

## ***Boggart Hole Clough Nature Conservation Group & Wildlife Gardening Club***

are volunteers dedicated to the long-term well-being of the Clough's wildlife/ecosystem: its broadleaved woodland, wildflower meadow, wetlands, lake, ponds and brooks and all the mammals, birds, amphibians, insects, etc., living in these habitats. The woodland, the Clough's predominant habitat, is classified by English Nature as ***Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland***: "...an irreplaceable asset of great importance...It has now become a major priority to prevent any further reduction in the area or in the nature conservation value of remaining ancient woodland..." The woodland is designated by the Greater Manchester Ecology Unit as a ***Site of Biological Importance in Greater Manchester***. The Clough has the characteristics of a ***Local Nature Reserve*** and we regard and care for it as such.

### **RESTORING BOGGART HOLE CLOUGH NATURAL WOODLAND BIODIVERSITY**

Boggart Hole Clough contains the largest of the four remnants of ancient woodland surviving in the City of Manchester. Its ancient woodland classification means the Clough has been continuously wooded since before AD 1600. The woodland core may have been continuously wooded since the retreat of glaciation 12,000 years ago. During the past century *Rhododendron Ponticum* and Japanese Knotweed, invasive plant species, have been introduced and allowed to spread unchecked so that areas of the woodland have been destroyed. The Greater Manchester Ecology Unit's 1991 Survey of the Clough stated: "*Rhododendron is invasive throughout much of the wood and is preventing the development of a good, native understorey and ground flora.*" Observe rhododendron areas and see how few plants are growing compared to other areas. In part this is because rhododendron are allelopathic: their roots contain toxins suppressing the growth of surrounding vegetation. Once rhododendron invade an area not even trees survive; only those trees growing above the level of the rhododendron canopy will persist, but when these die there is no replacement because seedlings cannot become established; as the flora is destroyed so in turn the fauna, deprived of habitat, disappears; thus rhododendron wipe out whole communities of plants, mammals, birds and insects. Rhododendron support no British wildlife. In September 2002 we initiated an **invasive rhododendron eradication programme**. Clearing rhododendron enables native flora and fauna to regenerate/recolonize thus **restoring natural woodland biodiversity**. A further programme, to eliminate Japanese Knotweed, will also have to be planned and implemented. These programmes may additionally include among other tasks: collecting and sowing seeds, planting, transplanting, coppicing, pollarding, thinning, creating pools/scrapes as amphibian habitats, reducing ravine-side erosion (soil conservation), renovating nature trails, carrying out floral and faunal surveys.

Boggart Hole Clough and its several tributary cloughs (ravines/narrow valleys) form a striking example of the Irk Valley's distinctive natural topography. Among other potential nature conservation remedial projects is the proposed reinstatement/renewal of Top Clough which was partly filled in with spoil, and the brook culverted, circa 1908-9 when the lake was constructed. Top Clough could be dug out, the brook opened to view again, the ravine sides reseeded/replanted from the Clough's own stock of native flora and a footbridge built for the brook crossing to Clough Top. This would **restore the original ravine landscape with its natural woodland**.

After these initial, prolonged though temporary, programmes/projects of remedial interventionist conservation work should follow permanent routine conservation activity to ensure the Clough's wildlife/ecosystem continues to thrive, i.e. there will always remain hands-on nature/woodland conservation management tasks, e.g. surveying biodiversity levels, weeding out invasive plant regrowth, coppicing, thinning, etc.

Our work supplements, it does not duplicate or replace, the work of Manchester City Council employees. It is possible that the Trust and/or the Council will obtain funds to employ paid nature/woodland conservationists on a temporary or preferably on a permanent basis in the Clough. We strongly encourage and would warmly welcome such a development because it would lighten our workload.

#### **The aim**

*of Boggart Hole Clough Nature Conservation Group & Wildlife Gardening Club*

**is to ensure the Clough's wildlife/ecosystem is in a healthy, thriving condition for future generations to enjoy.**