

Centre News

The Woodland Education Centre, Offwell, Honiton, Devon EX14 9SW. Tel 01404 831373



Centre Director's Report - Jan 2008

"It's all Action for 2008"

Offwell Woodland & Wildlife Trust

Even by the Centre's busy standards 2008 promises to be all action. Before the spring we aim to have completed the first phase of the Devon hedge bank project, laid 500 metres of water pipe from the existing toilet block to the new cabin extension, whilst at the same time putting in electricity and a data link from the cabin back to the lake classroom. The new extension is also earmarked for completion before the start of the main fieldwork season.

The winter work programme also has to be completed. The wetland coppicing has been finished and the water returned to its normal level in time for amphibian breeding but much more needs to be done. This is where volunteers are urgently needed to help with the 'Action for Biodiversity' project which aims to recruit a small army of volunteers to help make a real difference to the conservation value of the Centre.

The Trust has now appointed Lucy Morton as the Community Officer for the project which is funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund. She is an experienced conservation manager having recently managed nine nature reserves for Devon Wildlife Trust. She has also worked for the National Trust where she managed a team of wardens and volunteers.

Interestingly, Lucy also managed the first reintroduction site for the Large Blue Butterfly. She therefore not only has the all important practical experience necessary for the post, but she also has a wealth of qualifications including a BSC(Hons) in Heritage Conservation.

Schools and colleges are already booking for the approaching season with the first visits starting in February. Let's hope the current run of mild weather continues!

Following the success of the Woodland Discovery Trail which uses handheld GPS computers to guide and deliver practical educational activities around the southern part of the Centre, the Trust is now working on a similar project which will greatly enhance the value of pond study for pupils. At the same time, it will provide a more effective and efficient way of delivering information about the species which are found during pond dipping.



The head of a Phantom larva, just one of the images on the pond guides.



Lucy Morton is the Community Officer for the Action for Biodiversity project

Waterproof, handheld computers will provide information about the individual species in a way that no human being can compete with. A simple interface allows the information, in the form of narrative and images, to be accessed at the touch of a button. Close-up photography of the species shows them in a level of detail which would otherwise require a microscope. For example, the life and death struggle for survival can be shown of a damselfly with its prey or the amazing detail revealed by a highly magnified image of a Phantom larva or the miraculous event of the emergence of a dragonfly.

Using technology in this way, significantly eases the work load of the member of staff who is taking the pond dipping activities. In a busy week the same information would be repeated up to 50 times to the excited children who are clustered around their pond tray eager to find out about their own very special creatures which they have caught.

Action for Biodiversity



Lucy Morton, the Action for Biodiversity project officer, invites you to volunteer not only to gain new skills but also to help the Centre's valuable wildlife.

'As I sit in the wonderful log cabin at the Woodland Education Centre, with its roaring woodburner, set in this beautiful secluded valley I am very glad to have arrived as the new Community Officer for the exciting 2 year HLF Action for Biodiversity project .

The aims of this project are to conserve and enhance the Woodland Education Centre reserve by involving local people of all ages, abilities and backgrounds in practical conservation work and species recording, and to raise awareness and understanding within the local community of the wonderful local environment that is on their doorstep.

As the Community Officer I am eager to recruit volunteers to get involved with practical woodland management tasks, constructing new trails and helping with the heathland restoration area.

We would also like volunteers to come and help count, look for and discover the wildlife that lives on the reserve. No previous experience is necessary and any time you can give, from a couple of hours a week to a couple of days would be great!

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!

Have you always wanted to try your hand at coppicing, or wanted to know more about the wildlife in your local area, if so now's your chance!

The Offwell Woodland and Wildlife Trust are looking for volunteers to help them carry out practical conservation work and species and habitat recording at the Woodland Education Centre. No previous experience necessary, just enthusiasm and some time!

Please contact Lucy Morton, Community Officer, HLF Action for Biodiversity project on 01404 831881 or e-mail offwell5@aol.com.



Lucy Morton is presented with a camera from Offwell Fundraising Group

The Action for Biodiversity project has already received significant financial support from Offwell Environment Link, as well as from Offwell Fundraising Group. The latter recently presented the Centre with a new digital camera for use with the project.

Forthcoming Events at The Woodland Education Centre

Training Days - Coppicing

Saturday February 23rd

Saturday March 8th

**Come and learn how to coppice
hazel. No experience necessary,
hand tools are provided.**

Water Vole Conservation in East Devon

by
Mervyn Newman, Water Vole Officer

April 10th, 2pm.
Meet in Offwell Village Hall Car Park

All events are free! More details 01404 831881