

Brentwood & Billericay Local Group

Newsletter August 2019



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Bob Dawson
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Graham Clegg
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100 Club:

Sue Newth-Gibbs

Committee Member:

Ailsa Roberts

Chairman's Report

As you are no doubt aware we held Open Days at Warley Place for the Spring Bulb Spectacular from 23rd February to 7th April. Despite bad weather on a few days we still managed to raise over £6,400 and had over 2,600 visitors, many for the first time. This is our biggest fund raising event of the year and enables us to support various projects to protect local wildlife and habitats. A big thank you to all the volunteers who helped greet the visitors and manage the car park.

We had a very successful Plant Sale at Thorndon Countryside Centre in May which raised over £1,100. Also, in June we held our first ever Barn Dance at Brentwood School Sports Centre. Unfortunately it only raised £200, but at least we made a profit! Hopefully next time more people will come along as it was great fun. I would like to take this opportunity to thank John Allen and John McLaughlin for organising these events.

In a change to the advertised programme, members have an opportunity to see the premiere of a new film by Chris Baines, former president of the Essex Wildlife Trust, on the 19th September at Shenfield Parish Hall. It looks at the nature conservation projects making a difference for wildlife along the River Thames. On the 19th October (**please note the revised date**) we will be hosting another music concert at Shenfield Parish Hall. We are very pleased to welcome back the very popular ladies choir from Brentwood, Bra-vissima

The Local Group Committee has recently appointed 2 new officers, Frank Garbutt as Treasurer and Graham Clegg as Vice-chairman. I look forward to working with them both over the coming years. If anyone would like to join the Local Group Committee then please contact me, my phone number is 01277 262011.

This year the EWT Annual Members Day and AGM is to be held at Abbots Hall Farm on the 5th October and I hope that many of you will be able to attend. Recently there was a major restructure of the Reserves Management teams at head office. There are now 4 Landscape Conservation teams each comprising 3 people, when previously there were 3 Reserves Managers each with 1 assistant. So there are now 12 people doing what was previously done by 6 people! We fall into the South West Area which is headed by Zoe Ringwood, supported by John Spencer and Jamie White.

Bob Dawson

Bra-Vissima Concert

A date for your diaries - Saturday 19th October, Shenfield Parish Hall.

If you do not know of Bra-vissima, now is the time to find out about this brilliant local ladies choir that we welcome back for a second time to perform at our annual music evening. The choir has considerable status at the forefront of the local musical scene with an eclectic choice of works in their programme.

Tickets £15, (which include fish/chicken & chips supper) are available from John Allen, tel: 01277 231305



Please visit our Facebook page on www.facebook.com/EWTBrentBillG/



The Living Thames

An alteration to the advertised 19th September evening meeting at Shenfield Parish Hall offers a change of format. A special opportunity to view a new film by Chris Baines (former EWT President) about the natural world of our capital's river. Following the flow of the tidal river from Teddington to the estuary, Chris looks at the interactions between Man and Nature which have produced a rich mosaic of wildlife diversity, but one which is not without threats in the future. The director of the film, Dorothy Leiper, and archaeologist Fiona Haughey, who also contributed, will be present to answer questions and prompt further discussion about the issues raised. This promises to be a memorable evening not to be missed by anyone interested in the balance between the needs of wildlife and human development.



Teddington Lock



Folk Rocks Brentwood

Our local EWT group recently held its first barn dance in the less than rural locale of the Brentwood School Sports Centre.

Some members expressed surprise that the musicians of Bushes and Briars were not "some diddly Irish fiddlers" but rather a modern electric folk band in the style of Steeleye Span or the Albion Band. They soon got everyone on their feet to enjoy an experience which was a long way from memories of the English country dancing of our primary school years. It is only fair to say that some participants may have left their coordination behind when they left school, but they provided some innocent entertainment for the spectators. Much enthusiasm was on display, with a smattering of real grace and finesse, and, when energy was flagging, our caterer, Chris Lawrence, was on hand to provide delicious high calorie replenishment. If you enjoyed the evening, please tell your friends, and if you decided not to attend you missed a treat. We may just do it all again next year.

John McLaughlin

Warley Place

Those who are familiar with Warley Place may be aware of the box hedges within the walled garden. Unfortunately, some of them have become infested with the box tree moth. The first sign we noticed was the proiferation caterpillars. This relatively recent invasive species (since 2007) to this country has quickly spread from the south east counties. If left untreated the caterpillars can defoliate box hedge very quickly. There are effective insecticides, however, this method is a path that EWT wants to avoid. So, the band of volunteers set about picking the caterpillars off the infected shrubs, over 800. Additionally, a moth trap has been installed, which has a female pheromone to attract the males. Hopefully, these measures will help diminish the effects of the moth.



An annual task in the walled garden is the digging out of dock leaf. This has been done for a few years and we now enjoy the fruits of our labours with a much easier job with a lot fewer docks to be seen. Bracken is another plant that needs to be kept an eye on. If left unchecked their rhizomes spread quickly and the plant overshadows smaller plants. They are difficult to dig out, so their stems are broken to weaken the plant until it dies, which may take 6 or 7 years.

Mick Hedges



Please visit our Facebook page on www.facebook.com/EWTBrentBillG/



Shenfield's Butterfly Meadow



Our group has recently made contact with "Our Grieving Hearts" a locally based charity which aims to support bereaved families who have lost a child. We were made aware that they were looking to find a site to establish a garden of peace and remembrance. Fortunately, we suggested Butterfly Meadow in Hall Lane, Shenfield as a possible location and this met their requirements admirably. For those who don't know, this was developed as a community garden in the early 2000s and has been designated a local wildlife site. Its maintenance has been somewhat neglected in recent years, so we offered to help restore it to somewhere near its former glory. Together with supporters of the charity, EWT volunteers have taken part in three work-parties so far and have made considerable progress in removing unwanted invasive species such as nettle and bramble and re-establishing the wildflower meadows. We were rewarded with increased sightings of butterflies and damselflies this week, but there is still a fair amount of work required. If you are able to spare a couple of hours (or ten), please contact John McLaughlin or Mick Hedges and we will inform you when we will next be on site.

John McLaughlin



The Lee Valley Lives up to its Wetlands Billing



On a June Wednesday morning, a small group of wildlife enthusiasts set off from Waltham Abbey with visions of dazzling dragonflies at the Cornmill Meadows sanctuary. A red kite overhead seemed to be a good omen and there were many families of young birds to divert our attention with elusive warblers singing from cover before we reached the reserve proper. Then we started to spot banded demoiselles, common blues and the occasional southern hawkker before the first shower arrived. An attendant cuckoo seemed to be mocking our efforts to enjoy the promised spectacle. A stop at the bird hide yielded excellent views of a pair of lapwing with four youngsters, together with a solitary little ringed plover and a brief close encounter with a Cetti's warbler. By now the drizzle was steady so we headed for our lunch stop at Fishers Green without delay. From the Bittern hide we enjoyed the antics of several reed warblers at close quarters and we could see that many black-headed gulls and common terns were having a successful breeding season on the rafts. Three of us set off through the steady downpour to check out the orchid colonies which are a special feature of this area. Despite the less than ideal conditions, we were able to identify and photograph four species which are quite rare in the metropolitan area. All in all, a successful if soggy day, with 53 species of birds logged, and several converts to the attractions of the Lee Valley. For future guided walks please go to the back page for 'Wildlife Walks'

John McLaughlin



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Plant Sale Success

Once again the sun shone - we're usually lucky - and with a net profit of £1148 our Plant Sale can be said to have been a success, with all profits to the EWT.

As always, I am very grateful to the suppliers and our ever faithful volunteers on the day, including George Green again! The staff at Thorndon ever helpful under their increasing workload.

Gardening is a long term affair and thoughts are already towards 2020. Please do contact me if you are shifting/reducing perennials etc. over the coming months and cuttings are usually possible at various periods of the year - think of it as "Gardening for Wildlife".

Don't forget "That half a proper gardener's work is done upon his knees", - Kipling.

John Allen



100 CLUB

How about joining the 100 Club? Acquire a ping-pong ball number for £12 for 12 months, to keep our finances in balance and have the excitement of participating in the three draws during the year with the chance of winning £100, £50, £25 or £10.

The draw takes place in February, May & October.

So if you are up for joining in please email me at newthgibbs@btinternet.com or phone on 01277 822183 or write to Sue Newth-Gibbs at 29 Peartree Lane, Doddinghurst, Brentwood CM15 ORR.

May Draw winners as follows:

Mrs J. Andrews	£100
Mrs C. Rackham	£50
Mrs M. Mitchell	£25
Mrs D. Emery	£10
Mrs D. Geeves	£10

FORTHCOMING EVENTS & ACTIVITIES

Non-members are welcome to all our events

Wildlife Walks:

Wednesday, 25th September, **Half Day Walk**
Bowers Marsh (PH) Meet at 10.00 in the RSPB car park at the end of Church Lane in Bowers Gifford, beyond Pitsea Crematorium. GR755867

Saturday 19th October **Choral Concert**
Bra-vissima a small femal choir which sings a wide range of music. Anyone who has heard them would say a harmonious evening is guaranteed. Tickets £15, includes Fish/Chicken supper. John Allen - 01277 231305

Wednesday, 23rd October. **Half Day Walk**
Fungi Foray at Thorndon Country Park (JM) with local expert Tony Boniface. Meet at 10.00 in the car park of Thorndon Visitor Centre. Postcode CM13 3RZ.

Sunday, 10th November. **Half Day Walk**
Tollesbury Wick, (PH) A circular walk round this EWT Coastal reserve. Meet at 10.00 in the car park at Woodrolfe Rd. Tollesbury. CM9 8SE. GR963107 where toilets are available.

For further details of the walks please contact the walk leader: **Paul Hudson (PH) - 01277 656047, or**
John McLaughlin (JM) - 01245 420188

Illustrated Talks:

Evening Illustrated Talks take place at Shenfield Parish Hall and start at 8.00pm. A discretionary donation to EWT of £2.50 is requested; this includes tea or coffee and biscuits.

Thursday, 19th September. **Illustrated Talk**
The Living Thames: A film by Chris Baines (former EWT President) about the natural world of our capital's river. Following the flow of the tidal river from Teddington to the estuary, A Q&A follows the showing.

Thursday 17th October. **Illustrated Talk**
Alaska; Popular speaker Derek Howes presents his trip to this North-west corner of America. Truly stunning photos.

Thursday 21st November. **Illustrated Talk**
Bill Coster returns for our final talk of the season about **Antarctica**. Spectacular images of whales and penguins from the most inhospitable part of the world.

For further details of the talks please contact:
John McLaughlin - 01245 420188.



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