

Members Walk on Saturday 23rd May 2015 by Bob Johnson

At just after 9:15 on a cloudy, dry and not unpleasant morning Phil Holland and myself led a dozen plus members into the study area, ably assisted by Shaun and Alan. We pointed out the various woodland plants as we ambled along the woodland path which included the less common Adder's-tongue Fern & Common Spotted Orchids, though unfortunately these were not yet in flower. We gave information on the woodland management we have been carrying out. Phil pointed out and explained the bird nest boxes we have, giving a chance for some to see inside a couple of boxes – Mandarin nest with eggs, plus Blue Tit nest with egg & young, also a Jackdaw box with young. This was much appreciated by those present.

Bird song was evident with Blackcap and Song Thrush amongst others. Treecreeper and Nuthatch were seen, and young Great Spotted Woodpeckers were heard from high in a natural nest hole. We wandered nearly to Pintail Bank before returning back to the Car Park. A plant with a very variegated white leaf was noticed and its identification at the time was uncertain. After checking reference books we can confirm it is the variegated form of the woodland plant Yellow Archangel, this is the subspecies *argentatum* which apparently is becoming a common garden escape plant into woodlands.

Back at the Car Park a short break was taken. A few birds were seen on the water including Common Terns and the white plumage Grey Heron. Also seen was a rather distant sunbathing Terrapin, and a Garden Warbler was heard.

Just after 11AM the group went over to Whillet's meadows. We started at Whillet's Pool and reed-bed and heard the reed warblers. The corrugated sheets were checked with a Slow Worm being seen before viewing the otter holt location, where a Great Tit nest with young was seen.



Yellow Rattle

We pointed out more flowers as we wandered the meadow path leading to Meadow Pond, including the first of the flowering Yellow Rattle and some flowering Ragged Robin plants.

We met our dragonfly man Peter Erridge at the pond. Azure and Large Red Damselflies were pointed out and we had fleeting views of Beautiful Demoiselle damselflies.

Whirlygigs and Pond Skaters were seen on the water. A caterpillar found at the pond was a Drinker moth, a grassland species. At the pond at least two Whitethroats were heard and were showing occasionally.

Leaving the pond we checked more corrugated sheets with Grass Snake and Slow Worm again being seen. A walk into the back meadow gave views of some Stock Dove chicks, and our new caged young Black Poplar trees were seen. Walking as far as the end of the butterfly transect, we were now on the river bank nearly back as far as Whillet's Pool reed-bed.

The walk back through the three meadows produced another caterpillar this time on nettles, which was the butterfly Small Tortoiseshell. This caterpillar would have been produced from earlier flying overwintering adults that would have been laying their eggs back in April.

The group then strolled back to the car park shortly before 1PM, and all agreed it was a very enjoyable worthwhile walk and something we should do again.



On the Members Walk at the pond
in Whillet's Meadows.