



NEWSLETTER

Issue No. 24 April 2010

It has been a long cold winter on Hob Moor as everywhere, but at last spring has arrived. The grass has yet to really start growing, so this is the best time to see the contours of the Moor with the ridges and furrows clearly visible. Over the winter the Moor has been a quagmire when it hasn't been frozen and the ground is still so waterlogged that the slightest rain forms ponds and puddles. Despite the cold weather the first sighting of skylarks this year was in early March and two males have since been spotted in different parts of the Moor. Fieldfares and Redwings, more usually found on the moor itself, have been forced by the severe winter to find food in gardens around the moor. Other less common birds spotted this winter include Snipe and Grey Wagtail in the becks and a solitary Blackcap.

Natural England Stewardship Scheme

The exact form that the management of the Moor will take in the immediate future is uncertain as the City of York Council is applying for funding for the management of Hob Moor under a Stewardship Scheme run by Natural England which would come into effect in June if adopted. Under this scheme Natural England give a grant to help manage environmentally sensitive areas providing certain environmental and conservation criteria are met. The proposed changes would include measures to remove nutrients from the land, such as hay-cropping and better management of cattle grazing, to promote the growth of wild flowers and limit thistles. There will be more details in the next Newsletter.

Because of these proposals we are waiting to see what will happen to the dreaded thistles. The detailed plan laboriously worked out last year for dealing with thistles may have to be amended in the light of the Stewardship Scheme. Whatever happens, the thistles have to be dealt with, so some action will be taken, although exactly what is unclear at the moment.

Martin Hammond's Survey

The Friends and the Council jointly commissioned Martin Hammond, a Wildlife Consultant who has previously surveyed the Moor in 2000, to make a detailed survey of the ecology of the Moor and he has just completed his report 'A Review of Nature Conservation Management on Hob Moor'. The study is a long and detailed document describing the Moor's ecology, including habitats, fauna and flora. It discusses conservation issues and makes recommendations for the management of the Moor and so is very timely for informing us in connection with the stewardship scheme. All we can do here is bring out one or two points that you might like to consider. In his report Martin says that the old pasture on Hob Moor is of considerably higher ecological quality than the other York Strays but that the quality of the grassland has deteriorated over the past 20 years due to a combination of thistle encroachment, poor grazing management and nutrient-enrichment (substantially caused by dog urine and faeces). He writes that as the skylark is such an emblematic bird of Hob Moor, conservation of the breeding population must be a management priority and he recommends the control of creeping thistle infestation as essential to restore extensive areas of short/medium height grassland on the Moor. Thistles also limit the area on which cows can walk and feed and so increases pressure on skylarks. (We have asked Martin to conduct a Skylark and Meadow Pipit Survey of the Moor this spring.)

To help maintain the low nutrient levels of the Moor, which would promote the habitat that skylarks need, dog owners need to be encouraged to 'pick up' after their pets but, as we know from experience, this can be difficult. It may be worth considering limiting the areas on the Moor on which dogs can foul, for instance to the area of low ecological value adjoining Thanet Road. In addition to the problem of nutrient-enrichment, there are good reasons for reducing dog fouling on Hob Moor. Unrestricted fouling may be seen as a 'right' by regular dog walkers but tends to exclude other users such as children, families without dogs and the disabled. Your comments and ideas are welcomed.

Dogs

If you do walk a dog on the Moor, beware of letting it run on the banks of the becks. There is a lot of litter in places, including broken glass and old cans which can cause damage to paws, as one member's dog found to his cost. Responsibility for removing rubbish from the becks is complicated to apportion; different agencies are responsible for the water and the banks and for different parts of the water courses around the Moor. We are awaiting clarification so we know who to get in touch with to get rubbish removed. We are also waiting for a meeting with someone from the Railway Institute Sports Ground about the poor state of their fencing, which encourages vandalism and littering.

The Mystery of the Mounds on the Moor

You may have noticed some mounds of earth and divots which appeared on the Moor last autumn and then proliferated and moved in early spring. It turns out that these have been deposited by the council (!) and are the edges from grass verges which are now being trimmed rather than being sprayed with grass killer. The department responsible has been asked to find another site, as apart from being ugly, the soil and clods are contributing to the increased fertility of the Moor and the repeated visits of the tractor and trailer have churned up the earth quite badly in places.

Edmund Wilson Site

Lidl have been given planning permission to develop the site as a supermarket. The Friends were consulted on the Planning Application. We made comments and suggestions regarding litter control, the re-siting of the Information Board and dog-bin, the types of trees and hedgerow plants to be used along the boundary and lighting and we received a positive response from Lidl on these matters. There will be parking for shoppers only and no entrance to the Moor via the car park but a new access gate will be built in the road adjacent to the site (St James Pace). Lidl have provided guarantees about litter (at least on their site), keeping the trees already on the boundary and providing a screening hedge.

Despite a common misconception that Hob Moor is common land owned by the freemen of York, it has in fact been owned by York Council since 1907. Therefore, the Council has a free hand (within the constraints of planning law) with sites like this one. The land on which the baths were built was incorporated into Hob Moor in 1954 along with rest of Kelsey's Pond area. However, when the baths were built an area of equivalent size was added to Little Hob Moor. Consequently, there was no requirement that the Council return this area to Hob Moor when the baths closed.

Litter

It's to be hoped that the new supermarket doesn't generate more rubbish, as this is already a big problem on the Moor generally and on that side in particular. Plastic drink bottles, glass vodka bottles and plastic bags are the most common. Thanks as ever go to all those who pick it up. Requests to the Council for litter bins near the entrances to the Moor have not so far met with results, as has the request for more dog refuse bins, but this problem may be solved by the Stewardship Scheme which would provide funding for extra bins.

Subscription Renewals

The Committee is proposing to add some extra options to the way you can pay your subscription. The main reason for doing this is that we believe that many members do not renew their subscriptions because they just don't get round to it but would like to remain in contact with the Friends. The new options would allow people to make a longer term commitment if they wished and would also reduce our administration costs.

To change the subscription needs the consent of the members, so we are proposing to put this forward at the AGM in October. It is mentioned now so that you can think about it and come up with any other suggestions. Also if you want to pay one of the new subscription rates, wait until after the AGM to renew your subscription. Your existing membership will be extended until the end of October.

The new membership proposals are:

Annual membership	£2 (unchanged)		
Six year membership	£10	Life membership	£20

In Brief

- ❖ We have bought two new benches but their installation on the Moor is waiting on the acceptance of the Stewardship Scheme to determine their siting.
- ❖ The Friends of Hob Moor's new colour leaflet – 'A Walk Round Hob Moor' will soon be ready and will be distributed with the next Newsletter and to the houses around the Moor and made available at libraries. It will also be downloadable from the FoHM website. It includes information about the Moor and its history and a map with a guided walk showing present day features and the evidence of how the Moor has been used in the past.
- ❖ The Friends are sponsoring an arts project with Hob Moor School Year 6 pupils using the Moor as a creative stimulus. There will be a writing project and an art project creating mosaics. The work will be displayed at Hob Moor Day and prizes presented then. We hope that this will encourage young people to come onto and appreciate the Moor.
- ❖ The Rangers Service was not axed as part of Council budget cuts as was threatened, thanks in part to strong opposition from the Friends. However we will lose our Ranger, AnneMarie Heslop, who has decided to work part-time and from April 1st we will welcome her replacement. We extend our thanks to AnneMarie for all the hard work she has put in to support Hob Moor.
- ❖ High speed fibre optic cables are being laid along the north edge of the Moor starting at Kingsway West as part of the Council's development of high speed broadband connectivity for the city.
- ❖ The website is regularly updated and now has a new layout, a revised structure and a photo slideshow on the homepage.
- ❖ We always welcome any members to the work of the Committee. Please come to any of our meetings if you are at all interested: contact David or Gwen on 788018.

USEFUL CONTACT DETAILS

To report damage etc. urgently on Hob Moor (24 hours)	625751
To report motor cyclists on Hob Moor, contact Police	0845 6060247
For removal of fly-tipped debris, litter, graffiti etc. York Pride	551551
Contact us with your comments and suggestions about Hob Moor and the Friends	784616
email: friendsofhobmoor@yahoo.com	
website: www.friendsofhobmoor.org.uk or www.fohm.org.uk	

Walks on Hob Moor Spring & Summer 2010

Sunday 16th May

10.00am - 11.30am

Meet at the Holly Bank
entrance to Hob Moor

Wild Birds on Hob Moor

with Margaret Weeden

Join this informal, enjoyable and informative stroll to look out for the many birds that live on and around Hob Moor. If we are lucky we may hear beautiful song of the skylark.

Tuesday 25th May

7.00pm - 8.30pm

Meet at the Thanet Road
entrance to Hob Moor

A Look at the Ecology of Hob Moor

with Martin Hammond

Come along for a pleasant and fascinating evening walk on Hob Moor in which we will explore the diverse ecology of the moor and discuss its management with a local expert.

Sunday 18th July

2.00pm - 4.00pm

Meet at the North Lane
entrance to Hob Moor
(Chase Side Court)

Hob Moor Creepy Crawlies in Summer

with Mark Tyszka

Find the familiar; discover the new. Ask questions and be surprised. Walk with us and meet the bug life of the hedges and the flowers that grow in the pastures. Count butterflies and admire the trees. Bring a camera and a notebook. Children welcome.

Wednesday

1st September

8-9.30pm

Bat Night on the Moor

Discover the secrets of the moor at dusk! Come and spot the bats that come out just when you thought there was nothing to see on the moor. You'll need a torch, suitable footwear and warm clothes.

Please book onto this event through the Council: rangers@york.gov.uk or Stephen Whittaker on 0777 194 1155

Please note that walks will not take place if it is raining heavily.

HOB MOOR NATURE RESERVE DAY

A great afternoon out, with lots of activities for all the family: falconry display, fun dog show, willow weaving, face painting, story telling, refreshments, stalls and more.

Saturday 29th May

2-4.30pm

Held behind Edmund Wilson Baths/Lidl

**West Bank Park
Summer Fair**

Sunday 27th June

1.30-4pm