

# Autumn Newsletter



## Corporate Volunteering at the Trust

GRS Trading Ltd volunteers with Box Moor Trust  
Senior Ranger Karen Poore (far right)

*Photo: Jane Ahern*

**Over the last month we have been working with our corporate partners, GRS Trading Ltd, developing a team-building volunteer project for their staff that would give them a unique opportunity to learn new skills and work together to achieve an end goal.**

Approximately 60 staff have given a combined 350 volunteering hours and helped the Estates Team with work that will help to support the banks of the River Bulbourne, a chalk stream and globally rare habitat.

During the mornings, GRS volunteers collected and bundled coppice material which they then helped to install along the River Bulbourne in the afternoons. The purpose of these bundles is to support and protect the riverbanks from erosion and encourage natural siltation. This work helps

to improve biodiversity, reduce the risk of flooding and creates a valuable habitat for wildlife.

Volunteering projects like this bring people into contact with the outdoors and give them a chance to learn new skills with the support of our friendly team. If your staff are happy to roll their sleeves up and get stuck in, then we can offer worthwhile and enjoyable volunteering opportunities that will help us improve the land for visitors whilst maintaining important wildlife habitats.

The work of the Box Moor Trust aims to attract wildlife and increase the biodiversity of the local area whilst making the land open and accessible for the local community to enjoy. We also offer environmental awareness opportunities to instil a lifelong enjoyment of nature and the environment.

We are happy to work with you to find a project that you feel would fit with your organisation's core values and help you to provide employee engagement programmes to enrich both the organisation and its people. You will also make a difference to a local charity that strives to make a positive impact on the environment.

If you would like more information on ways that your organisation can help to support our charity, please contact us at [admin@boxmoortrust.org.uk](mailto:admin@boxmoortrust.org.uk)



# 2023 Calendar Competition

## Winning images



Photo: Iain Nibbsy

**The task of picking the 12 winning images for the following year's Box Moor Trust calendar is always a tough but enjoyable one, with some amazing shots having been entered in the photographic competition again this year.**

The brief for photographers was "Box Moor Trust: In Harmony with Nature" and the entries reflected all the diversity and beauty of the landscape and abundant wildlife of the Trust estate.

Twelve final images were selected and our Facebook community kindly voted for their favourites online to decide first, second and third places.

The overwhelming winner, with 310 votes, was Iain Nibbsy's enchanting backlit robin, its song portrayed graphically as cold winter breath - a fabulous shot!

Second and third places both went to Aaron Cooper for photos taken at Westbrook Hay. His lovely photo of a wildflower meadow at sunrise attracted 245 votes whilst his great capture of a fox in the long grass came in third with 170 votes.

Congratulations to all those whose images were chosen and thanks, also, to everyone who voted online. The calendar is now in stock and available to buy from our online shop at [www.boxmoortrust.org.uk](http://www.boxmoortrust.org.uk) at £6.00



Photo: Aaron Cooper



Photo: Aaron Cooper

+ p&p. Alternatively, pop into our HQ in London Road, Hemel Hempstead, HP1 2RE and pick up a copy there - they make great Christmas presents!



Photo: Steve Dutch

## Who's Home?

**Last month, our estate team and volunteers conducted a series of small mammal surveys across parts of the Trust land.**

This is an incredibly important set of surveys as the density of small mammals present in the habitat correlates directly to the success of barn owls raising chicks. The process involves live trapping of the animals over the course of an evening followed by identification and release of the occupants the following morning. This is one of our superstars of the session... a Wood Mouse! Should you wish to take part in this valuable research in the future, please visit our website and go to the Volunteering section.



# Ash Dieback – Tree Felling along Box Lane

Photo: Steve Wilson

**If you have driven along Box Lane recently you cannot have failed to notice the tree felling that has been going on at Sheethanger Common.**

Most of these trees were Ash trees, with a few other different species dotted throughout. Unfortunately, the outbreak of Ash Dieback had spread to the Ash within this tree line. Ash Dieback has a very high mortality rate. As the trees decline in health, the dead wood increases within the crown of infected trees. You may have seen that many of the tops of the trees no longer had any leaves on them. This dead wood and the decline in the tree can lead to branches or whole trees falling, which could have dire consequences where ash trees are close to Box Lane.

Our decisions to remove trees are never rashly made. We have left the trees that our specialist tree surgeons recommended would not cause future problems to the safety of Box Lane.

We have worked closely with the Forestry Commission and followed government guidance on how to best manage the Box Moor Trust estate in relation to Ash Dieback. This does mean that we will also be required to remove a portion of Ash trees along the north and east side of Bury Wood. These

trees will be removed and replanted with broadleaf species with the help of a Forestry Commission Ash Dieback regeneration grant.

You may have seen that we had previously removed a small section of trees adjacent to Gosnells access road; this was replanted as a native hedge which has grown very well. After our tree works are complete, we will be replanting a new native hedge before Christmas with the aim of laying it in about 3 years' time. A hedgerow of native species will also provide valuable habitats into the future.

None of us like to see trees cut down. The Ash trees on Trust land simply reflect a nationwide/Europewide problem. The Trust has a policy of proactive management of its trees. These issues were highlighted during our annual tree inspections. When safety concerns have been raised, we would be negligent not to act upon those concerns.

There is an excellent perspective on Ash Dieback available on the Woodland Trust website at: [www.woodlandtrust.org.uk](http://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk)



Photos: Elaine Rushton

## Autumn Festival Frolics

We were delighted to welcome so many visitors to our Autumn Festival over the weekend of 24th and 25th September. Although cold, the weather stayed fine for us and the crowds came out in their hundreds to support the event. On Saturday, the Hemel Hempstead Theatre Company entertained the crowd with a rousing selection of numbers from their shows, followed by a performance by the fabulous Berkhamsted Ukulele Random Players. The mix of local arts and crafts, food & drink vendors and activities for youngsters proved a hit with families and much fun was had by all. On the Sunday, we even had a visit from a Tyrannosaurus Rex although luckily, he seemed to be friendly! A big 'thank you' to Magical Story Elves for bringing him along as part of their brilliant immersive experience for the kids. Other activities included pottery, archery, crafts and circus workshop. We look seeing you at our events in 2023 – first on the calendar is our **Lambing Weekend on 1st and 2nd April.**



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Dennis Furnell



George Tite

# Trustee news

**Earlier this year, life Trustee Dennis Furnell completed 35 years of voluntary service for the Trust and its beneficiaries. Dennis, author of wildlife books and regular broadcaster on conservation issues over that time has done much to support the gradual increase in Trust land for the community.**

He has used his wealth of knowledge on flora and fauna to advise on the management of our special and varied habitats. Dennis has put in thousands of hours of voluntary work for the Trust and has staunchly supported its work to carefully manage habitats to encourage species to thrive.

**George Tite** has been a Trustee since 2000 and has a good degree of knowledge on grazing and managing livestock. Having lived locally all his long life, he is a great link to the days when grazing the moors was more popular and is a font of knowledge on life prior to the new town. As Vice-Chair since 2017, George has been a great support to current Chair, David Kirk. Although he has decided it's time to step down from this role, his life experiences of farming practices and local community needs will continue to fuel his enthusiasm for all that we do.

**Patrick Schneiders** from Bovingdon succeeds George as Trust Vice-Chair. He is already using his varied experience working in the environment sector to help pave the way for various environmental initiatives at the Trust.

**Julie James** was elected very recently in 2020; she has been a key part of the Trust's wildlife awareness sessions for young children at Gadespring for many years. Thanks to Julie, supported by many great volunteers, hundreds of 4 to 9 year olds were inspired by wildlife and we are keen to give such opportunities to more local schools. Julie has decided to move away from the area with her husband and therefore will be stepping down.

Our efforts to inspire children across Hemel and Bovingdon will continue and we hope our next election in 2025 will attract another Trustee with enthusiasm for this really important awareness work.

## Congratulations Freddie!

**Box Moor Trustee Peter Phillips recently presented a very special cricket bat to a young player at Hemel Hempstead Town Cricket Club. The bat was made from willow grown on the Trust estate, only a few hundred yards from the club's pitches!**

Paul Thompson, President of Hemel Hempstead Town CC, said "Freddie Lowe was the worthy winner of this year's Box Moor Trust award, which is presented to a young cricketer who has made a notable transition into senior cricket. There were a number of good candidates for this award, which shows the current strength in depth of our young cricketers at Hemel Hempstead Town CC. Freddie has already produced a number of eye-catching performances at senior level, including several promising 1st team league appearances for the Club."

Freddie's bat was made from a special type of willow, *Salix alba caerulea*, which is grown on Trust land. It takes 20 years or more to achieve its optimum size (about 5' diameter). The trees are then harvested, cut and graded into bat sized 'clefts' before being sent to India for production and finally exported worldwide. Each year, the Trust awards two bats – one to each of the two cricket clubs on the estate.



Photo courtesy of Freddie's parents, Paul and Tracey Lowe

Contact Us

The Box Moor Trust Centre, London Road  
Hemel Hempstead, HP1 2RE

Tel: 01442 253300 Reg. Charity No. 206142

