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Covid 19 Lockdown – Issue 4



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## Butterfly Surveying on the Quantock Hills

**By Barbara Wilcox and Phill Cook, Butterfly Surveyors.**

Butterfly surveys on the Quantock hills began on an ad hoc basis in 2015, but official survey routes (transects) were not registered with the United Kingdom Butterfly Monitoring Society (UKBMS) until 2018, when I joined the AONB as a volunteer. We now have a committed team of 10 and we are in our third full year of official records. The annual surveys are conducted over a 26 week period between 1st April and 1st September.

We have two official transects which take us around Cothelstone Hill and Fyne Court, taking about an hour and a half each. Butterfly surveyors 'enclose' themselves in an imaginary 5 metre box and record all butterflies that pass through. These are recorded on a dedicated form from which I submit records to a UK database maintained by the UKBMS.



Holly Blue butterfly feeding on  
Pyracantha.  
Photograph by Dave Mounsey, AONB  
volunteer.

During the course of the monitoring season we hope to see and record about 24 different types of butterfly and this data helps us to monitor the health of both the Quantock Hills and the species generally. This information assists us to maintain a health check on the hills and assists the UKBMS to monitor the general health of the species. It is also a very pleasant walk!



Painted lady butterfly.  
Photograph by Dave Mounsey, AONB  
volunteer.

Sadly, this year, as a result of COVID-19, we have been unable to start the transects in the normal way. In order to keep the team together and motivated we have been using weekly emails to stay in touch. These emails have included butterfly and other wildlife sightings from various team members as they take their permitted exercise each day. So far we have seen a total of 17 butterfly species, with a few examples shown in the photographs.

## Update on the Quantock Landscape Partnership Scheme

By Bill Jenman, QLPS Manager

You'll probably know that the Quantock Landscape Partnership Scheme (QLPS) got the go ahead from the National Lottery Heritage Fund last Christmas. Led by the Quantock Hills AONB Service in partnership with South West Heritage Trust, Friends of Quantock and many others, it is a £2.6m five year scheme

*The Landscape Partnership Scheme will protect and restore the distinctive features of the Quantock landscape, improve management of the access pressures on the Hills, and make the health and wellbeing benefits of recreation more available to communities in the surrounding towns and villages.*

*The Scheme will also increase understanding of the development of the Manorial landscape, how it underpins the character of the Quantocks, and of the wider natural, built and cultural heritage of the area.*

*It will increase the resilience of organisations, communities, and individuals, building the capacity and skills of the volunteer base working in the area, and give more people opportunities to contribute.*



Ash lined road.  
Photograph by QHAONB

The planned start in April was disrupted by Covid-19, and we have delayed recruiting the rest of the project team until we can conduct face to face meetings – we hope this will be possible later this summer and have pencilled in July/August for planning purposes. It's not just a matter of interviews, the new staff will also need induction and to get out meeting project partners and community groups so for now we're saving budget we can use to extend the project later if necessary.

Meantime I've been getting on with some of the procurement of contracts for things like the Evaluation consultants, LiDAR remote archaeological survey, and website build. These were held up a little by Somerset County Council's understandable focus on procuring Covid-19 related items, but things are now getting back to normal.

I can now do site visits too – Broomfield Common, which the LPS and the Parish Council will be developing as a community woodland, is looking lovely at first sight but the impact of ash die back disease is much, much more evident than it was last year. The plan here is to remove potentially dangerous trees along the roadside, and create some opportunities for planting a more diverse mix of species in patches elsewhere, while leaving the bulk of the Common to evolve naturally.



*Reimagining the Manor*

## Brilliant Bats

**By Iain Porter, Project Development Officer**

Bats are fascinating creatures, the only mammal that can truly fly, achieved through the evolution of their arms and hands into wings. In fact their family name is Chiroptera, which means 'hand wing'. Worldwide there are over 1,200 species of bat the smallest being the Kitti's hog-nosed bat (often referred to as the bumblebee bat) which is only 3cm long to the largest, the Giant golden-crowned flying fox, with a wingspan of 1.7m and weighing up to 2kg.

What I find fascinating is the different adaptations bats have developed to perfect their hunting style. An example is the Brown Long eared bat which has broad wings and tail allowing them to fly slowly amongst foliage, picking insects off of leaves and bark. The Daubenton's bat usually takes insects from close to the water and has even been seen taking prey directly from the water surface. They have large feet which they use as a gaff or they will use their tail membrane as a scoop.

The other fascinating thing about bats is how they manage to find their way at night. All bats can see, almost as well as humans, but at night when light levels are low bat use echolocation to find their way around. Echolocation works in a similar way to sonar, where a bat will make a call as they fly and listen to the returning echoes to build up a sonic map of their surroundings. The bat will be able to tell how far away something is by how long it takes the sound to return to them.



Brandt's Bat  
Photograph by Katie Coates.

In the UK bat populations have declined considerably over the last century. This is due to building and development work, loss and degradation of their habitat the loss of commuting routes by road building and removal of hedgerows and threats in the home, such as chemicals and cat attacks. Due to this decline in populations all bats and their roosts are protected by law.

In the UK there are 18 species which are resident with 17 species are known to breed. Somerset is very lucky in that it has records of 16 of the 18 species, the latest to be found was only in 2010 when a Leisler's bat was found in Taunton. Both Quantock and Blackdown Hills are important for bats. In the Quantocks there are significant populations of the rare woodland bat, the Barbastelle and Lesser Horseshoe bats. .

The Blackdowns is important for both Lesser and Greater Horseshoe bats. This is due to the good bat habitats, such as woodlands and hedgerows. But you can see bats virtually anywhere in the UK with the most common, the Common pipistrelle, which weighs around 5grams and can eat 3,000 tiny insects in one night, found in both rural and urban areas.

So if you are out at dusk spend a little time looking into the sky and you may be lucky enough to see one of our most fascinating mammals fluttering overhead.

# Elder – The Fairy Tree

By Verity Jones – Volunteer Coordinator



These flowers burst from our hedge banks everywhere in the southwest with a slight hint of May sunshine and the longer day length; often from the most unprepossessing gnarly, old stumps. The froth of cream coloured, sweetly scented flowers are a treat for insects and a treat for anyone who enjoys making cordial, champagne or cakes with the flowers. A spring delight!

There are few trees which tread the border between the magical and the practical more than the elder. Called on the Isle of Man 'the Fairy Tree' this was once regarded as one of the most magically powerful of plants; where the tree grown by the house could keep evil spirits at bay but

if burnt it would cause you to see the Devil. It also had the power to charm away warts and vermin and if you stood under an elder tree on Midsummer's Eve you would see fairies. But beware– if you fall asleep under the tree, the fairies would carry you off!

The switches of the pungent wood were used by cattle drovers to keep flies off their animals as they were being moved and the powerfully scented leaves were tied onto horse's harnesses to keep flies from their faces. The mature wood can be used for carving and the younger wood for crafts such as whistles.

## Elderflower Cordial Recipe

Make sure you pick freshly opened flowers for the best flavour. The cordial will keep for 2 weeks or can be frozen in plastic bottles.

1 ½ kg of white sugar  
2 unwaxed lemons  
20 fresh elderflower heads (washed)  
85g citric acid (this can be bought from a pharmacy or over the internet)

- Add sugar and 3-4L of water to a large pan and heat slowly until the sugar has dissolved
- Peel strips of lemon rind using a vegetable peeler and then slice the remaining lemon into rounds
- When the sugar is dissolved, bring to the boil briefly and then take off the heat
- Add the flowers, lemon and citric acid to the syrup
- Leave for 24hrs before straining and putting into bottles

# Did you know?

(Answers on the back page)

- 1) The Quantock Hills boast being the 'birthplace' of the English Romantic Movement. One of the founders, Samuel Taylor Coleridge lived in Nether Stowey during the 1790's but who was his friend and fellow founder who stayed in the Quantock Hills?
  - a. Robert Southey
  - b. William Wordsworth
  - c. Simon Armitage
- 2) The Blackdown Hills inspired a group of English post-impressionist artists in the early 20th century but what were the group known as?
  - a. The Camden Town Artists
  - b. The Swindon Town Artists
  - c. The Bognor Regis Town Artists
- 3) Which former F1 racing driver is associated with a karting race track in the heart of the Blackdown Hills?
  - a. Jenson Button
  - b. Nigel Mansell
  - c. Damon Hill
- 4) Which famous pop star used Kilve Beach and Holford for their music video to the song 'Everything I do'?
  - a. Brian Eno
  - b. Bryan Ferry
  - c. Bryan Adams
- 5) The famous author R D Blackmore was raised in Culmstock in the Blackdown Hill, but where was his popular book, Lorna Doone based?
  - a. Dartmoor
  - b. Exmoor
  - c. Bodmin Moor
- 6) Hestercombe House & Gardens is one of the finest examples of garden design by which pair of architect and designer?
  - a. Jekyll & Lutyens
  - b. Jekyll & Hyde
  - c. Jellicoe & Mawson
- 7) Upottery airfield, commonly known as Smeatharpe, was the departure point for Easy Company, 506th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 101st Airborne Division for the D-day invasion but what is the name of the famous book and TV series which detailed Easy Company?
  - a. Band of Mothers
  - b. Band of Brothers
  - c. Catch-22
- 8) While living in the Quantock Hills, Samuel Taylor Coleridge penned one of his most influential poems. What is it called?
  - a. The Rime of the Ancient Mariner
  - b. The Rime of the Ancient Peasant
  - c. The Rime of the Ancient Oak
- 9) Which famous chocolate producing family originated from Hemyock in the Blackdown Hills?
  - a. Twining
  - b. Darrell Lea
  - c. Cadbury
- 10) Andrew Crosse was a pioneering scientist and poet who lived at Fyne Court from 1784 – 1855. He often gave lectures, both in Somerset and in London on his experiments, but in which field of science was he fascinated?
  - a. Mineralogy
  - b. Chemistry
  - c. Electricity

# Word Search

C	R	I	C	K	E	T	S	T	F	I	R	H	T
S	R	B	I	D	H	R	B	S	I	G	L	Y	A
R	C	C	S	C	P	S	E	A	T	R	H	I	S
O	D	S	A	D	D	E	R	S	D	C	S	A	P
G	A	G	P	O	P	P	I	E	S	G	A	A	P
T	W	E	C	I	T	S	L	O	S	C	E	D	T
R	N	E	I	O	C	C	U	C	K	O	O	R	I
A	C	L	M	E	A	D	O	W	B	R	O	W	N
N	H	E	S	G	N	I	L	G	D	E	L	F	N
S	O	E	R	C	A	D	T	E	S	N	U	S	G
E	R	E	V	A	L	E	R	I	A	N	A	H	L
C	U	P	A	I	N	T	E	D	L	A	D	Y	A
T	S	D	O	H	E	A	T	W	A	V	E	R	R
N	O	O	T	K	D	R	A	G	O	N	F	L	Y

BADGER  
PAINTED LADY  
DAWN CHORUS  
SOLSTICE  
VALERIAN  
CUCKOO  
ASH  
MEADOW BROWN  
TRANSECT  
FLEDGLINGS  
DRAGONFLY  
CRICKETS  
SUNSET  
THRIFT  
POPPIES  
ADDER  
HEATWAVE

## Quiz Answers:

(1b) William Wordsworth, (2a) Camden Town Artists, (3b) Nigel Mansell, (4c) Bryan Adams, (5c) Exmoor, (6a) Jekyll and Lutyens, (7b) Band of Brothers, (8a) Rime of the Ancient Mariner, (9c) Cadbury, (10c) electricity.



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