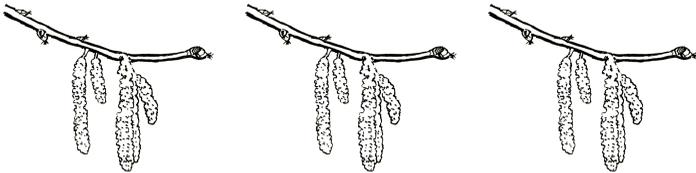




Supporting:
The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
The Botanical Society of the British Isles The British Trust for Ornithology
The Yorkshire Naturalists' Union The Yorkshire Wildlife Trust
Butterfly Conservation The British Dragonfly Society

Registered Charity No. 503860

SPRING NEWSLETTER 2019



THE PRESIDENT

The Society would like to thank Steve Worwood for his term of office as President of the Society which will come to an end at the AGM in April. Steve has introduced the Speakers at our indoor meetings and has made our attending Members very welcome. Steve represented Harrogate & District Naturalists' Society at the Yorkshire Naturalists' Union conference held at RHS Harlow Carr Gardens in November 2017 and addressed the assembled guests. Behind the scenes he has ensured the smooth running of Council by his quiet and efficient chairmanship.

A TREAT FOR ALL NATURALISTS....

On **Thursday October 3rd 2019**

Harrogate Naturalists will be hosting a celebrity speaker -

PROFESSOR TIM BIRKHEAD

of the University of Sheffield

will speak to us about his work on birds' eggs

Tim Birkhead is Professor of Behavioural Ecology, a Fellow of the Royal Society. His research includes promiscuity in birds and the physiology of birds' eggs; for over 46 years he has monitored populations of Guillemots on Skomer.

The lecture will be held in **Hampsthwaite Village Hall** at 7:30pm

Ample Parking

Free Refreshments

Tickets (£5) will be on sale at the AGM and at Field Meetings over the summer.

Tickets will be available from 1st April by contacting Council members:

Ruth Upsall: mjupsall@btinternet.com

Kerry Morrison: kerry.morrison5@gmail.com

Nigel Harcourt-Brown: nharcourtbrown@gmail.com

VOLUNTEER FOR COUNCIL

We have spaces on Council for HDNS. It would be great to get new people involved with fresh ideas. Council meets six or seven times a year and the meetings last for about 2 hours. We discuss a range of issues of relevance to the business of the Society, such as planning the programme of lectures and field meetings, Annual Reports and any relevant wildlife business that crops up.

For more information please contact any member of Council.

FIELD MEETINGS, SUMMER 2019

Field meetings are open to members only. Please note the following precautions: stout footwear and suitable outdoor clothing should always be worn. Bring plenty of food and drink, with sun blocker and insect repellent when relevant. Please bring next-of-kin name and phone number. Members take part entirely at their own risk and are responsible for their personal safety and the security of their personal belongings. Of course the weather can never be guaranteed, so some events may have to be altered slightly to work around any inclement precipitations! Return times are approximate only.

Tuesday 30 April, 09:30 - 16:30

**Gouthwaite Reservoir, Scar House
& Angram**

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

Tuesday 7 May, 10:00 - 17:30

RSPB Fairburn Ings

Leader: June Atkinson. Meet in the reserve car park at 10am in cars. Looking for passage birds, terns, waders, warblers, Great White Egret and Spoonbill which bred 2018. 75 species were seen on 2018 trip. RSPB members should have membership cards with them.

Thursday 13 June, 21:00 - 23:30 Evening Nightjar Walk, Stainburn Forest

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

Tuesday 10 September, 8.00 - early evening Spurn Point coach trip

Leader: June Atkinson. Minibus trip. Cost £18 per person. Booking required. Please see booking form at the end of the newsletter, and note change of cost for this trip. Meet at York Place Car Park, Knaresborough. Bus leaves at 8 am. Parking fee £1.60.

BOTANICAL FIELD TRIPS

A packed lunch is required; events would normally finish around 4:00pm. Please email or phone the organiser to say you are coming, this will make it possible to car share – many of the venues have little parking; also changes to the printed programme may have occurred.

Contact details: Muff = mjupsall@btinternet.com

Kerry = kerry.morrison5@gmail.com

Sonia = soniastarbuck50@gmail.com

Wednesday 10 April Eavestone Lake Nick Gaunt

Meet: 10.00am, layby SE231675 to get into fewer cars. (On B6265, towards Pateley Bridge, first left after the Sawley turning, just at the junction). Spring wildlife, plants including Bryophytes. Book with Muff.

Thursday 23 May Cow Myers Dr Kevin Walker

Meet: 10.00am, Lindrick Livery stables, SE267726. Spring flowers - Globeflower, orchids, Butterwort, Herb Paris. Book with Muff.

Tuesday 18 June YWT Askham Bog Prof. Alastair Fitter FRS

Meet: 10.00am, Car Park SE575481. (NB we need to make a donation to YWT for this special event, so please be prepared!) Royal Fern, marsh orchids, Bog Myrtle, Great Fen Sedge & much more; butterflies.

Book with Kerry.

Tuesday 25 June **Teesdale** Richard Campbell
Meet: 10.30am, Bowlees Visitor Centre, NY906283. Teesdale specialities.
Book with Muff.

Monday 1 July **South Gare** David Barlow
Meet: 10.30am, opposite fishing huts, NZ55612746. Rich flora including many
unusual plants. Book with Kerry

Saturday 6 July Farnham Gravel Pit (Meadows Day) Sonia Starbuck
Various activities, floral and faunal – come and enjoy Farnham on National
Meadows Day! From 10.30am. No need to book.

Saturday 13 July **Farnham Gravel Pit** Dr Kevin Walker
Meet: 10.00am, Farnham Gravel Pit. Varied flora including orchids and
aquatics. Book with Muff.

Thursday 1 August **YWT Brockadale** Group-led
Meet: 10.30am, Car Park SE513173, see YWT website for detailed directions.
Flowering plants, butterflies. Book with Muff.

Saturday 21 September **Swinsty Reservoir** Andy Woodall
Meet: 10.30am, Reservoir car park, SE186538. Fungi. Book with Muff.

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

FIELD MEETING REPORTS

HARTLEPOOL AND TEESMOUTH 4 September 2018 **Leader: June Atkinson**

Sea-watching began at 9.15 am as soon as we arrived at Hartlepool Headland: high tide was at 8.15 am, which brought the seabirds closer to us. Razorbills, Common Guillemots and three Red-throated Divers were soon found. There was a continual movement of Common and Sandwich Terns offshore, with Gannets moving through constantly and packs of Common Scoters flying north. The local birders were helpful in alerting us to a Peregrine Falcon over the sea which gave an exciting display as it chased Fulmars and Kittiwakes.

Some of our members had taken a walk along the front where they found a Whimbrel on the rocks; unfortunately it took off before the rest of us arrived, but Turnstones were seen by all and Eider Ducks were located in the harbour entrance. As the local gardens were very quiet for passerines, we left for Newburn Bridge which was our lunch stop. Sanderlings were on the beach, Ringed Plovers, Dunlins and more Turnstones were found among the rocks. This location is the most reliable wintering site for Mediterranean Gull and, just before we left, one was seen. A few leftover lunch crumbs thrown out brought it down to give us good views, which pleased the photographers.

A view through the telescope to our next stop at distant North Gare, revealed an Arctic Skua, our next target species, chasing a seabird. Seaton Common and North Gare are always worth a visit, for Whinchats particularly. The initial quick scan was negative, but the Arctic Skua was found as it flew briefly chasing a Sandwich Tern, before settling on the water for the duration of our stay as the Sandwich Terns present failed to catch any food to attract the skua to move. Some members walked to the shoreline where they found a Wheatear. As we returned to the car park, one of our photographers showed us a picture of a Whinchat which he had just taken and so we all began to search for the bird and eventually found two.

Our next stop was RSPB Saltholme Reserve from where there were reports of Curlew Sandpipers and Garganey. The female Garganey was found, along with Black-tailed Godwits and Little Egret, from the Phil Stead hide. The staff informed us that the main hide was closed during the building of an upward extension and so our only option was to view the main pool from the main road. A Merlin perching on the ground was pointed out to us by local birders.

Ruff and Golden Plovers were seen but the Curlew Sandpipers were elusive. A shout of 'Spoonbill' had us looking up to see it flying across the pool giving us great views. The Merlin took off disturbing all the waders, which was fortunate as then a Curlew Sandpiper was found close by the road, giving everyone excellent views. A satisfying end to a good day's birdwatching.

A total of 70 species was a credit to the efforts of all the members; we were short on passerines more of which may have been added with a walk around Saltholme, but we concentrated on quality species.

June E. Atkinson

GOYDEN POT AND UPPER NIDDERDALE 26 September 2018
Leader: Nick Gaunt

Ten members met at the car park near Manchester Hole in Upper Nidderdale. Starting in the car park and using the fascinating limestone landscape and lime-loving flora of the area, Nick demonstrated some of the essential features of mosses and liverworts, and explained the first steps towards unravelling their identities. Technical terms that split these small plants into major groups – acrocarpous and pleurocarpous mosses, thallose and leafy liverworts – were demonstrated using examples on the rocks, soil and trees of the area, including the pleurocarps *Anomodon viticulosus*, *Kindbergia praelonga* and *Thuidium tamariscinum*, acrocarps *Fissidens dubius*, *Bryum capillare* and *Polytrichastrum formosum*, and thallose liverworts *Conocephalum conicum*, *Lunularia cruciata* and *Marchantia polymorpha*. A brief descent into Manchester Hole fascinated us all with its profusion of ferns as well as mosses and liverworts.

After lunch, our attempt to look at moorland flora around Scar House Reservoir was abandoned as the strong wind blew us back to the car park, so instead we headed down the valley to Lofthouse, where we spent some time exploring the flora on the rocky river bank. Here we found Musk (*Mimulus moschatus*) and very robust Procumbent Pearlwort (*Sagina procumbens*) in flower. Sticky Groundsel (*Senecio viscosus*) was also in flower by the fire station.

Nick Gaunt

NIDD GORGE - LOOKING FOR FUNGI 29 September 2018
Leader: Andy Woodall

Our annual fungus foray began at the Woodland Trust car park on Ripley Road with some fine, bright autumn weather. At this spot the gorge comprises broadleaf woodland in a lovely steep-sided valley and there certainly was no shortage of fungi there for us to see. Ownership of this land passed to the Woodland Trust in 1995. A group of 8 of us set off into the gorge to look for fungi, under the expert eyes of Andy Woodall and co-leaders Mike and Joyce Clerk of the Mid-Yorkshire Fungus Group.

Some of the first fungi we found were Sulphur Tuft and Oak Stump Bonnet, which unsurprisingly was growing on dead oak. We also found plenty of Honey Fungus, a dangerous parasite of trees and shrubs which spreads by long, black cords resembling bootlaces. And as usual, the Elder trees provided some fine examples of Jelly Ear and Elder Whitewash.

Andy showed us how to identify fungi by several means including cutting them open, and using our senses of smell and taste and touch, although care had to be taken! He explained the distinction between Earthballs which are inedible, and Puffballs which are edible, cutting them open to show the spore mass. Some fungi need to be identified by a spore print. He also showed us some perennial bracket fungi which he left untouched in order for them to grow outwards the following year.

We then found two different species of Inkcap, and saw the different stages from edibility to messy deliquescence! The Common Inkcap has a striated, silky surface. It should not be eaten with alcohol – the result is severe nausea, so that it was once used as an aversion therapy for alcoholics! It was pleasurable to find several groups of people including family members stopping to ask about fungus species that they had themselves found in the woodland. Some people even brought specimens up to Andy to ask him to identify them.

We followed the path and reached the riverside, where some invasive Himalayan Balsam was growing, although fortunately there was not much to be found there. Then some of us enjoyed our lunch sitting on Thora Hird's bench beside the River Nidd, whilst the majority who could not fit on to the bench enjoyed theirs equally despite sitting on the ground.

We then crossed Burgess Bridge (opened in 1988) only to find a fabulous show of Fly Agaric below the birch trees. Nearby was found the uncommon Green Elfcup, which was prized for its effect staining wood. The green-coloured wood, called 'Green Oak' was once much used in the manufacture of Tunbridge Ware. Surprisingly fungus-like were some slime-moulds, including an orange, squirtable variety to be kept away from small children.

Other fungi we found included Amethyst Deceiver, False Chanterelle, Brown Rollrim, Holly Speckle, Dryad's Saddle, Weeping Widow and Blushing Bracket. In total we found 39 species of fungus (for full list see website). Many thanks to our leaders for providing such a fascinating day of mycology. We are already looking forward to a 2019 Fungus Event.

Sonia Starbuck

HDNS PRE-CHRISTMAS WALK & LUNCH 11 December 2018

Leader: Colin Slator

It is now becoming something of a tradition or pattern that I organise some birding (other biological orders are usually hidden away at this time of year) on some date in December, within the Society's area and with some eatery nearby. And so it was that on 11 December at 9am 16 members of the Society met outside (yes) the Black Lion in Skelton, just NW of Boroughbridge. The heavy cloud cover made for moderate light conditions but at least it was dry and with little wind.

We first explored intensive arable fields just outside the northern end of the village, intending to find some bunting and finch flocks; walking on hard farm tracks, some under a Stewardship access scheme and others on PRW. Looking across some active sheep breaks (fattening sheep fenced on stubble turnips) we spotted, at distance, some large flocks of Woodpigeons which eventually alighted in tree tops. Whilst looking at these pigeons we spotted several flocks of smaller birds whirling around over some standing barley, left around a field headland probably to hold game birds. Some of these smaller birds eventually landed in nearer large deciduous trees and we could get a look at them through bins and scopes; and to the delight of us all these birds proved to be Corn Buntings and lots of Yellowhammers. After a good look we moved on nearer and in so doing flushed some Red-legged Partridge and a Hare, as we set off. A Red Kite flew low over a distant field and probably had disturbed a lot of the small birds we suddenly started to see – a single Song Thrush, a nice flock of Linnets flipped over the hedge and out of view, some Redwing and then more, and nearer, Corn Buntings and Yellowhammer.

On reaching the barley headland more finches were seen closer; also a Tree Sparrow, a Great Spotted Woodpecker and a covey of 13 Grey Partridge took up near us and landed out of sight in the middle of the stubble turnips. As time was of a premium at this stage I decided to walk back towards the village diagonally across a 'bare' field and was pleased to find up to 60 each of Linnet and Pied Wagtail with a few Meadow Pipits mixed in. Back in the village a Jay was seen to drop into someones garden feeders – in my lifetime I can recall the 'keeper's gibbets' in nearby woods full of Jay (and other) carcasses.

Back to our vehicles and a short drive to the parking area, adjacent to Hewick Bridge. En route some of the group had seen about 80 Lapwing in a winter corn field. The bacon butty/café trailer on the parking area was tempting but resisted by all! We then proceeded to walk down river to look at the ex-quarry site and large developing reed bed soon to be handed over to the YWT come March next year. This site looks like an exciting habitat but little was seen over or in the reeds today. On the open water 40 odd Tufted Ducks, about a dozen Gadwall, four Goldeneye and eight Shoveler were observed. Eleven Cormorants were loafing on the dry spit. On the walk back to the cars, along the riverside, a few Long-tailed Tits were seen whilst looking through the alders for finches. A resting Buzzard was observed being harassed by a Carrion Crow. But the highlight was a flock of 43 Curlew coming low and calling – wonderful to see and listen to.

From Hewick Bridge a short drive towards Ripon and into a parking area near the Canal Marina allowed us to make a quick and short walk down the Canal side, to what is known locally as Nicholson's Lagoon. In some winters this site can hold a substantial Starling murmuration – but not this year, and anyway we were too early in the day. But, as usual, this site always seems stuffed with birds, mainly waterfowl. Over a hundred Mallard, six Shoveler, a single Shelduck, four more Goldeneye, a few Gadwall and six more Cormorants; a Snipe put in a brief appearance. It was obvious here and at the previous site that no geese were in evidence at all.

Time was moving on (13:00 hrs) and so back to the cars and make for the Weir Car park at Langthorpe (Boroughbridge) for a quick stop at the weir and search for any Goosanders lurking below, in the river. The drive from Skelton to Langthorpe, through some arable farmland produced two Red Kites, a Buzzard and a Kestrel. On the river bank near the weir, some lucky members of the group had a Kingfisher nearly take their hats off as it made from the river to the Canal. Initially no Goosanders could be found near the weir but three were found below the bridge – the drake in the group then flew upriver, landed and drifted back down stream, right in front of the happy photographers.

Just before 2pm all sixteen of us plus one other arrived at the Royal Oak in Staveley for a splendid lunch and convivial chat. After which, feeling replete, some of the group departed, but some hardy souls stayed on, and departed in the murk around the Staveley Nature Reserve hoping for a sighting of Barn Owl; six of us were soon rewarded with an observation of a perched bird in the Orchard and nearly in Muff and Jacks garden! A walk out to the Public Reedbed Hide and back produced another Barn Owl and two Water Rails seen from the first Hide. By this time, on the edge of darkness, an offer to call around at Muff and Jacks for mince pies and coffee was too tempting. So the six of us called around, and with other members of the group, rounded off a wonderful day sat around the log fire eating delicious mince pies and talking birds – what else! Thanks to Muff for organising this day and for the hospitality towards the end; to Nigel Harcourt-Brown for the pictures (all taken in poor light) and to all attendees who made the day so enjoyable.

Colin Slator

NOSTERFIELD COMPLEX & NICHOLSON'S LAGOONS

Leader: June E. Atkinson

8 January 2019

A sunny but breezy day was a bonus after a severe gale the day before. A good start to the day was made at Nosterfield when a Peregrine Falcon was sitting on one of the islands, later flying off. Ducks were present with good numbers of Wigeon and Teal. Tufted Duck, a single Goldeneye and three Redshanks were also present, plus a small party of Linnets which flew around. Greylag and Canada Geese were present but a bonus was when five Pink-footed Geese flew over. A Pied Wagtail was seen on our walk down to the North Hide. From there, across the field, large numbers of Golden Plovers, with equal numbers of Lapwings, were found. Grey Heron was added to the list and a lone Robin was in the bushes.

Lunch was taken at Lingham before exploring the lake, where two fine drake Pintails were the main attraction while Gadwall, Shelduck, Mute Swan and Great Crested Grebe were added to the list. A walk to Kiln and Flask produced Blue Tit, House Sparrow, Starling and also Collared Dove for the two members who took the short route via the village. A Common Buzzard flew over, but the regular Little Owl was having the day off. A Little Grebe was on Kiln with Redshank. The first bird at the screen was a Goldcrest which gave close views. Gadwall and Teal were present and a Water Rail called from the reed bed, but there was no sound from the Cetti's Warbler.

As there was time left in the day, it was suggested that we should visit Nicholson's Lagoons to see the pair of Red-crested Pochards which had been there for some time, to which everyone agreed. The ducks were easily found, the drake in fine plumage, with the female; other species found were Shoveler, a well-disguised Common Snipe, Redwing, Mistle Thrush and Bullfinch. An excellent end to the day, with 51 species recorded by the enthusiastic members. The lack of passerines was very notable.

June E. Atkinson

HARTLEPOOL & TEESMOUTH

12 February 2019

Leader: June E. Atkinson

We arrived at Hartlepool Headland as the tide was going out, parking in an area where the rocks were exposed. The usual Turnstones were in good numbers and the wader everyone hopes to see, a Purple Sandpiper, was quickly found; they have been more numerous this winter all down the east coast. Also seen were Curlew, Common Redshank, Ringed Plover, Sanderling and Oystercatcher. On the sea, large rafts of Common Scoters were seen, also groups of Great Crested Grebes and several Red-throated Divers. Further along the headland, three Shags gave close views and 20 Eider Ducks were counted. A short stop at the Marina, which is always worth a look, produced a drake Red-breasted Merganser. Whilst we had lunch at Newburn Bridge, the usual Mediterranean Gull and more Great Crested Grebes were seen. The next stop was at Seaton Common NNR and North Gare but, because of a cold and very fresh wind, the Short-eared Owls were keeping their heads down. We walked to North Gare and the estuary where a Grey Plover was found in a tidal pool.

Moving to the newly revamped Greatham Creek car park and viewpoint, we found that looking through a metal screen over the new flood plain was difficult, but a Marsh Harrier was seen briefly and a Little Egret flew into a creek and disappeared. A walk to Seal Sands was discounted due to the state of the tide and so we moved onto the RSPB Saltholme Reserve. As we walked down to the Main Hide, a Peregrine Falcon flew over putting up all the birds from the ground. From the hide, Pintails, Shovelers, Goldeneye and a good flock of Barnacle Geese were seen. The new upward hide extension, of turret design, did not impress and was not birdwatcher-friendly; one of our members was not pleased when her tripod leg was bent as it became stuck in the internal iron railings! A good day overall and a good team effort to produce 70 species in the far from ideal conditions.

June E. Atkinson

Botanical Society of Britain & Ireland NEW YEAR PLANT HUNT

STAVELEY NATURE RESERVE

30 December 2018

The BSBI's New Year Plant Hunt (NYPH) took place between Saturday 29 December 2018 and Tuesday 1 January 2019. Volunteers were asked to submit lists of plants they found in flower during a three-hour walk at locations throughout Britain and Ireland. The purpose is to build up a picture of how our wild or naturalised plants are responding to changes in weather patterns.

When I was invited to join Ruth Upsall and Kerry Morrison in the Plant Hunt at Staveley, I was very pleased to be involved but must confess that privately I thought it was going to be a waste of time. Perhaps we might see a scruffy bit of *Lamium purpureum*, Red Dead-nettle or even possibly a very early *Galanthus nivalis*, Snowdrop, but otherwise what else could there be in flower in the first week of January, for heaven's sake?

To my astonishment I found that I was very, very wrong and we found 25 species in flower including *Pimpinella saxifraga*, Burnet-saxifrage and *Ulex europaeus*, Gorse. Kerry was determined to use the new online recording system on her smartphone, which worked a treat (although we did somehow lose a couple of species along the way). Of course, our feelings of smugness at finding so many species diminished as soon as we looked at the website <https://nyph.bsbi.org/results.php> and realised that others (including Kevin Walker) had found loads more, the record being 120 species in Swanage. Still, we were above the national average of 19.9 species. There were 712 lists received, comprising 627 plant species, which is exactly 100 more than in 2018!

I am certainly looking forward to the next NYPH. But before then we have our own HDNS summer botany events to attend, beginning with a visit to Eavestone Lake with Nick Gaunt on Wednesday 10 April. Can't wait!

Sonia Starbuck

Source: BSBI New Year Plant Hunt 2019, Kevin Walker (BSBI Head of Science) and Louise Marsh (BSBI Communications Officer)



MOTHS IN 2018 – A MEMORABLE YEAR

Well the results are in and have all been counted. Crikey, we're sounding like X-factor judges here. All 2018 moth records are now safely on the database. All 18,637 of them. That's the most ever. 77,447 moths in total. 747 separate species – 366 micros and 381 macros. Record numbers in all categories. A staggering total which must have had something to do with the wonderful hot summer we enjoyed last year. The moths certainly liked it and some memorable species were recorded. The HDNS list has grown by seven – six micros and one macro (Dotted Footman) so now stands at 1166 (659 micros and 507 macros). We reported on some of these in the last newsletter but the end of the year brought more new species. *Ectoedemia sericopeza* was only found in the county in 2017 so it was exciting to find mines in Norway Maple "keys" at Boroughbridge and an adult to light at Hutton Conyers. *Ectoedemia heringi* is an uncommon miner of oak leaves, with all county records from the Doncaster area so mines at Brimham Rocks were another good find. *Psychoides filicivora* is a south-western species which has rapidly moved north and east. Mines on Hart's-tongue Fern at Brearton contained larvae of this species in October and adults emerged in early March. Finally, *Mompha bradleyi* is another species which is spreading in the county so one at Langthorpe was not unexpected.

What will 2019 bring? Will we have another long hot summer with masses of moths again? Will we ever beat the record totals of 2018? As we write, the rain is beating against the window and the wind is howling. The moth trap is on in hope rather than expectation, with probably just a handful of soggy moths to look forward to in the morning. Having said that, the year so far has been good. Instead of the "beast from the east" we had the warmest end to winter in living memory and moth catches have been extremely good. Southerly winds brought unexpected migrant moths to the county. None from our area, but Small Mottled Willow, Bordered Straw and even Humming-bird Hawk-moth have been on the wing nearby. February records of these species are unheard of so perhaps this is an omen. Get out those moth traps now!

A quick plug for two things that should be on your "wish list":

1. The new *Atlas of Britain and Ireland's Larger Moths* will be published this summer. Now is the time to order it as there is a pre-publication offer. For only £27.50 it's a bargain and it's a fantastic piece of work.
2. An app for your smartphone - *What's Flying tonight*. Google it and have a look. It works out where you live and tells you the common moths flying in your area at that particular time of year. We've tried it out and it works a treat!

Jill Warwick & Charlie Fletcher

FARNHAM NEWS

In **September**, a good record was of six Sandwich Terns which flew over to the south on 15th. An adult and a juvenile Hobby appeared on 23rd, the latter staying all afternoon. It began to hunt along the edge of the lake below the hide, giving superb views as it caught dragonflies. It repeated the display the following day, and was last seen on 29th.

On 7th **October**, the first of the winter thrushes arrived with a flock of 80 Redwings. Another winter arrival was a Jack Snipe on 12th. A Chiffchaff was still present on 17th, when seven Fieldfares and 300 Redwings flew over and seven Swallows flew south! A Blackcap was present on 20th. A strong north-easterly wind developed on 27th bringing, mainly, Pomarine Skuas inland in the country. A sustained watch resulted in the sighting of an adult pale phase Arctic Skua as it flew over the site. A flock of 40 Siskins was seen on the last day of the month. Maximum wildfowl counts for the month were: Gadwall – 38, Wigeon – 23, Teal – 16, Common Pochard – 2, Tufted Duck – 61, Goldeneye – 1, Little Grebe – 10, Great Crested Grebe – 6.

More thrushes were over on 3rd **November**, with 200 Fieldfares and 50 Redwings. The weather conditions were unseasonal, with 12°C recorded. There was little bird movement. A Rock Pipit was seen feeding on one of the islands on 20th and 29th – an uncommon visitor to Farnham. A gull roost was forming on the North Lake and more than 2,000 Black-headed Gulls were seen late afternoon. Fifty-five Pink-footed Geese flew south on 24th. Fieldfares and Redwings were present for most of the month. Maximum wildfowl counts were: Gadwall – 17, Wigeon – 23, Teal – 28, Tufted Duck – 53, Goldeneye – 7, Little Grebe – 10, Great Crested Grebe – 5.

On 3rd **December**, what had been a well-hidden Little Egret appeared and flew off over the lake. Two Whooper Swans flew over on 8th and a juvenile was present on 11th, while three juveniles flew north on 13th. Winter thrushes continued to feed on hawthorn berries, but competition from hundreds of Wood Pigeons was reducing the berries at a rapid rate. Weather conditions were similar to the previous month with a monthly maximum of 10°C. It was a dry month with only 10mm of rain recorded, so that a larger area than usual of the smaller islands in the South Lake was exposed, giving Gadwall, Wigeon and Teal good feeding conditions. The deeper North Lake attracted diving species such as Tufted Ducks, Goldeneye and Coots. Fifty Goldfinches, ten Bullfinches and 30 Siskins were noted during the month. Unfortunately, due to various circumstances, the feeding station cannot be maintained this winter. Otter sightings during the month caused some disruption to the wildfowl for a

time. Maximum wildfowl counts were: Gadwall – 36, Wigeon – 42, Teal – 85, Common Pochard – 2, Tufted Duck – 102, Goldeneye – 18, Little Grebe – 10, Great Crested Grebe – 5, Coot – 56.

January began well on 5th when a Water Rail crossed the lakeside edge below the hide. A winter visitor but always elusive. This was quickly followed the next day by a flock of 150 Golden Plovers which appeared over the lake. They flew around calling for some time before heading off west. As I arrived on 10th, I was greeted by an angler ready to tell me of the Waxwings he had seen in the morning, about 30, he said, feeding on guelder rose berries from a tree by the lakeside; there was an influx into the country at that time. The first Oystercatcher arrived on 11th. Tufted Duck numbers were increasing on the North Lake and, on 19th, a large flock flew in on the far end of the South Lake. During a count, a possible Scaup was found but too far away to be sure. Eventually, they moved closer up the lake and it was possible to make an accurate identification of a first-winter female Scaup, which was still present at the end of the month. Thirty Common Snipe were feeding on the islands due to the low water level and 14 Meadow Pipits were in the back field. Finch counts were of 18 Bullfinches, 70 Lesser Redpolls, 35 Goldfinches and 20 Siskins. Maximum waterfowl numbers were: Canada Geese – 156, Greylag Geese – 34, Mute Swan – 4, Shelduck – 1, Gadwall – 22, Wigeon – 55, Teal – 70, Common Pochard – 4, Tufted Duck – 154, Goldeneye – 27, Little Grebe – 7, Great Crested Grebe – 7, Coot – 83. Due to the weather conditions in January, with a maximum of 9°C recorded and only 10mm of rain, very little bird movement occurred. Seventy Teal were sitting on the ice on the frozen South Lake on 27th, obviously an influx from elsewhere. On 30th, both lakes were frozen but, thankfully, with a small amount of open water on the North Lake.

At the beginning of **February**, the lakes were still almost completely frozen apart from the small area on the North Lake where most of the wildfowl were present, including the female Scaup and three Goldeneye on 2nd. During the freeze-up, a Water Rail was watched eating a small dead bird on one of the islands. On 7th, three Oystercatchers were present and a Peregrine Falcon flew over the lake causing chaos with the waterfowl. Two Pintails were seen on 9th and three Sky Larks flew over the next day. Cormorants are not the best friends of anglers on a trout lake, especially when their numbers increase to 15 but, at this time of year it is interesting to see the Continental race *sinensis*, of which there were three during the month. Milder weather which began mid-month, continued with a steady increase in temperatures reaching new records for February in some parts of the country. We still keep our eyes open on work-days, seeing two Peacock butterflies on 17th. A maximum

temperature at Farnham of 16.5°C was reached on 26th, when the Canada Geese began prospecting for nest sites. Maximum waterfowl numbers were: Canada Geese – 60, Greylag Geese – 195, Mute Swan – 14, Shelduck – 4, Gadwall – 17, Wigeon – 37, Teal – 24, Common Pochard – 5, Tufted Duck – 170, Goldeneye – 49, Little Grebe – 10, Great Crested Grebe – 5.

June E. Atkinson
Honorary Warden & Chairman, Management Committee



INDOOR MEETINGS PROGRAMME 2019-20

St. Robert's Centre, Robert Street, Harrogate (opposite Waitrose), starting at **7.30 pm**. Parking on the adjacent streets. Visitors welcome (fee £3).

9 October 2019 **From Yorkshire to Wales and Beyond**
Paul's move to Wales last year; and his travels to Finland, Spain and Bulgaria.
Paul Irving

23 October **The "In at the Start" Project**
This prize-winning project at High Batts focuses on species recording and habitat development on a new quarry extraction site. Achievement to date and future plans.
Colin Slator & Alwyn Knowles

6 November **Hope for Hen Harriers?**
The RSPB's work to protect birds of prey in the British uplands, and the battles that our birds of prey are facing there.
James Bray, RSPB Bowland project officer

20 November **Paris to Harrogate: Local Action on Climate Change**
The risks to the natural world if we fail to curb global warming. What needs to happen in Yorkshire to reduce these risks? Our response, from planting trees to stopping fracking.
Simon Bowens, Friends of the Earth Yorkshire campaigner

4 December **Members' Evening**

8 January 2020

Alkborough Flats

Since its creation in 2006, Graham has monitored wildlife on the site. He gives a detailed insight into changes on site and the way birds have adapted.

Graham Catley, ornithological consultant & professional photographer

22 January

The Birds and Culture of Bhutan

From high pass to valley bottom, from east to west and back again seeing all the riches of this marvellous country.

Sheila Nash, HDNS

5 February

Invasive Non-Native Species

Invasive non-native species are the second largest threat to global biodiversity. Why are they so successful? Their impact, and what is being done in Yorkshire to win the fight against Invasive species.

John Cave, YWT

19 February

From the Notebook – a Photographic Journey

Harrogate to Hungary, Filey to Fuerteventura: travels of a European birdwatcher.

Malcolm Jones, HDNS

4 March

Farming & Wildlife

Wildlife conservation on farms, mainly in Yorkshire: both in the uplands and in the arable east.

Chris Tomson, RSPB

18 March

1280 and Counting – Flora of HDNS Area

The history of plant recording in our area; a tour by habitat/species (not all of them); what makes our area special from a botanical perspective; rounded off with a quiz.

Kevin Walker, HDNS & BSBI Head of Science

22 April

Annual General Meeting

THE UPS AND DOWNS OF WILDLIFE ON THE FARM

A good summer for butterflies, Comma, Speckled Wood and Brimstone in the garden. These are newcomers over the last few years. The locals, Wall Brown, Meadow Brown and the three Whites are all showing well. The highlight was the 1st September with over forty butterflies in the garden, of twelve species.

The mammals are having mixed fortunes. Rabbits, which got over myxomatosis many years ago, are now facing a new threat, haemorrhagic disease: several have been seen on the farm. Hare numbers are down but we

still have a viable population. The big surprise are House Mice. We've always had them in the farm buildings (daily sightings the norm), but this year they've almost vanished – one sighting a month, maybe. Rats, on the other hand, are booming. (Maybe the reason for the decline in mice.) More than fifteen hundred were accounted for in 2018. Not a single sighting of Weasel; on the other hand, Polecat/ferret crosses seem to be widespread with a huge female being caught last autumn. Mink also seem to be increasing again, with two big dogs being trapped.

The last Corncrake was seen about 1953, Cuckoos, Grey Partridge and Turtledoves about 10 to 12 years ago. Since then we've gained Shelduck (one youngster spent the winter in the farmyard with the farm ducks), Red-legged Partridge, Buzzards and Red Kite, even a pair of Swans on the farm pond. The big surprise was that NO swallows bred, for the first time in almost a hundred years. (The family came to the farm in 1921.) Also the resident flock of House Sparrows which usually numbers into the teens of pairs has crashed down this winter to three or four individuals. Answers on a postcard, please.

CA (Tony) Stobbs

THINGS ARE LOOKING UP

The summer of 2018 will certainly stay in all our memories, especially those of us who love butterflies. Whether the heatwave was the first of many, or an isolated event, remains to be seen. Certainly, many of us saw far more butterflies than we had for years. What is also unknown is what effect the parching temperatures will have had on next year's butterflies and moths; those of us old enough to remember the summer of 1976 will also recall that the searing heat killed off many caterpillar food-plants, resulting in population crashes in 1977 and subsequent summers.

So we will have to wait and see. Anyway, the title of this piece doesn't refer to optimism or pessimism over climate. It's more about practical advice to naturalists.

My usual habit when out walking is to look down, or at least at low shrub level. That's because I'm an insect person; the creatures that I'm interested in are usually to be found at lower levels. I do always react sharply to a shadow cast by something in flight, leading to a good deal of jumpiness in Autumn (falling leaves), and on breezy days (airborne litter). However, I rarely look right up to the treetops.

That all changed last summer, around the end of June. The heatwave was in full blast, and I'd gone out late one afternoon, it being too hot to venture out in the middle of the day. I only walked up the road of our 1970s estate, where I was encouraged to find six Small Tortoiseshells nectaring on Valerian. I decided to go further on, to a grassy verge of the lane bordering Pannal Golf Club, where I've seen Gatekeepers before. No luck there, so on I went to a footpath through woodland, where there are clumps of flowering Brambles. I stopped here to check the bushes, and then something made me look up - up to the top of the Oak trees bordering the path. Something small and greyish-silver jinked into sight for a moment, then vanished. I looked again - nothing. Then another flying insect darted across the topmost Oak branches. Of course, I didn't have binoculars, but could it be?

I returned next early evening with binoculars; and yes, I had found a colony of Purple Hairstreak butterflies. This was terribly exciting, even though some background reading told me that these butterflies are much commoner than assumed. They are often overlooked - because we don't look up often enough. They fly round the tops of Oak trees in late June/July in late afternoon and early evening, when the weather is hot and still. I shall certainly be looking up more frequently next year. If you do too, you may be lucky as I was.

Ginni Darbyshire

EARTHWORMS AND THE BASSOON

One of the more unusual winter lectures this year was about earthworms and their balls of calcite – tiny structures in the neck of the worm, whose function is still unclear. Professor Mark Hodson from York University recommended Charles Darwin's 1882 study of earthworms, which is still in print and also readily available on the internet. Go to darwin-online.org.uk, and look for *The Formation of Vegetable Mould, through the Action of Worms, with Observations on their Habits*. If you think it might be dry and dull, here is a sample:

. . . Worms do not possess any sense of hearing. They took not the least notice of the shrill notes from a metal whistle, which was repeatedly sounded near them; nor did they of the deepest and loudest tones of a bassoon. They were indifferent to shouts, if care was taken that the breath did not strike them . . .

Happy reading!

Val Smith

MISCELLANY

DISCOUNTS

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

CALL FOR RECORDS

All members – please send your observations and records for 2019 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.

The new password will be available on the new membership card, which will be posted in early 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

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 ring Cynthia on 867104.



FROM THE EDITORS

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

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Material for the **Autumn newsletter** should be sent
to Valerie Holmes by **14 September 2019**

email: valerieholmes@hotmail.co.uk