Prestwood Nature
SUMMER NEWS 2023

Conservation group for Prestwood Region including Great Missenden, the Hampdens, the Kingshills, North Dean and Speen ***Issue 63, 1 August 2023***

The Queen's Award for Voluntary Service



Chair's Chat: The Votes Are In!

Last month, PN Council invited members to vote on a phrase or slogan to sum up what Prestwood Nature stands for and the clear winner was **'Working together with nature'**. You will see this being used on our website, in social media posts and communications over the coming months. Our Communications and Events teams have been working hard to address the feedback we had from our survey that our message wasn't getting out to the wider community. We are now using Facebook, EventBrite and Instagram as well as posters to get information about our activities out to a wider audience. Membership of our Facebook Group is growing and it has been great to see the wide variety of photographs posted online as part of our #PrestwoodNoticesNature event across the month of June and linked competition. (See page 8-9 for the competition winners!) We also had a display at the Prestwood Village Association AGM in April and a stall at the Holy Trinity fete in May.

The Boug's team had excellent weather for National Meadows Day on 2 July. Despite competition from the Artisan Food Market on the High Street, the Steam Rally and the Bucks Country Show we welcomed 76 visitors, who had the opportunity to try out the smart new seat, provided thanks to a very generous donor. We are now seeking funds for a picnic table to match (see Paul Heath's update on Boug's Meadow on page 12).

Our next event is a walk in Prestwood Local Nature reserve on Sunday 13 August with Roy Vickery, who will share his expertise about the folklore surrounding some of our best-loved wildflowers. It is proving so popular that we have already had to ask him to run an extra session in the morning, as the original afternoon one is already fully booked. Hurry now and book your places via Eventbrite if you would like to come along. On a less positive note, anti-social behaviour continues to be a problem at Sheepwash. We are working with the Parish Council, Community Board and Police Community Support Officer to monitor the situation. Our Sites team are working on plans for further work at the site. Meanwhile, there are opportunities to get involved with regular work parties at the Pollinator Friendly Garden at Greenland's Lane allotments and at Boug's – please see PN's website for dates.

Best wishes, Helen Matthews

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Summer Quick Quiz

1. Can you identify butterflies A-D?
2. Which of these have you seen this summer in our local area?

Summer Botany *by Karen van Oostrum*



Many of our trees - beech, hazel and hornbeam in particular – are heavily laden with fruits this year. Plants tend to produce an abundance of fruits at times of stress, when they detect that their survival into the following year might be in question. This is because their fruits contain the seeds necessary for the propagation of new individuals, and hence the continuation of the species. The last 18 months have thrown some challenging weather at our plants – including an exceptionally hot and dry summer last year. Fruit-set was good this spring, and the continued rain has allowed these fruits to swell to their full potential. Image**: Hazelnuts** (K van Oostrum)

In the world of botany, 'fruits' come in many shapes and sizes. They include the 'fruity fruits' of apples and cherries, the 'nutty fruits' of hazel, sweet chestnut and beech, and the 'seedy fruits' of hornbeam, birch and ash. So what actually is a fruit? In the botanical sense, it is the ovary of the flower, which develops further after the flower has been fertilised. The seeds within the fruit are fertilised ovules. This is why, for example, botanists call sycamore keys

'fruits' – even though they are not sweet and fleshy. At one end of the fruit the ovary wall develops into a wing, to aid dispersal, and at the other end it envelops the seed, protecting it.



Image: **Sycamore keys** (K van Oostrum)

If you want to learn more about all these different types of fruits, then why not join Prestwood Nature's Autumn guided walk, later this year on Sunday 8th October?

Growing Soft Fruit by *Emma Plunket*

As we're picking now, I'm keen to share learning from growing soft fruit in poor soil, and with little effort.



Images taken in July: **Blackcurrants, pink gooseberries** and **raspberries** (E Plunkett)

These are tough, long-lasting and good value to plant either as cuttings or bareroot plants, rather than in pots from garden centres. It's satisfying when a dead looking twig, which arrived in an envelope, fruits after a few years. They want to grow even when planted in our thin layer of clay soil over nothing but flints! You can pay £1.80 for a raspberry cane +

delivery by post. These are available from early winter until early spring; and it's good to reserve before the season starts as stock can run out. On offer are thornless and more manageable versions of our native hedgerow and woodland plants such as blackberries, tayberries and boysenberries.

Once established these plants look after themselves, however they need to be controlled if space is limited. This grower provides a great range and advice on growing conditions, planting and maintenance.

A few final tips:

- Taking less space, some soft fruit like **Blueberries** can be grown in pots particularly if you don't have acid soil.

- **Gooseberries** - green for cooking; pick when slightly soft for gooseberry fool or savoury with oily fish like mackerel and sardines. Pink gooseberries don't need cooking, just pick when deep purply pink. Allow bushes to mature and even spread to produce new plants.

- **Raspberries** – choose a range of early, mid-season and autumn varieties.

- **Currants** – red ones make great sorbets and jellies; plants of the black ones are tougher and stronger growing.



Image: **And nature benefits … Gatekeeper on wild raspberries** (E Plunkett)

The Joy of Summer Nature

by Marieke Bosman

Summer is a glorious time for nature: there is so much to enjoy – everything growing and flowering in the garden, nature abuzz with wildflowers, insects, birds…. We hope you will all have a chance to visit the nature areas we look after as Prestwood Nature (see the projects page of the website) and that you also get a chance to visit some of the many other wonderful nature reserves in our local area. As always, keep an eye on the Prestwood Nature website as we will keep adding interesting and fun things to do!



Image: **Poppies in Boug's Meadow** (M Bosman)

THINGS TO DO FOR NATURE THIS SUMMER

Cure yourself of 'OTD'

Someone wrote, somewhere, recently, that UK gardens suffer from OTD – Obsessively Tidy Disorder – and that's not good for nature! So, sit back in the sunshine. Relax, and let nature go a little wild in your garden. Create a heap of logs somewhere for insects and amphibians to hide in. Let some of the grass grow long so that insects can feed on the flowers and voles can use it as a highway. Leave seedheads on plants for the birds in winter. Don't mow your lawn quite as often and quite as short.

Water

Especially when it gets hot it is important that you put out water to help birds, mammals and insects. Put water in a safe place in the garden, and make sure that animals can get in and out if necessary, and that there are ledges where bees and bumblebees can drink.

Volunteering with Prestwood Nature

Prestwood Nature manages several sites for nature, and we regularly hold 'work parties' which are days when local people can volunteer for a few hours – digging, pruning, planting, mowing and the like, with something for everyone, from the very fit and strong, to lighter work for children. There is usually cake on offer, friendly people to chat to and you can put in as little or as much time as you like. It is a great way to get fit and spend time outdoors! Over the next few months, we have work parties in the Pollinator Friendly Garden in Prestwood on 19 August, 16 September and 21 October, and at Boug's Meadow in Great Missenden on 17 September. More information can be found on our website.

Nature volunteering for children and teenagers

Children are very welcome on our work parties along with their parents! Teenagers looking for independent volunteering opportunities with Prestwood Nature should check the volunteering section of our website. BBOWT regularly holds nature conservation days when children and young people can help out at the Trust's reserves. There are such days at College Lake Tring on 19 August, 9 September, and 14 October. Nature Explorer day camps

will be held on 1, 8, 17 and 27 August, and 26 October. For more information, see the BBOWT website.

THINGS TO DO IN NATURE THIS SUMMER

Here is a calendar of nature events over the coming three months organised by Prestwood Nature and other local nature organisations:

10 August: Wildflower meadow walk near Henley with the Wycombe Wildlife Group

13 August: Learn about the lure and lore of wildflowers at the Prestwood Nature Reserve with Roy Vickery and Prestwood Nature

20 August: Moth trapping with the Wycombe Wildlife Group

23 August: Moth Madness family activity at Dancers End with BBOWT

24 August: Minibeast Madness family activity at Dancers End with BBOWT



Image right: **Musk Mallow** (M Bosman)

26 August: Discover late summer insects, Yoesden, with BBOWT

1 October: Autumn walk in Holtspur with the Wycombe Wildlife Group

7 October: Fungi Foray with Tony Marshall with Prestwood Nature

8 October: Go on an Autumn flower walk with Prestwood Nature

14 October: Fungus walk at Holtspur with the Wycombe Wildlife Group

19 October: Wetlands walk with the Wycombe Wildlife Group

25 October: Autumn wildlife at College Lake with BBOWT

OPPORTUNITIES TO LEARN ABOUT NATURE THIS SUMMER

The Field Studies Council is running a range of online nature courses this summer. All are priced between £30 and £60 and consist of one to four weekly sessions. To find out more or sign up, go to the FSC website.

Karen van Oostrum, known within Prestwood Nature for her seasonal guided walks, is an experienced botanist and a very good and engaging teacher. She will be teaching a selection of botany courses for the Field Studies Council this year. This includes…

Botanical Anatomy: Online learning, an **intermediate wildflower course,** which will build your understanding of botanical anatomy, considering the structure and function of leaves, flowers, fruits and seeds, germination and flower fertilisation. This 3-week online course requires approximately 2-3 hours of your time each week.

The next course will start in late August. Self-study material is made available online each week, together with a mixture of quizzes and activities to help you develop your understanding of the topic. At the end of weeks 1 and 3 a live webinar, hosted by Karen, will recap the topics and provide the opportunity for any questions from participants to be answered. A short assignment is set in Week 2 – this is marked and each participant receives feedback. Follow this link for all the information you need about this course.



Image right: **Meadow crane's-bill** (M Bosman)

National Meadow's Day: 2nd July at Boug's Meadow



Images: **Another great Open Day at Boug's Meadow – thank you to all the different organisations that helped Prestwood Nature host this community event**. (P Heath)

#PrestwoodNoticesNature Photo Competition

To mark the launch of our new Prestwood Nature Group on Facebook, a competition to share images with the caption #PrestwoodNoticesNature was held across the month of June. Anyone could post pictures they had taken in the local area from 1st June – 2nd July to enter the competition. Interested parties could also post images on Instagram with the same hashtag. With 61 posts and 18 contributors this month-long focus on local nature was a great online event! Prestwood Council members have selected the winners who are congratulated for their excellent entries. Judging criteria employed included looking for originality and quality of the image (sharpness, positioning within the frame, use of colour, light and depth).

1st prize: David Bennett



Great Spotted Woodpecker, now bringing chick (on left with red head and more brown grey colour) to the nut feeder. Mother collects from feeder and then feeds to chick in the branches above. Photographed from my bedroom window #prestwoodnoticesnature

2nd Prize: Paul Watts

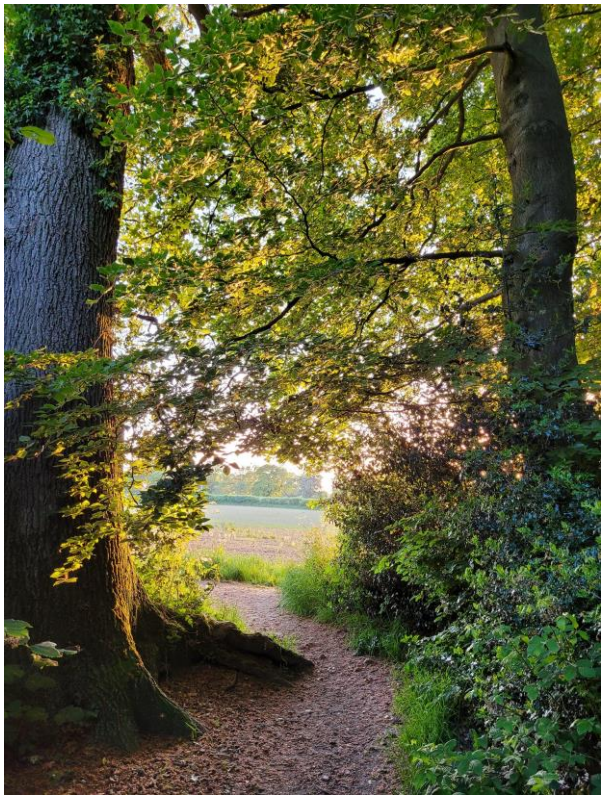


There must be over 1000 pyramidal orchids on display in the field between Angling Spring Wood and Trafford Rd at the moment. An amazing sight (and site) and well worth a visit (stick to the paths though please!) #prestwoodnoticesnature

3rd Prize: Jonathan Palmer



A honey bee with a typical grey allium pollen load #prestwoodnoticesnature



5th Prize: Katherine Furmston (image right)

Pollen-laden bumble bee enjoying a poppy that has sprung up in our garden - if only all weeds were this beautiful! #prestwoodnoticesnature

4th Prize: Soph Locke (image left)

Just a few of my recent pictures taken around Prestwood during my trail runs #prestwoodnoticesnature



We hope you'll agree that these images celebrate local flora and fauna at the height of our British summer – and what month June was! Our overall winner, David Bennett, wins a framed print of his image of woodpeckers and a year's membership of Prestwood Nature – congratulations David! 😊 Why not join our online Prestwood Nature community on Facebook or follow us on Instagram?



Community Orchard Update

by James Appleby

Over the last few months the Community Orchard on Kiln Common has provided a dazzling display of blossom from the apple, cherry, pear, and plum trees that grow there. Now fruiting season is upon us, particularly for cherries. Pictured here (left) is the orchard's **Morello cherry**. This variety ripens later than others, and produces a sour, bitter fruit. This is an acquired taste raw but is ideal for making jams and tarts.

Usually the cherries are followed by the plums ripening, and finally the pears and apples. However, some apples have already fallen as a result of the 'June drop', when the trees shed excess fruit so that the remaining apples can reach their full potential. These smaller apples are very sour, but contain a lot of pectin, making them an ideal component in herb jellies.



Pictured here is a **Prestwood Gold tree**, a cooking apple variety endemic to the village. This apple is great in pies, crumbles, and purees, and can sometimes be eaten raw later in the year. Make sure to visit the orchard this summer and autumn to see what is growing and maybe take home something to eat! Where is the Community Orchard located in Prestwood**?** *///notifying.fruits.places*
(Images: J Appleby)

Team Wilder's Visit to Boug's Meadow

by Alice Griffiths



Image: **Boug's Meadow hosted a day event for Team Wilder in July** (K Horgan)

Boug's Meadow was looking glorious in early July, brimming with colourful flowers and buzzing with insects. A perfect setting for learning about wildflowers!

The Buckinghamshire, Berkshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust (BBOWT) runs a project called Team Wilder which supports small local wildlife organisations through networking, training and resources. As part of this course, Marieke Bosman (a Prestwood Nature Council member) was asked to give a one-day workshop on tips and tricks to improve participants' wildflower ID skills. The course was attended by eight people from four different organisations belonging to Team Wilder who very much enjoyed the meadow and all the different species of plants they could look at. Paul Heath gave an interesting introduction to

the way the meadow had changed through Prestwood Nature's involvement. This was a nice way for the community to use and appreciate all the time volunteers spend maintaining this nature site in the heart of Great Missenden.

Update on the Pollinator-Friendly Garden

by Karen van Oostrum

This summer's rain has really helped the plants that we transplanted last Autumn to establish well in their new positions.

We are continuing to create new habitat for pollinators and other wildlife down at the garden. A new 'boggy area' is being developed near to the nettle bank, which we have already started planting up. This will be completed with a greater selection of bog-loving plants later this year.

Recent replacement of the bench at Boug's Meadow has meant that there is old wood available for us to re-purpose – keep your eye on the garden over the coming months, to see how this develops. We always welcome help from volunteers at our monthly work parties – we are a friendly group who enjoy doing our bit to help to care for this special garden. Please let us know if you would like to come along and join in – we are always grateful for any help, no matter what you can manage. Contact Karen via pfg@prestwoodnature.org



Echinops and bumbles
(K van Oostrum)



New bog garden at the Pollinator-friendly garden
(K van Oostrum)

Help Boug's Meadow replace…
…the picnic table



Our picnic table and bench have served visitors for many years. A kind donor enabled us to install a new bench in May and we now need to replace the collapsing table. We need £1,500 for a table in the same rustic style from the same craftsman. (Image right, by P Heath)

The rustic oak picnic bench and table at Boug's Meadow have been well used by the local community and many visitors over nearly two decades, surviving the elements, putting up with minor vandalism and now succumbing to the inevitable onslaught of the years. In May, volunteers dismantled the old bench and craftsman Ian Varley installed a new bench in a modern rustic style. This has been well received by visitors, much admired on National Meadows Day and we are very thankful to the Great Missenden resident who enabled this to happen with a kind and generous donation.



Volunteers waiting to dismantle Boug's old bench (K Wrennall)

We now need to replace the ageing and slanting oak picnic table to match the new bench. We estimate the total cost to be close to £1,500 and have started a JustGiving donation page. We would be grateful if Prestwood Nature members would consider contributing. We would also be grateful if you would pass this request on to others who you may feel would want to help the community in this way. Thank you.

By the way, as much oak as possible from the old furniture is being kept for recycling as additional small benches for Prestwood Nature sites or elsewhere in the community. At left is the last picture of the old bench with the volunteer team ready to dismantle and save the wood for future use.

Paul Heath for Boug's Meadow volunteers

No Mow May 2023 *by Tony Marshall*

Whether it was by design, as part of No Mow May, or a matter of financial cut-backs, the verges along Lodge Lane in Prestwood were left uncut by the County Council all that month. Combined with the wet spring, this resulted in a vigorous growth of plants that are usually decapitated before they can flourish. Val and I took the opportunity this provided of recording all the flora along the lane, updating and expanding a previous survey we had done in 2020 when we were prevented by lockdown from travelling further afield.

There were many sections of verge with tall grass on 23 May when we did the survey, although some households, not apparently having heard of No Mow May, had recently scalped the sections outside their own houses. Altogether we recorded 171 plant species. Of these 74 were good meadow species, eleven of them uncommon, showing that management of the verges as meadows, with just one or two cuts a year, would be very productive and far more environmentally valuable than continual mowing. One of the plants we recorded, Great Burnet *Sanguisorba officinalis*, has no other site in the region for many miles and is therefore a priority for conservation in its own right, but it cannot produce seed unless allowed to grow to its full height. Another plant Corky-fruited Water-dropwort *Oenanthe pimpinellifolia* (or as I prefer, Prestwood Parsley) grows in no other place in the whole county, although it occurs here not only along Lodge Lane but also across Wycombe Road in the Wren Davis fields.

It is likely that both of these traditional old meadow plants, along with most of the commoner species, are survivals from before the building of the main Prestwood estate, when Lodge Lane did not exist and this was part of extensive cow pasture, run by the Stevens family who also had many local butcher's shops and started the bacon factory where Giles Gate is now. Preservation of the meadow habitat would, therefore, not only be in the interests of biodiversity and maintenance of a carbon sink, but also the survival of our social heritage.



Image: ***Oenanthe pimpinellifolia*** **with pollinator** (Alex Locton **CC-BY-SA-4.40)**

We have been in touch with the Council in previous years about leaving at least some part of these verges uncut through the summer but have always been met with a refusal to contemplate it, citing 'security' grounds and the need to preserve 'visibility splays'. As the vegetation would never grow high enough to obscure the view around corners for cars, this really only comes down to one safety issue: small animals and crawling toddlers obscured in the long grass, who might emerge unexpectedly into the road. I have never seen any unaccompanied toddlers crawling along Lodge Lane, but it is possible that some creatures

could be obscured by long grass but, in my experience, cats and dogs usually run into the road so suddenly, even from a mown verge, that it is difficult for drivers to avoid them. In any case, some of the grass verges along Lodge Lane are of such width that a metre-wide strip could be mown along the road edge so that long grass does not extend as far as the road, still leaving an extensive area of grassland that does not need to be mown. This particularly applies to the section of verge opposite Wren Road which contains the more important meadow plants.

There is therefore plenty of scope for leaving off mowing after the winter until, say, September, allowing the plants already struggling to survive there to flourish and spread, and encouraging further meadow plants to seed themselves here from further afield. Not all residents, of course, have an interest in the natural environment and prefer the look of a neat green 'lawn' in front of their houses, although with the increasing drought conditions we now face through climate change, these are most of the time brown deserts of dead grass; whereas a long grass meadow would preserve a local micro-environment that is more humid and stay green longer. On the other hand, there could be environmental benefits to having some parts of the verge, especially where the verge is quite narrow, regularly cut through the growing season, as this allows a different wild flora to thrive that cannot compete with long-grass species (such as daisies, or the uncommon Spotted Medick *Medicago arabica*, which already grows in part of the verges).



Image above: **Spotted Medick *Medicago arabica*** (Amada44 CC-BY-SA-3.0)

If mowing of short-grass is left off temporarily in the autumn it also gives a chance for the interesting, uncommon, and colourful toadstools called Waxcaps to grow, some species of which have already been recorded along the lane, although they soon get destroyed by mowers.

No Mow May has shown the biodiversity potential of allowing maintenance of at least part of the verges along Lodge Lane as flower meadows. Here is a simple and cheap way for the Council to carry out its environmental responsibilities.

Join Our 'Prestwood Nature Activity' on iRecord and Start Recording!

By Anne Evans



Image: **Common Cockchafter** (A Evans)

Prestwood Nature has recently set up an 'Activity' in iRecord to assist with our ongoing record of wildlife in our area.

What is iRecord? iRecord is a website for sharing wildlife observations, including associated photos. It is quick and free to register. Once registered, you can add records for others to see and you can see what has been recorded by others. Your data is kept secure and regularly backed up. iRecord is operated by the Biological Records Centre as part of the work of the UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology.

Why has Prestwood Nature set up an 'Activity' in iRecord? Biological records on iRecord in the Prestwood Nature area can be viewed on our website. However, we can only 'download' records entered through our Activity. After you have registered, you can join the Activity following the instructions on our website.

What is a biological record? A biological record has four key components; the Ws (what, where, when, who). The name of the organism seen (the 'what'), where it was seen, when it was seen and the name of the recorder. Using iRecord ensures that the record is complete before it can be saved.

Where should I record? You don't have to leave home to start your recording! Explore what wildlife is visiting your plants, pond and log pile in your own garden. But you can also look out for interesting finds when you are at one of Prestwood Nature's sites or out and about in our area.

What happens to my records after I've put them on iRecord? All records added to iRecord are immediately available for browsing by anybody on the Explore pages of the iRecord website. Where possible, records are verified by experts. Photos uploaded with records are a great help in verifying records of some species. Verifiers are volunteers, so be patient while waiting for your record to be verified.

Records entered into iRecord are made available to relevant individuals and organisation(s), including national recording schemes and societies and their county recorders, and local environmental records centres. Records are also made available to support conservation, research, and decision making at local and national levels.



Image right: **Spotted longhorn beetle** (A Evans)

Should I record common species? There is a danger that if species perceived as common are not recorded, then we won't know if there are changes to the population of such species. However, it is generally sufficient to record the species found on a particular site just once each year. There are, of course, many exceptions to this rule, for example, the scheme run by Butterfly Conservation which helps them to direct conservation efforts where needed.



Image: **Mint moth on Germander speedwell** (A Evans)

Is there any help with identification? Generally, if you can take a photo, then do so! If possible, take several photos from different angles. If you don't know what you are looking at, then there are some useful apps such as ObsIdentify and PlantNet (as well as many others!) which provide identification suggestions with a percentage likelihood. In all cases, these auto-ID apps should be treated as guides or suggestions rather than definitive identifications and they often make mistakes, so always check key features to confirm that the proposed identification is correct, before entering the findings into iRecord. Caution should be used for certain groups such as spiders and fungi, where many are not identifiable from a photo alone and require other characteristics to be checked (e.g. examining structures under a microscope) before identification to species level is possible. You can also send sightings to us for identification through a Prestwood Nature expert. Email the Biorecords team at biorecords@prestwoodnature.org



How do I get started? Follow the instructions on our website. If you would like training in how to use iRecord, please let us know.

Anyone is welcome, if they prefer, to submit wildlife records to us via email ensuring to include the date, a detailed location and the species, as well as who spotted it – together with a photo where possible. These will be entered into iRecord on your behalf after identification is confirmed by Prestwood Nature.

For more information on how to use iRecord, please check out their guide on getting started.

Image left: **Dock bug** (A Evans)



Silver Y (A Evans)



Two-banded Meadow Fly (A Evans)

Answers to Summer Quick Quiz:

1 **A** Comma, **B** Small Skipper (in the rain), **C** Red Admiral, **D** Peacock (Images: H Matthews, A Evans and A Griffiths)
2. Answers will vary!

Prestwood Nature's Autumn News 2023 will be published in November. If you would like to write an article to be included in this newsletter, the deadline will be 25th October. Email newsletter@prestwoodnature.org

All views expressed in this newsletter are those of individual contributors and do not necessarily represent those of Prestwood Nature or its Council members.

Working together with Nature