

# MILTON KEYNES NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY



## MKNHS PROGRAMME – SPRING 2026

### JANUARY – APRIL

*Meetings are held at the Cruck Barn, City Discovery Centre, Alston Drive, Bradwell Abbey, Milton Keynes, MK13 9AP on Tuesdays at 7.30pm for 8.00pm. Visitors are very welcome. Tea/coffee and biscuits will be served free of charge. Cups are provided, but you are encouraged to bring your own if you can.*

*Please note that clause 7 of the Society's constitution reads: 'the Society will exercise due care when arranging its meetings and activities for the benefit of members. Members taking part in any meeting or activity do so at their own risk.'*

## January

### 06 MEMBERS' EVENING – BOOK REVIEWS

Please bring along a recent book on wildlife or an environmental theme, an identification guide or a digital guide/website or app (maybe something from your Christmas stocking!) and be prepared to say a few words about it, and why you'd recommend it to others.

### 13 SUMMER PLANNING

An earlier than usual session to plan our outdoor meetings over the spring and summer months (at least that should mean we all get our details in on time!). Do please come along with suggestions for sites to visit and offers to lead a walk around the site.

### 20 ST KILDA & THE HEBRIDES – Cruising to the Edge of the World (Zoom Meeting)

**Sara Frost** (Naturetrek) spent three years working in the Hebrides as a wildlife guide. This evening she will take us to St Kilda, one of only 35 sites in the world to hold joint UNESCO World Heritage status for both cultural and natural heritage. Sara will recount the wonderful wildlife which inhabits these islands and surrounding waters – from otters, eagles and seabirds to dolphins, sharks and whales. She will also give insight into the life of the hardy St. Kildan people, which was one of remarkable self-sufficiency.

## 27 THE HIGH-ALTITUDE FAUNA AND FLORA OF THE FRENCH PYRENEES

Society member **Tim Arnold** connects the geology, topography, hydrology, climate and farming practices with the wildlife to be found above 1,500 metres in the French Pyrenees.

## February

### 03 INTRODUCING GROUND-BEETLES - THE JOHN WICKHAM LECTURE

**Brian Eversham** is Chief Executive of Beds, Cambs and Northants Wildlife Trust. This evening, we welcome him back to talk about ground-beetles. This group of beetles are about as diverse as birds in Britain, they include good 'habitat indicators' in almost all habitats, from mountain-tops to seashores, they have a huge range of lifestyles and behaviours, and almost all species can be identified alive, in the field, with a hand lens.

### 10 THE BUCKS AMPHIBIANS AND REPTILES GROUP (Zoom meeting)

**Claudia Bernadini** will talk to us about the work of the group and how MKNHS members can get involved.

### 17 RECONNECTING BERNWOOD, OTMOOR AND THE RAY (RBOR)

RBOR is an exciting new landscape-scale conservation project in Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire which aims to work in partnership with local people to restore nature, preserve heritage and strengthen the connection between this special landscape and the urban and rural communities that call it home. **Hannah Broad**, RBOR Community Organising and Engagement Officer at BBOWT, will give an overview of the project and provide an opportunity for you to share your experience of the landscape to help shape the RBOR programme.

### 24 30 YEARS IN THE TOWER

**George Candlin**, Keeper of the Swifts at Oxford University Museum of Natural History, will describe the museum building, the colony and their monitoring of the swifts over this period along with a history of how it came to be.

## March

### 03 WILDLIFE IN FINNMARK

Former MKNHS member **Jeff Blincow** first visited Finnmark in 1980 primarily to see the birdlife. He now spends each summer recording wildlife in Norway. Finnmark is the northern part of Norway with Finland to the south and Russia to the east. Most of the area where he records wildlife is either classic alpine or arctic tundra habitats. These are seriously harsh conditions for plants and animals, and the talk will focus on these true survivors of Europe drawing on his experiences from general wildlife recording and specific project involving species such as Slavonian Grebe, Lesser Whitefront and Ruff.

## 10 MEMBERS' EVENING

An opportunity for members to share recent wildlife encounters and areas of natural history interest. Offers to talk for 10-15 minutes to Martin Kincaid or Linda Murphy.

## 17 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

A review of the Society's activities over the past year and the election of our officers and committee. New committee members and officers are always welcome. The Society needs to maintain a full and active committee. If you would like to contribute to the running of the Society, please speak to a committee member to find out more.

## 24 PHOTO COMPETITION 2026 – RESULTS

You will have been asked to vote online for your favourite members' photos over the past few weeks. Tonight, we reveal the overall winner and runners-up, and award the Ron Arnold Trophy to the winner.

## 31 THE GREAT AUK: Its Extraordinary Life, Hideous Death and Mysterious Afterlife (Zoom Meeting)

A conversation with leading ornithologist, **Professor Tim Birkhead**, exploring the life and death of the Great Auk driven to extinction in 1844 through human activity. He will tell the story of how this came about, how the bird has lived on through the unrelenting subsequent collectors' quest for its remains and how, 180 years on, he found himself the recipient of the archive of a man who accumulated more Great Auk skins and eggs than anyone else. Since 1950 more than seventy percent of the world's seabirds have been lost through human activity. The Great Auk was the first seabird to suffer this fate and is an all-powerful symbol of human folly and the necessity of conservation.

## April

## 07 EASTER BREAK – No Meeting

## 14 FLORA OF THE CHILTERNs

Freelance botanist and outdoor educator **Karen Van Oostrum** will take us on a tour of the Chilterns' rich flora, showing how its plant communities have been shaped over centuries by geology and land use. She will also draw some comparisons with the flora and geology of the Milton Keynes area, highlighting key similarities and differences.

## 21 PRACTICAL SESSION

A practical identification session at the Cruck Barn starting outdoors (weather permitting) in preparation for our summer outdoor programme. Focus to be confirmed nearer the time.

## 28 FIRST OUTDOOR MEETING of the Summer Programme