

Editorial

F. Watkins and D. Lewis

The Ashmolean Natural History Society of Oxfordshire continues its work with the publication of Volume 5 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 5 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 5 comprises papers which arose from the Floodplain Hay-meadows workshop held by the Rare Plants Group in 2007 as Camilla Lambrick explains in more detail in the Introduction.

We have already begun work on Volume 6 which is to be a Darwin Memorial volume and papers for this volume will be published on-line as soon as they are ready. We invite further papers and systematic lists to be submitted.

Ashmolean Natural History Society of Oxfordshire activities

The Society now has three sub-groups; the Verge Survey Group has been doing its work for nearly 30 years. The Rare Plants Group is 16 years old in 2010 and the Education Group is now in its ninth year.

The Rare Plants 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* and arable flowers at Wytham. The Group is also hard at work on the Oxfordshire Rare Plants Register with the Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre.

The Education Group's plant identification courses begun in 2002 continue to go from strength to strength. The basic course has been fully subscribed each year with a waiting list. 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.

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; and to campaign in support of sustainable principles and practices for the protection of the natural environment.

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. Over the past few years the importance of monitoring the effects our management is having on biodiversity has become ever more apparent. A large team of volunteers carry out survey work on reserves to help collect species data to show whether site management is achieving the desired effect.

Finally, 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.

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