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## SPRING NEWSLETTER 2015



## FROM THE PRESIDENT

As spring advances I believe that I am coming to the end of my 46th season with HDNS. Looking back over those years, so many things have obviously changed - the personnel, the speakers, the venue for our lectures, the lecture subjects and their methods of delivery. But then, on further reflection, so much is still the same; it has been the practice of the Society always to aim to produce a winter programme of lectures with speakers of some standing in their field who can illustrate their talks appropriately. There have been odd 'blips' in the past but, on the whole, I feel that we have achieved our aim. The annual programme always contains a wide range of subjects in an attempt to cater for the equally wide range of interests of the members. I believe we have had one such winter season just past: I have certainly enjoyed the varied topics on which our speakers have entertained and educated us and, maybe, planted seeds which will encourage us to pursue a new interest. What was unusual in the production of the programme was the fact that, as the Society is without a Programme Secretary, members of Council actually decided on speakers they felt would be suitable and invited them to fill our winter lecture programme; all the information was then collated by our Secretary to produce a most comprehensive series of winter lectures. That is all well and good but a Society cannot flourish if, what have always in the past been seen as necessary offices, are not filled by appropriate people. I looked around the members at a recent evening meeting and saw a good nucleus of those who have probably been around for almost as long as I have, religiously still turning out on alternate Wednesday evenings through the winters, perhaps not always with such eager, light steps as they did in years gone by. Also in the audience was a good scattering of new members, some of whom have been with us for long enough for their faces to be familiar to me though I do not remember all their names. It is to this group particularly, but not exclusively, that I address this invitation. The smooth running of Societies such as ours does not just happen, members have to be prepared to make commitments. There are many ways in which you may be able to help with the running of the Society. Some of you may be quite newly retired and wondering how you are going to fill all the spare time you now have on your hands. Others may dismiss my invitation immediately saying you are very busy already, but you know the saying - 'If you want something doing, ask a busy person!' Do give it some thought, don't always leave it to someone else, we are fast running out of those people. The Secretary would certainly welcome any member who is willing to help and makes contact in response to my invitation. I hope we will have a summer that will encourage us to get out and about and find what natural delights we have in the Harrogate District.

**Ann Mettam**

## FIELD MEETINGS 2015

### **SOUTH WEST LANCASHIRE COAST & MOSSES      Tuesday 14 April**

Bus trip (booking required) – depart: 08:00 hrs, Trinity Church, Harrogate, return flexible - probably mid-to late evening. Likely sites on itinerary: Martin Mere (bring WWT membership card if applicable), RSPB Marshside and Ainsdale Dunes. Latter site would be the target for Sand Lizard and the Birkdale Nightingale! Stop off for fish and chips on the return.

### **FARNHAM PATCH WATCH DAY      Sunday 3 May**

04.00 till dusk. Looking for passage migrants throughout the day and recording numbers of breeding species present on the site. Early or late risers welcome!

**Leader: June Atkinson**

### **WYKHAM RAPTOR VIEWPOINT, FILEY BRIGG      Tuesday 19 May**

Bus trip (booking required) – depart: 08:00 hrs, Trinity Church, Harrogate, return early evening. Wykham for Honey Buzzard, possible Goshawk and Turtle Dove. On to Filey for late waders, migrants and sea birds on the cliffs and sea.

### **BELLFLASK QUARRY NEAR WEST TANFIELD      Saturday 13 June**

Meet in cars at the village hall in West Tanfield at 09:00hrs. We will then double up in cars and drive to the site. A guided walk by Bob Orange and Brian Moreland. Back in West Tanfield by about 12:30. A wide range of wildlife can be observed on this fantastic part restored/part working quarry.

### **SOUTH/EAST NORTH YORK MOORS      Saturday 11 July**

Car share – depart: 10:00hrs from Quarry Moor, Ripon, return very late evening. Likely sites to visit include Fen Bog and Levisham, searching for butterflies and dragonflies. Adders are a possibility. An option would be for anyone wanting to listen for late Nightjars – hence the late return. Anyone staying late could visit somewhere to grab a bite and/or take sandwiches! Please note the meeting time and venue.

## **FARNHAM MEMBERS' DAY Sunday 12 July**

Meet at the hide 10.00. The main gate will be left open for members who do not have a key. Finish 15.30. A chance to improve your identification skills. Whatever your interests, there will be someone on hand to help you. Grovers OpticsShop will be bringing a display stand to the Farnham Open Day and you might like to come along to view some of their Swarovski, Hawke and Opticron equipment. They will also have some microscope and night vision on the day. 01609 898098 Ext 2, 216-217 High Street, Northallerton. DL78LW - [www.opticsshop.co.uk](http://www.opticsshop.co.uk) <http://grovers.biz/optics/content/4-our-events>

**Leader: June Atkinson**

## **TOP HILL LOW, HORNSEA & MERE Tuesday 25 August**

Bus trip (booking required) – depart: 08:00 hrs, Trinity Church, Harrogate, return (possibly) late evening. Top Hill Low, north of Beverley then on to Hornsea (coast) and the Mere later. Mainly birds with a possible target to observe the mass gathering of Little Gulls coming in off the sea at Hornsea, and onto the Mere to roost. This would depend on who would want to stay and see this sight, therefore, once again please note the possible late return.

## **SOUTH TEESIDE Tuesday 8 September**

Bus trip (booking required) - depart: 08:00 hrs, Trinity Church, Harrogate, return late afternoon. South Gare for possible late butterflies and dragonflies, early migrants and possibly Common Lizard. Also interesting botanically. On to Scaling Dam for likewise – butterflies and dragonflies and birds.

Some trips could return quite late in the night for this period. I am sorry but it's the nature of the species we are targeting. Please don't book if you are wanting to return early for any reason, an early return cant be guaranteed for the trips where it is stated – expect a late return.

The Society now has the use of a good quality telescope and tripod (a legacy from Rodney Waddilove). Various field guides are also available on most trips. Of course the weather can't be guaranteed, so some events may be altered slightly to work around any inclement precipitations!

Enquiries to Colin Slator: 0793535 2890



## FIELD MEETING REPORTS

\*\*\*\*See the NEWS items on the website for images of these visits\*\*\*\*

### HARTLEPOOL & SALTHOLME

23 September 2014

Ornithologically speaking, September on the north east coast is a good month for migrants and sea watching. An easterly wind and a rough sea is ideal but when we arrived at the Headland the sea was flat calm and the wind which had been in the east for days had deserted us. However there were waders and gulls on the shore to sift through and reports of Yellow-browed Warbler at the Borough Hall. There was plenty of choice for everyone and the party spread out depending on their interest.

A brief sea watch provided views of several Red-throated Divers flying south, also Gannets, Scoters, Kittiwakes, Guillemots and later a juvenile Pomarine Skua north. Interest quickly concentrated in the Borough Hall for the Yellow-browed Warbler. Still in full leaf, the trees provided this lovely little gem with plenty of cover, flitting Robins and Chiffchaffs keeping us on our toes. But persistence paid off and we had several excellent views eventually, complete with the eye stripe and wing bars.

A brief stop at the beach at Newburn was amazing for comparison views of three Tern species, Sandwich, Arctic and Common standing among the Oystercatchers. The white winged Mediterranean Gull among the smaller Black-headed Gulls provided another good comparison view. Colin was eager to show us the recently drained Dorman's Pool and new hide. Waders were certainly gathered in numbers, mainly Dunlin, also Black-tailed Godwit, Greenshank, Ruff and two Little Stints, one right in front of the hide. Rob Adams spotted a Whinchat and a pair of Stonechats around the fence posts. Little Egrets are now almost ubiquitous in marshland habitat but it's the Great White Egret which has the scarce but increasing status which the Little Egret had fifteen or twenty years ago. Colin's pager flagged up that we were only a few wing flaps away as the Great White Egret flies, which had been seen around Cowpen Marsh recently. Sure enough we located it quickly and saw it fly briefly. Their size makes them unmistakable, especially in flight.

All this and we hadn't even been to RSPB Saltholme yet. The fox cubs seen earlier in the year at Saltholme are now fully grown and very evident, much to the delight of visitors and photographers. The hides at Saltholme are roomy and well appointed, as is the coffee shop, and we finished our day equally divided amongst them. Winter ducks were starting to assemble, Wigeon, Teal, Pintail, Shoveler and a Red-crested Pochard in eclipse, just to test us! Waders included Golden Plover, Dunlin and Lapwings and Snipe but with fading light

levels and the reserve about to close we headed off back to the minibus and home, pencils poised to tick our life or year lists.

Many thanks to Colin, the man with the plan and Will, the man not so much with the van, but a very nice new minibus actually. A great day out!

**Sue Coldwell**

## **WILDLIFE-FRIENDLY GARDENS**

**15 November 2014**

Nine of the usual suspects met Colin at Ripley Car Park on a dank misty morning. Sharing cars, we first visited Colin's garden in Kirby Hill, near Boroughbridge, where he is creating a wildlife haven amidst an agro-industrial wasteland. He has installed approximately 30 nest boxes, which have encouraged House and Tree Sparrows, Tits and Starlings to nest. Swift nestboxes have unfortunately been taken over by the above more common species, but Colin was pleased to report that this summer Swallows have nested for the first time in his back porch. Areas of grass in his lawn have been left to grow long to encourage the growth of wild flowers and to provide a refuge for small rodents. In fact, recently a Harvest Mouse was found to have taken up residence. We were all getting rather chilled after touring the garden, so a hot drink provided by Colin's wife Claire was very welcome.

Our next visit was to HDBAG member Sandra Mason's woodland garden at Sawley. The principle behind the garden is to provide layers of vegetation ranging from treetop height to ground cover in order to attract the maximum number of invertebrates. The garden, which is influenced by the woodland garden at Old Sleningford, is still in its early stages but is attracting large numbers of insects with its mixture of native and more exotic species. Goldfinches fed in the nearby alders as Sandra explained how she established the garden in an area of rank grass using layers of old carpet and manure!

We next moved on to HDNS member Sue Harrison's garden between Pateley Bridge and Wath. Sue was unfortunately unable to be present, so Colin showed us around. There was much activity, mainly Tits, at the ingenious squirrel-proof feeders and a Greater-Spotted Woodpecker was also present. A pond containing Carp and Sturgeon is apparently a good breeding ground for various amphibians. Spotted Flycatchers have nested in previous years and Tawny Owls are frequently seen. Sue has tried to develop the surrounding fields, which she owns, for wildlife and has planted trees and erected an owl nest box.

Many thanks to Colin, Claire, Sandra and Sue for an interesting and informative morning. □

**Will Rich**

It was the week before Christmas and ten members took time off from festive preparations to visit RSPB Old Moor and Yorkshire Wildlife Trust's Potteric Carr. The weather was more reminiscent of October than December, warm breeze and fantastic light. We counted a total of 67 birds over the day. In the morning at Old Moor the winter ducks and waders looked fantastic in the sunshine, every feather showing up, giving the ubiquitous Magpie a splendid appearance and the eponymous Golden Plover lived up to its name. Other waders included Snipe, Dunlin, Redshank, Lapwing and Ruff.

The mixed tit flocks were foraging through the birch woodland during our afternoon walk at Potteric Carr and as we approached the lagoons, four species of gull came in to roost, a Kingfisher played a cameo role across the front of the hide, and our first Great Crested Grebe of the day was seen.

In fading light, there were distant views of a huge influx of Starlings. The shortest day was only a few days away and we walked back to the car park with the beautiful light which had enchanted us all day going fast. Thanks to Colin and Will for the organisation and leadership. We had a fantastic day and some of us didn't have to break off from Christmas shopping as the well-stocked Old Moor shop was just too tempting.

**Sue Coldwell**

**HDNS RECORDING AREA WALK****27 January 2015**

Colin's shaggy-dog stories came thick and fast as the fourteen of us walked from Ripon's North Bridge up the River Ure on a dry and intermittently sunny morning. As usual Colin proved a canny observer when he rescued a torpid Great-crested Newt from a drain and deposited it in a place of safety.

He next took us to the HBC nature reserve at Little Studley, where Teal and Mallard were seen but the Snipe for which the reserve is noted were unfortunately not in evidence. As we left, a passing Sparrowhawk elicited alarm calls from a number of small birds. Colin showed us the ruins of some bathing cubicles on the riverbank but it was difficult to envisage on a cold winter's day how anyone could ever have enjoyed taking a dip in the murky and fast flowing waters.

Our next port of call was the YWT reserve called Ripon Loop, where the river takes a huge meander, threatening to break through and undergo yet another

of its many historical changes of course. Reaching the reserve required climbing over several fences and gates, which proved a great trial for some of the old crocks amongst us. We ate our lunch seated rather uncomfortably on an old bowser then proceeded upriver, where the reluctant sun illuminated the Hazel catkins and Silver Birches in spectacular fashion.

Whilst walking along the river, Colin found a muddy bank where he was able to show us the difference between footprints of Otter, Badger and Mink, all of which were imprinted in the same short stretch of mud. Colin next pointed out the outcrops of gypsum (cause of many a house subsidence in Ripon) on the cliffs overhanging the Ure. After further fence climbing we finally arrived at High Batts Nature Reserve, where carpets of Snowdrops were in full bloom and giving promise of spring.

Our walk had taken us through the Ripon Parks SSSI, an area of wet woodland and watery meadows bounded by the spectacular River Ure and its floodplain. Highlights of the walk were two large flocks of Curlew, numbering perhaps 300 birds, several Buzzards and a Hare which sprang from its form in the grass at our feet. Many thanks, Colin, for an entertaining and informative day.

**Will Rich**

## **SIZERGH CASTLE**

**28 February 2015**

Hawfinches are best seen in winter when the trees shed their leaves, and can be seen in the high branches of the trees around the visitor centre at Sizergh. Disturbance from visitors can scare them off but we arrived early enough, even with a stopover at Hellifield Flash en route. 16 pairs of eyes scanned the Hornbeam trees, but it was Colin who heard and then spotted the first Hawfinch and got the telescope onto it. As we all gathered round, another flew over, which gave the rest of us a brief but good view. Target Species achieved once again! For anyone who missed this trip and would like to see a Hawfinch, visit [sizergh@nationaltrust.org.uk](mailto:sizergh@nationaltrust.org.uk) for free Ranger events.

There were many other woodland species to see, Woodpeckers, Nuthatch, Tits, etc., but our trip continued to Foulshaw Moss, a 350 hectare raised mire SSSI, a Cumbria Wildlife Trust site noted for its Harrier roost in winter and Ospreys, Adders, Green Hairstreak Butterfly and Emperor Moth in summer. This was a new site for many of us and one to note for future visits.

The next good sighting was a Peregrine Falcon at Warton Crag, sitting high on



a ledge, spotted by Robert Chandler. We were also entertained by a Buzzard being mobbed by a Kestrel. This is a nationally important Lancashire Wildlife Trust site of limestone crag, grassland and woodland.

The forecast had predicted rain for the afternoon but we arrived in the dry at the Allen Hide at Leighton Moss, prompted by Sue Harrison's Bird Guide report of Eurasian White-fronted Geese. We got an excellent haul of waders there, including Spotted Redshank, Greenshank, Avocet, Dunlin, Black-tailed Godwit; and the aforementioned geese were scoped on the grassland overlooking Morecambe Bay. Our duck tally, which started at Hellifield, increased. More Pintail, Shoveler, Goldeneye, Wigeon, Pochard, etc, and the last, but not least, bird of the day was a Marsh Harrier over the lagoons of the main reserve at Leighton Moss.

With the promised rain arriving too late to spoil anything, Colin started the long drive home and Sue Harrison recorded the 69 species seen. Many thanks to Colin and yet again to his Wingman, Will, for a really excellent days' birding and tour of the area.

**Sue Coldwell**



**BTO NEWS**

**HOUSE MARTIN SURVEY**

The British Trust for Ornithology is running a national survey of House Martins this year. This fascinating species with its amazing cup nests made from mud used to be a familiar site on all manner of buildings. Sadly things are not so good for House Martins both on their wintering grounds in the humid zone southwest of the Sahara or here during the summer. Many people "discourage" nest building on their property because of the mess (which I suppose is understandable) but unfortunate all the same.

The survey will involve a recce visit and two survey visits. As usual a random selection of one km. squares will be used but a little bit of bias has had to be introduced because there is no point in visiting a square with no buildings whatsoever! Please contact me for a list of squares and instructions.

**Mike Brown** BTO Regional Representative for Yorkshire Central  
mikebtorep@gmail.com 01423 567382 07900 301112

## MONITORING MUTE SWANS

A plea for sightings of colour-ringed Mute Swans in the HDNS area! Surprisingly for such an obvious and “favourite” bird, the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) actually receives few records of nesting attempts and is encouraging bird ringers with experience of the species, to undertake longer-term local studies by catching and colour-ringing populations.

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

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

**Jill Warwick**                      email: [jill@swland.co.uk](mailto:jill@swland.co.uk)

## MOTHS

In briefly summarising the 2014 season, two new species of ‘macro’ moth were new for the Society’s recording area – Blossom Underwing (Nosterfield LNR) and Scarce Footman (Sharow).

By the year-end, eight new species of ‘micro’ moth had also been identified, one being new for Yorkshire, several others new to either Vice County 64 or 65. Highlights included *Cydalima perspectalis* (new for Yorkshire) at Spofforth, most probably arrived on imported box plants; *Elachista trapeziella* at Hackfall, a moth of shady woodland gorges, was the first in the county since 1883.

The list of moth species recorded in the Society's area has now increased to 1132 (comprising 630 micros and 502 macros) although the number of records submitted was slightly reduced compared with last year, at 14110.

Other rare species which were recorded last year included the wonderfully named Maiden's Blush (3rd record), the distinctive Beautiful Hook-tip (3rd to 7th records), Red-necked Footman (4th record), Orange Footman (6th record) and Twin-spotted Wainscot (9th to 11th records). All will be detailed in full in the Society's annual report for 2014.

The spring species such as the quakers, Clouded Drab and Oak Beauty are now on the wing, so if you haven't started moth trapping yet this year, don't waste any more time! Any species which are causing identification headaches, please do take a clear, digital photograph and email to either recorder (with details of date and place) and we will do our best to assist you, although we would encourage you to make an attempt at identification before emailing us!

Follow us on Twitter: [@JillWarwick](#) or [@DoubleKidney](#)

**Jill Warwick & Charlie Fletcher**

## VERTEBRATES

## RICHARD STOBBS: RECORDER

As you may be aware I have taken over as Mammal and Lower Vertebrate Recorder from my brother Tony Stobbs.

Like him I have lived in the area all my life and this set me thinking about what has happened to our mammals in my lifetime. Red Squirrels, which were once in our area when I was no more than a toddler, have been ousted by the Grey Squirrel and despite attempts to control this species I think we must accept it is now here to stay. The Greys could be in for a nasty surprise however if Pine Martens, which are expanding their range in Scotland, should ever become established in our area. Foxes have taken to heart the adage that if you can't beat them then you might as well join them, and so for a while now we have had the urban Fox and increasingly also the urban Badger. The Roe Deer population has increased dramatically and what was once an uncommon sight can now be seen almost anywhere in the area. I regularly see one or two near New Park on my frequent visits to Harrogate on the 36 bus. Two deer species that are not seen here are the Muntjac and Chinese Water Deer. We are not likely to see the latter but the Muntjac is certainly a possibility so keep your eyes open. Similarly the Otter, which used to mean a visit to Scotland if I

wanted to see one, can now be seen (or at least signs of) on all the rivers in our area, much to the joy of some and consternation of others. Unfortunately the other aquatic mammal, the Water Vole, has all but disappeared thanks largely to predation by Mink. As regards reptiles the highlight of 2014 at Farnham GP was the sighting by a lucky few of the lizard *Crotaphytus artificialus* also known as the PVC Lizard (no more clues!!) an extremely rare, probably unique lizard.

Anyway keep sending me your records, preferably throughout the year.

**Richard Stobbs**

email: [rsmoonraker@gmail.com](mailto:rsmoonraker@gmail.com)



## FARNHAM NEWS

In the second week of **September**, summer migrants were still present with nine Blackcaps, eight Chiffchaffs, Garden Warbler, Yellow Wagtail, Wheatear and Common Sandpiper on 14th and Reed Warbler the next day. The temperature rose to 22°C on 18th. Winter ducks such as Wigeon, Gadwall and Teal were beginning to arrive and a skein of 35 Pink-footed Geese on 25th announced the arrival of autumn. On the last day of the month, 60 Swallows flew south and a temperature of 20°C was recorded - an Indian Summer!

On 3rd **October**, a Common Sandpiper was present together with 15 Blackbirds and eight Chiffchaffs. Over 100 Swallows and 25 House Martins flew south on 5th. Duck numbers rose with 33 Wigeon and 75 Gadwall during the second week when the wintering Tree Sparrows began to attack the feeding station. The first winter visitors arrived on the 14th with 22 Fieldfares and 30 Redwings. The last Chiffchaff was seen on 19th, when a charm of Goldfinches exceeded 80. Whooper Swans were on the move with 14 flying south-east on 20th; 280 Redwings were counted mid-month but only 20 Fieldfares. A Peregrine Falcon was seen at the end of the month and 79 Tree Sparrows were counted as they flew off to roost. It was a mild month with a maximum of 17°C.

On 1st **November**, a Blackcap was seen and over 30 Redwings were present feeding on hawthorn berries. Forty-six Pink-footed Geese flew over to the north on 4th and, on 10th, a drake Smew flew in late afternoon but, unfortunately, was not present the following day. A drake Pintail made an

appearance on 12th while wildfowl numbers generally remained stable. An increase in numbers of Little Grebes to 15 was notable as were 42 Coots, the latter in much reduced wintering numbers in recent years. One would think that the site would be a most unsuitable habitat for Goldcrests, but three were seen and a Woodcock flew across the back field on 24th. To round off the month, 102 Tree Sparrows were counted and 68 Pink-footed Geese flew west on 30th.

The weather in **December** was very unseasonal, the prolonged mild conditions prevented the lakes from freezing and this effect on cold weather movements was reflected in the numbers of Wigeons and Gadwall present - 124 and 57 respectively. These two species compete for weed and it is interesting to observe them interacting with feeding Coots which are also vegetarians. The feeding Coots dive for submerged weed, bringing it to the surface where the weed is stolen from them by Wigeons and Gadwall waiting in ambush. Redwings were in evidence with 120 on 9th, when a Peregrine Falcon flew by. Jays are shy birds but they do appear at the feeding station; can Jays find the acorns they cache away in autumn? I can tell you they are able, as I watched one from the hide do just that. It flew down to the ground in the exact spot, began probing with its beak and, within minutes, dug out an acorn. They are also adept at perching on a hanging feeder! The feeding station regularly attracts some 15 species, with 100+ Tree Sparrows dominating the activity. Marsh Tits fly in and out so quickly and Bullfinches, once so shy at visiting feeding stations, are common but Yellowhammers are less so now.

Mild weather continued in **January** in contrast to the snow and ice we experienced during this month in 2010 and 2011 when it was essential to maintain the feeding station daily. In 2015, the temperature on New Year's Day was 10°C! Wigeon numbers increased to 129 and a Jack Snipe was seen briefly on 4th. A sudden influx of Mute Swans began on 6th when 22 were present; this caused a great deal of aggravation to the resident cob who spent days attempting to chase them off and exhausted himself to no avail. Lapwing numbers rose to 260 and a Peregrine Falcon was seen. Goldeneye numbers increased to 17 and Mute Swans to 42 – this has never happened before and we have no idea where the swans came from except that amongst them was a colour-ringed bird, yellow 09, which had been ringed as a cygnet in August 2013 near Goole. The lake was 90% frozen on 18th and 19th with overnight snow on 21st when 50 Redwings were seen. A single Siskin was seen on 20th, a rarity this winter. Lapwing numbers rose to a maximum of 454 on 25th and a pair of Goosanders frequented the North Lake.

During the first two weeks of **February**, the waters still held good numbers of wildfowl with 24 Mute Swans, 125 Wigeons, 40 Teal, 94 Tufted Ducks, 46 Mallards, 14 Goldeneyes, ten Little Grebes and nine Great Crested Grebes. The lake was 90% frozen on 6th to 8th and again on 11th, when wildfowl numbers began to fall significantly. Sixty Fieldfares and 20 Redwings were present on 7th. On 15th, the temperature was 9°C. It would have been usual by this time in the month to have recorded Siskin and Lesser Redpoll over the winter, but the Siskin in January was the only sighting. Apparently there is a bumper pine seed crop in Scotland, so the birds have not had to move south in search of food. Six Common Buzzards were observed, some already starting to display, and the Green Woodpecker was yaffling from its usual perch in the oak tree. The Great Spotted Woodpecker raided the feeding station, scattering bird food everywhere. As a result of the generally milder than usual weather through the winter, the normal hard weather movements have not occurred. The first spring migrants arrived on 14th **March** with three Sand Martins, two Chiffchaffs and a Dunlin.

Butterflies were still in evidence in September with two Red Admirals, two Common Blues, a Brown Argus, 26 Small Tortoiseshells, two Peacocks and 26 Speckled Woods on 5th. Later records were of single specimens of Red Admiral, Small Tortoiseshell and Peacock on 4th October. At the beginning of the year, a Peacock was seen on 25th February and a Small Tortoiseshell on 11th March. Dragonflies recorded on 21st September included Common Blue Damselfly, Migrant Hawker, Southern Hawker ovipositing and more than ten Common Darters. On 19th October, Migrant Hawker and Common Darter were seen. Regular sightings of Stoat, Weasel and Roe Deer were recorded, with Otter becoming more frequent than in previous years; Rabbits are abundant and Grey Squirrels continue to raid the bird feeders.

Our Management Days have been most productive thanks to the fine weather; we have had to increase our work days to eight instead of six in an attempt to keep on top of the workload which is greater now as the site matures. The management team deserve a special mention for their commitment and willingness to undertake any task with which they are presented. My grateful thanks to the 14 members whose continuing efforts provide the habitats essential for all the wildlife present on site. I do not have a computer and so rely on Ken Limb to process all our bird records and compile a comprehensive summary report; he also keeps us up to date with all the changes to the Systematic List. My continued thanks to him, as he has undertaken this task since 1999.

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

## **FRACKING in the Harrogate & District Area**

We have attended two meetings, in May 2014 and March 2015, organized by HADAAF (Harrogate & District Alliance against Fracking) about the risks of fracking. It could happen here, if the shale below the area is found to contain sufficient gas to make the process financially viable. Each well is viable for only 2-3 years; therefore there are many wells, all needing access roads and hard standing.

Two major points emerged from the discussion: regulation of risk in the short, medium and long-term; and the huge amount of water needed.

All industrial processes are attended with some risk, and it is the duty of government to make sure that these are properly researched, carefully monitored, and kept within safe limits. It is not clear that the legislation around fracking is adequate to cope with the problems.

You can't switch off a gas well like turning off a tap. Eventually there will not be enough gas coming out of the shale to cover the cost of extracting it. The well must be capped so that the gas never leaks out into the surrounding rocks and into the water supply. Who will be responsible for these capped closed wells? For how long? Ten years? Twenty years? A hundred years?

Methane leaks have a much greater effect on climate change than carbon dioxide. It cannot be burnt off, as is the case with North Sea oil extraction.

If every risk is covered, there will still be the problem of supplying sufficient water. Fracking wells have a very short life. An enormous amount of water, hundreds of gallons per well, must be transported to the site during a few months, and the spent fluid – about 50% of the clean water – removed. In most cases this will be done by a fleet of huge water bowsers using rural roads. At present there is no clear plan for storing, cleaning and recycling the contaminated outflow water.

Broader issues relating to climate change and fossil fuel use were discussed. The March meeting focussed on possible reactions to the granting of exploration licenses in the local area.

**Val Smith & Ann Mettam**

## WEBSITE

www.hdns.org.uk

Spring is arriving! If you want confirmation then go to our website and follow the links to the sightings page. Sand Martins, Chifchaffs and Wheatear! We welcome sightings from anyone – make sure you put the place and date. You will need to add your email address but this will not be shown on the website.

In this newsletter are reports of our field trips. These are also on the website under News, often illustrated by photographs taken by our members. Click on any photo to see an enlarged view – return by clicking your back button.

Please also submit photographs for possible use in our gallery. These need to be current and local, local meaning within our recording area (as shown on the Welcome page of the website). To submit photographs use the form under Contact Us. To see the Gallery go to About HDNS → Photo Gallery and choose a section. To see the captions click on a thumbnail. Then use the chevrons ( or your keyboard arrow keys ) to move through the gallery. Click on the enlarged photo to return to the thumbnails.

Any questions or comments please email: [photos@hdns.org.uk](mailto:photos@hdns.org.uk)

**Malcolm Jones**

## WEBSITE PASSWORD

The members-only password will change on 1 June 2015. The new password will be available on the new membership card, which will be posted at the beginning of May.

## 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/](http://tech.groups.yahoo.com/group/Harrogate_Naturalists/) and sign up.

Contact **Robert Marshall** for more information:

email: [hdns.wildwatch@btinternet.com](mailto:hdns.wildwatch@btinternet.com)



## INDOOR MEETINGS PROGRAMME 2015/2016

Full programme to be completed (it will be in the membership card), but here is the opening attraction, and the dates for your diary.

**2015** 7 October **The Bird on the Bench** **Dr John R Mather BEM**

A close look at some of the lesser-known aspects of bird biology

21 October      4 November      18 November      2 December

**2016** 13 January      27 January      10 February      24 February

9 March      23 March      20 April: **AGM**

### CALL FOR RECORDS

All members – please send your observations and records for 2014 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. Don't wait until the end of the year – send them as you note them.

### FROM THE EDITORS

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



### CONTACT DETAILS

**General Secretary: Mrs Sue Coldwell**

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**Membership Secretary: Ms Val Smith**

email: memsec.hdns1@talktalk.net

**Website:**      [www.hdns.org.uk](http://www.hdns.org.uk)