

Eycott Hill Nature Reserve

Newsletter

ISSUE
#3



It was a mixed year for the project in 2017; while we achieved a lot in terms of public engagement and habitat work we also lost our colleague and friend Stephen Owen, who sadly died while taking part in a fell race. Stephen is missed by all of his colleagues, but he would want us to celebrate the positives, so read on for an update from Eycott Hill.



Getting creative

We've had a lot of fun working with local children, older people, and adults with learning disabilities on the arts project with Prism Arts. We ran 33 sessions in 2017 including site visits and workshops in creative writing, design and illustration, textiles, and music. We're building up an exciting body of work that will culminate in an on-site performance in summer 2019.

Five primary schools from Greystoke, Penruddock, Penrith, Braithwaite and Distington enjoyed working with David Napthine, an artist and writer from Prism Arts, to develop stories inspired by a visit

to the nature reserve. The stories were taken to residential homes in Penrith so older residents could contribute their ideas. The finished stories will be used to inspire the schools' performance pieces in 2019.

Later in the year the schools were partnered with groups of older people or adults with learning disabilities to design and make textile banners or puppets for their performances. They started by drawing their designs on paper, before making a fabric pattern, then selecting different types of textiles to use.

The Trolls of Eycott Hill

In October 2017 some fabulous frogs, terrible trolls, and a scary witch headlined an evening of entertainment at The Penrith Playhouse. The drama group from the Edington Centre, a Cumbria County Council day centre for adults with learning disabilities, have been working with us for two years and decided to adapt their wonderful animated film for the stage. The play *"The Trolls of Eycott Hill – they're bad 'uns"* also toured local residential homes, schools, and community groups.

Look out for opportunities to get involved on our website.

..... www.cumbriawildlifetrust.org.uk/eycott-hill



Slowing the flow

Early in 2017, as part of our slow the flow work, we blocked 20 man-made ditches that were draining water into Naddles Beck. A digger was used to build long dams across man made channels, before replacing the vegetation to strengthen the dam. Side channels were added where possible to divert water from the main ditch to soak into the surrounding land. A short film showing one of the dams being built can be viewed on our website. This has worked well and small pools are forming behind the dams.

During autumn 2017 we carried out some exciting work along a 400m section of Naddles Beck. The underwater habitats were already reasonably good, with areas of faster moving water (riffles), slow glides, and still pools, as well as 'spits and bars' created from deposited gravel. This artificial channel, which strays from the beck's true course,

was lacking structure so larger rocks and boulders have been carefully positioned to enhance the meandering course of the beck and reduce the speed that water travels along the channel.

Wildlife habitats have been created close to the beck in the form of shallow pools called scrapes. These will be good for amphibians, pond invertebrates, and dragonflies. Volunteers have planted more than 1,200 native wildflowers, including sneezewort and devil's-bit scabious and an area of wet woodland has been planted. Material from the scrapes has been used to restore an embankment on the west bank of the beck to help reduce flooding to surrounding fields and direct more water onto the nature reserve. We've also created scrapes and ponds on the eastern side of the nature reserve to add to the wildlife habitat there.

This work all contributes to slow the flow measures, designed to keep more water on the nature reserve, and reduce the speed it moves through the catchment. Water from Eycott Hill runs into Naddles Beck, which flows into the River Glenderamackin, a tributary of the Greta that joins the River Derwent to flow through Keswick, Cockermouth, and Workington, communities that have been affected by flooding.



On the ground

As well as slow the flow work, we've been repairing dry stone walls, planting trees (and keeping them weed free!), putting in wildflower plants and seeds, and carrying out species monitoring in the new wildflower meadow.

Newton Rigg College continued to graze the nature reserve with their herd of hardy Luing cattle and vegetation is recovering well with more extensive areas of heath flowering every year. To help speed this process up volunteers and staff planted 1,100 wildflower plants including heather, crowberry, and bilberry on the Mungrisdale side of the fell in January and February 2017. Calves were born in spring 2017 and a Luing bull ran with the herd over summer so we are expecting more new arrivals from May 2018.

Students from the college have been visiting the nature reserve to gain practical experience in an upland setting; 288 agriculture and countryside students visited in 2017.



Volunteers

In 2017 an amazing 342 volunteer days were given to Eycott Hill Nature Reserve. Our fantastic team of volunteers have helped with everything from vegetation surveys, to dry stone walling, planting trees and flowers, checking on the cattle, and leading guided walks and cycle rides. We couldn't achieve nearly as much without them so thank you to our brilliant volunteers!



2017
Work in numbers



11 training courses



Arts workshops

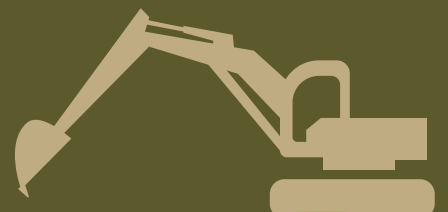


34 conservation work parties



29 wetland scrapes created

20 drainage ditches blocked



84 items of press coverage



9000 young trees checked and weeded by volunteers

Want to get involved? Visit www.cumbriawildlifetrust.org.uk/whats-on for events and volunteering opportunities. All volunteers welcome, no previous experience necessary.

Events

Thank you to everyone who came along to our events in 2017. People got arty in nature, helped with wildlife recording, learned to identify sedges, grasses, flowers, moths, and fungi, and improved practical skills like dry stone walling. We've had family fun days, guided walks, cycle rides, training events, creative workshops, and more, with over 600 people taking part.

It was lovely to meet everyone and we have lots planned for 2018. Sign up to the email newsletter on our website (see below) for monthly updates.

Some highlights for the first part of the year are:

**Tuesday 20th &
Wednesday 21st March:**

Lichen identification

Friday 6th April:

Write in nature creative writing

Wednesday 11th April:

Family walk

Wednesday 30th May:

Wildlife recording for families

Saturday 2nd June:

Introduction to invertebrates

Saturday 16th June:

Family wildlife discovery day

Sunday 8th July:

Incredible insects Wildlife Bioblitz



Super students

We're delighted that Rowena and Louise, our first two volunteer placements have secured employment. Rowena Hargill, our 2015/16 placement student, graduated from the University of Cumbria in summer 2017 and, after a short spell helping at Cumbria Wildlife Trust, joined the education team at Center Parcs. Louise Richards completed her graduate voluntary placement in April 2017 and moved from the uplands to the coast, joining the National Trust to work at Formby.

Rachel Todner joined us in June 2017 for a nine month placement. She is currently studying environmental science at the University of Leeds but grew up near Kendal and was keen to gain experience in her home county. Rachel has been helping out with vegetation surveying, practical work parties, and at events. She has completed her first aid training, a dry stone walling course, and learnt to identify sedges, grasses, moths and flowers. You can read more about her placement at www.cumbriawildlifetrust.org.uk/blog.

BA (Hons) Wildlife Media students from the University of Cumbria have been working on short term volunteer projects. Ben Wolstencroft promoted volunteering through photography and online blogs posts, Jess White carried out a geology photography project, and Emily Dodd has been blogging about events and filming some of the slow the flow work.



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www.cumbriawildlifetrust.org.uk/eycott-hill



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