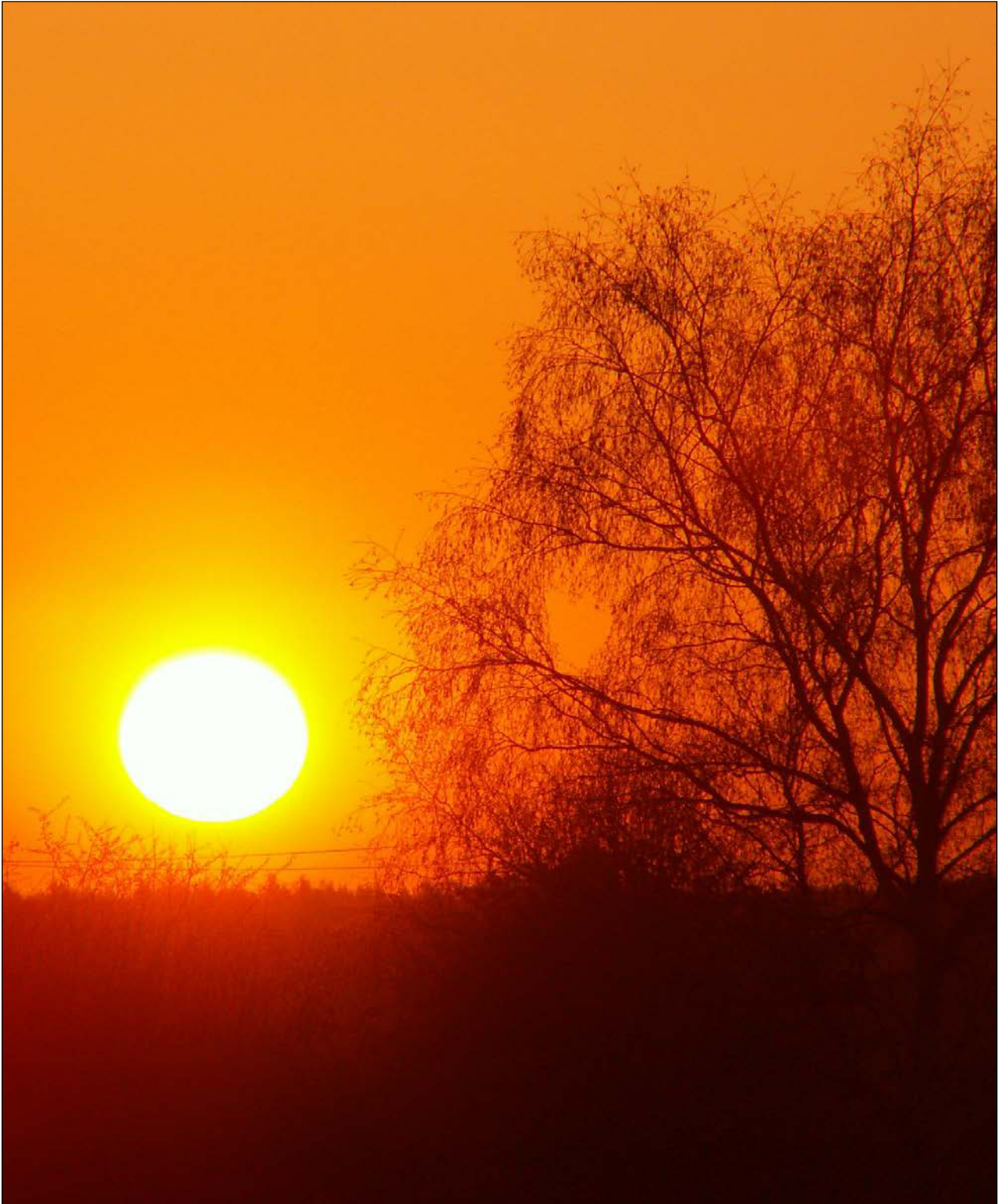


# Old Woodstock Line (OWL) Nature Reserve : Report 2010

Bob Pomfret



Sunset on the reserve under the volcanic ash cloud in April 2010

The Reserve is owned and maintained by Woodstock Town Council

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The Gate from Sansom's Lane



We've been here for five years now and the reserve feels like it has become an established part of the Woodstock landscape. It is well used by walkers (with dogs and without) and others looking for a quiet place to sit. Also by fruit pickers in the late summer and early Autumn. This year we had good crops of Blackberries, Elderberries and Sloes. With the new housing being built in Banbury Road and alongside the swimming pool I think it is bound to get even more use.

We do get some littering, particularly dog litter but to date I have no vandalism to report.

We have been supported hugely by work parties from the **Woodstock and Chipping Norton Green Gym** and from the **Wychwood Project**.

## Managing the Reserve

Since the reserve was set up the ethos of the management has always been to maintain a balance between supporting the local wildlife and welcoming the public. We have a mixed habitat of trees, scrub and grassland with areas to sit and enjoy the wildlife. We learnt very quickly that, left to its own devices, the reserve would soon be taken over by brambles and nettles. In the early years it was a bit of a struggle to keep on top of them but since the Green Gym came to our rescue the work feels manageable now.

The local **Green Gym** is a really great initiative getting people from West Oxfordshire involved in community projects like the nature reserve. The regular work parties have helped to keep the brambles at bay. We have also managed to extend the grassland a little, particularly around the wooden benches. In 2010 we had four Green Gym visits usually with 10 to 15 volunteers and we achieved a huge amount of work. Mainly this has been cutting back and uprooting brambles. In the summer of 2010 we didn't carry out a bee orchid survey, a very dry spring meant there were few blooms. Instead, in July, we pulled ragwort on the orchid field.

The **Wychwood Project** provided us with a work party in July who also helped to clear the ragwort.

**The Woodstock Town Council** also fund an annual grass cut along the path in September that really helps to keep the path clear without intruding on the rest of the reserve.

**Information.** I put up information signs every month to tell visitors about what is happening on the reserve, what birds and animals to look out for and to invite volunteers to join any work parties we are organising.



Grasshopper

## Birds on the Reserve

The number and variety of birds on and around the reserve stays fairly constant. All in all I saw 39 different species on the reserve in the year (40 in 2009, 38 in 2008) and 20 more nearby or overhead (19 in 2009, 16 in 2008). See Appendix 1 for a full list.

We have 7 Red List species (The Red List is an internationally recognised list of birds of conservation concern) which are visitors to the reserve: Song Thrush, Marsh Tit, Starling, House Sparrow, Linnet, Bullfinch and Yellowhammer. Disappointingly I haven't seen a Marsh Tit in 2010 but they are on Sansom's Lane not far away so may well return.

Of these Song Thrush, House Sparrow and Starling were seen on the reserve in every month of the year. Linnet and Bullfinch were both seen in 10 of the 12 months and Yellowhammer in 7 months. We will continue to manage the reserve to encourage all of these species.

Two birds that I saw on the reserve for the first time in 2010 were Nuthatch and Garden Warbler. As I write this, in 2011, a Garden Warbler has been seen again several times.

One statistic that I think bodes well is that 13 species were seen on the reserve in every month of the year, up from 9 in 2009.

See Appendix 1 for full results.

## Butterflies on the Reserve

2010 was a much better year for butterflies on the reserve than either 2009 or 2008. I saw 19 species on the reserve (17 in 2009, 16 in 2008). Like last year the most numerous butterfly was the Ringlet that peaked around 50 at the end of June and early July. Towards the end of July we had really good numbers of Common Blue. They do appear occasionally on the reserve every year but in this year they were present in 10 weeks and there were at least a dozen on the wing in the week starting June 18th. A single sighting of a Small Copper in September was a bit of a bonus.

There was often at least one dragonfly about as well. I'm no expert but they were definitely Hawkers possibly Common Hawker, or Brown Hawker (maybe both!). They were seen in the weeks starting 18/7, 01/08, 22/08, 29/08, 05/09, 12/09, 19/09.

Like last year the last butterfly I saw was a Red Admiral on October 24.

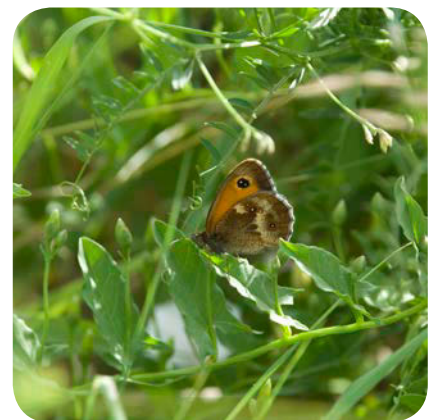
See Appendix 3 for full results.



**Bumble Bee**



**Comma**



**Meadow Brown**

## Slow Worm Refuges

The slow worm refuges have been a real success. Originally I put out 3 in 2008 and increased that number to 6 in 2009.

The refuges (Number 1 and 6) at the Budds Close end of the reserve were by far the most frequently used with a peak of 20 individuals present on May 29 and 17 (all under number 6) on June 19. Most of these were very small young ones. For the first time there were occasional visits from grass snakes. Each was a different individual... I worked this out from the fact that the biggest one I saw was the first one and the smallest the last one!

The slow worms and grass snake seemed happy in each others company, see the picture on the right (actually taken in 2011).

The refuges again attracted a range of small mammals: voles, mice and shrews but this year there were no nesting bees.

See Appendix 2 for more details.



## The Bee Orchid Survey

Alongside the Nature Reserve there is a school playing field. A part of it has been left as rough grassland for several years. I first noted bee orchids there in 2001.

With volunteers from the Green Gym we carried out orchid surveys in 2008 and 2009 and amazingly found more than 1000 flowering bee orchids. In 2010 I was quite shocked to find only 22 bee orchids and 2 pyramidal orchids. I asked Bill Temple from the Hardy Orchid Society for advice. He reassured me that it was the very dry Spring that stopped the flowering and assures me they will come back.

In the meantime to keep the local farmer happy we did two Ragwort Pulls on the site. One each with the Wychwood Project and the Green Gym. The pulled plants were burned by Simon Bult (Assistant Site Manager: Grounds, Marlborough School). Over the last three years Simon has worked with me to maintain an appropriate cutting regime on the field to give the orchids the best chance of flourishing.

On the plus side there were two bee orchids in flower on the reserve itself, a 100% increase on last year!!



## Bob Pomfret

### Volunteer Warden

The reserve is owned and maintained by Woodstock Town Council

## Bibliography

Ken Davies : *Ragwort Poisoning in Livestock - Prevention and Control*, 2005, SAC

David Lang : *Britains Orchids, a Field Guide* [www.britainsorchids.fieldguide.co.uk](http://www.britainsorchids.fieldguide.co.uk)

RSPB : *Birds of conservation concern: 2009* [www.rspb.org.uk/Images/BoCC\\_tcm9-217852.pdf](http://www.rspb.org.uk/Images/BoCC_tcm9-217852.pdf)

Bill Temple (Conservation Officer Hardy Orchid Society) : *Bee Orchid Care*

## Appendix 1 : Bird Survey 2010

Key: X = birds seen on the reserve | O = birds seen from the reserve (overhead or nearby) |

\*\* = Red List Species | \* = Amber List Species

		Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	X	O	Total	
1	Canada Goose	0	0					0	0	0	0		0		7	7	
2	Mallard			0		0	0								3	3	
3	Pheasant		0	0	0	0	0				x	0		1	6	7	
4	Red Legged Partridge						0								1	1	
5	Cormorant*	0	0	0								0	0		5	5	
6	Grey Heron		0		0	0	0			0					5	5	
7	Lapwing**				0										1	1	
8	Red Kite*			0						0		0	0		4	4	
9	Sparrow Hawk												0		1	1	
10	Buzzard	0	0		0	0	0	0	0	0	0				9	9	
11	Kestrel*	0			0			0							3	3	
12	Black-headed Gull*	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		0	0	0		11	11	
13	Lesser Black-b. Gull*		0	0			0		0						4	4	
14	Woodpigeon	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	12		12	
15	Collared Dove	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	0	x	0	0	x	9	3	12	
16	Tawny Owl			0							0				2	2	
17	Common Swift*					0	0	0							3	3	
18	Green Woodpecker*		0	0		0			0	0	x			1	5	6	
19	Great.Sp.Woodpecker	x		0			x	x	0	x			x	5	2	7	
20	Nuthatch						x								1	1	
21	Skylark**	0				0	0	0		0	0		0		7	7	
22	Swallow*						0	0	0	x	0				1	4	5
23	House Martin*					0	0	0	0	0					5	5	
24	Meadow Pipit*										0				1	1	
25	Pied Wagtail	x		0	x	0		0		0	x	x	x	5	4	9	
26	Wren	x		x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	10		10	
27	Duncock*	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	12		12	
28	Robin	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	12		12	
29	Blackbird	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	12		12	
30	Fieldfare*	x	0	x							x	x	x	5	1	6	
31	Song Thrush**	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	12		12	
32	Mistle Thrush*	0					0				0	0	0		5	5	
33	Redwing*	0								0	x	x	x	3	2	5	
34	Common Whitethroat*						x		x						2	2	
35	Lesser Whitethroat					x	0	x							2	1	3
36	Blackcap			0	x	x	x	x	x	x					6	1	7
37	Garden Warbler									x					1		1
38	Chiffchaff			x	x	x	x	x	x	x					7		7
39	Willow Warbler*				x										1		1
40	Goldcrest*								x			x			2		2
41	Long-tailed Tit	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	12		12	
42	Coal Tit								x	x			x		3		3
43	Blue Tit	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	12		12	
44	Great Tit	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	12		12	
45	Magpie	x	x	x	x		0	x	0	x	0	x	x	8	3	11	
46	Jackdaw	x	x	x	0	x	0	x	0	0	0	0	x	6	6	12	
47	Jay			0							x			1	1	2	

continues over

48	Rook	x	0	x	x	x	x	x		0	0		x	7	3	10
49	Carrion Crow	0	0	0					0						4	4
50	Raven												0		1	1
51	Starling**	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	12		12
52	House Sparrow**	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	12		12
53	Chaffinch	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	12		12
54	Greenfinch	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	12		12
55	Goldfinch	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	12		12
56	Linnet**			x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	10		10
57	Bullfinch**	x	x	x		x	0	x	x	x	x	x	x	10	1	11
58	Yellowhammer**	x	x	0	0	x			x	x	x	x		7	2	9
59	Reed Bunting*	x												1		1
Total (on reserve)		24	18	21	22	24	22	24	22	25	23	22	25	39		
Total (overhead/nearby)		9	11	14	8	10	16	9	12	11	12	7	8	20		

## Appendix 2 : Slow Worm Refuges 2010

Date	Refuges (showing number of slow worms seen)						Comments and other species seen
	1	2	3	4	5	6	
21/03	1	-	-	-	-	-	1 vole under No 2
28/03	4	-	-	-	-	-	
10/04	4	-	-	-	-	-	
17/04	6	-	-	-	-	-	
02/05	1	-	-	-	-	-	
09/05	1	-	1	-	-	6	
15/05	3	-	1	-	-	2	2 mice also under No 1 and 1 vole under 5
19/05	2	-	-	-	-	2	1 mouse nest under 1
29/05	6	-	-	-	-	14	
01/06	1	-	-	-	-	2	1 grass snake under No 1
05/06	-	-	-	-	-	1	1 vole under No 4
12/06	2	-	-	-	-	12	
19/06	-	-	-	-	-	17	1 grass snake under No 2, 1 shrew under No 5
26/06	2	-	-	-	-	-	1 grass snake under No 6
03/07	-	-	-	-	1	-	
10/07	1	-	-	-	-	-	
18/07	-	1	-	-	1	4	
01/08	1	-	-	-	-	1	1 vole under No 6
08/08	-	-	-	-	-	-	2 voles under No 4
15/08	-	1	-	-	1	-	1 vole under No 5
21/08	2	-	-	-	-	2	1 mouse under No 4
28/08	-	-	-	-	-	2	1 shrew under No 4, 1 vole under No 5
04/09	-	1	1	-	-	6	1 mouse under No 4, 1 vole under No 5
11/09	-	1	-	-	-	8	
18/09	-	-	-	-	-	-	1 shrew under No 5
25/09	-	-	-	-	-	1	
05/10	-	-	-	-	-	1	1 vole under Nos 2 and 3
16/10	-	-	-	-	-	-	1 vole under Nos 2 and 6

Species	First seen	Week Starting																															
		April				May				June				July				August				September				October							
		4	11	18	25	2	9	16	23	30	6	13	20	27	4	11	18	25	1	8	15	22	29	5	12	19	26	3	10	17	24		
Brimstone	17/04	1				1	3	2				1				1									1	1							
Peacock	17/04	1	3					1								2																	
Orange Tip	17/04	1	2		1	3	4	6	2	1																							
Small Tortoiseshell	24/04		1									2	4	2	2	1																	
Speckled Wood	05/05					3	1			1	1	1				2						1	1										
Comma	15/05						1						1	4	1	2	1	1	1	1	1				2	2			1				
Holly Blue	19/05							1																									
Small White	01/06								2		3	3	1	4	4	12	8	4	16	12	8	5	8	8	2								
Common Blue	05/06								1		3			1	1	12	9	2	9	5	5	1											
Green Veined White	13/06										1	1																					
Red Admiral	19/06										1														1	2	1				1		
Ringlet	26/06											4	50	40	25	3	2																
Small Skipper	26/06											2	5	4	2																		
Meadow Brown	26/06											2	4	5	3	12	3	3	2	3					1								
Large White	04/07													1																			
Gatekeeper	10/07													2	2	12	3	6	5	4													
Painted Lady	10/07													1																			
Marbled White	11/07														1																		
Small Copper	11/09																												1				

Appendix 3: Weekly Butterfly Count 2010 : Largest total seen at any one time

# Old Woodstock Line (OWL) Nature Reserve

