The Reading Naturalist

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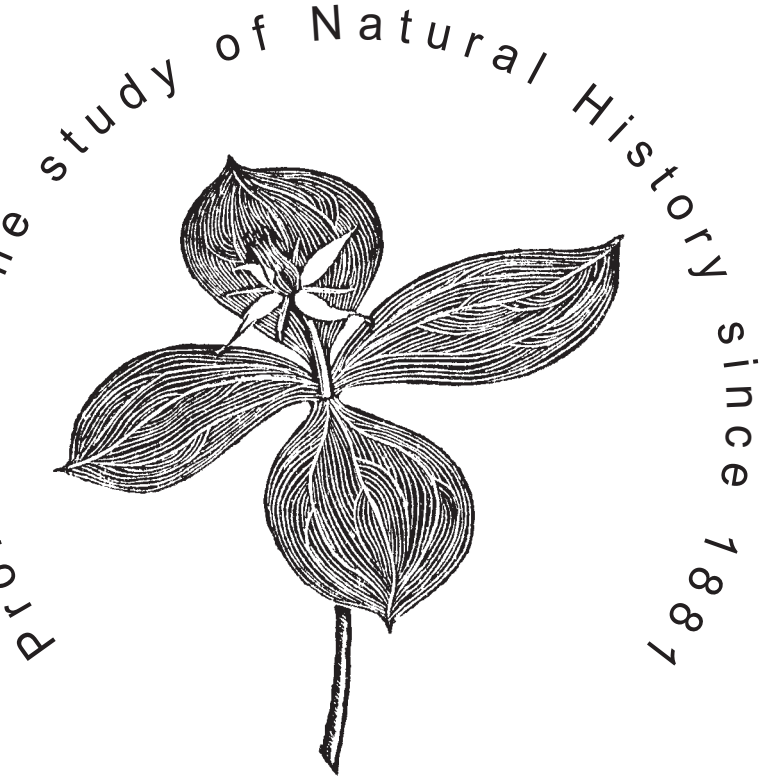

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Report for 2011

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THE READING NATURALIST

No 64 for the year 2011

The Journal of the

Reading and District Natural History Society

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This year's issue contains the usual eclectic mix of articles reporting the events organised by the Society and the diverse interests of our members and friends. We have the first Berkshire reports of a lichen and a bee, and Viktoras Didžiulis' article on Freshwater Sponges (p. 34) must be our first article on that subject.

As always, if you feel there should be more articles on your own favourite groups of organisms, you have just under a year to get writing...

Malcolm Storey (Hon. Editor)

PRESIDENTIAL RAMBLINGS

It is usual in Britain for some aspect of the seasons in any year to be unusual but 2011 was even more unusual than usual. It began unusually cold and unusually dry so that, by the beginning of March, everything was much later then usual, blossom on shrubs such as Cherry Plum being particularly late. When the blossom came there was plenty of it. By the end of April, though, a period of unusual warmth allowed everything to catch up. The early season butterflies had a particularly good spring. May and June were not unusual but the summer months were cooler than usual. The end of September was brilliantly fine, but dry. Rain at the end of October prompted the appearance of splendid shows of fungi that persisted well into December. Even though there were no conspicuous periods of very hot weather, 2011 ended up as the second warmest year on record.

The society retained its familiar, busy, programme through the year and introduced some novelties. The winter evening talks were well-attended and very varied. All the winter weekend and Wednesday morning walks happened as planned, without disruption by the weather. The many spring, summer and autumn Wednesday walks and weekend excursions were well-attended. New ventures were "Bioblitzes" at Caversham Court at the end of April and in Basildon Park over the first weekend of July and interaction with the Living Rain Forest in August. Several members guided natural history walks around Basildon Park on Fridays just about throughout the year. The numbers of National Trust members joining these walks varied greatly, from 2 to 38: it is now the norm for more than one member to lead the walks.

High spots of the year were the visit to the organically nurtured grassland and woodland at Cholderton Park and the annual summer coach trip, to the New Forest. Both trips provided opportunities for members to see rare species of plant and few will forget seeing a newly emerged Purple Emperor at Cholderton Park. A high spot of the Bioblitzes was viewing the many moths collected during an all-night session.

Less-specific high-spots were the very fine displays of wild fruits that followed on from the masses of spring bloom, the abundance of orchids at various locations and the wonderful displays of fungi well after their normal fruiting time.

So far 2012 has been less unusual: no doubt things will change!

MEMBERSHIP

Norman Hall

11 new members joined the society in 2011:

Ailsa Claybourn from Tilehurst
Sarah Facey from Emmer Green
Mary Fookes from Tilehurst
Sally Joyce from Reading
Philip & Jacky Noel from Goring
(whose daughter Katie had joined in 2010)
Janice & Andrew Proud from Tidmarsh
Renton Righelato from Reading
Phil Seager from Cheadle, Cheshire.
Liz Wild from Earley

MEMBERS' OBSERVATIONS

Ricki Bull

18th Jan

Martin Sell reported 7 Waxwings, and male & female Blackcaps in his garden.
Chris Bucke had seen 30 Waxwings at Thatcham Station on the 12th.
Renée Grayer noticed 2 Bramblings and a Blackcap in her garden.
Jan Haseler saw a Great Spotted Woodpecker drumming on the 17th, and noted that the Hazel catkins were out.
Colin Dibb had watched Great Spotted Woodpeckers regularly visiting an apple tree in Purley.
Nora Dunn recalled a mixed flock of several dozen Redwing and Fieldfare in her garden.
Graham Saunders counted 60 Lapwings in Tadley.

1st Feb

Jan Haseler had been to see the Snowdrops in flower in Welford Park and Hungerford Churchyard.
Martin Sell had had Goldcrest on his feeder and four Bullfinches were still coming to it.
Catherine Side had also seen a Goldcrest on her feeder for the first time.
Fred Taylor reported a Barn Owl, south of the Kennet, ¼ mile West from the station.

15th Feb

Graham Saunders had about 500 ladybirds around his windows. He brought samples along with guides for members to use for identification purposes.
Martin Sell had seen 1 male and 2 female Smews, and a Goosander.
Chris Bucke had spotted a Brimstone Butterfly on the 8th as well as 2 Cornelian cherry bushes in bloom on Peppard Road.
Tony Rayner had noticed Honeybees in his garden feeding on crocuses.
Alice Ayers reported white Sweet Violets blooming in her garden.
Renée Grayer had seen a Brambling in her garden on the 11th while Graham Saunders had had 4 on his feeders.
Roger Frankum had seen a Green Sandpiper on the 5th, a Little Egret on the 14th, and had regularly seen Bramblings in Bucklebury until the 13th.
Colin Dibb had watched 2 male and 1 female Mandarin Duck in Purley.

15th March

Chris Bucke had visited the Green Hellebore population at Nuffield and also noticed Wood Anemones and a few Lesser Celandines.
Martin Sell reported a female Smew at Woolhampton Gravel Pits and a pair of Oystercatchers on the islands, and 3 Brimstone butterflies at Bottom Lane Gravel Pits.
Roger Frankum was still seeing Bramblings in his garden in Bucklebury.
Fred Taylor had seen a pair of Hawfinches at Basildon on the woodland walk to the house, and also a Small Tortoiseshell butterfly.
Jan Haseler had spotted a Chiffchaff at Moor Copse.
Renée Grayer had seen a Comma in her garden in Earley.
Graham Saunders had noticed a Buff-tailed Bumblebee, *Bombus terrestris*, basking on a tree.
Malcolm Storey brought in a Hornet's nest from Roger Frankum's garden in Bucklebury.
Graham Saunders demonstrated a bone found on lichen walk in Newbury cemetery. The suggestion was that it may be from a terrapin or tortoise.

4th October

Martin Sell said there was currently a Ferruginous Duck at Dinton Pastures, and in mid-September there had been 2 Wheatears and a Merlin on the Downs. He had also seen Green Sandpiper at Moor Green Lakes and Clouded Yellows at Farmoor.
Graham Saunders saw a Wheatear and a Lapwing near Tadley on the 4th.
Renée Grayer had watched House Sparrows on her bird feeder, also on the 4th.
Chris Bucke had seen a Little Egret at Chilton Ferrers.
Sally Rankin spotted 2 Grass Snakes in a pond in Henley.
Ricki Bull reported that many plants of *Solanum vernei* have been seen along and near Paddick Drive in Earley; she also saw a Grass Snake swimming on the River Pang at Bradfield College on the 29th September; and found evidence of Dormice at Basildon Park on 2nd October.

18th October

Graham Saunders had seen Grey Wagtails at Silchester.
Renée Grayer had spotted a Brimstone butterfly and a Tawny Owl.
Fred Taylor had seen young Muntjac in the cemetery at Cemetery Junction.
Jan Haseler had counted 5 Red Admirals and 5 Speckled Woods at Shinfield Park.

1st November

Norman Hall brought in a Common quaker from his moth trap on Saturday evening; these normally fly in April/May.

Renée Grayer said her *Skimmia* was flowering.

Fred Taylor had seen lots of bats in the woods, pipistrelles and Noctules, and heard a Frog croaking in the pond. The Fallow deer rut is underway.

Martin Sell said there had been Ferruginous Duck at Dinton until a few days previously.

Dolin Dibb said his *Mahonia japonica* began to flower in early October, and was visited by the Buff-tailed Bumblebee *Bombus terrestris*, and several Primroses are in flower (others confirmed this from various areas).

Exhibits:

David Owens brought in a Stinkhorn from the Lambridge Wood walk the previous Sunday.

Ian Duddle showed us *Verroa* mites under the microscope.

Mary Fookes brought three moths from Whitchurch Hill.

15th November

Jan Haseler had seen 2 Commas at Moor Copse.

Susan Twitchett spotted a Peacock in her garden in Upper Basildon.

Martin Sell had seen Red Admirals today and Sunday, plus a Ferruginous Duck at Sandford Lake and a Bearded Tit at Lavell's Lake.

Michael Keith-Lucas said that both Primrose and Common Gorse were in flower.

Exhibits:

Chris Bucke showed a diverse collection of fungi from Paices Wood and Wasing Woods.

Jan Haseler also brought in some fungi.

EXCURSIONS 2011

Jan Haseler

The first field trip of 2011 was on Saturday 22nd January, when Martin Sell led a joint field trip with the Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust (BBOWT) to Farlington Marshes near Portsmouth. The exposed mud was slowly being covered by a rising tide as the 9-strong group set out. It was a cold morning with a light north-easterly wind. A flock of Avocets *Recurvirostra avosetta* was seen in the distance and many Brent Geese *Branta bernicla* were feeding on the mudflats, together with Pintail *Anas acuta*, Shelduck *Tadorna tadorn*a, Wigeon *Anas penelope* and Teal *Anas crecca*. On the first lagoon, a larger pale wader amongst the Redshanks *Tringa tetanus* was identified as a Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*. At the edge of the reed bed were a Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropu*s and several Snipe *Gallinago gallinago*. A Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis* was hunting round the edge of the reeds and it gave splendid views when it perched on top of a post.

On the harbour, the rising tide was pushing the waders closer to the sea wall. A big flock of Dunlin *Calidris alpina* suddenly took to the air as a large raptor with long bulky wings and a long tail flew overhead. As it flew inland and began hunting over the reed bed, its pale cap and lack of a white rump indicated that it was a Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*. Out on the mud, Grey Plovers *Pluvialis squatarola* and Turnstones *Arenaria interpres* joined the Dunlins. In the deeper channels were a Red-breasted Merganser *Mergus serrator* and 4 Goldeneye *Bucephela clangula*. Amongst the many Brent Geese on the fields of the nature reserve were 2 families of White-fronted Geese *Anser albifrons*. Few juvenile Brent Geese were seen, indicating that the previous breeding season must have been poor. Martin pointed out that the first winter Brent Geese lack the white neck patch of the adult birds. After a late lunch in the shelter of the visitor centre, the group returned to the cars, passing Little Egrets *Egretta garzetta* and a flock of Black-tailed Godwits *Limosa limosa* on the way.

On Saturday 19th February, Lesley Dunlop led 18 members on a walk to look at the geology of the Shiplake district. Before starting out, the botanists had a quick diversion to look at the Maidenhair Ferns *Adiantum*

capillus-veneris which grow under the over-hanging platform at Shiplake Station. The station lies on the Kempton Park Gravel Terrace, laid down about 40 thousand years ago. Fossils recovered from this layer include reindeer, brown bear and saiga antelope. A slight rise in the road indicated a transition back another 200 thousand years to the Taplow Gravel Terrace. As the track climbed steeply uphill, it crossed onto the chalk, laid down in shallow tropical seas about 80 million years ago. Dog's Mercury *Mercurialis perennis* was an indicator of base-rich soil. Most of the pebbles at the side of the track showed the angular faces of flint, but a round quartz pebble had a very different origin. It had been brought by the Thames from the Bunter Beds in the Midlands and these in turn had originated from the Permian deposits in Cornwall of about 290 million years ago.

In places, the top surface of the chalk had been weathered by ice to produce a deposit known as 'head'. This contributed to the particularly wet and sticky consistency of the mud on the footpath across the top field. Conditions underfoot improved when the path entered Hailey Wood. A dry valley running through the wood had been carved out by melt-water at the end of the ice age, when the normally porous chalk was frozen and impervious to water. A chalk pit at the edge of the wood would have provided material for the brick-works on the nearby Reading Beds deposits. At Shiplake Church, Wall Rue *Asplenium ruta-muraria* and Common Polypody Fern *Polypodium vulgare* were growing on the churchyard wall. The path then descended steeply to the River Thames. At the bottom of the hill was a boat yard, with the exposed chalk face of a quarry at its back. The lower part of the chalk face was in stratified layers, while the upper part was more uniform. The return route followed the Thames Path along the river bank. A big clump of Greater Tussock Sedge *Carex paniculata* was growing in a sheltered inlet and the leaves of Loddon Lily *Leucojum aestivum* were showing well in the wet woodland beside the path. In places, erosion at the edge of the river bank had exposed the gravel layer below the topsoil. A flint with the remains of a fossil sponge inside was discovered. The first cottages of Shiplake were built where the ground rose slightly onto the Kempton Park Gravel Terrace. Lesley pointed out the local brickwork on one of the cottages, with the bulk of the building made with red bricks and the more expensive grey glazed bricks used sparingly for decoration. The mortar was dotted with the holes of mason bees.

James Wearn, the Society's Recorder for Lichens, led a joint field trip with the Friends of Newtown Road Cemetery in Newbury on Saturday 12th March. The older of the two large cemeteries in the town, the Newtown Road site was closed in 2000 for health and safety reasons. During the last year, close interaction between the Friends, the Town Council and specialist wildlife recorders has allowed significant progress towards the re-opening of the site to the public and a Wildlife Management Plan has been written. Elizabeth Capewell (from the Friends) gave an introductory talk about the historical importance of the site and described some of the historically important figures who were buried there. James fascinated the 23-strong group with the intricacies and peculiarities of lichen ecology. He explained that lichens are formed from a partnership between two organisms: a fungal partner provides shelter for the algae that live within it (allowing the latter to live in harsh, dry environments) while, in return, the fungus receives nutrition from the photosynthetic algal cells. The group was shown examples of the range of lichen forms that can result from this interaction – from tiny crusts on walls to metre-long 'bushy' forms found hanging from trees in damp forests. The importance of lichens, for example as natural indicators of pollution levels and as food for insects (especially moth larvae), was highlighted, as well as the critical role of careful site management in maintaining the diversity of these intriguing little organisms.

To date, 38 species have been recorded in the cemetery. Of particular note, *Caloplaca crenularia*, characterised by its bright orange fruiting discs (technically *apothecia*, or, if one prefers, 'jam tarts'!) is present in only one location in the cemetery: on the top and base of a single, large chest tomb, and only on the sheltered region nearest to the boundary wall, although in some abundance on the tomb. The tops of chest tombs are frequently the most interesting habitats because their horizontal surfaces are often slow to dry out. This distinctive species is listed as 'occasional' in Berkshire and has a distinctly western distribution in England. In 1986, it was recorded by Francis Rose at Woolton Hill, approximately four miles southwest of Newbury (just over the border in Hampshire). Another highlight was the greenish-yellow *Lecanora sulphurea*, a species found on nutrient-enriched acid rocks and walls. Interestingly, *L. sulphurea* often parasitizes *Lecanora* or *Tephromela* species and was observed frequently, growing over these lichens. *Bilimbia sabuletorum*, beyond having a wonderful name, is restricted in the cemetery to growing on mosses on a single window ledge of the chapel. It has a scurfy greyish body with convex brown fruits. If this ledge is scraped clean then this lichen will disappear from the site – which just shows how insensitive management

leads to biodiversity loss! Primroses *Primula vulgaris* and Sweet Violets *Viola odorata* were flowering in the cemetery and sharp-eyed botanists spotted the leaves of Meadow Saxifrage *Saxifraga granulata*. The warm early-spring sunshine had tempted a few butterflies out of hibernation and single specimens of Brimstone *Gonepteryx rhamni*, Peacock *Inachis io* and Small Tortoiseshell *Aglais urticae* were recorded.

On Saturday 2nd April, Renée Grayer led 20 members on a gentle stroll through the Wilderness and around Whiteknights Lake and most of the party continued into the Harris Garden. The weather was fine and warm and birds were singing, including Chiffchaffs *Phylloscopus collybita* and Blackcaps *Sylvia atricapilla*. A mother Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos* anxiously protected her 15 tiny ducklings on the lake and a pair of Egyptian Geese *Alopochen aegyptiacus* guarded their four rather older goslings. Mandarin *Aix galericulata* drakes posed, Great Crested Grebes *Podiceps cristatus* dived and male Mallards were on the lookout for willing females. Unusually, there were no Mute Swans *Cygnus olor* on the lake. Both Whiteknights Park and the Harris Garden are examples of areas greatly influenced by human activity but retaining many of the plant species that would have been there well before the landscape gardeners moved in. Woodland species – Lesser Celandines *Ranunculus ficaria*, Wood Anemones *Anemone nemorosa*, Primroses and a colony of Goldilocks *Ranunculus auricomus*, were noted under native and exotic tree species and garden escapes such as *Hemerocallis* (Day Lily). Snake's Head Fritillaries *Fritillaria meleagris*, almost certainly planted, thrived and Colt's-foot *Tussilago farfara* was abundant on the banks of the lake. There is always disturbed land in a university campus: here there were Slender Speedwell *Veronica filiformis* and Springbeauty *Montia perfoliata*. Members were able to compare the two somewhat similar exotic tree species Swamp Cypress *Taxodium distichum* and Dawn Redwood *Metasequoia glyptostroboides*. There was evidence of major activity in the Harris Garden as a result of a change in management but the grassland areas retained their rich diversity of species. The Wollemi Pine *Wollemia nobilis* planted recently clearly is able to thrive in cold winters. Unexpectedly, very few butterflies were seen but there were several Bee-flies *Bombylius major* feeding on flowers in the Wilderness.

The weather was ideal on Sunday 17th April, when Michael Keith-Lucas led 32 members on a field trip at BBOWT's Warburg Reserve at Bix. As the party left the car park, Michael pointed out Common Nettles *Urtica dioica* amongst the Dog's Mercury at the side of the track, marking phosphate-enriched soil from horse droppings, from a time when the track had been used by horse-drawn transport. Dog's Mercury carpeted the thin chalk soils in the woods, but in the valley bottom a bare patch marked an area of acid, well-drained gravel, washed down at the end of the last ice age. The path climbed steeply up through the woods, with flowers including Yellow Archangel *Lamiastrum galeobdolon*, Woodruff *Galium odoratum* and Wood-spurge *Euphorbia amygdaloides*. Both Common Dog-violets *Viola riviniana*, with their pale notched spurs, and Early Dog-violets *V. reichenbachiana*, with smaller petals and dark spurs, were identified during the walk. Seeds were developing on the Spurge-laurel *Daphne laureola* plants and a White-pinion Spotted moth *Lomographa bimaculata* posed obligingly on a leaf. The path climbed past enormous, ancient Beech *Fagus sylvatica* stools – an unusual coppice tree.

The group then walked down through an area of Hazel *Corylus avellana* and Hornbeam *Carpinus betulus* coppice to an open grassy ride. Clumps of broad-bladed Tor Grass *Brachypodium pinnatum* indicated that the ride is not being grazed heavily enough by sheep. Michael explained that ancient chalk grassland is dominated by the plants which sheep avoid, such as poisonous gentians, aromatic Thyme *Thymus polytrichus* and Marjoram *Origanum vulgare* and fine-leaved Sheep's Fescue grass *Festuca ovina*. Browsing cattle are much less selective about what they eat. Cowslips *Primula veris* were coming into flower along the ride and a Wayfaring-tree *Viburnum lantana* was laden with somewhat unpleasant-smelling white flower-heads. The route then led through a steep meadow area. A Hornet *Vespa crabro* was spotted flying into a hole at the base of an ant heap. Closer investigation revealed a Hornet's nest inside the hole. Continuing steeply down through the woods, the thick carpet of Dog's-mercury beside the path ceased abruptly and was replaced with an area of Wood-sorrel *Oxalis acetosella* and Enchanter's-nightshade *Circaea lutetiana*, indicating a brief transition to more acid soil. A big patch of orange slime, with dripping stalactites of slime, was found on a Sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanas*. A debate ensued as to its identity – possibly a slime mould or some form of fungus. (Malcolm Storey subsequently identified it as *Fusarium*, a genus of fungi often found in fermenting sap.) Ancient woodland indicator species growing at the side of the track back along the valley bottom included Early Dog-violet, Dewberry *Rubus caesius*, Wood Speedwell *Veronica montana*, Three-

nerved Sandwort *Moehringia trinervia*, Goldilocks Buttercup and, the botanical highlight of the afternoon, an abundant display of Green Hellebore *Helleborus viridis*.

On a cloudy evening a week before the field trip, three Nightingales *Luscinia megarhynchos* and a Cetti's Warbler *Cettia cetti* were in full song at Searle's Farm, Burghfield. The sun shone brightly on the evening of Tuesday 10th May when Jan Haseler led the real field trip and the warblers were not so obliging. Perhaps 5 Nightingales called, but they only gave brief tantalising bursts of song and then fell silent. Only the last bird, as darkness was falling, gave a reasonable performance. The Cetti's Warbler, too, in thick vegetation by the bank of the River Kennet, gave a single brief burst of song and was then silent. With patience, the 12 members were able to distinguish between the songs of Garden Warblers *Sylvia borin* and Blackcaps *S. atricapilla* and several Reed Warblers *Acrocephalus scirpaceus* were seen as well as heard. Newly arrived Swifts *Apus apus* were flying above the gravel pits and a Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus* called in the distance. Three large eggs were visible in a Great Crested Grebe's nest and a Coot's *Fulica atra* nest held a fluffy youngster. Two webs on Spindle *Euonymus europaeus* held the caterpillars of the Spindle Ermine moth *Yponomeuta cagnagella*. As the light faded, large numbers of Green Carpet *Colostygia pectinataria* moths were in flight above the vegetation next to the Kennet and small bats, probably pipistrelles, flew above the river.

On 14th May, Malcolm Storey led 12 members of the Society to visit Headley Gravel Pits, a Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust reserve. The target species for the day was Green-winged Orchid *Anacamptis morio*. These were seen in profusion, but, following the hot weather of the previous weeks, it has to be admitted they were well past their best. A range of other plants of neutral to acid grassland including Changing Forget-me-not *Myosotis discolor* and cultivated Asparagus (presumably a garden throw-out) were seen and identified with much use of field-guides. A couple of patches of dry, bare sandy ground yielded Sand Spurrey *Spergularia rubra* and a few tiny cudweeds which probably would not survive to maturity. The weather was quite cold and only fleetingly sunny, but a few butterflies were seen, including Grizzled Skipper *Pyrgus malvae*, Orange-tip *Anthocharis cardamines* and Common Blue *Polyommatus icarus*, and Lesser Treble-bar *Aplocera efformata*, a day-flying moth. Other insects included Red-and-black Froghopper *Cercopis vulnerata*, the longhorn beetle *Stenurella melanura* and several craneflies *Tipula lunata*. The Society would like to thank the Hampshire Trust for permission to visit the site.

Jan Haseler led a walk, attended by 10 members, on Saturday 28th May, at the Devil's Punchbowl, near the Ridgeway between Lambourn and Wantage. It was a cold morning with a strong wind, but the steep valley was fairly sheltered. Resting on clumps of nettles were Green Hairstreak *Callophrys rubi* and Common Blue butterflies, while black and white striped Wood Tiger *Parasemia plantaginis* moths were sheltering in the grass. Flowers included Horseshoe Vetch *Hippocrepis comosa*, Common Rock-rose *Helianthemum nummularium*, Salad Burnet *Sanguisorba minor* and Weld *Reseda luteola*. Both Common Milkwort *Polygala vulgaris* and Chalk Milkwort *P. calcarea* were found and Roger Kemp showed how, with the help of a hand lens, these two species could be separated by the small veins on the sepals. In Common Milkwort, the small veins rejoin the main veins to form a closed network, while in Chalk Milkwort, the small veins form an open pattern. In a brief burst of sunshine, the butterflies started to fly and Small Heath *Coenonympha pamphilus* appeared. A clump of nettles had large caterpillars of Small Tortoiseshell and a mass of much smaller Peacock caterpillars.

The steep side valley had abundant rabbit holes with loose bare chalky soil and this is where the Henbane *Hyoscyamus niger* was found. In total, about 50 plants were counted. Green Hairstreak butterflies were particularly numerous in the side valley, both on nettles and on Elder *Sambucus nigra* blossom. A recently emerged Small Elephant Hawkmoth *Deilephila porcellus* was found in the grass. A few Burnet moths were found. Given the early date and the conjoined spots on some of the specimens (see photograph, p23), these are likely to be Five-spot Burnet *Zygaena trifolii palustrella*, a chalk specialist, rather than the much commoner Narrow-bordered Five-spot Burnet *Zygaena lonicerae*, which does not emerge usually until later in June. Back at the top of the valley, Nodding Thistles *Carduus nutans* were coming into flower, Corn Buntings *Miliaria calandra* were singing from the fence posts, there were numerous Skylarks *Alauda arvensis* and a Cuckoo was spotted.

22 members travelled further afield on Saturday 11th June for a walk led by Roger Kemp at Grangelands, Pulpit Hill and Cadsden Wood, near Princes Risborough. The field trip was held jointly with the Bucks Invertebrate Group and National Trust Warden Jerry Page was a welcome addition to the party. The walk started across the unimproved chalk grasslands of Grangelands, where sightings included a strangely deformed Bee Orchid *Ophrys apifera*, Fragrant-orchids *Gymnadenia conopsea* (including some unusual white specimens), Yellow-wort *Blackstonia perfoliata*, Horseshoe Vetch and abundant Pyramidal Orchids *Anacamptis pyramidalis*. Butterfly sightings included Green Hairstreak, Common Blue, Small Heath and Brimstone. Large Roman Snails *Helix pomatia* were common on the site. Walking eastwards along the Ridgeway, the group reached a viewpoint across the valley towards Chequers, with a distant view towards a hillside of native Box *Buxus sempervirens* bushes. Next stop was the Iron Age hill fort at Pulpit Hill, with Bird's-nest Orchids *Neottia nidus-avis* growing in the steep beech woods nearby. After a picnic lunch, Roger found 5 tiny Musk Orchids *Herminium monorchis* on chalk grassland. The group then walked into Cadsden Wood, where White Helleborine *Cephalanthera damasonium* and more Bird's-nest Orchids were found. In the valley bottom was an open glade with abundant Wild Candytuft *Iberis amara*, Common Rock-rose and a few plants of Hairy Rock-cress *Arabis hirsuta*.

Julia Cooper organised a visit on Saturday 25th June to the Cholderton Estate, on the Hants/Wilts border near Andover. The estate is fully organic and is managed sympathetically for wildlife, see http://www.cholderton-estate.co.uk. Owner Henry Edmunds kindly spent the day guiding 20 members round the estate, with transport provided by an elderly Bedford Lorry. First stop was a meadow area, planted up with rare native trees, including a selection of *Sorbus* specimens and a Plymouth Pear *Pyrus cordata*. Despite the cloudy conditions, Ringlet *Aphantopus hyperantus* and Marbled White *Melanargia galathea* butterflies were on the wing and Large Skippers *Ochlodes sylvanus* and Small Skippers *Thymelicus sylvestris* were seen. A Victorian boating lake had been restored and is now home in spring to hundreds of Common Toads *Bufo bufo*, while Brown Hairstreak *Thecla betulae* butterflies use the adjoining Blackthorn *Prunus spinosa* thicket. A Purple Emperor *Apatura iris* had been pupating on a Goat Willow *Salix caprea* next to the pond and the group were able to inspect the newly-emerged adult butterfly at close quarters.

There followed an exciting drive under low overhanging branches to an area of deciduous woodland. Coppicing is encouraging violets, the food-plant of Pearl-bordered Fritillary *Boloria euphrosyne* and Silver-washed Fritillary *Argynnis paphia* butterflies. The picnic lunch was consumed in an area of high quality chalk grassland, with flowers including Dropwort *Filipendula vulgaris*, Sainfoin *Onobrychis viciifolia*, Horseshoe Vetch, Bastard-toadflax *Thesium humifusum* and Fragrant-orchids. A clump of Comfrey *Symphytum officinale* at the bottom of the field had a colony of Scarlet Tiger *Callimorpha dominula* moths. Next stop was an area of restored chalk grassland, with Dark-green Fritillary *Argynnis aglaja*, Red Admiral *Vanessa atalanta*, Painted Lady *V. cardui* and Small Tortoiseshell butterflies and nesting Skylarks and Corn Buntings. The adjoining field was red with poppies, both Common Poppy *Papaver rhoeas* and the smaller and darker Rough Poppy *P. hybridum*. It had been ploughed in February and barley had been planted round the outside. The bare ground in April was ideal for nesting Lapwings *Vanellus vanellus*, while the barley provided cover for their chicks. When all the ground-nesting birds have left, the field will be sown with turnips as a fodder crop for the cattle. As well as abundant Common Fumitory *Fumaria officinalis*, a few plants of the rare Fine-leaved Fumitory *F. parviflora* were found. A Red-legged Partridge *Alectoris rufa* was sitting tight at the edge of the path and two tiny chicks peeped out from under its wings.

The group then drove across to the western side of the estate, spotting a Hare *Lepus europaeus* in one of the fields on the way. Stone-curlews *Burhinus oedicnemus* were nesting on a bare scraped area, protected from predators by an electric fence. The final stop was an area of chalk grassland, where plug-sown Horseshoe Vetch was thriving, protected from the Rabbits *Oryctolagus cuniculus* by netting. The grassland had an interesting collection of plants, including Long-stalked Crane's-bill *Geranium columbinum*. Small Toadflax *Chaenorhinum minus* and abundant Pyramidal Orchids.

Over a period of 24 hours on 2nd and 3rd July, about 30 members and friends conducted a Bioblitz of some of the remoter areas of the National Trust's Basildon Park which are not normally visited by visitors to the mansion and gardens. The aim was to note as many different species as possible in the 24-hour period. Chris Bucke led a walk on Saturday afternoon which started at Coddesdon Lodge and meandered through areas of ancient woodland, more recent woodland with some exotic species, into the species-rich chalk grassland

of the Hidden Valley, up into ancient woodland again and back through the bluebell woods. The plant species of the Hidden Valley were studied thoroughly: 10 specimens of Bee Orchid were found, also large numbers of Common Spotted-orchid *Dactylorhiza fuchsii*, some Common Twayblades *Listerata ovata* and a few Pyramidal Orchids. Many Adder's-tongue Ferns *Ophioglossum vulgatum* remained. Some members ventured into the adjacent more acid grassland area and located two trees remarkable for their very unusual forms, a lime that had fallen and produced 17 new poles and a *Robinia* whose trunk has twisted through over 360° and then produced vertical poles.

As the light faded, the moth-trappers set up their equipment at various locations round the park. Ricki Bull set up the society's Robinson trap on the south west side of the park, at the corner of the woodland near the top of the Pheasant Park. 16 cows in the adjoining field watched her activities with interest. She spent the night in her car and got up at 3:45am to check the catch. Highlights of her trap included Wood Carpet *Epirrhoe rivata*, Purple Thorn *Selenia tetralunaria*, Privet Hawkmoth *Sphinx ligustri* and a very ugly collection of Lobster Moths *Stauropus fagi*. Laurie and Jan Haseler headed for the south east side of the park, where they set up a light over a sheet in the Hidden Valley and a Skinner trap in the woods above the valley. Their highlights included Beautiful Carpet *Mesoleuca albicillata*, Clay Triple-lines *Cyclophora linearia*, Fern *Horisme tersata* and Dark Umber *Philereme transversata*. Unlike the other hardy moth trappers, they packed up at 1am, but were rewarded with a glimpse of a Badger *Meles meles* crossing the A329 towards the railway line, just beyond the park wall. Norman Hall set up a battery of lights around Coddesdon Lodge on the southern side of the park, including a light in warden Granville Nicholl's garden. His highlights included Waved Black *Parascotia fuliginaria*, August Thorn *Ennomos quercinaria*, Small Mottled Willow *Spodoptera exigua* and 2 Pine Hawkmoths *Hyloicus pinastri*. Norman retired to his van at 1:30am and got up to inspect his catch at 4:30am, retaining some of his specimens for visitors to see later in the morning.

Members of the Berks and South Bucks Bat Group brought bat detectors that allowed different species of bat to be detected. In fact only Common Pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pipistrellus* and Soprano *Pipistrelle P. pygmaeus* were noted, in excitingly large numbers in some locations. Apparently populations of pipistrelle have a boss male, which is presumably the alpha-bat! Hopes that Badgers would be seen were not realised but Roe Deer *Capreolus capreolus* were noted in places. A party of 12 regrouped in the morning and had the considerable pleasure of seeing the moths that had been trapped, which included several different species of hawkmoth, before doing an intensive survey of the plants in an area of woodland in the centre of the park. Thanks are due to the National Trust and, in particular, Granville Nicholls, for their hospitality. It is likely that further areas of the park will be bioblitzed at different times of year.

The annual coach trip to the New Forest on Saturday 16th July got off to an unpromising start, with rain beating down at Hatchet Pond. Of the two sites we intended to visit, it was more important to have the better weather here, so we moved on to Beaulieu Road. The rain soon abated, by lunch time it was dry enough to eat out of doors, and the afternoon was fine. Things got interesting for the botanists straight away, with fruiting heads of Wild Gladiolus *Gladiolus illyricus* among the bracken. Heathy areas had Ling *Calluna vulgaris*, and here and there, the parasitic Dodder *Cuscuta epithymum* was feeding on it and flowering. Also present were Bell Heather *Erica cinerea* and Heath Milkwort *Polygala serpyllifolia*. The bogs were pink with Cross-leaved Heath *Erica tetralix* and there were spikes of Bog Asphodel *Narthecium ossifragum* here and there, with Bog-myrtle *Myrica gale*, Lesser Spearwort *Ranunculus flammula*, Marsh Pennywort *Hydrocotyle vulgaris*, Bog Pimpernel *Anagallis tenella*, Lesser Skullcap *Scutellaria minor*, Lousewort *Pedicularis sylvatica* and two of the Sundews, *Drosera rotundifolia* and *D. intermedia*. Wetter areas had Yellow Loosestrife *Lysimachia vulgaris*, Water Plantain *Alisma plantago-aquatica*, Bogbean *Menyanthes trifoliata* in fruit, and Marsh St. John's-wort *Hypericum elodes* with its flowers closed up on account of the rain. In a wooded area, hornets were seen raiding wasps' nests in holes in an old tree – and the hornets themselves were coming and going from a hole near the base of another old tree, with a large bracket fungus above the entrance to their nest. Some people spotted a Fallow Deer among the trees. On our way towards lunch, on drier ground, were the diminutive Small Cudweed *Filago minima* and Bird's-foot *Ornithopus perpusillus* and in a water-filled rut in the track was the extraordinary-looking Coral-necklace *Illecebrum verticillatum*.

After lunch, we moved back to Hatchet Pond, in sunshine, with an ice-cream van in attendance. After such a rewarding morning, all we could hope for was more of the same – but no, things got even better, if you didn't mind scrambling up and down banks and wading through bogs. We examined Hatchet Pond itself,

some of us walking right round it, and a much smaller pond on the other side of the road. The Fen Bedstraw *Galium uliginosum* was growing virtually on the car park, in the company of other damp-loving plants. The smaller pond yielded White Water-lilies *Nymphaea alba*, Fringed Water-lily *Nymphoides peltata* and an alien from North America, the Pickerel Weed *Pontederia cordata*. The dreaded New Zealand Pigmyweed *Crassula helmsii* was also there, in company with the rare and native Hampshire-purslane *Ludwigia palustris*, with tiny flowers in the leaf-axils, and the Lesser Water-plantain *Baldellia ranunculoides*. By the road side between this small pond and the far end of Hatchet Pond were Goldenrod *Solidago virgaurea* and Betony *Stachys officinalis*. Scrambling down a bank to reach a boggy area, a large stand of the Royal Fern *Osmunda regalis* was seen, and the bog itself – not for the faint-hearted! – yielded the Pale Butterwort *Pinguicula lusitanica*, one of the Bladderworts *Utricularia* and the Bog Orchid *Hammarbya paludosa*, all in full flower.

Janet Welsh led a field trip at Peppard and Kingwood Commons on Saturday 30th July. The walk, which was attended by 26 members, started in welcome shade on Peppard Common. Oak *Quercus robur*, Rowan *Sorbus aucuparia*, Holly *Ilex aquifolium* and birch trees were indicators of the acid soil conditions. In the first sunny clearing, Dwarf Gorse *Ulex minor* and Heather were in flower, while Purple Hairstreaks *Neozephyrus quercus* and Holly Blues *Celastrina argiolus* were flying round the oak trees and an Essex Skipper *Thymelicus lineola* was resting on a bramble leaf. Back in the shade, a Hard Shield-fern *Polystichum aculeatum* with leathery leaves was an unusual sighting for South Oxfordshire. The route dropped down to the chalk of the valley bottom, where butterflies included numerous Gatekeepers *Pyronia tithonus*, plus single specimens of Brimstone, Comma *Polygonia c-album* and Peacock. The track then passed through the shady beeches of Littlebottom and Greatbottom Woods, before climbing up to Kingwood Common. Violet Helleborine *Epipactis purpurata* and Broad-leaved Helleborine *E. helleborine* were found on the bank beside the lane at the top. Open clearings on the common had flowering Heather and Bell Heather, white Heath Milkwort, the delicate yellow Slender St John's-wort *Hypericum pulchrum* and drifts of blue Harebells *Campanula rotundifolia*. Fibrous strands at the base of a greyish brown toadstool helped Gordon Crutchfield to identify it as White-laced Shank *Megacollybia platyphylla*. Finally, Martagon Lilies *Lilium martagon*, probably garden escapes, were a surprising sighting towards the end of the walk.

On Sunday 7th August, Sally Rankin led a field trip at Lambridge Wood near Henley. The walk started out through classic Chilterns beech woodland with a dense canopy and sparse understorey, then passed through an area where Holly was prolific. Thin-spiked Wood-sedge *Carex strigosa* was found by the eastern end of the large ditch that runs through the woods. The group then headed along the open ride at the valley bottom where Pale St John's-wort *Hypericum montanum* and Silver-washed Fritillary were seen. The ride was dominated by Raspberries *Rubus idaeus* and had recently been cut but, towards the Henley end, Vervain *Verbena officinalis* and a lot of very sick-looking Japanese Knotweed *Fallopia japonica* were found. It was good to see evidence of attempts to control this invasive alien. The route then climbed out of the valley to the Wild Service Tree *Sorbus torminalis* and returned through more diverse woodland containing elm and silver birch. On the banks beside the main road through the wood, Green-flowered Helleborine *Epipactis phyllanthes* and Yellow Bird's-nest *Monotropa hypopitys* were found. The latter was a pleasant surprise, as although good numbers had been recorded a few years ago, it had not been seen for a year or two. The *Carex*, *Hypericum*, *Sorbus*, *Epipactis* and *Monotropa* are all plants that that were on the Oxfordshire Rare Plants Register, although the *Sorbus* was removed when enough of them were recorded for the register that is currently in production.

Norman Hall organised the society's annual moth-trapping event at Padworth Common on Saturday 20th August. As darkness fell, 7 bright mercury-vapour lights were set up at various locations in the north-west part of the common. Specialist heathland moths included True Lover's Knot *Lycophotia porphyrea*, Neglected Rustic *Xestia castanea*, Narrow-winged Pug *Eupithecia nanata* and Ling Pug *E. absinthiata f. goossensiata*. Several different forms of the striking black and white Black Arches *Lymantria monacha* moths were taken. A Dark Sword-grass *Agrotis ipsilon* was the only migrant moth of the night. Highlights of the evening were White-line Dart *Euxoa tritici* and 4 Dotted Clays *Xestia baja*. The bright lights also attracted 2 police officers, who came to investigate the unusual nocturnal activity on the Common. Norman stayed overnight and showed a selection of the catch to interested members next morning. 15 members attended the event and 89 species of moth were recorded.

Renée Grayer led a walk at the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust Reserve at Bartley Heath on Saturday 3rd September. Highlights of the trip for the 15 who attended were the Marsh Gentians *Gentiana pneumonanthe*, which were flowering in profusion. The official count the previous weekend had been 974 plants. Other interesting plants on the heathland included Saw-wort *Serratula tinctoria*, Sneezewort *Achillea ptarmica*, abundant Devil's-bit Scabious *Succisa pratensis* and Petty Whin *Genista anglica*. An interesting feature of the trip was the number of white-flowered plants, including Heather, Cross-leaved Heath, Betony and Marsh Thistle *Cirsium palustre*. A wetter area with small ponds had Lesser Skullcap, Tufted Forget-me-not *Myosotis laxa* and Marsh Speedwell *Veronica scutellata*. In the woodland ride, Broad Buckler Fern *Dryopteris dilatata* and Narrow Buckler Fern *D. carthusiana* were growing together, showing the more upright posture and paler foliage of the Narrow Buckler Fern. Also in the woods were Lady Fern *Athyrium filix-femina* and Scaly male Fern *Dryopteris affinis*, which showed the characteristic dark mark at the base of the underside of the leaves. A number of Common Lizards *Lacerta vivipara* were basking in the sunshine and 2 Roe Deer were disturbed in the woods. Recent wet weather had brought on a selection of fungi, including Cep *Boletus edulis* and Orange Birch Bolete *Leccinum versipelle*.

Michael Keith-Lucas led a field trip at Greenham Common on Sunday 11th September. 11 members started from the Control Centre car park in sunshine, but with the threat of heavy showers in the not-too-distant future. Michael pointed out the contrasts between the calcareous runway areas and the acid heathland on the plateau gravels. A Common Whitebeam *Sorbus aria* and a Buckthorn *Rhamnus cathartica*, lime-loving bushes which were growing up through the Gorse *Ulex europaeus*, reinforced the message. Other plants of calcareous grassland included Carline Thistle *Carlina vulgaris* and Stemless Thistle *Cirsium acaule*. The latter is apparently extending its range northwards, recently moving on from the hottest south-facing slopes in Derbyshire into Yorkshire. Autumn Lady's-tresses *Spiranthes spiralis* were found in good numbers, with some of the best specimens protected under scrubby bushes from the grazing cattle. Following recent rain, the conditions were excellent for fungi. A number of waxcaps were found in the grassland, including Blackening Waxcap *Hygrocybe conica*, Parrot Waxcap *Hygrocybe psittacina* and some attractive bright red specimens. There were also a number of fungus rings, including Fairy Ring Champignon *Marasmius oreades*, a ring of puffballs and, in the woods, a ring of some form of *Hydnum*, with spines instead of gills on the underside. Other finds included Fly Agaric *Amanita muscaria* and Chanterelle *Cantharellus cibarius*.

The threatened heavy shower arrived and the group took shelter in an Alder *Alnus glutinosa* gulley on the south of the common. *Sphagnum* moss covered deep peat and a completely different set of plants were encountered, including Marsh Pennywort and Lesser Skullcap. After the shower passed, the party emerged from cover and went on to inspect a series of ponds which had an interesting collection of water plants, including Water Forget-me-not *Myosotis scorpioides* and Tufted Forget-me-not and Water-plantain. The return route climbed back up a wet valley to the top of the common, passing Bog Pimpernel and more Lesser Skullcap – and a lizard. Back on the heathland, flocks of Goldfinches *Carduelis carduelis*, Swallows *Hirundo rustica* and House Martins *Delichon urbica* were seen, a keen blackberry-picker spotted a Dartford Warbler *Sylvia undata* and a Northern Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe* posed on an exposed gravel mound.

On Sunday 18th September, Rod d'Ayala led a field trip at Swyncombe Downs, in the Chilterns north of Nettlebed. It was raining as 10 members set out along the track through the bottom of the woods, where a number of large pale brown Roman Snails were found in a grassy clearing. Dwarf Spurge *Euphorbia exigua* and Small Toadflax were seen at the edge of the adjacent arable field. The sun came out as the group reached the grassy ramparts at the top of the hill, where Hawkweed Oxtongue *Picris hieracioides* was an unusual find. A Yellowhammer *Emberiza citrinella* was calling from the top of a hawthorn bush and the squash bug *Coreus marginatus* was identified. There were still a good number of flowers in bloom, including Small Scabious *Scabiosa columbaria*, Pale Toadflax *Linaria repens*, Common Rock-rose, Basil Thyme *Clinopodium acinos* and Wild Candytuft. Both Dropwort and Salad Burnet plants were abundant and the narrow leaves of the Dropwort were compared with the rounder leaves of the Salad Burnet. The snail *Helicella itala* was identified by Chris Raper. A few butterflies were on the wing, including Meadow Browns *Maniola jurtina*, a Small Heath and a few Small Coppers *Lycaena phlaeas*. A large puffball with a fat stalk was identified as Pestle Puffball *Handkea excipuliforme*. A number of poisonous plants were growing on loose soil around rabbit holes on the steep south-facing slope, including Woody Nightshade *Solanum dulcamara* and Deadly Nightshade *Atropa belladonna* and a single plant of Henbane. On the walk back to the start, the route lay along a south-facing bank at the top of the field below, where Horseshoe Vetch and Long-stalked Crane's-bill were seen.

On Sunday 30th October, Gordon Crutchfield led a fungus foray at Lambridge Wood and Famous Copse, in the Chilterns to the north-west of Henley. The autumn colours were approaching their best and thanks to the rain in the previous week, there were reasonable numbers of fungi around. Two different kinds of Stinkhorn were found – the common variety *Phallus impudicus*, and the smaller and thinner Dog Stinkhorn *Mutinus caninus*. In its early stage, the Stinkhorn is egg-shaped, with a gelatinous layer round a firm nut-like centre – which two of the braver members of the group tried and agreed that it tasted like raw potato. Matt Bolete *Boletus pruinatus* was another tasty specimen which was nibbled by a few people. Saffrondrop Bonnet *Mycena crocata* is one of the specialities of the Chiltern beech woods. Gordon demonstrated that its stem exudes an orange liquid when squeezed. Blackedge Bonnet *Mycena pelianthina* had gills with a darker purple edge. Members with a good sense of smell could compare the radish scent of Rosy Bonnet *Mycena rosea* with the raw potato smell of *Amanita citrina*, the False Death Cap. The fluid exuded from Birch Milkcap *Lactarius tabidus* stained yellow on paper. Clustered Toughshank *Collybia confluens* was found in dense tufts, forming part of a large ring. Other finds included the Magpie Inkcap *Coprinopsis picaceus*, the Blushing Bracket *Daedaleopsis confragosa*, which flushed pink when scraped, and the gelatinous Beech Jellydisc *Neobulgaria pura* on a Beech branch. A few moths were disturbed, including several November Moth types and a Mottled Umber *Erannis defoliaria*.

The mild November weather helped to make 2011 an outstanding autumn for fungi and a wide variety were found when Chris Bucke led a circular walk, starting from Nettlebed on Saturday 26th November. 11 members started out along a footpath across a grassy pasture, where the stout orange Meadow Waxcap *Hygrocybe pratensis* was found, together with the yellow coral-like fingers of a coral fungus. The track then led into the beeches of Wellgrove Wood, where there were long lines and circles of the big cream funnel fungus *Leucopaxillus giganteus*. Also seen were Wood Blewits *Lepista nuda*, Clouded Agarics *Clitocybe nebularis* and the delicate pink Rosy Bonnet. The fallen leaves were a mixture of yellows, golds and browns, with the silver leaves of Common Whitebeam standing out in contrast. The track then followed the edge of a field down into Bix Bottom. Abundant brown-gilled mushrooms along the hedge line looked tempting, but closer inspection identified them as the poisonous Yellow Stainer *Agaricus xanthodermus*. Some of the group turned aside to inspect the ruined St James Church. The route then followed the lane towards BBOWT's Warburg reserve. Blue-green Verdigris Agaric *Stropharia aeruginosa* fungi and Magpie Inkcaps were found at the side of the lane. Another track led back up through more beech woods towards Nettlebed. A blue-backed Nuthatch *Sitta europaea* was watched as it foraged down on the ground at the edge of the woods. Shiny white Porcelain Fungus *Oudemansiella mucida* was found growing above head height on a Beech tree, with purple Amethyst Deceivers *Laccaria amethystea* in the leaf litter below. Finally, Shaggy Ink Caps *Coprinus comatus* were seen beside the lane on Nettlebed Common.

There was ice on the puddles, but the sun was shining and the air was still when Fred Taylor led 10 members on a walk round Lowbury Hill in the Berkshire Downs on Saturday 10th December. A flowering Common Poppy was a surprise find as the group started off up the track above Starveall, near Aldworth. Also in flower at the field edge were Scentless Mayweed *Tripleurospermum inodorum*, Shepherd's-purse *Capsella bursa-pastoris* and Groundsel *Senecio vulgaris*. Along the base of the hedge were a few clumps of Spurge-laurel, and this too was in flower, with its inconspicuous small green flowers. There were big flocks of Starlings *Sturnus vulgaris*, Lapwings *Vanellus vanellus* and Golden Plovers *Pluvialis apricaria* on the grass above Juniper Valley. The big surprise of the day was the number of species which were in flower on the racehorse gallops, including Cowslips, Common Knapweed *Centaurea nigra* and Greater Knapweed *C. scabiosa*, Field Scabious *Knautia arvensis* and Clustered Bellfower *Campanula glomerata* – very unexpected for the middle of December. A number of fungi were found, including white waxcaps and Field Blewits *Lepista saeva* in the grassland. Some of the hedgerows had been drastically flailed back. Where they had been left, they carried heavy crops of sloes, hawthorn berries and the bright red strings of Black Bryony *Tamus communis* berries and these were attracting large flocks of Fieldfares *Turdus pilaris* and a few Redwings *T. iliacus*.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank all the members who have led walks in 2011. Renée Grayer and Tony Mundell have provided detailed species lists and Rob Stallard has taken many of the photographs which have been used on the Excursions section of the Society's website. I would also like to thank Chris Bucke, David Cliffe, Sally Rankin, Malcolm Storey and James Wearn for their contributions to this report.

MID-WEEK WALKS, 2011

Alice Ayers, Chris Bucke, David Cliffe, Colin Dibb, Jan Haseler, Sheelagh Hill, Fred Taylor, Ken Thomas & Susan Twitchett

The first mid-week walk of 2011 was on Wednesday 19th January, when Chris Bucke followed a route which had originally been planned for the preceding November, but which had been cancelled due to bad weather. The walk started at Nettlebed, went down to Bix Bottom, up to Maidensgrove, down into BBOWT's Warburg reserve and back up to Nettlebed. 10 people attended on a lovely frosty day. Despite the cold conditions in January, the first signs of snowdrops were noted and Hazel catkins were seen. Afterwards, lunch was enjoyed at the Rising Sun at Witheridge Hill.

On 16th February, Alice and Eric Ayers led a group of 15 members for a circular walk from Waltham St. Lawrence to Shottesbrook Park via Downfield Lane. It was a mild and sunny day. Thanks to several practised spotters amongst the party, a Kestrel, Red Kites, Jackdaws, two pairs of Lapwings and a Great Spotted Woodpecker were seen and a Ring-necked Parakeet was heard. Also spotted were Primroses, gorse, snowdrops, White Dead-nettle, Common Chickweed, Comfrey, Lesser Celandine, Henbit Dead-nettle, Germander Speedwell, Groundsel, purple Sweet Violet, Mistletoe, Hazel and Alder catkins and two Roe Deer. A few of the party lunched in the Bell, others went to the Waggon and Horses in Twyford for a good, reasonably priced meal eaten outdoors.

21 members met at Stanford Dingley in spring-like conditions on 16th March for a walk led by Colin Dibb. Spring flowers were seen in various village gardens and in the churchyard, which is noted for its autumn cyclamens and venerable Sweet Chestnut trees, as well as being one of the few English churches named after Saint Denys, the patron saint of France. The grassy path to Rushall Manor commanded views of the Pang valley and led alongside an ancient diverse hedge, which is a haven for butterflies in the summer, before crossing the clovery sward grazed by ewes and lambs on this organic farm. The circular walk on the higher ground behind the old farm buildings passed through ancient woodland, a managed beech wood, a former field now managed for wildlife, silver birch woodland with much moss-covered ground and ornamental coniferous woodland on acid gravel. The return route dropped down to the river where the confluence of the river Pang and the unceasing outflow from the Blue Pool springs was noted, followed by the pleasant valley walk back to the village and lunch (which was enlivened by the arrival of an American film crew who were disappointed to find that none of us knew Kate and William personally).

On 20th April, Ken Thomas led a walk around Beenham and Upper Woolhampton. 23 members and friends met at Douai Abbey, looked in the beautiful Abbey church, then walked through fields and High Wood to the outskirts of Beenham, on down towards Hall Place Farm, across to the sombre Victorian Woolhampton church and back. The aim was "to enjoy the wonders of early springtime" and it certainly was wonderful but the spring had been so warm that "early springtime" had passed. In six weeks, an unusually late spring had changed to an unusually advanced spring. In High Wood both Wood Anemones and Wood-sorrel were in bloom, not a common combination, and bluebells were near their best there and in the other woodland. Two Cuckoos (or the same one twice) were heard and Cuckooflower was admired in various locations. Large numbers of the "cones" of Field Horsetail *Equisetum arvense* were noted around Upper Woolhampton and a colony of the larger Great Horsetail *E. telmateia* was found by a group who missed out on one of the leader's recitations near Hall Place. Perhaps the most noteworthy plant species seen were in the churchyard of Woolhampton church, a small colony of Meadow Saxifrage *Saxifraga granulata* and a large number of seedlings of Small Balsam *Impatiens parviflora*.

Ken Thomas led a walk on 18th May which started from the Black Horse at Checkendon. 14 members set out on a route which passed through woods and fields and along the Judges Road. Sightings included a dead fox and a badger sett and latrine. 10 different bird species were identified, including

Stock Dove, Chiffchaff and Buzzard, and there was a Pied Wagtail with young. 30 mainly common spring plants were noted. A visit to the ancient church of St Peter and St Paul was included.

On 15th June, Sheelagh Hill led a group of 14 members, exploring the countryside and some hidden lanes around Peppard and Sonning Common. Having lived in the area for 3 decades, she was able to offer historical insights to the landscape and key features such as the well in Spring Wood, Old Copse and the WWII ruins at Bishopswood. The walk started on Peppard Common, skirted Rotherfield Common, went down to Shiplake Bottom, through Old Copse to Bishopswood, across fields to Wyfold Lane and back to Peppard. The group identified a Pale St John's-wort flower and admired the Juniper bushes planted by Henley Wildlife Group in a small quarry in Peppard. Both The Red Lion and La Brochetta served group members at the end of the morning.

Fred Taylor led 20 members and friends for a walk in woodland between Binfield Heath and Sonning Common on 20th July. The group started out from the Bottle and Glass pub along Bones Lane, an ancient Pack Horse route between Henley and Binfield Heath. Two Fallow Deer were seen in the adjacent fields and several Skylarks were noted. Redhill Wood has areas of mixed plantation, ancient beech wood, mature scrub and alder / birch damp woodland. Fencing is non-existent or poorly maintained, allowing free movement of the larger mammals between the wood and surrounding fields. The area is used as a pheasant shoot. Large amounts of feed grain are used to rear the game birds through the winter. This encourages a good stock of ground mammals, which in turn support the carnivores. The wood has four or five Tawny Owl territories.

The second part of the walk was in mature scrubby woodland on gravel and sand, overlying chalk. The mature trees were mainly a mix of sycamore and ash with some pines. A large nest in a pine had a diameter 6-8ft and had been occupied and extended over the last ten years by various birds, including crows and then hawks. The previous year, three young Buzzards had fledged there. One had failed to make it through the harsh winter and its skeletal remains were at the base of the nest tree. The route then followed an overgrown path past an old chalk/flint working, through further areas of plantation, with firs on chalk. Many trees were dead or showing poor growth because they had been planted on the wrong soil type. A Nettle-leaved Bellflower and a single Pyramidal Orchid were found. Thirty years ago this area had many Bee Orchids and the chalk pit had resident Adders. Now it is covered in an under-storey of dogwood and blackberry, but Wild Strawberry and Common Twayblade still survive in sunnier spots. The margins of the woodland ride had large quantities of Wild Parsnip coming into bloom. Along with the thistles, these attracted hoverflies, wasps and other insects. At the end of the ride was a large sunny clearing, where Silver-washed Fritillaries, Red Admirals, Meadow Browns and Large Whites were seen. Blackcaps and Chiffchaffs were still singing occasionally in this area. To the North of the clearing, the path led up through an area of damp alder and birch. About 30 yards from the path was a large patch of Deadly Nightshade. The plants exhibited both flowers and immature green fruits. The dry remains of the previous year's plants were still standing - showing that the wise deer do not browse on them! The walk was brought to a close and the party made their way back to the Bottle and Glass, where the majority of walkers enjoyed a light luncheon.

Sixteen members met in the car park of Upper Basildon village hall on the pleasantly warm morning of Wednesday August 17th for a walk led by Susan and Peter Twitchett. The group was joined by Claire Pitcher, who was preparing an article featuring three societies (including RDNHS) based around Pangbourne for the October edition of *Berkshire Life* magazine. Puffballs were spotted on the playing field behind the village hall. Wild Arum, Woodruff, Dog's Mercury and Enchanter's Nightshade were seen in Harley Hill Wood on the descent to Hook End Lane and Goldcrest, Robin, Blackbird, Nuthatch and Buzzard were heard. The hedgerows lining both sides of Hook End Lane were filled with a wide variety of plants, including Bladder Campion, Marjoram, Hedge Bedstraw, Agrimony and Musk Mallow. Several badger setts were seen. Chalk grassland plants at the edge of the cultivated field next to Howe Grove Wood included Figwort, Vervain, Common Centaury, Common Poppy, Field Madder, White Clover, Scarlet Pimpernel, Pale Toadflax, Bird's-foot Trefoil, Eyebright and Annual Mercury. One surprising observation was that of the Adonis Blue butterfly, a first for this site. Other butterflies seen

were Common Blue, Small Copper, Large Skipper, Gatekeeper, Holly Blue, Small and Large White, Meadow Brown and Speckled Wood. Earlier in the week, a Grass Snake had been seen in Upper Basildon, also a first sighting for this area. The walk continued along the footpath behind Royal Berkshire Shooting School with more sightings of badger setts, to the road in front of Broom Wood, back to Hook End Lane via Hare Green, up to the village hall car park and on to the Red Lion pub for lunch.

On 21st September, Alice and Eric Ayers led a walk which started at Shinfield Grange. The route was through Reading University farmland to the River Loddon and over the bridge to the ruins of the old Arborfield Church. On the edge of a cornfield, Marsh Cudweed and Dwarf Mallow were identified, and some time was spent looking at the alien plants in a strip of land planted for the benefit of pheasants. On the return stretch, the sun had come out, and with it the Red Admiral and Comma butterflies, feasting on the Ivy flowers in the hedge.

Eighteen members, with Colin Dibb as leader, met on Bucklebury Common between Chapel Row and Upper Bucklebury on 19th October. Before starting, the group saw the open common covered with Ling growing on the acid gravel and discussed the management by volunteers, which includes pulling up Scots Pine seedlings and topping young Silver Birches. An unusual find was a small Aspen. Walks are held every summer to see and hear churring Nightjars and roding Woodcock. The walk started to the south to pass a mature Scots Pine and an American Red Oak, with Hard Fern, which again is an indicator of acid soil, growing in a gully. To the north of Douai Abbey, there was a transition to agricultural land with an interesting game strip with cornflowers in blue abundance and linseed in flower amongst senescent amaranth. On the return leg, there was a disappointing absence of fungi in Ironmongers Copse and the playing field at Chapel Row but this was more than compensated by the re-discovery by Martin Sell of the rare fungus Zonal Rosette *Podoscypha multizonata* growing close to one of the old oaks in the Avenue. This was an unusual walk in that it was entirely on naturally acid ground, although ameliorated on some fields by the application of lime to raise the pH to a suitable level for barley and wheat.

On 16th November, Mick and Jacky Cross led 15 members on a walk which started and ended at the Fox and Hounds at Sunnyside, Theale. The walk started out around Hosehill Lake, where Wigeon were particularly numerous and a Water Rail was heard making its ‘squealing pig’ call from deep in the waterside vegetation. Other birds included Gadwall, Great Crested Grebe, a few Tufted Ducks and Greylag Geese. The route then led westwards along Bottom Lane towards Sulhampstead. A few Shovelers were spotted on the next gravel pit and big Parasol Mushrooms were seen in the copse at the side of the lane. A footpath led across the fields to the Kennet and Avon Canal. Fieldfares were numerous and a flock of Siskins was moving through the Alders. Blue-green Verdigris Agaric fungi were found growing in the grass. A few Water Avens plants were in flower beside the canal – an extraordinary record for November.

On Thursday 15th December, 8 members, led by Gordon Crutchfield, met at the Reformation at Gallowstree Common on a bright, breezy morning after a cold wet night and walked through woods and fields past Wyfold Grange into the grounds of the old Borocourt Hospital and back through Wyfold Wood. It was expected to be a rather barren walk after some cold nights and frost but 39 species of fungi were found, some of them in abundance, more than were found during the fungus foray at the end of October. The most striking species were the brilliantly white *Hygrophorus eburneus*, *Agaricus augustus*, *Lactarius subdulcis*, *Laccaria laccata* and *L. amethystea* in addition to the Wood Blewits, Fly Agarics, Clouded Agarics, clitocybes, collybias, mycenas and so on that have been so abundant this autumn. In comparison, only 11 species of flowering plant were seen in bloom, the most unexpected being Garlic Mustard. Disappointingly few birds were seen but some of the party had a very good view of a male Muntjac. This was a very pleasant walk, a great contrast with the previous year when the walk did not occur because of snowy conditions.

INDOOR MEETINGS 2011

Ricki Bull

4th January – Peter Spillet – Peru, Land of Incas, Earthquakes and Biodiversity

The three elements: the Incas, earthquakes and biodiversity featured strongly in Peter's presentation. The whole coast of Peru is a seismic zone and, indeed, two days after Peter and his partner Yvette had left Lima in August 2007 the region suffered a massive earthquake which left several hundred people dead.

Peru itself is a large country twice the size of France with about 25 million inhabitants. It is a 'biodiversity hotspot' with over 1,800 bird species, about 20% of the world total. To put this in perspective the whole of North America has less than 1,000 species. Peter explained the reasons for such prolific diversity: the different habitats – the coast, the high Andes and the rainforest, the latitude in the Neotropics and the multitude of ecological niches.

The first port of call was down the coast from Lima to the Ballestas Islands, also known as 'the poor man's Galapagos'! Fed by the nutrient-rich Humboldt current sweeping up from the south, the islands support huge colonies of seabirds. We were shown some stunning slides of Peruvian Boobies, pelicans, gulls and three species of cormorant including the Guanay, all of which contribute to the guano deposits which were exploited in the past for fertilizer. In addition there were Humboldt Penguins, South American Sea-lions and Bottle-nosed Dolphins. The coast itself is extremely arid, in the rain shadow of the Andes.

The next step was a flight up the Andes to Cusco and the Sacred Valley of the Incas at around 3500m. The area is notable for its Spanish colonial buildings and striking stone edifices left by the Incas. As proof of their enduring architectural skills, the Inca structures were still standing whilst many of the later Spanish buildings have collapsed in subsequent earthquakes.

Peter gave a brief outline of the expansion of the huge Inca Empire in the 15th century before its dramatic demise as a result of civil war, exposure to European diseases and defeat at the hands of the Spanish conquistadors. High altitude birds were not neglected and we saw shots of Mountain Caracara, Andean Lapwing. Andean Gull, Andean Duck, Puna Teal and Puna Ibis.

The highlight of the trip was the visit to Machu Picchu, the jewel in the crown of the Inca Empire. Rediscovered by the American explorer Hiram Bingham in 1911, the site, in its remote mountain fastness, was never reached and desecrated by the Spanish. Machu Picchu is one of those incredible places that exceed expectations when you actually see it! Peter showed a series of photos of brightly coloured tanagers and hummingbirds. We had a succession of coronets, sapphires, racket-tails, violetears, thornbills and sylphs.

Our intrepid travelers then descended the eastern flanks of the Andes by jeep, stopping overnight to visit a gaudy cock-of-the-rock lek. At the foot of the mountains they reached the Rio Madre de Dios and proceeded downriver by motorized canoe for several hours, the only practicable way to travel in the Amazonian rainforest. Even in the dry season the tributary is enormously wide at this point and still has 2,000 miles to go before reaching the mouth of the Amazon! Wildlife was abundant with vultures, herons, macaws, kingfishers and toucans flying overhead whilst several species of monkey could be spotted in the trees along the river banks.

Peter and Yvette then stayed in a remote jungle camp with only mosquitos and leeches to spoil their enjoyment of a magnificent array of birds and animals. Highlights included a family of River Otters frolicking in the shadows, a group of Capybara and a nocturnal glimpse of a Tapir. Notable avian spectacles included several species of parrot and macaw queuing up at a clay lick, Sunbittern, Horned Screamers and the weird looking, primitive Hoatzin or 'Stink-bird'

After flying back to Cusco, Peter ended the trip with a less than appetizing roasted guinea-pig for dinner! All in all, a humorous and interesting account of a fascinating country, illuminated by some excellent high quality photos which we've come to expect.

18th January – James Butler – An Evening on Safari

James Butler has made 8 trips in 8 years to the Kruger National Park in South Africa. He and his wife are self-taught trackers, having learned through watching others and by observing the animals in the park. By using self-catering cabins within the South African National Park, the Butlers found that they could have self-drive trips which were far less expensive than those of tour companies. In addition, through their interest in World Vision South Africa, they began the charity CHOKO, based in Cholsey which supports Kodumela, a world vision project in an area near Kruger.

Kruger National Park, above Swaziland, covers an area the size of Wales. It is now part of the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park which includes parts of South Africa, Mozambique and Zimbabwe.

The approach to the park is through a range of private game reserves bordering it. Within the park system, cars are not allowed off-road. Through the many miles of bush in the park, the Butlers learned to spot things that are slightly different in the landscape whilst either driving very slowly or sitting and waiting. Klipspringers may blend into the rocks on which they stand, whereas spotting a leopard in a tree might be helped by noticing the vertical 'branch' which is in fact the tail hanging down. At times the animals are predictable by their habits: hyaena are attracted to the smell of meat at the 'bri', the barbecues that are common among visitors, whilst African Fish Eagles can be spotted because they use dead trees as a vantage point.

The tarred or gravel roads which make the park accessible are also useful for predators. Hooved animals struggle for grip on a tarmac surface and predatory animals can be seen chasing their prey onto the road so that they slip and the kill is made more easily.

There are over 517 species of birds within the park, 253 of which are resident. The ecozone around the Zimbabwe Mozambique border supports the Carmine Bee-eater, and the Bataleur which can range about 250 square miles a day. Pied Barbets, Kori bustards, Red-crested korhaans, Lilac-breasted Rollers and Giant Kingfishers (measuring more than 40cm long) can be found throughout the park. The species all have both Afrikaans and English names.

Other creatures that can be seen in the park include the Leopard Tortoise, which favours a thorny to grassland habitat, the giant African land snail and the giant millipede.

The photographs which James showed the group indicated the level of joy and interest that he and his wife find in watching the animals: a young elephant digging for water in a dry riverbed, lions feeding on rhino, an elephant snorkelling in a deep waterhole, the newborn baby elephant protected by its family. All the images told the story of a place visited and observed closely by people interested deeply in both the environment and the culture.

Further information on CHOKO can be found at: http://www.choko.org.uk

1st February – Samantha Cartwright – Conservation of the Mauritius Kestrel

The Mauritius Kestrel is the only remaining raptor on the island. Its long tarsi and short wings help it to hunt under the canopy of the native forests. Before 1750 the whole of Mauritius was covered with forests and the Kestrel would have been thriving everywhere, but since then most of the forests have been logged and the land used for planting sugar cane. At present, only two small areas of forest are left - on the steepest slopes of the mountains where they cannot grow crops. New species of trees were introduced such as exotic palms, which grow much faster than the native trees and have such a dense canopy that the Kestrel cannot prey underneath.This extreme loss of habitat has strongly contributed to the decline of the Mauritius Kestrel. Other negative factors included the introduction of foreign mammals (previously there were only bats), passerines and reptiles into the sugar plantations, for although the Kestrel has exploited these new sources of food, the young chicks do not yet produce a pellet (not necessary when the original food consisted mainly of geckos) and the young often die when their stomachs fill up with the fur of small mammals. Bigger mammals such as introduced monkeys, steal the eggs from the crevices in which the Kestrel nests. The local human population has persecuted the Mauritius Kestrel, as people thought that the bird predated on their chickens and therefore they called them '*mangeurs des poules*'. They even thought the birds would catch their piglets, but in reality they eat only small prey such as lizards and shrews. Furthermore, the introduction of DDT in 1948, and even

more toxic insecticides in later years, caused a high mortality, as the compounds accumulate in predators. DDT led to the thinning of the egg shell and mortality of the embryos, whereas products such as dieldrin led to mortality of the adults as well.

In 1974, there were only four birds left of the species, but since then rescue measures have been taken to increase the numbers, such as captive breeding, supplementary feeding, provision of monkey-proof nestboxes and predator control. Captive breeding initially had little success, but succeeded in the end. Prof. Carl Jones pioneered in this area of research and a lot about the bird has been learned since then, such as the fact that the hatchlings should not eat small mammals, which they used to give them in captivity. Now they give them baby food. In 1991, 94 birds were reared in captivity and released in the wild. This release happened in various ways, e.g. by 'hacking', in which case six or so young are brought together, so that they get used to other birds of the same species, or by 'fostering', in which case extra eggs are given to wild kestrels. Between 1984 and 1993, 331 kestrels were released in total, using different techniques and after provision of nestboxes. In 1994 there were 56 pairs in the wild in three subpopulations and in 2000 the population had increased to more than 500 birds, so that the species could be downgraded to 'vulnerable' instead of 'endangered' on the Red Data list. However, in 2010 there were only two instead of three localities left on Mauritius in which the kestrel occurs and the number has gone down to fewer than 400 birds, including breeding, non-breeding and juvenile birds. This number will not increase if the habitat does not expand.

All birds have been ringed with coloured rings for scientific monitoring and the dataset is the longest and most complete for a tropical forest bird, as there are 33 years of monitoring now. The genetic diversity is small as the birds do not travel far and the remaining two populations do not mix. Perhaps habitat corridors should be provided in the future for mixing of the genetic material of the two populations in order to prevent too much inbreeding. The results of the research provides unique and invaluable data that can be used for the conservation of other island species. Another result of this success story is that Mauritius has become an attraction to eco-tourists who want to see this Kestrel saved from extinction.

After this interesting conservation story, in which success did not come overnight, there were many questions from the audience, such as whether the number of birds will increase now that the sugarcane farms are disappearing. The answer was that unfortunately those lands get invaded by fast-growing foreign shrubs and that these dense thickets cannot be used for hunting by the birds. Another question was whether the kestrel could be introduced to the small islands in the neighbourhood where they are in less danger of predation. The answer was that this has been tried, but that the birds flew back to the mainland.

15th February – David Cliffe – As we were – 130 years of the RDNHS

David had been working on the society's records and photographs, on and off, over the last five years. Not surprisingly for a society with no premises or library of its own, over time, material had found its way into several museums, libraries and archives in the area. Now it had all been listed, and all the photographs had been copied digitally, so that it was now possible to see them in chronological order, and to put them on the website, if the society wished.

There was a brief report on what had ended up where – the minute books, accounts, programmes, publications, scrapbooks, and the herbarium. Then came a brief history of the society, from preliminary meetings in 1880 to the decision for form a society in 1881 and onwards towards the present day.

The main part of the evening was the showing of 150 photographs, taken between 1880 and 2009.

Members were particularly struck by what people wore when out in the field in the early days. In 1881 the society was a male preserve, and middle-class gentlemen wore three-piece suits and hats. Ladies were making an appearance by 1900, in full-length skirts and large hats. Cloche hats were very much in vogue in the 1920s.

From the minute books it was obvious that meetings were run along much more formal lines than now, and where photographs had any names written on, people were referred to just by a surname. New members had to be proposed and seconded by existing members, and the final decision was made by the committee.

The field excursions were made to the same kinds of places as now – but members arrived by train and on foot, and later by bus. Tea was arranged, at a public or private house, and the society regularly visited some of the private country estates in the area.

There was much more emphasis on collecting things in the early days, and not much idea of nature conservation. The presence of the man with a gun in one of the earliest pictures probably indicates that if an interesting bird was seen, he would oblige so that those present could see it more closely. Competitions were held for collections of pressed plants or birds' eggs, and speakers brought in their collections of stuffed birds or animals, bird skins, butterflies or snail shells for viewing. Dr. F. W. Stansfield, in his presidential address in 1918, sounded a warning note, when he said that he "deprecated the making of large collections, often causing a local insect or plant to be exterminated."

Many eminent men and women had been members over the years, and David had brought with him a file of short biographies which he had compiled to aid in identifying the people in the photographs, and dating them. In many cases there had been nothing written on the original prints or glass plates at all. Now it was possible to identify most of the people on most of the photographs, right from the beginning. Also on display was a large lever-arch file filled with prints of all the photographs arranged in date order, so that long-standing members could write in the names of people who hadn't yet been identified.

It was an unusual and varied evening. Inevitably, older members saw pictures of family and friends who are no longer with us. Besides natural history, there was a great deal of social history, and a great deal about the history of Reading and the surrounding countryside.

1st March – Malcolm Storey – Life on the Seashore

Malcolm led 67 members and guests on a virtual walk down the seashore following the receding tide. After an explanation of the differences between rocky and sandy beaches, we started at the strandline, where the tides deposit shells, egg cases (usually empty), dead animals and seaweed etc among the flotsam and jetsam of human origin. Malcolm showed us photographs of various sea shells, mermaid's purses (which are the egg cases of sharks, rays, skates and dogfish), and cuttlefish and squid's eggs. Next came a piece of driftwood with holes and calcareous tubes. These were the signature of shipworms which wreaked havoc on wooden ships before copper hull sheathing was introduced in the 18th Century. Unfortunately, Malcolm had extracted a couple of shells for identification and then thrown the wood away. The shells turned out to be *Xylophora praestans*; however this species doesn't make the calcareous tubes, so there was another shipworm present but without its shells it could not be identified with certainty. Before leaving the strandline we were introduced to "Sea Beans" in the shape of the Sea Purse (*Dioclea reflexa*).

Turning to sandy beaches, the most obvious signs of life are lugworm casts. The cast is at the tail end and a small depression marks the head end of their U-shaped burrow. We learnt how they burrow using an inflatable proboscis. Other life on and in the sandy shore included the five species of razor-shells, sea potatoes, and the whelk *Natica alderi*. Moving into the "Wellie zone" we saw Great Scallop (*Pecten maximus*) and Common Shrimp (*Crangon crangon*).

A wooden post provided support for the small green seaweed (*Blidingia minima*) with a tiny Chironomid midge (*Telmatogeton japonicus*) which feeds on it. This tiny insect is an invasive alien species from the Pacific, proving that not all invasive aliens are big robust things like Japanese Knotweed or Signal Crayfish! Other invasive alien species on the sea shore include Slipper Limpet (*Crepidula fornicata*) and Oyster Thief (*Colpomenia peregrina*) from the American east coast, and Wireweed (*Sargassum muticum*) from the Pacific. Oyster Thief has been a major problem when it grows on oyster beds as the hollow spherical thallus fills with air at low tide, then on the rising tide lifts the oyster off the bottom and floats away. Wireweed is a more recent introduction and when it first became abundant on the shore in the 1980s people were worried it would overwhelm all the other species in rockpools. However, it now seems to have settled down and, although still very abundant, native species are able to coexist.

By this time the tide was well out and we moved to a rocky shore to meet seaweeds from each of the three groups: brown, red and green. Flat Periwinkle (*Littorina obtusata*) can often be found on one of the brown seaweeds and this introduced us to the planktonic larvae which many marine organisms have. This was followed by *Obelia geniculata* with its "alternation of generations" between the hydroid (polyp) generation and the "medusa" (jellyfish) generation. The red seaweeds included some chalky (calcified) species such as maerl (*Phymatolithon calcareum*) which generated much interest as some members had seen it on sale as a garden fertiliser. This is unsustainable as the beds are small and the alga only grows slowly. It's also pure marketing as it's simply lime and does no more for your garden than lime from chalk or limestone.

Rockpools came next and we saw a selection of anemones, crabs, prawns, gastropods, fish, sea squirts and starfish. Prawns can change colour by expanding or contracting coloured cells called chromatophores.

Finally Malcolm showed us a couple of amazing molluscs. First was *Elysia viridis*, a small sea hare, which feeds on the green alga, *Codium*. The mollusc captures the chloroplasts from its food, unharmed, and incorporates them into its own cells. The chloroplasts survive for a while and can actually photosynthesise. The second was the grey sea slug (*Aeolidia papillosa*) which pulls a similar trick on its sea anemone prey. Sea anemones have special "nematocyst" cells which fire a microscopic poisoned harpoon into their prey. The sea slug absorbs the nematocysts, without triggering them, and incorporates them into its own defences.

15th March – Members' Evening and AGM

Illustrated Account of the Walks of 2010-2011 – Jan Haseler

Jan Haseler gave an illustrated presentation on the 23 field excursions of 2010. A more detailed description of the field trips is given in Reading Naturalist No. 63.

Report on Basildon Park Events

The walk leaders from the Natural History Society are increasing the number of routes through the Park with the encouragement of Basildon Park staff.

A Bioblitz will be held at Basildon Park on the 2nd-3rd of July beginning at 14.30 on the 2nd. During this 24hr period as many records as possible will be made of the wildlife of the park. This follows on from our OPAL grant and has been done by OPAL team on various sites.

RDNHS will need as many experts and helpers as possible including work on earthworms, etc. A walk will begin at 14.30 on Saturday then there will be evening recording for moths, bats and badgers. We will be using our own or OPAL equipment to collect and identify what has been seen.

The Bioblitz will start in the yard near what was once the Girl Guides house. Further information will be in the Summer Programme card.

4th October – Nathan Callaghan & Mark Lee – Traffic Pollution and the Environment

Dr Callaghan spoke about the ongoing work on monitoring effects of air pollution at Imperial. He enumerated the compounds found as a result of pollution from road traffic and gave some examples, i.e. NOx is associated with adverse effects on human health and on vegetation, including leaf damage and reduced. He explained that the stations at which councils measure pollution are often not necessarily where people interact with the environment - places such as parks, open spaces, school fields, SSSI's and nature reserves.

The OPAL study sought to monitor the impact on sites near A, B and minor roads though their Air Pollution monitoring kit.

Mark Lee looked specifically on the effects of roads on chalk grassland plants. These plants were often found on steep slopes with an alkaline pH, the plants having to be hardy to cope with what was often a high level of drought. The sites, all in SE England, were chosen for the different levels of traffic density. Air quality, soil chemistry, and the effects on site management were taken into account.

Measures of air pollution included the levels of heavy metals in the soil, the soil pH (higher the nearer to the road most likely because of road maintenance chemicals), and moisture (run-off from roads meant nearby soil was more moist), salt in the soil and grazing policies. The height above the road affected the pollution as did barriers of trees or walls.

Indicator species were noted. Examples included: Yarrow which is salt tolerant; Pyramidal Orchids which do not do well in high nitrogen areas, willow herb which does tolerate nitrogen; Spring Vetchling which tolerates acidity.

Preliminary results seem to indicate that grazing is not an important fact nor is there an increase in salt tolerant species (salt washes through the ground); wider busier roads have yielded an increase of grass species most likely as a result of the increase in moisture; and species that like nitrogen have increased near the roads.

The results also seem to indicate that effect of particulates on plants is greatest nearest the road whereas gases affect plants at distances farther from the road.

It might be assumed that because emissions have decreased since 1990, the effect of traffic on these sites might also decrease. While there is a levelling off because of the catalytic converters and the reduction of lead in fuel there has also been increased traffic and any future increase in the speed limit will also increase the nitrogen released.

18th October – Helen Whiteside – The Real Life of Fantastic Mr. Fox

Helen Whiteside began her talk with a look at the 13 species of foxes which exist in the world. The red fox is one of the largest widespread animals – covering the whole of the northern hemisphere.

A family group of foxes, dominant male and dominant female and others have distinct home territories and a regular yearly pattern to their lives. Mating takes place through January and February, birth March through May with the period of dependency lasting from May through July. Dispersal of cubs then will occur in the period August through February.

There is one opportunity, lasting 5 days only, for a female fox to become pregnant. After mating, as a way of preventing the female to mate again, the foxes are fused together for up to a few hours. Dominant male foxes will mate with the dominant vixen in their territory but they may also venture up to 2 territories away for mating opportunities.

The male fox will usually come and give food to the vixen and babies who will spend up to 6 weeks in the den site. For urban foxes the den may be built under floorboards, or in or under a shed or summerhouse. When born cubs resemble black rats but within 10 weeks will look like little foxes. By the end of 6 months they will be foraging for themselves. This long period of dependency may lead to the vixen losing up to 25-30% of her weight as for the first three months they will be taking milk from the vixen.

From 6-12 months the cubs will be sub-adults and begin dispersing. The males will leave sooner and go further away from the birth territory. There is a difference, however, between the cubs of dominant and subdominant females. male cubs of dominant mothers tend to leave while the female cubs remain. For subdominant females the opposite is true.

The life of a fox in captivity may last from 10-12 years; however, up to 50% of all foxes live a year or less. Road traffic accidents account for the majority of fox deaths but mange can have a devastating effect on a local fox population. There is a 70% death rate of cubs caused through traffic, kidney diseases, general infection and malnourishment. Both birds of prey and badgers will also predate fox cubs.

In order to catch food a fox relies heavily on his ears which, when hunting, he can move independently. In the urban environment almost a third of the fox's food is scavenged meats, bones and fat. Other scavenged food gives another nearly 32% of his diet, while wild mammals (4.9%), fruit (3.3%), pet birds (3.1%), wild birds (^.1%) and pet mammals (0.9%) comprise the rest. In rural situations 48% of the diet is composed of rabbits or hares and 24.8% birds.

There is a belief that foxes are spreading. Northern cities in the UK are starting to see more foxes but throughout the UK the densities at present are roughly the same. There has been an attempt to eliminate foxes but if a population within one home territory is removed, other foxes will move into that area. In order for there to be a reduction of foxes, 70% of urban foxes would need to be killed each year, an effort which is not cost-effective. In addition out of the fox population in the UK over 80% are still in the countryside.

The studies of the urban fox population in Bristol have used ear tags, radio collars and analysis of fox scat and urine. Identifying the paternity and maternity of the cubs has been useful in studying both the territories and movement of the foxes. For further information please see: www.bio.bris.ac.uk and www.thefoxwebsite.org.

1st November – Dr Fred Rumsey – Ferns of the British Isles

Ferns are a primitive and diverse group of plants whose biology can best be compared to the amphibians – they rely on moisture, especially in reproduction, and were one of the first of the more complex organisms to come onto land. In Devonian times the ferns diversified and by the carboniferous era there were many types.

Dr. Rumsey described the order of ferns, gave examples and information on each and the numbers of the sub-species which are found in the UK. The structure of the ferns often limits the effectiveness of their growth in any area, however the spread of spores by the wind (they can be blown a thousand kilometres) means that the species can be or have been carried across wide geographic barriers giving them a much larger range of species than flowering plants.

Using diagrams, Dr. Rumsey explained the reproductive cycle of the plants from spore to gametophyte. Each frond will have a cluster of 30-40 sporangia containing 64 spores in each. As spores dry they become flexed and can be carried by the wind; should they land in a suitable place they will produce gametophytes. Gametophytes, of one cell thickness, in turn produce, in separate areas, male and female cells. Fertilisation of these forms requires moisture as the sperm needs to swim to the female egg. Gametophytes usually last a few months but as soon as the first leaf of one of the group is formed a chemical is produced which kills the competition. However both the Jersey or Annual Fern (*Anogramma leptophylla*) and the Killarney Filmy Fern (*Trichomanes speciosum*) have gametophytes that persist from year to year

This process of 'inbreeding' ensures reproduction but has also has negative consequences. Some ferns therefore have developed a method to 'outbreed.' Effective reproduction is more difficult in these cases as the spores need to land within 2cm of each other. Dr. Rumsey gave examples of hybridisation which often occur where two species of fern have developed in different habitats and therefore have no barriers to breeding. An example of this is *Asplenium x microdon* (The Guernsey Fern) which seems to develop in banks where there is a mixed geology.

Nearly half the U.K. ferns are polyploidal (having 3 or more times the haploid number of chromosomes.) Some of the common species of ferns have many sets of chromosomes which make it more difficult to ascertain the original parents. Dr. Rumsey gave examples of polyploid ferns and explained that one of the problems with polyploidy is that the 'parents' can come together a number of times in a number of places, each producing subtly different though genetically the same 'offspring.'

Dr. Rumsey concluded his informative talk by elaborating on some of the most threatened British ferns as well as some of the alien ferns that are now found in the British Isles.

I would like to thank Kit Brownlee for her contribution to this report.

15th November – Prof. Georges Dussart – Slugs and Snails and….?

The life and loves of a soft-bodied animal

Professor Dussart entertained the members with an informative yet amusing talk on slugs and snails, remains of which from 600 million years ago resemble some molluscs that are alive today.

Types of slugs found in Britain today were described, some of which (*Arion nigra* and *rufus*) were not found here before the WWII. Others such as the Grey, Leopard, and Keeled Slugs are regular visitors to our gardens. Snails also range from the *Helix aspersa* which is common in our gardens to the *Monacha cantiana* which has been working its way northward from Kent.

Control of slugs and snails within the garden can be done via various methods. Professor Dussart suggested that while metaldehyde was a less toxic alternative to methiocarb, a natural control like nematodes could be used. He also recommended hand-picking slugs, particularly effective if done in early March and in November, and planting marigolds.

The internal characteristics of molluscs, including the way in which the mouth parts of snails and slugs work, gave us an idea of why one can hear the sound of slugs or snails eating lettuce leaves or, when close to the sea, limpets eating. Most members of the audience were surprised by internal arrangement of the slug and snail organs and the way in which the brain was developed to reside on top of the gut, with various ganglia around and below it.

Sexual reproduction in the group was entertainingly explained, including the existence of group orgies within some species. There may be male, female, hermaphrodites and transsexuals within a species. Two hermaphrodites can reproduce, the largest and the fastest becoming male, or in some species, the snails can take turns, being female on one occasion and male on the next.

Professor Dussart's particular interest in is the area of Schistosomiasis (*Bilharzia*) which, next to malaria, is the greatest health worry in less developed nations. It is spread by a freshwater snail that can even live in the soggy wet areas around a well and in areas which were affected through the building of the Three Gorges Dam in China and the Aswan Dam in Egypt, on both occasions spreading the disease further afield. The answer to controlling the disease appears to lie more in the realms of education (breaking the cycle of infection and spread) and alleviating poverty, for medical treatment is economically unsupportable.

6th Dec – Christmas Party

Some 60 members of RDNHS joined in the festive cheer of another successful Christmas Party. Food was in abundance, contributed by all who came, with Michael and Josey Keith-Lucas providing the mulled wine.

Michael Keith-Lucas regaled us all with slides and a talk about his and Josey's journey to Sicily where, in addition to all the typical sights, they unexpectedly managed to see an eruption of Mt. Etna.

Meryl Beek's annual Christmas Quiz, was its usual treat and our brains were further taxed by a plant and seed matching quiz provided by Malcolm Storey, who also gave a photographic presentation of the answers. Both were highly enjoyable yet left time for everyone to have time to relax and catch up with friends.

Hornet Robberfly (*Asilus crabroniformis*) (pair), Cholsey
© Chris Raper

Members enjoying the Midweek Walk from Upper Basildon on August 17th (© Claire Pitcher)

Photographic Competition 2011
winning photographs (see opposite)

Bladder Campion Seed
Winner: Pattern Perfect & Best Overall Entry – © Malcolm Storey

Common Knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*)" near Warburg Nature Reserve
Winner: Driven to Abstraction – © Rob Stallard

Mycena on a branch
Winner: Small is Beautiful – © Jan Haseler

Small Elephant Hawkmoth
Winner: Colour Prejudice – © Jan Haseler

Grey Seal in St. Ives Harbour
Winner: Nature in Action – © Anne Booth

Am&a Am&a Am&a – 3 Amanda's Blues)
Winner: Three of a Kind – © Laurie Haseler

PHOTOGRAPHIC COMPETITION 2011

Ricki Bull – competition coordinator

It was encouraging to see the increase in both number of photographers and number of photographs entered in this year's competition. Fifty-one photographic entries were received, some comprising three photographs, and all were of a high standard. Judging was difficult for the members and the competition was close in several categories.

Best Overall Photograph was Malcolm Storey's photograph of "Bladder Campion Seed" which was also the winner in the Pattern Perfect Competition. Malcolm received a shield and book token for his win.

Category winners are:

Small Is Beautiful: photographs of anything small

Winner: Jan Haseler for her photo of *Mycena* species

Pattern Perfect: an abstract category with the emphasis on pattern.

Winner: Malcolm Storey (as noted above).

Little and Large: in photographs of two related subjects: one large and one small either in the same photograph or in two separate photographs.

Winner: Philip Allen for a photograph of a sprouting acorn and an oak tree.

Against All Odds: wildlife thriving in an unlikely place

Winner: Robbie Robertson: "Primrose Path."

Three of a Kind is for photographs of three similar subjects. Again this may be as a single photograph or three separate photographs.

Winner: Laurie Haseler - "Am &a Am &a Am &a – three Amanda's Blues"

Nature In Action: photograph of an activity taking place.

Winner: Anne Booth: "Grey Seal in St. Ives Harbour."

Driven To Abstraction: a general abstract category.

Winner: Rob Stallard: "Common Knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*)" near Warburg Nature Reserve. 1st June 2011.

Colour Prejudice: in this category bright colours are all important.

Winner: Jan Haseler for Small Elephant Hawkmoth at Devil's Punchbowl

We thank everyone for their entries and hope that even more members will be inspired to enter next year.

STROLLING WITH THE PRESIDENT

Chris Bucke

An account of the rambling activities of your President, in case they might prove useful.

Overseas

There had been a drought of biblical proportions in the Middle East during the second half of 2010. The President found himself on an expensive but largely abortive expedition to the mountainous areas of Jordan at the end of November looking, largely in vain, for autumn flowering crocuses, irises, *Colchicums* and the like. Compensations resulted in the form of unscheduled visits: to the astonishing Roman ruins at Jerash and to the desert area of Wadi Rhum. The Emperor Hadrian, of wall fame, spent time at Jerash, presumably to thaw out, and was remembered there by magnificent ceremonial gateways. Jerash was more to the presidential taste than Petra, probably because it was less crowded and the guide was vastly better informed. Wadi Rhum, at that time of year, was splendid, the temperature was very agreeable, the air clear, the views superb and whilst there were no furry animals to be seen, their tracks and those of reptiles, legged and otherwise were visible. The trip was by no means a waste of time but something about it, like the absence of greenery and good beer led to a presidential decision to explore areas nearer home more thoroughly. Diana concurred, provided that trips did not interfere with the imperative to water the garden and keep it neat and tidy.

However, there is always an urge to find pastures new. The first new pastures were in Normandy on a butterfly hunting trip with Naturetrek in early July. This was fascinating, not simply because of the presence of unfamiliar butterflies (Ilex Hairstreak, Alcon Blue, Mazarine Blue, Queen of Spain Fritillary, Weaver's Fritillary, Mallow Skipper, Large Tortoiseshell) but because so much of the terrain was familiar yet with different species of plant, for instance sand dunes blue with Western Spiked Speedwell, damp woodland with Summer Ladies Tresses, Viper's Grass and Whorled Caraway all growing together, with Heath Lobelia not far away and chalk grassland with Round-headed Rampion, Cut-leaved Self-heal, and the Asphodel *Anthericum ramosum* in addition to familiar species. We were based in Arromanches, where the mulberry harbour was located for the Normandy campaign in 1944-5. The many commemorative plaques and relics of the war were very moving.

Wanderlust returned in early November, with a return to the Middle East, the Western Taurus Mountains in S.W Turkey, to look for autumn-flowering bulbs. This time there had been abundant rain which had ceased when we arrived and we saw only one or two clouds during 8 days of botanising. There is no great abundance of flowers at that time of year but there are areas with delightful quantities of *Cyclamen*, various Crocuses and Colchicums, yellow Sternbergias, the occasional Grape Hyacinth and, in one area, a very rare autumn-flowering snowdrop *Galanthus peshmenii*. The hillsides are largely forested with evergreens so maples in brilliant autumn colour were particularly striking.

There is a constant urge to visit one's homeland. The President found his way to the Isle of Man in mid-October – the wrong time of year because a weather front persisted over the island for the whole of the five days so the hills were covered in cloud. There was some sunshine, from 2.45 until 3.00 on most days! Strolling on beaches, watching, and being watched by, seals, with gannets plunging in the distance, oyster catchers, redshanks, turnstones and dunlins running around and shrieking, is most relaxing. The Manx Wildlife Trust is very vigorous in acquiring and developing new reserves: they have one of the very best sites in the British Isles for watching Hen Harriers with hides in a marshy "curragh" area in which Royal Ferns (*Osmunda regalis*) grow up to 2m tall. It has been realised that the Island is one of the best places to watch basking sharks so several of the specialised "eco-tourism" holiday companies offer trips centred on seeing them. As a consequence several other species of sharks and cetaceans are observed regularly.

Nearer Home

An invitation to lecture at Corfe Mullen in early February provided an opportunity to spend a weekend at Studland. The first signs of spring were apparent in the woodland below Ballard Down, the scent of winter heliotrope (*Petasites fragrans*) filling the air in sheltered areas. The cliffs above Old Harry and his wife were distinctly draughty but exhilarating, always worth visiting. An afternoon walk along the beach to Shell Bay was a very pleasant contrast. The very large number of shells of the razor clam suggested that opportunities are missed in that area for gourmet dining. The impulse to visit the sub-tropical gardens at Abbotsbury was not suppressed, nor, returning home, was Hillier's arboretum. Both gardens are not difficult to reach from Reading and well worth visiting even in February.

The target area for an April trip was the Mendips, largely unknown to both of us. A pleasant hotel at Webbington with a splendid view of the M5 was a convenient centre for exploring. From the map, Blean Down appeared interesting: in fact it was very interesting, an isolated limestone lump, a detached part of the Mendips. The most striking species was the very rare White Rockrose (*Helianthemum apenninum*) which occurred in abundance on a south facing slope. The occasional creamy-flowered plant may have been the even rarer hybrid between *H. apenninum* and the Common Rock Rose *H. nummularium*. Older members reminisce about a coach visit to Blean Down years ago: perhaps it is time for another visit.

A brisk walk up to the top of Crook Peak along the ridge and down through very fine woods to Cross was delightful. Mid- April was the period during which the season was returning to normal after the very cold start: blubells, ramsons, wood anemones, wood sorrel were all coming into bloom. Energy was restored and thirst satisfied in a very nice pub at Cross. A path that contoured round to the beautiful secluded village of Compton Bishop was very acceptable but the presidential navigation went astray after that, resulting in an unexpected return to Crook Peak.

Glastonbury is well worth a visit, not just for the ruins of the Abbey but for the many artisan shops and pleasant gardens. Information boards in the ground of the Abbey give the best account of the lifestyle of badgers the President and his partner had seen. The need to see fine gardens was more than satisfied by the small but beautiful Chalice Garden, the need for exercise satisfied by the climb up to Glastonbury Tor.

Diana's home is in Leighton Buzzard on greensand (leading to frequent discussions about the relative draining qualities of greensand and Reading plateau gravel – no conclusion is reached!). Nearby are pleasant walks on the Greensand Way: there a plant familiar from Bucklebury Common, the Climbing Corydalis (*Ceratocapnos claviculata*) is frequent. Further away, chalk country returns at impressive sites such as Sharpenhoe Clappers and Dunstable Downs. The President was unaware of the delights of the downland beside the Icknield Way in that area, not many would be enthralled by the prospect of visiting the Luton area! A reserve of the Bedfordshire, Northants and Cambridgeshire Trust at Pegsdon proved particularly striking, a very deep valley indeed grazed by Manx sheep and with plots fenced off to study the effect of different grazing regimes on the chalk grassland. This is another area that merits a visit by the Society.

The President had reached advanced age without having seen the Seven Sisters. This situation was corrected during a visit to the South Downs at the end of November, based at the HF Holidays base at Abingworth. The downs nearby were very pleasant with 25 species of plant still in bloom and very fine displays of fungi in the turf. The walk on the next day from Burling Gap up to the top of Beachy Head and back was one of the high spots of the year, in particular the return walk with occasional sunbeams striking the white cliffs but leaving the grassland in shade. Weather permitting, winter can be one of the absolute best times of year to ramble in this country.

Now for 2012!

MUSTELIDS

Tony Rayner

As Vertebrates Recorder the records from members I prize most are those of the mustelids. Aside from reports of Badgers, the other species are seldom seen. Even reports of Badgers have tailed off, with just five records in each of the last two years. Maybe members are going out less at night, or maybe there is a reluctance to report road kills. It is in fact mustelid and car collisions that have accounted for many of our records to date! Indeed you are most unlikely to see the nocturnal Polecat, other than as a road kill. Looking back over the past twenty years the RDNHS reports of Weasels and Stoats rely heavily on myself and Gordon Crutchfield. I seem to see the Weasels and Gordon the Stoats, but don't read too much into that. So how about more members trying to add to our records? When, where and how should you look? Weasels have been reported in every month, with October being the best for some reason. Kings Meadow, Clayfield Copse, Blackhouse Wood Caversham, Dunsden, Sonning Common and Englefield have all yielded records in the past. Further afield Ipsden and Cholsey seem to be hotspots, but this probably just reflects the haunts of the main mustelid spotters!

Stoats have shown no particular month to appear, but the period from November to February inclusive has seldom yielded much. Interesting to see that, unlike Weasels, Stoats have seldom been seen close to Reading. The Stoat seems to be much more of a rural beast, but there are isolated records from Emmer Green, the Peppard Road, Dinton Pastures, Grazeley and Pingewood.

The relatively recent spread of the Polecat from the west is reflected in the fact that 1999 produced our first record. Since then there have been reports almost every year since and almost all were road kills. April and June appear to be the most favoured months, and it may not be necessary to venture far afield: there is one record from Caversham Bridge, Reading. A Ferret has been reported just twice over the past twenty years, once from Cow Lane, Reading.

There have been one or two records of American Mink most years with August being the best month. Once again one record came close to central Reading – from Pipers Island. However the Aldermaston, Burghfield, Moor Copse areas seem to be particularly favoured.

Last but not least, the Otter is back and we are beginning to have records – what better inducement could there be to go mustelid spotting! When not frequenting the waterways, perhaps the best tip is to travel with a passenger equipped with a notebook for those roadside sightings! When simply walking in the countryside be prepared to stop quietly at times, especially when the prevailing wind is in your face.

BRITISH WILDLIFE EVENT AT THE LIVING RAINFOREST

Ricki Bull

For two weeks in August five members of the RDNHS supported the Living Rainforest in its project on British Wildlife by giving sessions for visitors (mainly children and their parents) and through both visual and tactile displays. Michael Keith-Lucas gave sessions on pollen. at the same time engaging the children's interest with his feely-boxes, Trish Marcouse and John Lerpiniere had a session on butterflies and Jan Haseler and Ricki Bull brought moths and caterpillars for visitors to look at and talk about. They were joined by Ray Reedman of the BOC who talked about garden birds. Both Butterfly Conservation and the Berkshire

Moth Group supported us through lending their very colourful and informative display material. All these activities were enhanced through the use of the equipment purchased as part of last year's OPAL.

Valuable interaction with the families enabled RDNHS to help interest, excite and inform what may well be the next generation of naturalists and we are grateful to The Living Rainforest for giving us the opportunity to do so.

IVY BEES

Rob Stallard

We hear of invasions of new species of plants and animals all the time. So it was with somewhat mixed feelings that I discovered that a colony of Ivy Bees (*Colletes hederae*) had taken over my front lawn. It is believed to be the first time they have been recorded in Berkshire. The BWARS (Bees, Wasps and Ants Recording Society) web site now has my garden in Tilehurst as the most northerly confirmed locality in the UK.

I first noticed them on 11th September 2010 when I saw a small swarm of insects darting around in warm sunshine, from a distance I thought they were just flies but as I got closer the yellow and black striped abdomen suggested wasps. Stepping back a little, I was glad to see their interest was not in me but in each other for there were a number of tight balls of dozens of individuals in bushes and on the ground. Perhaps they were bees forming new swarms, but there were not enough of them to support that idea. With help from Jan Haseler, Stuart Hine and Stuart Roberts (of BWARS) they were identified as Ivy Bees. This is a species sweeping north into the UK from the near continent. They feed nearly exclusively on Ivy pollen and nectar but I have also seen one or two feeding on *Abelia grandiflora* and *Sedum spectabile* flowers. They are a kind of miner bee, and although not a social insect live alongside each other in large colonies (officially though, these are called 'aggregations' as they are not interconnected). One of their most characteristic behaviours is the formation of tight balls of a dozen or so males around a female when they first emerge from the ground. Once mated, the females dig burrows a few inches long in lawns and meadows in which to deposit their brood of eggs together with a plentiful supply of ivy pollen. They fly for only a few weeks each year. Their emergence is timed to coincide with the flowering of Ivy and they are killed by the first sharp frosts. The wasp-like abdomen is misleading, these are extremely reluctant to sting and allowed me to approach closely without showing any annoyance and so they are safe with pets and children. They have made their home in the driest and sunniest portion of my front garden which is open to the South and the colony of a few hundred individuals covers about 30 square feet. In 2011 I was glad to see a repeat performance, and the area occupied has more than doubled. Burrows now cover the lawn and nearby borders. The area is on a steep slope with a lot of chalk in the soil and so it keeps dry. I have noticed that an animal has been digging down to feed on the larvae – as evidenced by deep narrow excavations into the lawn (I suspect a fox but have no direct evidence). I have seen Ivy Bees feeding on Common Ivy (*Hedera helix*) up to two hundred yards away, and as some bees are known to travel miles to forage for food their range could be much larger. There is certainly plenty of Ivy for them in the area.

The late flowering of Ivy and the early sharp frosts in 2010 did not seem to have an adverse affect on their population. I kept a look out for them in 2011 and was very pleased to see that they had emerged again on 1st September. They remained active despite some early wet and windy weather until 16th October, being particularly active on sunny days.

I do not know if they are in danger of displacing native Ivy pollinators. I hope this is a newcomer that will have little deleterious impact and can be welcomed into our gardens. For more information there is a web page on the BWARS web site all about them with an appeal for observations of their spread. (see http://www.bwars.com/colletes_hederae_map.htm). I have also put together a posting with photographs online that you can view at http://psophis.blogspot.com/2011/10/ivy-bees.html

A NEW LICHEN SPECIES RECORD FOR BERKSHIRE (VC22)

James A. Wearn

Pertusaria lactescens Mudd (1861) is a pale grey to yellowish grey, crustose lichen, which is found on acid stone (see photo). Although its colour and form may seem rather uninspiring, which, undoubtedly, they are from a distance; closer examination shows that the surface of the lichen is crowded with tiny projections, known as papillae. These projections quickly become eroded by mollusc grazing, abrasion or age, and dispersed, exposing granular patches (Smith et al. 2009, p. 683; Dobson 2011, p. 327). The main body of the lichen (thallus) is sometimes smooth but, when mature, often becomes cracked-areolate. It also has a distinctive white fringed margin (or, as it is known in the trade, a fimbriate prothallus!). The prothallus is essentially a fungal layer devoid of photosynthetic partner cells, which grows out beyond the main body of the lichen.

Simple chemical tests, using commonly available substances, can be used to react with the peculiar biochemical constituents of lichens, producing colour changes. This is an incredibly useful way to narrow down the possibilities of what you have found. For example, *P. lactescens* produces a 'yellow turning red' reaction with potassium hydroxide solution (or sodium hydroxide, which can usually be substituted and is sold widely in DIY shops, as drain cleaner – though care must be exercised as it is caustic). Another useful chemical test is sodium hypochlorite solution (bleach). Only a tiny drop of each chemical is required to elicit a colour change (for further information see Smith et al. 2009; Wearn 2010; or contact the author).

Pertusaria lactescens was, not very long ago, thought to be extinct in Britain, but a reassessment of specimens proved that the species was more frequent than previously realised (Coppins 1998). It is certainly under-recorded and there were no records for Berkshire (VC22) or Oxfordshire (VC23) in the national British Lichen Society database and county 'floras' (Seaward 2005; J. Simkin pers. comm.). Furthermore, a check of specimens collected from these counties, present in herbaria at the Natural History Museum, Royal Botanic Gardens Kew, and the Humphrey Bowen lichen collection at Reading Museum, did not yield any non-databased records of this species. Moreover, confusion with the similar, mainly coastal species, *P. excludens*, had resulted in some erroneous inland records of that species, which should have been those of *P. lactescens,* although neither had been recorded in Berkshire in any case.

This lichen now appears to be fairly common in Worcestershire (VC37) and Warwickshire (VC38), to the northwest of Oxfordshire, and so it is no surprise that it has now been found in Berkshire (J. Simkin pers. comm.). It is being recorded with increasing frequency from siliceous rocks and memorials in churchyards, and is now considered "locally common" (Smith et al. 2009). Interestingly, it is also being found more widely in Europe (Kossowska 2008).

The site of this first Berkshire record is the All Saints churchyard in Swallowfield, a haven for rock-dwelling (saxicolous) lichens. I first visited the site in 2009 and was able to return in 2011 to confirm the record. I have now studied other material of the genus *Pertusaria* in the collection at the Natural History Museum, London.

Record: James A. Wearn (voucher: Wearn L089), 21 March 2009, vertical south west face of siliceous headstone dated 1882, All Saints churchyard, Berkshire, SU731647.

I have complied notes of other interesting records from this site, on which I intend to report in the next issue, after I have identified more of them to species level.

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Zygaena trifolii f. palustrella Five-spot Burnet (Local, chalk downland ecoform) showing conjoined spots © Jan Haseler
see Devil's Punchbowl walk on 28th May, (p6)
and Lepidoptera Report (p50)

Helix pomatia Edible Snail © Chris Raper
see Swyncombe Downs walk on 18th September, (p10)

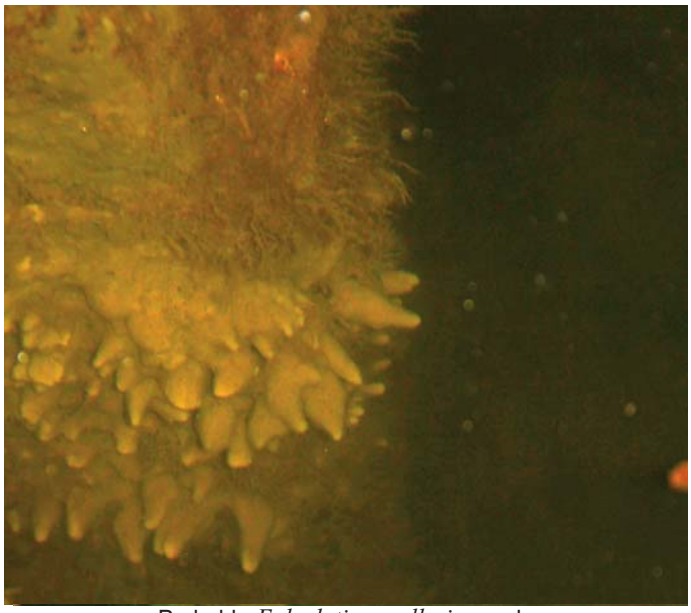
Pertusaria lactescens - growth form (L), texture (R) (© James Wearn)
see opposite

Ivy Bee mating aggregation (© Rob Stallard)
see p29

Ivy Bee visiting Ivy (© Rob Stallard)
see p29

FRESHWATER SPONGES IN THE RIVER THAMES - p34

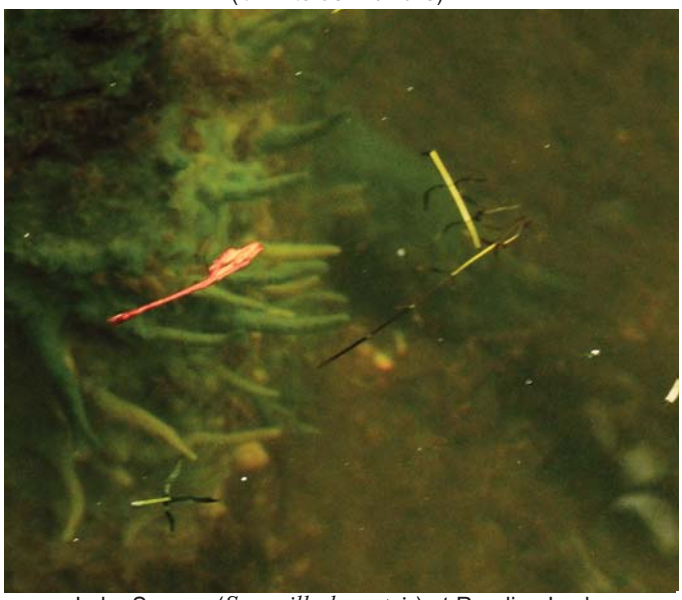
Reading Bridge - the red arrow marks the location of the sponges (© Jim Linwood - Wikimedia Commons)



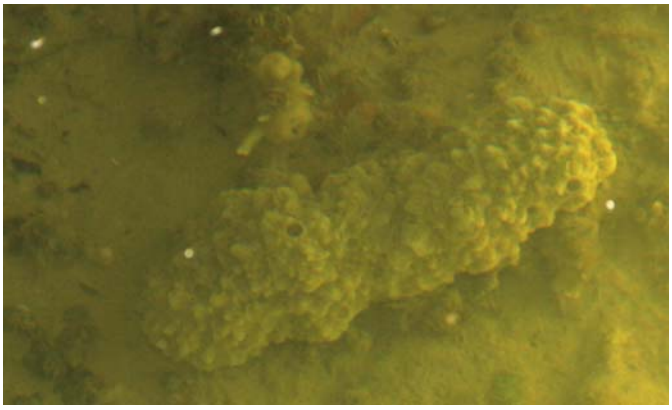
Probable *Ephydatia muelleri* on pole
(© Viktoras Didžiulis)

Lake Sponge (*Spongilla lacustris*) under Reading Bridge
(© Viktoras Didžiulis)

Lake Sponge (*Spongilla lacustris*) at Sonning Lock
(© Viktoras Didžiulis)



Lake Sponge (*Spongilla lacustris*) at Reading Lock
(© Viktoras Didžiulis)



River Sponge (*Ephydatia fluviatilis*) under Reading Bridge
(© Viktoras Didžiulis)

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Acknowledgments

I thank Holger Thüs for facilitating my viewing of specimens at the Natural History Museum, London, and for discussion of the identity of this new record. I am also grateful to Janet Simkin (British Lichen Society records database manager) for data and discussions concerning the British distribution of this species.

BIOBLITZ AT BASILDON PARK – 2 July 2011

Chris Bucke

Over a period of 24 hours, about 30 members and friends conducted a Bioblitz of some of the remoter areas of the National Trust's Basildon Park which are not normally seen by visitors to the mansion and gardens. The aim was to note as many different species as possible in the 24 hour period.

Chris Bucke led a walk on Saturday afternoon which started at Coddesdon Lodge and meandered through areas of ancient woodland, more recent woodland with some exotic species, into the species-rich chalk grassland of the Hidden Valley, up into ancient woodland again and back through the Bluebell woods. The plant species of the Hidden Valley were studied thoroughly: 10 specimens of Bee Orchid were found, also large numbers of Common Spotted Orchid, some Twayblades and a few Pyramidal Orchids. Many Adder's Tongue Ferns remained. Some members ventured into the adjacent more acid grassland area and located two trees remarkable for their very unusual forms, a lime that had fallen and produced 17 new poles and a *Robinia* whose trunk has twisted through over 360° and then produced vertical poles.

As the light faded, the moth-trappers set up their equipment at various locations round the park. Ricki Bull set up the society's Robinson trap on the south west side of the park, at the corner of the woodland near the top of the Pheasant Park. 16 cows in the adjoining field watched her activities with interest. She spent the night in her car and got up at 3:45 am to check the catch. Highlights of her trap included Wood Carpet, Purple Thorn, Privet Hawkmoth and a very ugly collection of Lobster Moths. Laurie and Jan Haseler headed for the south east side of the park, where they set up a light over a sheet in the Hidden Valley and a Skinner trap in the woods above the valley. Their highlights included Beautiful Carpet, Clay Triple-lines, Fern and Dark Umber. Unlike the other hardy moth trappers, they packed up at 1am, but were rewarded with a glimpse of a badger crossing the A327 towards the railway line, just beyond the park wall. Norman Hall set up a battery of lights around Coddesdon Lodge on the southern side of the park, including a light in warden Granville Nicholl's garden. His highlights included Waved Black, August Thorn, Small Mottled Willow and 2 Pine Hawkmoths. Norman retired to his van at 1:30am and got up to inspect his catch at 4:30am, retaining some of his specimens for visitors to see later in the morning.

At dusk, members of the Berks and S. Bucks Bat Group set out with their bat detectors. In fact only two types of pipistrelle were noted, in excitingly large numbers in some locations. The writer learned that populations of pipistrelle have a boss male, which is presumably the alpha-bat! Hopes that badgers would be seen were not realised but roe deer were noted in places.

A party of 12 regrouped in the morning and had the considerable pleasure of seeing the moths that had been trapped, which included several different species of hawk moth, before doing an intensive survey of the plants in an area of woodland in the centre of the park.

Lists of the moths, butterflies, insects, fungi and plants noted will be available on the website. Thanks are due to National Trust and, in particular, Granville Nicholls, for their hospitality. It is likely that further areas of the park will be bioblitzed at different times of year.

FRESHWATER SPONGES IN THE RIVER THAMES

Viktoras Didžiulis

The world is full of fascinating forms of life. There are about 2 million species on Earth known to scientists e.g. identified, described, with a scientific name in Latin. About 1.4 million of these species are listed in the Catalogue of Life [1] – a biodiversity information system with a database aiming to collect all names of known species. However some researchers suggest there might be as many as almost 9 million species [2] living on Earth. This means that even now, in the beginning of the XXIst Century, we have explored, found and named just a small fraction of global biodiversity and more than 80% of species still remain to be discovered. It is said, if one flipped a stone in the Great Barrier Reef in Australia, there is a chance he will see a few species no one has ever described and named before. In Deep Ocean probes between 50% and 90% of organisms are unknown as no one had ever identified them. Sometimes even with a species is well described and known; it still could have been missed in some regions just because there was no one to observe it. This is really good news for naturalists as the venture of discovery shows no sign of ending!

We humans spend most of our time in urban environments created by ourselves for our own convenience where, unfortunately, not many species can find a suitable habitat or space to live. Living organisms can stay unnoticed because they are rare, or population is represented by a small number of individuals dispersed in large area. Some organisms simply live in less convenient places for humans to reach. Some are too small. Some prefer habitats like hot springs, dry deserts, acid volcanic lakes, Arctic ice sheets, deep ocean hydrothermal vents that are entirely hostile.

However some interesting species (not necessarily unknown although there is always a chance to discover something new) live in our neighbourhoods and remain unnoticed just because their habitats are not very convenient to look at. This can be any place we pass-by every day. Stopping for a few minutes in these familiar spaces and taking a second look from a different perspective may lead to small discoveries.

During one of the many walks with the family to Sonning on a bright summer day of 2011, we walked under Reading Bridge stepping over a concrete structure sticking a few meters out into the River Thames and connecting to the pedestrian walkway on both sides of the bridge footing on the south east shore of the river. Water surface under the bridge was brightly lit by evening sun which did attract us like magnet for one of the experiences of the atmosphere of a place we collect in our memories. Besides this was a time for a fine evening shot as it was that “sweet” moment in the evening for taking pictures of buildings or landscape, where angle of lighting is best to get the photographs with clear details and saturated colour. A shaft of light from the sun fell into the river between the concrete wharf and the base of the bridge. Instead of being reflected from the surface and blurring everything beneath the ripples, it lit all features of the river bed and highlighted plants and animals crawling or swimming around. A school of tiny fish, a crayfish, and vertical wall of river grasses could all be seen, however what drew our attention were yellow coral-like branching creatures scattered all around and sticking right out of the sandy bottom. They were also encrusting poles of the wharf and draped the Tesco shopping cart submerged beneath it.

The ones branching like corals were Lake Sponge *Spongilla lacustris*, the flat massive ones encrusting submerged objects without any branches looking like a thick yellow carpet were River Sponge *Ephydatia fluviatilis* and, likely, the similar species - *Ephydatia muelleri*. Although the shape of colonies of the later are quite characteristic – their short branches look less finger-like and look like little volcanoes – the exact identification of sponges is a tricky thing as it can only be done analysing sponge tissue and spicules under a microscope. Some foreign sources mention occurrence of *E. muelleri* in England too [16][31]. I did not expect to find sponges in such a familiar place right below Reading Bridge, which I used to pass so many times before. Therefore the find was a pleasing surprise. Here they were big healthy colonies, sticking out of muddy sand or encrusting objects, yellow and brown in colour because lighting under the bridge was not sufficient to sustain sponge's autotrophic symbionts. Usually in sunny well lit places the freshwater sponges are bright green, because of the endosymbiotic algae (*Zoochlorella*) living inside sponge cells.

Previously I saw sponges growing in pristine lakes and rivers back in my country. They are abundant in an ancient lake Plateliai which was formed when glacial moraines blocked melt-water drainage during

the last glacial period approximately 10,000 years ago. The lake is located in the National Park area. Its clear waters teaming with life made it a popular destination for tourists and divers. It is also famous for its endemic variety of white-fish and archaeological findings. There is a diving club nearby, or one can always rent a boat or a water bike (tourist facilities are open in late spring and summer, but usually closed for winter). In summer large bright green sponges re-grow and branch from submerged stems of reeds along the west side of one of the lake islands. In late autumn, when the sponges die-out, fragments of their broken branches are cast ashore by waves and strong autumn winds, and lay there until covered by snow.

Sponges are filter feeders passing large volumes of water through their bodies. Water enters through multiple small pores called ostia, flows through canals to a spacious chamber, and finally exits through large opening called osculum. Sponges have no specialized organs, no nerve system or muscles. It's no wonder Aristotle and naturalists thought they were plants until the XIX Century when it was proven that they are actually animals. For those interested in more details about sponges an article on Wikipedia [3] might be the best place to start.

Many cells come into direct contact with the surrounding water as the sponge feeds. This results in high levels of exposure to any chemical compound or pollutant present in environment. Therefore sponges are sensitive to variations in environmental conditions and it is known that certain fresh water sponge species have become extinct within the last decades due to pollution [4]. Sensitive to pollution and disturbance sponges are indicator species reflecting relatively good environmental health of the river Thames. During the subsequent walks we found that sponges are actually abundant in Thames and colonies of these animals cover vertical walls of locks and poles of wharfs in Purley and Sonning. There they resemble patches of green and yellow carpet or moss with fingers sticking out. I also saw them growing on hull of a barge. This implies that the locks, bridges and wharfs in the river Thames serving as artificial reefs play a role in sustaining biological diversity of the rivers and canals by providing habitats for sponges and other aquatic organisms. Sponges in turn form associations with as well as provide habitats and food to many other species of invertebrates like gastropod molluscs, cadis fly larvae, amphipod crustaceans.

Sponges may be green because of symbiotic algae (*Zoochlorella*) inhabiting inside its cells – this kind of extremely close mutually beneficial relationship between different species is called endosymbiosis. The sponge provides its symbiotic algae population with substrate and a regular supply of substances needed for photosynthesis, including carbon dioxide, whereas the symbiont produces nutrition and oxygen that are consumed by sponge. The symbiotic relationships are very important for survival of some sponge species. Around two or more kilometres below sea level, on the sea-floor areas along the mid-ocean ridge systems there is a zone of ecosystems that look completely alien. They are different as they do not depend on sunlight as a source of energy, instead they harvest energy from substances produced by volcanic activity of the Earth released through hydrothermal vents. Hot water discharging from these vents may reach temperatures up to 400° C (the reason it does not boil is huge pressure at these depths). Apart from heat, the vents saturate their environment with hydrogen sulphide and methane. Surprisingly these hell-like conditions harbour rich ecosystems teaming with life. And of course sponges live there too. But differently from their sun light dependant counterparts living "up here", these deep ocean sponges do not host algae as endo-symbionts. Their symbionts are colonies of chemoautotrophic bacteria instead. Just like in the relationship with symbiotic algae, sponges provide carbon dioxide and other substances needed by bacteria, and the chemoautotrophic bacteria in return provide sponge with material synthesised during process of chemosynthesis where hydrogen sulphide or methane plays almost the same role the light does in "normal" ecosystems.

Body organization of sponges range from simple (so called ascon type) through to more complicated (sycon type) and complex (leucon type) produced by increasing degree of infolding of the body walls and complexity of canals inside the sponge. Bodies of sponges are made of four types of cells. The so called collar cells (choanocytes) line the canals in the interior of the sponge. Flagella attached to the ends of these cells pump water through the sponge's body bringing oxygen and nutrients and removing waste and carbon dioxide. The other cells are the porocytes that make up the pore walls of the sponge. Epidermal cells form the skin on the outside of the sponge which in freshwater sponges is completely transparent, fragile and looks like a very thin film wrapping whole sponge. Finally, the amoebocytes carry out diferent functions: transport nutrients, form spicules (sponge's skeletal fibers), or together with the collar cells digest the food.

Sponges reproduce either asexually or sexually. Asexually either by regenerating from fragments that break off from the parent colony or hatching from gemmules produced by some freshwater sponges like *Spongilla lacustris* to survive through the cold period of a year. Gemmules are wintering buds that look like tiny yellow spheres inside a colony, and usually appear in autumn. Cells called spongocytes make gemmules by wrapping shells of spongin, often reinforced with spicules into round clusters of archeocytes that are full of nutrients [3]. Freshwater sponge gemmules may also carry photosynthesizing symbiotic algae in them. They can survive up to several years if environmental conditions are not favourable for sponges to grow. Once conditions become favourable again, gemmules germinate, the archeocytes transform into pinacocytes, a membrane over a pore in the shell bursts, the clusters of cells slowly emerge, and most of the remaining archeocytes transform into other cell types needed to make a functioning sponge often reoccupying skeleton the sponge used to grow on before. This way size of a colony continuously increases regrowing year by year.

For sexual reproduction some sponges release both the sperm and egg cells into the water. However, in most sponges, fertilization is internal. The sperm cells are carried by the water currents out of the osculum of one sponge and through the pores and into the interior cavity of another where they are captured and transferred to eggs. Sponges even provide a certain amount of care, retaining the young during the early stages of development. The embryonic sponge develops into a free-swimming larva which after being released locates an appropriate site, settles in and develops into an adult sponge. Sponges are hermaphrodites, meaning the same individual has both male and female reproductive structures and produces both sperm and egg cells.

There are about 5,000 species of sponges around the world all classified under the four classes of phylum Porifera: Calcarea, Hexactinellida, Demospongia, and Homoscleromorpha.

The skeleton of Calcarea sponges consists of individual spicules of calcium carbonate. Hexactinellida, also known as glass sponges have spicules made of silica sometimes fused to form sophisticated and beautiful latticework. Unique thousands-of-years-old glass sponge reefs, covering area of hundreds of square kilometres and tens of meters in height were discovered in 1987 on the seafloor of Canada's Western continental shelf as deep as 260 m [7]. Until then, it had been thought that such reefs had become extinct around the time of the dinosaurs.

Demospongia is the largest class, with spicules made of un-fused silica and a tough keratin-like protein called spongin.

Homoscleromorpha sponges are massive or encrusting and have a very simple structure with very little variation in spicule form and all spicules being very small.

Previously one more class - Sclerospongia were proposed [3]. However, it was later found [4] that sclerosponges occur in different classes – all are characterised by a soft body covering a hard massive skeleton made of either aragonite or calcite. Therefore this morphological group is sometimes also called coralline sponges. They are very long-living animals with age of some colonies reaching up to 5,000 years. Their dense skeletons are deposited in concentric layers like tree rings and it is thought that analysis of the aragonite skeletons of these sponges could reveal historical changes in ocean temperature, salinity, and other environmental variables.

Sponges mostly live in marine environment. However there are about 150 freshwater species worldwide. All of the freshwater species belong to the class Demospongia, order Haplosclerida. The sponges that can be observed in Thames are actually cosmopolitan species found all around the world representing family Spongillidae.

Most sponges are sessile animals attached to a substrate and cannot perform any large scale movements apart from bending, opening or closing their osculum. However in some places of the lake Baikal live ball shaped sponges that are not attached to substrate, but lay on sand and are freely moved by currents and waves. Marine sponge species *Tethya wilhelma* (class Demospongia) and its "relatives" can change their body shape, display rhythmic body contractions and even produce body extensions to help them crawl slowly over a surface.

Most sponges are filter feeders but some are predators. Sponge predation is passive as it cannot chase its prey but instead develops some kind of traps to catch it. Probably the best known examples of carnivorous sponges are the giant club sponge *Chondrocladia gigantea* and ping-pong tree sponge *Chondrocladia lampadiglobus* (the latter described as recently as 2006). The first lives in the cold deep waters of Arctic, the second prefers Antarctic seas. Actually all sponges of genus *Chondrocladia* are carnivores. They form a colony which looks like a shrub with transparent inflated spheres on every branch. The sponge still produces water flow through the osculum which keeps the spheres inflated. As soon as a small animal, most likely a tiny crustacean touches the sphere it sticks to its surface and is digested by migrating amoebocytes within a couple of weeks. The sticky sphere is just one of many ways sponges can catch their pray. Mediterranean sponge *Asbestopluma hypogea* resembles a star in child's drawing its spicules sticking out from a centre like rays, with hooked ends like tiny hooks of a velcro fastener. The thickest and longest ray keeps the body of sponge raised above the ground, while the hooked spicules serve as hunting devices. The pray clings to these spicules and usually is digested within days. The species was found in shallow submarine caves (15 to 26 m) in the Western Mediterranean Sea and the Adriatic. However later *A. hypogea* was reported from outside of caves, on seamounts in the Alboran Sea, the Balearics and near the Sicily in much deeper surroundings down to 700 meters [8].

Some sponges live in one place and cannot be found anywhere else i.e. - they are endemic. There is a large cave system in Croatia stretching under the City of Ogulin. This cave system has its very own endemic freshwater Ogulin cave sponge *Eunapius subterraneus* living in it [9]. There they look like small white or grey clouds attached to and hanging from cave walls and stones. The species is listed in category endangered with great risk of extinction according to the IUCN. Both morphologically and ecologically the species is quite distinct from other species in the same genus and recent genetic studies cast some doubt on its systematics, proposing to exclude it from genus Eunapius [10], therefore the species can be more unique than it was thought. Unfortunately the Ogulin cave sponges might have already been extinct due to pollution [9], although hopefully there is a small chance of recovery of sponge population from its gemmules if the environmental conditions improve.

Lake Baikal in Russia is well known for its endemic sponges. The lake is a habitat for an entire taxonomic family of sponges - Lubomirskiidae, probably best represented by a species *Lubomirskia baicalensis*. At least 13 other *Lubomirskia* and 2 Spongillidae species live in the Baikal lake [11], which notably constitute ~10% of all known freshwater sponge species in the World. In some sites lubomirskia sponges form forests built of numerous large candelabra shaped colonies up to a meter in height attached to stones and rock.

Species from yet another family Malawispongiidae are endemic to lake Malawi and a few other larger African lakes. Covered by tiny spikes they look like yellow hedgehogs creeping on stones [12]. There are about 8 species of fresh water sponges found in lake Tanganyika [13][31].

There are 31-32 species of fresh water sponges known in India. A lot of fresh water sponges are known to inhabit lakes and rivers of Brazil [15] and South America. There are so many sponges in some South American rivers that it is not recommended to swim without eye protection as silica spicules floating in water can seriously injure unprotected eyes.

About 14 freshwater sponge species have been identified in Australia and New Zealand [17].

On a larger geographical scale about 27 species occur in fresh waters of the United States and Canada [14]. Out of these only 4 are occurring frequently: *Ephydatia fluviatilis*, *Eunapius fragilis*, *Ephydatia mulleri* and *Spongilla lacustris*. *E. fluviatilis* and *S. lacustris* are more common than the other two species. The same is also true for Europe and the UK. There are about 10 more frequently appearing species of fresh water sponges known in Europe (table 1). Including Russia and counting all the less frequent species and varieties this number raises to approximately 43 [11] [16][9].

Although some sources [30] report occurrence of only 2 fresh water sponge species in the UK, some foreign references [16][23] point to at least 4 (marked as ?! in the table 1) and a "naive" inference based on sponge species occurrence in neighbouring countries imply that 6 species of fresh water sponges (including the ones marked with ? in table 1) could inhabit rivers and lakes of the United Kingdom.

Table 1. Occurrence of fresh water sponge species in the UK and some adjacent European countries

Species / Region	*Spongilla lacustris*	*Ephydatia fluviatilis*	*Ephydatia muelleri*	*Eunapius fragilis*	*Trochospongilla horrida*	*Anheteromeyenia ryderi*	*Eunapius carteri*	*Heteromeyenia stepanowii*	*Heteromeyenia baileyi*	*Sanidastra yokotonensis*	**Reference**
UK	x	x	?!	?!	?	?					30, 16, 23
Ireland	x	x	x	x		x					25
Norway	x	x	x	x		x					22
France	x	x	x	x	x					x	26
Belgium	x	x	x	x							19
Netherlands	x	x	x	x							24
Denmark	x	x	x	x							27
Germany	x	x	x	x	x		x				18
Spain	x	x	x	x	fossil				x		21
Poland	x	x	x	x	x			x	x		
Lithuania	x	x	?	x	?						pers.obs.
Latvia	x	x	x	x	x						28
Estonia	x	x	x								19

It is possible to keep fresh water sponges in aquarium, but the requirements are quite challenging. The aquarium has to be mature and at least 40 litres in volume to sustain enough microorganisms for sponge to feed on. You would need to grow a sponge from gemmules, otherwise if an adult sponge is put into an aquarium it will not survive the change in environment and die. Fresh water sponges are relatively slow growing organisms and a reason for that is they have to collect sufficient amounts of silica to build their skeleton unless they have an old clean skeleton ready to be reoccupied and concentration of silica in water is usually minute. What makes it even more complicated is that sponges cannot live in aquarium together with larger gastropods like Apple Snails, as the molluscs will prey on sponges. Absence of the snails may cause problems with filamentous algae covering aquarium walls and plants. However in this case the algae issue can only be controlled by adjusting the lighting conditions and regularly cleaning the aquarium. No chemicals can be used to get rid of algae or against fish parasites as they will most likely kill the sponge.

Sponges have the potential to provide future drugs against cancer, a range of viral diseases, malaria, and inflammations [20]. Their silica spicules are durable enough so that dried-out fresh-water sponges in some regions of the world were used to polish metals [16]. Since old times Russian, Ukrainian, Polish and Lithuanian traditional medicine have used a freshwater sponge they call

Badiaga (or durlės in Lithuania) for treatment of various health conditions [20][16]. Badiaga is in fact a generic common name for all freshwater sponges. The cleaned dry powder of the sponges was rubbed on the chest or back of patients with lung diseases or on the sore places in cases of foot and leg aches such as rheumatism. The “Badiaga” powder used to be sold in some countries of Western Europe at the end of XIX Century. Ironically it used to be imported from Russia into areas of Europe where native “Badiaga” were also not less abundant in local rivers and lakes [16].

That’s the end of this story. Hopefully it is not an end of the story of fresh water sponge observations in England – chance of finding at least two or even more species previously unobserved in the UK is quite high!

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RECORDER'S REPORT FOR BOTANY 2011

Michael Keith-Lucas

2011 started very cold with several days of snow cover before Christmas 2010, and remained cold through most of January and February. The spring, by contrast was sunny and warm, with record high temperatures in April, followed by a cool damp summer. The autumn was dry and mild, with only one or two slight frosts before Christmas, as a result of which some 70 spring-flowering species were flowering in December and January.

This year, for the first time, I am following the 3rd edition of C.A.Stace's *New Flora of the British Isles*, (2010) which has adopted the changes recommended as a result of DNA analysis, leading to the merging of some families and the splitting of others, so some family names have disappeared, while some new ones have been created. There are also several name changes to genera and species, so some recorders may not recognise the records they sent in as they will appear with unfamiliar names in unfamiliar families!

PTEROPSIDA (Ferns and Alllies)

4. Ophioglossaceae

Ophioglossum vulgatum Common Adder's-tongue
09 May 11 Headley Gravel Pit Reserve, SU5162 (MS & JH)

12. Pteridaeae

Adiantum capillus-veneris Maidenhair Fern
19 Feb 11 Shiplake Station. Not recorded from Oxfordshire in Killick et al. SU777797 (JH)

13. Aspleniaceae

Asplenium ruta-muraria Wall Rue
19 Feb 11 Shiplake Church. SU767782 (JH)

A. ceterach Rustyback
01 Jan 11 On the flint wall of a farmhouse near Cookley Green SU706885 (JW)

16 Blechnaceae

Blechnum spicant Hard Fern
15 Aug 11 Single plant on the clay bank along the footpath at Checkendon SU672823 (JW)

18. Dryopteridaceae

Dryopteris affinis subsp. affinis Scaly Male Fern
03 Sep 11 Bartley Heath, beside a path in woodland SU7325 5353 (TM + RG)
25 Sep 11 Probably 100 crowns in Greyhone Plantation, Highmoor (open access woodland) towards the southern boundary. SU699832 (JW)

D. carthusiana Narrow Buckler-Fern
03 Sep 11 Bartley Heath – surprisingly plentiful in various places, e.g. SU7299 5342 (TM + RG)

19. Polypodiaceae

Polypodium sp. (a polypody)
01 Nov 11 A young plant on a coppiced hazel stump in the hedge on the track through the woods in the Warburg Reserve. Vera Paul recorded *P. interjectum* here, but this plant had no sporangia yet. Last seen 1998, but since disappeared. SU718879 (JW)

MAGNOLIIDAE (Flowering Plants)

30. Papaveraceae

Papaver hybridum Rough Poppy
14 Jul 11 South Stoke, edge of a wheat field on a path. SU626845 (JW)

32. Ranunculaceae

Helleborus foetidus Stinking Hellebore
30 Nov 11 On the track to Neal's Farm under hazel with no signs of garden rubbish. SU679831 (JW)

Helleborus viridis Green Hellebore
17 Apr 11 Warburg Reserve SU718879 (JH)

Ranunculus trichophyllus Thread-leaved Water-Crowfoot
05 Jul 11 In a field pond by Tag Lane, Eye and Dunsden, in heavy clay (ID Nigel Holmes, BSBI recorder, from fruiting specimen) SU739775 (JW)

38. Saxifragaceae

Saxifraga granulata Meadow Saxifrage
20 Apr 11 Woolhampton Churchyard. New record. SU577677 (JW)

39. Crassulaceae

Sedum telephium Orpine
26 Aug 11 A large clump on the edge of a small woodland at Trench Green. SU694772 (JW)

42. Fabaceae

Onobrychis viciifolia Sanfoin
18 Sep 11 In chalk grassland at Swyncombe Downs SU670915 (RD)

Hippocrepis comosa Horseshoe Vetch
22 Apr 11 The Holies, in flower. SU594798 (JH)
18 Sep 11 In chalk grassland at Swyncombe Downs SU669914 (RD)

Lathyrus nissolia Grass Vetchling
21 Jun 11 Many flowering in grassland by footpath in Dunsden SU753782 (JW)

Trifolium arvense Hare's Foot Clover
Several dates, August-November. Crookham Common, north edge, close to the road. SU517650 (CB)

Genista anglica Petty Whin
03 Sep 11 Bartley Heath, at SU729534 and 728534. (TM + RG)

43. Polygalaceae

Polygala calcarea Chalk Milkwort
18 Sep 11 In chalk grassland, Swyncombe Downs. SU670915 (RD)

44. Rosaceae

Geum* x *intermedium Hybrid Avens
June 11 Park Wood, Moor Copse. SU636742 (CB)

62. SALICACEAE

Salix repens Creeping Willow
03 Sep 11 Bartley Heath, in several places on the open heath. SU727535 (TM + RG)

65. Hypericaceae

Hypericum humifusum Trailing St John's-wort
03 Sep 11 Few beside path on Bartley Heath at SU726534 (TM +RG)

H. maculatum subsp. obtusiusculum
Imperforate St John's-wort
03 Sep 11 Several beside path at Bartley Heath. SU726534 (TM + RG)

H. montanum Pale St John's-wort
22 Jul 11 In scrub at the foot of the chalk slope on Kent's Hill, Harpsden, and in woodland nearby. SU725811 (JW).
08 Aug 11, 3 plants in tall herb/bramble scrub at Lambridge Wood. SU743840 (JW)
21 Aug 11 In tall grassland by the footpath through Stonor Park. SU725808 (JW)

66. Geraniaceae

Geranium colombinum Long-stalked Crane's-bill
22 Jul 11 On the bank of Blackmoor Lake, Sonning Common. SU714802 (JW)
22 Jul 11 on the lower slopes of Kent's Hill, Harpsden, SU725808 (SR)
18 Sep 11 in chalk grassland and arable at Swyncombe Downs. SU669914 (RD)

81. Brassicaceae

Hirschfeldia incana Hoary Mustard
18 Sep 11 In chalk grassland at Swyncombe Downs. A rare casual. SU679914 (RD)

86. Polygonaceae

Polygonum arenastrum Equal-leaved Knotgrass
17 Sep 11 Paddick Drive, Lower Earley, near BMX track. SU758701 (RG)

Fallopia convolvulus Black Bindweed
03 Jun 11 Paddick Drive, Lower Earley, near BMX track. SU758701 (RG)

88. Caryophyllaceae

Spergula arvensis Corn Spurrey
03 Jun 11 Paddick Drive, Lower Earley, near BMX track. SU758701 (RG).
23 Oct 11 locally frequent on a field edge near Three Corner Common. SU 679879 (JW)

Spergularia rubra Sand Spurrey
14 May 11 A few small plants at Headley Gravel Pit. SU511627 (TM)

89. Amaranthaceae

Chenopodium polyspermum Many-seeded Goosefoot
05 Jul 11 By a house on Tag Lane, Eye and Dunsden. SU738773 (JW)

Chenopodium strictum Striped Goosefoot
17 Sep 11 Paddick Drive, Lower Earley, near BMX track. SU758701 (RG)
17 Sep 11 Whiteknights, Reading, on disturbed ground. SU734722 (RG)

95. Cornaceae

Cornus mas Cornelian Cherry
11 Mar 11 2 bushes in flower in the woodland strip by the B481, Eye and Dunsden. SU720780 (JW)

102. Ericaceae

Hypopitys monotropa Yellow Bird's-nest
02 Sep 11 100 or so plants on a path descending to the 'Railway Field' in Basildon Park – first noted by Granville Nicholls. SU614777 (CB)
30 Sep 11 16 shoots counted, one still in flower, under beech and oak canopy in deep litter on the roadside at Rumerhedge Road, Checkendon (an old record in the flora for this tetrad). SU678816 (JW)

107. Boraginaceae

Lithospermum arvense *Field Gromwell*
14 Jul 11 Frequent on a field edge footpath, South Stoke. SU624845 (JW)

Pulmonaria officinalis Lungwort
14 May 11 In a wood on Ashford Hill Road, at SU515626 (TM)

Anchusa arvensis Bugloss
21 Jun 11 Many vigorous plants on heaps of soil in yard of Winterbourne Farm. SU457724 (CB)
24 Jun 11 Frequent on field edges near Wild Orchard, Binfield Heath. SU732787 (JW)
August, several plants, arable field edge between Purley and Pangbourne. SU649766 (CB)

Trachystemon orientalis Abraham-Isaac-Jacob
April 2011, a thriving colony on a bank on a woodland ride, Farley Hill. SU748645 (CB)

Myosotis laxa Tufted Forget-me-not
03 Sep 11 Bartley Heath, in a dried-up pond at SU7304 5343 (TM + RG)

Cynoglossum officinale Hound's-tongue
24 Jun 11 Field edge near Wild Orchard, Binfield Heath, in abundance. SU729788 (JW)
22 Jul 11 Scrub edge on Kents Hill. SU725808 (JW)
22 Jul 11 locally frequent by footpath through Stonor Park. SU746892 (JW)

108. Convolvulaceae

Cuscuta epithymum Dodder
03 Sep 11 Only a few non-flowering strands found on Bartley Heath, where there had been several flowering patches on 15 Jul 11. SU729534 (TM + RG)

109. Solanaceae

Lycium barbarum Duke of Argyll's Teaplant
23 Jul 11 In a hedge along Colmore Lane, Peppard Common. SU701819 (JW)

Hyoscyamus niger Henbane
28 May 11 Devil's Punchbowl, about 50 plants at SU350850 (JH)
18 Sep 11 In chalk grassland at Swyncombe Downs. SU669914 (RD)

Solanum vernei Purple Potato
11 Sep 11 Paddick Drive, Lower Earley, in several places along footpath and near BMX track. SU757699, 756700, 756701, 755702 and 755703 (RB + RG)

113 Veronicaceae

Chaenorhinum minus Small Toadflax
18 Sep 11 In chalk grassland at Swyncombe Downs. SU669914 (RD)

Veronica scutellata var. villosa Marsh Speedwell
03 Sep 11 Bartley Heath SU729534 (TM+ RG)

V.scutellata var. scutellata Glabrous form
Headley Gravel Pit Reserve, in a damp area at SU511627 (TM)

Kickxia elatine Sharp-leaved Fluellen
21 Sep 11 Moor Copse, arable field, around the base of newly-planted trees. SU639739 (JH)

118. Lamiaceae

Betonica officinalis Betony
15 Aug 11 A good clump on the road bank on Hookend Lane, Checkendon SU666821 (JW)

Stachys byzantina Lamb's Ears
On several occasions, a thriving colony on waste land between the old and new Skew Bridges, Lower Basildon. SU617780 (CB)

Stachys arvensis Field Woundwort
23 Oct 11 Locally abundant on a field edge near Three Corner Common. New record for area. SU666846 (JW)

Lamium amplexicaule Henbit Dead-nettle
03 Jun 11 Paddick Drive, Lower Earley, near BMX track. SU758701 (RG)

Scutellaria minor Lesser Skullcap
03 Sep 11 Bartley Heath, patches at SU727534, 729534 and 730534. (TM + RG)

Acinos arvensis Basil Thyme
18 Sep 11 Chalk grassland at Swyncombe Downs. SU679911 and 669914 (RD)

Salvia verbenaca Wild Clary
May, 2011 Small colony on grass verge of A329 to the east of the roundabout near Tilehurst Station, vulnerable to mowing in May. SU677749 (CB)

May, 2011 Long-established colony by the roadside in Blewbury. SU525856 (CB)
09 Sep 11 In a layby on a road in South Stoke. SU612838 (JW)

121. Orobanchaceae

Melampyrum pratense Common Cow-wheat
June, 2011. A few plants noted on woodland path near Bound Oak, Farley Hill. SU753655 (CB)

126. Campanulaceae

Legousia hybrida Venus's Looking-glass
01 Jun 11 A single plant in an arable field near Ewelme. SU644917 (CB)

127. Menyanthaceae

Menyanthes trifoliata Bogbean
20 Aug 11 California Country Park, Wokingham. SU782635 (RG)

128. Asteraceae

Cirsium dissectum Meadow Thistle
03 Sep 11 Bartley Heath, in several places with shorter vegetation . SU728534 (TM + RG)

Silybum marianum Milk Thistle
03 Jun 11 Paddick Drive, Lower Earley, near BMX track. SU758701 (RG)

Serratula tinctoria Saw-wort
03 Sep 11 Bartley Heath, in several places. SU731533, 728534 and 729534 (TM + RG)

Filago vulgaris Common Cudweed
Several occasions, August onwards. Many plants scattered beside tracks leading from Crookham Common car park into the Common itself. SU523645 (CB)

F. minima Small Cudweed
14 May 11 Headley Gravel Pit, 4 tiny plants at SU511627. Not likely to survive much longer unless an area is scraped to expose more bare gravel. Nearest Hampshire site is over 20 km away. (TM)

Conyza sumatrensis Guernsey Fleabane
09 Sep 11 Harcourt Drive, Earley. SU736711 (RG)

Achillea ptarmica Sneezewort
03 Sep 11 Bartley Heath, at SU732534 and 731533 (TM + RG)

Anthemis cotula Stinking Chamomile
03 Jun 11 Paddick Drive, Lower Earley, near BMX track. SU758701 (RG)

Petasites hybridus Butterbur
26 Dec 11 In flower (remarkably early) on roadside between Checkendon and Stoke Row at SU671839 (JW)

Galinsoga parviflora Gallant Soldier
31 Dec 11 Another remarkably early flowering. A line of plants noted at the base of walls in Beresford Street, Reading. SU701737 (CB)

138. Apiaceae

Conopodium majus Pignut
23 May 11 Scattered in a horse-grazed field opposite the King Charles' Head, Collins End. SU664788 (JW)
23 Jul 11 at the foot of a slope in a grazed field near Great Bottom Wood, Rotherfield Peppard. SU703823 (JW)

Smyrnium olusatrum Alexanders
30 Sep 11 On the footpath near the houses at Wyfold Court. SU681824 (JW)

158. Orchidaceae

Epipactis purpurata Violet Helleborine
15 Aug 11 In beech woodland on Corker's Lane, Checkendon. SU662824 (JW)

E. leptochila Narrow-lipped Helleborine
07 Aug 11 Lambridge Wood. SU7384 (JW)

E. phyllanthes Green-flowered Helleborine
07 Jul 11 Lambridge Wood. SU7384 (SR & JW)

Neottia nidus-avis Bird's-nest Orchid
11 Jun 11 Cadsden Wood. GR not given. (JH)

Herminium monorchis Musk Orchid
11 Jun 11 Pulpit Hill. GR not given. (JH)

Ophrys apifera Bee Orchid
No date given. A threatened colony in the entrance to the landfill site, now restored, at Field Farm, Burghfield. SU677703 Noted by Renton Righelato. (CB)
Locally frequent on a clay bund and in a field by the sewage works, Sonning Common. SU716794 (JW)

159. Iridaceae

Crocus tommasinianus Early Crocus
February, in flower. A clump of plants by the roadside in Downshire Square, Reading. SU705729 (CB)

162. Asparagaceae

Polygonatum multiflorum Solomon's-seal
24 Apr 11 Large clump near houses under hazel near Park Corner, Nettlebed. SU693881 (JW)
14 Jun 11 Headley Gravel Pit at SU513927 (TM)
14 Jun 11 in wood in Ashford Hill Road at SU 516626 (TM)

Ornithogalum angustifolium Star-of-Bethlehem
14 Jun 11 About 20 flowering plants, in wood on Ashford Hill Road at SU515626 (TM)

Hyacinthoides hispanicus Spanish Bluebell
14 May 11 Headley Gravel Pit, a single plant at SU513626, matching the pure species rather than the commoner hybrid. (TM)

Asparagus officinalis Garden Asparagus
14 Jul 11 A large clump on a footpath near South Stoke with no other signs of garden waste. SU606847 (JW)
14 May 11, Headley Gravel Pit, single plant at SU 512627, presumably bird-sown from a garden (TM)

169. CYPERACEAE

Eleogiton fluitans Floating Club-rush
03 Sep 11 Bartley Heath, in ponds at SU730534. (TM + RG)

Carex strigosa Thin-spiked Wood-sedge
7 Jul 11 Lambridge Wood. SU7384 (RG +SR)

CONTRIBUTORS:

Thanks are due to the following members:
(CB) Chris Bucke, (JW) Janet and Jerry Welsh, (MKL) Michael Keith-Lucas, (MS) Malcolm Storey, (RB) Ricki Bull, (RD) Rod d'Ayala, (RG) Renée Grayer, (SR) Sally Rankin & (TM) Tony Mundell.

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RECORDER'S REPORT FOR MYCOLOGY 2011

Malcolm Storey

2011 was another exceptional fungus season. Like 2010, it began early and continued into September, but then everything dried out and fungi all but disappeared. However, the weather remained warm and the continued absence of frost meant that things picked up again and some toadstools continued even into the New Year.

ASCOOMYCOTA

ASCOMYCETES

Boliniales

Boliniaceae

Camarops polysperma Thick Tarcrust
06 Nov 11, on Alder, Moor Copse (TVFG)
Red data list near threatened

Helotiales

Helotiaceae

Ascotremella faginea (a discomycete)
02 Oct 11, on Alder branch, Pamber Forest (TVFG)

Leotia lubrica Jellybaby
20 Sep 11, Finchampstead (TVFG)
Far less common than 30 years ago.

Hyaloscyphaceae

Lachnellula willkommii Larch Canker
05 Nov 11, on attached larch twig, Highclere Castle, SU4460 (AL/HFG)

Hypocreales

Cordycipitaceae

Cordyceps ophioglossoides Snake-tongue Truffleclub
13 Nov 11, Swinley forest (TVFG)

Leotiales

Leotiaceae

Microglossum olivaceum Olive Earthtongue
05 Nov 11, in grassland, Highclere Castle: The Temple, SU4560 (SJS/HFG)

Pezizales

Pyronemataceae

Pyronema omphalodes (a discomycete)
07 Aug 11, burnt wood, Hook: Bartley Heath, SU7253 (PH/HFG)

Scutellinia umbrorum (a discomycete)
02 Oct 11, on wet Alder wood, Pamber Forest (TVFG)

Rhytismatales

Cudoniaceae

Spathularia flavida Yellow Fan
05 Nov 11, under larch, Highclere Castle: Tent Hill, SU4560 (HFG)

Orbiliomycetes

Orbiliaceae

Orbilia delicatula (a glasscup)
07 Aug 11, on oak wood, Bartley Heath, SU7253 (SR+SJS/HFG)

BASIDIOMYCOTA

ATRACTIELLOMYCETES

Atractiellales

Phleogenaceae

Phleogena faginea Fenugreek Stalkball
06 Nov 11, on Alder, Moor Copse (TVFG)

BASIDIOMYCETES

Agaricales

Agaricaceae

Battarrea phalloides Sandy Stiltball
11 Feb 11, Abbey Fish Ponds, Abingdon, Stream Bank, SU510991 Single specimen c. 20 cm high growing at base of mature Willow pollard, close to stream. Growing in leaf litter with some lumps of dead wood from tree above (Rd'A)

Calvatia gigantea Giant Puffball
11 Sep 11, Greenham Common, SU497646 (RDNHS)

Lepiota echinella var echinella (a dapperling)
02 Oct 11, under alder, Pamber Forest (TVFG)

Lepiota ignivolvata (a dapperling)
24 Nov 11, Lackmore Wood (TVFG)

Clavariaceae

Clavaria fumosa Smoky Spindles
05 Nov 11, in grassland, Highclere Church, SU440602 (AL/HFG)

Cortinariaceae

Cortinarius violaceus Violet Webcap
02 Oct 11, on soil under oak, birch, poplar, Pamber Forest (TVFG)

Cyphellaceae

Granulobasidium vellereum (a resupinmate basidiomycete***)***
19 Nov 11, on fallen elm trunk, Bramshill College, SU7559 (AL/HFG)

Entolomataceae

Entoloma roseum Rosy Pinkgill
05 Nov 11, in grassland, Highclere Castle, SU4460 (AL/HFG)

Hygrophoraceae

Hygrocybe colemanniana Toasted Waxcap
05 Nov 11, in grassland, Highclere Castle: The Temple, SU4460 (AL/HFG)

Hygrocybe flavipes Yellow-foot Waxcap
02 Oct 11, on grazed grassland, Pamber Forest (TVFG)

Hygrocybe glutinipes var. glutinipes Glutinous Waxcap
05 Nov 11, in grassland, Highclere Church, SU440602 (EJ/HFG)

Hygrocybe irrigata Slimy Waxcap
05 Nov 11, in grassland, Highclere Church SU440602 (EJ/HFG)

Hygrocybe miniata Vermillion Waxcap
19 Nov 11, in grassland, Bramshill College, SU7559 (AL/HFG)

Hygrocybe laeta var. laeta Heath Waxcap
05 Nov 11, in grassland, Highclere Church, SU440602 (PB/HFG)

Hygrocybe ovina Blushing Waxcap
05 Nov 11, in grassland, Highclere Castle: The Temple, SU4560 (TF+AL/HFG)

Hygrocybe pratensis var. pratensis Meadow Waxcap
05 Nov 11, in grassland, Highclere Church, SU440602 (SJS/HFG)
19 Nov 11, in grassland, Bramshill College, SU7559 (ARHS/HFG)
26 Nov 11, Crocker End, SU712869 (RDNHS)

Hygrocybe splendidissima Splendid Waxcap
05 Nov 11, in grassland, Highclere Castle: The Temple, SU4560 (PB/HFG)

Marasmiaceae

Marasmiellus vaillantii Goblet Parachute
07 Aug 11, on grass stem, Hook: Bartley Heath, SU7253 (PC+SJS/HFG)

Mycenaceae

Mycena diosma (a bonnet)
24 Nov 11, in Beech litter, Lackmore Wood (TVFG)

Mycena olivaceomarginata Brownedge Bonnet
06 Nov 11, Moor Copse BBOWT Reserve, SU636735, in rough grassland, southern meadow, by path (MWS)

Mycena smithiana (a bonnet)
19 Nov 11, on fallen oak leaf, Bramshill College, SU7559 (EJ+AL/HFG)

Psathyrellaceae

Psathyrella cotonea Yellowfoot Brittlestem
02 Oct 11, on birch stump, Pamber Forest (TVFG)

Strophariaceae

Agrocybe rivulosa (a fieldcap)
19 Nov 11, on woodchips, Bramshill College, SU7559 (EJ/HFG)

Gymnopilus dilepis ***(***a rustgill)
19 Nov 11, on woodchips, Bramshill College, SU7559 (EJ/HFG)

Phaeogalera dissimulans (a toadstool)
20 Feb 11, Berry's Copse, SU544681, cluster of toadstools, by path. (MWS)

Tricholomataceae

Arrhenia retiruga (a cyphelloid fungus)
23 Feb 11, Upper Bucklebury, SU535686, 2m diam. Fairy Ring, on moss on roadside verge, north west of village, (MWS)

Collybia cookei Splitpea Shanklet
09 Oct 11, on rotten *Inonotus cuticularis* bracket, Lambridge Wood (TVFG)
Unusual substrate - usually on rotting *Russula*

Leucopaxillus giganteus Giant Funnel
26 Nov 11, Wellgrove Wood, SU717869 (RDNHS)

Atheliales

Atheliaceae

Piloderma bicolor (a resupinate fungus)
09 Oct 11, on Beech litter, Lambridge Wood (TVFG)
24 Nov 11, in Beech litter, Lackmore Wood (TVFG)
Uncommon: only 25 records on BMS database

Boletales

Boletaceae

Aureoboletus gentilis Gilded Bolete
07 Aug 11, under oak, Bartley Heath, SU7253 (HFG)

Leccinum crocipodium Yellow-cracking Bolete
02 Oct 11, on soil under oak, Pamber Forest (TVFG)

Leccinum holopus Ghost Bolete
02 Oct 11, on soil under birch, Pamber Forest (TVFG)

Diplocystidiaceae

Astraeus hygrometricus Barometer Earthstar
19 Nov 11, in grassland, Bramshill College, SU7559 (EJ/HFG)

Gomphidiaceae

Gomphidius roseus Rosy Spike
20 Sep 11, Finchampstead (TVFG)

Gyroporaceae

Gyroporus castaneus Chestnut Bolete
02 Oct 11, under oak, Pamber Forest (TVFG)

Serpulaceae

Serpula himantioides (a resupinate bolete)
24 Nov 11, Lackmore Wood (TVFG)

Tapinellaceae

Tapinella atrotomentosa Velvet Rollrim
20 Sep 11, Finchampstead (TVFG)
A pine species so mainly in eastern Berks.

Cantharellales

Tulasnellaceae

Tulasnella violea (a basidiomycete)
24 Nov 11, Lackmore Wood (TVFG)

Hymenochaetales

Hymenochaetaceae

Coltricia perennis Tiger's Eye
04 Sep 11, Wildmoor Heath (TVFG)
20 Sep 11, Finchampstead (TVFG)

Inonotus cuticularis Clustered Bracket
09 Oct 11, on Beech and birch (unusually inside old woodpecker hole on fallen trunk), Lambridge Wood (TVFG)

Phellinus populicola (a bracket fungus)
19 Nov 11, on standing Grey Poplar trunk, Bramshill College, SU7559 (AL/HFG)

Schizoporaceae

Hyphodontia barba-jovis (a resupinate tooth fungus)
25 Oct 11, on Beech, New Copse. Oxon (TVFG)
24 Nov 11, on Beech, Lackmore Wood (TVFG)

Polyporales

Fomitopsidaceae

Postia sericeomollis (a bracket fungus)
02 Oct 11, on fallen oak branch, Pamber Forest (TVFG)

Ischnoderma benzoinum Benzoin Bracket
13 Nov 11, Swinley forest (TVFG)

Meripilaceae

Physisporinus sanguinolentus Bleeding Porecrust
24 Nov 11, on conifer wood, Lackmore Wood (TVFG)

Meruliaceae

Mycoacia fuscoatra (a toothcrust)
02 Oct 11, on rotten wood under Alder/Hazel, Pamber Forest (TVFG)

Phanerochaetaceae

Antrodiella semisupina (a bracket fungus)
09 Oct 11, on Betula, Lambridge Wood (TVFG)

Ceriporiopsis gilvescens Pink Porecrust
05 Nov 11, on Beech log Highclere Castle: Tent Hill, SU4560 (AL/HFG)

Polyporaceae

Skeletocutis carneogrisea (a polypore)
02 Oct 11, on fallen pine trunk, Pamber Forest (TVFG)

Russulales

Hericiaceae

Hericium coralloides Coral Tooth
23 Jun 11, Sulham Wood, SU646755, fruitbodies just appeared on same fallen Beech log as last year. (DD)
Conservation status: Near Threatened

Russulaceae

Russula aurora Dawn Brittlegill
02 Oct 11, on soil under oak, Pamber Forest (TVFG)

Russula insignis (a brittlegill)
07 Aug 11, under oak, Bartley Heath,SU7253 (PH+EJ/HFG)

EXOBASIDIOMYCETES

Exobasidiales

Exobasidiaceae

Exobasidium camelliae (a redleaf fungus)
11 Jun 11, Grange Cottage, Harts Lane, SU464607, large gall on *Camellia* leaf, (NB, Id: MWS)

PUCCINIOMYCETES

Pucciniales

Pucciniaceae

Puccinia liliacearum (a rust fungus)
04 Apr 11, Upper Bucklebury, SU542683, Pycnia and telia on yellowed, slightly swollen and often curved tips of Star-of-Bethlehem (*Ornithogalum angustifolium*) leaves, 43 Berry's Road, rear garden (MWS)

Puccinia nitida Dill rust
15 Oct 11, Upper Bucklebury, SU542684, hypophyllous telia on galled leaves of Fool's Parsley, (*Aethusa cynapium*) Berry's Road (MWS)

TREMELLOMYCETES

Tremellales

Tremellaceae

Filobasidiella lutea (a basidiomycete yeast)
19 Nov 11, on fruitbody of *Granulobasidium vellereum*, Bramshill College, SU7559 (AL/HFG)

CONTRIBUTORS

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As always I'm grateful to the Hampshire Fungus Group (Stewart Skeates) and Thames Valley Fungus Group (Paul Cook) for letting me include their records.

RECORDER'S REPORT FOR LEPIDOPTERA 2011

Norman Hall (NMH)

Up until May 2011 the weather was unusually warm and emergence times for moths and butterflies were often two weeks earlier than usual. The weather then became changeable in late spring and summer and emergence times soon became more typical. A late spell of very good weather, an Indian summer, enabled us to catch larger numbers of the late autumn species, such as the Merveille du Jour, and to continue running traps usefully into November. However, although many interesting migrant species turned up on the south coast, catches in the Reading area were never particularly exciting.

I did a lot of trapping in West Berks in 2011 in connection with the Living Landscape Project in which BBOWT and West Berks Council co-operated in activities including insect recording in an area stretching approximately from Woolhampton to Newbury, and from the Kennet to the Enborne, which included Greenham Common, Crookham Common, Bowdown Woods and Thatcham Marsh. Pamphlets were produced for two circular walks through the area, which gave participants the opportunity to see how the different sites within it linked together. Jacky Akam of BBOWT asked me if I would lead some mothing evenings at Thatcham Marsh (generally on the 3rd Thursday each month) and I took part in most of the mothing evenings in the Greenham Common / Bowdown area, which were usually arranged by Roger Stace of BBOWT and Adrian Wallington of West Berks on the 1st Thursday, and usually at a different site each month. In addition to these nights I trapped twice at Snelsmore Common and twice at Padworth Common. These are not in the Living Landscape area but are equally worthy of study - and also under the care of West Berks Council (as are Paices Wood and Hosehill Lake, where the moths are under-recorded, though the butterflies are well monitored by John Lerpiniere).

A systematic list of this year's records of selected species follows. It is in the order of the 'Bradley numbers' - numbers assigned by Bradley & Fletcher when they produced a Recorder's Logbook of Lepidoptera in 1979. Since then many of the scientific names have changed, but the numbers have ensured continuity so that everyone knows which species is being referred to, whether the names are scientific or vernacular and up to date or not. When new species are added to the British list they are given interpolated Bradley 'numbers' such as 41B or 616A. Note that in Bradley order the butterflies come near the middle of the list.

I have also quoted the statuses of the macromoths, as given in 'The Field Guide to the Moths of Great Britain and Ireland' by Waring and Townsend. Most are Common, Local, Nationally Scarce B (Notable B), Nationally Scarce A (Notable A), or Red Data Book (RDB) species. For microlepidoptera, I have used the statuses proposed in ' A Review of the Status of Microlepidoptera in Britain' by Tony Davis, January 2012 (available as a PDF from the Butterfly Conservation Website)

I am given too many records by members to include them all, so for butterflies I generally include only earliest and latest records, records of unusually large numbers, and for scarcer species new sites. For moths I do not usually include any species whose status is common. However, if a record comes with interesting additional information, or if the status is questionable or if there is anything interesting to say about the species, it is included.

The statuses of moths can change, especially under the influences of climate change and loss of habitat.

Records without counts are generally singletons.

ADELIDAE

0143 Nematopogon metaxella (a micromoth) (Local)
02 Jun 11, 2, Greenham Common SU509642 (NMH)
10 Jun 11, Dinton Pastures SU782717 (NMH)

ZYGAENIDAE - Burnet Moths

0170 Zygaena trifolii f. palustrella Five-spot Burnet (Local, chalk downland ecoform)
28 May 11, 5, Devil's Punchbowl SU350850, photograph showing conjoined spots (see page 23), specimen retained (RDNHS)

LIMACODIDAE

0173 Apoda limacodes The Festoon (Notable B)
26 Jun 11, Red Cow Cholsey SU592868 (AR)
01 Jul 11, Snelsmore Common SU462711 (NMH)

PSYCHIDAE

175 Narycia duplicella (a micromoth)
12 Mar 11, 10, Newbury, Newtown Road Cemetery SU470661 (RDNHS)

186 Psyche casta (a micromoth)
25 May 11, 6-10 males assembling to a female. This was abortive since the female was concealed behind netting, Emmer Green SU719773 (JHFN)

TINEIDAE

0196 Morophaga choragella (a micromoth) (Local)
02 Jun 11, Greenham Common SU509642 (NMH)
04 Aug 11, Greenham Common SU493641 (NMH)
02 Sep 11, Snelsmore Common SU462711 (NMH)

GRACILLARIDAE

(Micromoths, which make 'pinch' mines)

332A Phyllonorycter leucographella Firethorn Leaf Miner (Now Common)
23 Sep 11, Westwood Road Tilehurst SU666742, first for garden (JH)

SESIIDAE – Clearwing Moths

374 Synanthedon vespiformis Yellow-legged Clearwing (Notable B)
20 Jun 11, Yattendon SU5574, Field observation (JL)
22 Jul 11, at VES pheromone, Emmer Green SU719773 (JHFN)

378 Synathedon andrenaeformis Orange-tailed Clearwing (Notable B)
26 Jun 11, 2 at VES pheromone, Emmer Green SU719773 (JHFN)

382 Bembecia ichneumoniformis Six-belted Clearwing (Notable B)
26 Jun 11, 3 at HOR pheromone, Emmer Green SU719773 (JHFN)

GLYPHIPTERIGIDAE

0397 Glyphipterix thrasonella (a micromoth) (Common)
02 Jun 11, 2, Greenham Common SU50996428 (NMH)

YPONOMEUTIDAE

0409A Argyresthia trifasciata (a micromoth) (Local)
06 & 28 May 11, Harcourt Drive, Earley SU735709 (NMH)

0427 Yponomeuta cagnagella Spindle Ermine (Common)
02 May 11, Goring SU614809, extensive larval webs on Spindle (NMH)
These webs have been have been particularly common this year on Spindle and garden *Euonymus*. The larvae feed inside the webs, which they extend across the foodplant, or across other plants or obstacles, while searching for more suitable food, sometimes for tens of meters.

0473 Acrolepiopsis assectella Leek Moth (Local)
21 Mar 11, Westwood Road Tilehurst SU666742 (JH)
15 May 11, at light, and larvae and pupae found on leeks, chives and onions in the garden, Emmer Green SU719773 (JHFN)
15 Aug 11, Harcourt Drive, Earley SU735709 (NMH)
This pest of leeks is spreading.

EPERMENIIDAE

0481 Epermenia falciformis (a micromoth) (Local)
02 Jun 11, Greenham Common SU509642 (NMH)
18 Aug 11, Thatcham reedbed SU499670 (NMH)

COLEOPHORIDAE

(Micromoths whose larvae live in 'cases' made from silk, leaves or seeds, which they carry around with them, and eventually pupate in).
Coleophorid cases are much easier to identify than the adult moths, so when 6 species were collected as adults by Nick Asher on 2 Jun 11, Greenham Common SU509642, they had to be dissected by Peter Hall to identify them. They were:

0493 Coleophora serratella (Common).
Cases can be found on many trees.

0496 Coleophora milvipennis (Local).
Cases on birch.

0501 Coleophora siccifolia (Nationally Scarce B)
Cases on Rosaceae.

0559 Coleophora peribenanderi (Common)
Cases on thistles.

0584 Coleophora alticolella (Common)
Cases on rushes.

0587 Coleophora caespititiella (Common)
Cases on rushes.

GELECHIIDAE

0755 Stenolechia gemmella (a micromoth) (Local)
09 Sep 11, Harcourt Drive, Earley SU735709 (NMH)

MOMPHIDAE

0888 Mompha propinquella (a micromoth) (Local)
04 Aug 11, 2, Greenham Common SU493641 (NMH)

TORTRICIDAE

1062x Acleris emargana agg (micromoths)
25 Aug 11, Beale Park Workshop yard SU620777 (RB)
02 Sep 11, 2, Snelsmore Common SU462711 (NMH)
This 'species' has been split into two: *Acleris emargana* (common) and *Acleris effractana* (status unknown). Specimens should therefore be retained for study. (NMH)

1208 Pseudococcyx posticana (a micromoth) ***(Nationally Scarce B)***
05 May 11, Greenham Common SU499652 (NMH)

PYRALIDAE

1290 Chilo phragmitella (a micromoth) (Local)
20 Jul 11, 3, Thatcham reedbed SU499670 (NMH)

1303 Agriphila selasella (a micromoth) (Local)
02 Aug 11, Westwood Road Tilehurst SU666742, New record for garden (JH)

1307 Agriphila latistria (a micromoth) (Local)
20 Aug 11, Padworth Common SU618647 (NMH)

1321 Thisanotia chrysonuchella (a micromoth) (Nationally Scarce B)
21 May 11, 3, Lardon Chase SU588809 (JH)
21 Jun 11, 3, Lardon Chase (National Trust) SU587809, 8. On vegetation (RB)

1336 Eudonia pallida (a micromoth) (Local)
21 May 11, 2, Padworth Gully SU61646472 (NMH)
29 May 11, Harcourt Drive, Earley SU735709 (NMH)
02 Jun 11, 4, Greenham Common SU509642 (NMH)
14 Jun 11 & 09 Sep 11, Harcourt Drive, Earley SU735709 (NMH)

1366 Pyrausta nigrata (a micromoth) (Local)
22 Apr 11, 4, The Holies SU594798, early record (JH)

1396 Mecyna flavalis (a micromoth) (pRDB3)
03 July 11, 10, The Holies SU594798 (JH)

1433 Cryptoblabes bistriga (a micromoth) (Local)
19 Apr & 06 May 11, Harcourt Drive, Earley SU735709 (NMH);
02 Jun 11, Westwood Road Tilehurst SU666742 (JH)

1441 Oncocera semirubella (a micromoth) (Nationally Scarce B)
03 Jul 11, Lardon Chase SU588809 (JH)
04 Aug 11, Greenham Common SU493641 (NMH)

HESPERIIDAE

1526 Thymelicus sylvestris Small Skipper
From 15 Jun 11, Shinfield Park, The Grove SU730689 (JH) to 02 Aug 11, Rook's Nest Wood N, Barkham SU790662 (JH)

1527 Thymelicus lineola Essex Skipper
From 24 Jun 11, Red Cow Cholsey SU592868 (AR) to 09 Aug 11, 2, Shinfield, Cutbush Lane Reservoir SU638740 (JH) & 10, Upper Lambourn SU2979 (JL)

1529 Hesperia comma Silver-spotted Skipper
27 Aug 11, 5, Aston Rowant NNR, Bald Hill SU724959 (JH). The only reported sighting.

1531 Ochlodes sylvanus Large Skipper
From 23 May 11, Red Cow Cholsey SU592868 (AR) to 01 Aug 11, California Country Park SU783653 (JH)

1532 Erynnis tages Dingy Skipper
From 22 Apr 11, 45, The Holies, Streatley SU594798 (JH) to 02 Jun 11, Seven Barrows SU3282 (JL)
Red Cow Cholsey SU592868 is now a breeding site for this species. (AR)

1534 Pyrgus malvae Grizzled Skipper
From 03 Apr 11, Thames Valley Park SU746745 (per JL) to 21 May 11, 8, Paices Wood SU5863 (JL)
25 Apr 11, Red Cow Cholsey SU592868 was the first for the site (AR)

PIERIDAE

1546 Gonepteryx rhamni Brimstone
From 24 Feb 11, Finchampstead Churchyard SU793638 (JH) to 02 Oct 11, Tilehurst SU666742 (JH)

1549 Pieris brassicae Large White
From 21 Apr 11, 2, Shepperlands Farm BBOWT Reserve, copse SU779644 (JH) to 02 Oct 11, Tilehurst SU666742 (JH)

1550 Pieris rapae Small White
25 Mar 11, Swallowfield, Valley Produce, NE field SU725643 (JH) to 14 Oct 11, Stratfield Mortimer, Foudry Brook E SU670641 (JH)

1551 Pieris napae Green-veined White
From 15 Apr 11, Riseley Village Hall SU723631 (JH) to 28 Sep 11, Whistley Green SU7874 (JL)

1553 Anthocharis cardamines Orange-tip
From 31 Mar 11, Winnersh, Arbor Meadows E SU781716 (JH) to 02 Jun 11, Lambourn Woodlands SU3274 (JL)

LYCAENIDAE

1555 Callophrys rubi Green Hairstreak
From 4 May 11, Cleeve Hill, Strawberry Field SU3376 (JL) & 4, Watts Bank SU3277 (JL) & Shinfield Park, The Grove SU730689, the first sighting in 6 years of monitoring the SU76 10K square (JH) to 22 May 11, 50, Devil's Punchbowl SU350850, a very high count (JH).
Sightings on three dates at Red Cow Cholsey SU592868 were the first for the site (AR)

1557 Neozephyrus quercus Purple Hairstreak
From 27 Jun 11, Finchampstead, Blackwater Valley Path E SU797623 (JH) to 03 Aug 11, Wokefield Common, centre SU652659 (JH)

1561 Lycaena phlaeas Small Copper
From 22 Apr 11 to 09 Oct 11, both at Red Cow Cholsey SU592868 (AR)

1569 Cupido minimus Small Blue
From 04 May 11, 2, Watts Bank SU330774 (JL) to 05 Jun 11, 12, Seven Barrows SU3282 (JL)
There were other records from Fognam Farm SU2980 & Pit SU2979 (JL),
Lardon Chase SU588809 (JH) & Ladle Hill SU479568 (JH)

1571 Plebejus argus Silver-studded Blue
From 28 Jun 11, 23, Broadmoor Bottom SU856628, SU855629 & SU857628 (JL) to 24 Jul 11, Broadmoor Bottom SU85628, female (JL). No reports from other sites, except for Wildmoor SU844631 close by.

1572 Aricia agestis Brown Argus
From 27 Apr to 27 Aug 11, both at Red Cow Cholsey SU592868 (AR)

1574 Polyommatus icarus Common Blue
From 30 Apr 11, Red Cow Cholsey SU592868 (AR) to 21 Sep 11, Moor Copse, Cottage Field SU638736 (JH)

1575 Lysandra coridon Chalkhill Blue
From 03 Jul 11, 27, Lardon Chase SU588809 (JH) to 27 Aug 11, 4, Aston Upthorpe Downs SSSI SU546837 (JH)

1576 Lysandra bellargus Adonis Blue
From 21 May 11, Lardon Chase SU588809 (JH) & 10, The Holies SU594798 (JH) to 17 Aug 11, Upper Basildon SU5978 (JL) & Watts Bank SU3277 (JL)

1580 Celastrina argiolus Holly Blue
From 27 Mar 11, Westwood Road Tilehurst SU666742 (JH) to 14 Aug 11, Moor Copse, field off 5-Acre, SU640740 (JH)

1582 Hamearis lucina Duke of Burgundy
04 May 11, 2, Cleeve Hill, Strawberry Field SU3376 (JL)

NYMPHALIDAE

1584 Limenitis camilla White Admiral
Conspicuous by its absence. No records received.

1585 Apatura iris Purple Emperor
20 Jun 11, Male, Bucklebury, SU5570 (TC)
26 Jun 11, Sulham SU647747 (D Greenaway per JL)
05 Jul 11, Moor Copse SU640733, Male drinking on Fools Watercress (JL)

1590 Vanessa atalanta Red Admiral
From 03 Feb 11, Shinfield Park Woods SU728693 (JH) to 17 Nov 11, 2, Shinfield Park Woods SU728693 (JH)

1591 Vanessa cardui Painted Lady
From 31 May 11, Stratfield Mortimer, footpath SW of church SU667638 to 30 Sep 11, Tilehurst SU666742(JH)
JH only saw 4 all year, and no-one else reported them.

1593 Aglais urticae Small Tortoiseshell
From 12 Mar 11, Newbury, Newtown Road Cemetery SU470661 (JH) to 24 Sep 11, Aston Upthorpe Downs SSSI SU546837 (JH)
20 Jun 11, 16, Yattendon SU5774 (JL)
JH noted that Small Tortoiseshell did well on the margins of arable fields in the spring, but that subsequent generations were poor.

1597 Inachis io Peacock
From 12 Mar 11, Newbury, Newtown Road Cemetery SU470661 to 9 Aug 11, Upper Lambourn SU2979 (JL)
The Peacock had a bad year, especially the new generation in the summer (JH)

1598 Polygonia c-album Comma
From 14 Mar 11, Red Cow Cholsey SU592868 (AR) to 13 Nov 11, Moor Copse, Park Wood SE SU637739 (JH)

1607 Argynnis aglaja Dark Green Fritillary
26 Jun 11, Watts Bank SU3277, flying circuits at bottom of reserve slope SU331771 (JL)

1608 Argynnis paphia Silver-washed Fritillary
From 27 June11, 4, Finchampstead, Blackwater Valley SU794626 (JH) to 14 Aug 11, 2, Moor Copse, field off 5-Acre SU640740 (JH).
03 Aug 11, 2, Wokefield Common, centre SU652659, which is a new site (JH).
Singles of form *valesina* were reported from Ashampstead Common SU5974, and Moor Copse SU640737 (both JL).

1610 Euphydryas aurinia Marsh Fritillary
02 & 05 Jun 11, 2 to 4, Seven Barrows SU3282 (JL)

SATYRIDAE

1614 Pararge aegeria Speckled Wood
From 06 Apr 11, The Cowsey SU7270 (JL) to 18 Oct 11, 5, Shinfield Park Woods SU728693 (JH)

1620 Melanargia galathea Marbled White
From 14 Jun 11, Red Cow Cholsey SU592868 (AR) to 09 Aug 11, Upper Lambourn SU2979 (JL)
24 June 11, 76 at Red Cow Cholsey

1625 Pyronia tithonus Gatekeeper
From 02 Jul 11, Basildon Park SU6077 (JL) to 25 Aug 11, Red Cow Cholsey SU592868 (AR)

1626 Maniola jurtina Meadow Brown
From 29 May 11, Hampstead Norreys SU5375 (JL) to 05 Oct 11, Red Cow Cholsey SU592868 (AR)

1627 Coenonympha pamphilus Small Heath
From 30 Apr 11, 2, Inkpen Common SU383641 (JH) to 24 Sep 11, 5, Aston Upthorpe Downs SSSI SU546837 (JH)
Easily the best year for this species at Red Cow Cholsey SU592868 (AR).

1629 Aphantopus hyperantus Ringlet
From 15 Jun 11, Shinfield Park, The Grove SU730689 (JH) to 26 Jul 11, Kintbury SU3864 (JL)

SATURNIIDAE

1643 Saturnia pavonia Emperor Moth
09 Apr 11, 2 males assembled, Maidenhead SU8781, (M. Albertini)

DREPANIDAE

1655 Tethea or Poplar Lutestring (Local)
01 Jul 11, Snelsmore Common SU462711 (NMH)

1658 Cymatophorima diluta Oak Lutestring (Local)
02 Sep 11, 7, Snelsmore Common SU462711 (NMH)

1660 Polyploca ridens Frosted Green (Local)
10 Apr 11, 2, 15 Apr 11, 1, 17 Apr 11, 3, 19 Apr 11, 2, Harcourt Drive, Earley SU735709 (NMH)
21 Apr 11, Moor Copse, Hogmoor Copse, Compartment 04 SU634740 (JH)

GEOMETRIDAE

1661 Archiearis parthenias Orange Underwing (Local)
15 Mar 11, 3, Aldermaston, Paices Wood SU5863, Field observation (JL)

1667 Comibaena bajularia Blotched Emerald (Local)
02 Jun 11, 3, Greenham Common SU509642 (NMH)

1677 Cyclophora albipunctata Birch Mocha (Local)
21 May 11, 2, Padworth Gully SU616647 (NMH)
04 Aug 11, Greenham Common SU493641 (NMH)
02 Sep 11, Snelsmore Common SU462711 (NMH)

1681 Cyclophora linearia Clay Triple-lines (Local)
02 Jul 11, 2, Basildon Park SU602777 (JH, RB)

1693 Scopula floslactata Cream Wave (Local)
05 May 11, Greenham Common SU499652, hindlegs (male) confirm (NMH)
21 May 11, 2, Padworth Gully SU616647 (NMH)

1699 Idaea rusticata Least Carpet (Local)
26 Jun 11, Westwood Road Tilehurst SU666742 (JH)
26 Jul to 13 Aug 11, singles, Red Cow Cholsey SU592868 (AR)
02 & 09 Aug 11, Harcourt Drive, Earley SU735709 (NMH)
23 Aug 11, Wokingham Road, Earley SU756715 (RB)

1705 Idaea fuscovenosa Dwarf Cream Wave (Local)
14 Jun 11, Harcourt Drive, Earley SU735709 (NMH)

1715 Idaea straminata Plain Wave (Local)
01 Jul 11, 20, Snelsmore Common SU462711 (NMH)

1716 Rhodometra sacraria Vestal (Immigrant)
30 Oct 11, Westwood Road Tilehurst SU666742 (JH)

1720 Orthonama obstipata Gem (Immigrant)
22 Nov 11, female at light, Emmer Green SU719773. A late date for this migrant species. Some eggs that were laid were reared to adults by 12 Jan 2012, (JHFN)

1721 Xanthorhoe biriviata Balsam Carpet (Uncommon)
21 Apr 11, Moor Copse, Hogmoor Copse, Compartment 04 SU634740 (JH)
15 Jul 11, 2, Boxford SU412706 (RB)

1726 Xanthorhoe quadrifasiata Large Twin-spot Carpet (Local)
21 Jun 11, Thatcham reedbed SU499670 (NMH)
15 Jul 11, Boxford SU412706 (RB)
20 Jul 11, 2, Thatcham reedbed SU499670 (NMH)

1739 Epirrhoe rivata Wood Carpet (Local)
02 Jul 11, Basildon Park SU602777, (RB det.NMH)

1751 Lampropteryx otregiata Devon Carpet (Notable B)
01 Sep 11, Greenham Common SU487642 (NMH)

1755 Eulithis testata The Chevron (Common)
01 Jul 11, 2, Snelsmore Common SU462711 (NMH)
Though 'Common' I have not seen it elsewhere locally.

1791 Philereme vetulata Brown Scallop (Local)
01 Jul 11, Snelsmore Common SU462711 (NMH)
02 Jul 11, 6, Basildon Park SU602777, (RB, NMH)

1792 Philereme transversata Dark Umber (Local)
02 Jul 11, 2, Basildon Park SU602777 (JH)

1794 Euphyia unangulata Sharp-angled Carpet (Local)
02 Jun 11, 2, Greenham Common SU509642 (NMH)
07 Jul 11, Bowdown Bomb Site SU507653 (NMH)
04 Aug 11, Greenham Common SU493641 (NMH)

1830 (form) Eupithecia goossensiata Ling Pug (Local)
20 Aug 11, Padworth Common SU618647 (JH, specimen retained by NMH)

1855 Eupithecia phoeniceata Cypress Pug (Uncommon)
25 Sep 11, Harcourt Drive, Earley SU735709 (NMH)

1878 Minoa murinata Drab Looper (Notable B)
From 02 May 11, 8, Aldermaston, Paices Wood SU5863 (JL) to 27 May 11, 3, Benyon's Inclosure SU629632 (JH)

1888 Ligdia adustata Scorched Carpet (Local)
21 Apr 11, 5, Moor Copse, Hogmoor Copse, Compartment 04 SU634740 (JH)

1889 Macaria notata Peacock Moth (Local)
05 May 11, Greenham Common SU499652 (NMH)
21 May 11, 4, Padworth Gully SU616647 (NMH)
20 Aug 11, 5, Padworth Common SU618647, (JH & NMH)

1904 Plagodis dolabraria Scorched Wing (Local)
05 May 11, Greenham Common SU499652 (NMH)
21 May 11, 3, Padworth Gully SU616647 (NMH)
02 Jun 11, Greenham Common SU509642 (NMH)

1910 Apeira syringaria Lilac Beauty (Local)
02 Jun 11, Greenham Common SU509642 (NMH)

1912 Ennomos quercinaria August Thorn (Local)
02 Jul 11, Basildon Park SU602777 (NMH)
28 Jul & 01 Aug 11, Red Cow Cholsey SU592868 (AR)

1940 Deileptenia ribeata Satin Beauty (Common)
01 Jul 11, 2, Snelsmore Common SU462711 (NMH)
Though classified as common I rarely see it (NMH).

1941 Alcis repandata Mottled Beauty (Common)
02 Jul 11, 10, Basildon Park SU602777 (NMH)
This included a completely black female, which unfortunately laid no eggs (NMH)

1968 Semiaspilates ochrearia Yellow Belle (Local)
05 May 11, Greenham Common SU499652 (NMH)

1970 Perconia strigillaria Grass Wave (Local)
21 May 11, 2, Padworth Gully SU616647 (NMH)

SPHINGIDAE

1980 Smerinthus ocellata Eyed Hawk-moth (Common)
02 Jun 11, Greenham Common SU509642 (NMH) & Westwood Road Tilehurst SU666742, first for garden (JH)
Eyed Hawk, Poplar Hawk & Elephant Hawk used to be the commonest Hawk-moths in suburban gardens, but in 2011 I saw not a single Eyed Hawk (NMH)

1984 Macroglossum stellatarum Humming-bird Hawk-moth (Immigrant, suspected Resident)
01 May 11, Red Cow Cholsey SU592868 (AR)
17 Jun, 26 & 30 Sep 11, singles seen nectaring at *Abelia* blossom, Emmer Green SU719773 (JHFN)
29 Jun 11, Westwood Road Tilehurst SU666742 (JH)
24 Jul 11, 2 small larvae (brown form) found on Lady's bedstraw in the garden, Emmer Green SU719773, reared to adults, emerging on 09 & 11 Sep 11 (JHFN)
10 Sep 11, Westwood Road Tilehurst SU666742 (JH)
22 Sep 11, Brimpton Common SU5762 (JL)
24 Sep 11, Westwood Road Tilehurst SU666742 (JH)

1992 Deilephila porcellus Small Elephant Hawk-moth (Local)
20 May 11 to 26 June 11, Red Cow Cholsey SU592868, max 15 on 14 June 11 (AR)
25 May 11, Westwood Road Tilehurst SU666742 (JH)
28 May 11, Devil's Punchbowl SU350850 (RDNHS)
26 Jun 11, at light, Emmer Green SU719773 (JHFN)
2 July 11, Basildon Park SU602777 (NMH)

NOTODONTIDAE

2005 Peridea anceps Great Prominent (Local)
05 May 11, 8, Greenham Common SU499652 (NMH)

2009 Ptilodontella cucullina Maple Prominent (Local)
02 Jul 11, 2, Basildon Park SU602777 (JH & NMH)

THAUMETOPOEIDAE

2022 Thaumetopoea processionea Oak Processionary
16 Aug 11, 11, Pangbourne, Green Lane SU633760 (JH)

ARCTIIDAE

2035 Thumatha senex Round-winged Muslin (Local)
14 June 11, Red Cow Cholsey SU592868 (AR)
21 June 11, 5, Thatcham reedbed SU499670 (NMH)
20 Jul 11, 12, Thatcham reedbed SU499670 (NMH)

2040 Cybosia mesomella Four-dotted Footman (Local)
01 Jul 11, 18, Snelsmore Common SU462711 (NMH)
7 Jul 11, Bowdown Bomb Site SU507653 (NMH)

2045 Eilema caniola Hoary Footman (Notable B)
02 Aug 11, Westwood Road Tilehurst SU666742, first for garden (JH)

2049 Eilema depressa Buff Footman (Local)
02 July 11, 2, Basildon Park SU602777 & SU604782 (RB & NMH)
15 July 11, Boxford SU412706 (RB)
40 Aug 11, Greenham Common SU493641 (NMH)

2056 Parasemia plantaginis Wood Tiger (Local, but rare in SE)
22 May 11, 20, Devil's Punchbowl SU350850 (JH)
28 May 11, 30, Devil's Punchbowl SU350850 (RDNHS)

2057 Arctia caja Garden Tiger (Common)
20 July 11, Thatcham reedbed SU499670 (NMH)
Status given as common, but actually declining rapidly (NMH)

2068 Callimorpha dominula Scarlet Tiger (Local)
From 20 Jun 11, Tilehurst, Pierces Hill SU666743, field observation (JL) to 04 July 11, Moor Copse SU6373, Field observation (JL)
Reported also from Thatcham reedbed SU499670 (NMH); Lambourn, Watts Bank SU3277 (JL); Basildon Park SU6078 (JL) Red Cow Cholsey (AR) & elsewhere in Tilehurst. (JH) & (M.Fookes, as larva on front door)

NOLIDAE

2075 Meganola strigula Small Black Arches (Notable A)
01 Jul 11, Snelsmore Common SU462711 (NMH)

2076 Meganola albula Kent Black Arches (Notable B)
07 Jul 11, Bowdown Bomb Site SU507653 (NMH)
31 Jul 11, Red Cow Cholsey SU592868 (AR)

NOCTUIDAE

2081 Euxoa tritici White-line Dart (Common)
20 Aug 11, Padworth Common SU618647 (NMH)
Classified as common, but I find it infrequently away from the coast (NMH)

2082 Euxoa nigricans Garden Dart (Common)
06 Aug 11, 1, Earley - Wokingham Road SU756715, (RB, det NMH & BMG group members).
Classified as common but declining rapidly (and difficult to identify) (NMH)

2130 Xestia baja Dotted Clay (Common)
20 Aug 11, 4, Padworth Common SU618647, (JH & NMH)
01 Sep 11, 7, Greenham Common SU487642 (NMH)
Classified as common, but with a distribution that may be shifting NW (NMH)

2131 Xestia rhomboidea Square-spotted Clay (Notable B)
28 Jul 11 to 09 Aug 11, 5 in all, Emmer Green SU719773 (JHFN)
16 Aug 11, Pangbourne, Green Lane SU633760 (JH)

2132 Xestia castanea Neglected Rustic (Local)
20 Aug 11, Padworth Common SU618647 (NMH)
01 Sep 11, 54, Greenham Common SU487642, including one very unusual example with an orange-yellow suffusion. Specimen retained. (NMH)
02 Sep 11, 2, Snelsmore Common SU462711 (NMH)

2136 Naenia typica The Gothic (Local)
20 Jul 11, Thatcham reedbed SU499670 (NMH)
11 Aug 11, Harcourt Drive, Earley SU735709 (NMH)

2171 Hadena confusa Marbled Coronet (Local)
14 Jun 11, Red Cow Cholsey SU592868 (AR)

2187 Orthosia cerasi Common Quaker (Common)
29 Oct 11, Harcourt Drive, Earley SU735709 (NMH)
Common – but not in Autumn! 4 autumn examples, including this one, were displayed at the BENHS Exhibition, Nov. 11.

2196 Mythimna pudorina Striped Wainscot (Local)
01 Jul 11, 2, Snelsmore Common SU462711 (NMH)

2197 Mythimna straminea Southern Wainscot (Local)
21 Jun, 6, & 20 Jul 11, 4, Thatcham reedbed SU499670 (NMH)

2204 Mythimna obsoleta Obscure Wainscot (Local)
21 Jun & 18 Aug 11, Thatcham reedbed SU49946700 (NMH)

2236 Lithophane hepatica Pale Pinion (Local)
02 Apr 11, Red Cow Cholsey SU592868 (AR)
10 Sep 11, Harcourt Drive, Earley SU735709 (NMH)

2260 Conistra rubiginea Dotted Chestnut (Notable B)
8 Apr 11, at light, Emmer Green SU719773 (JHFN)

2268 Parastichtis suspecta The Suspected (Local)
01 Jul 11, 7, Snelsmore Common SU462711 (NMH)
07 Jul 11, 2, Bowdown Bomb Site SU507653 (NMH)

2275 Xanthia gilvago Dusky-lemon Sallow (Local)
30 Sep 11, Harcourt Drive, Earley SU735709 (NMH)
03 Oct 11, Red Cow Cholsey SU592868, First for site (AR)
09 Nov 11, Westwood Road Tilehurst SU666742 (JH)
This species is an elm feeder, and so became very scarce after Dutch elm disease. To get 3 records is quite encouraging.

2300 Mormo maura Old Lady (Local)
15 Aug 11, Harcourt Drive, Earley SU735709 (NMH)
23 Aug 11, 2, Earley - Wokingham Road SU756715, (RB)
08 Sep 11, Harcourt Drive, Earley SU735709 (NMH)
10 Sep 11, Harcourt Drive, Earley SU735709 (NMH)

2323 Apamea sublustris Reddish Light Arches (Local)
14 Jun 11, Red Cow Cholsey SU592868 (AR)

2362 Hydraecia petasitis The Butterbur (Local)
20 Jul 11, Thatcham reedbed SU499670 (NMH)
This species has not been recorded recently in the Kennet Valley, but I have suggested that it is not the species that is dying out, but the entomologists looking for them (NMH)

2368 Celaena leucostigma The Crescent (Local)
20 Jul 11, 2, Thatcham reedbed SU499670 (NMH)
18 Aug 11, 17, Thatcham reedbed SU499670 (NMH)
25 Aug 11, Beale Park Workshop yard SU620777 (RB)
To see 17 in a night was quite unexpected (NMH)

2377 Arenostola phragmitidis Fen Wainscot (Local)
20 Jul 11, 2, Thatcham reedbed SU499670 (NMH)

2391 Chilodes maritimus Silky Wainscot (Notable B)/(Local)
20 Jul 11, Thatcham reedbed SU499670 (NMH)

2397 Panemeria tenebrata Small Yellow Underwing (Local)
06 May 11, Eastbury SU3579 (JL)
10 May 11, Moor Copse SU6373, (JL)
16 May 11, Shepperlands Farm BBOWT reserve, northern meadow SU779642 (JH)
05 Jun 11, Seven Barrows SU329829 (JL)

2466 Lygephila pastinum The Blackneck (Local)
21 Jun 11, Thatcham reedbed SU499670 (NMH)
27 Jun 11, Earley - Wokingham Road SU756715 (RB)

2470 Phytometra viridaria Small Purple-barred (Local)
23 Apr 11, 10, Dragon Hill SU301868, New species for me (JH)

2475 Parascotia fuliginaria Waved Black (Notable B)
02 Jul 11, Basildon Park SU602777 (NMH)
07 Jul 11, Bowdown Bomb Site SU507653 (NMH)
20 Jul 11, Thatcham reedbed SU499670 (NMH)

2480 Hypena rostralis Buttoned Snout (Notable B)
15 July 11, Boxford SU412706 (RB)
07 Nov 11, Red Cow Cholsey SU592868, in the cottage (AR)

2484 Schrankia costaestrigalis Pinion-streaked Snout (Local)
21 Jun 11, 5, Thatcham reedbed SU499670 (NMH)
26 Jun 11, at light, Emmer Green SU719773 (JHFN)
01 Jul 11, Snelsmore Common SU462711 (NMH)
07 Jul 11, Bowdown Bomb Site SU507653 (NMH)
18 Aug 11, Thatcham reedbed SU499670 (NMH)
08 Sep 11, Harcourt Drive, Earley SU735709 (NMH)

2492 Herminia grisealis Small Fan-foot (Common)
26 Jun 11, Westwood Road Tilehurst SU666742, last recorded in garden 2007 (JH)
Another ‘common’ species that could be in trouble. I saw none at all in 11(NMH)

CONTRIBUTORS

Thanks are due to the following members for their submissions:

(AR) Tony Rayner, (JH) Jan Haseler, (JL) John Lerpiniere, (JHFN) John Notton, (MWS) Malcolm Storey, (RB) Ricki Bull, (TC) Tim Culley.

(BMG) is the Berkshire Moth Group and (RDNHS), the Reading & District Natural History Society, to which records from their field meetings may be attributed.

RECORDER'S REPORT FOR ENTOMOLOGY and OTHER INVERTEBRATES 2011

Chris Raper

Many thanks to all the contributors whose records made 2011 such a bumper year for invertebrate recording. This year's report has a broader range of invertebrate groups than just about any previous report - with records coming in for everything from freshwater limpets to ticks! The year itself started with ideal Spring recording weather, which resulted in good sightings for invertebrates across the region. Summer proved to be a little more disappointing, with less that perfect weather conditions, but as I look at all the data I think that the year was a fairly good one, with some very interesting records.

Annelidae

Hirudinea

Erpobdella octoculata (a leech)
27 Apr 11, Lashbrook, Mill Road, Lower Shiplake, Lash Brook, SU77639 79166, Robert Aquilina.

Theromyzon tessulatum (a leech)
27 Apr 11, Lashbrook, Mill Road, Lower Shiplake, Lash Brook, SU77639 79166, Robert Aquilina.

Arthropoda

Arachnida

Acari

Ixodes ricinus Sheep Tick, Deer Tick
17 Aug 11, Upper Bucklebury, SU542683, female, on patio table cover in garden, 43 Berry's Road, Malcolm Storey.

Araneae

Araneus quadratus Four-spot Orb-weaver
9 Sep 11, 1 Adult, Woolhampton Quarry, South Area, collected from Hop vine, Rod d'Ayala.

Atypus affinis Purse Web Spider
3 Jul 11, 1 Web, Chalkhills, Whitchurch, chalk grassland, SU640778, Rod d'Ayala
23 May 11, Web, Martindale Heath, Under refuge, SU504639, typical tubular web on ground extending from underground burrow. Fresh web so adult probably present though not likely to be seen, Rod d'Ayala.
14 Sep 11, 2 Webs, Swyncombe Down, Chalk Grassland, SU669914, recent / occupied webs on sheltered south facing bank at bottom of site with tight turf and lots of bare ground, Chris Raper.

Pirata piraticus Pirate Wolf Spider
19 May 11, Adult, Woolhampton Quarry, Pond (NG9369), SU570658, Rod d'Ayala

Pisaura mirabilis Tent Spider
27 Mar 11, Didcot, Garden, woodland border, SU521895, Rod d'Ayala

Crustacea

Amphipoda

Crangonyx pseudogracilis (a freshwater shrimp)
27 Apr 11, Lashbrook, Mill Road, Lower Shiplake, Lash Brook, SU776791, Robert Aquilina
27 Apr 11, Parish Council Pond, Moorend Common, SU800904, Robert Aquilina.
This North American species is now common in our area.

Gammarus pulex (a freshwater shrimp)
4 Apr 11, Numerous adults, Abbey Fish Ponds, New Pond, SU510980. Pond creation completed on 5th, shrimps not present on 6th but had moved in in high numbers by 7th. Presumably present in fen (hiding in peat as no or little standing water present) OR living in springs that feed site. Rod d'Ayala.

Isopoda

Asellus aquaticus Water Slater
26 Jan 11, Brookfield School, Tilehurst, Pond, SU663754, Rod d'Ayala
13 Apr 11, Lashbrook, Mill Road, Lower Shiplake, SU776791, Rod d'Ayala
14 Apr 10, Sutton Courtenay Environmental Education Centre, Bird Hide Pond, Rod d'Ayala
6 May 11, Plastow Green, Hadley, Lawn Ponds, SU531617, Rod d'Ayala
19 May 11, Woolhampton Quarry, Pond, SU571058, Rod d'Ayala
30 May 11, Nettlebed Common, Stadwell Pond, SU703870, Rod d'Ayala
17 Jun 11, Broad Ride Pond, Little Wittenham Wood, SU571927, Rod d'Ayala
10 Aug 11, Adult, Abbey Fishponds (BBOWT), SU511980, Rod d'Ayala

Insecta

Coleoptera

Anthribidae

Platyrhinus resinosus Cramp-ball Fungus Weevil
30 Apr 11, Hartslock BBOWT Reserve, SU616796, resting on gate post at entrance, Malcolm Storey

Carabidae

Bembidion properans (a ground beetle)
09 May 11, Headley Gravel Pit HIOWNT Reserve, SU511626, on bonfire site, 4.3mm long, Malcolm Storey.

Cychrus caraboides Snail Hunter
23 May 11, Upper Bucklebury, SU542683, in log pile in rear garden, 43 Berry's Road, Malcolm Storey.

Elaphrus cupreus (a ground beetle)
27 Apr 11, temporary pond nr. crossroads, Moorend Common, SU800904, Robert Aquilina.

Cerambycidae

Alosterna tabacicolor Tobacco-coloured Longhorn Beetle
25 May 11, Byle's Green, SU544690, visiting Hedge Parsley, roadside, Malcolm Storey.

Grammoptera ruficornis Common Grammoptera
30 Apr 11, Hartslock BBOWT Reserve, SU617793, small longhorn visiting Hawthorn flowers, Field 3 (Comp 4), Malcolm Storey.

Rhagium bifasciatum Two-banded Longhorn Beetle
1x, 05 May 11, SU656844, Yewtree Brow, bridleway through woods, ride through beech woodland with conifers, J A Webb.

Stenurella melanura Black-striped Longhorn beetle
14 May 11, Headley Gravel Pit HIOWNT Reserve, SU512626, visiting Oxeye Daisy, Malcolm Storey.

Chrysomelidae

Chrysolina herbacea Mint-leaf Beetle
6 Apr 11, Abbey Fish Ponds, New Pond location 2, SU512978, on Water Mint, Rod d'Ayala

Donacia semicuprea (a reed beetle)
27 Apr 11, Lashbrook, Mill Road, Lower Shiplake, Lash Brook, SU776791, Robert Aquilina

Galeruca tanaceti (a leaf beetle)
06 Nov 11, Moor Copse BBOWT Reserve, SU636735, Gravid female, in rough grassland, southern meadow, by path, Malcolm Storey.

Phaedon armoraciae (a seed beetle)
27 Apr 11, temporary pond nr. crossroads, Moorend Common, SU800904, Robert Aquilina

Curculionidae

Phyllobius roboretanus Small Green Nettle Weevil
30 Apr 11, Hartslock BBOWT Reserve, SU616796, Mating pair, on Wood Avens, just inside entrance (field 1). On Wood Avens - they ate holes in the leaves when kept in a tube. Malcolm Storey

Sitona regensteinensis (a weevil)
12 Jun 11, Thursley Comon NNR, SU906414, under wooden plank beside Gorse, "Pine Island", Malcolm Storey

Strophosoma melanogrammum Nut Leaf Weevil
23 Oct 11, Upper Bucklebury, SU542682, female, on *Dryopteris* leaf, 43 Berry's Road, garden, Malcolm Storey

Dytiscidae

Agabus bipustulatus (a diving beetle)
27 Apr 11, temporary pond nr. crossroads, Moorend Common, SU800904, Robert Aquilina.

Hydroporus gyllenhalii (a diving beetle)
27 Apr 11, temporary pond nr. crossroads, Moorend Common, SU800904, Robert Aquilina

Hydroporus planus (a diving beetle)
27 Apr 11, Moorend Common, wet area and ruts, south end of Eastern Block, SU802903, Robert Aquilina
12 May 11, Adult, Abbey Fish Ponds, Abingdon, small fen pool, SU510981, Rod d'Ayala, det: Robert Aquilina

Haliplidae

Haliplus immaculatus (a crawling water beetle)
27 Apr 11, Lashbrook, Mill Road, Lower Shiplake, Lash Brook, SU776791, Robert Aquilina

Haliplus lineatocollis (a crawling water beetle)
27 Apr 11, Lashbrook, Mill Road, Lower Shiplake, Lash Brook, SU77639 79166, Robert Aquilina

Hydraenidae

Hydraena riparia (a small water beetle)
12 May 11, Adult, Abbey Fish Ponds, Abingdon, small fen pool, SU510981, Rod d'Ayala, det: Robert Aquilina.

Hydrophilidae

Anacaena globulus (a scavenger beetle)
27 Apr 11, Parish Council Pond, Moorend Common, SU800904, Robert Aquilina.

Anacaena limbata (a scavenger beetle)
12 May 11, Abbey Fish Ponds, Abingdon, small fen pool, SU510981, Rod d'Ayala, det: Robert Aquilina
27 Apr 11, Lashbrook, Mill Road, Lower Shiplake, Lash Brook, SU776791, Robert Aquilina.

Helophorus aequalis (a scavenger beetle)
27 Apr 11, Parish Council Pond, Moorend Common, SU800904, Robert Aquilina
27 Apr 11, temporary pond nr. crossroads, Moorend Common, SU800904, Robert Aquilina
12 May 11, Adult, Abbey Fish Ponds, Abingdon, small fen pool, SU510981, Rod d'Ayala, det: Robert Aquilina.

Helophorus brevipalpis (a scavenger beetle)
27 Apr 11, temporary pond nr. crossroads, Moorend Common, SU800904, Robert Aquilina
12 May 11, Adult, Abbey Fish Ponds, Abingdon, small fen pool, SU510981, Rod d'Ayala, det: Robert Aquilina.

Helophorus minutus (a scavenger beetle)
12 May 11, Adult, Abbey Fish Ponds, Abingdon, small fen pool, SU510981, Rod d'Ayala, det: Robert Aquilina.

Helophorus obscurus (a scavenger beetle)
27 Apr 11, Moorend Common, wet area and ruts, South End of Eastern Block, SU802903, Robert Aquilina.
27 Apr 11, temporary pond nr. crossroads, Moorend Common, SU800904, Robert Aquilina.

Hydrobius fuscipes (a scavenger beetle)
27 Apr 11, Lashbrook, Mill Road, Lower Shiplake, Lash Brook, SU776791, Robert Aquilina
12 May 11, Adult, Abbey Fish Ponds, Abingdon, small fen pool, SU510981, Rod d'Ayala, det: Robert Aquilina.

Ochthebius minimus (a scavenger beetle)
12 May 11, Adult, Abbey Fish Ponds, Abingdon, small fen pool, SU510981, Rod d'Ayala, det: Robert Aquilina.

Lampyridae

Lampyris noctiluca Glowworm
29 Mar 11, 1 Adult, Crookham Common, Under refuge, SU522644, Rod d'Ayala.

Lucanidae

Lucanus cervus Stag Beetle
Beetles seen in Cholsey from 25 Jun 11 to 26 Jul 11 with a maximum of five on 25 Jun 11. Observer away at peak time, so early records missed! For the second successive year these beetles seen to congregate low over busy road with predictable casualities.Red Cow, Cholsey, SU592868, Tony Rayner.
14 Jun 11, 1 adult, Tilehurst, SU666742, Jan Haseler.
25 Jun 11, 1 adult, Aldern Bridge Heath, under refuge, SU490644, Rod d'Ayala, Martin Burdock, Becca Flintham.
26 Jun 11, Tilehurst, SU666742, Jan Haseler.

Lycidae

Platycis minuta (a net-winged beetle)
21 Aug 11, Upper Bucklebury, SU542682, in cop., on dead Ash stump, 43 Berry's Road, garden, Malcolm Storey.

Platypodidae

Platypus cylindrus Oak Pin-hole Borer
29 Jul 11, Upper Bucklebury, SU542683, male, on washing on line, 43 Berry's Road, rear garden, Malcolm Storey.

Pyrochroidae

Pyrochroa coccinea Black-headed Cardinal Beetle
05 May 11, SU656844, Yewtree Brow, bridleway through woods, ride through beech woodland with conifers, J A Webb.

Pyrochroa serraticornis Red-headed Cardinal Beetle
05 May 11, SU656844, Yewtree Brow, bridleway through woods, ride through beech woodland with conifers, J A Webb.
Nice to see both our cardinal beetles together.

Scarabidae

Melolontha melolontha Cockchafer, Maybug
Moth traps included this chafer from 16 Apr 11 to 25 May 11. Peak counts of 45 on 24 Apr 11 and 64 on 30 Apr 11 suggest the common name of Maybug needs bringing up to date! Red Cow, Cholsey, SU592868, Tony Rayner.

Scirtidae

Microcara testacea (a marsh beetle)
27 Apr 11, Parish Council Pond, Moorend Common, SU800904, Robert Aquilina.

Staphylinidae

Ocypus olens Devils Coach Horse
20 Sep 11, 2, Woolhampton Quarry, South Area, SU569654, Becca Flintham.

Philonthus decorus (a rove beetle)
27 Apr 11, Moorend Common, Moorend, SU804902, Robert Aquilina.

Platydracus stercorarius (a rove beetle)
18 Sep 11, Swyncombe Downs, SU668914, in grass, beside path, Chris Raper, Id: Malcolm Storey.

Diptera

Anisopodidae

Sylvicola fenestralis (a window gnat)
23 Oct 11, Upper Bucklebury, SU542683, female, indoors, in passage, 43 Berry's Road, Malcolm Storey.

Asilidae

Asilus crabroniformis Hornet Robber Fly
A good, but short season for this species. Sightings from 25 Jul 11 to 25 Sep 11 mostly in August. Numbers that month were the best for several years, peaking at 33 on 16 Aug 11. Several mating pairs were observed, in marked contrast to 2010, Red Cow, Cholsey, SU592868, Tony Rayner.
23 Sep 11, 2 adults, Lardon Chase, SU587808, Jan Haseler.

Bibionidae

Bibio anglicus (a St Mark's fly)
30 Apr 11, Moor Copse BBOWT Reserve, SU634736, female, hedge beside new extension, Malcolm Storey.

Bibio marci St Mark's Fly
Numerous, 05 May 11, SU656844, Yewtree Brow, bridleway through woods, ride through beech woodland with conifers, J A Webb.
30 Apr 11, Hartslock BBOWT Reserve, SU61647961, male, just inside entrance (field 1), Malcolm Storey.
30 Apr 11, Moor Copse BBOWT Reserve, SU634736, male, hedge beside new extension, Malcolm Storey.

Bombylidae

Bombylius major Bee Fly
24 Mar 11, Didcot, Garden, SU521895, Rod d'Ayala.
6 Apr 11, Abbey Fish Ponds, New Pond Location 2, SU512978, Rod d'Ayala.
17 Mar 11, Bowdown Wood, Heath, SU507654, Rod d'Ayala.
27 Mar 11, Sutton Courtenay Environmental Education Centre, SU501918, Rod d'Ayala

Calliphoridae

Bellardia vulgaris (a green bottle)
14 May 11, Headley Gravel Pit HIOWNT Reserve, SU512626, male, Malcolm Storey

Calliphora vicina (a blue bottle)
18 Jul 11, Upper Bucklebury, SU542683, male, basking on white PVC window frame at 9am, 43 Berry's Road, rear garden, Malcolm Storey.

Calliphora vomitoria (a blue bottle)
17 and 19 Aug 11, Upper Bucklebury, SU542683, male, basking on Runner Beans, 43 Berry's Road, rear garden, Malcolm Storey.

Lucilia caesar (a green bottle)
09 Aug 11, Upper Bucklebury, SU542683, male, visiting Hemp Agrimony, 43 Berry's Road, rear garden, Malcolm Storey.

Lucilia sericata Sheep Maggot Fly
03 Aug 11, Upper Bucklebury, SU542683, male, visiting Hemp Agrimony, 43 Berry's Road, Malcolm Storey

Pollenia amentaria (a cluster fly)
17 Aug 11, Upper Bucklebury, SU542683, male, visiting Hemp Agrimony, 43 Berry's Road, rear garden, Malcolm Storey.

Pollenia labialis (a cluster fly)
23 Oct 11, Upper Bucklebury, SU542683, male, on south-facing house wall in sunshine, 43 Berry's Road, rear garden, Malcolm Storey.

Pollenia rudis (a cluster fly)
09 and 19 Aug 11, Upper Bucklebury, SU542683, males, 43 Berry's Road, rear garden, Malcolm Storey.

Cecidomyiidae

Contarinia scrophulariae Terminal Bud gall on Common Figwort
5 May 11, The Covert, Ipsden, Woodland, SU656844, Rod d'Ayala, det: Judy Webb.

Dolichopodidae

Hydrophorus bipunctatus (a long-legged fly)
24 Oct 11, Swinley Park, SU853649, female, swept off Bracken, "Dragonfly Pond", Malcolm Storey.

Dryomyzidae

Neuroctena anilis (a Dryomyzid fly)
14 Sep 11, Blacklands Copse, SU539678, mating pair and eggs on fresh dung in Badger latrine, along path by southern edge, halfway up slope, Malcolm Storey
06 Nov 11, Moor Copse BBOWT Reserve, SU634738, male, waiting on Nettle leaf near fresh Dog dung, Hogmoor Copse - path near entrance, Malcolm Storey.

Ephydridae

Scatella stagnalis (a shore fly)
24 Oct 11, Swinley Park, SU853649, male, swept off Grey Sallow regeneration, "Dragonfly Pond", Malcolm Storey.

Heleomyzidae

Suillia variegata (a heleomyzid fly)
18 Jul 11, Upper Bucklebury, SU542683, female, on window at 9am, 43 Berry's Road, rear garden, Malcolm Storey.

Hippoboscidae

Ornithomya avicularia (a flat fly)
12 Sep 11, Upper Bucklebury, SU542683, male, indoors, 43 Berry's Road, indoors, Malcolm Storey.

Lauxaniidae

Calliopum simillimum (a lauxaniid fly)
23 Oct 11, Upper Bucklebury, SU542683, 2 females 1 male, variously resting on window, south-facing wall, and green plastic water-butt, 43 Berry's Road, rear garden, Malcolm Storey.

Meiosimyza rorida (a lauxaniid fly)
17 Aug 11, Upper Bucklebury, SU542682, male and female, on *Skimmia* leaves, 43 Berry's Road, garden extension, Malcolm Storey.

Minettia inusta (a lauxaniid fly)
16-17 Aug 11, Upper Bucklebury, SU542683, Two females, on back door (PVCu) in evening (7pm), and on *Skimmia* leaves, and male visiting Ox-eye Daisy flower, 43 Berry's Road, rear garden, Malcolm Storey

Peplomyza litura (a lauxaniid fly)
21 Aug 11, Upper Bucklebury, SU54216829, Settled on *Skimmia* leaf, 43 Berry's Road, garden extension, Malcolm Storey

Tricholauxania praeusta (a lauxaniid fly)
08-10 Aug 11, Upper Bucklebury, SU542683, male and female, 43 Berry's Road, rear garden, Malcolm Storey.

Limoniidae

Limonia phragmitidis (a cranefly)
05 May 11, 3 adults, SU656844, Yewtree Brow, bridleway through woods, ride through beech woodland with conifers, J A Webb.

Lonchopteridae

Lonchoptera furcata (a pointed-wing fly)
24 Oct 11, Swinley Park, SU853649, swept from *Typha* over small stream, "Dragonfly Pond", Malcolm Storey.

Micropezidae

Neria cibaria (a micropezid fly)
05 May 11, adult male, SU656844, Yewtree Brow, bridleway through woods, ride through beech woodland with conifers, J A Webb, det:P J Chandler.

Muscidae

Morellia aenescens (a muscid fly)
09 Aug 11, Upper Bucklebury, SU542683, male, visiting Hemp Agrimony, 43 Berry's Road, rear garden, Malcolm Storey.

Mydaea corni (a muscid fly)
06 Nov 11, Moor Copse BBOWT Reserve, SU634738, female, waiting on Hazel leaf near fresh Dog dung, Hogmoor Copse - path near entrance, Malcolm Storey.

Neomyia cornicina (a green bottle)
23 Oct 11, Upper Bucklebury, SU542683, female and 2 males, on south-facing house wall in sunshine, 43 Berry's Road, rear garden, Malcolm Storey.

Polietes lardaria (a muscid fly)
06 Nov 11, Moor Copse BBOWT Reserve, SU639735, female, on fresh cowpat, southern meadow, by path, Malcolm Storey.

Pyrellia rapax (a green bottle)
23 Oct 11, Upper Bucklebury, SU542683, female, on South-facing house wall, 43 Berry's Road, rear garden, Malcolm Storey.

Thricops diaphanus (a muscid fly)
14 Sep 11, Blacklands Copse, SU539678, female, on flowering Ivy, along southern edge, near top of slope, Malcolm Storey.
23 Oct 11, Upper Bucklebury, SU542683, female, on Ivy, 5:30pm, 43 Berry's Road, rear garden, Malcolm Storey

Opomyzidae

Geomyza tripunctata (an opomyzid fly)
24 Oct 11, Swinley Park, SU850648, male, swept, trackside, Malcolm Storey

Opomyza florum (an opomyzid fly)
17 Aug 11, Upper Bucklebury, SU542682, female, on *Skimmia* leaves, 43 Berry's Road, garden extension, Malcolm Storey
24 Oct 11, Swinley Park, SU853649, Swept from *Typha*, over stream, Dragonfly Pond, Malcolm Storey

Piophilidae

Neottiophilum praeustum (a piophilid fly)
05 May 11, adult, SU656844, Yewtree Brow, bridleway through woods, ride through beech woodland with conifers, J A Webb, det:P J Chandler.

Sarcophagidae

Sarcophaga haemorrhoa (a flesh fly)
09 Aug 11, Upper Bucklebury, SU542683, male, 43 Berry's Road, rear garden Reddish juice (same colour as epiandrum) exuded from anus after death, Malcolm Storey.
Interestingly "*haemorrhoa*" translates as "flow of blood"

Sarcophaga pumila (a flesh fly)
02 Aug 11, Upper Bucklebury, SU542683, female, resting on wall, 43 Berry's Road, rear garden, Malcolm Storey.

Sarcophaga subvicina (a flesh fly)
31 Jul 11, Upper Bucklebury, SU542683, male, visiting Hemp Agrimony, 43 Berry's Road, rear garden, Malcolm Storey.

Scatopsidae

Apiloscatopse picea (a scatopsid fly)
23 Oct 11, Upper Bucklebury, SU542683, 3 small flies, swept off flowering Ivy, 43 Berry's Road, rear garden, Malcolm Storey.

Sciomyzidae

Coremacera marginata (a snail killing fly)
18 Sep 11, adult, Swyncombe Down, SU667913, Chris Raper.

Dichetophora obliterata (a snail killing fly)
18 Sep 11, Swyncombe Down, SU667913, Chris Raper.

Stratiomyidae

Beris chalybata (a soldierfly)
05 May 11, female, SU656844, Yewtree Brow, bridleway through woods, ride through beech woodland with conifers, J A Webb.
27 Apr 11, Lashbrook, Mill Road, Lower Shiplake, Lash Brook, SU776791, Robert Aquilina.

Pachygaster leachii Yellow-legged Black Soldierfly
26 Jul 11, Upper Bucklebury, SU542683, indoors, on window, 43 Berry's Road, indoors, Malcolm Storey.

Syrphidae

Eristalis arbustorum (a dronefly)
16 Aug 11, Upper Bucklebury, SU542683, female, visiting Hemp Agrimony, 43 Berry's Road, rear garden, Malcolm Storey.

Eristalis horticola (a dronefly)
03 Aug 11, Upper Bucklebury, SU542683, female, visiting Hemp Agrimony, 43 Berry's Road, Malcolm Storey.

Merodon equestris var equestris Large Bulb Fly, Large Narcissus Fly
19 May 11, Upper Bucklebury, SU542683, male, on leaf, 43 Berry's Road, rear garden, Malcolm Storey.

Rhingia rostrata (a hoverfly)
02 Aug 11, Upper Bucklebury, SU542683, female, visiting Buddleia, 43 Berry's Road, rear garden, Malcolm Storey.

Volucella zonaria (a hornet-mimic hoverfly)
Another good year for this species, frequently found on buddleia – dates not recorded.

Xylota segnis (hoverfly)
2x, 05 May 11, SU656844, Yewtree Brow , bridleway through woods, ride through beech woodland with conifers, J A Webb.

Tabanidae

Tabanus bromius Band-eyed Brown Horsefly
31 Jul 11, Upper Bucklebury, SU542683, female, basking on house wall at 9:30 am., 43 Berry's Road, rear garden, Malcolm Storey.

Tachinidae

Bithia spreta (a parasite fly)
15 Aug 11, a few adults on Wild Carrot, Red Cow, Cholsey, SU592868, Chris Raper.

Lydina aenea (a parasite fly)
15 Aug 11, a few adults on Wild Carrot, Red Cow, Cholsey, SU592868, Chris Raper.
14 Aug 11, many adults seen on wild parsnip, Hartslock Nature Reserve, Goring-on-Thames, SU616796, Chris Raper.

Tachina grossa (a parasite fly)
02 Aug 11, Upper Bucklebury, SU542683, Visiting Hemp Agrimony flowers, 43 Berry's Road, rear garden, Malcolm Storey

Tephritidae

Tephritis formosa (a gall fly)
10 Aug 11, Upper Bucklebury, SU542683, male, 43 Berry's Road, rear garden, Malcolm Storey.

Tephritis neesii (a gall fly)
24 Oct 11, Swinley Park, SU853649, 2 females & male, swept off Bracken, "Dragonfly Pond", Malcolm Storey.

Urophora cardui (a gall fly)
06 Jun 11, Upper Bucklebury, SU542683, male, resting on Red Campion, 43 Berry's Road, rear garden, Malcolm Storey.
10 Jul 11, Sutton Courtenay Environmental Education Centre, Newt Pond Enclosure, SU501917, Rod d'Ayala
31 Oct 11, Warburg Nature Reserve, Bix Bottom, Visitor Centre, In evening flying indoors in visitor centre. Gall known to be present on site, Rod d'Ayala.

Tipulidae

Ctenophora flaveolata (a cranefly)
02 May 11, 6 females, The Covert, Ipsden, woodland, SU656844, females flying over / landing on track through deciduous woodland (Beech etc), Rod d'Ayala.
02 May 11, 6 adults, SU656844, Yewtree Brow, bridleway through woods, ride through beech woodland with conifers, Rod d'Ayala, det:J A Webb.
05 May 11, female, SU656844, Yewtree Brow, bridleway through woods, ride through beech woodland with conifers, Rod d'Ayala, det:J A Webb.

Ctenophora pectinicornis (a cranefly)
05 May 11, female, SU656844, Yewtree Brow, bridleway through woods, ride through beech woodland with conifers, J A Webb, det: John Kramer.
05 May 11, male, SU656844, Yewtree Brow, bridleway through woods, ride through beech woodland with conifers, J A Webb.
10 May 11, female, Lower Woodland Pond, Little Wittenham Wood, SU572928, caught from deciduous damp / wet woodland around edge of pond, Rod d'Ayala, det: Judy Webb.

Cylindrotoma distincissimum (a cranefly)
05 May 11, male, SU656844, Yewtree Brow, bridleway through woods, ride through beech woodland with conifers, J A Webb.

Epiphragma ocellare (a cranefly)
05 May 11, female, SU656844, Yewtree Brow, bridleway through woods, ride through beech woodland with conifers, J A Webb.

Tanyptera nigricornis (a cranefly)
05 May 11, female, SU656844, Yewtree Brow, bridleway through woods, ride through beech woodland with conifers, J A Webb, det: A E Stubbs.

Tipula fascipennis (a cranefly)
30 Apr 11, Hartslock BBOWT Reserve, SU617793, female, resting on Hawthorn foliage, Field 3 (Comp 4), Malcolm Storey.
30 Apr 11, Hartslock BBOWT Reserve, SU616795, male, resting on fence post, Field 2, west-facing slope, Malcolm Storey.

Tipula lunata (a cranefly)
14 May 11, Headley Gravel Pit HIOWNT Reserve, SU511626, male and female, Malcolm Storey.

Tipula paludosa (a cranefly)
1m, 05 May 11, SU656844, Yewtree Brow, bridleway through woods, ride through beech woodland with conifers, J A Webb.

Tipula scripta (a cranefly)
18 May 11, Upper Bucklebury, SU542683, female, in greenhouse, 43 Berry's Road, greenhouse, Malcolm Storey.

Ephemeroptera

Baetidae

Cloeon dipterum Pond Olive
27 Apr 11, Lashbrook, Mill Road, Lower Shiplake, Lash Brook, SU776791, Robert Aquilina.

Hymenoptera

Apidae

Bombus hypnorum Tree Bumblebee
24 May 11, Upper Bucklebury, SU542683, male, visiting *Allium* in garden, 43 Berry's Road, rear garden, Malcolm Storey.

Bombus pratorum Early Bumble Bee
24 May 11, Upper Bucklebury, SU542683, female, visiting Allium in garden, 43 Berry's Road, rear garden, Malcolm Storey.

Osmia bicolor Two-coloured Mason Bee
28 Apr 11, Chalkhills, Whitchurch, Grassland, SU63997785, Rod d'Ayala.

Cynipidae

Diastrophus rubi Bramble Stem Gall Wasp
13 Apr 11, Lashbrook, Mill Road, Lower Shiplake, Hedge and Road Verge, SU775791, Rod d'Ayala.

Formicidae

Lasius fuliginosus Jet Ant
22 Aug 11, a strong nest colony in the base of a willow by the main entrance gate, Hartslock Nature Reserve, Goring-on-Thames, SU616796, Chris Raper.

Ichneumonidae

Limerodops subsericans (an ichneumon wasp)
04 Jul 11, Upper Bucklebury, SU542683, female, indoors, in passage, 6pm. , 43 Berry's Road, indoors, Malcolm Storey.

Megachilidae

Megachile ligniseca Wood-carving Leaf-cutter Bee
24 May 11, Upper Bucklebury, SU542683, male, visiting Chives in garden, 43 Berry's Road, rear garden, Malcolm Storey.

Tenthredinidae

Tenthredo scrophulariae (a sawfly)
02 Aug 11, Upper Bucklebury, SU542683, female, resting on wall, 43 Berry's Road, rear garden, Malcolm Storey

Vespidae

Vespa crabro Hornet
1 queen, 05 May 11, SU656844, Yewtree Brow, bridleway through woods, ride through beech woodland with conifers, J A Webb.
5 May 11, 1 Adult, Bishops Green Heath, SU497638, Becca Flintham.
5 May 11, 1 queen, The Covert, Ipsden, Woodland, SU656844, Rod d'Ayala, det: Judy Webb.
8 May 11, 1 Adult, Bowdown Wood, Ash tree, SU501657, queen collecting dead wood from rot hole on stem of large coppiced Ash stool, Rod d'Ayala.
28 Jul 11, Oaken Grove, Greenlands, Birch Woodland, SU767855, Rod d'Ayala.
19 Aug 11, 2 Adults, Sutton Courtenay Environmental Education Centre, two sightings - one drinking at New centre Pond and one catching and killing Wasp in Wildlife Garden (before flying off into planted copse opposite centre), Rod d'Ayala.
25 Sep 11, 1 Adult, Didcot, Garden, SU521895, Helen d'Ayala.

Neuroptera

Hemerobiidae

Micromus variegatus (a brown lacewing)
15 Aug 11, Upper Bucklebury, SU542683, on backdoor, 43 Berry's Road, rear garden, Malcolm Storey.

Raphidioptera

Phaeostigma notata (a snake fly)
14 May 11, Headley Gravel Pit HIOWNT Reserve, SU512627, at rest, Malcolm Storey.

Hemiptera

Corixidae

Sigara nigrolineata (a lesser water boatman)
27 Apr 11, Moorend Common, wet area and ruts, South End of Eastern Block, SU802903, Robert Aquilina.

Cydnidae

Canthophorus impressus Bastard Toadflax bug
09 Jul 11, many adults seen around *Thesium humifusum* plants, Hartslock Nature Reserve, Goring-on-Thames, SU616796, Chris Raper.

Gerridae

Gerris lacustris (a pond skater)
27 Apr 11, Lashbrook, Mill Road, Lower Shiplake, Lash Brook, SU776791, Robert Aquilina.
27 Apr 11, Moorend Common, wet area and ruts, South End of Eastern Block, SU802903, Robert Aquilina.

Hydrometridae

Hydrometra stagnorum Water Measurer
17 Jun 11, immature, Broad Ride Pond, Little Wittenham Wood, SU571927, Rod d'Ayala.

Nepidae

Nepa cinerea Water Scorpion
10 Aug 11, Adult, Abbey Fishponds (BBOWT), SU511980, Rod d'Ayala

Notonectidae

Notonecta glauca Greater Water Boatman
10 Aug 11, Adult, Abbey Fishponds (BBOWT), SU511980, Rod d'Ayala
5 May 11, Adult, Greenmoor, Upper Pond, SU645870, Rod d'Ayala
13 Apr 11, Adult, Lashbrook, Mill Road, Lower Shiplake, SU776791, Rod d'Ayala.

Rhopalidae

Corizus hyoscyami (a rhopalid bug)
17 Aug 11, Upper Bucklebury, SU542683, on Hemp Agrimony, 43 Berry's Road, rear garden, Malcolm Storey.

Veliidae

Velia caprai Water Cricket
13 Apr 11, Adult, Old Denery, Sonning, Berkshire, Garden Pond, SU756756, only seen in pond in enclosed courtyard, in which fountain normally runs (but not at time of survey), Rod d'Ayala.

Homoptera

Centrotus cornutus (a treehopper)
05 May 11, 1 adult, SU656844, Yewtree Brow, bridleway through woods, ride through beech woodland with conifers, J A Webb, det: E McAlister.
30 May 11, 1 adult, Hartslock Nature Reserve, SU616796, Chris Raper.

Cicadellidae

Graphocephala fennahi Rhododendron Leafhopper
17 Aug 11, Upper Bucklebury, SU542683, on Rhododendron, 43 Berry's Road, rear garden, Malcolm Storey.

Membracidae

Centrotus cornutus (a tree hopper)
14 May 11, Headley Gravel Pit HIOWNT Reserve, SU512626, on Turkey Oak, Malcolm Storey.

Megaloptera

Sialis lutaria (an alderfly)
10 Aug 11, abundant, Lashbrook, Mill Road, Lower Shiplake, Lash Brook, SU776791, Robert Aquilina

Orthoptera

Gomphocerippus rufus Rufous Grasshopper
21 Aug 11, many adults seen and heard singing, Hartslock Nature Reserve, Goring-on-Thames, SU616796, Chris Raper.

Metrioptera roeselii Roesel's Bush Cricket
Once again heard and seen through the year, but down on 2010.

Tetrix subulata Slender Groundhopper
7 Apr 11, 1 Adult, Abbey Fish Ponds, Abingdon, Sedge bed / fen, Rod d'Ayala
28 Apr 11, Moorend Common, wet area and ruts, South End of Eastern Block, SU802903, Rod d'Ayala

Tetrix undulata Groundhopper
17 Sep 11, Swyncombe Down, Chalk Grassland, SU670914, Rod d'Ayala / RDNHS

Odonata

Aeshnidae

Aeshna cyanea Blue Hawker – Southern Hawker
One patrolling or laying from 24 Aug to 15 Sep 11 Red Cow, Cholsey, SU592868, Tony Rayner.
10 Aug 11, adult and nymph, Abbey Fishponds (BBOWT), Upper Pond, SU511980, Rod d'Ayala,
6 May 11, nymph very common, The Elms, Plastow Green, Hadley, Lower Lawn Pond, SU531617, Rod d'Ayala

Aeshna grandis Brown Hawker
Singles seen from 11 Jul to 15 Sep 11. Often laying, Red Cow, Cholsey, SU592868, Tony Rayner.
28 Aug 11, Sutton Courtenay Environmental Education Centre, Education Pond, Flying over pond, Rod d'Ayala.

Aeshna mixta Migrant Hawker
Singles only mostly in September, recorded from 18 July to 29 Sep 11, Red Cow, Cholsey, SU592868, Tony Rayner.

Anax imperator Blue Emperor
One seen from 13 Jun to 25 Jul 11. Often laying..Red Cow, Cholsey, SU592868, Tony Rayner.
15 Jul 11, male and female, Upper Woodland Pond, Little Wittenham Wood, Rod d'Ayala.

Calopterygidae

Calopteryx splendens Banded Demoiselle
Up to two between 30 Jun and 31 Jul 11, Red Cow, Cholsey, SU592868, Tony Rayner.
19 May 11, Woolhampton Quarry, Pond (NG9369), Pond surrounds, SU570658, Rod d'Ayala.

Coenagrionidae

Coenagrion puella Azure Bluet
Regularly seen from 24 Apr to 24 Aug 11, Red Cow, Cholsey, SU592868, Tony Rayner.
27 Apr 11, Lashbrook, Mill Road, Lower Shiplake, Lash Brook, SU776791, Robert Aquilina.
15 Jul 11, Adult, Upper Woodland Pond, Little Wittenham Wood, Rod d'Ayala.

Enallagma cyathigerum Common Blue Damselfly
19 May 11, Adult, Woolhampton Quarry, Pond (NG9369), Pond, SU570658, Rod d'Ayala

Erythromma najas Red-eyed Damselfly
19 May 11, Adult, Woolhampton Quarry, Pond (NG9369), Pond, SU570658, Rod d'Ayala
15 July 11, Adult, Upper Woodland Pond, Little Wittenham Wood, Pond, a few males at least flying over pond, Rod d'Ayala.

Ischnura elegans Blue-tailed Damselfly
19 May 11, Adult, Woolhampton Quarry, Oxlease Lake, SU567664, Rod d'Ayala.

Pyrrhosoma nymphula Large Red Damsel
A poor year for this species, first seen on 28 Apr 11, Red Cow, Cholsey, SU592868, Tony Rayner.
27 Apr 11, Lashbrook, Mill Road, Lower Shiplake, Lash Brook, SU776791, Robert Aquilina

Corduliidae

Cordulia aenea Downy Emerald
19 May 11, 1 Adult, Woolhampton Quarry, Pond (NG0588), Pond, SU571058, Rod d'Ayala, Flying over open sunny bare area of plateau of bunded area.

Gomphidae

Gomphus vulgatissimus Club-tailed Dragonfly
30 Apr 11, Hartslock BBOWT Reserve, SU617793, teneral male, Field 3 (Comp 4), Malcolm Storey

Libellulidae

Libellula depressa Broad-bodied Chaser
Frequently seen patrolling or laying, max of 2 from 4 May to 30 Jun 11 Red Cow, Cholsey, SU592868, Tony Rayner.
12 May 11, Abbey Fish Ponds, New Pond Location 1, Pond surrounds, SU510980, single adult male flying over the pond, Rod d'Ayala.
10 Aug 11, nymph, Abbey Fishponds (BBOWT), SU511980, Rod d'Ayala.

Libellula quadrimaculata Four-spotted Chaser
Only one sighting on 9 May 11, Red Cow, Cholsey, SU592868, Tony Rayner.

Sympetrum sanguineum Ruddy Darter
15 July 11, adult, Lower Woodland Pond, Little Wittenham Wood, Pond Surrounds, SU573928, male in sunny area at north end of the pond. Rod d'Ayala.

Sympetrum striolatum Common Darter
Regularly seen from 23 Jul 11 to 13 Nov 11. Often laying. Red Cow, Cholsey, SU592868, Tony Rayner.
31 Aug 11, Sutton Courtenay Environmental Education Centre, New Centre Pond, SU499918, Rod d'Ayala.

Platycnemididae

Platycnemis pennipes White Legged Damselfly
15 July 11, Numerous Adults, Upper Woodland Pond, Little Wittenham Wood, pond and pond surrounds, Rod d'Ayala.

Plecoptera

Nemoura cinerea (a stonefly)
27 Apr 11, Parish Council Pond, Moorend Common, SU800904, Robert Aquilina

Trichoptera

Limnephilus auricular (a cased caddis)
27 Apr 11, Lashbrook, Mill Road, Lower Shiplake, Lash Brook, SU776791, Robert Aquilina

Limnephilus marmoratus (a cased caddis)
27 Apr 11, Lashbrook, Mill Road, Lower Shiplake, Lash Brook, SU776791, Robert Aquilina

Mollusca

Gastropoda

Acroloxidae

Acroloxus lacustris Lake Limpet
27 Apr 2011, Lashbrook, Mill Road, Lower Shiplake, Lash Brook, SU776791, Robert Aquilina

Cochlicopidae

Cochlicopa lubrica (a moss snail)
12 May 11, Dead and living shells, Abbey Fish Ponds, Abingdon, small fen pool, SU510981, Rod d'Ayala, det: Robert Aquilina

Helicidae

Cepaea hortensis White-lipped Snail
30 May 11, Nettlebed Common, Stadwell Pond, Pond Surrounds, SU703870, Rod d'Ayala

Helicella itala (a snail)
18 Sep 11, Swyncombe Down, Chalk Grassland, SU671915, Chris Raper.

Helix pomatia Roman Snail
17 Sep 11, 5 adults, Swyncombe Down, Chalk Grassland, SU670914, Rod d'Ayala / RDNHS.

Galba (Lymnaea) truncatula Marsh Pond Snail
27 Apr 11, Lashbrook, Mill Road, Lower Shiplake, Lash Brook, SU776791, Robert Aquilina.

Planorbidae

Anisus vortex Whirlpool Ramshorn
27 Apr 11, Lashbrook, Mill Road, Lower Shiplake, Lash Brook, SU776791, Robert Aquilina.

Bathyomphalus contortus Twisted Ramshorn
27 Apr 11, Lashbrook, Mill Road, Lower Shiplake, Lash Brook, SU776791, Robert Aquilina.

Planorbarius corneus Great Ramshorn
10 Aug 11, Adult, Abbey Fishponds (BBOWT), SU511980, Rod d'Ayala.
27 Apr 11, Lashbrook, Mill Road, Lower Shiplake, SU776791, Robert Aquilina.

Planorbis carinatus Keeled Ramshorn
27 Apr 11, Lashbrook, Mill Road, Lower Shiplake, SU776791, Robert Aquilina.

Valvata cristata Flat Valve Snail
27 Apr 11, Lashbrook, Mill Road, Lower Shiplake, SU776791, Robert Aquilina.

Veneroidea

Sphaeriidae

Pisidium milium (a pea mussel)
27 Apr 11, Lashbrook, Mill Road, Lower Shiplake, SU776791, Robert Aquilina.

Platyhelminthes

Turbellaria

Dugesia lugubris (a flatworm)
27 Apr 11, Parish Council Pond, Moorend Common, SU800904, Robert Aquilina.

Polycelis tenuis (a flatworm)
27 Apr 11, Lashbrook, Mill Road, Lower Shiplake, SU776791, Robert Aquilina.

RECORDER'S REPORT FOR VERTEBRATES 2010

Tony Rayner

My grateful thanks to all those who have contributed to this report. Once again special thanks are due to Rod D'Ayala and John Lepeniere for their unrivalled input. Note also Alan Parfitt's and John Sumpter's impressive amphibian counts and conservation work at Hambledon. Where the location is not stated, the records relate to Red Cow, Cholsey SU592868.

BIRDS

(seen/heard on local RDNHS field trips or in members' gardens)

Cuckoo

20 Apr 11, 2 heard at Beenham & Upper Woolhampton SU6870 (JH)

28 May 11, 1 at Devil's Punchbowl SU350850 (JH)

Golden Plover

10 Dec 11, 300 on Berks Downs near Lowbury Hill SU5482 (JH)

Lapwing

10 Dec 11, 300 on Berks Downs near Lowbury Hill SU5482 (JH)

Nightingale

10 May 11, 5 at Searle's Farm, Burghfield SU687702; SU693705; SU685708 (JH)

Dartford Warbler

11 Sep 11 1 at Greenham Common SU4964 (JH)

Brambling

24 Jan 11, 6 in Tilehurst garden SU666742 (JH)

Lesser Redpoll

29 Sep 11, 6 in Cholsey garden (TR)

Corn Bunting

28 May 11, 1 at Devil's Punchbowl SU350850 (JH)

Reed Bunting

28 Feb 11 5 in Cholsey garden (TR)

FISH

Gasterosteus aculeatus Three-spined Stickleback

13 Apr 11 1 adult in Lashbrook, Upper Shiplake SU776791 (Rd'A)

AMPHIBIANS

Bufo bufo Common Toad

16 Apr 11 Adult dug up in raised vegetable bed in Cholsey garden (TR)

23 Jun 11 Tadpoles at Stanford Dingley SU568713 (JL)

28 Jun 11 1 at Emmer Green SU713767 (GC)

13 Jul 11 2 adults at Brookfield School, Tilehurst SU663754 (JL)

23 Aug 11 2 juveniles at Padworth Common SU618648 (JL)

8 Sep 11 1 at Maiden Erlegh SU765705 (JL)

11 Sep 11 1 in Bartons Field Moor Copse SU641736 (JH)

14 Sep 11 1 immature at Wokefield Common SU653663 (JL)

12 Oct 11 Adult found in meadow during harvest at Cholsey (TR)

Through the year, a total of 9 adults in two of nine Little Wittenham ponds. Some breeding SU5693 (Rd'A)

Feb/Mar 7,785 adults collected and carried across road at Oaken Wood, Hambledon. (AP/JS)

Triturus vulgaris Smooth Newt

6 Feb 11 1 in Tilehurst garden SU666742 (JH)

7 Mar 11 5 in Cholsey pond (TR)

4 May 11 Many in pond at Lousehill Copse, Tilehurst SU683733 (JL)

5 May 11 4 adults in Greenmoor Upper Pond SU645870 (Rd'A)

End 5/11 Large number in Lousehill Copse, Tilehurst SU682734 (DE)

8 Jun 11 4 at Brookfield School Tilehurst SU663754 (JL)

17 Sep 11 5 tadpoles at Newbury Show Ground SU484733 (JL)

Total of 136 records from 6 Little Wittenham ponds SU5693 (Rd'A)

Feb/Mar 65 collected and carried across road at Oaken Wood, Hambledon.(AP/JS)

Triturus cristatus cristatus Great Crested Newt

71 adults recorded in year at newt pond Sutton Courtenay EEC SU501917 (Rd'A)

30 adults recorded in year at educn pond Sutton Courtenay EEC SU501918 (Rd'A)

Total of 138 records from 5 Little Wittenham ponds SU5693 (Rd'A)

Triturus helveticus Palmate Newt
29 Mar 11 9 adults & juvs in Greenham drain SU499650 (Rd'A)
5 May 11 2 adults in Greenmoor Upper Pond SU645870 (Rd'A)
8 May 11 4 adults in Bowdown pond SU510654 (Rd'A)

Rana temporaria Common Frog
6 Feb 11 First sighting of the year in a Tilehurst garden SU666742 (JH)
February 11 50+ adults in Tilehurst garden SU666742 (JH)
24 Feb 11 2 sqm of spawn at Decoy Heath SU611635 (JL)
26 Feb 11 1 adult at Hosehill LNR SU647695 (JL)
19 Mar 11 1 sqm of spawn at Thatcham Discovery Centre SU507670 (JL)
22 Mar 11 1 adult at Rushall Farm, Bradfield SU584724 (JL)
8 Jun 11 200 immatures at Brookfield School Tilehurst SU663754 (JL)
6 Jul 11 1 immature by the Kennet, Fobney Reading SU706710 (JL)
22 Aug 11 to 30 Aug 11 One in Cholsey garden (TR)
1 Sep 11 1 adult at Moor Copse SU636741 (JL)
3 Sep 11 1 at Bartley Heath during RDNHS field trip SU729533 (JH)
7 Sep 11 2 adults at Tilehurst allotment SU672748 (JL)
22 Sep 11 1 adult in Tilehurst garden SU665744 (JL)
9 Nov 11 3 found in small garden pond Cholsey on clearance (TR)
Total of 25 records from 4 Little Wittenham ponds. No evidence of breeding
SU5693 (Rd'A)
Feb/Mar 115 collected and carried across road at Hambledon. (AP/JS)

REPTILES

Lacerta vivipara Common Lizard
11 Mar 11 1 at Wokefield Common SU656662 (JL)
25 Mar 11 2 at Paices Wood SU583636 (JL)
18 May 11 1 at Decoy Heath SU610634 (JL)
10 Jul 11 2 at Broadmoor Bottom SU856628 & SU857628 (JL)
10 Jul 11 1 at Wildmoor SU844631 (JL)
10 Jul 11 2 juvs at Nettlebed Common SU705873 (EL)
23 Aug 11 1 at Padworth Common SU618648 (JL)
3 Sep 11 2 on Bartley Heath during RDNHS field trip SU729533 (JH)
14 Sep 11 3 incl an immature at Wokefield Common SU653664 (JL)
8 Mar 11 to 23 Oct 11 492 sightings at Cholsey in this period with a max. of 48 on 13 Sep 11 (TR)
In year 62 records at Bishop Green Heath SU497638 (Rd'A)
In year 32 records at Bowdown Heath SU507653 (Rd'A)
In year 13 records at Aldern Bridge Heath SU4964 (Rd'A)
In year 9 records at Crookham Common SU522643 (Rd'A)
In year 7 records at Woolhampton Quarry SU5666 (Rd'A)

Anguis fragilis Slow-worm
27/211 1 immature in Tilehurst garden SU666742 (JH)
16 Apr 11 3 at Decoy Heath SU611634 & SU612634 (JL)
19 May 11 4 at Decoy Heath SU610634 & SU610633 (JL)
17/7 1 at Tilehurst SU672748 (JL)
5 Aug 11 9 at Decoy Heath SU611634; SU610634 & SU610635 (JL)
15 Aug 11 3 at Paices Wood SU583636 & SU583635 (JL)
18 Aug 11 4 at Tilehurst SU671743 (JL)
28 Sep 11 Adult & young in Didcot garden (first ever evidence of breeding on site) SU 521895 (Rd'A)
7 Mar 11 to 31 Oct 11 A total of 1286 sightings, well down on previous years on account of far fewer observation days at Cholsey. The maximum count of 109 on 3 Apr 11 shows the population to be growing significantly. (TR)
In year 344 records at New Greenham Park East SU505641 (Rd'A)
In year 185 records at Goldfinch Heath SU513641 (Rd'A)
In year 155 records at Crookham Common SU522643 (Rd'A)
In year 124 records at Brushwood Gully SU516640 (Rd'A)

Natrix natrix Grass Snake
10 Apr 11 A juvenile in Upper Bucklebury garden SU542683 (MS)
16 Apr 11 2 at Hosehill LNR SU648694 (JL)
8 May 11 2 at Decoy Heath SU610634 (JL)
1 Jun 11 1 at Upper Pond Greenmoor SU645870 (Rd'A)
1 Jun 11 1 at Pingewood SU691708 (GC)
10 Jul 11 Sloughed skin at Wildmoor SU844631 (JL)
1 Aug 11 First year snake in central Cholsey garden SU586866 (TR)
15 Aug 11 2 immature at Paices Wood SU583637 (JL)

24 Aug 11 1 in Windsor Great Park SU973694 (JH)
14 Sep 11 1 at Wokefield Common SU653664 (JL)
23 Mar 11 to 24 Oct 11 a total of 116 sightings with a maximum of 9 on 1 Apr 11 & 26 Sep 11 at Cholsey site (TR)
In year 90 records at New Greenham Park East SU505641 (Rd'A)
In year 37 records at Goldfinch Heath SU513641 (Rd'A)
In year 25 records at Crookham Common SU522643 (Rd'A)
In year 15 records at Bowdown Heath SU507653 (Rd'A)
In year 64 records at Woolhampton Quarry SU5666 (Rd'A)

Vipera berus Adder
16 Mar 11 2 at New Greenham Park East SU505641 (Rd'A)
23 Mar 11 1 at Goldfinch Heath SU513641 (Rd'A & BF)
2 Apr 11 3 at Crookham Common SU522643 (MB)
6 Apr 11 3 at New Greenham Park East SU505641 (BF)
16 Apr 11 5 at Bowdown Heath SU507653 (MB)
20 Apr 11 1 at Martindale Heath SU504639 (Rd'A & BF)
18 May 11 Adult skin at Decoy Heath SU611634 (JL)
10 Jul 11 Adult female at Wildmoor SU844631 (JL)
23 Jul 11 2 at Bishops Green Heath SU497638 (MB)
5 Aug 11 Adult female & an immature at Decoy Heath SU611634 (JL)
14 Sep 11 2 Adult females at Wokefield Common SU653664 (JL)
30 Sep 11 Adult female at Decoy Heath SU611634 (JL)

BATS

Pipistrellus pipistrellus Common Pipistrelle
12 Feb 11 1 flying in Tilehurst garden at 12.55 & 14.30 SU666742 (JH)
7 Apr 11 First of the year at Red Cow Cholsey (TR)
5 May 11; 24 May 11 & 25 Jun 11 Good evenings for this species at Red Cow, but numbers well down on previous years. (TR)

Eptesicus serotinus Serotine
18 Sep 11 Picked up on bat detector at 19.30 at Cholsey SU597875 (TR)

Nyctalus noctula Noctule
27 Sep 11 to 2 Oct 11 Up to 3 individuals at Cholsey site (TR/RR)

INSECTIVORES

Erinaceus europaeus Hedgehog
28 Apr 11 Scooped-out skin of large hog (Badger kill) in Cholsey garden. (TR/RR)
1 Jul 11 Juvenile in Didcot garden SU521895 (Rd'A)
16 Jul 11 Two in Cholsey garden SU586866 (AS)
1 Aug 11 Adult curled up under snake sheet in central Cholsey garden SU586866 (TR)
2 Aug 11 Juvenile at Unhill Wood, Cholsey SU567830 (TR)
3 Nov 11 Two juveniles in Sotwell main street SU590905 (TR)

Sorex araneus Common Shrew
31 Mar 11 Adult on Crookham Common SU521643 (BF)
20 Sep 11 Adult at Woolhampton Quarry SU571659 (BF)
24 Feb 11 to 21 Oct 11 From 36 transects a total of 12 records at Cholsey site (TR)

Sorex minutus Pigmy Shrew
9 Mar 11 Adult at Crookham Common SU522642 (Rd'A)
9 Mar 11 Adult at Bowdown SU506657 (Rd'A)
12 Aug 11 Adult in Woolhampton Quarry SU564660 (Rd'A)

Neomys fodiens Water Shrew
8 May 11 Adult in Bowdown Wood SU506657 (Rd'A)
12 Aug 11 Adult in Woolhampton Quarry SU571655 (Rd'A)

Talpa europaea Mole
Generally fewer molehills this year.

CARNIVORES

Meles meles Badger
18 Jan 11 Adult male – road kill near Crowmarsh SU619884 (TR)
26&27 Apr 11 Cholsey lawn wrecked by digging (TR/RR)
13 May 11 Latrines in use in Basildon Park (CD)
3 Jul 11 One crossing A329 near Skew Bridge, Lower Basildon SU616781 (JH)

Mustela nivali**s** Weasel
5 Mar 11 1 crossing road at South Moreton SU567882 (CS)
17 Apr 11 1 carrying small prey in Cholsey garden (TR)

Mustela erminea Stoat
3 Aug 11 1 at Unhill Wood, Cholsey SU565827 (TR)

Mustela putorius Polecat
3 Jul 11 female road kill between Theale & Pangbourne SU632723 (GS)
Sept 11 Road kill on Tadley to Burghfield Road SU622648 (GS)
5 Dec 11 Adult Polecat/Ferret dead near Golden Balls Roundabout SU671959 (Hd/A)

Mustela vison American Mink
29 Oct 11 Mustalid, probably Mink, crossing road near Benson in poor light SU628921 (TR/CS)

Vulpes vulpes Fox
30 Jan 11 Road kill by Reading Road Cholsey SU604867 (TR)
1 Mar 11 1 at Caversham Heights SU699758 (GC)
5 Mar 11 1 at Emmer Green SU716759 (GC)
29 Mar 11 1 dead adult dumped? On Crookham Common SU524643 (Rd'A)
28 Apr 11 Adult at Chalkhills Whitchurch SU639778 (Rd'A)
24 Jun 11 1 at Southcote SU683719 & Two at Pingewood SU688698 (GC)
12 Jul 11 1 in Reading SU689724 & One at Pingewood SU687697 (GC)
22 Jul 11 1 at Pingewood SU681700 (GC)
27 Jul 11 1 at Emmer Green SU718761 (GC)
10 Aug 11 1 in Reading SU706731 & One at Pingewood SU687697 (GC)

Lutra lutra Otter
29 Jun 11 Adult in River Thames SU586801 (TW)
25 Jul 11 Juvenile in river at Abingdon eating Crayfish SU4796 (TR)

Rattus norvegicus Brown Rat
28 Jan 11 1 at Elm Lane Lower Earley SU744702 (JH)
19 May 11 1 at Emmer Green SU713767 (GC)
13 & 19 Jul 11 1 at Emmer Green SU713767 (GC)
5 Aug 11 2 juvs at Woolhampton Quarry SU570653 (Rd'A)
13 Sep 11 1 at Emmer Green SU713767 (GC)

DEER

Muntiacus reevesi Muntjac
24 Jan 11 1 by railway at Cholsey SU580864 (TR)
20 Mar 11 1 calling in evening at Cholsey (TR)
28 Mar 11 1 in Cholsey garden (TR)
23 Jun 11 1 at Kidmore End SU705787 (GC)

Capreolus capreolus Roe Deer
11 Jan 11 2 at Lollingdon SU570860 (TR)
13 Jan 11 1 at St Legers Copse, Riseley SU718634 (JH)
16 Jan 11 2 at Wasing Wood SU574637 (JH)
19 Jan 11 3 at Church Farm Shinfield SU725682 (JH)
28 Jan 11 4 at Lollingdon SU570860 (TR)
2 Feb 11 3 at South Moreton SU568876 (TR)
18 Feb 11 3 at Rooks Nest Wood, Barkham SU789659 (JH)
9 Mar 11 6 between Brightwell Baldwin and Chalgrove SU645963 (TR)
14 Mar 11 4 at Lollingdon SU570860 (TR)
21 Mar 11 3 at Sheephouse Farm SU566845 (TR/RR)
13 May 11 female at Basildon Park (CD)
18 May 11 Doe & fawn at Stratfield Mortimer by Foundry Brook SU670641 (JH)
19 May 11 Buck at Shinfield Grange SU740685 (JH)
14 Aug 11 1 at Hogmoor Copse Moor Copse SU634738 (JH)
3 Sep 11 2 at Bartley Heath during RDNHS field trip SU729533 (JH)
19 Oct 11 1 at Chapel Row SU564694 (GC)
20 Dec 11 2 at Green Park, Reading SU707692 (JH)

Dama dama Fallow Deer
29 Mar 11 1 at Binfield Heath SU731730 (GC)
20 Jul 11 2 at Binfield Heath SU7479 (FT)
29 Nov 11 1 at Binfield Heath SU747796 (GC)

RABBITS & HARES

Lepus europaeus Brown Hare
3 Jan 11 2 at Cholsey near Caps Lane (EN)
7 Mar 11 Road kill by Wallingford Bypass SU591904 (Rd'A)
18 Mar 11 3 near Carrimers Farm Aston Tirrold SU562852 (TR)

Oryctolagus cuniculus Rabbit
No reports received of large concentrations, but generally seem down on previous year.

RODENTS

Sciurus carolinensis Grey Squirrel
General increase in numbers this year, especially when walnuts & hazelnuts were ripe.

Apodemus sylvaticus Wood Mouse
25 May 11 1 at Pingewood SU691708 (GC)
25 Jun 11 Adult & 2 young at Bishops Green Heath SU596638 (Rd'A)
9 Sep 11 2 adults at Woolhampton Quarry SU569656 (Rd'A)
17 Sep 11 2 adults at Brushwood Gully SU517640 (Rd'A)
27 Dec 11 1 at Tokers Green SU700775 (GC)
12 Aug 11 to 31 Oct 11 From 36 transects a total of 9 records at Cholsey site (TR)

Apodemus flavicollis Yellow-necked Mouse
17 Sep 11 Adult at Bowdown Heath SU506654 (Rd'A)

Microtus agrestis Field Vole
18 May 11 1 at Hook End SU673808 (GC)
24 Feb 11 to 31 Oct 11 from 36 transects a total of 46 records at Cholsey site (TR)

Clethrionomys glareolus Bank Vole
9 Sep 11 2 juvs at Woolhampton Quarry SU565664 (Rd'A)
20 Sep 11 Adult at Woolhampton Quarry SU565664 (BF)
24 Feb 11 to 31 Oct 11 from 36 transects a total of 59 records at Cholsey site (TR)

Arvicola terrestris Water Vole
Easily seen in Abingdon area (outside R&D region).

CONTRIBUTORS

Thanks are due to the following members and friends for their submissions:-

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THE WEATHER IN READING DURING 2011

Roger Brugge

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(Averages and anomalies mentioned in this report refer to the new climatological period 1981-2010)

2011 was the second warmest year locally on record, with only 2006 being warmer. This statistic is possibly the most surprising one of the year – the summer was cool and dull, but was compensated for by warm, dry and sunny spring and autumn seasons; even December was on the mild side this year in contrast to 2010. While 30°C was not reached this year, there were many very warm or hot days during these two seasons – and the year exhibited a marked lack of low temperatures, the lowest being just -4.2°C which occurred rather late in the winter in March.

Unfortunately, heatwaves were short-lived, usually being 2-3 days in length. The mean maximum temperature in 2011 was (at 15.6°C) higher than that in 2006 but below that in 2003 when the summer was much hotter.

Sunshine exhibited an unusual distribution during the year; after 227.3h of sunshine during a sunny April (this total was 42% above the average) the sunshine duration recorded in the subsequent seven months was less in each case than in the preceding month – although the months of June to September each had very similar sunshine amounts. Even October had only one hour per day less sunshine than June.

There were few days with thunder or snow during the year, while about 10 per cent of the year's rain fell in a few hours in August on the 18th. Overall rainfall was only 3% less than what we would expect in a year – the spring and autumn were dry but the summer rather wet.

January

Following a cold December 2010, the start of 2011 brought a return to winter conditions that were much closer to normal. Worthy of note was the minimum temperature of 12.7°C on the 13th, making this one of the warmest January nights in the past 30 years. The 17th was the wettest January day for over 50 years and resulted in some localised flooding around the town the next day. It was the dullest January since 2002 with 14 completely sunless days.

February

The first eight days of the month were rainless – while 17 days were sunless during the month. This led to a dull and rather dreary month with only half the normal sunshine. The first week was windy at times – and with no snow and very little air frost it was a very mild month. Overall the mean temperature was about 2°C above average with the nights being 2.6°C warmer than normal. In fact the lowest temperature of the month actually occurred on 31st January. It was the mildest February since 2002 with the lowest number of February air frosts since 1995. (In 1990, February had no air frosts.) Not since 1972 has February been so dull in the Reading area – that year February recorded just 35h of sunshine, compared to the 38.6h in 2011.

March

March was a dry and sunny month – with about a quarter of the normal rainfall total, making it the driest March since 1987. Only two days had over 1mm of rain. In recent years both 2007 and 2009 were sunnier in March – even so, the total in 2011 was still almost 25% above average. This made a welcome change after a fairly dull winter. On several days there were large ranges of temperature, in particular the 23rd and 25th. This was reflected in the daytime temperatures averaging above average and the night-time temperatures being below average. 18 nights had a ground frost but there was no snow or sleet observed to fall.

April

Following on from the dry March, only 1.8mm of rain fell during April. While this was a remarkably low total, in 2007, April had only half of this total. In many ways April was the summer month of 2011 – it was the sunniest month of the year and the one in which the mean temperature departure from average was the most positive; the mean daytime maximum temperature was over 5C° above average. It was the hottest April for over 94 years – with the maximum temperature of 26.1°C on the 23rd being the highest April temperature since before 1961. Even the period 6th-10th was remarkably warm for early April. In the past 50 years only 2007 and 1984 have been slightly sunnier in April.

May

May was duller than April at the University – although it was the only month of the year to have sunshine on every day. No day was as hot as the hottest in April and overall the month was no warmer than April; in fact May was colder during the day than April by 0.8°C. It was a mostly anticyclonic month with a sharp ground frost on the 4th. To complete the very dry spring in the area, May saw only two-thirds of the normal rainfall.

June

June turned out to be cooler than average – as were each of the following two summer months – and there were two ground frosts this month. Despite this, the minimum temperature on the 27th was a high 17.7°C. The 15th to 20th was a dull period while traces of orange Saharan dust were left in places following thundery rainfall on the 28th. 78.4mm made for a very wet June – the wettest June since 2007 and the second wettest since 1998. With 50h less sunshine than in April, it did not seem to be a very summery month.

July

Again, the warmest day in July had a lower temperature than the highest recorded in April. With July being colder than average and with only three-quarters of the sunshine that had been recorded in April, it again gave the impression of a poor summer month. 25°C was not reached during July – for only the third time since 1980. There was no thunder – and indeed there was to be no more for the remainder of the year.

August

With 127mm of rain, almost two and a half times the average for the month, August was both the wettest month of 2011 and the wettest August since 2004. Of this 59.5mm fell on the 18th – a day when the maximum temperature failed to reach 15°C. Flooding occurred in places around the time of the 18th – which was the wettest day at the University since September 1992. August was another cool and dull month (the third consecutive duller-than-average summer month) following a warm start: 28.2°C on the 1st was the highest temperature of the year.

September

The main heatwave of the year occurred during a sunny spell from the 28th to 3rd October. The hottest day of September was the 29th – being only slightly cooler than the hottest day of the year in August. This turned out to be one of the warmest Septembers of the last 100 years; it was warmer than in June and less than 1°C colder than both July and August. The frequency of S'ly and SW'ly winds was unusually high.

October

A remarkable 27.8°C was recorded on the 1st – only 0.4C° below that recorded on 1st August. In fact at Stratfield Mortimer 28.7°C made 1st September the hottest day of the year there! Not only was the 3rd a hot day, it was arguably the end of the longest heatwave of 2011. In 1921 28.3°C was recorded at the University on the 5th. October was warm, sunny and dry overall – probably one of the seven sunniest Octobers in the past 100 years locally. Rainfall totalled less than half the normal for the month – and no day recorded 10mm.

November

November was the third consecutive warm and dry autumn month – but a rather dull one. Over half the month's fall occurred during the early hours of the 4th and the month was the driest November since 2005. There was only one air frost during the month (on the 28th, the first of the autumn). Only the November of 1994 has been warmer – and the month was easily the foggiest of the year, seven mornings having fog at 9a.m.

December

December was slightly sunnier than November and was certainly wetter. Overall it was a wet month (helped by a fall of almost 28mm on the 12th) but not as wet as in 2009. With almost four times the sunshine duration of December 2010 it turned out to be the sunniest December since 2008. However, the year ended on a dull note with just 2h of sunshine in the final nine days, seven of which were sunless. But December was another relatively mild month – just five air frosts, only two days with a slight fall of wet snow and the warmest December since 2006.

This report was compiled using the daily weather observations made at the University of Reading climatological station – almost all of these being made by our observer, Mike Stroud.

SUMMARY WEATHER RECORDS: 2011 – UNIVERSITY OF READING (WHITEKNIGHTS)

		J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	2011
Total sunshine	h	40.6	38.6	133.7	227.3	213.4	177.2	166.4	161.6	152.9	140.3	48.1	51.6	1551.7
%age of average sunshine	%	72	51	123	142	113	94	84	84	111	132	76	112	102
Greatest daily sunshine total	h	5.7	7.3	10.0	12.7	13.0	14.7	13.2	11.1	10.9	9.4	5.4	4.7	14.7
Date		19	8	7	22	21	3	24	9	14	1	13	22	3 Jun
Number of sunless days	days	14	17	4	2	0	3	3	3	1	2	9	11	69
Mean 10cm soil temperature	°C	3.7	5.5	5.7	11.9	14.3	16.0	17.3	16.5	14.5	11.7	9.0	4.7	10.9
Mean 30cm soil temperature	°C	5.2	6.2	7.1	11.5	13.6	15.4	16.9	17.0	15.7	13.4	11.5	7.2	11.7
Mean 100cm soil temperature	°C	6.4	6.8	7.4	10.2	12.4	14.0	15.4	16.1	15.5	14.5	12.6	9.4	11.7

		J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	2011
Mean maximum temperature	°C	6.9	9.6	11.9	18.8	18.0	19.5	21.0	20.6	20.1	17.3	13.2	9.8	15.6
Mean maximum anomaly	°C	-0.8	+1.6	+1.1	+5.3	+1.0	-0.5	-1.4	-1.5	+1.1	+2.4	+2.5	+1.9	+1.1
Mean minimum temperature	°C	1.9	4.3	2.5	7.2	8.0	10.0	11.4	12.1	11.3	8.6	6.8	3.1	7.3
Mean minimum anomaly	°C	0.0	+2.6	-1.0	+2.5	+0.3	-0.6	-1.3	-0.4	+1.0	+1.0	+2.4	+0.9	+0.7
Mean temperature	°C	4.4	7.0	7.2	13.0	13.0	14.8	16.2	16.4	15.7	13.0	10.0	6.5	11.5
Mean temperature anomaly	°C	-0.4	+2.1	+0.0	+3.9	+0.7	-0.6	-1.4	-1.0	+1.1	+1.7	+2.5	+1.4	+0.9
Highest temperature	°C	12.7	13.8	17.9	26.1	23.7	27.7	24.8	28.2	26.8	27.8	16.9	13.6	28.2
Date		13	24	25	23	6	26	5	1	29	1	3	21	1 Aug
Lowest maximum temperature	°C	1.1	4.7	4.0	12.5	14.9	14.7	17.5	14.9	15.8	11.7	9.3	4.5	1.1
Date		29	28	3	13	3	17	20	18	18	20	16	16	29 Jan
Highest minimum temperature	°C	10.9	10.0	8.9	11.6	13.5	17.7	14.5	15.9	16.2	15.5	12.2	9.9	17.7
Date		14	6	31	2	8	27	27	4	10	10	3	26	27 Jun
Lowest temperature	°C	-3.9	-2.4	-4.2	3.5	0.8	4.2	7.5	7.4	5.3	1.3	-2.2	-2.2	-4.2
Date		31	1	8	13	4	12	25	19	15	20	28	10	8 Mar
Lowest grass minimum	°C	-10.3	-10.5	-10.0	-4.5	-6.9	-1.0	1.0	2.1	2.2	-4.5	-5.8	-6.1	-10.5
Date		31	1	3	13	4	12	1	22	15	20	28	10	1 Feb

SUMMARY WEATHER RECORDS: 2011 – UNIVERSITY OF READING (WHITEKNIGHTS) - contd

		J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	2011
Total precipitation	mm	85.2	47.4	12.0	1.8	29.6	78.4	41.1	127.0	38.9	34.4	43.1	74.0	612.9
Percentage of the average precipitation	%	141	116	27	4	64	176	90	243	77	48	65	117	97
Number days with 0.2mm or more	days	15	17	7	2	8	15	10	20	13	12	13	17	149
Number of days with 1.0mm or more	days	10	13	2	1	4	13	9	12	9	7	8	14	102
Greatest fall in 24 hours	mm	22.8	10.5	5.0	1.3	16.6	14.6	8.9	59.5	14.7	7.2	23.2	28.7	59.5
Date		17	10	18	4	7	10	21	18	4	24	3	12	18 Aug
Number of days with air frost	days	13	2	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	5	27
Number of days with ground frost	days	20	13	18	12	7	2	0	0	0	6	2	18	98
Number of days with snow/sleet falling	days	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	4
Days with 50% snow cover at 0900GMT	days	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Number of days with thunder	days	0	0	0	1	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	5
Number of days with ice pellets/small hail	days	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
No of days with hail over 5mm diameter	days	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Number of days with fog at 0900GMT	days	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	7	0	11

		J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	0
Number of days with gale	days	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Number of days with N'ly winds	days	7	0	2	2	0	3	4	2	0	1	0	0	21
Number of days with NE'ly winds	days	4	2	4	7	1	2	6	3	1	3	4	0	37
Number of days with E'ly winds	days	2	4	13	2	5	3	1	3	2	2	9	0	46
Number of days with SE'ly winds	days	0	3	1	1	1	1	0	0	4	3	4	1	19
Number of days with S'ly winds	days	5	6	2	4	5	4	9	3	4	8	4	5	59
Number of days with SW'ly winds	days	4	9	4	6	11	8	6	7	10	5	3	9	82
Number of days with W'ly winds	days	5	2	2	2	5	8	2	9	8	6	2	14	65
Number of days with NW'ly winds	days	4	1	0	5	3	1	3	3	0	1	1	2	24
No of days with calm winds at 0900GMT	days	0	1	3	1	0	0	0	1	1	2	3	0	12
Mean wind speed	mph	6.0	7.8	5.2	5.8	9.4	5.2	5.6	5.6	7.2	6.0	5.1	6.5	6.3
Mean cloud cover at 0900GMT	%	82	89	80	59	78	76	74	80	71	67	79	75	76