



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

SPRING NEWSLETTER 2016



FROM THE PRESIDENT

According to the front cover, this is the SPRING Newsletter, spring meaning: to move rapidly from a constrained position, to leap, a contrivance used as motive power, a place where water wells up from the earth. This is interesting as all these definitions are connected with life or forms of energy.

As a naturalist, to me it is 'the season when vegetation begins'. Rather a bald statement but a fact, all animals either directly or indirectly need plants. I welcome spring as my favourite season - so full of promise - and look forward to it with the anticipation and excitement that no other season evokes. I look for the first signs of the succession of spring flowering plants, especially those which were planted last autumn as bulbs or corms, knowing that, in due course, they will delight us with their displays of vibrant colours. Phenologists make use of 'first date' records over many years to draw conclusions about changing and developing patterns, such as evidence for 'climate change'. In my lifetime I am aware of the flowering period of two spring-flowering plants that have advanced by between two and four weeks.

As the days gradually lengthen and the power of the sun brings increasing warmth, we will begin to see different insects venturing forth to feed on pollen and nectar; maybe a brimstone butterfly, a possible peacock or small tortoiseshell awakening from hibernation, or perhaps an early species of bee?

Conditions become more suitable for an increasing variety of insects, and now is the time we begin to look for summer bird visitors, many of which have spent winter months in countries south of the equator – how lovely to hear the first calls of a returning Chiffchaff, snatches of a Blackcap's song or the twittering of Barn Swallows returning to the site used last year.

To return to the definition of spring as 'the beginning of vegetation', I read recently that, in central England, there are now more than 330 days in an average year when plant growth occurs. Are we heading towards a time when there will be no obvious seasons? Perish the thought!

As my extended term of office ends at the AGM, I thought I would finish on an optimistic note and hope that you all, like me, will look forward to the next three months and we will have some pleasant weather during which we can revel in the joys of SPRING.

Ann Mettam

IAN WALLACE COMMEMORATIVE TREE PLANTING 20 October 2015

More than 25 people turned out to celebrate the life of Ian Wallace by witnessing the planting by members of Ian's family of a Wild Service tree in Seven Bridges Valley, Studley Royal. □ The tree was planted close to the spot where Ian discovered a naturally occurring wild service tree whilst conducting a plant survey for the National Trust.

The assembled company was addressed by Mike Ridsdale of the National Trust, who paid tribute to Ian's botanical work over many years on the Fountains Abbey/Studley Royal estate. Mavis Wallace then thanked all those who had generously contributed to make the tree planting possible and Mike and his team for their assistance and for allowing the tree to be planted on the National Trust estate.

For those wishing to see the tree, it is on the right-hand side of the valley just past the second bridge over the Skell when approaching from the Studley Royal car park.

Will Rich

PETER JAMES CARLTON: OBITUARY

Peter James Carlton, a member of the Society since 1958, died suddenly at home on 20th January, aged 81. Peter was a keen birdwatcher and supplied copious records for the Annual Bird Report for over 50 years.

A full obituary will appear in the 2016 Annual Report.

HARROGATE & DISTRICT VOLUNTEERING OSCARS 2015: HDNS MEMBERS WIN AWARDS

The awards, organized by former Mayor Councillor John Fox, and the Harrogate Advertiser Series, celebrate the work done by volunteers in our community. The Awards ceremony took place at the Old Swan in Harrogate on 30th October. Several Society members received awards presented by Her Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant for North Yorkshire, who also brought a message to all volunteers in the Harrogate District from the Queen.

Audrey Summersgill won the Lifetime Volunteer award, and was also highly commended in the Wildlife Volunteer section. Simon Warwick won the award for Environment Volunteer.

SUMMER FIELD TRIPS 2016

Please note the usual precautions: Stout footwear and suitable outdoor clothing should always be worn. Bring plenty of food and drink, sun blocker and insect repellent. Return times can be unpredictable, please ask before booking if you want more information. Members take part entirely at their own risk and are responsible for their personal safety and the security of their belongings.

The vehicles we use are good quality 17 seater self drive mini-buses, which we never fill to the maximum so as to allow for gear and bag storage. Various field guides are available on most trips. Of course the weather can never be guaranteed, so some events may have to be altered slightly to work around any inclement precipitations!

All bus trips are £15 pre-booked (non-returnable) plus whatever extras are quoted in the following trip list. Places are not confirmed; only, sadly, if the bus is full your rejection will be texted.

Enquiries to Colin Slator:

Tuesday 12 April POTTERIC CARR YWT(am) HADFIELD MOORS NNR (pm)

Both in South Yorkshire. Bus trip (booking required). Meet 08:00 at Trinity Church, Harrogate. Mainly birds but also emerging adders at Hadfield.

Thursday 14 April BIRK CRAG & OAK BECK

Flora (and fauna) including mosses and liverworts. Meet in the furthest car park at Harlow Carr (OS SE 280543) at 10am. Expect to finish 2pm. Leader: Nick Gaunt.

Thursday 12 May SPA GILL WOOD

Flora and fauna of the area including mosses and liverworts. Meet in lower Fountains Abbey car park (OS SE 270681) at 10am. Bring packed lunch. Finish around 4pm. Leader: Nick Gaunt

Tuesday 17 May GREAT WHERNSIDE, UPPER NIDDERDALE

A walk over the top from Scar House dam to Kettlewell (but not back)! Meet in the Gouthwaite Reservoir viewing area car park at 08:30. All prospective participants must text me on my mobile to book a place, BEFORE 1st May – no text no place! A car sharing system will operate, to get us back from Kettlewell. A full day birds and botanical. Bring plenty of food and drink and waterproofs – but make sure you can carry it all! This walk will be very much weather dependant.

Sunday 22 May NORTH EAST NORTHUMBERLAND COAST

Including a boat trip around RSPB Coquet Island. Booking required. Bus trip and 1 hour boat ride (not landing), limited to 12 members, all inclusive price of £23. Meet at 8:30 at Trinity Church, Harrogate returning at around 7pm. Morning spent at a Little Tern colony on the drive north and then Druridge Bay and Amble – sailing from the latter at 3:15pm. We will be sailing around the largest Roseate Tern colony in Britain, with plenty of photographic opportunities for these and other tern species. The sailing is weather dependant.

Thursday 23 June

SCOTTON BANKS & NIDD GORGE

Flora and fauna of Scotton Banks, Bilton Banks and Nidd Gorge. Meet in car park (OS SE 330584) at 10am – note that space is limited in the car park. Finish around 2pm. Leader Nick Gaunt.

Tuesday 28 June FOULSHAW MOSS CUMBRIAN WT

And other nearby Cumbrian WT sites. Bus trip (booking required) – meet Trinity Church, Harrogate at 08:00. Searching for breeding Osprey, Large Heath and the introduced White-faced Dragonfly on this superb restored raised bog. Return time flexible.

Sunday 3 July

HIGH BATTS NR OPEN DAY

Near North Stainley, Ripon 10:00 till 14:00. Check for details on the reserve web site highbatts.wordpress.com. All welcome.

Tuesday 12 July THORNE MOORS NNR

A full day in this large and varied habitat. Bus trip (booking required). Meet at Trinity Church, Harrogate at 08:00. Bring insect repellent, sun cream and plenty of drink. Possible species on the day could range from Hobby, Crane, Adder to interesting insects and plants. Return early evening.

Tuesday 16 August

ALKBOROUGH FLATS AND RSPB BLACKTOFT SANDS.

Bus trip (booking required) leaving Trinity Church, Harrogate at 08:00hrs. Mainly a birding trip, searching for passage waders, raptors and possible Reedlings. Return early evening.

Tuesday 13 September YWT SPURN NNR

Back by popular demand! But earlier in the autumn than our usual October trips. Hopefully we can hit on some of the classic drift migrants, some passage sea birds. Not forgetting butterflies and dragonflies. Bus trip (booking required) leaving Trinity Church, Harrogate at 08:00. Returning late evening.



This will be my last field trip session as leader. I would like to thank everyone who has attended the field trips, encouraged and helped in any way. We have had some great fun, seen lots of wonderful wildlife and made good friends. Thanks

Colin Slator.

HDNS Council would like to thank Colin for the programme of Field Trips which he has planned and led with unerring enthusiasm, generously sharing his first class subject knowledge with all participants. As well as organising and driving the minibus he has led many car-share excursions across all orders. Grateful thanks for all his hard work.

FIELD MEETING REPORTS

The full versions of the beautifully written field trip reports can be found on the website. These include photographs taken by members.

Redcar, South Gare and Scaling Dam 8 September 2015

An hour's watch saw Teal and Common Scoter flying north in quite large numbers, along with small groups of waders, Gannets, one Red-throated Diver, and one or two Arctic Skuas. There were Sandwich and Common Terns on the beach along with Turnstones and Ringed Plovers. Most skuas, shearwaters and divers were further out to sea with light winds, unlikely to push them inshore. At South Gare the weather was ideal for the high tide roost at the tip. We picked out Sanderling, Dunlin, Redshank, Ringed Plover, Curlew and Oystercatcher, but still very little was moving on the sea. The River Tees tidal estuary was exposing estuarine mud as the tide ebbed away. There we found a Bar-tailed Godwit, a juvenile Knot and Whimbrel and more Redshanks. The area consists of tidal mudflats, scrub, grassland, sand dunes, rocks, freshwater and salt pools. The plant list (see the website for this) was finalised by Ruth Upsall and Sonia Starbuck. This vegetation can be very good for attracting migrants such as warblers and flycatchers. This day we saw a pair of Stonechats and small flocks of Linnets, Goldfinches and Starlings. We called in at Scaling Dam on the A171, where we saw Tufted Duck, Mallard and Heron with Willow Warbler and another Stonechat on the moorland edge, bringing the total bird count to 53.

Sue Coldwell

Spurn Point 27 October 2015

The weather at Spurn was cloudy with a light south-south easterly wind. The Spurn Bird Observatory Website reported that recent arrivals had been Pallas's Warbler, Firecrest, Yellow-browed Warbler and an American Golden Plover remained on Kilnsea Wetlands. On our arrival, there was more good news, a Jack Snipe at Canal Scrape. The Pallas's and the Firecrest showed very well, standing out, as they do, against the numerous Goldcrest. The Jack Snipe was very obliging and was conveniently feeding next to a Common Snipe, giving good comparison views. The Yellow-browed Warbler at the Crown and Anchor car park showed briefly in the end. The sea watching was very disappointing, so we went back to the Warren area, which was alive with birds. Winter Thrushes and Starlings were gathering, the latter systematically clearing the orange Sea Buckthorn berries. The incoming tide gave rise to a wonderful aerial display of waders: Golden Plover, Bar-tailed Godwit, Knot, Dunlin, Curlew and Grey Plover. While we were in the Kilnsea Wetland Area watching the American Golden Plover we got fantastic views of at least two Short-eared Owls, three Little Egrets, five grazing Roe Deer and later, a perched Merlin. What a finale! 75 species in total and many of us with one or more 'lifers'. See the website for the Bird List.

Sue Coldwell

Nosterfield LNR and Nicholson's Lagoon 15 December 2015

On arrival Simon Warwick gave us a resume of recent conditions at Nosterfield. High rainfall had increased water levels and this had attracted huge numbers of Teal and Wigeon as well as good numbers of Lapwing and Golden Plover. We picked out three Goldeneye, a Little Grebe, and a Barnacle Goose amongst the Greylags. A Sparrowhawk glided silently past the hide window and into the fog. Passerines included Nuthatch, Fieldfare, Mistle Thrush, Marsh Tit and Goldfinch. We moved on to a Starling roost at Ripon Racecourse, flocks so dense it was breathtaking. They arrived in their hundreds and merged from left and right building up to an ever bigger flock, interrupted briefly by a cruising Sparrowhawk which created a Starling-free zone for just a few seconds. No sooner had one flock plummeted to the reed bed than others came to replace them. This continued for a full 40 minutes. As the light fell over Nicholson's Lagoon, a pair of Goosander flew in, followed eventually by several more. An easterly wind picked up and we realised the Starlings were proving to be noisy neighbours to the quietly roosting Goldeneye, Tufted Duck, Wigeon and a Great Crested Grebe. Time for us to leave for home too.

Sue Coldwell

Winter walk: Roecliffe to Staveley 12 January 2016

Setting off from Roecliffe, we walked through a small copse where Colin showed us a huge, active badger sett, unusual in it being on flat ground, not into a bank. We saw good numbers of Meadow Pipits, Yellowhammers, Skylarks, Chaffinches, Fieldfares and Redwings, along with a few Song and Mistle Thrushes feeding in stubble and sheep fields. Raptors were limited to several Buzzards and a Kestrel but strangely, no Red Kites. Yellowhammers, Tree Sparrows and Reed Buntings formed small flocks at the Staveley Nature Reserve, and on the feeders were Blue, Great and Willow Tits. By the end of the walk we had seen several Hares and a buck Roe Deer with three hinds. After lunch we added Long-eared Owl, more Goldeneye and a Kingfisher to our list and a bird count of 56. Our finale was a flock of about 200 mixed Fieldfares and Redwings, with a ratio of 75/25.

Sue Coldwell

Hares and Finches in Ripon 23 February 2016

Starting at Skelton-on-Ure, we quickly came across Hares which were easily visible in the large rolling fields. We were delighted to find three Skylark which continued to appear at nearly all locations throughout the day. Other species to be found here were flocks of Fieldfare and Yellowhammers. This location also gave us our first sighting of Buzzard - again a bird that seemed present all day - but this was a nesting pair! Moving on to land near Marton-le-Moor we examined a muck heap. We were rewarded by finding a small flock of Corn Bunting along with Chaffinch and Yellowhammer (a Wren, a Greenfinch and two Robin were also present at this little oasis!). We lunched at High Batts accompanied by Marsh Tit, Redpoll, Siskin and Great Spotted Woodpecker. On to Middle Parks (Mistle Thrush on the way) where Colin pointed out the effects of adverse land management and

its impact on wildlife. Our final port of call was Middle Farm at Ripon Parks. The once thriving habitat of the lake is now surrounded by an Otter fence. However, we were able to find Teal and Tufted duck as well as Shelduck, Canada Geese and Moorhen.

The main species of interest was a flock of Linnet. Other finches were mixed with the flock - the most notable being a Brambling. Our departure coincided with the arrival of six Curlew and a Kestrel. As we said our goodbyes at Quarry Moor and thanked Colin for a brilliant delivery of all target species, a female Sparrowhawk flew over.

Sue Harrison

SPRING CLEANING? PAST ANNUAL REPORTS REQUIRED

Kevin Walker, the Botanical Recorder, would be happy to house an unwanted set of HDNS annual reports from the years before 2007 (preferably a full set). Happy to collect from wherever. Contact him on email kevin.walker@bsbi.org.

British Trust for Ornithology: Curlew Appeal and Survey of Breeding Waders on Upland Farmland (In-Bye Land)

Until recently, Curlews were widespread across Britain and Ireland, but *Bird Atlas 2007-2011* revealed dramatic range contractions. The breeding range shrank by 17% of 10-km squares for breeding birds in Britain and 78% in Ireland over the last 40 years. Ireland also saw a 23% contraction in Curlew wintering range. These range contractions are coupled with declines in abundance. Data from the Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) show a 46% reduction between 1995 and 2013 across the UK, but this masks greater drops in Scotland (55%) and Wales (57%). There are now too few Curlews to calculate BBS trends in Northern Ireland, but dedicated studies have suggested a fall of more than 80%. The Curlew Appeal was launched in December 2015 to enable The Trust to carry out mainly desk-based research looking for possible reasons for decline under these main headings:

1. Increases in generalist predators reducing breeding success.
2. Afforestation of marginal hill land.
3. Changes in farming practice reducing habitat quality.
4. Climate change.

How will the money be spent? Researchers will utilise existing BTO resources:

1. Use BTO "Bird Atlas" data to investigate patterns of extinction and colonisation.
2. Predict patterns of Curlew abundance using "Breeding Bird Survey" data.
3. Study Curlew patterns across Europe.
4. Investigate home range and habitat use of breeding Curlews using remote tracking.
5. Launch a detailed study of Curlew habitat in use in winter using GPS tagging.
6. Possible use of data obtained from the study of breeding waders using the In-Bye land of Northern England (Breeding Waders of English Upland Farmland, 2016). See below.

Breeding Waders of English Upland Farmland Survey (BWEUF)

BWEUF is a project that Natural England commissioned and is entirely funded by DEFRA. The In-Bye is the focus due to the lack of information about the status of wader populations in this habitat, unlike those in the uplands (i.e. moorland) and lowland wet meadows which are reasonably well monitored.

The other requirement was to assess the effectiveness of wader specific agri-environment schemes in the In-Bye.

The Survey will start on 1st April and is tetrad based (2 x 2 km. squares). In common with most BTO surveys the squares are randomly selected but include suitable habitat: most of my squares fall within the Nidderdale AONB or the Yorkshire Dales National Park. We will initially be looking at high priority squares and only moving on to low priority if I have sufficient offers of help. At the time of writing (10th March) I have allocated 20 tetrads in the AONB leaving only one uncovered, all five tetrads outside the AONB are allocated. Fortunately I'm now managing to make inroads into 14 high priority squares in the YDNP. There are over 80 tetrads to cover in the NP (spread between three BTO Regions) so all offers of help are appreciated.

Mike Brown

BTO Regional Representative for Yorkshire-Central

mikebtorep@gmail.com



KNARESBOROUGH LIBRARY DISPLAY

During February half term week (15th to 20th) HDNS held a display in Knaresborough library. Images of birds, flowers, fungi and insects were on show together with information about the Society and how to join, information about Farnham Gravel Pit and the programme of field events and winter lectures. There were RSPB leaflets about nest boxes, garden ponds and about feeding the birds in your garden and also a children's quiz, with the Library providing a letter box for the answer sheets. HDNS member Sonia Starbuck kindly made all the arrangements and other members manned the stand and donated some excellent photos to use in the display.

This display could be made available at other events, to publicise HDNS. If you are interested, contact the general secretary Sue Coldwell.

HOW TO RESUSCITATE A BUMBLEBEE

In the Spring it is not unusual to find a bumblebee flaked out on a windowsill, barely able to move, only able to raise one leg in self defence. It probably entered through an open window looking for food or a nesting site and has flown against the glass until exhaustion supervened. If the Bumble is particularly large, she is probably a queen, the mother of the colony so her loss means the loss of a whole colony. Fear not, you can help. She has probably simply run out of fuel, like a little aeroplane, and it is well worth trying to resuscitate her. You will need a drop of honey, syrup or jam (in that order of preference) and a card and glass or jar so that you can move her outdoors without the risk of Her Majesty stinging you. Place a small drop of honey in front of her head and watch out for the following sequence of events: firstly, the antennae move around, noting the scent of sugary salvation. Then the tongue comes out and sucks up the droplet. If she finishes one drop, give her another. After several minutes (up to 20 minutes) she will start to walk about and then suddenly fly, usually straight back to the window! This is the time to put the jar over her then slide the card between the jar and window pane. Then you will have her safely contained and although she won't thank you for it, you can now take her outdoors and release her. Now you can bask in a warm glow, having done your good deed for the day.

**NEVER PICK UP A BEE DIRECTLY AS IT WILL PROBABLY STING!
USE A CARD AND GLASS AS ABOVE.**

HDNS member and lifelong beekeeper

Joe Dod

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.

Contact **Robert Marshall** for more information:
email: hdns.wildwatch@btinternet.com

MOTHS

In briefly summarising the 2015 season, there was just one new species of 'macro' moth for the Society's recording area – Beautiful Snout (at Bellflask), with eight new species of 'micro' moth also identified. It was not a hugely memorable year for moth trapping, although there was a notable influx of migratory species, including 66 records of Hummingbird Hawk-moth, five of Bordered Straw and two of Small Mottled Willow. Everything will be detailed fully in the 2015 Annual Report.

A total of 81 Obscure Wainscots, trapped at Nosterfield Reedbed on 1st July 2015, was a record catch for Yorkshire of this reedbed specialist, the first record for the Society only occurring in 2006. The list of moth species recorded in the Society's area has now increased to 1143 (comprising 638 micros and 505 macros) although the number of records submitted had again declined, compared with the last two years, at 12,812.

Other rare species recorded last year included Pine Hawk-moth (5th record), Red-necked Footman (5th record), Fen Square-spot (5th record), Cream-bordered Green-pea (6th & 7th records), Orange Footman (7th record), Beautiful Hook-tip (8th to 13th records) and Tissue (9th record).

Further records have been broken by the earliest-ever Hebrew Character being trapped in December 2015 and the fifth-earliest (for Yorkshire) Small Quaker in February 2016! Other spring species such as Clouded Drab, Early Grey and Oak Beauty are now on the wing, so if you haven't begun moth trapping yet this year, now's the time to start! Any species which are causing identification problems, please email a digital photograph (if possible) to either recorder (with details of date and place) and we will do our best to help, although we would encourage you to make an attempt at identification before emailing us!

Follow us on Twitter: *@JillWarwick* or *@DoubleKidney*

Jill Warwick and Charlie Fletcher

FARNHAM NEWS

Summer visitors were still in evidence in **September**. During the first week a Sparrowhawk was chased by a Hobby and a Greenshank was present until 4th. A flock of 50 Goldfinches perhaps indicated a good breeding season. Ten Gadwalls, two Common Sandpipers and 30 Chiffchaffs were present on 5th. Weather conditions were fairly settled and the five warbler species on site were seemingly in no hurry to move on. During the second week, 35 Pied Wagtails were seen going to roost one evening and two Spotted Flycatchers were present on 13th. Five hundred Barn Swallows and 50 House Martins flew through in an hour on the evening of 17th, when a Hobby was also seen. The work day on 20th was halted to watch a Peregrine Falcon fly onto one of the pylons. Fourteen Gadwalls, 13 Little Grebes, nine Chiffchaffs, 40 Blackbirds and 20 Song Thrushes were counted at the end of the month when, on 27th, the temperature was 18° C.

On 1st **October**, 23 Wigeons, 21 Gadwalls, 14 Teals, 78 Mallards and two drake Mandarin Ducks were present. Chiffchaffs, Willow Warblers and Blackcaps were still moving through and the first wintering Tree Sparrows arrived. A Peregrine Falcon was seen on 8th and the last Chiffchaff on 13th. The first winter thrushes, four Redwings, arrived on 11th with 120 on 18th, together with four Fieldfares. It was not until the last week of the month that wildfowl numbers began to increase with 63 Wigeons, 32 Gadwalls, 35 Teals, two Goldeneyes and a duck Mandarin. Three Waxwings flew over on 26th, 60 Fieldfares and 40 Redwings flew west on 29th and 19 Pink-footed Geese flew east on 31st. During the month 75mm of rain fell – little did we know what was to come!

Fog at the beginning of **November** brought a Brambling to the feeding station for three days and six Greenfinches were observed feeding on ash keys. A flock of 20 Siskins was seen on 16th and next day five Whooper Swans were seen to fly off from the North Lake. On 22nd 150 Pink-footed Geese flew south followed next day by 60 and 35 on 26th, on which date 25 Blackbirds were counted, 120 Starlings flew over and 40 Goldfinches were still around. Wildfowl numbers fluctuated, the highest counts being 72 Wigeons, 22 Gadwalls, 34 Teals, 56 Mallards, 40 Tufted Ducks and 12 Goldeneyes. A mixed month as regards the weather with temperatures ranging from 1° C to 16° C and some very strong winds on 29th. Total rainfall for the month was 114mm and the water level in the lake began to rise.

December began with a very unseasonal temperature of 11° C, there being no evidence of hard weather bird movement. On 8th, 40 Fieldfares passed over; because of the poor spring weather, there were very few berries on the hawthorn bushes which did not encourage winter thrushes to linger. During a very foggy day on 15th, one member had the very good fortune to see a 'ringtail' Hen Harrier appear out of the gloom behind the hide as it crossed the back field whilst the Warden was elsewhere. Mute Swan numbers increased to 27 on 17th and a male Blackcap was feeding on the bird table on 21st. A Peregrine Falcon was seen on four days during the month. Over 50 Tree Sparrows were present at the feeding station along with Yellowhammers, Reed Buntings and five species of tits. It was another wet month with 98mm of rain.

On 2nd **January**, there was an excellent sighting of eight Brent Geese which flew over from the north, did a U-turn and flew off to the north-east.

A Peregrine Falcon was seen three times during the first week, during which time 30 Siskins and 20 Lesser Redpolls were counted. Eleven Meadow Pipits continued to over-winter in the back field. Two female Pintails were present for five days from 10th. Duck numbers varied, the maxima being 42 Wigeons, ten Gadwalls, 29 Teals, 29 Tufted Ducks and 18 Goldeneyes. Little Grebes reached 13 on 12th. There were more than 80 Tree Sparrows regularly at the feeding station. By the end of the month, the high water level was causing problems for the weed feeding waterfowl and their numbers began to fall. A walk along the ditches in the back field flushed three Woodcocks.

A Treecreeper feeding on the ground under the bird feeders was a most interesting observation; Goldcrests have been seen to do so in the past but never a Treecreeper. Forty Pink-footed Geese flew west on 25th and 44 on 31st. Daytime temperatures for the first three weeks ranged from 0 to 5° C and rainfall for the month was 88mm. The lake iced over on 20th.

The unseasonable weather in **February** continued and there was little change in the number of waterfowls present. Forty Pink-footed Geese flew west on 7th. The number of Tree Sparrows at the feeding station rose to 91. Oystercatchers were moving through with 11 on 14th and a Peregrine Falcon was on the pylon on 17th. So many wet and windy days this winter have made for unpleasant birding conditions and one has to just sit it out! Saturday 20th February was just such a day but, looking at the feeding station from a comfy hide made for pleasant viewing. A total of 18 species – not counting Mallards, Moorhens and Magpies – was counted visiting the feeders. Three Lesser Redpolls were at the flooded margins of the lake as they picked up seeds amongst the debris. The lack of weed in the lake probably accounted for the Mute Swans eating the fluffy seed heads of bullrushes which were lying in the water; I have been unable to find any reference to this behaviour in the literature. A Barnacle Goose was present for a few days as it followed a Canada Goose around. Wildfowl numbers remained the same as in January until they began to fall at the month-end. On 26th, 600 Pink-footed Geese flew over to the west, with 60 more on 27th. Three Otters were watched feeding for an hour on 26th. Rainfall, at 49mm, was considerably less than in previous months. Total rainfall from October to February inclusive was 424mm (approx. 16 inches).

During our Management Day on 13th **March**, 20 Whooper Swans flew over, but those members busily working with their heads down failed to see them.

Some butterflies were still present in September with 11 species on the wing including Brown Argus, Common Blue and Speckled Wood. A few lingered into October with Brimstone, Comma and Speckled Wood until 21st. Emerald Damselfly, Migrant and Brown Hawkers were seen in September, with Common Darter on 30th. The Migrant Hawker and Common Darter were recorded in October and the latter in November. Otters were present in November with three observed as they fed together for an hour on two days and then again in December and January. Three Roe Deer were seen in December. There have been fewer sightings of Stoats and Weasels this autumn. In the sunshine on 8th January, a Peacock butterfly was flying across the back field.

The work team is very dedicated and committed to carrying out valuable work to maintain and improve the habitat for all species present; after many years of management we now feel we are getting the upper hand. There are only ten team members who do all the work

and it is a pity that there are not more volunteers from our membership who could come along and lend a hand.

My thanks to Ken Limb who produces our annual Farnham Bird Reports by processing the log sheets each month; these reports are kept in the hide for reference. It would be valuable to have annual reports for all other recorded orders as they are just as important. Would any computer enthusiast like to volunteer to produce such a report? The high water levels have restricted access to the lakeside path from the hide, so one must take the path from behind the hide which will be necessary until late April at the earliest.

The Farnham complex is divided into two lakes: the South Lake which is overlooked by the hide and the North Lake. Both lakes are used by anglers and the North by the sailing club also. Both may be viewed by our members walking along the designated paths. Due to the increasing pressure from Otters on the North Lake's valuable fish stocks, a fence has been erected around the whole lake. As a single Carp may be worth £1,000, this construction has been essential in order to guarantee the viability of the angling and the club's continuing presence, for which they pay a considerable sum for the annual fishing rights, as do the anglers on the South Lake. The Society is fortunate in not having to pay to visit the site. There is access to the grassland around the North Lake for members who wish to record butterflies and other species through gates which have a pull-chain for entry. Please ensure that the gates are securely closed at all times.

It has been a very difficult winter with little to inspire one's wildlife interest due to the influence of El Nino. We look forward to just what El Nina has in store for us – hopefully a “real” summer!

June E Atkinson Honorary Warden



HARROGATE NATURALISTS' WEBSITE www.hdns.org.uk

Have you visited our website recently? We have regular updates to our sightings page and photo gallery and we welcome submissions to both. There are also interesting items and links to other groups and societies in our area.

A list of local wildlife sites is here with OS map references. Look in *About HDNS*.

Sightings: click on the top menu item *Sightings* and follow the links. Scroll down to see the latest entry or add your own. We ask for your email but this does not appear online. Any interesting local item is welcome. Official records should still be sent to our recorders. Click *Contact us* for a form.

Photo Gallery: click on *About HDNS* and then *Photo Gallery* and then choose the gallery you would like to see. Click on any thumbnail to see a large view with a caption giving details of the photograph. Then click on the chevron on each side (or use keyboard arrow keys) to scroll through the photos. Click on any photo to return to the thumbnails. At the moment we have three raptors leading the birds' gallery. New photographs are always put at the top of the list for a while so visitors can easily see new entries, then occasionally the gallery is re-sorted into alphabetical order. (Look for Sparrow, House not House Sparrow)

To send a photo go to *Contact Us* and click *Submit a Photograph*. Fill in the form, following the instructions, and click submit. Any clear wildlife photographs taken currently in the HDNS area will be considered.

For any questions or problems please email photos@hdns.org.uk

WILDFLOWERS AT WOODLANDS

Last year, Woodlands Community Garden was one of 150 UK projects awarded a £1000 “Grow Wild” grant by Kew Gardens. The “Wildflowers at Woodlands” project gave sixth formers the opportunity to design and carry out an ecological experiment, whilst working with professional scientists. Here’s what they did! Ten A-level Biology students from Harrogate Grammar and Harrogate Ladies’ College took part, supported by their teachers, Dr Kevin Walker (BSBI) and Dr Alison Dyke (York University). They wanted to investigate how plant and invertebrate biodiversity could be increased with native wildflowers.

Around the margins of the Community Garden, the sixth formers marked out 2m x 2m plots and surveyed the existing plant and invertebrate life. Four plots were left as controls, but wildflowers were introduced to the others by:

- Adding green hay from Farnham Gravel Pits Nature Reserve
- Planting wildflower plugs (5 of each of 10 different species)
- Sowing ‘Grow Wild’ flower seed mix

The project will continue for five years with students and local people surveying plant and invertebrate biodiversity. It will be interesting to see which method has the biggest effect on biodiversity.

Involving the local community has been a very important part of this project. Local residents helped to plant the wildflower plugs and voted for their favourite flowers to be included in the project. Local children have had fun doing bug hunts, too. Everyone is welcome to visit Woodlands Community Garden, which is behind Woodlands Methodist Church on the Wetherby Road in Harrogate and is always open. For photos and to find out how the project is progressing do visit our

website: <https://www.growwilduk.com/community-projects/wildflowers-woodlands>

Catherine Baxter

ASPIN POND - AN INTRODUCTION

For the benefit of any unknowing HDNS Members, Aspin Pond is to be found next to Knaresborough Cricket Club on Aspin Lane, Knaresborough (postcode for Cricket Club is HG5 8EP). It lies within a fenced area and is owned by Harrogate Borough Council. Historically, it may have been in some way linked to the Trinitarian Priory on Abbey Road, or it may have been constructed much later in the 18th century, possibly for a more decorative purpose. In later years prior to 2012, the site was neglected. ‘The Friends of Aspin Pond’ was set up in April 2012 and one of its most important objectives is to protect and enhance the biodiversity of the area. This includes the pond and the surrounding areas containing wild flowers, trees and shrubs. Common newt and Great Crested newt have both been officially identified at the site in 2012, with one local resident recalling newts being there as far back as the 1940s!

Bird boxes, bat boxes and a bug hotel have been erected at the site by Harrogate Council at the Friends’ request. Several Friends have been keeping records and photographs of the flowers, birds, insects and other wildlife. Bird sightings include nuthatch, treecreeper, bullfinch and great spotted woodpecker. Butterflies include speckled wood, orange tip, brimstone and holly blue. Last year frogspawn was plentiful and is currently eagerly awaited for 2016. A toad also took up residence beneath a stone slab. A field vole has

been spotted and early one morning a fox was seen trotting around the pond's perimeter. Some sixty species of flower (including water plants) have so far been recorded. New paths have been created around the south side of the pond, which have enabled people to walk close to the water to try and spot the newts. The north side of the pond is much wilder than the south, with plenty of established trees, bushes and tall vegetation, all of which are ideal for newts, frogs, toads, mice, bats and birds.

Officers at the Borough Council provide valuable support in the practical management of the site, both physically as well as in forward planning. To cultivate a wildflower area on the south side in order to encourage a greater biodiversity will take several seasons and hard work. Many wild flowers thrive on poor soils, so in order to reduce the nutrients the group regularly has to cut back and rake the vegetation away.

It is to the credit of local Knaresborough residents that they have been proactive enough to take action to maintain and protect life at the pond. Considering that the site is within the middle of a housing estate and accessible to all, this is no mean feat.

For further details about Aspin Pond site, please contact me on email
Susan.Kitching@mail.com

Sue Kitching

These articles show just two of the wildlife ventures in which HDNS members are involved. Are you working in a local project? Please write about it in the newsletter, and publicise it to a wider audience.

Records: please do pass on the records of your local observations to the appropriate HDNS recorder.

COMPILING A 'WHERE TO FIND WILDLIFE' GUIDE TO OUR AREA

I have only recently retired, moved to North Yorkshire and joined HDNS. With time on my hands and a keen interest in natural history I have been looking for local places to explore. The area covered by our Society has wonderful biodiversity enhanced by a varied geology, with outcrops of limestone and grits providing crags, caves and base-rich flushes. There should be many great sites for finding a variety of wildlife, both flora and fauna, but where are they?

Naturally, I have turned to the web for information and, as I begin to meet members of the Society, I have found your knowledge invaluable. The Society's website includes a useful list of local wildlife sites, including some nature reserves and interesting places, with an indication of which are good for birds, butterflies or flowers. Scouring the HDNS Forum messages reveals other local sites members have visited. Elsewhere on the web you can find information on Nidderdale AONB, local nature reserves and sites of special scientific interest. The Yorkshire Naturalists' Union and some national societies have published trip reports in our area (including some dating back to 1800s). And of course, much can be gleaned by word of mouth from local naturalists.

The problem is not lack of information, it is the difficulty finding it when it is scattered across all these and other sources. Having started my search, it occurred to me that others might benefit from and even wish to contribute to a 'Where to find wildlife' guide to the HDNS Recording Area.

So, I would like to appeal to all members of the Society to help me catalogue all of the interesting sites by sending me details of your favourite spots, why you like them and what you find there. I will compile your suggestions into a list that can be shared on the website and, if there is sufficient material, HDNS might publish a printed leaflet or guidebook. If you are interested in helping with this task please let me know. Please share your local knowledge by sending it to me, preferably by email: drnickgaunt@gmail.com

Nick Gaunt

MONITORING MUTE SWANS

Repeating last year's plea for sightings of colour-ringed Mute Swans in the HDNS area. Surprisingly for such an obvious and "favourite" bird, the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) actually receives few records of nesting attempts and of course, there are several sites in the HDNS where they breed.

There are also key sites in our area where non-breeding Mute Swans congregate throughout the year. Members of East Dales Ringing Group have initiated a project (Retrapping Adults for Survival – RAS) to monitor our local swans, the results of which will be analysed by scientists at the BTO to understand more about the UK's population. Ringed swans will have a metal BTO ring on one leg but on the other is a coloured plastic ring (engraved with three letters/digits which are read UP the bird's leg) and can be seen quite easily if bread is used to tempt the birds in close, thus they can be monitored without having to catch them each time.

Certain digits which could cause possible confusion are not used, for example, the letters "E", "M", "Q" and "R" are avoided. Please could you report any colour-ringed swans to me (including date, place and digits on colour ring) and you will receive details about the bird's life history, if known. Swans ringed by other groups may come into the HDNS area and of course, require reporting as well. If a bird with a colour ring is seen, but you are unable to read the digits, perhaps you could contact me to report its location and a member of EDRG can try to confirm its identity.

Jill Warwick jill@swland.co.uk

INDOOR MEETINGS PROGRAMME 2016/7

St. Robert's Centre, Robert Street, Harrogate (opposite Waitrose), starting at **7.30 pm**. Parking is either on the adjacent streets or, with their kind permission, in the Waitrose car park. Visitors welcome (fee £3).

See the website for more details from these speakers.

2016

5 October **Landscapes, Flora and Fauna of the American West** Coastal California (including Monterey Bay pelagics), Salton Sea, Southern Arizona, Saguaro National Park, Carlsbad Caverns, Petrified Forest, Painted Desert, Grand Canyon and Yosemite National Park. **Dr John R Mather BEM**

19 October **Signal Crayfish**

White Clawed & Signal Crayfish: identification, habits and impact. Local response, and possible future for both species. **Don Vine YWT**

2 November **Eastern Europe – Looking at Wildlife Before It's Too Late** What were the consequences of the fall of the Iron Curtain, for wildlife, agricultural practices and people's living standards? **Colin Slator HDNS**

16 November **An Ethiopian Episode**

Ethiopia is a fascinating country, very different from much of Africa. Some of the best bird and mammal watching sites, the scenery and people.

Tom Lawson RSPB

30 November **Harvest Mice in Leeds Area**

Habitat use and requirements, leading to conservation management recommendations.

Ann Hanson Yorkshire Mammal Group

2017

11 January **Goshawks to Humpbacks –**

Wildlife of the North York Moors National Park

The wide diversity of wildlife in the National Park: orchids, birds of prey and whales. Top tips of where to go and what to find!

Richard Baines - Yorkshire Coast Nature

25 January **Barn Owls of the Lower Derwent Valley NNR**

The wealth of wildlife in the Lower Derwent Valley NNR; and one of the successful projects undertaken around the reserve – their amazing work on Barn Owls. **Craig**

Ralston Senior Reserve Manager

8 February Orchids of the Harrogate Area

Introduction to native British orchids and Yorkshire habitats. Different genera of orchids and their growth cycles, with slides of locally-growing orchids. **Charlie Philpotts Harrogate Orchid Society**

22 February A Naturalist with a Camera (2)

From home to three islands: Skokholm, Fair Isle and Stora Fjadderagg. The places and their wildlife. **Paul Irving HDNS**

8 March Birds in a Cage

An obsessive quest behind barbed wire. Through their love of birds, British POWs overcome hunger, hardship, fear and stultifying boredom.

Derek Niemann

22 March 1280 Species and Counting – the Flora of the HDNS Area

Recording the local plant life for 150 years: losses, gains, invasive aliens, ubiquitous species and specialities. Plans for producing a new flora.

Kevin Walker BSBI

26 April Annual General Meeting

If you have any suggestions for a lecture subject, or would like to give a talk yourself, or can recommend a speaker, please contact the Programme Secretary, Ruth Upsall, with your ideas: mjupsall@btinternet.com

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

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

CALL FOR RECORDS

All members – please send your observations and records for 2016 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.

WEBSITE PASSWORD

The members-only password will change on 1 June 2016. The new password will be available on the new membership card, which will be posted in May.

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 via the membership secretary.

CONTACT DETAILS

General Secretary: Mrs Sue Coldwell

email: gen.sechdns@yahoo.co.uk

Membership Secretary: Ms Val Smith

email: memsec.hdns1@talktalk.net

Website: www.hdns.org.uk