

Environment Matters



The environment bulletin of District 105N



Spring 2025

Fellow Lions and Leos,

Firstly, my thanks to those Clubs who responded to the survey on what Clubs have been doing which is helping the environment. Unsurprisingly, the most widespread activity is one which gives a double whammy, recycling specs. What has been redundant to one person has enabled another to see.

Tree planting has reduced, unfortunately, but a couple of Clubs indicated that local councils had been less than cooperative. Many groups are now tree planting as a major activity and that is putting pressure on council land. Additionally, some councils are including tree planting into their budgets and hiring professionals to undertake this. When the pros do it they can plant large areas quickly and on a scale which can be breathtaking so it may be bad news for us but better overall for the environment.

Another item arising from the survey was the support given to a local Hedgehog charity group by Elmet lions. Supporting conservation groups, with specific interests, may be a very useful way Clubs can make a contribution.

For Clubs recycling specs, feedback from Doncaster Lions may well be of interest. Specs recycling can be an expensive business. As Doncaster reported that they recycled approx. 500kg of specs I was intrigued as most Clubs report number of boxes. Doncaster L.C. ship their specs by courier at £90 / pallet. This might be worth thinking about if you are recycling on a large scale. A fantastic effort!



A plea to all Lion gardeners!

Although there may be mucky weather to come, spring is most definitely sprung. There is a strong temptation to tidy up the garden, rake up dead leaves and cut back dead stems. The dead leaves have entire populations of invertebrates which will pollinate your flowers as well as act as a food source for birds. The hollow stems of some of your plants will have the pupae of insects which overwinter in them and will hatch into adults in early summer.

It is better to leave the dead leaves and stems until early summer which gives the invertebrates, and the vertebrates which feed on them, the best help you can give. This can be too big an ask, for some, but a compromise is to make a wooden box with untreated wood and fill this with dead leaves and cut dead stems. This can then be placed in a concealed place in the garden.

In a similar way, garden ponds are often cleared of dead leaves and mud at this time of year. Leaving them alone for a couple of years will increase the variety of animals using them. Still ponds can have frogs, toads, newts, damsel flies etc etc, which enhance gardens and bring us that bit closer to nature.

Just an idea....

During lockdown, many people became much more familiar with the natural world as they spent time in their gardens. The health benefits of doing so are well recognised, particularly mental health but also blood pressure. Is this something you personally could benefit from? Could your Club develop this into a local health initiative?

Balloons



Many of us will remember taking part in party games involving balloons, as children.

Balloons will only last a few short hours before becoming rather sad.

Balloons are an environmental catastrophe taking between 2 to 6 years to break down. A significant proportion are eaten by marine animals and there are even whales whose guts have been blocked by them. Industry claims that biodegradable balloons break down more quickly, but this is disputed by some environmentalists. If you have ever had a foil-based balloon, it is still on the go and will outlive all of us.

Should we be decorating stalls with them, handing them out to kids or even buying Lions ones?

Good news!! It ain't all doom and gloom.

Ocean plastic

In an article in ACS Applied Materials and Interfaces, scientists from Japan's RIKEN research institute and the University of Tokyo announced that they have engineered a groundbreaking plastic material that completely dissolves in seawater within hours and decomposes in soil in just 10 days.

The study showed that the new plastic did not release microplastic particles, unlike conventional plastics that will stick around for centuries, and also broke down to nitrogen and phosphorous compounds, adding to soil fertility.

Green engines

At last, many car manufacturers have now developed hydrogen powered engines which are sustainable and not reliant on mining scarce and toxic substances. Range and weight are better than electric vehicles and safety should be around the same or better. The only exhaust gas will be water vapour and the production of hydrogen can be using electricity generated by solar, wind or tidal power networks.

Jurassic Park

Well, not quite. Colossal Biosciences, a Texas based genetics company has been promoting its efforts to resurrect the dodo and the woolly mammoth. The scientists involved, however, are at pains to say that these will not be the real thing but animals which look like them and share many of their genes. Resurrection of extinct animals is not, at present, possible. However, the science involved in undertaking what they are doing is cutting edge.

Reading the DNA code for any living thing is complex. A global effort to map the human genome (genetic makeup) was started in 1990 and completed in 2003 with 90% of the genome mapped. At the start, the rate of what genes were present and where on the chromosomes they were found, was very slow but as techniques improved, they became incredibly fast. Since then, gene mapping has developed still further.

Although the benefit of the work on the dodo and the mammoth is debatable, the techniques developed may be invaluable. The genome of "at risk" animals can be established so that there is a strong chance of bringing them back.

This backs up the plant conservation efforts which are trying to preserve the seeds of existing plants in seed banks.

Next issue

It is intended to circulate the next issue in June. Any articles for this would be gratefully received.

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