

West Oxfordshire Field Club

www.thefieldclub.org.uk



Newsletter No. 106 Autumn 2017

EDITORIAL

The first day of October sees some trees already flame-tipped, hedgerows dripping with hawthorn berries, jewelled strings of nightshade berries twining through the woodlands, and empty skies. The swallows and martins in our area left for warmer climes earlier than usual.

Autumn storms are approaching, spin-offs from the unusually violent hurricane season in the Caribbean. I recently came across a 1997 article by David Tomlinson on the effects of the Great Storm of 1987. I well remember watching fences crashing down around the garden and tiles flying off roofs. The following day I had to drive to Kent. On either side of the motorway, whole swathes of woodland looked as if they had been felled by a whirlwind – laid out in great flat spirals. The 1987 storm took down 15 million trees. But by 1997, ten years later, there had been huge regeneration of trees, and species reliant on rotting wood – nesting birds, fungi and many invertebrate species – had increased in numbers, some coming back from the brink of extinction. Silver-washed fritillaries and white admirals took advantage

of the new clearings, as did light-living plants such as primroses, bluebells and rare lady orchids. Nightjars in particular benefitted, doubling in numbers.

The roadsides around my part of Oxfordshire are going in the opposite direction – with the reduced frequency of verge-cutting, and in some places a reduced width of verge being cut, the hedges have advanced almost to the edge of the road. This has reduced a valuable food reservoir for pollinating insects, to the disadvantage of the arable farmers whose land abuts the roads.

In Oxfordshire, at least, this seems to have been a good summer for butterflies. For the first time I have seen seven species at the same time on the buddleia, and with regular dead-heading it is still flowering and attracting a variety of insects. A host of bees, wasps, flies, hoverflies and a few late butterflies are busy around the ivy flowers. The warm autumn has confused the wildflowers. Honeysuckle is blooming profusely again in garden and woodland, and on a recent WOFC trip to Ardley Quarry

Nature Reserve, besides Autumn Gentians, we found summer-flowering Dog Rose and Ox-eye Daisy, and even Early Dog Violets in flower. WOFC members have reported Primroses and Cowslips blooming in their gardens.

We are now looking forward to the autumn fungus foray, a trip to see autumn colours,

and the return of indoor meetings. The willingness of members to lead walks and give talks and the generosity of our outside speakers and leaders make it possible to maintain a variety of activities throughout the year, and we are most grateful. Our thanks, too, to the splendid Shilton ladies who supplied our summer party.

Jill Bailey

YOUR NEWSLETTER

My thanks to all those who sent reports in prompt response to my pleas. This year's was a bumper set of species, so I consulted contributors and most agreed that we should shorten the lists (the Wyre Forest alone ran to three pages). So I have omitted most of the common species, except where their early or late occurrence in the year is of interest, or where I think they are of interest to many members. The full species lists will be available on the web site, and there will be paper copies at the winter meetings.

Please can you let me have your reports of walks and other Club outings newsletter, by the first week of April 2018 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

Walk at Bury Down and West Ilsley 11 December 2016 (missed from last newsletter)

Following a day of continuous rain, it was pleasantly mild and sunny when a combined group of 21 Field Club and Oxford RSPB members met up in the Bury Down car park on the Ridgeway for this circular walk. Before setting off, small flocks of birds could be seen flitting to and fro before dropping down in to the stubble in an adjoining field. After heading west along the track, we could see that the flocks comprised linnets and yellowhammers. Later on, more of these could be seen in a hedge with a red kite perched atop, plus several chaffinches and

three corn buntings. Kites were continually gliding and soaring overhead for the duration of the walk. Skylarks were also soaring, but two also came down to bathe in a large puddle in front of us at the side of the track. Further on, a pair of stonechats and a small flock of goldfinches could be seen flitting about in the dead trackside vegetation. Suddenly, in the scrubby area of rough grassland beyond, a short-eared owl flew up into a relatively close small bush. And then, almost straightaway, another one appeared and landed in an adjoining bush, and three

more were soon seen flying low over the adjoining area. Several members of the group had brought their telescopes along, and everyone had good views of these relatively scarce winter visitors to our area. On our way down towards West Ilsley later on, several common buzzards and a kestrel were the only other raptor species seen during the walk. We encountered a few common bird species on our way through the village, but large flocks of winter thrushes,

List of bird species seen:

| | | |
|-----------------|--------------|--------------|
| Red Kite | Carrion Crow | Stonechat |
| Buzzard | Skylark | Chaffinch |
| Kestrel | Starling | Linnet |
| Short-eared Owl | Fieldfare | Yellowhammer |
| Jackdaw | Redwing | Corn bunting |

David Rolfe

Barnsley Warren and Chedworth 23 April 2017

A surprisingly large number of members attended this field trip – clearly not put off by the challenge of finding the reserve at Barnsley Warren, then a parking space alongside a very busy main road. The next challenge was to find the entrance to the reserve through a gap in the hedge. Once found, we were immediately confronted with wooden steps up and over a stone wall. Then on the reserve, we had to be very, very careful negotiating the precipitous slopes. However, this was all very worthwhile as we were rewarded with a wonderful display of Pasque flowers and further on there were dozens of Early Purple Orchids with a few Green-winged Orchids in flower.



After getting refreshments at the National Trust café, a smaller group enjoyed a walk along Chedworth Nature Reserve. This lovely reserve is a great site for geologists

mainly fieldfares, were feeding on the now almost bare hawthorn bushes bordering the route back up to the Ridgeway. Along the track back towards the car park, another pair of stonechats attracted our attention. They almost always perch for some time on the most prominent twigs of bushes, as if posing for those watching them. It had been an exhilarating winter walk, with all our target species found.

and wildlife lovers alike. The reserve runs along a section of the disused Cheltenham to Cirencester railway line that opened in 1891 and closed in 1961. The reserve takes the form of a woodland ride, with expanses of beech woods on either side of the railway line. Walking left from the entrance we came to the tufa spring where lime-rich water emerges from underground. It flows over rocks and plants and they become covered with limescale. Further on is the entrance to the railway tunnel that is now bricked up apart from access to the home of many species of bat.

We then turned around and walked back past the entrance and along a further section of the reserve where the railway ran along a steep-sided embankment. Here we marvelled at the construction methods before the days of diggers, cranes and earth-moving equipment.

Mary Elford

List of plant species in flower at Barnsley Warren:

| | | |
|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Coltsfoot (roadside) | Crosswort (roadside) | |
| Gorse | Sweet Vernal Grass | Early Purple Orchid |
| Glaucous Sedge | Salad Burnet | Field Wood-rush |
| Bulbous Buttercup | Kidney Vetch | Green-winged Orchid |
| Common Milkwort | Wall Speedwell | Hairy Bittercress |
| Pasqueflower | Sticky Mouse-ear | Common Centaury (NF) |
| Cowslip | Sweet Violet | Stemless Thistle |

Birds (seen or heard):

| | | |
|---------------------------|------------------|-------------|
| Skylark | Green Woodpecker | Whitethroat |
| Willow Warbler (in copse) | Linnets | Kestrel |
| Buzzard | Mistle Thrush | |
| Linnet | Chiffchaff | |

Other animals seen:

| | | |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------|
| Saint Mark's flies (one day early) | Small Tortoiseshell butterfly | Common Lizard |
| | Brimstone moth | |

Brenda Betteridge and Alison Weaver

Plant species seen at Chedworth Reserve:

| | | |
|----------------------------|-------------------|-------------|
| Wood Anemone | Primrose | Sanicle |
| Wood Sorrel | Cowslip | Bugle |
| Bluebell | Wood Speedwell | Wood Spurge |
| Wild Strawberry | Yellow Archangel | Wood Sedge |
| Hart's Tongue fern | Barren Strawberry | |
| Lady's Smock/Cuckoo Flower | Wood Sedge | |

Birds seen:

| | | |
|------------------|------------|----------------|
| Nuthatch | Goldfinch | Willow Warbler |
| Willow/Marsh Tit | Chiffchaff | |

Other animals seen:

Orangetip Butterfly
Roman Snails

Alison Weaver

Dawn Chorus at Minster Lovell and Crawley 7 May 2017

Nine members assembled at 4.00am in the Minster Lovell Ruins car park. It was very dark and overcast, but mild - fortunately the cold northern breeze of the previous week had subsided. As usual, the first birds heard were Pheasant and Tawny Owl. Other species were a little later than usual in starting to vocalise however, perhaps due to

the later dawn – we'd walked as far as the river before the other usual early birds, such as Robin, Rook, Jackdaw, Skylark, Moorhen and Mallard, were heard. Near to the ruins, a Barn Owl was heard screeching, but wasn't seen. As we walked through the water meadow towards the wooden river bridge, Song Thrushes started to sing – just the one

at first, followed quickly by several more, almost simultaneously! Beyond the bridge, we heard a Treecreeper singing its quiet song in trees close to the footpath, but not the usual Goldcrest! As we crossed the meadow below Maggots Grove, a Reed Bunting sang in a hawthorn tree near to a ditch-side reedbed, as did a Chiffchaff and a Blackcap as we made our way up through the wood.

On reaching the top of the escarpment, we immediately heard, and then saw, a Common Whitethroat performing its parachuting song-flight above the hedge alongside Dry Lane. During our approach to the village of Crawley, we quickly found one of a pair of

Grey Wagtails that nest beneath the road bridge over the River Windrush and, further on, the commoner small village birds such as Dunnock, Greenfinch and House Sparrow. Overhead, many Swallows were on the wing, and a Red Kite and a Buzzard were spotted. Along the bridleway on the way back to the cars, Stock Dove, Red-legged Partridge and, lastly, Willow Warbler were added to the list, making a final tally of 39 bird species. As well as birds, we also saw Pipistrelle Bats, a Fox, Hares and Rabbits during the walk.

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

| | |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 03.55: Pheasant | 05.54: Linnet |
| 04.07: Tawny owl | 05.55: Magpie |
| 04.20: Robin | 05.57: Dunnock |
| 04.21: Barn owl | 06.00: Greenfinch |
| 04.22: Rook | 06.02: Starling |
| 04.22: Jackdaw | 06.03: House sparrow |
| 04.23: Skylark | 06.03: Collared dove |
| 04.23: Moorhen | 06.07: Grey wagtail |
| 04.24: Mallard | 06.10: Red kite |
| 04.43: Song thrush | 06.18: Pied wagtail |
| 04.43: Carrion crow | 06.20: Green woodpecker |
| 04.53: Wood pigeon | 06.20: Swallow |
| 04.54: Treecreeper | 06.24: Buzzard |
| 04.50: Wren | 06.25: Stock dove |
| 04.55: Blackbird | 06.43: Great tit |
| 05.00: Chaffinch | 06.56: Goldfinch |
| 05.18: Reed bunting | 06.57: Red-legged partridge |
| 05.22: Blue tit | 06.59 Willow warbler |
| 05.25: Chiffchaff | |
| 05.26: Blackcap | |
| 05.34: Common whitethroat | |

David Rolfe

Walk in Homefield Wood BBOWT Reserve 14 June 2017

A party of seven members attended this field meeting, for which the target species were mainly butterflies and orchids. As it transpired, there was plenty of interest in other fields too. On arrival at the parking area a female Chaffinch was seen drinking

from a puddle and a Jay was heard. A Raven was also heard and then seen even before we had started our walk along the main ride. I had been told to look out for this by a BBOWT employee. A pair had built their

nest in a Douglas Fir only tens of metres from the entrance to the wood.

Orangetips (8) were seen along the main ride and single sightings of Green Hairstreak and Peacock butterflies were made before we turned right along a track following the outer perimeter of the BBOWT reserve, which is owned by the Forestry Commission and managed by BBOWT. We then saw a single Speckled wood immediately before spotting our first flowering orchid - an Early Purple. There were two, but only one had flowered this year. We then walked the perimeter track in a clockwise direction, during which time we spotted several of the total of ten Brimstone butterflies seen during our visit before reaching the meadow area, where we spotted a Small Heath, five male Common Blues, and three Dingy Skippers (including a mating pair). Also in the meadow we saw our first Military Orchids (R). Last year over 700 were counted on the reserve as a whole. There were also quite a few Fly Orchids, which are rather difficult to spot due largely to their small size. Both of these species have increased their numbers on this reserve in recent years.

Military Orchid

There were at least a dozen clumps of False Oxlip (the hybrid between primrose and cowslip) in the meadow. Sadly, only a few Cowslips were still in flower, and the Primrose and Oxlips had finished flowering. On our way towards an area where Broad-

It was interesting hearing the Ravens, which were not making their usual cronking call, but a shriller call that I reckon were young recently fledged ravens. Their breeding period is usually early, stretching from

leaved Helleborines are usually found, we had a look under a sheet of metal placed on the ground to attract Grass Snakes and Slow-worms. In addition to a Slow-worm, in the centre of the area of ground covered by the metal, we saw the nest of what we believe was a Common Vole. There were at least four young in the tiny nest, built from dried grass. Although they had developed a reasonable amount of fur, their eyes were still closed. I visited again two days later, when I did my monthly butterfly transect, and the nest was empty. A specimen of the Burnet Companion moth, which is often confused with the Dingy Skipper butterfly, was spotted in the meadow, and about eight specimens of Broad-leaved Helleborine were seen along the fence-line. These usually flower in late July, when wasps can be seen pollinating them.

Finally, we went to the main orchid glade where large numbers of Military Orchids and a few Fly Orchids were in full flower. The area where a few Bee Orchids are normally seen did not reveal a single flowering plant. None of their easily-recognised large oval leaves were found either, so this may be a blank flowering year for the species here.

On the way back, three Fallow Deer strolled in front of my car and I followed them for almost a minute at a very slow pace before they found a way into the woods – a fine sight with which to end the day.

Malcolm Brownsword

February-April when they lay a clutch of 4-6 eggs. They are certainly getting more common as their range is spreading. There were also views of Red Kites during the afternoon and the call of a Green Woodpecker plus calls of Chiffchaff.

David Roberts



Military Orchid *Jill Bailey*



Fly orchid *Jill Bailey*

List of plant species in flower:

Yellow Archangel
Bluebell
Wood Spurge
Spindle
Greater Stitchwort
Bush Vetch
Common Figwort
Wild Strawberry
Barren Strawberry
Smooth Meadow-grass
Field Wood-rush
Primrose
White Helleborine

Broad-ldd Helleborine NF
Early Purple Orchid
Glaucous Sedge
Thyme-leaved Speedwell
Wood Sedge
Yellow Pimpernel
Wood Speedwell
Bulbous Buttercup
Soft Rush
Twayblade
Cowslip
Fly Orchid
Salad Burnet

Common Milkwort
Common Quaking-grass
Military Orchid
Common Spotted Orchid (in bud)
Wild Privet
Bird's-foot Trefoil
False Oxlip
Eyebright
Woodruff

Sweet Vernal Grass
Upright Brome

Birds (mostly heard and not seen):

| | |
|--------|------------------|
| Ravens | Buzzards |
| Jay | Green woodpecker |

Chiffchaff

Other animals:

Muntjac called
?Roe Deer (John disturbed)
Squirrel

Common Vole (nest of young)
Slow-worm
Beefly

Small Heath butterfly
Common Blue butterfly
Dingy Skipper
Brimstone butterfly

The Wyre Forest and Hartlebury Common 19-22 May 2017

It would have been difficult to have a more fascinating weekend than we had in the Wyre Forest this spring. We were very lucky to count Peter Creed in our number. Peter is well known to the club and it was his idea to go back to the Wyre Forest - the Club last went in 2009 - and it was certainly a good idea. And this time the weather was better.

Ten of us stayed in two B and Bs close to the canal basin in Stourport on Severn over the weekend of 19 to 22 May. Stourport is a small town built around the canal system. The locks and basin are well maintained and offer an insight into the industrial history of the region, which, although not the point of the trip, was an added bonus. An unexpected activity for me was to help free a narrow boat that had got stuck in a lock! Adrian, meanwhile, was watching a family of five or six Grey Wagtails on the banks of the Severn.

The Wyre Forest itself covers an area of more than 2600ha (about 6500 acres in 'old money'). Until the early 20th century it was oak coppice and used to supply local industries. Now nearly a fifth of the area is designated as a National Nature Reserve.

Saturday morning was dampish when we met Rosemary Winnall at Earnwood Copse on the north side of the reserve. Rosemary is a member of the Wyre Forest Study Group and co-editor of a superb book on the forest. Like Peter, her knowledge is encyclopaedic, especially about the flora, the insects and, surprisingly, slugs. She showed us how you can identify one species just by picking it up, when it will then curl into a ball and rock

gently from side to side. Nobody else wanted to try. She also showed us an amusing trick by waving a Bluebell over a Wood Ants' nest. The ants spray formic acid and - remember litmus paper? - the Bluebell turns from blue to pink. With Peter and Rosemary - both hawk-eyed - spotting flowers and insects, including Speckled-Yellow moths and Plain-Gold micromoths, we progressed slowly to have lunch in a recently cleared area with a good stand of Wood Spurge where Peter had hoped to find Spurge Bugs. Although we didn't find any, there was a good display of Heath Speedwell and plenty of colourful insects including a Blue Shield-Bug, some Longhorn Beetles and, as the sun came out, a couple of Pearl-Bordered Fritillaries. There were also numerous Labyrinth Spiders, which make funnel-shaped webs around the old tree stumps; many of them were carrying egg sacs.



Pearl-bordered fritillary *John Cobb*

Notable finds after lunch were a honeycomb in a hollow log and a Wild Service Tree in bloom (though perhaps past its best). Sheltering from some very heavy rain in a hide for which Rosemary had presciently brought the key, someone discovered a perfectly formed hornet's nest in nest box just outside. Following the cleared ride over the top of the Elan Valley pipeline on our way back to the car park we found several Common Spotted Orchids and Rosemary pointed out some Orange-Tip eggs on the

flower stems of a Lady's Smock. At this point the species list stood at about a hundred and fifty. The evening was warm and still and a number of bats were seen over the Stourport canal basin and a lagoon between some blocks of flats. I didn't have my bat detector but the collective opinion was that they were probably Pipistrelles.

On Sunday morning we again met Rosemary and John Iles at Unclys farm on the south side of the forest. John was a founder of the Wyre Community Land Trust whose aims, working with volunteers and local landowners, are to enhance the biodiversity of the local traditional orchards, meadows and woodland. We learnt from John that the WCLT currently manages 140ha and has a herd of Dexter cattle which graze in the wood pasture. Much, if not all, of the land is known as 'Ruskin Land' and was given to John Ruskin, the Victorian artist who established the 'Guild of St George' to enable local people to reconnect with nature. (By coincidence, there was an interesting article about Ruskin Land in the spring 2017 edition of CPRE's Countryside Voice.) John took us on a short tour of the WCLT woodland and explained some of the history and woodland management, and then to see the Sword-Leaved Helleborines (see picture above) which grow there. Since they were put on Plantlife's 'Back-From-The-Brink' programme the number of sites in the forest where they grow has increased from two to twenty one, thanks in part to Rosemary who surveyed and monitored them.

John then returned for a farm open day and the rest of us headed towards a damp area to look for Carnation Sedge and Green



Huntsman spiders. On the way, Peter pointed out some copper-green dead wood. The colour is caused by the Green Elfcup fungus which used to be cultivated to produce 'green oak' for marquetry such as Tunbridge Ware. Whilst we ate our lunch on a bank overlooking a small valley a Great Tit went backwards and forwards to feed its young

and the silvery trills of a Wood Warbler - which we'd hoped to find - grew closer. Peter found the Carnation Sedge (*Carex panicea*) - and soon afterwards a Green Huntsman spider. If that - a large pure green spider with big white eyes - wasn't spectacular enough, a female Bagworm was then spotted on some Wood Spurge. The larvae of these moths build cases of short grass stems; the male adults have wings and fly but the wingless females remain in their larval cases.

The Wood Warbler came closer and was spotted; a Tree Creeper showed itself on the trunk of an oak.

Rosemary then led us to an old orchard and hung up a pheromone trap to attract Clearwing moths, but with no luck. As it was a warm sunny afternoon, some people took the opportunity for a nap on the grass, despite the many meadow ant hills, each of which had its own little ecosystem. Several Willow Warblers were singing; Adrian spotted a Hawfinch, which are not uncommon in the forest; a Common Lizard appeared briefly on a fallen tree. From there we walked along an old railway line (used as a cycle way) where more Pearl-Bordered Fritillaries and Plain-Gold micromoths were seen. I was pleased to find some Common Cow-wheat as we went down a rather precipitous path to Knowles Mill on Dowles

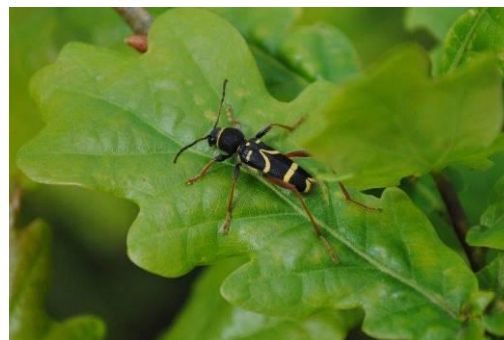
Brook with the hope of seeing a Dipper. Again, no luck, but we saw and heard a couple of Pied Flycatchers and a Marsh Tit. Making our way back up an easier path we heard more Wood Warblers and stopped at a small pond in the woods where there were tadpoles, a Palmate Newt and a couple of red Damsel Flies. Once back at the Ruskin Studio (belonging to the WCLT) at Unccllys Farm a number of bright red Welsh Oak Longhorn Beetles were found in the woodshed. We were very grateful for a cup of tea and a piece of birthday cake (thank you, Margaret!). I suspect that Brenda was the most grateful because as Recorder she was beginning to sag under the weight of the species list which was over three hundred and fifty by then. But there were more to come.



Green Elfcup fungus *Jill Bailey*

The Monday morning was warm and bright and we assembled with Peter on Hartlebury Common, which is a piece of dry, sandy heathland right on the outskirts of Stourport. It is a SSSI and a local nature reserve, grazed by a herd of longhorn cattle. As it was a completely different habitat it had many new species for the list. The first striking thing was the swarms of Garden Chafers which seemed to be everywhere. In fact, a couple of local dog-walkers asked us what they were; one of them had them all over his lawn (which was probably bad news). Near the car park was a small pond with an impressive display of Marsh Cinquefoil. Although we saw and heard a number of birds, including Whitethroats, perhaps the most interesting

things were the insects and the miniature plants adapted to the very dry conditions. In the dry sandy paths, Blood Bees, which have bright red abdomen, were besieging the holes of Brassy Mining Bees, on which they parasitise. Peter pointed out a Green Tiger Beetle - a fearsome bright green predator that has the reputation of being the UK's fastest moving beetle. It certainly moved too fast to be photographed! Higher up on the edge of the heath a black and yellow Wasp Beetle - a mimic - and a Green Hairstreak were found on some young Oaks. A number of evil-looking Sand Wasps were found by the side of the path. Lower down we got down on our hands and knees to identify some of the miniature plants. Bird's-foot, a member of the pea family which grows in cushions and has flowers no more than five or six millimetres across, was particularly attractive. Whilst we were at ground level, Peter noticed a small spider with unusual markings. It was photographed and later identified as a nationally rare species of False-Widow spider (*Steatoda albimaculata*), well away from its known range of coastal and southern counties. In fact, this was the first record for Worcestershire.



Wasp beetle *John Cobb*

By lunchtime the species list had grown to more than four hundred and fifty and, after eating our sandwiches whilst watching the longhorn cattle grazing, we all returned to Oxfordshire, well and truly 'ID'd-out' after a fascinating weekend. I'm sure that I speak for everyone in saying that we should like to thank Peter Creed and Rosemary Winnall for

their knowledge and generosity in sharing it,
Brenda Betteridge for her extreme species

recording, and Yvonne Townsend for liaising
with Peter to set up the trip.

John Cobb

Wyre Forest

List of flowering plants seen (entries in red are either rare or local/special species):

| | | |
|------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|
| Yellow Pimpernel | Broom | Sword-leaved Helleborine |
| Wood Speedwell | Wood Millet | Columbine |
| Heath-grass | Mountain Melick | Marsh Valerian |
| Yellow Archangel | Wild Service Tree | Great Wood-rush |
| Thyme-leaved Speedwell | Holly | Lesser Stitchwort |
| Heath Wood-rush | Mistletoe on Rowan | Mountain Melick |
| Lousewort | Pignut | Common Cow-wheat |
| Tutsan (in bud) | Lily of the Valley | Opposite-leaved Golden |
| Hairy Wood-rush | Bogbean | Saxifrage |
| Wood Club-rush | Shining Cranesbill | Soft-leaved Sedge |
| Bitter Vetchling | Yellow Rattle | Floating Club-rush |
| Lesser Spearwort | Changing Forget-me-not | Wood Club-rush |

Mosses and Ferns

| | | |
|------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Common Liverwort | Hard Fern | Scaly Male Fern |
| Large White-moss | Broad Buckler Fern | Hart's-tongue Fern |

Fungi

| | | |
|-------------|-------------------|----------------------|
| Turkey-tail | Scarletina Bolete | Mottlegill Toadstool |
|-------------|-------------------|----------------------|

Insects

| | | |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Small Heath butterfly | Bagworm <i>Psyche</i> sp. (moth) | Blue Shieldbug |
| Comma butterfly | Broad-bodied Chaser ♀ | Minotaur Beetle |
| Pearl-bordered Fritillary | Hoverfly <i>C. variabilis</i> | Black-headed Cardinal Beetle |
| Orange Tip butterfly | Hoverfly <i>Cheilosia proxima</i> | Welsh Oak Longhorn Beetle |
| Brimstone butterfly | Thick-headed Fly (Conopid) | Black-spotted Longhorn |
| Small Emerald moth | Southern Wood Ant | Black-striped Longhorn |
| Brindled White-spot moth | Figwort Weevil | Speckled Long-horn Beetle |
| Drab Looper moth | Water Cricket | 24-spot Ladybird |
| Speckled Yellow moth | Rove Beetle | Black-headed Cardinal Beetle |

Other Invertebrates:

| | |
|--------------------|-----------------------|
| Ash Black Slug | Worm Slug |
| Labyrinth Spider | Green Huntsman Spider |
| Nursery web spider | White Crab Spider |

Other Animals

| | |
|---------------|--------------------------------|
| Slow-worm | Short-tailed Field Vole |
| Common Lizard | Flat-backed Millipede (mating) |
| Palmate Newt | |

Hartlebury Common

Flowering Plants in flower:

Sticky Mouse-ear
Broom
Parsley Piert
Bogbean
Marsh Cinquefoil
Lesser Spearwort
Bog Stitchwort

Marsh Pennywort
Pignut
Annual Knawel
Birdsfoot
Small Cudweed (nf)
Shepherd's Cress
Sand Spurrey

Buck's-horn Plantain
Broad-leaved Cotton-sedge
T tormentil
Bottle Sedge
Heath Wood-rush

Fungi & Lichens

Puffball *Bovista plumbia*
Cladonia portentosa lichen

Insects

Small Heath butterfly
Common Blue butterfly
Green Hairstreak butterfly
Orange Tip butterfly
Small Copper butterfly

Tree Bumble Bee
Red-tailed Bumble Bee
Ichneumon Wasp *Ophion*
Scorpion fly
Pine Ladybird

14-spot ladybird
Green Tiger Beetle
Click Beetle
Grey-haired Mining Beetle

Arachnid

False-widow Spider [Nationally Rare found on dry sandy heaths – first record for Worcestershire (Confirmed by Spider Recording Scheme) well away from its known range of Dorset, Hants, Surrey, Norfolk and Suffolk]

Brenda Betteridge

Greenham and Cookham Common, Berkshire 11 June 2017 joint trip with RSPB

After overnight rain, it was bright and breezy when four of us met up in the Control Tower car park. Two more joined us a little later.

This site, owned by West Berkshire Council and managed by the Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust, is 500 hectares of heathland, grassland and ancient woodland. So, because it's such a huge area, we walked just a small part of it, eastwards onto Crookham Common. It is popular with many dog walkers, joggers and cyclists, but because of its size they are not obtrusive.

As we set off, both a Bullfinch and a Blackcap were singing in the car park. We firstly walked down the line of the former runway, now grassland flanked by lots of gorse. Skylarks sang overhead, and Linnets,

Meadow Pipits and Stonechats flitted about, settling from time-to-time on the tops of the shrubs. Occasionally, a flying Kestrel, Red Kite or Buzzard caught our attention. Cattle with calves, varying in size from very small ones to almost full-grown ones, were grazing on the grass in the more open areas. One cow we passed had just given birth to a still wet calf, and appeared to be about to produce its twin. In such a large area some of the more distant birds singing or calling, such as Green Woodpecker, Red-legged Partridge, Chiffchaff and Tree Pipit, weren't able to be spotted. We eventually made our way to an area of small pools surround by small shrubs where, while watching more Linnets, Meadow Pipits and Stonechats, a Dartford Warbler was spotted by one of our group. Despite constantly moving from bush to

bush, all of us managed to obtain good views of it. Just beyond the pools, a Hobby was seen swooping down to catch dragonflies. A Willow Warbler and several more Blackcaps sang as we made our way along the woodland edge path towards the car park. As we approached the former airfield control tower, a pair of Lapwings that were nesting on a gravelly mound were busily and noisily

seeing-off Jackdaws and Carrion Crows intent on taking the breeding pair's eggs; a none too pleasing an end to our walk! We'd hoped to see a Woodlark, having seen them here during previous visits but, alas, not on this occasion. Nevertheless, it had been a fruitful walk with just over 30 species seen or heard.

Bird Species Seen/Heard:

| | | |
|------------------|----------------------|--------------------|
| Blackcap | Hobby | Skylark |
| Bullfinch | Kestrel | Song Thrush |
| Buzzard | Lapwing | Stonechat |
| Carrion Crow | Linnet | Tree Pipit |
| Dartford Warbler | Meadow Pipit | Common Whitethroat |
| Green Woodpecker | Red Kite | Willow Warbler |
| Greenfinch | Red-legged Partridge | |

David Rolfe

Lower Moor Farm Reserve and Clattinger Farm 17 June 2017

This trip was cancelled

Moth morning 8 July 2017

There was an excellent turnout for this annual event at Ken and Brenda Betteridge's home near Worsham. Ken, Gavin Hageman and I set up one moth trap in the garden and two in the adjacent former quarry on the previous evening. It was a 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. We had a lovely collection of moths as follows, 64 species in all. The full list is on the web site,



and copies will be available at our winter meetings. In the absence of a moth expert we were able between us to identify 49 moths.

The rest were identified from photographs by Dr Marc Botham, butterfly and moth ecologist who also lent me a moth trap. Thanks to Gavin for bringing his trap along and to Ken and Brenda for their hospitality. Tours of Ken's fantastic vegetable garden were enjoyed as were the

refreshments.

Mary Elford

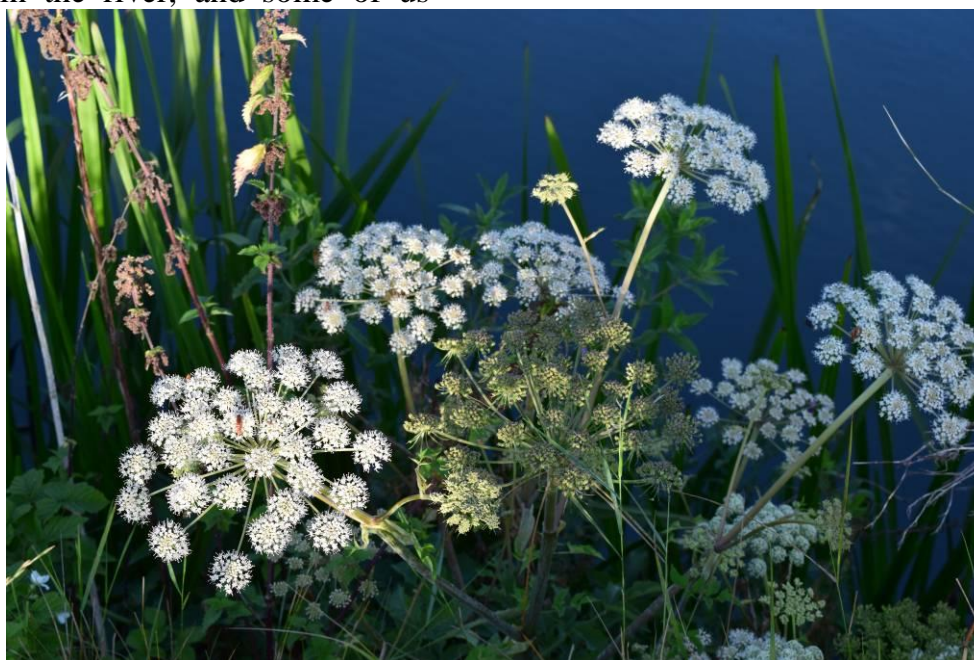
Evening walk along River Thames path at Bablockhythe 20 July 2017

This was a gentle evening stroll alongside the bank of the Thames in warm weather,

which grew colder later, then back to the Ferryman pub for refreshment. Although the

fields along the river bank are grazed, it is still a lovely walk. There is a variety of vegetation, with colourful stretches of riverside wild flowers interspersed with hedges, presumably planted to prevent the grazing animals from reaching the banks. Nestled among the waterside plants we found Skullcap, and under the hedges a scattering of Pignut. We were entertained by Common Terns diving in the river, and some of us

were lucky enough to catch the vivid flash of a Kingfisher. Alison had to sit by the bank near the pub because of a bad knee, but she still saw many birds, as is often the case when one sits and watches (as did our former wheelchair-bound chairman, Barbara Slocock). The seemingly resident pub geese were very, very inquisitive and came to greet her and stayed close by.



List of plant species in flower:

Purple Loosestrife
Yellow Loosestrife
Branched Bur-reed

Common Fleabane
Goatsbeard
Pignut

Skullcap

Birds seen:

Swallow
House martin
Great spotted woodpecker
Crow
Starlings
Kingfisher

Pied wagtails
Collared dove
Goldfinch
Cormorant
Common tern

Buzzard
Long-tailed Tits
Bullfinch (♂)
Greylag Goose
Barn Owl

Insects seen:

Banded Demoiselle
Common Blue Damselfly

Meadow Brown butterfly
Harlequin Ladybird

Red Underwing moth (2 on pub wall)

Alison Weaver and Tony Florey (picture by Jill Bailey)

Visit to Glyme Farm, Chipping Norton 2 August 2017

In a period of changeable weather, we were pleased to see on the morning of 2 August that the forecast for that evening was for fine weather. So it was disappointing when it rained all evening! About 20 West Oxfordshire Field Club and Wychwood Flora Group members turned up for the farm walk organised jointly for the two organisations with the owner, Lindon Cornwallis. It was difficult to appreciate the limestone grassland flora of the meadows, the maturing woodland planted by Lindon and the pasture sown with a mixture of plants specifically for sheep in a 10-year rotation. But while we were walking through them Lindon kept us entertained with a range of subjects close to his heart and had so much to tell us that I think we would still have been out in the fields after dark if Ken had not kept the group moving.

Before we started the walk Lindon gave us an introductory talk about how he came to the farm, his ambition to farm it in the way it would have been in the 1940s, his struggles with bureaucracy to obtain whatever financial support he could and his fight to keep his farm

a haven for wildlife. Moving off from the farm buildings we passed by one of the sources of the River Glyme on our way to the first field where strip lynchets (a feature of ancient field systems in which land was terraced to create flat land for cultivation) are still visible. It is here on the sloping bank that Meadow Clary (*Salvia pratensis*) flourishes thanks to Lindon's sympathetic management – keeping his sheep out of that area until after the flowers have set seed. Unfortunately it was too late in the season to see the Meadow Clary in flower, which was a shame as it is a wonderful sight not seen in many places.

At the end of the walk in the gathering gloom as we congregated back at the farm buildings feeling a bit bedraggled Christine shared her chocolate birthday cake with us – a perfect end to an enjoyable, informative and memorable evening. Thank you very much, Lindon, for giving up an evening to take us for a walk on your farm and for giving us your thoughts about the state of farming and the countryside, with which we sympathise.

Brenda Betteridge

Bats by the river Windrush 18 August 2017 with Gavin Hageman

Nine of us met at the Woodford Road car park in Witney at 8 p.m. (sunset was at 8.20 p.m.) I was pleasantly surprised that anybody turned up at all given that it was already starting to spit with rain and was forecast to rain heavily later, and I had seriously thought about cancelling the evening because bats feed on insects and insects don't like to fly when it's pouring with rain, so what's the point - it's not going to work, I had thought? But as nine brave and hopeful members of the club turned up to have a batty experience, I thought let's give it a go and see what happens.

I gave a short introduction to bats and bat detecting and played some bat call recordings

from my phone as examples of what to listen for when using the bat detector.

The early emerging bats (Noctule, Leislars and Serotine) are expected to fly at or close to sunset at 8.20 p.m., so we set some of the bat detectors to 25KHz to detect them should they appear. Then at about 8.15 p.m. we walked down Puck Lane to Mill Street where we crossed over the road and continued walking down towards the wooden bridges over the River Windrush. After the group arrived at the main wooden bridge over the river, I was able to give out some Magenta4 bat detectors kindly loaned to me by Chimney Meadows nature reserve(BBOWT). Shortly after our arrival at

the bridge there was a brief crackle on one of the bat detectors set at 25 kHz. By this point it was pouring with rain and not very pleasant at all but nevertheless we had detected our first bat and it probably was one of the early emerging bats, although the call was far too brief for me to be able to identify it. With our most common bats, the two Pipistrelles (Common and Soprano) expected to emerge from their roosts to feed at around about half an hour past

sunset, we were hoping that the bat detectors would burst into life at around about 8:45 and it was already 8.35 by this point and everybody was getting very, very wet. But despite conditions being extremely unfavourable, the bat detectors did burst into life at about 8:40 p.m. and for about half an hour until just after 9 p.m. We detected lots of Pipistrelle bats and the bridge was absolutely buzzing with bats

trying to feed and many were spotted as they flew past us over the bridge, and some people did spot flying moths, which demonstrated that there were some insects flying around.



By About 9:10 p.m. most people were absolutely saturated and prepared to resume bat detecting on a much finer evening. My written notes had turned into paper pulp so we decided to call it a day.

The fact that so many bats were detected on such a foul, wet evening was an absolute revelation to me but, as I had explained to the group, the bats are very keen at this time of year to fatten up ready for the winter hibernation and probably extra keen given that the weather in August hasn't been very good for them. Wow! I am still shocked, but thank you to everyone who braved the weather.

Gavin Hageman

MEMBERS' CONTRIBUTIONS

A Long-eared Bat

I was visiting Tony Florey in High Street, Witney, when I found in the outside yard a dead Long-eared Bat in a lovely condition. It has some a little bruising under its wing, but otherwise it was perfect. It was an exquisite creature, with its long ears and with wings like fine leather. Its body was darkish brown, and it had wonderful little feet. Adrian State photographed it and thought it was likely to be a juvenile.

Tony has not seen long-eared bats near his house before, but has seen and rescued Pipistrelles. Interestingly, I had found a dead Long-eared Bat on the North Leigh to Witney road only a few days earlier, and Sue Morton and John Cobb found one at Foscot very recently.

Alison Weaver