



## **Roborough Rewilders Newsletter**

**Registered charity No. 1203077**

### **Charitable Status**

Roborough Rewilders (please note the name change from Rewilding Roborough Fields) is now officially a charity with three trustees (myself, Annie and Andrew Mounstephen). Annie and I will now hand the land over to the charity which will allow us to start looking for grants and generally help in getting the rewilding ethos out there. Jo is now managing the website and has updated it to reflect the new name and charitable status. [www.roboroughrewilders.org](http://www.roboroughrewilders.org) Many thanks to team member Luis for setting it up in the first place.

### **Walk-Round**

There was a walk-round of the fields on June 23<sup>rd</sup> organised by the Devon Rewilding Network. It went well, with 22 people coming along. About half were via the Rewilding Network and half were local people. We were lucky enough to have a grass snake turn up and hundreds of damselflies and dragonflies. During my time in and around the fields there were various notable sightings – a female goshawk flying along the valley floor hotly pursued by “our” kestrels and pretty much every neighbourhood crow; little owls on the other side of the valley, and very interestingly, barn owls travelling nearly half a mile to catch prey in our fields to feed their four young in their barn nest. They had to fly over four or five fields to get to ours, so it shows the value of our small patch of prey-rich habitat.



### **Next Walk-Round**

Nick will be taking the Devon Wildlife Trust round the fields on Friday 21st July at 2.30pm. If anyone else would like to join, they'll be most welcome.



## Future management of the fields

Some of the techniques we have used to increase biodiversity have been really successful and won't need much more intervention. The hedgerow species on the banks we created have grown to up to 3m high in two years and are now almost out of range of the deer. Likewise, the areas we scraped are full of flower and our ponds are alive with insects and plants (not to mention tawny owls gingerly paddling in for a bath).



The Middle Meadow section though that had sheep, pigs and cattle on it last year is still dominated by grass so

we will aim to get the cattle in to graze this down again and then sow heavily with yellow rattle to create space for more flower. The cattle will also have access to the Back Field so that they can continue to slow down bramble growth and eat up some of the soft rush.

## Species count

Our species count for the two fields is now up to 507 and still rising, compared to the ecologists baseline survey in 2020 of 250. It isn't just the range of species, though, but the sheer quantity (and quality) of life in our ten acres. You literally can't move now without disturbing damselflies, bees and a myriad of other insects, and walking around is difficult to do if you are averse (as I am) to standing on a flower.



## Ephemeral ponds

These two photos show Corner Pond in the front field early this year and again in June. Quite a few of the shallow ponds in the front fields dry up most summers. Although you might think this would be bad for the wildlife, in fact there are many benefits. Firstly, the aquatic vegetation dies off every summer and this means that the pond doesn't become completely dominated by late succession vegetation; the pond starts anew every spring. This means that pioneer species get to have "new ponds" to colonise every spring. These ephemeral ponds are therefore quite different from the other pools in the two fields which hold permanent water. Ephemeral ponds would have been very common historically in our landscape but are now almost completely absent which makes the ones we have in our fields that much more valuable.



Best regards,

*Nick*