

Warwick Natural History Society

Snippets

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The Society is now on Twitter! Follow us on [@WarwickNatHist](https://twitter.com/WarwickNatHist)

DON'T FORGET THE RSPB BIG GARDEN BIRDWATCH – 27-29 JANUARY

Life after Leamington

For the last 16 months Val and I have lived in the attractive, diverse, fascinating City of Bristol. Many new, natural habitats are easily reached in our metropolis, each offering a distinctive repertoire of flowers. I have selected a local, urban collection of native and alien plants to share with you.

A few minutes from our apartment, on the edge of Floating Harbour, we spotted the handsome *Nemesia denticulata* early in our first October. The species was unknown to us and needed expert i/d. It turned out to be the second record for the Bristol Region, which includes all Somerset and Gloucestershire. Our plant had probably exchanged a hanging basket for its new home.



Just a few steps away in mid-November, Cape gooseberry arrived on the same scruffy concrete, another very rare casual in the Region.



From September the adjoining Cumberland Basin displayed Hairy finger-grass in most of its cracks and gaps – one more rare species.



Close by, our most astonishing discovery occurred, when we went to vote at our polling station. On the grassy roof of its bicycle shed, Val spotted ten spikes of Green-winged orchid in full flower at the beginning of May. As everywhere, this species is declining, but its presence in this new site astounds every botanist we tell!

Later on in November, we found *Sedum kamtschaticum* on the same shed, an eye-catching Stonecrop we already knew from Snitterfield Bushes. How it got from Eastern Asia to Bristol and Warwickshire is baffling.



The distinctive Conifer mazegill fungus grew on some stacked Pine trunks at Underfall Yard, amidst the building and repairing of boats.

At Clifton Down we saw some of the Onions that favour Bristol, including Keeled garlic, a rare introduction, now well established here.



The same day, edging the pavement at the busy Avon Gorge viewpoint, I noticed a couple of plants of Four-leaved allseed, a second Regional record for this inconspicuous species.



The Carboniferous limestone of the Gorge supports a nationally renowned flora, its Whitebeams, for instance, being famous for their often unique presence here. On its soils we have come across Bristol rockcress, Hutchinsia, Spring cinquefoil and other excitements, whilst remembering in 1984 we were shown the unique Bee x Fly orchid hybrid in Leigh Woods. Enthusiasm is now tempting me beyond the City boundaries... so another day!

28th December JR



Swift Bricks

There is currently a petition to be found at

<https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/626737>

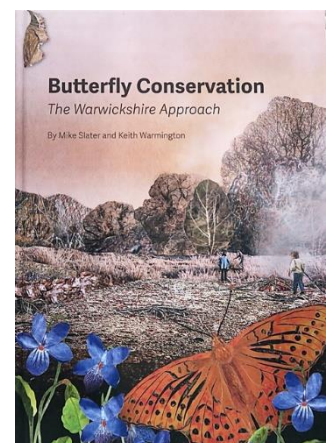
asking "Make swift bricks compulsory in new housing to help red-listed birds".

These bricks, which contain built in nest spaces, would benefit not only Swifts but also other Red-listed species such as House Sparrows, House Martins and Starlings. Their declines are directly correlated with human developments yet are not acknowledged in any Government Biodiversity Net Gain measurements. Swifts have declined more than 50% since 1995 and have been on the Red list for some time. They are of the highest conservation concern needing urgent action to halt the rate of decline. Given the amount of housing and other human induced developments, any kind of mitigation could really make a difference. So please sign this petition and encourage friends and neighbours to do so also.

28th December BC

A new book has been written by Mike Slater and Keith Warmington called '**Butterfly Conservation The Warwickshire Approach**'. Many of our members will know Mike from the talks he has given and walks he has led for our society. He and Keith have been involved with the conservation and management of sites for the butterflies of Warwickshire for many years.

Being about Warwickshire and covering many case studies of areas of the county familiar to us, it makes a very interesting, readable book. It is extensively illustrated with many photos of conservation techniques on actual sites. The book concludes with a round up of the butterflies found in Warwickshire along with present and future management plans for their habitat and survival. Over 400 pages of quality printing in a hard back edition making an excellent informative read for those lepidopterists amongst us.



The price to our members is £25 (a considerable saving on the actual selling price of £39.99). If you wish to purchase a copy, please let me know on 01926 312988. It would be cash only. All proceeds are to go into Warwickshire conservation projects and Butterfly Conservation Warwickshire.

1st January LD

3 Red Kites seen today floating effortlessly over the fields near Little Shrewley.
1st January 2023 LW

Brandon Marsh

A quick visit to Brandon Marsh provided picturesque vistas over the pools while bare trees took on a warm golden glow in winter sunshine. Reflections of trees on the first pool with a swimming swan were superb.



On the East Marsh pool, viewed from John Baldwin hide, white clouds scudded across glassy waters where we saw cormorants, black headed gulls and teal, while flocks of lapwings lit up the sky as they flew around.



A pair of Shovelers circled rapidly round and round, a technique to create a funnel to bring up food to the surface. The serrated edges of their flat ended beaks sift water as they eat insects, seeds and water plants on the surface or in mud below. Some live in UK all year round but many migrate here from Northern Europe. The male bird's head has a beautiful green sheen and he sports a chestnut body with a white breast. His mate is a



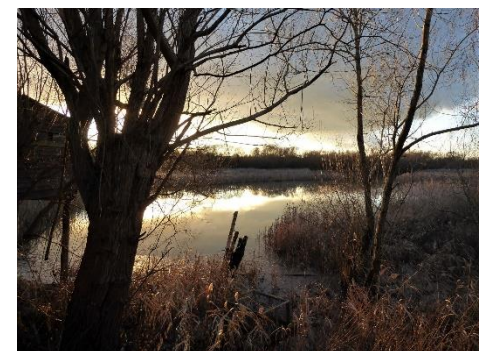
more sober brown colour. They nest on the ground amongst grass stems on marsh or damp meadows.



In front of the recently repaired Ted Jury hide we had a close up view of another pair feeding in the shallows in weedy areas. Their beaks and heads were continually sweeping the surface for food like clockwork.

Passing by Teal hide on our return, the sunset was spectacular over the pool - but there were no Teal to be seen or any other birds for that matter. The pool has filled up since the summer drought but still has a new beach area not seen before.

3rd January FW



At the Mill Garden on June 26th a female Privet Sawfly, *Macrophya punctumalbum*. Sawfly larvae can be a serious pest but these feed on ash and wild privet and not the garden variety.

It is parthenogenetic (asexual) and males are rarely seen.

5th January SG

A summer garden find on July 1, 2022 the stunning Cuckoo wasp *Pseudomalus* a member of the Chysididae family. Identified for me by an Estonian expert on iNaturalist.
5th January SG



A couple of years ago Veronica Hyland and I sent a picture of a 500 year old plus Oak near Hampton-on-the Hill to Snippets.

Passed it today to see it has been destroyed. A sad day.
5th January PH

Draycote Reservoir – 7th January

The forecast was dire but on a wet and windy morning, 12 hardy members met up at Draycote and walked along the dam to see what could be found. Rick ended with a bird list of 29 which included Goldeneyes, a handsome diving duck. Some of the males were displaying by reaching their necks backwards.



Members returned to their cars at various times and those left at the end came in for a soaking!

*Credit: Jed Dwight
British Waterfowl Association*

Rick's list

Crow, Black headed Gull, Lesser Black backed Gull, Blackbird, Mistle Thrush, Pied Wagtail, Meadow Pipit, Mallard, Tufted Duck, Coot, Moorhen, Little Grebe, Cormorant, Wren, Gt. Crested Grebe, Canada Goose, Greylag Goose, Shoveller, Greater Black backed Gull, Goldeneye, Goosander, Grey Wagtail, Mute Swan, Long-tailed Tit, Blue Tit, Great Tit, Linnet, Redwing, Magpie

25 dead and bloated mature frogs in my garden pond today.
8th January M-JR

This photo was taken in my back garden in north Warwick on 19th December '22 just after the thaw. The sparrowhawk had a good splash around in the bird bath before rather optimistically (and unsuccessfully) perching on top of one of our bird feeders!

10th January TB



Snippets to Linda please at: wesandlinda@btinternet.com

www.wnhs.info