



## NORTH SOMERSET AND BRISTOL GROUP NEWSLETTER – April 2018

Dear Member

Gill Brown's excellent talk on the Hazel Dormouse was our last talk of the winter season. The nocturnal habits of these delightful but secretive little creatures makes it difficult to know how abundant they are, but it was interesting to hear how they are being monitored, and what signs to look for if it is suspected they might be present.

Thanks to all who have supported our talks this winter, coped with changes of speakers, arranged chairs and brought friends etc. The topics have been wide ranging, covering Mendip Ponds and associated wildlife, raptors, gardening for wildlife, local energy generation, dormice and a discussion on the general state of wildlife. We are very grateful to our speakers, many of whom have been very generous regarding their fees. Special thanks to David Brown who has provided any technical expertise required by our speakers, and to the committee for always being so unfailingly supportive. As a result of this season we were able to make a significant contribution towards the purchase of a chainsaw for Shapwick.

An outline programme for the next season is at the end of this newsletter. We have reluctantly decided that we need to raise our entry fee from £3.00 to £4.00, bringing us into line with the South Gloucestershire group. For several years we have not paid a room charge which has cushioned us against the rising costs of speakers, but now we are back at The Ship that is no longer the case. We are keen to encourage wider audiences. Please support our talks, bring friends and ensure our talks are well attended so that we can continue to afford quality speakers! If you have ideas for topics or speakers we would be delighted to hear from you. Suggestions or offers of help on any other matters are also welcome.

**Our summer programme of walks will start on Monday, 16<sup>th</sup> April** with a walk around parts of the Tyntesfield Estate with Head Ranger, Darren Mait. It should be a great opportunity to find out what the National Trust is doing with regard to wildlife. We hope you can join us. Meet in the car park at 7.00pm. A full list of the walks also appears at the end of the newsletter.

During the summer months we are often asked to attend shows, such as the **North Somerset Show on 7<sup>th</sup> May, Bank Holiday Monday**, or other events like ploughing matches. On **21<sup>st</sup> April** we are doing owl pellet dissection at Windmill Hill City Farm in Bristol. For all these events we need volunteers, and it is frustrating to turn down opportunities to promote the work of the Trust because of a lack of volunteers! If you can spare the time to help in any way, please contact me.

Last week I found myself near the Tean Valley Nature Reserve in Staffordshire so decided to visit Alan and Sylvia Williams. (They kindly donated the funds for the gator vehicle which is so invaluable on our Shapwick reserve) About 12 years ago, Alan and Sylvia decided to buy a wood but, being unable to find what they wanted, bought a field and planted 5000 trees to create their own! In the mature trees in the boundary hedges they put barn owl boxes which have been extremely successful. Many of their bird boxes have cameras so they also have wonderful footage of what goes on, all relayed to the cosy log cabin on site. Over time, and



after a huge amount of work, a wealth of other wildlife can now be found on this beautiful reserve. Such vision and achievement!

### ***Kestrel Highways Project***

If you would like to be involved or have sightings please contact [baz.gray@btinternet.com](mailto:baz.gray@btinternet.com)

### ***Urban Peregrine Project***

The peregrines at St John's, Bath, laid their first egg on a cold snowy evening on 17<sup>th</sup> March. Three more eggs followed over the next few days and incubation started on 24/25<sup>th</sup> March. Live (silent) coverage is on <http://upp.hawkandowl.org/bath-peregrines/bath-st-johns-church-peregrine-live-web-cam-2018/>. The Norwich Cathedral peregrines are a few days behind those at Bath. They too have four eggs and a live webcam, (with sound). Details of both and links are on the Hawk and Owl Trust website under the 'Urban Peregrines' section.

### ***News from Shapwick:***

The final volunteer day of the winter months was spent working on a Natural England site, as a way of repaying a few favours! It was a lovely sunny day and we enjoyed seeing a different part of the Avalon Marshes and being reminded that we are all part of one very substantial area where the primary objective was to provide the best possible habitat for a diverse range of wildlife. There is now a break for the summer from regular monthly work days - we can stand back and enjoy seeing the hedges grow and watching what visits the reserve.



For further information please contact [simon.beard@hawkandowl.org](mailto:simon.beard@hawkandowl.org) Tel 01308 861008

### ***Other dates and items which may be of interest:***

**Hedgehog Awareness week 6-12<sup>th</sup> May.** [www.britishhedgehogs.org.uk](http://www.britishhedgehogs.org.uk). For tips on helping the species and to report sightings [www.hedgehogstreet.org](http://www.hedgehogstreet.org). Data suggests that the populations are becoming more isolated so ensuring that hedgehogs can move freely between gardens will encourage a connected landscape. Another plea is to avoid the use of slug pellets – harmful to both hedgehogs, song thrushes (also in decline) and any other species for which slugs are part of their diet. There is concern over an imported rat trap, called an A24, originally designed to catch hedgehogs in New Zealand. Recently approved by Defra, it avoids the use of poison to control unwanted pests but, unless set very carefully, is considered potentially lethal to the British population of hedgehogs.

**9/10<sup>th</sup> June- Festival of Nature in Bristol.** The UK's biggest free celebration of the natural world.

We look forward to seeing you on **16<sup>th</sup> April.**

Best wishes

**Carrie Riches**

Chair **Hawk and Owl Trust North Somerset and Bristol Group**

Tel: 01275 462908/ Mob.07769654219

[www.hawkandowl.org](http://www.hawkandowl.org)

*Working to conserve all Birds of Prey and their habitats*

**Summer walks and winter talks programme follows below**

**North Somerset and Bristol  
Group [www.hawkandowl.com](http://www.hawkandowl.com).**

**Summer Meetings for  
Members 2018**

<b>Monday 16<sup>th</sup> April</b>	A walk around parts of the Tyntesfield Estate with Warden Darren Mait.	7pm in the visitors carpark.
<b>Monday 21<sup>st</sup> May</b>	Following on from the October talk on the restoration of some of the Mendip ponds, we hope to visit four. 'Pond volunteer' John Howard will be leading this walk.	Meeting point TBC
<b>Monday 18<sup>th</sup> June</b>	Uphill and Walborough Nature Reserves	Car park in Uphill. Details TBC
<b>Monday 30<sup>th</sup> July</b>	A daytime walk at Radstock Quarries led by Roger Moses	Time and meeting point TBC
<b>Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> August</b>	An afternoon on Shapwick Moor Reserve with walks and a BBQ	More details nearer the time!
<b>Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> September</b>	Day walk at Rodborough Common butterfly walk led by Gill Brown. Promise of ice creams on the way!	National Trust car park S0850035

**All walks £2.50, for members only. Further details from Sally Lee**

**01275475131 Mob 07894093513**

**Winter Indoor Meetings 2018-19**

**Monday 17<sup>th</sup> September – ‘When Beavers roamed the Marshes’** - Chris Sperring, will take us back in time to when Beavers and other lost species inhabited the Avalon Marshes and wider levels and moors. He will look at the natural history of these areas over the centuries as they have changed and are changing again.

**Monday 15<sup>th</sup> October** – title TBC – by Duncan Riches(?) on the creation of a new inter-tidal habitat on the south coast.

**Monday 19<sup>th</sup> November – ‘Urban Peregrine Falcons ( ... and suburban birds of prey)’** The story of the Bath Urban Peregrine Project with fabulous film footage by Hamish Smith, Project Coordinator.

**Monday 17<sup>th</sup> December - Members Owl Prowl**– with Chris Sperring MBE, Warm clothes and a torch advised. Venue TBC. Afterwards at a local hostelry *Numbers limited, please book.*

**Monday 15<sup>th</sup> January.– ‘An overview of the work of the Avon Wildlife Trust’** - speaker will be confirmed nearer the date.

**Monday 18<sup>th</sup> February – ‘Wildlife of Somerset’s Coast’,** covering birds to underwater life. By Nigel Philips, SWT Living Seas Ambassador.

**Monday 18<sup>th</sup> March – ‘A Tour of some of the UK’s Overseas Territories’** . Dr. Steve Nicholls FRES , film producer and director, involved with the recent BBC Four programme, Britain’s Treasure Islands.

*Venue:* The Ship at Portishead, Down Road, BS20 8JT

*All meetings start at 7.45pm. Entry fee is £4.00 for members, £5.00 for non-members, free entry for 18 years or under. Further details from Carrie Riches 01275 462908*

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Registered charity number 1058565, VAT number 681 1823 35

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*This newsletter is intended to keep you up to date with this group's activities and other events which may be of interest. If you do not wish to receive this, please let me know.*