

Chichester Natural History Society



Registered Charity No 259211

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Website: www.chichesternaturalhistorysociety.org.uk

NEWSLETTER No 198 September 2020

FROM THE CHAIR

I hope that all of you are keeping well and still managing to enjoy life during this prolonged period of restrictions. Despite the necessary limitations on our everyday life, it's still great to be able to observe the changing patterns of wildlife behaviour as the weather changes from summer to autumn. This newsletter contains some interesting pieces, including reports on our recent outings and a review of an exhibition at the Pallant Gallery.

Since the "full lockdown" was lifted, I am very pleased that the Society has managed to restart some of its activities, whilst keeping in line with the government's guidance. I would particularly like to thank Philippa Arnott and Gill Hance for organising these events. Philippa has led our work on the Medmerry surveys which we managed to successfully complete this year. Whilst limited to 6 people and keeping 2m apart, we conducted all of the 2020 surveys; many thanks to the surveyors - see the website for the results and some nice pictures. Gill has instigated a new way of organising our field outings, with multiple trips to the same location, enabling up to 18 members to enjoy a wildlife spotting opportunity. These have been very well received and I would like to thank members for following the process of pre-registering their intention to attend and Gill for taking on the additional admin. Again, see the website for reports from the outings.

Obviously we have had to postpone our evening meetings which were scheduled for the autumn. However, the AGM, scheduled for November 4th, will go ahead using Zoom. I am sure that a lot of you have used Zoom during the last few months to see/hear family and also to attend other societies' events. It provides an easy way to see/hear and contribute to meetings over the internet and is surprisingly easy to use ! We will send out full details before the meeting.

Alongside our regular scheduled activities the Society's Legacy projects have continued to provide members with different ways of observing wildlife. The two bat detectors have been put to good use and the wildlife camera has provided an interesting insight into what goes on in our back gardens overnight! If any member would like to borrow a bat detector please contact Linda Smith, or John Kelsall for the wildlife camera.

In addition to the equipment we bought, the Society has also made good use of our legacy money on other projects. We are keen to hear of new ideas - either purchasing more equipment, projects for members or working with other societies. If any members have any suggestions for additional legacy projects, which align with the Society's objectives (see below), please let the committee know before October 31st.

I look forward to seeing some of you on our small scale field outings and "seeing" as many of you as possible via Zoom at the AGM. Please take care in the meantime.

Dr. Christian Hance.
chair@chichesternaturalhistorysociety.org.uk

CNHS Objectives

1. *The study and recording of all branches of Natural History.*
2. *The conservation of the flora and fauna of the district*
3. *Co-operation with other bodies for the conservation and study of the countryside.*

MEMBERS

New Members

We welcome the following new Members

Robert and Sue Yarham

Carolyn Coles

2020 Photographic Competition

The Photographic Competition for 2020 will not take place as the Members Christmas Meeting has been cancelled due to COVID-19. We are replacing it with a section of the Membership page of the website with space for you to submit the 3 photos you would have entered so that we can all enjoy them. There is no particular theme just natural history photos taken this year. Please send your submissions to web-master@chichesternaturalhistorysociety.org.uk by 1 December 2020.

Sightings

Please enter any observations in the sightings book on (when we re-start) 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 (when we re-start) at £1 for a badge and all members receive a free car sticker.

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 (when we re-start). 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

EVENTS – INDOOR MEETINGS, PUB MEETINGS and FIELD OUTINGS

Due to the Covid-19 virus rules and guidance there will **no Indoor Meetings** or **Pub Meetings** until further notice

In line with current government guidance, the committee proposes to run the Society's **field outings** in the following manner:-

- Field Outings to be a maximum of 6 attendees including the leader. Multiple dates will be offered, thus giving greater opportunity for members to attend.
- Pre-booking essential, with confirmation of members' contact details.
- Participants must not have tested positive for Covid 19 in the last 14 days prior to the event, be exhibiting any symptoms nor awaiting test results
- Social distancing of 1 metre plus to be observed at all times.
- Members attend at their own risk, as usual.

Notifications of proposed field outings will be sent via e-mail to members in time for pre-booking to proceed. For details and to book please email:

Outdoor-events@chichesternaturalhistorysociety.org.uk

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

Friday 5th June –First Medmerry Survey

We're allowed 'out'! How exciting, an outing to Medmerry, equipped with social distancing instructions from the government and with further instructions and permission from the RSPB to go ahead with the Society's first survey of 2020. Four members were greeted by a sea of oxeye daisies swaying in the breeze, no doubt what would be recorded as Dominant, according to the DAFOR scale. (These scores range from Dominant, Abundant, Frequent, Occasional to Rare.)

An interesting hour was spent scouring the entire survey area for species of wildflowers and grasses, books and keys to hand and plastic bags/boxes for specimens to be discussed at the end. Members regrouped (at

appropriate spacing), held the contents of their bags up to be identified and then voted on the DAFOR score for each species. It was noted that there is still a change in species occurrence along the length of the survey area and that some species had reduced in abundance compared with previous years. Finally, we discussed how to conduct our more detailed quadrat survey on the 12th June with the current government guidancewe think it can be done!

Gill Hance

Friday 19th June Second Medmerry Botany Survey

So glad we had set a reserve date for this quantitative Survey after the first attempt was rained off on the 12th June. It was a little breezy and some of the grasses had 'gone over', making identification a bit tricky, but after discussing how to 'fairly' conduct a quadrat survey (in order to cover the plot and accurately record presence of a species), six members lined up, socially distanced and worked their way along the bank.

The results from 40 plus quadrats were recorded, and as expected, ox-eye daisy was the most common species. The temptation to 'capture' some of the 'rare' species noted in the first survey were resisted and it will be interesting to see the analysis so as to compare the results with previous years.

Looking forward to the dragonfly survey in July.

Gill Hance

July 10 and 17 Medmerry survey Dragonflies

Due to the Covid-19 restrictions of only 6 people allowed together at any one time, the dragonfly survey was split into two. On the original date of July 3rd the wind was so strong and the weather so poor that the survey was abandoned. Four surveyors attended the rearranged date of July 10th and another 4 on July 17th. This worked well though Team 2 on 17th had very strong winds again!

On **July 10th** there was a 14mph NW wind, dry with some sun. The total count was:

Blue-tailed damselfly	8 (C)
Small red-eyed damselfly	9 (C) (4 prs Ov + 1 Ad)
Ruddy darter	8 (C) (6 Ad + 1 Co)
Emperor	5 (B) (3 Ad + 2 Ov)
Common blue damselfly	4 (B) (2 Ad + 2 Ov)
Emperor exuvia	1 Ex

Total = 34 animals + 1 exuvia

Other wildlife seen included Skylarks, Whitethroat with 2 young, Lapwing, Sand martin, Yellowhammer, Reed bunting, Kestrel, Buzzard, Reed warbler, Moorhen, Marsh frogs, Swallow, Gatekeepers and a Roe deer.

On **July 17th** it was sunny and very windy. The total count was:

Emperor	5 (B)	4 Ad	1 Ov
Common blue damselfly	3 (B)	3 Ad	
Blue-tailed damselfly	1 (A)	1 Ad	
Ruddy darter	1 (A)	1 Ad	
Exuvia sp	1 Ex	same one as found on 10 th ?	

Total = 10 animals + 1 exuvia

Other wildlife seen included a dark coloured Buzzard, Skylarks overhead, Coot in the reeds, funnel spiders in gorse. Amongst various butterflies 2 Gatekeepers were noted.

Philippa Arnott

7 August Medmerry Grasshopper Survey 1

Philippa Arnott divided us up into two Survey Teams in order to have the correct number of members surveying according to Coronavirus Rules. The first team consisted of Helen Dignum, Sylvia Gill, Mary Iden, Daphne Flach and our President Jim Bagley who joined us on site.

The weather was hot, hot, hot getting up to nearly 30 degrees Centigrade. Although in mitigation we did have a gentle breeze.

We were surveying a new area for Grasshoppers and Bush Crickets. We walked from RSPB car park Earnley across the road, through the pedestrian side gate and a little way along the track which we normally drive along before going up the bank on the right-hand side. This bank which runs parallel to the track had been sown with wildflowers.

Philippa explained we were going to survey an area with our sweep nets, examine and identify our specimens, then release them before moving on fifty yards and repeating the process along the bank as far as we could get in the allocated two hours, surveying four sites in all.

The others did very well wielding their sweep nets, collecting and identifying species. (Daphne did manage to get some specimens in her sweep net but they invariably jumped out before they could be put in the specimen pot. It was 1 to Daphne and 9 to the grasshoppers.)

The Team identified Lesser Marsh Grasshopper and Meadow Grasshopper at each of the four sites.

Our President, Jim Bagley came up trumps and caught a Long-winged Cone-head Bush Cricket at the first site, and two more were found in the fourth site.

Now it will be up to Team Two to see what they find starting from the far end of the wildflower bank and working towards the end where our Team One had started.

Daphne Flach

Friday 14th August - Grasshoppers and Crickets Survey Part 2

Team 2, consisting of another four Members, met at 1pm for instruction from Philippa. It had rained earlier in the day and conditions were still cloudy and quite humid. With the vegetation wet and knocked down, would we be lucky?

Well, Yes!

The surveyors continued, using the three sweep nets, from where Team 1 had finished the previous week and quickly found several Lesser Marsh Grasshoppers, with specimens of Common Green Grasshopper and Meadow Grasshopper soon following. The creatures were being very 'co-operative' with being temporarily captured in the petri dishes and tubes, even 'allowing' photos to be taken with the lids taken off. Usually, in the drier, sunnier conditions, they are much more active. It was a treat to be able to study their intricate anatomy in detail and close up. The rest of the new survey area was covered (pacing out approximately 50 metres between sweeps) and towards the 'barn end' we were excited to record two Crickets – Rosel's Bush-cricket with its distinctive patterning and Long-winged Cone-head.

Other wildlife noted were Gatekeeper, Small White, Blue-tailed damselfly and several moths (unidentified, as eyes were down looking for grasshoppers and Crickets!)

Congratulations and thanks to all those who have made the Medmerry surveys possible this year.

Gill Hance

September 4th 2020 Medmerry Survey – Later Dragonflies Part 1

The afternoon turned out to be warm and mostly sunny with a light breeze, much better than had been forecast. Six members arrived to see whether we could beat last year's record of 0 dragonflies! We immediately spotted 1 or 2 over the pool by the Marsh Barn junction. As they flew fast back and forth often behind the reeds it was very difficult to get a clear view. Was one an Emperor or not? A great deal of discussion and checking the books and it was eventually identified as a Migrant hawk. One or two further Migrant hawkers were spotted. A little further on and some darters appeared. Again, was that one a Ruddy or a Common? Very difficult to see them as the reeds in front of us were high and they were hidden by other vegetation across the ditch. In the end it was decided that they were Common and not one was a Ruddy darter. As we walked along the ditch became drier and the vegetation more encroaching so nothing was seen for a while. Another Migrant hawk was seen inside the meander, through the gate. A Blue-tailed damselfly was added to the tally having been spotted by our Chair at the edge of a photo! Nobody had actually noticed the animal as it was perched among the reeds.

As we walked we spotted several Marsh froglets in the grass with many grasshoppers. A Convolvulus Hawk moth was on the ground and, sadly, pronounced to be dead. Such a large, beautiful moth. Butterflies were represented by a sole Small white. Birds seen included Linnet, a Sparrowhawk, Little egret, a few Swallows and 2 Spoonbills in the Stilt Pools which was a treat.

Philippa Arnott

September 9th 2020 Medmerry survey - Later dragonflies Part 2

A warm and sunny afternoon provided the perfect end to the surveys of this strange year. Only four members were able to attend which was a pity as there were a great many dragonflies about. The count started with a copulating pair of Common darters at the pool by the junction. One or two Migrant hawkers were also seen here. As we walked on more Migrant hawkers and Common darters were recorded, including another copulating pair and some single individuals. Then two Common blue damselflies were seen. Loud whirring of wings signalled the arrival of an Emperor dragonfly which flew past my ear and over my head! The power of this animal could be felt.

While waiting at the pool by the junction one surveyor was lucky to see a young Chiffchaff which flew down to the vegetation at the water's edge. Some Swallows and a single Sand martin were seen as well as the usual Linnets. A Yellow wagtail flew over, calling. Five Teal were noted on the mud and a Grey heron flapped slowly out of the ditch. A Cattle egret was spotted flying over and a Silver Y moth was seen flitting over the grass by the fence at the end of the survey area. One or two Small whites were the only butterflies noted.

After such a lovely afternoon it was a shame that we could not finish with our traditional tea. Maybe next year.

Philippa Arnott

Early September

Kithurst Hill

This Field Outing was spread over 3 dates to allow as many Members as possible to attend given the Covid restrictions of no more than 6 attendees.

Wednesday 3 September**Kihurst Hill Part 1****Leader Jim Bagley**

Five members-one less than the law allows-met on a lovely morning, the heat tempered by a cool breeze. A large flock of Linnets were moving east along the ridge of the downs while Yellow Hammers were in the car park. As we moved to Kithurst Meadow a Raven was calling nearby. As clouds were now building the meadow did not yield as many butterflies as hoped. Only a tatty Meadow Brown-Brown Argus and Small Heath were seen. On the edge of the skirting woodland Great and Blue Tits were noted. The star of the day was a male Redstart. Flowers present in the meadow included Round Headed Rampion- Marjoram- Field Scabious- Harebell and Eyebright. We then walked west to a small mound called the Camel's Hump for lunch. On the way we recorded Buzzard-Red Kite-House Martin- Swallow and Goldfinch. Wild flowers seen en-route included Toad Flax-Centuary and Silverweed. During lunch on the Hump a Wheatear and a Kestrel flew over. On the way back to the car park we had a very good view of a Raven. In all a very pleasant relaxed walk in good company.

*Jim Bagley***Thursday 3rd September 2020****Kithurst Hill Part 2****Leader David Hart**

On leaving Slindon, the weather was reasonable but the closer we got to Kithurst, the more the mist thickened. On parking, the first people we met were a group of very highly regarded birders on their way home, they had given up!!!! But our group of five were made of tougher stuff. Firstly we went to the flower meadow, only two butterflies were evident – small heath and speckled wood. A far away raven could be identified by it's familiar call described as a 'kronk kronk' sound. The raven, being the largest of the crow family with a wing span greater than that of a buzzard.

We headed west along the south downs way, weather conditions were absolutely atrocious, but by now we were beginning to get a good list of plants which we will mention again later. We arrived at the high point above Rackham known as the Camel's Hump, but decided not to lunch there. We hunkered down below a bank with the mist and wind swirling over the top of us, and then to our amazement the weather began to clear. Amberley Castle and Wild Brooks came into view but still few birds and butterflies. On the circular walk back we spotted a batchelor group of roe buck. Red kite, jay and kestrel performed flyovers. A buzzard was heard and later spotted. The only other birds seen were yellowhammer, long-tailed tits, stock dove, pheasants and wood pigeons in good numbers. At least with the clearing weather we were able to talk about the flint mines and leper colony which can be seen from the south downs way. Our second visit to the flower meadow sadly didn't add to our butterfly list

I would like to thank my companions for their determination to enjoy the walk despite the inclement weather. Here is a list of flora seen: Round headed Rampion, Small Scabious and Devil's-bit Scabious, Common Toad flax, St. John's Wort, Ragwort, Marjoram, Wild Basil, Eyebright, Harebell, Bird's foot Trefoil, Hemp Agrimony, Heath Bedstraw, Red Poppy, Phacelia, Chicory, Kidney Vetch, Yellow Rattle and Common Knapweed.

*David Hart***Monday 7th September****Kihurst Hill Part 3****Leader John Kelsall**

Under the new normal of 2020, only 6 were allowed out on the walk from Kithurst Hill car park. John Kelsall was our leader and we were promised butterflies, lizards and possibly yellowhammers.

Setting off from the car park we went first into a meadow to the North, where we caught sight of plenty of small and large white butterflies, and a couple of red admirals. One sharp-eyed member saw a meadow grasshopper and another one spotted a couple of swallows flying overhead. There were plenty of wild flowers: toadflax, a stunning angelica, pignut umbels, delicate harebells and pretty eyebright.

We then followed a footpath to Rackham Hill, where we stopped for lunch on a tumulus. Along the way, we saw pheasants, a buzzard, a red kite and heard a raven. An unidentifiable dragonfly taunted us while we ate and a wheatear perched on a gatepost for our entertainment.

On the way back to the cars we were 'attacked' by several gatekeeper butterflies - next to a gate, of course – and were just lamenting that we had not seen any promised lizards despite the warm sunshine, when – not just one, but eleven! – a mixture of juveniles and adult lizards were found, sunning themselves on horizontal blocks of wood in the car park.

How clever of John to keep the best until last.

Our list consisted of:

Butterflies & Insects

Small White	Large White	Red Admiral	Speckled Wood
Gatekeeper	Meadow Grasshopper	Unidentified dragonfly	

Birds

Pheasant	Swallow	Raven (heard)	Buzzard
Wheatear	Red Kite	Robin	Chaffinch

Plants

Agrimony, common	Angelica	Black bryony	Black medick
Blackthorn (sloe berries)	Catsear	Corn chamomile	Dogwood

Dovesfoot Cranesbill	Eyebright	Fleabane	Germander speedwell
Harebell	Hawthorn	Hemp agrimony	Herb robert
Hogweed	Knapweed	Ladies bedstraw	Marjoram
Mint	Mugwort	Nipplewort	Perforate St John's Wort
Pignut	Plantain	Polygonal knotgrass	Ragwort
Red bartsia	Scabious	Silverweed	Smooth sowthistle
Spear thistle	Toadflax	Trefoil	Upright Hedge Parsley
Wild basil	Wild Clematis (old man's beard)		Wild Parsnip
Yarrow	Yellow rattle		

Animals

Common Lizards (juveniles and adults)

Fungi

Horse Mushroom The Deceiver (photos on website – might be proved wrong!)

Julia Macfarlane

NEWS & VIEWS

A Review – ‘Drawn to Nature: Gilbert White and the Artists’ at the Pallant Gallery until Sunday 15th November (booking required).

In October 2019, the Society was treated to a lecture by Kimberley James from The Wakes, Gilbert White's house in Selborne, Hampshire. She covered the life and work of this important naturalist and was enthusiastic about the events planned for 2020 to celebrate the 300th anniversary of Gilbert's birth. Well, we know what happened next..... However, a range of celebrations are still going ahead, the details for which can be found on the website for 'The Gilbert White and the Oates Collections', either to be visited at the Wakes or experienced online. In Chichester, at the Pallant Gallery until 15th November, is a fascinating exhibition looking at a selection of the illustrators who have contributed to some of the many editions of the 'Natural History of Selborne', first published in 1789 and never out of print.

In addition, some artists of 2020 have also offered their own interpretations of G W's observations. As one of them, Neil Bousfield, says "If Gilbert was here today, the Attenborough of his time, he would mourn the predicted loss of the bumble bee, birds, the impact of climate change, loss of habitat, biodiversity and would be in tears for what is now only beginning to dawn upon us. Gilbert White is more relevant now than ever."

A visit to this exhibition is thoroughly recommended.

Gill Hance

FROM THE EDITOR

This is my last Newsletter as Editor having been doing it for the last 10 years. It has been an interesting and enjoyable task I shall be handing it over to Helen Dignum who I am sure will put her own stamp on the document. This has been a very strange year so far and I think we may be in for some more restrictions over the Autumn and Winter. Running restricted Field Outings has kept some contact with Members but with no indoor or pub meetings we have had to rely on email correspondence. Even Committee meeting have been run over Zoom.

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 in future be sent to Helen Dignum at helendignum@protonmail.com

Deadline for articles for Newsletter 199 is 21 February 2021

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).

Chichester Natural History Society
ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS FOR 2020/21

Members are reminded that annual membership subscriptions are due on October 1st. Subscription rates have not increased from last year and are:

Full membership	£12.00
Joint membership	£22.00

If paying by post please complete this form and return it, with your subscription, to the **Membership Secretary, Heather Hart, The Heys, Bridle Lane, Slindon Common, Arundel BN18 0NA.**

Cheques should be made payable to 'Chichester Natural History Society'. Members who wish to commence paying by standing order, please use the form below.

If you wish to pay by internet banking then pay to the following bank reference:

Sort Code : 60-05-24

Account Number: 20521987

Please use payment reference : **CNHS20xxxxxxxx** where **xxxxxxxx** is your surname (this is important for your identification).

Please note that, as the Society's membership year runs from October 1st to September 30th the following year, please pay subscriptions promptly.

Thank you.

I/we shall be paying my/our membership by cheque/standing order/internet banking (delete as appropriate) to the value of £.....

Name(s)

Address:

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Code.....

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Chichester Natural History Society
Registered Charity no. 259211
NEW STANDING ORDER FORM

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Pay to **Chichester Natural History Society**

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Reference (your name).....

The sum of £..... on 1 October and then each year following

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Please send this form to your bank