

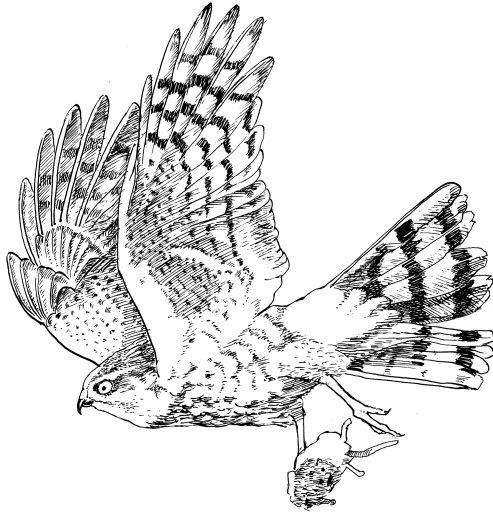


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SPRING NEWSLETTER 2013



FROM THE PRESIDENT

My term as President is nearly complete and I am looking forward to handing over to Ann Mettam and taking a back seat for a while. I will still be doing some publicity work and will, of course, continue to attend the lectures and field trips, work permitting.

I missed the Hartlepool/Saltholme field trip in February and was rather envious to hear that a Black-throated Diver had been seen. It brought to mind a trip to Loch Maree, in the Scottish Highlands, a few years ago. Janet and I had gone there with the intention of walking into the hills above the loch, where we were told there was a chance of seeing a Golden Eagle (all we saw was midges – millions of them!) Within minutes of stepping out of the car, we heard a loud, plaintive bird call which seemed to emanate from the loch. It hardly crossed our minds that the month was September, which meant that in all probability the Divers would already have departed for the sea with their young. We walked briskly towards the water, but before reaching the rocky shoreline found a group of people clustered around a large display board. “The rare Black-throated Diver breeds on Loch Maree,” it said. “To hear its call, press this button.” What an anti-climax!

Will Rich has put together an interesting and varied selection of field trips for this summer. Generally speaking the field trips are not well supported, unlike the winter lectures, but I would urge everybody to attend one or two this year. You never know what you might be missing (as I found out to my cost) and there is invariably somebody knowledgeable on hand to identify and point out the rarities, whether they are birds, insects or plants. Please do not let transport be an issue; if you cannot, or do not wish to drive, get in touch and we will do our best to arrange a lift.

What effect will last year's extreme weather have had on wildlife, I wonder? I am sure the seemingly incessant floods did no favours for many species. It will not be long before the first butterflies are on the wing, which should give us some idea of how the insect world has coped with the difficulties. One thing I can report is that despite floods during last year's breeding season and the big winter freezes of 2 and 3 years ago, I am still seeing Kingfishers in reasonable numbers while angling on the local rivers.

Thank you to everybody for tolerating my stuttering and nervous efforts to introduce the lectures over the last two years and I look forward to seeing you all on the forthcoming field trips.

David Tipping

SKIPWITH COMMON NNR Saturday 13 April

270 hectares of lowland heath. Woodlark, reptiles, inc. hopefully grass snake. Meet 0945 in reserve car park (SE664374) accessed from A19 Riccall bypass via King Ridding Lane, on left from York direction. **Leader: Paul Irving**

UPPER HUMBER BIRDING ODYSSEY Tuesday 30 April

Minibus trip to North Cave, Barton Clay Pits, Read's Island, Alkborough Flats, Blacktoft Sands. Pick-up: Ripon Bus Station 0800, Harrogate Trinity Church 0830. Cost £15. **Leader: Colin Slator**

FARNHAM PATCH WATCH DAY Sunday 5 May

0400 till dusk. Looking for passage migrants throughout the day and recording numbers of breeding species present on the site. Early or late risers welcome! Fry-up at 0900. **Leader: June Atkinson**

PENDLE HILL Thursday 9 May

Minibus trip to look for dotterel. Steep climb involved. Pick-up: Ripon Bus Station 0800, Harrogate Trinity Church 0830. Cost £15. **Leader: Tony Knowles**

BELLFLASK Sunday 26 May

Gravel pit in process of restoration. Brian will be moth trapping the night before and will have specimens to show us, also fish, birds, plants, invertebrates. Meet 0930 on site, which is 2 miles ESE of West Tanfield on the Wath road (SE295775). **Leader: Brian Morland**

FLORA & FAUNA OF THE DALES HAY MEADOWS Tuesday 4 June

Minibus trip to look at the ecology of the Dales' traditional hay meadows, taking in the Old Glebe, Wensley and other sites in Wensleydale and Swaledale. Pick-up: Harrogate Trinity 0830, Ripon Bus Station 0900. Cost £15. **Leader: Ian Wallace**

MALHAM TARN NNR

Thursday 4 July

Minibus trip to this interesting site in spectacular limestone country. Rare plants, butterflies, dragonflies etc. Pick-up: Ripon Bus Station 0800, Harrogate Trinity Church 0830. Cost £15. **Leader: Peter Welsh** (resident ecologist)

FARNHAM MEMBERS' DAY

Sunday 14 July

Meet at the hide 1000. The main gate will be left open for members who do not have a key. Finish 1530. A chance to improve your identification skills. Whatever your interests, there will be someone on hand to help you.

Leader: June Atkinson

RED SQUIRRELS AT SNAIZEHOLME

Thursday 26 September

Minibus trip to see the famous red squirrels in their forest home. Bring some nuts! Pick-up: Harrogate Trinity Church 0830, Ripon Bus Station 0900. Cost £15.



FIELD MEETING REPORTS

SPURN POINT

13 October 2013

The weather was kind to us and we enjoyed sunshine for most of the day, whilst nearby Hull appeared to have been afflicted by heavy showers. Disembarking the minibus, we were told in no uncertain terms by June, our leader, to stop talking and start stalking. Obediently scanning the bushes for rarities we turned up a Chiffchaff, which gave good views, a small party of Goldcrests and a nice male Stonechat. A woodcock flew up out of a ditch and disappeared into a stand of trees. Very little else was seen at the landward end, so we took our lunch in the minibus and then headed for the point. There we spent some time observing the Heligoland trap into which a Brambling (a lifer for some of us) was desperately trying to get, for reasons best known to itself.

There were also Redwings in the elder bushes. One of the highlights of the day were the two Black Redstarts which were showing well as we made our way back landward along the road. The main "tick" however was the Yellow-browed Warbler, whose presence was indicated by the gaggle of twitchers

gathered at the side of the road. It gave as good views as we could have hoped as it flitted in and out of the bushes, clearly displaying its pale supercilium and double wing bar. As the state of the tide was favourable, the day ended with some wader watching, which turned up Bar-tailed Godwit as well as the more common species.

We also did some sea watching, where a raft of Common Scoters was the main attraction. Unfortunately the wind direction was not tending to bring birds close inshore. A species tally in the region of 70 was cause for great satisfaction and all declared it to have been a very enjoyable day. Many thanks to June.

Will Rich

RIPLEY WINTER BIRD WALK

12 January 2013

Fourteen of us assembled outside the gates of Ripley Castle and were greeted by the sight of two Nuthatches in a nearby tree. We then entered the castle grounds, where unfortunately a shoot was in progress, so we could not enter the deer park. Nevertheless, the disturbance created by the beaters caused several groups of deer to sweep majestically across the far side of the lake. The birds on the lake seemed unperturbed by gunfire and we counted 4 Goosander, 33 Shelduck, c50 Mallard, c300 Black-headed Gulls, two Herons and four Cormorants. A dozen Curlew were feeding in the deer park. After perambulating the near side of the lake we had an uneventful stroll back through the woods and thence into the walled garden, where it was gratifying to see feeders provided with many small birds in attendance, including another Nuthatch. We were also intrigued to see a Monkey Puzzle Tree in fruit, which is apparently a rare event in this part of the country.

Leaving the castle grounds (many thanks to Sir Thomas for allowing us free admission) we proceeded up Birthwaite Lane, where unfortunately the Bramblings were not present this winter. However, we were rewarded with excellent views of a pair of Bullfinches feeding on nettle seeds. We once again ran into the shoot as we approached Cayton Gill, but they were kind enough to allow us free passage. In the gill itself we enjoyed the spectacle of at least four soaring Buzzards and three Red Kites, one of which was seen to dive bomb another, inoffensively perched in a tree. Having run the gauntlet of two very frisky horses, the walk back through fields on permissive paths (thanks again, Sir T) was uneventful.

A total of 41 species was seen, for which our leader Rob Adams and our telescope bearer Andy Hanby are to be congratulated.

Will Rich

As usual, a sprinkling of snow led to traffic chaos in Harrogate and we were 30 minutes late setting out. The snow fizzled out north of Ripon and it was a beautiful sunny day when we arrived at Hartlepool. It was high tide at the Headland and we were treated to the sight of a raft of Common Scoters very close inshore. Further out there were Red-throated Divers and Great-crested Grebes, as well as a Harbour Porpoise. Walking along the sea wall we enjoyed close-up views of Purple Sandpipers, Knot and other waders; sheltering behind a breakwater were many Eiders. Moving along to the fish dock, we were disappointed in our quest for white-winged gulls and the only bird of interest was a Red-breasted Merganser. At the Marina we obtained excellent views of a Black-throated Diver (a “lifer” for me) but the hoped-for Slavonian Grebe did not materialise.

At Seaton Carew lunch was shared with a couple of Mediterranean Gulls who were eager to swoop on the titbits offered and gave excellent views. Luckily, the only shower of the day occurred whilst we were sitting cosily (ha-ha!) in the minibus, though we never saw the sun again after lunch. Whilst walking towards Seal Sands we were lucky enough to see a hunting Barn Owl; Greenshank, Stonechat and Rock Pipit were also “bagged”. The biggest treat was in store when we arrived at the hide, from which Sue spotted the elusive Slavonian Grebe (another “lifer” for me), which was very obliging, demonstrating all its salient features. Later, at North Gare we missed out on the large flock of Snow Buntings, which seemed to have absented themselves from their usual haunts. Pursuing a tip from a local birder that there was a large number of Long-tailed Ducks at Dormans Pond, we bypassed Saltholme and went thither, only to find that said L-t D were in fact Pintail – a pretty sight, but not exactly in the same league. By this time Saltholme was closed so we departed for home, very pleased with our final tally of 66 species. Many thanks to our leader June, for keeping us in order and finding so many interesting birds.

Will Rich

BTO NEWS

For many of us our most regular encounter with Woodcock is in winter when they are widespread; with up to 1.5 million individuals in Britain and Ireland, mostly originating from northern Europe and western Russia. Those fortunate enough to see birds during the breeding season are treated to the twilight

“roding” display flights. Male Woodcock patrol their territories at tree-top height whilst repeatedly giving a series of low grunts or croaks interspersed with a characteristic nasal “squelchy” whistle.

The first breeding Woodcock survey was undertaken in 2003, estimating a breeding population of 78,000 males in Britain. Although the breeding distribution covered much of Britain and Ireland apart from southwest England, western Wales and much of western Ireland, there has been a considerable reduction in range since the 1968-72 Breeding Atlas, as indicated by Bird Atlas 2007-11.

The survey techniques are based upon the now familiar method of visiting randomly selected squares (containing suitable habitat). A list of High and Low Priority squares has been issued for my Region based on coverage in 2003, I’ve been very lucky this time, volunteers has come forward to cover all the High Priority squares and all but three of the Low Priority. I can now accept offers to cover what we classify as “Additional Squares” and if you are interested please contact me ASAP. More information and details of the methodology can be found on the BTO Website (www.bto.org).

Participation in the Winter Thrushes Survey (nationally) has been amazing! Since its launch on 12 September 2012, data has been inputted for 523 visits in September, 1,590 in October, 1,861 in November, 1,890 in December and 1,350 in January 2013. Overall, huge numbers of thrushes have been reported with peaks of over 25,000 in each of the first two weeks of November, most of them migrating Fieldfare and Redwing with a handful of Ring Ouzels for lucky observers. Numbers of Blackbird have also been steadily increasing, whereas counts of Song Thrush and Mistle Thrush, more often encountered singly or in small groups, have remained relatively steady. This survey continues in Autumn/Winter this year so if you would like to be involved please get in touch.

I’m always looking for new recruits to the ongoing Breeding Bird Survey now in its nineteenth year. This valuable study of the UK’s breeding populations has produced a vast amount of data which is used to build up an accurate picture of the fluctuations in our birds. Comparisons since 1995 allow us to monitor losses and gains and helps conservationists advise farmers, landowners, developers, etc, how to modify land use to the best advantage for all. If you are interested please ask me for details.

Mike Brown

BTO Regional Representative for Yorkshire-Central.
mikebtorep@gmail.com

MOTHS

In briefly summarising the 2012 season, two new species of “macro” moths were recorded for the first time – the long-awaited Red-necked Footman; single specimens of this distinctive moth were trapped at both Ellington Banks and Hackfall in late June. From Bellflask, north of Ripon came the first Twin-spotted Wainscot, trapped in late August. In addition, Barred Rivulet and Silky Wainscot were newly recorded for Vice County 65 (Nosterfield NR) and there were a number of new records of “micro” moths for the Society. All will be detailed in the moth report for 2012.

We have experienced one of the wettest summers in living memory – it will be interesting to see how this might affect the emergence period and even numbers of moths during spring/summer this year. Will the species which over-winter as larvae be more affected than those which over-winter as pupae or eggs? Already during 2013, the warm spell in early January has seen the earliest-ever sightings of Early Grey and Dotted Border, before the snow arrived!

If you haven't started moth trapping yet, now is the time to check that your trap is still working, the bulb isn't cracked and mice haven't chewed through any wires or cables.

Finally, we would like to remind members to search for day-flying moths during the year – even if you don't own a moth trap, you can still contribute records this way! On a sunny day in late March/early April, the Orange Underwing can be seen flying around the tops of stands of mature Silver Birch trees. Or if you are walking across the moorland of the higher ground above Masham and Pateley Bridge, look out for the spectacular, but mobile, male Emperor moths in late April/May. 2013 could see an influx of the continental migrant Humming-bird Hawk-moth, which often visits gardens in its search for nectar (2012 was a poor year for sightings). If you are in any doubt about the identification of a particular moth, please do send or email a photograph and hopefully we will be able to solve the mystery!

Jill Warwick & Charlie Fletcher



FARNHAM NEWS

On 11th **September**, a Wheatear was present on hay bales in the back field; 17 Pink-footed Geese flew south two days later. During the next few days Peregrine Falcon, Little Egret, Hobby and Spotted Flycatcher were seen. A Sanderling made a brief appearance on 23rd, an Osprey flew south on 26th with a Peregrine Falcon 15 minutes later. An Egyptian Goose was found on the morning of 27th and the evening birders were rewarded with a juvenile Gannet flying north-west. At the end of the month, five Kingfishers were seen; 50 Swallows and 80 House Martins were counted as they moved south.

Twelve Red Kites going in to roost were counted on 1st **October**. Five Chiffchaffs were present on 6th, the first Tree Sparrows of the autumn arrived on 10th, on which date four Fieldfares flew over, with 80 Redwings a few days later. A count of 85 Tree Sparrows flying off to roost was notable. Thirty Common Snipe were seen flying around in the fog and two Peregrine Falcons were perching on the usual pylons. The last Chiffchaff was recorded on 20th. During a strong northerly wind on 27th, 140 Fieldfares and 70 Redwings flew over and three Whooper Swans flew south two days later.

Winter arrivals on 3rd **November** included 20 Blackbirds, 50 Fieldfares and 150 Redwings; three days later, 26 Waxwings flew through. A female Blackcap was present on 11th. Six Waxwings were feeding on guelder rose berries on 17th, when they were also seen to catch caddis flies. Thirty-two Wigeon, 46 Gadwall and 28 Teal were present on 19th, with Jack Snipe and two Waxwings; 32 Waxwings were seen on 25th. A Peregrine Falcon was recorded on most days of the month.

Four Whooper Swans flew east on 4th **December**. Wildfowl numbers increased during the first week with 74 Mallards, 26 Wigeon, 54 Gadwall, 26 Teal, 108 Tufted Ducks and 24 Goldeneyes; two female Scaup were present on 9th. Ten Waxwings were observed on 17th and a Jack Snipe on 21st. A female Scaup appeared on 26th, when a Brambling was seen briefly at the feeding station. A Peregrine Falcon was perching, as usual, on the pylons. The water level in the lake rose from 80cm on 21st to 90 cm on 30th - 4 inches in old money! - the highest level recorded since 2000. All the smaller islands are under water, which will prevent returning species from breeding, as the South Lake has no natural outlet.

The first week in **January** was mild with a temperature of 10°C on 3rd when 11 Common Buzzards were counted; 170 Redwings and three Woodcocks were

present. Pink-footed Geese were on the move with 455 counted between 3rd and 6th. An Oystercatcher flew in on 5th but, due to the high water level, it was unable to land. More than 70 Tree Sparrows were queuing up to be fed and 16 Goldfinches were taking advantage of the teasel seeds; a flock of 40 Siskins was around on the site. By 9th, the thermometer was recording -2°C in the early afternoon; 13 Shelducks flew over on 12th. The next day, a first-winter drake Scaup was present on the North Lake, where it remained until 26th. Snow began to fall on 19th, with 2 inches on 21st and 26th. Numbers of wildfowl during the third week increased with 32 Wigeon, 28 Gadwall, 90 Teal, 22 Goldeneyes, 92 Mallards, 215 Tufted Ducks; a Peregrine Falcon was recorded on several days during the month.

Due to the open weather in **February**, very little bird movement occurred. The feeding station was hectic as usual with 60+ Tree Sparrows dominating the area, keeping the feeders full was a daily task. A Jack Snipe was feeding along the flooded margins on 2nd and 40 Siskins were noted. One hundred and forty-six Tufted Ducks were present; 19 Coots were counted compared to the 400+ which would have been here at this time several years ago - the decline is a mystery. Sixteen Goldeneyes were counted on 16th, when nine returning Oystercatchers had difficulty finding somewhere to land. Ten Whooper Swans flew over to the north-west the next day. The month had little to commend it. I have never known such a cold, dismal and dreary start to a new year.

Management work was undertaken from October to March. Members may not be aware that there is a top path on the East Bank which provides good views and more interest than the lakeside path. It is accessed through the wood at the south-east end; a sign indicates the path, look out for it. Due to the persistent high water levels, access to the west side is via the path behind the hide.

Many thanks are due to the Management Team who, as ever, continue to provide the essential workforce needed to maintain the habitat for the numerous species that occur on the site. Their commitment is ongoing; as Farnham is a designated SINC - Site of Importance for Nature Conservation - the work has to continue. A few more volunteers would be welcome to ease the work load on the existing team. Thanks are due again also to Ken Limb who processes all the bird records from the daily log sheets to produce our Farnham Report.

The Society's new website provides a Farnham Gravel Pit update on current sightings which I am able to input as they occur. Spring is on the way, so no doubt I will be kept very busy - I certainly hope so!

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



Although there is concern for the status of hedgehogs nationally, the Bilton Hogspital continues its relentless takeover of the Marshall household! Teresa had 222 'patients' through the doors in 2011 but last year the numbers rose to 280. Of these 164 were nursed back to health and returned to the wild in a controlled release programme. A further 34 spent a very comfortable winter wide awake indoors 'on the wards', with soft bedding, sharing the central heating and with a varied menu of non-fishy cat food, cat biscuits, dried mealworms, Rowena's Hedgehog Mix, raisins, plain buns, etc. along with as much water as they can drink.

The Hogspital motto is 'Helping Harrogate Hedgehogs' but, although the majority do come from the HDNS area, others have arrived from an area stretching from Richmond to Wakefield and Gargrave to Selby. The 'patients' can arrive at any time of the year. The earliest in 2012 was 14 January and the last was 27 December! Many have been disturbed during gardening, strimming(!), shed removal, bonfire lighting or by floods. Usually they are just spotted out and about during daytime, which is generally a sign of some problem.

Large numbers of ticks are often one of the potentially life-threatening problems and some have had more than 140 removed. However, only a small proportion (maybe 2%) had fleas. It is not true that they cannot live without them. Motor vehicles and strimmers can cause severe injuries and broken bones, many of which cannot be repaired by our hedgehog-friendly local vet. A lot of hedgehogs suffered in the cold wet summer. Although wet weather can be good for slugs these do carry intestinal and lungworms which can infect the hedgehogs, especially if they eat a lot of them. More slugs means gardeners use more slug pellets and so more hedgehogs are then found with the irreversible symptoms of poisoning.

Hedgehog babies can be a particular problem, needing to be kept warm and fed with special milk every hour or two – although thankfully not during the night! One family of four was discovered nesting in a stable after the mother had been stood on and killed by a horse. Another family of three was rescued from a lit bonfire when the singed mother was seen to make her rapid escape!

Although Teresa is listed as a carer on the British Hedgehog Preservation Society (BHPS) website the Bilton Hogspital is completely independent, voluntary and unfunded. Charity registration and fundraising would only add extra complications to what is essentially a hobby, so the Hogspital relies on donations such as food, bedding, carry-cases, etc., from those who find and bring the 'patients'. Last year three outdoor runs were kindly provided by the Northern Echo newspaper after an employee had brought two injured 'hogs' for treatment. Some people will take 'their own' hedgehog back to where it was found or deal with its further care, after getting advice. Many other local people help by 'fostering', running small scale 'outpatients departments' or by providing suitable long term support for a release site.

So the work to help Harrogate hedgehogs goes on and the household continues to be pervaded by the sounds of hedgehogs, the ghostly knocking, day and night, as they scratch – and they scratch a lot! – the snoring, the coughing, the chomping and the slurping along with the sights of beady eyes watching from under the blankets and even the smells! Then of course there is the daily cleaning, washing of bedding, large-scale hedgehog catering, etc.!

Lots of information, including downloadable leaflets, is available on the BHPS website: <http://www.hedgehogs.org.uk>

Robert & Teresa Marshall

INDOOR MEETINGS PROGRAMME 2013/2014

9 October 2013 ‘	Round the Horn’ – Cruising the Southern Oceans Dr John R Mather BEM
23 October	Food for Free Chris Bax
6 November	Conservation in the Nidd Gorge Bilton Conservation Group
20 November	Yorkshire Coast Nature Steve Race
4 December	Ure Natural Heritage Simon Warwick
8 January 2014	A Naturalist with a Camera Paul Irving
22 January	Birding in Trinidad and Tobago Sheila Nash
5 February	Biodiversity in the Harrogate Area Lynda Fussell
19 February	Bird Detectives: the work of the RSPB Investigations Team Bob Elliot
5 March	Black Grouse Recovery Project
19 March	Regeneration of a Quarry Bob Orange
23 April	AGM

AN EXTRA ATTRACTION FOR MEMBERS DAY!



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NIDDERDALE AONB SECURES HERITAGE LOTTERY FUND SUPPORT

Nidderdale AONB has received an earmarked first-round pass of £1.2 million from the Heritage Lottery Fund. Working in partnership with Upper Nidderdale's rural communities, including farmers and landowners, the project aims to restore heritage features like field barns, dry stone walls, hay meadows and ancient woodlands, deepen people's understanding of the landscape, and create new opportunities for celebrating and enjoying Upper Nidderdale. More information at www.uppernidderdale.org.uk

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.

BRIMHAM ROCKS BIOBLITZ 6 JULY 2013

Nidderdale AONB are planning a Bioblitz event at Brimham rocks. If you are interested in taking part, contact the AONB Development Officer at kelly.harmar@harrogate.gov.uk

HIMALAYAN BALSAM

Plans are being made to rid the River Laver and Kex Beck of this invasive plant. Send your observations and sightings, or find out more, from the AONB Development Officer at kelly.harmar@harrogate.gov.uk

CONTACT DETAILS

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