



Bracknell Forest Natural History Society

A society for everyone interested in nature and its conservation

MEMBERS' NEWSLETTER – Autumn 2021

At this time of the year it's always good to take a walk around some of the wooded places in Bracknell. We have a great deal of choice with different 'woodscapes', plenty of biodiversity and very welcome remoteness. **Swinley Woods** is looking particularly beautiful – with beech, lime and ancient oaks cascading leaves in hundreds of autumn tints.



Better still if you haven't done so lately, take a stroll through our restored woodland, **Nightingale Triangle**, to see the colours... and the many improvements our hardworking group of 'Friends of Nightingale Triangle' made last Saturday.



We are so pleased that most of you are again coming to our monthly indoor meetings at South Hill Park. We have held three so far in our 2021-22 year, which have gone well – and we hope you have enjoyed them. We were lucky to welcome weatherman **Ian Currie** as the speaker at our 15th November meeting. Ian knows more than a thing or two about climate change, so his talk '**Gales, Greenhouses and Global Warming**' was particularly topical.

With best wishes to everyone. *Gill Cheetham, Chairman – November 2021*



Fungus time is almost over, but thanks to one of our Members, Simon Douthwaite, for this pic of **Purple Deceiver Fungus** at Nightingale Triangle, which he spotted in October.

Have You Considered Going Peat Free?

Peat is dug out of wild places, damaging some of the last remaining peatlands in both the UK and overseas, in places such as Eastern Europe. This process releases carbon into the atmosphere, accelerating climate change. Sadly, more than 94% of the UK's lowland peat bogs have been destroyed or damaged, and a wealth of wildlife has disappeared along with it. This vital habitat isn't easily replaced.

Peat bogs store about twice the amount of carbon than the entire world's rain forests, even though they only cover 3% of the land. Methane is locked into the bogs as plants decompose in the absence of oxygen, but released when the peat is cut to be used. Methane is a more effective global A1 arming gas than carbon dioxide, so its release needs to be controlled.

See more over...

Going Peat Free – Start the Journey!

When the peat is cut and dried, it oxidises and releases carbon dioxide. Peat bogs are an essential eco system in their own right. Alternative products to peat can be used as effectively, including compost. So it looks sensible (or should we say important?) to follow the Peat Free route in your garden or allotment.



There are a number of peat-free alternatives for compost, all providing different conditions for growing. The best version to use will depend on what you want to grow and the existing soil you have in your own gardening space. You may want to research and experiment with bark chippings, coir or wood fibre, for instance.

Most larger retailers now stock peat-free composts and you should also look out for **peat-free plants** - most garden centres and nurseries are now stocking ranges of plants grown without using peat.

Do it yourself! You can, of course, make your own compost... and compost derived from the Green Waste collected from Bracknell Forest residents can be bought at the Recycling Centre.

Growing Seeds from Wild Service Trees



Gill reports: "I am in the process of trying to grow difficult-to-germinate seeds taken this Autumn from Wild Service trees.

One process is to put them in a seed tray with peat free compost, then leave it outside – and protected from squirrels.

The second process I am trying is in a plastic bag with damp compost for two weeks, beaten with a rolling pin! Then placed in the fridge for six months to encourage stratification.

I am wondering which of these methods (if either!) will work! If anyone else has grown Wild Service trees from seed, I would be very interested to hear about the experience."

Funds for Nightingale Triangle

All continues to go well at Nightingale Triangle – and we are so grateful for the many stalwarts who regularly turn up for our **Work Parties**, which are held on the first Saturday of the month (with the next one being **Saturday 4th December**).

We have been lucky to be selected by **Waitrose's Bracknell Community Matters team** for a 'Give a Little Love' Funding Award of £330 towards ongoing maintenance at the site. This will help enormously towards further tree work and the purchase of essential plants and bulbs.



2022 – Bracknell Forest's 'Year of the Green Corridors'

Coming up - watch this space! Next year there will be plenty of 'green' activities to celebrate our wonderful green walkways...

More information will follow shortly.



Would you like to help with The Bracknell Forest Veteran Tree Survey?

Established in 2015, BFVTS is a group of volunteers under our auspices, helping to compile a database of Veteran Trees in the Borough of Bracknell Forest.

Trees are important and valuable. Some are important for the range of wildlife they support, providing unique conditions for a variety of fungi, lichens, mosses and ferns, insects, birds and other animals. Veteran trees embody continuity. They can be threatened by road construction, by building developments and by intensive agriculture. **To help preserve them, we need to know where they are.**

Volunteers usually survey in small groups of two or three people working in their own time and at their own pace in areas of their choice. They record a small amount of data about each tree: its location, its girth and a few other significant facts. They take photos. It can be good fun. Records of our findings are submitted to TVERC (Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre).

A number of our Members have signed up recently, but we'd welcome more! Please email bfnthistsoc@rocketmail.com with your name and a contact phone number in the first instance.

TVERC collects, analyses and shares geodiversity and biodiversity information in Berkshire and Oxfordshire to help people make sound decisions about how to develop and manage land sustainably and where to direct wildlife conservation work. See more at tverc@oxfordshire.gov.uk



Orchid Recordings

Those of you who have been involved in this research will be pleased to know that the records are nearly completed and will soon be available on our website.

And here's a quick reminder of other websites which may interest you:

<https://www.plantlife.org.uk/>

<https://www.hedgehogstreet.org> > [help-hedgehogs](#) > [helpful-garden-features](#)

<https://www.growwilduk.com>

<https://bbowt.org.uk>

urgent email info@britishhedgehogs.org.uk -



there i

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



Find us on Facebook - for page after page of interesting and informative stuff!
www.facebook.com/bfnthistsoc/ are advice. 01584