



Bracknell Forest Natural History Society

A society for everyone interested in nature and its conservation

MEMBERS' NEWSLETTER – Summer 2021

At last, it looks as if the pandemic is subsiding, and we can get on with our lives again! **If all goes well Bracknell Forest Natural History Society will begin its new programme of indoor Meetings from September** – at South Hill Park as usual. It's been such a long time since we last met. I am so grateful for all the help and support shown to us for all these months and am confident that when we resume we will have a large and active Membership. Thank you to all who have retained your Membership and backing.



Where does gardening end and natural history begin?

It is increasingly obvious that gardens have become important wildlife sanctuaries. Our visit to the organic estate of Waltham Place reinforces the concept that we must garden in symbiosis with everything around us. More and more land is taken for development and although Bracknell Forest has a Biodiversity structure that protects the environment, wildlife faces habitat loss at every turn.

If you are lucky enough to have a garden of any size you can make a difference. Moving away from conventional gardening habits with its reliance on tidiness and order produces natural balances where everything has its place. **Adapting and allowing space for wildlife is not difficult or expensive.** Planting simple plants with single daisy shaped flowers is a good way to begin. Bees and other winged creatures will seek out the nectar. Soon a balance can be established, especially by leaving parts of the garden to be 'wild and weedy'.



Keeping a compost heap reduces waste and naturally rots unwanted plants and kitchen peelings. Please dispose of your garden waste responsibly - dumping in woodland or tipping over back fences alters the soil biodiversity and adds to the imbalance with native plants. **Garden escapees cause havoc and often the destruction of habitats for British natives.** Locally we have such a wonderful range of habitats and conditions - there is plenty to see and admire in its naturalness.

I and our Committee look forward to seeing you all soon.

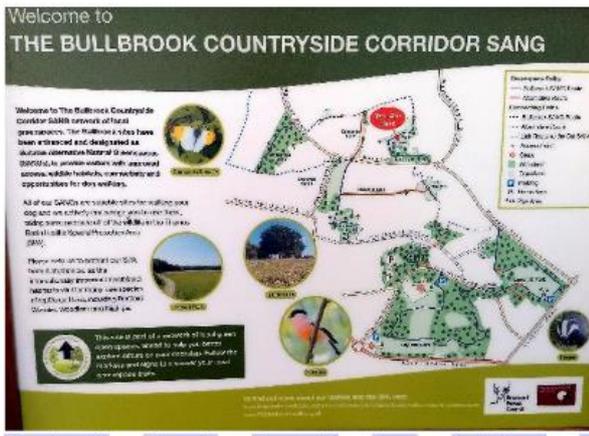
Gill Cheetham, Chairman – June 2021

PS Local sightings – you'll be pleased to know that purple wild orchids are flowering in profusion at Swain's Copse and Wykery Copse... and fox cubs have been spotted on Bill Hill.

Read on! In this issue we are covering the following:

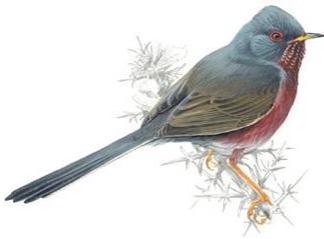
The Bullbrook Countryside Corridor	Page 2
A Thank You to Waltham Place	Page 2
Improvements at Nightingale Triangle	Page 3
The Neighbourhood Plan	Page 3
Early Days – South Hill Park's Nature Trail	Page 4
How to Submit Species Records to TVERC	Page 4/5
The Biodiversity Toolkit	Page 5
Road Verge Campaign News	Page 5
Update from Hedgehog Street	Page 6

The Bullbrook Countryside Corridor



Bracknell Forest Council has recently developed an interesting signposted/waymarked route around many of the open spaces in Bullbrook and Warfield. Known as **The Bullbrook Countryside Corridor SANG** (Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace), this 4.7 mile walk includes several lesser-known open spaces, such as Harvest Hill and Bluebell Hill.

Display boards showing the whole route have been installed adjacent to the carparks in Long Hill and Lily Hill Parks. It is recommended that when you arrive, you **take a photo of the board**, to help guide you along your walk. There will also soon be a guide on the Council website.



There are many other SANGs situated around Bracknell, which are funded by developers to help reduce the pressure on open spaces such as the **Wildmoor Heath Special Protection Area** which supports many rare birds, including the Dartford warbler (*pictured left*), woodlark and nightjar, which are highly sensitive to visitors.

A Big Thank You to Waltham Place

Divided into socially distanced groups of five people, more than twenty of our Members were recently treated to two guided walks (on different dates), at Waltham Place, near Maidenhead.



Their knowledgeable gardeners lead us on a fascinating introductory tour of the 220 acre Waltham estate, taking a broad view, including the ancient woodland with its bluebells and rhododendrons in full bloom. The woodland was truly beautiful in Spring - with blossom, birdsong and deer tracks all around.

The gardens are naturalistic in style, an evolution that has taken many years, in line with the owner's belief that **a garden should foster and support nature rather than fighting against it.** The whole estate is run under biodynamic and organic principles... gardening - and farming - without the use of chemicals. The result is a vibrant ecosystem rich in life - from the invertebrates, small mammals and birds to the larger mammals and top predators that live there.

If you haven't yet discovered Waltham Place, take a look on their website, and book a visit or join an event: www.walthamplace.com



Nightingale Triangle – Constant Improvements Despite Restrictions



Wheelbarrows at the ready! Strategically divided into socially distanced groups of five or six, thankfully we have been able to resume our Saturday Work Parties. We are truly grateful to the fifteen volunteers who turned up for the June one, when the main job was loading, transporting and re-laying a huge pile of chippings onto the pathway through the woodland. We all had plenty of laughs, worked hard, and got the job done in just over two hours! As it's a critical time for nesting birds and other wildlife, the 'Friends' group will now just be carrying out essential maintenance and tidying until September.

We're sorry to say that during the Spring two of our wooden mushrooms were pulled out of the ground by vandals. The mushrooms have now been firmly reinstated.

Our plinth is now (firmly!) positioned at the Nightingale Crescent entrance – and we are looking forward to holding a celebratory event, to which everyone will be invited, next year.



The Neighbourhood Plan

Consultation on the Pre-submission Bracknell Forest Local Plan closed in May. If you are following this important local topic, you can keep track here: [Emerging Bracknell Forest Local Plan](#)



Clearing Woodland - Way Back Then...

We came across this lovely cutting on a **Bygone Bracknell** Facebook posting recently – which goes to prove just how experienced the BFNHS is on woodland projects. Do read the story underneath – it's history!

Would anyone care to guess the year, or even better – does anyone recognise themselves? We'd love to hear from you!

Bracknell's nature trail



A GROUP of children joined their dads and other grown-ups last weekend when South Hill Park's Natural History Society took to the woods to help clear the nature trail in the grounds of the mansion. The society has already catalogued all the unusual trees growing along the trail and in the next few weeks identification labels will be attached to each tree. Explanatory leaflets about the nature trail, to help visitors appreciate the varied plant and animal communities in the grounds are also being prepared.

The lake in the grounds now has a special "duck island" inhabited by five Muscovie and two Carolina Wood ducks, and an area along the edge of the lake has been forced off to provide a secluded nesting site for them.

More Carolina wood ducks will be introduced this year for breeding. The society's development programme for the grounds of South Hill Park will culminate in a joint opening with an open air sculpture exhibition at Easter.

PLEASE SUBMIT YOUR RECORDS TO TVERC

Did you know that TVERC holds **3.4 million species records** in its database?
See how YOU can help, on the next page.

Thames Valley 
Environmental Records Centre **TVERC**

Sharing environmental information in Berkshire and Oxfordshire



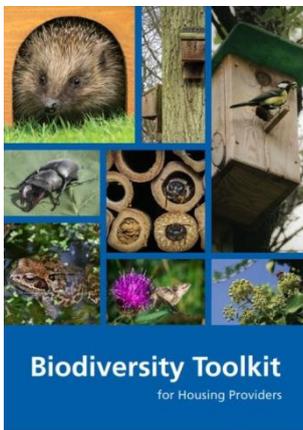
How to Submit Your Records to TVERC

Your wildlife sightings will help protect and enhance our environment by increasing the quality and quantity of data TVERC holds. In these strange times, many people have been finding calm and solace in nature, whether within their gardens or while walking/running/cycling – and they'd love to know what you've seen. Follow this link to find out how to do it: www.tverc.org/cms/content/share-your-records

Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre (TVERC) is the environmental records centre for Berkshire and Oxfordshire. TVERC is a 'not for profit' partnership between all twelve local authorities across Berkshire and Oxfordshire and the Environment Agency.



TVERC collects, manages, analyses and shares environmental data with a wide range of customers to enable evidenced-based decision-making about the natural environment.



Environmental Science for a World Where People and Nature Prosper

The [UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology \(UKCEH\)](http://www.ukceh.ac.uk) has launched a 'Biodiversity Toolkit'. The toolkit was developed by CEH with TVERC and other partners, providing different management options designed to boost wildlife on housing estates and other green spaces.

Access to high-quality green spaces and environments rich in biodiversity can bring benefits and well-being to people, as well as to wildlife.

If you are interested in the detail of this far reaching activity, you can download the Biodiversity toolkit [here](#)



We've reported before on the highly successful work which is constantly undertaken by the Road Verge Campaign, in fact many of you may have participated in 'NoMowMay'.

If you'd like to keep informed of the year round ongoing programme spearheaded by Dr Kate Petty, Plantlife's Road Verge Campaign Manager, click here:

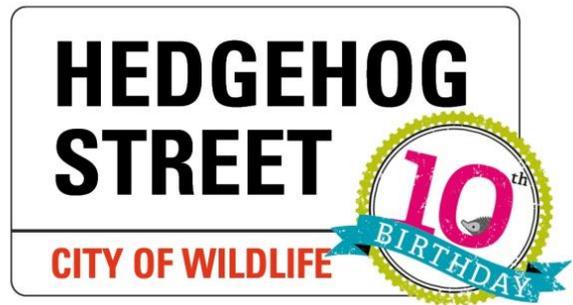
<https://plantlife.love-wildflowers.org.uk/roadvergecampaign>

You can also go to them on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#)

Watching Out for our Prickly Friends

As you'll remember, Hedgehog Street is a joint campaign by [People's Trust for Endangered Species](#) and [British Hedgehog Preservation Society](#)

Now that hedgehog families are out and about, leaving food out will provide a lifeline for hungry hogs – **meaty cat, dog or specialist hedgehog food can be offered.** And don't forget a shallow dish of clean water, especially when the warmer weather comes. If you're worried about cats, dogs or foxes pinching the food, have a look at their excellent [Tips for keeping them away.](#)



If you come across a sick, injured or orphaned hedgehog, please call the **British Hedgehog Preservation Society** on **01584 890 801** or if your problem is non-urgent email info@britishhedgehogs.org.uk There is also a Frequently Asked Questions page on their website for more advice.

Also bear in mind that hedgehogs are nocturnal, so being out in daylight could be a sign that they are in need of help.

info@britishhedgehogs.org.uk - there is also a [Frequently Asked Questions](#) page on their website for more advice. (BHPS) on **01584 890 801** or if non urgent email

This is your Newsletter, so if you have anything you would like to be included in our next issue – planned for early Autumn - please send it to your Editor Gill Cheetham:

bfmathistsoc@rocketmail.com



Find us on Facebook - for page after page of interesting and informative stuff!

www.facebook.com/bfnathistsoc/

There is also a [Frequently Asked Questions](#) page on their website for more advice.