

**Birmingham
Natural History
Society**

Founded 1858

Registered Charity No 500819

President: Ms Kat Clifford

Internet address: <http://freespace.virgin.net/clare.h/bnhs.htm>

NEWSLETTER No 104 – September 2014

Lecture Programme 2014-2015

Friends Meeting House, Selly Oak, starting at 7.30 pm

17 October 2014

Ian Whitehead – A botanist in the Western Cape, South Africa.

Ian will talk about the World Heritage Site called 'The Floral Kingdom' which contains around 8000 species, 6000 of which are endemics, in an area less than the size of the UK

21 November 2014

Peter Shirley – Nature conservation in towns and cities

Peter was a founder member of what was then the Urban Wildlife Group in 1980 and was its first Chair. Since then he has been Director of the Urban Wildlife Trust/Birmingham and the Black Country WT, and has held a number of positions with the Wildlife Trusts at regional and national levels.

16 January 2015

Lisa Worlidge – Bats: their biology and conservation

Lisa has been Partnerships Officer with the Bat Conservation Trust since 2011 and is just one of two BCT contacts for bats and disease. She is also much involved with Brumbats.

Bat Conservation Trust



20 February 2015

Peter Preece – Every picture tells a story

Some members may recall Peter's talk to the Society in 2004, with his stunning photos of wildlife. A decade on he will show more recent photos, explain his equipment, and suggest how and where to photograph particular species.

20 March 2015

Professor Jon Sadler – The ecological impacts of light and sound pollution in cities

Jon is Professor of Biogeography at the University of Birmingham. His research emphasises links between environmental variability and species response. He chaired the Society's Reserve Committee until we withdrew from involvement in the management of Edgbaston Pool SSSI.

17 April 2015

Presidential lecture: Kat Clifford – Cryptozoology – the search for new species

Parking at Friends Meeting House

Work on the bungalow has been completed and tenants have moved in. The tenants will be using two car parking spaces to the right of the bungalow nearest to the garages. 'Resident Only Parking' signs have been put up so it is clear where the spaces are, and we have been asked not to park in these spaces when using the Meeting House.

To contact the Hon Secretary or to provide copy for the next Newsletter:

Dr Peter Jarvis
23 Crosbie Road
Harborne
Birmingham B17 9BG

0121 427 1010 peterjarvis668@gmail.com

SAVE paper, printing and postage costs: could members let me know if they would be happy to receive the Newsletter by email. Many thanks to those who have already done this.

AGM

The Society's AGM was held on 18 April, with sixteen members attending. Copies of the 2013 AGM Minutes and of the audited Accounts can be sent to members who were unable to attend, on request to the Hon Secretary.

Officers and Members of Council were elected as proposed on the Calling Notice, with Ms Kat Clifford succeeding Mr Bryan Wood as President. Mr John Reeve and Mr Geoff Collins were re-elected as Auditors. Since, technically, all members of Council are its trustees, Miss Margaret Kingsbury and Dr Peter Coxhead were elected as *Nominee* Trustees of the Society – trustees nominated to deal with communications concerning shares, etc. Miss Kingsbury and Dr Coxhead were also elected as Honorary Life Members of the Society.

Owing to illness, Mr John Reeve was unable to give his proposed talk on the *Maculinea* butterfly conservation project in Hungary. In its place, Dr Peter Jarvis gave a talk on 'Badgers and people: how we view and value the world's eleven species of badger.'

Rooks and robins

There have been studies of intelligence in **rooks** in captivity but very little has been done in the wild. Using 'citizen scientists' in their own gardens, the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) wants to find out just how intelligent rooks are.

Gardens provide an excellent opportunity to study rook behaviour as there are a number of potential problems for them to solve.

Anecdotal evidence shows that these birds can quickly learn to how to unhook feeders in order to drop them on the ground, or how to pull up food dangling by a string with their feet.

The BTO Garden Rook Survey will be looking at a range of behaviours including feeding, social behaviour and object manipulation to try to learn more about how common these behaviours are in the wild. All that is needed to take part is a garden that is visited by rooks.

The survey will take part between 1 July and 31 December 2014 and anyone can take part. To find out more about the BTO Garden Rook Survey or to download the instructions on how to take part, visit www.bto.org/rooksurvey.

*

Last winter the BTO Garden Bird Feeding Survey (GBFS) saw very low numbers of birds using garden feeding stations because of the mild weather and abundance of natural food.

Robins, usually found in nine out of ten gardens during winter months, were seen at garden feeding stations in their lowest numbers since the winter of 1979 and, in rural areas, their lowest numbers since the survey began in 1970.

This has probably not been due to a reduction in robin numbers. Rather, it's thought that these birds were able to find good sources of invertebrate food elsewhere.

With the mild weather experienced last winter, including the warmest December since 1988, insects and earthworms were probably more abundant and accessible in the wider countryside than normal, meaning that robins would not have had to depend on the food that we put out for them. Robins in rural areas were probably more able to access countryside food sources than those in cities and towns, so numbers in rural gardens were particularly low. With climate change models predicting milder winters for the UK, could the classic Christmas card image of a robin in a garden be a thing of the past?

However, Clare Simm, of the BTO Garden Ecology team, has commented, 'This year's breeding season has the potential to have been more successful than the previous two thanks to the dry spring and summer, which is likely to benefit multi-brooded species like the robin. A cold winter this year could bring robins to gardens which, combined with high numbers after a good breeding season, could mean a bumper winter for robin spotting'.

(BTO Press Office)

THE *Flora* of WORCESTERSHIRE



Roger Maskew

The first comprehensive account of Worcestershire's flora since 1909* is now available. The Worcestershire Flora Project is a charity set up in 1987 and the publication features information on over 2400 species of plant that are known to occur or have previously occurred in the county. This includes all the native species and alien species that have become naturalised or are of casual occurrence.

The first part of the Flora includes chapters on post-war land use, the history of recording, geology and soils, habitats and changes in plant status. The second part of the publication covers the species accounts, which includes many distribution maps and over 400 colour photographs of plants in their typical habitats.

Copies are available direct from Roger Maskew (cheques for £47.00 payable to 'The Worcestershire Flora Project', including postage) or in person from Lower Smite Farm. Please include an address, telephone number and email address to: **Roger Maskew, Coppice House, Bannalls Lane, Stoke Bliss, Tenbury Wells, Worcs WR15 8RZ**

The Birmingham Natural History Society is pleased to have contributed £1000 towards publication costs of this excellent work, a copy of which is in the Society's library.

* Interestingly, a 1978 paperback reprint of Amphlett & Rea's *The Botany of Worcestershire* (1909) is currently advertised in C. Arden's Catalogue 103 (see Newsletter 102 for details of Darren Bloodworth's Hay-on-Wye book shop.)