

Ecology in Somerset 2016 editorial

Natural History Committee

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ECOLOGY IN SOMERSET 2016

EDITORIAL

Twenty-five years ago SANHS and the Somerset Wildlife Trust agreed that 'Ecology in Somerset' should be published in the annual Proceedings of the Society as a joint permanent record of their work promoting the study of natural history of Somerset. The edition for 2016 continues that spirit of collaboration with papers about surveying the adder population in the Avalon Marshes, about dandelions following a Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland/Somerset Rare Plants Group workshop held in Somerset, and a collection of annual reports from various wildlife groups and specialists. We hope that abiotic aspects of the natural environment will also feature in the annual reports in future years, especially given the recent re-establishment of the Somerset Geology Group. The Natural History section of the Society is committed to working co-operatively with partners, both within Somerset and beyond who have an interest in promoting the study of the County's ecosystems and in better understanding its ever-changing flora and fauna, and its soils and geology. We value the continuing role that the Society, and *Ecology in Somerset*, has with our partners in providing a place where important discoveries can be put on permanent record accessible for all to see.

Amongst the highlights of this issue, the Somerset Ornithological Society reports increasingly large numbers of Avocets visiting the Parrett estuary in winter reinforcing the international importance of this wetland area, a Site of Special Scientific Interest and a Ramsar site, for its wintering shorebird populations. In the report on butterflies, we welcome the outcome of the recent court case against a man taking and killing Large Blue butterflies in Somerset and Gloucestershire and disappointed (but not surprised) to read in the report of the British Dragonfly Society that numbers of dragonflies were a shade below normal levels in 2016. The study of plant galls is gaining

popularity in Somerset, and many records in 2016, including a number of County 'firsts', were made during SANHS or Somerset Rare Plants Group field meetings. The annual record of first flowering dates, the penultimate in a 10-year project, continues to show how much earlier plants are coming into bloom today than in the first half of last century.

It is the express intention of the Natural History section to make its events and publications more accessible to a wider public whilst enjoying the input and company of our own experts and members of other specialist groups. In 2017, we look forward to joint meetings at Brea Down, Skylark Meadows at Bawdrip, and Otterhead Lakes. Promotion of the study of natural history remains part of our core mission.

We await recordings and reports for 2017 in a spirit of excited expectation and discovery, anticipating an increased involvement of members of the Society as well as our partners and friends. Our optimism for the future is tempered by concerns for the impact of withdrawal from the EU on the protection and sustainability of the natural environment, and we anticipate playing our part, whether individually or collectively, in consultations during the planned Great Repeal Bill and relevant primary and secondary legislation.

The Natural History Committee wishes to thank everyone who has contributed to this issue of *Ecology in Somerset*, as well as to those who have helped to review and edit the various submissions. We would like to record a special thanks to Tony Serjeant for his contribution to our work and wish him well in his move to Yorkshire. He would doubtless modestly claim that his involvement was insignificant; but his wise and knowledgeable support, whether in the committee room or in the field, has certainly helped to keep us 'on track' these last few years.

Natural History Committee
April 2017