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## Newsletter for July 2025

### The next work party will be on Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> July

We will be here, there and everywhere this month! Firstly, working along the **southern boundary of all the commons**, checking along the base of the hedges and trampling the vegetation where necessary, taking care not to disturb late nesting birds. This is to prevent the hedgerow from being stifled by excess growth of bracken and bramble, so it can thrive as a wildlife habitat.

**On East Common**, we will do some partial strimming round the car park, leaving some cover for lizards around parts of the ditch. This is to allow a clear view both from and into the car park for the benefit of visitors and to deter car crime.

**On Middle & East Commons**, we will continue mowing the main paths through the grassland to improve access. In addition we will clear around benches and trees and check that the orchids on Middle Common (SE corner) are not being restricted by other plant growth. Finally we will water the fruit trees in the Jubilee and Enright orchards.

**Everyone is welcome to the work party, especially new volunteers** – We provide all necessary tools, but it is a good idea to bring your own gloves and water supply if you can. We meet outside the Village Hall (opposite the Red Lion) at 10am. We finish work at about 12.15 to enjoy a picnic lunch courtesy of our catering volunteers. For further information, please contact the Work Party co-ordinator Joan Stone on 872520 / 07740 353656 or [geone.stone@gmail.com](mailto:geone.stone@gmail.com)



*A Common Spotted-orchid freed from the brambles*

**June work party** We had a great turn out of 16+ volunteers. They got lots done despite the extreme heat which meant some of the more heavy duty tasks had to be put off until next time. The apple trees in the Jubilee orchard got lots of TLC with watering, trimming of surrounding growth and replacement of stakes and straps where necessary. All entrance and exit points to the three commons were cleared for easy access, Growth was trimmed around all benches and boards and in the area where the Common Spotted-orchids grow, as they were being choked by brambles. The notice boards were also washed down and the team did some litter picking and tidying around East Common car park. Many thanks to Julia Holder for the lovely photos.



*Apples forming in the Jubilee orchard*

## FOSC AGM and Wildlife Talk, Monday 30<sup>th</sup> June

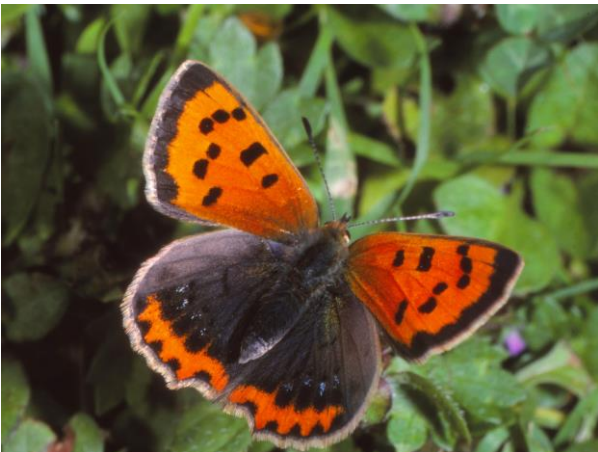


We really appreciated the good turnout, with people braving one of the hottest days of the year to join us for the evening. Warmest thanks are due to our Chairman Geoff Shute for once again giving us an entertaining pictorial report on the year's activities and to

Lynn and Joan for the delicious food in the refreshment break. We were then treated to a lively and interesting illustrated talk from Matt Sutcliffe, Communities & Education Manager for the Wildlife Trust in Bedfordshire, who told us about the Trust's work in our area and the nature reserves that they care for.



## Nature Notes



### Join us for The Big Butterfly Count!

The Big Butterfly Count is an annual citizen science project organised by [Butterfly Conservation](#). It will take place **from Friday July 18<sup>th</sup> to Sunday August 10<sup>th</sup>**. People are encouraged to spend 15 minutes in one place, recording and reporting the butterflies and day-flying moths they see. This data helps the organisation to assess the health of the environment and inform conservation efforts.

*Small Copper. Photo: Charles Baker*

Last year we joined forces on our Work Party day to collect butterfly sightings on the Common, which we passed to Pat Baker for reporting to the national effort and county records. We would love you to participate again this year. But this year Pat is suggesting that we do not commit to doing the count on a specific date, because it may not give us the best chance of sightings. Instead it is best to pick a day when the weather is warm, sunny and calm.

**So, if you would like to join our group count at any time in those 3 weeks, could you please let Pat know by sending your contact details to her at [dactyglo@gmail.com](mailto:dactyglo@gmail.com).**

Then she can contact you a couple of days ahead, when the forecast is favourable, to see if you are free. The actual count takes only 15 minutes at each location, but we'd need to allow time to get organised at the start, and gather the records together at the end, so perhaps an hour of your time altogether. The records are useful to FOSC as well as Butterfly Conservation, to help us see whether our efforts on the Common are helping the butterfly populations. Of course you can also do your own count as well or instead, at one or more places of your choosing. The Butterfly Conservation's website gives you all the information you need about how to go about it.



## Nature Notes (cont'd)

### Missing orchids – Who dunnit?

Here's another interesting explanation about the lack of orchids this year, which we have reported in recent newsletters. Perhaps human thieves are not the culprits after all? Many thanks to Pat Baker for sharing this interesting information with us. Here is her story:



*"In early June, I visited the common with four friends from the Beds Natural History Society. Amongst them was Graham Bellamy, co-author of "Wild Orchids of Bedfordshire" and "Bedfordshire - Our Changing Habitats and Wildlife". On seeing the holes Graham suggested that it might be Badgers that had dug up the Heath Spotted-orchids. We looked around more widely on Middle Common and found more, similar holes scattered throughout the hay crop. In some years there have been Common Spotted-orchids in that area but we saw none on that day. Worms form a major part of a Badger's diet, but they also eat bulbs (including Bluebell), seeds, nuts and other vegetable matter. So when it's dry and the worms are deep underground they might dig up tubers (such as orchids have) as an alternative food, finding them by using their excellent sense of smell. There were a few similar holes in the Green-winged orchid area, as well as the larger hoof prints. Graham said that Rooks and similar birds tend to throw large pieces of vegetation to one side when foraging for insects underground, but there was no evidence of that near the orchid sites. That makes them unlikely to be the culprits."*

## Out and About with Nature

Here are some links to news and fun summer activities in our area:

The Greensand Trust

<https://mailchi.mp/greensandtrust/summer-at-clophill-lakes-10355825?e=618c9509ff>

The Wildlife Trust

<https://mailchi.mp/19fde9402840/bedfordshire-e-news-july-3466763?e=c9e4d21732>

Chilterns National Landscape (formerly the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty)

<https://mailchi.mp/chilterns.org.uk/your-latest-news-from-the-chilterns-national-landscape-fp9vu665v0?e=37122574cf>