

Vale Landscape Heritage Trust

Summer newsletter
2014

Stocken Orchard Update

As our newest reserve, Stocken Orchard has received quite a lot of attention during the spring and early summer. There was a need to catch up on pruning the trees to help ensure an annual crop; fencing has been installed to segregate our site from the remaining orchard. Our regular volunteers have been an enormous help with the pruning and clearing away the brash. We now need to get the brash chipped and removed from site.

Wildlife highlights from the orchard include four species of orchid including about 30 Bee Orchids and many butterflies including Marbled White and Essex Skipper.



Adam Bates (Leverhulme Noble Chafer Research Project)
Steve Oren (Peoples Trust for Endangered Species)
Harry Green (Worcestershire Wildlife Trust & VLHT Trustee)
at Stocken Orchard, June 2014

We are presently seeking funding for further fencing and groundwork to reinstate the footpath between the woodland and orchard to allow visitors to view the orchard safely, as well as an interpretation panel to promote the Vale Landscape Heritage Trust (VLHT) and traditional orchard management.

We were also fortunate that delegates from a Noble Chafer research weekend paid a visit to the orchard. Noble Chafers are very rare, large metallic-green beetles that live in decaying trees and Worcestershire's old orchards offer the ideal habitat for the species. Becky Lashley from WBRC (Worcestershire Biological Records Centre) organised a workshop over the weekend of 28th and 29th June, 2014. Around 25 people visited Stocken on the Sunday morning including representatives from Peoples Trust for Endangered Species, Leverhulme Noble Chafer Research Project and Worcestershire Wildlife Trust, as well as local land owners and other orchard enthusiasts. It was a great opportunity to introduce VLHT to people and discuss possible management of the site for the future.

Pershore Plum Festival

We are racing towards the start of the Pershore Plum Festival which gives an ideal opportunity to promote the Vale Landscape Heritage Trust and is also a really good event for selling our plums

The main Festival day is Monday 25th August, but there are lots of events and activities during the weekend of 23rd and 24th August, and much more throughout the month of August, including Plum Coach Tours and even a night at Worcester Races. For more details visit: <http://www.pershoreplumfestival.org.uk> or call 01386 565373.

As with previous years we will be relying on lots of volunteer input and would welcome any support picking plums, helping at the stalls, picking more plums, welcoming the plum tours at Hipton, picking even more plums and various other activities during the month. If you can help please get in touch with us using the contact details on the back page of this newsletter.

Could you love a horsefly?

It's not often that I get the chance to 'big-up' bugs to such a wide audience, so when our volunteers were being bothered by horseflies at Hipton during a work party I thought I'd show them a different side to these much maligned insects. Here are a few random facts to help you feel the love:

- It is only the female horseflies that suck blood and they do this to feed their developing eggs.
- Male horseflies feed on nectar and pollen (they are important to us as they pollinate our plants).
- The larvae or maggots live in wet ground or swamps where they feed on small invertebrates including slugs and snails (natural pest control).
- There are over 20 different species of horseflies in Britain.
- Adult horseflies have really beautiful eyes.



Deerfly *Chrysops caecutiens*
Hipton Hill 18th June 2014

The commonest horsefly in this area is known as the Clegg, or more correctly *Haematopota pluvialis*, and is a grey/brown fly with mottled wings. Another species that we have found during work parties is the attractive Deerfly *Chrysops caecutiens* which has bright green eyes. A third species that turned up at Stocken is the much larger Hairy-legged Horsefly *Hybomitra bimaculata*, with hairy legs and large striped eyes.

So next time you see a horsefly take a good look at its eyes before you squash it!

Evening Strolls



Marbled White on Pyramidal Orchid
Hipton Hill June 2014

We have come to the end of our planned evening strolls at our reserves. The walks were well attended and very enjoyable with lots to see and hear. The orchids at Hipton Hill Orchard were as spectacular as ever and there were good numbers of butterflies on the wing including the Vale's speciality the Marbled White. Birds were singing well, with Yellowhammer, Whitethroat and Song Thrush being the most obvious but we also had a bonus of a Grasshopper Warbler singing in the orchard. Lower Moor was a good place to hear Cuckoos this year and they were calling during our evening walk. Little Ringed Plovers and a Curlew added to the interest and a few Banded Demoiselles were displaying near the river. Our walk at Fladbury gave the chance to compare two of our meadow sites; Gore Meadows which are two flower-rich hay meadows and Mike's Meadow, a site which is starting to recover after years of horse-grazing.

Friends of VLHT

Friends of VLHT pay a regular amount each month or each year, which supports the important work saving and renovating old orchards and hay meadows and woodlands. For more details, please contact Gary Farmer at the office. Contact details are on the back page of the newsletter.

Vale Landscape Heritage Trust (VLHT) is a registered charity, number 1080109. We work to protect and preserve the environment in and around the Vale of Evesham and Pershore. We work with volunteers, funders, farmers and the government to secure the future of, so far, over 250 acres.



Lower Moor Birds Spring and Early-Summer 2014

Some highlights from our volunteer warden Rob Prudden at Lower Moor including some exciting news of a new breeding species on the reserve:

- Gulls from the Arctic region are normally scarce winter visitors so a juvenile Iceland Gull from 2nd April - 6th May was most unexpected.
- A female Ruddy Shelduck of unknown origin was on the river flash mid-morning on 5th May and was seen later in the day at Upton Warren.
- Eighteen Golden Plovers dropped in on 5th May, these being fairly late for spring passage birds and bound for breeding sites well to the north.
- Red Kites have become easier to see in the county of late so individuals over the river meadows were not unexpected on 9th May and 11th June.
- Grasshopper Warblers are generally scarce and difficult to find due to their secretive nature, so a male singing on 13th & 14th May and two singing males looking to second brood on 29th May was pleasing.
- Little Ringed Plovers were resident in small numbers throughout the period with a peak of seven on 19th April.
- The first Cuckoo was heard on 15th April, two males and a female were seen on two dates in mid May. The last singing bird was heard on the late date of 1st July.
- Common passage waders included small numbers of Oystercatchers, Dunlin, Redshank, Ringed Plover, Common Sandpiper and Curlew.
- Scarcer Wading birds were a Whimbrel on 25th April, Wood Sandpiper on 15th May and Avocets on three separate dates including a family party of a female and three juveniles on 21st June. It was presumed the latter birds were from the small breeding population at Upton Warren, but this proved not to be the case, these birds having travelled from further afield.
- Yellow Wagtails have become much scarcer in recent years so birds seen on four dates was encouraging.
- A pair of Common Terns were seen fishing along the river throughout May. This pair annually attempt to breed at the nearby Leisure Park, although high water curtailed proceedings this year.
- Kingfishers have been seen on several occasions throughout the period.
- June saw return passage begin with Lapwings from 5th, then peaking at 85 on 26th.
- Green Sandpipers arrived from 16th June with a male Teal also present on this date.
- Proof of on site breeding Redstarts came on 26th June when a female with two barely able to fly juveniles were seen. This is the first breeding record of this species in this vicinity.



Many of our projects are funded by Severn Waste Services through the Landfill Communities Fund. Without SWS, VLHT could not own, or protect, anywhere near as many acres.



Vale Landscape Heritage Trust

Evesham Volunteer Centre
Brick Kiln Street
Evesham
Worcestershire
WR11 4AA

01386 40165
07794 835 953

valetrust@tiscali.co.uk
www.valetrust.weebly.com

(This is a temporary website)

Website

We have had many problems with our website this year; unable to access it; unable to edit it; out of date details remaining on the internet; and now it has disappeared altogether. Despite many emails and service desk online discussions this has not been resolved. So, in the meantime please use our new (temporary) site at <http://valetrust.weebly.com>.

Three Cheers for the Volunteers!

Our dedicated group of regular volunteers have been busy pruning plum and apple trees in our orchards during the last three months. Many of the plum trees at Hipton are in need of restoration pruning to ensure a good supply of fruit for the plum festival and local jam makers. The cider apple trees in Stocken Orchard are being pruned to help maintain an annual crop rather than a biannual crop. All of the pruning has to take into account the value of old orchards for wildlife so dead wood is being left where appropriate. We also had a visit from Birmingham & Solihull Midweek Conservation Volunteers in June. The group spent a day at Hipton clearing bramble and other competitive vegetation from around newly planted fruit trees. So a big thank you to all who volunteer for VLHT, we couldn't do what we do without you.



Volunteers receiving expert tuition in fruit tree pruning

Newsletter delivery

If you can receive this newsletter via email rather than in the post it saves us time and money and makes sure you hear the news without delay. Please email the Trust if you would like future copies via email. If we don't hear from you then we will continue to send you a copy in the post.

Thank you for your continued support for Vale Landscape Heritage Trust.