



Rewilding Roborough Fields Newsletter



Some great news from the fields in Roborough is the fact that a pair of kestrels have raised and fledged 5 chicks in the kestrel box we put up. They had to fight a large clan of jackdaws for occupancy of the box but having won out they proved to be exemplary parents. Food brought to the young included a newt, a few birds, rats, shrews and (mostly) field voles. Five kestrel chicks take a lot of feeding!



The adult male with a vole for dinner



A chick on a stick

This summer the fields are absolutely buzzing with life. Once the Tamworth pigs had left, we seeded the ground with wildflower, much of which has now germinated. The yellow rattle sown in the autumn of last year has turned into hundreds, if not thousands, of plants and the air is full of the sound of bumblebees and honey bees feeding on all the flower.



The hedgerows are growing tall now that they are not flailed every year and the brambles are spreading out into the fields.

Thanks to Jo and Paul and dragonfly expert Dave Smallshire, we know that we now have 9 species of dragonfly including the rare Lesser Emperor, as well as 18 species of butterfly, again including a rare species, the Marbled White.



Emperor Dragonfly
laying eggs on
pondweed





Golden Ringed dragonfly on brambles



Jo and Paul recently saw a grass snake about a metre long. They live under our corrugated tin sheets.



Short tailed field voles also live under the tins.



Large Red damselfly on spearwort flower

Perhaps most importantly though, there is a huge difference in the abundance of flower and insects in our fields compared to the neighbouring ones. In just a year and a half life has flooded back into the rewilded fields.

The next steps in our project may well include bringing local Devon Ruby cattle in to graze down more of the grass; sowing more rattle seed, but this time collected in the fields, and doing presentations in Roborough and Edinburgh on the progress so far.

Next summer the Devon Rewilding Network is going to hold an Open Day in the fields for their members, which is exciting. The project just moves from one success to another. This is partly because it is so much easier working with natural processes than against them, but also due to Jo and Paul's constant efforts in the fields and the village. Once I have the dates for the presentations and the Open Day in the fields, I will let everyone know and hopefully some of you can come along. Jo's and Paul's amazing photographs and videos guarantee some beautiful images and we will be able to discuss all the aspects of the project with a wider group of people.

Best regards,

Nick and Annie



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