



Join us for the Story of Charcoal at St Nicks AGM on Thursday 28th July p. 8



Award-winning Musical p.6



photo by Ian Traynor

Wildwatching p.5



A young Rotter drumming up support for St Nicks? Or maybe just enjoying himself on our Give or Take Day in June. Thanks go to Hull Road Ward Committee for their financial support for this event.

## JOIN US & ENJOY FREE WALKS

Support York's leading organisation promoting sustainable living - join St Nicks and you will get free entry to our guided walks. Membership starts **from £10 per year** - please pick up a form or join on-line at:

[www.stnicksfields.org.uk/join.php](http://www.stnicksfields.org.uk/join.php)

## Welcome to another News from St Nicks!

We are delighted to let you know that St Nicks has been awarded a prestigious **Green Flag (Community Award)** for the second year running. The Community Award is recognised as a sign that the site is a high-quality green space, well-managed and welcoming and central to the local community. Our Green Flag judge was particularly impressed by our links with and the involvement of so many community groups across York.

A **huge thanks** must go to all our volunteers as well as all our members and supporters who have helped us, through financial support or time (or both), to make so many improvements to the nature reserve over the last few years and to bring it up to Green Flag status. We could not have done it without you!

All award-winning sites now have the chance to receive a further award from the Green Flag Plus Partnership, the People's Choice Award. This award is voted for by the public, so if you want to see St Nicks receive a national accolade as the People's Choice, then **please visit the Green Flag Award website** ([/www.keepbritaintidy.org/GreenFlag](http://www.keepbritaintidy.org/GreenFlag)) and register your vote.

Thank you for your support!

## BE THE EYES AND EARS OF ST NICKS

July has seen the launch of our brand new Eyes and Ears scheme. Our volunteers have been handing out pocket-sized Eyes and Ears cards, along with refreshments and cakes, to members of the public. The cards encourage users of the reserve to keep their eyes peeled for any notable activity and provide them with useful telephone numbers and contact details. We want to hear all about anything from prominent wildlife sightings to fallen trees and graffiti. So please pick up your card from the Environment Centre and if you happen to see anything whilst ambling through the reserve, be sure to tell us about it!

### FRIENDS OF ST NICHOLAS FIELDS

♻️ Community Recycling Champion 2010

♻️ Green Flag Community Award winner 2011 & 2010

♻️ national 2007 Biffa Climate Conscious Award winner

♻️ registered charity (no. 1068909)

♻️ supported by the City of York Council

### York Environment Centre

Rawdon Avenue, York YO10 3ST

tel./ fax: (01904) 411821 🌐 [www.stnicksfields.org.uk](http://www.stnicksfields.org.uk)

**general enquiries:** [info@stnicksfields.org.uk](mailto:info@stnicksfields.org.uk)

**composting advice:** [rotters@stnicksfields.org.uk](mailto:rotters@stnicksfields.org.uk)

**volunteering:** [volunteer@stnicksfields.org.uk](mailto:volunteer@stnicksfields.org.uk)

## BEARING FRUIT PROJECT LAUNCHED

June saw the launch of St Nicks new Bearing Community Orchard Project. At a special launch event, the Core Group, consisting of ten volunteers recruited over the last few months, gave an introduction to the orchard scheme. This was followed by a presentation by Dave Broughton from Edible York on their exciting projects throughout the city. A tour of the nature reserve followed, detailing early plans for the five orchard sites. A good natter over some delicious fruit cakes and refreshing Yorkshire pressed apple juice and fruity cordials was a perfect way to end the day.

We will now be getting some expert advice from Rogers Nurseries of Pickering before finalising our plans to plant in November. The Core Group, which meets every week on Monday afternoons to plan the project, has also been trying out some tasty recipes from produce on the nature reserve. Our first attempt at elderflower cordial went down a storm, but, disappointingly, the elderflower champagne fizzed out of its bottles! The Core Group will try their hand at lots of other recipes throughout the project, particularly after we get some expert foraging training from Jenny Cairns from CYC Parks and Open Spaces.

If you would like to help create the St Nicks community orchard, we will be holding open work sessions throughout the year when you can join in with the practical tasks such as digging the planting sites over and then planting the trees. Please see the Events pages at the back for session dates.

Bearing Fruit has been funded by Ecominds, a £7.5million funding scheme run by Mind on behalf of the BIG Lottery Fund. Ecominds involves people with direct experience of mental distress in environmental projects that improve their mental and physical health, and local communities.



Karen Cooper, the Sustainability Manager at the PTC said about the day: "The Green Away day was exactly what we needed, a mixture of education and getting our hands dirty. We felt a great sense of accomplishment for the bench building and butterfly walk improvements, and although we had both torrential rain and blazing sunshine in our day, we all came away feeling tired but great! I think we will also see a blossoming of composting amongst our employees!"

## FANCY A GREEN AWAY DAY?

A dozen staff from Nestle's Product Technology Centre (PTC) in York recently enjoyed a Green Away Day at St Nicks. The team building day consisted of a tour of the nature reserve, demonstration about composting and then a number of team challenges including the construction and installation of a rustic wooden bench.

Please contact John at St Nicks if you would like more information about our team building Green Away Days: [john@stnicksfields.org.uk](mailto:john@stnicksfields.org.uk) or tel. (01904) 427641.



## FROM THE VOLUNTEERS' DIARY

It has been a busy time for our conservation volunteers. During the summer months, keeping the paths clear of vegetation is a daily task. Then there is battling our biggest annual enemy – Himalayan Balsam. Balsam can spread throughout the park like wildfire if it is not tackled in time before its exploding seedpods litter the sides of the becks with next year's undeveloped weeds.

June saw the arrival of our two **new Volunteer Park Rangers**. We would like to extend a warm welcome to Ellie and Nicola, who are very excited to be taking over from Vicki and Joe in leading volunteers in conservation tasks. Both are looking forward to some warm weeks of summer volunteering ahead.



Ian Traynor, member of the Wildwatch, took this lovely photo of a juvenile bullfinch. It helps prove that bullfinches are breeding on St Nicks, which is great news.

## GROUP VOLUNTEERING

Staff from the local software solutions company, Trustmark Solutions, paid us a visit in June to help us in the nature reserve. It was the team's second visit and they excelled at tasks including the removal of the invasive Himalayan Balsam and clearing a patch of brambles ready for the

orchard planting, while also trying their hand at a spot of scything too. Also in June, we had a group of young people from the PACT project at the Children's Society who gave the butterfly walk a much needed spruce up.

## ST NICKS WILDWATCH

Our Wildwatch group has expanded over recent months with a wide range of people, currently spanning five decades and five

nationalities. Our long-term aim is to produce a **complete catalogue of species** present on the reserve, covering birds, mammals, amphibians, invertebrates and plants. This is important in two ways – to establish a benchmark for habitat management and biodiversity, and to provide reliable data for fundraising purposes and to raise the profile of St Nicks as a nature reserve.

We aim to develop our skills and knowledge by sharing each other's and through external training. We also want to carry out a range of small-scale projects, contribute guided walks to St Nicks events programme, and generally make friends and have fun. So far we have spent most of our time on birds but we have also had a lot of fun watching the recently discovered **water voles** on Tang Hall Beck.

## ST NICKS SCYTHERS

A number of our volunteers are now fully trained in using Austrian scythes. Scything summer growth by hand is actually quicker than using a strimmer and there is no noise, vibration or pollution. Once you have learnt how to sharpen and use an Austrian scythe properly, mowing a meadow by hand becomes a real joy, rather than a struggle. Our scything team will soon be scything the meadow at St Nicks and we have also been hired to mow the meadow at Danesmead.

The team is available for hire at very reasonable rates. Please get in touch with John or Jonathan at St Nicks if you would like to know more details.

Recently, we were able to contribute evidence of **breeding bullfinches and willow warblers**. It has been a great year for other warblers, with several whitethroats and blackcaps, and chiffchaffs all over the place. Other highlights have included regular sightings of a kingfisher on Tang Hall Beck, and most recently a young robin about half-way through growing its adult red breast feathers (pictured on the cover).

We meet on Wednesday mornings, normally from 10 to 12.30, though we hope to offer an alternative session in the near future. We welcome new members at any level of expertise. If you can't tell a house sparrow from a golden eagle or a dandelion from a spotted orchid, but would like to find out, we would love to meet you. Whether you can spare half a day a week or just a couple of hours a month, if you love wildlife, please **join us**.

### NEED A FUNKY EDGE?

In exchange for a donation to St Nicks, we can offer you an inexhaustible supply of coloured bottles of all shapes and sizes to create funky garden edging. With blue being the interesting exception, we are temporarily unable to sell the coloured glass we collect. By using the glass in your garden you will get an interesting long-lasting feature and help us ease the impact of the crash in recycled glass prices. After all, reuse is even better than recycling!



## RECYCLING TEAM UPDATE



The youngest member of St Nicks team of casual recycling workers. Alexander, aged 17, has done a work placement alongside our nature reserve volunteers but was very keen to help the recycling team. After a successful trial, we are happy to be able to offer him occasional employment when regular members of the team are on leave or sick.

During the spring, the recycling team carried out a survey of 1700 of the properties which we service. We are pleased to report that 74% of respondents rated our service as **'very good'**, and 23% as **'good'**. It was very nice to receive so many compliments on the quality of our service.

Thanks to an exciting new collaboration with a local company, we are now especially happy to find blue glass amongst the recycling. Bottle Alley Glass is based a few miles away in Wheldrake, and make unique, stylish, hardwearing tiles, worktops and splashbacks from recycled bottle glass. They use all colours, but blue glass is hardest for them to obtain – which is where we come in. From Bombay Sapphire to Harvey's Bristol Cream, hand sorting means we can extract suitable bottles at the kerbside and provide a regular supply of all shades of blue. **If you have any blue glass**, but we don't collect your recycling, please feel free to bring it down to St Nicks for us to pass on! You can see the company's products on their website [www.bottlealleyglass.co.uk](http://www.bottlealleyglass.co.uk)

## 'ROTTEN' AWARD WINNERS

York Rotters have been awarded **The National Masters 2011 Innovation Award from Garden Organic** for the creation of 'Compost! The mini-musical'. With York Rotters' input, the musical was composed by Anneliese Emanns Dean from The Big Buzz, and together we have been teaching it to community groups throughout York. The musical is a fun way to get the message across that composting is really easy and a great thing to do. Since the partnership began in 2007 we have taught the musical to twelve children's community groups and six York primary schools.



We are also pleased to announce that we have received ward funding to carry out **free training sessions** on how to use your home compost to **grow your own fruit and vegetables** in a small space. The free 2-hour training sessions will be run by local gardening expert Jane Thurlow and held at various locations across York during November. Venues and dates have not been finalised yet but if you are interested, please get in touch.

York Rotters regularly hold **How To Compost training sessions** at St Nicks and in order to spread the message that composting is a great thing to do we have decided to take the training course out on tour. The next free training sessions are being held at Haxby Methodist Church on Tuesday 6th September and at Bar Convent, Blossom Street on Thursday 8th September. If you are interested in attending or know someone who would like to attend then please contact Catherine Bamford on 01904 412861 or email [rotters@stnicksfields.org.uk](mailto:rotters@stnicksfields.org.uk)

We are also **looking for new volunteers** to join our merry 'rotten' team. Whether you are a long-term compost enthusiast or a complete novice, please get in touch. You will get training, meet new people and learn new skills.

Attendees of this year's Give or Take Day in June were treated to a performance of the award-winning Compost! The Mini-Musical, and some even joined in.

### Judy's **LOVAGE SOUP** recipe

Judy, one of St Nicks Saturday volunteers kindly made this soup for our Eco-Active Day volunteers. Some really liked it and asked for the recipe so here it is.

- ♻️ 1 oz butter 1 oz plain flour
- ♻️ onions, finely chopped
- ♻️ 1 pint chicken or vegetable stock
- ♻️ 4 tbsp finely chopped lovage leaves
- ♻️ 1/2 pt milk
- ♻️ (a small lettuce)
- ♻️ salt and black pepper

Melt the butter in a saucepan and gently saute the onions for 5 minutes until soft. Add the lovage, stir in the flour and cook for 1 minute. Gradually stir in the stock, cover and simmer gently for 15 minutes. Add the milk and seasoning. Reheat slowly; do not boil the soup or it will curdle. (I add lettuce to the soup at the same time as the lovage, because it takes away the rather bitter taste of the lovage).

## EVENTS JULY - NOVEMBER 2011

Please note that there may be changes and more events. For all events meet at York Environment Centre. Check our [website](#) or call us on 01904 411821 for bookings and more information. Please help us spread the word.

### WILDLIFE WALKS & DAYS

#### Discover the variety of wildlife at St Nicks

with our series of guided walks, supported by the Big Lottery Fund. Entry is free to members—join on the day—or £2.50 adults, £1.50 children. Price includes a drink and biscuits afterwards.

#### 🦋 BUTTERFLY WALK

Sat 30th July 10am-12

Led by local butterfly expert Tony Fairburn

Plus you will be able to pick up a survey pack for the OPAL's Bugs Count (see box on the right)

#### 🦇 BAT WALK Thur 18th August 8-9:30pm

With St Nicks Wildwatch

#### 🦋 MOTH DAY Sat 27th August 10am-4pm

Learn to identify moths with local expert Dave Chesmore and the Open Air Laboratories project officers.

The day will also include the highly enjoyable, and award-winning, multimedia moth show by acclaimed poet and photographer Anneliese Emmans Dean. Her **Buzzing!** is an edu-taining multimedia celebration of garden minibeasts. Each of Anneliese's poems introduces you to one of the extraordinary tiny creatures that live in our gardens. She performs the poems to a backdrop of projected photos, interspersed with musical interludes.

**Quentin Blake has said:** "Anneliese Emmans Dean has discovered the poetry in insects and knows a lot about them as well. She has the Buzz!"

#### 🦋 BIRD WALK Sat 12th November

Led by local ornithologist  
David Campbell



Enjoy St Nicks wildlife!

LOTTERY FUNDED

**St Nicks members get free entry to all our guided walks and discounts on training courses. JOIN US and enjoy the benefits of supporting York's leading organisation promoting sustainable living.**

### GETTING BUG-EYED?

Take part in The Open Air Laboratories (OPAL) network's national survey of British gardens. The **Bugs Count** survey is simple and fun – it involves counting as many invertebrates as you can find in three timed challenges as well as looking out for six very special Quest Species. This survey is collecting data from across the country to help scientists understand how invertebrates are affected by changing habitats and urbanisation.

St Nicks Bug Hunt in the Environment Centre garden clocked up an amazing total of 743 bugs in under an hour, despite rain!

**More info:** [www.opalexplornature.org](http://www.opalexplornature.org) or contact the regional team on [opalproject@york.ac.uk](mailto:opalproject@york.ac.uk) or ring Sarah West, OPAL Community Scientist on 01904 324577.

Alternatively, pick up a survey pack, complete with identification sheets and magnifying glass, on the **St Nicks Butterfly Walk**, Saturday 30th July.



photo by Jessica Bone

## MORE EVENTS

### THE NEVER-ENDING STORY OF CHARCOAL + ST NICKS AGM

**Thur 28 July 7:15-9:30pm**

In his talk and charcoal making demonstration, David Hutchinson will take you from charcoal's chequered past (including its role in shaping the evolution of mankind) up to the present and into a promising future in gardening and helping to combat climate change. David is the inventor of 'The Viper' mobile charcoal retort, with over 20 years experience in the industry and numerous TV appearances, including channel 4's 'Worst Jobs in History' and Luke Casey's 'Country Diary'.

David's talk and charcoal making demonstration will be followed by St Nicks annual general meeting with light refreshments and a visual overview of the charity's year. **Come and have a say in the future of St Nicks.** New members are welcome.



### HOW TO COMPOST TRAINING

♻️ **Tue 6th September 7-9pm**

**Haxby Methodist Church**

♻️ **Thur 8th September 7-9pm**

**Bar Convent, Blossom Street**

Be amazed by the variety of materials which can be turned into fantastic compost. You do not need to have a garden to compost and it will help slim your refuse bin.

Please book with Catherine on 01904 412861 or [rotters@stnicksfields.org.uk](mailto:rotters@stnicksfields.org.uk)

### FOOD FOR FREE WALK

**Sat 10th Sept 10am-12 noon**

Come and learn which wild plants provide free (and sometimes tasty) food.

### APPLE DAY

**Sat 15th October 1-4pm**

Enjoy our annual celebration of the humble apple - join in the juicing, Apple Olympics, Longest Apple Peel contest, Apple Pudding Competition or simply enjoy the buzz of the fun day.



photo provided by David Hutchinson

### ECO-ACTIVE DAYS

Help us prepare the ground for the Community Orchard. You will get a warm feeling and free lunch in return.

♻️ **Sat 6th Aug 10am-1pm - site preparation**

♻️ **Sat 3rd Sept 10am-1pm - site preparation**

♻️ **Sat 1st Oct 10am-1pm - site preparation**

♻️ **Sat 5th Nov 10am-1pm - planting**

**BEARING FRUIT DAYS - first Mondays 1-4pm**  
**site preparation - 1st Aug, 5th Sept and 3rd Oct; planting - 7th Nov**

Help us turn our Community Orchard plans into reality.

### CALLING YOUNG VOLUNTEERS

**Thursdays 2-4pm from 28th July to 25th Aug**

We offer free sessions in environmental studies and conservation for 14-16 year olds during the summer holidays. Sessions can include environmental projects such as wildlife photography, recycled art and wildlife identification, as well as practical conservation tasks. They are a wonderful way to meet new people and learn exciting skills so get in touch if you would like to know more. **Booking is essential.**

### CAMERA CLUB

♻️ **Sat 6th August 10:15am-12:15**

♻️ **Sat 3rd September 10:15am-12:15**

♻️ **Sat 1st October 10:15am-12:15**

♻️ **Sat 5th November 10:15am-12:15**

Join our friendly informal group recording life on St Nicks and sharing photographic skills. Free admission. See what we do or join on-line at [www.flickr.com/groups/stnickscameraclub](http://www.flickr.com/groups/stnickscameraclub)