

Ongar Wildlife Society

An Occasional Newsletter

Number 6

September 2004

Winter Talks

It does not seem that four months have passed since Mary Smith presented her energetic talk on the *Wild Plants of South Essex* to the Ongar Wildlife Society. During the intervening period, an inconsistent Summer has passed. However, all is not gloom since the new Winter season of OWLS talks is soon to be upon us.

The first talk of the new season is:

Monday, 20 September	<i>Insects through the Eye of the Camera</i> by Micky Andrews
-----------------------------	--

And this is followed by:

Monday, 18 October	<i>Meanderings from the Marshes</i> Dominic Funnell
--------------------	--

Monday, 15 November	<i>The African Elephant</i> Colin Lewis
---------------------	--

Monday, 13 December	<i>Gardening with Birds</i> Mike Logan Wood.
---------------------	---

All these meetings will be held in Essex Rooms, Castle Street, Chipping Ongar commencing at 7.45 pm for 8.00 pm. Once again, a varied programme is continued . . . covering the small to the very large!

Future Programme

The programme for next year is being cast at the present time. The committee, and particularly the Programme Secretary, encourage members to suggest speakers, talks or visits. So if you have listened to a talk recently, and the subject of that talk would be of interest of OWLS, then please let the committee know.

It seems that the walks and reserve visits have been less well supported over the Summer than in previous years. However, the weather on at least one occasion was quite discouraging. It may be also that the travelling associated with these events deterred most members. Again, here is an opportunity for members to propose a local walk with a natural history theme.

Please support the Welney outing that is described later in this Newsletter.

Summer Walks and Visits

Although OWLS do not meet for monthly lectures during the summer months, four visits were organized and enjoyed by everyone who attended. Undeterred by the wet and cold weather, we set off for Danbury Common on the 8th May and managed to hear and see the Nightingales. There was an abundance of Wood Anemones and woolly catkins of the Aspen tree. There was also plenty of split gill fungus on dead and broken Birch trunks.

On the 5th June we visited Blue House Farm - a much better, drier day, where our coastal walk revealed many wading birds including Shovelers and Shelducks, and the two hides provided an opportunity to see Cormorants and Herons. We relaxed and enjoyed a welcome drink at a nearby pub at the end of our walk.



*A flock of seasoned bird watchers seen at Blue House Farm
... but now heading for some local refreshment.*

A very exciting part of the visit to Chigborough Lakes on the 25th July was the sighting of a flock of 17 Little Egrets flying around the lake and perching in the tops of dead trees.

Finally the recent afternoon out on the 15th August was to Phyllis Currie Reserve, a 22 acre Essex Wildlife Trust site consisting of a lake, wildflower meadows, Scots Pine plantation and glades. Here we saw a variety of wildlife - Speckled Wood and Meadow Brown butterflies, damselflies, Common Darter dragonflies, day-flying moths feeding on Rose Bay Willow Herb. A tiny frog appeared amongst the Wood Anemone plants, and we were fortunate to see Willow Warblers and a family of Spotted Flycatchers. There were many different wildflowers including Robin's Pincushion with a solitary wasp's gall and in the damp ditches was Corky Fruited Water Dropwort. 'Robbie's' hide revealed

only Mallard ducks and Moorhens on the lake. Rob had his photo taken outside the hide but denies any family connection! On the way home a group of us stopped off at Pleshey for a 'domestic' tea.

Tanya Welford

Next outing:

COACH TRIP TO WELNEY - SUNDAY, 5TH DECEMBER, 2004.

Welney, situated 12 miles north of Ely, is a Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust Centre, which in the winter months offers an opportunity to experience the excitement of watching hundreds of Whooper and Bewick's Swans accompanied by flocks of thousands of wild ducks. Following prolonged cold weather in Scandinavia and Holland the geese and swans will appear on the Cambridgeshire Flood Relief Washes at Welney virtually overnight. In late afternoon the wild swans fly in to claim their roosting sites.

A 49-seater coach has been booked for the outing - pick up points are at Queens Head pub, Fyfield at 2.00 pm and Budworth Hall, Ongar at 2.10 pm. We expect to arrive at Welney by 4.15 pm in time to see the swans fly in. At 6.00 pm we will be given a short talk and at 6.30 pm we will be able to watch the floodlit feed. We can then stay at the Centre until 8.00 pm when it closes. We should arrive home by 10.00 pm.

The Centre is undercover and has a heated observatory, but warm clothing is still recommended, especially if the weather is very cold at the time of our visit. There is a small tearoom where you can buy drinks and a cake, but **it is suggested that you bring your own food**. The gift and book shop should be well stocked following a shopping extravaganza the previous day.

The cost will be £10.00 per person for the coach and entry fee to the Centre (party booking rate) is £3.20 adults and £2.50 senior citizens, unless of course you are a member of the WWT when entry is free.

The fly-in of the swans followed by the flood-lit feed is a spectacular sight. If you have not already put your name down for this outing, then **please telephone Tanya Welford on 01277 363947 to reserve your place.**

OWLS Committee

Rob Brooks (Chairman) (tel: 01277 364305)
Tanya Welford (Secretary) (tel: 01277 363947)
John Turnbull (Treasurer)
Allan Cook (Programme Secretary)
Anne Brooks
Richard Cook
Mike Devonald
Rosina Lacome

*Rob Brooks
Chairman*

