

The Naturalist.
Newsletter of the BSDNHS
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From Bob Reed:

Dear Member,

A shorter Newsletter this time as we draw to the end of the winter season once again.

We have had a very successful programme of talks this season which have been very well attended on a consistent basis. We should like to welcome new members who keep on arriving to swell our numbers - please keep coming we enjoy having you at the meetings! A big thank you is due to Carol Wylde for putting together the winter programme for us. Thanks also to Jim Fish for doing such an excellent job as Treasurer, this is a really key post for the society and we are indebted to him for taking it on. Thanks also to Francis Oldfield who has continued to maintain a plentiful supply of refreshments during the evenings. We must also once again thank the National Trust for so generously allowing us premises for our meetings free of charge, also for the staff who stay on during Friday evenings to welcome us.

Summer programme 2010.

I have tried to put together a varied programme of evening and afternoon meetings. Rather than just a walk I have tried to give a focus to the meetings. You will see that we are carrying out the Big Forest Bird Watch again this year and we are steadily building up a valuable record over a period of time for the National Trust. The new forest venture this year is to be an afternoon butterfly watch, rather than name an afternoon we are asking that interested people give a contact and we will then be in touch according to the suitability of the weather. It is hoped that we shall catch a sight of the Silver Washed Fritillary. Our main theme as 'Forest Nature' this year is to provide records of mammals on the Forest to contribute to John Dobson's new edition of the Mammals of Essex. As before we shall be putting out the dormouse nest tubes in April and would welcome some help. We shall also be carrying out small mammal trapping later in the year. Once again please attend these events or offer assistance. If you have any verified records of mammals on the forest this year then please let me know and we can include them. Some of the meetings were not very well attended last year so I would ask you all to make the effort to get out and about and appreciate our local wildlife in the company of like-minded individuals!

Biological records.

The old Minute books are full of records which although of interest, to be quite frank are of very little biological value lacking as they often do any accurate map reference or name of observer. I am currently working on a computer based system onto which we can enter records which can then easily be sent to any of the Biological Records Centres. As soon as it is up and running we can start putting in records and this will be a theme running through our meetings during the summer. Please do not be frightened off! I understand that the Biological Records Centres are only too pleased to receive records of common species, remember that what is common today may not be so in a few years time. During one of our evening walks last year we tried, just for interest to see what we could name and came up with a staggering list without much effort. Including over 50 types of plants, 12 bird species, several fungi, evidence for 7 mammals as well as other miscellaneous groups. I am confident that we could make a significant contribution to biological recording in that the Stort Valley in particular where very little recording of this type has been done.

Green Infrastructure Plan and Living Landscapes Vision.

This is a really exciting development for the Stort Valley. For several years now some of us have been pushing for recognition of wildlife sites within the valley which seem previously to have been overlooked. All this has now come together in a 'Living Landscapes Vision' put forward by the Herts and Middx Wildlife Trust and supported by a large number of influential bodies. The idea is to form a green riverpark, joining up the already existing nature reserves and providing a recreational area for those living locally. We would all like to see the clock turned back 60 years so

that the valley is what it used to be like but this is not going to happen. There have been considerable worries that there may be pressure to develop the valley and floodplain. There is good reason to believe that the green riverpark idea will favour the survival of wildlife and scenery in the valley and positively discourage development. We have to accept the fact that there may be greater use of the river but there is a very strong recognition of the wildlife value of the area and this is uppermost in the vision put forward by the HMWT. The society has been invited to have an input into the development of the riverpark and this is something with which we should certainly be closely involved. There are several of our meetings planned for the river valley this year so please give them your support. These are exciting times and something which we would not dare to have hoped for several years ago.

Black Poplar planting.

The committee have recently organised the planting of a native Black Poplar on and the Sawbridgeworth Marsh Nature Reserve in memory of John Fielding. As many of you will know John was the instigator in the purchase of the Marsh in the early 1970s. He had long known the area as being very important botanically. Once the reserve was formed he set about laying out a system of paths and ditches still in existence today which enable visitors to see all aspects of the reserve. We are sure that he would approve of such a treeplanting and a tree of this stature should become a landscape feature to his memory and foresight for many years.

Officers and AGM 2010.

We are approaching the AGM once again. The committee will have discussed the usual items in advance of the meeting but we need to be considering new officers and new blood on the committee. For my own part I have now been chairman for at least three years. The rules state that this post should change after this period of time to allow for fresh ideas. I am quite willing to continue as chairman but would be equally willing to stand down if there are any other nominations, I think this is important so that no one individual comes to dominate the society. Also we would welcome new people onto the committee with new ideas and some new approaches. Please feel free to make nominations for any of these not very onerous posts in the society.

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