



# *Environment Matters*

*The environment bulletin of District 105N*



**Issue 3**  
**Spring 2023**



Fellow Lions and LEOs,

This may seem an odd way to start our environment bulletin but, perhaps, you will be moved, as I am, by presentation given by KoKo. KoKo was a Western Lowland gorilla raised in captivity. From the age of one, she was raised in very close, human contact. She had a vocabulary of 1000 signs and understood around 2000 words of English. Her IQ was measured as being between 70 – 90 using a pictorial assessment technique.

<https://www.youtube.com/@liveLaughLearnOfficial> and click on KoKo's last message to mankind.

In KoKo we gave nature a voice. Perhaps we should listen to what she said.

### **How can we give nature a helping hand in Spring?**

As with most things in nature, the best thing we can do is leave it to get on with life and ensure that our activities do not get in the way. The temptation, in spring, is to give the garden more attention. We cut the lawn, rake up dead leaves and twigs - perhaps even burn them. Regular readers will know what's next!

Please let the grass grow a bit longer and leave the dead leaves and twigs alone until the weather warms up until it is reaching frost free conditions and a steady 10°C during the day. This allows pupae to hatch into adults. This will give the animals in your garden nature reserve a chance to build up their populations a lot faster. If you must burn, please check that there are no hedgehogs hibernating in the pile.

### **Bug Hotel Competition**

You may remember that the autumn bulletin announced a grand competition for designing and building a Bug Hotel. In a very closely fought competition, PDG Lion John Sutherland of Easingwold Lions Club took top honours. His magnificent DIY skills coupled with his thoughtful design ensured his triumph.

As the only other entry was a bird box which was disqualified, also made by John, I had no hesitation in declaring him the outright winner and the winner of the star prize of a pint. Fortunately, I managed to leave Bridlington before John got thirsty so I'm owe him one.



PDG John Sutherland with his excellent Bug Hotel.

## Bird Flu

Sadly, bird flu is still with us and with the, rapidly approaching, breeding season we are likely to see an upsurge in the number of affected birds. As birds congregate at nesting sites, and interactions increase, so the virus transmission increases.

Cruel as it may seem, the last place you should take these birds is a rescue centre. This only puts their animals at risk as well as the humans transporting the stricken birds.

It is important to consider this when carrying out risk assessments for project work in areas where birds congregate and advise accordingly in your safety advice.

## Around the Clubs

### Tickhill and District Lions Club

Tickhill Lions have proved they are hardy lads and lasses by planting trees in freezing fog. They also seem to be enjoying themselves doing it!

Stuart Allen reports,

These are some of the photos of the tree planting by Tickhill and District Lions



We planted 14 trees on Rossington near Doncaster in memory of a good friend of Lions Melvyn Wright. He always helped on our Xmas float, usually 4 nights every year. His widow, Rosemary donated a sum of money raised at Melvyn's funeral and we decided to put it to good use in her area.





Melvyn's daughter is disabled and belongs to a group called Smile (who work with disabled people) who will water the trees throughout the year. One of the reasons we planted the trees is that both she and her dad love them and these are close to her home. Rosemary and her daughter Kerry are in the group photo (right front)

We also put in two fruit trees and a plaque for Melvyn in December in Rossington Memorial Hall where the Smile group meet.

What a splendid way to provide a lasting memorial to a life of service for a man who loved nature! The trees are a living memorial and a constant reminder to his family of the appreciation of Tickhill and District Lions Club for his service.

Tickhill have also been out litter picking, this time along Stripe Rd. This time it wasn't just the 30 bags of litter arising from motorists chucking rubbish out of their cars but also fly-tipped carpets, a bed, and a wardrobe.



## Aberdeen – Bon Accord Lions Club and Harlaw Academy LEO Club

Aberdeen – Bon Accord Lions and their LEOs, from Harlaw Academy celebrated spring by raising and planting 200 willow trees, of two different species, at East Woodcroft Moor, in an area surrounding wetland.



The area is public land with paths and is used by the public for dog walking and exercising horses.



As in a previous tree planting, the area was identified by the Aberdeen Countryside Rangers and the Club is grateful to them for their help and enthusiasm.

A substantial rabbit population and a well-established roe deer herd necessitated the use of staking and spiral protection to improve survivability. Nevertheless, most will survive. Bon Accord Lions are planning with the Countryside Rangers to develop this link and plant a greater range of species in autumn of this year.





## Around the world

Some good news! Some forms of plastic may well be broken down by micro-organisms (bacteria and fungi). Natural evolution works on the basis of supply and demand. If a material can be used as a food source, something will evolve to utilise it. Some bacteria isolated from landfill sites appear to have done so. In future, we may see genetically modified forms of these being produced on an industrial scale to eliminate junked plastics.

Another development which may have consequences in the not so-distant future is a clay suspension which can be poured into dry soil into which trees can be planted and become established. This enables near desert soil to be planted, providing new habitats suitable for other vegetation to occupy.

## A good deed?

It is the time of year that many people perform the most common act of kindness to animal life in this country. Our feathered friends are finding it tough going just now with many species very much in decline. We like to help birds by feeding them over winter. So much so, that many conservation charities are concerned about feeding too much fat to the birds.

Another concern which has been raised is the spreading of disease by the use of dirty feeding stations. This year, the added risk of spreading bird flu to other birds or indeed the risk of transmission to humans is a real concern. If you are going to use them, please be careful to sterilise them regularly and frequently, taking care to protect yourself and your feathered clients.



As birds are, generally, not too fussy where they poo, their faeces generally accumulates where they visit regularly. Saliva is also deposited on feeders, as the birds feed. Both can spread disease..

## How to help bees and other pollinators.

It will not be too long before we see and hear the first bees in the garden, There is a tendency to treat them all the same. There are over 200 species of bee in the UK. Most are solitary, rather than living in hives or colonies. Others, such as many bumble bees, live in small underground colonies.

Planting perennials, with different shaped and size of flowers, gives a bigger range of bee species a potential source of food, especially if they are in flower over a long period. This will also benefit the other great insect group responsible for much of the pollination of flowers, the unsung and, usually unwelcome, heroes, the flies.

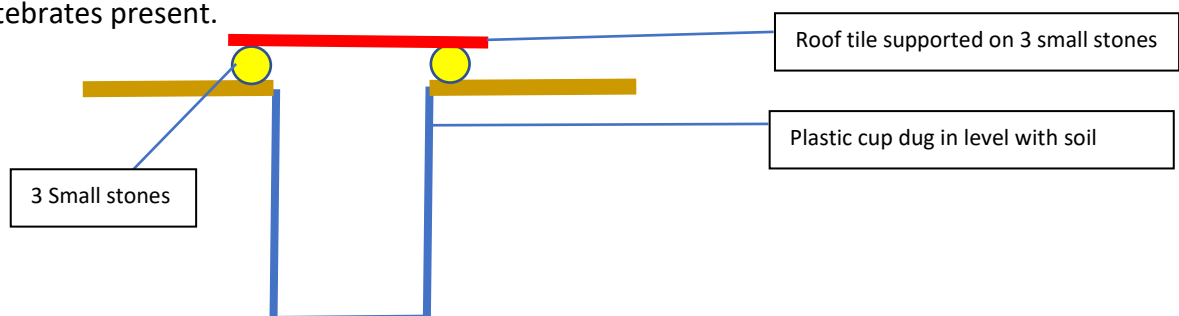
Most fly species want nothing to do with humans. Most do not suck blood nor spread disease. Even the most unpopular and uninvited guests in our houses, the bluebottles, are not really wanting to be there. Most come in attracted to smells of food and only some are there with a purpose (to lay eggs). The majority are simply there because they have got lost.

### Following up on Wildtribe Heroes

Many schools in our District have established links with Lions through the donation of sets of Ellie Jackson's great series of Environmental books. This may be built on relatively easily and further raise the interest of youngsters in the micro – beasts surrounding their school.

The grounds of a school vary hugely. Some are tarmac deserts and others have sports grounds or even small woodlands attached. For ones with tarmac surroundings, raised beds can be added using old pallet planking and filled with earth or (peat free) compost.

For these, the first project could be simply to monitor how many different species of plants move in, simply by counting the number of different leaves turn up. Further work can be done to identify the species. Pitfall traps can be set using plastic cups to sample the invertebrates present.



How the living things change over time can be monitored as a class project. An additional source of fascination can be added very readily and relatively cheaply by using a digital microscope. Many models of these are available at prices varying from £15 up to £120. As most schools have data projectors and all have computers, these small animals can be shown to all in a class very easily.

For real fascination and Star Wars animals appeal, you can't beat pond life. Shallow ponds using plastic pre-forms can be added very easily to raised beds and will quickly become populated with animal life, although you may have to buy some native, aquatic plants for it.

Guides will be available for identifying common animals and plants which are likely to turn up in pitfall traps and shallow ponds. These will be suitable for youngsters and will be available in the next bulletin.

Even better, is contacting a local wildlife group or university and arrange a visit from an expert. A good presenter can then tell them of the lifestyles of the animals in their school grounds.

As Lions, we often talk about changing peoples' lives. Two life changing experiences happened in my own childhood. A Christmas stocking filler, the Sunday Mail Pictorial Animal Encyclopaedia when I was six and a small microscope when I was seven or eight. The book (which has survived umpteen book culls) started a lifelong passion for animal life and the microscope introduced me to the fascinating world of microscopic animals. Who knows what you could start with this?

## **Appeal!!**

I can only share what Clubs are doing, with others in the District, if you share them with me. Please let me know, even if you think it is too small or you have read about similar, in previous bulletins, please share them anyway. If your Club is small, why not combine forces with another close by and look at undertaking a joint project. This has been done very successfully in the past.

Looking forward to improving weather, and a good season for nature,

Malcolm Hogg  
District Environment Chair