

## Cambridge Natural History Society: Programme Secretary's report

The autumn and spring talks have covered a broad range of topics, as can be seen from the list below and all went very well. On average they attracted about 30 people, of whom about 20 are CNHS members. Numbers have ranged from 18 at the Myxomycetes talk to 42 at the talk on Mill Road Cemetery. On that occasion I think the audience was boosted by ARU students. The visit to the Sedgwick Museum attracted 33 people, despite there being a small charge. This was to offset the costs incurred by the Museum opening especially for us. Of the non-members most only attended one or two talks and were, I think, generally associated with the speakers.

Looking at the sign-in sheets 98 people, of whom 53 were members, attended one or more talks in the autumn, and 134, of whom 63 were members in the spring. As we have about 260 members this means almost a quarter have attended one or more talks this spring.

I am sure the steady increase in numbers attending over the last few years, from an average of 17 in autumn 2009, is due to the increased efforts to publicise talks more widely. Particular thanks are due to Deborah Marchant for designing and distributing striking new posters for this term's talks and excursions. Thanks are also due to Hilary Conlan who has taken over responsibility for arranging refreshments before the talks.

We must also acknowledge the time and effort that the speakers put into preparing and presenting such interesting and informative talks, which is much appreciated.

*The accuracy of this report is dependent upon the accuracy of the sign-in sheets and their transcription. It is known that sometimes people overlook the sign-in sheets, especially late arrivals. Nor is the number of members accurate: not everyone ticks the 'member' column and some people join during the term.*

| <i>Date</i>          | <i>Title/speaker</i>  | <i>CNHS</i>  | <i>ARU</i> | <i>Total</i> |
|----------------------|---|--------------|------------|--------------|
| <b>2011</b>          |   |              |            |              |
| 6 <sup>th</sup> Oct  | Portholme Meadow, Brampton: history and natural history entwined: Pat Doody             | 22           |            | 26           |
| 13 <sup>th</sup> Oct | Managing the Cam: balancing the needs of river users and the environment: Philippa Noon | 20           | 5          | 37           |
| 20 <sup>th</sup> Oct | Cacti in Chile and in cultivation: Clarke Brunt   | 23           | 1          | 30           |
| 3 <sup>rd</sup> Nov  | Mapping the landuse of Britain: Ruth Swetnam  | 23           | 5          | 34           |
| 10 <sup>th</sup> Nov | The star-crossed stone: Ken McNamara  | 19           |            | 25           |
| 17 <sup>th</sup> Nov | A botanist on Mull: Lynne Farrell   | 19           |            | 22           |
| 24 <sup>th</sup> Nov | Mammals and milk: Hayley Friend   | 15           | 6          | 21           |
| <b>2012</b>          | <i>Average over seven talks</i>   | <i>20.14</i> |            | <i>27.86</i> |
| 2 <sup>nd</sup> Feb  | 50 years of conservation: Louise Bacon, Merlin Fox, Vince Lea                           | 21           | 1          | 32           |
| 9 <sup>th</sup> Feb  | Keeping the skies alive with swifts: Dick Newell  | 14           | 3          | 25           |
| 16 <sup>th</sup> Feb | Come and get me! How flowers attract their pollinators: Clive Nuttman                   | 22           | 2          | 32           |
| 23 <sup>rd</sup> Feb | A living cemetery: the flora and fauna of Mill Road Cemetery: Keri Russell & Simon Ward | 22           | 3          | 42           |
| 8 <sup>th</sup> Mar  | Understanding landscapes: the challenge of East Anglia: Pete Friend                     | 24           | 2          | 31           |
| 15 <sup>th</sup> Mar | The Myxomycetes: a life of slime: John Holden   | 13           |            | 18           |
| 22 <sup>nd</sup> Mar | Sedgwick Museum visit: Ken McNamara   | 26           |            | 33           |
| 12 <sup>th</sup> Apr | East Anglian orchard biodiversity: Paul Read  | 20           |            | 31           |
|                      | <i>Average of eight events</i>  | <i>20.25</i> |            | <i>30.5</i>  |

For comparison I include the figures from previous terms:

|             | <i>No. of talks*</i> | <i>Signed in**</i> | <i>Members **</i> | <i>Range</i> | <i>Average (total)</i> | <i>Average (members)</i> |
|-------------|----------------------|--------------------|-------------------|--------------|------------------------|--------------------------|
| Autumn 2009 | 3                    | 38                 | 25                | 15 – 22      | 17                     | 13                       |
| Spring 2010 | 8                    | 77                 | 50                | 11 – 32      | 19                     | 15                       |
| Autumn 2010 | 6                    | 85                 | 43                | 11 – 35      | 25                     | 16                       |
| Spring 2011 | 8                    | 115                | 51                | 10 – 46      | 29                     | 20                       |
| Autumn 2011 | 7                    | 98                 | 53                | 21 – 37      | 28                     | 20                       |
| Spring 2012 | 8                    | 134                | 63                | 18 – 42      | 30                     | 20                       |

*\* for which I have attendance sheets \*\* cumulative*

In addition to the talks, the survey of The Backs, organised by Jonathan Shanklin, continued monthly until November 2011 and a new survey of the Trumpington Meadows area started in March 2012. Details of the surveys, including lists of species identified, are on the CNHS website, and reports are published in *Nature in Cambridge*.

The visit to Madingley Wood on 26<sup>th</sup> February attracted 24 people and was much enjoyed although it was too early for most of the spring flowers. A return visit at a future date was suggested.

The seasonal social at the Golden Hind in December was most convivial and the quiz posed some intriguing puzzles. In addition, many members attended events organised by the Cambridge group of the Wildlife Trust.

*Monica Frisch, 17<sup>th</sup> April 2012*