

## NATURAL HISTORY SECTION

The Natural History Section is pleased to record another successful year of visits and lectures:

- 16th January:* 'Fossil Reptiles of Buckinghamshire' by Kate Hawkins. A most interesting afternoon spent hearing about fossils found in the County, with the aid of slides and a display of specimens.
- 13th February:* Winter Bird Watch at Loddon Nature Reserve, Twyford: This small reserve shows the amount of interesting wildlife to be found even right on the edge of a town. Of particular ornithological interest was a courtship display of Great Crested Grebes, and a roost of hundreds of Lapwings on the flooded gravel pits.
- 13th March:* Meet a Barn Owl, with a talk by Mike Willicombe: A really lovely afternoon with 'Jo-Jo', a Barn Owl, and his owner, who gave us a wealth of information on these fascinating birds.
- 3rd April:* After the Annual General Meeting, we were entertained by a talk by Jean Hall on 'Disappearing Flora of Bucks,' with some really superb slides. Examples of management strategy to encourage wild flora were also a feature of her presentation.
- 15th May:* Birdwatch at Willen Lake, Milton Keynes: Brilliant sunshine, but with a stiff breeze, made ideal Bird watching conditions, and 34 Species were identified. Willen Lake therefore is an exceptional site for this activity, made even better by the excellent hides and the abundance of chicks at this time of the year. Species identified: Pied Wagtail. Starling. Goldfinch. Magpie. Robin. Greylag. Canada Goose. Lapwing. Mallard. Common Tern. Swift. Reed Bunting. Reed Warbler. Black-headed Gull. Crow. Great Crested Grebe. Tufted Duck. Moorhen. Little Ringed Plover. Coot. Mute Swan. Little Grebe. Swallow. Blackbird. Ringed Plover. Greenfinch. Wood Pigeon. Pintail.

Bar-headed Goose. Shag. Grey Heron. Gadwall. North American Ruddy Duck.

- 12th June:* Millfield Wood with Dr. Alan Showler for Orchids & Rare Flora. In spite of heavy rain, Dr. Showler gave us a most interesting visit to Millfield & Millfield Wood, finding examples of the rare species of flora to be seen here, – particularly the Orchids: Twayblades, Early Marsh, Southern Marsh, & Spotted, enhanced by his expert Botanical knowledge.
- 16th July:* Churchyard Flora & Grasses at Bradenham with Roy Maycock. Once again, Roy gave us a most interesting afternoon, adding to a previous list of 116 species found here. He outlined the work that has been done in the County to ascertain the churchyards richest in flora, pointing out that Bradenham is the only churchyard in Bucks. with mistletoe.
- 11th September:* Chalk Geology of Chinnor quarry led by Kate Hawkins. Nineteen members gathered for this meeting hoping to find fossils and to understand the stratigraphy of Chinnor Quarry. (Ref. Sumbler, M. G. and Woods M. A. 1992. 'The stratigraphy of the Lower and Middle Chalk at Chinnor, Oxfordshire', *Proc Geol. Ass.*, **103**, 111–118.)
- Though expert geologists were not able to be with the party, parts of the sequence in the Lower and Middle Chalk were recognised from the descriptions available, though not with confidence. Some time was spent in the lower section of the quarry trying to confirm the location of a 'marker bed' called the Totternhoe Stone. This brown grainy bed in the Lower Chalk is often fossiliferous and members of the party did find a few fragmentary fossils. The stratigraphy above what was thought to be the Totternhoe Stone proved to be somewhat mysterious to the inexperienced party leader, so members moved to

the upper end of the quarry. There more distinct beds or bands could be seen and a tentative identification made of the Melbourne Rock hardground which marks the boundary between the Lower and Middle Chalk.

Fossils collected during the visit were mainly bivalves and bivalve fragments, including provisionally identified *Inoceramus*. Fish scales were also found in the upper part of the quarry.

The Society would like to thank Rugby Cement for making the visit possible and allowing the collection of samples.

*25th September:* Fungus Foray with Victor Scott in Penn Woods. Combining this event with Wycombe Urban Wildlife Group proved to be a great success as 32 people came and enjoyed one of Victor's informative afternoons. Some 31 species were found including 3 which the Natural History Section had not found before viz. *Mycena haematopus*, *Hydnum rufescens*, & *Peziza rutilans*. This year's cool Summer meant that the fungi were not as plentiful as in previous years.

*16th October:* Man & Nature in the Chilterns: A Visit to Wycombe Local History Museum. An interesting & enjoyable afternoon made even better by the friendly welcome of the Museums Officer Philip Crouch

with his introductory talk. We were shown a 1930's film on the Bodgers, and enjoyed a guided tour of the Norman motte, the Wild Life Garden created by the Wycombe Urban Wildlife Group, and the Exhibition Galleries with a special exhibition on John Piper – a tribute to his less known work as a major force in post-war theatre design.

*20th November:* Illustrated talk on Iceland by Geoff Beck. An interesting insight into this strange island with its sub-Arctic climate and geological sights associated with volcanic activity. We were taken round the unsurfaced ring road looking at fine slides of the scenery, including impressive waterfalls and glaciers, the flora and bird life.

*11th December:* Weston Turville Reservoir – its History & Ecology. An extremely competent and interesting talk by Tessa Taylor, illustrated not only with slides of the birds and flora but accompanied by reproductions of old maps, prints and manuscripts researched at the Record Office. Once used to provide water for the Grand Junction Canal, the reservoir now has five different habitats important to wild life: open water, reed beds, calcareous marshland, scrub and trees.

A.V.C.