

The Naturalist.
Newsletter of the BSDNHS
No 4. August 2007

From Bob Reed:

Just a quick newsletter to welcome you back for the start of the new "term". It has been a miserable and disappointing summer not only from the point of weather and wildlife but also attendance at field meetings. We started the season well with an evening meeting at Oaklands Park where Doris and Peter Clewitt-Price welcomed us for an evening looking at moths captured by Tom Lewis and Jim Fish. Five members attended in addition to our hosts. (I am sure you will join me in extending our sympathies to Doris at the recent loss of Peter who had been a stalwart member of the society). The proposed stand at the Bishops Stortford carnival was cancelled as insufficient members volunteered to help with setting up and manning the display. Six members attended the meeting at Hunsdon Mead and were treated to a wonderful show of wild flowers as expected. The Sawbridgeworth Marsh visit was better attended with 10 visitors of which six were BSNHS members. As usual Andrew Sapsford gave us an informative tour of his reserve. A total of three members went to Pishiobury Park to see the fine display of neutral grassland flowers and butterflies. At Mollie and John Godfree's house meeting there were 3 members in addition to the hosts. As usual John gave us an interesting and informative tour of the village green nature reserve. This coming Friday we have a moth evening in Hatfield Forest. In the region of 30 people have booked of which five are BSNHS members.

I am determined to keep the summer programme going as long as there is a nucleus of members interested in the wonderful natural history of our local area but please give us your support.

New venue for winter meetings.

As you will be aware the society can no longer fund meetings at the Apton Road Day Centre after Christmas. The combined cost of hiring the centre and speaker is in the region of £80 to £90 per evening. We have decided to take up the generous offer of the Meetings Room in the Office Block at Hatfield Forest which will be available free of charge. It is not large but has good facilities. It is not in the Education Base by the lake as suggested earlier although this could be available for summer workshop evenings. It is near to Takeley Street and access is good. In addition it will base us on a National Nature Reserve and we will have the full support of the National Trust staff and their circle contacts including visitors to the forest. Speaking with other natural history society officers it is obvious that they would give their 'eye teeth' for such an opportunity. We are being welcomed with open arms! Some members have already said that they will not be able to attend meetings at this new venue which is disappointing. If people are having problems with transport then please ask as I am sure that something can be arranged. Carol has put together a good programme of speakers so please support the society in what we hope could be a new and successful chapter in its history.

www.stortvalleywild.co.uk

This website continues to grow, currently it has more than 30 'members'. There are a wide range of topics and lots of good photographs. It is obvious that many people in the younger age bracket are participating. The BSNHS has a page to publicise our activities. The web site is a good resource it is not a natural history society, yet it is doing all the things that a traditional nat.hist.soc would do which is interesting. It is also equally obvious that the contributors enjoy 'virtual' participation but would probably not entertain the idea of membership of a traditional society. This is disappointing because originally I had high hopes that we might recruit through this medium. If you have the opportunity then please look at and use/participate in this local web site.

The future for the society?

It cannot be denied that the outlook for the society as it currently stands is not good. I personally, have done all I can to take the society into the future. We have good Internet publicity in at least two places, we publicise meetings and have held displays of our activities to the general public, I produce this newsletter regularly, we have maintained a full winter and summer programme and have secured a firm base for future meetings in an ideal setting, I have tried to stimulate interest at meetings by having quiz type displays, records are shown in a clearer way, I have tried to introduce the use of the microscope as a natural history tool and have updated presentations using a computer and video projector. In spite of all these things we still see a decline in membership and lack of support at meetings. Do members want the society to continue? Are societies of this type an anachronism today? Is the society already dead judging by the support received? If you want the society to continue then please let me and the committee know, I am determined to keep it going if only in a skeleton format but what could this be? Please be positive and support our society as we try to take it forward in the coming year, publicise us to friends and lets try to keep alive the vision of the founding members back in the 1930's.