

# Harrogate & District Naturalists' Society



Supporting:

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

Registered Charity No. 503860

## SPRING NEWSLETTER 2021



AGM information: pages 4-8

Subscription renewal form: at end of newsletter



## FROM THE PRESIDENT

Little did we know last Spring how extensive would be the impact of the pandemic. A year ago, we were plunged into lockdown just as Spring was arriving, stopping us from visiting all but the most local of our favorite haunts. Whilst we, as naturalists, may already be familiar with the wildlife around us, many others have come to notice for the first time the delights of birdsong, the antics of insects and the glory of wildflowers in and around their homes. As a Society of naturalists, we should be doing all we can to foster this increased public interest in nature. How can we support those keen to learn more?

Sharing our knowledge of habitats and the wildlife they hold is an obvious first step. Our website now has a 'gazetteer' of localities of natural interest in the district, with over seventy places so far included. We need those entries to be comprehensive, accurate and informative, so I would welcome your contributions, whether descriptions of new locations, images of the habitat or suggestions for improving the text.

Our field trips have of course been severely curtailed over the past year, with only small groups being allowed if at all. We are eager to resume field meetings as soon as we can and have published a provisional programme on the website and in this Newsletter. All the field meetings this year are visiting localities from the gazetteer so we will have an opportunity to become more familiar with them. The meetings are likely to be constrained in size for some time yet, so please contact the organisers, Muff Upsall and Kerry Morrison, should you wish to attend.

The Sightings function of the website has been very successful and I am sure members and non-members alike find it interesting to learn what wildlife is around. I will take the opportunity here to remind you all that our Recorders are also keen to receive your records for 2020 as they embark on the hard task of writing their sections of our Annual Reports. Our Recorder of beetles and other insects, Jim Jobe, will be standing down this year but will continue to offer his expertise in identification. However, we do need a new recorder (or recorders) for beetles, flies and other insects and spiders to continue in Jim's footsteps. Please let me know if you can take on some or all of this role. I am sure that you, like me, are looking forward to venturing out and about in our wonderfully bio-diverse district once again and I wish you all an enjoyable time in our countryside this Spring and Summer. Happy watching and recording!

**Nick Gaunt    President**

## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2021

The timescale for the resumption of normal life is still unclear so Council is once again inviting all members who have access to a computer to join the Council for a video conference AGM on Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> April 2021 at 7.30pm. An email will be sent out to all members who are on the messaging service.

Members who wish to nominate candidates for office, or for membership of Council, or to bring up items under Any Other Business may do so in advance in writing by post or email to the General Secretary, Sue Coldwell, to reach her by 7 April.

The video conference will allow for up to 100 members to attend and we very much hope you will accept the invitation which will come in an email from the President, Nick Gaunt. Council has made the necessary change to the Constitution to allow for this type of meeting, and the Charity Commission has confirmed the temporary change, but this is only intended to be for as long as is necessary during the Coronavirus pandemic.

### **The Annual General Meeting of the Society will be held on Wednesday, 21<sup>st</sup> April 2021 at 7.30pm by Zoom Video Conference.**

After the meeting there will be a presentation by Nick Gaunt entitled 'Wildlife in India'.

### **AGENDA**

- 1 Apologies for absence
- 2 Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 16<sup>th</sup> December 2020
- 3 Council's Report for 2020-21
- 4 Treasurer's Report for 2020-21
- 5 Election of Officers and Members of Council 2021-22
- 6 Any other business (prior notice having been given to the Secretary)

**Notice is hereby given of the following nominations for Council to be proposed for election at the Annual General Meeting as Officers and Members of Council for 2021-22.**

**The Retiring Council 2021-22**

**Officers:**

<b><i>President:</i></b>	Nick Gaunt
<b><i>Vice President:</i></b>	Vacant
<b><i>General Secretary:</i></b>	Sue Coldwell
<b><i>Membership Secretary:</i></b>	Valerie Smith
<b><i>Programme Secretary:</i></b>	Ruth Upsall
<b><i>Treasurer:</i></b>	Lynne Gilland

**Council's nominations for Officers 2021-22**

<b><i>President:</i></b>	Nick Gaunt
<b><i>Vice President:</i></b>	Vacant
<b><i>General Secretary:</i></b>	Sue Coldwell
<b><i>Membership Secretary:</i></b>	Valerie Smith
<b><i>Programme Secretary:</i></b>	Ruth Upsall
<b><i>Treasurer:</i></b>	Lynne Gilland

**Members of Council: 2020-21**

Kerry Morrison (2021)  
Nigel Harcourt-Brown(2021)  
Kevin Walker (2022)

**Council's nominations Members of Council: 2021-22**

Kerry Morrison (2021)  
Nigel Harcourt-Brown(2021)  
Kevin Walker (2022)

**Honorary Auditor: Mr A Pease**

## **AGM Minutes and Secretary's Report, 16 December 2020**

Minutes of the 73<sup>rd</sup> Annual General Meeting held by Zoom Video Conference on Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> December 2020.

The meeting was attended by 31 members including officers and council members. Nick Gaunt, President, conducted the meeting. After the business meeting a short film on Kefalonia was presented by David Tipping.

1. Apologies for Absence; Richard and Andrea Bion, Brian Damper, Michael Wade, Val Smith
2. Minutes of the Last Annual General Meeting; held on 17<sup>th</sup> April 2019. These were read out by the Secretary after which the President asked if the meeting accepted them as a true record. When all agreed, Kerry Morrison proposed and Peter Riley seconded the motion to accept them.
3. **Report to Council 2019-20 Presented by Sue Coldwell**

At the 2019 AGM all current members were prepared to stand again. With Nick Gaunt as President set about inviting tenders for a new website as it became apparent that our current website provider could no longer offer support. In the end Flair Digital was chosen and they began work on the new website, with Nick very much involved with the transfer of everything that members were used to on the old website and some brand new features too. After a winter of trials and tribulation the new site went live on 20<sup>th</sup> May and it was certainly worth all the hours that Nick had put into it! Many thanks! After working with Valerie Holmes as Treasurer for several years, I was very sorry that Valerie made it known to Council that she wished to resign as soon as Council could find a replacement. Council would like to join me in thanking Valerie for the years of service that she put into HDNS as Treasurer. Valerie remains with Val Smith joint Newsletter editor and we are very grateful to her for all her hard work. Council were very fortunate to be able to co-opt Lynne Gilland as Treasurer but unfortunately were unable to seek full approval due to the AGM deferral. However, Lynne very quickly was able to take over the reins from Valerie and is happy to stand for election. The new logo on the website was designed in conjunction with Beth Bishop and Alice Crosby from Nidderdale AONB who also helped design and print a new publicity brochure for the Society. Thanks to Kerry Morrison who was very much the instigator for this collaboration which started in September 2019. As a new venture for this year, a sub-committee of Nigel Harcourt Brown, Kerry Morrison and Muff Upsall offered an opportunity for all members and the public to listen to a lecture by the eminent ornithologist Professor Tim Birkhead at Hampsthwaite Memorial Hall on Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2019 at 7.30pm; Tickets sold well and Val produced homemade refreshments. The evening was deemed a great

success. The Botany Field Trips have gone from strength to strength with Kevin Walker, Muff Upsall and Kerry Morrison including a New Year Plant Hunt at Staveley NR. Nick Gaunt ran a Bryophyte Workshop at Muff's house and this attracted a capacity attendance, given the limited access to microscopes. June Atkinson ran a very successful list of Ornithological events including two well subscribed coach trips to Spurn Point and Teeside. The annual Fungus Foray with Andy Woodall was similarly well attended. There was huge interest in the visits to Allerton Waste Recovery Park and two groups attended, coming away hugely impressed. Colin Slator once again led a very popular Winter Walk. Thank you to Brian Morland for showing us round his fascinating site at Bell Flask. This was followed by the traditional Christmas Lunch at The Bull in West Tanfield. In all 20 Field Trips were offered up until February 2020. A full programme of well attended Indoor Meetings was curtailed in March due to the emergence of Coronavirus. Thank you to Muff Upsall for the organisation of the meetings and all the members who have contributed to the programme of talks. Unfortunately, as Council were planning the April AGM it became evident that there would be no more meetings, indoors or out due to National Lockdown on March 23<sup>rd</sup>. Council has continued to meet with Zoom Video conferencing to see the Society through the very challenging time. One of the most on-going challenges has been the ever increasing size of the Annual Report. We have had to change printers due to the spiralling cost and hopefully this will be resolved shortly. Many thanks to Val Smith for her perseverance in compiling the Report, as well as two newsletters a year and continuing with Membership Secretary duties. The Annual Report very much depends on the hard work of the Society's Recorders, for which we thank them. Once again, many thanks to Stephen Root for his excellent compilation of the Bird Report. Council is once again grateful to June Atkinson and the Farnham Management Team for keeping the site and the hide maintained for members to enjoy. The Council continues to run with at least one vacancy and we would very much welcome some new blood. Please contact any Council Member for details if you think you would like to become involved. Thank you to Richard Bion for his dedication to keeping members updated by email and to Cynthia and Robert Chandler for enlisting help from members to serve refreshments at the evening meetings. Thank you also to Robert Marshall for moderating the Harrogate Naturalists' forum on Facebook. This is a private group with 28 HDNS members but room for many more! If you would like join please contact Robert. Many thanks to Michael Smith for providing the AV services for the winter lecture meetings, without which our evening meetings could not function. We have continued to support the BTO, RSPB, BSBI, YNU, YWT, BDS and Butterfly Conservation, by membership or donation. There being no questions arising, Ian Morris proposed and Ann Fitzgerald seconded the acceptance of the report.

#### 4. **Treasurer's Report ;**

Presented by Lynne Gilland. Income: Membership subscriptions continue to account for the majority of the Society's Income and there has been a 20% increase over last year's figure. During this period there have been small increases in income from donations and interest on the COIF deposit account, while income from field meetings and Gift Aid fell slightly, together with a decline on income from Farnham keys. Sales of Ornithological Reports have been almost double last year's figure. Income from visitor fees was boosted enormously by the excellent and well attended Tim Birkhead lecture held last autumn. Discounting the transfer of funds from the COIF deposit account to pay for the website development and set-up, income is slightly up on last year's figure. Expenditure Two major items of expenditure appear in the year's accounts: printing of the Ornithological Report and the development of the new website. There have been slight increases in expenditure on printing postage and stationery, Farnham keys, and affiliations and donations; officer expenses covered travel costs of our President, Nick Gaunt, during consultations with Flair Digital regarding development and set up of the new website. The increase in Speakers' fees is up on last year, inflated by the fee for the Tim Birkhead lecture. Expenditure on field meetings is down slightly. Farnham Management costs were down by 33% on last year's figure, while tools and equipment costs were also down significantly, by 79%. Summary The Tim Birkhead lecture in October 2019 was a huge success and generated a profit of £132.25 As the accounts show, the cost of the website has depleted funds in our deposit account. The new website is a significant investment and it is anticipated that this very attractive, informative and easily navigable website will bring new members to the Society which will augment our income. Our thanks go to all those who have contributed and in particular to Nick Gaunt's considerable input into its development. Despite this outlay the Society retains a healthy deposit account with COIF Charities Deposit Fund. As the accounts show, the Society had an excess of income over expenditure for the year ending March 2020, and is in a sound financial position. Our thanks go to Hanson's, Bass & Bligh, and Pharmall for their continued sponsorship of the Annual Report costs. I would personally like to thank Valerie Holmes for her support and advice with the handover of the Treasurer's duties. Thanks to Alan Pease, our Honorary Auditor. Lynne Gilland - Treasurer elect. The motion to accept the report proposed by Malcolm Jones, seconded by Ruth Jowett.

5. Election of Officers and Members of Council; The retiring council and nominations for the new council had been previously circulated, and the new members were elected unopposed. The motion to accept the election was proposed by Richard Stobbs and seconded by Ann Fitzgerald.

6. Any Other Business. There was none previously submitted to the Secretary and the meeting finished at 8.10pm.



## WINTER LECTURES 2021-2022 PROVISIONAL PROGRAMME

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



## PROVISIONAL FIELD TRIP PROGRAMME Summer 2021

Location	Target	Date	Contact
Aubert Ings	Wild Tulips, Fritillaries and much more	Friday 16 April	Kerry
Birk Crag	Escapes from Harlow Carr, Bluebells, Bryophytes	Wednesday 26 May	Muff
High Batts	Many plants of the Magnesian Limestone	Saturday 5 June	Muff
Lumley Reservoir	Waterside flora, Pillwort	Thursday 17 June	Muff
Quarry Moor	Calcareous grassland plants including Thistle Broomrape	Wednesday 23 June	Kerry
Scargill Reservoir & Beaver Dyke	Bog plants, possibility of Crossbills	Tuesday 6 July	Muff
Valley Gardens	Afternoon tree walk led by Sue Wood, HBC Horticultural Officer	Monday 19 July	Kerry
FGP	Late-flowering plants such as Nettle-leaved Bellflower, Blue Fleabane	Monday 9 August	Kerry
Fungus Foray	TBA	TBA	
If Covid restrictions permit, a trip to a more distant destination, e.g. Grass Wood		June, July or August	

Contact details:

Muff: [mjupsall@btinternet.com](mailto:mjupsall@btinternet.com) Mob: 07812356177; LL: 01423340694

Kerry: [kerry.morrison5@gmail.com](mailto:kerry.morrison5@gmail.com) Mob: 07811806409

## **ORNITHOLOGICAL FIELD MEETINGS 2021**

Leader: **June E. Atkinson** (unless otherwise stated)  
Enquiries to her on 01423 885612 or mobile 07811929925

Please note that these meetings will take place only if national guidelines permit. If more than six members attend, there will be two leaders.

Tuesday 30 March            **NOSTERFIELD complex, Nicholson's Lagoons and YWT Ripon Wetlands** (am & pm)

Meet at Nosterfield car park at 9.30 am (in cars); looking for late winter visitors and early summer migrants.

Tuesday 27 April            **GOUTHWAITE & Scar House reservoir** (am & pm)

Meet at Gouthwaite main car park at 9.30 am (in cars); looking for waterfowl and spring and passage migrants. Stopping en route for Dipper, Pied Flycatcher and raptors, to Scar House for lunch; looking for Ring Ouzel and Wheatear.

Tuesday 11 May            **RSPB FAIRBURN INGS** (am & pm)

Meet in the Reserve car park at 10 a.m. (in cars); looking for passage migrants, waders, warblers, egrets and spoonbills; 75 species were seen on the last two trips - can we better this? RSPB members should have their cards with them.

Thursday 10 June Evening            **NIGHTJAR WALK Stainburn Forest**

Leader: Mike Smithson. Meet at Stainburn Forest car park, Little Almscliffe at 09.00pm (in cars); looking for Nightjars, Roding Woodcock, Tree Pipits. The walk is approximately 1 mile each way on a good Forest track. Please bring a torch for the return walk. Midge repellent essential.

**Staveley Nature Reserve**

**15 September 2020**

The temperature was 22°C when we arrived at the car park and set off to walk into the reserve. As we approached Willow Wood a Chiffchaff was heard giving the last rendering of its summer song, a Wren churred and a Speckled Wood butterfly was seen. Further along, a chance encounter with Pete, a local birdwatcher, drew our attention to a Whinchat and a Stonechat perching on fence posts bordering a field, typical of these two species which launch themselves from the posts in pursuit of their insect prey. A Reed Bunting was also seen.

We made our way to the East Lagoon where a variety of wildfowl was present. An Elephant Hawk Moth caterpillar was seen struggling across the sandy path, it was duly picked up and given a helping hand into the vegetation. Many Migrant Hawker dragonflies were on the wing and Common Darters were also seen. A good specimen of Purple Loosestrife was found along the path edge to the hide.

After extensive searching of the area, we made our way to the West Lagoon where the most numerous species was Greylag Goose, amongst which were found Shoveler, Gadwall and Wigeon. Two Ruff were found amongst the many Lapwings, but two Dunlins favoured the quieter edges. Five Black-tailed Godwits had been seen the previous day and, after much searching, they were eventually found sleeping amongst some tall vegetation. As we gathered to leave the reserve, all the Lapwings flew up in alarm as a Hobby flew over, but it was more interested in a dragonfly. A Tawny Owl hooted making a splendid ending to a very good three hours birdwatching, when 38 species were seen.

**June E. Atkinson**

**Hartlepool, Newburn Bridge, Seaton Common, Greatham Creek and Saltholme**

**22<sup>nd</sup> September 2020**

It was a perfect morning as we arrived at Hartlepool Headland lighthouse, which provides a good vantage point. The sea was fairly calm with little wind. Common Scoters were on the move, several packs were flying over the sea, while Common Guillemots and Eider Ducks were seen at close range. Gannets were plentiful as they flew south, a few Sandwich Terns were still being seen along with two Red-throated Divers. As the tide receded, we viewed the emerging rocks where, after searching, a Purple Sandpiper was found, also Turnstones and Dunlins. A walk along the seafront produced an unexpected Dark—bellied Brent Goose amongst the rocks.

Newburn Bridge was our lunch stop, during which there was a brief view of a Mediterranean Gull. We visited Seaton Common and North Gare next but, by then, the light wind had strengthened considerably. We had just arrived when all the birds flew up in alarm, caused by a Merlin which was so quick to disappear as it made contact with its prey, before the rest of the group could see it. We lined up with our telescopes to scan the fields and identify which birds the Merlin had disturbed, Goldfinches and Lapwings being the majority. Small birds sitting on the fence were identified as Stonechats and Linnets. We next moved on to Greatham Creek, where the area has recently been extended to create a large tidal flood plain. It was low tide so many of the waders had dispersed but, on searching the area from the car park screen and the creek, Black- and Bar-tailed Godwits, Greenshank, two Grey Plovers and Dunlin were added to the list. Our final stop was by the roadside overlooking Saltholme Pools, where good numbers of wildfowl were present including Gadwall, Shoveler and Wigeon, but the star bird was a Great White Egret that gave excellent views. Golden Plovers were sleeping on the rocky causeway but the Little Stint, which had been present earlier, had moved elsewhere. We drove round the corner to Dorman's Pool where an RSPB hide overlooks the area. Four Pintails and a Shelduck were new and a Marsh Harrier suddenly appeared, giving good views as it quartered the reed beds. A fine end to the day; a total of 64 species was seen and all credit to the group for producing a good list in what developed into less than ideal conditions.

**June E. Atkinson**

## **IN MEMORIAM**

## **ROD FAIRCLOUGH 1938-2020**

A long-standing member of the Society, Rod passed away due to Covid 19 in April 2020. He will have been known to many members. A very keen birder Rod contributed his records to the Annual Reports for many years. An excellent companion in the field always full of optimism and enthusiasm whatever the weather. He had a particularly keen eye for waders – buff-breasted sandpiper and white-rumped sandpiper are both on my life list thanks to Rod. Rod regularly visited most of the local reserves and regularly accompanied me at Hay-a-Park GP which we both regarded as our local patch. I regarded him as my mentor in my early birding years when he taught me much about how to look at birds. He is survived by his wife Margaret and his children Tim and Paula, and our condolences go to them.

**Stephen Root**

Despite the lockdown and Covid restrictions the Friends of Aspin Pond have been able to organise and implement some improvements to the pond. More than a year ago it was becoming obvious the pond needed to be excavated again in order to remove the ever-encroaching grass and reeds. We were becoming concerned that the habitat was less favourable to our Great Crested Newt colony, which prefers open water for breeding purposes. The winter of 2019 was exceptionally wet and the pond flooded for many months over the lower path. We feared for the same problem this Winter. However, our contractor Rob Marshall reassured us he could dredge the pond and get the digger in to excavate it.

The work was carried out over two days, the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> of January and we are delighted with the results. We are hoping the newts will be equally impressed. Hopefully the grass can be kept at bay for many years – it was last dug out in 2013. We are also grateful to Rob Marshall for pruning the hazel hedge and strimming the wildflower banks.

We are hoping that Harrogate Borough Council will appoint a new Countryside Ranger to replace Sam Walker, who was such a great help with the maintenance of the site.

We did have enough funds to pay for the recent work, more than £1,700, but obviously we haven't been able to hold any fundraising events such as Quiz Nights and a Car Boot Sale. We are hoping that the Big Lunch picnic may be able to take place on June 6<sup>th</sup> but it will all depend on the pandemic.

One positive result of the pandemic is that many more local people have included a visit to Aspin Pond in their daily exercise.

There are usually quite a lot of different birds around and the snowdrops and aconites are a very welcome sight. The footprints of fox, rabbit and various large and small birds show we aren't the only ones visiting.

The group's AGM had to be cancelled last April and probably will be again this April. However, our supporters can rest assured the committee is keeping a watchful eye on the site.

**Sue Kitching**  
**(Chair, Friends of Aspin Pond)**

## MOTHS

Since the Autumn Newsletter, the excellent 2020 moth season continued late into the year, with no fewer than 17 new species of moth finally recorded in the Society's area, comprising a single 'macro' (Fletcher's/Pauper Pug) but an amazing 16 species of 'micro' moth (several of which are rare or very rare in Yorkshire). An incredible 819 species of moth were reported in this record-breaking year (specifically 378 macros and 441 micros), the biggest total ever. The number of records submitted by the end of the year was 18,760 thus beating the previous record total set in 2018. The complete HDNS list now stands at 1202 species – 690 micros and 512 macros recorded.

The following new micro moths were recorded towards the year-end: *Stigmella incognitella* (an adult attracted to light) at Hutton Conyers on 5th July - all the other Yorkshire records are of leaf mines. *Tachystola acroxantha* at Rocliffe on 21st September; *Acleris cristana* at Hutton Conyers on 20th October and lastly, *Stigmella sakhalinella* also at Hutton Conyers nine days later (a leaf mine on Silver Birch).

All new records will be detailed in the 2020 Annual Report, in which we will be presenting a "new look" Moth Report – more succinct, detailing only the new and rarer species of moth recorded in the Society's area each year. Time for a change!

In addition, we have also devised a "Moth Challenge", revealed in full on the Society's website, in which we invite members to participate! Very straightforward – simply record all day-flying moths on your daily walk, according to current Covid rules, but there are several species we would like you to look hard for – good luck and we hope you can find one or two, several are quite small (remember to take your camera or mobile phone with you)!

Follow us on Twitter: @JillWarwick or @DoubleKidney

**Jill Warwick & Charlie Fletcher**

A Green Sandpiper was present on 1<sup>st</sup> **October** after which it was recorded six times during the month, with two on 14<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup>. The first autumn movement of Pink-footed Geese was on 4<sup>th</sup>, when 65 flew over south. Redwings were feeding on hawthorn berries on 10<sup>th</sup> while Little Egret, Peregrine Falcon and Redshank were seen the next day. Common Snipe were back in their winter quarters, with 18 on 16<sup>th</sup> and a female Mandarin Duck was on the North Lake the next day, when 150 Redwings were present. A Peregrine Falcon was perching on a pylon, its usual vantage point, on 23<sup>rd</sup> while, on the following day, 200 Fieldfares were counted as they moved through. An Egyptian Goose was present for four days from 25<sup>th</sup>, when a count of 400 Pink-footed Geese was made as they flew over to the south-east. Chiffchaffs were seen during the month, with a maximum of two, the last on 24<sup>th</sup>. Two Common Pochards were recorded on 27<sup>th</sup>, a far cry from October 1986 when 150 were present; this duck has declined dramatically in the last 15 years. Maximum wildfowl counts for the month were: Canada Goose – 25, Greylag Goose – 130, Mute Swan – 8, Egyptian Goose – 1, Gadwall – 14, Wigeon – 23, Mallard – 66, Teal – 73, Common Pochard – 2, Tufted Duck – 81, Goldeneye – 6, Little Grebe – 6, Great Crested Grebe – 10, Moorhen – 16, Coot – 246. October has been a dismal month as far as the weather has been concerned.

On 5<sup>th</sup> **November**, a Peregrine Falcon was perching on the pylon and an Egyptian Goose was present. The next day, 100 Fieldfares were on site with 200 Redwings on 11<sup>th</sup>; probably the same birds were seen a week later, giving a good display as they flew down to the lakeside almost continuously to drink. This was repeated the next day – until a Sparrowhawk discovered them! On 16<sup>th</sup>, two Little Egrets dropped down to feed at the lakeside to the right of the hide; the level of the lake is so high that the under-water vegetation is solely *Crassula* and, though I watched the birds for 20 minutes, I found they obtained very little, if any, nutrition before they flew away. This confirms how sterile this invasive weed is in this situation. A Green Sandpiper was present on 22<sup>nd</sup>, a not unusually late record. At the end of the month, two Whooper Swans flew south, a Chiffchaff was seen near the hide and a Woodcock was flushed. There were five sightings of a Peregrine Falcon during the month. A mild month, with a maximum temperature of 12°C. Maximum wildfowl counts for the month were: Canada Goose – 127, Greylag Goose – 89, Mute Swan – 8, Shoveler – 2, Gadwall – 17, Wigeon – 40, Mallard – 46, Teal – 129, Common Pochard – 15, Tufted Duck – 106, Goosander – 1, Goldeneye – 24, Little Grebe – 6, Great Crested Grebe – 7, Moorhen – 13, Coot – 291.



A Chiffchaff, found on 1<sup>st</sup> **December**, was seen several times during the month. Numbers of Fieldfares and Redwings fell as the berry crop diminished, with a maximum of only 100 Redwings seen. The only sizeable finch flocks were of 25 Lesser Redpolls and 17 Goldfinches. On 14<sup>th</sup>, 350 Lapwings were present and an Oystercatcher was seen twice during the month. Very little movement occurred until 25<sup>th</sup> when a Whooper Swan flew south, 16 Pink-footed Geese flew east the next morning and a red-head Smew was located on the South Lake, the last record of this species being in 2014. The Smew was very active and feeding constantly. A Water Rail ran across the path below the hide - always an elusive species, this was the first sighting of the winter. Another month without severe frosts, -4°C on 25<sup>th</sup> being the minimum temperature, but the lake was almost frozen over on 31<sup>st</sup>, which was not good news for the New Year Listers, nor for the Smew. Maximum wildfowl counts for the month were: Canada Goose – 65, Greylag Goose – 15, Mute Swan – 4, Shoveler – 10, Gadwall – 19, Wigeon – 52, Mallard – 38, Teal – 68, Common Pochard – 18, Tufted Duck – 136, Smew – 1, Goosander – 2, Goldeneye – 31, Little Grebe – 8, Great Crested Grebe – 7, Moorhen – 14, Coot – 310.

On 1<sup>st</sup> **January**, as predicted, the Smew had moved on as there was now only a small area of open water; the North Lake was less frozen so offering open water for the wildfowl, but the Smew could not be found there either. The expected news of a lockdown was announced and so, from 4<sup>th</sup> January, Farnham was closed to everyone. During the next ten days, the National Angling Association reached an agreement with the Government to permit anglers to fish their local waters but no one else was allowed on site. In view of past events, I was concerned about the security of the site during our absence and the fact that anglers would not be fishing the frozen lakes. Through the anglers' secretary, I requested permission from the site's land agent for two of our society members to be allowed to visit Farnham for security purposes and this was granted on 11<sup>th</sup> but, before this could be implemented, the hide and boathouse were broken into. Fortunately, in forcing the hide door open, the vandals did not damage the lock and the door was soon back in place. They did steal a pair of binoculars and a radio; I am cross about the latter and the binoculars were handy if a visitor had forgotten their own. Grateful thanks to members of the Angling Club who repaired the damage for us. Very little recording occurred during the month but 120 Pink-footed Geese were seen as they flew west on 24<sup>th</sup>. Maximum wildfowl counts for the month were: Canada Goose – 33, Mute Swan – 6, Shoveler – 5, Gadwall – 4, Wigeon – 52, Mallard – 44, Teal – 86, Common Pochard – 13, Tufted Duck – 144, Goosander – 2, Goldeneye – 41, Little Grebe – 3, Great Crested Grebe – 11. Coot – 380.

On 1<sup>st</sup> **February**, with an overnight temperature below zero, both lakes had frozen even more but a small area of open water on the South Lake was holding 97 Teal and 32 Wigeon. The North Lake was 95% frozen but 34 Goldeneyes and nine Great Crested Grebes were still present and further searching produced a female Scaup at the northern end of the lake. A small flock of Greylag Geese, which had been grazing in one of the nearby fields, flew onto the lake and a scan through them revealed a Taiga Bean Goose. Unfortunately for the photographer, there were too many trees for an uninterrupted view and, following heavy snowfall the next day, the bird was not seen again. The considerable rainfall this winter has raised the water level in the South Lake to a critical level for the Sand Martin wall, at just a few inches below the bottom row of holes. Competition for breeding waterfowl sites will become an issue as all of the smaller islands are under water. On 16<sup>th</sup>, a Peregrine Falcon was perching on a pylon and later it flew past the hide giving good views, its plumage indicating that it was a juvenile. The Scaup was present until 20<sup>th</sup> when the shooting fraternity targeting Cormorants, caused it and the accompanying flock of Tufted Ducks to seek refuge at Bar Lane Quarry. The Scaup did not return to Farnham but a female Scaup did appear at Hay-a-Park soon afterwards. Twenty-one Oystercatchers on passage were present on 25<sup>th</sup>. Maximum wildfowl counts for the month were: Canada Goose – 51, Greylag Goose – 47, Mute Swan – 6, Gadwall – 4, Wigeon – 53, Mallard – 58, Teal – 97, Common Pochard – 9, Tufted Duck – 300, Scaup – 1, Goosander – 6, Goldeneye – 43, Little Grebe – 11, Great Crested Grebe – 10, Moorhen – 9, Coot – 294.

Thanks are due once more to the dedication of the Management Team, who never fail to tackle the many and varied conservation issues that Farnham throws at them! It has been particularly difficult this winter with Covid restrictions in place, but we did manage to have two work days and then another two in December with a smaller team. I hope that lockdown restrictions will be lifted at the end of March, as essential works needs to be carried out on the Sand Martin wall as none was possible last year. Many thanks also to Ken Limb who continues to produce our Farnham Bird Report from records entered on our daily log sheets; Ken has now carried out this task most efficiently for the past 20 years.

**June E. Atkinson**

Chairman, Management Committee and Honorary Warden.

## Harrogate Naturalists' Forum on Facebook!

Our **private Facebook Forum** continues to be very active in covering most corners of natural history with some great photos and wide-ranging discussions. Currently the Forum has 32 members but we would still like to see as many more HDNS members as possible supporting and taking advantage of this **FREE** facility.

The discussions can be light-hearted or more serious but they are accessible only to HDNS members and not to the general public. The photos don't have to be exhibition quality, just share what you have seen. You don't have to be an expert, asking questions is encouraged. We are happy for you to join and just silently follow the friendly exchanges but of course we hope that at some stage you will feel able to add your own two penn'orth to the proceedings! This is a great way to keep in touch with other Society members and enjoy your natural history, without restricting numbers, wearing a mask or social distancing! It's 100% Covid safe!

If you wish **to join**, or have any queries or concerns, then please **email Group Admin**, Robert Marshall, at **hdns.wildwatch@btinternet.com** - please also include the **email address** you use for Facebook and your **full name**. This will help speed approval. You will then be sent a **link** to join our Facebook Forum. Please do it today, before you forget! We really appreciate your support. (If you don't already have a **FREE Facebook account** the set-up is simple at [www.facebook.com/r.php](http://www.facebook.com/r.php) )

We hope to welcome many more of you to the Forum very soon!

**Robert Marshall**



### **MARJORIE MIDDLETON: LEGACY**

Marjorie, who died on 21 February 2020 aged 96, left a legacy of £100 to HDNS to be used at Farnham GP.

The Society is very grateful for this gift.

## **British Trust for Ornithology, Yorkshire (Central) Region**

In the Spring 2020 Newsletter I gave an overview of the Trust's range of surveys both ongoing and "one off" projects. I wrote it before the full effect of Covid-19 restrictions had taken hold. As it turned out the BTO decided to close all fieldwork at the beginning of the spring/summer survey period. A small amount of work was subsequently carried out but it was limited to sites where social distancing was irrelevant!

As a result, I had very little to report for the HDNS Autumn 2020 Newsletter so did not submit anything to the Editors. However, the Trust is now putting in place arrangements to resume annual surveys such as Breeding Bird Survey and the Heronries Census. The repeat Breeding Waders of Wet Meadows has been re-scheduled for this year (first undertaken in 2002). If fieldworkers take sensible precautions, we should be able to get back to something near normal as far as surveying is concerned. For those of you who do contribute to our projects please check the website ([www.bto.org](http://www.bto.org)) for updates on the Trust's COVID-19 precautions.

If you would like to know more about the BTO's work please visit the website or contact me:

**Mike Brown**

BTO Regional Representative for Yorkshire-Central.

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## **NEWSLETTER EDITOR REQUIRED**

Over many years now, members have been able to enjoy the twice yearly newsletters produced by Valerie Holmes and Val Smith. The Society is extremely grateful to them for all their hard work and diligence.

They are both wishing to retire from this job now so we are looking for a new Newsletter Editor. The website has a lot of information about the Society and its activities, but the newsletter is also important for keeping members in touch with current and forthcoming events, especially for members who have no access to the internet.

Please contact Val Smith for more details if you think you could help.

**Sue Coldwell**

## DISCOUNTS

**Cotswold & Leeds North Face Store** 15% discount (excluding sale goods, gift vouchers, carriage) in store, online or mail order. Quote the affiliation/promotional code AF-HDNS-W3.

**Bass & Bligh** Flexible discount, including photo printing and services.

**Blacks** of Harrogate: 10% discount: present HDNS, RSPB or NT card.

**Lynne Gilland, Hon. Treasurer**

## MISCELLANY

### 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.

### 2017 BIRD REPORT

Copies of this are still available from Steve Root, 4 Plompton Way, HG2 7DU  
Price £6.50 including p&p

### WEBSITE PASSWORD

The members-only password will change on 13 May 2021. The new password will be available on the new membership card, which will be posted on 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](mailto: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 ring Cynthia on 867104.

## FROM THE EDITORS

All telephone numbers are Harrogate, code 01423, unless otherwise stated. Thanks to Brian Darbyshire for line illustrations.

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Material for the **Autumn newsletter** should be sent  
to Valerie Holmes by **September 2021**

Post: 63, Jesmond Road Harrogate HG1 4SA

tel: 888997

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

**SUBSCRIPTION RENEWAL**      Year beginning **1 April 2021**

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