



Roborough Rewilders Newsletter

Registered Charity No. 1203077

www.roboroughrewilders.org



Walk Round for The Devon Wildlife Trust

On July 21st 2023 Nick took a group from the Devon Wildlife Trust round the fields. Thanks to Tom Parsons for organising it. We had a great look round and, apart from the usual myriad dragonflies and birds, we were surprised to get a visit from a hobby (of which more later!)

Wildlife Update

Our species count is up to 538 (from a baseline of 250) with notable recent additions of the hobby, common lizard, stoat and weasel. Another reason for optimism is that the fields are full to bursting with field voles. They are absolutely everywhere, partly due to our management decision not to cut two-thirds of the front field.



Currently the kestrels are taking a good look at our box again. Last year they were pushed out by the jackdaws but Jo and Paul have cleared the jackdaw twigs out of the box over the winter and we are hoping the male kestrel will be stroppy enough to hold his own.

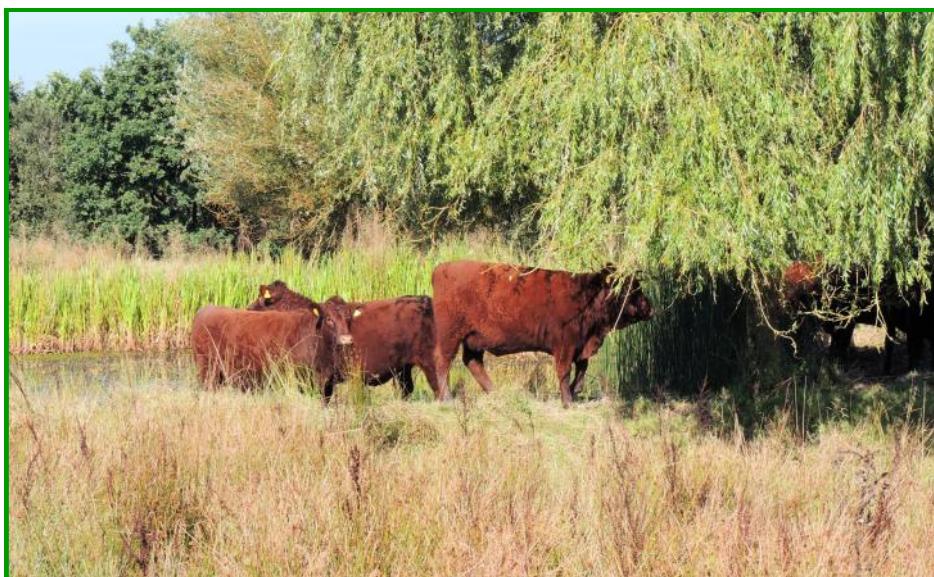


In terms of recording our wildlife, Jo and Paul have come up with an ingenious rodent-cam - a box with a perspex lid and trail camera at one end. One objective with this is to try and photograph the ever-elusive dormouse that we are almost certain are using our hedgerows. So far we only have lots of photos of woodmice, but dormice are still hibernating, so not the right time yet.



Red Devons and Wildflower

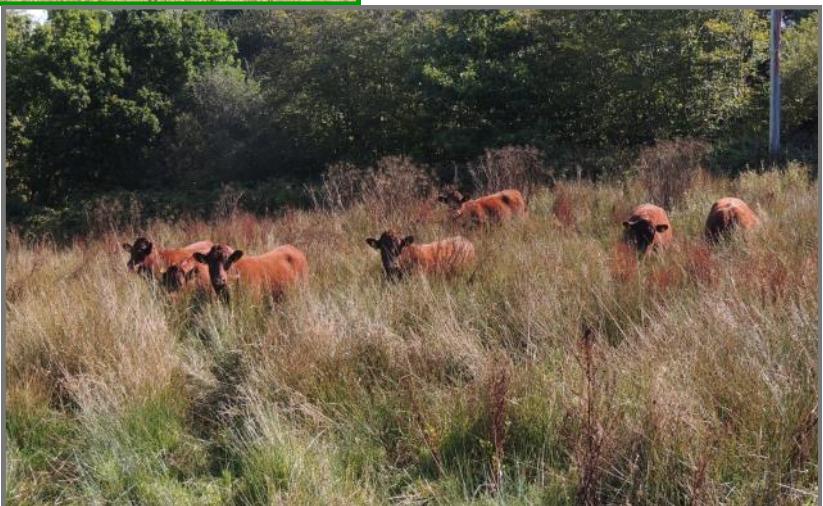
Last Autumn the Red Devon cattle were in the fields for the second year. Neighbouring farmer, Neil Huggons very kindly brought them in for us again. They did their usual great job of knocking around vegetation and creating space for new plants to germinate but also brought a new impact. One of our ponds - Solo Pond - has never held water at all; just a puddle at the bottom. The cattle have sealed it by poaching the ground with their hooves and it has been brim-full ever since. This is much to the liking of a kingfisher which has been feeding on the newts that have moved in. An amazing way to seal a leaking pond - just let a mob of Red Devons loaf around in it!



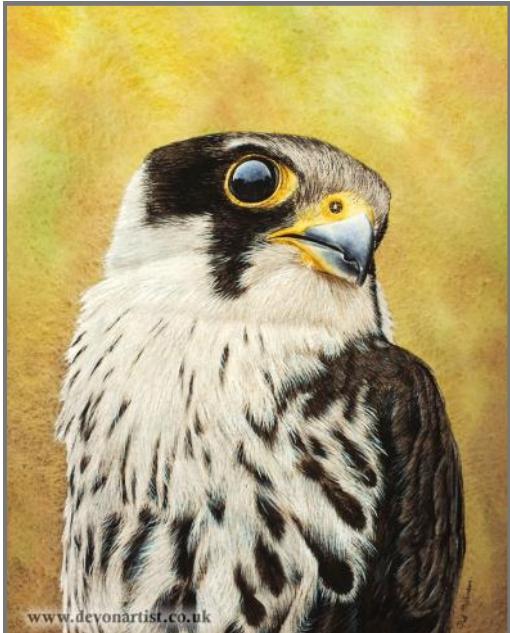
Neil also gave us permission to collect Devil's Bit Scabious seed from his lovely Colm grassland meadows so this was sown in the autumn. At the same time we put in loads more yellow rattle seed to try and knock back the grass again in Middle Meadow. Because of the years of fertilising, it is difficult to get flowering plants to establish, but we will persevere.

Regeneration and Hedgerows

Our plantings of hedgerow shrubs on the turf banks have grown at an extraordinary rate. The white willow are growing at 2m a year!! I have now started taking the spiral guards off them as they are no longer vulnerable to rabbits and deer. They will soon be full of seeds and fruit for our dormice and birds, but they will also improve the microclimate in the open field.

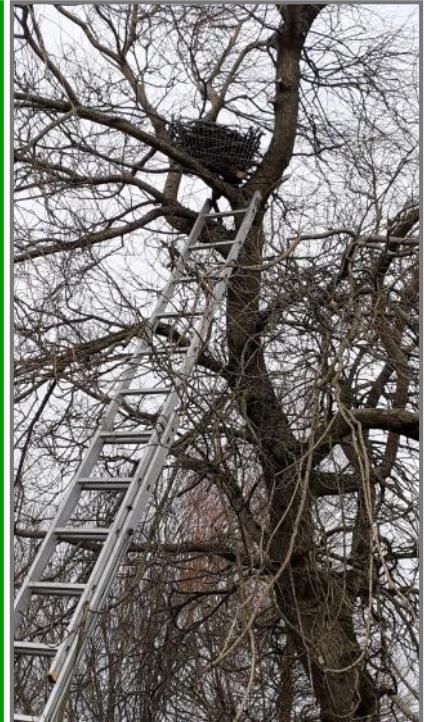


Another positive thing that is happening is natural regeneration. This is much the best way to get new scrub and woodland. Notable trees and shrubs that are popping up include oak, field elm, hazel, gorse and willow.



The Hobby Basket

This is a hobby. Not a photo, but a wonderful painting by Paul. Prompted by the visit we got from a hobby in July, we decided to put up an artificial nest site for this stunning falcon. Hobbies hunt dragonflies and even swallows. They migrate here to breed in the summer and tend to use old crows' nests; so we have fashioned a crow's nest by weaving sticks into an old shopping basket which we then put up in one of our willows. Fingers crossed!



Website

Jo has been revamping the website. There are exciting new videos on our "How To" pages under "Roughness" and "Pond creation" and, if you haven't seen it, the "Highlights" reel on the Home page is wonderful. www.roboroughrewilders.org

Best regards,

Nick and Annie

<http://www.clarksonwoods.co.uk/>

<https://knepp.co.uk/home>

<https://devonartist.co.uk/>

All photos courtesy of Jo Everitt and Paul Hopkinson
aka The Devon Artist <https://devonartist.co.uk/>