



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 2022



“Any chance I can come out?”

NEWS FROM THE RESERVE

It has been another strange year for us...but the Natural World carries on regardless.

It was a long, cold spring; late frosts affected some of the apple blossom in the orchard and those trees affected didn't fruit at all. However, only the Swallows' arrival was delayed, all our other summer visitors arrived as usual and at the usual time. The Ospreys arrived at the end of March and this year raised three young, which all fledged successfully. The first Pied Flycatchers were sighted on 15th April followed by the first Redstart on 24th, between the two, the Cuckoo was calling on 22nd – the same date as in 2019 and 2020.

The weather didn't warm up until the end of May, which was just in time for the first wildflower plug planting day in early June. As part of CWT Hay Meadows Project, the reach had been extended to wet meadows. So, plans were afoot for planting appropriate species (Meadowsweet, Yellow Flag, Marsh Woundwort, etc.) in Hay Bridge Pool Meadow, the wet area of Newlands and later in the year, Crooked Dale and the wet area of Low Moor (the latter two being part of the SSSI). A big thank you to all those volunteers who turned up on any of those days.



We were also delighted that for the first time, we were able to harvest wildflower seeds from our own meadow, which was brush-harvested in July from Littlelands. We dried and cleaned it in the barn, and on the final volunteers plug planting day at the end of August, we hand spread the seed on a rotovated Low Moor, also part of the SSSI and the last of our eligible fields to benefit from meadow restoration; seed doesn't come with better local provenance than that!



The summer was mainly very warm and very dry; drought conditions prevailed with ponds and streams drying out. We were concerned for the new plug plants because the wet meadows weren't very wet! but the Spotted Flycatchers certainly didn't suffer, we had good numbers with much breeding success. One pair nested in the barn and were flying in and out over our heads as the seed was turned.

The Red Deer produced a lot of calves, but there was a change to the stags behaviour this year. Normally, once the rut has ended, they disappear off up into the woods and fells until the start of the next year's rut; this year, they remained with the hinds and calves, even the big stags. We were able to observe them as the previous year's antlers dropped and the new ones grew. The general local consensus appears to be that there is now too much human disturbance in the woods and fells around the valley, and the stags can no longer find quiet areas – we'll see what happens this year.



The dry weather eventually came to an end and the first stag roar was heard on the 8th October. The rut was lively for a couple of weeks, and then the rain really came. The deer had to swim off the Moss and the wet meadows became very wet, as they have been several times over the winter. It was still very mild, and the rut went quiet. We had a fabulous sighting of an Otter in Newlands Pond though, and the Kingfisher on the same day. The otter has also been seen recently on the river, possibly with a cub.

Then came Storm Arwen!!!



The Reserve lost in the region of 70 trees, mainly medium and large oaks, some of them very large. Approximately 15 have been and continue to be dealt with, as they have affected paths, tracks, walls, and fences; those in the woodlands will be left. Most will probably continue to live and in years to come, there may well be some very interesting 'phoenix' trees developing. Four hides were affected, two blown over onto their backs, one right over onto its roof pulling the concrete foundations to which it was fixed out of the ground, and one blown off its bearers but remaining upright. Power and water were off for four

days, and communications for weeks.

Then came the first snow, although thankfully that didn't last long.

We have had a flock of about 50 Redwing with us over the winter, but very few Fieldfare. Several sightings of a Hare with three leverets cheered us up, and recently we have had very good sightings of a Barn Owl around the orchard and buildings, even during the day, which has been a treat.

At the end of this month, hopefully the Ospreys will be back!

HAY BRIDGE NATURAL HISTORY GROUP

Once Covid restrictions were relaxed in March 2021 the group successfully completed two surveys each month. That's 21 surveys with 18 surveyors and maintains our bi-monthly record for six years.

As described in earlier newsletters, a group of 3-4 surveyors follow a survey route looking for key species that are indicators of a thriving raised bog. However, if the enjoyment of the survey depended on seeing those key species we would often be disheartened! The vagaries of nature may result in little on the recording sheet, but each survey has its moments of interest and joy. We call them our distractions! It may be spending time identifying the fungi on the walk through the woods to the first static viewpoint or the butterflies enjoying the brambles in front of the hide.

Whilst out with curious nature lovers there is always something to notice and learn from each other. Watching the Pied Flycatchers flying back and forth to their nest; the clouds of Beautiful Demoiselles over the stream and almost stumbling over a red deer calf curled up in the grass, have been personal highlights. Other 'distractions' have been a Peregrine Falcon, a Marsh Harrier, and a Hen Harrier (unconfirmed).



A Pied Flycatcher at Hay Bridge

New sightings, for the survey, have included Wheatear, Redstart, Whitethroat, Migrant Hawker dragonfly and a Musk beetle. On a cold, misty day when there was little to record, we were entertained by an unkindness of 15 plus Ravens! Directly relevant to the records of the Raised Bog survey, we were pleased to see 10 plus Black Darter dragonflies which was very encouraging as it had been showing a consistent decline and is one of the most iconic of acid-tolerating bog species.

The Raft Spider was seen in April but there were no further sightings as the pools where it has been observed were dry for most of the summer. We were pleased to find the Bog Bush Cricket. Our wanderings with the bat detector chuffing away like a steam train attracted the attention of a passer-by who just happened to be an expert in grasshoppers and crickets! His advice as to how to change the frequencies on the bat detector will be very helpful in tracking down this elusive critter.

Nationally the Large Heath butterfly has been in moderate decline and is only found in wetland areas where their food plant (Hare's tail cotton grass) is present. It is only in flight in June and sometimes the first week in July, so we were pleased to make a good sighting of it in 2021.

The group welcomes new members, no level of expertise is required, contact Hazel at hazeldole@btinternet.com if you would like to join us.

FUNGAL FUN WITH THE FUNGI GUY



Ali with two Forayers

The annual Fungal Foray in October 2021 was a family event and we were very lucky to get the FUNgi Guy (Ali McKernan) to lead it. Ali has an unrivalled national reputation for his field mycologywork with children, and he did not disappoint. So, despite the covid cancellations and damp weather, we had an exciting foray around the car park and the Charcoal Burner's hut. We found 30 species of fungi, large and small, with finds including the newly named Captain America mushroom (aka Deer Shield, *Pluteus cervinus*) and Burgundydrop Bonnet (*Mycena haematopus*), which 'bleeds' when the stem is broken.



47TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE HAY BRIDGE NATURE RESERVE SOCIETY

The AGM will be held on **Saturday 23rd April from 3.00pm**. This is the first time since the start of the pandemic two years ago that we have been able to hold an AGM. Therefore, the Agenda and AGM Notice will include the Minutes of the last meeting held in 2019, which still need AGM approval, abbreviated financial data from 2019 and 2020 (the Treasurer can provide a full breakdown of these years for members that might require it) and full data for 2022.

A guided walk around the Reserve will start at 1. 30pm. Tea and refreshments will be available after the meeting. There will be no raffle this year.

While the Reserve, even 50 years after Tissie Fooks established the Society, may feel (in her words) "always the same"; the world around it has changed. Following two years of Covid restrictions and uncertainties, the Trustees feel that this is now the right time to review the Society's role at Hay Bridge and how best it can support the JSCF into the future. This important subject will be discussed and voted on at the AGM.

A separate notice from the Society Trustees to all Members is being distributed along with this Newsletter.

Please can Members planning to attend the AGM advise the Secretary in advance via email: secretary@haybridgereserve.org.uk

IF ANY MEMBER HAS NOT YET ADVISED US OF AN EMAIL ADDRESS, PLEASE CAN YOU NOW DO SO BY EMAILING: treasurer@haybridgereserve.org.uk

THANK YOU