



Winter 2012

Chairman's Notes

When you were 30 did you feel old? Of course not! Young, keen, growing family, fully occupied . just the same as the Society. And we were active in our special year.

Two extra meetings in May and June were well received and attended, so we shall repeat both dates next year. We assisted at four days of %bio-blitz+ at Sandford and Copplestone primary schools on consecutive rainy weekends in June. Each day saw us constantly surprised at the genuine enthusiasm and knowledge these youngsters displayed. It convinced us that 5 to 11 is the age to catch them for a lifetime interest.

There were successful outdoor trips throughout the spring and summer but the culmination of our celebration year was at Roliphants late in August. Sun drove out the rain just in time, people chatted and some exercised, the Harris hawks and the Sparrow hawk were imperious and everyone went home full and happy after that splendid buffet.

Behind the scenes your hard working committee arranged a nature trail for local cub scouts, did two extensive flower surveys; were requested by Bardon Aggregates to survey the flora and fauna of one of their quarries next year and to create a continuing and permanent record for the use and interest of the Company and its staff. Devon Biodiversity Records Office expressed interest in the work that we do and two-way exchanges have been agreed. Liz Rogers has introduced us to phenology and many of you now have sheets to note the onset of various events; very important in establishing the impact of any climate change. Mid Devon District Council produced a draft Green Infrastructure Plan which sets out how green issues are to be tackled and facilities expanded between now and 2026. Local organisations and others were given an open invitation to reply. Peter Bowers and Stephen Powles were instrumental in producing our considered response which is available for you to read on our website.

All that remains for me to do now is to wish you a merry Christmas and a very happy and healthy New Year.

David Leader

Features

Burnet Moths of Mid-Devon

It is said that you can tell a leopard by its spots, but what about a Burnet Moth? Well, probably not, unless you are another Burnet Moth!

In Great Britain, there are seven species of Burnet moth (*Zygaena*). Four of these are to be found only in Scotland: Scotch Burnet and Slender Scotch Burnet- both true to their nomenclature; Transparent Burnet . with streaks rather than spots; and New Forest Burnet . a sub-species surviving in Western Argyll, whereas the original one from the New Forest became extinct in 1927. (There is a lesson to be learnt there for those who name species according to where they are found!). Until this year, it was thought that only two of the remaining three species could be found in Devon: the Six-spot (*Zygaena*

filipendulae) and the Five-spot (*Zygaena trifolii*). The remaining Burnet, called Narrow-bordered Five-spot (*Zygaena lonicerae*), was confined to eastern counties, with a few sightings in Somerset, but no further south-west. However, Devon can now proudly boast all three of the southern species.

So, how can you tell the three southern species apart? Fortunately, the Six-spot Burnet is straightforward, living up to its name. Of course, you have to know that the red patch closest to the thorax counts as two spots, although it is really only one divided by a black vein. You also have to know that the middle pair of spots on the forewing can sometimes be merged, as can the outermost pair! But in general, if the outermost red marking is two spots rather than one spot, then it's a Six-spot Burnet.



**Narrow-bordered Five spot Burnet moth
Z. lonicerae – photo by Peter Bowers**

Now for the tricky bit: distinguishing a Five-spot (*Z. trifolii*) from a Narrow-bordered Five-spot (*Z. lonicerae*). True to part of their name, both have five spots, and the difference from the Six-spot is readily recognisable (the outermost red marking being just one spot). Unfortunately, unless you're going to collect several specimens, measure the width of their borders with a micrometer, and compare the average border width with that of library specimens, then you're not going to be able to rely on the Narrow-bordered bit to tell the two species of Five-spot apart. No, for the average observer, you need to look elsewhere.

Firstly, you can look at the habitat. We now encounter an extra difficulty, because there are two sub-species of *Z. trifolii* which live in different habitats. *Ssp. decreta* likes damp grassland, heathland and wetlands, whereas *Ssp. palustrella* prefers dry calcareous grassland on chalk and limestone. *Z. lonicerae* inhabits rough grassland both on well drained calcareous ground and on damper clays, meaning that there is considerable overlap in preferred habitat between the species.

Secondly, you can look at the larval foodplants. Both subspecies of *Z. trifolii* feed on Bird's-foot-trefoil (Greater Bird's-foot-trefoil and Common respectively). *Z. lonicerae* prefers Meadow Vetchling and Red Clover, although it will feed on many other plants including Bird's-foot-trefoil. The absence of Bird's-foot-trefoil from a site where either *Z. trifolii* or *Z. lonicerae* are present is therefore indicative of *Z. lonicerae*.

Thirdly, and definitively, you can examine the caterpillars. Fortunately, there is clear distinction between the two species. The larvae appear fairly similar in colouring and markings, but those of *Z. trifolii* have short hairs, whereas those of *Z. lonicerae* have longer hairs. It is possible to compare any specimen you find with some excellent photos on the website www.ukleps.org to confirm their identity.

***Z. lonicerae* (note longer hairs)
photo by Peter**

Bowers



It is in this way that the presence of *Z. lonicerae* in Mid-Devon was first identified this year. A large colony exists on the embankment of the A361 near Sampford Peverell, and is known to have been there for at least 8 years. In that time, this opportunist species is likely to have colonised other sites nearby. Have you seen any Burnet moths that you took to be Five-spot Burnets (*Z. trifolii*) recently? Is it possible that they were actually the Narrow-bordered Five-spot Burnets (*Z. lonicerae*) instead? To find out, visit the site where you saw them in late April / early May and search for the caterpillars! Please also report your finds to the County Moth Recorder or the Moth Officer, Barry Henwood. (barry.henwood@btinternet.com)

Peter Bowers

Day Trip to Lundy

In late August, we set off for Bideford on a grey morning with heavy drizzle to meet our boat, the MS

Oldenburg, at 7.30 am, for the two hour crossing to Lundy. The weather cleared gradually as we set off into the Atlantic, which was fortunate as the bird life was abundant. Going downriver to the sand bar quite a lot of gulls and waterfowl were to be seen with geese and cormorants flying by. Once into open water there were also Guillemots, Razor Bills, Gannets and large numbers of Manx Shearwater all around us.



The sea conditions were fair to moderate, but this did not prevent about 75% of passengers getting seasick due to the motion of a flat bottomed boat. I am delighted to say that none of my family felt the slightest bit nauseous.

Some of Lundy's nosy seals
photo by Shelia Richardson

As the boat comes towards land you are welcomed by the nosy resident seals, and once on land we spent some time photographing them and the Shag in the little cove.

There is a steep path to the top of the island, which is mainly a plateau, on to the small village with a tavern, one shop and a farm. Once at the village, all the walking is fairly easy but rough, so walking boots were a good idea.

Because it is such a protected environment, all the animal life whether farm, feral or wild, is pretty tame. Be prepared for chickens to come and sit on your lap if you are having a picnic. Apart from farm stock we saw feral ponies, goats and Soay sheep, but unfortunately, did not glimpse the Sika deer.

We saw a good variety of birdlife but the stars were very confident Ravens, and peregrine falcons which came within a few feet of us.



A Lundy Raven – photo by Peter Richardson

There was the opportunity of a one hour boat trip round the island before returning to the mainland, which we jumped at, along with only about a dozen other hardy sailors. It was very exciting being quite rough on the Atlantic side of the island, but the scenery was wonderful, with lots of shipwrecks and fortifications round the coast, and again, lots of close ups of grey seals and birdlife.

A fairly tame return trip until we entered the river Torridge where again there was a great selection of waterfowl and waders along the banks including Redshanks Curlews Sandpipers etc. and the empty heronry we had passed going downstream, was now full with Grey herons and Little egrets. As we passed under the road bridge, one of the crew mentioned that earlier in the year Peregrine falcons had roosted there. Right on cue one arrived for the night.

A long day, but we would recommend it to everyone. If you saw no wildlife, it would be worth going just for the spectacular coastal scenery.

Peter and Shelia Richardson

Blashford Lakes Wildlife Reserve

Last August, together with our son Dave and his wife we visited this reserve which is about 2 miles north of Ringwood, Hampshire on the A338 (about 2 . 2 1/2 hours drive from Tiverton). The main car park is at grid ref SU151083, the Education Centre at SU151079 and postcode BH24 3PJ. The reserve is managed by the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust in company with Hampshire County Council.

The lakes are a series of former gravel pits surrounded by grassland and willow, birch and alder woodland. The Dockens Water stream flows through the reserve and is bounded by ancient woodland of oak and beech. The lakes attract large numbers of wildfowl during the winter. Gadwall can number over 900 and there is a roost of up to 65 Goosander each evening. Herons, including Little egret, and in recent years Great white egret, are regular with Bittern in some winters whilst kingfishers are present all year round. The woodland has woodpeckers, nuthatches and a range of common woodland birds. In summer Garden warblers and blackcaps are common visitors. In winter the woodland hide feeders attract large flocks of birds giving close-up views through the one-way glass windows. The woodland areas are also home to badgers, foxes and deer.



Tufted duck on Ivy Lake – photo Malcolm Randle

Our immediate impression was of a very well laid out and beautifully maintained area but with a nice element of wildness. There is an excellent visitor and education centre There are 11 large to medium sized lakes and 8 minor lakes or ponds. Most of the larger lakes are named and two of these (Blashford lake and Ellingham lake are dedicated to water sports such as sailing and water skiing but this does not affect the wildlife or the enjoyment of it as they are all secluded from each other. There are six hides all strategically placed to observe the different types of birds and wildlife to be seen. Ibsley Water (the largest lake) has three hides namely the Goosander hide, the Tern hide and the Lapwing hide. Ivy Lake has two hides, north and south and in between is the woodland hide. The main paths are all rolled gravel with shallow gradients.



A small copy of the plan is included here but a brochure (from which the plan is taken) can be downloaded from the reserve's website which gives more information.

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http://www.hwt.org.uk/reserve_detail.php/13/blasford-lakes

There is an excellent visitor centre and several cameras are set up around the reserve, the output of which can be watched in the Centre. The cameras give a glimpse of activities in various locations such as into the badger sett, or maybe grass snakes and mice in the compost bin or the underwater world of the pond.

On our visit we spent some time initially at Ibsley Water where there were various ducks, grebes and a

buzzard sitting on a fence post on the opposite side but nothing spectacular as really it was the wrong time of year. We also spent some time in both north and south hides of Ivy Lake where a Kingfisher was coming and going and also several Tufted ducks amongst other species. We didn't arrive at the reserve until mid-afternoon, having earlier spent some time in the nearby New Forest where we had a picnic lunch. Unfortunately at 4.30pm the hides, centre and car parks are all closed down so we had to leave earlier than we wanted to. The reserve is open between 9.am and 4.30 pm every day of the year except Christmas day and we could certainly see plenty of potential for the more active times of the year.

Just to give an idea of what can be expected here is an outline of what might be seen here during the seasons:

Winter (November to March)

Up to 5000 wildfowl on the lakes including Gadwall, Wigeon, Pintail, Shoveler, Teal, Tufted duck, Pochard, Goldeneye, Goosander and Coot. There is a large gull roost on Ibsley Water in late afternoons and in the woodland are woodpeckers, Siskin, Brambling, Redpoll and tits.

Breeding season (March to July)

Breeding waders including Redshank, Lapwing, Oystercatcher and Little ringed plover, also Common terns (on rafts in Ivy Lake) and Black-headed gulls. Sand martins breed in an artificial bank below the goosander hide. Grass snakes may be seen basking on the paths and in the ponds and lakes,

Spring and autumn passage (March to May & August to October)

Waders passing to and from their northern breeding areas include Greenshank, Black-tailed godwit, Common sandpiper, Dunlin. also Black tern, Little gull, Osprey Garganey and many more are likely to be seen.

Blackboards in the car park, at the Education centre and in the hides provide information on the latest sightings.

Following a visit to the reserve it is worth travelling on the three or so miles to the attractive little town of Fordingbridge which lies in the beautiful Avon valley where there are several establishments available for refreshments. We are looking forward to visiting this lovely wildlife reserve again.

Malcolm and Brenda Randle

Barn owl courtship (all photos by the author)



This year on a cold mid February afternoon I went out to a favourite spot of mine where I had been recently photographing a barn owl in the hope of getting some more shots to add to my portfolio. This spot is a stretch of land on the border of Berkshire and Hampshire which is divided by the Blackwater Valley near to Green Moor lakes nature reserve. The area is about 270 acres or so and for the last few years there has been quite a few barn owl boxes put up across the reserve. Most of the boxes are a long way from the beaten track and can only just be seen with the naked eye.

I had been watching a male barn owl which inhabited what I called the North Box. Quite often at around 3pm you could see him (with binoculars) looking out of the entrance of the box waiting for the right moment to go. I've never been able to successfully predict this moment. I use to think it was all to do with the height of the sun but you could never guarantee it! Eventually he would fly off and start quartering the land in that classic style flying very low across the terrain no higher than about ten to fifteen feet and then frequently breaking into a hover which may or may not materialise into a stoop to the ground. After a few months of observation I learned that his quartering usually followed a similar pattern over the land so this time I decided to head down to the south of the reserve, where he often ended up flying near to a footpath, with



the idea I could get closer shots. Also in this area a new nest box had been put up on a tree which I called the south box, it was easier to see than the north box. Once in position and after a short period I could see him quartering in the distance heading my way. Finally he was very close and to my surprise he stopped quartering and flew straight to the south box on the tree and perched on the side of it. Then suddenly, surprising me even further, a female barn owl appeared at the box entrance (I had no idea at this time that another owl had inhabited the new box). The male immediately went into a hover with his feet dangling



down but his head looking upwards. A series of hissing and high frequency pips could be heard and the female then came out of the box too. The two of them then went up into the tree and at various stages the female would perch and the male would do the head-up hover with legs either dangling or pointing outwards. I've since learnt that this is termed moth flight. The pipping, hissing and high pitched screeching continued along with the aerobatics. Eventually they left the tree and rose high into the air, much higher than I've ever seen a barn owl fly, and the courtship display continued with all sorts of aerial stunts and manoeuvres. Eventually it came to a sudden end and the male flew off whilst the female went back and perched on a branch in her tree. The whole event seemed to go on and on but in fact only lasted about 2 minutes from when the male owl first arrived until he finally flew off.

Since this event took place the Moor Green Lakes Group (to which I'm a member) reported that a pair of barn owls successfully produced a brood of two in the spring/early summer of 2011 although I'm not sure if this was the same pair as I saw. Also a pair bred in the north box but the eggs never hatched which happened a previous year which has led to some suspicions that one of the pair maybe infertile.

For me this was the first time I witnessed such an event. I felt very privileged to have done so as many people have never seen this wildlife spectacle and I felt the need to share it.

Dave Randle

Meeting Reports

September 16th 2011 - Water Voles: Mervyn Newman (freelance ecologist with a special interest in water voles)

Mervyn's presentation focussed particularly on the status of *Arvicola terrestris* in Devon. The water vole was once widespread archaeology suggests that it was a dominant grazing species before the arrival of the rabbit. It was already declining early in the 20th century and by 1989 survey maps of Devon show that it only occurred on a few river catchments and the Grand Western Canal was one of its last strongholds.

By 1998 all sites in Devon were negative. In the UK it is now rare and local, absent from Ireland and widespread on the Continent. Truly



Water Vole (*Arvicola terrestris*) – photo by Dave Randle

amphibious, associated with slow rivers lakes and ditches with abundant bankside grazing and aquatic vegetation, it burrows with its teeth and so leaves no spoil at the burrow entrance (cf Brown rat). A prolific largely vegetarian rodent occasionally taking water snails and small fish, it is capable of up to five litters of four to six per year but has a short life expectancy (about one year) in the wild. In captivity it may live up to five years but it is being bred in order to reintroduce to suitable sites such as the River Tale and Seaton Marshes (2004 and 2006) and these are proving successful.

Predator control is focussed principally on American Mink which is thought to be the main threat but otter, stoat, badger, dogs, cats, rats and herons etc are also involved. Mink traps are widely used and Mink rafts monitor the movements of the water voles and its mammal predators. We were left in no doubt that without mink control reintroductions would be unlikely to succeed. Equally important for reintroduction is the protection of bankside vegetation which means fencing to prevent trampling by cattle, and coppicing of trees to prevent overshadowing. Mink control has other benefits for indigenous species- waterfowl, all hole nesting birds, freshwater mussels, crayfish etc.

Apart from actually seeing the water vole there are signs to look out for:-

- i) bank holes with a surround of tight grazing
- ii) latrine sites with cylindrical green staining droppings 5-8mm long (similar to field vole but smaller).
- iii) feed remains - stems 8-10cms long cut at 45 degrees at each end (field vole's are much shorter)

Apparently the Grand Western Canal (currently monitored for mink) is becoming once again highly suitable for the water vole, maybe a reintroduction?? Or could it just have survived? Keep looking.

Alan Hopkins.

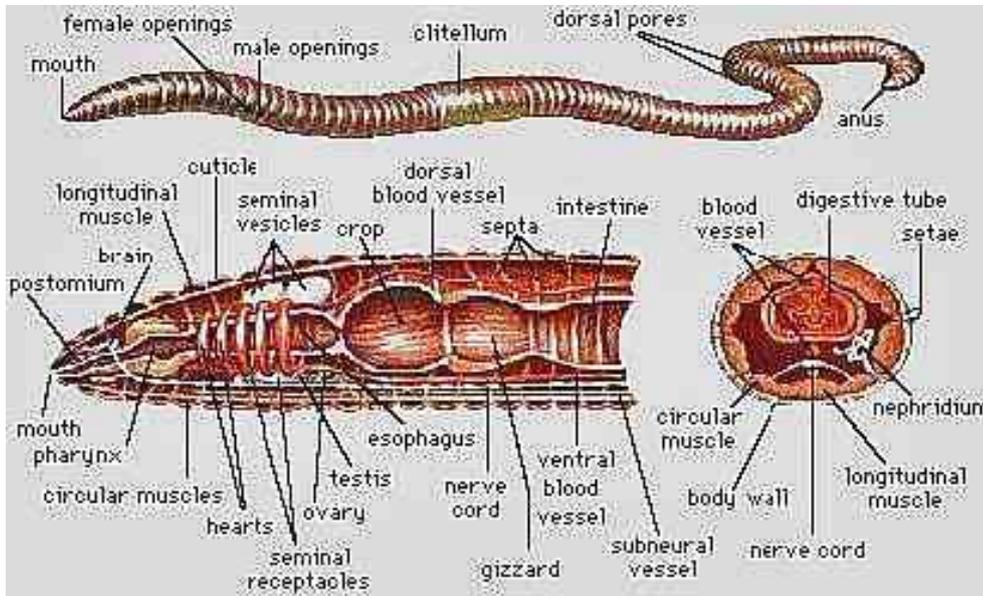
October 21st - Dr Roger Avery "The worms in your garden"

The title of Roger's talk was clearly directed to the earthworm but by way of introduction he briefly described some of the other species which are commonly referred to as worms including nematodes, tapeworms, flatworms, marine ragworms and lugworms, and even some caterpillars often called cutworms. Few naturalists would regard any worm as particularly charismatic, though Charles Darwin recognised their importance and studied them in detail, (*The formation of vegetable moulds through the action of worms*). Some 10,000 earthworms are present in the average suburban garden and there are many more nematodes (eelworms) whilst compost heaps contain numerous small brandling worms.

Roger went on to explain in detail exactly how earthworms cope with burrowing through the crumb structure of so many different soil types. The segmented body is perfectly adapted. Each segment is a

separate compartment (apart from the gut which traverses the whole body length) having circular and longitudinal muscles which alternately compress the fluid content causing extension, or shortening and bulging. Several segments along the length of the body synchronise their activity. Each segment has small retractable bristle like projections which grip the soil crumb so assisting the worm in dragging itself through the earth.

This method of movement is in contrast to the simple unsegmented body of the nematode which can only swim in a surface film of water with serpentine movements. Roger used simple diagrams to illustrate this but using a live worm and some magnification all these features can be seen in action. Earthworms are hermaphrodite but they mate to exchange sperm and can sometimes be



The anatomy of an earthworm

(diagram obtained from Internet)

the shape of things they consume. This animal is more sophisticated than we thought. When finishing his book on earthworms in 1881, Charles Darwin wrote:

'It may be doubted whether there are many other animals which have played so important a part in the history of the world, as have these lowly organised creatures'

Roger's talk had been a revelation.

Alan Hopkins.

November 18th - Liz Rogers "The other Gorillas - Lowland populations in Gabon and Congo"

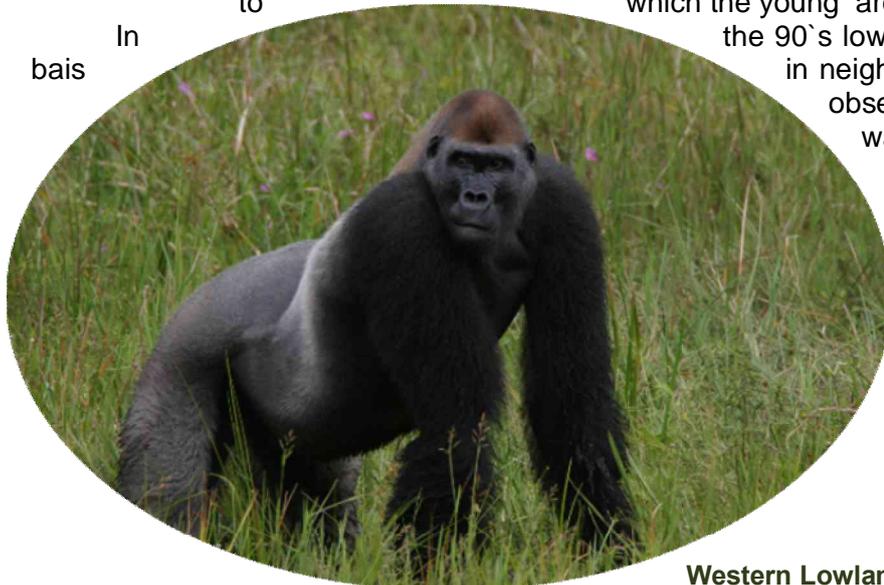
Liz's presentation was based on her involvement with the first extended study [1980- 2000] of the Lowland Gorilla, the species commonly seen in Zoos, but which has received far less attention in the wild compared with the mountain gorillas in Rwanda from whom they are completely separated geographically. Studies commenced in Gabon (1980) extending in the 90's into N.W. Congo.

Gabon was 85% rainforest and still has about 78% with small areas of savannah. Human population is still quite small. It had large Lowland Gorilla and Forest Elephant populations. However the situation is changing. Roads now encroach more into the forest associated with industrial logging which is less selective than it was. This also enables an increase in the bushmeat trade. Ebola virus (a haemorrhagic disease) to which humans and apes are susceptible is moving west from its source in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (previously Zaire) meaning that apes including gorillas could be a source of human infection. The creation of several new national parks in 2002 of some 30,000 sq km (10% land) and the promotion of eco-tourism should offer some protection.

The studies carried out on the gorilla revealed some important findings:-

- i) In the dense forest understory they leave no obvious tracks (cf. Elephants) but on mud, knuckle prints (front limbs) and footprints (hind feet) may be seen. Feed remains are also a useful clue.
- ii) Nests for sleeping may be on the ground or in a tree as these gorillas climb a lot in the search for fruit which they love. Dung near the nest site and hair from the nest is used for DNA and this together with nest counts is the best way of estimating group size and population.

- iii) Travel distances daily particularly for fruit (cf. Mountain gorilla which feeds mainly on vegetation and in the absence of fruit has no need to climb and is much more territory restricted). They may suddenly desert an area in this quest for fruit so when tracking it helps to know what trees are fruiting and where.
- iv) A complete vegetarian, apart from termites and ants, they do not hunt like chimpanzees.
- v) Several vocalisations are possible.
- vi) Sieving dung samples can reveal much about diet and which fruits are being selected.
- vii) Radio tracking has not proved useful - neck too short and thick, whilst wrist and ankle strapped devices get removed.
- viii) Typical group size . a silverback, two or three females plus offspring of various ages.
- ix) Silverback develops at about 10 years and first breeds at 15 years continuing for 10-12 yrs.
- x) Lifespan is 30-40 yrs.
- xi) Breeding interval four to six years so replacement rate is slow as births are single, and babes are not weaned before 36 months followed by years to sexual maturity. Young females tend to leave the natal group so avoiding in-breeding.
- xii) Has few predators except man. Poachers and the leopard will target the bais (swampy clearings in the forest with lush vegetation which also attract many elephants, game and birds) to which the young are vulnerable..



bais
In

the 90's lowland gorillas were located frequently in neighbouring Congo. Here gorillas could be observed easily and they were filmed wading and feeding. Such places are an obvious tourist attraction where the elusive gorilla could be more reliably found. Some bais also exist in Gabon.

This was a fascinating presentation full of vital information; thank-you Liz.

Alan Hopkins

Western Lowland Gorilla

(photo by Thomas Breuer MPI EVAN/WCS & provided by Liz Rogers)

Programme Notes

Our January buffet dinner is always a fine start to the year to blow away winter blues. Do read Doris's notes and request to book early; it helps in her arrangements with our caterers, too.

There is a new 'Reflections+evening MC in February this year; Stephen is taking over from the worthy Ralph, so you know it will still be lively and entertaining but with a new twist or two.

In March we have the AGM and once we have dusted down the agenda for its 30 minute slot we can relax and enjoy the vivid experiences of Alan Hopkins's veterinary career.

Most of us see fish lifeless at very close quarters and ready for dissection. Live ones are much more fun, and certainly outnumber humans, as Rod Lawrence will demonstrate and illustrate in April.

In between these St. George's dates there are various outings. A couple have firm dates but there will be others coming under the heading of 'short notice visits+'. Keep your ears open at meetings and your eyes on emails and on the website.

The next annual programme is due from 1st May and will be issued with the April newsletter.

David Leader

Annual Dinner

Once again the Society's dinner evening will be on Friday 20th January 2012 at St George's Hall. The event is subsidised and food and membership for 2012 will be £20. Please book your place in good time and let me know your choice of sweet:

Fruit Pavlova - Fresh Fruit Salad - Profiteroles - Apple Pie

BYO drinks but glasses are provided.

Please arrive at about 6.45pm for a 7.00pm start.

Doris Leader
01398 351 359

Long Sightedness

In the Round Britain Quiz a question might be 'What's the connection between frost, Devon and Patrick Moore.+'.

'Simple, a meerkat would say 'a clear sky at night.' And he would be right. When frost is around there's clear sky everywhere but there's one place in Europe, and only one, which has been designated an International Dark Sky Reserve; and it's right on our doorstep!

Exmoor National Park recently received this prestigious award which is the first time it's been granted in Europe and only the second time in the world. It was achieved after much hard work during recent years by the Park and local groups and the bid was supported by funding from both the British Astronomical Association and the Royal Astronomical Society. The other holder of the award is the 5500 sq.km. National Park of Mont-Megantic in Quebec.

With something so near and so special a visit is inevitable. An exact date now, though, poses problems. fog, rain cloud, snow would stop us getting there or seeing the brilliance of a clear dark sky. So sometime towards the end of February or the beginning of March it will appear as a short notice visit. Be prepared!

David Leader

Reflections Evening – Friday 17th February

The 'Reflections' evening is an opportunity for members of the Society to share with us all their enthusiasm and interest in natural history by giving a short presentation on a subject that has caught their imagination. The idea is to share, inform and entertain. This might be through giving a slide show, showing a film, reading a piece of prose/verse or giving a talk on any aspect of natural history, either local or from further afield.

Ralph Hopper has presided over and put together the 'Reflections' evening for many years and, in his own very personal, engaging and amusing way, has done excellent work in cajoling speakers and organising the programme. With the recent introduction of numerous newly developed technologies to give a presentation, he has cleverly and calmly filled the pauses as presenters have grappled with computers, projectors and leads in a desperate attempt to 'get the show on the road'. Sadly, Ralph has decided to stand down, so on behalf of the Society, I would like to thank him for his long standing commitment to the 'Reflections' evenings.

My concern is trying to take on where Ralph left off, the committee having asked me to take on the role of organising them from now on!

Please give serious consideration to making a presentation at the next 'Reflections' evening on the 17th February. It would be wonderful to see some new faces on the programme this year (to join the 'old guard'). Presentations don't have to be long – in fact often it's better that they are not!! Anywhere between two and twenty minutes is ideal. If you are thinking of taking part the following guidance might be helpful:

- Try to inform and entertain
- Better to edit heavily and concentrate on quality not quantity
- Whilst photographs and video are enjoyable, the stories that they can tell or the information that relates to them is equally important, if not more so than the pictures themselves.
- If you would like help putting together the photographs/Powerpoint/video clips, please ask as there are almost certainly people who can help you ò ò ò but don't leave it to the last minute!!
- Do a trial run to get an idea of how long it will take
- If you are not using your own projection equipment, please submit your presentation well in advance of the evening so we can try to make sure it works on the night.

If you are thinking of contributing to the next Reflections+evening please let me know by the middle of January. Thank you.

Stephen Powles

Notices

Trail Cameras for Hire

The cameras work by sensing the animal using detectors similar to those that are now commonly used to automatically turn lights on as we approach them. On detecting the animal, the camera will take the picture/video clip, using infrared (still photos or video) or flash (still photos only) to light the scene at night time. Some cameras will also record sound with the video.

The pictures/video are stored on SD cards which can then be viewed on a computer or some televisions.

Whilst the quality of the images will not match most cameras they often give a fascinating insight into a world that one would not see otherwise and, on occasions, surprise you with goings on that you were completely unaware of.

As the cameras only detect the movement of warm blooded animals, they can only be used for mammals and birds. The smaller the animal and the better its insulation, the greater the difficulty that the camera will have at detecting it (especially at a distance).

The MDNHS now has two Trail Cameras that are available for hire by members of the society. They are the HCO Scouting Camera and the Prostalk 3MP

Feature	HCO Scouting	Prostalk 3MP
Stills and Video	Yes	Yes
Sound	No	Yes
Quality of video or stills	+++	+
Ease of use	+	+++
Detect otters?	No	No

For more information:

HCO Scouting Camera: www.hcodealer.com/product_info.php?cPath=1&products_id=44

Prostalk 3MP: www.hawkeoptics.com/nature-cameras/prostalk-camera-3mp.html



Young red deer eating crab apples



Members of the society can hire them on the following terms:

- £5 per week/part week (from collection to return), £15 for 4 weeks
- £20 deposit returnable when the camera is returned in good working order
- Supplied with 2 x SD cards, batteries (rechargeable), instructions, suitable leads to connect with a computer and some top tips+
- To be returned to either David and Doris Leader or Stephen Powles

These cameras are on loan to the MDHNS. If the scheme proves successful the Society, in time, will be able to purchase its own cameras and ones of better quality or with more functions.

For more information contact Stephen Powles on 01884 242965 or s.w.powles@btinternet.com

Stephen Powles

