Warwick Natural History Society

Snippets

No. 153 **7th May 2026**

You can follow the Society on Bluesky
https://bsky.app/profile/warwicknathistsoc.bsky.social

New look website - same address – take a look on www.wnhs.info

Decline of UK Butterflies

Fifty years of data from the UK Butterfly Monitoring Scheme show that many of the UK butterfly species are disappearing due to habitat loss, pollution and climate change. Volunteers carried out 782,000 walks to count species at thousands of sites across the UK and of the 59 native species monitored, figures show that 33 have declined in numbers and 25 have improved. The small tortoiseshell has declined by almost 90% in the last 50 years and whereas the Red Admiral used to be a summer visitor to the UK, the species is now seen here year-round as the climate warms.
(Daily Telegraph 15th April)

For the third year in a row, this silly duck has nested somewhere in our garden in the centre of Warwick, and now they can't get out because it is a walled garden and the back gate is at the top - and she will always walk them downhill. In past years it has taken hours to catch them, put them in a box, and walk them to the river with the mother duck following. So that's what I'll be doing this afternoon!
16th April RT

Hampton Wood – 16th April

This ancient woodland, dating back to medieval times, was a haven of peace and quiet when members visited on a fine afternoon.

The bluebell display was spectacular providing a splendid splash of deep blue through the trees, interspersed with stitchwort, yellow archangel and the occasional wood anemone and campion. The search for a kingfisher was in vain although they have been seen on the river recently.

Walking through the trees was delightful and together with the sound of birdsong and the hammering of a woodpecker made us realise how important it is to get out into these beautiful spaces.
16th April *LW*

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Riverside Walk, opposite Victoria Park, Leamington

The short walk on a sunny morning was delightful with butterflies on the side of the path - small white, peacock, holly blue and speckled wood. A treat after attending the nearby centre for a Covid jab. The tall trees always provide peace even if the park opposite is teeming with activity. Birdsong was deafening - chiffchaff, wren, great tit, chaffinch, blackbird.....
23rd April FW

The District Council has created two wildlife scrapes on the edge of the meadow area at Newbold Comyn. Scrapes are shallow areas with gently sloping edges which don't hold water permanently and can often dry out. In this way different habitats are created supporting a variety of wildlife. The material excavated from the scrapes will eventually form butterfly and moth banks as they become colonised by wildflowers.

25th April *LD*

Good to see the return of some early hirundines (swallows and house martins) over the last couple of days.
Also to hear the descending lament of willow warblers.
25th April LD

Amongst a field of yellow cowslips, a red-tinted specimen.
25th April *LD*

Britain's cranes are flying high!

Britain's cranes are the nation's tallest bird, becoming extinct 400 years ago as a result of over-hunting and loss of wetland habitat. They were even served at royal banquets in 1251. Miraculously, the birds are now returning, as we saw on our recent Slimbridge WWT visit, due to the pioneering Somerset project where young birds were bred and hand reared. They are now thriving and nationally a record 87 pairs raised 37 young – a phenomenal achievement.

The bird stands a metre tall with 2-metre wing span and is known for its complex courtship displays and loud bugling call. In 2014 at Slimbridge I was lucky enough to see a pair dancing up and down with gangly legs and a great flapping of wings. And in 2018 in June we saw a crane feeding a tiny chick lost in the grass by its feet, while birdwatching in Martin Smith hide. An incentive to go back to Slimbridge again this June?!

In the Fens in winter there are now more than 100 cranes and in Scotland a record 10 pairs fledged 9 chicks last year. At least 80% of the breeding birds are on protected sites such as RSPB, Wildlife and Wetland Trust and Pensthorpe Conservation Trust. Co-operation with local Land owners meant that nesting habitat increased. The removal of hunting pressure in the UK made a big difference to cranes and the reintroduction of them is a real conservation success. A spokesman for Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust added: "It demonstrates the resilience of nature and what can be achieved by working together."
25th April FW
[with reference Daily Telegraph article l2 April 2026, "400 years after becoming extinct, Britain's cranes are flying high"]

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Time to end hunting for good – Trail hunting consultation

As is commonly known, trail hunting is a smokescreen for hunting wildlife with hounds – foxes, deer, hares, rabbits …. all being chased and killed by a pack of dogs largely out of control. Trail hunting cannot work in the countryside because even if an artificial trail is laid (which it invariably is not), when dogs come across an animal in the field, they will instinctively give chase. We need to get rid of hunting, closing these loopholes which have enabled hunting to continue.

Please respond to the consultation so the Government are left in no uncertain terms how people who care for wildlife feel. The consultation is to be found at https://consult.defra.gov.uk/defra/trail-hunting-consultatiion/ .

There is lots of advice on how to respond to the consultation put together by organisations that exist to protect our wildlife – such as Badger Trust, League against Cruel Sports, Protect the Wild and many more. Visit their websites for more details and help with completion. All submissions need to be done by 18th June. It takes a while but is a really important action to take if you value our wild animals.

28th April *BC*

Blank Canvas *is a nationwide community art project funded by the government in collaboration with local bodies such as WCC. It is funding a series of murals in each area of which this is Warwickshire's second, in the Pageant Garden in Warwick. It was created by Packhorse Community Centre children who wanted it to depict nature in Warwick using flowers and animals as a backdrop.*

They wanted it to be colourful and make people happy, hence the famous Warwickshire Bear reading on the swing. Another local touch included Warwick Castle in the background.

28th April LD

Walking on Newbold Comyn today the familiar sounds of screaming swifts heralded their welcome return.

2nd May LD

Strolling around Jephson Gardens some of the ornamental trees were coming into flower.

A Painted Buckeye (Aesculus sylvatica), also known as Sweet or Common Buckeye with it's upright 'candles'.

An Eastern Redbud (Cercis canadensis) with pink flowers growing along bare branches.

A Manna Ash (Fraxinus ornus) with its large cream-coloured panicles of flowers.

2nd May LD

First cuckoos heard on last day of April when walking along the River Avon between Bidford upon Avon & Offenham. Seem to remember hearing one last year at Hampton Wood, but an increasingly rare sound these days around Warwickshire.

3rd May BC

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St Nicholas Park – 3rd May

A group of about 20 met at the café in the Park for Rick's walk to the pools to see how many birds could be seen or heard. Fortunately the weather was fine and the anticipated rain held off for the two groups led by Rick and Lizzy.

Bee Friendly Warwick, in conjunction with Warwickshire County Council, has installed wild bee boxes throughout Warwick and we were pleased to see that the one in the park was already in use!

Tulip tree

The walk through the park and round the pools was delightful identifying bird song as we went including Blackcap, Sedge and Cetti Warblers, with a kingfisher posing for us on the opposite bank of the river.

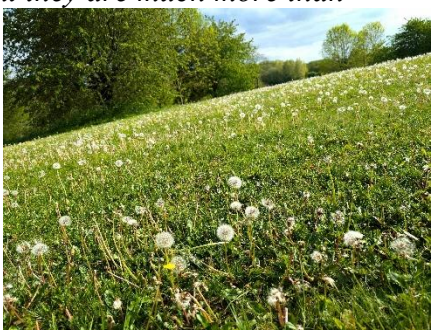
The carefully protected swans nest by the pool attracted much attention with the tiny cygnets making an occasional appearance, although it was thought that 1 had already disappeared – let's hope the remaining 7 make it through!

4th May LW

Rick and Lizzie's final count was an amazing 33:

Wood Pigeon, Robin, Crow, Blue Tit, Great Tit, Grey Wagtail, Mallard, Blackbird, Song Thrush, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Canada Goose, Wren, Kingfisher, Magpie, Starling, Sedge Warbler, Blackcap, Greenfinch, Long-tailed Tit, Goldcrest, House Sparrow, Swift, Chiffchaff, Cetti's Warbler, Collared Dove, Mute Swan, Moorhen, Pheasant, House Martin, Goldfinch, Dunnock, Black-headed Gull, Jackdaw

***Dandelions**: Dandelions are so common, often regarded as a weed - but they are much more than that. Their yellow flowers when open in the sunshine provide nectar and are beloved by bees and butterflies. Afterwards the spherical fruit clusters have seeds attached to downy mini umbrellas that sail away in the wind ... As children we delight in blowing the seeds off a 'dandelion clock'. The flowers often grow in meadows, the one seen here in Daventry near the canal, with thousands of dandelion clocks. Finches love the seeds and birds often seize the downy strands to line their nests.*



Dandelions have been used in folk medicine - they are said the cleanse the blood, roots aid digestion and flowers were used as a diuretic remedy. Flowers can be used to make tea and young leaves can be used in salads.

Who'd have thought the cheery little dandelion had so many uses? Mind you, gardeners hate them as they have such long tap roots and are so difficult to dig out of the lawn....

4th May FW

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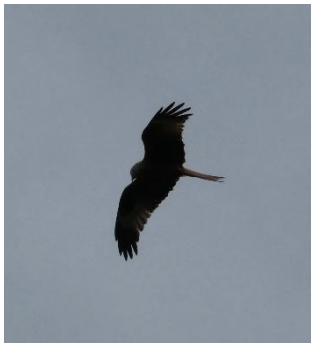
Holly Blue: The first blue butterflies on the wing in April are usually Holly Blues - often seen in gardens on holly. This specimen was seen in a sheltered garden in Leamington near Newbold Comyn on May 1st. They typically perch with closed wings. Food plants for their caterpillars are holly blue and ivy.
4th May *FW*

Wappenbury Wood at bluebell time is always a delight with its various pathways in the ancient woodland. So many birds were seen or heard - blackcap, wren, robin, mistletoe thrush, song thrush, garden warblers, willow warblers, chiffchaffs, crow, great tit, blue tit, coal tit, kestrel, goldfinch, dunnock, jackdaw, rook, green woodpecker, kite soaring above and three different cuckoos with very different sounds - one flew overhead.



Two hours of unforgettable springtime sounds and sights, especially deep blue carpets of bluebells.
4th May FW

What a colourful display in the countryside at the moment - a buttercup feast on a local walk today around Henley in Arden and hedgerows massed with campion, stitchwort and green alkanet.

This mum's got a challenge ahead – we counted 14 ducklings!

6th May *LW*

An update on the swans in St Nick's Park. Seen today on the River Avon. Someone told me they'd left Kingfisher Pools on Monday.

*A rather dark shot of a muntjac in my garden about 8pm last night. Had a good wander round and fortunately never found any plants it fancied eating. (**Attached to email as rather dark**)*

6th May MA

Snippets to Linda please at: wesandlinda@btinternet.com

www.wnhs.info