34th Annual Newsletter of the

North Lancashire
Wildlife Group

Price £2.50
North Lancashire Wildlife Group

The Group is a local group of the Wildlife Trust for Lancashire, Manchester & N.Merseyside, primarily for members living in the Lancaster City Council District and immediately adjacent areas of Lancashire, South Cumbria and North Yorkshire.

Meetings are open to all members of the Wildlife Trust. If you are not already a member, come along to a few meetings and, if you like what we do, join us.

The Committee coordinates all the work of the Group and, in particular, arranges meetings, field outings, recording sessions, and the production of an annual Newsletter. The Recorders receive and collate records to help conserve interesting sites, to monitor changing numbers and distribution of species and to contribute to national recording schemes.

Our events and meetings are listed on our website - www.nlwg.co.uk and also on the ‘What`s On’ section of the of the Lancashire Wildlife Trust’s website. For further information contact the Chairman, Mike Moon, E-mail mikejmoon@aol.com or telephone him on 01524 701163.

Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Editorial</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reserves Reports</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recorders list and Reports</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field Meetings</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellany</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NLNG Committee 2015-16

Chairman Mike Moon
Treasurer Chris Workman
Minutes Secretary Cis Brook
Newsletter Editor Barbara Crooks
Webmaster Martin Sherlock
Member Linda Renshaw
Member Pete Marsh
Member Steve Garland

News from The Committee 2015

We must first of all apologise for the problems we have had with our website this year which unfortunately was down for several months. It is now up and running again, so we hope you will be able to access it easily and find information about our summer and winter programmes. Also, we do try to get our programmes of events onto the L.W.T. website ‘What`s On’ pages if people also look there.

After many years, Brian Hugo has retired as the recorder for Hoverflies and we would like to thank him for the enthusiasm and expertise which he always brought to the meetings. Michael Bloomfield has also retired as Ladybird Recorder and is passing this role onto Rob Zloch. Our thanks go to Mike for all his effort and time and we hope he will still join us on some of our field trips. We welcome Rob to the Recorder group and also Belinda Garland who has agreed to take on Dragonfly recording.

The Biodiverse Society Project is an exciting Heritage Lottery Funded partnership project between the Lancashire Wildlife Trust and Local Record Centres; Merseyside BioBank and the Lancashire Environmental Records Network (LERN). With funding from the HLF until October 2017 the main focus of the project, is to enhance and update the data on 210 Local Wildlife Sites (known in Lancashire as BHS) throughout Lancashire and North Merseyside and to make the collection of accurate data sustainable into the future. The surveys will help us to bring the current data up-to-date, provide information and management recommendations on these sites protecting them into the future. By engaging with volunteers, local groups and experts the project aims to build a stronger network of groups and individuals equipped with the skills to carry on this essential work into the future.

If readers are interested, or would like to register as a volunteer on the project, please contact the Project Manager Joanne Moore, on jmoore@lancswt.org.uk, 07738 545438.

Cover photo of a Banded Demoiselle by D & J Moreton

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Reserves Report

Another year and another round up of some of the work Trust staff have been involved with across our reserves.

Work at Heysham Nature Reserve has continued this year with the programme of regular management activities scheduled to maintain the diverse mosaic of habitats. In addition, a new programme of work was started within the Landscape Strip to improve the woodland screening planting alongside Moneyclose Lane. The current mix includes a high proportion of non-native species and is a very closely planted and aged structure. The plan is to thin out a lot of the non-native trees and replant with native species with a mix of standards and scrub. There is little understory at present and it is hoped that it will eventually provide better habitat for a number of the bird species that have used the woodland area in the past.

Work was also undertaken at the northern end of the woodland strip, near to the entrance road to the reserve, to create a woodland, outdoor education area.

There is still more work to do, but it has already been used as part of the community funded project and by the Wildlife Watch group that is based at the reserve. It has enabled us to deliver a different range of activities that have engaged people who have perhaps not visited the reserve before. We have plans to develop the area in future years and hopefully offer a wider range of activities on a more regular basis.

Funding was confirmed early in the year by EDF for a second year of the ‘Connecting to Nature’ community project at Heysham reserve. Emma Garston returned this year on a two day a week contract for the year to coordinate and run the programme, with funding for a second post to cover the busier period from late Spring, through Summer and into Autumn. Hilary Smith, who had previously worked with Butterfly Conservation on their recent project in the area, joined the North Lancashire team early in the summer. They delivered an excellent second year of the project which saw even greater numbers of visitors through the reserve gates and some exciting new developments. ‘Nature Tuesdays’ was a new programme delivered in...
conjunction with the Power Station visitor centre and gave station staff and their families the chance to join weekly wildlife activities during school holidays throughout the year, both on the reserve and using the education centre at the station. Emma and Hilary also worked extremely hard to produce an education resource pack for use on the reserve. It has been very well received by EDF and they are currently exploring plans to use the resource at other stations around the country in order to engage local communities in exploring and learning about the wildlife at some of these sites.

EDF had also generously looked to provide funding for a new, combined educational facility and office building at the reserve this year but delays saw the project put on hold at the end of the year. It is hoped it will be progressed in 2016 and see the ageing, existing buildings replaced. It is encouraging to see ongoing commitment by EDF in expanding the work that various staff and many volunteers have done at Heysham over the years and we look forward to some further exciting developments in 2016.

This year saw the final phase of the Large Heath reintroduction project at Heysham Moss. After last year’s anticipated failure to rear any young from the adults collected at Winmarleigh Moss, it was reassuring to get news from Chester Zoo in late spring that a number of caterpillars had been seen in the rearing cages, and we might have some adults to release onto the Moss after all. There was also some apprehension this year as we awaited the emergence of the first adults of ‘local provenance’. Mating adults had been observed last year following their release, but we were uncertain how many would complete a full cycle on the reserve and produce adults on the wing in 2015. We didn’t have to wait long with an early emergent on 8th June, a couple of weeks in fact before we saw them on the donor site. This did appear to be a very early individual, with the main emergence a couple of weeks later. The pupae which had been recorded in the breeding cages at the zoo were transferred to smaller release enclosures and brought up to Heysham at the beginning of June. Emergence from these was a week or so later than the main emergence on the Moss and so we could be sure that the good numbers observed flying at Heysham were indeed site bred individuals. This was very heartening, and although we are still a long way from establishing a stable population, the early signs are the best we can expect.

The collection of further gravid females from Winmarleigh was undertaken earlier this year and it is hoped that the final stage of the captive breeding programme at the zoo will produce a good number of adults for the final release of the funded project in 2016.

This year saw the start of two new developments on land adjoining the Heysham Moss reserve. Large scale ground works began for a new substation on the land immediately to the south of the reserve and, by the end of the year, a new solar farm to the east was virtually complete. Given the potential impacts on the reserve, the Trust were very actively involved in responding to both applications and remained involved throughout the process to ensure that any impacts were kept to a minimum.

Since the writing of last year’s report, there has been a significant amount of work undertaken at Cockerham and Winmarleigh Moss, managed by the Trust’s mossland team. Work has included further tree removal work along with a lot of re-wetting works. A visit to the reserve during the Large Heath flight period saw some excellent looking conditions behind some of the new bunds and it was great to see some real progress in the long process of restoring this fantastic site. Access to the reserve still remains restricted to the public footpath, but most of the reserve’s key features of interest, as well as some of the recent works, can all be seen from the path that crosses east to west through the middle of the site.

While we avoided the worst impacts of the December floods on our reserves in North Lancashire, Aughton Woods didn’t come out completely unscathed. The Lune Valley ramble path, which runs along the bottom of part of the wood and very close to the river at times, has been subject to a number of small landslips in the past. During the very high river levels at the end of the year, a large section was lost into the river. This currently means that the path is now temporarily closed and notices to that effect have been put up by the County Council. Because there is a very steep bank above the path into the woodland, a simple detour is not possible and we will be having discussions with LCC about how to progress this. There was also a large
landslip in the wood itself, just below the central concessionary path, which brought down a number of trees and deposited a large amount of mud and other debris at the bottom of the wood. This, combined with the deterioration of some of the bridges and other structures along the route, has resulted in the path being temporarily closed while we can look at the implications of providing a safe path through this part of the wood and across some quite difficult terrain. Parts of the wood can still be visited by following the river path from the Crook of Lune and around a loop through Lawson’s Meadow. Up to date information about current access arrangements can be found on the Trust’s website.

Lastly, but certainly not least, a roundup of Warton Crag. Last year we reported a disappointing year for butterflies on the Crag and sadly it has been a similar picture this year. While the earlier part of the season saw poor weather conditions, periods during at least some of the High Brown flight period were better. That said, there were still very low numbers recorded, albeit marginally higher than 2014. We also struggled to match good weather windows with additional surveys during both the Pearl-bordered and High Brown flight periods. Some of the time spent undertaking additional timed counts for High Brown did record a number of large fritillaries, but in contrast to previous years there were no positive records for High Brown, although their presence was recorded on the transects. Interestingly, there were two records of large fritillaries exhibiting what appeared to be egg laying behaviour on the new ride within Strickland Wood running up to the summit beacon. However, parts of the new ride have quickly become very grassy and less suitable for species like Pearl-bordered and High Brown. This is possibly, in part, due to the recent mild winters and we are currently looking at some novel techniques for allowing a grazing strategy, similar to that used on the adjoining Westfield area, to be put in place. This would allow more suitable conditions to be retained for longer periods following coppicing and clearing works.

Those with an interest in the archaeological history of the site will be very interested in ongoing survey work currently being undertaken as part of a project within the wider ‘Headlands to Headspace’ (H2H) project, led by the Morecambe Bay Partnership. This has been looking at further surveys of the hill fort which is registered as a Scheduled Ancient Monument. A lot of ‘on the ground’ work has already been undertaken by a group of volunteers and has highlighted a number of possible features of interest, while a Lidar survey is due to be commissioned shortly. It is hoped the latter will reveal some of the ‘hidden’ features of the monument, currently not visible below the tree cover. With recent conservation work being undertaken in and around the area covered by the monument, we have already been working with Historic England. This year we have worked with the heritage officer on the H2H project to look at how we may work together to undertake work that may benefit both the biodiversity as well as the archaeological interest of this important site.

As always, much of the excellent work carried out this year would not have been possible without the many hours that all the volunteers have given up to help the Trust and, as usual, a big thank you to both our team of ‘regulars’ and those who have joined us this year.

Further details about the wildlife of Heysham this year are compiled in the Heysham Observatory Annual Report, available from the reserve office or from the Leighton Moss shop. A daily blog for the Heysham and Middleton area can be seen at http://heyshamobservatory.blogspot.co.uk/

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Photos for this article are on page 7
**Middleton Nature Reserve**

The Wildlife Trust is now into the sixth year of managing this County Wildlife Site as a Nature Reserve through an agreement with Lancaster City Council. We are also approaching the half way point of a separate five year project working on key management objectives for the reserve.

Encouragingly, Red-veined Darter was recorded around the model boat pond for a number of weeks this summer. The first record was of a single male on 17th June; the high count was 8 (7 males plus 1 ovipositing female) on 15th July. This could be evidence of overlooked, local breeding last year, or an influx of migrants: either way, careful resurveys next year should provide an indication of the outcome of this year’s observed breeding.

Other notable dragonfly records include:- 15-20 Black-tailed Skimmer and up to 2 Banded Demoiselle around the model boat pond in mid-July; 8-10 Migrant Hawker along the sycamore spinney edge on 18th September and 2 Broad-bodied Chaser amongst rubble heaps on 4th July. There were also encouraging numbers of Brown Hawker and Southern Hawker on the reserve throughout late summer.

Notable bird records for 2015 include a successful Little Ringed Plover breeding attempt; Barn Owl, again recorded hunting across the reserve (mainly during March and April); Cetti’s Warbler, single singing males, recorded during March, April and October - November; Skylark, a breeding attempt (outcome unknown) from the western side of the reserve and Water Rail, a single breeding attempt from the central marsh.

Remains of a small number of White-Clawed Crayfish were found on the reserve in October, indicating the presence of Otter (spraints have also been found locally this autumn). It may be that Otter are now using a number of wetland sites on the Heysham peninsula, perhaps moving between these sites and the River Lune using the network of farmland ditches.

As ever, thanks very much to those providing records for the reserve: - Pete Marsh, Malcolm Downham, Jean Roberts, John Mason, Alan Draper, Janet Packham and the Aldcliffe Birding group.

Steve Ryder, North Lancs Reserves Officer

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**Aughton Woods Nestboxes Report for 2015**

Owing to a variety of factors, this proved to be a poor year for nestboxes in the local area. The cool, wet, spring weather resulted in a shortage of caterpillars at a crucial time whilst predation was another factor, probably by Weasels, because of a shortage in their own natural food supplies. The arrival of many of our spring migrants was later than in 2014, as was the start of nesting activities of migrants and resident birds alike.

A few of the older boxes were again replaced at the start of the year and 35 boxes were monitored this year and the occupancy was as follows: (compared to 2014 in brackets)

- Blue Tit; 13: (18), Great Tit; 8: (3), Pied Flycatcher; 1: (0), Nest Build started only 3: (4), Empty 10: (11).

The number of boxes used by Tit species was 21, which was the same as in 2014. The number of eggs laid per nest was much lower, with a total of 162 eggs laid compared with 210 in 2014 and just 106 in 2013, although in fewer boxes.

Nest building and egg laying was generally around a week later than in 2014. Success rates were very poor, with only 8 of the Tits fledging their broods compared to 20 in 2014. Brood sizes were also much lower, ranging from 1 to 9 for Blue Tit and 2 to 7 for Great Tit. Predation accounted for the failure of 8 boxes and desertion for 4 others.

The one positive was that for the first time since 2012, the pair of Pied Flycatchers was successful and fledged 7 young which were also ringed.

John Mason
A community project, identifying waders

Royal Fern on the Storey Institute, Lancaster
(Ferns report)

Lobster claws, Middleton NR

A minibeast hunt (Reserves reports)

Adder (Reptiles report)

Slow worm (Reptiles report)

Mating toads (Amphibians report)
White-winged Black Tern (Bird report)  Janet Packham

Yellow-browed Warbler (Bird report)  LWT

Hawthorn Shieldbug early instar Sept  A Smith

Eyed Ladybird (Longridge Fell)  M Foley

Hawthorn Shieldbug Late instar 7 September 2015

Harlequin Ladybird  M Bloomfield
Look at our website!

**www.nlwg.co.uk**
Mammals

The highlight of 2015 for me was the discovery of a very young Roe kid in my local woods in the middle of May. On first glimpse, I thought it was an old Brown Hare that frequents the woods, which now has quite a mottled appearance, but as it crept closer along a dry stream bed, its body shape and white-spotted coat became clear. I hid behind a tree to watch as it settled behind a clump of rushes, remaining there until its mother came into view (of course my camera had run out of battery power minutes before). The mother stood for a while then moved off into a thicket of spindly trees, with the kid following a few minutes later. After some time, a doe reappeared and spent several minutes walking and peering around before gradually disappearing into the thicket. I had regularly seen three Roe deer together in and around the woods, two does and a buck, so I couldn’t be sure if this was the same doe or her companion. Although I was thrilled with my encounter, I was rather concerned for the kid’s safety as neighbours occasionally walk their dogs through the woods. However, throughout the rest of the year I had occasional sightings of the growing youngster and as time went on it would often be grazing at some distance from its mother, though never too far to catch her up when it became aware of my presence. There are large patches of tall grasses in the woods which often gave away its whereabouts as it moved through them, hidden from view by their height. There was much barking during late summer so I am hopeful that more offspring will appear in 2016.

I have received comprehensive records from Linda Renshaw, which include 62 Rabbits that she managed to count in two fields opposite the canal at Holme! As usual, she has had good sightings and evidence of Otter, including tracks, spraints and feeding signs, not just at Leighton Moss but along the River Keer at Carnforth, Milheath and Borwick; the River Lune at Arkholme and at Capernwray Tarn. Linda reported that she hadn’t seen a single, live Hedgehog all year, only 2 dead specimens.

Gail Atkinson’s extensive records include no less than 30 dead Hedgehogs of different ages: most of the road casualties she reported occurred at various points on the A6 between Scotforth and Garstang, and along the A588 from Cockerham towards Lancaster. Many of the casualties on the A588 were found in Thurnham, which may account for the smaller number of Hedgehogs seen in my garden there over the year, though I have had a few ambling about. Gail’s first dead Hedgehog sighting was actually opposite my garden on January 20th, which suggests that either the weather was very mild at the time or that the Hedgehog had been out to forage, perhaps having been underweight at the start of its hibernation, or disturbed.

In Forton, a few Hedgehogs have been found in the open during the day, which is discouraging since this indicates a problem. A large, slow moving Hedgehog was noticed in our school grounds which, unfortunately, had died by the time I was alerted. I had previously been told by a neighbouring villager that rats had become a problem locally and poison had been used, so I suspect that this could perhaps have been the cause since the Hedgehog was a good weight and seemed uninjured apart from a small patch of blood at its nostrils.

Gail also recorded several incidences of mole activity and she noticed that many of the mole hills ran along hedgerows or in line with walls, or in corners. One theory I have read is that more moisture is retained near the hedge where vegetation may be thicker, e.g. after rain, increasing the abundance of worms etc., although Moles avoid really soggy ground for obvious reasons: another is that the edges of managed fields are less subject to mechanical disturbance. Although hedge roots may pose a physical barrier near the surface, they will also harbour tasty invertebrates and I’m sure that, after the floods we have had this winter, there will be a greater concentration of mole hills towards the margins of many waterlogged fields.

Thank you to all who passed me their records, including Steve Garland and a new young enthusiast from Forton School, aged eight, who, with help from her mother, has started recording wildlife in her garden, which is very encouraging. I would be grateful to receive any mammal sightings, common or otherwise.

Cis Brook
Fish

The River Lune had another good run of sea trout this year but the salmon run was very poor again.

The numbers of wild Atlantic Salmon *Salmo salar* at sea are thought to have declined by 60% since the 1970s when there were 8 million Salmon on the feeding grounds in the North Atlantic prior to starting their homeward journeys: now there are only 3 million.

It is also feared that post smolts may be getting caught by accident in pelagic commercial mackerel and herring fishing nets on their outward migration to the feeding grounds. There are also still some salmon coastal net fisheries operating in Canada, Norway, Scotland and England.

At grass roots level, the Lune Rivers Trust is doing a very good job drawing together many diverse groups who share a common interest in the welfare of the River Lune and its large catchment area. Much habitat improvement work has already been completed.

Most of the anglers who fish the River Lune are returning Salmon they catch in an effort to improve stocks.

A friend who fishes the River Lune at Arkholme got a bit of a shock when he was landing a good sized Salmon. An Otter followed the fish into the shallows and snatched it at the last minute before making off downstream at speed with the Salmon. This has also happened to another angler there this summer. I am not sure if this is a cheeky Otter or a very hungry one!

In early May, 7 good sized Brown Trout *Salmo trutta* and 3 Sea Trout smolts caught on the lower reaches of the R. Keer were returned to the river.

Redd counting was impossible as the River Keer burst its banks at peak spawning time. However, I did see 3 Sea Trout at Docker in late November during a brief respite in the rain before the next deluge arrived and caused widespread flooding in the lower reaches.

The government is considering creating another 51 Marine Conservation Zones around the coast of Britain within the next 12-24 months. Any that are approved will supplement the 27 existing zones.

Winter/Spring 2015 saw some good sized Cod *Gadus morhua* in Morecambe Bay. Summer produced lots of Lesser Spotted Dogfish *Scyliorhinus canicula* and some Spur Dog *Squalus acanthias* for shore anglers around the Bay, much to the frustration of the bass fishermen who got fed up of the dogfish taking their peeler crab baits. Some good Bass *Dicentrarchus labrax* were taken from Jenny Brown’s Point this summer.

I was surprised to hear that Thornback Rays *Raja clavata* were being caught from Heysham harbour wall and the beaches at Morecambe. These rays normally live at depths of 20-100 metres. With only a few trawlers still working Morecambe Bay, I wonder if an increase in the shrimp and flatfish population could be tempting the rays into shallower water to feed. There was some superb specimen Plaice *Pleuronectes platessa* in the Bay this year.

I sometimes find bits of crab shell around the top end of Middleton NR boating pond. I assumed that these crabs were found on the seashore by the larger gulls and carried inland to be eaten/regurgitated. On the 29th October there was a pair of lobster claws in the grass there. This coincided with a very high tide, so I suspect this poor lobster was winkled out of its hiding place when it was uncovered at low water. Years ago there always used to be lobsters living in the big stones at the foot of the old oil jetty.

Linda Renshaw.

Photo on page 7
**Amphibians and Reptiles**

**Amphibians**

It has been a strange year with the cold, wet Spring making everything late.

Frogspawn was seen at Docker Moor pond, Woodwell, Hale Moss ponds and Heysham Nature Reserve ponds.

In April, I visited a friend’s pond on Hale Moss. Roger’s pond was packed full of frogspawn but one of the bankings next to the pond resembled a battlefield, with bits of frogs and toads scattered all over the grass. I bent down to look at a half eaten toad whose back end had been completely chewed off. The poor thing lifted its head and blinked at me. Sadly, beyond any kind of help, I reluctantly dispatched it. There was a distinct smell of otter there and fresh spraint among the carnage.

Common Toads *Bufo bufo* were mating in Heysham N.R. nature park pond in April and some more were seen on the paths and behind the visitor centre at Leighton Moss N.R. on late summer evenings.

There was a mass migration of tiny Common Frogs *Rana temporaria* leaving Middleton N.R. boating pond on 12th June and a similar exodus was underway at Heysham N.R. on 16th June. These tiny Frogs will become sexually mature and ready to breed in 2-3 years time. Adult Frogs spend most of their time away from water, in woodland, deep vegetation, farmland, parks and gardens, but do have a preference for damp places.

An evening NLWG meeting at Flora and Fauna produced some good finds including several juvenile newts from Cromwell’s pond, although it is hard to identify the species when they are so small.

I did not see many Great Crested Newts *Triturus vulgaris* at Middleton N.R. this year. On several occasions, I noticed a lot of the large stones had been turned over around the edge of the boating pond. I wish the people who do this would put them back as they found them afterwards and replace them carefully.

On a NLWG fieldtrip to Ribblehead Quarry on 12th July, we observed some Palmate Newts *T. helveticus* in one of the shallow pools. I was surprised to see a male curling his tail and doing his shaking, mating dance around one of the females. The vibrations from his tail direct his pheromones towards her. This was very late in the year for breeding to take place.

**Reptiles**

Common Lizards *Zootoca vivipara* were recorded locally at the usual locations; Arnside Knott, the Plain Quarry at Burton, Haweswater (Silverdale), Warton Crag, Clawthorpe N.R. and further afield at Foulshaw Moss, Roudsea and Haybridge nature reserves. Several were seen sunbathing on the boardwalk above Rigg Lane car park at Birkbank (Clougha) and a few more were spotted on the path at Burns Beck Moss N.R. (Cumbria).

A Slow Worm *Anguis fragilis* was seen at Gaitbarrows N.R. in May and Jim Ellis had the pleasure of watching 2 together there in September. There was one which had almost cast its skin on the path above Rigg Lane car park at Birkbank on 7th May, and another one under a tin at Brown Robin N.R. (Grange-over Sands) on 8th June.

A Slow Worm’s average lifespan is 6-12 years although there is a record of one in captivity living for 51 years. Perhaps this is a reflection of how many predators they face in the wild.

I have not received any reports of Adders *Vipera berus* from our local area, although several have been seen this summer at Foulshaw Moss N.R. One chap I spoke to on the boardwalk had unwittingly picked up a juvenile. This is not to be recommended as they still have a poisonous bite.

In early May, two adult males and a mature female were seen at Haybridge N.R. She disappeared into the bottom of a stone wall, slithering up the inside of the wall before peeping out of a hole near the top. The males were basking on the boardwalk nearby. Snakes are deaf so talking quietly will not frighten them, but they are very sensitive to vibrations. If you want to take a closer look or get a photograph, it is necessary to approach very stealthily.

Adders are cold and sluggish when they emerge from hibernation and likewise in autumn when they are getting ready to go into hibernation. At these times, their reflexes are very slow and this is when you may accidentally step on one if you don’t take care. In the warm months, Adders react much quicker and you
barely get a glimpse of them before they disappear. The average lifespan of an Adder is 10 years and they consume about 9 voles a year, although they will take frogs, lizards and nesting birds. This does not seem a lot but bear in mind they are hibernating for half of the year. Most females only breed in alternate years, producing 3-18 young.

No Grass Snakes *Natrix natrix* were reported locally. There were 2 Grass Snakes with some eggs in Keith’s compost heap at Haybridge N.R. on 9th July. The oblong shaped eggs measure 20-40 mm, have a soft leathery shell and the average clutch is 30. Later in the year, I was lucky enough to see a medium sized Grass Snake there which was basking next to the wooden footbridge down on the moss. Grass Snakes have the longest lifespan of our British snakes, living up to 28 years.

Thank you to those who passed on records.

Linda Renshaw.

There are photos on page 7

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**Bird Report**

This was a year of extremes and unpredictability. The ‘extremes’ included a dreadful breeding season, perhaps most notable in the Meadow Pipit data. The 'unpredictability' was epitomised by the only tern species recorded after early September being a moulting adult White-winged Black on Heysham PS outfalls!

The year was perhaps most notable in a positive sense for the influx of Yellow-browed Warblers from late September throughout October. However, they need finding and, whilst the increase at Heysham Observatory was in real terms at a constant effort site, the persistent ‘in the field’ efforts in the Sunderland (see also Red-backed Shrike), Glasson and Fluke Hall areas, with patches of vegetation constantly re-worked during the course of a single morning, also indicated that this influx was widespread. I’m sure a team similarly working the Silverdale to Morecambe coastline would have met with success, especially given that two reached the mist nets along the “inland” lower hide path at Leighton Moss.

What is going on? This influx from the east/north-east was certainly helped by the lack of any Atlantic westerly weather during September and October but, for example, high single figures were located by two of us on Fuerteventura in January 2014, with by all accounts similar numbers on at least neighbouring Lanzarote this winter. A proportion seems to be successfully changing their wintering areas, with a north-east to south-west migratory trajectory over the British Isles, as opposed to the old notion of ‘lost birds heading west to a watery Atlantic grave’. Are adults successfully returning in spring and passing some migratory DNA on to their offspring or is that too simplistic? The unanswered question relates to spring. There is very little/zero evidence of spring migration through at least north-western Europe so, if they do return, how have they avoided detection? Roll on mini-satellite-tracking.

One other significant general feature of the year was the terrible breeding season for single brooded, strictly timed species such as Blue Tit. Record numbers of Pied Flycatchers returned after last year’s bumper season but fell victim to a double whammy of poor weather and what appeared to be hungry weasels lacking their usual supply of voles and wood mice. Perhaps the most notable failure involved Meadow Pipit where the moors were devoid of the usual post-breeding gatherings and the autumnal visible migration of this usually abundant species was very poor, despite good migration weather. This obviously indicated that the failure had affected whole swathes of Northern Britain, not just our local area.

This report is very selective and concentrates on events characteristic of 2015 and this goes for the records on less regular species tabulated below. If you want to read about more regular annual events such as Avocets at Leighton Moss and, for example, results from bird ringing in 2015, I suggest you join Lancaster and District Birdwatching Society and receive their Newsletters and Annual Report.

Finally please do send your records in either via posting on the LDBWS website, via Birdtrack, or to the County recorder at the end of the year. With bird-watching
becoming such a major leisure industry, the old scenario of contributing records being part of the hobby has been replaced by a 'no obligation/pure leisure' mindset which means valuable records are just lost in the ether.

Here are a few key species from the year (LDBWS boundaries used)

Greenland White-fronted Goose - Party of five at Aldcliffe on November 16th.

Eurasian White-fronted Goose – Family party of 5 remaining from 2014; initially at Aldcliffe with Greylags, then perhaps lost and unreported in the Lune valley before reappearing at Leighton Moss.

Tundra Bean Goose – Up to 3 in the Leighton Moss area from January 29th-February 5th.

Green-winged Teal – Drake at Leighton Moss February 28th – March 1st

Great Northern Diver - Juvenile off Heysham November 9th.

Pied-billed Grebe – One at Leighton Moss from April 26th to 4th May.

Leach's Petrel - Belated trickle as the weather changed in early/mid November with at least three birds seen from local vantage points November 13th-16th.

Shag - An influx included up to three inland on Pine Lake November 14th-24th.

Bittern – Migratory departure of at least nine birds on a succession of nights from March 17th – no definite resident ‘boomer’.

Common Crane - Two in the Lyth valley on 19th-20th April and one or two fly-over reports at the same time.

Spotted Crake – One calling at Leighton Moss 1st-5th May.

Quail - One in Gilpin Bridge area at least 26th May.

Dotterel - Five at Cockersands on 8th-9th May and another singleton there on May 10th.

Pectoral Sandpiper – Juvenile on Lune near Aldcliffe September 3rd and 5th.

Purple Sandpiper – Just one at Heysham, first winter period, none later.

Lesser Yellowlegs – Adult at Conder Green August 23rd-26th

Red-necked Phalarope – Female at Leighton Moss June 20th.

Yellow-legged Gull – The only report was a moult ing adult seen irregularly around Glasson area – many recent candidates have proven to be Herring x Lesser Black-backed Gull hybrids so please photograph any claims.

Iceland Gull – Juvenile flew south at Heysham on March 1st, 2CY Heysham Harbour mouth April 25th.

White-winged Black Tern – Adult at Barrow Scout then Leighton Moss July 4th-5th. Moulting adult Heysham Power Station outfalls September 26th-30th (claim on October 1st unresolved).

Red-rumped Swallow – First for area was one on the Keer Estuary April 16th.

Hoopoe - one in the NE of the recording area at Rawrid ding on 14th-15th April.

Red-backed Shrike – Juvenile in the hedgerows near Sunderland village on September 1st.

Great Grey Shrike - not one but two on Dalton Crags in late March, following (at least?) one wintering bird!

Wryneck - One at Cockersands April 13th and an obliging kerb-crawling individual at Burton-in-Lonsdale on September 20th-21st.

Bluethroat – Unconfirmed report by the Eric Morecambe Hide on September 30th – apparently multi-observed but no info received and therefore likely to be rejected.

Yellow-browed Warbler – Heard calling Heysham at NR on September 22nd, one ringed there September 29th, one at Heysham Head September 30th and no fewer than 22 in October!

Siberian Chiffchaff - A not particularly convincing example plumage-wise caught and heard calling once at Heysham on November 1st

Firecrest - One at Leighton Moss January 22nd, male ringed Heysham April 13, female ringed Heysham NR September 14th, one at Heysham Head September 30th and one along our southern boundary at Fluke Hall in October.

Hooded Crow - One south over Heysham NR on October 10th and one Carnforth slag tips November 25th.

Pete Marsh

Photos are on page 8
Arachnids (spiders, harvestmen, pseudoscorpions)

Records for arachnids have been few and far between. Please send me any observations and photos so that a better picture of the group can be amassed in our area. Web structure can be a specific identifier.

In June I went to the AGM and field meeting of the British Arachnological Society which was held at Castlehead Field Centre, Grange-over-Sands. Besides learning some of the identification techniques, I was introduced to the ‘sonic toothbrush’. Why should an ecologist take an electric toothbrush out on a collecting trip? It was magic! For years arachnologists have had problems finding the spider hidden in a hole in the wall. We used to take a tuning fork (with arguments about the best key) and gently vibrate the web. Sometimes the spider emerged. However, the response to the sonic toothbrush was amazing – about 80% success rate for emergence and the speed of response was dramatic. If allowed, try any electric toothbrush and gently touch the web of the spider on the window frame in the garage (or such-like). The Tegenaria (in house), Amaurobius or Coelotes (under stones) or Segestria (holes in walls) rush out and often surprise the investigator.

Like other groups, the distribution pattern seems to be changing. Species that were only in the south of England are now being found further north. One species appears to have become much more common in my house than I remember years ago. This is the “daddy long legs” spider Pholcus phalangioides. It spins delicate thin webs in the corners of the ceiling and I have had several other reports to indicate its commonness. One report that I read recently said that it was abundant when the woodworm beetle emerged and the authors attributed woodworm control to the spider. I just can’t believe it!

Records from NLWG outings:

Dalton Woods: - Coelotes atropos ♂, Pardosa pullata ♂, Pardosa agrestis ♂, Pardosa nigriceps ♂
Ribblehead quarry: - Pardosa palustris ♂ with egg sac, Colt Park meadows: - Tetragnatha extensa subad ♂, Pachygynatha clerkii subad ♂, Theridion sisyphium subad ♂ + ♂
Records from Linda Renshaw:
Roudsea N.R.: - Dolomedes fimbriatus ♂
Millhead: - Philodromus sp
Castlehead FC: - Meta menardi ♂, Meta segmentata ♂, Tetragnatha montana subad ♂, Microneta vivaria ♂

Chris Workman

SHIELD BUG REPORT 2015

This year ten people sent in thirty-five reports covering nine species (73 individuals).

Birch Elasmostethus interstinctus 9
Blue Zicrona caerulea 1
Bronze Troilus luridus 3
Forest Pentatoma rufipes 7
Gorse Piezodorus lituratus 12
Green Palomina prasina 22
Hawthorn Acanthasoma haemorrhoidale 10
Sloe/Hairy Dolycoris baccarum 7
Spiked Picromerus bidens 2

Remembering, let alone spelling, the Latin names is quite a task but using the so-called “common name” is not always straightforward. I have always called Dolycoris baccarum a Sloe Bug but the use of Hairy Shield Bug for this species is now common and has caused some confusion. When I got the first report I thought someone had discovered a new species.

Last year, I asked members to look out for Blue Bug in Lancashire and a sharp-eyed friend found one about a mile from my house! Congratulations to him.

Seven of the records were of instars. After hatching, the larvae moult several times as they grow and each stage is called an instar. The colour of an instar might be quite different from an adult and early instars may be different from late instars. Even within the same species variations in colour occur.

This year I have had a number of red instars of Hawthorn Shield Bug in the garden. They were all on the Rowan and were very difficult to see when resting on the berries with which the tree was laden.

Many thanks to all those who have contributed records.

Anne Smith

Photos are on page 8
LADYBIRDS

Reports of Ladybirds have declined. Apart from a 7-spot *Coccinella septempunctata* and 16-spot *Tytthaspis sedecipunctata* from Linda Renshaw and an Orange Ladybird *Halyzia sedecimtiguttata* and 14-spot *Propylea quattuordecimpunctata* from Barbara Crooks there is little to add to the record.

I did find a cluster of Harlequins *Harmania axyridis* (*f.coccinea* and *f.spectabilis*) in Garstang with a couple of Cream-spot *Calvia quattuordecimpunctata* close by. I also saw the tiny 24-spot *Subcoccinella vigintiquattuordecimpunctata* in grassland on the outskirts of Blackpool. An Orange Ladybird was spotted on a work party at Myers Allotment in October.

Michael Foley got in touch about a report of a 5-spot Ladybird *Coccinella quinquepunctata* somewhere on the River Wyre to see if I knew the location. I was unable to help as I had not heard the report myself. Should it come to light in our area it would a significant event as most sightings seem to occur in either the Speyside area of Scotland or mid-Wales. It is reported to be very habitat specific in Britain.

Michael also advised me that an Adonis Ladybird *Hippodamia variegata* had been found at Middleton and its image posted on Facebook. The last record I can find at that location was posted by Jim Thomas way back in 2004 whilst sweeping poolside vegetation.

With an apparent abundance of suitable habitat in our area, you would think that the Heather Ladybird *Chilocus bipustulatus* would be a commonplace. None, however, have been reported to me since I started keeping records for the group.

Mike Foley has sent in 5 photographs of some less commonly seen ladybirds which I hope may encourage readers to look out for and send in records: they were all found on Longridge Fell in 2015.

Mike Bloomfield

Photos are on pages 8 and 17

Orthoptera

This has been another good season for Orthoptera and one which got away to an early start with nymphs of the Dark Bush-cricket *Pholidoptera griseoaptera* being found by Linda Renshaw and Pat Bromley on Heathwaite as early as June 5th and those of the Speckled Bush-cricket *Leptophyes punctatissima*, also by them, at Eaves Wood on the 9th. In addition, Mo Richards found a nymph of Common Green Grasshopper *Omocestus viridulus* at Latterbarrow on June 4th and I also had early sightings of Field Grasshopper *Chorthippus brunneus* nymphs at Latterbarrow on the 6th and at Brockholes, near Preston, on the 8th.

Last winter’s scrub clearances on Heathwaite and at Eaves Wood had posed a possible threat to the habitat for the Dark and Speckled Bush-crickets respectively but regular recording there during the summer indicates that good populations survive. Similar scrub clearance below Whitbarrow Scar and hedging work alongside the lane to Humphrey Head also appears to have left the Speckled-bush populations unaffected; in fact, at the latter, Linda recorded 50+ on her detector on the shrubs along the wall. This is all good news for these two important, locally-scarce species and we are very fortunate to have such a rich orthopteran fauna within our area.

Bog Bush-crickets *Metrioptera brachyptera* were seen and heard by several recorders at Meathop Moss, Hay Bridge, and at Foulshaw Moss. At the latter site, they are quite readily found even from the boardwalk and, judging by the number which can be detected without leaving it, this must be a very large population and unaffected by the recent construction of dragonfly pools.

The Short-winged Conehead *Conocephalus dorsalis* is now present around most of the Morecambe Bay salt marsh. At Humphrey Head, in mid-August, hundreds could be heard calling and several easily spotted, sitting out on the sea rush just above the normal high water mark (photo). It is now well established locally in large populations and is moving northward along the Cumbrian coast in a rapid and successful extension of its range.

Cont. on page 19
10-spot Ladybird, Longridge Fell               M Foley

Heioglyphic Ladybird, Longridge Fell          M Foley

Striped Ladybird, Longridge Fell             M Foley

Larch Ladybird, Longridge Fell               M Foley

24-spot Ladybird, Holyoake Avenue            M Bloomfield

Roesel’s Bush Cricket, Fleetwood (Orthoptera) M Foley
Short-winged Conehead, Humphrey Head (Orthoptera)  M Foley

Oak Bush-cricket, Heathwaite (Orthoptera)  M Foley

Group at Oak Bush-cricket find, Heathwaite (Orthoptera)  M Foley

Brown Hairstreak - second butterfly at Gait Barrows  M Jones

Brown Hairstreak - first butterfly at Gait Barrows (Butterfly report)  J Budgie

White-letter Hairstreak egg (Butterfly report)  M Greenland
In early September, Allen Holmes and I checked out the population of the (normally southern) Roesel’s Bush Cricket *Metrioptera roeselii* near Fleetwood. This is an exceptionally isolated one which is more than 100 km from the nearest which lies much further to the south. It was originally thought to be restricted to private ground but in fact we saw and picked up its call in several places just to the north which proves that it is significantly extending its local area. There is also an unsubstantiated rumour that it has been found nearby at Fleetwood Marsh. If so, this is all good news for what is a very interesting bush-cricket (photo).

The last of our six, local bush-crickets is the very elusive, nocturnal, arboreal and non-stridulating Oak Bush-cricket *Meconema thalassinum*. It is impossible to pick up its tapping call-sound by ear or by the bat detector and is rarely encountered other than by luck such as when coming to light or to a moth trap, or when blown out of trees by strong winds. Despite this, Allen Holmes succeeded in finding a male in an oak on Heathwaite on September 29th (photo) and a few of us (photo) managed to meet there to see this rare sighting after being alerted by Allen.

Field and Common Green Grasshoppers are quite common within the area and were widely recorded - but much scarcer is the Meadow *Chorthippus parallelus* and also the Mottled Grasshopper *Myrmeleotettix maculatus*. This year we only had two records for the former (Tilberthwaite and Foulshaw Moss) and four for the Mottled (Heathwaite, Hutton Roof, Tilberthwaite Gill, and by the River Keer estuary). These two species require quite different habitats; the Meadow being usually found on damp, acidic, upland grassland or in peaty areas on lowland bogs, whereas the Mottled prefers dry, sparsely vegetated ground.

This year, Common Groundhopper *Tetrix undulata* was seen on Heathwaite and also close to the entrance to Middlebarrow Quarry but the Slender Groundhopper *Tetrix subulata* eluded us. Allen Holmes searched a known locality at Silverdale Moss but failed to find it and it was not found again at Brockholes NR where the suitable habitat now seems to be diminishing.

Thanks go to those who have sent in records. These have now been incorporated into a single Excel spreadsheet and forwarded to the national Orthoptera Recording Scheme at Wallingford, Oxfordshire. Linda Renshaw and Pat Bromley have put in an enormous amount of time and effort locally, searching out new localities and checking known ones. Allen Holmes has done similarly and he has also come up with the important Oak Bush-cricket record on Heathwaite. Mo Richards has also provided several records whilst others have come from Carol Poole, Gary Hedges and David Andrew. However, we are still in need of additional recorders in order to do justice to the rich Orthoptera fauna hereabouts, so if anyone wishes to help, please contact me. We now have a dedicated Facebook group where photos and comments are posted regularly. This can be accessed by searching Facebook for “Orthoptera of North Lancashire and South Cumbria”.

Michael Foley, November, 2015.

Accompanying photos are on pages 17 and 18.

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**Butterflies**

In a year that’s gone down as one of the worst in living memory (and probably beyond; I can’t remember), there were a couple of spots of very interesting news. One of these was the discovery of White-letter Hair-streak eggs on elm growing alongside the canal near Galgate. These butterflies spend most of their lives high in the canopy so are very easily missed. Their feeding damage can be quite noticeable, but is similar to that of shield bugs and other possible insect species. During the many years I lived close to the canal, a couple of miles from Galgate, I often saw what I thought could be White-letter Hair-streak feeding damage, but never a single butterfly to back it up. At last, we have proof that they’re breeding there. It’s also possible (likely?) that they live along a good portion of the stretch of canal between Galgate and Lancaster: there’s plenty of elm though a lot of it is inaccessible for egg-hunting. There was more evidence of eggs further down the canal near Potter’s Brook.

Despite the bad weather, quite a few sightings of White-letter Hair-streak were recorded in our area. Yealand Hall Allotments turned up quite good numbers...
(maximum count 2 but 2 were seen several times over several days by different people), and the species was again seen at Stairend Bridge. There was also an unconfirmed possible sighting from Heysham. That's not far from Galgate as the crow or hairstreak flies.

Purple Hairstreak showed up quite well at Gait Barrows and Myers Allotment, with an unusual record coming from Warton Crag. It was also seen in the Crook'O'Lune area, a new site.

The second item of ‘big’ hairstreak news was the recording of Brown Hairstreak at Gait Barrows. Now, there's no way these occurred naturally. The first sighting was of a well-worn and gravid-looking female photographed before they were flying in their natural habitats in the south – a likely sign of a captive-bred butterfly. The second was a fresher individual – from the photo it wasn’t possible to determine if it was a male or another female. Since then, eggs have been found in the vicinity of the first sighting. When the news of these butterflies came out, another record came to light from Coldwell Parrock, just over the border into Cumbria, either 2007 or 2009.

Green Hairstreak appeared at the usual sites in the Silverdale area, but there were no sightings from Birkbank Bog or surrounding area (or indeed anywhere in Bowland, either). The Birkbank colony was huge just a few years ago; since then, the site has been very heavily sheep-grazed but I can’t believe the entire colony has been wiped out. I visited and looked in sunny but quite windy conditions but saw nothing, even in the sheltered areas. It used to be possible to see them by the hundred there, also (in smaller numbers) near the reservoir at Nicky Nook, and along the road to Jubilee Tower. Langdon Brook is another place worth looking.

Apart from the hairstreaks, there is bad news about some of our most threatened butterfly species: High Brown Fritillary had the worst year on record and populations are at critically low numbers on some sites – although a single record came from Eaves Wood where none have been recorded on transect since 2013, and none in 2012. Things weren’t much better for Pearl-bordered Fritillary which undoubtedly suffered from the late, cool, spring. Duke of Burgundy is still clinging on at Gait Barrows, with one counted away from the core area. Here’s hoping they’re starting to spread out again.

Laura Sivell

There are some photos on pages 18 and 36

2015 Macro Moth report

2015 was the middle year of three for the National Macro Moth Atlas and was characterised by some fairly intensive recording of known productive sites which did come up with some new species, but mainly, and perhaps predictably, simply confirmed the presence of the various site specialists. It was also not a particularly brilliant year for the recorder who has a general but not fanatical interest in moths. Thus the 6th October was a 'horrible wet night' for most people, not arguably the best trapping night of the autumn. As Mark Tunmore mentions in his editorial in the latest Atropos, wet nights are for switching traps on, not off! It was also a poor year, or certainly first half of the year, for garden moth-ers where the moths just didn't get going unless you were prepared to seek out sheltered woodland sites.

The remainder of this winter will be spent researching the gaps in coverage and trying to entice the active moth-ers away from their tried and trusted sites in favour of under-recorded areas/habitats.

This is where you could be a great help. West of the M6, we do not have under-recording issues, except some coastal strips where trap security is a problem, but this is definitely not always the case to the east of the M6 where there are quite a few potential moth trap locations which are under-recorded. These may unearth another gem of a site, which hardly grabs the attention when perusing OS Maps, like Herring Head Wood. Anyone living, or who knows anyone living, in Melling, Burrow, Whittington, the Leck valley (the fell is well-recorded), Thursland Hall area, the Kellets (especially anywhere near the limestone quarry areas), Dolphinholme, Abbeystead, Thurnham, Glasson, Littledale, especially next to woodland and not with a load of
street-lights or neighbours to upset with bright lights? This involves occasional requests to run MV traps from properties (preferably with outside sockets) and/or leave portable traps in locations e.g. woodlands which are as private and secure as they can be. Please do respond to this request if you think you can help as 2016 is the final year for the Atlas. Thanks.

Apologies if anything significant is missed from the season by season summary. Thanks to the keepers and deer stalkers for cooperation re-overnight moth traps, especially Raggy from Docker Moor, Jeff from Herring Head, Andy from Docker Moor and Chris from Leck for their help. Thanks also to the landowners for allowing overnight moth tapping:- Val May at Millhouses, the Batty family at Summersgill, Thelma and Alan Holland at Greenbank, the Taylor family from Botton Head, the Middleton family from Leck Fell, Wolfy at Crossdale Grains, Veronica Gilchrist from Sunderland Point and the Hope family at Herring Head wood. These are my own personal contacts, I’m sure some of the other moth recorders will also have people to acknowledge if you want to feed these through to me please for the BC annual report. Thanks.

First winter period

The usual handful of 24/7 moth-ers were out and about targeting sheltered woodland sites such as Mealbank or driving slowly along sheltered country lanes seeing what the headlights revealed. The best catch was in an actinic run by Justine Patton (JP) at Aughton Woods on 25th February (60 March Moth, 2 Spring Usher, 43 Dotted Border, 3 Satellite and 15 Chestnut). Spring Usher was new to SD45 when found at Lancaster University lights on February 16th (Jonathan Scragg). A Red Sword Grass at Mealbank on 27th February (Pete Marsh PJM) was quite early in not particularly warm weather.

Spring

Early March was the start of a series of pear-shaped conditions and the usual early spring species really struggled with only Mottled Grey on 3rd (Anne Smith) and a handful of Oak Beauty in the first week being 'on time'. Better weather on 11th and 12th March saw Yellow-horned at Herring Head, the first of only three Small Brindled Beauty at High Tatham, with Shoulder Stripe, Engrailed and, at last, Common Quaker and Early Grey making their appearance. The rather 'late' Spring was epitomised by the 18th March date for the first Small Quaker and Hebrew Character.

April saw some decent numbers of Lead-coloured Drab at Herring Head Wood peaking at 24 on 10th but the usually abundant Small Quaker was in very low numbers.

Although nights were often cool and unproductive, it did result in some decent sunny days to locate the elusive Orange Underwing and records came from Warton Crag, Heysham Moss, Herring Head and upper Hindburndale sites. One of the best ever spring moth trap catches on April 13th included the only three Blossom Underwing reported so far and an incredible 75 Twin-spotted Quaker, bucking the general trend of low orthosia numbers (JP). This night also saw the peak catch of 18 Barred Tooth-striped, which was well-recorded on especially Warton Crag as per monitoring of key species of conservation concern (JP), whilst 36 of its commoner relative, Early Tooth-striped, adorned an actinic trap in Herring Head (April 10th). Belted Beauty revealed better numbers at Potts Corner this year with a rather late peak of 93 (54 females) on April 20th (Graham Jones GJ).

The next main ‘event’ of the spring involved playing with a new toy – the Emperor pheromone lure which was very effective indeed over our local moorlands with the authors car being chased by a male up Leck fell after the pheromone had been ‘opened’ inside – the driver side window was open!

The stand-out record from the end of April was an adult Mullein at Heysham road on 24th (John Holding (DJH). Larvae are conspicuous – see later – but adults are very hard to find in the wild. Interesting odds and ends from the back end of April included Chamomile Shark on Heysham Road on 20th, Red Sword Grass on Heysham Moss on 22nd (JP) and the usual records of Scarce Prominent and Lunar Marbled Brown from their stronghold in the Warton/Silverdale areas

May was a poor month for overnight moth trapping although the day-time Emperor luring received a nice weather window on the 4th. A hint that migrants were trying to arrive against the inclement weather was provided by a Dark Sword Grass at Middleton on 5th (JP). [see separate migrant section]. Amongst the usual widespread fare, which included Pale Tussock and Nut Tree Tussock, were records of Dwarf Pug from Docker Moor (10th) along with Square Spot and Scarce Promi-
nent at this most easterly known site. The 11th saw the first Mullein larvae of what was to be a bumper year at Middleton.

The most interesting records later in the month came from Warton Crag with an actinic catch on 23rd holding Scorched Carpet, Small White Wave and Great Prominent (JP). This latter species also graced a garden trap in Warton on 26th (Peter Stevens PS) but have we all given up on it to the east of the M6 in the Dalton/Docker area? It is certainly not in the well-recorded lower Hindburndale oakwoods. Maybe some intensive trapping in the Dalton Parish (Cumbria, but all-importantly in VC60!) at the middle/end of May is needed in 2016? Elsewhere, the first of three Ruddy Highflyer at its only known site in the area, Heysham Nature Reserve, was recorded on 25th.

Summer months

Moths which normally emerge in the late spring were often really late and therefore by mid/late summer we were finding species which normally never overlap on the same egg packing! Interesting stuff in some rather poor weather during the first 2/3 of June included the first Cistus Forester on Warton Crag on 3rd, the first Shaded Pug at Heysham on 4th and an unusual ‘garden trap’ Light Knot Grass at Brookhouse also on 4th (Ian Hartley IH). 120 Mullein larvae were located at Middleton on 7th (JP). Brian checked the known Valerian Pug site at Cinderbarrow on 15th and located three individuals at dusk (Brian Hancock BH). Other June highlights included a Puss Moth on the road near Morrison’s in Morecambe on 19th (JP), the first Blomer’s Rivulet on Warton Crag on 23rd, a Lunar Thorn at Docker on 24th, a Shark at Heysham Nature reserve on 24th, two Silky Wainscot at a new site at Heysham Moss on 24th-25th, a Satin Wave was new for Sunderland on 26th and a number of Currant Clearwing were pheromone-lured at an Over Kellet farm from 27th (Linda Renshaw LR and Barbara Crooks BC). The start of a dramatic change of status from rare to commonplace saw the first of many Heart and Club at Heysham Nature reserve on 26th. A Little Emerald was unexpected at Bay Horse on 28th (Nigel Rogers NR) as was the only Alder Kitten of the year way out of habitat at Sunderland on 29th. More predictable were the annual recording by Brian of Netted Pug and Thyme Pug at their known sites by the Keer Estuary on 28th (BH).

The stand-out record for July was a Dwarf Cream Wave along the coastal strip near the old Pontin’s site at Heysham on July 12th (JP) – the first VC60 record for 12 years and further indication that some of the species common at the Formby/Ainsdale area are managing to survive in smaller pockets further north. The 1st July saw all sorts of excitement on Leck Fell (PJM, Steve Palmer SP), not the least a thunderstorm-related moon-bow as well as a shed load of moths, although nothing really show-stopping to rival the weather! Highlights were a day-time Beautiful Yellow Underwing and eight Grey Mountain Carpet and elsewhere three Reddish Light Arches from two traps at the traditional north-eastern end of Warton Crag. Lord’s Lot was searched for Bilberry Pug at dusk on July 3rd and five were quickly located at the 2014 site (JP). Lilac Beauty was a nice record from Silverdale Moss on 5th and Welsh Wave was a very odd record high on Leck Fell on 9th (not accidental transport from a previous catch at Docker Moor!), accompanying a more predictable Light Knot Grass and three of The Confused. A Blood Vein was new for Sunderland on 10th and two of its similarly spreading congener, Clay Triple-Lines were at Yealand Conyers on 17th. Minor Shoulder-Knot has become rather hard to find in recent years with just a singleton at Leighton Moss centre on 18th and this site produced two presumably different Four-dotted Footman on 22nd and 25th. There were a series of Fen Square Spot records in the latter half of July and early August from Leck Fell, Docker Moor and Botton Head Middle gill. Golden Plusia was an excellent record away from its Warton stronghold at the Crook of Lune on 18th (Steve Graham SG) and a rather late Obscure Wainscot was at Middleton NR on 21st. The only Crescent-striped of the year was from a traditional site at Sunderland on 22nd, but this reflects how the salt-marsh habitats are under-recorded, especially in wet windy summers! The following night saw a complete surprise with a Triple-spotted Clay being carefully documented at Heysham NR and around this time it was confirmed just how common Barred Carpet is in the shaded areas of the north-eastern side of Warton Crag. The highly localised V-Moth was scarce this year but appeared in a Warton garden on 25th (PS). The 29th saw 7 Red Carpet in two traps at the top of Leck Fell (Jean Roberts JR), along with 6 The Confused, the only Galium Carpet of the year and the Ling Pug form of Wormwood Pug (PJM). Only a handful of Netted Car-
pet could be found this year in the Hyning Wood area (BH et al)

The first half of August involved a tedious trawl through the database with its screeds of common noctuids - indeed if a was forced to miss a half-month in the whole year as regards moth trapping, this would be it, especially in a good/bad wasp year. Many of the interesting species at the beginning were already well-recorded in July. The slowly increasing Striped Wainscot was new for SD47 at Barrow Scout fields on 14th (PS). A Waved Black was located at its only known site at Carnforth Station underpass (Tim Hutchison TH). Other snippets of interest were a Lesser Cream Wave at Warton on 7th (Martin Elsworth ME), an Annulet on Warton Crag on 10th, a Tissue not hiding in a cave at Gaitbarrows on 12th (both JP) and a Pretty Chalk Carpet at Yealand Conyers on 14th (BH).

The second half of the month saw a few new moths of interest including a new site for Small Rufous with two at Heysham Moss on 17th, a short flurry = short flight period (?) of The Suspected at Docker Moor from 18th-20th and more prolonged series of Neglected Rustic and Hedge Rustic there from 20th. The currently rather scarce Olive also appeared at Docker Moor on 20th along with the first of a few Anomalous from this and other northern sites. A Blood-vein was a good record from Silverdale Moss on 21st and warningly the only Tawny-specked Pug of the year was at Heysham NR on 21st. Barred Chestnut was once again a common moth high on Warton Crag, Docker Moor and it has now spread to Herring Head wood and Botton Head in the east. The declining Heath Rustic was a very welcome record from the bothy site at Docker Moor on 26th, next to the mature heather and another heather species seemingly on the wane, Pale Eggar, was equally welcome with a couple at Leck fell on 29th, along with a single Small Autumnal Moth and a nice flurry of second brood Striped Twin-spot Carpet.

Autumn

September started with a real struggle on the 1st for three of us trying locate Butterbur at the successful 2014 site along the Wenning at Hornby - one was eventually located (JP)! The National Moth Nights (10th-12th) were a real struggle for garden trappers with limited choice of (lack of) shelter, but careful assessment of the wind at more flexible woodland sites saw some decent stuff including Olive and Orange Sallow at Herring Head on 10th, Heath Rustic again at Docker Moor bothy on 11th and some limestone wall-sheltered trapping at Leck Fell producing a Pale Eggar amongst the more numerous Haworth’s Minor on 12th. Other stuff included Brown-spot Pinion at Barrow Scout Fields on 12th with Oak Luteestring and Flounced Chestnut at a sheet and light session at Baines Crag also on 12th. Another Brown-spot Pinion appeared at Greenbank Farm at Over Kellett on 14th - is a revival on for a once widespread moth in e.g. the 1960s? A Beaded Chestnut was an excellent record from Warton on 19th (PS) with the only other VC60 report being from just outside out southern boundary at Pilling.

October started with a new record for Heysham NR with a day-flying Vapourer on 1st (SD45E). The night of the 6th was great (see also migrants) with some high risk open hillside trapping in upper Hindburndale paying off with the catch including the very elusive Northern Deep-brown Dart at Greenbank Farm. This was followed by an even greater prize in the form of a Streak at Heysham Road on 18th - is there a resident population in our area? The usual localised late autumn species appeared in the usual places with one or two minor range extensions, notably Sprawler at Botton Head on 19th and one or two unseasonal species such as Burnished Brass at Heysham Road on 19th. It was not, however, a year for numerous unseasonal second broods, having “started” so late

Second winter period

The first week saw good numbers of the predictable species before the weather put paid to several of the more exposed garden traps. Other than the separate migrant section, nothing out of the ordinary with the usual Northern Winter Moth records from SD66, scattering of Scarce Umber at woodland sites and good catches of Mottled Umber at Millhouses and (after a long walk!) Aughton Woods on the warm 17th December, plus, leading us into 2016, a couple of early Pale Brindled Beauty.

Pete Marsh

Photos are on page 25
Migrant moths in 2015

Migrant moths have been described as an 'irrelevant bit of excitement to spice up the routine recording'. They are usually on a ticket to nowhere, to some extent capable of producing summer broods, but unable to sustain a population over the subsequent winter, certainly 'up here'. Therefore they have no "conservation value" and any dots on maps have equally limited significance - the same sort of comment you get from non-twitchers about rare birds! However, a lot of moth-ers gain a lot of pleasure out of migrant moths, notably the unpredictability and trying to work out potential occurrence patterns in relation to the weather. They encourage extra recording effort e.g. my trap is on as I write this (Boxing Day night) in the faint hope the southerly wind might deposit something of interest. Reality suggests a couple of dung flies, but there might be a more realistic unseasonal resident species to add to the database, maybe providing a "latest ever record".

The Migrant Moth Facebook site flagged up possibilities of 2015 being a very good year based on Spanish observations in the early spring. This particularly related to Bordered Straw (along with a predicted massive Painted Lady influx). Unfortunately the weather had other ideas, especially during May and June and we received dribs and drabs but none of the major influxes which were anticipated. In the case of Bordered Straw, the anticipated late summer flourish of British-born individuals just did not happen, despite 10 promising records in our area in May-July. There were subsequently just two in August and one in September. The exception was perhaps Silver Y where the second generation was recorded in significant numbers, especially on the likes of late-flowering buddleia and 'influx nights' reflected in the moth trap catches.

In this region there are a number of traps run on a virtually nightly basis and therefore the migrant records are not a rather meaningless reflection of when traps were put out, but are a pretty good indication of which nights produced the genuine influxes. This is particularly apparent with Silver Y. Thus 3rd-5th July, 12th July, 20-21st August, 31st August-4th September, 11th September, 25th September and 6th October stand out as key periods/individual nights for Silver Y influxes. They were not all "nice warm, still nights" and indeed arguably the best night of the year, 6th October, was a belated decision to run extra traps wondering what a misty, murky wet night followed by early hours torrential rain would bring! Another feature, perhaps most noticeable in the 24/7 Heysham toilet trap was that, on any given morning, Silver Y's either seemed to be plastered all over the toilet walls or were completely absent (they don't seem to like resting on the ground level egg packing like most civilised moths)!

Small Mottled Willow deserves special mention. There was a remarkable run in a trap set next to Veronica Gilchrist's vegetable patch at Sunderland! To avoid duplication of records, and the fact that it really doesn't matter where migrants are released, each catch was taken at least 4 km away before release. Therefore, apart from perhaps one which escaped in situ, there were 19 different individuals recorded between 10th and 15th July. Similar occurrence patterns elsewhere have interpreted these concentrations as being a home-grown generation from an egg-laying female arriving a month or so previously, which then completed a typically rapid life-cycle for this species. This would certainly explain the disproportionate numbers at this site compared to the rest of our region, indeed the whole of Lancashire - indeed were the two September records at Sunderland a mini third generation?

Finally, anywhere can turn up a migrant moth; the locations are not all coastal! A previous year saw a Bedstraw Hawkmoth in a trap on remote moorland operated from a gamekeeper's shed, one of the two Convolvulus Hawkmoth this year was from about 5 metres from where I am typing this at inland High Tatham and one of the three Scarce Bordered Straw was from the only light for miles around in a field near Thrushgill. Conversely, urban sites with plenty of other lights do seem to produce migrants with JP recording Gem and Small Mottled Willow in 2015 in a garden trap near Morecambe Football Ground.

Pete Marsh
Brown-spot Pinion, Greenbank Farm, Over Kellet (Macromoths)  B Crooks

Hummingbird Hawk Moth, Heysham NR (Migrant moths)  Janet Packham

Red-veined Darter, Middleton (Dragonfly report)  D&J Moreton

Examining a rock, Lichen outing  C Brook

Currant Clearwing, Greenbank Farm, Over Kellet (Macromoths)  B Crooks

Ruddy Darter, Aldcliffe (Dragonfly report)  D Hayward
Parmelia laevigata (Lichen outing)  C Brook

Mike Gosling explaining to the group (Lichen outing)  C Brook

Emperor Moth in net (Hindburndale outing)  J Roberts

Emperor Moth pheromone trap (Hindburndale outing)  J Roberts

Drinker Moth caterpillar (Hindburndale)  J Roberts

Parmelia laevigata (Lichen outing)  C Brook

Emperor Moth in net (Hindburndale outing)  J Roberts

Drinker Moth caterpillar (Hindburndale)  J Roberts

Heath spotted Orchid (Ribblehead outing)  B Crooks
Micro-moths in NLWG recording area in 2015

This was a fantastic year for micro recording largely due to efforts in the field by Justine Patton and occasional visits to this area by Steve Palmer, accompanied by other experts Mark Young and Kevin McCabe, Graham Jones, Robert Homan and John Girdley. Providing great encouragement for recorders is Ben Smart with his Micro-Tips Facebook site - hopefully in book form soon and therefore available to the (still) vast swath of non-Facebook users. Many other people contributed odds and ends of key records from moth traps and encounters in the field.

One of the problems with micro recording is that many of the smaller ones need 'gender determination'. Sometimes it seems to be impossible to select which ones, if any, might be key species when you encounter a trap full of moths within which is a large number of plain-looking Coleophora (e.g. Docker Moor in 2015). To the untrained eye, they appear to be one species but "random" gender determination samples suggest otherwise. Whilst many adult micros can be identified by careful examination and photography from all angles, there are a good number of species which look visually fairly distinctive but fall into the category of 'one of two or three or more similar species requiring gen det'; rather like the Ear Moths.

One way around this is to join the increasing number of people with the skills to either identify various leaf mines or galls etc. or know which of these e.g. leaf mines need 'breeding through' in order to specifically identify. Ben’s postings are full of the latter examples and going out and searching is an all-year-round possibility. Justine found two species of micro based on feeding signs during a short, casual walk on 1st January 2016, whilst 30 species were identified on the same date in woodland in Kent.

It may be of interest to note that later this year, a full list of British micros with identification criteria (e.g. good photos essential or dissection essential etc) will be published. John Girdley, Richard Walker and Steve Palmer will be working on a Lancashire version which will hopefully be ready for the start of the main 2016 field recording season.

Here are a few of the confirmed sightings of interest in 2015 (check e.g. the UK Moths website for pics):

Elachista gleichenella - This is a shaded woodland species feeding on woodrush etc. It is pretty distinctive so perhaps surprising that there are only two Lancashire records with the second of these on Warton Crag in May 2015 (JP).

Acleris abietana - This is a coniferous, presumably adventive, species first recorded in Scotland in 1965 and slowly spreading south. One at Docker Moor in Spring 2015 was the second Lancashire record (PJM).

Epinotia cruciana - This is a presumably overlooked species which can be found during the day. Seven were found at Heysham Moss on June 27th (JP) with very few VC60 records - mainly from Steve Palmer who suggests that it seems to prefer creeping willow on the dunes where it can be common. Elsewhere it’s really local.

Eana penziana - Apart from a few old records from Gaitbarrows, one in a light trap at Leck Fell on July 9th was the only recent record. This reflects our only area of upland limestone and indeed several were taken in 2015 in the nearby more extensive upland limestone in VC64.

Strophedra weirana - This was a real star record of 2015 and a product of targeting the extensive beech in Leek Hill Wood (NE Warton Crag). New for Lancashire (JP).

Swammerdamia caesiella - One was taken on June 1st at Docker Moor and this birch feeder has only previously been recorded in VC60 out of our area at Winmarleigh.

Scythis grandipennis - This gorse feeder was located on Heysham Moss on June 24th (JP). It is clearly very localised and worth looking for larval spinings. This is a first for Lancashire and one which is very rare in the north of England.

Monochroa cytisella - This bracken feeder appeared at an upper clough site, with the banks covered in the foodplant at Middle Gill, near Botton Head Farm, Upper Hindburndale on July 9th (PJM). The only previous in VC60 was from Gaitbarrows in 2007. SP suggests that it is overlooked and has been searching for and locating the bracken gall in late spring (but not got round to it yet in Lancashire!) – see Gelechiid website for details:

- http://www.gelechiid.co.uk/species/monochroa-cytisella

Pammene spendidulana - A swish at one of the few moths disturbed during an unsuccessful search for Small Argent and Sable at Thrushgill on June 4th turns out to be a first for Lancashire (an oak feeder)! There is hope for us all. (JP).

Pete Marsh
**Dragonflies**

The year started slowly with only one record in April - a Large Red Damselfly found by Linda Renshaw at Latterbarrow. May and June were also quite quiet but the numbers of records and individuals picked up in July but tailed off quite quickly in August and September with a final rally of records from Heysham in October.

There were particularly few records of damselflies this year, with only one record of Common Blue Damselfly. I’m not sure if this is because the beginning of the season was cold or if it is just that everyone assumes that they are relatively common and so makes no note of the record. There were a few records for Banded Demoiselle, Blue-tailed and Large Red Damselflies but only one Azure Damselfly, found at Heysham.

Common Hawker was not very common with the only north Lancashire record I received being from Heysham in August. There were more records of Southern Hawker (6 in the Lancashire area) and we found 5 exuvia around the pond in our garden in Bolton-le-Sands.

Brown Hawker was better recorded, with 11 records from 11 July to 1 October. There were 7 records of Migrant Hawker from the middle of August to the end of October.

There was one early June record of Emperor Dragonfly and then a further 9 records throughout July. Linda also recorded them at Foulshaw Moss in August and September. The only Golden-ringed Dragonfly was seen by Steve Garland in Coniston Coppermines but there should be more recorded in north Lancashire, so keep looking.

Broad-bodied Chaser was recorded 4 times from 31 May to 4 July and there were 5 Lancashire records of Four-spotted Chaser, 4 from Middleton and one in June at Trowbarrow Quarry.

There were 11 records of Black-tailed Skimmer from the middle of June to the middle of August, with up to 15 being recorded at any one time. All the records were from Middleton and Heysham.

There were 2 records of Black Darter in our area, one in early June (larvae) and the other in early October, although Linda had them at Foulshaw Moss in July and August. Common Darter lived up to its name with 23 records from all over the area, with records from the end of June to the end of October. Dan Haywood recorded the first Ruddy Darter for 7 years at Aldcliffe, Lancaster.

However, 2015 was the year of the Red-veined Darter with records from Middleton on 14 days in July.

Finally, here is a map showing where I received records from for 2015.

Thank you to everyone who sent in records - Alan Draper, Barbara Crooks and Linda Renshaw. Other records were extracted from the Heysham Observatory Report and iRecord.

Belinda Garland

Photos are on the front cover and page 25
Report on Beetles and other insects

A tiny beetle worth looking out for when Rockrose *Helianthemum nummularium* is flowering is *Bruchidius cisti*. This is one of the seed beetle family and might occur wherever the host plant is common around this area. It is known from the Silverdale, Gait Barrows area as well as Whitbarrow and this year was recorded in a couple of sites in the Hutton Roof area. Moth trapping in Park Wood (Hutton Roof) turned up two uncommon beetles. One was the large, dark-brown Click Beetle *Melanotus castanipes*, which has a wireworm larva that lives in dead wood. The other was a Nitidulid beetle called *So-ronia punctatissima* which has been recorded in Cumbria, but very rarely.

While weeding the garden in Bolton le Sands, I spotted an extremely small (2mm or so) ground beetle (Carabidae). This was identified as *Elaphropus parvulus* which hasn’t been recorded before in this area, but may be overlooked, due to it being so tiny!

Linda has sent in a record of 4 Glow-worm larvae from Middlebarrow Quarry in December. There seem to be very few records of them in the area and I would welcome any other reports.

One of the big surprises while recording flies in 2015 was to find a small colony of the Four-barred Major soldierfly *Oxycera rara* around a freshwater seepage at the top of the saltmarsh at Bolton le Sands. This is a local species which I normally associate with inland springs and marshes. The marshes are the main home for the tiny Barred Snout soldierfly *Nemotelus uliginosus* and thousands can be swept from the vegetation in the summer. It is rarely found away from the coast. The other soldierfly of note found this year was Pygmy Soldier *Oxycera pygmaea*, which is common around calcareous springs at Park Wood near Hutton Roof.

While recording at Burns Beck Moss Cumbria Wildlife Trust Reserve, I noticed several Common Reed *Phragmites australis* plants with swollen and distorted stems. I took one to examine and found it to contain microscopic mites. These proved to be the gall of *Steneotarsonemus phragmitidis*. The National Biodiversity Network distribution map shows no records outside Norfolk, but an enquiry to the British Gall Society recorder revealed records as far north as South-west Yorkshire. However, this is almost certainly a new record for Cumbria. In early January 2016, I visited Leighton Moss RSPB Reserve and found a small patch of these same galls there. This will be a new record for Lancashire. Whether it has been there all along or recently spread, I can’t judge.

Steve Garland

Photo on page 36

Field Meetings

Lichen Outing to Clougha and Birk Bank 12th April

The warm, sunny weather during the second week in April bode well for our first summer outing of the year. It was not so on Sunday 12th when eleven hardy souls braved the driving rain and bitterly cold wind to be enlightened and entertained by Mike Gosling on the world of local lichens.

We started the expedition with a look at two common lichens on an Elder at the roadside beyond the carpark, *Xanthoria parietina* and *Physcia tenella* - both nitrogen-pollution-tolerant species. The smooth bark of the Elder is spongy which provides a good habitat for lichens. We were shown *Lecidella elaeochroma*, which grows in circular form to start with but spreads to a more irregular shape as its host tree grows. As we moved away from the road and progressed further along Birk Bank, we noticed the lessening of these species where the air became cleaner. Mike later showed us a specimen of *Xanthoria* on a twig, which showed more yellow on the upper side of the twig whereas the underside was green – Mike explained that the species uses its fungal component to protect it from harmful effects of the sun, giving the yellow colouration of specimens exposed to sunlight, whereas in shadier situations Xanthoria remains green. The protected green alga component of the lichen provides nutrients for the fungus through photosynthesis.

During the afternoon session, by which time our numbers had dwindled slightly due to the adverse weather, we explored Birk Bank’s species-rich ancient woodland.
We were shown *Lecanactis abietina*, a grey crustose lichen with ‘jam tart’ fruits and white projections (pycnidia) and we were lucky enough to see this fertile, an uncommon occurrence. *Graphis scripta* and *Graphis elegans* were both found on the smooth bark of Hazel. The woodland at Birk Bank contains much Silver Birch, the bark of which is quite acidic and therefore good for many species of lichen.

On the shady side of moss-covered rocks amongst the trees we found a powdery, leprose lichen, the blue-green *Lepraria incana*, which has never been seen fertile. There were other leprose species which can be separated by their substrate. One foliose species of lichen, rare in this area but occurring in the woods, is *Parmelia laevigata* which thrives in habitats with high humidity. It is a non-rosetting species of which the lobes appear square as though cut off and smooth with no reticulae (net-like patterns). The specimen we examined was on the decline of a rock, but the species grows on trees as well. On a nearby mossy rock, we found *Sphaerophorus globosus*, green-grey with finger-like branches and branchlets, resembling coral. On the mossy woodland floor were species of *Cladonia*, the cup-lichens that resemble golf tees, including *C. coccifera*, with bright red fruits. A smaller, brown-coloured Cladonia is *C. fimbriata*, smooth with no squamules (leaf-like structures).

The rocks found on Clougha are of sandstone grit, which also provides an acid substrate for lichen species, so all the specimens we looked at on the rocks were acid-lovers. Mike was able to demonstrate how some lichens are restricted to particular substrates when we passed a man-made structure which included lime mortar. He pointed out a patch of *Protoblastenia rupestris*, a limestone species which spread only as far as the edge of the mortar, and similarly a species of *Caloplaaca* manifested only on the mortar.

The rock dwelling lichens we investigated included the ‘map lichen’, *Rhizocarpon geographicum*, bright green with black fruits, an unmistakable indicator of acid rock. In the old quarry area, Mike showed us *Rhizocarpon reductum*, a grey crustose lichen also with black fruits. We also looked at *Rhizocarpon oederi*, a rusty-brown species with black fruits like miniature Chelsea buns. Mike explained that there are two forms of brown in lichens; some take iron from their substrate into their thallus and therefore don’t appear wholly brown. The various species can be difficult to distinguish.

On our return journey, we were tested on some of the species we had learned about! We thanked Mike for such an informative and entertaining day out. The rain may have dampened us somewhat (and my notebook – good job I used pencil!) but we all learned a great deal.

Cis Brook

Photos are on pages 25 and 26

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**Dalton Crags 10th May**

This field trip was led by Steve Garland starting at Plain Quarry and climbing steadily to the summit plateau of Hutton Roof Crags then descending through Lancelot Clark Storth, crossing a large area of sloping limestone pavement then returning through Storth Wood. The habitats were varied despite the overall limestone geology and ranged from short grassland to clints and grykes, wet woodland to recently cleared plantation. A moth trap had been left overnight and three moths had been potted for us to see.

Twelve of us set off through woodland but soon emerged onto short grassland where there were plenty of insects and invertebrates to keep us busy. By far the most common was St. Mark’s fly *Bibio marci* which was everywhere and in high numbers.

Approaching the plateau, wide views opened up and we were able to see the extent of the tree clearance. The felling had led to a resurgence of ground flora, which was very good to see.

Changing direction, we entered Lancelot Clark Storth and found a handy limestone shelf just right for a lunch spot. A pleasant downhill stretch brought us to the pavement, the largest area of sloping, water worn limestone in Europe. The botanists among us soon got busy looking for rare plants, like Angular Solomon’s-seal *Polygonatum odoratum*, Rigid Buckler-Fern *Dryopteris villarii* and Lily-of-the-valley *Convallaria majalis*. 
There could not have been a greater contrast ahead of us. Within minutes we were on a very squelchy track through thick woodland. There was plenty to look at, however, and we puzzled over an unusual form of Harlequin Ladybird Harmonia axyridis for some time!

As we turned uphill again to join our outward route it became drier underfoot and we could chat about what we had seen. It had been a field trip with something for everyone, whatever their specialism, and warm thanks were expressed to Steve.

**List of Species Found**

**Caught overnight in trap**
- Mottled Grey Colostygia multistrigaria
- Powdered Quaker Orthosia gracilis
- Micro-moth Micropterix tunbergella

**Limestone woodland**
- Stonefly ?
- Fungus gnats ?
- Weevil Phyllabius glaucus
- Millipede Tachypodoiulus niger
- St Mark's Fly Bibio marci

**Short limestone grassland**
- Centipedes Lithobius forficatus Lithobius variegatum
- A Fox dropping ?
- Large Black slug ? Arion ater
- Yellow Meadow ant Lasius niger

**Wet woodland**
- Velvet mite Eutrombidium rostratus
- Harlequin ladybird Harmonia axyridis
- Beetle Aphodius prodromus
- Micro-moth Micropterix calthella ?
- Click beetle Tetrix undulata
- Ground-hopper Abax parallelepipedus
- Ground beetle Limnephilus auricula
- Hoverfly Orcheses fagi
- Caddisfly Olophrum piceum
- Weevil Olyphrum piceum
- Rove beetle Ferdinandeia cuprea

**Limestone grassland**
- Hoverfly Ferdinandea cuprea

Anne Smith

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**Hindburndale 24th May**

As arranged, 9 of us met in the early afternoon in the car park at Wray Bridge House Farm Tearooms. Pete Marsh, our leader for the outing, explained his plans for the day. He had led a group the day before following the same schedule and route. As the weather had then been sunny and calm, their search for wildlife had been productive - we perhaps would not find as much in the overcast, cool and windier conditions.

After car sharing we headed off to Loftshaw Moss where we hoped that the use of an Emperor Moth pheromone would attract some moths. It was very windy and mostly cloudy on this exposed moorland above Wray; not very conducive to using the pheromone lure which Pete had brought. We were therefore delighted and surprised to observe 3 males coming to the lure after only a few minutes and one of the moths was netted and photos duly taken. Whilst there, we heard a pair of Curlew bubbling away, a Skylark singing and saw a Raven and Meadow Pipit. A Drinker moth caterpillar was also spotted.

After this successful, but windblown experience, we all got back into our cars and drove on downhill to the next and more sheltered site at Stair End Bridge; Linda spotting an Orange tip butterfly on the way.

**Stair End Bridge**

Pete had very thoughtfully brought along some moths for the group to see that had been trapped at Warton Crag during the previous night. These were:- Broken-barred Carpet – which has a restricted emergence time
Common Pug – identified by the dot on its forewings
Ingrailed Clay – found in spring on the lowlands and
midsummer on the fells; it’s late emergence this year
was due to cold weather in May
Common Marbled Carpet – a dark form, found most of
the year
Pine Carpet
Gracillaria syringella – a grass moth.
Nest boxes at Stair End hold Pied Flycatchers. Pete ex-
plained that Hindburndale has the highest density of
Pied Flycatchers in the UK and one returning female has
used the boxes in this area since 2011. Great Tits nest
earlier than Pied Flycatchers, so rather than trying to
keep Great Tits out of the boxes by taping over the
holes earlier in the season, additional boxes have been
put up so that there is room for both species.
Birds found at Stair End were: - Swallow – 2, Chiffchaff –
1 singing, Blackbird – 1 singing and Robin.
A number of insects were found but not all could be
identified to species. These included: a green leaf
sucking weevil Phyllobus pomaceus, a small cranefly, a
harvestman and a ladybird Adalia10-punctata. On the
roadside banking, we found Opposite-leaved Golden-
Saxifrage Chrysosplenium oppositifolium and Wood
Speedwell Veronica montana with its hairy leaves and
small blue flowers.
At the end of the short walk along the narrow country
road from Stair End, we came to Botton Mill. Here we
walked across rough grassland to a wooded area at the
far side of a stream. Perched on a rock by the stream
we found a Scalloped Hazel moth and saw a caddis fly
larva in the stream itself. Despite the lack of sunshine,
a few butterflies were flying, mainly Peacock. We were
all fortunate in being able to see a male Pied Flycatcher
singing and to hear a Willow Warbler. A Lesser Black-
backed Gull was observed - probably thought to be one
from the large Bowland colony roaming for food.
Whilst the rest of the group waited at Botton Mill, the
car drivers walked back to retrieve their cars and then
we all drove on to our last destination at Thrushgill
Plantation. Much of the area had been cleared for tim-
ber, allowing good views as we walked along a rough
pathway down the slope from the clearfell. Pete in-
formed us that this area from the clearfell to the Hind-
burn has the only colony in VC60 of Small Argent and
Sable, a day-flying moth associated with Heath Bed-
straw Gallium saxatile which we found growing there.
Unfortunately, due to the late Spring and cool, windy
conditions, we didn’t see any. We did find a Longhorn
beetle Rhagium bifasciatum which lives in decaying tim-
ber and saw St Mark’s fly Bibio marci sheltering in the
lee of the larch trees.
Birds seen at Thrushgill were: - Woodpigeon – 3, Lesser
Black-backed Gull – 2, Willow Warbler – 2, Red-legged
Partridge – 1.
Although we did not see any, evidence of Roe Deer was
found in a footprint in a muddy area.
Returning to the cars at the entrance to the plantation,
we were delighted to be able to watch a flock of Lesser
Redpoll calling to each other among the row of trees.
Everyone thanked Pete for organizing and leading such
an interesting field trip in less well known, local areas.
Despite the weather we had gained a lot, both from our
own experiences and Pete’s expert knowledge.
Barbara Crooks and Jean Roberts
Photos are on page 26

Ribblehead 12th July
Although it was officially summer, it didn’t feel much
like it as we gathered at Ribblehead for our July outing.
The Senior Reserves Officer, Colin Newman, was kind
enough to show us around. First he gave a brief de-
scription of the reserve. Ingleborough Nature Reserve
covers 1 800ha around the north and east sides of the
hill, but not the summit nor the well-known paths from
Ingleton and Clapham. The earliest part, Colt Park
Wood, was acquired in 1962. We didn’t visit this as it
was considered too hazardous. The most recent addi-
tion to the reserve is Ribblehead Quarry, acquired in
1997. This is where we started. Incidentally, this is
open to the public and easily accessible to anyone who
can get to Ribblehead – it’s next to the railway station
on the opposite side of the tracks to the station en-
trance. It was originally opened, as you might guess, to
supply stone for the Settle-Carlisle railway. Once the
line was open, it had its own siding and sent stone far
and wide. Now it is home to a variety of plants such as usually invade old limestone quarries. Perhaps because of the altitude there is not much scrub as yet, so nature is largely left to get on with it here.

Passing a few typical limestone grassland species like Limestone Bedstraw Galium sterneri and Felwort Gentianella amarella, we arrived at a “geological seat”, made of the rocks of Ingleborough, with Silurian grey-wacke at the bottom and Millstone Grit at the top. Then we had a look at a pond with White Water-lily Nymphaea alba (planted) and Roach Rutilus rutilus (probably, according to Linda). She was able to draw the fish out of hiding by throwing in lumps of bread. The wet area had the unusual spike-rush Eleocharis austriaca.

There followed a short walk to see the area managed as a hay meadow. On the way, we found the Orchard Beetle Dascillus cervinus and an unusual Sawfly Abia sp. The latter was later identified as being either Abia cadens or sericea. We then had lunch in the reserve centre education room - luxury indeed, with tables, chairs and even a kettle.

The hay meadow turned out to be quite a large field with a steep slope. At the bottom, there was a rocky area, almost pavement, which was the home of the rare Lady’s-Mantle Alchemilla glaucescens. Higher up, there was a clear boundary between the limestone grassland and the acid soils on the Yoredale rocks – for example, Common Spotted Orchid Dactylorhiza fuchsii below and Heath Spotted Orchid Dactylorhiza maculata above. Notable on these rather wet upper slopes were Marsh Hawkbeard Crepis pallescens and Pale Sedge Carex pallescens. On the way down was another treasure, Small-white Orchid Pseudorchis albida, along with Fragrant Orchid Gymnadenia sp. and Great Burnet Sanguisorba officinalis.

Return was via the old quarry. There was more to see, notably Green Spleenwort Asplenium viride on one of the exposed faces. Then, right near the end and quite unexpectedly, we came across a Pyramidal Orchid Anacamptis pyramidalis which Colin had not seen there before. Although usually called a grassland plant, these do seem to be seeding themselves around dunes and old quarries in our region; so keep an eye out.

A few insects were collected on the walk, despite the unfavourable weather, but I don't have the localities. Two Robber-flies were taken as a pair: Empis (Euempis) tessellata holding dead Empis (Kritempis) livida, which was either food or gift. Males of E. tessellata, Britain’s largest empid, present a gift to the female, in the form of a dead insect, before mating takes place. Females will not mate with males who do not present a gift. Insects characteristic of hilly areas included Haematopota crassicornis (Black-horned Cleg) and Bibio pomonae (Red-thighed St.Mark’s Fly).

Martin Sherlock
Photos are on page 26 and 35

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**Freeman’s Pools and New Quay areas, Lancaster, 16th August**

Our group of about a dozen met at the end of the quay road where there was adequate parking just before the builders’ merchant’s premises. The weather at the start was somewhat threatening but gradually improved during the walk. Our group was led by Martin Sherlock and field notes were taken by Belinda Nixie.

We headed off down the cycle way in a southwesterly direction. On our left was the wooded area which has, in recent years, been subject to a conservation and amenity dispute, still unresolved, between local people, the city council and the property development company owners.

After 300 metres we came to Freeman’s Pools on our right (no public access). On the path, looking towards the main pool, we saw Sea Club-rush Bolboschoenus maritimus, Lesser Reedmace Typha angustifolia, Woody Nightshade or Bittersweet Solanum dulcamara, Hogweed or Cow Parsnip Heracleum sphondylium, Wood Dock Rumex sanguineus and Broad-leaved Dock Rumex obtusifolius as well as the common hoverflies: Eristalis pertinax, Melanastoma mellinum and Episyphus balteatus.

Freeman’s Pools is a Lancashire Wildlife Trust managed reserve formed in 2008 following various flood prevention works after the Environment Agency bought the land. The site provided clay for the flood embankments and, afterwards, landscaping produced a mosaic of interconnected pools, ponds and other wetland habitats supporting a range of wetland and grassland invertebrates, and various breeding and passage birds.

A short distance further down the cycle track, we took a right turn along a raised path (Freeman’s Wood) between drainage ditches that marked the historic boundary separating Aldcliffe and Lancaster. As such, it is flanked by a variety of mature trees, bushes and flowers. These included Wood Avens Geum urbanum, Spanish Bluebells Hyacinthoides hispanica, Red Campion Silene dioica, Cow Parsley Anthriscus sylvestris, Upright Hedge Parsley Torilis japonica, Tall Mellilot Melilotus
We saw *Cirsium arvense* as well as *Wych Elm Ulmus glabra*, *Elder Sambucus nigra* and *Hawthorn Crataegus monogyna*. We stopped to look more closely at an interesting dead *Sycamore Acer pseudoplatanus*, showing possible solitary wasp holes and dust on the trunk, a *Scots Pine Pinus sylvestris* with much evidence of insect activity, and a single, mature *Black Poplar Populus nigra*.

The Black Poplar is an especially rare tree, with only about 8000 left in the UK and perhaps only 400 females of which this Lancaster tree is one. Being dioecious, natural pollination can be very difficult between these often isolated individuals. The Environment Agency state that, “The species has historically been persecuted as the females produce vast amounts of fluffy seeds that can cause a nuisance for landowners. Large numbers of females were destroyed meaning that the tree has been edging towards extinction in the UK”. According to the Forestry Commission, the Black Poplar is the most endangered native timber tree in Britain. On a positive note, as part of the establishment of the Freeman’s Pools reserve, many trees were planted including a number of Black Poplar saplings genetically identical to our mature tree.

Emerging from this shaded path, we came to an open, raised area overlooking the River Lune. This marked a change of habitat to that of the Lune tidal embankment, a riparian mixture of grass and scrub, and hedge and edge. There was some excitement here as we seemed to have found a rare clover – except we couldn’t decide which one. Long after the walk was over, it was determined as an aberrant Bird’s-foot-trefoil *Lotus corniculatus*. Linda Renshaw showed us the use of a bat detector at a lower setting to hear orthopterans and identified the stridulations of several Short-winged Conehead crickets *Conocephalus dorsalis*, which was very interesting! This bush-cricket is a mainly southern and coastal species with the northermost NBN records circling Morecambe Bay.

We slowly headed back along the Lune noting various plants as we went. Martin identified many of these and explained the identifying characteristics that, in some cases, distinguished them from their close relatives. We saw Creeping Thistle *Cirsium arvense* - no spines up
Ingleborough wild flower meadow (Ribblehead outing)  B Crooks

Sawfly Abia sp (Ingleborough NNR)  R Zloch

Galls on Mugwort (Freemans Pools outing)  B Crooks

Rose Chafer (Badgers)  J Thomas

Searching along the estuary near Freemans Pools  B Crooks

Rose Chafer (Badgers)  J Thomas
Asplenium viride in limestone crevice at Ease Gill  T Piearce

Glow worm larvae (Beetle Report)  L Renshaw

Purple Hairstreak female (Butterfly Report)  B Dyson

Hairy stereum fungus  L Sivell
Badgers – Some Comments on Their Diet and an Unfortunate Addition to Their Menu!

My interest in Badgers lies not in the animals themselves but in the various beetles attracted to their faeces. Badger droppings may be quite firm or extremely sloppy, depending on what their recent diet has been but are always extremely evil smelling and are frequently to be found in latrines, regularly used hollows in the surface of the ground, often near the entrances to their setts.

Rather surprisingly, I have not come across very many species that we generally regard as dung feeders, such as species of *Aphodius*, other than two common species, *A. prodromus* and *A. Sphacelatus*, but have frequently found large numbers of *staphylinid*, *histerid* and *ptiliid* beetles. The *staphylinid* beetle *Philonthus marginatus* is comparatively easy to identify since it has yellow margins to its shortened elytra or wing cases (which give it its specific name) whilst the much smaller *Tachinus laticollis* occurs regularly in leaf litter and similar situations. *Margarinotus striola* is a *histerid* which is again fairly easy to identify because of the deep pit on each of its elytra. Each of these species has occurred in badger dung on Nichol's Moss and in the woods near the summit of Yewbarrow in recent years. One particularly wet latrine in the latter locality held literally hundreds of *ptiliids*, Britain's smallest beetles, known as featherwing beetles.

European Badgers *Meles meles* are known to have an extremely wide and varied diet, being one of the few truly omnivorous members of our fauna, described by Neal (1948) as “opportunistic omnivores,” that is feeding on whatever happens to be available and edible in any particular locality and at any particular time. Since Neal’s day, there has been evidence to suggest that Badgers, especially in the woodland areas of northern Europe, including Northern Britain, are food specialists since earthworms constitute on average over fifty per cent of their diet. Whilst they have been shown to eat as much as half a kilo of earthworms on a single night, Roper (2010) in the second version of the New Naturalist volume on badgers argues strongly that they are far less specialist and that we should revert to the original view proposed by Neal over sixty years ago.

The diet of nocturnal mammals such as the Badger is usually deduced by one of two means, either by examining the stomach contents of recently dead animals or by searching through their droppings, neither of which is a particularly pleasant activity. Whilst looking at the contents of one particular latrine in the woods on Yewbarrow, above Witherslack Church, in early May of this year, I noticed several very shiny, bright green fragments. I took a sample home and stirred it into a bucket of water when numerous insect parts floated on the surface. Once these had been washed thoroughly and examined under the microscope it was obvious that I had obtained several beetle elytra, thoraxes and legs of large dung beetles *Geotrupes* or *Anoplotrupes* and ground beetles, probably the Violet Ground Beetle *Carabus problematicus*. All these are listed by Roper in his chapter on badger feeding habits as being met with on their nocturnal searches for food either in or under dung or walking on the ground. Of far greater interest were the bright green body parts that had first caught my attention and were of a Rose Chafer *Cetonia aurata*, a beetle that does not appear to have been recorded previously as forming part of the badger’s diet.

This is not really surprising because the Rose Chafer is itself quite scarce and not likely to occur in all the areas inhabited by Badgers. The adult chafer spends most of its time well above the normal foraging level of Badgers but I have on two occasions, in March and April, discovered adult chafers in peaty soil under fairly large pieces of limestone on Whitbarrow Scar and on the National Nature Reserve at Gait Barrows. Badgers are known to be able to turn over quite large rocks in their search for food and this seems to be the most likely way in which they would come across the chafer beetles. Not only was my discovery interesting as another item on the Badger’s known extensive menu, but was an addition to my list of the beetles found on Yewbarrow and a not unexpected addition to its range in our area!

Rose Chafers are fascinating insects in their own right. As adults, they are beautiful, big beetles whose metallic green colour reflects the sun, and means that they catch the eye whether sitting on umbels or in flight, occasionally in some numbers; a truly magical sight. It takes two years for them to complete their life cycle
though most of this is spent as a larva in the soil, feeding on decaying vegetation, leaf mould and rotting wood. When fully grown, the larvae pupate, again in the soil, in a pupal cell made from fragments of plant material; empty cells may occasionally be found in the soil. This stage lasts up to six months before the pupae become adult and overwinter either in the pupal cell itself or in the soil nearby, before emerging in late spring to mate, lay eggs and die. Jessop (1986) lists the beetle as “a southern species, rare in northern England” whilst on the NBN Gateway distribution map, it is recorded from just three squares north of Morecambe Bay; one in Scotland and two in Northern Ireland. They seem to be well-established on Gait Barrows and can be observed on warm sunny days, often in quite large numbers in flight around bushes such as hawthorn and silver birch or on umbels feeding on pollen and nectar. To see several of them in flight together is a truly memorable sight! The name chafer is interesting in itself, probably derived from a Middle English word meaning to gnaw, describing the larval feeding habits.

During some recent research into early records of Lancashire Beetles, I came across the following which may not be politically acceptable but is so much more readable than the rather sterile distribution lists produced today! “The late Rev. H.H. Higgins reported the occurrence of Cetonia aurata many years ago in the gardens of the Rainhill Asylum near Liverpool. This is the only record (for the county)” (Sharp 1908).”

Whilst I was preparing this note I came across some comments by Dave Goulson in his book on bumblebees ‘A Sting in the Tail’, in which he describes how his research into bumblebee nests was frequently thwarted by the foraging activity of Badgers who destroyed the nests completely and ate everything that they could find; bees, grubs, wax, honey, the lot! Apparently, they tend to dig out bumblebee nests in dry spells during the summer months when earthworms are harder to find. That attractive predatory animals inevitably feed on other, equally attractive, victims is a fact of life of which no-one who watches TV wildlife documentaries can fail to be aware. It does seem rather a pity that Badgers can’t be persuaded to leave attractive insects like bumble bees and chafer beetles alone and concentrate on things such as slugs that we find less attractive!

Jim Thomas

Photos are on page 35

Bibliography


The Wood - Ready and Waiting

The wood is looking quite different now. Since March 2011, dense, overgrown thickets have become open rides and areas in the woodland have been felled to create coppices. Spindle, buckthorn, large oaks and most of the Yews have been left untouched. Unfortunately, one of the biggest oaks had a huge, living branch torn off in a gale. The ragged ends showed clearly the violent, twisting force of the gust.

Blackberry, young Ash and Hazel that had been invading the limestone pavement have been carefully removed. Already, the ferns are responding and Rusty-back Asplenium ceterachis flourishing in the grikes at the top of the slope. Sunshine and warmth is reaching the woodland floor and dormant seeds are germinating.

The extra bird-boxes were well used and weekly monitoring through May and June 2014 revealed that over half of the seventy boxes were occupied. One hundred and ninety-five chicks fledged, including two Tawny owlets and five Marsh Tits. Two tit boxes had been appropriated by Tree bees Bombus hypnorum, another contained two dead chicks and two burying beetles, and one, the remains of a Cockchafer Melolontha mel-
A wide range of lodgers was recorded when the boxes were cleaned out in the winter including various spiders, snails, woodlice, springtails, a micro-moth, and earwigs.

During a visit in July to look for hoverflies, the wild Clematis *Clematis vitalba* (known as Travellers Joy) which had been discovered the previous winter was seen in full flower in the sunshine, thirty feet up in the canopy.

Work began again in October. Two new coppices, some new glades and extensive dead hedging kept us busy into 2015. Attention then turned to the dreaded bramble!

Butterflies are not the only ones to like the sunshine: Bramble *Rubus fruticosus* had flourished wherever the light had been let in. It had begun to obstruct the rides and invade the anthills in the meadows. Bramble, of course, is not all bad. It provides cover for nests, and pollen, nectar, and juicy berries for many insects, birds, small mammals and, of course, butterflies, so a balance had to be struck. Along the rides, cleared bays now alternate with bramble thickets. In some areas, a brush cutter could be used but not on the limestone and never near the nests of the Yellow Meadow Ants *Lasius flavus*. These anthills are favoured sites for Common Rockrose *Helianthemum chamaecistus*, which is the food plant of the Northern Brown Argus. Many hours of careful weeding were needed. It emerged that we were not the only ones interested in the anthills. Neat, conical holes revealed where hungry Green Woodpeckers had been busy with their strong, dagger-like beaks. Similarly, any areas of bracken and violet had to be cleared by hand. After raking up the Bramble, it was bundled up and left close by so that any dormant eggs or over-wintering fritillary larvae could emerge in the spring.

During four winter seasons, a huge amount of useable timber had been generated by the felling. All the logs had been stacked, the large ones to be collected by the landowner and the thinner branches, suitable for domestic use, to be taken away by the local wood-bank after seasoning on site for a year. Inaccessible or forgotten piles of logs soon became habitat for many species of fungi, mosses and lichens and will be left in place to contribute to the biodiversity of the site.

Various records exist for the site, some long standing and detailed, such as for butterflies. Some records were made on field-trips including those for flowers, fungi, hoverflies and small mammals, and on a nesting bird survey. Other good sightings have been made while working on the reserve - several frogs have been seen despite the lack of any water on site. In early March, a Mottled Grey moth appeared and, on almost the last work-party, a grey/green patch in one of the meadows proved to be a mass of tiny goblets of the beautiful lichen *Cladonia fimbriata*.

Whatever your interest, Myers Allotment has something for you, so visit soon - you may be surprised by what you find.

Anne Smith
March 2015

**Postscript July 2015**

The nest box survey was repeated in May and June 2015. Despite the same number of boxes being occupied, the number of chicks fledging was down by almost 70%. In a few cases, eggs had been abandoned but of 125 live chicks only 61 fledged. Similar results were being reported elsewhere and generally put down to starvation due to the lack of caterpillars.

On a brighter note, the resurgence of ground flora in the cleared areas has been truly spectacular, especially the violets and the Common Rockrose, whilst previously sparse Cowslips *Primula veris* appeared all over the site.
Hedgehog Diary 2015

After getting hooked onto looking for Hedgehogs every night last year, I was keen to start again this year. But I wanted to add to what I had done last year, so I decided to mark all newcomers on their bottoms with a blob of paint which made it easy to tell them apart from any I had marked last year. I wanted to find out which, if any, came back. I wasn’t really expecting any – I didn’t know whether the Hedgehogs I had seen were big enough to survive hibernation or even if they revisited old haunts.

Hedgehog watching started two weeks earlier than last year. After finding my ground bird feeder tipped over on the morning of 24th March, my first thought was, ‘HEDGEHOGS are back!’

MARCH
The first sighting in my garden was the Hedgehog marked orange and red from last year, which answered one question - will they come back to old/past haunts? Through March I marked two Hedgehogs – white and green and the Hedgehog marked yellow on the right hand side last year came back.

APRIL
Four Hedgehogs from last year have visited this month: - orange + red, yellow, blue and a dark yellow. I’ve also marked three more Hedgehogs – one violet, one red and one yellow. April 9th – My yellow Hedgehog from last year had quite a lot of blue blobs of paint on it; it looked a bit of a mess and I wasn’t too happy about it. April 10th – I nipped round to my neighbour who had marked my orange Hedgehog red last year, to ask her in a roundabout way if she’d marked my yellow one blue. “Have you seen many Hedgehogs?” I asked her. “HEDGEHOGS?” she asked, “Are they back?” “Oh, it’s not you then,” I said. Throughout April, I had eight different Hedgehogs, with the orange+red one being the most frequent visitor.

MAY
I’ve still got three Hedgehogs visiting from last year, plus a new one marked and an unmarked one that was too quick for me to mark. Seven different Hedgehogs visited through May; three were quite regular; the violet, orange+red and the white one.

JUNE
My neighbour told me she had marked three Hedgehogs white – one on the left side, one on the right and one on its back. I’ll have to keep an eye out for them and check them. Three Hedgehogs from last year are still coming, which makes it six in total visiting in June, with my neighbour’s white mark on the back being the most frequent.

JULY
Just one Hedgehog from last year visited this month: the blue one. I’ve marked three more Hedgehogs – one fluorescent pink, one blue and one orange on the back of its head. Plus there was one unmarked which was far quicker than me. In total I had eight visitors, with my neighbour’s white on the back again being the most frequent.

AUGUST
The blue Hedgehog definitely likes it here, still visiting – it certainly likes the dried mealworms. There have been three regular Hedgehogs this month.

SEPTEMBER
Ah, I’ve had one young hoglet this month – someone has marked it white. It’s so small, I hope it fattens up quickly before it hibernates. My blue Hedgehog is now blue with a white blob on its left side - someone’s not looking properly! I’ve had five Hedgehogs this month; blue and white being the most regular.

OCTOBER
So small, another young hoglet: I’ve marked it green. Blue+white is the most frequent visitor seen. This month there have been four Hedgehogs. I’ve been using my night camera more this month because I haven’t seen any Hedgehogs since the 15th. Because of the way the blue + white hedgehog and the one with white on its back are marked, I can pick them out on the black and white pictures from the camera. These are the only Hedgehogs I’ve seen this month.

NOVEMBER
The only Hedgehog I’ve seen is the one with a white blob on its back, and I’ve only seen it on the night camera. Its visiting hours have also changed and I have only
been seeing it in the early hours between midnight and 5am.
I made two Hedgehog boxes and put one in my front garden and one in the back garden at the beginning of the year. In June, for 2-3 weeks, I had a Hedgehog in both, fast asleep through the day.

It was exciting seeing the two young hoglets in September; they were so small compared with the other hedgehogs I’ve been getting in my garden. But I haven’t seen them after my first sighting and marking of them.

I’ve had to re-mark a couple of hedgehogs this year as the paint does wear off. I think I’ve had a good year – in total, I’ve had eighteen different hedgehogs, four from last year and fourteen new ones.

HIBERNATION time now. I can sit and relax until Spring. No getting up out of my chair or stopping what I’m doing every half hour to see if I can spot any spikey visitors. I wonder what 2016 is going to bring!

Gail Atkinson

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**Things that go bump in the night**

When I woke up around 5.30am on the 25th April, it was still quite dark and too early to get up. The only sound breaking the silence was the song of a Blackbird, until I heard a noise like a small stone hitting an empty tin can.

I could only think something had fallen into the watering can just outside my window but it sounded nearer than that. I tried to doze off but just then there was a rustling sound like a plastic bag being moved. This time it was definitely inside the house. A few minutes later I heard a soft, bell-like echo even closer. I was more and more puzzled.

Shortly afterwards there was a bump like a door left ajar in a draught; but there was no wind that night. What could it be? I remembered the Sherlock Holmes method and examined all the clues in my head. While considering the evidence, I heard a scuffling noise right beside my bed.

Enough! I flung open the curtains and let in the daylight. I looked round for the culprit. It was not a cat or a dog, not a rat or a hedgehog, not a squirrel, a mouse or a bat. It was a beautifully marked, greenish yellow frog in my bedroom, banging into things, trying to climb the skirting board.

I picked him up and whispered sweet nothings in his ear (I drew the line at kissing him) but he didn't turn into a Prince so I took him into the garden and said goodbye to him by the pond.

I guess that if Conan Doyle were writing this account he might have entitled it ‘The curious incident of the frog in the night-time’.

Anne Smith

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**British Pteridological Society 125th Anniversary**

Northwest England is rich in ferns and has over many years provided a good hunting ground for fern enthusiasts. In September 1891, a group of such enthusiasts from northern England met in Kendal to form the Northern British Pteridological Society. The “Northern” was dropped at the first AGM in 1892 to attract a wider potential membership. However, given its northern origins, it is appropriate that the BPS will celebrate its first 125 years of existence with a programme of events in north Lancashire and Cumbria. The meeting will be held from Sunday 3rd July to Saturday 9th July 2016. Excursions to a wide range of field sites will show participants as many of our native ferns as possible; garden visits will include national collections, and there will be evening talks and an exhibition of fern-related items. Those attending will include eminent fern experts from overseas. For more information on the meeting and on the Society see the BPS website ebps.org.uk.

Trevor and Ruth Plearce