



## Summer 2017 Newsletter

*Welcome to the Summer Edition of Wildlife Matters at Lower Pertwood Farm!*

From our next edition onwards we will be dealing with what happens on an organic farm in much greater detail and reviewing the repercussions of the methodology in terms of its contribution to the English countryside, and to the farming industry at large. Wildlife Matters will remain exactly as is but as a self-contained section within our broader newsletter. The change in our approach has been brought about by a significant rise in interest in what we do, both by farmers, members of the public and government agencies. These include those who are charged with the responsibility of managing policy issues such as agricultural subsidies, the environment, water quality etc.

The editorial scope is enormous and we are always happy to receive feedback and comments. We have been influenced to some extent by many interesting comments which we have received from motorists who drive past the farm on the A350. Here are a few examples:

*I am writing to you about the line of meadow flowers which you planted along the edge of a field as you approach Longbridge Deverill coming from Shaftesbury. We have had to visit Bath several times over the last month and I was delighted to see the beautiful strip of meadow flowers each time we passed your field. It cheered me up to see the flowers and made me realise how beautiful our fields could be if only more farmers did this. I stopped and took some photos from the gate way off the main road and one of them is now my computer screen wallpaper and still cheers me when I sit down at the computer. Thank you for making a rather tedious journey to Bath that much more enjoyable. I hope the flowers will return next year.*

*- Judy*

*We have just driven past your fields on our way both to and from the A303 on our trip to Devon. We were so delighted with bank of fresh wild flowers bordering one of your fields. Quite beautiful. I have just been to your website and read about the poppies and wish we could have seen them! Do you by any chance have access to the wild flower seed or know where we can get some to plant in our small garden next year.*

*Congratulations, Linda*

*We went up to see the wild flowers this afternoon, when the rain finally stopped! They really are very pretty - a lovely sight.*

*- Claudia and Nick*



CLICK [HERE](#) TO SEE FOOTAGE OF THE PERTWOOD WILDFLOWERS ON YOUTUBE



# Breeding Birds Update

By NICK ADAMS

With the news of a great bustard on the farm in the last newsletter, our bird list since 2014 has reached **103 species**. At this time of year, attention switches to how many of the bird species are actually breeding at Lower Pertwood.

Currently we have recorded 56 bird species breeding, 12 of which are Red-Listed species of high conservation concern. These include *marsh tit*, *spotted flycatcher*, *corn bunting*, *yellowhammer*, *linnet*, *skylark* and *tree sparrow*.

Of the ten amber-listed species of conservation concern that breed on the farm, the most notable are *quail*, *kestrel*, *willow warbler* and *bullfinch*. The remaining 34 species are green-listed species of low conservation concern, these include *barn owl*, *hobby*, *sparrowhawk* and *swallow*. New to this list are **stonechat** and **raven**.



FEMALE STONECHAT

Stonechat are a very interesting species. Breeding stonechat have two wintering strategies; stay where they are or move to warmer climes. This movement usually means moving to a lower altitude or going to the coast. The vast majority in Wiltshire used to stay on their breeding grounds, on places like Salisbury Plain. For the mild winters we had in the early 2000's in Wiltshire, this was a great idea for the insectivorous stonechat. Those that stayed saved energy by not migrating and stayed on their chosen territory. Then came the run of snowy winters starting in 2010. They were not able to get through the snow to get food and many starved.



MALE STONECHAT

The next few breeding seasons saw relatively few birds, these were the ones that migrated, they had decent breeding seasons and the numbers started to slowly recover. Now we have had a run of snow-free winters and number staying are up and the breeding stock has replenished.

At Lower Pertwood, I suspect we lost our breeding population at this point. Since the 2104/15 winter we have had four or so pairs winter and none staying to breed. However this year, the wintering birds stayed and three pair bred successfully. I'm guessing this is an expansion of the Salisbury Plain population.

Great stuff!

# Day Flying Moths

Before you say it no, this is not about butterflies! There are a number of differences between butterflies and moths, one of which is that most moths fly at night. Another difference is the antennae of moths tend to be feathered (especially the males) whereas butterflies tend to have unfeathered antennae with a lump on the end, a bit like an old-style car aerial. We have been lucky enough to have a number of interesting species on Lower Pertwood recently, I will run through a few of them here.



## Hummingbird hawkmoth (LEFT & ABOVE)

This migrant from Southern Europe and Northern Africa arrives in variable numbers each in the UK, this one was having a rest on the grass by Marriage's Gorse. They flew exactly like a hummingbird and are usually seen buzzing around valerian or a buddleia, drinking the nectar with their long tongues.

## Cistus Forester (BELOW)

What a beast! We had a number of these feeding in Big Down. Their larval foodplant is rock-rose, the Latin family name of which is *cistaceae* or *cistus*. The sheep and cattle have done a great job on Big Down producing a great show of rock-rose, which in turn attracted these moths to hold territories. This is a male, he has the feathered antennae for detecting and following pheromones released by females.



## Burnet Moths (BELOW)

We get two types of burnet moth: five-spot and narrow-bordered five-spot. The important features to check for are the shape of the wing and whether the central spots are clearly separate or joined. Therefore, this is a narrow-bordered five-spot burnet. This moth's larval food plants are vetches and clovers, but not burnet! They are often associated with salad burnet, perhaps this is the reason for the name.





## *Species Spotlight:* THE COMMON POPPY

I think this could be considered the poppy edition of the newsletter given David White's amazing photos. But are poppies any good for other wildlife? The answer to this question is, absolutely! Bumblebees have a special relationship with poppies, they use a skill called buzz pollination.

If you look in the centre of this poppy, the yellowy-looking, small, circular bits are the anthers, which produce the pollen. Poppies have a sneaky way of ensuring that the pollen is not lost to the wind: they pack it in very tightly on the anthers making it virtually impossible to dislodge, unless you're a bumblebee. Bumblebees will land in the flower and vibrate at a very fast rate while touching the anthers, this causes an explosion of pollen, covering the hairy body of the bumblebee.

It gets better! The hairs on the bumble have hooks on the end which catch the pollen. The bumblebee then combs her body, brushing the pollen into the baskets on her hind legs. The bumblebee will take this pollen back to its nest. They will invariably miss a few bits which stay on the body and are deposited in the next flowers visited. Fantastic!



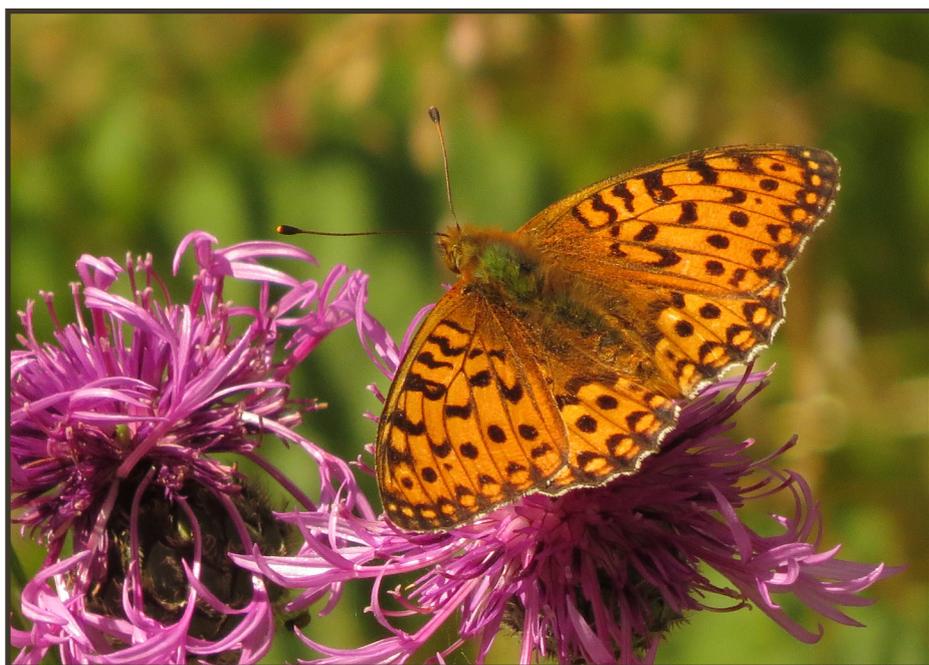


## *Species Spotlight:* THE DARK GREEN FRITILLARY

We recently found our **29th species of butterfly** on Lower Pertwood since 2014, dark green fritillary.

This is one of the larger butterflies we get in the UK, and quite a sight if you are lucky enough to see one. This species prefers grassland and is often to be found nectaring on thistles and knapweed (as this one is). The name comes from a dark green look to the underwing, although this one also has a dark green colouration on the body!

There are large populations of dark green fritillary on nearby grassland areas like Salisbury Plain and in a



good year they will wonder looking for new breeding sites, this seems to be one of those years. The females lay their eggs on violets, usually hairy violet, but also common-dog violet and marsh violet. We have the second of these species at Lower Pertwood, so hopefully we will get some future generations of this lovely species.



ROMAN SNAIL

... A question that must have been asked on many a Valentine's Day. Giving your intended the choice between an evening visiting a hostelry considered to be a Gastropub to consume hugely expensive haute cuisine, or to stay at home with a plate of snails and garlic strikes me as a failsafe way of assessing whether an affordable future is in sight. Personally, I have never received a single repeatable response when I have insisted on the Gastropod option, despite being a man of taste who is fully prepared to compromise with sausage and chips at the Slug and Lettuce.

Maybe the rather unromantic responses have been due to a lack of understanding of the term Gastropod. It is a mystery to me why this word should not act as the sharpest arrow in Cupids quiver. After all, this subject has many avenues for worthwhile discussion, debate and, maybe, romance for the right, lucky, person.

I am using this esteemed publication to open a Gastropod-orientated discussion in the hope that, on the next 14th February, someone will prize me from my shell and

allow the world to see the interesting person I really am. Failing that I will have to send myself an unsigned card again and postage costs are becoming prohibitively expensive.

So, Gastropods, what are they?

This is a Class of animals within the larger grouping *Mollusca*. *Gastropoda* are characterised by being spineless and soft-bodied and includes snails and slugs as members. Snails, as we know, carry their house on their back in the form of a shell. This shell is made from calcium carbonate, the same chemical as chalk which is why snails are so commonly found in our region. A slug is a snail that has evolved to

live without a shell. Infact, some families of slug, such the *Limacidae* still possess a rudimentary shell hidden within the body.

If we look at slugs and snails, from a selfish human viewpoint, in terms of their 'usefulness' we can select the *Roman snail* as existing for a reason. This snail is interesting in that it does not occur in male and female form but is both at the same time. Additionally, it is unique in the animal kingdom in that, during mating, a love dart is used that is stung into the mate's body. Now that truly is Cupids arrow.

The **Roman snail** is also known as the **Edible snail** as it is used to make escargot. It is believed the Romans introduced them to this country as a foodstuff. I prefer to think that the construction of long, straight roads allowing rapid movement across their vast Empire was actually an attempt to escape the threat of snail-based meals, a subject that Gibbon, in his *Rise and Fall of the Roman Empire*, omitted. If you want a chance to see the wonderful Roman snail it can be found on Martin Down. It is a highly protected species in these more enlightened times.

'Usefulness', from the human



DEROCERUS RETICULATUM

perspective, is perhaps more difficult to determine for most people when we think of slugs. Our encounters with them tend to be battles over who is going to end up eating the vegetables in our gardens. Perhaps taking a wider view will open up that avenue of discussion, debate and romance.



**MATING LEOPARD SLUGS**

The word 'slugs' tends to be used to describe an agricultural or garden pest. In fact, there are around 30 species of slug in the UK and only four of them are considered as pests. The **Netted slug** (*Derocerus reticulatum*) is a major threat to cereal crops, the **Common Garden slug** (*Arion distinctus*) is a major pest of potatoes and attacks both leaf and root crops, the **Common Keeled slug** (*Tandonia budapestensis*) feeds underground and attacks newly drilled seeds and potatoes and finally the **Large Red slug** (*Arion ater*) will eat seedlings in spring but is much less damaging than the other species.

Non-pest species tend to live in woodland. One of the most striking of these is the **Leopard slug** (*Limus maximus*) which can grow to 20cms in length and has a grey body covered with brown or black blotch-

es making it, in slug terms, very attractive. To initiate mating a pair will hang upside down, mainly at night from a string of glistening mucus, slowly rotating together. Then, from the heads emerge blue penises the length of the slugs body which intertwine and fertilise each other's eggs. For this species love is, truly, in the air.

Let's remove the human perspective and discuss what slugs (and snails) do in ecological terms. Most species of slugs are generalist feeders on a broad spectrum of organic matter including living and dead plant material, lichens, fungi, carrion and faecal remains. Some species are carnivorous and prey upon earthworms and other molluscs, including their own kind. They play an important role in an ecosystem by recycling nutrients.

It has been stated that the average British garden will contain over 20,000 slugs and snails and that they can each consume forty times their own weight in a day. This constitutes a recycling factory of huge proportions on a national scale and emphasises the importance of a group of creatures that are more normally considered to be a nuisance.



**SNAILS ARE AN IMPORANT FOOD FOR THE SONG THRUSH**



**ALL 20,000 SLUGS VISIT THE SOLOMON'S SEAL IN MY GARDEN**

Slugs and snails are also important food for a wide range of other animals including mammals such as foxes, badgers and hedgehogs, reptiles including slow-worms, amphibians including frogs and toads, birds of many species and invertebrates such as Ground beetles and Glow worm larvae.

There are many fascinating Gastropodean avenues which we could explore, but space has limited our current adventure. I will now return to my shell and hope that the trail of slime I have emanated will result in the postman delivering a card that will save me the cost of a stamp next February 14th.

In 1968 James Lang Brown, my now-retired former business partner, ventured out into the fog with the, then owner of Lower Pertwood, Colonel Jack Houghton Brown. Their intension was to mark out two areas for tree planting on the south west side of the A.350. They could not really see what they were doing but the result was two woods that fitted reasonably well into the landscape, nestling at the foot of a slope and taking out land not ideally suited to the plough. The largest area, Charlie's Copse (then called Lords Hill) was 8.65 acres (3.50 hectares) and the smaller was Merlins Cover at 3.41 acres (1.38 hectares). Both woods where mixed broadleaved / conifer; the broadleaves being largely beech together with a small proportion of other native species and the conifer where Norway Spruce and Western Red Cedar.

In the intervening years others have planted various areas of broadleaves, many on the periphery of the farm. These have provided valuable screens / shelterbelts and created habitats essential to wildlife. Our work over the past 3 years has included significant stretches of hedging adjacent to the A.350 with, to date, 17,500 native hedge plants representing approximately 4.37 kilometres (2.70 miles) of new hedging. In the winter of 2016/17 we planted 3 fields, the largest being Lower Lords (5.23 hectares) at the north western end of the farm where almost 4300 native trees and shrubs where planted. In addition to the hedge planting, since the farm has been in its present ownership, in excess of 8600 native trees and shrubs have been planted. There are further plans to plant significant areas next winter which amount to over 7300 native trees and shrubs.

Although, by their nature, hedges are essentially linear, they do provide valuable, even essential, wildlife habitats and when planted as a 'green lane', that is a hedge on both sides of an access, can increase this value while at the same time giving farm working access. There is, of course, almost endless scope to carry out further tree and hedge planting on the farm but this will be balanced against other needs called upon the land.

The large areas taken out of agricultural production and put into woodland at Lower Pertwood are a testament to



**THE NEW AVENUE ALONG THE SCENIC DRIVEWAY**

the farms commitment to protecting wildlife, conservation and improving the local and wider landscape. What has been done and what is proposed is at the top end of one might expect a landowner to undertake, given that this is a productive farm.

The planting carried out in 1968, although not quite what one might plan these days shows what can be achieved in a relatively short period, providing valuable habitat and a different dimension to the landscape. The man who planted these two woods almost 50 years ago is still planting on the farm to this day.

Planting trees is, and always has been, an essential part of the long-term strategy at Pertwood Farm, and recent statistics have shown that this is exactly what England needs. The country has edged back into a deforestation stat, which has consequences not only for conservation, but for carbon emissions targets and for the economy. Please see the following article from [THE GUARDIAN](#) for more information:

**[ENGLAND MAY BE IN DEFORESTATION STATE DUE TO LACK OF TREE PLANTING](#)**



# Global Generation at LPF

It has been a busy summer for Global Generation, with numerous expeditions from the city out to the tranquil Wiltshire countryside.

Entitled 'Wisdom through the ages', the latest camp hosted by Global Generation at Lower Pertwood Farm was an immersive deep ecology camp, where young people are invited to reflect on their place in the natural community, form new friendships, consider their broader impact on society and the environment and experience the serenity of life away from the city. This is part of the charity's Generators Youth Leadership Programme, designed such that the youngest and oldest learn together, and from each other.



**A FIVE SPOTTED BURNET. PHOTO (ABOVE) BY RACHEL SOLOMON OF GLOBAL GENERATION**

**PAINTING (RIGHT) BY EMMA, A CAMP PARTICIPANT**



**ALISON RYMELL OF THE DEVERILL RAPTOR AND OWL GROUP (DROG), SHARING HER EXTENSIVE KNOWLEDGE OF THE LOCAL BIRDLIFE (LEFT)**

*Global Generation is an educational charity, which works together with local children and young people, businesses, residents and families in Camden, Islington and Southwark to create healthy, integrated and environmentally responsible communities. They offer practical experiences and employment pathways to young people, often from disadvantaged backgrounds, and give them the social, emotional and practical skills to make a difference in the world.*

For more information please visit [www.globalgeneration.org.uk](http://www.globalgeneration.org.uk)



# THE PATTERN OF TINY FEET...

With the Spring moving on into summer, many of the mammal on the farm are busy rearing their young. We have shown you the lambs in previous newsletters, so here are a few pictures of two others. The first two pictures show different doe roe deer with twin kids, if there are twins they is usually on of each sex. They are taken by the wildlife cameras we have tucked away in the quiet areas of the farm.

On the second picture shows up the spots on the kids show up really well. They lose these as they mature. The doe will leave them hidden in grass when they are very young, the spots must help break up their shape, making them harder to see for predators.

The final picture (below) is of a leveret in the crop edge, they again will be left alone at a very young age, but are soon out on their own. Unlike rabbits they are born fully furred with open eyes. This little fellow didn't move as I passed by - not a bad picture seeming it was taken on the move!



**A LEVERET HIDING IN THE CROP-EDGE**

TO FOLLOW SOME OF THE  
ACTIVITIES AND WILDLIFE  
DISCOVERIES ON THE FARM,  
TAKE A LOOK AT  
**@PERTWOODFARM**  
ON INSTAGRAM!



## SPOTTED!

Among the creatures found on summer walks on the farm is this Giant Puffball Mushroom, which starts off white and turns brown as it matures.

Important - these aren't edible!



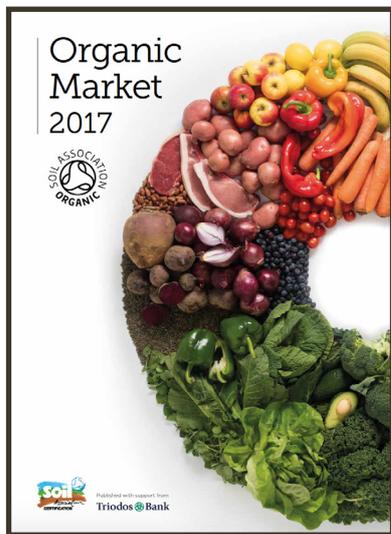
# ORGANIC FARMING - THE WAY FORWARD

Organic farming practices have been growing in popularity, both due to the recognition of the benefits to the planet and farm ecosystems, and as a result of increased consumer demand for food that is free from chemicals.

Although Pertwood's organic track record is exemplary, we are constantly faced with adapting to changing climatic conditions, new pests, soil fertility challenges and the threat of changing regulations. Interestingly, it seems that in a post-Brexit organic market, there is huge scope for positive developments and the opportunity to boost exports of high quality organic food from the UK, as well as meet increased local demand. These developments are ongoing and changeable, but overall, the trajectory seems positive and the reasons to pursue an organic approach are ever increasing.



WATCHING A DELIVERY OF ORGANIC CHICKEN MANURE FROM THE JCB



In this light, we will be adding a section on farming to future Newsletters to open these discussions to a wider audience, as well as share successes and challenges that we discover through our own experimentation on the farm. Topics such as the soil microbiome, organic food and health, antibiotic resistance and climate change are all on our radar, and we would love any feedback or shared experiences from our Readers with extensive knowledge in these fields.

To read more about the future of organic, please click on the links below:

[PRINCE CHARLES SAYS 'FUTURE OF HUMANITY' MAY DEPEND ON ORGANIC FARMING](#)

[SOIL ASSOCIATION - ORGANIC MARKET REPORT 2017 \(DOWNLOAD\)](#)

[IFOAM EU CONGRESS: ROADMAP FOR MAKING EUROPE MORE ORGANIC](#)

[UK SCHOOL FRUIT CONTAINS MULTIPLE PESTICIDES - THE GUARDIAN](#)

## BBC RADIO WILTSHIRE MEETS OUR BEES

*Wild About Wiltshire* featured our Zeidler Hive in their Sunday show, which can be found online [HERE](#) (starts at 12 minutes).

The bees are essential pollinators for a large proportion of the wild plantlife on the farm, and providing them with a home is of utmost importance at the farm.

Thanks to **Rhiannon Fitz-Gerald** at BBC Wiltshire for a great feature!



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