



Bracknell Forest Natural History Society

TALKS PROGRAMME September 2026 – June 2027



WATCH THIS SPACE!

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

21st September
2026

HEDGELAYING: Home and Away

Thinking about laying a hedge to support wildlife? Learn techniques and tips from **Phil Hart**, one of the UK's leading experts. Hedgerows provide vital resources for mammals, birds, and insect species. As well as being an important habitat in their own right, they act as wildlife corridors allowing dispersal between isolated habitats. Hedgelaying is a craft that preserves the past and protects the future. It is a skill set that has been practised for hundreds of years, passing from generation to generation due to its importance in agriculture, nature, our environment and our heritage. This talk will be preceeded by our Annual General Meeting.

19th October
2026

BIRDS AND HABITAT MANAGEMENT: Lavell's and Lea Farm Lakes



Lavell's Lake is in the most northerly part of Dinton Pastures Country Park, set in about 46 acres of a mixture of managed wetland habitat - and has a rich biodiversity. **Fraser Cottington** has been visiting Dinton Pastures since 1981 and has been a Trustee of Lavell's Wetland Trust - and before that A Friend of Lavell's Lake, going back to 2000. So many changes have come to pass, perhaps most notably becoming owners of their own lake, thanks to the purchase and gifting of it by another Trustee – Ron Bryant. Fraser will be talking us through the early years, all that has happened since he joined the charity and of course many of the birds, not to forget why it is such an exciting time to become a member of LWT.

16th November
2026

HIDDEN KINGDOMS: The Secret World of Our Local Fungi

We welcome back Runnymede survey volunteer **Stefanie Smith**, to dive into the weird and wonderful world of fungi. She'll focus on species that can be found locally and which habitats they occur in, which plants they are associated with - and provide a host of useful ID tips. With over 500 of the UK's 1500 species found in Runnymede alone, there's a lot to learn!

14th December
2026

UNDERSTANDING THE CLIMATE CRISIS AND ITS IMPACT

Professor Ian Candy of Royal Holloway University, will provide an overview of the climate crisis and the science behind it. Drawing from the work of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), Professor Candy will discuss the direct relevance and implications of climate change within the UK. He will explore, for example, how warmer temperatures, drought and increased wildfire risk could affect the types of trees we plant, the biodiversity of our landscapes, and the way we will manage woodland areas.

18th January
2027

THE RIVER THAME: Restoring a Beautiful Waterway

In 2013 the River Thame in Buckinghamshire was polluted and its wildlife destroyed by sewage from Thames Water's Aylesbury works. It is still in recovery, but the river and its valley have been transformed into a developing wetland corridor which attracts a wide range of birds, dragonflies and other wildlife. It is a river that flows through a variety of landscapes, infrastructure, history and wetlands, all of which will be described in this illustrated talk from ecologist and environmental campaigner **Doug Kennedy**.

15th February
2027

POLLINATOR FRIENDLY GARDENING

A Biology graduate of Oxford University with a PhD in wheat genetics, **Karen Van Oostrum** was Head of Education at Cambridge University Botanic Garden, working with learners of all ages and backgrounds. Today, Karen works as a freelance botanist and educator. This illustrated talk is full of practical advice for attracting pollinators to your garden. Karen will explore the vital role pollinators play, the challenges they currently face, and the simple steps you can take to support them.

15th March 2027

FINDING W H HUDSON: The Writer Who Came to Britain to Save the Birds

Returning writer and naturalist **Conor Mark Jameson**, author of the books *Silent Spring Revisited* and *Looking for the Goshawk*, explores his latest book *Finding W H Hudson*. Conor traces the unassuming field naturalist's path through a dramatic and turbulent era: from Hudson's journey to Britain from Argentina in 1874 to the unveiling by the Prime Minister of a monument and bird sanctuary in his honour 50 years later, in the heart of Hyde Park. The story reveals Hudson's deep influence on the creation of his beloved Bird Society (RSPB) by its founding women, and the rise of the conservation movement.

19th April 2027



INDONESIA: Sailing from Bali to Komodo

NatureTrek's **Sara Frost** will take us on a journey through the archipelagos of Indonesia, covering the wonderful wildlife famously explored by the great naturalist Alfred Wallace. Indonesia is home to an astonishing 30 species of whales and dolphins, birds such as the Red-tailed Tropicbird and the critically endangered Yellow-crested Cockatoo (*pictured*). The seas are also home to the mighty Manta Ray and pristine coral reefs teeming with colourful fish. And of course Komodo is home to the world's largest species of lizard, the formidable Komodo Dragon!

17th May 2027

A SURVEY AND REVIEW OF SAPROXYLIC INSECTS AT DINTON PASTURES

Saproxylic invertebrates are associated with dead or decaying wood or with many fungi and micro organisms, providing important ecosystem services such as nutrient recycling and carbon sequestration. These species are in decline and include some of the most endangered insects, owing to a reduction in available suitable habitat which leads to fragmentation and increasing isolation of populations. **Jon Cole** from the British Entomological & Natural History Society will describe the perhaps surprising results of a long-term survey of saproxylic insects at Dinton Pastures Country Park - and venture into the miniature world of these fascinating and surprising creatures.

21st June 2027

PLANT GALLS: An Introduction to their enormous variety, function and occasional use for us

Martin Woolner from Wild Maidenhead has a passion for wildlife, especially small creatures like insects... but particularly plants. Plant galls cover both interests as they are formed by parasites offering no benefit to the plant, but generally doing no harm either. They have been collected through the ages and used as ink (the Magna Carta was written in oak gall ink) and for medicine. Oak apples, Robin's pin cushions, Witches' brooms...all are found around Berkshire - along with hundreds of others, each specific to their host plant. This is your chance to discover all about this fascinating subject!

Our **2026-27 Membership Year** runs from the beginning of September 2026 to the end of August next year. So it's now time to **renew your Membership, please - during September preferably.** You'll remember the cost is now **£25 per person** – and included in this sum is free entry to each of our ten monthly Evening Talks. Go to www.bfnathistsoc.org.uk and click on *Contact/Join* for more details.