

West Oxfordshire Field Club

www.thefieldclub.org.uk



Newsletter No. 102 Autumn 2015

EDITORIAL

In contrast to last spring's editorial, which was written after a lazy lunch-hour in the sun, this one comes from a rather fuzzy head after spending much of the night watching the eclipse of the supermoon. Local conditions were perfect – a crisp, clear and very star-spangled night set the scene (no street lights here), and the main event was sufficiently high above the horizon not to be obscured by hills or houses. I was surprised by how astoundingly beautiful it was – the shades of blood-red to amber, the detail of the dark shadowy figures, and the delicate lighting of the rim as it approached totality. The brilliance of the supermoon emphasised the heavy darkness of totality.

The night was punctuated by the cries of geese – a common sound even at night during migration time. The last of the local swallows and martins left last week. On Exmoor a couple of weeks ago the skies were full of these agile fliers swooping among the brilliant yellow gorse bushes and the still-purple heather, many probably already on their way south. Before they departed, the last broods of summer lined up to be fed, not on the telegraph wires but on roof.

The Field Club also has a nightlife, with visits to Swinford churchyard to look

for glow worms, to Sherborne and other venues to watch (and hear) the various species of bats as they emerge for an evening's hunting, and the regular moth morning, when we check out moth traps set the previous evening.

But even stay-at-homes can find plenty to watch. Over the many years I have lived in Oxfordshire I have seen the advance of the collared dove, the disappearance of willow warblers, siskins and yellowhammers from my garden, and the loss of the cuckoos who use to mate with such abandon in the willows at the end of the garden. The latest newcomer is the red kite, seen almost every day now. When it descends in to a small garden, one realises just how big this bird is – with a wingspan of almost 2 metres. A few weeks ago I found a dead young rabbit in my garden. Not unusual, you might think, but it would be difficult for a rabbit to get under my garden gate and it certainly hadn't tunnelled its way in. I assumed it had been dropped by a bird. My neighbour took it out into the field and set up his video camera. I was hoping to lure a kite down. About half an hour later I glimpsed a large bird dropping into the field. The video footage we got showed that it was not a kite. First, two magpies and a rook pitched into the carcass.

Then a buzzard arrived and stood possessively over it. The magpies took off straight away, but the rook lingered. It fixed its eye on the buzzard, obviously much put out to lose a meal. But when the buzzard rather disdainfully turned its head towards the rook, the rook immediately began to peck at the soil, feigning disinterest. As soon as the buzzard looked away, the rook resumed its angry staring. The buzzard then spent some five minutes shuffling the carcass around between its feet, before finally getting a good grip and flying off with it.

In parts of the Chilterns red kites, like seagulls on the coast, are getting a bad name for stealing people's sandwiches, which can be scary. But whose behaviour should we change? Do we drive the birds away so that people can eat in the street? At least the kites don't resort to pecking humans. Club

members will remember visits to the Farne Islands where the nesting terns, like the nesting seagulls, attack. I still have the image of Tony Florey carrying a raised-up walking stick with a Cola can on the top as a decoy – and it worked!

The Club will soon be heading north again, to Morecambe Bay for its autumn birding trip. The botanist among us enjoyed the June trip to the Peak District, blessed by warm, sunny weather and perhaps the longest species list we have ever recorded.

Our hearty thanks to all our leaders, both Club members and others, who have given up their time so that we can enjoy the great outdoors.

Jill Bailey

YOUR NEWSLETTER

A big thank you to everyone who contributed to this newsletter, and especially those who had to try more than once to get emails through. These reports really bring back good memories for members, and help to show non-members what is out there to be enjoyed.

Please can you let me have your reports of walks and other Club outings, including any September reports that did not make it into this

newsletter, by the first week of April 2016 for the Spring newsletter, and any April reports as soon as possible afterwards. My e-mail address is j.bailey@ecofeatures.co.uk. E-mailed flora and fauna lists in a single column, not in a table or spaced with tabs, please. If this is not convenient, please post handwritten or printed reports to the address given on your programme.

Jill Bailey (Newsletter Editor)

REPORTS OF FIELD MEETINGS

Dawn Chorus at Rushy Common 10 May 2015

Thirteen of us met up in the reserve car park just before 4.00a.m. on an overcast but fine spring morning. As expected, the calls of the first few bird species heard were from those on the Rushy Common Lake: Black-headed Gulls, Coots, Mallards, Canada Geese and Lapwings. A Barn Owl was seen just outside the car park entrance and tawny owls were calling in the distance. I think we disturbed a Sedge Warbler nearby on the edge of the lake because it uttered a few notes of its irritable sounding song – they always seem to me as if something has upset them!

We did a circular walk to Hardwick and Gill Mill, via Tar Lakes, and finished at the Rushy Common bird-watching hide. By the time we reached Tar Lakes many of the passerine species were waking up and Reed Buntings, Robins, Song Thrushes, Blackbirds, Blackcaps and Wrens constantly sang along the hedgerows. At this time of day, once one of a particular species sings, then others of the same tribe soon join in. However, one of our party briefly heard the

only Common Snipe of the morning drumming not far away. Along the way, a Barn Owl spent some time quite close to us quartering the grassy areas around a fishing lake. We also had a very close view of a pair of Red-crested Pochards on the river and, beyond them on the far bank, a startled Muntjac deer.

As we ambled across the water meadow towards Gill Mill, a large flock of grazing Greylag Geese completely ignored us, presumably because they were used to seeing local walkers on a regular basis. From the bird-watching hide a bit later on, in addition to the usual water bird species seen, Common Terns, Oystercatchers and a Little Ringed Plover were spotted and added to the growing species list, which eventually reached 45. Surprisingly, some of the expected common species such as Greenfinch and Dunnock weren't heard or seen, but nevertheless it had been a fruitful and enjoyable walk.

List of bird species logged, with the time the first of each was encountered:

03.52 Black-headed gull	04.42 Wood pigeon	05.55 Common whitethroat
03.52 Coot	04.52 Garden warbler	05.55 Cormorant
03.53 Mallard	04.54 Chaffinch	06.07 Swallow
03.54 Canada goose	05.00 Moorhen	06.15 Great crested grebe
03.55 Lapwing	05.01 Carrion crow	06.15 Common tern
03.58 Sedge warbler	05.02 Chiffchaff	06.16 Tufted duck
04.00 Barn owl	05.02 Pheasant	06.20 Gadwall
04.14 Tawny owl	05.05 Great tit	06.25 Magpie
04.15 Reed bunting	05.20 Grey heron	06.30 Oystercatcher
04.25 Robin	05.26 Rook	06.30 Mute swan
04.26 Song thrush	05.26 Green woodpecker	06.40 Sand martin
04.27 Blackbird	05.27 Red-crested pochard	06.45 Little ringed plover
04.27 Common snipe	05.29 Jackdaw	07.00 Goldfinch
04.28 Blackcap	05.30 Greylag goose	07.05 Great-spotted w'pecker
04.32 Wren	05.50 Blue tit	07.13 Stock dove

David Rolfe

Hackpen Hill 31 May 2015

The chosen date for this chalk grassland site visit coincided with that of the Upper Thames branch of Butterfly Conservation, the latter due to take place in the morning and ours in the afternoon. No-one turned up for the morning visit, no doubt due to a poor weather forecast, but I managed to contact Gillian and Mike Taylor, the intended leaders of the BC visit, at noon. They live in nearby Childrey and agreed to join us and give us the benefit of their considerable knowledge of the site, which only became an open access area less than 10 years ago. As it happened, the weather was much better than predicted! It did not rain, but a fair wind was blowing for some of the time.

In an average year, I would have expected to see kestrel, buzzard and wheatear, but this was not to be. However, we did see and hear corn bunting and skylark, as well as a single red kite. Also seen were yellowhammer, whitethroat, chaffinch and meadow pipit.

It was a little cool to observe many Lepidoptera, but there were plenty of Narrow-bordered 5-spot Burnet moths and a Burnet Companion moth. These 5-spot

Burnets are often confused with the 6-spot variety, but emerge earlier in the year. We also found a caterpillar of a 6-spot Burnet. Based on his earlier observance of Wood Tiger caterpillars, Mike Taylor told us that the day-flying Wood Tiger moths, which are common here, were likely to emerge three weeks later than average this year, so none were seen. Despite the cloudy sky and low temperature we saw a few Common Blues and Small Heaths, a single Small Copper, a few Green Hairstreaks and two Brown Argus. On two patches of nettles we found caterpillars of Peacock and Small Tortoiseshell butterflies.

Regarding the flora, we found a small number of Common Spotted and Pyramidal Orchids in bud. Present in much larger numbers and all flowering were: Quaking Grass (*Briza media*), Stemless Thistle, Horse Vetch, Rockrose, Common Thyme, Salad Burnet, Milkwort and Mouse-eared Hawkweed, as well as several species of buttercup, including Bulbous Buttercup. As we left through a kissing gate we found some Heartsease (*Viola tricolor*).

Common Blue, Small Heath and Burnet Moth Caterpillar



Malcolm Brownsword

Derbyshire Peak District 1-4 June 2015

An advanced party of three travelled up to Castleton in the High Peak of Derbyshire, where we were staying at Ye Olde Cheshire Cheese Inn, the day before the rest of the group and our leader Peter Creed. On the

Monday morning we were greeted by lovely sunshine and after breakfast, while waiting for Peter to arrive, we walked from the car park at the top of Winnats Pass to the top of Mam Tor, 517 m (1,696 ft) high, which

dominated the skyline to the north. Approaching the summit we had magnificent views into the Vale of Edale on the left and on the right to Castleton and the cement works. On the banks beside the path we were delighted to see, among lots of other limestone grassland flowers, Meadow Saxifrage. Overhead Skylarks were singing their hearts out. Our return route took us through a wood where Bluebells were still in flower, then on to what appeared to be an abandoned tarmac road. Further up the hillside this road disappeared into a series of distortions. It was snapped and buckled with deep cracks criss-crossing it and sheer drop-offs to the left. Above the distortions the road appeared normal again with double white lines still showing. Mam Tor means 'mother hill', so called because frequent landslips on its eastern face have resulted in a multitude of 'mini-hills' beneath it. It was these landslips, caused by unstable lower layers of shale, that had caused the devastation of the road which we found out later was the original route of the A625 Sheffield to Chapel en le Frith road. The Sheffield Turnpike Company first constructed this road in 1819 using spoil from the nearby Odin mine. The following 160 years saw constant repairs and reconstruction which are all exposed in the remains. In 1977, the landslide moved again and the road was restricted to single-lane traffic. In 1979, the road was permanently closed to traffic. The landslips also gave the hill its alternative name of Shivering Mountain.

As we continued back to the car park beyond the Blue John Cave we passed a big depression in the ground, the bottom of

which was very colourful with Marsh Marigolds and Lady's Smock flowers. We noted that in this area some of the Lady's Smock flowers were quite a deep pink in amongst the more usual very pale violet/pink

The weather had gradually deteriorated during the morning and it rained intermittently as we reached the car park. We had had the best of the day as it rained from then on and the strong wind made it difficult to manage an umbrella. Never the less after Peter arrived two of us joined him for a walk up Cave Dale, which gave us splendid views of Peveril Castle perched on top of the steep cliffs above us. We were rewarded by finding several of the Derbyshire specialities including Spring Sandwort and Lesser Meadow-rue on the steep slopes and rocks on either side of the path. Peter also pointed out two saxifrages that have become naturalised – Fringe Cups and London Pride growing on a wall as we entered Cave Dale.

The next day with improved weather – drizzle giving way to clear skies but with dark clouds, at times threatening to deluge us with rain, which fortunately did not happen. The wind remained very strong so Peter decided to take us to Cheedale to walk beside the River Wye from Wye Dale car park where it was relatively sheltered. I don't know what colour the river is usually but it was a lovely shade of brown and after all the rain the previous day and night was high and running fast. As soon as we had left the car park Peter was finding interesting plants and insects for us to see. In a patch of Ransoms (Wild Garlic) male Ransoms Hoverflies were flying around over the top of the plants (the females were hiding in the foliage where they lay their eggs in the roots)



L Water Avens, C Wood Avens, R Hybrid These were common in the woodland here.

As we progressed along the good quality private road Peter was spotting interesting insects one after another. He was thrilled these included four uncommon ladybirds. We came across a small group of tall allium-type flowers which turned out to be *Nectaroscordum siculum* (Honey Garlic) – one of only two sites where this plant is found in Derbyshire. Then right on the side of the road (one plant run over) we spotted Narrow-leaved Bittercress, a biennial herb which is listed as Near Threatened. Chee Dale is one of the few places it is found. The road followed the river at the edge of Topley Wood which was on the steep slope to our right. Ken, ahead of the group, spotted two Dippers, and on the way back Jill Bailey watched some Dippers feeding two young. We were also lucky to see a Heron standing motionless looking into the river. Before we reached the bicycle-hire shop and café some of us made a diversion to Chee Dale Nature Reserve where, by the entrance, we saw two Dingy Skippers. Here there were Early Purple Orchids and Cowslips in flower, reflecting the late spring, and other limestone-loving plants like Mossy Saxifrage. Some of us carried on after the Blackwell Mill and followed the river on the other side on a narrow stony path. The wall on our left was covered with mosses and the Comb-moss was particularly attractive. Further on the steep banks to our left on the rocky outcrops and scree we could see a few specimens of Rock Whitebeam, a rare tree found only on limestone cliffs. On a shelf we could just make out a large clump of Bloody

Cranesbill. Here the path was hidden under the large leaves of Butterbur which was in flower. At this point we retraced our steps, stopping at the café for a coffee.

After a snack lunch eaten by the car we crossed the A623 to take the path outside the Topley Quarry entrance fence to the entrance of Deep Dale Nature Reserve. Before we reached there we saw the dainty grass Mountain or Nodding Melick in flower on the bank. Here we climbed the steps up the steep slope through the flower-rich limestone grassland and then followed the path along the edge of the quarry with the extensive steep slopes of the reserve to our left. There were hundreds of Twayblades coming into flower and lots of Early Purple Orchids. Under outcrops of rock Peter spotted the pretty fronds of Limestone Oak Fern. The path as it progressed up Deep Dale was rocky. The grassland gave way to Hazel scrub, some of which had been cleared, then large areas of scree which we decided not to try to explore.

The next morning, with the weather improving, we set off up the road from Cressbrook to enter the reserve. What a delightful place! There were lots of woodland species on the roadside which continued once we had entered the wood, where the steep slopes were carpeted with Ransoms stretching as far as you could see. The road was edged with the delightful grass Wood Melick, its flowering heads nodding in the wind. In the distance a Great Spotted Woodpecker was drumming and other birds which we had difficulty identifying were

singing their hearts out. Once inside the wood the path was very muddy and had been trampled by cows. We crossed a bridge over a little stream and came to a steep slope of calcareous grassland. Flying close to the ground was a Dingy Skipper and a beautiful Green Hairstreak which stayed around long enough to be photographed. As well as the more common calcareous grassland species we found Lesser Meadow-rue and Rockrose, just coming into flower. There were some attractive insects for Peter to photograph, including a Violet Leaf Beetle. We took the lower path through the reserve which was through woodland again. Once on the other side the dale opened up into extensive slopes of grassland some of which showed evidence of its lead-mining past. On the mine spoil we found Spring Sandwort which is also known as 'leadwort' from its preference for this habitat. Then came the highlight of the walk – thousands of Early Purple Orchids still in flower. Peter reckoned that there were more Early Purple Orchids in this one dale than there were in the whole of Oxfordshire. At

one point we could see them outlined against the sky at the top of the slope.



We continued walking up the dale until we had passed Peter's Stone and could see the road at the other end of the dale. Here there was an almost complete darker green circle of grass in which St George's Mushrooms were still in good condition. As their name suggests they are a mushroom associated with April rather than June – another indicator of the late spring.



Upper Cressbrook Dale

On the way back we took the upper path which left the valley floor and crossed the grassland at an angle. From the top we had magnificent views over virtually the whole of Cressbrook Dale. Once we left the grassland and entered the woodland the path became stony and at one point we had to

clamber down over some rocks. Here we spotted Lily-of-the-valley leaves which all appeared blind, which was rather a shame as it would have been lovely to have seen their attractive flowers and smelt their sweet scent. Here, too, Jill spotted an unusual-looking bramble by the path which Peter

immediately identified as Stone Bramble by its upward pointing petals.

It was such a lovely afternoon we were reluctant to leave and when Peter suggested a walk by the River Wye from Cressbrook towards Litton we were keen to join him. In the water by the weir we spotted a Rainbow Trout. At the start the path was very wet and muddy due to the recent heavy rain. We passed a boggy area which had one Large Bittercress plant in it. Peter pointed out that with this sighting we had seen all five species of the genus *Cardamine* on this trip. Most of the species we noted here were typical of woodland or riverside. Where a spring was seeping out of a rocky bank the rock face was covered with a tufa-forming

moss. At this point we were walking by Cramside Wood Nature Reserve SSSI which was on the bank to our right. Aware that we should be getting back we turned round and retraced our steps as far as the notice indicating an alternative path back to Cressbrook which three of us took to avoid the flooded area. This took us steeply up through the wood, then out into a meadow with a magnificent view of Cressbrook Hall ahead of us. It then went through another wooded area, coming out on the road higher up from the other path. It was here that Ken and I reluctantly left the party to return home while the rest went back to the Castleton to stay another night

Species list:

Day 1

Cave Dale

London Pride
Fringe Cups
Shining Cranesbill
Crosswort
Herb Robert
Wavy Bittercress
Red Campion
Lesser Meadow-rue
Wild Marjoram
Spring Sandwort
Meadow Saxifrage
Mossy Saxifrage
Wild Thyme
Limestone Bedstraw
Hawkweed
(*Hieracium* agg.)
Harebell
Common Mouse-ear
Germander Speedwell

Ferns
Maidenhair Spleenwort
Hart's-tongue Fern
Wall Rue
Brittle Bladder Fern

Bryophytes

(mosses + liverworts)

Frizzled Crisp-moss
Comb-moss
Wall Scalewort
Rock/ Maidenhair
Pocket-moss

Verdigris Tufa-moss
Common Smoothcap/
Catherine's Moss
Harebell
Common Mouse-ear
Germander Speedwell

Ferns
Maidenhair Spleenwort
Hart's-tongue Fern
Wall Rue
Brittle Bladder Fern

Bryophytes
(mosses + liverworts)
Frizzled Crisp-moss
Comb-moss
Wall Scalewort
Rock/ Maidenhair
Pocket-moss
Verdigris Tufa-moss
Common Smoothcap/
Catherine's Moss

Day 2

Road by River Wye

Flowering plants
Butterbur
Ransoms
Ground Elder
Creeping Buttercup
Red Campion
Wood Avens
Garlic Mustard
Wood Forget-me-not

(blue, pink + white forms)
Opposite-leaved Golden
Saxifrage
Herb Robert
Common Valerian
Water Avens
Hybrid Avens
Honey Garlic
Welsh Poppy
Cow Parsley
Dog's Mercury
Meadowsweet
Woodruff
Wild Strawberry
Rosebay
Hawkweed
(*Hieracium* agg.)
Hairy Bittercress
Crosswort
Wild Angelica
Goldilocks
Wood Anemone
Wavy Bittercress
Lords-and-ladies
Narrow-leaved Bittercress
Hoary Whitlowgrass
Meadow Vetchling
Hairy St John's-wort
Ground Ivy
Wood Speedwell
Cuckooflower
Wood Sorrel
Wall Lettuce
Giant Bellflower
Black Currant
Broad-leaved Willowherb

Garden Arabis
Bush Vetch
Small Scabious

Grasses & Sedges
Ferns
Scaly Male Fern
Hart's-tongue Fern
Brittle Bladder Fern
Maidenhair Spleenwort
Male Fern
Hard Shield Fern

Bryophytes
Comb-moss
Wall screw-moss
Spiral Extinguisher-moss
Big Shaggy-moss
Fox-tail Feather-moss
Blunt Feather-moss
Common Pocket-moss
Greater Featherwort
(liverwort)

Birds
Blackbird
Wren
Heron
Dipper
Grey Wagtail
Moorhen
Heron
Mallard
(♂ and ♀ and young)

Insects
Black and red Frog hopper
Ransoms Hoverfly
Dock Leaf Beetle
Blue Soldier Beetle
Ground Beetle
Tree Bumble Bee
Cream-spot Ladybird
Crane fly
(Daddy Longlegs)
Violet Black-legged
Robberfly
Green Sawfly
Giant Crane fly ♂
Yellow Sally Stonefly
Buff-tipped Bumble-bee
Orange Ladybird
Green Nettle Weevil
Ten-spot Ladybird
Rhopalid Bug
Common Banded Hoverfly
Alderfly

Chee Dale Nature Reserve

Flowering plants
Wild Marjoram
Shining Cranesbill
Common Mouse-ear
Hairy Rockcress
Wood Sage
Early Purple Orchid
Cowslip
Germander Speedwell
Mossy Saxifrage
Parsley Piert
Lady's Bedstraw
Bird'-foot Trefoil
Common Dog Violet
Meadow Saxifrage
Pignut
Oxeye Daisy
Wetted Thistle
Ribwort Plantain
Nipplewort
Biting Stonecrop

Grasses & Sedges
Glaucous Sedge
Soft Brome
Sweet Vernal-grass
Cock's-foot
Red Fescue

Insects
Dingy Skipper Butterfly

By River Wye from Blackwell Mill

Flowering plants
Yellow Iris
Great Yellow Cress
Common Comfrey
Gooseberry
Hedge Woundwort
Sweet Cicely
Fringe Cups
Meadow Cranesbill
Creeping Cinquefoil
Great Willowherb
Bloody Cranesbill
Rock Whitebeam

Lichens
Dog Lichen *Peltigera* sp.

Birds
Raven
Dipper

Insects
Orange Tip Butterfly ♂
7-spot Ladybird
Rove beetle
Scorpionfly

Deep Dale and Topley Pike Nature Reserve

Flowering Plants
Greater Knapweed
Common Milkwort
Salad Burnet
Fairy Flax
Common Rockrose
Wall Speedwell
Tor Grass
Broad-leaved Helleborine
Common Figwort
Barren Strawberry
Common Twayblade
Marsh Valerian
(mostly ♀)
Thyme-leaved Speedwell
Common Spotted Orchid
Coltsfoot
Meadow Vetchling
Limestone Bedstraw
Red Clover
Lesser Celandine
Meadow Buttercup
Hazel
Common Chickweed
Raspberry
Broad-leaved Dock

Grasses, sedges & rushes
Mountain Melick
Sheep's Fescue
Hairy Wood-rush

Pteridophytes
Field Horsetail
Limestone Oak Fern

Bryophytes
Rambling Tail-moss
Intermediate Screw-moss

Insects
Frog Hopper
Slender Ground Hopper

Arachnid
Red Velvet Mite

Day 3 Cressbrook Dale

Flowering plants
Herb Robert
Honeysuckle
Wood Forget-me-not
Germander Speedwell
Bush Vetch
Cow Parsley
Garlic Mustard

Ivy-leaved Toadflax
 Wall Lettuce
 Yellow Corydalis
 Greater Stitchwort
 Dog's Mercury
 Red Campion
 Ransoms
 Bluebell
 Bugle
 Common Ragwort
 Lords-and-ladies
 Wood Sorrel
 Ground Elder
 Wood Speedwell
 Lesser Celandine
 Raspberry
 Common Valerian
 Water Avens
 Broad-leaved Willowherb
 Common Dog Violet
 Hedge Woundwort
 Wild Strawberry
 Woodruff
 Enchanter's Nightshade
 Wavy Bittercress
 Fairy Flax
 Hawkweed
 (*Hieracium* agg.)
 Common Mouse-ear
 Wall Lettuce
 Hogweed
 Welsh Poppy (orange)
 Ivy-leaved Speedwell
 Common Comfrey
 Solomon's Seal
 London Pride
 Fringe Cups
 Primrose
 Wood Anemone
 Goldilocks
 Opposite-leaved Golden
 Saxifrage
 Cleavers
 Meadowsweet
 Creeping Buttercup
 Hairy Bittercress
 Silverweed
 Crosswort
 Hybrid Avens
 Hairless Lady's Mantle
 Ribwort Plantain
 Early Purple Orchid
 Cowslip
 Lesser Burdock
 Red Campion
 Greater Plantain
 Garlic Mustard
 Wood Avens
 Meadowsweet
 Dog's Mercury

Thyme-leaved Speedwell
 Meadow Saxifrage
 Shining Cranesbill
 Rue-leaved Saxifrage
 Common Whitlowgrass
 Thyme
 Parsley Piert
 Lesser Trefoil
 Marsh Thistle
 Creeping Thistle
 Dove's-foot Cranesbill
 Cuckooflower
 Mouse-ear Hawkweed
 Water Forget-me-not
 Spear Thistle
 Common Daisy
 Yarrow
 Biting Stonecrop
 Wall Speedwell
 Tormentil
 Spring Sandwort
 Dropwort
 Common Twayblade
 Sorrel
 Thyme-leaved Sandwort
 Self-heal
 Ribwort Plantain
 Bloody Cransbill
 Lily of the Valley
 Stone Bramble
 Bird Cherry

Grasses, sedges & rushes

Wood Melick
 Wood Meadow-grass
 Cocksfoot
 Wood Sedge
 Annual Meadow-grass
 Tor-grass
 Soft Brome

Pteridophytes
 Wall Rue
 Male Fern
 Hart's-tongue Fern
 Hard Shield Fern
 Common Polypody
 Male Fern
 Brittle Bladder Fern
 Maidenhair Spleenwort

Bryophytes

Greater Featherwort
 (liverwort)
 Many-fruited
 Raspberry
 Herb Robert
 Ribwort Plantain
 Yellow Iris
 Hairy Rockcress
 Hawkweed

Thyme-moss

Fungi

St George's Mushroom

Mammals

Rabbit

Birds

Coot
 Jay
 Chiffchaff
 Whitethroat
 Great Spotted Woodpecker
 Jackdaw
 Rook
 Skylark
 Swallow
 Meadow Pipit
 Chaffinch ♂
 Jackdaw

Insects

Small Bloody-nosed
 Beetle
 Sawfly
 Tortoise beetle
 Orange-tip Butterfly
 Speckled Wood Butterfly
 Ransoms Hoverfly ♂
 Snout Hoverfly
 Brimstone Butterfly
 Common Carder Bumblebee
 Click Beetle
 Downlooker Snipefly
Panemeria tenebrata
Small Yellow Underwing
(day-flying moth)

Walk by River Wye towards

Litton

Flowering plants
 Mugwort
 Oxeye Daisy
 Brooklime
 Large Bittercress
 Water Forget-me-not
 Water Mint
 Star of Bethlehem Marsh
 Marigold
 Butterbur
 Sweet Cicely
 Cleavers
 Wild Angelica
 Biting Stonecrop
 Rough Chervil

(*Hieracium* agg.)

Hairy St John's-wort
 Creeping Buttercup
 Wood Forget-me-not
 Greater Stitchwort
 Ground Elder

Ransoms
Greater Burdock
Common Comfrey
Bugle
Lords-and-ladies
Wild Strawberry
Woodruff
Cuckooflower
Nipplewort
Watercress
Stream Water Crowfoot
Broad-leaved Willowherb
Nightshade
Bush Vetch
Wall Lettuce
Enchanter's Nightshade
Hedge Woundwort
Great Willowherb
Hairy Bittercress
Wood Sanicle

Alternate Route back
Bluebell

Nettle-leaved Bellflower
Wood Speedwell
Meadow Saxifrage
Crosswort
Sorrel
Germander Speedwell
Cow Parsley
Wood Avens
Dame's Violet
Grasses, sedges & rushes
Pendulous Sedge
Wood Melick
Wood Meadow Grass
False Brome
Timothy
Pteridophytes
Male Fern
Brittle Bladder Fern
Maidenhair Spleenwort

Hart's-tongue Fern
Bryophytes
Wall Scalewort

Comb-moss
Wholed Tufa-moss
Great Scented Liverwort

Fungi
Turkey-tail fungus on
dead oak

Birds
Grey Wagtail
Mallard
(adults + ducklings)
Coot
Chiffchaff

Insects
Nettle-tap micromoth
Mayfly
Green-veined White Butterfly
Silver-ground Carpet Moth

Brenda Betteridge

Visit to Over Norton Park Farm 11 June 2015

Eight members of the Field Club enjoyed a lovely evening visiting Mike and Sarah Kettlewell's farm, which is situated in rolling countryside just north of Chipping Norton. Dr Alan Larkman also joined us – he has been advising on conservation issues on this farm for many years but had never visited in the summer. We were greeted by Mike and Sarah and the first thing we saw was a large poster of photographs of the wild flowers on the farm taken by Sarah between 23rd May and 3rd June this year, featuring over 70 species in bloom. We knew then that we were in for a special treat. Sarah's family has owned this farm for 400 years. The farm is 400 acres with a pedigree herd of South Devon cattle, mixed arable crops and some woodland. The farm has been in Stewardship schemes for 15 years to increase biodiversity, all the arable fields have uncultivated margins and there are impressive native hedgerows that are trimmed only every 3 years – in one of them I counted 10 hedgerow species. There is a year-round feeding programme for vulnerable farmland birds that have declined so badly over the last 5 decades and to support this, 15 acres on the farm are sown for birdseed. There are hanging

feeders of millet year round to help Tree Sparrows and Reed Buntings. From late December to early May there is ground feeding to attract Chaffinches, Yellowhammers, Linnets, Skylarks and Corn Bunting plus the usual hedgerow birds. Yellow Rattle is introduced to the feeding areas to keep down the grass and make the seeds more accessible to the birds. In places, double hedges with a



ditch in the middle, cut back every three years, help provide shelter and nesting sites. Old ponds support reedbeds and birds such as Little Grebes, Cormorants, Kingfishers, a colony of Reed Buntings and some Sedge Warblers.

Mike and Sarah led us on an amble around the farm, including through a beautiful meadow where Spotted Orchids were in flower. In the last field the cattle were grazing

including the impressive bull who was sitting contentedly surrounded by his ladies and their calves. Your scribe watched in amazement as Mike and Sarah went over to him, stroking him and talking to him as if he were a pet cat!

Our thanks to Mike and Sarah for their hospitality. In our coming winter programme is a visit to the farm in the winter hopefully to see a good range of farmland birds.



Plants:

Common Spotted Orchid

Mugwort	Dogwood
Chamomile	Hazel (NF)
Heartsease	Dog Rose
White Champion	Wood Aven
White Deadnettle	Bird cherry
Common Vetch	Guelder Rose
Fumitory	Wild Mustard
Ox-eye Daisy	Lady's Bedstraw
Red Clover	Common Knapweed
White Clover	Chicory
Yellow Rattle	Hedge Woundwort
Meadow Buttercup	Ground Ivy
Hogweed	Sorrel
Field Forget-me-not	<i>Phacelia</i> sp
Goosegrass (Cleavers)	Yarrow
Ribwort Plantain	Common Spotted Orchid
Sainfoin	Herb Robert
Lesser Trefoil	Cow Parsley
Bird's-foot Trefoil	Ragged Robin
Mignonette	Marsh Thistle
Goatsbeard	Water Chickweed
Sun Spurge	Bugle
Field Poppy	Common Daisy
Spindle	Cuckoo Flower
Blackthorn (NF)	Quaking Grass (<i>B. media</i>)
Hawthorn (NF)	Pignut
Field Maple (NF)	Meadow Vetchling
	Brooklime
	Yellow Flag
	Comfrey
	Rowan
	Hedge Mustard

Prickly Lettuce
Broomrape
Borage



Sainfoin

Insects:
Common Blue

Birds:
Herons

Mammals:
Muntjac
Hare

Mary Elford
Plant list *Jill Bailey*

Greenham Common 14 June 2015

This was a joint trip with the Oxford RSPB Group. After a day and a half of rain, the evening remained dry but overcast with a cool north-easterly breeze, which meant that bird activity and song were subdued. However, song thrushes and a willow warbler sang as 16 of us set out along the path from the car park.

Once on the path that follows the line of one of the former taxiways of this former military airfield, small flocks of linnets flitted by and the occasional swallow and house martin were seen overhead. Owing to the cloud cover, the evening light faded early, so we made our way towards a formerly wooded area clear-felled some years ago, now covered with low shrubs and isolated conifer and deciduous trees which nightjars prefer as a breeding habitat. As on previous visits, woodcocks were the first of our two target bird species to appear, flying a direct route above the remaining woodland beyond the open area.

Bird species seen or heard:

Grey heron	Dunnoek
Wood pigeon	Robin
Tawny owl	Blackbird
Nightjar	Song thrush
Swallow	Chiffchaff
House martin	Willow warbler

Magpie
Jackdaw
Carrion crow
Starling
Linnet
Woodcock

David Rolfe

Hook Norton 30 June 2015

23 people gathered for a visit to a species-rich limestone grassland bank (SSSI) and adjacent field, uncultivated for 20 years and now re-colonised naturally. The location was near Hook Norton and our guide was Craig Blackwell (former OCC County Ecologist). The group comprised Field Club members, members of the Wychwood Flora Group and several visitors. The field is in private ownership. Craig took us on a tour of both parts of the site – it was a beautiful

Later on, two of them flew by just in front of us, heading in the same direction as before and uttering their typical three or four note croaking call, quickly followed by a short explosive high-pitched squeak. Then, much earlier than usual, we heard the first nightjar's rattling reeling song from some trees to our left. After a prolonged pause, it flew to more trees immediately opposite us, where it sang again. This to-ing and fro-ing carried on for some time, but on several occasions after that, one, and then two nightjars flew almost over us, wing clapping and jinking here and there almost bat-like as they caught insects as they passed. Several times one alighted in a conifer immediately in front of us. It was probably the best nightjar display we'd seen over the several years of coming here to see them, and we went home pleased that we'd come along for this worthwhile visit.

evening and there was so much to enjoy and appreciate. Brenda Betteridge compiled the very impressive plant list. Craig pointed out a Greater Butterfly Orchid that was just going over – this is a first for the site. Butterflies and moths were on the wing in the evening sunshine including a good number of Marbled Whites, Chimney Sweeper, White Plume and Blackneck moths. Our thanks to Craig for a very special evening.



Above: Ghost Moth

Left: 6-spot Burnet Moths mating on Knapweed

Species list:

Sycamore
Yarrow
Agrimony
Garlic Mustard
Pyramidal Orchid
Sweet Vernal-grass
Cow Parsley
Kidney Vetch
Lesser Burdock
False Oat-grass
Tor Grass
Quaking Grass
Upright Brome
Hairy Brome
Clustered Bellflower
Harebell
Glaucous sedge
Common Knapweed
Greater Knapweed
Common Century
Common Mouse-ear
Rough Chervil
Dwarf Thistle
Creeping Thistle
Woolly Thistle
Spear Thistle
Traveller's Joy
Pignut
Field Bindweed
Hazel
Hawthorn
Rough Hawksbeard

Smooth Hawksbeard
Crosswort
Crested Dogstail
Cock's-foot
Common Spotted Orchid
Sheep's Fescue
Meadowsweet
Dropwort
Ash
Cleavers
Lady's Bedstraw
Autumn Gentian
Herb Bennet
Ground Ivy
Chalk Fragrant Orchid
Ivy
Common Rock-rose
Meadow Oat-grass
Hogweed
Yorkshire Fog
Hairy St John's-wort
Perforate St John's-wort
Catsear
Hard Rush
Field Scabious
White Dead-nettle
Nipplewort
Meadow Vetchling
Ox-eye Daisy
Fairy Flax
Perennial Ryegrass
Birdsfoot Trefoil

Black Medick
Field Forget-me-not
Red Bartsia
Sainfoin
Rest-harrow
Common Broomrape
Ribwort Plantain
Hoary Plantain
Greater Butterfly Orchid
Smooth Meadow-grass
Rough Meadow-grass
Creeping Cinquefoil
Cowslip
Self-heal
Blackthorn
Meadow Buttercup
Creeping Buttercup
Yellow Rattle
Dog Rose
Bramble
Common Sorrel
Broad-leaved Dock
Wood Dock
Elder
Salad Burnet
Common Ragwort
Red Campion
Hedge Woundwort
Black Bryony
Dandelion
Wild Thyme
Goatsbeard

Hop Trefoil
 Alsike Clover
 Red Clover
 White Clover

Yellow Oat-grass
 Elm
 Stinging Nettle
 Tufted Vetch

Hairy Tare
 Common Vetch
 Hairy Violet

Insects:
 Black-neck Moth
 Ghost Moth

Six-spot Burnet Moth
 Chimneysweeper Moth

Reptiles:
 Lizard

Mary Elford List by Brenda Betteridge

Walk Around Eynsham 7 July 2015

On a warm summer evening, Ken Betteridge led us on a walk around Eynsham. We started off exploring the old site of Eynsham Abbey and its fishponds – there is an explore trail there, with large pieces of masonry from the Abbey dotted at intervals. Then we walked along the main road (formerly the track of the old Oxford to Witney railway), towards Swinford Bridge. Turning off across the fields, Ken explained that Swinford used to have an important wharf for cargo barges, which explains the location of the Talbot inn. The footpath is lined with trees planted to encourage undergrowth to slow the flow of the water. We came across an old *** (what was it that was related to the moving of

water around the county, and what was the story? I can't remember it except Beacon Hill Reservoir enough to make a couple of sentences). Along the river bank we saw a ring of posts with a bar round it. This was where the old paddles used to insert into the nearby sluices to control river flow were kept.

After an amble around stubble fields, we returned to the village through the allotments and a string of small paths that led through the quiet back streets of Eynsham.

It was unusual to have seen all three rues – meadow rue, wall rue and goat's rue in the same day.

Species list (includes some plants not in flower):

Field Maple
 Sycamore
 Yarrow
 Horse Chestnut
 Water-plantain
 Garlic Mustard
 Pyramidal Orchid
 Wild Angelica
 Barren Brome
 Fool's Watercress
 Greater Burdock
 False Oat-grass
 Mugwort
 Wild Arum
 Wall-rue
 Black Horehound
 Common Daisy
 False Brome

Hairy Brome
 White Bryony
 Hedge Bindweed
 Shepherd's Purse
 Welled Thistle
 Musk Thistle
 Pendulous Sedge
 Greater Knapweed
 Red Valerian
 Common Mouse-ear
 Rough Chervil
 Creeping Thistle
 Spear Thistle
 Common Calamint
 Field Bindweed
 Dogwood
 Swine-cress
 Hazel

Hawthorn
 Smooth Hawksbeard
 Ivy-leaved Toadflax
 Cock's-foot
 Tufted Hair-grass
 Foxglove
 Wild Teasel
 Bearded Couch
 Common Couch
 Great Willowherb
 Broad-leaved Willowherb
 Hoary Willowherb
 Field Horsetail
 Marsh Horsetail
 Giant Fescue
 Red Fescue
 Meadowsweet
 Wild Strawberry

Ash
 Goat's Rue
 Cleavers
 Hedge Bedstraw
 Cut-leaved Cranesbill
 Dovesfoot Cranesbill
 Herb Robert
 Herb Bennet
 Ground Ivy
 Ivy
 Hogweed
 Yorkshire Fog
 Wall Barley
 Meadow Barley
 Hop
 Spanish Bluebell
 Perforate St John's-wort
 Stinking Iris
 Hard Rush
 Prickly Lettuce
 White Dead-nettle
 Nipplewort
 Meadow Vetchling
 Duckweed
 Ox-eye Daisy
 Common Toadflax
 Perennial Ryegrass
 Gipsywort
 Common Mallow
 Pineappleweed

Black Medick
 Field Forget-me-not
 White Field Forget-me-not
 Yellow Water-lily
 Opium Poppy
 Pellitory of the Wall
 Green Alkanet
 Water-pepper
 Redleg
 Smaller Catstail
 Timothy
 Bristly Oxtongue
 Ribwort Plantain
 Greater Plantain
 Annual Meadow-grass
 Rough Meadow-grass
 Knotgrass
 Silverweed
 Creeping Cinquefoil
 Self-heal
 Wild Cherry
 Blackthorn
 Common Fleabane
 Pedunculate Oak
 Meadow Buttercup
 Creeping Buttercup
 Dog Rose
 Bramble
 Broad-leaved Dock
 Wood Dock

Elder
 Great Burnet
 Water Figwort
 Hoary Ragwort
 Common Ragwort
 White Campion
 Hedge Mustard
 Rough Sow-thistle
 Smooth Sow-thistle
 Branched Bur-reed
 Marsh Woundwort
 Hedge Woundwort
 Common Comfrey
 Black Bryony
 Dandelion
 Common Meadow-rue
 Lime
 Goatsbeard
 Hop Trefoil
 Lesser Trefoil
 Red Clover
 White Clover
 Elm
 Stinging Nettle
 Great Mullein
 Wall Speedwell
 Brooklime
 Guelder-rose
 Tufted Vetch
 Common Vetch

Jill Bailey

List by *Brenda Betteridge*

Moth morning 8 August 2015

15 people came to Ken and Brenda's Betteridge's home near Worsham for what has become an annual Field Club event. I set up 2 moth traps in the garden and one in the adjacent former quarry. It was a reasonably warm, calm night and Ken kindly covered the traps at the break of day to prevent all the moths escaping as our arrival time was not until 9 am

It's been a poor year for moths but we had a good selection for the time of year. I had taken the precaution of bringing the following colourful moths from my own trap for extra interest: Magpie Moth, Ruby Tiger, Knot Grass, White Satin, Brimstone and Yellow Shell

In the absence of an expert, we managed to identify the following moths:

Chinese Character	Nut-tree Tussock	Brown-line Bright-eye
Yellow Tail	Marbled Green	Smoky Wainscot
Small Magpie	Shuttle-shaped Dart	Large Yellow Underwing
Dusky Sallow	Heart and Dart	Muslin Footman
Common Footman	Scarce Footman	Ringed China-mark
Double Square-spot	Uncertain	Cochylis atricapitana
Dingy Footman	Common Rustic	

After examining the moths, we relaxed in the lovely morning sunshine and enjoyed bacon butties and drinks – could the refreshment

have enticed people to come along, I wonder?! Thanks to Ken and Brenda for their hospitality

Mary Elford

Bat walk at Sherborne 12 August 2015

A group of nine of us turned up in the courtyard behind the National Trust's office in the village of Sherborne. It was a pleasant evening and we were all eagerly anticipating seeing lots of bats and we were not about to be disappointed.

Whilst we chatted we could hear ravens 'kronking' in the cedar trees behind us and we spotted one flying off as we turned to the sound. A swallow flew in and out of one of the outbuildings at speed doubtless feeding young. When our leader Mike Robinson appeared he invited us all into the office where he gave us a short but very informative talk about the Sherborne estate and also about bats, in particular the ones found on the estate. There have been nine species of bat discovered on the estate, over half of the seventeen known British species.

After the talk we were eager to see some bats for ourselves and we all proceeded to leave the offices to be greeted outside by an absolutely glorious sunset and our first bat, a pipistrelle, which was flitting around over the roadway. This gave those who had borrowed bat detectors from Mike an opportunity to try them out and we all clearly heard the clicks emanating from the pipistrelle via the detectors.

We carried on a leisurely walk down through the village through clouds of midges

which we surmised would have been even greater without the sterling efforts of the pipistrelle we could see flying through them. We then turned into the old hunt kennels and waited outside a building with two open doorways and in a very short space of time we saw our first lesser horseshoe bats as they emerged from the doorways, flitted around and went back in. Mike explained that this behaviour appears to be their way of sampling the outside environment before venturing off on the night's feeding.

Soon though they started leaving and individuals were leaving at a constant rate for the next forty five minutes or so. Mike told us there were probably in excess of two hundred individuals in this roost! Listening to them on the bat detectors was interesting; instead of the harsh clicks and pops of the pipistrelle their calls had a rising and falling quality not unlike some of the more avant-garde music compositions one can hear nowadays. There was also a constant background 'chatter' from the bats remaining in the building which did sound as though they were having a conversation.

After we had observed and listened to the lesser horseshoes for a good time it was getting quite dark and Mike then led us down to the river Windrush where it runs through the valley and where it has been widened into a

large pool above a small weir. We stood on the bridge over the weir and a powerful torch was shone low across the surface of the water. This soon picked up some Daubentons bats which were skimming low over the water feeding on the proliferation of flying insects illuminated in the beam. After some time enjoying the spectacle of their precision flying we made our way back to our cars seeing more bats (probably pipistrelle) as we returned.

As it was a clear evening Tony and Alison and I drove a short way to a hillside near the village of Windrush and got out of the car to see if we could spot any of the Perseid

meteor shower which we had been informed would be at its peak that evening. Whilst we sipped on mugs of tea from Tony's thoughtfully provided flask we enjoyed the watching a number of meteors streaking across the sky, then at about ten-thirty p.m. we were treated to the sight of the international space station passing overhead.

It seemed a fitting end to the evening, from watching one of the most ancient of flying mammals to seeing the pinnacle of human flight all in such a short space of time.

Adrian State

Visit to Hawk Conservancy Trust, Weyhill, near Andover 23 August 2015

Eight Field Club members enjoyed a good day at this wonderfully run birds of prey centre where there are over 150 birds of prey on view set in twenty two acres of grounds made up of woodland and a seven acre wildflower meadow. The birds range in size from the diminutive Pygmy Owl to the enormous Stellar's Sea Eagles.

The weather was rather wet on arrival but improved during the day. Two of our group were able to avail themselves of the electric buggies to get around. There were three impressive displays during the day. They included a group of Sacred Ibis, eight Black Kites, American Bald Eagles, Turkey Vultures, Barn Owls and Great Grey Owls among others.

There is a good restaurant and shop there and all the staff are very friendly and informative. The National Bird of Prey Hospital is there and can treat over two hundred sick, injured and orphaned raptors each year. The Trust has been running for fifty years *David Roberts*

MEMBER'S CONTRIBUTIONS

Emergence of Cockchafer (Part 2) 29 June 2015

Last year (2014) Alison and I saw a large emergence of cockchafers at Cassington. This year on the same Monday night in June we saw a similar – and larger – emergence. As last year, it was just dusk as we went in the same field. All around us cockchafers were emerging and flying. Alison held a mating pair

in her hand – they had fallen off a sycamore tree. A line of four or five youngish sycamores had hundreds, possibly thousands, of cockchafers flying around each tree top in their courtship and mating display. This was quite a sight, and one I would guess most people have never witnessed.

Tony Florey and Alison Weaver

'Ants in the sitting room' July 2015

I lay down on my sofa hoping to have a doze. It was a hot sunny afternoon and I was just drifting off to sleep when I heard a pattering on the window. It sounded like rain and I sat up thinking it odd to be raining on such a sunny afternoon. To my surprise my window was covered in flying ants, and there were dozens of non-flying ants running around the windows and up the wall. They were coming out of a small hole in the window frame.

I spent 10-15 minutes or more catching them and putting them out. Some of them were bigger with large abdomens whilst others were tiny and wasp like ants which I think were the males.

I eventually got all the winged ants out until I only had the dozens of black wingless ants running around. After a few more minutes even all of these had disappeared and it looked as if nothing had happened.

Alison Weaver

Ringling Baby Barn Owls 20 July 2015

Alison, David Roberts and I were lucky to be invited to go with Pat Wixey and a few O.O.S. members to visit three barn owl boxes. At Chimney Meadows two young and very quiet chicks were ringed and likewise at Ham Court, Bampton. The latter were slightly older and much livelier, flapping their



wings as Pat ringed them. Then on to Alvescot stud, where Pat got out a very tiny owlet to show us, only a few days old. There was another of similar age along with five eggs in this nest. This was a lovely experience – we were out a good part of the day.

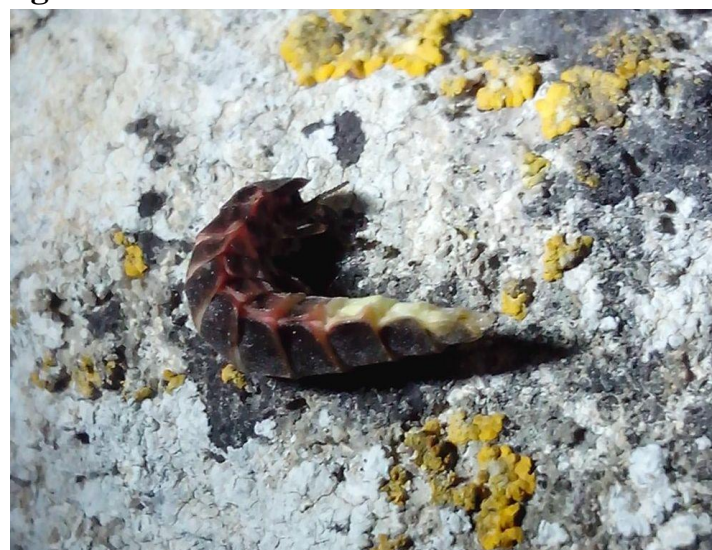
We hope that Pat will be able to repeat an event of this type for a few WOFC members on another occasion.

Tony Florey & Alison Weaver

Glow Worms at Swinbrook Churchyard 1 August 2015

On an ideal night for glow worm searching (i.e. overcast and dull) Adrian State, Tony and I looked in and out of the graveyard at Swinbrook and found eight glow worms. One of these “went out” just as we spotted it – they can “switch” on and off at will. Although we have seen these over many years, we agreed that it is always a so-as-to-speak magical experience with the bright emerald green lights in the grass. Adrian took this excellent photograph. But we were trumped by Mary Elford and others, who found ten glow worms the next night!

Alison Weaver, Tony Florey and Adrian State



Spectacular moth larvae in Leafield!

On 10 September I was at Bridewell Organic Gardens when someone showed me the stunning larva of the Death's Head Hawkmoth with its Day-Glo colours. It was about 10 cm long and munching away on potato leaves. It had been found along with three others on a potato patch in a garden in Leafield. Two had already gone underground to pupate. I contacted a Marc Botham who is a butterfly and moth ecologist as I know that he loves rearing larvae. He immediately left work at the

Centre for Ecology and Hydrology in Wallingford and hot-footed over to the Leafield garden. I joined him there to discover that the fourth larva had been found by the cat but had come to no harm! Marc did some excavating to see if he could get the complete family but to no avail. So Marc took his new offspring home and if they successfully hatch next year, he will return the adults to the Leafield garden. Watch this space....

Mary Elford



Publishers note:

I am afraid that due to the size of this issue of the news letter, some of it particularly the species lists, has had to be printed in a very small typeface.

A larger version with larger images can be found on the clubs website :

<http://www.thefieldclub.org.uk/newsletter.htm>