

Volunteer Newsletter

Spring 2022



Photo: Ben Andrew RSPB Images

Hello everyone!

I hope you're well. Here's the Spring/ Summer volunteer newsletter for the Dearne Valley. I aim for it to be quarterly, but that doesn't quite happen, sorry!

Anyway, grab a cuppa and a biccys and settle down for a read of what's been happening on our reserves over the last few months. Thank you to everyone who has contributed, if you would like to contribute to future

newsletter, do get in touch with me:

elizabeth.harding@rspb.org.uk or 07729
627280



As every, thanks so much for all you do to keep Old Moor and our satellite sites thriving and our visitors happy.

Hope to see you soon!

Liz Harding

Volunteer events



Friday 17th June Volunteer Summer Party!

Join us for a BBQ from 6pm and pub quiz at 7pm. In the courtyard, all staff and volunteers welcome– please let Liz/ Martin know if you're coming by Wednesday 15th at the latest.

Dearne Valley Fuddles!

Bring and share lunch for all staff and volunteers, on the following dates. Bring along something (shop bought or homemade) for a drop in lunch between 12-2pm. We'll be on the Farmhouse Lawn or Chat Room if wet. Pop in for as long as you can!

Thursday 14th July

Friday 5th August

Tuesday 13th September

Wednesday 5th October

Hello from Lydia Tague

Hello again everyone! Boy it's good to be back. Many of you will already know me in my previous role as Visitor Operations Manager here in the Dearne Valley, but Emma's impending (at time of writing!) happy news has given me the opportunity to do the job of my dreams at a reserve that I love.

I've been with the RSPB for a grand total of 15 years now. Starting as an Education volunteer, I went on to my first part time role as a centre assistant at the Ribble. Between then and now, I have worked on the Manchester Peregrines project, Saltholme, Aberdeen, back down to Newcastle, the Aire Valley and then here. What a list eh? This does mean that I have had the pleasure of working with a wide range of wonderful people, both staff and volunteers, and can honestly say, the Dearne Valley has some of the best.

In my spare time, I like to go walking and birding, working on my partner's farm keeps me pretty busy, and most weekends I can be found skating round a sports hall playing roller derby.

I look forward to working with all of you whilst I keep Emma's chair warm for her.

Lydia



Hello from Martin Halstead



Hi everyone, for those volunteers who I'm yet to meet, I'm Martin the volunteer co-ordinator at Old Moor.

My day job is being an Investigator in the National Crime Agency (NCA). I've been in law enforcement for 41 years. I have 2 grown up kids, 3 grandkids, 2 miniature schnauzers and a lovely wife, Virginia. My hobbies are ornithology, metal detecting and supporting Sheffield United. I started at Old Moor in January this year, working on Fridays, I'm enjoying meeting new people and hope to help make your volunteering experience an enjoyable one. Please pop in for a chat if you can, it would be great to meet you !

What the Warden Team gets up to.

written by Derek Smith.

I've been volunteering with the Warden Team for just over 12 years. In this time the number of reserves we need to cover has grown to seven, so the demands on the team have grown. Our work varies – habitat tasks, planting trees, reeds and then managing them, trimming trees, laying hedges, cutting reeds -as examples. We also do a lot of structural work, building hides (and taking them down), making concrete sluices and installing the pipes/water courses that go with them. Erecting fences, the list goes on... but I guess you get the idea!

Added on to this is the Lottery funded work which has largely been done by contractors, but our team has had to do a large bulk of the supporting work.

Wombwell Ings

This photo shows the posts being put in at Wombwell Ings for the fence that was put in the trench that was dug around the perimeter. The ditch and fence are there to keep predators out of the area.

Since the ditch and fence have been established the number and variety of birds has increased.

To enable the works to be done on Wombwell, the water levels in the pools had to be lowered, this resulted in a very small pool and reports of fish being trapped in the small pool. A team from a fishery came to investigate and found several very large carp, plus some smaller fish and an eel! These would be kept in their own ponds as they're not allowed to release them back into the wild.



Adwick

No major works have taken place at Adwick over the last couple of years, our main tasks here are: - maintaining the electric fence; plants grow and start to short out the fence, and maintain the hedge we

planted several years ago. The main part of this is to lay the hedge, it's going to take us several years to lay the whole of it as there are several kilometres of hedge! We started this in 2020 (pic below) and this year we've had to trim the growth from the hedge that's been layed!



Edderthorpe, Great and Little Houghton.

These three reserves have no real public access though you can see Edderthorpe from the layby on the main road that goes by.

Edderthorpe has been managed by us for quite a while now but first Great and then followed by Little Houghton came under our management.

This photo shows one of the tern rafts that were floated out at Edderthorpe this year.



Great Houghton had scrapes dug out for pools and we planted hundreds if not thousands (it felt like thousands!) of trees near woodland and a hedge along a boundary.

Little Houghton (more or less across the river Dearne from Great Houghton) had to be fenced off and a couple of sluices installed to manage the water on site. You may or may not be aware that we acquired three Konik ponies (Polish wild horses) a couple of years ago, this is where they live all year round. Being wild horses, they can cope with our winters no problem. Several RSPB reserves around the UK have Koniks on site to help control the vegetation, they eat virtually anything!

Gypsy Marsh

There is a public footpath through Gypsy Marsh, so people are able to see the flora and fauna on site. Our main management here is to cut the growth, especially willow, to enable the orchids, etc to thrive.

Old Moor

Many changes have taken place at Old Moor due to Lottery funding. The wild Play areas, new Family hide (The Lookout) and landscaping the Field Pools.

The landscaping on the Field Pools was done by a contractor, but the path parallel to Green Lane was laid by us. Part way along is the footbridge over the flood channel to the Field Pools.

The bridge came in kit form with instructions a lot less clear than an IKEA kit! We had to lay the parts out and work step by step as to how to put it together.



We eventually figured it out and, after the foundations were laid, it got assembled. It hasn't collapsed yet so maybe we did it right.





The ground along the Field Pools is solid clay (as is a large part of Old Moor), leading to water collecting along the new path. French drains had to be put across the path in places and one alongside the path near the bridge to make the area along the path dry.



A French drain is made by digging a trench, inserting a plastic pipe with holes in it along the bottom of the trench and then filling the trench with gravel. The gravel allows water to flow down to the pipe, goes through the holes in the pipe and then empties itself where the pipe comes out, above the ditch.

Some other things we've done this year: -

We cut and then collected some of the reeds in various places. Bitterns like to fish on reed edges, so this enables them to be able to do this.





The old Toyota Pond dipping platform had become unsafe and so was replaced by a solid platform which should last longer.

The roof on the Field Pools East hide was leaking very badly and so we replaced the roof.

Wath Ings hide roof is also deteriorating and in need of replacing, this is on the list for the near future.

Wath Ings hide is, of course, much bigger and is built on a slope on stilts and so presents much more of a problem.



Going back to the Konik ponies to finish this piece, we started off with three ponies but we soon found out that the mare was pregnant! Not from the two male horses as they had been gelded, but from a horse where they were before they came to us. So, last year a little foal was born and the wardens gave him the name Mac. For reasons I won't go into, he can't be gelded and so, nearing maturity, he has to be separated from his mum. His eventual destination is Blacktoft Sands where they have quite a few Konik ponies but they can't take him yet. Here he is (on the right) being made a fuss of by Heather in the meadow behind the pylon near the Wildlife Ponds. The other horse is Col, brought to keep Mac company. They will remain here for a while until Blacktoft can take him.

Bye for now, Derek.



Current Volunteer Vacancies

We have several volunteer roles available at the moment– if you know someone who might be interested, please take a role flyer from the red folder in the Welcome Hut or share <https://volunteer.rspb.org.uk/opportunities> and search for Old Moor.

Retail Volunteer (see April)

Optics Champion Volunteer (see April)

Community Engagement Volunteer (see Liz)

Nature Tots Leaders (see Sharon)

Schools on Reserves Leaders (see Abi)

Social Media and Communications Volunteer (see Spike)

Quality Control and Maintenance Volunteer (see Spike)

Face Painter Volunteer (see Liz)

Administrator Volunteer (see Brigid)

We are trying to get our volunteer roles better advertised, especially out in the community to bring in new people to join our team.

If you know of a community space/ online group/ websites who could share a volunteer roles poster

or have some flyers, please get in touch with Liz Harding or Martin Halstead. You could take some posters/ flyers or put us in touch.

Thank you very much!



History of RSPB Old Moor, Dearne Valley

By Alvin Hickling, Welcome Volunteer

I have a small Genealogy business and for the last 12 or so years my main objective has been dealing with researching people and not places. But a couple of months ago I was asked by Liz to look into the history of Old Moor. It was an opportunity for me to broaden my horizons and I have loved the challenge so far. Thank you for the opportunity. I was given a blank canvas so that was a big help as I had no plan and would just make it up as I went along.

As I am partial to collecting old maps, I started there. A visit to Rotherham and Barnsley Archives confirms that it is on the boundary so a couple of the maps had bits missing. Using The National Library of Scotland it was possible to acquire a range of maps dating from 1849, 1888, 1901, 1916, 1952 and 2012. These show us the enormous changes in the whole area over a period of 170 years. There have been railway lines, sidings, coal tips, flooded land agricultural land and even an emergency airstrip during WW2. The land was eventually acquired, cleaned up and become the wonderful world we all know today as RSPB Old Moor. Paradise in the Dearne Valley.

When I've completed the research (although I suspect this will be an ongoing task) the fuller picture will be logged. In the meantime these are a few highlights.....

According to the stone above the entrance to the shop we can see a date of 1755 engraved. Potentially this is the date that the building was built.

After a search of old newspapers courtesy of Lancashire Library I turned up an advert in the Leeds Intelligencer dated 10th May 1757. A horse was stolen from Old Moor pastures. It was the property of Edward Bramald of Wombwell and there was one guinea reward. It's probable that Edward Bramald was the first farmer to live at Old Moor.

I have found tax assessments between 1790 and 1800. The documents tell us that the landowner was the Earl Fitzwilliam and the occupier was George Brooke. The Brooke family would occupy the farm from the latter part of the 18th century (I don't know the exact date) through to around 1930. Having managed to find all the census documents from 1841 to 1911 and the 1939 register it's clear that many individuals particularly in the Brooke family were born and died at Old Moor Farm House.

World War 1 connections at Old Moor

The First World War affected the lives of everyone everywhere at the time and Old Moor was no exception. Several individuals played important roles during the First World War.

Sarah (Daisy) Brooke was the first daughter of Joseph Brooke the last Brooke tenant of Old Moor. The two younger sisters were Cassandra and Ethel. Daisy, born in 1889 and worked for the British Red Cross at Middlewood Hall V.A.D. Hospital in Darfield. Middlewood was one of 3000 auxiliary hospitals administered by the Red Cross during the war. Sarah worked here throughout the war until October 1918. She then went on to work at Beckett Street Hospital in Leeds. currently known as St.James's.

<https://vad.redcross.org.uk/en/~media/BritishRedCross/Documents/Who%20we%20are/History%20and%20archives/List%20of%20auxiliary%20hospitals%20in%20the%20UK%20during%20the%20First%20World%20War.pdf>

Joseph's Brooke's sister Cassandra married Benjamin Ormerod , secretary of a mining company from Manchester. They had two children , **James Brooke** and **Alfred** Ormerod. James was born in 1884 in West Melton and signed up in December 1915. He served with 13th Cheshire Regiment. He was killed in action on 8th October 1916 in Bouzincourt in France. Less than 12 months later Benjamin and Cassandra would lose their remaining son Albert .

Albert attended Manchester Grammar School and Durham University where he graduated. He was about to be ordained by the Bishop of Southwell when war broke out. With permission from the Bishop he enlisted in 1914. He was with 20th Battalion Royal Fusiliers and was killed in action on 23rd April 1917 in Fontaine les Croisilles.

I'm almost certain that Joseph Brooke born in 1857 was the last Brooke to reside at Old Moor. The 1927 trade directory shows him as the farmer here. I've still not managed to find a death entry for Joseph but the 1939 Register tells us that the occupants were Stanley Gascoyne, dairy farmer with his wife Ethel and son Brian.

Several people who currently work at Old Moor remember the Gascoyne family from the early years of Old Moor Wetland Centre.

There is still a lot of information to gather and a lot of documents to be uncovered. I'm going to try to fill in as many gaps as I can in the future. If anyone suspects that I got some incorrect information then please feel free to correct me. There is so much more to Old Moor than meets the eye. It will take time.

In the not too distant future I am surveying and photographing the carvings dotted about the walls and buildings. Hopefully, I will get them all but if anyone has inside information of hidden ones then please let me know. The carvings suggest to me that the farm housed some very talented people in the past. Logging the carvings will be a fine tribute to him, her or them. Maybe one day whilst digging in the archives I will come across an actual name.

I hope these few notes of the initial findings will intrigue people. Historical research can be addictive. You find one answer but that asks you two more questions. Hopefully the maps and other documents will be made available to view in time for the Heritage Event on 19th June . Anyone requiring copies is welcome to contact me.

If you'd like to learn more about the Dearne Valley from industrial landscape to nature reserve, here is a link to a YouTube recording of a talk by Ian Rotherham, Professor Environmental Geography at Sheffield Hallam University

[From Dereliction to Tourism Hub - the story of RSPB Old Moor in the Dearne Valley - YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tz6Htzloexo)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tz6Htzloexo>

The talk itself begins 3 minutes in.

Creativity at Old Moor!

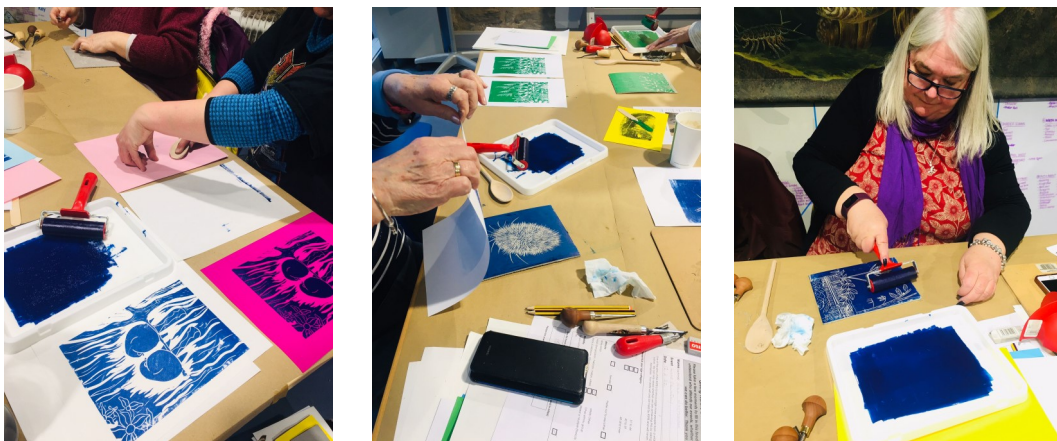
by Liz Harding

The first half of the Activity Plan delivery in 2022 has been very creative, with us trying our different events to attract new audience and introduce them to nature in the Dearne Valley. I thought I would share some photos of what has been happening.

Mid February, Louise Wright (<https://www.louiseannwright.co.uk>) delivered a day's workshop on lino printing. People on the workshop started with a walk around the reserve, taking photos and drawing shapes, textures and views that inspired them.



These images and ideas were developed into a final design which was carved into a lino block, ink was spread onto this so the design could be printed onto card/ canvas.



I hope you agree that the resulting prints are wonderfully different to each other but all contain elements of our wonderful nature reserve.



"Great experience- I enjoyed using the environment for ideas for our designs. Very knowledgeable tutor with lots of good ideas. Thanks!"

April saw local crafts men and women return to Old Moor for our Spring Craft Fair, with MUCH better weather than our Christmas Fair. The sun shone over 730+ visitors coming to Old Moor, over 200 of them visiting us for the first time. They explored 30 stalls including local glass workers, jewellery makers, ceramicists, wood turners, a crepe van, photographers, illustrators, candle makers.....

Kids did finger print butterflies, made bird feeders, pond dipped and searched for our Easter Eggs. It was a fantastic day. It looks like the craft fairs are events enabled by our Lottery funding but which will continue long after the project. The date is set for our Christmas Fair 2022– Saturday 26th November– and Father Christmas is booked in!

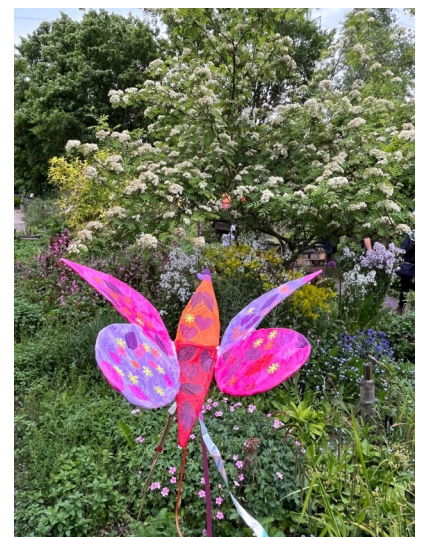




May bought lots of workshops: family workshops at Old Moor making lots of dragonflies and giant bugs in all colours of the rainbow.



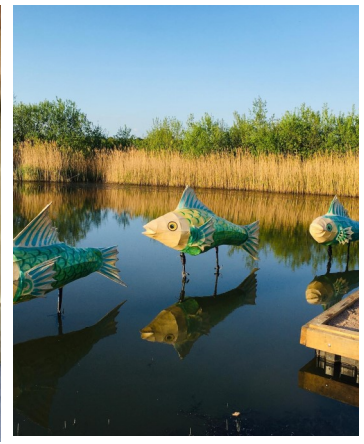
Creative Recovery, a charity using crafts and creativity to help people's mental health, made a giant face and bugs, Barnburgh Brownies made loads of tissue paper fish, Manvers Residents' Association made some gorgeous butterflies.



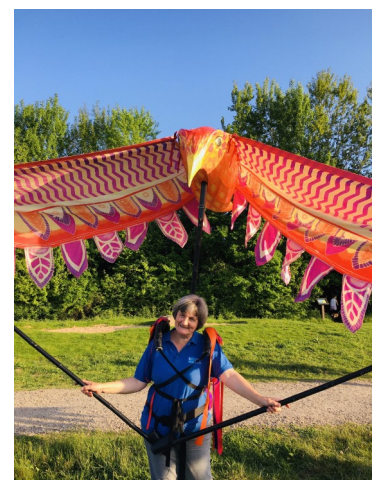


Students at Dearne Valley College made hoop pictures, Rotherham Beavers made colourful birds and metres and metres of leaf bunting was made by Thorpe Hesley Primary School and The Rowan Centre. Wath Wood Drive crafters created some lovely dragonflies.

All this creativity featured in our Wonders of the Wetlands art festival, alongside giant wildlife sculptures, and puppets from Handmade Parade and stilt walkers.



“It was lovely to be part of the workshop and then visit again with our family”



“Absolutely glorious! Beautifully done, engaging, subtle, moving and perfect for the whole family. More please!”

“Really impressed by the quality of the sculptures and the range of groups who've been involved in making them. Delighted to see the new hide, the new play area and the gardens developed - such progress since our last visit in 2020. Well done.”



Dates for your diaries

If you would like to volunteer at these events, please get in touch with Liz Harding, or if you would like to buy tickets/ share with your friends and family, find out more here: <https://events.rspb.org.uk/oldmoor>

Sunday 19th June 6-9pm Heritage Evening with Rockingham Band performances and Chol Theatre performing “A Flock of Stories” based on memories of the Dearne Valley

Saturday 2nd July Paper Birds workshop

Saturday 23rd July Fused glass garden panels workshop

Saturday 10th September Bumblebee willow weaving workshop

Sunday 18th September- Time TBC Heritage event again with Chol and Rockingham band- not sure if this will be daytime or evening....

Friday 14th and Saturday 15th October— 6-8:30pm Lantern Festival, featuring lanterns from family and community workshops and lit sculptures by Hand-made Parade.

Saturday 26th November- Christmas Fair 2022 (daytime)

Every Monday 1-2:30pm Wellbeing Walk led by Walking for Health leaves from Old Moor courtyard. FREE.

Hello from Abi Gibbons

Hello everyone! I'm Abi the new Learning Officer at Old Moor. Some of you may have spotted me around the reserve and activity centre already (usually followed closely by a group of children!) Here's a little bit about me.

I have worked in the Conservation sector for the last six years, educating and engaging with a range of age groups around the Midlands and Yorkshire region. My role focuses on the RSPB Schools on Reserves programme, which provides a fantastic opportunity for young people to connect with nature through a variety of curriculum-based activities, which I could not do without the help of my Schools on reserves volunteers. A typical day starts with preparing the classroom and resources for the days school visit, checking the weather forecast before briefing the volunteers on the school. After a quick cuppa it's off to the coach bay, ready to greet the children and teachers.

Our groups usually visit 10 till 2:30pm during which time we might be pond dipping, minibeast spotting in the woods and meadows, bird watching or playing environmental games on the lawn. It's wonderful to see how much the children enjoy



being outside and a brilliant way for them to learn about nature. Some of our children come from areas with little to no access to green spaces so it's so important we keep providing these opportunities and experiences. I like to think we're inspiring the next Greta Thunberg or David Attenborough of the world.

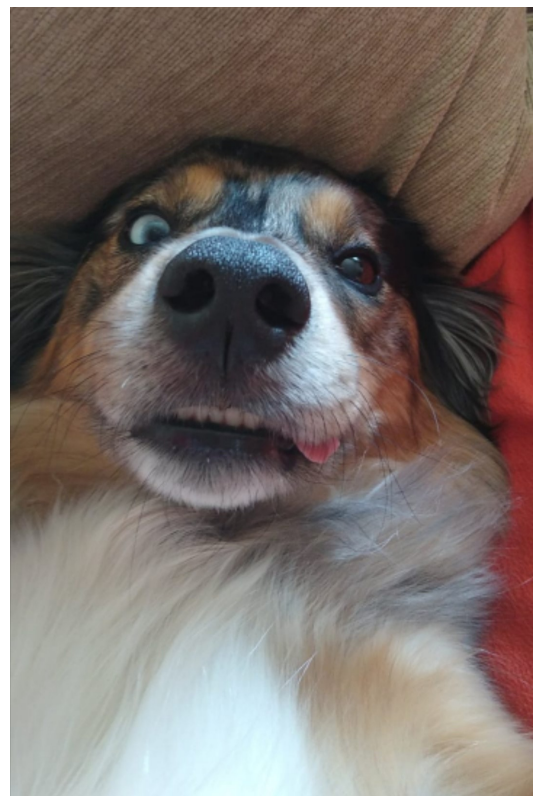
When I'm not working, I try to get outside as much as possible, whether that's walking the hills and forests with my dog, foraging or paddle boarding on Yorkshire's rivers and coasts, being by water gives my mental health an instant feel-good boost. An RSPB highlight for me so far this year has been a trip to Bempton Cliffs, one of my favourite places to watch the puffins and gannets. Recently I was lucky enough to catch a glimpse of the Brown eyed Albatross and some curious seals.

If you would like to be involved with Schools on Reserves or know someone who might be, please do find out more or apply, we're always after enthusiastic and engaging people to join the team. It's a great excuse to get outside, meet new people, share knowledge and learn new skills.

Hope to meet you soon,

Abi

Ps I have way more photos of my dog, Anakin, than of me so here's one of him too!



Spring wildlife quiz

During spring, hedgehogs start emerging from hibernation and can roam up to two miles at night foraging for food. Which of the following should you **NOT** leave out for hedgehogs passing through your garden? Dog/cat food Plain, fresh water Milk

As well as taking their first steps within an hour of being born, lambs are born with their bodies already covered in wool. How long will a sheep's wool grow before being shed?

6 months 2 years Forever



Is this a picture of a rabbit or a hare? Rabbit Hare

Is there anything more adorable than the sight of a mother duck with her flock of ducklings following along behind her? Ducklings usually start to emerge from March onwards, but how long are the eggs incubated for before they hatch? 28 days 3 months 9

months



The red admiral butterfly migrates to the UK in spring from as far away as Europe and North America. When it makes its home to prepare for the mating season, which type of plant does it prefer?

Stinging nettle

Ripening fruit

Flowering plants



Puffins are making their way back to the UK to have their young after spending winter in warmer climes. What do you call a baby puffin?

Puffy

Puffling

Puffinette



During spring bumblebees begin to come out of hibernation. How large is an average bumblebee colony?

4000 workers

400 workers

40,000 workers

When the weather's fair, you might catch sight of a pipistrelle – the most common bat in Britain, out hunting in the evening. How heavy is a pipistrelle bat? 400g (as much as a can of soup) 55g (as much as a tennis ball) 5g (as much as a 20 pence piece)



In spring, ponds will often become overrun with toad and frogspawn. Whilst it may seem overcrowded, how much of the eggs would normally survive to adulthood? 70% 35% 10%



Quiz answers

1. milk 2. Forever 3. Hare 4. 28 days 5. stinging nettle 6. puffing 7. 400 8. 5g 9. 10%