



West Oxfordshire Field Club

Newsletter

NEWSLETTER No. 88 – AUTUMN 2008

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EDITORIAL

Summer seems to have faded into autumn almost imperceptibly – just a gradual cooling, and rather rapid dimming of the light with continuation of the monsoon. The skies have suddenly emptied this week – the martins and swallows seems to have departed at least a week earlier than usual. It's not for a shortage of insects, to judge by the number of mosquito bites I have been getting. Perhaps they are craving the sun as much as we are.

Other birds have been spreading into the area. The Red Kites are seen more often, hawking over Oxford itself, and extending further west. And Little Egrets are arriving in increasing numbers. There are often one or two in the local gravel pits. Pairs of Little Egrets have nested in Oxfordshire for the last 6 years, successfully rearing young. Watch out, too, for the Great White Egret. The fourth Oxfordshire sighting was in May this year at Farmoor. In May, too, a Cattle Egret was seen for the first time in the county, near Sutton. We shall probably never see many of these, as the county does not have a lot of cattle.

I fear the gloomy wet summer has not been good for birds or butterflies. I have seen very few of the smaller young birds this year, including fewer baby Blackbirds than usual and hardly any young tits. Also the buddleia has had very few butterflies on it. But the Hedgehogs do seem to be thriving well – my garden is spangled with their signatures every day. Not surprising, as the slug and snail populations have boomed, and my hostas look like doilies, despite lavish helpings of bird-friendly slug bait. And no doubt we are in for a rich array of fungi this autumn, though they do like a bit of warmth as well as moisture.

Frogs and toads too, are enjoying the wet weather. My garden is full of small ones, my large resident frog having been eaten by a (very large) Grass Snake last summer. The hostas are still mourning its loss. This frog used to love my garden hose. As soon as I began watering it would emerge and sit, snout pointed upward, to let the water run all over its body. This behaviour is not uncommon – I know another gardener whose frog behaves in the same way.

The mice have moved indoors already – who can blame them? A mouse-friendly neighbour has been using live traps to get rid of them, but it's not so easy.

Convinced that the same mouse was returning time after time, she clipped a piece out of its ear – and sure enough – it was the same mouse. She then took it further and further away, but each time it returned. Finally, from a distance of 4 miles it failed to return. This, of course, doesn't prove anything other than that you need to take it at least 4 miles away - it may have been eaten by an owl or kestrel.

Last year was disastrous for small mammals, as many drowned or were washed away in the floods. We have had more floods this summer – on one occasion I drove from Cassington to Yarnton with water gushing like a river from beneath one hedge across the road to the other hedge. The roads in Yarnton were completely under water, in places up a foot deep. By the time the car had crawled through the water to the Post Office, it had closed because it, too, was flooded. Let's hope the small animals were not too badly hit. Certainly the moles have been throwing up hillocks in new, drier areas.

But the trees appear to have thrived, putting on tremendous growth this summer. The Wychwood Project's recording of ancient trees is proceeding apace. Oxfordshire has many splendid specimens. I remember one huge Wild Service tree encountered

on a Friends of Wychwood walk. Few people know that local inns called 'The Chequers' mostly got the name from a large Wild Service tree, whose local name is Chequers. Such trees were often gathering places for village folk. According to the Woodland Trust, the UK may have the largest concentration of ancient trees in northern Europe. In just 120 square miles of West Oxfordshire, the Project has identified about 500 ancient trees (large trees estimated to be at least 500 years old), and that area excluded the big estates of Blenheim, Cornbury and Ditchley.

Jill Bailey

YOUR NEWSLETTER

I am grateful to all of you to all who contributed to this newsletter, especially Jill Bailey who, once again, has written an interesting editorial. Without your contributions there would be no newsletter!

Don't forget this is newsletter is intended to be used by members to share their observations, make comments, etc. on anything associated with wildlife and the countryside, as well as for reports of walks and trips that you make with the Field Club or even with any other like-minded group.

The deadline for the next newsletter is the end of March 2009 but I'm happy to receive your contributions any time. Please send your contributions to me by e-mail as an attachment (Word is preferred) or on paper by post to the address given on the programme.

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REPORTS OF FIELD MEETINGS

Foxholes 3 May 2008

A small group turned out after an indifferent morning to walk through the woods and associated meadows of this BBOWT reserve. The weather was dry but remained cool which kept birds out of sight. However, we did hear a Cuckoo and spotted Blackbird, Song Thrush, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Green Woodpecker, Blue Tit, Wood Pigeon, Robin, Chiffchaff, Chaffinch and Blackcap.

Flowers were rather more in evidence with White Deadnettle, Greater Stitchwort, Dandelion, Cow Parsley, Cowslip, Hogweed, Common Vetch, Ground Ivy, Daisy, Jack-by-the-Hedge, Lesser Celandine, Tormentil, Wild Arum, Bluebell, Dog Violet, Primrose, Bugle, Germander Speedwell, Wood Sorrel, Lady's Smock, Ribwort Plantain, Early Purple Orchid and a Cherry tree in flower.

Ray Edwards

Dawn Chorus – Macaroni Farm, Eastleach 11 May 2008 at 04.00 hrs

This was our third visit to Eastleach for our annual Dawn Chorus meeting, again by kind permission of Mr Charles Phillips who unfortunately was unable to attend this year. We took the usual route along the valley of the River Leach towards the village, encountering more beef cattle with their calves than bleating sheep and lambs, resulting in rather less noise pollution!

As I left home (Herefordshire) at 02.42 hrs there were echoes of Christmas – it really was a 'Silent Night' – the stars were shining and there was not a breath of wind. Much to my surprise part of the Gloucester ring road was closed, which resulted in my slightly delayed arrival at Sheep's Bridge at 03.52 hrs. I was delighted to see several cars had already arrived. This was the first time at Eastleach that we have had the traditional start to our dawn chorus with the song of not one but two Skylarks at 04.00 hrs on the dot, as the dawn began to break. We commenced the walk at

04.10 hrs having already recorded five species. There were at least a trio of Skylarks singing as we reached the high ground, to the delight of all present. Wrens were the dominant songsters as we walked through the woodland. The odds are that the unidentified Wagtail was a Pied! As in 2006, we enjoyed excellent views of a Barn Owl, a species which in some areas is suffering from starvation due to a crash in the small mammal population as a result of last year's very wet summer. On reaching the village, we added a further eight species to the list (see below). With the exception of Long-tailed Tit, the other seven are traditionally linked with some form of human habitation, this giving a total of 37 species.

Bird list with the time of each first species recorded:

04.06 Skylark
04.06 Mallard
04.08 Red-legged Partridge
04.08 Rook
04.09 Tawny Owl
04.17 Pheasant
04.17 Moorhen
04.23 Song Thrush
04.23 Blackbird
04.23 Woodpigeon
04.35 Robin
04.47 Blackcap
04.47 Wren
04.49 Blue Tit
04.52 Great Tit
04.55 Buzzard
04.56 Chaffinch
04.57 Chiffchaff
05.00 Goldcrest
05.03 Garden Warbler
05.15 Grey Heron
05.17 Carrion Crow
05.25 Stock Dove
05.42 Great-spotted Woodpecker
05.43 Wagtail (Pied?)
05.44 Barn Owl
05.45 Dunnock
05.48 Green Woodpecker
06.02 Jackdaw
06.37 Goldfinch
06.37 Greenfinch
06.39 House Sparrow
06.40 Collared Dove
06.45 Swift
06.48 Starling
07.00 Long-tailed Tit
07.15 Swallow

Species recorded on our two previous visits, but not this year, were Lapwing, Magpie, Yellowhammer, Mute Swan and Willow Warbler. In a recent article in The Independent entitled 'The great migration crisis' it stated that Willow Warblers are down by 60% long term (1967–2005) and down 16% short term (1995–2005). This may well be a contribution to the absence of this species! We have yet to hear a Cuckoo at Eastleach, while on the plus side Dunnock, Green Woodpecker, Goldfinch and Greenfinch were new species for our list. The weather remained perfect throughout the duration and was enjoyed by a dozen Field Club members plus the

two secretaries from Barrington Park Estate and a trio of ladies from Eastleach. Many thanks indeed to you all for your support. I hope to see you again next year. A special thank you to Judy Branson for ferrying the car drivers back to their vehicles at Sheeps Bridge. Despite not being 100% of late Yvonne and Roger insisted they would provide the now traditional 'Overflowing Hailey' breakfast. All 12 club members took advantage of this kind and very generous offer. Was anybody disappointed? No chance! Thank you both as always.
Graham Wren

Highnam Woods and Newent Birds of Prey Centre 31 May 2008

The weather on Saturday 31 May turned out to be one of the best for the month when members of WOFC drove down to Highnam Woods RSPB reserve just the other side of Gloucester.

The previous week, when I had carried out a recce, I was rather disappointed because the bird hide had been vandalised and closed off together with easy access to the pond. However, on the day, I met the warden who had been monitoring some of the nest boxes and was able to give us a lot of helpful information about the site. It is a large area of mixed woodland and this was full of birdsong, probably encouraged by the bright sunshine. Lots of Song Thrushes were singing interspersed with the songs of Willow Warblers and Blackcaps, plus a lot of the common woodland species. Raven called as they flew over and we listened to at least three Nightingales singing close to us. Ragged Robin grows in profusion along the woodland rides. Broad-bodied Chaser dragonflies could be seen basking in the sun on the pond edge and frequently flying rapidly to change position. On a good day, this reserve has a lot of potential and is known to have nesting Pied Flycatchers and Goshawks.

We had lunch at the Traveller's Rest at Malswick before rounding off the day with an afternoon at the fascinating Newent National Birds of Prey Centre where we were able to see several birds in flight including a Burrowing Owl, Red Kite and a Peregrine–Merlin cross, which was extremely fast. Many of the birds are captive bred or taken in as injured birds and most are flown regularly.

David Roberts

Oxford Canal/Shipton Quarry 8 June 2008

John Brucker kindly agreed to lead us on this walk as access to Shipton Quarry has now been denied by the new owners. In any case the habitat in the quarry had been largely destroyed as a preliminary to a large development – later turned down by the Planning Authorities. People living on the canal in narrow boats told us that Peregrines were nesting on 'Smokey Joe', the chimney of the old cement works.
Ray Edwards

List of birds counted and comments by John:

Heron 2
Mallard 2 adult 2 juv
Sparrow 10+
Dunnock 5+
Green Woodpecker 1
Buzzard 1 over
Reed Bunting 10+
Reed Warbler 5+
Blackcap 3
Garden Warbler 1
Chiffchaff 2
Whitethroat 2+
Long-tailed Tit 2

Chaffinch 5+
Blackbird 3+
Song Thrush 1
Moorhen 2
Woodpigeon 5+
Crow 3
Robin 3
Wren 10+
Black-headed Gull 5
Common Tern 2
Chaffinch 5

Birds missing but once common here: Marsh Tit, Willow Tit, Kingfisher, Willow Warbler.

We failed to see Great Spotted Woodpecker, Peregrine Falcon, and Kestrel that are usually present. Did we hear a Cuckoo? They were unusually common this year around the Cherwell valley.

Thatcham Reedbeds Nature Reserve and Bucklebury Common 15 June 2008

This was a joint Oxford RSPB Local Group/West Oxon Field Club trip. Seven RSPB group and two WOFC members met up at the Thatcham reserve on a bright evening, but with dark clouds on the horizon. However, once a brief hail shower had passed, it remained fine. As we walked from the visitor centre car park along the edge of the main open pool (Thatcham Lake) we watched Common Terns nesting on a raft and Sand Martins also nesting, but in an artificial sand-bank – a very large box of sand with holes in its front, supported above the water on stilts. Small bird species were singing all round the reserve but they were very difficult to see. We did, however, get good views of Sedge Warblers and Long-tailed Tits. On arrival at Bucklebury Common we heard several Tawny Owls calling. Then Woodcock started their roding flights, grunting and squeaking as they flew over. Finally, at 9.30 pm, a seemingly lone Nightjar started its coarse purring song and, from time to time, flitted to and fro. It sang almost continually until we left at 10.15. David Rolfe

Birds seen/heard:

Great-crested Grebe Mute Swan Canada Goose Mallard
Tufted Duck Moorhen Coot Woodcock
Common Tern Woodpigeon Collared Dove Tawny Owl
Nightjar Swift Great Spotted Woodpecker Sand Martin
Wren Robin Blackbird Song Thrush
Sedge Warbler Blackcap Chiffchaff Willow Warbler
Long-tailed Tit Blue Tit Carrion Crow House Sparrow
Chaffinch Greenfinch Goldfinch

In search of the Bee Orchid – Broadwell Airfield 17 June 2008

About 15 members turned out on one of those 'barmy' June evenings when a fleece was needed and the sun wasn't shining. However, it was dry and one stalwart arrived in open-toed sandals because he was going to insist that it was summer. We plunged through a hedge, following a public footpath sign, and stood amongst a sea of Pyramid Orchids close to the old runway of Broadwell airfield. Since the Dakotas and gliders left for the assault on Arnhem the airfield has been unused in several large areas and, consequently, a profusion of wild flowers has appeared. I had planned a circular walk to take in the varied flora of wild unused land, cultivated hedgerow, a stream through a wood and an open field but progress was so very slow through the wild unused section that the rest of the route was abandoned.

Apart from the Pyramid Orchids we found many excellent large Bee Orchids and

even a Common Spotted Orchid.

The group strolled, knelt, resorted to books and discussed the many specimens found from orchids to Hemlock and Parsnip. After a couple of hours the circular route was deemed impossible to complete and steps were retraced such that more specimens were found. A faint red glow behind the clouds indicated that we should give up for the evening before it became impossible to find our way off the airfield.
Derek Cotterill

P.S. from Sue Morton. The plump green caterpillar found on some Mellilot was later identified as one of the burnet moths. I also found a spectacular Vapourer Moth caterpillar in my car when I returned to it at the end of the walk.

Pyramidal Orchid
Bee Orchid
Common Spotted Orchid
Bird's-foot Trefoil
Grass Vetchling
Mellilot
White Campion
Red Campion
Bladder Campion
Sweet Rocket
Hoary Cress
Wild Parsnip
Hedge Bedstraw
White Bryony
Black Bryony
Hound's-tongue
Common Broomrape
Lady's Mantle
Agrimony
Dog Rose
Shining Cranesbill
Wood Avens
Biting Stonecrop
Sue Morton

This is probably not the complete plant list – I know that many more species grow in this area! (BJB)

Chimney Meadows 28 June 2008

Fourteen of us turned up in the car park at Chimney Meadows and it was encouraging to welcome some new faces, the information about this meeting having been picked it up from the Oxford Times or the notice board in the Oxford library. We were lucky with the weather again although the wind was a bit too strong to encourage many butterflies to show.

From the approach road, in the remains of a flooded field, a Common Tern was spotted and there were a number of Little Egrets and a Grey Heron. It was interesting to see the improvements to the reserve, BBOWT's largest nature reserve, since we had visited two or three years back. There were a lot more wildflowers and the paths are well marked and cut now with a long section of board walk on the approach to two rather impressive bird hides. One of these has a turf roof and what appeared to be a Wren's nest in an outside crevice near the roof with an obvious hole into it. The board walk was constructed of planks that appeared to be recycled plastic. What a good use for it. I would imagine this to be more durable than wood and it seemed to blend in very well in dark brown, rough grained for good grip in wet

weather. It will be a good walk to do on a summer evening again in the future when we might get another view of a Barn Owl which we were lucky enough to see last time.

Here are some of the birds (seen and heard), flowers and butterflies seen on this walk. We missed our WOFC flower experts!

Birds:

Common Tern Little Egret Black Headed Gull Chiff Chaff Yellowhammer Skylark
Red Kite Whitethroat Wren
Swift Chaffinch Tufted Duck
Great Tits and young House Martin Moorhen
Redshank Mallard and young Cormorant
(Moorhen's nest) Lesser Whitethroat

Butterflies:

Meadow Brown Small Blue Small Skipper
Orange-tip Red Admiral Ringlet

Damselflies:

Banded Demoiselle Large Red Common Blue
David Roberts

Wendlebury Meads 13 July 2008

A cloudy but fine and warm afternoon saw a small group of members turn out for a walk near to the site of the proposed new 'eco town' of Weston Otmoor. There is little doubt that such a development would, by disturbance, leave a damaging effect on the small but rich BBOWT reserve and the nearby Meads.

Birds were disappointingly few but, before we started, four Red Kites offered us some very close views. An elusive Lesser Spotted Woodpecker was seen together with a Greater Spotted Woodpecker and, either seen or heard were Kestrel, Pigeon, Collared Dove and Garden Warbler.

Other animals seen were Common Darter Dragonfly and the following butterflies: Meadow Brown, Ringlet, Marbled White, Large Skipper, Gatekeeper, Silver Spotted Skipper and Dark Green or Silver Washed Fritillary.

The following plants were noted: Greater Willowherb, White Bryony, Greater Hogweed, Woundwort, Oxford Ragwort, Yellow Rattle, Rosebay Willowherb, Meadowsweet, Lesser Bindweed, Clovers (red and white), St John's Wort, Greater Knapweed, Betony and Ragged Robin.

Ray Edwards

WOFC Weekend in Suffolk 18–20 July 2008

Five of us spent a bracing weekend near Diss, around the Suffolk–Norfolk border. It was great weather for walking and photography – the racing clouds enhanced the wide open skies of the rolling landscape. But occasionally they came too close for comfort, and we got a good soaking on a couple of occasions – there are very few places to shelter in the middle of a large fen!

We were based at the very comfortable White Horse Inn at Stoke Ash, near Diss. The food was so good we did not bother to look elsewhere.

Regrave and Lopham Fen spans 300 acres, and is the largest lowland valley fen in England and Wales, rescued from near destitution and almost totally drained in the 1990s. It is claimed to have 260 species of wild flower, but we found (recognised) only 61. This is an expansive landscape of a large fen with, in places, open water between the reed beds, and in the distance a wet marsh grazed by Polish Tarpan ponies. These were especially imported to maintain this habitat as they are happy to graze in water up to their bellies, unlike our native pony breeds.

There were several small pools near the path, fringed by reeds. Here one may on

rare occasions see the most famous inhabitant of this fen – the rare Fishing Spider. A large spider, it rests on aquatic plants with one ‘toe’ on the surface film of the water, to sense vibrations of insects falling into the water, which it then seizes. It also actively hunts small water animals. We didn’t see any spiders, but a local informed us that he had been looking out for them for 20 years and had not seen them. Some of the larger pools are home to a great variety of dragonflies and damselflies. We saw few other insects probably because of the strong wind. But Sedge Warblers ‘sang’ from hiding places in the reeds, and House Martins, Swifts and Swallows swooped all around us, hunting low over the open water.

The banks adjoining the reed beds are a rich habitat for wildflowers, and we were pausing every few steps to identify them. The paths were bright with Yellow and Purple Loosestrife, the mauve fluffy heads of Hemp Agrimony, and tiny stars of yellow Cinquefoil and Tormentil.

Roydon Fen, just a few miles away, was much wetter – a dense reed bed that swayed above our heads. It was bridged by a very narrow boardwalk, just two railway sleepers wide which was rather uneven, rocking not only from side to side, but also up and down! It kept us from some rather deep water. Walking along it was a very strange sensation. We visited in stormy weather, and the reeds were swirling around and above our heads, so that we couldn’t see ahead, behind or the sky above, while the boardwalk rocked unhelpfully. Afterwards we discovered that we had all felt extremely giddy and queasy, and very uneasy. Definitely an ‘experience’! Starry white Marsh Stitchwort drifted between the reeds. There were supposed to be various carnivorous plants and orchids and other rare species there, but it came on to rain very heavily and soon we were soaked by the reeds all around and we didn’t stay to explore, returning to the cars to wring out our clothes and empty our boots. The fen was surrounded by Alder carr, with Reed Sweetgrass in the ditches, and lots of horsetails. We found water plants like Brooklime, Lesser Water Parsnip, Watercress and Water Forget-me-not. This is definitely a place to revisit and explore in better weather.

Lackford Lakes is a mixed reserve of small lakes, reedbeds and some very dry stony habitats with a great range of wild flowers. In places the paths were lined with bright blue ribbons of Viper’s Bugloss, interspersed with Ragwort. There were colourful patches of other flowers – Scabious, Centaury and pretty little Wild Pansies. On the driest parts we found Cudweed and large clumps of Mignonette.

There were not many birds here, but we did spot a Hobby. We would probably have seen more if we had visited some of the hides close to the main lake but we were short of time. The ones we did visit were mainly in the reeds.

On the last day we visited Lakenheath Fen, a relatively new wetland RSPB reserve being developed rather in the way that Otmoor is being expanded. Only 12 years ago, it was a carrot field! Now it is home to Marsh Harriers, Hobbies, Bearded Tits, Bitterns, Golden Orioles and a host of warblers. You had to walk a long way to reach the hides and the weather was not very nice, so only Sue ventured that far, while Diana and Jill explored the habitats closer to the car park. There is a vast reed swamp, mainly of Reed Sweetgrass (*Glyceria maxima*), which we were told is under water for most of the winter. In the distance was a large expanse of water with swans, ducks and other water birds. A river winds its way through the reserve, and there were clumps of aspens and other trees that are home to orioles, though these remained elusive as usual.

Here is Sue Morton’s report on what she saw. The birds at Lakenheath Fen RSPB reserve were all added after I parted company from Jill and Diana. They will remember that it was cool and quite windy that afternoon – I had decided to press on to one of the more distant viewing points in the reserve (they don’t run to the luxury of hides) where some lucky people had apparently seen Cranes within the last few days, via a poplar plantation said to be home to some Golden Orioles. When I got to the poplars, I met a couple diligently scanning the treetops for the surprisingly

elusive bright yellow and black orioles, without success while I was there. It was too windy to hear the beautiful fluting calls that normally give them away. The very extensive reed beds were clearly full of small birds sheltering from the wind, judging by the amount of twittering coming out of them. On one of the few areas of open water there was a family of Great Crested Grebes, but most of the reserve is reed beds which you can look over from an elevated footpath along the top of a dyke. I got good views of Marsh Harriers which had evidently bred there – some of the reserve paths had been closed to keep over-enthusiastic birdwatchers away from the nest. The young had fledged and seemed to be flying well. Just outside the main part of the reserve, but visible from the elevated footpath, is the river and interesting wet meadows, which I suspect would be good for waders in winter. I have just checked the RSPB website and find that the Marsh Harriers at Lakenheath Fen actually raised 17 young from six nests. I am now ashamed that I didn't see more of them!

Species list for the whole trip:
Redgrave and Lopham Fen

Plants
Birdsfoot Trefoil
Bladderwort
Bramble
Broom
Brown Rush
Bugloss
Cat's-ear
Cinquefoil
Common Chickweed
Common Clubrush
Common Hemp-nettle
Common Meadow Rue
Common Mouseear
Common Reed
Creeping Thistle
Dovesfoot Cranesbill
Forget-me-not
Goosegrass
Great Bindweed
Great Plantain
Great Willowherb
Greater Spearwort
Ground Ivy
Guelder Rose
Hard Rush
Hedge Woundwort
Hemp Agrimony
Hogweed
Lady's Bedstraw
Lesser Knapweed
Lesser Spearwort
Marsh Bedstraw
Marsh Thistle
Meadow Buttercup
Meadowsweet
Purple Loosestrife
Ragged Robin
Ragwort
Raspberry

Red Clover
Reed Mace
Rosebay Willowherb
Rough Chervil
Saw Sedge
Self-heal
Spear Thistle
St John's-wort
Storksbill
Tormentil
Tufted Vetch
Valerian
Water Chickweed
Water Dock
Wetted Thistle
White Bryony
White Campion
White Clover
White Deadnettle
Woody Nightshade
Yarrow
Yellow Loosestrife

Butterflies and moths
Cinnabar moth caterpillar
Comma
Common Skipper
Five-spot Burnet moth
Large White
Meadow Brown
Small White

Other insects
Grasshoppers
Pond Skater
Azure Damselfly
Black-tailed Skimmer
Blue-tailed Damselfly
Emperor Dragonfly
Four-spot Chaser
Large Red Damselfly
Ruddy Darter
Possibly also the Brilliant Emerald (*Somatachlora metallica*) and the Black-tailed skimmer (*Orthetrum cancellatum*)

Birds
Chiffchaff
Coot
Green Woodpecker
Heron
House Martin
Mallard
Sedge Warbler
Swift
Wood Pigeon
Wren

Mammals
Rabbit

Polish Tarpan ponies

Roydon Fen

Plants

Common Horsetail

Water Horsetail

Birds-foot Trefoil

Brooklime

Hard Rush

Herb Robert

Honeysuckle

Lesser Water Parsnip

Marsh Bedstraw

Marsh Stitchwort

Soft Rush

Water Forget-me-not

Watercress

Yellow Rattle

Reeds (lots and lots of including Reed Sweetgrass and Common Reed)

Hard Rush

Soft Rush

Butterfly

Peacock

Birds

Magpie

Sedge Warbler

Lackford Lakes

Plants

Centaury

Common Chickweed

Common Cudweed

Common Reed

Fat Hen

Field Scabious

Gipsywort

Great Burdock

Great Mullein

Heartsease

Heath Bedstraw

Knotgrass

Knotted Pearlwort

Mayweed

Medick

Mignonette

Pennyroyal

Ragwort

Redshank (Polygonatum)

Reed Sweetgrass

Scarlet Pimpernel

Soft Rush

Spring Sandwort

Storksbill

Teasel
Treacle Mustard
Viper's Bugloss
Weld
Wild Mignonette

Butterflies
Gatekeeper
Heath Brown
Meadow Brown
Speckled Wood
various Whites

Birds
Black-headed gull
Blackcap (heard)
Blue Tit
Canada Goose
Chaffinch
Cormorant
Great Tit
Hobby
Lapwing
Lesser Black-backed Gull
Mute Swan

Lakenheath Fen (RSPB)

Plants
Amphibious Bistort
Black Horehound
Broad-leaved Willowherb
Comfrey
Field Mallow
Great Bindweed
Haresfoot Trefoil
Mugwort
Pineappleweed
Yellow Waterlilies
Reeds (lots and lots and lots but predominantly Reed Sweetgrass)

Butterflies
Large Tortoiseshell
Red Admiral
Ringlelet

Birds
Buzzard
Canada Geese
Common Terns
Great Crested Grebe and young
Marsh Harrier and young
Mute Swans
Tufted Ducks

Reptile
Grass Snake

Jill Bailey

Asham Meadows 12 August 2008

After a very cool, wet day nine members met at this small BBOWT reserve adjacent to the recently acquired meadows of the RSPB Otmoor reserve. The evening was cool and overcast but dry. The cool conditions kept the butterflies down but some sharp-eyed members spotted Small Copper, Small White and particularly abundant were Common Blue. Two male Common Blues briefly opened their wings and eggs found on grasses were probably of this species. Other insects were Grasshoppers, Dragonflies and Bush Cricket.

Birds seen were Robin, Wren, Chaffinch, Blue Tit, Kestrel, Common Crow and Little Egret. A Roe Deer also showed itself. The meadows had been mown but wide verges had been left uncut to display the rich flora which includes Betony, Bird's-foot Trefoil, Greater Knapweed, Tufted Vetch, Agrimony, Quaking Grass, Buttercups, Red Clover, Black Medick, Club Rush, Timothy Grass, Lesser Spearwort, Water Plantain, Water Lily and Water Mint

Ray Edwards

MEMBER'S CONTRIBUTIONS

There is always something new

While enjoying walk in the Pentland hills a short distance outside Edinburgh in early September 2007. My attention was drawn to a white flower amongst a patch of Ragged Robin (*Lychnis flos-cuculi*). On investigation I was amazed to find that the white flower was also a Ragged Robin – this was another first for me.

On Sunday 9 March 2008 at approximately 10.00 hrs while in the company of three friends from Edinburgh who were doing the WeBS wildfowl count from the hide at Bavelaw Marsh, Midlothian (near the Pentland hills) we watched an immature White-tailed Eagle (*Haliaeetus albicilla*) with white wing tags hunting over the western end of the open water of the Marsh which was thick with Wigeon (*Anas penelope*), Teal (*Anas crecca*), Tufted Duck (*Aythya fuligula*), Mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*) and Mute and Whooper Swans (*Cygnus olor* and *Cygnus cygnus*). For at least 10 minutes we had marvellous views of the eagle as it passed repeatedly back and forth very low over the wildfowl, causing a lot of panic. At one point it hovered just above the heads of a small group of swans as if contemplating an attack on one of them. After failing to catch any prey it flew off westwards, putting up large flocks of Lapwing (*Vanellus vanellus*) and Common and Black-headed Gulls (*Larus canus* and *Larus ridibundus*) from the fields north and west of the Marsh reserve.

Graham J. Wren

BITS AND BOBS

Plant sale

Thank you very much for supporting our annual plant sale which was held once again at the last indoor meeting in aid of BBOWT, our local wildlife trust. We only managed to raise £29 but all the plants which were not sold were given another chance of finding a home at Foxholes Open Day on 11 May. It was a lovely afternoon and I enjoyed manning the plant stall in the sunshine outside the barn where the teas were served and making an additional small contribution to BBOWT this way. A special thank you to whoever brought along the salmon pink geranium plants – I bought them and gave them to my mother and they have been producing a lovely show of colour in the pots outside her house all summer despite the miserable weather.

Erratum

In the report in the last newsletter (No. 87) about the Club's visit to the Rothschild Museum, an elephant was listed as one of the exhibits. Apparently there is no

elephant there and it should have read an elephant bird. Sorry Jill, I must have inadvertently deleted the word 'bird'.

Brenda Betteridge

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