



West Oxfordshire Field Club

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No.92

AUTUMN

2010



EDITORIAL

Lazy white butterflies drift like ghosts in remote corners of the garden, gone their frenzied summer flapping. With two good summers, the butterflies are making a good recovery from the devastating 'monsoon summers' of 2007 and 2008. I have been enjoying an article in Saga Magazine by Patrick Barkham, who has written a book about a summer spent trying to see all 59 native British species – butterfly 'twitching'! What a great way to spend a summer. More than half these species are in decline, including common species like the Small Tortoiseshell. Even when you visit a wildflower meadow dotted with butterflies, it is sobering to reflect that Victorian collectors would scoop up 100 butterflies with a single flick of a net. The club has also been butterfly-spotting. A trip to Homefield Wood BBOWT reserve rewarded members with only four different species of orchids, but a good selection of butterflies, including Silver-washed Fritillary. It might have been even better – the next day one of our members, doing a butterfly transect on the site, saw a total of 16 species, including Small Copper, Brown Argus and White-letter Hairstreak.

And we have not forgotten the moths. An unpromising August night paid bonuses for those members who ventured out to Asthall Leigh. It rained most of the way there, and all the way back, but while we were there, the rain held off. With moth traps scattered through a rambling Cotswold garden and in a nearby quarry, we chatted and enjoyed hot drinks and home-cooked nibbles while we waited. The following morning we went back to examine the traps. Despite the wet night, we had trapped some 160 moths from three species. In the cool of early morning, we had an excellent chance to examine the moths up close with a magnifying lens, as they were too sluggish to attempt to fly away.

House Martins and Swallows have gone very early from Cassington. At least 2 weeks before the usual date. I was surprised to find interest in last year's old nest, which had lain unoccupied all summer, from several martins dashing in and out during the week before departure. Were they scouting for next year's nest? Our President's nest box studies have shown that martins do not use the same nest each year – it seems that the early bird gets not only the worm, but also the best nest. One year I had a pair start to repair an old nest on 2 August, and they successfully fledged a brood in time to depart south. The Kites remain of course – the first year they have regularly been flying over the garden. Soon, I suppose, they will cease to excite. I remember my first sighting of one in Oxford city – circling lazily above the Sheldonian theatre.

There is still the occasional bat at twilight, and, of course, the spiders and house mice are beginning to seek warmer homes indoors. Bah! It's the season of Daddy-long-legs and their crazy dances around the bedside light, and of late mosquitoes still seeking – and finding – a juicy piece of flesh to feed from. There are a lot of late ladybirds around, sitting basking on September lavender blooms, crawling up stems and nestling in the crevices of branches. At least in my garden it has been a poor year for the aphids – I have seen very few. They always seem to thrive in moister weather. Even the ants living under the porch step have had a hard time finding any aphids to escort up the climber on the wall. Usually they march them up just

too high for me to reach, so that they drip honeydew all over the windows and sill, where it quickly grows an unsightly black mould.

Driving through our Oxfordshire countryside is always a joy – the verges are so rich in wildflowers. My thanks to the council workers who obviously cut at the right time (usually) and leave part of the bank uncut for the flowers. We are lucky to live in an area with a wide variety of habitats, ranging from marsh and bog to dry sandpits, limestone grassland, chalk streams, clay-lined river valleys, cliffs, quarries and lakes.

Many of our members are involved with the Wychwood Project, and this year's Wychwood Fair was held on ground near Witney on which the Project is about to plant a whole new woodland. This exciting and wide-ranging Project has already been involved in restoring habitats, advising farmers on conservation, mapping out the Wychwood Way for walkers, and encouraging the preservation of local history memorabilia over the area once designated a royal forest.

The highlight of the Club's summer programme was a trip to Teesdale, with guide Peter Creed, a flower and fungus expert and photographer. With its wide variety of upland habitats, Teesdale always yields plenty of less-common wild flowers, as well as birds like the Ring Ouzel, Dipper, Redshank and Sandpipers, which breed on the high moors in summer.

This is the time of year when bird-lovers start to stock their feeders. Some of us now feed all year round, and there is evidence that it can help the survival of smaller birds, especially this year's fledglings. While at one time counting the Greenfinches on the feeder was like trying to count how many people you could cram into a telephone box, sadly this is no longer true. Do remember when getting out your feeders – and when topping them up – to disinfect them regularly. You can buy the appropriate spray and brushes from most wild bird-food stockists. Those of us whose gardens are less than tidy can be complimented for helping garden birds. Bare areas where Sparrows can have a dust bath, wet muddy patches where Swallows and Martins can puddle for nest material, a good number of ant nests where Green Woodpeckers can rid themselves of parasites, unpruned shrubs where Sparrows and other small birds can nest, and – most important of all – plenty of soil not covered by paving stones where birds can forage. Where birds come, other creatures may also appear – Hedgehogs, Foxes and, if there is a garden pond nearby, Grass Snakes, Frogs and Toads (the best way to keep hostas from becoming green doilies). So think green, not guilty!

Jill Bailey

Your Newsletter

Thank you Jill for once again for coming up with another interesting editorial. Also thanks to all the other contributors. – your efforts are much appreciated.

Don't forget this 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 with any other like-minded group. By the way, a copy of this Newsletter is passed on to the Thames Valley Record Centre, which is always on the look-out for new records of natural history and geological interest. With this in mind, if you include in your contribution to this Newsletter a sighting of an animal or plant which is particularly interesting, could you please state exactly where you saw it, preferably with a map reference.

The deadline for the next newsletter is the end of March 2011 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.

Brenda Betteridge (Newsletter Editor)
E-mail: bbetteridge@phonecoop.coop

WOFC Website

Thanks to Adrian State and Jill Bailey the Field Club now has a website: www.thefieldclub.org.uk. Do visit it and see what we are about! If you have any additions or corrections you would like made please contact either Adrian or Jill – their contact details are given on the programme.

Plant Sale

Our annual plant sale raised £40.30 which was a welcome boost to the Field Club's income. Thank you for your support.

REPORTS OF FIELD MEETINGS

Upper Teesdale 10–14 June 2010

In 1991, the Field Club had a most memorable visit to Teesdale, led by Peter Creed. It was felt that with Peter's agreement another trip should be organised. Of the seven members who came this time only two were on the original trip. We were 3 weeks earlier than we had been in 1991, the weather was cooler and somewhat wetter, and after a very cold winter the vegetation was not as advanced as on our previous trip; however, that did not prevent us seeing a wide variety of flowers and bryophytes which have become Peter's speciality.

Upper Teesdale is a special place. It was never reforested after the last ice age, with the result that many rare (and mostly extremely small) arctic alpine plants have survived there. This, combined with the area's geology and traditional farming methods, produces a wide range of habitats from flower-rich meadows to the bleak fell tops with sugar limestone flora, grouse, Curlews and Golden Plovers. It's a long way from Witney – over 250 miles – but well worth the journey. Once you leave the motorway, the scenery becomes prettier and prettier, with lots of distracting flowers along the verges.

On arrival at the Langdon Beck Hotel (not Long Beach Hotel as given in the programme!) on the Thursday evening we were greeted by lots of low-flying House Martins catching their supper. After the evening meal a few of us went for a short walk from the hotel and in the twilight found the northern-montane Lady's-mantle, which does not seem to have a common name (*Alchemilla acutiloba*), Northern Dock, Globeflowers, Northern Marsh Orchids, Bird's-eye Primroses and Common Butterwort, setting the scene for the following few days.

Friday 11 June saw us parking by Forest-in-Teesdale primary school and making our way through fields and farmyards, noting Melancholy Thistles, Blood-drop Emlets and Blinks. After crossing over the River Tees and admiring the many orchids and meadow flowers near the bridge, we followed the course of the river for a mile or so. The sun shone intermittently, Peewits and Redshank were calling, Common Sandpiper, Pied Wagtails and dozens of House Martins and Sand Martins flew along the river; Curlews could be heard everywhere and Peewits dive bombed us. Green-veined White and Small Heath butterflies flitted amongst the vegetation. Lunch was taken at a delightful spot near the Tees. There was a total lack of vehicle noise – the only sounds being birdsong and running water.

On our way again along an increasingly rocky path by the river Peter found Beech Fern growing in the shelter of a rock in the same position he found it 20 years ago. Beneath Cronkley Scar, Juniper has been replanted in protective guards in an attempt to halt the decline in this endangered species. A Teesdale speciality, Shrubby Cinquefoil, also grows here but only a few flowers were out. Eventually we retraced our steps to Langdon Beck for supper and a well-earned rest.

Saturday was cooler and damper. After stopping to admire a splendid bank of Globeflowers, we drove up to the car park at Cow Green Reservoir and immediately put on all our spare clothes against the freezing wind. No wonder those arctic alpine feel so at home there. We saw the diminutive Teesdale Violet growing right next to the information board, and carried on through the Moor House–Upper Teesdale National Nature Reserve, following a track which runs the length of the reservoir. The Spring Gentians for which the area is famous were nearly over, but apparently a few days earlier there had been plenty. We were certainly in time for the Mountain Pansies, which spread over large areas in great patches of yellow and purple. Those able to bend down far enough were also able to see Alpine Bistort and Moonwort. As we made our slow progress towards the dam, we learned about the barytes mining which had continued in the area until the 1950s, with old shafts and spoil heaps still visible in places. Shallow streams or 'sikes' produced many interesting plants including the tiny Alpine Meadow-Rue and Stonewort, as well as Scottish Asphodel. Lunch was taken by the dam. Then the more adventurous members of the party made their way down the steep rocky path beside Cauldron Snout. Here the Tees rushes in a series of cataracts over a 200-yard-long rocky 'stairway'. The vertical distance from the first cataract to the last is 200 feet, making this the highest in England. This was definitely not for anyone with dodgy knees or a poor head for heights.

At the bottom of the waterfall the temperature must have been a good 10–15 degrees warmer than at the top and, in the sunshine, we were soon shedding the extra layers that we had put on earlier. The path at the foot of Falcon Clints is rather strenuous with fallen boulders to negotiate. Eventually the way became easier and we were pleased to see a number of Ring Ouzels hopping about on the grass, with another very smart male singing loudly from a Rowan tree. Further on past Widdybank Farm were some wonderful damp meadows, with many Early Marsh Orchids, Marsh Lousewort, Butterwort and Birds-eye Primroses.

A long and tiring, but very enjoyable, day was completed with watching World Cup football – England versus USA (score 1–1) – on the hotel TV. Well, Tony watched it – the rest of us stayed in the bar!

Sunday started damp and got wetter as the day progressed. We crossed the fields as on

Friday, seeing Peewits with young of various ages and after crossing the Tees we came to the bottom of the path up to Cronkley Fell. Then it was up a rocky gully through Juniper bushes and a long uphill slog to the top of Cronkley Fell to see the rare plants growing on the areas of sugar limestone.

Sugar limestone is a type of marble which weathers into a thin soil, looking just like granulated sugar. It was formed some 295 million years ago when molten magma intruded into the limestone and solidified to form the Great Whin Sill. As it pushed through, the magma baked the surrounding limestone to form sugar limestone. The arctic alpine really seem to like it and, in the protected enclosures on the fell top (to keep out rabbits, sheep and presumably also people), we saw Mountain Avens, lots of Spring Sandwort and a subspecies of Hoary Rockrose which grows there and nowhere else. Despite the wind and the rain, Golden Plovers were calling and posing obligingly on nearby rocks.

Two of us had an easier day and took a drive from Teesdale to Nanthead in Weardale passing hundreds of beautiful Mountain Pansies along the verges, Cotton Grass and Globe Flowers in the meadows, Snipe perched on the fence posts and Meadow Pipits and Skylarks were to be seen. On reaching the A689 they drove past the Killhope lead-mining Centre to St John's Chapel and followed a single-track road down to Langdon Beck. The tall snow posts lining the roads show how treacherous it must be in winter.

The final morning found us at High Force. Here the Tees spectacularly drops 70 feet over the Great Whin Sill into a plunge pool, making it England's highest uninterrupted drop of water. It took us some time to walk down the wooded path to the waterfall, Peter spotting bryophytes on every trunk and rock – the wet rocks by the 'landing' being particularly rich. Here we were distracted by a little bird which by its behaviour could only have been a Spotted Flycatcher. Eventually it settled down on a branch and Peter was able to photograph it.

Our visit to Upper Teesdale ended at Bowlees Nature Reserve, a delightful spot tucked away off the main road. The first area of interest was an old quarry which, although limestone, has wet areas with plants typical of more acid habitats, e.g. Common Butterwort, Northern Marsh Orchid, Common Spotted-orchid, and dry areas with Wild Thyme, Twayblades and Wood Cranesbill. From the quarry we made our way up the path by the Bowlees Beck to Summerhill Force. To get a better view of the waterfall, Peter left the path and climbed down to a lower level when suddenly he lost his balance, slipping on the rocks into the water. Fortunately his rucksack saved him and his precious cameras. The waterfall has partly undercut the limestone behind it to form a picturesque cavern known as Gibson's Cave. Here Peter was really in his element with lots of obscure liverworts growing on the wet overhang and the rocks below. Before setting off home we visited the visitor centre in a former primitive Methodist chapel built in 1845. This is run by the Durham Wildlife Trust and contains some very interesting information about Upper Teesdale but more importantly for us at that time it provided us with refreshment.

Despite the long journey and unusually energetic walks entailed with the expedition, we all had an interesting and rewarding few days in Teesdale. Many thanks to Peter Creed for his leadership and special knowledge.

Sue Morton, Jean Kenworthy and Brenda Betteridge

List of species recorded

Flowering plants:

Water Avens

†Melancholy Thistle

*Lady's-mantle *Alchemilla acutiloba*

Cuckooflower/Lady's-smock *Cardamine pratensis*

Brooklime

Sorrel

Crosswort

Opposite-leaved Golden-saxifrage *Chrysosplenium alternifolium*

Sticky Mouse-ear

Wall Speedwell

Bugle

Yellow Pimpernel

†Northern Dock *Rumex longifolius*

†Mountain Pansy *Viola lutea*

Heath Rush

Blood-drop-embels *Mimulus luteus*

Bog Stitchwort *Stellaria uliginosa*

Blinks *Montia fontana*

Broadleaved Dock

Common Marsh-bedstraw *Galium palustre*
 Lesser Spearwort *Ranunculus flammula*
 Yellow Rattle
 Common Milkwort
 †Northern Marsh-orchid *Dactylorhiza purpurella*
 Fairy/Purging Flax *Linum catharticum*
 Pyrenean Survygrass *Cochlearia pyrenaica*
 Marsh Valerian *Valeriana dioica*
 Eared Willow *Salix aurita*
 Common Spotted-orchid *Dactyloriza fuchsii*
 Heath Bedstraw *Galium saxatile*
 Meadow Foxtail
 †Pale Forget-me-not *Myosotis stolonifera*
 Changing Forget-me-not *Myosotis discolor*
 †Eyebright *Euphrasia rostkoviana*
 Bitter Vetchling
 Wood Anemone
 Lousewort *Pedicularis sylvatica*
 Common Butterwort *Pinguicula vulgaris*
 Flea Sedge
 Common Yellow Sedge
 Wild Thyme
 Wood-sorrel *Oxalis acetosella*
 †Marsh Lousewort *Pedicularis palustris*
 Round-leaved Sundew
 Cotton-grass
 Heather
 Bilberry
 Carnation Sedge
 *Shrubby Cinquefoil *Potentilla fruticosa*
 †Yellow Mountain Saxifrage *Saxifraga aizoides*
 Raspberry
 Juniper
 Procumbent Pearlwort
 Thyme-leaved Speedwell
 Hybrid orchid Northern Marsh ? Common Spotted
 Wavy Bittercress
 Sea Plantain
 Quaking Grass
 Common Dog-violet
 Early Purple Orchid
 Spring Sedge *Carex caryophyllea*
 Marsh Foxtail
 Ragged Robin
 *Teesdale Violet *Viola rupestris*
 Limestone Bedstraw
 Spring Sandwort *Minuartia verna*
 †Hair Sedge *Carex capillaris*
 Deer-grass *Scirpus cespitosus*
 †Northern Bedstraw
 *Bird's-eye Primrose *Primula farinosa*
 Few-flowered Spike-rush *Eleocharis quinqueflora*
 Three-flowered Rush *Juncus triglumis*
 Common Cotton Grass *Eriophorum angustifolium*
 *Dwarf Milkwort *Polygala amarella*
 †Alpine Bistort *Persicaria vivipara*
 *Spring Gentian *Gentiana verna*
 †Mountain Everlasting *Antennaria dioica*
 †Dioecious Sedge *Carex dioica*
 Hoary Whitlow Grass *Draba incana*
 *Scottish Asphodel *Tofieldia pusilla*
 †Alpine Meadow-rue *Thalictrum alpinum*
 Bog Asphodel *Narthecium ossifragum*

New Zealand Willowherb *Epilobium brunnescens*
 Heath Milkwort *Polygala serpyllifolia*
 Star Sedge *Carex echinata*
 Bog Pondweed *Potamogeton polygonifolius*
 Water Starwort *Callitriche*
 †Wood Crane's-bill *Geranium sylvaticum*
 Marsh Arrowgrass *Triglochin palustre*
 Common Bistort *Persicaria bistorta*
 Early Marsh-orchid *Dactylorhiza incarnata*
 Great Burnet *Sanguisorba officinalis*
 Common Sedge *Carex nigra*
 †Hoary Rock-rose *Helianthemum canum*
 Common Rock-rose *Helianthemum nummularium*
 Blue Moor Grass *Sesleria albicans*
 *Mountain Avens *Dryas octopetala*
 Wild Strawberry
 Ragged Robin
 Bluebell
 Water Figwort
 Greater Woodrush
 Ramsoms
 Wood Sage *Teucrium scorodonia*
 Welsh Poppy
 Wood Avens *Geum urbanum*
 Wall Lettuce
 Harebell
 Wood Sanicle
 Foxglove
 Wood Sedge *Carex sylvatica*
 Heath Speedwell *Veronica officinalis*
 Goldenrod *Solidago virgaurea*
 Common Dog-violet *Viola rivinianna*
 Three-nerved Sandwort *Moehringia trinerva*
 Hawkweed
 Wood Mellick *Melica uniflora*
 Wood Anemone
 Hairy St John's-wort *Hypericum hirsutum*
 Giant Bellflower *Campanula latifolia*
 Sweet Woodruff *Galium odoratum*
 Great Willowherb *Epilobium hirsutum*
 Rosebay Willowherb *Chamerion angustifolium*
 Dog's Mercury
 Quaking Grass
 Wild Angelica *Angelica sylvestris*
 Bristly Oxtongue *Picris echinoides*
 Fragrant Orchid *Gymnadenia conopsea*
 Twayblade
 Common Spotted-orchid

* Teesdale speciality

† Northern species

Ferns, Bryophytes and Lichens:

Spiral Extinguisher-moss *Encalypta streptocarpa*
 Yellow Fringe-moss *Racomitrium aciculare*
 Marsh Bryum *Bryum pseudotriquetrum*
 Maidenhair Spleenwort *Asplenium trichomanes*
 Narrow-leaved Fringe-moss *Racomitrium aquaticum*
 Hoary Fringe-moss *Racomitrium canescens*
 A cup lichen *Cladonia coccinea*
 Lesser Clubmoss *Selaginella selaginoides*
 Rustwort (a liverwort) *Nowellia curvifolia*
 Black Rock-moss *Andreaea rupestris*
 Pale Thread-moss *Bryum pallens*

Male Fern
 Beech Fern
 Common Haircap *Polytrichum commune*
 Hard Fern
 Greater Water-moss *Fontinalis antipyretica*
 River Grimmia *Schistidium rivulare*
 Hooded Bristle-moss *Orthotrichum cupulatum*
 Golden-head Moss *Breutelia chrysocoma*
 Sharp-leaved Blindia *Blindia acuta*
 Red Bog-moss *Sphagnum capillifolium* subsp. *rubellum*
 Juniper Haircap *Polytrichum juniperinum*
 Moonwort *Botrychium lunularia*
 A stonewort
 Mountain Male Fern *Dryopteris oreades*
 Narrow Mushroom-headed Liverwort *Preissia quadrata*
 Hook-beak Tufa-moss *Hymenostylium recurvirostrum*
 Fountain Smoothcap *Atrichum crispum*
 Parsley Fern
 Fir Clubmoss *Huperzia selago*
 Woolly Fringe-moss *Racomitrium languginosum*
 Feathery Bog-moss *Sphagnum cuspidatum*
 Green Spleenwort *Asplenium viride*
 Alpine Thread-moss *Bryum alpinum*
 Fountain Apple-moss *Philonotis fontana*
 Hooked Scorpion-moss *Scorpidium scorpioides*
 Tree moss *Climacium dendroides*
 Awl-leaved Screw-moss *Tortula subulata*
 Lichen *Cladonia fimbriata*
 Wood Bristle-moss *Orthotrichum affine*
 Common Pin-cushion Moss *Dicranoweissia cirrata*
 Dotted thyme-moss *Rhizomnium punctatum*
 Yellow fringe-moss *Racomitrium aciculare*
 Common Apple-moss *Bartramia pomiformis*
 Juicy Silk-moss *Plagiothecium succulentum*
 Grove Earwort *Scapania nemorea* liverwort
 White Earwort *Diplophyllum albicans* liverwort
 Common Polypody *Polypodium vulgare*
 Scaly Male Fern *Dryopteris affinis*
 Mouse-tail Moss *Isoetecium myosuroides*
 Black Spleenwort *Asplenium adiantum-nigrum*
 Hard Shield Fern *Polystichum aculeatum*
 Many-fruited Leskea *Leskea polycarpa*
 Whorled Tufa-moss *Eucadium verticillatum*
 Arnell's Apple-moss *Philonotis arnellii*
 Big Shaggy-moss *Rhytidiadelphus triquetus*
 Frizzled Crisp-moss *Tortella tortuosa*
 Rock pocket-moss *Fissidens dubius*
 Lesser Featherwort *Plagiochila porelloides*
 Rock Pouncewort *Cololejeunea calcarea*
 Great Scented Liverwort *Conocephalum conicum*

Birds:

Peewit
 Redshank
 Willow Warbler
 Dipper
 Pied Wagtail
 House Martin
 Sand Martin
 Oystercatcher
 Sandpiper
 Chaffinch
 Blackbird
 Curlew

Wheatear
Grouse
Swallow
Ring Ouzel
Snipe
Mistle Thrush
Black-headed Gull
Goldfinch
House Sparrow
Greenfinch
Starlings
Mallard
Pheasant
Curlew egg
Golden Plover
Lunch at dam
Wren
Goldcrest
Red Shank nest (4 eggs)
Golden Plover
Black Grouse
Plover chicks (3)
Robin
Spotted Flycatcher
Great Tit
Long-tailed Tit

Lepidoptera:

Latticed Heath-moth
Green-veined White butterfly
Small Heath butterfly
Silver Y Moth
Wood Tiger Moth
Red Admiral

Fungi:

Dung Round-head
Yellow Brain Fungus Tremella mesenterica
on ash tree

Amphibians and Reptiles:

Frogs
Common Lizard

Ken Betteridge (recorder in the field)

Circular walk via Buscot and Kelmscot 26 June 2010

It was a very hot summer's day when 14 of us set out from Buscot village on a circular walk that took us across various fields via Kelmscot returning to Buscot along the banks of the River Thames.

Starting from the car park, we walked towards the weir and turned off across several fields with lovely open views, where we stopped several times to admire the various wild flowers (see list) and several butterflies, among which were seen skippers, Meadow Brown, Common Blue, Ringlets, Small Tortoiseshell and Speckled Wood. We also spotted a Brown Hare. Reaching the River Thames we stopped to cool off and one of the guest walkers (there were six on the day) gave an interesting 'history' of the Buscot estate and an account of the narrow-gauge railway which served the estate and its workers.

Moving on we crossed the Thames and, following more footpaths across open land, eventually reached the village of Kelmscott, famous for its connections with William Morris, founder of the Arts and Crafts Movement, probably best remembered for his furnishings, fabric and wallpaper designs.

After a short stop at 'The Plough' for welcome cold drinks, we continued through the village

passing the home of William Morris, now a museum, until we reached the Thames again from which point we followed the tow path to Buscot. Along the route we stopped to watch and listen to a family of Reed Warblers in bushes on the opposite bank of the river. Continuing on we eventually reached Buscot Weir which was only a short distance from the car park.

Birds seen/heard (H):

Chiffchaff
Robin
Reed Bunting (H)
Yellowhammer
Crow
House Sparrow
Rook
Blackbird
Swan
Great Spotted Woodpecker
Moorhen
Blackcap
Swift
Swallow
House Martin
Goldfinch
Skylark
Whitethroat (H)
Coot
Wren
Jackdaw
Common Tern
Reed Warbler
Magpie
Chaffinch
Wood Pigeon
Mallard
Turtle Dove (H)
Song Thrush

Flowers noted:

Hemlock
Hogweed
Burdock
Field Bindweed
Marsh Thistle
Bryony
Woundwort
Buttercup
Vetch
Privet
Black Medick
Greater Bird's-foot Trefoil
Clovers
Ribbed Melilot
Dog Rose
Camomile
Periwinkle
Self-heal
Rock Rose
Ragwort
St John's-wort
Scentless Mayweed
Spear Thistle
Teasel
Meadowsweet
Poppy

Common Valerian
Cut-leaved Crane's-bill
Spurge
Pineappleweed
Hops (in tree)
Woody Nightshade
Cleavers
Mallow
Large Bindweed
Great Willowherb
Silverweed
Himalayan Balsam
Water Mint
Yellow Water-lily
Purple Loosestrife
Flowering Rush

Miscellaneous:

Moths:

Silver Y Moth
Orange Underwing Moth

Harlequin Ladybird

Dragonflies:

Banded Demoiselle
Beautiful Demoiselle
Azure Blue

Tony Mattingley

Homefield Wood 18 July 2010

A party of eight members visited this BBOWT reserve, famous for its spring-flowering Military Orchids. The visit was primarily to see the summer butterflies. After walking only 200 metres along the track alongside the reserve, we saw our first Silver-washed Fritillaries. These only appeared here for the first time about 25 years ago, but in recent years Homefield Wood has become possibly the best site to find them in the Upper Thames region. About 30 were seen, including a pair mating in flight. Other insects seen included several unidentified dragonflies, a hornet, a longhorn beetle, soldier beetles and plenty of horseflies! Two species of bush-cricket, Croesel's and Dark were seen during the afternoon, but not the Speckled, which does occur here.

Later, we saw a Slow-worm, seen on lifting a sheet of steel deliberately positioned in the meadow to attract reptiles. Particularly notable in the meadow was the sight of two wasps pollinating our tallest native orchid, Broad-leaved Helleborine. Orchids produce their pollen in organs called pollinia, and several pollinia were visible stuck to each wasp's head. The large developing seed pods of Military Orchid and Fly Orchid showed that 2010 has been a good year for seed production. Pyramidal Orchids were also found, but had recently finished flowering. It being July, besides Red Kites, few birds were seen, and we heard Chiff-chaff, Wren, Buzzard, Blackbird and Blackcap.

A total of 13 species of butterfly were seen: Silver-washed Fritillary, Marbled White, Large White, Common Blue, Small Skipper, Large Skipper, Meadow Brown, Peacock, Small Tortoiseshell, Comma, Red Admiral, Green-veined White and Gatekeeper

Plants seen included Potentilla sp., Ox-eye Daisy, Clustered Bellflower, Nettle-leaved Bellflower, Basil, Common Centaury, Blackberry, Broad-leaved Helleborine, Military Orchid, Fly Orchid, Pyramidal Orchid, Hedge Bedstraw, Common Milkwort, Cut-leaved Cranesbill, Common Thyme, Rest Harrow, Knapweed, Field Scabious and Deadly Nightshade.

The following day I did my BBOWT butterfly transect at Homefield Wood and saw a total of 16 species. In addition to those above, I saw a Small Copper, two newly hatched Brown Argus, and an amazing total of seven of the mainly high-flying White-letter Hairstreak. These were all within 2 metres of the ground. I hope to show images from both visits at the January 2011 members' night.

Malcolm Brownsword

Icomb 1 August 2010

Eleven members and two visitors joined me in the pretty village of Icomb on a warm, dry, but mostly cloudy afternoon. Before we had even started our walk, some eagle-eyed members found a spectacular fungus, identified as a Red Cracking Bolete, under a lime tree in the centre of the village. The first part of our 3-mile circular walk was less interesting from a natural history point of view than the return along Westcote Brook, and we really had to keep our eyes peeled for plants and butterflies. It was surprising how many arable weeds we were able to identify, but we saw and heard very few birds.

The second part of the walk, following the Oxfordshire Way along the Westcote Brook, took us through an area of meadow with various ponds and scrapes which had been created for wildlife. The contrast with the arable fields and improved grassland of the early part of the walk was marked, with many more interesting flowers and butterflies, even a couple of Roe Deer and a Hare.

We turned off the Oxfordshire Way and followed the footpath up the hill back to Icomb, enjoying the fine views to Bledington, Kingham and beyond.

Flowers and trees:

Wayfaring tree
Hogweed
Great Willowherb
Creeping Thistle
Hedge Woundwort
Redshank
Red Bartsia
Sorrel
Spear Thistle
Wall Lettuce
Dove's-foot Cranesbill
Pineappleweed
Ragwort
Mallow
Treacle Mustard
Fool's Parsley
Hop Trefoil
Meadowsweet
Corn Mint
Lady's Bedstraw
Lesser Knapweed
Chickory
Scarlet Pimpernel
Field Poppy
Heartsease
Birdsfoot trefoil
Honeysuckle
Herb Robert
White Deadnettle
Woody Nightshade
Greater Plantain
Burdock
Tufted Vetch
Marsh Thistle
Self-heal
Great Burnet
Silverweed
Agrimony
Lesser Convolvulus
Meadow Vetchling
Fleabane
Horsetail
Mimulus
Birds:
Swallow

Goldfinch
Yellowhammer
Chaffinch
Blackcap (heard)
Wood pigeon
Blackbird
Heron
Wren
Swift
Kestrel

Butterflies and moths:

Peacock
Large White
Small White
Comma
Ringlelet
Red Admiral
Magpie Moth
Large Skipper
Marbled White
Small Copper
Gatekeeper

Miscellaneous:

Roe Deer
Hare

Frog

Soldier beetle
7-Spot Ladybird

Sue Morton

Moth Trapping 13/14 August

Mary Elford and I ran an MV light and an actinic light in Brenda and Ken Betteridge's delightful garden near Asthall Leigh for the Field Club members plus another actinic light in the infilled quarry alongside their garden. Fourteen members enjoyed the moths as they arrived and the lights were left running overnight. Seven members turned up the following morning to inspect the overnight arrivals which included a Tawny Speckled Pug from the quarry trap. In spite of the nearly continuous overnight rain the final macro-moth species count was 36 and a third of the over 150 individuals were Setaceous Hebrew Characters. Purple Bar (1), Lesser Treble-bar (3) and Orange Swift (5) were all species that Mary and I rarely see in their own garden traps.

Considering that it rained most of the night, about 160 macro-moths from 36 species is not too bad at all. They are all classed as 'common' but that covers a multitude of sins and I think I have only seen the Tawny Speckled Pug once before and the Purple Bar only a few times. I have managed to identify one of the micros I potted, the other half dozen I will need to get identified by real experts – this may take some time, so don't hold your breath. So the micro-moth list to date is just 5.

This was a very enjoyable evening and morning in delightful company with some interesting moths and some delicious food – what more can one ask! I look forward to returning in 2011 – May, June, July and September in addition to August will all give good numbers of moths subject to the weather, of course (it has just started raining again as I finish this e-mail!).

List of moths collected:

Micro-moths (5 species)

Agapeta hamana
Chequered Fruit-tree Tortrix *Pandemis corylana*
Garden Pebble *Evergestis forficalis*
Mother of Pearl *Pleuroptya ruralis*

Euzophera pinguis

Macro-moths (36 species)

Orange Swift *Hepialus sylvina*
Red Twin-spot Carpet *Xanthorhoe spadicearia*
Shaded Broad-bar *Scotopteryx chenopodiata*
Common Carpet *Epirrhoe alternata*
Yellow Shell *Camptogramma bilineata*
Purple Bar *Cosmorhoe ocellata*
July Highflyer *Hydriomena furcata*
Lime-speck Pug *Eupithecia centaureata*
Tawny Speckled Pug *Eupithecia icterata*
Lesser Treble-bar *Aplocera efformata*
Brimstone Moth *Opisthograptis luteolata*
Canary-shouldered Thorn *Ennomos alniaria*
Willow Beauty *Peribatodes rhomboidaria*
Poplar Hawk-moth *Laothoe populi*
Sallow Kitten *Furcula furcula*
Iron Prominent *Notodonta dromedarius*
Pale Prominent *Pterostoma palpina*
Buff Footman *Eilema depressa*
Turnip Moth *Agrotis segetum*
Shuttle-shaped Dart *Agrotis puta*
Flame Shoulder *Ochropleura plecta*
Large Yellow Underwing *Noctua pronuba*
Broad-bordered Yellow Underwing *Noctua fimbriata*
Lesser Broad-bordered Yellow Underwing *Noctua janthe*
Setaceous Hebrew Character *Xestia c-nigrum*
Square-spot Rustic *Xestia xanthographa*
Common Wainscot *Mythimna pallens*
Mouse Moth *Amphipyra tragopoginis*
Straw Underwing *Thalpophila matura*
Angle Shades
Phlogophora meticulosa
Dun-bar *Cosmia trapezina*
Common Rustic agg. *Mesapamea secalis* agg.
Flounced Rustic *Luperina testacea*
Vine's Rustic *Hoplodrina ambigua*
Silver Y *Autographa gamma*
Straw Dot *Rivula sericealis*

David Redhead (modified for this newsletter by Brenda)

Here by popular request is the recipe for Dutch Plum Cake

Base:

4 oz SR flour
2 oz butter
2 oz sugar
2 oz sultanas
1 egg
milk

Topping:

1 lb (approx.) plums
1 tbsp sugar
1 tsp ground cinnamon
1 oz butter (optional)

Rub butter into flour. Add sugar and sultanas. Add beaten egg and mix to a stiff paste. If too stiff add a little milk. Press into a greased or oiled Swiss roll tin and smooth top. Cut plums in half, remove stones and lay, cut side down, in rows to cover the cake mixture. Mix sugar and cinnamon together and sprinkle over the plums. For a richer cake, dot with small pieces of butter. Cook in preheated oven at 350 °F (180 °C or gas Mk 4) for about 30 min.

Brenda

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