



**Berkshire
Buckinghamshire
& Oxfordshire**
Wildlife Trust

THE CHILTERN NEWSLETTER

Issue 105 Autumn - Winter 2022

Wildlife Trust news, views and event information from the Chilterns Group, College Lake and around Buckinghamshire

Enjoying your membership of BBOWT

I'm so pleased that you have signed up to receive our Chilterns Volunteer Group Newsletter and hope it helps you to get more out of your membership of BBOWT. Please let your friends know they can also do this by going to the volunteering page on the BBOWT website, selecting 'Regional groups', then 'Find out more' and 'Chilterns Group', where you can click on 'Subscribe to the Chilterns newsletter'.

By sending out this Newsletter and occasional shorter Newsflashes our aim is to give a more local focus to BBOWT for the Chilterns area and adjacent parts of Buckinghamshire. I'm sure you are already happy to be supporting our work across the three counties and our wider campaigning



Mick Jones (centre) with some hardy perennial volunteers

for greater environmental protection and space for wildlife, but there is also so much to get involved with closer to home.

**PLEASE SUPPORT THE BBOWT
PLANT AND PRODUCE
CHARITY MARKET**

**COLLEGE LAKE RESERVE
Bulbourne,
Tring HP23 5QG**

**Sunday 9 October
11am - 1pm**

- **Excellent value plants**
- **Tasty homemade produce**
- **Badger Cafe open**
- **Free entry, free parking**
- **WorkAid recycled tools**
- **Wildlife miscellany**

**For contributions & queries
please contact**

John Catton on

01494726616

richard.catton1@ntlworld.com

Our volunteer group organises events like guided walks, talks and fundraisers such as the biannual Plant and Produce Markets, and also supports practical volunteering at BBOWT reserves in your area. There are always opportunities to join us in this volunteering effort and I was thrilled that a new person came forward to join our small organising committee after an appeal in the last Newsletter. We are always interested to hear ideas for ways in which we might expand or change our events programme so it engages you more and gives greater enjoyment – please email with your thoughts on this to the editor juliebirch60@yahoo.com

In the meantime, we offer you reserves news, articles and details of our late Summer and Autumn events below and don't forget to also look at the Blog page on the BBOWT website for more local stories and views - www.bbowt.org.uk/blog.

Mick Jones MBE, Chairman BBOWT Chilterns Volunteer Group
01296 720623 jonesmick365@gmail.com

Rough Around the Edges / Chilterns Orchards update

It's a while since I've written a project update for the newsletter, so there's quite a lot to pack in.

I now have about 12 active projects ranging from the pond in Holmer Green to Donkey Lane Orchard in Chinnor. Many of the projects were very quiet during the pandemic and have only recently begun to get going again.

In June the group at Coleshill Common held their second Wildlife Explorer day, bigger and better attended than the first. We had support from the newly formed Bucks Amphibian and Reptile Group (ARG), and Chesham and District Natural History Society. Lots of families attended, and while the weather was a bit too blustery for great butterfly sightings, there was lots of excitement around wildflowers, newts and tadpoles.

We've done wildflower and fruit tree planting at Knotty Green allotments, and wildflowers at Winchmore Hill. Actually most of the work at Winchmore Hill involves altering the mowing regime, monitoring what they have and informing the local community about what is going on – and why long grass is as good for wildlife as the flowers.

The church group that I work with – Chinnor Churches Go Wild! - are enthusiastically monitoring for hedgehogs and training local residents in how to do this at home, while encouraging everyone to improve their gardens for hogs. This has all been inspired by training initially given by volunteers from Prestwood Nature, who have a hedgehog project with me. They are slowly building up a



Tadpoles at Coleshill Common

picture of hedgehog activity in Great Missenden and are also hoping to encourage people to do more for our prickliest mammal.

Chinnor is a busy place with Mill Lane Community Garden also providing space for hedgehogs, along with their sown wildflower area and a small pond in the corner of the garden. It's a really lovely mix of wildlife, wildflowers, fruit, veg and of course people. The Community Church in Chinnor is creating a garden of reflection with some wildlife friendly elements in it, so we will be starting that project in September, and the orchard at Donkey Lane continues to be a well-supported site. The

group now have surveying and story telling sub- groups, and the regular work parties have made an amazing difference to the orchard. We've also planted a new Community Orchard in West Wycombe, behind St. Paul's Church. We've only planted a small number of trees as the field itself has a lot of wildflowers, so we're making sure the Parish Council can look after the field for these as well as for

the fruit trees. A recent visit revealed a lot of pyramidal orchids and plenty of bindweed looking really quite lovely in flower!

Amongst other things, I am planning a training programme for community group volunteers across the area. Training will hopefully include some basic identification sessions for moths, birds and trees in winter, aimed at complete beginners. If anyone feels this is something they can help with, or if you want to know more about the projects and have somewhere that might benefit from them, please do get in touch.

Katy Horgan Rough Around the Edges Project Officer

Bacombe Hill

This summer has really shown the benefits of the winter's hard work cutting and raking on Bacombe Hill. The slope below the Ridgeway national trail which had previously been covered with brambles, dog rose, and tall scrub has opened out to allow a number of orchids to poke their heads up in the sun for the first time in ages. There was an abundance of spotted orchids and numerous pyramidal orchids, but I only saw a few fragrant orchids and sadly for the second summer running no sign of the bee orchids. Fingers crossed they will show next summer.

The top ridge has been an absolute profusion of wild flowers, horse shoe vetch is starting to appear in several places, where we have been clearing the scrub, and my favourite the thyme is showing well. I think the chalk grassland flowers have looked the best they have been for several years.

I'm told the butterfly surveys have recorded lots of fritillaries and I have seen more marbled whites than usual this year, as well as lots of other little so and so's who delight in refusing to stay still long enough for me to have a hope of identifying them. Once again, the cattle are back grazing on the hill, but with the hot weather we have had times when they retreated under the trees and disappeared from sight. They do however, leave plenty of signs of their presence scattered around.

Red kites, and buzzards are constant companions overhead, and often a pair of kestrels are to be seen hovering on the look out for prey in the vicinity of the round barrow. If you are very lucky you may well hear the call of a raven from somewhere in the woods behind Bacombe Hill, and several times early in the morning I've watched a pair fly overhead going north, out into the Aylesbury vale.

Sadly, the cottages on Ellesborough Road have now gone to make way for HS2 and as I type the first large detached house beyond them is being demolished. The alternative 'temporary' re-route of Ellesborough road is due to open late Summer, and the alternative re-route of Bacombe Lane will emerge immediately in front of the access gate to Bacombe Hill.

It remains to be seen how this will affect direct access to the site from Wendover, but the fantastic team of Bacombe Hill volunteers will continue to graft away as usual on the second Thursday of every month.



Common spotted orchid

Paul Niddler, Volunteer Warden

Can you help the Chilterns Volunteers with two events this autumn?

We are all now only too aware of the fragility of our environment, so when local events are being planned organisers are becoming keener to involve us. For instance the Chilterns Volunteer Group had a stall at Amersham's Climate Action Day last November and at Wendover Big Green Week.

Looking forward we will be taking one of our brand new gazebos to **Amersham Heritage Day** on **Sunday 4th September**. We've attended this hugely popular all-day event in Old Amersham High Street for many years and it's back after a two year absence. The other event is the second of this year's fundraising **Plant and Produce Markets** which is being held at **College Lake** on **Sunday 9th October** and we'd love new volunteers for both events.

For us the Amersham Heritage Day is primarily an awareness raising day – you'd be surprised just how many people do not know of BBOWT's existence – we will be sited next to a BBOWT recruiter, meaning no membership 'hard sell' is involved! As it's a family day we'll have a couple of quizzes for both parents and children. The event runs from 11:30am to 5:30pm so we'll be looking for up to 6 volunteers to spend about an hour each with us.

The Plant and Produce Market is an established biannual event that takes place in the heart of the Chilterns area at College Lake reserve. It's open for two hours from 11:00am to 1:00pm. We get a huge amount of support from the team of volunteers based at College Lake but more are needed to run the stalls: **Plants**, donated by enthusiastic local gardeners, **Produce**, selling locally grown, made and cooked food items, plus, I hope, some Dancersend apple juice, from its heritage orchard, along with a couple of complementary stalls, **Wildlife Miscellany** and the charity '**Workaid**'. The success of these events depends very much on the support of volunteers. It's good fun and I'm pretty confident you'll know people attending both events!

Thinking about the Plant and Produce Market in particular, even if you can't help on the day, you can contribute to its success through donations of plants and Home Produce, so please consider:

- a) potting up and labelling any excess plants (especially the rarer ones, but no trees) you may have as you divide them and / or.....
- b) bake a cake (or two), and some biscuits, make jams and marmalades, perhaps conjure up some fudge or pick some late summer fruits from your garden....and....
- c) spread word of the Market nearer the time.

If you would like to help at either, or have any queries, please contact John Catton on 01494 726616 or richard.catton1@ntlworld.com. If you have any plants or produce you would like collected in Wendover, Aylesbury and thereabouts please contact richardbirch60@yahoo.com

Aston Clinton Ragpits

This year's orchid count at Aston Clinton Ragpits was beset by some mixed weather, but I would like to say a big thank you to all those willing volunteers who turned out. The season had been fairly good with a pleasant spring, no late frosts to speak of, and so the peak flowering period did coincide nicely with the date of the count.

Other notable flowering plants were the continued expansion of yellow rattle throughout the reserve this year and some nice patches of chalk milkwort.

One insect species notable by its absence was the garden chafer, a species which is often found in large numbers in mid summer. It may be a species whose populations boom and bust from year to year so hopefully it will return.

Through late spring and early summer there were good numbers of butterflies such as green hairstreak, holly blue and dingy skipper. During the count there were a few individual marbled whites on the wing.



So to the orchids, and of the two earlier flowering species, white helleborine numbers were disappointing. However, greater butterfly orchids were more numerous including a couple of very large and impressive specimens in the woodland.

Of the three most common, species, numbers were very good - common twayblade, chalk fragrant, pictured and common spotted orchid. There were also several hybrids of the common spotted and chalk fragrant - some showing good examples of hybrid vigour.

There was also a notably large common twayblade with a very sinuous and wavy stem.

Bee orchids were very thin on the ground this year but there were already a few pyramidal orchids showing, including some nice white flowered varieties. Overall a very good year for orchid numbers and the colourful displays were as always, spectacular.

Thank you again to all those who gave up their time to come and help

Results of the orchid count at Aston Clinton Ragpits on 18th June

Common spotted.....	4794
Chalk fragrant.....	10553
Common twayblade	4814
Pyramidal	1083 (including 8 white flowered varieties)
Bee orchid	14 (including 1 x belgarum, 1 x fulvofusca varieties)
Common spotted x chalk fragrant hybrids	10

On 4th June I counted the following - greater butterfly 168 & white helleborine 33

Phil Townsend Volunteer Warden

Finemere Wood has been glorious over the summer months with its exquisite floral splendour. Common spotted orchids, pale pink with purple markings, have been more widespread than ever before. Meadowsweet abounds, with dense clusters of small white flowers. Clumps of deep-violet tufted vetch line the woodland rides. Devil's-bit scabious with pincushion-like, lilac-blue flowers, is ever more extensive. The result is a rich and diverse source of nectar upon which butterflies and other invertebrates thrive.

The woodland workers continue to labour away to ensure a rich habitat for all things wild. After a summer of cutting and raking grassy areas, and erecting fences of all kinds (deer fencing, stock fencing, post-and-rail fencing), they will be happy to get back to their trusty loppers and saws. Come autumn, the clearance of scrub and trees, in carefully selected areas, will begin once again.



Pete Bray (BBOWT'S North Buckinghamshire Reserves Officer), our leader and guru, has moved on to pastures new. A joy and inspiration to work with, always supportive, and hugely knowledgeable, he will be sorely missed by all.

For those planning a visit to the wood in the coming months, it is worth checking the information on the BBOWT website with regard to access:

https://www.bbowt.org.uk/nature-reserves/finemere-wood?gclid=CjwKCAjw8sCRBhA6EiwA6_IF4XO3QZVtSsZMlf2ddiv_7mmU

HS2 works continue apace, with regular road closures in the area. Public access is by foot down the track where there is much HS2 activity, so please watch out for heavy vehicles and potholes.

Charlotte Kamali, Volunteer Warden

College Lake Visitor Centre

In summer it's always great to be able to come into work and walk past bee orchids in the carpark and ox-eye daisies on the banks and has anyone noticed the visitor centre roof this year? It's simply flourishing. We have had some positive news here as Howard Davies is now Visitor Centre Officer which is a great role for Howard to get his teeth in to. We have recruited some new café staff to help us over the summer period. Visitor numbers have slowed down recently but with the now mostly opened world after Covid this was to be expected. We are still looking for volunteers in the shop for most days of the week so if anyone could spare a few hours please do send me a message on toyahbault@bbowt.org.uk We have lots of new products on sale which are selling well and we will soon hopefully have some new garden items! I'd like to pay tribute to all who volunteer in the centre and on Meet and Greet. The financial results this year have been very encouraging, inside and out, with donations at the entrance hut on track to exceed last year's £60,000 - thank you to all concerned.

Toyah Baulk, Visitor Centre Manager

Farewell from College Lake Warden

It is with a mixture of sadness to be leaving College Lake and excitement about starting a new role that I will finally end my time as the Warden of this wonderful place. It seems difficult to believe that it has been six and a half years since I first started out at College Lake and what a fantastic time it has been! There have been many challenges along the way but it has been so rewarding to see the way the site has developed under my stewardship.



I am very glad to say that I will not be going far and will in fact still be a member of the BBOWT workforce. I will be moving to the other end of the county though, and will be based at Meadow Farm looking after several of our North Bucks sites including Finemere and Whitecross Green Woods. I am very excited to get my teeth into something new and to learn about the management of some different sites and habitats.

I have learned so much during my time at College Lake and it has been such a pleasure to

work with the very large team of volunteers here. You are all an incredibly dedicated and passionate group and it is your enthusiasm that makes College Lake the incredible place that it is. Highlights of my time at College Lake include seeing the young lapwing and other waders each spring knowing that we are continuing to provide good nesting conditions. 2018 was the best year during my time here with 17 lapwing young successfully fledging.

It has also been incredibly rewarding to see so many trainees develop during their time here and go on to gain jobs within the conservation sector. It has been fantastic seeing my various volunteer groups grow and develop over the years and seeing those volunteers putting into effect skills that I have personally taught them how to do.

I have been involved with many projects that have improved the site such as the recent project to showcase the geological features of College Lake or the construction of a new viewing screen along the path to the Octagon Hide. I have overseen many other improvements to the infrastructure around the site as well as lots of work to improve the habitats here for wildlife. Some of the areas that I feel have seen particular improvements are the two meadows on the eastern side of the site that were previously managed as arable fields, now some of the richest grasslands we have, and also the complex of new ponds and ditches at the foot of the bank below the Visitor Centre something I created after a couple of very enjoyable days sitting in a digger! I am really pleased with how nice this area looks now and it is providing some wonderful habitat for our dragonflies and amphibians in particular.

So I will be sad to go, but glad to not be going too far. I am also very much looking forward to welcoming the new College Lake Warden and helping them to get settled in at this most amazing nature reserve.

Leo Keedy, July 2022 Warden

News from Dancersend

We are now three-quarters of the way through our 80th birthday year at Dancersend and have managed to run a number of celebratory events, including guided walks focusing on the history of the reserve, a special field meeting of the Bucks Invertebrate Group (complete with an 80th birthday cake) and a Fungus Microscopy Workshop with the Bucks Fungus Group.

The year has more or less coincided with year 1 of the Rothschild Foundation funded 2-year project to carry out enhancements to the reserve, develop a number of new interpretation resources and begin projects with neighbouring landowners to bring about biodiversity improvements elsewhere in the valley and around Aston Hill. One of the first things we wanted

was to tell the story of Dancersend, its fascinating history and connections with the development of nature conservation in the UK. You can still read a blog about this on the BBOWT website and if you go to the Dancersend page under 'Reserves' you will find a brand-new page on the history of the reserve, created by Pete Hughes, BBOWT Communications Assistant, with my input.

Our work parties continue to be well attended and through the summer months we have caught up



Ched George with the 80th birthday cake



Fungus microscopy workshop at Dancersend

with many tasks, from clearing paths to mending fences and gates and maintaining signs. Other management has been challenging with our grazing plans for the Extension being completely upset by unexpected cattle movement restrictions and the driest conditions I have ever experienced in over 40 years. We have even had to water the younger fruit trees in the orchard. Much of the grassland is now both taller than normal and tinder dry, with a considerable risk of fires.

Despite all this, there have been some wonderful wildlife experiences – hundreds of fly and greater butterfly orchids in sections of the meadows that had some late scrub clearance in April; sightings of purple emperor, clouded yellow and both purple and white-letter

hairstreaks during July; well over 200 moth species recorded during our BIG field meeting; and, as I write this, the best display of scabious flowers for years, attracting a great variety of insects. We are currently planning some family fun sessions at Dancersend Waterworks during the school holidays and further guided walks for the autumn. Work on the Rothschild Foundation projects will shortly step up – watch out for my next blog with news of these.

Mick Jones, Volunteer Warden, Dancersend Nature Reserve
01296 720623 jonesmick365@gmail.com

Some Chiltern Bellflowers and a Case of Mistaken Identity

There are 3 species of *Campanula* commonly found in our local reserves. They are usually quite showy and easy to identify with care.



The delightful harebell is commonly found on the short turf of chalk grassland sites such as Bacombe Hill. It has very slender stems and the delicate blue-purple flowers dance prettily in any passing breeze. It doesn't grow much taller than 30cm and is difficult to confuse with anything else. According to Grigson's 'The Englishman's Flora' it has many common names including fairy cap, dingdongs and (in Somerset) granny's tears. These names seem whimsical nowadays but in historical times the link with fairies was not a benign one, when mischievous fairies were blamed for many of the ills which befell humans. Harebells were also named the witch bell, the witch-thimble, the devil's bell and, in Ireland, the goblin's thimble. It was not to be picked at any cost.

A much larger and coarser *Campanula* is the nettle-leaved bellflower. The leaves resemble those of the common nettle but they don't sting.

Growing up to a metre tall, with its blue-purple flowers it is quite striking and easy to find. It grows on dry, calcareous soils and it favours woodland edges, hedgerows and other shady places. It can be found at Dancersend, amongst other places.

When I first encountered a clustered bellflower quite a few years ago, I was in a group of people looking out for and recording autumn gentians in the Ivinghoe Hills. I was a naive beginner and got quite excited, thinking I had located said gentian, but unfortunately I was sadly mistaken. Apparently I'm not alone and many people confuse the two. They both grow in short chalk grassland, flower at a similar time of year and have purple, bell-shaped flowers. Some easy ways to tell them apart, I have since discovered, is that gentians have opposite leaves while bellflowers have alternate leaves; the flower of the clustered bellflower is a brighter colour; if you look closely at the flower you will see the gentian has a fringe of hairs at the mouth of the petal tube, which is absent in the bellflower. Always learning!

In the same family, although not a *Campanula*, is Venus's looking-glass. This low-growing plant with small, dull purple flowers is an archeophyte i.e. its presence is associated with human activity and it has existed in the British Isles since before 1500. Its flowers are quite pretty. The name comes from the shiny, oval seeds which, according to Richard Mabey's 'Flora Britannica', look like 'brilliantly polished brass hand-mirrors'. It is found in arable fields but changes in agricultural practices are, sadly, causing its decline. It can be seen at College Lake in the arable weeds (cornfield flowers) field where it flowers from May to August.

Sylvia O'Brien

Geology Award

Rodney Sims received an award on behalf of BBOWT from Haydon Bailey of the Geologists Association Curry Fund. We were awarded a 'Certificate of Excellence' for the work we have done exposing some of the geological features found at College Lake and creating a point of interest for visitors to enjoy.



This prestigious award is given to just one of the many projects that the Curry Fund supports each year, so it is a real honour to receive such recognition.

College Lake is a Site of Special Scientific Interest because of its unique geology and this project really celebrates that. It was a fantastic collaboration and along with the money received from the Curry Fund, contributions to this project also came from the BBOWT Chilterns Group and the Quaternary Research Association.

College Lake Learning team update (previously known as the Education Team!)

Our last update was in the mists of peak teaching at College Lake and a huge amount of change. With all this change our learning volunteers were invaluable and without their dedication we couldn't deliver our programmes and events. I would like to welcome our new volunteers and thank every one of you for your continued support and enthusiasm for the work we do. As we transitioned from the busy spring/summer school terms into the summer holiday, we managed to take a moment to celebrate being back, doing what we do best: delivering school programmes, monthly preschool Nature Tots sessions, holiday trails and magical family events! Our trails and events received wonderful feedback and it was so rewarding to see so many families and wild at heart adults out exploring the reserve together again. September sees our well-established monthly Nature Tots sessions return for the Autumn term, as well as more school visits and we are excited to announce our new offerings in the form of Wildlife Clubs and Lifelong Learning. We are looking forward to sharing and exploring this beautiful reserve with you all over the coming months and into next year.....

Sarah Close, Senior Learning Officer (Bucks)

Nature Tots (Preschool – 2-4 years)

We are always excited to welcome your pre-school little ones to join us for nature discovery, games, crafts, exploration and lots of fun! Our wonderful group of Tots volunteers lead two morning nature discovery sessions every month for our little visitors and their families. Nature Tots days are always magical and leave us with a big smile, and hopefully muddy feet too! The magic created in these sessions is due to our wonderful Nature Tots volunteers!

Autumn/Winter term dates

September Tuesday 13 & Thursday 15, 10.15 - 11.45am

October Tuesday 11 & Thursday 13, 10.15 - 11.45am

November Tuesday 15 & Thursday 17, 10.15 - 11.45am

December Tuesday 13 & Thursday 15, 10.15 - 11.45am

NEW Wildlife Clubs (8-16 years)

In August we ran a taster session for our new wildlife clubs for young people aged 8-12 (Young Rangers) and 12-16 (Teen Rangers). It was great to meet lots of enthusiastic children looking to meet new friends and support nature. Both sessions will run monthly on a Saturday and are an opportunity for young people to make a positive impact for the Natural Environment whilst having fun and meeting others with similar interests. We are excited to meet the next wildlife warriors to share ideas, explore and help us look after our nature reserve!

NEW Lifelong Learning (Adults)

September is also the start of workshops and activities for adults. We have a few sessions planned from wildlife to wellbeing and crafts like our annual wreath making sessions. We are keen to hear what you would like to see available as we head into planning for 2023! Whether you have a wish list of activities or are a local provider of outdoor/nature inspired workshops/sessions do get in touch by emailing collegelakeeducation@bbowt.org.uk

Family Events and Trails

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We run family events and self-guided trails throughout the various school holidays that offer a chance to find out more about your local wildlife and explore the reserve as a family throughout the changing seasons. For those of you keen to explore and maybe still a child at heart please note some of our events and trails are for all ages and will include an adult only ticket option.

To find a full list and to book on to any of these events please visit www.bbowt.org.uk/events

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To be added to our nature tots or wildlife club mailing lists please email collegelakeeducation@bbowt.org.uk

School Educational Visits (Primary and Secondary)

Our school visits are very popular and run from March to October led by our learning team staff and volunteers or you can opt to self-guide. We continue to offer KS1 & KS2 programmes and now also offer engaging and inspiring field courses for AS and A-level students studying Biology or Environmental Sciences. Students this year went away inspired by their local environment and equipped with the practical experience and knowledge to succeed in their exams. We even had animal care students from Tiggywinkles Wildlife Hospital join us for a practical session to enhance their learning experience. Please visit our website for more details and how to book www.bbowt.org.uk/explore/discover-and-learn/college-lake-bucks

Self-guided Educational Visits (Universities, scouting & guiding groups, walking groups etc.)

Our nature reserves offer the perfect place for a whole range of groups to learn more about and immerse themselves in the natural world. If you'd like to visit a BBOWT nature reserve or visitor centre with your group please send an email to reserveaccess@bbowt.org.uk with the site you would like to visit, on which date, and the size of your party.

Weston Turville Reservoir

For 20 years the reservoir had always been a place that I just walked around. I had young children and life was busier in a different way.

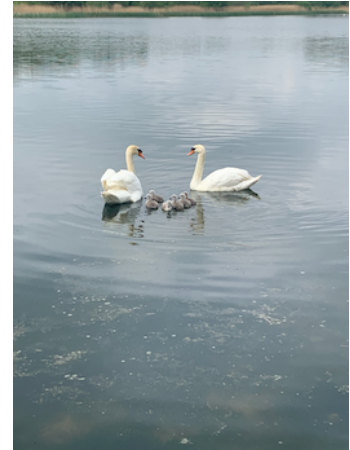
Living next door to Tessa Taylor, then Chilterns Group Chair, and finding out how passionate she was about the place, I soon found that there was more to see and learn than one could take in on a quick walk.

During the lockdown of 2020, it soon became a place for people to exercise and appreciate the outdoors, enticing many new visitors. The quiet reservoir I loved became very busy and I chose not to walk there anymore.

When local social media highlighted the increased litter problem, I knew I had to be proactive and look after the reservoir, just like Tessa had.

Then I was introduced to Richard Birch and with many others I became a volunteer patroller. Richard asked me to take over as leader of the patrollers early this year, as I am indeed walking around there most days. If you'd like to be on the roster for occasional litter picking, please apply to volunteering@bbowt.org.uk.

Unfortunately, there is still a litter problem and it is comforting to have the support of others if we need to have an emergency clean-up. Between the BBOWT volunteer group and the other users (Prestwood & District Angling club and the Aylesbury Sailing Club) we can all work together to keep the Reservoir an amazing nature reserve for generations to come.



Susanna Allford

Susanna's photo of the newly hatched cygnets in May is a reminder that in spite of litter and some antisocial behaviour nature flourishes there. **Stacey Hewitt, South Bucks Reserves Manager**, reports that the early marsh orchids in the fen put on a good show this spring, though we have to keep their exact whereabouts secret.

Chilterns Group Evening talks programme by Steve Hawkins, volunteer organiser Great Missenden Memorial Hall, HP16 9A

Talks take place on the third Tuesday of the month. Doors open at 7pm for refreshments and conversation before the talk starts at 7.45pm. Admission is £5 including coffee and a raffle ticket. There is no need to book but as the programme develops you will find more details at bbowt.org.uk/events. Park for free in Borough Fields off the Link road.

September 20 - Barbastelle Bats at Ashridge. with **Chantelle Helm**

October 18 - Moths with **Martin Harvey**

November 15 – Chilterns Woods with **Richard Tennant-Eyles** of the Woodland Trust

December 20 – The Countryside in Winter, with **John Tyler**

January 17 – Owls with **Norman Shepherd of Bucks Owl and Raptor Group**

February 21 – Topic to be confirmed.

March 21 – Ants at Aston Rowant with **Dr Tim King**

Guided walks and reserve events

Sunday 4 September 10:00-12:00

From Arable Fields to Nature Reserve in 20 years

Dancersend Nature Reserve, Aston Clinton, HP23 6LD

Explore Dancersend Extension with warden Mick Jones and hear about the successes and challenges of turning arable fields into a haven for rare wildflowers and insects.

Moving into Autumn at Dancersend Sunday 16 October 13:30-16:00

Dancersend Waterworks, Aston Clinton, HP23 6LB

Join warden Mick Jones to discover the changes taking place in our plants and animals as another wildlife year draws to a close and this special reserve moves towards the end of its 80th year.

Poo and Other Clues. Monday 24 October 10:30-12:00 or 13:00- 14:30

Outdoor activity suitable for children aged 7 years and above (accompanied by an adult)

Dancersend Waterworks, Aston Clinton, HP23 6LB

Come and test your skills as nature detectives, looking at tracks, poo and other clues of the animals that live at this nature reserve.

Booking essential. For more autumn and winter guided walks and reserve events go to

www.bbowl.org.uk/events.

The BBOWT Community Network

I'll just quickly introduce myself - I'm Lily, a relatively new Volunteering Network Officer at BBOWT. My role is basically centred around creating a Community Network for community groups in the 3 counties. The broad aims are facilitating greater connections and communications between the groups themselves, signposting to helpful resources and providing training where possible.

As part of the Team Wilder launch last autumn, we asked how BBOWT can best help communities take action for nature. A key theme suggested was the development of a community network, and this forms the basis of my role as Community Networking Officer.

Our goal is to build an online platform and network that can foster greater connections between groups across Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire, inspire individuals to engage with nature, and help create a wilder world on our doorstep.

This Autumn, we will be launching several key aspects of this Community Network. Starting from Weds 7th September, and running on the first Weds of every month, we are hosting the BBOWT Community Network zoom series. Designed to be a space for sharing learned experiences about community-based working, we will host guest speakers from community groups in the three counties, discuss topics chosen by the network members, and will include time for Q&A's.

We know that there are already many community groups doing amazing work in our area, and we want to do all we can to support and encourage this work for wildlife. The network aims to enable groups to share stories and experiences too – to inspire other like-minded groups across our three counties as we all work towards more nature everywhere.

For this reason we are launching the BBOWT Community Network Facebook group. This will be a space for facilitating peer-to-peer conversations, information sharing, and community group collaborations. In sharing knowledge and experiences we can maximise the effect of our local actions and create a network of wilder spaces.....

We are also currently developing training sessions, aiming to deliver introductions to basic site surveying, managing green spaces, and much more. For updates to our training opportunities, please see our BBOWT events page, or join our Community Network Facebook group!

See Katy Horgan's piece on page 2 for examples of local community groups.

Lily O'Neill, Community Networking Officer at BBOWT

The Inside Story of 'Meeting and Greeting' at College Lake

I think most people are aware that 'Meeting and Greeting' has made a significant contribution to the finances of BBOWT by encouraging visitors to donate (and most do willingly donate), significantly raising the income to BBOWT, compared with the old car park payment system.

But 'Meet and Greet' is much more than this. When visitors arrive at the entrance at the far end of the car park we try to engage with them, telling them what has changed, if they are regulars, and explaining the reserve background and features to those who have either never been or have not been for a long time. If they have children with them we can explain where best to entertain them. We do not just stay at the entrance, whenever we can we walk the reserve and engage with visitors who are walking round, explaining what they are looking at and answering any questions they might have. We also litter pick, check the hides are tidy and the windows open for ventilation, check for any problems at the barn toilets and make sure that all the bird feeders are topped up. Volunteers also clean the feeders regularly to make sure the risks from fungus and viruses are managed as best we can and we look out for any hazards on the site. Some of the volunteers act as 'Guides in the Hides' and run the shop or help in the cafe when there are staff shortages. At weekends some volunteers act as Duty Wardens, either with staff warden backup (summer) or on their own (winter) with 'on call' backup. This means reserve staff can concentrate on tasks around the reserve rather than being on immediate call to cover visitor issues.

Having volunteers walking the reserve every day it is open, provides far greater coverage than can be done by busy staff and provides flexibility.

If you are interested in becoming a volunteer at College Lake and being involved in the visitor interface please get in contact with us using volunteering@bbowt.org.uk . We are always looking for new volunteers to spread the load.

David Owen, College Lake Volunteer

David organises an easy-to-use roster system online and each week sends out a briefing note telling volunteers what features to mention to visitors plus details of any events taking place. 'Meeting and Greeting' is a rewarding, sociable volunteering activity helping the public to enjoy one of the Trust's top reserves.

Richard Birch, 'Meet and Greet' volunteer

The Rhyming Riddle quiz!

The last two letters of the answer to one clue are the same as the first two letters of the clue following. The last clue reverts to the first so you can begin anywhere. Clue 8 is probably the easiest.

1. This flower 's much like a marigold
But a different family so I'm told
2. Not a type of shoe, but an orchid rare
If you go to Yorkshire, some grow there.
3. These black spotted moths are not the same
As stoats in winter, despite their name
4. These roundworms are good at killing pests
So organic gardeners like them best.
5. This may look like a dragonfly
But it's really a damsel flying by
6. This plant 's an edible leafy green
In summer salads often seen
7. Before the summer it's time for spring
First signs of which these bright blooms bring
8. I have to say some plants aren't nice
This has a sting, don't touch it twice
9. You might hear this in a school maths class
But it's also the name for a bract on a grass
10. Two meanings again, a fruit or a man
One's orange and juicy, guess which if you can
11. A type of worm this, not slow nor electric
It's really quite short, absolutely not metric
12. Put in salads or soups, omelettes or sauce
This adds a mild onion taste to that course
13. It's blue , purple , pink, or the colour of snow
And maybe the name of some girl you know

Peggy Verrall

You can find the answers here:

bbowt.org.uk/sites/default/files/2022-08/Answers%20to%20Peggy%20Verrall%27s%20word%20puzzle.pdf

NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

We are covering topics from around the county to encourage members to spread their wings. The Trust's reserves north of Aylesbury have year round interest but are less visited, so please explore them and support the hard work of local staff and volunteers.

We are grateful for everyone's contributions to the newsletter. If you have ideas for the next issue, **covering April to September 2023 please submit them by mid February to juliebirch60@yahoo.com.**

To be put on the mailing list for this newsletter please contact membership@bbowt.org.uk

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Views expressed by contributors are not necessarily those of Berks, Bucks & Oxon Wildlife Trust.

MAIN CONTACT DETAILS

Head Office:

www.bbowt.org.uk / 01865 775476

College Lake: 01442 826774

Events

Events at bbowt.org.uk

Visitor centre: Toyah Baulk,

toyahbaulk@bbowt.org.uk

Education: Sarah Close
sarahclose@bbowt.org.uk

Volunteering Information:

www.bbowt.org.uk/how-you-can-help/

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HANDS - ON CONSERVATION OPPORTUNITIES

Work parties are sociable and satisfying local events with opportunities to learn new skills. Beginners are particularly welcome and you can stay for whatever time you can spare. Please wear stout footwear and work clothes, including gloves, and take care on steep slopes and uneven ground. Tools and instruction are provided. We welcome all new volunteers who are invited to email volunteering@bbowt.org.uk for registration. The contact information below is for queries from members of existing teams.

Dancersend with Pavis Woods 10 - 4pm -

Main work sessions are held on the second Sunday of every month, starting at 10am, with occasional half-day sessions on Wednesdays. To be added to the email list for more details contact Judi Fisher 01494 722073, judiandbryan@yahoo.co.uk .

ASTON CLINTON RAGPITS (near Wendover)

For information please **contact** Phil Townsend 01923 353410,
philjtownsend@yahoo.co.uk or volunteering@bbowt.org.uk

FINEMERE WOOD (near Quainton) Work parties: 9.30am - 3pm on second and fourth
Thursday of the month:
.
Contact Charlotte at charlottekarmali@outlook.com.

WESTON TURVILLE RESERVOIR (near Wendover) 10am - 2.30pm, last Thursday of month
Contact See below *

COLLEGE LAKE (near Tring) *

PITSTONE FEN (near Tring).& Yoesden Bank (near Princes Risborough) *

BACOMBE HILL *(near Wendover) 10am on second Thursday of month

*For more information on joining these groups , please contact the BBOWT
volunteering team on volunteering@bbowt.org.uk