



NORTH SOMERSET AND BRISTOL GROUP NEWSLETTER – September 2018

Dear Member and Friends

Sunday 19th August - Contrary to early conditions, we enjoyed some wonderful weather for the BBQ, the sun shone and the breeze was warm! The format that we have established works well, mainly due to Pat's great organising. The Workbase is a good space and is now well equipped with tables and chairs, BBQ's, a rainwater supply, camping stove, mugs, a kettle and 'facilities' (maintained by Mike for which we are most grateful). We just add a few table clothes, coffee, cakes and people and we have all the ingredients for a very



sociable get-together in a lovely location! We were pleased that Chris and his family were able to join us this year. After lunch and far too much scrummy cake (rude not to sample all contributions) we went for a walk round the reserve to look at the new ditch (see below in Shapwick news), the pond and the hide. By the pond, which had a surprising amount of water in it and lots of fish activity visible on the surface, the sharp-eyed heard and spotted a green sandpiper - we think a first for the reserve. During the day two hobbies, seven buzzards, and a sparrowhawk were also seen. Many thanks to all who came and helped to make the day so enjoyable.

Monday 17th September, 7.45pm at The Ship at Portishead, the first of our winter talks '**When Beavers roamed the Marshes**' will be given by Chris Sperring. He will take us back in time to when Beavers and other lost species inhabited the Avalon Marshes and wider levels and moors and outline the natural history of these areas over the centuries as they have changed and are changing again.

The talk will be followed by a very brief **AGM** which we are now required by HO to hold. We hope you will stay for this as we need you as members to elect the local Group Chairman and Treasurer and a committee! Currently your committee comprises of Carrie Riches, Pat Rogers, Roger Moses, Sally Lee and Mike Lee. Carrie, Pat and Roger have all volunteered to stand for election. Sadly, Sally and Mike have decided that the time has come to step down though they will still be active volunteers on the reserve and be involved with the Kestrel Highways Project. They have made a huge contribution and been so supportive over many years for which we are very grateful. Many thanks to them. Under the new Group Agreement with Head Office we need a minimum of four on the committee, so we are very grateful to the two additional members who responded last month and have volunteered to stand.

A reminder that we have felt it necessary to raise the entry fee to £4 for members and £5 for non-members. After many years without, we now have to pay a room charge, and the cost of interesting speakers rises year on year! Free entry will continue for under 18's. The full winter programme is attached separately.

Kestrel Highways Project

If you would like to be involved or have sightings please contact baz.gray@btinternet.com

News from Shapwick:

According to some very old maps there was once a ditch in the field through which the footpath runs. This ditch has now been re-instated, under the auspices of Natural England, and is holding water so we wait to see what impact this will have on the reserve. As you can see from the photo, it is quite a significant project! I have also included a photo of another fairly recently installed dam/sluice to manage water levels.

For information on volunteering please contact simon.beard@hawkandowl.org Tel 01308 861008



Other dates and items which may be of interest:

BTO Tawny Owl Survey. 30th September - 31st March. *'Tawny Owls are our most frequently heard/seen owl in and around gardens, but despite our familiarity with these birds, we know little about the impacts of urbanisation on their behaviour, and how it influences our ability to detect their presence. Tawny Owls are reliant on vocalisations, using them to show ownership of a breeding territory, as well as attracting a mate and reinforcing a pair bond. You can help us explore the impact of artificial light pollution and other aspects of urbanisation on the likelihood of hearing Tawny Owls. At the same time we'll also look at seasonal changes in Tawny Owl calling behaviour more generally and see if urbanisation plays a role in this too.'*

This work builds on information collected by a huge 3,465 volunteers in 2005/06, who listened for Tawny Owls in their gardens. We found that the time of day, the moon cycle and weather influenced Tawny Owl calling behaviour.

Anyone can help us by taking part in the survey, and listening for Tawny Owls in your garden or local green space or any other place that can be visited repeatedly. All you need to do is to listen for Tawny Owls for 20 minutes on one evening a week from 30 September to 31 March. Although the more weeks you listen the better, you'll be able to do as many or as few weeks during the survey period as you feel able.

Be a zero hero! We need your help even if you have never heard a Tawny Owl locally. Records of where we can't hear them are just as valuable to us as records where owls are present.'

There will be more coverage of this in the next 'Peregrine' magazine. Otherwise at www.bto.org/owl-surveys.

Sunday 9th September - 175th North Somerset Agricultural Society Annual Ploughing and Hedging Match and 31st Crafts and Produce Show at Grove Farm, Brockley Way, Claverham, BS49 4PT. There will be ploughing competitions with heavy horses, vintage and modern tractors, hedge laying, and craft demonstrations. and a handicraft and produce show. This year the Match will be run in conjunction with the Western Counties Heavy Horse Society Working and Ploughing Weekend taking place on the 8th & 9th September at Grove Farm.

Tuesday 11th September the speaker for the South Gloucestershire Group will be **David Prior** who will be talking about the Dardia Forest in Greece. Iron Acton Parish Hall at 7.30 pm. £4 for members, £5 for non members, includes tea/coffee and biscuits.

Sunday 16th September – National Vintage Tractor and Engine Club North Somerset Group Steam-up and Vintage Rally at Chew Stoke Cricket Club, Pagan's Hill, BS40 8UE.

Best wishes

Carrie Riches

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

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