

Sun Rising News

The twice yearly newsletter of
Sun Rising Natural Burial Ground and Nature Reserve

Summer 2010



Welcome to the natural burial ground's summer newsletter for 2010.

Nature Watch Days 2010

So far, two Nature Watch events have been held at Sun Rising this year, on 3 April and 22 – 23 May. Although a record of flora and fauna at Sun Rising has been kept since August 2009, the events were opportunities for others to get involved, extending our list as the seasons change. The process is an important part of the creation of a nature reserve: we are documenting every little change, watching as the ecological diversity of the site is naturally enriched, not only by our own plantings and sowings, but with the wildlife that is attracted to what is rapidly becoming a haven within the surrounding agricultural landscape.

The burial ground has only been open for four years, so we were not expecting many surprises. Indeed, during our May weekend, we had such clear blue skies and hot weather that most birds were sheltering in the cool of the trees and hedgerows; few of the 13 species we have seen on our birdfeeder showed themselves until the warmth eased in the evening. Many visitors did, however, see a number of the wild hares, scampering along the paths and running through the long grass and buttercups of the meadow. A few bold ones came right up to the car park!

Also making an appearance, albeit at more of a distance, were the roe deer. These

shy creatures seldom venture down to the busier parts of the burial ground, but can be seen along the hedgerows and will nibble the tops of the trees up by the Roundhouse forcing us to use taller guards in this area.

Along with some beautiful early summer butterflies, including the small copper, orange tips and dingy skipper, our most exciting sighting at the May weekend was a pair of marsh harriers, elegantly patrolling the territory – shown here in a picture drawn for us by Robin Restall. Most



commonly seen further east in England, we had our evidence checked by experts. We hope to see them again!

Our next Nature Watch day will be our Late Summer Watch, and will be held on **Sunday 22 August 2010**. Just before the cutting of the meadow areas of wild flowers and grasses, of particular interest will be the butterflies, moths and grasshoppers, together with the seeding flowers and grasses.

All are welcome to attend – whether an expert or a happy amateur. We may well do some work after dark, looking for moths and bats too. Bring along field guides and binoculars if you have them, or just your love of nature, a little patience and curiosity. Let us know if you plan to come along.

If you are interested in receiving a copy of the list we have so far compiled, on paper or digitally via email, please do get in touch.

Bulb and Tree Planting 2010

If you are interested in planting bulbs on and around your loved one's grave this autumn, please let us know and we can send you out the relevant information.

Our tree planting weekend will be around the end of November or beginning of December. You will receive news in the autumn if you have ordered (or intend to order) a tree.

Drainage Scheme

Many of you who visit Sun Rising regularly will have noticed the drainage work that was done during April: the resulting little runs of earth will soon grass over. Breaking existing field drains was causing problems in wet weather, but now all those old drains are diverted and are effectively taking the water down to the brook.

If you have any queries about the changes, do let us know.

Nature Notes

After a long cold winter the summer is now warming the earth, and life is returning to the fields, woods and hedgerows. The late arrival of spring this year saw snowdrops appearing in mid-February, and the hawthorn flowering in mid-May, two or three weeks later than in recent years. The cold winter and late spring also resulted in a bumper crop of dandelions, turning the meadow a golden yellow in flower, and leaving it misty with seedheads.

As well as dandelions, a host of other wild flowers and grasses are beginning to appear in the meadow at Sun Rising. Oxeye daisies, selfheal, buttercups, ragged robin, heartsease, vetchlings, teasels and meadow cranesbills will be amongst the flowers that make an appearance. As well as bringing colour to the burial ground, these wild plants support a wide range of insects, from small, elusive spiders, harvest men and beetles to large, decorative butterflies and moths. These will in turn feed the birds, bats and other animals which have made their home at Sun Rising.

Green with summer's growth, the hedgerow is again providing cover and nest sites for all those species of small birds

regularly seen on the birdfeeder. As the summer progresses and more insects become available for the birds to eat, they will be less reliant on the food we provide and be seen less often on the feeder. Then the late summer harvest of fruits, seeds and berries will sustain the wildlife at Sun Rising through into the winter months. Watch out for the colourful goldfinches feeding on the teasel heads.

As well as the small grassland and hedgerow flowers, the trees and shrubs also provide essential food for wildlife. The hawthorn is particularly important in this respect. Hawthorn is our most common hedgerow shrub, with sweet nectar in the spring and red berries in the autumn. Also, during times of heavy snow such as those we experienced last winter, hedgerows provide snow free corridors for small mammals, allowing them to move freely in search of food.

We are always interested in adding to the list of species seen at the burial ground, so if you make any interesting wildlife observations, do let us know.

Feedback Forms

Feedback forms are all too common in our society today. Even natural burial grounds give them to families after a funeral, asking for comment on the services they have provided. At Sun Rising, however, we have always felt this to be somewhat intrusive, especially at such a difficult time, and many families we have spoken to about this have tended to agree.

However, our standards and advisory body, the Association of Natural Burial Grounds, has now made it a compulsory condition of membership that we give each family a copy of their feedback form. We are enclosing one with this newsletter.

If you would like to fill it in and send it back to the Association, please do. If you would rather not, then please don't feel obliged to do so. We continue, of course, to welcome all feedback from families sent direct to us.

Thank you.

Nature Reserve Burial Grounds

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