

Green Gym®



Sonning Common

# "THE LOPPER"

full of little cuttings.

April 2021

*"Where flowers bloom so does hope"*



I love this quote by Lady Bird Johnson. It has been glorious to go out on walks in the countryside and see the spring flowers bursting into life, after what seemed a very long hard gloomy winter. It has really lifted my spirit, and enabled me to look forward with optimism again.

These Loddon Lilies are a new patch found at Cleeve Court in an area the SCGG have been clearing of nettles for many years. So I think they are a **fitting recognition** for all the hard work all GG members, past and present, have put in over the years at all the sites we improve for nature and people to enjoy.

As Margaret Atwood said: *"In the spring, at the end of the day, you should smell like dirt."* A fine motto for the GG maybe!

**martin b**

**Robin Howles**



Most of our members will have had the news of Robin's death from John's email.

We were all saddened to hear of the sudden death of Robin Howles, who was our secretary for most of SCGG's existence. In the next edition we hope to publish an appreciation of Robin, so please send your reminiscences to Julia, who is collecting these together.

## Dunsden Church

About 4 years ago, the Green Gym session at Dunsden Church, besides hedge laying, included helping John Bodmin plant more snowdrops around the churchyard on a very cold morning, assisted by a group of Community Service individuals. You might be interested to see the results of our efforts. These photographs were taken by our friends Clive and Margaret Ormond who are involved with Dunsden Church.

Sheelagh



Photo: Clive Ormonde



Photo: Margaret Ormonde

## Spring bird activity in Binfield Heath

As spring approaches the birds are starting to be less focused on pure survival in the icy weather and have started to 'pair off' and look for nesting sites. At about the same time the winter migrants have moved to pasture new (as the food supplies have dwindled) and our garden bird feeders are visited by the less common species.



So, in the winter we were inundated with Blue tits, Great tits, Magpies and Pigeons and had visits from Wrens, Robins, Dunnocks, Coal tits, Great tits, Long-tailed tits (we like the older term "Bumbarrel"), Nuthatches, Sparrows, Greater-spotted woodpeckers, Starlings, Blackbirds and infrequently Marsh tits [Left], Collared Doves and Green Woodpecker.

For a few weeks we were treated to visits from a group of Redwings [Right] to feed on the Ivy berries near the kitchen window.



In the last few weeks, the Siskins [Left], Chaffinches, Greenfinches and Goldfinches are now in evidence.

One aspect of lockdown which concerns us is the massive increase in pedestrian and dog traffic across the field at the bottom of the garden. We assume that this means we are unlikely to have Skylarks serenading us later in the year.

Enjoy the spring before SCGG starts again !

Chris

## Home Farm Wood

Although we had made strides in the past with clearing round the pond at **Home Farm Wood**, there were still some huge laurels to tackle on 3rd April. It was heartening to see that wild daffodils and primroses have appeared in the areas where we removed rhododendrons.

**Julia**



## Frog Spawn

Throughout this winter, Nettlebed footpaths have been extremely muddy with hundreds of walkers and cyclists. But after a few days of hard frosts when the sprinkling of snow sublimated, followed by a thaw with some warmth from the sun despite the easterly wind, it all began to dry up.

Back in January there had been so much rain, our lawn became so water-logged that I thought the pond was going to overflow across the garden. But the recent weather change had brought about quite an evaporation, or do we have a puncture in the pond-liner?

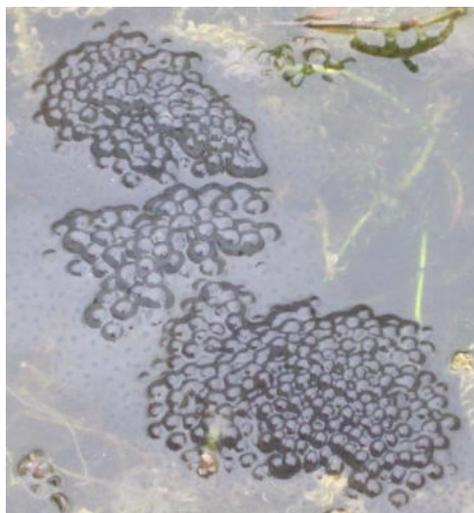
"Do you really want to get in there and clean it all out to see?", asked my husband. The pond has got quite mucky with gunk from blanket weed but the thought of emptying it sounded like too much hard work when it is cold out there and also what about all the wildlife hibernating in the bottom?

Yesterday afternoon it rained hard. I looked out of the kitchen window to see huge raindrops..... but hang on a minute it looked more like someone had thrown in a stone with all those ripples. Then something bobbed up, and another and another. Altogether David counted five frogs and at least two were mating.

This morning I find we have a huge mass of spawn on top of the oxygenating plant. This is the first time since the pond was dug and it is so exciting. Now we just have to hope that those ferociously hungry damselfly larvae do not devour it all before the tadpoles have time to develop!

I shall be watching very attentively and hope to be able to report in person when we open up in April.....not long now.

**Susan**



## Behind Ewe!



First session after lockdown at [Aston Rowant](#), and these curious sheep might have known it was April Fool's Day. There was nothing appetising in the piles of hawthorn we were cutting up for the bonfire, but they were just checking...

**Julia**

## Tony's daffodils at South Stoke-lonely as a cloud ( well nearly)

That bloke in the Lake District did it, Martin had a go, so I might as well.....



*Besides the track, beneath the fence  
Quite near the nettles  
But not so dense  
Trumpets and bells their yellow head  
Told me in passing  
That snow had fled  
Oh joy, oh joy oh jubily  
They Springed my gait  
That whole March day*

**Mike S**

## Dinner Guest



I don't know: The sun comes out, you open the doors and who drops in to Hoover up the seed spilled when filling the feeders.....

**martin b**

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