

Newsletter

Issue 2 • Autumn/winter 2011

Star performers!

It's been an astonishing year for sightings on the reserve – better than we ever dreamed when the year began with the wintry work on the nesting island. From a bittern in March to a spoonbill in October, the excitement at our rare visitors has only been matched by delight at our fledgling residents in June.

"I went out to check the nest boxes that morning," said reserve warden Bernie D'Arcy, "and there were four strong and healthy owlets! It was amazing to see them." Bernie was accompanied by owl expert Chris Sperring who monitors owls in the area. He estimated that they were between 4 and 5 weeks old.

Other notable birds that appeared at Portbury Wharf were bittern, grey phalarope, water rail, and arctic tern. In October an elegant white bird was spotted on the north pools island, its distinctive spoon-shaped bill making it immediately identifiable to excited volunteers on site. "It was fantastic to spot a rare spoonbill" Bernie said. "Best of all, it counted in as the 150th bird species to be recorded since the creation of the pools – a real sign of success for our nature reserve!"



Chris Sperring

Bernie with owlets

"I didn't know I could be a member of Avon Wildlife Trust FOR FREE, and what brilliant value it is!"

Village Quarter resident Helen Ellison only found out earlier this year that she **and** her family could sign up to be full members of Avon Wildlife Trust – just by living in the VQ near the reserve.

"All I had to do was contact the Trust and we received our family membership pack within a few days. We didn't know how much work for wildlife was going on all over the local area, and now we feel a real part of it. There are 35 wonderful nature reserves to visit, including our own Portbury Wharf, and a free programme of events and activities to suit all – including families like ours. I can really see how my annual contribution to the reserve is making a difference to the wildlife in the area!"

You can become a member too! As a Village Quarter resident all you have to do is phone Angela, Trust Membership Officer, on 0117 9177270 (or email angeladavies@avonwildlifetrust.org.uk) and quote VQ Membership Offer.



Eunice Myers

the Ellison family



Having fun at Portbury Wharf!

A wildlife winner

First prize in June's Portishead Carnival Schools category was scooped by the 'On our doorstep' float we designed in partnership with Trinity School. The float featured children, parents and volunteers dressed as badger, kingfisher, frogs, flowers and bees and depicted a Village Quarter house and garden, merging with the nature reserve over which flew a five foot long hairy dragonfly, made by Trinity School's Year 1. This rare dragonfly can be spotted at Portbury Wharf.



Pete Evans

hairy dragonfly



Portishead carnival

Beefriending bees

Local beekeeper and Village Quarter resident Clive Bowell took Portbury Wharf's Community Officer Neil Hutton to inspect his bees in early August. The hives were started this year, and the colonies are building up very strongly indeed. "It was a great treat," said Neil, who was accompanied by suitably suited up volunteers Erin and Ceri. "The bees were lively, but never aggressive. The hives feature British black bees and Buckfastleigh bees, from the famous abbey."

Bees are so essential for a healthy environment that it's wonderful to see them doing so well on the edge of Portishead. We look forward to a jar or two of Portbury Wharf honey in the future!



Clive, Ceri and Neil



Gatehouse Studio

honey bee

Questions you've asked us

Why the Nature Reserve and annual charge?

The land between Portishead and Royal Portbury Dock is extremely important for wildlife. Planning consent for the Port Marine development was only granted by North Somerset Council on condition that the developers created a nature reserve on the land adjoining the new development, that the on-going costs of managing and maintaining the reserve (and the adjoining Sea Wall) were met by the development, and that the reserve should be owned and managed by a suitable organisation. This is being implemented through a legal charge on each new house in the Port Marine development, requiring the owner to pay an annual charge to Port Marine Management Limited (PMML).

Vital volunteers

Out and about!

Many thanks to the Portbury Wharf Conservation volunteer group for all their hard work over the last few months. The Summer is a busy time for wildlife monitoring, and Bernie and the volunteers have been carrying out lots of surveys. They've also installed seven new interpretation boards around the reserve, which will provide visitors with more information about Portbury Wharf's various habitats and its history.

Practical tasks such as pulling invasive vegetation, scrub clearance, maintaining fences, footpaths and hedges have also been carried out. In late September work began on clearing the vegetation from the nesting island before the arrival of the winter waders. Waders prefer the island to be as bare as possible so they have a panoramic view of their surroundings. This was well-rewarded with the arrival of a rare spoonbill just days later!

At the end of September a Pond Restoration project began in the secluded fields with the assistance of contractors and the Trust's Consultancy company. The ponds were in poor health and have been re-profiled and enlarged to provide a much more desirable home for newts, dragonflies and invertebrates. A couple of toads have already been spotted passing through. The spoil from the ponds is in the South Pools field and will be used along with other materials to create an exciting new sand martin bank next year.



clearing vegetation from nesting island

Please note – there is no public access to the ponds as the habitat is sensitive and is home to protected species, including schedule one listed birds. Please have a look at the Portbury Wharf blog to see any interesting sightings.



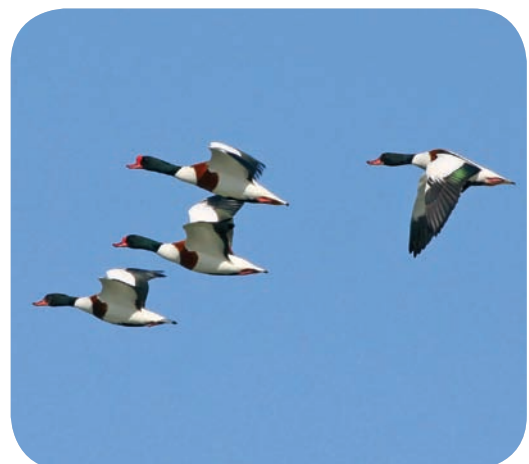
Brandon Trust team with Neil

Trusty teamwork

The Brandon Trust team comes out to the reserve every other week working hard on a range of tasks. These range from reed clearing and fencing to making flapjacks and serving teas at our events! Brandon Trust works with adults with learning difficulties, and the eight-strong team are enthusiastic about their work at Portbury Wharf, for which they recently won a regional Community Award of £1,000. They came second overall in the National Community Awards competition. The picture shows the team beside hedgerows by the North Pools.

What is my annual charge paying for?

The annual charge is collected from each household by Port Marine Management Ltd (PMML). Part of the charge goes towards the costs of checking and maintaining the Sea Wall which protects the Port Marine development from the risk of flooding from high tides in the Severn Estuary, and part goes towards the costs of running PMML. The remainder goes to Avon Wildlife Trust to pay for the costs of managing and maintaining the Portbury Wharf nature reserve alongside the Port Marine development; this includes the employment of two staff members dedicated to this work. The Trust was approved by North Somerset Council as the most suitable organisation to run the nature reserve.



Pete Evans

shelduck

for wetland birds and meadow wildlife

Upcoming Events at Portbury Wharf

January – July 2012

January

10th **Talk for Village Quarter Residents** 19.30-21.00

February

14th* **Valentines Day Bird box making** with Neil

March

10th* **Bird Walk** with a local expert - 15.00-17.00

18th* **Water Voles** with Chris Sperring - 14.00-17.00

25th* **Family Spring walk** 10.30-12.30

April

22nd* **Art lessons on the estuary** - 10.00-16.00

28th* **Bird walk** with local expert - 11.00-13.00

May

6th* **Dawn Chorus Walk** 06.30-09.30

24th* **Owl Prowl** with Chris Sperring - 19.30 till late

27th **Springwatch Community Day** 13.00-16.00

June

10th* **Family Summer Walk** with Neil - 10.30-12.30

July

8th **Portishead Raft Race** cheer on the team!

10th* **Evening Walk** with the Warden 21.00-22.45

21st -22nd **Portishead Flower Show** - see our stand

Meet in Wharf Lane BS20 7TD

*Places limited – booking essential. Email: courses@avonwildlifetrust.org.uk quoting **VQ** for **free** tickets.

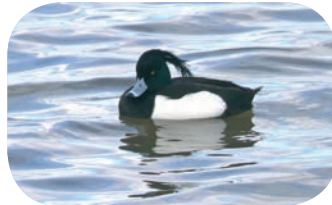
Contact us

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Portbury Portfolio

Pete Evans has been taking pictures at Portbury Wharf over the past year. On this page you can see a sample of his work which is building up an excellent record of wildlife on the reserve. Pete was also good enough to give a day teaching wildlife photography to regular volunteer Ceri and school Year 10 work placement Rob Steele.



tufted duck



broad-bodied chaser



grey heron

Greet the New Year at Portbury Wharf!

Tuesday 10 January 2012 at Trinity School Hall 7.30pm

Come and meet the team and hear all about the work carried out on the reserve over the last 18 months, and our plans for 2012.

Drinks and nibbles provided – email neilhutton@avonwildlifetrust.org.uk if you want to come along



Pete Evans

Follow us on Facebook

Follow us on Facebook! We now have a dedicated Portbury Wharf page where you can keep up to date with events, sightings, swap info and post pix. Check it out at www.facebook.com/portburywharf

For other news and events see our blog at www.avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/portbury



A BIG thank you to all of the dog walkers who have been keeping their dogs under control and remaining on the circular walk. This has reduced the disturbance to the wildlife and contributed to the increased number of birds in the Pools.

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