



TIMSBURY NATURAL HISTORY GROUP

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Dear Member,

The first indoor meeting of the season saw the return after a long absence of Ray Barnett, from Bristol Museum, who was talking about the state of the region's insects, which are currently undergoing many changes primarily through climate change and agricultural practices. Ray divided his talk into three parts, dealing with species that have been accidentally introduced, those that have obviously declined and those that are increasing. The first group has greatly increased through goods and people entering the country – of course there is much more movement of people these days. Unfortunately many of these imports turn out to be pests in this country. Probably one that we have all seen in our gardens is the Harlequin ladybird, which eats aphids which is good but also eats our native ladybirds – clearly bad. Other pest beetles because of their foodplants are the Lily beetle and the Rosemary Leaf beetle. The Light Brown Apple moth is a species which has spread rapidly since the 70s. In fact it is a more of a pest for eating pelargoniums rather than apple trees. Another moth to spread rapidly is the Boxtree moth, which eats what it says in the name. This was recorded in London in 2008 and three years later had reached Bristol. There are also several spider species which have arrived – the scary looking Wasp spider, the False Black Widow and the fearsomely green fanged *Segestria florentina* amongst them. The declining species include some very familiar ones – the Small Tortoiseshell butterfly, which may be losing out to a parasitic fly, and the honey bee, which is beset with all sorts of problems, chiefly the varroa mite but is also vulnerable to being weakened through pesticides. The Garden Tiger moth, once common here, has now declined by 96%. Moth trapping has shown that between the 70s and 2013 56% of moth species have declined. Similarly butterflies are 62% down. The increasing species are mainly through climate change – we have more hot and wet days than previously. A very interesting talk but also fairly depressing on the state of things.

The October meeting will be the return of local birdwatcher John Martin, who has been on his travels again, this time to South Africa. His talk is about the **Eastern Cape** and will include the famous Kruger National Park. This is on **Monday, October 16th**, at 7.30pm at the Conygre Hall as usual.

The field trip in September to Ham Wall and Shapwick Heath enjoyed a good day with 46 species of bird and 8 butterfly species recorded. Best things were probably Great White Egret, Green Sandpiper, Kingfisher and Sparrowhawk.

The field trip in October will be a return to a site we tried last year - Blashford Lakes near Ringwood. The reserve is found off the A338 about two miles north of Ringwood. As we are coming from the north, turn left into Ellingham Drove, after 500 yards the car park is on the left. This is at SU151083. The meeting is at **10.30am** on **Saturday October 21st**. We will need to check on the weather beforehand, so if you have any doubts please check with me first.

Please remember Rod's calendars and cards will be on sale at the indoor meeting.

Martin Hunt