



## One year on and the future is bright

The last few months have been particularly exciting, following the news that the long-term future of Hedleyhope Fell has been secured.

As it stands, Durham Wildlife Trust owns approximately half of Hedleyhope Fell and has a 25 year lease with the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) for the majority of the remaining land. However, an adjacent area used for the burial of animals during the foot and mouth outbreak in 2001 has not been under our management.

Following the success of the Heritage Lottery Funded project so far, Defra and the Trust have agreed a deal that incorporates the surface management of the burial site into the existing management programme for the Fell. When the Lottery funding ends in 2008, Defra have agreed to continue funding the entire management programme, including the post of project officer, until 2019.

Local people and wildlife do not recognise the boundaries presented by the burial pit, so it is very exciting to add approximately 30ha onto

what is already the largest of the Trust's nature reserves.

The new area is largely made up of recently disturbed land. Interestingly, it supports significant numbers of ground nesting birds such as lapwing and snipe. It also contains some important seasonal scrapes and permanent ponds. The main feature of interest is a small area of remnant wet heath, which remarkably has remained undisturbed from both open cast operations and the recent burial of animals. The wet heath is a fine example of this type of habitat on the Fell and has an extensive area dominated by cotton-grass.

The funding agreement includes an impressive volunteer training and development programme for the Hedleyhope Fell Volunteer Task Force. It is imperative that there is someone in post to site manage the Fell, but without the help of local volunteers, we would not be able to manage the habitats and install and maintain the infrastructure.

Now is a very good time to get involved with the Task Force. The Fell is still a

relatively new nature reserve and all of the work carried out will make a significant difference for many years to come.

### Defra's funding also includes:

- a range of ecological surveys which will enable us to effectively monitor the ongoing management of the Fell;
- the management of species and habitats across the Fell;
- newsletters and leaflets to keep visitors and local people informed;
- an educational events programme;
- stock management

Given the resource demand that Hedleyhope Fell presents, this funding could not have come at a better time. It is very satisfying to be recognised as the organisation that can move the old burial site into the future and make a meaningful difference to the lives and environment of the surrounding communities.

Craig Best



# Green Gym Gossip



The Green Gym sessions on the Fell are going from strength to strength with 8 to 10 volunteers regularly turning up for a good chat, some exercise in the fresh air and to get a whole manner of tasks completed. In recent weeks these have included: construction of steps and bridges, revetment work and stone pitching to improve drainage.

Some of these tasks were pretty mucky as demonstrated by Eric in the photograph, but how many



Eric & Louise

people do you see grinning on a treadmill down the local gym?

Congratulations to Eric Dack and Jacqueline Waller. They both

recently completed their First Aid at Work course. This is a really positive move towards creating a self-sufficient Green Gym group. Other training, specific to running the group, is also on offer. If anyone is interested in taking on responsibility for mini-bus driving, the brew kit or leading the tasks each week, please contact Ceri on 01388 529036, 07917460476 or [cgibson@btcv.org.uk](mailto:cgibson@btcv.org.uk).

**Ceri Gibson**  
BTCV Green Gym  
Project officer

# Dogs on the Fell



Lapwing, photo: Darin Smith

Hedleyhope Fell is one of the most important places for ground nesting birds in County Durham. By minimising disturbance during the nesting season we can make the Fell an even better place for species such as lapwing, black grouse, snipe and skylark.

Birds see dogs as a threat and the evasive action they take can leave eggs and chicks vulnerable to cold and predators.

By law, you must control your dog so that it does not disturb or scare farm animals or wildlife. You must keep your dog on a short lead on most areas of open country and on common land between 1 March and 31 July. Where there are farm animals present, your dog must be kept on a lead at all times.

For further information go to [www.countrysideaccess.gov.uk](http://www.countrysideaccess.gov.uk) or contact the Access Helpline on 0845 100 3298.



Snipe photo: Darin Smith

# Wildlife update

Photos: Janet Simplot

When you think of the plants that grow on the Fell I am sure heather, bilberry and trees spring to mind. There is however a group of plants known as lower plants. Hedleyhope Fell happens to be quite an interesting place for these species.

'Lower plants' is a collective term for three main groups of plants, mosses, liverworts and lichens. They do not have roots and reproduce using spores, rather than flowers.

There were 77 species of moss, 8 liverworts and 77 lichens found during a recent survey on the Fell. These included 36 mosses, 5 liverworts and 60 lichens not previously recorded.



*Polytrichum piliferum*



*Cladonia chlorophaea*



*Sphagnum capillifolium*

## Fell catches fire

If you have followed the news recently, you may have already heard about the fire on the Fell. Over 10 ha was affected by the fire, including trees, heather, bilberry and the most important part of the Fell for the green hairstreak butterfly.

The burnt area will recover in time. The main concern is that bracken will take over and out compete any heather and bilberry regeneration. Luckily, the fire only burnt the vegetation on the surface, leaving most of the seeds underground intact and healthy.

Over the next few years the volunteer task force will be monitoring and managing the area affected by the fire. Invasive species such as bracken will be controlled by hand and by machine.

Heather burning on a much smaller scale can be beneficial for heathland plants and animals. In fact, burning in itself can be a great method of creating fire breaks and help reduce the impact that an accidental fire can create.

Over the next few months, in conjunction with the fire and police authorities a fire plan will be drawn up. Most of the plan will focus on ensuring fire breaks are in place on the Fell. This will ensure a fire will not take place again on such a massive scale.

**Craig Best**



The Fell after the fire, photo: Jamie Glover

# Hedleyhope Fell needs you!



Join the Hedleyhope Fell Volunteer Task Force now and help manage over 200ha of heathland. We carry out essential conservation tasks such as footpath maintenance, wildlife surveys, bracken control, tree and scrub management and heather burning.

## Why volunteer for Durham Wildlife Trust?

- Improve nature reserves for wildlife
- Kick-start a new career
- Learn new skills
- Make new friends
- Keep fit
- Have fun!

To become part of the Hedleyhope Fell Volunteer Task Force or to find out about volunteering on Durham Wildlife Trust's nature reserves, please contact:

Durham Wildlife Trust, Low Barns Nature Reserve,  
Witton-le-Wear, Bishop Auckland, County Durham  
DL14 0AG

Hedleyhope Fell is located between the communities  
of Tow Law and Cornsay Colliery, 10 minutes from  
Crook and 20 minutes from Durham City.

**Tel: 01388 488728**

**[www.wildlifetrust.org.uk/durham](http://www.wildlifetrust.org.uk/durham)**



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Durham Wildlife Trust aims to conserve wildlife and to promote  
conservation within the County of Durham, City of Sunderland and  
the Boroughs of Gateshead, South Tyneside and Darlington.  
For further information visit [www.wildlifetrust.org.uk/durham](http://www.wildlifetrust.org.uk/durham)  
or [www.towlaw.org.uk](http://www.towlaw.org.uk)



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