

orchids and although most were over we did find one with colour left. The meadow was a delight with an abundance of flowers, including common spotted, early purple, fragrant and bee orchids and broadleaved helleborine.

We then visited the Warburg Reserve, arriving in time for lunch. The weather had improved after the initial downpours and we had a wonderful afternoon. Again we were welcomed by the reserve warden, Giles, who produced tea and coffee. He took us on a guided walk of part of this large reserve which through the year has 15 types of orchid. He was very informative about the history, flora and fauna of Warburg and the way it was managed. In the beech woods he showed us yellow bird's nest, a saprophytic perennial new to many of us. There were only two specimens of narrow-lipped helleborine, a speciality of the reserve; the rest had been eaten by slugs!

We had time at the end of the guided walk to enjoy the reserve in the sun by ourselves before setting off for home. A brilliant day out enjoyed by all.

Wildlife at Ferney Hill

By William and Rosemary Eustace

Great excitement this spring! A green-winged orchid – a first in our field and a welcome addition to the 110 species of plant which Peter Garner and Keith Barnett identified when they carried out a survey some twenty years ago. Our field is 17 acres of old pasture and woodland at the southern end of Coombe Green Common with a boundary hedge along the B4208 and another shorter one onto the Common. This gives us commoners' grazing rights to graze sheep, cattle and one mule! The field is characterised by a thousand plus ant hills (green woodpeckers are our constant companions) with very clear evidence of the old ridge and furrow system of farming. To maintain the pasture we keep a few badger-faced sheep and allow our neighbour to run a dozen cattle from late May to early October. Without the dual grazing of sheep and cattle, scrub rapidly encroaches and the quality of the sward deteriorates. Badgers regularly cross our land and each year we wait with fingers crossed for the cattle to be tested free of TB. In the July evenings we hear fox cubs in the wood as they play. Without them the rabbit numbers could become a problem. Tawny owls hoot and occasionally we see a little owl. Eleven years ago, rooks built five nests in the ash trees behind the cottage. The rookery now extends to over sixty nests and of necessity they have built in the branches of oak and even hawthorn trees. As I write at the end of August they are just beginning to return from their summer roosts and noise levels are increasing. We never grow tired of watching their aerial flying displays during the winter and spring – like having our own squadron of the Red Arrows! Only a few jackdaws, their constant companions, stayed behind during the summer. In the garden it has been a very poor year for insects. No humming bird hawk moths on the phlox and no glow worms in an area that once was a medieval house platform. Bat (pipistrelle and noctule), butterfly and swallow numbers are also much reduced. The turtle dove, purring in the black poplar trees behind our cottage from early May to August, is now heard less and less, but this is still a magical corner of Worcestershire.

A Malvern Garden

By Christine Seymour

Our fairly small corner plot is situated between Poolbrook and Malvern Commons, and has the same poor, stony soil, containing granite eroded from the Hills. As keen gardeners, we work with the conditions and grow things that thrive, while having colour and interest throughout the year. We like to think of it as a refuge for bees and other creatures.

In winter, hellebores, mahonia, clematis cirrhosa and hebe provide nectar for buff-tailed bumblebees which fly even in snowy conditions. The mahonia pollen is also eaten by over-wintering blackcaps. Snowdrops, primroses, forget-me-not and early pulmonaria provide food for emerging bees. From late spring onwards the red-tailed, tree and buff-tailed bumblebees join honey bees, solitary bees and a host of other insects on self-seeded foxgloves, hollyhocks and verbena. Other plants popular with bees and butterflies are penstemons, lavender, sages, fennel, perennial geraniums and sunflowers. We grow fruit and vegetables mixed in with herbaceous plants and shrubs, which serve the insects as well as us. Shield bugs and grasshoppers are often found on the raspberry canes. We extend the season into autumn with asters, chrysanthemums, and sedums.

Regular deadheading encourages more flowers, but I shake off any invertebrates living in them. Crab spiders often lurk on roses and other spent flowers, so I don't want to consign them to the compost bin. A small pond provides water and a home for frogs, newts and dragonflies.

This year we've had a good crop of goldfinches and greenfinches visiting our sunflower seed feeder, and an 'off-piste' cuckoo and green woodpecker. The open aspect of our garden means that we have excellent views of spats between buzzards, ravens and crows, while peregrine falcons pass over chasing house martins and swallows that gather to feed on the insect bonanza.



Peregrine Falcons

Oil painting by Jenny Bradford 2016

Contributions

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

Malvern Group Newsletter



Winter 2016

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Worcestershire

NEWS & VIEWS from Alison

We have just enjoyed our first meeting of the new season, a very interesting double bill when David Dennis talked about butterflies of the Chilterns and Mel Mason discussed butterflies of the Malverns. It was fascinating to hear about the intensive efforts being made to encourage our Malvern speciality, the grayling, and reverse its declining numbers. It's been a mixed year for our butterflies, the long cold spring affecting many species especially the small tortoiseshell and peacock. However, I noticed good numbers of marbled whites, small and Essex skippers on Malvern Common in midsummer. There were also hundreds of 6-spot and 5-spot burnet moths in the first week of August. Common blues were late but plentiful, and there were a few small coppers on the fleabane right through into September.

The bat walk with Johnny Birks on British Camp was very successful. We identified 5 different species of bat with our bat detectors and watched Daubenton's bats flying low over the reservoir in the light of a strong torch. Muntjac deer were barking on the hill and tawny owls called in the trees.

Our **Wildlife Garden** series continues with contributions from William and Rosemary Eustace, and Christine Seymour. Any offers for the next edition?

Many thanks to all the volunteers who helped at our collection at Marks and Spencer in July. We collected £586.21 which will go towards the restoration work at Blackhouse Wood.

Indoor Meetings 2017

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.

5th January: Orchids, Biodiversity and Conservation
Philip Seaton, Project Manager for Orchid Seed Stores for Sustainable Use.

2nd February: Wild Boar
John Dutton, Senior Lecturer in Ecology at the University of Worcester.

2nd March: Farming and Wildlife
Nicholas Watts, manager of Vine House Farm in Lincolnshire.

Outdoor Meetings 2017

Monday 2nd January, 10am: New Worcestershire Wildlife Trust land at the Knapp and Papermill Nature Reserve
A morning walk with Brian Iles around the recently acquired Trust land near the Knapp and Papermill Nature Reserve.
Meet at the Knapp car park (SO 751522).

March: Hawfinches in Ledbury
A 2 to 3 hour guided walk with Mike Pullen, a member of the Malvern Bird Group, to see the elusive hawfinches. We await their return to Ledbury after which the date and

meeting details will be advertised on the website and sent to all those who have given us their email address. Booking will be required as numbers will be limited to 10, but a repeat walk could be arranged if interest is high.

2017 Day Trips and Walks: the list, including full details, can be found on the enclosed booking form. If required, further forms are available at our indoor meetings or can be downloaded from our website. All enquiries to Margaret Vernon 01684 565079.

Orchids Galore in Derbyshire's White Peak

27th June - 1st July 2016. By Anne Spurgeon and Tim Carter

Using the beautiful Monsal Trail, a former railway line, as an artery between one nature reserve and another, twelve of us explored nature within its industrial and geological context. Almost all the reserves were a product of human intervention, not just the usual scrub clearance and selective grazing, but also limestone quarrying and lead mining.

Surprisingly, these former wastelands are now rich meadows of diverse wild flowers, including rarities such as mountain pansy and spring sandwort (otherwise known as leadwort) that have the ability to colonise the spoil-heaps of former lead workings. We also caught sight of numerous butterflies, including ringlets, fritillaries, small heaths and common blues. A brown argus favoured us with a wonderful display, sunning itself for several minutes, while chimney sweep moths were constant companions. We watched mandarin ducks teaching their ducklings to shoot the rapids on a turbulent stream; they were refugees from a park in Buxton, we were told by a local fisherman. We enjoyed a passing walker's surprise when we told him that 'all those pink pointy things' (his words) were orchids. These were the real stars of the show, magnificent in their variety (early purple, spotted, fragrant, pyramidal, bee and twayblade) and in their incredible numbers!

After supper one evening, most of us went out for a ride round and after watching a pair of redstarts feeding, we spent a fascinating hour observing the big diesel beasts of the freight haulage industry shunting long trains of newly quarried limestone. The greener part of the group went off for their daily twayblade fix!

Our thanks to the wardens and volunteers of the Derbyshire Wildlife Trust and Plantlife for their knowledgeable guiding.

Homefield Wood and Warburg Reserve

12th July 2016. By Geraldine Guppy

In July, 14 members had a very rewarding day visiting these two reserves in the Chiltern Hills. At Homefield Wood we were met by the volunteer reserve warden, Phillip, who was very welcoming and knowledgeable. The reserve is one of only three sites in England for military