

Chichester Natural History Society



Registered Charity No 259211

Chair: Christian Hance, 389 Chichester Road, Bognor Regis, PO21 5BU
(01243 825187)

Membership: Heather Hart, The Hays, Bridle Lane, Slindon Common
Arundel, BN18 0NA (01243 814497)

Website: www.chichesternaturalhistorysociety.org.uk

NEWSLETTER No 194 May 2019

FROM THE CHAIR

Hello,

As May draws to a close, it's wonderful to see how the wildlife around us has really got into its stride for this year. Gill & I are very pleased that several of the nesting boxes in our back garden are in use, with Wren and Great Tit families being raised. Our new wildlife pond continues to attract new species (e.g. we saw a Large Red Damselfly there last week), and this is despite the pond being just yards from a major road! We entered this record onto our phenology sheet and, as I do every year, I would encourage all members to fill in the first sighting/hearing on the sheets so that the Society can continue to build its body of data.

Whilst it may sound like a buzz word, I do like the term "citizen science" to describe several of the Society's activities, which utilise our members' expert knowledge and recording abilities. In addition to the Phenology, we have several other projects in which members can participate including 1) The Society has recently acquired a camera trap that can be used by members to record wildlife in their gardens. Please contact John Kelsall if you would like to borrow it. 2) The automated bat recorder continues to give good results and we would like to have another successful season capturing records across the district. In addition, we also now have a handheld bat detector which can give an immediate identification of a bat species, so it's ideal for summer evening walks. Please contact Linda & Ken Smith if you are interested in borrowing either of these devices. 3) Our Medmerry surveys are into their 6th year and the value of our records has been recognised by the publication of an article on our work in the ADA STRA magazine. Anyone can join the team doing the work so please contact Philippa Arnott if you would like any more details.

As the summer field outing season gets into full swing I do hope to see many of you on our trips. This evening we are going for a walk to see how the National Trust Northwood project is developing, with a special focus on the areas that the Society has helped/participated in creating. Then, later in the summer, we have trips planned to Iping Common, Burpham & Levin Down amongst others.

The organisation of our autumn evening meetings is already well advanced and we kick off in September with a talk on the troubling topic of plastics in our Oceans. Other subjects lined up include a talk on Gilbert White, the renowned naturalist, the Bar-headed Goose by an academic from Exeter University and a talk on Kew's Millennium seed bank.

We are keen for members to share their knowledge and have several opportunities for this. Chris Hardy is always happy for members to volunteer to lead a pub talk on a specific topic. She facilitates a really good small group forum for the discussion of natural history related subjects, helped along by a good lunch! In addition, we have opportunities for members to give short presentations to a larger audience after the AGM, please contact me to discuss one of these slots. For members who want to cover a larger topic, to a larger audience, please contact Helen Dignum to see if we have any spaces in our lecture series.

It was good to see many of our members at the funeral of our President, Rosemary Marshall. It was a lovely send off to someone who made a large contribution to the Society.

Christian Hance

chair@chichesternaturalhistorysociety.org.uk

MEMBERS

We welcome the following new members:

Paula Chatfield of Chichester

David Bates of Winchfield

Rosemary Marshall 1941–2019

It is with great sadness that we have to inform you that our President, ROSEMARY MARSHALL passed peacefully away at home on the 28th March 2019. The loss of her leaves a gap in all our lives.

I first met Rosemary in 2010 whilst counting wild daffodils in the woods at West Dean. It soon became clear that we shared a love for West Sussex which brought us closer together through working with local groups and societies

In 2011 Mike Perry rotated out as Chairman, Rosemary was elected to take his place, and I joined a very vibrant and active committee as Winter Speaker Meeting Secretary. Rosemary set about implementing changes to improve and enhance the opportunities offered to our membership. As Jill Sutcliffe remembers:

When I think of Rosemary, I see a wise owl and a gem of a person, with a broad smile and a great sense of humour. Generally, she preferred to stay in the background and lead from the rear - but her influence and determination was legion. For five years she chaired the Society, bringing a steady hand on the tiller, together with innovation of new ideas. The introduction of the monthly Winter Pub Lunch was one of her ideas, enabling a smaller keen group to explore a specific topic in more depth. In 2013 the RSPB was poised to take over management of the Medmerry coastal realignment as the Environment Agency completed their work. I suggested that CNHS might be in a position to carry out some monitoring from the beginning, as the sea was allowed in and a new site started emerging. Rosemary responded in her characteristically positive way, and thus began the Society's involvement in this exciting project. She had an infinite flair for teasing out the full implications of key issues without raising hackles. She was always learning, always open to new ideas and had a firm commitment to working together. The Society has been a beneficiary of her way of doing things and she will be much missed.

This work continues in the capable hands of John and Philippa Arnott and the team at Medmerry. Rosemary was actively involved in supporting other closely associated organisations, and the Weald & Downland Living Museum staged a Countryside Fayre which the CNHS attended. Diana Zeuner recalls:

Rosemary was undoubtedly an extraordinary person. When I met her on an RSPB Chichester Group field trip, I realised I had often seen her before, manning a CNHS stand at the Weald & Downland Living Museum (where my late husband had been museum director). I joined Chi Nats when she recruited me! Then there were the trips to Guernsey and The Isles of Scilly, so ably organised by Denise, with Rosemary acting as her lieutenant! She was also a 'horse' person and with my interest in Heavy Horses through the magazine I produce, there was always plenty to chat about, including the delights of the Shetland pony in the field at the North Wall, Pagham. Alongside her depth of knowledge and interest, Rosemary had a great sense of humour and was liable to turn a conversation down a new avenue with a chance remark which had everyone laughing. We will all miss her terribly.

The Society was fortunate to inherit two legacies during Rosemary's time as Chair, and with one of the projects chosen by the membership, she worked closely alongside Philippa Arnott on a schools education programme. Philippa has written:

I first met Rosemary at a Chi Nets meeting. When she later became Chair, I joined her as Secretary and we worked together for five years. I have always admired her immense energy and commitment to the causes she was passionate about. When the Society received another legacy, I backed Rosemary's fervent wish to see some of it used to encourage children to get back to Nature. To this end Rosemary produced a list of primary schools in the area and three were selected, all recommended by Chi Nats members. The idea was to offer the schools the chance to buy natural history equipment to encourage the children to learn about wild life and their environment. Rosemary, determined to do what she could, ensured that the schools were offered nest boxes, pots for pollinators and a great list of support equipment so that the children could participate in every aspect of maintaining animal houses, a Minibeast Mansion and much more.

I feel privileged to count Rosemary as a dear friend and will always remember with great fondness the times we had together.

In 2017 Rosemary's close friend and associate John Herring retired, and she was elected to take his place as President. She remained in this post for the rest of her life.

Up to the time of her death, Rosemary remained vitally involved with our Society, and we are indebted to her for her strength and tenacity in keeping CNHS as strong as it is today. She was content in the knowledge that it was 'in a safe pair of hands' when she handed the reins to our present chairman, Dr Christian Hance. We will all remember Rosemary in our own ways. Mine include counting dragonflies and grasshoppers at Medmerry, observing Purple Emperor butterflies and Bumble bees on the Knepp Estate, waiting for nightjars at Stedham, or listening to the Nightingales at Pulborough Brooks. Her warmth, friendliness and ability to reach many people on all levels remains her legacy, and I leave the last words of this tribute to Rosemary herself - taken from 'Fifty Years of Nature' CNHS 1963-2013;

Nevertheless, with a steady membership of around 175, a new home at The Pallant Suite and much goodwill, our remarkable institution should provide rewarding experience for both novice and expert naturalists in the years ahead.

Rosemary Marshall, Chair.

Rest in peace, dear friend. Our lives have been enriched for having known you.

Denise Bowerman. April 2019

2019 Photographic Competition

The normal rules apply – no main theme– just natural history photos and the entries to be in the form of 3 prints, any size. Preferably all taken in 2019. Entries should be brought along to the members' evening in December, where fellow members will judge them anonymously. The photos from 2018 were exhibited in Chichester Library and we would hope to do the same for the 2019 entries.

Sightings

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

Publicity

We have purchased some promotional lapel badges and some car stickers to advertise our existence. They can be obtained at lecture evenings at £1 for a badge and all members receive a free car sticker.

Phenology

Please make sure you have a phenology sheet (download from website) and complete it during the year in order to keep our records complete and continuous.

Book Loan Scheme

As we are accumulating a selection of books for the use of our members, it was thought that someone ought to be in charge of their care and distribution. We now have 3 copies of Collins Wildflower Guide which will be of particular use to Medmerry surveyors and a Flora of Sussex. To begin with, I will keep all the books and can bring them to the indoor meetings. However, they will mostly be needed in the spring and summer when we do not have indoor meetings. Therefore, if anyone would like to borrow a book on a 4 week loan they can contact me and arrange either to collect the book from me or to meet somewhere mutually convenient. There will be a signing out sheet so I can keep tabs on the books and make sure they are back in time for the next borrower. A full list of titles will be available once I have all the books.

I do hope members will take the opportunity to use these books and find them useful.

Philippa Arnott 01243 575345 07840 859122 philippa.arnott@uwclub.net

LECTURE PROGRAMME

All lecture evenings will be held on Wednesdays in THE PALLANT SUITE, MASONIC HALL, SOUTH PALLANT, CHICHESTER. Non-members cost £3.00. Members free. Lectures begin at 7.15pm.. Doors will open at 6.30 pm. .

Wednesday 4th September 2019 Ocean Plastics. By David Jones, of Just One Ocean.

David is founder of Just One Ocean charity , raising awareness of ocean issues. A recent project has studied microplastics in Chichester Harbour. <https://justoneocean.org/>

Wednesday 2nd October 2019 'An outdoor naturalist, the life of Gilbert White' - Kimberley James, Gilbert White's House.

Gilbert White studied nature around his home in Selborne and published his book "The Natural History of Selborne" in 1789. Come and hear about his life and work.

Wednesday 6th November 2019 - AGM and Members' Presentations

Wednesday 4th December 2019 - Christmas Party

Wednesday 8th January 2020 The Bar-headed Goose – the world's highest flying bird by Lucy Hawkes, Exeter University

Wednesday 5th February 2020 - TBC

Wednesday 4th March 2020 The Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew: Plant Discovery and Conservation. Tim Pearce, Kew - Conservation Partnerships Coordinator for Africa

Tim describes Kew Gardens conservation work, particularly the Millenium Seed Bank at Wakehurst Place, Haywards Heath, West Sussex.

Wednesday 1st April 2020 - TBC

MEDMERRY

2019 - 6th Year of Surveys at Medmerry

ALL surveys (approx. 2 hours in length) will start 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 either to 1: Easton Lane for the 2 Plant Surveys (Fridays 7th & 14th June) and the Grasshopper Survey (Friday 2nd August) or 2: along the track to the pools for the Dragonfly Surveys (Fridays July 5th & September 6th). (Little walking required on any date.) See Main Events List for more information. Sessions are open to all, no matter what your level of expertise, as guidance will be provided. We shall use the Society's equipment but hand magnifiers, binoculars and reference books will be useful. Any questions or if help required with transport then please contact Philippa Arnott on philippa.arnott@uwclub.net or phone 01243 575345.

FIELD OUTINGS

These field outings, led by one of the expert members of the Society, enable participants to see different aspects of wildlife and nature in the field. No meeting will be cancelled because of the weather so please wear suitable clothing and footwear. These meetings are open to members and non-members, children over 8 are welcome but should be under parental control. These outings always start promptly so please arrive in plenty of time. Any questions about these events, or if help needed re transport, please contact Gill Hance (hanceatbognor@aol.com or 01243 825187). In addition, if members have any ideas for outings or can offer to lead one themselves, then please contact Gill. In accordance with Health & Safety Requirements, Chichester Natural History Society hereby gives notice- "The Society is prepared to assist members in making arrangements to enable them to participate in activities arranged by the Society. It cannot accept any responsibility whatsoever for any loss, injury or damage sustained by any person in consequence of their participation in any activity. Persons attending field outings do so on the understanding that they attend at their own risk".

LOOK OUT FOR NOTIFICATIONS OF VISITS TO MEMBERS' GARDENS OVER THE SUMMER

How can we help/observe wildlife in our own backyards/gardens? Please contact Gill Hance (as above) if you would like to welcome members to your patch, whatever size. Perhaps you have ideas to share or are after some suggestions from other members?

Friday 7th June 13:00 start RSPB car park at Earnley - FIRST MEDMERRY SURVEY

Grid Ref SZ 816 968 Postcode PO20 7JL See above for detailed instructions.

Plant Survey 1 (a species list) - bring wildflower books

Friday 14th June 13:00 start RSPB car park at Earnley - SECOND MEDMERRY SURVEY

Grid Ref SZ 816 968 Postcode PO20 7JL See above for detailed instructions.

Plant Survey 2 (using quadrats for gathering more quantitative data) - bring wildflower books

Monday 17th June 10:00 start. IPING COMMON.

Leader Helen Dignum

Grid Ref SU 852 220 Postcode GU29 0PB

A morning's walk through this excellent example of lowland heath with its wealth of fauna and flora. Large car park on Elsted Road just off the A272, approx. 2 miles west of Midhurst.

See - <https://sussexwildlifetrust.org.uk/visit/iping-stedham-commons>

Tuesday 25th June 10:00 start, finish by 14:00 BURPHAM

Leader David Hart

Grid Ref TQ 041 097

A chance to see farm-land birds as well as good numbers of raptors, hedgerow species and grey partridge which the Norfolk Estate is well known for breeding. As you are leaving Arundel, going east heading towards Worthing, go over railway bridge and turn immediately left and drive through Warningcamp and Wepham. As you approach Burpham, go down steep hill and as you go up the other side the main road branches left but members should head straight over. This is a dangerous bend, so slow down and follow David's signs. Meet at the top of the next hill. Bring a picnic to enjoy, as we're promised an excellent picnic spot.

Friday 5th July 13:00 start RSPB car park at Earnley - THIRD MEDMERRY SURVEY

Grid Ref SZ 816 968 Postcode PO20 7JL See above for detailed instructions.

Dragonflies 1 (earlier-flying species) - bring binoculars and dragonfly books and/or iRecord Dragonflies app (free for Apple and Android devices) <https://www.brc.ac.uk/app/irecord-dragonflies>

Thursday 11th July 10:30 LEVIN DOWN - BUTTERFLIES

Leaders Chris Furlepa and Dorothy Rodefeld

Meet at Grid Ref 879 114

A Butterfly focused walk through this Wildlife Trust Reserve, led by Chris Furlepa and Dorothy Rodefeld who have recently followed in Ann Griffiths' footsteps in monitoring the butterflies here. Initial steep climb. Close focusing binoculars useful. Take a picnic lunch. Meet at the 'Triangle' car park on the north side of The Trundle at above Grid Reference for car share to the foot of Levin Down.

Friday 2nd August 13:00 start RSPB car park at Earnley - FOURTH MEDMERRY SURVEY

Grid Ref SZ 816 968 Postcode PO20 7JL See above for detailed instructions.

Grasshoppers and Bush Crickets (using bat detectors and the Society's nets). Bring orthoptera books and/or iRecord Grasshoppers app (free for Apple and Android devices)

<http://naturelocator.org/irecord-grasshoppers.html>

Wednesday 21st August 19:00 start CHICHESTER CANAL

Grid Ref SU 865 023

An evening nature walk along the canal with the added chance of using the Society's new Bat Equipment as dusk falls. Meet at the car park close to the canal 'bend' just north of Hunston. If you have bat detectors of your own and reference books then do bring them along, together with a small torch for personal safety.

Friday 6th September 13:00 start RSPB car park at Earnley – FIFTH MEDMERRY SURVEY

Grid Ref SZ 816 968 Postcode PO20 7JL See above for detailed instructions.

Dragonflies 2 (Later-flying species) - bring binoculars and dragonfly books and/or iRecord Dragonflies app (free for Apple and Android devices)

<https://www.brc.ac.uk/app/irecord-dragonflies>

Tuesday 24th September 10:00 – 15:30 TITCHFIELD HAVEN NATIONAL NATURE RESERVE

Leader Tony Wootton

Grid Reference SU 536 024 Postcode PO14 3JT

An all day visit (or depart after the morning session if you wish) to a carefully managed Reserve in the Meon Valley, which gives a mosaic of natural habitats – river, fen, pool, reedbed and meadow

Check their website <https://www.hants.gov.uk/thingstodo/countryparks/titchfield> for more info and directions, as well as sightings closer to the time.

Take a picnic lunch or eat at the Reserve's cafe. Contact Gill Hance (01243 825187) if willing to offer lifts to other members or if you need a lift yourself (£5 contributions to petrol are kindly requested). Car park next to Hill Head Sailing Club or along the sea wall. Meet at ticket office at 10:00 and quote "Hance" to gain group entry rate of £3.75 per person.

Monday 14th October 10:00 start SNOW HILL AND ELLANORE

Leader - David Hart

Grid Reference SZ 765 984

A half day walk looking for sea birds and waders, meeting at the far end of West Beach car park, West Wittering (parking fee payable). Optional - bring a packed lunch and drink and continue around East Head in the afternoon.

Friday 15th November 10:00 start PULBOROUGH BROOKS RSPB RESERVE

Leaders – Tony Nevard and Sylvia Gill

Grid Reference – TQ 059 165 Postcode RH20 2EL

A wealth of birdlife. A half day walk around the Reserve (members may wish to stay on into the afternoon). Much to see on the flood plains, marsh and farmland whatever the weather, as there are several excellent hides available.

Entry fee is payable for non-RSPB members

Optional – take a picnic or buy lunch in the restaurant.

Reserve is well sign-posted just off the A283 between Pulborough and Storrington. Meet in the main Reserve Car Park.

Friday 13th December 10:00 start THORNHAM LANE and GREAT DEEP

Leader John Kelsall

Grid Reference SU 756049

A morning's walk to observe seabirds, waders, divers and passerines as we pass by 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.

PUB MEETINGS 2019/2020

These are informal gatherings held at the **Bull's Head, Fishbourne**. They are led by experienced members of the society with specialist knowledge of the subject and are a chance to learn more in the company of an 'expert.' They usually last about an hour to an hour and a quarter. There is a small charge of £1 per person. They are also social gatherings, as we have lunch first, but there is no obligation to join this. However as we do not pay the pub for hire of the room could any attendees not having lunch please purchase at least a small drink ! These small meetings are limited to **15 members who must pre-book** usually at the preceding lecture meeting. Start time is at 1:30pm – members may wish to meet for lunch beforehand at 12:30pm. New management at the pub requires that menu selection is chosen and passed to them ahead of the meeting.

CNHS LEGACY PROJECTS

Subsequent to consultation with Members and Committee discussions the following projects were set up in 2018 and are ongoing or completed.:

- 1) Monitoring and encouraging swifts in Chichester – will continue into 2019
- 2) Monitoring bats in Chichester – will continue into 2019

Another consultation has taken place and the following projects have been approved for 2019

1. A Nature writing/poetry/art competition in schools
2. Contribution to establishing a pond on the Northwood project
3. Purchase of surveying and recording equipment
 - a) Laser range finder for establishing the height of trees
 - b) Motion activated Camera trap for recording mammals and other wildlife in gardens
 - c) Immediate bat detector and identifier to complement the bat recording project. .

CNHS Challenge to Schools

£500 for each of two years is being allocated from our legacy funds, with schools throughout West Sussex invited to enter a new competition with nature at its heart. In each category (junior and senior) £100 will go to the schools of winners, plus £75, £50, and £25 for the best three contestants per age section. With the emphasis on originality, the themes for essays (300 words) or up to five verses of poetry, which need not rhyme, will be:

- 1 How can we help keep the planet safe and healthy?
- 2 My favourite countryside place in Sussex.
- 3 My top British animal.

Schools will be asked to sift entries down to three per category, to be judged by Chinats, the Chichester Observer, and naturalist Richard Williamson.

It is expected that prize money, for school and pupil alike, will be spent on nature projects or materials. The competition will be widely publicised in Chichester Observer Group papers, starting in the academic year 2019/2020.

Terry Timblick

Swifts

This project is aimed at encouraging swifts by erecting swift boxes in the appropriate place to enable more breeding pairs. We have now completed erecting our stock of boxes with a grand total of 44 boxes installed. We have had invaluable assistance from Richard Kennedy of Team Endeavour to actually climb the ladder and drill the screw holes. We shall be monitoring any activity in the installed boxes.

John Kelsall

Bat recording in and around the Chichester area using an automatic bat detector

The project to record bats flying at night in the Chichester area has been very successful so far and will continue in 2019.

In 2018, from April to October, the bat detector was deployed at 51 locations in Chichester area (mostly members' gardens) for a total of 160 nights collecting 75,000 bat encounters of at least 10 different species. Because the detector is vigilant all night, it gives much more comprehensive results than a hand-held device. A summary of the results is available on the legacy projects page of the ChiNats website.

For 2019, Ken and Linda Smith have agreed to continue to co-ordinate the arrangements for deploying the detector and downloading and analysing the results of each recording session. Bats are hibernating at present and will become active again when the weather warms in April. As well as giving all members the chance to record bats in their own gardens, we want to try to fill some of the gaps in coverage, particularly to the north of the city.

If you would like to host the detector for a couple of nights in your garden or other suitable location please get in touch with project co-ordinators, Linda and Ken Smith, email kenandlindasmith@gmail.com or 01243786079 or see their bat project webpage at www.woodpecker-network.org.uk/index.php/news/38-bat-monitoring-in-chichester-area

Project co-ordinators - Ken and Linda Smith.

Equipment

Laser rangefinder – has been purchased and put into use in assisting the surveying of trees in West Dean Woods. It has proved invaluable as the original method involved actually taping the distance to the tree before using a hand made protractor to measure the angle to the top. In heavy scrub this proved difficult.

Camera trap – has been purchased and trial runs have been carried out. So far we have the odd fox, lots of cats and pigeons!

This equipment is now available to members in order to ascertain what wildlife they have in their gardens. The procedure is that members have the equipment for a few nights and then return the kit. John Kelsall is the coordinator so if you want to participate please contact John on 01243 788092 or jjkelsall70@gmail.com.

Immediate bat detector – this piece of kit is a gadget attached to an Ipad and will immediately identify any bats flying around. This will be coordinated by Ken and Linda Smith who are preparing and testing the kit before making it available to members.

FIELD OUTING REPORTS (see our website for photos taken on the day)

Friday 22 March

Farlington Marshes

Leader Tony Wootton

What wonderful weather we enjoyed last Friday. Usually, it's wet and windy on the Society's outings to Farlington but not on this occasion. As we gathered, we listened to a Cetti's Warbler outdoing the noise of the traffic on the A27. It was going to be a good morning.

Even before we started listing the many bird species we were to observe, we saw lots of brown tailed moth caterpillars with their urticating hairs, best avoided.

As we set off in an anticlockwise direction towards the harbourside, the fourteen members called out their observations. These included Great Tit, Collared Dove, Wood Pigeon, Blackbird, Carrion Crow, Dunnock, the song of a Robin, the churring of a Greenfinch and a Cormorant flying seaward over the incoming tide.

On reaching the water's edge, Mallard, Brent Goose, Oyster Catcher, Black headed Gull, Redshank and Curlew were noted with a Little Egret wading within, what seemed, a very short distance of the main road. A lone Grey Plover was seen (distinguishable by its black patch under the wing). Two Shelduck flew over, to join the many others in the field behind us.

Looking both right and left, out into the harbour and in to the marsh, we observed Moorhen and Coot, a mixture of Canada and Brent Geese, including some juveniles, as well as Magpie, Pheasant, Avocet, Black tailed Godwit, Teal and two Mute Swan. How nice it was not to be buffeted about by the usual squalls!

As we reached the southernmost edge of the marsh, Greenshank, Dunlin (very busy dibbling), Bearded Reedling (Bearded Tit), MORE Shelduck, Meadow Pipit, Lapwing, Wigeon, displaying Moorhen, Common Gull, Coot and Shoveller were added to the growing List. Some Hirundines flew over but there was no agreement as to what they were! The beautiful sound of Skylark could be heard almost continuously but proved invisible against the grey sky. The antics of several Great Crested Grebe were enjoyed, difficult to tell how many there were as they dived down and reappeared!

We met 4 members of a recently formed group of birders, part of the Winchester U3A and we ambled on together as Tony led us north on the eastern side of the marsh. Raven, Chaffinch and another Cormorant (out at sea) and a close-by Meadow Pipit were next to be seen. Over towards the Hayling Island oyster beds, beady eyes spotted four Merganser (two male and two female) and Sandwich Tern; while Mediterranean Gull were heard.

To our left were seen - Wren, Gadwall, Teal, very handsome Tufted Duck, Pintail and a lone winnowing Little Grebe. On cue, Lapwing put on a dramatic swooping display against a backdrop of a small murmuration of Starling. Nearer to hand, we listed Goldfinch and Reed Bunting.

A pure black rabbit caught our attention as we crossed the fields heading towards the car park. We bumped into a Wildlife Trust warden who informed us that the metal points we'd queried on some of the fence posts were specifically near the Lapwing nesting areas to deter predators.

Nearing the information shelter and the nearby pool, we completed our List (to be forwarded to the Society's Recorder) with a Little Ringed Plover, a Peregrine flying overhead, Chiffchaff, and the song of more Cetti's and Robin. An observant member saw nine Avocet mixed in with some black headed Gull in the final pool (the rest of us were keen for our lunch, I think!) This same member went on to see some Black Necked Grebe (see the Chi Nats Blog for more detail).

Many thanks for everyone's company and especially to Tony Wootton for leading us so ably.

Gill Hance

Thursday 4th April 2019

Hollybank Woods

Leader John Bond

18 intrepid explorers braved a cold, wet and blustery April morning to meet John Bond for a walk around Hollybank Woods, in north Emsworth. John explained the history of the woods, from the wildwoods of the distant past, to more recent times as part of the Southleigh estate, now leased to Havant Borough Council for 999 years. The woods have been managed by the Friends of Hollybank Woods since 2002 for conservation and as a working woodland.

John led us north along the main path from Hollybank Lane, to meet two Andrews: Andrew the forester, and Andy the Chair of the Friends of Hollybank Woods. Together they explained the issues of improving and sensitively managing the different areas of forest, using only hand tools. Some areas were originally Forestry Commission softwood, replanted after both world wars to replace felled trees. The replanting was a mixture of different trees so it has little commercial worth, but still produces useful wood. Andrew showed us how small clearings had been created, allowing log piles and grass to stabilise the soil and create a place for naturally regeneration with closely growing seedling trees, already 1-2 metres high after only a few years.

We walked to a different part of the wood to see silver birch coppice being developed from scratch. Hay bales and dead log piles increased the benefit to slow worms, mice and insects. Finally we visited an area of coppiced holly. Andrew explained how holly wood and coppiced holly was used for beams and construction long before the Romans introduced sweet chestnut.

We also heard the story of the great oak trees, which were planted by the Royal Navy 280 years ago, to provide for their future timber needs, splendid long term planning. However when the 280 year contract term fell due in 2002, the Royal Navy no longer needed the oak trees, due to be delivered to Portsmouth harbour, and has returned their ownership to the woods, where they still grow!

The cold and wet weather kept most birds and insects in hiding, but we heard mistle thrush, nuthatch, and greater spotted woodpecker. The bluebells were just coming into flower, and there were some scattered dog-violets.

A few hardy members stayed for a picnic lunch in the glade.

Helen Dignum

Friday 10th May 2019

Amberley Wildbrooks

Leader John Kelsall

Eleven of us took part in a delightful, sunny walk in the wetlands near the River Arun in this Site of Special Scientific Interest. A swift and raven were seen straightaway whilst we were still standing near the cars. The morning continued in this same vein with meadow and creeping buttercups at our feet, eight Konik ponies grazing as we walked along the remaining part of the old Wey and Arun canal and numerous birds singing or flying overhead – linnets, greenfinch, whitethroat, dunnoek, starling, reed, garden, sedge and Cetti's warblers.

It was quiet and peaceful looking at two swans flying over the River Arun and shelduck, mallards, gadwall in the water. The wetlands had big clumps of great reed mace, meadow foxtail grass was seen with a tiny bright green beetle on its flower, the willow trees were in flower and summer seemed to be just around the corner.

Part of the walk is in "Waltham Brooks" Nature Reserve run by the Sussex Wildlife Trust. They ensure the grasslands, ditches, wetlands and scrub for grazing are kept in good order to preserve the wet habitat. Some of the flora seen was cutleaf geranium, crosswort, greater stitchwort and common water starwort. We crossed over Greatham Bridge and walked along the other side of the River Arun. A song thrush was singing, a rook and green woodpecker were heard. Along the way various butterflies were seen dancing around us, an orange tip, small tortoise shell, red admiral, yellow brimstone, peacock and a delightful holly blue.

We crossed over two old narrow rickety wooden bridges and stopped midway on one in order to watch some tadpoles in the small pond. There were tall rushes on either side of the path before we reached the open wetlands looking out over towards Amberley Castle. A fallow deer was seen grazing but unfortunately no sign of a marsh harrier that day.

We retraced our steps back to Greatham Bridge seeing the grey wagtail again and then walking along the road we heard a cuckoo which we had hoped to hear at some point on the walk. Altogether 40 species of bird were recorded, amongst them barn owl, wren, jackdaw and the icing on the cake was a nightingale at the very end of this lovely walk.

John Kelsall did us all proud.

Daphne Flach

FROM THE EDITOR

A heat wave in February and another at Easter means nature has had a problem knowing when spring arrived! Mixed in was some colder and drier conditions (at the moment – very dry!) so we wait and see how the flora and fauna cope. The oak has beaten the ash again this year so can we expect a summer like last year?

Thanks for our reporters for their contributions to the Newsletter. We always welcome articles on any natural history subject for the newsletter so if you have something please send it to me for publication. It does not have to be about an exotic location – it could just be a wildlife event in your garden. All reports and articles should be sent to me at jjkelsall70@gmail.com

Deadline for articles for Newsletter 195 is 21 September 2019

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).