



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 2017



FIELD TRIPS 2017

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. Please bring a note of your next-of-kin details, so that the leader can fill in the Attendance sheets.

Tuesday 25 April GOUTHWAITE RESERVOIR, SCAR HOUSE and ANGRAM (am & pm)

Meet at Gouthwaite Reservoir main car park at 9.30 am (in cars). Looking for waders and spring migrants. Continue to Scar House, stopping en route for raptors, Pied Flycatcher, Dipper. Scar House car park for lunch, looking for Ring Ouzel, Wheatear etc. A walk then to Angram for those who so wish.

Leader: June Atkinson

Tuesday 6 June WYKEHAM FOREST RAPTOR WATCHPOINT and RSPB BEMPTON (am & pm)

Minibus trip (*booking required*). Meet at York Place car park, Knaresborough, at 8 am. A stop at Wykeham for Honey-buzzard and other raptors, Turtle Dove, Tree Pipit, Common Crossbill. On to RSPB Bempton for the myriads of breeding seabirds. RSPB members should have their membership cards.

Leader: June Atkinson

Tuesday 13 June EVENING WALK for NIGHTJARS and RODING WOODCOCKS in STAINBURN FOREST, LITTLE ALMSCLIFFE (Cars)

Meet in Stainburn car park at 9 pm. 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

Sunday 9 July BOTANY FIELD TRIP, DUCK STREET QUARRY

Meet at Duck Street, Greenhow, SE113638 at 10:00 am. Full day trip.

Leader: Kevin Walker

Enquiries to him at kevin.walker@bsbi.org

Sunday 3 September YWT SPURN NNR

Coach trip (*booking required*). Meet at York Place car park, Knaresborough, at 8 am. Looking for passage migrants, seabirds and waders. Hopefully we may coincide with more unusual species. Butterflies and dragonflies will be of interest.

Note: There is now no vehicular access along the peninsula to the Point, but those wishing to undertake the walk, may do so.

Leader: June Atkinson

ORCHIDS

Charlie Philpotts of the Harrogate Orchid Society gave a lecture on native British Orchids in the winter programme, and has offered to lead these field trips. So that he has some idea of numbers, please let the Programme Secretary, Ruth Upsall, know if you will be joining the trip. mjupsall@btinternet.com. If you are interested in a car share, please speak to Ruth.

Sunday 25 June AUGILL PASTURE & WAITBY GREENRIGGS, CUMBRIA

Meet at Augill Pasture site at around 10:00am. The reserve is at the end of the road past Augill Beck Park caravan site near Brough off the A66 - postcode CA17 4DX. There is no sign for the reserve but the road comes to an end here next to an old stone building. This is an old lead works and is home to a good variety of plants. Orchids seen should include common spotted, heath spotted, fragrant, early purple, frog and greater butterfly orchids.

<http://www.cumbriawildlifetrust.org.uk/reserves/augill-pasture>

We will move on after a couple of hours to the Christian Head public car park in Kirkby Stephen where we can use the toilets and have lunch. The postcode is CA17 4HA and it is near both the grammar school and fire station which are on the right hand turn of a roundabout.

We will then drive a short distance up to Waitby Greenriggs reserve. This is on an old railway line and we should see common spotted, northern marsh, lesser butterfly, marsh helleborine, twayblades, fragrant and hopefully fly orchids. This is my personal favourite reserve and is a good complement to Augill

pastures having different soil conditions and other wildflowers. If anybody does not enjoy this site they will be left behind!

<http://www.cumbriawildlifetrust.org.uk/reserves/waitby-greenriggs>

If time allows we can go to the other end of Kirkby Stephen and look for the bird's nest orchid in a park, have a spot of refreshment or simply leave and make our way home.

Saturday 15 July ORCHIDS: SITES AROUND EAST LEEDS

Meet at Sue's pit stop cafe in the Enterprise car park at Ledstone Luck at 10:00am. Cafe and toilets are open in the morning. The postcode is LS25 7BF. There is ample car parking and we can car share from there. It is a short walk from here to the actual Ledston Luck reserve where we will see common spotted, northern and southern marsh, a few pyramids and bee orchids. There are thousands of orchids on this site including some very good *Dactylorhiza* hybrids. There are a number of ponds so there will be chasers and dragonflies etc. This is an old pit site which closed in the late 80s, it can be muddy so wellies may be worthwhile

<http://www.ywt.org.uk/reserves/ledston-luck>

The next site is Townclose Hills, a SSSI site nearby which is a magnesian limestone outcrop surrounded by meadows. Park at Kippax sports centre - postcode LS25 7LQ. This is my favourite local site and has many thousands of common spotted and hybrids, around 1000 pyramidals, a number of bee orchids and a few twayblades. There are also an excellent variety of calcareous plants which are not common to the area. We can use the benches here to have our lunch before walking up to the site.

<http://www.ywt.org.uk/reserves/townclose-hills>

We could take a short break in an old coaching inn on the way to the next reserve if people wish. The Chequers Inn is a large pub with a marquee in the beer garden. Postcode is LS25 5LP

<http://thechequersinn.com>

From here we will drive a short distance to Ledsham Bank reserve. This a magnesian limestone grassland site and there is an excellent variety of calcareous plants here. Orchids include fragrant, common spotted and pyramidal. This is a small site and we can spend a nice hour exploring before heading home.

<http://www.ywt.org.uk/reserves/ledsham-bank-nature-reserve>

FIELD MEETING REPORTS 2016-7

A full account of the trips, and photographs, are to be found on the website.

PATELEY BRIDGE & GUISECLIFF FUNGUS & MOSSES FORAY

25 October 2016

Leaders: Nick Gaunt (mosses and liverworts) and Andy Woodall (fungi).

We assembled in Nidd Walk Car Park and headed off beside the River Nidd towards Glasshouses. The walls along the track had a good selection of mosses and liverworts while several species of fungi were showing in the bordering fields and woodland. After lunch by Glasshouses Dam we ascended through Guisecliff Wood, a damp hillside habitat dominated by birch, to reach Guisecliff Tarn. This small lake was surrounded by trees in full autumn colours, a magnificent sight. As anticipated, the woods had a profusion of fungi, mosses and liverworts.

Nick Gaunt

SPURN POINT

13 September 2016

A sellout bus load was greeted by a glorious autumn day for Colin's last field trip as leader. The wind was a light South-easterly, which kept the temperature bearable, unlike parts of Britain which were experiencing thirty degrees, temperatures not seen in September since 1911. A visit to the Canal Scrape hide produced a Redstart, Spotted Flycatcher, Meadow Pipits and Linnets. Whinchat numbers achieved double figures very quickly which was an absolute treat! Wheatears and Hirundines were there in good numbers too.

The Crown and Anchor car park produced, as ever, an excellent opportunity, this time for a juvenile Pied Flycatcher, launching itself from a telegraph wire to feed up before its long journey. We on the other hand had a short trip to Kilnsea Wetlands. Not all of us knew Beacon Ponds which lay behind the Kilnsea Wetland lagoon, where we paused to see a wonderful Wood Sandpiper and a cracking Curlew Sandpiper amongst the multitudes of Dunlin, Knot, Redshank, Terns, Black Headed Gulls and Oystercatchers.

On the far shore we managed to pick out a Little Stint and another Curlew Sandpiper as well as Sanderling and Ringed Plovers. The weekend's Kentish Plover had perhaps already relocated, sadly. There was an influx of waders as high tide approached. Amongst them were several magnificent Grey Plovers still in their monochrome breeding plumage.

A high tide on the estuary afforded good views of wader murmurations as birds which were clinging to the last bit of salt marsh were finally displaced by the waves. The North Sea was slightly misty and bird movement was sparse. Sea watching revealed plenty of immature Gannets feeding offshore, only one Great Skua, a few sea ducks, Common Terns and a Red throated Diver.

At that point, we were ourselves finally ready to be relocate back to Harrogate.

The group presented Colin with a card and book token in appreciation for all the trips which have been many and varied over the years, but one common theme . . . Colin's unerring enthusiasm and determination to make sure we all learnt something while having a great day out! Many thanks as well to all the photographers who have done sterling work to capture the moments which have been so special.

Sue Coldwell

WILD GOOSE CHASE: NOSTERFIELD LNR & LINGHAM 10 January 2017

This was the first meeting of the year and seven members joined Jill Warwick at the car park at Nosterfield. Jill explained that the water level was very low, but this was not deterring large numbers of Lapwing, Golden Plover, Wigeon and Curlew, as well as some Teal, Tufted Duck, Pochard, and Mallard, not to mention a very nice female Goldeneye.

There were no other waders except Redshank and even Passerines were very scarce. There were reports of a Little Egret but it was not seen on the day. Jill had said that some of the numerous Greylag Geese had been seen wearing BTO neck collars which proved that they had come from Windermere.

Raptors included two Common Buzzards and a Kestrel at the reserve, and a Sparrowhawk at Flasks.

After we had lunched at Lingham we scanned the lake and then walked down to Flasks Lake, stopping to see a Little Owl sitting in its usual area, with winter thrushes in the hedgerows. Great Crested and Little Grebes were feeding up on Flasks Lake.

There was intelligence that there were big numbers of wild geese out in the fields near Carthorpe, so we set off in cars to test the theory. We befriended a local farmer who said that indeed they were a wonderful sight when they all came into his fields. However they weren't there just now and with darkness

falling we decided to leave the empty fields to fill up with geese after we had gone! The weather contradicted the forecast and got better all day, as we evaded the rain and wind, which must have slipped South. A good start to the year: thanks to June Atkinson for leading.

Sue Coldwell

HARTLEPOOL & SALTHOLME

14 February 2017

After a weekend of grim easterly winds off the North Sea, the day dawned warm and spring-like, with a very light breeze and broken cloud. On arriving at Hartlepool Headland, we noticed the sea was still very agitated, but with a receding tide we started scanning the intertidal zone for waders. This was easier said than done as there were very few, and no Purple Sandpipers to be found, just Oystercatchers, Turnstones, Redshank, Curlew, Ringed Plover and a single Knot. There were Eiders, Common Scoters, Cormorants and a Red-throated Diver on the sea.

With rough seas, it is often wise to check the marina at Hartlepool for sheltering birds and so it turned out to be: splendid Red-breasted Mergansers, one male and two females. We then sent Mike to talk his way into the Fish Dock, a quick résumé of health and safety near deep water – and we were greeted with a lovely first winter Iceland Gull, and soon afterwards were watching two beautiful Great Northern Divers.

Next stop, Newburn Bridge for lunch & Mediterranean Gulls. We had excellent views of the gulls, especially when they noticed we had brought our lunch with us. They are gulls after all and will readily swoop (uninvited) for food: and for us birders, close-up views of a white-winged gull aren't to be missed.

At Saltholme we were disappointed that the Long-tailed Duck appeared to have moved on, but were consoled with a male Pintail, some 70 White-fronted Geese, huge flocks of Curlew, Wigeon, Golden Plover and Lapwing. Two Short-eared Owls and a Stonechat were seen along the Kestrel route; oh yes, and a Kestrel, what else?

Our thanks to June Atkinson for leading a great day out; and to our driver Andrew, who was patience personified as he parked here, there and everywhere as we pursued our quest, totalling well over an amazing 70 species.

Sue Coldwell

2015 BIRD REPORT & ANNUAL REPORT

Due to unforeseen circumstances the 2015 Bird Report is somewhat delayed, but is in the final stages of preparation. This has also delayed the 2015 Annual Report. Both editors are working to get the Reports to members as soon as possible, without compromising accuracy and continuity.

2016 BIRD RECORDS

Records for the 2016 bird report should be sent to the recorder as soon as possible. Thank you.

ROOKERY SURVEY

With signs of the breeding season now underway, and before the leaves on the trees obscure the nests, I have decided to undertake a simple study of the number of rookeries in the HDNS area. The information I require is site, date, number of visible nests and if any activity is seen, e.g. birds taking in sticks to nest site, presence/absence of birds etc.

Driving around the area at the moment, rookeries are very visible so this hopefully should be a straightforward task for us all! Recently, I have formed the impression that Rooks have become more common, and although this "study" is not particularly scientific, it will be interesting to see the spread of rookeries in the area and the density of nests per rookery.

Please email your information to me (with nest counts) as soon as possible after the sighting. I'm hoping these can be plotted on to a map, showing density, with different dots representing different numbers of nests counted.

Paul Irving, Bird Recorder
2bluetails@gmail.com



MOTHS

In briefly summarising the 2016 season: there were no new species of 'macro' moth for the Society's recording area but seven new species of 'micro' moth, one of which was new for Yorkshire (caught in 2015, identified in 2016) and also six Vice County records. The year started very slowly, but improved markedly in June/July. There was a notable influx of the tiny Diamond-back Moth throughout the UK, including our area – one trap alone attracting over 300 on one night. Conversely, there were just three records of Humming-bird Hawk-moth (compared with the good numbers reported in 2015) and just a lone migrant Vestal caught. Everything will be detailed fully in the 2016 Annual Report.

A total of four Netted Pug, trapped at Nosterfield NR, was a record catch and some pheromones (developed for attracting the day-flying Emperor Moth) were found to work well! The nationally declining V-moth was trapped at two sites, both on the higher ground (what is the foodplant there?). During 2016, some 677 species of moth were recorded in the Society's area (369 macros and 308 micros). The overall list of species recorded in the Society's area has again increased, to 1150 (comprising 645 micros and 505 macros) and, encouragingly, the number of records submitted in 2016 had increased to 13,320 of 52,050 individual moths.

Other rare species recorded last year included Scarce Footman (2nd record), Varied Coronet (2nd & 3rd records), Maiden's Blush (4th record), Red-necked Footman (6th record), Pine Hawk-moth (6th & 7th records), Fen Square-spot (6th to 9th records), Cream-bordered Green-pea (8th record), Anomalous (8th record), Brown-veined Wainscot (8th record) and Orange Footman (8th to 10th records).

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!

jill@swland.co.uk

chfletcher@btinternet.com

Follow us on Twitter: @JillWarwick or @DoubleKidney

Jill Warwick & Charlie Fletcher

FARNHAM NEWS

Summer migrants continued to move through in **September**, with an unexpected Turtle Dove on 18th which sang for two minutes but stayed out of sight; this is now a very scarce bird in our area. This was followed the next day by a drake Garganey in eclipse plumage which remained for nine days, being joined on 24th by a female. On the morning of 28th, 33 Sky Larks, one Sand Martin, 110 Barn Swallows, 160 House Martins, 48 Meadow Pipits and 30 Siskins flew south; a Hobby was also observed, no doubt following on! The female Garganey, a Common Sandpiper and a Hobby were seen to 30th, concluding an interesting eight days.

October opened with a Ruff on 2nd and a Jack Snipe on 5th. A Willow Warbler was singing on 11th and 200 Redwings were seen. Hundreds of Redwings were seen from 15th on which date 26 Fieldfares flew over. The last Chiffchaff was present on 16th. Two Jack Snipe were on the islands and duck numbers increased slowly, with maxima of Wigeon – 24, Gadwall – 32, Teal – 26 and Mallard – 29. A Brambling called as it flew over the hide on 29th and, on the same day, a Whooper Swan flew around and a Peregrine Falcon was perching on a pylon.

It was a good start to **November** when, on 1st, ten Whooper Swans were on the North Lake. The first two Goldeneyes appeared on 5th and a Brambling was present at the feeding station for two days until 10th, when 12 Waxwings flew south. Seventy Pink-footed Geese flew over the next day and Shoveler, Woodcock, Jack Snipe, Dunlin and Brambling were all seen from 10th. A first-winter drake Scaup appeared on 21st and stayed for six days. Fifty Goldfinches attended the feeding station. A count of 100 Blackbirds was notable on 22nd and a Common Redshank was present the next day. Five Whooper Swans flew south on 26th, when a Chiffchaff was also seen. Maximum waterfowl counts were Wigeon – 21, Gadwall – 24, Mallard – 38, Tufted Duck – 84, Goldeneye – 15 and Little Grebe – 11. There was a continuing presence of Redwings with 300 on 29th and the feeding station was always busy with four species of tit, Nuthatches, Great Spotted Woodpeckers, Tree Sparrows, Bullfinches, Yellowhammers and Reed Buntings seen daily.

On 3rd **December**, a Jack Snipe was seen and a Peregrine Falcon perched on the usual pylon next day. The over-wintering Chiffchaff was present on 16th. A skein of 19 Pink-footed Geese flew over on 17th with 58 over next day. A pair of Egyptian Geese was on site for two days during the third week when 50+ Meadow Pipits were in the back field and 60+ Goldfinches were counted.

Maximum numbers of ducks during the month were Wigeon - 53, Gadwall - 16, Teal - 43, Mallard - 52, Tufted Duck - 58 and Goldeneye - 29. The weather was rather unseasonal, with little frost and the temperature reaching 15°C on 9th and 25th.

January started well with a cream-crown Marsh Harrier on 6th, followed by an immature drake Common Scoter on 10th, which stayed for four days. The first Oystercatcher arrived on 13th. From 17th, Pink-footed Geese were flying over north with skeins of 150 and 80, then 90 on 19th and 80 next day. An immature drake Scaup was present on 23rd, but the lake froze overnight so it departed and was not seen again. A skein of 100 Pink-footed Geese flew over to the north on 24th. A light west wind on 29th was enough to encourage 15 Common Buzzards to take to the air. Waterfowl numbers fluctuated during the month, the maxima being Wigeon - 24, Gadwall - 21, Teal - 33, Mallard - 53, Tufted Duck - 50 and Goldeneye - 13. There was a slight increase in Coot numbers with 11 present; long gone are the days when hundreds were counted during the month.

On 2nd **February**, a first-winter Glaucous Gull was on the North Lake at 1pm, and was seen again next morning. This was the first record since 2009. When at Farnham, it is often worthwhile looking to the north for birds flying over which would otherwise be missed; on 3rd, six small grey geese dropped into the back field to join feeding Greylag Geese; from their size I assumed they were Pink-footed Geese, but one should not take anything for granted and they were in fact Bean Geese of the race *rossicus*. After 30 minutes they flew off and were seen next day at Staveley Reserve. On 8th, a chance stop to scan the gulls which were arriving as I was leaving the site, revealed a first-winter Iceland Gull. This was the start of a surprising series of records. A call to Les Lancaster brought him to the site later as the roost was increasing, when he also found three first-winter Glaucous Gulls; after that, the roost was watched each evening. Five first-winter Glaucous Gulls were seen one evening and an adult one morning. Two first-winter Iceland Gulls and an adult were recorded. Over a period of eight days, these were the highest counts ever to be recorded in the HDNS area at any one time. A Little Egret was seen on three days from 9th. A party of 20 Waxwings was present on 11th. Late afternoon on 18th, a small raptor was mobbing a Common Buzzard; a closer look revealed that the small raptor was a Merlin. A Brambling was at the feeding station on 26th. Maximum wildfowl counts for the month were Wigeon – 37, Gadwall – 21, Teal – 29, Pochard – 17, Goldeneye – 12 and Little Grebe – 7.

A single Brambling was again at the feeding station on 2nd **March**, with two on 10th. The evening gull roost at the North Lake continued to be productive, with two Iceland Gulls on 6th, on which evening the observer saw a Barn Owl, the first on site for seven years. A Glaucous Gull was at the roost on 9th. A Chiffchaff was singing on 11th, with eight on 15th. A drake Mandarin Duck made a brief appearance on 12th. Early March is the time to look for Whooper Swans moving north, so 13 on the North Lake on the morning of 14th were true to form. On 15th, six Goldeneyes and four pairs of Oystercatchers were present.

The dedicated Management Team continued their work through the winter months maintaining habitats and protecting sites for important species. Due to health and safety constraints we are not now allowed to use equipment for which the operator requires a licence i.e. chain saws and strimmers with cutting blades; professional contractors have to be employed. Regarding health and safety issues, I would ask all members visiting the site to read the notices, which can be found on the outside of the hide, and take note of the instructions. It is also advised that you carry a mobile phone. A large number of trees, which were causing a problem with the electricity cables from the pylon, have been felled on the southern boundary. This has created a large area from which fallen tree debris and wood chippings are being raked off. Botanically it will be interesting to see what emerges after all our hard work! Preventive measures will be taken to stop the otters from climbing onto the tern platform by erecting wire netting around it.

As the front of the old section of the hide was in need of re-cladding, four members of the Management Team undertook the task and deserve a big thank you for a very professional job; we are fortunate in having such highly skilled team members.

Our thanks again to Ken Limb who continues to produce our bird report, which he has done for almost 20 years. He also produces statistics from our log sheets which make for very interesting reading. From the completed sheets, which are not filled in every day, it shows that 258 days coverage give cumulative records for that period of 11,394, June and July having the least number of records.

The weather this autumn and winter has been exceptionally dry revealing the smaller islands, hopefully they will remain above water through the summer. It has been a dreary winter, lacking in sunshine but thankfully no snow. Here's hoping for a real summer at last!

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

ANN METTAM LIFE MEMBER

In recognition of her many years of service to the society, as Council member, Weather reporter, active Farnham worker, indefatigable typist of immaculate scripts, wildlife photographer and, recently, President; Council is pleased to offer Ann a well-deserved Life Membership.

FRIENDS OF ASPIN POND

Last year our Spring newsletter contained an introduction to Aspin Pond, where to find it and how to get involved. The Pond is a wonderful natural resource on our doorstep and easily accessible for all age groups, particularly children. Thanks to the local community, the Pond is going from strength to strength. Working parties are held regularly to maintain and manage the site, with the help and guidance of Harrogate Borough Council's Parks Department. Tasks have included cutting back and removing vegetation around the pond and its banks, removing grass from the pond, planting bluebells, wild flowers and seeds, maintaining hedges and installing a second bug hotel.

Last year we had visits from the Aspin Brownies and Rainbows. Dan McAndrew, Harrogate Borough Council's ecologist once again led the very interesting bat walk in the autumn, and it was particularly interesting to listen and learn about the different sound frequencies of the various bat species.

The group also worked hard to raise funds. The group is very grateful for the generous support it has received from Aspin Park WI, Knaresborough Rotary Club and Knaresborough Town Council. An interpretation board is now ready for installation at the pond. The board was expensive as it must be durable and vandal proof. We hope that children and adults alike will learn from it and be encouraged to value wildlife as a consequence. In order to preserve the beauty and tranquillity of the pond, we commented on the decision by the Borough Council not to designate the pond and its surrounding meadowland as a Local Green Space and are hoping that the Council may reconsider its decision. Special thanks to all those who also wrote letters of support.

At the present time the snowdrops and winter aconites are in full flower, and bluebell leaves are beginning to emerge. We look forward to the frog spawn appearing, followed by the great crested newts in April. This coming year we are hoping to carry out further archaeological investigations to try and discover an ancient water course.

Please feel free to visit Aspin pond whenever you like. It is situated next to Knaresborough Cricket Club. Our Annual General Meeting for the Friends will be held on Thursday 27 April at 7.30pm at Knaresborough Cricket Club on Aspin Lane, Knaresborough, HG5 8EP. All welcome!

For further details about the Aspin pond site, please contact Sue Kitching on Susan.Kitching@mail.com

HARROGATE INNER RELIEF ROAD

North Yorkshire County Council has set out proposals for a relief road which would destroy the green belt between Harrogate and Knaresborough, the Nidd Gorge corridor and the Nidderdale Greenway. Unsurprisingly, many people are deeply concerned about this and have formed a group to campaign actively against the proposals. One of the ways to object to these proposals yourself is to write to your Councillors. You can also sign the petition and join the campaigning group. But please at least do something!

Details of North Yorkshire County Council's proposals are on their website: www.northyorks.gov.uk/article/33048/Harrogate-relief-road

Details of the group who are campaigning against the proposals are on their website: www.niddgorgeca.org and click on the facebook link.

Sonia Starbuck

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

THE WILD WATCH

Nidderdale AONB (Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty) is inviting participation in recording the area for specific species. A representative from Nidderdale AONB will be joining us at our AGM and will make a short presentation about what is involved, with a view to recruit members to join in this project.

The Wild Watch is an exciting new project initiative based in Nidderdale AONB. It will enable local people to play an active part in conserving Nidderdale's natural heritage by helping gather information that will be used to improve habitats for wildlife. The project will combine the power of citizen science, a dynamic partnership approach and the latest research to gather natural heritage records, reconnect communities to their local natural heritage and pioneer a new way of delivering conservation action on a landscape scale.

The Wild Watch will give conservation bodies, farmers and the wider community the information needed to begin to reverse the decline of species and habitats of conservation concern in the AONB.

Core partners comprise the University of Leeds, North and East Yorkshire Ecological Data Centre and Nidderdale AONB. A steering group, which oversees project development and implementation, includes representatives of Wharfedale Naturalists, Harrogate & District Naturalists' Society, Yorkshire Naturalists Union, Yorkshire Wildlife Trust, Yorkshire Dales Rivers Trust, Nidderdale Plus, Natural England, Environment Agency, Yorkshire Water, Harrogate Borough Council and North Yorkshire County Council.

www.nidderdaleaonb.org.uk/wild-watch

WEBSITE www.hdns.org.uk

We are looking for someone to take over running the website. Do not be afraid – no knowledge of coding or html is needed! Just computer literacy at word processing level. You will be working with the present webmaster at first, with full training and help. For more information contact Malcolm Jones on malcolm@itlimestreet.co.uk

SUN BECK WOOD, BRAFFERTON SPRINGS

August 2016, I am recuperating after surgery. An email pings in: “*Woodland for Sale, Brafferton Springs, three and a half acres*”, ancient woodland, and not far too away! I’m soon hobbling painfully on crutches down a neglected woodland ride trying to keep up with the agent. Two Buzzards float effortlessly across a wonderful mix of tall oak, scots pine, poplar, larch, sycamore, spruce, birch and beech, marsh tits sneeze in an understorey of overstood hazel coppice, and from the undergrowth a woodcock explodes away from our feet through the trees. I can just see but can’t get to a sunlit stream, the Sun Beck. Could I also buy the adjacent four acres? Mmmm, but it’s not up for sale. Can you see what you can do? Days pass, then a phone call. Meetings have been called, heads scratched and an agreement reached. Solicitors step in. Time slows to a crawl.

Late November and I’m standing in the middle of my new ancient woodland. Winter. The vegetation has died back, the leaves have fallen, the birds are silent and the rain drips incessantly from the trees. The Inland Drainage Board had enthusiastically done what they do best with a rather big machine, and now 400m of streamside path is a total muddy mess! Never mind, time for some work. Nestboxes up, access paths created, simple bridges and rustic seats installed.

By mid-March plants are vigorously recolonising the desecrated beckside, an acre of bluebells can’t burst through the leaf mould fast enough and the first Chiffchaff is singing. Experts will be lured, with the promise of hot beverages and biscuits, to identify the fungi, ferns, flowering plants, lichens, beetles, moths, butterflies, dragonflies, bees, and mammals that call this special place home. The data will help enormously towards formulating a management plan next winter for the improvement of the wood. Sun Beck Wood falls just outside the HDNS area but you are welcome to visit. Hot drink and biscuits anyone?

David Watkins



11 October **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

2018

10 January **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**

This talk presents new and interesting facts about Swifts, explains why they are in trouble, and suggests 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

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

EARLY RECORDS OF HDNS

The Society was founded in 1947, but we have very few records of the early years. If you have copies of Annual Reports, or any other material, from 1947 to 1955, that you would like to donate to the Archives, we would be very grateful.

HDNS COUNCIL MEMBERS

Would you be interested in serving on the Council? The Council meets about 6-8 times a year, to plan the programme and to manage the affairs of the Society. You do not need any special expertise, only to be interested in wildlife and the environment. If you don't want to commit yourself to three years, why not offer your name for co-option and serve for a year?

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 2017. The new password will be available on the new membership card, which will be posted on 1 May.

NEWSLETTER BY EMAIL

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

NOTICE-BOARD

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.

