

BRITISH NATURALISTS' ASSOCIATION
Hertfordshire Branch

BULLETIN No.136



Insect Survey at Redbourn Common
3rd September 2017
Photo: Andrew Harris



Enjoying flowery field margins at Greys Farm, Therfield
Saturday 24th June 2017
(Photo: Chris James)



Watching Buzzards near Nicholl's Great Wood, Redbourn
3rd September 2017
(Photo: Andrew Harris)

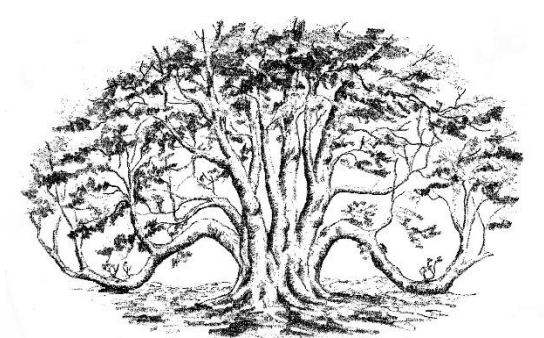
BRITISH NATURALISTS' ASSOCIATION
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BULLETIN 136

May – November 2017

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EDITOR'S BIT

I was pottering around my wildflower meadow late in the day a few weeks ago. During the summer it has supported a good colony of Common Blue butterflies and I noticed how they preferentially rested on the tops of Cock's-foot and Knapweed flowers. The spangled markings on the underside of the wings made them blend in and seem to become part of the flower head. It is these little discoveries that makes natural history such an absorbing subject and also benefitting from the knowledge of a friendly enthusiastic group. I have gained so much from involvement with BNA and the friendship of the branch and this is a welcome opportunity to congratulate one of our long-standing and dedicated members, June Crew, on being named in the New Year Honours last year. June is pictured below receiving a British Empire Medal from the Lord-Lieutenant of Hertfordshire (Robert Voss) and was invited to one of the Queen's garden parties. June received it for 'services to natural history and the community of Broxbourne' and was only one of two people in Herts to be recognised for services to natural history in that list. Though June has not been able to get out much recently she continues to support her local natural history group and is actively involved in a Local Nature Reserve in Broxbourne.

Following the sad passing of Frank Lancaster and Audrey Sage, we remember with fondness and gratitude their lives and involvement with the branch.

Once again, the *Bulletin* features a rich variety of reports. Thank you to all who have led meetings and to Trevor and Chris for helping so much with the compilation of the *Bulletin*. I have not been able to be out as often this year, so have greatly enjoyed reading the reports and I hope, despite the delay with this issue, your interest in natural history will be similarly enthused by them.



Frank Lancaster (1932 – 2018)

It was with great sadness that we received the news that Frank Lancaster, a very long-standing member of our Branch, had died on 29th April 2018.

Frank, along with his wife, Pat, was a very active member of the Branch almost from the time he joined in 1957, having been encouraged to do so by Bryan Sage and Tom Gladwin, when they met in the London Natural History Society. Frank was born on 7th April 1932, and so his time as a member with us has been most of his adult life. His professional career was mostly involved with railways, working with the former British Railways, in which he became a senior manager in charge of track maintenance. He and Pat lived at St Albans until 1985, when they moved to live near the Wyre Forest in Worcestershire, but that did not stop them keeping in touch, and they were frequent visitors, especially at AGMs, which he always enjoyed, chin-wagging with friends.



Frank enjoying a nap at Tregaron Bog, Wales, BNA week, May 1978
(Photo: Trevor James)

Frank was also heavily involved with the Scouts in St Albans, and it was through his knowledge and leadership with them that some of his activities in BNA had their inspiration. Most characteristic of all was his initiation of the 'long treks', in 1978, when he led a small group of us on a long weekend, walking across north Hertfordshire, sleeping rough, eating al fresco and enjoying the landscapes as we passed through them. This was an especially memorable event, as we camped out (illegitimately!) under the stars in Reed Chalk Pit one night, and then in Hitch Wood the next, the latter punctuated by calling Foxes and overhead aeroplanes from Luton Airport!



Frank wading the R. Mimram at Whitwell, during the 'Long Trek', September 1978.
(Photo: Trevor James)

Other treks followed across Hertfordshire in one direction or another, Frank's expertise in scout camp fires always being to the fore in cooking breakfast without leaving behind much evidence. Frank also edited our Branch *Bulletin* for a number of years in the late 1970s-1980s.

When Frank and Pat moved to Bewdley, he tried to set up a similar group to Herts BNA, but the group that emerged did not want to join the Association, and became instead the Wyre Forest Study Group, which is a thriving organisation that has recently published a fine book on Wyre: *The Nature of Wyre*. Frank pioneered butterfly transects in the Forest and was a staunch local supporter of Butterfly Conservation, his work now having led to conservation management work being carried out by the Forestry Commission in the Forest.



Frank, with daughter Jackie and Pat, BNA meeting at Hatfield House, October 2011.
(Photo: Trevor James)

Frank was always a mischievous individual, with a wicked sense of humour, which, despite the onset of Alzheimer's Disease in 2000, never left him. His last years were spent in a specialist home, where he was much loved by staff.



Frank Lancaster tending breakfast fire at Reed Chalk Pit, September 1978.
Photo: Trevor James.

We give our love and condolences to Pat and their children: Jackie, Sally, Robert and Debbie.

Trevor James

Postscript: a commemorative ‘mini-trek’ organised by Sally Lancaster in September 2018

Sally has provided a few words, and two photos, to parallel two of those of Frank, included above:

“We enjoyed ourselves sleeping out in Hitch Wood, making breakfast and trekking down to the point where you all crossed the Mimram 40 years ago. The weather was good for walking, a bit of light rain during the night, enough to make it a bit exciting but not enough to get wet! We saw a few Buzzards, a Kestrel and Pheasants; and Debbie saw a deer. We heard a couple of owls in the night.

I have attached a few photos for you and was pleased to get one of Debbie making the fire in almost exactly the same posture that Frank was in when he was doing the same at the chalk pit.

With good wishes, Sally”



Debbie (Lancaster) making evening fire, during the commemorative 'mini-trek', September 2018.



Sally Lancaster at the (dry) R. Mimram crossing near Whitwell, during the commemorative 'mini-trek', September 2018.

Audrey Sage (1931 – 2018)

It was also with great sadness that, as this *Bulletin* was being put together, we had the news that Audrey Sage, wife of our long-time Vice-President, Bryan, had also died, on 6th August, Bryan's birthday.

As with Frank Lancaster, Audrey joined BNA in the mid-1950s, after she had met Bryan, and took part in activities from the start. She, along with past members Betty Fox, Wynne McCready and Jennifer Palmer, formed a stalwart band of ladies in the Branch, often taking part in the fun of fence-climbing, wall-scaling, stream-crossing, mud-skirting or avoiding bulls! Somehow, she survived all the escapades that Bryan was able to devise, and in their separate life she joined him from an early time to places like Iraq (pre- the fall of the King in the 1950s), Morocco and the former Yugoslavia (at a time when tourists scarcely ventured there).



Audrey Sage on the BNA Santon Downham camping trip, August 1955

In more recent times, she and Bryan explored the World – from the mountains of Ecuador and Kazakhstan to the outback of Australia, Death Valley in the United States and the wilds of Alaska, to name but a few. She always complained, but really was always up for the challenge, one way or another.

When she and Bryan moved to Wells-next-the-Sea in Norfolk in the late 1970s, we saw less of her, although she was always part of the crowd at winter weekends, and occasionally appeared at other times with Bryan, when they visited Hertfordshire. She was very active locally in Wells, too, with the Women's Institute, arts and crafts organisations and the like.

We extend our heart-felt condolences to Bryan, and also to their daughter, Annette and her husband, Jim, in their loss.



Bryan and Audrey Sage at Much Hadham, July 2016
Photo: Trevor James

FIELD MEETING REPORTS 2017



ESSENDON & LITTLE BERKHAMPSTEAD

Sunday 28th May

4 members, 2 visitors

Paula Shipway, William Bishop, Jean Williamson and Merle Gwyn, with two prospective members, Phil and Jan, met in School Lane, Essendon and set off east across Essendon Golf Club, with its mown fairways and interesting stripes of scrub and unmanaged grassland. On close inspection amongst the tall grasses we found the delightful Grass Vetchling *Lathyrus nissolia* and on a waste tip nearby was the unusual Flixweed *Descurainia sophia*, confirmed later after we had taken a sample home.

The golf course was alive with bird song, so good to hear but difficult to differentiate each call. There is always one call that represents spring: that is the Willow Warbler, a rare event in Hertfordshire these days; the short scrub bushes were just the right habitat for them. There were tall conifer trees where the call of a Goldcrest was heard.

On a pile of grass plugs, the remains from a grass aeration machine, was a 16-spot Ladybird. William also identified on the golf course area Hairy Shield-bug, Crucifer Shield-bug, Dark Bush-cricket nymph and Box Bug.

Looking across a lake, there was a nest in a good position for a Coot to rear its young. Near the margin of the lake a Grey Heron was looking eagerly for a likely food source. Other birds within the golf course were: Cormorant, Whooper Swan [presumably a tame bird! T.J.], six Buzzards, Red Kite, Pheasant, Moorhen, Green Woodpecker, Skylark, Song Thrush, Robin, Blackcap, Whitethroat, Willow Warbler, Chiffchaff, Blue Tit, Long-tailed Tit, Wren, Carrion Crow, Magpie, and Chaffinch.

Leaving the golf course, we continued on a path at the bottom of a slope along the south edge of the chalk pit. The verge contained patches of Common Corn-salad *Valerianella locusta*, Creeping Cinquefoil *Potentilla reptans*, Shining Crane's-bill *Geranium lucidum*, and the amusingly named Warty Cabbage *Bunias orientalis*. On the neighbouring chalk bank was an interesting mix of Caper Spurge *Euphorbia lathyris*, Spearmint *Mentha spicata*, Common Centaury *Centaureum erythraea*, Dropwort *Filipendula vulgaris*, Fairy Flax *Linum catharticum* and Wild Strawberry *Fragaria vesca*, many confirming the chalky substrate [It's good to know at least some of the scarce plants that once adorned Bedwell Chalk Pit have escaped the ravages of back-filling, waste-dumping and re-profiling! It used to be a site for Chiltern Gentian as well. T.J.].

In the lane near Ashfield Farm there was confusion over a very melodious call. The call almost resembled a Nightingale but it was decided the call was between a Lesser Whitethroat and a Garden Warbler. We needed Trevor for this identification. Merle thought it was more likely to be Lesser Whitethroat. William did spy a Stock Dove, a rare sighting. A Rook and a Jackdaw were also seen. Through a gap in the hedge we saw a Muntjac grazing. William identified a few Lepidoptera *en route*: the moths *Pseudargyrotoza conwagana*, *Pammene regiana* and *Hedya pruniana*; and the butterflies: Orange-tip, Brimstone and Small White.

We continued east past Ashfield farm and south-east along the Chain Walk, bordered by hedgerows, with Field Maple *Acer campestre*, Hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna* and Blackthorn *Prunus spinosa*, and herbaceous plants Yellow Archangel *Lamium galeobdolon*, Broad Buckler-fern *Dryopteris dilatata* and Honeysuckle *Lonicera periclymenum* in full flower. We were fascinated by the many ancient pollarded Oaks *Quercus robur* and stopped for lunch near a pollarded Hornbeam *Carpinus betulus*.

We then walked up to Little Berkhamstead, passing the tall tower, Strattons Folly, in Bucks Alley. Least Yellow-sorrel *Oxalis exilis* was in the shade near a wall. Turning right into a footpath through a meadow towards the church, Greenfinch, Whitethroat, Great Spotted and Green Woodpeckers were identified. We also came to a large Turkey Oak *Quercus cerris*, badly infested with wasp galls, which look like black currants.

By the time we reached the village centre the weather had become hot and humid. The little shop was open, so ice cream was a welcome diversion and enjoyed whilst observing a Swallow swooping over the cricket field. Along the lane back towards Essendon, near Danes Farm, Paula discovered a very old oak railing fence. She was in her element: the fence was covered in many species of lichens. Some she identified as: *Cladonia macilenta*, *C. coniocraea*, *C. pyxidata*, *Diploschistes muscorum*, *Xanthoparmelia* sp., *Chaenotheca ferruginea*, *Hypocenomyce scalaris* and *Flavoparmelia caperata*.



Paula's lichen fence near Danes Farm (Photo Merle Gwyn)

We then walked back towards the golf course, stopping to collect a specimen of what proved to be Intermediate Polypody *Polypodium interjectum*, growing at the roof edge of an old corrugated iron shed. From the bridge on the edge of the golf course we spotted a good population of Small Balsam *Impatiens parviflora*, with small pale-yellow flowers. Our walk ended with a final crossing of the golf course and back to Essendon village.

Jean Williamson and Merle Gwyn

SHERRARDSPARK WOOD

Sunday 11th June

Alla Mashanova and I waited at the appointed meeting place for around thirty minutes and were surprised when nobody else arrived. I confessed that I had left my mobile phone at home and, having concluded that the leader, Peter Alton, must have had transport difficulties, we decided to set off and see what we could find in the wood. We had already noticed Wood Sage *Teucrium scorodonia*, growing in a scruffy area at the back of the car park next to the Ayot Greenway, which seemed surprising to us considering how close we were to the centre of the city.

We scrambled down a bank to join the Ayot Greenway and immediately noted an easier official route to follow on our return. We made a good start on a bird list, with Nuthatch, Chiffchaff, Blackbird and Goldcrest, and noted a couple of interesting plants, Wood Anemone *Anemone nemorosa* and Stinking Iris *Iris foetidissima*, which was quickly confirmed by smelling a torn leaf. I also noted down Enchanter's Nightshade *Circaea lutetiana* and a garden throw-out variety of Yellow Archangel, *Lamium galeobdolon* ssp. *argentatum* that had successfully invaded the banks on both sides of the track.

Wren and Magpie were added to the list and as we followed the track closer to Sherrardspark Wood we noticed Grey Sedge *Carex divulsa*, Bush Vetch *Vicia sepium* and Barren Strawberry *Potentilla sterilis*. A very common grass, that barely warrants a mention, False Brome *Brachypodium sylvaticum*, was also growing in the shade and I was very interested to hear Alla's explanation of the Latin name. Each flower spikelet is supported on a short stalk and the Latin for 'short' is brachy while podium is translated as 'foot or stalk', hence *Brachypodium*. *Sylvaticum* is translated as 'of woods or forests'.

Having reached the wood, we turned north along a footpath and identified Wood Speedwell *Veronica montana*, Tutsan *Hypericum androsaemum*, Thyme-leaved Speedwell *Veronica serpyllifolia*, Yellow Pimpernel *Lysimachia nemorum*, Common Wood Violet *Viola riviniana*, Marsh Thistle *Cirsium palustre*, Soft Rush *Juncus effusus* and Raspberry *Rubus idaeus*. A Dunnock and a Blackcap sang as we noticed the wide range of tree species, including

Mountain Ash *Sorbus aucuparia* and for identification purposes I collected a few fruiting bodies from a lichen that was widespread on the trunk of an Ash tree. The species was later confirmed as *Opegrapha ochrocheila* and had a magenta-red pigment that was particularly visible after the application of sodium hydroxide. The same Ash proved to be a good habitat for another lichen, *Arthonia spadicea*.

Hunting for more lichens, I spotted a large and well camouflaged moth and time was spent trying to take a photograph that would help with identification. It proved to be a Grey Arches Moth, which is a common species in woodland. After coming across Kerry Robinson, who told us that she had seen Peter in another part of the wood, we took a path to cross over to the west side in the hope of meeting up. *En route* we stood for a moment and watched a couple of butterflies 'dancing' in the sunlight and thought they were probably Speckled Woods.

We failed to find Peter, so decided to explore the northern part of the wood and as we took another path northwards we watched a Song Thrush with a full beak, clearly with a nest close by. We crossed through an area of pine trees, which proved to be a mix of Scots Pine and Black Pine, and compared the different types of cones that were lying on the ground. A leaning Silver Birch tree had a good community of lichens on the 'top' side of the trunk and we noted *Flavoparmelia caperata*, *Hypogymnia physodes* and *Parmotrema perlatum*. In this more acidic area of the wood we found Great Wood-rush *Luzula sylvatica* and Heath Speedwell *Veronica officinalis* and a grass that prefers shady areas, Creeping Soft-grass *Holcus mollis*. An Oak trunk had a good colony of the pin lichen *Chaenotheca ferruginea* and examination of a large area of sedges showed that there was a mix of two different sedges, Remote Sedge *Carex remota* and more Grey Sedge.

Green Woodpecker, Wood Pigeon and Long-tailed Tits were noted and before stopping for lunch Grey Squirrel was added to the list. As we approached the road running along the northern edge of the wood we passed Aspen trees and a damp area provided a couple more plants, Wavy Bitter-cress *Cardamine flexuosa* and Water-pepper *Persicaria hydropiper*.

We emerged onto the road and, dodging more traffic than we had expected, made our way east. We were both surprised by the variety of plants growing

along the verge: Wood Melick *Melica uniflora*, Wood Millet *Milium effusum*, Sweet Woodruff *Galium odoratum*, Greater Stitchwort *Stellaria holostea*, Sanicle *Sanicula europaea*, and more Great Wood-rush. There was a freshly fallen branch from Goat Willow with some curious looking galls on the twigs and despite a good attempt no identification has been possible.

As we set off back into the wood we passed a particularly large Oak and we found another pin lichen on the trunk, *Chaenotheca trichialis*. A little further on a fallen Oak branch provided two more lichen records: *Parmelia saxatilis* and *Fuscidea lightfootii*.

We continued on our way, going south through the wood and on our way around the edge of an old pit found Hairy Wood-rush *Luzula pilosa* and a little further on Slender St. John's-wort *Hypericum pulchrum*. Having followed a short diversion that had been set up to help to prevent wear on an historic bank we were soon back following a short path parallel with the Ayot Greenway, adding one more lichen, *Ramalina fastigiata*, that had fallen from a tree. Red Currant *Ribes rubrum* was added to the growing list and Alla heard a Coal Tit. After a while spent trying to catch sight of another tit that was calling we were happy to add Blue Tit to the list. A Blackbird announced its presence very loudly just above our heads as we left the path and followed a more sensible route back into the car park.

Despite earlier thoughts that the two of us might finish earlier than sometimes, it was still 4.30 pm before we finished our enjoyable day in Sherrardspark Wood.

Postscript

Alla has kindly checked her notebook for any additions and I can add Robin, Dunnock and Blackcap to the birds that we noted during the day.

Paula Shipway

Unknown to either Paula or Alla, Chris and I had planned with Peter to meet up with the party at a location near Dowdell's Wood, west of the A1(M), for lunch. We made it there around the right time, to find no sign of the group, so did our own thing as well – looking at insects etc. around Bladder Wood, and then back along the Ayot Way. Apart from a good haul of new records of

beetles for the forthcoming book, we saw a fine queen Hornet by Bladder Wood, and also recorded a noisy pair of Buzzards and a Green Woodpecker. Butterflies in evidence included Red Admiral, Meadow Brown, Speckled Wood and Large Skipper, but none were numerous. A rather attractive moth swept by Dowdell's Wood was identified later as the Bramble-shoot Moth *Notocelia uddmanniana*.

Trevor James

GREYS FARM, THERFIELD

Saturday 24th June

12 members, 1 visitor

This was a private visit to a special farm, by kind invitation of the owner, Edward Darling. It was also the first time I had managed to attend a field meeting since hospitalisation in February. Chris was down as leader, but we shared the business on the day and I took the notes, so here is my report!

To start with, we were given a brief introduction to the farm and its objectives by Edward. He has been establishing a conservation project called Redlist Revival, and his own farm has been used to demonstrate some of the methods he hopes will be adopted across the UK. These initially included wildflower-sowing of arable margins, but more recently, on advice, he has followed a plan to work with the natural flora of chalk field margins, and to enhance them by minimal cultivation and no pesticide use. Hedgerows are managed on a rotation for conservation purposes and areas are also left fallow. The result has been a considerable enhancement of what was already quite a diverse chalk arable farm, with some rare species of plants and insects recorded. Bird life has also increased considerably.

Our party made its way east from the farm along a main track alongside arable, and we immediately began to encounter some of the more special things. One field held about 20 Lapwings, now rare in the breeding season in Hertfordshire, along with a singing male Meadow Pipit, Red Kite, Buzzards, Red-legged Partridges, Whitethroats, Yellowhammers and even two male

Reed Buntings. Butterflies were numerous, with Small Heath, Small Skipper, Small White, Small Tortoiseshell, Comma, Meadow Browns, Marbled Whites, Large Skipper and Ringlets. I did some sweeping for beetles, finding the diminutive but local weevil *Omphalapion hookerorum* and the flea beetle *Podagrica fuscicornis* (on Tall Musk-mallow *Malva alcea*, which had been sown in mistake for its native cousin *M. moschata*), among others. William Bishop spotted a black chafer beetle on a bramble clump – the black variety of *Omaloplia ruricola*. This species is notable for Hertfordshire, known to breed only on nearby Therfield Heath, so this must have been a wanderer.

The flora was also rich, if partly of sown origin. Native plants here included abundant Common Fumitory *Fumaria officinalis*, of the chalk arable subspecies *wirtgenii*, Small-flowered Fumitory *F. parviflora* (a special rarity of this site), Dense-flowered Fumitory *F. densiflora* (another scarce fumitory of the chalk), Small Toadflax *Chaenorhinum minus* (also now pretty scarce), Venus' Looking-glass *Legousia hybrida* (also scarce), Dwarf Spurge *Euphorbia exigua*, Hop Trefoil *Trifolium campestre* (much less common than it once was), and perhaps best of all, the now-rare Night-flowering Catchfly *Silene noctiflora*. Other introduced plants, attractive for all that, included Chicory *Cichorium intybus*, Sainfoin *Onobrychis viciifolia* (the cultivated form, not the slender, native chalk grassland sort) and Corn Marigold *Glebionis segetum*. In the hedge by the track, I pointed out the local chalk bramble *Rubus cantabrigiensis*, whose main area of distribution is in Cambridgeshire, hence its name. I also took people to see the re-introduced Interrupted Brome *Bromus interruptus*, which I sowed, with Edward Darling's enthusiastic support, along the south side of the main hedgerow two years earlier, towards the bridleway. It has done reasonably well in a small area, but the jury is out as to whether it will survive. It was considered extinct in the wild (a native endemic species) but has now been re-introduced in several places in south-eastern England. As it was discovered new to science in our area in the 19th century, we have some claim to be its natural home!



The chunky flower spikes of *Bromus interruptus*. (Photo: Trevor James)

Our party made its way east of the bridleway and along another flowery hedgerow to a site where Red Hemp-nettle *Galeopsis angustifolia* was found in quantity a few years ago. Unfortunately, this year it had failed to put in an appearance, after rather late cultivation of the field margin in question. However, our guest, Ian Denholm, did find some Prickly Poppy *Papaver hybridum*, and I found a single plant of Sowbane *Chenopodium hybridum* (presumably from manure), by an arable field.

We had lunch by the hemp-nettle field, before making our way back towards the bridleway, finding several Dark-green Fritillary butterflies on flowers along the hedgerow. I also beat a rove beetle *Quedius invreae* out of a hedgerow ash, which turned out to be new to Hertfordshire!

We made our way to the east end of Therfield Heath, stopping briefly to examine more cornfield weeds near the footpath, where we found Sharp-fruited Corn-salad *Valerianella dentata* (another chalk rarity), along with some Common Cudweed *Filago vulgaris*, Henbit Dead-nettle *Lamium amplexicaule* and more fumitories, as before.

Our return walk was along the shade margin of Therfield Heath, where I did a bit of beetle hunting. I was pleased to find the Swollen-thighed Beetle

Oedemera nobilis, which was its first actual record from the Heath (it having spread north-east across the County fairly recently).



Dark Green Fritillary at Greys. (Photo: Chris James)

Finally, on our way back to the cars, we visited the old chalk grassland trial plots behind the Heath, on Greys Farm, where the former Nature Conservancy initiated experiments years ago to see if chalk grassland could be successfully re-created by seeding and management. These plots have shown that, by and large, it can be, although rare plants do not colonise well. We studied the flora and found that it included quantities of Meadow Crane's-bill *Geranium pratense* – hardly a chalk grassland plant! William then came across its special weevil *Zacladus geranii*, which proves that the latter is colonising the county, and is not an overlooked 'native' (it having first turned up on its food-plant at King's Meads, Hertford, the previous year). Plants like Tall Broomrape *Orobancha elatior*, though, have colonised the plots naturally. We also came across more Dark-green Fritillary butterflies.

I am afraid I ran out of steam at this point, although some of the rest joined Edward Darling to look at extra things elsewhere. All told, it was a splendid

day, in good sunshine, looking at some of Hertfordshire's special chalk wildlife.



Birds: Red Kite, Buzzard, Red-legged Partridge, Moorhen (pond at Greys), Lapwing, Wood Pigeon, Collared Dove, Skylark, Swallow, Mistle Thrush, Song Thrush, Blackbird, Robin, Blackcap, Whitethroat, Lesser Whitethroat, Coal Tit, Dunnock, Meadow Pipit, Pied Wagtail, Carrion Crow, Rook, Chaffinch, Greenfinch, Goldfinch, Linnet, Yellowhammer, Reed Bunting, House Sparrow (at Greys).

Trevor James

PRESTON

Saturday 8th July

3 members

With another hot day in prospect we were happy to be able to park our cars in the deep shade along Back Lane and we wondered if the hot weather would deter many from coming out. There were no late arrivals and at 10.15 just three of us ventured out to see what we could find.

There was a clump of Grey Sedge *Carex divulsa* by the school gate and we noticed Jackdaws on the chimneys of the cottages along with a few Wood Pigeons. As we walked north past the school gate a Dunnock took cover in the bottom of a hedge. We walked slowly along noting a few plants growing in the mown verges: Smooth Hawk's-beard *Crepis capillaris*, Self-heal *Prunella vulgaris* and Common Knapweed *Centurea nigra*. Opposite the houses there we noted Meadow Vetchling *Lathyrus pratensis* and Hedge Woundwort *Stachys sylvatica*. The hedge was smothered in Large Bindweed *Calystigea silvatica* and Hedge Bindweed *Calystegia sepium* which, thanks to Alla's knowledge, gave us an ideal opportunity to test the method of separating the two species by studying only the leaves. In *C. silvatica* the lowest veins run into the more rounded sinus whereas in *C. sepium* the lower veins converge with the higher veins. Along the same section of hedge a single Comma butterfly was outnumbered by an extraordinary number of Gatekeepers.

With the day warming up nobody wanted to hurry and we enjoyed a slow amble, noting Nipplewort *Lapsana communis*, Bearded Couch *Elymus canina* and Bush Vetch *Vicia sepium*. By the crossroads there were more plants: Ox-eye Daisy *Leucanthemum vulgare*, Agrimony *Agrimonia eupatoria*, Bird's-foot-trefoil *Lotus corniculatus*, Hairy Brome *Bromopsis ramosa* and Stone Parsley *Sison amomum*, which had the distinctive smell of petroleum when the leaves were crushed.

We walked a little way along Butcher's Lane, adding Small White butterfly and Greater Stitchwort *Stellaria holostea* to the list. I noted down a lichen that was growing on the top rail of a kissing gate, *Candelariella vitellina*, and we followed the footpath towards Dead Woman's Lane. However, we didn't get very far before being stopped short by a patch of Creeping Thistle *Cirsium arvense*. It wasn't the thistle plants that caught our attention but the insect life. We identified Meadow Brown Butterflies, a solitary Marbled White, dozens of Common Soldier Beetles and several Seven-spot Ladybirds, along with invasive Harlequin Ladybirds, and we wished that we had better insect identification skills. Skippers and a hoverfly were photographed, with the hope that we would be able to identify them later. Later on, Simon thought that I was likely to be right with thoughts of a Pied Hoverfly *Scaeva pyrastris*, but photos of skippers proved to be unsuitable for certain identification.

Somewhat reluctantly we moved on, then paused by a lone Ash tree. Having identified a Kidney-spot Ladybird on the trunk, I made a short list of the common lichens: *Physconia grisea*, *Phaeophyscia orbicularis*, *Parmelia sulcata* and *Punctelia subrudecta*.

A little further on we came across a dead shrew lying on the grass and after some discussion took photographs and measurements. Ian Flack later confirmed that we were right thinking it was a Common Shrew, although we had pondered with the possibility of it being a Pygmy Shrew.

We noted Hedge Bedstraw *Galium album* growing at the bottom of a fence and my attention was drawn to one of the fence posts, where I spotted a lichen, *Lecanora conizaeoides*. This lichen was very common during times when there were high levels of atmospheric sulphur dioxide pollution but is

not recorded very often nowadays. We heard Yellowhammers singing as well as a Chiffchaff and a Blackcap, before joining the track known as Dead Woman's Lane. I picked up a stick off the ground that had a few common species of lichen on it, including *Lecanora chlarotera* that was host to a lichenicolous fungus, *Unguiculariopsis thallophila*. It is thought to be a common parasite but under recorded.

We followed the track a little way north before leaving it to follow a path along the edge of a wheat field and listened to Skylarks singing. There were a few common plants along the field margin, including Common Poppy *Papaver rhoeas*, Scentless Mayweed *Tripleurospermum inodorum* and Fool's Parsley *Aethusa cynapium*, but then an unusual looking form of Red Bartsia, *Odontites vernus*, caused us to pause. This proved to be subspecies *serotinus*, with side branches held at a greater than 50 degree angle.

We decided that it was time for a lunch stop, so rested in the shade of an oak tree and listened to the persistent call of a Yellowhammer that perched on the top of a hedge a little way away. Feeling refreshed we set off but then made the decision to shorten the route a little as we hadn't progressed very far. Our detour took us past Stony Wood, where a scrambling plant caught our attention. On closer examination it proved to be Climbing Corydalis *Ceratocapnos claviculata* and an interesting record for Hertfordshire. There were mature conifers in the wood and we assume that this delicate climber was introduced when the trees were planted. A Yellow-tail Moth also caught our attention but proved to be difficult to photograph. After moderate success we continued on our way round a loop back towards Dead Woman's Lane, noting some noisy Goldfinches and several tall examples of Common Hemp-nettle *Galeopsis tetrahit*. We also noted Hairy St. John's-wort, *Hypericum hirsutum* growing next to the path and Ladies Bedstraw *Galium verum* in the field margin. A very tall grass was quickly identified as Creeping Soft-grass *Holcus mollis*.

We hadn't seen or heard any raptors during the day but as we approached Preston I was able to add two final records for the day with a Buzzard and a Red Kite, both of which we expect to see on BNA meetings nowadays.

Paula Shipway

HAMMONDS END FARM

Saturday 22nd July

8 members

Anyone doubting the benefits of organic farming, as compared with its industrial cousin, is advised to wander the public footpaths through Hammonds End Farm, just to the west of Harpenden. The flora to be found in the fields of organically grown crops there is a botanical delight, and the various species were greatly enjoyed by the eight people who attended this meeting. The actual focus of the meeting, though, was insects.

Conditions, however, were not ideal for insect finding – the day saw occasional showers and, later, more persistent rain – but we nevertheless found quite a few species (see below). The individual insect attracting most interest was a handsome hawk moth caterpillar swept off Ladies' Bedstraw *Galium verum* in a field margin. Our initial guess, naturally, was that we were looking at the caterpillar of the Bedstraw Hawkmoth, but when we stopped for lunch, the trusty handbook of Peter Alton informed us that it was actually a Hummingbird Hawk-moth.

With sandwich crumbs dusted from mouths, we set off initially as a single group to examine the farm's fine hedgerows, but the beetle enthusiasts soon peeled off when they saw a large heap of (organic) manure. Were it not for those at the front of the group looking to press on, they could have spent a lot longer than the half hour they did, digging through the pile. While the peloton waited for the stragglers, they enjoyed a brief detour into the Food Smiles allotment within the farm – a superb community organic food cooperative founded by Transition St Albans.

No sooner had the group re-formed than the skies darkened. With the rain looking like it would set in, almost everyone's mind turned to the journey home. However, William Bishop was not quite done for the day, and he swept the foliage of a mature Scot's Pine growing on the edge of Harpenden. After a few swipes, he looked into his net to find an Eighteen-spot Ladybird, a rather under-recorded species for Herts.

Coleoptera (Trevor James): *Ahasverus advena* (local, in dung heap), *Amara aenea*, *Atholus bimaculatus* (local, in dung heap), *Atomaria lewisi* (in dung heap), *Bembidion lampros*, *Bisnius sordidus* (local, in dung heap), *Bruchidius varius*, *Bruchus rufimanus* (Bean Beetle), *Cercyon analis* (in dung heap), *Cercyon unipunctatus* var. *impunctatus* (found by Dan Asaw, local, in dung heap), *Coccinella septempunctata* (Seven-spot Ladybird), *Enicmus histrio*, *Gastrophysa polygoni*, *Ischnopterapion loti*, *Lagria hirta*, *Lithocharis ochracea* (scarce rove beetle, in dung heap), *Longitarsus exsoletus* (scarce flea-beetle, on comfrey at allotment), *Megasternum concinnum* (in dung heap), *Meligethes aeneus* (Common Pollen Beetle), *Myrrha octodecimguttata* (Eighteen-spot Ladybird) (found by William Bishop, local, on pine, Harpenden), *Oedemera lurida*, *Oedemera nobilis* (Swollen-thighed Beetle), *Olibrus aeneus*, *Omonadus floralis* (an ant-beetle, in dung heap), *Phyllotreta undulata*, *Protapion apricans*, *Protapion trifolii*, *Psylliodes luteola* (local, on oaks near Hammonds End Wood), *Psyllobora vigintiduopunctata* (Twenty-two-spot Ladybird), *Pterostichus madidus* (Black Clock Beetle), *Pyrhalta viburni*, *Rhagonycha fulva* (Common Soldier Beetle), *Scydmaenus tarsatus* (in dung heap), *Scymnus rubromaculatus* (a recently recorded ladybird in UK, 2nd Herts record, caught by William Bishop at start of walk, off cypress hedge), *Siagonium quadricorne* (local rove beetle, found by Dan Asaw, Hammond's End Wood), *Sitona lineatus* (Striped Pea Weevil), *Tachinus rufipes*, *Tytthaspis sedecimpunctata* (16-spot Ladybird).

Heteroptera: *Apolygus spinolae*, *Closterotomus norwegicus*, *Coreus marginatus*, *Coreus marginatus*, *Deraeocoris lutescens*, *Heterogaster urticae*, *Heterotoma planicornis*, *Liocoris tripustulatus*, *Oncotylus viridiflavus*, *Palomena prasina*, *Plagiognathus arbustorum*.

Lepidoptera: Cherry Fruit Moth, Comma, Common Blue, Gatekeeper, Hummingbird Hawk-moth (caterpillar), Large White, Meadow Brown, Mother-of-Pearl, Red Admiral, Six-spot Burnet, Small Skipper, Small White,.

Other invertebrates: Common Earwig, Common Field Grasshopper, Oak Bush-cricket.

Amphibian: Common Frog (found by William Bishop, allotments)

Birds: Red Kite, Buzzard, Pheasant, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Wood Pigeon, Collared Dove, Ring-necked Parakeet, Green Woodpecker, Skylark, Swift, Swallow, Blackbird, Robin, Blackcap, Whitethroat, Blue Tit, Coal Tit, Nuthatch, Wren, Carrion Crow, Jackdaw, Magpie, Jay, Chaffinch, Goldfinch, Greenfinch, Linnet, Yellowhammer.

Joe Gray

ALDBURY NOWERS

Saturday 5th August

13 members/guests

The meeting began as a BNA meeting but became a joint venture with the Herts Flora Group, although several of us belong to both. The weather was predicted to be sunny with showers later. However this changed and we experienced an interesting range of meteorological variation. Most of us met at Tring Station, which at a cost afforded good parking; the area near the reserve has limited spaces; we then made our way to the reserve where we met Trevor and Chris James. Trevor had by this stage undertaken some beating and found a couple of interesting weevils, *Kalcapion pallipes* and *Anthonomus rubi*.

The HMWT reserve is split into two pieces of hillside separated by an area of wood (Turlhanger's Wood). My plan, in so far as I had a plan, was to have an easy day and simply explore both these hillside areas, any plants of note to be passed to Ian Denholm for recording.

We set off to check out the lower areas first, which includes Duchie's Piece. The weather at this point was reasonable, with plenty of butterflies about. As we entered the first field a Raven flew over the wood, the 'kronking' from it was as ever loud and constant; it is always nice to see this still less than common bird. The field contained a good range of chalk species of all types. Of interest were the Red Bartsia Bees *Melitta tricincta* visiting the Red Bartsia, whilst ignoring other similar coloured flowers.





Bartsia Bee (Photo: William Bishop)

We then looked for a way into Duchie's Piece, but found the gates locked, so made our way to a lower area to look for Horseshoe Vetch *Hippocrepis comosa* and Basil Thyme *Clinopodium acinos*. Trevor located the former but we failed with the Basil Thyme. I saw a Conopid fly *Sicus ferrugineus* here on a flower. We opted to head for the trees, as the weather looked fairly grim in the valley.

It was still early at 12:00 but given the nature of the weather we had lunch, during which there was a fairly heavy downpour. However, most took shelter under a bush or tree; the possible winner being Chris who managed to blend into a Holly like a flower fairy in natural habitat. (This must be a first – CJ!) By the end of lunch, the rain had departed. Before heading off, a black and white micro moth was found settled on Steve's net, I took this home and identified it as *Ypsolopha sequella*; not rare but very attractive.

We went further along the wood and found the other gate into Duchie's Piece. Again, there was a good range of chalk species, even if no rarities. A few large Fritillary butterflies were seen here, a Clouded Yellow, a few of the tiny bees that visit Harebells *Chelostoma campanularum* (Small Scissor Bee) and the snail *Pomatias elegans* (the only land snail with an operculum). Some Common Lizards were seen basking on logs. We then made our way through the wood to the second area of hillside. Here most opted to sit and admire the view across the vale below. It is a fine sight and in this modern age has almost no pylons or other large structures to mar it.

The Trust has scraped the ground here but the soil was removed and bare chalk exposed, which had little growing on it currently. Initially the sun shone and it was rather lovely but by about 14:00 a rather dark bank of cloud appeared, with thunder and lightning. Again, we headed for the trees. There followed a hail shower of pea-sized stones. On the return journey a number of fungi were seen, and Trevor managed to knock a few Staphylinid beetles out of some of these. Claudi Soler took specimens of the fungi away (see below).

The rest of the return to Tring Station was fairly uneventful. Whilst we probably failed to record much in the way of interesting plants and had a short day thanks to mixed weather, it was good to see this area again, and I hope we might return to give it a better examination one day. Thank you to all those who came.

Birds: Red Kite, Buzzard, Pheasant, Wood Pigeon, Stock Dove, Green Woodpecker, Great Spotted Woodpecker, House Martin, Swallow, Robin, Blue Tit, Marsh Tit (Turlhangers Wood – T.J.), Long-tailed Tit, Wren, Nuthatch, Raven, Carrion Crow, Chaffinch, Bullfinch.

Mammals: Muntjac, Rabbit (droppings), and occasional Hominid.

Reptile: Common Lizard.

Butterflies: Gatekeeper, Brimstone, Red Admiral, Dark-green Fritillary, Silver-washed Fritillary, Small Skipper, Meadow Brown, Large White, Common Blue, Small Copper, Peacock, Green-veined White, Small White, Small Heath, Brown Argus, Marbled White, Clouded Yellow.



Moths (with help from Peter Alton): Dusky Sallow, Yellow Shell, Treble-bar, Dingy Footman, Straw Dot, Common Carpet, *Ypsolopha sequella*, Mother of Pearl, *Pyrausta aurata*.

Beetles (T.J.): *Anthonomus rubi*, *Brachypterolus linariae* (on Toadflax), *Byturus tomentosus* (Raspberry Beetle), *Chaetocnema concinna*, *Cryptocephalus pusillus*, *Eutrichapion ervi*, *Gyrophaena affinis* (local,

staphylinid, in *Crepidotus mollis* fungus), *Kalcapion pallipes* (on Dog's Mercury), *Mecinus pascuorum*, *Nebria brevicollis*, *Oedemera lurida*, *Oulema duftschmidi*, *Pterostichus madidus* (Black Clock Beetle), *Pyrrhalta viburni* (Viburnum Beetle), *Rhinusa antirrhini* (on Toadflax), *Salpingus planirostris*, *Sermylassa halensis* (a leaf beetle, on Ladies Bedstraw), *Stilbus testaceus*, *Tachyporus chrysomelinus*, *Tillus elongatus* (scarce, predator of woodworm beetles), *Xylocleptes bispinus* (Clematis Bark-beetle).

Dragonflies: Southern Hawker, Brown Hawker.

Bugs (T.J., only a few noted): *Dolychoris baccarum*, *Palomena prasina*, *Pentatoma rufipes*.

Grasshoppers/Crickets (T.J.): Speckled Bush-cricket, Dark Bush-cricket, Meadow Grasshopper.

Bees: *Melitta tricincta* (Bartsia Bee), *Chelostoma campanularum* (Harebell Carder-bee), *Bombus terrestris* (Buff-tailed Bumblebee), *Bombus lapidarius* (Red-tailed Bumble-bee), *Apis mellifera* (Honey Bee).

Fungi (from Claudi Soler): *Crepidotus mollis* (Peeling Oysterling), on ash, *Daldinia concentrica* (King Alfred's Cake). On beech, *Nectria cinnabarina* (Coral Spot). *Pluteus cervinus* (Deer Shield), *Pluteus salicinus* (Willow Shield), *Polyporus leptcephalus* (Blackfoot Polypore), *Lycoperdon pyriforme* (Stump Puffball) and *Mycena galericulata* (Common Bonnet).

Lichen relative (from Paula Shipway): *Arthropyrenia analepta*, a probable under-recorded species of non-lichenised fungus with only about three Herts. records.

William Bishop

KNOCKING HOE AND THE PEGSDON HILLS

Saturday 19th August

No report

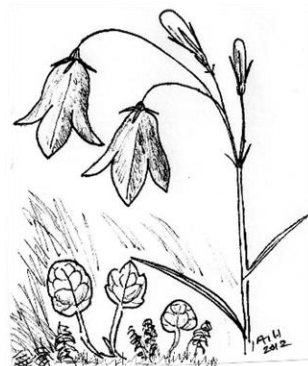
REDBOURN AND FLAMSTEAD

There and back again

Sunday 3rd September

There.....

It did not take long for lichens to cause long delays once we left the meeting place on Redbourn Common. The first delay was at a Grey Poplar with upwards of seventeen species of lichens on it, including an impressive drift of *Candelaria concolor*, a lichen beginning to become established in Hertfordshire, as well as a mystery species which Paula Shipway later identified as *Phycia tribacia*, a fifth Hertfordshire record of a species uncommon in this part of the country. The flora on Redbourn Common was still looking good, with several patches of Harebell *Campanula rotundifolia* in flower. We did not move far before we encountered a second Grey Poplar, with an equally impressive community of lichens, including a large swathe of the bearded lichen *Usnea subfloridana*.



There being no further distractions we left the Common and housing estates behind and headed along a footpath bordering bean fields. These had a good range of arable weeds, among them Sharp-leaved Fluellen *Kickxia elatine* and plentiful Dwarf Spurge *Euphorbia exigua*. William Bishop pointed out a fine cluster of Ramshorn Galls on an Oak. Noise pollution became ever more incessant and it was not long before we came up to the M1, where a bridge takes the access road to Nicholls Farm across it. Upon crossing the bridge, we encountered several clumps of a spurge on the embankment, which, as William said, was beautiful but for the present remained a mystery. This was later determined by Alla Mashanova (in later discussion with T.J.) as Balkan Spurge *Euphorbia oblongata*. [It also grows by the M1 bridge over the road to Gaddesden Row, near The Aubreys hillfort, not far away – T.J.]



Balkan Spurge *Euphorbia oblongata* by the M1 bridge (photo Andrew Harris)

We skirted some paddocks, whereupon the route then turned westwards following the ancient boundary hedge marking the border between the parishes of Redbourn and Flamstead. Two ancient woodlands are continuous with the hedge and we soon entered the charmingly named Rabbitfield Spring. The trees filtered out much of the traffic noise and we were in a different world. Hornbeams and Ash lined the route and by the path were drifts of Wood Melick *Melica uniflora* and a small amount of Sanicle *Sanicula europaea*. After Rabbitfield Spring came Nicholls Great Wood, then emerging into the open we had lunch in a sheltered corner. Meanwhile, armed with binoculars, members of the group watched a family party of Buzzards around a carcass across the valley and a Red Kite landed. We followed the old hedgerow between large arable fields and came to another surviving ancient feature of the landscape, the green lane which follows the brow of a large dry valley with the hamlet of Trowley Bottom lying below. This old route has locally been variously called Jack's Dell Lane, Mud Lane and Hogturd Lane. This marked the parting of the ways, as I had to reluctantly leave the party and make my way home and entrust the remainder of the walk into the capable hands of Paula.

Andrew Harris

....and back

Our leader for the morning, Andrew, needed to go home, so I took up the baton and led our little group. Following the green lane, we were pleased to be sheltered from the easterly wind. We passed some colourful toadstools, possibly a species of *Russula*, but without a mycologist in the group we couldn't be sure. The banks either side of the track provided a good habitat for Wood Melick *Melica uniflora* and after examining a small branch lying on the ground I pointed out a lichen *Fuscidea lightfootii*.

Before turning off right to head back towards Redbourn, those at the front had stopped to examine a *Sorbus* tree. After a few minutes with a field guide, following William Bishop's gallant effort to reach a leaf, the conclusion was that it was Broad-leaved Whitebeam *Sorbus latifolia*. Considering the position of the tree the conclusion was that it was bird sown and not planted.

From the more exposed path, Alla spotted two different mayweeds growing close together. We paused to compare them as Scentless Mayweed *Tripleurospermum inodorum* has a solid receptacle and Scented Mayweed *Matricaria recutita* has a hollow receptacle. We also spotted the pink flowered form of Wild Radish *Raphanus raphanistrum* but unfortunately the wind prevented us from being able to photograph the beautiful dark veined flowers. A mature specimen of the shrubby lichen *Ramalina fastigiata*, with trumpet-like fruiting bodies, was growing in a sheltered position in the hedge and was an easier proposition for photographers in the group. An intriguing gall on Hawthorn was also photographed but unfortunately not identified.

A 14-spot Ladybird landed on Alla's hand, then seemed reluctant to leave again and a Speckled Wood butterfly found a sheltered spot on the path in front of us. We also noted a Badger latrine below the hedge. The threat of rain was increasing and we hurried back across the bridge over the M1 towards our cars. The last record I have for the day was for a Grey Squirrel in a sycamore tree shortly before we reached Redbourn Common.

With thanks to Andrew for finding us a new area to explore. We all had a good day.

Paula Shipway

Birds (with thanks to William Bishop): Red Kite, Buzzard, Sparrowhawk, Kestrel, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Wood Pigeon, Collared Dove, Green Woodpecker, Swallow, House Martin, Great Tit, Long-tailed Tit, Pied Wagtail, Starling, Carrion Crow, Jackdaw, Magpie, Jay, Goldfinch.



Mammals: Badger (latrines), Grey Squirrel.

Butterflies: Speckled Wood and Small Copper.

Other invertebrates: 7-spot Ladybird, 14-spot Ladybird.

Lichens:

First White Poplar: *Candelaria concolor*, *Candelariella reflexa*, *Flavoparmelia caperata*, *Lecanora chlorotera*, *Lecanora expallens*, *Parmelia sulcata*, *Phaeophyscia orbicularis*, *Physcia adscendens*, *Physcia aipolia*, *Physcia tribacea*, *Physconia grisea*, *Punctelia jeckeri*, *Punctelia subrudecta*, *Ramalina farinacea*, *Ramalina fastigiata*, *Xanthoria parietina*.

Second White Poplar: *Evernia prunastri*, *Hypogymnia physodes*, *Usnea subfloridana*.



Plants: Fool's Parsley *Aethusa cynapium*, Black Grass *Alopecurus myosuroides*, Parsley-piert *Aphanes arvensis*, Common Orache *Atriplex patula*, Winter-cress *Barbarea vulgaris*, Rye Brome *Bromus secalinus*, Fat-hen *Chenopodium album*, Dwarf Spurge *Euphorbia exigua*, Balkan Spurge

Euphorbia oblongata, Black Bindweed *Fallopia convolvulus*, Cut-leaved Crane's-bill *Geranium dissectum*, Sharp-leaved Fluellen *Kickxia elatine*, Nipplewort *Lapsana communis*, Swine-cress *Lepidium coronopus*, Redshank *Persicaria maculosa*, Field Speedwell *Veronica persica*, Field Pansy *Viola arvensis*.

TRING PARK MAMMAL RECORDING

Sunday 17th September

6 members/guests

This meeting was primarily arranged for mammal recording. We were fortunate to have the help and expertise of Martin Hicks, who led the first part of the meeting. Martin opened 59 Longworth small mammal traps which he and I had put down on land newly acquired by the Woodland Trust (this land lying along the west side of Hastoe Lane and immediately south of the embankment of the A41 bypass) at Tring. The newly acquired land is 63 acres in extent and includes arable land divided by hedgerows.

One line of traps were set in a north-south direction along the eastern edge of the land, alongside woodland scrub separating the arable field from Hastoe Lane. A second line was placed on the other side of the field, also in a north-south direction, alongside an old hedge. The field itself was of stubble, with many wild plants already established. During the previous year no sprays or fertilisers had been used but, before that, this field and the other arable fields had been subjected to chemical treatment.

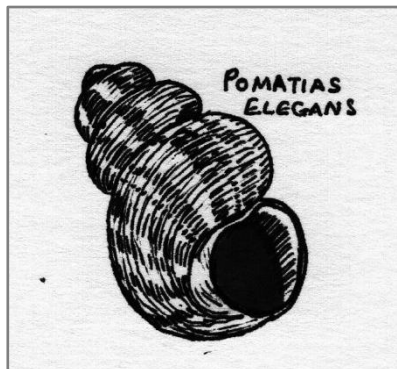
Six of us met for the meeting. Besides Martin and myself there were William Bishop, his friend Phil, Geoff Howe (a volunteer with the Woodland Trust who came along out of interest) and his daughter Esme (currently studying for her A levels). We were very surprised, especially Martin, at how many traps were closed when we came to look at them. In all we caught 43 small mammals (which is a 73% success rate). There were 34 Wood Mice, 6 Bank Voles and 3 Short-tailed Voles. Most of the traps had been set in long grass at the field edges. The Wood Mice ranged from juveniles to mature adults, with some females appearing to be pregnant.

After opening the traps three of us looked more closely at the fields we had been allowed to have access to, (by kind permission of the Woodland Trust), noting some of the many 'arable weeds' that were coming up amongst the stubble and (in William's case) sweeping some of these for insects. Plants noted included Common Poppy, Dwarf Spurge, Common Toadflax, Small Toadflax (a good stand of this), Common Fumitory, Scentless Mayweed, Field Bindweed and Black-grass. Sweeping the Common toadflax produced a caterpillar of the Toadflax Brocade moth.

We mused that perhaps if the stubble fields (which are chalky) were tilled and fresh arable crops sown, harvested and the stubble then left to over-winter, more arable weeds might appear; also, the winter stubble might attract flocks of finches, this being a rare sight today in Hertfordshire. The complex of land here would then reflect a traditional Chilterns mixed farming landscape, with arable, grassland and woodland. All of us were of the opinion that this would be a great way to manage the land.

Our interest in the fields meant we strayed a little from my planned route, so we had to walk westwards through Stubbing's Wood to reach the western - most footpath. We followed this, leaving the woodland edge to skirt round a field to the south of West Leith Farm and then to follow a byway along the county boundary to Hastoe. At 244 meters above sea level, this is the highest point in Hertfordshire. Time was pressing now and after walking eastwards along the road we made our way south again through Stubbing's Wood and, following its western edge once again, returned back to Hastoe Lane.

Interesting finds along the way were Irish Ivy along the western edge of Stubbing's Wood and some old shells of the Round-mouthed snail *Pomatias elegans*, the land snail with an operculum which closes the aperture when the animal withdraws into its spiral sculpted shell. We saw a live specimen too on the trunk of a tree. It was quite active (and much photographed) but then suddenly fell to the ground, whereupon it promptly used the operculum to seal itself



inside its shell. Climbing up towards Hastoe, we were surprised to find Wall Lettuce, quite abundant by the side of the path and some of it in flower. There was also a Loganberry (hybrid between Raspberry and Blackberry) bush here. When the sun came out a Speckled Wood butterfly fluttered along the edge of Stubbing's Wood.

Birds recorded were Buzzard, Chiffchaff (singing apparently, although I didn't hear it) and Goldcrest. There were Pheasants in the field to the west of Stubbing's Wood, and a Red-legged Partridge stared at us intently at one point from the field edge. A Nuthatch called near Hastoe.

So far as other mammals were concerned, we did note a rabbit warren along the hedgerow on the newly acquired Woodland Trust land at SP924106. (During reconnoitres for the meeting I had noted a large and active Badger sett on the side of Grim's Ditch and Grey Squirrels on the path by Grim's Ditch at SP935093 and on Browns Lane at SP918092).

Michael Demidecki



Left: weighing a Wood Mouse. Top right: Bank Vole. Bottom right: Wood Mouse

(All photos: Mike Demidecki)

PATMORE HEATH AREA, ALBURY

Sunday 30th September

6 members

A beautiful autumn day greeted the six of us at Patmore Heath Nature Reserve and we hoped the ground conditions were going to be right for finding a few fungi.

The Heath looked very attractive in the sunshine and there was plenty to find and look at in our various species groups, not just fungi – enough, in fact, to keep us there for the whole morning. So we had a lovely time, exploring this small corner almost on the border with Essex. Claudi, Peter and I looked mostly at fungi and between us we assembled a reasonable list, including species of grassland such as Yellow Club *Clavulinopsis helvola*, the attractive Scarlet Waxcap *Hygrocybe coccinea*, both species of the miniature moss caps *Rickinella fibula* and *R. swartzii*, the Dewdrop Mottlegill *Panaeolus acuminatus* and *Banded Mottlegill* *P. cinctulus*. At the large end of the scale, we found some majestic Parasols *Macrolepiota procera*, a huge Penny Bun *Boletus edulis*, several Stubble Rosegills *Volvariella gloiocephala* and a clump of strangely distorted Spotted Toughshank *Rhodocollybia maculata*. By the time we had poked around under most of the oak and birch trees, the damp vegetation around the ponds and the scrubby patches, our list had grown to over 50 species (see list).

Having thoroughly enjoyed what the Heath had offered us, we decided we needed to walk a little more briskly in the afternoon so, after eating our picnics, we set off on a very pleasant walk along footpaths around Hixham Hall and Kings, to the north-east of Patmore Heath and Patmore Hall Wood. A different and complimentary range of fungi habitats yielded another list, including species growing on soil, twigs and tree trunks, horse dung, rotting wood as well as grassy paths.



Spotted Toughshank *Rhodocollybia maculata* - Patmore Heath
Photo: Chris James



Clubfoot *Clitocybe clavipes* - Patmore Heath
Photo: Chris James

The lawns of the large house at King's were covered in several kinds of fungi and the huge temptation to climb over the gate and have a look had to be resisted, sadly! However, an attractive green lane with old trees west of here was of interest for fungi and beetles and we took our time wandering along it before arriving back at the cars.

Chris James

Birds (Trevor James): Red Kite, Buzzard, Pheasant, Wood Pigeon, Collared Dove, Green Woodpecker, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Skylark, Mistle Thrush, Robin, Blackcap, Chiffchaff, Goldcrest, Great Tit, Blue Tit, Coal Tit, Long-tailed Tit, Wren, Dunnock, Nuthatch, Treecreeper, Meadow Pipit, Pied Wagtail, Rook, Jackdaw, Magpie, Jay, Chaffinch, Greenfinch, Goldfinch, Linnet, Bullfinch, Yellowhammer.

Mammals (T.J.): Grey Squirrel, Rabbit, Mole (hills).

Butterflies/Moths (T.J.): Red Admiral, Small Copper, Large White, Sycamore Moth (caterpillar) (found by Claudi Soler).

Grasshoppers: Common Field Grasshopper.

Beetles (T.J.) Patmore Heath: *Aphthona euphorbiae*, *Coccinella septempunctata* (Seven-spot Ladybird), *Corticaria gibbosa*, *Mocyta fungi*, *Phyllotreta nigripes*, *Sitona lineatus* (Striped Pea-weevil), *Strophosoma melanogrammum*. By Patmore Hall Wood: *Stilbus testaceus*, *Tachyporus hypnorum*. Green lane near 'King's': *Coccinella septempunctata*, *Dorcus parallelepipedus* (Lesser Stag Beetle) (larval tunnels in fallen ash tree), *Hermaeophaga mercurialis* (Mercury Flea-beetle), *Scaphidema metallicum* (scarce, in dead ivy stems).

Plants of note (T.J.): Patmore Heath: Harebell *Campanula rotundifolia*, Common Knapweed *Centaurea nigra* (in the strict sense), Narrow Buckler-fern *Dryopteris carthusiana*, Heath Bedstraw *Galium saxatile*, Stinking Iris *Iris foetidissima*, Purple Moor-grass *Molinia caerulea*, Mat-grass *Nardus stricta*,

Upright Tormentil *Potentilla erecta*, Devil's-bit Scabious *Succisa pratensis*. By Patmore Hall Wood: Common Centaury *Centaureum erythraea*; Smooth Tare *Vicia tetrasperma*. Near Hixham Hall: Betony *Betonica officinalis*. Near 'King's': Tufted Forget-me-not *Myosotis laxa*.

Fungi at Patmore Heath: Camembert Brittlegill *Russula amoenolens*, Ochre brittlegill *R. ochroleuca*, Powdery Brittlegill *R. parazurea*, Blackening Brittlegill *R. nigricans*, Wood Woolly-foot *Gymnopus peronata*, Buttercap *Rhodocollybia butyracea*, Spotted Toughshank *R. maculata*, Clubfoot *Ampulloclitocybe clavipes*, Clouded Funnel Clitocybe *nebularis*, Aniseed Funnel *C. odora*, Chicken Run Funnel *C. phaeophthalma*, The Deceiver *Laccaria laccata*, Amethyst Deceiver *L. amethystina*, The Blusher *Amanita rubescens*, Fly Agaric *A. muscaria*, Tawny Grisette *A. fulva*, Grey-spotted *Amanita A. excelsa* var *spissa* (unconfirmed), Orange Mosscap *Rickinella fibula*, Collared mosscap *R. swartzii*, Rooting Shank *Xerula radicata*, Stubble Rosegill *Volvariella gloiocephala*, Honey Fungus *Armillaria mellea*, Dewdrop Mottlegill *Panaeolus acuminatus*, Banded Mottlegill *P. cinctulus*, Parasol *Macrolepiota procera*, Stinking Dapperling *Lepiota cristata*, Drab Bonnet *Mycena aetities*, Milking Bonnet *M. galopus*, Iodine Bonnet *M. filopes*, Angel's Bonnet *M. arcangelina*, Lilac Bonnet *M. pura*, Snapping Bonnet *M. vitilis*, Frosty Webcap *Cortinarius hemitrichus*, *C. raphanoides* (with birch, unconfirmed), Bay Bolete *Boletus badius*, Penny Bun *B. edulis*, Brown Birch Bolete *Leccinum scabrum*, Red-cracking Bolete *Xerocomus cisalpinus* (unconfirmed), Rollrim *Paxillus involutus*, Scarlet Waxcap *Hygrocybe coccinea*, Ugly Milkcap *Lactarius turpis*, Birch Milkcap *L. tabidus*, Oakbug Milkcap *L. quietus*, a White Knight either *Tricholoma album* or *T. stiparophyllum*, a Bell toadstool *Galerina* sp, Dryad's Saddle *Polyporus squamosus*, Turkeytails *Trametes versicolor*, Dusky Puffball *Lycoperdon nigrescens*, Candlesnuff *Xylaria hypoxylon*, a slime mould on grass *Mucilago crustacea*.

Fungi on the walk: Bearded Milkcap *Lactarius pubescens*, Inky Mushroom *Agaricus moelleri*, Blue Roundhead *Stropharia caerulea*, Birch Knight *Tricholoma fulvum*, Common Bonnet *Mycena galericulata*, Fanvault Bonnet

Hemimycena mairei, a woodland parasol *Macrolepiota konradii*, Goldleaf Shield *Pluteus romellii*, Russet Toughshank *Gymnopus dryophilus*, Indigo Pinkgill *Entoloma chalybaeum*, Velvet Shank *Flammulina velutipes*, Shaggy inkcap *Coprinus commatus*, Glistening Inkcap *Coprinopsis micaceous*, Common Inkcap *C. atrementaria*, Field Blewit *Lepista saeva*, Clustered Brittlestem *Psathyrella multipedata*, Snowy Waxcap *Hycrocybe virginea*, Egghead Mottlegill *Panaeolus semi-ovatus*, Poison Pie *Hebeloma crustuliniforme*, Yellow Fieldcap *Bolbitius titubans*, Lilac Fibrecap *Inocybe lilacina*, Sticky Scalycap *Pholiota gummosa*, Shaggy Bracket *Inonotus hispidus*, Cramp Balls *Daldinia concentrica*, Bleeding Oak Crust *Stereum gausapatum*, Jelly Ear *Auricularia auricula-judae*, Stump Puffball *Lycoperdon pyriforme*, Jelly Rot *Phlebia tremellosa*, Oak Crust *Peniphora quercina*, Blushing Rosette *Abortiporus biennis*.

A total of 85 species of fungi for the day at Patmore Heath and locality.



A Slime Mould *Mucilago crustacea* on grass

Photo: Chris James

NORTHAW GREAT WOOD

Saturday 14th October

6 Members

The fungi season started early in 2017. The abundant summer rain and mild temperatures made August a very prolific month for Boletes and Russulas. By the time we got to October most Boletes had disappeared. However, we still had many other interesting fungi. Two species that we don't see very often are the Silky Piggyback *Asterophora parasitica* and the Powdery Piggyback *Asterophora lycoperdioides*. Both are small and would be unremarkable if it wasn't for the fact that they grow on top of other fungi, especially on the decaying Blackening Brittlegill *Russula nigricans*, very abundant in the summer this year. They look very similar, but on closer examination the surface of the cap is different, silky in *A. parasitica* while *A. lycoperdioides* has a powdery coating. The look of the gills is also helpful for identification. The former has properly formed gills, while the latter are very rudimentary or completely non-existent. Another unusual species we found was the Parasitic Bolete *Pseudoboletus parasiticus*. It has the appearance of an ordinary bolete but if you look closely you can see it is attached to the fruit body of the Common Earthball *Scleroderma citrinum*, which it parasitises.

We found seven species of brittle-gills, the most species for a single genus, but all in limited numbers: *Russula atropurpurea*, growing under a range of deciduous trees, *Russula betularum* under birch, *Russula fellea*, geranium-scented and growing under beech, *Russula fragilis*, small and delicate, *Russula nigricans*, mostly old and rotten, and *Russula ochroleuca*, possibly the most common brittlegill of all. The seventh we couldn't identify. We found four Amanitas, the False Death-cap *Amanita citrina*, with its raw potato smell, the Tawny Grisette *Amanita fulva*, commonly found close to birches, and also the Fly Agaric *Amanita muscaria*. We found a single specimen of the Panther-cap *Amanita pantherina*, not yet fully opened and already partially eaten. Strangely enough we didn't see (or possibly didn't record) the Blusher *Amanita rubescens*, normally common. There were three Mycenas, the Angel's Bonnet *Mycena arcangeliana*, the Common Bonnet *Mycena galericulata* on wood and the Rosy Bonnet *Mycena rosea* on the ground.

Xerula radicata is a species commonly found under beech, attached to its roots or to underground bits of rotten wood. We found a single fruit body, old but still recognisable by its tall stature and long root.

We found some Ascomycetes too, none rare but still worth mentioning. The first one was infecting the unopened buds of the Rhododendron flowers close to the car park. *Pycnostysanus azaleae* is a common species where Rhododendron grows, unremarkable from a distance, but if looked at with a magnifying glass a profusion of a kind of black needles can be seen covering the surface of the buds, giving them a darker appearance. When a lot of buds are infected the species becomes more obvious and the identification can be done from a distance.

The pink and orange dots of the Coral-spot *Nectria cinnabarina* can be found on most forays on wooden sticks, normally still attached to the main plant stem. It is colourful and pretty. The Lemon Disco *Bisporella citrina* is lemon yellow and also found in similar habitat.

We recorded a total of 54 species of fungi with a further four species identified to genus only.

As we didn't leave the woods, the number of species of plants and birds we saw was low. We found a very nice clump of Yellow Pimpernel *Lysimachia nemorum* in flower, also Marsh Pennywort *Hydrocotyle vulgaris* and Lesser Spearwort *Ranunculus flammula* in a wet patch.

Claudi V. Soler

Fungi:

ASCOMYCETES

<i>Annulohypoxylon multiforme</i>	Birch Woodwart	on Birch bark
<i>Bisporella citrina</i>	Lemon Disco	on deciduous dead wood
<i>Diatrypella quercina</i>	a type of Barkspot	on Oak bark
<i>Nectria cinnabarina</i>	Coral Spot Fungus	on deciduous dead wood
<i>Peziza sp</i>	a Cup	on the ground
<i>Pycnostysanus azaleae</i>		on the buds of Rhododendron
<i>Rhopoglyphus filicinus</i>	Bracken map	on the dead stems of Bracken

<i>Rhytisma acerinum</i>	Tar Spot	on the fallen leaves of Sycamore
<i>Xylaria hypoxylon</i>	Candlesnuff Fungus	on rotten deciduous wood

BASIDIOMYCETES

<i>Amanita pantherina</i>	Panthercap	on the ground, not fully opened yet
<i>Amanita citrina</i>	False Death-Cap	on the ground
<i>Amanita fulva</i>	Tawny Grisette	on the ground close to birch
<i>Amanita muscaria</i>	Fly Agaric	on the ground close to birch
<i>Ampuloclitocybe clavipes</i>	Club Foot	on the ground
	Bulbous Honey	
<i>Armillaria gallica</i>	Fungus	
<i>Armillaria mellea</i>	Honey Fungus	
<i>Asterophora</i>		
<i>lycoperdioides</i>	Powdery Piggyback	on decaying Blackening Milkcap
<i>Asterophora parasitica</i>	Silky Piggyback	on decaying Blackening Milkcap
<i>Byssomerulius corium</i>	Netted Crust	on dead deciduous bark
<i>Clavulinopsis helvola</i>	Yellow Club	on a grassy area with moss
<i>Clitocybe nebularis</i>	Clouded Agaric	on the ground
<i>Coprinellus micaceus</i>	Glistening Inkcap	on rotten deciduous wood
<i>Cortinarius sp</i>		on the ground, purplish colour
<i>Crepidotus variabilis</i>	Variable Oysterling	on deciduous wood
<i>Fistulina hepatica</i>	Beefsteak Fungus	on Oak
	Hoof	
<i>Fomes fomentarius</i>	Fungus/TinderBracket	on a fallen Birch trunk
<i>Ganoderma australe</i>	Southern Bracket	on Beech
<i>Gymnopus fusipes</i>	Spindle Toughshank	at the base of an Oak
<i>Hymenochaete rubiginosa</i>	Oak Curtain Crust	on Oak dead wood
<i>Hypholoma fasciculare</i>	Sulphur Tuft	on Birch
<i>Laccaria amethystina</i>	Amethyst Deceiver	on the ground
<i>Laccaria laccata</i>	Deceiver	on the ground
<i>Lactarius subdulcis</i>	Mild Milkcap	on the ground
<i>Lactarius tabidus</i>	Birch Milkcap	on the ground
<i>Lactarius turpis</i>	Ugly Milkcap	on the ground
<i>Lycoperdon perlatum</i>	Common Puffball	on the ground
<i>Lycoperdon pyriforme</i>	Stump Puftball	on rotten deciduous wood
<i>Mycena arcangeliana</i>	Angel's Bonnet	on deciduous wood
<i>Mycena galericulata</i>	Common Bonnet	on deciduous wood
<i>Mycena rosea</i>	Rosy Bonnet	on the ground
<i>Panellus stipticus</i>	Bitter Oysterling	on Oak dead wood

<i>Paxillus involutus</i>	Brown Rollrim	on the ground unopened, half buried on the ground
<i>Phallus impudicus</i>	Stinkhorn	
<i>Piptoporus betulinus</i>	Birch Polypore	on dead Birch wood small single specimen on Oak dead wood
<i>Pluteus sp</i>	a Shield	
<i>Psathyrella sp</i>	a Brittlestem	on the ground
<i>Pseudoboletus parasitius</i>	Parasitic Bolete	on Common Earthball
<i>Rhodocollybia butyracea</i>	Buttter Cap	on the ground
<i>Russula atropurpurea</i>	Purple Brittle-gill	on the ground
<i>Russula betularum</i>	Birch Brittle-gill	on the ground, close to Birch on the ground. Pelargonium smell
<i>Russula fellea</i>	Geranium Brittle-gill	
<i>Russula fragilis</i>	Fragile Brittle-gill	on the ground
<i>Russula nigricans</i>	Blackening Milkcap	many, decaying on the ground
<i>Russula ochroleuca</i>	Ochre Brittle-gill	on the ground
<i>Schizopora paradoxa</i>	Split Porecrust	on deciduous dead wood
<i>Scleroderma citrinum</i>	Common Earthball	on the ground
<i>Trametes versicolor</i>	Turkeytail	on deciduous dead wood
<i>Xerula radicata</i>	Rooting shank	on the ground

Birds (Trevor James): Buzzard, Pheasant, Wood Pigeon, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Skylark (overhead), Blackbird, Robin, Goldcrest, Great Tit, Blue Tit, Coal Tit, Marsh Tit, Nuthatch, Treecreeper, Wren, Carrion Crow, Jackdaw, Jay, Chaffinch, Redpoll (6 at the 'Heather Glade' near the car park), Siskin (at the 'Heather Glade').

Mammals (T.J.): Muntjac, Grey Squirrel.

Beetles (T.J.): *Autalia impressa* (a rove beetle, in *Clitocybe nebularis* fungus), *Endomychus coccineus* (False Ladybird) (several in old rotten beech near 'Heather Glade'), *Notiophilus biguttatus* (a ground beetle), *Tasgius melanarius* (a large rove beetle).

Wasps etc. (T.J.): *Vespa crabro* (Hornet) (a large queen, under bark).

Plants of note (T.J.): *Agrostis canina* (Velvet Bent), *Cardamina flexuosa* (Wavy Bittercress) (in flower!), *Carex pilulifera* (Pill Sedge), *Hydrocotyle*

vulgaris (Marsh Pennywort), *Juncus bulbosus* (Bulbous Rush), *Juncus tenuis* (Slender Rush), *Lysimachia nemorum* (Yellow Pimpernel), *Potentilla erecta* (Upright Tormentil), *Ranunculus flammula* (Lesser Spearwort), *Ruscus aculeatus* (Butcher's Broom) (old bush at pond, W. end of wood – long known here)

HITCH WOOD

Sunday 29th October

Fungi recorded by Kerry Robinson:

Amanita rubescens, *Boletus erythropus*, *Clitocybe fragrans*, *C. nebularis*, *Coprinellus micaceus*, *Coprinopsis atramentarius*, *Crepidotus variabilis*, *Entoloma tenellum*, *Gymnopus confluens*, *G. peronata*, *Hypholoma fasciculare*, *Inocybe asterospora*, *Laccaria amethystea*, *L. laccata*, *Lactarius decipiens*, *L. subdulcis*, *Lepista flaccida*, *Marasmius recubans*, *Megacollybia platyphylla*, *Mycena arcangeliana*, *M. crocata*, *M. galericulata*, *M. inclinata*, *M. leptocephala*, *M. rosea*, *M. sanguinolenta*, *M. vitilis*, *Oudemansiella mucida*, *Panellus stipticus*, *Pluteus cervinus*, *P. pellitus*, *Paxillus involutus*, *Rhodocollybia butyracea*, *Russula fellea*, *R. grisea*, *R. heterophylla*, *R. ochroleuca*, *Tricholoma stiparophyllum*, *Xerula radicata*, *Xerocomus cisalpinus*, *Bjerkandera adusta*, *Daedaleopsis confragosa*, *Datronia mollis*, *Ganoderma applanatum*, *G. austral*, *Heterobasidion annosum*, *Hyphodontia sambuci*, *Hymenochaete rubiginosum*, *Peniophora quercina*, *Phellinus ferreus/ferruginosus*, *Schizopora paradoxa*, *Sparassis crispa*, *Steccherinum ochraceum*, *Stereum gausapatum*, *S. hirsutum*, *S. rugosum*, *S. subtomentosum*, *Trichaptum albietinus*, *Lycoperdon perlatum*, *Scleroderma citrinum*, *Auricularia auricula-judae*, *Pheogenia faginea*, *Ascocoryne sarcoides*, *Bischofia nummularia*, *Bisporella citrina*, *Chaetosphaerella phaeostroma*, *Cudoniella acicularis*, *Diatrype disciformis*, *D. stigma*, *Diatrypella flavacea*, *D. quercina*, *Erysiphe heraclei* (on Hogweed), *Hymenoscyphus calyculus*, *Hypoxylon fragiforme*, *H. fuscum*, *Lophodermium pinistri*, *Nectria cinnabarina*, *Neobulgaria pura*, *Orbilbia auricolor*, *Rhopographus filicinus*,

Rhytisma acerinum, Scutellinia scutellata, Trochilia ilicina, Xylaria hypoxylon, X. polymorpha, Ceratiomyxa fruticulosa, Lycogala terrestre.

RUSLING END

Saturday 11th November

7 members

A small group of seven met for this afternoon walk, looking forward to a gentle ramble and hoping to see some dusk activity on our return to Rusling End Cottage.

We headed down the lane towards Graffridge Wood, passing a small flock of Helmeted Guinea Fowl, which are semi-domesticated, having been fed by the Keepers Cottage household. I have tasted the eggs, which are very creamy and delicious. We entered Graffridge Wood, which is coppiced hornbeam woodland with conifer plantation, and stopped at a path crossway to listen for bird calls. We heard Magpie, Goldcrest, Wren and Coal Tit.

Leaving Graffridge Wood, we crossed the B656 into Knebworth Park as a flock of Redwings flew overhead. In the more open space of the park it was easier to see and spot the bird life, as follows: Red Kite, Blackbird, Robin, Treecreeper, Jackdaw, Jay. A small group of 12 Chaffinches was identified by William Bishop and Ruth Graham spotted a Grey Heron flying in the distance, quite distinctive with its long legs dangling. William and Trevor James diverted to a magnificent dead standing Oak tree in search of beetles and reported back having found evidence of the Death-watch Beetle and the Common Bean Beetle.

We entered Wintergreen Wood and were drawn to the amusing chatter and laughter of a very large flock of Mallard. They continued to fly in from the surrounding area to roost for the night on the Boat Lake within the wood.

On leaving Wintergreen Wood, following the footpath to Burleigh Farm, we crossed a fallow field and saw Fieldfare. Even in November the Common Field Speedwell, Field Madder, Field Pansy and Groundsel were in flower.

Continuing our ramble past Burleigh Farmhouse, crossing grassland and through an arable field, we turned left back beside Burleighcroft Wood and across the B656 into grassland *en route* for Rusling End Cottage.

Birds sighted on this stretch included 12 Red-legged Partridges, a charm of 10 Goldfinches and a flock of Canada Geese heading home to roost; also some Yellow Fieldcap mushrooms *Bolbitius titubans*.

As we passed through the meadow beside Graffridge Wood, there were sheep grazing and browsing the grass. Amidst the sheep was a Red Deer calf [escape from the Park T.J.], not at all disturbed by our presence. It was almost dusk by now but nearly home there were still more birds sighted: Long-tailed Tits, Blue Tit, Pheasant, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Carrion Crow, Great Tit, Wood Pigeon and Skylark.

Back at Rusling End Cottage, there was a fire alight, crumpets being toasted and a warming cup of tea. Those that stayed sat around the fire and chatted about the afternoon's sightings.

The hoot of a nearby Tawny Owl accompanied the group as they returned to their cars and headed home.

Julie Wise



Birds: Grey Heron, Canada Goose, Mallard, Red Kite, Buzzard, Pheasant, Red-legged Partridge, Tawny Owl, Wood Pigeon, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Skylark, Fieldfare, Redwing, Blackbird, Robin, Goldcrest, Great Tit, Blue Tit, Marsh Tit, Coal Tit, Long-tailed Tit, Dunnock, Wren, Treecreeper, Carrion Crow, Rook, Jackdaw, Magpie,

Jay, Chaffinch, Goldfinch, Yellowhammer.

Mammals: Mole (hills), Grey Squirrel, Red Deer (slots etc. in the Park, plus the escapee), Rabbit (droppings etc.), Bank Vole (dead at Rusling End).



Sheltering from the hailstorm at Aldbury Nowers
Saturday 5th August 2017
(Photo: Chris James)



Searching for fungi at Patmore Heath
30th September 2017
(Photo: Chris James)



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