



Bracknell Forest Natural History Society

A society for everyone interested in nature and its conservation

MEMBERS' NEWSLETTER Summer 2023



Following some marvellous and well-attended recent illustrated talks on a variety of subjects, including dragonflies, ancient trees and nightjars we have reached the end of our programme of indoor meetings for 2022-23 (our Membership year runs from 1st September till the end of August.). During the Summer period we are running a series of outside events, and joining with Priestwood Environmental Group in a series of monthly Wellbeing and Nature Walks on Sunday mornings.

We are very pleased to report that our current Membership now stands at 58, which is fantastic. All the changes and cancellations during the Covid years are now behind us, and we are confident that we can go forward with a healthy Membership into our 2023-24 year. Our Annual General Meeting will be on **Monday 18th September** at 7.30 pm, followed by a really interesting talk, the details of which will be advised when we put out our new Programme, shortly.

We will be conducting our Dragonfly and Orchid surveys as usual this Summer, so please let me know at bfmathistsociety@rocketmail.com if you are able to help.

Filming of a TV series of **Lord of the Rings** has begun in Swinley Forest. It has attracted a lot of media attention. The Society was asked to give an opinion about its impact which was reported in the Sunday Mirror earlier in the year. The situation, of possible substantial damage to the ecosystem, is of concern. The filming is due to finish in August.

Some help with support roles to assist our existing Committee will ensure that the Society will remain active for many years to come – so please put your name forward to me at the rocketmail email address above if you'd like to join our team.

In the meantime we send our very best wishes for July and beyond.

Gill Cheetham, Chairman – Summer 2023

Measuring Outfall

There has been much publicity about water companies discharging raw sewage into rivers and streams, and you will have received a flyer about an important Citizen Science project to look into our local facilities. **Volunteers are needed to help out with measuring the water quality** of some of Bracknell's waterways. The survey will take place during late June and July, and training will be given. If you are able to help, please contact one of our Members, Paul Adkins - who is coordinating the project. His email address is priestwoodeg@gmail.com



Nightingale Triangle – Increasing the Biodiversity in our space

Our thanks to Phil Clarke, our Biodiversity Study Group Leader, for this article

The work on our Nightingale Triangle regeneration project continues - with a dedicated team of volunteers forming a morning Work Party on the first Saturday of most months.



Initially the project was mainly concerned with removing many of the non-native plant species, particularly the rhododendrons that had overgrown much of the woodland, including the paths. Having achieved this, the project has entered another phase... **We now intend to increase the biodiversity of the space.**

We hope to achieve this by providing habitats and food sources to encourage a wider variety of insects, birds, mammals etc. This is where we would like to enlist your help...

Do you have knowledge of what native species we could introduce that might thrive in the rather sandy soil of Nightingale Triangle?

Much of the area is in shade from the trees overhead. **What plants would be most beneficial for attracting insects etc. which live both below and above ground (beetles, nematodes, moths, butterflies, etc.)?** I am sure there are lots of keen gardeners out there with knowledge of what grows well in sandy/shady places?

Or maybe you are a botanist or entomologist who knows what flora might encourage a healthy and diverse range of fauna. What would be the best way of sourcing plants - grow from seed? cuttings? purchase from specialist nurseries? **Is there something we should be doing to make the space more hospitable to a diverse range of flora?**

If we get it right with the smaller things, then we feel that the larger more visible species (e.g. hedgehogs, bats etc.) will follow. Maybe your knowledge is limited in this area (mine certainly is!). **If so, can you link us up to a contact you have, who might have the necessary expertise?**

We will shortly be producing a plan of how we will manage Nightingale Triangle going forward, with an emphasis on maintaining or increasing the biodiversity. If you could contribute to this in any way please let us know your ideas. Any contribution, however small, would make a difference. **Please contact me at mailphilclarke@googlemail.com in the first instance.**



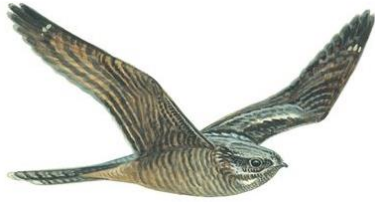
Gillian's memorial trees

The three beautiful trees planted in memory of **Gillian Martin**, a long-serving member of our Committee who sadly passed away in 2018, now have a plaque to commemorate her dedication to improving the biodiversity of Bracknell Forest. In our next issue we hope to have some positive information about a suitable memorial to **Ian Marsh**.

Diary Reminders

You've still got these three BFNHS outdoor events to come this Summer:

Thursday 22nd June



Alan Moore, the Bracknell & Wokingham RSPB Group Leader will be guiding us through Wishmoor Bottom, near Camberley, where there will be chances to see or hear **Nightjar, Woodcock, Glow Worms - and more!**

We'll meet at 8.30pm, and park along the top of Kings Ride, GU15 4NG. A small donation of £2 is requested, which will go towards RSPB funds. To help towards the best possible wildlife experience, places are limited to fifteen. So if you haven't signed up already, please get in touch as soon as possible bfnathistsoc@rocketmail.com

Sunday 16th July



Our visit this year is to **Gilbert White's House and Gardens**, not far away in Hampshire. Selborne and its surrounding landscape inspired Gilbert White's lifelong investigation of the natural world, culminating in his world-famous book *The Natural History and Antiquities of Selborne*. To get a feel of this beautifully restored house, well-tended gardens (originally designed by White in around 1730) and the fascinating historic collections on show

inside, have a look at www.gilbertwhiteshouse.org.uk

For more information and joining details, see our Summer Programme leaflet – if you can't find it, email Ray at bfnhspublicity@outlook.com And if you'd like to be part of our group (car share is available) sign up at bfnathistsoc@rockemail.com by Tuesday 4th July at the latest.

Sunday 30th July



From Gladstone's Holm Oak, the Wellingtonias, giant Cedars and the more recent Ash Avenue, in around an hour and a half on our free **Evening Tree Walk, led by Gill Cheetham**, you'll see all the most interesting trees that the 55 acres of parkland around both North Lake and South Lake have to offer.

We'll be meeting in the main South Hill Park car park at 6.00pm. If you haven't already done so, please sign up ASAP if you would like to join us

bfnathistsoc@rocketmail.com (places are limited to twenty only).



WANTED!

Are you a tree expert? Or do you know somebody who is? We need help in some tree identification - please ring Gill or email bfnathistsoc@rocketmail.com if you are able to help.

PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY Inspector Volunteers

We're printing the whole of this recent message from Bracknell Forest Council, which is seeking volunteers for inspecting sections of the Public Rights of Way within the Borough.

In Bracknell we have over 50 miles of public Rights Of Way (ROW) of various classifications including footpaths, bridleways, restricted byways and byways. The local authority has a statutory requirement to maintain the surface of each of these ROWs to their expected standard and, where possible, providing year round access. ROWs may also suffer from access issues such as a more natural, and therefore less manageable, surface; overgrown vegetation; broken or not suitable furniture (gates and stiles); or blockages such as fallen trees or fly tipping etc. Unfortunately it is impossible for council officers to regularly inspect all the paths by themselves and therefore a team of volunteers is required. Can you help?

Volunteers are asked to individually inspect a selection of paths twice a year (in summer and winter), and, where possible, the inspected paths are linked to allow for a hopefully enjoyable walk. They can either be completed as one walk or split into individual paths, whichever suits. Inspectors are asked to complete a report form, which will be provided, and comment on any findings, allowing the council to be proactive when managing the ROW network.



No practical work is expected and only completed if desired to do so (often landowners must be consulted beforehand). We currently have paths in Sandhurst, Crowthorne, Bracknell and Binfield. If you are interested in helping with this, please email [Robert Solomon](mailto:Robert.Solomon@bracknell-forest.gov.uk) from the Parks & Countryside Rangers Team, whose address is Robert.Solomon@bracknell-forest.gov.uk

[Click Here!](#)

The Big Meadow Search

Have you heard about The Big Meadow Search, another Citizen Science project being run this Summer? If not, here are the details, and it's easy to take part!



The **Big Meadow Search (BMS)** is a Citizen Science project which aims to encourage people to record plants in an area of grassland of their own choice. The idea is to get them outside, to look at what they're walking through, and to learn to identify the plants they find, thus raising awareness and interest in grasslands and their importance. It began in 2021 as an initiative by the Carmarthenshire Meadows Group in West Wales, and was at first only intended to be carried out

there, but it generated interest well beyond Wales, so it has been expanded to cover the whole of the UK.

The BMS species check list is based on the National Plant Monitoring Scheme grassland indicator species, plus additional species of interest from meadows and grasslands – but all plants found should be recorded, whether they are on the BMS species list or not. Any type of species-rich grassland can be searched: meadows, churchyards, road verges, amenity grassland etc. Obviously, if it's not public access land, make sure you get permission!

To take part:

- Select your grassland
- Record the location name, grid reference and date
- Walk around and write down all the plants you can see
- If you aren't sure on a species, take photographs from multiple angles of the flower heads, basal and stem leaves, upper and lower leaf surface, leaf base shape and either post on the BMS social media or **email the organisers at bigmeadowsearch@gmail.com** and they will try to identify the species.
- You then enter your results on their **website www.bigmeadowsearch.co.uk** and once they have finished their BMS analysis, they will send them on to your local environmental record centre (LERC).

You can find lots of information on their **Facebook page** Big Meadow Search, or on their **Twitter account** @bigmeadowsearch, or you can get in touch via email on bigmeadowsearch@gmail.com



SIGHTINGS

Keep those reports coming! We're pleased to let you know that **Mandarin Ducks** have been seen on the water at Savernake Park.

Subscription Arrangements - our 2023-24 Programme Year

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 will become due during September of this year.

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 or a problem with access on arrival but still wish to remain as a Member, do please get in touch with Gill Cheetham at bfathistsoc@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
<https://www.greenpeace.org.uk>
<https://friendsoftheearth.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 and our Chairman, Gill Cheetham:**

bfathistsoc@rocketmail.com Or phone Gill on 07773 850276

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