



GEOFF CORNEY (1932-2017)

We are very sorry to tell you that Geoff Corney died on February 18th.

Geoff was a keen, popular and active member of the Harrow Natural History Society. He was the first secretary of the society in the 1970s and he served as chairman in the 1980s. Finally he became our president and served in this capacity until he retired at the last AGM, owing to ill-health.

Geoff's main interests were botany and fungi. He and his four brothers roamed the Northamptonshire countryside when they were boys, and Geoff built up a very good knowledge of wild flowers. He later learnt about fungi through evening classes at Harrow College. He also attended weekend courses at the Juniper Hall Field Studies Centre and he became very knowledgeable. He was a mine of information on our fungus forays.

Geoff was also very active in advertising the society's events at the Harrow Museum and both he and his wife Dorothy have supported the Society in numerous other ways over the years.

He will be greatly missed. Our thoughts are with Dorothy at this sad time.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT - THE 2016 FIELD TRIP

First I wish you all a happy year with lots of wildlife spotting!

I have been asked to write about last year's field trip. We stayed at the Three Swans Hotel in Hungerford. On the way down we visited Englefield House Garden and then we travelled on to the hotel after lunch. In the late afternoon we walked down to Hungerford Marsh local reserve to admire the wetland plants. These included Lady's Smock, which Orange Tip and Green-veined White butterflies love, but it was too late to see any insects or birds.

Next day we went to see the Crofton Pumping Station, which has been preserved as a museum. Before going on a conducted tour of the building, some members took the long flight of steps down to the canal. Others stayed by the cafe, admiring the wonderful view, enjoying the sun and watching the house martins collecting mud for their nests.

The following day was dull and showery. We went to the Nature Discovery Centre in Thatcham because it had a cafe and shop overlooking a lake. There were many water birds. Some very tame ducks invaded the patio and even came inside. Some of our members walked around the lake. Others did a longer walk to some reed beds.

The next day was misty and wet so we abandoned our trip to Inkpen Hill. Instead we took a very enjoyable 2-hour trip on a covered canal boat, complete with facilities for drinks and snacks. Whilst we were passing through one of the locks, Brian defied the weather to take a walk along the tow path and photograph the boat from a bridge.

The weather was not getting better so we decided to go home the next day. We went via Snelsmore Country Park. This had a varied landscape including heathland and woodland. There were some spectacular views but it was very muddy.

Evelyn Crispe

2017 FIELD TRIP

This year's field trip will run from Monday 22nd May to Thursday 25th May. We will be staying for 3 nights at the Premier Inn, Norman Cross near Peterborough, Cambridgeshire. Further details are available from Evelyn Crispe or Brian Hunter.

REPORTS ON OUTSIDE EVENTS

SUNDAY 1ST OCTOBER 2016 - ORCHARD DAY IN PEAR WOOD.

Our second Orchard Day was very successful and much enjoyed by the 20 people who came. Someone commented on the party atmosphere as we sat on the chairs provided and enjoyed the refreshments. There was a choice of drinks, including apple juice, cider and sparkling apple or elderflower pressé, and an assortment of cakes and biscuits, many of them apple-based.

Claire gave a short talk. She explained what traditional orchards are and why they are important. They are classified as UK BAP Priority Habitats because of the large number of animal and plant species they support, many not found in other habitats. And of course they contain many old varieties of apple tree that are in danger of being lost. We have been conserving the existing trees. Now we are getting ready to plant 14 new trees, thanks to funding from the Green Grid. Claire also mentioned that there are so many different varieties of apple that you could eat an apple pie every day for 16 years and never eat the same variety twice! The one in the picture is *Mère de Ménage*, a large dark red cooking apple.



After the talk Claire handed out maps of the orchard and lists of the varieties and invited people to walk round and help themselves to apples. This proved very popular. As well as picking apples we observed the insects visiting the ivy flowers. These included hornets, wasps (see left), honeybees, bumble bees and hoverflies. We also spotted a Painted Lady butterfly (a bit tatty) and a couple of Red Admirals.

Thank you to Claire for organising the event and to Peter Elton for his work in preparing the orchard for visitors.

Rosie Etheridge

SATURDAY 8TH OCTOBER 2016 - FUNGUS WALK IN PEAR WOOD

Margaret and John, Marian, Claire and Rosie met up for our annual fungus walk in Pear Wood. The weather had been unseasonably dry and there were not many fungi about. We only found 18 species that could be identified (see right) plus a couple of red Russulas and some nondescript Mycenas.

Beech Barkspot	<i>Diatrype disciformis</i>
Birch Polypore	<i>Peptoporus betulinum</i>
Black-foot Polypore	<i>Polyporus leptcephalus</i>
Blushing bracket	<i>Daedaleopsis confragosa</i>
Bonnet Bell Cap	<i>Mycena galericulata</i>
Bracket	<i>Ganoderma adpersum</i>
Butter Cap	<i>Collybia butyracea</i>
Common Earth Ball	<i>Scleroderma aurantium</i>
Coral fungus	<i>Clavulina coralloides</i>
Glistening Inkcap	<i>Coprinus micaceus</i>
Hen of the Woods	<i>Grifola frondosa</i>
Lumpy Bracket	<i>Trametes gibbosa</i>
Stump Puffball	<i>Lycoperdon pyriforme</i>
Sulphur Tuft	<i>Hypholoma fasciculare</i>
Tooth fungus	<i>Steccherinum sp.</i>
Turkey Tail	<i>Coriolus versicolor</i>
Willow Shield	<i>Pluteus salicinus</i>



Coral fungus



Black-foot Polypore

Despite the paucity of fungi we had a pleasant walk. We spotted some hornets by the old cottages and we found a tiny grass snake under a sheet of roofing felt on the dyke.

Rosie Etheridge

THURSDAY 11TH NOVEMBER 2016 - BRENT RESERVOIR

Eleven members met in the car park at the west end of the reservoir and then travelled via Cool Oak Lane to the opposite end where a bird hide is situated. This was because two very experienced birdwatchers, Bob Husband and Roy Beddard, had kindly offered to open the hide and let us look through their very good telescopes.



An enjoyable hour was spent in the comfort of the hide observing a wide variety of waterfowl and other birds including the rarer Snipe, Green Sandpiper and Water Rail. Other birds seen were : Pied Wagtail, Coot (see left), Moorhen, Heron, Great Crested Grebe, Little Grebe, Canada Goose, Cormorant, Mute Swan, Mallard, Pochard, Teal, Shoveler, Gadwall, Tufted Duck and Common, Herring, Black-headed and Lesser Black-backed Gulls.

On the walk to and from the hide the following birds were also seen: Muscovy Duck, Blue Tit, Great Tit, Wren, Robin, Blackbird, Crow, Magpie, Woodpigeon, Feral Pigeon and Rose-ringed Parakeet. This gives a total of Thirty-three species seen on this visit. Fortunately, the weather was quite good apart from a heavy shower when we met in the car park.

Brian Hunter

WEDNESDAY 28TH DECEMBER 2016 - POST-CHRISTMAS WALK AT OLD REDDING

Twelve of us met at the View Point car park at Old Redding. It was a lovely, bright day – a good day to be out in the woods. We all completed the first loop of the Nature Trail through Harrow Weald Common, round Gilbert's Lake then looking over to the Hotel grounds and back.

The downy birch, oak and beech were all noted as were the trails of honeysuckle hanging from the trees. Rosemary showed us a Common Feather moss with its distinctive beaked capsules (see right).



At Gilbert's lake we noticed variegated bamboo; perhaps put there by W. S. Back along the path it was obvious which side was Grimsdyke Open Space and Harrow Weald Common as the vegetation was so different on either side of the path. Luckily the Rhododendron had kept to one side. Not many birds were about. One Dunnock was seen in the car park and we heard a Nuthatch and a Blue Tit in the woods.

After a good dose of fresh air and nature most of the party retired for a well-earned lunch and chat.

John Hollingdale

THURSDAY 26TH JANUARY 2017 - STOCKERS LAKE BIRD WALK

This particular day was one of the coldest of the year when the temperature did not rise above zero all day. Despite this, six hardy souls arrived for this walk. Due to the cold weather large parts of the lakes were frozen over so the waterfowl were concentrated into the remaining clear stretches of water.



We first went to the near corner of Bury Lake which was not frozen and there we saw the usual waterfowl species, namely Mute Swan (see left), Canada Goose, Coot, Moorhen, Mallard and Tufted Duck together with Black-headed and Lesser Black-backed Gulls. We also saw a large white feral goose which was not a Snow Goose as it had no black wing tips !

We walked down to Stockers Lock and had good views of several Redwings on the way as well as seeing Robin, Magpie, Crow, Woodpigeon, Blackbird and a Jay. At Stockers Lock there were many small birds round the feeders including House Sparrow, Blue Tit, Great Tit, Dunnock and a small flock of the lovely Long-tailed Tit. Finally, we went to the nearest hide along Stockers Lake and here we were lucky enough to see both male and

female Goldeneye as well as Shoveler, Pochard, Cormorant, Heron, Great Crested Grebe and many very attractive Wigeon giving their excited whistles.

Other birds seen today were Parakeet, Jackdaw, Wren, Chaffinch and Pied Wagtail making a total of 33 species. It was disappointing that no Birds of Prey were observed. At the end of the walk we all went into the handy café to warm up !

Brian Hunter

FRIDAY 17TH FEBRUARY 2017 - LEMS福德 SPRINGS NATURE RESERVE

Three weeks before, on our visit to Stockers Lake (see above), the temperature remained below zero all day. Fortunately, on this visit it was mild and signs of spring were around with Snowdrops and Hazel catkins present. The main feature of this reserve is the old Watercress bed and from the hide overlooking this we had good views of, in particular, two (usually shy) Water Rails, a Snipe and a Green Sandpiper (with much tail bobbing). There were also Teal, Moorhen and Grey Wagtail present.



On a walk by the stream we saw Pied Wagtail, Mallard, Mistle Thrush, Green Woodpecker and a Buzzard gliding on out-stretched wings. Other birds observed at the reserve were: Robin, Blackbird, Blue Tit, Great Tit, Woodpigeon, Crow, Magpie, Jackdaw, Song Thrush, Wren and Parakeet. So the ten members who made their way to this rather hidden resort had a very worthwhile afternoon.

Brian Hunter

HAVE YOU VISITED OUR WEBSITE?

You can find details of our current programme, and reports on our evening meetings, at the society's website:

<http://www.harrownaturalhistory.org.uk/>

Our sister organisation, the Harrow Nature Conservation Forum, also has a website where you can read about Harrow's nature reserves and find details of additional natural history events that are open to everyone.

<http://www.harrownfc.org/index.html>

AND FINALLY, HOME THOUGHTS FROM ABROAD

To end our newsletter, Marian Sartin has chosen this well-loved poem by Robert Browning (1812-1889). It reminds us how lucky we are to live in a land with such beautiful scenery and varied wildlife. Ed.

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OH, to be in England now that April's there
And whoever wakes in England sees, some morning, unaware,
That the lowest boughs and the brushwood sheaf
Round the elm-tree bole are in tiny leaf,
While the chaffinch sings on the orchard bough
In England-now!

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And after April, when May follows
And the white-throat builds, and all the swallows!
Hark, where my blossom'd pear-tree in the hedge
Leans to the field and scatters on the clover
Blossoms and dewdrops-at the bent spray's edge-
That's the wise thrush: he sings each song twice over
Lest you should think he never could re-capture
The first fine careless rapture!

And, though the fields look rough with hoary dew,
All will be gay when noontide wakes anew
The buttercups, the little children's dower,
Far brighter than this gaudy melon-flower!



White Clover



Bubous Buttercup

