

All smiles from the River Wardens on their training



What's been happening this Autumn/Winter?

Over the past couple of months we have been busy encouraging as many people as possible to get outside and enjoy the delights of Rockingham Forest through guided walks, courses or training opportunities. Here Sophie picks out some highlights -

GUIDED WALKS- Unfortunately a couple of our walks had to be cancelled due to atrocious weather conditions but we still managed to get out and about on the better days to deliver walks about bats, post-landfill landscapes and a winter woodland walk. Our bat walk was led by Matt Johnson, Conservation Manager from the Wildlife Trust leading a family-friendly bat walk in King's Wood, Corby and both adults and children enjoyed bat detecting, picking up the calls of lots of pipistrelles and noctules! No one was afraid - well maybe just a little!

Another fantastic walk was to the Augean landfill site at Thornhaugh, perhaps not an obvious choice for a walk but absolutely fascinating to learn about how the land will be sympathetically restored post landfill to create a mosaic of habitats that both wildlife and people will be able to enjoy and benefit from. Lastly, a well attended, joyous and simply stunning walk through Wakerley Great Wood led by forester, Charles Cuthbert who showed us the delights of this ancient forest, highlighting the woodland management for biodiversity, disease resistance and climate change.



Walking in Wakerley Great Wood

A big thanks to RFV volunteers Trish and Barrie Galpin for organising our guided walks programme in 2023 and to all those who led the walks. They were popular with lots of lovely feed back.

"I am already looking forward to the next walk and it's inspired me to go and volunteer in my local woodland."

"I learnt so much on the walk about how our local landfill sites and quarries can be restored for nature."

"Learning about bats (!) in our local woodland in Corby with my family was fun and informative."



Thornhaugh landfill site walk

Community Grant Scheme update

There has been a fantastic uptake of our community grants this Autumn with a wide range of projects put forward including; funding for setting up forest schools, wildlife monitoring, improving habitats and tree planting to name but a few.

These grants will enable community groups to provide a host of opportunities for people to connect with nature and to improve their local environment. A win for people and wildlife! Watch out for announcements as each of the Community Grant Projects swing into action. Here's our first one:

King's Cliffe Wildplaces group will be using their community grant to carry out a variety of projects including adder monitoring, improved signage in their local woods/paths and better access for all to enjoy the wild places in and around King's Cliffe.

Charles Tomalin who heads up the group writes "With this grant we will be able to really help the local adder population and better inform people of our local and natural heritage."



The new brick path along the railway line in King's Cliffe improving accessibility



Oundle, Corby and Cottingham site visits, all part of developing local Nature Recovery Plans

Highlights continued ...

COURSES

The last 3 months there has been a whole host of courses run under the banner of the RF Vision – here are a few highlights –

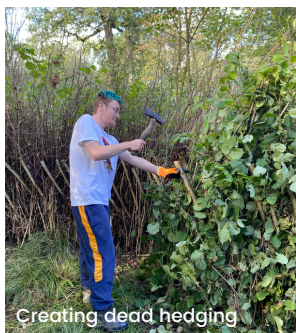
Introduction to Forestry – Jemma Cuthbert from the Royal Forestry Society ran two courses in Ring Haw Wood. These dealt in a practical way with managing a woodland for productivity and biodiversity, as well as considering the impact of climate change now and in the future. One of the 14 attendees summed up the course well describing it as “An excellent and informative day where I learnt loads of new things.”

Coppicing courses – Both the Wildlife Trust BCN and Hugh Ross and Carolyn Church of Hazel Woodland Products led coppicing courses. I was lucky enough to support Hugh and Carolyn on their course and those who attended had a real treat as we were led round a hazel coppice that is managed both for productivity and biodiversity.

Following the walk, we then got practical, learning all the elements of harvesting hazel using traditional tools. Hugh and Carolyn made it look easy but it wasn't! As one of the 7 attendees said “I learnt so much, from woodland management, tool use, different products from hazel and that nothing get's wasted. Going on from this course I am definitely going to volunteer and coppice.”



Making hazel stakes



Creating dead hedging



The finished product

North Northants Council have also been delivering opportunities for RFV, with volunteers undertaking courses in basic tree inspection and tractor driving. The tree inspection course held in East Carlton Countryside Park was very wet but that didn't stop 12 enthusiastic volunteers learn how to methodically inspect a variety of trees to assess their health and safety.

TRAINEES

Our Forest School Leader trainees are busy developing their skills and gaining qualifications. Below is brief update from one of them.

Donna, a teaching assistant at Studfall Junior School, in Coby reports: “I'm really enjoying finding my feet with Forest School and am excited to see it grow into something really special at Studfall. Management have been very positive about what I've created so far as I've really had to think outside of the box and learn on the hop with my wonderful children with autism.

Today I was able to take a group of 16 children from years 3-6 to the boating lake to help the Lord Lieutenant plant an oak tree as part of the 'King's Tree' scheme. The children also got to plant young whips, adding to our local woodland which was just so special. This would never have happened without Forest School, so thank you so much for your help.”

“My Forest School training is already enabling me to open doors for our children. Facilitating play and experiences they otherwise wouldn't have had is a truly wonderful thing”.

PARISH/LOCAL NATURE RECOVERY

Work continues with local groups and parish councils to help them develop a plan to help nature. RFV have been supporting with site visits, meetings and developing community ideas. Some great ideas are beginning to take shape including; hedgehog runs, wild flower meadows, church yard bee friendly places, tree planting, woodland management / regeneration and community orchards to name but a few.

Going forward into 2024 we will be continuing to support these local groups through a number of workshops on making use of biodiversity records, mapping and writing up a Nature Recovery Plan.

We want local communities to develop skills that allow them to build sustainable nature recovery for their area. To find out more please follow the link to our website – [Parish Nature Recovery Plans](#)



Hazel coppicing in Ringhaw Wood



Forest School at Studfall Junior, Corby



Stacked coppiced hazel

Highlights continued ...

River Warden Training

Katie Field of the East Mercia Rivers Trust reported recently:

“Saturday morning saw a group of seven people from the Rockingham Forest joining together to learn more about local rivers and streams, and how to assess their health. During this hands-on session, the group learnt how to carry out a Freshwater Watch Survey in the lovely autumnal landscape of East Carlton Countryside Park. Participants will now undertake regular surveys of their chosen watercourse to further develop our knowledge of the freshwater environment in the Rockingham Forest.”

For more information about the RFV River Warden training opportunities please see the website link - [river wardens](#)



Trainee Ranger, Paul at work...



Paul taking a well deserved break

Landowner Conversations ...

We and our partners have become increasingly busy discussing nature recovery plans with landowners large and small across the area, and we are looking forward to being able to publicise some of their exciting plans for habitat creation and improvement during 2024. In particular keep an eye out for news from the Bulwick Estate where their ambitious programme of environmental enhancement is now under way - well worth a walk across the Rights of Way and permissive paths where you can see things beginning to take shape. Take a look at our website [changing landscape page](#) for a taster.

TRAINEE RANGER

Paul Humphries, our trainee woodland ranger continues to take all the opportunities on offer. Paul gives us an insight into his role and what it means to him:

“Over the past couple weeks I have assisted helping the rangers to deal with wind blown trees after recent storms. I have also been doing some ride scalloping. Alongside this, I have many different types of weekly tasks such as wood processing, hazel coppicing, tree and facility inspections. This work opportunity has given me a better understanding of what goes into woodland management and a job that I thrive in. Plus this training has given me a massive boost in improving my mental wellbeing.”

RFV AND 2024...

We are looking forward to progressing our project further next year with lots of new opportunities. For individuals there will be guided walks to the gems of the Rockingham Forest, courses and training, Then there will be further support to parishes and local groups to develop Nature Recovery Plans, community grant project implementation and of course ongoing conversations with landowners. For more information please take a look at the our informative [RFV website](#)...



Tree planting in the Rockingham Forest

And finally...

We would like to wish you all a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year and thank you for your continued support.

All the best from Dr. Corinne Muir, Sophie van den Bergh and the RFV team.

If you want to find out more about the project please do contact either Corinne - corinne@neneriverstrust.org or Sophie - sophie@neneriverstrust.org