

Editorial

F. Watkins and D. Lewis

The Ashmolean Natural History Society of Oxfordshire continues its work with the publication of Volume 6 of *Fritillary* which is again a joint venture between the Society (ANHSO) and the Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust (BBOWT). *Fritillary* forms part of the educational work of both organisations. Volume 6 is published on-line and can be found on www.fritillary.org.uk. Publication on the web allows us to bring articles to public notice as they are completed but those who prefer a paper copy can obtain one, bound and in A4 format from orders@fritillary.org.uk or by ringing 01865 863660.

Volume 6 is our Darwin Memorial volume.

Papers have already been received for volume 7 and they will be published on-line as soon as they are ready. We are always on the lookout for possible papers or lists resulting from research carried out locally so should you have been studying something which is worth publicising please get in touch with submissions@fritillary.org.uk.

Ashmolean Natural History Society of Oxfordshire activities

The Society now has four sub-groups; the Verge Survey Group has been doing its work for nearly 30 years. The Education Group is in its 14th year. The Rare Plants Group became the Oxfordshire Flora Group in 2013 after having been going for 19 years. The Flood-plain Meadows Group is relatively new.

The Oxfordshire Flora Group is now monitoring *Apium graveolens*, *A. repens*, *Aristolochia clematitis*, *Carex vulpina*, *Cynoglossum germanicum*, *Filago pyramidata*, *Gentianella anglica*, *Lythrum hyssopifolium*, *Oenanthe silaifolia*, *Pulsatilla vulgaris*, *Salvia pratensis*, *Sium latifolium*, *Thlaspi perfoliatum*, *Viola persicifolia*, *Veronica praecox*, arable flowers at Wytham and plants and habitats at Frilford Golf Course. The Oxfordshire Rare Plants Register which has been created with the help of the Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre is expected to be published in 2016.

The Education Group's plant identification courses begun in 2002 continue to go from strength to strength. The basic course has taken place each year and more advanced specialist courses have also been very successful.

The Verge Group continues its work. The valuable data collected by the verge group is passed on to the Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre, which will monitor change in species abundance over the years.

The Society is involved in a large variety of work and much of this is done in collaboration with or with help from other organisations. Without their help some of our activities would not be possible:

- Plantlife International, Natural England and the Environment Agency assist the Rare Plants Group.

- We work closely with the Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre in various ways and we are very grateful to them for their past financial support of the Education Group.
- The Awards for All Scheme (Lottery funding) have helped the Education Group in the past and we have also received finance from the Tanner Trust and Oxera. The EG is now trying to run its courses without funding support.
- We work closely with BBOWT, the local wildlife trust, on this journal and also on our annual Warburg memorial lecture as well as in other ways.
- The Bernard Tucker lecture, in November each year, is held in partnership with the Oxford Ornithological Society.

Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust Activities

BBOWT continues to support a wide variety of projects which promote wildlife conservation across the three counties. BBOWT aims to undertake and promote the conservation of wildlife species and their habitats including the restoration and creation of such habitats; to promote public understanding of, and support for, the natural world.

The Trust is also engaged in several ‘living landscape projects’ which seek to increase biodiversity on privately owned land, by encouraging farmers to sign up to government agri-environment grant schemes and by giving management advice. This work is focused in ‘biodiversity opportunity areas’ which have been regionally identified as being significantly important for wildlife. BBOWT also hosts the Oxfordshire Wildlife Sites Project, which gives Wildlife Site landowners management advice on how to maintain and improve these areas for wildlife.

While the Trust recognises the importance of biodiversity benefits within the wider countryside, our reserves still play a very important role in preserving and enhancing biodiversity. Monitoring the effects our management and environmental factors such as climate change, are having on biodiversity is pivotal to our reserve management strategy. A large team of volunteers carries out survey work on reserves to help collect species and habitat data to show whether sites are in good condition.

BBOWT understands only too well the need for skilled natural historians. We are attempting to help overcome any skills gap, by running an annual series of training courses aimed at inspiring the public in taking the first steps to becoming keen natural historians.

Finally, BBOWT recognises that the next generation need to be inspired to care about wildlife. We have three education centres across Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire which run activities for school groups and Nature Tot sessions for pre-school aged children. Older generations are also included, through our many and varied events and community engagement programmes.

Frances Watkins
frances.watkins@anthriscus.co.uk

Debbie Lewis, Reserves Ecology Manager,

BBOWT, The Lodge, 1, Armstrong Road, Littlemore, Oxford, OX4 4XT
debbielewis@bbowt.org.uk