

## **Bio-diversity Report, July 2019.**

### 1. Management of A388 verges and Hatt roundabout.

A meeting has been arranged with Paul Allen on Friday 26<sup>th</sup> July in Hatt to ascertain the precise extent of the publically maintained and owned verges along the eastern side of the A388 as it passes through the village. This will then enable us to decide on the best options for tree planting and wild flower sowing.

### 2. Oak Processionary Moth.

The Tree Council has issued an alert to be on the lookout for the Oak Processionary Moth. This is a non-native species which has now become established in London and surrounding areas. The rest of the country is designated as a Protected Zone. However, there have been recent sightings in Gloucestershire, Hampshire and Warwickshire. It is thought that these occurrences may have come from young oak trees imported from the Netherlands.

The caterpillars often move around the tree in long, nose-to-tail "processions", hence the name! They build themselves large "nests" which look rather like big spiders' webs in the oak tree. They feed on the oak leaves and can cause serious damage to the tree, weakening its resistance to disease and other pests. However, the major concern seems to be the threat to human health. The caterpillars are covered in hairs, and contact with these can produce a severe allergic reaction. If you think you may have developed such a reaction, contact the emergency services immediately.

If you see evidence of the caterpillars, report the sighting to the Tree Council or DEFRA as soon as possible.

### 3. What's the Big Deal with Biodiversity?

Well, there now seems to be pretty good evidence that bio-diversity, or the variety of all forms of life in a given habitat, is one of the best insurance policy against some of the worst effects of climate change. Let's take the example of pollination, remembering that at least one in three mouthfuls of food we take in depend on insect pollination. Honeybees do a pretty good job pollinating fruit and vegetables. However, they are not the only insects involved in pollination. Other bee species, flies, beetles, ants, wasps and butterflies are not as efficient pollinators per flower, but this is offset by the fact that they visit many more flowers overall because they vastly outnumber honeybees. Data from a number of studies has found that better

crop yields resulted from pollination when they were visited by “non-bees” regardless of how many bees visited them.<sup>1</sup>

It seems then that “team work” is the best way to ensure good yields of fruit and vegetables. Relying on a single species is fraught with difficulty. Honeybees have been under stress for a number of years now. The varroa mite, hive collapse and the use of neo-nicotenoid pesticides have often put their survival in doubt. So having “back-up” in the form of the other host of pollinators could be vital, given that we cannot be sure how climate change will impact insects.

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<sup>1</sup> Sverdrup-Thygeson, A. *Extraordinary Insects*, Mudlark, London, 2019.