

Castle Hags Allotments – Nature’s Nocturnal Gardeners

Castle Hags and Castle Hags Extension together form a large allotment site almost surrounded by public footpaths. These include those across Fletcher Park to the Castle and Kendal Cemetery, and the old canal, now a walkway and cycle path, enjoyed by both allotmenters and all who pass. The crops and flowers on the site provide a valuable area in Kendal town for wildlife. On the Castle Hags site of around 35 plots we have four or more small ponds, grass paths, mixed hedges and lots of compost heaps.

During the day we gardeners see lots of pollinators, e.g. bees, butterflies and hoverflies, attracted to our crops. But by night a different set of animals is at large, acting as pollinators and pest controllers. These are just some of them:



Moths - research on farmland in East Yorkshire by Butterfly Conservation, Universities of York and Newcastle, and the Hull Centre of Ecology and Hydrology revealed that moths appear to complement the work of bees and other daytime pollinators. Pollen from 33 different plants, including peas, was detected by common Noctuid moth species such as Dark Arches, Smoky Wainscot, Large Yellow Underwing and the Common / Lesser Common Rustic group.

Earthworms – these are fantastic recyclers of plant material in soil and compost heaps, as well as providing food for birds. The red-striped Tiger or Brandling Worms are just one of 27 species recycling garden and kitchen waste in the darkness of our compost heaps into rich compost to be used again by the plants. And under our feet, earthworms are making burrows and aerating the soil, indeed Darwin referred to these as “Nature’s ploughs”. They also provide food for birds, hedgehogs, frogs and others.



Hedgehogs – these can range between 1km and 2km per night, feeding on a wide range of garden invertebrates. As well as slugs, they also eat beetles, caterpillars and earthworms. Hedgehogs are in serious decline so really need our help. **Avoid using pesticide**, make steep-sided ponds safe by including escape ramps, and why not provide log or leaf piles for nest sites? Or you could try making a simple hedgehog house for winter hibernation. Link here: <https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/actions/how-build-hedgehog-home>



Frogs – tend to be most active at night, these also feed on a wide variety of invertebrates including slugs. Like hedgehogs, frogs hibernate in winter, often under rocks, in compost heaps, or buried in mud and vegetation. More information here: <https://www.froglife.org/who-we-are/>



So, there’s a lot happening by night, our allotment plots providing excellent habitats for a wide variety of creatures, and the above are just a few examples of the wildlife working the opposite shift in our allotments. If you’ve any interesting sightings of wildlife on your allotment, day or night, try taking a photo and posting the record on iRecord: <https://www.brc.ac.uk/irecord/user>. All records are valuable, and it’s the common species like the above that tend to get overlooked most.

Gwen Tordoff—Site Representative, Castle Hags

Tidy pathways. Allotment pathways and boundaries are to be kept tidy. Maintenance of the main access path is the responsibility of the Town Council, but side paths are the **tenant’s responsibility** and these should be maintained on a side to edge basis. Encroachment onto the paths and/or boundary **is not permitted**. Internal boundary hedges, trees and bushes should be cut back by the tenant.

Allotments

Newsletter



2020

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Chairman's Rambling

Firstly, I would like to thank you all for your hard work and dedication this year. I regularly visit each site and I have been amazed at how well kept the allotments have been this year. Without doubt, it has been a difficult and uncertain year for us all but seeing the allotments makes me proud to be part of the thriving allotment community in Kendal.

The demand for allotments is the highest it has been for over 4 years. Since March, the list has quadrupled. The current wait for an allotment is approx. 2 years on most sites. To be fair to everyone who wants to enjoy an allotment, we have decided to reinstate the policy of **one** allotment per family only, this will provide more families in Kendal with the opportunity to be able to rent an allotment.

Pest control on allotments has continued to be a problem throughout this year. The level of vermin on the allotments and around generally has been unprecedented, if you see rats, please report them to the office.

This time last year, I was granted approval by the Committee to keep bees on my allotment. Looking back, the year has been a tough learning curve but one which I have really enjoyed. I am fascinated by bees and if you are interested in bees, I encourage you to explore the possibility of incorporating a hive onto your plot. Not all sites/plots are suitable for bees and approval to keep bees **has to be granted** by the Allotments Committee. If you would like more information, please contact the office.

I wish you all a Merry Christmas and a safe and Happy New year.

Regards, **The Chairman of the Committee, Councillor Alvin Finch**



Fires on Allotments—

Although the burning of green waste is currently permitted under the tenancy agreement, this clause is under review by the Allotments Committee. Please could I ask you to consider the following points when deciding if it is appropriate to light a fire:

- Please keep fires to an absolute minimum
- Never leave a fire unattended.
- Check the weather conditions before you light a fire, do not light a fire in windy conditions.
- Be mindful of the local residents and the environment.

Please only start a fire as a last resort if the clean green waste cannot be disposed of in any other way.

Janine Holt—Kendal Town Council

Bird Flu—Important Information

All poultry and pet birds **will have to be kept indoors by law from 14th December 2020** as rules are tightened in a bid to stop the spread of bird flu. Chief veterinary officers for England, Scotland and Wales ordered the move following several outbreaks of the highly infectious disease in farming areas and in the wild. As a result, all bird keepers will be legally required to keep flocks netted or indoors to protect against the avian virus from 14 December 2020.

UK Chief Veterinary Officer Christine Middlemiss said:

“We have taken swift action to limit the spread of the disease and are now planning to introduce a legal requirement for all poultry and captive bird keepers to keep their birds housed or otherwise separate from wild birds. Whether you keep just a few birds or thousands, from 14 December onwards you will be legally required to keep your birds indoors, or take appropriate steps to keep them separate from wild birds. We have not taken this decision lightly, but it is the best way to protect your birds from this highly infectious disease.”

If any birds are found to be outside after the 14th December 2020, you will be in breach of the law and therefore your tenancy will be terminated with immediate effect.

Thank you for your co-operation with this matter and I will keep you informed of any updates.

Janine Holt, Assistant to the Town Clerk

Thank you from Waste into Wellbeing

This summer, Kendal Town Council partnered with local food waste initiative, Waste into Wellbeing. We asked allotment holders and residents alike to donate their surplus produce to support the community and the results have been phenomenal. Kendal's growers have contributed a staggering 880kg of produce over the summer, but it didn't stop there. Through the posters put up across all sites, the gardening team at Sizergh Castle learned of the scheme and got in touch to donate surplus from their kitchen gardens. Produce which would ordinarily be used in the café had it not been for lockdown. From June onwards Sizergh Castle has so far donated a further 224kg of beautiful fresh produce, saving it from landfill and supporting the community.



Waste into Wellbeing offered two drop-off slots each week and volunteers were humbled by the generosity shown from Kendal's residents keen to share their lovingly grown produce. At a time when the charity has seen a decline in surplus fresh food being offered from local businesses, the regular donations of fruit and vegetables were a welcomed sight. From strawberries and rhubarb to chard and salads, from potatoes and artichokes to cabbages and broccoli, the fresh produce just kept coming.

Waste to Wellbeing is a volunteer led, social project at the heart of Kendal's food community. Surplus food from local food and drink which would otherwise become waste is turned into nourishing meals, provided on a pay what you can basis in Kendal People's Cafe, or is distributed to residents in need via Kendal Food Hub.



The produce donated over the summer was shared across three weekly food shares hosted at Outside In, Hallgarth Community Centre and the Salvation Army. Since March, the food shares provided over 2,300 grocery bags for vulnerable families and individuals, and the allotment produce was a welcomed addition to the basic staples on offer. Customers to the shares often commented on the addition of fresh produce and recipes were shared to encourage attendees to prepare veg they sometimes wouldn't have had before. 'Super Hero Hulk Soup' was a great way to encourage children to try spinach for instance.



In addition to the food shares, Waste into Wellbeing is working with the local NHS Integrated Care in the Community team delivering meals twice a month to vulnerable and isolated elderly residents. Each month, between 60 and 80 meals are delivered to households through the joint 'Lunch Bunch' project; all of which are met with smiles of appreciation. The fresh produce donated by allotment holders has been a welcomed addition to these dishes.



With their new home at Stricklandgate House, we look forward to seeing this valuable project develop further. Kendal Town Council hopes to continue its partnership with Waste into Wellbeing and we look forward to bringing news of how you can get involved in Spring 2021. Until then, a huge thank you from the team of volunteers at Waste into Wellbeing for the generous donations received so far.



To find out more about the project and its parent charity, South Lakes Action on Climate Change, visit <https://slacc.org.uk/wiw/>

Slug Pellets—Last year I wrote about how we can look after our lovely hedgehogs, which once again this year have been seen on allotments. I think I can safely say that we all love them, and want to encourage them as they do eat our number one enemies: slugs and snails. And they're cute!

Unfortunately, **the old-style slug pellets made of metaldehyde can harm hedgehogs**, as, although they don't consume the pellets directly, toxicity can build up when they consume slugs containing the substance. The newer 'organic' slug pellets made of ferric phosphate may be better as the slugs tend to crawl away and hide to die, but is still not completely safe.

There are other ways to control slugs and snails which you can see described on lots of websites, of which the Royal Horticultural Society's is one of the best.

However, if you do need to use slug pellets, here are my personal suggestions:

- * Only use pellets to protect young seedlings
- * Reduce use by putting them where they are needed with only a few pellets.
- * Keep wildlife and pets off the pellets with netting, or cover them over in some way.

And by doing this, you also protect our birds, frogs and toads.



Ros Taylor—Site Representative, Wattsfield Allotments

Repopulating Hedgehogs on Allotments- Hi, my name is Robert and I am an allotment holder

older on Rinkfield. Recently, I have been thinking about how we can help to protect and encourage hedgehogs on allotments. I have developed a project with my fellow allotment holder Dave Bell to site some hedgehog houses on Rinkfield and monitor the activity. In October, I approached the Town Council to discuss the project and apply for a small grant to create the hedgehog houses. I attended the Kendal in Bloom Committee and was successful in securing a grant which will enabled me and Dave to build 10 hedgehog houses, these will be located on Rinkfield site. Rinkfield is going to be used as a test site to see how successful these hedgehog homes are. Dave and I will monitor activity closely and collect the data which we will present to the Town Council next Autumn when we evaluate whether the project has been a success or not.

My three top tips for helping hedgehogs:

- Always check before strimming
- Try to avoid open fires instead use an incinerator



Rats on allotments— This year has seen a massive rise in the number of reports of rats on allotments in Kendal. A new contractor was appointed at the beginning of summer and he certainly has had his work cut out this season. The increase in the rat population this year is

partly due to the mild winter of last year, cold weather helps to kill rats off but the mild weather meant that the rats didn't die off and carried on breeding instead. Please can I ask that you report any sightings of rats to the office, try to avoid putting food waste into your compost bin on the allotment, avoid feeding wild birds on your allotment and ensure that you adopt good husbandry methods where poultry is concerned. These techniques will help to keep the rats population in check. The Town Council can only deal with **rats on allotments** and not in residential properties.



Janine Holt— Kendal Town Council