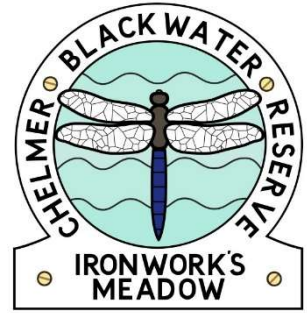


# CHELMER BLACKWATER RESERVE

SHAREHOLDER NEWSLETTER # 11 – September 2024



**FAMILY NATURE DAY, ROBOT SEEN ON SEA WALL, IRONWORKS MEADOW ENHANCES LOCAL PROPERTY VALUES, DISABLED ACCESS ASSESSED, BINS PLAN BINNED, WINTER WORK DATES**

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 unpaid 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.

This newsletter provides updates on what has been going on over the past few months.

## FAMILY NATURE DAY 28<sup>th</sup> JULY 2024

As last year, we were lucky with the weather and were pleased to welcome a wide range of people to our family & community nature day on the reserve. Popular activities included a wildflower search (with a check-sheet of species to look for), bug hunting and dipping for creatures in the Kingsmere. The last produced some surprises in the form of a couple of fish - a Three-spined Stickleback and a young Flounder. There were also some moths on view that had been caught at the reserve the previous night, including Oak Eggar, Ruby Tiger and Drinker.



Family Nature Day



Young Flounder (and Ditch Shrimp)

Throughout the day, Simon Wood manned the identification desk, explaining what all the finds were and, more importantly, providing lots of information about the background and lifestyle of the creatures involved.

## WINTER WORK PARTIES

Thank you to all those who have assisted on the summer work parties. These have worked well and always been manageable within their two hour schedule. The main results have been to keep all the paths navigable despite rampant grass and reed growth and to remove rubbish where it has appeared.

Winter work parties are now scheduled for **Sundays October 13<sup>th</sup>, November 17<sup>th</sup>, December 15<sup>th</sup>, January 26<sup>th</sup>, February 16<sup>th</sup> & March 16<sup>th</sup>**. We will remind you nearer the date and hope you will be able to attend some of them.

## DISABLED ACCESS

In August, John Buchanan, in his role as a member of the Essex Highways sponsored Essex Local Access Forum, led a party from the group to view the reserve and look at its accessibility for those with restricted mobility. One of the group, Rowena Macaulay, is a wheelchair user and very knowledgeable about what is needed to maximise accessibility. It was great to hear her complimentary comments about the access we have provided. It is particularly helpful that we have our sloped path down from the sea wall that, in turn, connects via the sea wall path to the access ramp from the Tesco car park, meaning a continuous route is available from the Tesco car park.



ELAF visit to the Reserve

The sea wall slope would ideally be less steep but the group understood the constraints caused by the geography of the site and Rowena was perfectly able to navigate it in her hybrid chair. The group did comment about the restricted space for turning at the bottom of the sea wall - this is an issue that the reserve management team can look in to. There were also some comments about the public footpath along the tow path. A few minor actions could help open this up to providing an accessible loop back into the reserve. We plan to discuss possible modifications with our local Public Rights of Way officer.

## WATERCOURSE BLOCKAGE

Over time there has been a significant build-up of silt in culverts at the bypass end of Kingsmere. We have been looking at options for clearing this blockage and have found a local contractor who could carry the work out. We have applied for a grant to cover the costs involved and hope to make progress over the winter.

## BIN PLAN BINNED

A lack of any significant uptake of volunteers to join a bin roster means that we are shelving the proposal to provide bins on the Reserve. We continue to be pleasantly surprised by the small amount of litter left on the Reserve. If this changes in the future, the plan for bins can be reconsidered.

## ROBOT ON SEA WALL



With the summer over, the Environment Agency have been cutting the vegetation on the slopes of the sea wall. This work is necessary to maintain the integrity of the sea wall and to ensure accessibility for maintenance. The equipment used was very impressive - a remote-controlled cutter that was sufficiently manoeuvrable to be able to steer around obstacles without damaging them.

We will need to consider what to do with the cut material - a work party may be able to clear it so that it does not affect the nutrient balance of the soil (low nutrient soil is desirable for the wildflowers that we want to encourage).

## ITS OFFICIAL: IRONWORKS MEADOW ENHANCES LOCAL PROPERTY VALUES



An article in the 29<sup>th</sup> August Maldon & Burnham Standard drew our attention to the fact that a local estate agent considers the presence of our nature reserve to be a positive local feature and one worthy of mention in their particulars for local house sales!

Should we be getting a percentage? 😊

## WILDLIFE NOTES

As elsewhere in the country, butterfly numbers at the reserve have been disappointing this year. It was nice to at least record a Painted Lady - one of our migrant species. The reserve continues to be very good for Orthoptera species (crickets and grasshoppers). A visit on 12<sup>th</sup> September revealed lots of Meadow Grasshopper activity and Simon spotted a Long-winged Conehead, a type of bush-cricket. There were also some dragonflies making the most of the sunshine - mostly Migrant Hawkers.

On the same day we also recorded a Common Lizard and a Slow Worm. The most impressive sighting though was the Grass Snake skin that Simon and Carla found. Snakes cast their skins as they grow - the fact that the skin measured a metre long means that there is now a very large snake on the reserve! (Note, of course, that Grass Snakes are completely harmless to people - and dogs). We await further sightings!



Painted Lady butterfly



Long-Winged Conehead bush-cricket

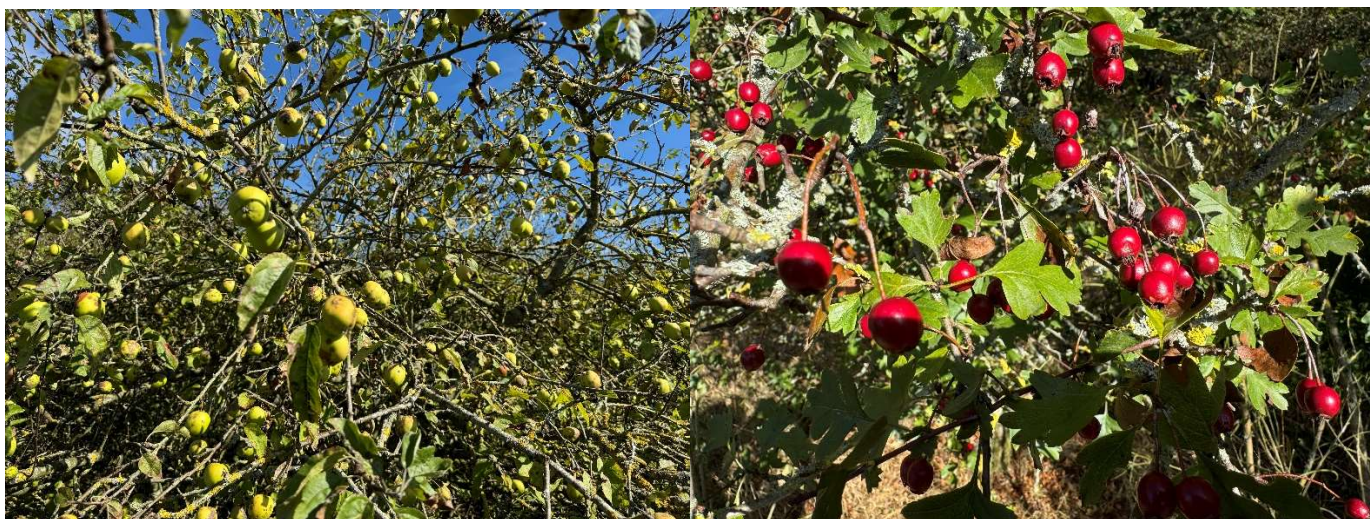


Migrant Hawker dragonfly



Grass Snake skin found on the reserve

Now autumn is on the way, the trees and shrubs on the reserve are busy producing their fruit. Hopefully the various apples, plums, hips, haws and berries will help our birds and mammals survive the winter.



Apples and haws on the reserve

### TRIFOLDS

We now have trifold reserve information leaflets in the Museum in the Park, Museum of Power and Maeldune Centre. If anyone thinks of another good location, please contact Patrick [patrick@ellum.co.uk](mailto:patrick@ellum.co.uk) and he will let you have some.



## STANDING ORDERS

More members have now entered into standing orders to make an annual contribution to the reserve. Thank you to them. Your share purchase makes you a member of The Chelmer Blackwater Reserve Community Interest Company for life and you do not need to make any further payment. However, to help the CIC meet the inevitable expenses which we incur going forward, we are inviting shareholders to enter into standing orders on a voluntary basis. We suggest five pounds a year but if you want to pay more that would be very much appreciated. The bank details are:

The Chelmer Blackwater Reserve CIC      Sort Code 60-13-37      Account No. 49715534

It will help if you also e-mail the Treasurer [cpryke@clara.co.uk](mailto:cpryke@clara.co.uk) and tell him you have set it up.

**THANK YOU EVERYONE FOR YOUR ONGOING SUPPORT!**

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