



Bracknell Forest Natural History Society

TALKS PROGRAMME September 2025 – June 2026



Our illustrated talks are held on a Monday each month (September to June)
at 7:30pm in the Recital Room, South Hill Park, Ringmead, Bracknell RG12 7PA

15th September
2025

RUNNYMEDE MONITORING AND PROJECT UPDATES

Following our **AGM**, Runnymede volunteers **Cathy Clark** and **Stefanie Smith** will tell us all about the range of wildlife monitoring happening along these riverside meadows. With over eleven years of experience in butterfly monitoring, the data Cathy has collected is invaluable in assessing the health of these populations.

The evening will finish with some project updates which BFNHS are involved in - with **Mark Collings** giving an overview of the South Hill Park bird surveys which have been running for over a year now, and **Paul Adkins** updating us on his water surveys and habitat enhancement projects.

20th October
2025



THE RETURN OF THE RED KITE

We welcome back expert bird recorder and Chair of Hampshire Ornithological Society **Keith Betton**, who will talk about the remarkable spread of the Red Kite since its reintroduction - and share his insights into the biology and ecology of this charismatic species, which is now such a familiar sight in the area.

17th November
2025

FLOWER RICH HABITATS OF WESTERN CRETE

Dr Brian Ferry of Royal Holloway College has visited the key spots in Europe for wildflowers for many years and in this eagerly awaited talk (postponed from last year), he will share with us the rich variety found in Western Crete. Plant communities range from lowland and coastal, wooded landscapes up to high altitude alpine regions, with some mountain gorge landscapes near-vertical. With such a wealth of habitats it is not surprising that the number of native flora of Crete exceeds that of the UK - and nearly 10% is endemic to the island.



15th December
2025

SURVIVAL OF THE SHARK

Do you know how many sharks can be found around the UK? How are sharks doing globally? The Shark Trust's Outreach & Engagement Coordinator **Mark Packer** is passionate about sharks and wants to share their stories - and tell us about the vital work the Trust is doing to help them. He will also explain how we can help to safeguard the future of these fascinating and often misunderstood fish.

19th January
2026

WILDLIFE OF THE JUBILEE RIVER

Local author and expert naturalist **Brian Clews** knows the Jubilee river very well, having lived in the area for over fifty years. Looking and acting like a natural river, this 'flood alleviation scheme' from Cookham to Datchet was constructed in 2000. Inclusion of reedbeds, islands and miles of banks provide perfect habitats for many species of birds. We will look at the various stages of creation and conservation of the site - and the animals it has affected and attracted.

16th February
2026

THE ECOLOGY OF PONDS

Water is vital for all wildlife and having a pond can be a biodiversity hot spot, whether in your garden or in the wider landscape. The Crown Estate's Conservation Officer **Des Sussex** will talk about the wildlife they attract, how to manage a pond and their role in tackling environmental issues such as flooding, climate change and pollution.

16th March 2026



BUTTERFLY IDENTIFICATION MADE EASY

Recording butterflies contributes vital data especially on local populations, but do you know your large whites from your green veined? **Grahame Hawker** conducts surveys for the Upper Thames branch of Butterfly Conservation and after a brief introduction to butterflies will look at species that can be found in our area to ensure everyone has the confidence to identify and record them.

20th April 2026

SULHAM WOODMEADOWS

130ha of former arable land on the Sulham Estate near Tilehurst, West Berkshire, is being transformed into a landscape aimed at increasing biodiversity. Our speaker, **Ed Cooper** is the founder of BioCap Ltd, a small charity that has assisted Sulham Estate with the design and practical work on this large area of land. He will explain the design process and habitat creation work that is occurring here. BioCap is working with partners to create a regional, trusted and well-managed marketplace for Natural Capital. This marketplace will ensure that Biodiversity Gain, carbon and nutrient offsetting and other Natural Solutions are managed to enhance the environment of, initially, West Berkshire and then beyond.

18th May 2026

AN INTRODUCTION TO BUMBLEBEES, MINERS, MASONS AND LEAF CUTTERS

Local bee expert **Trevor Smith** has been running bee ID courses for BBOWT and monitoring bees at Waltham Place for many years - and for this talk he will focus on bumblebees with some basic ID tips and also create awareness towards the large number of solitary species of bee in the UK and their much more demanding ID requirements. Bees are struggling in the UK but the more we learn about their habits and life cycles, and the things they need for food and nesting, the more chance we have to increase their numbers.



15th June 2026



THE GREAT BUSTARD REINTRODUCTION PROGRAMME

The project began in 1998 when a group of enthusiasts led by our speaker, now Executive Officer of the Great Bustard Group, **David Waters**, joined together to explore how to bring back the Great Bustard to the UK. Once a common bird, changes in farming methods and hunting killed off the last of the British Bustards in the 1830s. The first release was in 2004, with further releases being undertaken every year since. To date over 100 Bustards have been reintroduced on the Salisbury Plain and David will be here to tell us how the programme is progressing.

We'll also shortly be providing our Members with details of our **January '26 Winter Birdwatching Walk at Dinton Pastures Country Park** in Hurst, our **April Spring Walk around Horseshoe Lake** in the Blackwater Valley... and the **June trip to Charles Darwin's home – Down House** near Orpington in Kent.

