

MARCH 2022

Bristol Naturalist News



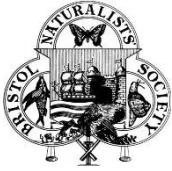
Photo © Paul Chapman



Discover Your Natural World

Bristol Naturalists' Society
BULLETIN NO. 608 MARCH 2022





Bristol Naturalists' Society
Discover Your Natural World



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

HON. PRESIDENT: Ray Barnett

HON. CHAIRMAN: Giles Morris

HON. PROCEEDINGS EDITOR:
Dee Holladay,

HON. SEC.: Lesley Cox

HON. MEMBERSHIP SEC: Margaret Fay

HON. TREASURER: Mary Jane Steer

HON. PUBLICITY SECRETARY: Alex Morss

BULLETIN EDITOR: David B Davies

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: Paul Chapman kindly gave us this picture of an unusual visitor to Weston-super-Mare – for more information see the Bird Notes on page [19](#).

Diary of events

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Council usually meets on the first Wednesday of each month. Please contact the Hon. Sec. 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 17

FEBRUARY 2022

Sun 27 Portishead Marina [Botany](#) 14.30 page 7

MARCH 2022

Wed 9 Section AGM + Talk: Portbury Wharf NR [Ornithology](#) 19.30 page 18

Wed 16 Geology AGM ([p12](#)); Society AGM+Talk: Sharks [Society](#) 19.30 page 4

Sat 19 Clevedon [Botany](#) 14.30 page 7

Sun 20 Forest of Dean [Ornithology](#) 12.30 page 18

OTHER ITEMS OF INTEREST

Until 5 June Wildlife Photographer of 2021 M Shed

Sun 6 Mar Curator's Spring tour [Botanic](#) Garden 10.30 page 20

Thu 17 Mar Friends' AGM + Lecture [Botanic](#) Garden 19.00 page 20

Sat 19 Mar Geology Zoom Lecture [SWGA](#) 11.00 page 13

Thu 24 Mar 'Growing Medicinal Mushrooms' [AOG](#) 18.30 page 20

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

Nature in Avon 2021

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Articles and short notes are invited for this year's journal - **deadline March 31st 2022**. Members will be glad to read about meetings, individual surveys or sightings. Please send all contributions from now onwards (don't wait for the **March 31st** deadline!) to Dee Holladay

SOCIETY ITEMS

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ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
of the **Bristol Naturalists' Society**
on Zoom, 7.30pm, Wednesday 16th March 2022
Preceded by AGM of the Geology Section (see page [13](#)) and
followed by a talk by Paul Cox, MD of
THE SHARK TRUST

Since 1997, the Shark Trust have been creating positive change for sharks and rays around the UK and across the world. As the managing director, Paul Cox has been involved in all areas of the Trust's diverse portfolio of work for the past 7 years.

Paul will introduce us to the varied work of the Shark Trust and to the life of one particularly fascinating species, the Greenland Shark. From natural history to exploitation to conservation solutions, the Greenland shark offers an insight into the challenges facing many of the world's shark species.

Election of Officers

Officers of the Society and Members are required to stand for re-election annually. Section Representatives are elected at individual Section AGM's.

Ray Barnett: President. [3rd year of 3-year term.]

Giles Morris: Chairman

Lesley Cox: Hon. Sec.

Mary-Jane Steer: Hon. Treasurer

Margaret Fay: Hon. Membership Secretary

David Davies: Hon *Bulletin* Editor

Jim Webster: Hon. Librarian

Dee Holladay: Hon. *Proceedings* Editor

Clive Lovatt: Hon Archivist

Alex Morss: Hon Publicity Secretary

Members

Tim Corner

Robert Muston

Steve Nicholls

Section Representatives

Botany: David Hawkins

Geology: Richard Ashley

Invertebrates: Maico Weites

Ornithology: Giles Morris

Any member of the Society who would like to stand or wishing to nominate a fellow member for election should inform the Chairman, Giles Morris, as soon as possible.

To register for the AGM, please email bsnzzoommeetings@gmail.com

Bristol Naturalists' Society, Annual General Meeting 2022

Proposed changes to the Society's Constitution and Rules relating to Membership and Subscriptions

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The BNS Council is recommending to the Annual General Meeting to be held on Wednesday 16 March 2022 that the following changes be made to the Society's Constitution (no. 1 below) and Rules (nos. 2-5 below).

The purpose of the changes is to encourage long-term membership of the Society by: (1-2) replacing Student Membership with a broader Young Naturalists' Membership, which newly allows individuals aged 16 and 17 to become members in their own right; (3-4) facilitating the payment of annual subscriptions other than for the calendar year; and (5) allowing Council at its discretion to reduce or waive subscriptions. To support the first of these, Council has recently approved a written policy on safeguarding children, young people, and adults at risk.

1. It is proposed to amend Part 2 of the Society's Constitution by deleting the words "over eighteen" from article 7 (1) relating to Membership and to insert the words "over sixteen".
2. It is proposed to amend rule 4 a) (v) to read: "**Young Naturalists' Membership** – Membership at a reduced rate of subscription is available for persons between 16 and 21 years of age or in continuing full time education. This is subject to written parental consent in the case of applicants under 18 years of age".
3. The following revised wording for rule 11 a) is proposed: "The rates of annual subscription for the various classes of membership shall be amounts decided from time to time by Council. All subscriptions shall become payable on the 1st day of January except in the case of members who join during the course of the year and set up a bank standing order in favour of the Society in which case their subscriptions shall become due on the anniversary of their first joining."
4. It is proposed that rule 11 b), that states "The annual subscription of a member who first joins the Society on or after the 1st day of October in any year shall extend to the period ending on the 31st day of December of the following year." be deleted. By setting up a standing order all members joining would receive a full year's membership. At present a person joining in September would only receive four months membership whilst an October joiner gets 15 months. It is proposed that the following new rule be substituted as rule 11 b): "It shall be within the discretion of Council to remit the subscription of a member or applicant for membership in whole or in part. The decision to remit shall thereafter be subject to annual review."

Adoption of a

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Safeguarding Policy for Children and Vulnerable Adults

At its February meeting the BNS Council adopted a Safeguarding Policy in respect of Children and Vulnerable Adults. Although BNS does not specifically work with either group it is a legal requirement that the Trustees of a charity, which BNS is, have considered the safeguarding implications of its activities and have an appropriate agreed policy in place.

It is also a requirement that the charity have a trustee or trustees with specific responsibilities for safeguarding. For BNS these are Richard Ashley and Tim Corner who may be contacted by email safeguarding@bristolnats.org.uk . Richard Ashley may also be contacted by telephone 01934 838 850. Their role is to respond to any safeguarding issues that arise in relation to the Society's activities but any concerns about the welfare of

an individual child or vulnerable adult, whether in relation to BNS activities or not, should be reported immediately to the appropriate authorities.

For the City of Bristol anyone concerned about the welfare of a child should contact the First Response Team on 0117 903 6444 or out of office hours 01454 615165. If a child is at immediate risk call the Police on 999. There is also a NSPCC 24 hour helpline:0808 800 5000.

For concerns regarding adults contact Bristol Care Direct 0117 922 2000.

The Safeguarding Policy is published in full on the Bristol Naturalists Society's Website but electronic or hard copies may be obtained by contacting Richard Ashley.

Bristol Weather

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January 2022

January was notable in several weather parameters in 2022. It was a month of exceptionally light winds, dominated by high pressure, low rainfall, high sunshine percentages for the time of the month and average temperatures overall, though there were some exceptions to this.

It was the calmest January since records began in 2006 at the South Bristol (Totterdown) site with an average wind speed of 3.2 mph. There were 9 calm days when the wind speed was 0.4 mph or less. The windiest day on the 2nd with an average wind speed of 9.8mph for the day was the 2nd lowest since the data began in 2006. The minimum gust of wind on the 13th January of 3 mph was the joint lowest of any month, with December 2006, since this data started in 2006.

The average daily pressure of 1025 mb at 09:00 was the joint highest for the month since the data started in 1994. The maximum daily pressure of 1041 mb on the 12th and 13th was the 3rd highest for the month of January in 29 years of data. The total monthly rainfall was 30.8 mm which is only 1/3rd of the 30 year average for the city. It was in fact the 20th driest January in 141 years of continuous data. It was the 3rd sunniest January with 22% of the maximum sunshine after 2012 (23.3%) and 2015 (23.2%). This data started in 2006. I should stress here that during the winter months there is an obstruction to the full sunshine being recorded at the Totterdown weather station. Comparison with other solar radiation data is however valid.

The mean temperature of 5.6°C for the month was just 0.1°C below the 30 year average. Interestingly the average minimum temperature was -0.9°C below average while the mean maximum temperature for the month was +0.6°C.

There were three notable daily temperature extremes. The highest daily minimum temperature of 12.8°C on the 1st was the highest since this data started in 1960. The highest daily maximum temperature of 14.8°C also on the 1st was the highest since this data started in 1937. The highest daily average on this exceptional day of 13.8°C was the highest since this particular parameter started in 1994.

Barry Horton

BOTANY SECTION

PRESIDENT:- Clive Lovatt

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HON. SEC:- David Hawkins

FIELD MEETINGS

All field meetings require pre-booking. Numbers may be limited by the availability of parking, and any social distancing guidance.

PORTISHEAD MARINA – REMINDER & new parking details.

Places still available.

Clive Lovatt

2.30pm, Sunday 27 February

Meet at the southernmost point of the Portishead Marina in the paved area beside Harbour Road immediately opposite the Lidl Supermarket. For Satnav users, the postcode BS20 7DE will bring you to the right area. The grid reference is ST47097667 (look it up on <https://www.bnhs.co.uk/2019/technology/grabagridref/gagr.php>). For roadside parking try in the industrial estate beside Martingale Way and Newfoundland Way immediately east of the meeting point. There are also some free public parking spaces at the back of the Lidl half of the car park by the brambly waste ground.

This is a particularly good place for urban botany and a social meeting in a breezy place, so it should be a further opportunity to those who enjoyed our January New Year Plant Hunt meeting to look again for plants in flower and get some fresh air. We will walk anti-clockwise around the harbour and look briefly at the Severn-side plants. Hopefully the harbourside café and coffee dispensary near the pier will be open for mid-way refreshments. We should be back about 5pm.

Booking requests and enquiries to Clive Lovatt please.

CLEVEDON

Saturday 19 March

Clive Lovatt & Dee Holladay

2.30pm

The third of a series of social botany walks. Clevedon is one of the warmest places in the Bristol area and can always be relied on for early flowering plants along the front and on Wain's Hill. Meet on Poet's Walk by the Marine Lake at the south end of Salthouse Bay, about 1km south-west of the Clevedon Pier. For Satnav users, the postcode BS21 7TR will bring you to the right area. The grid reference is ST396710. (Look it up on <https://www.bnhs.co.uk/2019/technology/grabagridref/gagr.php>.) Paid parking in the Salthouse Fields Car Park adjacent to the meeting place.

Booking requests and enquiries to the Clive Lovatt please.

FIELD MEETING REPORTS

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The January 2022 Botany Section field meeting was held on 3 January 2021 and was reported in the February 2022 issue of *Bristol Naturalist News*.

BOTANICAL NOTES

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More Dog Stinkhorn *Mutinus caninus* in Bristol

In the last issue of *Bristol Naturalist News*, Jean Oliver reported Dog Stinkhorn *Mutinus caninus* which she found on 3 January 2022 growing in the Orchid meadow on Clifton Down, near the Circular Road. On 2 February 2022 another member Sue Pettit reported it to me, with a rather more superlative photo, appearing more animal than vegetable. 'Three fruiting bodies appeared at the bottom of my garden this New Year. I haven't seen it before in the 20 years I've been here but that may be because it was behind the shed'. Sue also mentioned two other fungi in her garden, Rosy Earthstar *Geastrum rufescens* puffing out spores and the last fruiting bodies of a Webcap Mushroom, suspected to be *Cortinarius saturninus*, that had appeared as an aggressive fairy ring.

Plate 1. The fruiting body of the fungus, Dog stinkhorn, *Mutinus caninus*, in a Bristol garden, ST5578, 4 January 2022. © Sue Pettit.



Plate 2. Springbeauty *Claytonia perfoliata*, Montpellier, Bristol, ST5974, 29 January 2022 © David Hawkins.

More Springbeauty *Claytonia perfoliata* 'springing beautifully on the streets of Bristol'

David Hawkins reports (in the words quoted above) finding this uncommon and odd-looking weedy plant on York Road opposite the end of Wellington Avenue, Montpellier, ST5974, on 29 January. Its tangled bare stems have a joined pair of leaves immediately below a cluster of small white flowers (Plate 2). In N Somerset VC6 it occurs on the coastline from Sand Bay to Berron Dunes whilst in VC34 I have only one recent site, a single specimen reported in the *Bristol Naturalists News* for May 2016 as a roadside weed between College Green and the bottom of Jacob's Wells Road where it was later seen by John Martin in more quantity.

Imagine that! A mid-1870s walk round the Avon Gorge with Hardwicke Drummond Rawnsley, later one of the co-founders of the National Trust

Back in the 1970s I worked through a copy of White's *Flora of Bristol* (1912) that my late father had inscribed 'to Clive ... to help with his PhD in Bristol', underlining in pencil all the many entries relating to plants in the Avon Gorge. One of these underlinings was on page 533 and related to an old wayside elm at Abbots Leigh. It was the fashion of Flora-writers in those days to scatter in their works various extracts of poetic writing, so I thought little of it, other than writing in a note to my older self to 'see if any other good quotes are in here'. Fast-forward over 40 years, writing up the elms of the Avon Gorge, I realised that the author of the piece in *A Book of Bristol Sonnets* (1877) White had quoted from was HD Rawnsley, later to become one of the three co-founders of the National Trust. Although one can access the book online, I thought it worth buying an original copy. It is inscribed 'For my mother, with her son's best love, May 2, 1877', though the inscription isn't signed, and I haven't been able to confirm it is in Rawnsley's hand.

Hardwicke Drummond Rawnsley (1851-1920) came from a long line of Church of England vicars. After studying Natural Sciences at Oxford University and taking holy orders he worked with the urban poor in London and then Bristol, where under the auspices of the Clifton College mission, amongst other things organising a temperance club, regular football matches and weekend country walks. With the power of poetry (he was apparently related to Alfred, Lord Tennyson) a sonnet bleakly entitled *St Werburgh's Tower. Built in 1385. To be pulled down in 1877*, he successfully campaigned to save the disused church on Corn Street. The stones were numbered, and it was re-built two miles away and is now in use as a climbing centre. As it happens, it is a place I have been, taken there with others by Libby Houston after a BNS Botany field meeting at Narroways on 8 August 2015.

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As is often the case, one learns from the Preface how the author came to write their book, and how they hoped it might be received. In Rawnsley's case, it begins with humility. 'This book has little to recommend it and asks no praise'. He continued that 'it is believed that it will fill a want here in Bristol, where men are so actively engaged, and oftentimes so wearied, in their business, that they may be glad to have some such thoughts suggested to them'. Rawnsley observes an urbanising and industrialising but deeply historical Bristol, and thinks of nature and of religious matters, and in passing he records a few wild plants, and even gives notice to Hannibal, the then ruling lion at the Clifton Zoological Gardens.

There is a series of no less than 18 sonnets which more or less follow a circular route from Ham Green (1), Abbots Leigh (3), Leigh Woods (4), Clifton Suspension Bridge (1), St Vincent's Rocks (2) the Downs (6) and Sneyd Park Woods (1). 'There is no spot in all the country round / where Nature's hands so strong to help are found !', he wrote of the view from *The churchyard gate at Abbots Leigh*. Unsurprisingly Rawnsley wrote of *The Nightingale in Nightingale Valley* but also *On finding the Wild Strawberry in Nightingale Valley*, too. In the former, the first four lines talk of the Ash *Fraxinus excelsior* in the valley, hawthorns *Crataegus monogyna* on the slopes in the distance, and whitebeams on the warm rocks on the ridge below Stokeleigh Camp. The whitebeam is 'moony' because of the white underside of its leaves, but one is tempted to think of *Sorbus eminens*, the Round-leaved Whitebeam.

The laggard Ash has shaken free her plumes
From yonder slopes, the may-tide snow is gone
And down the cleft, where day the latest shone
The moony White-Beam all the dusk illumines !

It was on the third of April one year that Rawnsley found the Wild Strawberry *Fragaria vesca*; later, in fruit 'some hedgerow thing will win a feast of thee' he reflected. He also mentions Lords and Ladies *Arum maculatum* which he must have seen there, and Daisy *Bellis perennis*, which seems to be figurative.

Before the Arum peeps from out her hood
When daisies still are fresh in children's eyes
I, rambling, found her wilding strawberries
Had spread their peary petals in the wood !

Walking across the Clifton Suspension Bridge, Rawnsley imagines the Avon Gorge at its time of formation. 'When the world shook and yawned, did it unearth this mighty sinew, this tremendous thing', formed of Vulcan? Was Neptune wallowing in the water, and were

there satyrs in the 'primal woods'? But 'nay! for these [careless jolly] gods' were captive long ago, these monster forces from their thrones were hurled', he preached. 'His fashioning Finger was the atom man!

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Once across, *To a Thrush, heard on Clifton Down in a January mist*. 'Thou that so cheerly settest forth the morrow, while round thee million buds are wet with tears!' Next, *The Power of Spring; or St Vincent's Rocks* where 'the grim rocks yield and forth the Wall-flowers peep'. The green flood with birchwood chained with *Clematis* must be in the Green Valley. 'The light heart captives round the Hawthorn' might be the shoots and leaves of Black Bryony, *Tamus communis*. He then writes of *Dandelions and Daisies on the Downs*, subtitled *Jealousy*, 'with gay address smiles Madame Coquetry', which may have been an allusion to the parading couples on the Promenade. Then, *Clematis in leaf on the Downs*.

In bush and brake they twist the idle cord
Fresh knots of green proclaim what strength they stored
And the quick ropes make captive of the May!

It was *Quiet on the Downs*, as he sat 'on this sunny rock astride', as if in peace, precarious peace.

Nor thought I once, beyond the hill there lies
A City's travail, with all its throes and cries.

And seeing *Gossamers on the Down*, Rawnsley begins to preach again, 'Friend, our life's lessons at our feet are strown! But on *May Day in Sneyd Park Woods* (including Cook's Folly Woods?) we get a sonnet crammed with woodland plants like the contents of a young botanist's vasculum: Wood Anemone, *Anemone nemorosa*; Bluebell, *Hyacinthoides non-scripta*; Primrose, *Primula vulgaris*; Violets, *Viola* species, Early Dog-violet, *V. reichenbachiana* and/or Common Dog-violet, *V. riviniana*; an orchid, probably Early-purple Orchid, *Orchis mascula*; the Wood Spurge, *Euphorbia amygdaloides*; Lords and Ladies, *Arum maculatum* again, and an allusion to May as Titania, adorned in chains of daisies.

The teeming land of May-tide must be won
With swift recruits the pale Anemones
Collect their trembling-hearted companies
The Blue-bell's banner leads them cheerly on
Five plated shields of gold Primroses don
Grey visors Violets take, the Orchis frees
Her sanguined rowels, in cool armouries
The Spurge works poisoned spears for everyone
But I might see those grave wood counsellors
The Lords and Ladies, sitting in their doors
At their green tents no stir of war was made
When lo! In daisy fetters down the glade
While birds triumphant sang the paeon song
The captive May came willingly along!

Later in 1877, Rawnsley left Bristol and moved to the Lake District, where he became Vicar of Wray in December, marrying the following January. Very soon he became active in landscape preservation, founding bodies along the way such as the Derwentwater and

Borrowdale Defence Committee and the Lake District Defence Society. He was Canon of Carlisle Cathedral from 1891-1920.

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Plate 3. Beatrix Potter; Rupert Potter; Hardwicke Drummond Rawnsley, by Rupert Potter, albumen print, 11 September 1906. NPG P1823. © National Portrait Gallery, London. Published here under creative commons licence. Rawnsley is on the right.

residing in the woods' who did not want to see the rest of Leigh Woods built up and terraces gouged into the slopes beneath Stokeleigh Camp, on the other side of Nightingale Valley from his residence nearby at Burwalls. The Indenture of Conveyance wrote of Wills' intention to further convey 'Nightingale Valley and part of the hanging woods' to the National Trust, who affixed their Common Seal to the document. Rawnsley, as Hon. Secretary, may well have authorised the use of the seal if indeed he did not do it himself – there was also a business Secretary, Nigel Bond. Rawnsley must have been delighted with this early acquisition of land by the National Trust, having become well-acquainted with the woods in their cultural setting during his visits in the mid-1870s.

Acknowledgements. The details about the transfer of Leigh Woods to the National Trust in 1909 are from LJU Way's, *An account of the Leigh Woods in the parish of Long Ashton, County of Somerset*, in the Transactions of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society for 1913 (36: 55-102). Other historical material is largely taken from Wikipedia. The extracts of sonnets are from HD Rawnsley's *A Book of Bristol Sonnets* (1877). The image of Rawnsley with his friend Beatrix Potter is from the National Portrait Gallery, London, with permission.

The National Trust was registered in 1895 to "promote the permanent preservation for the benefit of the Nation of lands and tenements (including buildings) of beauty or historic interest". Its three most active and inspirational founder-leaders were Octavia Hill (who Rawnsley had known since his days in London before he came to Bristol), Sir Robert Hunter (Chair) and Rawnsley as Hon. Secretary, a post he retained until his death.

On 15 May 1909, an estimated 80 acres and 22 perches of the southern part of Leigh Woods was acquired from the Leigh Woods Land Co. Ltd. by George Alfred Wills, 'a gentleman

Clive Lovatt, Stroud, 7 February 2022

GEOLOGY SECTION

PRESIDENT: Richard Arthur

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HON. SEC: Richard Ashley

Geology Section Annual General Meeting – 7.30pm Wed. 16 March

Due to the on-going situation with Covid 19 it will not be possible to hold a formal Annual General Meeting of the Geology Section so a short Zoom meeting will be held Wednesday 16 March immediately prior to the main Annual General Meeting of the Society (see page 4). The main business will be to receive the annual report and appoint a President, Secretary and Field Secretary for the coming year. Nominations for these posts should be sent to the current Secretary by the end of February or as soon as possible thereafter. The current Secretary will not be in the least offended if another member wishes to take on that role and feels that it would be good for the Section to have someone with new ideas and a bit more energy.

South Wales Geologists' Association – Zoom Lectures

The Section Secretary apologises for giving incorrect information regarding these lectures in the February edition. The previous year's programme was pasted in by mistake. There is one lecture remaining in this year's programme. That is Chris Lee giving his Presidential Address on ***Bivalve Mounds and Reefs of the Middle Lias (Domerian) of the Central High Atlas Morocco*** on **Saturday 19th March at 11am**. If anybody is interested all they have to do is contact programme@swga.org.uk and say that they would like to hear the talk. The Meetings Coordinator will send them the link.

INVERTEBRATE SECTION

PRESIDENT: Maico Weites.

Hon. SECRETARY: Vacant

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FIELD MEETINGS

(Advance notices)

STOKE PARK

Leader: Maico Weites

Saturday 28 May

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 if you want to attend

LEIGH WOODS

Leader: Maico Weites

Saturday 6 August

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 if you want to attend

Invertebrate Notes for March 2022

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The mild condition at the tail end of 2021 saw a few bumblebees and *Eristalis* hoverflies being noted up to late December. That however largely changed in January with colder conditions which meant that the first butterflies on the wing out of hibernation were not starting to be reported until the beginning of February.

The latest edition of Entomologists' Gazette (available in the BNS Library) includes some very interesting observations on the Rugose Oil Beetle *Meloe rugosus* from just over the Severn in Monmouthshire. This oil beetle is the only one to be active as an adult in autumn and winter and is considered nationally scarce. We have a couple of known populations around Bristol and it is possible others are undiscovered given the time of year when it is active and that it is most active after nightfall. The information on habitat and behaviour could be useful in helping conserve our own populations but also in suggesting where to search for possibly overlooked populations.

In addition, this edition of the 'Gazette' includes a fascinating paper which suggests that many of the marks we just pass off as squiggles on moth wings may be acting as false eyes when viewed from certain angles and so deterring predators. This fresh look at very familiar insects is similar to the suggestions a few years ago now that many moth larvae are mimicking snakes with their colouration. To understand this better we have to stop looking at something like a caterpillar through our own eyes and experience and instead try to approximate to what a bird sees. The trigger for a bird to avoid a possible altercation with something dangerous like a snake may not have to be a full blown accurate depiction of say false eyes but just the core elements which produce the instinctive response to leave it alone.

Ray Barnett
04/02/22

Do you have exotic flatworms in your garden?

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A few months ago I received a message from Dave and Anne Jewell. Strange flatworms had appeared in their daughter's garden in Thornbury. The first individual was found in a damp area near their shed but later on more individuals were found including four others behind the shed underneath a large builder's woven sack and the last one (taken as a live specimen) under a stone.

The original photos that were taken clearly showed a Yellow-striped or

Caenoplana variegata ©Maico Weites Southampton Flatworm (*Caenoplana variegata*, also known by its junior synonym *Caenoplana bicolor*)! Most flatworms we have in the UK are different shades of brown or grey but this species has a very striking bright yellow line over its back making it easy to recognise. They were kind enough to give me a live specimen about 80mm long, which I was able to photograph, attached below, and take some notes of its behaviour.

Many people will be familiar with non-native invasive species such as grey squirrels or Himalayan Balsam but there are also many invertebrates that are regarded as invasive in the UK. One of the invertebrates that has been a cause of concern in recent years is the New Zealand Flatworm (*Arthurdendyus triangulatus*) that preys on earthworms and was likely introduced and spread via the horticultural trade. The Southampton Flatworm is its Australian cousin and most likely arrived in the UK in a similar fashion. The first UK records date to 2008 and so far this species is only sporadically found in England and Wales, most notably in Southampton.

Flatworms are very much unlike earthworms. Both are slimy mainly soil-dwelling creatures but they are only very distantly related. Flatworms are not segmented like earthworms and unlike earthworms they lack a body cavity and circulatory system. The lack of a circulatory system explains the flattened nature of their bodies as it creates a larger surface area for gas exchange.

Flatworm reproduction is also unusual as they can reproduce in different ways: sexual reproduction, budding, and reverse fission. Sexual reproduction needs two individuals (no need for a specific sex as flatworms are hermaphrodites) and eggs are eventually formed. The latter two methods are ways of asexual reproduction. In budding small 'buds' form along the flatworm's body that then detach. These detached buds grow into fully-fledged flatworms. Reverse fission is similar but refers to when the portions of the rear break off when the rest of the body moves forward. These bits of flatworm can also develop into new individuals.

I offered the flatworm a range of food items but it did not seem that interested in the earthworms, instead preferring woodlice. The woodlice are ingested and their mucus-covered exoskeleton is regurgitated via the mouth that also functions as anus. This seems to be in line with what Jones et al. (2020) found in their studies where earthworms were ignored as prey.

Whether this new addition to the British fauna remains a rare species or ends up becoming more common and potentially form a danger to native species remains to be seen. However, unlike its New Zealand cousin, the Southampton Flatworm does not seem to have an appetite for earthworms. The Non-native Species Secretariat recommends killing non-native flatworms but I quite enjoyed observing its behaviour in a sealed glass jar over the last few months.

It is unlikely that in our area the Southampton Flatworm is restricted to this single garden. It won't hurt to take a quick look under your plant pots!

More information on this flatworm can be found in the following sources:

Jones, H. D., Mateos, E., Riutort, M., & Álvarez-Presas, M. (2020). The identity of the invasive yellow-striped terrestrial planarian found recently in Europe: *Caenoplana variegata* (Fletcher & Hamilton, 1888) or *Caenoplana bicolor* (Graff, 1899)? *Zootaxa*, 4731(2), 193–222. <https://doi.org/10.11646/zootaxa.4731.2.2>

Buglife (2020). Non-native Land flatworms

https://cdn.buglife.org.uk/downloads/UK-land-flatworms-2020_V2.pdf

LIBRARY

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

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LIBRARY COMMITTEE CHAIR: - Clive Lovatt

HON. LIBRARIAN:- Jim Webster

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 only be open for bookings once a week, alternating between Saturdays and Wednesdays. **The available dates for March** are Saturday 5th March, Wednesday 9th March, Saturday 19th March and Wednesday 23rd March. Alternative dates and times may be possible on request with a week's notice.

The Library will only be staffed by a Duty Librarian from the Library Committee on dates when a member has booked in, so visitors without appointments may find that nobody is on hand. *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 and Chair 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.

We look forward to seeing some of you again.

FROM THE BOOKSHELVES

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James Henry Cundall (1808-1884) of Clifton and his *Every-day Book of Natural History*

In his *History of Bristol Botany*, part of the *Flora of Bristol*, White (1912: 81-82) gave a warm account of Cundall's book, and of his herbarium (since lost, also its catalogue) and botanical finds: 'A Clifton naturalist whose name has not been so often quoted as his local work and merit would suggest was James H Cundall. His botanical [and other] memoranda are of special interest because they were written with a welcome amount of detail, in contrast with the scanty information ... too often provided in similar cases. We have, for example, observations on plants and plant-sites formerly existing in Cotham and Redland ... all long since destroyed by extensions of building necessitated by growing populations. In those days the most pretentious thoroughfare in modern Clifton was known as Gallow's-acre Lane [now Pembroke Road], and on its hedgebanks grew Goldilocks, Archangels and Moschatel'.

The *Every-day Book of Natural History* was first published in 1866 with the author's initials (JC) on the title page, but it is signed below the preface. It was subtitled 'comprising a note for every day on the flowers, insects, birds, animals etc most commonly observed on rambles into the country throughout the year'. The daily entries, listed alphabetically by

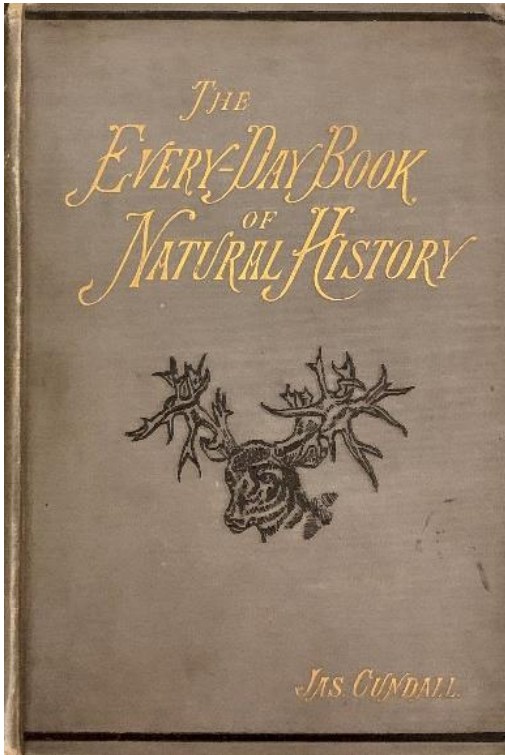


Plate 1. The cover of the revised edition (1890) of James Cundall's *Every-day Book of Natural History*. The embossed design alludes to a similar sketch on the frontispiece in the first edition (1866) rather crudely showing wildlife of January and February. © CM Lovatt.

render the same more acceptable to the public generally'.

So it may have been, but in the revision, we lose the local touch. For instance on 22 March when Cundall went to see the Green Hellebore, *Helleborus viridis*, he wrote, 'We know of but one locality in the district where it may be found – the Roman entrenchment in Leigh Woods, Clifton, where we now propose to seek it'. The revised edition strips that out and generalises: 'The plant is occasionally met with in woods and thickets'. As a result, the text retained abandons its sense of place. So now we appreciate just where it was that Cundall was thinking about when he wrote, 'The aspect of the woods has materially changed in the past fortnight. As we look from the summit of the hill over the tops of the trees there is a perceptible ruddy tint; the sap has pushed its way to the extremities of the topmost twigs and the swelling buds'.

He continued, 'A glint of sunshine plays among the underwood, lighting up the fresh green of the early leafing honeysuckle and turning the graceful catkins of the hazel into pendants of gold; but we are still reminded of winter, for the trees are naked, and ... a deep silence prevails: the wind is hushed, the clouds gather over the sun, and a gloom spreads through the wood'. Then, there was a brief shower, and 'all at once the birds break out into song; a thrush is heard in the neighbouring dell, two rival robins open up a contention in song, and above all ring the clear full tones of the chaffinch', and then as the

English name in an index at the front, and then in monthly calendars with common and scientific names, were based on a series of articles written for Bristol's *Western Daily Press*, revised, extended and where necessary supplemented before being compiled into book form 'at the request of numerous readers'. Thus for the first ten days in February we have the Chicken, Gull, Greyhound, Rhubarb, Coltsfoot, Wren, Kingfisher, Dandelion and Pigeon. In the second half of June, Rose, Elder, Squirrel, Walnut, Rose Aphid, Bumble bee, Fly Orchid, and later, Woodlouse and Dragonfly. As usual for this period, the nature poets have been trawled for suitable quotations. He would have held an audience spell-bound.

There is a freely accessible searchable and downloadable copy online on Google Books. Somehow, the copy digitised had reached the New York Public Library in 1913. I have a copy from the third thousand, issued in about 1890, and apparently edited by the Victorian populariser, Edward Step*. He claimed that he revised and corrected the work throughout and made 'such additions thereto as seem calculated to

storm abates, Cundall observed 'in the hollows ... the stems of the Green Hellebore pushing their way through the soil, and scarcely freed from the earth, already opening their curious green blossoms'.

On the other hand, the account for 29 July, of the Bogbean *Menyanthes trifoliata*, is unchanged, and we have to rely on White (1912: 423) for the assurance that the spot was indeed also in Leigh Woods. [Perhaps the original newspaper columns have the further details of localities, but I see no reason why White might have wanted to have researched so deeply.] We are left to suppose that White must have known Cundall – not apparently a BNS member, at least so far as the 1870 and 1876 lists show. We do know that White knew Cundall's daughters: as described in my account of the four illustrations in White's *Flora* (*Bristol Naturalist News*, 586: 10-13, for December 2019/January 2020) I showed that two were by Miss F Cundall.

It also seems that it was Miss EM Cundall who painted a 16-volume set of illustrations of British plants, once owned by White and then purchased by Miss MM Wills and for over 80 years in the care of the University of Bristol. Bristol Museum and Art Gallery, on the Natural History workroom bookshelves, has the thinly annotated copy of White's *Flora of Bristol* (Ref 7131M) presented 'To the Misses Cundall in grateful acknowledgement & with kind regards'. It was also through the two ladies that White inspected their father's herbarium on 9 November 1902. It included the Narrow-leaved Helleborine *Cephalanthera longifolia* collected by Cundall from a 'Wooded slope, Durdham Down, 5 June 1853. Somehow White purloined the specimen (or at least a part of the gathering) on the grounds that, as he wrote against it in his later years, 'there exists no other record of the occurrence of this orchid in the Bristol district'.

That Cundall's activities were unknown to EH Swete, the author of the *Flora Bristolensis* (1854) and neither was he a member of the Bristol Microscopical Society at this time also suggests that Cundall was somehow not in the mainstream of Bristol natural history. This seems very strange when his book was written for 'those rural excursionists who desire to attend to Nature's Voice', as he explained in the preface of his book, a remark written in December 1865 and still, like the whole of Cundall's book, pertinent to Bristol naturalists today.

*The copy in the BNS Library seems to be a revised edition, given that it was catalogued as written by Cundall and Step. My copy has no intimation of the editor's identity.



Plate 2. Green Hellebore, *Helleborus viridis* in Stokeleigh Camp, Leigh Woods, 6 April 2018, where the 'curious green blossoms' were seen by JH Cundall one 22 March in the mid-1800s. © CM Lovatt.

Clive Lovatt, 7 February 2022

ORNITHOLOGY SECTION

PRESIDENT:- Giles Morris

HON SEC.:- Lesley Cox

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ORNITHOLOGY TALK & AGM

Sadly our planned speaker for the last talk of the season is unable to give their presentation on Moorhens, so that talk has been postponed until the autumn.

PORTBURY WHARF NATURE RESERVE

Wednesday, 9th March

Speaker: Giles Morris

7.30pm



Snipe at Portbury Wharf © Giles Morris

I'm sure that many of you will be familiar with Portbury Wharf Nature Reserve. Opened in 2010 to protect a small, but valuable stretch of Severn Estuary coastline, this reserve has had more than its fair share of difficulties in its short life. This talk will look at the reserve's origins, its habitats and wildlife and finish with an analysis of the threats to its future.

The talk will be preceded by a very short section AGM.

To join this talk on Zoom, please email bnzoommeetings@gmail.com

FOREST OF DEAN

Sunday March 20th, 9.30am to 12.30pm

Leader: Mel Parker

Meet at RSPB Nag's head car park at 9.30. By road from Parkend, take the B4431 in a westerly direction towards Coleford. Nagshead is signposted on the right on leaving Parkend village. Nearest postcode: GL15 4LA

<https://www.rspb.org.uk/reserves-and-events/reserves-a-z/nagshead/>

We will walk through mature oak woodlands looking for the resident tits, treecreepers, nuthatches and woodpeckers, including the rare lesser spotted woodpecker. The lower hide should be open. We then move on to New Fancy view, to see if we can spot distant goshawks with more opportunities to look for bullfinches, hawfinches and crossbill. Fancy Rd, Lydney GL16 7EL. If time permits, we can visit Cannop ponds. Expect to finish by 12.30 pm.

To join this Field Meeting, please contact the leader.

Breeding Bird Survey

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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 we have recently received an additional allocation of 20 squares - we now have a total of 72 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 9246968) - you will be very welcome.

Bird Notes

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The normally quiet mid-winter season has been livened up by a few good birds this year, the best of them probably three Penduline Tits at the former airfield on the edge of Weston-super-Mare. They are actually returning birds, having been present during the 2021/22 winter and seem very well settled around a small wetland created in connection with a nearby housing development, feeding chiefly in stands of reed-mace. This of course raises the question of where the birds spent the summer – could they even have attempted to nest locally? This is a real possibility: both the range and abundance of the species have been increasing in Europe and there are now healthy populations in Denmark and the Netherlands, although it is less numerous in France. Their favoured breeding habitat is in bushes and scrub close to reedbeds and other swamps, a combination that is abundant in the Somerset Levels and elsewhere locally. There have been no known nesting attempts in Britain but records have steadily increased since the first UK sighting in 1996 and Penduline Tit is high on the list of potential colonists.

Penduline tits form the Remizidae, a separate, but closely related, family to the true tits (Paridae), with several species in Africa and Asia and one, the Verdin, in North America. Like the true tits they are largely insectivorous and feed in a similar fashion, busily searching vegetation for their prey, often hanging upside down. Many of the tropical species frequent woodland and scrub, and Verdin is a bird of semi-deserts and arid scrub. Probably the most characteristic feature of the family is their nests, which are beautifully constructed hanging baskets, woven from grasses and suspended from slender twigs. The nests of the European species are impressive enough but do not rival those of some African species, which incorporate a conspicuous tunnel leading to a false chamber whilst the true nest chamber is reached through a concealed entrance with two flaps, which the adults seal shut with spider silk every time they leave. It is amazing that a group of animals whose forelimbs are dedicated to flight are able to perform such feats of engineering.



Penduline Tit, Weston Airfield,
3 February 2022. Photo © Paul Chapman

The Weston site has been attracting a rich variety of bird life in addition to the Penduline Tits, including Shoveler, Jack Snipe, Bearded Tits, Cetti's Warbler and Reed Bunting, an illustration that new habitats can rapidly become valuable for wildlife, even without expensive or elaborate design. There is soon to be a legal requirement for developers to either provide or fund habitat creation, through an initiative known as Biodiversity Net Gain and it is likely that we will see many similar schemes implemented. If these schemes are sensibly planned and managed we should be able to enjoy much more high quality urban fringe birdwatching in the coming years.

Rupert Higgins

Your sightings are welcome at: avonbirdrecorder@outlook.com

MISCELLANY

UNIVERSITY OF BRISTOL 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



BOTANIC GARDEN

Sunday 6 March. 10:30 am to 12:30 pm

CURATOR'S SPRING TOUR

Free to Friends of the Garden, school age children, all students, and staff of the University. For all others the price is £10.

Thursday 17 March at 7:00 pm to 8:30 pm on ZOOM: AGM + Lecture by Maisie Brett (*organised by the Friends*)

The AGM of the Friends of the Botanic Garden will be followed by a lecture by Maisie Brett, University of Bristol Life Sciences PhD student. Maisie did her masters project on plants and pollinators in South Africa.

The link to the Zoom lecture will be available nearer the time. There is a limit of 100 people which will be on a first come first served basis with no pre-booking.

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AVON ORGANIC GROUP

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www.groworganicbristol.org

www.facebook.com/avonorganic

Thursday, 24th March, 6.30pm - 8.30pm – *Live and on Zoom - Talk*

"GROWING MEDICINAL MUSHROOMS"

with Tom Baxter, Bristol Fungarium



Live Meeting at The Station, Silver Street Bristol. BS1 2AG - in the Engine Room, the large and airy room on the Ground floor.

We expect to live-stream the talk so that people have the option to attend in person at The Station or access the talk online via Zoom at 7pm. As usual now, we also anticipate providing all ticket holders

with a link to a recording shortly after for a time limited period.

<https://www.groworganicbristol.org>

Tom will illustrate how he and his small team grow the mushrooms from culturing in a lab to nurturing them in the different conditions required for each variety and may bring some of his produce along to the talk. He will also explain how we can grow edible fungi at home. <https://bristolfungarium.com>



Portbury Wharf
images (see [p18](#)):
Left, Barn Owl
© Hilary Kington
Right, Red-Veined
Darter
© Giles Morris

