

Harrogate & District Naturalists' Society



Supporting:

The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
The Botanical Society of Britain & Ireland The British Trust for Ornithology
The Yorkshire Naturalists' Union The Yorkshire Wildlife Trust
Butterfly Conservation The British Dragonfly Society

Registered Charity No. 503860

AUTUMN NEWSLETTER 2021



FROM THE PRESIDENT

One impact of the last two years of restrictions has been the greater public interest in the wildlife of our immediate surroundings. For example, it is notable how many people have found an interest in insects (and other invertebrates) - we have recently added some stunning images of insects to the Photo Gallery on our website, which you can see at the bottom of the home page. Sadly, just as interest is growing, our own expert on beetles and other insects, Jim Jobe, has now stepped down as our Recorder for these groups. We are most grateful for his contribution to the Society records over the years and for his detailed and well-illustrated section in the Annual Reports – his role will be hard to fill. If there are any members interested in stepping into his shoes, as Recorder for even a part of his scope, please do let Council know. Jim has kindly offered to continue to help members with the identification of their insect finds, from specimens or good quality photographs.

Recently, Bill Ely, the YNU Recorder of parasitic wasps, has sent me his records from our area, which I will be adding to the website, and he hopes very much that our members will take note in particular of plant galls caused by this fascinating group of insects and send him any records. On my own doorstep I have just found both Knopper Gall and Silky Spangle Gall on oak trees, each caused by different species with their own intricate life cycles.

The full Photos gallery on the website now has a vast selection of wildlife images taken by members over the past few years and is well worth a browse. The Sightings section is certainly worth a regular visit – it is by far the most popular part of the website and new entries are made almost every day, which is a great way to discover and promote the biodiversity of our area.

As you will read in the newsletter, we are hoping very much to resume indoor meetings for the Winter season but will keep this under review as the pandemic continues to disrupt our way of life. Our series of virtual meetings by Zoom last Winter were a success and we can switch our talks to be on-line again if necessary. I very much look forward to seeing you all at our forthcoming meetings, whether in person or over the Internet. In the meantime, I hope you keep well and enjoy the natural world around us.

Nick Gaunt

ARE YOU SIGNED UP TO RECEIVE HDNS EMAILS? HAVE YOU CHECKED THE LATEST EVENTS ON OUR SMART NEW WEBSITE? *READ ON...*

This last 18 months has of course necessitated changes to the HDNS programme of indoor talks and outdoor field meetings. Events have had to be cancelled and new ones put in at short notice. This state of affairs is likely to continue for some time, so the biannual Newsletter is no longer sufficient for members to know what is going on. There are two other ways for Council to keep members informed: by email, and via the HDNS website, which is also linked to Facebook pages. Of course, these require members to be online. But the cost and labour involved mean a posted message to the entire membership for every alteration in the programme is out of the question.

It's very fortunate that the new greatly expanded and improved website was up and running in time for the first lockdown. Upcoming events, recent sightings, illustrated reports of trips and a stunning gallery of members' photos are all available, reformatted to be easily viewed on a Smartphone or Tablet as well as a desktop. Do take the time to explore the website, it is regularly updated and as well as HDNS news there are links to many local activities and issues of interest to naturalists.

As for email, we appear to have about 100 members who are not on Richard Bion's mailing list. Richard's postings are the most useful way of reminding members of imminent society events, and providing information of local activities such as the exciting new Longlands project, or just communications from other members with information or requests. If you have not previously received Richard's emails, but are now in a position to do so, please contact the membership secretary (memsec.hdns1@talktalk.net) to make sure you don't miss out!

Similarly, when the evening lectures of last winter were replaced by some Zoom talks, the numbers attending were a very small fraction of the membership; we will certainly need to replace at least some of the forthcoming lecture series and it is a shame for people to miss excellent illustrated talks, and also disappointing for the presenter.

The fluidity of the current situation, and the general trend away from paper posting, mean that we will be increasingly relying on the flexibility of electronic communication. Please keep checking the website!

If you are unable to access the internet, you can always find out what is going on by contacting a member of Council. We are suggesting 3 people you can telephone for updates:

Val Smith – 01423 503932

Muff Upsall – 01423 340694

Kerry Morrison – 07811 806409

This is especially important for checking the winter lectures, where decisions to change from venue to Zoom and vice versa may be made at the last minute. Everyone should be able to get the most out of their membership!

HDNS WINTER LECTURES – NEW VENUE, COVID ARRANGEMENTS

We have a new venue for the Winter lecture series. This is because the St Roberts Centre closed during lockdown, though we had been considering a move for some time as several features of the St Robert Centre, for example the parking, the lack of a ground floor kitchen and the cost, were unsatisfactory.

For 2021-22 in the first instance, we will be using the Friends Meeting House, 12a Queen Parade, HG1 5PP. It is a large airy room with a nearby kitchen and plenty of on street parking.

The first lecture of the year on 6th October is Alastair Fitter's "Askham Bog: Yorkshire's Biodiversity Hotspot". Professor Fitter, CBE, FRS is a much sought-after speaker and we were particularly excited to have him to inaugurate the season. But of course, there is still uncertainty regarding Covid and the advisability of mixing indoors. Last winter, a number of our speakers gave illustrated Zoom talks. These were excellent, though of course no substitute for a face-to-face meeting, but no more than 20 members joined them. It seems therefore, that we have nothing to lose by planning to open the season with a traditional lecture in our beautiful new room, with Covid precautions. Alastair is happy with this, indeed it was his suggestion.

We can learn from this experience and continue to play it by ear through the autumn. Of course, if the Covid situation becomes drastically worse we will have to think again! We will keep members posted through Richard Bion's emails, but please keep checking the website for the latest news.

Council would welcome members' feedback on this decision.

Muff Upsall, programme secretary.

WINTER 2021 TO 2022 – LECTURES AND FIELD TRIPS

HDNS WINTER LECTURES 2021-2022 PROGRAMME

note: new venue, Friends Meeting House, Queen Parade

Check the website (or phone – see page 4) before each talk to make sure it will be going ahead in the hall, and not by Zoom

Date	Name	Title
6 th October 2021	Alastair Fitter	Askham Bog: Yorkshire's Biodiversity Hotspot
20 th October 2021	Kevin Walker	Wildlife of Colonsay
3 rd November 2021	Steve Race	Wild Shetland
17 th November 2021	Charlie Fletcher	Why should I be interested in micro moths?
1 st December 2021	Bill Hall	Flowers & Polar Bears of Svalbard
15 th December 2021	Nigel Harcourt-Brown	Feathers, beaks and claws
12 th January 2022	John Preston	Garden Bird Watch
26 th January 2022	Richard Bunce	Birds from the Yard
9 th February 2022	SIGB	St Aidans – Destroyed by mining, restored by Nature
23 rd February 2022	Kelvin Smith	Encounters with Hares
9 th March 2022	Becki Lawson	The Garden Wildlife Project

BOTANICAL SEASIDE JAUNT, WEDNESDAY, 10 NOVEMBER WHITBY MUSEUM, PANNETT PARK

After the success of the 2019 trips to the waste incinerator, we decided that indoor venues in the winter make a welcome change! So here is a new venture – Whitby Museum Herbarium, to be displayed to us by the Curator, Tamsyn Naylor. (Read about the herbarium on the museum website – choose What's Here, Collections, then "Pressed Flowers").

There are more than 10,000 specimens in the herbarium; obviously we will only see a selection, we can suggest particular plants we would like to see beforehand. They have been collected historically by local botanists, some are very beautiful, some very rare.

There is plenty more to see in the museum including geological specimens, a natural history section, art gallery and of course local maritime history. Some of you who are not rabid botanists may like to come along for these other exhibits - or even just to explore Whitby, watch birds and paddle in the sea! The museum has a café and if there is enough interest we could organise a group lunch. There is a limit of 12 on the actual herbarium experience, which is booked for **1:30 pm and will last about 2 hours.**

It is approximately 1 hour 45 mins to drive to Whitby so we are organising coach transport for those who wish to use it. This will be a regular public coach run by Globe travel, so it will not cost us any more if few of us use it. If you book on the trip, you can choose to drive yourself or take the Globe Holidays coach; if the latter, the cost will be £19, £18 with concession (over 60). Adjacent seats (a Covid precaution) may be secured at a cost of £5 and these should be requested and paid for at the time of booking. (Note that there is also a modest charge for entry to the museum).

Globe coach pick-up times are as follows. (Other pick-up points may be available at the time of booking):

Harrogate: 9:00am St Mary's Walk (Montpellier)

Knaresborough: 9:20am York Place Car Park
(behind the Marquis of Granby pub)

Depart **Whitby** approx. 4:30pm.

If you wish to visit the **Herbarium** and travel by **Globe Coach**, you should:

First contact Muff or Sonia (contact details below) to book your place for the herbarium;

Second ring Globe Holidays on **01226 299900** or **01423 321246** to book a place on the coach; you will need to pay by card and specify your preferred pick-up point. (If you have any problems with this, or any other queries, please contact Muff or Sonia and we will try to help).
Please ring and book before the end of October.

Contact Details:

Muff Upsall

01423 340694, 07812 356177

mjupsall@btinternet.com

The Paddocks

Staveley HG5 9LQ

Sonia Starbuck

07522 035161

soniastarbuck50@gmail.com

43 Birkdale Avenue

Knaresborough HG5 0LS

WINTER FIELD TRIPS 2021 – 2022

DATE	VENUE	TIME	TARGET	LEADER
Wednesday 10 November 2021	Whitby	See separate information: 'Botanical Seaside Jaunt'		
Tuesday 14 December 2021	Quarry Moor, SE311694 then local bird sites	9:15 at Quarry Moor; finish at lunch time then Christmas pub meal if Covid permits	Winter wildlife	Colin Slator
Tuesday 8 March 2022	TBA	TBA	Early spring wildlife	Colin Slator
Saturday 9 April 2022	Bishop Monkton – Ripon City Wetlands, returning by bus	9:00 Bishop Monkton Village Hall, HG3 3TN Finish approx. 12:30	Birds and more	Peter Bowman

BRITISH TRUST FOR ORNITHOLOGY

BTO Members and Survey Volunteers have been informed that at the end of the year I will stand down from my position as Regional Representative for Yorkshire (Central) which I have held since 1991. May I take this opportunity to thank HDNS members who have contributed to the work of the Trust at any time during my time as RR. We are not likely to appoint my replacement before the end of the year but I am staying on as Regional Organiser of surveys for the foreseeable future so I'm still a local point of contact for BTO matters.

Contact details: 01423 567382, 07900 301112. My BTO email address will remain valid until the end of the year: mikebtorep@gmail.com

Mike Brown

FIELD TRIP REPORTS

We have reports from a dozen field trips, too many to include in full in the newsletter: an extract from each one is given here, and the full account is available on the website. If you can't access the website, Val Smith will be happy to send you a paper copy of a full report.

Nosterfield Complex & YWT Ripon Wetlands

30/03/2021

We arrived at Nosterfield Nature Reserve the day after Covid restrictions were lifted and the prospect of excellent weather made it an ideal start to our birding year. A Knot in winter plumage was a good start, with Ruffs, Black-tailed Godwits, Avocets and Ringed Plovers providing added interest. Ten species of ducks were present, a female Scaup being the centre of attraction, with a pair of Pintails a close second. The chance of seeing some early warblers prompted a walk down to the North Hide where, as expected, Chiffchaff was the first to be heard and a Sky Lark was singing high above us. . . . we moved on to YWT Ripon Wetlands. Water Rail, Goosander, Marsh Tit, Linnet, Siskin, two Green Woodpeckers and a Red Kite were added to the list, Nosterfield having produced most of the species. A total of 69 species was seen.

June E. Atkinson

Aubert Ings

16/04/2021

Aubert Ings is a traditionally managed unimproved hay meadow with flora typical of neutral grassland. The underlying rock is southern magnesian limestone, with overlying alluvial deposits from the adjacent River Nidd . . . Despite being a hay meadow, there were species typical of woodland such as Dog's Mercury (*Mercurialis perennis*). . . the most unusual species found were Wild Tulip (*Tulipa sylvestris*) and Snakeshead Fritillary (*Fritillaria meleagris*). The deep yellow tulips were generally high on the earth banks and naturalised amongst the grass. The fritillaries, in the meadow itself, were both the checkered purple and also the plain white variant.

Hazel Mitford

Gouthwaite Reservoir and Scar House

27/04/2021

Since our last visit to Gouthwaite in 2019, a real eye opener awaited us as a forest of trees is now growing in the middle of the reservoir. This is due to the lowering of the water level for a considerable time in order to carry out work on the dam wall. The large expanse of exposed mud attracted Common Sandpipers, Dunlins, Ringed Plovers, Common Redshanks, a displaying Little Ringed Plover and two White Wagtails the nominate race our Pied Wagtail. We were surprised to see two Swifts flying overhead.. . the weather conditions were not ideal, it was very cold and dull with an easterly airstream which did not induce the birds to be very active . . . we did well to achieve a total of 69 species.

June Atkinson

RSPB Fairburn Reserve

11/5/2021

On our arrival at the car park, a Whitethroat and a Sedge Warbler were singing, Goldfinches were in the hedgerow and Swifts flying overhead. A Shoveler was found from the footpath. We walked along the wooded streamside hearing Chiffchaff, Blackcap and Song Thrush . . . A Whitethroat was performing its song flight display, characteristic of this species, while a nearby Carrion Crow was showing an interest. . . . After lunch, we drove down to Lindyke. The main songbird was a Blackcap; also seen were Greylag and Canada Geese, a Common Tern and duck species . . . the rain started again and, as it became heavier, the path seemed to be twice as long on the return hike. May is regarded as one of the prime months for birdwatching, but this year it was, literally, a washout! Sixty species were recorded.

June E. Atkinson

Oak Beck and Birk Craggs

26/5/2021

Kevin Walker described the unique situation of Oak Beck, downstream from RHS Harlow Carr Gardens and its non-native plants . . . many alien plants have “escaped” the gardens and are carried down Oak Beck, into the River Nidd and eventually, presumably, to the Humber. Some, for example Skunk Cabbage, have already proved invasive . . . Most striking was Abraham-Isaac-Jacob, related to borage and with similar hairy leaves . . . the Pick-a-back plant, so called because it bears tiny plantlets on its leaves, again a strategy for effective propagation. There were Fringecups, Broadleaved Cuckoo-flower, Aconite-leaved Buttercup, Caucasian Pennycress – a veritable world tour. Even the Ivy was Persian . . . Kevin spotted from a distance that what appeared to us an anonymous-looking clump was the Greater Tussock-sedge, a rare species whose large tussocks are supposed to have inspired John Wyndham’s Triffid fantasy.

Muff Upsall

High Batts Nature Reserve

5/6/2021

High Batts is situated on the banks of the River Ure and comprises 32 acres of mixed woodland with some open clearings . . . We managed to find over 100 plant species during our visit, with Comfrey being very, very plentiful in almost all areas. We managed six species of speedwell, including the Slender Speedwell with its delicate leaves and stem. Marjoram, Thyme and Water Mint were all present, together with the Burnet Rose with its lovely scent. It was also very pleasing to see Viper’s-bugloss emerging. These striking plants of high summer have a blue intensity which is just gorgeous. Of the ferns in the reserve, Male Fern was the dominant species. We also spotted several grasses and sedges including False and Barren Brome and Spring and Glaucous Sedge . . . The leafy surroundings made bird spotting very difficult, particularly since some of us were occasionally crawling around on our hands and knees. Naturalists who are able to do both at the same time are very clever . . .

Sonia Starbuck

Lumley Moor Reservoir

17/6/2021

The site is surrounded by planted birch/Scots pine woodland giving dappled shade. It is noted as one of the few UK sites of pillwort (*Pilularia globulifera*), an atypical fern. Accompanied by the sound of curlew on the surrounding moors, and willow warblers amongst the trees, we ambled the pleasant walk which proved to be mostly typical acid vegetation . . . Splashes of colour were given by bugle (*Ajuga reptans*), bitter vetch (*Lathyrus linifolius*), marsh cinquefoil (*Potentilla palustris*) and red campion (*Silene dioica*). Sadly, the highly invasive New Zealand pigmyweed was growing densely around the water's edge. And the pillwort, despite careful searching, could not be found. As consolation a cuckoo, silent till we left, finally made its presence felt.

Hazel Mitford

Quarry Moor, Ripon

23/6/2021

The site contains grassland, scrub, woodland and Permian magnesian limestone rocks which are seen nowhere else in Britain. Those of us who were new to the site were genuinely astonished to find such an immense diversity of species. The yellow carpets of Birdsfoot Trefoil and Creeping Cinquefoil, the bright blues of Speedwells and Ground Ivy, the creamy flowers of Elder, the luscious green of Black Bryony. The most important plant to mention is the parasitic Thistle Broomrape, *Orobanche reticulata* whose host is normally the Creeping Thistle. This is a rare and protected plant in the UK, growing only on a few grassland sites in Yorkshire . . . We came across Bee Orchids . . . and a bright red Robin's Pincushion, the gall of the wasp *Diplolepis rosae*

Sonia Starbuck

Afternoon Walk to Beaver Dyke Reservoir

6/7/2021

Beaver Dyke Reservoirs are two small supply reservoirs built in 1890, situated in the valley of the Oak Beck. A wide footpath between fields led downhill with abundant verges protected by stone walls with a drainage ditch on the left, producing many interesting sedges in the damp environment . . . Down in the picturesque valley it opened into grassland which ran to the water's edge, punctuated with stands of Marsh Thistle and Creeping Thistle and where the turf was short, clumps of Mouse-eared Hawkweed waved their lemon-coloured heads. The few butterflies included Meadow Brown and Ringlet. A stunning example of Dryad's Saddle was seen on a well-rotted tree stump . . .

Sue Coldwell

Trees of Valley Gardens

26/7/2021

Who knew there are so many wonderful and special trees in our very own Valley Gardens? I didn't - I must have walked through the gardens a million times and never really looked up! Our guide was Sue Wood, Horticultural Officer for Harrogate Borough Council. Sue briefly outlined the history of the site, beginning in 1841 when the Harrogate Improvement Act approved a footpath across Bogs Field to provide access to the mineral springs. In 1888, as part of the celebrations for Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee, a competition was held for a design to

change this damp area into a park. It is hoped to plant a number of new trees to celebrate the Queen's Jubilee next year. . . *Ann goes on to give a list of notable trees, a strong encouragement to "look up"*
Ann FitzGerald

Morning walk at Farnham Gravel Pit

9/8/2021

Our first stop was to admire the smart new roof over part of the Bird Hide . . . Richard Campbell's sharp eyes spotted just one small plant of Pink Water Speedwell *Veronica catenata* growing in front of an area fenced off with wire netting. These 2 enclosed areas date from the 1990s. Old photos of FGP show that this area was an extensive rabbit warren with minimal vegetation. Once the wire netting was installed by the HDNS Management Committee typical calcareous grassland plants began to appear . . . Numerous plants of Blue Fleabane *Erigeron acris* flourish on the dry banks and slopes at the southern end of the lake . . . Kevin Walker often refers to Farnham as one of the richest sites for plant diversity in our area . . .
Kerry Morrison

North Cave Wetlands

18/8/2021

The car park had a flock of Long-tailed Tits, a Chaffinch and a Chiffchaff as I arrived. Sand Martins and Swallows were overhead . . . the usual waterbirds included a Mute Swan family group, Mallard, Tufted Ducks, Coot, Moorhen, Little and Great Crested Grebes. Three Green Sandpipers flew over towards the Island Lake, the favoured lake of the waders. Species present were 13 Common Snipe, 1 Wood Sandpiper, 14 Green Sandpipers, 2 Greenshank, 4 Ruff, 2 Ringed Plover and 1 Common Sandpiper. One member's description was "Wader Fest". Waterfowl included Shoveler, Mallard and Teal plus Coot, Moorhen and 2 Little Egret . . . The species total for the day was 46. I noticed a lack of small birds on our walk, notably warblers, tits, and hedgerow birds.
Mike Smithson

Nosterfield Nature Reserve

8/9/2021

A very warm sunny day . . . A good selection of waders was present viewed from the screen. 2 Greenshank, 4 Ruff, 5 Golden Plover, 1 Dunlin, 2 Snipe, 2 Redshank, 5 Ringed Plover, 1 Black-tailed Godwit plus large numbers of Lapwings and Curlews. One unidentified wader seen at a distance was later identified as a Pectoral Sandpiper. They are annual vagrants to the UK from North America. Ducks included Gadwall, Shoveler, Mallard and a Garganey. The heron family was well represented by 2 Grey Heron, 3 Little Egrets and a fly-by Great Egret which circled high and flew away to the West. Lesser Black-backed Gulls and Black-headed Gulls were here in low numbers . . .
Mike Smithson

MOTHS

A good year with some large catches in warm summer weather after an awful spring, with very few moths due to the cold, wet conditions, especially in May. At the time of writing, no new species of macro moth has been reported yet (still three months left), but several species spreading in the south of the county are heading our way, such as Small Ranunculus and Chocolate-tip and are likely to appear soon. Two very attractive species, namely Tree-lichen Beauty and Toadflax Brocade may be not far behind. All will be detailed in full in the 2021 Annual Report.

Ten new micro species have been recorded so far: *Phyllonorycter salicicolella* bred from goat willow at Killinghall Country Park, whilst *Phyllonorycter tenerella*, bred from hornbeam at Studley Roger, was also a first record for VC64. *Phyllonorycter roboris* was bred from oak at Galphay woods; *Amphisbatis incongruella*, another VC64 record, was 'swept' from heather on Heyshaw Moor, whilst *Stictea mygindiana* was bred from larval spinings on cowberry, also on Heyshaw Moor. *Denisia albimaculea* was attracted to light at Hackfall Woods, another new record for VC64 and *Morophaga choragella* attracted to light at Hutton Conyers, was a first record for VC65. *Acrocercops brongniardiella* mines were found at Spa Gill, also new for VC64, whilst mines of *Mompha langiella* were found at Hackfall Woods. Lastly, the second record for Yorkshire of *Endothenia ustulana* was attracted to light at High Batts NR (also new for VC65) - the previous Yorkshire record was in 1869!

The following species were all new records for VC65: *Caloptilia betulicola* at Nosterfield NR on 30 March, larval cases of *Coleophora vitisella* and *Coleophora pyrrhulipennella* found in Colsterdale on 15 April, **Devon Carpet** at Hutton Conyers on 14 June and the third for the HDNS. *Hellinsia lienigianus* at High Batts NR on 4 July, *Crambus uliginosellus*, three at a site south of Masham in August, *Tinea pellionella* found indoors at Langthorpe on 29 June and *Cydalima perspectalis*, also at Langthorpe, on 25 July.

With the availability of pheromone lures from lepidopterist suppliers, good numbers of Lunar Hornet Moths and Red-tipped Clearwings were reported attracted to pheromones during summer. Finally, we are hopeful for some exciting migrant species, particularly with the unusual early September temperatures/easterly airflow from the Continent.

Follow us on Twitter: @JillWarwick and @DoubleKidney

Jill Warwick & Charles Fletcher

FARNHAM NEWS

On 1st **April**, 17 Chiffchaffs and a Blackcap were heard and 24 Sand Martins counted. A fine drake Garganey was located near the hide on 4th, when it spent the day either sleeping or hiding in the nearby willows; unfortunately for the listers, it was not present the following day. An Osprey gave good, if brief, views as it flew over on 9th. Next day, a Black-tailed Godwit was present on the main island, the only island above the water level; as it tried to sleep, it was surrounded by geese and Black-headed Gulls. The breeding Oystercatchers were also having a difficult time, their two nests with eggs being destroyed by the feet of fighting geese. Two Mediterranean Gulls, looking splendid in their breeding plumage, flew in mid-month. A pair of Great Crested Grebes on the North Lake had two young on 20th. A Snow Goose appeared next day; this was a former breeding species locally in the 1980s, being first recorded at Ripley Lake where they reared four young. The resident species breeding on the island did not welcome two adult Herring Gulls that arrived each afternoon for several days, attracted by discarded goose eggs. A Common Sandpiper was seen on 22nd, a Nuthatch was located at its nest hole, eight Blackcaps were singing, Whitethroat, Reed and Garden Warblers were also present. Two Common Terns flew in on 26th, when the first successful breeding by a Mallard was recorded as a duck appeared with ten ducklings. Maximum wildfowl counts for the month were: Canada Goose – 62, Greylag Goose – 45, Mute Swan – 4, Gadwall – 3, Wigeon – 2, Mallard – 11, Tufted Duck – 38, Great Crested Grebe – 8, Coot – 33.

A pair of Oystercatchers, desperate to find a suitable breeding site, on 2nd **May** decided that the hide roof would have to do. Two eggs were laid in the roof channels but the inevitable happened the following day when one egg was broken on the ground and the other could not be found – a Carrion Crow with a nest nearby may be the culprit. During the first week, a Sedge Warbler was singing along with a Lesser Whitethroat, a Swift and three Common Terns were also seen. The Annual Bird Census was carried out on 9th but the start was delayed until the rain stopped at 7 a.m. Warbler numbers were on a par with the 2019 count; six species were present on the day but Sedge Warbler was elusive, though seen later in the month. Yellow Wagtail was the only passage bird recorded. Heavy rain continued through the month. A second Great Crested Grebe on the North Lake hatched young on 11th but they were missing on 15th. As the water level on the South Lake rose, it was evident that the Great Crested Grebes had lost their nest as they began to look for another site. A few years ago, two car tyres had been placed on one of the islands to provide a nest site for Common Terns and so, when the water level began to fall and one tyre emerged, the Great Crested Grebes took the opportunity and began to deposit water weed on top of it, completing the nest in four days. A pair of Common Terns found

space on the platform to build their nest, much to the annoyance of the resident Black-headed Gulls. A pair of Nuthatches was seen at the nest hole in a tree by the North Lake. Due to the slow growth of the *Phragmites* in the South Lake the Reed Warblers, although present, showed no sign of breeding; a pair of Reed Warblers on the North Lake was more successful. The 19 nest boxes were checked during the month and 14 were occupied with equal numbers of Great and Blue Tits, the latter having 11 eggs in one box. Sand Martins were breeding in the wall by the end of May. Mammals recorded during the month were an Otter on 2nd, also Weasel and Roe Deer. Six species of butterfly were seen during the latter half of the month: Brimstone, Green-veined White, Orange Tip, Small Copper, Common Blue and Speckled Wood. Dragonflies present were Four-spot Chaser and Azure, Common Blue, Blue-tailed and Large Red Damselflies. The total rainfall for the month was 100mm, 22mm falling on one day.

A count was made in **June** to record how many of the 79 holes in the Sand Martin wall were occupied. It is carried out by watching each of the holes, which are not numbered, to see if birds are entering it, which can be rather stressful on the eyes; this year 51 holes were occupied. The pair of Mute Swans appeared with five cygnets on 14th. The Society's Council members made their annual visit on 16th, when the planned management work was outlined and any possible problems arising were discussed. At the end of the afternoon, one observant Council member alerted us to the presence of a Hobby and we recorded our first Hobby sighting of the year. The atrocious weather of the last two months was forgotten as the temperature rose to 25° C on 5th. The pair of Great Crested Grebes, which had their nest on the tyre, hatched one chick which was, unfortunately, seen for only one day; although the other eggshell was broken, a second chick was not seen. Little Grebes appeared this month after being absent since March, as the water level was now falling. The pair of Common Terns on the platform had two chicks but these were missing four days later, as was a Black-headed Gull chick. Maximum wildfowl counts for the month were: Canada Goose – 70, Greylag Goose – 129 + 44, Mute Swan – 4, Gadwall – 4, Mallard – 16, Tufted Duck – 30, Great Crested Grebe – 4 pairs + 5 young, Coot – 41. Also recorded during the month were Common Blue, Red Admiral and Small Tortoiseshell butterflies and nine species of dragonfly:- Banded Demoiselle, Large Red, Azure, Common Blue, Blue-tailed, Emperor, 4-spot Chaser, Common Darter, Black-tailed Skimmer.

July is usually the month when return migration begins and, true to form, three Black-tailed Godwits dropped in on 4th and were present all day. Successful breeding of Sedge and Reed Warblers was confirmed, with family parties of both species being seen in the area of the North Lake. Sixteen Tufted Duck ducklings squeezed through the otter fence around the North Lake to gain access to the South Lake much to the anxiety of the female which was too large to squeeze

through; eventually they were reunited. Post-breeding flocks of Lapwings usually arrive from July, but numbers were much reduced as the smaller islands they normally occupy were under water. A Little Egret was present on 17th and a Common Sandpiper, which appeared on 24th, stayed until the end of the month. The pair of Common Terns made frequent return visits but was undecided as to whether to make another breeding attempt. An unusual place to see Mistle Thrushes is on top of a pylon, but a party of six was recorded there on 24th. A Little Grebe was seen to have only one chick, it is hoped that the second pair with a nest will be more successful. Another Tufted Duck, with four ducklings was recorded, also a female with only one chick.

It was a most successful year for Pyramidal Orchids, with a count of 86 flowering in the fenced enclosure and 64 outside on 21st. Butterflies recorded during the month were: Large Skipper, Small Skipper, Large White, Small White, Green-veined White, Red Admiral, Small Tortoiseshell, Painted Lady, Common Blue, Speckled Wood, Gatekeeper and Ringlet.

A Hobby flew over on 1st **August** as it chased dragonflies giving two sightings during the morning and two juvenile Buzzards were calling above the nearby wood. During the first week, a Common Sandpiper was present, 38 Long-tailed Tits flew past the hide and an adult Common Tern was found dead. It was taken, for closer examination, to Dr John Mather who found it to be a male in good condition, but one wing was broken in several places. An Egyptian Goose was present on 7th, with a juvenile Ruff and a Redshank two days later. The pair of Little Grebes with a nest on 24th July, hatched one young on 11th August and continued to incubate. A Black-tailed Godwit was attempting to find space on one of the islands amongst the many Lapwings, two Common Sandpipers were present, also a Little Egret on 19th. A family party of Green Woodpeckers was around feeding most days and the first Kingfisher of the year was seen on 18th along with 44 Coots, 340 Lapwings and ten Chiffchaffs. The Little Grebe remained on its nest for six days after the first young one hatched, during which time the chick had stayed on the parent's back, until two more young hatched on 22nd – rather a protracted effort! An Osprey flew round on 21st and a drake Mandarin Duck was seen next day. Three juvenile Lesser Whitethroats took refuge in the stick pile on a wet morning and two Common Sandpipers were feeding along the lakeside edges. At the end of the month, a second wave of 750 moulting Greylag Geese descended and covered all of the islands which were above the water level. A Swift flew over on 28th and a Green Sandpiper was present on 30th.

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

2021

SEPTEMBER	26 th	Safe working distances to be observed.
OCTOBER	24 th	Please take hand sanitisers and gloves.
NOVEMBER	28 th	If any member does not wish to take part,
DECEMBER	12 th	please let me know.

2022

JANUARY	16 th
FEBRUARY	20 th
MARCH	20 th

All are on SUNDAYS.

Please meet at the hide at 10 a.m.

Further details from June on 01423 885612.



Volunteers needed at Farnham

Crisis is on the horizon for Farnham Gravel Pit and this is an appeal to our members to step forward and avoid its arrival! The Management Team now consists of only six members and there is more maintenance work to be done than six people can keep up with, each Sunday, in the months from October to March.

The winter management work consists of regular jobs such as cutting back the willow, removing this and other debris from in front of the hide, raking up after

the strimming done by the contractor, controlling brambles and branches overhanging paths, bagging up sand to take out to the Sand Martin wall.

Details of the work of the Management team can be seen on the website on the Farnham Gravel Pit page, under Farnham updates; or go to <https://www.hdns.org.uk/farnham-gravel-pit/farnham-updates/>

If any member is interested in joining the Farnham Management Team, June Atkinson, Honorary Warden for Farnham would be pleased to show them round and show the type of work involved.

Please contact June Atkinson on 07811929925
or email kerry.morrison5@gmail.com

HARROGATE NATURALISTS' FORUM ON FACEBOOK

Our **private Facebook Forum** continues to be very active in covering most corners of natural history with some great photos and wide-ranging discussions. Currently the Forum has 28 members but we would like to see as many more HDNS members as possible supporting and taking advantage of this facility. The discussions can be light-hearted or more serious but are not accessible to the general public. The photos don't have to be exhibition quality, just share what you have seen. You don't have to be an expert, asking questions is encouraged. We are happy for you to join and just silently follow the friendly exchanges but of course we hope that at some stage you will feel able to add your own two penn'orth to the proceedings! This is a great way to keep in touch with other Society members and enjoy your natural history, without restricting numbers, wearing a mask or social distancing!

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 our 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! We hope to see many more of you on the Forum soon!

Robert Marshall

A ROUNDUP OF WILDLIFE ON THE FARM

We'll start with insects. Last year was the first year I have seen Ringlet butterfly on the farm. This year the same hedgerow had dozens of them, plus a few Meadow Browns. The hedge had thick patches of tall grass either side- we'll see what appears next year. A small black Ant was seen on the lawn. Investigation revealed three areas where these ants were busy. About a quarter were the size of ordinary field ants. On 20th August my wife Elizabeth noticed a lot of activity round the nests. More ants appeared with wings. Later all had gone on a mating flight. The strange thing is all the workers just seemed to disappear. The first time in a hundred years these have been seen. Put it down to Brexit or Global Warming!

A poor year on the bird front. A wet, cold spring ruined a lot of nests. I live about a quarter of a mile from the farm. Six blackbird nests between the houses managed to rear one young between them at the first broods. The second attempt not much better. A solitary young Thrush was seen from the one pair of Song Thrushes on the farm. Not a good advert for Throstle Nest Farm. For the second year running, the pair of Mute Swans lost all their brood. Four pairs of reared two young, one nest being under two feet of water for about a week. The last pair of Curlew in the area nested in one of our silage fields. The nest was found and an area about the size of HDNC meeting room was left, and the female was back on the nest within minutes. The eggs lasted about eight days before they disappeared (fox, badger, carrion crow?). That's about the tenth time I've tried fencing the area off and haven't succeeded yet. The only birds that managed to do well were four pairs of Mandarin Duck that reared about twenty offspring between them,

We still have a few Hares left on the farm, far less than yesteryear. One doe gives birth in the bungalow garden, about three broods this year and usually has three a brood and within 24 hours the young are dispersed around the garden. At dusk the doe comes past the front window to feed them. A surprise one evening in spring was to see a group of animals looking over a hedge at me. Fourteen Red Deer from the Sawley woods were paying a visit. All were hinds except for about four of last year's prickets. Finally something to think about - when was the last time you had to stop the car to clean all the dead flies off the windscreen? this has got me thinking. All these flies down the country lanes were probably born in "cow claps" in the neighbouring fields. Many parishes don't have a single dairy farm left. Our parish has five left from forty plus a few years ago. You could see many species of fly and beetle in the dairy fields. A vast number of bird species relied on those cattle herds! Just something to think about.

Tony Stobbs

BUTTERFLY CONSERVATION YORKSHIRE WEBSITE

HDNS members may be interested in the revamped Butterfly Conservation Yorkshire website - yorkshirebutterflies.org.uk

There are many new features, including a live sighting system, a ground-breaking interactive map of more than 300 sites, and information on Yorkshire species and where to see them. It is well worth a regular look, as there are updated items on local, national and global issues to do with butterflies, moths and other insects, and wildlife in general.

Ginni Darbyshire, Education Officer, Butterfly Conservation Yorkshire.

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 2021 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.

NEWSLETTER: EDITORIAL HELP REQUIRED

Val Smith and Valerie Holmes have produced the newsletter for some fifteen years and would like to retire. Hazel Mitford has kindly offered to take over the practical editorial work. She would like a co-editor to assist with collecting material, encouraging contributors, proof-reading and liaising with the printers. Could you take on this role? The work involved takes place over two or three weeks, in April and September, and is mostly done via email. Hazel can be contacted via hdnsnewsletter@gmail.com.

(It would be helpful if Members with access to Computers could read the Newsletter online. This would keep costs down and reduce the administration.)

CONTACT DETAILS

Please see your Membership Card.

Website: www.hdns.org.uk



Material for the **Spring newsletter** should be sent to
the Newsletter Editor hdnsnewsletter@gmail.com

by **14 March 2022**

or by post to the Membership Secretary