



Bulletin

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Moving Forwards

As coronavirus restrictions have been slowly eased, we have been able to begin resuming some of our activities. Several Section Leaders have been able to lead outdoor meetings, frequently with restricted numbers. Meanwhile, the Archaeologists have continued to meet through the pandemic via zoom. With the release of our autumn / winter programme, we are increasingly confident that we will be able to resume more or less normal activities. Please come along and support our Society at these meetings if you feel confident to do so.

We are still hoping to be able to arrange a Centenary Celebration Dinner later in the autumn. Currently, this is not straightforward to plan for. If we are able to do so, those of you who receive our regular e-mail Bulletins will be notified with the details in good time. If you would like to receive our e-Bulletins and do not already do so, please e-mail the Society (iwnhas@btconnect.com) with your contact e-mail. Alternatively, if you think you might like to attend, please leave a message on our answerphone on 01983 282596 and we will get back to you.

Editor

President's Address

I might fairly be accused of hyperbole if I suggested that my term as president so far has been a remarkable time for me, for the society and indeed for the human race as a whole. However, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic really has had worldwide impact, and that impact has been no less on us here on the Isle of Wight. As this is now easing, and not before time, I'm moved to reflect on how this has been for us.

What has amazed and delighted me is the resilience and enthusiasm of our members, who have managed to continue with many of the activities of the society despite the very serious constraints placed upon us. As the majority of us - myself included - are in the higher risk group because of our age, it

has been of particular importance that the COVID-19 restrictions are observed to keep everyone as safe as possible in these extraordinary times. I would like to sincerely thank every one of our members, especially society officers and council members, for their consideration and careful attention in making sure that so much could continue without simply shutting things down. We will all be aware of such endeavours, as there have been numerous examples.

Most notably, the centenary conference was a huge success, and I cannot emphasise enough how much of an achievement this was. To move such a major event entirely online for the first time seemed at the outset to be a significant challenge, but one to which the organising team, including Roger Herbert and Tina Whitmore, rose in magnificent fashion. I was delighted to launch the event as my most public appearance in my presidential role so far; and I attended all the sessions. The breadth of expertise within our membership and beyond was as satisfying as ever.

I was struck by how many of the presentations on the programme were able to make clear - in more or less direct ways - that the Isle of Wight is not only a special place for natural history in its own right. It also has connections to and sometimes lessons that inform wider issues, such as climate change that affect the whole globe. With over 430 attendees over the four days of the conference, the new virtual format without a doubt reached more people, spread out over a wider area, than it ever would have done as a physical event. What was more, the presentations were recorded and captured for future viewers, providing a valuable record and archive of the event. Notwithstanding the necessary downsides - notably the lack of field trips and opportunities for socialising - this could only be judged a success. The way in which the skills and knowledge we gained can be used in the future is something I am keen to consider.

I must also pay tribute to the section leaders. They are managing, despite all the odds, to create and largely deliver an ongoing programme of meetings, using their considerable skills and resourcefulness to embrace new online formats, socially distanced fieldwork, and many other methods. This ensured that members could still enjoy the companionship of the society's activities, and share the wisdom and knowledge of other members.

Sensible and safe habits are now engrained into us, and no doubt some of these will continue throughout the summer and beyond. But I do want to point out how much we have been able to learn and develop from this tragic worldwide pandemic. Difficulties will no doubt remain, but I am confident that as a society we will continue and grow beyond COVID-19 into the future.

Matthew Chatfield

An Unusual Query from Brittany

Towards the end of May, the IW Museum Service received an interesting request from a Breton student enquiring whether the Island had any local names for shellfish or related species. The enquiry was passed to Dr Martin Munt at Dinosaur Isle, who couldn't think of any sources and asked Andy Yule, as a lifelong Islander, whether he knew of any local words. Andy drew a blank but put Martin in touch with me as someone who had done some work on local names and dialect words. In turn I got in touch with the student, Mael Jézéquel, who is a serious linguistics scholar currently studying for his doctorate at the Université de Bretagne Occidentale in Brest. The aim of the PhD is "to identify motivational concordances in the local terminology along the coasts of the Atlantic and the Channel, based on the methodology proposed for the *Atlas Linguarum Europae*".

It transpired that the query was much wider than just shellfish: he was interested in any local words used in a marine context or to some extent in a watery context more widely, and his research extended along the whole of the French, English and Welsh coastlines! Mael's English is perfect and he seems pretty much at home with Welsh too, which of course has common roots with the Breton language.

He had already located W.H. Long's 1886 IW dialect dictionary online, and I realised immediately that coming up with any suitable examples was going to be quite a challenge. I knew there wasn't very much in Long and hoped that the late Jack Lavers' revised IW dialect dictionary of 1988 might yield a few more fishy words, and was very pleased to find that it did, albeit only a small number of examples. A.D. Mills (1996) came to the rescue with several appropriate place-names.

Mael had already found these local IW words:

jackheyarn – heron

luck – a pool of water left among the rocks by the receding tide; as in the Gurnard Luck, but which of course actually denotes a small river.

oreweed – seaweed washed on shore; though as Martin Munt pointed out, this is a common name for *Laminaria*, a marine alga or seaweed, and not Isle of Wight specific.

I was eventually able to add a handful of local words to this list, of which probably only the place-names are still in regular use:

chub or chubby – a small freshwater fish known as the European bull-head fish, or miller's thumb (Long).

stucklen – a stickleback fish (Lavers).

suss – the small spotted dogfish (Lavers).

snig – an eel, especially a young or small one (Lavers).

Isle of Wight Parson – the cormorant (Lavers). This would have been pronounced in dialect as 'Oil-o'-Woight Paason'.

And while not exactly marine, some further watery creatures of interest:

evvet – the eft or newt (Lavers).

todpool – tadpole (Long).

Place-names of interest include:

Cranmore – the marshy ground frequented by cranes or herons (Mills).

Culver Cliff – Old English *culfre* meant 'a dove or pigeon', and Culver was a royal preserve for peregrine falcons in Queen Elizabeth I's day (Du Boulay).

Chine – a cleft or ravine in the cliff formed by the action of running water (Lavers). From Old English *cinu*, 'a chink, fissure, ravine' (Mills). As in Whale Chine, Shepherds Chine, Luccombe Chine etc.

Chale – *Cela* 1086 (Domesday Book), meaning '(place at) the gorge or ravine', no doubt referring to what came to be known as Blackgang Chine. The word literally meant 'a throat', and was sometimes used in this transferred sense in place-names (Mills).

Cowes – originally named from two sandbanks off the mouth of the Medina called *Estcowe* and *Westcowe* in 1413, from their fancied resemblance to animals (Mills).

Mael seemed to be pleased with these examples, and I was doubly reassured when Martin replied that he remembered 'suss' being used for the dogfish when he was growing up in Portsmouth – thereby validating Jack Lavers' additional fishy words.

What this exercise served to reaffirm was that when Long was collecting local words in the 1880s, he was mainly talking to farm labourers rather than fishermen, so if there were a good number of fish-related words, then most of them were never picked up. (The point is often made that he didn't talk to many women either, so there were a lot of words round women's work and especially on the domestic front that never got collected.) This is not to criticise Long; he did an absolutely sterling job for Isle of Wight dialect where hardly anyone else did anything at all – it's just about being aware of the strengths and weaknesses of his dictionary.

It turns out that Mael Jézéquel is not the first to research this field. He informs me that in the early 1970s a Swiss linguist by the name of Willy Elmer travelled the entire coasts of England and Wales gathering phonological and anthropological material on fishing. As part of his tour he stopped in Freshwater and Bembridge and gathered a number of words, including:

soldier crab – hermit crab

berries – herring eggs

peal – a young salmon; in use from Wight to Cornwall.

These latter do not appear to have made it into any IW dictionaries or word-lists. There will no doubt be many other local words connected with fishing and the sea that have never been collected.

If any readers know of any such words, Mael will be very interested to learn of them, as will I. Please do get in touch with me at phillipsiow47@gmail.com.

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Alan Phillips

Fungi at Millbrooke House

Alan Shepherd has been a huge help to us in delivering lots of envelopes for us around Newport and in more rural areas, twice a year. Back in the spring, he contacted us to say that a lot of fungi had appeared in the grounds of Millbrooke House in Carisbrooke Road, Newport, the base for the Isle of Wight Society for the Blind, where Alan volunteers.

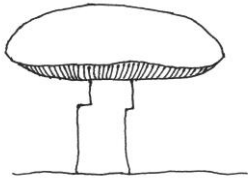
I went around to have a look and met Alan. He showed me the base of an old tree that had been felled. The cut surface was covered with a spectacular display of wood-rotting fungi. They were Lumpy Bracket, *Trametes gibbosa* and Turkeytail, *Trametes versicolor*. Less spectacular, but of particular interest to me was a hand-made painted wooden flowerbox on legs, standing by the house entrance. It was sprouting abundant growths of Jelly-ear Fungus, *Auricularia auricula-judae*. We usually find this jelly fungus growing on old Elder trees, its favoured host. The wood used to construct the flower box would not have been Elder and it was most unexpected to find it growing out of a flower box!



Colin Pope

A Mushroom Story

Back when I was living at Thorness in October 1977, I'd set out to go fossiling. I could get through the hedge at the top of the field and cross two more fields to get into Burnt Wood and on to the shore at Elmsworth. Well, halfway across the second field, I spied a Horse Mushroom, still in its button stage but even so it was the size of a bread roll. So, knife out, I cut through the stalk and put it in a bag. Hang on, you gurt lummat, I thought! You start putting rocks in your bag, mushers going to get crushed. I go back and put the mushroom back on its stem. I'll pick it up on my return.



Yes, well, the best laid plans and all that. I got on the shore and walk half way to Newtown. Back along the shore below Burnt Wood, I clamber over the cliff and home, forgetting all about it.

About a day and a half later, it springs to mind and I go and see if it's still there. When I got to the site, all I can see is a large fully grown Horse Mushroom. No sign of a button. I cut the stem and to my amazement I see it is the same one. It had grafted itself back together; no weakness at all, and grown to the size of a dinner plate. I took it home to show to my father and we wonder at the mushroom tribe. Then we cooked it and ate it. Very tasty it was!

Andy Yule

What's in a name?

Deadly Nightshade, *Atropa belladonna*

Named for Atropos, one of the goddesses of fate. Greek mythology tells of the Three Sisters of Fate, namely Clotho, Lachesis and Atropos, who determined birth, life and death of mortals. From her distaff (a tool used in spinning), Clotho spun the thread of life while Lachesis measured out length and determined destiny. Atropos was the one who decided when to use her deadly scissors to cut the thread.

The Italian term *belladonna* means pretty lady. Deadly Nightshade contains a poisonous alkaloid, atropine, which is used in ophthalmology to dilate the pupil of the eyes. Centuries ago, well-to-do Italian ladies would put a drop of distilled water containing atropine in their eyes to enlarge their pupils, thus making themselves more attractive.



Dwale is an old-fashioned alternative English common name for Deadly Nightshade and is defined in some dictionaries as a stupefying drink. Similarly, in some Old or Middle European languages, words like *duale*, *dwolma* and *dwaule* mean to cause stupor and confusion or to be delirious. Symptoms of atropine poisoning include loss of sense or reasoning ability and delirium. The narcotic and deadly properties of *Atropa belladonna* have been known to botanists and physicians for many centuries. In heraldry, the word *dwale* is used to describe the colour black.

Sue Blackwell

Footnote: Deadly Nightshade is a native British plant but it has always been a rarity on the Island. The only reliable site for it has been Westover Plantation, on the north side of Mottistone Down, where it has been known since 1909. Hilary Higgins photographed the plant here in 2007 (above). Sadly, it has not been seen here in recent years.

Some historical notes on the White-tailed Eagle, *Haliaeetus albicilla*, in the Isle of Wight

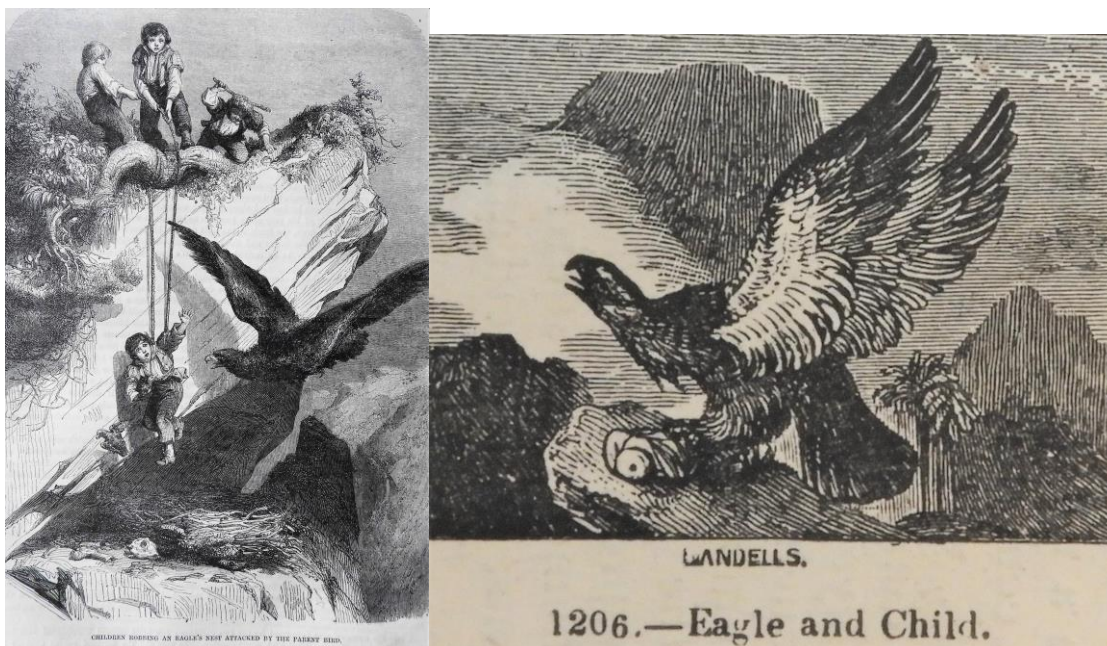
The proposed five-year project by the Roy Dennis Wildlife Foundation to re-introduce the White-tailed Eagle to the Isle of Wight started in 2019 when the first young birds arrived at a purpose-built facility in the north of the Island. Before this, however, public consultations took place where, although the general public were much in favour, there were a number of people, mostly farmers, who had a few concerns. At this stage, mid 2021, it is obvious that the project is turning into a huge success with the vast majority of Islanders aware that there are eagles in the Island and are keen to see them. Those who had their doubts about the project have realised that their concerns were unfounded. The purpose of this article is to look at how some of these concerns may have originated in myth and legend and also to document some of the records of White-tailed Eagles recorded in our area in the past.



In the early days of natural history observation many mistakes in nomenclature were made, especially with birds. The differing plumages of immature and adult birds led to them being identified as belonging to different species and eagles were no exception. The immature White-tailed Eagle was called a Sea Eagle and the adult was named as The Cinereous Eagle, a completely different species although this was later rectified in the Ornithological Dictionary of British Birds by Colonel Montague published in 1832, thus 'The identity', says Selby (Prideaux John Selby 1788-1867) 'of the Cinereous and Sea Eagle is now so satisfactorily established, that I have, without any hesitation, brought the synonymes hitherto assigned to the two supposed species under the same head.' A convoluted way of saying they were one and the same. Again, it was thought there was a different variety of the Golden Eagle that was even named as the Royal Eagle, *Aquila regis*. Further confusion occurred with some other authors maintaining that the American Bald Eagle, *Haliaeetus leucocephalus*, was the same species as our White-tailed and in a number of books these and the Golden Eagle, *Aquila chrysaetos*, were lumped together and just called Eagles. Even the Osprey, *Pandion haliaetus*, was deemed to be a species of eagle. However, the common belief held by just about everyone, was that all eagles were a menace to mankind and should be exterminated at every opportunity, this to also include their young and their nests.

The probable reason for this was that eagles of all species were, mistakenly, held responsible for the maiming, killing and taking of livestock or household pets and also that most heinous of crimes, child abduction. In Cassell's book on natural history (undated but probably c1870) there are a number of accounts of eagles allegedly making off with children and taking them back to their nest sites. The author quotes an

Icelandic writer, Anderson, who says in his History of Iceland that ‘children of four or five years old have been abducted; and Ray (John Ray, English naturalist 1627-1705) relates that, in one of the Orkneys, a child was seized in the talons of an eagle and borne above four miles to its nest. The mother, knowing the eyrie, went thither, climbed up the mountain, discovered her child and took it away unharmed’. Sir Robert Sibbald, in his account of the Orkneys gives, amongst other instances, the following. ‘An eagle seized a child a year old which its mother had left, wrapped up in some clothes, at a place called Houton Head, while she went for a few moments to gather sticks for firewood, and carried it a distance of four miles to Hoia (Hoy); which circumstance being known from the cries of the mother, four men went there in a boat, and, knowing where the nest was, found the child unhurt’. All these stories should be viewed with a great deal of scepticism; a little thought as to the practicalities of what is being said, such as an eagle lifting a five year old child into the air, the determined mother climbing a mountain or the children being rescued unharmed, are all hard to believe. The truth behind the stories is probably a combination of gross exaggeration and a harking back to the folk tales of the distant past. After all, if you go back as far as the Greek myths, the story of Prometheus chained to a rock as a punishment and having his liver ripped from his body every day was not by some legendary monster but, yes, you’ve guessed it, an eagle. (He was immortal so he healed every day ready for the next, not really much to look forward to then).



Eagles do feed on carrion such as dead sheep or cattle and sickly lambs would be a prey item thus giving rise to the mistaken impression that they are their primary food source. White-tailed Eagles eat a lot of fish so if they take them from a fishery or prime game fishing river they are again in conflict with the owners or sportsmen and seen as a threat to be dealt with. Even today owners of grouse shooting estates, for example, encourage their keepers to kill any raptors that may be seen as a hazard to the wellbeing of their birds; grouse shooting is a very lucrative business.

Back in the 18th and 19th centuries, it was the habit of the wealthy to go on tours of out of the way places, such as the Scottish Isles, observe the scenery, visit any historical sites, talk to the locals and then write and publish a book of their travels. The ordinary people living in these areas would be quite willing to talk to the wealthy visitor as they knew there would be a decent tip forthcoming and the more interesting and outlandish the story the bigger the remuneration; eagles making off with their children fitted the bill perfectly! The gullible traveller obviously believed them as the stories went into print and are quoted even today as the memory of them lingers on.

Eagles of all species were persecuted wherever they were found, for example Montague writes ‘John Maxwell, Esq, of Ardracran, in Ireland, favoured us with two young birds of this species (White-tailed) alive, taken the preceding year on a mountainous precipice called Slieve Donald, impending over the sea in county of Down. This gentleman informed us that two men, covered with sackcloth and armed, were lowered by ropes to the area, which, with considerable difficulty, they robbed of two young leaving only one

addled egg behind. The old eagles being so furious as to create serious alarm, neither the nest or the colour of the egg was noted'. He goes on to say that these two birds were impounded by the Customs when they arrived at Bristol on the grounds that there was a duty to be charged on all caged singing birds. Montague, rather drily, notes that 'Had this happened on the other side of the water it might have been termed an Irish story.' He did eventually take delivery of his birds after pointing out that they were most certainly not singing birds!

Cassell records that from March 1831 to March 1834 in the county of Sutherland alone, 171 old birds and 53 young and eggs were destroyed. These would have been of both our native species. In Ireland they were shot to extinction and even their nests destroyed by lowering burning peat into them. One result of this determination to destroy these birds was, conversely, a thriving trade in young live birds (see above) to be sold to wealthy collectors. The adult birds were usually shot but also had a value as taxidermy was very popular and there are many examples of this still to be seen today and, incidentally, command a high price when offered for sale. In a book on British birds published by Brumby & Clarke in the late 1800's, the Rev. Murray Mathew writes 'An adult White-tailed Eagle was shot a few years since near Bridgewater, and purchased at a high price by an American gentleman then living in Taunton; he had it stuffed and placed in a handsome mahogany case, it was, he said, his country's bird, and stood it at the bottom of his bed, while over his head, suspended from the wall, waved the Stars and Stripes!' Another case of misidentification.

Most of the early books on ornithology have a list of where White-tailed Eagles were resident and bred, such as Wales, the Isle of Man, Lundy, The Dewerstone Rock near Plymouth, the Lake District and the Isle of Wight. The Island reference is to be found in Warner's History of the Isle of Wight published in 1795 and he describes an eyrie on the cliffs at Culver, 'The last eagle known to build in Culver Cliffs (according to the information I could obtain) came there in 1780. An adventurous countryman who had frequently descended the rock for the eggs of its other winged tenants, having watched the eagle from the nest, paid a visit to it also. He found this fabrication to be of considerable size and formed of sticks and rushes laid alternately, containing one solitary bird. This he took, but not knowing how to manage it, the eaglet died'. Incidentally, this is an accurate description of a White-tailed Eagle nest.

Other references to White-tailed Eagles can be found in 'The Birds of Hampshire and the Isle of Wight' by Kelsall and Munn, published in 1905. The authors quote extensively from the Diaries of Col. Peter Hawker, 1786-1853, a Hampshire sportsman who devoted his life to wildfowling, usually in the Solent, and game shooting. On February 10th 1827, when afloat after duck, he writes 'Reade (his assistant) paddled me up to within 130 yards of a huge Sea Eagle. I let fly, beat him down, and then up he got and went away out of sight. I had scarcely done watching for him when five hoopers (Whooper Swans) came directly towards me and then hove up at about 120 yards; I let fly the other barrel, but for want of being loaded with mould shot (for duck), I lost both my grand prizes.'

On January 9th 1837, he recorded 'Gave up my whole tide for shooting in the pursuit of a splendid eagle that appeared off Hurst. I had all but got him when a lubber rushed out with a musket and scared him away. He, however, returned in a few hours and gave me a second chance by sitting on Hurst beach within range of any great gun while afloat; but the baker drove by and put him up, when he flew several miles westward. I found he had been seen three days in succession within a few hundred yards of the same place.' On the 15th 'The eagle came to the beach as if he knew it was Sunday'. (In those days there was strictly no shooting on the Sabbath). On January 23rd he 'saw the eagle again on wing and sailed after him for miles, till we saw him pitched with five crows flapping over him, but he would not remain long enough in one place for us to 'settle his hash' '.

W. Gilpen in his book on the New Forest published in 1834, wrote 'I have heard of a pair of eagles which took possession of a part of the wood called King's Wood, where they eluded all the arts of the keepers and continued their annual depredations for several years. Sometime after, an eagle was killed, after three discharges, near Ashley Lodge and was extended like the imperial arms in the courtroom of the King's House at Lyndhurst.'

The Rev. Bury, the vicar of Bonchurch, states that in about 1837 one was seen at the Hermitage, near Niton, which was attracted by a tame one kept there, and remained in the area for some hours. The newspapers of the following week recorded the capture of a White-tailed Eagle in the New Forest, the date corresponds with one of those seen by Col. Hawker. The tame eagle referred to ended up in the museum at Newport, it had been originally shot and slightly wounded by W. Dawes Esq. near Niton, before being

chained up and kept at the Hermitage until it died. Victor Willett who lived at Strathwell Park, Whitwell, mentions one that was killed in the late 1800's on St. Catherine's Down.

Another eagle that was shot at Haslar in 1857 was thought to be one that had been brought back to England by soldiers returning from the Crimean War and that had obviously escaped.

All these instances mentioned of the determined efforts to kill or capture White-Tailed eagles and to destroy their nests, are just a few of the many to be found in the books and magazines of the time and the desire to exterminate these birds seemed to be universal. Consequently, this magnificent bird was lost to us for many years but the equally determined efforts by conservationists to re-establish them back in the U.K, led by the Roy Dennis Wildlife Foundation, have to be applauded. It is also rather nice to think that the Isle of Wight is at the forefront of this effort.

Andy Butler

Mea culpa

In the last Bulletin, I described a gall which a group of us had found on a young tree in Hildyard's Cemetery at Lake on 8th December 2020. This was attributed by me to the gall-wasp, *Andricus grossulariae* of the family *Cynipidae*, and illustrated. But herein was a deliberate mistake. Did you notice it? Well, not exactly a deliberate mistake. Just an error! The description was accurate but the identification wrong.

A couple of weeks later, Toni Goodley and I were walking through the Arboretum at Fairlee, when I noticed exactly similar growths on a small tree. The growths were the normal fruits of Liquidamber. *Mea culpa*.

David Biggs



Isle of Wight UNESCO Biosphere Reserve

Introduction

Biosphere is the living surface of our planet, made from the land, the sea, the air we breathe and the energy from the Sun. People across the world have learned about the wonderful benefits from their biosphere and how to use them sustainably.

UNESCO (United Nations Environment, Science and Cultural Organisation) Biosphere Reserves are some of the best examples where communities have found ways to resolve the conservation of ecosystems with their ongoing sustainable use. There are over 700 UNESCO Biosphere Reserves in 120 countries including 20 transboundary sites. Seven Biosphere Reserves existed in the British Isles with two in England (North Devon and Brighton). In 2016, the Isle of Wight started to process to become the third.

Why the Isle of Wight?

The Isle of Wight is often described as a small version of southern England. The Island has everything you could possibly need: from blustery downs filled with drinking water to secretive saltmarshes teeming with life; from ancient woodlands full of bluebells to long-distance walking trails; Victorian beachside resorts to wild, surf-strewn beaches. It is a magnificent place to live, work and play. It is also one of the most biodiverse landscapes in south-east England.

Proof of the Island's rich ecosystems, stretching back 65 million years, can be found along the coast through fossils and dinosaur footprints. The Island has healthy ecosystems, with rare species such as red squirrels, dormice and bats in the woodlands; downland populated by incomparable displays of butterflies and wildflowers; Glanville fritillaries and other rare invertebrates on the cliffs; water voles and otters our river systems; and plants that occur nowhere else in the British Isles.

In 2016 there were concerns raised about the protection of our most precious wildlife if the withdrawal from the European Union lead to a reduction in protection of wildlife-rich sites such as Special Protection Areas for wetlands and birds and Special Areas of Conservation for other habitats and species. The Isle of Wight has a number of these sites including Briddlesford Woods, Isle of Wight Lagoons and Downs as well as our estuaries and coast.

A small team from the Isle of Wight AONB, Environment Agency and Arc Environmental Consultancy suggested an exploration of the concept of making the Isle of Wight a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve to maintain and enhance the awareness of the important ecological value of the Island. This would also highlight, globally, the Isle of Wight is one of the best places to explore people's interaction with the natural world.

In 2017, working with partner organisations across the Island, the Isle of Wight Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Partnership lead a bid to achieve UNESCO Biosphere Reserve status for the Isle of Wight.

In order to become a Biosphere, the Isle of Wight had to submit a nomination to UNESCO in Paris in September 2018, after having been endorsed by UK Government. The culmination of two years of public consultation, strategy meetings, public events and lots of hard work was on 19th June 2019 when UNESCO designated the Isle of Wight a Biosphere Reserve.

What does this mean?

The designation confers no legal protection or obligation on the local or national government other than that which is already found in UK law. The designation does show the world that the Isle of Wight is an important area for wildlife and that this is due, in part, to the continuing commitment its citizens have to its conservation and enhancement. Since the designation, the Biosphere is now mentioned in local authority corporate plans, development plans, sustainable tourism strategies, sustainable transport strategies, local election campaigns and nature and landscape conservation initiatives. It has given the Isle of Wight a distinctive and unique identity which is being used in funding bids for nature conservation, tourism and the arts.

Why should we care?

In the face of a climate crisis and ecological emergency the need to conserve and enhance our natural assets has not been more critical. This might mean reduction in emissions and run-off from agriculture; increase storage and retention of carbon through woodlands, peat beds, saltmarshes and seagrass / algal beds or simply in our soils; increasing sustainable transport options and producing sufficient food for future needs. On the Isle of Wight, we have a head start in that many of our sites of high nature conservation value are protected but they need increased resources to conserve and enhance them. Individuals making informed choices, together with decision-makers, local and national government agencies, environmental charities and local organisations can make a difference and the Isle of Wight UNESCO Biosphere Reserve gives them the leverage to make the changes required.

As an Island, once these natural assets are lost they will be much harder to regain as natural colonisation is difficult and man-made re-introductions are costly in both time and money. However, land is increasingly at a premium for the many objectives that decision-makers and landowners will have in terms of food, timber and energy production, economic development, transport infrastructure, climate change mitigation and health and well-being. All these require the conservation and enhancement of our natural

assets and the ecosystem services they provide and it is hoped that the whole Island community can share a common aspiration to maintain the Isle of Wight UNESCO Biosphere Reserve ethos and designation going forward.

The Isle of Wight AONB recognises the work of all groups and organisations, big and small, that contributed to the success of the application and bid to UNESCO. In particular, we would like to thank: Ian Boyd – Arc Environmental Consultancy; Joel Bateman, Richard Grogan and Peter Fellows – Isle of Wight AONB Unit; Chris Slann – New Carnival Company; Peter Taylor – Environment Agency

Richard Grogan – Isle of Wight AONB Lead Officer

An orchid bonanza

Lots of people have remarked on the prolific displays of wild orchids this year. In particular, Common Spotted, Southern Marsh, Pyramidal and Bee Orchids seem to have had a good season.

The orchid season got off to a good start when a single Early Spider Orchid put in an appearance near the Needles Battery again. This was the plant first found by Will Hannam and Sheena Bridger during lockdown in 2020 and this year it became a site of pilgrimage for many orchid enthusiasts.

Lidl's carpark in Newport has become an unlikely spot to look for orchids, following Paul Stanley's find of Broad-leaved Helleborines there in 2019. Roger Powley reported Bee Orchids from here this year and, indeed Bee Orchids appear to be doing well in this part of Newport, particularly around Hunnycross Way and Riverway as reported by Ben Tonner.

Stephen Oakes-Monger found some very fine Bee Orchid plants, including some with distinctive white sepals, along Watergate Road outside Newport and Vidya Wolton independently came across the same plants shortly afterwards.



Left: Early Spider Orchid (Roger Powley) Right: Bee Orchids (Vidya Wolton)

Vicky Basford reported a particularly fine display of Southern Marsh Orchids in Clatterford water meadows, more than in most years. She also reports increasing numbers of Pyramidal Orchids in the

Clatterford Papermill meadow below the Carisbrooke Castle car park. This field was ploughed as recently as about 2006.

At Gift to Nature's Golden Celebrations event held at Golden Hill Country Park on Sunday 27th June, orchids attracted a lot of attention. The Society held an iWatch Wildlife mini Bioblitz event on the day and orchids were reported by many members of the public. A group of Bee Orchids growing amongst a fine display of Southern Marsh Orchids were visited by many people.

Orchid enthusiast, Stephen Oakes-Monger reported a particularly fine display on Bird's-nest Orchids from the only currently known Island site by the roadside at Undercliff Gardens, Ventnor.



Left: Southern Marsh Orchids at Colwell Common (Will Hannan) Right: Bird's nest Orchid (Colin Pope)

Orchids are always unpredictable in appearance. It seems likely that the right combination of weather conditions over the past twelve months have come together to promote good flowering. As BSBI Recorder for the Isle of Wight, I am always pleased to receive interesting plant records, not just orchids, to incorporate into our Isle of Wight database and share nationally with the BSBI.

Colin Pope, colinrpop@gmail.com

Andy Yule's lockdown discoveries

Andy's account of his remarkable microfossil finds has proved popular and here he tells us about some of his finds just before and during the pandemic.

1st January 2020. 6.30 am. I got dropped off outside of the Sportsman's Rest at Porchfield. Not seeing in the New Year; I don't do that anymore. I don't want to be fuzzy headed all day; that's no way to start off another year. I was off collecting. The trouble is that the sun is not up until 8.00 and it's cloudy, which doesn't help. Pitch black it was. Then zip! A security light snaps on over the road and I can see less than I could before. I reckon the guy in the space station could see it!

I wandered up Elmsworth Lane, through the farm and down the footpath to the shore. I could see by now, but not enough to collect so I walked out onto the Newtown river. It was peaceful out there, just me and the birds over yonder waking up.

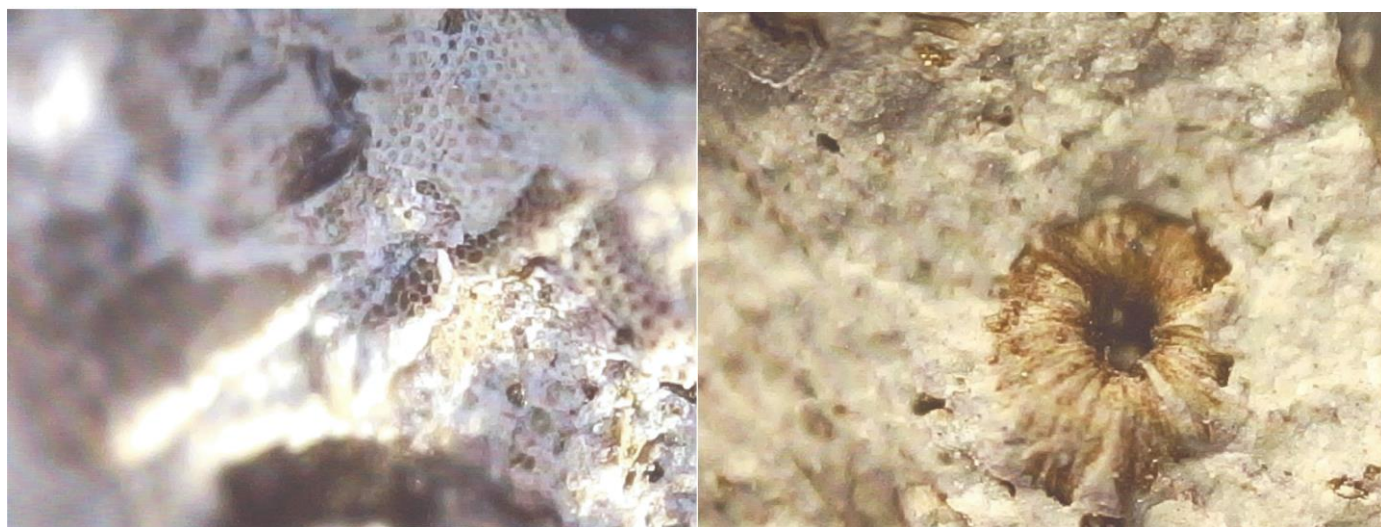
Back in 1991, I was lucky enough to find a fossil-rich bone bed about halfway 'twixt Newtown and Burnt Wood. All manner of wonderful fossils in it. I went down there today and dug out a bag full and stow it in my rucksack and wander slowly back, cracking a few bits of insect stone. I did OK; part of a feather in one and a beetle in another, not perfect but more about that later.

If I have got a little gem of a find, I wrap it up, write the date and site found, and what I think it is and place it in a drawer up in my room. Other finds I wrap up and stow in the shed. The trouble is time sort

of slides past and more and more things go into the drawer. Then the floorboards start to creak. So late last autumn I got a new shed. Now I get storage boxes, sealable bags and sticky labels. All I have to do now is to go through hundreds of fossils!

25th January. I begin to go through my finds. I pick at a piece I'd split on a bedding plane. It has part of a lacewing, a tiny body and a pair of very fine wings, a little part of the bed still covered it. I use a very small chisel and hammer and gently tap. I flip off the last bit of matrix and check the new surface. What looks like part of a snake skin. I need a picture that I can send to NHM. Very next item I check says feather. Yes, it's OK but not great. I just check the rest and is that a flower? I check under the microscope. It is very small. I need a picture of this too.

26th January, a Sunday. I look again at the beetle I collected first day of this year. What's this? I check and see what appears to be a sloughed skin of a snake. I need to get pics. (below left)



29th January. I visit Dinosaur Isle. They have a microscope that projects pictures onto a screen. I got Alec to do the pictures. Yeah! Not quite up to it. I need a microscope seen at the Medina Valley Centre with the Society. A guy called Colin Palmer was a whizz kid with the microscope imaging. I contact him and he took the pictures. I think the flower is probably a seed but a beautiful find (above right). Thank you, Colin for taking the pictures.

2nd April. I'm stuck at home like everyone else due to Covid lockdown. I had wanted to get out to Barton and Thorness but I got to bide home.

15th April. I was looking through a bag of insect stone I had in the shed. It's a piece of rock with just a partial wing. Not much so I gave it a clout and uncovered a rather lovely wing and seed. It's not like anything I saw before. Best I can do. It could be that it's wrapped in the rock in such a way that it looks different. Whatever, it's a lovely find.

20th April. I check out another bag from the shed, I collected three years ago along by Saltmead site. It's in a hard brittle version of insect stone. Two pieces, part and counter part of a plant, perhaps a horsetail. Dr Peter Hayes is keen to take any plant fossils I find. He is a paleobotanist at NHM. Anyway, one part has a perfect imprint of a horsetail. The other part is not so good. I'd almost left it on the shore. Today, I gave it a good look, when I spot this piece of lizard jaw with seven teeth. Alec Parker at Dinosaur Isle took a photo.



12th May. Fair tide today. I make out to Elmsworth for 6.30. It's a bright day but a chilly breeze. I walk the footpath to shore and discover that I'd been in such a hurry to get out, I'd forgotten to bring the kitchen roll to wrap my finds in. You've got to wrap them up, you can't just chuck them in a bag. They need to be wrapped. Yes, well I shall have to bring back rocks and split them at home.

I walk to the bone bed. Picked up five crocodile teeth from the surface. I then dig a carrier bag full of samples. Greedy, I fill the bag get it and shoved into my ruck sack (bit heavy!) and start back, picking up a couple of bits of insect stone. Enough! Then I see another. A large chunk but it has a seam. I gave it a couple of thumps and split it on the seam. Lot of vegetation, root of Bullrush or something. Dr Hayes would like this but no way can I carry it. I decided I'd put it up out of reach of the sea and return for it next day.

But then I see something, a wing case of a beetle. I check it. Oh dear, it's a pair of wing cases maybe an inch long plus three and possibly hidden under reeds. It's the biggest beetle I've seen from here. I can't leave it, but I must wrap it up. Jacket off, shirt off, vest off. I wrap it up in my vest. It's chilly down there on the shore. I then start back carrying the beetle rock like you'd carry a baby. Back ache or what! I rang Martin Munt and he came round. Yes, social distancing rubs off. Outside, I hold a tape and he uses a mobile and took its photo. He sent the photo to Dr Andrew Ross in Edinburgh. Martin tells me that Dr Ross said 'Wow! A Jewel Beetle, likely new to science'. It was worth the struggle!



September. Enough of fossils for now, I shall tell you about another discovery. OK? Eight years ago, my niece and her husband produced a set of twins, Megan, a girl one and Max, a boy one. Max likes to be out and about and one afternoon in September he was up in the garden and I'm showing him acorns. I say, 'Put a hole in the ground and you'll get a tree like that one'. We then find a Walnut and open it up. He picks up an Ash key. Yes, I say what it is and how you can grow it on to an Ash tree. I say there's a seed in there. He pulls at it and opens it up and he says there's a worm in here. I took a look. He's right, a little grub in there. I never knew you have any in Ash keys. I mention it to David Biggs and he sends me to find another.

A week or two later, Max was back. I see a ladybird, get it onto my finger and transfer it to the boy. He runs off to show his grandma, my sister Lynn. She tells him it's a Seven-spot Ladybird and puts it in amongst the shrubs. Ten minutes later she calls Max, 'There's your ladybird crossing the patio'. Max goes over and glances down at it. 'That's not him', he says. Lynn says 'Oh, tell them apart can you?' 'Yes', he says 'that one's got no spots'. What? I'm down on my knees to pick up the ladybird on a leaf and check it under my hand lens. Not a spot on it! What's this about? I've been here 73 years. Max has been here 8 years. He's found a grub in Ash keys and now a ladybird without spots. I shall have to watch out.

Andy Yule

Congratulations to George

Many of you will have heard of George Greiff, the botany student with a remarkable skill for spotting, naming and identifying mosses, liverworts and micro-fungi and a member of our Society. You may have read of his discoveries from articles in the Bulletin and Wight Studies. We are delighted to learn that George has now graduated from Oxford University with a First class degree. He will be going on to study for a Ph. D. at Bristol University, identifying mechanisms for stem cell division plane orientation in plants. Working under Dr Jill Harrison, he will be using mosses as type material to study cell division.

We send our congratulations to George and wish him all the best for the next stage in his journey.

Surprise garden visitor

Chris Hicks and Rob Pearson sent us this lovely photograph of a Long-eared Owl that appeared in their garden at Cranmore in early July for the first time. It flew through the garden, being mobbed by two Magpies and then returned and spent five minutes perched on the fence, before landing on Rob's car and then making an unsuccessful attempt to pounce on something in the long grass. A memorable encounter.



The White-letter Hairstreak, an elusive butterfly at large



As a small, indolent butterfly, given to basking aloft with wings always closed, seeking the White-letter Hairstreak (WLH) can often be a labour of Hercules. On the wing from early June to early August, it is most active before 0900 hrs and after 1600 hrs. Even then, it is only occasionally seen near the ground.

Favoured flowers such as those of bramble and thistle are more often visited after rain has purged honeydew, the chief source of sustenance, from the elm leaves.

With so many tetrads to be surveyed for the Millennium Atlas, it was soon apparent that WLH observation could be greatly accelerated by teamwork. With the more robust members detailed to shake the elm stems or branches, others with binoculars would follow the disturbed insect's zany flight, evolved to outwit feathered predators, to its next perch. Away from public highways and byways, and with due regard to H&S, deadwood could also be lobbed into the canopies of larger trees to great effect!

While the Island has been endowed with even fewer elm varieties than Hampshire, the tree is ubiquitous. Wych Elm generally survive a few years into sexual maturity before succumbing to Dutch elm disease, while derivatives of 'Dutch' elm (all hybrids of wych and field elm) cultivars, notably Huntingdon Elm, are common. Although also very susceptible to Dutch elm disease, 'Dutch', unlike Wych Elm, is perpetuated by root suckers flowering at a very early age. Moreover, resistant cultivars such as LUTECE, planted by the Island 2000 Trust (now Natural Enterprise) at the beginning of this century, are already supporting the butterfly. However, the miscalled 'English Elm' is a poor host, unable to sport the flowers and seeds on which the larvae, hatching in early March, feed.

WLH egg searches can be rewarding during winter. However, the ova are rather inconspicuous, unlike those of the Brown Hairstreak, and difficult to spot by the untrained eye.

Andrew Brookes, ya.brookes2018@yander.com

Footnote: Andrew Brookes is the White-letter Hairstreak species champion for the Hants & IoW Branch of Butterfly Conservation. On the Island, Jim Baldwin is recording butterflies for Butterfly Conservation and would be delighted to receive any records of possible White-letter Hairstreaks. He can be contacted at wightmoths@gmail.com Photo by Andy Butler

Andy's Nature Notes January to June 2021

January



1st. 2 Ringed Plover on Bonchurch front (above left).

2nd. 4 Black Redstarts in Wheeler's Bay car park on Cabbage Palms. One Black Redstart along Bonchurch Village road. Grey Wagtail by East Dene, Bonchurch.

4th. Small numbers of Gannets heading east for about an hour at 0900 diving for fish close in off Wheeler's Bay, probably after sprats (above right). A few auk sp with them.

5th. Gannets fishing off the bay again this morning. Great-northern and Red-throated Divers with them. A Stonechat along the revetment. 3 Black Redstarts in the car park.

7th. A male Blackcap feeding on the palm berries in the car park. A Bonchurch fisherman told me that he had seen 8 Little Auks (well described) diving for fish off Bonchurch when he was hauling his crab pots. He said there were other, larger, auks with them.

10th. 2 Red-throated Divers heading east this am. One female Black Redstart in the garden and 2 Goldcrests by Bonchurch Pond.

11th. First moth of the year, a Double-striped Pug on the dining room window. Well, it's a start!

15th There are two ladies that have been swimming most days this winter in front of my house. They are in ordinary swim suits and not wet suits.

16th. Photographed the resident Bonchurch Pond Buzzard today and also brief views of a Kingfisher. A Sparrowhawk killed a Blackbird in the garden this afternoon. A Red Admiral flying along Bonchurch Village Rd.

17th. Saw one of the White-tailed Eagles flying low over the cliff just to the east of my house, it then drifted off south east and on out to sea.

18th. A sun-dog to the south west, a sure sign off wind and rain.

19th. South westerly gale and rain, as expected.

20th. c.250 Gannets heading west.

23rd. A Purple Sandpiper along the revetment in company with a Rock Pipit, not bothered by breaking waves (below left). A Fulmar flew by the house this am. About 12 Guillemots on the sea off Bonchurch (Seen by local fisherman).

24th. Male and female Blackcap in the garden. Purple Sandpiper still along the revetment with the Pipit. Kingfisher on Bonchurch Pond.

25th. Good views of the Kingfisher and managed to get some reasonable photos (below right).

26th. Returning from shopping round town when a White-tailed Eagle came in low over the Winter Gardens and then on across the town heading north.

27th. Great-northern Diver 150m on the sea off home. Had my first vaccine jab today and was ill all night but better in the morning.

28th. 5 Red-throated Divers off the bay.

29th. Ladies still in swimming most days!



February

1st. Little Egret in the bay.

4th. Stonechat and a Peacock butterfly along the revetment. Ladies in swimming this afternoon.

6th. A Heron on Bonchurch pond. The Drone Fly mimic hoverfly, *Emstatia tenax*, along the revetment this afternoon.

8th. A flurry of snow this am. The Purple Sandpiper still along the revetment with the Pipit.

- 10th. A severe North East gale last night. Very cold.
 13th. The Kingfisher seen most days on the pond.
 15th. Saw a Kestrel catch, kill and eat a large Slow-worm along the cliffs to the east of me (below left).
 18th. Celandines in bloom down Shore Rd., Bonchurch.
 19th. A dead Gannet with a large Bass jammed down its throat seen and photographed on Shanklin Beach by Rod Parker (below right).
 25th. The first Wheatear of the year, a male, along at Monk's bay, Bonchurch, today. Never seen one in February before.
 26th. A Blackcap singing in the garden.
 27th. 2 Ravens at Bonchurch.



March

- 2nd. 2 Little Egrets in the bay foraging in the rocks. Chiffchaff in the garden.
 5th. Saw a fox drinking from my pond this lunchtime.
 8th. The Kingfisher still at Bonchurch Pond. 2 Firecrests in Shore Rd. Bonchurch. Heron in Monk's Bay. A small seal seen off Wheeler's Bay.
 11th. A few Redwings about at the moment, usually on ivy.
 15th. An Angle Shades moth on the side of the house this morning.
 18th. 2 Mute Swans flew by the house this morning.
 19th. A Brimstone by the side of the road at Chale.
 20th. Kingfisher still at Bonchurch but this proved to be the last sighting.
 21st. Saw 3 Red Kites high over Brading Marshes. The first Bee Fly, *Bombylius major*, at Brading.
 23rd. 2 Willow Warblers on Bonchurch Pond plus 2 Comma butterflies.
 24th. A pair of Blackcaps seen regularly in the garden drinking from the pond. Probably nesting. A female Merganser on the sea just off the revetment in the afternoon. Seen them flying by but this is the first one settled on the sea.
 25th. 2 male Wheatears on the rocks in front of the house.
 26th. Sea watch 0815 to 0915 hrs, 135 Gannets and one diver sp. A Humming-bird Hawkmoth [HBHM] in the garden plus the first Bee Fly, *Bombylius discolor*.
 27th. Another HBHM in the garden.
 30th. Watched a pair of Coal Tits taking nesting material into the space behind the barge boards on Bonchurch Old Church. Don't often see Coal Tits in this area. A Holly Blue at Monk's Bay.



April

1st. Went to Yarmouth in the morning. A Spoonbill, a Spotted Redshank, Greenfinch, Greenshank, Teal, Swallows and Martins. First Swallow off home and the first Small White in the garden. 6 Peacocks along the revetment.

3rd. An Oystercatcher along the revetment.

4th. HBHM in the garden, Went over to Laundry Lane; Great Egret, 2 Eagles, Reed Warbler, Cetti's Warbler and 5 Little Egrets together.

6th. Drove out to Woody Bay and walked back to Steephill: 2 Ravens and a Common Sandpiper on Orchard Bay beach. A Silver Y moth in the garden. Went to Brading for 2 Penduline Tits, didn't see them. Went back in the afternoon for 2 Night Herons, didn't see them either.

7th. Went to Atherfield, saw a Merlin by Chale Church chasing a small bird. Back to Laundry Lane in the afternoon and had distant views of a Night Heron. Saw a Buzzard take a small rabbit.

9th. 3 Willow Warblers and a Firecrest in Bonchurch Old Church.

10th. My son saw a male Harrier (probably a Montague's) fly across in front of his car while driving along the Military Rd at Barnes High. Ron, the Grey Seal, off Wheeler's Bay.

11th. Brading again: The Eagles were trying to take one of the Great White Egrets but gave up after a concentrated effort.

12th. 2 Sandwich Terns across the bay.

13th. Brading: a Little-ringed Plover (below left) and c.40 Med Gulls.

14th. Good views of the Night heron at last!! (below right)

16th. A Clouded Yellow along the revetment.



17th. Atherfield: a Little-ringed Plover, 5 Wheatears and 7 Tufted Duck. On to Yarmouth and saw 2 Redshank, a Greenshank, 2 Reed Buntings, 8 Shelduck, 19 Black-tailed Godwits in summer plumage (below left) and 14 Turnstones. Ron seal close in off Bonchurch.

19th. Male Orange Tip in the garden. The naturalized Wallflowers along the cliffs to the east of my house are the best I've seen for years (below right). They were first recorded here in 1883.

20th. A right old racket going on above my house in the late afternoon which turned out to be a Black Kite attempting to get some food item from a Buzzard. The Herring Gulls were going berserk and the resident corvids joined in as well. They were just above the trees at the back of the house and I had excellent views of all this. The battle was still going on as they moved up and over the cliff and eventually out of my sight.

21st. First Large-red Damselfly in the garden plus a Brimstone and a Willow Warbler.

22nd. 20 Bar-tailed Godwits heading east off home late afternoon.

25th. A Wheatear spent most of the day in and around the garden. A Whimbrel on the shore in the Bay and a Whitethroat by the pond.

26th. A Wall butterfly in Blackgang Viewpoint carpark. 6 Swifts in off the sea same place.

27th. Pete and I walked from Woody Bay to the Ventnor Botanic Garden and saw 2 Whimbrel on Battery Bay beach and also heard a Golden Oriole calling close to us in the Botanic Garden for about 5 minutes. Try as we might we couldn't see it although it was only about 20ft away. Very frustrating! Then got a call to say a Hoopoe was in the same field at Niton where one was last year so we nipped smartly over there to see it. Not a bad morning!

29th. Ron close in off the Bay at home.

30th. We went out to the West Wight this morning and recorded 4 Small Blue, 2 Green Hairstreaks, one Small Copper, 2 Small Heath and 2 Wall in Whiteways car park. Later on, found the first three Glanville Fritillaries along the revetment.



MAY.

3rd. 3 Cattle Egrets on Brading Marshes and 2 Great Egrets.

4th. 2 Common Sandpipers to the east of Monk's Bay.

7th. One Common Sandpiper in the Bay. 9 Glanvilles, 2 Common Blue along the revetment.

10th. A Painted Lady in the garden today. As it turned out this was the start of an influx right along the south coast.

11th. 30 Glanvilles, 2 Common Blue, one Brown Argus, 5 Dingy Skippers, 3 Painted Lady, one Wall and a Silver y along the revetment.

12th. Glanville in the garden.

16th. Laundry Lane with Pete: one Hairy Dragonfly, 5 Hobbies, c.200 Swifts and a Sparrowhawk.

17th. One Adonis Blue, 5 Dingy, 33 Glanvilles and 6 Common Blue along the revetment. 5 Orange tips in the garden (below upper right). 6 *Eurydema ornata* along the revetment.

24th. 2 Manx Shearwaters early am. A long way out.

26th. Called the coastguard this afternoon to retrieve a large piece of trawl netting lodged in the rocks someway off in front of the house. They managed it with difficulty (below bottom left).

29th. Had a look along Bonchurch Down lower slope. 8 Adonis Blue, 5 Glanvilles, 38 Common Blue, 6 Brown Argus, 3 Dingy Skipper and 5 White Helleborine in the Holm Oak wood.

30th. Pete and I went to Forelands and saw 16 Glanvilles and 6 Green-winged Orchids.

31st. We went to St. Catherine's Point this am and recorded 13 Bar-tailed Godwits, one Lesser Whitethroat, 3 Yellowhammers and 2 Stonechats. In the afternoon had 49 Glanvilles and one Adonis with Dave Nordell along the revetment.



JUNE.

1st. 3 Rose Chafers, a Silver y, Glanville, Brown Argus and a male and female Orange Tip in the garden. 2 Fulmars seen most days passing the front of my house.

3rd. Ran the moth trap for the first time this year. Not much at all: a White Point, 3 Diamond Back moths, one Rusty-dot Pearl, 8 Cream-spot Tiger, a Lime Hawkmoth and a single Blair's Mocha.

5th. Pete and I went over to a private reservoir along the Military Rd and saw one Red-veined Darter, a Broad-bodied Chaser and an Emperor Dragonfly. Stopped off at Whale Chine and recorded 32 Small Heath 2 Painted Lady and 12 Glanvilles. In the afternoon went along to a site near Ventnor to see 3 Bird's-nest Orchids (heads up from Colin!).

8th. Bonchurch Down with John Caws. 17 male Adonis, 35 Glanvilles, 38 Small Heath, 29 Brown Argus, 35 Common Blue, one Wall, 4 Large Skippers and 15 Dingy Skippers.

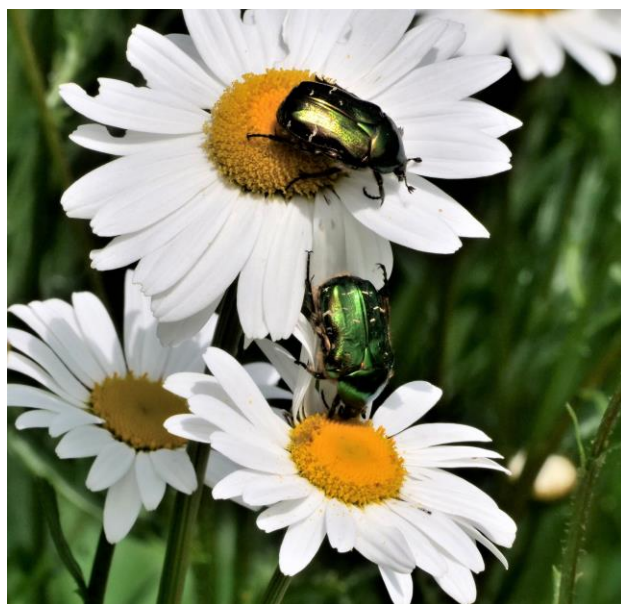
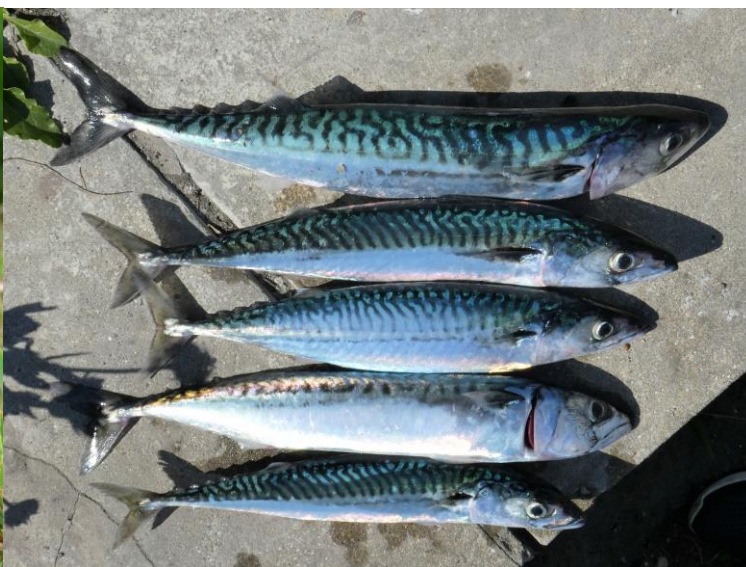
9th. 3 or 4 Rose Chafers in the garden most sunny days, not seen so many before (below left). 9 Bee Orchids along the revetment and a Small Heath, only the second one we've seen here.

10th. A small seal in the bay early am. A Peregrine Falcon flew by the house later on.

11th. Ron seal close in off home. A Green Woodpecker in the garden (below left) and a single Holly Blue.

12th. First Meadow Brown in the garden plus 3 Holly Blue.

13th. A male Downy Emerald dragonfly flew through the garden this pm. Where it came from is a mystery although we did see another back in 2007. Very strange. In the morning Pete and I had gone to the Sandown Levels to survey for Dragonflies. We saw 3 Scarce Chasers, one Hairy Dragonfly and c.15 Banded Demoiselles.



14th. First swim of the year. Not cold thankfully.

15th. Stranger and stranger: 2 Banded Demoiselles through the garden, again, no idea where they could have come from. 2 Small Blues along the revetment. My son and his wife took their dinghy out for a spot of fishing in the afternoon and had 5 Mackerel, the first of the year (upper right).

16th. 2 Orange Tips in the garden.

20th. 3 Razorbills on the sea drifting down tide. A long way out.

21st. Terrible day, rained all the time.

23rd. Went back to the Bird's nest Orchid site with Iain Outlaw. There are 6 there now.

Also had a look at the Field Cow-wheat site at St. Lawrence, plenty of flowers and has spread into the field, so doing well.

26th. First Marbled White of the year along the revetment. Rose Chafers still coming in to the garden. A Sandwich Tern flew past the bay this am.

27th. A Small Skipper in the garden (previous page below right).

28th. An influx of Silver Y moths back of the revetment this afternoon, 24 counted along with a HBHM and a Painted Lady (seen with Dave Nordell). A female Broad-bodied Chaser back of Monk's Bay. A Little Egret heading west past the house, late evening.

29th. Another horrendous day with torrential rain last night. A feature all too common so far this year, let's hope things improve in the next 6 months.

Andy Butler

Section Meetings

Archaeology Section

Archaeology On Wednesdays

Zoom meetings

Zoom meetings became an accepted and regular replacement for our Wednesday outdoor meetings until it was possible to meet outside in a larger group. Members' confidence increased and more felt able to offer slideshow presentations; we were able to share experiences and knowledge and promote discussions which would not otherwise have happened. Thus we have discovered that Zoom offers clear benefits in itself and is not just a substitute for the real thing. We shall make more planned use of the format during the winter season.

Some examples:

Janie and Alan Martin spent several years sailing the Mediterranean and visited many sites of historical/archaeological interest. They sailed through the Corinth Canal which, although not built until the 19th century, had been considered since the time of Nero because it cut 120 miles off the journey between Rome and Athens. Their photos showed it to be a dramatic experience. Famous sites en route included Messalongi, where Byron died; Delphi and links to Apollo; Epidavros and the Greek theatre; Sounion and the temple of Poseidon.

Discussions about the travel and trade of the Phoenicians prompted Janie and Alan to show photos of the region near the Straits of Gibraltar, known to the ancient world as 'The Pillars of Hercules'. Janie explained how seeing these straits from a small boat, and in particular from the Mediterranean side, gave an insight into why the 'Pillars' were viewed by ancient travellers as so daunting, with the seas beyond being full of mystery and threat. Several sites in this part of Spain were actually colonies founded by the Phoenicians; these intrepid sailors were responsible for trade from the Levantine coast in the east to Cornwall in the distant North West.

Janie also talked about the 15th century navigators who sailed from the same area down past Africa and also across the Atlantic, ultimately circumnavigating the globe.

Delian Backhouse-Fry revisited a talk about human evolution with updates based largely on the rapid progress in use of DNA and our increased knowledge of other early hominids such as the Denisovans. We both recommend a recently published book 'The World Before Us' by Tom Higham.

Delian also gave a slideshow of her visit to the Roman sites in Libya, such as Leptis Magna. This was the subject of a talk to the society some years ago but it was new to nearly all the members at the Zoom meeting. The stunning Roman ruins included tributes to Septimus Severus who was born there, eventually becoming emperor and dying at York.

Helen gave a presentation of our excavations at Key Cottage, Newtown in 2011. This enabled her to share plans and photographs which was not possible when we had our socially distanced walk there in October 2020.

Post lockdown activities

Once we were able to meet outside again, we trialed some fieldwork keeping within Covid restrictions.

A trip to Brook beach at low tide produced 2 notable items:

1: a lump of 'slag' probably from the Bronze Age with residue of copper or bronze. Analysis and confirmation is awaited.

2: an unusual small dinosaur footprint identified at the Dinosaur Centre at Sutton Farm as a kind of pterodactyl.

Fieldwalking on a site off Apse Manor Rd produced some pottery and worked flints but also opened our eyes to 2 events in its history: the medieval ownership by the monks of Lyra (we keep encountering them on the island!) and the story of Shanklin Airport in the 1920s and 30s.

Walks have taken us to the Anglo-Saxon cemetery site on Bowcombe Down (left below), the Bowcombe valley, Headon Warren, Appuldurcombe (right below), Ventnor Esplanade and Bonchurch.



Helen Jackson

Talk on Durotrigian Coinage by Dr. John Talbot: Wednesday March 10th

The Archaeology Group were very fortunate to be offered a talk via Zoom by Dr John Talbot, associated researcher at Oxford. His current long-term research project is researching the South-western Iron Age ('Durotriges') silver stater coinage. These are found almost exclusively in Dorset, the Isle of Wight and Western Hampshire.

John led us through the process of how he established different die groups which allowed him to sequence coins from earliest to latest but not allow for a precise chronology to be given. Using the evidence from the die groups, he has been able to locate the main areas of distribution for the different die groupings.

In addition to individual coin finds, John has been investigating the coins within Iron Age hoards. Two Island hoards have figured within his research, those found at Brighstone (967 coins) and the other at Shorwell (156 coins). Both these were revealed by metal detectorists and reported to the Finds Liaison Officer (Portable Antiquities Scheme) for the Island. Tentative conclusions suggest that these coins were used for commercial purposes within a restricted island area prior to being accumulated into the hoards. Over the time span from the earliest coins within the die group to the latest, it was apparent that there were three periods of increased accumulation paralleled in both hoards. Why this should be was thought to be too speculative to comment on at this stage of the research.

The talk was extremely interesting especially John's explanation of how he is able to structure die groups. It was refreshing to see the Isle of Wight feature in a wider area of research. Too often, even research involving Southern England, treats the island as a footnote if that.

David Marshall

Time Team Revisited: Saturday April 24th



About twelve members joined me on a breezy, showery morning to explore the field on Gander Down at Yaverland which was excavated by Time Team in 2001. Whilst the site and its story were new to some, members who had taken part could share their experiences. Some had helped with fieldwalking and finds-washing and could also remember seeing some of the discoveries. Anne Cahill has also donated a collection of photos to the Society and I was able to share some of those.

We met at the car park on the way up Culver Down, from where we could set the site into context and discuss the ancient Brading Haven and the wide waterway continuing through to Sandown Bay. This strategic position was an obvious reason for the use of this site in the past. I gave a brief background to the site and explained that the term 'hillfort' is misleading as it can denote an Iron Age site used for a number of purposes not just defensive.

As we walked down the hill it was possible to make out the remains of the earthworks that curved round one part of the hill and were partially excavated by Time Team. Having crossed the road we then walked along the side of the old creek and it was easy to visualise how flat-bottomed cargo vessels could have traveled up and moored, explaining the presence of a Roman building that was identified as a workshop, perhaps used for metal smelting and recycling. We took a short diversion along the sea-wall to gaze out across the marshes and imagine the difference when ships could have been seen here.

Moving back and up the hill we discussed some of the finds and conclusions, including the unexpected discovery of a skeleton in one the enclosure ditches. With no single definitive report on the excavation there are still some conflicting opinions about the conclusions, but a Romano-British date for the skeleton seems likely. Occupation evidence was found for the Iron Age and Roman period, with disputed evidence for Anglo-Saxon.

Many thanks to Pat Barber, Christine Harmer and Michael Fawdry for sharing their memories.

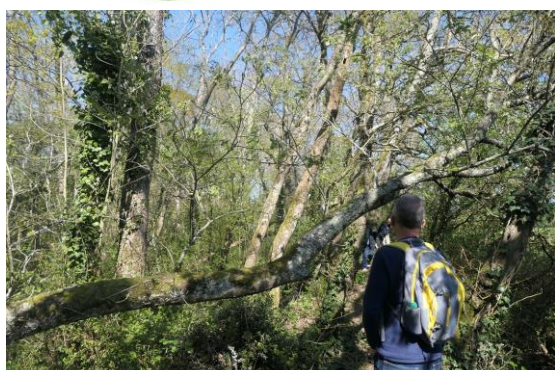
Helen Jackson

Botany



Saturday 24th April Chalkclose Copse

Due to restrictions at the time, we were a small party of just six but that proved to be fortuitous as parking was very limited. The Botany Group had visited Chalkclose Copse in 2006 when the owner, who was very proud of the wood, had used grants to carry out coppice management. The new owner, Sam Cambridge, kindly invited us back. He has carried out a small amount of management but the woodland path was much shadier than before which probably explained why we failed to refind Narrow-leaved Lungwort, Betony, Saw-wort and Bitter-vetch. Nevertheless, there was a colourful display of spring flowers and Early Purple Orchids were much admired. We were delighted to refind the Wild Service Tree (left) and show it to Sam. He had been told



there was one in the wood but had not located it. Sadly, it had blown over in a previous storm but was still growing and carried the label put there by the previous owner. Another upright younger tree was growing alongside.

Colin Pope

Sunday 16th May Lock's Farm meadow, Porchfield

We were still restricting numbers at this meeting. Twelve people had booked but only eight showed. The owner of the field, Barry Angell accompanied us to the site. At first, we searched for Mousetail (*Myosurus minimus*) which grows on disturbed muddy ground around the field entrances, but we failed to find any. The cold, dry spring must have delayed the growth of this annual. When we reached the meadow, an SSSI, the Green-winged Orchids were much enjoyed by everyone. A feature of this particular population is the wide range of colour forms and this was very much in evidence. There were not a lot of other plants in flower but several stands of the nationally scarce Divided Sedge (*Carex divisa*), a plant generally requiring brackish conditions, was noteworthy. Records show that this is a recent colonist of the meadow. We also saw Dyer's Greenweed and Saw-wort, neither in flower yet, and both of which have increased here in recent years.

The meadow is one of a number of herb rich neutral grasslands in the Newtown area that were known to have been ploughed in the nineteenth century. Evidence of ridge and furrow was still evident. In the early twentieth century, a part of the field (where the Divided Sedge now grows) was used for keeping poultry. The flat south-western part of the field was used as Porchfield cricket ground at one time and there was a pavilion there (photo below right shows Porchfield cricket pavilion during a match in 1950s, courtesy of Barry Angell). The pitch was maintained by digging it over with garden forks and kept in condition using a steam roller. Barry told us that he still had the remains of the pavilion in his garden! We recorded 38 lowland meadow species on our visit. I followed this up on a second visit in early June and recorded an additional 19 meadow species, mostly grasses and sedges. Barry said that he had been delighted by the number of Hares he had seen in the field this year and we had good views of two Hares on our visit.



Colin Pope

Saturday 5th June Binnel Bay

On a perfect summers' afternoon, 13 members attended the meeting to botanise the Binnel Bay area. This was the third meeting of the season and with lockdown restrictions easing the best attended meeting so far. It was decided that due to the difficulty of the terrain (narrow cliff paths, uneven ground, need for social distancing etc) we would not do any formal recording but regard the meeting as a learning experience especially for some of the newer members.

The walk started by going through Charles Wood, where Colin Pope spotted a very good specimen of Italian Lord's-and-ladies, *Arum italicum ssp. neglectum*, a subspecies confined to the Undercliff area. Dave pointed out the very fine stands of Harts Tongue Fern *Asplenium scolopendrium* another notable feature of this wood. Another plant of interest was Spurge Laurel, *Daphne laureola*, an interesting evergreen shrub with yellowish green flowers. There were some very fine examples of Lime (*Tilia x europaea*) whose leaves looked lovely backlit in the sunshine.

As we made our way towards Binnel Bay, the vegetation changed. A specimen of Darwin's Barberry, *Berberis darwinii*, was observed by the side of the path, probably a garden escape from nearby Old Park. In a wet area good stands of Yellow Iris, *Iris pseudacorus*, could be seen. At Binnel Bay, there were large stands of Tamarisk, *Tamarix gallica*, some with their feathery pink racemes beginning to show, not native but thought to be naturalised at Binnel where it is clearly thriving. At this point, members had wonderful views of the coast looking down to St. Catherine's Lighthouse, also the remains of the sea wall built by William Spindler and known locally as Spindler's Folly.

Some nifty footwork was required to cross a stream flowing down to the beach but growing on the rocks at the back of the stream was the liverwort, *Pellia epiphylla*. The group then joined the cliff path which eventually gets to Woody Bay and beyond. In a steep rocky area were glorious stands of Sea Thrift, *Armeria maritima*. On the large rock outcrops here grew Rock Sea-spurrey, *Spergularia rupicola*, which along with other species forms a glorious natural rock garden here. In this area we were fortunate to observe a few specimens of Glanville Fritillary Butterflies feeding on the Thrift.

A wide variety of coastal flowers provided a pleasing backdrop to the walk, notably Sea Beet (*Beta vulgaris*), Birds Foot Trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*) and Sea Carrot (*Daucus carota ssp. gummifer*). Several members commented how they had never visited the area before and how beautiful it was. Hoary Plantain, *Plantago media*, was present in a few areas. It seemed we were a bit early for orchids, but then Will Hannam spotted some Bee Orchids, *Ophrys apifera*.

As we left the coastal path and made our way back to the village, Colin remembered that a garden close by was one of the few sites for Cocks Eggs (*Salpichroa organifolia*) in the UK. We made an impromptu call on the owner of the house and were pleased to see the plant was still established in the garden. It was first recorded here in 1927 making this the longest established population of the plant in this country!





Dave and Hazel Trevan

Ornithology



17th April 2021 Brading Marsh

Two groups of six people met at the beginning of the cycle track at the end of Laundry Lane for a walk in the area. The start times were staggered to try and avoid both groups meeting up and Jim Baldwin and I led the walks. Both groups were able to see two White-tailed Eagles at the start as they were both perched on two bare trees on the main marsh. Between us we noted 46 species during the course of the beautiful morning. Other special species seen were Marsh Harrier and Great White Egret. The migrants that visit us each spring are arriving with Chiffchaff, Willow Warbler, Sedge Warbler, Reed Warbler, Blackcap and Whitethroat represented. We also heard the explosive call of many Cetti's Warbler which are resident. Many Skylark were singing and the odd House Martin and Swallow were seen. By the pools south-west of Carpenter's Farm were a group of at least 40 very vocal Mediterranean Gull with about 10 Black-headed Gull so we were able to see the differences in the head markings at this time of the year. Whilst my group were walking along the raised footpath to Bexley Point we were delighted to see both White-tailed Eagles flying over and then heading south west, one of them being pursued by Kestrel and then Buzzard. The difference in sizes was very apparent. In the 'triangular' field the Great White Egret was spotted both by us and then two Grey Herons who harassed the egret until it flew off.

Jackie Hart

16th May 2021 Golden Hill Country Park

As part of the 50th anniversary of Golden Hill Country Park the Society was asked to conduct surveys during 2020. This could not go ahead because of the Covid 19 pandemic so we decided to conduct the bird meeting now. The Country Park obtained some lottery funding and have provided a directions board in the car park and we followed the wildlife walk. Half of the park is taken up with tree cover with the rest as open spaces. As the weather forecast was for heavy rain only five people attended. The birds were mainly in the tree cover or shrubs as they are busy raising young at this time so it was mainly an exercise in identifying bird song. Three species of warblers were identified, Chiffchaff (the most numerous), Blackcap

and Common Whitethroat. Robin, Blackbird, Blue Tit, Great Tit, Wren, Dunnock, Magpie and Song Thrush were the representative resident birds. Three Jays were about and a Great Spotted Woodpecker was heard. 20 species were recorded.

Jackie Hart

4th June 2021 Mottistone Down

Eleven members and a guest met at Strawberry Lane for an evening walk along Mottistone Down. The weather was perfect with a clear evening and a light wind although the temperature was slightly below average for the time of year. As we made our way towards the Long Stone, we stopped to enjoy close views of singing male Yellowhammers and to enjoy the Bee Orchids by the side of the path. We carried on past the Long Stone to our destination to hear and hopefully see our target species, the Nightjar. As dusk approached and the light faded, the first churring birds were heard. Minutes later the first bird was seen briefly in flight. A Woodcock was heard with their distinctive call before we were then treated with virtually non-stop flight views of Nightjars at close range including a display flight with wing clapping. We estimated that there must have been at least 6-8 birds present, possibly more, with one female identified by the lack of white patches on the wings (they were that close). Eventually it was time to leave and a contented group returned to the car park after a successful evening walk.

Jim Baldwin

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY'S REPORT

We are delighted to welcome the following new members:

We are sorry to report the following death:

Toni Goodley, Membership Secretary

SOCIETY OFFICERS:-

President Mr Matthew Chatfield, Flat 2, 17 East Hill Road, Ryde IOW PO33 1LU

General Secretary Dr. Colin Pope, 14 High Park Rd, Ryde IOW. PO33 1BP colinrpoppe@gmail.com

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Membership Secretary Mrs T. Goodley, 15 The Lawns, Fairlee Rd, Newport, IOW. PO30 2PT

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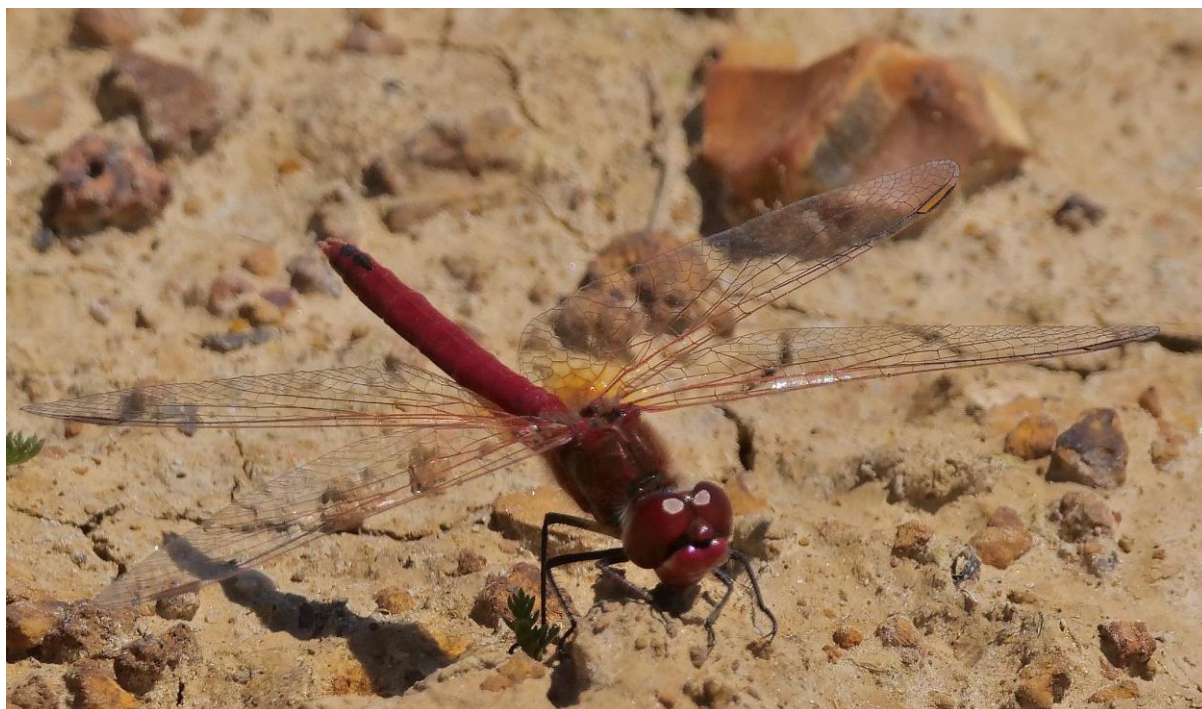
NEXT BULLETIN

Items for inclusion in the next Bulletin and Reports of Meetings
for 1st July 2021 to 31st December 2021 should be sent to:-

Isle of Wight Natural History & Archaeology Society, Unit 16, Prospect Business Centre, Prospect Road,
Cowes PO31 7AD Email: iwnhas@btconnect.com

The closing date for acceptance of items and reports will be 2nd January 2022

Bulletin Editor: Colin Pope



A Red-veined Darter Dragonfly at Atherfield reservoir. Photo Andy Butler



Above: Rue-leaved Saxifrage, *Saxifraga tridactylites*, found in two locations in central Newport in May by Keith and Anne Marston. Below: View towards Woody Bay photographed on a Botany meeting by Dave Trevan.

