

Winter Newsletter

When the Belted Galloways disappear from the pastures in November, we often get asked by members of the public where they have gone.

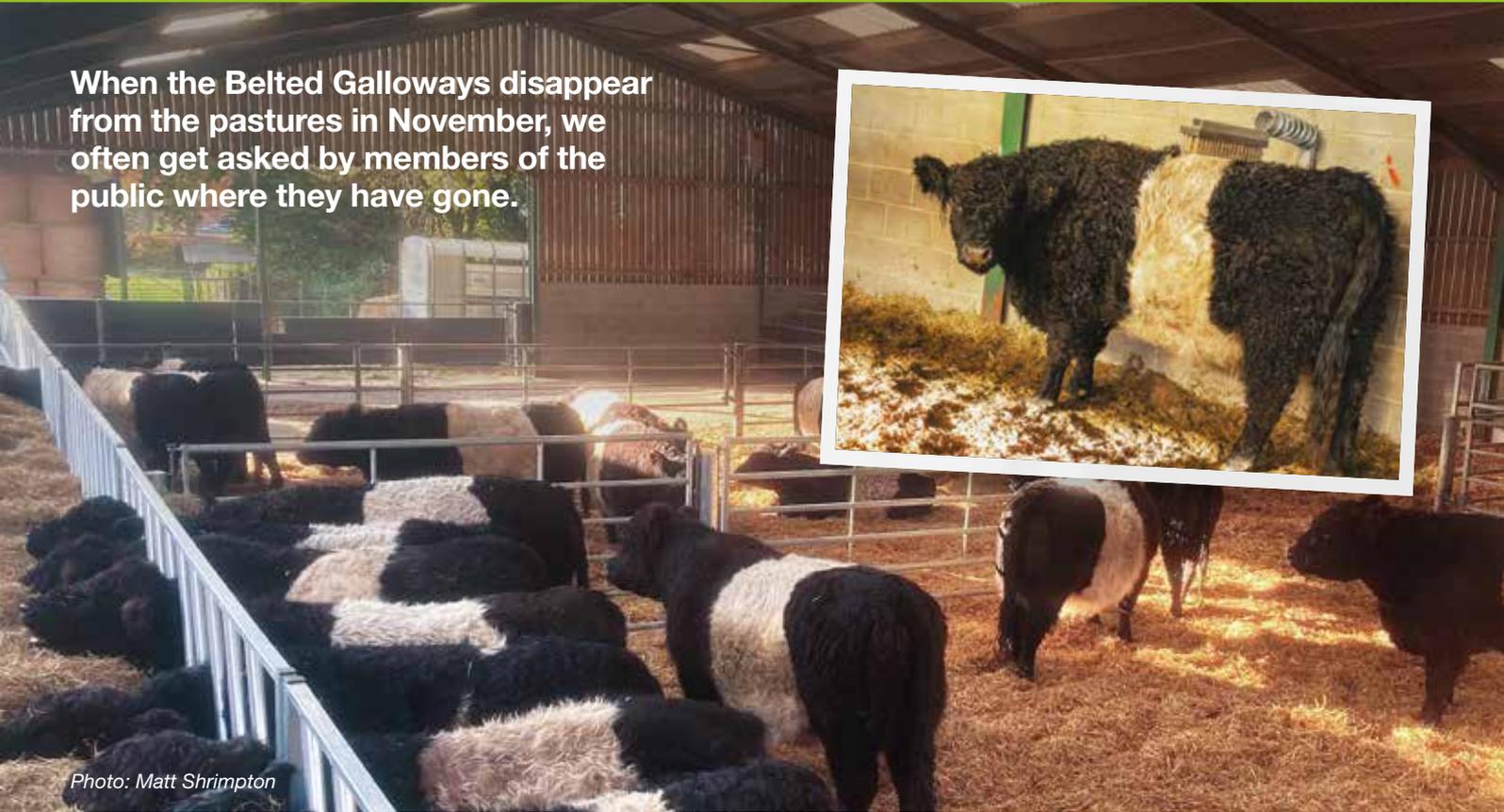


Photo: Matt Shrimpton

The answer is that they spend the coldest months of the year snug and warm in their winter housing at Howes Retreat. We have been making some improvements to the cattle barn and, after a lot of hard work by our team of rangers and volunteers, the alterations are complete and the cattle's

winter quarters are ready. There is one new feature to provide some additional enrichment. When out and about on our estate our cattle always find a tree or fence post to have a good scratch! Now that they are in their winter home these things aren't as readily available, so we have provided

them with a cattle scratching brush which, as well as making them happy, has the added benefit of stimulating healthy blood circulation.

As you can see, our Belties are already making themselves at home!



Photo: Kate Steele

Water Vole Survey

After our phased water vole reintroduction in recent years we have made sure that we regularly survey the sites to monitor their success.

Recently our Trainee Ranger Jane joined Martin Ketcher of Herts & Middx Wildlife Trust, who has been surveying water voles for 20 years, to look for field signs. It takes a trained eye to spot the signs - things such as feeding sites and latrines. Indications are good so far that they are establishing themselves and the hope is that the population will spread, eventually joining up with others. The Herts & Middx Wildlife Trust has recently undertaken a similar reintroduction project on the river Ver. *Long term success is dependent on keeping mink at bay. If you see one in our local valleys can you please let us know?*



Photo Competition: In Harmony with Nature

Entries are invited for our annual photographic competition and the winning photos will feature in the Box Moor Trust 2023 calendar.

Competitors may interpret the theme, "Box Moor Trust: In Harmony with Nature", in any way they choose. All photographs must have been taken on, or of, Box Moor Trust land and should be in landscape format to fit in with the design of the calendar. The closing date is Sunday 7th August 2022. The Trust will select twelve finalists for the calendar. These will then be put to the public vote on the Box Moor Trust Facebook page to determine 1st, 2nd and 3rd places.

Prizes are £100 for first place, £75 for second and £50 for third, with £10 awarded to all other photographers whose images are selected for the calendar.

Entry forms and full rules and regulations can be downloaded from our website at: www.boxmoortrust.org.uk/the-trust/calendar-competition/

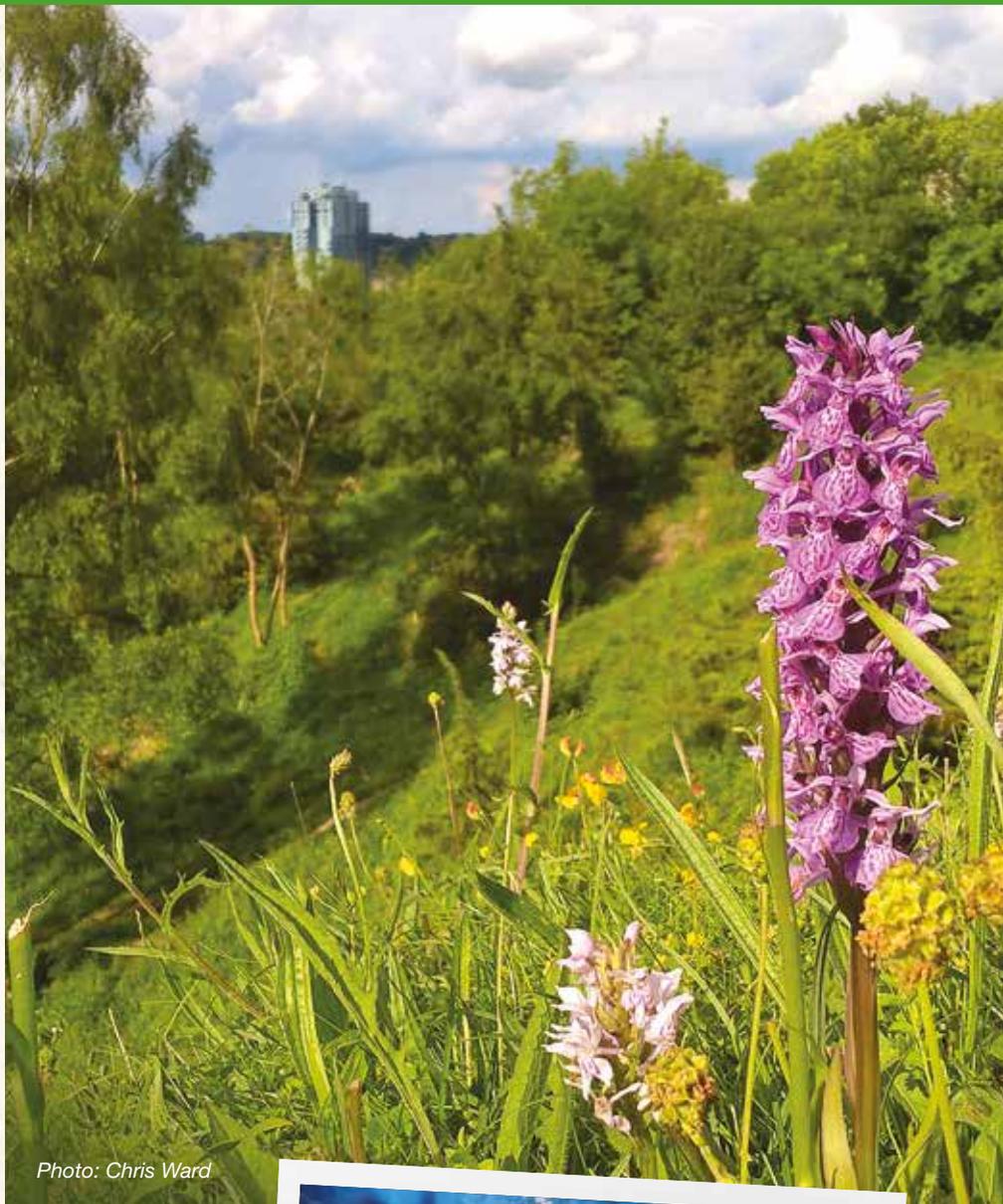


Photo: Chris Ward



Photo: Peter Samson

Tree Safety Works

As a result of our yearly Tree Safety Inspections, you may have seen tree surgeons starting works on Heath Park, felling some of our Lombardy Poplars. Here we have an example of why this work was necessary. From the photo you can see that the internal 'heart' is decayed and rotten, structurally weakening the tree. Further tree safety works will continue to be carried out over the next few months. For further information please contact us on 01442 253300.



Photo: Karen Poore

Youth Rangers help with Wildlife Survey

In November, our Youth Rangers group surveyed for small mammals using mammal traps and caught 6 bank voles and 4 wood mice. The rangers learnt about why small mammals are so important. They also investigated a badger sett in the woodland and identified tracks and signs to determine whether or not it was active.

Welcome... Steve & Laura



Photo: Elaine Rushton

We are pleased to introduce two new members of our Estate team: Steve Dutch and Laura Caller.

Both Steve and Laura will be assisting with day-to-day conservation management of the Trust's open spaces, common land and SSSI, in addition to a range of duties specific to their individual roles.

Steve is our Ecology Ranger (Environmental Awareness & Community) and will be undertaking ecological surveys and reports, sharing data with external bodies and working with the team to design ecological enhancement schemes and effective species mitigation. He has previously worked for the Greensand Trust in Bedfordshire as a Countryside Ranger and as a trainee with

Berks, Bucks & Oxon Wildlife Trust (BBOWT) at College Lake near Tring.

Laura joined us at the start of 2022 as Environmental Awareness & Community Ranger and will be supporting wildlife awareness activities and leading estate walks, pond dipping sessions and other community activities to raise awareness of the Trust's work on local habitats. She has previous Ranger experience, has worked in visitor engagement and with volunteers, and – last but not least – is an experienced tractor driver!

Did you know...

...that, in common with most fish-eating birds, Kingfishers don't have a crop and their gizzard is unfit for vigorous grinding so adults must produce pellets of indigestible materials like fish scales and bones and expel them? This amazing series of photos taken by Trust volunteer Mike Dunks at Gadespring Cressbeds show the moment that a pellet is expelled by this adult female bird.



A Shy Visitor

Here we have a stunning shot of a Water Rail (*Rallus aquaticus*), captured at our Gadespring site by Iain Nibbsy, one of our volunteers. Water Rails, part of the rail family which includes crakes, coots and gallinules, breed in well-vegetated wetlands across Europe, Asia and North Africa. They are omnivores but mainly eat small fish, snails and insects. As they are very secretive birds, you are more likely to hear one than see one. They make a variety of noises, from grunts and groans, to 'purring' and even squealing like a piglet! Water rails are not often seen in flight as they prefer to migrate under the cover of darkness.



Photo: Iain Nibbsy



Livestock location updates

As with all working farms, our livestock may be subject to movement from one part of the estate to another at any time for a variety of operational reasons.

In any field where there may be stock, it is every dog walker's responsibility to keep their dogs under full and complete control, i.e. on a lead no longer than 2 metres. They must also clear up after their dogs and dispose of faeces responsibly. Dog waste can spread a variety of diseases to livestock and humans

and can contaminate hay feed crops. To help dog walkers plan their routes in advance and avoid risk, the Trust provides up-to-date info on which fields are being grazed at any given time. Visit www.boxmoortrust.org.uk/stock-map/ to see a simple map of the estate with each field numbered, a key with

field names and details of which fields are being grazed that week. Whilst we make every effort to ensure that the map is always kept up to date, this in no way negates the responsibility of dog owners to act responsibly and follow the Countryside Code.

Supporting the community through challenging times

When the pandemic hit in early 2020 and the country went into lockdown Community Action Dacorum was, like many other organisations, office-based and not geared up for home working.

Support from Hertfordshire County Council had meant they had been able to invest in a cloud-based database for their Community Transport Service, but they lacked the portable IT equipment to enable staff to continue delivering the service whilst working from home. A £2,000 grant from Box Moor Trust funded the purchase of 3 laptops, which meant that CAD were able to ensure the welfare and safety of their staff and at the same time continue to deliver their services,

which were vital to support the most vulnerable members of our community. Over the ensuing months, they covered essential hospital visits for existing members and introduced their Store to Door service, recruiting additional volunteers who shopped on behalf of members who had been advised to shield. They also worked alongside other voluntary sector partners commissioned by Hertfordshire CC to deliver services to those who were being identified as clinically extremely vulnerable (CEV) which resulted in an additional 246 people being referred into their service. This included prescription collections, delivering food parcels and, later on, transport to and from vaccine clinics. CAD's Deputy Chief Executive, Helen Mutio,

said "Community Action Dacorum is grateful for the grant that we received from Box Moor Trust. The purchase of the laptops enabled us to adapt our services during a very challenging and difficult time and contributed to the health and wellbeing of the most vulnerable members of our community."

When surplus funds allow, The Box Moor Trust makes available a grant fund to eligible not-for-profit organisations within its Area of Benefit. Although applications are currently suspended due to continuing uncertainty over income levels, Trustees hope to reinstate the fund as soon as circumstances allow.

Contact Us

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

