: Heather Burrows



Nature Conservation for under-18s

Photo: Heather Burrows

In October, we had another busy month with all our youngsters.

Youth Rangers had an exciting session where they dissected some owl pellets for us. The owl pellets were obtained when checking one of our barn owl boxes on site. Not only was this an exciting session for the children but helps our conservation efforts as we can record what the owl has been eating, which helps us know if our management strategy for that area is right. The Rangers then constructed some habitat boxes to replace some of the older ones on site.

Mini Rangers found out all about trees and fungi. We walked through Hay Wood and identified different types of tree and fungus along the way. We looked at the various fruits and seeds that come from trees and talked about which animals may be eating what.

Nature Tots has been all about mammals and where they live. The children all chose a cuddly mammal to take on a walk, we looked

at the different places they may live, heard a story about the mammals. We then found out what their footprints look like and made our cuddly mammals a little home. We finished the session with the children making a mask to take away.

We have had over 100 people join us on bat walks during late summer. Most attendees not only heard the bats via our bat detectors but saw them too. One lucky brownie group got quite the display when a common pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*) decided to feed right above us, flitting around our heads for 20 minutes or so.

Monthly Ranger sessions are aimed at 8-16 year-olds (Youth Rangers) and 3-7 year-olds (Mini Rangers). Youth Rangers are drop-off sessions, giving youngsters a taste of the life of a Ranger. Activities will vary depending on the season and the current

conservation needs of the Trust. First child: £7.00. Additional siblings and pupil premium children: £3.50.

Mini Ranger sessions are designed to engage your children and inspire a life-long love of nature. A range of activities will include such things as insect hunting, pond dipping, leaf matching and animal tracking. All children must be accompanied by an adult. First child: £5. Additional siblings and pupil premium children: £2.50.

Tickets available through Eventbrite (See 'Upcoming Events' on our website).

Nature Tots is designed specifically for toddlers and pre-schoolers. Nature Tots is aimed at children between the ages of 18 months and 4 years, as well as their parents and/or carers. Contact environment@boxmoortrust.org.uk for more information.

Tupping Time

Preparations are under way for lambing 2022, with breeding rams currently being sorted into their tupping groups (the groups of ewes that each ram will be mated to). When you see them in the fields, you may notice that each ram will be wearing a special harness (known as a 'raddle'), which holds a coloured wax block that marks the ewes so that we know they have been mated. The rams will be in with the ewes for around 6 weeks, by which time we hope they will all be pregnant, ready to give birth in time for you to see lambs at our Lambing Weekend on 2nd and 3rd April next year.

Contact Us

The Box Moor Trust Centre, London Road
Hemel Hempstead, HP1 2RE
Tel: 01442 253300 Reg. Charity No. 206142

