



## NEWSLETTER

November 2024

Welcome to the Autumn issue of the **Longhirst Wildlife & Community Trust** newsletter. We are now well into our second year and have been working on a new, varied programme of events and activities which we hope will interest everyone. We will continue to issue this newsletter to keep you all updated on what's on, and what we've been up to in and around the Village.

### WHAT'S ON

**Kim Woolhead**

As we are no longer funded by the Heritage Lottery, there will be a small charge (£3 per adult, under 18's free) for future events. To date we have arranged one event for the end of November.

### **"A YEAR IN THE LIFE OF A MORPETH SWIFT"**

Graham Sorrie has been developing a swift colony in North Morpeth for over 20 years. Come and hear about the evolution of these amazing birds and how one of the swifts in the colony spent the year in 2022/23.

**Saturday 30 November, 2.00pm, Longhirst Village Hall**

**Admission: £3 (under 18's free) - to include tea, coffee and mince pies**

To guarantee a place and give us an idea of numbers for catering, please email [paulinegilbertson@gmail.com](mailto:paulinegilbertson@gmail.com).

### **A taster of what's to come**

Over the next few months, Pauline has been busy planning more events. These will include: a talk on the Northumberland Beavers; a visit to Hauxley Nature Reserve; a Dawn Chorus Walk around Longhirst; a botany and butterflies walk around East Chevington/Druridge Bay and one or two more moth sessions in the spring and summer.

As the details for these events are confirmed, we'll be letting you know via this newsletter, the Longhirst Leader, our Facebook page and the website. We look forward to seeing you at some or all these events.

**WEST CHEVINGTON NATURE RESERVE**

On 11 August a group of us met at Northumberland Wildlife Trust's West Chevington reserve, which was acquired by NWT relatively recently.



*West Chevington Photo: P Gilbertson*

Manager Lee Rankin took us for a guided walk and explained that the 277-hectare site, which now hosts a wind farm, was previously used for open cast coal mining. Lee prefers to describe his strategy for the reserve as 'nature recovery' rather than 'rewilding'. He plans a fair amount of intervention in the early years, which will reduce as nature develops at her own speed. This will help the site be more resistant to climate change and other challenges, than if it were to be over-managed.

A mixed herd of 30 cattle will be introduced, as well as a herd of pigs, to regenerate the land and help increase biodiversity. Trees will be planted and ponds created, all carefully designed to encourage wildlife. There are already red squirrels, roe deer, foxes and badgers on the site and maybe one day they will be joined by beavers....



*Linnet & Stonechat Photo: P Gilbertson*



*Wall Brown butterfly Photo: P Gilbertson*

We thoroughly enjoyed our session with Lee and look forward to returning in due course to see how the site is developing.

### **MOTH IDENTIFICATION AT SCOTCH GILL WOODS**

(See below for an article on moths, including a report of this event)

### **BAT TALK AND WALK**

We were delighted to welcome our local bat expert, Claire Snowball, to give a bat talk at the Village Hall.



Afterwards, armed with bat detectors and lots of interesting bat facts, we walked up to the church and around the village and saw/heard three types of bats: Common Pipistrelle, Soprano Pipistrelle and Noctule. The infra-red bat detectors were especially amazing! We have some slightly more basic bat detectors to loan to local people if anyone is interested (two are already out on loan).

### **IMPROVEMENTS TO THE CHURCH CAR PARK ISLAND AND PADDOCK WOOD**

**Peter Coates**

On 26 October seven volunteers made substantial headway in reducing the number of brambles in the centre of the **island by the Church car park**. This will encourage the spread of more desirable ground cover.





The County Council has also made a start and one of their teams has removed unwanted saplings and overhanging branches. We expect them to fell the dead or dying ash trees shortly and assist with the heavier tidying up operations during the winter. I am very grateful to the volunteers and NCC for all their efforts and hope that villagers appreciate the improvements that are underway.

At **Paddock (the Millennium) Wood**, Groundwork NE volunteers have opened two new paths through the trees giving alternative access to the newly repaired and significantly improved bird hide. Existing paths to the hide and around the east side of the wood above the burn proved to be very boggy in places for residents last winter. We will need to monitor how the new routes perform in wet conditions, but they offer a reasonable chance of being maintained at relatively low cost in future.

The Trust, with the support of the Parish Council, will continue to attempt to improve our local environment. If we are to succeed, we need more residents to become involved and offer to help. Please come along to the limited number of natural history events we are running and/or lend us some of your time. It can be very satisfying, fun and the intention is to benefit the whole community.

## **MARVELLOUS MOTHS**

**Pauline Gilbertson**

It seems that moths are the marmite of the insect world: you either love them or hate them. Most of us would agree that clothes moths are not at all lovable, and I freely admit to murdering them on sight. But as for the other 2,500 or so UK moths....I have surprised myself by falling in love with them.

A few years ago, I saw and photographed what I later learned was a Blood-Vein Moth in Paddock Wood and read that it had only recently spread as far north as Northumbria. That piqued my interest and so I was pleased when we were offered a moth session as part of our National Lottery-funded wildlife programme.



We were unsure how many would respond to our moth session advert but, in the end, we had to turn people away as it was fully booked well in advance. Sixteen of us (of all ages) enjoyed an informative and fun session led by local naturalist Mark Welfare, who had set his (enormous) moth traps the previous night and brought along a good number of different moths for us to admire and identify (his grand total was 141 moths of 27 species).

I brought along my brand new (budget) moth trap too, and was delighted to find that it had attracted over a dozen moths the previous night. Mark talked us through the different moths as well as giving us useful information about moth traps, identification apps (*Obsidentify* being highly recommended) and where to record our findings (ideally on *iRecord*). His enthusiasm for moths was infectious, and I loved the names too: Dingy Footman, Bulrush Wainscot and Dark Arches were three of my personal favourites amongst those we had in front of us. They come in all shapes and sizes, with amazing wing colouration and patterns (presumably designed with camouflage in mind). Who knew moths could be so fascinating!

I came away from that session feeling inspired to take my new hobby seriously. I have bought a bigger and better moth trap and set it on appropriate evenings (warm, still nights are best, and numbers decline as temperatures fall). I faithfully record all my findings on *iRecord*. “Citizen Science” – i.e. you and me recording the wildlife we spot – is brilliant as it gives a valuable picture of what is happening in the natural world. All trapped moths are released, unharmed, after inspection. The *Obsidentify* app has proved to be wonderful at identifying the moths, but I also check their ID with the *Field Guide to the Moths of Great Britain and Ireland* (Bloomsbury Wildlife Guides).

Here are photos of four of the moths I was delighted to find in my garden recently: Merveille du Jour, Gold Spot, Canary-Shouldered Thorn and Angle Shades.



*Merveille du Jour*



*Gold Spot*

Most moths are sleepy after being trapped and these were happy to cling to my finger while I photographed them before releasing them back into the bushes.



*Canary Shouldered Thorn*



*Angle Shades*

Many moths, and indeed butterflies, are in serious decline. Moth trapping, like doing the Big Butterfly Count, is a great way of contributing information about which species are doing well and which are in danger of disappearing altogether. There are some useful Facebook groups including *North East Invertebrates: Identification and Recording* and *North East GMS Participants* which are useful in helping identify different species. Those who become really keen might decide to sign up for the Garden Moth Survey North East; this involves setting your moth trap on a monthly basis in the same spot in your garden and filling in special forms which are then submitted to the group (like doing the BTO Garden Birdwatch surveys).

If you would like to be kept informed about future moth sessions in Longhirst or Morpeth, please email me at [paulinegilbertson@gmail.com](mailto:paulinegilbertson@gmail.com)

## **THE LONGHIRST HOGLETS**

**Richard Tordoff**

For a while I volunteered at the Northumbrian Hedgehog Rescue (NHR) and, due to other commitments, had to give it up. However, I take in rescue hedgehogs, particularly over winter, to ease the pressure on the Centre. Anyway, I saw on social media in early June a post about abandoned babies. I thought that it was simply that the mother who had weaned them had left them to forage by themselves.

After following the advice, the person contacted me again and I went down expecting to see normal juvenile hogs BUT was met by hoglets. There were two, shivering cold and about 8 days old. Both around 70g and the size of a walnut. Way beyond my expertise, I contacted Fallowfield rescue centre who kindly lent me equipment including an incubator. They recommended I take them to the NHR but I was aware that they had already x 4 babies in and they need feeding every two



hours.....Then three days later I took in another from roughly the same place, again weighing 70g.



*Feeding a hoglet* Photo: R Tordoff



*Hoglets* Photo: R Tordoff

I quickly learned, and after feeding every two and three-quarter hours for around four weeks, they were finally ready to feed themselves fully and I could get some sleep! When they were around 600g I decided to release them into my garden.

Since then, I have seen the little one that I rescued on her own and she has taken up residence in one of my hedgehog boxes. I know this because while they were in captivity I marked them to distinguish between them for weight and medication purposes. Around the middle of October, I saw my little one coming and going to the hedgehog house using one of the trail cameras I have.

Hedgehog females don't have litters in their first year but I hope she will be around long enough for me to see her next generation next year. Males on the other hand will mate as soon as they are able and can even attempt mating with their mother, so I suppose that as well as fatigue is the reason she leaves them to fend for themselves at the earliest opportunity.

## **RECENT SPOTS AROUND THE VILLAGE**

Three great photos of wildlife (flora and fauna!) that have been spotted in Longhirst recently.



*Meripilus giganteus*

*A weird and wonderful fungus!*

*Photo: P Gilbertson*

*'Just looking'!*

*Photo: Oz Prey*



*'The Longhirst  
Monster?!'*

*Photo: Oz Prey*

Aren't we lucky to have such wonderful and varied wildlife on our doorstep! Keep the photos coming – we love to see them.

### **AND FINALLY**

Just a reminder that we welcome everyone who would like to get involved or attend an event so if you would like more information about the Longhirst Wildlife & Community Trust, please email me at [kim.woolhead@gmail.com](mailto:kim.woolhead@gmail.com).