



LOCAL NATURE RESERVE

# NEWSletter

Issue No 200

August 2022

## Unusual Circumstances...

The hottest temperature ever recorded in this country, drought conditions leading to failed crops and a hosepipe ban; yet compared to other parts of Europe it seems we are the lucky ones.

### Concerning Foalhurst.

On the 24<sup>th</sup> April we had an extra work day to move the pile of wood chips that were left in the car park for us. Carted away to various parts of the reserve in two wheel barrows and a hand trailer, the chips have helped improve the paths and some of the seating areas. The day was very sunny and some of the eight people who turned up, soon felt too hot to work. However, all of the chips were moved but the second task of building a dead hedge from some trees felled by the electricity company was not completed until later in the year.

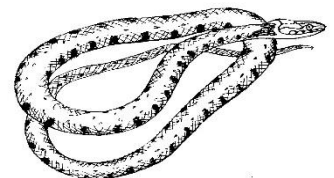
At that time, the bluebells were looking pretty good, building up towards their climax. There were lots of butterflies including orange tip, speckled wood, gatekeeper and both male and female small white. There was no sign of tadpoles at either the wetland or the dipping ponds but they may have been resting in deeper water where it is difficult to see them. I saw a green woodpecker and there were chiffchaffs and stonechats, robins, blackbirds, great tits and blue tits singing, altogether a lovely day. Previously, the deer had wandered through Allotments Way down to the car park and left both hoof prints and droppings.

We didn't do any other work throughout April or the first half of May, except that I planted several asters, dog daisies, wild geraniums and other wild plants that I picked up from weeding the garden.

Unfortunately, the five trees that Mr Barsley donated were attacked by the deer. I covered the wounds with seal and heal and placed metal wire fence around each plant to try and prevent any further damage. They were not well but hopefully the treatment will enable them to live.

I found the remains of a male pheasant, feathers only, scattered over about two square meters of the Orchard Meadow. I wonder if it was the act of a weasel or stoat as there was a three inch hole in the ground close by, too big for a mouse and too big for a rabbit, it seemed like a possibility

On the 18<sup>th</sup> May I took the new manager of the P.W. Estates team, Mr Carl Smith around the wood and we talked about the work that is done by the volunteers and how the estates team may be able to help. I have to report it was a very good meeting. While we were on our wanderings we saw deer droppings and several different butterflies including a comma, several whites, a peacock, a common blue and couple of hornets that seemed to be very busy around the Flower Meadow. There was also a grass snake in the Dipping Pond which was great because I haven't actually seen one for about four years.



Throughout May it was very pleasing to see the section of car park hedge that we trimmed in early 2021 in full flower. The hawthorn, dog rose and guilder rose all produced good blossoms and hopefully will have a fine crop of fruit for the birds this autumn. With the black thorn having flowered nicely in March, the new regime of cutting half the hedge on alternate years looks to be a success.

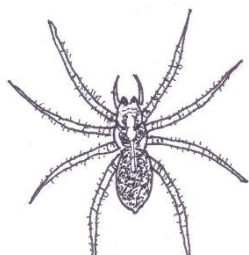


*Guilder rose*

I didn't work in the reserve during most of May and June. In the middle of June, two of the old bridges were replaced with new timber structures which should last the next fifteen to twenty years. The work was carried out by a contractor and I am very pleased with how they look, especially with the anti-slip wire over the whole bridge in each case. On the 6<sup>th</sup> July Steve, John and I replaced broken benches in the Orchard Meadow with a view to creating several more around the reserve over following weeks. The work went quite well although the ground was very hard for digging in the supports. The water table was very low after so little rain in the winter and spring and all the ponds were dry by this time.

Many people have mentioned a dearth of insects this year. I have noticed it with the number of bees and wasps I have had to rescue from my conservatory. Normally I would evict several per day but this year I have hardly had to catch any. I have also seen far fewer bees in my garden in spite of the abundance of flowers. By the end of June I was quite concerned by the lack of butterflies both at home and in the reserve. There were some black specimens which wouldn't stop for identification purposes so I had no idea what they were at the time (identified as ringlets from photos on 10<sup>th</sup> July). However, there was a plethora of crickets in the long grass of the Orchard Meadow. The butterflies improved in July.

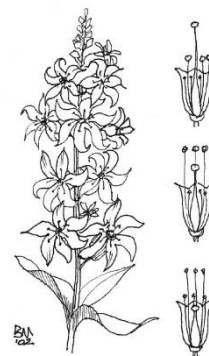
With climate change and our use of insecticides, I think we will have fewer of the more delicate pollinating species and greater, even plague numbers of the less useful critters such as crickets. Having said that, on the 10<sup>th</sup> July I walked the reserve for about 2 hours. It was a hot and sunny day and the woodland was pleasantly cool by comparison with the meadows. On my exploration I found ringlet butterflies (*Aphantopus hyperantus*), commas, gatekeepers, small heaths, meadow browns, woodland browns, large coppers, small and large whites. Also on the 10<sup>th</sup> I saw broad-winged damselflies, a golden-winged dragonfly, five different kinds of grasshopper or crickets, frog hoppers, seven species of spider including wolf spiders and a funnel-web, or cobweb spider as they are known in Britain, at the small pond in the Orchard Meadow, and a hornet. It was very pleasant walking round with the chirping of crickets in the meadows and the hum of insects in the wood. It just goes to show the beasties are there if you look out for them. I am very pleased with the variety of grasses in the meadows but saddened at the lack of actual flowers.



*Wolf Spider*

The Orchard Meadow is actually looking better than the Flower Meadow with yellow and purple loosestrife, oxeye daisies, evening primrose and several other noticeable flowers some of which are in drifts. The scarlet pimpernels and the birds-foot trefoil seem to be doing fine on the short grass of the paths.

I have had to notify the council of ragwort which I found in the car park and the Orchard Meadow. The rule is that it must not spread. I am supposed to dig it up but instead I have cut the heads off to stop them seeding. It is, in my opinion, a great shame that this has to be done as ragwort is the food plant of the cinnabar moth (*Tyria jacobaeae*) which is a rare if not endangered species. The hibernated cinnabar moth recognises the flowers and then lays its eggs. The caterpillars hatch after about a week and proceed to eat the entire plant down to the ground, which they can do in another seven days or so before moving on to the next plant. With the flower-heads removed the adult moths cannot recognise the plants and so will not lay eggs. For this reason I left the flower heads on as long as possible before removal.

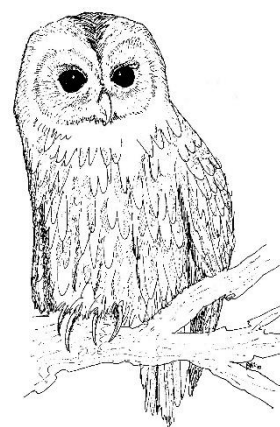


*Purple Loosestrife*  
3 style and stamen  
arrangements

I was surprised at the number of other insects feeding from the ragwort flowers. Ringlets and meadow browns were both present as were cardinal beetles and various flies. There were spiders on some of the plants including a green crab spider sitting in ambush for prey to pass. The food chain of this one plant is extensive but by removing the heads of the plants I have removed the food supply of all the resident insects.

On the 27<sup>th</sup> July members of the Wednesday Team installed four new benches along Allotments Way, Buckthorn Ride and the Avenue. Ray Moon strimmed the brambles along Allotments Way making the path much more manageable for walkers. The last two new benches were placed in the Orchard Meadow on the 3<sup>rd</sup> August and Ray continued strimming the Allotments Way.

When I had finished work on the 3<sup>rd</sup> I sat along the Avenue and watched two tawny owl fledglings as they swooped from tree to tree. They seemed to be making efforts to hunt for themselves because every so often they would launch themselves at passing birds but with no success. Their constant screeching at each other was amusing and if they came too close to each other, one would always drive the other off. 50 metres seemed to be the limit of tolerance. One of the birds landed in a tree not far from where I was sitting and spent several minutes scrutinising what sort of bird I might be. When I moved my head it flew off and both birds departed for another part of the wood. I don't recall the tawny owls having two fledglings before so this was obviously a good year. I found a dead mole with its guts ripped out. I wonder if that was the work of a tawny. I suspect the mole was too difficult to swallow due to the huge claws they have particularly on their front feet.



*Tawny Owl*

# FHW NEWS letter

Work for the new season starting in September.

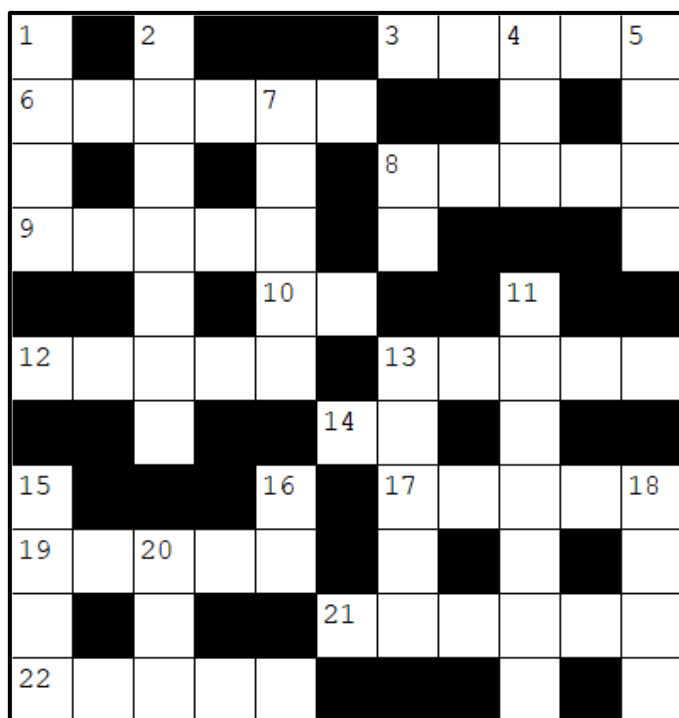
Date	Task of the day	Work description
Sunday Sept. 25 <sup>th</sup>	Coppicing, digging Wetland.	Chopping, sawing, dead hedging, digging.
Sunday Oct. 30 <sup>th</sup>	Coppicing, digging Wetland.	Chopping, sawing, dead hedging, digging.
Sunday Nov. 27 <sup>th</sup>	Coppicing.	Chopping, sawing, dead hedging.
Sunday Jan. 8 <sup>th</sup>	Coppicing.	Chopping, sawing, dead hedging.
Sunday Jan. 29 <sup>th</sup>	Hedge laying.	Clipping, lopping, sawing,
Sunday Feb. 26 <sup>th</sup>	Hedge laying.	Clipping, lopping, sawing.
Sunday Mar. 26 <sup>th</sup>	Hedge laying and trimming	Clipping, lopping, sawing.

As usual we will meet in the car park at Badsell Road ready for a 9.30 start. Bring your own gloves and wear strong shoes preferably with toughened toecaps. Tea and coffee will be provided. Anyone who wishes to stay after lunch will be very welcome to do so but please bring your own lunch. Work must finish by 3 p.m.

You will notice there are two work days in January because I suspect you don't want to work Christmas day or New Year's Day. Forgive me if I'm wrong.

Peter Prince

## FHW Crossword No 165



### Clues Across

3. *Polygonia c-album*, (5). 6. *Mustela nivalis*, (6).  
 8. Land areas, (5). 9. Distributor of seeds, (5).  
 10. Opposite of from, (2). 12/13. Useful timber, pit props etc, (5.5). 14. Exist, (2). 17. *Sorbus aucuparia*, (6). 19/22. *Natrix natrix*, (5,5).  
 21. Happy bird song, (6).

### Clues Down

1. Nocturnal avians, (4). 2. Beacons for the cinnabar moth, (7,7). 4. Spoil, impair, (3). 5. As well, (4).  
 7. Natural planting medium, (5). 8. Morning, (2).  
 13. Fish or roost, (5). 15. 'Donkey's years', (4).  
 16. Similar to 14 across, (2). 18. Birds home, (4).  
 20. Alias, (1.1.1.)

### Any News?

Items for the next Issue by 27<sup>th</sup> Sept please, to  
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