

seabirds; several common ones were seen including ringed plover, oystercatchers and cormorants. One person spotted a red-throated diver and a great northern diver out at sea. However, the highlight of the day, and the purpose of our trip, was the murmuration of starlings over the pier at dusk. They swirled, they ballooned, they swooped, and finally they dived in their tens of thousands to their roosting place on the girders under the pier, where they sat squabbling for a while before resting for the night. Behind them the sunset glowed pink and gradually faded into a calm grey. Wonderful.

An excellent meal at The Olive Branch on the seafront rounded off the day. A most enjoyable outing, in a very beautiful part of Wales.

A Tale of Two Meadows

From Andrew Cartlidge

In June last year, members of the Malvern Wildlife Trust surveyed the wild flower species in two meadows at WWT's Hollybed Farm reserve, the two meadows being Middle Starling and Far Starling Bank.

In Middle Starling only eighteen species were found, and other than for meadow and creeping buttercups, there were few plants of each species. Far Starling Bank was a much richer meadow with 56 different species present, some of them in abundance, particularly birds foot trefoil, creeping cinquefoil and knapweed.

These two fields are adjacent to each other and have similar aspects, so it is likely that their differences are due to their previous management rather than environmental. There is no reason why they should not both be rich meadows if managed correctly. To this end, in August some of the grass and wild flowers in Far Starling Bank were mown and then strewn onto Middle Starling. It is hoped that any wild flower seeds transferred will subsequently germinate, so increasing the richness of the flora of Middle Starling. However, the process will probably need to be repeated for several years before any significant benefits occur. Malvern Wildlife Trust and WWT will be monitoring the meadows throughout to see if Middle Starling improves and, more importantly, ensuring that Far Starling suffers no ill effects.

Far Starling Bank has also been chosen as Worcestershire's 'Coronation Meadow'. Coronation Meadows are an initiative from Prince Charles as part of the Queen's Coronation Jubilee. It is to have, in every county in Britain, a meadow that is protected, is representative of the meadow flora of the county and can act as a seed donor bank to other local meadows. In this way the characteristic meadow flora of each county can be maintained and hopefully expanded.

Plantlife is administering the scheme, and this website <http://coronationmeadows.org.uk/> lists the details of each Coronation Meadow. There are over 60 so far. The nearest one to us, other than Hollybed, is Joan's Hill Farm at Woolhope in Herefordshire which is quite close. The next is Highgrove, but you may need to ask very politely before gaining admittance to that one!

97% of rich meadows in the UK have disappeared since the 1930s, so it will be good to get at least some back.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Indoor Meetings

Indoor meetings are held at 7.30 pm on the first Thursday of the month at the Lyttelton Rooms in Church Street, Great Malvern. Adults £2, children free, refreshments available. Non-members of the Trust are welcome.

Thurs 3rd Apr: 'Cloud Forest and the Galapagos Islands' by Mike Wilkes – wildlife photographer.

Thurs 1st May: 'The Malvern Hills Conservators' by Steve Bound – director of Malvern Hills Conservators.

Thurs 4th Sept: 'Insect Curiosities' by Harry Green – WWT volunteer and trustee.

Outdoor Meetings

If you are joining us for the first time – welcome! Always wear suitable clothing and footwear. Phone Brian Bradford (01684 565994) regarding coach trips. Phone Brian Dawkins (01684 573562) regarding walks.

Sat 5th Apr: Great Bustard Project & Hawk Conservancy Trust, Wiltshire. Morning visit using Land Rover transport to hide to observe Great Bustards. Afternoon visit to the Hawk Conservancy Trust to see various birds of prey including red kites. Take packed lunch or visit Hawk CT restaurant. Cost £35 includes entry fees. Depart Splash 7.15am.

Tue 20th May: 10 am visit to Hollybed Farm with Rob Allen to look at the flowers and insects of these rich grasslands. Parking at entrance limited to 4 cars, so please share lifts if only from Welland. Main entrance (farm gate and footpath sign) on left, ¼ mile along New Road which leaves B2408 opposite Robin Hood inn. Grid ref: SO 778 382, postcode WR13 6BY.

Sat 21st June: 10 am visit to Carpenter's Farm, Berrow, with Martin Skirrow - wildflower meadows and insects, and also a moth display in the barn. Parking available. Grid ref: SO 778 339.

Sun 29th June – Thurs 3rd July: The Forest of Bowland, (AONB) and surrounding area. £255 including transport and two evening meals. Information and booking form on website or from Margaret (01684 565079).

Wed 16th July: Chestnut Otter Sanctuary, Derbyshire. A lovely animal sanctuary in a valley at Chapel en le Frith. Animals are fed at various times. Take packed lunch or use pleasant on-site restaurant. Cost £21 (includes entry fee of £6.25). Limit of 16. Depart Splash 7.30 am.

Sun 27th July: Porton Down, Wiltshire. Return visit for a guided walk with the Conservation Officer. Fair amount of walking involved. Take packed lunch. Limit of 30. Cost £20. Depart Splash 7.30 am.

Sun 5th – Wed 8th Oct: Gibraltar Point, a Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust reserve and centre. An important staging post for thousands of birds, hence its credentials: LNR, NNR, SSSI, SPA, Ramsar Site. £220 including all meals and transport. Information and booking form on website or from Margaret (01684 565079).

Contributions

Please send ideas or contributions for future Newsletters to Brian Dawkins (01684 573562) email db.dawkins@hotmail.co.uk

Committee Contact

Margaret Vernon (01684 565079)

NEWS & VIEWS

Brian Dawkins

Another new year is upon us with a very wet start, but let's hope that this is not the trend for the year – we can but hope! It's time to start filling your diary with all the events which have been organised by your committee. Do please remember we always welcome your suggestions on topics to hear about or places to go and see. Please let me know if you have any ideas.

Fundraising for the Wildlife Trust

Our annual collection this year will again be at Morrisons in Malvern on Friday 1st and Saturday 2nd August. It would be good to have our 2-manned hourly rota complete asap. If you can give an hour or so of your time, please contact Dave Cook (01684 564603), or sign the rota at our indoor meetings.

Bluebell Sunday at the KnappSunday 27th April 10am – 5pm

Our group will again be 'manning' the Refreshment Stall (selling drinks and cakes), Car Parking and Admissions. Please sign up on our rotas, or ring Margaret Vernon (01684 565079) to book a slot. Your reward – free entrance to the Day!

Ambling/study group outings

Carol Bradley

For a slower, closer look at local wildlife. No experience necessary, everyone is very welcome. Details, including the meet point/location, are sent out just beforehand to the Malvern Group e-mailing group, or contact Carol Bradley (01886 884372).

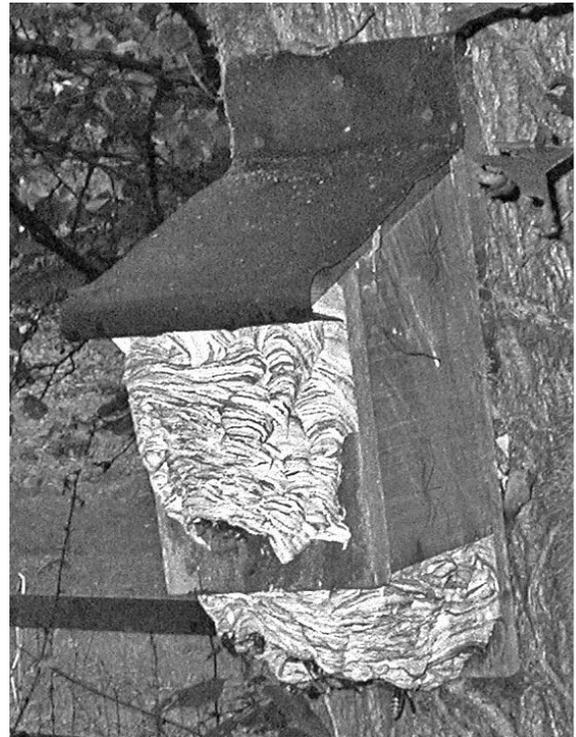
Tue. 29th Apr. , 10 am	Wed. 14th May , 2 pm
Wed. 4th June , 10 am	Thurs. 26th June , 2 pm
Fri. 18th July , 10 am	Wed. 6th Aug. , 2 pm
Thurs. 21st Aug. , 2 pm	Tue. 9th Sept. , 10 am
Wed. 1st Oct. , 2 pm	

Hornets Nest in a Birdbox

Garth Lowe

For many years a queen hornet has appeared around my house in Old Storridge in late spring, but this year because of the cold weather, it was not until 28th June that she first arrived. Whilst doing my weekly butterfly transect walk in July at the Knapp, I noticed that hornets had taken over a bird box in the orchard. As I live very close to this reserve, it is possible that this was 'my' queen hornet. The previous bird occupants would have left the box by then, making it a home again for other species. Although the nest started inside the box it soon spread to the outside and then a basement was added. On 8th November workers were still going in

and out, although they usually die off after the first frost. The nest went un-noticed by most visitors even though they passed within a few feet of it, which shows how tolerant the hornets are.

**Winter Spectacular at Aberystwyth**

23.11.13

Alison Uren

Sometimes November surprises us all with beautiful sunshine, crisp frosts, and glowing autumn colours. Such was the day when the Malvern Group went by minibus to Aberystwyth, taking the mountain road from Rhayader to Devil's Bridge, because the weather was so perfect and the scenery was looking its best. Bird watching was very good all the way; even the car park in Rhayader rewarded us with fieldfares, redwings, a mistle thrush and a treecreeper. The hills were thronged with red kites, buzzards and kestrels, some on the ground or on fence posts, some flying close to the road. Our first stop was at the Old Warren Hill reserve near Aberystwyth, where there is ancient deciduous woodland and an Iron Age fort. Several woodland birds were spotted, including goldcrests, long-tailed tits and wrens, but surprisingly, no woodpeckers. Opposite this reserve is another smaller one called Coed Pen-glan Owen, where there is a beautifully managed river and a tall Wellingtonia tree.

We moved down into the town of Aberystwyth for the afternoon, and spent a little while looking for