



Hay Bridge News

The Newsletter of the Hay Bridge Nature Reserve Society. Registered Charity No. 501384

Hay Bridge Nature Reserve Society, Bouth, Ulverston, Cumbria, LA12 8JG

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SPRING 2020



“Any chance I can come out?”

THE JSCF, WHO OWN AND MANAGE THE RESERVE, HAVE DECIDED THAT IT IS CLOSED AND WILL REMAIN SO DURING THE CORONA VIRUS RESTRICTIONS

Members can be assured that the Reserve, its habitats and wildlife will be there for them when the pandemic is over, just as beautiful and peaceful as ever. Of course the deer and other animals may then be surprised to find that their world has been ‘invaded’ by long haired, pale faced humans desperate for some fresh air and open countryside.....but Hay Bridge will, in the words of the Society’s Founder, Tissie Fooks, be “always the same”....

The following poem by John O'Donohue was sent to me by Bernie Young and is very appropriate for these strange times:

**This is the time to be slow,
Lie low to the wall
Until the bitter weather passes.**

**Try, as best you can, not to let
The wire brush of doubt
Scrape from your heart**

**All sense of yourself
And your hesitant light.**

**If you remain generous,
Time will come good;
And you will find your feet
Again on fresh pastures of promise,
Where the air will be kind
And blushed with beginning.**

THE BIG BIRD RACE, SATURDAY 18TH JANUARY 2020

It was billed as 'The Big Bird Race' to start the year at Hay Bridge and the aim was to identify as many birds as possible in just over an hour. It was a deadly serious competition for some, especially with a prize in the offing! Eight teams of keen bird spotters, some 30 members and their families in all, set off to obey Chris Berry's watchwords for the 2020 Bird Race. "Keep warm, have fun and please be back in an hour"! And it was Team Parky, with 34 birds spotted, that won. Their victory will be recorded on the Bird Race Trophy for the second year running!

It was a dampish sort of day so everyone was pleased to get back to the Study Centre to be greeted by hot soup; a most welcome way to beat the cold. Chris Berry encouraged all the teams to share what they had seen and heard as they raced around the Reserve and it was fascinating to discover the wide variety of birds that had been spotted and that were active so early in the year.

After hot soup and prize giving, Chris led a short walk with his usual blend of knowledge and enthusiasm to entertain and enlighten us all.

HAY BRIDGE NATURAL HISTORY GROUP.

We have now completed 5 years of vegetation surveys and 4 (full) years of animal surveys (we started these in August 2015). The data from 2019 has been collated and analysed and graphs produced to provide visual annual comparisons.

Vegetation: The graphs show very little change from year to year with no obvious trends that would confirm any vegetation adaption to the wetter conditions encouraged by the fish-scale bunding. As well as the bog mosses, White-beaked Sedge has increased slightly again this year but it is still short of the level recorded for 2017.

Round leaved sundew has increased slightly over last year but is still considerably less than when the survey started. Common Cotton Grass is slightly lower this year but Hare's-tail Cotton Grass is on the increase. Bog Rosemary has reduced and Cross-leaved Heath has increased slightly but not back to its 2015 record.

Bog Myrtle, Common Heather and Bog asphodel are decreasing, as you might expect if the bog is getting wetter.

The area where we do our survey is now being grazed heavily by deer and this winter the ground has been badly poached by their hooves. Bare peat means that the carbon is no longer locked into the ground and it's hard to see how Sundews, Bog Rosemary and other threatened key species can survive this level of trampling.



The Hay Bridge Mosses showing evidence of deer related damage

Animals: The frequency of recording Red Deer has increased this year and the maximum number seen at any one time has almost doubled from 28 to 55. Actual sightings of other mammals in the Moss are quite rare but their presence can be recorded from field signs, tracks, droppings etc. Otter, Badger, Fox

Sightings of Teal, Mallard, Lapwing and Heron have reduced as have the numbers seen at any one time except for Mallard. Frequency of sightings for Stonechat and Pied Flycatcher are on the increase but numbers seen at any one time remain low. Snipe were recorded again this year but Curlews not recorded at all in 2019. Reed bunting numbers were down but the frequency-of-recordings were up. We have yet to Record Redshank or Green Sandpiper on our surveys.

Grass snakes and adders were not recorded at all in 2018 or 2019 and the wall that we used to see Adders sunbathing on has been damaged by deer trampling. Common Lizards, were hardly seen at all in 2018, but numbers and frequency of sightings have recovered a little in 2019.

The scarce Large Heath butterfly is still present but only one butterfly seen on two occasions. Orange Tip butterflies were seen on six occasions. Green-veined White on three occasions

Numbers of dragonflies seen at any one time are down for the Large Red Damselfly, Keeled Skimmer, Golden Ringed, and Four-spotted Chaser. Common Darter max-numbers recovered slightly this year and they were seen more frequently than last year. Most worryingly the Black Darter (which lays its eggs in shallow pools edged with moss) and is perhaps the most iconic of our acid tolerating bog-species, shows a consistent decline in numbers sighted at any one time.

20 other invertebrates have been recorded over the years, but few of us know enough to record them all down to species level and the survey would just take too long if we stopped to record everything we see. This year we have added two bumblebees, a Crane fly, a Devils Coach and Horses beetle, Gnats (In December), a Stonefly, Tansy beetle and Water Crickets. Something else we have noticed is that, the number of surface-swimming insects seen in the boundary ditches have reduced considerably, and so we do keep a look out for Whirligig beetles, Water boatmen and Pondskaters etc. These do seem to be present more often this year but not in as large numbers as we used to see them.

SOCIETY COMMITTEE

The Society is run by a group of volunteers who come together during the year to plan events and other projects. It would be great to welcome some new members to the Committee or indeed any member of the Society who has a project in mind that would benefit the Society or the Reserve. Please take a moment to think what you would like see achieved or done and get in touch with Nick Chaloner, the Society Secretary on secretary@haybridgereserve.org.uk. We really do hope to hear from you!

CAR PARK PASSES/MEMBERSHIP CARDS

The Committee have decided that annual car park passes or membership cards no longer have to be displayed when using the Reserve car park and so will not be issued in the future. All we do ask is that if you are using the car park please park carefully and ensure that there is room for others to park as well so we can get maximum benefit from the space available.

SPRING WALK, SATURDAY 14th MARCH 2020



Picture from 2019 Walk!

We gathered rather nervously outside the Study Centre at first, keeping at least one metre apart as advised for those not wanting coronavirus. But as Chris pointed out we were in the fresh air, at Hay Bridge and, despite what was going on in the world, spring had started to show itself. There were banks of wild daffodils, birds chattering in the trees and a sense that the time honoured cycle of Nature was well underway. As we walked on we gathered closer to listen to Chris. As well as all the fascinating information about the habitats on the Reserve, Chris is usually always ready with an appropriate joke or two as well, which no one wanted to miss. When we got back to the Study Centre there was a chance for some final questions and chat before we all left having thoroughly enjoyed the walk.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

PLEASE NOTE THAT EVENTS MAY WELL BE CANCELLED DUE TO THE CORONAVIRUS RESTRICTIONS

May 16th – Dawn Chorus Walk **July 11th** – Hay Bridge in Summer **August 8th** – Bat Evening

August 15th – The Rusland Show **September 12th** – Autumn Walk **October 10th** – Fungal Foray

Event details will be emailed to members and dates are listed on the website and in the Newsletter.

2020 AGM CANCELLED