



[About us](#)

[Events](#)

[Newsletter](#)

[Recent News](#)

[Membership](#)

[Contact us](#)

[Links](#)

West Oxfordshire Field Club

Newsletter

No.98

AUTUMN

2013



Fiftieth anniversary celebrations



Photo Mary Elford

To celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Club members gathered at Shilton Village Hall for a buffet lunch and a social afternoon. After an excellent meal washed down with wine generously provided by David and Jean Roberts and the minimum of speeches we drank to the health of the Club. Then the tables were cleared for another of our president Graham Wren's Fiendish Quizzes. A wide range of fascinating objects were laid out for us to identify, from skulls and twigs to sheaves of dried stems with moth chrysalid cases, antlers, and groups of specimens that shared a mysterious common trait. It was won by our chairman Sue Morton. There was also a grand raffle with a generous number of good prizes donated by members. Later a nostalgic display of selected photographs of members and events past and present was set out and we were able to reminisce and remember past members, some of whom sadly are no longer with us.

The afternoon ended with cups of tea and slices of the Anniversary Cake. This was a delicious fruit cake baked by Yvonne Townsend and expertly iced by Margaret Edwards and Yvonne, and was accompanied by a display of the amazingly intricate and delicate sugar flowers made by Margaret for our 40th celebration.

The success of this occasion is the result of a lot of hard work and organisation and we are indebted to David and Jean Roberts, Penny Pearce, Gill Siuda, Gill Murdock and other members who helped on the day.

EDITORIAL

At last - a fine summer! A chance to get out and see nature without water droplets dripping from anorak hood to notebook, and boots soaking up the water until bubbles trickle up between your toes! The Field Club at its summer best.

It's too soon to know how well butterflies and moths have recovered after the last few disastrous wet, cold years. A recent survey has shown that two-thirds of Britain's larger moth species have declined significantly in the last 40 years, some falling by 99%. A similar fate befell the butterflies. Last year in particular, summer species struggled to find food, shelter and mating opportunities as the weather exacerbated the long-standing problems of habitat loss and deterioration. Certainly there were more butterflies on the buddleia this year. One trick with buddleia is to do an extra prune in late February. This causes a delay in flowering so that the flowers are more likely to coincide with the peak of the summer butterflies. The large pink- or red-flowered sedums are also good plants at this time of year to attract Painted Ladies. The Club's moth night produced a good harvest of moths, including the three large hawk-moths - the privet, poplar and elephant hawk-moths.

And what of the bees? At least they are now firmly on the political agenda, where yet again politicians are proving sceptical of scientific evidence. The Club's trip to the New Forest and Isle of Wight with Peter Creed saw us looking not only at plants (including some endemics and other rare species on the Isle of Wight), but also at beetles, bees and hoverflies. Not everything that buzzes is a bee. There are bee-flies, and bee- and wasp-mimic hoverflies. For the gardener, one excellent plant for all of these is the climbing hydrangea. For leaf-cutter bees, red robin (Photinia) seems to be popular, the crisply cut crescents scalloping the edges of the leaves remind me of the leaf-cutter ants of the Amazonian jungle.

Recently, on my own on the purple heaths of Exmoor and on my favourite reserve on the Mendip hills, I began to appreciate solitude. It's a very special experience just to sit in a wild place, relax and listen - to the rustle of beech leaves overhead, the occasional twitters of birds, and - as you tune in - the flutter of butterfly wings, the rasping of wasps collecting bark, the whine of a hoverfly and even sometimes the sound of a caterpillar munching. There is more of a chance to see a timid animal, e.g. otters which have recently been spotted at Cassington. A recent meditation course taught me how to reach out into my surroundings and become one with them. Try it sometime - I can guarantee you will like it. A good place for this used to be Snelsmore Common on a balmy summer evening, where you could sit and listen to the Nightjars and the whirring of the occasional roding Woodcock. But Snelsmore is a changed place these days, the roar of the nearby M4 almost drowning out the Nightjars.

Another place where motorway traffic noise is very intrusive is Aston Rowant Nature Reserve which was visited by the Club this summer. Dr Tim King followed up his fascinating lecture on ants with a field trip here. The chalk grassland on this hill is home to a range of orchids and other wildflowers, besides many thriving colonies of ants, and there are some interesting experiments in conservation and wildlife (and visitor) management taking place there.

We are now looking forward to damp woodland fungus forays and our indoor meetings and winter walks, and our October birding holiday in Norfolk.

Jill Bailey

Your Newsletter

This newsletter covers most of the Club activities over the spring and summer. Even though it has run to 16 pages to accommodate all the material available it has posed a challenge to fit them together and I apologise to Jill for altering her interesting editorial and leaving some of it out. A big thank you to all of you who have written reports and articles, kept species lists and provided photos.

Please send me your observations, comments, etc. on anything associated with wildlife and the countryside, as well as your reports of walks and trips that have been made by the Field Club or with any other like-minded group by the end of March 2014 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.

Jill Bailey is in the process of composing a history of the Club. Have you any photos of Club activities taken during the 50 years since it was founded? If so please contact Jill.

Brenda Betteridge (Newsletter Editor)

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Plant and Book Sale

The plant and book sale at the May meeting raised £100 for Club funds. A big thank you to all of you who so generously supported this.

REPORTS OF FIELD MEETINGS

Dawn Chorus - Rushy Common 12 May 2013

It was a starlit, cool morning with the hint of dawn on the eastern horizon when five of us met in the reserve car park. We were greeted by the calls of a distant Tawny Owl and nearby Coots and Canada Geese. Our walk took us past Tar Lakes and Gill Mill Lake to Hardwick, along the River Windrush and back to the reserve via Gill Mill. During the walk we heard the songs and/or calls of 29 different bird species, including the first ones of six of them at the same time - 4.15 am! Once back where we'd started, half an hour or so was spent in the bird-watching hide catching up with a further ten species, all water birds, that hadn't caught our attention earlier because they had been silent. These species have been listed separately below because of that.

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

03.50 Tawny Owl 04.20 Garden Warbler 05.00 Carrion Crow
03.55 Coot 04.25 Sedge Warbler 05.00 Mallard
04.05 Canada Goose 04.25 Woodpigeon 05.10 Willow Warbler
04.10 Reed Bunting 04.40 Wren 05.15 Green Woodpecker
04.15 Blackbird 04.40 Chiffchaff 05.15 Blue Tit
04.15 Pheasant 04.42 Whitethroat 05.20 Greylag Goose
04.15 Cuckoo 04.43 Barn Owl 05.30 Collared Dove
04.15 Song Thrush 04.45 Grey Heron 05.30 Moorhen
04.15 Blackcap 04.55 Great Tit 05.35 Chaffinch
04.15 Robin 05.00 Green Sandpiper

Water bird species seen from the bird-watching hide between 05.50 am and 06.20 am:

Little Egret Oystercatcher Shelduck
Cormorant Egyptian Goose Mute Swan
Tufted Duck Common Tern Black-headed Gull
Red-crested Pochard

David Rolfe

Hartslock 19 May 2013

A party of ten members enjoyed a visit to BBOWT's South Oxfordshire reserve near Goring. This south-facing chalk grassland area was acquired in the mid-1970s when there were about six flowering Monkey Orchids growing there. Subsequently the numbers increased to almost 200 flowering plants by 2011, but have declined over the last two years due largely to adverse weather conditions. Following the appearance of three Lady Orchids about 7 years ago, the two species have hybridised and this year have produced in the region of 200 flowering hybrid plants which, like two of the Lady Orchids, were in flower for our visit.



There must be something interesting down there!



Spotted Bee Fly



Dingy Skipper

Photos Malcolm Brownsword

We were too early for the flowering Monkey Orchids. The Pasque-flower has had its best year since it was planted here for research purposes some years ago. The small number of butterflies seen included single specimens of Green Hairstreak and Holly Blue and several Dingy Skippers and Small Heaths. The latter are declining in Britain, but Hartslock has had a thriving population in recent years. The birds seen were Swifts, Swallows, Red Kites, Buzzard and Green Woodpecker.

During our visit, Chris Raper, the warden, a Diptera expert, netted a rare Spotted Bee Fly (which is a fly, not a bee!) *Bombylius discolor* - a new species for Hartslock. It is normally found further south. Its wings are spotted, unlike that of the commoner Bee Fly species that I see in my garden every spring. We learnt that females coat their eggs in sand and then flick these at suitable solitary bee nests whilst hovering. The larvae seek out the burrows of their hosts, and develop. Chris is shortly due to join the staff at The Natural History Museum in London and will be sadly missed following many years of being a very diligent warden and in particular educating visitors so enthusiastically.

Malcolm Brownsword

Plants seen in flower:

Cowslips *Primula veris*
Salad Burnet *Sanguisorba minor*
Glaucous Sedge *Carex flacca*
Chalk Milkwort *Polygala calcarea*
Hybrid Orchids Lady x Monkey
Lady Orchid *Orchis purpurea*
Twayblade *Listera ovata*
Barren Strawberry *Potentilla sterilis*
Bird's-foot Trefoil *Lotus corniculatus*
Common Milkwort *Polygala vulgaris*
Meadow Buttercup *Ranunculus acris*
Quaking Grass *Briza media*
Ribwort Plantain *Plantago lanceolata*
Daisy Bellis *perennis*
Downy-fruited Sedge *Carex filiformis*
Upright Brome *Bromus erectus*
Germander Speedwell *Veronica chamaedrys*
Tor Grass *Brachypodium rupestre*
Sheep's Fescue *Festuca ovina*
Cock's-foot *Dactylis glomerata*
Wall Speedwell *Veronica arvensis*
Common Mouse-ear *Cerastium fontanum*
Dandelion *Taraxacum* agg.
Lesser Hawkbit *Leontodon saxalis*
Clustered Bellflower *Campanula glomerata*
Fairy Flax *Linum catharticum*
Pasque-flower *Pulsatilla vulgaris*
Bastard-toadflax *Thesium humifusum* (in bud)

To round off the afternoon, members were invited by Malcolm and Valerie to join them for tea and biscuits in their delightful garden in West Hagbourne. What a perfect way to end a very enjoyable outing! Thank you both very much.

Brenda Betteridge

New Forest and Isle of Wight Weekend 31 May to 3 June 2013

As this year marks the 50th anniversary of formation of the West Oxfordshire Field Club we wanted our summer weekend away to be a bit special and asked Peter Creed for ideas. As he was going to be reconnoitring and photographing in Scotland in June he suggested we join him there for a few days. Lovely idea but for most of us this was not practical and too far away for just a few days. Peter's alternative suggestion was the New Forest and the Isle of Wight at the beginning of June where he wanted to photograph insects and the rare plants which grow in that area. Yvonne contacted the hotel in Lyndhurst which the Club had used on a previous visit to the New Forest and found that they could begin with Paul beating the foliage of a Hawthorn with a stick, collecting the insects that fell onto a sheet placed underneath. As we moved through the wood other habitats known to be good for insects were inspected but fewer were found than expected. Although the weather now was perfect for insects, the poor summer of 2012 with this year's late spring had taken their toll. Nevertheless, knowing where to look, Paul did find some for us to see: e.g. a few individuals of *Andrena ferox*, a solitary bee which is classified as endangered on the Red List, flying out of a hole in the ground and the Dor Beetle *Geotrupes stercorarius* in pony dung.

During the morning we came across accommodate us. So that was settled. Peter could not have chosen a better weekend for us as the weather was perfect - fine, warm but not too warm with hazy sunshine.

Our exploration of the area started on Saturday morning in Denny Wood, an ancient beech-oak-holly wood-pasture, where we met up with Paul Brock and his sister Helen who are insect experts. The search for insects. Sarah Henshall who works for the charity Buglife.



Two-banded longhorn beetle

She is involved with a project to locate the New Forest Cicada (*Cicadetta montana* s. str.) which is the only cicada native to the UK. During May-July it sings with a very characteristic high-pitched song, which is at the limits of human hearing, and is particularly difficult for most adults to hear. Sightings of the cicada within the New Forest date back to 1812, but the last unconfirmed sighting was in 2000. There maybe undiscovered colonies in less-visited parts of the forest. To increase the chance of finding them the Cicada Project are using the latest technology - an app that can detect and recognise the song of the cicada, which they would like some of the millions of visitors to the forest to download onto their smart phone and report back to them any response. According to the Buglife website no cicadas were found this year but they are still hopeful that this insect is still in the New Forest. Cicadas have a particular lifespan. They live underground as nymphs for 7 or 8 years, up until the year when they emerge, become adults and die, all within 4-6 weeks. American cicadas (magicicadas) are actually synchronised, and they emerge all together every 13 or 17 years. Our cicadas don't behave like that, but they still have cycles when the population is higher than previous years. According to reports, next year should be one of those.

Although most of our attention was taken up looking for insects some of us were also noting the species in flower, which were mostly plants typical of acid grassland or of woodland. There was little birdlife evident but we did spot a pair of Redstarts flitting about in the trees.

After lunch we walked through Denny Wood to open pasture, where we found some interesting plants in boggy patches and by a stream. Those who were not up to this drove on to Hatchett Pond, a popular spot for visitors on a sunny day, where later the party were reunited. Peter led us away from the crowds and soon we were discovering minute plants growing in the mud at the edge of the water like Blinks and Bog Pimpernel.

On our way back to the hotel some of us stopped at South Weirs pond in the hope of finding a New Forest rarity which has been recorded growing there. Peter could not see it so suggested that we look at another pond further down the lane. No luck there either but in the meadow Peter spotted Upright Chickweed, a small uncommon annual, not seen by us before, which made our detour worthwhile.

After breakfast on Sunday morning we drove down to Lymington to catch the ferry for Yarmouth. From there we headed for Freshwater Bay where we looked at the plants growing near the car park, at the base of the cliffs and in the shingle. It is amazing how these plants manage to live in this harsh environment. Then those that were able walked up on to Tennyson Down. To get there we followed

a steep path through ungrazed limestone grassland with lots of plants typical of this habitat in flower. On the Down the grassland is closely grazed which suits the special plants which grow there. Probably our most exciting find was Early Gentian, which is considered to be one of the few endemic plants of Great Britain. The flowers only open when the sun shines so we were fortunate to see them as it was a bit overcast. We also spotted some interesting insects like the Lesser Bloody-nosed Beetle.

We walked as far as the Tennyson monument where we sat for a while enjoying the view over the western end of the Isle of Wight. To add to our pleasure of being there a



Early gentian

Painted Lady butterfly graced us with her presence. On the way back Peter spotted a plant that he had never seen before - Hairy Bird's-foot Trefoil which is an annual which only grows in dry grassland near the coast in southern England. Instead of taking the direct route back we deviated to the left and walked through an area which had been recently cleared of scrub and added considerably to our list of plants. We made it back in Yarmouth in good time and were allowed to board an earlier ferry than the one we were booked on.

So ended a very successful weekend for which we are very grateful to Yvonne for organising and Peter for his identification skills, knowledge and enthusiasm.

Animals and plants recorded:

Denny Wood

Insects

Beetles:

Soldier Beetle *Cantharis* sp.

Two-banded Longhorn Beetle *Rhagium bifasciatum*

Pine-stump Borer *Asemum striatum**

Athous haemorrhoidalis (a click beetle)

Ampedus cinnabarinus (a click beetle)‡

Cryptocephalus parvulus†
 Ischnomera cyanea†
 Dor Beetle Geotrupes stercorarius
 Carabus problematicus (a ground beetle)
 Fan-bearing Wood-borer Ptilinus pectinicornus
 Triplax aenea
 Bitoma crenata
 Rose Chafer Ceronia aurata
 Anthiscus anterinus (an ant-like flower beetle)
 Silpha atrata [a carrion beetle (snail feeder)]
 Four-spotted ground beetle Philorhizus quadrisignatus
 Black-headed Cardinal Pyrochroa coccinea†
 Green Tiger Beetle Cicindela campestris
 Ampedus elongantulus (a click beetle)†
 Black-spotted Longhorn Beetle Rhagium mordax
 Black Carrion Beetle Silpha bituberosa

True Bugs
 Hawthorn Shieldbug Acanthosome haemorrhoidale

Hoverflies:
 Criorhina floccosa (a hairy bumble bee mimic)
 Myathropa florum
 Caliprobala speciosa‡
 Criorhina ranunculi

Bees:
 Nomad flower bee Nomada sp. (wasp mimic)
 Common Carder-bee Bombus pascuorum
 Andrena ferox (a solitary bee)§

Wasps:
 Jewel Wasp Chrysis ignita

Damselflies and Dragonflies:
 Large Red Damselfly
 Four-spotted Chaser
 Broad-bodied Chaser

Moths:
 Green Carpet Colostygia pectinataria
 Looper moth caterpillar on thread

Butterflies:
 Small or Green-veined White
 Brimstone

By bridge
 Reed Beetle
 Gooseberry Sawfly

* Local; † nationally scarce; ‡ Red list; § Red List endangered; rare.

Birds
 Redstart
 Song Thrush (h)
 Chaffinch (h)
 Great Spotted Woodpecker
 Blackbird
 Cuckoo (h)

Plants (nf = not in flower)
 Rumex acetosella Sheep Sorrel
 Veronica officinalis Heath Speedwell
 Galium saxatile Heath Bedstraw
 Luzula campestris Field Woodrush
 Potentilla erecta Tormentil
 Aphanes arvensis Parsley Piert
 Ornithopus perpusillus Bird's-foot
 Trifolium dubium Lesser Trefoil
 Poa annua Annual Meadow-grass
 Hyacinthoides non-scripta Bluebell
 Sagina procumbens Procrumbent Pearlwort
 Cerastium fontanum Common Mouse-ear
 Bellis perennis Daisy
 Pedicularis sylvatica Lousewort
 Crataegus monogyna Hawthorn
 Viola riviniana Common Dog Violet
 Lysimachia nemorum Yellow Pimpernel
 Cardamine flexuosa Wavy Bitter-cress
 Conopodium majus Pignut
 Euphorbia amygdaloides Wood Spurge
 Veronica chamaedrys Germander Speedwell
 Ruscus aculeatus Butcher's-broom
 Leucobryum glaucum Large White-moss
 Ranunculus flammula Lesser Spearwort
 Ranunculus tripartitus Three-lobed Water Crowfoot

By bridge
 Potamogeton polygonifolius Bog Pondweed
 Mentha aquatica Water Mint
 Hypericum elodes Marsh St John's-wort
 Myosotis scorpioides Water Forget-me-not
 Hydrocotyle vulgaris Marsh Pennywort
 Cardamine pratensis Lady's-smock
 Juncus squarrosus Heath Rush
 Galium palustre Common Marsh Bedstraw
 Callitriche sp. Water Starwort
 Potentilla reptans Creeping Cinquefoil

Lythrum portula Water Purslane
Equisetum fluviatile Water Horsetail
|
Hatchett Pond
Insects
Shore Fly
Drone Fly

Birds
Mute Swan

Plants
Montia fontana Blinks
Anagallis tenella Bog Pimpernell
Carex nigra Common Sedge
Chamaemelum nobile Chamomile
Menyanthes trifoliata Bog Bean
Sagina procumbens Procumbent Pearlwort
Carex echinata Star Sedge
Eleocharis quinqueflora Few-flowered Spike-rush
Carex panicea Carnation Sedge
Sphagnum fallax Flat-topped Bog-moss
Drosera rotundifolia Round-leaved Sundew
Isoetes lacustris Quillwort (rare)
Myrica gale Bog Myrtle
Ulex europaeus Gorse
Nymphaea alba White Water-lily (nf)
Lythrum portula Hampshire Purslane
Ranunculus acris Meadow Buttercup
Crassula helmsii New Zealand Pygmyweed (alien)
Lotus corniculatus Bird's-foot Trefoil
Plantago lanceolata Ribwort Plantain
Equisetum fluviatile Water Horsetail
Ranunculus hederaceus Ivy-leaved Crowfoot
Glyceria fluitans Floating Sweet-grass
Elodea canadensis Canadian Pondweed
Genista anglica Petty Whin
Drosera intermedia Oblong-leaved Sundew
Aira praecox Early Hair-grass

South Weirs pond
Ludwigia palustris Hampshire Purslane
Ranunculus aquatilis Common Water-crowfoot
Ranunculus tripartitus Three-lobed Water Crowfoot
Ranunculus hederaceus Ivy-leaved Crowfoot
Cardamine pratensis Lady's-smock
Callitriche sp. Water Starwort
South Weirs meadow
Moenchia erecta Upright Chickweed
Trifolium micranthum Slender Trefoil
Carex nigra Common Sedge
Pedicularis sylvatica Lousewort
Potentilla anserina Silverweed
Lysimachia nummularia Creeping Jenny (nf)

Freshwater Bay
On bank opposite car park and at top of shingle beach
Insects
Eristalinus aeneus a coastal hover fly

Plants
Beta vulgaris ssp. maritima Sea Beet
Spergularia rupicola Rock Sea-spurrey
Cochlearia officinalis Common Scurvy-grass
Sagina procumbens Procumbent Pearlwort
Cerastium fontanum Common Mouse-ear
Festuca ovina Sheep's Fescue
Plantago coronopus Buck's-horn Plantain
Bromus mollis Soft Brome
Armeria maritima Thrift
Crithmum maritimum Rock Samphire
Crepis biennis Rough Hawk's-beard
Atriplex prostrata Spear-leaved Orache
Sonchus asper Prickly Sow Thistle
Halimione portulacoides Sea Purslane
Anthyllis vulneraria Kidney Vetch
Lotus corniculatus Bird's-foot Trefoil
Daucus carota ssp. gummiifer Sea Carrot
Senecio vulgaris Groundsel
Crambe maritima Sea-kale
Dactylis glomerata Cock's-foot

Field approaching Tennyson Down
Cynoglossum officinale Hound's Tongue
Myosotis discolor Changing Forget-me-not
Trifolium pratense Red Clover
Trifolium campestre Hop Trefoil
Helianthemum nummularium Common Rock Rose
Galium mollugo Hedge Bedstraw
Cerastium fontanum Mouse-ear Chickweed
Silene dioica Red Campion
Silene latifolia White Campion
Rhinanthus minor Yellow-rattle (nf)
Plantago lanceolata Ribwort Plantain
Polygala vulgaris Common Milkwort
Primula veris Cowslip
Centaurea scabiosa Greater Knapweed (nf)
Hippocrepis comosa Horseshoe Vetch
Ranunculus bulbosus Bulbous Buttercup
Plantago media Hoary Plantain

Sanguisorba minor Salad Burnet
Myosotis arvensis Field Forget-me-not
Linum catharticum Fairy Flax
Glechoma hederacea Ground Ivy

Tennyson Down

Insects

Common Blue Butterfly
Plantain Leaf-beetle Chrysolina haemoptera
Ten-spot Ladybird
Soldier Beetle Catherus nigrescens
Painted Lady Butterfly
Pyrausta nubilalis (a day-flying moth)
Lesser Bloody-nosed Beetle Timarcha goettingensis
Crane Fly

Plants

Trychostomum crispulum Curly Crisp Moss
Centaurium erythraea Common Centaury
Anacamptis morio Green-winged Orchid
Gentianella anglica Early Gentian (endemic)
Briza media Quaking Grass
Scabiosa columbaria Small Scabious
Trifolium dubium Lesser Trefoil
Cirsium vulgare Spear Thistle
Reseda luteola Dyer's Weld
Senecio jacobaea Common Ragwort (nf)
Raphanus raphanistrum ssp. maritimus Sea Radish
Carduus crispus Waxed Thistle
Pilosella officinarum Mouse-ear Hawkweed
Euphrasia officinalis agg. Eyebright
Carex flacca Glaucous Sedge
Parietaria judaica Pellitory-of-the-Wall
Ranunculus parviflorus Small-flowered Buttercup
Cynoglossum officinale Hound's Tongue
Rubus fruticosus Bramble (nf)
Lotus subbiflorus Hairy Bird's-foot Trefoil
Euphorbia portlandica Portland Spurge
Thymus polytrichus Wild Thyme
Catapodium rigidum Fern-grass
Bromus mollis Soft Brome
Cirsium vulgare Spear Thistle
Carduus tenuiflorus Slender Thistle
Erodium cicutarium Common Stork's-bill
Carduus nutans Musk Thistle
Carlina vulgaris Carlina Thistle
Orchis mascula Early Purple Orchid
Silene dioica Red Campion
Veronica chamaedrys Germander Speedwell
Hyacinthoides non-scripta Bluebell
Geum urbanum Wood Avens
Armeria maritima Thrift
Sherardia arvensis Field Madder
Urtica dioica Stinging Nettle
Iris foetidissima Stinking Iris (nf)
Clematis vitalba Wild Clematis
Geranium robertianum Herb Robert
Teucrium scorodonia Wood Sage (nf)
Cirsium palustre Marsh Thistle
Veronica arvensis Wall Speedwell
Anagallis arvensis Scarlet Pimpernel
Glechoma hederacea Ground Ivy
Viola arvensis Field Pansy
Tamus communis Black Bryony (nf)
Vicia sativa Common Vetch
Anthriscus arvensis Cow Parsley
Leucanthemum vulgare Ox-eye Daisy

Tricholoma gambosum St George's Mushroom

Brenda Betteridge

Trip to Greenham Common 16 June 2013

This bird-watching trip should have been to Snelsmoor Common but due to the scarcity of Nightjars there we diverted to Greenham Common a few miles on, just south of Newbury, where I was told there were several. Two of us turned up to join 16 RSPB members on a fine evening, with medium level cloud and little wind. As we walked along the tree-lined path from the car park towards one of this former airfield's taxiways, now bordered on both sides by gorse bushes, we heard Song Thrushes, Blackbirds, Dunnocks and a Blackcap singing, and a Kestrel hovered above us. One of our members with exceptional hearing picked up a Woodlark's song, and there it was amongst the many Swallows and House Martins, high up like a Skylark but definitely a Woodlark! As light fell, several small flocks of Linnets flitted about, in and around the extensive areas of Gorse, as we made our way towards a wooded area with a small clear-felled area with low shrubs and isolated birch and conifer trees, where in previous years we'd seen Nightjars and Woodcocks roding. We hadn't been there long before the first of several roding Woodcocks made an appearance, flying a constant circuit, part of which was almost directly over us. A little later on the first Nightjar passed by, flying quite low as if curious about our presence. After that, we heard the churring song opposite us on the far side of the clearing and, now and again, one, and then a couple of them, would fly towards us and then briefly hover before veering off into the increasing darkness. A wonderful experience once again.

Birds species seen and/or heard:

Kestrel Woodcock Wood Pigeon Tawny Owl Nightjar
Woodlark Swallow House Martin Wren Dunnock
Robin Blackbird Song Thrush Blackcap Blue Tit
Carrion Crow Starling

David Rolfe

Glyme Farm, Chipping Norton 23 June 2013

It was not surprising that only five people turned up on this chilly damp afternoon, which was a shame as it is always a delight to visit Glyme Farm. Not only was the weather disappointing but also, as summer was reluctant to start this year, the Meadow Clary was only just coming into flower. Usually by this time in the year the banks on which this plant thrives are studded with blue. Notwithstanding, Lyndon took us on the tour of his organically run farm which supports a rich variety of different habitats. The route took us through a young wood which Lyndon had planted when he first took on the farm. Here White Helleborines

and Common Spotted Orchids had established themselves and were in flower. Returning via the River Glyme we were fascinated to learn that it had changed its course during the winter.
It was intended that this visit would end with everybody sitting on the grass in the sun having a picnic. Instead Lyndon and his wife Rose invited us into the farm kitchen where we very much enjoyed sitting round the kitchen table putting the world to right over tea and cakes. Thank you very much Lyndon and Rose for giving up your afternoon to show us round your farm and entertain us.

Brenda Betteridge

Plants:

Cuckoo Pint
Yellow Flag
Marsh Thistle
White Clover
Meadow Clary
Dropwort
Bird's-foot Trefoil
Lady's Bedstraw
Lesser Knapweed
Mouse-ear Chickweed
Ribwort Plantain
Hoary Plantain
Small Timothy
Yellow Oat-grass
Crested Dog's-tail
Cocksfoot
Upright Brome
Rough Meadow-grass
Smooth meadow-grass
Spear Thistle
Red Clover
Yorkshire Fog
Rest Harrow
Sterile Brome
Cleavers
Thyme-leaved Speedwell
Common Vetch
Rough Chervil
Goat's-beard
Rough Hawkbit
Hogweed
Cut-leaved Cranesbill
Chicory
Creeping Buttercup
Dandelion
Sheep's Fescue
Creeping Thistle
False Oat-grass
Dog Rose
Herb Robert
Wood Avens
Wayfaring Tree
Spindle
Yarrow
White Helleborine
Common Spotted Orchid
Hoary Ragwort
Field Forget-me-not
Glaucous Sedge
Jack-by-the-hedge
Meadow Cranesbill
Yellow Rattle
Adder's-tongue Fern
Creeping Cinquefoil
Moon Daisy
Common Daisy
Quaking Grass
Cowslips
Fairy Flax
Stemless Thistle
Tor Grass
Sorrel
Field Scabious
Procumbent Pearlwort
Fool's Watercress
Floating Sweet-grass
Heath Speedwell
Hedge Woundwort
Greater Knapweed
Bladder Campion
Meadow Vetchling

Birds:

Black-headed Gull
Chaffinch
Skylark
Swallow

Invertebrates:

Lacewing
Cinnabar Moth
Freshwater Shrimp
A flatworm

Alison Weaver

Minster Lovell to Crawley and back 27 June 2013

It was a very damp evening when John and I arrived at the meeting point for this walk, half hoping that nobody else would turn up. We had underestimated the hardy souls of the Field Club, as two others were already waiting to start. We climbed into our wellies and waterproofs and set off through the churchyard and the ruins, then down the Windrush valley through long soggy vegetation to see what wildlife was to be seen. Despite the weather we got a reasonable list, and by the time we were on our return trip down the other side of the river it had dried up somewhat and we

enjoyed a good view of a Roe Deer bounding through a flowery meadow, and ten Hares and many Partridges in a recently cut field.

Birds (*= heard)
Blackcap*
Song Thrush*
Swifts
Moorhen
House Martins
Jackdaw
Wren*
Wood Pigeon
Swallows
Chiffchaff*
Partridge
Chaffinch
Blue Tit
Heron
Great Spotted Woodpecker
Mallard

Flowers
White Campion
Duke of Argyll's Tea-plant
White Clover
Elder
Black Knapweed
Yellow Rattle
Yellow Flag
Hogweed
Meadow Vetchling
Tufted Vetch
Woody Nightshade
Silverweed
Jack by the Hedge
Pineappleweed
Comfrey
Herb Robert
Silverweed
Self-heal
Hop Trefoil
Mullein
Dogwood
Stinging Nettle
Water Forget-me-not
Water Speedwell
Hemlock
Meadow Cranesbill
Field Poppy
Meadowsweet
Hedge Woundwort
White Bryony
Biting Stonecrop
Common Mallow
Ragged Robin
Ivy leaved Toadflax
Goose-grass
Dropwort
Woolly Thistle
Fumitory
Common Valerian

Mammals
Roe deer
Hare

Sue Morton

Aston Rowant National Nature Reserve 7 July 2013

On a most glorious hot sunny afternoon Dr Tm King, a great authority on ants, led about eight of us over this wonderful nature reserve. On a field which had been farmed and fertilized he laid out a metre square quadrat to show how limited the flora is here. When we moved into the Bald Hill area the quadrat was laid out again, this time to demonstrate the huge diversity of plants growing there. Dr King showed and explained in detail the remarkable lives of the Yellow Meadow Ants and described the tremendous array of chalk-land plants. Members are urged to visit and see this display if they possibly can. Unfortunately we did not have time to move on to the area where Juniper grows but perhaps we can see this another time.

This reserve is divided in two by the M40 cut with its continuous stream of traffic. Dr Tim can remember before the motorway was built standing in complete silence except for the small sounds of nature.

Some of the plants seen:
White Clover
Ribwort Plantain
Dandelion
Mouse-ear Chickweed
Cock's-foot
Creeping Bent
Rough-stalked Meadow Grass
Red Clover
Bird's-foot Trefoil
Autumn Gentian
Yellow-wort
Viper's Bugloss
Salad Burnet
Moon Daisy
Wild Thyme
Rock Rose
Rough Hawkbit
Fairy Flax
Frog Orchid (11+)
Marjoram
Lady's Bedstraw

Perforated St John's-wort
Greater Butterfly Orchid
Dog Rose
Pyramidal Orchid
Bladder Campion
Early Purple Orchid
Bee Orchid
Dropwort
White Helleborine
Foxglove
Early Forget-me-not
Common Ragwort
Germander Speedwell

Butterflies:
Common Blue
Small Heath
Meadow Brown
Brimstone
Speckled Wood
Ringlet
Marbled White

Birds:
Bullfinch (h)
Kite
Kestrel

Alison Weaver and Tony Florey

Moth-trapping Event 19/20 July 2013

We were pleased to welcome entomologist Richard Comont and our own moth expert Mary Elford back to run what seems to have developed into an annual moth-trapping event at our home. On the Friday evening they set up three traps, two in the disused quarry next to our garden and one in the orchard. The members who turned up the next morning were delighted to see that a large selection of moths had been caught. There was extra excitement when what appeared at first sight to be a heaving mass of flying ants in the grass next to one of the traps in the quarry turned out, on closer inspection, to be water-boatmen. Richard sent a photograph of them to a friend, who is a freshwater-insect specialist, for identification. Later we learnt that they were a species of *Callicorixa*, a migratory insect which does occasionally turn up at locations mob-handed, including occasionally swamping moth-traps, as we found! One specimen of another water-boatman, a *Corixa* species, was also found, which was interesting as it is not usually attracted by light. As you will see from the list a good selection of moths - 76 in total - and a number of other insects were trapped. It was a pleasant fine sunny morning and when all the egg boxes had been examined and the contents identified we sat in the garden with mugs of coffee and biscuits.

Ken and Brenda Betteridge

Richard's list of moths and other insects
Moths:
Acronicta megacephala Poplar Grey
Acronicta psi/tridens Grey Dagger/Dark Dagger
Adaina microdactyla Hemp-agrimony Plume
Agapeta hamana Common Yellow Conch
Agapeta zoezana Knapweed Conch
Agriphila straminella Straw Grass-veneer
Agrotis clavis Heart and Club
Agrotis segetum Turnip Moth
Apamea monoglypha Dark Arches
Archips podana Large Fruit-Tree Tortrix
Axyia putris Flame
Biston betularia Peppered Moth
Callimorpha dominula Scarlet Tiger
Camptogramma bilineata Yellow Shell
Catoptria falsella Chequered Grass-veneer
Catoptria pinella Pearl Grass-veneer
Chilodes maritimus Silky Wainscot
Chloroclystis v-ata V-Pug
Chrysoteuchia culmella Garden Grass-Veneer
Cilix glaucata Chinese Character
Clepsia consimilana Privet Twist
Crambus perlella Satin Grass-veneer
Craniophora ligustri Coronet
Deilephila elpenor Elephant Hawk-Moth
Eilema complana Scarce Footman
Eilema lurideola Common Footman
Endothenia marginana Bordered Marble
Epiblema foenella White-foot Bell
Epiphyas postvittana Light Brown Apple Moth
Eucosma campoliliana Marbled Bell
Eucosma hohewartiana Bright Bell
Eupithecia absinthiata Wormwood Pug
Habrosyne pyritoides Buff Arches
Hedya nubiferana Marbled Orchard Tortrix
Hedya ochroleucana Buff-tipped Marble
Hedya pruniana Plum Tortrix
Hedya salicella White-backed Marble
Hemithea aestivaria Common Emerald
Hoplodrina blanda Rustic
Hydriomena furcata July Highflyer
Hypena proboscidalis Snout
Idaea aversata Riband Wave
Idaea seriata Small Dusty Wave
Laothoe populi Poplar Hawk-Moth
Laspeyria flexula Beautiful Hook-tip
Melanchra persicariae Dot Moth
Melanthia procellata Pretty Chalk Carpet
Mesapamea secalis/didyma Common Rustic
Mesoleuca albicillata Beautiful Carpet
Mesoligia furuncula Cloaked Minor
Myelois circumvoluta Thistle Ermine
Mythimna conigera Brown-Line Bright Eye
Noctua pronuba Large Yellow Underwing

Odontopera bidentata Scalloped Hazel
Ourapteryx sambucaria Swallow-Tailed Moth
Pandemis cerasana Barred Fruit-Tree Tortrix
Pasiphila rectangulata Green Pug
Pempeliella dilutella Powdered Knot-horn
Peribatodes rhomboidaria Willow Beauty
Perizoma flavofasciata Sandy Carpet
Phalera bucephala Buff-Tip
Phragmatobia fuliginosa Ruby Tiger
Phtheochroa inopiana Plain Conch
Ptilodon capucina Coxcomb Prominent
Scoparia ambigualis Common Grey
Scopula imitaria Small Blood-Vein
Selenia dentaria Early Thorn
Sphinx ligustri Privet Hawk-Moth
Syncopacma larseniella White-strap Sober
Thalpophila matura Straw Underwing
Tinea trinotella Bird's-nest Moth
Tyria jacobaeae Cinnabar
Udea olivalis Olive Pearl
Xestia ditrapezium Triple-Spotted Clay
Xestia triangulum Double Square-Spot
Zygaena filipendulae Six-spot Burnet

Other insects:

True bugs
Callicorixa praeusta a Water Boatman
Corixa punctata Punctate Corixa
 True flies
Episyrphus balteatus Marmalade Hoverfly
 Acarine
Poecilochirus carabi
 Beetles
Amphimallon solstitiale Summer Chafer
Nicrophorus investigator
Ophonus (Ophonus) ardosiacus
Rhagonycha fulva Common Red Soldier Beetle
 Butterflies
Aglais urticae Small Tortoiseshell
Inachis io Peacock
Maniola jurtina Meadow Brown
Mystacides longicornis

Guiting Wood 28 July 2013

On 28 July Field Club members enjoyed a beautiful walk through Guiting Wood led by Gordon Ottewell. Nettle-leaved Bellflower in profusion graced the way and amongst the many butterflies, several Silver-washed Fritillaries were seen. Many thanks to Gordon for leading this lovely walk and it was a joy to see so many butterflies after such a dismal start to their year.

Plants:

Red Campion
 Burdock
 Spear Thistle
 Enchanter's Nightshade
 Hedge Woundwort
 Common Figwort
 Ragwort
 St John's-wort
 Hogweed
 Wild Basil
 Wood Spurge
 Woody Nightshade
 Bugle
 Great Willowherb
 Wood Avens
 Herb Robert
 Hedge Bedstraw
 Lady's Bedstraw
 Tufted Vetch
 Bush Vetch
 Nettle-leaved Bellflower
 Pineappleweed
 Wood Speedwell
 Cinquefoil
 Common Centaury
 Meadowsweet
 Angelica
 White Clover
 Red Clover
 Horsetail
 Wild Strawberry
 Tufted Hair-grass
 Wall Lettuce
 Fairy Flax
 Broad-leaved Helleborine
 Male Fern
 Hart's Tongue Fern
 Meadow Vetchling
 Greater Knapweed
 Rosebay Willowherb
 Meadow Cranesbill
 Red Campion
 Black Bryony

Butterflies/moths:

Marbled White
 Meadow Brown
 Peacock

Small White
Ringlet
Comma
Silver-washed Fritillary
Red Admiral
Small Skipper
Speckled Wood
Silver Y Moth

Dragonfly
Southern Hawker

Mary Elford and Jill French

Selborne 17 August 2013

Seven members enjoyed a visit to Gilbert White's home in Selborne on 17 August. The more energetic of us walked up the Zig Zag Path, built by White and his brother, and on through the beech hanger where we were rewarded by lovely views to the house, village and church below, and the countryside beyond. White's book *The Natural History of Selborne* has never been out of print and in the house there is a huge bookcase that contains a copy of every edition that has ever been published. White (1720-1793) is regarded by many as England's first ecologist, and one of those who shaped the modern attitude of respect for nature. He said of the earthworm: "Earthworms, though in appearance a small and despicable link in the chain of nature, yet, if lost, would make a lamentable chasm. Worms seem to be the great promoters of vegetation, which would proceed but lamely without them . . .". White's biographer, Richard Mabey, praises White's expressiveness: "What is striking is the way he often arranges his sentence structure to echo the physical style of a bird's flight. So 'The white-throat uses odd jerks and gesticulations over the tops of hedges and bushes'; and 'Woodpeckers fly volatu undosu (in an undulating flight), opening and closing their wings at every stroke, and so are always rising and falling in curves'."

Mary Elford

MEMBER'S CONTRIBUTIONS

Death's Head Hawk-moth in Witney on 22 August 2013

On Thursday 22 August I was working late on my computer. I always keep my study window open to welcome any interesting moths that may be flying past but on this evening I got a real surprise.

At approximately 1.45 am something large and dark flew in through the window and for a few seconds I thought that a Pipistrelle bat had lost its bearings, but as it settled next to the ceiling light, I was amazed to see it was a huge moth and what was more it had a clearly defined skull shape on its thorax. It could only be a Death's Head Hawk-moth which I had never before seen in the living form. What really impressed me, however, was its size, I often get Poplar Hawk-moths flying in and although they are large this was clearly quite a bit larger still.

I typed in 'Deaths head hawk moth' into my computers browser and on finding the Natural History Museum page on it I read that it squeaked when touched.

Well nothing ventured

I gently pushed it with the tip of a wooden ruler and was immediately rewarded by a very loud and distinct squeak! Whilst I marvelled at this, the moth decided it had had quite enough of satisfying my curiosity and flew back out through the open window. At this point I was extremely cross with myself as my camera had been on my desktop beside me throughout the visit.

Ah well, next time!

Adrian State

White Admiral Butterfly in Witney on 2 August 2013

I was in my garden in central Witney talking to my neighbour when I saw a large dark butterfly. I remarked that it looked an unusual species and carefully caught it in my net to take indoors where it settled on the window sill. I consulted my butterfly book and discovered that it was a White Admiral (sex unknown), far away from its normal habitat of broad-leaved woodland. I photographed it before releasing it back in the garden. It flew off at high speed over the house. My book says 'very powerful flight' and this was born out. Mary Elford and from thence Butterfly Conservation have been notified. This is the first recorded sighting in Witney.

Alison Weaver

Do I need new glasses? (Should have gone to Specsavers!)

I.

We were viewing the conversion of Bishop's Farm Mill, an old water mill in Witney, into seven apartments. The building is surrounded by the usual high wire security fencing. We peered at a little disturbance at a broken out air-vent/grating low down (about 1 ft square) and espied what we thought was an old bumblebees' nest. I was intrigued and quite keen to have this as a natural history object of interest. I went down some days later to enquire. Two young workmen were lunchtime dozing in their van. I tentatively enquired as to whether I could have the 'bees nest' in the grating. One young chap woke up and thought for a minute, gathering his wits, and then said 'It's foam!' Oh dear! I retired in acute embarrassment. But it did look superficially like the cells of a bumblebee nest. I studiously avoided the site thereafter.

II.

We were driving along the Crawley Road out of Witney past Roger Townsend's field in broad daylight. As we passed the small iron gate I looked in the field - a quick glance - and said 'Oh look at the little black sheep - aren't they small'. I was immediately pooh-poohed by Tony who said he knew full well that they were very large ant hills, which had been very closely grazed and cropped by horses and probably rabbits! Laughter all round! This field has never been ploughed because the slope is quite 35-40°. Club members may remember having a job to keep their balance when we had a walk there a few years ago.

Alison Weaver and Tony Florey

Older newsletters - [97](#) [96](#) [95](#) [94](#) [93](#) [92](#) [91](#) [90](#) [89](#) [88](#) [87](#) [86](#)

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