

Downley Common Newsletter

Quarterly Newsletter of the Downley Common Preservation Society Issue 20. September 2002
Web: <http://www.downleycommon.org.uk>. Email bill.thompson@downleycommon.org.uk

Forthcoming Meetings

The next open meeting will be held on Thursday 5 September at 8.00pm at the Memorial Hall. Items on the agenda will include proposed working party activities, training requirements, forthcoming Chiltern Commons Network activities and finance.

The Annual General Meeting will be held on Thursday 3 October at 8.00pm in the Memorial Hall. In addition to the formal reports and election of officers for the coming year there will be a presentation on "Bats" by Alan Dodds of the Aylesbury Rangers.

Moth Night

There will be a moth-trapping event taking place on Friday 27th September, commencing at 7.30pm and ending 10pm or later, on Downley Common. It will be led by County Moth Recorder Martin Albertini and Wycombe Wildlife Group.

Come and find out what goes bump in the night!

Contact Pat Morris Wycombe Wildlife Group
Tel: 01494 529484

Tree cutting

We are currently planning our annual clearance program designed to maintain the open characteristic of the central Common and to create a diverse habitat for the local wildlife. To this end we have identified those trees we intend to remove with red spots. The next "slice" in the coppice area is identified and to the east side of the central grassland is a group of sycamores that the District Council Arboriculturalist would like to see removed. Some other hawthorns may also be thinned in that area.

All those willing to help with this program will be welcomed at the Working Parties.

	Diary	
5 September 2002, 8.00pm	Members Meeting	Village Hall
3 October 2002, 10.00am	Annual General Meeting and Presentation on "Bats"	Village Hall
6 October 2002, 10.00am	Working Party. Tree cutting for bonfire	Dairy
13 October 2002, 2.00pm	Working Party. Tree cutting for bonfire	Dairy
20 October 2002, 10.00am	Working Party. Tree cutting for bonfire	Dairy
27 October 2002, 10.00am	Working Party. Tree cutting for bonfire	Dairy
3 November 2002, 10.00am	Working Party. Tree cutting for bonfire	Dairy
10 November 2002, 10.00am	Working Party Clear up	Dairy
1 December 2002, 10.00am	Working Party	Dairy

Bats



Generally seen only at dusk, there are many myths and misunderstandings about these wild animals

Bat facts....

- Bats are not blind, but they can also "see" in the dark by listening to the echoes of their high frequency calls
- They have good steering - they won't get caught in your hair!
- Bats do not build nests; they hang up or creep into cracks and crannies
- Bats rarely live in belfries. They prefer somewhere quiet, not draughty, and free from cobwebs
- Bats often choose modern houses as roost sites - about half of all known pipistrelle bat roosts known in the 1980s were in houses less than 25 years old
- In winter, when insects are scarce, bats hibernate in cool parts of buildings, caves and hollow trees
- In Britain it is illegal to disturb bats or the places where they roost
- Bats can live for up to 30 years
- Of about 4,500 different species of mammal in the world, nearly 1,000 are bats
- Three-quarters of these eat insects just as British bats do. In the tropics bats also eat many other foods - fruit, flowers, frogs, fish, blood, even other bats!
- Bats are vital to rainforests, as many trees need bats for pollination and seed dispersal
- Valuable foods and derivatives from bat-adapted plants include dates, vanilla, bananas, breadfruit, guavas, kapok, Iroko timber, balsa wood, sisal - even Tequila and chewing gum!

- Bat populations are threatened not only by loss of habitat, affecting roosting sites and feeding grounds, but also by deliberate killing and over-exploitation for food
- Britain's commonest bat, the pipistrelle, is only 4cm long and weighs about 5 grams
- Of the 16 species left in Britain, 6 are Endangered or Rare and 6 others are Vulnerable

Moths

Moths are closely related to the butterflies; both belong to the Lepidoptera [derived from the Greek 'lepis'=scale and 'pteron'=wing]. Nearly 2,500 species of moths have been found in the British Isles, whereas around 70 species of butterflies are known. The moths are artificially split into two groups, the so-called larger moths (macro-moths) and smaller moths (micro-moths), although in reality some of the latter are larger than the former and vice versa! Around 900 species of larger moth have been recorded in Britain.

All year round

Moths can be found all year round, even in mid-winter. For example, large numbers of a few species can be found on mild evenings in January and February. The adults of some species live for only a few days, others live for many months and hibernate over the winter. Most moths can only be found in their adult form at certain times of the year.

Appearance

Moths vary greatly in appearance. This variety includes several species which may not initially be thought of as moths, e.g. the clearwing moths that mimic wasps, bees or flies. There are also, amongst others, the longhorn moths, which have very long antennae; the bagworms, whose caterpillars live in cases; the china-marks, whose caterpillars are aquatic; the plume moth whose wings are feather-like; the leaf-mining moths, whose caterpillars feed within a leaf leaving telltale trails or blotches; the hook-tips, which are leaf-like with hooked tips to the wings; the hawk-moths, generally large and fast-flying moths, whose caterpillars are usually large and have a tail spine; the tigers, many of which are brightly coloured; and the carpets, with their delicate patterning.