

goosander, little and great crested grebes, Egyptian geese and a far-off pair of little egrets.

At the Tower Hide, a large assortment of geese and both surface feeding and diving ducks could be seen, along with a water rail and the 'resident' green woodpecker. But, unfortunately, no bittern!

The group then separated to explore the many ponds and well laid out trails, of which there are about 10km. Good sightings of goldeneye, cormorant, grey heron, lapwing and a single snipe were all recorded.

The walk along the River Trent, which adjoins the reserve's eastern boundary, noted reed bunting, pied wagtail and a very pleasing kingfisher. A small flock of siskin and long-tailed tits were also in evidence. The walk alongside the very busy railway line, which forms the western boundary and the woodland area to the south, provided good views of starling, redwing, fieldfare and both song and mistle thrushes, as well as a flock of feeding goldfinches. We had late afternoon views of a hovering kestrel and a much lazier buzzard, perching on a telegraph pole.

We left the Reserve at 4.00 pm with a very satisfying combined group list total of 57 species and a general agreement that the site was well worth another visit in the future, in order that all the varied flora, fungi and wildlife might be better appreciated.

Visit to Welshpool to hear

Iolo Williams

2nd December 2015

By Margaret Vernon

Our day in Welshpool began with visits to two Montgomeryshire Wildlife Trust reserves, firstly visiting Dolydd Hafren on the natural floodplain of the river Severn (and it was in flood!), seeing snipe, goldeneye, little grebe and large flocks of mixed finches, redwings and fieldfares. We moved on to Severn Farm Pond, an urban oasis sandwiched between an industrial estate and the by-pass and which showed just what can be done in such inauspicious surroundings. The reserve comprised boardwalks, marvellous sculptures and teaching aids and here we saw goldcrests and treecreepers. Both reserves were havens in their own right and a delight to visit.

After a lovely meal, we moved to the Town Hall to hear the naturalist Iolo Williams. His presentation looked at the wildlife in Wales, beginning high in the mountains with rare alpine plants and moving down through moors and woodlands to the sea and the depths. His openness was refreshing and enlightening and his responses to questions from the audience, rounded, informed and often humorous. We all had a wonderful day – it was well worth the late night we had!

Spring Butterflies around the Malvern Hills

By Mel Mason

Brimstone, small tortoiseshell, peacock and comma are winter hibernators seen on mild, sunny days during late winter but their numbers increase dramatically at the start of spring. For just two months in April and May look out for areas of garlic mustard and cuckoo flower to find orange tip, the green mottled undersides of their wings as

beautiful as the bright orange tips of the males. Large, small and green-veined whites emerge at the same time, whilst speckled wood soon appear on the lower slopes along tree-lined paths. During May you might spot the green iridescent undersides of a green hairstreak perching on low vegetation below Ivy Scar, or taking nectar from the many flowers in the hillside quarries or basking on an exposed surface of a gravelled path. However, holly blue is much easier to observe as it flies around our gardens in search of holly to lay its eggs. May is also the month to see large numbers of red admiral as they arrive from their overwintering sites around the coast of the Mediterranean. At the same time, small copper, with its unmistakable flash of reddish auburn and black, flies about the higher slopes where wood sorrel is found. Between British Camp and North Hill, look for small heath along the grassy slopes where sheep's fescue is common. Finally, as spring ends and the summer butterflies emerge, common blue appear on grassy meadows at St Wulstans, Coombe Green and Melrose.

A Haven of Untidiness

By Martin Skirrow

I am not sure whether 'haven' in the title qualifies as a proper collective noun but it is certainly apt for Carpenter's Farm near Berrow, where I have the good fortune to live. Here, untidiness is evident in the form of fallen timber left to rot on the ground, half-dead hollow fruit trees, and odd piles of cut vegetation. Why leave all this stuff lying about when things could be 'smartened up'? Well the answer is that we would lose the huge biodiversity involved in the natural processes of decay. Fungi play a major role and they in turn support many specialist invertebrates, many of which prey on each other. A staggering 1700 or so species are associated with rotting wood in Britain.

So, not surprisingly, saproxylic insects (those associated with rotting wood) are well represented among the 1200 or so insect species we have recorded here on the farm. Some are rare, notably a Red Data Book 1 endangered species of fly with a lovely common name: Forest Silver-stiletto (*Pandivirilia melaleuca*). In Britain this fly is almost confined to Windsor Great Park, though two other specimens have recently been found in ancient wood pastures in this area. Its larvae predate certain species of beetle larvae that are found only in old hollow trees, especially oaks, containing red rot fungus.

Chunks of rotting wood may not be aesthetically pleasing, but unspoiled flower meadows certainly are, and we are lucky to have such meadows here. The almost universal post-war policy of ploughing up traditional meadows and replacing them with a monoculture of rye grass never happened here, but it happened in 95% of the rest of Worcestershire. It irritates me that the official term for the rye grass product is 'improved grassland'. What a travesty nomenclature!

Contributions

Please send any ideas or contributions for future Newsletters to the editor alison.uren@gmail.com or phone 01684 567819



NEWS & VIEWS from Alison

2016 got off to a great start with 94 people attending the talk by Peter Garner on Wild Plants of the Malvern Hills. In February we had another fascinating evening with Marcus John, who shared with us his amazing knowledge of Scottish Wildlife. At the time of writing this, I am looking forward to the next one in March, with Gordon Forrest talking about Randan Meadows.

I am also in the middle of planning all the talks for 2017 and if anyone has any requests for particular speakers or subjects, then do get in touch with me. Ideas for trips and walks, local or distant, would also be very welcome.

On July 22nd and 23rd we are going to do a collection at the entrance to Marks and Spencers; soon we will be asking you all if you can help on the rota. An hour of your time would be much appreciated! Contact Dave Cook 01684 564603.

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 £2.50 with refreshments included. Children are free and non-members of the Trust are very welcome.

April 7th: "Introduction to Insects"

Rosemary Winnall, general naturalist with special knowledge of the Wyre Forest.

May 5th: "Birdwatching in Britain"

Roger Pannell, keen birdwatcher and member of the WWT Council.

Sept 1st: "Butterflies of the Chilterns, and Butterfly Conservation"

David Dennis, Chairman of Butterfly Conservation 2011 to 2014, and keen photographer.

Outdoor meetings

Day Trips and Walks: the list, including full details, was in the previous mailing, but if required, further forms are available at our indoor meetings or can be downloaded from our website.

For information on Walks and the Derbyshire Dales trip, contact Margaret Vernon 01684 565079. For Day Trips, contact Brian Bradford 01684 574849.

Day Trip: Tuesday 19th April: Snake's-head Fritillaries at Cricklade North Meadow and Upper Waterhay beginning with a short introduction by the Natural England reserve manager. Cost £10. Depart Splash 9 am. Limit 16.

Walk: Saturday 7th May, 9.00 am: Birds of the Southern Commons. A 2 to 3 hour guided walk with Mick Woodward to look for early spring migrants on Hollybed and Coombe Green commons. Meet at the Mill Pond, Golden Valley (SO 774369). Donation to WWT appreciated.

Walk: Tuesday 24th May, 2.00 pm: Wildlife at Old Country Farm, Mathon. A guided walk with Peter Garner and Ella Quincy through the various habitats of the farm. Refreshments will be provided. Meet at the farm, 1 km north of Coddington Cross (SO 727446). Donation to WWT appreciated.

Overnight trip: Mon 27th June – Fri 1st July: Derbyshire Dales. We shall be staying at Tideswell and visiting several reserves along the beautiful Wye Valley Monsal Trail.

Day trip: Tuesday 12th July: Warburg Reserve and Homefield Wood. These two lovely reserves are in the Chiltern Hills and are a haven for butterflies, other insects, orchids and birds. We shall have a guided walk around Homefield Wood. Cost £15. Depart Splash 7.45 am. Limit 16.

Walk: Tuesday 6th September, 8pm: Bats around the Malvern Hills. A 2 hour guided walk with Johnny Birks. Limited to 20 people so booking via Margaret Vernon is necessary.

Other Outdoor Events

The following are organised at relatively short notice and will be advertised on the website and by email:

- Strolls with a Purpose, with Andrew Cartlidge.
- Ambling Group, with Carol Bradley.
- Four Seasons Walks, with Alison Uren.

Attenborough Nature Reserve

21st November 2015

by Neil Edwards

We set off for Attenborough at 7.30am on a bright, but very cold, morning. The journey to Nottingham was clear and a light dusting of snow, which had occurred during the night, was noted along the motorway verges en route.

We arrived at the Nature Reserve around 9.30am and it was decided that a much needed hot drink was the first order of the day, together with a recce of the Visitor Centre. The adjacent feeding station provided good views of tree sparrows and a variety of finches and tits.

It was then agreed that a group visit to the reserve's central Tower Hide would be the next port of call, after earlier sightings of the elusive bittern had been reported. En route we stopped at the Barton Lane bridge for excellent views of a male and female