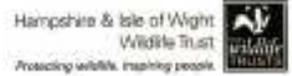




Newsletter No.57

March 2018

Our 21st Anniversary Edn.



Welcome to our Spring Newsletter (not very springlike at the time of writing !) Included are events ahead and in the Nature Notes are details of the activities of the Horndean Biodiversity Group. It is hoped that many of you will be able to attend the two meetings listed below which are both at our usual venue at St Wilfrid's Church Hall (upstairs) Padnell Road, Cowplain, PO8 0DZ.

Wed. 21st March

"Urban Wildlife and its Conservation"

7.30 pm

Well known Trust ecologist Dr David Rumble will present an illustrated talk on the importance of raising local awareness in Biodiversity conservation. At St.Wilfrid's Hall (Details as above) This is an especially important meeting as it is the 21st Anniversary of the South Down Group which had its first meeting at St Wilfrid's in 1997

Sadly at this meeting Peter Leversha will be retiring as Chairman, after 10 years of excellent service in keeping the Group going when he took over from Stephen Harwood who was Chairman for the previous 10 years. The Group will continue to be run by existing members of the committee but we ask you to consider joining the committee, they need your support to ensure the long term future of the group and lighten the load. The next committee meeting will be **Thurs. 5th April in Lovedean - Details of the HBG committee meeting are available from Deryn via deryn.hawkins1@gmail.com**

Wed. 18th April

"Local Wildlife caught on camera during 2017"

7.30pm

This meeting is organised by the Horndean Biodiversity Group. All members of the South Down Group are invited. This is a special meeting in which local naturalists, recorders and photographers will show their pictures of amazing plants and animals all seen locally in 2017, many at the Bioblitz on Catherington Down last July. Details of Surveys and activities of HBG in 2018 will be announced.

No AGMs of the South Down Group or the Biodiversity Group will be held this year.

A report on the **HBic** (Hampshire Biodiversity Information Centre) **Annual Recorders Forum**. at Littleton, 10th March This very popular event was attended by over 80 members of local recording groups and as ever there were many interesting presentations covering a wide range of topics. Highlights included a talk by Peter Thompson of the Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust on **Farmer Cluster Recording** project, developed by GWCT in association with Natural England. This is a plan to help a number of farmers to work together in one locality to deliver greater benefits for soil, water and wildlife on a landscape scale. To date 98 farm clusters (1680 farmers) have been set up and cover over a million acres. There are 5 'clusters' in Hampshire : Around Martin Down in West Hampshire, north of Alton and nearer to home farms around Selborne. Excellent news for wildlife. It would be great if they could form a cluster in Blendworth ! For more on this go to www.gwet.org.uk/farming/advice/farmer-clusters. On this site there is a Case study - The Selborne Landscape Partnership. On **27/28th May** there will be **Nature Festival** and **Bioblitz** at Selborne (many events) Other talks were given by Nik Knight who showed some superb shots of bats flying and feeding, taken in total darkness on the very latest Thermal Imaging Cameras. These may be shown by the BBC (?Springwatch) worth looking out for. Nick also mentioned the very rare Alcaethoe Bat. Only one recorded in UK and that was found on a rooftop in Horndean ! The Hampshire Bat Group are anxious to have all our bat records to help with their distribution monitoring. Other speakers told us about Leeches in Hampshire and how to catch them !, the Heronries Census, Fungal recording and the new HIWWT nature reserve at **St.Clair's Meadow** in the Meon Valley at Soberton - worth a visit this summer. Many Thanks to Nicky Court (HBic manager) and her staff for giving us such an interesting and enjoyable day. We're glad to hear that HBic has not suffered too much from HCC cutbacks but one sad note to end on - Chilcombe House and the Museum Services have been closed down, we heard the news from Christine Taylor who has been Curator there for several years, we will miss the many ID courses that she organised. Who is going to look after the collections ?

The next newsletter (NL58) will be in Sept.2018, contributions welcomed, send to the Editor (JV) on wildlife@vigay.com
The next issue will contain details of our next Autumn talks at Cowplain

Garden Bird Life

We were pleased to be visited by many **Redwings** this month in our garden in Victory Av. Also this month the regulars plus a Heron, Gt Spotted Woodpecker several black-headed seagulls and a tawny owl.

Kate Risely (BTO Garden Birdwatch) calls on everyone to help prevent disease by offering a variety of food from **accredited sources**, feeding in moderation and **regularly cleaning bird feeders thus avoiding accumulations of waste or bird droppings**. We are trying to do this but find it difficult in such wet or freezing conditions that we have had this winter. John Goodspeed is now the Garden Bird Ambassador for South Hampshire where Hampshire observers submit more than 310,000 records weekly to the BTO. More info. on recent studies by BTO, RSPB, Froglife and ZSL can be found on www.gardenwildlifehealth.org



Butterflies and Moths

This year **Butterfly Transects** will be done at the 4 best local sites. A team of volunteers will walk a set route on a weekly rota and records of all butterflies seen are sent to **Butterfly Conservation** via our two co-ordinators :- Matt (Chief Ranger HPC) for Catherington Down, Parsonage Field and Hazleton Common and John Nundy who receives the records for The Holt and Horndean Down (Windmill Hill). Andy Barker of BC announced at the HBic Forum that he wants everyone to include day flying moths on their recording sheets. There are around 50 species of moths regularly seen on sunny days, many seen locally especially on chalk downland and open grassland. Roger Marriott is stepping down this year as he has family commitments but he is still continuing with the breeding & re-introduction of Marsh Fritillaries. This includes growing a good supply of their foodplant - mainly Sheep's Bit. A report on Butterflies and Moths was given in NL 56 (Autumn 2017) on page two.

Moth recording nights will be held during 2018 but precise details cannot be given in advance, mainly because of the unpredictable weather conditions. Details will be posted on the website. See www.horndeanbiodiversity.co.uk

'**Bioblitzes**' Results of the **Bioblitz** 2017 at Catherington Down last July were detailed in NL56 on page 2, There will not be a Bioblitz in Horndean this year as HPC have a heavy work load, but everyone is invited to the special meeting on the 18th April at St Wilfrid's where we will be showing pictures of the wildlife seen at the Bioblitz and at other sites during 2017.

We are pleased to note that a new ranger, Lewis Coleman has joined Horndean parish council's Countryside Team. He says that Hazleton Common is his favourite Nature Reserve where he once spent some of his childhood..

Wildlife Surveys in 2018

PONDS One of our most valued habitats for wildlife. HBG are working with the Parish Rangers. We are continuing to survey the rich variety of ponds that we have in the Horndean area, not only 'public' ponds, all with public access but including 'private' ponds in gardens and on farmland and in parkland as at Merchistoun Hall, all of course in association with the owners. The survey will include tests for water quality and the range of plant and animal species present in and around the pond area. **JOIN IN** Those wishing to come to pond events should contact Matt at HPC (Tel: 023 92597766) matthewmadill@horndeanpc-hants.gov.uk.

Volunteers meet on Thursdays 10am and the following dates have been given for pond surveys :-

14th June- Catherington Pond **12th July**- Dell Piece West **23rd August**- Hazleton Pond(s) John Vigay is continuing with a survey of his wild garden pond. Sadly 4 frogs have produced an amount of frogspawn and then died and the spawn may not be fertile, their death is a mystery. I am extending my survey to microorganism including ciliates, rotifers and diatoms. Anyone wishing to join in the survey of garden ponds would be most welcome to visit us and share in studies of the amazing microscopic world that is seen in pond water.

HEDGEROWS (and Road Verges) Our other most valued habitat for wildlife. HBG are planning to carry hedgerows this summer. Priority will be given to surveying hedgerows and verges adjacent to Land East of Horndean. East Hants DC have announced that Bloor Homes are preparing a new masterplan for the layout of the scheme and will be consulting with the public As there are many fine hedgerows within this development area it is important that they are surveyed. A meeting will be held in April for those interested. Date to be announced.