

Newsletter

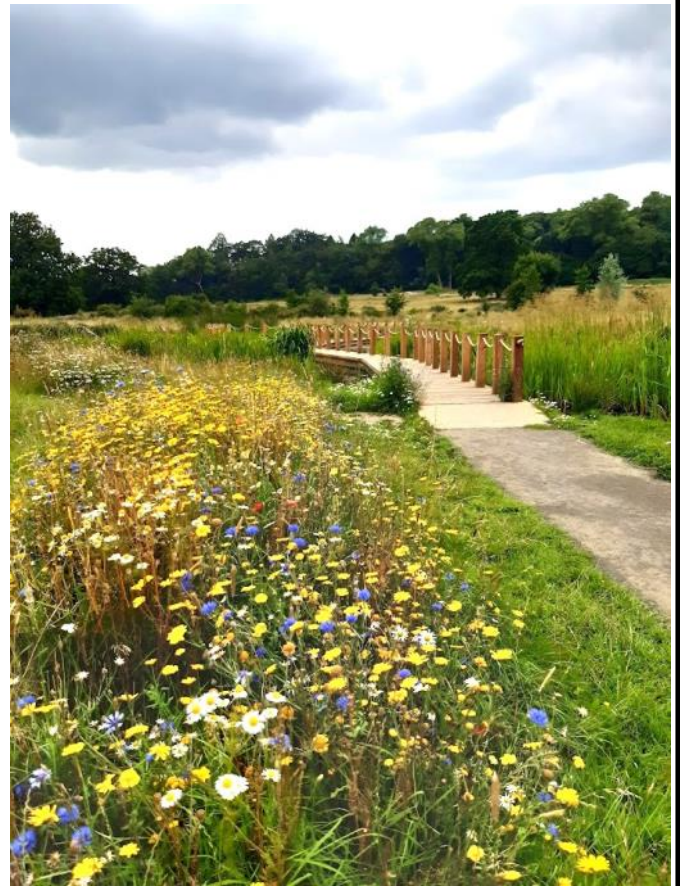
Autumn 2023 Volume 19 Issue 2

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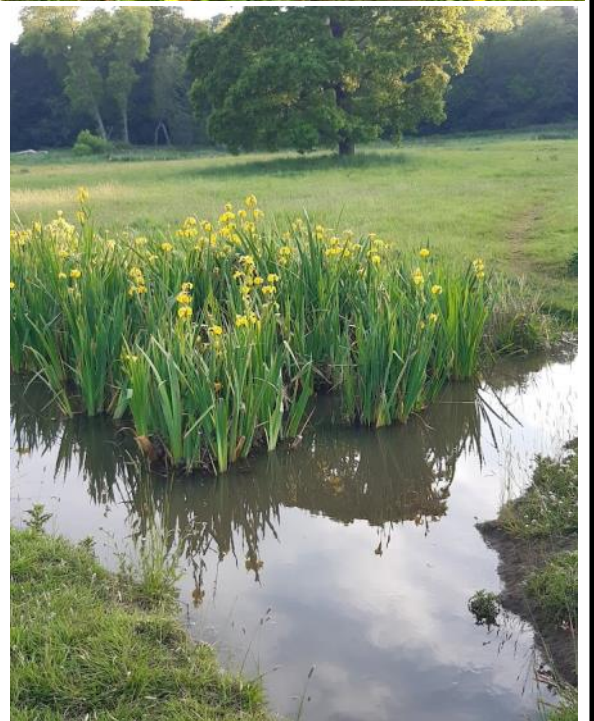
Six month Roundup

The Wetland

The wetland continues to thrive. Over the summer hundreds, if not thousands, of tiny frogs and toads emerged from the water and hopped off into the park. In a year or two these will return to spawn and increase the amphibian population. Sticklebacks, newts and dragonflies have all taken up residence too and ducklings and baby moorhens were also in evidence.



In May we began to install some large stones in the small stream feeding the wetland so that it comes down in a series of steps with tiny waterfalls, reducing erosion of the stream bed. Six have been installed to date. The banks are beginning to green up too.



In and Around the Park

Planting for Bees

The April planting of 600 flowering plants in the walled garden to give the bees late forage has worked well.



A new group of Friends volunteers has taken over the tending of the plants which have flowered throughout the summer and into the autumn.



Birds of Prey in Cammo

This year has been a good one for birds of prey in Cammo. After being missing last year, the Cammo buzzards nested again and raised two young. Barn owls nested in the tower by Mauseley Hill and in the box in North field (below is one of them being ringed by the council).



Our tawny owls also produced three chicks, as they do most years. Finally, a male kestrel has been much in evidence recently as have both male and female sparrowhawks. The rather obvious piles of woodpigeon feathers in the park attest to how often the sparrowhawks are hunting in the park. Lastly we also have a near-resident heron. Although not normally thought of as a bird of prey, herons will catch and eat almost anything from beetles all the way up to rats, voles and young waterfowl.

Field Cutting

You may have noticed that North field has been cut and baled recently. This is to encourage more wildflower. The removal of the grass into the bales makes a huge difference - letting in light, preventing the build up of thatch and lowering the nutrient levels. Getting this done is a major contributory factor in the masses of flower we now have in the fields where once there was only tall grass.

However, there is a down-side to cutting and baling. The much shorter sward does not support many voles. These are the main prey for our barn owls as well as kestrels, tawny owls and buzzards - (you might say they are they are the wildebeest of the park) - so cutting makes life more difficult for them. The baling also kills a certain number of our toads which are out in the fields foraging. To try and reduce these negative impacts, we leave strips of long grass around the field edges and also plan to cut just one of the fields per year. This should give us a good balance between encouraging flower and keeping vole numbers up for our birds of prey.



Nat West Volunteer Day

14 volunteers from Nat West bank turned up on August 23rd to shift lots of woodchip. Woodchip is being used to prevent pathways becoming muddy.

Chalara ash dieback

As is the case for the rest of Britain, the ash trees in Cammo are dying from a fungus that causes ash dieback disease. This will kill almost all of our ash trees in the next few years. Interestingly though, some trees seem to be resistant.



This photo shows three trees that we have planted. The one on the left (1) is a sycamore, but the one on the right (2) and the big one in the middle (3) are ash. Both planted at the same time, the right-hand one is dead but the middle one is thriving.

Hopefully, trees like this one will provide seed for a new generation of ash tree that is resistant to Chalara.

Foraging!

Apart from all the other benefits that Cammo brings to all of us, there is also the opportunity to collect wild food! This year I have picked kilos of blackberries. There has also been lots of lovely watercress in the stream which makes delicious watercress soup or as an addition to salads, and the fields have sorrel which is also great in salads.

Some people (not me; I don't know enough about it!) collect mushrooms and there are both cooking and eating apples to be had. Others collect the wildflowers to dry and make essential oils. All in all, a natural bounty!



Nick Bengé

Water Cress Soup

- 1 tbsp olive oil
- 1 small onion, chopped
- 1 small stick celery, chopped
- 350g potato, peeled and diced
- 600ml chicken or vegetable stock
- 250g watercress, stalks chopped a bit



- Heat the oil in a large pan, add the onion and celery and sauté for 5 mins until pale golden. Stir in the potato and stock and bring to the boil. Cover and simmer for 10 minutes until the potato is tender. (Or put it in a soup-maker and set to smooth.)
- 5 minutes before the end of the cooking time in the soup-maker, or when the potato is tender, add the watercress and cook a further 5 minutes.
- Transfer to a food processor (if not using a soup-maker) and blitz until smooth.
- Return the soup to rinsed out pan and add the milk, nutmeg, lemon juice and seasoning to taste.
- Gently reheat until piping hot and serve with crusty bread or rolls.

Dates for Your Diary

Sunday 12 November Litter pick. Help tidy up Cammo for Winter (equipment supplied). Meet at the Lodge at 10.00am

Wednesday 13 December (Christmas OGM) 7:30pm in Cammo Lodge - Open to all

Wednesday 6 March (AGM) 7:30pm in Cammo Lodge - Open to all

Any other events will be notified on our Facebook page and website, and by email to members.