



## Kempshott Conservation Group



December 2011

Newsletter No. 18

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### **The next Newsletter will be published in the spring.....**

Contributions should be submitted by 15 March.

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### **Annual subscriptions.....**

.....for 2011/2012 are now due and we are very pleased that many of you have already renewed your £2.00 per household membership, saving us so much time going from house to house. Thank you for your cooperation. Subscriptions are a very important part of the Group's income as they pay for Newsletter production and other operating expenses. If yours has not yet been paid would you please send or deliver a cheque or cash to any of the addresses on the left as quickly as possible.

Those who undertake telephone or internet banking may prefer payment direct to our bank account:-

<b>Bank</b>	NatWest
	Old Market Square Branch
	3 London Street, Basingstoke
<b>A/C name</b>	Kempshott Conservation Group
<b>Sort code</b>	60-02-49 <b>A/C number</b> 71148523

With all payments, please remember to include your name.



### **Our website.....**

.....is now up and running so why not visit us at <http://kempshottconservationgroup.org.uk/> Please bookmark the site and communicating with us will be even easier. All the latest news and information, the picture gallery and your feedback and questions will be in one place. The website is linked to that of other conservation groups in and around Basingstoke so you can quickly find out what is happening in wildlife conservation throughout the area.



## ***Our 2011 wild flower seed harvest.....***

.....was the best ever for collecting seed for our own use and for the benefit of sister groups in Basingstoke. Apart from collecting on our own site at Down Grange Meadow members made a number of forays to collect seed from other places with an abundance of wild flowers. Our friends at Old Down & Beggarwood Wildlife Group kindly allowed us to collect at their Old Down site and we also visited the large Butterfly Conservation site at Magdalen Hill Down, Winchester.

This year our **Seed Cleaning Team** swung into action and, over the period from July to October, the three ladies spent 32 hours preparing seed for use. A magnificent effort! If you would like to help processing our 2012 seed harvest, you will be very welcome.

Much has been used in reseeding the triangle of bare ground in Down Grange Meadow. Some has been given to the Old Down & Beggarwood Wildlife Group and the Friends of Stratton Park with some retained for propagation trials - see below.

We will be collecting more seed in 2012. If you are interested in joining us for a couple of hours on a nice sunny day between June and October, please get in touch.



## ***Wild flower propagation scheme***

OK, so we know how and where to collect wild flower seed and we have a team of lovely ladies prepared to clean and sort it for us.

The next step in our plan has always been to start propagating some seed in trays for planting out as plugs. We have done this on a small scale for the last two years with teasel, foxglove, bird's-foot trefoil and cowslip.

We would like to increase the scale of this operation, but have run out of time and space. We are looking for volunteers to accommodate seed trays in their greenhouses and, later in spring, to put them out in the open air to bring the plants on before they are planted out. There is also the possibility of selling plug plants to Kempshott residents who would like some wild flowers in their gardens for the benefit of wildlife.

So, if you have green fingers and would like to join the seed propagation team, please do contact us.



## On Down Grange Meadow.....

.....fungi have been popping up everywhere, probably because of the recent wet spell. Our only red book species, the Bearded Tooth (*Hericium erinaceus*), has appeared again for the third year running on an old beech tree.

A new arrival is a Magpie Ink Cap (*Coprinus picaceus*) (Pictured). This is also a mushroom of beech woodland or well shaded grassland adjacent to beech woods on alkaline soils. While not as rare as our Bearded Tooth, it is still fairly uncommon and, according to the Hampshire Recorder for Fungi, this ink cap is one of only four species that are protected in Hampshire. Like all ink caps, the fruiting body does not last very long and we were lucky to see it. It tends to occur singly or in small well spaced groups. In the immediate area there were two or three remnant "stumps" of its predecessors. Let's see if they return next year.



Along the hedgerow Extension, we also had a good show of Fly Agaric mushrooms underneath the Silver Birch. These are a distinctive fungi with red tops with white spots. While they look attractive, they are one of our more poisonous mushrooms!

The focus of our management plans for the Meadow has been on encouraging invertebrates, especially butterflies and moths. As these are at the bottom of the food chain, getting the mix of flowers, shrubs, trees and habitat structure correct for them will help birds and higher animals. We will investigate getting the site SINC status (Site of Interest for Nature Conservation). The award of this accolade is determined by HBIC (Hampshire Biodiversity Information Centre) and is based on the number of interesting species that can be found. It may be that these two rare or unusual fungi may be crucial to us getting SINC status, rather than all the hard work we have put into managing and improving the habitat for invertebrates.

During October and early November we seeded the triangular patch that the Council had scraped and rotavated for us, all 755 sq metres of it. The seed used were a "home brew" mix of wildflowers and fine grasses. The wildflower seed had been collected from local sites by various groups and processed by our team of ladies. The grasses were a mix of fescues and other fine leaved varieties. All the seed was sown and raked by hand, which was a lot of hard work.

This technique looks as if it will provide a mosaic of flower and grass with bare gaps in between. This may not look attractive to start with, but bare earth is useful for helping burrowing insects, such as solitary bees, to build their nests. Other insects like to lie on the surface and bask in the sun.



### ***Our two-wheeled tractor.....***

.....has been put to good use cutting various areas on Down Grange Meadow and along the Old Hedgerow as this picture with Barry Dale at the controls shows.

Grass and wildflowers cut in the Meadow have been used to create habitat piles and welcome shelter for small mammals along the edge of the Northern Belt. As the piles are mainly grass, other vertebrates might be encouraged.

The wildflowers cut in the Embayment were used to create a habitat pile in the Meadow itself. Comprising mainly flower stalks and seed heads, the pile is less dense than if we had used only grass cuttings. Consequently, and within a few days, holes started appearing in the base. We think hedgehogs have been looking for a winter home.

Much of the nettle on the eastern side of the Old Hedgerow has been cut. Again, some of the arrisings have been used to create habitat piles for our smaller residents. During cutting, a Short-tailed Vole and a Common Frog - the first amphibian recorded on any of our sites - were spotted.



### ***Our Work Party programme.....***

.....from January until the end of the season in April is outlined below. As always, we look forward to seeing as many of you as possible. Don't forget to bring gloves. Any other equipment needed will be provided. If you need more information, please ask.

Date & time	Location	Date & time	Location
Sunday, 8 January	Hedgerow	Thursday, 1 March	Orchard
Thursday, 19 January	Meadow	Sunday, 11 March	Hedgerow
Sunday, 29 January	Orchard	Thursday, 22 March	Meadow
Thursday, 9 February	Hedgerow	Sunday, 1 April	Orchard
Sunday, 19 February	Meadow	Thursday, 12 April	Hedgerow

Operating times of Work Parties and meeting points for each location are:-

Day	Times	Location	Meeting Point
Sunday	10 00 - 12 30	Orchard	In the Orchard, opposite Kendal Gardens (park in Derwent Road)
Thursday	14 00 - 16 00	Meadow	Entrance by St. Mark's Church in Homesteads Road
		Hedgerow	Southern end of footpath between Coniston Road and Down Grange