



Kempshott Conservation Group



Newsletter No. 22 June 2013

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*To see details of events or re-
port sightings :*
<http://kempshottconservationgroup.org.uk>

Or Telephone.: (01256) 470171

Basingstoke Festival 2013

Assisted by Basingstoke and Deane

join us at our free

Picnic in the Park

in Stratton Park
Sunday 23 June 2013
11.30am to 3.30pm

***Entertainment, competitions, lots of things to see and do - stalls and activities for everyone.**

Punch and Judy, Teddy Bear Competition, Tennis and Football activities & Treasure Hunt

Bring your own picnic - but if that needs topping up there is a Burger Bar, Ice-creams or drop in for Tea & Cakes.

*some activities may charge a small fee

Our sister group, *The Friends of Stratton Park*, have organised a free community celebration of the park and all that goes on in it. There will be something for everybody - see above - so please do come and give them your support.



..... *Meadow Meanderings*

These conducted walks around Down Grange Meadow are now Underway and, like last year, they are being held on the **first Sunday in each month** until September. Starting at 11 00 by the Homesteads Road Interpretation Board, they last around an hour. Do come along to see what birds, flowers and butterflies are about. Everyone is welcome, whether a member or not. Want to bring your dog on a lead? Not a problem. We look forward to seeing you.

Basingstoke Bio-Blitz

*Get hands on with nature at the BioBlitz
Saturday, 22 June 10 00am to 4 00pm
Black Dam and Crabtree*

You can make wildlife count this summer by joining the
Basingstoke BioBlitz.

Held as part of Basingstoke Festival this exciting FREE event for all ages offers you the opportunity to get hands on with nature to seek, identify and record as many species as possible over the course of the day with the help of wildlife experts.

Activities will include:

Butterfly walks

Owl pellet dissections

Table-top safari

Bat walks*

River wildlife demonstrations

Wildflower identification

Bird ringing demonstrations

Moth trapping*

*Must be booked in advance and will take place in the evening

Refreshments will be available for purchase. Free parking is available at The Old Common, London Road (RG21 4BY) which is a short walk from the event. Disabled parking is available at Black Dam Ponds (RG21 3QX). Don't forget to bring your wellies!

For more information visit www.basingstoke.gov.uk/go/bioblitz or to book an evening session visit wildlifeconservation@basingstoke.gov.uk or call 01256 844844.



Late Spring Report for Down Grange meadow...

While the foliage was bursting out, we had the unusual spectacle of blackthorn still in blossom as the hawthorn was budding up. Hawthorn, or "May", traditionally flowered on 1st May. On adoption the Gregorian calendar in 1752, eleven days were added to get our Julian calendar synchronised with the rest of catholic and protestant Europe. So hawthorn should flower in the second week of May, but not this year!



June is also a good month for wild flowers. This is because the grass has not yet got into its stride and smothered all but the tallest and more vigorous flower species. Lady's Smock or Cuckooflower (*Cardamines pratensis*), allegedly one for damp meadows and a member of the cabbage family, is found scattered over the northern half of the Meadow. It is a perennial that grows to 60cm or 2ft. It has a pretty pale pinky-mauve flower that appears when the cuckoo starts singing. It's cousin, the Garlic Mustard, is a common "weed"



of hedgerows. Both species are used by the Orange-tip and Green-veined White butterflies as their food plants. (Both photos were taken in the meadow this year)

What to look out for in June, one of the best months for butterflies ...

It is slightly worrying that the species we would expect to see are present, but numbers are down. Spring last year was also wet and cold so changing conditions may have a long term effect on numbers.

The number of other flying insects, bees in particular, so important for pollinating the blossom, are also down.

Two species to look out for are the Common Blue and Brown Argus. Both are members of the family of "blues" and are the same size.

The **Common Blue** has two or three broods and can be seen flying over the Meadow or nectaring on the creeping thistle. With the Common Blue only the male is actually all blue. The female is basically brown with a dusting of blue scales surrounding her abdomen.

Both sexes have similar undersides of a silver background with the tell-tale black and orange spots. A fresh female also has a "dusting" of blue scales surrounding her abdomen, which are a giveaway.

If you see a lovely matt chocolate brown butterfly, shown below left, this is a **Brown Argus**. This also has two broods and flies at the same time as the Common Blue. Distinguishing between a faded Brown Argus (the sexes look the same) and a female Common Blue can be tricky but the Brown Argus never has any dusting of blue.



← This female was taken in the Meadow 6/8/2010 — You can tell it's a female because of the swollen abdomen used for egg production. The males on the other hand have a long but thin abdomens. This is the case with all butterflies.



↑ Male Common Blue taken in the Meadow 2/6/2011
Female Common Blue taken in the Meadow 21/6/2010 ↓



Summer Work Parties ...

We will be organising a number of work parties during the Summer, depending upon weather and growing conditions! We have a few jobs to do, but the most time consuming tasks are "ragwort pulling" and "thistle topping". We have abundant quantities of both these, so called, pest species. "So called", because both species in moderation are good things to have. Creeping thistle is a good nectar source for butterflies and Ragwort is used by Cinnabar Moths as their food plant, and late in the season, is also a magnet for hoverflies. However, you can have too much of a good thing!!

It is difficult at present to predict when we will do these jobs. In a normal year, we would "top" our creeping thistle in July, hence the saying "Cutting in June is too soon, but cut in July, it will surely die!". Ragwort can also be pulled in July. Watch out for notices in the Meadow, giving details or contact Marion (Bas. 470171)

Spring report for The Old Orchard...



As often happens, a long, cold and dry early Spring is followed by a splendid show of blossom, and that is certainly true of the Old Orchard this year. If there is not too much heavy rain before the fruit sets this should be an excellent fruit year - the Old Bramley apple is certainly showing plenty of promise with its splendid display of blossom.

The quince is also full of pretty pink flowers—will this be the year it actually sets fruit successfully?



Kempshott Biodiversity Plan what's that?

Increasingly over the last few years communities have become involved in determining the way their local area is developed and managed and services provided. Indeed it is now the law that all community members have a say in this—it is not just 'their' responsibility to fix it.

Increasingly over the last five years local residents have become involved in nature conservation in and around Kempshott and have been working with the borough staff to better protect and recover quality urban green spaces for nature and wildlife.

The next phase of this effort is to develop a **biodiversity plan** for all the green spaces in Kempshott—and we are fortunate in having lots of green spaces. What is a biodiversity plan? Well, if you start with a large area of flat green grass regularly mowed, the biodiversity score is 1 out of 10. If you look at Old Down Wildlife Park the biodiversity score is perhaps 6 out of 10—it has a wide range of native wild plants of all shapes and sizes which support a healthy and growing population of insects and birds. Local people appreciate the richness, or biodiversity, of that area and take great pleasure in walking in it. What is the potential for other green spaces in Kempshott to be more like Old Down and less like a billiard table?

That is what a group of local residents want to establish—and from what we know already it is not a question of spending vast amounts of money. The biodiversity of an area can be mightily improved by small changes in what you do and when you do it. Again we are working in co-operation with council staff on this project. If you would like to be involved in even the slightest way do please get in touch.



Subscriptions and Wildflower Seeds for Members

We normally begin collecting annual subscriptions door to door in March but, because of the poor weather and other commitments, we are very late starting. We will get round to it and will bring the promised seed packets with us in good time for autumn sowing.

"Thank you" to those members who have already paid their £2.00 per household. As always, it will save time and shoe leather if a cheque or cash could be sent or delivered as early as possible to any of the addresses below.

Seed Collecting Group in 2013

We had a really successful seed collecting year in 2012 and now have good stocks of many of the larger flowering plants.

The one area of failure last summer was in collecting any significant quantities of seed for the early flowering species—in particular birds foot trefoil—due to the exceptionally wet May and June. Lets hope that this year the harvest is better.

We have about half a dozen of the plentiful species on our target list this year as well as some of the less common flowers.

We meet from mid-July onwards on week days, usually on fine afternoons, to collect and later, at our leisure at home, tease the seeds from their pods or husks in readiness for sowing in the Autumn. If you are interested in joining the seed group please email or phone us.

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