

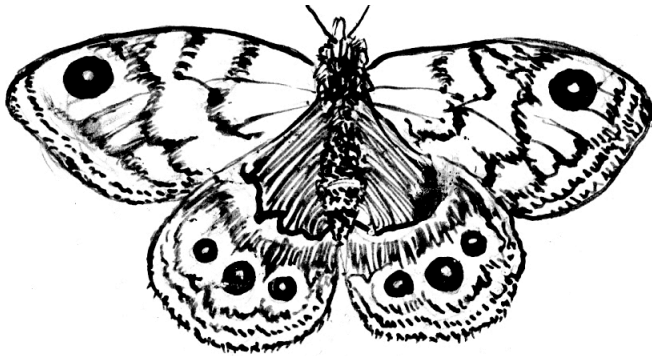


Supporting:

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 Ltd.  
Butterfly Conservation      The British Dragonfly Society

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## AUTUMN NEWSLETTER 2013



## FROM THE PRESIDENT

It may have been rather late in starting but, at last, we have had a summer to look back on and remember sights and happenings which delighted the naturalist in us. The Society's field trips which I attended were most enjoyable, the first one being on a lovely sunny day in May when a group of us met Brian Morland at his Bellflask fishery and reserve. We were treated to a fascinating morning as Brian took us round a selection of the varied habitats on the site, educating and entertaining us as we went. It was another lovely day in early June when we drove to Wensleydale to visit the YWT Glebe Meadow. This is a calcareous meadow on a south-facing slope, from the top of which we had lovely views over the River Ure and the flood plain of the Dale. The meadow was a beautiful sight of massed wildflowers amongst which were several burnt orchids and many green-winged orchids of varying shades. In the afternoon we travelled to Swaledale, to another YWT reserve at Yellands Meadow, an example of a typical Dales' hay meadow. I am now anticipating a good day when we go in search of Red Squirrels at Snaizholme. I would like to thank Will Rich who has produced such an interesting programme of field outings for us over the past years. It is pleasing to have Colin Slator taking on that role for the year ahead and hope that many of you will support him.

It was not necessary to travel out into the countryside to appreciate the difference that warmth and sunshine had made, especially to insect life. There were bees and butterflies everywhere, in our gardens and also flying around the streets, the 'whites' being particularly numerous - though the gardeners amongst you may not have welcomed them so enthusiastically! The photos submitted by some members for display on the photo gallery of the Society's website have recorded some of the beautiful specimens seen. This is your website so make use of it: do not forget to send SIGHTINGS of any natural history subjects to the relevant page; look at the FARNHAM section, records are regularly updated; keep an eye on the NEWS page which has reports and pictures of recent outings.

Ahead of us now is the Winter Programme; the subjects of the lectures are varied and so, hopefully, there will be some topics which will tempt you out on winter nights, joining us in good numbers to make the speakers' efforts worthwhile.

**Ann Mettam**

## **WINTER PROGRAMME 2013-4**

All meetings are held in **St. Robert's Centre, Robert Street, Harrogate** (opposite Waitrose), starting at **7.30 pm**. Parking is either on the adjacent streets or, with their kind permission, in the Waitrose car park.

### **2013**

9 October                    **Round the Horn: Cruising the Southern Oceans**  
                                     **Dr John R Mather BEM**

A 4584 mile voyage from Buenos Aires, south to the Falklands and Cape Horn, and north along the Pacific coast to Valparaíso.

23 October                    **Food for Free**  
                                     **Chris Bax of Taste The Wild**

A revelation of the food which is available for free, courtesy of Mother Nature; with a seasonal emphasis on fungi.

6 November                    **Conservation in the Nidd Gorge**  
                                     **Keith Wilkinson**

A journey from the formation of the Nidd Gorge through to the present day, its flora and fauna, and the efforts to conserve them.

20 November                    **Yorkshire Coast Nature**  
                                     **Steve Race**

The wildlife found along the Yorkshire coast, which offers an incredible variety of habitats, forests, woodlands, moorland and rugged coastline.

4 December                    **Ure Natural Heritage**  
                                     **Simon Warwick**

Nosterfield Nature Reserve is an example of the role mineral sites can play in enhancing the wildlife potential of our wider landscape.

### **2014**

8 January                    **A Naturalist with a Camera**  
                                     **Paul Irving**

Places and wildlife I've photographed – locally, elsewhere in the UK and beyond. Not just birds!

22 January

**Birding in Trinidad and Tobago**  
**Sheila Nash & Ros Wade**

A trip to these tropical islands noted for their wildlife.

5 February

**Biodiversity in the Harrogate Area**  
**Lynda Fussell**

HDBAG projects in recent years, why they started and how the group has evolved. Challenges, messages, results and benefits.

19 February

**Bird Detectives: the RSPB Investigations Team**  
**Bob Elliot**

Hear firsthand the inside story about some of RSPB's most challenging cases, bringing wildlife criminals to justice.

5 March

**Black Grouse Recovery Project**  
**Philip Warren**

How conservation measures have helped boost the population and range of this nationally declining bird.

19 March

**Regeneration of Bellflask Quarry**

**Bob Orange**

23 April

**Annual General Meeting**

**Obituary**

**Leslie Rush**

Leslie Rush died on 21 July 2013, aged 81, after a short illness. He had been a member and office-holder of the Society since 1976. A full obituary will appear in the 2013 Annual Report.

## FIELD MEETINGS WINTER/SPRING 2013/4

*The viability of minibus trips depends on the money received beforehand, as the bus has to be booked well in advance. It is therefore not possible to give refunds, except in exceptional circumstances such as bereavement.*

### 2013

**Tuesday 22 October** Minibus trip to **Hartlepool/Teesmouth**. Target species – birds, winter visitors and migrants. Cost £15. Leader: June Atkinson. Pick-up: Harrogate Trinity Church 08:00. Bring warm clothes and food/drinks for a full day. *see blue booking form*

**Tuesday 12 November** Minibus trip to **Druridge Bay** wetland complex, seashore and inshore waters. Target species – mainly birds, a wide variety of wetland species, possible raptors and buntings. This site is just north of Newcastle and entails a drive both ways of just over 2 hours. Cost £15. Leader: Colin Slator. Pick-up: Harrogate Trinity Church 08:00. Bring warm clothes and food/drinks for a full day. *see blue booking form*

**Tuesday 17 December** Minibus trip to **RSPB Dovestones Reserve and South Pennines**. Target species – Mountain Hare and birds. Cost £15. Leader: Colin Slator. Pick-up: Harrogate Trinity Church 08:00. Although there will possibly be some strenuous walking on tracks please still bring plenty of warm clothes and food/drink. *see blue booking form*

### 2014

**Tuesday 14 January Staveley YWT Reserve**. Target species – small mammal trapping, looking for evidence of larger animals and birds. Leaders: Colin Slator and others. Meet on site in the Staveley NR car park at 08:30. Please note we will finish at 12:30. Could be cold at this time of year standing around looking at traps !

**Tuesday 25 February Brimham Rocks and Sawley High Moor**. Target species – Stonechat, Crossbill, Redpoll etc. Leader: Colin Slator. Meet in the National Trust car park at Brimham at 09:00 (if not a member you will be charged). A full day, undertaking short walks (mostly on public rights of way). Bring food/drink.

## **Tuesday 25 March Lower Derwent NNR and Skipwith Common NNR.**

Target species – wildfowl, waders, raptors and passerines. Leader: Colin Slator. Meet at 08:00 at Harrogate Trinity Church in our OWN CARS. A full day, on the Derwent initially then Skipwith. Easy walking. Hope to have a NNR warden with us for part of the day.

**Tuesday 22 April** Minibus trip to **Geltsdale RSPB reserve**. Target species – mainly birds and possibly some early flowers. Cost £15. Leader: Colin Slator. Pick-up: Harrogate Trinity Church 08:00. A full day, birding Upper Teesdale en route. Easy walking on reserve trails. *see blue booking form*

From Colin Slator:

I could do with a volunteer photographer with a remit of taking pictures on these trips and then putting together a short lecture (I could do the talking), for one of the Society's members' evenings. It must be borne in mind of course that there will also be possibly six other trips during the summer.

Would members be interested in a possible, once a year, weekend away trip? What are your views?

## **FIELD MEETING REPORTS**

### **PENDLE: DOTTEREL**

**9 May 2013**

The forecast threatened cold, strong winds and with rain later in the morning. Absolutely correct, but despite this seven optimists met at Barley car park before moving on to a suitable parking spot near the foot of the hill. The walk to the top was steep and Ann received a well-deserved round of applause for reaching the top of the path. Once near the summit we spread out and headed towards the trig point looking for Dotterel, without success. We then moved on, spread out like a line of skirmishers, by this time not too hopeful of finding the birds. But within ten minutes Sue in the centre of the line spotted a Dotterel and stood still, arm raised, to summon the rest of us. We got excellent views of three birds, although we think there were more, and gently worked our way towards them, one of our group nearly treading on one in the process. All of us managed to get quite close to the birds without upsetting them and some good photo opportunities resulted, despite the high winds and frozen fingers. A retreat to the car park at Barley for some much needed warmth and

refreshment was followed by a visit to Stocks Reservoir where the rain was driving horizontally. Despite this, the Swallows and Sand Martins were struggling against the wind over the water in a search for food. We also saw a flypast by a male Merganser and some distant waders, geese and gulls. We saw in all eleven bird species at Pendle and twelve at Stocks Reservoir; not a great total but in view of the conditions we were delighted by our success and proud of our survival. My thanks to everyone who turned up.

**Tony Knowles**

## **BELLFLASK    26 May 2013**

A good turnout of 18 members arrived at Bellflask on a brilliantly sunny morning to be greeted by Brian and Susan Morland. Brian showed us around this fascinating gravel quarry which is being restored and is already a haven for wildlife. He treated us to his robust views on habitat management (intervene as little as possible) and was extremely critical of the destructive practices which have severely impacted on wildlife over the past 50 years. He showed us the agro-chemical polluted and wildlife-depleted River Ure which runs through the middle of the quarry. By contrast the Bellflask lakes were pristine and full of life. In the sunshine we were able to see into the depths of the crystal clear water, where trout and perch patrolled. We also had close-up views of Perch and Gudgeon, Brian having netted some the day before. He showed us the contents of his moth trap which were meagre due to a frost the previous night. Nevertheless we were able to see some interesting species such as Poplar Hawk Moth. Later Brian pointed out an albino rabbit, which was a sight new to most of us. After a couple of hours pleasantly spent some of us were beginning to feel the heat (that makes a change!) so we returned to the car park for our departure.

Many thanks to Brian and Susan for a splendid morning.

**Will Rich**

## **DALES HAY MEADOWS    4 June 2013**

Eleven of us set off from Trinity in bright sunshine which fortunately persisted all day. Prior to meeting Ian, our leader, we called in at Nosterfield, where the highlight was a distant Garganey. Ian and wife Mavis were waiting for us at the Old Glebe Field near Wendel's Lea (nowadays known as Wensley) and we were not disappointed in our quest for Burnt (Tip) and Green-winged Orchids, the latter of which were growing in profusion, mainly purple specimens but also some paler forms. Ian informed us that this YWT reserve is the northernmost outpost of the Burnt Orchid, which is sporadically distributed across the

country but mainly in the south. There was also a good display of typical meadow plants here, including some nice stands of Bugle and a few Twayblades. Some of us nearly trod on a Pheasant chick which was hunkered down in the grass but eventually scurried off to join its siblings in the hedge bottom. After a lunch stop at Berry's Farm Shop in Swinithwaite (Wensleydale) we drove over the top to Muker in Swaledale via Askrigg. Unfortunately the brakes on the minibus were proving none too reliable and the descent into Swaledale in low gear was somewhat nerve-wracking. We followed Ian and Mavis to Yellands Meadow, another YWT reserve, with another superb display of flowers, including Wood Anemones which surprisingly were growing in the open field. There was also a traditional hay barn with many original features inside. Our last stop was Muker village itself where some of us strolled across the meadows to the River Swale, obtaining distant views of a Cuckoo which was being harassed by a much smaller bird, probably a Meadow Pipit. The rest of the party waited in the sunshine in the village, where at least one was tempted to sample the delights of the local hostelry, The Farmers' Arms. On returning to Harrogate the minibus brakes finally packed up completely and smoke billowed from the front of the vehicle, so it was abandoned at Trinity.

Our thanks to Ian and Mavis for a great day out.

**Will Rich**

## **MALHAM TARN NNR**

**4 July 2013**

Eight stalwarts braved lashing rain as we were conducted through fen and bog at the reserve, which being at 1200ft can be rather uninviting in these conditions. However Peter Welsh, our articulate and knowledgeable guide, compensated for the weather with his sunny disposition as he described the various plant species encountered, including Northern Marsh Orchid, Bogbean, Marsh Cinquefoil, Cranberry, Sundew and (not so) Common Wintergreen. Unfortunately the weather ruled out sightings of any flies of the dragon, damsel or butter variety. Lunch was taken in the old orchid house at the Field Studies Centre after which the rain abated though the wind whipped up white horses on the water as we toured the meadows and wetlands on the tarn shore. There we enjoyed the sight of more orchids, mostly Northern Marsh but one or two Early Marsh and Heath Spotted. Also of interest were Bird's Eye Primrose, Butterwort and Marsh Lousewort. Finally Peter showed us the drier limestone meadows on the higher ground, where species such as Milkwort, Mountain Everlasting and Fragrant Orchid flourish. Very little bird life was seen during the day, the highlight being a number of Spotted Flycatchers,



one of which gave particularly good views. Just as we were saying our farewells the sun emerged, so we headed for tea and cakes in Malham village where the weather was considerably balmier by this time. Many thanks to Peter, the National Trust and Natural England for an enjoyable and instructive day.

**Will Rich**

## **FARNHAM GRAVEL PIT: MEMBERS' DAY    14 July 2013**

Thanks to good weather, about 30 members attended Members' Day this year. An optics and camera display, supplied by Marcus Grover from Northallerton, provided additional interest for those seeking new equipment. Butterfly species produced an excellent display with many Meadow Browns, Gatekeepers and Ringlets recorded. The White Letter Hairstreaks obliged, giving good opportunity for photographers. Dragonfly species were also numerous with Emperor and Black Tailed Skimmer, Brown Hawker and four species of damselfly. Many thanks go to David Alred who helped members to identify each species. The Common Terns were busy feeding their young on the islands, which are at last beginning to appear again as the water level recedes.

**Sue Coldwell**

## **MOTHS**

At the beginning of the year, your recorders really did begin to wonder what was happening – initially, there were some unusually early records of species such as Early Grey, then with the cold weather at the end of March (with snow falling on our moth traps!), running through into April and May, when catches barely reached double figures, plans to go out and about with our generators and moth traps had to be cancelled several times. This hadn't happened in the last eleven years since the Ripon Moth-ers first started peripatetic moth trapping – catches were very small, if not nonexistent, it was bizarre and cause for much discussion.

Then, with the warmer weather starting in June and the glorious weather of July and August, the moths responded accordingly! Two new species of macro-moth were recorded for the Society – Small Blood-vein at Staveley NR and Sycamore in a garden at Spofforth, together with at least four new species of micro moth: *Mompha conturbatella*, *Olethreutes palustrana*, *Dichrorampha aeratana* and most importantly, *Ancylis obtusana*, the first in the county since 1904! Garden Tiger, a species which has suffered a well-documented decline

in population nationally over the last 30 years, was more prevalent this summer, with a welcome increase in numbers particularly at Bellflask and also the odd specimen with more unusual wing markings.

In our own gardens, we have been fortunate enough to record a number of new species, including Twin-spotted Wainscot (both Recorders!), Blackneck, Haworth's Minor (a wanderer from the higher ground) and at the time of writing, with the odd migrant moth starting to appear, one of your Recorders has already been fortunate enough to trap a *Convolvulus* Hawk-moth – a very large and striking insect!

Of course, our traps will not be put away just yet, trapping will continue well into November with many exciting autumn species still to emerge and if the winds blow from a warm, southerly direction, there is still the anticipation of more unusual visitors to the garden. Everything will be detailed in our report of the year's moth recording and will make very interesting reading.

**Jill Warwick & Charlie Fletcher**

## **FARNHAM NEWS**

Water levels remained extremely high in **March** with all of the smaller islands still under water. Twenty-seven Whooper Swans flew over heading north-west on 3rd and two were present on 6th. The next day a drake Scaup and an adult Yellow-legged Gull were seen; an adult Mediterranean Gull was found on the North Lake on 12th. Fifty Meadow Pipits were feeding in the back field on 20th and Whooper Swans were still moving through with 21 heading west next day; 18 Goldeneyes were still present on 28th. Heavy snow on 23rd, very cold easterly winds at the end of the month and a frozen lake did little to encourage bird movement or the bird watchers but the first Chiffchaffs were three on 30th.

During the first week of **April**, 50 Redwings were present, 20 Meadow Pipits flew in and the first Sand Martin arrived on 7th. Swallows, Willow Warblers and a Blackcap moved through on 13th. On a southerly wind, five Black-tailed Godwits arrived the next day. Fifteen Chiffchaffs were present and three Arctic Terns were found feeding over the South Lake on 15th, with three more two days later. A pair of Common Terns arrived back on 17th; two adult Mediterranean Gulls made a brief appearance on 20th, when a drake Mandarin Duck was also present, staying for two days, during which time it displayed to a female Mallard! A Little Ringed Plover flew in on 25th and tried

desperately to find its breeding site which was still under water; a dark-bellied Brent Goose arrived on 27th.

The first two days of **May** saw the arrival of Lesser Whitethroat, Sedge and Garden Warblers. Patch Watch Day on 5th was uneventful as regards passage birds with only Dunlin recorded while warbler counts were three Garden Warblers, 13 Blackcaps, 12 Willow Warblers and ten Chiffchaffs. Lesser Whitethroats were scarce with only one pair plus a single individual seen. The highlight of the day was a Cuckoo that was perched and well seen. A Greenshank dropped in on 10th and a White Stork gave excellent views as it flew over on 12th; although there was an influx of this species into the country at this time, it was dismissed yet again on 'Bird Guides' as an escape from Harewood Bird Garden. Dr Mather informs me that, having spoken to the Curator at Harewood Bird Garden, he can confirm that there have been no free-flying White Storks at Harewood for the past three years. By mid-month, four pairs of Common Terns were present but all hope of Sand Martins returning to the wall had gone. This is the first time since the wall was built 15 years ago that it has not been occupied. The reason is not clear but bad weather conditions in Africa and Spain during their migration north could have severely depleted the population. The Brent Goose, which arrived at the end of April, eventually left on 23rd. The first breeding record of Shelduck at Farnham occurred on 31st, when a female appeared with eight ducklings; all had been predated by the next day, possibly by the Mute Swan which was breeding nearby.

There was a good start to **June** when eight Black Terns were present on 5th; a pair of Great Crested Grebes hatched three chicks and the first family party of Chiffchaffs was seen on 8th; a pair of Gadwall with eight ducklings appeared the next day. By 19th, five pairs of Common Terns were present. A pair of Great Crested Grebes hatched two chicks on the North Lake. A first-summer Little Gull was feeding well on 21st, when the Mute Swan appeared with five cygnets. Two Common Tern chicks were seen on 23rd and six Black-tailed Godwits flew around before departing to the west. A Whimbrel occurred on 28th, giving good views and calling as it flew off south.

By the first week in **July**, more Common Tern chicks were hatching, with three on 1st and two more on 3rd; one pair of Oystercatchers hatched two chicks and the first Tufted Duck ducklings appeared. A Little Egret was present on 8th when there was also a Black-tailed Godwit, and a Greenshank occurred the next day. Common Redstarts began to move through when two juveniles were seen on 11th and a female Marsh Harrier gave good views on 13th. Six Common Terns had fledged by 20th leaving just two to go; Common Redstart

and Greenshank were seen. Twenty-three Tufted Duck ducklings were counted. Our early morning birder, Ian Walker, was rewarded with a new record for Farnham when a Great White Egret flew over at 07.30 on 24th - a long overdue species! There were six sightings of Common Redstarts during the month and a Black Swan on 31<sup>st</sup> gave no cause for excitement.

On 1st **August**, an adult Little Gull flew south in the evening and Lapwing numbers had built to 220 at their daytime roost on the islands. A Little Grebe with three chicks appeared on 5th. Green Sandpipers and Common Redstarts were present during the first two weeks and a Marsh Harrier flew over on 14th. The last two Common Tern young had fledged by 18th, making a total of eight successfully reared. Spotted Flycatchers were in evidence, the first on 18th and good numbers of Chiffchaffs were moving through. There was a sign of approaching autumn when a juvenile female Peregrine Falcon flew over. The evening bird watchers were rewarded on 22nd with a Green Sandpiper followed later by a Wood Sandpiper. Common Sandpipers, Little Ringed Plovers and twelve individual Common Redstarts were recorded during the month.

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

## **CALL FOR RECORDS**

All members – please send your observations and records for 2012 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.

## **CONTACT DETAILS**

**General Secretary: Mrs Sue Coldwell**

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**Membership Secretary: Ms Val Smith**

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

## FARNHAM MANAGEMENT DAYS

### ALL SUNDAYS

2013: 29<sup>th</sup> September    27<sup>th</sup> October    24<sup>th</sup> November

2014: 26<sup>th</sup> January    23<sup>rd</sup> February    23<sup>rd</sup> March

Please meet at the hide at 10 am

***ALL HANDS WELCOME FOR THIS ESSENTIAL WORK!***

