



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

Registered Charity No. 503860

AUTUMN NEWSLETTER 2015



FROM THE PRESIDENT

Rewilding – what amazing scenes that word conjures up in my mind – maybe in yours? The thought that once again the wildwood could be inhabited by those animals which were removed by the actions of Man; after all, that was the habitat in which they evolved, until we came along and changed everything.

In this country, the Woodland Trust is making a valiant effort to restore tree cover to a greater proportion of the country using native species. For some years now the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds has planned its reserves on a 'landscape scale' involving principles such as 'biodiversity', 'food webs' and 'ecosystems', in other words producing a habitat with the basic plants on which many forms of herbivores may feed and these in turn may be eaten by a variety of predators up to the apex species. This has been the principle at their large Abernethy NNR which covers an area of 13,700 ha. However, these schemes pale into insignificance when compared with projects planned by conservation bodies in Europe with a 56,000 ha wetland in The Netherlands, 17,000 ha reserve in the mountains of Croatia, 200,000 ha of protected land in the Romanian Carpathian Mountains and a plan to declare 2% of Germany as a 'wilderness zone' by 2020. If only we had more space!

Recently I saw the other side of the coin when I joined Farnham Management Committee as they walked around the site planning the maintenance work which needs to be undertaken during the coming winter. Some of the native species, in the form of hundreds of willow and birch saplings plus a thriving rabbit warren, are endeavouring to take over the site and it is a routine ongoing struggle to keep them at bay before any constructive projects can be envisaged to create habitats suitable for our more threatened life forms.

With that thought in mind, where have all the insects gone? Have you had bees or hoverflies in the garden this year? I have found lavender and *Hebe* spp attract good numbers. Have there been many butterflies on your *Buddleia* bush? I have seen only 12 species in the garden so far and those only in small numbers. What are visiting Spotted and Pied Flycatchers feeding on? When did you last have to use toothpaste to remove the layer of squashed insects from the car windscreen and headlights? They are still present in the Brenne region of Central France as are the Nightjars. Are eradicating practices being allowed in Britain?

To finish on a high – my new record for the garden this summer has been a beautiful male Banded Demoiselle.

Ann Mettam

JUNE ATKINSON

HONORARY LIFE MEMBERSHIP

The Society is pleased to announce that June Atkinson has been made an Honorary Life Member of Harrogate & District Naturalists' Society. Her services over many years have been invaluable, particularly as Warden at Farnham Gravel Pits where she visits most days and organises working parties. She joined the Society in 1969 and over the ensuing years has been the entomological Group Leader organising a very successful series of moth-trapping courses and has also led many field trips.



VICE-PRESIDENT

Council has Co-opted Stephen Worwood as Vice President of the Society. Stephen is currently a Member of Council and the Recorder for Odonata, and is a long standing member of the Society.

NEW PROGRAMME SECRETARY

Ruth Upsall has kindly volunteered to be Programme Secretary, as members will know from the AGM. She is actively preparing the programme of lectures for 2016-17. She would like to hear of possible speakers, both members of the Society and speakers that you have heard and would recommend, so that she can build up a portfolio for future programmes. She would also like to know what topics interest you

NIDD GORGE COMMITTEE

The Society is looking for a volunteer to represent the Society on the Nidd Gorge Committee. If you are a regular visitor to this area then you might find this interesting and it would be of valuable help to the Society. Kindly contact HDNS General Secretary, Sue Coldwell gen.sechdns@yahoo.co.uk

WINTER WALK: ROECLIFFE to BISHOP MONKTON Tuesday 12 January 2016

A full day's steady winter walk from Roecliffe to YWT Staveley, across to the Bishop Monkton Ings and finish in Bishop Monkton. Meet adjacent to Roecliffe village green in cars at 9am. Expect a late afternoon finish. Food, drinks and waterproofs essential. No booking required. Mainly birds and interesting wetland habitat.

HARES & FINCHES in RIPON

Tuesday 23 February

Ripon and District for a car sharing tour around the area looking for Hares (maybe boxing) and winter finches on local game shoots. Meet at Quarry Moor, Ripon at 9am. Finish is flexible – probably mid-afternoon. No booking required.

RSPB FAIRBURN & SWILLINGTON INGS/ ST.AIDANS

Tuesday 15 March

Mini-bus trip (*booking essential – see back page*). Meet Trinity Church, Harrogate at 8am. Around 5pm return. Take food and drink and warm clothes. Mostly winter birds, possibly some early migrants.



HARROGATE NATURALISTS' FORUM

Get the very latest wildlife news from our area, recent sightings, reminders of HDNS meetings, members' photos (and even sound files!), advice, explanation, good natured discussion and humour. The more members who join the Forum the more useful it becomes as a means of communication within our Society. So, if you have use of a computer you really must visit http://tech.groups.yahoo.com/group/Harrogate_Naturalists/ and sign up.



BOTANY

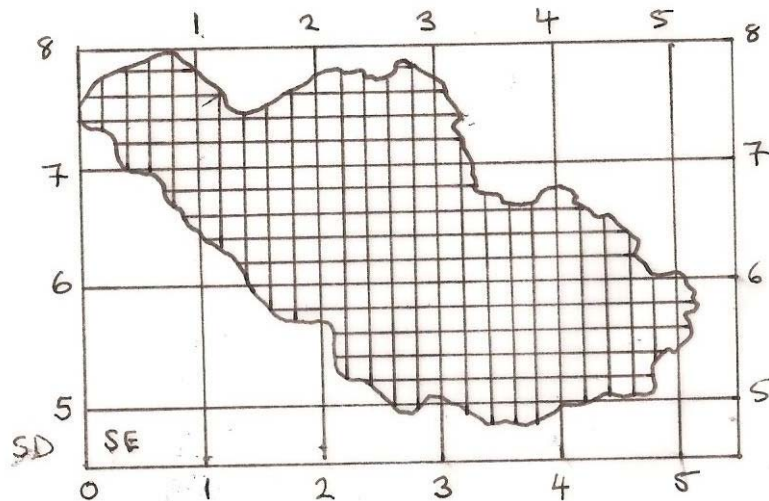
ATLAS 2020

PLANS FOR A NEW FLORA OF THE HDNS AREA

This summer I've been out and about recording plants for the third atlas of the British and Irish flora (Atlas 2020) which is due to be published by the Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland (BSBI) at the end of the decade.

This involves recording all native and alien plants growing in the wild within the 3000-odd 10 x 10 km grid squares (hectads) that make up Britain and Ireland with BSBI county recorders coordinating recording within their own vice-counties. My job is to cover the hectads that make up the HDNS area.

As I'd like to make comparisons with Jowsey's *Botanical Atlas of the Harrogate District* (Jowsey 1978) I'm using the old HDNS area which lies entirely within vice-county 64 (Mid-west Yorkshire) whereas the recent extensions to the north of the HDNS area are all within vice-county 65 (North-west Yorkshire). The old area comprises 19 hectads of which 17 straddle the boundary and therefore have varying amounts of land within our area (see map below). The equivalent figures for tetrads (2 x 2 km grid squares) and monads (1 x 1 km grid squares) are 252 and 931 respectively, with 85 (34%) and 164 (18%) squares respectively straddling the boundary.



Jowsey's botanical atlas was one of the first floras to record on a monad basis and provides 1 km grid 'dot' maps for over 750 species. My aim is more limited: to record at least 1 monad within each of the 252 tetrads over the next 10 years. This year I've managed to visit 52 monads within 32 tetrads, with some monad visited numerous times to ensure good coverage. Where present I've recorded local nature reserves (Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation, SINCs) separately so that the lists for these sites can be updated and differentiated from records made in the rest of the monad. This is essential for conservation and planning purposes and also very rewarding as one can start to see how sites have changed over time. This year this has included well known sites, such as Farnham Gravel Pit and the Nidd Gorge, as well as less often visited sites Sandy Bank Wood, Decoy Field, and Beaver Dyke. In addition, I've started surveys of rarities such as Yellow Star-of-Bethlehem *Gagea lutea* and non-natives that have escaped from Harlow Carr Gardens and spread down the Nidd Gorge.

Highlights of this summers' field work have included the discovery of a number of new native species for our area such as Stiff Sedge *Carex bigelowii* on the summit of Great Whernside where it is abundant and grows with Fir Clubmoss *Huperzia selago* and Cloudberry *Rubus chamaemorus*, Thin-spiked Wood-sedge *C. strigosa* which was found to be abundant in two woods (Spring and Skrikes Woods), Arctic Eyebright *Euphrasia arctica* at Farnham GP and Lesser Sea-spurrey *Spergularia marina* as a relatively frequent halophytes on roadsides in Harrogate. Refinds of very localised species included Variegated Horsetail *Equisetum variegatum* at Farnham GP and Wilson's Filmy-fern *Hymenophyllum wilsonii* at Skrikes Wood where it grows with Oak Fern *Gymnocarpium dryopteris* and Beech Fern *Phegopteris connectilis*. Also notable has been the abundance of Southern Marsh Orchid *Dactylorhiza praetermissa* which is now relatively common in our area, presumably due to colonisation of many new sites as it range continues to migrate northwards.

I plan to give members regular updates on the survey in the hope that it will encourage further recording in our area. I doubt we can emulate the achievements of Jowsey and others but it would be good to at least update the list of species present in our area given the changes that have occurred since the 1970s. So if anyone would like to get involved or submit records then please get in touch.

Jowsey, W.H. 1978. *Botanical Atlas of the Harrogate District*. Harrogate and District Naturalists' Society.

Kevin Walker

FIELD MEETING REPORTS

We hope you enjoy reading the abridged Field Trip reports. The full versions of these reports are available on the website www.hdns.org.uk

NORTH NORTHUMBERLAND COAST 10 March 2015

Arriving at Seahouses just before 10am the visibility was crystal clear, with excellent views of the Farne Islands. Low tide enabled us to scan the rocks for waders, revealing Purple Sandpipers, Dunlin, Ringed Plovers, Oystercatchers, Redshank, Curlews and Turnstones. Goldeneye and 'Cuddy' ducks were on the sea and in the harbour, both looking resplendent in the sunshine. The Eider Ducks are locally named after St Cuthbert who established a chapel on Inner Farne 600 years ago. We decided to join a trip to the Farne Islands. The Fulmars had paired up and Kittiwakes had returned for the breeding season. Lesser Black-backed Gulls, Cormorants, Shags, Guillemots and a few Razorbills came close to the boat and we got a very satisfying view of the very first returning Puffins. There is a notable colony of about 6000 grey seals which includes 1000 pups born each autumn, and many were basking in the sunshine. Once back on shore we drove to Budle Bay. Highlights included Red-breasted Mergansers, Wigeon and Little Egret. The hide at Fenham-le-Moor gave us Twite and Linnet. Stag Rocks gave us a pair of Long-tailed Ducks and a Black-necked Grebe and at least 20 Slavonian Grebes amongst the Common Scoters. There were several Red-throated Divers to add to the list of 68 species seen! Many thanks to Peter and Colin for driving and thanks also to Colin for leading what was an absolutely superb day out. This trip was definitely worth the travel time and the chance to see a good selection of grebes, sea ducks, waders, gulls and the Farne Islands at close range was not to be missed.

Sue Coldwell

WEST COAST MOSSES

14 April 2015

Our first stop was WWT Martin Mere which is known for its breeding programme of pinioned global ducks. The same fences which keep the ducks safe from predation also provide a haven for small passerines. Here we listened to a Blackcap in full voice and watched a Chaffinch nest-building at close range. A good selection of waders were on the marsh pools, including Redshank, Lapwing, Avocet, Black-tailed Godwits and Ruff. We also saw Mediterranean Gulls, Whooper Swans, Pintail and Widgeon. Two Tawny Owls

were roosting side by side and Buzzard and Kestrel were seen over the marshes. After lunch we called in at RSPB Marshside, north of Southport. Here they were in the process of installing an electric predator proof fence which will hugely increase the breeding success of the spectacular number of birds out on the marsh. Golden Plover and a second summer Little Gull added to our tally of 69 birds for the day. Next to the dunes of the Ainsdale and Birkdale Sandhills Local Nature Reserve a site rich in unusual plants and home of Natterjack Toads and Sand Lizards. It was an absolute delight to wonder about these dunes, plant- spotting and listening to Willow Warblers marking out territory. We also saw a Stonechat and two Wheatears. Sadly we saw no lizards or toads, but now it's on the radar, who would not look forward to another visit to such a wonderful site for another look?

Sue Coldwell

WYKEHAM RAPTOR WATCHPOINT & FILEY 19 May 2015

Having arrived at Wykeham, we watched the dramatic westward advance of storm clouds filling in the view over Fylingdales Moor. The storm caught up with us and we retreated to the minibus. However, the species total for the day was an impressive 75. Highlights were, from Sutton Bank, Siskin and Garden Warbler. Filey Dams provided Barn Owl, Little Grebe and Common Sandpiper and Cuckoo (heard). From Filey Brigg Country Park we walked along the top of the Brigg, the southern side of which has seen three recent landslips in the boulder clay. On the northern side we saw a good variety of nesting seabirds, Fulmar, Kittiwake, Guillemot and Razorbill. Even at a distance it is possible to see the sheer numbers of Gannets on the cliffs at Bempton. A fine evening and stop at Scarborough was notable for the summer sound of Sandwich Terns traversing the bay, reinforcing that it was in fact May, not March. The roofs of Harrogate may have been white over with hailstones and 3 degrees showing on the thermometer, but we arrived home warm and dry, having seen some amazing weather. The bird list was as varied as the habitats we had visited, despite everything.

Sue Coldwell

BELLFLASK

Saturday 13 June 2015

Bob Orange led the meeting at Bellflask, which is a working Hanson Heidelberg gravel quarry in process of restoration for wildlife. We had a very pleasant walk accompanied by Brian and Susan Moreland, who live on-site where they run a trout fishery and also record the wildlife to be found there. Bob, who manages this quarry amongst others, showed us how the gravel is extracted and water levels are managed, whilst Brian gave us the conservation

angle. The working quarry at Bellflask supports good numbers of Sand Martins (c350 pairs) and nesting Oystercatchers and Little-ringed Plovers. The restored gravel pits are home to Great-crested Grebes and other water birds, with the reed beds supporting Reed and Sedge Warblers, Reed Buntings and the occasional Bittern. Avocets and other waders also breed. Harriers, Ospreys and Little Egrets are regularly seen on passage. This is an ever-changing environment but nature takes advantage of the niches it provides.

Will Rich

SOUTHEAST NORTH YORK MOORS Saturday 11 July 2015

First stop was the National Park Centre on Sutton Bank where we went to a small wildflower meadow which was rich in Common Spotted Orchids, Twayblade, Yellow Rattle and a single Bee Orchid. Ringlet butterflies fluttered among the plants. From this limestone grassland we crossed to the other side of the site to an area of typical heathland with heather, Bilberry, Silver Birch, Sheep's Sorrel and Wavy Hair Grass. At YWT's Fen Bog nature reserve we saw a male Small Pearl Bordered Fritillary, 6-spot Burnet moths, Orange Underwing and Dark Green Fritillary. The valley bottom of Fen Bog is dominated by Purple Moor grass, Bog Myrtle and Common Cotton grass, with stands of open water populated by Bog Bean and Lesser Spearwort. The sloping sides of the valley are heather clad and we followed a reasonably dry peaty path, with muddy patches where we soon found Common Butterwort, Round Leaved Sundew, Twayblade, Heath Milkwort and Bog Asphodel, Cross-leaved Heath and Bell Heather. There was a flyover of 16 Crossbills and a glimpse of lizards. In the valley bottom a small pool yielded a beautiful powder-blue Keeled Skimmer and a Whinchat which treated us to some good views. Other destinations on this day were Hole of Horcum and Ellerton Bank. Adder, Slow-worms and a very large Common Lizard were found and two Marbled Whites.

Muff Upsall

Top Hill Low and Hornsea Mere Tuesday 25 August 2015

By the time we reached Top Hill Low Water Treatment Plant the weather was quite pleasant so as we walked to the first of the marsh hides we were able to enjoy plenty of insect activity. We recorded ten species of butterfly including Painted Lady, three species of bumblebee and numerous Common Darters. A full morning in all the hides rewarded us with good views of three Green Sandpipers, other wader species were scarce but brief views of a Kingfisher and Sedge Warbler added to our list which by then included Mallard, Shoveler, Shelduck, Cormorant, Grey Heron, Little Grebe and 85 Greylag Geese.

Drama was provided by a female Marsh Harrier that put everything up several

times. The "O" reservoir held 27 Great crested Grebes and the "D" reservoir had a good range of waterfowl including 37 Tufted Ducks and one Red-crested Pochard, one of our number said it "had a bill like a carrot", a good description! Five species of Gull were also on the reservoir. A change of plan took us to Sammy's Point at Spurn in pursuit of a Red-footed Falcon, no luck there but we did pick up on the tail end of a big movement of Pied Flycatchers along with Redstarts, Whinchat, Wheatear and several Willow Warblers. Seven Swifts hurried southwards down the point whilst the estuary side provided us with 70 Golden Plovers and the calls of Whimbrel. There was a Spoonbill on the ponds at Kilnsea Wetlands. On the sea front at Hornsea we saw good numbers of Little Gull and Black headed Gulls. Common Tern and unspicifiable "comic" terns passing all the time going south. By the time we visited The Mere the light was failing; we saw plenty more Little Gulls. Another Marsh Harrier was our final bird of the day with a check list total of 72 species of birds.

Mike Brown

HARROGATE ADVERTISER NIGEL HEPTINSTALL

For twenty years Nigel has been writing a column in the Harrogate Advertiser, bringing wildlife issues to a wide audience throughout the local area, encouraging local participation in conservation issues. Ackrill's have decided that it will no longer appear. If you would like to protest against the loss of this valuable and interesting piece of local journalism, please contact news@harrogateadvertiser.co.uk, or write to Letters to the Editor, Harrogate Advertiser, I Cardale Park, Beckwith Head Road, Harrogate, HG3 1RZ.

KNARESBOROUGH LIBRARY EVENT

The Society is hoping to have a Display Stand in Knaresborough Library between 15 and 22 February 2016 (half term week). The intention is to provide information about the Society to the general public, including details on Farnham Gravel Pit. We would be grateful to borrow any photographs taken by Members at Farnham. Some Members may wish to be present at the stand. For further details please contact Sonia Starbuck .

MOTHS

Another busy summer saw the Ripon Moth-ers travel near and far (mostly in conjunction with the Yorkshire Naturalists' Union), with myriad moth trapping paraphernalia. New species continue to be discovered, including more Vice County and HDNS records. Regular sites were visited, including Ellington Banks, Nosterfield Local Nature Reserve, High Batts NR (for the Open Day) and Hackfall Woods but also some less familiar places such as Nosterfield reed bed, Fountains Abbey (adjoining the Hall) and Sawley (another moth trapping event for the Harrogate & District Biodiversity Action Group).

Spring was rather uneventful, the cool, wet weather affecting the numbers of moths caught. In early July, there was a marked, although temporary improvement in the situation, with new species being recorded in the garden traps of both your Recorders! Ten Elephant Hawk-moths arrived on one night in the trap at Sharow, and a record count of 78 Obscure Wainscots was trapped at Nosterfield reed bed, accompanied by three micro-moths new for VC 65.

Further south in the UK, there was a large influx of several migratory species from the Continent, including Bordered Straw, Silver-striped Hawk-moth and Ni Moth. The former certainly reached Yorkshire but so far, no records of the latter two have been forthcoming, although a Small Mottled Willow (another migrant) was trapped at Fountains Abbey. All will be detailed in full in the annual report.

Autumn can still be an interesting time. Particularly, the unpredictable weather conditions prevailing during mid-September which brought two rare birds to our area, could also bring further immigrant moths across the North Sea. There is also the pleasure of recording such beautiful resident species such 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 just yet!

Follow us on Twitter: @JillWarwick or @DoubleKidney

Jill Warwick & Charlie Fletcher

During the first week in **March**, winter wildfowl numbers fell but 22 Wigeons, 14 Gadwalls, 38 Mallards, 49 Tufted Ducks and six Goldeneyes were still present. Oystercatchers were on the move with 14 on 5th when Redwings were still being seen. During the second week, the first spring arrivals were three Sand Martins, two Chiffchaffs, a Dunlin and a Little Ringed Plover flew through on 14th. During a hailstorm on 24th, Sand Martins were struggling to feed; and 13 Chiffchaffs were seen next day. Strong winds and heavy rain at the end of the month brought a halt to migration but up to 30 Tree Sparrows were attending the feeding station.

On 2nd **April**, the first Blackcap of spring was seen and, two days later, 16 Chiffchaffs were present, two Swallows, 17 Meadow Pipits and four Redwings flew over and a Little Ringed Plover was on the islands. By the end of the first week, Sand Martins were inspecting the wall and 30 Meadow Pipits were seen on the evening of 9th. There was a movement of hirundines on 11th when 350 Sand Martins and 35 Swallows were counted. Willow Warblers were on site by 12th and a male Common Redstart was seen next day. Four Arctic Terns flew through on 14th when the first Common Tern was present; 19 Chiffchaffs, ten Willow Warblers and six Blackcaps were recorded. A pair of breeding Great Crested Grebes had their first egg by 16th on which day a male Common Redstart, two White Wagtails and three Common Terns were present. On 19th, two fairly large brown waders with curved bills dropped onto one of the islands and closer inspection revealed them to be Whimbrels which stayed for only ten minutes before flying off. Next day, a late afternoon surprise was a Black Tern in breeding plumage which stayed until early evening. During the last week of the month Ringed Plover, Dunlin, Sedge Warbler, Garden Warbler and Lesser Whitethroat were on site, the Great Crested Grebes now had four eggs and the first Mallard ducklings appeared. The number of Sand Martins inspecting the wall rose to over 100. The weather during the month was pleasant and very welcome, little did we know what was to come.

May is usually regarded as the month by which most of our summer migrants have arrived and there is always the chance of an unexpected bird appearing in certain weather conditions. The first week was not encouraging with adverse winds and the maximum temperature reaching only 11°C. The Annual Patch Watch Day and bird census was on 3rd, with a 4 a.m.start, when it was raining heavily and the temperature was just 4°C, though this was an improvement on minus 5°C of a previous year. A pair of Gadwalls was present

together with Tufted Ducks and Mallards and the count of goslings, 25 Greylags and 15 Canadas, was slightly below average. Three pairs of Oystercatchers and two pairs of Little Ringed Plovers were frequenting the islands along with a Common Sandpiper. One pair of Common Terns was on site and 12 others flew through in the early morning. Warblers were well represented with 13 singing Chiffchaffs, four Willow Warblers, 13 Blackcaps, six Garden Warblers, two Lesser Whitethroats and a Common Whitethroat. Other passerines included 12 Robins, ten Blackbirds, eight Dunnocks and 12 Chaffinches all of which were singing and holding territory. Two Yellow Wagtails were present. A Hobby flew over on 6th, when three pairs of Common Terns were present. The Great Crested Grebes hatched only one young from five eggs by 10th and there were two further sightings of a Hobby. A Reed Warbler was singing in a small area of common reed on 14th when the temperature was just 12°C, but worse was to come on 19th with hail and thunder and a temperature of just 8°C. The number of Mallard ducklings rose to 26 but an Otter, which had been on site since January was seen to take some of them. Two Oystercatcher chicks were hatched on the boat and a Knot in winter plumage was present, along with two Dunlins, on 19th. During the third week, a Ringed Plover, two Dunlins and two Common Redshanks passed through. The temperature on 24th was 20°C. Two pairs of Reed Warblers were singing on 25th and took up residence in the reed bed. A pair of Mediterranean Gulls in breeding plumage dropped in on 29th.

At the beginning of **June**, the first family parties of Chiffchaffs were seen and Great Spotted Woodpeckers were feeding young. A Hobby flew over on 5th. Young Long-tailed and Marsh Tits and two young Tree Sparrows were noted. Four pairs of Common Terns were attempting to breed on the islands but were very unsettled, with a further two pairs on the platform. The Great Crested Grebes had another breeding attempt, with two eggs seen on 13th, when the first chick was still in attendance. Temperatures were now increasing, with 24°C on 16th. During the third week, the Mute Swans had three cygnets. Two pairs of Common Terns together hatched only three chicks, one of which fell off the platform and survived for only a few days; the one young Oystercatcher also went missing – a very poor year for them. An adult Mediterranean Gull was on site on 19th. A pair of Gadwalls produced two ducklings, one of which survived and over 50 pairs of Sand Martins were breeding in the wall. A Ruff in breeding plumage was present on 26th. Following high water levels for the past two years, the islands this year were more exposed and large enough for us to hope for a good breeding season but constant and systematic predation, mostly by Magpies and many Jackdaws, prevented that. The two pairs of Little Ringed Plovers failed and a Common Tern's nest was destroyed by trampling geese. The 33 nest boxes on site are

used mainly by various species of tit and an occasional Tree Sparrow. The low success rate of birds using the boxes was due to the miserable cold weather in May, resulting in fewer caterpillars being available for the tits to feed to their young. Most boxes were empty, eggs were deserted in others and only nine produced young.

During the first week of **July**, the temperature rose to 25°C on 4th. Breeding Tufted Ducks had a poor season with only two pairs producing a total of nine young, eight of which eventually disappeared. A Peregrine Falcon was seen on its usual pylon watch-point. Five Common Sandpipers and a Common Redshank were present one misty morning. Two Little Gulls were resting on the islands on 4th and a Tree Pipit sang briefly next day. The first of the Common Tern chicks fledged on 8th and a Turtle Dove was heard in Area 5. The second breeding attempt by the Great Crested Grebes resulted in one chick hatching on 9th. A pair of Reed Warblers was feeding young in the nest and two Hobbies were chasing Sand Martins. A late breeding pair of Common Terns hatched two chicks. The juvenile Great Crested Grebe from the first breeding attempt in June, now disappeared. By the third week, Common Redstarts were moving through on several days with three on 23rd, when seven Black-tailed Godwits in breeding plumage dropped onto the islands. Lapwing numbers now rose to 313. The first Greenshank of the year and a Ruff were seen on 30th, the former still present next day. The two late-hatched tern chicks did not survive the cold and wet conditions and the six breeding pairs fledged only two young.

There was a welcome return to summer temperatures in **August**, reaching 27°C on 9th. The first week of the month was quite productive with two Common Redstarts, a Pied Flycatcher (only the second record for the site), a reeling Grasshopper Warbler on the East Bank and another Turtle Dove, a species which was seen regularly from 1980 to 2004. The Mute Swan cygnets were now reduced to two. Spotted Flycatchers were in evidence with two on 8th and 11th, along with a Common Redstart. The passage of Greenshanks was very evident: after the one on 30th and 31st July, the species was present daily from one on 11th August until the month-end – with three on 12th, a total of eight during the day on 13th including some flying over and three down in the evening and next morning, followed by one or two every day (three on 24th) until 31st and with six on 1st September and one from 2nd to 4th. This series of records is the most ever recorded at Farnham. A Green Sandpiper was seen on 16th and a Little Gull was present in the evening. The Mute Swan cygnets were now reduced to one which also disappeared, the reason not being known but it has happened in the past. A pair of Reed Warblers was seen feeding three successfully fledged young. Spotted Flycatchers were seen on eight

days from 18th, including a family party of five, and eight seen on 23rd. Two Common Redstarts were present and a Green Sandpiper stayed from 25th to 29th. Sand Martins had a good year with 59 pairs in the first brood period and 47 in the second. A long-awaited Osprey appeared in the afternoon of 29th and, after a few abortive attempts, caught a large perch and flew off with it to the nearby woods. Surprisingly, it appeared again at 10 a.m. next day when its fishing technique left much to be desired resulting in just two very small fish. It eventually left at mid-day after being harassed by two Common Buzzards.

Also on 1st **September** (see above), was a Green Sandpiper, 25 Chiffchaffs and a Hobby chasing a Sparrowhawk.

Butterflies By the first week in March Small Tortoiseshell, Peacock and Comma were noted after which it was during the favourable conditions in early April when Brimstone, Orange Tip and Speckled Wood appeared. It was then dismal with few sightings, just fleeting glimpses of butterflies on the move. A Painted Lady was seen on 16th June and, as in previous years, there was another poor showing of Common Blue. By July Large Skipper, Red Admiral and more Painted Ladies were on the wing. A White-letter Hairstreak was seen on Members' Day. The lack of periods of prolonged sunshine made butterflies reluctant to spend much time on the wing and be counted. Reasonable numbers of Meadow Brown, Gatekeeper and Ringlet were in keeping with an improvement in weather conditions. By mid-August, second broods of Peacock butterflies were emerging. During late August and early September, warm sunshine encouraged several species to take wing when ten species were seen on 6th September including Brimstone, Speckled Wood, Red Admiral, Common Blue and Brown Argus. Twenty-two species were seen this year but numbers were well down.

Damselflies and Dragonflies The first Four-spotted Chaser emerged on 26th May and the first Blue-tailed and Azure damselflies were seen on 10th June; another poor start to the season. An Emperor dragonfly was seen on 16th June with Black-tailed Skimmers on 21st. Banded Demoiselles were on the wing on three days in July and four Emperors were each patrolling their territories. Brown Hawkers appeared during the month, with ten on 12th August. Common Darters were in small numbers. On 6th September, dragonflies included Migrant, Brown and Southern Hawkers and Green Emerald. Twelve species were recorded this year; four damselflies and eight dragonflies.

Mammals There were regular sightings of Stoat, Weasel and Roe Deer, one of which favours eating nettles, and also a Fox with cubs during the summer.

An Otter was present from January to July; although regarded as a charismatic species, it caused a lot of disturbance during the breeding season, taking not only fish but waterfowl chicks, very few young Coot, Moorhen and ducklings being seen. There was an interesting observation of a Pipistrelle-sized bat coming down to drink and a small bat seen in the copse and roosting under the tool-shed roof, was probably a Pipistrelle. Rabbits, as ever, are in abundance.

We have been fortunate to have our new Botanical Recorder, Dr Kevin Walker once a junior member of the Society, visiting the site to conduct a survey and to update the species recorded since *The Natural History of Farnham Gravel Pit* was published in 1994. Some species have been lost but new ones found, a natural progression as older gravel pits mature.

Invertebrates of note included an Oak Eggar moth found by our Butterfly Recorder, Dr Mike Barnham, which was seen again on Members' Day. Very few insects were on the wing during the summer and, even in August, the Spotted Flycatchers appeared to be making very few successful catches.

Management of the site continues with a small number of members who are dedicated to ensuring the ongoing biodiversity of the site. We could do with more members willing to give a few hours of their time to help with the management work undertaken throughout the winter. Nature does not stand still and measures have to be taken to control invasive species. If you would like more information about what is involved then please get in touch with me.

June E. Atkinson

Chairman, Management Committee & Honorary Warden

FARNHAM MANAGEMENT DAYS

ALL SUNDAYS

2015 25 October 22 November 27 December

2016 17 January 14 February 13 March 3 April

Meet at the hide at 10am

Can you spare some time to help?

There are two places where you can view photographs on our site, GALLERY and NEWS. Each contains photos taken by our members.

GALLERY

Go here by clicking on 'About HDNS' on the top row. Next click 'Photo gallery' and move across to click the section you want to see. Eg click mammals and you will see 10 small images (thumbnails). You can click 'slide show' to see them all but you will miss the captions. To see the photos full size just click on any one. It will open full size with the caption visible (Species, where taken, date and photographer). Move to the next photo by clicking the chevron (v on its side) or use the arrow keys on your keyboard. To return to the home page – just click on any enlarged photo.

NB Recent photos are at first always put at the top. At intervals the new ones are moved into alphabetical order with the rest. Alphabetical order is by main name first . eg "Sparrow, House" not "House Sparrow".

NEWS

After a field trip a report of the day and its sightings is put on the website. Photos taken at the trip are added. These photos are also thumbnails. To see one full size click on it.

Important: To return to the NEWS section use the back button on your Internet Browser. Internet Explorer, Google Chrome and Firefox all have a back button. It is usually a small triangle on its side at the top left of your screen

We welcome photographs for the website either from trips or submitted for the gallery. Gallery photos should be current and local. To send a photograph go to ' Contact Us' on the website and click 'Submit a photograph'. OR email the photo as an attachment to photos@HDNS.org.uk

Malcolm Jones



MEMBERS' DAY AT FARNHAM GRAVEL PIT SUNDAY 12 JULY 2015

For several years the Society, through the Honorary Warden, has arranged a Members' Day at Farnham Gravel Pit which is advertised on the Membership Card and in the Spring Newsletter, with the intention of showing members, particularly new ones, this important area and giving them the opportunity to meet other members. The Warden and members of the Management Committee are on hand to show visitors around and point out some of the many life-forms which occur on site.

On the day, together with the President, I visited at 11 a.m. to discover that there were only five others present; the Warden, two members of the Management Committee, one member of Council and one member of the management working team, in other words the support staff. The President and I had to leave at 12.30 and learnt subsequently that only one member of the Society arrived during the afternoon.

In preparation, the grass path from the car park to the hide had been cut and swept, telescopes had been set up for visitors to use and various displays and literature were on view in the hide – all to no avail!

The Society is extremely fortunate to have access to such a species-rich site with its hide facilities, something most Societies would dearly wish to have. It is a pity therefore, that many members seemingly fail to realise how privileged they are to have such a resource. Many travel long distances to visit RSPB and YWT Reserves, in most cases seeing little more than they could at Farnham except, perhaps, for an occasional rare bird, and often having to fight their way through hordes of 'long-lensers' who commandeer the hides in the hope of such. Suffice to say that no fewer than 13 species of very rare birds, including the first record of a Pacific Diver for the Western Palearctic and several other minor rarities have occurred at Farnham, most being first seen by the Warden or by a small group of keen members who attend regularly. There is also much to interest the entomologist and the botanist, the list of flowering plants being formidable, numbering over 300 species.

To this end, we are very fortunate to have a dedicated group of volunteer members who regularly attend working parties, their input being invaluable to ensure the ongoing preservation and maintenance of the various habitats, some very fragile, so necessary for the survival and continuing presence of the many animals and plants.

Having been a member of the Society since 1951, and being involved in the evolution of Farnham from working to restored gravel pit and the subsequent discussions and agreement with the owners to allow the Society to build the hide and manage the environs of the South Lake for wildlife, I am rather disappointed that more members do not avail themselves of this very special facility in their pursuit of natural history.

Dr John R. Mather BEM

MISCELLANY

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. Quote the affiliation/promotional code AF-HDNS-W3.

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

Valerie Holmes, Hon. Treasurer

HIGH BATTS LECTURES

Monday evenings, commencing at 7.30 pm at the Golden Lion pub on Allhallowgate, Ripon. Admission £2.

5 October	A Naturalist's France	Brian & Sophia Fuller
9 November	Kamchatka and the Kuril Islands	Tony & Alwin Knowles
7 December	In search of a sword-bearer in Ecuador	Raymond & Pat Rumbold
8 February	The Quest for British Butterflies - part 1	Liz & Ray Wilson
7 March	The Quest for British Butterflies - part 2	Liz & Ray Wilson

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?

CALL FOR RECORDS

All members – please send your observations and records for 2015 to the appropriate Recorder (see membership card for details). 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.

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

NOTICE-BOARD

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TEA AND BISCUITS

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. If you would like to help out please contact 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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