

Portbury Wharf Newsletter

Avon Wildlife Trust

Issue 1 • Summer 2011

How to activate your FREE Avon Wildlife Trust membership for Village Quarter Residents

You may not be aware that all residents of The Village Quarter paying the Nature Reserve maintenance fee qualify for free, full membership of Avon Wildlife Trust.

Your membership helps maintain Portbury Wharf Reserve, allowing us to improve the site and hold our exciting events there. Members also receive *Wildlife*, the Trust's local magazine three times a year, an events programme and a guide to walks on our top ten nature reserves. You'll also be provided with regular email bulletins if you wish, detailing the latest news and events going on at the Trust.

All members can also enjoy free access to all 35 of the Trust's nature reserves. Junior Members become part of Wildlife Watch, receiving the special starter pack and six mailings a year filled with wildlife stories, details of family events, activities and things you can do at home or at school. You do, however, need to 'opt in' to become a member for data protection purposes. To activate your membership simply email angeladavies@avonwildlifetrust.org.uk or phone Trust Headquarters at **0117 917 7270**.



Tufted duck and six ducklings using 'Splash' sculpture for an island rest



Birds move onto the new island



Haven Lodge Care Home residents enjoy the new hide

Introductions

Bernie D'Arcy

My role is to manage the nature reserve and to provide visitors with information and guidance about the wildlife that can be seen. Daily tasks include working with a team of dedicated local conservation volunteers to deliver practical maintenance and habitat enhancement works across the site, and monitoring of species. I also find external contractors to carry out specialised task, and provide local residents with opportunities to get involved with the reserve.

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Neil Hutton

My role as Community Officer involves engaging the public of the Portishead and Portbury area with the wildlife of the nature reserve. This includes everyone; from pre-school, primary and secondary schools, children and young people out of school, the residents of the Marina and Village Quarter, to older people and other groups who might otherwise be excluded.

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Portbury Wharf: bonanza season for birds!

The past months have provided us with a wealth of bird species on the reserve and adjoining foreshore.

The habitats are maintained and enhanced by our staff and conservation volunteers with wildlife in mind, and this has led to sightings of rare and interesting birds. Major works were carried out on the nesting island situated in the pool directly beside the foreshore in December. Contractors used specialised digging equipment which was designed in the Alps to level the island which resulted in a more favourable habitat for the birds. We hoped that by flattening the island we would attract more wading birds from the estuary foreshore and within hours of the work's completion lapwing had begun to visit. To date over 90 have been spotted there.

There have been sightings of 145 different bird species on the reserve including barn and little owls, curlew, dunlin, oystercatchers, firecrests, a hen harrier and a bittern. An amazing tower hide and two standard hides have been installed overlooking the north and south pools which provide fantastic opportunities to sight birds and other wildlife.



Pete Evans

little owl



Darrin Smith

lapwing



Arthur Grosset

redshank

People of all ages come and enjoy Portbury Wharf Reserve

The benefits of Portbury Wharf have been shown to people young and old with some recent activities run by the Trust for local people.



Pirate Day

World Wetlands Day on 2 February 2011 celebrated the Ramsar convention of 1971 which gave wetlands increased recognition and protection.

For this event residents Jean and Joan from Haven Lodge Care Home in Portishead enjoyed their time bird watching from the North Pools Hide. They would have been in their fifties when the convention was signed 40 years ago! After the success of the day more visits are now planned for later in the year.

Year 2 pupils from Trinity School then took part in pirate-themed activities on the reserve. This included the Tower bird hide temporarily taking on the form of a sailing ship and "Pieces of Ate" where pellets were examined to learn the diet of owls (small mammals and insects).

We also congratulate Trinity School for winning the £1000 Big Bristol Habitat Hunt prize, sponsored by Western Power Distribution. Steve Micklewright of the Trust said, "We were very impressed with the ideas that all of the children had put into how they could improve their school grounds for wildlife. We were especially impressed with Trinity's ideas for bringing wildlife from the countryside close to the school and into their grounds with some really simple but effective projects."

Portbury Wharf hits the headlines

Portbury Wharf has been gaining lots of media attention recently, with a feature in the Guardian Society supplement and appearances on BBC *Inside Out West* and Radio 4's *Open Country*.



Mike meets Chris Sperring with barn owl Beau

TV presenter Mike Dilger came down to report on the nature reserve for *Inside Out West* and had a wonderful time with local residents exploring all the biodiversity that Portbury Wharf has to offer. He said "It's a cracking site to sight birds - I couldn't believe my luck when we were filming there recently and a hen harrier flew by! It's been a bonanza year for birds and the hides will make it an even more spectacular site to visit."

A behind the scenes video can be found on YouTube, with links to this on the Trust's homepage:

www.avonwildlifetrust.org.uk

Radio 4's *Open Country* met residents who were getting muddy down on the reserve and looked for evidence of some of the wildlife that resides there. A link to the broadcast can be found at:

www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/opencountry

Portbury Wharf Conservation Volunteers

The Portbury Wharf Volunteer group, comprising local residents, has been carrying out weekly practical habitat maintenance tasks with Bernie, our reserve warden. Such tasks have included reed cutting, scrub clearance, willow pollarding, path construction and nesting island maintenance. The volunteers also assisted contractors with the removal of approximately 7,000 redundant tree guards on the reserve. On 27 February 33 members of AWT Gordano Group led by Keith Giles volunteered for a scrub clearance day to help restore a wildflower glade. We also have a team of volunteer key wardens who assist with the management of the hides.

Currently any work that could potentially disrupt the breeding season has come to a halt and the late spring and summer months will primarily focus on wildlife monitoring of reptiles, invertebrates, plants, watervoles and barn owls.

Many thanks to all who have volunteered over the past year. Their help is of huge importance to the wildlife and greatly appreciated by the Trust. If you would like to hear more about conservation volunteering at Portbury Wharf contact bernied'arcy@avonwildlifetrust.org.uk

Local people have become key volunteers in helping to manage the reserve for wildlife.



Volunteer Warden Paul Thurston assisting with reed management by the large pools

for wetland birds and meadow wildlife

Upcoming Events at Portbury Wharf

Take a look at some of the exciting goings-on at Portbury Wharf over the next few months...

April

23rd **Bird walk** with local expert (11am-1pm)*

May

24th **Owl Prowl** with Chris Sperring (7.30pm til late)*

28th **Bird walk** with local expert (11am-1pm)*

30th Bank Holiday
Community Day -
Springwatch Fayre

June

5th **Summer walk** with the Warden (10.30am-12.30pm)*

18th **Portishead Carnival** with Trinity Primary School

July

14th **Evening walk** bats & owls (7-10pm)*

29/30th **Portishead Flower Show**

August

3rd **Play Day – Den Build** (11am-3pm)*

September

13th **Owl Prowl** with Chris Sperring (7.30pm til late)*

17th **Wharf Wild Food Foraging** (11am-1pm)*

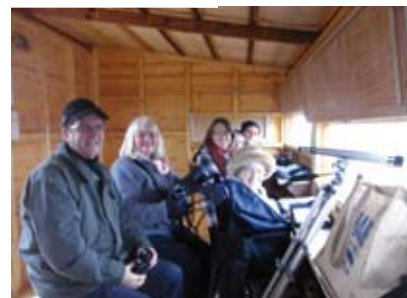
October

16th **Autumn walk** with the Warden (10.30am-12.30pm)*

Meet in Wharf Lane BS20 7TD

*Please book for these events – see below.

People enjoy Portbury Wharf



Wharf Wild Gardens

Ceri Cambridge has recently started as the new voluntary Community Assistant at Portbury Wharf Nature Reserve, so we are beginning to put the wildlife gardening project into action. We are calling the project Wharf Wild Gardens and will be promoting wildlife gardening to the residents of the Village Quarter, as well as wider Portishead.

The project will launch at the Springwatch Fayre, on the nature reserve on May Day Bank Holiday, Monday 30 May. We will also be working with Trinity School at the Portishead Carnival on Saturday 18 June. The float will have a wildlife gardening theme to further promote the project. We are also looking for a Village Quarter garden which demonstrates good wildlife gardening for Portishead in Bloom's Open Garden Scheme on 10-11 June.

Discover what's going on at Portbury Wharf and AWT online

Here at Avon Wildlife Trust we have taken full advantage of new media to let you know what we're up to and to find out about events in your area. We have a Portbury Wharf Blog which is regularly updated with species sightings and activities on the reserve. The blog is located on the Portbury Wharf pages of the Trust website. We can be found on Twitter at twitter.com/avonwt and on Facebook at facebook.com/Avonwt. We'd love to have some of your comments, stories or pictures!



www.avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/portbury

Contact us

To book an event please contact our Head Office:

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