

Vale Landscape Heritage Trust

Summer 2016



White Park Cattle at Lower Moor

Trees for the Queen

We would like to thank the children from The Littletons School who came to our Little Pastures site to plant trees 21st April. They planted three oak trees to celebrate the Queen's 90th Birthday, near to three veteran trees presently standing on the site. These old trees have been standing here for 200 years or more and so the new trees will grow alongside them to take their place as landscape features in the future.

Stocken Sheep and PIGs

This summer Stocken Orchard had both sheep and PIGs, no not pigs, PIGs; the Plant Identification Group (PIG) from Worcestershire Wildlife Trust's Malvern Local Group. This group of wildflower enthusiasts visits sites around the county to record and monitor the local flora. We were really pleased that they could spend a morning in our orchard as their findings will inform future management of the orchard grassland. The sheep were in the orchard as part of ongoing management, to keep the grass and tree seedlings down between the fruit trees where our mower can't reach. This is important to allow us to harvest the cider apples and to reduce the vigour of the grasses to allow even more wildflowers to grow.



Sheep and PIGs at Stocken June 2016

New land

We are really pleased to be able to tell you that we have added three more fields to our land at Haines Meadows in Wick, thanks again to the generous support of Severn Waste Services. One small field which is rough grassland with some scrub, good for breeding birds such as Reed Buntings. The other two fields were hay meadows in the past with breeding Curlew, however changes in management to silage cutting meant that these wading birds were lost from the site. It is hoped that by bringing the fields back into hay meadow management that this rapidly declining bird will return to breed and its evocative call will be heard in this part of the Avon valley again.

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, nearly 300 acres.

The Sound of Summer - What's that chirping in the grass?



Roesel's Bush-cricket male



Lesser Marsh Grasshopper



Long-winged Conehead female

As the spring and early summer bird song dies away, another choir is taking their place. Not as easy to hear as the birds, it is the grasshoppers and bush-crickets. The Vale has four species of grasshoppers and six species of bush-crickets. One of these is disappearing and three new species have arrived. The Common Green Grasshopper is now not common in this part of the county but the Lesser Marsh Grasshopper was first noted here about 20 years ago and is very common now. Both Roesel's Bush-cricket and Long-winged Conehead (another bush-cricket) arrived in the county at the start of the new millennium and are now found across Worcestershire. Another bush-cricket, the Short-winged Conehead is rare in the county but is found at several sites along the Avon including VLHT's grasslands at Lower Moor.

Did you know?

Grasshoppers and bush-crickets belong to the group of insects known as Orthoptera, which means 'straight wings', and some Orthoptera fly very well (Locusts are just big grasshoppers).

Grasshoppers eat mostly grass but bush-crickets eat grass, leaves, pollen and small insects, including young grasshoppers if they can catch them.

Grasshoppers make their song by rubbing their back legs against their wings while bush-crickets rub together special pads on their wings. The Oak Bush-cricket is an oddity as it lacks the special wing-pads and tap dances on a leaf instead.

A grasshopper's ears are in the side of its body but a bush-cricket's ear are in its knees!

Events

It's been a busy few months and we have been able to promote VLHT at a few events as well as opening some of our sites for guided walks. At the beginning of May we attended Worcestershire Wildlife Trust's open day at Tiddesley Wood when we opened our Stocken Orchard for visitors to watch a horse logging demonstration, which proved very popular. We attended the Avon Meadows annual BioBlitz and joined other groups to find out more about what lives in this wonderful wetland on the edge of Pershore town. We opened Hipton Hill orchards for guided walks to see the wildflowers (including thousands of orchids), birds and butterflies. Our guided walk around Lower Moor was well attended and enjoyable even if it was a little damp. We have one walk left on our programme, a chance to see our ridge and furrow site between South and Middle Littletons.

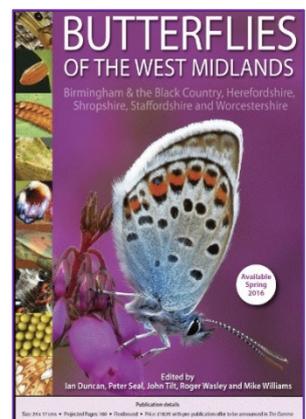
On June 26th we were invited to the official launch of a new book about butterflies in our region – Butterflies of the West Midlands, produced by Butterfly Conservation. VLHT sponsored the Grizzled Skipper, a rare little butterfly which breeds on Hipton Hill. More details on Butterfly Conservation's website:

<http://www.westmidlands-butterflies.org.uk/>

The next big event for us is the Pershore Plum Festival. This award-winning event includes various activities from crowning of the Plum Princess and a night at the horse races to music and plum sales leading up to the August bank holiday weekend.

For more details check the Pershore Plum Festival web site at:

<http://www.pershoreplumfestival.org.uk/>



Grizzled Skipper

Bird Highlights at Lower Moor and Wick Wetlands April - June 2016 - Rob Pruden.

APRIL began with a handful of winter stragglers including seven **Wigeon** and fifteen **Teal** during the first week.

The last wintering **Fieldfares** were seen on the first day of the month, when a loose flock of c120 were seen flying north overhead, while the first sign of spring passage was apparent on 3rd when a **Green Sandpiper** and a **Redshank** were seen, the latter stayed to the end of the month. The first 3 **Swallows** arrived on 4th and a pair of **Curlew** on the same date were then seen intermittently till 19th. Other spring migrants passed through later in the month and included **Yellow Wagtail**, **Little Egret**, **Common Sandpiper**, **Whinchat**, **Wheatear** and a pair of **Little Ringed Plovers** that stayed for most of April.

Cetti's Warbler is a very scarce breeding bird in the Midlands, so a male singing along the Lench Ditch for just one day on the 9th was unexpected. This is only the fourth record of this species at Lower Moor and had probably dispersed from a small wintering population down river. A male **Peregrine** caused havoc amongst the loafing Gulls on 10th, the attacks by this feared predator appeared half hearted and were probably carried out for pure enjoyment rather than with any deadly intent.

The most unexpected record of April was a juvenile **Iceland Gull** on 9th; this species would normally be expected to be offshore north of Britain at this time.

In **MAY** a female **Red-crested Pochard**, which had first been recorded in January, was again seen on and off from 5th May – 6th June. A pair of **Grey Partridge** at Wick at the beginning of the month was pleasing as this species struggles to exist around modern farming practices. Also at Wick, there were late passage waders, with a **Common Sandpiper** mid-month and 2 **Greenshanks** from 13th – 17th. A **Hobby** was seen on two dates mid-month, as was a **Yellow Wagtail** and a singing male **Corn Bunting**.

Late waders were seen at Lower Moor with seven **Black Tailed Godwits** on the 23rd followed by a female **Ruff** on 24th. A **Hobby** was seen on two dates mid-month and a **Red Kite** drifted north on 29th.

The star bird of May was a **Glossy Ibis** which was present for just fifteen minutes mid-morning on the 22nd. There have been less than ten records of this species in Worcestershire with this being the third at Lower Moor.

In **JUNE** a **Little Ringed Plover** was present throughout the first week and a male **Curlew** stayed around all month, regularly dropping in to bathe just before dark. Despite continuing to sing it appeared unsuccessful in finding a mate. Two unusually late **Dunlin** were seen early morning on the 4th. And the first **Common Tern** of the year was fishing along the river on 17th. A **Hobby** gave an impressive aerial display mid-month as it attempted to catch newly fledged **Swallows**. The first returning male **Teal** arrived back on 8th and a pair of **Avocet** spent the morning feeding avidly at Lower Moor on the 21st.

Breeding birds

A pair of **Oystercatchers** that arrived on April 2nd successfully nested at the nearby Leisure Park. The adult pair and three fully fledged juveniles regularly fed at the river flash from June 7th through till the end of the month. A Pair of **Shelduck** were present from April 4th to May 9th. This species has attempted to breed in the area many times but has never managed to rear young due to predation. This year sadly they arrived back on June 10th, again without a family. The first **Cuckoo** was heard on April 19th and then daily till June 17th, and a pair were seen on several occasions. Other breeding species noted included **Willow**, **Sedge & Reed Warblers**, **Greenfinch**, **Bullfinch**, **Whitethroat & Lesser Whitethroat**, **Reed Bunting**, **Yellow Wagtail**, **Tree Creeper** and **Kestrel**.



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.

TCTOP

We continue to support TCTOP where we can and at the end of May helped restore an old plum orchard on the edge of Evesham. Under the guidance of orchard-expert Wade Muggleton we joined some of TCTOP's volunteers to prune the trees and also managed to carry out a wildlife survey which proved the presence of Noble Chafer beetles. These rare beetles are not often seen but their larvae leave characteristic frass inside the trees where they live.

For further information about TCTOP and how to get involved visit their web site:

<http://tctop.org.uk> or phone 01684 560616



Plum tree pruning at Chadbury

VLHT Volunteers

Despite the fact that Wednesdays attracted more than their fair share of rain, our volunteers continued to turn out to help with the management of our sites. We cleared flood debris from Lower Moor and Haines Meadows and moved items from car tyres to plastic garden furniture, as well as a chest of drawers and added a new species to the site's bird-list, a family of plastic ducks!

We've also carried out fence repairs at Gore Meadows and tended new fruit trees at Hipton. In the three months from end of March to end June our Wednesday volunteers have carried out 12 tasks totalling over 180 hours of volunteer time. We also have volunteers involved as site wardens and in putting this newsletter together as well as helping with tractor work. Many thanks to all involved.



VLHT volunteers clearing Flood-debris at Lower Moor

If you would like to find out more about volunteer opportunities, please get in touch.



VALE LANDSCAPE HERITAGE TRUST

Evesham Volunteer Centre
Brick Kiln Street
Evesham
Worcestershire
WR11 4AA
01386 40165
07794 835 953

valetrust@outlook.com
www.valetrust.weebly.com



Volunteers added a new species to the Lower Moor bird list while clearing flood-debris from the river banks

Friends of VLHT pay a regular amount each month or year, to support the important work saving and renovating old orchards, hay meadows and woodlands. For details, please contact Gary Farmer at the office.