



Community Heritage Initiative

Year 4 Project Report

February 2007 - January 2008



Community Heritage Initiative Leicestershire County Council

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Introduction

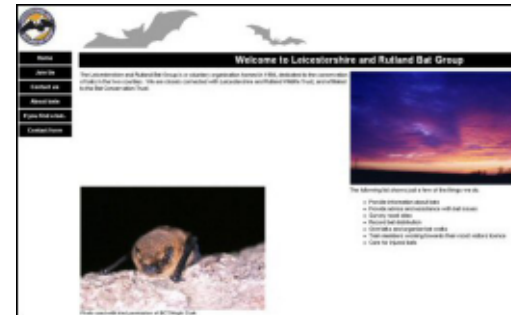
The Community Heritage Initiative (CHI), launched in February 2004, works with support from the Heritage Lottery Fund and Rutland County Council. The project is part of Leicestershire County Council's (LCC) Environment and Heritage Service, working within the Historic and Natural Environment Team, at the Holly Hayes Environment and Heritage Resources Centre.

CHI works closely with many other LCC sections, such as the Library Service (through the Breathing Places Campaign and Literacy Development Officer), country parks and museum collections, as well as in partnership with other conservation and wildlife groups, such as the Leicestershire & Rutland Wildlife Trust

CHI encourages heritage study, documentation and celebration, focussing on themes of natural, geological, built, archaeological and social heritage within the context of countryside and landscape. Support includes a comprehensive programme of free literature, training and community events, which help raise awareness of local wildlife, conservation and heritage issues.

Natural heritage is ultimately lost or conserved at the local level, and much of CHI's work is encouraging people to record where they live and take action to conserve the heritage on their doorstep. This is through schemes such as the network of Heritage Wardens and support of community heritage and conservation groups, as well as individual's studies. CHI offers advice on projects and funding and support of events, such as an annual heritage conference, one of the only events in the two counties that bring such groups together. April 2007's event, Roots to Routes, shared best practice in community developed projects, such as field name studies in Mowsley, running a Heritage Open Day in Rothley and Burbage Heritage Group's horticultural project.

As part of the support of the Leicestershire and Rutland Bat Group and the parish bat project, CHI developed a bat travelling display case: "Bats – Fact or Fiction", which aimed to dispel the myths surrounding bats. In 2007 this continued to tour libraries raising awareness of these mammals.



Support also included the continued development and final hand over of the website to trained volunteers.

A new project has been developed with the local Badger Group. CHI has helped the group research, plan and promote badger sett surveying through a training event for February 2008 at Holly Hayes. This was launched at the Nature Conservation Forum in November and is likely to be fully booked, helping to recruit new volunteers to the work of the group.



Working with groups

CHI continued its work in supporting natural history societies and their work, through direct support of groups. This has included:

- Leicestershire Fungi Study Group - looking at data collation and website development
- Leicestershire Entomological Society - advice on funding application to the Heritage Lottery Fund
- Loughborough Naturalists - advice on slide archiving and access to records.



Natural History Societies' slide collections are a valuable source of information about the two counties.

Photos courtesy of robjoycephotography.co.uk

The project makes the important link between environmental information, museum natural history collections and local communities, making access easier and allowing connections to be made to many subjects. New ways of using the collections at training events, in libraries and for creative inspiration has been a major part of the team's work in the review period, with the launch of the successful Creative Nature Programme.

CHI's work on promoting nature conservation issues has led to over 775 people signing up for natural history survey packs, encouraging potential nature detectives in their local patch or areas they visit. CHI also supports the many naturalist volunteers who are active in Leicestershire and Rutland through natural history groups, or as individual volunteers. This has included many one to one meetings to see how the project can help groups achieve their goals and develop for the future. Networking opportunities have been key with CHI facilitating a new Recorders' Conference and developments within the county's Nature Conservation Forum. The team's work on ladybird recording has won national praise, due to the detailed information collated on the spread of the Harlequin ladybird in the two counties.

Between February 2007 and January 2008 the team has issued 75 media releases. CHI has also introduced monthly articles to local community newsletters and regional community papers at the request of editors. This assists reaching a wider audience and keeping people abreast of local conservation and biodiversity issues. Between March 2007 and the end of January 2008 the CHI team answered over 2300 enquiries from the general public, with topics ranging from specific natural enquiries to general heritage advice.

Young people

CHI works with young people aged 7-20 years. This year has seen projects focusing on bats, animal tracking and photography.

" I would like to do this more often."

" I feel pleased I have learnt new skills."

Animal Tracking

CHI organised an animal tracking event in partnership with Leicestershire Country Parks. Eleven members of the Castle Donington Youth Group, aged between 13-16 years, spent an afternoon with a Country Parks ranger learning about animal signs and tracking.

The session was 'hands on', with the young people doing a variety of activities which focused on using their four senses and learning to identify animal tracks and signs.

This activity provided a 'different outdoor experience' for the group compared to activities such as sailing, riding and climbing, as they had not done anything like this before.



In September a new display case on 'Plants and People' was created to show how we depend on plants and why they are important to us. This was developed with colleagues from the Collections to link to a new project to promote the natural history herbarium.

Collections of flowering plants are essential evidence of what has been recorded in the field. They are also invaluable for teaching others, especially the next generation of botanists.

The project was launched in November 2007, following a pilot training session and production of an information pack.



Throughout 2008 CHI will be offering training to local naturalists and societies in preparing plant specimens. We hope to enhance and update the Museums' Herbarium collections through the lodging of donations created as part of this project. In 2007 CHI used the collections increasingly for creative inspiration at drawing and writing workshops as part of the Creative Nature programme.

Collections

CHI has continued to promote the use of the natural history collections held at the Barrow Collections Resources Centre by members of the public, young people, creative writing and drawing groups as well as natural history societies. The collections are a unique way of illustrating the diversity of the natural world and are an excellent education resource, providing inspiration.

CHI funded travelling display cases, showing bumblebee collections, ladybirds, mosses, lichens, garden insects, and pond life, have continued to be used by curatorial staff for activities in local libraries, training sessions and community events and PR, promoting the natural history collections to new audiences. The use of these, and the wider collections at training events, has enabled people to practice their identification skills before going out in the field and has also highlighted the valuable resources held at Barrow.

In 2007 the bat travelling display case linked to a bat project promoting the Leicestershire and Rutland Bat Group, continued to raise awareness of these mammals. The case has toured a number of the counties' libraries.



Going Batty in Market Harborough

In partnership with Leicestershire and Rutland Bat Group, CHI ran two sessions on bats with Market Harborough Methodist Youth Group: a talk on bats from the local bat group and a bat walk.



22 young people between the ages of 11-15 learnt about the world of bats, including feeding an injured bat, which provided a real wildlife encounter.

A bat walk at Foxton Locks saw 8 young people learn how to use bat detectors and identify the different echolocation calls of different species.

The group are continuing their bat project by working with a community artist to produce a mosaic based on bats using natural materials.

"The group had a great time and especially liked seeing the bats at the youth club. Those who took part in the bat walk enjoyed the adventure of being out together and the fact that they all got to use detectors. It was particularly good that we saw bats."

"The bat walk was a wicked experience."

"I really enjoyed the bat talk because we got to see bats."

Wildly Wicked Photography Competition

CHI ran a photography competition 'Wildly Wicked' for young people aged 11-20, focusing on "What matters to you most about your natural environment?"

One hundred and twenty photos of a high standard were submitted by 32 entrants. The competition was judged by three young people and a special prize giving ceremony was held in January with the Chair of the County Council awarding the winners' prizes and presenting certificates to all entrants. The photographs will form an exhibition which will tour Leicestershire and Rutland.



Hind Leys College Photography Project

Following the photography competition, contact from a teacher at Hind Leys Community College resulted in a natural history photography project with a group of students aged 17-18 years.

"There are a lot of interesting things out there"

"Important to take photos with regards to natural history so can see changes over the years."

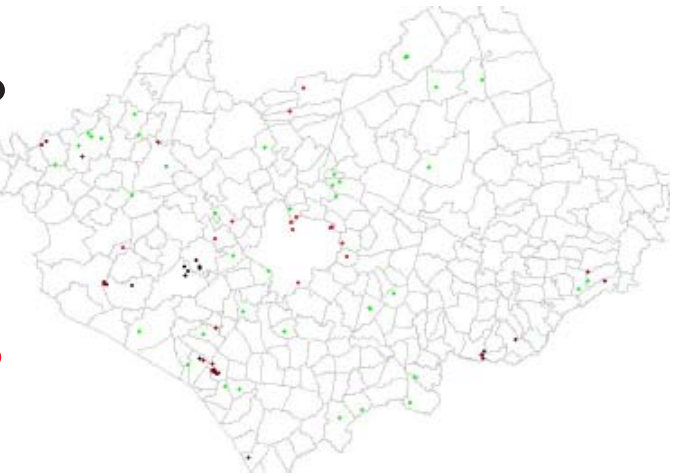
A nature photography walk at the Outwoods and a practical session with LCC staff to learn about the collections and microscopy at the Collections

Resources Centre were organised.

The 12 students gained different perspectives and college staff are now looking at introducing microscopy to photography students. Charnwood's Wildlife Officer will be using the photographs in literature, and 15 photographs by the students have been selected to form an exhibition which will tour locally.

Highlights

- Butterfly Bounty ●
- Hop Skip & Jump ●
- Spawn Spot ●
- Ladybird Survey ●



February 2007 - over 2000 ladybird records received from a single recorder.



April 2007 - nearly 700 butterfly records received from one recorder.

November 2007 - 132 fish records received from one recorder.

Records

In 2007 CHI received almost 10,000 species records, including over 3,000 ladybird records and 2,800 miscellaneous records, including lime hawk moths, great crested newts, barn owls, buzzards and a variety of birds and plants. Many of these records were supported by photographs.



Exchange of data

Records were exchanged with the UK Ladybird Survey and Leicestershire and Rutland Ornithological Society. Arrangements were made to exchange data with the national phenology recording scheme, Spring Watch.



Enquiries from recorders included identification of snakes, crickets and moths which were referred to county recorders or in-house experts.



A dandelion in flower January 2007

Website

www.leics.gov.uk/celebrating_wildlife

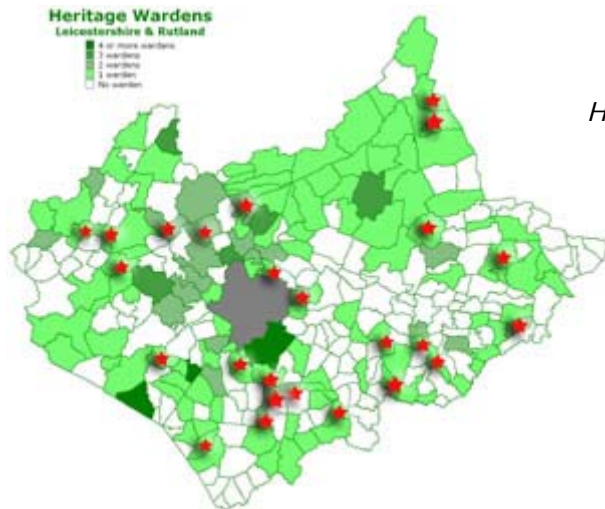
- Over 50,00 views of CHI pages
- Over 1,500 visits to CHI home page
- 3,500 visits to Hare and Rabbit survey
- 369 visits to Heritage Wardens pages
- Nearly 9,00 downloads of Wild About ladybird
- Nearly 6,00 downloads of Wild About butterfly
- 665 hedgerow survey forms downloaded



Heritage Wardens

Heritage Wardens are volunteers who help monitor and conserve the heritage of Leicestershire and Rutland's countryside and landscape. The Heritage Warden network is based at the parish or equivalent level, with appointed wardens being ratified by their Parish Council, or working in association with district council colleagues in non-parish areas.

The network stands at 179 active volunteers in 135 parishes (46% coverage of Leicestershire and Rutland), with 27 of these volunteers being recruited to the network in this year. Parishes can have more than one warden.



Parishes where a Heritage warden has been recruited in the past year

Barrow Parish Plan Group, led by the Heritage Warden, made a successful bid to the Lottery for £18,000 for heritage activities, including a tree trail. After guidance and advice from CHI they decided to help finance technical developments of the leicestershirevillages.com website (a Library Service programme) which will allow them, and in time, all other villages in the county to build map based databases of local information, with their tree trail as the pilot.

Creative Nature

In the last year, CHI has looked at how people can record the environment creatively and has promoted a new information pack "Recording Naturally", supported by a Creative Nature events training programme. This was in direct response to customer feedback on other training events.

Events include partnerships with the Adult Learning Service and Library Services for training sessions, which encourage people to record and celebrate nature in different creative ways, from poetry and artworks, map making to use of ICT. Nearly 40 sessions have been run to date, including digital photography, writing poetry, themed heritage trails and botanical drawing. This project has brought new people to recording wildlife, and outcomes include people developing new hobbies and signing up to further training outside CHI.



Conferences

CHI plays a central role in the green and heritage networks of the two counties, acting as a vital signpost for the public and community groups alike. CHI organises a bi-annual nature conservation forum, attracting 60 people to each meeting. The inaugural Environmental Recorder's Conference attracted 47 people in March 2007, and 62 people attended the Routes to Roots heritage and landscape conference in April 2007.

Training

A key function of CHI is to motivate and support communities in developing local projects and studies - providing the skills and learning to begin these journeys.

Between February 2007 and January 2008, CHI ran 33 information sessions involving 614 people.

Highlights

In May 2007, national expert Dr. Paul Waring returned to run another session for CHI, this time on butterfly and moth caterpillars.

In June a group of people spent two sessions learning how to identify wildflowers.

"I was extremely impressed by the presentation, materials, organisation and content of this short course."



Representatives of local history and natural history groups attended a Groups Day in October which covered issues such as: working with the media, copyright, health and safety and funding.

In November 2007 local publisher Bob Trubshaw led four sessions on writing and publishing local history.

The CHI programme in 2008 will cover topics such as geology, the history of local places names, reptile and insect identification.

"A great opportunity to meet and learn from a national expert who is also a great teacher."

Sapcote Heritage Group, established by the Heritage/Archaeology Warden, has become registered charity and successfully run a number of campaigns against local planning issues. They have developed an effective partnership with their local library and become a well-established community group.



Wardens' recruitment has involved active partnerships with village newsletters, libraries, local press, parish councils, the LCC newsletter, Leicestershire Matters, and Community Services' Events Guide.

NEWS

VOLUNTEERS: WARDENS HAVE IMPORTANT ROLE TO PLAY

Are you a champion of our rich heritage?

Conservation champions are being sought to help save the rich heritage and wildlife of villages.

WILDLIFE WARDEN

Conservation champions are being sought to help save the rich heritage and wildlife of villages. The Wildlife Warden role is a voluntary position and is open to anyone who is interested in the natural world. The role involves monitoring the wildlife in the area and reporting any changes to the Wildlife Warden. The Wildlife Warden also has a role to play in the conservation of the area and in the education of the public. The Wildlife Warden is a key member of the conservation team and is responsible for the day-to-day management of the area. The Wildlife Warden is a key member of the conservation team and is responsible for the day-to-day management of the area. The Wildlife Warden is a key member of the conservation team and is responsible for the day-to-day management of the area.

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