*Petty Whin (*Genista anglica*); photo by Steve Mellor*

We're pleased to announce that the regular Saturday field meetings at **Bookham Commons** are about to resume so do come along and explore this lovely site. The meetings are held on every second Saturday of the month – a very long-standing tradition! The first one will be on **12 March 2022**. The group will assemble at **Bookham railway station** at 10.30 so there will be a chance to catch up with other members. Those who have visited before will know that you can then step straight off the platform onto the survey site so it's very easy to reach. People are most welcome to explore as a group during the Saturday sessions or to work individually. We'd certainly love you to **record species** of interest that you find. Once we have re-established these sessions and have some regular attendees, we hope to form a working group and start to discuss survey projects that people might take on.

As you may remember from the report at the **Society's AGM**, the three-year Life on the Edge project, funded by Natural England and **Friends of Bookham Commons** has already had a positive impact on the site and last year the nightingales returned. We're therefore particularly delighted that there will be a walk on **9 July 2022** led by Ian Swinney, the National Trust Ranger, which will look at birds, dragonflies and butterflies and discuss the management of the site.

The plants of Bookham Commons have been well studied by Steve Mellor and his team so do look at our recent *The London Naturalist* for the results of the latest survey – a great resource for anyone wanting to know more about the plants at the site. During the 80 years that the LNHS has been surveying here, over 700 plant taxa have been recorded.

The plains at Bookham Commons are a particularly important habitat. These are wet meadows established over many years by grazing of common land and later by rabbits. Following the crash of rabbit populations, the short sward habitat quickly became overgrown. Recent

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*Photo of Puss Moth (*Cerura vinula*) larva by Mick Massie*

management by the National Trust involved removing some trees and scrub before reinstating cattle grazing. One plant that benefitted was the small native spiny shrub Petty Whin (*Genista anglica*, see photo by Steve Mellor), which was recorded here for the first time for over 30 years. For those not familiar with it, this species is a member of the Fabaceae – the Pea family – so it has the distinctive five-petalled flowers of that family with a wide upright standard petal, two wing petals and then two lower petals forming a keel. This particular species has hairless waxy green leaves and swollen pointed pods.

The London Naturalist of 2021 also has a list of species of dragonflies and hoverflies compiled by Neil Anderson and Alan Prowse, respectively, as well as an account of recent bird records – also from Alan Prowse. These are all valuable additions to the survey. Many different taxonomic groups have been studied over the years, but there is still lots more work to be done. The caterpillar shown in the second photo (by Mick Massie) is that of the Puss Moth (*Cerura vinula*). It is quite a common species and is especially associated with dense woodland with its main food plants being Aspen and the various species of Willow and Poplar. It has a particularly spectacular tail fork with two long tips and red extendable flagellae that it waves about as a defensive strategy when it feels threatened.

We welcome accounts from other recorders at the site so do contact the Editor of *The London Naturalist* or the President if you are interested in writing a piece. We hope many of you will manage to visit this wonderful site over the course of 2022 and make your own contribution to the survey. The LNHS hopes that the next eighty years of survey work will be just as productive as the first eighty!

(words by Maria Roberts)

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