

## MARDEN WALKING GROUP

Well we are getting close to May 17<sup>th</sup> and the next stage of the COVID Lockdown release plan. This means we can at last start to think about organising walks as we are allowed to meet outside in a group of up to 30 people. So to celebrate this and take advantage of the timing, we are planning a post-lockdown walk to **Marden Meadow on Wednesday at 2 p.m. on 19<sup>th</sup> May** to see the orchids. This would normally be a bit late to see the best of the Green-Winged orchids but hopefully the cold weather in April will have delayed them for us. Meet outside the library as usual.

Then as shown on page 1 we are planning a short **“Trees of Marden” walk on Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> June** before the Strawberry Tea in Southons Field. This is a new walk around the centre of the village looking at some of our different trees which finishes in Southons Field to look at the wide range of trees there. It will be published later this year as one of a new set of **“Historic Walks Around Marden”**, further details of the other walks in due course. There will be no walks in July and August as these are holiday months, Then on Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> September we will do the 6.5 mile **“West End Wander”**, meet at 10.00 outside the library as usual. This is one of the current set of **“Six New Walks Around Marden” Guides** which have recently been updated and reprinted. These are available from the Farm Shop and No 47 for £5 a set.

Saturday walks are planned to restart soon, and also the Long-Distance walks, further details in due course.

*Steve McArragher*

## FEEDING THE HEDGEHOGS

As noted in Ray’s article above, the Marden Wildlife Group have started a hedgehog survey in the village. We are fortunate in having had a hedgehog visit us for several years now, and we have encouraged this by regular feeding during their active season. The only problem is, how to ensure that the hedgehogs can get the food but not the local fox or the various neighbourhood cats that have appeared?



Our solution to this problem was to use an old chest freezer basket, with a hedgehog sized opening cut into it, turned upside down with a weight on the top. This worked well and we even had two hedgehogs visiting in August 2020, one eating and one drinking, but sadly no hoglets. However the local cats got smarter and worked out how to get a paw through the side and hook the food bowl over. To prevent this, we had to cover the frame with chicken wire mesh and hook it on to the summerhouse.

This has worked well so far this year and we are seeing regular visits but only one hedgehog so far. One has to be careful not to spook them as I did one night, causing the hog to panic and fall in our pond. Luckily I was there to fish it out with a net and it ran off damp but unharmed. However there is now a ramp in the pond to ensure any other hogs who fall in can crawl out. Sadly this did not help an unlucky starling who used it to have a drink but fell in and drowned.

Just shows you can’t win them all!

*Steve McArragher*



# The Parish Pump

## THE JOURNAL OF THE MARDEN SOCIETY – MAY 2021

***AT LAST!! With the successful rollout of the Vaccination Programme and the removal of most Government restrictions, we can think about restarting our programme of talks.***

**To celebrate, The Marden Society invites you to a  
Strawberry Tea**

**Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> June: 2.30 – 5 p.m. in Southons Field**

**Free Entry but we ask you to please buy at least one Raffle Ticket for £1**  
Please bring your own chair. Parking on the field is permitted if necessary but no dogs. Robin Judd will give a tour of Southons Field trees at 3.00 pm.

**We need to know numbers so if coming please contact Mo on 831529**  
**([tillergirl2913@gmail.com](mailto:tillergirl2913@gmail.com)) or one of the committee.**

**This will be preceded by a short “Marden Tree Walk” around the village:**  
**meet Steve at 1.30 p.m. outside the Library**

**Bring your friends – hope for a fine afternoon – and we can start to enjoy the summer again!**

Our programme of talks will restart in September as follows:

**22<sup>nd</sup> September: The Story of Captain Oates by Michael Smith**

**27<sup>th</sup> October: Punch and Judy by Jacqui Sparks**

**24<sup>th</sup> November: Marden Wildlife by Ray Morris.**

**26<sup>th</sup> January: Annual General Meeting and Social.** This is important as we did not have one last year

As usual our meetings will start at 7.30 p.m. in the Vestry Hall with refreshments and raffle. ***All this is of course subject to any future COVID-related Government restrictions and meetings will comply with social distancing and other requirements. Further details in due course.***

### **MO'S MOANS – Part 3**

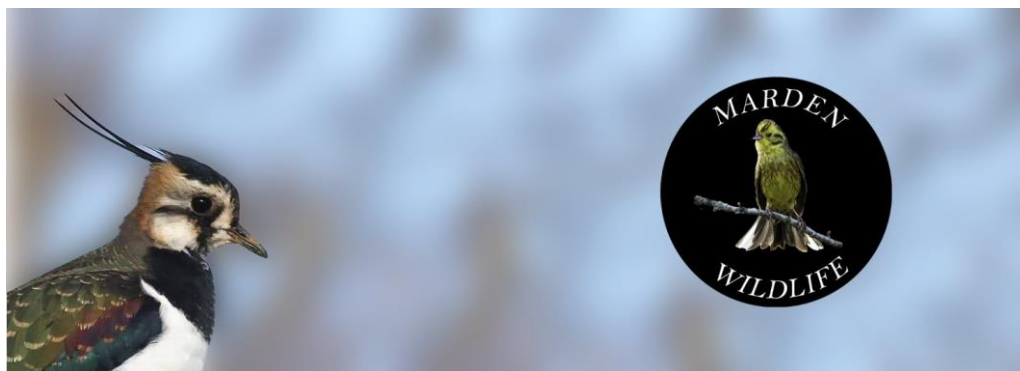
My postbox was full today (April 9<sup>th</sup>), one charity bag for old clothes, a leaflet on double glazing, a takeaway menu for a local restaurant, a brochure for footwear (never bought from this company), and the 4<sup>th</sup> Saga cruises brochure this week. All of this unread rubbish then fills my waste bin so there is no room left for any other stuff.

Charity demands because of one donation – tell me how much their CEO earns before I make any contributions. And how much does it cost to send out these ceaseless cries for money?

Coupled with numerous phone calls telling me my Amazon account is about to finish (I never buy from Amazon on principle) when I don't even have an account. Would I like to take advantage of the Government scheme for updating double glazing, cavity wall insulation, ??? No we don't want to sell you anything madam SO GET OFF MY PHONE! I have on occasion been very rude, but it is probably someone on minimum wage ticking boxes and hoping for a result.

My computer inbox is loaded with invitations to buy garden plants, magazines, learn a new skill (having enough trouble with the existing ones) and so much else. I don't believe it is just me who is invaded like this. If I want it I will come and find you, meantime enough is enough!

*Mo Clayton*



### **MARDEN WILDLIFE GROUP**

#### **A FIRST YEAR CHALLENGED BY NATURE!**

Marden Wildlife came into being early in 2020 following publication on village websites of what had become a regular wildlife report for Peter Hall's farms. As this work had extended to Richard and Lou Carpenter's farms, time was right to attract more local interest. There was an immediate response but, as this coincided with the first Covid lockdown, our first year was largely WhatsApp-based, with around fifty contributors encompassing professional ecologists through to those simply interested in what they see in their garden or on a country walk. The decision to create a Facebook page to share members' photographs paid dividends by increasing local interest – the page now has four hundred followers – and encouraging involvement of knowledgeable local people. This in turn led to the 2020 report becoming a hardback book showcasing village wildlife, published in time for Christmas (a few copies are still available from No. 47). The small profit from sales will finance a Marden Wildlife website (look out for [www.mardenwildlife.org.uk](http://www.mardenwildlife.org.uk)) to provide a focus for exploring the area's biodiversity.

Practical activity has necessarily been limited to small, socially distanced informal groups to look for and record wildlife. There was a small window of opportunity between lockdowns when we enjoyed two evening 'bat walks' led by local ecologist Simon Ginnaw. His expertise helped confirm the presence of a significant local bat population. Another feature of the year has been the increasing interest in moths, prompting people to purchase their own moth traps. Moth trapping is ideally suited to lockdown at home while connected online to other local enthusiasts, resulting in the identification of several nationally scarce moth species in Marden.

Bat and moth discoveries have added to an increasingly detailed (and important) picture of the area's flora and fauna; some of Kent's (and one of the UK's) rarest plants have been found in Marden, along with good numbers of red-listed bird species, scarce dragonflies and other insects. Discoveries are systematically recorded and submitted to Kent and Medway Biological Records Centre. With Marden Meadow (a Site of Special Scientific Interest) the parish compares favourably with many better-known Kent wildlife locations.

Another online-based activity is mapping the village hedgehogs on Google Earth. As an endangered species that most people like having in their gardens, it is important to know where they are – and especially where they aren't. The work is continuing this year and should lead to practical conservation action.

A notable development has been linking local naturalists with the farming community. This has been facilitated through a Marden Farmer Cluster (a new initiative promoted and organised by Kent Wildlife Trust) to support farmers in creating more biodiversity on their land while still producing food. Marden Wildlife members have surveyed birds on local farmland, and we aim to extend this to plants and insects. A Natural England grant to cover the cost of equipment, especially trail cameras, together with many hours spent checking thousands of remote camera pictures by MW volunteers, supported a winter project that involved fitting coloured rings to over two hundred yellowhammers to track their movements around local farms. The purpose is to help farmers understand and provide the specialised habitat the birds need for breeding as Marden is home to a significant proportion of Kent's yellowhammer population.

Regular bird ringing (started in 2015) and annual surveys of breeding birds (from 1995) have continued throughout the year (apart from during the most severe lockdown restrictions) and continue to add important data about local wintering and breeding bird populations. These include turtle doves. A species officially categorised as vulnerable to global extinction; Marden's birds are a sizeable proportion of Kent's breeding turtle doves which in turn are most of the UK's population. During ringing sessions, walkers often stop to talk and learn about what is being done, and sometimes even get to hold a bird in their hand. Plans to hold public ringing demonstrations and a talk for The Marden Society have so far been scotched by Covid but will hopefully take place soon.

The group is open to anyone. This includes young people – with the appropriate safeguarding measures in place. Practical activities currently involving two teenage members include bird ringing and a scientific study into microplastics found in small mammal droppings (based at Sussex University).

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