Southampton Natural History Society

Annual Report 2021

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Cover photograph - *Narcissus papyraceus* **Paperwhite Daffodil** Weston Shore, Phil Budd.

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The 2021 Annual Report

Jan Schubert, Secretary

Welcome to the Annual Report of the Southampton Natural History Society for 2021. Although some restrictions caused by the pandemic eased during the year, we still were making use of Zoom for most of our meetings!

When things are completly back to normal (whatever that is) we are still considering keeping some illustrated talks on Zoom as we reach many people who aren't otherwise able to atend in person. We have considered hybrid meetings, where people can attend in person or join over the internet, but that would require significant investment in technology for a good quality exeprience so that has been ruled out for the time being (but never say never). We would welcome your views on this and on any other aspect of the Society's work. Please email us with any views to ***admin@sotonnhs.net***.

Once again, thanks to Daphne for providing the reports from the meetings we did manage during the year.

Don't foget to join our Facebook Group which has become a virtual meeting space - ***facebook.com/groups/SotonNatHistSoc***.

Membership Report for 2020

Sue Channon, Membership Secretary

Due to ongoing Covid restrictions we were unable to offer our members indoor talks at Edmund Kell Hall, however we were pleased to offer several Zoom talks hosted by local naturalists. We also managed to put together a programme of field meetings for June – December 2021.

We were pleased to welcome new members, Janet Adshead & family, Sam Munslow, Martin Roberts, Brian Golding, Hilary Musker, Mac Ince, John Holden-Dye, Kate Martin and Jennifer & Jethro Gorman. We were sorry to have received notice of the deaths of Peter Burford and Alan Budd.

The total number of members as at 31st December 2021 was 135.

Wild Orchids of the UK

Peter Ashburn

Illustrated Talk April 2021

Until retirement Peter Ashburn was a Professor in the Department of Electronics at Southampton University but orchids are his passion, studying them in the wild and growing tropical varieties at home. There are 25,000 species of orchids worldwide, with 1 in 12 flowers being an orchid, and 56 are native to the UK. They have very specialised habitats, and all are reliant on a symbiotic relationship with soil fungi to supply nutrients during germination and development stages, and some remain completely dependent.

Habitats range from chalk hills, dark woodlands, damp grassland to bogs. Chappetts Copse, a nature reserve near West Meon, is an ancient ash and beech wood giving rise to rare fungi supporting rare orchids and worth a visit. Not all those found growing in the wild can be counted as UK native, the Mediterranean Sawfly Orchid appeared at Dancing Ledge in Dorset at one time but then disappeared so not included.

We were treated to a series of beautiful photographs of orchids seen through the seasons, their habitats, where and when to find them, and how to identify them. Also how to count the lobes, differentiate between patterns of swirls and lines, 'tooth' length and other details. Orchids can also be very dependent on weather conditions so they may be late or early making an appearance. While some are obvious, others have very small flowers and need a lot of searching for, often in boggy or inhospitable places.

More commonly found species will tolerate a wider range of conditions. The **Common Spotted Orchid** likes alkaline soil and can be found on open grassland, woodland and marshland, they can also vary in colour from pale to dark purple, be with or without spots, and patterned with lines or swirls, identified by 3 lobes and a long 'tooth'.

A visit to Durleston Country Park and Dancing Ledge in early April was recommended to see **Early Spider Orchids**, and the Warden is very happy to show the location. Although considered a rare species it can be abundant where conditions are favourable and at Dancing Ledge there are hundreds.

Hoe Road Meadow, Bishops Waltham end of April into early May is a good place to see **Green-winged Orchids**, these are also seen at Dancing Ledge.

Very rare and only found in ancient woodland with established fungal colonies are **Sword Leaved Helleborine** and **White Helleborine**, found at Chappets Wood, West Meon from early to mid-May. Helleborines tend to hybridise, with colours ranging from fake yellow, green and white making them tricky to identify. **Fly Orchids** can be found at Chappets Wood and Noar Hill, Selbourne, they like woodland clearings and margins and rare variants can be found.

Sword Leaved Helleborine
Cephalanthera longifolia

Heath Spotted Orchid
Dactylorhiza maculata

Mid May to mid July is the main orchid season. The stunning **Bee Orchid** is not thin and delicate like so many and can be seen in numerous locations including in the rock garden of the George Pub on Portsdown Hill, Claylands in Bishops Waltham and best at Dancing Ledge where they occur in their hundreds.

The medieval chalk pits at Noar Hill are home to 11 species of orchids and rare butterflies and highly recommended to visit in May or June for the **Pyramidal Orchids** which can vary in colour from deep pink to white. Some orchids have fragrances including **Musk** and **Chalk Fragrant Ochids** all found at Noar Hill, Musk orchids are listed as rare but common at this site. Martin Down is also highly recommended for a visit, home to 10 orchid species and rare butterflies.

The acidic soils of the New Forest provide habitat for different orchids, the damp meadows of Boundway Hill are a good site, with **Marsh Helleborines** and **Heath Spotted** which is similar to the **Common Spotted** but without a long tongue and wider than it is long, look for them in bogs or on tussocks of grass.

By July the main orchid season is over with just 1 or 2 helleborines, one found at Hillier's Arboretum. These are pale varieties, red ones are not found in Hampshire. In August only one remains, a small delicate plant, **Autumn Ladies Tresses**, found by the old flats in Royal Victoria Country Park and at Noar Hill. **Irish ladies Tresses** have also recently been found in Wales. To maintain orchid populations the habitat often has to be managed, at Noar Hill cattle are grazed over winter to keep the grass short.

Lady Orchids, and strange looking **Lizard Orchids** photographed at Sandwich Bay, are found in Kent which tends to be warmer than Hampshire. **Lizard Orchids** have been noted moving east along the coast so could be seen here in the future, perhaps due to global warming. In Kent you can find stunning **Late Spider Orchids** as seen at Folkestone Down.

Different orchids are found in northern England, **Northern Marsh Orchids** are abundant at Carrick a Rede, Causeway Coast, by the bridge. The **Tyne Helleborine** shown at Williamston Reserve, Northumberland, could be an evolving **Dune Helleborine** and only grows along the Tyne in areas contaminated with metals from old mine workings.

Hybrids make identification difficult, there are lots at Hartslock by the Thames in Oxfordshire where there is a wide range in percentage of variation. This is the only site in the UK where **Lady** and **Monkey Orchids** have hybridised, first recorded in 2006, and they have subsequently become the dominant species at this site. Orchids naturally love to hybridise and can be confused with sub-

species which look like hybrids, and these can become very vigorous, one in N. Ireland grows to 3ft tall. The use of genetics has altered identification, disclosing relationships, and an acceptance of hybrids.

Common Fragrant Orchid
Gymnadenia conopsea

Anyone interested in learning more about orchids could join the Bournemouth Orchid Society details of their activities www.bournemouthorchidsociety.org.uk or the Wessex Orchid Society which meets in Portchester, details ***wessexorchidsociety.org.uk***, both have talks and shows.

Bee Orchid
Ophrys apifera

The **Green-winged Orchid** is a short orchid of unimproved grasslands, mainly on chalky soils, although it can be spotted on banks, village greens and even in churchyards.

Indeed in Soutampton it can be found in good numbers in St Mary Extra Cemetary. Look for it in May-June.

The flower spike carries a cluster of pinky-purple flowers (sometimes white) that give this orchid its name - the hood formed by the sepals is lined with green veins. Green-winged Orchids are pollinated by bumblebees.

How to identify

The three-lobed, pink or purple flowers of the Green-winged orchid cluster around a single spike. The 'hood' of the flowers is formed by the sepals and is lined with green veins. The leaves are narrow and pointed, and do not have spots.

Wild New Forest 2020-2021

Marcus Ward

Illustrated Talk March 2021

Wild New Forest is a not-for-profit Community Interest Company (CIC) set up by Marcus Ward *(below, right)* **and Russel Wynn** *(left)* **in 2016. Their aim was to inform, involve and inspire everybody about wildlife in the New Forest and they run identification workshops, tours, public talks and advise landowners on management for wildlife. They have over 40 years of experience of recording, monitoring and surveying between them, collecting scientific data for research and informing management bodies, with many records captured on amazing photographs.**

The pair set a goal to see if they could record 2021 species present in the New Forest National Park in the year 2020-2021, perhaps driven by competition between them to find the most. Weather can have a huge impact on wildlife and February that year was the wettest on record with 3 named storms, but

Hawfinch
Coccothraustes coccothraustes

it remained very mild. August had some high temperatures but was also wet with 2 named storms. A dry September was followed by a very wet October with exceptional rain associated with storm Alex. We were treated to a photographic diary of some of the species seen through 2020.

In January a very tiny **Nail Fungus**, a species unique to the New Forest, was found on very smelly horse poo. An unusually large number of **Hawfinches** were seen on **Hornbeam** and a lot of time was spent at the location to appreciate this remarkable event. A **Portuguese Man of War** was washed up on Hurst Beach after a storm and **Southern Wood Ants** were active. Marcus and Russell were engaged in an ongoing study of declining **Woodcocks** and **Snipe**, and ringing was carried nocturnally behind Balmer Lawn when these species could be caught feeding; the data is used to understand behaviour patterns - one bird had come from Russia to the New Forest.

Seen in February were **Larch** cones and flowers, a **Serotine Bat**, and the magnificent **Queen Bower Oak** was included in a survey of ancient Oaks.

Spoonbill
Platalea leucorodia

Spoonbills, once a rare sight, now winter along the south coast and were seen in March at Pennington Marshes, with 11 recorded this year. A **Honey Bee** was seen on **Gorse** - this evergreen perennial shrub on heathland provides an important habitat, as does the flowering **Blackthorn** where many small birds can be found.

In April Wild New Forest had a contract to survey Beaulieu Heath West which gave an excuse to cycle round the New Forest bogs looking for birds, rising early to visit sites at sunrise. **Red Kites**, common in northern Hampshire are now breeding in the NE corner of the New Forest. Also recorded were a **Grass Snake**, **Dark-edged Bee-fly**, **Wood Sorrel** in flower, **Orange Tip** butterfly on a **Bluebell**, a **Raft Spider** only seen by sitting quietly so as not to cause any disturbance, and a **Dwarf Thistle** only found after hours in the cold and wet. There were 68 pairs of **Lapwing** which had young. Very few of the young birds survived, many were predated and like many other species were devastated by the cold spell nicknamed the Beast from the East.

In May a **Peregrine Falcon** passed over a colony of gulls at Pylewell Foreshore creating a noisy response. A **Smooth Newt** was seen in a pool with a **Raft Spider**, **Bog Bean** in flower which is common in marshy areas and dozens of **Narrow-bordered Bee Hawk-moths** on Bugle. It was a good year for **Pearl-bordered Fritillary**. Also seen were an **Emperor Moth**, **Beautiful Demoiselle**, which are common in the New Forest, and a **Common Cockchafer** which is fascinating to watch if you get the chance. **Wood Warblers** are a classic New Forest species but in decline and 2020 was a very poor year for them. **Curlew** nest on the ground and their nests are difficult to see. They are prone to damage by predation, being trampled on, or worried by dogs. From 48 pairs only 5 chicks fledged, unfortunately the outcome is always poor and sometimes none survive. Two Curlew nests were next to a car park and this was closed for the season to give them a chance. **Peregrines** here are also ground nesting, and of the pair of fluffy chicks from one nest one stayed around for a year. **Small Red Damselflies** are another classic New Forest species, as are **Southern Damselflies** which are not common elsewhere. **Toadlets** and **tadpoles** are another iconic species of the larger puddles on the New Forest tracks. **Common Snipe** require a very specific habitat and 151 pairs were counted throughout the forest.

At the beginning of June 3 species of **Cotton Grass** were found in bogs at Backley Bottom, along with **Mottled Grasshoppers**. In mid-June a **Light Crimson Underwing** Moth, another New Forest specialist, was spotted in a garden. **Sea Kale** was seen along the beach to Hurt Castle, a **Pellucid Hoverfly** on bramble flowers (common in the New Forest), with *Rutpela maculata* the **Black and Yellow Lonhorn** beetle. **Wild Gladiolus** was found but there were very few in 2021. A common **Swallow-tailed Moth**, and a spectacular hoverfly *Sphaerophoria scripta* were both seen. Tiny flowers of **Coral Necklace** are fairly common on sandy footpaths across the New Forest although they have been regarded as rare.

July was greeted by watching the sunrise at Hatchet Moor. A **Honey Buzzard** seen in flight was born and bred in the New Forest. A beautiful and energetic **Green Tiger Beetle** was found, and it was a good year for the **Silver-studded Blue** Butterfly. A **Bank Vole** was a treat to see as there are very limited numbers of small mammals. **Bog Asphodel** is widespread and common, and also recorded were **Sundew** of which there are 3 species in the New Forest. A **Blue-tailed Damselfly** was seen caught in an **Oblong-leaved Sundew**. A **Marsh Helleborine** was found - these are very limited in number and perhaps only one site is left in the New Forest where they are found. **Common Lizards** are

Clifden Nonpareil
Catocala fraxini

very quick to move and difficult to photograph. Out on a family walk a **Common Pipistrelle** was found caught in wire hanging off a fence and looking dead, but they gave it some water and had the wing stitched and it survived. There are a good mix of bats to be found with a bat detector at night. Only 3 pairs of **Lesser Redpolls** were seen and they are in serious decline. On a walk by the sea wall a **Weasel** was seen going back and forth and an **Avocet** was having an altercation with a gull. A few **Sexton Beetles** were found (look for them in public areas on dog poo). **Wasp Spiders** which were once relatively rare are now much more common in the Forest.

On night walks in August a **Jersey Tiger Moth**, a **Tanner Beetle**, and a large black beetle were recorded. There was an impressive close-up photo of the head of a large **Marsh Horsefly**, also a rare micro moth and a hairy **Vapourer Moth** larva with spectacular colours. A scarce **Hedgehog** was seen; these are not abundant in the New Forest and more commonly found associated with human habitats. Another rare sight now was a timid **Muntjac Deer**, a non-native species which flourished but is now being removed by New Forest Wardens. At the end of August widespread **Marsh Gentians**, **New Forest flies** which get in your hair, and fairly rare **Marsh Clubmoss** in with Sundew were all observed.

In September **Field Gentian** and **Lady's Tresses** were seen on an area of short cropped grass. A striking moth, **Merviele du Jour**, was found but one of the highlights of the year was the large moth **Clifden Nonpareil**, first caught in a moth trap and so large it sits in the palm of your hand.

In October an **Otter** was seen around the same time every night on a camera trap. Also recorded were **Devils Fingers**, a spectacular non-native species of fungus spreading from Australia, and **Beefsteak Fungus**, so named because it looks and feels like beef, generally found on Oak trees. Migratory birds were ringed including a rare **Yellow-browed Warbler**. More fungi included **Amethyst Deceiver** and **Magpie**

Amethyst deceiver
Laccaria amethystina

Inkcap, **Porcelain Fungus** and **Stinkhorn**. The **Red Deer** rut occurs in October. An **Olive Tree Pearl** migrant moth was one of several caught in a trap this year, previously only 1 or 2. **Firecrest** numbers were good this year.

Seen in November were **Bracken Club** fungus, a niche species, an **Adder**, and **Spotted Red Shank** at Salters Marsh, only found where water is clear as they need to see to feed.

In December **Dark-bellied Brent Geese** numbers were building up on the coast and *Xanthoria parietina*, a common species of lichen, was found on Blackthorn. A winter **Raven** reminded Marcus to ask us to please record any sightings of these as they need to know how many are in the New Forest. On a Christmas walk, a **Grey Plover** in flight, and on the beach **Hornwrack**, and a **Common Whelk** with a **Coastal Centipede**. A final species of the year was **Irish Moss seen** on the beach visiting Hurst Castle at sunset on 31st December.

Total number of species recorded for 2021 was 2024, so the target was exceeded.

600 Moths and Butterflies

500 Plants and Trees

330 Terrestrial Invertebrates

250 Fungi

200 Birds

100 Lichens, Mosses, and Coastal species

30 Terrestrial Vertebrates

Visit their web-site ***wildnewforest.co.uk*** for full details of all the ongoing projects, tours and educational activities. Updates on their work can be found on social media - particularly their Facebook Pages (search for Wild New Forest).

A Walk on the Wildside

As well as the fantastic series of online talks reported in this Annual Report, we were able to arrange a series of guided walks during the year.

Apart from the usual planning associated with arranging any walk, this year we were also making sure all our walks were COVID compliant to ensure as safe an environment as possible for participating members. We would particularly like to thank our walk leaders for taking on this extra responsibility to ensure that our walks were as welcoming and enjoyable as possible.

Peartree Green

Copythorne Common

Portchester Castle

Mayfield Park

Below are a couple of short diary entries of two of the walks as well as some images from the walks over the last year.

Creech Wood

We had a dry sunny day in November. The woods are part of the Forest of Bere near Denmead. The car-park is busy but once one heads into the woods there are very few people and it is quite eerie. There are a wide range of walks here but we were able to do a circular one taking in the dense pine wood and taking advantage of the season looking for fungi.

The thick woodland floor covering of pine needles was like nothing I had seen. It was so spongy and it felt like one was on a trampoline, and tempting to dig down and see how far before one would reach the base layer. I resisted.

The other outstanding things were a silver birch that had a girth of at least 4 to 5'. and a couple of ravens.

It is certainly an area that would be worth another visit.

Creech Wood

Creech Wood, Denmead, Waterlooville

Sat Nav Postcode: PO7 6UB

Head south-west from Denmead on the Bunkers Hill road towards Southwick. The car park is on the left hand side.

OS Grid Ref SU647113

Knot

Poole Harbour

Poole Harbour trip on 29th January.

Poole Harbour is the largest European natural harbour and is the location of numerous birdwatching sites. This popular trip takes the ferry from Poole to Sandbanks to explore the Littlesea and Studland area.

A rather common place list which began with a little group of Knot flying across the harbour entrance in front of the ferry and Black Headed gulls flying around the

Brownsea Island ferry pier. Littlesea was fairly quiet just a few Mallard in the reeds, a Grey Heron stalking round the other side of the same reeds and two buzzards floated over the wood land on the seaward side.

A Marsh Harrier eventually put in an appearance but there were almost no duck to take alarm and fly off. A few Blue Tit were flitting through the pines approaching the hide and a Song Thrush was also audible as was a Dartford Warbler churring from cover in the Gorse. Inevitably a Robin piped up as well.

After lunch Brands Bay proved rather more productive and a skein of waterbirds included Dunlin, several Curlew, Little Egret, probably a couple of hundred Wigeon, Oystercatchers, a couple of dozen Avocet, several pairs of Pintail, Lesser Black Backed gull, a random scattering of Teal, several Common Gull, Shelduck, Brent Geese and, rather further out, Red Breasted Merganser, two males and probably at least three females.

Redshank and Ringed Plover were a welcome sight on the foreshore mud and a Pied Wagtail finished off the list as we approached the ferry on the return leg.

You can get all the information you need about when and how to visit the areas around Poole Harbour by visiting birdsofpooleharbour.co.uk

Littlesea © Phil Champion

Cadman's Pool

Hut Wood

Daisy Dip

Wellstead Park

Broughton Down

Future Walks

Keep an eye on our website at ***sotonnhs.net*** for details of future field trips. Our events are family-friendly. Assistance dogs welcome, but no other dogs, please.

The web-site will give an indication of the length of each walk. Most of them are easy walking but some can several miles, but you can always contact the walk leader for further information.

Can you help?

Do you have a suggestion for a natural history walk that our members and guests might enjoy?

Perhaps you would like to lead (or co-lead) a walk round your favourite local patch? Let us know by using the contact form on our web-site or by emailing our Field Trip Officer ***walks@sotonnhs.net***

Peartree Green Local Nature Reserve

Jill Doubleday and Philip Budd

Some members of the Southampton Natural History Society will be familiar with Peartree Green LNR because Phil Budd, chair of the Friends of Peartree Green, has led guided walks there in conjunction with SNHS.

For those of you who are not familiar with it, we'll start with a very brief introduction before reporting on the activities held in 2021, and the biodiversity on the reserve.

Peartree Green is a site of 51.4 acres that was designated an LNR in 2017. It lies on the eastern side of Southampton, with its western boundary running alongside the Southampton-Portsmouth railway line.

It's an urban reserve, bordered by Peartree Road to the south, with back gardens of houses adjacent to the track that forms its northern boundary. Within the reserve there are further residential properties in Peartree Close and along Sea Road. To the east, Peartree Avenue separates the main part of the reserve from the smaller part around Pear Tree Church.

The reserve is well-used, particularly by dog walkers, but many local people are not aware of the extent of the site, or that it is a nature reserve. The long-distance walk the Itchen Way goes across the reserve.

We have an active Friends group with a following of almost 800 people on Facebook, and a good number of volunteers who help to maintain the reserve during our regular conservation work parties and litter picks. In the past we have run educational visits for local school children, looking at the flora and fauna on the reserve through activities such as butterfly hunts, and we hope to restart these in 2022. We also welcome children to our guided walks and bioblitzes. In 2021, we were delighted to be awarded the Wilder Group of the Year award by the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust, who were

particularly impressed at the ways in which we're getting people involved in our urban setting.

We are keen to spread the word about the Green being a nature reserve and what that means, as well as making it easier for people to enjoy it. Some of the ways that we've done this are outlined below.

Events held in 2021

In May, we held our first group walk in conjunction with a local housing service

provider, Home Group, with the aim of providing a general orientation to the reserve and its biodiversity. This was successful and was then followed by three more walks in July, September, and October.

On 3 July we featured as a clue on BBC Radio Solent's Clued-Up programme, giving Jill the chance to spread the word to radio listeners for the first time. On 17 August Southampton City Council's engagement officer Ian Bailey ran a well-attended wildlife-themed activity morning for families.

Phil Budd ran four specialist events: a moth lamp on 14 August and three guided walks in conjunction with SNHS. The first on 11 September focussed on flora and insects, with the other two, on 21 November and 28 December, looking at birds.

Habitats of the reserve

Peartree Green is designated as a Local Nature Reserve based on its habitat and species diversity. The lower half of the reserve can be considered the largest and most important area of calcareous i.e. chalky grassland and scrub in the Southampton area. Natural chalk does not exist close to the surface in Southampton and the chalky soil at Peartree Green is partly a relic of the industrial past when there was a small railway system there or due to the dumping of chalk introduced from elsewhere due to motorway works. Prior to that the lower green was marshland and, before the railway was built, an embayment of the River Itchen.

In August 1983, a serious fire burnt much of the lower green and the area was landscaped, with new tree plantings near the railway. Since then, and despite occasional fires, the green has gradually scrubbed up so that today there is a 50:50 mix of scrub and grassland. The dominant scrub species are various species of bramble and buddleia with grey willow, blackthorn, hawthorn and gorse locally. There are also characteristic chalky soil plants like dogwood, privet, and clematis present. Gradually and since World War Two oak woodland has developed at the northern end of the green.

The upper green consists of regularly mown acidic grassland and the soil in this area overlies the natural sandy clays and gravels. These grasslands are good for waxcap fungi and certain short herbaceous plants. A disused road runs across the upper green and is bordered on both sides by Cornish elm hedges, which have their associated flora and fauna.

Between this road, the woodland and the houses is an area of acidic grassland known as 'the heath' with bramble and gorse scrub too. In this area false oat grass is gradually invading but is being managed. One other area, to the south of the houses, is the picnic area. Here there is amenity grassland with planted trees, but the roadside banks here contain some interesting flora such as corky-fruited water-dropwort.

Prior to World War Two there were more houses here. The growth of sycamore trees on the green now inhibits the former views over Southampton from the upper green but these views can still be enjoyed in all their glory atop Phil's Hill in the centre of the green.

Guess who Phil's Hill is named after?

Species of the reserve

An ongoing checklist of species recorded at Peartree Green LNR is held by the friends. At the time of writing, February 2022, this list includes about 1,280 species of everything. Sources of information include species seen casually over 40 years or more plus those recorded on our events, especially our annual 'bioblitz' events. Local birdwatchers have added to the list and there have been specific surveys in the past covering such groups as lichens, mosses, flora, moths, ladybirds, shield-bugs, and snails.

Beginning with the fungi, over 100 species of these have been recorded. A particularly rare fungus is the so-called **Common Morel** *Morchella esculenta* which appeared on a fire site two springs running. There is also a rare bracket associated with elm *Perenniporia fraxinea* and a rare species called *Auriculariopsis ampla* found in the aspen stand. The striking **Golden-eye Lichen** *Teloschistes chrysophthalmus* has been found on an apple tree by the railway. Over 300 flowering plants have been identified including **Pyramidal**

Orchid (which typically numbers over 1,000 and is diligently counted by one FOPG member), **Bee Orchid** and **Bithynian Vetch**. The latter occurs nowhere else in Hampshire.

Almost 100 bird species have been seen on the reserve and there are good breeding populations of **Blackcap**, **Whitethroat**, and **Greenfinch** in the scrubby areas. A **Cetti's Warbler**, normally a marshland bird, has taken up residence on the reserve recently. Of reptiles, there appear to be no snakes on the green and only lizards and slow-worms. Of mammals there are no rabbits but good numbers of **Field Vole** and **Wood Mouse** with **Yellow-necked Mouse** present in the woodland. Nearly 30 species of butterfly have been sighted on the reserve with three species of particular interest, these are the **Small Blue**,

Green Hairstreak and **White-letter Hairstreak**. Butterfly lovers come from far and wide to see the latter on the **Cornish Elm** hedge in June and July. The wealth of insect life, spiders and snails can hardly bee summarised in a short article, but there should be mention of the very attractive **Jersey Tiger** moth, which can now been in August flying by both by day and night.

Further information about this fine local nature reserve can be found at ***facebook.com/friendsofpeartreegreen/***

Return of the Peregrine

Keith Betton

Illustrated Talk December 2021

Keith is Chairman of Hampshire Ornithological Society and County Bird Recorder and is known worldwide for his work.

Peregrines are the fastest birds on Earth, they can turn quickly in flight drawing their wings in close to form a bullet shape when diving for prey. They can make mistakes and often crash into buildings during their first year. The teardrop below the eye helps them to see in bright sunlight. Male and female rarely sit together at the nest site, they are easily differentiated with the male being much smaller, lighter in colour, and having a larger eye. Pigeons are their most common prey locally although they do take wading birds or others given the opportunity. Climate change is extending the egg laying period, with sometimes up to 5 eggs, but of those which hatch 50-70% die in the first year. Formerly peregrine nesting sites and perches were on cliffs but are now very common on high buildings or structures, they appear to be adapting well to changes humans have made to the environment. There are 19 different versions of this bird across the world, some looking very different, but all are called Peregrines.

Peregrines had largely disappeared from England by the first half of the 20th Century, killed by humans for sport and their attractive eggs collected by Victorians. The situation was exacerbated by the use of pigeons as message carriers during the war as there was a concerted effort to kill their predators to enable the pigeons to deliver. After the war the widespread use of persistent chemicals in agriculture to destroy pests and increase yield caused contamination in the food chain with devastating effects on wildlife and caused a collapse in the UK peregrine population in the 1950s.

The return of the peregrines to most of the UK is a success story which has developed without any need for reintroduction, as has had to happen with other species, but there was a need to protect sites and enhance facilities such as providing nest boxes. There are no peregrines in Shetland or west of Scotland where sea birds were their main prey and mercury contamination in fish has killed further up the food chain, fishing birds are also in decline.

More peregrines are seen in winter, many migrate south from Scandinavia, but there are now over 2,000 breeding pairs in the UK and with growing chicks there is an increase the number seen.

In 1993 the first recorded pair nested on the recently demolished chimney at Fawley, they now need a new home and a nesting box is being provided close by. The Canute boat crane hosted a breeding pair from 2004, when it moved to the Isle of Wight the female stayed with it while the male stayed in Southampton. As numbers increased there were more observers, and more nesting sites were made, so probably helping the population. Nest boxes are fairly basic with fish tank gravel in a wooden box sited on the highest building or structure. There are usually 4 eggs and the male has little to do with hatching them. Three often hatch first and the later one is smaller and often dies.

Birds are ringed and Hampshire rings are orange with large numbers. The only UK ground nesting peregrines are in Hampshire, these originate from ground nesting parents, unfortunately they suffer fatalities from drowning with 3 pairs lost this year. Peregrines choose strange sites for their nests, found on chimney stacks at Fawley, on tension type pylons, and on a crane in the container port which is the only known mobile nest as it moves along the rails. Nearby alternative sites have been provided to persuade them to move with full co-operation from relevant management. Also found on the dock head grain silos and on the gantry, very noisy and dusty locations but they do well. The female was from London and laid her eggs in grain the first year, 3 eggs were quite dark but the 4th was smaller, pale and had no speckles. ABP have been very supportive and moved a nest box to a more suitable location from the port to the docks, here the eggs were taken by carrion crow but 4 more eggs were laid, the female ate 2 of them and only 1 hatched. Another pair nested on the top of Norwich House, a high rise building in the centre of Southampton, in 2020 the male died and no chicks were raised but a new male was in place 2021 and 1 chick was raised.

A pair of peregrines named Winnie and Chester have nested on Winchester Cathedral since 2017. Chester was at least 12 years old and died in 2021, a post mortem revealed he was underweight with internal parasites. The pair had been together at least since 2013 when they took up residence on the former Police HQ where the Hampshire Ornithological Society had supplied a nesting box, then moving to the Cathedral. Choosing to nest in the gully, which acts as a drain, their eggs were washed away the first year. A nesting box was put on the north side by the Rose Window which was successfully

used, but no ladder was supplied to enable the chicks to climb back into the box in the first year and the chicks had to be rescued and put back on the nest every time they jumped off to stop them getting wet and washed away, worth the effort as 5 chicks were successful. In June they learned to fly and came down amongst the tourists causing a bit of a flap. At 6 weeks the male chick is noticeably smaller than the female. It is not only in this country that Peregrines have adapted from their previous habitats to seek out nesting places on high-rise buildings, Keith had a photo of 4 chicks living on an apartment block in Chicago.

The National Grid discourages peregrines from nesting in pylons, certainly not the best place for them being the hottest and coldest sites with no shelter and completely exposed to all weathers where many chicks fall to their death. Where possible alternative nesting boxes are positioned nearby to encourage them to relocate but nests are removed from pylons.

Many of us were aware of the recent demolition of the tower at the defunct Fawley power station. This was done after the nesting period, and the building was checked to make sure none remained. The first of the loud sounds heard was a boom to frighten any birds away, the second was the demolition explosion. It is likely the peregrines will nest next year on a high structure nearby, they will be monitored and assisted if required, but still awaiting permission to put a box on a suitable building.

An interesting discussion followed, one member had regularly seen peregrines on the Civic Centre building, they are not nesting there but eat their prey and feathers had been collected for identification.

Keith has requested for any sightings of suspected breeding peregrines be reported to him at ***keithbetton@hotmail.com***

Recommended reading ***Where to Watch Birds in Dorset, Hampshire and the Isle of Wight: 5th Edition*** by Keith Betton, also available in Kindle edition.

The Work of Southampton City Council's New Ecologist

Samantha Munslow

Illustrated Talk Novermber 2021

Sam is employed on a 3 year contract from February 2021 to work on Southampton's Greener City Plan with Lindsay McCulloch. Living locally, she had previously been involved in Ecological Consultancy, specialising in protected species legislation, mitigation and compensation in relation to planning applications. Her role at the council is very different and should be very rewarding. To make sure she was familiar with all the greenspaces in the city, before starting her position she visited all the parks, nature reserves and greenways in the city. She was amazed at how much green space there is in Southampton but noted that much of it is disconnected.

What is Southampton's Greener City Plan? It addresses:

- Sustainable energy and carbon reduction
- Cleaner air
- Resources, waste and water management
- Sustainable travel
- Our Natural environment - and this is where Sam is involved and why she has been taken on at the council.

A number of projects are underway to involve the public, not only raising awareness to take notice of the environment but, to actively take part in taking care of nature and the city. Sam wants to build an up to date picture of what is in the city in terms of biodiversity and started by looking at what was already in place and to build on that. In the past Southampton has been a hot spot for swifts but the population has decreased significantly in recent times, mainly due to city redevelopment which removed nesting places in older buildings.

In consultation with the Hampshire Swift Society, the council has bought nesting boxes for schools and is also looking to include nest sites in new

buildings and those under repair. Sam is a member of Hampshire Bat Group and also a bat carer. She has sought their help to undertake surveys in Southampton's greenspaces and add to the understanding of what bats are where and how they are using habitats in the city. Activity surveys have been set up in some of the greenways, using "audio moths" to records bat sounds and boxes have been set up in the Central Parks which will be monitored to see whether bats use them for roosting. Bat walks took place in some of the greenways and a bat transect through the Central Parks detected constant feeding buzzes, signifying they are important local feeding areas for a number of bat species.

The council is looking to create more areas of meadow within the city, leaving areas to grow and only cutting back at the end of the summer. Some wildflower areas are natural and others cleared and seeded, some are just small areas around buildings (such as by the Civic Centre) where the soil is very thin and so herbs are prevalent and grasses low. There are around 145 wildflower sites in the city, the plan is to increase this. Not all wildflower areas have been a success, planters along Victoria Road in Woolston were seeded but did not look very attractive, they were not well received and some residents replanted them with their own specimens. More public awareness is needed to get people supporting the wildflower plan, with surveys to record how they are doing year on year.

All council staff working on maintaining greenspaces in the city are to be given wildlife awareness training, including what species are protected, and why and how the council's activities could affect certain species. Advice will be given in terms of sensitive timings of working and what to do in terms of avoiding harm to wildlife. Suitable bodies of water were sampled for Great Crested Newt in 2021 and further surveys will take place in future seasons. A dormouse monitoring site has been set up. Moth trapping has been carried out at some locations, including the Common; more moth sampling is planned. Sam is also involved in invasive species eradication, helping identify hot spot areas.

A Green Grid project is a key part of Sam's work. The idea of the Green Grid is to design and implement a network of green, linked areas across the city to improve Southampton for people and wildlife. With climate change, the city needs to be more resilient. The data analysis and mapping is being carried out by the University of Southampton (Geodata). Issues such as heat, noise, health and wellbeing, surface water flooding, air pollution and gaps in greenspace will feed into a Green Grid Map and Action Plan and assist with where to focus projects such as tree planting, creating wildflower meadows and delivering all types of green infrastructure. **The Action Plan will also include timeframes for projects, and where finance will come from to help deliver the projects.** The Green Grid will also affect planning policy and internal guidance in relation to things like planting, species selection and provisions for wildlife (ie. hedgehog passes and swift nest boxes).

The first round of internal consultation on the Green Grid has been completed. External consultation is taking place in February and March 2022. Sam would like your feedback and thoughts about the Green Grid. How do the public get involved? They will be encouraged to join and support local wildlife groups, volunteer to help, look after what is around your area, and spread the word. Everyone in the city is encouraged to provide their feedback on the Green Grid via the consultation website and a link to the site will be shared. Phil Budd has been involved with some of Sam's work and has agreed to help with some botanical training of volunteers so the wildflower areas in the city can be surveyed and monitored. The hope is to get joined up thinking, looking for

sites which could be included such as railway cuttings, schools, highways and businesses etc. With the new Environment Bill, Biodiversity Net Gain will be mandatory; development will need to deliver a 10% net gain in biodiversity. This is a significant step in terms of compensating for loss of habitat.

Swift box installation by *Action for Swifts*

During the following discussion members brought attention to the perceived lack of attention to ensuring current agreed action plans are followed. As an example, it was suggested that Bereavement Services at Southampton Old Cemetery have not kept to the plan which is highly detrimental to butterfly diversity and population, as witnessed and monitored members of the Society. If current plans are not being adhered to there would seem little hope of increasing the scope without a change in management strategy to ensure planned changes are implemented.

Let there be Light – Ancient British Forests or Wood Pastures

Jill Butler

Illustrated Talk September 2021

Jill joined the Woodland Trust in 1995 and in 2002 became their ancient treescape specialist. Now retired she continues to promote a greater understanding of our very special ancient trees and the actions required to ensure there is a continuing succession for centuries to come.

Ancient trees origins are in wood pastures and parkland where they have been surrounded by space to allow them to grow to full crown at maturity and then 'grow downwards' as they age.

The New Forest is recognised as one of the best examples of ancient forest (wood pasture) in Europe and is home to some of these remarkable trees. Oak and Yew are the native trees that live the longest, some are 700 years or more in age, and can be recognised by their large girth created as a growth ring is added every year. From maturity onwards, where a tree has been allowed to grow without competition for light and nutrients from surrounding younger trees, the crown will naturally flatten or retrench (reduce in height/width), the trunk becomes hollow and limbs decay or dieback, providing a wide range of ecological niches. Each tree species has different shade tolerances or demands for light, and this leads to a variety of habitats such as Caledonian pine forest (open wood pasture) to high forest beech (closed canopy woodland). Oliver Rackham wrote "an open grown oak over 500 years old is worth more than 10,000 plantation grown oaks 200 years old for providing a greater range of habitats for wildlife" and it also sequesters more carbon and is far better for the ecology both above and below ground.

Ancient Oak
Windsor Great Park
© Malcolm Gould

Woodland Pasture
New Forest
© Jim Champion

There is a misconception that all ancient trees are in woodland, especially ancient woodland. Instead they are found in great parks such as Windsor Great Park, and maybe in town or city parks such as in Southampton. However if care is not taken in urban parks especially there will be no succession or establishment of species to provide ancient trees for millennia to come.

Ancient Forests, like the New Forest, present the best examples of how the natural evolution of these landscapes developed over thousands of years. Large herbivores such as cattle and deer open up space and graze most of the competition to retain areas of open heathland and herb rich pasture with patches of thorny bush which give vital protection to the tree saplings. If there is no grazing it leads to succession of ever more shade tolerant species. Closed canopy woodland with minimum intervention leads to less diversity. Wood pastures with grazing create the greatest diversity of vegetation structure and therefore greatest number of niches for the richest biodiversity.

Frans Vera used the New Forest as an example of open wood pasture landscapes with grassland and patches of scrub establishing with hawthorn and blackthorn. Acorns (planted by Jays) grow and are protected from grazing by the thorny scrub but get enough light to thrive while the surrounding area will remain open through grazing, allowing them to grow to maturity without competition for light, water and nutrients. An open grown oak has 20 times more leaves, pollen and nectar than a plantation oak of the same age. New Forest management needs to sustain this ancient wood pasture structure for millennia to come. Cattle, deer, horses and pigs are excellent as they are analogues of native wild herbivores. Sheep and goats (non-native) damage scrub and the system of tree regeneration, and they are not good for ecological development. Most native plants have strategies to avoid being eaten but non-native animals can change the dynamics and that is why we use them to control scrub where it is not wanted. Red Deer have in the past been very important in the landscape especially in landscapes that have been beneficial for ancient trees and are our only large herbivore survivors from the distant past.

A Saxton Elizabethan map of England 1587 shows open grown trees in the historic Forests. Ancient trees with large horizontal and bent branches forming knees were vital for the construction of large buildings and ships. Windsor Great Park, with Red Deer, was the top site for trees, and perhaps because was not used by commoners has always had exceptional dead wood value. In Norman times Commons and Parks often helped trees to survive to old age by pollarding the limbs for wood and through grazing. Over time the Forests of wild woody grounds and fruitful pastures (forests) shrank due to privatisation of the land from the Crown.

Wood pastures are recognised as helping with biodiversity and climate change and are closer to our ancient wild woodland than high forests, as they still contain some maiden uncut ancient trees with their associated species richness, especially for invertebrates and lichens, which is related to the age of trees. Veteran trees, open grassland and heathland, glades and edges, with scrub mosaics provide most habitats and niche requirements for wildlife. They are the key to the future and can be traced back to the last Ice Age.

In a census of maiden ancient oaks >9m in girth it was found England has 126, the whole of the rest of Europe just 97. Most ecologists do not recognise the importance of the New Forest, or the need to conserve, restore, expand and recreate for sustainability, and its dynamic vegetation structure should

be prioritised as it is internationally important. Some countries have recognised the importance of these resources which once lost can never be replaced. Spain is actively promoting conservation, with Scandinavia and Romania close behind but it is not happening in Turkey. Forestry and timber production is important but plantation tree planting along timber production lines is not good for biodiversity and may actually add to the greenhouse problem. In the UK there is poor protection for park-like treescapes.

Trees do not move, they may survive up to a 1,000 years in the same place creating the great structures they are from just air, water and nutrients, growing leaves which fall and provide sustaining nutrients for future growth, Kew has now been persuaded to blow leaves back under trees in the autumn and not remove them which created nutrient depletion in the soils. As trees age, dead heartwood in the middle of the trunk decays giving the nutrients back to the tree. Trees can even develop aerial roots which extend into the decay. Sometimes seeds germinate in the forks of trees and where the heartwood decay is exposed can develop and have been called cuckoo or air trees. Trees are not weakened by heartwood decay, the resulting cylinder is a strong and flexible structure, sapwood is a sensitive material which can add new growth to adjust to suit changing conditions. Elm and Ash are shade tolerant and very palatable to animals, in the past they were also pollarded in dry periods to supply fresh leaves to livestock and also in wet areas when hay crops failed.

There is obviously a need for timber and this needs to be managed as a product separately and not confused with addressing the biodiversity crisis. A concerted push by all conservation and nature groups to plant more trees is heralded as the answer to global warming, rewilding and saving the planet, but is not a natural solution to the problem. It is forcing a man-made solution which is of little value to biodiversity and the wrong trees in the wrong place can cause damage. A photograph showed

European Bison
Bison bonasus
Rewilding project on the Danish island of Bornholm

what we have all seen, along the motorways and by new housing developments everywhere, close rows of saplings in plastic sleeves to protect them from deer or other damage. What happens to all the plastic? Look more closely and most will found planted on former grassland, often alongside existing hedge rows or single trees. What happens to that habitat when the trees grow and lack of light, water and nutrients will result in poor diversity at ground level. Good grassland is high carbon sequestering, there is an urgent need to save our grasslands and provide habitats for insects.

There is some recognition that something has to be done for our current ancient trees to continue to survive and enable young trees today to become magnificent ancient trees 1,000 years from now. The key is to have the right tree in the right location and give them enough space, with native species and native wildlife which work together, the New Forest now has good diversity which was influenced by subsidies. There is a need to rethink analogies between the role played by ancient species in the landscape and the managed and the domesticated, perceived equivalent animals now roaming our habitats. Many of our native wildlife have gone from our landscapes, some are being slowly reintroduced but effects need to be monitored. Perhaps Bison will be next, already this has happened in the Netherlands and the results seem to be good.

Frans Vera hypothesised that “the most natural forest was a park like landscape consisting of open grass/heathlands, scrub (banks), open grown solitary trees and patches of closed canopy/groves. Large herbivores are the key.”

Recommended reading

Grazing Ecology and Forest History, F W M Vera, 2000 (studies done in the New Forest)

Pasture-Woodlands in Lowland Britain, published by Institute of Terrestrial Ecology, NERC, by Paul T Harding and Francis Rose, 1986.

Reptiles and Amphibians and Other Wildlife of Calakmul

Joshua Phangurha

Ilustrated Talk February 2021

Josh did a degree in Zoology and Herpetology at Bangor and MSc at Bristol University, with fieldwork abroad and in Hampshire. As a volunteer with Operation Wallacea Josh has been on conservation research expeditions around the world, highly recommended for students wanting experience in the field, more information can be found at ***www.opwall.com***. Their work is to monitor changes in species, abundance, richness and community structure and to identify conservation priority species. Josh has been involved in the projects with training student volunteers in herpetology identification and survey techniques.

The Calakmul Biosphere Reserve is situated on the Yucatan Peninsula, in the Gulf of Mexico, where a large asteroid impact 66million years ago caused a major extinction event at the end of the Cretaceous period. The area is mostly semi-deciduous dry tropical forest with lowland tropical forest in the south and south east. Summer is normally the wet period but a recent period of drought has stressed the conditions for many species. Epiphytes are common, Josh showed a particularly attractive pink bromeliad.

Aguadas are large lakes and ponds that are the only sources of water above ground and critical for the survival of herpetofauna, particularly amphibians, turtles and crocodiles. The underlying geology is porous limestone and any rain soaks down to rivers which run ~100m underground. **Morelet's crocodiles** will travel long distances through the forest to find water.

Hidden in the forest are remains of the ancient Mayan city built 4,000 years ago over a period of 14 centuries, it is thought this was done independently from the rest of the world. These are very impressive large stone structures, with carvings, and many are still yet to be discovered.

Photographs illustrated some of the wildlife observed, the **Thirst Snail-eating Snake** *Dipsas brevifacies* is an endemic species with black and orange bands, juveniles tend to have black and white bands. They exclusively feed

Ancient Maya city and protected tropical forests of Calakmul

Yucatan Casquehead Frog
Triprion petasatus

on molluscs. The **Variable Coral Snake** *Micrurus diastema*, looks similar to the **Milk Snake** *Lampropeltis abnorma* with the scale arrangement on the head used for thorough identification, although experienced herpetologist can usually tell the difference without this due to subtle differences in body morphology. They mimic the **Coral Snake** which is highly venomous and it is thought that by mimicry they deter predators; named *Batesian Mimicry* after English naturalist Henry Walter Bates who first described it in Brazilian butterflies. Josh had a little folklore rhyme supposedly to tell the difference between the safe or dangerous snakes by whether the red or yellow bands were touching black, however there are many species and colour combinations so please never use it.

Red touch black, safe for Jack.

Red touches yellow, kills a fellow.

Josh advocates avoiding all handling of unknown snakes on field visits, especially as medical assistance and anti-venom may be in short supply and, if in a remote location, the nearest hospital is very far away! *Imantodes gemmistratus* is a small blunt headed snake, an uncommon species that dwells in the trees and bushes although the only one seen on the trip was found in leaf litter on the ground. **Cave Rat Snakes** *Pseudelaphe flavirufa* also eat bats and other small vertebrates, they are about 1m long and unusually have blue eyes. They literally hang about at the cave entrance at dusk as the bats emerge and catch them mid-air. Josh watched as one moved along a shelf to the entrance, amazed at the dexterity of movement for a creature with no legs.

The **Yucatan Casquehead Frog** *Triprion petasatus* is endemic to the Yucatan Peninsula with an unusual shaped head and seems happy to live around human environments and very few are seen in the forest. It is thought the head is shaped so that it can be wedged into a tree crevice to retain moisture during dry periods, Josh had a sound recording of their loud noise at night. Puddles can form in tree hollows and indentations in rocks, these Sartenejas are used by various amphibians. The **Mexican Burrowing Toad** *Rhinophrynus dorsalis* is patterned vibrant red and black, and has a tiny head with prominent eyes and a stout flat body. They live mainly unseen underground but during and after heavy rain hundreds appear on the surface, most are usually a dark purplish colour.

A **Furrowed Wood Turtle** *Rhinoclemmys areolata* had a large parasitic tick lying flat against the shell which had bored in to gain access to the blood supply, it

Morelet's Crocodile
Crocodylus moreletii

was well camouflaged so blending into the shell and almost all turtles there have them.

Populations of **Morelet's Crocodiles** *Crocodylus moreletii* in Calakmul are some of the most genetically pure. This is due to significant geological and habitat barriers between these crocodiles and **American Crocodiles** *Crocodylus acutus* nearer the coast, which they can hybridise with. The one in the photograph was known by local villagers as the dog muncher.

The habitats of the **Smooth-headed Basilisk** *Corytophanes cristatus* and **Helmeted Basilisk** *Corytophanes hernandezii* overlap but the **Helmeted Basilisk** are found more frequently in the South and South East of the reserve. Both sleep at night which is the easiest time to find and photograph them, although out and about in the daytime they quickly run away when they see you coming. **Anole Lizards** *Anolis sp.* have coloured dewlaps used to display to the opposite sex or rivals, especially the males, different species having a variety of colour combinations and patterns, blue and orange, red, and yellow, some are more common than others. The **Speckled Racer** *Drymobius margaritiferus* was the fastest snake Josh had ever seen, small, up to a metre long, with a turquoise skin. Researchers use funnel traps to catch reptiles, a **Schwartz's Skink** looked keen to get away. The **Yucatan Banded Gecko** *Coleonyx elegans* is a medium sized gecko belonging to the family Eublepharidae. Geckos in this family have eye lids that they can open and close, which the majority of Geckos around the world can are unable to do. An interesting snake *Leptodeira septentrionalis* had a blunt tongue with no fork, with very limited literature on this Josh was unsure about how it lives.

Other wildlife highlights of his visit included **Yucatan Howler Monkeys**, the ones here are a sub-species which are jet black, elsewhere they are shades of brown/ginger. **Yucatan Spider Monkeys** are a subspecies only found on the peninsula as well, in some areas they do not mind the presence of humans, but elsewhere they show their displeasure by throwing things and urinating on you.

A number of unusual and spectacular birds are also found here including **Collared Aracari** with an awesome serrated bill for cracking nuts and seeds. Josh found it possible to get quite close to a **Keel-billed Toucan** while it was intent on eating its favourite seeds, it has a multi-coloured beak and amazing turquoise feet. **Black Vultures** can be found around the Mayan ruins and Josh was able to get quite close, in fact the ruins seem to be wildlife hotspots particularly for monkeys and birds. A **Bat Falcon** was spotted perching on a

Thirst Snail-eating Snake
Dipsas brevifacies

beam in the small museum, they eat dragonflies and bats as they emerge at dusk. Josh showed a video of a **Red-Capped Manakin** with a bright red head and fluffy yellow trousers doing a 'moon walk' dance along the branch. Male and female **Red-legged Honeycreepers** looked so different, the male brightly patterned in blue and black and the female quite dull in comparison. Also photographs of a **Lineated Woodpecker** on a tree, a pair of **White fronted Parrots** who mate for life, and a **Yucatan Parrot** which is only found on the peninsula and was observed feeding on the berries of a Chechen tree, which are toxic to humans. The beautifully coloured **Turquoise-browed Motmot** is one of the two species in which innate avoidance of Coral Snake patterns was first detected helping confirm the Batesian theory of mimicry.

Opossums are found here, in fact marsupials originated in South America although they are now mostly associated with Australia. Fossils have been found in Antarctica supporting the theory they spread across the continents before the break-up of the super continent Gondwanaland about 180 million years ago. A very distinctive, large 3 toed footprint was the only evidence found of the **Baird's Tapir**. Although a large animal it was never seen.

A flamboyant bug *Fulgora latemaria* with a strange looking head was aptly christened the **Peanut-headed Lantern Bug** by Josh. About the size of a stag beetle, it opens its wings and flashes a large eye pattern when spooked. **The South American Dead-leaf Mantis** is extremely well camouflaged and difficult to spot, it has horns and large purple eyes. Josh was lucky enough to find a Cicada just emerging from the nymph stage, shedding its exoskeleton with wings ready to inflate before starting adult life, remarkable to see it at this stage considering some cicada species can spend a decade or two underground before emerging. A **Robberfly** was pictured hanging under a leaf with just two legs while eating a spider. The bright green **Orchid Bee** is a group found in Central and South America. An **Owlfly** lava looking like a fuzzy bug will metamorphose into a large insect looking similar to a butterfly. The **Saddleback** caterpillar looked very spectacular, like a squat dog with a green back and brown appendages, destined to become a moth. An **Assassin Bug** was eating a beetle, they look similar to our Shield Bugs but 4-5cm in length.

Arachnids included a **Net-casting Spider**, a 'scorpion-spider' actually a **Whip Spider** which is as big as a hand, a green **Jumping Spider** which has a red mask used to signal for mates and courtship displays, a **Wolf Spider** devouring a scorpion, a very large **Huntsman Spider**, and **Tarantulas**.

The Calakmul Biosphere Reserve offers a lot of protection to the wildlife. Residents are allowed to hunt to a certain extent to ensure sustainability, although there is also some illegal activity. The greatest impact on the habitat is caused by tourism in the north, with encroachment into the forest to provide visitor accommodation. Ecotourism is becoming more popular around Calakmul which helps the reserve financially but is a bit of a catch 22. Drought is the biggest issue for wildlife here. The unique geography of the area has given rise to a large number of endemic species although these are similar to others found in central South America bar a few.

Yucatan Howler Monkey
Alouatta pigra

It is not only the more exotic locations and species which need to be monitored, those in the UK are just as important. Josh is involved with giving talks to students about field techniques and the decline of UK Herpetofauna. For anyone interested in finding out more about snakes and reptiles in Hampshire please look at the **Hampshire and Isle of Wight Amphibian and Reptile Group** (HIWARG) website ***groups.arguk.org/hiwarg*** and their Facebook group as they are always happy to welcome people willing to get involved.

Recording Officers Report: Members Records 2021

Phil Budd

I would like to thank the following individuals for submitting records and reports, from various sources, in 2021: Andy Collins, Catherine Corney, David Payne, Dennis Trunecka, Diana Chapman, Freya Brown, Gemma Paul, Geoff Frampton, Hannah Scully, Ian Watts, Jan Schubert, Jenny Mallinson, Jill Doubleday, Joanne Gulliver, John Poland, John Vetterlein, Josh Phangurha, Julian Moseley, Kathy Emmott, Lewis Woods, Mac Ince, Maggie Short, Maria Miller, Mark Painter, Mark Pierce, Martin Smith, Mick Milner, Mike Creighton, Mike Hill, Mike Terry, Nic Burns, Paul Garrett, Paul Winter, Peter Hyde, Phil Budd, Rose Nicole, Terry Crow, Virginia Wilkinson, Viv Cronin and Zoe Birtle. Please accept my apologies for anybody who I may have missed.

There were several other sources of records on FACEBOOK including the following: Friends of Peartree Green, Friends of Wildern Local Nature Reserve (in Hedge End), our own Southampton Natural History Society and the Southampton Wildlife site (particularly important for bird records). At least one moth record was extracted from the BITTERNE NEXTDOOR e-mail pages.

Please see our new web-site: http://sotonnhs.org for on-going up to date reports during 2022. Some 2021 records were also submitted to this web-site.

2021 was a less successful year than was 2020 with a far fewer records as life returned to 'normal'. Thank you for all of those who submitted records and other reports.

Myxomycota (slime-moulds)

This group is not often recorded but a few species are commonly seen and reported especially *Lycogala*, *Fuligo* and *Mucilago*. The latter often referred to as the **Dog's Vomit Fungus**. There was one record in 2021 that was new to the Southampton area according to SNHS records, this being *Stemonitis flavogenita* and this was found on a beech log at Mayfield Park on 4th April.

Fungi

2021 was not an exceptional year for fungi but eventually there was a significant flush between mid-October and mid-November, the autumn season was very poor prior to that.

Pholiotina (Conocybe) rugosa

21 species were identified on the SNHS fungus foray at Mayfield Park on 16th October. This is a small number as the conditions were still quite dry. The best of the fungi were to be found in the beech woodland and included **Golden Scaly-cap** *Pholiota aurivella* and the **Cinnamon web-cap** *Cortinarius cinnamomeus*. Members also saw some brackets of **Tinder Fungus** *Fomes fomentarius* on beech; this species is uncommon in Southampton but has been known at this site since at least 1986. Later, Mark Trigwell's walk at Creech Walk, Denmead on 14th November was much more productive for fungi. The 52 species recorded here included **Oyster Roll-rim** *Tapinella panuoides*, **Bulbous Fibrecap** *Inocybe napipes* and the **Bluing Conifer Bracket** *Postia caesia*. Phil Budd led a public fungus foray at Itchen Valley Country Park on 25th October. 32 species recorded on this foray including **Lilac-leg Fibrecap** *Inocybe lilacina*, **Blushing Milkcap** *Lactarius controversus* and **Sticky Scalycap** *Pholiota gummosa*.

A sample of other noteworthy and interesting fungi records in 2021 are as follows:

Agaricus xanthodermus, **Yellow-stainer**, Oaktree Road, Bitterne Park, 18th October
Calocybe gambosum, **St George's Mushroom**, Whiteley- the only reported sighting in 2021!, 29th May
Calvatia caelatum, **Mosaic Puffball**, Southampton Old Cemetery – a new site, 31st May
Crinipellis scabella, **Hairy Parachute**, Riverside Park at Woodmill play area, 19th October
Exidia plana, A jelly fungus, Telegraph Woods – on hazel, 20th February
*Gloeoporus dichrous**, **Bi-coloured Bracket**, Telegraph Road, West End – on cherry-plum , 24th November
Gymnopilus junonius, **Spectacular Rust-gill**, Hamble Common, 23rd November
In Japan, this species is known as the 'Big Laughing Mushroom' due to its psychotic effects when eaten. I have never tried it!
Hygrocybe quieta, **Oily Waxcap**, St James Churchyard, West End, 15th November
Hygrocybe reidii, **Honey Waxcap**, West End Burial Ground, 15th November
Hygrocybe russocoriacea, **Cedarwood Waxcap**, St James Churchyard, West End, 15th November

Exidia plana

Lepista personata, **Field Blewit**, Peartree Green LNR – new to site, 12th November
Melanoleuca grammopodia, **Grooved Cavalier**, Southampton Old Cemetery – new to site, 23rd November
Mutinus caninus, **Dog Stinkhorn**, Southampton Old Cemetery – new to site – 6 seen, 31st November
Mycena meliigena, **A bonnetcap**, Turnpike Way, Hedge End – on mossy trunk, 29th December
Phaeolus schweinitzii, **Dyer's Mazegill**, Upper Shirley Avenue -? on cedar, 16th October
Phellinus pomaceus, **Cushion Bracket**, Wynter Road, Bitterne – on *Prunus* sp., 21st January
Phellinus pomaceus, **Cushion Bracket**, Telegraph Road, West End – on cherry-plum, 24th November
Pluteus salicinus, **Willow Shield**, Miller's Pond LNR, 26th September
Russula versicolor, A brittlegill, Hogsty Copse, Hedge End – well out of season, 29th December
Simocybe haustellaris, A gilled bracket, Duncan Court, Sholing – on wooden barrier, 27th December

Tubaria dispersa, **Hawthorn Twiglet**, Donkey Common, Bitterne, 23rd October

*A first record for Southampton.

A lot more information on fungi can be found on certain web-sites such as those produced by the Hampshire Fungus Recording Group: ***www.hampshirefungi.org.uk/*** .

Vascular Flora

Native Species

2021 appears to have been a good year for the **Bee Orchid** *Ophrys apifera* around Southampton. A count of 44 on Peartree Green LNR on 16th June is the most there for many years, in addition a leaf rosette was found by Peartree Avenue on 14th December – a new site on Peartree Green. 8 flowering spikes of Bee Orchid were seen by Test Lane, Redbridge on 12th June, this is a new site to me. A very large colony exists on the grass banks by Hamble Marina at Hamble Point and 130+ leaf rosettes counted there on 9th February. On 16th July around 16 flowering spikes counted there but others may

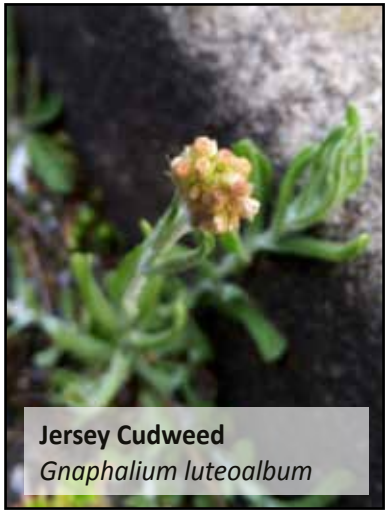
Bee Orchid
Ophrys apifera

have been mown. **Green-winged Orchid** *Anacamptis morio* is well established at St Mary's Extra Cemetery, Sholing but one flowering spike counted on a garden lawn at nearby Portsmouth Road opposite the cemetery in May. A high count of **Pyramidal Orchid** *Anacamptis pyramidalis* at Peartree Green LNR again with 1,141 flowering spikes diligently counted on 16th June but this was several hundred down on the 2020 number of 1,706. One specimen was found at Freemantle Common, Bitterne on 4th July and this is a new site. Another new orchid site was for **Twayblade** *Neottia ovata* as one spike found in grassland east of Red Lion Cut in Bitterne on 8th June – the only sighting of this orchid within the Southampton City boundary and known to me for about 30 years. Twayblade used to occur on Southampton Common in the 1980's.

Other notable records of native or probable native species recorded in 2021 included the following:

Elymus caninus, **Bearded Couch Grass**, Peartree Green LNR – new site record , 5th July
Galium verum, **Lady's Bedstraw**, Civic Centre – large display on uncut lawns, 12th July

Hieraceum sabaudum, **Autumn Hawkweed**, Chessel Bay LNR – in the woodland, 3rd August
Hieraceum trichocaulon, **Hairy-stemmed Hawkweed**, Golf Course path side, Sports Centre, 31st August
Hypericum desetangsii, **Des Etang's St John's-wort**, Bitterne Park garden, 21st July
Malva moschata, **Musk Mallow**, Civic Centre – on uncut lawns, 12th July
Orobanche hederae, **Ivy Broomrape**, Bitterne Road East – large number at a new site, 4th September
Polypogon monspeliensis, **Annual Beard-grass**, Bitterne Road East – one plant on driveway, 17th July
Polypogon monspeliensis, **Annual Beard-grass**, High Wood Barn, Itchen Valley CP – many on gravel, 2nd September
*Sison segetum**, **Corn Parsley**, Bursledon Road near Upper Deacon Rd – leaves only, 6th January
*Sison segetum**, **Corn Parsley**, Kathleen Road, Sholing near Grove Road - leaves, 2nd May
Stachys arvensis, **Field Woundwort**, Flint Close, Thornhill – 2 in flower, 4th December
Trifolium subterraneum, **Burrowing Clover**, Hamble Recreation Ground – large patch, 20th May
Viola canina, **Heath Dog Violet**, Hamble Airfield – northern edge – ID confirmed, 20th May
Viola canina, **Heath Dog Violet**, St Mary's Extra Cemetery, Sholing, 20th May



Jersey Cudweed
Gnaphalium luteoalbum

Non-native Species

A selection of records of naturalised flowering plants seen in 2021 are as follows:

Allium subhirsutum, **Hairy Garlic**, Beech Close, Hamble – very large colony, 20th May
*Allium trifoliatum**, **Pink (Hirsute) Garlic**, By Bacon Wood, Cheriton Avenue, 27th April
Diplotaxis muralis, **Annual Wall Rocket**, Mayfield Park – by Fox Memorial at field meeting, 16th October
*Gnaphalium luteoalbum**, **Jersey Cudweed**, On kerb at Duncan Court, Sholing, 20th June
Hyacinthoides hispanica, **Spanish Bluebell**, By Bacon Wood, Cheriton Avenue , 27th April
Lepidium ruderale, **Narrow-leaved Pepperwort**, Civic Centre – in paving, 12th July
Melilotus officinalis, **Ribbed Melilot**, Centenary Quay, Woolston – still in bloom, 31st October
Ornithogalum umbellatum, **Star-of-Bethlehem**, Donkey Common, Bitterne – 2 plants, 16th March
Papaver atlanticum, **Atlas (Moroccan) Poppy**, Summit Way, Midanbury – 6 seen – 2nd So'ton record, 6th November
Pilosella aurantiaca, **Orange Hawkweed**, Oaktree Road, Bitterne Park - driveway, 15th August
Senecio inaequidens, **Narrow-leaved Ragwort**, Empress Road, Bevois Valley – several plants, 3rd August
Smyrnium olusatrum, **Alexanders**, Northam Bridge – already in bloom, 25th February

*A first record for Southampton.

For more details of botanical sightings in Hampshire please refer to the Hampshire Flora Group: ***www.hwt.org.uk/pages/-hampshire-flora-group***.

Edible Crab
Cancer pagurus

Fauna

Non-insect Invertebrates

There were several records of random invertebrates plus a few spider records in 2022. On 12th June swarms of **Moon Jellyfish** (= Common Jellyfish) *Aurelia aurita* were observed in the River Test between Southampton and Hythe. An interesting flatworm record was of four specimens of the attractive *Kontikia ventrolineata* under a refuse bag at Firgrove Road, Freemantle on 4th April. Another marine record was of a dead **Edible Crab** *Cancer pagurus* cast up on Netley Shore on 2nd February. A record of the scarce **House Centipede** *Scutigera coleoptrata* was reported in a Hedge End garden on 6th May.

Arachnida: Aranae (Spiders)

Two rather rare spiders found in 2022 were the crab spider *Bassaniodes robustus* at Wildern Moor, Hedge End on 2nd July and the **Triangle Weaver** *Hyptiotes paradoxus* in woodland by the Totton

Triangle Weaver
Hyptiotes paradoxus

Bypass on 24th August. Two other records were of a male specimen of the spider *Hahnia nana* at Oak Road, Bishop's Waltham on 20th April and **Wasp Spider** *Argiope bruennichi* at Miller's Pond LNR, Sholing on 24th August – the first record here despite it being a widespread and conspicuous species.

Hexapoda: Insects

A summary of the more interesting and noteworthy records for 2022 appear below:

Minor orders

Orthoptera (grasshoppers/crickets), *Chorthippus brunneus*, Bitterne Bypass – late date, 2nd November
Orthoptera (grasshoppers/crickets), *Meconema meridionale*, Bitterne Manor garden, 13th October
Orthoptera (grasshoppers/crickets), *Tettigonia viridissima*, Hamble Common, 30th August
Dermaptera (earwigs), *Forficula lesnei*, Hoe, Bishop's Waltham, 24th February

Great Green Bush Cricket
Tettigonia viridissima

Major Orders

Odonata

Three early emergence records in 2021 were **Azure Damselfly** *Coenagrion puella* out before May, being seen at Coltsfoot Pond, Hedge End on 25th April, **Broad-bodied Chaser** *Libellula depressa* at Wildern LNR on 9th May and **Common Darter** *Sympetrum striolatum* at Wildern LNR on 15th June. In terms of last records there was still a **Southern Hawker** *Aeshna cyanea* out at Hedge End on 1st November and hawker *Aeshna sp*., at Wildern LNR on 9th November. The final **Common Darter** *Sympetrum striolatum* was seen at Wildern Moor, Hedge End on 10th December.

Other Odonata records of interest in 2021 included:

Aeshna mixta, **Migrant Hawker**, Dowd's Farm Park. Hedge End – field meeting, 7th August
Brachytron pratense, **Hairy Dragonfly**, Frog's Copse Meadow, 6th June
Ischnura pumilio, **Scarce Blue-tailed Damselfly**, Hamble Common, 2nd September
Lestes sponsa, **Emerald Damselfly**, Hamble Common, 2nd September
Orthetrum coerulescens, **Keeled Skimmer**, Goodall's Meadow, Hedge End, 31st July
Sympetrum fonscolombii, **Red-winged Darter**, Wildern Moor, Hedge End, 16th August
Sympetrum sanguineum, **Ruddy Darter**, Hamble Common, 4th August

Hemiptera

Three species of Hemiptera were recorded in the Southampton area in 2021 which I had not known about previously. At least one of them may be a genuinely new to the city and this is **Ornate Shieldbug** *Eurydema ornata*, this species was already known in other places such as the Bournemouth area and is associated with *Cruciferae*. It was recorded on **Winter Cress** *Barbarea sp*., in the company of the closely related **Crucifer Shieldbug** *E. oleracea* at Mansbridge Meadow on 28th May.

White-shouldered Shieldbug
Dyroderes umbraculatus

The second species is the **White-shouldered Shieldbug** *Dyroderes umbraculatus*, which appears to have been present in Southampton since about 2016 but which may have started increasing significantly in 2021. This latter species is associated with a very common plant, **Goosegrass (Cleavers)** *Galium aparine* and is long-known in the Channel Islands. The first report this year was on the edge of Lord's Wood at Rownhams on 19th May, there were then records at Station Road (Nursling) on 26th May, at Coltsfoot Pond at Hedge End (new to Wildern LNR) on 27th May, two seen at Upton Lane at Nursling on 5th June and three seen at Frog's Copse Meadow on 6th June. Looks like this new bug is well established and given the abundance of its foodplant will not go hungry!

Finally, the third species is the **Mirid bug** *Closterotomus trivialis*, a species associated with **St John's-worts** *Hypericum sp*. This bug was first recorded in the woodlands in the NW corner of Southampton Common on 7th June and three more were found close to the Ornamental Lake on 25th June.

Hemiptera

Hemiptera and Homoptera are now lumped together as one order, Hemiptera, and therefore are listed together. Below in a selection of other 2021 records:

Aphanus rolandri, A ground bug, Dundridge Lane, near Bishop's Waltham, 9th July
Ceraleptus lividus, **Slender-horned Leatherbug**, Coltsfoot Pond – new to Wildern LNR, 27th May
Cinara fresai, **American Juniper Aphid**, Oak Road, Bishop's Waltham – on *Juniperinus scopularum* , 29th April
Ditropis pteridis, A short-winged leafhopper, Hut Wood – plentiful on bracken at field meeting, 19th June
Eremocoris podagricus, A ground bug, Nursling Gravel Pits, 28th May
Idiocerus heydenii, A leafhopper, Bitterne Park – at Actinic light. ID confirmed Alan Stewart, 16th September
Idiocerus stigmaticalis, A leafhopper, Bitterne Park – at Actinic light. ID confirmed Alan Stewart, 7th September
Japananus hyalinus, A leafhopper, Bitterne Park garden – at U.V. light – an associate of maples, 5th September
Kleidocerys resedae, **Birch Seed Bug**, Hogsty Copse, Hedge End – 3 active on late date, 29th December
Megacoelum infusum, A mirid bug, Hoe Lane, North Baddesley, 5th September
Metatrophis rufescens, A stilt bug, Hoe Lane, North Baddesley, 5th September
Metopoplax ditomoides, A ground bug, Mill Lane, Nursling – several seen, 24th June
Nepa cinerea, **Water Scorpion**, Coltsfoot Pond, Hedge End, 11th June
Oncotylus viridiflavus, **Knapweed Bug**, Bitterne Road East – at U.V. light, 24th July
Reuteria marqueti, A mirid bug, Bitterne Park garden – at U.V. light , 14th August (The identity of this bug was confirmed by Maria Justamond)
Rhopalus maculatus, A glass bug, Emer Bog NR, 20th September
Scolopostethus affinis, A ground bug, Oak Road, Bishop's Waltham, 29th March
Spathocera dahlmanii, **Dahlmann's Leatherbug**, Near Nursling Substation – a rare bug in Southampton, 25th June
Stictopleurus punctatonervosus, A glass bug, Upton Lane, Nursling, 9th July

Syromastus rhombeus, **Rhombic Leatherbug**, Testwood Lakes near River Blackwater , 26th April
Trapezonotus ullrichi, A ground bug, Upton Lane, Nursling, 12th June
Trigonotylus ruficornis, A mirid bug, Bitterne Road East – at U.V. light, 24th July
Viridicerus ustulatus, A leafhopper, Bitterne Park – at Actinic light. ID confirmed Alan Stewart, 7th September

The web-site ***micropics.org.uk*** is very useful in the determination of adult Hemiptera. Another useful site which provides abundant, up-to-date information on Hemiptera is the site ***britishbugs.org.uk***

Coleoptera (Beetles)

There were numerous reports of **Stag Beetle** *Lucanus cervus* between 29th May and 27th June, of males flying at dusk. Records in or very close to Southampton include a male found dead in a garden pond at Bitterne Manor, a male at Denzil Avenue at Netley and a female at Alfriston Gardens at Sholing. There were also records from three gardens in Chandler's Ford between 5th June and 24th June. **Rose Beetle (Rose Chafer)** *Cetonia aurata* seems to be increasing in the Southampton area with two seen at Shafford Meadows, Wildern LNR on 2nd June and one at Millbrook Allotment by Trebourba Way on 4th June. There were again records of another increasing species of chafer – the **Welsh Chafer** *Hoplia philanthus* at a Townhill garden on 14th June and at Wildern Moor, Hedge End on 25th June. The latter was a new site record.

A selection of the other beetle records received in 2021 include the following:

Altica lythri/palustris, **Willowherb Leaf Beetle**, North of Dowd's Farm Park, Hedge End – field meeting, 7th August
Ampedus sanguinolentus, A click beetle, Rownhams garden - a very late date, 2nd October
Anotylus rugosus, A rove beetle, Oak Road, Bishop's Waltham, 30th March
Carabus nemoralis, **Wood Ground-beetle**, Cupernham Lane, Romsey , 17th October
Ceutorhynchus pallidactylus, A weevil, Oak Road, Bishop's Waltham, 21st February
Cypha longicornis, A rove beetle, Oak Road, Bishop's Waltham, 25th April
Drilus flavescens, A snail-eating beetle, Mill Lane, Nursling , 6th June
Hypera venusta, A weevil, Bishop's Waltham, 6th March
Leptura quadrifasciata, **Four-banded Longhorn**, Hut Wood, 14th July
Meloe proscarabaeus, **Common Oil Beetle**, Upper Swanmore, 27th April
Mogulones asperifoliarum, A weevil, Bishop's Waltham Moors, 15th April
Onthophagus coenobita, A dung beetle, Mill Lane, Nursling, 17th May
Platycis minutus, A net-winged beetle, Crampmoor, near Romsey, 4th September
Platyostomos albinus, **Bird-dropping Weevil**, Street End, Bishop's Waltham, 29th March
Platyostomos albinus, **Bird-dropping Weevil**, Station Road, Nursling – on cross-wort, 31st May
Pogonocherus hispidulus, A longhorn beetle, Bitterne Manor garden, 2nd September
Scaphidium quadrimaculatum, A fungus beetle, Netley Common – under a log, 4th September
Scymnus frontalis, A micro-ladybird, Oak Road, Bishop's Waltham, 29th May

Diptera (Two-winged Flies)

There was an exceptionally early report of **Common Bee-fly** *Bombylius major* at Wildern Moor, Hedge End on 27th February and another at nearby Coltsfoot Pond in Hedge End on 9th March. In 2021 the first record of the year of **Hornet Hoverfly** *Volucella zonaria* was at Brownhill Road, Lordshill on 17th July and the latest was two on ivy at Peartree Church on 19th September. Two other late date hoverfly sightings were of *Sericomyia silentis* at Wildern LNR on 6th November and *Ferdinandea cuprea* at Peartree Green LNR on 21st November. The latter was also a new site record.

A selection of other interesting Diptera (two-winged flies) records from 2021 are as follows:

Bibio reticulatus, A St Mark's Fly, Goodall's Meadow, Wildern LNR – an uncommon fly, 11th May
Chalcosyrphus nemorum, **Small Forest Hoverfly**, Coltsfoot Pond, Hedge End – confirmed by Roger Morris, 16th April
Chrysotoxum bicinctum, **Two-banded Spearhorn**, Frog's Copse Meadow, 18th July
Chrysotoxum bicinctum, **Two-banded Spearhorn**, Daisy Dip, Bassett Green, 24th July
Chrysotoxum verralli, **Verrall's Spearhorn**, Wildern LNR, 30th July
Conops flavipes, **Yellow-legged Beegrabber**, Goodall's Meadow, Wildern LNR – new site record, 15th August
Conops quadrifasciatus, **Four-banded Beegrabber**, Goodall's Meadow, Wildern LNR – new site record, 23rd July
Ctenophora flaveolata, A cranefly, Marchwood Bypass near to Twigg's Lane - female, 4th May
Gymnosoma rotundatum, **Ladybird Fly**, Wildern LNR – new site record, 23rd July
Leopoldius signatus, **Ivy Wasp-grabber**, Wildern Moor, Hedge End, 22nd October
Myopa tessellatipennis, **Spot-winged Spring Beegrabber**, Oak Road, Bishop's Waltham – on rosemary, 12th April
Nephrotoma flavipalpis, A cranefly, Hamble House Gardens, Hamble - female, 27th August
Odontomyia argentata, **Silver Colonel**, Wildern Moor, Hedge End – a scarce species, 17th April
Pedicia rivosa, A cranefly, Peartree Green LNR – at U.V. light and new to site, 14th August
Phasia obesa, A tachinid fly, Wildern Moor, Hedge End – a new site record, 29th August
Platycheiris fulviventris, A hoverfly, Coltsfoot Pond, Hedge End, 25th May
Rhingia rostrata, **Grey-backed Snout**, Bitterne Park garden, 24th August
Sericomyia silentis, **Yellow-barred Peat Hoverfly**, Bitterne Road East – first since 2009, 20th September

Mourning Bee
Melecta albifrons

Tabanus sudeticus, **Large Dark Horsefly**, Newtown Road, Weston Park, 9th July
Tachina lurida, A tachinid fly, Goodall's Wood, Wildern LNR – new site record, 26th April
Volucella inanis, **Lesser Hornet Hoverfly**, Bitterne Manor garden – on goldenrod, 21st August

Hymenoptera

The earliest dates in 2021 for selected species are as follows:

Andrena haemorrhoa, **Early Mining Bee**, Weston Shore, 28th February
Andrena flavipes, **Yellow-legged Mining Bee**, Turnpike Way, Hedge End, 26th February
Andrena fulva, **Tawny Mining Bee**, Mayfield Park, 4th April
Anthophora plumipes, **Hairy-legged Flower Bee**, Bitterne Road East, 13th March
Bombus hypnorum, **Tree Bumble-bee**, Bevois Valley, 23rd February
Bombus lapidarius, **Red-tailed Bumble-bee**, Itchen Valley Country Park, 27th February

Bombus sp., Bumble-bee (unidentified), Veracity Ground, Sholing, 6th February
Bombus terrestris, **Buff-tailed Bumble-bee**, Bitterne Bypass, 18th February
Melecta albifrons, **Mourning Bee**, Daisy Dip, Bassett, 2nd April
Nomada fucata, **Painted Nomad Bee**, Turnpike Way, Hedge End, 27th February

There was a late report for **Common Wasp** *Vespula vulgaris* at Peartree Green on 28th November. 2021 was a particularly good season for the parasitic **Mourning Bee** *Melecta albifrons*, in addition to the record above this species was seen by Bursledon Road at Hightown on 3rd April, on wallflowers at Sholing Road on 13th April and a report further afield at Badminston Common in April. Although some were seen in the usual localities there was an apparent decline in the numbers of **Ivy Bee** *Colletes hederae* in 2021 compared to recent years, nevertheless a good number were seen on ivy at the new Peartree Church community garden in early autumn. I will have to see what happens in 2022

A selected list of the other Hymenoptera records received for 2021 is as follows:

Honneysuckle Sawfly
Abia lonicerae

Abia lonicerae, **Honeysuckle Sawfly**, Bitterne Road East – an early date, 30th March
Aglaostigma fulvipes, **Pale-vented Bedstraw Sawfly**, Hogsty Pond area, Wildern LNR, 13th May
Anthidium manicatum, **Wool Carder Bee**, Lumsden Avenue, Upper Shirley, 22nd June
Anthophora bimaculata, **Green-eyed Flower Bee**, Peartree Green LNR on thistle flower – first site record, 11th July
Arge ustulata, **Yellow-winged Fusehorn**, Station Road, Nursling, 28th May
Astata boops, A digger wasp, Hogsty Corner, Wildern LNR, 16th July and also near Nursling Substation, on the same date
Hedychridium roseum, A ruby-tail wasp, Sholing garden near Cranbury Road, 27th June
Nomada ferruginata, **Yellow-shouldered Nomad Bee**, Coltsfoot Pond, Hedge End – a scarce species, 8th April
Polysphincta tuberosa, A parasitic wasp, Cricklemede, Bishop's Waltham , 15th March
Symmorphus bifasciatus, **Willow Mason Wasp**, Sholing Valley Study Centre, 21st July
Tenthredo thompsoni, **Marjoram Wasp-sawfly**, Moorgreen Meadows, West End, 6th August

Lepidoptera: Butterflies

The earliest records of selected species in 2021 are as follows:

Brimstone at both Hut Wood and at Wildern LNR, Hedge End on 23rd February
Comma at Wildern Moor, Hedge End on 26th February
Green-veined White at Daisy Dip, Bassett on 2nd April
Holly Blue at Newtown Road, Weston Park on 30th March
Large White at Daisy Dip, Bassett on 2nd April
Orange Tip at Skidmore (Test Valley) and at Woolston on 30th March
Painted Lady at Bridget Mary Walk, Hedge End on 9th May
Peacock at Fleming Park, Eastleigh on 27th February
Red Admiral at Oak Road, Bishop's Waltham on 17th January
Small Copper at Wildern Moor, Hedge End on 17th April
Small Tortoiseshell at Skidmore (Test Valley) on 26th February

Small White at Goodall's Meadow, Wildern LNR, Hedge End on 27th March
Speckled Wood at Daisy Dip, Bassett on 23rd February – an exceptionally early date

The latest dates of selected species in 2021 are as follows:

Comma at Moorcourt, Test Valley on 17th October
Gatekeeper at Hannay Rise, Thornhill on 4th September
Green-veined White at Wildern LNR, Hedge End on 16th October – exceptionally late
Peacock at Moorcourt, Test Valley on 17th October
Red Admiral at Oak Road, Bishop's Waltham on 21st December
Small Copper at Bell Crossing, Lower Test Reserve on 19th October

Despite 2021 not being a particularly good year for migrants there were four reports of **Clouded Yellow**. The first was at Weston Shore on 16th July followed by a sighting at Wildern Moor, Hedge End on 13th August, one at Peartree Green LNR on 26th September and another at Twiggs Lane, Dibden Purlieu on 29th September. In addition to the Hedge End sighting on 9th May (above) there were two other **Painted Lady** sightings, these were at Exford Avenue, Harefield on 17th May and one much later on *Sedum* in a Hamble garden on 23rd September.

A selection of other butterfly records in 2021 were as follows:

Chalkhill Blue, Wildern Moor, Hedge End – a male, 14th August
Green Hairstreak, Hogsty Corner, Hedge End, 12th June
Purple Hairstreak, Peartree Green LNR – 5 seen, 19th July

Lepidoptera: Moths

Far fewer moth records were obtained in 2021 than in most previous years but two species continue to feature very prominently in the records. One is the Jersey Tiger and the other, the Box-tree Moth *Cydalima perspectalis***.** There were numerous records of Jersey Tiger in July and August, the first of the year was at Sea Road, Peartree on 18th July and the final one at Chessel Avenue, Bitterne on 21st August. Other sightings between these dates at Peartree Green LNR (several sightings here), Brownlow Road at Bitterne, in a Swaythling garden, at a Bitterne Road East garden and in the city centre at West Quay. At Bitterne Churchyard two small box bushes were devasted with the larvae of **Box-tree Moth** on 11th August, there was a report of an adult from Alfriston Gardens at Sholing on 13th September and a later sighting of an adult at Bitterne Road East on 15th October. An even later sighting was in a garden at Bitterne Park at Actinic trap; a total 815 specimens of the moth were caught at this same location starting on 30th June. There is another new moth that appears to be colonising Southampton, the **Bloxworth Snout**, this species was identified at a moth lamp in a Bevois Valley garden on 14th October.

Pebble Hook-tip
Drepana falcataria

Bloxwortth Snout
Hypena obsitalis

Other moth records from 2021 that are of interest are as follows:

Macro-moths

Early Moth, Swaythling garden, 6th February
Five-spot Burnet agg., Bitterne Park garden – at Actinic trap, 15th June
Goat Moth, Southampton Common – north of Boating Lake – a larva, 12th September
Hummingbird Hawkmoth, Totton garden – at daffodils, 15th March
Hummingbird Hawkmoth, Near Moorcourt Farm, Test Valley, 18th April
Hummingbird Hawkmoth, Bitterne garden – on Buddleia, 27th September
Pebble Hooktip, Netley Common – larva on birch, 4th September
Red-tipped Clearwing Moth, Wildern LNR – 2 seen, 26th June
Rustic Shoulder-knot, Bitterne Park garden – at Actinic trap, 1st June
Small Rufous, Bursledon – near Blundell Lane – at U.V. light, 10th July

Sycamore Moth, Warren Avenue, Shirley – one larva, 1st August
Toadflax Brocade, Hythe area – larva on Purple Toadflax , 29th July
Tree-lichen Beauty, Peartree Green LNR – at U.V. light -one of 13 new site records, 14th August
Vapourer Moth, Daisy Dip, Bassett – 3 seen, 7th October
White Satin Moth, Bitterne Park garden – at Actinic trap, 20th July

Micro-moths

Acleris logiana, Edge of Dumbleton's Copse, Thornhill – on a white door, 17th December
Aethes beatricella, Bitterne Park garden – at Actinic trap, 23rd June
Ancylis comptana, Bitterne Park garden – at Actinic trap, 30th June
Batrachedra praeangusta, Bitterne Park garden – at Actinic trap, 30th June
Blastobasis rebeli, Near Galley Down NE of Bishop's Waltham, 29th July
This new colonist (see 2020 report) was seen again at U.V. light at Bitterne Road East in 2021
Epinotia immundana, Bitterne Park garden – at Actinic trap, 31st May
Phyllocnistis unipunctella, Riverside Park – mines in Black Poplar leaves near Woodmill, 4th November
Phyllocnistis unipunctella, Riverside Park – mines in Lombardy Poplar leaves, 9th November
Phyllocnistis xenia, Riverside Park – mines in Grey Poplar leaves, 8th November
Platyedra subcinerea, Bitterne Park garden – at Actinic trap, 27th May
This moth is known by the common name of **Mallow Crest**.
Schoenobius gigantella, Bitterne Park garden – at Actinic trap, 12th June
Yponomeuta evonymella, Bitterne Road East – 10+ at U.V. light, 24th July

A very good web-site for more information about both macro moths and micro moths is ***ukmoths.org.uk*** For up-to-date and more local information ***hantsmoths.org.uk*** is a very good site.

Vertebrates

Amphibians & Reptiles

January 2021 was a little colder than the recent normal but, despite this, the first report of **Common Frog** spawn was at Wildern LNR on 27th January, followed by Newtown Road at Weston Park on 31st January and at Daisy Dip in Bassett on 26th February. An immature (half-grown) **Common Toad** was rescued from a soakaway in a Bitterne Road East garden during the heavy rains of 30th October - a new site record. The most noteworthy reptile record was of **Grass Snake** at Mansbridge, already active on 17th March.

Birds

Birds are more extensively observed and recorded than any other taxonomic group, and it would be appropriate for members with an interest in bird records to seek other sources of information including the annual Hampshire Bird Report and the Kingfisher magazine produced three times per year by the Hampshire Ornithological Society: ***www.hos.org.uk***. There are also a lot of up-to-date sightings on the web, including our own site: ***sotonnhs.net*** site and, particularly the very good Hampshire Going Birding site: ***goingbirding.co.uk/hants/*** as well as ***havantnature.net*** for the Portsmouth area. The Southampton Wildlife FACEBOOK page is particularly useful for detailed and up-to-date reports.

Ring-necked Parakeet's are continuing to be recorded in some parts of Southampton. The largest flock so far was reported at Woodmill on 9th January – 50 birds in total. There were also records of smaller numbers at Golden Grove, St Mary's on 18th November. An obvious escape from captivity was

a Budgerigar feeding on a lawn at Bitterne Road East during wet weather on 5th July, but it was not seen again. A very unusual record of a possible escaped bird was the **Gyrfalcon** feeding on a pigeon at London Road in Southampton on 13th April. 2021 was another good year for **Black Redstart** sightings with a garden first of one at Townhill Park garden on 6th February. There was one at Woolston Sewage Farm on 21st February at least and a bird reappeared there for the 2021/2022 winter. Late in the year a female bird that was first seen in the Bargate area of Southampton on 14th November stayed for several days. There was a good influx of **Redwing** later in the year with sightings at Peartree Church on 2nd & 14th December, heard over Itchen College on 10th December and about 10 feeding on *Cotoneaster* berries at Coates Road, Sholing on 19th December. **Marsh Tits** are still frequent in the New Forest but rare in Southampton area these days. This bird is still resident as close to Southampton as the area between Romsey and Nursling with records at Moorcourt Copse on 29th March, Moorcourt Farm to Yew Tree Copse on 18th April and at Ridge Wood near to Broadlands on 21st November. It would be interesting to hear of any Marsh Tit records anywhere else in the Southampton area.
There were some interesting phenological bird records in 2021. The first singing male **Chiffchaff** was reported at Daisy Dip on 26th February, the first **Willow Warbler** report at Riverside Park on 29th March, the first **Sedge Warbler** at Lower Test Marshes on 31st March and the first **Common Whitethroat** at Testwood Park, Totton on 4th April. **Wheatear** had arrived at Weston Shore on 10th March followed by another at Wildern LNR, Hedge End on 20th March; the first **Swallow** report was at Eastleigh Sewage Farm on 28th March. **Swift** had arrived at Swaythling on 26th April and the last was over Southampton Common on 7th September. **Mistle Thrush** was already singing at Bitterne Road East on 4th November.

A selection of the many other bird reports in the Southampton area through 2021 included:

Arctic Tern, Off Weston Shore – a juvenile bird, 30th September
Bar-tailed Godwit, Weston Shore – 6 seen – unusual here, 22nd April
Black-necked Grebe, Weston Shore – off Weston Sailing Club – one seen, 28th January
Canada Goose, Miller's Pond at Sholing – very unusual here, 28th February
Cattle Egret , Lower Test Marshes – one seen, 28th September
Cetti's Warbler, Peartree Green LNR – singing male present at least from 11th April to 10th June
Common Whitethroat, Windy Bay, Northam – singing male – unusual here, 16th June
Crossbill, Mayfield Park near Bowling Green – 3 seen, 7th July
Cuckoo, Lord's Wood – heard calling – rare here in recent years, 28th May
Egyptian Goose, Lower Test Marshes – 2 seen, 8th August
Garden Warbler, Southampton Old Cemetery – singing male, 27th April
Glossy Ibis, Lower Test Marshes – 2 seen, 27th January
Goldeneye, River Test at Redbridge Wharf - uncommon in recent years, 17th December
Goosander, River Itchen below Woodmill – one male, 31st January
Goosander, Weston Shore – a pair, 18th December
Great Reed Warbler, Itchen Valley near Decoy Wood – singing male – rare in Hampshire, 23rd May
House Martin, Highclere Road, Southampton – more than one, 8th May
Iceland Gull , River Itchen – reported at various locations along the river, 6th December
Long-tailed Duck, Weston Shore – one regularly seen in winter 2020/2021, 28th January
Mandarin Duck, Testwood Lakes – 4 seen, 22nd August
Mediterranean Gull, Cemetery Lake, Southampton Common, 15th/16th September
Merlin, Moorcourt Copse, Test Valley, 29th March
Nightjar, Hedge End garden near Wildern LNR – a good garden record!, 23rd June
Pintail, Dibden Bay – 3 seen, 11th April
Red-legged Partridge, Weston Shore – first record for this site, 2nd April
Roseate Tern, Weston Shore – a pair at the jetty, 21st June
Shoveler, Cemetery Lake, Southampton Common – a high count of 43, 15th January

Storm Petrel, Off Weston Shore - one, 30th September
Water Rail, Hogsty Copse, Wildern LNR, Hedge End, 6th February
Water Rail, Mansbridge Reservoir, 5th March
Water Rail, Riverside Park – at 'compost heap corner', 17th November
Whinchat, Townhill Park garden – a juvenile – a great garden record!, 23rd August
Woodcock, Southampton Common – near the Ornamental Lake , 3rd July
Woodlark, Test Valley site, 18th April
Woodpigeon, West Wood and Weston Shore – 5,450 NW over, 1st November
Yellow Wagtail, Riverside Park – 9 seen, 13th September

Mammals

Records of mammals, of interest, in 2021 are as follows:

American Mink, Itchen Valley Country Park , 13th February
Badger, Lower Brownhill Road, Lord's Hill, 30th April
Common Seal, Weston Shore – less common in the summer months, 13th August
Grey Seal, Near to Weston Jetty, 16th October
Harbour Porpoise, Off Weston Shore – rarely seen in the Southampton area, 31st March
Muntjac, Turnpike Way, Hedge End , 13th February
Noctule Bat, Wildern LNR – active on an early date and seen in daytime, 16th February
Pipistrelle Bat sp., Lower Test Reserve -active on early date, 25th February
Weasel, Wildern LNR, Hedge End, 23rd March

Water Rail
Rallus aquaticus

Weather Records 2021
Records made at Bitterne Road East, Bitterne (SU454129)

Phil Budd

A summary of 2021

2021 was 'normal' year overall but a little wetter and warmer than the long term average. The early winter period was near average for wind, temperature, and rainfall but no severe cold weather apart from a few sharp frosts and the occasional snowfall.

Spring was dry and cool with a sunny April, but May was a real let down – very cool and dull with over twice the normal rainfall expected. There were two days with gale force winds in May.

The summer was a story of two halves, a very wet June and first half of July but drier than normal in late July and August. There were frequent thundery downpours in the summer and a major heatwave in a sunny mid-July. September was lovely being warm, dry, and sunny.

October and November were both mild to warm but with a cold spell in late November that extended into December. There was a great contrast in rainfall, though, as October saw over seven inches rainfall and was the wettest month of the year. By contrast November was extremely dry with only 10% normal rainfall – such dry November's are very rare. December was mild, wet, and exceptionally dull.

I will now summarise the main weather events of 2021:

January 1st to 10th: Cold start to the year especially on the 7th when the maximum was just 1.2˚C

January 24th: Rare 'thundersnow' fell at 6.30am and gave a light dusting of snow and hail.

February 8th: Coldest day of the early winter period, max 0.6˚C and another light dusting of snow. This was part of a particularly cold period between 7th and 14th.

February 10th/11th: Coldest night of the early year winter period, minimum -3.2˚C.

March 12th/13th: Winds reached storm-force 10 overnight following earlier gales on 10th/11th.

March 28th to April 27th: Extremely dry, only 0.6mm rain fell in this month-long period.

March 30th: Maximum temperatures reached but there was a rural air frost the following night. (70˚F) for the first time this year. These temperatures were not reached again until May 29th.

April 5th & 6th: Sleety showers recorded both days. The last wintry precipitation in winter 20/21.

April 13th: Final air frost in Bitterne for the winter but there was a rural air frost the following night.

April 16th to April 26th (lunchtime): Almost continuous clear skies and sunshine for 11 days.

May 3rd and 20th to 21st: Rare May gales, up to 61mph recorded in Southampton on 21st. Unusually only 2mm rain accompanied these stormy winds. A rare 'dry' storm.

May 16th: A very wet day for May, 30mm recorded and the first day with over an inch of rain in 2021.

May 27th to June 16th: Another very dry spell with only 2.5mm rain fall in three weeks.

June 17th & June 18th: 70mm rain from 3pm on 17th to 7pm on 18th – an extraordinarily wet period. This ended a mini heatwave that started on 12th and saw temperatures reach just over 28˚C (83˚F)

June 21st: An exceptionally cold summer solstice, maximum just 13.4˚C

June 24th to September 28th: Night-time temperatures exceeded 10˚C throughout

July 5th/6th: A very wet night with 28mm rain and gales – unusual for early July.

July 12th & July 13th: 38mm rain from 3.30pm on 12th into 13th caused significant flooding on roads.

July 16th to July 23rd: Almost continuous sunshine in heatwave ending in a thundery breakdown on 24th.

July 19th: Hottest day of the year, maximum in Bitterne 31.6˚C.

August 7th to August 9th: Very wet with 48mm thundery rain over three days.

August 10th to September 7th: Extremely dry period – only 1.4mm rain fell.

September 7th: A very hot day for September, maximum 29˚C (84˚F), part of a short 4-day heatwave.

September 7th/8th: The warmest night of 2021, minimum 19.0˚C.

September 15th: A particularly hot day for September, maximum 28.3˚C. This was followed by a very warm night with a minimum of 17.4˚C.

September: Only 5mm rain fell up to and including 26th with no rain at all from 12th to 26th.

October 1st to October 5th: The usual very wet start to October; 94mm fell in five days (nearly four inches). Following this there was no rain in the ten days from 6th to 15th.

October 20th & October 21st: 46mm rain fell in two days accompanied by a very sharp temperature fall by 6˚C between 20th and 21st.

October 31st: The most severe gales in autumn 2021, accompanied by heavy morning rain.

November 4th/5th: First air frost of the 21/22 winter in Bitterne.

November 2nd to November 25th: An extraordinary dry period for November 3.5mm rain fell in 24 days.

November 28th: First laying snow of 2021/2022 fell in evening, thin layer in Southampton. Heavier snow persisted into the following day in inland Hampshire. This followed in the wake of Storm Arwen.

December 14th to 22nd: Totally dry weather with high pressure and, for December, unusual easterly winds. This period was very cloudy, like the rest of the month, and mild.

December 29th: Peak maximum 15.4˚C in exceptionally mild southerly spell at years end. No sun though.

Weather Records for 2020 at Bitterne Road East, Southampton by Phil Budd

	Mean max temp		High temp	Mean min temp		Low temp	Air frost days	Wet days[1]	Total rainfall	
	°C	°F	°C	°C	°F	°C			mm	in
Jan	7.3	*45.1*	13.9	2.8	*37.0*	-2.5	13	15	93.0	*3.66*
Feb	9.3	*48.7*	15.1	4.0	*39.2*	-3.2	7	15	64.1	*2.52*
Mar	12.7	*54.9*	21.3	5.1	*41.2*	-1.9	3	10	37.2	*1.46*
Apr	13.8	*56.8*	17.8	3.6	*38.5*	-1.2	3	2	5.3	*0.21*
May	16.2	*61.2*	24.0	7.6	*45.7*	2.1	0	14	127.6	*5.02*
Jun	22.4	*72.3*	28.3	13.3	*55.9*	8.5	0	11	141.5	*5.57*
Jul	24.0	*75.2*	31.6	15.4	*59.7*	10.8	0	12	93.6	*3.69*
Aug	22.1	*71.8*	24.5	14.4	*57.9*	10.8	0	6	63.8	*2.51*
Sep	22.1	*71.8*	29.1	13.6	*56.5*	7.8	0	6	26.5	*1.04*
Oct	17.2	*63.0*	19.9	11.0	*51.8*	5.0	0	15	187.3	*7.37*
Nov	11.5	*52.7*	16.1	5.9	*42.6*	-0.2	3	5	8.9	*0.35*
Dec	10.6	*51.1*	15.4	6.6	*43.9*	0.1	1	19	105.0	*4.13*
Mean/ total	**15.8**	***60.4***	**31.6**	**8.6**	***47.5***	**-3.2**	**30**	**130**	**953.8**	***37.54***

[1] ***A wet day is defined as a day where 1 mm or more of rainfall fell.***

Weather records from 2006 to the present day may be found on our website at ***sotonnhs.net/weather***.

Southampton Natural History Society

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