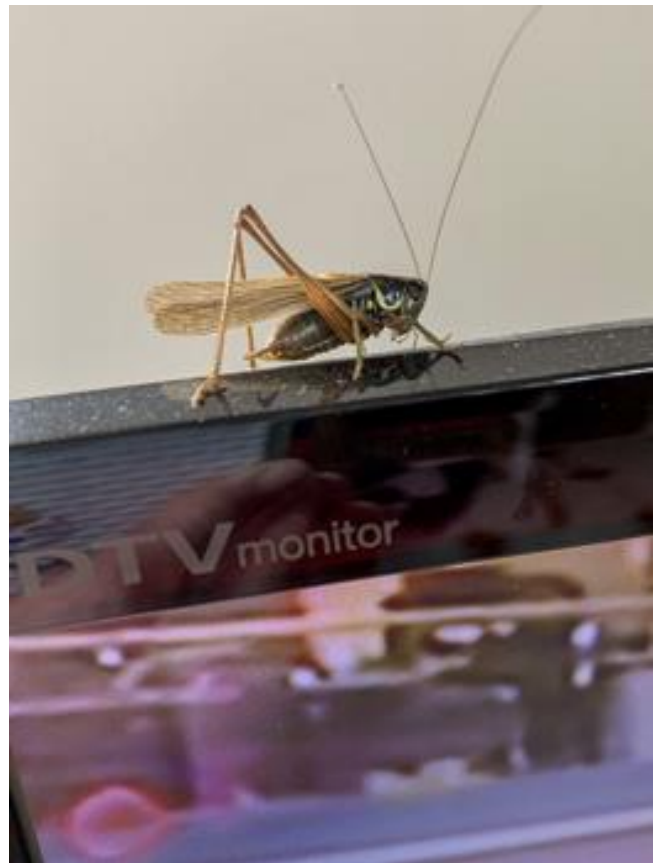




The Newsletter of the Milton Keynes Natural History Society

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Vice-President and winter programmer	Martin Kincaid
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Deputy Chair and sound technician	Paul Lund
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	Harry Appleyard
	Joe Clinch
Non-Committee Responsibilities	
Tetrad project	Tony Wood
Magpie editor	Julie Lane



I have been watching cricket on the telly! (Peter Hassett)

Welcome to our Autumn newsletter. It has been a busy summer for me, the highlight of which involved becoming Nana to a gorgeous little girl called Phoebe. I am still on catch-up so forgive the less-than-perfect formatting in this newsletter.

I would like to start by thanking all our contributors to this edition. Tony has been compiling and contributing his 'Wildlife around MK' report for quite a few years now and it is great to find out and compare what has been spotted of particular interest each year. Gordon Redford has also been sending in regular reports of his moth records. These on-going updates give us all a picture of how our local wildlife is surviving, what is becoming less common and what is maybe able to adapt and take advantage of the habitat changes brought about by human pressures and climate change. Following on from his recent talk to society members Harry Appleyard has sent in an article about his year watching wildlife around his local patch of Tattenhoe and this has prompted Roy our president to write a piece about the rise of the pyramidal orchid in North Bucks. Finally, Jenny Mercer has sent in a snapshot of her magical encounter with Golden Orioles in Bulgaria whilst on a Naturetrek holiday that was instigated by Tony Wood, attended by quite a few of our members and led by Andy Harding.

So a big thank you to those of you who have contributed beautiful photos and articles for others to read – I hope this inspires other members to have a go next time round.

I thought you might be interested in hearing about initiatives that have been taking place in my local patch of Olney. Supported and encouraged by Fiona Everingham from BMERC a few local people have started to look at ways in which we can enhance the wildlife areas around the town. So far this has involved running work parties a few times a year to manage local habitats; the construction and erection of owl and swift boxes around the town; a group of local scouts doing practical conservation work and the primary schoolchildren collecting wildflower seed for growing on and planting out in newly designated areas around the town. There are quite a few other plans afoot as well so things are looking up for the wildlife of Olney.

I did my bit the other day as a large ivy-covered ash at the end of my garden crashed down leaving a jagged trunk about 6 metres high. I requested that this trunk be left and not ‘tidied up’ and this has been done leaving a wonderful bit of standing deadwood covered in ivy for the local birds and bats to continue using.

Julie Lane



A Note from the Chairman <i>Lewis Dickinson</i>	Committee News
<p>Welcome back after another hot, although marginally wetter compared to 2018, summer! We always feel the end of summer before we realise; the disappearing shrieks of swifts, a cool note to the morning air, the darker of evenings.</p> <p>A lot of my summer has been spent by the Rivers Ouse and Nene, looking out for our elusive water born mammals. Two of these critters, the otter and the water vole, hold a very special place in the hearts and minds of countryside lovers. They are so elusive, with us feeling lucky to even catch a flick of the tail or hear the distinctive ‘plop’ into the water; and yet we feel connected to them at a basic level, as both are dependent on the fresh water that sustains us all.</p> <p>This connectedness to our ponds, rivers and lakes is the reason why we must do what we can to help reduce the stress from these worsening extreme weather events as a result of climate change. One basic everyday action we can take is to try our best to reduce our water consumption. Whether it be shorter showers or a toilet cistern displacer, every little act helps to reduce that stress on the water environment and will also save us money. The local water company (Anglian Water for MK) has great tips on reducing water consumption. With the combined efforts of small acts we can contribute to improving the future for our freshwater, the otters and water voles that live within it and all the other wildlife that depends on it.</p>	<p>We are looking for volunteers to join the committee at the next AGM in March 2020 and help to run our society. No prior experience required just a willingness to help out with the many jobs involved in running a society of such a size and quality. We strive to keep the membership fees as low as possible but to combine that with striving to achieve our Society’s aims (see our constitution on the website) we need the active involvement of society members. We hope that some of our newer members will consider getting involved.</p> <p>Also, we are looking for help with the running of the website to give our excellent webmaster an occasional break. No prior experience required but if you are interested in helping out and learning about managing or adding content to the Society website then please get in touch with any of the committee members or contact us via the website.</p> <p>Member Survey</p> <p>Hopefully by now, members will have received the member questionnaire. The Committee agreed to carry out a survey of the membership, so that with the benefit of feedback, we can plan ahead for the future of the Society. The Committee is hoping for a good response, so that we have the views and ideas of all members. The contribution of each member is greatly appreciated. Completed questionnaires can be left in the box on the table at the entrance to the Cruck Barn. Members are asked to complete their questionnaire as soon as possible. Completed questionnaires should be submitted no later than Tuesday 17 December, which is the last meeting of 2019. Thank you very much.</p>

My year in Tattenhoe – Harry Appleyard

This year marks 11 years since I started my local wildlife watching. With birds being my speciality, I've spent a lot of my days this year exploring woodlands, meadows and freshwater habitats on the outskirts of the city, hoping to find out more about local species distribution and hopefully some new species for my records along the way. However, there's no place like home and I've found more than enough wildlife to keep me busy on my doorstep in Tattenhoe.

Spring brought some pleasant surprises from bird migration, including the first Hawfinch recorded in Bucks this year flying over Tattenhoe Park on 12th April and a rare treat well away from their usual coniferous woodland haunts, a pair of Common Crossbill passing over Howe Park Wood on 10th April. Dull, overcast skies over the fields of Tattenhoe Park through late winter into early spring provided ideal conditions for watching bird migration, with 620 northbound Meadow Pipits recorded between 8th March and 22nd April, while Wheatears and 2 male Redstarts made short passing visits at ground level.

During some of the warmer days of the summer around June and early July I retreated from the open fields to the shaded rides of Howe Park Wood, where I spent several days with my eyes on the canopy for the elusive Purple Emperor Butterfly. I had a stunning view of one flying a few metres overhead on 23rd July, which I did capture in a few pictures, but not even the best of cameras does the sight of one of these magnificent insects justice.



Pied Flycatcher (Harry Appleyard)

Bird Club, and later on I was joined by fellow birder Mark Baker, who confirmed the presence of at least 3 of them, living up to their names between a couple of the field margins. With at least 2 of them still around the next day and several happy photographers, this turned out to be the first time a sighting of multiple Pied Flycatchers had been recorded in MK since 1983, years before my time!

As we progress further into Autumn, a species I'm keeping my eyes out for is the Willow Emerald Damselfly. The Tattenhoe colony which I discovered in September 2016 took longer than expected to emerge this year, but the sunnier days over recent weeks have been great for watching basking males on the waterside willows, where ovipositing pairs have also been hard at work, often laying their eggs on the same branches as pairs in the past, given away by galls within the wood. With no shortage of ideal habitat for them around MK, I'm eager to bridge the gap between their local colonies and their other sites further to the east.

August felt like Christmas come early for my local birdwatching. Tattenhoe Park produced no shortage of Wheatears, which stopped by the fields and dis-used roads for recuperation alone and in pairs throughout the month. The Tree Pipit, now a very scarce species for Milton Keynes, excitingly made several appearances at this corner of the city, both passing over and perched around the field margins from August into early September, with one roosting in mixed vegetation at sunset on 6th September. The most exciting wildlife find for me this year so far was a trio of Pied Flycatchers, also in Tattenhoe Park, spotted on 26th August. This county rarity was a bird I had long been on the lookout for over the past few years. News of my sighting of a lone bird in the early morning soon got around within the Bucks



Willow Emerald Damselfly (Harry Appleyard)

Pyramidal Orchid (*Anacamptis pyramidalis*) – Roy Maycock

At the first meeting of the new season Harry Appleyard showed more photographs from the Tattenhoe area of MK where he lives. All were splendid especially the birds, but he also showed a photograph of several Pyramidal Orchids – a plant rare in Milton Keynes. In fact the first record here was not made until 2000. Nationally it has a wide distribution up to Northern England and is very common in North Bucks.

In Druce's 'Flora of Buckinghamshire' (Published in 1926) all records for this plant in the county were from the south. The only reference in the north was from Akeley Wood (north of Buckingham) probably from the late 1900's – but I wonder if it was accurately identified.



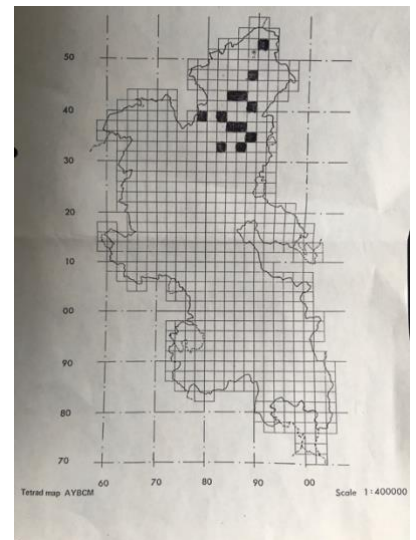
Pyramidal Orchid (*Harry Appleyard*)

In the 'Checklist of the Plants of Buckinghamshire' (Maycock and Woods. 2005) it says it can be found in "Chalk grassland, recently spreading northwards". Until recently the furthest north in Bucks it had been recorded was from places like Pitstone, Cheddington, Ivinghoe Beacon and Edlesborough. There are no records from the Vale of Aylesbury and the first I have from MK is from Blakelands in 2000. Rarely, if ever, are the number of plants recorded. Other records from MK in 2000 were from Knowlhill and Mount Farm, then 2001 (Lavendon); 2003 (Bletchley, Sherington, Bradwell and Bridge House); 2005 (Blue Lagoon, Willen); 2009 (Bridge House again); 2010 (near Olney, Great Linford); 2012 (Caldecotte); 2016 (Calverton); 2019 (Stonepit Field). There must be more! Records please!!

Alkaline soil is necessary for this orchid to survive and there is plenty of it in MK and immediately northwards (e.g. on the Blisworth Limestone – as at Stonepit Field where it has been exposed manually, Olney and Sherington). The clay soils more to the south (as at Bletchley) are also of an alkaline nature. So why was the Pyramidal Orchid not recorded in this area until this century? Thanks to Harry for prompting me with his photograph to write this note. Now your turn.

Editors note – the Barn Field a newly created Local Wildlife Site above Olney has had Pyramidal Orchids on it for as long as I remember probably the last ten years. It is on alkaline clay but as it was reseeded on its creation about 15 years ago maybe this isn't an authentic record. However, after a discussion with Roy we speculated that all the North Bucks records in the new city might be as a result of introduced seed?

Map of pyramidal orchid distribution in North Bucks



Bulgarian Beauties – Jenny Mercer

Golden Oriole, the name itself still seems magical to me.

We were on a sunny walk in Bulgaria in July, with fellow members of the society and others, enjoying plants, butterflies, dragonflies, a tortoise and birds. Andy Harding, our esteemed Naturetrek leader spotted the Golden Orioles, in the tree tops not far from our path. We had super sightings.

My fondest memory though is of another day at 7am in the morning when I was on my own in another location. I didn't get a sighting but just their singing!!!

On our last day at Melnik, still on the south west slope of the Perin Mountains I was reluctant to leave without exploring more of the old abandoned churches of the area... Soon we'd be off to the alpine resort of Bansko on the north east slopes of the Perin range. I walked to a high spot in Melnik and climbed to one of several ruined churches. Golden Orioles, at least two of them, were singing beautifully in the wooded areas where gardens run into the woods and the unusual bare cliffs of ancient lake sediments. Everywhere was quiet but for that beautiful song! Then I turned and looked at the old walls of the Orthodox church and saw a Little Owl surveying me! What a morning!

GIVE me the singing of the Golden Orioles anytime and I'll be in heaven.

Click on this link for the song of the Golden Oriole:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m5wGfpq3-f4>

Wildlife around MK – Autumn 2019	<i>- Tony Wood</i>
<p>Following a mild winter, we enjoyed a relatively dry and warm summer with temperatures exceeding 30 degrees Celsius on several days in August. Whilst we gardeners suffered, from the numerous reports from members of our Society, the wildlife appeared to enjoy the conditions locally.</p> <p>Mammals- Reports of Otters continue to be made locally and in June a large adult was seen crossing the path to Willen Lake north, and one of our dormouse survey volunteers showed me an image taken with her camera of one entering her garden in the Bletchley area.</p> <p>The dormouse nest box surveys continued monthly from May to September at Little Linford Wood and surrounding hedgerows, with poor results. As mentioned in previous `Magpie` articles, in recent years the dormice appear to have left the Little Linford Wood and moved to the hedgerows beside the M1 Motorway. Due to the widening of the motorway to four lanes the vegetation has been cleared from the embankment beside the hedgerows and our dormice appear to have moved on. In May we were encouraged finding a nest of four young and a single adult. However, only two adults were found in the boxes in June, one in July, none in August, and one in September. The group leader, John Prince, was interviewed by Three Counties Radio on the project on Thursday September 12th.</p> <p>Whilst there have been no records of dormice in Little Linford Wood during the past three years the 300 plus nest boxes are still checked monthly, and, apart from the occasional woodmouse, it has been a good year for Brown long-eared bats. Several boxes have held in excess of 10 bats at a time. In June, a Simpson resident contacted Joe Clinch to say that he had a huge number of bats resident behind tiles in his roof. Martin Kincaid, together with his Parks Trust colleague Carla Boswell, visited the following day and were amazed to find a number of baby bats that had fallen out of the roost. Eventually they were identified as Soprano Pipistrelles</p>	<p>fortunate to see males basking on the ground in Shenley Wood in July, and he and Harry Appleyard saw several in Howe Park Wood. Others were reported in College Wood, Kingsmead Spinney and Little Linford Wood. In May, following a report from Kevin Booden, Martin visited the Blue Lagoon Nature Reserve and was pleased to see two Duke of Burgundy butterflies. How this rare butterfly came to be at the Blue Lagoon is uncertain, but up to five were seen by some individuals and it is likely to be breeding on site.</p> <p>Moths – During July at least four members of our Society recorded the Hummingbird Hawkmoth in their gardens and in similar locations there was several records of the Scarlet Tiger moth. In April I found an Emperor Moth in the moth trap installed in my garden and discovered that it had laid its eggs on the containers inside. Approximately 40 hatched out and, following advice provided by our moth expert Gordon Redford, I supplied them with hawthorn leaves to feed on. Eventually 9 pupated and I await spring to see if they hatch out. {see Gordon`s article on moths}.</p> <p>Damselflies – Last year the Willow Emerald Damselfly was first discovered locally {see Harry Appleyard`s article} and they have returned, not only at Tattenhoe Park, but there has been a report of one seen at Stonepits, The Beautiful Demoiselle, once rare locally, has also been observed at several sites.</p> <p>Birds – Members of our Society have been very observant this summer and birds such as Spotted Flycatcher and Wheatear, normally only occasionally mentioned, have been regularly recorded. During the summer months most birds are nesting but the unusual ones still pass</p>

and at the peak some 470 were seen to emerge. A few pups sadly fell to their death but they were able to reunite some by leaving them in a shoebox on a pedestal. As night fell, the mothers flew down to retrieve their young. Elsewhere, a Daubenton`s bat roost was found under a stone bridge in Old Wolverton. A recent visit to the M1 Daubenton`s roost at Pineham by Parks Trust staff and North Bucks Bat Group members resulted in sightings of the former together with Common Pipistrelles and Serotine bats.

Butterflies – In the last issue of the `Magpie` I asked members to look out for Clouded Yellow and Painted Lady butterflies this summer. I have heard of only one report of the former, but it has definitely been a `Painted Lady year`. It would appear that during a national three-week survey over half a million records of the Painted Lady butterfly were submitted. Martin Kincaid informs us that 2019 was a good season for many butterflies locally. The Brown Argus butterfly was abundant in July and August, and recorded in Tattenhoe, Blue Lagoon and Magna Park. The Purple Emperor butterfly has reputed to have had a below average season nationally but perhaps had its best season in MK since its `discovery` here in 2015. Martin was

through this area. In June a pair of Egyptian Geese and a pair of Ruddy Shelduck were recorded at Linford Lakes Reserve, the Peregrine Falcon seen at MK Stadium, and a Firecrest heard singing at Back Wood, Woburn. July sightings were low but the Floodplain Forest at Old Wolverton attracted a Black-tailed Godwit and a White-winged Black Tern. Records increased during August with a Tree Pipit, Whinchat and Pied Flycatcher observed at Tattenhoe Park, a Great White Egret at Linford Lakes Reserve, and a Mediterranean Gull at the Floodplain Forest. Also, a Ring-necked Parakeet was seen feeding in a garden at Newport Pagnell and a Raven in flight at Kents Hill. September produced a Turtle Dove at Bradwell Lakes, a Lesser Spotted Woodpecker at Hyde Lane, possibly two Osprey over the River/Common at Newport Pagnell and a Redstart at Tattenhoe Park..

Sadly, winter will soon be with us, but so will a great variety of wildlife. So, wrap up, get out there, and report your sightings – enjoy!

Moth Report May 1st –July 31st 2019 - Gordon Redford

My last report in the spring edition of the Magpie, covering the period February 16th to April 30th, indicated that 2019 was showing signs of being a good mothing year. Record numbers of both species and moths were reported for those months in traps from my garden in Newport Pagnell and at Linford Lakes Nature Reserve. That promising start though disappointingly has not been maintained.

At Linford Lakes, a Robinson trap has been in use since 2017. In 2018, the trap was only used for the latter part of the season. The table below showing monthly records for May, June and July in 2017 and 2019 shows that both numbers of species and total numbers of moths in 2019 to be considerably lower.

Year	May		June		July	
	No of Species	Total Moths	No of Species	Total Moths	No of Species	Total Moths
2019	82	898	170	2824	196	3545
2017	99	1597	194	4642	200	4339

However, despite the lower numbers of 2019, 20 new moths have been added to the Linford Lakes list, 9 Macro moths and 11 Micro moths.

One of these is the Foxglove Pug, *Eupithecia pulchellata pulchellata*, a macro moth despite its size.



Foxglove Pug (*Gordon Redford*)

The story in the garden in Newport Pagnell is similar and this is confirmed by the figures in the table below which shows records from 2017-2019 covering the months of May, June and July.

Year	May		June		July	
	No of Species	Total Moths	No of Species	Total Moths	No of Species	Total Moths
2019	61	575	128	1884	149	3380
2018	94	938	158	1943	186	3030
2017	71	533	148	2229	157	2362

The numbers of species are lower in each of the months in 2019 than in the previous years but the total numbers of moths do not conform to the pattern with there being more in May, 2019 than in May 2017 and more in July, 2019 than in both July 2017 and 2018. 13 new species though were added to the garden during this period of which 10 were Micro moths and 3 Macro moths. One of the new macro moths for the garden was the Chamomile Shark *Cucullia chamomillae*. The County Moth Recorder told me that the last record received for this moth in the north of the County was in the 1990's and submitted by George and Frances Higgs.



Chamomile Shark (*Gordon Redford*)