

As I write this in the last days of April, it is good to see signs of spring on the cress beds. Chiffchaffs and Blackcaps have arrived and are staking their territories “loudly” and Blue and Great Tits have been seen filling nest boxes with nesting material. The first few families of Mallard and Moorhen have arrived which will be well received by the crows, kites and other predators. I know it is sad but if they all survived, we wouldn’t be able to see the water for birds. As well as the birds the first orchid has appeared in the meadow, a green-winged, with hopefully many more to come – last year there were over 200!

One of the two bridges on the lower site has now been completed and the second is nearing completion. Apologies to walkers who were inconvenienced during the work.

Thanks to a generous grant from SODC, a group of volunteers from the cress beds, Benson Nature Group and Wallingford Green gym were trained in the traditional skill of hedge laying and the results of our efforts can be seen opposite the centre. I’m afraid it has uncovered the view of the untidy storage area which will receive attention when volunteers available. On this subject we are always looking for volunteers to help in all sorts of activities – don’t worry you won’t be asked to do anything you are not happy to do. We have been lucky recently as the cress has been very slow to grow so we are not spending all our time maintaining channels through the beds. Before you ask, I have no idea why it has been so slow to grow!

We have now reverted to open days on the first Sunday of the month from 2 – 4:30 pm. We will be showing the short film which gives an insight into the way the beds operated when run commercially and you can either have a guided tour or self-guide. You might just be lucky enough to catch site of some of the wildlife like the fox pictured that was lazing in the sun by one of the compost heaps. Or you might spot an orchid or some of the cowslips planted many years ago by Tina Thompson. If you are a member of the Chiltern Society or the friends of the cress beds, it is free to visit and only £3 for non-members. Tea, coffee and cakes are also available to buy. It is worth coming along just to see our recent acquisition of watercress serving dishes and drainers in the display cabinet.

Finally, I probably don’t do it enough, very many thanks to the friends who support us financially and all of the volunteers who give their time selflessly to look after this amazing village asset.