

APRIL 2022

Bristol Naturalist News



Photo © Steve Parker



Discover Your Natural World

Bristol Naturalists' Society
BULLETIN NO. 609 APRIL 2022





Bristol Naturalists' Society
Discover Your Natural World



Registered Charity No: 235494
www.bristolnats.org.uk

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Health & Safety on walks: Members
participate at their own risk. They are
responsible for being properly clothed and shod.
Dogs may only be brought on a walk with prior
agreement of the leader.

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- Cover picture:** Clive Lovatt at
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Diary of events

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Council usually meets on the first Wednesday of each month. Please contact the Hon. Sec. (secretary@bristolnats.org.uk) at least a week in advance if you have any matters you wish to be discussed by Council.

Visitors & guests are welcome, free, at our lectures and field meetings. If contact details are given, please contact the leader beforehand, and make yourself known on arrival. We hope you will enjoy the meeting, and consider joining the Society. To join, visit <https://bristolnats.org.uk> and click on membership. Members are members of ALL sections.

BNS LIBRARY opening times are given on page 12

APRIL

Sat. 9 Sand Point [Ornithology](#) 09.00 page 13

MAY

Sun 22 Durlston & Purbeck Coast, Dorset (Coach) [Ornithology](#)+BOC 08.00 page 13

Sat 28 Stoke Park [Invertebrates](#) 10.30 page 10

JUNE

Sat 11 Jun Hanham Meadows [Invertebrates](#) 10.00 page 10

AUGUST

Sat 6 Aug. Leigh Woods [Invertebrates](#) 10.30 page 10

OTHER ITEMS OF INTEREST

Until 5 June	Wildlife Photographer of 2021	M Shed	
29 Apr–2 May	City Nature Challenge	Bristol & Bath	page 11
19-21 May	National Moth Nights		page 11
10–18 June	Festival of Nature	City Centre	page 11
20-26 June	National Insect Week		page 11

SUBSCRIPTIONS for 2022...

...were due on 1 January. Rates: Single: £25 'Household': £35 Student: £10

Payment options:

Bank Transfer/Standing Order to:

Lloyds TSB: A/c no: 00697372: Sort code: 30-92-13. Please quote your name as reference otherwise there is no way to link the payment with your membership.

Cheques: to: 'Bristol Naturalists' Society' (posted to Membership Secretary)

N.B.: If you don't wish to renew your membership, it's helpful if you let me know.

Many thanks to all members for your continuing support.

Margaret Fay, Membership Secretary, 81 Cumberland Road, Bristol BS1 6UG

Email: mmfay@btinternet.com

SOCIETY ITEMS

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CLIVE LOVATT

From the President

It is my very sad duty to report to you the sudden passing on 1 March of Clive Lovatt. Clive will be well known to many of you through his roles as President of the Botanical Section and Honorary Archivist for the Society. His in depth and fascinating 'Botany Notes' have been a feature of the Society's monthly bulletin for a very long time. Indeed, a way of bringing them together for publication was being considered so the invaluable research they displayed on the current status of local plants, but also the history of local botany and botanists, could be brought together so as to reach an even bigger audience.

When I was an undergraduate at Bristol at the start of the 1980s, Clive's reputation as a pre-eminent botanist and especially his research with Dr Lewis Frost on the plants of the Avon Gorge through the University, was already fêted. Clive spent some time in Africa but came back to Bristol where he took up the reins again and he played a key role in the Society and other organisations such as the Somerset Rare Plants Group, in his retirement. Clive's tremendous botanical knowledge, calm common sense approach to life and enthusiasm and dedication to natural history and conservation will be hugely missed by all who knew him and is a loss to the running of this Society. Our sincere condolences to all his family and friends.

Ray Barnett

**Stop Press: Clive's funeral will be at
Cheltenham Crematorium on 29th March at 1.30pm**

2021/22 winter and February 2022 summary.**Winter summary 2021/22**

With an average winter temperature of 7.4°C it was 5th warmest winter in Bristol in 132 years of data. It was 1.5°C above the 30 year average for the city. The total rainfall for the 3 winter months was 189.7mm. The 30 year average (1991-2020) for the city is 260.7mm. This total makes 2021/22 the 47th driest winter out of 141 in the city.

February summary 2022

It was a mild month with no air frost or snow. It was also notable for three named storms around the middle of the month. It was mainly dull too.

Rainfall was above average for the month and there were only 4 consecutive days without rainfall and two of those recorded a 'trace'. With a total rainfall of 80.5mm it was 121% of the 30 year average for the month.

Temperatures were above average and the mean temperature for the month was 8.2°C and, with 1998, it was the joint 2nd warmest since continuous data started in 1891. The average temperature was 2.2°C above the 30 year average for the city. 1990 was the warmest February with an average temperature of 8.8°C. Most significantly it was the minimum temperatures being milder than usual that were most notable. The lowest minimum temperature of 1.6°C on the 11th was the 4th highest since this data started in 1938. The average minimum temperature for the month of 5.4°C was the 3rd highest since the data started in 1894. The lowest daily maximum temperature of 7.3°C on the 24th was the equal second highest, with 2014, since this data started in 1960. The highest was 8.0°C in February 2000.

On the 18th February storm Eunice arrived and unusually at this site in Bristol we recorded 4 occasions with wind gust speeds at 50 mph or above. The highest gust recorded was 51 mph at 10:50. It was a windy month generally and was the windiest of all months since February 2020. The maximum gust average for the month was 30 mph and this is equal 11th highest in 321 months of records starting in 1995. The 10 minute average wind speed (also at 30 mph) at 11:30 on the 18th was the 8th highest of all months starting in 2005/6. The previous highest in February was 31 mph in 2008.

Also notable was that there were no predominate daily winds from any of the Easterly, Northerly, North Easterly or North Westerly directions. It was the dullest February since 2017 with only 28.9% of the maximum solar radiation for the month.

Barry Horton

BOTANY SECTION

PRESIDENT:-

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HON. SEC:- David Hawkins ecoteric@googlemail.com

A tribute to Clive from the Botany Section

With the sudden and unexpected death of Clive Lovatt, long-time Hon. President of the Botany Section – as well as an integral part of several other organisations – we have lost an irreplaceable and unique friend, guide and mentor. For many of us the gap he leaves behind is extremely large and already palpable. It is impossible in a few short paragraphs to do any sort of justice to his character and work, and we are all still in shock; but here I endeavour to set down some initial reflections.

A great enthusiast and enthuser, Clive was always ready to share his immense knowledge about plants. He combined the methodical, scientific approach of the professional with the eager excitement of the amateur. This is exemplified by how he would stick with a difficult specimen (a saltmarsh orache *Atriplex*, say, or a stubborn willowherb *Epilobium*), carefully examining all the characters and keying it out; and also in the way he might physically act out a particular feature of species, gesturing and smiling with his charming boyish sense of humour and a twinkle in his eye.

Clive didn't just offer encouragement, useful tips and determinations of difficult plants; he showed us how to look, how to look again, how to look closer, better.

These are things to carry with you as a naturalist. As well as advice, he also gave me many books – some out of print and worth a fair bit of money – keen to help me become a better botanist. He could be relied upon to celebrate my finds and those of others who reported to him (as the Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland's county recorder for vice-county 34, West Gloucestershire), underscoring the importance of observing and recording wild plants.



Clive at Tyntesfield. Photo © Steve Parker

He had a particular fondness for ‘aliens’ – non-natives and weeds and things that were out of place. One autumn he found a staggering array of curious species on a new road embankment. He was recently delighted by the appearance of sea stork’s-bill *Erodium maritimum* on a street in Clifton Wood. At the same time, he wouldn’t shy away from the unglamorous species, such as fleabanes *Conyza*, that tell us so much about how our flora is eternally dynamic and surprising.

Clive was kind and generous beyond the realms of botany and natural history. We discovered a shared love of English folk music, and Clive gave me some rare records by one of our mutual heroes, Peter Bellamy, recounting that he had once compèred a night headlined by the legendary singer at a folk club in Cambridge in the 1970s. I am sorry never to have heard Clive play one of his vintage squeeze-boxes, which sat on top of the towering bookshelves that were home to his botanical library.

Among the many ongoing projects in which Clive was engaged is investigating and writing up the history of the botanists of the Bristol region – all the greats, from George Thwaites, to J.H. White, to Ida Roper. Many fascinating extracts from this work have appeared in these pages in recent years. He now takes his rightful place among those luminaries, albeit much too soon.

I still have hundreds of questions to ask Clive, and a long list of places I was hoping to visit in his company. But to quote one of his favourite remarks from the aforementioned J.H. White, author of the seminal *The Flora of Bristol*, ‘finality in field botany is fortunately unattainable’. So, we keep going and try to remember what Clive showed and taught, in his ever-gentle way.

Spring is on the verge of coming again, the golden saxifrage already in flower in damp hollows, and there is some slight solace perhaps in the fact that Clive’s last place in this world was among the beautiful Cotswolds woods of the Stroud Valleys that he loved so well. In the words of the traditional song ‘Oak, Ash and Thorn’ as sung by Peter Bellamy and the Young Tradition:

*Oh do not tell the priest our plight
for he would call it a sin,
but we’ve been out in the woods all night
a-conjuring summer in.
And we bring you news by word of mouth,
good news for cattle and corn
now is the sun come up from the south
with oak and ash and thorn.
Sing oak and ash and thorn,
all on a midsummer morn.
England will bide ‘til judgement-tide
with oak and ash and thorn*

David Hawkins

A note on Wild Daffodils

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We are of course all used to seeing daffodils – or Lenten-lilies as they are also known – planted on road verges and in municipal flowerbeds. Naturalised populations are frequent out in the wider landscape too, whether they derive from garden escapes or were placed deliberately. Some of these populations have no doubt been there for many years. But the Wild Daffodil *Narcissus pseudonarcissus* is also a true native plant of these isles, and is only encountered in its natural state occasionally – although it can appear in profusion in the right place. Traditionally a plant of coppice woods (i.e. having an understorey with plenty of light), damp meadow edges and sometimes riverbanks, it does not like hot, dry summers. Among its strongholds are the Welsh Borders, the Vale of Evesham and the High Weald; elsewhere it is scattered, and it is rare in our region.



Fig. 1: Wild Daffodil close-up showing the characteristic two-tone flower.

© BerndH/GNU FDL

Not to do down the joyous spring beauty of many of the daffodil cultivars available, but there is undoubtedly a particular elegance and delicacy to the wild ancestor: its six tepals (somewhere between a sepal and a petal) are pale creamy yellow, while its trumpet (a tube of fused petals) is bright egg-yolk – surely an irresistible vortex for early spring bees and hoverflies (see fig. 1). The plants in question were on the far side of a wide rhine from me, and so sadly just too far away to take a good photo (fig. 2), but they were uplifting and hopeful nonetheless.

In light of this, I was pleased to be greeted recently by three good clumps in full bloom in a pocket of woodland towards the south-western end of the Gordano Valley. This small, damp Hazel *Corylus avellana* and Ash *Fraxinus excelsior* woodland is off the beaten track, hard of access and appears on maps from at least 100 years ago. The combination of habitat, location and the appearance of the plants themselves makes a strong case for these being Wild Daffodils.



Fig. 2: Wild Daffodils in the Gordano Valley, March 2022. © David Hawkins

GEOLOGY SECTION

PRESIDENT: Richard Arthur ukgeologist@gmail.com

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HON. SEC: Richard Ashley, richardwashley@gmail.com Tel: 01934 838850

Bristol Academics used to contribute, but now...??

Fifty years ago I accepted an offer to read zoology at Bristol University. It was a gruelling interview but I must have impressed at the time, because the panel made me an offer of two 'E' grades. At the time I was delighted and it allowed me to easily fulfil their entry requirement but on reflection, this didn't exactly steer me away from the 60's life style I had started to enjoy and which I still try to follow!

At uni I quickly realised that geology was my thing and provided the opportunity for analytical scientific deduction that has become a major part of my life ever since; I have never stopped being fascinated by how geology pervades every aspect of the workings of this planet (and others) and directly influences all life on it.

Back in the 70's the proceedings of Bristol Naturalists' Society was the 'go to' point of reference for the university's academics but now, unlike many, I continue to regard BNS with high regard. Years ago most of the academic geology staff were regular contributors to BNS but pressure to publish in 'recognised journals' has meant that such contributions are almost non-existent. Sadly staff and students also rarely if ever attend our geology BNS field trips or lectures.

I would like to mark my presidency of the geology section by trying to change this and (as I also want to mark my half century at Bristol University) by showing staff and students what a superb and affordable resource BNS is. To that end I made an offer to the current Professor that I would personally pay for a membership of BNS for an extended period. In this way I hoped BNS Proceedings would be seen and read by many at Uni. I had hoped to be able to announce that this offer had been seized upon but as I made it a while back I am disappointed to have to say that so far it has fallen on deaf ears. I have also made many requests for staff and students to join me on informal field trips and also BNS trips and for senior staff to join me personally as I try with some difficulty to complete an accurate description of the less than straightforward Avon Gorge geology.

I still hope to see a contribution in 'Nature in Avon' from current Uni staff before I cease my presidency.

As my subscription idea is yet to attract interest I am looking for something else to donate to my alma mater in this year; suggestions from BNS members would be very welcome.

Richard Arthur

INVERTEBRATE SECTION

PRESIDENT: Maico Weites. maicoweites@gmail.com

Hon. SECRETARY: Vacant

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FIELD MEETINGS

(Advance notices)

STOKE PARK

Saturday 28 May

Leader: Maico Weites

10:30

Stoke Park is an area of great ecological value located along the M32.

The 18th century park comprises ancient woodland, wood pasture, meadows & ponds.

This will be a great site to look for deadwood specialists as well as for dragonflies. We will

be meeting at the entrance to the park at Romney Ave, just north of the Cameron

Centre at ST 61163 77096 / BS7 9TD

Please contact Maico Weites (maicoweites@gmail.com) if you want to attend

HANHAM MEADOWS

Saturday 11 June

Leader: Peter Smithers

10:00

In 2014 six acres of meadows were created at the Hanham Hall Estate and so far not many invertebrate records have been made. This will be a chance to change this and see what we can find and inform the management of the meadows.

We will be meeting at 10:00 by the allotments on Roman Way BS15 3QA, Peter will put up a sign. Turn off the A431 by The Blue Bowl pub onto Whittucks road. Roman way is the third turning on the left, just past Hanham Health Centre.

Please contact Maico Weites (maicoweites@gmail.com) if you want to attend.

LEIGH WOODS

Saturday 6 August

Leader: Maico Weites

10:30

Leigh Woods in Somerset is an ancient woodland managed by the National Trust located just across the Clifton Suspension Bridge. It is home to a wide variety of scarce and unusual invertebrates: from Golden Shelled Slugs to White-letter Hairstreaks and rare isopods. The copious deadwood and veteran trees provide great habitats for saproxylic (decayed wood) specialists. All in all, very promising and hopefully we can generate some useful records.

We will meet at 10:30 outside the National Trust office on Valley Road (ST5551673130).

Parking is possible along North Road BS8 3PQ.

Please wear appropriate footwear as some of the paths may be steep or slippery and **be aware of ticks**. We are likely to be out for several hours.

Please contact Maico Weites (maicoweites@gmail.com) if you want to attend

Invertebrate Notes for April 2022

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The very end of February and start of March saw the first consistent reports of the usual butterflies out of hibernation, Small Tortoiseshell and Red Admiral in particular. However, Small White and Orange-tip on the wing, reported in Bristol and near Bleadon respectively, in the first week of March would also indicate an emergence from the pupal stage for some. The same period also saw activity starting to be reported from light traps with the usual suspects of Hebrew Character, Common Quaker and so on.

The start of the spring activity inevitably raises expectations for the coming season. As we (apparently) are emerging from the pandemic events are once again appearing which had been postponed for two years. Things to look out for include **National Moth Nights** 19-21 May, with a theme of woodland species and **National Insect Week** which is planned for 20 - 26 June. **Bristol's Festival of Nature** returns on 10 – 18 June and follows the **City Nature Challenge** on 29 April – 02 May.

2022 is also significant for the closure in early September of the Bristol Zoological Society, Clifton site after 186 years, with that organisation moving to be focused at their Wild Place site in South Gloucestershire, close to Cribbs Causeway. The Zoo has played a very significant role in conserving invertebrate species from around the world and the UK over the decades and no doubt will continue to do so at its new base. Please do continue to visit and support them at the Wild Place Project* to ensure this work can continue.

Bristol Museums and Galleries are planning an exhibition for M Shed this summer which will examine the global environmental issues and what this means for us at a local level. It is hoped that visitors may be able to participate whilst in the exhibition in helping to enter information from the labels on historic insect specimens onto a database and so contribute to the understanding of where species used to occur which can be used to inform conservation work today. Watch this space.

Ray Barnett
05/03/22

*Wild Place Project, Blackhorse Hill, Bristol
BS10 7TP
0117 428 5602 <http://www.wildplace.org.uk>



LIBRARY

BNS Library at Bristol City Museum & Art Gallery, BS8 1RL.

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LIBRARY COMMITTEE CHAIR: -

HON. LIBRARIAN:- Jim Webster jim.bnslibrarian@gmail.com

The Library is open: Wednesdays 1.15pm-2.15pm, Saturdays 10.15am-12.15pm.

Tel. (opening hours only): 0117 922 3651. **CLOSED on Saturdays connected with Bank Holiday Mondays, and New Year, Christmas and Easter. (And see below).**

News from the Library

Library opening

The Library is currently open to BNS members on a bookings-only basis. Normal opening times are above, but until demand picks up, the Library will be open for bookings only.

The Library will only be staffed by a Duty Librarian from the Library Committee when a member has booked in. *Bona fide* researchers may also book visits through the Hon Librarian and Chair. There are standing arrangements for staff of the Bristol Museum and Art Gallery to access our Library.

If you wish to visit the Library to borrow books, please contact the Hon Librarian by e-mail at least a week in advance. Because our Library is housed in the Museum, you should also book an entry slot through their website in order to guarantee access <https://www.bristolmuseums.org.uk/bristol-museum-and-art-gallery/plan-your-visit/>

As the Museum advises, "During your visit, please can you continue to wear a face covering unless you are exempt. Do not visit if you feel unwell or have COVID-19 symptoms". The Duty Librarian will be wearing a face covering in your presence.

Jim Webster
Hon Librarian

ORNITHOLOGY SECTION

PRESIDENT:- Giles Morris, 01275 373917 danemorris@btinternet.com

HON SEC.:- Lesley Cox secretary@bristolnats.org.uk

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FIELD MEETINGS

SAND POINT

Saturday 9th April

Leader: Giles Morris (07712 398903)

09:00

Meet at the NT car park (ST 330659) at the northern end of Sand Bay at 9am. (There is a charge to park here now for non-members of NT)

We will walk up to the point and along towards Middle Hope and St Thomas's Head. This is always an interesting spot for migrant passerines and winter visitors in the trees and scrub of the headland. Hopefully some of the spring migrants will be moving through, in which case rarities are always possible. We shall also take the chance to see what waders are in Sand Bay and Woodspring Bay. The terrain is roughish, so suitable footwear is advisable and, being a coastal site, it will be exposed to whatever weather the day throws up, so please dress appropriately. We should finish at about noon.

Please let the leader know if you intend to join the trip

DURLSTON AND THE PURBECK COAST, DORSET

Joint Coach trip with BOC

Sunday 22nd May

We'd like to fill the coach so this trip is open to all - please invite family and friends. Our coach will leave the Water Tower on Clifton Downs at 8a.m., drop us at Worth Matravers and meet us at Durlston Country Park, Swanage for the journey home.

We will walk east along the cliff tops for 4-6 miles, stopping for a picnic lunch and fortified by the thought of tea and ices for sale when we reach the country park! Delights include wonderful views, orchids and downland flora, a breeding auk colony and bushy valleys full of winding paths that may produce some late migrants. Bring good walking shoes, sunscreen and lunch.

Please send your name and £18 (cheques payable to BOC) to Judy Copeland (judycopeland19@gmail.com) by 30th April.

FIELD MEETING REPORT

Newport Wetlands 13th February 2022

Five intrepid birdwatchers, well-wrapped against the weather, met at the RSPB Newport Wetlands centre. Braving the wind and rain, we set off towards the Lighthouse. A Cetti's warbler was heard, along with a succession of Robins. Sensible birds were sheltering from the rain, but we saw three little grebes bobbing and diving on one of the ponds.

As we progressed along the strangely bouncy walkway, we saw a pair of Mute Swans flying over. Past the lighthouse, the tide was quite far out. It was hard to see much birdlife, through the rain and misted up glasses, but there was a healthy number of Shelducks and a couple of Curlews.

Walking along the shore was not pleasant, with needles of rain blowing against any exposed skin, so we were relieved to reach the hide, overlooking another pond.

A flock of 13 tufted ducks headed slowly away from us, and another little grebe dived out of sight. A few small birds were flitting across from the bushes on the left, into the reedbeds on the right. Sadly, no Bearded Tits (or Bearded Reedlings as they should be called now) were seen, and Mike remarked that they should really be called moustachioed tits. This led to a discussion about Common Gulls (not common) Mute Swans (not mute) and Black headed gulls (brown headed)

The small birds were identified as blue tits. Starting to feel a bit cold, we moved on into the wooded area. More Robins, Great tits and Long Tailed tits (aptly named) flittered through the trees. A number of Chaffinches were heard and seen, also Woodpigeons and at least one Blackbird. A few snatches of Wren song were audible.

After leaving the wood, we turned left and in the fields and hedgerows to the right, we heard more tits and a Dunnock, as well as a few more Robins.

We made our way back towards the visitor centre, and on the left of the path, many house sparrows squabbled in the brambles. In the pond in front of the café, we saw Coot and Moorhen and a big flock of Greenfinch pairs at the bird feeder. They were joined by Goldfinches, and a Jay was prowling round. A female Pheasant also hoisted herself up onto the bird feeder and we were well entertained while we had a welcome hot drink.

The total number of species was 28, which was not bad for such a miserable day.

Mel Parker

Breeding Bird Survey

The Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) is the main scheme for monitoring population changes of our common breeding birds both nationally and within Avon. Anyone can participate who can identify our common birds by sight and sound - and the emphasis really is on our common birds.

It is organised by the BTO and involves just two early morning visits in the breeding season (April to June) to an allocated 1km square. Visits typically take about two hours each plus an extra visit in the first year to set up/check the route. Squares are randomly allocated by the BTO and there are now 60 vacant squares spread throughout the Region. There are squares available in most areas although there is only one in the City of Bristol - ST6268 Stockwood.

We also have a local 'Avon BBS' scheme which is very similar but a little simpler and which adds considerably to our local knowledge. Observers can select their own squares in the Avon scheme which can be in any habitat including urban/suburban areas, subject to the square not already being allocated.

The Survey has always had strong support in the 'Avon Region' and this will be the 29th season. In 2021 despite problems with the Covid Tier System we surveyed 224 1km squares and recorded 72,603 birds, only a little behind our pre-Covid performance.

If you would like to take on a square or would like any further information about BBS, please contact Dave Stoddard - dave.stoddard@tiscali.co.uk (0117 924 6968) - you will be very welcome.

FEBRUARY 2022

The thoughts of birders may be increasingly focused on the arrival of summer migrants, but there are still winter visitors to provide continued interest. The past few months have been much better than usual for Brambling, presumably a reflection of poor seed production in the forests of northern and eastern Europe resulting in these finches moving further west than usual. We are never likely to witness the million-strong roosts of this species that sometimes develop in central Europe, but the flocks numbering in the dozens that have been seen recently constitute a good winter for us, and encounters with this species are always a joy.

Brambling is superficially similar to Chaffinch and often the first sign of its presence is either the sight of a white rump glimpsed amongst a flock of Chaffinches as they fly into cover or hearing the hoarse nasal contact call. A decent view, however, reveals a strikingly distinctive bird. The sharp contrast between the orange breast and white belly on a Brambling is particularly obvious, as is the heavy build. The males have a dark head and face, which becomes darker in the spring as pale brown feather fringes wear away to reveal the black of full breeding plumage. When birds linger into the spring it is occasionally possible to hear their chattering buzzy song.

Wintering Bramblings are typically associated with beech mast but many this year are feeding on the cover crops sown by farmers in agri-environment schemes, often in association with Linnets. As sources of wild food are depleted in coming weeks they are likely to appear with increasing frequency at garden feeders, even in urban areas, where they may become regular but rather nervous visitors.

Bramblings cropped up in a conversation I had several years ago with an elderly gentleman who in past decades had been a keen keeper of captive birds, which until recently was a far more popular hobby than birdwatching. The first topic he touched on was the now lost (I think) world of competitive breeding of fancy varieties of House Sparrow: apparently around a dozen named varieties, sporting abnormalities such as cream plumage or extravagant ruffs, were recognised and regularly judged at shows throughout the country. His other passion had been inducing hybridisation in finches, which he regarded as the ultimate test of a fancier's skill. A cross between a female Brambling and a male Chaffinch was, apparently, relatively easy but the real prize was to produce offspring between a male Brambling and a female Chaffinch; I am not aware of any instances of hybridisation between the two species in the wild. I imagine that most BNS members, like myself, are not at all keen on keeping birds in cages, but this man's knowledge and enthusiasm for his pastime were obvious, and a reminder that love of birds has taken many forms through the years.

Rupert Higgins

Your sightings are welcome at: avonbirdrecorder@outlook.com

MISCELLANY

UNIVERSITY OF BRISTOL BOTANIC GARDEN



BOTANIC GARDEN

The Holmes, Stoke Park Rd, Stoke Bishop, BS9 1JG.
Tel. 0117 428 2041 <https://botanic-garden.bristol.ac.uk>.
Email: botanic-gardens@bristol.ac.uk

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EASTER SCULPTURE FESTIVAL

Friday 15 April 10am to Monday 18 April 4:30pm

Carboniferous limestone giants stride through a prehistoric forest, ephemeral sounds of ceramic Zen bells chime on trees, and the sight of the potter's wheel mesmerises the passer by.

Refreshments. Plant sales. Admission: £10. Free to Friends of the Garden, school age children, university staff & students.

AVON ORGANIC GROUP

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www.groworganicbristol.org

www.facebook.com/avonorganic

Thur. 28 April "PERENNIAL VEGETABLES & FUTURE FOOD CROPS: creating a diverse and resilient edible

garden". Mandy Barber, *Incredible Vegetables*

www.incrediblevegetables.co.uk (some perennial plants & seeds will be for sale on the night).

Live streamed from The Station. Doors open 6.30pm; talk starts 7pm. Join on Zoom 7pm. All ticket holders will receive a link to a recording of the talk for a limited period. More details about event and venue on our website.



FOXES in the garden

Ray Gooding sent these observations from his garden in early March.



I found (4th March) the foetus of an animal in our garden which I believe to be a Fox (left). The garden is regularly visited by a Fox and that particular area often smells strongly of Fox. The foetus is 3.5 inches long from nose to rear which I think is too big for a rat and March is when Foxes give birth I believe.

A few hours after sending the photo of a foetus, a Vixen was seen resting by the Magnolia tree (right). I only managed to get one quick photo taken through an upstairs window, by the time I had attached a longer lens she had gone. I now have a trail camera to set up in the garden in the hope she will be back.



On a more pleasant side, also on 4th March, a very smart Red Admiral butterfly landed on Pam's flowers but didn't stay long enough for me to photograph.