



# **Pleasley Pit Nature Study Group**

## **Newsletter**

**Volume 8: Issue 3 (July 2008)**

### **Editorial**

It is with a great deal of pleasure and pride that I can tell you of a dramatic surge in the interest and membership of PPNSG. Our 'paid up' membership has risen from approximately ninety members at the beginning of the year, to approximately one hundred and fifty members at the beginning of July. Whilst we are absolutely delighted with this increase, it has, inevitably caused our membership mechanism to creak a little, resulting in some of our later members having to wait for their membership acknowledgement and hide key. We apologise for this, and ask for your patience and understanding during this time. At present we are looking at methods of streamlining our process, and take this opportunity of assuring you that every effort is being made to resolve this issue.

I have mentioned previously, the need for contributions from members, on suitable wildlife topics for our newsletter and also for inclusion in our Annual Report. These are still required, please help if you can. Although our AGM is still approximately 6 months away, the committee needs to consider the committee make up for next year. If you are interested in helping with any of our committee functions, please contact Ken Lomas on 01623-640143. Many thanks in anticipation.

### **Diary Dates**

**Butterflies/Dragonflies**, Sun 20<sup>th</sup> July, 10-00 am, on site

**Wildlife Weekend**, Sat 26<sup>th</sup> July, 10-00 am, Clumber Park

**Wildlife Weekend**, Sun 27<sup>th</sup> July, 10-00 am, Clumber Park

**Bat/Moth night**, Sat 9<sup>th</sup> August, **Cresswell Crags**  
**NO INDOOR meeting** on 14<sup>th</sup> August, but meet 'on site' at 7-00 pm for evening walk etc.

**Moth night**, Sat 23<sup>rd</sup> August, on site.

**Pleasley Pit Open Weekend**, 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> September

The PPNSG intends to take part in all of the above events, but some are weather dependant. For confirmation of the group's attendance at any event, and for all further details contact Loz Brooks on 01623-811378.

### **Mansfield RSPB local members group.**

Most of you will be aware of our close relationship with the Mansfield RSPB group, and their willingness to allow our members to join them on their excellent field trips. However, what you may not realise, is that they also have a running article in their quarterly newsletter about the activities of the PPNSG. We thank them for that, and would like to return the favour by giving the following information;

**Group Leader: John Barlow (01623-626647)**

**Indoor Meetings are held at the Bridge Street Methodist Church, Mansfield (non-members welcome), on the first Wednesday of each month (except July and August), 7-30 pm start. Next meeting is on 3<sup>rd</sup> September, and is entitled 'Ospreys and birds of Rutland Water' by Paul Turner. You will be made most welcome.**

### **Mansfield RSPB Field Trips 2008.**

*(Courtesy of Mansfield RSPB committee)*

**Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> September, Sandwell Valley, RSPB reserve.**

**Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> November, Freiston Shore**

**Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> December, Old Moor RSPB reserve.**

Please ring Mr D Beech on 01623-644095 for all other details.

**Note:** There are no field trips in July and August

### **PPNSG Annual Photographic Competition.**

It is not my intention to reproduce the information given out in the last newsletter, but I would like to remind all potential entrants that the competition will be judged during the Pleasley Pit Open Weekend on the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> September. Please submit your entries as soon as possible. If you do need a copy of the rules, or an entry form, please contact me.

### **'Springwatch' at Pleasley Pit CP?**

If, like me, you sat patiently waiting for the Pleasley Pit item on the BBC's 'Springwatch', then you will be aware that it never happened. Apparently, the item was dropped, due to the lack of air time. However, it will be offered to the BBC regions for inclusion in the forthcoming 'Autumnwatch'. A full copy of the exchange of emails between Darren Renshaw and Alex Lanchester (BBC) can be found in the 'forum' on the Pleasley Pit Nature Study Group website. Our thanks to Darren for his efforts in putting Pleasley on the TV map.

**Website: [www.ppnsng.com](http://www.ppnsng.com)**

## Wildlife News April to June inclusive.

### Wildflowers

It was mid-April before the **Cowslips** gave us their main display. As well as the verges of Long Hedge Lane and the bank above the Dragonfly Pools, these spectacular spring flowers have now spread halfway across the Pit Bank, - a very welcome sight.

The plant survey got off to a very slow start. It was still raining when we started on Long Hedge Lane. We still managed to record 44 different species in this area alone. Long Hedge Ride now has **Snowdrops, Primrose, Lesser Celandine Dog Violet, Sweet Violet and Bluebells** amongst its spring collection.

It was mid-May before the colours began to look their best, when the pinks of **Ragged Robin, Red Campion and Sainfoin** and the lilac of **Cuckoo Flower** joined the gold of **Marsh Marigold** and **Buttercup** at the Run-off and Dragonfly Pools. We have now listed **Meadow, Creeping, Bulbous and Celery-leaved Buttercup**, to join the earlier **Marsh Marigold and Lesser Celandine** and the later **Columbine**, in the same *Ranunculus* family.

The newly planted 'Lutece' Elms all seem to be in good health, but have a lot of growing to do before they will be large enough to attract the White Letter Hair Streak butterflies across from Long Hedge Lane.

Orchids have been very variable this year. We have more **Pyramidal Orchids** on several new sites, reasonable numbers of **Common Spotted** and **Southern Marsh Orchids** but **Bee Orchids** have been rather sparse with just two white sp. *chlorantha*. **Common Twayblade** numbers remain about the same. As usual we await the arrival of the later **Fragrant Orchid** to bring the number of flowering species up to six. The Orchid Walks, led by Loz Brooks, were their usual success with over 30 visitors over the two days.

We have four more months to continue recording the plants on site. So far we have found three new species. These are **Herb Bennet, Fennel** and a purple **Toadflax**, possibly **Italian Toadflax**, but it has a different leaf and is presumably a garden escape.

Thanks again to everyone who has filled in the Record Sheets in the Hide, keep up the good work!! As I write this, there is no sign of either the **Sulphur Cinquefoil** or the **Wild (plumaris) Pink**; - we hope they will still appear.

We hope for some 'summer' weather during the next two months, enjoy your walking.

Liz Walker.

### Lepidoptera and Odonata.

Once again the ups and downs (mostly downs) of the weather have had their effect on the insect populations but we have scored some successes in the recording line, perhaps the most significant being the discovery of a mated pair of **Dingy Skippers** in the Orchid Patch (see photo on our website). More **Birdsfoot Trefoil**, the larval host plant, has been planted in that area, and it is good to see that this 'not so common' butterfly is at least attempting to breed on site.

Another butterfly attempting to breed on site for the first time was **Orange Tip**, when females were seen laying eggs on the developing seed pods of **Lady's Smock** growing around the Run-off pools. The eggs of this species are bright orange in

colour and very distinctive, but the emerging larvae are very well camouflaged and hard to spot.

Most of the usual butterflies have been recorded, including a possible **Wall Brown**, but the less than pleasant weather has not really helped at all, and numbers are down overall, whilst some species are a little late in appearing. Some of the moths have been present in quite large numbers, notably the **Common Swift**, at light in Wetland Wood on National Moth Night; the **Blackneck**, which was first discovered only last year, in Showman's Wood and the top side of the Orchid Patch where it can be easily disturbed from the low herbage. The **Six-spot Burnet** is now starting to appear, about a week later than usual, the distinctive cocoons being visible in most of the grassland areas.

The questionable weather has affected Dragonfly numbers too but the few bright spells have brought them out and most of the usual species have been recorded, beginning with the **Large Red Damselfly**. Other species noted include the **Black-tailed Skimmer, Broad-bodied Chaser, and Four-spotted Chaser**, including at least two of the heavily marked var *praenubila* **Common Darter, Azure Damselfly, Blue-tailed Damselfly, and Emerald Damselfly**. These have been seen around most of the water bodies, including the new Upper Terrace Pond, it didn't take them long to find it despite the weather but numbers are certainly down and we can only hope for some better weather conditions to improve matters.

Martyn (Moth) Bradley

### Birds

As one can imagine, this quarter was dominated by migrants, some passing through, others remaining to breed. The following is just a selection of birds seen at Pleasley during this period. The first species of note was an **Osprey** passing through on the 4<sup>th</sup> April, and this date also saw the arrival of **Redshank**, destined to breed on site. Two **Little Owls** were seen on the Pit Buildings also on the 4<sup>th</sup> April and have been in further evidence throughout the quarter. A **Hobby** was recorded on the 26<sup>th</sup> April, and, subject to acceptance, becomes our earliest to date by two days. A **Little Gull** seen on the Main Pond on the 23<sup>rd</sup> April was much appreciated by those present. A single **Black Tern** passed through on the 22<sup>nd</sup> April, whilst **Common Terns** have been present on and off throughout this period. A **Cuckoo**, an increasingly scarce bird at Pleasley, passed through on the 27<sup>th</sup> April, whilst a **Grasshopper Warbler** was heard on the same day, and this species has been heard on a number of subsequent occasions since, but to date, no firm evidence of breeding.

Waders have included a **Greenshank** on the 13<sup>th</sup> April, a **Whimbrel** on the 23<sup>rd</sup> April, **Dunlin** on at least three dates in the quarter, one/two **Oystercatchers** on at least two dates in the period, and one/three **Ringed Plovers** between the 23<sup>rd</sup>/28<sup>th</sup> April, but probably the most exciting find was that of a **Wood Sandpiper** present around the main pond on the 28<sup>th</sup>/29<sup>th</sup> May.

**Reed Warblers** returned in small numbers, with breeding anticipated in the main reed bed areas. A **Lesser Whitethroat** was heard singing in the Woodyard on the 28<sup>th</sup> April, whilst other birds of note have included a **Barn Owl** on the 6<sup>th</sup> June, three **Yellow Wagtails** on the 16<sup>th</sup> May, a **Common Sandpiper** on the 6<sup>th</sup> May, and a **Great-spotted Woodpecker** (a scarce bird at Pleasley), on the 24<sup>th</sup> June.

Finally, a note on the **Mute Swan** versus **Canada** goose saga that has been unfolding over the past 2/3 years. The swans are currently in possession of six fine cygnets, whilst two pairs of Canada geese have successfully dodged the manic attention of the cob, and currently have three well grown juveniles each.

Ken Lomas