

Harrogate District Biodiversity Action Group

Newsletter no.17 - August 2014

What have we been doing?

The summer weather brings on the [Himalayan Balsam](#) and once again we enlisted the help of local Guide and Cub packs along with our members to attack a part of our patch in [Valley Gardens](#). It was encouraging find areas we attacked last year were not as densely planted and that some of our native wildflower plugs we planted are thriving. Thanks to all who lent a hand.



Getting and keeping control of even a small area requires recruiting many hands during a fairly short period of time. Phil Lyth of Yorkshire Farming and Wildlife Partnership is looking to **control the balsam at [Plumpton Rocks](#)** as part of a long term conservation plan. If you would like to help please contact him at phil.lyth@farmingandwildlife.net

We have had **two wonderful trips to [Studfold](#)** in the Yorkshire Dales.

In June, members were invited by proprietor Anne Challis to **visit the 'Trails'**. It was a glorious day when we all appreciated the views, spring wildflowers and even a Pied Flycatcher spotted from the bird hide and then a slice of Anne's homemade cake to round it all off.

We presented Anne with a [Wildlife Friendly Garden 'Gold' Award](#) in recognition of the wonderful work and habitats being created at Studfold.

Comments and contributions welcomed.

Please contact Pamela Millen: -

✉ biodiversityaction@gmail.com

☎ 01423 523233



In July we went back to work and be part of The Studfold **'Bug Hunt' day**. Robert and Theresa Marshall were there identifying the bugs and we helped the children make mini bug hotels to take home.



We have been pleased to be invited to attend other events:

Despite the rain the Pinewoods Conservation Group's **opening of the [Irongate Field](#)** was a success. This is great spot for a picnic and at the top of Cornwall Road it is not too far out of town.

Harrogate always does well in the **'Britain in Bloom'** competition so hopefully our contribution when meeting the judges at [Rossett Nature Reserve](#) at the beginning of August will have been welcomed. Fingers crossed until the results are out in October.

Moth Morning

Success at last! After a couple of poor years we finally had a great morning, on 16th August, being shown the colourful collection of moths trapped overnight. Many thanks to Jill Warwick for making the event possible and to Sandra Mason for the use of her garden and field – plus the coffee and biscuits.

There were 28 species identified, 22 macro moths and 6 micro moths with large numbers of some species. A full list will eventually be available on our website.

A couple of the beautiful moths that are out and about at night.



Canary Shouldered Thorn



Lesser Swallow Prominent

* * *

Time to get physical?

Sam Walker, Harrogate Borough Council's Countryside Ranger, would like to head up a team of volunteers to go out with him and enjoy spending time outdoors making a difference to some of our wildlife areas.

The areas he has responsibility for include Rossett Nature Reserve (Harrogate), Grange Quarry (Harrogate), Hell Wath (Ripon), Ure Bank (nr. Meadowside, Ripon), Bilton cycleway and Wetherby cycleway.

The work would include tasks such as coppicing, meadow management and habitat management. No experience is necessary as training would be given on safe and efficient ways of working and use of pieces of equipment.

Sam is proposing working **two Fridays a month from 10am - 3pm** with a central pick up point for volunteers. This project would start in October.

If you are interested please contact:

Sam at sam.walker@harrogate.gov.uk or
HDBAG at biodiversityaction@gmail.com

Nigel the Newt

To help celebrate the 'Grand Depart' Nigel the Newt cycled on his yellow bike from Aspin Pond to the shop next to the butcher's shop on Knaresborough High Street.



Friends of Aspin Pond have been busy, the pond was dug out last November and so far it has retained its water quite well. It is possible that it may not need relining after all. The newts have bred very well this year, both Great Crested and Smooth newts.

Volunteers have been busy planting wild flower plants and seeds on the Southern side. Thank you to the Aspin Brownies who planted some seeds on 6th May.

The Northern side, thanks to help from volunteers and Harrogate Borough Council, is now a safe haven for wildlife which will enable birds and small mammals to enjoy undisturbed habitats.

Friends of Aspin Pond will be holding a Car Boot Sale on 25th August, Bank Holiday Monday, at Knaresborough Cricket Club.

Planting in Valley Gardens

We will soon be sending emails requesting help with more planting in our section of Valley Gardens during September. Hope you can help ☺ ☺

Comments and contributions welcomed.

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Musings of a wildlife gardener (a personal view)

Why should I help the bees and butterflies?

There was a time, and not so many years ago, when I think I was like most keen gardeners: aware of the presence of bees and butterflies in my garden, enjoying their beauty and sound, and conscious that the delight of a garden was incomplete without them, but not much more aware than that. Then I became a more dedicated wildlife gardener and my world has changed.

This has coincided with more public awareness of diminishing insect numbers and our need to do what we can to help them. The more I read, whether it be about pesticide use or the paving over of front gardens, the more I feel a sense of responsibility to the insects with whom we share the planet and feel that I have to do my little bit to help. The payback from this is a whole new world of interest as I wander around my garden. No longer am I just looking at the colour and form of the blooms and enjoying their scent, I find myself peering at the various insects around them, trying to identify the ones I can and wondering if I can increase my repertoire of knowledge. If [Jennifer Owen](#) (the Leicester gardener who spent 30 years recording the species in her garden) is anything to go by, it's a hopeless task - I'm not a scientist and I don't have enough years left! But I can enjoy slowly adding to my knowledge in my own amateurish way.

Perhaps the word "enjoy" is the important one here. We are exhorted to garden to help our insect pollinators. Should we only see this as the virtuous thing to do or should more emphasis be placed on the additional pleasures that can accrue for us in so doing. In no way do I feel that I am missing out by not planting exotic double blooms that could wow me with their ostentation. I have the pleasure of admiring the beautiful rich ginger colours of the [tawny mining bee](#) busily pollinating my apple tree.

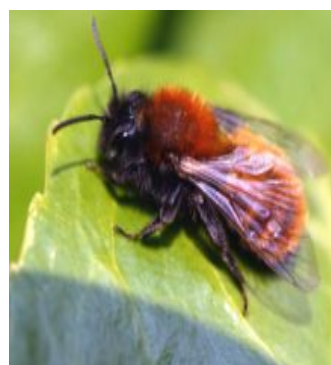
As the bumblebees wander about my flowers I can now recognise more individual species and greet them as returning friends, as part of the seasonal pattern of my year which grounds me in a world of constant change and disturbance.

As for butterflies, their glamour more than makes up for showy blooms. [Buddleia fallowiana](#) "Lochin" isn't as vibrant as so many conventional bedding plants, but when its lilac-blue flowers are setting off [peacocks](#), [red admirals](#) and [tortoiseshells](#), what could be more delightful to the eye of someone who takes that little extra trouble to look closely?

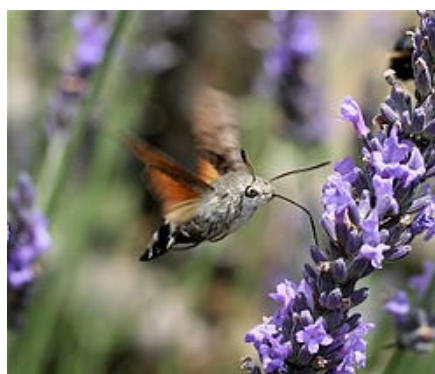
My garden visitors can also give me a real sense of excitement. It is 3 years now since we first spotted the new kid on the block - the [tree bumblebee](#). It was fascinating to muse on its advance up the country and work out its preferred flowers: in our garden, raspberry and [rosa rugosa](#). Butterflies and moths have also excited me with the odd rarity (for us). Will this summer bring us a [hummingbird hawk-moth](#) on the [catmint](#)? Why do we occasionally get a brimstone butterfly visit us as if just passing through and how long before the next one? Just where did the battered looking holly blue come from, and why do we never get common blue despite having lots of their food plant?

So in answering my own question I find that in helping the bees, hoverflies, butterflies etc that come to my garden I am not just doing something for them but for myself, in providing enhanced enjoyment, stimulation and knowledge. A veritable win win!

Janice Scott



Tawny Mining Bee



Hummingbird Hawk Moth