

Green Shoots Cheshire newsletter, Summer 2009

Summer 2009

Welcome to the Summer 2009 Green Shoots Cheshire Newsletter. In this edition there's more news on the River Gowy water vole project, barn owls at Daresbury to report on and a new home for otters on the River Weaver. There's also a list of free training events happening in the county over the next few months. So take ten minutes to read through the newsletter, and don't forget to contact me if you'd like to get involved.

The Green Shoots project is only possible with your help. Without the valuable contributions from BASC members we wouldn't have a project at all. Through your support we can gain the results we need to ensure our sport and its contribution to wildlife conservation, are recognised by politicians, the media and the general public. If you're interested in any of the work going on and would like to find out more please don't hesitate to get in touch.

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Barn owls at Daresbury

After reports of barn owl sightings on a shoot near Daresbury that is involved with the Green Shoots project, I enlisted the help of Andrew Duncalf from Mid-Cheshire barn owl group to check the boxes. Andrew found three chicks along with two adult birds. All five birds were ringed to allow the group to monitor them in order to gain a better understanding of barn owl ecology.

The discovery is significant as the barn owl population has declined in Cheshire from 240 pairs in 1932 to 151 in 2007. Mid-Cheshire Barn Owl Group's Andrew Duncalf said; "All of the local barn owl groups in Cheshire rely upon the goodwill and co-operation of the landowners concerned. Without the combination of good habitat creation and the provision of suitable breeding sites the future of this iconic species is under great threat".

It's always great to hear from members who have barn owls on their shoot, or from those who want to encourage barn owls onto their shoot. Drop me a line if you're interested in finding out more, or if you would like your local barn owl group to get involved in conservation in your area.



Ratty returns

After just under 10 months of mink trapping on the River Gowy I'm pleased to announce that water voles have returned to parts of the river from which they were absent last year. A recent survey carried out by Richard Gardner, northwest lowlands water vole officer, found 12 latrine sites, four burrows and numerous piles of feeding remains on a section of the river that had previously been devoid of any signs of water voles.

The same stretch of river has been one of the targeted areas for mink control and, in fact, has been the most successful trapping site on the river with a total of 12 mink trapped and dispatched.

The Gowy has got some great habitat along its banks but with mink active in the area, the water voles were really struggling to thrive. I'm hopeful that more surveys carried out this year will yield more positive signs of water voles returning back to the river. This is also a good opportunity to thank all those people who have helped so far with the project, your help really is appreciated.

If you have any questions about the work being done by the Green Shoots project in Cheshire, or you think you may be able to help, please don't hesitate to contact me.

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BASC
The British Association for Shooting & Conservation



Otters get a new home on the Weaver

In recent years many old bankside trees have been cleared and natural otter holt sites have become rare. As an active member of the riparian Mammals Group in Cheshire I've been co-ordinating and assisting with the building of a number of otter holts on Green Shoots member's land over the past six months.

The first holt was constructed on the banks of the River Weaver on a shoot near Hankelow, using a fallen willow tree, which had very conveniently created two good sized chambers! A day's work with the group resulted in a pipe and chamber holt being constructed with a sand pad at the entrance so we can keep our eyes on what's using the holt.

Hopefully our riverside retreat will be snapped up by a first time buyer ready for breeding next spring.



Events and courses in the county

What?

Fungal Foray – Explore the fascinating world of fungi at two of Cheshire's best sites

When?

Wednesday 23 September 2009

Where?

Delamere Forest area

What?

Woodland management – learn the techniques of woodland management from seeing practical examples

When?

Tuesday 13 October 2009

Where?

Peckforton area

What?

Introduction to tree felling with hand tools

When?

Friday 4 December 2009

Where?

TBC

For more details contact me after 28 September, or the conservation team prior to that on 01244 573024. After going on one of the courses myself last year I can certainly recommend them.