

The Reading Naturalist

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Editor's Notes

A big thank you to all the contributors to the 78th edition of the Reading Naturalist which reports the activities of the RDNHS members during 2025. In addition, there is an interesting historic look into the RDNHS finances called "Accounts of the past" by David Cliffe. Furthermore, Ailsa Claybourn sent us the now traditional highlights of the birding year at Moor Copse and last but not least, Roger Brugge provided the annual report on the weather in Reading in 2025. Many thanks to Ian Duddle for providing the membership's data, to Brenda Moore for sending us information on the late Cath Butcher and David Cliffe for a picture of her, Katie Jenks for compiling the Members' Observations, Fiona Brown for reporting on the Indoor Meetings, Rachel Woolnough for arranging the winning pictures of the photographic competition, Jan Haseler and a range of other members for the Excursion and Midweek Walks reports and John Lerpiniere for the Vertebrates report. I am also very grateful to Julia Cooper for sub-editing and checking the pages for typing errors and to Robert Stallard, Fiona Brown and Tom Parker who provided the beautiful photographs illustrating the various reports. Also, a huge thank you to Tricia Marcousé, who stepped in to edit the previous volume of the Reading Naturalist when it became clear that our long-standing editor Ken White was no longer able to produce it because of too many new commitments after he moved to Scotland. Tricia also had been the president of our Society for five years and probably feared it would become a job for life, so that we were very pleased that last year Grahame Hawker offered to take over the presidential reins of the RDNHS despite his busy roles for the Upper Thames Branch of Butterfly Conservation. His inspiring Presidential Musings can be found on the next page.

We'd love to receive your observations for the recorders and any interesting nature articles for the next edition of the Reading Naturalist (see back page of the Summer or Winter Programme for email addresses).

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Presidential Musings

THERE IS HOPE. It can seem that the world is full of problems with climate change, biodiversity loss, flooding, drought, forest fires, destruction of the Amazon, overpopulation, warmongering leaders, plastic pollution; and even closer to home things don't look much better. In the UK, we are suffering from loss of habitats with the subsequent loss of species, climate change and rising temperatures, flooding, drought, wildfires, soil degradation from intensive farming (ploughing, artificial fertilisers, pesticides, etc), monocultures, low woodland cover, being one of the most nature-depleted countries on the planet, a rapidly rising human population, most land being privately owned giving us little control over its use, almost no 'wild' land unaffected by humans, the vast majority of land used by farmers whose main goal is making money - almost entirely from food production. Moreover, our nature reserves are too small and isolated, traditional conservation of heathland, chalk downland, coppice woodland etc is very labour-intensive and therefore very expensive, and our government does not seem to have sufficient money and no cohesive policies for a sustainable future, paying for our food multiple times - once through taxes to pay farming grants, then again to remove pesticides and nitrates from our tap-water, dispose of excess packaging, and then again at the supermarket. Wow! that is a very long list of problems. Is there a way of solving all of these? Well, an initiative called 30 by 30 could go a long way to partially solving many of them. *So, what is 30 by 30?* The 30 by 30 charity states that its goal is "the global commitment to protect and restore at least 30% of land and sea for nature by 2030." It was adopted by almost every country through the UN Convention on Biological Diversity in 2022, as part of the Kunming-Montréal Global Biodiversity Framework (Target 3). 30 by 30 is often called 'natures moonshot' - the most ambitious conservation target ever agreed - because it recognises that reversing biodiversity loss is essential for climate stability, food security, and human well-being. In the UK, achieving 30 by 30 means ensuring that almost a third of our land and sea is effectively managed for natures recovery - not just designated on paper, but genuinely thriving with wildlife, restoring habitats, and connected ecological corridors. The UK has formally designated around 11% of land and 38% of seas for nature protection, according to government figures. However, designation alone does not guarantee that these places are effectively managed for wildlife. Many terrestrial protected areas remain in poor ecological condition, and most marine sites still allow damaging activities such as bottom trawling. Clearly, we are way off target! Here are a few things that could be done to help us get back on track. I'm sure you can think of many others:

Education - The vast majority of people in the UK are not fully aware of the massive crisis. Being an increasingly urban population, with no right to roam, and the fact that environmental studies is not a compulsory school subject, are all contributory factors leading to children today not being able to identify a primrose or an oak. Changes to legislation could start to fill this knowledge gap. Sir David Attenborough famously said "No one will protect what they don't care about; and no one will care about what they have never experienced."

Population - It is very difficult to envisage a truly sustainable, circular economy without a stable population. Since Stone Age times, our population in the UK has grown and grown. This accelerated hugely in Victorian times, and in the last 20 years, our population has grown by nearly 10 million extra people. 95% of UK population growth comes from legal visa routes, so that our unsustainable population growth is due to government policies and not fertility rates or people smugglers!

Volunteering - In the high wage economy we have in the UK only volunteers can viably achieve the amount of work required to turn the corner on biodiversity loss. If we all gave a little of our time we could create the equivalent of millions of full-time conservation jobs - and create a physically and mentally healthier population.

Landownership/management - More than 70% of the UK is farmland. The primary purpose of this land is to generate profits. Having this enormous amount of land in a vast number of private owner's hands means that there are thousands of different objectives and end goals, mostly centred around profit rather than long-term public

ecological benefit. In the future, we will need some of this land to be given over to doing more than solely producing food - such as carbon sequestration, soil restoration, biodiversity gains, flood prevention, etc. This could be through ownership change such as wildlife trusts, community buy-outs, or by philanthropic purchases; or kept by the current owners and funded by biodiversity net gain (BNG,) carbon credits, better agricultural grants etc. But to achieve real change, we will need to see changes to our current diet. **Diet** - A diet whereby we eat less but better meat (possibly including cultured meat), eating more vegetables and mushrooms (possibly grown more efficiently, e.g. a cabbage takes seven months to grow, the same amount of alfalfa sprouts takes seven days!); would free up land for biodiversity. It takes about 7 to 25 tons of grain to produce one ton of beef. Approximately 85% of the U.K.'s total agricultural land is dedicated to feeding livestock, with around 2 million ha of arable land (roughly 40% of the U.K.'s total arable land) used specifically for growing cereals like wheat and barley for animal feed. This means that 85% of our agricultural land provides only 32% of the calories and less than half of the protein consumed in the UK! Around 35% of UK lamb is exported (NB. overstocking of sheep in North Wales is contributing to flooding further down the River Severn valley). In the short-term vegetarianism/veganism could reduce our meat consumption but in the long term we will still need a way of funding conservation grazing. The 20% of the U.K.'s least productive (lowest grade) farmland produces just 3% of the nation's total food! This indicates that a vast amount of our land contributes very little to overall food output. This inefficient farming is only sustained by expensive government grants, with farmers being trapped into high input systems by agronomists funded by chemical companies. The UK wastes approximately 10.7 million tons of food annually. These four facts alone suggest that small changes to our eating habits would easily free up enough land to achieve 30 by 30, and allow more land to be converted to regenerative farming.

Regenerative agriculture - This is defined as "a holistic, outcome-based farming approach that restores soil health, enhances biodiversity, and boosts ecosystem resilience, moving beyond simple sustainability to actively repair degraded land. It works with natural processes - such as no-till farming, cover cropping, and managed grazing - to sequester carbon, improve water retention, and increase farm productivity while reducing reliance on synthetic fertilisers and pesticides. It focuses on long-term stewardship of the land rather than short-term extraction."

Rewilding - As well as enabling the change to regenerative agriculture, a minor change in diet would also make possible large-scale rewilding.

What is it? - Rewilding is the large-scale restoration of nature until it can take care of itself. It's about restoring nature's remarkable web of life, including habitats, natural processes, and where appropriate, missing species.

Is it the answer everywhere? - No, clearly, we will still need some reasonably intensive food production land. Also, the conservation of certain species, such as the Adonis Blue butterfly, do not fit into current rewilding models.

Does it work? - Yes. The Knepp Estate is the U.K.'s longest running rewilding project. In the last two decades it has seen a 900% increase in breeding birds, a 500% rise in Nightingales, a 600% increase in Turtle Doves, it now holds one of the largest populations of Purple Emperor butterflies, employs more people than it did when it was an intensive arable farm, is financially stable and still produces food!

Cost - Rewilding is by far the most cost-effective way of restoring biodiversity. For each pound spent it can restore species, restore habitats, restore soils, sequester carbon, reduce flooding, store water, increase drought resilience, increase rural employment, get people closer to nature, and still produce food! Agriculture, forestry, and fishing typically represent just 3% to 5% of the rural economy in terms of gross value added and employs just 15% of the rural workforce. If you also take into account that there are 40 million urban people (many of which love nature), with money in their pockets, and looking for weekend leisure destinations, it is clear that people who say there is only room for one Knepp are way off the mark. So, as you can see from the above, a few minor changes to our habits, and to legislation, could go a long way to solving the long list of problems at the start of this article.

Membership 2025

By Ian Duddle

Paid up membership at the end of 2025

Single members	53
Families	66
Student members	9
Honorary members	7
Total	135

27 People did not renew their membership, but we welcomed 23 new members to the Society:

Ulrike Halmer & Chris Johnson

John Aked

Mark & Alison Hazelton

Fiona D'Cruz

Paul & Caroline Starkey

Peter Driver

Paul & Carole Kirk

4 students:

Dave & Sally McEwen

Carmen Frewer

Dr Peter Vaughan & Dr Jane Vaughan

Kristine Quinnell

Paul Davies & Liz Real

Hayley Waller

David Hammant

Jasmine Beard

Sharon Harper



Banded Demoiselle, Bucklebury ©Robert Stallard 2025

Obituary: Catherine Butcher, 1933-2025

By Brenda Moore, David Cliffe and Renée Grayer



Catherine (left) with Alice Ayers and Judy Sell in 2006, celebrating the 125th RDNHS anniversary in the garden of Graham Saunders

Cath was a long-time member of the RDNHS or “Nats” as they used to call us, succeeding Meryl Beek as the Honorary Secretary in 1998. She fulfilled this role enthusiastically until 2005, using her secretarial work experience and especially her shorthand skills for recording the minutes of the Society’s committee meetings. Her interests included music, wild flowers and gardening, not objecting to the occasional weed if they provided shelter or a food supply for wildlife. She sometimes would take her little dog on a lead to the RDNHS field trips. In recent years, when Cath would go out with her dog and her four-wheeled walker, the dog was often sitting on the seat of the walker, looking as if he admired the view from its higher vantage point!

Catherine was well-loved by the members of the RDNHS and also by her friends, as she was a warm-hearted and self-effacing lady, so she will be badly missed.

Accounts from the past

by David Cliffe

Two boxes of old documents have sat under my dining table for a couple of years now. They came from June Housden, who was the Society's Honorary Treasurer for nearly 40 years, 1970-2009. She had been wondering if they might be of any interest to me, on account of my work in the past on the history of the RDNHS. It took me until November 2025 to get round to looking through the boxes, and I was pleased and occasionally surprised by what I found. I was reminded of the well-known saying, "The past is a foreign country: they do things differently there." Over the last 50 years, our ways of doing things certainly have changed!

The first envelope I opened contained papers from 1970-71. There were receipted invoices, many of them from local firms. This continued over the years - William Smith's the booksellers, Ryman Conran's the stationers, Parnell's the printers, Pangbourne Coaches, Tappin's Coaches, Chiltern Queens Buses and Coaches, and Smith's Luxury Coaches. There was a payment to the Rank Film Library in Brentford for the hire of a film. Payments to Reading Borough Council are recorded, for the use of a meeting room in the Art Gallery, and later to Berkshire County Council for the hire of the Abbey Room in the (then) new Central Library, and then to the Abbey Baptist Church next to the library. There are letters of thanks and records of payments to lecturers.

Memories were stirred when I came across invoices from Gestetner Duplicators and Roneo Vickers for stencils, ink, and repairs to the duplicator. Using a typewriter without an inked ribbon, you could type onto a stencil. Then you fixed the stencil onto an inked drum, cranked a handle, and fed sheets of paper, quarto or foolscap, through the machine, and the printed page came out of the other side, with the words that had been typed. It was all rather fiddly, but it worked. "The Reading Naturalist" was produced in this way until 1995, but the covers for it, and the summer and winter programmes, were produced by local printers.

Another reminder of old technology came with the discovery of a small soft-backed notebook, with "Epidiascope Fund" on the front, with the word "Epidiascope" crossed out, and "Projector" added. An epidiascope was a projector which could use either glass slides, or printed pages. The fund rose slowly, from 1944 until 1970, when the amount had reached £31.10.0, and the fund was closed and was merged with the General Fund. It looks as though by 1970 the committee had decided that epidiascopes were things of the past, though it seems that we didn't buy a 35mm slide projector until 1989 – before then, we had paid the museum or the library for the hire of slide or film projectors.

The Society bought a Tasco telescope from Comet Radiovision Services of Hull, and insured it for £40, in 1979.

There was a separate Publications Account until 1975, when it was merged with the General Account. A couple of small notebooks record the transactions from 1950 onwards. On the income side it is mainly the sale of copies of "The Reading Naturalist," and expenditure included envelopes, stamps, paper, stencils, and a repair to the Gestetner machine.

Another fund, for the Fishlock Memorial Prize, was kept in a Trustee Savings Bank account until 1982, when it amounted to £46.97 and was invested in the National Savings Bank. It had begun in 1964, when Mrs. Ada Fishlock gave £50 in memory of her husband, the interest from which was to pay for a prize for young naturalists. The junior section of the Society had been formed in 1962. The prize was

awarded at approximately 10-year intervals. On one occasion the prize was books, and in 1976 it was a dissection kit comprising an instrument roll, fine-points scissors, blunt loose spring forceps, and two scalpels. In 1999, there were cash prizes in connection with a competition for the best natural history drawings. It was run in collaboration with Reading Museum. There were two age categories – ages 5-9, and 10-14 – with a £15 first prize in each category, and over 200 entries were received. Walter Charles Fishlock was RDNHS Secretary from 1932, and President 1955-57. He died in 1959.

A major project of 1978 was the publication of “Diptera of the Reading Area,” which was issued as a supplement to “The Reading Naturalist,” but copies could be bought individually for £1.80 a copy. The printing costs amounted to £156.50. A special account was set up with the Trustee Savings Bank, with cheque book and paying-in book. Reading Borough Council was persuaded to give a grant of £50 towards it, and the rest was lent by members, who were paid back from the money received from sales. All the loans are recorded, and signed receipts acknowledging the repayments have been kept. Among the bodies buying copies of the publication were the National Trust, the Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Naturalists’ Trust (as it was then), the Nature Conservancy Council, and the University of Oxford. Although 100 copies were printed, I have never seen one.

1981 brought the centenary of the foundation of the Society, and a celebration dinner at The Upper Deck in Duke Street. There were 58 guests, with each paying £6.20. The building is still there, next to the High Bridge and the river, but now boarded up. It had formerly been called The Lower Ship, and in 1981 was being run by the Ship Hotel along the road, which had formerly been called the Upper Ship Hotel.

A folder from 2004 concerns the A. E. Moon legacy. There is no information about Mr. Moon in there, apart from the fact that he was a former member, but it raised £682.50 for the Society. The legacy came in the form of books on natural history, and the committee had thought that it might form the basis of a library for the Society. Then they must have changed their minds, and the whole collection was sold off. A list of all the books was produced, and members and second-hand book dealers were invited to tender for each item. Offers were accepted, and receipts for payments were made out – a lot of work for the treasurer!

There are a few odd copies of minutes and agendas for committee meetings and Annual General Meetings among the papers. They show that the committee met in members’ houses before 1995, then in the Caversham Court Development Centre in St. Peter’s Hill, until 2002, and a few years in Prospect Park Pavilion after that.

The Society’s old records are now divided between the University Library, Reading Central Library, the Royal Berkshire Archives (formerly Berkshire Record Office), and Reading Museum. I’ll be asking if any of them would like some, or all, of the material, and since it’s the University which has the old minute books, from the beginning in 1881, I’ll ask them first, but before letting anything go, I felt I really ought to open the boxes to see what was there. I’m glad that I did – the contents have entertained me for a couple of wet and dreary November afternoons.

Members' Observations 2025

by **Katie Jenks** and **Julia Cooper**

Before each evening talk, in Pangbourne or on Zoom, members and visitors are invited to announce their recent observations. Those communicated in 2025 are listed below.

7th January 2025

Julia Cooper – Yarrow in flower on the RDNHS walks.

Tricia Marcousé – a Robin nesting in her conservatory at the moment. She has also noticed a lot of Yarrow in flower.

Ian Duddle – regular fly-overs of Ravens at his Tilehurst house. He has Wood Avens in flower in his garden at the moment.

David Owens – a male Blackcap taking peanuts from his Reading garden bird feeder on 05/01/25. He reports Cowslips flowering in his garden over the last 2 weeks.

Jan Haseler – 2 drumming Great Spotted Woodpeckers at Clayfield Copse on 04/01/25, one drumming at a different pitch to the other. She thought they were competing against each other. Tricia Marcousé said that she had heard one drumming in Maiden Erlegh woods recently.

Grahame Hawker – a female Bullfinch at Brimpton Common today. There was a report on Facebook that the Egyptian Geese at the Whiteknights University campus have 6 goslings – David Owens thought that there were 9 goslings on 06/01/25.

21st January 2025

Ian Duddle – a Buff-tailed Bumblebee queen in his garden this afternoon, with Tricia Marcousé saying that she had also seen one today in her Earley garden.

Tom Walker – has had a decline in Greenfinches in his central Reading garden over the last few years but 2-3 have returned over the last couple of months.

Tricia Marcousé – has 2 plants that have flowered before Christmas and are now in flower for the second time; a Witch Hazel and Wintersweet.

Liz Carr – said there are reports of a Green Sandpiper at Fobney Marsh on the Fobney WhatsApp Group.

11th February 2025 (postponed from 4th February 2025)

Tricia Marcousé – 3 Blackcap tearing the flowers of her Witch Hazel in her Earley garden this week. Primroses flowering in her Earley garden at the moment. She has also seen them in flower at the Harris Gardens.

Julia Cooper – 4 Goldfinches and a Coal Tit in her Tilehurst garden today.

George Noble – a Brambling and a Treecreeper in his Woodcote garden this week.

Paul Starkey – 2 Song Thrushes competing with each other in song at Northcourt Avenue, Reading today. He also caught a Badger over 2 days on his garden camera trap recently.

Fiona Brown – a pair of Smew at Caversham Lakes on 23/01/25.

18th February 2025

Julia Cooper – 4 Goldfinches and a Coal Tit in her Tilehurst garden today.

George Noble – Bramblings and Treecreepers in his Woodcote garden this week.

Louise Knight – a regular Nuthatch on her garden bird feeder in Hamilton Road, Earley.

4th March 2025



Lapwings – *Vanellus vanellus* ©Fiona Brown 2025

Rob Stallard – 40+ Lapwings on a flooded field in Bucklebury on 25/02/25. A Red Admiral on *Viburnum farreri* in his Tilehurst garden 03/03/25-04/03/25.

Dorothy Marshall – a Brimstone and a male Hairy-footed Flower Bee in her Pangbourne garden today.

Jenny Greenham – a *Bombus* sp. in her Hampstead Norreys garden on a sunny day last week.

Julia Cooper – a Brimstone in her Tilehurst garden today.

Jan & Jerry Welsh – A Brimstone today and a Red Kite flew very low over their Sonning Common garden last week.

David Owens – a Brimstone in an Earley garden on 01/03/25.

Marion Venners – 4 Common Buzzards flying over Hosehill Lake on 03/03/25 and a Red Admiral and a *Bombus* sp. in her Purley garden on 04/03/25.

Christine Williams – a Tawny Owl is occupying the nest box at Maiden Erleigh lake at the moment.

Fiona Cummins -a Barn Owl between Goring and Crays Pond on 26/02/25.

Reneé Grayer – 6 Red Admirals on Daphne flowers in Savill Gardens on 01/03/2025 and 2 Common Buzzards flying over her Earley garden on 03/03/25.

Ian Duddle – a Sparrowhawk plucking a pigeon in his Tilehurst garden on 19/02/25. It flew off allowing him to set up the trail camera which revealed the Sparrowhawk returned to eat that afternoon and the next morning. A Fox then took the carcass.

Liz Wild – a large amount of frogspawn in her Earley garden on 27/02/25.

18th March 2025

Rob Stallard – reports 2 Brimstone and a first for the year male Hairy-footed Flower Bee on Viburnum in his Tilehurst garden today.

Tricia Marcousé – has frogspawn in her Earley garden pond.

Jan Haseler – frogspawn in her Tilehurst garden pond and Newts waiting to eat it. A Comma was seen today in her garden.

Jane Sellwood – no frogspawn in her Lower Earley garden pond. On Toad patrol in Priest Hill on 22/02/25 there were 100 Common Toads over 2 nights. There have been none reported since because of the sharp drop in temperature.

Alan Holmes – a male Shield Bug today in Winnersh.

Liz Carr – 3 Great White Egrets on 01/03/25 at Fobney Meadows.

Rachel Woolnough – a Barn Owl tonight at Mortimer. Hatching frogspawn in a half-frozen pond in the New Forest on 01/03/25.

Fiona Brown – 4 Goldeneye at Twyford Gravel Pits on 17/03/25. A Barn Owl near the Cuning Man pub, Burghfield Bridge at midday on 14/03/25.

7th October 2025

Renée Grayer – Pipistrelle bats flying in her Earley garden in at dusk on 22/09/25 - 25/09 /05 and 02/10/25.

Ian Duddle – a Red Admiral in their Tilehurst garden on 05/10/25 and 06/10/25.

Tricia Marcousé – a Silver-washed Fritillary for the first time in 40 years in her Earley garden around 11/06/25, and a pair at Woolley Firs. More Hedgehogs than usual seen this summer, with some eating bird food in the next-door neighbour's garden on a July night.

Roger Kemp – Yellow and normal red forms of Jersey Tiger moths on Buddleia in his garden south of Dinton near Aylesbury in mid-August. The Bucks recorder had confirmed many were seen this summer. They were also reported in Earley at the Harris Garden by Tricia Marcousé and in Renée Grayer's garden.

Jan Haseler – 2 Small Coppers on Yarrow flowers in Moor Copse meadows on 06/10/25. Following a warm southerly wind, a new moth for her Tilehurst garden - L-album Wainscot, which is usually

restricted to the South coast. Grahame Hawker had seen at least 4 at Padworth Common. Jan commented Small Heath butterflies had also done well this summer, and Roger Kemp agreed.

John Sharpe – 2 water scorpions at Fobney Meadows on 06/08/25. On 30/09/25 in the Holy Brook at the back of Reading Library: 8 Mayfly larvae, a blood worm, an olive nymph, and a 6-7cm Brook Lamprey confirmed by Anna Forbes of ARK. A Harvest Mouse nest at Fobney Meadows on 05/10/25.

Sally Rankin – a Common Broomrape this summer in her Henley garden, the first time in her 40 years there. Host was a non-native geranium.

4th November 2025

Renée Grayer and Christine Williams – near Whiteknights Lake on 01/11/25 Thorn-apple, and Shaggy Soldier which is in the Daisy family. It is common in London but this was only the second time Renée had seen it in Reading.

Jenny Greenham – a Great Spotted Woodpecker chasing off a Blackbird in her Hampstead Norreys garden on 28/03/25; a cabbage white chasing off a yellow Brimstone at the Fiveways allotments in Hampstead Norreys on 27/04/25 and in her garden more recently a yellow Brimstone on 06/10/25 and a Red Admiral on Wisteria leaves on 02/11/25.

Tricia Marcousé – in Silverdale Road, Earley: a Red Admiral feeding on late flowering Choisya on 31/10/25, and Wintersweet flowering 1 month early. A Common Carder Bumblebee today (04/11/25).

Grahame Hawker - a Red Admiral in his Brimpton garden today. He commented that these butterflies are now resident and do not necessarily hibernate. Ian Duddle also saw 2 Red Admirals in their Tilehurst garden today.

Rob Stallard – a Kestrel near Brimpton Church on 27/10/25.



Kestrel near Brimpton Church. © Rob Stallard 2025

Indoor Meetings 2025

Reports by **Fiona Brown, Katie Jenks, Robert Stallard, Grahame Hawker** and **Tricia Marcousé**

7th January 2025

Making Space for Nature by Rosie Street

Rosie's talk gave a brief overview of our Berkshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy. The Strategy is required under the Environment Act 2021 and has been 18 months of work to try and improve the UK's current biodiversity crisis. Each county has a Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) and Berkshire is aiming to publish theirs in July 2025.

Rosie described the progress; there is a history and description of Berkshire, what the most important priorities are with action measures to be taken, a local Habitat Map where it is best to undertake measures and a list of Priority Species.

The LNRS has been researching existing documents, holding workshops and seeking expert opinions. Local landowners and communities have been asked what their priorities are. Data were prioritised and they are now in the process of signing off the Strategy for Public Consultation.

Berkshire has been split into main habitat groupings:

- Agriculture
- Woodland
- Chalk
- Wetland
- Heath
- Urban-related

Community workshops were also asked for other habitat suggestions and 'Deadwood' and 'Gardens' have been added to the list.

Priorities included improving these habitats (such as improving chalk stream management) and ensuring that they can contribute to the 30:30 rule (conserving 30% of habitat by 2030). Through the workshops the most important habitat to communities was connected with rivers and streams, resulting in more measures with higher targets for water-based habitats.

Using the example of agricultural field margins, Rosie then explained habitat improvement. She demonstrated how measures were to sow native flower seeds, enhance hedgerows, stop spraying and create beetle-banks. These could then be linked to wider environmental benefits and mapped where best to undertake in the county.

TVERC (Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre) has been heavily involved in the Strategy, creating the initial species longlist which were then shortlisted and grouped into habitats and assemblages.

All can get involved – there is a Public Consultation 03/02/2025-10/03/2025 with either an online or a paper survey and Drop-In Sessions at local libraries. RDNHS will forward further details.

21st January 2025

Sulham Wood-meadows by Ed Couper

Ed Cooper from Biocap described the project in progress at Sulham Wood-meadows. This is a strip of land (130Ha) just east of Sulham Woods running from Purley-on-Thames to Little Heath Road.

The land had been set out for arable, but the soil is poor and needed artificial fertilisers and pesticides to produce a low-quality crop. The owner, Henry Scot, of Sulham Farms has taken the gamble of trying to make a profit by enhancing the biodiversity. In a complex new system, land is surveyed to measure the existing biodiversity; the owner is then given points for improving this baseline biodiversity. The number of points awarded depends on a number of factors including a count of plant species. The system has to be kept easy as there are not enough trained ecologists or time to measure more complex biodiversity measures. This scheme can make the owner money as these units are tradable. Developers are required to raise biodiversity levels as part of their planning agreements and must do this on the land they are developing (called 'on-site') or buy units elsewhere such as Sulham Wood-meadows. A 30-year legal agreement prevents the land returning to arable usage.

The land is to be split into a mosaic of small units enhancing biodiversity in different ways. Some areas have been seeded as pasture and some compartments already have grazing cattle. 50Ha of species rich grassland has been seeded using three different mixes have been used depending on the underlying soil type. Over 5kms of hedgerow is to be planted (2kms already completed) of mixed native species. Over 30,000 trees are to be planted, this is spread over several years to reduce the risk of loss through drought or flooding. Some areas near the existing woods have been protected with deer fences so that deer are kept out, leaving the scrub to naturally regenerate. A walnut grove has been planted near the northern end that may eventually deliver a crop. In a separate parcel of land by the railway between Purley and Pangbourne new ponds have been dug to entice a range of wildlife, hopefully including lapwings and newts. Green hay from Moor Copse has been spread here in the hope of seeding local plant species into the surrounding meadow.

These are early days for the scheme and it will be fascinating to see how biodiversity will develop. There has already been an increase in butterfly numbers bucking the national trend. The owner runs the risk of drought, flood or fire wiping out any biodiversity gain and is also reliant on the new trade in units being profitable. There is a web site (<https://www.biocap.org.uk/>) with further information and regular updates.

4th February 2025

Bird Flight & Cooperative Aerodynamics by Dr Steve Portugal – Oxford University

Birds and other animals often gather in groups for survival benefits, such as protection against predators, and improved vigilance. These group behaviours include fish bait balls and tern colonies mobbing predators. In birds, large groups like winter geese skeins and starling murmuration's showcase complex flocking behaviours.

V formations are common among larger birds that fly fast but with limited manoeuvrability, while smaller birds tend to form cluster flocks.

When birds fly, their wings displace air, creating downwash (unfavourable) and upwash (favourable) vortices, especially at wingtips. Positioning in the upwash zone can reduce the energy needed to fly. Research aims to understand these dynamics better, partly motivated by the potential to reduce fuel consumption and emissions in aviation.

Biologging technology, involving tiny sensors that record GPS, altitude, and wingbeat data, has enabled detailed study of bird flight in natural settings. The Northern Bald Ibis became the focus for such research. These birds learn migratory routes through imprinting on human foster parents who lead them via microlight aircraft along established routes, allowing researchers to retrieve bio-loggers after flights.

Ibis' flight positions closely match classical fixed-wing aerodynamic theory, favouring a 45-degree angle and 1.2-1.4 meters distance in the V formation. Despite the formation's apparent structure, birds move within the flock.

Ibis exhibit wing-tip path coherence by synchronizing their wingbeats to follow the upwash vortex created by the bird in front, effectively "riding" the airflow to save energy. They avoid downwash zones, which are energetically costly. Additionally, birds take turns leading the formation, as leading offers no aerodynamic benefit and requires more effort.

Cluster flocking, seen in species like starlings and homing pigeons, differs aerodynamically from V formations. Pigeons flying in clusters work harder, especially those at the back or close to others. Using biologging, researchers found that pigeons consistently occupy the same front or back positions in flocks, with those at the back expending more effort.

When released individually, pigeons that usually fly at the back of the flock often struggle to navigate home, sometimes taking hours or days, while front-position birds return quickly. This suggests some birds disengage cognitively when not leading, relying on others for navigation. Personality traits such as boldness and willingness to explore correlate with leadership roles and navigation success. Bold pigeons tend to lead and learn routes better, while shy individuals follow and expend more effort.

Pigeons and some seabirds use infrasound for navigation, detecting subtle low-frequency sounds shaped by topography to orient themselves. They are not notably disturbed by motorways; in fact, pigeons often use roads as navigational landmarks.

The research highlights distinct aerodynamic and social dynamics in bird flocking behaviours. V formation flight involves cooperative energy-saving strategies with reciprocal leadership and precise wingbeat coordination, while cluster flocking involves higher energetic costs with less cooperation and consistent individual roles. Personality traits influence navigation and flock position, providing insights into animal behaviour.

18th February 2025

Butterfly Identification Made Easy by Grahame Hawker

Grahame is vice-chair and conservation and recording chair of the Upper Thames Branch of Butterfly Conservation and his talk emphasised that although there are nearly 60 species of butterflies in the UK, some of which look superficially similar, there are always specific points to look for to separate similar species with relative ease. This principle also applies to the UK's moths, although there are 2500 of these and a small percentage of them cannot be identified with confidence by markings alone.

The speaker explained that together butterflies and moths form the Lepidoptera or 'scale wings', from the Greek words *lepis* meaning scale and *pteron* meaning wing. The audience were then taken through the butterfly families, the Nymphalids (the bright garden butterflies, emperors, admirals and fritillaries), the whites and yellows, the skippers, the browns, and the blues, coppers and hairstreaks. As each species was covered, the unique identification marks were explained.

It was hoped that those attending the talk went away with a much greater confidence at identifying the butterflies that they see, and equally importantly, that they will have the confidence to record butterflies that they see in their gardens and elsewhere on the free butterfly recording app iRecord Butterflies.

4th March 2025

1.2 Million Wildebeest by Fiona Brown

Fiona went on a safari trip to Tanzania in January 2024 to coincide with the rainy season when vegetation is lush, and mammals migrate with many having calves.

Tanzania is in the Southern Hemisphere and is four times the size of the United Kingdom. The trip organised by Naturetrek with a group of eleven people and two guides, flew into Kilimanjaro Airport on the outskirts of Arusha. Fiona's route around the north of Tanzania would involve starting in Arusha National Park, moving on to Tarangire National Park, exploring Lake Manyara set in the Great Rift valley, travelling to the Serengeti grasslands, returning via the Olduvai Gorge and ending at the Ngorongoro Crater.

The first stop was at Arusha National Park with habitats of swamps, lakes, forest and Mount Meru. Big Game such as the Cape Buffalo were spotted as well as Giraffes. Fiona explained that Giraffes have horn-like structures called ossicones on their heads. A female's ossicones have tufts of hair whereas the male has lost his tufts during fights. Two species of Flamingo were on the lake; the Lesser Flamingo and the Greater Flamingo. Both get their pink colour from pigments in an alga but whereas Lesser Flamingos are generally vegetarian and eat the algae directly, the Greater Flamingo is carnivorous. Part of its diet is shrimps which feed on the algae and give the bird its colouration.

Fiona's group then travelled on to Tarangire National Park, renowned for its Elephants and Baobab trees. The park is 1000 square miles and includes part of the Tarangire Valley. Here a wide variety of species were seen including Elephants, Grant's Gazelles, a curious Dwarf Mongoose in a termite mound and birds such as African Fish Eagle, Southern Ground Hornbill and Red-chested Cuckoo. The wildlife was never far away – members of the group woke one morning to find Lion and Hyena tracks around their tents!

Perhaps the highlight of the trip was visiting the Serengeti. The migration was well under way of 1.2 million Wildebeest and 300,00 Zebra accompanied by various antelopes and other animals. The different species tend to travel together and make a good team; the Wildebeest have good hearing and are excellent at finding water. The Zebras have better eyesight and a better memory for navigating. The line of mammals that Fiona witnessed was half a mile long and at least four animals deep. The visit to Ngorongoro Crater included watching a new-born Zebra calf getting to its feet for the first time.

Total Species Numbers for the whole trip were - Birds: 315, Mammals: 41 and Reptiles: 7. This included all of the 'Big Five' of Lion, Cape Buffalo, Leopard, Rhinoceros and Elephant.

18th March 2025

RDNHS Annual General Meeting

At the AGM retiring President Tricia Marcousé was made an Honorary Member in recognition of her dedicated service. Following the business of the meeting three presentations were given covering local wildlife observations, community conservation efforts, and aquarium ecology.

- **Honorary membership awarded:** Tricia Marcou   was named an Honorary Member for her extensive contributions including outreach, book sales, and leadership as President.
- **Hobbies and dragonflies study:** Alan Holmes discussed the rise in Hobby bird numbers linked to increased dragonfly populations at Moor Green Lakes, identifying Black-tailed Skimmers and Migrant Hawkers as primary prey.
- **Wild Tilehurst community group:** Katie Jenks described the formation of Wild Tilehurst, a citizen science and biodiversity initiative with monthly events, partnerships, and funding support aimed at local conservation awareness.
- **Aquarium ecology basics:** Rob Stallard explained aquarium setup essentials including the effects of the nitrogen cycle, lighting, aeration, substrates, plant and fish species and considerations for maintaining healthy closed water systems. Various fish species were highlighted, such as Ruby Tetras, Betta fish, Zebra Danios, and Kuhli Loaches, emphasising species-specific needs and behaviours for aquarium enthusiasts. **Aquarium maintenance tips included** recommendations for substrate layering, use of Aqua soil, mulm importance, and careful stocking levels to sustain water quality and fish wellbeing.

7th October

A Year in Reserve... by Jon Mason

Jon Mason, known as Instagram's 'theearlybirder', was a teacher until retirement and continues to educate all age groups with his natural history knowledge and his brilliant photography,

In 2023 he gave himself the challenge of visiting all of the 86 reserves that BBOWT manages during one calendar year. This talk to RDNHS wasn't long enough to cover every reserve that he visited, but a representative sample. As well as being a super birder, Jon is a brilliant photographer and his talk was beautifully illustrated. He covered rare orchids at BBOWT sites, but his wider woodland shots were even more inviting.

Jon is a wordsmith as well as a birder and photographer. You can see his latest photographs and thoughts at [words & pictures | Theearlybirder](#). This website will give you easy access to his Facebook and Instagram accounts as well.

4th November 2025

Using AI for mammal monitoring by Maddie Davis and Dr Henrietta Pringle

This talk came in two parts both explaining how the latest technology can be used to improve the monitoring of mammals.

Maddie Davis (Bat Conservation Trust) gave the first talk about using AI technology to study the behaviour of bats. The usual way we have detected and monitored bats is with ultrasonic detectors. Different bat species give different calls on different frequencies and so can be distinguished just by ultrasound. So many nature recordings have been made that it is now impossible to listen back through them all and note the bats that might be present. Fortunately, pattern recognition software (in the form of a convolutional neural network) has been developed that greatly speeds up the process so this is now feasible. The accuracy of species identification by the software is now better than human experts. The software gives a probability of which bat species is present but cannot currently distinguish individual bats so it gives a measure of bat activity levels rather than population.

Dr Henrietta Pringle (People's Trust for Endangered Species and British Hedgehog Preservation Society) then gave a summary of her work monitoring hedgehog activity. In this case instead of sound recordings images are collected by motion detecting cameras. There are 52 sites currently being monitored in the UK each with a set of 30 cameras run for a month. So once again the challenge is processing such a vast amount of data. As any mammal, a bird or even waving vegetation can trigger the cameras, there is a considerable need for filtering. Citizen science has been used to recruit a loyal band of volunteers to identify what was captured by the camera. AI is used in a limited fashion to filter out obvious 'dud' photographs and to confirm human identifications. When AI and humans agree, a 98% accuracy rate has been achieved. All this data will help understand hedgehog activity and population levels.

2nd December 2025

Christmas party

Members met at Pangbourne Village Hall for our Christmas party. As usual a delicious mix of food was brought by those attending and this was accompanied by mulled wine. Jan Haseler provided a selection of twigs to be identified giving a list of possible answers. Grahame Hawker won this. Lesley Hawker prepared two quizzes, one involving clues to film titles and the other clues to words that contain the letters A, B, and C. Each table competed for the prizes. During the evening, we voted for the various categories in the photographic competition, and the winners and runners up were announced at the end of the evening, see below. As always, a good time was had by all.

Photographic Competition 2025

By **Rachel Woolnough**

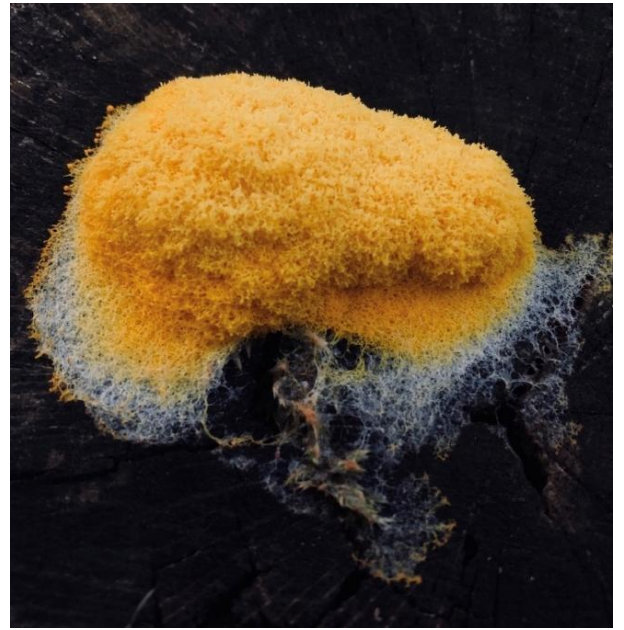
The Photographic competition was held in December during the Society's Christmas party. Pictures could be entered into 9 categories, Colour Carnival, Nature in Action, Nature on your Doorstep, Pattern Perfect, Small is Beautiful, Something to Make you Smile, Three of a Kind, Any Fauna and Any Flora or Fungi. The members were allowed one vote per category, with a further two votes for their overall favourite pictures.

We had a wonderful collection of 78 photos to vote for and enjoy. Winner and runner-up places in the individual categories were shared among eleven different members. Lesley Hawker was the overall runner up, with her photo of birds on the lake at The Nature Discovery Centre in Thatcham. Jenny Greenham was the overall winner, with her beautiful picture of an Orange Sponge Fungus taken in Buzancais, France. Congratulations to her and thank you to everyone who took part.

Photographic Competition 2025 Winning Photographs

Overall Winner and Winner: Any Flora or fungi

Orange Sponge Fungus, Pycnoporellus
Buzancais, France
© Jenny Greenham



Winner: **Nature on your doorstep** & Runner Up for Overall
Winner. Lake at Nature Discovery Centre
Thatcham © Lesley Hawker



Winner: **Any Fauna**
Kestrel
Brimpton © Robert Stallard



Winner: **Colour Carnival**
Guelder Rose, Moulsoford
© Rachel Woolnough



Winner: **Nature in Action**
Frogs, Nature Discovery Centre
Thatcham © Lesley Hawker



Winner: **Pattern Perfect**
Broom Moth Caterpillar, Kettlewell
Yorkshire © Steve Woolnough



Winner: **Something to Make You Smile**
Mute Swans Courting
River Ant, Norfolk © Grahame Hawker



Winner: **Small is Beautiful**
Gypsy Moth,
Redlands Road, Reading © Tom walker



Winner: **Three of a Kind**
Soldier Beetles,
Mapledurham, Oxfordshire © Tom walker



Joint Runner Up: **Nature in Action**
Ladybirds
Medmenham © David Owens



Runner Up: **Pattern Perfect**
Buff Tip Moth
Brimpton Common © Grahame Hawker



Joint Runner Up: **Three of a Kind**
Fragrant Orchids
Christmas Common © Fiona Cummins



Joint Runner Up: **Colour Carnival**
Rose Chafer on Lily,
Sonning Common © Fiona Cummins



Joint Runner Up: **Any Flora or Fungi**
Sneezewort
Purley-on-Thames © Robert Stallard



Joint Runner Up: **Nature in Action**
Grey Wagtail
River Kennet, Fobney Weir © Anne Booth



Joint Runner Up: **Colour Carnival**
Grey Dagger Caterpillar
Devils Punchbowl, Hindhead, Surrey © Tom walker



Joint Runner Up: **Any Flora or Fungi**
Bee Orchid, Christmas Common
© Fiona Cummins



Joint Runner Up: **Any Flora or Fungi**
Turkey Tail, Castletown, Ireland
© Grahame Hawker



Runner Up: **Something to Make You Smile**
Mole, Skipton, Yorkshire
© Rachel Woolnough



Runner Up: **Any Fauna**
Pied Kingfisher, Ranthambore, India
© Fiona Brown



Runner Up: **Nature on your Doorstep**
Urban Fox, Redlands Road, Reading
© Tom Walker



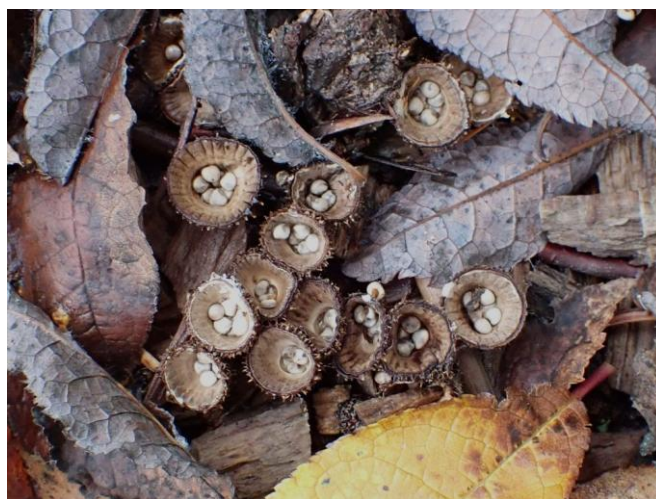
Joint Runner Up: **Three of a Kind**
Spectacular Rustgill, Sulham Woods
© Robert Stallard



Joint Runner Up: **Small is Beautiful**
Swollen Thighed Beetle on Field Bindweed
Kingsclere © Grahame Hawker



Joint Runner Up: **Small is Beautiful**
Bush Cricket (Green), Tilehurst Garden
© Robert Stallard



Joint Runner Up: **Any Flora or Fungi**
Fluted Bird's Nest Fungus, Harris Garden, Whiteknights ©
David Owens

Excursions 2025

By Jan Haseler, Grahame Hawker and Julia Cooper

Marcus Wheeler led a walk round **Blackhouse Wood and Clayfield Copse**, a local nature reserve on the northern edge of Caversham, on the morning of Saturday 4 January 2025. It was a cold but reasonably bright morning. 13 Members gathered in the car park of the adjoining recreation ground before setting out across the first of several small fields. There were a number of old oaks in the hedgerow with long limbs dipping down towards the ground. Marcus explained that curved branches were valued for ship-building. He estimated that the trees were about 200 years old. A hybrid elm, with resistance to Dutch Elm Disease, had been planted to help the local population of White-letter Hairstreak butterflies. A cherry tree had clusters of buds which would become clusters of first flowers, then fruit. A fallen tree which had been carved into the shape of a crocodile was part of a sculpture trail. A calling Nuthatch was heard. The next field had been designated as a wildflower meadow, but was being allowed to regenerate to woodland naturally. Many Ash trees had sprouted, but these had been badly affected by Ash Dieback disease. Marcus pointed out the form of the black Ash buds, in opposite pairs, and the top branches, which made a trident shape. The fungus Yellow Brain *Tremella mesenterica* was found nearby. A delicate greyish green lichen was growing on a Rowan. Nearby was a Holm Oak *Quercus ilex* in the unusual columnar or 'fastigate' form. Hornbeam trees have very hard wood. A specimen next to the path showed bad squirrel damage to its bark. The Hornbeam's long shiny pointed buds resemble those of the Beech tree, but the edges of its leaves are wavy, while those of the Beech are straight. The next track led to an area of Beech trees. As well as the leaves being smooth, the trunks are also smooth. Approximately every third year is a 'mast year', with a bountiful crop of Beech nuts, but 2024 had not been a mast year. Marcus commented that the dense canopy of the Beech trees made them a shady place to shelter in hot weather. Continuing along the path, a clay pit had upright trees around its edge. Some of the Beech trees here had exposed roots. As can be seen from the root plate of fallen trees, the roots can spread out below ground more widely than the canopy, but they cannot extend very far downwards. Next specimen was a Wild Service-tree, distinguished by the distinctive shape of its fallen leaves. A larger tree can be seen along Kiln Road. Before the introduction of Hops to this country, the berries of the Wild-service tree were used to flavour beer.

Lesley Dunlop led a walk to look at the geology of the **Curridge** area on the cold and misty morning of Saturday 8 February. Six participants gathered at the car park of the Curridge Women's Institute Hall. Lesley said that we would be looking for some of the pits and hollows which are to be found in the area. The walkers turned left onto Curridge Road, passing a big clump of Butcher's-broom at the roadside, then turned sharply right along a footpath which headed southwards. Lesley paused to give an introduction to the geology of the area. The bedrock is Chalk, which was laid down about 85 million years ago in warm shallow tropical seas. Then for about 20 million years, the surface of the Chalk was slowly eroded, before the Lambeth beds of sands and clays were laid down in shallow marine, coastal and river environments. Water draining through the iron-rich Lambeth Beds was acid and dissolved the underlying Chalk. Then slowly over time, the Lambeth beds too eroded, leaving the surface of the Chalk pitted by the sink holes which had been created by the Lambeth beds which were no longer there. The big field on the left of the track sloped up to a ridge-line which was capped by Lambeth beds. Looking along the track, a wet area near a small group of trees was the first of the sought after hollows. Several more were seen as the footpath approached Rookery Farm. In small fields on the right were several horses, a Pied Wagtail, a flock of Rooks and a Greenfinch. At the other side of the farm was a business park. Here a hard-standing area for vehicles had recently been extended by quarrying into the slope behind the business park. This had exposed a clear profile of orange Lambeth beds above white Chalk, with Chalk debris above that and other material on top. There are very few places in Berkshire where the junction between the Lambeth Beds and the Chalk can be seen, so this was a significant discovery. The walk continued southwards along the footpath. Five Egyptian Geese loomed

out of the mist in the middle of the extensive cultivated field on the right. Further on was what was thought to be a wild bird or game bird mix in the field margin, with sunflower heads and also some brassicas. On the left side of the path was a big, deep Chalk pit. The walk continued along the footpath until it came to Long Lane, where another footpath led back north-westwards. On the left side of the footpath was a newly planted Hawthorn hedge which followed the line of big Oak trees, which marked the track of the original hedge. The geological map showed a small fault line running ESE-WNW, caused by Africa crashing into Europe. It also showed a band of London Clay on the ridge to the west. Above the London Clay were older river terrace deposits degraded by the freezing and thawing of surface material during the Ice Ages. Water issuing from between the permeable terrace deposits and the impermeable London Clay had lubricated the slump of surface material down the hillside. The big field on the left of the path was cultivated, with a number of small grass-covered conical hills rising up out of the cultivated area. Most of the field was on Chalk, which has the nutrients necessary for growing arable crops. The small conical hills are made up of Sands and Clays of the Lambeth beds. They are nutrient poor and are left uncultivated and covered by grass. These small conical hills were formed by erosion in the last 500,000 years. Many streams drained across the London Clay and eroded the Lambeth group and Chalk layers. Some patches were protected by hard-packed Gravel. The rivers eroded around them, leaving behind these islands of higher ground. Several large reddish-brown sarsen stones were found beside the path. They were formed when the Lambeth Sands were cemented together as the surface water evaporated in tropical conditions that enhanced the solubility of silica. The underlying geology changed from Chalk to the Lambeth beds as the footpath began to climb gently uphill. Tall Burdock plants started to appear beside the path. Jerry Welsh found a Milk Thistle with variegated leaves, the first West Berkshire record since 1984. The leaves were bright shining green with white veins. Lesley pointed out another hollow on the right of the path. The walkers climbed up into the field on the left to avoid a long puddle which blocked the path. The path led to a track junction. There was a brief diversion straight ahead to a gateway on the north side of Curridge Road, from which two more hollows could be seen. Birds seen here included a small flock of Goldfinches and three Fieldfares, plus Starlings and Chaffinches. Then the route led back to the Women's Institute Hall car park, where a Treecreeper was feeding on the trunk of an Oak tree.

Saturday 22 March 2025 was not as chilling a day as hardy members recalled from the previous **Moss Walk** at Greenham Common and thirteen individuals, led by Sean O'Leary, started from St. Leonard's Church in **Wallingford**, to look at some typical urban bryophytes. Differences between acrocarpous and pleurocarpous mosses were noted and examples of each demonstrated. Members then explored the banks of the River Thames, with some riverine species, notably *Cinclidotus fontinaloides* and *Hygroamblystegium fluviatile* still hanging on, despite the polluted waters. The latter is rare in the South of England, although found in several places along the Thames. We then followed Bradford's Brook back into town, along Squire's Walk, noting beautiful patches of *Homalothecium sericeum* on old walls. Members were, in line with tradition, rewarded with Louise's legendary muesli crunch at the end of the walk.

Alan Holmes organised a **pond dipping session at Withymead Reserve**, between Goring and South Stoke, on the morning of Saturday 12 April. Alan's principal aim was to find dragonfly and damselfly larvae. Warden Pete Morton accompanied the group of 10 members on their walk round the reserve. The first pond, with a pH of 6.8, was near the study centre and there the only dragonfly larva of the morning was found. It was the larva of a Southern Hawker dragonfly. Tiny wing buds could be seen on its back, near its back legs. These indicated that it was in its final stage before hatching. Other creatures found here included the larva of one of the diving beetles, a Lesser Water Boatman and a Back-swimmer. The rest of the ponds had a pH of about 7. The group then walked down through woodland to the second pond, passing the yellow flowers of Yellow Archangel and spikes of Lords-and-ladies. Nearer the river was a marshy area which was covered by a sea of Loddon Lilies, all fully in flower and close to their best. Gypsywort and Brooklime were seen, while Wren, Chiffchaff and Cetti's Warbler were heard. Wildlife found at the second pond included several Waterlice *Asellus* (shrimp-like

crustaceans), a leech, a Great Ramshorn snail and two Caddis flies. The latter had built impressive homes with stones and bits of twig. Every so often, the Caddis fly would poke its head out of its tube-like dwelling. On the other side of the track was a pond whose surface was covered by a blanket of Duckweed. Very little aquatic life was found here – several Annelid worms, a leech and some Ramshorn snails. The path continued to the bank of the River Thames, where the pH was measured as 8.4. Turning right, Common Pond Snail and more Caddis fly larvae were found in the next pond. Flying insects included the Drone Fly *Eristalis pertinax* and a Dark-edged Bee-fly *Bombilius major*. The route then followed a boardwalk through an area of marshland. Cuckooflower was in flower here. In summer, Yellow Loosestrife flowers can be found here, providing oil and pollen for the Yellow Loosestrife Bee. It uses the oil to waterproof its nest. Also seen here, not in flower, were Meadow-rue, Meadowsweet and Common Valerian. A branch of the board walk leads to the Kingfisher Hide which overlooks a quiet backwater of the Thames. Warden Pete regularly sees Otters here. As the day warmed up, butterflies began to appear, starting with a Peacock and a Brimstone. The boardwalk then turned to the right and headed away from the river. Most of the marshy area on the reserve is wetted by spring water and dominated by Greater and Lesser Pond Sedge, with Common Reed thriving in certain parts more than others. Along the final section of boardwalk, the dominant vegetation on the left, i.e. the north side, changes to Reed Sweet Grass *Glyceria maxima*. This is due to the change in nutrients and pH as a result of the stream that inundates the compartment with run-off from farm fields. Green Woodpecker and Sparrowhawk were recorded here. The final section of the walk led through woodland, where there was plentiful Red Currant.

The Society would like to thank owner Suzanne for a fascinating and rewarding walk round her land near **Medmenham** on the afternoon of Sunday 27 April. After gathering in front of the farm buildings, 17 members set off up to the field above the barns, looking successfully for Adder's-tongue Fern - a number of patches were found. Also seen nearby were Lady's Bedstraw and Yellow Rattle. On the opposite slope, Horseshoe Vetch and Meadow Saxifrage were protected with metal cages from browsing animals. Hairy Violets were found here. A new population of Military Orchids is becoming established in the field – there are currently 7 plants with the characteristic 3-way arrangement of leaves. These too are protected with cages from browsing deer, rabbits, etc. Up at the top of the field, Slender Bedstraw was growing along the fence line and there were a few Pasqueflowers. Passing through a gate, flowering Twayblade and more Adder's-tongue Fern were seen. The next field is known as 'the potato field', because it had been dug up and planted with potatoes during World War II. Earlier in the spring, there had been a splendid display of Primroses here. Bluebells and Dog's Mercury are gradually spreading back into the field. Other plants seen included Ploughman's-spikenard and Common Figwort. There was also another Military Orchid which looked as if it would not be flowering this year. A Grizzled Skipper was resting with wings together on top of the flower head of a pink-flowered orchid with spotless leaves which was not yet fully out. There was a debate over its identity – Early-purple Orchid was one suggestion but Military Orchid was also thought to be a possibility. The path led on into Beech woodland where there was a carpet of Bluebells stretching as far as the eye could see. Dotted amongst the Bluebells were flower heads of Yellow Archangel, Wood Spurge, Greater Stitchwort and Hairy St John's-wort. A Red-headed Cardinal Beetle was spotted on a Yellow Archangel flower. Two Brimstones flew past in their spiralling courtship dance. Other butterflies included Peacock, Large White and Orange-tip. The route crossed a public footpath and led into a field which had been sown with a wildflower mixture. Cowslips, Salad Burnet and Common Bird's-foot-trefoil were amongst the flowers here, with the latter the caterpillar food plant of the numerous Dingy Skippers. Also seen were a few more Grizzled Skippers and a Small Heath. Three scrapes had been dug at the top of the field. Initially rabbits did a lot of damage here, but once it had been securely fenced in 2011, Horseshoe Vetch, the caterpillar food-plant of Adonis and Chalkhill Blue butterflies, and Kidney Vetch, food-plant of the Small Blue, were able to flourish. Meadow Saxifrage, Common Milkwort, Meadow Vetchling, Lady's Bedstraw, Carline Thistle, Harebell and flowering Common Rock-rose were all seen in the first scrape. The second scrape had both Kidney Vetch and Horseshoe Vetch in flower, with Chiltern Gentian expected to flower later in the year. Competing grass had been carefully removed from the

scrape. As a result, there were dense clumps of the leaves of Kidney and Horseshoe Vetch. The third scrape had Common Rock-rose, Carline Thistle and Pasqueflower. On the walk back to the start, a Peacock and two Comma butterflies were seen on nettles. Finally, a Swallow was seen by the farm buildings.

John Lerpiniere led five members on a walk to listen for **Nightingales** at the **Searles Farm** gravel pit complex on the evening of Wednesday 30 April. Meeting time was 19:30, not long before sunset, and the parking location was at the southern end of Pingewood Road North, a dead-end road. It was a warm evening after a hot day. While members assembled, John pointed out the song of a Lesser Whitethroat, with its characteristic dry rattle at the end of the song. Also heard here were Wren, Robin, Blackbird, Song Thrush and Blackcap. The group headed northwards along Searle's Farm Lane, adding Cetti's Warbler, Garden Warbler and Chiffchaff to the list. The route turned right and followed a path between two lakes. Everything was coated in fluffy Willow seeds – they looked like scum on the surface of the lakes. Looking over the lake to the north, a pair of Gadwall and a Red-crested Pochard were seen. A Grey Heron flew in and perched on top of a lakeside Willow. A little further on, there was a vacant fishing bay with a view to the south. A female Mallard had three small ducklings in tow, very close behind her. The path led to a small triangular-shaped lake where a Nightingale was singing loudly. It made a wide range of sounds - repeated whistles, a single note repeated more and more loudly, 'jug-jug', and more. The path led to a locked fishermen's car park, so John turned right and followed a track which ran along the backs of a row of houses. Bats flew past and at least two more Nightingales could be heard. As the light began to fade, the group turned round and retraced their footsteps along the path between two lakes. The sky was dominated by the reds and oranges of a glorious sunset. Bats flew to and fro above the path. As the group walked back past several singing Nightingales, John heard the 'grunting' noise of a female Nightingale deep in a bramble thicket next to the lake. A Song Thrush had incorporated a snatch of Nightingale song in its repertoire. It was almost completely dark for the final short stretch of road before returning to the cars.



Speckled Wood butterfly ©Robert Stallard 2025

Adrian Lawson led 18 members and friends on a walk round **Fobney Marsh** on the morning of Saturday 3 May, starting from the Matalan car park. This area is the last surviving fragment of the River Kennet floodplain. A gap in the trees at the south-west end of the car park led to the line of a dismantled railway. Sightings along here included a Speckled Wood and a Brimstone butterfly and a Banded Demoiselle. Blackcaps were singing and Chiffchaffs and Cetti's Warblers were calling. The meadows between the north-west side of the railway line and the Holy Brook were formerly summer grazed by cattle. They were recently bought by the owners of the trading estate. The meadows on the south-east side were owned by a company which was subsequently taken over by the Tarmac Company. They hoped to extract gravel there, but planning permission was refused. These meadows lie on the site of an ancient watercourse of the River Kennet and are referred to by Adrian's group, the Marshians, as

the Tarmac Meadows. Beyond are further meadows owned by Reading Borough Council. None of the meadows are currently being grazed. The route led steeply down the left side of the railway embankment, then out onto the meadows. The first section had not been grazed intensively for 4 years, and for the last 2.5 years has not been grazed at all. Young willow bushes are starting to grow here and without intervention, the land will quickly revert to winter-flooded woodland. The drainage of the meadows was originally designed to dry the land as quickly as possible in spring. The Marshians on the other hand are trying to reduce the drying, thereby improving the meadows as a carbon sink. They have been blocking drainage channels. The owners are kept informed of their activities and have not objected. Plants seen in this section of the meadows included Meadow and Creeping Buttercup, Water Mint, Brooklime, Gypsywort, Silverweed and Water Chickweed. An Orange-tip egg was found on the flower stem of a Cuckooflower plant. A Sedge Warbler was heard and a Reed Bunting and a Grey Heron were seen. There was a brief glimpse of a Grasshopper Warbler. This was the first sighting since 2017, when four were found early one morning. A brief snatch of Nightingale song was heard coming from the far corner of the field. The path led to Thames Water's Fobney Water Treatment Works. A footpath runs along the northern fence of the treatment works. It is wet in places where leaks from the works flow into the meadow then back into the canal. The Marshians have been plugging the hole back into the canal. Plants seen along this section of footpath include Common Comfrey, Wild Angelica, Bittersweet, Hemp Agrimony, Yellow Iris and Common Meadow-rue. The path overlooks a large area of open water. This has been created and maintained by large numbers of volunteers stomping down the vegetation. The mass trampling, together with tree clearance, has been very successful. Bird visitors to the open water have included Avocets and a Great White Egret. Four pairs of Lapwings are breeding here this year. Adrian commented that the Lapwings are very territorial and may have chased away other waders. Other birds on the open water included Coot and Moorhen, and Black-headed and Lesser Black-backed Gull. A Peregrine was roosting on a distant pylon, a Little Egret flew overhead and a Buzzard was seen. There are several other open water areas which have been created by mass stomping, but which cannot be seen from this section of footpath. The group then retraced their route back to the start.

Alan Holmes led 10 members and a guest on a walk to look for the **Common Clubtail Dragonfly** *Gomphus vulgatissimus* on the morning of Saturday 24 May. It is a dragonfly of slow-flowing rivers with a silty bottom. The **River Thames near Goring** is one of the best places to find this dragonfly. The River Severn is another hotspot. Members gathered at the Station Road car park before setting off along a succession of footpaths to the Thames Path. It was a cool, cloudy morning with a strong wind – not ideal conditions for finding the target dragonfly. The exuvia (shed larval skin) is typically found on places such as culverts and bridges. The Thames path was initially bordered by big multi-stemmed willows, but soon emerged into open meadows. The first insect sighting was a Harlequin Ladybird larva. Water Figwort plants were found next to the river, distinguished from Common Figwort by their winged 4-angled stems. Also seen by the river were Great Willowherb, Wild Angelica and Meadowsweet. A small flock of House Martins flew twittering over the river and the waterside meadows. Next, both male and female Banded Demoiselles were seen on bankside vegetation. The male has a metallic blue-green body and wings with a dark blue-black band, with unpigmented sections next to the body and at the wing tip. The female has a metallic green abdomen and unpigmented wings. Then a male Blue-tailed Damselfly was seen. It had a predominately black abdomen, but with section 8 blue. (The abdomen has 9 segments, with section 1 nearest to the thorax and section 9 furthest from the thorax). Continuing south-eastwards along the river bank, Goat's-beard and Teasel were seen. Next sighting was a White-legged Damselfly on taller vegetation in the meadow next to the river. In total during the morning, about five specimens were seen, indicating that there might be a breeding colony nearby. Then a Roessel's Bush-cricket was spotted. Next, black spiky caterpillars of a Peacock butterfly were found on Nettle. Butterfly watchers were excited to see a Small Tortoiseshell on a clump of longer vegetation out in the meadow. This butterfly is becoming a rare sighting in our area nowadays. A small group of Mayflies were doing their rising and falling mating dance over the river, approximately five metres from the bank. The Thames Path went through a gate

and into Little Meadow. Signs near the gate explained that the meadow is managed by the team from Withymead Nature Reserve. Close to the path across the meadow were a number of clumps of Meadow Crane's-bill. More White-legged Damselflies were seen here. Two Goldfinches were seen on a willow and Chiffchaff and Reed Warbler were heard. The path left Little Meadow by a second gate and emerged next to the Brunel railway bridge. This is the classic site for finding the exuviae and they had been seen here earlier in the week but alas there was no sign of them this time. Members had their picnic on the grassy riverbank next to the bridge and waited unsuccessfully for the dragonflies to fly past. Unfortunately, on this occasion, there was no sign of them. An adult Mayfly was seen on a reed stem approximately 100mm above the surface of the river. Admitting defeat, the group then retraced their footsteps back to Goring. We now know where to go and when to go – perhaps next time we will have better luck and manage to see a Common Clubtail.

Jan Haseler led 7 members on a walk at **The Holies**, National Trust land at Streatley, on the morning of Saturday 7 June. The weather forecast had predicted heavy showers, with the Met Office issuing a yellow weather warning for thunderstorms. There was some debate the night before as to whether or not the event should be cancelled, since the walk in and out of The Holies goes through woodland. It was announced on the website that a decision about whether or not to go ahead with the walk would be made at 9am on the morning of the walk. But next morning, the start of the weather warning had been moved to later in the afternoon, so the decision was made to go ahead. Apart from some light drizzle, the morning turned out to be dry and thunder-free. Walkers assembled at the National Trust car park at the top of Streatley Hill, then crossed the road and set off eastwards along a track through woodland. The top of the site lies on Clay-with-flints. The track led to Top Field, an open area with acid grassland which was yellow in parts with big clumps of Common Bird's-foot-trefoil. Other flowers seen here included Common Milkwort, Heath Speedwell, Cat's-ear and Mouse-ear-hawkweed. Meadow Brown, Marbled White and Small Heath butterflies were also seen. A path led down through two gates to Middle Field, a big area of chalk grassland which still showed the outline of the motor-cycle scramble tracks which were made in the 1980s. The scramble tracks had been worn down to bare chalk. It was thought at the time that the site had been trashed. But now turf has grown back and many of the rarer plants can be found on the shorter turf of the former scramble tracks. Common Spotted-orchid was putting on a particularly good display and the Pyramidal Orchids were just coming into flower. Seed-heads of last year's Carline Thistles were seen. Yellow-wort plants were widespread, some with buds and some with flowers. Also seen here were Dark Mullein, Fairy Flax, Quaking Grass, Wild Thyme, Squinancywort, Rough Hawkbit, Salad Burnet, Dwarf Thistle, Eyebright, Restharrow, Horseshoe Vetch and Long-stalked Crane's-bill. A Swollen-thighed Beetle was spotted on one of the Rough Hawkbit flowers. Two female Common Blue butterflies and a Small Heath were also seen. Target species for the morning was the elusive Early Gentian, which had been discovered on the far side of Middle Field by Camilla Lambrick in the 1990s. Jan had found it in Middle Field in April 2009 and in Middle and Bottom Fields in May 2016. There had also been many unsuccessful hunts for Early Gentian at The Holies. All the plants had been found on the former scramble tracks, so this is where the search was being concentrated. The walk continued across the side of the valley in Middle Field, over the track at the bottom of the valley and up the other side. Here Dropwort, Field Madder, Dark Mullein and Vervain were added to the flower list. Also, a Dwarf Mallow plant with white flowers was found. A Five-spot Burnet moth with conjoined red spots was thought to be *Zygaena trifolii* ssp. *palustrella*. This subspecies is found on dry calcareous grassland and has an earlier flight time than the other Five-spot Burnet moths. A flock of 50 – 60 Black-headed Gulls was circling over the track at the lowest part of Middle Field. One of the group went off to check out the gulls and to look for flowers on the SSSI part of Bottom Field. He found good numbers of Common Rock-rose flowers there. The walk back was started in good time to avoid the forecasted thunderstorm. A Lesser Hawkbit flower on the acid grassland of Top Field was inspected carefully, pointing out its slender stem with hairs at the bottom and no scales. A number of insect pictures were taken during the walk, including a metallic green flower beetle, thought to be *Cryptocephalus aureolus*; a hoverfly, thought to be the Migrant Hoverfly *Eupeodes corollae*; a possible Early Bumblebee *Bombus pratorum* on Green Alkanet; the myrid bug

Grypocoris stysii; the gall *Dasineura urticae* on nettles and the Speckled Bush-cricket *Leptophyes punctatissima*.

Grahame Hawker led 7 members on a walk at **Silchester Common** and **Pamber Forest** on the overcast morning of Sunday 22 June. Starting from the Impstone Road car park the route led through a dry area of gorse, where Marsh Cudweed, Tormential, Centaury, Wood Sage, Heath Groundsel and Smooth Hawksbeard were growing, and a Meadow Brown and a male Silver-studded Blue flew by. As the ground became damper Dwarf Gorse, Creeping Willow and Alder Buckthorn with red berries were seen, with Cross-leaved Heath in the small mires and Bell Heather in dryer patches. A female Silver-studded Blue and a Small Skipper were spotted, a Red Poplar Leaf Beetle was found on the willow and Cinnabar moth caterpillars were feasting on Ragwort.



Male Silver-studded Blue ©Fiona Brown 2025

The walk continued to open heathland where several Silver-studded Blues were on the wing in spite of the unfavourable weather. Grahame explained that they were in worn condition as they had emerged early, most before 1st June. A distinguishing feature of both males and females is that the black spots on the edge of the underside of the hindwings have turquoise scales within them. This butterfly has an association with black ants which protect their larvae. Heath Bedstraw and Sheep's Sorrel, and a Linnet and female Stonechat were noted in the heathland. The group then headed to Pamber Forest via the car park. Near the bottom of the slope Slender St John's Wort which prefers acid soil was growing in a ditch, and a flash of purple revealed a Purple Hairstreak which was unable to fly. This gave an opportunity to closely examine a butterfly which is usually high up in oak trees and a challenge to photograph its iridescent wings. Nearby there was rotting wood with bright Green Elfcup and moving on a less colourful Garden Grass-veneer moth was spotted. By the sides of the path were Hard Fern, Soft Shield Fern and Broad Buckler-Fern along with a long-leaved subspecies of Marsh Bedstraw and Enchanter's Nightshade. Brooklime and Water Starwort were growing in puddles. A polypore with a round cap, central stipe and many decurrent tubes each terminating in a small pore was identified as Tuberous Polypore *Polyporus tuberaster*. A Scarlet Tiger, Green-veined White, Silver-washed Fritillaries and a Comma were seen. Continuing through a gate the group passed the Donkey Oak, one of the oldest trees in the Forest. Common Cow-wheat, Wood Spurge, Marsh Thistle and Bilberry were growing along the path edge in woodland with Downy Birch, Grey Willow, Scots Pine, Mountain Ash and Whitebeam. The rides and coppice areas here are managed to benefit butterflies. Honeysuckle, the foodplant of the White Admiral caterpillar was abundant and the butterflies can often be seen, but the weather was not conducive to their flight. In a more open area, a Common

Lizard was spotted in the bracken, while Bird's-foot Trefoil, Betony and Ling were in flower and Devil's-bit Scabious leaves were identified. Further on there were Wood Sorrel, Wood Dock, Foxgloves, a Common-spotted Orchid and Field Rose, and a Marbled White, Large Skipper and Ringlet flew by. Wood Ants were crossing the path to their nest. Some brown toadstools near the bank were identified as Fairy Ring Champignons. Returning up the hill to the car park Yellow Pimpernel, Scaly Male Fern, Heath Speedwell, Figwort, a Red Admiral and a Peacock butterfly were recorded.

On Saturday 5 July, Grahame Hawker led 15 members on a walk at **Knepp** near Horsham in West Sussex. Grahame and his wife Lesley had been camping on the Knepp Estate for the previous few days of hot sunny weather, checking out in particular the best places to see Purple Emperor butterflies, which were having a good year. Unfortunately, the weather on Saturday was disappointing, with thick grey cloud, lower temperatures and occasional rain. Members gathered at the shop near the walkers' car park, then regrouped outside while Grahame gave an introduction to the rewilding at Knepp. The 3500-acre Knepp Estate lies on deep clay which is like concrete in summer and sticky porridge in winter. Owners Charlie Burrell and Isabella Tree tried their hardest for about 12 years to improve and diversify the farm, but only succeeded in increasing their debts. In 2000, the sale of their dairy herd and arable farming machinery cleared their debts and enabled them to start on the rewilding experiment. In 2003, changes to the EU's Common Agricultural Policy allowed farmers to receive subsidies for taking agricultural land out of production. The walkers set off towards the camping area. A Humming-bird Hawk-moth was spotted feeding on a Buddleia bush. It was then seen egg-laying on yellow-flowered Lady's Bedstraw, which was scrambling through the scrub around the Buddleia. The track led into a field whose vegetation was dominated by Common Ragwort, Common Knapweed and Common Fleabane, plus Common Centaury and Marsh Thistle. Stripy black and yellow caterpillars of the Cinnabar moth were feeding on the ragwort. A Marbled White butterfly was spotted resting with its wings together. A flock of Goldfinches were calling. The hairy black caterpillars of a Painted Lady were feeding on Creeping Thistle on the bank by the car park. Beyond some farm buildings, a White Stork's nest was home to at least 2 large juvenile White Storks. More Storks' nests were seen as the day progressed. The walk continued first along the Yellow route, then along a white-marked public footpath. All the fields were a sea of waist-high Ragwort growing out of short-cropped grass, disturbed in places by the rooting of ginger Tamworth pigs. Bare soil exposed by the pigs gives seeds a chance to germinate and patches of scrub give protection to young trees. Birds heard included Garden Warbler and Linnet, while Buzzard, Swallow, Pied Wagtail and Swift were seen. Further on, seven White Storks were flying together. Next destination was a crossroads where two tracks met. Each track was bounded on one side by a hedge containing oak and willow, so there were a sheltered side and a side exposed to the wind. Grahame and Lesley reported that this had been a good place to see Purple Hairstreaks and Purple Emperors in the hot and sunny conditions earlier in the week. Despite the cool weather, the tiny, silvery shapes of Purple Hairstreaks were seen. Then Matthew Oates, who had given a talk about Purple Emperors to the Society in October 2021, appeared on a bicycle and was flagged down by Grahame. Miraculously, despite the unpromising weather, Matthew was able to spot a Purple Emperor feeding on a sap run high in an oak which was next to the track. When it flew, the white line on the hind wing was clearly visible. It started to rain quite heavily and Matthew led the group to shelter under a large oak which was a little way back from the track. Then, despite the pouring rain, he was able to point out another four Purple Emperors feeding on sap runs. The group then turned round and went to inspect the dam at the bottom of the nearby hammer pond. The height of the water had been raised by about a foot, thanks to the building skills of the resident beavers. They had started with sticks and branches, then put stones and bricks on the higher side of the dam and lined it all with mud. Pigs have learned to dive and pick up swan mussels. Water Figwort, Water Forget-me-not, Waterplantain, Marsh Woundwort and Greater Bird's-foot-trefoil, all plants of wet habitats, were seen here. A Great Crested Grebe was on its nest and a Blue-tailed Damselfly was identified. Members then walked back to the café for a hot drink and some cake. At this point, some of the party set off back home. But 8 serious walkers set out again on a circular walk which passed the ruins of the original

Knepp Castle, with its motte, bailey and keep. A small herd of Exmoor ponies with 3 foals was spotted. The River Adur has been restored to a more natural form, with meanders. Water plants seen here included Flowering Rush, Water-plantain, Purple Loosestrife and Arrowhead. The millpond was once the largest body of water in the south-east of England, but it has silted up. Water power was once used to drive hammers which could crush the ore and work the bellows for the 16th and 17th century iron works. A hide looked out over the millpond, where Cormorant and Gadwall were amongst the sightings. Finally, on the walk back, Trifid Bur-marigold was identified.

Julia Cooper and Ian Duddle led a walk at **Greywell Moors** near Hook on the rainy morning of Sunday 20 July, starting at Greywell Pumping Station. The fen area in the north-eastern section of this Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust reserve has permit-only access and Reserves Manager Zoe Cotton kindly came to open the gate and give 13 members an update about management of the reserve. Zoe led the group along the narrow path through the first meadow which had a rich mix of tall fen vegetation, including Meadowsweet, Purple-loosestrife and Hemp Agrimony, and Common Knapweed, Common Bird's-foot-trefoil, Eyebright and Common Fleabane. In the second smaller meadow there were Marsh Helleborines *Epipactis palustris*, slightly past their best after the recent hot weather, and Marsh Fragrant-orchids *Gymnadenia densiflora*. They then moved into the second small field, where Southern Marsh-orchid *Dactylohriza praetermissa* and many Marsh Fragrant-orchids were found. Moving on through a wooded area a Common Twayblade and Broomrape in fruit were spotted.



Marsh Helleborine, Greywell Reserve near Hook ©Fiona Brown 2025

The third field had a wonderful display of flowers, with many more Marsh Helleborines and Marsh Fragrant-orchids at their best in form and fragrance. A marsh orchid in fruit, probably Southern Marsh-orchid, was also found. This part of the reserve was formerly used for dumping lime spoil, so has flowers typically seen on Chalk grassland growing near wet fen vegetation. The Fen Bedstraw *Galium uliginosum* was identified by the mucronate tips to the leaves and the backward-pointing prickles on the leaf margins, the whole plant feeling very rough to the touch. Imperforate St John's-wort *Hypericum maculatum* with a square stem and leaves lacking perforations was also identified along with Square-stalked St John's-wort *H. tetrapterum*, a white-flowered form of Common Knapweed and Greater Bird's-foot-trefoil. The northern marshy part of this meadow was particularly rich in invertebrates, including abundant Green Leaf Hoppers *Cicadella viridis*, 2 rarely recorded Ichneumon wasps, *Heterischnus truncator* and a *Cryptinae* sp., a Four-banded knapweed gall fly *Urophora quadrifasciata*, Straw dot *Rivula sericealis* and Shaded Broad-bar *Scotopteryx chenopodiata* moths, and an Amber snail *Succinea putris* which inhabits waterside vegetation. Butterflies seen in the northern part of the reserve included Green-veined, Small and Large White, newly emerged Brimstone and Peacock, Marbled White, Small Skipper, Red Admiral, Comma, Ringlet, Gatekeeper, Speckled Wood

and Meadow Brown. After inspecting a large Water Figwort plant with a 7-Spot Ladybird by the gate, the group crossed Deptford Lane to the very different southern part of the reserve. Cows with GPS collars were grazing the short grass. Zoe explained that the cattle are trained to stay within a virtual fence, and are locatable on her mobile phone, which is particularly helpful when they are in the other areas of scrub and wet woodland. Having checked the herd Zoe left the group to carry on through the reserve. A Kestrel perched on the wires, showing off its yellow feet and legs. The route then continued alongside the River Whitewater towards the mill pond, with Purple-loosestrife, Meadowsweet and Greater Tussock-sedge along the river edge.



Heterischnus truncator, Greywell Reserve near Hook ©Tom Parker 2025

Just before Greywell Mill flowering Hedge Woundwort *Stachys sylvatica*, Marsh Woundwort *S. palustris* and their hybrid *Stachys x ambigua* were found. They had been identified at this site on a previous RDNHS visit. Further on along the boardwalk emerald green male Banded Demoiselles were flying, and a Signal Crayfish was spotted emerging from under a log. After passing through the churchyard the footpath crossed a field with a herd of heifers and a bull. In response to a sudden heavy shower the heifers gathered together and raced towards the shelter of some trees. The walkers continued at a steady pace into Deptford Lane, crossing the river before arriving back at the pumping station. Some then enjoyed lunch at the Fox and Goose.

Katie Jenks led a walk around **Linear Park in Calcot** on Saturday 23 August. It was a perfect evening for a **bat walk** – 17°C, no rain and just a slight breeze. Nine members met at the Beansheaf Community Centre car park just before dusk at 8pm. Katie handed everyone a heterodyne bat detector, along with an information card highlighting which species of bat could be heard at the various frequencies. After an explanation of how to use the detectors and which species might be found, the group followed the path southwards in the direction of the Holy Brook. Dusk was at 8.07pm and the bats that were most likely to be encountered emerge just before or a little after dusk. The first path followed a treeline at the edge of woodland. The route then turned to continue with the woodland on the left and more open wet areas and ditches on the right. Purple-loosestrife *Lythrum salicaria* was growing in the ditches and willow dominated the wetter open areas. The first bat of the evening was a Soprano Pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pygmaeus*. Katie explained about the division between the Pipistrelle species in the 1990's when it was discovered that Common and Soprano Pipistrelles were two separate species. It was found that the Common Pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pipistrellus* echolocates at 45 kHz and is slightly darker than the Soprano with a dark band across its eyes. The Sopranos which could be seen foraging amongst the oak trees could be heard on the detectors as a series of clicks at 55 kHz as they echolocated. Every now and again, there was a raspberry sound on the detectors as the bats caught and ate an insect. Pipistrelles emerge 15-20 minutes after sunset to hunt for smaller insects, with the

Sopranos favouring wetter habitats and being more common in the south of the UK. The ones we were watching would probably be roosting behind hanging tiles of nearby houses or in loft spaces. As the group moved on, the Sopranos were joined by foraging Common Pipistrelles. Three or four darted between the trees and up and down the tree-lined path, some getting very close to our heads. Arriving at a small open area of amenity grassland, those of us who had tuned our detectors to 25 kHz could hear a very different noise from the Pipistrelle clicks – a higher sounding ‘chip chop’ noise. This was a larger bat, the Noctule *Nyctalus noctula* which favours tree holes and crevices to roost in and feeds on larger insects such as beetles and moths. Katie explained how the Noctule can commute around 7 km to hunt and that the echolocation noise on the detectors sounds slower because they fly higher than the Pipistrelles and do not have so many obstacles to navigate around. It was almost dark when we reached the small bridge over the Holy Brook. We settled here to wait for the ‘water bats’, the Daubenton’s, *Myotis daubentonii*, and were soon joined by three fishermen curious to know what we were looking for. Armed with a detector they were soon hearing the bats! We didn’t have to wait long before the Daubenton’s made an appearance. As we watched them below us, they zoomed under the bridge, catching insects on the water’s surface with their big hairy feet. They seemed to have plenty of choice – moths were abundant as well as the usual mosquitoes and midges. Confusingly they also echolocate at around 45 kHz but sound like machine gun fire rather than clicks. Mindful of getting back to the car park before it was locked up, we slowly made our way back in the dark. It was fairly quiet with the bats either moving on to areas further away from their roosts or taking a break from hunting. We had seen or heard 4 out of the 18 UK bat species in a short space of time.

On the afternoon of Sunday 14th September six intrepid naturalists met in the car park at **Watlington Hill**, a Site of Special Scientific Interest and a nationally important home to rare wildflowers, butterflies, birds, mosses, lichens, and fungi. Watlington Hill is managed by the National Trust. Led by Fiona Brown, the plan was to follow a circular walk around the hill. However, it was pouring with rain and the weather forecast promised wind gusts of up to 35 mph. So, it was decided to shorten the walk. Going west through a small wood a few early fungi were spotted amongst the leaf litter. A Hawthorn tree had large berries which may be an indication that the tree was a non-native species originating in Southern Europe. Continuing along the open ridge, the beautiful view across South Oxfordshire was reduced by the rain and the grassy paths were close-cut by rabbits which hide until dusk to avoid the Red Kites. For a while the rain abated enabling some botanising. The undergrowth beside the paths is cut by volunteers each year and the cuttings are removed to avoid a built-up of nutrients. This helps chalk specialist plants to outcompete other species. Unfortunately, the long dry summer had stunted growth, and most plants were much shorter than expected. Wild Marjoram *Origanum vulgare* was present in abundance and other plants found included Dark Mullein *Verbascum nigrum*, Wild Basil *Clinopodium vulgare*, Red Bartsia *Odontites vernus*, Eyebright *Euphrasia* spec., Field Scabious *Knautia arvensis*, both Hedge *Galium album* and Ladies *G. verum* Bedstraw, Agrimony *Agrimonia eupatoria*, Hop or Lesser Trefoil, *Trifolium campestre* or *T. dubium*, Dwarf Thistle *Cirsium acaule*, Common Centaury *Centaureum erythraea*, Harebell *Campanula rotundifolia*, leaves of Salad Burnet *Poterium sanguisorba*, and Yellow-wort *Blackstonia perfoliata*, which was widespread. A Raven croaked as it flew past, but surprisingly few Red Kites were in evidence. Further along the ridge the path widened out. Here were found Yellow Meadow Ants’ nests covered in Wild Thyme *Thymus polytrichus*, and vegetative Common Rock-rose *Helianthemum nummularium*. Sheltered between the ant hills were Gentians including one patch of seven plants. They were still in bud so difficult to identify. However, one much smaller plant was probably an Autumn Gentian *Gentiana amarella* and suggested that the rest were either Chiltern Gentians *G. germanica* or Chiltern x Autumn hybrids. Heading northwest above the White Mark of Watlington the group made their way downhill through Gorse bushes with a large stand of Yew trees to the left. This led to the west-facing slope of the hill where Vervain *Verbena officinalis* and Clustered Bellflower *Campanula glomerata* were seen during the pre-walk. Turning right the group began heading back uphill noting leaves of Hairy Violet *Viola hirta*, small but flowering Blue Fleabane *Erigeron acris* and a clump of inkcaps beside the path. Near the top there was a clump of Rosebay Willowherb *Chamerion angustifolium*, with most of their hairy seeds already released they

were looking a bit dilapidated. By now the view had disappeared behind a thick curtain of rain and the wind was increasing so it was time to return to the car park where a clump of fungi (possibly a Mottle Gill species) was spotted.



Autumn Gentian, Watlington Hill ©Fiona Brown 2025

Sue White led a walk to look at fungi and slime moulds at **Wildmoor Heath** on the morning of Saturday 11 October. Meeting point was the reserve car park on the east side of Sandhurst Road at **Crowthorne**. The walk started out southwards through woodland which was dominated by Oak, Sweet Chestnut and Birch, and dotted with tall Scots Pines. First sighting was a White Saddle *Helvella crispa* at the side of the path. Under a pine was a group of Brown Rollrims *Paxillus involutus*. They are poisonous, with the toxins building up over time. A tuft of one of the Scalycaps *Pholiota* was growing on a Sweet Chestnut stump. The upper specimens had dropped brown spores onto some of the lower ones. Other fungi found nearby included the large orange Rustgill *Gymnopilus junioni*, Sulphur Tuft *Hypholoma fasciculare* on pine and a Bay Bolete *Boletus badius* at the side of the track. It had pale yellow pores on the underside which stained blue-green when handled. It had been attacked by the Bolete Eater *Hypomyces chrysospermus*, a parasitic fungus which attacks Bolete fungi. It is white initially, then turns sulphur yellow. A Shaggy Scalycap *Pholiota squarrosa*, with scales on both cap and stipe (stem), was growing in the cleft of a tree trunk. It is a secondary parasite, attacking trees that have already been weakened by prior injury or infection. It can also grow saprophytically on dead wood. The cap of a poisonous Blusher *Amanita rubescens* was covered with remnants of its veil and it stained red when cut. A Birch Bracket *Fomitopsis betulina* had holes which had been bored by one of four or five possible species of beetle. The first of many Fly Agarics *Amanita muscaria* of the morning was seen. *Plicatura crispa* on a birch log had forked gill-like folds. Several buried cones were found which supported small colonies of Conifer Conecap *Baeospora myosura*. They are small tough fungi with crowded gills. Growing under pine was a small troop of cream-coloured fungi with small brown speckles which were identified as Spotted Toughshank *Rhodocollybia maculata*. Yellow Stagshorn *Calocera viscosa* was growing on rotting conifer wood. False Chanterelles *Hygrophoropsis aurantiaca* were dotted across the woodland floor. The Common Rustgill *Gymnopilus penetrans* was found on rotting conifer wood. A bright yellow fungus under pine was identified as Dyer's Mazegill *Phaeolus schweinitzii*. The underside showed a labyrinthine pattern of pores. An oak leaf had Spangle Galls, made by the wasp *Neuroterus quercusbaccarum*, Silk Button galls made by the wasp *N. numismalis*, and a Pea Gall on a vein. Earlier in the walk, a Beech leaf had been found with Hairy Beech Galls *Hartigola annulipes*. The route followed the boundary between the woodland and the heathland. A boardwalk had been deconstructed, with single wooden sleepers bridging wet parts. On the underside of one of the sleepers was the white slime mould Coral Slime *Ceratiomyxa fruticulosa*. Seen through a hand lens, the structures resembled corals or sea anemones. Before turning right onto a track across the

heathland, the group stopped to inspect a bright red Beefsteak Fungus *Fistulina hepatica* at the base of an oak tree. Both Brown Birch Bolete *Leccinum scabrum* and Orange Birch Bolete *L. versipelle* were found near the track. Brown Birch Bolete had scabers (scales) on its stem. Orange Birch Bolete turned first dull pink, then grey/black when cut. The next part of the walk followed a narrow path up towards the top of a ridge. The reindeer moss *Cladonia portentosa* (actually a lichen) was found here, as was *C. fimbriata*. On the walk back to the car park, the group added Birch Milkcap *Lactarius tabidus*, Cracking Bolete *Xerocomellus chrysenteron*, Common Earthball *Scleroderma citrinum* and Tawny Grisette *Amanita fulva* to the sightings list. The latter species had distinctive striations at the edge of its cap. Brittlebills of a number of different colours were found during the morning, including purplish pink, grey and greenish grey. Peeling off the cuticle from the fleshy cap of a greenish grey specimen revealed that it was Powdery Brittlebill *Russula parazurea*.

Lesley Dunlop led a group of 13 members and 2 visitors to look at the **geology of Greenham Common** on the morning of Saturday 15 November. Meeting place was the Control Centre car park. It was a misty morning, following a day of rain. Greenham and Crookham Commons lie on a long ridge between the Rivers Enborne and Kennet. The ridge consists of Eocene deposits of acid, sandy clays of the Bagshot Formation, overlain by Silchester gravels and seated on heavy impermeable clays of the London Clay, which were laid down about 50 million years ago. The Silchester gravels were freshwater deposits, laid down about 500,000 years ago at the time of maximum extent of the ice fields, the Anglian stage. At this time, the course of the Thames was diverted by the advancing ice sheet from a route to the north of the Chilterns, eventually becoming a tributary of the Rhine, to its current location to the south of the Chilterns, passing through the Goring Gap. The walk started out on a track which led eastwards to a large shallow pool which was full of water, following the previous day's rain. The impermeable London Clay bedrock stops the water from draining away. The soils are a complicated mixture of deposits in which free draining soils dominate, but with clay pockets producing extensive seepage zones and springs. These springs give rise to streams creating the small, flushed and waterlogged valleys of Alder woodland. Lesley pointed out the line of the Chalk hills to the south. The various layers were laid down horizontally, but became folded when Africa collided with Europe. Continuing along the track, a small herd of cattle were grazing nearby. Snowy and Parrot Waxcaps were growing in the grass and Common Centaury was seen in flower. Birds seen included a Pied Wagtail, a Stonechat, 3 Fieldfares and a Siskin. The stones in the gravel track were mainly flint, but they were inspected carefully for quartz specimens. These originate from veins in granite in south-west England which were formed about 290 million years ago. They were washed out first to beds in the West Midlands, then to the older, higher gravel beds in the Thames Valley. The next part of the walk was supposed to be across Bury's Bank Road and into BBOWT's Bowdown Woods reserve, where streams carve out gullies and the wet woodland is dominated by Alders. Alder has hard wood which repels water and had many uses, including forming the base of wooden clogs, paint brush handles and scaffolding poles. Unfortunately, the safe road crossing point could not be located, so the group turned round and retraced their footsteps. One of the party had spotted a regular pattern of ridges and troughs to the side of the track, with acid-loving plants such as Bell and Common Heather and Dwarf Gorse on the ridges. The Dwarf Gorse was in flower at the same time as the common Gorse, a most unusual occurrence. According to the Collins Flower Guide, the common Gorse flowers December – June, while Dwarf Gorse flowers July – September. The search for quartz pebbles continued without success, but a Sea Urchin fossil with 5-fold symmetry was an interesting find. Also seen towards the end of the walk was a flowering Blue Fleabane plant.

On the morning of Sunday 14 December, Peter Driver led a walk round **Hosehill Lake near Theale**, looking at winter birds. Meeting place was the car park of the Fox and Hounds pub. Hosehill Lake is a 24-hectare site managed by BBOWT. The reserve is based around the only one of the former gravel pits south of the Kennet at Theale with the status of a local nature reserve. The lake is edged by a few small reedbeds, with woodland and meadow adding to the variety of habitats which support a wide range of flora and fauna. Regular work parties are organised by Theale Area Bird Conservation Group,

on Saturday mornings, to carry out habitat management and general maintenance tasks. Twelve members met in the car park of the Fox and Hounds on a bright, dry winter morning. A Song Thrush was singing nearby and a Red Kite drifted low over the car park as we crossed the road to enter the reserve. The path here forms part of the *Camino Ingles* to Santiago, or St James' Way pilgrimage route connecting Reading Abbey to Southampton. From the viewing screen on the north side of the lake, we saw many waterbirds afloat or along the edges of the island opposite the screen. The low sunlight rendered the birds to our east as silhouettes but we identified many Coot, Mallard and Tufted Duck, with smaller numbers of Teal, Gadwall, Shoveler, Pochard, Great Crested Grebe and Egyptian Goose. Most of the wildfowl were winter visitors. They breed as far away as Fennoscandia, Eastern Europe and Russia but migrate to the UK for our milder winters, joining the few resident Mallards and geese. Harry found a splendid drake Red-crested Pochard, tucked away behind the island. Although its scarlet bill wasn't really visible at 300 metres, we could see its distinctive 'coiffed' golden cap and large white side-patch. We followed the path clockwise around the lake. Two Chiffchaffs were high in a tree top, their yellow-green hues glowing in the sunshine. Chiffchaff used to be a summer visiting species but with climate change, we are seeing increasing numbers of Chiffchaff and Blackcap wintering in the UK. A few other passerines were flitting about in the trees and understory: Blue, Great and Long-tailed Tits, Blackbird, Wren and Robin. On reaching the lawn at the eastern end of the lake, we had a better view onto the water with the sun behind us. A Little Grebe was among the closest birds to us on the water, diving busily among the Coots and a large group of some 200 Tufted Ducks. Pairs and small groups of Shoveler were whirling round on the water, using this distinctive feeding strategy to create a vortex, drawing sediment and food to the surface to be filtered through their massive bills. A young Mute Swan in its grey first winter plumage was the largest bird on the reserve. Grey Herons and Cormorants kept vigil at the edges. A flock of seventeen Lapwings drifted over the island, their distinctive broad wings and erratic flight pattern making them unmistakable even at some distance. Further round the path there are fewer views onto the lake and the habitat is more wooded. A Goldcrest sang but proved elusive to all but the most determined viewers. A Siskin flew off from the bird-feeding station, which had just been restocked by a local volunteer. The Blue and Great Tits on the feeders were joined by a Chaffinch and, very briefly, a Marsh Tit, which announced its arrival with a 'pitchu' call above our heads. One of our group spotted a Redwing in a tree along the path. Along the western side of the lake several mature oaks held Nuthatch and Treecreeper, which showed well. A mixed feeding flock of Long-tailed Tits with other small passerines fed noisily in the willows. A Goldcrest was feeding in hawthorn at knee-height, giving very good views to members at the front of the party. After one final look across the lake to check a group of Black-headed Gulls for any unusual species (to no avail) we made our way back to the pub. Several members watched a Kestrel pass overhead while they changed out of their muddy boots. Between us we had observed 43 bird species.



Kestrel ©Fiona Brown 2025

Mid-week Walks 2025

By Jan Haseler, Fiona Brown and Jerry Welsh

Fiona Brown led a circular walk which started from the car park of the King's Head at **Little Marlow** on Wednesday 15 January 2025. It was a grey morning with thick cloud cover, but the weather was relatively mild and there was no rain. Fiona challenged the walkers to see more than the 38 species of bird which she had counted on the pre-walk. The morning's tally started with Robin, Wood Pigeon, Jackdaw and Redwing. Ten members turned right out of the car park, then right again along a footpath which headed in a south-westerly direction. At the start of the footpath, Annual Mercury was in flower near the base of a wall on one side of the path and sweet-smelling Winter Heliotrope was in flower on the other side. A pair of Ring-necked Parakeets called loudly. An Egyptian Goose was standing in the middle of a field on the left. The path continued along a stretch where there were many Teasel seed heads. Most of the berries had already been stripped from the scattered Hawthorns which bordered the path. Birds seen here included Blackbird, Goldfinch, Chaffinch, Red Kite, Blue Tit and Great Tit. A Hazel by the path had yellow male catkins and red female flowers. A fallen branch was home to a clump of the Yellow Brain fungus *Tremella mesenterica*. A Kestrel was spotted up in a tree and Dunnock and Fieldfare were amongst the species seen. The path continued through the grounds of Westhorpe House where Snowdrops were already in flower. The next section of the route followed a path round the edge of a gravel pit, where Coot, Mallard, Shoveler, Tufted Duck, Great Crested Grebe and Moorhen were seen and a Great Spotted Woodpecker was heard. The path then crossed the single-track railway line to Bourne End. On the south side of the line was a grassy meadow which bordered the fast-flowing River Thames. Quarry Wood and Winter Hill could be seen across the river. This section of the route is part of the Thames Path. Two months earlier, the midweek walk had followed the Thames Path south from Moulsoford. At every hauling out site beside the river there had been Crayfish bones and claws, left by Otters. There were no signs of Otters along this section of the River Thames. The Moles had been busy – there were freshly made mole hills in the rich soil of the riverside meadows. On her pre-walk, Fiona had seen a Fox here. Several Cormorants and a pair of Egyptian Geese flew past, following the river upstream. The next section of the walk was along a footpath over the meadow and then back over the railway line. Parts of the meadow had been covered by shallow floods which had then frozen. A chorus of crackles and crunches accompanied the walkers as they cautiously crossed the ice. The route led to Spade Oak Nature Reserve, which includes the largest gravel pit which has been landscaped with islands, varying depths of water, shallow margins and bankside trees. Herons were already nesting in willows near the path. One flew in and presented a twig to its mate which was sitting on its nest.



Little Egret, Spade Oak Nature Reserve ©Fiona Brown 2025

A Little Egret was perched in the bankside willows further round the lake. Ducks seen included Gadwall, Teal, Shelduck and Pochard. A flock of Lapwings were roosting on a shallow shore. There were several Mute Swans and many Black-headed Gulls. Then a Kingfisher flew fast across a corner of the lake. The

footpath led back to Little Marlow, initially with the lake to the right and some rather smelly sewage treatment works to the left. Just before reaching the village, Fiona pointed out where she had seen the star bird of her pre-walk, a Lesser Spotted Woodpecker. A count later in the pub revealed that Fiona had won the bird list challenge, seeing 38 species on the pre-walk, while the rest of the group had managed to see 35 species during the morning's walk. Most of the group then stayed for lunch at the King's Head.

On Wednesday 19 February, on his fourth attempt, Rob Stallard led a walk round **Savernake Forest**, which lies between Hungerford and Marlborough. In the three preceding years, the February mid-week walk had had unsuitable weather – either rain, strong winds or both. This time, there was a little drizzle and a band of light rain passed through, but then the sun came out. Before starting the walk, Rob told members a little about the Forest. It holds many records. It has the longest tree-lined avenue in Britain (the Grand Avenue which is 4 miles long and follows the route of a Roman Road), it has the greatest concentration of veteran trees anywhere in Europe, its forest designation dates back to Saxon times, and it is the only privately owned forest in England (owned by the Earl of Cardigan who is the 31st hereditary Warden of the Forest in a direct line to the first warden). *Safernoc* is first mentioned in 934. It is managed as a commercial undertaking by Forestry England and there are large stands of non-native conifers. The interesting parts are to be found along the edges of the forest, along ancient tracks and in some boggy areas. The soil is a thick layer of 'Clay with Flints' which formed between 23.03 million and 11.8 thousand years ago during the Neogene and Quaternary periods. The bedrock is Chalk, laid down 86 million years ago. Due to the poor, infertile soil, the Forest has escaped cultivation. This has also led to slow tree growth, so the veteran trees may have lower girth than might have been expected for their age. The oldest tree is believed to be the 1,100 year old 11 metre circumference 'Big Belly Oak'. It is located beside the busy A346 Salisbury Road. Measures are now taken to clear a halo from around the veterans to reduce competition for light and nutrients. Cattle have been introduced into some areas to create open meadows. Savernake has SSSI status (1971) primarily for rare lichens found on the bark of the older trees. There are also rare fungi and mosses.



Cathedral Oak, Savernake Forest ©Robert Stallard 2025

Starting point for the walk was a small unmarked car park at the side of Grand Avenue. Nine members set off in a westerly direction along Long Harry, one of the original winding tracks through the Forest. The Forest was dominated by oak trees and relatively open, with fallen oak leaves carpeting the floor and no sign of Bluebells. Wood Spurge plants were seen next to the track. A big old oak on the left of the track was covered in bright green moss. According to Rob's tree inventory, it was Oak 442 with a circumference of 6.69 m. A Nuthatch was heard and a Song Thrush was singing. Hairy Curtain Crust *Stereum hirsutum* was found on a fallen log. The route then turned to the right and passed a big fallen tree where a Treecreeper was foraging on the bark. The path led to the Saddle Oak. A giant limb had

fallen from this big old oak and it no longer looked as saddle-like as it once did. Turning left then right, the route continued northwards along Church Walk to Old Paunchy, which has a circumference of 8 m and is probably about 700 years old. It has Polypody ferns growing on some of its limbs. Two noisy male Blackbirds were fighting, jumping up into the air and flapping their wings at one another. A female was spotted nearby. After reaching the White Road, a detour was made to see the next named tree, the Cathedral Oak, with a circumference of 10.15 m and a height of about 25.8 m. It is at least 1000 years old and is probably the second oldest tree in the Forest. It stands next to the boundary fence, with Savernake Hospital on the other side. After retracing their steps for a short distance, the group walked south-westwards along White Road, passing Young Paunchy on the way to the White Road Oak, which has a circumference of 6.75 m. The route then turned left and continued south-eastwards to the Great Beech, which has a circumference of 5.23 m. Beechmast Candlesnuff fungus *Xylaria carpophila* with a single springing tip was found on the ground below the tree. The walk continued along Great Lodge Bottom and Great Lodge Drive, then turned into a more open grassy area. Seen here was the Bruce Oak, with a circumference of 6.4 m. A Red Kite flew overhead and a Buzzard was also seen in flight. A specimen of the Oak Cherry Gall *Cynips quercusfolii* was found on an oak leaf. An old Hawthorn and a Hart's-tongue Fern were noted. On the other side of the valley, a Roe deer with a youngster at its side watched the walkers for a while, then moved quietly away. The route took a detour south of Great Lodge Drive to see the Spiral Oak, and then passed a leaning Oak and a Monkey-puzzle Tree on the way back to the parked cars on Grand Avenue. Most of the group then went for lunch at the Bear at Hungerford.

On Wednesday 19 March, John Sharpe led a walk with the theme of **East Reading** community gardens. The sun was shining brightly and 24 members gathered on Kennet Side, near the Fisherman's Cottage, an unusually high attendance. John pointed out the blocks of Bath Stone which had been used to build the pub, which indicated that it had been built after the Kennet and Avon Canal had been constructed. Apparently, Otters are seen regularly in this stretch of the river. The group set off downstream, heading to the site of the last gasometer in Reading. Peregrines had been nesting here, but had now moved to The Blade, a prominent high building in the centre of Reading. Cormorants with bright white breeding patches flew low over the water and there were Swans, Canada Geese and Mallards to be seen. The towpath led under the Singing Bridge, in fact 3 bridges with the third being a listed Brunel Bridge, and out to the River Thames. Catkins were forming on the Weeping Willows and Loddon Lilies would be flowering here in a few weeks' time. People then retraced their steps, before turning left into School Terrace. Annual Mercury was spotted in a number of front gardens. It is much bushier than the perennial Dog's Mercury. Next stop was Newtown Community Garden, between Cumberland Road and Amity Road. Back in the 1970s, 3 houses were demolished at either end to make space for garages and a walk-through route. Local resident Lesley Barron was waiting to tell the group about the Community Garden. Contracted grass-cutters cut planted flowers at least 3 times before they were able to get the garden off the council's mowing list. Bees identified included Sharp-tailed Bee, Blue Mason Bee, Wool Carder Bee and Hairy-footed Flower Bee. Plants seen included Ivy-leaved Speedwell, Petty Spurge, Green Alkanet, Sweet Violet and Dandelion. A pair of Jackdaws were foraging down on the ground in the grassy area next to the paved path through the garden. An apple tree had been planted in memory of one of the local residents.

Next stop was Reading Old Cemetery, passing flowering Common Whitlowgrass on the way. Teresa Verney Brookes was waiting just inside the cemetery. She told the group that it was a Garden Cemetery, opened in 1843, outside the town. There were many unmarked and common graves. Suttons Seeds had the contract for planting the original trees which are now mature. Six of them are on the Ancient Tree Inventory. A Cedar of Lebanon has dropped some large limbs. Other trees include a Weeping Beech and a grafted Fern-leaved Beech. The cemetery was declared to be full in the 1950s. It was then closed and given to Reading Council. The main interest of the volunteers who look after the cemetery is maintaining two wild flower meadows in a site which has never been artificially fertilised. Yellow Rattle is used to reduce the amount of grass present and it is mown in the autumn. White flowers of

Barren Strawberry were seen next to the path, Oxford Ragwort was identified and both male and female Brimstone butterflies were on the wing. Other plants in flower included Lungwort and Primrose. Teresa pointed out the low wall which separated the cemetery into the area for the graves of Non-conformists (at the front) and the larger area for graves of Anglicans (further back). The Council has put its environmental monitoring equipment near the site of the former Anglican chapel, well away from the busy roads which one would expect that it should be monitoring.

There followed a brief visit to John's front garden, where there were Primroses which had been flowering since December. Final stop was a new Staff Health and Wellbeing garden. This is being developed at the back of a substantial house which is across Craven Road from the main entrance to the Royal Berkshire Hospital. The house is faced with Bath Stone and was formerly the home of the Headmaster of Reading School. On a lovely sunny day, staff were making the most of the sunshine, sitting at tables dotted round the lawn area near the entrance to the garden to eat their lunch. There is also a quiet area, centred round a pond. There were flowers on the Rosemary bushes and a Hairy-footed Flower-bee was feeding at the Green Alkanet flowers. Most of the group then went for lunch at the Fisherman's Cottage.

Richard and Alison Donnelly led 14 members on a walk around part of the **Maidenhead and Cookham Commons** on Wednesday 9 April. It was initially cloudy with a chill wind blowing from the north-east, but as the morning progressed, the clouds melted away and the temperature rose. The walk started from the National Trust car park on Pinkneys Drive. A Blue Tit was busily nest-building in the top corner of the height-restrictor at the entrance to the car park. After crossing Pinkneys Drive, the route led eastwards across a large field which had been planted with wildflowers many years ago. It was yellow with a carpet of Cowslips. Continuing towards Pinkneys Green, an Early Dog-violet was identified by its dark spur and pointed sepals. Further on, Few-flowered Garlic, an introduced and potentially invasive species, was growing densely below a small group of trees. The walk continued northwards across grassy fields where Bulbous Buttercups were already in flower, the bright yellow flowers of Norway Maple were conspicuous and Cherry Plum and Blackthorn were flowering in the hedgerow. Windsor Castle and Cliveden could be seen in the distance. The footpath led to the site of the former brick and tile works. Hindhay Farm, one of the original buildings, had an impressive red terracotta dragon at one end of its roof.



Water Soldier, *Stratiotes aloides* ©Fiona Brown 2025

An area of woodland on the site of the former works has been designated as a nature reserve. Trees are dominated by Birch and Willow, while the former clay pits have become ponds. Sanicle leaves, shiny on the underside, were found near the entrance to the reserve and nearby, a Lesser Burdock leaf was shown to have a hollow stem. An unfamiliar water plant was identified as Water-soldier, which is a free-floating submerged perennial, rising to the surface at flowering time. The long sword-like leaves

with spiny marginal teeth are arranged in a basal rosette. Continuing round the reserve, a pile of cut branches was home to a colony of Scarlet Elf-cup fungi. Following on from the Early Dog-violet seen earlier in the walk, Common Dog-violet flowers with pale spurs were seen here. The walk round the reserve returned to the start. Where the path emerged from the reserve, a male Kestrel with a grey head was perched on a telegraph pole. It gave a superb display of hovering and hunting, but without success.

The route then led into an area of woodland. Many Bluebell flowers were already out, but it was still probably a week or two before peak Bluebell time. There were many Wood Anemones near the path. Also seen here were two forms of Lesser Celandine. Some had large petals to attract pollinating insects. Others had thinner petals and spread vegetatively with bulbils. A Holly Blue butterfly flew past, a sign that the day had warmed up enough for the butterflies to start flying. Also seen soon after were a Green-veined White, a Peacock and both male and female Orange-tips. Goldilocks Buttercup, with small petals, was flowering here. The track emerged from the woods near the Golden Ball pub. In front of the pub was a grassy green with many Cuckooflower flowers. Also seen here were Common Sorrel and Shining Crane's-bill, which had small pink flowers and leaves which were shiny on top. These were compared with the Sanicle leaves which had been seen earlier in the walk and which were shiny on the underside. The last part of the walk was across several fields where Blackthorn blossom in the hedges formed a dense white blanket. Speckled Wood and Comma butterflies were added to the species list, together with Sweet Violet. Most of the group then went for lunch at the Bird in Hand at Knowl Hill.

On the morning of Wednesday 21 May, Rob Stallard led a circular walk which started from the car park of the village recreation ground in **Bucklebury**. The weather forecast had warned of the possibility of showers, but these did not materialise and the temperature warmed as the morning progressed. House Martins flew above the car park and a Song Thrush sang loudly in the background. First stop for the ten walkers was across the road in the churchyard of St Mary the Virgin. The churchyard is known for its display of Meadow Saxifrage in late spring, but most of the flowers had already gone to seed. Pellitory-of-the-wall was growing at the base of the church. The intricate Norman carving round the arch of the south door was admired. The route then led northwards, following a footpath across the meadow on the north side of the churchyard. Plants seen here included Lady's Bedstraw, Meadow Buttercup, Common Sorrel and Common Bird's-foot-trefoil. Wren and Chaffinch were heard. The footpath left the meadow near a bridge over the River Pang. Despite the very dry spring, the river still had plenty of water, due to the wet weather earlier in the year. The grey shape of a fish was seen against the Water-crowfoot growing from the stream bed. Flowering Comfrey was growing on the river bank. A Swallow flew overhead. Next, the lane crossed the village's flood protection channel. Beaked Hawk's-beard, Hoary Cress and Meadow Vetchling were all found in flower amongst the bankside vegetation, as were White, Red and a hybrid pink Campion. The lane climbed steadily as it continued northwards. The sound of the church bells rang out across the valley at 11am. On the right of the lane was a field with a wide conservation margin where Sainfoin and Field Madder were in flower. Beyond the planted margin was an arable crop. A Hare was spotted as it ran along the far edge of the crop. Bush Vetch, Wood Dock and Goat's-beard were noted at the side of the lane and the songs of Garden Warbler and Whitethroat were heard. The webs of Ermine moth caterpillars draped a Spindle Bush. The lane changed to a track as it continued up through the woods. Big patches of Ramsons grew next to the track. Woodland plants included Wood Spurge, Wood Sage, Wood Speedwell, Common Figwort, Bugle and Yellow Pimpernel. Coal Tit, Blue Tit and Great Tit were heard. At the top of the hill, the route turned eastwards. Good numbers of Speckled Yellow moths flitted through clearings in the woods. A small patch of Japanese Knotweed was a worrying sight. Tormentil, Brooklime, Water-pepper, Marsh Thistle and a Speckled Wood butterfly were noted, and scattered Rhododendron bushes were in flower. A small unmarked moth which settled on a Nettle leaf next to a Wood Spurge plant (its caterpillar food plant) was identified as a Drab Looper, one of the specialties of the woodlands of the upper Pang valley.



Drab Looper, Bucklebury ©Robert Stallard 2025

The track continued to the eastern boundary of the woodland, then the route joined another path which ran southwards just inside the woodland edge. Creeping-Jenny was found in a damp patch near the path. The leaves have rounded tips, unlike the pointed tips of Yellow Pimpernel which had been seen earlier. The path continued southwards to the end of the woods, then turned south-eastwards along the hedge line until it came to Pangfield Farm. After walking round the farm buildings, the group followed a track down to the River Pang. In a field to the right of the track were a Hare and two mares with young foals. The route then turned westwards, following a footpath which ran along the north bank of the Pang. Yellow Flag irises were flowering on the banks of the river. A big Guelder Rose bush on the river bank was covered in creamy white blossom. Skylarks were singing high above in the sky and a distant Yellowhammer was singing. A Peacock and a Green-veined White butterfly plus several Beautiful Demoiselle damselflies were seen along this section of the footpath. There were a few places where it was possible to get down to the water's edge. The water was slightly cloudy and there was not as much Water-crowfoot on the river bed as one might expect to see. More plants were identified along the final stretch back to the start, including Hop, Great Willowherb, Black Horehound, Wilted Thistle and Rough Chervil. Also seen were an Orange-tip butterfly, a scorpionfly and a Greenfinch. Afterwards, most of the group went to the Six Bells at Beenham for lunch.

Liz Carr organised a visit to **Wild Oakingham near Nuffield** on the hot morning of Tuesday 17 June. Owner Jane Ibrahim and Rewilding Specialist Professor Alastair Driver very kindly led 15 members round the site to see how rewilding is progressing. Before setting out, Alastair gave a brief introduction to rewilding, then showed members some of the moths which he had caught in his moth trap the previous night. The land at Wild Oakingham was formerly used for polo ponies. In 2021, the conversion to organic farming began and most of the internal fencing on the 200 acre site was removed. Creeping Thistle was flowering in the first field which the group visited. The flowers are very attractive to insects, including the butterflies Marbled White, Meadow Brown and Large and Small Skipper which were seen here. The dense tangle of thistle plants protects seedling oaks from browsing deer. The rough grazing supports 10 – 20 times more invertebrates than traditional grazing. A 50 metre strip around the site is mown to reassure those neighbours who were worried by the sight of Creeping Thistle, Ragwort, etc. The resulting cut grass cannot be used for hay because of its high Ragwort content. Instead it is baled and left standing on edge. The path led past three fenced-in young oaks which had had their bark damaged by browsing deer. A drone survey had shown that there were large herds of non-native Fallow Deer in the area, some with more than 100 members. The native Roe Deer, on the other hand, live in small family groups. There are plans to actively manage the Fallow and Muntjac populations. A Kestrel flew overhead and mining bees were seen going in and out of holes by the side of the path. Nearby, the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology at Wallingford has set up a machine, powered by 2 solar panels,

for continuous monitoring of invertebrate life. There is also an acoustic recorder. A giant Privet Hawk-moth was spotted perching on the machine. Further along, a fenced off restricted byway runs along the bottom of the field. Stiles have been replaced by kissing gates to improve access and to encourage community engagement. Requests are made via signage for dogs to be kept on leads in order in order to protect the ground-nesting Skylarks.

The walk continued through two matching gates on either side of the byway and into another grassy pasture, bounded on two sides by ancient woodland. A big bank of brambles is advancing into the field. The bramble blossom is very attractive to insects. Later in the year, ivy blossom will be another insect magnet. If trees fall here, they are left to decay. This field is the only one which had previously been fertilised, with grass cut for silage. A narrow path led through woodland, where sightings included Woodruff and the grass Wood Melick. The group then turned round, re-crossed the byway and walked across former pony paddocks to a collection of former pony sheds which are now being used as roosts by both Barn and Tawny Owls. A Barn Owl pellet was found to contain the jaw-bone of a vole. A number of owl boxes have been erected around the estate, but this year they have only been used by pigeons and Jackdaws. A birder in the group commented that it had been a bad year for Barn Owls, and that of six boxes on another site which he had checked, only one aborted nesting attempt had been observed. This field was not grazed. At its edge, Blackthorn was moving into the field. Alastair commented that approximately half of all rewilding sites are planting trees. Wild Oakingham shows that natural regeneration can be faster if there are any areas of woodland nearby, together with vectors such as jays or squirrels. The Knepp Estate is unusual in that it lies on former arable farmland. The route led through a gate and into another field which is being lightly grazed to provide suitable conditions for breeding Skylarks. Turning left along a footpath, the walk continued past a small herd of long-horn cattle which were sheltering from the sun in the shade of a group of trees. They use a fallen Ash tree in the field as a rubbing post. The footpath led back to the house where the walk had started. Our host Jane had kindly laid out a picnic lunch for everyone.

Julia Cooper stepped in at short notice to lead 7 members on a circular walk starting from the Bull at **Arborfield Cross** on the morning of Wednesday 16 July. The route turned right out of the car park along Swallowfield Road, then right again along a track. It was a good morning for seeing butterflies and species noted here included Red Admiral, Speckled Wood, Comma on a Greater Burdock flower-head, Gatekeeper and Green-veined White. Turning left, there followed a short stretch along Reading Road before turning right along Church Lane. A pond on the right side of the lane had Branched Bur-reed, Gypsywort and Water Mint, while another small pond in a front garden had Flowering Rush and a Banded Demoiselle. There followed a brief investigation of the churchyard, where Common Bird's-foot-trefoil, Common Knapweed, Hart's-tongue Fern and Black Bryony were amongst the sightings. The group then turned left out of the churchyard onto Church Lane and almost immediately left again along a network of tracks which led through farmland. A small flock of Chaffinches got up from the track ahead and there was a discussion about the identity of a leafless dead tree in the hedgerow – Ash or Oak? Oak was the majority verdict. White Campion flowers were seen here and Elderberries were already turning black. The track ran past a very big and presumably old Field Maple. It was multi-stemmed, with eight thick stems at its base. Had it been coppiced, or had a bundle of young tree seedlings been planted originally? Further debate ensued. Flowering Himalayan Balsam was spotted in a ditch to the right of the track. Nearby, flowering Bittersweet was scrambling through the hedge and spikes of Lords-and-ladies already had heads of ripe orange berries. The track crossed a ford, where Meadowsweet and Branched Bur-reed were amongst the sightings in the taller vegetation at the side of the track. A right turn then led to Gravelpit Hill at the north-east side of the Coombes. A footpath near Bearwood Lakes Golf Course had Stone Parsley and Fragrant Agrimony. Heather and Bell Heather were in flower here. A blue butterfly on the heather was initially identified as a Common Blue, but when it perched with its wings together, the underside of the wings, with small black dots on a pale blue background, showed that it was a Holly Blue, and the wide black margin of the fore-wing indicated that it was a female. The footpath led to an open sandy area where the ground vegetation

was withered and straw-coloured, following the weeks of drought and high temperatures. Despite the conditions, Common Stork's-bill was still managing to flower. The next track led past Ellis's Hill Farm and back towards Arborfield Cross. It crossed a ford where several dogs were enjoying the water. Water Chickweed, Brooklime and Water Figwort were found on the stream bank. There followed a long gentle climb back to the Bull, where most of the group stayed for lunch.

On the morning of Wednesday 20 August, a dry, windless day, Jan and Jerry Welsh led a walk from the former King Charles Head pub at **Collins End near Goring Heath**. The group headed west along a footpath through grassy fields where Blinks, fairly rare in Oxfordshire, had been found previously after a wet spring. After passing heavily laden Walnut trees the track leading south-east by Pathhill Farm was taken. Chicken of the Woods was seen on a tree stump. The presence of Common Calamint was noted before the wood became more dense. In a more open area Nettle-leaved Bellflower and Spurge Laurel were recorded. The route headed downhill and then followed the valley bottom. There was some excitement when a climbing Bird's-foot Trefoil was seen, but closer examination showed it to be the common form. Giant Bellflower, at its only Oxfordshire site, had been recorded here previously when the site was less scrubbed over. This track appeared to be the course of the route to the Thames for transport of timber and wood to Mapledurham from Bottom Wood and then on to London. A wide variety of trees including Oak, Lime, Cherry, Whitebeam, Maple, Birch, Alder and Wild Service were noted in Bottom Shaw. Shortly afterwards on turning north to Whittles Farm, an arable field with maize stubble had unusually both Sharp-leaved and Round-leaved Fluellen, and Welled Thistle, Fool's Parsley and Burnet Saxifrage. The steeper area above remained species-rich chalk grassland with Knapweed, Marjoram, Salad Burnet, Perforate St John's-wort, Dwarf Thistle, Rough Hawkbit, Clustered Bellflower, Centaury, Thyme, Yellow-wort, Small Scabious, Greater Knapweed and Quaking Grass, and an old orchid flowering spike, probably Common Spotted. Close to Whittles Farm the route crossed the road into Nuney Wood, the hamlet of Nuney then Gutteridge's Wood where Marsh Cudweed, plentiful Water Pepper, Butcher's-broom and a fine bolete with a yellow cap and dark brown pores were recorded. Most of the group enjoyed lunch at the Packhorse at Mapledurham afterwards.

Rob Stallard led six members on a walk at **Newtown Common**, to the south of Newbury, on the morning of Wednesday 17 September. There were heavy dark clouds, but the threatened rain never materialised. Meeting place was the well-hidden Village Hall car park. The track from the road to the car park was lined on each side by an avenue of Lawyer's Wig (or Shaggy Inkcap) fungi. False Chanterelles were found at the base of a pine tree in the car park. The walk started out along a path through woodland which was dominated by oak, birch and Scots Pine. Bilberry plants covered the ground in places, but only a single berry was found. The path crossed a patch of heathland where Dwarf Gorse was in flower. Common and Bell Heather were still flowering. A large pale fungus was identified as Spotted Toughshank *Collybia maculata*. The path dipped down towards a stream, with a big patch of the invasive Skunk Cabbage on both sides. After crossing the stream, the path climbed up the other side of the valley. A yellow polypore on a log was thought to be a Bay or Black-foot Polypore. The next path led out onto a steep grassy field. Oak trees lined the edge of the field, and Silk-button Gall and Pea Gall *Cynips divisa* were found on their leaves. Three Parasol Mushrooms were found under a Yew at the top of the hill. The path emerged at School Cottage, which was where the old school had been. The walk continued along the cleared heathy area beneath a power line where Sheep's Sorrel was plentiful. The route crossed from Newtown Common to Burghclere Common and then to Herbert Plantation. Black Nightshade and poisonous Thorn-apple were growing in freshly dug soil which appeared to have been dumped next to the path. Continuing into woodland, Common Puffball and Common Earthball were seen. Herbert Plantation is a Local Nature Reserve which is managed by the Hampshire Countryside Service. Old boundary banks indicate that it has been woodland for a long time. Brown Rollrim and Blusher were found here. Turning left, Guelder Rose was growing next to the path, as were Wood Spurge and Solomon's-seal. Further on, a large group of Fly Agaric, with its associated birch trees, was found a little way back from the path. As the path descended, it passed through a normally boggy area which was almost dry in places, following the long summer drought.

Yellow Pimpernel was found in flower here. The path crossed a bridge over a dried-up stream, then joined a track which led uphill. A white fungus was identified as The Miller *Clitopilus prunulus*. The next path led out onto a large open area of heathland. Yellow Stagshorn fungus and Bay Bolete *Boletus badius* were growing on the path. The final stretch of the walk was through more woodland, before returning to the Newtown Village Hall car park. Most of the walkers then headed to The Swan at Newtown for lunch.



Yellow Stagshorn fungus, Newtown Common ©Robert Stallard 2025

Inge Beck led a walk at **Knowl Hill**, to the west of Maidenhead, on the morning of Wednesday 15 October. Meeting place for 16 members was the large lay-by on the north side of the A4. It also turned out to be the parking place for the large group of local ladies who practise Nordic walking (with poles) three times per week, including Wednesday mornings but starting earlier in the morning than the Natural History Society. Miraculously, spaces were found for everyone. A tall brick chimney decorated with a painted star is a listed relic from the former Tile and Brickworks at Knowl Hill. The site is now a waste transfer site managed by Grundon. The walk started out in a north-westerly direction along Star Lane. There was a brief diversion through a gap in the hedge into the adjoining grassy field where there is usually a good view of Windsor Castle. However, it was a misty morning and the Castle could not be seen. Stone Parsley and Alexanders were amongst the sightings at the side of the road. Further on, small yellow apples on the ground alerted the group to the location of a Crab Apple tree in the hedgerow. Knowl Hill is ringed by springs which feed into small streams which carve deep gullies through the underlying London Clay deposits. The track crossed one of these gullies. The top of Knowl Hill is crossed by a network of lanes, bridleways and footpaths and covered by ancient semi-natural woodland. The route led first to Warren Row to admire the chapel, St Paul's Mission Church, also called the Tin Tabernacle. It was bought as a kit for £100 in 1894. From a nearby vantage point, it is possible to look northwards towards Medmenham and BBOWT's Hurley Chalk-pit reserve. The next part of the walk was south-westwards through woodland which was dominated by beech, together with a scattering of other species. A good variety of fungi was found amongst the leaf litter and on fallen wood. This included Blushing Bracket *Daedaleopsis confragosa*, Magpie Inkcap *Coprinopsis picacea*, the greenish-grey Powdery Brittlegill *Russula parazurea*, Birch Milkcap *Lactarius tabidus*, Porcelain Fungus *Oudemansiella mucida* on beech, Fly Agaric *Amanita muscaria* under birch, Rosy Bonnet *Mycena rosea*, False Death Cap *Amanita citrina*, Beech Milkcap *Lactarius blennius*, Slender Parasol *Macrolepiota mastoidea* and Yellowing Curtain Crust *Stereum subtomentosum*. One of the highlights

of this part of the walk was a single Helleborine plant to one side of the track which was the subject of much discussion. The leaves did not appear to be wide enough for Broad-leaved Helleborine and Violet Helleborine usually grows in clusters. Narrow-lipped and Green-flowered Helleborines might also be possibilities. It was thought that it might be easier to identify it next summer when the plant is flowering, so a 10-digit grid reference, SU81116 89480 was taken, to help with its relocation if anyone has the opportunity to look for it again. As the route circled round, glimpses were had of first Reading, then Bracknell. Then Clustered Bracket *Inonotus cuticularis* was found on beech, Orange Peel fungus *Aleuria aurantia* was found on bare ground and *Lactarius controversus* was found under willow. The next part of the walk was down across a large restored open area, on the site of the former quarry. Large boulders had been deposited on either side of the track, to discourage walkers from straying off the track. The first of the fungi found here was a small clump of the Weeping Widow *Lacrymaria lacrymabunda*, with black edges to the cap and powder on the stem. A few plants of Common Fleabane were still flowering, as was purple- and white-flowered Goat's-rue. The leaves of Sun Spurge were seen. A path led from the former quarry site back to Star Lane. Most of the walkers then went to The Cricketers at Littlewick Green for lunch.

Ten members joined Rob Stallard for a walk at **Brimpton** on the morning of Wednesday 26 November, starting from the churchyard. The sun was shining and the sky was blue. A hard overnight frost had left the vegetation coated in rime. The route followed a footpath which led south-eastwards across a field and down towards the River Enborne. There were still flowers in the field margin and berries in the hedgerow. A Privet bush had shiny black berries and a Bittersweet plant had red berries. A Kestrel and a Pied Wagtail were perching in their respective trees, a Song Thrush was singing and eight Fieldfares were spotted in the field corner. The next field had a wide margin where a bird food crop had been sown. Plants identified here included Chicory, Flax and Wild Radish. The footpath ran close to the River Enborne. At this point, the river ran in a deep channel with near-vertical sides, cutting down through the underlying clay. Hop was growing nearby and small fish were seen from one of the bridges. The path ran through the site of a former poplar plantation where on a previous walk the semi-parasitic Purple Toothwort had been found in flower. It will be interesting to see if the Purple Toothwort will survive the felling of the poplar plantation. Rime-covered Greater Burdock seed heads were back-lit by the winter sunlight. The walk continued over a footbridge and into Inwood Copse. An Alder Bracket was found on a log and a big clump of Sulphur Tuft was seen. Greater Stitchwort leaves were already poking up through the woodland floor and Red Campion was found in flower. A series of molehills followed the line of the path. The route crossed a quiet lane, with a ditch and bank marking the boundary of Inwood Copse. Wood Spurge was growing on the bank. Continuing along the footpath, a line of big fungi were identified as Trooping Funnel. The quiet call of a Bullfinch was heard. The walk continued along a network of footpaths and quiet lanes through fields. A small log had the aptly named White Paint fungus on its underside. Hogweed was in flower and a Redwing was on a Hawthorn bush. A shiny orange tuft of Velvet Shank fungi was seen and a Raven and a Buzzard were heard. The path crossed the Enborne again, then climbed uphill, with a new vineyard on one side. In 2022, the 7 acre vineyard was planted up with 15,000 vines of 3 grape types, Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and Pinot Meunier. These are the grape varieties which are used to make Champagne, or English Sparkling Wine. When mature, the vines should produce 10-15,000 bottles per year. A right turn onto another footpath led back to Brimpton. A noisy flock of Rooks disturbed the peace. Some were on the ground and some up on wires. After the walk, most of the group went to the Rowbarge at Woolhampton for lunch.

Highlights of the Birding Year at Moor Copse 2025

By Ailsa Claybourn

January

Flooding was less bad than in December, 2024, and we had some bright sunshine. Good numbers of Redwing and Siskin overall. Singing increasing, Song Thrushes very vocal, with Tits, Robins, Wrens and many others establishing territories: Spring gets going early.

February

Very high, extensive flooding by the end of the month, and tricky to negotiate a way through in places. Mallard making the most of all the extra 'lakes', and Grey Herons feeding in the swales in Corner Field, probably on the frogs who have other things on their spawning minds. River Field South inaccessible and colonised by Mallard and Pied Wagtails. Still plenty of Siskin, though fewer Redwing. First female flowers on the Hazel. Several woodcrete bat boxes installed.

March

A warm start, with Brimstone butterflies on the 6th, as well as my first Moor Copse singing Chiffchaff of 2025! Definitely Spring. Much singing, collecting of nesting material, and general activity amongst the birds, from Long-tailed Tits to Mallards, Mandarin Ducks and Red Kites. I saw a Comma butterfly, and some Scarlet Elf Cap fungi; a Meadow Pipit in Arable Field, and a Grey Wagtail near the car park. Flood water receding by the end of the month: on the 31st I recorded no Redwings or Siskins, and counted 14 Chiffchaffs and 3 Blackcaps: Spring had arrived!

April

Spring in full swing, very warm, pleasant weather. Looked as if, unusually for Moor Copse, Starlings might be nesting in a hole in the big dead tree in Park Wood; but 2 Ring-necked Parakeet were also showing an interest: they're hole-nesters, too, and likely to chase Starlings away (in the end, I saw no evidence of either pair successfully rearing young).

Still lots of flooding: Little Egret fishing near the entrance on the 6th, and several Orange Tip and Peacock butterflies around the reserve. 2 Willow Warblers were singing on the 7th, unusual birds for Moor Copse, and just passing through; a Garden Warbler, Whitethroat and Greenfinch were singing on the 22nd, when I also watched a male Sparrowhawk in a swooping and diving courtship flight. Many birds were brooding and feeding – less song, more busy-ness.

May

Vegetation was 'lush' on the 9th, and Chiffchaffs and Blackcaps were still in full song, also Robins, Wrens and Dunnocks; by the 23rd the focus had switched to family life, with Blue Tit broods being fed by parents, and a pair of Blackcaps collecting food for their nestlings. The only evidence of Parakeets was in the song of a mimicking Song Thrush! The Cuckoo I heard was genuine, though. Two Whitethroat sang in Cottage Field. Beautiful Demoiselles in glittering abundance along the River Pang. Furtive male Sparrowhawk hunting.

June

Heatwaves and rain. Grey Wagtails near the main entrance. Blackcaps feeding fledglings. Lots of unidentified fledgling calls, and most adult birds looking tattered and worn by parenthood. Kestrel hunting over River Field South. Good numbers of Goldcrests, still singing. A Whitethroat sang in Barton's

Field, hopefully indicating the third breeding pair this year. Meadows noisy with Orthoptera until sometime after the 21st, when the meadows were cut and fell silent.

July

A very hot month. More insects than birds. Beginning of annual moult. Only Wrens, Blackcaps and Chiffchaff singing by mid-month. 3 days of rain then triggered more activity, with a family of Wrens being fed by the river. Heard a family of Treecreepers keeping in touch with each other as they fed in Horsemoor Copse. Watched 3 Goldfinches feeding on dried Knapweed seedheads.

August

Still hot, and dry. Even fewer birds. Great view of a Green Woodpecker in this year's coppice plot in Moor Copse. Little birdsong, but more calling heard towards the end of August, from Blue Tits, Robins, Wrens, Goldcrests, Treecreepers., Nuthatches and Chiffchaffs. Saw a huge Signal Crayfish in the Pang. Storm Erin broke the heatwave at the end of the month, as temperatures fell by 10 degrees.

September

Summer over. Rain on and off. Birds calling, feeding, still in family groups, especially Long-tailed Tits. Male Grey Wagtail feeding near the car park. Groups of House Martins hawking over the reserve, feeding-up as they headed south, then 20 swooping low, all around me, in Cottage Field.

October

First Redwings and Siskins on the 24th: a sure sign of Autumn, though it was a mild month. Two Grey Wagtails in Cottage Field, using molehills as vantage points from which to see their insect prey. Jays collecting acorns, of which there is an abundance: this is a mast year, with masses of fruits on most trees and shrubs (though not Spindles, interestingly). All the usual Moor Copse birds active, feeding and calling, though Blackbirds and Great Tits continued to keep their profiles low. Winter migrant numbers lower, and their arrival later, than usual.

November

A mix of weather, from frost to sun, mild to cold, and wet to very wet. Autumn leaves falling looked like birds – very confusing! – early in the month, but trees almost bare by end. Two Moorhens on the river. Roving Tit flock of at least 7 Long-tailed, with Blue and Marsh Tits too. Song Thrushes, in full song by the 28th, brightening thoughts of Winter. Still lots of fruits and berries, though very few Redwings around to eat them. Siskins feeding in the Alders, with some large flocks, and several sightings of them in 1s and 2s. in contrast, around 200 Woodpigeons flew over, in wave after wave, their wingbeats easily audible from the path.

December

A damp and misty visit on the 4th. A relief not to be wading through floodwater, unlike the 2 previous Decembers. Song Thrushes still in good voice. Great Tits now quite pugnaciously setting up their breeding territories. Blackbirds more in evidence too. An unusual call in MC was that of a disgruntled male Sparrowhawk being escorted off their premises by 2 even more disgruntled Carrion Crows. Only a handful of Redwings, outnumbered by Siskins.

Recorder's Report for Botany 2025

By Renée Grayer

This year the Botany Report looks slightly different than in previous years, because for the first time in the 78-year history of the Reading Naturalist, the English names of the plant families and species come before the scientific (Latin) names. The reason why I have changed this sequence is in the first place because it is more user friendly for most of the RDNHS members, although a bit more difficult to read for any foreign botanist. Secondly, the English names of the plants have been much more constant in the last few decades than the scientific names. Native wild flowers tend to have many different local names, but the lists of suggested English names published by the Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland is now generally used in Floras and botanical literature. On the other hand, international research in the last thirty years on the DNA sequences of selected plant genes revealed that relationships among and within plant families and genera was often very different than morphological characters suggested. Therefore, some families have been split into several new ones or became a part of a larger family, some genera have been removed to different families and species have been moved to different genera, etc., resulting in quite a few changes of the scientific names. For instance, the Scarlet Pimpernel, the Latin name of which used to be *Anagallis arvensis*, is now included in the genus *Lysimachia* (Yellow Loosestrife) and consequently called *Lysimachia arvensis*. At first glance, this looks a bit strange, but the plant is now in the same genus as the similar looking Yellow Pimpernel, *Lysimachia nemorum*.



Scarlet Pimpernel, *Lysimachia arvensis* © Robert Stallard 2021

The 4th edition of C.A. Stace's New Flora of the British Isles (2019) has been followed for the English and scientific names of the plant species and for the taxonomic arrangement of the species into families and higher categories. The families have also been given the same family number as in this Flora. The Flora of Berkshire by M. J. Crawley (2005) was generally used to select the species for the Botany Report, using rarity or decline in their occurrence as criteria. After each entry the initials of the names of the recorders are given, but whenever a species was recorded during a RDNHS trip or walk, the names of the excursion leaders are given after the record, even if other members of the group discovered the plant. All abbreviations are explained at the end of the Report.

FERNS AND ALLIES

4. Adder's-tongue family – Ophioglossaceae

Adder's-tongue – *Ophioglossum vulgatum*

27/04/25 Kings Barn Farm, Medmenham (RN trip) SU811849 (SR)

FLOWERING PLANTS (ANGIOSPERMAE)

Dicots

36. Buttercup family – Ranunculaceae

Goldilocks Buttercup – *Ranunculus auricomus*

08/05/25 Basildon Park NT SU609782 (RG&CW)

38. Box family – Buxaceae

Box – *Buxus sempervirens*

26/04/25 Burnt Hill SU57007429 (JL)

42. Saxifrage family – Saxifragaceae



Meadow Saxifrage, Bucklebury Churchyard ©Robert Stallard 2025

Meadow Saxifrage – *Saxifraga granulata*

27/04/25 Kings Barn Farm, Medmenham (RN trip) SU813850 (SR)

21/05/25 Bucklebury Churchyard (RN walk) SU55287087 (RS)

21/05/25 Road verge in Bucklebury (RN walk) SU55487062 (RS)

Opposite-leaved Golden-saxifrage – *Chrysosplenium oppositifolium*

20/03/25 Paices Wood, Lower Wood SU586641 (JL)

46. Pea family – Fabaceae

Goat's-rue – *Galega officinalis*

23/08/25 Bradfield, Barn Elms SU608736 (JL)

Horseshoe Vetch – *Hippocrepis comosa*

27/04/25 Kings Barn Farm, Medmenham (RN trip) SU813850 (SR)

25/05/25 Crog Hill SU323833 (JL)

07/06/25 The Holies NT, Streatley (RN trip) SU590800 (JH)

Ribbed Melilot – *Melilotus officinalis*

18/06/25 Chieveley M4 Services SU47967253 (JL)

Crimson Clover – *Trifolium incarnatum*

03/06/25 Sulham Woodmeadow, Saddlers Farm SU664947432 (JL)

48. Rose family – Rosaceae

Dropwort – *Filipendula vulgaris*

25/05/25 Seven Barrows SU32938285 (JL)

Wild Service-tree – *Sorbus torminalis*

04/04/25 Reading, The Cowsey SU72897017 (JL)

64. St John's-wort family – Hypericaceae

Imperforate St John's-wort – *Hypericum maculatum*

20/07/25 Greywell HIWWT, Hook (RN trip) SU722514 (JC&ID)

30/08/25 Watlington Hill SU706936 (RG&FB)

Trailing St John's-wort – *Hypericum humifusum*

08/08/25 Paices Wood, Sec. 5 SU58426372 (JL)

71. Crane's-bill family – Geraniaceae

Round-leaved Crane's-bill – *Geranium rotundifolium*

06/09/25 Weed in the Harris Garden, University of Reading SU737712 (RG&CW)

Long-stalked Creane's-bill – *Geranium columbinum*

07/06/25 The Holies NT, Streatley (RN trip) SU589800 (JH)

80. Mallow family – Malvaceae

Dwarf Mallow – *Malva neglecta*

07/06/25 The Holies NT, Streatley (RN trip), plant with white flowers SU592799 (JH)

81. Mezereon family – Thymelaeaceae

Spurge-laurel – *Daphne laureola*

13/01/25 Caversham, Clayfield Copse SU72577737 (JL)

87. Cabbage family – Brassicaceae

Lesser Swine-cress – *Lepidium didymum*

23/08/25 Earley Gate, University of Reading, weedy patch nr building site SU742718 (RG)

Wild Radish – *Raphanus raphanistrum*

10/05/25 Sulham Woodmeadow, Saddlers Farm SU652742 (JL)

Dame's-violet – *Hesperis matronalis*

18/06/25 Chieveley M4 Services SU479672563 (JL)

88. Bastard-toadflax family – Santalaceae

Mistletoe – *Viscum album*

13/01/25 Caversham, Clayfield Copse SU72607685 and SU72627688 (JL)

09/03/25 Prospect Park SU690725 (JL)

24/03/25 Paices Wood, Lower Wood SU58636425 (JL)

92. Knotweed family – Polygonaceae

Japanese Knotweed – *Reynoutria japonica*

25/04/25 Pingewood, Searles Farm SU68807023 (JL)

94. Pink family – Caryophyllaceae

Corn Spurrey – *Spergula arvensis*

10/05/25 Sulham Woodmeadow, Saddlers Farm SU652742 (JL)

Ragged-Robin – *Silene flos-cuculi*

17/05/25 Aldermaston, Rosebourne SU58896557 (JL)

17/05/25 Moor Copse, Hogmoor SU63387410 (JL)

110. Bedstraw family – Rubiaceae

Squinancywort – *Asperula cynanchica*

07/06/25 The Holies NT, Streatley (RN trip) SU590800 (JH)

Fen Bedstraw – *Galium uliginosum*

20/07/25 Greywell HIWWT, Hook (RN trip) SU722514 (JC&ID)

Slender Bedstraw – *Galium pumilum*

27/04/25 Kings Barn Farn, Medmenham (RN trip) SU810851 (SR)

111. Gentian family – Gentianaceae

Autumn Gentian – *Gentianella amarella*

30/08/25 Watlington Hill SU704936 (FB&RG)



Fen Bedstraw, Greywell Reserve, Hook © Fiona Brown 2025

114. Borage family – Boraginaceae

Common Gromwell – *Lithospermum officinale*

14/06/25 Basildon Park NT, more than 10 specimens SU609775 (RG&CW)

Creeping Comfrey – *Symphytum grandiflorum*

14/05/25 Upper Basildon SU587780 (JL)

116. Nightshade family – Solanaceae

Deadly Nightshade – *Atropa belladonna*

18/08/25 Harris Garden, University of Reading, weed in flowerbed SU73647129 (RG)

Thorn-apple – *Datura stramonium*

23/08/25 Earley Gate, University of Reading, weedy patch near building site SU74217181 (RG)

01/11/25 Whiteknights, University of Reading, near the lake SU737718 (RG&CW)

120. Speedwell family - Veronicaceae

Sharp-leaved Fluellen – *Kickxia elatine*

20/08/25 Collins End near Goring Heath (RN walk) SU671778 (JJW)

Round-leaved Fluellen – *Kickxia spuria*

20/08/25 Collins End near Goring Heath (RN walk) SU671778 (JJW)

128. Dead-nettle family – Lamiaceae

Hedge Woundwort x Marsh Woundwort – *Stachys* x *ambigua*

20/07/25 Along River Whitewater, RN trip to Greywell HIWWT SU716506 (JC&ID)

Skullcap – *Scutellaria galericulata*

14/07/25 Whiteknights, University of Reading, south of bridge, surviving SU737718 (RG&CW)

131. Broomrape family – Orobanchaceae

Common Broomrape – *Orobanche minor*

Summer 25 Garden in Henley, parasite on non-native geranium SU752813 (SR)

133. Bellflower family – Campanulaceae

Clustered Bellflower – *Campanula glomerata*

20/08/25 Collins End near Goring Heath (RN walk) SU670779 (JJW)

30/08/25 Watlington Hill SU699933 (FB&RG)

135. Daisy family – Asteraceae

Woolly Thistle – *Cirsium eriophorum*

18/06/25 Nodmore, Lower Barn SU412761 (JL)

Goat's-beard – *Tragopogon pratensis*

10/05/25 Whiteknights, Reading University SU737716 (RG&CW)



Goat's-beard, Bucklebury ©Robert Stallard 2025

Gallant-soldier – *Galinsoga parviflora*

13/11/25 Central Reservation junction Queens Road and Sidmouth Street SU7203973214 (RS)

15/11/25 Corner of Hindhead Road, Earley, many plants growing in the gutter SU741711 (RG)

Shaggy Soldier – *Galinsoga quadriradiata*

01/11/25 Whiteknights, University of Reading, near the lake SU737723 (RG&CW)

140. Teasel family – Dipsacaceae

Small Teasel – *Dipsacus pilosus*

19/09/25 Aldermaston, Rosebourne Pond SU58896556 (JL)

Devil's-bit Scabious – *Succisa pratensis*

10/10/25 Kintbury cemetery SU385651 (JL)

145. Carrot family – Apiaceae

Sanicle – *Sanicula europaea*

26/04/25 Paices Wood, industrial fence SU588637 (JL)

Spreading Hedge-parsley – *Torilis arvensis*

27/07/25 Lambourn, Crog Hill, The Holloway SU323833 (JL)

Stone Parsley – *Sison amomum*

23/08/25 Bradfield, Barn Elms SU608736 (JL)

Monocots

147. Lords-and-Ladies family – Araceae

Italian Lords-and-Ladies – *Arum italicum*

17/04/25 Paices Wood, top park SU58836358 (JL)

159. Black Bryony family – Dioscoreaceae

Black Bryony – *Tamus communis*

07/09/25 Ruscombe, Church Lane SU79837630 (JL)

07/09/25 Reading, Pepper Lane, growing through the University fence SU73327152 (RG)

164. Orchid family – Orchidaceae

White Helleborine – *Cephalanthera damasonium*

25/05/25 Lambourn, Crog Hill SU323833 (JL)

06/06/25 Woodland edge of Sulham Woods SU6479973874 (RS)

Marsh Helleborine – *Epipactis palustris*

20/07/25 Greywell HIWWT Reserve, Hook (RN trip) SU723514 (JC&ID)

Broad-leaved Helleborine – *Epipactis helleborine*

27/07/25 Lambourn, Crog Hill SU32328338 (JL)

Common Twayblade – *Neottia ovata*

27/04/25 Kings Barn Farm, Medmenham (RN trip) SU809851(SR)

14/06/25 Basildon Park NT, 12 spikes SU60557716 (RG&CW)

20/07/25 Greywell HIWWT, Hook (RN trip) SU722514 (JC&ID)



Marsh Fragrant Orchid, Greywell Reserve, Hook ©Fiona Brown 2025

Marsh Fragrant-orchid – *Gymnadenia densiflora*

20/07/25 Greywell HIWWT, Hook (RN trip) SU723514 (JC&ID)

Southern Marsh-orchid – *Dactylorhiza praetermissa*

20/07/25 Greywell HIWWT, Hook (RN trip) SU723514 (JC&ID)

Early-purple Orchid – *Orchis mascula*

05/04/25 Bradfield, Rushall Farm, Long Copse SU58017284 (JL)

27/04/25 Kings Barn Farm, Medmenham (RN trip) SU810852 (SR)

Pyramidal Orchid – *Anacamptis pyramidalis*

07/06/25 The Holies NT, Streatley (RN trip) SU590800 (JH)

20/06/25 Burghfield, M4 Services SU669699 (JL)

177. Grass family – Poaceae

Black-grass – *Alopecurus myosuroides*

10/05/25 Sulham Woodmeadow, Saddlers Farm SU652742 (JL)

CONTRIBUTORS

Thanks are due to the following members for their submissions:

CW Christine Williams; **FB** Fiona Brown; **ID** Ian Duddle; **JC** Julia Cooper; **JH** Jan Haseler; **JL** John Lerpiniere; **JJW** Jan & Jerry Welsh; **RG** Renée Grayer; **RS** Robert Stallard; **SR** Sally Rankin

Further abbreviations

HIWWT: Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust Reserve

NT: National Trust Reserve

RN trip or walk: seen during a RDNHS excursion or midweek walk

Recorder's Report for Vertebrates 2025

By John Lerpiniere

A few bird records are included but these are well recorded elsewhere, by far the most of these are collated by **Berkshire Ornithological Club**, see <http://berksoc.org.uk/recording/annual-reports/>

The majority Mammals are secretive or nocturnal and not easily seen. Some are more obvious, especially as roadkills but not many of these are recorded. Frequent roadkills include Fox, Badger, Brown Rat, Rabbit, Roe, and Chinese Muntjac. Species sometimes reported but not this year include the common Field Vole, Water Vole, Dormice, Water Shrew and Pygmy Shrew, plus Adder.

An abundance of one is assumed in each record unless indicated by the value given after the date and before the place name. Abbreviations used are **ad(s)** **juv(s)** = juvenile, **imm(s)** = immature, **m(s)** = male, **fem(s)** = female. **GP(s)** = gravel pit, **LNR** = Local Nature Reserve.

The nomenclature is as listed on the national recording website **iRecord** run primarily by the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology. This is a versatile one-stop shop for all your records if you wish to record your sightings. The records are then available for use by relevant authorities including Thames Valley Environment Centre (**TVERC**) who make good use of them.

With thanks to all those who have contributed to this report. The names of a few of the contributors are abbreviated and these include **A&JB** Anne and John Booth; **FB** Fiona Brown; **LB** Liz Butcher; **RG** Renée Grayer; **GH** Grahame Hawker; **JH** Jan Haseler; **KJ** Katie Jenks; **JL** John Lerpiniere; **TM** Tricia Marcousé; **DM** David Owens; **MO** multiple observers; **JP** Jo Parsons; **RS** Robert Stallard.

FISH

Brook Lamprey – *Lampetra planeri*

30/09/35 Reading, Holybrook SU718734 (J Sharpe)

Bullhead – *Cottus gabio*

24/10/25 Bradfield in R Pang, Brook Lamprey also occasionally reported SU586718 (JL)

AMPHIBIANS

Common Toad – *Bufo bufo*

22/02/25 Priest Hill 100 seen on toad patrol over two nights then none as temperature dropped SU767853 (J Sellwood)

24/03/25 many Bradfield Southend garden SU59287045 (JP)

26/03/25 Bradfield, Rushall Fm pond some spawn present SU58417238 (JL)

09/09/25 Winterbourne Wood SU445719 (JL)

05/10/25 small ad 3cm Kintbury Newt Ponds SU38686620 (JL)

Smooth Newt - *Lissotriton vulgaris*

March 2025 Tilehurst waiting to eat frog spawn in garden pond SU664742 (JH)

10/05/25 ad Tilehurst garden pond SU665742 (JL)

19/06/25 tadpole Bradfield, Rushall pond SU58417237 (JL)

26/06/25 Tilehurst 3 dead ads in shallow very warm garden pond SU665742 (JL)

Palmate Newt - *Lissotriton helveticus*

17/04/25 3 Paices Wood dipping pond SU58416367 (JL)

Great Crested Newt - *Triturus cristatus*

15/01/25 1 Kintbury Newt Ponds SU58726638 (JL)

17/10/25 small ad Kintbury Newt Ponds SU38686620 (JL)

Common Frog – *Rana temporaria*

21/02/25 Tilehurst garden pond mating, 2m 1fem SU664742 (JH)

27/02/25 Earley garden large amount of spawn SU8580 (L Wild)

25/02/25 6 Tilehurst garden pond but no spawn yet SU664742 (JH)

08/03/25 Tilehurst garden pond first spawn of year SU664742 (JH)

11/03/25 Tilehurst garden pond, lots of spawn, ads have left SU664742 (JH)

15/03/25 Earley, spawn in garden pond SU851800 (TM)

24/03/25 Bradfield Southend many adults in garden pond SU592704 (JP)

28/03/25 Reading, The Cowsey, several spawn clumps in one large mass in pond SU72767049 (JL)

26/03/25 Bradfield, Rushall Fm less spawn than usual in pond SU58417238 (JL)

02/05/25 Bradfield, Mirams Copse tadpoles in ephemeral woodland pool SU57667321 (JL)

REPTILES

Common Lizard – *Zootoca vivipara*

17/04/25 ad Paices Wood heath SU58396359 (JL)

Slow-worm – *Anguis fragilis*



Slow-worm, Kings Barn, Medmenham ©Robert Stallard 2025

23/03/25 Tilehurst, Oaktree allotment ad m tailless SU67087489 (JL)
06/04/25 Tilehurst first in garden this year, long ad fem but tail tip missing SU665742 (JL)
22/04/25 Tilehurst garden ad fem 30cm SU67 (RS)
26/04/25 6 Bradfield Southend, Holly Copse under refuge SU599701 (LB)
14/05/25 Tilehurst, Poors allotment, long ad SU670743 (anon)
02/06/25 7 Tilehurst garden 1ad fem 6 imm SU665742 (JL)
20/06/25 imm Littlewick Green, Wooley Firs SU851799 (JL)
05/10/25 very young Paices Wood heath SU58336361 (JL)
04/11/25 ad fem Tilehurst garden, last date SU665742 (JL)
03/12/25 Tilehurst garden small juv by the compost SU66377467 (RS)

Grass Snake – *Natrix helvetica*

30/04/25 Paices Wood SU588637 (D&N Massie)
13/05/25 imm Aldermaston, Rosebourne Pond SU58896556 (JL)
23/06/25 Paices Wood young ad under refuge with 2 Slow-worms SU58416384 (JL)
21/08/25 Hosehill LNR meadow SU65196962 (JL)

BIRDS

Goldeneye – *Bucephala clangula*

17/03/2025 4 Twyford GPs SU7875 (FB)

Smew – *Mergellus albellus*

23/01/25 pair Caversham lakes SU7374 (FB)

Egyptian Goose – *Alopochen aegyptiaca*

06/01/25 Whiteknights University with 9 Goslings already SU737723 (GH, DO)

Great White Egret – *Casmerodius albus*

01/03/25 3 Fobney Marshes SU7071 (L Carr)

Buzzard – *Buteo buteo*

03/03/25 Hosehill LNR 4 over the lake SU6469 (M Venners)

Sparrowhawk – *Accipiter nisus*

07/02/25 Earley garden chasing birds on seed feeder, also on other dates SU735710 (RG)
19/02/25 Tilehurst garden, plucking a pigeon, returned to feed next morning then a fox took the carcass, trail camera SU6585 (I Duddle)

Green Sandpiper – *Tringa ochropos*

Jan 2025 Fobney Marsh SU7071 (per L Carr)

Tawny Owl – *Strix aluco*

March 2025 Maiden Earley lake, currently occupying nest box SU7372 (C Williams)

Barn Owl – *Tyto alba*

26/02/25 Crays Pond SU6280 (F Cummins)

14/03/25 Burghfield SU6770 (FB)

18/03/25 Mortimer SU6565 (R Woolnough)

Green Woodpecker – *Picus viridis*

01/01/25 Earley garden on lawn pecking into ant nests, also on other dates SU735710 (RG)

Great Spotted Woodpecker – *Dendrocopus major*

04/01/25 Emmer Green, Clayfield Copse 2 drumming at different pitches, perhaps in competition SU7277 (JH)

28/03/25 Hampstead Norreys garden chasing off a Blackbird (*Turdus merula*) SU5276 (J Greenham)

14/03/25 Earley garden on seed feeder, also on other dates SU735710 (RG)

Redwing – *Turdus iliacus*

14/01/25 Earley garden SU735710 (RG)

Robin – *Erithacus rubecula*

05/01/25 Earley already nesting, in conservatory SU851800 (TM)

Nightingale - *Lucinia megarhynchos*

30/04/25 Pingwood, Searles Lane GPs up to 6 heard SU6870 (rdnhs trip)

Blackcap – *Sylvia atricapilla*

05/01/25 Reading taking peanuts from garden feeder SU6585 (DO)

Feb 2025 Earley garden 3 tearing at Witch Hazel flowers SU851800 (TM)

Brambling – *Fringilla montifringilla*

Feb 2025 Woodcote, also a Treecreeper (*Certhia familiaris*) in garden SU6481 (G Noble)

Nuthatch – *Sitta europaea*

Feb 2025 2 Earley, reg in garden SU733725 (L Knight)

MAMMALS

RODENTS - RODENTIA

Grey Squirrel - *Sciurus carolinensis*

17/04/25 Paices Wd, surprisingly infrequent here SU583638 (JL)

Brown Rat - *Rattus norvegicus*

25/03/25 Reading, St Mary's Butts, dead juv lying on floor of closed shop front for weeks SU71347337 (JL)

01/04/25–30/06/25 Tilehurst SU67207431 (KJ)

28/07/25 Tilehurst remains of dead ad in garden SU665742 (JL)

Wood Mouse - *Apodemus sylvaticus*

06/07/25 Bradfield Southend garden on trail camera SU59287045 (JP)

10/12/25 4 imm Shepperlands bbowt reserve, together under refuge, well grown but with greyish
juv pelt SU78026449 (JL)

Bank Vole - *Myodes glareolus*

14/08/25 Bradfield Southend, Holly Copse SU599701 (LB)

11/10/25 Hosehill LNR SU64886947 (JL)

17/10/25 imm Paices Wood coppice under refuge SU58566409 (JL)

24/10/25 Kintbury Newt Ponds SU38656624 (JL)

04/11/25 Hosehill LNR under refuge SU64636068 (JL)

Harvest Mouse – *Micromys minutus*

05/10/25 nest Fobney Meadows SU7071 (J Sharpe)

RABBITS & HARES - LAGOMORPHA

Rabbit - *Oryctolagus cuniculus*

17/02/25 Leckhampstead, Grove Pit SU438771 (JL)

27/02/25 Padworth SU617654 (JL)

11/04/25 East Shefford SU38527496 (JL)

13/05/25 Aldermaston SU60186768 (JL)

21/05/25 Paices Wood SU58896370 (JL)

25/05/25 Leverton SU335708 (JL)

14/05/25 The Holies, fresh droppings SU602792 (JL)

13/08/25 juv Wawcott SU386683approx (JL)

17/11/25 ad Hosehill LNR SU64866944 (JL)

Brown Hare – *Lepus europaeus*

27/02/25 Englefield SU621705 (JL)

11/04/25 Radley Farm SU379704 (JL)

11/04/25 North Heath SU454742 (JL)

03/05/25 Lambourn SU332806 (JL)

21/05/25 Bucklebury SU554713 (RDNHS trip, leader (RS)

21/05/25 Stanford Dingley SU564716 (RDNHS trip, leader (RS)

00/05/25 East Garston SU367762 (JL)

28/06/25 ad Stanford Dingley SU574717 (JP)

24/08/25 ad Bothampstead SU52497621 (JL)

07/09/25 Watts Bank in scrub SU33107715 (JL)

HEDGEHOGS - ERINACEOMORPHA

Hedgehog - *Erinaceus europaeus*

23/05/25 ad Tilehurst SU67087443 (KJ)

29/05/25 Tilehurst SU66617388 (KJ)
 28/06/25 Bradfield Southend 2 regular to food in garden, cat biscuits and water SU592704 (LB)
 June 2025 Earley, crossed garden to feed under neighbour's bird table SU851800 (TM)
 04/07/25 multiple sightings, Bradfield Southend garden, back in numbers now since local building work probably restricted their nightly circuits, trail camera SU592704 (LB)
 06/07/25 Bradfield Southend garden, first for few years since new houses were being built nearby SU592704 (JP)
 28/06/25 2 Bradfield Southend garden coming regularly to food SU592704 (LB)
 12/07/25 Tilehurst at least 2 making regular visits to garden pond SU664733 (anon)

SHREWS & MOLES - *SORICOMORPHA*

Common Shrew – *Sorex araneus*

18/07/25 Fobney dead on path SU712710 (A&JB)
 08/08/25 juv Paices Wood Glade SU585640 (JL)

Mole - *Talpa europaea*

17/02/25 Hill Green c100 hills SU451767 (JL)
 21/05/25 Paices Wood, 5 fresh holes in woodland SU587641 (JL)
 15/08/25 Paices Wood coppice, dead on path SU585640 (anon)
 31/10/25 Inkpen cemetery, a few hills SU385651 (JL)

BATS - *CHIROPTERA*

Serotine – *Eptesicus serotinus*

22/05/25 3 Tilehurst, Kentwood, in flight SU670745 (KJ)
 26/06/25 4 Tilehurst, Kentwood, hunting SU670745 (KJ)

Noctule - *Nyctalus noctula*

19/05/25 Tilehurst, in flight SU681747 (KJ)
 22/05/25 Tilehurst, Kentwood, in flight SU670745 (KJ)
 29/06/25 Tilehurst, Prospect Park, in flight SU689727 (KJ)
 23/08/25 Calcot Linear Park SU664714 (RDNHS trip, leader (KJ)

Common Pipistrelle - *Pipistrellus pipistrellus*

19/05/25 Tilehurst, in flight SU681747 (KJ)
 22/05/25 & 26/06 Tilehurst, Kentwood, in flight SU670745 (KJ)
 29/06/25 Tilehurst, Prospect Park, in flight SU689727 (KJ)
 23/08/25 Calcot Linear Park SU664714 (RDNHS trip, leader (KJ)
 22/09/25 to 25/09 Earley garden flying at dusk, also 02/10 SU735710 (RG)

Soprano Pipistrelle - *Pipistrellus pygmaeus*

19/05/25 Tilehurst, in flight SU681747 (KJ)
 22/05/25 & 26/06 Tilehurst, Kentwood, in flight SU67074
 29/06/25 Tilehurst, Prospect Park, in flight SU670745 (KJ)

23/08/25 Calcot Linear Park SU664714 (RDNHS trip, leader (KJ)

Brown Long-eared Bat – *Plecotus auritus*

19/05/25 Tilehurst, in flight SU681747 (KJ)

Daubenton's Bat – *Myotis daubentonii*

23/08/25 Calcot Linear Park SU664714 (RDNHS trip, leader (KJ)

CARNIVORES - CARNIVORA

***Vulpes vulpes* – Fox**

27/01/25 Englefield another road casualty on verge near M4 bridge SU633733 also juv on 07/08 at SU63207111 (JL)

16/03/25 Earley garden, also on other dates SU735710 (RG)

April to June ad Tilehurst, Kentwood, trail camera SU67207431 (KJ)

14/06/25 2 Tilehurst, regular in garden SU664733 (per JL)

01/05/25 to 18/06/25 juv Tilehurst, Kentwood, trail camera SU672743 (KJ)

10/08/25 Chieveley SU470728 (JL)

22/09/25 Purley SU650761 (JL)

31/12/25 Calcot roadkill SU8716 (JL)

CARNIVORES – MUSTELIDAE

Badger – *Meles meles*

Feb 2025 Reading, Northcourt Avenue garden on camera trap SU7271 (P Starkey)

16/03/25 North Street, dead on M4 SU607736 & further W SU639732 (JL)

24/03/25 Englefield, another corpse on this stretch of road SU6073 also on 17/11 SU6372 (JL)

April to June 2 juv & ad Tilehurst, Kentwood, trail camera SU672743 (KJ)

01/04/25 to 30/06/25 ad Tilehurst, Kentwood, trail camera SU672743 (KJ)

21/04/25 Tilehurst, Blundells Copse, sett SU682733 (KJ)

14/05/25 The Holies 4 sett holes, one clearly in use SU602792 (JL)

25/05/25 Eddington roadkill SU350706 (JL)

30/05/25 Bradfield roadkill, small juv SU5972 (JL)

American Mink - *Mustela vison*

29/07/25 Pingewood, Searles Farm lake SU691703 (anon)

12/04/25 Pingewood, Cottage Lane SU692705 (anon)

Otter - *Lutra lutra*

31/03/25 Moulsoford, R Thames SU597829 (LB)

Nov 2025 Moor Copse, two reports of sightings over this period SU634741 (AB)

DEER – ARTIODACTYLA - CERVIDAE



Roe Deer buck, shedding its winter coat, Sulham Woodmeadows ©Robert Stallard 2025

Chinese Muntjac - *Muntiacus reevesi*

17/01/25 ad Tilehurst, Downing Rd playing field regular over a couple of weeks SU66517381 (RS)
28/02/25 Tilehurst garden SU664742 (JH)
April to June Tilehurst, Kentwood, trail camera SU672743 (KJ)
12/04/25 ad m Tilehurst garden SU665742 (JL)
01/05/25 m & fem Tilehurst, Kentwood, SU672743 (KJ)
13/05/25 ad m Paices Wood SU58776318 (JL)
04/06/25 to 18/05/25 Tilehurst, Kentwood, trail camera SU672743 (KJ)
24/07/25 Tidmarsh, Great Bear, young m SU616744 also juv nearby on 09/08 hopped into hedge SU62517453 (JL)
27/08/25 ad Tilehurst, Barefoots Copse SU65717437 (JL)
31/10/25 Avington SU3666 (JL)
11/11/25 imm Reading M4 J11 roadkill SU71266875 (JL)

Roe Deer - *Capreolus capreolus*

27/02/25 3 together Englefield SU609705 (JL)
02/04/22 ad m Tilehurst by house at 3am SUSU66377467 (RS)
08/04/25 Sulham, Stonehams Farm a few sightings of up to 4 SU652748 (MO)
13/08/25 ad fem Bagnor roadkill SU457697approx (JL)
07/09/25 ad m Eastbury SU34677592 (JL)
13/12/25 Littlewick Green, Woolley Firs 3 together SU851800 (TM)

Fallow Deer - *Dama dama*

13/02/25 Tilehurst, Cornwell Copse spoor print in mud 8cm probably this sp SU65727418 (JL)
27/02/25 Padworth Common 2 road kills, one almost skeletonised SU619647 (JL)

The Weather in Reading 2025

by **Roger Brugge** (Observations made by the Department of Meteorology, University of Reading)

Averages and anomalies mentioned in this report refer to the climatological period 1991-2020. Historical records date back to 1901 for rainfall, 1956 for sunshine and to 1908 for most other weather elements.

2025 was the second-warmest year on record in Reading. The annual mean temperature of 11.79 °C (0.9 degC above the 1991-2020 average) was just behind 2022 which averaged out at 11.87 °C. All five of Reading's warmest years have now occurred since, and including, 2006.

Total rainfall at the university in 2025 was 517.9 mm, just 79 per cent of what would normally be expected, based on the 1991-2020 averages. It was the driest year in Reading since 2005 (when 480.9 mm of rain fell), and ranks as the twelfth driest year in the 125-year rainfall record due to the dry spring and summer.

The total sunshine duration during the year was 1827.8 hours, 17 per cent more than normal. In sunshine records, which date back to 1956, only 1959 (1917.8 hours) and 2020 (1892 hours) have been sunnier years.

January

January was a cool and rather wet month. It was the coolest January since 2017 but had only 12 air frosts. January was the first of only two wetter-than-normal months during 2025; it was the wettest January since 2016 while the 4 days with snow (mostly slight) were the most in January since 4 days in 2021 and 5 days in 2019. The 9th to 22nd was quite dry with just 1.5 mm of precipitation falling.

February

February was the second (and last) wetter-than-normal month of 2025. Only one day had any snowfall (some sleet on the 7th), while much of the rain fell during the 21st-26th. Overall, it was the coolest February since 2018, despite a very warm spell during the 21st-25th. The sunshine total was only slightly less than normal due to some sunny days towards the end of the month, which counterbalanced the nine sunless days.

The winter season (December 2024 to February 2025) was rather dull (the duller since 2010) and slightly wetter than normal, with near-normal temperatures overall.

March

Clear skies led to March being cooler than normal overnight but warmer than normal by day. It was the driest March (with just 8.2 mm of rain) locally since 1961 when 5 mm fell. March was also the driest month of 2025. March 2025 was the third sunniest March in the Reading record – 176.4 hours being only slightly less than the 177.2 hours in 1995 and the 178.7 hours in 2007. Frosts were more frequent than normal – including 21 days with a ground frost.

April

The year had the second sunniest April on record (after 2020 which had 250.9 hours) with 237.0 hours recorded. This was due to sunny spells with little cloud during the 1st to 11th and 27th to 30th. It was the warmest April since 2011 with the 30th having the highest April temperature since 2018. In fact, by day April was very warm although night temperatures averaged out close to normal. It was a dry April – the driest April since 2021 with over half the rain falling on the 22nd. No rain fell in the 16 days ending the 12th and there was only a trace of rain fell in the final eight days.

May

May was warm (especially by day), sunny and dry overall. It was the warmest May since 2018 and was especially mild by day with 27.7 °C on the 1st being the highest temperature in May since 2005. With 255 hours of bright sunshine, it was the sunniest May since 2020 and also the sunniest month of 2025. It was also the driest May since 2020 (only 1 mm of rain fell that year) with about half the normal rainfall for the month. During the first 19 days just one day recorded any rainfall (8.9 mm on the 11th).

The spring months of March to May were the warmest on record, being slightly less than 0.1 degC warmer than in 2007 and 2011. With almost 669 hours of bright sunshine in spring, only 2020 (766 hours) has seen a sunnier spring since the sunshine records began in 1956. The rainfall during spring amounted to 48.8 mm, corresponding to a

shortfall of 83 mm. Since records began only the spring seasons of 1990 (39.2 mm) and 2011 (43.2 mm) have been drier.

June

The year had the warmest June on record, the average temperature being 0.2 degC warmer than in 1976 and 2003, the two previous warmest June months. There were two heatwaves, each lasting four days, beginning on the 18th and 28th. The 30th (maximum temperature 31.1 °C) had the highest June temperature since 2022. It was the sunniest June since 2006 with about 10 hours more sunshine than in each of the three previous Junes (2022-2024). June was also the fourth successive dry month (but wetter than in June 2024).

July

July was a warm and sunny month; rainfall was close to normal. It was the warmest July month since 2022, with the warmest July day since 2022. The 10th was the start of the third (and final) four-day heatwave of 2025 in Reading. It was the sunniest July since 2022, despite many relatively cloudy days in the second half of the month. July was the wettest month since February this year with over half the rain falling on the final day; in the first half of the month only 3.1 mm of rain fell.

August

August turned out to be the warmest August since 2022, although night-time minimum temperatures were cooler than normal. As a result of these cool nights, August was the coolest of the three summer months this year. By the 25th only 2.2 mm of rainfall had been recorded during August, but some heavy falls during the final week led to the monthly total climbing to 28.9 mm – about half of the normal August total. August was also sunnier than normal – with 217 hours of bright sunshine it was the sunniest August since 2022.

Despite the cooler end to August, summer (June to August) was the warmest on record – 0.1 degC warmer than in 2022. With 96.3 mm of rainfall, it was the driest summer since 2022 (62.7 mm). In fact, there have been many drier summers over the last hundred years locally. The summer sunshine in 2025 amounted to 692.4 hours – several summers in the recent record have been sunnier, most recently that of 2022 with 732.2 hours.

September

2025 had the coolest September since 2017 and the sunniest since 2020, although there were 2 sunless days. It was slightly drier than normal, and the driest September since 2021. There was little rainfall in the second half of the month (just 2.1 mm in the final fortnight) when the air pressure was generally high.

October

In October temperatures during the day were normal for the month, but nights were milder than usual with only four nights having a ground frost. Due to a dry spell during the 4th-18th, it was the driest October since 2017. Many of these dry days were also sunless, helping to make it the duller October since 1982 locally. In fact, only January and December had more sunless days during 2025. The final 12 days of the month were unsettled.

November

2025 had the warmest November since 2022 due to a mild start to the month. There was no November air frost until the 18th. It was the driest November since 2021 but with many more rain days than normal; there was also a brief fall of sleet on the 19th. November was a sunny month – the sunniest since 2007 and the first time that November was sunnier than October since 1989 - with less sunless days than normal.

Overall, the autumn (September to November) was slightly drier than average, but only marginally warmer and sunnier than average.

December

December was generally mild until the last nine days - the 31st was the one of the coldest days of the year in terms of maximum temperature. Overall, it was the coolest December for three years (but had only 4 days with air frost) and the sunniest for five years. The month was drier than normal with no sleet or snow. Fog was present at 0900 GMT on four days - the most in December for nine years and it persisted, on and off, for much of the 31st.

This report was compiled using the daily weather observations made at the University of Reading climatological station – most of these being made by our chief observers Cahyo Leksmono and Martin Lindupp. The University also operates an automatic weather station that gathers weather information continuously. Details can be seen at <https://research.reading.ac.uk/meteorology/atmospheric-observatory/atmospheric-observatory-data/> - there is even a mailing list that you can subscribe to in order to have daily weather reports sent direct to your inbox.

Temperature 2025

	Mean maximum temperature	Mean maximum anomaly	Mean minimum temperature	Mean minimum anomaly	Mean temperature	Mean temperature anomaly	Highest temperature	Date	Lowest maximum temperature	Date	Highest minimum temperature	Date	Lowest temperature	Date	Lowest grass minimum temperature	Date
	°C	degC	°C	degC	°C	degC	°C		°C		°C		°C		°C	
J	7.0	-1.0	0.6	-1.5	3.8	-1.3	12.9	5	1.7	8,10	8.3	1	-6.8	11	-11.9	10
F	8.6	0.0	2.1	0.0	5.4	0.0	14.9	21	4.3	13	11.1	21	-3.1	17	-9.5	17
M	13.5	+2.3	2.5	-1.0	8.0	+0.7	20.4	20	7.9	17	9.0	22	-3.8	4	-12.1	16
A	17.5	+3.3	5.2	+0.1	11.4	+1.7	25.3	30	12.9	23	10.5	19	-0.4	8	-9.8	8
M	19.8	+2.4	8.2	+0.3	14.0	+1.4	27.7	1	13.9	5	14.2	30	2.4	9	-6.0	20
J	23.8	+3.4	12.8	+2.0	18.3	+2.7	31.1	30	16.8	5	18.2	28	7.5	8	1.4	9
J	25.0	+2.3	14.2	+1.3	19.6	+1.8	32.2	11	20.2	29	20.0	1	7.5	3	-0.1	3
A	24.0	+1.7	12.4	-0.3	18.2	+0.7	32.4	12	19.9	20	16.6	18	6.2	22	-0.8	22
S	19.3	0.0	9.7	-0.7	14.5	-0.4	26.2	19	14.4	26	15.1	18	2.5	23	-3.3	23
O	15.1	0.0	8.7	+0.8	11.9	+0.4	20.5	6	11.9	26	13.0	3	2.8	26	-3.0	30
N	12.3	+1.3	5.9	+1.2	9.1	+1.3	17.5	13	4.3	20	13.5	6	-2.3	26	-8.7	26
D	10.1	+1.7	3.7	+1.2	6.9	+1.5	14.4	7	3.3	31	11.4	9	-3.1	31	-8.1	31
2025	16.3	+1.4	7.2	+0.3	11.8	+0.9	32.4	Aug	1.7	Jan	20.0	Jul	-6.8	Jan	-12.1	Mar

Sunshine 2025

Month	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Total sunshine	42.0	66.3	176.4	237.0	255.0	253.4	222.0	217.0	173.2	73.7	73.9	37.9
Percentage of average sunshine	76	85	149	140	128	130	109	113	121	68	125	83
Greatest daily sunshine total	7.1	9.0	10.8	13.2	13.7	13.6	14.3	13.1	10.0	9.5	6.2	3.5
Date	30	27	31	28	10	17	8	17	22	6	17	11
Number of sunless days	14	9	1	0	2	1	0	0	2	10	5	14

In 2025 there were 1827.8 hours of sunshine in total

Precipitation and weather types 2025

	Total precipitation	Percentage of the average precipitation	Number days with 0.2mm or more	Number of days with 1.0mm or more	Greatest fall in 24 hours	Date	Number of days with air frost	Number of days with ground frost	Number of days with snow/sleet falling	Number of days with 50% ground snow cover at 0900GMT	Number of days with thunder	Number of days with ice pellets/small hail	Number of days with hail over 5mm diameter	Number of days with fog at 0900GMT
	mm	%	days	days	mm		days	days	days	days	days	days	days	days
J	93.4	145	15	9	19.6	4	12	21	4	2	1	0	0	0
F	60.6	135	13	9	13.9	23	8	17	1	0	0	0	0	1
M	8.2	20	5	1	5.4	23	10	21	0	0	0	0	0	1
A	16.0	33	7	3	10.7	22	1	18	0	0	0	0	0	0
M	24.6	57	8	6	8.9	11	0	11	0	0	0	0	0	0
J	23.1	49	9	7	7.2	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
J	44.3	91	10	6	22.8	31	0	1	0	0	2	0	0	0
A	28.9	51	7	5	11.6	28	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0
S	49.2	99	15	8	13.3	2	0	7	0	0	0	0	0	0
O	55.3	75	15	7	15.0	19	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	1
N	57.8	80	19	14	9.4	22	6	13	1	0	0	0	0	2
D	56.5	87	17	10	19.7	18	4	18	0	0	0	0	0	4
2025	517.9	79	140	61	22.8	Jul	41	132	6	2	4	0	0	9

Wind details in 2025

Month	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	Total
Days with gales	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Days with N'ly winds	1	0	2	0	3	0	7	4	2	0	2	0	21
Days with NE'ly winds	1	6	7	6	8	0	2	5	4	3	2	6	50
Days with E'ly winds	2	4	8	14	8	1	1	3	0	3	1	5	50
Days with SE'ly winds	1	3	1	2	1	4	1	1	6	3	1	4	29
Days with with S'ly winds	3	3	1	2	0	2	2	4	3	4	8	9	41
Days with SW'ly winds	8	4	2	1	4	8	4	7	8	5	9	4	64
Days with W'ly winds	7	3	5	5	6	13	11	5	4	9	3	2	73
Days with NW'ly winds	1	2	2	0	1	2	2	2	1	2	4	0	19
Days with calm winds at 9 am	6	3	3	0	0	0	1	0	2	2	0	1	18

