

Thursday 19th October 2023 - Strawberry Hill – 30 years in the making and where do we go from here? – Aidan Matthews and Chantelle Warriner

The first indoor meeting for autumn 2023 was held on 19th October 2023 in the Hall at Hinchingsbrooke Country Park when Aidan Matthews spoke on Strawberry Hill Farm, a Wildlife Trust reserve. Seven members attended the meeting with a further 7 on zoom.

The farm which consists of 152 hectares came out of farming in 1988 and has gradually reverted to scrub over the last 30 years, having been arable. In 2002 it started to be monitored until in 2020 the Esmee Fairburn Foundation and Julia Davis of “we have the power” bought the farm in order for the Naturalist Trust to have time to raise the funds complete the acquisition.

At present the Trust is getting to know the site carrying out surveys and leading walks so it can plan the future management. So far 10 species of bats have been recorded including Barbastelle, Serotine and Leisters.

The site has 9 pond of which four have Great crested Newts. Badgers, Fox and Roe Deer breed on the site as do Muntjac. Harvest mouse nests have been found in winter months. In addition Barn Owl, Turtle Dove Cuckoos and Grasshopper Warblers can be found, with about 30 pairs of Blackcap breeding and 70 pairs of Willow Warbler; Chiffchaff are very numerous.

Twenty four species of butterfly have been recorded including Silver Wash, Small Copper and Essex Skipper. 227 species of invertebrates have been found and 36 species of Lichen.

Great care to manage these areas will be needed to maximise these species, and to this end a Management plan has been started.