



**SPELTHORNE NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY
NEWSLETTER**



www.snhs.org.uk

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Newsletter: Liz and Roger Whitaker, The Hollies, Middle Hill, Egham, Surrey, TW20 OJG

Summer 2023

Dear Member

Welcome to the Summer newsletter. Thanks to Marion Rider, Eric Sloan, Peter Clifford and Martin Love for their contributions to the newsletter.

Future events

Wednesday 11th October 8:15pm. Andrew Wood County recorder for Butterflies for Herts and Middx Wildlife Trust. How Butterflies and Moths are Changing in and around the London area"

Wednesday 8th November 8:15pm. A talk by Anthony Beasley from the **Laleham Bird Ringing group.** Importance of Bird Ringing at Queen Mary reservoir in investigating bird migration

Wednesday 15th November -FIELD VISIT Kempton Nature Reserve 10 -12pm for Birds and GNH. Meet at 10 am at the entrance to the reserve at the corner of Nallhead Road and Main Street, TW13 6ST, Grid reference 116712.

Wednesday 13th December 8:15pm. Christmas Social Evening, refreshments and a raffle. Members photos. Our **President Phil Cribb** will give a short talk on the **Flowers of Greece.**

2024

Wednesday 10th January 8:15pm. Talk by Mike Waite, Director of research and monitoring, Surrey Wildlife Trust, will talk to us about Spiders of Surrey

Wednesday 14th February 8:15pm. A talk by **Professor David Morritt,** Professor of Marine Biology, Department of Biological Sciences, Royal Holloway University of London. Mike will talk about **Invasive Species of the River Thames**

Saturday March 2nd Spring Social Evening 7.30pm
Annual Spring Social Evening Including Buffet, Raffle & Illustrated Talk by
Dr David Jones, Dept of Entomology, Natural History Museum, London

Wednesday 13th March 8:15pm. Derek Stimpson from the **British Deer Society**

Wednesday April 10th 8:15pm. Ben West of "Where the wild things are" will talk to us and give an 'overview of the various habitat types found in Surrey and the fungi that might be found there'

Wednesday April 17th 10 am FIELD VISIT

Cabrera Trust Riverside walk for spring flowers with Marion Rider

Meet at the Corner of Cabrera Ave and Beechmont Ave, GU25 4EY.

Wednesday May 8th pm. Society AGM and members photos. Annual project progress update from the River Thames Scheme

Previous Events

Wednesday 31st May 2023 Revisit to Kempton Nature Reserve

We visited this reserve last November 2022, so it was interesting to see the Reserve at a different time of the year. Our guide Kristine showed us around the site. Kristine has known the site for many years and so has a good knowledge as to how the reserve has developed. Some 2,000 to 5,000 trees have been planted such as oak, lime, elder and cherry. Dogwood with blackthorn has arrived here naturally.

Turkey Oak (*Quercus cerris*) grows here. This is a non-native oak which can be invasive out competing with our native oak. Lesser Hop Trefoil (*Trifolium dubium*), Cut-leaved Crane's-bill (*Geranium dissectum*) was found as we made our way to the Paul Jackson Hide. On the water we saw a Great Crested Grebe (with chicks), Coot (with chicks), Swan, Little Grebe Black-headed Gulls, Heron, Mallard and a Canada Goose. Birdlife on the water appeared to be very similar to that of last November, apart from the absence of shovelers and Egyptian Geese. In the trees there were Magpies and Ring-necked Pigeons. A Cuckoo was heard as we left the Hide.

We continued our walk around the perimeter of the Reserve. Kristine brought our attention to the grassland areas where there has been the removal, with the substantial reduction of brambles and coarse vegetation using a strimmer. This has resulted in a colourful display of plants such as Oxeye Daisy (*Leucanthemum vulgare*), Herb Robert (*Geranium robertianum*), Catsear (*Hypochaeris radicata*), St. John's-wort (*Hypericum sp.*), Forget-me-not (*Myosotis sp.*), Bird's-foot Trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*), Wild Rose (*Rosa sp.*), Vipers Bugloss (*Echium vulgare*), Teasel (*Dipsacus fullonum*) and Wood Avens (*Geum urbanum*). Also was found was Hairy Vetch (*Vicia hirsuta*) and Smooth Vetch (*Vicia tetrasperma*). Along the grass perimeter was seen the Broad-bodied Chaser Dragonfly, a Long-jawed Orb Weaver Spider (*Tetragnathidae*), a Tegenaria Spider and a Scarlet Tiger Moth. There are water channels around the perimeter which are remnants of the previous reservoir. There is an effort to reduce Goat Willow (*Salix caprea*) which is invading this area to reduce the loss of water in the channels. We heard Marsh Frogs here. Kristine took the group to a pond which is used for pond dipping. The pond gets invaded with New Zealand Pigmyweed (*Crassula helmsii*) which is an invasive pondweed and difficult to eradicate. Different methods have been used to try to eradicate the weed, but the weed cannot be removed entirely and reinvades rapidly and at best may be kept under control.

At the second bird hide we saw again Swan, Tufted Duck and Pochard. Kingfishers are often present here and posts for perching for the benefit of the Kingfishers, have been placed in strategic places by the water's edge around the site but no Kingfishers were seen on this occasion.

As we continued around the perimeter path onto the third hide we saw a Common Blue Damselfly, Painted Lady Butterfly and a Thick-legged Flower Beetle which was found on Oxeye Daisy and again on Catsear. Knotted Clover (*Trifolium striatum*) and Soft Brome (*Bromus hordeaceus*) was added to our list.

At the third hide was Pochard, Coot with chicks. Little and Great Crested Grebe, Canada Geese and Mallard. We watched with interest as a Fox appeared to be stalking something on the reed edge and

then shortly afterwards was seen running away with something in its mouth. We suspect it might have been a young bird.

We made our way to the entrance and was interested to see a group of volunteers shaping the land for the creation of a new pond with the construction of a platform for pond dipping. Many thanks to Kristine for taking us around the reserve and giving us greater insights into the work in progress.

Wednesday 21st June Holme Farm Community Project, with Andi Roy

Andi showed a group of members around this site which altogether consists of about 14 acres. Andi is well known to members of the SNHS for his passion for all things to do with wildlife. Andi Roy is an Ecologist working for Spelthorne Council and assists in increasing the biodiversity and rewilding of Holme Farm. He has a BSc (Hons) in Zoology and an MSc in Conservation Science, has previously worked for DEFRA for many years and has been bringing his expertise and knowledge of conservation and ecological practices to Holme Park for over a year now. His particular expertise is in reptiles and amphibians.

The land of Home Farm had been unused, formerly an Animal and Plant Health Agency site on government land with several old disused buildings. After much campaigning by local people DEFRA gave the go-ahead to lease the land to the community with plans to form community allotments, create workshops for many kinds of community activities, a café, plant trees and create wildlife areas across 8 acres and has now been given permission from the Government. Fundraising to refurbish the two derelict building is underway. Use of the site has started well and work is in progress. The derelict building houses tools for the allotment and maintenance and a welcome cup of tea and coffee. Andi pointed out the allotment area where there are plans to extend further before moving onto areas for wildlife.

As Andi began his tour of the wildlife-meadows we passed plants such as Lesser Stitchwort (*Stellaria graminea*), Goat's-beard (*Tragopogon pratensis*), Forget-me-not (*Myosotis sp.*), Red Clover (*Trifolium pratense*) and Nipplewort (*Lapsana communis*) a small taste of the flora to be seen on the site. Under a felt sheet we found 3 slow worms. Community volunteers had planted a community orchard consisting of apples, plum, cherries and other orchard trees which have to be kept well-watered during periods of dry weather. Areas of the grassland has been planted with Yellow Rattle (*Rhinanthus minor*) which is parasitic on grass in an effort to reduce coarse grasses and increase plant biodiversity. Here we found Bee Orchid (*Ophrys apifera*) and growing under a group of trees Broad-leaved Helleborine (*Epipactis helleborine*). We passed Tufted Vetch (*Vicia cracca*), Hairy Vetch (*Vicia hirsute*), Smooth Vetch (*Vicia tetrasperma*), Meadow Vetchling (*Lathyrus pratensis*), Meadow Buttercup (*Ranunculus acris*), Cut-leaved Cranesbill (*Geranium dissectum*) and saw a Meadow Brown butterfly. We came to a corner of a field where there is a Blackthorn hedge of 100years old. White Throats are found here. Andi has much enthusiasm when it comes to encouraging wildlife on the site which becomes increasingly apparent as we progress around the site. There is an Elm tree where it is hoped to encourage White Hairstreak butterflies. Elm trees usually die when they reach a certain size when beetles exploit the bark and Dutch Elm Disease takes hold. Further on Andi has set up an area with a bird feeder and camera where it is hoped to catch images of Harvest Mice as they climb to access the bird food. We stopped to look at a moth trap which Andi had set up. John our moth expert identified amongst the egg boxes a Small Elephant Hawk-moth, Tortrix Moth, Green Pug and a Buff-tipp Moth, a Mayfly and Grousewing Caddisfly. We came to a brook in which Purple Loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*) was growing and saw a Banded Demoiselle. Amongst the vegetation there was a Golden Bloomed Longhorn Beetle and on nettles we found Peacock caterpillars.

Further on plants indicative of flooded meadows were found. The River Bourne which runs through the site with frequent flooding leading to areas of marshy ground. Here could be found Marsh Bedstraw (*Galium palustre*) with its wonderfully perfumed flowers and also Greater Bird's-foot Trefoil (*Lotus pedunculatus*) which differs from its drier habitat species the Common Bird's-foot Trefoil (*L. corniculatus*)

as the stem is always hollow. Here volunteers are creating a hedge out of piles of dead twigs which follows the length of a damp ditch. This is to provide a corridor through which small mammals may pass increasing the habitat available to them. We stopped to admire a veteran Oak tree, one of Andi's favourites. Andi commented that they were moving away from increasing plant diversity by seeding and allowing natural regeneration to occur. By the water's edge we saw Marsh Woundwort (*Stachys palustris*) which has brighter purple flowers than those of the Hedge Woundwort (*Stachys sylvatica*) which we previously seen on drier ground. Also present was Yellow Iris (*Iris pseudacorus*) and the invasive Himalayan Balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*) against which there is a constant battle. There are features of an old ditch along which reeds and rushes are growing which is possibly the remains of an old river course. Skullcap has been found here but we were not successful in finding any on this occasion. But we did see a Black-tailed Skimmer, find Angelica (*Angelica sylvestris*) and Redshank (*Persicaria maculosa*), heard a Swallow and saw a Red Admiral and a Marbled White butterfly. On our way back Andi stopped to show us Common Figwort (*Scrophularia nodosa*) on which we hoped to find Mullein Moth but were not successful on this occasion. Walking back towards the once disused buildings some stopped to observe the work going on within its walls.

It was enjoyable to see the wonderful work going on here to increase the wildlife value of Home Farm and for the enjoyment and welfare of the community.

Sunday July 2nd Chobham Common for Nightjars with Eric Sloan

This year our walk started from the roundabout car park so we could explore that part of the Common lying to the north of the M3. Our main purpose was to observe the behaviour of the nesting nightjars as dusk arrived. On our way to the viewpoint, Andi Roy was able to point out a number of interesting features including:

The insectivorous **Common Sundew** (*Drosera rotundifolia*) growing in the wild alongside **Marsh Club Moss** (*Lycopodiella inundata*). This moss is a living fossil which appeared on the planet over 400 million years ago & would have been present when our vertebrate ancestors emerged from the oceans. This plant & has declined dramatically as our heathlands have been fragmented through development. This find indicates that conservation efforts at Chobham are moving in the right direction.

Bog Asphodel (*Narthecium ossifragum*). The Latin name of bog asphodel, ossifragum, literally translates as 'bone-breaker'. This unassuming plant acquired this violent name because it was believed that the livestock that grazed on it got brittle bones. However, it was actually the calcium-poor pastures that caused the problem.

When compared to most other plants, **Common Dodder** (*Cuscuta epithimum*) really is a strange one, little more than a tangled mass of slender, reddy-coloured threads draped over gorse or heathers; dodder's tiny, pale-pink, densely clustered bell-shaped flowers add to its sense of mystery. Not only is the appearance of common dodder unusual, though, but so is its lifestyle. An annual, parasitic plant, in late-spring a slender stem emerges from germinating over-wintered seeds, and entwines itself, always anti-clockwise, around the nearest host plant. Common dodder growth at this stage depends entirely on food reserves contained in the seed, for the plant has no green chlorophyll, and therefore cannot photosynthesise. But once the plant is established, the lower part of the stem withers and falls away, leaving the dodder to depend solely on its unfortunate host, from which it takes sugar and other nutrients through suckers that penetrate stem and branches.

Growth is rapid, and it quickly engulfs host and adjacent plants in a tangled cloak of incredibly fine threads, colouring the landscape with a wine-red mantle. It prefers areas of scrubland recovering from fires so this red mantle often indicates recent brush fires.

Glow-worms, the glow-worm is not actually a worm, but a medium-sized, narrow beetle. Males look like typical beetles, but the nightly glow of the female is unmistakable - lighting up to attract a mate in the

darkness of their grassland habitats. The females have no wings and look similar to the larvae. Glow-worms are most often found as larvae, living under rocks on chalk or limestone grassland, and feeding on slugs and snails. Gardens, hedgerows, railway embankments, woodland rides, heathlands and cliffs are all possible habitats for glow-worms. The females are famous for emitting a greeny-orange light from their bottoms at night. They climb up plant stems and glow in order to attract males, who have large, photosensitive eyes - perfect for scanning vegetation at night. The larvae can also emit light, and so can the eggs. Adults are only around for a short period in June and July. The male glow-worm is a light brown, typical beetle. The larva is greyish-brown with yellowy-orange triangular markings at the side of each segment. The female is similar in appearance to the larva, but is unmistakable when she lights up at night. The larvae of glow-worms are predators, feeding on slugs and snails. They kill their prey by delivering a series of toxic bites, injecting digestive proteins that paralyse and eventually dissolve the soft body of the slug or snail. While the glow-worm is waiting for this process to happen, it might ride on the snail's back keeping away from the sticky mucus it produces.

Nightjars (*Caprimulgus europaeus*) summer visitors between April-August, nesting in Surrey heathlands. They spend the daytime hiding deep in the undergrowth, guarding their nests. They have excellent camouflage & if approached by dogs, their nature is to keep perfectly still but unfortunately this does not always work out well & nowadays with so many dogs being kept as pets this is why many reserves have to insist that dog walkers keep their dogs on a lead. The nightjars can best be seen when they take to the air for about an hour around at dusk/ dawn when they forage for moths & beetles. They are extremely agile in the air & also very acrobatic as they catch & eat their prey while flying. Taking advantage of their large tails & wingspan they can perform somersaults & hover to catch their prey, picking insects off one by one. As the sun sets one can hear their chirring call, each marking out its territory. Eventually they emit a squawk as a "call to flight". When flying they are almost completely silent but when it suits they can also make a wing clapping sound. Their flight patterns are intriguing, however they can generally only be photographed while flying around in darkness making them very difficult to photograph. Generally there are very few good photographs, apart from a good number of blurry silhouettes.

We were able to hear quite a number of birds chirring & later we managed to see a handful or so of nightjars in flight.

Eric Sloan

Sunday 23rd July Feltham Marshalling Yards with Phil Cribb.

16 people turned out on a sunny morning walk to the Feltham Marshalling Yards beginning our walk from the entrance of Pevensey Road Nature Reserve.

Phil's father, Peter Cribb was responsible for the grounds of the West Middlesex Crematorium from 1956 to 1985 and took a great interest in the conservation of wildlife around the crematorium. There is a pioneer wild garden in the crematorium. The Nature Reserve which surrounds West Middlesex Crematorium on three sides. Britain's Butcher Bird now extinct in the UK as a breeding bird was found here as well as the Wheatear and Tawny Owl. The damp muddy areas have become altered by the trees as they have matured. The reserve lies on the banks of the river Crane. The Duke of Northumberland's Canal which once run parallel to the river has dried up and now between there is thick woodland. The area was acid grassland but where the railway was built the nature of the land and plant life was altered due to addition of chalk clinker. A sewage works was built here in the 1940's, which used to be part of Butts Farm became disused and has become part of the nature reserve. Butterflies here, have had mixed fortunes with some butterflies such as the Wall butterfly disappearing while some others have become more common.

As we began our walk Phil showed us a comparison between coarse and fine grasses on either side of the path. False Oat-grass (*Arrhenatherum elatius*) is one of a number of native grasses that are found on unimproved grasslands and Bent (*Agrostis sp.*) a fine textured grass. Turkey Oak (*Quercus cerris*) and English Oak (*Quercus robur*) were found growing along the path. Gate Keeper and Meadow Brown butterflies were seen. We continued towards the disused sewage works passing Rosebay Willowherb (*Chamaenerion angustifolium*), Lesser Trefoil (*Trifolium dubium*), Hogweed (*Heracleum spondylium*) and Field Scabious (*Knautia arvensis*) on the way. Remnants of the sewage works could be seen beside the path which consists of embankments and concrete structures. Growing within the structures on the stoney ground was found Stonecrop (*Sedum sp.*), Wild Carrot (*Daucus carota*) and Yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*). Continuing on the path towards the Feltham Marshalling Yards we noted Wild Fennel (*Foeniculum vulgare*), Black Horehound (*Ballota nigra*), Mugwort (*Artemisia vulgaris*), Greater Burdock (*Arctium lappa*), Greater Knapweed (*Centaurea scabiosa*), Spear Thistle (*Cirsium vulgare*), Cornflower (*Centaurea cyanus*), White Bryony (*Bryonia dioica*), Teasel (*Dipsacus fullonum*), Wild Lettuce (*Lactuca virosa*), Green Alkanet (*Pentaglottis sempervirens*), Elder (*Sambucus nigra*), Stinging Nettle (*Urtica dioica*) important as habitat and food source for many insects, Woody Nightshade (*Solanum dulcamara*), Chicory (*Cichorium intybus*), Viper's Bugloss (*Echium vulgare*), Wild Mustard (*Sinapis arvensis*), Buddleja (*Buddleia davidii*) and Alfalfa (*Medicago sativa*) also known as Lucerne used by agriculture for animal forage and soil improvement. Peacock, Red Admiral and Comma butterflies were seen here.

We came to the edge of the Pevensey Nature Reserve leading onto the Marshalling Yards. The Feltham Marshalling Yards was closed in 1969 but recently a third of the site has been brought back into use, upon which a depot has been built. Part of the site was already occupied by the Royal Mail Jubilee Mail Centre. The remaining disused part of the site consisting of woodland and acid grasslands is being conserved for its biodiversity with access now allowed to the local community. Walking around the site, its wildlife richness soon became apparent. Here we found Hop Trefoil (*Trifolium campestre*), Perforate St John's Wort (*Hypericum perforatum*), Hare's-foot Clover (*Trifolium arvense*), Bird's-foot Trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*), Great Mullein (*Verbascum Thapsus*), Evening Primrose (*Oenothera biennis*), Yellow Melilot (*Melilotus officinalis*), Dyer's Weed (*Reseda luteola*), Tansy (*Tanacetum vulgare*), Common Gorse (*Ulex europaeus*). A Brown Argus, Marbled White, a female Brimstone and a Holly Blue Butterfly was seen and a Common Blue butterfly which was laying eggs on a Bird's Foot Trefoil. Toadflax Brocade was here and we also found two Oak Tree galls. An Oak Cherry Gall which is made by the wasp (*Cynips quercufoлии*) was found growing on a leaf and a Knopper Oak Gall made by the wasp (*Andricus quercusolicis*) which was found growing on an acorn. We emerged from the Marshalling site we came across a volunteer carrying out a butterfly survey. It is a good site for lepidopterology as we had experienced that morning.

We returned by a different path through wet woodland. Here we found the Angle Shades moth, Himalayan Balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*), Purple Loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*), Black Poplar (*Populus nigra*), Hedge Woundwort (*Stachys sylvatica*) and Wild Hop (*Humulus lupulus*). We followed the path along the edge of the river Crane back lastly finding Nettle-leaved Bellflower (*Campanula trachelium*) before emerging from the gate to return to where we started. Once again an enjoyable and informative morning provided by Phil Cribb.

Sunday 30th July Staines Moor with Phil Cribb. Meet at 10am in Moore Lane just before the bypass bridge. Grid Ref 031723

A group of 16 met on a cool and overcast morning at the end of July for our annual walk over Staines Moor led by our president Phil Cribb. We set off, most of us wearing wellington boots as the Moor was flooded on the northern end but in many other places too. Reasons for this were unclear. In addition, there had been no grazing by cattle all year due to missing fencing making it unsecure for any animals to use the moor this year. These two factors had a remarkable effect on the flora we found.

Proceeding up and over the railway bridge we spotted a comma and holy blue butterflies. The plants along the way included treacle mustard *Erysimum cheiranthoides*, privet *Ligustrum vulgare*, greater burdock *Arctium lappa*, yarrow *Achillea millefolium*, mayweed *Tripleurospermum inodorum* and dense flowered mullein *Verbascum densiflorum*. Sloes were beginning to form as well as some very tasty blackberries.

We set off along the west bank of the river Colne which was very high and fast flowing. A coot family were busy feeding here. We soon came across large areas of strawberry clover *Trifolium fragiferum*, a plant that is found on the moor but not in this area and only in small patches. Continuing to walk up this side of the river the ground was becoming extremely wet and we had to follow an alternative route towards the pond at the north end of the moor. The highlight here was a patch of tubular water dropwort *Oenanthe fistulosa* not seen on the moor for many years. This was another example of the changing flora. We then tried to cross to the other river bank but were unable to do that as by now even wellies were not sufficient footwear. On the return walk we spotted a wasp spider, patches of spiny restharrow *Ononis spinosa*, Flowering rush *Butomus umbellatus*, and blue water speedwell *Veronica anagallis aquatica*. It certainly had been a very interesting walk!

Other plants, birds and invertebrates recorded were Common fleabane *Pulicaria dysenterica*, Red shanks *Persicaria maculosa*, Marsh cudweed *Gnaphalium uliginosum*, Water pepper *Persicaria hydropiper*, Water mint *Mentha aquatica*, Musk thistle *Carduus nutans*, Creeping thistle *Cirsium arvense*, Arrow head *Sagittaria sagittifolia*, Reed mace *Typha latifolia*, Water plantain *Alisma plantago-aquatica*, Gypsywort *Lycopus seuropaeus*, Water forget-me-not *Myosotis scorpiodes*, Water figwort *Scrophularia auriculata* And Fool's watercress *Apium nodiflorum*

Birds recorded were Reed warbler, Coot and young, Meadow pipets, Kestrel, Hobby, Juvenile swallows and Common terns

Invertebrates recorded were Gatekeepers, Meadow browns and Brown argus.

Marion Rider

Saturday 12th August Ranmore Common with Phil Cribb.

9 Members met at Denbies Hillside Car Park to join Phil Cribb for a walk around Ranmore Common National Trust. This site has become familiar to members as Phil has been guided us around this site over a number of years. The weather was sunny but windy, and the recent rainy weather had brought out a good display of wild flowers so we were hopeful for a successful find of butterflies. This is a much-loved Site of Special Scientific Interest, (SSSI), within the Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. We hoped to see the Adonis Blue & Chalkhill Blue butterflies and the rare Silver Spotted Skipper and we were not disappointed.

As we Walked across the field of long grass before reaching the gate taking us onto the short chalk grassland we saw Wild Carrot (*Daucus carota*), Wild Parsnip (*Pastinaca sativa*), Common Vervain (*Verbena officinalis*), Non-spiny Restharrow (*Ononis repens*), Red Bartsia (*Odontites vernus*) and Hoary Ragwort (*Jacobaea erucifolia*) a grey downy plant with rocket shaped leaves related to common Ragwort. Beyond the gate following the path onto the Downland we saw many plants indicative of short chalk grassland among which were Clustered Bellflower (*Campanula glomerata*), Basil Thyme (*Acinos arvensis*), Wild Marjoram (*Origanum vulgare*), Quaking Grass (*Briza media*), Harebell (*Campanula rotundifolia*), Pignut (*Conopodium majus*), Eyebright (*Euphrasia sp.*), Common Rock-rose (*Helianthemum nummularium*), Carline Thistle (*Carlina vulgaris*), Ploughman's-spikenard (*Inula conyzae*), Yellow-wort (*Blackstonia perfoliata*) and Common Centaury (*Centaureum pulchellum*) both members of the Gentian family. Autumn Lady's-tresses (*Spiranthes spiralis*) a slender orchid with very small white with green flowers, Perforate St

John's Wort (*Hypericum perforatum*), Dwarf Thistle (*Cirsium acaule*), Bird's-foot Trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*), Traveller's Joy (*Clematis vitalba*) also called Old Man's Beard due to fluffy white seed heads which are seen scrabbling over the hedgerow in the Autumn. Wild Privet (*Ligustrum vulgare*) and Wayfaring Tree (*Viburnum lantana*) both shrubs of Chalk Downland. A herd of Belted Galloway Cattle were seen. These are used to reduce the coarse and thick clumps of grass which inhibit the growth of the fragile downland plants.

There were quite a few Chalkhill Blue butterflies on the wing and also settled amongst the plants and also a number Adonis Blue butterflies but fewer Common Blue butterflies. Also seen was a Silver-spotted Skipper, a Small Heath and a Brown Argus. A very enjoyable morning walk given by Phil Cribb, amply awarded with butterflies and plants.

Saturday 9th September 9th A walk on Chobham Common NNR with Marion Rider

On a hot and sunny morning 8 SNHS members set off primarily to see the rare Marsh Gentians, *Gentiana pneumonanthe*, which are in flower at this time. Descending the slope onto the main path we passed ling heather, *Calluna vulgaris* now fully in bloom and some bell heather, *Erica cinerea*, still in flower. We later found cross leaved heath, *Erica tetralix*, the third type of heather. Several grayling butterflies were very active and also some small heath butterflies.

SWT now have belted Galloway cattle grazing the heath in the areas where the marsh gentians are growing. The cattle eat the invasive purple moor grass and break up the underlying soil encouraging the gentians to flourish. We soon found a good colony of the gentians. Other plants of note were Dwarf gorse, *Ulex minor*, now in flower and also Saw-wort, *Serratula tinctoria*, an unusual and uncommon plant, Common knapweed *Centaurea scabiosa*, Common fleabane *Pulicaria dysenterica*, Red shanks *Persicaria maculosa*, Devil's bit scabious *Succisa pratensis* and Marsh cudweed *Gnaphalium uliginosum*

Marion Rider

Wednesday September 13th 8.15 pm Andy Sands gave a talk on "The Natural History of Upper Teesdale."

Andy showed many top-class photographs from his visits to Upper Teesdale. He concentrated particularly on birds in their habitats, but included some mammals and a few plants.

Upper Teesdale is an area of the Pennines in western Durham. It consists partly of estates managed for grouse shooting and partly of agricultural land used for beef cattle and sheep. A major theme of his presentation was that Upper Teesdale preserves thriving populations of plants, birds and animals that are rare or absent in most of England. Andy considered that the management of the land by gamekeepers, removing some predators such as corvids and mink, was an important factor in this biodiversity.

Waders are some of Andy's favourite birds, and he included photographs and descriptions of several species that inhabit the heather moorland. These included snipe, lapwing, golden plover, curlew, and dunlin (in wet bog areas). The camouflage of these ground-nesting birds was impressive. A sitting woodcock was almost invisible in plain sight. The curlew lays its eggs in areas of newly burned heather, so it is under pressure from the policy of stopping burning in order to retain carbon in the moors. He described and illustrated the lekking behaviour of black grouse.

Along the streams and grassland, the grey, pied, and yellow wagtail are found, along with dippers. In grassland, there are abundant populations of meadow pipits, along with the cuckoos that lay in their nests. Sandpipers and oyster catchers are common. Birds of the relatively few wooded areas include the pied and spotted flycatcher. Andy also showed photos of the merlin and short-eared owl.

After starting the talk with excellent photos of hares, Andy also showed stoats and weasels, together with the modern traps used to control them. There continues to be trapping of moles. One species which has probably benefited from trapping is the water vole, which is very abundant in Upper Teesdale but scarce almost everywhere else. This is because mink have so far been kept out of the area.

Andy also showed a few plants special to the area, including the rare spring gentian, mountain everlasting and moonwort, a type of fern.

Questions

Andy said that accommodation in the area was mainly in rented cottages. Margaret Bradshaw was discussed as a distinguished author, recorder, and advocate of Upper Teesdale flora, now aged 97. Phil Cribb supported Andy's view that the removal of land management for grouse shooting would damage wildlife.

Peter Clifford

What to look out for during the Autumn Months

During the height of summer many of our common birds who visited our gardens in the Spring will now nowhere to be seen. Adult birds moult after they have finished raising their young growing new feathers. This moulting makes them vulnerable to predators so they hide while this is taking place. When Tits have finished raising their young and no longer defending their territory, they spend most of their time in the trees. In late summer there is more food available in the surrounding countryside. House Sparrows and Finches may be found feeding on leftover grain in the fields and Blackbirds and Thrushes in the hedgerows and areas where there is plenty of fruits and berries. Half of UK birds are migratory, Swifts and Swallows will be leaving while House Martins may stay until October. Not all birds will disappear, Robins being territorial all year will stay around the garden. Planting shrubs and plants which provide berries and seedheads and stems with a myriad of insects, larvae and eggs providing a food source, will attract birds to the garden. When winter comes and there is a shortage of food in the wider landscape birds return to the garden to the bird feeders and others offerings. Fungi will now be more visible as Autumn gets under way. Trees will gradually have Autumn tints to the leaves as they begin to shed their leaves.

WILDLIFE RECORDING IN SPELTHORNE

Martin is no longer receiving wildlife records but the society would still like to receive any records that our members have of the wildlife they see or find within the Borough to add to the Societies database. Also any records that are made on Society visits to other areas, these records are passed to the local Natural History Society or to the Local County Recorders as appropriate.

All records are wanted, but they need to have a minimum of information for them to be valuable.

WHO - Who made the original observation and the name of the person who made the identification if different from the original observer.

WHAT - An unambiguous name for the specimen, preferably the scientific binomial if possible.

WHERE - A reasonably accurate location. preferably as a minimum 6 figure map reference.

WHEN - The date of the original observation.

Any other information that seems appropriate such as the Sex, Stage, i.e. larvae, Quantity etc., if appropriate, can be added. A spreadsheet can be provided for those that find them useful, phone and it can be emailed to you.

Please pass your records to Richard Robinson in whatever format is convenient to yourself.

Email : recorder@snhsociety.org.uk if possible, Royal Mail or just a phone call. More information can found on <https://www.snhsociety.org.uk/recording/>.

Thank you

Martin Love requested the following article to be included in the newsletter, being of interest to members of the society who maybe familiar with the landscape of Halliford.

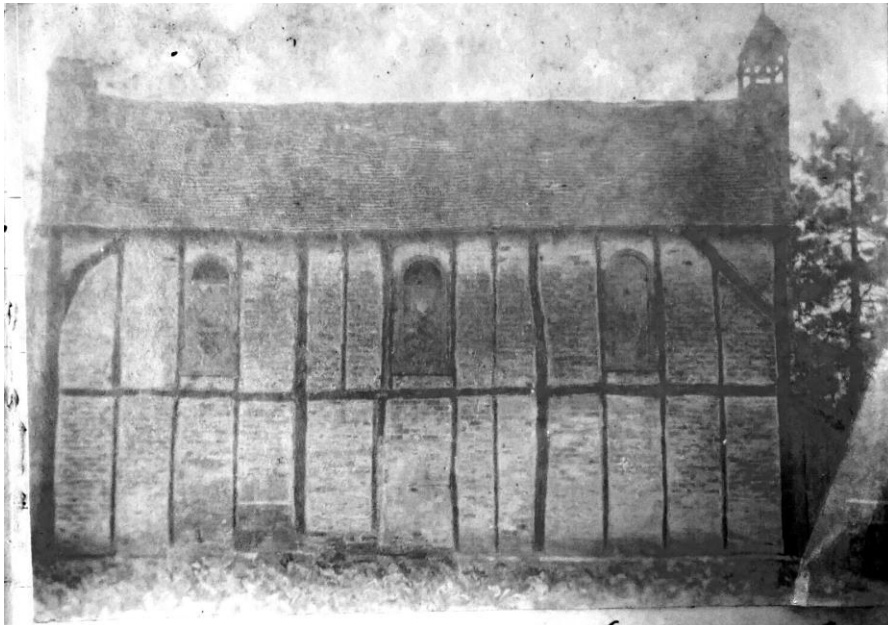
From the journals of Mr John Waring Love.

Sat Upper Halliford (Mdsx) 13 May 1905

Yet another afternoon business journey to a small village lying between Sunbury and Shepperton, Middlesex.

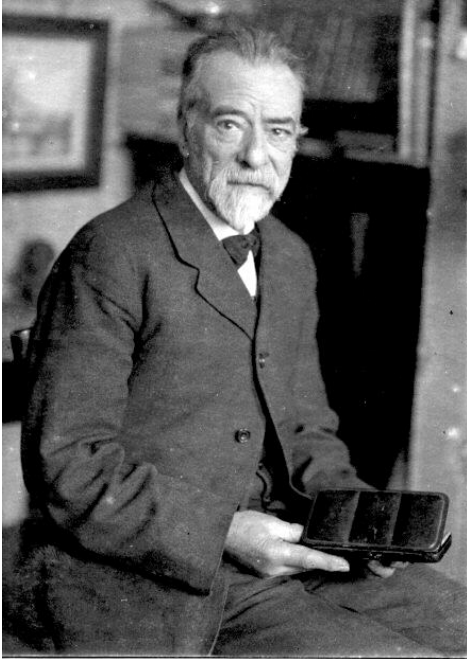
I anticipated more attractive country and more interesting objects than I found for this west district of London is all apparently designated to be built upon sooner or later - there are already odd houses here and there in fields and streets laid out in out of the way places - and where there are neither it would seem that the expectation that his fields are to be "cut up" deters the farmer doing things with niceness. Thus I account for the general untidiness of all the ground I walked over.

Upper Halliford is a small place and old fashioned enough - gipsy vans and the paraphernalia of a village fair had invaded the widened road that constituted the high street but the one great attraction for me was the village church, the barest and the most unpretentious ecclesiastical edifice as plain as a barn, which it resembled, brick built and "half timbered".



The "tower" at one end is erected on top of the chimney which is built out, as is seen in old houses. I used a new lens on this journey and the photos are poor. The above is a back view, the front view turned out a failure but it would have shown the entrance door bare as the rest.

I was told of a pretty and old church at Littleton and it justified the description, but it was not easy to get at for photographing - this was 2 miles farther from London than Upper Halliford and here too was a beautiful great village green with ponds of water and groups of noble elmtrees. This last small village was the only unspoiled bit of scenery I saw.



John Waring Love 1849 To 1920

Company Secretary to Moules Patents, Earth Closets and Sanitary Ware Manufacturers.
Rev. Henry Moule [1801-1880] Inventor of the Dry Earth Closet.

J.W.L lived in Wanstead, Essex at the time of this note and travelled over much of the U.K. for business, mostly collecting debts. He was a keen naturalist and he and a few friends started 'The East London Microscopical & Natural History Society' in around 1870 which I believe joined with other early Natural History Societies to become the East London Natural History Society.

Ash Link Local Nature Reserve

Ash Link is now formally recognised as a Local Nature Reserve. (Local Nature Reserves are a statutory designation made under Section 21 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949). The Management Plan has now been updated for the next 10 year period.

Work Group

The Society's nature conservation working group "The Friends of Ash Link Local Nature Reserve" (FOAL) has continued to meet and carry out works including the reduction of nettles and bindweed and pond clearance.

The next newsletter will be out during winter 2023/2024.

