



Bracknell Forest Natural History Society

A society for everyone interested in nature and its conservation

MEMBERS' NEWSLETTER – Spring 2023

Once again we are happy to report that we are continuing to sign up a steady flow of new Members, and returning Members following the disruption caused by the Covid epidemic. Welcome to you all, and to our seasonal Newsletter which we hope contains items of interest to everyone in the Society.

As the weather becomes (we hope!) kinder to us all, we trust everyone will have the opportunity to enjoy the great outdoors as Spring progresses, and your Committee sends our very best wishes for April and beyond.

Gill Cheetham, Chairman – March 2023



Reporting back – 'Tigers and Teesias'

Our February Meeting gave us a wonderful view of some of the national parks in Northern India, and their inhabitants – as well as the much anticipated return of the celebrated naturalist **Andrew Cleave**, who lives locally.

The ongoing study of tigers in this region means that they are now protected and are flourishing. Teesias turned out to be tiny little birds which are exceedingly rare and can only be found in this part of India.

Water pollution – and what we can do about it

For a number of years now we have been conscious of not buying products containing palm oil. Perhaps, as a nation, we should now be thinking about using detergents that have a low phosphate content.

A recent visit to a well known local treated water outfall demonstrated that a shocking amount of foam is being released into the **River Cut** as it flows from Jocks Lane towards Bottle Lane, accompanied by a distinct aroma of washing powder and detergents.



In general, modern filtering techniques fail to remove phosphates from treated water, with the result entering our streams and rivers – and, in our case, eventually flowing into the River Thames. We continue to wholeheartedly support the plans for river monitoring in our catchment area and are preparing to actively promote this activity. Our plan is to attend all relevant meetings, to ascertain what part we and our Members (as volunteers) can play when the monitoring resumes later this year, and we will keep you up-to-date on progress.

More improvements at Nightingale Triangle

Our thanks to a large number of Bracknell Conservation Volunteers, who spent a day at our woodland restoration project (on the corner of Nightingale Crescent, Firlands and the Bagshot Road) earlier in the year. With their help, our own regular woodland volunteers have progressed the work to remove large areas of the huge and ugly Ponticum Rhododendron and have also cleared large clearings of invasive brambles from the site.

A programme to replace some of the understory will be commencing shortly. 150 specially selected Hawthorn, Hazel and Rowan saplings (*left to right below*), gifted by the Woodland Trust, have arrived and will be planted out during **our next Work Party, scheduled for Saturday 1st April.**

All extra help will be appreciated – please see joining details at the end of this item.



More good news is that many of the bulbs planted in previous years have somehow managed to survive last Summer's drought. Thankfully, the Snowdrops in particular have flourished – and the Bluebells are coming along well. By dividing up clumps of Snowdrops we can enlarge the patches for next year, which will also help provide nectar for early bees – and their flowers will be far more noticeable next Winter.

You'll be amused to know that our 'fame' is spreading, to the extent that Google Maps now provides a 'guided' pictorial walk through our woodland paths, which also includes a shot of our '*Enjoy Your Walk*' welcome board put up a few years ago!

Many thanks to our dedicated team of '**Friends of Nightingale Triangle**' who turn up each first Saturday in the month regardless of weather and conditions. It is great to see that after five years, enthusiasm still reigns!

And if you'd like to join us, do please sign in for a maximum of three hours' happy and very satisfying work, at ten o'clock on Saturday 1st April.
The postcode is RG12 9SB and there is kerbside parking on Firlands.



QUIZ CHAMPIONS 2023!

Our thanks to Malcolm Hawkes and the team at **Wildlife in Ascot** for organising their popular Quiz once again, after an absence of three years...

And well done to the Society's foursome of **Heather King, Andrew Cleare, Carole White and Gill Cheetham**, who retained our team Championship status, despite the gap. It was a great evening - a tough challenge - but enormous fun!



Blashford Lakes – a beautiful location

A group of Members hit lucky with the February weather and enjoyed a spectacular visit to Blashford Lakes near Ringwood, Hampshire. Originally created from flooded gravel pits, this 150 hectare nature reserve has a unique mix of woodland habitats and panoramic lake vistas.

It is very popular with birdwatchers – and in Winter many thousands of wildfowl flock there to overwinter on the tranquil waters. As you walk the waymarked and well-surfaced paths, you come across six strategically placed hides – and a huge number of birds to spot!



We're quite sure there were many birds we didn't recognise, but amongst those that we did were wigeon, pochard, gadwell, shoveler, pintail, goldeneye, grebe, cormorant, oystercatcher, siskin, redwing and all the usual woodland suspects. The peace was tangible, and we really recommend your visiting this beautiful place if ever you are passing through this part of the country, which is only about one-and-a-half hours by car from the Bracknell area.



SUMMER WALKS IN BRACKNELL

We will be conducting at least two walks as our involvement in the Year of the Green Corridors project, developed and hosted by the **Bracknell Nature Partnership**.

Find out more about the project by clicking on this link: <https://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/parks-and-countryside/year-green-corridors>

The routes and dates for our walks are yet to be finalised, but we will get you up to speed within a month or so.

COMING SOON – to the Recital Room near you!

Here's a brief reminder of the remaining three illustrated talks (at South Hill Park) in our 2022-23 Programme to look forward to, over the next three months...

17th April JEWELS ON THE WING: THE SECRET LIFE OF THE DRAGONFLY

Nick Percival is a volunteer surveyor and Member of the British Dragonfly Society. His insightful talk will help identify common species of these spectacular insects and highlight where to find them, their life cycle, ecology - and how climate change is affecting them.

15th May ANCIENT TREES AND ALL THAT ROT

Dr Helen Read, Burnham Beeches Conservation Officer, has plenty of examples of ancient trees within her reserve, to bring to life the intriguing world of rotting trees and the creatures who live in and on them – along with their importance to other species. Come and discover more about this important habitat, and why it needs preserving.

19th June THE CUCKOO AND THE NIGHTJAR These two charismatic birds, quintessential to our British Summers, have many things in common, but also have very secretive lives. Naturalist expert Brian Clews looks at their journeys, their part in our folk history, and what modern science has helped us to find out about them.

Planning and Development

The long running saga of the Borough's Local Plan took a step forward in January when the Planning Inspectors' report on their examination of the Plan was published.

The report requests the Council to make a number of changes before another consultation is required on the modifications. The annual requirement is now for 614 dwellings to be built each year during the Plan period – a total of 10,438 by 2037.

The inspectors highlighted that the draft Plan overprovided for land to meet this requirement and required several proposed development sites to be removed. Three smaller sites (total 50 dwellings) are to be excluded: land opposite Popes Manor, Murrell Hill Lane, Binfield and two sites on Lower Church Road, Sandhurst.



In addition, the inspectors found that there was not sufficient evidence of the required exceptional circumstances to modify the Green Belt Boundary at Jealott's Hill. Consequently, the proposal to build a Garden Village (1,350 dwellings during the Plan period) should be deleted from the Local Plan.

If many of the recent planning proposals for new conversions of offices to flats in the town centre go ahead, we suspect that the Borough will more than meet the required number of new dwellings.

The timing of the next stages is not yet clear. However, it would be good get the Plan completed as soon as possible to give certainty and avoid speculative planning applications on other land.

The Warfield Neighbourhood Plan Referendum, held in November 2022, voted in favour of their Plan, which came into legal force as part of the Development Plan for Warfield Parish, with immediate effect after approval at Referendum.

Information provided by The Bracknell Forest Society



Grow Wild

Grow Wild is the national outreach learning programme of the **Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew** – bringing people together to value and enjoy UK-native wildflowers, plants and fungi. It has a track record of combining community and creativity to help people learn, grow, and enjoy nature's gifts first hand.

Find out more and how you can get involved if you wish - at <https://www.growwilduk.com>

You can also visit Grow Wild's YouTube channel to see projects they've led and supported in the past.

The continuing spread of Bird Flu

Avian Influenza has been a major concern in many parts of the country this Winter. See below for some links covering more government information and guidance, which may be of interest:

[Bird flu \(avian influenza\): latest situation in England](#)

[Notifiable animal disease cases and control zones](#)

[Bird flu: rules in disease control and prevention zones in England](#)

[Bird flu: how to prevent it and stop it spreading](#)

Final Subscription Arrangements – our 2022-23 Programme Year

We are pleased to announce that the number of Members in the Society has now reached the pre-Covid figure – thank you for your loyalty. Most of you are aware that **The Society's Membership Year runs annually from 1st September to 31st August**, so your £12 annual Membership subscription needs to be paid during September each year.

At this time of year (i.e. more than six months since Membership payments were due) we check through our Membership list... **and it is assumed that anyone who hasn't paid their subscription for the current year** no longer wishes to be a Member, so they are removed from our listing.



Even though you may not be paying the Membership fee any more, you are, of course, more than welcome to come to any of the Meetings which appeal to you as a **Guest, for which the entrance fee is £3.**



But please remember, if you now have difficulty getting to South Hill Park or a problem with access on arrival but still wish to remain as a Member, do please get in touch with Gill Cheetham, at bfmathistsoc@rocketmail.com

Finally, here is a reminder of some more websites which may interest you:

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

<https://www.hedgehogstreet.org>

<https://bbowt.org.uk>

tverc@oxfordshire.gov.uk

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

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