



Friends of Sharphill Wood

2022 Annual Report

May 2022

Founded 22 January 2008: Fourteenth Annual Report



Covid-19 has meant that we were unable to hold our ordinary meetings of the Friends of Sharphill Wood face to face, but thanks to Friends David Nicholson-Cole and Chrissie Wells we have had 8 meetings via Zoom and hope to resume our normal meetings in the future. The Officers elected at the Annual General Meeting on 11 May 2021 were as follows:

Chairperson	Phil Miller
Vice Chair	Chrissie Wells
Secretary	Bill Logan
Treasurer	Chrissie Wells
Publicity Officer	Jo Miller
Work Party Coordinator	John Elwell
Work Party Leader (2)	Richard Elliott, Mike Rivett

During the year Jo Miller stood down and she was thanked for her many years of service to the Group. Mike Rivett has carried out the role of Publicity Officer in place of Jo.

There were 90 Friends on the circulation list in May 2022, up from 78 in 2021.

Management Developments

A note of a 25 August 2021 meeting in the wood with Paul Phillips of RBC, Ben Driver and Lorna Griffiths of NWT to discuss the Management Plan was copied out to the Group. The points of discussion included the damaged ladder board, removal of invasive trees, coppicing, path edging and a Rushcliffe Reports article (see Publicity below). The particular problem of the hole in the central path was considered and we await its resolution. We were granted £586 from Rushcliffe Nature Conservation Strategy Implementation Group for the purchase of hedging whips and biodegradable guards and 20 free canopy trees from Rushcliffe Borough Council (see Work Parties below). NWT promised to erect 8 bat boxes, which has since been done. Arrangements for contacting the retailers about litter was also discussed.

We have had two meetings with a group set up by Cllr Simon Robinson and RBC officers to discuss implementation of the mitigating measures agreed by the housing developers. The boundary fence has been completed, although there are problems with damage and the 3 dog friendly stiles at the unauthorised entrances to the wood were vandalised and we are pursuing their replacement with the RBC group. Separately, a meeting was held with the developers and RBC to consider the gap between the wood and the housing and it was accepted that the gap was c40m.

Again, our social at The Test Match had to be cancelled and we are considering holding one in the wood this summer.

Publicity

We were fortunate to have several reports in different media: an item on BBC Radio Nottingham for new volunteers organised and undertaken by Chrissie, an article in Rushcliffe Borough Council's "Rushcliffe Reports" Winter Edition, and an item in the Notts Wildlife Trust's Volunteer Newsletter, sent by email to 583 members. Online we had items in West Bridgford Local News and West Bridgford Wire in February and March. In June we had a stand at the Edwalton Community Event.



Some changes were made to the navigation on our website. Maps and access advice updated and a News page added; further work to be done to ensure it is optimised across different platforms such as phones and tablets.

We now have 395 Facebook followers and have been averaging over 5 new posts per month over the last 6 months including a monthly post of photographs. Our posts are frequently shared to other Facebook groups by their administrators including "Southnottswildlife" and "RNCSIG". Some use has been made by us of sharing to the West Bridgford Local Community and Edwalton Community in Action groups. It would be good to make use of other social media (Instagram, TikTok?) and anyone with expertise is encouraged to come forward.

However, our publicity has prompted just 20 new potential volunteers to contact us. So far 7 of these have attended work parties.

On 29th March we had a [litter pick](#) by the 14th West Bridgford Brownies. Organised by Magdalena Szyrkowska, StreetWise provided all the gloves, litter pickers and bags and collected it all afterwards.

Nature Surveys

During summer 2021 we learned that NWT was introducing a new database called [Nature Counts](#) to record wildlife sightings in the county. At the time we were starting to think about maintaining our own sightings list, but it was clear that it would be far more beneficial to add our sightings to Nature Counts, whence they would also feed into national records. A few of us were trained in the use of Nature Counts by Ben Driver and Lorna Griffiths, and Sharphill Wood was given its own "activity" for on-site sightings. As of April 2022, we had populated the database with 370 records covering 262 species, mostly birds, plants and fungi from the various surveys that have taken place over the years.

Nest box inspections were carried out again during spring 2021, led by John and ably assisted on different visits by Chrissie, Hilary, Jan, Simon, Tim and Zdena, clocking up 25.75 hours on site. The report is available [here](#). For 2022 we have installed 6 new nest boxes towards the northern end of the site, to replace the old Treecreeper boxes and a couple of others that were damaged.

As in recent years, John conducted a series of bird surveys at roughly 2-week intervals from late March to early June, leading to the publication of a report '[Spring Birds at Sharphill Wood 2021](#)'. It gives a broad picture of birds present at the site during the breeding season and very rough estimates of the number of pairs of most species. A similar report had been produced each year since 2018, although the 2020 report had been somewhat limited in scope because of lock-down restrictions. The quantity and diversity of birds recorded in 2021 was not significantly different from recent years. Although several species recorded in the past were not recorded, every species recorded annually since 2018 was recorded again in 2021. This survey involved 25 volunteer-hours on site. Thanks to Chrissie and Hilary for helping on some visits.

Richard carried out a further [flora survey](#) in the wood during 2021, to complement earlier surveys. The 2021 weather was characterised by a wet winter, followed by a cold and dry April with numerous night frosts and a wet but still cool May; probably as a result, many flowers initially appeared around 2 weeks later than in previous years. The summer was generally warm, but relatively dry in the later part of the season, with relatively few woodland plants continuing to flower though September and into October. The species recorded in 2021 included 90 species of wildflower, 28 species of tree and

17 species of grass, sedge, rush and fern (a total of 135 species). The flora survey involved 16 visits by Richard between February and October, involving some 40 volunteer-hours. The 2022 survey is currently underway.

John Parker, Chair of the Nottinghamshire Bat Group, kindly conducted a bat survey in the wood on Friday 30 July during which Noctule, Soprano and Common Pipistrelle bats were detected and since recorded on Nature Counts. The Bat Group have said they will install static detectors in the wood for a week after April.

Work Parties

During the period April 2021 to March 2022 we held 11 scheduled Sunday [work parties](#) (one each month except August), plus an additional work party in early January to get on top of whip planting. In addition, John and Bill had a short work party in early December to brush cut an area for canopy tree planting. John, with assistance from Mike and Rosemary, carried out annual nest box servicing in November, including the installation of 6 new boxes.



Although participation had been down a little during the summer months, we enjoyed good support during the autumn and winter with an average of 10 at each main work party during that period and as many as 15 on one

occasion. We were particularly pleased to see a good number of new recruits during that period, most of them coming back at least once for more! During these various sessions, and taking into account low risk work (such as site inspections and litter picking) carried out by individuals on other occasions, we clocked up 385 volunteer-hours on site, which is comparable with the last pre-Covid year.

Much of the year's work was focused on winter planting. With a generous donation from Rushcliffe Nature Conservation Special Interest Group (RNCSIG), we had acquired about 600 whips (mostly Hawthorn and Blackthorn), which we planted inside the boundary fence. A few of these were used to fill gaps on the eastern boundary, where earlier planting had failed, but the vast majority were planted down the western side, starting from the northern entrance and extending over half way to the southern entrance. We also received 20 canopy trees (Oak and Small-leaved Lime) donated by Rushcliffe Borough Council, and these were planted in a prepared area near the southern end of the eastern path, the fourth such "trial planting area".



Much of the remainder of the autumn/winter was used to thin young Sycamore and Norway Maple, which are rather invasive and a threat to biodiversity. By taking out some of these, other species will have a better chance of growing to maturity. The arisings from this work, along with some posts purchased with grant money, were used to construct a dead hedge where there was a substantial gap in the natural hedge towards the northern end of the western boundary.

Other tasks throughout the year have included watering the previous year's canopy trees, checking planted trees/whips, path edging maintenance at the northern end of the eastern path, keeping paths clear of encroaching vegetation and fallen branches (including a session with scythes loaned by NWT in June), placing stones on muddy sections of the paths, and the inevitable litter picking.

A huge thank you to all who have helped.

Finance

The County and Borough Councillors really came up trumps with support this year. Because of the pandemic we considered it appropriate to offer kit to volunteers instead of lending, which posed logistical issues as regards cleanliness. This was covered by a grant from Councillor Robinson £395.23 late in 2020 which is not shown in these accounts, but it was spent during the year. Councillor Penny Gowland also gave us a grant of £50.00 for a similar purpose. As regards tools, we are the proud own-

ers of a new Tree Popper (for use in the removal of invasive species of small sapling) courtesy of Councillor Robinson. Councillor Wheeler's grant of £250.00 from Notts County Council helped us buy the tools & equipment we need to keep going, for example the purchase of a new supply of nest boxes – these are regularly damaged by falling branches or felling of unsafe trees, although vandalism is thankfully rare.

One of the main tasks as already described has been the planting of whips, to protect the boundary and for understorey, and the RBC Biodiversity Grant approved in 2020 via the Rushcliffe Nature Conservation Special Interest Group £586.00 was used for this purpose together with the supportive stakes ties and guards where appropriate. Councillor Vicky Price also provided us with a grant of £200.00 for this purpose. Last but not least, although S. Collins and Co Cash and Carry (the legendary!) no longer trade, last year Mr. and Mrs. Collins kindly donated £200 so we could pay for Public Liability Insurance. Rushcliffe Borough Councillors are unable to fund this very necessary expense.

It has always been our ambition to secure funding from East Midlands Airport, due to the aeroplanes continually flying over the Wood on their flight path to EM airport. This we have managed to achieve from their Community Fund, although the grant of £250.00 does not appear in the accounts as we unfortunately have to spend the money before we receive it, showing evidence of purchase. This is an unfortunate rule of some funders, and it means some of us having to live on bread and cheese whilst waiting for grants to come through!! The grant will be spent on construction of a notice board for the kissing gate entrance, and David Nicholson- Cole has provided us with quotes for building one himself. This is considerably cheaper than using suppliers, and the previous one he made has stood the test of time. Notice Boards are a very important part of helping educate and inform members of the Public who use the Wood.

So, thanks to all these donors for their continued support and understanding. We ended the year with a modest surplus of £235.66 to carry out further essential work in the Wood. Thanks also to Gordon Dyne who has audited our accounts from the very start and continues to do so.

Acknowledgements

Thanks are again due to Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust, especially Ben Driver, Paul Phillips of Rushcliffe Borough Council and Gordon Dyne of the South Notts Group for their continued advice and support.

Phil Miller (Chair), Chrissie Wells (Vice Chair & Treasurer), John Elwell (Work Party Coordinator), Richard Elliott & Mike Rivett (Deputy Work Party Coordinators), and Bill Logan (Secretary).