

# Green Gym™



## Sonning Common

# "THE LOPPER"

full of little cuttings.

Number 33 September 2012

### Joint Session with Abingdon Green Gym

On 14th July we visited Abingdon GG for a joint session at Frilford Heath SSSI by the river Ock pulling Himalayan balsam. The balsam covers a large area, but we could see it has been knocked back in the area we worked on together last year. Despite the wet weather the total turnout was 25, and we had a good time meeting the thriving Abingdon group.



### Withymead

We returned to Withymead to help clear one of the four compartments of reed beds. These will be cleared on a four year rotation to help keep down unwanted species, allow regeneration of the Loddon Lillies and the reeds. many thanks to Dot and Keith for their hospitality and help with the task.







**The Bat Sculptures**



**The Bodger's Shelter**



**The Red Kite**

**The Aston Rowant 'Talking Sculpture Trail'**

Opened on the 26th July, the sculpture trail is a tribute both to its imaginative creators and to the wildlife and environment at Aston Rowant NNR. Make time to visit and appreciate the sculptures and listen to the audio tracks on the built-in MP3 players.

Starting from Cherry Tree Corner (back down the road from the reserve public car park), you learn about the bats that hunt in and inhabit the woodland. The sculptures are intricately carved and invite you touch them and find the bat and moth motifs.

When you come to the old quarry further along the path you find the representation of the Bodger's Shelter and the closely cropped trees that they used to manage, as well as quarrying for chalk and flint.

Further along the path you emerge from the woodland onto Beacon Hill to find the ear shaped shelter for leverets, with wooden shingles and coloured wool balls representing the hare's fur.

Further along and overlooking the vale to the North-west is a Red Kite where you can sit and imagine soaring high over the reserve scavenging for food.

Turning back along a parallel path, a dead yew tree has been embellished to represent the Ring Ouzels which visit the reserve on their migratory path. The spindles in the wing were turned using a bodger's lathe.

Finally you find a Dormouse nest sited on the edge of a clearing in the woods. The spiral decorated centre post of the structure is designed to be embellished by passers-by decorating it with snail shells and hazel nuts.

Congratulations to all the staff, sculptors, sound artists and volunteers who helped create an environmentally sound adjunct to the reserve.

**The Dormouse Nest**



**The Ring Ouzel's Wing**



**The One-ear**





The wonders of ragwort are with us again ..... This year there is an especially luxuriant crop of ragwort and we spent a hot day at Greys Court pulling up or digging out the plants. Alternative names to ragwort are Cushag (Isle of Man), Buachalan Bui (Ireland) Stinking Nanny/Ninny/Willy, Staggerwort, Cankerwort, Stammerwort and Mare's Fart. Ragwort contains alkaloids which make it poisonous to animals although documented cases of poisoning are rare in the UK. The cinnabar moth caterpillar uses it exclusively as a food plant and is currently described as 'scarce, threatened and declining'. Both the caterpillar and moth are distasteful to predators due to the absorption of the alkaloids from the plant.



At Cleve Court meadows we continued to build the barrier along the Thames path, as well as starting construction of a boardwalk over the worst of the marshy patches. With the boardwalk and the



wood-chip paths there should be a dry route between the river and the cottage all year round.



**Greys Court** : A session with both path clearance and pond clearance showed a dramatic increase in light levels reaching the water. The willows will be cleared further, but will regenerate in future years to maintain a healthy habitat.



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