

# FRIENDS *of* LONG LANE PASTURE

## NEWSLETTER

No.7 October 2007

The Pasture **lease** has *still* not been agreed with Barnet though some progress has been made: we have got as far as negotiating the basis of a draft lease document (which we thought had been largely agreed ages ago). There are still a number of difficulties to overcome, but we live in hope that we will have tenure before much longer. We have been waiting far too long already.

There is better news on our **Management Plan**, which has been approved by the Council and is now being put into action. A huge and wonderful boost to making our plans a reality has been the grant of £9,994 by Awards for All for the creation of a new pond and additional fencing and hedging; and £9,890 by the Breathing Spaces programme of the Big Lottery Fund. This is to pay for the construction of a well-surfaced path down one side of the pasture, a site sign, a second mower (much needed and already put to good use), more hand tools, and the planting up of a butterfly border. Work has begun on constructing the path and the pond has already been dug out.

Now is a generally quieter time for wildlife and the bird nesting season is well and truly over – which means a lot of work for us over the next few months. Our **winter plans** include clearing and preparing the butterfly border for planting, cutting back bramble and clearing regrowth (a never-ending chore), landscaping and seeding the pond margins with wild flowers, and planting trees and hedges – we will be taking part in National Tree Planting Week on 1<sup>st</sup> December. And then there's clearing the rubbish thrown over the footpath fence. It's a busy time, and we could do with more help.

Our regular team is a small group who assemble on alternate Saturdays between 10.00 a.m. and 12 noon and, with the best will in the world, they can't do all that is needed, so if you are able to **volunteer two hours** of your time every other Saturday just come along. The next work days are:

20<sup>th</sup> October; 3<sup>rd</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> November; 1<sup>st</sup> (tree planting!), 15<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> December

We would be delighted to welcome Friends on any of these mornings. Do come, even if you just want to see how the plans are progressing.

**Wildlife** continues to flourish and gives us great encouragement for the future. The foxes have raised two cubs this year. They happily use both the Pasture and Pointalls Allotments to forage for food. Gatekeepers and the common blue were among the many butterflies and we continue to add to our list of moths. Both whitethroat and blackcap were singing in July and it is quite likely they have nested successfully. The wren has been seen feeding young and now the weather is changing there are flocks of greenfinches and goldfinches. Over 200 starlings have been gathering close by.

The small pond has been the source of continuing fascination. We developed it from a test pit dug by Fairview when they were investigating the site for housing development. It is small enough to jump over (not that any of us has tried). With water, weed, and some marginal planting, dragonflies and damselflies became regular visitors and both newts and frogs took up residence. Shay Gilhooley, our pond man, has nursed this on with appropriate planting and the introduction of water snails, both the Great Pond Snail and Bladder Snails. Of these Shay writes:

“The Great Pond Snail is a *dextrial* snail: that is, when viewed from the front with the spire facing upwards and the opening towards you the opening is on the right. Bladder Snails coil the other way: the opening is on the left, so they are *sinistral*. Great Pond Snails deliberately eat small grains of sand which they keep in their gizzards. These help to break down and digest tougher pieces of organic material.”

He acquired four adults from a fellow enthusiast and introduced them into a small ‘nursery pond’ in his garden where, within six weeks, they had laid eggs that had hatched into tiny, half millimetre snails. These he subsequently collected and transferred, along with two adults, into the small pond.

“As winter approaches, the snails will burrow into the soft mud at the bottom of the pond. There they will withdraw into their shells and secrete a thick seal over the opening to protect themselves from the cold. Then they hibernate until the spring, when we hope to see them again.”

Now under some dense brambles near the embankment we have discovered a second test pit with a similar history and are beginning to develop that. Then there’s the newly excavated pond, which is *huge*. Shay is delighted.

***This Newsletter is issued by the Long Lane Pasture Trust. For further information contact Ann Brown, 1 Princes Avenue, Finchley, London, N3 2DA***