



AUTUMN NEWSLETTER 2017

70th ANNIVERSARY



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

The Society's 70th Anniversary event, which was to have been held at Pateley Bridge on 16th July 2017 had, unfortunately, to be cancelled due to lack of support. Our longest serving member and twice President, Dr. John R. Mather BEM was to have addressed the assumed assembly. His speech is reproduced below for the record:

When I joined this Society on 14th November 1951, at the age of 21, having been interested in birds since boyhood, I didn't imagine that I would be addressing you some 66 years on. In those far off days, members met upstairs in the dimly lit and musty Church Rooms in Cambridge Road where perhaps just a handful of enthusiasts, some clad in camphor-laden tweeds, would assemble to gaze at strange wriggling creatures through microscopes or listen to a visiting speaker who would bring large 4x4 hand-coloured glass slides which were slotted into a metal machine with an ornate roof and a chimney. I remember one well-known bird photographer charging £3 for his visit at a time when life membership of the Society was £5.

During the 1950s and '60s, several of our members were very active naturalists, spending much time in the field, studying their various disciplines. There was a very knowledgeable Botanical Section including W.H Jowsey, Dorothy Haythornthwaite, Elsa Unne, 'Til Mellard and Olive Windermere. Entomologists Billy Beck, Dennis Jesper, Donald Trenbath and Arnold Winter. Ornithologists the Rev. Ilderton, Alan Walker, Christine Shaddick, Molly Wray and myself. The then deer herd at Studley Park, Ernest Kemp, was our Mammals Recorder.

Much of their work and that of other subsequent incoming active members was put into print, resulting in a series of publications, the first being *A Checklist of the Macrolepidoptera* by Ian Rutherford in 1965, a discipline for which we now know a great deal, due to 50 more years of continuous moth trapping. In 1970, the Society planned a Nature Trail in the Valley Gardens and Pinewoods, accompanied by a booklet arranged by Helen Jackson. This was followed by Jowsey's *Botanical Atlas* in 1978, an important work which is still being used as a baseline today. Two booklets were published by Ron Deaton, one dealing with Reptiles and Amphibians in 1984 and the other on Mammals, Reptiles and Amphibians in 1986. Alan Walker produced three Checklists of the Birds in 1966, 1977 and 1991, the last being completed by Dr. Arthur Kinnear following Alan's untimely death, and my *Birds of the Harrogate District*

was published in 2001. Doctors Mike Barnham and Graham Foggitt wrote *Butterflies of the Harrogate District* in 1992 and June Atkinson and myself produced *The Natural History of Farnham Gravel Pit* in 1994. Clearly, during those earlier years, more field work was being undertaken by the various sections than is the case today and, most importantly, the results were being published.

Membership increased at this time from 273 in 1968 to 350 in 1970, peaked at 481 in 1990 and today stands at 255. During the 1980s, we had something that today would be impossible, a junior membership which steadily increased reaching 105 in 1990, many of whom attended lectures and went on field trips under the guidance of a team of volunteers; they even had a special area dedicated for the study of wildlife at the farm of our stalwart member, Tony Stobbs, at Bishop Thornton. Today, with the overly restrictive health and safety regulations, all this I fear, would be a logistical nightmare.

Where are the juniors now? Regrettably, recruitment of young people to the ranks is rare, not only in natural history societies, but every society one hears of has the same problem. The attractions of computers, video games, smart phones, i-phones and the like, offering many exciting but, perhaps, wasted hours. The complexities of bird and insect migration and the impact of intensive agriculture on our flora and fauna is of little consequence for all but a very small section of today's youth. There are, I believe, quite a few young 'twitchers', but they are certainly not naturalists! We do, however, manage to maintain a viable adult membership and, together with our friends and neighbours, the Wharfedale Naturalists, are two of the most numerically successful, traditional natural history societies in Yorkshire, being approached only by the newer RSPB groups.

Over time we have been served by a succession of dedicated officers, perhaps the most important being our secretaries, without whom no society could function. Some of you will remember Marion Ogilvie, who served for very many years as did Joyce Hall, Derrick Mellard and Helen Jackson, our Programme Secretary for over 30 years. More recently Joan McClean, Pat Cook and currently, Sue Coldwell and Val Smith.

Having been involved, in one way or another, for 66 of our 70 years (once your Secretary – I remember the quill pen!), it is impossible to speculate where the Society will be 70 years from now if the degree of technological change is maintained, the art of letter writing for instance already having virtually disappeared under a plethora of hastily sent and often ill-conceived emails. One can only hope we will continue, in whatever form, unlike some long-

established societies which have had to fold through lack of volunteers to take on the responsibilities of important office.

In conclusion, consider our title – just what is a naturalist? Broadly speaking, someone who takes an interest in plants and animals and whose degree of interest ranges from maintaining bird feeders or spending time in the countryside enjoying what they see, to specializing in a particular discipline and recording their findings. Simply being a member of some natural history society is enough for most and their enjoyment comes from occasional field trips and regular attendance at indoor meetings to mix with friends and listen to some visiting speaker regale them with obscure aspects of the natural world, or be transported to some exotic land, if only on celluloid, and latterly through some strange, and sometimes temperamental, digital equipment followed by tea or coffee.

For many, that's all they want, and why not?!

(Note: this speech was penned before the *Brief History of the Society* by Ann Mettam was posted on the Society's website).



INDOOR MEETINGS PROGRAMME 2017-18

11 October 2017 **Fighting Wildlife Crime - in the UK & Internationally**

Formed in 1889 to stop the trade in millinery plumes, the RSPB continues to fight the illegal killing of birds: investigations, threats and opportunities.

Bob Elliot, RSPB, head of Wildlife Crime

25 October **Yorkshire's Forgotten Fenlands**

The unique history of the once-great fenlands of eastern England, from Yorkshire to East Anglia. A story of loss and transformation, the consequences, and beginnings of recovery. **Professor Ian Rotherham**

8 November **Hackfall Woods**

This unique woodland landscape is owned by the Woodland Trust. A tour with photographs, historical notes and details of the heritage project which put Hackfall back on the map. **David Mason, Woodland Trust**

22 November **Filey International – Arrivals & Departures**
North Yorkshire's Bird Observatory

Fasten your seatbelts! Migration never stops at this east coast hotspot – and neither does Mark in his pursuit of its wonders. A whistlestop tour through four seasons.

Mark Pearson

6 December **The State of the UK's Birds**

An in-depth review of the population status of birds in the United Kingdom based upon research by the BTO, RSPB, Natural England and several other conservation organisations.

Mike Brown, HDNS

10 January 2018 **Work of the RSPB in Yorkshire**

Highlights of work in the wider countryside: saving species, habitats, sites and landscapes; uplands, working with farmers, involvement in planning and advocacy.

Helen Byron, RSPB

24 January **Namibia**

Awe-inspiring scenery where the Kalahari desert meets the infamous Skeleton Coast. A remarkable variety of wildlife clinging on to life in an apparently hostile environment.

Nick Gaunt, HDNS

7 February **Colorado**

Spring visits in search of the seven readily available grouse species. Also a great selection of special North American bird species, some spectacular scenery and lots of snow!

Mike Watson

21 February **Yorkshire Dales Rivers Trust: an Overview**

Natural Flood Management, an Upper Wharfe perspective.

A proactive approach to flood management, working with natural processes to slow the flow of water.

Dan Turner YDRT

7 March **Swift Conservation**

New and interesting facts about Swifts, why they are in trouble, and ways in which we can help Swifts survive and thrive.

Edward Mayer

21 March **Spiders – a Natural History**

British spiders: their numbers, structure and importance in various food webs; feeding, moulting and mating. Silk – the defining feature of spiders - will be a recurring theme.

Geoff Oxford, YNU

25 April **Annual General Meeting**

YORKSHIRE NATURALISTS' UNION

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING & NATURAL SCIENCES FORUM

18 November 2017, honouring Harrogate & District Naturalists' 70th Anniversary.

The next Annual General Meeting of the Yorkshire Naturalists' Union will be held in the Wolfson Room at the Bramall learning Centre in the Royal Horticultural Society Garden Harlow Carr, Harrogate, on Saturday 18th November 2017.

The day will start with registration and refreshments at 10.30am followed by a meeting of the Natural Sciences Forum. Picnic bag lunches will be provided by Betty's Café Tea Rooms, and will include vegetarian options. The AGM will take place after lunch, beginning with a welcome address by Harrogate and District Naturalists' Society, who celebrate their 70th anniversary this year. This will be followed by the presidential address from outgoing YNU President, Mrs Sarah White. The meeting will close at 4pm.

The price is £12 per person. The agenda and booking form can be downloaded from the YNU website.



CLEAN WATER FOR WILDLIFE SURVEY

The Freshwater Habitats Trust want to encourage as many people as possible to take part in the Clean Water for Wildlife Survey. Anyone and everyone can get involved, both groups and members of the public are welcome to participate. The two quick test kits are easy to use and you can record the amount of nutrient pollution in your local ponds, streams, rivers, ditches and canals – and maybe discover new clean water sites. FHT will send you as many nitrate and phosphate kits as you need to take part. Each kit comes with a Clean Water leaflet and recording form, so that you know what to do and what to record. More information can be found on the FHT website: <https://freshwaterhabitats.org.uk/projects/clean-water/take-part/> or contact Laura Quinlan lquinlan@freshwaterhabitats.org.uk

2017

Saturday 21 October

HACKFALL WOODS Looking for Fungi.

Meet at 10.30am at Hackfall carpark (NGR 230775) Bring packed lunch.
Finish mid-afternoon. Contact Muff Upsall to say you are coming.
Leader: Andy Woodall.

Wednesday 1 November

HIGH BATTS NR

Meet at 10.00am at High Batts car park. Autumn Wildlife, including mosses, liverworts and fungi. Bring packed lunch. Finish around 16:00.
Leader: Nick Gaunt.

Tuesday 19 December

RIPON PARKS SSSI

Walking through the Ripon Parks SSSI including visits to YWT Ripon Loop and High Batts NR. Meet at **High Batts car park** at 9.00am and prepare to car share to Ripon Golf Course. Then walk back to the High Batts NR. Mainly birds, but with some geology and mammal interest. A pre-booked late lunch will be taken in a local hostelry (probably in West Tanfield) and numbers need to be confirmed to Muff Upsall by **5 December**, please. Anyone can join the walk without taking the pre-booked lunch. Depending on the weather and how many Starling roosts develop in the Ripon area a late afternoon visit to a roost will take place to watch any murmuration.
Leader: Colin Slator

2018

Leader (except 14 June): June E. Atkinson

Pick-up point for minibus and coach outings: meet at York Place Car Park, off York Road, Knaresborough – behind Marquis of Granby pub. Car parking charge: £1.60 all day. Please have exact money for the machine

Please note the following precautions: stout footwear and suitable outdoor clothing should always be worn. Bring plenty of food and drinks, with sun blocker and insect repellent where relevant. Members take part at entirely their own risk and are responsible for their personal safety and the security of their personal belongings. The vehicle, where used, will be a 16-seater minibus with a hired driver. Various field guides will be available on most trips.

Tuesday 20 February

**HARTLEPOOL, TEESMOUTH
and RSPB SALTHOLME (am & pm)**

Minibus trip (*booking required – see blue form*). Meet at York Place car park, Knaresborough at 8.00 am. Looking for divers, grebes, winter ducks, other seabirds and white-winged gulls. RSPB members should have their membership cards with them.

Tuesday 27 March

**SKIPWITH COMMON and LOWER DERWENT
(am & pm)**

Meet in Skipwith at the village green at 10 am in cars. Looking for woodpeckers, finches and, hopefully, Wood Lark. Wildfowl at Lower Derwent and possibly raptors.

Tuesday 1 May

RSPB FAIRBURN INGS (am & pm)

Meet in reserve car park at 10 am in cars. Looking for passage birds, terns and waders; warblers, to be identified on song; hopefully Spoonbill, which bred last year. RSPB members should have their membership cards with them.

Thursday 14 June EVENING NIGHTJAR WALK, STAINBURN FOREST

Meet in Stainburn car park, Little Almscliffe at 9 pm in cars. Looking for Nightjars and roding Woodcocks. The walk is approximately 1 mile each way on a good forestry track. Please bring a torch for the return walk. Midge repellent is essential.

Leader: Robert Brown

Tuesday 7 August

**TOPHILL LOW NATURE RESERVE -
Yorkshire Water (am & pm)**

Minibus trip (*booking required – see blue form*). Meet at York Place car park, Knaresborough at 8.30 am. A diverse habitat with two reservoirs, wader pools and woodland; there are several hides and access paths are good. Butterflies and dragonflies are abundant.

Tuesday 4 September

**HARTLEPOOL, TEESMOUTH
and RSPB SALTHOLME (am & pm)**

Minibus trip (*booking required – see blue form*). Meet at York Place car park, Knaresborough at 8.00 am. Looking for sea passage, skuas and terns; also waders at Saltholme. RSPB members should have their membership cards with them.

FIELD MEETING REPORTS 2017

The full versions of the Field Meeting Reports, including photos, can be found on the HDNS website. Our authors have gone to great lengths to write interesting and informative reports Apologies in advance for editing these reports in order to publish them in the newsletter. Do read the reports on the web if you can.

Hackfall Woods

29 March

Leader: Nick Gaunt

Nine members attended the meeting, which was primarily to introduce members to the study of mosses and liverworts and to take in any other natural history along the way. We followed the path down to the river finding many species of mosses and liverworts. We lunched at Fisher's Hall which is not quite so glamorous as you might think. We carried on to the Alum Spring which is an interesting area of Tufa limestone with cascading water running over it. Several members climbed to the top for a closer inspection. We saw Palmate newts in the Fountain Pond. The water was clear and we could see the big webbed feet of the males. We also recorded Common Newt and Common Toad. Just a few Spring flowers were in bloom. Toothwort, Wood Anemones, Wood Sorrel, Early Dog-violet and Celandines. Before long there will be carpets of Wild Garlic as the leaves were very much in evidence. We also recorded 13 birds, including Nuthatch and 24 Bryophytes.

Valerie Holmes

Gouthwaite & Scar House, in search of Ring Ouzels

25 April

Leader: June Atkinson

With 12 pairs of expert eyes trained on the mud at the top end of the reservoir we soon found Dunlin, Ringed Plover, Redshank, a Common Sandpiper and black headed gulls and a Knot. A few duck and grebes were swimming on the wave-tossed water. Next stop, Scar House, where we noticed a Goshawk flying overhead, which treated us to a great display of diving steeply then swooping up again. A few minutes later, the first Wheatears appeared, the male in fine breeding plumage, then Ken spotted the first Ring Ouzel, a male with its dazzling white bib, which stayed in view for some time, posing for photos and occasionally joined by a female. A really excellent display, despite the strong northerly wind which was now bearing snow. We walked across the

dam, spotting Siskins and Mistle Thrush and another Common Sandpiper; too early and/or too cold probably for house martins.

The afternoon was spent working our way down the valley stopping at various sites well known to June – our main target was pied flycatchers but the weather was not cooperative; June eventually spotted a bird going into one of the nesting boxes and we waited and watched hopefully for it to emerge. She explained that male birds arrive before females and prepare the nest, presumably this one was still waiting for no further sightings were seen. There were several other interesting sights in the valley, including a pair of song thrush feeding fledged young, some bivalve fossils found for us by David, a mallard duck with 8 newly hatched ducklings and a brief sighting of a redstart by June. We finally visited a beautiful little waterfall overlooked by a bridge where we had good views of a Dipper preening, feeding, and swimming and a Grey Wagtail.

We returned to the Gouthwaite viewpoint, where Little Ringed Plover and Common Tern and Black Grouse were added –total 65 species.

Muff Upsall

Wykeham Raptor Viewpoint & RSPB Bempton

6 June

Leader: June Atkinson

There was definitely no chance of raptors at the Viewpoint, when we got there it was far too wet. The conifer nurseries provide excellent habitat for Skylarks which were in abundance, Thrushes and Lapwings too. Sadly as there has been a nationwide crash of Turtle Dove population they are so very hard to see or hear in Wykeham these days. Anyone who hadn't been on a fine day could be forgiven for thinking why is the Raptor Viewpoint is so named, but on a good day the views are fantastic and given a slight breeze the raptors, including Honey Buzzard, Common Buzzard and Goshawk will soar over the ridge giving an amazing day's raptor watching.

Onward to Bempton and hopes of us arriving before the rain. Well, we did and for half an hour had stunning views of Barn Owl, Gannets, Puffins, Guillemots, Razorbills, Kittiwakes and Shag. But the inevitable happened and we retreated back to the new visitor centre at Bempton to dry off!

Thinking hides at Filey Dams may be our salvation we persuaded the driver to divert back there for a final fling. Jason our named driver was, as ever, very tolerant of 15 slightly soggy birders and was amenable throughout. By the time we got to Filey the wind was up and the rain was really lashing down. As

a new habitat for the day we ran for the hide and added Little Grebe to our list, but then headed home to dry out properly. We had a total bird count of 61.

Sue Coldwell

Nightjars and Roding Woodcocks

15 June

Leader: Robert Brown.

Thirteen intrepid souls turned up for the evening walk at Stainburn Forest. Walking along the track the first thing we saw was a roe deer. This was followed by woodcocks flying overhead and above the trees, their shapes and beaks clearly visible even to me. These sightings continued as we walked along. Then we came to a clearing surrounded by trees, where we waited. And waited. Suddenly an osprey appeared. This was just the warm-up act for what was to follow. More waiting. Then we heard the churring sounds of the nightjars. More waiting, and then suddenly as if out of nowhere a nightjar appeared. Much white handkerchief waving was undertaken, whereupon this utterly beautiful creature began flying low over our heads to investigate us. I was spellbound, and I suspect that my companions were as well. Then, just as suddenly, the nightjar disappeared. We stayed awhile but did not see it again. No matter, we had experienced a rare treat. Feeling happy and privileged, we wended our way back to the cars, by which time darkness was falling. Grateful thanks go to Robert for organising the event, and for having the stamina and patience to put up with amateurs such as myself. And I really do not mind about the unused spray repellent, because I shall definitely be going to Stainburn Forest again.

Sonia Starbuck

Plumpton Rocks

21 June 2017

Leader: Nick Gaunt

Seven of us enjoyed a relaxing visit to this interesting location. Nick introduced the group to some common woodland mosses: *Pseudotaxiphyllum elegans*, *Hypnum cupressiforme* and *Mnium hornum* were the dominant species in the mixed deciduous and coniferous woodland surrounding the lake. The extensive millstone grit outcrops held some extensive patches of the liverworts *Lepidozia reptans* and *Diplophyllum albicans*. They also supported a few ancient specimens of yew and oak, their large gnarled roots delving into the many crevices. There are some notably tall trees - pedunculate oak, ash, beech, cherry and holly in particular. The lake has some extensive rafts of Yellow Water-lily (*Nuphar lutea*) that were home to families of Moorhen. The lake margins supported a variety of wild flowers and blue damselflies

(species not identified). A search for some uncommon bryophytes recorded here over a century ago (*Cynodontium bruntonii*, *Orthodontium gracile*, *Tetradontium brownianum* and *Jungermannia exsectiformis*), will have to wait for another visit when the rocks are not so dry!

Nick Gaunt

Augill Pastures & Waitby Greenriggs, near Brough 25 June 2017

Leader: Charlie Philpotts of the Hardy Orchid Society

Our focus was on orchids, and 13 species (including hybrids), were found, but as we explored, the diversity of other wild flowers growing in these 2 reserves was a delight and our tally, including other wild flowers, was over 100 species. Augill Pastures SSSI lies 260m above sea level, and is a rare area of 'unimproved neutral northern grassland', including a steep bank down to Augill Beck. Waitby Greenriggs reserve is a section of the old Stainmore Railway and Eden Valley branch line. A diverse grassland flora has developed on the limestone, including Bird's-eye Primrose, Herb Paris, Greater and Lesser Butterfly orchids and three sub-species of fragrant orchid growing together. Charlie was a knowledgeable, enthusiastic leader, who was always ready to share his passion for orchids.

At both sites we were treated to swathes of orchids, with perhaps the bank at Waitby Greenriggs being the most memorable example. The least frequent orchid was the Northern Marsh Orchid, Fly and Bird's Nest orchids numbers were a little higher, and other orchids were frequently numerous. The list of other plants seen is not comprehensive as this was beyond our small group, but certainly some 'gems' were spotted, rarely or not seen before, by members of the group. Our thanks again go to Charlie Philpotts and his wife Julie, for leading this visit on one day of their 'holiday'.

Kerry Morrison

Duck Street Quarry & Cockpit Mine,

9 July

Leader: Kevin Walker, Head of Science of the BSBI

A splendid turnout of 15 enthusiastic botanists assembled at the entrance to the disused Duck Street Quarry, a habitat of both biological and geological significance that, in common with the lead mine which we visited later in the day, is a good example of how Britain's old industrial sites have given us many important wildlife habitats.

Kevin amazed us all with his knowledge of the plants, not only recognising them from tiny portions, but giving us tips for identification, showing us the commoner grasses and sedges and how to recognise them, and demystifying some of the daunting yellow dandelion-type flowers. The naturalists scrambled up spoil heaps to admire frog orchids, ventured underground for close encounters with the pallid and starfish like green spleenwort, and viewed from a respectful distance the intractable genus of Hawkweeds. There is a full plant list attached on the website. After such a dry season, mosses are not at their best, but some typical limestone specimens were found by Nick, such as *Ctenidium molluscum*, *Entodon concinnus*, *Ditrichum flexuosus* and the liverwort *Scapania aspera*.

The sun also brought out some butterflies – a Dark Green Fritillary was spotted; flocks of Common Blue males also Green-veined White, Small Heath and many Ringlets and Meadow Browns. After lunch we walked to the disused lead mine in the valley bottom, on the way admiring (with binoculars) a stand of Melancholy Thistle We walked to the old lead workings, where we saw Leadwort and Spring Sandwort. Other specialities found here were Mossy Saxifrage, Rustyback Fern and Rigid Buckler Fern, and the moss *Philonotis fontana* which grows in waterlogged areas.

Muff Upsall

Ledston Luck, Townclose Hills & Ledsham Bank

15 July

Leader: Charlie Philpotts of the Hardy Orchid Society

We started the day at the the Ledston Luck nature reserve, relatively recently regenerated from the old coal mine by a team of volunteers including our leader Charlie. Here there was a profusion of flowers, in particular the yellow Tall Melilot which in places formed an almost impenetrable forest; the Pea family was well represented generally with both Hairy and Smooth Tare and masses of Common Bird's-foot-trefoil. We saw the relics of many thousand Common Spotted, also Southern Marsh, and some hybrids, but none of the Bee Orchids which would be seen there earlier in the year. There were several small ponds with different species of rushes, sedges and reeds.

The next site was Townclose Hills located on a SSSI magnesian limestone outcrop. Here there were many of the same flowers but also many new ones. Fields of marjoram were knee-high, dotted with Clustered Bellflower, Agrimony and Greater Knapweed, thickets of Restharrow, both spiny and not, and Yellow-wort, Field Scabious and lots of those yellow hawk-somethings

which we did not have time to identify. This is quite a large site and the flower recorder was developing writer's cramp.

Our final location was Ledsham Bank, a small secluded north-south valley on the magnesian limestone. Here we found, amongst much more, abundant Pyramidal Orchid, still more or less in full flower, and plentiful clumps of the relatively rare Dyer's Greenweed. Any one of these three locations could have occupied us a whole day!

The plants dominated this trip, but we did see other orders – several butterflies, including skippers, Gatekeeper, Meadow Brown, Ringlet and at Ledsham Bank a beautiful Marbled White which posed for close-up photos. One specimen of the blue-bruising boletus *Boletus purpureus* was found, and a livid white Coprinus-type fruiting body. Birds were mainly heard rather than seen but there were yellowhammers at Townclose Hills. And Keith saw a toad. This was an excellent day and we owe thanks to Charlie Philpotts who organised these trips so efficiently and led them with his infectious enthusiasm.

Muff Upsall

SPURN POINT

3 September

Leader: June Atkinson

After a good run through in the minibus, a Merlin was seen flying over a field as we approached Spurn on a bright day with a fresh southerly wind. A sea-watch first at the Warren produced Arctic Skuas, Gannets, Fulmars, Sandwich and Common Terns and a Brent Goose, while packs of Common Scoters and Teal were moving through. Near the sea-watching hide, a Whinchat was found on a fence where it gave close views, a good start! As we walked along the road from the Warren checking the bushes, it was obvious that there was a distinct lack of passerines with only Chiffchaff and Willow Warbler seen. During a lunch stop by the Crown and Anchor Inn a Wheatear was found below the sea wall and the report of a Pied Flycatcher in the car park was worth investigation, but the bird did not oblige. After lunch we visited Kilnsea Wetlands, with the prospect of seeing both Pectoral and Curlew Sandpipers our main objective. The Curlew Sandpiper gave good views along with Greenshank, Ruff and Dunlin but the Pectoral Sandpiper remained elusive, though we did cover all the possible sites. Seven species of duck were also seen including Pintail, Shoveler and Wigeon. High tide was approaching as we returned to the centre to obtain close views of waders in the estuary. We were greeted with a fantastic display of Grey Plovers and Knots, some still in their breeding plumage, Bar-tailed Godwits, Sanderlings and Dunlins,

there were thousands of waders all along the tide line, together with 12 Little Egrets. Speculation was made of the possibility of a Whimbrel and one member persevered until he found one! A great ending to an excellent days birding with 80 species being recorded. Many thanks to all the members who worked hard to produce such a good list.

June Atkinson



HIGH BATTS NATURE RESERVE

Sunday, October 22nd 2017 sees another High Batts Nature Reserve Open Day, when the Reserve will welcome Members, friends and all those interested in learning more about this small, private nature reserve just outside Ripon. The event will run from 10am until 4pm, and visitors will be welcome to explore the Reserve on their own at any time during the day or to join in guided walks around the Reserve at 11am and 2pm. Special events for children will including making a garden nest box to take home and wildlife quiz sheets. Small mammal live trapping and bird ringing displays will be arranged and live bats are also expected to attend along with their carer Lesley Helliwell. After a walk around the Reserve, free refreshments are provided. Footwear suitable for grass and woodland paths should be worn. The Reserve is situated on the A6108 from Ripon between Lightwater Valley and North Stainley, with access along the Hanson Heidelberg quarry track. No dogs are permitted in the Reserve and for safety reasons many of the events are weather dependent.

This year's talks will be held on Thursday evenings at the Golden Lion, Allhallowgate, Ripon and commence at 7.30pm. The programme is as follows:

October 5 th	Keith Gittens	"Dragonflies in Yorkshire"
November 9 th	Stuart Ward	"Sri Lanka"
December 7 th	Tom Lawson	"Travels in Australia"
February 8 th	Pat Rumbold and Colin Slator	"Two Seasons in the Far North"
March 8 th	Peter Bowman	India or Oman (still to be decided)

Bird food is available to buy from the Rumbolds with all proceeds going to High Batts funds. For current prices/to order and collect please phone The Rumbolds

The outstanding highlight of the year so far has been the presence of a second year Sabines Gull *Xema sabini* in the Nosterfield area from 25 June to about 20 July. This was a first for the Harrogate recording area and the long stay enabled a great many people to see this attractive bird, often at very close range, as it seemed to have very little fear of people. The head pattern of the bird strongly suggests it was one of three that had spent a day at Belvide Reservoir in Staffordshire before its arrival at Nosterfield. Sabines Gull is a rare bird inland: they spend the non-breeding season out at sea, being a truly oceanic gull. Breeding takes place in Alaska, various islands in the Canadian Arctic, Greenland and the coast of east Siberia, with birds wintering at sea off the west coast of both South America and Africa. Making it all the more surprising that one spent nearly a month at Nosterfield. There was also an adult White-tailed Eagle on 11 April, which flew south fairly low over Hay-a-Park GP. It was seen by one lucky observer who had the presence of mind to get two photographs enabling the bird to be quickly accepted at county level.

On the down side there has been the recent persecution of a Marsh Harrier nest on Denton Moor in Wharfedale, reminding us all to be vigilant and to report anything suspicious to the police. We have also almost certainly had a moorland nesting attempt by this species, a food pass being seen on 9 June. A subsequent visit however failed to locate the birds.

It is vitally important that any Hen Harrier sightings are immediately reported to the RSPB Harrier Hotline either via the internet at henharriers@rspb.org.uk or if urgent ring **0845 460 0121**. The Hen Harrier LIFE project has enabled RSPB to have dedicated protection/ investigation staff who can follow up these sightings as well as informing a network of local raptor workers and these birds definitely need our help.

The 2015 report has been sadly delayed but should be with the printers shortly: only the layout needs finishing. Work on the 2016 report is already under way.

Paul V Irving

MOTHS

Spring and summer have been warmer, with good numbers of moths caught during June and early July, when the season really started to become busy! New species for the Society so far have included several micros, namely *Scythropia crataegella* in central Harrogate, *Ectoedemia lousella* (mines found in field maple ‘keys’) at Nosterfield NR and at Fountains Abbey, *Chrysoesthia sexguttella* (mines) at Hutton Conyers and Littlethorpe, *Monochroa cytisella* at the Druid's Temple and *Coleophora deauratella* at Healey (a record from 2016 but only dissected in 2017) and one species of macro - Birch Mocha at Hutton Conyers.

Other rarely recorded species have included Oblique Carpet at Nosterfield Reedbed, Galium Carpet (a new species for both Recorders) and Golden-rod Brindle near Pateley Bridge, Grey Mountain Carpet at Druid's Temple, Scallop Shell at both Ellington Banks and Hutton Conyers, Varied Coronet at Sharow and Grey Scalloped-bar at both Healey and Druid's Temple. It also appears to have been a good year for sightings of Humming-bird Hawk-moth, particularly during late May/June – all will become clear when all records for the year have been received.

With the official launch, in July, of the three year Wild Watch Project in the Nidderdale AONB, some public moth trapping events have been organised to assist with recording target species and also to introduce and encourage members of the public to help with monitoring and perhaps even start moth trapping themselves. The first event was held at the Druid's Temple, near Ilton with encouraging results (see above). Another will be held in mid September at Thruscross Reservoir, with more planned for 2018 - hopefully in more remote areas where moth trapping has never been done before.

A good number of migrant moths are now being recorded along the south coast and we very much hope that apart from usual species, such as Rusty-dot Pearl and Rush Veneer, that the MV traps might attract one or two of the rarer migrants, such as Delicate, Vestal or the “ultimate moth” – the Clifden Nonpareil (or Blue Underwing)!

All will be detailed in full in the 2017 annual report.

Follow us on Twitter: @JillWarwick or @DoubleKidney

Jill Warwick & Charlie Fletcher

FARNHAM NEWS

April began well with 18 Common Buzzards in the air together on 2nd; also on the same day a Ring-necked Parakeet flew over – a new species for the site. Until recently, this parakeet was always reported in the 'Escape' category but, since breeding has occurred in the south of the county, it is now accepted by the County Recorders and added to the county list. Chiffchaffs were in good numbers with 20 recorded singing, together with a single Willow Warbler and two Blackcaps. A Goldeneye was still present and the first egg had been laid in the nest of the Great Crested Grebes. Thirteen Red Kites were counted on 11th, a Little Egret flew through and a Common Sandpiper was seen. On 18th, a female Mallard appeared with ten ducklings and three pairs of Oystercatchers were breeding. Two Hobbys were watched for five minutes on 25th and, by the month-end, Garden Warbler, Lesser Whitethroat and Sedge Warbler had been recorded.

On 1st **May**, two Arctic Terns appeared and a Common Whitethroat was present next day. Three Greenshanks were seen on 6th and two House Sparrows, a Farnham rarity. Bird Census Day on 7th began with 300+ Common Swifts moving through; a count of warblers produced 13 Chiffchaffs, two Willow Warblers, 12 Blackcaps, nine Garden Warblers and a single Common Whitethroat. Two Common Terns were present and 150 Sand Martins were counted. The resident pair of Mute Swans appeared with seven cygnets on 15th but, by 16th, they had been reduced to four. Great Crested Grebe chicks were seen on the North Lake. A female Montagu's Harrier gave good views, being very active in windy conditions. A pair of Common Terns took up residence on the tern platform. By the third week, a pair of Reed Warblers was present in the very small patch of *Phragmites*. There were several sightings of Hobby towards the end of the month. A disappointing month in some respects, there being no northerly migration of waders nor the occasional unexpected species.

On 2nd **June**, family parties of Blue, Great, Marsh and Long-tailed Tits were in evidence, while Tree Sparrows were feeding young in a nest box. A pair of Common Whitethroats was breeding in brambles in front of the hide and, on the North Lake, a pair of Great Crested Grebes had three young. A Hobby, carrying prey, was seen several times. Two pairs of Reed Warblers were present in the *Phragmites* bed. Juvenile Chiffchaffs, Willow Warblers and

Garden Warblers were seen during the third week. The pair of Common Terns on the platform were feeding young with very small fish. A Moorhen, wandering around on Island 5, found a Little Ringed Plover's nest containing eggs, which it was seen to eat. It was a very warm day on 19th with a maximum of 30 degrees C. A Black Tern flew in at 11 a.m. on 20th and gave excellent views all day. A Gadwall appeared with eight ducklings, but a Tufted Duck had only two, fewer than normal. Three Common Tern chicks were seen.

A Little Egret was present on 1st **July** and the Great Crested Grebe on its nest was seen to have three eggs. Two juvenile Lesser Whitethroats were found, a Common Whitethroat was seen feeding four young and one fledged Reed Warbler was present in the *Phragmites*. Three Common Redshanks were present on 4th. By the second week, the Great Crested Grebe had five chicks – a great achievement in view of earlier setbacks. When the cut grass in the hay field at the rear of the hide was being turned and baled, I was entertained by the sight of eight Red Kites searching for prey items together with a Common Buzzard and a Kestrel. Fifteen Oystercatchers were seen on 15th and more than 250 Lapwings were counted. Tufted Ducks had a poor breeding season with two pairs producing only five young. A Hobby hunted over the lake on 16th, but there was a disappointing lack of Sand Martins which had been present in the wall the previous week to begin their second broods. A visit to the wall was necessary in order to find an explanation; due to the lack of winter and summer rainfall, the sand had dried out and did not contain enough moisture to form breeding chambers, with the result that sand collapsed. This has never previously happened, the wall having been built in 1998. Common Sandpiper was recorded on 17 days in the month; a Greenshank flew through on 21st. Three Common Terns fledged. A Peregrine Falcon was hunting over the lake in the evening of 24th, but was unsuccessful. Forty House Martins were feeding over the lake in the evening of 25th, a female Common Scoter dropped in for 20 minutes and a Dunlin was present next day. A party of 20 Long-tailed Tits was seen and 100 Goldfinches were feeding in the West Field. A young Reed Warbler was seen from the second pair on 30th.

During the first week of **August**, a Hobby flew through and the first Spotted Flycatcher was seen. A mixed flock of passerines, flying through by the hide, contained five species of warbler, four of which dropped into a dead stick pile giving excellent views. The number of young Great Crested Grebes dropped to three. Greylag Geese wearing orange neck collars were frequent visitors,

including SNL, PZU, SLP and SJX, that originated from Windermere. Two Black-tailed Godwits made a brief appearance on 14th, when the first Common Redstart flew over the back field and a Whimbrel called as it flew over in the evening. A Green Sandpiper was present on 17th, and a Black-tailed Godwit next day, when three Spotted Flycatchers were found that stayed for two days. Over 800 Starlings congregated on the islands, some taking advantage of berry-laden elder trees. A Hobby was seen on several occasions and a Black-tailed Godwit was present all day on 19th. A Ringed Plover flew over on 23rd and a party of 20 Chiffchaffs flew through the willows. The birders on the evening of 24th were rewarded with two Green Sandpipers and an Osprey. Five Green Sandpipers were seen between 2nd and 9th **September**. A most unexpected bird, on the afternoon of 5th, was a Wryneck which appeared in a dead stick pile by the hide after a morning of heavy rain; this was a new record for the site. It dropped down and fed on the ground for 15 minutes before being disturbed by a Stoat. Eight Ruff flew past the hide on 8th and two were present on 12th.

Butterflies in the spring were in small numbers, with Brimstone, Peacock, Small Tortoiseshell and Comma noted in March. Two Painted Ladies and a Red Admiral were recorded on 26th May. The first two Common Blues were seen on 23rd May with a maximum of 23 on 27th. By 11th June, the first Meadow Browns and Ringlets were appearing, the former being the most numerous species in July. During August, Brown Argus, Wall, Small Copper and 30+ Common Blues were seen. A total of 21 species was recorded for the site, but count numbers were down on last year, apart from Common Blue which has had its best year since the late 1990s, following a peak of 370 in 1988. Red Admirals continued to be seen into September.

Damselflies were on the wing by 5th May, when several teneral were seen. The first Four-spotted Chasers were over the pond on 27th and a Large Red Damselfly, a scarce species at Farnham, was present on 31st. On 9th June, an Emperor Dragonfly was over the lake and the first Black-tailed Skimmer was seen on 4th. By the end of June, Common Darter and Banded Demoiselle were recorded. Brown Hawker and Southern Hawker were present in July and Emerald Damselflies were around the pond, while hundreds of Common Blue and Blue-tailed Damselflies were seen over the lake. A surprise in August was the occurrence of two Ruddy Darters which is becoming rather scarce in our area. Brown Hawkers, an easy dragonfly to identify with their brown bodies and golden wings, were ever present. In August, the last hawker to emerge

is Migrant Hawker, and these continued to be seen into September.

Mammals are regularly seen with Fox, Stoat and Weasel being most common. Three Otters were present in January, but there were fewer regular sightings this year. Roe Deer are usually seen as they cross the field behind the hide, which is where three young ones occurred. A family party of seven Stoats gave close views as they passed in front of the hide. A Fox was seen to chase geese into the lake and three well-grown Fox cubs were along the lakeside in August.

Two plants of Nettle-leaved Bellflower were of botanical interest, as this is the first time the species has been seen within a few yards of where it was first recorded in 2008. The Pyramidal Orchid site on the North Lakeside, having been fenced off to protect it from rabbits and geese, produced 40 flower spikes. In contrast, Bee Orchids had a poor year. The Variegated Horsetail is still surviving by the lakeside despite the dry season.

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



Can you offer some time to help at Farnham Gravel Pit?

Farnham Management Days 2017 - 2018:

October 15	November 19	December 10	
January 14	February 18	March 18	April 8

All are SUNDAYS Please meet at the hide at 10 a.m.
Further details from June Atkinson

ASPIN POND

Since the Spring HDNS newsletter, Aspin pond's friends and supporters have been busy with maintenance work, fundraising and organising community events. The new interpretation board has now been installed and is attracting interest from both locals and visitors alike. We also have a new magpost on the site, which gives close up views of insects and flowers. Although this may mean some of the insects being disturbed and some flowers being picked, we hope that this will be compensated for by a new interest in natural history from young people.

Our working parties have been held more regularly than last year, at least once a month and have attracted more people to help. In consequence, and with the support of Sam Walker and Harrogate Borough Council, the site is thriving, and is going from strength to strength. Colin Pearce has built a second bug hotel and more wild flower planting has been undertaken, thus increasing the biodiversity of the site. In 2017 we have so far recorded around 90 plant species within the area. Other surveys have included the RSPB bird count and the national butterfly count.

During work days, our visitors included a broad bodied chaser (female) in May and a very large elephant hawk moth larva was spotted in July. At the same time the mullein plants were covered with (surprise, surprise) mullein moth larvae. Whilst this was happening above ground, during weeding activities the great crested newts were being spotted hidden under black plastic coverings.

Fundraising has continued unabated. Events this year included a quiz night in April and the 'Big Lunch' in June, which included a visit by Theresa Marshall with a hoglet (or, 'very cute baby hedgehog' to some!). On August bank holiday we held the annual car boot sale and raised over £1,000. The group is very grateful for the generous support it has received from Aspin Park WI, Knaresborough Rotary Club and both Knaresborough Town Council and Harrogate Borough Council.

In May the site was awarded an Environment Cup from Knaresborough Town Council. This is an annual award and was presented to us by the outgoing mayor, Bill Rigby. The Town Council was very impressed with our endeavours. It considered that the group has created a rich, sustainable and beautiful bio diverse treasure, to be enjoyed by generations to come.

For further details about the Aspin pond site, please contact Sue Kitching. Or better still, come and visit. The pond is next to Knaresborough Cricket Club and is within walking distance from Knaresborough town centre.

Sonia Starbuck

HOUSE MARTINS OVER PANNAL

We moved to Pannal, near the A61 just outside Harrogate, in October 2015. There was not much chance for me to indulge my love of natural history for a fair few months, what with winter coming on, and all the turmoil of settling into a new home. However, with the spring of 2016, I joined HDNS, and started to look more closely at our new environment.

I was very excited to see that, a few doors down the road on our 1970s housing estate, a neighbour had House Martins nesting under his eaves. I was a little puzzled that other houses were not similarly blessed, knowing that the birds like to nest communally. However, when I looked more closely, I could see that these were artificial nests, one at the front, and another at the rear. Here, the Martins had built another mud nest, abutting one of the artificial nests. In fact I was so inspired that I asked for my birthday present that year (September) to be a double artificial House Martin nest box. So this spring, I waited with bated breath. March came, and April, and in due course our near neighbour had his nests occupied. Ours remained resolutely empty. Eventually, I plucked up courage to put a note through his door, asking if he knew about the British Trust for Ornithology survey of House Martins, and explaining about my efforts to encourage them. He called round and he explained that he is a BTO member, and would be doing the survey. He also told me that the Walton Park estate had had many more House Martin nests when it was first built; the houses have very deep eaves.

I noticed that there were quite a number of Martins hunting over the estate. I tracked them down to Walton Close. It is in fact quite hard to see when nests are being used, as the birds fly in and out so quickly. Also it does look rather suspicious when one is just standing in the road, apparently gazing up at someone else's bedroom windows. Of course, someone came out of one of the houses when I was doing just that. Happily, when I explained, the lady was very sympathetic. 'I come from Manchester; it's all sparrows and starlings in my street. I'm thrilled to see House Martins.

Since then, I've spotted an active nest on another house in our road, and again, got talking to the resident of the house, who told me there was another on the other side, out of my view. So I am quite cheered, and now at the end of August, the House Martins are still hunting in the skies over Walton Park. I keep trying to count them, but it's very hard - 10? 15? Then I get a crick in my neck and they soar out of view. And our nest boxes? Alas, still unoccupied. My husband suggests a 'To Let' sign, and makes jokes about advertising on Rightmove. I just smile; there's always next year. Come March, I'll be gazing skywards again.

Ginni Darbyshire



ROSSETT LOCAL NATURE RESERVE

Rossett Nature Reserve is a small site (1.75ha.), featuring ponds, grassland and scrub. It is situated in south-west Harrogate, between the playing fields of adjacent schools, towards the edge of an extensive 1980s/90s housing development. The Reserve was saved from development in the 1980s by the discovery of a breeding population of Great Crested Newts at the site. The site is therefore designated as a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) on the basis of the importance of its amphibian populations, especially great crested newts.

2017 has been a busy and interesting year. We realised in 2016 that our previous attempts to control the invading Crassula (New Zealand Pigmy weed) were in vain and despite the efforts of our volunteers removing the weed (very hard work) we were making very little progress. Jowett's and Salix Ponds had become completely overgrown by mid-summer 2016 and no open water could be seen. It was decided that an excavator would have to be deployed in all the ponds: this was undertaken in January. Anybody involved with nature reserve management will know that public comments are not unusual: on this occasion it was "something terrible has happened! What on earth are you doing?" Well, we cleared the Crassula and the site has recovered very well; however, the dreaded weed is creeping back and all we can do is apply sprays within the

limits of our licence and time of year. Incidentally, we also receive comments about our Wildflower Meadow which is deemed to be “untidy”. You can’t win!

Although the Reserve is not specifically managed for Dragonflies and Damselflies we have a small population of Southern and Brown Hawkers, and also Common Blue Damselflies. In recent years Four Spot Chasers have been recorded. It’s been a poor year for butterflies both in species range and numbers. I’ve recorded: Speckled Wood, Ringlet, Orange Tip, Small and Large Whites, the odd Red Admiral and one Comma. Previous summers have given me a check list of ten species.

For a long time now we have found Common Spotted Orchids (CSO) growing on the Bottle Mound and along the edges of the Seasonal Pond. They have never been in profusion and the number of spikes seemed to remain in single figures. However, this year we were delighted to locate a total of 19 spikes on the Bottle Mound and then for the first time three spikes in the Wildflower Meadow. The adjacent British Telecom site (now sold for housing) also supports CSOs and this year there were examples of the white phase plant.

Bearing in mind that the Reserve represents about a quarter of the original habitat the bird population is not extensive but Mallard and Moorhen breed, Grey Heron visits from time to time. You can expect to encounter Great spotted Woodpecker, Magpie, Great and Blue Tit, Wren, Blackbird, Songthrush, Dunnock, House Sparrow, Chaffinch, Bullfinch and Goldfinch all year round. During the summer, Chiffchaffs hold two or three territories but sadly Willow Warbler is less common, Blackcaps hold at least two territories and Garden Warbler sings briefly, I suspect on passage. By the way, the Reserve seems to be a very good place to catch up with Bullfinch if you need it for your year list. Winter brings Redwing and Fieldfare plus Siskin and Lesser Redpoll.

Access is from the top of Arthur’s Avenue or Richmond Road, park at the bollards. The Reserve is permanently open and is popular with dog walkers. If you bring a dog please keep it out of the ponds. No cycles please.

Mike Brown

HDNS ON THE INTERNET: A CLARIFICATION

There is sometimes confusion about the two HDNS sites on the Internet but they are two distinct systems each with its own purpose:

HARROGATE NATURALISTS' WEBSITE

This is the main site for both members and the general public to access a whole range of information about the Society and how to join. There is also the facility for submitting interesting sightings, photos and providing records to the appropriate recorders. It can be found at <http://www.hdns.org.uk/>

Nick Gaunt has now taken over editing the HDNS website from Malcolm Jones. If you have any items for publication on the website such as trip reports or relevant news, please send them to webeditor@hdns.org.uk

However, for discussion and comment and uploading your own photos then the Forum is the place to go...

HARROGATE NATURALISTS' FORUM

This site is a private Yahoo Group for HDNS members only and it continues to be managed by Robert Marshall. It aims to provide a focus and forum for good-natured, informal exchange of views, observations, notices, photos, gossip or any other information likely to be of interest to members of this natural history society. In this way we hope to extend members' enjoyment and involvement in both the Society and our local wildlife. The Forum can be accessed directly online or via regular emails and we would recommend as many members as possible to join.

The simplest way of joining the Forum is to go direct to the Forum webpage at https://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/Harrogate_Naturalists/info then carefully read and follow the joining instructions there. (This same link is also available via the Members' Area of the main site in 1 above)

- (i). Click the purple '+ Join Group' button.
- (ii). Sign in to your Yahoo! account or, if you don't already have an account on Yahoo, click the 'Sign up' link and follow the simple steps to join Yahoo!
- (iii). Be sure to provide your full name in the 'Comment to owner' box so that we can check that you are a member of HDNS.

Robert is always happy to try to help anyone having problems or wanting advice about the process (email: hdns.wildwatch@btinternet.com)

Once approved you can join in immediately or sit on the side-lines and watch, if you prefer. We hope to see you at the Forum very soon!



DISCOUNTS FOR MEMBERS



Present your membership card to receive these valuable 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

MISCELLANY

CALL FOR RECORDS

All members – please send your observations and records for 2017 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

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

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

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