

MOOR GREEN LAKES GROUP NEWSLETTER August 2011



Dear Members

I sincerely hope you are enjoying the summer which has been variable to say the least, we seem to have swung from dry spells to wet spells and back again and as I write this note another change looks to be around the corner. This all adds to the fascinating pattern of the natural world and Moor Green Lakes is a good place to enjoy it.

In every Newsletter I request new content and this time I have been supplied with so much I cannot do it all justice! However, the offerings remain often from the usual contributors and I am very grateful to them, but I am still looking for new contributors to add to the variety.

You will notice the reports of various activities and some of the works done at the reserve, not all of which I have been able to include. Practical important things like fence repairs and difficulties associated with trying to increase the size of the car park (getting the planning permission agreed) have all provided much material to include perhaps in a future Newsletter.

Sadly, our bird recorder Ian Brown has had to resign. Ian has undertaken the task since the Group started. We need help to follow in his footsteps and you can read more on the next page where we include our grateful thanks for his efforts over all those years. If you know birds well please see if you can help.

Another volunteer is needed to regularly check our mink traps, these creatures are possibly responsible for the decimation of the breeding birds on the islands this year. If you visit regularly or live nearby and could do regular checks please contact Sue Dent at BVCP 01252 331353 for more details.

In the past I have mentioned some of the activities of the Blackwater Valley Countryside Trust and I am taking the opportunity again to mention their Photographic Competition and you can find more details on their website. It is open to all and costs nothing but, if you have a camera and enjoy our reserve or enjoy the valley you have a chance of winning – it really is a simple way to share your photographs with others. Have a look at <http://bvct.org.uk/node/83> to see how easy it is.

The Trust is also collecting details of important trees in the valley and anyone that walks in the area can help them. Again see <http://bvct.org.uk/node/129> to see how easy it is to join in.

All that remains is for me to thank you for being a member, wish you a very happy autumn at Moor Green and encourage you to renew with your Group for another year.

Colin Wilson, Editor

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Membership enquiries to our Membership Secretary:
Dave Bishop, email dave.bishop@mglg.org.uk or phone 01252 876966

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● **Have fun on**
● **October 1st**
● **A Worm Charming**
● **day. Bring the family**
●



Moor Green Lakes Group seeks a (voluntary) Bird Recorder.

Bruce Archer

Ian Brown has unfortunately had to relinquish his role as the Group's Bird Recorder, a post he has held since the Group was formed in 1993. A team of committee members has worked together to produce the 2010 Bird Report as part of the Group's 2010 Annual Report.

For the future, the Group could split the workload between a Bird Recorder and an Assistant Bird Recorder if it suits. The precise way of working is open to discussion with the new volunteer(s).

One option is that the Assistant could collate the records of birds from various sources and enter them into a database. Any issues with acceptable or unacceptable records will be resolved involving the Bird Recorder as necessary. Once the year's records have been collated, the Bird Recorder will compile the Annual Report probably with the help of the Assistant.

The Bird Recorder should ideally be an experienced bird watcher and, preferably, have experience or understanding of vetting records and preparing Reports. Please contact the Group Chairman, Iain Oldcorn at iain.oldcorn@mglg.org.uk if you are interested in either of these roles.

This opportunity should not pass without extending our grateful thanks to Ian for the many years of diligent and dedicated work he has done for the Group and the Reserve. His annual reports have been a comprehensive and valuable part of the history of Moor Green Lakes. We are sorry to see him go and offer him our very best wishes for the future.

Why do we lay our hedges?

Peter Scott

Visitors to the reserve can't help but notice the changed appearance of the hedge between the footpath and bridleway just north of Colebrook hide. This results from the work of a team of expert hedgelayers who spent a day working on site earlier this year. Some members have asked why this job was done.

The best hedge for wildlife is actually a tall, overgrown one. However, allowing this particular hedge to 'run wild' isn't really an option: it has to be trimmed regularly so that it doesn't impede access along the paths. Cutting back just the upper branches (where most rapid growth occurs) promotes further vigorous growth at that level. Doing this repeatedly over several years leads to the base of the hedge becoming 'gappy'. In contrast, after a hedge is layed, most regrowth is low down. Also, increased light input to the base often leads to denser growth of flowering herbs, providing additional food for insects. A dense hedge, with a good mix of trees, shrubs and herbs, provides an important wildlife 'corridor', giving security and food to many animals. Traditionally, when hedges were used by farmers as stock-proof barriers between fields, maintaining dense growth from the ground up was clearly important, so hedgelaying was a common winter activity for farm workers (who were often, otherwise, underemployed at that time of year). Since cheap labour is no longer available, other forms of fence have become much more affordable than hedges. Therefore hedgelaying has become a hobby activity for relatively few people rather than a paying job for many.

South of the Colebrook hide, almost all the hedge between the footpath and the bridleway has been layed over a period of many years, mostly by volunteers from the Moor Green group or the Blackwater Valley Countryside Partnership's Tuesday group. However, those groups are fully occupied on other jobs, so 'outsiders' were recruited to do this year's work. We expect to do the same next winter, tackling the next stretch northwards towards the car park. It is because of the generous donations by Members with their subs that we are able to pay for this.



Keep Moor Green Lakes in great shape






Why not come along and join a Conservation Work Party?

The team work on the 2nd Sunday of the month from September until March. Work at your own pace and enjoy a sociable day with like minded people. Come along on any of the following dates:

	Sunday	Tuesday
September	11	20
October	9	25
November	13	22
December	11	6

Meet in the car park off Lower Sandhurst Road at 10.30am

Don't worry if you haven't done conservation work before.

-  No special skills are needed
-  Tools and training are provided
-  Refreshments are provided but bring lunch if you're staying a full day
-  Just wear outdoor clothing, boots or wellies and waterproofs
-  Children under 16 must be accompanied by an adult

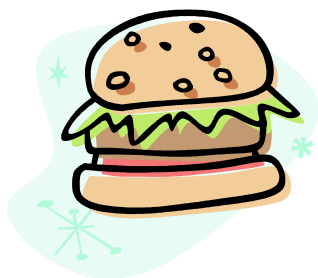
For more details contact Stuart on 01252 331353



Conservation Day September Special!

Sunday

12th September



**Lunchtime BBQ
for the workers!**



Barn Owls at Moor Green Lakes

Iain Oldcorn

The donation and installation last autumn of a further Barn Owl box has significantly increased our chances of helping these magnificent birds to breed near our reserve. In February we were excited by reports of them in the vicinity of the new box and by early June we were aware of eggs in one box and chicks in another.

On 11 July, Simon Weeks, Les Thorn and I visited Moor Green Lakes where Stuart Croft had arranged to meet Colin Shawey (well known for his work on the Barn Owl Conservation Network and the BTO's Barn Owl Monitoring Programme and author of a number of articles and books on the species: e.g. Hamlyn Species Guides - "Barn Owl"). This was to watch part of Colin's work ringing at six boxes in our area: two at MGL, one to the east near the A33 and ones at Wokingham, Barkham and Hurst. Colin has been ringing barn owls for about thirty years and recently completed 10 years on the BTO's major project; during this period he developed many methods for sexing and ageing barn owls. Last year he visited about 1000 barn owl nesting sites!



In the newest MGLG box one healthy female chick was found and ringed. At the second box we had expected to find some further chicks but were rather surprised to find two adults with a number of eggs but as yet no chicks. By detailed observation of the primaries Colin was able to age the female as a four year old and the male as two years old and decided after weighing the female that she may be carrying more eggs to be laid. I had never been so close to these birds and was fascinated to observe the colour differences between the two sexes, the ears (normally hidden) and also the brood patch on the female.

Here's hoping that the eggs hatch and that some more chicks are raised and fledged.

Barn Owls enjoy a special status under our law. They are a protected species under Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 so unless a special permit is held the nests or birds may not

be approached or interfered with in any way. Members should be alert to this and report anyone acting improperly to the police.

Some more Moor Green Butterflies

John and Rachel Westmacott

Amongst the prettiest butterflies seen on the reserve are members of the *Lycaenidae* family, five of which are regular. All are small and can be easily overlooked. The first to appear is the Holly Blue, which in April/May wanders amongst hedgerows and bushes and is frequently seen in gardens. It tends to be solitary and will often fly above head-height. This butterfly usually rests with wings closed to reveal silver-blue undersides with black spots. It has two flight periods, mid-April to June and late July and August. The spring females prefer to lay eggs on the holly bush whereas the summer females lay on ivy. The young caterpillars are periodically attacked by two species of parasitic wasps which causes the population to fluctuate, but generally this butterfly has held its own and is, if anything, expanding its range. You may see the Holly Blue anywhere as you walk round Moor Green.



The other resident blue is the Common Blue, which is a butterfly of grassland and meadow. This is the most widespread of all the blues and is found virtually everywhere in the British Isles. It is a communal butterfly not tending to stray far from its breeding area, and so will often be seen with others. The male has bright blue uppersides with a white edging, and grey undersides with black and orange markings. The female can be brown or blue on the upperside, and is similar to the male on the underside. The favoured food plant of the caterpillar is the Bird's-foot Trefoil, and the female lays her eggs on this plant. It has two, sometimes three, flight periods, May-June, July-September, and occasionally October. Although their main territory is the grassland to the north of Colebrook Lake North, where they are abundant, small colonies are on the grassy area to the west of the lake which may be seen from the path if you scan this area closely.



A third member of the family is the Small Copper, an exquisite little orange and brown butterfly, which again appears widely throughout the British Isles. It prefers dry and dusty places with patches of rough grass. Areas of the north bank of Colebrook Lake North are particularly suitable, but it may be seen in other places around the reserve. It has bright orange forewings with brown hindwings and orange and brown underwings. It feeds on sorrel and ragwort, and though not seen in large numbers it appears in most months of the season. The Small Copper is quite a pugnacious little butterfly and will vigorously defend its territory from intruders. It does not live in a close community so will usually be seen in ones and twos. It has three flight periods, April-June, July-August and September-October. In 2010 it was the last butterfly to be recorded on the reserve, on 17 October.



The two other *Lycaenidae* butterflies which are regular on site are the Green and Purple Hairstreaks which we hope to feature on a future occasion.

Please continue to help in maintaining records of butterflies seen on the reserve by adding your sightings to the recording sheets in either Colebrook or Grove hides. Thank you.



*Blackwater Valley Countryside Trust,
Camberley Natural History Society and The Earthworm Society of Britain present*

Are you a charmer? Come and find out at

EARTHWORM DAY

Saturday October 1st 2011 10am - 1pm

- *Sign up for the 'worm charming' competition and see how many worms you can charm out of the ground. Fancy dress and musical instruments encouraged.
Booking required, £5.*
- *Learn to identify earthworms at the Earthworm Society's free workshop.
Booking required.*
- *Join in surveys to find and record local worm species.*



King's International College, Watchetts Drive, Camberley GU15 2PQ

Come along and get involved in this unique event.

Details, booking forms and rules from:

Blackwater Valley Countryside

Ash Lock Cottage, Government Road, Aldershot GU11 2PS.

Tel: 01252 331353

Email: blackwater.valley@hants.gov.uk

Website: www.bvct.org.uk

MOOR GREEN LAKES NOTICE BOARD – RESTORATION OR SCRAP?

Tony Elston a regular volunteer with Moor Green Lakes Group gives the old notice board at Grove Hide a new lease of life.

I was asked if I would look at the notice board which was in need of repair. On close examination, it appeared that most of the problems were cosmetic and that the casing was in very good condition. The only parts required were a new glass front, 2 new locks and 2 slide plates for the support arms. I was able to re-assemble them to make a template for a replacement of clear plastic that I sourced locally. The locks and slide plates could not be repaired. On cleaning up the casing I found a label for the company that made it (over 20 years ago). With a bit of luck I managed to trace the company that replaced the original supplier and an employee who knew the answers to my questions. The company could supply new locks and slide plates, but could only suggest drilling out the old locks. Four hours and several drill bits later I managed to remove one lock. As the lock came clear I found how it had been fitted originally and thirty seconds later the other lock came out! All the new parts were installed, and the board is as good as new and standing beside the path at Grove Hide. Hopefully it will now last another 20 odd years!



Moor Green Insect Survey, 2011 – Interim Report

Jon Cole & Ian Sims

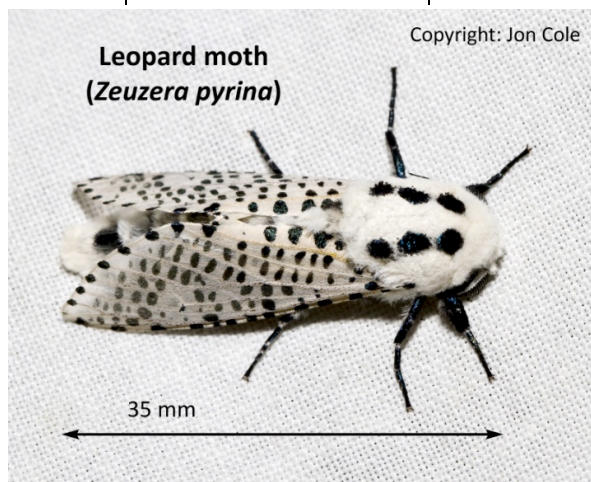
This interim report summarises the results so far of a survey of terrestrial insects conducted at Moor Green Lakes during the first half of 2011. The area under survey is the scrub/meadow along the Northern boundary of Colebrook Lake North, an area of approximately 2 ha (5 ac). Site visits were conducted on 9 April, 7 May, 4/5 June and 9/10 July. Observation methods included beating, sweeping and pitfall trapping for general insects plus light trapping, 'dusking' and sugaring specifically for moths. There was no light trapping in April and the May attempt was abandoned due to the onset of rain just at the point when all was set up and ready to go! Colin Proudley joined the team with an additional light trap on the July visit. Further visits are intended for August and possibly September.

Over 250 species have been recorded so far and at the time of writing the July sampling is still being evaluated. See the table below for a breakdown of species numbers by major taxonomic group (Order). The majority (about 60%) of species recorded were moths, which is not surprising as the light (mercury vapour) trapping method attracts many more species per hour spent than the methods employed to collect other insects, although species other than moths drawn to light were also recorded where possible.

Species totals so far for the various orders surveyed are as follows:

Insect Group (Order)	Number of species	% of Total
Odonata (Damsel­flies & Dragonflies)	3	1.2
Plecoptera (Stoneflies)	1	0.4
Dictyoptera (Cockroaches)	1	0.4
Orthoptera (Grasshoppers & Crickets)	6	2.3
Dermaptera (Earwigs)	1	0.4
Hemiptera, Heteroptera (True bugs)	29	11.2
Magaloptera (Alderflies)	1	0.4
Coleoptera (Beetles)	40	15.5
Diptera (Flies)	4	1.6
Trichoptera (Caddisflies)	2	0.8
Lepidoptera (Butterflies)	18	7.0
Lepidoptera (Macro-moths)	91	35.3
Lepidoptera (Micro-moths)	56	21.7
Hymenoptera (Bees, wasps, ants & sawflies)	5	1.9
Total species	258	100.0

Many species so far recorded have apparently not been seen in previous surveys. Highlights include the large ground beetle *Carabus monilis* (a UK BAP species), a cuckoo wasp (*Chrysis viridula* – a parasitoid in nests of solitary bees), Small Elephant Hawkmoth (*Deilephila porcellus* – larvae on ladies bedstraw), Lunar Hornet Clearwing moth (*Sesia bembeciformis* – larvae mine in willow trunks), Leopard moth (*Zeuzera pyrina* – larvae mine in various trees) (see photo) and Lobster moth (*Stauropus fagi* – larvae on beech).



Trees in the River Blackwater at Moor Green Lakes

Sue Dent

Why is 'large woody debris' important?

In the past when a tree fell in the river the first response was to remove it fast but it is now recognised that woody debris makes a great contribution to the diversity of water flows, habitats and wildlife. Because woody debris is so valuable to the life of the river the Blackwater Valley Countryside team has been working closely with the Environment Agency (EA) to use trees and woody debris to improve the quality of the Blackwater. Any trees that fall into the River are assessed to decide if they pose a flood risk or dangerous erosion. If there is no risk of this then they will be left in situ and allowed to do their work modifying and improving the river channel.

Moor Green – south of Colebrook South

This large Willow fell into the river before the winter of 2009/10, it extended across about 80% of the river channel and had a huge impact on the flow of water, creating a significant gravel bank downstream. Initially it had little impact on the northern bank but over the winter 2010/11 it started to cause erosion, eventually beginning to undermine the footpath. BVCP liaised with the EA to develop a project which would stop the erosion while retaining as much of the river channel diversity that the tree had created as possible.

Moor Green One – Before

Showing the substantially increased erosion of the northern bank.



April 2010



February 2011

April 2011

A team from the EA led by Dominic Martyn developed a scheme to prevent further erosion of the bank while retaining some improvements to the river channel that the tree had created. The work was carried out in April 2011 including:

- Reducing the canopy of the tree so that it only extends a metre into the river channel from the southern bank hence the flow of the river is less constricted and so less powerful and is no longer forced onto the northern bank.
- Creating a mat of branches in front of the eroded part of the bank. This will help to dissipate the force of the river against the bank and encourage deposition and accumulation of sediment to reinstate it. The branches cut from the tree were used to create the wooden 'mat' and a large limb was removed from a nearby willow, this provided an excellent mainstay for the mat and, as it was leaning over the river, removed a future problem
- The combination of these changes should effectively stop the erosion of the northern bank.

Summer 2011 The repair will be finished off by building up some aggregate over the timber to reduce the steepness of the drop from the footpath.

