



## Slipper Mill Pond Preservation Association

Registered Charity No: 277444

[www.smppa.org.uk](http://www.smppa.org.uk)



Slipper Pond – January 2010

*Photo – Richard Somerscocks*

# NEWSLETTER

## February 2010

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### **Chairman's Introduction:**

Christmas and the New Year were cold and the January snowfall is, hopefully, a receding memory. Along with everyone else I felt for the birds – I was amazed to see so many fieldfares raid our crab-apple tree and strip it of fruit in a morning. The Wildlife Report describes the impact more fully. Now it is February and we are in another cold spell and all looking forward to Spring.

## **Wildlife Report** - by Gavin Millar

Yes, we've shivered, and milk was hard to come by, (all in people's fridges), but birds had it much harder. The upside was that, driven by hunger the flocks of Fieldfare and Redwing which we rarely see this far south arrived in vast numbers and stripped the berries and crab-apples. Then, as quickly as they came, they went. Meanwhile the icing over of the Town Pond and Little Deep, not to say a good deal of Great Deep, while the Slipper Pond stayed unfrozen led to our having most of the local population of Tufted Ducks (23 was the most I counted), which, again, is unusual. We even had,

briefly, a pair of Gadwall. Emptying the pond for the January work party to do its stuff quickly sent them back to their usual haunts, to be replaced by Redshank, Egrets and maybe other waders (anyone?). Back to the usual suspects now- assorted Gulls, hordes of Coots, quite a few Dabchick and Moorhen, and Mallards and Mute swan.



Fieldfares at work  
*Photo – David Brightwell*

Kingfishers are occasionally to be seen. Below the tidal gates there have been mini-flocks of Greenshank this winter, with a few Lapwing, Oystercatcher, but no Godwit, Grey Plover, Dunlin, Knot (there were a lot elsewhere in the harbour) Ring Plover or Curlew that I could see. They don't seem to like our mud! (or maybe all the people on the path).

As for plants, they have been pretty inactive until just recently. Spring is now heralded by the bluebells, daffodils and other plants pushing up through the grass.

Not surprisingly there's nothing to report in the way of insect or fish life. Despite our best efforts it proved very difficult to get the tidal gates closed for a little while after the work-party, with nocturnal temperatures around freezing. I don't suppose our Tubeworm enjoyed it much.



Town Mill Pond – January 2010  
*Photo – David Brightwell*

### **Pond Freezing**

Early in January there was a series of cold days when the temperature did not rise above freezing point and at night it dropped to -5° C and lower. Slipper Pond did not freeze over whilst the Town Mill Pond did. This was queried and it was concluded that the Ems was in flood. The hills were saturated and the Constant Springs Sluice had been opened to relieve flooding. The quantity of water flowing through Peter Pond and Slipper Pond was so great that it did not have enough time to cool.

### **January Work Party**

On the 23<sup>rd</sup>. January after an unbelievably wet and miserable week 15 volunteers turned out on a glorious Saturday morning, for a most enjoyable and productive work day. The pond gates had been opened earlier to enable access to the pond bottom and the tasks discussed at the AGM were tackled. A large section of the top of the outer face of the South Bank was concreted to stop boys grubbing out rocks. Inevitably this will be initially unsightly – but hopefully it will soon weather and become part of the landscape. Matting was placed on the pond side of the common reeds at the South end of the East bank to try to stop their spread. Bushes and trees were trimmed to improve sight lines along the road and to keep them under control, and the banks cleared of litter.

### **West Bank Repairs**

As reported at the AGM the consultant has completed his design stage and has invited bids from six contractors. Four responded and we are in the final stages of evaluating them at the moment. Happily they are within our anticipated budget so we will be able to proceed to the next step. This is to seek grants for the main works, and, if we are successful, we hope to start

the works this Autumn.

The fees for this stage have almost been covered by grants and we are grateful to the Chichester Harbour Conservancy for two, Chichester District Council, the Emsworth Business Association, the Solent Protection Society and West Sussex Council for their support.

### **North Wall**

The Environment Agency has endorsed our proposal to remove silt along the main road wall and we are exploring practical ways to do this.

### **Slipper Park – Fence**

As noted at the AGM the owners have appealed against an Enforcement Notice from Chichester District Council.

### **Dates for your Diary for 2010**

Friday	26th February	Quiz Night.
Friday	7th May	Spring Talk by Tony Yoward. “The Changing Shape of the Chemist’s Shop”
	August	A Summer Drinks Party
Friday	15th October	AGM
Friday	19th November	Annual Dinner at the Brookfield Hotel.

### **Contacts**

General:	Nick Madina	01243 377749
Treasurer:	Mark Phillips	01243 376756
Social Events	Betty Smith	01243 371576
	Sarah Titley	01243 379947
Wildlife:	Gavin Millar	01243 377071
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	RSPCA	01329 667541
Environment Agency	Pollution and Flood line	0845 988 1188 0800 80 70 60
	Mention the local rangers in any calls – Paul Reynolds & Trevor Page	