

Staffordshire Wildlife Trust

www.staffs-wildlife.org.uk

S.W.T. Headquarters Tel: 01889 880100



LEEK GROUP

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NEWSLETTER No 72

Chairman's Comments

With winter fast approaching, we can look back over the summer months and wonder however we survived all that nature threw at us. We had a lovely, long, warm Spring followed by the torrential rains devastating lots of the countryside and when the floods started to recede and things were getting back to normal, we had the dreaded foot and mouth as well as blue tongue. However, Mother Nature appears to take it all in her stride. Looking out along the lanes and across the fields at the autumn tints and the abundance of fruit on the trees and bushes, it's as though nothing untoward had ever happened.

Talking of fruit I was watching my friendly, garden blackbird the other day (I call him 'White Eyes' because of the distinct white ring around his eyes) and was intrigued to notice that at one sitting, lasting just a few minutes, he took 45 Pyracantha berries. I wondered how many more he would have had if he had not been disturbed.

The winter talks got off to a good start with attendances well up yet again, despite what some people think, we must be doing something right. Which reminds me, please don't believe what you read in the local paper. If you have any queries regarding the Trust and its work please don't hesitate to contact us direct, all committee phone numbers are available in every newsletter.

Good news from the Trust, the membership is now over 15.000 and growing with quite a few in this area. For any new members who maybe don't know, local reserves still need volunteers (Swineholes Wood first Sunday and Rod Wood second Sunday of each month) and contact numbers are on the back of this newsletter.

Christmas is almost upon us so why not visit the Wolseley Centre and have a look at the new gatehouse, which is now near completion, and buy some Christmas presents while you're there - tell them you're from the Leek group and you never know, you might get a discount..... (!!!) (Steady on, John! Ed.)

I wish all our members and Sponsors a very Merry Christmas and a Happy, Healthy and Prosperous New Year

John Bridgett

CORPORATE Charity Clay Pigeon Shoot

On the Sunday morning of the August Bank Holiday weekend, Corporate Member of S.W.T. Reg Bestwick of Leek Waste Disposal held a charity clay pigeon shoot at the Ipstones shooting ground. As the S.W.T. was his chosen charity for the event he requested that a representative of S.W.T. took part. I agreed to be that representative and filled in an application form.

The event started at the Green Man at Bottomhouse crossroads with as good a "full English" as I have ever enjoyed, during which I had chance to chat to a few of the other participants. I was greatly relieved to find that some had even less clay shooting experience than I had and that the event was more about enjoyment than competition, although prizes would be awarded to the winners of each of three classes; novice, intermediate and high gun.

One of the participants was a 'waste broker' (a new one on me) who put people with a waste problem in touch with people with waste problem solutions. How's that for a job description! Another was a man from Wiltshire who was the sales director for a company making and selling waste balers, and what a salesman, he nearly convinced me I needed a hundred ton baler to solve a cardboard problem I don't have! He will be well known to any listeners to Wake up to Wogan as Wilting Baz. Apparently, the last gun that he fired was on a Chieftain tank and he asked whether there would be something similar available for him to use on the clay pigeons.

After our wonderful breakfast we all proceeded to the shooting ground on the road leading to Sharpecliffe Hall. I, like many of the other participants would need to use a borrowed shotgun but that proved not to be a problem as there were many willing lenders. I had great fun for a few hours but I have to say that shooting clay pigeons is not as easy as it might seem, those things don't half shift and there were more misses than hits, apart from the high guns who seemed to hit everything, but everyone enjoyed themselves.

Afterwards we returned to the Green Man where Leek Group members Dee Townsend and Kay Wright were waiting with buckets to collect money for the Trust. They collected a total of £270 altogether for which we are very grateful to Reg and all who had helped to arrange the day. Wilting Baz had come on a charitable mission of his own. He has published a collection of poems by himself and others, all of which have been used by Terry Wogan on his morning show on Radio2. All proceeds from the sale of these books will go to Children in Need. I told you he was a good salesman, of course I bought one.

David Brammer