

Volunteer Update December 2016

**Special
Season
Greetings to
all our
volunteers!**



Cottage and Lighter get seasonal make-overs

Halloween seems like a long time ago now but we would like to say a thank you to the volunteers who decorated the cottage and lighter with Nichola. It was great to see a traditional look with lots of spooky decorations and platters of seasonal vegetables to add colour and an educational aspect. As you can see it looked great.



With Christmas fast approaching the cottage and lighter have again been decorated, this time with a Christmas theme. Once again our volunteers stepped up to the mark and produced a wonderful seasonal display for all our visitors to enjoy.

Updates on Conservation Tasks

Over the past few months we have made an impact on the Park with all of our various conservation tasks.



In early October we collected hundreds of acorns from the veteran and ancient oaks in Belvoir Park Forest and some of these will be planted by local school children, to be brought on as whips over the next three years by Forest Service. The whips will then be returned to Belvoir Park Forest for planting. For the children involved in this project, these trees will be the woodland of their grandchildren and great grandchildren.

Late October saw two mornings of laurel removal in Derriaghy Glen when a lot of sawing and hauling took place. A perfect workout over a couple of Saturday mornings. Dan our Senior Ranger will return to this site and treat the laurel stumps to ensure the laurel doesn't get a chance to grow back. A visit to the site in a few years will hopefully see a return of native plants.

At the end of November we ran a hedge-laying training event facilitated by The Conservation Volunteers and experienced instructor David Thompson. Twelve volunteers took part and gained plenty of experience in hedge-laying. Our twelve volunteers achieved an 'Entry Level Hedge-laying' accreditation and there will be an opportunity for those volunteers to take part in Level 2 training early in the New Year. Hedges are a wonderful haven for biodiversity, providing food and shelter for invertebrates, birds and small mammals they are also invaluable as stock-proof field borders. A great time was had by all despite the unexpected November midge visitation!



In the middle of our endeavours we were delighted to find a sample of yellow jelly fungus, or yellow brain fungus, on dead hawthorn. You never know what you will come across when working out in the open.



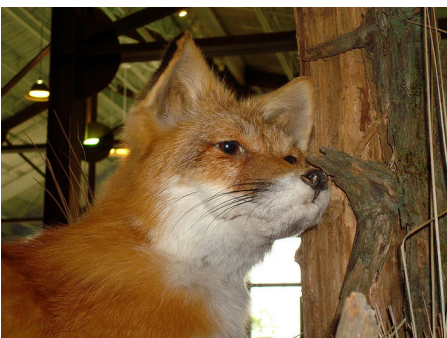
For our final task of the year, for the first while our volunteers joined the 'Lisburn Wildlife Watch' group, in Mclloy Park, and assisted with preparing a wildflower meadow and planting yellow rattle, they then moved to a woodland area where they removed unwanted vegetation such as brambles and bracken by brashing and thinning. This was followed by some coppicing to further clear the woodland floor. It is hoped to visit Mclloy Park early next year to continue with this good work.

Management Plan 2017 - 2022

As you all know, the Regional Park is currently developing its next 5 year management plan. This is almost complete and will act as a guide for the next five years. Thank you to all those who took part in the consultation process.

Volunteer Wildlife Surveyors

This is a quiet time of year for most of our Volunteer Wildlife Surveyors with our butterflies, bees, bats and wildfowl being left in peace to make it through the winter months however, our squirrel surveyors are battling on with little to see with the reds gone from Belvoir and the greys fewer in number. You might be surprised and delighted to know we have been informed that there are Red Squirrels not too far away in Hydebank grounds! Forest Service have seen stripped Norway spruce cones, evidence that there are red squirrels in the area. It may be one of the last vestiges of red squirrels in the Regional Park and we would like to follow this up in the New Year by starting a new survey.



Freddie the Fox

We are waiting patiently to greet our new stuffed friend 'Freddie the Fox'. One of our volunteers found Freddie who had unfortunately met a sad end while crossing the road and he was taken to a taxidermist. Freddie should join us soon and will be used to educate children on woodland animals, food chains and biodiversity.

Christmas craft event

A special thanks to all those who helped out at the final event on our 2016 programme, when members of the public booked to spend a couple of hours away from the hustle and bustle of the Christmas rush to drink mulled wine and make a selection of Christmas crafts on the Industry. It was a very relaxing two hours with everyone going away with at least one Christmas decoration to feel proud of. We also had a stall with a selection of crafts for sale and thank you to those who donated crafts and helped manage the sale of goods. All in all a very successful event.



The next three months Saturday conservation programme looks like this: (but as usual Anne will email out confirmations prior to task days)

<u>Date</u>	<u>Task</u>	<u>Venue</u>	<u>Meeting place</u>	<u>Member of staff</u>
7.1.2017	Woodland Management	McIlroy Park	Drumbo Greyhound Stadium car park	Dan
21.1.2017	Hedge-laying training - TCV	Lagan Meadows	Knightsbridge entrance to Lagan Meadows	Dan / Anne
4.2.2017	Tree Planting	To be advised	To be advised	Andy
18.2.2017	Meadow Management	Lagan Meadows	Sharman Drive entrance	Anne
4.3.2017	Woodland management and tree aftercare	McIlroy Park	Drumbo Greyhound Stadium car park	Dan
18.3.2017	Meadow Mangement	Lagan Meadows	Sharman Drive entrance	Andy

Christmas Volunteer doo!

As a thank you to all our volunteers we will rounding up the year by joining together on the 17th December for a Christmas walk with a Yuletide theme followed by some lunch. Dan is working on a Christmas quiz which should put our brains to the test. Everyone will be welcome and we look forward to seeing you all for a bit of craic.