

Cub Scouts plant daffodil bulbs



On the 18th October
1st Woosehill Cubs planted daffodil bulbs around the benches at Riverside Walk. This was part of the Scouts County Community Day, and the aim was to enhance their local area.

Bird Boxes Along The Emm Last week FOTEB Members checked about half the bird nest boxes they put up along the Emm. Thirteen of the 16 contained nests, and encouragingly and unlike last season, there were no dead chicks, although there was an egg in a robin's nest. We suspect that chicks fledged more successfully this year because the weather in late spring/summer was better.

The majority of the boxes were designed for hole-nesting birds like tits, sparrows and nuthatches and all of these boxes were used. Those with smaller holes (26mm) designed for blue tits, contained far more elaborate nests than those with larger holes (32 mm), which we think were used mainly by great tits.

The nests, made mainly of moss, leaves, hair and feathers, often contained a selection of synthetic materials too. The commonest was yellow, day-glow fluff from tennis balls - perhaps lost by people out exercising their dogs! The nests were again full of invertebrates, principally spiders and caterpillars, so everything was removed and the boxes were cleaned thoroughly. The nesting material in some boxes was replaced with fresh, dry, chopped-up leaves as insulation, should they also be used as roosts. We were delighted that one of the two spherical 'wren houses' had been used.

Members plan to examine and clean the remaining boxes later this month. Some of these are designed to attract less common species, such as owls, tree creepers and kingfishers and there will be another report about their success in the next Newsletter.

Kick Sampling in The Emm Members continued their biannual (May and September/October) kick sampling, to monitor the invertebrates present in the river, which began in 2006. The numbers and types of invertebrates present tell you a lot about quality of the water and the long term health of a river. For this reason the Environment Agency (EA) samples hundreds of rivers throughout the UK, usually every three or four years.

FOTEB take their samples from the same place as the EA, immediately up-stream of the bridge over the Emm in Old Forest Road, so both sets of results are comparable. Based on the invertebrates present the EA classifies rivers into six categories, from 'Very Good' to 'Bad'. **The results from their and FOTEB's samples suggest that the water quality in the Emm is 'GOOD', the second highest category.** Two new invertebrates found this autumn were flatworms and a small swimming mayfly larva.



Woodcraft Folk plant Wild Cowslips

On Tuesday 23 September a very happy, excited group of Woodcraft Folk met at Riverside Park to help FOTEB plant 100 baby cowslip plants in the Wild Flower Patch near the Emm Brook. First they had to learn how to prepare and then plant them from Mike Saynor, who had grown them from seed given him by a friend. The patch had been mown but it was really tough work to dig into hard ground through matted grass. The children set to with a will and a trowel, and in less than an hour all the little seedlings were in their new home. They have since visited them to see if they are growing but we shall have to wait for the spring to find out if they flower and

enhance the Patch with their wonderful scent. **Thank you, Woodcraft Folk.**

What does a cowslip look like in flower? (see picture R)

A cluster of pale yellow flowers on a 20-21cm stem in late April and May. Look out for them in the wildflower patch near the Brook. The scientific name is *Primula Veris*.



Moths around the Emm Brook

2008 has not been a good year for monitoring the moths around the Emm Brook with numbers down by approx 30% in my light trap at Woosehill. The low count is largely due to the wet, cool and windy weather that most parts of Britain have experienced for much of the year, plus the knock-on effects of a poor summer last year when the parents and or grand-parents of this year's moths were trying to get on with their lives and reproduce. Following a bad year, populations of moths (and other insects) usually have a great ability to bounce back when better conditions return, thanks to their high reproductive output and short life-cycles. However, the poor weather of 2007 and 2008 has come on top of a very significant and deeply worrying long-term decline in British moth populations, so local populations are now smaller and less resilient to natural fluctuations caused by variations in the weather.

Let's hope that 2009 produces warmer spring and summer weather to help the moth numbers recover.

Our Moth Man added the following note: Whilst bug hunting along side the Emm at Forest Road on the 10th October I was amazed to see **this large pike** lying in wait on a bend in the river. It was still in the same position 30 mins later. The first time that I have seen one in the brook.



Volunteers needed: If you have IT skills, you might like to volunteer to help occasionally with the management and collation of all the information we hold about the Brook. You could help to create a long term record of the Brook, and to contribute data to the national networks such as TVERC and The Woodland Trust..

Advance Notice: The 2009 FOTEB AGM will take place on June 2nd at Woosehill Centre. Everyone welcome