

CHELMER BLACKWATER RESERVE

SHAREHOLDER NEWSLETTER # 6 September 2023



BACKGROUND

The Chelmer Blackwater Reserve Community Interest Company (CIC) was formed by a group of residents concerned as to future plans for the land adjacent to the Tesco Supermarket in Maldon. In Feb 2022, the CIC signed a long-term lease with Tesco Stores Ltd to take control of the land and to develop it as a community nature reserve. All members of the CIC are un-paid volunteers and work is funded by a combination of grants and donations. Members of the public are actively encouraged to become shareholders and to participate in activities to support the management of the reserve.

One hundred people! Two hundred moths! Four hundred species! The TV debut of the Chelmer Blackwater Reserve. The start of phase 3 of the walkway... Another busy few months on the reserve!



THE OFFICIAL OPENING WELCOMES 100 PEOPLE

The official opening on 24th June was a great success, coinciding as it did with gloriously sunny weather. The crowd of shareholders and invited visitors totalled around a hundred, many of whom stayed to enjoy the Ironworks Meadow Ale provided by Mighty Oak Brewery and the buffet food provided by Tesco, along with entertainment provided by the Brandy Hole Shanty Men. Importantly, coverage after the event was good, with a page two mention in the Maldon & Burnham Standard and front and full page 3 spread in the Essex Chronicle and features on Maldon Nub News.

TV APPEARANCE

As a result of the opening publicity, Ironworks Meadow was chosen by Carl Wakefield of the Plume School as the location for BBC Look East television to film a piece on 14th July, connected with the forthcoming COP Climate Conference in Dubai. The main interviews were with Rachel Ojo, a student from Basildon who will be representing the views of the young people of the UK and with Hattie Phillips, Plume Head Girl, who attended the COP conference in Glasgow in 2021 in a similar role. John Buchanan and Jonathan Wood enjoyed their bit parts talking about the reserve and pointing at things they were supposed to be looking at!



BIO BLITZ: 400 SPECIES INCLUDING 200 MOTHS

On 9th July we held our first Bioblitz. There were two interlinking aims- to invite expert naturalists to survey the reserve to provide a fuller picture of the wildlife to be found, and to have members of the public visit to explore the site themselves and to see some of the more interesting species discovered by the experts. It was a very enjoyable event. Numbers of visitors were relatively low (with people perhaps put off by the forecast of rain) but those families that did join in had a good time catching grasshoppers and bugs and examining the moths that had been trapped the night before. In total, close to 400 species of flora and fauna were recorded, including an exceptional 200 species of moths including the rare Chalk-hill Bell *Pelochrista caecimaculana*, which was last recorded in Essex in 1984. Amongst the more impressive creatures that visitors were able to look at were a Pine Hawkmoth and a Jersey Tiger moth, as well as a Wasp Spider and a Bishop's Mitre Bug. Other unusual species recorded included Large Velvet Ant and Bee Wolf. A pond-dipping instigated by John Rogers was also an eye-opener, with the mere proving to be home to shrimps, sticklebacks, water boatmen and an Emperor dragonfly larva. Many thanks to Claire Williamson and Maldon District Council for helping with provision of nets and other equipment.



Meadow Grasshopper

MARSH SOW-THISTLE



As mentioned in the previous newsletter, we felt very privileged to be entrusted with several specimens of the rare Marsh Sow-thistle, as part of an attempt to reintroduce it to parts of Essex where it formally occurred but since became extinct. It is an impressive plant, that stands taller than the surrounding reeds when it reaches full height.

We are pleased to report that as a result of a fairly intensive watering regime, and lots of TLC, the majority of the plants flowered and went to seed. We are hoping that this seed will produce further plants next year so that the species can become fully established on the reserve.

As an aside, regular watering of the Alder whips that we were given by the Environment Agency has also proved successful. They were planted at the north-eastern corner of the reserve, towards the canal.

WORK PARTIES

With the end of the breeding season, we can restart the program of reserve maintenance and habitat development. Please can anyone who is interested in helping look out for future emails that will give details of dates and work to be carried out.

PHASE 3 WALKWAY TO COMMENCE IN SEPTEMBER

Please note that from Monday 11th September the footpath and bridge through the Reserve will be closed for 2-3 weeks whilst work to complete the footpath across the meadow are in progress.

It is the next phase in the planned work for the Reserve which is very exciting.

Apologies for any inconvenience the works may cause.

DAMAGE TO SITE

Unfortunately we have once again had someone remove a number of signs from the reserve. It is difficult to imagine their motive but it is very frustrating as it means we have to spend funds replacing them that would be much better spent in improving the site as a whole. If anyone has witnessed these actions, or suspects they know who is doing it, please let us know. As this is not a one-off event, we are contacting the police so that they are made aware.

This newsletter is published by the Chelmer Blackwater Reserve Community Interest Company
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