



Supporting:
The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
The Botanical Society of the British Isles The British Trust for Ornithology
The Yorkshire Naturalists' Union The Yorkshire Wildlife Trust
Butterfly Conservation The British Dragonfly Society

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AUTUMN NEWSLETTER 2014



FROM THE PRESIDENT

One day recently, I went into the garden to mow the lawn and was most surprised to find a perfect miniature oak tree, about 3 inches high, growing in the middle of the grass. On recollection, I realised that, due to the lack of rain, it had been some time since the lawn had been cut. It set me thinking about the natural processes which had been involved in producing the seedling which was freely growing there; in past autumns I have watched Jays burying acorns in a variety of situations around the garden, here was one that escaped detection and had been uneaten over the winter and had germinated – what a pity it was in such an inconvenient position.

Having grown up in a village within a few miles of the Major Oak in Sherwood Forest, I am very much aware of the potential stored within an acorn – “mighty oaks from little acorns grow”; the ability to grow for hundreds of years into a magnificent mature tree which, during its lifetime and then, even afterwards, can act as host to hundreds of different and very varied organisms. There is something very permanent about oak trees, no wonder the National Trust chose one as its logo, signifying the “for ever” in its purpose. Plants invest a tremendous amount in their seeds and fruits, whether it be in tempting foods that attract animals to disperse the seeds to new localities, either inadvertently or in diverse structures which enable them to be carried on air currents, sometimes for considerable distances to colonise different habitats. If you have been aware of the birch seeds accumulating several inches deep where wind eddies have deposited them, or seen fluffy masses of willow seeds drifting on the breeze, just imagine what the country would look like if they all germinated in suitable habitats and were allowed to grow. Plants do not need us, they are very capable of regenerating themselves if left alone – but I am afraid my oak tree cannot remain to grow where it began its life.

Summer finished abruptly, autumn approaches fast, evening lectures will soon be starting. I hope to see many of you at our fortnightly Wednesday meetings which begin in early October.

Ann Mettam

Ian Wallace

Ian Wallace, Botanical Recorder for HDNS for many years, sadly passed away in June. Ian had served the Society for many years and had fostered an interest in members by taking groups on many field trips over the years. A full and fitting tribute to Ian will be published in the Annual Report.

All meetings are held in **St. Robert's Centre, Robert Street, Harrogate** (opposite Waitrose), starting at **7.30 pm**. Parking is either on the adjacent streets or, with their kind permission, in the Waitrose car park.

PLEASE NOTE: CHANGE TO DATES

Since the membership card was distributed the published programme has been changed: **7 January 2015 interchanged with 18 February 2015**

2014

8 October

An African Safari

Highlights of fifty visits to the dark continent: an illustrated account of John's fascination with Africa from boyhood. **Dr John R Mather BEM**

22 October

Conserving Nature in the Dales - Couldn't We Do Better?

Current nature interest and conservation work on the NT land-holdings in the Dales (20,000 acres); and some personal reflections on the state of nature in the UK and ways in which we might do better.

Peter Welsh, Ecologist, National Trust.

5 November

Wildlife Images and Observations 2013

Recent observations on wildlife sites, behaviour, and habitats. Black Grouse in the farmyard, Burnt Tip Orchids in all their glory, a feeding Dark Green Fritillary butterfly. . . Something for everyone.

Whitfield Benson

19 November

Nature's Year

A show of seasonal nature, weather and landscape, mainly in Yorkshire, as it occurs throughout a twelve month period.

David Alred

3 December

Wild Life, Wild Places

A wide variety of wildlife subjects from the UK and beyond. Not just birds but mammals, butterflies, insects and flowers as well as a few remote landscapes.

John Gardner

2015

7 January

Nepal

Birding, people and scenery in a small mountainous kingdom in the 80s. Birds from Kathmandu; from a mountain trek, the fringe of the Chitwan National Park and the Kosey Barrage area.

Colin Slator

21 January **Vampires, Veggies & Things That Go Bump in the Night:
the Ecology & Conservation of Bats.**

A brief introduction to the wonderful diversity of bats around the world; and an overview of research at the University of Leeds – from work on your doorstep to the Western Ghats of India.
Professor John Altringham

4 February **Four Years in Paradise: Papua New Guinea in the 1970s**

Some observations on the people and wildlife of this exotic country.
Jim Jobe

18 February **Birding Down Under – Australia**

A fast-moving tour of some of Australia's best birding locations from the outback and down the east coast to Tasmania.
Alan Davies & Ruth Miller

4 March **Dragonflies in Yorkshire**

A look at the biology and life cycle of these fascinating insects, with particular reference to habitats and the species to be found in Yorkshire.

Keith Gittens of the British Dragonfly Society

18 March **Ring Ouzels of North Yorkshire**

My 16-year study of the ring ouzel in Rosedale: findings to date, and likely reasons behind the serious decline of this enchanting shy moorland migrant.

Ken Hutchinson

22 April **Annual General Meeting**

FIELD TRIPS AUTUMN 2014 - WINTER 2015

(the editor apologises for the small print on this item)

FLAMBOROUGH HEAD Saturday 11 October

Targets: morning – sea watching and migrants on the Headland; afternoon – rock pool searching (with a local expert) and possibly further birding.

All self car driving. Meet in the free public car park in Boroughbridge at 06:00 for car sharing. Alternatively, meet in the (charged) car park at the Head Lighthouse and make your own way to the seaward side of the foghorn wall where the watchers will be sat until 12:30. We will then make our way to the South Landing, for rock pooling.

This is a joint meeting with the Yorkshire Naturalists' Union, following on the interest aroused by last year's lecture. The date has been fixed to coincide with tide times for rock-pooling. It would be nice to have some families with a younger generation for the opportunity to rock pool search, especially with the experts on hand to help! Ring Colin Slator for further details.

WILDLIFE-FRIENDLY GARDENS**Saturday 15 November**

Meet at Ripley, the grass car park, for car-sharing at 08:30 and return to same site for a 12:30 finish. Target – garden wildlife. What do you do in your garden for wildlife? With kind permission of a number of garden owners we will be visiting several amazing gardens dedicated to wildlife – not just birds, although they will feature largely. Come along and get some ideas for your garden biodiversity. A lot of wildlife depends on what you do for them in your backyard. (If you are willing to allow us to visit your garden and prepared to guide us around for a short while, please contact Colin for a preliminary chat.)

SOUTH YORKSHIRE**Tuesday 16 December**

Target – winter wildfowl. Visiting at least two sites in South Yorkshire (RSPB Old Moor and Hadfield Moor NNR are the likely candidates). A mini-bus trip from Harrogate, meet at Harrogate Trinity Church at 08.00. Please bring a packed lunch and RSPB membership card. Some food will be available from RSPB Old Moor if we get there in time and the shop will be open pre-Christmas.

HDNS RECORDING AREA**Tuesday 27 January**

Target – habitats along the River Ure from Ripon to North Stainley. An all-day walk (c 8.5 km) mainly following the Ure upstream from Ripon to the High Batts NR. The walking should not be too strenuous but on the day the weather and the state of the river re flooding will dictate exactly where we can wander. A wide range of habitats will be explored – wetland, riverine woodland, gravel beds, scrub and interesting geological features. Meet at Quarry Moor LNR, on the south side of Ripon, at 08.30. Return logistics will be organised between Quarry Moor and the start point. Bring food and drink and wear strong boots.

SIZERGH CASTLE**Saturday 28 February**

NT property in the south Lakes and probably other nearby sites. Target – Hawfinch and Red Squirrel. A small flock of Hawfinch gather at this site in late winter and can be quite approachable. There should be good photographic opportunities. Mini-bus trip from Harrogate – meet at Trinity Church at 08.00. An expected late evening return. Packed lunch required, and your camera of course!

NORTH NORTHUMBERLAND COAST**Sunday 22 March**

Target – Divers, grebes and sea duck. This is the time of year when a good variety of these species can be seen in numbers. Car sharing (mainly because of speed to the location which will be just over 2 hours – which is of course the same travel time to Spurn). Meet at Trinity Church at the slightly earlier time of 07:30. Returning early evening. Bring a packed lunch and plenty of warm clothes – sat on the NE coast in March can be very cold!

LOWER DERWENT NNR & SKIPWITH COMMON NNR Tuesday 25 March

“Quality not quantity” was the initial theme for our trip – I’m referring to the four members who accompanied our guide for the day, Colin, rather than the birds! The weather hadn’t shown great promise, (hence the small numbers?) but as we neared our destination things began to improve. Or at least the Woodlarks thought so! As we peered through the drizzle amidst the continuous yaffling of some energetic Green Woodpeckers we heard the tell-tale sonorous, rippling sound of Woodlark. At first they were not visible, but our patience was rewarded when we were treated to a close sighting of a singing Woodlark on a nearby tree stump. Mike moved quickly to mount his camera onto his scope and managed to track the bird along the ground. Then the bird flew off so we made our way back to the cars with mutterings of “Lifer” and “First Yorkshire Personal Sighting” and “pure quality”.

Duffield Carr was next, and here we did indeed experience copious quantities of wild fowl. Some numbers were recorded, including 15 Ruff, over 20 Dunlin, 32 Whoopers, as well as multiple Gadwall, Pintail, Shovelers, Shelduck, Wigeon, Teal along with calling Snipe. It seemed that our trip today had been perfectly timed to greet the arrival of the Whoopers whose progress had been reported by various messaging services earlier in the day. At East Cottingwith we heard our first Chiffchaff of the day and found plenty of Tree Sparrows.

Our final destination was Wheldrake YWT where this winter’s bad weather had left its mark with demolished hides and jetsam-strewn walkways. The conditions didn’t seem to bother the local Water Rail as they conducted their territorial squabbles to the accompaniment of frenzied squeals. And although we didn’t manage to find the reported Great White Egret, we enjoyed the search. Before we left, we had more Whoopers and views of four Buzzards climbing a thermal and combing the skies above us. We finished with a decent number of species (63 in all!) and even a little bit of Gold (in the form of Goldeneye and Goldfinch!). Thanks again to Colin

Sue Harrison

GELTSDALE RSPB RESERVE

Tuesday 22 April

In spite of a gloomy weather forecast a full minibus of 15 members plus Colin Slator as leader set off for the upland RSPB reserve of Geltsdale in Cumbria.

The route took us via Upper Teesdale to look for Black Grouse, and although persistent drizzle had set in we were fortunate to see around 20 males feeding on the grazed grassy areas at Langdon Beck, plus a brief sighting of a single female. Other upland species were also present, including Curlew, Redshank, and displaying Snipe and Lapwing.

We continued on to Geltsdale RSPB Reserve, and while we ate our picnic lunch in the Visitors' Centre Steve, the RSPB warden, gave us information about the reserve and issues affecting its management. We were also entertained by live CCTV footage of a pair of Barn Owls that were nesting in the loft above our heads in the Centre.

The reserve covers over 5000 hectares, and consists of blanket bog (which is being restored by blocking of artificial drains and reducing sheep grazing and heather burning), heath, upland farmland, and woodland (which is being extended by natural regeneration and extensive planting of over 100,000 native trees), making it an important site for breeding upland birds such as Golden Plover, Curlew, Ring Ouzel, Whinchat, and Black Grouse. After lunch Steve accompanied us for a walk along one of the trails to look for these species, but unfortunately the weather had deteriorated to alternating drizzle and heavy rain, so birds were conspicuous by their absence! However we did see Skylark, two more male Black Grouse, and some of the group had good views of a Ring Ouzel.

With the weather showing no sign of improvement it was decided to leave further exploration of the reserve for a better day, and head back home via Saltholme RSPB Reserve. We arrived there an hour before it closed, in very murky conditions but at least the rain had stopped. From the first hide a drake Scaup and drake Garganey were quickly spotted, and near the next hide we had close views of a fox with three cubs. On leaving the reserve, a female Long-tailed Duck was seen from the main road on Saltholme Pool, along with excellent views of a Black Tern feeding over the Pool. Stopping off at Dormans Pool, a Sedge Warbler and Water Rail were heard, giving a total of 67 species seen or heard on the day, which was a good total considering the weather conditions.

We arrived back in Harrogate shortly before 8 pm, a long but interesting day with some excellent sightings, and our thanks go to Colin for leading the trip, and also to Will for a long day's drive of 300 miles.

Robert and Cynthia Chandler

NIGHTJAR SEARCH

29 May

A still, warm evening with lot of midge activity is just ideal for looking at and listening for Nightjars. And, exactly where Colin had done a recce the previous week, nine members assembled to wait till it was dusk. It was still but not very warm and the midges were keeping a low profile. We had about an hour to wait, depending on how quickly the light level dropped.

A few minutes into the hour, a Cuckoo called, distantly. It called again and again tantalising us into thinking it was getting closer. Then it did! It perched on a small tree, tail cocked, long enough for Colin to get his telescope on it and everyone have a good look. A Tree Pipit also broke cover to sit in the top of a tree and call. Its call was answered by its mate who joined it, enabling us once again a great view through the scope. A Great Spotted Woodpecker also played a cameo role. Then as the light level dropped, Woodcock started roding, as we watched their bat-like flight across the tops of the trees. They entertained us for quite a while, but the stars of the show were proving elusive. Then, shhhhhh! Churring? Yes, the unmistakable churring of a Nightjar to the right, to the left, then back again. Great sound, but we wanted to see them! Patience was rewarded and a pair were seen chasing around a few times and a distant one perched. All too soon the churring died down and we had to accept the show was over. It was pretty dark by now: back to the cars.

Many thanks to Colin for obtaining permission for us to enter the woodland near Brimham Rocks and providing a very enjoyable evening's bird watching.

Sue Coldwell

FARNHAM MEMBERS' DAY

Sunday 20 July

With the temperature rising, it was a good start to the day as we began by concentrating on butterflies among the creeping thistles: Meadow Brown, Gatekeeper, Ringlet, Small Skipper and Small Tortoiseshell being the most noticeable. A superb Comma was admired and photographed and a late Cinnabar moth flew by. Carpets of Common Centaury, Yellow-wort, Bird's-foot Trefoil and Self-heal provided a colourful backdrop to the scene. A visit to the lakeside was very productive for dragonflies with an Emperor patrolling close by, a Black-tailed Skimmer posing on the shoreline for the photographers, with Common Darters and Four-spot Chasers within feet of the members. After lunch, we searched the area around the pond for the four species of damselfly present, the main attraction being Emerald damselfly, which was soon seen.

Brown Hawker dragonflies zoomed overhead and Four-spot Chasers held territory. The site for the White-letter Hairstreak was the next stop but, due to the prolonged hot weather, the bramble flowers on which the butterfly can usually be seen at close range, were almost over. After much searching, several were seen at the top of the elm tree. Soon after this, the afternoon's observations were brought to a speedy conclusion with a tremendous downpour that lasted 30 minutes. Not forgetting the birds: a Common Buzzard surveyed the scene from its perch on the pylon, four Common Redstarts were present and, on the lake, were family parties of Common Terns, Mute Swans, Great Crested and Little Grebes, while the constant activity of the Sand Martins all added interest to an excellent day – though the heat was too much for some!

June E. Atkinson Honorary Warden

ARNSIDE AND SILVERDALE AONB

Tuesday 29 July

Another successful day under the leadership of Colin Slator (The Mountie – always gets his target species). Eighty different bird species were seen, including Great White Egret, and at least ten types of butterfly, including Grayling and. . . well, read on to find out.

The day dawned cloudy and cool with light drizzle; however, the 15 of us travelled hopefully. Our first port of call was Hellifield Flash, which curiously was almost empty of water though this did not deter several species associated with mud and water, including Little Ringed Plover, Snipe, and Teal from using it. Colin decided that, given the cool conditions, which were unsuitable for butterflies, it was best to visit Leighton Moss first before pursuing our main quarry, the High Brown Fritillary. The highlights were distant views of the aforementioned Great White Egret, several Cream-Crown Marsh Harriers and young Water Rails, which seemed quite happy in their naivety to feed in the open. We next took lunch in the Morecambe and adjacent hide, where we saw a flock of 14 Little Egrets, some Greenshank and yet more Little Ringed Plover as well as many more common waders. Leaving the hides we were then able to add to our list several passerine species which were showing well in the nearby bushes.

The sun began to come out so we headed for Gait Barrows National Nature Reserve to search for the elusive High Brown Fritillary. Taking the so-called Limestone Trail through the trees we came upon some extensive stands of Hemp Agrimony which held disappointingly few butterflies but we were able to find Meadow Brown, Gatekeeper, Peacock, Small Tortoiseshell and Small

Skipper, as well as Emperor Dragonfly. The trail led us to an unimproved meadow where Dan spotted and photographed a fritillary, which had disappeared by the time the rest of us caught up with him. We all went searching and were able to flush several other fritillaries, at which point shouts of "High Brown" went up.

However, disappointment followed, for on netting one of the fritillaries and examining it closely, it was found to have green underwings and was clearly a much more widespread species, though no less beautiful for that, the Dark Green Fritillary. Disappointment was followed by elation shortly after when, scouring the limestone pavements further along the trail we were able to find and photograph several Graylings – a first for some of us.

Returning to the minibus we headed for home, calling at Milnthorpe to try and find the Glossy Ibis which is seen regularly on the River Bela there. We were unlucky on this occasion but superb views of a herd of Fallow Deer more than compensated. Our next stop was for fish and chips at Kirkby Lonsdale whence, replete, tired but happy we returned to Harrogate.

Will Rich

GREENHOW

Saturday afternoon 9 August

Nine members met Colin at Pateley Bridge car park, from where we continued to the privately owned, disused quarry near Greenhow. In the past, limestone was quarried here and towards the end of the last century the site was bought to manage the flowers and butterflies that thrive there.

Unfortunately it was a very windy afternoon, but the rain held off and we were able to walk round the whole site. Despite the conditions we saw a total of nine butterfly species – at least 25 Small Tortoiseshells and 20 Common Blues, with smaller numbers of Peacock, Meadow Brown, Ringlet, Green-veined White, Red Admiral, and Small Heath. Finally when we had nearly given up hope we saw four Dark Green Fritillaries amongst the knapweed on a sheltered sunny bank.

Frog and Common Spotted Orchids had faded, as had the Common Twayblades, but the Autumn Gentians were just opening and there were quite a few Sandwort plants, a speciality of the quarry. We had excellent views of a Spotted Flycatcher catching and devouring a Peacock butterfly. We also saw Linnet, Buzzard, Kestrel and more than 15 Goldfinches.

On the north face of the quarry the entrance to an old adit was visible – a relic of the past lead-mining industry, and good examples of the calcite and barytes minerals associated with the lead veins could be seen.

Many thanks to Colin for an informative afternoon and a chance to see a site not normally open to the public.

Cynthia and Robert Chandler

ROE FAWN MORTALITY . . . AND OTHER THINGS

One of the consequences of the increase in the Roe Deer population is the number of fawns which are killed during harvesting operations on our farm land. The fawns' traditional means of avoiding detection is to squat down in long grass and keep very still. This is fatal when confronted by a fast moving grass mower or combine harvester. An average of two a year are killed this way on our own farm. Talking to other farmers it seems to be an increasing event. We are probably talking of well over three figures for our area alone.

Something more cheerful are the ginger rabbits at New Park. They are becoming quite famous as people walking on the roadside see them and pass the news on. Another was seen alongside Ripley Park wall in a small warren. The feral ferret saga continues with a litter being reared at Bishop Thornton, and one of my bantams being taken to feed them. Grey Squirrels seem to have had a boom year. All over the area the young are fattening up for the winter on a veritable bumper harvest of hazel nuts.

It was with a surprise that I realized I have been Mammal Recorder for the Society for nine years. I've enjoyed doing this but have decided that 2013 will be my last. Mammals are far more interesting than those fast-moving little things covered with feathers, so I am sure there will be a queue of people willing to take over! I look forward to seeing this.

All the best, **Tony Stobbs**

THANK YOU, TONY, FROM COUNCIL

HDNS Council were very sorry to hear that Tony will not continue as Mammal Recorder. His entertaining and informative Annual Reports will be sadly missed. Very sincere thanks for your nine years' work, Tony, and please keep on writing for the Newsletter.

LEGACY from HELEN JACKSON**Book Sale 8 October**

Helen died intestate, but the heirs to her estate have finally been found. They very kindly said that we could have her books on Natural History to sell for the benefit of the Society. She left an incomplete set of the New Naturalist books, which we have sold for £2,260 pounds, a legacy for which we are very grateful.

Other books will be on sale to members at the first meeting, including some early copies of the New Naturalist series which were not wanted by the book dealer. (I have checked the value of all the books on Abebooks, and priced them at one-third of their Abebook valuation, which is what we would be offered by a dealer.) You will have the chance to buy a book from 50p upwards, and to have a memento of Helen at the same time.

Val Smith (Helen's next-door neighbour)

**LEGACY from RODNEY WADDILOVE****Two Telescopes**

Mary Waddilove has most generously given two telescopes, which had belonged to Rodney, to be sold on behalf of the Society. She wishes that they should first be offered to members. Both telescopes are in mint condition and in their cases. (We hope to put pictures of them on the website.) If you are interested and would like to make an offer, please write to the general secretary, Sue Coldwell, by 22 October 2014. If no member is interested, the scopes will be offered to a dealer to be sold.

Technical specifications:

Leica Apo-Televid 65 Telescope

Straight version, 25-50x zoom 65mm objective lens, with ER stay-on case
Current retail price ~ £2,100 Offer price expected: £850

Leica Apo-Televid 82 Telescope

Straight version, 25-50x zoom 82mm objective lens, with ER stay-on case
Current retail price ~ £2,600 Offer price expected: £1,100

MOTHS

Another busy summer is coming to an end for the Ripon Moth-ers, when the packing and unpacking of cars, unreeling and reeling in of cables, the ritual of placing moth traps on white sheets and early morning starts become just a memory. Regular sites were visited, such as Ellington Banks (where new species are still being recorded), Nosterfield Local Nature Reserve (35 new species) and Hackfall Woods (where another well attended public demonstration was held); and also some new sites, including Dallowgill and Sawley (the latter was a moth trapping event for the Harrogate & District Biodiversity Action Group).

The year started promisingly, with expected catches in March and April, but unfortunately the organisers of National Moth Night chose the period of 3-5th July, which of course, clashed badly with Le Grand Depart, so after much discussion, it was decided to restrict activities to moth trapping in our own gardens, rather than arrange a public event – road closures and volume of traffic would have made life almost impossible!

In mid-April, the attractively-named Blossom Underwing was an unexpected visitor to Nosterfield LNR (very rare in the county and the first for Yorkshire since 2009). In July, a Scarce Footman at Sharow was the first record for the Society and in mid-August, there was a flurry of interesting records: a photograph of a large hawk-moth larva on potatoes at an allotment in Harrogate was identified by CHF as a Death's-head, shortly followed by two Pale Eggars (now a scarce species) recorded at different sites near Ripon, then came a near-profusion of records of the Old Lady moth from Harrogate and around Ripon. All will be detailed in full in the 2014 annual report.

Autumn can still be an interesting time – if the winds come from an easterly quarter from the Continent (currently forecast), it can bring the excitement of migrant species hiding inside your moth trap. There is also the pleasure of recording such beautiful moths as Merveille du Jour, mimicking a piece of lichen, or the autumnal hues of oranges, yellows and pinks which are prevalent in members of the Sallow family. Checking the egg trays in the morning can still hold a degree of excitement, so resist putting your traps away in the garage just yet!

Follow us on Twitter: @JillWarwick or @DoubleKidney

Jill Warwick & Charles Fletcher

FARNHAM NEWS

On 26th **March** our first Swallow arrived followed (on 30th) by the last of our winter wildfowl when 26 Whooper Swans moved north.

The first Common Tern arrived on 3rd **April**, a Peregrine Falcon was perched on the pylon and five Sand Martins were present the next day along with Blackcap and Willow Warbler. Sand Martin numbers increased during the next few days with 25 on 9th and "hundreds" on 13th. A pair of Mallards appeared with 12 ducklings on 17th and a Little Ringed Plover flew over but could find nowhere to land because of the high water levels. By the third week, two pairs of Oystercatchers on the main island were on nests as were the Mute Swans and Great Crested Grebes. A Marsh Harrier flew over west on 19th and a Green Sandpiper was present on 22nd, when three Arctic Terns went through. Common Terns were on the move, with 22 on 25th. Garden Warbler and Lesser Whitethroat, the last of the warblers to arrive, were in by the end of the month. On 30th, six Sand Martins were entering the wall, but the biggest surprise was an Avocet, only the second record for the site, the first being in 1984 when it was the first for the HDNS area.

Our Patch Watch Day on 4th **May** began without a frost at 4 a.m. The day was ideal for recording the breeding species present with 42 pairs holding territory, Blackcap and Chiffchaff having the highest numbers. Three pairs of Common Terns were present on the breeding site on 8th, when an adult Kittiwake stayed for a while. An increase in the activity of Sand Martins at the wall was encouraging after last year. A Whimbrel flew over on 10th and an Otter was seen. By the third week, two of the Oystercatcher nests had been predated by Magpies but, on a happier note, 15 pairs of Sand Martins were collecting nest material. Six pairs of Common Terns were fighting with Black-headed Gulls for space to breed. The water level was still very high. Fledged Tree Sparrows were seen on 24th when the temperature was just 10°C and a northerly wind blowing! The pair of Mute Swans had eight fledged cygnets and, on 31st, there was a welcome record of a Cuckoo. Not an inspiring month by any means, when 91mm of rain fell.

On 2nd **June**, a pair of adult Mediterranean Gulls, in immaculate breeding plumage, flew in but the sight of them prompted the Black-headed Gulls to chase them off before too long. Seven pairs of Common Terns were present. A Hobby and a Peregrine Falcon were seen on 8th. The latter, an adult, flew close by carrying prey and, when it landed on a nearby pylon, proceeded to pluck it; through the telescope it was possible to identify the prey as a Great

Spotted Woodpecker. By 16th, seven tern chicks hatched from three pairs present on the tern platform. The Great Crested Grebes hatched four young on 22nd. Fifty-seven pairs of Sand Martins were breeding in the wall by 22nd, with some young being seen at the entrances. By the end of the month, family parties of Garden Warbler, Chiffchaff and Blackcap were being seen and a Spitfire was a good fly-over on 28th. It was a warm month with temperatures reaching 24°C.

On 1st **July**, the first Tufted Duck ducklings emerged, eight being seen. Another aerial tick was nine Red Arrows going south on 4th. A Hobby was chasing dragonflies on 7th. A very localised downpour occurred on 8th when torrential rain dropped 30mm in 30 minutes – I know, I was there! A Greenshank flew in just before the rain started. The first family party of Tree Sparrows appeared. An exceptional record for Farnham was 11 Common Sandpipers on 10th. The first Common Redstarts were moving through, with a very obliging male in front of the hide for a few hours on 15th; a female or juvenile Mandarin Duck was seen next day. A family party of Common Whitethroats was seen and more Common Redstarts were moving through by the third week. Common Tern chicks were now fledging, unfortunately with some casualties for unknown reasons; seven pairs of terns fledged eight young. There were four Hobby sightings during the month. July was warm with temperatures of 20°C to 24°C recorded on several days.

On 2nd **August**, two Peregrine Falcons flying together were “up from town” for the day. A Greenshank was around for two days from 5th and the first Spotted Flycatcher on passage was much earlier than usual. A long-awaited Osprey was present for nearly two hours on 8th; on the following evening, for some lucky observers, a Little Egret flew over and one was seen again the next morning, while a Greenshank flew around later. Forty-eight pairs of Sand Martins were in the wall for a second brood on 10th August. A late breeding Little Grebe reared 3 young, first seen on 23rd. A good selection of warblers was moving through with 15 Chiffchaffs, four Lesser Whitethroats, four Common Whitethroats and seven Blackcaps being noteworthy. Lapwing numbers were increasing with 480 present during the month. A Ruff was seen early in the morning of 28th and a Black-tailed Godwit was present on 30th, with a Spotted Flycatcher on 31st. Common Redstart sightings during the month totalled 15, with seven Spotted Flycatchers. The highlight of the month was a Glossy Ibis which was found in the afternoon of 22nd and was present until 09.15 the next morning; it was a new record for Farnham. The weather in August was unexpectedly unseasonal at times with 73mm of rain and summer water levels remaining high compared with previous years.

During the first week of **September** Spotted Flycatcher, Black-tailed Godwit and four Green Sandpipers were recorded and Lapwing numbers increased to 800. Passage warblers were still in evidence with 10+ Chiffchaffs and 9+ Blackcaps; three Common Redstarts were present until 11th and one or two Yellow Wagtails dropped in during the evenings. We suspected that Tawny Owls were breeding in the Kestrel box and this was confirmed on 7th when two well grown juveniles were seen; this was a new breeding record for the site. The water level is the same now as it was at this time last year and, with the winter rains to come, the islands will inevitably be flooded in the coming months.

The weather in April was anything but springlike for **butterflies** but 11 Peacocks and two Small Tortoiseshells were seen on 10th and ten Speckled Woods appeared mid-month. May butterfly sightings included small numbers of Brimstone, Orange Tip and Common Blue. The first Common Blues appeared in early June along with Red Admirals, Brimstone and Speckled Wood; Meadow Brown and Ringlet by the second week and Large Skipper on 22nd. July was the best month for numbers of butterfly species, 13 being seen on 20th; White-letter Hairstreaks were present again on the favoured tree and bramble patch. A surprise visitor, a Marbled White, appeared on 12th. By late July, Peacocks were well in evidence with over 50 counted; Painted Lady, Brown Argus and Red Admiral were present along with 80+ Gatekeepers. Twenty Speckled Woods were counted on 30th August and 23 species of butterfly were recorded during the month, although there was a total absence of Holly Blue.

Species of **dragonfly** began to increase by June with ten Four-spotted Chasers, Emperor, Black-tailed Skimmers and hundreds of damselflies seen over the lake. In July, six Emperor dragonflies were counted, a Banded Demoiselle was seen, Brown Hawkers and Migrant Hawkers were noted, but only a single Ruddy Darter; this species seems to be declining; 20+ Emerald damselflies were seen round the pond. Fifteen species were recorded.

There was an interesting observation by one member who witnessed a Stoat carrying a dead Grey Squirrel; the Stoat dropped its prey and ran off on seeing the observer. On 2nd August, another member saw a Mole run across a path closely followed by a Magpie flying above it and showing great interest in the mammal.

Our winter management work begins on 21st September and continues until March. I know from past years that our management team will continue to support us, but we do need more volunteers. If you can use a pair of loppers

or a bow saw, we can find a job for you. It is most disappointing that, from a membership of around 300, there are no more than 15 supporters and most of those are “of an age”, but dedicated.

June E. Atkinson
Chairman, Management Committee & Honorary Warden

FARNHAM MANAGEMENT DAYS

ALL SUNDAYS

2014: 21st September 19th October
16th November 14th December
2015: 11th January 8th February 1st March 29th March

Please meet at the hide at 10 a.m.

ALL HANDS WELCOME FOR THIS ESSENTIAL WORK

June E. Atkinson
Chair, Management Committee and Honorary Warden.

NEW RECORDER FOR BOTANY

Dr. Kevin Walker has kindly agreed to be our Recorder for Botany.

He says: I was a very keen junior member of the Society in the 80s, and recall Helen Jackson and June Atkinson as particular mentors. Although I was originally interested in birds, I pursued a career in plant ecology and now work for the Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland (BSBI), as their Head of Science. I have botanised all over the country but have a special love of the flora of the Yorkshire Dales (including Nidderdale), which I plan to record in detail for the next Atlas of the British and Irish flora. I hope to run at least one field meeting a year, and to make the focus improving botanical skills. I welcome your records, and will be happy to check identifications and to provide advice. My contact details are:
BSBI, Suite 14, Bridge House, 1-2 Station Bridge, Harrogate, HG1 1SS
email: kevin.walker@bsbi.org

Have you looked at our website recently?

It is an excellent source of current wildlife information. The recent Glossy Ibis (a first for Farnham) was immediately on June's regular contribution. Look on the right hand side of the Home Page. Rapidly followed by comments on our sightings page which followed the possible wanderings of this bird (or of course there were three of them!)

Looking through our gallery you will see what photographs our members have been taking. We always put fresh photos at the top of each section as they are submitted. Then later they go into alphabetical species order. We look for current local examples. Older photos will be replaced if we receive more up to date ones.

We have a new Botany Recorder, Kevin Walker, and plant records are now sent automatically to him. The calendar of events and news of recent outings are regularly updated. So make a point of having a regular glance at the site to see what is happening in our area.

Malcolm Jones

DISCOUNTS

Black's 10% discount on fully priced items.

Cotswold & Leeds North Face Store 15% discount (excluding sale goods, gift vouchers, carriage) in store, online or mail order.

Bass & Bligh Flexible discount, including photo printing and services.

Valerie Holmes, Hon. Treasurer

MISCELLANY

CALL FOR RECORDS

All members – please send your observations and records for 2014 to the appropriate Recorder (see membership card for details, Kevin Walker for Botany). Unusual sightings, unusual habitats, early or late sightings, interesting observations – include time and place, and make sure that what you see becomes part of our cumulative records of the local wildlife.

HIGH BATTS OPEN DAY Note in your diary – Sunday 2 November.

NATURAL HISTORY BOOKS FOR CHILDREN

Spring-cleaning your bookshelves, donating surplus volumes to charity? Have you any books on wildlife and natural history that would be of interest to children? Fountains Abbey want to expand their work reaching out to the next generation of naturalists, and their library would be very pleased to receive books to augment their collection. Bring your books to a meeting, or contact Marguerite Hobdey (884349) or Val Smith (see end page).

NEWSLETTER BY EMAIL

If you would be happy to receive the newsletter by email (saving the Society at least a pound a time, and Nature a small tree) please contact Richard Bion at richard.bion@talktalk.net

PLANTS: FROM ROOTS TO RICHES

Did you have Radio 4 on at 1.45pm during August? One of the treats of BBC broadcasting – a series of thoughtful, entertaining and informative talks on the study of plants, the importance of Kew Gardens as a centre for that study, and the value of plants in the modern world. It dealt with economic crops like rubber, medicinal plants like quinine, beautiful and exotic plants like the giant lily, and the systematic recording of every ordinary "weed" from every corner of the world. For those of you with computers, it is available on iplayer for a whole year, and it will be permanently archived. (There is also a book, same title, to accompany the series: authors Kathy Willis and Carolyn Fry).

NOTICE-BOARD

Council is looking for someone to keep the HDNS notice-board, and to bring it to the winter lectures. Could you do this, or share the task with a friend?

TEA AND BISCUITS *now free!*

Thank you to Cynthia and Robert Chandler and all the volunteers who have kindly made the tea and coffee at our meetings over the winter months. It's very pleasant having a chat over a cuppa and a biscuit after the lectures. In order to encourage more people to stay for the sociable part of the evening, there will be no charge for refreshments.

If you would like to help out please ring Cynthia.

FROM THE EDITORS

All telephone numbers are Harrogate, code 01423, unless otherwise stated.
Thanks to Brian Darbyshire for line illustrations.

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Material for the **Spring newsletter** should be sent
to Valerie Holmes by **14 March 2015**
email: valerieholmes@hotmail.co.uk

