



Reserves News

It's now late August, and as I sit in our new regional office, listening to the rain teeming down outside, I am grateful that for once I am in the dry. The butterflies, however, have to take their chances and the adverse weather over the last few days will probably have a significant impact on the numbers seen during transect week 20 and, possibly, week 21. But the weather has generally been kind to us. This summer has seen a good number of visitors turning up for the regular and the group walks that we hold on the reserves every summer. Between April and September this year 450 members of the public attended a total of 28 events. These ranged from our informal 'Wednesday Wanders', where anyone is welcome to join us without pre-booking, to the group bookings, which vary from Scouts to Natural History Societies and U3A walks.



If you would like to book a walk for your group between April and September at one of our Hampshire Reserves, please do get in touch with me (see the Useful Contacts page at the back of this newsletter). The walks are free of charge and last 2 hours. The only stipulation is that there are 6 or more attending.

Magdalen Hill Down

Magdalen has looked stunning this summer and the comments below are testament to all the hard work and effort from our wonderful team of volunteers.

'Beautiful weather, lots of butterflies and day-flying moths. Cubs very engaged. Lovely trip.' Melanie G.

'A beautiful place and the flowers were unbelievable. What a haven for all wildlife!' Susan K.



Six-spot Burnet moths
Ashley Whitlock

'The flowers were superb! We have never seen the reserve looking so good! We saw 16 species of butterfly and the members were thrilled to see the Small Blue – a first for most of them. Your management has proved to be very successful' Margaret H. Haslemere Natural History Society.

Although the majority of the management work is carried out during the winter months, there are still plenty of tasks that keep us busy over the summer too. Ragwort being one of them. This year, we held 'pulling parties' (no, not what it sounds like...) in the evenings during July. The volunteers formed a line and walked in the same direction, 'sweeping' the fields and pulling ragwort as they went. It was very effective, but relied on good numbers of volunteers turning up. One evening we got soaked to the skin and ended up in the pub! Please do join us next year if you have a few free hours. All the details are on the website.

Other management to maintain the grassland in good condition included a hay cut during the last week of July. There is a lot of planning that goes into which bits to cut and which to leave. The areas are cut on a rotational basis, but the final decisions are made depending on the ranker areas of grass and, most importantly, where the Skylarks are nesting that year. Despite the ground-nesting bird season coming to a close at the end of July, Skylarks can and do breed well into August. However, after early July, the nutrient value starts to decline so the contractors prefer to take an early hay cut. We have to keep both the Skylarks and the contractors happy, and by leaving areas that remain uncut the birds can escape into the longer grass for sanctuary.

In return for the hay we are left enough bales to sustain the cattle and sheep over the winter, should it be necessary to supplement their feed. By using our own hay we reduce the risk of introducing other species, such as weeds, on to the site.

Last year we were delighted when the Adonis Blue butterfly took a liking to Magdalen, so much so, it decided to breed on the reserve and produced a second generation. This year, sadly, its presence was not that evident, although a few individuals were seen.



*Mating Adonis Blues
Ashley Whitlock*

Butterfly highlights at Magdalen this year included increased numbers of Brown Argus, and Small Blue, with many Chalkhill Blue and Gatekeeper seen. There are plenty of bird species on this site too, with the following being recorded on the 15th May: Green Woodpecker, Chiffchaff, Blackcap, Willow Warbler, Kestrel, Dunnock, Great Tit, Starling, Jay, Buzzard, Goldfinch, Lesser Whitethroat, Common Whitethroat, Red Kite, Yellowhammer, Long-tailed Tit, Linnets and Blue Tit.



Green Hairstreak

Brian Fletcher

Bentley Station Meadow

Bentley Station Meadow appears to be a hit for the Silver-washed Fritillary now that it is open and sunny with a great array of nectar sources, plus Dark Green Fritillary and Purple Hairstreak have also been recorded.

Yew Hill

Hilltop at Yew Hill has been grazed with ewes and lambs for pretty much most of the year, and is looking spectacular. The Ragwort is clearly under control and mechanical means of flailing this year has not been necessary.



*Munchers
Jayne Chapman*



*Common Blue - female
Brian Fletcher*

All in all a delightful summer season has been enjoyed by our visitors and wildlife alike. Do please join us for the winter work tasks (see pages 16-17) to find out more about what we do on our reserves.

Jayne Chapman, Reserves Officer