



The Marlborough Downs Nature Improvement Area

Jindabyne - Great Hinton
Wiltshire BA14 6BT

mdnia@btinternet.com

01380 871012

MDNIA Newsletter, June 2012

Welcome to the first Marlborough Downs NIA newsletter! Through regular newsletters we hope to keep everyone up to date with what's happening with the project and allow people to report on how they've been involved. This first edition is the only one that will be printed and sent by post to everyone as, to save on costs and so allow us to deliver more on the ground, **future newsletters will be circulated by email**, as will any other important information such as event dates. If you really must have a printed copy please let us know (contact details above), but otherwise to avoid missing anything make sure that mdnia@btinternet.com is in your contacts list and check your emails regularly.



You can also follow what's going on and comment on the project and our activities on facebook, where there's lots of information as well as a gallery of beautiful photographs showcasing our outstanding wildlife and landscape.

Upcoming events – book your place now!

The **Habitat Survey workshop** will take place on **19th June 2012**, 10 am to 3 pm at Maisey Farm, Rockley (thanks to Jilly Carter). All farmers, their families and other interested volunteers are invited to come along and learn how to carry out this simple survey.

Remember, if you're a farmer we'll need a habitat map of your farm before any application for funding or other support can be considered so if you can't come along yourself, get someone else to attend on your behalf.



We'll also be holding a **Farmland Bird Survey workshop**. As well as Simon Smart, our very own farmland bird specialist, the Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust and the South West Farmland Bird Initiative are designing a simple survey method to allow us to monitor the impact of our activities on our local bird populations. This workshop will be held on **4th July 2012**, 8 am to 12 noon at Manor Farm, Avebury Trusloe (thanks to Robin and Ben Butler). Again, if you'd like to get involved in supporting farmland birds by providing wild bird seed plots, stubbles, etc. you'll need to come along to this workshop. And

to get you started, each farm represented will receive a **free kestrel box!**

And don't forget the first annual **MDNIA summer barbeque!** This will take place at the Barbury Castle Members' Bar (thanks yet again to Nigel Bunter) on **6th July 2012**, starting at 7 pm. Bring a smile, bring your friends and family, and come along and enjoy a fun evening in the heart of the Marlborough Downs!

For more information and to reserve your place/s on any or all of these events, please contact Jemma Batten on 01380 871012 or email mdnia@btinternet.com

Let's get started!

As well as organising events and sorting out the dreaded paperwork, we've been busy since our last meeting at Barbury.

James and Gill Hussey at Weir Farm have planted over 3.5 hectares of **wild bird seed plots**. These have replaced traditional game strips and so, while continuing to be an important part of the shoot, should support a host of smaller birds too. As well as a general all-purpose mix, James and Gill have chosen to include a couple of small plots with a special mix for tree sparrows which will help to feed the thriving population at Fiddlers Hill. And the good news is that this hasn't cost the NIA a penny as the seed was supplied FREE courtesy of the **Campaign for the Farmed Environment** – a shining example of partnership working!



The MDNIA's first **dew pond restoration** is well underway at David and Edward White's farm at Berwick Bassett. So far, all the scrub that had grown over the pond has been removed and the original profile revealed. As you can see, it's already holding water so we're going to watch it over the summer before lining it, just in case we don't need to (which would save a good deal of money). The pond is immediately adjacent to the Ridgeway and we plan to build a simple bird hide so that everyone can sit and watch the birds and other wildlife while taking in the wonderful views from this spot. Do go and have a look next time you're in the area and who knows, maybe we'll soon be on your farm working on the next one!



If, like James and Gill, David and Edward, you'd like to get involved in some way, we now have a simple **application pack** which gives more detail about the many exciting activities supported by the project as well as information about how to get started. The pack is designed to be viewed on your computer (again to save printing and postage costs) so will be sent out to all farmers by email in the next few days. However, if you really need a printed version, let us know and we'll get one sent to you in the post.

And finally for now, as you see we have our very own **Marlborough Downs NIA logo** which we hope you'll agree sums up our downland landscape beautifully. Thanks very much to Gill Hussey who designed it and to Harry Bell, of the North Wessex Downs AONB team, who digitised it for us.

Please do get in touch at any time to discuss whatever aspect of the project interests you. This partnership was put together to make sure that **everyone** in the area has the opportunity to get involved in supporting our local countryside, so come on and join the fun!

Jemma Batten, Acting Project Manager