



Bracknell Forest Natural History Society

A society for everyone interested in nature and its conservation

MEMBERS' NEWSLETTER – Autumn 2020



Autumn is now well and truly here. It seems to have been a spectacular year for Autumn colours, or that may be because we have more time to notice and appreciate the natural world around us. But when *AutumnWatch* recommences on television it's a signal that Summer will soon vanish into just a memory!

You will be aware that we aren't able to hold our popular monthly Meetings at present... and currently South Hill Park remains unsure about reopening its smaller rooms such as the Recital Room, where we usually gather. So we may need to start looking at other, larger local community venues in which to hold our talks – where social distancing can be observed, until it becomes a thing of the past.

However, you'll be pleased to know that we are in the process of putting together a **2021 Programme** – hopefully running from Easter onwards. As well as **Meetings**, this will include **Walks** of ecological interest and **Visits** to destinations which we feel will be of interest to our Members.

Although our Financial and Membership year finished on 30th September, thanks to all those who gave donations following our e-mailed AGM documentation.. and to the many Members who have been content to let their standing order subscriptions remain. And happily, we remain solvent!

Thanks also to everyone for sending in their photos and information on a wide range of topics – please keep them coming as we use them not only in these quarterly Newsletters, but also in our occasional Sightings Bulletins. We are easily contacted through email, our Facebook page or by telephone. We appreciate your continued support for the Society and look forward to meeting up again soon.

With best wishes to you all, and please keep safe and well. Gill Cheetham, Chairman – November 2020

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What a year it's been for Fungi! And how beautiful, colourful... and delicate they have been! Thanks to many of you who have sent in photographs and descriptions of their locations.



Good News about The Orchid Bank

The area previously known as The BMW Orchid Bank is now overshadowed by a large self-storage warehouse belonging to the **Big Yellow Storage Company**. As the bank faces north, happily being overshadowed may not make a significant difference to the delicate orchids which grow there.

During last year, the local management at BYS approached Bracknell Forest Council, requesting the opportunity to sponsor and maintain the bank. This was agreed and work began during September to remove the Salix tree which had taken up residence on the bank and reduce the impact of selfsets and other rogue vegetation throughout the site. The difference is already obvious. It's a great delight to know that the bank will be cared for and remain one of our important local sites for several different orchid species.



Wild Garden Awards

Despite the trials and tribulations of the long lockdown the **Bracknell Forest Nature Partnership's Wild Garden Awards**, organised to celebrate The Year of the Garden 2020 did go ahead. A number of our creative and enterprising Members entered their gardens, and some entrants have already been notified that they have received Silver Awards. The name of the winner of the Gold Award is yet to be announced... Well done everyone!



We all owe a big vote of thanks to **Marlies Boydell**, our Bracknell Forest Council Biodiversity Officer, for the enormous effort she put into masterminding the whole scheme, including designing the entry forms, creating the judging criteria - and also finding a significant prize for the winner.

The judges were our Chairman Gill Cheetham, Des Sussex of Natural England and Marlies herself - and the high marks awarded reflected the panel's recognition of the effort put in by all the competitors.



BUY A CALENDAR OF LOCAL SCENES Support South Hill Park

Nikos Polydorou is a reputable local photographer who each year produces a calendar depicting local scenes. This year the profits are being donated to South Hill Park - every penny raised will go to SHP, after printing costs.



The calendars cost **£7.50** and you can choose a **WALL CALENDAR** or a **DESK CALENDAR**. You need to contact Nikos at the email address below to order your calendar and there are **three collection points**, where you pay – cash only. If you are unable to collect your calendar personally, Nikos can post it to you – but there will be extra costs.

Thank you, Nikos, for your kind gesture!

Contact Nikos - nikos.polydorou@gmail.com - to order a calendar before collecting it. These are the collection points:

Advantage PrintRoom (Opening hours 9:00am – 5:00pm, Monday to Friday): Unit 1, Forest Park Business Units, Horndean Rd, Bracknell RG12 0XQ

South Hill Park Arts Centre (Opening hours 10:00am – 5:00pm, Monday to Saturday)

SIBIT (Opening hours 9:00 – 5:00, Monday to Friday): 11-13 Duke's Ride, Crowthorne RG45 6LZ

A SEASONAL ANNOUNCEMENT FROM THE BBOWT

Berkshire
Buckinghamshire
Oxfordshire



CHRISTMAS TREE SALE – WILDMORE HEATH Sunday 5th December, 11.00am-3.00pm

Location: Crowthorne Road, 1 mile north of Sandhurst Station, Crowthorne RG45 7PW
(car park on the Crowthorne to Sandhurst road)

Yes, our annual sale of Scots Pine Christmas trees, holly, mistletoe and wreaths at Wildmoor Heath is back!

Our **Scots Pine Christmas trees** are a by-product of heathland management on local SPAs. Come and buy these green Christmas trees and other natural decorations and support conservation of local wildlife sites.

You'll see that Scots pine is not as bushy as the usual Norway Spruce, but has two huge advantages: **it NEVER sheds its leaves and it smells wonderful.**



Also available are **willow wreaths and stars made from local willow coppice for you to decorate at home, holly, mistletoe, and bunches of decorative vegetation.** Everything can be recycled after Christmas.

There will be controls on the number of people looking at trees at any one time and a Track & Trace record must be given, so we are confident that you'll be able to **choose your own tree in safety with us** - even if it takes a little longer than usual.

Please check on our website <https://www.bbowt.org.uk/> at the beginning of December for final arrangements because Government restrictions may change.



Nightingale Triangle update

We continue to make progress at our woodland development site, albeit not quite as fast as we would have liked. The original lockdown more or less coincided with our seasonal Spring/Summer break, when we leave the birds and beasts alone so that they can nest and bring up their young.

The Friends of Nightingale Triangle gang continued to litter-pick and do general maintenance tasks throughout the Summer, and we had excellent turnouts (including several new recruits) for our socially distanced Work Parties on 1st August and 5th September, when a great deal of clearance and restructuring work was done. We've been attacking the brambles, cutting back Summer growths on a variety of plants and trees - including the omni-present rhododendrons - and re-aligning the pathways, checking and cleaning out the nest boxes, etc. etc.

Those of you who have joined us before will know how enjoyable and fulfilling these mornings are, but unfortunately our 3rd October Work Party was rained off (we think this was for only the second time in the three years we've been working at Nightingale Triangle). We are hoping that the current lockdown will be over and that we will be able to get together for our next diary date, **Saturday 5th December...** fingers crossed!

Waltham Place

Working with nature

AN INVITATION TO AN EXCLUSIVE BFNHS TRIP

From Niki McCann, Education Officer
at Waltham Place



Here at Waltham Place, Covid-19 altered all our plans for the year, cancelling events and visits by schools. It did however allow a quieter, more thoughtful atmosphere in which to observe the life of our beautiful gardens and woodland. A breeding bird survey, butterfly transect and bee survey were all able to continue behind the locked gates and when the time was right small-scale Garden Tours and Bat Walks began...

59 species of bird were recorded, of which many showed evidence of breeding. We recorded details of a 9th species of bat on the estate and added more than 14 new moth species to the estate's already impressive list.

As our tiny Farm Shop was forced to close during lockdown, we rolled out a weekly Veg Box scheme that will continue into Winter. Summer highlights for this year have included:

- The discovery of our wasp spider's delightful gourd-shaped egg sacs hidden in the long grass.
- The juvenile sparrow hawk who succeeded in catching a ring-necked parakeet but couldn't work out how to kill it.
- The charm of 50 or more chattering goldfinches that roamed the estate feeding on the seed heads and chicory.
- The sheer abundance of butterflies and caterpillars this year.

All such simple pleasures, but bringing such joy to the observer. The cold weather now brings a few months of quieter time, but plans are already afoot for next Summer, formulated to showcase the beautiful flora and fauna of Waltham Place.

WALTHAM PLACE Church Hill, White Waltham, Berks SL6 3JH 01628 825517

To find out more about Waltham Place (we're only 15 minutes' drive from Bracknell, in the general direction of Maidenhead) take a look at our Newsletter for a weekly nature diary, news of events and details of fresh produce for sale.

It's available on the homepage of our website www.walthamplace.com Or you can sign up to receive it directly by emailing education@walthamplace.com

Invitation - 'Signs of Spring'

Waltham Place's Summer season commences at the end of May, when Garden Visits and other highly anticipated events will re-commence. **Covid-permitting, we have been invited to a super-special exclusive BFNHS preview of what is to come, entitled 'Signs of Spring' - to be held at Waltham Place just for us – during the morning of Tuesday 27th April 2021.**

Places will be limited to 15 people (visitors will be divided into groups of five), although if take-up is as high as we are expecting, a second Visit will be organised in early May. The cost will be **£7.50 per person**. We'll be in touch with more details in the New Year.

TVERC Recorders' Conference (virtual) Friday 20th and Saturday 21st November

The latest Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre Recorders' Conference will take place on **Friday 20th and Saturday 21st November** (10.00am – 12.15pm). You will have the opportunity to hear about what TVERC and the biological recording community in Berkshire and Oxfordshire has been doing over the last few months. This two-day event will be online, FREE... and anyone who is interested in wildlife recording and conservation is welcome to attend. The TVERC has an exciting selection of national and local speakers lined up! For further details and to book your place, please visit: www.tverc.org/cms/content/autumn-2020



This Summer, did you notice that more and more verges, roundabouts and central reservations have remained uncut, cut in strips or indeed planted out with wild flowers? Well... we've heard from Kate Petty, Plantlife's Road Verge Campaign Manager, that there has been such high demand for printed copies of their *Managing Grassland Road Verges* document that they have run out!

However, the guide is still available digitally, free - if you click [here](#)



CHECK OUT THE BAT CONSERVATION TRUST

Over the years, we have come to recognise that a considerable number of our Members are interested in bats – and in fact several of you already support The Bat Conservation Trust.



The Trust supports local Bat Groups across the UK, working with volunteers, scientists, industry and government both locally and nationally on a huge range of projects. To achieve their vision of **a world rich in wildlife where bats and people thrive together**, their endeavours focus on discovering more about bats and how they use the landscape, taking action to protect them and enhance the landscapes on which they rely – in other words, inspiring people about bats and their environment.

If you'd like to refresh your knowledge of these beautiful and multi-talented creatures, or indeed join one of more than eighty Bat Groups in the UK, The Trust's website should be your first call. The Groups are made up of many dedicated volunteers and are the mainstay of bat conservation across the country, undertaking vital front-line conservation work. Here's the link: www.bats.org.uk

This is your Newsletter, so if you have anything you would like to be included in our next (Winter 2021) issue, please send it to your Editor Gill Cheetham:

bfathistsoc@rocketmail.com



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