

Summer Newsletter

Triumph out of Adversity

Earlier in the year, we were devastated to discover that seven of the memorial benches on Blackbirds Moor, donated by families in memory of lost loved ones, had been deliberately destroyed in a single act of mindless vandalism.

Photo: Elaine Rushton

This wanton damage struck a chord with our lovely local community who rallied round to help us fund the replacement of each and every one that had been destroyed. It was agreed that the replacement benches should be of galvanised steel construction instead of wood, to minimise the risk of future damage being inflicted, but inevitably this was a more expensive option.

Boxmoor Councillor William Allen organised a Crowdfunder project, which was generously supported by many of you

living in the community and yielded a total of £690.00. Justin Peacock and the staff and regulars of the Steam Coach pub in St John's Road raised a brilliant £500.00 through an 'Eighties Night'. Herts County Councillor Adrian England arranged for the cost of replacing two litter bins, which were also destroyed in the same incident.

The Trust would like to sincerely thank William, Justin, Adrian and everyone who kindly contributed to these fundraising initiatives. The Trust made up the balance

of the purchase cost and the new benches are now looking resplendent on the moor, complete with replacement engraved plaques to match the originals.





Jubilee Planting at Boxmoor Primary School

Recently, one of our team visited Boxmoor Primary School to help take part in the Queen's Green Canopy initiative in which Her Majesty invited people to 'Plant a Tree for the Jubilee'. With the help of each class, our Ecology Ranger Steve Dutch planted hazel, crab apple and rowan trees to replace veteran trees and in areas that will hopefully provide the best benefit for the natural landscape. During the planting, the classes engaged in a discussion about how trees survive and what we can do to grow them effectively. The importance of planting more trees is well known and it is fantastic to be able to work with the community to bring a greener hue to the local area!

A Fond Farewell to Carters Steam Fair

Photo: Elaine Rushton

It was with a mixture of pleasure and sadness that we welcomed Carters Steam Fair back to Blackbirds Moor for the last time in June.

Having toured their unique range of vintage fairground rides and vehicles around the UK for the last 45 years, the Carter family has taken the decision that 2022 will be the steam fair's final tour and the search is on for the fair to be re-homed on a permanent site with a new owner.

When John and Anna Carter started the fair in 1977, they were passionate about preserving fairground history at a time when other showmen were chasing the latest styles and innovations. When John sadly passed away in 2000, his son Joby took on the responsibility of keeping his legacy

going. Thanks to the loyal support of family and fans, the fair became so much bigger than John could ever have anticipated. Thousands of hours have been invested over the years to restore the vintage rides to new condition, even painting by hand and using real gold leaf. Local families have looked forward to Carters' visit to Boxmoor for many years, with parents who came as youngsters now bringing their own children to enjoy the rides.

We wish the Carter family well in finding a suitable owner and securing the fair's future.

Safeguarding a rare species



In early summer, Box Moor Trustees and staff gathered to witness the planting of a rare Black Poplar standard on the Heritage Site of Fishery Moor, in honour of the Queen's Green Canopy initiative, 'Plant a Tree for the Jubilee'.

The native Black Poplar is one of Britain's most endangered trees. As they hybridise easily, there are very few pure Black Poplars left. The number is currently reckoned to be around 7000, of which only around 600 are female. This makes the fact that the specimen planted by the Trust is both genetically pure and female particularly valuable for the conservation of this endangered species. Black Poplars prefer to grow with their roots in damp ground often following the routes of ditches and streams so Fishery Moor, one of the last remaining flood meadows in the area, is the perfect location. We hope you will enjoy seeing it flourish and grow.

Photo: Elaine Rushton

On Kingfishers

Many of you will know that with lots of effort from volunteers we built a kingfisher bank at Gadespring Cressbeds a few years ago. These banks have a vertical face to deter predators and two nest holes halfway up the face. Inside the bank itself is a long tunnel with a nest cavity at the end. Wherever kingfishers put their nests they are always susceptible to rats and weasels, so any help we can give to improve the breeding success of this enchanting bird has to be worthwhile.

Kingfishers are quite choosy birds, and it took a good while for them to try out one of our 'des res' homes. We eventually rejoiced when a pair did mate and laid eggs in one of the holes. Alas, the design of the bank was not quite robust enough to deter Mr Rat. Luckily a local photographer was there to snap the villain coming out of the hole otherwise we would never have known but, clearly the eggs were predated. So, it was back to the drawing board. The Trust has not survived 428 years without demonstrating lots of patience! We found an impregnable solution which is now used throughout the country - a sheet of smooth iron - and 3 years ago that was installed. Until early this spring there had been no interest and we were beginning to wonder if breeding would ever take place. Then Eureka! A pair began displaying breeding behaviour for some while, giving

good photo opportunities, and eventually it was clear that eggs had been laid. We know that at least one young kingfisher fledged from that effort and at the time of writing this the female is now on eggs in the second nest hole. Success much depends on food supply but Gadespring's scrapes and channels are full of small fish and other food so we will have to wait and see.

We all know that suitable habitats for birds and animals are fast becoming depleted. The scale of reduction in many species around the country is extremely worrying. At the Trust we are trying to improve the chances for what we have and to aid the return of various species, including water voles and butterflies, but this is not like flicking a switch. It is fraught with trial and error but we have support from a fantastic band of volunteers and there is a wealth of advice available nationally. We will keep you updated on other successes in due course.

If you would like to join our volunteers, do please contact the Trust at admin@boxmoortrust.org.uk

We would like to take this opportunity to respectfully remind you all that Kingfishers are a protected species and it is illegal to disturb them at the nest site.



Photo: Steve Bond

Have you 'Herd' the News?

In the spring, we welcomed some new members to our herd of rare breed Belted Galloway cattle. Ten cattle have been bought in to replace some of the ageing animals within the herd (a few of our cattle are 18 years old!) and to assist us with the important task of conservation grazing across the estate. Five cows with heifer calves at foot are the familiar black and white colours that you will be used to seeing. We also have two heifers in the less commonly seen red and white. They are very distinctive – look out for them when you are out and about on the land.

Autumn Festival 2022

We are busy planning this year's festival, which will take place on Blackbirds Moor over the weekend of 24th and 25th September. Following on from the success of last year's event we welcome stall applications from local crafters, artisans and small businesses as well as community groups and charities. You can take space inside one of three large marquees or book a pitch for your own gazebo outside. We also have room for a few more hot food vendors particularly on the Sunday. For more information and a link to the application form, please email: elainerushton@boxmoortrust.org.uk



Photo: Graham Denney

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Keen on nature? Love photography?

Why not mix both together and submit an entry or two to our 2023 calendar photo competition?

Photo: Ian Nibbsy

This year's theme is "In Harmony with Nature" which can be interpreted any way you wish. 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 twelve selected finalists will 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/

Summer Events 2022

River Bulbourne Guided Walk
Saturday 16th July, 2022 at 10am.
Suitable for all.

Family Ragwort Bash
Thursday 28th July 2022 at 1pm.
Suitable for families.

Meadow Sweeping at the Old Barn
Tuesday 2nd August and Thursday 18th August 2022, 11am-12 noon and 1pm to 2pm. Suitable for families.

Wildflower Walk at Westbrook Hay
Wednesday 3rd August 2022, 6pm-8pm.
Suitable for all.

We have a range of events in the next few months, including pond dipping, guided walks, and bug hunts. All events are ticketed, and numbers are limited, so get your tickets quickly before they sell out! Places can be booked via our Eventbrite page at: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/o/the-box-moor-trust-33777097107>

Pond Dipping at Gadespring Cressbeds
Thursday 4th August and Tuesday 16th August 11am-12pm and 1pm to 2pm.
Suitable for families.

River Dipping at Gadespring Sidestream
Wednesday 10th August 2022, 1pm-3pm. Suitable for families.

Pond Dipping at the Old Barn
Friday 12th August and Friday 26th August 11am-12pm & 1pm-2pm.
Suitable for families.

Bug Hunting in Hay Wood
Wednesday 25th August, 11am-12pm and 1pm-2pm. Suitable for families.



Contact Us

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