

Headbourne Worthy, St Swithun's Churchyard
Wildlife Habitat and Footpath Improvement
Sunday 16th November 2008



Eleven volunteers gathered to carry out this month's conservation activity at St. Swithun's Church habitat and local footpaths in Headbourne Worthy. It was our sixth visit to St. Swithun's and the focus was on consolidating the work that had been carried out on previous occasions. The primary tasks were:

- to clear dense areas of nettles to encourage a variety of plants to grow next year, creating a habitat for a wider range of flora, animals and insects;
- to clear overgrowth on and around the footpaths;
- to clean out the existing bird boxes;
- to make some new bird & bat boxes for use elsewhere in the villages.

The nettle clearing began on a densely covered piece of ground next to the stream in the grounds of the church. Care was taken to remove as many of the roots as possible, which proved to be quite a task as while nettle root systems are relatively shallow they run to some considerable length and seem to have the texture and resilience of nylon twine! Underneath the nettles we revealed many Flag Iris tubers which should make a lovely show next year. By the end of the afternoon a large section of the ground had been cleared and a very large pile of grubbed up nettles had been created. While it is very difficult to ward off the veracious nettle altogether we hope that our efforts will encourage a diversity of plants to flourish next year.



Elsewhere Jonathan, ably assisted by Imogen, braved the high ladder to check the numerous bird boxes around the churchyard. Finding most, if not all, had been put to good use over the spring and summer, they cleaned and replaced them ready for new inhabitants next year.

Some clearing of brambles, dogwood and overhead branches along the footpath towards School Lane also took place. Unfortunately, it was noticed that the top of the finger sign that we had put at the beginning of the year at the head of the footpath had been removed – the parish council were arranging for this to be replaced.

After the footpaths had been cleared, Bruce and Martin spent the rest of the afternoon making several bird & bat boxes using some timber kindly donated by a carpenter working on the recent refurbishment of the Cart & Horses pub – it's amazing what you can get just by asking! The boxes are planned to be fixed to trees on the green and elsewhere in the villages in December.

Rosie Day. Weather: cold and drizzly.

Why not make your new year's resolution to join the Worthy Conservation Volunteers in January? We will be making improvements to the footpath along the old Didcot railway line, everyone welcome! See the website for further details.

Next Activities:

Sunday 21st December, 1.30pm – Nest box fixing and litter picking, Kings Worthy.
Sunday 19th January, 1.30pm – Disused Didcot Railway Improvements.