

**BRITISH NATURALISTS' ASSOCIATION**  
**Hertfordshire Branch**

***BULLETIN No.134***



**Emptying the moth trap at Rusling End, 28<sup>th</sup> May 2016**  
**Photo: Mike Demidecki**

(April – September 2016)



Magnificent oaks at Woodhall Park 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2016

Photo: Trevor James



The Black-spotted Pliers Support Beetle (probably better known as  
*Rhagium mordax*!) at Sacombe Park on 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2016

Photo: Trevor James

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### **BULLETIN 134**

April 2016 - September 2016  
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Herts Branch has recently heard the sad news of the death of Pauline Smith, former member of Herts Branch and wife of Peter. Peter and Pauline moved from Bishops Stortford to Herefordshire to be closer to their son and family. Pauline loved the beauty of plants and enjoyed seeing them on our field meetings.

We send our warmest condolences to Peter and family.



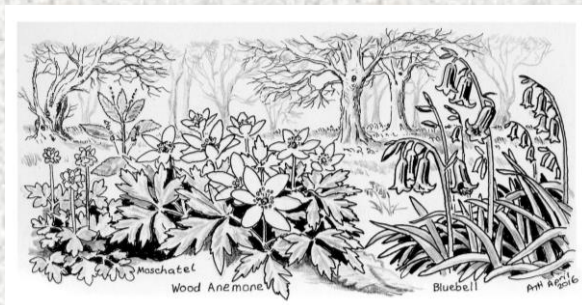
## **EDITOR'S BIT**

Spring and the natural world is in a constant state of change. Birds which nest early in the year, such as the Dunnock, have fledglings to feed and soon there will be young Blue Tits and Great Tits in the garden. The first wave of spring flowers such as the Primrose and Wood Anemone are going over all too quickly, a delight while they have graced our woodlands. These are now taking on a haze of blue and cowslips are flowering in the meadow.

This bulletin covers spring through to late summer of last year from the time when Wood Anemones were flower through to long days and the buzz of insects. In the first part of the year our group admired the veteran tree in Woodhall Park and at Kings Walden including the Kings Walden Oak reputed to be one of the oldest oaks in this country. It is a reminder of the wonderful ancient landscape we have here in Hertfordshire. All the more reason to get out there to learn about it and record it in depth.

Other articles include mothing at Rustling End Cottage and a fine pictorial account of a visit to the Boxmoor Estate. In fact the reports reflect the variety of enthusiasm of our field meeting leaders to whom we are most grateful for making our extensive programme possible.

I am very grateful to Trevor for all so much help getting this edition ready before he went into hospital. We wish him a very speedy recovery following his surgery .





## MEETING REPORTS- 2016 continued



### TONWELL

Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> April

12 members

With plenty of enthusiasm and the promise of sunshine, I arrived a little early for this meeting and immediately jotted down a list of birds that I saw in the centre of Tonwell where we were to meet. The first was a Blackbird and it was good to hear a healthy population of House Sparrows in the village. Other birds included Starling, Wood Pigeon, Collared Dove, Robin, Magpie, Goldfinch, Rooks, a Kestrel, as well as two Mallard in flight that William Bishop confirmed for me. While tying the laces on my boots I couldn't help noticing the Chewing-gum Lichen *Lecanora muralis* on the tarmac pavement.

Twelve of us assembled for the start of the walk and after the usual greetings and chatter we set off along Temple Lane. Above the fields a Skylark was singing and we had a lovely view of a Dunnock on top of the hedge. Another sign of Spring was Wood Anemone flowering on a bank, and close examination of a violet proved it to be Sweet Violet. A queen bumble bee flying over the bank was identified as *Bombus terrestris*. As usual with a large group we were soon spread out along the length of the track and there was a shout of 'Swallow' from the front, which was a first of the season sighting for some of us. Birds were being seen or heard as fast as I could write them down in my note book: Sparrowhawk, Red Kite, Yellowhammer, Buzzard, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Black-headed Gull, Linnet, Chaffinch and Song Thrush.

We reached Bengoe Temple Farm and noted Brooklime in the pond. Close-by there were two ladybirds, 7-spot and 10-spot, along with a Peacock butterfly and then William showed us a very small white wood-louse, *Platyarthrus hoffmannseggi*, on this occasion hidden under a slate that was lying on the ground, although this species is usually found in ant nests. A Pied Wagtail was hopping around on the ground by the farm buildings and as we followed the path towards Sacombe Park there were still more birds:

Cormorant, Pheasant, Great Tit, Long-tailed Tits, Wren, Meadow Pipit and a Linnet singing from the top of a tree. A clump of Cowslips was emerging from the ground and, warmed by the sunshine, a Brimstone butterfly flew by. Close to the Park on the edge of a field we noted Winter-cress *Barbarea vulgaris* and time was spent searching for beetles by a fallen tree.

Having reached the Park a magnificent longhorn beetle, *Rhagium mordax*, caused some excitement after landing on Dan Asaw's rucksack where it posed for photographs. A Devil's Coach-horse beetle *Ocypus olens* was also discovered under a log. A Chiffchaff was heard and after the usual discussion needed early in the year another violet was identified as Early Dog-violet *Viola reichenbachiana*.

We left Sacombe Park and all survived the hazardous crossing of the A 602 before following the Hertfordshire Way towards Woodhall Park, an area that has escaped the attention of BNA meetings for some years. We passed Greater Stitchwort just coming into flower and paused to admire the flowers on an Elm tree although the species could not be confirmed with any certainty.

A long-dead Fox was the subject of curiosity for beetle hunters and a little further along the path I jotted down two more ladybirds in my notebook: a Cream-spot Ladybird on Garlic Mustard and a Kidney-spot Ladybird that William pointed out on the trunk of a tree. By the parkland wall we found several empty Roman Snail shells and one or two that were inhabited. A strong smell let us know that a Fox had recently passed by.

With the need for a lunchtime break we settled ourselves on a bank and gave the local wildlife a chance to come and find us. A Striped Pea-weevil was captured and passed along the line to be identified and a small but very beautiful Lace Bug was admired. After lunch we continued on our way and close to the centre of the park we gathered around a veteran Hornbeam tree. The dead wood was a likely habitat for lichens and, through a hand lens, I could see very small crater-shaped pits containing soredia that suggested *Caloplaca obscurella* or *ulcerosa*. The pale yellow-green colour was indicative of *C. ulcerosa* but without fruiting bodies would be difficult to prove. There have been no records of this lichen in Hertfordshire to date and unfortunately it could not be formally recorded on this occasion.



I added Heron to the bird list as it flew away from us along the course of the Dane End Tributary and from a bridge we watched a Toad, until it became wary and jumped back into the water. From another bridge we were fortunate to see a Great Crested Newt that was well camouflaged and resting on the river bed. We noted that a Mole had been busy extending its empire, then followed a path south along the bank of the River Beane adding Mute Swan, Coot, Canada Goose, Moorhen, Tufted Ducks and Little Egrets to the list.



*Common Toad at Woodhall Park*

*Photo: Trevor James*

In Clusterbolts Wood, we saw more Spring flowers emerging: Ramsons, Goldilocks Buttercups, Ivy-leaved Speedwell and Barren Strawberry. Only some of our group were fortunate to see a Kingfisher flying along the river but I think we all saw a small gathering of raptors wheeling in the sky. I counted three Red Kites and two Buzzards. We turned east along Church Lane, heading back towards Tonwell, and paused going up the hill to watch a busy population of solitary Yellow-legged Mining-bees *Andrena flavipes* that had their holes in the road bank. Further up the hill I added Small Tortoiseshell butterfly and Chiffchaff to the list. After leaving the road and cutting across fields close to Tonwell, we were pleased to see a Hare but the grand finale was Jean's discovery of several Bee Orchids *Ophrys apifera* on the verge of the busy A602.

*Paula Shipway*

## A few extra notes from the entomologists etc.:

For beetles, it turned out to be a busy day. The track out to Bengoe Temple produced the attractive brown/yellow ground beetle *Badister bullatus* under a stone. At Sacombe Park, the beetle interest did not just include *Rhagium mordax*, but also a blue flea-beetle *Altica carinthiaca*, which has few Hertfordshire records, and was only first discovered to be in the UK about 20 years ago. There were also several of the nocturnal ground beetle *Stomis pumicatus*, with distinctively long jaws, hiding under a log on wet ground in the lodge house grove. At Woodhall Park, the lunchtime beetles also included the supposedly scarce flea beetle *Longitarsus dorsalis*, with characteristic orange stripes down the sides of its wing-cases, a 22-spot Ladybird, a Larch Ladybird (in flight), and all three colour forms of the Harlequin Ladybird, among others. At Clusterbolts Wood, I came across the rove beetle *Aloconota gregaria* on the Ramsons. On the bank with the mining bees at Stapleford was the specialist ant-associated rove beetle *Drusilla canaliculata*. Perhaps the best find of the day was by Dan Asaw, although he did not confirm it until a few days later, when he went back to find a beetle he had seen by the track to Bengoe Temple – a Bombardier Beetle *Brachinus crepitans*. Until 2014 this nationally scarce beetle had not been seen in Herts. since the 1940s. It is capable of emitting an explosive, hot and caustic chemical from its rear end when attacked, hence its name! We found it on a BNA meeting at Kimpton in 2014, and later it turned up at Waterford Heath in 2015. Now this species has appeared not that far away at Tonwell – showing it is expanding.

Trevor James

**Birds** (with some extra records: T.J./W.B.): Cormorant (over), Grey Heron, Little Egret, Mute Swan, Canada Goose, Mallard, Tufted Duck, Red Kite, Buzzard, Sparrowhawk (Simon Knott), Kestrel, Pheasant, Coot, Moorhen, Lapwing, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Black-headed Gull, Wood Pigeon, Stock Dove, Collared Dove, Green Woodpecker, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Kingfisher, Skylark, Swallow, Song Thrush, Blackbird, Robin, Chiffchaff, Great Tit, Blue Tit, Coal Tit, Long-tailed Tit, Nuthatch, Wren, Dunnock, Carrion Crow, Rook, Jackdaw, Magpie, Starling, Pied Wagtail, Meadow Pipit, Chaffinch, Greenfinch, Goldfinch, Linnet, Lesser Redpoll, Yellowhammer, House Sparrow.

**Mammals** (with extra notes by T.J.): Fox, Mole (hills), Badger (sett in

Clusterbolts Wood), Fallow Deer (slots), Brown Hare.

**Amphibians:** Great Crested Newt, Common Toad.

**Butterflies:** Peacock, Small Tortoiseshell, Brimstone.



**Other plants of note** (T.J.): Common Whitlow-grass

*Erophila verna* (Tonwell and Stapleford), Sanicle (Clusterbolts Wood), Bluebell (in flower, Clusterbolts Wood), Thale-cress (Stapleford), Chives *Allium schoenoprasum* (escape by road, Tonwell), Greater Celandine (Tonwell).

## **THERFIELD**

**Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> April**

3 members

We met at the car park on the golf course at Therfield. The temperature was 3°C, with a biting north wind, plus accompanying persistent rain. The intention had been to walk over to Thrift Farm then up to Therfield village, cross the road and come back down the Icknield Way to the Rugby Club. This area can be extremely good for migrating birds at this time of year. There were plenty of reports of passage birds coming in from all over Herts at this time, and I had observed two Ring Ouzels in Coombe Road earlier that morning, only a short distance away. However, the weather had deteriorated by then, so we elected to drive up to the start of the path to Church Hill and look at the Pasque Flowers instead.

We walked out onto the hill and the Pasque Flowers were fully out, in good quantities, but looking rather cold and damp. There were also plenty of Cowslips and some Spring Sedge *Carex caryophyllea*, the latter just starting to flower. The whole area was covered with the shells of the snail *Helicella itala*, a snail of short, dry, exposed calcareous grassland. At the far end of the hill we saw several rosettes of emerging orchids. The oddest sight was many dozens of worms that had all come out onto the grass, despite the cold.

By now we were all rather damp and very cold, and given the continuing rain we decided to give up. We just about lasted an hour! Shortly afterwards as I drove through Therfield it tried to snow.

**Bird list** (I think they had mostly stayed at home too): Kestrel, Red-legged Partridge, Mistle Thrush, Song Thrush, Blackbird, Robin, Goldcrest, Chaffinch.



*William Bishop*

## **BREACHWOOD GREEN**

**Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> May 2016**

8 members

This was my first meeting after a brief stay in hospital, so very welcome! We gathered at Breachwood Green, under the flight-path from Luton Airport, the noise of which stayed with us all day. Nevertheless it turned out to be a good excursion. We moved off east towards Watkins Wood, but not before seeing the usual Red Kites and Buzzards, not to mention the welcome sight of a number of House Sparrows, which still seem to be doing OK here. Along the path near houses, we also came across Three-cornered Leek *Allium triquetrum*, not yet a common escape in Herts., but potentially a menace.

Watkins Wood and Lord's Wood adjoin each other and are partly planted with conifers, but rather derelict. However, they did harbour a singing Chiffchaff, Blackcap, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Goldcrests, Nuthatch and a Coal Tit. The Bluebells were also well advanced in some places, alongside Primroses. However, the flora does receive quite a hammering from Fallow Deer, whose droppings and slots were everywhere. On the east side of the wood along a sunny hedgerow, we watched Bee-flies *Bombylius major* and the drone-fly *Eristalis pertinax*, as well as finding a few common beetles.

Our path took us down towards the valley floor and then rose again across pasture to King's Walden Park. A Raven flew over (no doubt one of the birds from Whitwell, where they breed), mobbed by Carrion Crows. Two pairs of Linnets flitted along a hedge line, and we had three more Red Kites! A Green Woodpecker called from the Park and there was a Chiffchaff near the Church, as well as a pair of Nuthatches. Along the lane by the Church, Simon Knott pointed out the slender, graceful hoverfly *Helophilus pendulus*, and on the water in a water trough we watched Common Pond-skaters *Gerris lacustris*. A rather odd observation made at the walled gardens near the Church was of a pair of Red-legged Partridges teetering along the top of the wall! The garden escape Italian Lords-and-Ladies *Arum italicum* was noted to be

spreading, alongside self-sown Stinking Hellebore *Helleborus foetidus*. Hart's-tongue fern *Asplenium scolopendrium* was also found.

King's Walden Park used to be a deer park (Red Deer), but lost its herd around the time of the Second World War. It now has longhorn cattle (very fine beasts), and is in good shape, with plenty of dung for the dung-flies and beetles! Several of us admired the massive King's Walden Oak, supposed to be one of the oldest oaks in the County. It is not alone as a fine tree there, though. We came across Mistle Thrushes, the Raven again, and a ♂ Stock Dove. Frogmore Farm, nearby, had a Moorhen with a nest at a pond and some Swallows, as well as semi-tame Mallard and a Muscovy Duck!



**King's Walden Park, with longhorn cattle. Photo Trevor James**

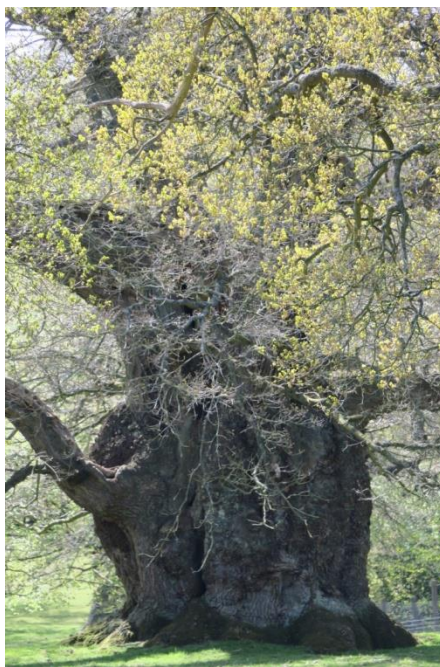
Our route continued to Law Hall, where a roadside bank and hedge was quite rich. Here we stopped for lunch by the lane, before moving off towards Bendish. The old hedgerows here produced three ♂ Whitethroats, Brimstone butterfly, and the spring-flowering Narrow-leaved Meadow-grass *Poa angustifolia*. A Brown Hare rose by a field path, and a Rabbit carcass was tipped over, to reveal several carrion beetles *Thanatophilus rugosus*, which are not seen that frequently these days.

The green lane into Bendish was typical of Hertfordshire, with a dense

hedgerow either side, dominated here by old Holly and Hornbeam. Another Chiffchaff was singing, and more Blackcaps, while a pair of Mistle Thrushes was scouring a playing field for food. Mole hills were also a marked feature – no doubt adding interest to the sports activities! Bendish itself is a small hamlet, and a small old pond here held a few wetland plants, such as Brooklime and Water Mint.

We turned back towards Breachwood Green and saw a small herd of 16 Fallow Deer in the fields near Greathouse Wood. The wood itself is another of these small, but ancient coppices, again partly replanted, but with a typical ground flora, including Yellow Archangel and Wood Melick. A pair of Long-tailed Tits were evidently nesting along its margin.

Finally, we returned to Breachwood Green, where we found a small colony of the local Polypody *Polypodium vulgare* growing on an old wall. Here I left the party, although I don't think the remainder carried on very far! It had been a good walk with much to see.



**The King's Walden Oak. Photo Trevor James**

**Birds:** Mallard, Red Kite (at least 5), Buzzard (3), Pheasant, Red-legged Partridge, Moorhen, Wood Pigeon, Stock Dove, Collared Dove, Green Woodpecker, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Skylark, Swallow, Mistle Thrush, Song Thrush, Blackbird, Robin, Blackcap, Whitethroat, Chiffchaff, Goldcrest, Great Tit, Blue Tit, Coal Tit, Long-tailed Tit, Dunnock, Nuthatch, Wren, Pied Wagtail, Starling, Raven, Carrion Crow, Rook, Jackdaw, Jay, Chaffinch, Goldfinch, Greenfinch, Linnet, House Sparrow.

**Mammals:** Rabbit, Brown Hare, Fallow Deer, Mole (hills).

**Butterflies:** Brimstone, Small Tortoiseshell.

**Hymenoptera:** Honey Bee *Apis mellifera*.

**Diptera:** *Bombylius major*, *Eristalis pertinax*, *Helophilus pendulus*. (Simon no doubt saw many more!).

**Coleoptera:** *Agriotes pallidulus*, *Agriotes sputator*, *Brachypterus glaber*, *Coccinella septempunctata* (Seven-spot Ladybird), *Exochomus quadripustulatus* (Pine Ladybird), *Hermaphysa mercurialis* (Mercury Flea-beetle), *Meligethes aeneus* (Common Pollen-beetle), *Meligethes nigrescens*, *Olibrus aeneus*, *Phyllotreta nigripes*, *Protopion fulvipes*, *Sitona lineatus* (Striped Pea-weevil), *Tachyporus hypnorum*, *Tachyporus obtusus*, *Thanatophilus rugosus*.

**Flora** (notable sightings):

*Allium triquetrum* (Three-cornered Leek), *Arum italicum* (Italian Lords-and-Ladies), *Asplenium scolopendrium* (Hart's-tongue), *Helleborus foetidus* (Stinking Hellebore), *Hyacinthoides non-scripta* (Bluebell), *Lamiastrum galeobdolon* ssp. *montanum* (Yellow Archangel), *Luzula campestris* (Field Wood-rush) (King's Walden Park), *Melica uniflora* (Wood Melick), *Mentha aquatica* (Water Mint), *Poa angustifolia* (Narrow-leaved Meadow-grass), *Polypodium vulgare* (Polypody), *Primula vulgaris* (Primrose), *Veronica beccabunga* (Brooklime), *Viola reichenbachiana* (Early Dog-violet).

*Trevor James*





## ESSENDON AND LITTLE BERKHAMPSTEAD

Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> May 2016

9 members

The weather was promising as Jean, Merle and seven other members gathered in Essendon. In fact it would prove a little too hot at times and before we had even left, Merle had identified a number of birds. We set off east across the Golf Course being wary of the golfers. In fact the course has several strips of unmanaged scrub and grassland between the fairways which were interesting both botanically and for the bug hunters with their sweep nets. We saw young feathery leaves of Wild Carrot *Daucus carota*, Common Vetch *Vicia sativa*, with its bright pink flowers, a single Bee Orchid *Ophrys apifera* and a large tufted grass which Trevor Identified later as Hungarian Brome *Bromopsis inermis*. A Grey Wagtail was catching insects beside a pond while a Coot was settled on its nest. We then left the Golf Course, still walking east over a ford and onto the footpath running below a chalk bank. This proved much richer botanically than during our recce a week earlier. A grass bank to the south on the edge of the Golf Course had a large population of seeding Coltsfoot *Tussilago farfara* – rarely seen in such large numbers in Hertfordshire these days. On the slope to the north side of the path below the chalk pit were large patches of Creeping Comfrey *Symphytum grandiflorum* and Green Alkanet *Pentaglottis sempervirens*, with Mouse-ear Hawkweed *Pilosella officinarum* and Wild Strawberry *Fragaria vesca*. On the verge below this bank there was a delightful mix of Shining Crane's-bill *Geranium lucidum*, Red and White Campions *Silene dioica* and *S. latifolia*, Common Stitchwort *Stellaria holostea*, Creeping Cinquefoil *Potentilla repens*, Large Warty Cabbage *Bunias orientalis* and the diminutive Corn Salad *Valerianella locust*. Some members investigated the entrance to the chalk quarry but at this point one member commented that it had been nearly two hours to walk half a mile.

After Ashfield Farm we took another path south-east, with interesting old hedges on each side and a number of plants more often seen in woodland, such as Yellow Archangel *Lamiastrum galeobdolon* and Broad Buckler-fern *Dryopteris dilatata*, together with Honeysuckle *Lonicera periclymenum*.

In the hedgerows towards Little Berkhamstead we came across a number of beautiful ancient pollarded Pedunculate Oaks *Quercus robur* and stopped for

lunch under a similar pollarded Hornbeam *Carpinus betulus*. Here we were entertained by Bee-flies hovering above the holes in the path made by solitary bees or wasps and dropping in their eggs, which would hatch and parasitise the bee or wasp larvae.

With batteries recharged the next plant of interest was Toothed Medick *Medicago polymorph* which we had casually thought was Spotted Medick until Trevor later pointed out our error. At the edge of the pond, which incidentally required its surrounding vegetation to be cut back so allowing more light, we found Bog Stichwort *Stellaria alsine*. We then walked south-west and took a path to the left, which looped round towards Buck's Alley Wood. The cooler temperature here was very welcome. It is a typical Hertfordshire woodland of coppiced Hornbeam, standard Pedunculate Oak with some Downy Birch *Betula pubescans*, and here sparse ground cover of Bluebell *Hyacinthoides non-scripta*, Wood Anemone *Anemone nemorosa* and Three-veined Sandwort *Moerhingia trinervia*.

This path led to Buck's Alley road and back up to Little Berkhamstead, with an interesting verge of much Grey Sedge *Carex divulsa* and Changing Forget-me-not *Myosotis discolor*. Turning left into Robin's Nest Hill, by the wall on a damp bank, was a carpet of Least Yellow Sorrel *Oxalis exilis*. Then beyond the churchyard, as luck would have it, the village shop was open so we were able to cool down with ice creams. The last part of our walk took us across the cricket field and the second comfrey of the day, White Comfrey *Symphytum orientale*. On to Dane's Farm, past fields with grazing horses, then down through the wood with more Enchanter's Nightshade, Wild Angelica and a Wych Elm *Ulmus glabra*. We re-crossed the golf course and returned to Essendon.

### **Birds**

Cormorant, Red Kite, Buzzard, Pheasant, Coot, Green Woodpecker, Skylark, Song Thrush, Blackbird, Robin, Blackcap, Whitethroat, Chiffchaff, Goldcrest, Great Tit, Blue Tit, Nuthatch, Wren, Grey Wagtail, Carrion Crow, Jackdaw, Magpie, Chaffinch, Greenfinch, Goldfinch, Yellowhammer.

### **Bugs**

Forget-me-not Shieldbug *Sehirus luctuosus* (TL29680785, on ground under *Myosotis discolor* on a roadside bank).

Gorse Shieldbug *Piezodorus lituratus* (TL28670795, beaten off Gorse; TL280087, beaten off Gorse on golf course).

Hairy Shieldbug *Dolycoris baccarum* (TL280087, beaten off Gorse on golf course).

Pine-cone Bug *Gastrodes grossipes* (TL28020872, beaten off a pine tree on golf course).

Hawthorn Shieldbug *Acanthosoma haemorrhoidale* (TL28540883, beaten off Hawthorn).

*Dryophilocoris flavoquadrimaculatus* (TL28970886, beaten off Hazel near Oak).

(All the above identified by William Bishop).

*Eysarcoris venustissimus* (on nettle: TL27590861).

*Coreus marginatus* (TL27760861).

(the above identified by Dan Asaw).

## **Beetles**

Water Ladybird *Anisosticta novemdecimpunctata* (TL28090874, beaten from cypress tree near a pond).

*Altica lythri* (beaten off *Iris* by pond, TL280087).

*Cassida vibex* (TL28320876, swept from low herbage).

Harlequin Ladybird *Harmonia axyridis* (TL28320876, swept from low herbage).

Fourteen-spot Ladybird *Propylea quattuordecimpunctata* (TL28320876, swept from low herbage).

*Grammoptera ruficornis* (TL28540883, beaten from flowering Hawthorn).

Ten-spot Ladybird *Adalia decempunctata* (TL28970814, beaten off Oak).

*Diaperis boleti* (in Birch Polypore fungus, TL29620766, four at least)(found by Peter Alton).

*Cantharis decipiens*, *Cantharis rustica* (TL28320875).

Cream-spot Ladybird *Calvia quatturodecimgutta* (TL28650887).

*Abax parallelepipedus*, *Nebria brevicollis* and Black Clock *Pterostichus madidus* (throughout).

(above identified by Dan Asaw/William Bishop).

## **General Insects**

Snake-fly *Phaeostigma notata* (TL286079, beaten off Broom under Oak).

Giant Crane fly *Tipula maxima* (TL289081, near pond/grassland).

Plain Gold (Moth) *Micropterix calthella* (TL29570761, clustered in buttercup flower).

*Hyadaphis passerinii* (a Honeysuckle aphid, TL28960852, taken from heavily infected/curling honeysuckle plant).

Bee: a ♀ *Osmia bicornis* (TL28320875).

Butterflies: Orange-tip and Small White.



### **Mammals**

Rabbit, Muntjac.

*Jean Williamson and Merle Gwyn*

## **RUSLING END, LANGLEY**

### **Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> May**

It was to be a full itinerary for this outing to Rusling End and its environs starting later in the day than the normal BNA walk. Our afternoon began in the meadow at Rustling End Cottage, designated a county wildlife site due to the diversity of its flora and managed to maintain and increase this diversity since 1993. Two species of orchid have been noted in the meadow: Green-winged and Common Spotted. The Kestrel nest-box in one of the meadow's perimeter oak trees has housed Kestrels but is now home to Tawny Owls that nest every year.

We headed off up the lane that leads to St Paul's Waldenbury, entering the long slim meadow opposite Rustling End Farm and followed the path towards Langley. We saw two Holly Blue butterflies and William photographed a pair of mating Harlequin Ladybirds. There were Skylarks soaring over the arable fields to our right.

In the unsprayed field margins we noted Common Wintercress *Barbarea vulgaris*, Cut-leaved Cranesbill *Geranium dissectum* and Wild Pansy *Viola tricolor* [This needs to be confirmed – could be the hybrid with *V. arvensis*, or a form of the latter – T.J.]. A Cocksfoot Moth fed on Butterbur flowers.

We crossed the B656 towards Langley and walked beside Burleighcroft Wood, with arable fields on our right. We turned left towards the village,

passing by a pretty carpet of Wood Melick *Melica uniflora*, before crossing pasture to walk through the spinney adjacent to Langley Meadow. The spinney is slim, with a narrow footpath, but has some interesting flora: Wood Anemone *Anemone nemorosa*, Wood Poa *Poa nemoralis*, Wood False-Brome *Brachypodium sylvaticum*, Sanicle *Sanicula europaea* and Bluebell *Hyacinthoides non-scripta*. Langley Meadow is full of Green-winged Orchids, one of a handful of sites in Hertfordshire where they still grow. We saw Lady's Smock *Cardamine pratensis* too.

Our walk then left the spinney and turned right towards Burleigh Meadow, following a bank with Hedge Bedstraw *Galium album* and Hedge Woundwort *Stachys officinalis*. We heard a Blackcap, a Song Thrush and a Robin and spotted a Red-and-black Froghopper *Cercopis vulnerata*. At the edge of an arable field on our right in a damp spot was Ladies Bedstraw *Galium verum*, Remote Sedge *Carex remota* and Ragged Robin *Lychnis flos-cuculi* and just beyond in the corner Paula spotted Toad Rush *Juncus bufonius* growing with Cut-leaved Geranium *Geranium dissectum*. More birds called out: a Mistle Thrush and a Chiffchaff.

Through to Burleigh Meadow which always thrills on every visit but our stay was to be brief, as there are moths to note, bats to detect and an afternoon tea waited back at Rustling End Cottage. Not wanting to miss anything the following were noted on our short walk through the meadow: more *Stachys officinalis* and *Cardamine pratensis*, Glaucous Sedge *Carex flacca*, Sweet Vernal Grass *Anthoxanthum odoratum*, Lousewort *Pedicularis sylvatica*, False Fox Sedge *Carex otrubae*, Pignut *Conopodium majus*, and Hairy Sedge *Carex hirta*.

Our return journey took us through arable fields and Langley village before crossing the B656 and entering the meadows below Rusling End, where there were also plants to note: more Pignut *Conopodium majus*, Bulbous Buttercup *Ranunculus bulbosus*, Bird's Foot Trefoil *Lotus pedunculatus*, more *Cardamine pratensis* and Marsh Thistle *Cirsium palustre*. We saw a Yellowhammer and a Brown Hare.

On returning to the cottage we found Tom and Janet Gladwin already enjoying a cup of tea and slice of cake and chatting to Tim Wise. There were three moth traps to check, which were set out the previous evening: one in

the meadow; one in the vegetable garden close to woodland and the last on the lawn adjacent to a formal pond.

This is the second time that we have looked at the visiting moths on a BNA walk at Rusling End. Previously it was late July. There were not nearly as many species this time but here is a list I made:

**The Meadow trap** had caught mainly Large Nutmegs

The Vegetable Garden trap	The Lawn Trap
<p>Flame Shoulder White Ermine Treble Lines Red Chestnut Large Nutmeg Setaceous Hebrew Character Shuttle Shaped Dart Common Swift</p>	<p>Large Nutmeg Pale Tussock Clouded Bordered Brindle Swallow Prominent Shuttle Shaped Dart Common Pug White Ermine Great Prominent</p>



It had been a long afternoon and not wanting to disappoint the bat lovers we visited Keeper's Cottage next door where, in a newly built barn, in the eaves are clusters of bats snoozing before venturing out at dusk. The consensus is that they are Brown Long-eared Bats, and much to the amusement of the group their droppings fall onto a tarpaulin covered Ferrari. Fortunately David, the owner, isn't too concerned and appreciates the bats wanting to use his barn. He showed us the Swallows nesting in another open-fronted barn. Their numbers have increased over the last decade now that they have a safe nesting site and plenty of ponds in the vicinity providing insects and mud for building their nests. In a shrub in the garden, David also showed us a Chaffinch nest with young .

It is so rewarding to see that the fauna at Rusling End is happy to reside so close to us and we look forward to enjoying what each season brings.

*Julie Wise*

[For those who might have noticed discrepancies in spelling – we have followed the Ordnance Survey in using ‘Rusling End’ for the overall place and ‘Rustling End Cottage/Farm’ for the specific buildings. Which is correct is anybody’s guess! T.J./A.H.]

## **BOXMOOR ESTATE**

### **A photo feature**

**Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> June**

7 members, 1 host

An enjoyable day was spent on the Boxmoor Estate, with the group being guided round two sites – the Fishery Lane Watercress Beds and Westbrook Hay Farm – by David Kirk, Chairman of the Trust. A report for the day is presented below in the form of photos taken by the leader (a cunning strategy that means that he does not feature in any of them... no, he has not heard of “selfies”). Species lists are presented after the photos for lichens, true bugs, beetles and moths. The last mostly came from checking a moth trap.



**Part of the group setting off down Old Fishery Lane,  
towards the old watercress beds, at the start of the day**





**A Bloody-nosed Beetle larva on Cleavers at the watercress beds**



**A Lesser Stag Beetle at the watercress beds**



**Some members made full use of the classroom during lunch...**



**... while others performed a thorough splinter check at their lunch spot**



**After lunch, naturalism quickly resumed, at Westbrook Hay Farm**



**The meeting finished up at one of the meadows on the farm site**

Lichens:<sup>†</sup>

*Acarospora fuscata*, *Amandinea punctata*, *Arthonia radiata*, *Arthonia spadicea*, *Arthopyrenia punctiformis* [non-lichenised fungus], *Buellia aethalea*, *Buellia griseovirens*, *Buellia ocellata*, *Caloplaca arcis*, *Caloplaca austrocitrina*, *Caloplaca cerinella*, *Caloplaca holocarpa* s. str., *Candelariella aurella* f. *aurella*, *Candelariella reflexa*, *Candelariella vitellina* f. *vitellina*, *Cladonia* sp., *Flavoparmelia caperata*, *Halecania viridescens*, *Hypogymnia tubulosa*, *Lecania erysibe* s. str., *Lecania naegelii*, *Lecania rabenhorstii*, *Lecanora albescens*, *Lecanora carpineae*, *Lecanora chlarotera*, *Lecanora conizaeoides* f. *conizaeoides*, *Lecanora dispersa*, *Lecanora expallens*, *Lecanora hagenii*, *Lecanora muralis*, *Lecanora pulicaris*, *Lecanora symmicta*, *Lecanora varia*, *Lecidea grisella*, *Lecidella elaeochroma* f. *elaeochroma*, *Lepraria incana* s. str., *Lepraria vouauxii*, *Melanelixia subaurifera*, *Opegrapha* cf. *herbarum*, *Parmelia sulcata*, *Parmotrema perlatum*, *Phaeophyscia orbicularis*, *Physcia adscendens*, *Physcia aipolia*, *Physcia tenella*, *Placynthiella icmalea*, *Porina aenea*, *Porpidia soledizodes*, *Psilolechia lucida*, *Punctelia jeckeri*, *Punctelia subrudecta* s. str., *Ramalina farinacea*, *Ramalina fastigiata*, *Rinodina oleae*, *Scoliciosporum chlorococcum*, *Scoliciosporum umbrinum*, *Syzygospora physciacearum* [lichen parasite], *Trapelia glebulosa*, *Unguiculariopsis thallophila* [lichen parasite], *Verrucaria muralis*, *Verrucaria nigrescens* f. *nigrescens*, *Xanthoparmelia mougeotii*, *Xanthoparmelia verruculifera*, *Xanthoria calcicola*, *Xanthoria parietina*, *Xanthoria polycarpa*.

True bugs:

*Anthocoris nemorum*, *Capsus ater*, *Coreus marginatus*, *Cyllecoris histrionius*, *Dictyla convergens*, *Dicyphus epilobii*, *Dolycoris baccarum*, *Drepanosiphum platanoidis*, *Dryophilocoris flavoquadrinaculatus*, *Gerris lateralis*, *Grypocoris stysi*, *Heterogaster urticae*, *Leptopterna dolabrata*, *Liocoris tripustulatus*, *Nabis rugosus*, *Orius niger*, *Pentatoma rufipes*, *Phylus melanocephalus*, *Rhabdomiris striatellus*, *Scolopostethus thomsoni*, *Sigara nigrolineata*, *Stenodema laevigata*.

Moths:<sup>‡</sup>

*Abrostola tripartita*, *Agrotis exclamationis*, *Agrotis puta*, *Alabonia geoffrella*, *Apamea anceps*, *Apamea crenata*, *Apamea monoglypha*, *Apamea sordens*, *Apamea unanimitis*, *Aphomia sociella*, *Axylia putris*, *Biston betularia*, *Cabera*

*pusaria*, *Campaea margaritata*, *Caradrina morpheus*, *Charanyca trigramicca*, *Chloroclysta truncata*, *Clepsis spectrana*, *Colostygia pectinataria*, *Craniophora ligustri*, *Deilephila elpenor*, *Diachrysia cysitis*, *Diarsia mendica*, *Diarsia rubi*, *Eilema sororcula*, *Electrophaes corylata*, *Epiphyas postvittana*, *Eupithecia exigua*, *Eupithecia subfuscata*, *Eupithecia tripunctaria*, *Eupithecia venosata*, *Eupithecia vulgata*, *Hada plebeja*, *Hepialus lupulin*, *Hoplodrina ambigua*, *Hypena proboscidalis*, *Idaea trigeminata*, *Lacanobia w-latinum*, *Lomaspilis marginata*, *Lomographa temerata*, *Mythimna comma*, *Mythimna pallans*, *Noctua pronuba*, *Nola confusalis*, *Ochropleura plecta*, *Oligia fasciuncula*, *Oligia latruncula*, *Oligia strigilis*, *Opisthograptis luteolata*, *Pandemis cerasana*, *Pasiphila rectangulata*, *Peribatodes rhomboidaria*, *Perizoma albulata*, *Phlogophora meticulosa*, *Plutella xylostella*, *Pseudargyrotoza conwagana*, *Rivula sericealis*, *Spilosoma lubricipeda*, *Spilosoma luteum*, *Tyria jacobaeae*, *Tyria jacobaeae*, *Udea olivalis*, *Xanthorhoe montanata*, *Xestia c-nigrum*, *Xestia triangulum*.

Beetles: \*

a) Boxmoor Cress Beds and nearby: *Acupalpus dubius*, *Adalia bipunctata*, *Agriotes obscurus*, *Agriotes pallidulus*, *Altica lythri*, *Aphthona nonstriata*, *Atomaria lewisi*, *Atomaria testacea*, *Brachypterus urticae*, *Cantharis cryptica*, *Cantharis rufa*, *Cantharis rustica*, *Coccidula rufa*, *Coccinella septempunctata*, *Cordylepherus viridis*, *Crepidodera aurata*, *Donacia semicuprea*, *Dorcus parallelepipedus*, *Exochomus quadripustulatus*, *Grammoptera ruficornis*, *Harmonia axyridis*, *Malachius bipustulatus*, *Megasternum concinnum* (agg.), *Melanotus castanipes*, *Meligethes aeneus*, *Nebria brevicollis*, *Nedys quadrimaculatus*, *Oedemera lurida*, *Oedemera nobilis*, *Paranchus albipes*, *Phaedon cochleariae*, *Phyllobius pomaceus*, *Propylea quattuordecimpunctata*, *Quedius maurorufus*, *Rhinocyllus conicus*, *Stenus solutus*, *Subcoccinella vigintiquattuor punctata*, *Timarcha tenebricosa*, *Tytthaspis sedecimpunctata*.

b) Westbrook Hay: *Agriotes pallidulus*, *Agriotes sputator*, *Altica carinthiaca*, *Anotylus inustus*, *Aphodius sticticus*, *Brachypterus urticae*, *Calvia quattuordecimguttata*, *Cantharis decipiens*, *Cantharis flavilabris* [= 'nigra'], *Cantharis rustica*, *Coccinella septempunctata*, *Grammoptera ruficornis*, *Gyrophana manca*, *Hallomenus binotatus*, *Harpalus rufipes*, *Helophorus brevipalpis*, *Mecinus pascuorum*, *Meligethes atratus*, *Nedys quadrimaculatus*, *Oedemera nobilis*, *Ophonus ardosiacus*, *Phaedon*



*tumidulus, Protapion apricans, Protapion assimile, Ptomaphagus medius, Pyrrhalta viburni, Rhagonycha limbata, Sericoderus brevicornis, Sitona lineatus, Stenocorus meridianus, Tachyporus hypnorum, Trichosirocalus troglodytes.*

<sup>†</sup>Courtesy of Andrew Harris. <sup>‡</sup>Courtesy of David Kirk. <sup>\*</sup>Courtesy of Trevor James.

*Joe Gray*

[To maintain our BNA tradition, I have also taken the liberty of adding a brief bird list to Joe's report! Hope he doesn't mind!:

Wood Pigeon, Song Thrush, Robin, Blackcap, Whitethroat, Chiffchaff, Goldcrest, Great Tit, Blue Tit, Long-tailed Tit, Wren, Carrion Crow, Chaffinch, Greenfinch, Goldfinch, Reed Bunting.

*Trevor James]*

## **NORTHERN BROXBORNE WOODS**

Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> June

6 members + 4 Flora Group/visitors.

This was billed as a joint Herts Flora Group/BNA meeting, with the aim of recording a 'tetrad' (2x2km square) for the 2020 BSBI Atlas project. As such, I hope it didn't put too many BNA members off who might otherwise have come!

We recorded tetrad TL30/P comprising the area around Hoddesdon Park Wood and the edge of Highfield Wood, Danemead Nature Reserve (NR) etc. It is generally a fairly well-studied area but we can always find 'new' things - and we always need 'new' records of species we already have on record, just so we know they are still there. Overall we recorded 247 taxa (species/subspecies/ hybrids) during the day – not too bad, but with many common species missing, given that the habitats we were mostly examining were not urban, cultivated ground or waste ground, from which many more would no doubt be forthcoming. We also probably missed a few species because we were at the 'wrong' time of year, or didn't go to quite the right places.

We actually met in the next tetrad to the south, at Martin's Green car park. Our route led us north up Ermine Street to the Danemead NR, where the tetrad boundary cuts across the reserve. So we were careful which bits we looked at! This involved the damper areas near the Spital Brook. Having done what we could there, we struck off east along the southern edge of Hoddesdon Park Wood in the hope of finding a few scarcer plants along the brook. Unfortunately one – Wood Club-rush *Scirpus sylvaticus* – which used to be here, has not been seen for some time, and we again failed to find it, so it might be extinct. This was its last locality in the County.

Beyond the wood, we followed our noses into the old pastures around Hoddesdon Lodge Farm – rather a tatty area but with some interest, not the least of which are the banks alongside the A10 motorway, where we stopped for lunch. These nutrient-poor, scrubby banks have a rich flora, partly owing to their having been created through some formerly good quality habitat when the road was built, partly through the nature of the soils. From there we went via Goose Green (in some rain) to Ermine Street, and (in sun again) down to Highfield Wood and back to the cars.

From a botanical recording viewpoint, our most significant finds included: *Lathyrus linifolius* (Bitter-vetch) – by the entrance to Highfield Wood, a rare species now in the County and not seen in the area for some time; *Agrimonia procera* (Fragrant Agrimony) – the recently found colony at Danemead having expanded somewhat, one of very few in the County; *Epipactis helleborine* (Broad-leaved Helleborine) – several plants at a 'new' locality by the Spital Brook at Hoddesdon Park Wood (already known at Danemead); *Epipactis purpurata* (Violet Helleborine) – a single plant by the Spital Brook beside Hoddesdon Park Wood/Ermine Street; *Trifolium striatum* (Striated Clover), *Lathyrus nissolia* (Grass Vetchling), *Ophrys apifera* (Bee Orchid), *Geranium rotundifolium* (Round-leaved Crane's-bill), *Myosotis ramossissima* (Early Forget-me-not) and *Trifolium arvense* (Hare's-foot Clover) – all on the banks by the A10; *Polystichum setiferum* (Soft Shield-fern) – by the Spital Brook at Ermine Street; *Valeriana officinalis* ssp. *sambucifolia* – also by the Spital Brook at Ermine Street (this is the damp clay subspecies, very different from the chalk grassland ssp. *officinalis*); *Juncus acutiflorus* (Sharp-flowered Rush) – fertile specimens proving their status as the species rather than the sterile hybrid with *J. articulatus*, at Danemead; *Epilobium obscurum* (Short-fruited Willowherb) and *Trifolium medium* (Zigzag Clover) – both now rather scarce



in the County, also at Danemead. We also found the increasingly frequent alien grass *Polypogon viridis* (Water Bent) at the entrance to Highfield Wood (brought in with hoggin) and the so-called 'Stingless Nettle' *Urtica dioica* ssp. *galeopsifolia* by a ditch adjoining the A10.

It is sobering to think that a large proportion of the scarcer plants we found were limited to one 50 metre-long section of scrubby bank by a motorway – the rest of the grasslands around about being generally fairly species-poor or just rank. The woodlands are fairly OK, but even here we seem to be losing species. For example, we did not find Common Cow-wheat *Melampyrum pratense*, which was once abundant in Hoddesdon Park Wood. It may still be there, but is evidently not now abundant.

I am afraid we did not do our usual thing of making a bird list, although we did see a Hobby at Hoddesdon Lodge, as well as the usual (now) Red Kite. One beetle of note also caught Simon Knott's eye – the so-called Welsh Chafer *Hoplia philanthus*, which is local in Herts.

*Trevor James*

## **KIMPTON & PRIOR'S WOOD**

Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> July

7 members

We met in Claggy Road, Kimpton. There was high thin cloud, weak sunshine at times, and it was warm. Overall it was muggy and there was a heavy scent of privet in the air. It was, however, an improvement on the rainy, cold or cool year that we had endured thus far.

A Nuthatch gave a loud burst and showed well on top of the nearest telegraph pole. After some debate about a bracket fungus on an appallingly pruned ornamental plum by the road we set off. The fungus was Shaggy Bracket *Inonotus hispidus*, identified by Claudi. We crossed the main street and passed through a new estate into the fields to the south of Kimpton. The first field was full of tick beans and the boundary was not inspiring. However a few bits were swept from the herbage. Of note was a Conopid fly caught by Dan Asaw and identified as *Sicus ferrugineus* by Simon Knott. Conopids are thick-headed flies that are parasitoids of bees and wasps. Turning south we headed towards Kimpton Hall Farm through the beans and some rather

tidied hedges. There were quite a lot of poppies blooming in the field and this made me think of 1916, it being 100 years since the battle of the Somme. Hard not to be touched when I looked back and remembered my childhood was full of the men that passed through that tragic event. Merle and I heard Yellowhammers in the hedge. A ground beetle caught near the farm was *Leistus rufomarginatus*. Trevor James commented on it being less commonly found than its relatives. Trevor then swept what I think is about the most beautiful caterpillar I've ever seen, which from images I've found is the Chamomile Shark *Cucullia chamomillae*.



**Chamomile Shark caterpillar by Kimpton Hall Farm. Photo William Bishop**

On ivy in the lane I saw Cottony Camellia Scale *Pulvinaria floccifera*, an imported pest that produces a rather attractive little white mound under evergreen leaves. By Gunn's Lodge Cottages Dan spotted Speckled Bush Crickets *Leptophyes punctatissima* in the hedge. Also much admired was a very fine Hornet Hoverfly *Volucella zonaria*, our largest hoverfly (we had seen *V. pellucens* earlier).

Next came a quick walk down the road to get to the next path. Along the way we found a beautiful deep pink-flowered bramble, identified by Trevor as the hybrid *Rubus ulmifolius* x *vestitus*. We cut across a cornfield to get to

our main target area: Prior's Wood. Here we found a suitable bank and were about to have lunch when I spotted a superb looking beetle on a stump. Trevor was parted from his food and told us it was the Red Longhorn Beetle *Stictoleptura rubra*, until now only found in Broxbourne Woods in Herts. I think this gave us five longhorn beetles for the day. A Summer Chafer *Amphimallon solstitiale* joined Trevor during lunch. The spot we chose was surrounded by Dwale *Atropa belladonna* [otherwise known as Deadly Nightshade *T.J.*] and had lots of Marbled White butterflies. When everyone got up to move off, I noticed the Sowthistle leaves they had been sitting on were covered in rather attractive bright red galls. These were caused by a midge *Cystiphora sonchi*. I have never noticed this one before.



***Stictoleptura rubra* at Prior's Wood. Photo William Bishop**

After lunch we wandered around in Prior's Wood, sweeping, beating and turning over logs. A number of beetles were collected. Paula Shipway found an *Opegrapha* lichen, some of which went home for microscopy. Dan found a freshly dead Common Shrew and Simon showed me the fungus gnat *Sciara hemerobioides*, the latter an attractive large black and yellow species rather let down by the description of gnat. Dan managed to get a male Scorpion fly to species: *Panorpa communis*. It now being 15:30 we headed back to Kimpton. Kimpton was holding a Folk Festival and we could hear music from several places, eventually passing the Morris dancers hard at it.

My thanks to all the participants.

**Birds** (with a few added – T.J.):

Red Kite, Buzzard, Pheasant, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Wood Pigeon, Collared Dove, Green Woodpecker, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Swift, Swallow, Skylark, Blackbird, Robin, Blackcap, Chiffchaff, Blue Tit, Nuthatch, Treecreeper, Wren, Carrion Crow, Jackdaw, Jay, Chaffinch, Greenfinch, Goldfinch, Bullfinch, Yellowhammer, House Sparrow.

**Butterflies:**

Meadow Brown, Ringlet, Speckled Wood, Marbled White, Large White, Small White, Small Tortoiseshell, Peacock (cats), Large Skipper, Small Skipper.

*William Bishop*

**Beetles (more interesting records only – T.J.):**

*Amphimallon solstitiale* (Summer Chafer – Prior's Wood); *Cleopus pulchellus* (in Prior's Wood - a relative of the figwort weevils *Cionus*, not seen in Herts since c.1950!); *Lagria hirta* (hairy darkling beetle relative – in hedge near Kimpton Hall); *Leistus rufomarginatus* (a ground beetle – near Kimpton Hall Farm); *Malthodes marginatus* (a less common soldier-beetle relative, Claggbottom Wood); *Mordellistena neuwaldeggiana* (a tumbling flower-beetle – on ash tree near Kimpton); *Pseudovadonia livida* (a longhorn beetle – near Kimpton Hall); *Stenurella melanura* (longhorn beetle – Claggbottom Wood); *Stictoleptura rubra* – on pine stump, Prior's Wood).

## **KING'S MEADS NATURE RESERVE, HERTFORD**

Saturday 23rd July



5 Herts BNA Members  
3 London NHS Members

We joined forces with the London Natural History Society for a meeting co- led by Tristan Bantock (national recorder for shield-bugs and allies) and me on what turned out to be a dry and warm day on the Meads. The focus was very much on invertebrates, and with the combined expertise of Tristan and our own Trevor James – along with the local knowledge of Simon Knott – we

raced to a total of 178 invertebrate species recorded on the day (despite covering not even a third of the reserve's diverse habitats).

As there are so many invertebrates to list, their names form the bulk of this report. However, it is worth noting briefly that the group also found six Great Crested Newts and one Smooth Newt under a mattress that had been dumped off the side of the A10 overpass.

**Bees:** *Andrena flavipes* (Yellow Legged Mining Bee), *Bombus lapidarius* (Large Red-tailed Bumblebee), *Bombus pascuorum* (Common Carder Bee), *Hylaeus signatus* (Large Yellow-faced Bee).

**Beetles:** *Altica lythri*, *Amphimallon solstitiale* (Summer Chafer), *Anacaena limbata*, *Anisosticta novemdecimpunctata* (Water Ladybird), *Anthonomus rubi* (Strawberry Blossom Weevil), *Anthrenus verbasci* (Varied Carpet Beetle), *Aphodius fossor*, *Aphodius haemorrhoidalis*, *Apion haematodes*, *Apion rubens*, *Aspidapion aeneum*, *Aspidapion radiolus*, *Brachypterus urticae* (Nettle Pollen Beetle), *Cantharis flavilabris*, *Cassida prasina*, *Cercyon melanocephalus*, *Ceutorhynchus pallidactylus*, *Chrysolina herbacea* (Mint Leaf-beetle), *Chrysolina polita*, *Colymbetes fuscus*, *Cordylepherus viridis*, *Donacia vulgaris*, *Dryophilus pusillus*, *Haliphus fluvialis*, *Haliphus ruficollis*, *Harmonia axyridis* (Harlequin Ladybird), *Harpalus affinis*, *Hygrotus inaequalis*, *Hypera nigrirostris*, *Ilybius fuliginosus*, *Malvapion malvae*, *Mecinus pascuorum*, *Meligethes aeneus* (Common Pollen Beetle), *Meligethes ruficornis*, *Microplontus rugulosus*, *Nedus quadrimaculatus* (Small Nettle Weevil), *Notaris acridulus*, *Noterus clavicornis*, *Oedemera lurida*, *Oedemera nobilis* (Swollen-thighed Beetle), *Ontholestes murinus*, *Parthelus pollinarius*, *Perapion curtirostre*, *Perapion hydrolapathi*, *Perapion marchicum*, *Phaedon cochleariae*, *Phyllobius roboretanus* (Small Green Nettle Weevil), *Protapion assimile*, *Psylliodes chrysocephala* (Cabbage-stem Flea-beetle), *Psyllobora vigintiduopunctata* (22-spot Ladybird), *Pterostichus madidus* (Black Clock), *Rhagonycha fulva* (Common Soldier-beetle), *Rhyzobius litura*, *Saprinus semistriatus*, *Sitona lineatus* (Striped Pea-weevil), *Sphaeridium lunatum*, *Sphaeridium scarabaeoides*, *Sphaeroderma rubidum*, *Subcoccinella vigintiquattuorpunctata* (24-spot Ladybird), *Syntomus foveatus*, *Taeniapion urticarium*, *Tychius picirostris*, *Tytthaspis sedecimpunctata* (16-spot Ladybird), *Zaclusus geranii* (a cranesbill weevil).

**Butterflies and moths:** *Aglais urticae* (Small Tortoiseshell), *Aphantopus hyperantus* (Ringlet), *Chrysoteuchia culmella* (Garden Grass-veneer), *Crambus perlella* (a moth), *Eilema depressa* (Buff Footman), *Gonepteryx rhamni* (Brimstone), *Idaea rusticata* (Least Carpet), *Maniola jurtina* (Meadow Brown), *Marasmarcha lunaedactyla* (Crescent Plume), *Pieris napi* (Green-veined White), *Plutella xylostella* (Diamond-back Moth), *Pyronia tithonus* (Gatekeeper), *Thymelicus lineola* (Essex Skipper), *Thymelicus sylvestris* (Small Skipper), *Tyria jacobaeae* (Cinnabar), *Vanessa atalanta* (Red Admiral), *Zygaena filipendulae* (Six-spot Burnet).

**Dragonflies:** *Aeshna grandis* (Brown Hawker), *Anax imperator* (Emperor Dragonfly), *Calopteryx splendens* (Banded Demoiselle), *Ischnura elegans* (Blue-tailed Damselfly), *Pyrrhosoma nymphula* (Large Red Damselfly).

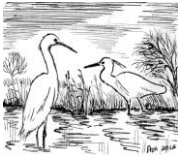
**Grasshoppers and crickets:** *Chorthippus albomarginatus* (Lesser Marsh Grasshopper), *Chorthippus brunneus* (Common Field Grasshopper), *Chorthippus parallelus* (Meadow Grasshopper), *Conocephalus discolor* (Long-winged Conehead), *Leptophyes punctatissima* (Speckled Bush Cricket), *Metrioptera roeselii* (Roesel's Bush Cricket).

**Spiders:** *Araneus quadratus*.

**True bugs:** *Acanthosoma haemorrhoidale* (Hawthorn Shieldbug), *Aelia acuminata* (Bishop's Mitre Shieldbug), *Anthocoris nemorum*, *Aphrodes serratulae*, *Apolygus lucorum*, *Atractotomus mali*, *Campyloneura virgula*, *Capsus ater*, *Cicadella viridis*, *Cicadula quadrinotata*, *Closterotomus norwegicus*, *Conomelus anceps*, *Coreus marginatus* (Dock Bug), *Cymus melanocephalus*, *Cyrtorhinus caricus*, *Deraeocoris flavilinea*, *Deraeocoris ruber*, *Dictyla convergens*, *Dicyphus epilobii*, *Dolycoris baccarum* (Hairy Shieldbug), *Doratura stylata*, *Eupteryx aurata*, *Eupteryx florida*, *Eupteryx thoulessi*, *Eupteryx urticae*, *Europiella artemisiae*, *Eurygaster testudinaria* (Tortoise Shieldbug), *Euscelis incisus*, *Gastrodes grossipes*, *Gerris odontogaster*, *Graphocraerus ventralis*, *Hesperocorixa linnaei*, *Hesperocorixa moesta*, *Heterotoma planicornis*, *Himacerus mirmicoides*, *Hyledelphax elegantulus*, *Ilyocoris cimicoides*, *Ischnodemus sabuleti*, *Javesella pellucida*, *Leptopterna dolabrata*, *Leptopterna ferrugata*, *Liocoris tripustulatus*, *Lopus decolor*, *Lygus pratensis*, *Macrotylus horvathi*, *Macrotylus paykulli*, *Megaloceroea recticornis*, *Nabis flavomarginatus*, *Neophilaenus lineatus*,

*Nepa cinerea* (Water Scorpion), *Notonecta glauca*, *Notostira elongata*, *Oncotylus viridiflavus*, *Orthotylus ochrotrichus*, *Palomena prasina* (Common Green Shieldbug), *Pentatoma rufipes* (Red-legged Shieldbug), *Philaenus spumarius*, *Phytocoris tiliae*, *Phytocoris varipes*, *Plagiognathus arbustorum*, *Plagiognathus chrysanthemi*, *Psammotettix confinis*, *Raglius alboacuminatus*, *Stenodema laevigata*, *Stenotus binotatus*, *Stygnocoris fuliginus*, *Tritomegas bicolor* (Pied Shieldbug), *Troilus luridus* (Bronze Shieldbug)

**True flies:** *Acrocera orbiculus*, *Anomoia purmunda*, *Beris vallata*, *Chloromyia formosa*, *Chrysopilus asiliformis*, *Eriothrix rufomaculata*, *Haematopota pluvialis*, *Leptogaster cylindrica*, *Oplodontha viridula*, *Pachygaster leachii*, *Ptychoptera contaminata*, *Sepedon spehegea*, *Urophora stylata*



*Joe Gray*

[For the record, here is my (no doubt incomplete) bird list:

**Birds:** Great Crested Grebe, Dabchick, Cormorant, Little Egret, Mute Swan, Canada Goose, Mallard, Gadwall, Tufted Duck, Coot, Moorhen, Black-headed Gull, Common Tern, Wood Pigeon, Collared Dove, Blackbird, Blackcap, Whitethroat, Cetti's Warbler, Dunnock, Carrion Crow, Magpie, Greenfinch, Goldfinch, Linnet, Reed Bunting, House Sparrow.

*Trevor James]*

## **HERONSGATE**

**Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> August**

11 members

The summer sunshine encouraged ten BNA members to join me for this meeting and we gathered outside the Stag public house at 10 o'clock, ready for the off, although I had already started my list for the day by noting a 'cloud' of Chestnut Leaf-miner moths *Cameraria ohridella* by my car.

We followed the track next to the pub past the allotments and explored an area of grassland that had a few young trees establishing themselves. One young oak in particular had numerous Knopper galls and in amongst the grasses we found Greater Bird's-foot-trefoil *Lotus pedunculatus*, Knapweed

*Centaurea nigra*, Smooth Hawk's-beard *Crepis capillaris*, and Perforate St. John's Wort *Hypericum perforatum*. Simon Knott caught a female Kite-tailed Robberfly *Machimus atricapillus* and passed it round for us to look at in a collecting tube before releasing it, and a colourful micro moth proved to be *Phyllonorycter harrisella*.

We continued on our way and walked down the hill towards Bullsland Farm, commenting on the number of Meadow Brown butterflies. On the edge of the path by the farm there were a few eye-catching patches of the common liverwort *Marchantia polymorpha*, with their parasol-like fruiting bodies. We followed Bullsland Lane south, noting five Red Kites, a Sparrowhawk and five Carrion Crows. The wild flowers, such as Field Scabious *Knautia arvensis*, Agrimony *Agrimonia eupatoria* and Honeysuckle *Lonicera periclymenum*, along the edges of the path attracted butterflies and I added Red Admiral, Comma, Gatekeeper, Ringlet and Holly Blue to the list. The Holly Blue was also attracted to horse dung, which provided an easy viewing point, and close by there was a Spanish Slug *Arion vulgaris*, which is an invasive species and considered to be a pest.

One of the exciting finds for the day was spotted by William and is an important record for Hertfordshire [in fact it was the first in the County for a long time T.J.]. The Hazel Leaf-roller beetle *Apoderus coryli*, was predictably sitting on a hazel leaf and before long members found two more specimens sunning themselves. Our enthusiastic invertebrate specialists were busy with their sweep nets and a fly *Chaetorella jaceae*, with particularly beautiful wing markings, was examined and shown to those of us standing close-by.

Orpine *Sedum telephium*, found by Claudi, was one of the more interesting plants seen along the path and a chalky area towards the bottom of the valley provided a habitat for several chalk loving plants: Wild Basil *Clinopodium vulgare*, Marjoram *Origanum vulgare*, Common Toadflax *Linaria vulgaris*, and Hoary Ragwort *Senecio erucifolius*. These plants provided a resting place for a common Diamond-back Moth and a little further along members at the back of the group found an interesting longhorn beetle, *Rutpela maculata*, on Yarrow.

Our path joined Old Shire Lane, which follows the county border, and we were surprised to find a long dead Rhea, which I think could be a 'first' for a



BNA meeting. Unfortunately it had died too long ago to be of interest to our beetle enthusiasts.

A Green Woodpecker called and there was a short debate about whether an active Badger sett should be recorded, as the entrance hole was in Hertfordshire but the underground passages were thought to be in Buckinghamshire. The day was warming up and we were grateful for the shade, which was also appreciated by a few plants, Wood Melick *Melica uniflora*, and Enchanter's-nightshade *Circaea lutetiana*.

We noted House Sparrows and Jackdaws, then turned off the path to make our way towards Bottom Wood, passing a field of Rheas which explained our earlier find. A little way into the wood there was a carpet of Wood Sorrel *Oxalis acetosella* and a spreading specimen of Three-veined Sandwort *Moehringia trinervia*. A fallen Silver Birch tree provided a perfect place for our lunch break in dappled shade and sitting still for a few minutes gave the wildlife a chance to come to us. A Snipe Fly *Rhagio lineola*, was captured and we watched a Speckled Wood butterfly flitting in the sunlight. A Wren complained at our presence but there seemed to be reluctance for the group to move on. William encouraged us to look at the orange blobs of a slime mould, which is possibly *Lycogala terrestris*, although to be sure of the species the colour of the spores would need to be checked, and he also found a Devils Coach-horse, *Ocypus olens* under a log.

We ventured further through the wood, spotting Bugle *Ajuga reptans*, Woodruff *Galium odoratum*, and Wood Millet *Milium effusum*. In the northern part of the wood there were quantities of Greater Stitchwort *Stellaria holostea* and Yellow Archangel *Lamiastrum galeobdolon*. A fine specimen of Deer Fungus *Pleuteus cervinus* was also seen when we made a detour from the path to negotiate a fallen tree.

We left the wood behind us then climbed the grassy slope through a herd of curious cattle, pausing to watch a lone Swallow, then followed the path towards the noisy M25, noting a pin cushion gall on a wild rose in the hedgerow.



We crossed the footbridge over the motorway and, in Ladywalk Wood, William pointed out a single specimen of Southern Wood-rush *Luzula forsteri* that he remembered being discovered by

Gerald Salisbury some years previously. After starting the Woodoaks Farm ‘loop’ in a clockwise direction we paused in the corner of the first arable field where there was a rather scruffy looking Hedge Parsley. At the time we took it to be Upright Hedge Parsley *Torilis japonica*, but a return visit was needed a couple of days later to quell any doubts and it proved to be *Torilis arvensis*, which is a very good record for Hertfordshire. In the same field margin we also recorded Wild Carrot *Daucus carota*, Fool’s Parsley *Aethusa cynapium*, Scarlet Pimpernel *Anagallis arvensis*, and during the return visit, Sharp-leaved Fluellen *Kickxia elatine*.

The invertebrates ‘team’ came up trumps again with a Wasp Beetle *Clytus arietus* in a bramble patch while I checked for lichens on the trunk of an Oak tree. I encouraged a few members to look at *Candelaria concolor* through a hand lens; this is a lichen that has become more common during the past twenty years or so. We continued on the loop and recorded a longhorn beetle, *Agapanthia villosoviridescens*. Further along, Field Pansy *Viola arvensis*, was growing at the edge of the field along with Perennial Sow Thistle *Sonchus arvensis* at the side of the track.

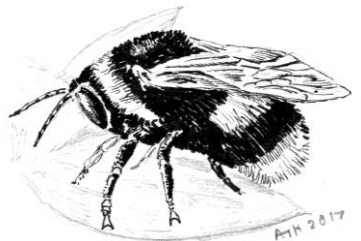
After completing the loop and re-crossing the motorway bridge we followed the path along the hedge where there was little respite from the heat of the afternoon sun. With a growing thirst we concentrated on following the path back to our cars and when those at the front disappeared into the pub we all followed suit and enjoyed a round of cold soft drinks. Just as we thought the list for the day was complete, there was one more find on the window in the pub, later confirmed as *Nysson trimaculatus*, a klepto-parasite of the scarce wasp *Lestiphorus bicinctus*.

Thanks to everyone who came out, we had an enjoyable day in an area of Hertfordshire that we have seldom visited.

*Paula Shipway*

### **Notes**

Additional records for the day included four species of Bumblebee: *Bombus lucorum*, *B. pascuorum*, *B. terrestris* and *B. vestalis*.



## **SMALL MAMMAL TRAPPING AT WILSTONE RESERVOIR NATURE RESERVE**

**Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> August**

7 members, 7 visitors

Fourteen of us met for this meeting: seven BNA members and two visitors (Toby and Harley aged 2, Paula and David Shipway's son and grandson), four people from the Herts & Middx Wildlife Trust (John Taylor, Warden of Wilstone Reservoir Nature Reserve, Laura Baker, Reserves Officer for HMWT, and John and Roy, two of the reserve volunteers) along with Emily, a Ranger from the Ashridge National Trust Estate. All were keen to learn what small mammals were to be found on this Herts & Middx Wildlife Trust Reserve as there were no current records for small mammals there.

Martin Hicks led us through the reserve as we collected his 45 Longworth traps which Jum and I had put down the evening before. The night had been dry and the minimum temperature recorded had been 15°C. Martin gave a short talk, explaining about the traps, before we got started. Nine small mammals were caught (meaning 20% of the traps had catches), results being as follows:

### Wood Mouse:

1. Female (young) at SP9088812844 (long grass).
2. Pregnant female at SP9074712835 (wet woodland).
3. One at a grid ref. very close by the previous one (jumped away before examination) (wet woodland).
4. Male (young) at SP9061412740 (by board walk, nr. stream).

### Bank Vole:

5. Male at SP9073712825 (in nettles).
6. Female at same map. reference (reeds and nettles).
7. One (not sexed) at SP 9055412744 (grassy ride through woodland).

### Common Shrew:

8. One at SP9072912888 (willow carr and bramble).

### Pygmy Shrew:

9. One at SP9074012843 (wet woodland).

(It was not possible to sex the shrews as their sexual organs are internal).

Many thanks to Martin for lending us both the traps and his expertise! William Bishop, Paula (who came part of the way with us), Jum and I then went for a ramble, our route taking us north-west towards the bird hide (where we had lunch) and then into Buckinghamshire and south to the church of St. Mary the Virgin, Drayton Beauchamp, north-west along the Wendover Arm of the Grand Union Canal and back to the cars at the parking place for the reserve. Highlights were as follows:

At the beginning of our ramble, in the hedges bordering the reserve to the south-west and south-east, we noted Hedge Bindweed *Calystegia sepium* with its pure white trumpet flowers and the smaller Field Bindweed *Convolvulus arvensis*, with both white flowers and pink flowers. The latter seemed to vary a great deal - some flowers for example had a pink star radiating outwards from the centre while others had a red centre. We assumed these were genetic differences as the flowers in one section of hedgerow seemed mostly different from those in other sections where there were gaps (where the plant was not present) between the sections.

Further out from the reserve, a Chinese Water Deer ran from one hedgerow across a recently cut field of corn with its large round bales of straw.

Near the bird hide, but still outside the reserve, we lifted up logs by a fallen tree. Under one, there were three Smooth Newts and a Frog. The map reference here was SP9021112855.

In front of the hide were several Greylag and Canada Geese, including one hybrid between the two – interesting. Its broad (typically Greylag) bill was slightly orange and it had a dark head with suggestion of a white patch (typical of Canada Geese) on each side of the face. We were surprised how two birds each of a different genus could breed! Three Common Sandpipers were nearby.

Along the Wendover Arm of the Grand Union Canal, shoals of Rudd/ Roach could be seen in places in the clear water and there were many dragonflies here. Honey Bees were foraging on the flowers of White Bryony on the bank.

Jum, William and I struggled against the very strong wind blowing from the

south-west as we walked along the north-east bank of the reservoir, ending the day at the Wilstone Farm shop café, where William received a text to say that an Osprey had just flown over the reservoir! If only we had just spent another few minutes there....!

**Other records:**

**Butterflies:** Painted Lady, Small Tortoiseshell, Green-veined White, Holly Blue, Speckled Wood, Red Admiral, Small White.

**Lichen:** *Punctelia jeckeri* (identified on the reserve by Paula).

**Other birds:** Common Tern, Tufted Duck, Teal, Pochard, Moorhen, Coot, Black-headed Gull, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Grey Heron, Peregrine (two seen earlier before the meeting by William near the reservoir- they were chasing hirundine birds), Chiffchaff (calling on the reserve while we were opening the traps), Goldfinch, Pied Wagtail (by the north-east reservoir wall), Common Buzzard, Red Kite (William had a much longer list of birds).

**Flowers:** Hemp Agrimony in flower on the reserve (by the board walk), Gipsywort and Water Mint (the latter two both favourite foods of Chinese Water Deer on the reserve).

**Dragonflies:** Brown Hawker and Southern Hawker (along the Wendover Arm), Common Darter.

**Fungi:** Dryad's Saddle (near the bird hide).

The small mammal and Smooth Newt records were submitted for the Hertfordshire Atlas of Mammals, Amphibians & Reptiles, which is currently being updated.



*Mike Demidecki*

## PRESTON AREA for late summer wildlife

Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> September

7 members

This is just a brief note about this meeting, which was led by Ruth Graham. We met at Preston village, and then did a round route, starting across country near Princess Helena College, down to Hitch Wood, which we skirted on its northern side. Our path then led us through Hearnfield Wood towards Temple Dinsley and Whitehall Farm, before returning east again back to Preston. It was a rather dull day, weather-wise, becoming wet later, but not without interest. Hitch Wood came up with the interesting find of the Wasp's-nest Beetle *Metoecus paradoxus*, found beside an active nest of the Common Wasp by a tree trunk. This weird beetle looks more like a fly and has a strange life-cycle that allows it to develop in the nest of the wasp. Towards Whitehall Farm, we also came across quite a colony of the rather rare Slender Bird's-foot Trefoil *Lotus tenuis* beside a field track, along with Centaury *Centaureum erythraea*, both still in flower! A field margin north of Whitehall Farm produced both the ground-hoppers, *Tetrix undulata* and *T. subulata*, both usually seen in the Spring! There was also the dug-out remains of another wasp's nest here, but no beetle. Birds were rather sparse, although we did see a fair range, including the usual Red Kite, a Kestrel, Treecreeper in Hitch Wood, and a male Stock Dove singing. Mammal sightings were limited to Brown Hare, but signs of Fallow Deer, Muntjac, Badger, Rabbit etc. were in evidence. A dead Common Frog on a road near Temple Dinsley was rather late.

This was a 'new' route round for me (strange to admit!), and welcome for that. It also proved that anywhere can come up with something of interest, even on a dull looking day. Thank you Ruth.

**Birds:** Red Kite, Buzzard, Kestrel, Pheasant, Wood Pigeon, Stock Dove, Green Woodpecker, Great Spotted Woodpecker, House Martin, Blackbird, Robin, Chiffchaff, Goldcrest, Great Tit, Blue Tit, Coal Tit, Treecreeper, Wren, Meadow Pipit, Jackdaw, Jay, Chaffinch, Greenfinch, Linnet, Bullfinch, Yellowhammer. (but no House Sparrows or Collared Doves!).

Trevor James



**Elephant Hawk-moth, Boxmoor Cress Beds, 11<sup>th</sup> June. Photo: Joe Gray**



**Hazel Leaf-roller beetle, Heronsgate, 6<sup>th</sup> August. Photo W. Bishop**



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