



39 Christchurch Road, Bournemouth, BH1 3NS

Tel: 01202 553525

Registered Charity Number 219585

www.bnss.org.uk

Science Naturally

Newsletter Winter 2015/16

Update from the Trustees.....

What an amazing year 2015 has been for the Society! Here are just a few of our highlights....

- ♦ We held three amazing open events and have enticed hundreds of people through our doors, including joint events with the Arts University Bournemouth, Bournemouth Arts by the Sea Festival, Dorset Architectural Heritage Week and Dorset Wildlife Trust.
- ♦ We became an Accredited Museum! (See more on page 6)
- ♦ We welcomed Chris Packham as our new Patron.
- ♦ We reached 1,000 likes on our Facebook page!
- ♦ We held many amazing talks, study groups, field trips and Young Explorers groups and welcomed many new members



There are already many plans in place to make 2016 an equally amazing year. Members are looking into potential grants and funding to be able to repair the lantern roof and enhance our visitor experience. We are also working with local companies to review and improve the Society's logo and website, with updates hopefully being made in the new year.

We are extremely grateful for all of the hard work and dedication so many of the members have put in over the last year. Moving forward, we would like this to continue to grow, and we are therefore looking for more people who are willing to volunteer. There are so many different ways you can be involved across the Society, from helping with museum collections documentation and care, to administration assistance, stewarding at open events, giving guided tours or assisting with school visits, fundraising, social media and promotional assistance....the list goes on!! We will be looking into the improvement of our volunteer service in the new year, but if there is anything you would like to do to help, or any ideas you would like to share, please do get in touch with me. As Tesco says, every little helps!!

So, that is all for 2015. We will see you again when the Society returns on Tuesday 5th January. On behalf of myself and all the Trustees I would like to wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

Katherine West, Communications Officer

publicity@bnss.org.uk

Open Weekend 2015 - Reason for its success finally revealed.

We have field trips, talks, coach trips; but to me, the BNSS is at its finest, its most professional and most cheering, when they put on an Open Day/Weekend. I do believe there is a secret behind this success, which can now, finally, be revealed.

Yes, it is professional, everything arranged to put on a show of what the real world can offer, rather than seen through a screen. Refreshments at hand, and presented in such a pleasing way. A welcoming committee, that were indeed welcoming. So it was that on 11th October, and another large crowd, mainly of families.



Katherine has taken over from Mary Thornton with the role of putting it all together, co-ordinating everyone to work as a team, and once again it seemed to go faultlessly. Not once did I hear the plaintive wail of a young child, "I'm bored. Can we go now", rather it was smiles all round, laughter, or deep concentration, shock and awe, mouths ajar in

wonderment at the natural world.

As the families departed Katherine would ask if they had enjoyed the day, and I never heard anyone say it was 'Okay.' Rather they were fulsome in their praise, the children clutching their books, artwork or fossil.

Each exhibitor believes their department is the most interesting, quite right too, and want to impart this belief with knowledge and enthusiasm, bewilderment that anyone could think otherwise. Everyone should be entranced, whether it be the night sky/the insect world/creative artwork/fossils' eggs/life as seen through powerful microscopes/axe-heads and so on.

So here is I believe the secret behind this success. It is that the volunteers, be it the caterers, the welcoming committee, or exhibitors, enjoy the day every bit as much as the visitors.

Ian Julian

BNSS Forum

We are blessed in residing in such a scenic, varied habitat county. I asked a few likely members if they would like a forum for the town, and so far, have received a 100% positive response. The primary functions will be to report any interesting sightings, principally in the borough's boundaries – but not exclusively. If anything really good is spotted just outside, such as Otters on the Stour, then they can let us know. Perhaps James could tell us if there is anything interesting astronomically, particularly if he knows the skies are likely to be cloudless.

Another thing we hope to do are field trips, but with short notice, perhaps taking advantage of friendly weather, perhaps of a special sighting. We already did this a few weeks ago when we went to Brownsea, to see the Red Squirrels, Spoonbills and Avocets, and a hastily arranged trip to Studland a couple of weeks later.

All you have to do is go to Yahoo Groups, search for bnssmembersforum, register with a name, and get them to send you emails direct. That's it. Hope you not only join, but occasionally submit something, but you don't have to. I do not foresee this ever clogging up your Inbox, it will just be an occasional message. To submit anything, post to bnssmembersforum@yahoo.co.uk

Ian Julian



Winter Wildlife

Fieldfare



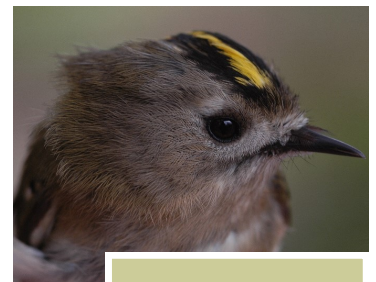
Katherine asked me to write a little about the local wildlife to look out for during the winter months. Heather Dixon and 'Bournemouth Naturally' showed the variety of habitats, and the large expanses of green spaces inside the Borough. But - let's face it, Bournemouth is actually a town for the summer. I don't just mean hordes of grockles with impeccable taste who migrate here for the sun, but the town is abuzz with bees and butterflies together with reptiles on the heathlands, with terns passing along our seashores, numerous wall lizards along our clifftops and from where I have actually photographed a school of dolphins passing along the Bay. But when the nights start to close in - there is not so much to see!

But do not despair, we have Badgers, Otters along the Stour, together with numerous Kingfishers, who sensibly come south from the cold, bleak industrial north for the milder climate. Vixens will be heard shrieking and yelling in January calling for mates, similarly Tawny Owls hooting as the juveniles attempt to establish territories.

As I write this in late November, the main topic of interest is the lowly Woodpigeon. Each day, up to 150,000 can be seen in an hour, sometimes very high up, and despite us knowing more and more about migration, no one is sure what they are up to or where they are going. It is largely a local thing here on the south coast, and it happens this time each year.

Already, there are large flocks of our winter thrushes, Redwings and Fieldfares who often travel together, mainly gorging on fruits and berries. If you see Chaffinch flocks, look out for very colourful orangey birds and this will be the Bramblings, one of my favourite birds.

But we are bereft of many winter migrants, so really, you have to go just outside the town's boundaries, and there you can be satiated with the best that Britain can offer.



Goldcrest

Take your choice of Weymouth, Portland, Poole Harbour and the Purbecks to the west, or Christchurch Harbour or Keyhaven to the east, and here you will see thousands of our Brent Geese back from Siberia, and virtually every species of our winter waders. These are amongst the best sites for migration and winter wildlife, and I do urge you to make the most of these national hotspots.

Poole Harbour is famous for its 1,000 wintering Avocets, now joined by Spoonbills, and you can get close-ups of these at Holes Bay, where a few individuals have become used to human beings.

In some ways, you can get better wildlife sightings in winter, because birds are more likely to come to garden feeders. Great for photography, but try and have a perching twig near the food, as photos look more natural than on the actual feeder, and do remember to clean all feeders every month with disinfectant to prevent disease.

Firecrest



I live in the centre of the town, but overlook trees, and have always had Goldcrests here, but also Firecrests, which I have photographed many times. These are our smallest birds, and 50 years ago extremely rare, but are now flourishing.

The advice is, always, always look around, even if just going to buy a pint of milk, there are often surprises to be savoured, and it is all free. But for really good sightings, 20 minutes in a car will bring you the best scenery imaginable and glorious sights to behold.

You really are spoiled rotten living in Bournemouth, in the middle of it all.

Ian Julian

A selection of 2015 Field Trip Reports

Hengistbury Head, 30th April



24 people started out from the Solent Car Park. Walking along the boardwalk we were fortunate to spot two Stonechats on the boardwalk rail. Descending to beach level we examined the gravels more closely, noting the upwards coarsening of the pebble size in some deposits indicating a change of flow regime.

Moving back to the cliff we studied the Boscombe Sand which proved to be a very fine quartz sand,

which in places smelled of oil and contained minute plant material. Walking further many sand martins were seen flying near the top of the sand cliff trying out old nest holes for size, also a sand lizard crossed the path in front of us.



Bournemouth Pier to Sandbanks, 28th May



We gathered at the pier and discussed the creation of the Bournemouth coastline. The cliffs between the pier and sandbanks are formed from the Branksome Sand with the Boscombe Sand above. Looking west, the blown

sand of the most expensive piece of land along the coast was seen. Sandbanks is being colonised by marram grass but the sandy beach is taken out to sea by the opposed longshore drift on this stretch of coast. Sand has to be regularly dredged from the bay, keeping the shipping channels clear, and replaced on the beach. This was last done this year by pumping the sand from the Swash Channel onto the beach and distributing it by mechanical means. The party now dispersed to drink coffee, catch buses or walk back to the pier.



Durlston, 18th June

The planned trip to Durlston Bay was changed due to the dangerous condition of the cliffs, so instead we walked through the cliff path up to the Castle where our trip started. One advantage of this was that we were able to study the wonderful vegetation on the way. A little further on we came to the Tilly Whim Cave entrance, closed in 1976 for safety reasons. The name may be derived from the name of a quarryman George Tilly and the name of the hoists used to lower the stone into the waiting barges for transport to Swanage, 'whim'.



A selection of 2015 Field Trip Reports

Brownsea Island, 16th July



Walking past the castle and up a slope past the centre there was a red squirrel putting on a display for a party of visitors, and continued to do the same while we took pictures. Continuing along the path watching several more squirrels frolicking among the trees, we reached the South Shore. One of the features of the trip were the large number of dead barrel jellyfish along the beach and in the sea all round the Island.



Barton on Sea, 27th August

Starting from the Cliff House Hotel we walked east studying the collapsing cliffs as we went. We walked to the undercliff and along what used to be a level path, but is now a distorted series of levels with



defensive shuttering placed there in the 1960's to prevent slipping, bent over almost flat in places. Walking eastwards along the beach we



studied what we could see of the strata but were soon distracted by fossil hunting which continued for much of the rest of the day.

Milford on Sea, 24th September

We walked down Paddy's Gap to the beach and followed the dark blue-grey clay strata of the Headon Beds, soon collecting freshwater seeds, gastropods and the occasional fish scale. While we walked we were observed by a curious seal near to the shore. Back on the cliff path we headed west to Taddiford Gap where, with a bit of scrambling, we were able to access the beach. We studied the cliff section where the various beds were well



defined above us but well mixed at our feet where material had slipped. The Mammal, Leaf and Crocodile Beds were all visible and a few fossils were collected here.



Accreditation

The BNSS is now an Accredited Museum!

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS?

Performance It is quality standard that serves as an authoritative benchmark for assessing performance, rewarding achievement and driving improvement.

Profile It raises awareness and understanding of museums, building confidence and credibility both within the governing body and among the public.

People It helps museums to improve their focus on meeting users' needs and interests and developing their workforce.

Partnerships It helps museums to examine their services and to encourage joint working within and between organisations.

Planning It helps with forward planning by formalising procedures and policies.

Patronage It demonstrates that a museum has met a national standard, which strengthens applications for public and private funding and gives investors confidence in the organisation.

A huge congratulations goes out to Ray Chapman and all the members of the Museum Development Committee. They have been working extremely hard to get the Society and its collections up to the Accreditation standard.

We interviewed Ray in the last newsletter and touched on aspects of Accreditation - but what does it actually mean? And what impact will it have on the BNSS?

Well.... Accreditation is granted by the Arts Council England (ACE) to museums that meet the stringent requirements imposed by their Accreditation Standard. These requirements include the care of museum collections and premises, protecting both from decay and damage by pests. The collections have to be catalogued and recorded and any loans subject to proper documentation. Appropriate forward planning must be demonstrated and milestones prepared. There must be systems in place to ensure that visitors to the museum have a good experience and are able to learn from their visit. There must be a learning plan for visitors including young people.

'Museums enable people to explore collections for inspiration, learning and enjoyment. They are institutions that collect, safeguard and make accessible artefacts and specimens, which they hold in trust for society'

After application by BNSS, ACE followed up by a verification visit to review our procedures and processes and check that our cataloguing system worked. After this Accreditation was granted. It has to be renewed every three years to ensure that the museum is meeting its targets and maintaining its standards.

Now that we have Accreditation, we are one of the 1,800 museums participating in the scheme, and are recognised as an organisation which cares for its collections and works to share them with its community. It opens up a number of funding streams for which we could not apply before, meaning we can put together bids for large grants which can help the Society maintain and enhance its collection and public offer. Accreditation is a high

standard, to which all museums aspire, and it is a great accolade for our Society.

If you would like to learn more about the Accreditation scheme, you can visit the Arts Council England website here: <http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/what-we-do/supporting-museums/accreditation-scheme/>



Have you entered the BNSS Photographic Competition yet?

Don't worry—there's still time! The closing date is **Sunday 10th January 2016** so there are loads of opportunities to get out there and snap the winning shot.

This year's theme is **Dorset** and the three categories are **wildlife**, **plant life** and **landscapes**. You can enter up to 4 photographs in each category and there is an Adult and Under 16s section so everyone can join in! Photos can be entered by sending them to publicity@bnss.org.uk or uploading them to our Flickr competition group here <https://www.flickr.com/groups/bnssphotocomp2015/>

You could win up to £50 worth of Castle Cameras vouchers! Full details of the competition can be found on our website at www.bnss.org.uk/photography

Martin, the BNSS member leading the photo competition, has sent in a few tips to help you on your way!

Winter is still a great time to get out and about to photograph nature!



When photographing plants, vertical is usually a better composition for single specimens.

Make sure to show your subject in its natural habitat - no captive or domestic animals! Try staging the shot to record an aspect of the animal's behaviour. Have your subject looking into the photograph, not out of it.



Why not get creative and see what you can do with a macro setting?

Landscapes: Rules of Composition

- * Use dividing thirds to put the subject dominant
- * Select good foreground to lead the eye into the photograph
- * Use of light is key. At midday the light is often flat—try early/late afternoon for richer or softer light

A winning photo will have good composition and/or interpretation.

Control of light is important. Try using a sidelight for stronger impact and use cloud cover for light subjects to enhance details.

Reflections Winter Avon Causeway

Martin Western



Different times of day make atmospheric shots with different light levels—and winter is a great time for capturing the beauty of tree structures.

REMEMBER TO RESPECT YOUR SUBJECT!

Don't stress or startle your subject to get a good picture. Your photos should try to convey your love of nature.

Photographed using reflection on mirror avoids lying down
Martin Western



This shot was captured using a mirror to show the underside of a mushroom cap

Merry Christmas!

Christmas is nearly upon us! Time to get out the tree and put up the lights, and time to hang your stockings on the chimney!

With the time of festive giving upon us, now is a great opportunity to get something special for a friend or loved one. How about one of our BNSS 2016 calendars? With photos taken by our members and starting at only £5 these are a great stocking filler! Do you have a friend or relative who would like to become a member? You could treat them to a year's membership—or treat one of the younger members of your family to a year's attendance to the monthly Young Explorers club for just £30!

Did you know you can now raise money for the BNSS just by doing your Christmas shopping through EasyFundraising? There are hundreds of retailers signed up, from Amazon to Waitrose—all you have to do is buy through the EasyFundraising website, choose the BNSS as your charitable cause, and we will receive a donation at no extra cost to you! For more information and to sign up go to www.easyfundraising.org.uk

Thank you, and I hope you all have a very Merry Christmas!

Member's Christmas Party!

Don't forget this year's Member's Christmas party is on Tuesday 8th December at 12noon.

There will be mulled wine and mince pies and a chance for everyone to get together before the Society's Christmas break.

This is also a way for the Trustees to say thank you for all that our members and volunteers have done over the last year!