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Ranger

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The magazine of the Countryside Management Association

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made for walking
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CMA is the leading organisation for those involved in the practice of sustainable countryside management in England and Wales.

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Cover picture: Guillemot, Dave Hollis and Wild Scape

HERE AND NOW

My line manager, three Rangers and the City Farm Officer now manage some 200 hectares spread over 4 main sites, comprising unimproved grasslands, ancient hedgerows containing veteran trees, traditional orchard, flood plain meadows, old arboretum and woodland, as well as a City Farm and a small rare-breeds farm. We make all our own hay to feed the farm livestock (we won't dwell on July 2007 when much went under water!). We keep 20 head of cattle for grazing (keeping it local and specialising in Old Gloucesters and we are re-wetting the flood meadows to try to encourage more wetland species. All is currently funded by the City Council, with assistance from agri-environment and Woodland Grant schemes.

Our “Friends” have started monthly work groups with us, concentrating on scrub clearing and opening up the old orchard (arranging replacement trees using old, local varieties), as well as contributing to specialist pruning. We also have some 100 Cub Scouts on a workday every October, and recently have hosted corporate work events (for around 20 British Gas meter readers and 25 Npower staff). We try to keep the Cubs working around the same area, so that they can see their results from the previous year. For much of the educational year we take up to two work experience placements a week from local schools and agricultural college, which can be a blessing or a burden, depending on whether the student chose the placement, or was placed as a last resort!

Like so many of you we feel that we could achieve much more with better resources, but in these troubled times it can be a struggle just to keep on top of existing activity. The City Council is currently going through a major re-structuring and we have yet to find out how (or even if) we will survive. Once again we have to spend time justifying our existence. The direct services section has already been placed with a private ‘partner’ after little consultation with us, so we have lost our in-house machinery maintenance capability, as well as welding, drain clearing and other functions, all of which we now have to source externally from existing budgets.

But would I want to go back to a nice, dry, cushy, office? Not likely!

Would I give up the dubious pleasure of checking the cattle whatever the weather? No chance!

Am I glad I changed track? Absolutely!

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We're all in it together

Find out more about the people who join CMA.

'When I grow up, I'm going to be a Ranger!'

OK, I suspect that there aren't many of us who realised that there was such a thing as 'a Ranger' when we were at school!

From an early age I didn't have a clue what I wanted to do. After being ejected from school on barely getting double figure marks for my mock 'A' levels, I drifted into engineering. Scraping through 6 years of day release, 3 years of evening courses and a couple of jobs, I finally seemed to be developing something like a career as Production Manager for a small 'data-comms' company. That is until on 4th July 1994 (ironically Independence Day!) aged 37, I found myself redundant when the company owner linked up directly with the excellent sub-contractor I had been using for production work! Since the defence industry at that time was shedding skilled engineers like confetti, I was less than optimistic about my future!

On returning home from work to find me slumped despondently on the sofa, my good lady suggested that I change career and put my long held interest in wildlife to good use! I had always loved the class nature table and going for walks up Holyhead Mountain (Anglesey), in Malta and the Lincolnshire Wolds (dad was in the R.A.F.). I phoned round local authorities who ran nature reserves in my area. It became obvious that I needed to re-train and gain qualifications and experience. Once again my wife came to the rescue. Since I was earning nothing (and she was!) why not go to college, and get a grant? It transpired that as a mature student I was eligible for an enhanced grant. This student lark was obviously a good way to make money, so I visited my local careers advisor and found a college within commuting distance that was offering a 2-year HND in Environmental Protection (Conservation Management). What's more they had spare spaces for the September intake. Back to school!

Once there I found that, for the first time in my life, I actually understood a good deal of what I was being taught and seemed to be getting good marks. Why hadn't this option been available when I was at school? Of course then the "Environment" wasn't as important (or sexy)! At the end of my first year, I was offered a transfer to the Degree course.

What about gaining experience? I started volunteering at weekends with a variety of groups tackling hedge laying and coppicing, water vole habitat restoration, heathland management. I managed to get a paid Seasonal Ranger position with a local Country Park for six months in summer '95, which was my industrial placement. Summer



'96 was spent volunteering full time with the Surrey County Council Rangers. I now know I'd definitely like to be a Countryside Ranger!

TOP OF THE CLASS

On completing the degree course in 1997, (1st class with Honours – how amazed was I?!), I once again found myself in the jobs market. Without the resources to undertake a Masters, I had to seek employment. After a 10-week job as a seasonal assistant warden with the National Trust, I continued volunteering virtually full time with the Surrey Rangers. I worked part time in the warehouse of a local DIY store. The Ranger job applications started producing interviews. Finally, 17 months after leaving college, I was offered a job. I wasn't first choice, but the originally appointed person handed in their notice. Who cares? Here I was, a Ranger for Gloucester City Council!

I quickly found out that I was expected to assume the role of Head Ranger, which was daunting. However, with just a temporary Ranger, plus a few college and 'New Deal' placements, it didn't take long to settle in. Oh, and would I be able to feed the farm animals at the weekend? The scariest thing was attending a committee meeting of the "Friends of" group for the first time. The Group was originally set up as a protest group and "Friends of the City Council" they were not. They had a long list of 'issues' and it took some time to convince them that we were all trying to achieve the same aims.

Editorial

Cuts, cuts and more cuts. Will we bleed to death? Those CMA members in the public sector will probably be feeling a combination of disappointment, uncertainty and anger at the moment. Many (most?) countryside and greenspace delivery in the public sector is non statutory and ripe for becoming a quickly identified saving. Statutory roles are not safe either. The sector has never had the investment and support it needed and CMA members have been extremely creative and innovative in looking at ways to fund and deliver activity. Countryside and greenspace teams *that deliver* are not a luxury on our crowded island.

The key thing is to remain positive. There are alternative ways to deliver existing services that work and pay their way and CMA members are skilled in gaining community and political support. On pages 12 and 13 Roger Cole and Neil Lister attempt to outline the big policy and political picture. The range of skills that CMA members will bring into the landscape 'post cuts' (many gained via CMA) is phenomenal and they can be put to use whatever the future holds.

31st July has been designated by the International Ranger Federation as World Ranger Day. This year that date falls on a Saturday. Please do your best to organise or join in events and activities that recognize the work of Rangers across the globe. If you happen to be running an event on that day (or even if you are not) please mention the role of the world's Rangers to your visitors. Many previous events have been very well received and have highlighted the fact that the positive work that Rangers do is often invisible. People only 'recognise the Ranger' when they are asked to put their barbeque out. We need people to know that we also make things much better for them.

More than ever, CMA is relying on your valued support as a member and on new members signing up to access the great benefits of membership of the Association. A new CMA Prospectus and application form is available. Please contact CMA Admin (contact details opposite) for copies and help us with recruitment.

CMA advertisers are becoming harder to sign up and they often say that business generated via Ranger is not what they expected. If you buy anything from our advertisers please mention *Ranger*.

Happy Reading!

NEIL LISTER
Ranger Editor



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TBC

On The Edge

Berry Head National Nature Reserve is an impressive limestone headland in Brixham, Torbay, in South Devon. It is one of Torbay's most important wildlife sites, and has many designations in recognition of its wildlife, historical and geological importance. As a result of its high quality biodiversity and earth heritage it is a Site of Special Scientific Interest and forms part of the Berry Head to Sharkham Point National Nature Reserve. The Guillemot colony is also protected as an Area of Special Protection under the European Birds Directive. Two Napoleonic War forts dominate the site, a reminder of the strategic role played by the promontory through the ages. The two forts and a nearby gun battery are scheduled as Ancient Monuments. The site falls within the South Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. It is also a gateway site to the English Riviera Global Geopark. With over 200,000 visitors a year enjoying the site, it is also a hugely important green space for Torbay.

PROJECT BACKGROUND

Berry Head had however been suffering from a long term lack of investment, it was clear the headland was in great need of an injection of cash, if it was to survive in any condition for future generations to enjoy. And so the 'On the Edge' project was born. The project's main aim was to 'Rejuvenate Berry Head's heritage'. The Napoleonic Fortifications needed repair and consolidation, the visitor centre was old and out of date, the headland was also suffering from scrub encroachment over the important limestone grassland areas and all facilities were out of date and run down. Following 5 years of consultation and research by TCCT staff, helped by some funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund, a final bid of £1 million was made to the Heritage Lottery Fund. Match funding still had to be found for the remaining £1.8 million we needed. We were fortunate that Torbay had been recognised as eligible for Sea Change funding. Sea Change is a central government fund to regenerate seaside towns. We successfully gained the HLF funding and match funding so the three year project could go ahead.

THE FIRST YEAR

A year on and so much has changed on the site. The majority of the capital work has been completed:

- 1) A new visitor centre and café on the main headland
- 2) A new drawbridge across the moat into the Southern Fort
- 3) Artillery Store converted into a Learning Centre for education groups.
- 4) A new traffic management system to prevent joyriding and inappropriate access
- 5) New interpretation signs and leaflets
- 6) New toilet facilities
- 7) More extensive grazing compartments for soay sheep, as a more sustainable approach to scrub management



Ongoing over the three years is a Trainee Ranger scheme; we provide four paid placements each year. The trainees gain an NVQ in Environmental Conservation and certificates verifying practical courses such as chainsaw use and first aid. This is the vital step of work experience, which assists the trainees into their first paid ranger posts. The repair work on the Ancient Monument is also ongoing over the three years. Trainees work with a qualified stone mason using lime mortar to consolidate the walls and remove any invasive vegetation.

THE FUTURE?

Over the final two years of the project we are focusing on 'Audience Development', in other words community involvement and engagement. This is achieved through events, a school transport grant, new educational activities and also Friends Groups and volunteer days. Our target audiences, as identified in the research work are:



WORLD CONSERVATION CONGRESS

Last year Gabriela was able to take four of our Junior Rangers to the World Conservation Congress in Barcelona. She found financial support for herself and one Junior Ranger and the others were financed either by their parents or the community. The one financed by the programme was elected by the Junior Rangers themselves. At the Congress they contributed very well, learned a lot and the final official Congress document opens with a sentence from Matias Gomez, one of our kids.

Our Junior Rangers were the first in Uruguay, but now there is at least one other group of teenagers linking up with a protected area. The two groups met during the Protected Areas and Ecotourism National Congress this year and we will have an exchange event. The other group does not have canoes, so our kids will introduce them to the art of canoeing. I would go as far as to say that the Junior Ranger programme is the most successful activity in the *Ombú forest* Park. We have been supported by a long list of institutions and individuals. Last year we joined with *Vida Silvestre Uruguay*, an NGO that helps to promote the natural environment. We also owe a very big thank you to the *Global Greengrants Fund*. Due to our need to purchase items such as tents and sleeping bags, we are always looking for support.

TAKE NATURE WITH YOU

Finally, I want you to understand that we do not want all our kids to become Rangers. Some of them say they have discovered their vocation and want to be Rangers. Others say they have discovered they want to be nature guides. But our aim is to provide as many kids as possible from in and around *Castillos* an opportunity to enjoy nature. We believe that if they enjoy nature and see how challenging it is to protect it, they will remember nature, no matter what direction they take in adult life.

JUAN CARLOS GAMBAROTTA

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Rocha
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Snippet 3 Can humble moss save the Peak District moors?

A rare moss that was in danger of disappearing from the Peak District has been distributed across the moors by helicopter as part of a pioneering project delivered by Moors for the Future on behalf of The Co-operative and Natural England.

Using a revolutionary new technique, scientists have propagated *Sphagnum* moss in a laboratory and dropped the tiny plant (ravaged by pollution from the industries of northern England) onto remote moors.

Sphagnum moss is the basic building block of our blanket peatlands. As it partially decomposes in waterlogged conditions it forms peat, the basis of the very special habitat that develops. The loss of *Sphagnum* from the Peak District has reduced the contribution that blanket peats make to carbon storage that can help combat climate change.

Sphagnum moss has the ability to hold many times its own weight of water which allows other vegetation to flourish, covering the peat so that it is less vulnerable to weather and also reduces the risk of wildfire as the surface of the bog is kept wet.

Contact:

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Moors for the Future.

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Junior Rangers in Uruguay

I am a Park Ranger and have been working in the “Ombú forest” ever since the area opened in 1991. My wife teaches biology in the secondary school in Castillos, the town nearest to the Park. Castillos is inhabited by just 7,000 people, but we noticed that our local teenagers shared at least one thing with boys and girls from the city. Most have no experience of nature, and probably none have experienced it in a “non-destructive” manner. So we started a Junior Ranger programme.

ON YOUR BIKE!

Some years ago, my wife Gabriela and a colleague Oscar Olivera, the PE teacher, decided to take students to places of interest near town. Gabriela used the opportunity to show the kids ‘on site’ some of the things they were studying in class and Oscar was happy the children were getting good physical exercise. One day I returned from an International Ranger Federation Congress and having seen examples of Junior Ranger programmes I spoke with Gabriela and Oscar. We decided to create our own programme. We have been working with some of the kids now for almost five years, but most are Junior Rangers for only one summer. Every August, Gabriela invites all her 12-13 years old students to cycle to the nearest hill. It is only 5 km away but good exercise because of the terrain. She watches the interest shown by the students and then she invites them to take part in Junior Ranger camps the following summer. During the camps the kids have to ride up to 44km, mostly cross-country.

The *Laguna de Castillos* protected area comprises an 8,000 hectare brackish lagoon surrounded by wetlands and a native forest which occupies a very narrow sand ring around the lagoon. The *Valizas* stream provides a route for fresh water from the lagoon to reach the ocean 20km downstream. Thus salt water from the ocean gets into the lagoon. So we have lagoon, wetland, forest, meadows and a stream all within a small area. An excellent introduction to nature for the kids! The area is used by around a thousand Black-necked Swans. Flamingos can be in the tens of thousands and is the *Laguna* is the richest ornithological site in Uruguay with 254 species recorded. I believe that bird watching is a great way to enjoy the happiness of being alive and some of our kids are very keen birdwatchers.

THE LONE RANGER

As I have always been the only ranger of the *Laguna de Castillos* Park, I feel the Park desperately needs recognition from the community. This is now provided by more than 350 kids whom have already taken part in the programme. They have in many cases influenced their own families in a positive way and many of the inhabitants of Castillos see the Park in a better light.

The Park provides the boys and girls with room to walk and bike cross-country, to paddle canoes and kayaks, to row a boat and some have even learnt to swim. They gain their first



experience of camping, including making camp fires, cooking their own food and building friendships. Almost all our camps last three days and the Junior Rangers are the only people authorised to camp in the Park, something they value very much. The kids always help with my tasks whether repairing a deck, fencing, guiding visitors, keeping an eye on the nets of fishermen, pest control and even monitoring small mammals and amphibians. Gabriela and Oscar are in charge of them when they go to the stream to play and swim and I teach the Junior Rangers to use canoes and kayaks.

We do not only camp in *Laguna de Castillos*. Three times a year, during spring, we go to the hills that surround *Laguna Negra* and remove as many pine trees as we can. This area is the site of one of the most beautiful native forests in Uruguay, in some parts dominated by very big strangler figs. Some areas have been invaded by pines. Pine control is probably the most useful task our Junior Rangers are doing to benefit wildlife.

We take those who have followed the programme the longest on visits to other protected areas such as *Quebrada de los Cuervos* and *Cabo Polonio* in Uruguay and *Taim* Biological Station in Brazil. *Taim* is only 165 km from the international border and we spent a weekend there with 41 teenagers. The aim was to show our kids that Brazil maintains a very big capybara and caiman population in a Park crossed by a national highway. In Uruguay it is extremely difficult to see capybaras even in very isolated places. The reason is simple, protected areas in Uruguay do not matter very much as far as the Government is concerned and Rangers do not have much power to change this.

- 1) Existing site users
- 2) People without a car
- 3) Young people under 30; young families
- 4) People with disabilities
- 5) School and Youth Groups

The aim is that the community involvement generated by On the Edge will continue beyond the grant. This, along with new facilities and more extensive grazing, will ensure this fantastic and important site is handed to future generations in good condition.

So come and visit, enjoy a bite to eat in the new cafe, a film in the visitor centre, watch the seabird colony from the new bird hide, join in on an event, or just take in the views!

EMMA REECE

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Snippet 1 Rubbish Dump Revolution

The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds is one of Britain's best-loved charities, with an eight-figure budget and a base of support that would be the envy of any political party. Yet over the past couple of weeks the charity declared that nature reserves are now passé. Then it was attacked by Country Life magazine.

The RSPB, claimed a Country Life editorial, has become “obsessed” with high-profile species lost interest in protecting more common birds such as sparrows and starlings, whose numbers have been in steady decline.

The article suggested that the RSPB has “lost the confidence” of “farmers, landowners and back-garden bird enthusiasts”. Its million-strong membership and £70 million income make it the largest conservation charity in Europe. But this “influence and power ... also makes the society vulnerable to accusations of being out of touch ... obsessed with subjects only distantly related to bird protection”.

The RSPB hotly denied the accusations. Yet it may be true that it is leaving the countryside behind. Under its new chief executive, Dr Mike Clarke, the charity will engage in its most drastic transformation for decades, moving away from nature reserves and into many of the grimmest parts of our overcrowded island. The conclusion the charity has come to is that nature reserves no longer work: you can't protect birds and animals simply by fencing off little pockets of countryside. If vulnerable species such as farmland birds are to survive, far more space will be needed.

A new “Futurescapes Programme” will ensure that animals can move easily around the country along “green corridors”, and provide communities with “breathing space” in often deprived areas. By using land that is unwanted and encouraging local companies to get involved, it is also a way of increasing the space available to wildlife in the teeth of a recession. Already more than 80 sites around the country have been earmarked, including farmland in the North West and former industrial areas in Scotland.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/science/7733945/The-RSPBs-rubbish-dump-revolution.html>

Devils and Ducks



I had the good fortune to take a break in Australia last February visiting relatives. I met a Ranger from the Northern Territory (Phil Wise) at the IRF /CMA conference in Scotland in 2006. I thought this may lead to a high temperature weeks stay up in the Northern desert (Arnhem Land). However, Phil had since moved to Tasmania so I ended up with a temperate stay in a bush shed on the beautiful slopes of Mount Wellington just above Hobart. During one week I managed to visit 5 National Parks, meet several rangers and see a host of 'Tassie' wildlife, including the fabled Duck-billed Platypus. One was actually living in Phil's pond, a pleasant change from goldfish!



of peaks crossed by the Overland Trail. The Trail is a 5 day walk through world heritage class, unspoilt scenery, offering potential stays at camp sites and lodges. I was briefly employed in greasing a suspension bridge in the middle of nowhere, then a path survey looking for any recent fallen Mountain Ash trees (2 metres in diameter!) blocking the Trail. Although there was a healthy population of Rangers and seasonal Path Rangers, they did seem to be fully stretched to just keep the paths open and maintain structures. They actually helicopter out all waste (and I mean all-toilet as well!).

THE WILD OCEAN

I spent a final day with Tasman Peninsula National Park Ranger, Luke Cadd, who took me on patrol through the natural wonders of this very exposed coastline. We finished at the tip of the Peninsula where the full might of the Southern ocean crashes into the dolerite headland. Luke had a very large area to cover including well visited areas and camp sites, plus several hundred kilometres of bush footpath. He was slightly down beat as the Park now operates reduced Ranger numbers, as money is tight even in paradise. He was limited to high priority Health and Safety site checks and reactionary work. Projects are a luxury.

THE VERDICT

I cannot recommend Tasmania highly enough. Nearly 50% is World Heritage pristine natural habitat, a must for any conservation nut. Australians go there to see natural beauty, which speaks volumes. There is even a bit of dark history to the place that lends an enigmatic air. It's amazing what a chance meeting at a CMA/IRF conference can lead to!

IS THERE ANY MORE TO THIS ARTICLE AS IT ENDS ABRYUPTLY SOMEHOW???????

POOR DEVILS

Phil Wise is now a head ecologist working for the 'Save the Tasmanian Devil' Programme. The Devil is being drastically affected by a contagious facial tumour which is slowly wiping it out (70 percent reduction!). The Programme aims to:

- Capture infected Devils and humanely destroy them.
- Set up safe areas for sustainable healthy Devil populations.
- Research a cure for the disease.

I visited a holding area for captive Devils and discovered how aggressive they can be. The keeper had an impressive bruise on her thigh ('just a graze really'). A team was in the process of preparing Maria Island, one of the largest outlying islands, as a sanctuary for healthy Devils.

KANGAROO MAN OF LAKE ST. CLAIR

Phil arranged a visit to Barry Batchelor, a very nice Ranger who takes in orphaned Tasmanian wildlife. Barry lives in Lake St. Clair National Park with an assortment of 'Skippy' like characters hopping around his home demanding sweet potato and milk. Lake St. Clair is a beautiful Park on the central Tasmanian plateau (approx. 800m). The lake is surrounded by an impressive set



Healthy Parks Healthy People

The *Healthy Parks Healthy People* international conference held in Melbourne, Australia in April focussed on encouraging people to become more active, lead healthier lifestyles and reconnect to nature, for their own wellbeing and for the health of our ecosystems. The environment provides clean air and water, as well as many abstract benefits. This helps to convey the relevance of Parks and protected areas to our society. With lifestyle diseases such as diabetes two and obesity now more prevalent than infectious diseases, this pandemic is a major concern for the health industry and it is essential to encourage people to live in ways that prevent their lifestyle making them ill.

FUTURE TRENDS

The conference highlighted future trends and current survey results on Park use and how education can play a key role in reconnecting people to nature and promoting the benefits of the natural environment.

The conference *future trends analysis* focussed on how our society is changing.

1. Aging population
2. Greater health awareness
3. Greater cultural diversity
4. Changing work patterns
5. Changing household types
6. Urban Population growth (2030 – 7.4 billion globally)
7. Independence and convenience
8. Safety - perceived or real

Surveys of Park use benefits to visitors, showed that people who enjoyed a natural benefit/experience were most likely to recommend the experience whereas visitors who attained a greater personal benefit, were more likely to be repeat users. This has implications for management particular targeted at visitor/wildlife needs. It was of note that certain cultural groups use Parks for social aspects more than natural experiences.

EARLY EXPOSURE

Through education, early exposure to nature leads to environmental protection for the future and nature-based informal play results in a greater environmental awareness. Examples of linking technologies to Park users through *iphones* were presented, as well as the notions of promoting respect and good manners in the environment.

Through the medical sector, there were examples illustrating that preventative cost savings in preventing health



deterioration through Park use were significant. A doctor from the UK stated that one visit to Green Park in Central London could result in £40-200 in preventative medical expenses. It was highlighted that physical and mental wellbeing is not the same as being free from disease.

The main concept that the conference grappled with was "Can offering a better quality of life be economically competitive?" If true, this would of course add to the value, use and ongoing protection of the natural and cultural assets in all our Parks.

PETER CLEARY

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Focus on rural regeneration

In March this year Hadlow College's Rural Regeneration Centre (RRC) was officially launched by Sir Robert Worcester (of Mori poll fame). The RRC is now being actively used as a hub for the rural sector and its diverse communities.

The building is one of the very first in the UK constructed to *PassivHaus* standards. This means it doesn't require a traditional heating system to warm it. Neither does it require an air cooling system to be comfortable in summer. Energy saving is estimated to be in the region of 90% when compared to a similar building reliant on conventional systems.

RURAL RATIONALE

The construction methods are important but the big story relates to the *uses* to which the building is being put: it is one of the first centres in the UK and the very first in the college sector to focus exclusively on researching, developing, influencing and supporting the creation of the rural unity needed to ensure sustainable rural regeneration. Few would argue that the rural sector has some wonderfully strong elements. But it has a major weakness. By and large, it lacks the unity to give it a strong single voice.

'Rural' is made up of numerous elements, each with its own, usually worthwhile, agenda. In reality, the overlap between rural businesses, charitable trusts and other bodies within the sector is very considerable. They have much in common but there are *divergences* and *differences* and the focus frequently seems to be on these rather than on the greater number of areas in which there is consensus.

Hadlow College, which has colleagues and friends in every part of the rural sector, is playing a proactive part in building partnerships that will help to produce that single, powerful voice. The College has long had exemplary links with the wider rural business community, most especially with the agriculture and commercial horticulture industries. Such links are essential to produce graduates educated and trained to fulfil the emerging and future needs of these vitally important industries. Similar links extend across all Hadlow's curriculum areas, countryside management, landscape management, equine, fisheries and so on, in order to match employee needs to student numbers, management, training and skills.

Rural areas are generally perceived as prosperous, but this is often a misconception. Mark Lumsdon-Taylor, College Finance Director, is convinced that the rural economy has the potential to grow. 'But', he says, 'this has to be combined with safeguards that ensure economic growth enhances and doesn't diminish the rural way of life.'



LAND IS ALL

The definition of 'rural' is complicated. One thing for certain is that it is impossible to remove 'land' from the equation. Pressures on land usage are growing and set to grow even more. Land is needed for thousands of additional homes and the infrastructure to support them. At the same time, Defra and other government agencies are exhorting farmers to up production in light of fears over food security. Increased production has either to involve additional land or relate to more sustainable ways of farming. It is impossible to separate land use from the *crucially important* issues of conservation, preservation, bio-diversity and recreation.

Hadlow's intention is to use the RRC to bring together the entire rural sector to stimulate discussion and exchange of ideas that will promote the unity needed to make some fundamentally important decisions. What Hadlow is doing won't produce a *finite* solution, but it can be a catalyst.

PAT CRAWFORD

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It's Only Life

As you know, 2010 has been declared the International Year of Biodiversity (IYB) by the United Nations.

Biodiversity (the variety of life on Earth) is essential for sustaining the natural living systems or ecosystems that provide us with food, fuel, health, wealth, and other vital services. Humans are part of this biodiversity and we have the power to protect or destroy it. Currently, our activities are destroying biodiversity at alarming rates. These losses are irreversible, impoverish us all and damage the life support systems we rely on. But we can prevent them. We need to reflect on our achievements to safeguard biodiversity and focus on the urgent challenges ahead. Now is the time to act.

We will be making Ranger 95 a special issue and our theme will be 'International Year of Biodiversity, a retrospective.' Could you please write up any IYB 2010 initiatives you are doing to safeguard biodiversity in your patch; your achievements; what you see as the challenges ahead and your take on how useful IYB and similar initiatives are? Copy to reach Neil Lister neil.lister@suffolk.gov.uk by December 2010 please.



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These boots are made for.....?

The purchase of a pair of walking boots represents a significant investment - whether that purchase is made *by us* or *for us*. For those who wear them all year round, it's even more important to make sure you're in the right kit. The following article should help you get your choice of boots right:

RIGHT BOOT, RIGHT FOOT?

Is the right boot on the right foot?

In an ideal world, you would have different footwear to suit the different terrains and conditions that you might encounter year round. However, this is not realistic and your footwear will have to perform in a range of circumstances. This involves some trade-off between features necessary for say a tough winter and for less challenging summer conditions (flexibility, lighter weight, breathe-ability). To a large extent, you will get what you pay for. That said, there is no point paying for features that you won't really need. So it's best to start your search for footwear by looking at the type of terrain over which you plan to walk. You should also take into account your foot size/shape, your build/weight and whether you are likely to be carrying a backpack. The following classification will help identify the type of boot you need.

1-2 Season Walking Boots: For use in spring/summer conditions, on firm low level paths that are not particularly steep. Footwear in this category is designed to offer relatively more flexibility and often comes in the form of low-cut boots or shoes.

3 Season Walking Boots: For use on paths that are much rockier and steeper and where you will be walking all year round and in most weathers. These leather/fabric boots usually have a waterproof liner. The sole and ankle cuff will be designed to provide a good level of support and the boot will be water-proof and will have treaded soles to provide good grip in rough terrain.

4 Season Walking Boots: For use when you're likely to encounter snow/ice. These boots will be stiffer to take crampons for short periods of time.

Mountain/Mountaineering Boots: highly technical footwear designed for use in the high mountains where snow and ice exist all the year round, on glaciers or when climbing.

Safety Boots: where walking/hiking boots with a protective toecap (to ISO safety standards) are required. For these you will need to look at specialist manufacturers such as Gronell (www.gronell.it/).

WELL MADE?

Leather is the traditional construction material for boots. It is water-resistant and allows your feet to 'breathe'. Periodically, you should wax leather boots or treat with water-resistant



spray to restore the water resistance, particularly on stitched areas which may start to leak over time. The thickness of the leather will affect the feel of the boot as well as its warmth. Some boots have a waterproof lining made from *Gore-Tex* or something similar. Whilst the lining will enhance the water-proofing, it will also make your feet hotter. Boots available in fabric materials are often lighter-weight than leather alternatives.

The upper should be flexible enough to ensure comfort but provide protection for your toes and ankle if you plan to walk on rougher terrain. The sides of the boot should be high enough to support your ankle.

The heel 'cup' must provide support so that heel doesn't move too much over rough terrain. Internal stiffening around the heel & toe will provide protection. The stiffer the boot the more suitable it will be for rugged walking. A good 'scree cuff' (the padded section that surrounds the top of the ankle) and a padded tongue joined to the upper along its entire length will prevent small stones, debris and water from getting inside the boot.

The sole should be 'treaded' to ensure a good grip and be made from material offering good adhesive properties, like rubber. PVC should be avoided. You should also check out the cushioning offered by the boot. Generally speaking, the more cushioning there is the better, particularly for walking on hard rock or tarmac. Squeeze the sides of the upper and flex the boot, toe to heel. The more resistance there is to bending the more suitable the boot is for walking on rocky ground.

Woofing and Weaving!

These days a lot of attention is given to bringing people into parks and countryside sites, catering for the bird watchers with bird hides, the walkers and cyclists with surfaced paths, the families with picnic benches and nicely mown amenity grass to kick a ball around on or have a game of *Frisbee*. But who are the visitors you see most frequently in your park? The people you see day in, day out, rain or shine, winter or summer? Dog walkers! Lee Valley Regional Park Ranger Amy Lewis tells how the Valley's dogs and their owners got some attention.

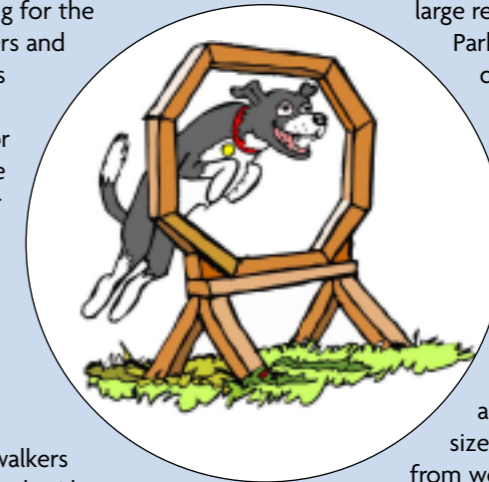
There is no escaping the fact that dog walkers are the life blood of any park. These 'regulars' let you know that something in the park is wrong or broken, that they have spotted a water-vole in a ditch or heard a nightingale in a particular patch of scrub. Dog walkers are a Ranger's eyes and ears, yet often all we provide them with are Dog Waste Bins.

We then burden them with regulations and restrictions. "You can't go here!" we cry. "Oh, and you can't go there either!" "Keep your dog on a lead around livestock!" "Clean up after your dog!"

To redress the balance and to say 'thank you' for providing Ranger support and acting as our unofficial early warning system, Lee Valley Regional Park is building a permanent Dog Agility Course on one of our Broxbourne sites, based on the course at Coatham Community Woodland, Teesside (a partnership project between the Forestry Commission and The Kennel Club).

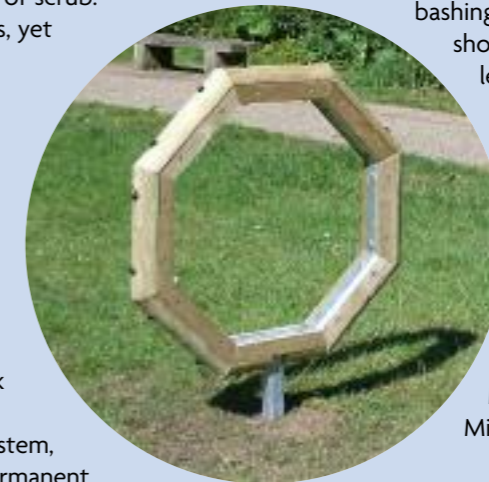
CONFIDENTLY ON COURSE

The Lee Valley Park course, in Cheshunt Country Walk, near Cheshunt rail station, offers 10 obstacles including hurdles, a 'weave', a tunnel, an 'A' frame and long jump. The course stretches across half a mile of parkland.



This Ranger hopes the course (situated right next to a large residential area) will attract visitors to the Park who would otherwise simply take their dog for a walk down the road. In an age when just 150 yards from the car park is the average distance a dog walker will venture, this canine agility course hopes to take them that little bit further.

The obstacles reflect the wide range of dog breeds that we hope to attract. A Miniature Schnauzer will not manage to clear a hurdle designed for a Border Collie and therefore some obstacles have two sizes. The course is predominantly constructed from wood, designed to be robust and with both small and large removable sections. The course is being built by the Rangers and contractors and also our loyal conservation volunteers, who are more used to scrub bashing and raking orchid meadows, yet have shown themselves to be as adept with a spirit level as a slasher!



The local papers have shown a great deal of interest and the community are already showing promising signs of supporting the course.

AMY LEWIS

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Peak Wise People

Need logos for this article

Losehill Hall, working with *Mosaic* (a national project, led by the Campaign for National Parks, that aims to build sustainable links between black and minority ethnic (BME) communities and nine of the National Parks in England and Youth Hostels Association), secured Government funding from the 'Transformation Fund' spearheaded by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) for a 'Peak Wise People' project which ran from September 2009 to March 2010.

The overall aims of the project were to enable inspirational, practical and creative learning in and about the Peak District and to cultivate passion and confidence for discovering and exploring the countryside in nearby urban communities. We worked with 'Peak District Champions' to increase their knowledge and enjoyment of the Peak District National Park and improve their skills in communicating this to others.

To quote one participant:

'This programme has given me the confidence to lead a group. It has given me skill, knowledge and awareness of what is important when taking a group into the Peak District, to ensure a safe and enjoyable walk.'

The Champions planned and delivered events for groups from their own communities, with the support of mentors from the Peak District National Park Staff and a budget of £300. These events were very successful and brought out 158 folk from surrounding urban areas, most of who had never visited the Peak District. They took part in walks, bike rides and visits to local attractions. All the groups want to visit again, as one person said;

'I used to look at people walking in the countryside and think, that's not for me, now I know it is!'

Traditionally communities from urban areas have seen the Peak District National Park as an escape from the city, a chance to breathe fresh air and relax. However, research shows that groups from BME communities make up a lower percentage of the visitor population than their percentage of the overall population.

LEARNING CASCADES

There was strong emphasis in this project on creating a 'cascade' to other informal learners in their own communities via participants sharing better knowledge of the National Park and natural environment.

Key outcomes are:

Well trained advocates for the Peak District National Park and the National Park Authority.

Strong links between Champions and Authority staff, with greater understanding of needs, roles and responsibilities.

Through developing deeper understanding about the National Park Authority, the project has given Champions more capacity to question and support the Authority's role. Two Champions are considering applying to become



Voluntary Rangers and one is considering becoming a trustee of Friends of the Peak District.

WHAT NEXT?

The project has demonstrated what can be achieved with limited time and resources. *Mosaic* operates through cluster groups based in urban communities surrounding the National Park and this project has inspired these groups to do more. It has demonstrated that with a little investment, the rewards and benefits for *Mosaic*, the Champions and their communities can be huge.

Although there may be ways to continue to provide training opportunities for Champions, it is unlikely that financial resources, without external funding, will be available for project grants.

The involvement of PDNPA staff has been essential. Specialists have delivered training and taken on mentoring roles. Future work will need to ensure that the Champions are given the capacity to 'go it alone' and not create a culture dependent on key staff such as Rangers.

SARAH WILKS

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Lacing should be easy to fasten and adjust. Look out for features such as hooks and 'D' rings that help if you're trying to fasten/adjust a boot with cold hands. Some boots have 'locking' hooks that hold the laces tight on the lower part of the boot while you tighten the upper section.

DOES THE BOOT FIT?

It may seem obvious but the best boots in the world will be little use if they are uncomfortable. The type of last used to build the boot can determine the shape and size of the boot interior (or boot volume.) So try boots from several manufacturers to find the one that suits you best. It's really worthwhile spending time on this! Fitting should be snug but not overly tight. If boots are too tight, your feet are liable to get cold. Either wear your own hiking socks or borrow some from the shop. Some ranges include women's models that are usually slightly narrower at the heel. If that's not the case, it's a good idea to check out lower volume men's boots. As a general guide, with the laces undone move your foot in the boot so that your toes touch the front. Then check you can insert a finger at the back between your heel and the back of the boot.

Also check that when laced your foot is held firmly but not squeezed. Make sure your foot will not slide forward when going downhill. Most specialist shops have a 'boot ramp' you can stand on to test this. Having chosen your boot don't jump right into them and start hiking. They ideally need to be softened up and moulded to the fit of your feet before you take them out for their first trip. If time permits, you should just wear them around the house a bit. If they feel comfortable you can start to walk for short distances. If you get one consistent 'hot spot' or area that rubs on your foot, you may need to get that section stretched.

A good pair of boots, well looked-after, should last several years and it's something you really need to get right, as anyone who has experienced the misery of a day in the wrong footwear will readily testify.

One final tip - our regular advertisers of outdoor clothing/footwear will provide boots at a discount for CMA members, so always mention *RANGER* magazine when you contact them.

"THE RAMBLING RANGER"



Snippet 2 Wet, wet, yet?

Leicester City Council is gauging the views of locals on creating a wetland at Castle Hill Country Park. The plans include building ponds, reed beds, a meadow and wetlands in the Rothley Brook Valley section of the park, a flood relief basin. The 100ha park was established in the early 1980s and includes grassland, plantation and broadleaved woodland. The southern section is higher ground with good views; the northern part including the Valley is flat meadow land. Leicester City Council parks and nature conservation officers want the views of locals before pushing ahead with the plan.

"The park is very much in its early stages of development," says the Council. "Ancient tracks pass through the Park and parts are susceptible to occasional water-logging."

<http://www.hortweek.com/channel/ParksAndGardens/article/1008137/Westonbirt-Arboretum-tempts-children-free-entry-hidden-dens/>

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New Government - new idea?

Defra priorities for the next 5 years

With a new coalition government in place, Defra Secretary of State Caroline Spelman recently outlined to Parliament some key priorities facing the Department and reaffirmed the Government's pledge to be the greenest in UK history.



NEW PROTECTED AREAS

The Secretary of State addressed MPs at the end of a Queen's Speech debate on Energy and Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. The Secretary of State said the work of the previous Government would be continued to implement the Marine and Coastal Access Act, support the new South Downs National Park and support Lundy Island as the first marine conservation zone. She also remarked that "there will be continuity on matters such as illegal logging, fishing and whaling" and listed a number of priorities for Defra, saying:

- "We are absolutely committed to reversing the reduction in biodiversity."
- "On the question of dangerous dogs, we will tackle the conduct of their owners and require greater responsibility from them."
- "Coastal erosion is an issue that I will treat as a priority in my Department."
- "We are particularly keen to support community-led broadband in rural areas."
- "All Departments are going to have to think about how they can drive down their carbon footprints and contribute to the new green economy."
- Defra will seek "genuine reform of the Common Agricultural Policy, to ensure that it reflects this Government's approach to good value for farmers, taxpayers, consumers and the environment"
- "We will maintain an increase in the money that taxpayers spend on flood defence this year, with no impact on the number of households protected."

IMPROVED QUALITY OF LIFE AND WELL BEING

"The Government believes that we need to protect the environment for future generations, make our economy more environmentally sustainable and improve our quality of life and well-being. We also believe that much more needs to be done to support the farming industry, protect biodiversity and encourage sustainable food production".

Here in full are the environment, food and rural affairs policy plans:

- Measures to make import or possession of illegal timber a criminal offence.
- Measures to protect wildlife and promote green spaces and wildlife corridors to halt the loss of habitats and restore biodiversity.
- A national tree planting campaign.
- Review of National Park governance arrangements to increase local accountability.
- Work towards full compliance with European Air Quality standards.
- Improve flood defences and prevent unnecessary building in areas of high flood risk.
- Reform the water industry to ensure more efficient water use and protection of poorer households.
- Work towards a "zero waste" economy, encourage Councils to pay people to recycle and work to reduce littering.
- Reduce the regulatory burden on farmers by moving to a risk-based system of regulation and extra support for hill farmers.
- Investigate ways to share with livestock keepers responsibility for preparing for and dealing with disease outbreaks.
- Take forward the *Marine and Coastal Access Act* and ensure that its conservation measures are implemented effectively.
- Introduce a carefully managed and science-led policy of badger control in areas with high and persistent levels of bovine tuberculosis.
- Promote high standards of farm animal welfare. End testing of household products on animals and work to reduce the use of animals in scientific research. Promote responsible pet ownership by introducing effective codes of practice and ensure that enforcement agencies target irresponsible owners of dangerous dogs.
- Ensure that food procured by Government departments and eventually the whole public sector, meets British standards of production wherever possible without increasing costs.



- Investigate measures to help with fuel costs in remote rural areas.
- Create a presumption in favour of sustainable development in the planning system.
- Oppose the resumption of commercial whaling, press for a ban on ivory sales and tackle the smuggling and illegal trade of wildlife.
- Bring forward a free vote enabling the House of Commons to express its view on the repeal of the Hunting Act.

A GREENER SOCIETY?

The Secretary of State outlined the national and global issues on which our future depends and pledged to put them at the heart of the Government's strategy for economic growth to deliver the green jobs, green technologies and greener economy.

On recycling and energy efficiency in the home, the Secretary of State said:

'For too long, families have been exhorted to do their bit to drive down greenhouse gas emissions without being offered support to act. We will help householders via greater energy efficiency, saving money and cutting emissions.'

WHAT ABOUT ME?

In the new Government, roughly a third of all MPs will be taking seats in Westminster for the first time. A key question is, 'what are their views on the issues that matter to us?' How do they think the Government should encourage people to move towards a low-carbon lifestyle, conserve biodiversity and access and enjoy their environment? What do they believe should be for the Government to decide and what should be left to the market to deliver?

Such questions are framed by the largest budget deficit since the Second World War; ministers' ability to use public funding to implement policy is straitjacketed. If there are no funds to address our key issues nothing can be done. There will be more competition between Whitehall

departments for available budgets; our employers will need more allies and champions in Parliament than ever to fight our cause. We need to ensure that our employers and others with influence work hard to identify the new generation of champions and build new relationships with them.

In recent years, those dealing with Government policy making have grown used to working with successive administrations with comfortable majorities. This has meant a greater degree of certainty about policy implementation, but also it has meant policy has been dealt with through procedure and bureaucracy rather than through politics.

A coalition government completely changes this. Ministers will have to pay far more attention to the concerns of individual MPs in order to woo their support and get proposals passed. Government will have to work harder to ensure that front bench policy is broadly aligned with the range of opinions amongst backbench MPs by providing concessions in some areas of policy in order to get other proposals passed.

So what does this mean for our employer's campaigning efforts in Westminster on our behalf? It means a more diverse, vibrant debate around the issues that affect us. And it means less certainty in policy making. We can expect to see weeks of hard work by civil servants undone by a single vote in Parliament if the minister responsible hasn't done his or her homework on the probability of their proposals being passed.

There is greater scope for building networks of supportive MPs on key issues who can act as an important force in Westminster and it is those individuals that the Government will have to spend more time and effort paying attention to in order to push through their preferred policy.

ROGER COLE & NEIL LISTER
CMA

