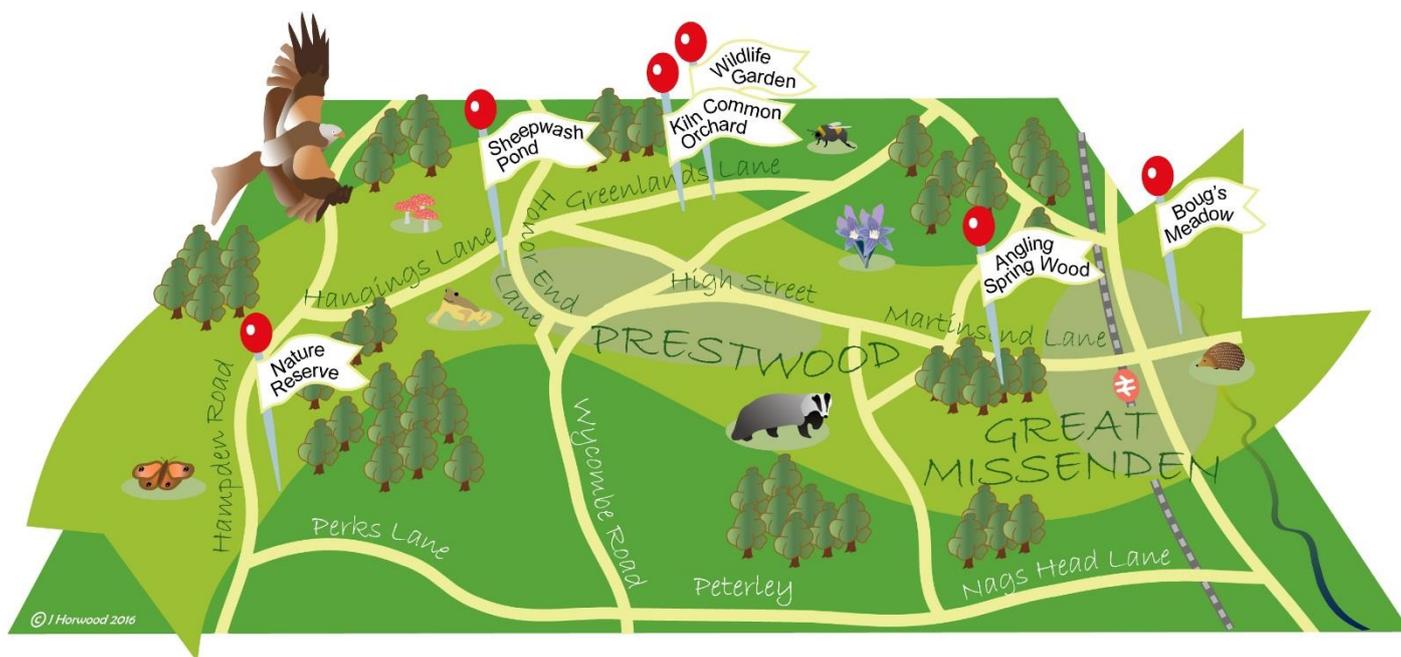


Prestwood Nature's Sites Map 2016



Prestwood Nature has often been asked for a map of the sites which we manage. This one has been designed by Jerry Horwood, a local cartographer. We are proud to share this schematic map with you all and hope it will help you familiarise yourself with the places we work to improve and conserve.

Each site has a main contact, whose details are available on the back page, and who would be delighted to hear from you, to inform you of future activities, and of volunteering opportunities. Alternatively use the map to plan a sites tour and visit all six, and see for yourself. The project leaders will be pleased to hear what you think!

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From the Editor

Uncertain times lie ahead - will we have a real summer? Will we remain part of Europe? Will England win a football tournament, or a Test series? A good walk in our beautiful green countryside, spotting birds, flowers or butterflies can be a restorative escape from insistent media messages.

Members' News

It has been a strange beginning to the year, one of the unpredictable perturbations of our seasons as our climate continues to warm up. While we get floods and temperatures plunging to 10°C at the beginning of June, confusing our perceptions, the overall trend is drier and warmer. So after all that rain in the autumn and winter, the Misbourne still did not run through Boug's Meadow this year and the Mobwell spring was, at its best, just a puddle.



Daffodils Mobwell Corner

So we noted that Daffodils were already out on New Year's Day and the mild weather in early January brought Lesser celandine, Primrose, Cherry-plum, and Lesser periwinkle all in flower a couple of months early. At the same time autumn toadstools such as Yellow stainer and the uncommon beech-bracket Hohenbuehelia petalodes both occurred at Angling Spring Wood, and the rare mushroom Agaricus impudicus appeared beside Honor End Lane. Although it was mild, we did not get enough sunshine to fool the hibernating butterflies and we had no early reports of them. The first was not, indeed, until after a spell of proper wintery weather, with **David Page** (who we are glad to say is well on the way to recovery from serious illness) spotting the first thirsty Brimstone on 14 March at the Harrow Inn, although there were no more records until a gloriously sunny day on 25 March when both Brimstone and Small tortoiseshell were seen by **George Lewis**. More records followed at the beginning of April of Brimstone all over the place and the first Orange-tip in Perks Lane (**David Page** again).



Brimstone butterfly

One of the earliest flies of the large and difficult "house-fly" group, Pollenia rudis also appeared at this time. Orange-tip was seen at the Full Moon on 20 April by **John Obee**, making one wonder whether it is the butterflies or our members who have a predilection for pubs. Oddly, the first Peacock was not reported until 21 April (at Meadsgarden Field with Small tortoiseshell). Bees were similarly hampered by spring taking a long time to come, with the first report being the new immigrant Tree bumble-bee by **George Lewis** on 28 March, while Large red-tailed bumble-bees were not common until late April, when the Dark-edged bee-fly, which pollinates spring flowers as well as parasitising the nests of bumble-bees, was also in action. The weather in May, with cold east winds and mostly overcast, virtually brought records to an end (apart from a welcome Green hairstreak at the Picnic Site on the 26th that an enthusiastic **John Obee** was glad to show to all who passed through), although, as I write, warm sunny days have just returned, a few days into June, and **George Lewis** reports both Slow-worm and Painted lady from his garden. Holly blues are also common this year (they are a species that has spectacular boom-and-bust cycles because of the effect of a parasite), so look out for them - do not assume all blue butterflies are common blues. The holly blue looks very pale in flight and flies along hedgerows, while the common blue keeps closer to the ground.

As for the birds, we did not seem to get any influx of the uncommon winter visitors this year, presumably because the mild weather applied further north as well as here, but **John**

Obee reported 12 Long-tailed tits on his bird-feeder on 20 February - until a bully-boy Great spotted woodpecker muscled in. We often get long-tailed tits in our garden too, but you have to be around at the right time to see them, as the whole party will work its way through our hedge and feeders in a very few minutes and then move on to pastures new - they are the most restless birds I know. This may be a good strategy for not over-utilising particular resources, but if this is so, why do not more birds do the same? On 28-29 February we were also visited by a nervy Grey Heron, which apparently wiped out the population of Frogs in our pond, although not before they managed to spawn, so we now have a healthy pond full of tadpoles. **Val Marshall** saw Black-headed gulls at Abbey Park on 14 March. All through the winter Nuthatches (often more than one at a time) were constant in our garden. We have had them before from time to time, but never so frequently: has there been an increase in their population? They were nesting nearby, as in spring they were carrying seeds back for their broods, probably in trees by Prestwood Lodge School (as it used to be) or in Peterley Wood (where I also see them). On 2 April Greenfinches were nesting in **John Obee's** garden. (Gardens are often used for nesting, which must pay off in readily-available food resources despite the high rates of predation by domestic cats and magpies, and we regularly have robins, blackbirds, goldfinch, wood pigeon, collared dove, magpie, wren and various tits - although not all in one year! I also saw that Wrens were nesting at the base of a churchyard wall at Holy Trinity on 26 April.)



Young wrens in a garden Photo Bob Fastner

On 17 April **Paul Heath** spotted our first House martins and Swallows of the year and our first singing Skylark and Yellowhammer, all at Prestwood. On 6 May **John Obee** heard our first Cuckoo at Little Kingshill, a slightly later date than usual for the last few years, while I saw Grey wagtail and Canada geese at Warren Water in Abbey Park and at Doctor's Meadow in Little Missenden respectively. **George Lewis** was beaten to it by just one day with our second cuckoo heard at Lawrence Grove Wood.

While many records are casual, concentrated searches are often the best way of finding new species. **Val** and I went on a BBOWT moss course, which alerted us to some things to look out for which we might otherwise have overlooked. So we found six new local records towards the end of March, including the uncommon English rock-bristle on chalk rubble, Bonfire-moss and Pink-fruited thread-moss on bare soil, and Common pocket-moss inside a rabbit burrow (its usual habitat!), all at Hampden Bottom Farm.

The weather on 2 May for our annual Spring Flower Walk, which this year was at Prestwood Picnic Site, was very poor and we finished early as the rain started getting heavier.



False Oxlip

We still managed to see 29 plants, including three different Violets (common dog, early dog and hairy), lots of Cowslips, a few Primroses and the stout hybrid between them both, False oxlip (plus an escaped garden Polyanthus, which is also derived from the hybrid), so at least the numerous people who came went away as experts in violets and Primulas, not just damp and cold. We also saw two Semi-free morels, uncommon spring toadstools that regularly occur at the Picnic Site. Unfortunately these were very

difficult to identify because they were both thoroughly slug-damaged and looked more like miniature stinkhorns, the characteristic pock-marked morel flesh having been virtually all eaten away.

On 7 May the weather was still very dull and cool for the Bucks Invertebrate Group field-trip to Road Farm, Great Missenden, at the invitation of the owners. 118 records were made, many of them at night when moth-traps were set, although the only notable moths seen were Scorched Carpet, Lime Hawk-moth, and Dotted Chestnut. The most interesting day-time sightings were of mining- and other bees along a sandy track: the uncommon Red-girdled mining-bee, Grey-patched mining-bee, Chocolate mining-bee, Chalk furrow-bee and another uncommon species Sharp-collared furrow-bee. Eleven bees overall were recorded. Bees are under-recorded in our area, but a splendid new text-book making their identification more possible should lead to many more being recorded (Steven Falk "Field Guide to the Bees of Great Britain and Ireland" Bloomsbury - although you'll need to capture specimens and use a lens to work through the keys). Other useful records at Road Farm included the hoverfly Epistrophe eligans, Cream-spot and Orange ladybirds, Broad bean weevil, the rare weevil Anthribus fasciatus and two other small beetles Ochtheophilum fracticorne and Onthophagus joannae.



Anthribus fasciatus Photo Neil Fletcher

Two final casual observations. **Roger Almond** reported something digging large holes in his garden to get at tulip bulbs - almost certainly Badger, who are rather partial to them. Last, but probably the best discovery of all, **George Lewis** split an ash log and found a

large juicy larva inside, which we identified as Leopard Moth, which is rarely seen. Afterwards George bound the pieces together again and left it to develop to maturity. The adults average 6cm across and are white with many black spots. (One was seen by Ian Taylor last year in Great Missenden - see Newsletter 38.)



Leopard moth caterpillar in log

Tony Marshall

Project News

Shardeloes Bird Walk 3rd April 2016 led by John Obee

The squealing call of a Water Rail from nearby reeds welcomed us to Shardeloes Lake on the annual Prestwood Nature Bird Walk. The early April growth kept the secretive wetland bird well hidden in the reed bed with its voice the only occasional evidence of its presence. Soon after, Richard's practised ear identified a Willow Warbler nearby and most members managed a glimpse of it in, would you believe, a Pussy Willow just bursting into blossom over the lake edge. These were just two of the highlights for the 15 members and guests who joined John Obee for this annual event.

Along the track to the lake, we'd seen Mistle Thrush, Yellowhammer, Goldfinch, Great, Blue and Long-tailed Tits amongst others although not large numbers of any. Several Skylarks were evident, however, and their song accompanied us for a long way. There were sporadic Chiffchaff calls and the laughing calls of a Green Woodpecker, but no sight of either. In the waterlogged fields at the side of the Misbourne, we saw dozens of Canada Geese, paired off and feeding, extending their grip on our waterways, and a number of Gadwall fighting for a share of space. More Gadwall than Mallards! Many ducks were flying the river

route and was that orange and white one a Mandarin? Quite possibly.

Just before the lake, we heard and then had superb views of a Nuthatch foraging in the old trees in Shardeloes parkland, strangely going up the tree rather than down as usually seen.

At the lake itself, with the Water Rail hidden, there were a number of feeding waterfowl, Little Grebe but unfortunately no Great Crested, also Coots and Moorhen, three Gull species with many immature, more Canada Geese and just one Greylag pair, Mute Swan nesting, many Gadwall, Tufted Duck and Mallard. There were more tits among the waterside vegetation and a Grey Heron in the margins but no view again this year of a Kingfisher. Next year perhaps!

In the sky, John's keen eye picked out a distant buzzard among the Red Kites. Last year we had a flock of Redwing and Fieldfares but the mild winter has probably encouraged them to return north a little earlier this year.

Finally, returning to the Crown at Little Missenden, we glimpsed one solitary Greenfinch in a Hazel, a welcome sight after the population decimation from *Trichomonosis* and our 36th species of the day on top of the 3 species merely heard. This is the same number as last year and encouraging in that many of the usual suspects such as Rooks, Kestrel, Song Thrush and Wren were not recorded.

Shardeloes Lake is worth a visit at any time, but, if you don't make it before, join us next year when we may get to see the Kingfisher and the Water Rail.

Paul Heath

Talks

Over the past two years the Council have arranged evening meetings with talks about the environment and local wildlife. They have proved popular with our members and are advertised locally and open to the general public. We do not charge for admission but rely on donations to cover the cost of speakers and hall hire.

The latest in our series of evening talks was held in March at the Memorial Hall in Great Missenden when Peter Symonds came to give us a talk on the wildlife of a Chiltern Woodland. He

showed us some incredible photos of birds and mammals he had taken in the woods backing on to his house at Speen. He also explained how, after purchasing the woodland, he had spent many hours improving the site which had been very neglected and used as an area to ride motor bikes. Thanks to his efforts it is now an environment which provides a habitat for much wildlife.

Our next talk will also focus on birds but this time mainly the barn owl. Dave Short is coming to talk to us about these birds and he will also bring a live barn owl to show us. Dave is a registered ringer of barn owls and has many years of working with them. It should be a very interesting evening. We are holding it at Great Kingshill Village Hall on 21st June at 7.30pm - more details will follow shortly.

Then, looking ahead, John Tyler, who gave us a fascinating talk on glow-worms last year, will be speaking at our AGM in November. The topic has yet to be decided but John is an excellent speaker and once again we are sure it will be a very interesting meeting.

If there are any topics you are particularly interested in, or if you know of any speakers who might be able to talk to us, please let any member of the Council know.

Vanessa Rickett

Kiln Common Orchard

Kiln Common Orchard was first planned in 2008 by Prestwood Nature to help preserve some of the older fruit tree species that have been lost over the years and provide a habitat for wildlife. Eight years on there are now 50 trees growing in the orchard. Reflecting Prestwood's heritage as a cherry-growing area many are cherries, of which there are twenty-two. The rest of the orchard comprises eighteen apple trees, five pear trees and five plum trees.

Members of the local community sponsored the trees and some came to help plant them! At the time plaques giving details of sponsorship and dedications were planted at the base of the trees but over time they have become damaged, difficult to read or even completely disappeared. They are no longer suitable for the environment. It was decided by the Council to replace them with small aluminium

tags giving the species and variety of each tree. These tags are attached to the tree itself and blend in with the foliage.

However in order to preserve the information about sponsorship and dedications there is now a schematic plan of the orchard on the Prestwood Nature website (<http://www.prestwoodnature.org/kcoplan.html>). If you visit the plan, which is on the Kiln Common Orchard page, and hover your mouse over the name of the tree, then names of the sponsor and any dedications will spring into view. We hope that this will ensure that the orchard remains uncluttered and that the dedications are preserved on-line for all to be able to see.

One of the more interesting plantings in the orchard is an apple which has been named Prestwood Gold. Growing in one of our member's gardens on the Wycombe Road it was found to be a variety that had not been catalogued before and several grafts were taken from it, one of which is in the orchard. The original tree is very prolific and we wait to see how its offspring will behave.

The grass around the trees is being managed by scything, as needed, to ensure that the trees are not throttled by the vegetation and that the wildflowers have an opportunity to seed before being cut down.

Although it is still a very young orchard it is already providing blossom to attract insects and will in time become a lovely peaceful site to complement the pollinator-friendly garden next to it. Eight years on we are well on the way to providing an orchard which the local community will be able to enjoy for years to come.



Wootton Costard apple blossom

Photo Vanessa Rickett

Vanessa Rickett

Flower Portrait No.13 - Bryonies

We have two bryonies in this country - black bryony and white bryony, completely unrelated, but both sharing the same habit - sprawling over hedges with grasping tendrils and having brightly-coloured poisonous berries. They are easy to tell apart.



Black bryony flowers

Black bryony, which is the commoner one in our area, has shiny bright green heart-shaped leaves and shiny berries that change from green to red. In spring it throws up spikes of tiny green flowers that can be conspicuous sticking up from the top of a hedge.



Black bryony berries

White bryony has greyish leaves lobed like a maple, larger whitish flowers with green veins in small clusters, not long spikes, and fruits that turn a matt chalky red.



White bryony

Each of our bryonies is our sole representative in this country of a tropical family of plants. In the case of black bryony it is the yam family, and in the case of white bryony the marrow family. So although they are poisonous they both have edible relatives - much as the tomato is a member of the nightshade family, which mainly has plants with poisonous berries. "Bryony" comes from

the Greek *bryein* "to swell", referring to the large fruits of the marrow, courgette and other gourds.

Black bryony can be found in many of our hedgerows, but we do not have so many records of white bryony. If you see it around please let us know where it was. And while you are at it, look out for the bryony ladybird: it is a recent arrival, has not yet been recorded in our area, and only feeds on the leaves of white bryony (or melons). It is small (up to 7mm long), orange with 11 black spots, has short downy hairs, orange thorax and brown legs. Our native 11-spot ladybird is similar but has a black thorax with white spots and black legs. We would really welcome your observations (including 11-spot, which is also uncommon).



Bryony ladybird

11-spot ladybird

Tony Marshall

Other News

From the Membership Secretary

Once again I am writing to alert the membership to the problems that the administration of Prestwood Nature are currently facing and asking for help in dealing with them.

We have a thriving membership of about 80 households made up of 152 adult members. Our work parties are well-attended and we are able to maintain our sites satisfactorily; field walks and evening meetings also attract good numbers. So we must be doing something right and filling a need in the local area.

BUT we have few people who are willing to carry out the administrative tasks that enable the society to run smoothly. For the last two years we have run without a Chairperson and thanks to extra efforts from the Council members this has not appeared to be a problem in our routine work. However the absence of a Chairperson in our dealings with other bodies such as Local Councils, Conservation Boards and others does not send a message that we are a Society to be reckoned with; nor do we have anyone to meet the Queen next time she calls!

Our constitution was drawn up to make sure that there was a regular change of members of Council so that new ideas were brought in and discussed. Each member of the Council must apply

for re-election after three years and is not eligible for re-election after six consecutive years in one position. We are now facing the fact that many of our Council members will either this year or next have run the full term of office. It is in one way very good because it shows that people enjoy the experience of giving their time to help run the society. This year the Membership Secretary is time-expired and next year the Treasurer will also have come to the end of his period of office. In 2017 three Ordinary Members of the Council will have come to the end of their six years and be ineligible for re-election.

There is a distinct possibility that if we do not manage to persuade some new people to join the Council that in two years' time Prestwood Nature will have to be run by the Secretary supported by four Ordinary Council Members! It is unlikely that the Society would be able to continue with this scenario and might have to be wound up.

If you want Prestwood Nature to continue improving habitats for wildlife, educating people about the countryside and generally influencing what goes on in our local environment please think seriously about offering yourself to stand for the Council to help with the administration. This is vital if the society is to continue to prosper. It is not an onerous job - believe me I would not have served for the past six years if it were!

If you are interested please get in touch with a Council member (details on back page) and perhaps come along and sit in on one of our Council meetings - the chocolate biscuits alone are worth coming for!

Vanessa Rickett

Letters to the Editor

May 16

Have you seen the area of wild flowers growing on a patch of recently disturbed land beside the London Road between Great Missenden and the Chiltern Hospital? It caught my eye as we were driving along the road because of the profusion of tall white campion flowers, but there are many colourful wild flowers growing there. To find it, turn right at the bottom of Nags Head Lane and it's a short distance along on the left hand side. I saw scarlet pimpernel, red campion, clover, buttercup, mustard, birdsfoot trefoil, medick, forget-me-not, green alkanet, speedwell and many others. There were many teasel plants yet to flower, along with vetches, thistle and wild angelica.

Tina Hillas

People and Projects

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Tony Marshall	864251	records@prestwoodnature.org	Surveys/Chalk grassland project	Wildlife records
Val Marshall	864251	newsletter@prestwoodnature.org	Hedge and Tree Surveys	Newsletter editor
Vanessa Rickett	866516	membership@prestwoodnature.org		Membership Sec

Dates for your Diary

June

21 Tuesday 7:30-9:30 Barn Owls Show and Tell with Dave Short at Great Kingshill Village Hall (Info: PN website)

July

4 Monday 9:30-11:30 Angling Spring Wood Work party including holly and laurel clearance, conversation and information sharing. Meet Martinsend Lane entrance Info: Hilary Tyrrell

23 Saturday 2:00 -4:00pm Tour of Robert le Mare's trees at his home Shangri-La, Hotley Bottom Lane. Pre-booking required £2.00 pp Refreshments available

September

10 Saturday 10:00-12:00 Pollinator Friendly Garden Greenlands Lane General tidying for winter. Info: admin@prestwoodnature.org

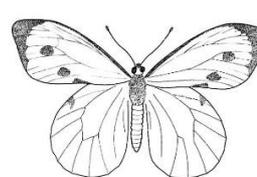
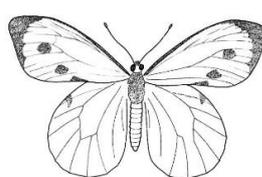
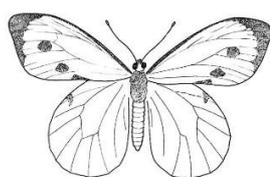
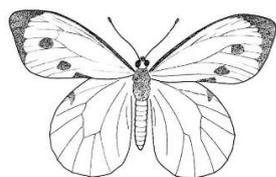
12 Monday 9:30-11:30 Angling Spring Wood Work party including holly and laurel clearance, conversation and information sharing. Meet Martinsend Lane entrance. Info.: Hilary Tyrrell

October

15 Saturday 10:00-12:00 Pollinator Friendly Garden Greenlands Lane General tidying for winter. Info: admin@prestwoodnature.org

16 Sunday 10:30-4.00 Priestfield Arboretum Open Day, Little Kingshill. Info: www.priestfieldarboretum.org.uk

Up-to-date information about events and activities may be obtained from www.prestwoodnature.org



Newsletter Editor Val Marshall 864251 newsletter@prestwoodnature.org

Next contribution deadline: August 31st 2016 please.

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www.prestwoodnature.org