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The Yorkshire Naturalists' Union      The Yorkshire Wildlife Trust  
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## SPRING NEWSLETTER 2018



## **THE NEW ORNITHOLOGICAL RECORDER: AN INTRODUCTION**

When Paul Irving announced that he was moving away I had not expected to be asked to take on the role of the Society's Ornithological Recorder. I was honoured, especially after the great job done by Paul. He is a hard act to follow! The Society's heartfelt thanks go to him for all the hard work over many years – and to Jill and Simon Warwick who have helped edit and produce the Ornithological Report. They are also standing down, having more than done their stint.

The remaining editorial team – Pat Rumbold, Steve Worwood and me – aim to maintain the high standard. Paul will still be writing his section for a year or two yet but if anyone wants to join us and help compile the report they would be very welcome. Please get in touch! It is interesting and absorbing and all you need is an eye for data, be organised and enthusiastic.

I would repeat the regular appeal from my predecessors for all records to be submitted by the end of February in each year. Alternatively use Birdtrack and enter your sightings throughout the year. However, I would like to receive accounts for description birds as soon as possible after they have been seen. Description species are listed at the end of the Report and updated lists are now displayed in the hides at Farnham GP, Nosterfield Nature Reserve and Staveley Nature Reserve.

For those who don't know me I have been a member of the Society for 30 years. I adopted Hay-a-Park GP as my local patch when I moved to Knaresborough and my site list is now 175 species. I can also be encountered at many of the local wildlife sites across the Harrogate district.

You can get hold of me on [Stephenroot@outlook.com](mailto:Stephenroot@outlook.com) Alternatively message me on twitter @smrbirds. Feel free to contact me with sightings or questions at any time and I look forward to meeting many of you when out birding.

**Stephen Root**

## Obituary Notices:

### John Hobson

John Hobson died peacefully on 15 February 2018. John joined the Society in 1996, and has been Recorder for Freshwater Life for many years. Our sympathies go to his wife Christine and to his family.

### Robert Brown

Robert Brown passed away on 9 February 2018 after a short illness. Robert was a regular visitor to Farnham Gravel Pit and a hard working member of the Farnham Management Team. Robert enjoyed attending the ornithological Field Meetings. Our sympathies go to his family.

### Sylvia Hodson

Sylvia Hodson died peacefully on 24 February 2018, aged 85 years. She was a member of the Society from 1988-2010, and a keen bird-watcher.



## FARNHAM OPEN DAY

**Sunday 15 July 2018**

**10 am to 4 pm**

It is hoped to include the following events:

**Mammal trapping** - 10 am and 2 pm. Looking at the contents of traps set the previous night.

**Moth trapping** - inspecting the catch from the previous night, weather permitting.

**Wild flower walks** - help will be given in identifying the flowering plants.

**Bird walks** - to help identify water birds, breeding warblers and other species.

**Butterfly walks** - 15 species may be found on a good day.

**Damselflies and Dragonflies** - observations of a possible 10 species of damselflies and dragonflies, with all the help you need to identify them.

### Information

The entrance gate will be open from 9 am to 4 pm

For those intending to make a day of it, there is a comfortable hide in which to eat your picnic lunch.

NB: there are no toilet facilities.

**Field meetings** are open to members only. All members are welcome giving opportunities to pursue specific interests and learn about biodiversity in different habitats and the relationships between species involved. Reports of past excursions can be found on the website.

Please note the following precautions: stout footwear and suitable outdoor clothing should always be worn. Bring plenty of food and drink, with sun blocker and insect repellent when relevant. Members take part entirely at their own risk and are responsible for their personal safety and the security of their personal belongings.

Of course the weather can never be guaranteed, so some events may have to be altered slightly to work around any inclement precipitations! Also note that return times are approximate only.

**Notes for meetings led by June Atkinson:**

Pick-up point for minibus and coach outings: meet at York Place Car Park, off York Road, Knaresborough – behind Marquis of Granby pub. Car parking charge: £1.60 all day. Please have exact money for the machine. Booking form for trips on 20 Feb, 7 August and 4 September. Please note that the price for the bookable mini-bus trips is now £17, not £15 as advertised. This is due to increased operator charges.

**Tuesday 1 May**

**RSPB FAIRBURN INGS**

Meet in reserve car park at 10 am in cars. Looking for passage birds, terns and waders; warblers, to be identified on song; hopefully Spoonbill, which bred last year. RSPB members should have their membership cards with them. Finish at 16:30

**Thursday 14 June**

**EVENING NIGHTJAR WALK, STAINBURN FOREST**

Meet in Stainburn car park, Little Almscliffe at 9 pm in cars. Looking for Nightjars and roding Woodcocks. The walk is approximately 1 mile each way on a good forestry track. Please bring a torch for the return walk. Midge repellent is essential. Finish at 23.00

**Leader: Mike Smithson**

**Thursday July 19, 10:00 - 16:00**

**NOSTERFIELD NR BIOBLITZ**

Details to follow shortly

**Tuesday 7 August**

**TOPHILL LOW NATURE RESERVE**

Minibus trip (*booking required*). Meet at York Place car park, Knaresborough at 8.30 am. A diverse habitat with two reservoirs, wader pools and woodland; there are several hides and access paths are good. Butterflies and dragonflies are abundant. Finish at 18:00.

**Tuesday 4 September HARTLEPOOL, TEESMOUTH & RSPB SALTHOLME**

Minibus trip (*booking required*). Meet at York Place car park, Knaresborough at 8.00 am. Looking for sea passage, skuas and terns; also waders at Saltholme. RSPB members should have their membership cards with them. Finish at 18:00.

**BOTANICAL FIELD TRIPS – SUMMER 2018**

**Note:** for all the botanical field trips below, a packed lunch is required; events would normally finish around 16:00. Please email or phone the organiser to say you are coming, this will make it possible to car share – many of the venues have little parking; also changes to the printed programme may have occurred. Please bring next-of-kin name and phone number.

Contact details: Muff = [mjupsall@btinternet.com](mailto:mjupsall@btinternet.com);  
Kerry = [kerry.morrison5@gmail.com](mailto:kerry.morrison5@gmail.com)  
Sonia= [soniastarbuck50@gmail.com](mailto:soniastarbuck50@gmail.com)

| Date                     | Venue                              | Meet:  | Leader                          | Target                                 | Contact:       |
|--------------------------|------------------------------------|--|---------------------------------|--|----------------|
| Fri May 11th             | Upper Teesdale                     | Staveley to car share or Bowlees Visitor Centre, NGR NY 906283           | Richard Campbell                | Spring flowers – Teesdale specialities | Muff Upsall    |
| Wed June 27th            | Ashberry Pasture & Ellerburn Banks | National Park Visitor Centre, Sutton Bank, to reduce car numbers. 10:00. | YWT Reserve Manager, Kate Yates | Limestone flowers; butterflies         | Kerry Morrison |
| Fri July 6 <sup>th</sup> | Staveley Nature Reserve            | 10:00 in the NR car park   | Kevin Walker, BSBI              | Botanical workshop<br>See below        | Muff Upsall    |
| Sat July                 | Farnham                            | From 9:00  | Sonia                           | Survey of                              | Just turn      |

|   |   |   |   |  |                                     |
|---|---|---|---|--|-------------------------------------|
| 7 <sup>th</sup> –<br>National<br>Meadows<br>Day | GP<br>HG5 9JP<br>Grid Ref:<br>SE 353597                     | onwards<br>at FGP   | Starbuck                                | Farnham<br>flowers   | up –<br>gate will<br>be<br>unlocked |
| Sat 14 <sup>th</sup><br>July                    | Skrikes<br>Wood   | Main car<br>park by the<br>Showground<br>in Pateley<br>Bridge                   | Kevin<br>Walker,<br>BSBI                | As for 6 <sup>th</sup><br>July, see<br>further<br>details<br>below | Muff<br>Upsall                      |
| Wed<br>August<br>1st                            | Ribblehead<br>Quarry and<br>Environs,<br>Yorkshire<br>Dales | Fewston to<br>car share or<br>10:30 @<br>quarry<br>car park,<br>NGR<br>SD766788 | Colin<br>Newlands,<br>English<br>Nature | Flowers of<br>limestone  | Kerry<br>Morrison                   |
| Wed<br>Sept 26th                                | Upper<br>Nidderdale,  | 9:45 @<br>Pateley<br>Bridge car<br>park,<br>SE157654,<br>to car share           | Nick<br>Gaunt                           | Autumn<br>Wildlife,<br>incl<br>Mosses &<br>Liverworts              | Nick<br>Gaunt                       |
| Sat<br>Sept 29th                                | Nidd Gorge  | Woodland<br>Trust car<br>park 10:00   | Andy<br>Woodall                         | Fungi  | Muff<br>Upsall                      |

### **Details of Kevin Walker's Identification Workshops, 6 & 14 July Grasses, Sedges, Rushes and Ferns**

Friday 6 July     **Staveley NR**     10 am till 4 pm     Meet at car park

Aim: a very informal teaching session where I plan to cover common grasses, sedges and rushes and maybe some other tricky groups if we have time such as willows and aquatics. We'll start in the meadow by the car park and work our way around the reserve taking in a variety of grassy and marshy habitats, as well as woodland and lake shore. Ideally bring wellies and a hand lens if you have one. I'll bring a selection of useful ID guides so no need to bring your own unless you want to. For those with money to spend the main guide I will be referring to is Francis Rose's *Guide to Grasses, Sedges, Rushes and Ferns* published by Viking Press.

Saturday 14 July

**Skrikes Wood**

10 am till 4 pm

Meet: main car park by the show ground in Pateley Bridge.

Aim; another informal teaching session where I plan to cover common grasses, sedges, rushes and ferns. Skrikes Wood is possibly the best site in the HDNS area for ferns and currently the only site for Wilson's Filmy-fern and Oak fern. We will also see the full range of woodland ferns including lady, male, beech, buckler, golden-scale, hard-shield, soft-shield and brittle-bladder. I will try show you how to easily tell apart the most common three or four species. If we have time we may be able to pay our respects to chickweed-wintergreen. Again I will bring some ID guides. The best for ferns is undoubtedly James Merryweather's AIDGAP key which is published by the Field Studies Council.

### **HDNS WINTER LECTURES: 2018- 2019 PROGRAMME**

| <b>Date</b>     | <b>Name</b>  | <b>Title</b>                               |
|-----------------|--|--|
| 10 October 2018 | Alice Crosby   | Progress with the 'Wildwatch' project      |
| 24 October      | Roger Parrish  | The Mists of India                         |
| 7 November      | Malcolm Greaves,<br>Recorder Mid-Yorks<br>fungus group | Fungi                                      |
| 21 November     | Mike Gray  | Garden Birds                               |
| 5 December      | Keith Wilkinson  | Nidd Gorge – a walk through the study area |
| 9 January 2019  | Nick Gaunt, HDNS                                       | Rainforest on four continents              |
| 23 January      | Mark Hodson,<br>University of York                     | Earthworms and their balls of calcite      |
| 6 February      | Colin Slator   | Wildlife of Sri Lanka                      |
| 20 February     | Sara Robin,<br>YWT planning officer                    | Planning for Wildlife                      |
| 6 March         | Carl Watts   | Wild Photography –<br>Tales & Tails        |
| 20 March        | Prof John Altrincham,<br>University of Leeds           | Bats                                       |

## **SPURN POINT**

**3 September 2017**

Leader: June Atkinson

After a good run through in the minibus, a Merlin was seen flying over a field as we approached Spurn on a bright day with a fresh southerly wind. A sea-watch first at the Warren produced Arctic Skuas, Gannets, Fulmars, Sandwich and Common Terns and a Brent Goose, while packs of Common Scoters and Teal were moving through. Near the sea-watching hide, a Whinchat was found on a fence where it gave close views, a good start! As we walked along the road from the Warren checking the bushes, it was obvious that there was a distinct lack of passerines with only Chiffchaff and Willow Warbler seen. During a lunch stop by the Crown and Anchor Inn a Wheatear was found below the sea wall and the report of a Pied Flycatcher in the car park was worth investigation, but the bird did not oblige. After lunch, we visited Kilnsea Wetlands, with the prospect of seeing both Pectoral and Curlew Sandpipers our main objective. The Curlew Sandpiper gave good views along with Greenshank, Ruff and Dunlin but the Pectoral Sandpiper remained elusive, though we did cover all the possible sites. Seven species of duck were also seen including Pintail, Shoveler and Wigeon. High tide was approaching as we returned to the centre to obtain close views of waders in the estuary. We were greeted with a fantastic display of Grey Plovers and Knots, some still in their breeding plumage, Bar-tailed Godwits, Sanderlings and Dunlins, there were thousands of waders all along the tide line, together with 12 Little Egrets. Speculation was made of the possibility of a Whimbrel and one member persevered until he found one!

A great ending to an excellent days birding with 80 species being recorded. Many thanks to all the members who worked hard to produce such a good list.

**June Atkinson**

## **HACKFALL WOODS looking for fungi**

**21 October 2017**

Leader: Andy Woodall, Mid-Yorkshire Fungus Group

Our day in Hackfall Woods got off to a promising start, with the morning's weather being mild and bright. A group of twelve of us set off (one was following) with our fungi books, magnifying glasses and packed lunches at the ready. Although Hackfall appears to be a natural wood, the landscape is in large part a result of design and work undertaken by the Aislabies in the eighteenth century. It is now an English Heritage Grade 1 listed garden.



We had scarcely left the car park when we had our first fungus sighting – Ergot *Claviceps purpurea* formed in the inflorescences of some of the grass. It is very poisonous. We did not need to venture much further before finding other species such as Jelly Ear, Angel's Bonnet, Elder Whitewash, Honey Fungus and Turkeytails. Several of these were growing on dead elder trees. Nearby, found on ash were Cramp Balls or King Alfred's Cakes *Daldinia concentrica*. Then we found Dead Man's Fingers and Candlesnuff, weird and creepy fungi to find at this time of year around Halloween. We lunched on Kent's Seat at Alum Spring, where we also had the chance to admire the lichens, ferns and mosses which were growing very profusely around us. As well as fungi we had a few diversions such as tiny tree snails and slime mould.

We then found more of the dreaded Honey Fungus *Armillaria mellea*. This is a dangerous parasite of trees and shrubs and spreads by long, black cords resembling bootlaces. Other common fungi included The Deceiver (so-called because of its variable appearance, not because it is poisonous), Sulphur Tuft, Common Inkcap, Oak Stump Bonnet and Coral Spot. In total we found 44 fungi. A few of us were interested in tasting the edible species (although this did not apply to me). Later in the afternoon it began to rain and as we headed back towards the cars it rained more and more, and the paths became very muddy. Fortunately, our health and safety contact telephone numbers were not required and we each got back in one piece. The rain certainly did not spoil our day.

Many thanks to our leader, Andy Woodall from the Mid-Yorkshire Fungus Group, for a lively and entertaining day of mycology, and for patiently answering all our questions. I was sorry that we did not find any magical Earthstars (my favourite fungi) but those can wait for another day.

**Sonia Starbuck**

## **HIGH BATTS NATURE RESERVE**

**1 November 2017**

Leader: Nick Gaunt

On a cool, overcast but dry day nine members were shown around High Batts Nature Reserve by Will Rich. Given the time of year, flowering plants weren't particularly memorable, but a few fungi were identified such as Birch Polypore, Candle-snuff, Dead Man's Fingers, Jelly Ear and the only puffball to grow on wood, Stump Puffball (*Lycoperdon pyriforme*).

Thankfully, there was a good number of mosses and liverworts including some in a calcareous 'scrape' that are restricted to base-rich areas, such as *Entodon concinnus*, *Ditrichum gracile* and *Thuidium assimile*. The dominant ground cover

in the burnet rose scrubland was of the mosses *Hylocomium splendens*, *Rhytidiadelphus triquetrus*, *Rhytidiadelphus squarrosus* and *Pseudoscleropodium purum*. Trees on the river bank held the flood-zone mosses *Leskea polycarpa* and *Syntrichia latifolia*, which looks black and shrivelled when dry but instantly unfurls bright green leaves on moistening. Elsewhere the trees supported the pleurocarps *Hypnum cupressiforme*, *Rhynchostegium confertum*, *Cryphaea heteromalla*, acrocarps including *Orthotrichum affine* and *Zygodon viridissimus*, and the liverwort *Metzgeria furcata*.

After lunch, which we took in the 'Hotel', Will led us 'off piste' to the northern edge of the reserve to see a small waterfall that held, amongst others, the semi-aquatic moss *Platyhypnidium riparioides* and the liverwort *Lunularia cruciata*. Members listened intently as the features of some of the mosses were described and did their best to come to terms with the scientific names! Bird life was sparse but good views of goldcrest, redwing and a couple of kingfishers were had. Sadly, the hawfinch recently seen in the reserve didn't show. Overall, a good day was had by all.

**Nick Gaunt**

## **WALK from HIGH BATTS NR and Christmas Meal at Ripon Golf Club**

Leader : Colin Slator

**19th December 2017**

Eleven of us braved the early morning icy conditions to enjoy a walk starting at High Batts NR. After a brief visit to the hide on the reserve where we saw a good variety of birds at the well-stocked feeders, we started walking along public rights of way towards Ripon through Ripon Parks. Colin shared his encyclopaedic knowledge of the locality in relation to future and past gravel extraction activities, changes in the course of the River Ure, and changes in land use and ownership that he has witnessed over his long association with the area since the reserve was first set up in 1973. We scanned the hedgerows for Yellowhammers, Bullfinches and Tree Sparrows and the copses for mixed flocks of Goldfinch, Redpoll and Siskin. A small flock of Curlew flew into view several times. A very dark Buzzard was the first raptor we saw sitting in the emerging sunlight, but that was soon followed by a fantastic sighting of a large sub=adult Peregrine Falcon sitting on a fence post preening. Bird of the day, it sat for several minutes allowing us to photograph it before flying off. By now the sun was warming us up and it was a beautiful day with small pockets of mist floating across the winter fields. As we walked we could see how different land management strategies over the years had changed the fortunes of several species, none more so than Otter.

After a festive lunch at the Golf Club we just about timed it right to witness a spectacular Starling murmuration over the reed beds near the river, viewed from the bridge over Ripon Canal. Although they were distant, the sheer number of birds was astounding. The numbers increased for about fifteen minutes, each time it looked like that there were no more to come, even more arrived to swell the ranks and put on an extended display. Nicholson's Lagoon had a large number of Mallard, a single male Pintail, several Goldeneye, and a Goosander. Wigeon, Teal and Tufted Duck completed the line-up.

Many thanks to Colin for leading and to Muff for organising the meal booking.

**Sue Coldwell**

## **HARTLEPOOL & TEESMOUTH**

**20 February 2018**

Leader: June Atkinson

Sites visited: Hartlepool Headland and Marina, Newburn Bridge, Seaton Common, North Gare, Saltholme RSPB Reserve. Weather: Sunny, sea conditions slight; cold northerly airstream.

Our minibus driver, Keith, got us off to a good start, arriving at Hartlepool at 9.15 am on a sunny morning with a receding tide that had been high at 6.30 am. Our first stop was along the seafront where the rocks were just beginning to be exposed and our target wader species, Purple Sandpiper, was quickly found. The usual Turnstones and Oystercatchers were in good numbers but a very good find was a single Knot. We next moved on to the Headland to sea watch as, in the past, this had always produced a good number of species but on this day it was extremely quiet and two flying Red-throated Divers with one on the sea, two Common Scoters and a Common Guillemot were all that were seen. As we walked past the breakwater, a Mediterranean Gull was sitting on the rocks and a party of Eider Ducks was on the sea, close to the entrance to the fish docks. Moving on to the Marina, which like the Headland is usually a good location, did not produce anything. The report of a Black Redstart at the entrance to the docks was worth a try, but in vain, though a diligent member did find a Little Owl which gave a flying view to some of the group.

Our lunch stop at Newburn Bridge gave us the usual Mediterranean Gull, also a lone Sanderling on the beach. A Lapland Bunting, with a large flock of Linnets across the road from there, was worth investigating; as usual the flock was constantly on the move but some members did have a brief view of the bunting. A short stop at North Gare provided us with a Grey Plover, before we reached RSPB Saltholme Reserve where a strong northerly wind greeted us. Fourteen

species of waterfowl were seen, highlights being Pintail, Red-breasted Merganser and Goldeneye. Hundreds of Wigeon were feeding in the fields with Curlews, Golden Plovers and a close Little Egret, while a hunting Marsh Harrier gave excellent views. A Stonechat was located and Tree Sparrow, Greenfinch and Reed Bunting were some of the species at the feeders.

Well done to the 18 members who worked hard to provide such a good list of 73, which equalled last year's trip – a very enjoyable day.

**June Atkinson**

## **THE BIG GARDEN BIRDWATCH IN STARBECK**

On Saturday 27 January, members of Starbeck in Bloom, the Harrogate and District Biodiversity Group and HDNS all joined forces in Starbeck Library to organise the Big Garden Birdwatch for the RSPB. Since some of us do not have our own gardens, Starbeck in Bloom decided to open up Belmont Field and Starbeck Library garden for a community event. Armed with binoculars, and on behalf of the Harrogate Biodiversity Group, Malcolm Jones led children of various sizes (and adults) on a walk around the library perimeter. Despite the poor weather, they were rewarded with several sightings including a flock of long tailed tits, which caused great interest amongst the 'new' birdwatchers.

After this, the participants came indoors and set to work on various craft activities involving birds. For most of the morning the library was full of children working together round a table, absorbed in their set tasks of making bird feeders, bird mobiles and learning about different foods to attract different birds. The HDNS photographic display was on show in the main library and refreshments were available.

The Starbeck Big Garden Birdwatch was a credit to the organisers who had worked so hard to involve the local community and to teach them about birds. This was a free event and it was good to see such hard work being rewarded. Hopefully there will be many more joint events organised in the future.

**Sonia Starbuck**



**House Martin Survey:** Provisional results of the 2015 survey can be viewed on the website ([www.bto.org](http://www.bto.org)). Fieldworkers who contributed to the nest survey in 2016/17 can still access the system to view their records, it will no longer be possible to add additional data. Some regional provisional results will be available later in the year.

**Peregrine Survey, 2014:** Provisional results can be found on the website, and a paper has been submitted to Bird Study for publication in due course. In comparison to the 2002 survey only England and Northern Ireland showed increases, 34% and 17% respectively; a general pattern is emerging that peregrines are doing well in urban and lowland situations whilst they continue to decline in the uplands.

**Winter Thrushes, 2012/13 and 13/14:** Again provisional results can be found on the website and as with peregrines a paper has been submitted to Bird Study.

**Breeding Waders of English Upland Farmland (BWEUF):** In 2016 we set about surveying wading birds that breed on the “In-Bye”, a characteristic habitat found between cultivated grazing and moorland. This was a challenging piece of work requiring short notice acquisition of fieldworkers and I am very grateful to those of you who kindly volunteered. One of the problems was to sort out ownership of land and access permission where required in the complex network of dales farms. Fortunately the BTO anticipated that attracting volunteers would be difficult so some of the fieldwork was carried out by RSPB Professionals. I can’t direct you to any provisional results at the moment but the survey web page is still open so you can see the extent of coverage in the north of England.

### **Ongoing Surveys:**

**Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) and Waterways Breeding Bird Survey (WBBS):** These surveys provide valuable information that is combined with other sources of data to give us a good indication of bird population trends. About 4,000 squares are annually surveyed in the U.K. In my Region I currently have 22 squares covered and 16 vacant; please contact me if you are interested in getting involved in either of these projects.

**Heronries Census (Colonial Nesting Birds Survey):** The name change of this long standing project reflects the fact that Little Egrets occur in some heronries and that there are inland Cormorant colonies. The BTO is very proud of the fact that the Heronries Census is the longest running bird survey in the world and was established in 1928; to celebrate this achievement the Trust is has launched an enhanced survey for the 90<sup>th</sup>. Anniversary. Regular heronry counters will be asked to take a closer look at their current site(s) and of course keep an eye open for new heronries. I would, therefore invite you to let me know of any sites (active or not) you may know of, I will reply to you with details if we already have it listed.

### **New Surveys:**

**Project Owl:** Decline in several owl species was highlighted in the BTO Atlas of 2007-11. Fieldwork for the Tawny Owl will commence in autumn 2018 based on methodology similar to that used in 2005-06. Little is known about the breeding success of Long Eared Owls so hopefully this species will be studied more extensively than in the past. To help fund Project Owl the Trust has launched an appeal, please see our website ([www.bto.org](http://www.bto.org)) for more information and a summary of the planned survey.

**Seabird Census:** BTO Reps have agreed to act as regional organisers for this JNCC project. Yes, I know we are 60 miles from the coast in Yorkshire (Central), but we do have Common Terns breeding at gravel pits and Black Headed Gull colonies on the moors, so I will be looking for volunteers to do the field work in the summer this year. I intend sending out an email request listing the specific sites to be visited (the survey is not random). In the case of Common Tern breeding sites I am arranging to get information from the managers of the reserves where they occur.

**Mike Brown**

BTO Regional Representative for Yorkshire (Central)  
[mikebtorep@gmail.com](mailto:mikebtorep@gmail.com)



## MOTHS

In briefly summarising the 2017 season, one new species of 'macro' moth, the Birch Mocha, was recorded in the Society's area but eight new species of 'micro' moth were recorded (several of which are very rare in Yorkshire). During 2017, some 713 species of moth were recorded in our area (372 macros and 341 micros), whilst the overall list of species recorded for the Society continues to increase, now numbering 1157 (comprising 652 micros and 506 macros) and encouragingly, the number of records submitted in 2017 had noticeably increased to 14,574 of 54,839 moths. There were a number of Vice County records, the majority of which were in VC65, historically an under-recorded area of Yorkshire.

It was a good, but not exceptional, year for the day-flying Humming-bird Hawk-moth (compared with 2016), with three records of the beautiful migrant the Vestal (38 in the county) during autumn; three other migrant species, Scarce Bordered Straw, Small Mottled Willow and Pearly Underwing were also reported from our area, part of a county-wide influx. A small population of the nationally declining V-moth was found at Grewelthorpe, one of only two sites in the whole county to record this species!

Other rare species recorded last year included Small Blood-vein (2nd-4th records), Scallop Shell and Varied Coronet (4th & 5th records), Red-necked Footman (7th record), Coronet (8th record) and Fen Square-spot and Brown-veined Wainscot (9th records), whilst a Galium Carpet was the first HDNS record since 2005. Everything will be detailed fully in the 2017 Annual Report.

Early-emerging species such as Grey Shoulder-knot, Spring Usher and Common Quaker have already been recorded this year (before the blizzards!), so if you haven't begun moth trapping yet this year, now's the time to start. Any species which are causing identification problems, please email a digital photograph (if possible) to either recorder (with details of date and place) and we will do our best to help, although we would encourage you to make an attempt at identification before emailing us!

Follow us on Twitter: *@JillWarwick* or *@DoubleKidney*

**Jill Warwick & Charlie Fletcher**





Three Green Sandpipers were present in the middle of **September** and a Little Egret flew over on 23<sup>rd</sup>, while two Greenshank were on site. A male Stonechat was a good record on 26<sup>th</sup> and a Ruff was seen the next day.

**October** began with a Green Sandpiper on 1<sup>st</sup>. The last record of a Chiffchaff was on 7<sup>th</sup>. A skein of 50 Pink-footed Geese flew over on 8<sup>th</sup>, while a female Brambling was present at the feeding station. Two Green Sandpipers were seen during the first half of the month. The first large movement of winter thrushes was of 450 Redwings on 21<sup>st</sup>, when 30 Pink-footed Geese flew south-east. On the same day there was a late record of a Swallow. The last record of a Green Sandpiper was of one on 25<sup>th</sup>, when 65 Fieldfares flew over. The first Goldeneye was seen on 27<sup>th</sup>. Thirteen Whooper Swans flew south on 29<sup>th</sup> and a count of 30 Blackbirds was noteworthy. On the last day of the month, 700 Starlings were counted in three hours, coming from the east in small flocks.

On 1<sup>st</sup> **November**, 90 Pink-footed Geese flew west which was the start of a movement that continued next day, with skeins of 300, 400 and 180. Also on 2<sup>nd</sup>, a Blackcap and Brambling were seen and a Peregrine Falcon was perched on a pylon on 3<sup>rd</sup>; 13 Red Kites were counted the next day. A Swallow, seen on 6<sup>th</sup>, was a very late record. A female Brambling was present for two days together with three sightings of a Peregrine Falcon. A pair of Mandarin Ducks and the first Jack Snipe were seen on 23<sup>rd</sup>. Maximum duck counts were: Wigeon – 20, Gadwall – 19, Mallard – 50, Teal – 26, Tufted Duck- 65, Goldeneye – 5.

There was a good start to **December** when a Green Sandpiper remained for four days. Temperatures were unseasonal with 10°C on 6<sup>th</sup>. A Peregrine Falcon was on its usual perch on 9<sup>th</sup> and a Green Sandpiper stayed for a further four days. A Great White Egret flew over on 16<sup>th</sup> and an overnight frost froze the lakes almost completely; when the Green Sandpiper returned, it soon departed. The temperature rose to 11°C on 27<sup>th</sup> and 12 Meadow Pipits were present in the back field. Two Common Redshanks were recorded on 28<sup>th</sup>. A Shelduck, first recorded on 14<sup>th</sup>, remained until the end of the month. A Herring Gull was seen with a black, plastic square around its neck, an adornment no doubt acquired whilst feeding on a refuse tip. Maximum wildfowl counts were: Wigeon – 41, Gadwall – 20, Mallard – 56,

Teal – 41, Pochard - 1, Tufted Duck – 87, Goldeneye – 13; also Little Grebe – 9, Great Crested Grebe – 6.

A Peregrine Falcon was seen on 1<sup>st</sup> **January**, when a drake Scaup made a brief appearance before flying off. A drake Shoveler was present in sub-eclipse plumage, according to the Wildfowl Handbook. On 8<sup>th</sup>, the South Lake was almost completely frozen over which resulted in a good count of wildfowl. An early Curlew flew over on 10<sup>th</sup> and three Woodcocks were flushed on 12<sup>th</sup>. On the afternoon of 15<sup>th</sup>, eight Ruff flew through; there are references of this species recorded in January in *Birds of the Harrogate District*. Wintering thrushes appeared with 12 Redwings on 16<sup>th</sup> and, a few days later, 200+ Fieldfares were moving through in small flocks; small numbers of both species fed in the back field. Two Oystercatchers were present on 20<sup>th</sup>, 13 Meadow Pipits were in the back field and 200 Lapwings on the islands. Five Oystercatchers were seen on 29<sup>th</sup>. A mixed flock of about 50 Siskins and Lesser Redpolls flew over - the first record of both species this winter. The feeding station has attracted five species of tits together with Great Spotted Woodpecker, Bullfinch, Goldfinch, Nuthatch, Tree Sparrow, Yellowhammer and Reed Bunting. A Treecreeper is a regular visitor to the area as it forages around the hawthorns. Maximum wildfowl counts were: Shelduck – 1, Wigeon – 57, Gadwall – 24, Mallard – 22, Teal – 92, Pochard – 2, Tufted Duck – 79, Goldeneye – 18, Little Grebe – 6, Great Crested Grebe – 4. The open weather conditions so far this winter have produced very little movement of the more unusual species. The maximum temperature for the month was 10°C on 27<sup>th</sup>. Perhaps next month may see a change!

On 4<sup>th</sup> **February**, 350 Pink-footed Geese flew north. A Jack Snipe was flushed on 7<sup>th</sup>; they have been rather elusive this winter. Twenty-four Meadow Pipits were present in the back field. The highest count of Cormorants, 34, did not please the anglers! Six Oystercatchers were present on 21<sup>st</sup>. An optimistic Sparrowhawk was perching on the post of a bird feeder. Maximum wildfowl counts were: Mute Swan – 13, Shelduck – 2, Wigeon – 66, Gadwall – 20, Mallard – 56, Teal – 53, Pochard – 3, Tufted Duck – 62, Goldeneye – 15, Little Grebe – 7, Great Crested Grebe – 5, Moorhen – 18, Coot – 12. Very little bird movement was occurring throughout the whole of our area, according to local birdwatchers. The weather for the month was again mild, with a maximum of 10°C and a minimum of -2°C, until the so-called 'Beast from the East' arrived on 26<sup>th</sup>, giving us a taste of real winter conditions. The last one I remember was winter 2010-2011, but that was not as harsh nor prolonged as the current

one. We can only hope that the continuing strong, easterly winds will send a flurry of eastern rarities into our area!

One House Sparrow, a common bird but a rarity for Farnham, was recorded on 4<sup>th</sup> **March**, ten Common Pochards flew in on 6<sup>th</sup> and 52 Pink-footed Geese flew over north on 7<sup>th</sup>, a fine drake Pintail was present and later, 50 Wigeon dropped in on the lake.

There were three sightings of Otters in October, an adult and three young were seen in November and there was a single sighting in December. Three were seen on 6<sup>th</sup> January, with two on 27<sup>th</sup> and three on 5<sup>th</sup> March. There have been regular sightings of Stoat and Roe Deer and also evidence of the presence of Foxes.

On 27<sup>th</sup> October two Red Admirals, a Comma and a Peacock were recorded; one Comma was seen on 11<sup>th</sup> November.

**June Atkinson**

Chairman, Management Committee & Honorary Warden.

## **SWIFTS**

Many of you enjoyed the recent lecture about Swifts by Edward Mayer.

To find out more about Swift conservation you might like to visit the website <http://www.swift-conservation.org/> where you can find out more information about Swifts. There are tips on providing the right kind of nesting places and what can be done in a practical way to help protect their future.

## **ROSSETT PONDS LNR**

Mike Brown has been our representative on the Rossett Ponds LNR committee (for which we tend our thanks), but now wishes to resign. Would you be willing to serve as a representative of HDNS?

Committee meetings are roughly every two months or as required. There is no formal monthly date. Committee members are expected to show a willingness to turn up for work days on the Reserve but this obviously depends on your physical ability to participate.

Please contact Sue Coldwell if you would like to hear more.

## HIGH BATTS NATURE RESERVE: "IN AT THE START" PROJECT

Work is beginning on a major new quarrying extension by Hanson, adjacent to High Batts Nature Reserve. This will be both a challenge and a great opportunity for us to do even more for nature. Working with Hanson we will be monitoring and recording the changes on the working quarry and how species respond. All the data will go into helping to develop the plans for the eventual restoration of the site, so that we can maximise the potential for creating new habitats and conservation gain. We will be working with local schools to provide fun and learning opportunities for children and young people.

Take a look at the High Batts Website to find out how you can get involved.

<https://highbatts.wordpress.com/in-at-the-start-our-new-project/>

## HARROGATE NATURALISTS' FORUM

Get the very latest wildlife news from our area, recent sightings, reminders of HDNS meetings, members' photos (and even sound files!), advice, explanation, good natured discussion and humour. The more members who join the Forum the more useful it becomes as a means of communication within our Society. So, if you have use of a computer you really must visit [http://tech.groups.yahoo.com/group/Harrogate\\_Naturalists/](http://tech.groups.yahoo.com/group/Harrogate_Naturalists/) and sign up.

Contact **Robert Marshall** for more information:  
email: [hdns.wildwatch@btinternet.com](mailto:hdns.wildwatch@btinternet.com)

## WEATHER RECORDS for ANNUAL REPORT & BIRD REPORT

Ann Mettam wrote her last Weather Report for 2016.

Unfortunately, the person who was going to submit further reports is now unable to do so. Would you be able to offer weather records and a commentary, for the Harrogate and District Recording Area?

If so, Val Smith and Steve Root (respective editors) would be very pleased to hear from you.

## PAST PUBLICATIONS

We have a number of past publications that we no longer wish to keep, as they are available from other sources. If you would like to have any of them, or if you know of a group that would like them please contact Val Smith to arrange collection. (See last page for contact details.)

*British Birds* 1986, 1987 and some odd copies from the 1980s

*High Batts Annual Report* 1987-2009 (some missing)

*The Naturalist (YNU)* 1981-2001 (three missing)

*YNU Bulletin* numbers 34, 35 and 41-46 (2001-6)

## DISCOUNTS

**Black's** 10% discount on fully priced items.

**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.

**Valerie Holmes, Hon. Treasurer**

## CALL FOR RECORDS

All members – please send your observations and records for 2018 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.

## WEBSITE PASSWORD

The members-only password will change on 1 June 2018. The new password will be available on the new membership card, which will be posted shortly after 1 May.

## **NEWSLETTER BY EMAIL**

If you would be happy to receive the newsletter by email (saving the Society at least a pound a time, and Nature a small tree) please contact Richard Bion at richard.bion@talktalk.net

## **TEA AND BISCUITS**

Thank you to Cynthia and Robert Chandler and all the volunteers who have kindly made the tea and coffee at our meetings over the winter months. It's very pleasant having a chat over a cuppa and a biscuit after the lectures. If you would like to help out please contact Cynthia.

## **CONTACT DETAILS**

**General Secretary: Mrs Sue Coldwell**

email: gen.sechdns@yahoo.co.uk

**Membership Secretary: Ms Val Smith**

email: memsec.hdns1@talktalk.net

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



Material for the **Autumn newsletter** should be sent  
to Valerie Holmes by **14 September 2018**

email: [valerieholmes@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:valerieholmes@hotmail.co.uk)

## **ADVANCE NOTICE: INCREASE IN SUBSCRIPTIONS 2019-20**

### **Subscription increase from 1 April 2019**

Your subscription to Harrogate District Naturalists' Society has remained the same for 10 years. In order to balance the income and expenditure we need to increase the subs from 1 April 2019 as follows: Single £20.00 Joint £30.00

Please contact your bank to change your standing order. As your subscription will have already been paid for 2018-19 by the time you receive the Newsletter, you can contact the bank right away to have the correct sum in place for April 2019.

**HARROGATE & DISTRICT NATURALISTS' SOCIETY**  
**Standing Order Mandate**

To ..... Bank

Branch Title (not address).....

Please / make payments \* / amend the existing payment \* /  
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**Harrogate & District Naturalists' Society**

**Yorkshire Bank plc**  
**Sort Code 05-05-45**

**Harrogate Branch**  
**Account number      33786400**

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Regular payment:-

Annually, from 1st April 2019 a payment of £.....

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this payment to be made until you receive further notice from me/us \*

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