

October, Trevor will take us around this very special reserve. Meet at Ravenshill Reserve, Lulsley (SO740539). £2 suggested donation.

Sat 21st Nov: Attenborough Nature Reserve. Cost £16. Depart from the Splash at 7.30am. (Booking essential as limited to 16 people.) This Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust SSSI reserve is a beautiful complex of flooded former gravel pits and islands, providing acres of exceptional habitat for plants, birds and other wildlife, including the elusive bittern. There are three trails around the lakes ranging from 1.9 to 3 miles, 4 hides, plus a visitor centre and restaurant.

Ambling/Study Group Outings

If you prefer a slower and closer discovery and study of our precious wildlife, then join us for a 2 – 3 hour amble. The events are very informal, no experience is necessary and everyone is welcome. Contact Carol Bradley (01886 884372 or 07929 091814) for details of the next outing, or look on our website.

Oxford Botanic Garden and Harcourt Arboretum

by Brian Bradford

On Tuesday 28th April, 17 members of our group visited the University of Oxford Botanic Garden and the Harcourt Arboretum.

We were given an excellent guided tour of the Botanic Garden during which we learned it originated in 1621 as a Physic Garden. It was funded by Sir Henry Danvers, Earl of Danby, who donated £5000 to set it up on Magdalen College land, beside the River Cherwell.

Our tour started in the walled garden, with plants laid out in oblong plots ranked by their botanical classification and the timing of their evolution throughout the ages, together with groups of plants known to contribute to specific modern medical problems. We were also shown the alpine, fernery, tropical lily, orchid and palm glasshouses.

In the afternoon we moved on to the Harcourt Arboretum. This 130 acre site was originally planted in 1835 as an 8 acre pinetum for Archbishop Harcourt, and was purchased by the University in 1963. Of particular note were bluebells, acers and rhododendrons, some very large redwood trees and a number of peacocks and peahens.

Bardsey Island Visit, 8 – 16 May 2015

by Jean and Andy Young

Bardsey, a small island off the Welsh coast, combines beautiful scenery, abundant wildlife and peaceful surroundings with a fascinating history. After an exciting boat crossing over choppy seas, our thirteen members arrived (more than doubling the population!) and settled into our accommodation. We were soon out exploring the diverse range of habitats on offer. Spring flowers were out in force with abundant gorse giving the hill a golden glow, and drifts of thrift and spring squill adding lovely splashes of pink and purple. Birdlife was plentiful with many of the seabirds and other resident birds busily nesting, and a continuous flow of spring migrants passing through. Grey seals were a permanent feature relaxing on the rocks or bobbing up and down in the sea keeping a curious eye on passers-by.

We brushed up our bird identification skills on a walk with the wardens and saw an oystercatcher nest, so well camouflaged that we'd have missed it if it hadn't been pointed out. The highlight for many was watching the wardens capture, ring and record manx shearwaters as they fly to their burrows at night. There are 18,000 pairs on the island, and the eerie, ghostly calls they make have to be heard to be believed! They are rather ungainly on the ground and easily caught by the wardens (while trying to avoid the sharp beaks and claws!). The birds are then ringed and released to scuttle away at their leisure.

At the Observatory we saw several birds in the hand that were mist netted and ringed, and moths from the moth trap. All too soon, the day came for us to return. We were serenaded by the seals as we waited for the boat back to the mainland after a wonderful stay. Many thanks to Margaret and Lyndon for all their hard work organising the trip, particularly Lyndon's driving skills for getting us all safely there and back.

The Delights of a Pond

by Tony Hughes

For many years we have greatly enjoyed our small garden pond – a rectangle of about 10' x 6', and some 18" deep. Many happy hours have been spent showing our grandchildren the creepy-crawlies that thrive in the weeds, watching the antics of the numerous smooth newts, and collecting the larval skins ('exuviae') of the various damselflies and darters that emerge each year. But Spring 2015 has been a little bit special!

The first bit of excitement came on a sunny day in March when the male smooth newts, now in full mating colours, were doing their best to attract the attentions of the dowdier females. Suddenly I realised that one of the newts was considerably larger – our very first great crested newt! His black, warty skin was unmistakable, as was the wavy crest all along his back – a most imposing character. As we watched, he was joined on top of the weeds by no less than three mature females, all of whom chose to ignore his display!

Two months later, Saturday 23rd May started warm and sunny, prompting an early morning pond inspection. Imagine our surprise at finding a couple of enormous dragonfly exuviae, far larger than any our pond had previously produced. Identification was fairly easy – they were emperors, our largest dragonfly. Next morning there were three more skins to add to our collection. We were sure they had not been there the previous day, so late that evening we did a torch-light inspection and witnessed at least 6 more in the early stages of escape. By the next morning they had all completed their emergence and flown away, but several more had just started to crawl up the reeds. This was very bad timing, because the local house sparrows were keen to supplement their breakfast rations with any that were close to the edge of the pond! This was a clear example of the survival benefits of night-time emergence: they should all try it!

Contributions / Committee Contact

Please send ideas or contributions for future Newsletters to Alison Uren (01684 567819) email alison.uren@gmail.com



NEWS & VIEWS

from Margaret Vernon

Welcome to our autumn newsletter (although the summer is still with us!) which introduces our forthcoming programme of indoor meetings and outdoor events, plus details of the committee changes I referred to last time.

Our Malvern group continues to thrive, largely because so many of you participate in different ways.

From the autumn, the committee will see some changes:

- Alison Uren will take over as chairman, and I very warmly welcome her to this role and know that we will all support her in the way that you have supported me. Alison will continue to organise the indoor meetings and newspaper write-ups, and will also edit the newsletter.
- I shall become vice-chairman for a year to assist in the change-over, and will also oversee the walks, trips, outdoor events and some of the rotas.
- Dave Cook will continue as treasurer – a really important role and so efficiently carried out.
- Brian Iles will continue with publicity, displays, H&S plus involvement in the outdoor events, all vital elements of our group.
- Brian Bradford will continue to plan the varied and popular day trips. We have all had the opportunity to go to places that we wouldn't otherwise have gone to.
- Eileen Cockayne is due to move away from the area, but in the meantime will continue to be involved with the sales stall, another important contribution to our group. Good wishes go to her.
- Sally Sines is stepping down from the committee. Very many thanks to her for her support and involvement, particularly helping with the rotas (not always an easy task). Her help in some areas will continue.
- Richard Owen produces the minutes and, although not a committee member, is always willing to assist with wise words and opinions.

I would also like to give my thanks to the team of people who have agreed to provide us with refreshments for our meetings during the next year. The interval and the opportunity it gives to meet and talk with others is an important part of our evening.

Finally a request: if you are willing to offer any help, however irregularly and in whatever capacity, please do so – it will be much appreciated. Please contact Alison (01684 567819) or me (01684 565079) to discuss.

Enjoy the rest of the summer and all that the autumn holds.

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, WR14 2AY. Adults £2, children free, refreshments available but a donation is requested. Non-members of the Trust are very welcome.

Thurs 3rd Sept: 'The breeding birds of Northern Britain' by Graham Wren, wildlife photographer and lecturer on ornithology, who has a special interest in the Farne islands where he worked as a warden for two and a half years.

Thurs 1st Oct: 'Ravenshill Reserve' by Trevor Smart, a lifelong birdwatcher, manager and the owner of Ravenshill. Trevor will talk about the reserve, how it is managed throughout the year and the wildlife it attracts. (See also 10th Oct below.)

Thurs 5th Nov: 'Nature Conservation and Urban Development' by Steve Bloomfield, a WWT Conservation Officer who will talk about getting the best deal for nature when modern developments encroach into the green belt.

Thurs 3rd Dec: 'Q&A Session' with Harry Green, John Tilt, Rosemary Winnall and Johnny Birks, four of our best known local naturalists who will join forces to answer your questions.

Outdoor Meetings

If you are joining us for the first time, welcome. Do always wear suitable clothing and footwear. Phone Brian Bradford (07816 867137) regarding day trips, which must be pre-booked. Full details can be downloaded from our website and are available at our indoor meetings. Phone Margaret Vernon (01684 565079) regarding walks.

Sat 5th Sept: Alfrick and Lulsley Annual Horticultural Show, 12.30pm onwards at Alfrick Playing Fields, WR6 5HJ. We will have a stand, so if you are able to help for an hour or so please contact Margaret (01684 565079).

Sat 10th Oct: Guided walk in Ravenshill Wood with Trevor Smart. Following on from our talk on 1st