

## TARN ASSOCIATION MANAGEMENT AND WILDLIFE REPORT

OCT 05 - MAY 06

Management work during the period has as usual been carried out in various areas of the tarn and surrounds.

The major project has been clearing out part of the Croft area-removing mud from the ditches and clearing larger willows.

Once again the willow branches have been placed in the shallows off the Croft adding to the `mangrove` reef which now shelters all manner of creepy crawlies.

Concern has recently been expressed that these willow branches growing in the water will eventually grow to block the view but as has already been pointed out this will not be allowed to happen-maintaining the open aspect is an important part of the management objective for the area.

More branches have been added to existing reefs and new ones started in various areas of the tarn-as most people will be aware tyre reefs which would have provided shelter for fish in the deeper areas of the tarn as they do in other waters have been discontinued!-we wait to see what other viable alternative will emerge.

Following last years disaster work was started to make the swans nest site less accessible to people, unfortunately high water levels soon made the work impossible.

Lower water levels have allowed more work to be carried out there more recently while the swan sat unconcerned on the nest but much remains to be done.

On the Hag more areas of bramble have been cut back to increase the grass land areas.

In the main reed bed seedling willow-birch-alder and areas of blackcurrant bush have been weeded out to maintain the open reed-fen.

In the areas where geese have been excluded there is clear evidence of plant recovery with cuckoo flower and sedge appearing recently and a range of plants which either do not occur or fail to thrive outside the fencing.

Even those areas more recently `excluded` are showing some sign of reeds springing up where they had been eaten away.

During the period 130 hrs has been put in on various jobs making a total of 230 hrs since our last AGM once again much has been done but much more remains to be done many hands make light work.

On October 16<sup>th</sup> a sighting of a Kingfisher along the cat walk bank was the first for sometime and such sightings often lead to queries as to possible breeding.

That Kingfishers once nested around the tarn is not in doubt but-the only known nest site in the root `pan` of a large fallen willow disappeared decades ago.

With plenty of small fish in the tarn and perches to fish from the lack of a suitable bank to nest in would seem to be the only reason kingfishers-and in deed Sand Martins-fail to breed here.

Such problems are however not insurmountable-artificial banks which can prove attractive to both species can be made so if some sympathetic landowner with a relatively quiet area of the tarn verge and a fairly open aspect could be prevailed upon-who knows-perhaps one day.

Oct 18<sup>th</sup> with thoughts turning to Christmas and visitors sliding down chimneys one of the houses at the Hag did indeed receive an unexpected visitor via that route when a some what sooty Tawny Owl appeared in the fireplace and careered round the living room.

Somewhat anxious about the birds battered appearance the neighbours called in someone experienced in safely handling such impressively taloned visitors.

Once I had struggled to extricate the owls talons from a now bleeding wrist I judged the owl had recovered sufficiently to be freed and it was released on the landing!

Oct 30<sup>th</sup> 2 Woodcock were flushed from under the scrub on the landing.

As usual odd Cormorants turned up on the tarn but from Christmas on they began to be more obvious with some cheekily perching on posts of the exclusion fencing on the South East corner of the tarn and up to ten perching on the dead branches over hanging the water at Clarke Beck.

Such perching-wing drying seems to encourage the Cormorants to fish-perch and digest their meal before fishing again so reducing such perching areas may well reduce the fish taken.

With this in mind the landowner was approached and gave permission for the branches to be cleared-we wait to see where the cormorants perch next!

Despite-or perhaps because of this predation anglers fishing the tarn are now catching fish of a size which not that long ago would have been hard to credit.

Bream of 5lb now seem to be relatively common place even being caught by some of the local kids, one young man after several fruitless attempts eventually succeeded in catching just one fish but it was an 8 ½lb bream so well worth the wait!

The swans have built another large nest on their island and in early May had 5-6 eggs so hopefully they will do better than last year.

During the last few weeks smaller birds have been much in evidence especially the summer visitors. At times five species of warblers could be heard singing, Reed and Sedge Warbler in the wetter areas plus Chiffchaff-Willow Warbler Blackcap and Whitethroat in the scrub and grassland.

Of the local mammals signs of Otters have been much in evidence in the area indicating (as would be expected) that they are now breeding in Low Furness.

A phone call from Paul Bolt told of an exhausted badger in a shed in the village-collected and placed in our boiler room with food and water it would be released when it recovered.

On the second night it announced itself fit to be released when gone midnight it woke us up as it proceeded To tear the boiler room door off.

Trying to extricate an `unhappy badger from the gap between a boiler and a wall while guarding one's legs and feet with a board is not to be recommended!

On a quieter note a pair of hares has often been seen in an area where none have been seen for 30 years- on one occasion even hopping round a garden.

The Noctule bat has always been scarce around the area-some years none are seen while even in a good year no more than 4 or 5 are usually recorded.

This was to change on the perfect evening of May 9<sup>th</sup> with the emergence of many large Cockchafer or May bugs the equivalent of a fast food outlet for Noctules.

As would perhaps be expected of a bat with a wing span of up to 400mm (dwarfing the common Pipistrelle) the Noctule flies high and fast-typically at 20-30m with sudden dives so is fairly distinctive.

On this occasion the main area of Noctule activity was the Hag-Landing area where they flew all over with 6-7 in view at any one time.

Even with two observers attempting a count was a chaos of one there-two over here-two behind us-suffice to say that with bats active from the Hag-Kirk Flatts the final `Noctule` count (guess timate) was some 12-15 individuals!

Whether this represents a genuine increase in Noctules locally rather than a gathering at an easy food source only time will tell.