

MANT MATTERS

The Newsletter of Menston Area Nature Trust



ISSUE 1 AUTUMN / WINTER 2021

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MANT's First Newsletter



Welcome to the first Newsletter from Menston Area Nature Trust! We are delighted that you share our passion for enhancing nature, and thank you for your support.

This first edition will bring you up to date with our progress so far. We also intend to have regular features on local wildlife and what you can do in your garden to help it survive. This edition has a fascinating article on long tailed tits by Alison Davies, and another

on what you can do in the autumn for wildlife.

Since setting up the charity in August and holding our official launch in September, we have been busy undertaking mundane but essential tasks. These include getting the mechanics of the website working, especially the membership and donation pages, and putting in place various policies and procedures required by the Charity Commission.

On a more interesting note, we have been making invaluable contacts across the region in the wildlife world and within Bradford Council. We are also in talks with local cub and scout groups, and Menston Primary School, to see how we might be able to work together.

ABOUT Menston Area Nature Trust



Menston Area Nature Trust has been set up by five local residents to find ways of supporting wildlife. Nationally, 44 million birds have been lost since the 70s, and hedgehogs are predicted to become extinct as soon as 2025. These are just two examples of the desperate situation for wildlife around us and the need to act now. Inspired by [East Keswick Wildlife Trust](#), we are hoping to

set up nature reserves dedicated to enhancing habitats for our local wildlife. Exactly how this is done will depend on the site, but may include some judicious planting of copses and/or wildflowers; in some cases nature will be left to grow as it sees fit, with minimal interference. We are also determined to engage the community by sharing knowledge, providing joint resources and inspiring actions in people's own gardens.

FUTURE EVENTS

General Meeting 3rd February 2022 7:30pm at St John's Parish Rooms – please keep this date free; come and meet us and join in our work.

Open Wilder Gardens - Sunday 22nd May 2022. We will be opening several gardens around Menston to share how we are making them nature friendly while having an attractive garden. If you would like to open your garden too, please get in touch.

VOLUNTEERS WANTED

Expertise needed! If anyone has legal knowledge, particularly concerning land ownership or management, we would love to have your help.

Wildflower Meadow in Menston Park



We are in talks with the council and other local groups about establishing a permanent wildflower meadow as a community asset in Menston Park. Earlier this year we opportunely intervened and managed to get a large area of grass left uncut – you may have noticed it and wondered what was happening. One of our wonderful members, Sarah, helped us identify what is already growing there, to the tune of 17 species. This surprised us and provided a foundation on which to build and improve. We have also planted a small number of donated wildflower plants into this patch. At the moment, the exact site of the permanent meadow is subject to discussion, but we hope to be able to finalise it soon.

Wildflower Nursery



MANT has been inspired to set up its own seedbank and wildflower nursery, following the expertise and guidance of East Keswick Wildlife Trust. We collected a range of seeds from their ancient wildflower meadow in August and sowed them during October in peat-free compost. In theory, they will germinate during spring and grow to the point where we can plug plant them into suitable sites over the next 2-3 years. We want to pass our knowledge onto members and will aim to run a wildflower seed-sowing workshop in autumn 2022.

If anyone would be interested in helping with this process, or has space to house some of the pots, please let us know.

In addition, we have been generously supplied with a source of local wildflowers by a donor in Menston and have already planted some of these in the village.

Featured Species—The Long-tailed Tit



Did you know we have a bird which is pink (with dark grey and off white) and is quite common in Menston? These beautiful little birds live in family groups, making constant communication calls as they move along bush tops or from tree to tree. Although they are not primarily garden birds, you may be lucky and see some visiting your bird feeder occasionally. On a clear cold day, when the sun has begun to warm the tree tops, the insects will begin to stir up there, and the birds will arrive. Listen for their high, thin see see call, or an abrupt *trrrp*, then look up. After a while, you should begin to notice what look like many leaves appearing to flutter within the branches. Look

closely, and you will see tiny teaspoon-shaped birds flitting about. When they leave to move on to a different feeding spot, they will do so in single file, setting off one after the other, making a sine-wave shaped flight path, dipping and rising. In autumn, the groups become quite large, and they will combine with other small birds in foraging groups. Thus they get some protection from predators while there are no leaves on the trees, and they can huddle together for warmth at night, strung out along a branch. They are not in fact from the Paridae (tit) family and do not nest in holes. Rather, they build a round nest of moss, cobweb and feathers, edged with lichen, which can expand as the brood grows.

We have seen them all over Menston where there are tall trees with some undergrowth.

The Garden Now

This autumn, you could try something new if you are not already doing it. Leave everything alone! The seed heads will provide food for birds, and the stems will provide hibernation habitat for insects. Smaller weeds will provide ground cover and will not multiply until the spring, so you can hoe them off in good time before then. However, larger deep-rooted weeds do need to be dug up. In MANT, we are learning about “no-dig” gardening, whereby the soil is given the chance to look after itself. Over winter, you can help it by covering the earth with any kind of organic mulch. The worms will take it down and improve the structure of the soil. Enjoy the architectural display of your spent perennials, and look forward to moments of creepy-crawly study or the thrill of visiting flocks of goldfinches on snowy days.



[Menston Area Nature Trust](http://MenstonAreaNatureTrust.org.uk)

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