

SPRING NEWSLETTER 2020

The AGM is cancelled until further notice.

The final accounts for the year to 31 March 2020 will be published after being accepted at a reconvened AGM.

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that are widespread in wildlife as well as humans, in whom they are a cause of the common cold. There is increasing evidence that coronaviruses are adept at hopping from one species to another. Bats in particular harbour many types of coronavirus without apparent ill-harm, but can pass the virus to other species through their faeces. It is likely that recent severe coronavirus diseases in humans spread from bats via intermediate hosts contaminated by bat droppings and then eaten by humans. In the SARS outbreak in China, palm civets bred for consumption were infected and sold live in 'wet markets'. In the MERS outbreak in the Middle East, infected camels were the intermediate source.

The epicentre of the current outbreak is once again a 'wet market', this time in Wuhan, where many species of wild animals were being offered for sale, both live and butchered. As well as farm-reared wild animals such as palm civets, wet markets often sell illegally traded species such as pangolins, which face extinction as a result. The potential for cross-infection between the multitude of different animals in such markets is huge, creating a perfect mixing-pot for emergence of new human pathogens.

The Chinese authorities recognised the risk during the SARS outbreak in 2002 and banned wild animals from markets, but sadly this was only a temporary measure. Once again a ban has been imposed and there are now increasing calls for that to be made permanent. Such is the cultural demand in the Far East for wild animal products for their supposed health benefits that there are fears that a ban would merely force the trade underground. Nevertheless, the prospect of a decline in illegal trading of wild animals might be one silver lining in the otherwise dark clouds of the COVID-19 epidemic.

Nick Gaunt

As a result of the COVID-19 epidemic the Society has decided to cancel all Field Meetings until the end of June. This will be kept under review for Field Meetings planned after that date. The website will be updated with further information as appropriate. Farnham GP has also been closed, initially for three weeks from 26 March.

If you wish to receive e-mail updates kindly contact richardbion@talktalk.net if you are not already on his list, and he can add you to his email messaging list.

BOTANICAL FIELD TRIPS 2020

A packed lunch is required. Events would normally finish by 4.00 pm. Please email or phone the organizer 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

Please note: all field meetings will be kept under review: check with the website in case of possible cancellations.

Saturday 4 July

Malham Tarn

Kevin Walker

National Meadows Day Meet: 10:30 am, water sinks car park, SE 894658 Meadows and mires.

Book with Muff.

Tuesday 14 July

Roundhay Park

Alan Hunton

Meet: 10:30am, car park on Princes Ave (the Tram Park) opposite Lidgett Park Rd, SE 327379 A 'workshop' on native trees with experts from the Woodland Trust.

Book with Muff.

Sunday 19 July

Farnham Gravel Pit

Stuart Foster

Meet: 10:00am, Farnham Gravel Pit (at the gate if you don't have a key). An introduction to insects by Stuart of the YNU.

Book with Muff.

Thursday 6 August

South Gare

David Barlow

Meet: 10:30 am opposite the fishing huts, NZ 5561274 flowers, led by the vice-county Recorder.

Remarkably diverse Book with Kerry.

Saturday 17 October Fungus foray

Andy Woodall

Details to follow.

MINIBUS FIELD TRIP

Tuesday 1 September

YWT North Cave Wetlands

Leader: June Atkinson

The reserve consists of a large area of lagoons and grassland with a circular path taking in all habitats. There are several hides, toilet facilities and a catering van. Minibus trip - £17.00 per person. *Booking required, see blue booking form in centrefold.* Meet at York Place carpark, Knaresborough at 8.30am. Parking fee £1.60 all day.

Preliminary Report from the Treasurer 2019-20

The usual major items of expenditure over the past year are roughly in line with those of the previous year. These are coach hire for field trips, ground maintenance at Farnham, hire of St Roberts meeting room and annual insurance. This year's expenditure also includes once again the printing of Bird Reports.

There is one substantial item of expenditure and this relates to the design and development costs of the new website. This is a major investment for the Society and will impact on the reserves held in the deposit account. However, the Society remains in a good financial position going forward. The new website will enhance our on-line presence and profile and will doubtless generate new interest in our activities, leading to an increased membership which will therefore generate more income.

It is also worth mentioning that, alongside the new website, the Society has an excellent new leaflet which has been produced free of charge with the support of Nidderdale AONB. The leaflet complements the new website and will also help generate new interest and members; we are fortunate to have this eye-catching, high quality leaflet at no cost.

Lynne Gilland

ANNUAL REPORTS

Unfortunately, publication of the Society's Annual Reports for 2016 and 2017 has fallen behind schedule, in part due to the many competing tasks that Val Smith, their editor, does for the Society. To ease her burden, Council is forming an Editorial Team to share the workload and expedite publication. If you would like to join the team please contact Val Smith. I would like to take the opportunity to thank Val for the many contributions she makes to the Society as Membership Secretary and editor of the Newsletters as well as Annual Reports.

Nick Gaunt

MARJORIE MIDDLETON

Marjorie died peacefully, at the age of 96, on 21 February 2020. She joined the Society in 1966, and was one of our longest-serving members. We extend our sympathy to friends and family.

FIELD MEETING REPORTS 2019-20

YWT SPURN POINT 10 September 2019

Leader: June Atkinson

This popular venue attracted 14 members and it was a perfect day for the visit. After stopping at The Bluebell car park to pick up a Wheatear and some Sandwich Terns over the sea, reports of a White Rumped Sandpiper made YWT Kilnsea Wetlands the next stop of the day. After sifting through many Dunlin and Redshank we saw this tiny wader make a run for open ground and this was our first sighting of it. There were subsequent views as it fed around the lagoon edge. While we scanned the wetland a Greenshank, a single Avocet and several Pintail and Wigeon added interest, with Curlew seen feeding in the adjacent grassland.

Our next target bird was the reported Barred Warbler at the Warren, and we eventually found it flitting around with a Lesser Whitethroat and Garden Warbler. The sea watch was fairly uneventful but the wonderfully colourful flower meadow attracted Whinchats in double figures, a Stonechat, Yellow Wagtails, hoards of Goldfinches and Linnets and a few Greenfinches. Canal Scrape hosted a Common Snipe but the Little Stint was reported later in the day. The high tide wader roost was pretty spectacular with a supporting cast of a close-in Whimbrel and some stunning Grey Plovers, most in breeding plumage.

Thanks to June for a truly memorable trip.

FUNGUS FORAY, SWINSTY RESERVOIR

21 September 2019

Nine HDNS members braved the UCI road closures to drive successfully to Swinsty Reservoir for the Harrogate Autumn Fungi Show. What's more, we all managed to arrive at the correct car park, where we met three members from the Mid Yorkshire Fungus Group, led by Andy Woodall.

At a guess, it took at least an hour before we left the car park due to the astonishing variety of fungi so close by. In the first few minutes we had come across Stinking Parasol, Dyer's Mazegill, Fly Agaric, Poison Pie and Weeping Widow (with gills which 'weep' when moist). We were grateful to Andy's friend

Joyce who has such boundless energy and never seemed to stop searching for different specimens along the way. Together we found well over fifty species of fungi, covering a whole range of genera including *Amanita*, *Coprinus* (inkcaps), *Hygrocybe* (waxcaps), *Hypholoma*, *Lactarius* (milkcaps) and *Russula* (brittle gills).

Eventually we managed to leave the car park and progressed along one of the paths. Andy soon spotted Ergot, *Claviceps purpurea*, which forms in the inflorescences of grasses. It is violet-black in colour and deadly poisonous.

This poisoning has been recorded since the Middle Ages and many superstitions have grown up around it. Apparently, the link between ergotism and infected grain was only fully established in the 20th century.

We continued to find an astonishing array of fungi, such as Bloody and Common Brittle gills, Plums and Custard (with very yellow gills), Blusher, Sulphur Tuft and Birch Bracket. Both the Deceiver and the Amethyst Deceiver (fantastic purple gills) were present. These are common but very variable in appearance, hence their name. Another fungus found soon afterwards was the Coconut-scented Milkcap, which involved much sniffing. The rusts also featured during the day. Who would have thought there is a Coltsfoot Rust? At lunch time the sun decided to become really hot. After a well-deserved break, we followed the path and came upon the home (I should say mansion) of Gareth Southgate close to the reservoir. We then crossed the Swinsty Embankment and turned right into the grassy fields. Here we came upon Slippery Jack and Ballerina Waxcaps. This latter fungus is a dusky pink colour and looks a little like a ballerina's tutu. I myself was not convinced about this, but the idea is so pretty that it would be shameful to dispute it.

Although this fungus outing was sadly the last of our HDNS summer field trips for 2019, the day proved to be a perfect one. Gorgeous autumn weather, in a gorgeous autumn setting with an astonishing showcase of fungi. Thank you to Andy Woodall for leading, Joyce and Mike from the Mid-Yorkshire Fungus Group, Muff Upsall for organising and to the HDNS members for coming along and contributing to such a fascinating and uplifting day.

'Field' Trip to ALLERTON WASTE RECOVERY PARK 6 December 2019

As we shivered in the car park at the AWRP site, the 12 members of HDNS were thinking that indoor field trips were a very good idea in winter! In fact this trip was the most popular we have ever organised, fully booked the day after the newsletter came out! Clearly, household rubbish is more alluring than wildlife...

The reams of paperwork with rules, restrictions and warnings had led us to expect a Fort Knox like institution, but we had an informal welcome into the

smart new visitor centre, with free drinks on offer, and were treated to an informative and well-illustrated description of the plant's main processes. Quite a lot of this was new to most of us, for instance the high-tech sorting facilities which diverted various metals, paper, different coloured plastics etc to other downstream processes. Only the completely non-recyclable material is actually burned. The organic material is fermented in a huge anaerobic digester which produces methane used on the site.

One of the good things about the visit was that we were encouraged to ask questions – and we had plenty. After this introduction we set off on our tour of the plant, where we discovered that simply watching household rubbish moving up a conveyor belt is completely fascinating. ... We were struck by the size and complexity of the engineering, occupying vast halls several storeys high. A monstrous claw operated from behind a glass screen as it scooped tonnes of rubbish and added them to a huge pile, ready for the incinerator which could be seen glowing in the background. Like our guide, the operators of the machinery were very ready to talk about the job. Allerton Park employs about 90 staff, but we saw few of them as the jobs we saw were highly automated. There is however a stage of hand-picking at the end of the sorting process, but we did not see this except on video.

Last stage was the control room, and again the staff were happy to chat, showed us their screens on which the gases from the incinerator are constantly displayed, and many other statistics involved in monitoring the process.

We all felt we had learnt a lot, and on the whole were more favourably disposed to what we had previously considered to be just a blot on the landscape. Very different from the usual field trip, but fascinating and relevant nonetheless.

Muff Upsall

WINTER WALK 10 December 2019

True to tradition, our Christmas winter walk this year was led by Colin Slator.

Ten of us travelled initially by car from Ripon along hitherto unexplored back roads, stopping here and there to scan the expansive vistas. Snippets of history and geology coloured the views with tales of ownership and family fall-outs and, here and there, we found birds – some Scandinavian Thrushes, a flock of Linnet and also a mixed flock searching the mast from autumn leaf litter – eking out an existence from the depleted landscape.

'Mindful management and conservation of the land' was certainly a theme which continued upon our arrival at Bellflask at East Tanfield where we met with Brian Morland. His passionate custodianship of this place was evident.

He reiterated what we, as naturalists, readily understand: if we sanitise the countryside imposing neatness and order upon nettles, thistles, ragwort and other 'perceived weeds', then we remove the food source for our bird populations. For example, he showed us the micro moth larvae safely bedded down within a teasel seed head, which act as vital store cupboards for future meals.

We felt privileged to be guided round his 'patch' where his intimate knowledge was such that he can even identify the many individual Bittern that he has encountered there. On the day of our visit any sensible birds were hunkered down. However, we still managed a reasonable tally of duck (including Wigeon, Goldeneye, Teal, Tufted Duck and Mallard) and multiple Little Grebe as well as a Great Crested Grebe. As well as the standard Mute swans we also encountered two Whooper swans. The bushes held some mobile mixed flocks which included Gold Crests and Tree Creepers.

The weather was windy and increasingly wet: our lovely Christmas Dinner at the Black Bull was well earned. Many thanks to Muff for organising this and Colin for his expert guidance.

Sue Harrison

NEW YEAR FLOWER HUNT STAVELEY N R 4 January 2020

This was the ninth year of the New Year Plant Hunt organised by the BSBI, in which almost 1,500 volunteers took part in a national search for flowers in the middle of winter. The idea is to build up a picture of how our wild or naturalised plants are responding to changes in weather patterns. Harrogate Naturalists of course took part with 12 members turning up, accompanied by one reporter from a national newspaper, who was writing an article about the event. Kevin Walker's family also came along which made the occasion very enjoyable. It is always reassuring to explore nature with children since their knowledge is our future.

After warming up with food and drink, we began our search in the environs of Muff and Jack Upsall's house which is located beside the nature reserve. We then progressed into the reserve itself. Despite the previous wet weather, in three hours we found a total of 14 species. These included *Ulex europaeus*, Gorse and *Corylus avellana*, Hazel. Interestingly, although *Bellis perennis*, Daisy was the commonest plant found nationally, we did not find it ourselves. We did however, find some lovely bright coloured plants - as well as the yellow Gorse we also found *Lamium purpureum*, Red Dead-nettle and blue *Veronica persica*, Common Field-speedwell.

It would appear that our results paled in comparison with those in some other parts of the country. There is a participant from Swanage who records over

100 species each year. And one lady even submitted her records on her way home from the London New Year fireworks! It is important to mention however that even if there were some volunteers who perhaps hunted for three hours in some areas and found nothing, these nil records are equally important. They will also contribute to the picture of our changing weather.

To date, 769 lists have been received and 623 species have been recorded. If you want to see the results in full and comparisons with other years, then please look at the BSBI website: <https://bsbi.org/new-year-plant-hunt>
See you next January!

Sonia Starbuck

NOSTERFIELD COMPLEX, NICHOLSON'S LAGOON, and YWT RIPON CITY WETLANDS **7 January 2020** Leader: June Atkinson.

Amid an unsettled spell of weather, this trip took place on an unexpectedly dry day which was 'unseasonably warm', whatever that means these days. At Nosterfield, we found the Lapwings were very unsettled and frequently put the Golden Plover flock up with them while the Curlews were more settled and the 4 Grey Herons stood quite unperturbed throughout. A Little Egret flew amongst the swirling flocks, but we could see no raptor to account for the flighty waders. The water levels at the reserve were high and ducks present included Tufted, Shoveler, Mallard and Teal.

Unable to spot the long staying American vagrant, Lesser Yellowlegs amongst the Redshanks at Nosterfield we relocated to Lingham. Here we added female Scaup, Great Crested Grebe, Little Grebe, Pintail, Shelduck and Redwing to the list. Rumours reached us that the female Smew could be at Ladybridge Lake just down the road, so we went to investigate. On this site views are limited due to access, and unfortunately the Smew was not seen.

After lunch we parked at Ripon Canal and walked up to view Nicholson's Lagoon. There were several Goldeneye and two species of geese, Greylag and Canada, amid the usual ducks. Determined to add the YWT Ripon City to our itinerary for the first time this year, we had a pleasant walk further up the canal and entered the wetlands at Renton Bridge. A splendid male Red crested Pochard, and a male Pochard for comparison, were located very quickly on the lagoon nearest to the canal side. A small flock of Linnets and Goldfinches were in the canal side trees.

This was a very good start to the year's birding and enjoyed by all 11 members who attended, with 58 species seen. Thanks to June for her leadership.

PS. The Lesser Yellowlegs returned to the Nosterfield reserve on the following days and was subsequently seen by many lucky birders.

Sue Coldwell

BRYOPHYTE WORKSHOP at STAVELEY 14 January 2020

A workshop concentrating on mosses was organised in response to requests by society members who had negligible skills with this taxonomic group. The full day workshop was led by Nick Gaunt and 8 members attended. A range of microscopes was provided to aid identification.

After an introduction, we collected a variety of samples from the Staveley reserve itself and also a surprising variety from the area surrounding Muff's house. Apart from morphological features, details of the habitat and substrate on which the moss grows are also important in identification, so these were noted on collection.

The main key used was the British Bryological Society's own publication '*Mosses and liverworts of Britain and Ireland*' Ed. Atherton, Bosanquet and Lawley, though other keys were briefly compared. The photographs in Atherton proved a useful check and the notes provided many useful comments about each species distribution, ecology and confusions. The most important task was understanding the terminology, particularly when terms appeared self evident but actually had quite narrow meanings in this context. Nick patiently assisted as we worked through the key with a number of species in small groups, developing our understanding in the process. Nick's extensive ID skills have developed over a lifetime so the rest of us, now that we understand the fundamental terminology, require repeated practice and observation to ensure we progress.

Many thanks to Nick for sharing his expertise, developing our curiosity and being so patient with our questions.

Hazel Mitford

HARTLEPOOL & TEESMOUTH 18 February 2020 Leader: June E. Atkinson

As a consequence of Storm Ciara, our proposed trip had to be delayed until the following week, when the high tide on our arrival was not ideal for wader watching. Our first stop was along the seafront at Hartlepool where a small rocky island was still above sea level and we were in luck as three Purple Sandpipers were found – a wader for everyone's list! Turnstones and Redshanks were also feeding there but, within ten minutes, the rocks had disappeared under water. At the headland, sea watching was very quiet with a few Common Guillemots, Eiders and a flying Red-throated Diver being the only birds of interest. Further along the sea front, more Turnstones, Redshanks

and Oystercatchers were seen. The Continental race of Cormorant, *sinensis*, attracted some attention. A walk to the entrance of the fish quay rewarded us with an elusive Rock Pipit and a small group of feeding Eiders. On closer inspection, a smaller duck amongst them proved to be a female Long-tailed Duck – an excellent find!

Lunch was taken at Newburn Bridge where the usual wintering Mediterranean Gull was present; at this location Ringed Plover, Sanderling and three Great Crested Grebes out on the sea were added to the list. A drive along the road at Seaton Common was worthwhile as two Whooper Swans were present – another good find. The visit to North Gare was cut short by the only heavy shower of the day and so we quickly moved on the RSPB Saltholme Reserve,

parts of which were badly flooded. However, we did see Red-breasted Merganser, Pintail, hundreds of Wigeon, Black-tailed Godwit, Little Egret, many Golden Plovers and a Marsh Harrier. A Long-eared Owl was seen by one intrepid member who braved a long, muddy walk.

Although it was a sunny day, the wind was rather fresh but we did find a good number of species, only three less than in previous years. A total of 67 was excellent and all credit to the members of the group who persevered in not ideal conditions.

BRITISH TRUST FOR ORNITHOLOGY
YORKSHIRE (CENTRAL) REGION

Heronries Census

First the national picture: By the end of November, records had been submitted from 783 heronries in 2019. This is a decrease from the 1,311 sites visited during the 90th anniversary of the survey in 2018, when many BTO regions made a special effort to re-visit all their historical sites. However, it compares favourably with other recent years when the BTO received counts from around 700 to 800 sites annually. There are eight known colonies in the Yorkshire (Central) Region, in 2019 there were only 17 apparently occupied nests in total, currently all the colonies are limited to Grey Herons, no Little Egrets or other species have so far been recorded. I always take this opportunity to remind you that if you are aware of a heronry that might not have been located please get in touch with me, I will then let you know the location of all eight sites (N.B. some are on private land and I will advise on restricted access). Please do not be disappointed if your discovery is already well known, I'm sure we will eventually find a hitherto undetected colony.

Breeding Bird Survey and Waterways Breeding Survey

This important survey was introduced in 1994 replacing the Common Birds Census (CBC). During the 2019 season in Yorkshire Central Region 25 volunteers walked 86 km. and recorded a total of 95 different species. Existing fieldworkers: the online system continues to improve with added features, please take time to explore the downloadable information which is there to make your survey involvement more rewarding and interesting. Don't forget the Wider Countryside Butterfly Survey which asks you to look at your BBS square later in the day for butterflies, more info at www.ukbms.org/wcbs If you would like to take on a square for BBS or WBBS have a look at the general guidance on the website (www.bto.org/our-science/projects/bbs/taking-part) and then contact me, we can have a chat and I will then send you a list of vacant squares. There's still time to get going for the 2020 season, if you are at all uncertain about your bird identification abilities or field skills I might be able to accompany you on a suitable test square. A special comment about the Waterways Breeding Bird Survey: I have eight squares with suitable stretches of river included, none of them are being covered by volunteers at the moment. I lost my one remaining fieldworker last year who moved away from the area, looking at his results especially the field recording sheets it is a "bird rich" site and must have been very enjoyable to cover. Please contact me if the WBBS project appeals to you.

Breeding Waders of Wet Meadows (NE/BTO/RSPB)

The BTO plan to repeat the 2002 survey this year with the addition of sites covered by the RSPB in 2009/10 plus a sample of new sites and a sample of farms with Lapwings. I sent a message to all my members and volunteers in December last year giving an early announcement of this survey and asking for potential fieldworkers, there was a good response with offers of help and suggestions for sites, there is a delay in finalising sites with the Trust's collaborators. However, the online system and site allocation will be available later in February.

A REMINDER of some of the on-going projects that might be of interest:

BirdTrack looks at migration movements and distributions of birds throughout Britain and Ireland and provides facilities for observers to store and manage their own personal records as well as using these to support species conservation at local, regional, national and international scales. The idea behind BirdTrack is that if you have been out birdwatching or simply watching the birds in your garden, records of the birds you have seen can be useful data. The scheme is year-round, and ongoing, and anyone with an interest in

birds can contribute. Important results produced by BirdTrack include mapping migration (arrivals and departures) timings and monitoring scarce birds.
www.birdtrack.net

Garden BirdWatch If you're not already involved take a look at the website and maybe give it a try? The project is funded by an annual subscription of £17 but on joining you will receive a complimentary copy of "Garden birds and other wildlife" (worth £14.99), membership includes the "The Bird Table" magazine four times a year, there is also a promotional offer of a free BTO 2020 Calendar whilst stocks last. See how you can add to our knowledge of how birds use our gardens, the data entry system also allows you to record: mammals, amphibians, reptiles, dragonflies, butterflies and other insects.
www.bto.org/our-science/projects/gbw

Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS) The Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS) is the monitoring scheme for non-breeding waterbirds in the UK, which aims to provide the principal data for the conservation of their populations and wetland habitats. Take a look at: www.bto.org/our-science/projects/wetland-bird-survey WeBS has its own Regional Organisers and the boundaries don't exactly fit the BTO Regions, at the moment there isn't an Organiser for my area so if you are interested please send an email to: webs@bto.org
You can view the vacant WeBS sites online at: <https://app.bto.org/websonline/sites/vacant/vacant-sites.jsp> There are a number of sites that require birdwatchers to count them: Ripley Castle, Farnham Old Gravel Pit, Farnham New Gravel Pits, Allerton Park, Beaver Dyke Reservoirs, Scargill Reservoir, Swinsty Reservoir, Fewston Reservoir and Thurcross Reservoir. Many of these sites have not been counted for many years, so even if you could commit to making occasional visits, that would be better than no data at all.

Results from the two Tawny Owl Projects:

Tawny Owl Point Survey (TOPS) 2018:

Provisional results are available on the website from over 2900 tetrads nationwide (<https://www.bto.org/our-science/projects/project-owl/tawny-owl-point-survey/provisional-results>). As I mentioned in my Newsletter last spring, I'm grateful to the ten intrepid volunteers who took on tetrads in my Region.

Tawny Owl Calling Survey (TOCS) Winter 2018/19:

Eighty two people contributed to this project in my Region, thanks again to all. The results are still being analysed and written up as a paper.

Regional Network – can you help?

We are keen to build the BTO community in Yorkshire (Central), and would like

to recruit a supporting Regional Ambassador to be part of the local Regional Network team, working alongside the Regional Representative. There are also opportunities to take on the role of a Regional Organiser for surveys. If you are interested, please contact Dawn Balmer (dawn.balmer@bto.org) at BTO HQ.

Thank you for supporting the work of the BTO through membership and/or as a volunteer fieldworker, your contribution is much appreciated. Don't hesitate to contact me if you would like to get involved with any of our projects, hope you enjoy your birding this Spring and Summer.

Mike Brown, BTO Regional Representative for Yorkshire (Central)
mikebtorep@gmail.com

MOTHS

In briefly summarising the excellent 2019 season, no fewer than 16 new species of moth were recorded in the Society's area, comprising four 'macro' and an amazing 12 species of 'micro' moth (several of which are rare or very rare in Yorkshire). During the year, 741 species of moth were recorded (specifically 370 macros and 371 micros), just six fewer than the record number of 2018! The overall number of species recorded for the Society continues to increase, now totalling 1182, which equates to 67% of the whole of the Yorkshire list. The number of records submitted by the end of 2019 was 15,199 totalling 68,672 moths – could 70,000 be achievable in the future? There were several Vice County records, the majority of which were in VC65, historically an under-recorded area of Yorkshire.

Depressaria pimpinellae was trapped at Hutton Conyers on 22nd August. The foodplants are Burnet Saxifrage/Greater Burnet Saxifrage and the only other confirmed county records occur in VC62. *Stigmella continuella* mines found on Birch at Hencliffe Wood 2nd October was a range expansion, with most Yorkshire records from the south-east. *Phyllonorycter schreberella* mines were found on Elm at Roecliffe on 23rd September, another species which has spread through the county.

Devon Carpet was trapped at Sawley in August – a species which has enjoyed a good year county-wide, appearing at many new sites. A new moth trapping site north of Ripon, comprising several different habitats, proved very productive – two Pale Eggar and 11 Dusky Thorn (both seriously declining species in Yorkshire) were noteworthy. The nationally declining V-Moth was

again recorded in our area at two sites, the only records in Yorkshire last year! Butterbur is another species undergoing a marked decline – of three Yorkshire records in 2019, two were in the Society's area.

Migrant species were again in evidence, with a lone Vestal at Sharow in September (five in the county), followed by a live *Convolvulus* Hawk-moth in Masham churchyard in October (a photograph was emailed for identification) and of seven county records of Scarce Bordered Straw, two occurred in the Society's area. Everything will be described fully in the 2019 Annual Report.

Early-emerging species such as Oak Beauty, Spring Usher and Common Quaker have already been recorded this year (before Storms Ciara, Dennis and Jorge!), so if you haven't started moth trapping this year, now's the time to begin. 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

An Egyptian Goose was present on 1st **September**, with two Little Ringed Plovers and a female Mandarin Duck the next day. On the North Lake, there were three pairs of Great Crested Grebes and ten juveniles. A Swift flew over on 9th, followed by a large movement of Swallows and Sand Martins passing through during the day with hundreds of birds involved. A Little Egret was present on 10th. Mid-month, Green Sandpiper, Little Egret and a Hobby were recorded, but there was no further passage movement for the rest of the month. Maximum wildfowl counts for the month were: Mute Swan – 7, Shoveler – 1, Gadwall – 20, Wigeon – 6, Common Pochard – 1, Mallard – 67, Teal – 15, Tufted Duck – 6, Little Grebe – 6, Great Crested Grebe – 16, Moorhen – 12, Coot – 37. From the 24th of the month, 76mm of rain fell and the maximum temperature was 18 °C.

During the first week of **October**, Swallows were still moving through with 23 seen; 40 Redwings were present on 5th, with five on 14th. A charm of 50 Goldfinches was counted on 10th. The first skein of Pink-footed Geese flew over on 16th. Fieldfares were present and 11 Whooper Swans flew south-east on 20th, with a Jack Snipe seen the next day. At the end of the month, 62

Whooper Swans moved south-east; a juvenile Scaup was present on the North Lake for one day only; a Bean Goose flew over and a Peregrine Falcon was seen carrying prey to a nearby pylon. On the last day of the month, a skein of 130 Pink-footed Geese flew east. Maximum wildfowl counts were: Canada Goose – 60, Greylag Goose – 90, Mute Swan – 4, Gadwall – 14, Wigeon – 25, Mallard – 54, Teal – 43, Common Pochard – 1, Tufted Duck – 96, Goldeneye – 1, Little Grebe – 8, Great Crested Grebe – 5, Moorhen – 13, Coot – 213. Total rainfall for the month was 188mm; maximum temperature was 13 °C and minimum was -2 °C.

On 3rd **November**, a skein of Pink-footed Geese flew over to the south-east and winter thrushes continued to be seen, mainly Redwings feeding on hawthorn berries, with a maximum of 120 counted. Being in the right place at the right time is often important for birdwatchers, and such was the case on 11th for our morning observer, Ian Walker, as he stood in front of the hide drinking his coffee. He nearly dropped the mug in his surprise as a Bearded Tit flew up in front of him from the nearby reed bed. He watched until it flew off north. Some days later, one was located at Staveley Reserve, possibly the same bird? The last record of this species at Farnham GP was of two birds in October 2002. Due to the constant rainfall from September onwards, the water level on the South Lake has risen rapidly, covering the smaller islands; it was unfortunate that the Management Team was unable to clear the vegetation from the islands before they became submerged. Finch species were in low numbers, with only ten Bullfinches, 15 Goldfinches and eight Siskins recorded. On 29th, 250 Pink-footed Geese flew west. Maximum wildfowl counts were: Canada Goose – 48, Mute Swan – 13, Shoveler – 1, Gadwall – 17, Wigeon – 36, Mallard – 52, Teal – 16, Common Pochard – 5, Tufted Duck – 107, Goosander – 2, Goldeneye – 13, Little Grebe – 6, Great Crested Grebe – 5, Moorhen – 10, Coot – 258. Total rainfall for the month was 86mm; maximum temperature was 8°C and minimum was -4°C.

The unseasonal weather continued into **December**, with a lack of frozen lakes resulting in very little bird movement. Common Buzzards and Red Kites usually make daily appearances over the area and a late afternoon watch over a distant wood recorded 23 kites going in to roost. The high water level disappointed 220 over-flying Lapwings which would have dropped in to land. An Otter and two cubs were present for a while which proved to be rather disruptive for the wildfowl. We take water level readings of the South Lake each month (recorded on a graph in the hide) and, at the end of September, the reading was 20cm but, by the end of December it was 73cm, a rise equivalent to 21 inches, making it the highest level for four years; it will take months for the water to fall sufficiently to provide suitable breeding habitat for

ducks and waders. A flock of 22 Long-tailed Tits was notable. Snipe were difficult to see as there was no suitable open feeding area, but 20 took flight from around the island, possibly disturbed by the Otters. Only small numbers of Redwings, up to 16, were seen until a Sparrowhawk flushed 50. At the end of the month, 21 Pink-footed Geese flew west and a Grey Wagtail was present. Maximum wildfowl counts were: Canada Goose – 116, Greylag Goose – 130, Mute Swan – 11, Gadwall – 22, Wigeon – 28, Mallard – 41, Teal – 33, Common Pochard – 11, Tufted Duck – 182, Goosander – 4, Goldeneye – 33, Little Grebe – 7, Great Crested Grebe – 3, Moorhen – 9, Coot – 306. Total rainfall for the month was 46mm; maximum temperature was 6 °C and minimum was - 3 °C.

The weather in **January** continued in the same vein as the previous month and there was still disappointingly low bird activity. A Peregrine Falcon usually appears this month and one was seen over the North Lake chasing ducks on 12th and perching on a pylon the next day. A few finch flocks were noted with 22 Chaffinches, 20 Goldfinches and 30 Siskins. On 18th, a Sparrowhawk was found dead by Ian Walker and was given to Dr John R. Mather for examination and preservation, his report makes for interesting reading.

“The bird, a juvenile female, was most interesting in that it was in complete juvenile plumage with no sign of moult at this late date. Sparrowhawks undergo a post-fledging moult, starting soon after independence and being almost complete by September/October except for a few rufous-tipped wing and tail coverts. Of the 45 juveniles I have examined, this is only the second to be in complete juvenile plumage as late as January.

Post mortem examination showed cause of death to be blunt force trauma resulting in brain haemorrhage and severe bruising with blood clotting around the intact upper cervical vertebrae. The major organs were healthy and there was sub-dermal fat, so poor physical condition could not be considered as a possible cause for delayed moult and the bird could be assumed to be from a late brood.”

Since October, there has been weekly shooting by the Angling Society on the South Lake in order to deter the presence of Cormorants – not the anglers’ favourite bird on a trout lake. This course of action has been sanctioned by English Nature and will continue until the end of February. This has, combined with the presence of Otters since August, had the effect of seriously disturbing and thus reducing the numbers of wintering ducks on the South Lake. Consequently, as it has an otter-proof fence around it, the North Lake has become a refuge for wildfowl. The first Oystercatchers returned on 15th, when there were two present. Sixteen Common Snipe took flight from the islands. A

very large and distant flock of birds was seen coming from the south-east on 29th; they were Golden Plovers and, as they flew round for some time before they began to drop down, I estimated there to be around 1,000. Fifty Pink-footed Geese flew west on 29th, then next day, a drake Mandarin Duck was found but has not been seen since. Maximum wildfowl counts were: Canada Goose – 45, Greylag Goose – 82, Mute Swan – 10, Shoveler – 1, Gadwall – 20, Wigeon – 28, Mallard – 50, Teal – 53, Common Pochard – 12, Tufted Duck – 161, Goosander – 4, Goldeneye – 41, Little Grebe – 4, Great Crested Grebe – 5, Moorhen – 10, Coot – 272. Total rainfall for the month was 30mm; maximum temperature was 9 °C and minimum was 0 °C.

The old saying ‘**February** fill dyke, be it black or be it white’ was certainly true this year. Thankfully, our region did not have the worst of it, nor of the winds from storms Ciara, Dennis and the last one, Jorge; but, as a result, very little bird movement occurred. A Water Rail was seen in a ditch near the Yacht Club and a roaming flock of 25 Long-tailed Tits was notable. Generally, Siskins remained scarce, but as members of the Management Team walked across the top car park on 16th, 18 were seen feeding in the alders. Goosanders were recorded on ten days during the month. As is usual at this time of year, birds of the Continental race of Cormorant, *sinensis*, are now being recorded, with a maximum of three. The bird of the month, occurring on 19th, was a female Long-tailed Duck, seen by Ian; the bird circled over the South Lake but unfortunately did not land. The last record of the species at Farnham GP was in 2007. Scaup has been recorded in seven winters since 2011, but has not occurred yet this year but we have had the highest number of Goldeneyes ever recorded. Oystercatchers were moving, with 11 on 19th and, on the same day with a temperature of 3 C, three Song Thrushes were singing. At the end of the month, 22 Redwings were recorded, with a Peregrine Falcon on the last day. Maximum wildfowl counts were: Canada Goose - 55, Greylag Goose - 76, Shelduck - 1, Gadwall - 14, Wigeon - 24, Mallard - 35, Teal --25, Common Pochard - 14, Tufted Duck - 129, Long-tailed Duck - 1, Goldeneye - 58, Goosander - 7, Little Grebe - 6, Great Crested Grebe - 6, Moorhen - 9, Coot - 92. Total rainfall for the month was 136 mm; maximum temperature was 8 °C and minimum was -1 °C. An Otter was seen at the end of the month, also two Roe Deer.

Although it has apparently been rather quiet, 70 species of birds have already been recorded on the site this year. Finally, another saying about the month, "If in February thou hearest thunder, thou shalt see a summer wonder". This proved to be accurate in 1995, maybe it could happen again this year? as thunder has been heard.

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

MUNTJAC DEER

On the 3rd December 2019 I was fortunate to see a new mammal species for our area in the form of a Muntjac deer and I thought a few facts about the little beastie may be of interest.

Muntjac are thought to have evolved some 25 million years ago and are now represented by 12 species throughout Asia, some only recently discovered. The species now established in the UK is the Reeves Muntjac *Muntiacus reevesi*. First introduced to Woburn Abbey by the eleventh Duke of Bedford who like other Victorian landowners thought that the native wildlife needed more diversity, especially if it could be hunted. Mary his wife noted that between 1894 and 1905 “a total of 24 Muntjac were imported and turned out into the woods, where they have done well.” Perhaps fortunately Elk and Caribou also kept at Woburn didn't thrive. Since then more escapes, notably from Whipsnade Zoo in 1921, and subsequent releases, are thought to have led to the present population rather than the original introductions. It is now expected to become the most numerous deer species in the UK.

The animal itself has rather a humpbacked appearance due to its rear end seemingly being higher than its fore end. It is quite small, being only half a metre at the shoulder and about a metre long. The bucks have short unbranched antlers and two upper canine teeth in the form of short tusks which are used in territorial disputes. They have no defined breeding season and the does are sexually mature at seven months and after a seven months gestation period give birth to a single kid. They are then ready to mate again within days. They are normally solitary and are usually nocturnal in areas subject to daytime disturbance with peak activity at dawn and dusk. They have a varied diet but I haven't been able to confirm their alleged threat to our native Bluebell.

They are apparently expert pruners of roses and other plants in the garden, however, so beware!

Richard Stobbs

Mammal Recorder

INDOOR MEETINGS PROGRAMME 2020-2021

Regular meetings take place in the St. Robert's Centre, Robert Street, Harrogate (opposite Waitrose). Start at 7:30pm. Parking is either on the adjacent streets or in the Waitrose car park. (Beware 2hr time limit!) Visitors welcome, fee £3.

2020

14 October

Yorkshire's Biodiversity Hotspot

Askham Bog is YWT's first and richest nature reserve, despite which it is threatened by a housing development. This talk will explain its remarkable ecology and biodiversity.

Alastair Fitter FRS

28 October

Wild Shetland

This talk highlights some of the birds and mammals of this magical and very wild place with its incredible list of species.

Steve Race, Yorkshire Coast Nature

11 November

Pole to Pole

Peter describes a number of visits to the Arctic and Antarctic, comparing the scenery and wildlife, particularly seabirds and cetaceans.

Peter Dunn, photographer

25 November

Back Garden Bumblebees Plus

The bumblebees of a mature Victorian garden, plus more species from North Yorkshire, rare bees from Scotland and solitary bees.

Bill Hall, HDNS

9 December

Garden Birdwatch

An introduction to the wider work of the BTO, in-depth coverage of the Garden Birdwatch scheme and how you can get involved.

John Preston BTO

2021

6 January

Moths of the Harrogate Area

Developments of the last ten years of moth trapping – special moths of our area, new arrivals and losses, a general look at moths across the county.

Charlie Fletcher, Moth Recorder

20 January

Avian Flight: how it works and what happens if it doesn't

The functional anatomy of flight plus some veterinary observations with suggestions about rehabilitation of injured birds.

Nigel Harcourt-Brown, FRCVS, HDNs

3 February

Birds from the Yard

A photographic exploration of Avians from the door. Award-winning photographer Richard describes the wildlife in the vicinity of his home.

Richard Bunce

17 February

Swillington Ings – destroyed by mining, rebuilt by Nature

The history and wildlife of RSPB St. Aidans, and the future – an extended Lower Aire Valley reserve?

Swillington Ings Bird Group

3 March

Encounters with Hares

Observations on the Behaviour and Biology of the Brown Hare.

Kelvin Smith, HDNS

17 March

The Garden Wildlife Project

How citizen science can help us learn about wildlife health. This project encourages reports of public sightings, to investigate disease threats to wildlife and so learn how best to manage garden habitats.

Dr Becki Lawson, MRCVS, ZSL

21 April

Annual General Meeting

HARROGATE NATURALISTS' FORUM

NEW - Harrogate Naturalists' Forum on Facebook!

Our original Harrogate Naturalists' Forum ran very successfully as a Yahoo Group for the last 14 years. It has always aimed to provide a focus and forum for good-natured, informal exchange of views, observations, notices, photos, gossip or any other information likely to be of interest to members of this natural history society. In this way we hoped to extend members' enjoyment and involvement in both the Society and our local wildlife.

However recent sudden changes from Yahoo means that the Forum has changed to a purely email group. This means particularly that our online repository of messages, photos and other files, which built up over the years, no longer exist. At the moment we fully intend to keep this version of the Forum running and see what develops. Although some may prefer the idea of an email group, we also needed to consider alternatives.

Following the shock changes from Yahoo it was suggested we develop a **private Facebook Group** as a free alternative version of our HDNS members-only Forum. This shiny, new Forum is now live on Facebook and **all HDNS members are warmly invited to join**. Importantly, it is a **private group** which

can **only** be seen by those who apply to join and the information it contains **doesn't** show up in Internet searches. (Note that messages are **not** automatically duplicated between the two versions of the Forum. Each is a separate system.)

The more HDNS members who join this new Forum the more useful it becomes as a means of communication (and, incidentally avoiding the coronavirus!). This is a new venture for HDNS and our Forum so we hope it will be well supported by as many members as possible. Current membership is only 22 so we need lots more to provide a healthy core of listeners and potential contributors!

If you wish to **join**, or have any queries, then please **email Group Admin**, Robert Marshall, at hdns.wildwatch@btinternet.com - please also include the **email address** you intend to use for the Forum and your **full name**, if this isn't obvious from your email address. This will help speed approval. You will then be sent a link to join the Facebook Forum. (You will need to set up a free Facebook account if you don't already have one) Please do it today, before you forget!

Maybe we will have to run virtual field trips on the Forum if we all have to start self-isolating! Whatever happens, we do hope to see many more of you at the Forum very soon!

MISCELLANY

SERVING ON COUNCIL

Would you be interested in serving on Council, which manages the affairs of HDNS. It involves about six evening meetings per year, and gives an interesting insight into wildlife conservation and recording, as well as the month-by-month running of the Society.

WANTED, WORD WIZARD

Val Smith would like to hand on the role of assistant editor of the newsletter. If you like the layout and arranging side of word processing, you would enjoy this. (Valerie Holmes will continue as general editor.) The task involves some concentrated work twice a year, preparing the material for the printer and posting out the finished newsletter. Val would be happy to talk to anyone interested. Contact details: see below

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.

Blacks of Harrogate: 10% discount: present HDNS, RSPB or NT card.

Lynne Gilland, Hon. Treasurer

CALL FOR RECORDS

All members – please send your observations and records for 2020 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 13 May 2020. 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

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.

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 **September 2020**

email: valerieholmes@hotmail.co.uk