Prestwood Nature
AUTUMN NEWS 2023

Conservation group for Prestwood Region including Great Missenden, the Hampdens, the Kingshills, North Dean and Speen

Issue 64, 10th November 2023



Chair's Chat

As I write this, we have just held our 20th AGM. On the charity's 20th anniversary, we also took time to reflect on Prestwood Nature's origins and achievements over the past two decades. Karen van Oostrum and Paul Heath presented updates on our sites at Kiln Common Orchard, the Pollinator-Friendly Garden and Boug's Meadow, the latter with a special cameo appearance from former Chair John Obee. I for one was inspired to hear about all the great work our volunteers are doing. It was particularly good to hear how produce from the Community Orchard is being shared via the Community Fridge – a fantastic example of how community initiatives can link up. In more formal business, as well as receiving the accounts and annual report, the meeting agreed to change our constitution to replace the officer role of Membership Secretary with a Vice-Chair. The administration of membership has become much easier thanks to technology, whereas succession planning has been more of a problem for us in recent years. We hope that the Vice-Chair role will provide more flexibility and help to ensure continuity. We aim to elect a Vice-Chair for the first time next year – if anyone is interested, please contact me (email chair@prestwoodnature.org) for a chat. We also presented the Queen's Award to PN power couple Colin and Hazel Tyler (see p2) After the meeting we adjourned for tea and cake, with founder member Tony Marshall cutting our 20th birthday cake. If you would like to know more about how Prestwood Nature started, Tony has written a personal account of Prestwood Nature's origins which you can find on our website here. Looking to the future there is still a lot to do. Sheepwash Pond is in need of some care and attention. We need someone who can take this on as project leader. If that might be you, or if you might be able to help out at a work party there, please get in touch.

Helen Matthews

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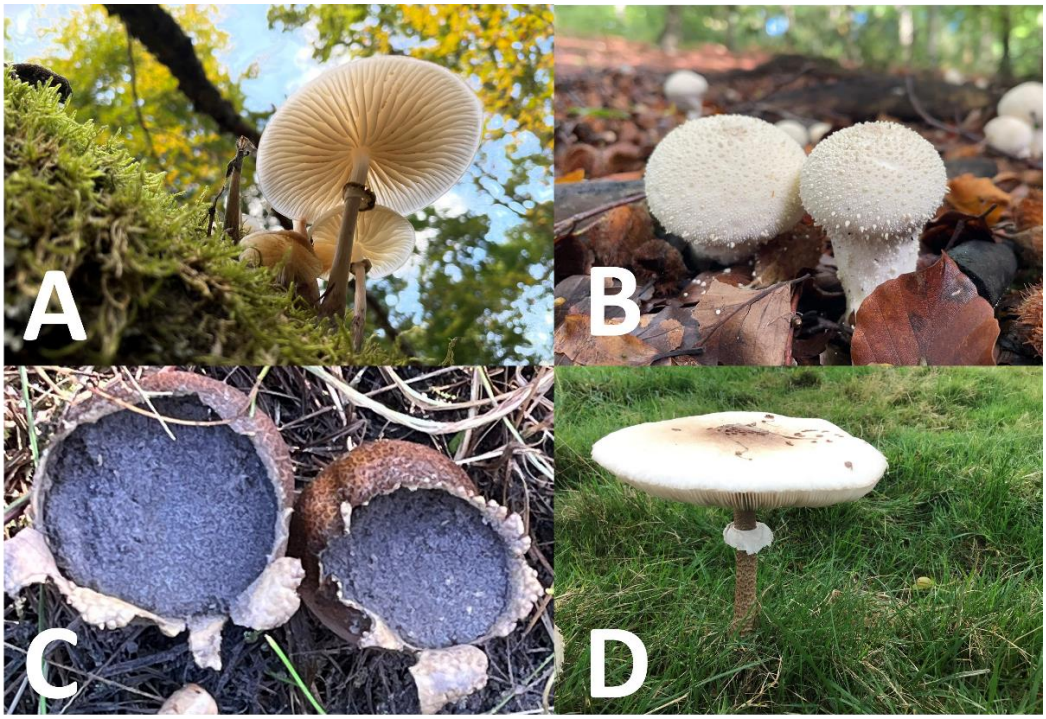
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Autumn Quick Quiz

1. *Can you identify any of these local fungi?*
2. *How do fungi disperse their spores? Can you think of more than one method?*

Queen's Award 2023: Colin and Hazel Tyler



In 2010, Prestwood Nature was awarded the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service. Since then, we have presented the physical award to a volunteer each year to celebrate their contribution to the work of Prestwood Nature. This year the award goes jointly to **Colin** and **Hazel Tyler**.

Colin and Hazel Tyler awaiting visitors to Boug's Meadow on National Meadows Day 2023 (M Bosman)

A former Treasurer of Prestwood Nature, Colin has been a major force at Boug's Meadow: building and repairing benches, mowing and maintaining paths and contributing at volunteer sessions in all manner of ways. He has also supported the growth of wildflowers in Kiln Common Orchard through his careful mowing of the site, as well as building a compost bin. He frequently contributes excellent photos of sightings for use on the website and Facebook posts. Hazel has been instrumental in developing the wildflower meadow at Boug's, advising on seeding, scarifying and supplementary planting as well as communicating

regular news of flora and fauna, thereby encouraging the wider volunteer community. She also has been actively involved at both the Pollinator-Friendly Garden and Kiln Common Orchard. Prestwood Nature thanks them both for their service.

Autumn Botany *by Karen van Oostrum*



Wood Avens, *Geum urbanum* – *flower, fruit cluster and individual fruits with hooked spike*
(Images: KvO)

This is the time of year when plants are working hard to guarantee their continuation next year, by dispersing their fruits. Sometimes plants achieve this by inviting their fruits to be eaten, and in last autumn's newsletter I covered the 'Reds and Browns of Autumn' – how different colours attract different dispersal agents. Some plants employ a different tactic – hitch-hiking. So, what are the little spiky fruits that get stuck to our socks and jumpers at this time of year? One likely culprit is Wood Avens, *Geum urbanum*. This very common perennial plant grows up to 60cm tall, and it has small yellow strawberry-like flowers. The petals drop off after pollination, and at this time of year their spiky fruit clusters seem to be everywhere. As they ripen and turn brown they will break apart. Each individual fruit contains a seed and is adorned with a perfectly hooked spike – if you have a moment to stop and look at one carefully, you will see why they cling so readily to animal fur and clothing.

The Colour of Autumn *by Marieke Bosman*

Autumn is a bit of a contradiction, isn't it? While it gets darker and greyer above, nature goes down in a blaze of intense colour – bright yellow Autumn leaves, deep purple mushrooms, magenta sunsets… all in all, a good time to get your last nature top up of the year and get ready for winter.



Image right: Amethyst deceiver (M Bosman)

Talking of which, one lovely thing to do is to make a collage of autumn finds and colours – you can stick them down or take a

lovely photo of your arrangement. Here's an example of what you might make! It's a lovely activity to do during and after a weekend walk – and can you work out which bit is which? If you do make this kind of collage, please share it with us on Facebook or Instagram.



(Image: A & S Griffiths)

Below are some ideas of things to do for or in nature on days when it is sunny, and even on days when you might like to snuggle up inside over the next three months. As always, keep an eye on the Prestwood Nature website as we are working hard to develop a full schedule of interesting nature events for 2024 and will start adding these as they are confirmed in the coming few months.

THINGS TO DO FOR NATURE THIS AUTUMN

1. **Brush out those boxes** so birds can shelter in your nestboxes on cold days this winter – they may decide they like the box enough to raise their next family in!
2. **Go for green** by planting a rowan, holly, hazel or hawthorn in your garden. These all fit even in small gardens and offer food and shelter for birds, mammals and insects – and lovely blossom, berries and nuts for you to admire.
3. **Halt hedgecutting till half term** – if you can wait with cutting your hedges until mid February, you will provide a wonderful wintering spot for migrating birds, hibernating hedgehogs and insects hiding away until Spring comes.
4. **Help hogs to a home** – hedgehogs will want to hibernate, and putting a pile of leaves or twigs (or a hedgehog home) in a quiet corner of your garden may bring these joyful little creatures to live on your plot. And if there are no hedgehogs tenants available, grass snakes and slow worms will happily move in.
5. **Tone back the tidying** – instead, sit back and enjoy a bit of mess in your garden – leave some of your borders, seedheads and fallen leaves in place. Many insects overwinter in hollow stems, birds will feed on seedheads and various invertebrates will be delighted with a cosy blanket of leaves and plant matter.
6. **Feed feathered friends** so that they can get through the winter. Don't forget to break up water that has frozen over, and clean your feeders regularly so that they do not spread disease.
7. **Bury bulbs** of early flowering spring plants to help early emerging insects find food and to ensure you can enjoy the first flush of spring.

… and don't forget to enjoy the winter spectacle!

Outdoor volunteering for nature with Prestwood Nature

Prestwood Nature manages several sites for nature, and we regularly hold conservation volunteering sessions. Local residents (members and non-members) come for an hour or longer to help look after our Pollinator Friendly Garden, our Community Orchard and Boug's (wildflower) Meadow in Great Missenden. There is usually cake on offer and a friendly group of people to welcome you. You don't need to book and you don't need any experience; tools are provided. Over the next few months, there's definitely a work party on Saturday 17 February at the Pollinator Friendly Garden, and further work parties will be added on the Prestwood Nature calendar on our website.

Meeting other voluntary nature groups and nature lovers

BBOWT runs Team Wilder, a community network of nature volunteer organisations and people interested in supporting nature personally or through their organisation. Once a month they meet online to share experiences, swap ideas about nature projects, chat and network. Usually one member gives a presentation about their work. These meetings are held on a Wednesday evening from 7pm to 8pm; dates for the next few months are 6 December and 3 January. For more info and to sign up, go to BBOWT.

Nature volunteering for children and teenagers

BBOWT regularly holds nature conservation days where children and young people can come and learn about nature and help out with conservation work together with other children. There are such days at College Lake Tring on 16 December, 13 January and 10 February, with mornings for children aged 8-11 and afternoons for teens aged 11-17. For more information, see the BBOWT website.

THINGS TO DO IN NATURE THIS AUTUMN

Here is a calendar of free or low cost outdoor nature events organised by Prestwood Nature and other local nature organisations within easy reach of Prestwood over the next three months. Events are free unless otherwise indicated.

18 November: Discover the nature and archaeology of **Bledlow Ridge** with a (£5) guided walk by the ChilternsAONB.

2 Dec: **Make natural winter wreaths** at College Lake nature reserve in Tring with BBOWT.

14 Dec: children up to 4 years can come and discover nature at the **Nature Tots** event from 10.15 at College Lake Tring with BBOWT.

13 Feb: A **pond explorer activity** at College Lake for children aged 7 and over, starting at 10.30 with BBOWT.

14 Feb: **Winter wildlife event for families** at College Lake tring from 10.30. For information, see BBOWT.

15 Feb: **Nature explorers day camp** for children aged 7 to 12 starting at 9.45 at College Lake Tring with BBOWT.

There are a range of guided and free **Chiltern Society Walks** over the coming months exploring local natural areas. The Sunday walks start at 10 and the Wednesday walks at 10.15. The following dates are within easy reach of Prestwood:

- 19 November, Coleshill.
- 26 November, West Wycombe
- 6 December, Lane End
- 10 December, Stokenchurch

- 13 December, Chenies
- 26 December, Great Kingshill
- 1 January, Wendover
- 7 January, Whiteleaf Hill
- 14 January, Hambleden
- 21 January, Lacey Green
- 28 January, Ashton Rowant
- 31 January, Longwick
- 4 February, Coleshill.

OPPORTUNITIES TO LEARN ABOUT NATURE THIS AUTUMN

A number of indoor or online talks will be held over the coming months where you can learn about nature and meet other nature enthusiasts.

17 November: Prestwood Nature's Karen van Oostrum will give a **beginner's botany** workshop for Wycombe Wildlife Group from 7.45pm at the Hughenden Valley Village Hall.

15 Dec: at 7.45 John Tyler will speak about '**making space for wildlife'** at the St Thomas Church Hall in Holtspur. For more information, see Wycombe Wildlife Group

19 Dec: John Tyler will hold a talk about the **Wildlife of the Ridgeway** at the Great Missenden Memorial Centre for BBOWT.

The Field Studies Council is running a range of online nature courses this autumn and winter. 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. The following courses (covering wildlife found in the Chilterns) start on the following dates:

- 17 January: Broadleaf trees in winter
- 19 January: Bee conservation
- 14 February: Bryophytes
- 15 February: Tracks and signs

From Community Orchard to Community Fridge by James Appleby

As we head into November the orchard has concluded its fruiting season. This year we had a fairly average amount of apples, and not many pears or cherries, but lots of plums, including greengages and damsons. In fact, we had so many plums that many of them were not being picked in time and started to rot on the trees. To stop the fruit going to waste, volunteers from Prestwood Nature including Hazel Tyler began to collect and share them at the Prestwood Community Fridge.

The Prestwood Community Fridge was established by a team which included Catherine Bunting (Catherine is also on PN's Council) and is held in a premises behind Cross Roads Garage. The Community Fridge collects surplus food from the local area and invites people to

take as much as they need for a small donation. Originally just taking in surplus from shops, this community initiative is now receiving donations from allotments.



The distribution of plums from the Community Orchard had a positive impact in two ways. Firstly the fruit was saved from going to waste and people were able to enjoy it. Additionally more people became aware of the Community Orchard, and further donations from it and other fruit trees began to be made. Even locally picked blackberries started to be shared at the Community Fridge. This is a great example of how Prestwood Nature can be a part of wider community activities and inspiring people to think about the local area and where their food comes from.

Update on the Pollinator-Friendly Garden *by Karen van Oostrum*

The front beds at the PFG are well established again now and have been full of flowers this summer. We're looking at addressing the mix of species growing there, as the asters have really dominated the central bed – and although the pollinators love them, you can have too much of a good thing! We aim to offer something for pollinators across as many months of the year as possible, and since asters are 'late season' flowerers we need to free up some of the space that they're taking, to make room for plants that will flower earlier in the season. This will be the focus of our next work party. If you have a clear-out in your garden this autumn, and find you are looking for a home for your surplus plants, do get in touch to see if we could use them down at the PFG. Please contact Karen via pfg@prestwoodnature.org



The PFG in mid-September 2023: full of asters (Image: KvO)

We take care of the PFG throughout the year, meeting in the morning of the 3rd Saturday each month. Please let us know if you would like to come along and join in – we are a very friendly bunch, always grateful for any help no matter what you can manage. You can use the same email address given above to get in touch and find out more.

Volunteers at work in Boug's Meadow this Autumn



Where do butterflies go in the winter? *By Anne Evans*

Butterflies can't cope with cold, wet conditions as they are cold-blooded and need the warmth of the sun to stir them into action. So, what do they do in winter? Different butterfly species have different approaches to handling the cold season and for many, this involves entering a state of dormancy called diapause. This is not the same as hibernation, which only warm-blooded creatures do. Instead, it is a hormonally-programmed resting state where development is suspended and metabolism suppressed. The butterfly lifecycle involves four stages, from egg to larva (caterpillar) to pupa (chrysalis) to adult. Diapause may occur in any of these stages. The table at the end of this article shows which of our local species overwinter in which life stage. The timing of their emergence from diapause is important as the butterflies need to have access to the right plants.



Purple Hairstreak (A Evans)

Butterflies that overwinter as an egg include the Chalk Hill Blue, Essex Skipper, Purple Hairstreak and Silver-spotted Skipper. Purple Hairstreaks lay their eggs singly at the base of a plump oak bud or an adjoining twig on the south-facing side of the tree to receive full sun. Essex Skippers lay several eggs between the stem and sheath of Cock's-foot grass or other foodplants.

About half of the butterfly species seen in the Chilterns overwinter as a caterpillar including the fritillaries and species such as the Small Copper, Small Heath and Small Skipper. Small Skippers usually lay their eggs on Yorkshire-fog and other grasses and when the caterpillars hatch, they spin dense cocoons around themselves attached to the inside of the grass sheath.



Green Hairstreak (A Evans)

Butterflies that overwinter as a pupa include the Duke of Burgundy, Green Hairstreak, Green-veined White, Grizzled Skipper, Holly Blue, Large White, Orange-tip and Small White. The pupa of the Green Hairstreak is known to make a squeaking sound that mimics the sound of an adult ant, and there is evidence that secretions from pores on the pupa attract ants. Pupae have been found in ant nests, but others are found in leaf litter.

The Speckled Wood is unusual in that it may over-winter as either a pupa or a caterpillar.

Species of butterfly that overwinter in their adult form are the Brimstone, Small Tortoiseshell, Comma, Peacock and some Red Admirals. Red Admirals are a migrant species, but increasingly there are records of them overwintering here thanks to a milder climate. The overwintering adults still need to find somewhere sheltered which is why we find the

occasional butterfly in sheds or garages. They may also seek crevices in places such as walls, fences, ivy and woodpiles.

Lastly there are the purely migrant species such as the Painted Lady and the Clouded Yellow which do not generally overwinter in the UK.

Sometimes, butterflies such as the Small Tortoiseshell and Peacock enter houses in the autumn and enter their dormant state, but when the central heating comes on, they become active again. If you should find one in your home, relocate it to somewhere cooler like a shed or outbuilding to await warmer days.



Small Tortoiseshell (A Evans)

Overwintering status of butterflies in the Chilterns

Egg	**Caterpillar**	**Pupa**	**Adult**	**Migrant**
Chalk Hill Blue Essex Skipper Purple Hairstreak Silver-spotted Skipper	Adonis Blue Brown Argus Common Blue Dark Green Fritillary Dingy Skipper Gatekeeper Large Skipper Marbled White Meadow Brown Purple Emperor Ringlet Silver-washed Fritillary Small Blue Small Copper Small Heath Small Skipper	Duke of Burgundy Green Hairstreak Green-veined White Grizzled Skipper Holly Blue Large White Orange-tip Small White	Brimstone Comma Peacock Small Tortoiseshell	Clouded Yellow Painted Lady
	Speckled Wood		Red Admiral	



AGM 2023:

Prestwood Nature founders Tony Marshall and Helen Matthews cut our 20th birthday cake!

Answers to the Autumn Quick Quiz:

1. **A** Porcelain, **B** Common puffball, **C** Common earthball (ruptured), **D** Parasol (Images: H Tyler and A Griffiths)

2. Fungi disperse their spores in several different ways, including shooting them out into the air (e.g. Common puffball); rupturing to expose spores to the elements (e.g. Common earthball) utilising vectors such as wind or water (rainsplash); and tempting animals, which eat them.

NB: Lots of fungi are poisonous including Common earthballs.

Prestwood Nature's Winter News 2023 will be published in February 2024 If you would like to write an article to be included in this newsletter, the deadline will be 25th January. 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.

Prestwood Nature

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