

BRITISH NATURALISTS' ASSOCIATION

Hertfordshire Branch

BULLETIN No.139



William Bishop with Giant Puffballs at Much Hadham

8th August 2019

Photo: Paula Shipway



William Bishop pond-dipping at Highfield Park

Saturday 4th May 2019

Photo: Paula Shipway



Looking closely at Lichens – at the Panshanger Festival of Wildlife

Sunday 27th July 2019

Photo: Michael Demidecki

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EDITOR'S BIT

It seems a like a distant memory at the moment: Enjoying a regular field meeting programme and examining the wonders of the natural world both seem as though they happened in a different universe. However, I hope the following accounts will provide happy thoughts of our experiences in the well-known and lesser known parts of our county and anticipation of better times ahead. At a time of lockdown and grim news, the natural world has been a consolation and an inspiration and I know like many of you Trevor has had a great influence on inspiring and informing my interest in the natural world and this issue celebrates his life as an expert naturalist and good friend. Forthcoming Reports may be a little thin following the lockdown, so I will welcome any contributions on your own experiences of nature.

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TREVOR JAMES – 16.9.1947 – 5.6.2020

Further to Chris James' emailed message in early June to longer-term members about the very sad death of Trevor, it is proposed to include a special obituary for him in the next edition of the Bulletin. Our newer members who did not know Trevor very well will be sad to know that Herts Branch has lost not only a highly respected naturalist but a much-loved mentor and friend.

It is all the more miraculous that Trevor was well enough to attend a special award ceremony in March which is reported below:

BRITISH EMPIRE MEDAL – TREVOR JAMES



Following several months in 2019 during which Chris had to maintain absolute secrecy, a letter arrived for Trevor in mid-December from Her Majesty's Cabinet Office, inviting him (and asking if he was willing) to receive a British Empire Medal in the New Year's Honours!

Two more weeks of secrecy had to be maintained until we could tell anyone about it – we couldn't, sadly, even mention it to our family at Christmas.

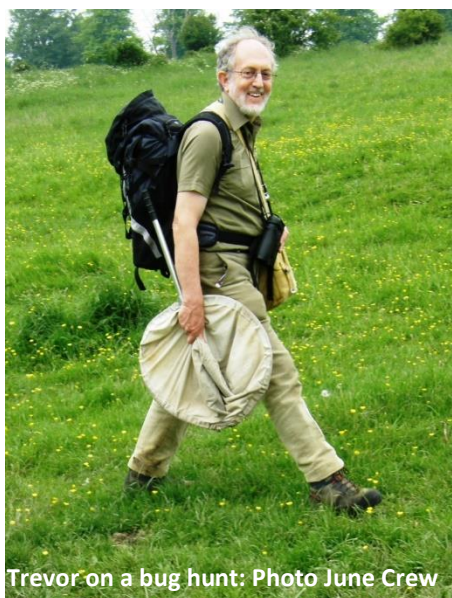
But in early January, the news was out! So many people have been in touch with Trevor to congratulate him and, before the official ceremony, a lovely surprise cake was provided at the Branch AGM in January – with very special thanks to June Crew (a fellow BEM-holder!)

The award ceremony took place at Hanbury Manor Hotel on Monday 2nd March and Trevor's medal was presented to him by Robert Voss, Lord Lieutenant of Hertfordshire. We are both so pleased that Trevor was well enough to attend. The citation was for 'services to natural history and nature conservation in Hertfordshire' and, when read out, included lots of other information about Trevor's involvement with biological recording in the UK and his two published books on Flora and Beetles. It was a great occasion!

Chris James

TREVOR: AN AMAZING PERSON

June Crew sent the following reflections (incorporating words she wrote in support of his nomination for the British Empire medal) on Trevor as a kind and expert naturalist:



Trevor on a bug hunt: Photo June Crew

Trevor was the most amazing person I have ever known. I first met him in May 1973 when my two young sons and I joined a walk he was leading around a local wood. I have never forgotten his enthusiasm and desire to show us how to observe and identify all that we saw. When I became secretary of the Cheshunt Natural History Society, at my request, he willingly, and at no cost, gave talks to the society on all manner of natural history topics over 30 years. Eventually I joined the Herts branch of BNA, of which he was chairman, joining dozens of his walks, around the county and beyond, learning from

his incredibly detailed knowledge of all things wild - sometimes delving into the carcase of a long dead deer or a dung heap for beetles or searching a hillside for the last known specimen in Herts of a rare flower. Exploring the Isles of Scilly and touring the Inner Hebrides in a chartered boat were particularly memorable with Trevor's inexhaustible knowledge of everywhere we went.

Trevor's childhood explorations of the countryside around Cuffley finding birds' nests (what a wealth there was in those days!) led him to become competent in identifying all things living and dead. He became one of the foremost authorities on natural history in the country. He knew every wood, field system, footpath – not that he took much notice of definitive rights of way – and where every plant grew in the county. He had a phenomenal memory for Latin names – plants, invertebrates, vertebrates - but more importantly - the distinguishing characteristics of any one species. Moreover, from those early days of looking for birds' nests, he was expert at recognising bird songs and calls. As



Trevor examining a pond in Northaw Great Wood in 2008 Photo June Crew



chairman of Herts Flora Group and the Hertfordshire branch of the British Naturalists Association, (roles he relinquished only relatively recently due to ill health) he encouraged, taught, enthused and informed countless would-be naturalists who trailed in his august footprints. Trevor's magnum opus: *Flora of Hertfordshire* is not only a systematic survey of over 2000 species of plant but

there are chapters on the history of botanical recording in the county, the geography, geology, soils, habitats, topography and so much more and is the culmination of a lifetime's passion. Richard Mabey in his foreword to the Flora said *"every single record is the story of an encounter between a person and a plant, a story of affection and respect. This is what makes this Flora both an historic document and a message of hope for the future."* Trevor's *Flora of Hertfordshire* contributed towards his being awarded the prestigious Herts Natural History Society 1875 Award in 2015. It was given *'in recognition of his outstanding contribution to the natural history of Hertfordshire'*.

But then...did I mention beetles? There are even more beetle species than plant species. It was Haldane who said, when asked if he believed in God, *"The Creator, if he exists, must have had an inordinate fondness for beetles since he made so many of them"*. It was to be Trevor's second magnum opus: *Beetles of Hertfordshire*, containing descriptions of nearly two and a half thousand beetles. Published in 2018, it sold like hot cakes nation-wide. This study of beetle habitats and key sites is a decisive tool for future conservation policy not only for beetles but for a wide range of other organisms with which they interact. Trevor's book, with its many photos and tetrad distribution maps, is the most comprehensive account of beetles for a county and sets a precedent for future studies.

This good-natured, unassuming man has done more for natural history in Hertfordshire than any other single individual. We will never see his like again.



June Crew

OBITUARY – JOYCE SMITH

It was with great sadness that I heard at the end of March from her dear friend, Janine Tyler, that Joyce Smith had died.

Joyce was born Marianne Joyce Smith on 5th September 1920. We know this only because sixteen other Herts Branch members helped her to celebrate her 90th birthday on 5th September 2010 at The Bog Mine & Visitor Centre, Stiperstones in Shropshire! We had been rained on for most of the morning and this excellent small café offered a welcome respite for lunch – and birthday cake.



Joyce Smith, celebrating
her 90th birthday in
Shropshire in
September 2010

Joyce (as she was known to natural history friends in later life) was a truly remarkable lady. Most of us knew her as a branch member only from 2009 when she decided that BNA was an interesting organisation to join because we actually got out into the field and did things. Joyce was interested in everything and 'up' for anything. She appeared to be as fit as a flea, although sadly for her, very deaf. She could walk all day and possessed a very lively and enquiring mind – and a very good sense of humour.

The only snippet of information about her past life that we gleaned was that she had been a civil servant all her professional life, at one time working under Margaret Thatcher when the latter was opposition spokesman for education.

A few of us were lucky enough to get to know her especially well when she joined our branch holiday in July 2009, cruising around the Hebrides on MV 'Chalice' for a really fantastic week of wonderful scenery and natural history. Nothing daunted her, not even climbing in and out of dinghies and sometimes slithering over seaweedy old jetties or rocks to reach the shore. She enjoyed all our explorations of the islands we visited and afterwards declared that it was the best thing she had ever done.



Joyce on Rona, Hebrides
July 2009

Only during her last year or so when she was being cared for in a nursing home did Joyce's amazing intellect begin to fail her until, finally, she did not even know her very old friend, Janine.

We remember her with great respect and affection.

MORE SAD NEWS

Some of the longer-established branch members will remember the convivial company on several field meetings – and the occasional indoor meeting in the 1990s and early 2000s - of Peter Alton's partner, Jim Reeves. Jim joined a small party of members on a memorable holiday to the Isles of Scilly in 2006. Sadly, Peter has told us that Jim died in hospital at the end of April, aged 86. Peter met Jim in 1977 and they lived together for 32 years.

Jim always remembered and talked about BNA people with affection but natural history wasn't really his 'thing'. He helped Peter to get out on meetings by providing transport and that is how some of us got to know him. On a personal note, I was always grateful to Jim for keeping an eye on Edward when he was smaller and not always that pleased to be out with his parents! The two of them would be somewhere at the back of the party chatting away about something - and Jim would gently admonish Edward for whacking things with a stick.

Chris James

HIGHFIELD PARK, ST. ALBANS

Saturday 4th May 2019

7 members, 2 visitors

A select group gathered for a meeting that would visit an apparently 'urban' area on the south-east side of St Albans. Highfield Park was created on the former grounds of two mental hospitals that closed in the 1990s. Housing development went ahead on condition that 60 acres was set aside as a public open space. We had a very interesting day exploring a mixture of ornamental gardens, old orchards, meadows, newly planted and old established woodlands and two ponds.

Thanks to Merle's sampling equipment and skills and William's willingness to jump in (with boots on), we were able to make a survey of the two ponds, both of which the Park's board has plans to rejuvenate. The ubiquitous Waterlouse *Asellus aquaticus* and the more exceptional Water Ladybird *Anisosticta novemdecimpunctata* were among the invertebrates found in the ponds. Merle also found the Horse Leech *Haemopsis sanguiuga*.



William and Merle pond-dipping
in one of the ponds at Highfield
Park.

We also found evidence of several species of insect galls including the Big Bud Gall Mite *Phytoptus avellanae* on Hazel.

Alla worked very hard recording all the species of plant she could find. Her list reached 150 and is available from her. William multi-tasked – not only did he fish things out of ponds but he also subconsciously recorded birds.

Birds: Moorhen, Herring Gull, Wood Pigeon, Feral Pigeon, Collared Dove, Green Woodpecker, Dunnock, Blackcap, Chiffchaff, Goldcrest, Robin,

Blackbird, Song Thrush, Great Tit, Wren, Goldfinch, Greenfinch, Starling, Magpie, Carrion Crow, Jackdaw.

Ladybirds: Pine Ladybird, Water Ladybird, Harlequin Ladybird, 7-spot Ladybird, 10-spot Ladybird, 14-spot Ladybird.

Other invertebrates: a Soldier Beetle *Cantharis decipiens*, a longhorn beetle *Grammoptera ruficornis*, Forest Bug *Pentatoma rufipes*.

Joe Gray

WHIPPENDELL WOODS NATURE RESERVE

Saturday 18th May

3 members

With the weather forecast promising a bit of everything, the three of us met at the car park in Rousebarn Lane. It was cool and damp after earlier rain, and the prospect for invertebrates was uncertain.

We admired one of the Bird Cherries *Prunus padus* surrounding the car park that was still in flower and set off west following the perimeter of Whippendell Wood. After seeing a beautiful patch of Wood Speedwell *Veronica montana*, some well-camouflaged Wood Millet *Milium effusum* and Sanicle *Sanicula europaea* growing in the very middle of the path, we came to the first Coralroot *Cardamine bulbifera*. The flowers were mostly gone, but the bulbils at the bases of the leaves were in their prime condition – shiny and glimmering. Coralroots were everywhere, in some places forming pretty much the monoculture, and we could only guess how this place looked like when they were all in flower.

At the westernmost point of Whippendell Wood, we took a short diversion to the edge of Harrocks Wood to look at Three-cornered Garlic *Allium triquetrum* which Jean saw a few days earlier (and which I mistook for white Bluebells on the same day when looking at Goldilocks Buttercup *Ranunculus auricomus* nearby!). Going further we saw Wood Melick grass *Melica uniflora*, Woodruff *Galium odoratum* and Midland Hawthorn *Crataegus laevigata* showing beautifully 2 styles. William pointed to a nymph of the Forest Bug *Pentatoma rufipes*, galls on Broad Buckler Fern *Dryopteris dilatata* and a huge gall on Beech *Fagus sylvatica*. We noticed Bank Haircap Moss

(*Polytrichastrum formosum*) and a lichen *Cladonia coniocraea*. A large Beech with a clear seepage line on the trunk had lots of cones around it indicating a great spotted woodpecker anvil somewhere around.

After we passed the northern car park, the path became broader. The verges were covered with Small Balsam *Impatiens parviflora* while a few rhododendrons were lurking in the shadows. Ramsons *Allium ursinum* and a click beetle were spotted at the golf course edge. When the path broadened even further, as we reached the golf course in Jacotts Hill, the sun came out and the verges became alive with invertebrates: Black-headed *Pyrochroa coccinea* and Red-headed *P. serraticornis* Cardinal Beetles, 14-spot *Propylea quattuordecimpunctata* and 7-spot *Coccinella septempunctata* Ladybirds, Nettle Weevil *Phyllobius pomaceus*, Hairy Shieldbug *Dolycoris baccarum*, a group of three Dock bugs *Coreus marginatus*, Common Carder Bee *Bombus pascuorum*, some Nomad Bees, and a Soldier beetle *Cantharis livida*. Caterpillars of Mottled Umber *Erannis defoliaria* and Lime Nail galls *Eriophyes tiliae* were plentiful on a nearby Lime tree *Tilia x europea*. Thanks to William for identifying all of those!

Approaching the Grand Union Canal, we found a large patch of Deadly Nightshade *Atropa belladonna*, a few Orange Tip butterflies *Anthocaris cardamines*, a dot-bordered Bee-fly *Bombylius major* and what looked like young Nettle-leaved Bellflowers *Campanula trachelium*. Jean spotted a grey heron. The bird list was quickly extended by a moorhen, mallards and noisy ring-necked parakeets. We had lunch by the bridge into Cassiobury Park watching boats going through the lock. Before leaving, we looked at the bridge, which had all three “brick-wall-ferns” *Asplenium scolopendrium*, *A. trichomanes* and *A. ruta-muraria* and headed back through the golf course.

When crossing an open space strip, we disturbed a mistle thrush feeding in the grassland and could not resist the temptation of having a closer look at a small patch of grassland looking different. The patch indeed had Sheep’s Sorrel *Rumex acetosella*, Mouse-ear Hawkweed *Pilosella officinarum* and a small grass identified by Jean as Early Hair-grass *Aira praecox*. At the edge of the wood, Maiden’s Blush moth *Cyclophora punctaria* sitting on the ground gave us plenty of time for taking pictures.

We crossed the road, noticing a monkey toy hanging on the hedge. (There was a bit of discussion whether we should keep this kind of records – we saw a toy bear on our Boxing Day walk!) After walking through a completely weed-free arable field, we came to an unexpectedly good-looking patch of grassland where we recorded 29 plant species including Sweet Vernal-grass *Anthoxanthum odoratum* and Tall Fescue *Schedonorus arundinacea* with a Small Yellow Underwing moth *Panemeria tenebrata* on it. We took a detour into Dell Wood and found a huge *Ganoderma* bracket fungus. A bird of prey dashed away so quickly that William could only guess that it might be a sparrowhawk. Another “kept-clean” crop had nothing but a small patch of Wild Radish *Raphanus raphanistrum* miraculously surviving in it. The final sightings included Wood Sorrel *Oxalis acetosella* and Remote Sedge *Carex remota* as we were crossing Merlin’s wood on the way back to our starting point.

Birds: Grey Heron, Pheasant, Mallard, Moorhen, Stock Dove, Wood Pigeon, Ring-necked Parakeet, Green Woodpecker, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Blackcap, Chiffchaff, Gold crest, Robin, Blackbird, Mistle Thrush, Song Thrush, Long-tailed Tit, Great Tit, Blue Tit, Coal Tit, Wren, Chaffinch, Jay, Carrion Crow,

Mammals: Grey Squirrel

Other Beetles (not mentioned in text): Harlequin Ladybird *Harmonia axyridis*, Common Malachite Beetle (*Malachius bipustulatus*)

Butterflies and moths: Mottled Umber, Maiden’s Blush, Small Yellow Underwing, *Incurvaria oehlmaniella*

Alla Mashanova

RUSTLING END and HILL END PIT NATURE RESERVE

Saturday 1st June

10 members

This walk would take us up winding lanes, through meadows and churchyards and patches of woodland to a chalk pit famous for its ammonites but we started the day at Rustling End Cottage meadow where the insect hunters

already had their sweep nets out searching for bugs. They found a Horned Leather Bug which is nationally scarce and only the third ever sighting in Hertfordshire!

We walked along the lane heading north towards East Hall Farm then turned off it along a track through Reynolds Wood, where Mike Demidecki showed us damage caused by Muntjac deer to **bramble** leaves, which are apparently very nutritious for the Muntjac. There were Dark Mullein plants *Verbascum nigrum* covered in Hairy Shieldbug *Dolycoris baccarum* and Mullein Moth caterpillars. Other flora in Reynolds Wood included Yellow Archangel *Lamium galeobdolon*, Pignut *Conopodium majus*, Tufted Hair-grass *Deschampsia cespitosa*, Sweet Woodruff *Galium odoratum*, Primrose *Primula vulgaris* and Wood Melick *Melica uniflora*.

On leaving Reynolds Wood, we headed down a track towards St Paul's Waldenbury, crossing the road into the grounds of The Bury (as it's known locally). We saw flowering Spindle *Euonymus europaeus* and Hedge Bedstraw *Gallium mollugo* on our way.

In the large Bearded Iris *Iris germanica* bed outside the walled garden we found a Stonecrop *Sedum* sp., Common Fumitory *Fumaria officinalis* and Scarlet Pimpernel *Anagallis arvensis*, which only opens when the sun shines and is known as the poor man's weather glass.

We walked up the hill along the Chiltern Way to St Paul's Walden church where the churchyard meadow was in full bloom. Andrew and Alla carried out a botanical survey (see below). This has been sent to the church warden. We then headed to Hitch Spring, where we saw a Red-tailed Bumblebee, 16-spot Ladybird, 24-spot Ladybird and Fallow Deer. In the meadow were Common Spotted-orchid *Dactylorhiza fuchsii*, Pignut *Conopodium majus*, Angelica *Angelica sylvestris* and Common Sorrel, *Rumex acetosa*.

We continued towards Langley End, crossing Langley Lane, and then on to Hill End pit where Jack Doyle was waiting to give us a talk on this interesting quarry. The chalk in the quarry is around 70 million years old (Cretaceous period). The chalk is upper chalk (as opposed to middle and lower chalk and the quarry is famous for ammonites including uncoiled ammonites. Jack told

us that as a boy he would cycle with his two friends from Hertford and search for the ammonites. They built quite a collection and most are now in London's Natural History Museum.

On our return to Rusling End we passed by Langleyhill Farm, where we counted 6 Swallows and saw Wild Hop *Humulus lupulus* growing in the hedgerow, before moving on to Roundwood Dell and a quarry filled with Ramsons *Allium ursinum*.

Phew! This was a long walk but we were rewarded with tea and cake in the garden of Rustling End Cottage on our return!

Julie Wise

St Paul's Walden Churchyard flora (Alla Mashanova & Andrew Harris).

The churchyard comprises grassland with a good diversity of flowering plants. The higher part of the site has a higher frequency of Red Fescue with coarser grasses, particularly False Oat-grass, becoming commoner in the lower part of the area. Black Knapweed is very numerous throughout and Hedge Bedstraw, Ox-eye Daisy and Cowslip are also prominent. Other species scattered throughout include Germander Speedwell and Common Sorrel and those with more localised populations include Meadow Vetchling, Lady's Bedstraw and Lesser Stitchwort. There were over 10 flowering spikes of Common Spotted Orchid. The lower edge of the area is more ruderal with Common Nettle and Cow Parsley

Scientific name	Common name
<i>Achillea millefolium</i>	Yarrow
<i>Ajuga reptans</i>	Bugle
<i>Alopecurus pratensis</i>	Meadow Foxtail
<i>Anisantha sterilis</i>	Barren Brome
<i>Anthriscus sylvestris</i>	Cow Parsley
<i>Arrhenatherum elatius</i>	False Oat-grass
<i>Bellis perennis</i>	Daisy
<i>Centaurea nigra</i> agg	Black Knapweed
<i>Clematis vitalba</i>	Wild Clematis
<i>Dactylis glomerata</i>	Cock's-foot

<i>Dactylorhiza fuchsii</i>	Common Spotted Orchid
<i>Festuca rubra</i> agg.	Red Fescue
<i>Galium album</i>	Hedge Bedstraw
<i>Galium verum</i>	Lady's Bedstraw
<i>Glechoma hederacea</i>	Ground Ivy
<i>Heracleum sphondylium</i>	Hogweed
<i>Holcus lanatus</i>	Yorkshire-fog
<i>Lathyrus pratensis</i>	Meadow Vetchling
<i>Leucanthemum vulgare</i>	Ox-eye Daisy
<i>Lolium perenne</i>	Perennial Ryegrass
<i>Luzula campestris</i>	Field Wood-rush
<i>Medicago lupulina</i>	Black Medick
<i>Plantago lanceolata</i>	Ribwort Plantain
<i>Poa angustifolia</i>	Narrow-leaved Meadow-grass
<i>Poa trivialis</i>	Rough Meadow-grass
<i>Potentilla reptans</i>	Creeping Cinquefoil
<i>Primula veris</i>	Cowslip
<i>Ranunculus acris</i>	Meadow Buttercup
<i>Rumex acetosa</i>	Common Sorrel
<i>Rumex sanguineus</i>	Wood Dock
<i>Stellaria graminea</i>	Lesser Stitchwort
<i>Trisetum flavescens</i>	Yellow Oat-grass
<i>Urtica dioica</i>	Common Nettle
<i>Veronica chamaedrys</i>	Germander Speedwell
<i>Vicia sativa</i> agg.	Common Vetch
<i>Viola odorata</i>	Sweet Violet

Birds: Canada Goose, Buzzard, Pheasant, Wood Pigeon, Tawny Owl, Skylark, House Martin, Whitethroat, Blackcap, Chiffchaff, Robin, Blackbird, Song Thrush, Blue Tit, Nuthatch, Treecreeper, Yellowhammer, Chaffinch, Goldfinch, Greenfinch, Jackdaw, Magpie.

Butterflies: Red Admiral, Speckled Wood, Brimstone, Green-veined White, Orange Tip, Small Copper, Common Blue.

Other insects seen, Cinnabar Moth, 10-spot Ladybird, 7-spot Ladybird, Hairy Shield Bug.

BLAGROVE COMMON NATURE RESERVE, SANDON

Saturday 15th June

9 members of BNA and Herts Flora Group

The day started before I reached the meeting place at Roe Green! I remembered that the road verges in the area were rather nice, so was considering making a quick stop when I saw William absorbed in the life on a Twiggy Spurge *Euphorbia x pseudovirginiana*. Before long, Jean also joined in. William took a picture of what he later identified as a Pied Hoverfly *Scaeva pyrastris*, showed us a Corn Bunting singing from a wire and pointed to a Quail occasionally making a call from further down the path.

Then we all met at Roe Green. The plan was to walk to Blagrove Common following the route we had used on our Boxing Day walk. However, our speed was much slower due to looking at all the plants and invertebrates we found on the way. Right from the start, there were broad strips of grassland on both sides of the road with Meadow Barley *Hordeum secalinu*), Birds-foot Trefoil *Lotus corniculatus* and Lady's Bedstraw *Galium verum* indicating that they were worthy of exploring. Lots of butterflies and moths were attracted to the grassland. William showed us Burnet Companion Moth *Euclidia glyphica* and Mother Shipton Moth *Callistege mi*, Common Blue *Polyommatus icarus* and Meadow Brown *Maniola jurtina*.

Further down the road, Small Nettle *Urtica urens*, Greater Celandine *Chelidonium majus* and Honesty *Lunaria annua* were noted before we moved into the fields where Ian Denholm (Herts Recorder for plants) identified Rye Brome *Bromus secalinum*. A whitethroat was singing enthusiastically in the hedgerow, and an occasional blackcap song provided a beautiful comparison between these two species. William netted a Wasp Beetle *Clytus arietis*, which looked indeed like a wasp, but this was overshadowed by a Golden-bloomed Grey Longhorn *Agapanthia villosoviridescens* patiently sitting on a Hogweed leaf and allowing everyone to take pictures. Sadly, Common Malachite beetle *Malachius bipustulatus* nearby did not get the same attention. We saw our first orchid of the day. This was a single spike of Common Spotted Orchid *Dactylorhiza fuchsii*, but the beauty was in seeing it growing at a field edge.

Shortly, we reached Blagrove Common Nature Reserve. Here, orchids were to be a highlight and flowering spikes of Common Spotted Orchid were everywhere. William was the first to find Southern Marsh Orchid *D. praetermissa* and Catherine found Early Marsh Orchid *D. incarnata*. Having Ian was wonderful as he showed us the hybrids and explained how to identify them. Wetland plants included Marsh Horsetail *Equisetum palustre*, Common Spike-rush *Eleocharis palustre*, Fen Bedstraw *Galium uliginosum*, Brooklime *Veronica beccabunga*, Ragged Robin *Silene flos-cuculi*, Marsh Marigold *Caltha palustris*, Lesser Spearwort *Ranunculus flammula*, Fool's Watercress *Apium nodiflorum* and Creeping Jenny *Lysimachia nummularia*. We saw three sedges – False Fox *Carex otrubae*, Spiked *C. spicata* and Brown *C. disticha* and two Sweet-grasses – Plicate *Glyceria notata* and Floating *G. fluitans*. A very large Clustered Dock *Rumex conglomeratus* stood out. I picked some Watercress fruits, and they appeared to belong to a Narrow-fruited Watercress *Nasturtium microphylla* with seeds in one row. William kept finding invertebrates with the top places taken by Marsh Click-beetle *Actenicerus sjaelandicus*, Spear-thistle and Creeping-thistle Lacebugs *Tingis cardui* and *T. ampliata*, Bishop's Mitre Shieldbug *Aelia acuminata* and Humped Orbweb spider *Gibbaranea gibbosa*, complemented with a young Bush cricket. Mammal sightings were limited with just a single shy Muntjac crossing an opening in a nearby garden.

We headed back following the edge of Tichney Wood and stopped to discuss features of a willow looking beautifully intermediate between Goat Willow and Grey Sallow. We agreed that it was indeed a hybrid *Salix caprea* x *S. cinerea*. Walking through Cock's Lodge Wood provided an opportunity to add a few woodland plants to the list including Dog's Mercury *Mercurialis perennis*, Hairy Brome *Bromopsis ramosa* and Wood Speedwell *Veronica montana*. Not far from Roe Green, Paula's attention was drawn to a large tree covered with lichens from which I could remember *Xanthoria parietina*, *Hyperphyscia adglutinosa*, *Lepraria incana* and *Physcia adscendens*. The base of the tree had multiple holes which William identified as Clearwing moth exit holes.

Given that the meeting was a joint one with Herts Flora Group, plants took a big part of my attention, and I am very grateful to William for staying on top of the animal side and showing us all those wonderful creatures.

Birds (not a full list): Dunnock, Whitethroat, Blackcap, Chiffchaff, Song Thrush, Nuthatch, Wren, Corn Bunting, Yellowhammer.

Butterflies and moths additional to text: Large Skipper, Speckled Wood Small Tortoiseshell, Silver-ground Carpet moth.



Bug: *Capsus ater*

Alla Mashanova

HASTOE AREA NEAR TRING

Saturday 29th June

6 members

We met for this ramble at Hastoe, near Tring in north-west Hertfordshire. It was a blisteringly hot day, the temperature reaching 30 degrees, and one member returned to her car after walking just a short distance. The rest of us carried bravely on!

We walked in a south easterly direction along Brown's Lane following the byway along the western sides of first Shrubs Wood and then High Scrubs. We walked south west, then followed a footpath which took us to Shire Lane, the county boundary, where when crossing into Drayton Wood (heading towards Parrott's Farm) we left Hertfordshire and entered 'foreign' territory in Buckinghamshire! Near Parrott's Farm we walked south east until we came to Cholesbury Fort. We then retraced our steps going further into Drayton's Wood before making our way again to the byway leading to Brown's Lane. We briefly diverted to the south west along Grim's Ditch to look at the badger sett there before returning to Brown's Lane and so back to the cars.

The leader was concerned that the route (about 4 miles) wouldn't be long enough but he needn't have worried. The first half mile along Brown's Lane until we came to Shrubs Wood took us about an hour and a half and this under strong sunshine! What took us so long was looking at and recording the profusion of wild flowers on the verges and in the hedgerows either side of the lane, also the insects that were to be found, particularly in the flowers of Hogweed. One highlight here was several areas of the pink-purple flowers of Zig-Zag Clover *Trifolium medium*, while the numerous Lesser Stitchwort *Stellaria graminea* plants with their white flowers peppered much of the

verges. Notable insects were the Welsh Chafer Beetle *Hoplia philanthus* and the Swollen- thighed Beetle *Oedemera nobilis*.

Once through the gate and into the Wildlife Conservation Area which began at Shrubbs's Wood, other plants were identified such as Enchanter's Nightshade *Circaea lutetiana* and Woodruff *Galium odoratum* though neither was in flower. Pendulous Sedge *Carex pendula* with its drooping catkins was seen here, as were Wood Sedge *C. sylvatica* and Remote Sedge *C. remota*.

We had a choice now of having lunch either in Hertfordshire or in Buckinghamshire. The former having been chosen we sat on the old hedge bank alongside High Scrubs. In places there were the remains of an old laid beech hedge, now mature trees. After lunch, crossing through a meadow towards Shire lane we put up many Meadow Brown butterflies and saw also Large Skippers and, in the next field, a Marbled White butterfly. On the verge (Hertfordshire side) of Shire Lane Paula pointed out Greater Bird's-foot Trefoil *Lotus pedunculatus*.

In Drayton Wood, Buckinghamshire, we admired Male Fern *Dryopteris filix-mas*, Golden- scaled Male Fern *D. affinis*, and Great Wood- rush *Luzula sylvatica*. After leaving Cholesbury Camp, an iron age hill-fort, Paula drew our attention to a badger latrine in Drayton Wood before we returned to our cars. We had seen a lot during our walk on this one of the hottest days of the year.

Other species recorded were as follows:

Birds: Buzzard, Pheasant, Wood Pigeon, Blackcap (singing along Brown's Lane), Chiffchaff (in Drayton Wood, Bucks.), Goldcrest, Blackbird, Song Thrush, Nuthatch, Wren.

Insects: **Along Brown's Lane:** Black-and-yellow Longhorn Beetle *Rutpela maculata*, Seven-spot Ladybird, Meadow Brown Butterfly, Peacock Butterfly. **By Shrubbs's Wood:** Red Admiral Butterfly. **By Shrubbs's Wood / High Scrubs:** Enchanter's Nightshade Stilt Bug *Metatropis rufescens* and Speckled Wood Butterfly. **Meadows near Shireland Farm:** Marbled White, Large Skipper and Meadow Brown butterflies, Silver Y Moth and Harlequin Ladybird. Somewhere William also found (on holly leaves) an unbanded variety of the Riband Wave Moth, *Idaea aversata*.

Mammals: Badger sett in Grim's ditch at c. SP918087; Grey Squirrel (feeding platform on stump) at SP923082.



Plants: Alla recorded 157 plant species (including trees) during the ramble. She sent me her list and this is available from me (or Alla). Rather than list everything here however I have been selective and would just mention the following in addition to those already listed above: Alongside Brown's Lane: Willow-leaved Bridewort, Field Rose, American Willowherb, Yarrow, Agrimony, Thyme-leaved Speedwell, Germander Speedwell, Hedge Woundwort, Rosebay Willowherb, Lesser Stitchwort, Self-heal, Meadow Vetchling, Feverfew, Creeping Buttercup and Creeping Thistle. Edge of field of barley: Field Pansy and Scarlet Pimpernel. By Shrub's Wood/ High Scrubs: Yellow Pimpernel and Common Figwort. By Shire Lane (Hertfordshire side): Silverweed, Creeping Cinquefoil, Dog Rose, Field Rose, Privet and Black Bryony.

Mike Demidecki

HALSEY FIELD at GADEBRIDGE, HEMEL HEMPSTEAD

Saturday 13th July (No report)

Steve Lings

PANSHANGER FESTIVAL OF WILDLIFE

Saturday 27th and Sunday 28th July 2019

Our attendance at this Festival was a new adventure for BNA and ten members worked very hard to make the weekend enjoyable. Our aim was to introduce more people to BNA and hopefully gain a few new members.

First thing on Saturday morning we noted that several insects had taken refuge or been trapped in the marquee overnight, including a Hornet Hoverfly, *Volucella zonaria* which had unfortunately died and was lying on one of the tables. There was also a Black-tailed Skimmer dragonfly resting on the marquee wall and a few other unidentified insects high up in the roof.

Unfortunately, the weather wasn't as good as we had hoped for. There were only 450 visitors and nobody booked to join us on a 'taster' meeting. However, a small group of our members ventured out for a walk in the Park during the late morning. Plenty of plants and lichens were noted including *Arthonia muscigena*, a very small lichen that can easily be mistaken for insect frass, which was growing on elder near the Panshanger Oak. There was some excitement when a Little Owl flew across in front of the marquee and landed in a near-by beech tree. Someone very quickly focused a telescope on it so, for a while, visitors to the marquee were fortunate in having a good view.



Most of the human visitors came along in the afternoon and the marquee was soon a hive of activity.

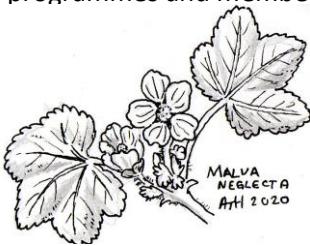
We tempted members of the public by inviting them to smell a creeping thistle and they had the opportunity to test their skills on the 'Name that Tree' display and quiz. Another display showed photographs taken during Herts Branch meetings. A tray of gnawed hazel nuts gave visitors the opportunity to work out which mammal had opened them. (Examples of nuts opened by dormice, squirrels and wood mice were provided to help them!) Hunting for 'jam tarts' on a lichen encrusted branch proved popular too.

The weather improved on Sunday and we were kept very busy all day with 1,400 visitors to the Festival! Twelve people, including small children, booked to join us on our late morning walk and we found plenty to show them including numerous spectacular Wasp Spiders. They listened intently to William's description of the 'alternative' living mode adopted by Willow Emerald Damselfly. (They reduce the risk of losing their young to predation by laying eggs individually behind the bark of willow trees.) A very small boy was entranced by the sudden disappearance of a frog hopper and a lady amazed at the close-up view through a lens of the glandular hairs on a Perennial Sow-thistle.

We shared the marquee with an artist who had a large board where he skilfully drew various finds from the Park over the weekend. One of the special finds that he drew was the rare Hazel Leaf-roller Weevil that caused a good deal of excitement when it was caught by a young girl with a sweep net. Another special find was a species of hover-fly called the Smudge-winged Pipiza *Pipiza lugubris*. This was later identified by a national expert from a photograph taken by Simon.

At the end of the day, the general feeling was that we had enjoyed the weekend, even though it had been hard work, and we hoped that the BNA programmes and membership forms taken away would yield new members.

Paula Shipway, Jean Williamson and William Bishop



MUCH HADHAM



Saturday 10 August 2019

2 Members

It was a dark and stormy night it remained extremely windy the next day, too!

I would guess that most were put off by the strong wind, as by 10am only Paula and I were at the north end of Much Hadham. Paula was already examining an old brick wall for lichens. There were patches of Dwarf Mallow *Malva neglecta* along the dry bank below the wall.

We headed west and crossed a completely dry River Ash. We then turned north past Lordship Farm towards Bridgefoot. The fields here were sown with Lucerne *Medicago sativa* and with less wind the crop would probably have been buzzing with insects but only a few white butterflies and a hardy bee were seen. We were both captivated by the sight of the spiralling seeds of Lime caught in the wind. They don't always do it perfectly but those that do are fascinating: if the balance is just right the seeds rotate very fast and the papery bracteole appears not as a narrow strip but as a complete cone that parachutes away from the tree.

Next, we encountered a mixed bird flock with Long-tailed Tits, a Nuthatch and a Treecreeper meandering through the hedge. Lady's Bedstraw *Galium verum* was abundant in a meadow. Then we encountered a lichenologist's idea of a good day out. A large old Ash *Fraxinus* had succumbed to the night's gales and was on the ground totally shattered. Paula advanced, lens in hand. We spent some time scrutinising the branches. It never fails to astound me how a lichenologist can reel off the most complex scientific names, one after another, whilst looking at tiny blotches between which most of us can barely tell the difference! Close by was an older ash trunk so I went to examine it. As I rounded the end of it, I spotted a white, fluffy perfectly formed egg shape emerging from a speckled sac. It was the lovely Silky Rosegill fungus *Volvariella bombycina*.



A Silky Rosegill toadstool
emerging from an ash log.

Photo: Paula Shipway

We continued towards Bridgefoot where Paula found a Giant Puffball *Calvatia gigantea*. I have never seen one that big: it comprised three sections and was about the size of my torso. Close by was another very old one and, taking advantage of the strong wind, I gave it several hearty kicks. We watched the millions of spores being carried high into the air and over the hill. We now followed the road to Hadham Ford, then crossed to take the footpath west.

The fields here showed signs of having once been rather good, but now sadly the better plants were relegated to the margins. Marjoram *Origanum vulgare* and Field Scabious *Knautia arvensis* survived only on the path and ditch edge. On the Ash Valley golf course, a family of Common Whitethroats gave us a good telling off from the bushes. At the top of the golf course Paula spotted a large clump of Stone Parsley *Sison amomum* by the hedge. We then turned

towards Bromley and stopped for lunch in a sheltered valley at Pig's Green. We didn't eat that much really . . . A vineyard had been planted here. After lunch we made our way towards Bromleyhall Farm and then south down the road.

The last section of our walk took us past Nine Acre Wood and down to Bartram's Wood. We spotted a small patch of blue ahead and had a guess that it would be Borage *Borago officinalis*. We were right - even on a dull day that blue shines out. This area has suffered from very intensive agriculture; every margin was mown down and everywhere had been sprayed to leave very few surviving plants. We managed to find a few plants of Dwarf Spurge *Euphorbia exigua*, Sharp-leaved Fluellen *Kickxia elatine* and Round-leaved Fluellen *K. spuria*, but they were few and far between. Then we turned east back to Much Hadham, passing Brand's Farm and down Cox Lane. Cox Lane had a small patch of Wood Melick *Melica uniflora* and a few Hart's-tongues *Asplenium scolopendrium* but was very dry. In Much Hadham a Scarce Footman *Eilema complana* was sheltering on a window ledge. Thank you, Paula, for your companionship and every present joy at all the little wonders of nature that we shared.

Birds: Common Buzzard, Sparrowhawk, Kestrel, Moorhen, Wood Pigeon, Stock Dove, Green Woodpecker, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Swallow, Common Whitethroat, Long-tailed Tit, Blue Tit, Nuthatch, Treecreeper, Wren, Jay, Magpie, Jackdaw, Carrion Crow.

Butterflies: Small Skipper, Small White, Meadow Brown, Green-veined White, Gatekeeper, Marbled White.

William Bishop

Lichens: TL431200, Ash trunk - *Amandinea punctate*, *Dendrographa decolorans*, *Lecanora chlarotera*, *Lecanora expallens*, *Phaeophyscia orbicularis*, *Physcia tenella*, *Xanthoria parietina*.

TL433208, Fallen Ash Pollard - *Arthonia radiata*, *Caloplaca cerinella*, *Flavoparmelia caperata*, *Fuscidea lighfootii*, *Heterocephalacria physciacearum* - Lichenicolous fungus on *Physcia tenella*, *Lecania cyrtella*, *Lecania naegelii*, *Lecanora carpineae*, *Lecanora chlarotera*, *Lecanora confusa*, *Lecanora hageni*, *Lecidella elaeochroma*, *Melanelixia subaurifera*, *Opegrapha rufescens*, *Phaeophyscia orbicularis*, *Phlyctis argena*, *Physcia tenella*,

Physconia grisea, *Punctelia subrudecta*, *Taeniolella phaeophysciae* - Lichenicolous fungus on *Phaeophyscia orbicularis*, *Xanthoria parietina*, *Xanthoria polycarpa*.

Paula Shipway



WATERFORD HEATH LOCAL NATURE RESERVE

Saturday 24th August 2019

9 members, 1 visitor

We met in the Waterford Heath car park for a day exploring. Until around thirty years ago the area was a sand and gravel quarry but now the reserve provides fascinating habitats for a wide range of species. With so many keen naturalists out for the day we were sure to have a good day.

With a very hot day expected I made an early start on recording a few common lichens on the wooden railings of the parking area; *Physcia tenella*, *Xanthoria parietina* and *Xanthoria polycarpa*. During an earlier visit I had discovered a flint that may have been worked in the past so I showed it to new arrivals in the car park and there was much discussion although no conclusion was reached. It was home to a range of lichens that are commonly found on sandstone memorials in churchyards; *Rhizocarpon reductum*, *Porpidia soredizodes*, *Buellia ocellata* and *Xanthoparmelia mougeotii*, along with *Lecanora muralis* and *Flavoparmelia soledians* which seemed an unlikely candidate so needed a chemical test for reassurance. I put the flint back in the area where I had found it wondering if it might be seen by someone else in the future.

As other members arrived, our attention was drawn to the range of plants which included Weld *Reseda luteola*, Carline Thistle *Carlina vulgaris*, Dark Mullein *Verbascum nigrum*, Thyme-leaved Speedwell *Veronica serpyllifolia*, Teasel *Dipsacus fullonum*, Ploughman's-spikenard *Inula conyzae*, Agrimony *Agrimonia eupatoria*, Common Stork's-bill *Erodium cicutarium*, Common Centaury *Centaureum erythraea* Scarlet Pimpernel *Anagalis arvensis*, Wild Strawberry *Fragaria vesca* and Blue Fleabane *Erigeron acris*. With so much to see we were soon widely dispersed on the Northern Heath. William had his sweep net with him and showed us a beautifully marked Treble Bar Moth which was the first of several that we noted during the day.



William, with sweep net,
showing members the Treble
Bar moth.

Photo: Paula Shipway

There were two typical heathland lichens which are not common in Hertfordshire, *Cladonia rangiformis* with it's lovely 'giraffe neck' markings and *Cladonia humilis* as well as *Evernia prunasti* which is more usually seen on trees. *Diploschistes muscorum* is a parasitic lichen and was present on the *Cladonia* species.

A few minutes in the shade of a willow tree produced more lichen records, *Lecanora confusa*, *Lecanora chlorotera*, *Lecidella elaeochroma*, *Candelariella reflexa* and *Hyperphyscia adglutinata*. I also made a note of *Cladonia fimbriata* on a close-by tree stump.



Some of our posse spent time in a slightly damp area finding Gypsywort *Lycopus europaeus*, Purple-loosestrife *Lythrum salicaria*, Water-plantain *Alisma plantago-aquatica*, Common Spike rush *Eleocharis palustris*, Common Reedmace, *Typha latifolia*, Water Figwort *Scrophularia auriculata* and Square-stalked St. Johns' Wort *Hypericum tetrapterum*. A Western Conifer Seed Bug posed on William's sweep net and was duly photographed.

An attempt to lure the group a little further across the Heath failed and after noting a Meadow Brown butterfly and two Painted Ladies I returned to the group. Passing a rose bush I was stopped short by the strong smell of apples. Glandular hairs on the underside of the leaves and petioles suggested it could be *Rosa rubiginosa*. A little later Alla and Ian confirmed the identification. In

the meantime, Simon had spotted a potter wasp in flight, William continued to watch the wasp and was lucky to see it visit the 'pot' that it had made attached to a rush! My regret from the meeting was failing to photograph the miniature work of art.

I noted more lichens: *Parmelia sulcata* on a wooden post; *Physcia aipolia* on a field maple branch; then *Arthonia punctiformis*, *Arthopyrenia punctiformis* and *Amandinea punctata* on hawthorn. A magpie flew past. We found Hoary Ragwort *Senecio erucifolius* growing close to a path and a few specimens of Yellow-wort *Blackstonia perfoliata* too. After examining a wooden seat where the two dominant lichens were *Candelariella vitellina* and *Buellia badia*, the consensus was that we needed a shady spot for lunch which was found on a grassy area below some young trees. Here I noted *Verrucaria nigrescens* on a flint and a Brassica Shield Bug walked across my rucksac.

After lunch, a few of the party joined me to have a quick look at the limestone memorial from which I had noted nineteen saxicolous (growing on rock) lichens during my earlier visit although it was rather too hot to spend time looking at them all on the day of our visit: *Xanthoria calcicola*, *Lecanora muralis*, *Candelariella aurella*, *Lecidella stigmatea*, *Caloplaca saxicola*, *Xanthoria elegans*, *Xanthoria parietina*, *Lecanora dispersa*, *Phaeophyscia orbicularis*, *Aspicilia contorta* f. *contorta*, *Lecanora albescens*, *Caloplaca teicholyta*, *Caloplaca oasis*, *Sarcoyne regularis*, *Protoblastenia rupestris*, *Lecanora campestris*, *Candelariella medians*, *Caloplaca decipiens*, and *Verucaria macrostomma* f. *furfuracea*.

Before we left the northern heath two Hobbies were heard calling above us and we all looked up and watched them, although it wasn't long before we concentrated on the ground again and I spotted *Aspicillia contorta* subsp. *hoffmaniana* on the concrete track. We paused to look at a buddleia near the car park and admired a beautiful Jersey Tiger moth, a species which some of us had seen in our own gardens for the first time this summer. Simon pointed out a Brown Argus butterfly on the verge and we noted a particularly healthy patch of a terricolous (growing on soil) lichen *Peltigera hymenina*.

On the South Heath we were pleased to see more Hoary Cinquefoil but also, unfortunately, a lot of Goat's-rue *Galega officinalis* which, although attractive, is an invasive species. With the summer heat becoming more

intense it was a relief to spend a while examining a gravel cliff in the shade of some trees – the perfect setting for Maidenhair Spleenwort *Asplenium trichomanes* and another lichen *Bilimbia sabuletorum*, growing on moss.

We followed a shady path towards the old silt beds. I recorded *Caloplaca cerinella*, *Lecanora hagenii* and *Lecania cyrtella* on an elder bush. A little time was spent trying to photograph a Holly Blue butterfly and further along a Brimstone butterfly flitted across the path. On the edge of Great Mole Wood, I recorded a few more lichens; *Phaeophyscia orbicularis*, *Punctelia subrudecta*, *Lepraria incana*, *Ramalina farinacea* and *Lecanora expallens*.

On our way back towards the car park I found *Ramalina fastigiata* on a cherry tree and I pleased to record *Lecanora conizaeoides* and *Lecanora pulicaris* on a wooden fence (the latter confirmed with a quick chemical test).

We had had a lovely day on the Heath and found plenty to see! Alla recorded 130 species of flowering plant, including trees and shrubs. Her list is available from either her or me. Claudi provided me with fungi records: *Russula exalbicans*, *Taphrina alni* on Alder catkins and Pale Bramble Rust *Kuehneola uredines*.

Thank you to everybody who helped record species at Waterford Heath.



Lichen community on a flint

Photo: Paula Shipway



Conifer Seed Bug

Photo: Paula Shipway

Paula Shipway

NORTHAW GREAT WOOD LOCAL NATURE RESERVE

Saturday 7th September

6 members

This is one of Hertfordshire's largest woods so it is easily possible to spend a whole day here – Herts Branch has done so on many occasions during its long existence. The day was programmed for mainly fungi but conditions were very dry so there didn't seem to be much likelihood in finding either large quantities or a wide variety, so we decided to just enjoy anything we found!

Our route took us in a large circle north-west from the car park to Middle Way, over Rowbourne Hill, down to Cuffley Brook which we followed eastwards to Brook Glade. We then turned south and uphill to 'Six Ways', then eastwards towards the former school camp and round through the south-eastern part of the wood and so back to the car park.

The large glade north of the car park is developing several areas of Heather *Calluna vulgaris* following removal of dense rhododendron thickets. June Crew found an interesting hybrid cinquefoil *Potentilla erecta x anglica* growing in this area and Common Earthballs *Scleroderma citrina* were dotted around in several locations in this dry, gravelly area. Towards the bottom of it, a damp patch held carpets of Sphagnum moss and Marsh Pennywort *Hydrocotyle vulgaris*. Trevor investigated some handfuls of the moss for beetles, finding a rove beetle *Philonthus cognatus*, an insect-eating ground beetle *Acupalpus dubius*, another ground beetle *Pterostichus diligens* and another small rove beetle *Tachporus hypnorum*. Leaving the open glade behind us we continued on down the hill with trees more closely either side. If we looked up, there were the usual Birch Brackets *Piptoporus betulinus* and, lower down, we found one or two Blushing Brackets *Daedaliopsis confragosa*, some clumps of Turkey Tails *Trametes versicolor* and several small brackets of Splitgill *Schizopora paradoxa* on rotting logs but, with few other fungi in evidence, it seemed best to carry on turning over the logs and sifting leaf litter to see what else we could find. It wasn't long before we discovered a large and handsome Violet Ground beetle *Carabus violaceus* and another woodland ground beetle *Notiophilus rufipes*, a species distinguished by its large protuberant eyes and pale legs.

Growing in the remaining slightly damper patches in the main east-west ride (Middle Way), we found several patches of Marsh Cudweed *Gnaphalium uliginosum*, a somewhat small and straggly silvery-grey plant that seems to ask to be trodden on, being found usually at the side of tracks! Paula had, meanwhile, found a waymark post that had lichens growing on it.

We turned north and walked slowly along a wide grassy ride that led uphill over Rowbourne Hill. There were large sweet chestnuts growing at the sides and a few had either fallen or dropped branches and these held the focus of attention for the beetle sub-group. Another large and very mobile ground beetle was finally caught and identified as *Abax parallelepipidus*. Trevor and William sifted some heaps of old bracken and caught specimens of several Staphylinid beetles – ‘Click’ beetles to you and I – to be identified later.

From the top of the hill down to Cuffley Brook and along the brook, trees had been removed to let in the light and the area was still looking a bit raw. The ground along the brook had virtually nothing growing on it, having been under deep shade for many years. However, Chris was delighted to discover a fallen silver birch log with nearly twenty brackets of Hoof Fungus *Fomes fomentarius* growing along it. Each of these chunky brackets grows in horizontal layers looking very like an old horse’s hoof. They used to be much less common in the county but now seem to be on the increase. Some time was spent investigating the whole of the log for lichens, beetles and other smaller fungi.



Hoof Fungi growing on birch log

Photo: Chris James



A close inspection of the log!

Photo: Paula Shipway

The beetle group found several specimens of the more familiar Devil's Coach Horse *Ocypus olens*, a very large and black rove beetle which raises its tail end in a threat posture if disturbed and can give a painful nip with its jaws if handled carelessly. Chris found more Birch Brackets and also the much tougher Birch Mazegill *Daedalea quercina*. At the other end of the size spectrum, and only easily seen with a hand lens, was a tiny clump of *Comatrichia* sp. a Myxomycete resembling shiny black balls on stalks and Common Glasscup *Orbilina xanthostigma*, an Ascomycete appearing as very small waxy yellow dots.

Further along the Brook in a damp patch, Chris noticed a tall 'skinny' plant which Trevor identified as Heath Groundsel *Senecio sylvaticus*, a species of dry heathy woodland – perhaps the seed had been lying dormant just waiting for the trees to be cleared! When we looked harder, we found this slightly uninspiring plant growing in several places. We also found Lesser Spearwort *Ranunculus flammula*, Marsh Bedstraw *Galium palustre*, Water Starwort *Callitriche stagnalis*, Wavy Bittercress *Cardamine flexuosa*, Bog Stitchwort *Stellaria alsine*, Thyme-leaved Speedwell *Veronica serpyllifolia*, and a hybrid Willowherb *Epilobium ciliatum x tetragonum*, so hopefully within a year or two the ground along the brook will have carpets of these plants of damp woodland.

Chris tried to find some more fungi: a very small clump of Sulphur Tuft *Hypholoma fasciculare* was eventually located, along with a droughted Blusher *Amanita rubescens* and some dried-out brackets of Branched Oyster Mushroom *Pleurotus cornucopiae*. On fallen branches and twigs, there were various small black blotches and dots - Birch Woodwarts *Hypoxylon multifforme* and Beech Woodwarts *H. fragiforme*, Beech Tarcrust *Biscogniauxia nummularium* and Oak Blackhead *Diatrypella quercina*.

Coming out of the shade and into the sunshine, we had lunch at picnic tables in Brook Glade, before continuing our gentle amble uphill to a meeting of six tracks known (unimaginatively!) as Six Ways. Here the group split, with Trevor and William returning to the car park whilst the rest of us continued towards the former school camp on the east section of Middle Way. Here, close to oak and sweet chestnut we found the Chestnut Bolete *Gyroporus castaneus* – just one specimen. It is a very attractive toadstool being a smooth light cinnamon colour on the cap with white pores. Further along we

found a small and rather damaged specimen of the Lacquered Bracket *Ganoderma lucidum* growing at the bottom of a decaying stump. Not far away, we then found a log with lots of tiered dark brown brackets of the Oak Curtain Crust *Hymenochaete rubiginosa*. Our list of fungus was growing – slowly! We added only Stag’s Horn *Calocera cornea*, Blackfoot Polypore *Polyporus durus* and another small black pustule on a hornbeam twig possibly *Melogramma bulliardii*, making a day’s total of 21 species quite an effort!

It didn’t take us very long to get back to the ‘hut’ where we found Trevor and William taking their ease on the bench outside. Chris (the keyholder) unlocked the hut and put the kettle on ready for tea and cake, enjoyed by all.

Birds from Trevor’s list: Buzzard, Wood Pigeon, Great-spotted Woodpecker (2), Blackcap (2 heard), Chiffchaff (several), Robin (several), Blackbird (1), Long-tailed Tit (3 small parties), Great Tit (several), Blue Tit (several), Coal Tit (1), Marsh Tit (2), Nuthatch (several), Tree-creeper (1), Wren (several), Jay (1), Carrion Crow & Magpie (over field to north of wood).

Mammals: Mole hills adjacent Cuffley Brook and in Brook Glade, Grey Squirrel (only 2 seen), Wood Mouse (food cache), Rabbit (droppings) and Muntjac (droppings).



Lichens recorded by Paula:

<i>Arthonia spadicea</i>	On an oak trunk
<i>Chaenotheca ferruginea</i>	On an oak trunk
<i>Dimerella pineti</i>	On a birch trunk
<i>Graphis scripta</i>	On a hornbeam trunk
<i>Lecanora carpinea</i>	On a dead branch
<i>Lecanora conizaeoides</i>	On a wooden post
<i>Lepraria incana</i>	On an oak trunk
<i>Lecanactis abietina</i>	On an oak trunk
<i>Parmelia saxatilis</i>	On a fallen branch beneath an oak
<i>Pertusaria</i> sp.	On a hornbeam trunk
<i>Phylloblastia</i> cf. <i>inexpectata</i>	On holly leaves
<i>Xanthoria polycarpa</i>	On a fallen oak branch

Chris James

PEGSDON

Saturday 21st September

4 members, 2 guests

The walk was led by Chris James instead of Ruth Graham. It was a fine, warm and sunny day but ground conditions were still very dry, there having been no rain for some weeks. A small and select group including two visitors met in various places along the village road at Pegsdon. After waiting for a while at one end of the road, recording some birds, Chris & Trevor set off, thinking that no-one else had turned up. But a timely phone call from William enabled him to bring the rest of the party from *their* meeting place and catch us up! What would we have done without mobile phones . . . ?

After apologies to Rose and David Seabrook, our visitors, we followed a broad track southwards up the east side of Clarke's Hill / The Meg toward's Hoo Bit. The track sides had been very tidily mown right back to the hedges so there was very little left to look at botanically. The only species of note were one Red Admiral butterfly, a Speckled Wood butterfly, a few bees on the ivy and some ladybirds – both 7-spot and 32-spot. But for something completely different, William found a fossil sponge at the side of the path and we thought how clever he was! We continued along a fenced-in field path on the west side of Hoo Bit, a chalky meadow reserve owned by the Beds and Cambs Wildlife Trust, where we found a few more flowers including Salad Burnet *Sanguisorba minor*, Wild Basil *Clinopodium vulgare*, Restharrow *Ononis repens*, Burnet Saxifrage *Pimpinella saxifraga*, Agrimony *Agrimonia eupatoria*, Field scabious *Centaurea scabiosa* and the Chalk Knapweed *Centaurea nigra var debeauxii*. So this was a bit more encouraging.

We turned left (north-east) on the Icknield Way Path, climbed steadily to Telegraph Hill (184m). The path here is bordered by magnificent beech trees under which we could see many dried-out stems of White Helleborine *Epipactis helleborine*. We were quite keen to see the effects of some scrub clearance on the steep banks of the historic track of the Icknield Way where it passes over the hill, so we clambered up through bushes to have a look – and to have an elevenses break. Due to the drought, the only plant in good flower was Devil's Bit Scabious *Succisa pratensis* but there were a few more butterflies enjoying the very warm sunshine: another Red Admiral, Green-veined and Small Whites, a Meadow Brown.

We dragged ourselves back up to our feet - it would have been easy to drop off for a nap here - said good-bye to Trevor who was turning back (but looking for beetles on the way) and continued along the Icknield Way to a gateway leading on to the Pegsdon Hills Nature Reserve. A short walk led us to a most spectacular view over the dry chalk valley landscape of Barn Hole and across to Deacon Hill. From here you can see for miles into Bedfordshire (and it was a perfect day for it) but after dallying for while we retraced our steps to the Icknield Way and on to a bridleway leading south again towards Lilley Hoo.

We had gone only a few yards before we found a 'scruffy' field corner that looked promising for insects. A pause here gave Chris a chance to spot a small brown bird behaving oddly on a bush a little further away. Flying out in short circular bursts, it was, of course, a Spotted Flycatcher – a very nice record. A bit further along, we passed a magnificent pollarded oak tree being gradually smothered by a dense 'skirt' of holly before taking a left turn towards Wicks Spring. There wasn't a lot to see along the field edges until we came to a sown game strip infested with Creeping Thistles. William encouraged everyone to smell the flowers – a wonderfully rich 'draft' of honey!



Here we also found many plants of Thorn Apple *Datura stramonium* with their large prickly green fruits which were interesting because not often seen in the countryside.

Moving on, we reached Little Offley, a very fine old house with a 'ha-ha' (which kept us out of the garden!). The farm yard was ultra-tidy but we found one corner with 'weeds' including a large crucifer. I showed the plant to Trevor later. He checked it out and was confident that it was Russian Mustard *Sisymbrium volgense*, the first county record and for the 100km grid square, although Ian Denholm (county recorder) did not confirm it. There

were also some enormous specimens of Sun Spurge *Euphorbia helioscopia*, Shepherd's Purse *Capsella bursa-pastoris* and Henbit Deadnettle *Lamium amplexicaule* growing on a compost/dung heap.

From Little Offley we continued north-eastwards towards Wellbury House. We dipped down into a valley between Markhamshill Plantation and Saddle Plantation and earmarked a place with a good view for our lunch. There was, however, very little wildlife to be seen in the good view apart from a Sparrowhawk and a Carrion Crow having an argument above us and lots of pheasants at ground level!

Our route continued on through attractive and rolling arable landscape past Wellbury House and New Wellbury where it became a tarmacked lane. The highlight here was two large and still healthy elm trees which appeared to be English Elm. We also watched a flock of about fifteen Meadow Pipits flutter overhead and several Ivy Bees taking nectar - on Ivy. A short and nasty stretch along the busy B655, walked as quickly as possible, brought us once more to the Icknield Way track. We turned off it almost immediately into the large pasture field below Deacon Hill and here we could slow up again and enjoy following a mixed gathering of Great Tits, Robins and Chiffchaffs along the hedge next to us, before we started our ascent of the Hill.

Time for another drinks break at the top – and to take in another wide and sweeping view over north Hertfordshire (and probably into south Cambridgeshire) and south Bedfordshire. However, we decided to move on before we were decapitated by the strings of several kites that got closer and closer - and lower and lower!

Our day ended with a very pleasant walk along the top of Deacon Hill and then down a slope covered in calcareous grassland where we found some nice chalk plants: Autumn Gentian *Gentianella amarella*, Small Scabious *Scabiosa columbaria*, Wild Basil, *Clinopodium vulgare*, more Devil's Bit Scabious, Harebells *Campanula rotundifolia*, Purging Flax *Linum catharticum*, Large Thyme *Thymus pulegioides* and Common Toadflax *Linaria vulgaris*. A little further down we found large carpets of Marjoram *Origanum vulgare* in flower. And so back to Pegsdon and our various parking places!

Meanwhile, Trevor had recorded the following **birds**: At Pegsdon – Buzzard, Red Kite, Pheasant, Wood Pigeon, Great Tit, Robin, Jay, Jackdaw, Carrion Crow. At Telegraph Hill – Green Woodpecker, Blackcap, Chiffchaff, Wren, Dunnock, Robin, Blackbird, Bullfinch, Goldfinch, Long-tailed Tit, Great Tit, Blue Tit, Coal Tit, Marsh Tit, Magpie.



Butterflies: Small Heath (4), Meadow Brown (3), Speckled Wood (2), Comma (1), Peacock (1), Red Admiral (3), Brimstone (1), Small White (1), Green-veined White (1).

Chris James

OXHEY WOODS LOCAL NATURE RESERVE

Saturday 5th October

7 members

We met in the Oxhey Woods car park but soon realized that we could leave our cars there for two hours only. After a quick check we all left in convoy towards Oxhey Drive and parked safely at the bottom of the road. As we stepped out, we found our first fungi on the living leaves of a young Norway Maple growing at the side of the pavement. It was a powdery mildew *Sawadea bicornis* that I've never seen or noticed before. As normally happens with this type of fungi, the host is very important for the correct identification. The book to use is 'Microfungi on Land Plants' by Elis & Ellis.

It had been raining on and off for two weeks only, so the ground was still dry and the fungi in the woods were not abundant. We found some of the usual species but not in great numbers: Russet Toughshank *Gymnopilus dryophilus*, Common Puffball *Lycoperdon perlatum*, Common Earthball *Scleroderma citrinum*, the ubiquitous Sulphur Tuft *Hypholoma fasciculare* etc.

The sense of smell is very important for the would-be mycologist and we spent some time testing ours. The Aniseed Funnel *Clitocybe odora* has a strong aniseed smell that most of us could pick up. The Rosy Bonnet *Mycena rosea* smells of radish. The common Earthball has an unpleasant rubbery smell, especially if you slice the fruitbody in two with a knife. You can see

then the thicker skin that differentiates it from other Earthballs and the dark mass of the spores inside it.

Some years ago, English Nature was trying to develop some tools to assess the conservation value of different sites using fungi as indicator species. Lists of fungi were made to be used in a similar way as we are using some plants as ancient woodland indicators. Several types of Shields *Pluteus* sp. were proposed and out of those we found two growing in rotten wood at Oxhey Woods, the Velvet Shield *Pluteus umbrosus* and the beautiful orange-coloured *Pluteus aurantiorugosus*.

We found another species worth mentioning. *Mycena pseudocorticola* (no English name) is a tiny blue-grey bonnet that can grow in large numbers on mossy trunks. Ours wasn't as prolific but was still a nice find.

I regret to say that we didn't keep a proper record of plants and the birds we heard or saw.



ASCOMYCETES

Annulohypoxylon

multiforme

Birch Woodwart

Host

Birch dead wood

Diatrypella quercina

A Barkspot

fallen Oak branch

Erysiphe(Microsphaera)

Oak Powdery

alphitoides

Mildew

living Oak leaves

Exidia nucleata

Crystal Brain

rotten deciduous wood

Hypoxylon fuscum

Hazel Woodwart

Hazel dead wood

Nectria cinnabarina

Coral Spot

deciduous stick

Rhytisma acerinum

Sycamore Tarspot

fallen Norway Maple leaves

Sawadaea (Uncinula)

bicornis

A Powdery Mildew

living Sycamore leaves

Trochila ilicina

Holly Speckle

Holly leaves

Xylaria hypoxylon

Candlesnuff Fungus

rotten deciduous wood

Xylaria polymorpha

Dead Man's Fingers

rotten deciduous log

BASIDIOMYCETES

<i>Auricularia auricula-judae</i>	Jelly Ear	deciduous dead wood
<i>Calocera cornea</i>	Small Stagshorn	rotten Oak log
<i>Calocera pallidospathulata</i>	Pale Stagshorn	rotten Oak log
<i>Clitocybe gibba</i>	Common Funnel	soil, deciduous woodland
<i>Clitocybe odora</i>	Aniseed Funnel	soil close to Oak
<i>Crepidotus mollis</i>	Peeling Oysterling	dead Hawthorn
<i>Daedaleopsis confragosa</i>	Blushing Bracket	dead Birch wood
<i>Gymnopilus penetrans</i>	Common Rustgill	deciduous dead wood
<i>Gymnopus dryophilus</i>	Russet Toughshank	soil, deciduous woodland
<i>Hypholoma fasciculare</i>	Sulphur Tuft	rotten deciduous stump
<i>Lycoperdon perlatum</i>	Common Puffball	soil
<i>Marasmius rotula</i>	Collared Parachute	decayed Oak leaves
<i>Mycena galericulata</i>	Common Bonnet	deciduous dead wood
<i>Mycena pseudocorticola</i>		mossy Oak trunk
<i>Mycena rosea</i>	Rosy Bonnet	soil under mixed deciduous trees
<i>Peniophora quercina</i>	A Crust	Oak stick
<i>Piptoporus betulinus</i>	Birch Polypore	Birch dead wood
<i>Pluteus aurantiorugosus</i>	A type of Shield	rotten Sycamore log
<i>Pluteus cervinus</i>	Deer Shield	undet. deciduous wood
<i>Pluteus umbrosus</i>	Velvet Shield	rotten Sycamore log
<i>Schizopora paradoxa</i>	Split Porecrust	fallen deciduous branch
<i>Scleroderma citrinum</i>	Common Earthball	soil
<i>Stereum gausapatum</i>	Bleeding Oak Crust	standing dead Oak
<i>Stereum hirsutum</i>	Hairy Curtaincrust	Birch dead wood
<i>Trametes versicolor</i>	Turkeytail	dead deciduous wood
<i>Tremella mesenterica</i>	Yellow Brain	dead deciduous wood
<i>Tubaria furfuracea</i>	Scurfy Twiglet	soil

Claudi Soler

BURNS GREEN, BENINGTON

Sunday 20th October 2019

6 members



We met on a bright, pleasant day and set off southwest on an ancient green lane, where there were many veteran trees on the banks. One of the first was a field maple where Paula spotted a Yellow Pin lichen low down on the trunk. Continuing on down the track there were a number of veteran pollarded oaks and some massive poplars with deeply furrowed bark. In

the 16 days since our reccé there had been an outburst of fungal growth and we found many and varied Bonnet Caps *Mycena* sp. on rotting logs and branches, some very large Parasol Mushrooms *Macrolepiota procera*, groups of Shaggy Scaly-caps *Pholiota squarrosa* completely encircling the base of a huge Poplar, a number of Spectacular Rustgills *Gymnopilus junonius* on another poplar (one about 30cm across) and, amongst the leaf litter, a number of Giant Puffballs *Langermannia gigantea* which were very close to a large badger sett. We were certainly giving Peter a lot of work today and Simon was busy looking for beetles in old fungi.

As usual we recorded the plants in flower :- with some surprises considering we were well into October including Common Hogweed, a Blackberry, Hedge Woundwort, Prickly Sowthistle, Wood Avens, Common Mouse-ear, Red and White Campion and Chicory.



We then crossed High Elms Lane onto a footpath across grassland with Idle Hill on our left and very soon stopped in our tracks as Simon spotted a pair of Stonechats flying back and forth from grassland to mugwort plants growing on a bank. Many of us had not seen these delightful birds before. We continued on and up the hill to towards Gregory's Farm, as great views of the area opened up around us. Just past the farm we saw a Brown Hare, some Fairy-ring toadstools *Marasmius oreades* and two beautiful old pollarded oak trees which must have been 300 years old. By this time, we had lost Paula

temporarily - she had found an old ridge tile on the verge with a fungus growing on a lichen. She told us this was *Polycoccum pulvinatum* which has very few records in Herts.

We next entered Loefield Grove woodland with numerous old coppiced hornbeams forming part of an ancient hedgerow. There were also many more fungi: Sulphur Tufts *Hypholoma fasciculare*, Tawny Funnels *Lepista flaccida* and large groups of Shaggy Parasols *Macrolepiota rhacodes* amongst the brambles. As usual our rate of progress was so slow that it was already time for a lunch break in delightful, peaceful surroundings.

After lunch we continued on a path north-east between arable fields and, at one point, we realized we had been spotted by several fallow deer moving along a hedge to the north. We next crossed Whempstead Road and into Comb's Wood where the path dropped down towards the Old Bourne. Here we found a fungus we had been hoping to see – a Fly Agaric *Amanita muscaria* - with a young specimen looking even more stunning than the adults.

A field corner just outside Comb's Wood had been planted with a strange mix of plants, perhaps as pheasant feed, with small sunflowers, large bugloss, flax, brassicas, a millet and other non-native grasses. We continued along the field boundary beside the Old Bourne passing many hazel bushes and one ancient ash which had lost many of its upper limbs. This led us to a path going north-west through a sheep-grazed meadow where there were large numbers of Field Mushrooms *Agaricus campestris* - several were picked for supper. Finally, we joined the Hertfordshire Chain Walk west through Hebing End and back to our point of departure.

With thanks to Paula (lichens), Peter (fungi), Simon and Julie (birds).

Birds seen or heard: Red Kite, Common Buzzard, Pheasant, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Wood Pigeon, Great-spotted Woodpecker, Skylark, Meadow Pipit, Pied Wagtail, Dunnock, Stonechat, Robin, Blackbird, Redwing, Long-tailed Tit, Coal Tit, Blue Tit, Marsh Tit, Nuthatch, Wren, Yellowhammer, Chaffinch, Goldfinch, Bullfinch, Redpoll, Starling, Magpie, Carrion Crow, Rook, Jackdaw.

Other fungi not included above: Dark Honey Fungus *Armillaria ostoyae*
Stinking Dapperling *Lepiota cristata*, Russet Toughshank *Gymnopilus dryophilus*,
Buttercap *Collybia butyracea*, Fairy Ring Toadstool *Marasmius oreades*,
Grooved Bonnet *Mycena polygramma*, Lilac Bonnet *Mycena pura*,
Field Blewit *Lepista saeva*, Verdigris Toadstool *Stropharia aeruginosa*, Dung
Roundhead *Stropharia semiglobosa*, Lawyer's Wig *Coprinus comatus*,
Fairy Inkcap *Coprinellus disseminatus*, Peeling Oysterling *Crepidotus mollis*,
Hen of the Woods *Grifola frondosa*, Southern Bracket *Ganoderma australe*,
Common Puffball *Lycoperdon perlatum*.



Lichens in TL3022 - From the concrete post in Burns Green: *Caloplaca oasis*,
Candelariella aurella, *Lecidella stigmataea*, *Xanthoria calcicola*, *Xanthoria*
parietina. On a Kerb Stone: *Lecanora muralis*. From the track on the west
side of Burns Green: *Arthonia spadicea* – Oak tree trunk, *Chaenotheca*
brachypoda – Yellow pin lichen on base of veteran Field Maple, *Lecanora*
expallens – Ivy trunk, *Lepraria incana* – Oak tree trunk, *Parmelia sulcata* –
Willow tree trunk, *Phaeophyscia orbicularis* - Willow tree trunk, *Phlyctis*
argena - Willow tree trunk, *Punctelia jeckeri* - Willow tree trunk, *Punctelia*
subrudecta - Willow tree trunk, *Strigula jamesii* – Ash tree trunk

Lichens in TL3021 - from a ridge tile lying on the verge: *Physcia caesia*,
Polycoccum pulvinatum = Lichenicolous fungus on *P. caesia*, *Rinodina oleae*

Jean Williamson

HATFIELD FOREST, ESSEX

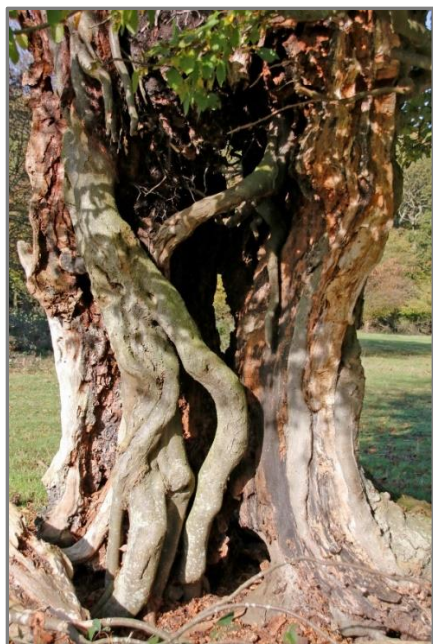
Saturday 2nd November 2019

5 members

It was raining when I arrived at the car park of this National Trust property, which is also a National Nature Reserve and a Site of Special Scientific Interest. Given the forecast of strong winds as well, and the fact that the Rugby World Cup Final was being shown that morning on TV I didn't think there would be much of a turn-out. However, Rose, David and Alla arrived. We set off in the rain, but at about mid-day it cleared up and we had some sunshine before the rain started again shortly before we got back to the cars.

Hatfield Forest is a favourite place for me and I have long admired the veteran trees there. As Oliver Rackham says in his book *'The Last Forest'*, "Hatfield Forest is of supreme interest in that all the elements of a medieval Forest survive: deer, cattle, coppice woods, pollards, scrub, timber trees, grassland and fen, plus a seventeenth century lodge and rabbit warren. As such it is almost certainly unique in England and possibly in the world."

We walked from the east side of the forest coming across ancient pollarded hornbeams almost straight away. According to Rackham, the pollards in this part of the Forest are derived from three coppices lost in the early eighteenth century. Many of the hornbeam pollards were showing signs of decay and were partly hollow. In some cases, all that was left of the bole were two elevations, one on either side with a gap between them, holding the crown above.

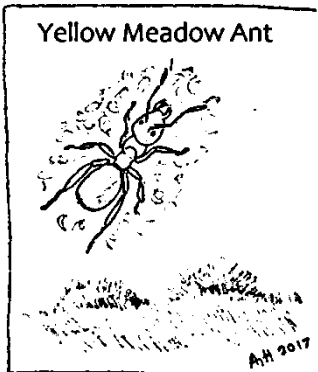
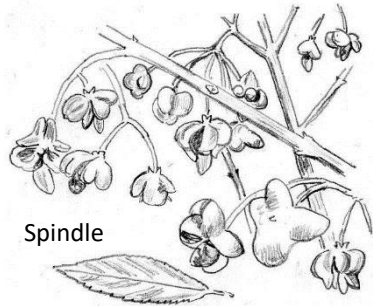


Internal roots were often being put down as part of the process of decay and hollowing, no doubt in order to recycle the minerals released by the rotting process in the centre of the bole. One hollow hornbeam pollard which I have been photographing for some eleven years now has internal roots which have reached the ground. These have grown larger each year and in due course they may become the new bole for the tree.

We walked along the boardwalk which led down to the lake, admiring the ancient coppice stools (many of hornbeam) which had not been cut for many years. There were a few birds on the lake (see below) but not many. We passed by what looked like a group of young field maple trees, but which was

in fact a single tree that has been coppiced. It is thought possible that it is 1000 years old! We walked through Spittlemore Coppice where we saw a fallow deer doe. (The previous week-end there had been a buck groaning here as the rut had been going on but today, if it was there, it was silent).

We then followed the course of the Shermore Brook and admired the profusion of mistletoe, mostly growing on hawthorn, although there was some on field maple and apple too. Having explained to the party that according to one gentleman cited in Rackham's book, most of the mistletoe in Hatfield Forest was male and had no berries (mistletoe being dioecious with male and female flowers on separate plants), I was very surprised to find that all the mistletoe we saw were female plants, easily identified by their sticky white berries! Perhaps there were some male plants as well – we did not check



thoroughly. There was a lot of spindle in fruit, lending a red glow to the otherwise drab hawthorn bushes next to which most of the spindle was growing. There were many hills created by Yellow Meadow Ants (an ancient wood pasture species).

We had lunch by the Shell House. This was built in 1759 as a place for the then owners of the Forest, the Houbblons, to picnic by the lake. Our lunches over, after passing the 17th-century rabbit warren, we walked along the Main Plain towards Forest Lodge. This is an important listed monument as it is the only Medieval forest lodge in England with remains which can still be seen above ground. A building still stands on the site but has been much altered since its original building in 1510-20. We made our way back then along one of the ancient rides created in the medieval period for hunters on horseback, passing through Collins Coppice, then via the dam at the end of the lake and the boardwalk back to the cars. A herd of red poll cattle had appeared briefly to prove the wood pasture was still in current use. It was now raining again!



Long Tailed Tits

Birds:

Over the plains: Buzzard, Kestrel (a pair);

On or by the lake: Cormorant, Mallard, Coot, Moorhen, Canada Goose, Back-headed Gull;

Woodland: Long-tailed Tit, Jay.

Plant species in flower (recorded by Alla):

White Dead-nettle, Annual Mercury, Annual Meadow-grass, Selfheal, Autumn Hawkbit, Common Ragwort, Red Clover.

Mammals: Fallow Deer (doe), Rabbit, Mole (many fresh mole heaps), Grey Squirrel.

Mike Demidecki





Plant hunting at Waterford Heath Nature Reserve
Saturday 24th August 2019
Photo: Paula Shipway



Taking a closer look at Scaly-cap Fungi near Bramfield
Sunday 20th October 2019
Photo: Paula Shipway



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