



## ELMBRIDGE NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

*(formerly Weybridge Natural History and Aquarist Society)*

**BULLETIN**  
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### **SPRING/SUMMER 2013 PROGRAMME**

- Wed 8 May The Ledges, West End Common: spring flowers of ancient woodland. Meet in West End Lane Car Park near Claremont Gardens at 10am.
- Sat 11 May Papercourt: bird walk, led by Chris Brading and Peter Hambrook. Meet at the car park south of Newark bridge (B367, grid ref. TQ 039574) at 10.30am.
- Sat 1 Jun Desborough Island: wildlife of unimproved meadow by the River Thames. Meet in car park at western end of Desborough Island on Walton Lane, at 10am.
- Thur 13 Jun Hurst Meadows: survey day in conjunction with Friends of Hurst Park and Frances Halstead of Surrey Wildlife Trust (SWT). Meet in car park in Graburn Way, East Molesey, 10.30am - 3pm. If you want to stay all day, bring a picnic lunch, or there is a café nearby.
- Sat 15 Jun Ockham and Wisley Common Bioblitz, hosted by SWT. From 10am, Wisley Common. Car park details not yet available: please refer to SWT website nearer the time.
- Wed 26 Jun Fairmile Common: heathland flora and fauna including silver-studded blue butterflies. Meet at Lakewood Car Park, A307 Portsmouth Road, at 10am.
- Sat 29 Jun Brooklands Community Park: acid grassland flora and fauna. Meet in car park off Sopwith Drive at 10am.
- Sat 6 Jul Black Pond and Esher Common: heathland and wetland flora and fauna. Meet in Horseshoe Clump Car Park, opposite Blackhills, A307 Portsmouth Road at 10am.
- Wed 10 Jul West End Common: ponds, dragonflies and flora. Meet in West End Lane Car Park near Claremont Gardens at 10am.
- Wed 24 Jul Oxshott Heath: dry heath invertebrates and flora. Meet in station car park, A244 Warren Lane, Oxshott at 10am.

### *Moth Trapping*

The Committee have agreed that on-site moth trapping may take place on occasional Friday nights only if good warm weather is forecast. It is intended that members will be contacted via email a day beforehand with the meeting point should they wish to attend.

Indoor meetings are held from October to April, at the Methodist Church Hall, Mayfield Road, Weybridge, at 8pm. Non-members are welcome to all meetings (£3.00 charge, refundable if you join the Society). Refreshments charge (winter meetings): 50p.

## **ENHS MEETING NOTES**

### **Alfred Russel Wallace: The Other Evolution Man, 14 November 2012**

Dr Jane McLaughlin introduced us in her talk to this intriguing character, due to be better known in 2013, the centenary of his death at the age of ninety. Wallace was a pioneer of evolution theory, many of his ideas being inspired, like Darwin's, by what he saw on his travels. Wallace was by far the greater traveller, recording and collecting species from Amazonia and the Far East over many years. He wrote several books which were much better known in his time, and are still a very good read. His account of his travels around Borneo is especially recommended by Jane.

Wallace trained as a surveyor, a trade useful to him in following years. He became friendly with H.W. Bates, a beetle expert, who proposed an insect-collecting trip up the Amazon, on which they embarked in 1848. Wallace was to spend most of the next four years surveying the Rio Negro and collecting specimens of all kinds. While there, he started to notice regional differences in wild populations. In 1852 he set off homewards, but the ship on which he was travelling caught fire and had to be abandoned, along with his specimens. He survived ten days in an open boat before being rescued.

Always short of money, he lived partly on the £200 insurance on his lost specimens, and by writing about his trip. But in 1854 he was off again, on another collecting trip, this time to what are now Malaysia and Indonesia. There, he collected an enormous number of specimens during eight years of remarkable travels. His ideas on evolution were becoming further developed, and he was led to the idea of natural selection being the basic mechanism involved. When he wrote of this to Darwin in 1858, Darwin was prompted to publish his own theories, while at the same time acknowledging Wallace's work. When Wallace returned to England he met Darwin, and there seems to have been no friction between them subsequently.

In 1866, Wallace married, and settled down to writing accounts of his travels and ideas. Probably his finest work is 'The Malay Peninsula', dedicated to Darwin. In 1872 he designed and built a revolutionary house in concrete as his family home in Barking, and this still survives. He moved to Croydon (where he joined what is now Croydon Natural History and Scientific Society), then to Dorking, to Godalming, and finally to Poole in the 1890s. His money worries were eased a little in 1881 when Darwin was instrumental in the award to him of a £200 per annum pension, for his contribution to science. He continued writing into old age, on many subjects.

Wallace was not only a man of science, but a campaigner on social issues including clean water, food adulteration, green belts, land nationalisation, social equality and suffrage. Yet he was utopian rather than revolutionary. Some of his views may have been inspired by his own struggles, but he also admired aspects of the lives of some of the tribal people whom he had encountered on his travels. In contrast, on a trip to the USA he was disgusted by the wastefulness and ugliness that he witnessed. He also dabbled in spiritualism, to the horror of some of his scientific brethren. Nevertheless, he was highly regarded in his lifetime; he receiving an honorary degree from Cambridge University, and the Order of Merit in 1908.

He died on 7 November 1913, and was buried in Broadstone Cemetery near Poole, where his grave is marked with part of the trunk of a petrified tree.

DICK ALDER

### **The Hunt for Nathusius' Pipistrelle, 9 January 2013**

Ross Baker, ENHS member and chairman of Surrey Bat Group, presented a talk on this rare UK bat species and a project being carried out by the bat group to search for its roosts in Elmbridge.

It is known that Nathusius' pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus nathusii*) undertake a seasonal migration in continental Europe, from north eastern to south western Europe each autumn, returning in the spring. There is speculation that a significant part of the UK population is also migratory, resident in the UK only over the winter. Evidence for this comes from records which seem to show peaks of activity in May and September. There are also a few records of this species breeding in the UK, but the size of population and the extent to which it is resident or migratory is unknown.

Surrey Bat Group currently holds 20 records of the species in Surrey, and it was first recorded in the county on the River Mole in Esher in 2002. Twelve records are from within the borough of Elmbridge, and five of these are from Claremont Landscape Garden in Esher. Four of these records have been in May or September with the fifth on 23 August 2008. All were recorded during bat walks, which are held there twice a year. Records of Nathusius' pipistrelle are accepted by Surrey Bat Group if they are confirmed by a bat detector recording which has been subjected to computer analysis and shows a call with a peak frequency at around 39 kilohertz. However, although this is a satisfactory way of differentiating this species from the other two widely occurring UK pipistrelle species, there is also the possibility that the bat recorded was a Kuhl's pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus kuhlii*). This is another European species which is thought, possibly as a consequence of global warming, to be undergoing range expansion at the moment.

The bat group therefore planned a project with the following aims:

- 1) To identify Nathusius' pipistrelle in the hand from Claremont Garden;
- 2) To determine whether Nathusius' pipistrelles are present at the site throughout the bats' active (spring to autumn) period;
- 3) To determine whether there are peaks in spring and autumn that would indicate the presence of passage migrants;

- 4) To determine the locations of the roosts used by bats coming to feed at the site, or at least whether the roosts are on- or off-site;
- 5) To determine whether there is a locally resident population and if so whether breeding is taking place.



*One of the Song Meter bat detectors in situ.*

Three techniques are being used to achieve these aims. Firstly, two Song Meter SM2BAT+ static bat detectors have been deployed around the gardens in order to try to quantify seasonal activity levels. During each deployment, typically for a week each month, one of these detectors is mounted in a fixed location, while the other is positioned at different locations. The fixed detector provides data on seasonal variations in activity, and also provides baseline data to compare with those from the other detector, so that the parts of the site with the greatest activity can be identified.

These records helped in focusing efforts for the next part of the survey, which involved bat group surveyors being positioned at various points throughout the site after dusk, with synchronised watches, and hand-held bat detectors tuned to 39 kHz. The surveyors carefully noted the time and, if possible, the direction of travel of the first *Nathusius' pipistrelle* they encountered. From this it was hoped to be able to determine if the bats seen were resident within the site or had commuted to it from one or more external roost sites. It was also hoped that flightlines through the site could be identified, and even that bats could be tracked back to a roost.

The final part of the survey involved catching bats with a harp trap and ultrasonic lure. If successful, this would confirm the presence of the species on site, and would enable their age and reproductive status to be determined. The presence of juvenile or lactating females in the June to August period, or of pregnant females in May/June, would be regarded as proof that a breeding population is present in the locality.



*One of the Nathusius' pipistrelles caught in Claremont Garden.*

Although things did not go entirely to plan during 2012, as a result of the poor weather and delays in acquiring equipment and the necessary project licence to trap at the site, some progress has been made. The static detectors worked very well, and although it is not possible to draw any firm conclusions yet, the fixed detector has recorded Nathusius' activity on almost every night of its deployment, while the 'roving' detector has provided a very clear indication of which parts of the site are heavily used by the species and which are not. Plans were refined as the project progressed, and now the fixed detector is running every night.

The manual detector surveys have helped to validate the results from the roving static detector and have enabled efforts to be focused more tightly on the area pinpointed by this part of the survey. It was originally thought that bats were commuting onto the site from the neighbouring school in Claremont House, but this does not seem to be the case; instead it appears they are entering through the north western corner of the site.

Harp trapping began much later than originally planned and during the first two sessions no Nathusius' were caught, although other bats, mainly soprano pipistrelles (*Pipistrellus pygmaeus*), were. However, at a final harp trapping session on 22 September 2012, two Nathusius' pipistrelles were caught, a male and a female. This confirmed the presence of the species at the site. However, this late in the season these could be migratory bats: further trapping will therefore take place in summer 2013 to try to establish whether a breeding population exists here.

For more information on Nathusius' pipistrelle in the UK, go to the following website: <http://www.nathusius.org.uk/>

ROSS BAKER

## MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, 10 APRIL 2013

The venue was the Methodist Hall, Mayfield Road, Weybridge. Ross Baker took the chair and opened the meeting at 8.10pm with an attendance of 11 members.

### 1. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Lynn Wilson, David Page, Janet Ripley, Mariko Parslow and Kath Brading.

### 2. Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of 11 April 2012

The minutes were agreed and passed as a true record. Proposed by Chris Brading and seconded by Lynn Whitfield.

### 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. The full document was circulated with the other documentation prior to the AGM. A minor change was made to the end of the first paragraph (only one honorary member plus one free Bulletin).

*The Society has had another busy year with a wide-ranging programme of events. The membership has again dropped slightly with three members not renewing and one new member and now stands at 30 (8 doubles and 14 singles) plus one honorary membership and one free copy of the Bulletin sent by email.*

*Income was substantially down this year, mainly due to a much reduced profit on the 'Bring and buy' table. Subscriptions were also down because, although we gained a single membership during the year, we lost three other single memberships. We now have only 22 paid memberships (14 single memberships and eight double). Due to the double memberships, we actually have 30 society members. We only had one visitor this year compared with 10 last year. Fortunately, expenditure was also down during this year as Dick managed to book all our speakers at no cost to the Society. No claims were received for any postage costs and the only real refreshment cost was the Christmas social meeting. The insurance cost and the hall hire remained the same but since the end of our financial year the hall hire cost has increased significantly. Unfortunately these significantly increased hire charges will continue now so discussions took place before the AGM to consider the options.*

*The Committee has stabilised following last year's AGM appointments but members are under some pressure from their outside commitments. Only one formal meeting took place but business was conducted during the indoor meetings and by email. The positions of Minute Secretary and a Society Secretary still need filling to bring us back to full strength.*

*Dave Page organised an extensive programme of mid-week 'Study Walks' and these*

*were well attended. The amount of effort put in by Dave was much appreciated. There were five talks during the winter, two of them by members, and there were also two Member's Evenings. Attendance at the talks has dropped considerably this year but there is still much animated conversation during the breaks.*

*Lynn Whitfield, as always, has done excellent work producing our quarterly Bulletins but does need more articles from members, while Dick Alder has arranged some fascinating speakers.*

*As agreed at the last AGM, Ray Wilson and Peter Hambrook have rebuilt the web site of the ENHS on a new free host site by Weebly and this went live early in November and has been well received. Some archive data is still held on the old site thanks to Colin Poyton and can be accessed via a link. Sadly the bring-and-buy table is missing the energy of Mariko Parslow but is still available at the meetings. Dick Alder has taken on the provisioning of the refreshments, with help from others during the meetings.*

*The Committee would like to thank all of them, the contributors and other helpers for their loyal support throughout the year.*

## **5. Treasurer's Report**

This was read by Ross Baker in Janet Ripley's absence. The only changes to the previously circulated report were an increase of £7.20 in the cost of hall hire to £151.20 bringing the total expenditure to £243.40 and Chris Brading advised that he had an outstanding amount of postal expenses of approximately £20 which will be carried forward to the accounts for the year 2013/14. Acceptance of the audited accounts was proposed by Dick Alder, seconded by Ray Wilson and agreed unanimously by the floor.

Some additional items were discussed:

Chris advised that five members (one Honorary) receive printed Bulletins. Two other printed copies are sent, one to the British Library and the other an exchange copy to the West Surrey Natural History Society in Ripley. The British Library copy is part of the agreement under which our publications are registered for ISSN/ISBN status, so must continue. It was suggested however that the exchange copy with WSNHS could be sent by email as they also now offer their members email newsletters. Peter will talk to the WSNHS to get their agreement for this.

## **6. Election of Officers and Committee**

All the current Committee agreed to stand for another year and were voted in en masse. Acceptance was proposed by Chris Brading, seconded by Lorna Sandford and agreed unanimously by the floor.

There are still two Committee places unfilled, those of Secretary and Minute Secretary. The latter is covered by Peter Hambrook on a temporary basis. The Committee would welcome any offers to take on one or both of these roles.

## **7. Election of Honorary Scrutineer**

Brian Spooner agreed to take on this role for a further year. Acceptance was proposed by Lynn Whitfield, seconded by Keith Sandford and agreed unanimously by the floor.

## **8. Agreement on how to proceed with increased hire charges for hall.**

The society was informed in February, with very little notice, that the cost of hiring the hall for three hours for our indoor meetings would rise from the then current £18.90 to a new level of £41 for the same length of hire time (three hours), effective from 1 March 2013. It was felt, after checking other possible venues, that although the rise was severe the new level does reflect what other venues charge, so there was nothing to be gained in moving elsewhere. Clearly a rise of such magnitude cannot be absorbed without some cost to members and the necessary introduction of other changes. The following was proposed:

- a. That the September meeting be an outdoor meeting rather than an indoor one. This will save £30 (see below) per season.
- b. That the period of hall hire be reduced from three to two hours. Set up from 8pm, speaker to begin at 8.15pm. Hall to be vacated by 10pm. It was suggested that it may be sensible for the speakers to continue without a break until no later than 9.30pm, after which refreshments will be served. This will save £11 per meeting - £77 per season.
- c. That the minimum cost of membership be increased to £10 single and £15 double with any additional payment being welcomed as a donation to society funds and recorded on both membership receipt and membership records. On current membership numbers this will bring in a minimum of an additional £52 per year.

Although the above changes will not totally cancel out the rise in hall hire costs it is felt that they will reduce the drain on our reserves and give us a window in which to try and increase membership numbers. The above three proposals were carried unanimously.

## **9. New logo for the society**

This was raised by Peter Hambrook. The current logo was produced many years ago and is now looking dated, which is not a help when trying to get new members. Following a brief discussion it was agreed that the membership would be encouraged to submit new designs with a deadline of the October 2013 indoor meeting. Designs should be simple and easy to reproduce. Those received will be presented to the membership and a winner chosen by ballot.

## **10. Any other business**

- a. Raising the profile of the Society

In order to attract new members, it was felt that we needed to raise the profile of the society. One way to do this was considered to be to take part in consultations regarding developments proposed in Elmbridge. An opportunity has presented itself in the form of a proposed development in Molesey involving the site of the Molesey



Sewage Works and the committee will investigate the potential impact of this and prepare a response if considered appropriate. There are also some changes proposed for Desborough Island to designate it as a Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG). This was thought to largely only make official what is already in place so probably not worth our comment.

Peter advised that on checking the stats for visits to the web site he found that there was a minimum of one hit per day since early March (one occasion) while the maximum was 16 hits. Most of these may have just been people taking a quick look and moving on but he felt that we should consider how we may be able to grab their attention and get them to explore further.

The meeting closed at 9.17pm.