

STROUD VALLEYS PROJECT

Enriching lives, transforming places



Welcome to our Winter 2018-19 newsletter

Exciting New Projects; Building Communities

We are pleased to have recently secured funding for two new projects. Firstly from the Big Lottery Reaching Communities programme who are funding our project, Building Sensory Gardens with Local Communities.

We will be working in partnership with a wide range of community organisations to support communities to build sensory gardens starting in Stratford Park and then further afield as the project develops over four years. During the project we will support eight local groups to create their own part of the sensory garden. We will be starting the project in the New Year and will be growing plants on a Tuesday and working in Stratford Park on Wednesdays from January onwards.



Volunteer Lunch, Sensory Garden September 2018 Photo : DeborahRoberts

We have also just started a new Thursday group called Wild Shed, which has been funded through Thriving Communities (Gloucestershire County Council), which aims to help people to stay well and live independently for as long as possible and support people with health issues. The group will meet once a week and volunteers will create a community tree nursery, learn about growing fruit and vegetables and managing land for wildlife

Do contact us if you are interested in joining any of our projects as a volunteer : 01453 753358.

Event Dates

Sunday 17 February

**Archaeology Walk
of the Heavens**



Saturday 23 February

Seed Swap



Saturday 23 February

Hedge Planting for Beginners



Saturday 16 March

**Observing Goshawks
at Symonds Yat**



Events cont...

Wednesday 17 April
Chalford Valley Walk



Friday 3 May
Moths in Your Garden



Saturday 4 May
Nightingale Walk



Saturday 18 May
Wild About Kingswood
Newt Survey



See our Events Programme
for more events and
further information

PROJECT NEWS

Sarah's Field, Berkeley

The field is becoming a place! It has pathways, fruit trees, entrance gates, picnic tables, a bog and two ponds, and benches to sit on and contemplate the view. On Tuesdays, volunteers meet to manage, mow and create habitats. Sarah's Field is named after the girl who kept her horses here in the early 1900's. Her granddaughter, Pamela Thorpe, bequeathed the field to Berkeley Town Council as a green community space with a water meadow. On the site are toads, voles, fox and badger paths, resident starlings and sparrows.



Tired, hot pond-diggers: SVP heroes in the heat wave of summer 2018

During the summer months, paths were mown, a corporate workday (with St James investments) achieved a lot of digging, the gates were put in place, the bog was made.

The pond shapes were sculpted, by skilled landscaper Jeremy Prout and friends, with a mix of depths and sizes which will create a rich variety of watery habitats. During this work, many 'treasures' have been unearthed: pottery, ceramics, a Queen Victoria penny, marbles, clay pipes, and horses teeth; these may result from its former use as a fair ground. Such tales of the field, shared by local people, include how it flooded in 1968 and 2001, how it was adjoined to the orchards of the James family (complete with cider press), and how it had both an elm tree and a pond.

In September the pond liners were delivered and moving the heavy rolled-up liner involved a few unprintable words! Berkeley residents donated carpets to line the ponds. The challenge of getting water into them was solved thanks to a water pump hired from Ermin's. The powerful little Honda pump lifted and transported the water from the 'rhine' (Saxon for ditch) to the ponds 40 meters away.

At the open day on 6 October, newt hibernation areas were made, and apples pressed into juice by Girl Guides, Rangers and local residents. On 26 January there will be a Wassail, to 'give health' to the fruit trees with song and cider.

I hope Sarah would be pleased with this work in her field.

PROJECT NEWS

Our education project, Wild Classrooms

Wild Classrooms aims to support children's outdoor learning and builds on the foundations laid by our earlier educational projects, Get Growing and Growing Wild. The project is funded by the Cotswolds Conservation Board's Sustainable Development Fund and was launched in January 2017. Tamsin, the Wild Classroom project officer, has developed free resources which link what's going on outside with the primary science curriculum. Every participating school gets up to free three visits from Tamsin, a seasonal poster and a class scrapbook / notebook.



Children at Stroud Valleys School receiving their calendar

In September we launched five themed calendars which aim to help children learn about one plant or animal a month that they will hopefully be able to see without having to search too hard! They are made even more special by the use of photographs provided by local photographers including two young people, Duerden Cormack and Alfie Owen.

We have had a great response from local schools and have even had schools as far away as Oxford and Lincolnshire requesting copies. The topics covered by the calendars are birds, butterflies, flowers, minibeasts and trees and they are a fun way for everyone to learn a little bit more about the natural world around them.

If you work with children and would like to be involved in the project or would like some calendars, please contact Tamsin on 01453 358 or tamsin@stroudvalleysproject.org



GEM Project

The GEM project continues to go from strength to strength. We signed up our first GEM participant 1st December 2016. Since then we have signed up 18 people. The Going the Extra Mile (GEM) Project is committed to help move people closer towards education, training, volunteering or work, including self-employment. The programme reconnects people with their local services through their communities and ultimately helps achieve their desired outcome, whether through a working or educational related route. The GEM Project and Stroud Valleys Project understands that everyone is unique, with different needs and requirements, impacting on their step into the world of employment, education or training.

Out of 18 people, one of the biggest barriers to finding work is being unable to drive - 9 of the 18 are unable to drive. The reasons for this are complex. All GEM participants are in receipt of benefits or not earning any money at all. They may be unable to drive because they never learnt but now they cannot afford to have driving lessons, or even if they could and they passed, they couldn't afford to run a car. This means that they are stuck, looking for work on bus routes and this limits their choices of work. If you have any ideas about how we might remedy this, we'd love to hear from you.

This month has seen one of our GEM participants find work after a gap of 10 years. Susan, (not her real name) has carried out an introduction to counselling course and now she has applied for several jobs and been successful in getting one in a caring role.

We wish her luck in her new job.



PROJECT NEWS

The GEM Project at The Beeches

The Tuesday group volunteers based at The Beeches Day Care Centre have been welcoming new GEM Project participants who have been signposted to us by our GEM Navigator Developer, Julie Wickham.



The group have been venturing in to new areas gaining woodworking skills by making standard size garden bird boxes along with a new swift box design that we have embarked upon making. A big thank you to John of Stroud Swift Group for his input - he helped us with the design and we are now in the steady production of a number of these types boxes (see photo). Look out for them on sale at our eco shop at 8 Threadneedle Street, Stroud!

As the group has been growing vegetables at The Beeches over the summer months, including cucumber, tomatoes and aubergine to name a few, we called in our own expert chef Katherine Hallewell to help us turn produce into product. This included teaching sessions in making chutney and damson butter (a spread not a jam) at the OPENhouse Community Kitchen, Gloucester Street, Stroud.



The cooking session run by Katherine was very well organised and had everyone (all 10 of us!) working at different tasks to produce both our own spicy tomato chutney and damson butter. All ingredients came from our sites and projects - for example, vegetables from The Beeches, damsons from Kingswood Newt Ponds - and jars were brought in by volunteers. This made the session more enjoyable for all.

Over the last few weeks the group have also embarked on a small project for the Back from the Brink Butterfly Conservation team based at our office. They have collected wild thyme cuttings from three commons around the district in the hope that we may be able to propagate and grow them on at The Beeches.

Wild thyme is the main food plant of the Large Blue butterfly whose caterpillars rely on it as a main food source. If this experimental project works then the plants will be planted back onto their particular commons in the hope of providing the butterfly populations with more food sources.

Several of our GEM participants are developing skills towards being self-employed and the project is looking at broadening their horizons in terms of what can be done in order to earn a living through self employment.



Photo : DeborahRoberts



PROJECT NEWS

Wild About Kingswood

We have had a number of events and workshops at the nature reserve starting with our annual Great Crested Newt (GCN) survey (end April until mid May), a scything for beginners course run by SVP colleague Fred Miller, Pond Dipping with Denise Gibbons and Barbara Wood and Bat Walk led by Nadine Smykatz-Kloss.

GCN Survey 2018: Once again the survey was a great success with numbers up from last year. A highlight of this second survey of three was when (with the help of volunteers, clear early blue skies and a clear plastic chocolate tray) we were able to photograph the under belly patterns of all 17 GCNs (11 male, 6 female) - the under belly pattern is unique to the individual newt.



So we now know that through SVP's third year of surveying the main breeding pond number of GCNs is up from 5 trapped in 2016 to 17 this year. Also another find on our third survey this year was a male Palmate newt. This is great news as it means that we have all three native newt species in the main breeding pond. However, it makes next year's survey interesting as both palmate and smooth female newts are very difficult to tell apart.

Fred Miller's scything course for beginners went really well, Fred showed the attendees the art of cutting and sharpening with a scythe. The group cut a good amount of grass sward on the day, again this work helps towards the continued management of the site for the GCN population and other wildlife.



Pond dipping in July with Denise and Barbara was again a great success, with a number young families attending, a highlight being 6 GCN efts (young newts) found when pond dipping along with many other pond life species.

The Bat Walk led by Nadine was very well attended with 30 adults and children and enough bat detectors to go around! On the walk we were able to hear Common and Soprano pipistrelle bats and, once in the pond area, we were able to hear the larger Noctule bat flying around the pond.

A special thank you to Paul Green for the great photos he keeps on producing for us, capturing some of the work we do on the sites that we manage.



Sensory Garden Project, Stratford Park,

The Wednesday team have finished off the building of the pergola under the watchful eye of Mike McCrea, Iverde contract manager at the park. The team has moved on to creating a large raised flower bed made from a Cedar of Lebanon tree (Cedrus libani) that had fallen in the park, increasing seating areas for the public by installing three oak benches and a hexagonal tree seat as well as completing a further section of footpath adjacent to the small child play area.



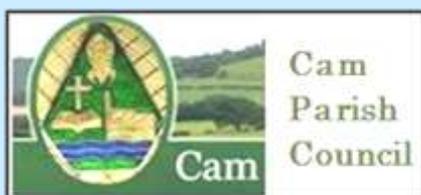
Raised bed and bench Photo : Paul Green, Threshold Photography.com

We hope over the next few months to start preliminary work on the open space amphitheatre, creating seating space and steps to enhance the space for open theatre. The future of the Sensory Garden Project is again dependant on further funding after this phase of work comes to an end. The work that has been achieved by all involved has put down a really good 'marker' so to speak as the partnership and working relationship between Mike McCrea, the Iverde team (Paul, Shaun & Andy) and our staff and volunteers has been excellent even at some telling times during these first phases of the project.

Once again thanks to ALL involved



FUNDRAISING / PROJECT NEWS



Rackleaze Wetland, Cam

Since the last article in the newsletter Stroud Valleys Project and its regular Thursday volunteer group have been busy with habitat management work including the start of the annual comfrey 'bash' (cutting back) which was scythed (less messy than a brush-cutter), and the management of the newly planted hedgerow. This has suffered over the hot summer months and a number of plants have actually died which we will replace this coming autumn.

The volunteer group has also completely rebuilt the footbridge that crosses the ditch on-site, a job which was achieved over two sessions to take down and build (see photos). We also hope to start giving the old boardwalk a wire brushing and wood preserve if weather will allow us!

As a result of this fine piece of work to build the footbridge, we have been asked by the parish council to draw up plans and quote for another extension for the boardwalk on-site. This would again create more disabled wheelchair access on to the wetland areas. We are hopeful of securing further funding in the future to complete a circular boardwalk around the wetland site.

Our management of the wetland site as well as the adjacent balancing pond on behalf of Tesco has opened up these green spaces for people to enjoy and wildlife to thrive.

Good examples of wildlife seen or heard over past few months have included; two Grass snake (*Natrix natrix*) on different occasions (1 adult, 1 juvenile) by the team and a Reed bunting (*Emberiza schoeniclus*) heard by our own bird expert, Barbara Wood. She has said that we are very lucky to have the Reed bunting as their numbers have been on the decline over the past years mainly due to habitat loss.

Thanks once again to all the Thursday group volunteers who help look after the wildlife area and a big thank you to Denise Gibbons and Barbara Wood for their support on wildlife sightings on-site along with the continued support and partnership of Cam Parish Council.

FUNDRAISING / PROJECT NEWS

Tuesday Conservation Group

We have had a busy summer working at a whole range of sites around Stroud District carrying out all sorts of conservation tasks. Each month we have visited our three main sites, interspersed with other sites.

We have continued working with Cainscross Parish Council to improve Queen Elizabeth II Field at Dudbridge for people and wildlife. The native hedge we planted two years ago is doing really well with flowers for pollinators in the spring and plenty of berries in the autumn for the birds. Unfortunately the wild flower plugs we planted last spring didn't do as well, possibly due to the hot summer. So once the weather cooled down again, we planted larger wildflower plants, grown on our allotment which we hope will have a much better chance of survival.



Spindle berries at Arundel Mill Pond

We have also been working at Arundel Mill Pond, just along from Capel's Mill below Waitrose. While water levels were low in the summer, we managed to access the main island and smaller silt bars to remove invasive Himalayan Balsam. We continued clearing around the trees that we planted in 2015 and this autumn have had a great show from the spindle trees. However, the highlight of the year for me so far was spotting my first wild otter in the canal just along from the millpond. Other sites we have worked on include Bisley Road Cemetery and Uplands Playing field, where

we helped rake up the grass cuttings to benefit wildflowers, and Rowcroft Medical Centre.



Volunteers taking a well earned tea break at Arundel Mill Pond!

From November, the Tuesday group is changing its name to "Wild Works" and is looking to recruit some new volunteers, particularly those aged 18-24. So if you are free on Tuesdays and would like to join us, please get in touch with Tamsin on 01453 753358 or tamsin@stroudvalleysproject.org



Cainscross Parish Council



COME AND BROWSE IN OUR ECO SHOP 8 Threadneedle Street, Stroud

Following on from the success of our bamboo toothbrushes, we are delighted to announce an increased range of dental care products. We have dental floss – available as vegan (nylon-4) or plastic-free (silk), with refills available for the original glass dispenser.

We also have Toothtabs (with or without fluoride): tiny tablets to replace toothpaste. Just chew until soft, then brush your teeth! These are packed in a neat tin – with refills available. The final item in the range is the bamboo toothbrush travel case – to complete the set!

We have just started a new recycling scheme - for all your old plastic toothbrushes and toothpaste tubes. Why not drop off your old dental products and pick up items from our new range to try?

Finally we are all stocked up for Christmas... as well as our usual Christmas cards and gifts, we are delighted to be stocking the "Elephant Box" range of stainless steel lunch boxes, locally produced beeswax wraps (vegan wraps eagerly awaited!), vegan candles and local calendars.

We look forward to seeing you soon!

STROUD VALLEYS PROJECT

Contact Details and Membership Form

Stroud Valleys Project's office and eco shop are located at 8 Threadneedle St, Stroud, GL5 1AF

T: 01453 753358

W: www.stroudvalleysproject.org

E: info@stroudvalleysproject.org



Donate the items below to us for recycling
to **RAISE FUNDS** for us!



Biscuit and cake wrappers - *only flexible wrap, hard inner trays can go in Council recycling box*

Toothpaste packaging inc. tubes, toothbrushes, heads from electric brushes

Mobile phones - *working or not, no SIMs* / **Ink cartridges** - *not laser/toner*

Unwanted or damaged gold and silver items and jewellery - *odd earrings, broken chains, costume jewellery - in all materials: plastic, wood, bronze, gold, silver and metal.*

Watches - *working or not*

Banknotes and coins - *old or current - of any currency from anywhere .*

Cameras - *working or not* / **MP3 players** - *working or not*

Games consoles - *working or not*

Digital games and accessories - *working or not*

Ipods, laptops, tablets - *working or not*

Stamps and Postcards - *loose or collections, albums, presentation packs*

Please note that we cannot accept :

Home phones * Fax machines * Printers * DVD players

* Kitchen appliances * Personal grooming items



**Drop off your items at our eco shop
at 8 Threadneedle Street, Stroud, GL5 1AF**



Enriching lives, transforming places

THIS NEWSLETTER is a team effort by John Ockham, Clare Mahdiyone, Tamsin Bent, Richard Lewis, Carolyn Buckley, Deb Coleman, Julie Wickham, Deb Roberts, Fred Miller, Wednesday Peglar and lots of volunteers who proof-read, prepare, and stuff envelopes - thanks to you all!

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