



ELMBRIDGE NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

(formerly Weybridge Natural History and Aquarist Society)

BULLETIN
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AUTUMN 2012 PROGRAMME

Indoor Meetings

- Wed 12 Sep* 'The Life of a Ranger' by James Herd, Ranger, Barossa & Poors Allotment, Surrey Wildlife Trust Grazing Team. A look at all the aspects of the job, including wildlife surveys, guided walks, and dealing with fly-tipping, and with the public generally.
- Wed 10 Oct* Members' Evening. Contributions welcome; please contact Dick Alder if you would like to give a short talk.
- Wed 14 Nov* 'Alfred Russel Wallace' by Dr Jane McLauchlin. An illustrated talk on a great nineteenth-century traveller whose thoughts on evolution rocked the world.
- Wed 12 Dec* 'La Brenne, Butterflies, Moths and Other Delights' by Peter Hambrook and Ray Wilson. Some nice slides from their recent trip to France, PLUS mince pies and seasonal jollity!

Moth trapping evening

Fri 14 Sep West End Common, 19.30 (West End Village Green, West End Lane)

Moth trapping may be cancelled if the weather is bad: if uncertain about this or the meeting location please contact Dave Page on 07850 739760.

Indoor meetings are held from September to April, at the Methodist Church Hall, Mayfield Road, Weybridge, at 8.00pm. Non-members are welcome to all meetings (£3.00 charge, refundable if you join the Society). Refreshments charge (winter meetings): 50p.

The sale of natural history-related books and products will continue to be a feature of indoor meetings, so please bring anything you feel might be of interest to someone else, and which could help keep the society's bank balance healthy!

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, 11 APRIL 2012

The venue was the Methodist Hall, Mayfield Road, Weybridge. Ross Baker took the chair and opened the meeting at 20:10 with an attendance of 14 members.

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Chris and Kath Brading, Keith and Lorna Sandford, and Ray and Lynn Wilson.

2. Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of 13 April 2011

The minutes were agreed and passed as a true record. Proposed by Lynn Whitfield, seconded by David Page.

3. Matters arising

There were no matters arising this time.

4. Committee Report

This was compiled by Peter Hambrook and presented by Ross Baker. Below is a précis of the document, omitting details of indoor meetings and field trips, and with minor additions and deletions agreed during the meeting, following which acceptance of this amended Committee Report was then agreed. The full document was circulated with the other documentation prior to the AGM.

The Society has had an eventful year with a wide-ranging programme of events. The membership has dropped slightly with six members not renewing and only one new member and now stands at 34. Our finances are still healthy but an increase in expenditure, particularly for speakers and a new requirement for insurance, did lead to a small deficit over basic income. The small charge for refreshments, the greater use of email and a new initiative to sell books and other items at meetings have, however, more than covered these costs. We have decided that a subscription increase is not a necessity at present despite the need to cover the new insurance requirements.

The Committee has been under some pressure with Chris Brading and David Taylor both standing down at the last AGM. We met only twice during the year but much of the business has been conducted at the monthly meetings and by email. David Morgan (Programme Secretary) will be stepping down at this AGM and we thank him for his years of effort on behalf of the society. Over the last year the remaining Committee members have shuffled positions to cover the urgent tasks and have also persuaded others to join them to return the numbers to a more workable level once the changes have been agreed at the AGM. However, we still need a Minute Secretary and a Society Secretary to bring us back to full strength.

The Constitution of the Society has not been updated for several years, so the Committee has spent some time reviewing this document and has prepared a new version to be considered for acceptance at the AGM.

Lynn Whitfield continued her sterling work producing our quarterly Bulletins and has also done a great job in preparing the report on our wildlife survey of the Brooklands Museum site that has been undertaken over the last few years. Colin and Pauline Poyton have continued to maintain an excellent website which is both a source of

information and a means of advertising the Society. Mariko Parslow has taken over the organisation of refreshments and also initiated and organises the 'bring and buy' table which has proved popular and has helped swell the Society's funds. Last but not least, Chris Brading continues to support the Committee with practical help and the benefit of his years of experience.

The Committee would like to thank all of them, the contributors and other helpers for their loyal support throughout the year. We would also like to thank both Chris Brading and David Morgan, who steps down at this year's AGM, for their many years of hard work on behalf of the Society.

5. Treasurer's Report

A summary of the Treasurer's Report follows. The full document was circulated to members prior to the AGM.

The Society had funds of £761.42 as at 29 February 2012 as against £583.54 a year earlier. Total income was £556.80 while expenditure was £378.92 giving an income over expenditure of £177.88, a significant improvement on the previous year. There was a profit of £55.80 on refreshments which were provided at very little cost to the Society due to the generosity of those providing them. Because a number of members didn't renew their subscription for the year, subscription revenue only increased by a modest £13 despite the higher subscription rate. Income from visitors rose to £30 compared with £2 last year.

Our decision to take out public liability insurance resulted in a cost of £74 for the year to 1 September 2012. The hall hire rose at the start of 2012 but only by 90p per session, bringing it to £18.90 per session.

Our speakers in 2011/12 have been extremely modest in their demands for payment. We should not rely on such generosity as a matter of course and should be able to allow £30-£40 per speaker.

Currently an income of approximately £400 per annum is required to cover our expenses.

Acceptance of the Treasurer's report was proposed by David Morgan, seconded by Graham Carey and agreed unanimously by the floor.

6. Election of Officers and Committee

| | |
|----------------------|------------------|
| President | Olive Boroughs* |
| Chairman | Ross Baker* |
| Secretary | |
| Treasurer | Janet Ripley* |
| Membership Secretary | Peter Hambrook |
| Programme Secretary | Dick Alder* |
| Minute Secretary | Peter Hambrook** |
| Outdoor Events | David Page* |
| No fixed position | Brian Spooner* |

* Denotes new Committee member or changed position held.

** Position held on a covering basis only.

No nominations were received for the posts of Secretary and Minute Secretary. The Committee was voted in en masse, proposed by Lynn Whitfield, seconded by Graham Carey and agreed unanimously by the floor.

7. Vote on the acceptance of the amended Constitution

The amended Constitution of the society was circulated to all members prior to the AGM. With the exception of a minor typing error (now corrected) it was passed unchanged. Proposed by David Page, seconded by Alan Forno and agreed unanimously by the floor.

8. Election of an Honorary Scrutineer

Brian Spooner agreed to take on this role for a further year. Acceptance was proposed by Richard Jewell, seconded by David Taylor and agreed unanimously by the floor.

9. Resolutions:

a) Brenda Chapman to be elected an Honorary Member

Proposed by Chris Brading and backed by other Committee members. This was agreed unanimously.

b) That the Committee proceed with the development of a new website to replace that currently maintained by Colin and Patricia Poyton (now no longer members)

Following discussion, some clarification from Peter Hambrook and suggested processes by Graham Carey the resolution was agreed unanimously.

10. Any other business

a) **Mariko Parslow** advised that due to other commitments (see below) she would be unable to run the refreshments or the bring and buy stall in future. Mariko was warmly thanked for her efforts over the past year. It was agreed that the current small stock of books would be retained for next winter's meetings and volunteers were needed to cover both areas next winter.

b) **David Page** advised that his proposed programme of study and moth trapping sessions would be going ahead during the warmer months. These events are open to ENHS members and their friends. This programme does not preclude others from running their own walks etc. should they so wish. Lynn Whitfield has circulated the details by email and everyone is encouraged to support David's initiative.

c) **David Page** confirmed that he will be manning an ENHS table at the Claremont event on 20 May to promote the society.

d) **Mariko Parslow** advised that Brian Spooner, Dick Alder and herself were about to undertake a major project to pull together all Surrey (Vice-County 17) mycological records, including the minimal records held by the ENHS, into one database in a three-stage 12 year project. The project will be based at Kew and will be known as the Surrey Fungus Study Group.

The meeting closed at 21:17.

ENHS SUMMER WALKS PROGRAMME NOTES

Fairmile Common, 13 June 2012

We had hoped to see silver-studded blues (*Plebeius argus*) flying here, but owing to dreadful weather recently, everything was running late. Dave Page, who led the summer walks, has observed that these butterflies do not emerge until there is enough bell heather flowering to provide them with nectar. He suggested that about 15% flowering is necessary, and on this date there was only about 5%. However, several small copper (*Lycaena phlaeas*) butterflies were about, cinnabar (*Tyria jacobaeae*) moths were attending ragwort, and a few mullein (*Shargacucullia verbasci*) moth larvae were found on mullein (*Verbascum* sp.). Wall-pepper (*Sedum acre*) was flowering around the edge of the old flying circle, with viper's bugloss (*Echium vulgare*) as well as bugloss (*Anchusa arvensis*).

Over the A3, we entered the cleared area, recording sand spurrey (*Spergularia rubra*), thyme-leaved speedwell (*Veronica serpyllifolia*), and heath bedstraw (*Galium saxatile*), and clouds of pollen were knocked from the sheep's sorrel (*Rumex acetosella*). Dave suggested that the wet weather has brought on the wavy hair grass (*Deschampsia flexuosa*) in this area, where in dry years the heather prevails. Several lesser treble-bar (*Aplocera efformata*) and yellow shell (*Camptogramma bilineata*) moths were disturbed, and rose chafer (*Cetonia aurata*) beetle flew past us. A dor beetle (*Geotrupes* sp.) was found on the path. On a white bryony (*Bryonia dioica*) plant several bryony ladybirds (*Epilachna argus*) were feeding.

Dave led us to a fenced pit, part of the A3 drainage system, where dragonflies were active, including a black-tailed skimmer (*Orthretrum cancellatum*), broad-bodied chaser *Libulella depressa*), banded demoiselle (*Calopteryx splendens*) and large red damselfly (*Phyrrhosoma nymphula*). Greater bird's foot trefoil (*Lotus pedunculatus*) and marsh thistles (*Cirsium palustre*) were growing in the bottom, and near the edge we found the uncommon imperforate St John's wort (*Hypericum maculatum*), and narrow-leaved vetch (*Vicia sativa* ssp. *nigra*).

On our return trek to the car park we disturbed a brown silver-line moth (*Petrophora chlorosata*) and garden chafer beetle (*Phyllopertha horticola*).

Brooklands Community Park, 20 June 2012

This is part of the old Brooklands motor racing circuit and aircraft factory, now converted to four separate uses. The western side is warehousing and retail park, including Tesco and Marks & Spencer. The northern end is Mercedes-Benz World, with showcase headquarters and demo tracks. On the east side are offices, housing and the Brooklands Museum. The remainder of the site has come into the hands of Elmbridge Borough Council, much of it as an activities area, but also with quite a lot of interesting acid grassland and woodland

On this occasion we were looking mainly at the grassland, on an anti-clockwise circuit of the old runway area. The eastern side is drier, with shorter vegetation. A notable find was a patch of hoary cinquefoil (*Potentilla argentea*) that was heavily infested with an orange rust, which Brian Spooner has tentatively identified as *Phragmidium potentillae*. This seems to be to only British material of the rust known

from this host, and has been added to Kew's mycology collection. Other finds on the drier areas were good numbers of sheep's bit (*Jasione montana*), common centaury (*Centaureum erythraea*), sand spurrey (*Spergularia rubra*) and dwarf mallow (*Malva neglecta*). By the car park kerb knotted clover (*Trifolium striatum*) was discovered.

In the taller grasses on the eastern side were large patches of yellow-rattle (*Rhinanthus minor*), grass vetchling (*Lathyrus nissolia*), meadow vetchling (*Lathyrus pratensis*), and lady's bedstraw (*Galium verum*). The little pond at the south end still has its fringe of orchids (*Dactylorhiza x grandis*), seen here for many years; we counted 58 heads. Dave spotted a common frog (*Rana temporaria*) in the edge.

Of the birds seen today, most notable was a reed bunting (*Emberiza schoeniclus*) at the overflow channel pond, and there were greylag geese (*Anser anser*) on the Wey. Not a perfect day for butterflies, but we did see two common blue (*Polyommatus icarus*), small heath (*Coenonympha pamphilus*), red admiral (*Vanessa atalanta*), speckled wood (*Pararge aegeria*) and comma (*Polygonia c-album*), plus cinnabar (*Tyria jacobaeae*) and yellow shell (*Camptogramma bilineata*) moths.

Molesey Heath, 27 June 2012

Our regular annual visit to this site often produces surprises. There was nothing new this time, but it was good to see bee orchids (*Ophrys apifera*) flowering here again, and possibly some bithynian vetch (*Vicia bithynica*) in leaf, and red bartsia (*Odontites vernus*). Other plants in flower included common broomrape (*Orobanche minor*), grass vetchling (*Lathyrus nissolia*), wood spurge (*Euphorbia amygdaloides*), perennial wall rocket (*Diplotaxis tenuiflora*), lucerne (*Medicago sativa*), alsike clover (*Trifolium hybridum*), and meadow vetchling (*Lathyrus pratensis*). Several sturdy invasive plants are of concern such as goat's-rue (*Galega officinalis*), hoary cress (*Lepidium draba*), giant hogweed (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*), and Japanese knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*). Dave hopes that rabbits will eventually colonise the heath and help to keep the vegetation low; but they are hampered by a foot-thick layer of clay that covers the landfill in this former tip.

Once again we had a day of cloud and wind, limiting the number of insects flying. But we managed to record a few butterflies: large skipper (*Ochlodes venata*), small heath (*Coenonympha pamphilus*), meadow brown (*Maniola jurtina*), red admiral (*Vanessa atalanta*), comma (*Polygonia c-album*), small white (*Pieris rapae*), plus burnet companion moth (*Euclidia glyphica*), cinnabar moth (*Tyria jacobaeae*) and a larva of six-spot burnet moth (*Zygaena filipendulae*). The sad remains of a stag beetle (*Lucanus cervus*) suggested magpie attack. A few birds were seen: common whitethroat (*Sylvia communis*), blackcap (*Sylvia atricapilla*), common swift (*Apus apus*), grey heron (*Ardea cinerea*) and common kestrel (*Falco tinnunculus*).

We were joined today by new member, Ben West, who lives adjacent and hopes to keep us informed of new sightings on the heath.

Black Pond, Esher Common, 4 July 2012

We hoped to see dragonflies during this walk, but once again this grey summer was against us. There was a brief glimpse of what might have been a brilliant emerald (*Somatochlora metallica*). The highlight of the morning was watching a hobby (*Falco*

subbuteo) hunting over the new wetlands behind the dam, and being pestered whenever it landed by a pair of magpies (*Pica pica*). Already, this new area is starting to look mature and must be well worth a visit on a sunny day.

A family of mute swans (*Cygnus olor*), parents and five cygnets followed us all around the pond. Other birds on the water were little grebe (*Tachybaptus ruficollis*), tufted duck (*Aythya fuligula*), coot (*Fulica atra*) and mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*), whilst a chiffchaff (*Phylloscopus collbita*) sang from a willow.

In the marshy area of the pond tail we located a group of marsh violet (*Viola palustris*) and a little bit of round-leaved sundew (*Drosera rotundifolia*), and we disturbed five common wave moths (*Cabera exanthemata*).

On the east bank of the pond was our only butterfly of the day, a ringlet (*Aphantopus hyperantus*), and also the larva of a knot grass moth (*Acronicta rumicis*), and too many harlequin ladybirds (*Harmonia axyridis*) on birch scrub.

Oxshott Heath, 11 July 2012

This was another horrible day for insect-watching, with torrential showers. This was unfortunate as we were joined today by David Baldock, the distinguished Surrey entomologist. He was keen to discover which species of solitary bee and wasp were benefitting from the recent clearances around the big sandpit and below. Fortunately, some of these insects were sitting torpid in the flowerheads of compositae, which made collection easy. While we sheltered under a Scots pine tree we noticed several tawny cockroach (*Ectobius pallidus*) scuttling around our feet!

After some of our party departed at midday, the sun managed to show itself for a while, and the remnant was treated to the sight of a mass emergence of the solitary bee *Andrena argentata* from the banks of the sandpit.

David later identified one of our morning finds as *Crossocerus exiguus*, “A great surprise ...one of the rarest of wasps, only found in Kent, Sussex and Surrey and then on very rare occasions. It’s been found only three times in Surrey and one of these was from the sandpit in 1962.” Another scarce species he identified was the wasp *Oxybelus mandibularis*, and the following other species for the site on the day: a ruby wasp *Elampus panzeri*, wasps *Astata boops* (a shield-bug parasite), *Cerceris rybensis* (a common parasite of solitary bees), *Crossocerus pusillus* (a parasite of flies), and the solitary bees *Panurgus banksianus*, *Panurgus calcaratus* and *Sphecodes pellucidus*.

Despite the weather we also managed to record a few butterflies: small skipper (*Thymelicus sylvestris*), gatekeeper (*Pyronia tithonus*), ringlet (*Aphantopus hyperantus*), red admiral (*Vanessa atalanta*), and a silver-y moth (*Autographa gamma*).

Hurst Meadows, 18 July 2012

The meeting began with a look at the old finishing straight of this former racecourse. Two-thirds of this is currently close-mown, but the far end is left as meadow. It is assumed to be the original turf, and has a very rich flora. This includes great burnet (*Sanguisorba officinalis*), yellow-rattle (*Rhinanthus minor*), meadowsweet

(*Filipendula ulmaria*), lady's bedstraw (*Galium verum*), common knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*), common bird's-foot trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*), meadow vetchling (*Lathyrus pratensis*) and cut-leaved crane's bill (*Geranium dissectum*). In the edge were many tall fennel (*Foeniculum vulgare*) plants. Meadow brown (*Maniola jurtina*) and gatekeeper (*Pyronia tithonus*) butterflies were plentiful, and Essex skipper (*Thymelicus lineola*) identified after capture. A fine bee-imitating fly (*Volucella bombylans*) was seen nectaring.

Crossing onto the main meadow area, we did a wide trawl of the grassland, noting other interesting plants in flower, such as meadow crane's bill (*Geranium pratense*), dropwort (*Filipendula vulgaris*), field scabious (*Knautia arvensis*), burnet-saxifrage (*Pimpinella saxifraga*), red bartsia (*Odontites vernus*), hare's foot clover (*Trifolium arvense*), tufted vetch (*Vicia cracca*), wild carrot (*Daucus carota*), dark mullein (*Verbascum nigrum*), and hoary cinquefoil (*Potentilla argentea*).

More meadow brown (*Maniola jurtina*), gatekeepers (*Pyronia tithonus*) and Essex skippers (*Thymelicus lineola*) were seen, as well as silver-y (*Autographa gamma*) and burnet companion (*Eucidia glyphica*) moths, meadow grasshoppers (*Chorthippus parallelus*) and Roesel's bush crickets (*Metrioptera roeselii*).

Once again we endured showers!

Esher Common, 8 August 2012

This was the last of Dave's Wednesday walks of the year, and its purpose was to view the dry heathland on the common, which has been greatly enhanced by the tree-felling of recent years.

We took an anti-clockwise circuit around Longy Down, beginning beneath the electricity pylon line to the north. The vegetation here has to be kept short, by agreement with National Grid. A mosaic of heather of different ages has been produced, mostly of ling (*Calluna vulgaris*) with scraps of bell heather (*Erica cinerea*). The dry track under the pylon line has proved suitable for solitary wasps, one of which showed its face at the top of its burrow, but seemed reluctant to emerge! David Baldock has suggested that it might be the weevil-hunting *Cerceris arenaria*. More easily viewed was a colourful 'horse-fly' that landed on Dave's arm. This was taken for identification and proved to be the 'twin-lobed deerfly' (*Chrysops relictus*), a nationally local species of wet heathland and moorland.

At the Fiveways track junction, a quick look was taken at the old water tank, but there was no sign of dragonfly exuvia. Heading southwards across the area cleared five years ago, we were impressed with the show of ling coming into flower, scenting the air and attracting assorted bees, especially honey bees (*Apis mellifera*). Other insects were attracted to the 'weeds' on the patches where earth scrapings had been deposited. One heap was rather unexpectedly covered with water-pepper (*Persicaria hydropiper*). A spectacular sawfly (*Tenthredo* sp.) was photographed by Alan Forno. At least one common lizard (*Lacerta vivipara*) was seen, and a small amount of common dodder (*Cuscuta epithimum*) was found tangled around heather stems. A recent development has been the planting of a double line of holly (*Ilex aquifolium*) along the edge of the A3, to provide a permanent shelter belt from the noise and visual intrusion of the road.



Sawfly
photographed
on Esher
Common.

A quick sortie over the A3 bridge proved interesting; not least because of the plants allowed to remain as a miniature 'green corridor' in the kerb of the bridge, which included marjoram (*Origanum vulgare*). Behind the little A3 Pond, devil's bit scabious (*Succisa pratensis*) and common fleabane (*Pulicaria dysenterica*) were in flower. A young great crested newt (*Triturus cristatus*) was spotted in the pond, and ruddy darter (*Sympetrum sanguineum*) and brown hawker (*Aeshna grandis*) dragonflies flying above.

After crossing the bridge back onto Esher Common, we looked into the second water tank; still no exuvia, but an unwanted growth of New Zealand pigmyweed (*Crassula helmsii*). A bog bush-cricket (*Metrioptera brachyptera*) was photographed by Alan. Over the heather again, and we climbed the slopes of Longy Down. On the ridge we viewed the old beech tree that has gradually fallen to pieces, its remains now piled around the clearing created by its collapse. Dave pointed out that birch seedlings were already poised to take over the clearing.

Back at the car park, members expressed their thanks to Dave for what has been a most interesting and worthwhile season of walks. He regrets that they have been unavailable to those who are working, and expects that next year's programme will also include some weekend events. All members are invited to devise and lead such events, and offers should be addressed to Dave for inclusion in the programme.

DICK ALDER

2012 MOTH NIGHTS

Owing to the weather and people's other commitments, the programme of moth-trapping sessions has been a non-starter this year. However, it is hoped that the final scheduled session, from 7.30pm on Friday 14 September on West End Common, will take place, but please check with Dave or Dick before setting out!