



President: Geof Corney Editor: Joanne Colthup Newsletter No 73 Spring 2015

Chairman's Report

I hope you are looking forward to lighter evenings and warmer weather as I am. I have the seeds I ordered ready to be sown. I am managing a few short holidays and hope to be able to fit in some outings with the group.

I am writing this newsletter in my conservatory on a lovely sunny morning, and whilst I am aware that the temperature on my patio is nothing near the lovely one I am enjoying, I am watching bumble bees and flies nectaring on the winter flowering clematis, and many different birds on the feeders. My "tame"? foxes come every night hoping for some breakfast and seem to get on fine with my feline visitor who is eating his supper on my front step while they scavenge on the drive. As for my felines? Well they, like we are, still hibernating indoors most of the time.

Best wishes to you all, and I wish you a very happy and successful summer of wildlife watching.

Evelyn Crispe

Visit to Roe Green Walled Garden on Saturday 20th September 2014

At least twelve of us found our way to the Roe Green Walled Garden for 10.30. Long term member of the Barn Hill Conservation Group, Kim Williams gave us an interesting overview and was on hand to answer any questions too.

The garden was originally part of the estate of the house now called Kingsbury Manor. The house was built in 1899 for the Duchess of Sutherland and her third husband Sir Albert Kaye Rollit, who was M.P. for Islington from 1886 to 1906. It was then a country house, surrounded by farmland, and was called 'The Cottage'. The garden is now looked after by volunteers from the Barn Hill Conservation Group.

Members enjoyed looking round the Garden which is organic and wildlife friendly.

A new pond has been dug to encourage wildlife – frogs, toads and newts – while the old round pond was left for the fish. Homes from recycled wood, for a variety of creatures, can be seen in one corner, and birds are encouraged in nest boxes and feeders. While we were there we saw:

Carrion Crow Magpie Wood Pigeon Robin Starling Black- Headed Gull Great Spotted Woodpecker Chiffchaff (flying around in one of the netted vegetable cages from which it was released)

Birds heard were: Long -Tailed Tit Blue tit

Mammals: Numerous Grey Squirrel Slugs: *Arion rufus* Butterflies: Speckled Wood Snail: *Cepaea* (Sp)
The two plants we particularly noticed were Black Horehound *Ballota nigra*, the Purple/Mauve flower. The small white flower in the vegetable garden was Gallant or Shaggy Soldier *Galinsoga Sp.*

After looking round the garden and talking to some of the volunteers a hot drink was very welcome. The garden has limited opening hours but is well worth a visit.

Margaret Huitson.

Saturday 18th October 2014. Fungus Walk in Pear Wood. Leaders: Claire Abbot and Rosemary Etheridge

Eight of us assembled for this annual event: Margaret and John, Marian and Norman, Peter, Joanne and Claire and myself. Rain had been forecast and we knew it was a bad year for fungi, so our expectations were low. We were pleasantly surprised. The rain kept off and we found nearly 30 different species, not as good as last year but not bad either.

We admired a large Beefsteak fungus on an oak tree on the other side of Wood Lane. For the non vegetarians it almost looked good enough to eat. We found an almost perfect ring of Trooping Funnels by the Fisherman's Track. We spotted a fine Fly Agaric – the most iconic and easily recognizable toadstool of them all. Many of the other finds were brackets and other bark fungi, plus of course the ubiquitous Bonnet Caps (*Mycenas*).

Towards the end of the walk I spotted something that I thought looked rather interesting. No one else gave it a second glance but I took a specimen home. It had strange little projections at the base of the stem and I have identified as Rootlet Brittlestem (*Psathyella microrrhiza*) a new record for Pear Wood.

A full list is given below.

A Barkspot Fungus	<i>Nectria peziza</i>	Cramp Ball	<i>Daldinia concentrica</i>
Angel's Bonnet	<i>Mycena arcangeliana</i>	Ear Fungus	<i>Auricularia auricularia</i>
Artist's Fungus	<i>Ganoderma adspersum</i>	Fly Agaric	<i>Amanita muscaria</i>
Beech Barkspot	<i>Diatrype disciformis</i>	Hen Of The Woods	<i>Grifola frondosa</i>
Beefsteak Fungus	<i>Fistulina hepatica</i>	Lilac Bell Cap	<i>Mycena pura</i>
Birch Polypore	<i>Polyporus betulinum</i>	Turkey Tail	<i>Coriolus versicolor</i>
Black Witches Butter	<i>Exidia nigricans</i>	Oyster Mushroom	<i>Pleurotus ostreatus</i>
Bleeding Oak Crust	<i>Stereun gauspatum</i>	Rootlet Brittle Stem	<i>Psathyella microrrhiza</i>
Blushing Bracket	<i>Daedaleopsis confragosa</i>	Soft Slipper Toadstool	<i>Crepidotus variabilis</i>
Bonnet Bell Cap	<i>Mycena galericulata</i>	Sulphur Tuft	<i>Hypholoma fasciculare</i>
Butter Cap	<i>Collybia butyracea</i>	Trooping Funnel	<i>Clitocybe geotropa</i>
Candle Snuff	<i>Xylaria hypoxylon</i>	White Rot Fungus	<i>Trametes pubescens</i>
Clean Air Fungus	<i>Rhystisma acerinum</i>	Witches Butter	<i>Tremella mesenterica</i>
Common Earth ball	<i>Scleroderma aurantium</i>	Wood Wart	<i>Hypoxylon fuscum</i>
Common Puff Ball	<i>Lycoperdon perlatum</i>		

Walk in Oxhey Woods on 23rd October 2014 Leader Elizabeth Stainthorpe

A group of 14 members met in the car park in Oxhey Woods for a short (in distance) walk. The weather was kind, it was dry and fairly warm as we set off along the “Sculpture Trail” which goes through the woods. There are 10 sculptures spaced at intervals along the trail. They have been made from wood and include a frog, a stag beetle, a snail, several owls and a very fine insect house. The trail has been laid down by Three Rivers District Council and the Forestry Commission who had been given a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund to enable them to “reinvigorate” the wood by improving the paths and access and to mark out the new trails.

Due to the date at the end of October there were not many flowers but many of the leaves on the trees were turning so there were some nice colours and we only saw five species of birds. The main attraction were the fungi and we saw over 20 species including fly agarics, russulas, puffballs, earthballs, sulphur tufts and a good number of turkey tail brackets. There was a large whitish fungus growing quite high on the trunk of an oak tree which we were puzzled about but a few days later when I returned to look at it again it was very small and

shrivelled up. We decided it was probably an oyster fungus a species which grows on tree trunks. Thank you Rosemary for your help in it's identification.

The trail is well marked and easy to follow. The distance is just over half a mile but it took us nearly 2 hours to complete. It is well used particularly by dog walkers and locals. A lot of work has been done to clear the scrub and rhododendrons and the car park is free.

UNUSUAL FUNGUS

Some people who visit Pinner New Cemetery often told me in the middle of November that there were a lot of large fungi in the grass near the top of the cemetery. When I found them I realised they were a type of mushroom (*Agaricus*) but could not tell which species so I sent a couple to an expert who identified them as *Agaricus bresadolanus* . This species is not common but the mycellium must have been in the soil and the conditions last autumn were right for them to appear – about 100 caps were counted on one visit.

The main fascination of fungi to me is that some species can be dormant for many years and then when conditions are right they will produce their fruit bodies often in large numbers. I have lived in this area for 15 years and have not seen them before.

Elizabeth Stainthorpe

Tree Walk Identification Walk at Harrow Arts Centre on November 1st 2014: Leader Margaret Huitson

After some early rain the skies cleared and thirteen of us met to look at some of our local trees.

A tree behind the cafe was brightly coloured with yellow and green hues. This tree turned out to be a good sized specimen of a Gingko, *Ginkgo biloba* with its very distinctive 2 lobed leaves littering the ground. This, the only survivor of a group of trees that flourished some 200 million years ago, is always a pleasure to see. Beside it was an Elder *Sambucus nigra* usually a small deciduous tree or shrub. It was interesting as the main stem had bent over and it was growing with many vertical stems.

We then moved on past the Hart's tongue fern *Asplenium scolopendrium*, growing on the wall to look at the trees either side of the path in front of the Dance Studio. We had a list of trees produced by the Council which turned out not to be completely reliable. Most of the trees in this area originate from the Eastern USA and the first was no exception. It resembled our native hawthorn but was in fact the Cockspur thorn *Crataegus crus-galli* which produced haws which are valuable for birds. After that on either side of the path were trees that our list indicated were Silver Maples, however when members of the party looked at their books the leaves were not right. When we found the fruit which are spherical and spiny the trees were identified as Sweet Gum *Liquidamber styraciflua* which is not a Maple at all. Apparently this is quite commonly planted as a street tree because of its autumn colour. The next tree had a trunk that looked like a beech but from the shape of its leaves it was clearly not our native beech it was Fern-leaved beech the cultivar. "Heterophylla", there was also a Copper beech nearby. We looked at the large old pear tree which has the distinctive shape that these trees have. In some years there are large amounts of pears on the ground greatly appreciated by butterflies such as the Red Admiral. The day was warm enough for us to see one perfectly fresh looking Red Admiral but we were too late to see any pears. We stopped to look at another tree from the USA the Tulip tree *Liriodendron tulipifera* again with very distinctive leaves and the remains of the tulip-shaped flowers on the tree.

Aline Bowers from Harrow Bee Keepers had come along to show us the Harrow Bee Keepers' site. We passed more trees on the way including a Purple-leaf plum (*Prunus cerasifera*) "Pissardi" the tree with purple leaves which gives us the early blossom in Spring. Aline told us a bit about the bees and for some it was a welcome chance to sit down. The area is very well kept with fruit bushes and other plants to provide pollen and nectar and Aline was thanked for showing it to us.

At the end we had only covered part of the site. It is amazing what you can see without going too far.

Margaret Huitson

Vist to St Albans on 21st November 2014. Leader: Margaret Huitson

A select group of us gathered in the car park near Grebe House, home of the Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust. The weather had dropped 3 degrees overnight and it was drizzling, however we decided to carry on starting with a look round the wildlife garden at Grebe House. It was not the best time of year (and weather) for it but we managed, between us to identify a number of wild plants and admired the chalk bank that had been made there. The Winter Jasmine looked cheery and the *Calendula officinalis* was hanging on.

We then walked around the lake gathering quite a lot of birds along the way. Several pairs of Shovelers were on the water together with all the expected species. We saw the untidy looking Heron nest on the island and eventually managed to see a Heron which looked like it was sheltering from the weather. The Mallards were all staying in the water presumably the warmest place for them and we were told that ducks legs have adapted so that they can swim in cold water.

By this time we however needed to warm up in the cafe which was very welcome. On the way there we were treated to the spectacle of a low flying Red Kite and the rain had stopped too.

Margaret Huitson

Christmas Ramble at Stanmore Common Saturday 27th December 2014: Leaders: John Hollingdale & Margaret Huitson.

Our Christmas walk was well attended by 14 members meeting at the Stanmore Common car park in Warren Lane. We had dry weather, not too cold but muddy under foot so we didn't venture far into the wooded areas. It was interesting to try to identify trees without leaves, only shape and bark to guide us. The most dominant tree was the Hornbeam (*Carpinus betulus*), common on clay soil. It is an exceptionally hard wood and was used as fire wood but also for tool handles, wooden screws and pegs. We saw many Oak (*Quercus robur*), Silver Birch (*Betula alba*) and Aspen (*Populus tremula*). Aspen wood was used to make matches. We started by skirting the cricket pitch and eventually arrived at Brewers' Ponds. At first it seemed disappointing with only the odd Coot, Moorhen and Mallard so most moved on, but the remaining few were rewarded with a Grey Wagtail which lingered in an excellent position to be photographed by Marian. However the forward group which were in the majority saw a flock of at least twenty Redwing circling above oak trees.

Other birds seen and heard were Robin, Blackbird, Blue tit, Great tit, and Wood pigeon. Occasional trees recognised were Hazel. (*Corylus avellana*) catkins appearing, Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*) and Goat Willow (*Salix caprea*).

We finished the pleasant morning with lunch at Shoots, the garden centre in Common Road enjoyng good food and fellowship.

Joanne Colthup

Visit to Rickmansworth Aquadrome on 23rd January 2015 Leader Brian Hunter.

Just six members arrived for what was a very productive birdwatching walk round the Aquadrome area of Rickmansworth with 43 species being noted. The weather was bright but cold and the lakes half covered with ice. We looked at Bury Lake and the eastern end of Stockers Lake and found good numbers of the usual duck

species namely:-

Mallard, tufted duck, shoveler, gadwall, pochard and wigeon.

We were lucky to see on Stocker's Lake two rarer duck species: 4 goldeneye (with the males in their smart black and white plumage) and 6 red-crested pochard (with the males showing their elaborate orange heads).

The only geese we saw were Canada ones, but the many mute swans had been joined by an elegant black swan which is not included in most bird books as it is regarded as a foreign intruder and an escapee from a wild fowl collection.

Other birds in or around the water were coots, moorhens, herons, cormorants and great crested grebes. As well as the many black-headed gulls present there were also several herring gulls and a lesser black-backed gull.

In the bushes by the lake we got close views of a wren and a goldcrest as well as seeing siskins and goldfinches in the trees. In the field next to Bury Lake there were good views of a redwing, mistle thrushes, song thrush and a blackbird. A group of fieldfares also flew overhead.

We walked to the canal bridge at Stockers Lock and saw many house sparrows near the feeders as well as chaffinches, a dunnock and blue, great and long-tailed tits. The only raptor we saw was a red kite high above us.

Other species seen were crow, magpie, jackdaw, woodpigeon, starling and robin. We also heard both green and great spotted woodpeckers.

At the end of the walk we went into the pleasant Aquadrome cafe to warm up and discovered there was a very tasty new type of crisp made from lentils instead of potatoes.

Brian Hunter

Saturday 14th February 2015. Tring, Starpop's End Reservoir. Leader: Brian Hunter.

As we drove from Harrow the sun was out and even though showers were forecast the weather looked promising. However by the meeting time at Startops End the sky turned grey and damp but during the meeting it didn't actually rain.

Attendance was good, twelve of us and we set off for a short stretch along the Grand Union Canal until joining the reservoir. Just leaving the car park we saw about 20 redwing fluttering high in the trees. The short stretch of canal was very productive with pied wagtail, blackbird, chaffinch, dunnock, goldfinch, cormorant, and greenfinch.

We joined Startops Reservoir and then Marsworth. The birds seen are in order of observation.

Tufted duck, a single immature crested grebe, mature crested grebe, mute swan, pochard, coot, shoveller, moorhen, goldcrest, a single lesser black-backed gull, black-headed gull, blue tits, teal, a flock of lapwing flying high, crow, wren, widgeon, and starling.

After lunch at the nearby Bluebell Cafe and just on moving to the car park we had an excellent view of a solitary grey wagtail on the opposite side of the canal by the lock.

We ended the day visiting a garden open for charity, Old Church Cottage in Long Marston where, after mulled

wine and warm home-made muffins we explored. The garden specialized in snowdrops with many varieties that most of us had not realized existed. There were also a wide assortment of cyclamen and other early spring flowers. It was a very pleasant day.

Joanne Colthup

Saturday March 21st Denham Country Park. Leader: Joanne Colthup

Due to sickness of several members we were only five on our meeting to Denham Country Park. It was a chilly, grey but dry day.

We followed the map to walk the circular path by following the River Misbourne which is a clear chalk river rising out beyond the Chalfonts in the Chilterns. By Denham it was deep and wide and eventually seemed to run into the Colne. We walked along side the Colne, which was very wide in places until we reached the Grand Union Canal. A short distance along the tow path we reached the lock keepers house at Denham Lock which has been turned into a cafe, we stopped for coffee and home made cake and were entertained by two coot chasing each other apparently quarrelling over territory. After a short walk along the tow path we turned back onto the circular walk and returned to the car park via the Colne with glimpses of the River Fray. We ended the morning with lunch in the cafe.

We heard more birds, rather than seeing them, and Brian felt that if it had been sunny we would have seen more.

Robin	Chaffinch	Redwing	Jackdaw	Long tailed tit	Goldfinch	Magpie	Wren	Blackbird
Crow	Song thrush	Greenfinch	Nuthatch	Great tit	Parakeet	Wood pigeon	Tufted duck	
Coot	Moorhen	Cormorant	Heron	Tufted Duck	Mallard.			

The flowers we saw in bloom were very common, many over wintering.

Dog's Mercury	<i>Mercurialis perennis</i>	Lesser Celandine	<i>Ficaria verna</i>	Chickweed	<i>Stellaria media</i>
Hairy Bittercress	<i>Cardamine hirsuta</i>	Shepherd's Purse	<i>Capsella bursa-pastoris</i>		
Red Dead Nettle	<i>Lamium purpureum</i>	White Dead Nettle	<i>Lamium album</i>	Grousel	<i>Senecio vulgaris</i>
Blackthorn	<i>Prunus spinosa</i>	Cherry Plum	<i>Prunus cerasifolia</i>	Hazel	<i>Corylus avellana</i>
Field Forgetmenot	<i>Myosotis arvensis</i>	Alder	<i>Alnus glutinosa</i>		
Cherry Laurel	<i>Prunus laurocerasus</i>	Goat Willow	<i>Salix caprea</i>		
Polypody	<i>Polypodium vulgare</i>	Hartstongue	<i>Asplenium scolopendrium</i>		

We welcome Peter Elton to our society and hope that he will enjoy many of our meetings.

Joanne Colthup

