



LOCAL NATURE RESERVE

NEWSletter

Issue No 176

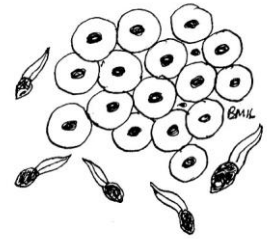
April 2019

Another season finished...

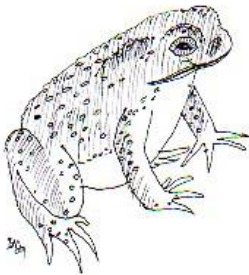
So, Mother's Day came and went and I hope everyone had a lovely time, likewise, the 7th April came and went and it seems almost everyone had something else to do. I should have suggested a week earlier rather than later. My fault .

Anyway, the aim of the day was to make two beetle pyramids so I went to the Orchard Meadow and dug two holes ready for the construction. Nobody enjoys digging and it was a job I could manage on my own. The actual pyramid construction requires three people. Two unexpected people did turn up but I had not brought the required materials for building the pyramids. Other work was found, namely laying weed suppressant mat around the orchard trees and removing some of the rabbit guards from the hedge to be laid next season. The weather was damp and miserable and the wind was cold so we packed up at about eleven.

I received a report of frog activity at the Wetland on Saturday 2nd of March. So, on the 5th Simone and I went for a walk around the wood to look for spawn. The Wetland had 34 clumps of spawn and the Rookery pond had 5 clumps. There was still quite a lot of activity. In the small Orchard Meadow pond there were two places where spawn had been deposited. The first site had 104 clumps of normal spawn and two with white embryos. The second site had 92 clumps. Much of the spawn looked like it had been there a few days as the embryos were progressing beyond the dot stage. In the dipping pond we counted 156 clumps of spawn on the west side of the pond. This is close to 400 clumps total.



The next day there were a further 15 clumps of spawn in the Wetland and, 7 paired toads working on stringing their spawn through the reeds in the dipping pond with at least 15 other toads swimming around. The toads were still laying on the 13th and by the 15th the numbers had reached astronomical proportions. Steve Songhurst called me to say he had counted nearly three hundred toads in the small Orchard Meadow pond and nearly nine hundred in the dipping pond. I duly went round on the 16th starting at about 7.30 pm and counted 347 at the small Orchard Meadow pond of which about a third were couples. At the dipping pond I counted 921 with about a quarter being couples



The toads were still arriving and it was quite hazardous walking round trying not to step on toads. Steve does not know why there are so many toads there all of a sudden but it is possible that these are the results of the first spawning three or four years ago, or, maybe they have come from the Trickle Brook Fishery on the A228. Either way, it is possible we have a major toad population using the two new ponds which were created in the Orchard Meadow. The situation will need to be monitored closely over the next few years. I wonder if there will be similar population expansion when the new ponds are created between Foal Hurst Wood and the Berkeley Homes development. I look forward to finding out what happens there in the next five to ten years.

Regarding white spawn, I collected a clump from the small Orchard Meadow pond and placed it in my own pond at home. There I was able to monitor the progress of the eggs, watching them develop in the spheres until on the 22nd March they hatched. By the 14th they were free swimming and spreading around the pond. The pond water is very green at the moment and I wonder how this will affect the spawn's progress. I have never seen white tadpoles so I wonder if under normal conditions they are easily predated. I shall continue to report on this matter.

Additionally, I would like to thank Mark and Allison for their continuing support on the tea and coffee front and many thanks to Brian Mace and his family for continuing with the newsletter and crossword puzzle.

I am sorry to have missed you all on the 7th April but hopefully we can all get back together on the 29th September when the next season will commence. In the mean time have a wonderful summer.

Peter Prince

British Trust for Ornithology

Tawny Owl Calling Survey 2018/19

Throughout the darker nights, between 1st October 2018 & 30 March 2019, I took part in a large UK wide citizen science project, organised by the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO), recording Tawny Owl calls in two woodlands in Paddock Wood – Foal Hurst Wood & Whetsted Wood.



It was a very simple survey, I just had to visit both sites once a week, after dark and listen out for Tawny Owl Calls – either & ‘hoot’ (male) or a ‘kee-wick’ (female or juvenile) - during a twenty-minute period. That was it, nice a simple :-). If I couldn’t manage every week over the 26-week period, it didn’t matter too much, but in fact as it turned out I only missed one week during the survey season.

The purpose of the study was to help the BTO understand where Tawny Owls could still be heard across the UK and note seasonal changes in their distribution, plus investigate the impact of artificial lighting - in urban, or edge of urban sites - on Tawny Owl presence. So here are the results of my 25 weeks of monitoring.

Foal Hurst Wood

Month	No. of weeks MALE calls were Heard	No of weeks FEMALE (or Juvenile) calls were heard	Percentage of visits when Tawny Owls were heard
October 2018	1	1	50%
November 2018	1	2	40%
December 2018	1	0	25%

Whetsted Wood

Month	No. of weeks MALE calls were Heard	No of weeks FEMALE calls were heard	Percentage of visits where Tawny Owls were heard
October 2018	0	3	75%
November 2018	0	1	25%
December 2018	0	0	0
January 2019	0	0	0
February 2019	0	0	0
March 2019	0	0	0

As can be seen, at Foal Hurst Wood, during autumn and early spring I would hear Tawny Owls calling for usually 50% or more of the 20-minute monitoring periods, whereas in the winter it was much more difficult to hear any Tawny Owls calling. In fact, it turned out that the best place to hear the owls was along the eastern edge of the wood, bordering the (now grubbed up) apple orchard. Twenty years ago, I remember the south western corner of Foal Hurst Wood being the best area for Tawny Owls.

Whetsted Wood, started off well, with, what I suspect was a juvenile tawny owl, being heard on most visits during October. But by November calls were scarce and thereafter non-existent. Maybe the owl died or moved away, but no other owls seemed to occupy this small woodland during my survey period

Based upon nation results, from the more than 7500 volunteers taking part in the survey, Foal Hurst Wood was fairly typical of what surveyors were finding, when monitoring of their own sites.

FHW NEWS *letter*

It may seem disheartening not hearing owls in Whetsed Wood for much of the time, but negative results are really important in understanding national distribution of Tawny Owls. To be honest I had great fun watching the fish in Tudely Brook, which runs through Whetsted Wood, whilst listening out for Tawny Owls, so all was not lost :-).

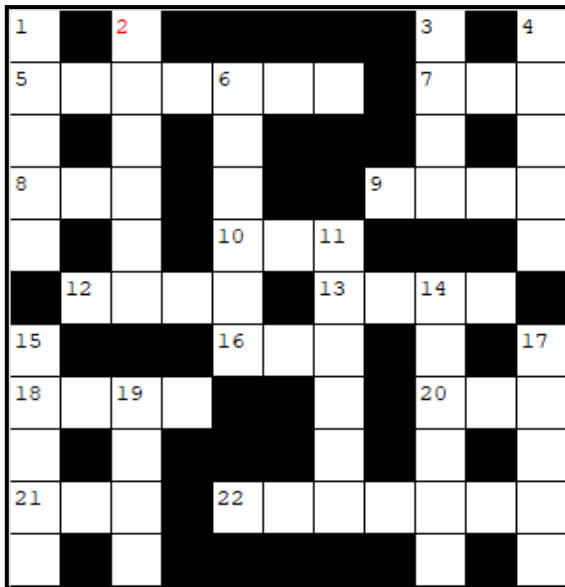
Future Surveys

If you would like to take part in the BTO Tawny Owl Survey during 2019 / 20 and survey other areas of Paddock Wood, or the surrounding countryside, just visit the BTO Tawny Owl Website and sign up to take part –

see <https://www.bto.org/volunteer-surveys/project-owl/tawny-owl-calling-survey>.

Steve Songhurst

FHW Crossword No 143



Clues Across 5. See 4 Down. 7. Fire debris, (3).
8. Number, (3). 9. Land measure, (4). 10. Rod, (3).
12. Himalayan monster, (4). 13. Impel, (4).
16. It is, abrv.(3). 18. Nocturnal birds, (4). 20. Smart phone software, (3). Female rabbit, (3). 22. Member of the Crow family, (7).

Clues Down 1 & 17. Unusual embryos, (5,5).
2. 'Forty winks'. (6). 3. Cosmetic powder, (4).
4 down, 5 across, 15 down. Steve's first telephone numbers ? (5,7,5). 6 & 14. Tree protection, (6,6).
11. Countrified, (6). 14. See 6. 15. See 4. 17. See 1.
19. Vegetable, (4).

Solutions to FHW Crossword No 142

Across 2. Old trees. 5. Rhea. 6. Substantial. 8. K.O. 9. Bud. 12. Sow 14. SE.. 16. Nice barrier. 18. Dogs 19. East side.

Down. 1. Shrub. 2. Oaks. 3. Trunks. 4. Essay. 7. Too. 10. Use. 11. Debris. 13. Viola. 15. Hedge 17. Ride..

This is the last newsletter of the season

If you have any items of interest from FHW during the summer please forward

To:- 80 Forest Road, Paddock Wood, Kent TN12 6JX

email b.mace452@btinternet.com