



Roborough Rewilders Newsletter

Registered Charity No. 1203077

www.roboroughrewilders.org

Welcome to our first newsletter of 2025 - and a very Happy New Year to all Otters and Goshawks!

Species Numbers, Fields and Talks

Species numbers continue to climb - they are now up to 559 from our baseline survey number of 250. The two fields are full of life and diversity and provide a marked contrast to the surrounding sheep pasture. They have also been an inspiration to visitors to the fields and audiences at Nick's talks. Nick has given three talks in recent months, one in Dolton for a branch of the Devon Wildlife Trust and two near Kittisford where Nick and Annie now live.

In addition, several people have been shown round the project and Nick ran a "Pond Management for Biodiversity" day for local landowners as well. From this have come two quite large-scale biodiversity, pond-creation schemes (of which more later). Nick also continues to visit landowners (8 since the last newsletter) to see what other rewilders are doing and also to suggest options for increasing biodiversity.

Brash and Christmas Trees

Roborough villagers again kindly brought us their old Christmas trees. We received about 25 all told. These have been placed with the others from previous years to create structure and habitat. In addition, we have received a huge pile of "leylandii" which we will get into the fields. Apart from the direct benefits to invertebrates and birds, it also means that a lot of organic matter (and hence carbon) ends up in the soil. Often the alternative is burning which of course releases almost all of the carbon into the atmosphere.





Red Devons

The Red Devon cattle were again in the fields, courtesy of Neil Huggons, for five weeks or so before Christmas. This year for the first time we allowed them into the Laneside section of the project. Although they grazed back some of the young oaks, the benefits of grass grazed, poaching of the ground and dung deposited far outweigh this. They rapidly developed a routine of sleeping in the north-western corner next to the evergreens and then in the morning trekking over to the far side of the back field to graze their way back to their sleeping patch for the evening.

Candlelit Bazaar

With some of our funds we have invested in a display board with the idea of setting up a stand at some of the many fairs, fetes and shows that take place all around the county in spring and summer with a view to recruiting more Otters and Goshawks. As a trial, we took a stand at the Milverton Candlelit Bazaar. As this was an actual bazaar we thought we should have some things to sell and so Andrew made bird boxes, a neighbour made cheesecakes, and muffins, Annie made Christmas cards and a supporter donated knitted woodland creature bottle/Ferro Rocher covers!



The Future

We continue to look for grants and contacts in order to expand the project by buying more land nearby. In addition, Nick will continue the work of spreading the word and we may well set up a group of like-minded people/projects in the Roborough area to further this. The charity has a healthy bank balance and the trustees meet regularly to discuss the way forward.

The Devon Rewilding Network is preparing a Lottery bid to look at ways to encourage landowners to carry out biodiversity work. Ten existing sites (one of which will be the Roborough Rewilders' fields) will receive 50% funding for work in the fields, plus we will try and encourage a neighbour to participate as well. This is definitely an interesting project and we are very happy to have been approached as one of the ten sites.

Cadbury Cottage

Jack and David Smellie of Cadbury Cottage near Chulmleigh contacted Nick to have a look round our fields. They liked what they saw so much that they wanted one! Their land is very similar to how our fields were 5 years ago (10 acres of sheep pasture, a north-facing slope and lots of water.) So, for the past two weeks (one more to go) Nick (and another Nick) have been digging ponds, creating streams and scraping turf to make hedgerow banks. The project has been a great success and the “green desert” of improved sheep pasture has been transformed into a diverse landscape ready to fill with life in the spring.



Best regards,

The Trustees

Nick, Annie, Andrew and Rob

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

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

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