



The Newsletter of the Milton Keynes Natural History Society

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Tetrad Project	Tony Wood



Volucella zonaria hoverfly, Olney (J. Lane, 2017)

A warm welcome to you all for this December edition of the Magpie. A lot has happened in this past year including the passing of one of our members and dear friend Arthur Allen, for which a touching tribute has been written by Martin for this edition. Our thoughts and love go out to Carol and the rest of the family at this difficult time.

There are a range of interesting articles in this edition, some from new contributors which is great to see! As our minds draw a close on this year and we look forward to the new year we move from MK50 to the 50th birthday of our very own Natural History Society. If you have any thoughts or ideas of how we could celebrate the MKNHS' 50th birthday then please speak to any of our Committee members, we would be more than happy to take any suggestions!

If you have any articles for future editions of the Magpie please send them to lewis.dickinson91@gmail.com.

Last of all Merry Christmas and have a Happy New Year!

- Lewis Dickinson, Editor



Lesser Stag Beetle, Howe Park Wood (M. Kincaid, 2017)

A Note from the Chairman

Another year has passed and Autumn has turned into Winter but I love the turning of the seasons – there is always something new to look forward to. The fieldfares and redwings are filling up the hedges and the geese are doing their annual shuffle southwards. I was working on a small-holding on the Black Isle last September and skeins of pink footed geese used to fly over twice a day from their feeding grounds to their nightly roost – it was such a glorious wild sight and sound. If I went into the forest behind the farm I used to find little glutinous piles of rowan berries on the paths – a sure sign that pine martins were marking their territories in a very seasonal way.

The Society has had another good year thanks to the efforts of the committee and many of our members who knuckle down and help with running the weekly events we put on over the year. It is also great to see so many new faces – we know it can take time to feel that you are integrated into a new society but we do want you to know that you are very welcome and we hope you enjoy the programme of talks this winter.

It has been a busy year due to the MK50 celebrations in which the Society been fully engaged, culminating in the final celebration at the MK Rose when a few of us were honoured to meet HRH Prince William. But the celebrations won't stop there as next year is our 50th Anniversary and we are busy planning special events to mark the fact that the Society has been going strongly for 50 years.

At our Annual General Meeting next March there will be vacancies on our committee so please let us know if you are interested in joining and helping with the running of the Society. I fully believe that it is good for the Society to have 'new blood' on the committee. It's great to have members who have been there for a few years and know the ropes, but new committee members bring in fresh enthusiasm and new ideas which help to keep the Society moving forwards. Please let us know if you are interested. (As an aside to this please can I also remind people to read last years AGM minutes before coming to the AGM in March. They are attached to this version of the Magpie.)

Also following the recent very sad news of the death of our lovely friend and long-time member Arthur Allen we now have to look for a replacement membership secretary. If anyone would like to take on this role and be the first point of contact for new members please let me or Linda know as soon as possible. (Please see Martin's piece about Arthur later in this newsletter)

Maybe this winter will be a cold one – tough for man and beast I know but all this warmth is a bit worrying and it would be great to have some really glorious sparkly frosts and maybe even a bit of the white stuff.

- Julie Lane

Annual Photographic Competition

Following the success of last year's competition with a large turnout and many high quality prints submitted I hope we can do as well this year. To remind you of the rules:-

Prints only can be entered.

Maximum size of prints A4 (210x297mm).

Each member may enter a maximum of 2 prints per category. (That's 8 prints in total). Prints must be unmounted.

The four categories are:-

- 1) Birds
- 2) All other animals, including mammals, fish, insects, etc.
- 3) Plants and fungi.
- 4) Habitats, geological, astronomical.

Domestic animals and cultivated plants are not eligible.

People must not be a major subject of any photograph.

May the best photograph win! It could be yours!

- Paul Lund



2017 Competition Winner. Hoverflies (M Strutton, 2016)



Arthur Allen 1942–2017

Arthur John Allen was born in Liverpool on Christmas Day 1942 to parents Doris and Arthur. He had two sisters, Doreen and Marjorie.

Arthur attended West Derby Technical High School where he was Head Boy (naturally) and, as he once told me, remained a student for life. His father took him to see his first football match at Anfield at an early age and he was soon hooked – an avid Liverpool F.C. supporter for life. His shock of red hair was perfect for this allegiance and would stay with him.

Arthur met Carol at Teacher Training College in York in 1962 and the rest, as they say, is history. Married in 1964 they would go on to have two children, Jenny and David and later six grand-children and five great grand-children. Anyone who knew Arthur could testify that his family were his pride and joy. He was never happier than when surrounded by his family – although we, his close friends, were always made to feel like family.

He taught and inspired many generations of children, firstly at New Earswick Primary School near York, later at a school for learning disabled children near Scarborough. In the 1970s Arthur and Carol moved south to Milton Keynes where he took up a post at St Giles and St Mary's School in Stony Stratford and then to a Deputy Headship at Knowles Middle School in Bletchley and finally a Headteacher post at Redbourne School near St. Albans. Arthur retired in 2003 but this was by no means the end of his work in education.

Clearly, former students all had fond memories of Arthur and it was not unusual to be out with him when a shop assistant or waiter would call out "Is that Mr Allen?"

The Allens joined MKNHS in 2002 and soon made many friends and contacts through the Society. Arthur always had great love of nature, with particular interests in birds, butterflies and also climatology. Both Arthur and Carol loved their involvement in the Society and were to become avid members, enjoying regular meetings and social events and holidays with fellow members. For the past four years, Arthur, ably assisted by Carol, has been Membership Secretary of the Society. Together they did an excellent job of recruiting new members and making them feel welcome.

Among Arthur's many other interests were sport (it seemed to me that he was a sporting oracle who could answer any question on football, cricket, athletics...you name it) and literature, particularly science fiction. He and I would sometimes have a whispered conversation in the Cruck Barn or the pub about our favourite Arthur C Clarke or Philip K Dick novels. I was delighted when Arthur took me to see the latest Star Wars movie a couple of years back. At one particularly dramatic moment of the movie, he jumped out of his skin causing me to spill my drink over myself!

In recent years, Arthur joined a local art group. He had always had an interest in art but seldom found the time to indulge it during his professional life. However, he clearly had a talent and his lovely watercolours of landscapes, wildlife and portraits show this.

He had been a season ticket holder at Milton Keynes Dons from the time that the club moved to its new stadium and had followed their ups and downs most passionately. Naturally enough, he was delighted when a pair of peregrine falcons made their home in Stadium:MK, allowing him to combine two of his favourite pastimes.

He served as a JP from 1981 and in retirement Arthur dedicated much time to volunteer roles. When I was new in post as Volunteers Coordinator at The Parks Trust, I suggested that he might like to come and join our Education Team and do 'a little bit of volunteering'. That little bit would evolve into ten years dedicated voluntary service to The Trust, helping out at countless sessions and inspiring yet another generation of children to love the natural world. In 2014, Arthur won the Parks Trust's Volunteer of the Year Award and gave a moving speech to explain why he remained so passionate about education. He and Carol have also assisted with a Butterfly Transect for The Parks Trust in recent years. Arthur was also a teaching mentor for the National College of School Leadership and would gather for two long weekends away each year. He enjoyed the generous helpings at meal times!

To be friends with Arthur Allen was a privilege. His wisdom, warmth, generosity and sparkling sense of humour were always to the fore. Not that he was perfect – a true redhead, Arthur could be feisty and short-tempered and on more than one occasion I felt the sharp end of his tongue. The trouble was, when he apologised he would generally go over the top and we would collapse in giggles.

In recent years, Arthur had some serious health problems. He was diagnosed with prostate cancer in 2012 and overcame that with typical character. He also suffered two heart attacks - one in 2014 and another in 2015. Arthur joked that his regular visits to the gym probably saved his life. On 7th November 2017 Arthur suffered a massive heart attack. He was taken to Harefield Hospital where he passed away on the 18th November, surrounded by his loving family.

When I think of Arthur it will be with sadness but also a big smile. So many happy memories – MKNHS trips to Norfolk, Cumbria and Dorset with long days enjoying wildlife and evenings enjoying a nice meal, seeing him dressed up as a Pirate of the Caribbean at his 65th Birthday party and meals at The Moza Restaurant in Newport Pagnell where Arthur and Carol were always treated like visiting royalty (and Arthur would too often foot the bill).

His is a great loss to all who knew him in MKNHS, to education and mostly of course to Carol and his precious family. We extend our love and sympathy to them at this sad time.

- *Martin Kincaid, with help from Arthur's Family.*

Water Quality Survey

September 2017

This project was part of the 'Clean Water for Wildlife survey' run by the Freshwater Habitats trust's "People Ponds and Water Project".

Phil and I had 5 testing kits and we set off to find 5 different water bodies, to test for Nitrates (ppm) and Phosphates (ppm). Our test sites were:

Pond in Little Linford Wood (SP 8285 4550)
21/09/17
River Great Ouse, Stony Stratford (SP7875 3965)
22/09/17
Calverton Brook (SP 78095 3861) 22/09/17
Pond, High Street, Stony Stratford (SP 7840 4080)
24/09/17
Flood Plain Forest Nature Reserve (SP8112 4220)
24/09/17

The test results showed that the water quality around MK is generally pretty good, with low levels of both Nitrates and Phosphates. Phil researched the net to try and establish an 'acceptable' level for nitrates for 'environmental water' and the International Consensus is less than 5ppm.

So how did our 5 sites compare?
Little Linford Wood: Nitrates: < 0.2 ppm
Phosphates: <0.02ppm
River Great Ouse: Nitrates: 0.5 – 1ppm
Phosphates: <0.02 ppm
Calverton Brook: Nitrates; 1-2ppm
Phosphates: <0.02ppm
Pond, High Street: Nitrates: <0.2ppm
Phosphates: <0.02ppm
Flood Plain Forest Nitrates: <0.2ppm
Phosphates: 0.02 – 0.05ppm.

These figures need to be taken with a pinch of salt as the colour of the water in the test kit was assessed against the colour on the recording chart.

Calverton Brook runs through farmland, which might account for the higher Nitrate level.

I wonder if there were any other results to compare locally?

- Mary Sarre

Help Needed for New One-Year Survey!

I wonder what we could learn about nature from taking a brief look at one of our most urban of birds? Binomially named *Columba livia*, politely named, Rock Dove, impolitely 'Feral' Pigeon. This is a species that has been living with humans for millennia. But what's happening now in our own city and local area? We are a Natural History Society that is based in a large urban area, so let's have a good look at this thoroughly urban bird species.

I am proposing a one-year survey to see where they occur locally, where they breed, what they eat and who eats them. In London the Peregrine Falcon makes a meal of them, but what's happening here?

In Kents Hill, Milton Keynes, there are two flocks on the estate, one of 60+ birds and the other nudging 30 birds and a Sparrowhawk in regular attendance. A brief look at Queensway Bletchley revealed at least another 50 birds present.

One advantage of this species is that it is highly visible, often on roof tops, making it easy to survey. I would like to meet with members who are experienced in surveys to design what we do and to find members who would like to take part. Please email me or say hi at a MKNHS meeting.

- Steve Cousins

Steven.h.cousins@gmail.com



Flock *Columba livia*, Kents Hill (S.Cousins)

A Big Year for Bats



Serotine Bat

This has been a very interesting year for Chiroptera in MK, with a number of key discoveries of new colonies/roosts.

In my work with The Parks Trust, we have been inspecting bat boxes in Shenley Wood, Kingsmead Spinney and Linford Lakes this year. In 2010, The Gordon Osborn Fund provided some money for 12 boxes to be installed in Shenley Wood (this number has since been increased to 20). It was done by erstwhile MKNHS member Paul Moon and Bill Parker. Despite annual checks, no bats were found to be using these boxes. This year, Paul and I have checked the boxes on three occasions with Brown Long-eared bats found each time, and a single Common Pipistrelle found in September. The boxes at Linford Lakes have also been checked three times this year. Whereas in previous years we only found Common and Soprano Pipistrelles using these boxes, now we have found four species using them. A Noctule bat was found in June (using a bat box in the car park!) and on 3rd October, the first Natterer's bat, a rather torpid female, was found in one of the boxes. The same female was found again on 2nd November in the same box, but this time she was much more active and had put on weight, coming in at a respectable 9.9g.

The Serotine, one of our larger species, is a fairly recent addition to our local bat list as has been mentioned in these pages before. We seem to have a small but viable population in the Ouzel Valley. However, there was great excitement in May this year when members of North Bucks Bat Group were called out to a property in Galley Hill when the homeowners reported bats roosting in their roof. These turned out to be Serotines. These fantastic bats are very building-orientated, rarely using trees, and they emerge very early in the evening, often before the sun has set.

Paul and I have also been surveying for bats at Westbury Farm, as part of their ecological monitoring programme. We have been granted access to the roof of this old farmhouse, which has to be seen to be believed! The 17th Century timbered roof is perfect for bats and, although we have only found Common Pipistrelle and Brown Long-eared bats roosting so far, we expect to find other species including Serotine. There is a record of Whiskered Bat (very rare in Bucks) here from 2015.

Finally, ecologists surveying the land at Linford Lakes ear-marked for a new housing estate have recorded Serotine (again), Leisler's Bat and Nathusius' Pipistrelles with the use of static bat recorders. The latter two species are new for Milton Keynes. So while we have confidently stated for years that we have 6 bat species resident in MK, I think we now have to recognise that we have at least 10-11 species.... and quite possibly more.

- *Martin Kincaid*



Natterer's Bat, Linford Lakes (S. Jensen, 2017)

Groan Corner

One year Father Christmas was forced to have an official from the Aviation Authority check his sleigh to make sure it's airworthy.

The official checks out the sleigh on the ground, then sits beside Father Christmas for a test flight. Suddenly Father Christmas notices he has a revolver in his pocket.

'What's that for' he asks, 'You're not a hijacker are you?' 'No,' replies the official, 'But we have to see how you handle the craft when you loose an engine on take-off.'

What does Santa do with fat elves? He sends them to the Elf Farm.

Message from the Treasurer

The Committee has recently been discussing how best to increase the Society's regular annual income and has reached the stage where feedback from members on the preferred approach would be welcome. This short article provides background on the current sources of income, the need for increasing it, the options for doing so, and the one considered by the committee to be the best way forward.

Current sources of annual income

The Society's income in 2016 was £3350. Membership subscriptions represent about two-thirds of this sum (£2150). Other regular income sources come to about £450 annually (mainly from refreshments; raffles; sales of donated books and other items; and visitor fees). Periodic donations usually for specific purposes (e.g. purchase of projector equipment in 2006 and audio equipment in 2016) and occasional external grants (e.g. from the Milton Keynes Community Foundation for Display Materials in 2017) make up the balance but are highly variable year by year (£730 in 2016 £225 in 2015) the high years having been associated with the purchase of new equipment or the like. These generous donations have come from a narrow base of the membership. All these current sources of annual income continue to be important to the Society's overall financial sustainability and the Society has good reason to be grateful to the many members who support it in these ways.

Why is there a need to increase the Society's regular annual income?

The Society has invested in a number of assets (mainly equipment but also display materials) over the past decade or more. Many of these will need replacing as they become life expired in due course but the Society makes no explicit financial provision for this. A recent assessment suggests that there is a need to set aside about £300 a year for this purpose.



Oystercatcher, Floodplain Forest NR (P. Hassett, 2017)

What are the options for increasing regular annual income?

The Committee has looked at a number of options including: increasing the number of subscribing members; increasing the level of subscription; a Society 'lottery'; introducing an admission charge for Cruck Barn evening meetings; regular voluntary annual donations; and registering as a charity to take advantage of Gift Aid in respect of those members who are income tax payers. Some of these options are not feasible (e.g. Gift Aid); and others the Committee views as undesirable (e.g. charging for admission or raising the subscription level other than in the circumstances of an unavoidable increase in costs for example an increase in fees for hire of our meeting venue).

The Committee's preferred approach

In principle, increasing the number of subscribing members is the most attractive of these options and there has been an encouraging increase in the number of new members this year reflecting the increased 'profile' of the Society. On the other side there is inevitably some loss of existing members each year for various personal reasons (e.g. moving away, health reasons, or change in interests). At the time of writing it is too early to assess whether the overall number will show an increase in 2017 over 2016 and past experience suggests that this option cannot be relied on. So increasing and retaining members will continue to be a priority for the Society but we need to look at another option.

Regular voluntary donations as an addition to the membership subscription are used by many other membership organisations locally and nationally, and having reviewed the options this is now the preferred approach of the Committee. In reaching this conclusion the Committee is aware that there can be no certainty about how much might be raised in this way but we will not know unless we try. The donations could be collected with annual subscriptions either through an addition to a Standing Order or through payment by cheque or bank transfer. They would be accounted for as donations separate from the subscription. The normal practice of other organisations adopting this practice is to suggest amounts that might be donated (e.g. £5, £10, £25 or own amount). There would be no special privileges for donating in this way and the intention is that they should be anonymous. And of course they would be voluntary with the proviso that they can be cancelled at any point. The intention would be to introduce the scheme in 2019.

Message from the Treasurer cont.

Feedback on the options

The Committee which next meets on 26th February 2018 would welcome any feedback on the Committee's preferred approach or indeed any other option whether considered by the Committee or not. Please send these to me Joe Clinch by email at (or by letter to 39 Tudor Gardens, Stony Stratford, MK11 1HX) or to one of the Joint Chairmen (Linda Murphy at or Julie Lane at) by the 15th January 2018 or alternatively talk to me, Julie or Linda at one of the Society's evening meetings.

- Joe Clinch

Willen Lake Winter Walk

Sunday 26th November saw the first of our Society winter walks. 15 hardy souls braved the icy winds at North Willen Lake and were well rewarded.

We met at the Willen Pavilion car park on the west shore of the lake and began by looking at the veteran ash tree near the lake edge. I explained how The Parks Trust has managed the decline of this tree and the recent discovery of bats roosting in it.

We then walked clockwise around the lake, stopping at times to look at the many species of duck among the huge group of coots (cootarium!) on the water. A single female Scaup, among a group of Tufted Ducks, was probably the pick, with good numbers of Teal, Mallard, Wigeon and Gadwall also spotted. We also found some nice specimens of the fungus *Clitocybe geotropa* on the grassy banks. When we reached the Flood Control structure, Mark Strutton shared his experiences of seeing otters here on several occasions in 2016. The animals are still active here and we were able to pick out a track from the lake edge, across the redway and down to the River Ouzel where we also found several piles of otter spraint and a slide down into the river!

At the bridge between the north and south lakes, we added 4 Little Grebes to the list and a Kingfisher was spotted shooting low across the water. We also admired a very tame Little Egret roosting in willow at this point. Ann Strutton managed to spot a group of 6 Goldeneye bobbing about on the South Lake at this point, and we did our best to see them between their frequent dives.

On the approach to the bird hide we spotted a Chiffchaff (there seem to be more than ever around this autumn) and Hazel catkins. From the hide itself we added Pochard and Shoveler to the wildfowl list bringing our duck total to nine species. However, waders were thin on the ground with just a single Lapwing observed. A single Greylag was the only goose we saw – obviously there were easier pickings on the South Lake.

The main target for the walk was the Starling murmuration and we quickly marched around towards the Peace Pagoda to take position and wait. The first group of about 50 starlings appeared right on queue at 3.50pm and within five minutes they were swarming over the lake. Although there were probably no more than 2,000 birds (a pretty modest number) they put on a fine display as the sun set and for those who had not witnessed a starling murmuration before it was a memorable experience. A singing Cetti's Warbler was a bonus at this point. The Starlings finally settled in the reed beds at around 4.15pm at which point we said our goodbyes and retired for the evening, happy but in need of thawing out!

- Martin Kincaid



Starling Murmuration, Willen Lake (P. Lund, 2017)

Mothing Season Summary

As noted in the August Magpie, the 2017 mothing season was proving to be a very good one and now that all records collected have been fed into Mapmate, there is the data to prove it.

TABLE 1. SUMMARY OF MOTH RECORDING AT LINFORD LAKES NATURE RESERVE 2011-2017

Year	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	TOTAL
Total No of Specimens	1163	1278	3221	4578	7216	5109	13907	36472
Total no of Species	146	116	224	237	261	248	348	
New Species	146	40	83	53	44	31	58	
Trapping Nights	52	75	156	187	324	251	215	

The increase in number of species in 2017 is the combination of a very good year and the use throughout the season for the first time of a Robinson Trap using a 125Watt Mercury vapour bulb run off mains electricity. All records 2011-2016 were almost exclusively collected from battery operated 40Watt actinic bulbs over Skinner Traps. The Robinson Trap, as well as using a more powerful bulb, is more efficient at retaining the moths once they have entered the trap particularly it seems, micro-moths.

The total number of species of 348 in 2017 is a reflection of the above and the competence of the recorders in identifying micro-moths. The recent years have produced some very good reference books and web sites to help with micro identification.

58 new species were recorded in 2017 and of those 33 were micro moths. Notable of the macro-moths were Vestal (*Rhodometra sacraria*, below left) a migrant species, Kent Black Arches (*Meganola albula*, below middle) a species on the move and Olive (*Ipimorpha subtusa*, below right) a species last recorded by George and Frances Higgs many years ago.



1,2,3 and sometimes 4 traps were set and left on overnight and checked early next morning. Trapping Nights reflect the numbers of traps set. 215 trapping nights in 2017 was not the busiest of seasons so the numbers of specimens and species recorded are more remarkable for that.

The author would like to thank Ayla Webb and Andy Harding for their help in identifying catches and Andy and the author are indebted to Ayla for her sharp eyesight and ability to point out the many errors that we make.

- Gordon Redford

Wildlife Around the Area

Late summer and autumn brought this area dull, wet and windy weather, with a few frosts in late November, but, sadly, no sign of an `Indian Summer`. However, that did not prevent our members setting foot outside and reporting their findings through the Society's website. If you have not had the opportunity to discover and contribute to this section look for `News` then `Recent sightings`.

INSECTS

Odonata

Some of the rarer species found locally included the Small Red-eyed Damselfly at Caldecott Lake and a Scarce Chaser, a first for Milton Keynes, at Linford Lakes Wildlife Reserve. Last year we mentioned that Harry Appleyard had found and photographed a Willow Emerald Damselfly at Tattenhoe, confirmed as a first for the county. Well he is pleased to discover that this species has not only returned to that site, but observed laying eggs again.

Butterflies

During late July Purple Emperor were recorded at Hazeley Wood and Howe Park Wood, White Admirals at Shenley, Hazeley and Little Linford Woods and a Clouded Yellow at Pineham Park. In August a Painted Lady was present at both the Stonepits, MK Hospital gardens, and the Floodplain Forest near Old Wolverton. There were records of Red Admirals still present during the middle of November. This species achieved the second most frequently seen, after the Gatekeeper, in this year's Big Butterfly Count.

Moths

A Hummingbird Hawk Moth was observed laying eggs in a garden in Oldbrook during August and one seen in the gardens of the MK Hospital by our member Colin Dockerty. {see the article by Gordon Redford in this edition for more details of this year's moth counts}.

Orthoptera

During late July at Pineham Park Roesel's, Dark, and Speckled Bush-crickets were found, in August Short-winged Coneheads recorded on Willen Island, Long-winged Coneheads at Pineham Park, and a Slender Grasshopper at Bury Field, Newport Pagnell.

Large Red Damselfly, Tottenhoe (H. Appleyard, 2017)



Reptiles

Slowworms appear to be breeding at Elfield Park as young were seen there in September. They are still resident in a member's garden in Stony Stratford, and there was also a new record of one at the Floodplain Forest Reserve at Old Wolverton in August.

BIRDS

Autumn usually indicates the movement of certain species, many leaving our shores to head south, and others arriving from northern regions. Our last record of a Swift was on the 21st August and Swallows on the 3rd October. Two unusual species that have been regularly recorded around this area during autumn are the Ravens, up to four at a time, and as many as five Hawfinches.

Other birds of note recorded included a possible Caspian Tern, two Bar-headed Geese and a Marsh Harrier in August at Linford Lakes Reserve, a Common Scoter at Furzton Lake and a Cattle Egret at Willen Lake during the same month.

During September a juvenile Arctic Tern arrived at Linford Lakes Reserve, Goosander and Ruff were seen at the Floodplain Forest Reserve at Old Wolverton, a Manx Shearwater at Tattenhoe and a Yellow-browed Warbler at Caldecotte.

The Yellow-browed Warbler re-appeared at the beginning of October, a Merlin was seen at Campbell Park, the Cattle Egret moved to Linford Lakes Reserve, and a Great White Egret and Pintail appeared at Willen Lakes. There was a record of 47 chaffinches in one flock at Wolverton during October. It is interesting that the scientific name of the chaffinch is *Fringilla coelebs*, the species meaning unmarried or `bachelor bird`. It would appear that Linnaeus believed that in winter female chaffinches migrated leaving the males to form their own flocks. So, was that Wolverton flock all males?

The Hawfinches, mentioned earlier, moved around the area during November with reports of them at Tattenhoe, Willen and Howe Park Wood. The same month a Woodcock was attracted to Tattenhoe, a Pintail at Willen, Goosanders, Great White Egret and 4 Ravens at the Floodplain Forest Reserve, a Black Redstart at Stacey Bushes, and a Bittern at Linford Lakes Reserve.

Wildlife Around the Area cont.

Mammals

Chinese Water Deer have been recorded again at Pineham Park and a Water Vole was not only seen but photographed at Linford Lakes Reserve. This is encouraging news.

For the second year running since Dormice were released in 1998 we failed to find any in the nest boxes in Little Linford Wood and for the first year since 2009, when boxes were installed in a section of Gayhurst Wood, we also drew a blank. However, all is not lost as, on each of the six-monthly surveys, dormice were found in the boxes installed in the hedgerows growing beside the M1. Nests of young were recorded in four of the monthly surveys. For some reason they appear to prefer the noise and exhaust fumes of the traffic to the adjacent woodland that appears to provide ideal conditions for them!

Otters

Linford Lakes Reserve continues to provide records of them and fantastic videos of one adult was obtained with trail cameras left on site. Also, an Otter was reported at Willen Lake in November. One adult was unfortunately reported found as a road kill in the Bletchley area.

Bats

See Martin Kincaid's article in this edition of the Magpie.

Winter is on our door step now but the New Year is not far away. So, wrap up and brave the conditions, there is still plenty of wildlife out there. Enjoy!!

- Tony Wood



European Otter, Linford Lakes (M. Kincaid, 2017)

Upcoming Walks/Events

Saturday 13th Jan (2pm): RSPB Otmoor. Leader: Linda Murphy

Sunday 4th March (2pm): Floodplain Forest Nature Reserve. Leaders: Joe Clinch & Martin Kincaid

Sunday 15th April (2.15pm): Linford Wood. Leader: Mike LeRoy

MILTON KEYNES NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

48th Annual General Meeting Cruck Barn, Bradwell Abbey – March 14th 2017 In attendance: Roy Maycock (in the Chair), Linda Murphy (Joint Chairman), Joe Clinch (Treasurer), Jean Cooke (Minuting), Jenny Mercer, Mary Sarre, Viola Read, Janice Robertson, Linda and Alan Piggott, Helen Wilson, Martin Kincaid, Mike Killeby, Chris Roberts, Frances Higgs, Gordon Redford, Mike Sheridan, Mike LeRoy, Ian Saunders, Peter Hassett, Philip Brown, Carol and Arthur Allen, Tony Wood, John Prince, Carol Watts Apologies for absence were received from Julie Lane, Steve Brady, John and Margaret Wickham, Paul Lund, Peter Meadows, Robert Williams, Aaron Woods, Philip Sarre, Kate Redford, Joan Lancaster.

1. Minutes of the 47th AGM held on March 15th 2016, circulated in the April 2016 edition of The Magpie. Adoption of these as a correct record was proposed by Ian Saunders, seconded by Mike Killerby, and agreed nem con.

2. There were no matters arising.

3. Combined Officers' Report.

This was read to the meeting by Linda Murphy and the full text is appended. The main points were as follows:

3.1 Both indoor and outdoor Programmes had been very successful and varied.

3.2 Approaching the Society's 50th year (next year), the Committee has been taking a careful look at securing its future.

3.3 Over the year there has been an increased focus on encouraging members to make and submit records of their wildlife sightings. Work is being done on resources to aid identification and submission of records.

3.4 The role of the website in reaching out to a wider audience has been enhanced – particular thanks are due to Peter Hassett for all his work on this. (Applause!)

3.5 Cooperation with other local organisations has been developing – with the Parks Trust and the MK50 Project in particular.

3.6 The experimental job share Chairmanship has proved a success.

3.7 Thanks are due to many people – both Committee members and others, for their dedication to the day-to-day functioning of the Society. Adoption of this Report was proposed by Mike LeRoy, seconded by Mary Sarre and carried nem con.

4. Treasurer's Report

Joe Clinch presented his first report as Treasurer, and thanked Philip Brown for his support and assistance over the year. Main points from the Report are as follows (detailed Balance Sheets are available on request):

4.1 The Income and Expenditure Account shows a small surplus of £124.02 (2015 it was £291.80)

4.2 The total Income was up by £60.85 from the 2015 figure (£3391.15)

4.3 Subscription income, however, is down by £75 (representing 3 members) from 2015 (2016 - £2105.00, 2015 - £2180.00).

4.4 Donation income is up over the same period (£731.95 in 2016, £225.10 in 2015). However, £516.95 represents specific donations for new audio equipment in 2016.

4.5 Total expenditure is also up ((£3267.13 in 2016, £3038.5 in 2015) but again £516.95 of this was expenditure purchasing the new audio equipment. 4.6 There was a payment out of £200 from the Gordon Osborn Bequest Fund.

4.7 The Society and GOBF funds are held as shown (in £s):

	Current Account	Savings Account	Treasury Bond	Totals
Society	2342.44	500.00		2843.25
GOBF		Capital 774.26 Interest 470.54	1959.72	3204.52
Totals	2342.44	1745.61	1959.72	6047.77

(Note: Under the terms of the Gordon Osborn Bequest only the interest is available for allocation.) Adoption of this Report was proposed by Martin Kincaid, seconded by John Prince and carried nem con.

5. Election of Officers

Linda Murphy took over the Chair, and called for nominations for the role of President of the Society. Roy Maycock was nominated by Mary Sarre seconded by Carol Watts. There being no other nominations he was declared elected.

Roy Maycock resumed the Chair and called for nominations for Vice-President. He nominated John Wickham and Martin Kincaid, and there being no other nominations they were declared elected.

Nominations for Chairman of the Society were called for. Roy Maycock proposed from the Chair that the current arrangement be continued, and nominated Julie Lane and Linda Murphy as Joint Chairmen for a further year. There being no other nominations they were declared elected.

Nominations were called for Secretary. Steve Brady (in absentea) was nominated by Tony Wood, seconded by Carol Watts. There being no other nominations he was declared elected.

Nominations for Treasurer were called for. Joe Clinch was nominated by Peter Hassett, seconded by John Prince. There being no other nominations he was declared elected.

6. Election of Committee

The Constitution of the Society provides that the Committee consist of the above Officers plus a further 8 members. All present members of the Committee – viz Arthur Allen, Jean Cooke, Lewis Dickinson, Peter Hassett, Paul Lund, Mary Sarre, Ian Saunders and Carol Watts were prepared to continue.

Martin Kincaid said he had understood there was a vacancy, and, in that case he had been intending to propose Colin Docketty. Mike LeRoy indicated that he would have seconded such a proposal. It was explained that while there had been a vacancy following the last AGM this had been filled shortly afterwards by the co-option of Lewis Dickinson, who was now actively engaged with Julie Lane developing our recording strategy. In the light of this the nomination was not pursued.

The current committee members were proposed en bloc by Mike Sheridan, seconded by Viola Read. There being no further nominations they were declared elected.

The full membership of the Committee is, therefore: Arthur Allen, Steve Brady, Joe Clinch, Jean Cooke, Lewis Dickinson, Peter Hassett, Martin Kincaid, Julie Lane, Paul Lund, Roy Maycock, Linda Murphy, Mary Sarre, Ian Saunders, Carol Watts, John Wickham.

7. Any Other Business

7.1 Linda Murphy asked whether there were still issues around the welcome offered to new members (following comments made at the last AGM and initiatives taken following discussion by the Committee). No one present had any comments to make.

7.2 A question was asked about what was being done to stem the reduction in membership over the past few years. Linda Murphy outlined a list of initiatives being taken: improved publicity via the development of a membership leaflet which was being made available at a variety of venues and events, our involvement in the MK50 events including walks, a Photographic Exhibition in the library, Nature day on 1 July, etc. The developments in the website were attracting more visits, and work is now underway to develop a presence in the social media..

7.3 It was announced that annual subscriptions could be paid at the end of the meeting – and that SO Forms were also available..

7.4 The tendency of the secretary to be “down under” at the time of the AGM was noted, – and the meeting formally closed.