

Green Gym[®]



Sonning Common

"THE LOPPER"

full of little cuttings.

Issue 76 June 2023

Welcome



Volunteers' Week is the first week of June, so this edition of the newsletter is dedicated to all of you and your amazing work. To show appreciation of the time and energy you invest in protecting and restoring the natural environment for wildlife and others to enjoy.

martin b

Nesting Mallard at Cleeve Water Meadows

At the session at Cleeve Water Meadows Gymsers were surprised to see a mass of feathers on top of one of the habitat piles we had built - checking it out we discovered a mallard nesting on the pile.



The caring mum sat there for over two weeks only leaving early morning and late evening to feed.



Charlotte was happy to find that 3 of the eggs had safely hatched.

No sign of the ducklings or mum but hope they do well.

Really pleasing when the work we do to benefit the environment pays off!

martin b

Crocker End Green again.....

We were here some time ago I was assured but it was a new one for me and what a delightful spot where we found ourselves on a wet Thursday morning in early April. A detached hamlet nestling in the woods of Nettlebed parish we found this lovely green with houses around, our cars parked on a grassy patch of it. I must say I love places with an 'End' or a 'Green' in the name. Let alone a 'Common'.



The task today was bramble clearance - not I hasten to point out-pulling bramble up, but much easier just slashing it or shearing at ground level. The bramble hedge was a clear stretch bordering a path fringing the Common.

Geoff and Martin were on hand to explain the parish council Commons sub committee's management plan. The idea is to cut to the ground a third of a length, leave a third to grow and a third to mature. This is an excellent idea after all we always need to balance of neatness and a manicured finish with habitat creation and a reasonably 'wild' appearance.

And so we split into groups to attack the flag marked sections stacking the cut material against the boundary fence which will become a dead hedge very usefully in the future.

The picture shows the completed clearances and work still to be done another time.



Mike S

Aston Rowant



We were repairing a fence and gate, and removing mini-scrub from the adjoining downland field, while Steph went to move the wethers into a new pasture. She put in a call for help as one of them had escaped into the wrong field and she couldn't round it up on her own. Three of us descended the steep slope to the gate between the top field and the middle field where the errant sheep was on one side calling to a pal sheep on the right side. The aid was to encourage him back through the gate without the pal getting out. Alas, he was thinking of coming in when the other shot out and they both took off down the middle field and joined a neighbour's flock through a gap to the bottom field.

Peter and Steph had done a lot of running to no avail, and we all slogged back up the slope in disappointment. Steph checked their whereabouts shortly afterwards, to find they were back at the first gate asking to be let in. There's sheep for you!

Julia

Greys Court

The main task Leo gave us at the end of April was to clear a mass of broken branches by the edge of Pissen Wood. They were from a fallen beech which was blocking access to the wood for estate vehicles.



Tony climbed up to remove heavy branches still attached to the trunk. We made a habitat pile of the debris around a nearby ancient tree stump which was already an insect haven. With a turnout of 17, short work was made of that and the additional task of clearing brambles along the field edge.

Julia

Henley Rowing Museum



Our May task at the River and Rowing Museum in Henley was to restore an overgrown footpath skirting the car park. The path also needed a new section, so we cleared vegetation and installed wooden boards ready for scalplings and chippings to be laid along the route. When the Museum re-opens in the summer after extensive refurbishment there will be a new mysterious pathway for Mole and Ratty to explore.

Julia

Home Farm Wood - I



The ground was very squelchy in the area we had last cleared, so the April work session in Home Farm Wood concentrated on a section to the SE of the pond. It took most of the morning to dispose of one thick stand of rhododendrons, but Alison, Jane, Carol, Robert and Geoff won in the end.

Julia

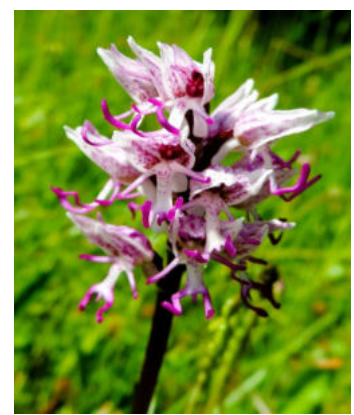
Home Farm Wood - II



We could happily wage war on rhododendron ponticum all year, but in spring and summer are a useful time for us to programme sessions as these rhodys are no good for nesting birds or insect life. Bring on the mattocks! Isabelle and Elodie chose a huge specimen which took all morning to eradicate at one session at Home Farm Wood in May. The enormous root finally succumbed, with extra help at the end from Carol, Mike M and Peter T. Chris and Sheelagh's filled rolls and rock cakes no doubt contributed extra energy.

Julia

Some orchids found around Goring in May



L-R: Green Winged; Hybrid Lady x Monkey; White Helleborine; Monkey

martin b

Tony's daffodils at South Stoke

Yes, they appear again alongside the railway fence as if to say GG was 'ere.
Enter Autolycus, singing

*When daffodils begin to appear,
With heigh the doxy over the dale
Why then comes in the sweet o' the year;
For the red blood reigns in the winter's pale*

The Winter's Tale, Act 4, Scene 3



As of 23 March, daffodils all over South Stoke and stretches along the main road (Planted by South Stoke WI not GG)

Not sure about a 'doxy over the dale' though or the 'red blood' unless you trip over them of course.

Mike S

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