

Chichester Natural History Society

Registered Charity No 259211



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NEWSLETTER No 202 February 2022

FROM THE CHAIR

Well, at the moment it feels that the country is awakening in all sorts of ways! The new year is bursting forth with Chi Nats field outings starting, snowdrops appearing, birds checking out nesting sites and members recording the first entries on their Phenology sheets! At the same time, our country appears to be “luckily” moving away from the need for severe restrictions due to Covid 19.

Our Society weathered the last couple of years well and the Committee are now keen to build on this, with a broad range of activities continuing in 2022. Our first field outing was led by our President, Jim Bagley, and took us around the local, but often overlooked, site of Chichester Lakes. We were lucky enough to observe a range of water birds, although the “LBJs” were a bit sparse. Whilst I really enjoyed our first evening lecture, (wasn’t the speaker good!), I am keenly anticipating Ken Smith’s lecture on Woodpeckers in February. We are so fortunate to have a national expert amongst our members and so the opportunity to hear him speak should not be missed! This lecture will be face/face in the Pallant Suite and we strongly suggest that all members wear masks. To reduce the risk of any COVID infection still further, we will not be having coffee/tea at this meeting, but we hope to recommence this at the March evening lecture.

During the remainder of the year, we will be enjoying more events including Lectures, Field Outings, Medmerry & Bat surveys, Pub Meetings and Mothing Mornings. Alongside these, members can make use of the Society’s equipment to enhance their own observation of wildlife. Please let us know if you would like to borrow one of the bat detectors or trail camera. Having mentioned Phenology sheets earlier, I would encourage all members to participate as even one recording is valuable for us. Use this link to obtain a Phenology sheet: <http://www.chichesternaturalhistorysociety.org.uk/surveys>.

Wishing you all a Happy and Healthy 2022!

Christian.

Dr. Christian Hance.

chair@chichesternaturalhistorysociety.org.uk

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MEMBERSHIP

New Members

We welcome the following new members:

Diana Beale
Susan Jane Booker
Hilary Cooke
Wendy Ellison
Jennie Hallett

Richard and Claire Locke
Gina Morley
Malcolm Walford
Robert Watson
Alison Woolerton

2022 Photographic Competition

Entries will be displayed at the Members' Christmas Meeting in December 2022. Please bring along 3 prints, any size.

Sightings

Please enter any observations in the sightings book on lecture evenings or add them to the blog on the website.

Membership Badges and Car Stickers.

These can be obtained at lecture evenings at £1 for a badge and all members receive a free car sticker.

Camera trap – available for members to borrow, from Christian Hance (01243 825187). A number of members have used it this year.

Laser tree range finder – available for members to borrow, from Helen Dignum. Used for tree surveys at West Dean Woods and Bishops Palace Gardens in 2020 and 2021. (07526 765968)

Bat detectors: After the success last year of finding a very rare bat in Aldwick, the CNHS bat recording project will restart in April. Members can borrow the detector to record bats in their gardens for a few nights and the results will be analysed by the BTO Acoustic Pipeline. Please contact Linda Smith at kenandlindasmith@gmail.com to arrange a date to have the detector. Available to borrow from Linda and Ken Smith.

EVENTS

Speaker Meetings

All evening events will be held on the first Wednesday of the month from September to April in the Pallant Suite, Masonic Hall, South Pallant, Chichester PO19 1SY.

Doors will open at 6.30 pm and lectures begin at 7.15pm.

The events will be free to members and cost £3 for non-members.

We want the indoor events to be as safe as possible:

- There will be plenty of space between the seats and good ventilation. The upper windows of the hall will be open, so bring a jumper or coat to keep warm.
- You are encouraged to wear a face covering when moving around.
- Please do not come to the meeting if you have, or think you may have COVID -19, or have been in contact with anyone with COVID-19.
- Tea and coffee will not be served in February, to reduce mixing, but will be reintroduced subsequently.

Wednesday 2nd February 7.15pm

Bars and Spots - the varying fortunes of our Great Spotted and Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers **Speaker:**

Ken worked for the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) in what is now the Centre for Conservation Science for almost 30 years. Over that time, he worked on a wide range of species and habitats and contributed to many conservation initiatives. In the 1980s he completed his first RSPB project on woodland breeding birds - a national survey which was repeated in 2003/4. This was sufficient to kindle an enduring interest in woodlands and especially woodpeckers. In 2015, Ken and his wife, Linda, set up www.woodpecker-network.org.uk with the express purpose of promoting the study of Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers and collecting important data on their nesting success.

Wednesday 2nd March 7.15pm. Risks to the environment from alien invasive pests and diseases. Andrew Gaunt, DEFRA Plant Health Inspectorate

Andrew Gaunt, from Defra will speak on the risks to the environment from alien invasive pests and diseases, his role and the work of the government Plant Health Inspectorate in protecting agriculture, horticulture and the wider environment from such pests and diseases.

Andrew lives in Fishbourne and as a hobby grows and maintains the National Collection of Ornamental Gingers (*Hedychium* species) at his nursery near Birdham.

Wednesday 6th April 7.15pm. Speaker and title to be announced

Pub Meetings – monthly lunchtime pub meal and meeting

Venue: The Bull's Head pub, Main Road, Fishbourne, 12.30-2.30pm

These are informal gatherings held once a month at the Bull's Head, Fishbourne, over the winter months from October to April. A chance to meet fellow members, enjoy a lunch on a cold winter's day, and learn more about a subject, with a talk led by an experienced member of the Society with specialist knowledge of the subject.

These small meetings are limited to ten members **who must pre-book and order their meal** usually at the preceding lecture meeting. Members pay for their meal at the bar on arrival. Everyone will be served together at one sitting at 12.30. The Society charges £1 per person, payable on the day, to cover speaker expenses, payable to Dee in cash on the day.

Wednesday 9th February. Rob and Maria Wildman - 'Dormouse Days'

Wednesday 16th March. Chichester NFU Representative. Changes in farming methods

Wednesday 16th March a talk will be given by a Chichester NFU (National Farmers Union) representative on the changes in farming methods post Brexit, re-wilding and advances in set-aside and field margin management. We enjoyed a field outing to Pepper Farm, near Houghton some years ago, and spent an evening being transported round the farm on trailers to see the thriving diversity of field margins and array of pollinators, birds and mammals attracted to these areas. Chet Modi has been appointed as Senior Partner at the Chichester and Henfield offices due to the sudden death of James Wiseman, and will be at the meeting to introduce himself to us. Re-wilding is a hot topic and will be a useful ahead of our field visit to the Knepp Estate on 29th June to learn more about the Stork Project.

Organiser: Dee Bowerman (01243 576981) d.bowerman@live.co.uk

2022 - The Society's 9th Year of Surveys at Medmerry

Please note that Surveys will be on THURSDAYS this year, with all surveys (approx. 2 hours in length) starting at 13:00 PROMPT, meeting at the RSPB Earnley Car Park at Grid Ref SZ 816 968, Post Code PO20 7JL, and then car sharing or walking as appropriate.

Dates:

Thursdays June 9th and 16th (with the 23rd as a reserve day in case of bad weather) Plant Surveys

Thursday July 7th (with the 14th as reserve day) Earlier-flying dragonflies.

Thursday August 4th (with the 11th as reserve day) Grasshoppers and bush crickets

Thursday September 1st (with the 8th as reserve day) Later-flying dragonflies.

Sessions are open to all, no matter what your level of expertise, as guidance will be provided. The Society's equipment is available but hand magnifiers, binoculars and reference books will be useful. Any questions or if help required with transport then please contact Philippa Arnott.

Organiser Philippa Arnott: philippa.arnott@uwclub.net or phone 01243 575345. Mobile 07840 859122, particularly for emergencies and delays on the day.

Field Outings

Following the relaxation of Covid regulations there is now no need to pre-book on to a Field Outing. The Committee would expect attendees to continue to observe any prevailing government guidance particularly with regards to testing and self-isolation as required. Members, as always, attend events at their own risk.

Friday 18th February 10:00 start CHIDHAM

Grid Reference SU 793 034

A morning's walk, looking for farmland and shoreline wildlife. Meet at the 'sunken' car park at the above grid reference. From A259, 1.0 mile west of Bosham roundabout, turn south into Chidham Lane, car park is a further 1.5 miles on.

Monday 21st March 10:00 start THORNHAM LANE and GREAT DEEP

Grid Reference SU 756 049

A morning's walk to observe seabirds, waders, divers and passerines as we pass by the harbour shoreline, saltmarsh, mudflats and farmland. Turn left off the A259 Chichester to Emsworth road, just before entering Emsworth, onto an unclassified road signposted Thorney. Pass the entrance to Emsworth Marina on your right then, after approximately 100 metres, take turning off to the left into Thornham Lane. Park immediately on the verge on the left.

Thursday 21st April 10:00 start NORTH MUNDHAM area

Leaders Alan and Steph Carn

Grid Reference SU 873 029 Postcode PO20 1LA

A local walk starting at the car park in North Mundham, to include Hunston Copse and parts of North Mundham and Runcton (further details / options to follow). Starting point can be reached via the 600 bus, see timetable, or if by car - take the B2145 sign posted Selsey from the A27 Chichester by-pass. Take first exit at roundabout onto B2166 sign posted North Mundham and Bognor Regis. At North Mundham, turn left at the chicane onto an unclassified road. Turn almost immediately right, under the height barriers, into the village hall car park.

Tuesday 26th April 09:30 start to 12:30 THE DOVER

Leader David Hart

Grid Reference TQ 061 065

And further afield, at The Dover, there are two options this morning. A longish (3.0 miles) or shortish (1 mile) walk through a mix of arable farmland and woodland habitats observing fauna (possibly including deer and hares) and flora.

Heading east from Arundel on the A27 and after approximately 3 miles, turn north into Dover Lane which is the second turning on the left. You will find yourself at The Dover car park in about a third of a mile.

FIELD OUTING REPORTS (see our website for additional field trip photos)

Burton Mill Pond – 20 October 2021 – Leader Diana Zeuner

After a night of continuous heavy rain, and with the added challenge of a diverted main road owing to a damaged culvert from the latest storm, seven members met for a morning walk around the Burton Mill Pond reserve with its many different habitats. The weather started off dull and showery, but improved with the odd moment of sunshine. Birds however were not convinced, and stayed well hidden in most cases!

Burton Mill Pond held a number of Tufted ducks, a Great crested grebe, Coots, and a Heron (replaced by a Little egret when we had a second look at the end of the walk). A Grey wagtail appeared at the edge, and accompanied us for a little way up the path, taking advantage of

overnight pools. Blackbirds, Blue tits, Great tits, Robins, Jays, Rooks, Jackdaws and Crows were seen alongside the path and above, and Nuthatch heard. The Sussex cattle undertaking conservation duties



were busy munching to the right. Past the magnificent veteran sweet chestnuts Christian photographed what was surely a raven, so top bird of the day!

At Chingford pond it was a bit busier, with Tufted and Great crested grebe accompanied by numbers of Little grebe and Pochard. Cormorants were seen, Mute swans disappeared to the left, and there were large numbers of Coots. On neither pond were any Mallards seen.



On the walk through the pine trees we heard the high-pitched call of Crests and a probable Coal tit. A Pheasant was flushed beside the field, and Pied wagtails were seen on the barn roof. Around the area of the Black Hole, Green woodpecker was heard and seen, and a possible but unenthusiastic Chiffchaff heard. Red admiral and Small copper butterflies were taking in the momentary sun, and there were one or two late dragonflies. It was a good chance to spot fungi, and several different types were enjoyed and photographed, including Parasol mushrooms in the fields by the chapel, and groups of puffballs. Along the paths the pink berries

Not a huge list, but the emerging autumnal colours were appreciated, along with those special appearances of blue sky!

Diana Zeuner

Farlington Marshes, 23 Nov 2021, Leader Tony Wootton

What a day, never to be repeated, not for the birds but for the weather. Never again will we walk around Farlington in late November and be too well dressed. No rain, no wind and temperatures in the mid-teens. 12 of us set off at 10.00 sharp accompanied by the Hazelmere U3A bird group and a Hampshire Wildlife Trust work party. We did our best to ignore each other apart from some occasional banter worthy of the Australian cricket team.

The sun shone, the tide came in and the wind never appeared. Whilst we didn't see any particularly rare birds, we were treated to some wonderful sightings in lovely light. The highlight for me was a fly past of dazzling avocets, worthy of the red arrows.

We managed nearly 40 bird species and thanks to Diana and her scope we also saw 4 harbour seals lying in their unusual banana pose.

The birds were, Canada and Brent Geese, Shelduck, Wigeon, Teal, Mallard, Pintail and Shoveler, Pheasant, Little Grebe, Great Crested Grebe, Cormorant, Little Egret, Grey Heron, Buzzard, Kestrel, Water Rail (heard only), Moorhen, Coot, Oystercatcher, Avocet, Grey Plover, Lapwing, Dunlin, Black tailed Godwit, Curlew, Redshank, Turnstone, Black headed Gull, Herring Gull, Meadow Pipit, Robin, Stonechat, Blackbird, Magpie, Carrion Crow and Starling. Hopefully, I haven't missed too many off.



Avocet Fly-past

I hope everyone enjoyed the day as much as I did. Thanks for your company.

Tony Wootton

Field Outing Report of Wednesday 19th January 2022 Chichester Lakes with Leader Jim Bagley

There was much chattering amongst the members (old and new) as we rejoiced in meeting up again after the Christmas break. At 10 o'clock, 17 pairs of eyes set off up the lane. In addition to the Long-tailed tits seen in the car park, Starling, Blue tit, Robin, Great tit, Jackdaw, Crow, Blackbird and Magpie were noted.

On the first lake were the first of many Coot and also Gadwall, Tufted duck, Mallard and a group of resting Pochard on the far side, by the chalets. I was introduced to the term commensal feeding by a learned member – where one species relies on another to stir up prey. One example here being the diving Coots stirring up plant material for the dabbling Gadwall to feed on. Cormorants and a pair of colourful Egyptian geese flew over, both of these species were to be seen later on, at the furthest lake. With a loud cackling and honking, a flock of Greylag geese (accompanied by a few Canadas) came in to land on the lake to our left.



Tufted Duck

Half a dozen Moorhen were enjoying the grass lawns around the recently restored house and as the trackside vegetation increased, members reported Chiffchaff, more Long-tailed tits and two Heron (one in a bush at the lakeside and another hidden in plain sight in the centre of the track ahead of us!) On Ivy Lake, both Little grebe and Great crested grebe were clearly identified along with a pair of Shoveler. Great spotted woodpecker was added to the list, distinctly heard by some and seen by others. Herring gull and Black-headed gull were on the furthest lake and on a smaller, well sheltered lake, a family of swans with last year's cygnets were sailing serenely whilst the features of Gadwall could now be seen in close up. As we made our way back, a wren was heard singing to distract us from the drizzle which had now arrived.



Great Crested Grebe

Altogether a splendid morning, many thanks to Jim and to all attendees for their cheerful company.
Gill Hance

Jim Arnott adds: "The two darker-backed Herring Gulls that I pointed out to Jim were almost certainly the northern Europe race *argentatus*, originating from Scandinavia and the Baltic. The more usual Herring Gulls with pale grey backs were our familiar western Europe race *argenteus*. If you've got the Collins Bird Guide, pages 184/185 show the difference. Jim instantly spotted the darker grey backs (not dark enough for Lesser Black-backed) and they weren't Yellow-legged Gulls as I could get glimpses of their pinky-grey legs while they were very actively bathing plus (in the 'scope) the red spot on the beak was confined to the lower mandible."

Bat Surveys in Slindon North Wood

Whilst the COVID restrictions impacted some of the Society's activities during 2020 and 2021, we were fortunate in being able to start some new pursuits. One of these was starting a series of bat surveys in the emerging North Wood, which is within the National Trust Slindon estate. This short article describes the process we followed, gives a summary of our results and considers how we might build on this in the future.

Due to COVID lockdown restrictions the surveys were carried out in the early to late summer of both years. In each year 3 walks were undertaken, with each walk starting around dusk. For all surveys we carried the Society's Echo Meter Touch 2 bat detector around a standard route. This provides instant feedback on the bats detected, making it a good tool for a group of Chi Nats members.

We were very lucky with the weather, generally enjoying warm, still evenings as well as excellent opportunities for some astronomy, as there was very little background light this far out into the countryside. The walks were often very exciting, with the bats clearly visible flying just above our heads!

Out of 18 species of bat commonly found in the UK we detected 12, 11 to the species level and 1 to the level of genus. Some of these species were regularly detected, e.g. Common pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrelles*), Common Serotine (*Eptesicus serotinus*), Soprano pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pygmaeus*), Noctule (*Nyctalus noctula*) and Lesser noctule (*Nyctalus leisleri*).

However, other species were detected less frequently, e.g. Grey long-eared bat (*Plecotus austriacus*), Brown long-eared bat (*Plecotus auritus*) and Nathusius' pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus nathusii*). On one occasion we detected a Greater horseshoe bat (*Rhinolophus ferrumequinum*). Bat species are known to appear at different times of the night and to fly different distances from their roosts. The difference in time of appearance was very noticeable on the surveys, with some species present as we set off, whilst others only appeared much later. It was also very noticeable that several species were only detected in the older, more established, parts of the wood.

Going forward it will be very interesting to see how the distribution of bat species alters as the wood develops. Possibly, we would expect to detect more species in the newer parts of the wood, as the recently planted trees mature. We may also consider "hiding" the Society's automated detector in different parts of the wood, so that we can gain an "all night" view of the species present. The Society has also been asked if we are interested in looking for bats on the RSPB Medmerry reserve, so in 2022 we may run two sets of surveys. If any member is interested in taking part, please contact Christian Hance, or look out for announcements of when the surveys will take place.

FROM THE EDITOR

We always welcome articles on any natural history subject for the newsletter so if you have something please send it to me for publication. All reports and articles should be sent to Helen Dignum at helendignum@protonmail.com **Deadline for articles for Newsletter 203 is 16 May 2022**

Data base: Names, addresses and telephone numbers of members are stored in a computer file for the sole use of the Society according to our privacy policy (see website).

