

## **27<sup>th</sup> February 2011 Work Party**

The weather was shocking today, very wet and muddy, but fortunately not windy. It was a big work party today, which was good, as the nesting season will soon start and we will have to be a lot more careful about disturbing hedges, trees and bushes.

The main work was again edging the path and good progress was made. This involves seeking out young recently felled sycamores and laying them at an appropriate width to form a path border (Notts Wildlife Trust occasionally bring vehicles into the Wood and they need access). Stakes are made from sycamore branches about 2-3 inches thick, with pointed ends and driven into the ground to hold the edges in place. These are then wired and stapled together – some people object to the wire, but the benefit of using the wired edging more than makes up for any ecological disadvantage. The process of defining paths, as we have said before, encourages walkers and bikers not to make a whole network of paths across the Wood, to the detriment of the undergrowth and consequently the small birds and animals whose home it is. This will be even more important when the houses are completed on the Eastern side along Melton Road and there is more pressure on the fragile resources of the Wood. It encourages responsible sharing. Our other neverending task is spreading wood chip along the muddy paths.

There were no fewer than 6 new volunteers, and together with the regulars, this made a party of sixteen. In spite of the poor weather, working was as always really enjoyable – those who spend a lot of time indoors can't fail to get pleasure from being in the open air and getting healthy exercise, whilst learning new skills and learning about the wildlife that is present in the Wood. New volunteers are provided with gloves, visibility vests, a range of tools, some basic health and safety advice and information about Sharphill and the conservation work that is happening. See separate section on the hedge laying work that has been taking place recently courtesy of BTCV (British Trust for Conservation Volunteers) along the Western Edge.

One task that we could not undertake was removal of a rather large overhanging branch along the Western Path – Rushcliffe Borough Council have undertaken to remove it as soon as possible – meanwhile beware! Woods can be hazardous places, especially on windy days when tree branches can fall with no warning and it's surprising how often this happens over the paths. However RBC and Notts Wildlife Trust do regular Health and Safety checks and remove any trees that appear hazardous. You can see evidence of this on the main spinal path where some large trees have been felled and cut up. Much conservation work involves removing vegetation, instead of planting new stuff – however woods are very good at regenerating themselves. The Developers, in their detailed and complex mitigation plans, have undertaken to enlarge the perimeter of the Wood with appropriate sympathetic native species, along with a post and rail fence, so new planting will take place in the near future.