

VOLUNTEER'S BBQ



Once again, following last year's success, we are holding another volunteer's BBQ immediately after the monthly work party on Sunday 24th September. This is to say a huge 'Thank you' from the committee for all the hard work that our volunteers have done for the WWA this last year. We will supply all the food (including vegetarian options), soft drinks, cutlery, paper plates, etc. You just need to bring yourselves. If you wish to partake of any alcoholic beverages please feel welcome to bring your own. The BBQ will be lit in time to cook from around noon. Volunteers are welcome to bring along their partners and close family but please could you let our Secretary (Janet) know that you are coming so we can gauge the amount to cater for. Thanks, and we look forward to seeing as many of you as possible. Fingers crossed that the weather is kind to us!

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual General Meeting was held on Sunday 19th March 2017 at the Sub Aqua Club in Cottonmill Lane. The committee for 2017 was duly elected, followed by a talk from WWA volunteer, Derek, who gave a fascinating account of his time volunteering abroad, titled 'A Kenyan Adventure' where he spent time with the charity 'Cricket Without Boundaries'. Thanks, Derek.

THE BIRD HIDE

The code to enter the bird hide is: **XXXXX**

Please make sure the door and windows are closed on leaving. If you see anything interesting at the Reserve feel free to please put it up on either of the sightings board.

WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS

The Association would like to extend a warm welcome to the following new members:

Gillian

Diane

Graham & Jane

Derek

Jane

We hope you will enjoy visiting the Reserve.

BUTTERFLIES – WHAT DO YOU KNOW?

In July, Margaret, Laurie, Alison and Derryn, our butterfly site surveyors, went on a day course at the field Study Centre in Amersham to learn more about these beautiful creatures. It was a very wet day but they still managed to get out and spot Essex Skipper, Common Blue, Small Copper, Meadow Brown, Comma, Red Admiral and Ringlet.

Why not test your knowledge with these three questions? And no cheating on Google!

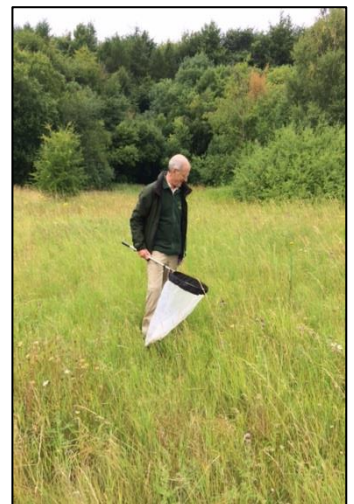
1. What's the best way to tell a moth from a butterfly?
2. Is it O.K. to use a net to catch a butterfly?
3. Is there such a thing as a "Cabbage White" butterfly?

Answers to questions at the end of the newsletter.
No peeking now!



Alison in action!

Laurie in pensive mood



WORK PARTY NEWS

There has been a good turnout of helpers at both the weekly and monthly work parties. Along with all the regular chores like filling up the bird feeders, emptying the donation box, mowing the paths and trimming the hedges lots of other work has been achieved this year. Below is a snapshot of some of the work done.

March: A small group dug out some of the increasingly invasive Flag Iris that were obscuring the view from the bench overlooking the Mere. It was extremely messy and hard work. Well done, all.

April: Chairman Steve cleared the Pyghtle pond of invasive growth, almost getting stuck in the process! Howard continued with the barley straw treatment, whilst other volunteers cut back the paths around the Reserve and cleared the entrance area of hogweed and nettles.



May: The Wednesday group covered a lot of work this month. They drastically reduced a huge rose bush that had spread almost to the opposite bank of the River Ver. Roly donned waders and cleared the watercress from the boggy area. Janet gave the benches a scrub and a quick coat of wood treatment, and Roger and Howard thinned out the Quince trees in the entrance area.

June: The donation box was vandalised again but Steve quickly replaced it with another. Neil and Janet cleared the paths of overhanging vegetation, Steve and Howard cleared a tree that had fallen over, blocking the main gate, the forsythia in the Orchard was pruned back, the chicken wire on one of the bridges was stapled back down where it had come adrift and the large dogwoods in the Shady Place were felled. Roger scythed in the allotment.



Clearing away one of the fallen trees

WORK PARTY NEWS



July: Another tree had fallen over, this time in the Shady Place, and it took a small team of volunteers to cut and clear it away. Katie did the barley straw treatment (any excuse to get those waders on!). Also, she and Roly had another go at opening up a channel through the boggy area.

August: With so many trees falling over (well, three, but you should see the waste material it creates!) there was an enormous pile of wood to be burnt so we had to have a couple of bonfires to get rid of it all. Jude and Janet cut a path around the inside of the Pyghtle hedge so we can get around with the ride-on mower. Robert and Neil worked with Laurie and Margaret in one of the butterfly meadows.

WORK PARTY DATES 2017

Sunday 24th September: Scything the meadow, cutting back Willowherb, general maintenance. **BBQ!**

Sunday 29th October: Digging out dogwood saplings, clearing the Shady Place of nettles and brambles.

Sunday 26th November: Cutting back vegetation in the Orchard.

Sunday 31st December: Mince pie bashing!

The **monthly work party** is always held on the last Sunday of the month. All ages are welcome. Work parties start at **10am** and finish around **1pm**. Light refreshments are served around midday. Tools and gloves are provided.

The work parties are a great way to get to meet new people. Come and give us a try!

The regular, weekly Wednesday morning work party starts at **10am** and lasts for a couple of hours. If you are interested in coming along it is a good idea to give Janet, our Secretary, your contact details as she sends out an e-mail in advance of the work party to let you know what is planned that week. Also, she can let you know if the work party is cancelled for any reason.

SILTEX AND BARLEY STRAW TREATMENT

Both the Siltex and the Barley Straw Extract programme were started at the end of March. There are two reasons for adding these products to the water. The Mere is gradually silting up, and although this is just natural progression, the WWA realise the stretch of open water is the most attractive feature of the Reserve so we are doing everything we can to delay the inevitable. We are trialling Siltex as it is supposed to break down levels of organic silt.

Firstly, we need to understand what silt is. Silt is organic matter, plus sand and clay, combined with water, which forms a spongy mass. Organic silt accumulates when the micro-organisms that normally feed on the organic matter are no longer present, due to low oxygen levels and increased acidity.



Siltex is a highly porous form of Calcium Carbonate consisting of microscopic particles with an average size of less than 5 microns (5/1,000 of a millimetre!). Being Calcium Carbonate, it is completely harmless to plants and wildlife.

- ❖ It decreases organic and oxidisable matter which is displayed as a reduction in silt levels.
- ❖ It increases oxygenation and stimulates aerobic micro-organisms.
- ❖ It improves water clarity by settling suspended waterborne solids.
- ❖ It reduces methane production by silt body.
- ❖ It counteracts acidity in the water and the silt.
- ❖ It provides essential Calcium for plants and wildlife.
- ❖ It increases biodiversity within the water bodies.
- ❖ The microscopic Siltex particles can penetrate right in to the silt layer and create the right environment for the micro-organisms to re-establish themselves and start to digest the organic matter, thus reducing the silt volume. It works best when the silt has a high organic content, combined with acidity.

The downside is that it is a very messy business adding it to the water, as it is basically just finely powdered chalk (Calcium Carbonate). The treatment needs to be done twice a year, in the spring and autumn. We will be interested to see if it actually works!

SILTEX AND BARLEY STRAW TREATMENT

The Barley straw extract (Excalibar) is used to try and keep the algae problem under control. In very simplistic terms, the Mere is very shallow so it warms up quickly, there are too many nutrients in the water, and along with too much light on the water, algal blooms can develop. The results, using the barley straw extract this year, have been encouraging, as although the algal blooms are still at the bottom of the Mere, they have not floated to the surface and covered the whole body of water as in previous years. In previous decades we have used bales of barley straw, which used to be the traditional method for dealing with this problem, without much success. This was probably because we didn't use enough bales and they weren't spread around the whole Mere.



"Excalibar is an established, environment-friendly extract of barley straw treatment. Extract of barley straw is a scientifically proven technique to control the growth of green-water, blue/green and filamentous ("blanket weed") algae resulting from an imbalance in the aquatic ecosystem.

Where there are insufficient water plants present, species of algae are the first to 'grab' available nutrients when temperature and light levels increase in the spring. Rapid growth of algae can quickly shade or smother desirable water plants, making algae the dominant recyclers of nutrients. If this annual cycle can be broken, water plants can, hopefully, re-establish a long-lasting balance."

Fingers crossed that both these treatments help in the long run.



Katie in her favourite waders adding the barley straw extract

IT'S NOT ALL HARD WORK, THOUGH.....

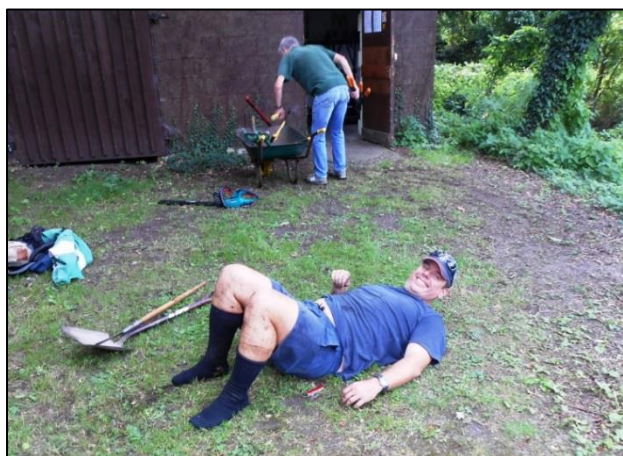
Andrew and Vanessa tending the grapevine



Group photo at the August work party



C'mon, Roly, stop pretending you've been working hard!



GADWALLS

In August we were lucky to play host to some Gadwall ducks that just appeared one day and decided to stay for a few weeks. They were very timid and swam away when anyone went near so it was difficult to get any decent photos. All in all, there were 18 birds, made up of various adults and their respective broods.

What a treat. They seemed to have moved on now but hopefully they'll pay us a visit every now and then.

ANSWERS TO BUTTERFLY QUIZ

1. Butterfly antennae have little 'clubs' on the end; moth antennae are thin and a bit feathery. If you said that moths are nocturnal, they generally are but there are quite a few that fly in the daytime.
2. Yes, conservationists say, but with care and then only momentarily to identify a butterfly before releasing it.
3. Not officially, but both the Small White and Large White are commonly called 'Cabbage White'

Below is a Common Blue butterfly. Note the ragged wings. Perhaps a bird has taken a nibble? It is quite obviously still able to fly and so lives to flight another day! :-)



For more information go to: www.butterfly-conservation.org

WWA COMMITTEE 2017

Officers

Steve/Chairman

Janet/Secretary

Howard /Reserve Manager and Membership Secretary

Mandy Neale/Treasurer

Members

Sheila /Newsletter Editor

Sam /Webmaster

Cath

Margaret/Management Plan Advisor

www.watercresslnr.org