

MEANWOOD VALLEY

Wilderness on your Doorstep



Interim Report January 2018 - March 2019



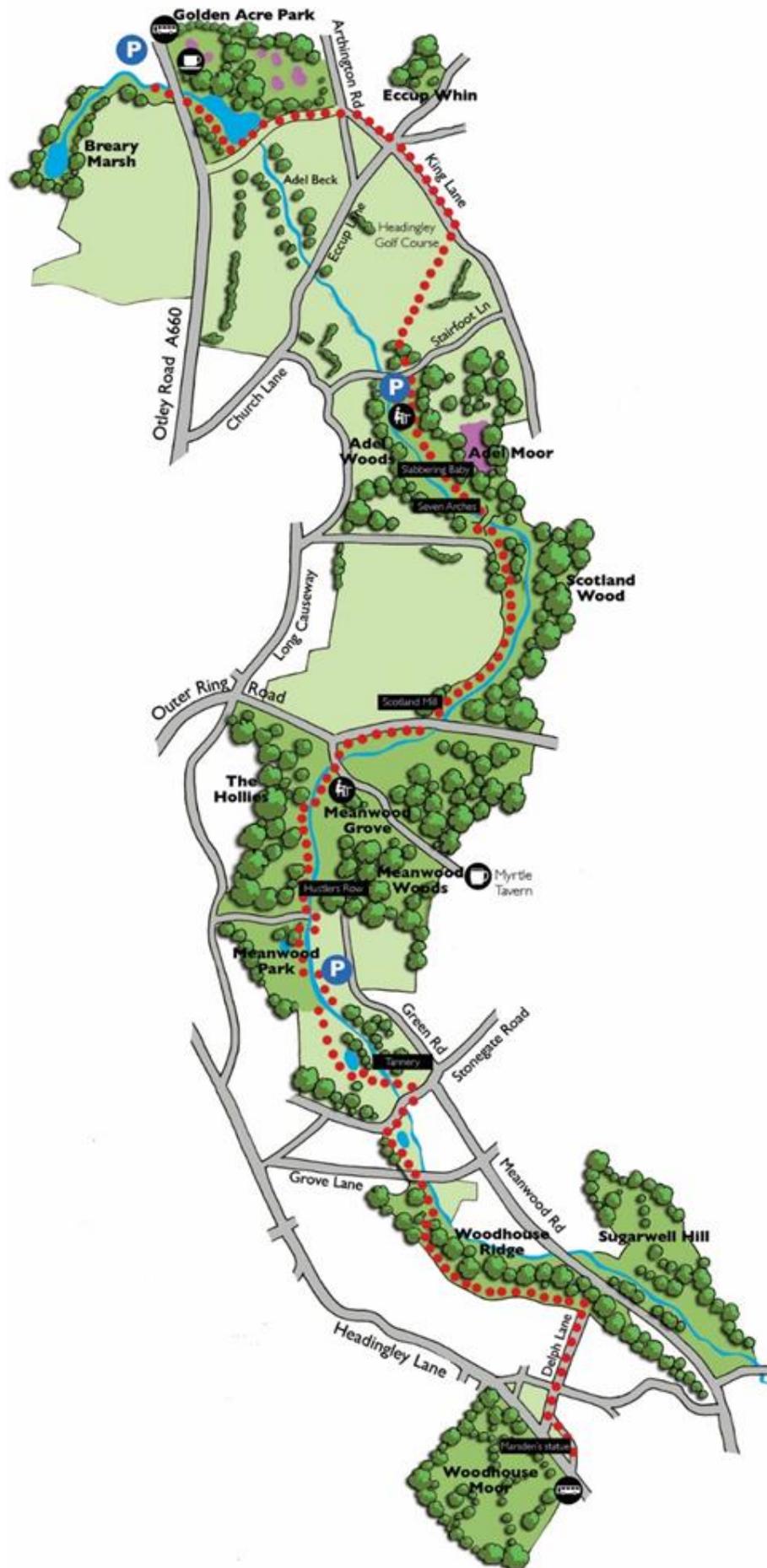
BACKGROUND

The Meanwood Valley has long been celebrated as a 'green artery' from the centre of urban Leeds to the rural countryside north of the city. This Green Infrastructure Corridor has a rich natural heritage, with an extensive and diverse range of habitats and a wealth of sites designated for their biodiversity value and nature conservation interest.

In January 2018, Leeds City Council and the Meanwood Valley Partnership were awarded £65K from the Heritage Lottery Fund in order to promote an understanding of this wildlife and its management by increasing opportunities for local communities to discover and get involved in the natural environment of the Valley, through a programme of volunteer activity, wildlife surveys, Bioblitzes and other public nature events, interpretation, web content and education.

By encouraging as wide a range of people as possible to celebrate this wildlife on their doorstep we aim to ensure the sustainability of this natural heritage into the future; because, in the words of David Attenborough: *"No one will protect what they don't care about, and no one will care about what they have never experienced"*.

The project officially started in January 2018 and will run to June 2020. It was in April 2018 when our newly-funded Meanwood Valley Heritage Ranger started that the project really took off the ground. This report summarises what we have achieved in the first year of this project; from January 2018 until March 2019.



PROJECT THEMES

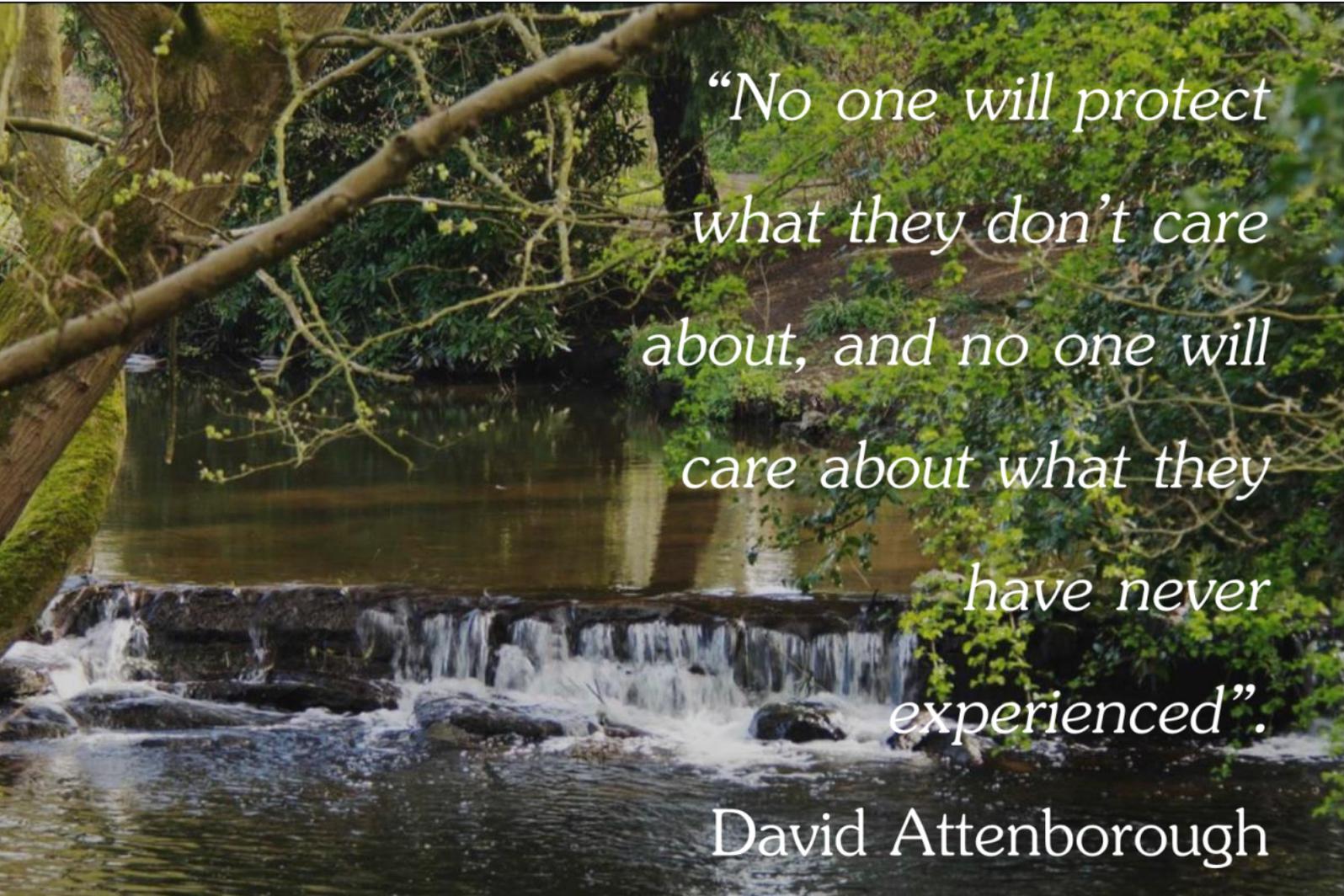
To achieve our aims of engaging as many people as possible with the wildlife on their doorstep we developed the following themes:

INTERPRET NATURE

EXPERIENCE NATURE

UNDERSTAND NATURE

PROTECT NATURE



*“No one will protect
what they don’t care
about, and no one will
care about what they
have never
experienced”.*

David Attenborough

INTERPRET NATURE

Prior to this project we noted that on-site interpretation panels were extremely limited; very few leaflets were available; web content was hard to find and, where available, spread over a number of websites. The Ranger Service were delivering a limited number of general environmental education sessions to primary schools along the Valley, but no sessions had been developed that focus specifically on the local wildlife of the Meanwood Valley. There were virtually no public events that explore the heritage and volunteering activities were limited to Woodhouse Ridge, Sugarwell Hill and Adel Woods.

We wanted our project to open up as many avenues as possible for people to engage with and improve their understanding of the natural heritage of the Meanwood Valley. Our interpretation plan will open up the Valley's heritage to a much wider range of audiences and ensure that information on all aspects of the Valley's heritage is easy to find. We will produce a suite of on-site interpretation panels, with QR code links to web content, a self-guided walk booklet, a child-friendly activity leaflet for Woodhouse Ridge and a wildlife spotters guide. All of this interpretative material will be made available to download on the Leeds City Council website in a section dedicated to the Meanwood Valley.

The Meanwood Valley Heritage Ranger has already been promoting the natural heritage of the Valley on Facebook, where the 400+ followers receive daily updates detailing specific aspects of the wildlife found here, the issues affecting this wildlife and tips on how people can spot or protect wildlife at home.

Our designer and volunteers are already working on producing the interpretation listed above and we should start having it produced from April 2019.



EXPERIENCE NATURE

The need for our project is highlighted in various studies, including the 2016 State of Nature report and Biodiversity 2020. For example, our focus on providing opportunities for people to engage with nature is emphasised in ‘Outcome 4’ of Biodiversity 2020, which states that “public understanding and opinion on the value of biodiversity has strong implications for the acceptance and adoption of conservation measures”. This outcome cites the need to provide more opportunities for people to engage with biodiversity, to volunteer to improve biodiversity and for children to learn outdoors. This latter forms one of the ‘Conservation Themes’ of the 2016 State of Nature; i.e. Connecting children to nature. The emphasis here is that if children are connected with nature they are more likely to be interested in the environment and take part in nature based activities. In other words, children who are connected with nature will enjoy it and want to save it, both now and in the future.

While we are keen to promote an understanding of the Valley’s wildlife through as many methods as possible, we feel that it is vitally important that we encourage people to experience nature first hand. Hence the major focus of our project will be delivering events, citizen science projects and volunteering activities in the field. The Meanwood Valley Heritage Ranger will deliver a wealth of guided walks and public events (such as bat walks, tree ID walks, bird watching and fungus forays) to further reach out and interpret the heritage to different audiences. The ranger will also deliver KS1 and KS2 sessions that focus on the local wildlife of the Meanwood Valley. On top of this we will run competitions to encourage people to celebrate wildlife in other ways, such as a photo competition, where winners’ photos will be used to create a suite of postcards; and a wildlife encounter competition for schools, where children will be encouraged to submit stories, photos and drawings.



Public Nature Events

The Meanwood Valley Heritage Ranger has delivered 8 events so far, with a total of 220 participants; see table below for details. We have another 11 nature events booked in for spring/summer, which will take us close to our agreed 24 nature events for the 2-year project.

Some of these events have proven to be extremely popular, such as the bat walks and nocturnal; safari which attracted between 50 and 60 people. The feedback has been hugely positive also.

Date	Details	Site	CC	Number of Participants
01/08/2018	Small Mammal Morning	Meanwood Park	INE	21
28/08/2018	Guided Bat Walk	Meanwood Park	INE	50
29/08/2018	Moth Identification Morning	Meanwood Park	INE	10
12/09/2018	Guided Bat Walk	Woodhouse Ridge	INW	48
17/09/2018	Nocturnal Safari	Meanwood Park	INE	60
24/09/2018	Guided Bat Walk	Sugarwell Hill	INE	9
07/10/2018	Fungal Foray	Adel Woods	ONE	10
13/10/2018	Fungal Foray	Woodhouse Ridge	INW	12
Total				220

“The event was very informative and interesting. Much of the wildlife was difficult to spot until it was pointed out. I really enjoyed the session”.

Photography Competition

While the photography competition was not as popular as we hoped, we did have 12 entries and 18 people attend the competition event. However, we have since been inundated with people’s photos of the wildlife in the Valley and we do have some great pictures that we can



Public Nature Events in Spring/Summer 2019

Our upcoming events and bioblitzes for spring and summer 2019 are shown below, which you are more than welcome to attend.

Wildfowl Walk in Golden Acre Park	Wednesday 6 March 10:00am to 12:30pm	Help take the pulse of nature by identifying and recording wildfowl species with your Ranger.
Bluebell Walk in Woodhouse Ridge	Sunday 14 April 10:00am to 12:30pm	Enjoy a Spring Guided Walk with Your Ranger to Discover Spring Flowers!
Dawn Chorus in Meanwood Park	Saturday 27th April 7:00am to 9:00am	Join our resident expert, ranger Steve Joul, on an early morning (not quite dawn) walk around Meanwood Park and Woods to learn how to identify our local birds by their song.
Meanwood Valley Trail Loop 1	Saturday 4 May 10:00am to 13:00pm	Join your Ranger on a Guided Walk of the Valley
Meanwood Valley Trail Loop 2	Saturday 11 May 10:00am to 13:00pm	Join your Ranger on a Guided Walk of the Valley
Great British Bee Count— Golden Acre Park	Saturday 22 June 2019	Help us to record bee species on this BioBlitz at Golden Acre Park
Life in the undergrowth Adel Moor	Wednesday 26 June 2019 10:00am to 12:30pm	Help us to record invertebrate species on this BioBlitz at Adel Moor
BioBlitz in Meanwood Park	Sunday 7 July 2019 10:00am to 12:30pm	Help us carry out and record species on this BioBlitz of Meanwood Park
Guided Reptile Walk on Adel Moor	Saturday 20 July 2019 10:00am to 12:30pm	Join your Ranger for a reptile hunt, help record these elusive creatures
Small Mammal Morning in Woodhouse Ridge	Tuesday 23 July 2019 10:00am to 12:30pm	Join us to discover meet some of the small furry creatures we have found in Woodhouse Ridge
Big Butterfly Count— Sugarwell Hill	Saturday 27 July 2019 10:00am to 12:30pm	Help take the pulse of nature by recording butterfly species on this bioblitz
Guided Bat Walk on Woodhouse Ridge	Monday 5 August 2019 20:00pm to 22:00pm	An evening bat walk to discover what bats reside on Woodhouse Ridge.
Freshwater BioBlitz—Pond Dipping in Adel Woods	Wednesday 7 August 2019 10:00am to 12:30pm	Help carry out pond dipping and record species on this Freshwater bioblitz
Guided Bat Detecting Walk with Talk & Setting up Moth Trap - Meanwood Park	Monday 26 August 2019 20:00pm to 22:30pm	An evening bat walk to discover what bats reside in Meanwood Woods. Followed by setting up a moth trap for tomorrow's event.
Marvellous Moths - Meanwood Park	Tuesday 27 August 2019 9:00am to 11:00am	A morning event to see what moths we caught in the trap we set at yesterday's event.

KS1 and KS2 Environmental Education

We have a target of 10 environmental education sessions and 4 assemblies as part of this project. The majority of these are already booked and are to be delivered in spring and summer 2019. However, the Meanwood Valley Heritage Ranger has already delivered 3 sessions, with a total of 89 children and 14 adults participating; see table below for details. These sessions are a fantastic way to reach large numbers of children and enthuse them early in life about the wildlife on their doorstep. Indeed, by the end of the project we anticipate that we will have reached approximately 700 children through these education sessions and assemblies.

We are also delivering a Wildlife Encounter Project with at least one primary school in the Meanwood Valley, where we will be asking the children to share their favourite wildlife experiences with us through drawings, poems, stories or photographs.

“The children loved every minute, learned lots and learned about habitats”

Date	Details	Site	CC	Number of Participants
25/09/2018	Adel St John Baptist Primary School, Mini Beast Hunt	Adel Moor and Woods	ONE	27 Pupils and 9 Adults
03/10/2018	Meanwood Church of England Primary School, Autumn Seed Gathering and Tree Educational Nature Games	Meanwood Park	INE	1 Teacher and 32 Pupils
28/11/2018	Shire Oak Primary Environmental Education Session: Humans and other animals, classifying, habitats and environments Session.	Woodhouse Ridge	INW	30 Pupils and 4 Adults
Total				103

“This was a lovely, fun and hands-on learning opportunity for the children.”



UNDERSTAND NATURE

In order to protect the natural heritage of the Meanwood Valley we need to continue to develop our understanding of this natural heritage; and to accomplish this, we need to continue the strong British tradition of citizen science. This is also highlighted in the 2016 State of Nature report as one of the conservation themes, due to the importance of citizen science in providing vital evidence needed to support conservation action. While we are blessed with some enthusiastic naturalists in the Meanwood Valley, they are themselves an endangered species. We need to start looking for their successors, and so, intend to use this project to encourage the next generation of naturalists.

In order to encourage the next generation of naturalists, we have been delivering a range of 'Bioblitz' events, where school groups, volunteer groups and members of the public have been joining the ranger on wildlife surveys, which are linked to national schemes; such as national Amphibian and Reptile recording Scheme, Big Garden Birdwatch and the Big Butterfly Count. Attendees on these Bioblitz events have been trained how to use iRecord, so that all wildlife sightings on these events and throughout the length of the project (and beyond) in the Meanwood Valley can be recorded and made available to the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology's Biological Records Centre and viewed by all interested parties (including West Yorkshire Ecology and the Natural Habitats Team of Leeds City Council). For those volunteers and members of the public who want to gain further survey experience, the ranger has been delivering more in-depth wildlife survey training sessions and a volunteer wildlife survey programme.



Bioblitzes

Bioblitzes are a fantastic way to engage novices in a simple wildlife survey. They are still very useful in providing us with a snapshot of what species we have on our green spaces as well. We have so far delivered 7 bioblitzes, with 37 adults and 29 children participating. We have another 7 booked in for the spring and summer months, which will bring us close to our target of 18 bioblitzes in the life of this project.

Date	Details	Site	CC	Number of Participants
09/06/2018	Great British Bee Count	Golden Acre Park and Breary Marsh	ONW	6
10/07/2018	St Edmunds Cubs from Roundhay Bioblitz and Guided Nature Walk	Breary Marsh and Golden Acre Park	ONW	6 Adult Leaders with 20 Children
22/07/2018	Bioblitz Adel Moor	Adel Moor	ONE	2
04/08/2018	Big Butterfly Count	Adel Moor	ONE	9
09/08/2018	Ralph Thoresby High School – Bioblitz and Balsam pulling, Litter Picking	Adel Woods	ONE	3 Teachers and 9 Pupils
11/08/2018	Big Butterfly Count	Sugarwell Hill	INE	8
26/01/2019	RSPB Big Garden Bird Watch	Golden Acre Park	ONW	3
Total				66



Training in wildlife survey techniques

In order to gain a better understanding of the state of the habitats and wildlife in the Meanwood Valley we developed a programme of wildlife survey training sessions with a follow-up wildlife survey volunteer programme. OPur target for this project was to deliver 5 training sessions, but have already exceeded this with 7 events; with 61 participants (see details in the table below) and we have another 1 booked in for February.

Date	Details	Site	CC	Number of Participants
18/06/2018	Phase 1 Habitat surveying training delivered by Gordon Haycock. Ecological Consultancy	Golden Acre Park and Breary Marsh	ONW	7
19/06/2018	Phase 1 Habitat surveying training delivered by Gordon Haycock. Ecological Consultancy	Golden Acre Park and Breary Marsh	ONW	6
26/06/2018	Woodland NVC surveying training delivered by Gordon Haycock. Ecological Consultancy	Meanwood Park and Woodland	INE	10
03/07/2018	Grassland NVC surveying training delivered by Gordon Haycock. Ecological Consultancy	Breary Marsh	ONW	5
10/07/2018	Buglife – Urban Buzz, Pollinator species recording training Delivered By Catherine Jones	Golden Acre Park and Breary Marsh	ONW	8
07/08/2018	Heathland NVC surveying training delivered by Gordon Haycock. Ecological Consultancy	Adel Moor and Adel Bog	ONE	7
26/11/2018	Field/Indoor Native Health and Tree Identification Disease Workshop delivered by Dr Charles Lane, Plant Health Consultant at Fera.	Meanwood Park	INE	18
Total				61

*“It made a complex,
hidden subject accessible”*



Wildlife Survey Volunteer Programme

Together with the wildlife survey training detailed on the previous page, we have a target to deliver 12 wildlife surveys to help us build up a picture of the wildlife in the valley and support us in writing effective management plans. We have delivered 3 volunteer wildlife surveys so far, which are detailed in the table below. We have another 9 booked in for spring and summer, and plans to deliver some NVC habitat surveys in order to utilise the newly gained skills of the volunteers who attended the training provided by Haycock and Jay Ecological Consultants. And better inform us on what we need to do to improve the woodlands, heathlands and grasslands of the Meanwood Valley.

Date	Details	Site	CC	Number of Participants
18/06/2018	Butterfly Transects	Breary Marsh and Pauls Pond	ONW	8
18/06/2018	Wildflower Surveys	Breary Marsh and Pauls Pond	ONW	8
14/01/2019	Field/Indoor Lichen Workshop and Recording Session Delivered by Professor Mark Seaward, British Lichen Society	Meanwood Park	INE	15
Total				31

"It was great! I learnt a lot about the technicalities of surveying and also about the local plant life."



PROTECT NATURE

While the main focus of our project is to encourage people to engage with the biodiversity of the Meanwood Valley, the reason for doing this is to bolster the long-term conservation of the valley, by encouraging more people to share our love of the valley's natural heritage and to support us in its protection and enhancement.

We have developed a volunteer programme that will go some way to achieving Outcome 1 of Biodiversity 2020; by helping to ensure that biodiversity in the valley is maintained and enhanced, and any degraded habitats are improved. Recent work with volunteers on some of the green spaces in the valley has been hugely successful. For example, the Leeds Wildlife Volunteers have, in a few years, brought the fen at Breary Marsh into a favourable condition (an excellent outcome of this work was the recording of the spotted heath orchid at this site for the first time in 20 years). And the Friends of Adel Woods have cleared most of the encroaching birch and bracken from Adel Moor, taking the boundary of this valuable heathland back to what it was 30 years ago, when the valley was blessed with a dedicated ranger. While we are under no illusion that we will be able to achieve the Biodiversity 2020 vision of improving all priority habitats and SSSI's in the valley to a favourable condition, our volunteer task programme will at least set the wheels in motion.

The practical conservation volunteer programme will be achieved by facilitating and encouraging the development of new voluntary groups (a Friends group at Breary Marsh and a regular valley-wide roaming volunteer group, the Meanwood Valley Volunteers). We will also support the existing Friends groups in the valley (such as Woodhouse Ridge Action Group) by providing training in wildlife survey skills, first aid and practical conservation techniques, including machine use and herbicide application, in order to help these groups protect the natural heritage of the Meanwood Valley in the long-term.

To ensure that our work in this project is sustained into the future we will be developing management plans for the natural green spaces that make up the Meanwood Valley.



Meanwood Valley Volunteer Rangers

While Leeds City Council ranger team do work with hundreds of volunteers across the 4000 hectares of green space managed by the Parks and Countryside Service, we felt that this valuable green corridor deserved its own band of volunteers to help us protect the wildlife that makes the Meanwood Valley its home. And so, in May 2018 we launched the Meanwood Valley Volunteer Rangers. This monthly volunteer group has started to become quite popular and is already helping us to bring some of the habitats in the valley back into a favourable condition.

As well as being trained in practical nature conservation techniques by the Meanwood Valley Heritage Ranger, some of these volunteers have received formal training in herbicide application, in order to help us eradicate some of the highly invasive, non-native plants that are threatening the wildlife of the Meanwood Valley.

Date	Details	Site	CC	Number of Participants
16/05/2018	Bracken and Seedling Control	Adel Moor	ONE	2
20/06/2018	Himalayan Balsam Control	Scotland Wood	ONE	2
18/06/2018	Wildflower Surveys and Butterfly Transects	Breary Marsh and Pauls Pond.	ONW	8
15/08/2018	Grassland Management, Scything	Buckstone Fields	ONE	12
19/09/2018	Bog Management	Adel Bog	ONE	4
17/10/2018	Pond Creation	Eccup Whin	ONE	4
21/11/2018	Woodland Edge Management	Sugarwell Hill	INE	25
19/12/2018	Woodland Glade & Ride Management	Eccup Whin	ONE	12
Total				69



Friends of Breary Marsh

The Meanwood Valley has been blessed for many years now with the support of several Friends groups, including Friends of Sugarwell Hill, Woodhouse Ridge Action Group, Friends of The Hollies and Friends of Adel Woods. And just the planning of this project encouraged the establishment of the now very successful Friends of Meanwood Park. All of these groups do a huge amount of work to protect and promote the wildlife of the Meanwood Valley.

We wanted to extend this support to one of the most important sites for nature conservation in the Meanwood Valley; Breary Marsh SSSI. So in June 2018, we launched the Friends of Breary Marsh to ensure that this valuable nature reserve retains its favourable condition. While only 3 action days have been delivered so far, there are another 5 planned during the life of this project.

Date	Details	CC	Number of People
30/06/2018	Guided Nature Walk of Breary Marsh, Balsam and Rhododendron Removal	ONW	4
12/01/2019	Reedmace Removal	ONW	8
02/02/2019	Coppicing and Dead Hedging	ONW	1
Total			13



"It was very interesting and more than what I expected. Much more to look forward to!"

SUMMARY

So far we have had nearly 600 people attend our outreach activities. We also have 800 people on the project mailing list and 400 people on the project Facebook Page, who receive daily updates. And this is in the first year of the project, where a lot of our time was spent planning and promoting the project. We expect the number of people engaged with this project to dramatically increase over spring and summer 2019 and look forward to helping these people discover and protect this wildlife on their doorstep.



To keep up-to-date with the development of the project ask to join our mailing list or follow us on Facebook:

MeanwoodValley.Ranger@leeds.gov.uk

 [Meanwood Valley](#)

