

Autumn Newsletter

New Kids on the Block!

Visitors to Bovington Brickworks may notice some new members of the team in the coming months. Five rare breed goats have been purchased by the Trust to aid invasive scrub control across the estate (specifically Bovington Brickworks). They are Old English goats and are bucket-trained wethers (gelded billy goats). We think they will be a great addition to our conservation-grazing livestock.

Photos: Elaine Rushton

Conservation in action: Common Tern chicks

The Common Tern is of conservation concern (BoCC5 amber listed) due to a decline in both the breeding population and the breeding range (by around 30-40%). A major cause of their decline is the lack of suitable breeding sites.

They require open ground free of vegetation and have traditionally nested on coastal shingle or on low lying inland islands. They are increasingly dependent on the latter as a result of coastal development and human disturbance. Another cause for concern is the potential spread of avian flu to the larger colonies.

A couple of years ago, the Trust was instrumental in the deployment of a new floating tern raft at Pixies Mere, specially designed to create nesting habitat for terns. For the first time this year, we are delighted to report that three Common Tern chicks have successfully hatched and fledged – a very significant development. As an isolated colony, the terns at Pixies Mere have a higher chance of breeding successfully, so we are very hopeful of having more chicks in the future. This is real conservation in action from Box Moor Trust.



Common Tern with chick
Painting by Dennis Furnell



2024 Calendar: *Winning Photos*



Photo: Graham Denney



Photo: Daniel Whittaker



Photo: Christine Keilty

What a great response we had this year to our call for entries into our calendar photo competition! Thanks to everyone who entered – we had over 100 images to consider.

As always, it was extremely hard to select the final 12 photos for the 2024 calendar, and the standard just seems to go up every year. The brief for photographers was “Box Moor Trust: for Community and Conservation” which gave photographers lots of scope for subject matter.

We put the 12 finalists to the public vote on Facebook to decide first, second and third places.

The overall winner was Graham Denney’s fabulous shot of courting kingfishers, taken at Gadespring Cress Beds, which led from the start and finished the count with 188 votes. Second place, with 170 votes, went to Daniel Whittaker for his evocative warm sunset image taken at our Bovingdon Brickworks site. Christine Keilty nabbed third place with her gorgeous photo of the Bulbourne on a

frosty winter morning, which attracted 150 votes. Congratulations to them, and to all the other entrants who have won a month in our 2024 calendar.

The calendar is now in stock and available to buy from our online shop at www.boxmoortrust.org.uk at £6.00 + 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: Iain Nibbsy

Water Vole Surveys

Some of our dedicated volunteers have recently been out in all weathers to survey for signs of water voles.

We released water voles across the estate in two stages, first in 2018 and second in 2020. It is important for us to survey for field signs (latrines, evidence of feeding) to monitor the success of the project. So far results are promising and it is clear that this iconic short-lived vole is breeding happily in places, but we must be careful to protect it. We have great opportunities for volunteers to join us for wildlife monitoring (surveys include but aren’t limited to small mammals, water voles, amphibians, grassland) - visit our website for more information: <https://www.boxmoortrust.org.uk/support-us/volunteer/>



Festival Fun

Our Autumn Festival on 23rd and 24th September was a big hit again this year, with plenty going on to interest visitors.

We had the usual fantastic support from the community and attendance was high on both days. There were more stalls than ever before, selling everything from locally produced food and drink, wood turning and carving, jewellery, pottery and all manner of other crafts.

We were delighted to have Puddingstone Distillery there on the Saturday, doing brisk trade with their latest distillation of Box Moor Gin, made using very rare juniper from a single bush on the Trust estate. If you missed out, you could still buy a bottle direct from Puddingstone, and they will generously donate £2 from every bottle to the Trust to help support our conservation work!

Music was kindly coordinated for us by the 'Arts Venue in Dacorum' group and it was lovely to have local choirs, ukulele bands and the HH Brass Band all performing live over the weekend for the enjoyment of all.

Berkhamsted Bowmen ran their popular 'have-a-go' archery, including a mini-archery set-up for the under-eights. The Trust's Environmental Awareness team had a range of activities for youngsters to engage with and the circus workshop on the Sunday was as popular as ever.

We look forward to doing it all again next year!



Photos: Elaine Rushton

Sad news...

Many of you will be aware of the pair of Roe deer that have been spending a lot of time on the moors between Bourne End and Fishery Road over the last few months.

Despite notices warning dog walkers of their presence, we are extremely sad to have to report that both deer have now succumbed to injuries received following a suspected dog attack. This has been particularly distressing for our staff to have to deal with and we would take this opportunity to emphasise once again that if you do not have full close control of your dog then it should not be off the lead in areas where there are livestock and wildlife grazing.



Photo: Graham Denney



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Events and Activities

November and December 2023

For further details and to book places please visit the [Upcoming Events](#) page on our website.

Autumn Bird Walk: Bovingdon Brickworks

Saturday 11th November, 10am-12 noon

Come along to hear the birds of autumn, listen out for our winter migrants and learn more about identifying their calls. Suitable for all, including families with children of all ages.

Highcroft Hares Needlefelt: Box Moor Trust Centre

**Saturday 11th November, 10am-2pm and
Saturday 2nd December, 10am-2pm**

Learn to needlefelt a Christmas robin on wooden stand or a 3D Christmas decoration for your tree. After this, you will have the opportunity to felt a 2D image onto a hessian shopper bag. All materials and Christmas-themed refreshments included. £45 per person. Suitable for ages 14+ and adults. Beginners welcome!

Boxmoor Rangers sessions: Old Barn, Westbrook Hay

Saturday 2nd December, 10am-12.30pm (Youth Rangers, 8-16s) and 1.30pm-2.30pm (Mini Rangers, 5-7s).

Our monthly Ranger sessions are designed to engage your children and inspire a lifelong love of nature.

Mindfulness in Autumn, Old Barn: Westbrook Hay

Sunday 19th December, 10am-12 noon

Take a couple of hours to pause and spend some time in nature. This event is aimed at adults, though children aged 16+ are welcome.

Festive Foraging & Wreath Making, Old Barn, Westbrook Hay

Saturday 9th December and Monday 10th December.

Forage through the woods with one of our Rangers to collect materials (Saturday only), learn about the different types of plants you can use in your wreath, then learn how to make your own natural wreath. Mince pies and hot drinks will be provided as well as all the material you need to create your wreath. £30.00 per person.

All welcome, though this event will be more suitable for older children and adults. **Please note: Both these sessions are fully booked – keep an eye on our website as additional sessions may be arranged.**

Cricket Bat Winners

Once again this year, the Trust has been very pleased to award cricket bats, made from willow grown on the Trust estate, to deserving young cricketers from each of the two clubs that play on the land.

At Hemel Hempstead Town Cricket Club the award went to Jacob Hodgins, one of a number of young cricketers who have made a notable transition into senior cricket at the club. Boxmoor Cricket Club's Junior Cricketer Award went to Aiden Manning, who this season has progressed to play Saturday 1st XI cricket. Both bats were presented by Trustee Peter Phillips. For over 100 years now the hybrid willow *Salix Caerulea* has been grown along the canal and riverbanks on Trust land. Every ten to twelve years, a number of trees become ready for cropping and new young setts are then planted in their place. Once felled, the trunks are sent to the sawmills where they are cut into clefts and sold on to bat makers. It takes about a year to make a fully seasoned bat.



Jacob Hodgins with Peter Phillips (Trustee)



Aiden Manning with Peter Phillips (Trustee)

Contact Us

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

Tel: 01442 253300 Reg. Charity No. 206142

