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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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SPRING NEWSLETTER 2014



FROM THE PRESIDENT

Winter, one uses the term loosely in connection with the past season, appears to be drawing to a close. Spring is upon us – the days are lengthening apace, the masses of snowdrops we welcomed last month have reached the peak of their display and are being outshone by the carpets of crocuses blooming in the sunshine on the Stray.

On that optimistic note I feel that I can now turn my attention to another subject which I have been turning over in my mind during the past several weeks. For some years now, at the behest of the RSPB, I have written letters in support of their campaigns to local MPs, MEPs, foreign Presidents, Government ministers, departments and consultation processes on subjects as varied as the UK's Biodiversity Plan, the Via Baltica in Poland, the Lewis Wind Farm, Bulgaria's infringement of EU environmental legislation, the proposed highway through the Serengeti, the localism Bill and environmental protection.

I must now turn my thoughts to the topic of hydraulic fracturing or 'fracking' – what a dreadful word; you are probably aware that it is the process by which gas is extracted from formations of shale rock. The proposal is a very intensive process with well pads throughout the country – possibly around the outskirts of Harrogate or at your favourite wildlife reserve! – which will require considerable additional infrastructure such as new roads with greater volumes of traffic. This exploitation at a commercial level risks affecting the environment and wildlife, disturbing and damaging valuable habitats, having a particular effect on water supplies. Our climate may also be affected, as unconventional fossil fuels will have a negative impact, so that the UK may be unable to meet its climate commitments.

As naturalists, we should be appalled by these proposals and should ensure that our opinions are heard and valued in the decision-making process. If you feel strongly enough, be sure to enlighten the Department of Energy and Climate Change.

Have a pleasurable summer, get out there and enjoy your environment – whilst it is still intact!

Ann Mettam

Obituary: We have lost two long-standing members, Helen Jackson and Rodney Waddilove. Our sympathy to friends and family.

GELTSDALE RSPB RESERVE

Tuesday 22 April

Minibus trip to Cumbria. The outward journey at least will take us via upper Teesdale for Black Grouse. Cost £15. Pick-up: Harrogate Trinity Church 08.00. Please be aware that return could be late. Target – general, although birds should feature largely. **Leader: Colin Slator**

FARNHAM PATCH WATCH DAY

Sunday 4 May

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

NIGHTJAR SEARCH

Friday 23 May

Meet in Ripley car park at 19.00 for destination instructions and car share. Bring midge repellent. We might get the chance for our own night jar afterwards! **Leader: Colin Slator**

SEA LAMPREY SEARCH

June (*date: see below*)

Hunting for this amazing prehistoric-like creature in one of our local rivers. This event will be co-led with Brian Moreland as a lot of uncertainties are attached to it! We don't know as yet where the fish will gather, the state of the river at the time and the number of people we can accommodate at wherever it will be! If it all comes together as planned, the effort to see these amazing creatures in the hand is well worth while. So, on a first come first place basis, please phone Colin Slator (contact Val Smith on memsec.hdns1@talktalk.net for number) on any evening during last three days of May and hopefully by then we will have all the relevant details we/you will need.

FARNHAM MEMBERS' DAY

Sunday 20 July

Meet at the hide 10.00. The main gate will be left open for members who do not have a key. Finish 15.30. A chance to improve your identification skills. Whatever your interests, there will be someone on hand to help you. **Leader: June Atkinson**

A full days mini-bus trip to this super area for Birds and Butterflies. Cost: £15. Meet at Harrogate Trinity Church at 08.00 and expect to be late back – we could even stop off for fish and chips! Leighton Moss will be visited at some stage during the day. **Leader: Colin Slator**

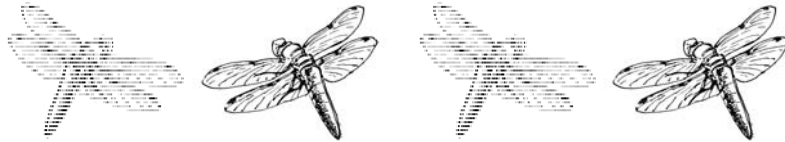
GREENHOW**Saturday afternoon 9 August**

Meet in Pateley Bridge show ground car park to car share at 13.00. Then re-group on Greenhow to search for butterflies and flowers with a visit to Duck Street Quarry included. **Leader: Colin Slator** (plus a botanist)

HARTLEPOOL & TEESSIDE**Tuesday 23 September**

An all-day minibus trip. Cost: £15. Meet at Harrogate Trinity Church at 08.00. Mainly birds – seawatching, waders and hopefully migrants. **Leader: Colin Slator**

Preliminary plans are under discussion for a weekend field trip away, possibly in March 2015. Watch this space!



FIELD MEETING REPORTS

2013/4

SNAIZEHOLME**26 September 2013**

Red squirrels, part of our countryside for 10,000 years, used to number 3.5 million in the UK. In the 19th century the larger grey squirrel, introduced from North America, spread relentlessly, out-competing the red for food and spreading a deadly virus which left the greys unaffected. Snaizeholme is one of a handful of sites in NE England which is being managed to encourage the reds. After a longish drive and a short walk we had amazing photo-opportunities of these delightful animals scampering about eating and 'squirrelling' away the nuts which we had brought for them.

At the reserve there is a feeding station and information about how tree species such as Larch and Scots Pine are being planted to provide the cones which the reds prefer to eat. Sycamores are weeded out as they attract the greys to cross the buffer zone created by the wild fells of Widdale. Stick piles encourage stoats and weasels to nest as they help to keep rabbit numbers down. Once we had all filled our cameras' memory cards with cute squirrel photos we drove to Ribblesdale for lunch. Whernside and the viaduct looked stunning in the sun, so quickly delete several squirrel photos!

The drive down Ribblesdale showed off Ingleborough and Pen y Ghent equally well and as we had time, Will introduced us to a hidden gem. An industrial archaeology site, the huge Hoffman lime kiln, just outside Settle, the back drop to which is a vast quarry wall where Raven and Peregrine breed. Tea at the Ye Olde Naked Man Café in Settle and we were back in Harrogate for 5.30pm.

Sue Coldwell

HARTLEPOOL 22 October 2013

Reports of a Pallid Swift and Western Bonelli's Warbler made the minibus trip to Hartlepool a hopeful prospect. We arrived with rain abating and a fresh SE wind. We all looked skyward but no Pallid Swift. It had been seen earlier that morning so surely it would return! Having conducted a thorough search we turned our attention to the sea. The first challenge was differentiating between two divers, one Red Throated and one Black Throated. On a receding tide, coastal waders were playing hard to get, two Purple Sandpipers, a couple of Turnstones, Redshanks and Oystercatchers and a single Bar Tailed Godwit flew over. Among the Black Headed Gulls was one Mediterranean Gull. Sea ducks were scarce, apart from Scoter and a male and female Eider on rocks. Still no Pallid Swift so we moved on, which is precisely when the swift made a re-appearance back at the Headland U-turn accomplished, Colin drove back and some of the sharper-eyed of us spotted it at distance over the bay. It was to finally return to roost on the church while we were well on our way home.

We called in at Newburn Bridge and got a much closer view of a Mediterranean Gull on the beach and a single Ringed Plover. Our next stop was North Gare and then the Zinc Road. The grass was quite long but careful searching revealed good numbers of Curlew, Wigeon, Teal, Mallard and several Ruff and on the river we saw Red Breasted Merganser and Red Throated Diver. In the area around Greatham Creek were Shoveler, Dunlin, Little Egret and a visit to Dorman's Pool gave us Pintail and Marsh Harrier, with Kingfisher in one of the creeks.

72 species seen and all worked quite hard for, but no one said it was going to be easy! Thanks to June for leading and Colin for driving, making a most enjoyable trip.

Sue Coldwell

DRURIDGE BAY

12 November 2013

Eight members took part in this minibus excursion. About 15 miles north of the Tyne on the A189 our first (two) brief stops were specifically to look for the reported two juvenile Greenland White-fronted Geese feeding in a field of rape, amongst a group of Grey-lags. These birds were quickly located but required very careful observation to confirm identification – the key word here is juvenile not immature! A short drive further north eventually brought us to the coast at Cresswell, which lies on the south end of the seven mile long Druridge Bay. From Cresswell we looked out over the sea, which was flat calm, and with excellent visibility we soon picked out Red-throated Divers (which numbered 20 plus during the day), single Gannet, fly past Long-tailed Duck and drake Eider. From this point one could easily pick out Coquet Island which lies at the northern end of the Bay.

The shore and adjacent sand dune system could be seen in its golden glory and the immediately inland complex of habitats ranging from wet grassland, small and extensive water-bodies, reedbed and various types of woodland were all laid out in front of us waiting to be explored. Some of these habitats are quite young, especially the post opencast coal mining complex of the Chevington area. At least six sites within the area are Northumberland Wildlife Trust sites. During the course of the day, in glorious sunshine albeit with a cool westerly breeze, we looked out over the sea at several points, Cresswell Pond (twice), Druridge Pools and the large East Chevington complex.

Other than birds little else was seen of note. With regard to birds passerines were very much in short supply, especially buntings and finches. Waders were few and of the common species. Raptors were also scarce – the lack of Short-eared Owls was most disappointing. But ample other sightings made up for the perceived loss. A small skein of Pink-foots coming in high off the sea,

against a powder blue sky and calling as much as they could muster lifted the spirits no end. A superb drake Velvet Scoter close into the shore with Red-breasted Mergansers and Red-throated Divers around it for good measure.

Then towards the end of the day, with the sun at our backs, a beautiful Bittern flew nearby into a bed of scrub and reed – don't they look so big and tail-less in flight (?)

I often regard Northumberland as my second home. Today's trip did not diminish my enthusiasm for the County and especially this site one bit. The homeward drive was uneventful but to track back into a lay-by and locate an earlier lost flat cap was all part of the service!

Colin Slator

RSPB DOVE STONE, SOUTH PENNINES 17 December 2013

Saddleworth Moor, despite its grim reputation, was looking beautiful in the bright sunshine as we arrived at RSPB Dove Stone. Walking up Chew Road towards Chew Reservoir we were treated to excellent views of a female/juvenile Kestrel which perched for long intervals on a rock beside the track. Further along, our keen-eyed leader Colin spotted far off across the moor a white blob which, to the unpractised eye, might have been a stray plastic bag. Looking through the scope, however, this was definitely what we had mainly set out to see – a Mountain Hare in full winter regalia. Shortly afterwards, on the other side of the track, we obtained much better views of an equally beautiful animal, which provided some good photo opportunities. The hare seemed unperturbed by a helicopter which was passing almost directly overhead transporting stone to fill in the moorland grips (drains). A huge area of the moor is now managed by the RSPB and there are healthy breeding populations of Dunlin, Golden Plover and other waders.

Colin's pager was now beeping repeatedly, telling him that there were Two-barred Crossbills (quite a rarity) at Broomhead Reservoir on the other side of the Pennines near Stocksbridge. We set off in the minibus along the A635, past those places which will live forever in infamy, towards Holmfirth, then along some tortuous country lanes to Broomhead. Unfortunately, it was the usual, "You should have been here an hour ago," because the birds were nowhere to be seen. They had been there since August and are there still (14 January). In fact, the more enthusiastic of our members have been back subsequently and seen them. As it was now beginning to get dark we had to give up the hunt, return to the minibus and wend our way home. Many thanks to Colin for "delivering the goods" yet again (at least as far as our main quarry, the hares, was concerned).

Will Rich

A good number of members (seventeen) turned out for the first, mercifully dry, field meeting of the year. This was very gratifying for our leaders, Colin and Brian, who had put in a considerable amount of work placing and setting the twenty-nine mammal traps. Colin was his usual jovial, witty self as he gave a very entertaining introduction to mammal trapping. He also had some Barn Owl pellets and a display board showing the skeletons of the typical species on which they prey. Meanwhile, Brian arrived with a Bank Vole and a couple of Wood Mice, the latter of which escaped into the car park and ran off. We were not disappointed, however, as once we were in the reserve, we had ample opportunity to inspect and photograph several other Wood Mice. Colin showed us his collection of mammal and bird traps, some of them now illegal, and gave a quite horrifying account of the huge numbers of Stoats and Hedgehogs, etc, trapped and killed by gamekeepers. The main species trapped during the day was Bank Vole but we were also able to see Common Shrew and, the highlight, a Harvest Mouse. Bank Voles and Wood Mice seemed content to sit on people's shoulders for a short while whilst being photographed.

All mammals were released back into the areas where they were trapped. Colin also showed us skulls of various larger mammals, including Grey Seal, as well as casts of footprints. No larger mammals were seen, despite traps being set for Water Vole and Mink, though there was evidence of Otter. Many thanks to Brian and Colin, also to Bobby Evison and YWT for allowing us to place the traps on the reserve.

Will Rich

BRIMLEY/SAWLEY HIGH MOOR 25 February 2014

I wondered how Colin was going to cope with us all (16 in total) as we gathered eagerly at Brimham Rocks, energized with the promise of a fine day and clear skies. But, obviously used to instilling a sense of order and purpose, Colin established ground rules and commenced by outlining our target species for the morning (Stonechat). He even remembered to add some health and safety advice.

Our morning stroll over the moorland was, for me, uncharted territory and quite a contrast to the area of Brimham Rocks where I normally walk. We were soon treated to fine views of deer: four Reds, two Roe and a Sika buck with a magnificent pair of antlers. It was whilst we were examining these creatures that we became aware of at least two Stonechats in the foreground. Their colours stood out beautifully against the surrounding pale ochre of the dead grasses and echoed the russets of the distant deer.

There was a distinct lack of other passerines but we were accompanied at several points by the clear, loud and melodious trills of various Wrens. And we enjoyed the unexpected zigzag flypast of a Snipe which had obviously decided that an approaching army of 16 was rather too many to risk. Not so a Red Kite which drifted directly overhead, giving excellent views. Further along, from an elevated position, we had a panoramic view of seven Buzzards soaring and occasionally clashing with each other.

After returning to Brimham car park, we relocated to Sawley High Moor for lunch. Following a short game of musical cars, half of which were positioned at one entrance point and half at another, we were privileged to explore yet another area new to me. The land, being part of a shooting estate, had vast tracts which were promising heathland habitat and Colin expressed the conviction that in future some interesting species might take advantage of the area.

Our target species (Crossbill and Redpoll) were sadly lacking. Sounds of Coal Tit and Goldcrest were all that we could hear, though Colin discerned a distant Kestrel. As we stood straining eyes and ears, a Sparrowhawk swept over the trees. Indeed it seemed that raptors were the order of the day as we were able to count another six Buzzards in the eastern sky with a view that encompassed the A1 in the distance.

It was a great day out, despite the small number of birds, and we were very grateful to Colin for giving his time when he should have been packing for his holidays.

Sue Harrison



INTRODUCTION TO OUR WEBSITE www.hdns.org.uk

Welcome

Below the pictures at the top you see a row of headings, white on green.

Welcome is open so it is black on white. If you see text in green it is a link to more information. Click with the mouse on **Field Meetings, Recorders, Farnham Gravel Pit** etc and you will be taken to the page. Click on the **Welcome** heading to return. Watch out for these links on any page.

Sightings

We welcome interesting sightings from any visitor to the site. Click this heading for more information then click **Sightings** further down the page to go to our sightings page. You can browse or send a sighting.

About HDNS

Click this heading to access subheadings. Click these for more information about the society. For example, **Field Meetings** and **Lectures** takes you to our **Calendar** of events. **Farnham Updates** explains the Twitter feed from Farnham. Soon this will also show you recent work carried out at Farnham. Other subheadings are self explanatory – have a look at them.

Photo Gallery is a collection of photographs submitted by our members. Click on a gallery section to open an index of the photographs. Click on any one to enlarge the view. This will also show the attributes “Subject, place taken, date and photographer”. Use the chevrons below the picture to move through the gallery or use the arrow keys on your keyboard. Click on the photo to return to the gallery. There is a slide show link but this does not show captions. We welcome recent and local photos for consideration in the gallery.

To submit a photograph go to the **Contact Us** heading and click **Submit a Photograph**. This will open a form for you to complete. NB: you need to supply your email but this will NOT appear on the website. Browse for your photo and fill in the security code. Then click submit. You will get an acknowledgment email.

Farnham Gravel Pit

Gives details of our site near Farnham and lists of Flora and Fauna at the site.

News

Click here for reports and pictures of recent outings.

Calendar

An up to date programme of outings and lectures.

Membership

Details of membership features and advantages. To join you can download a form, print and fill it in and send it to us by post.

Contact Us

For any questions please use the Online Message form. Here you can also submit a sighting or photograph. Use the link to a report form to send your records to our recorders.

Members

You will need the members' password (you will find it on your membership card) to access the forum or to view the Annual Report.

Enjoy the website – it is for the benefit of members and visitors and we welcome your comments. For general comments send an Online Message. For specific questions about the website, the sightings page or the gallery please add “ for the attention of the photoeditor”.

Malcolm Jones

MOTHS

In briefly summarising the 2013 season, two new species of 'macro' moth were new for the Society's recording area – Sycamore, caught at Spofforth and Small Blood-vein at Staveley NR, intriguingly both on the same night, 24th July. By the year-end, ten new species of 'micro' moth had been identified during the year, the majority of which were new to either Vice County 64 or 65. Highlights included *Ancylis obtusana*, the first record for Yorkshire since 1904, *Palpita vitrealis* at Hutton Conyers, a very distinctive migrant (one of three caught in Yorkshire last year), but the undoubted 'celebrity' was *Scrobipalpa pauperella*. This latter was confirmed by dissection of specimens (originally caught in 2011) from Ellington Banks in June – the moth had only previously been recorded at one site in Cambridgeshire, 40 years ago and was considered extinct in the UK! More survey work to assess the species' population is planned for 2014 but is a hugely exciting development for the Society, currently hosting the only known site for a moth in the whole country.

Compared with recent years, spring was late in arriving last year, more reminiscent of the 1960s (for those who can remember), and similarly, the emergence period of moths was affected, your recorders not venturing forth with generators and moth traps until well into May! However, once the warmer

weather arrived, the moths soon responded – indeed new site records were in profusion, even in the recorders' own gardens! Other rare species which were recorded last year included Twin-spotted Wainscot (3rd to 8th records, after the first in 2012), the distinctive Blackneck (recorded at two new sites), Haworth's Minor (a wanderer from the higher ground – two caught in a low ground garden) and Saltern Ear (4th record). All will be detailed in full in the Society's annual report for 2013.

Recently, much exhaustive work on DNA analysis has been carried out on the UK's lepidoptera species, resulting in another change to the order of species (the third in the last 50 years). The Bradley/Fletcher order most recently in use, has been superseded and there is now an almost totally new order to follow: *Checklist of the Lepidoptera of the British Isles*, was published by the Royal Entomological Society in December 2013 – again, this will be explained in more detail in the annual report.

The spring species such as the quakers, Clouded Drab and Shoulder Stripe are now on the wing, so if you haven't started moth trapping yet this year, don't waste any more time! But do check that your MV bulb isn't cracked and the electrics are working properly. Any species which are causing identification headaches, please do take a clear, digital photograph (with date and place details) and email to either recorder and we will do our best to assist you, although it's good to make an attempt at identification yourself before emailing us!

Jill Warwick and Charlie Fletcher

HARROGATE NATURALISTS' FORUM

The on-line Forum is a great place to discover the details about and report on the latest sightings of our local wildlife. Additionally it is a wonderful place to ask questions, post photos in your own album and to discuss any wildlife subject likely to be of interest to HDNS members. Messages can be sent and received by email or directly on the Forum website. If you are not a Forum member you could be missing out!

Follow this link to the

Forum https://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/Harrogate_Naturalists/info
or contact Robert for more details on hdns.wildwatch@btinternet.com

On 1st **September**, a Hobby flew over the site and a Black-tailed Godwit went through. Passage migrants were still moving with Lesser Whitethroat, Spotted Flycatcher, more than ten Chiffchaffs, Garden Warbler, Willow Warbler and Reed Warbler recorded during the first week. A Peregrine Falcon was chasing Lapwings on 8th, and a Hobby flew over taking a Sand Martin on 9th. Black-tailed Godwits were moving with 18 on 15th; ten Chiffchaffs were present on 18th and a female Mandarin Duck next day. A juvenile Little Gull came in on 26th, when a Jack Snipe was recorded in the evening. Ruff and Pintail were seen at the end of the month, along with Lesser Whitethroat, Blackcap and Chiffchaff.

A Tree Pipit was found on 1st **October** and one was seen again on 8th; a Jack Snipe was recorded next day. The first winter thrushes were 26 Fieldfares and 110 Redwings on 10th. A small movement of Sky Larks was observed with 37 on 17th and in fog, on 19th, 52 Common Snipe were disturbed from the islands. Wigeon and Gadwall numbers were increasing thanks to the prolific weed growth on the lake. A juvenile Peregrine Falcon was perched on the pylon on 20th and a Whooper Swan flew south on 24th, when a Brambling was also seen; four Whooper Swans flew north-west on 27th. A Chiffchaff was seen on 31st when Redwings and Fieldfares were moving through. Daytime temperatures varied between 1°C and 15°C and the winds were mainly southerly.

November was an extremely quiet month with very little movement occurring. Chiffchaffs were still being seen during the first week, the last sighting being on 12th. Wildfowl numbers began to increase by the second week with 44 Wigeon, 76 Gadwall, 26 Teal, 90 Tufted Ducks and six Goldeneyes; three Whooper Swans flew west on 17th. A Brambling was found on 19th and up to 60 Redwings were around for most of the month while Tree Sparrow numbers increased to 30. A Dunlin was present from 22nd for three days. The maximum number of Common Snipe recorded during the month was 20. The weather remained reasonably open with only a few days when the temperature dropped below 0°C; 27mm of rain fell on 21st raising the water level in the South Lake even higher.

December began open and mild with a temperature of 8°C on 1st. A record number of Gadwall was present on 10th, with 118 being counted. Other duck counts were: Wigeon - 98, Teal - 42, Mallard - 60, Tufted Duck - 94, Goldeneye - 12; 56 Coots were also present. Prolific growth of weed in the

South Lake during the summer benefitted the two weed-feeding species - Gadwall and Wigeon. The relatively mild winter, with temperatures generally above freezing, meant that the weed was available until much later in the year. Redwings and Fieldfares continued to be seen along with 25 Blackbirds on 10th. Tree Sparrow numbers increased to 70+ and greater numbers of many species attended the feeding station when the early morning temperature fell to -2°C on 17th. A flock of 40 Siskins was noted, with 25 Goldfinches and nine Bullfinches. A Chiffchaff was seen on 21st and my two hour visit on Christmas Day morning produced 41 species seen from the hide.

On 5th **January**, the highest number of Tree Sparrows was recorded, with 105 being counted as they flew off in small groups to roost. Wildfowl numbers remained stable, the only new species being Pochard, with a maximum of nine recorded during the month. A Woodcock was flushed during the first week and a Brent Goose flew over on 11th. Eight Common Buzzards were up together on 13th, a sunny day with a light south-westerly wind, when four Red Kites, a Sparrowhawk and a Kestrel were also seen. The maximum number of Goldeneyes was 15 on 27th. Another mild month but wet, with 70mm of rain (3" in old money).

A pair of Great Crested Grebes was displaying on 4th **February**. Duck numbers remained stable with the following being recorded: Wigeon - 68, Gadwall - 40, Tufted Duck - 75 and Goldeneye - 12. Four Little Grebes were present, their numbers having declined as a breeding species during the last few years, the severe winters of 2010-11 taking their toll. Three Whooper Swans were on the North Lake on 4th. The highest number of Pochards was present on 12th when 18 were recorded; this species has also declined in the past 20 years when there were counts in three figures. Tree Sparrows at the feeding station are always difficult to count but were estimated at 80+ mid-month. A drumming Great Spotted Woodpecker was advertising spring and the calling Green Woodpecker made one believe that the birds had it right! A spring gathering of eight Great Crested Grebes on 22nd as birds dispersed to their breeding grounds, was far below the numbers seen in the 1980s and '90s. A drake Smew, present at the nearby Bar Lane Quarry in the early evening of 23rd, was not there next morning nor did it put in an appearance at Farnham. February was another mild month, with a temperature of 10°C on 18th.

On 2nd **March**, 32 Whooper Swans flew over to the west and a solitary Pink-footed Goose came in with a flock of Greylag Geese. An adult and three juvenile Whooper Swans flew north on 4th and a Woodcock was flushed along the North Lake path. The first Chiffchaff was singing by the entrance gate on

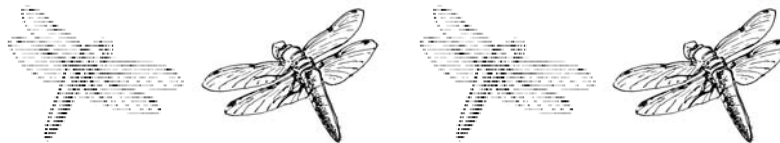
6th when 35 Whooper Swans were observed flying north. A temperature of 14°C on 9th encouraged ten Common Buzzards to take to the air together, accompanied by three Red Kites. Two Chiffchaffs were also present on 9th and Oystercatcher numbers rose to ten, but finding breeding sites will be difficult for them as all islands, except the main one, remain submerged. As a result of warm sunshine in the second week brimstone, comma, peacock and small tortoiseshell butterflies were on the wing. In autumn, the Sand Martin wall was given a good coat of Weathershield to protect the masonry. During the next two weeks it will be made ready for the breeding season, which entails topping up the sand behind the wall, this task needs to be done every two years. We hope that this year some Sand Martins will take up residence; our wall was not the only one which failed to attract birds last year.

Management work continued on site through the winter. The team, as ever, undertook essential work for the benefit mainly of wildlife and, to a lesser extent, our members. As it is a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation, as recognized by North Yorkshire County Council, we have to endeavour to maintain the habitat for resident and visiting species; perhaps members are unaware of this obligation.

Can I remind all members that cars are brought on to the site at the owner's risk.

My thanks to our team for their continued commitment throughout the year, also to those who contribute to the log books and to Ken Limb who uses his computer skills to process all the data into report form.

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



THE CATCHER CAUGHT

One of my many occupations is rowing grass and hay up in preparation for my contractor son to either bale or forage. I use a tractor and a ten-metre wide rake to do this. The work can be anywhere between Knaresborough and Pateley Bridge. In almost every field I will disturb voles, shrews, etc. It is almost guaranteed that within a few minutes of starting I will be joined by a Kestrel who will sit on a vantage point (such as a dead tree branch) and will wait for lunch to be served. So it was in July last year at Burnt Yates. About a third of the field had been done and a vole scuttled past the tractor front wheel. Clutch and brake stood on, even so the Kestrel was already there mantling over his catch. Suddenly a huge shape dropped past the tractor window. A large talon shot out and grasped the Kestrel, a flap of the wings and the Kite (for that is what it was) rose in the air not two metres in front of me. The Kestrel dropped the vole which was caught in mid air by the Kite's other claw. Kes was then unceremoniously dumped on the ground and the Kite disappeared over the top of the tractor cab roof. I watched as the Kestrel slowly recovered, his head turning this way and that looking skywards. The expression on his face was easy to read: "what the h- -I was that." Slowly and unsteadily he flew back to his perch. For the rest of the time I was in the field, he never moved except to preen his ruffled feathers. A good example of "the catcher caught."

Tony Stobbs

INDOOR MEETINGS PROGRAMME 2014/2015

8 October	An African Safari	John Mather
22 October	Ecology of the Yorkshire Dales	Peter Welsh
5 November	Wildlife Images 2013	Whitfield Benson
19 November	Nature's Year	David Alred
3 December	Wild Life, Wild Places	John Gardner
7 January	Birding Down Under: Australia	Alan Davies and Ruth Miller
21 January	Bat Ecology	Prof John Altringham
4 February	Papua New Guinea	Jim Jobe
18 February	Nepal	Colin Slator
4 March	Dragonflies	Keith Gittens
18 March	Ring Ouzels	Ken Hutchinson
22 April	Annual General Meeting	

CALL FOR RECORDS

All members – please send your observations and records for 2013 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.

NATURAL HISTORY BOOKS FOR CHILDREN

Spring-cleaning your bookshelves, donating surplus volumes to charity? Have you any books on wildlife and natural history that would be of interest to children? Fountains Abbey want to expand their work reaching out to the next generation of naturalists, and their library would be very pleased to receive books to augment their collection. Bring your books to a meeting, or contact Val Smith (see below).

CONTACT DETAILS

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