



Bracknell Forest Natural History Society

A society for everyone interested in nature and its conservation

MEMBERS' NEWSLETTER Autumn 2023



Out and About this Summer

Following some marvellous and well-attended illustrated talks on a variety of subjects, our indoor Meetings ended in June as usual – but the Summer period was packed with other activities:

During June, celebrating Bracknell Forest Council's **Year of the Green Corridors**, we walked a 'Green Corridor' from The Parks to and around Nightingale Triangle, the woodland site we look after, situated opposite the Leisure Centre. During July another 'Green Corridor' walk took us to South Hill Park to look at the old and interesting trees in the grounds. In spite of the rainy weather we managed to evade the rain in just enough time to get around.

A number of our Members went on this year's **Nightjar Walk** at Wishmoor Bottom near Camberley, led by Alan Moore from the Bracknell & Wokingham RSPB - to whom we are very grateful.

It was a hot and sunny day for our outing to **Gilbert White's House** at Selborne in Hampshire in July, with the added treat of a rare demonstration of dancing from the Jane Austen era. There was much to see inside the Museum and in the beautiful gardens surrounding the house.

The Biodiversity Action Plan 2023-28



In early September work began on looking at the next five years of Biodiversity in Bracknell Forest. **All five areas of concern must be updated and corrected.** We have unique habitat, flora and fauna which is going to need much protection and monitoring over the coming years, especially with the rapid climate change we now experience. Growth of the Borough with housing, roads, and industry will make a more challenging option.

Be assured that The Natural History Society will continue to work with Bracknell Forest Council, with the aim of bringing up to date the needs and requirements of every aspect of the Biodiversity Action Plan.

Gill Cheetham, Chairman – Autumn 2023

This is your Newsletter, so if you have anything you would like included in our next issue, please send it to me at bfnatistsoc@rocketmail.com. Or phone me on 07773 850276

River Pollution Management (Rivers 21)

In August Gill and Paul Adkins attended a two day training course designed to show us how to safely and effectively approach, conduct and execute a Rivers event. We would then be able to correctly measure what goes on in our local rivers. On this occasion, The Bullbrook was used for practical training.



Using the 'RiverFly' method of scraping the bottom of the river, we found many interesting insects and a Signal Crayfish. These are an invasive pest, inhabiting most of Britain to the detriment of our native crayfish and other species. Once removed it is illegal to return it to the waterway. The one in the picture was dispatched to Crayfish heaven!



Nightingale Triangle

Throughout the Summer we have continued to meet during the morning of the first Saturday of each month, to carry out light maintenance and litter picking in the woodland and surrounding area. Although part of the Summer was hot and dry, we have been delighted to find that most of our planted and seeded annuals on the grassy bank have survived. The bank is now strimmed, cleared and ready for our Autumn planting and more seed distribution. And we've just planted **400 native bluebell bulbs** in a beautiful glade we have created alongside a path within the woodland.

The Climate Change Summit

The Summit, held on Friday 14th July, was organised by **Bracknell Forest Council**, with invitations sent out to interested parties. Gill attended on behalf of Bracknell Forest Natural History Society, and was asked by the Chairman to also represent The Bracknell Forest Society - and supply feedback. The Summit was held over two days, with the results from both days to be analysed, recorded and circulated to everybody concerned.

The **Leader of the Council** gave an address in which it was suggested that BFC has committed to a Net Zero emissions pledge, to achieve by 2050. It was pointed out and unanimously agreed that without immediate action to reduce emissions within the Borough this target is almost certainly unachievable. However it is evident that even simple acts can have a positive effect.

It was, of course, agreed that climate change is upon us - we can already see the effects across Bracknell Forest. As a body we must speedily come up with a plan of how we can reduce our carbon footprint in a way that is embraced by community, business, education and local authority which is workable and acceptable to all. Thankfully this meeting has already had effect, with further summits and subcommittee/group forming already in the pipeline.

See more over

Delegates were split into groups and asked to complete a number of questions aimed at who they were and what had they already done, and what they are going to do. The following are some examples:

- The Sewage Outfall Measuring, which is driven and funded by ZSL, was discussed. BFC is already committed to pressuring Thames Water and want to be part of the Outfall Action Group. We need better monitoring.
- There is no dedicated cycle track to Windsor. It would be a good idea to involve cyclists in future planning. Better and more cycle tracks are needed.
- Public transport is available in the evenings across Bracknell - but is poorly advertised and promoted.
- We need to reduce car journeys, lift share and seek alternative methods of transport.
- Regarding Planning, BFC has no desire to reinvent and resubmit the Local Plan. They have to work within the modifications agreed from central government, and are committed to protect SANGS (Suitable Alternative Natural Green Spaces).
- Electric vehicles and carbon neutral buildings could reduce local emissions. Where possible delivery vans/companies should work together to supply neighbouring businesses.
- A 'Share' process operated from our local disposal facility could help to reduce the need to purchase some items and goods.
- A community 'Brand' that is in evidence throughout the Borough could help people recognise the recycling points.
- Reduction in the single use of plastic water bottles is of great importance - this is the largest waste in plastic that is not recycled. There should be many more filling points for water bottles within the Borough. For instance there are currently none in the Lexicon Centre. There should be better recycling information circulated in the local schools.

Strategically, delegates had an excellent opportunity to network, and it was agreed that we need to communicate and share resources and information. Further positive action was pledged by the Leader of Bracknell Forest Council.

Our AGM – and The Crown Estate

We were happy to welcome a good turnout of both Members and Visitors to our talk on 18th September, which was preceded by our AGM. As a Natural History Society of many years standing, we are recognised as being an integral part of the community, and as such we are included in everything that concerns the local natural environment in the Bracknell Forest area. We do need to be concerned about our surroundings, it's unique and is in danger of being minimalised through drought or overdevelopment.



After the AGM, Biodiversity & Conservation Manager Des Sussex's talk on **The Crown Estate** highlighted the extent to which the forests and all their different aspects require intensive planning, management and monitoring.

Swinley Forest is a large part of the picture, and we are fortunate to have **The Great Park** on our doorstep. We can benefit from the 'rewilding' of certain parts and observe the many species that the careful management attracts.

Wildflower Update

- If you have collected wild flower seeds during the year, **now is the time to start sowing**. It's really very easy to collect them and this is, of course, a much cheaper and easier option than buying expensive mixes.



As we enter Autumn, the **Botanical Society of Britain & Ireland** – BSBI - is looking ahead to their winter citizen science initiative - **The New Year Plant Hunt** - and they're hoping that some of our Members will be able to support them in making this their biggest year ever. Here's their advance information, which may well intrigue and inspire you sufficiently to join the initiative!

The New Year Plant Hunt is a remarkable citizen science venture that unveils winter's floral secrets and sheds light on climate change. Warmer Winters may be changing the flowering times of plants, and [BSBI](#) needs your help to track this.

Perhaps surprisingly, many plants are still flowering in midwinter, with nearly 500 different species recorded during last year's Hunt. Many of these are widespread, common and easy to identify, but we will provide a handy spotter sheet to help everyone, including total beginners, recognise the top 20 species recorded in previous years.



It's easy to take part. During the four days around New Year, 30th December - 2nd January, take a leisurely walk outdoors, noting wild flowers in bloom. Submit your finds via our online form and you'll be contributing to vital climate research.

Embrace winter's beauty, learn more about our wonderful wildflowers and make a difference by participating in the New Year Plant Hunt. This is your chance to join the 2024 journey to uncover nature's response to our changing world. Register now at bsbi.org/new-year-plant-hunt



Reflections Can Kill

According to many sources, birdie window strikes are estimated to **kill over a billion birds a year**. A bird may see its own natural habitat mirrored in the glass, and fly straight into the window... thus knocking itself out - or in over 50% of the cases, killing itself.

Most of you probably know what to do if you find this is happening at your home... but if you don't, try buying decals to stick on your windows depicting leaves, flowers etc. from garden centres and bird-feed outlets, or taping hanging strips of feathers, cut vegetation or lengths of string outside the window (these should be no more than 10 inches apart). In actuality, anything that breaks up your window's reflection from the birds' viewpoint will help reduce the strikes. See more at www.garden-birds.co.uk/information/windows

Stop Press!!

One of the Government's latest decisions is to scrap the Biodiversity Net Gains initiative. How will this affect Bracknell Forest Council, which is already committed to delivering?

We're looking for another Committee Member

We have a Committee requirement which we hope may appeal to one of our Members - for a **Biodiversity and Ecology Officer**. This new position within the Society is a unique opportunity to create, take part in, monitor and record biodiversity and species events/surveys which we will be organising on a regular basis. Planning events, recruiting volunteers, overseeing surveys, reporting back and keeping records for our archives are the main tasks.

A few hours a month, and attendance at our Committee Meetings (which are held on weekday evenings, approximately five times a year) would be required. If you are interested please email Gill at bfnathistsoc@rocketmail.com or phone her on 07773 850276.

Have you Re-Joined?

You'll remember that **The Society's Membership Year runs annually from 1st September**, so your £12 annual 2023-24 Membership subscription became due this September. If you haven't rejoined yet you can pay with cash or by cheque made out to Bracknell Forest Natural History Society when you come to any of our Meetings. If you wish to pay electronically, please visit our website www.bfnathistsoc.org.uk and go to 'Membership' for full instructions/forms.

If you decide not to pay 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**.



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

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

<https://www.plantlife.org.uk/>
<https://growwild.kew.org>
<https://www.hedgehogstreet.org>
<https://bbowt.org.uk>
tverc@oxfordshire.gov.uk
<https://www.greenpeace.org.uk>
<https://friendsoftheearth.uk>

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