

Wildlife

In North Lancashire 2012



31st Annual Newsletter of the

North Lancashire Naturalists Group

Price £2.50



Lancashire,
Manchester &
N Merseyside

North Lancashire Naturalists 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, working parties on local reserves and the production of the 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 in the Wildlife Trusts brochure 'Wildlife What's On' which can be obtained locally from Heysham Nature Reserve (01524 855030) or by Email - info@lancswt.org.uk.

For further information contact the Chairman, Mike Moon, E-mail mikejmoon@aol.com or telephone him on 01524 701163.

NLNG Committee 2012

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Layout by Laura Sivell

Printed on 100% recycled paper

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Chairman's Report

I have really struggled this year to find and deliver a truly punchy and inspiring message for the newsletter. Perhaps it is symptomatic of my age as I am now officially past the sell by date, though I have no intentions of retiring from anything just yet! I have just found a means of extending the shelf life!

Then again, it may have something to do with the rather wet summer, which was quite miserable and depressing at times, although did let up on occasions. So, instead of all the rhetoric about finding younger members and joining committees, I will just wish you all the best for 2013 and hope for a better summer than last year. I cannot imagine it could be any worse again.

Sadly, Jennifer Newton is no longer able to continue as a recorder for North Lancashire, but we are fortunate that she has been able to persuade Michael Foley to take over as the Orthoptera recorder. John and Sheila Weir have also retired as the Fungi recorders and both they and Jennifer will be very much missed for their expertise and guidance.

Enjoy the newsletter, everybody has yet again done a superb job and put in a lot of work and effort to keep it up to the usual high standard.

Thank you all for your contributions.

Mike Moon

Look at our website!

www.nlng.co.uk

Editorial

The extremely wet weather of 2012 has affected many areas of habitat management, conservation work and wildlife recording in general. As well as having to contend with the vagaries of the weather, Trust staff spend a great deal of their time obtaining funding and negotiating with other industrial or commercial developers. Their reports give a valuable insight into the work of the Trust.

Rain and habitat work also affected our Group's outings this year and subsequently there are fewer articles about these, but more than usual in the miscellany section. Members have been amazingly generous with their time and expertise in providing such interesting and informative articles - they all well worth reading!

Some of the Recorders reports also describe the negative effects of the weather on certain species, but they are still able to provide plenty of interesting information. This year's newsletter also sees reports from new Recorders: Anne Smith (Shieldbugs), Mike Bloomfield (Ladybirds) and Cis Brook (Lichens).

Eric Greenwood writes about the making of his new book, 'The Flora of North Lancashire' - a significant publication for this area. If people are interested in obtaining it, a good review can be read at: <http://www.chicagobotanic.org/book/14.6/green.php>.

My sincere thanks must go to Laura Sivell who does all the typesetting and without whom the newsletter would not be produced. Many thanks also to Trust staff, Recorders and members who have provided their reports and sent in images; also to Jennifer Newton and John Holding for their help and support throughout the year.

We received positive feedback about the colour printing of images in last year's newsletter and so we are producing the 2012 version in the same format. We are very grateful that L.W.T. is again allowing us to use the printing resources at Bamber Bridge and a special thank you to the volunteer who does all the hard work.

Barbara Crooks

Conservation and Planning 2012

Possibly one of the lesser known seasonal traditions is that of developers submitting controversial planning applications in December in the hope that potential objectors will be otherwise distracted by Christmas and that the effective opportunity for comment is minimised by the Christmas holidays. In this vein, & based on past experience, we await the **third** Cloughton Community Windfarm application (10 turbines) and have also just noticed the Leisure Village proposals at Borwick Lane.

December will also be a busy month for the Planning Inspectors submitting their reports and recommendations to the Secretary of State on the Heysham-M6 Link and Halite gas storage proposals. Because the process is new, I am unclear as to whether the reports will be publically available before the Secretary of State makes his decisions in April 2013 so we may have to remain on tenterhooks a while longer.

Onshore windfarm applications continue to generate a lot of work across North Lancashire. Of the Heysham cluster, the BT scheme close to Heysham Moss & the Heysham South Windfarm have both been approved with conditions attached. The Heysham Harbour scheme is yet to be determined. Even the Walney Offshore Windfarm extensions are affecting the Heysham peninsula through their onshore grid connection routes. Steve Ryder has spent much time negotiating over the Walney 2 cable route affecting Middleton & I have been commenting on the potential cable routes for Walney 3, some of which affect the Belted Beauty colony at Potts Corner. The developer has recently re-consulted on a revised route which should hopefully minimise the impact at Potts Corner so we await the full

application to see their exact plans. This same scheme also moots the possibility of a new substation on the old sidings adjoining Heysham Moss so we will be keeping a very close eye on this scheme as it goes through the Planning Inspectorate examination process.

We have also been participating in the discussions surrounding a proposed major upgrade to the National Grid transmission system. The current system is reaching capacity and an upgrade is required to service any new power stations (e.g. New nuclear on the Cumbrian coast) and both overground/underground and even marine cable route options are being explored, although the marine option would be a world first so perhaps unlikely, given the difficulty of adding in new connections undersea. The draft Lancaster Local Plan (Development Management DPD – Preferred Options Stage) is currently out to consultation, so we are closely examining its policies in relation to the National Grid and Windfarms as well as the environmental protection policies that we usually concentrate upon.

The Wildlife Trusts also undertake a lot of planning work at national level which has been particularly critical this year with all the proposed planning changes and Government's stated intention to remove perceived barriers to development. We recently had a fascinating briefing from our national Public Affairs Manager about engaging effectively with politicians at all levels, the complications of social media and the legal requirement to engage equally with all parties, including the BNP. The Wildlife Trusts have worked with the Town and Country Planning Association to produce 'Planning for a healthy environment - Best practice guidance on green infrastructure and biodiversity' (July 2012), which we are encouraging all planners to integrate within their planning policy guidance & decision-making.

Finally, with the recent publication of the new Energy Bill and possibility of shale gas exploration proceeding to commercial production within Lancashire, this Trust has produced its own Position Statement on Fracking (available on request).

Thank you for continuing to support our work. It has been a really tough year with redundancies within the Trust and

amongst our key partners. This has meant significantly fewer staff available to respond to planning issues across the County, which is a situation that some developers are keen to exploit.

Kim Wisdom

Conservation Officer for North Lancashire

Reserves

Reserves Officer's Report

As usual, it has been another busy year on Trust reserves in north Lancashire as well as some exciting new developments.

Winmarleigh Moss

Following lengthy negotiations with the Duchy over part of the Winmarleigh Moss SSSI, it was with great excitement that the Trust finally purchased an additional 60ha of mossland early in 2012, increasing the size of our reserve to around 84ha. Although supporting some areas of good mossland vegetation, scrub has invaded large areas of the bog, and drainage ditches around the perimeter are currently having a significant impact on the hydrology. Work to restore the site as a whole is going to be a long term project. Trust staff and a number of volunteers visited the site on the 4th of July and produced some good records including: Large Heath in good numbers, the day flying moths, Wood Tiger and Purple-bordered Gold, and numerous Bog Bush-crickets. Water Voles have also been recorded in the surrounding ditches, although a comprehensive survey has yet to be carried out. Over the next couple of years, while we work to draw up a programme of restoration, we hope to build up a more detailed baseline survey of other key groups.

Cockerham Moss

Work began at the beginning of March at Cockerham Moss with a small amount of birch clearance, as well as the bridging of some of the internal ditches to improve access within the reserve itself. Following last year's record of Nightjar, we were keen to re-survey again this year, although the only night managed unfortunately drew a blank. Most of the work done this past year, on both parts of the reserve, has been to explore opportunities for funding, as this will be critical to the success of the restoration as well as the long term sustainability of the reserve management. Both Cockerham and Winmarleigh are currently not open for general public access, apart from the footpath which runs along the length of Crawley's Dyke, although permits to visit the reserve can be obtained from the Trust. Both parts of the reserve currently have shooting rights outside the control of the Trust and there is no access away from the public footpath on shoot days.

Heysham Moss

Some of the work at Winmarleigh and Heysham Moss has been linked through the Large Heath re-introduction project at the latter site, and at the end of the year we received

confirmation of the final, match funding to enable the project to go ahead. The Trust will be working with Chester Zoo, which has given both a grant as well as 'in kind' support to undertake the captive rearing of the Large Heath larvae. The project also funded additional capital works at Heysham Moss to improve some of the marginal habitat on the raised dome itself. This was undertaken around the middle of November and, even taking into account the exceptionally high rainfall this year, has shown some quite dramatic results. The captive rearing project is due to start in 2013 with about six gravid females to be taken from Winmarleigh Moss just after they emerge in early July. The rearing of the larvae will be undertaken by staff at Chester Zoo before the adults are released at Heysham Moss in July 2014. A second cycle will be carried out in 2014-2015 to ensure the maximum chances of success.

Heysham Nature Reserve

Work at Heysham Nature Reserve followed a now familiar pattern this year and probably continues to be one of the most monitored of the Trust reserves, as can no doubt be seen from the various species reports, particularly in the context of birds, moths and dragonflies. The most exciting record of the year though, must go to the Slow Worm which was seen and photographed by visitors, Cameron Bell, Alex Simpson and Kirsten Bradley on the 20th August. Many post-industrial sites can be excellent for reptiles and despite Heysham having potential, this is the first definitive reptile record for the reserve and (as far as we are aware) the only record of Slow Worm in recent years from the Heysham area.

Much of the work at the Heysham Reserve over the years would not have been possible without the support of EDF Energy and its previous incarnations, and 2012 saw EDF apply for the Wildlife Trust's Biodiversity Benchmark award. Reserve staff were involved in the audit process and it was officially announced at the end of the year that they had been successful. The award recognises the continual input made by the company in helping to improve and maintain the biodiversity of the site. This achievement has been very reliant on the incredible amount of hard work, particularly monitoring, carried out by volunteers over the years: the contribution they have made cannot be overstated.

Community Work

Community work continued in 2012 with another year of the Morecambe Bay Wealth of Wildlife project. This year, the project worked with 14 schools, delivering Living Seas and

other campaigns to 868 children. A programme of 28 events was effectively run with 343 attendees, and 10 training events with 94 people. Funded by Natural England through their access to nature programme, the current project is due to finish in September 2013. To ensure that all the excellent work that has been done over the last couple of years can continue in the future, we are already looking for further funding and exploring links with partners. We hope that our work to engage with the local community and our many volunteers can continue to be an important part of our work in North Lancashire in future years.

Other Projects

The meadows group project started last year has continued, albeit at a lower level, with the funding having ended at the beginning of the year. Even management of our own grasslands was severely hampered by the weather this year, with more than one site just too wet to access. We did find time to meet up with the project officers for two new, exciting grassland projects that started in 2012. The Bowland Haytime project is working together with farmers in the AONB, and the project will harvest wildflower seed from species-rich meadows and use this to restore meadows that have lost some of their characteristic plants. The project also aims to increase public awareness, enjoyment and understanding of the hay meadows found in the area. It will improve public access to meadows, as well as surveying many meadows to record the variety and number of plant species they contain. The other project is part of the Morecambe Bay Nature Improvement Area project (see below for more information) and is working across a range of different grassland habitats, including meadows. We hope to explore further ways of working with these projects in 2013.

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, and I look forward to working with you again in 2013.

Aughton Woods

After last year's disappointing absence of Pied Flycatcher from the reserve, the return of a pair in 2012 was good news. A more detailed summary of the nest box scheme run at the reserve has been produced by Alan Draper and can be read on page 6.

Urgent tree safety work, as well as repair work on some of the bridges, meant the concessionary path through the middle of the wood had to be closed at the beginning of the year. It was, however, reopened in time for the spring show of bluebells and provides an alternative, if not challenging (due to the steep terrain) route to the lower Lune Valley Ramble, which follows the lower edge of the woodland.

With much of the main areas of woodland left to develop into high forest with little intervention, management work is limited to the felling of non-native Sycamore and Larch in areas

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.com/>

More information about the North Lancashire Meadows Group can be found at

<http://nlmeadowsgroup.blogspot.com/>

The Bowland Haytime project can be found at

<http://www.forestofbowland.com/haytimeproject>

More about the Morecambe Bay Limestones and Wetlands NIA project can be found at

<http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/conservation/biodiversity/funding/nia/projects/morecambebay.aspx>

Reuben Neville

North Lancashire Reserves Officer

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Photo accompanying this article is on page 7

of Lawson's wood and Cole Wood. Work has continued this year with funding from the Forestry Commission through the English Woodland Grant Scheme.

Recent years have seen the invasive Himalayan Balsam spread into the lower edges of the woodland at its western limit and the now annual balsam bashing took place on the 14th July. An excellent attendance meant we were able to remove all but some of the plants growing along the edge of the Lune. With new seed brought in by the river each year, it is impossible to eradicate it completely, but evidence from the last few years suggests the clearing work is proving very effective in stopping its spread throughout the wood.

Thanks go to Alan Draper and John Mason for maintaining and checking nest boxes this year.

Reuben Neville

Aughton Woods Nestboxes Report – 2012

It has been possible to provide very detailed coverage of the nestboxes this year, mainly as many of the recording visits were made by John Mason, particularly in the early part of the season whilst my broken foot repaired itself. A 'new pair of eyes' also spotted two more, rather out of the way, boxes that had been present since way back, but not previously found.

The total number of boxes monitored this year was 36.

The cold weather in April, after a very warm March, made for slow progress with egg laying by Tit species. The arrival of Pied Flycatchers this year was generally very late and the one pair that nested in Aughton laid their first egg on the late date of May 13th.

After a complete blank ever since its first placement, the single Treecreeper box supported a successful nesting attempt – the first Treecreeper nest that I have seen. It was a pleasure to watch these attractive birds progress and finally fledge.

After the mass predation of many nests last season, the success rate was good this year - perhaps a result of the warm spell just when many of the young hatched and were being fed, as well as lack of predators.

The take up of boxes was:

Blue Tit	11	10 Young Fledged, 1 failed at the egg stage
Great Tit	5	4 Young Fledged, 1 failed (the 4 young died)
Pied Flycatcher	1	6 Young Fledged
Treecreeper	1	5 Young Fledged

Other nests were begun in 9 boxes but did not progress
9 boxes were unused.

This was a remarkably successful outcome for Blue Tits which seemed to have a terrible season in many other areas where the fledging rate was around 18% down on previous years.

10 further old boxes were replaced this summer and one additional box erected, bringing the total to be monitored next season up to 37.

Alan Draper

Photographs accompanying this article are on page 7

Warton Crag

After seeing a drop in 2011 following the excellent numbers of many butterflies recorded in 2010, this year saw another decline for many species. The number of large fritillaries recorded this year on the transect were less than half of those recorded in 2011. In recent years, unidentified large fritillaries have been aggregated as part of the transect results due to the difficulties of separating Dark Green and High Brown on the wing. Additional timed counts were carried out this year but with small catches in poor weather. In contrast to previous years, more Dark Green were caught this year than High Brown and both totals were down, despite considerably more effort put in this year. Timed counts were also undertaken this year for Pearl-bordered Fritillary but totals were also down on 2011 figures. Interestingly enough though, numbers recorded on the transect for both Pearl-bordered and Small Pearl-bordered were actually up on 2011 totals, with the index for Pearl-bordered the highest since 2006. Both these species were on the wing during better weather earlier in the season, with wet, windy and cool weather returning part way through the High Brown flight period. Ringlet have continued to show a small increase and were one of the few butterflies on the wing during a walk through Strickland Wood during some less than ideal 'butterfly' weather in July. Contrary to expectations, both Small Heath and Dingy Skipper seemed to have a good year with the indices for the former being the highest since 1998, and the latter the highest in the last twenty years. Counts for Northern Brown Argus were low this year but comparable with recent years, with the exception of 2010.

This year saw the completion of the report from the invertebrate team at Liverpool Museum who started survey work in 2011. Although, unfortunately, a shortfall in funding meant the work wasn't able to continue in 2012, the very extensive efforts during the previous year meant the list of findings was rather impressive. A total of 945 invertebrate taxa were recorded during the survey and represented at least 936 distinct species. A genus and species of mite *Euphthiracarus monodactylus* was recorded here for the first time in Britain, a sawfly *Nematus pseudodispar* for the first time in England, with an additional sawfly provisionally named as *Pristiphora lativentris* also for the first time in the British Isles outside Scotland. Thirty two Red Data Book and Nationally Notable species, being of particular conservation concern, were recorded, highlighting the importance of the site for invertebrates in general, not just Lepidoptera. These included a snail, a woodlouse, two lacewings, twelve beetles, eleven true flies, three sawflies and a bee. An additional seven species of 'unknown' status probably deserve similar designations. Twenty six species were Regionally Notable, several occurring here near either the southern or northern limit of their British distribution.

We are still in the process of digesting the full report and reviewing the implications for the management of the site as a whole, but it leaves no doubt about the importance of the reserve both regionally as well as nationally.

Management work has followed the now familiar pattern of rotational scrub management mainly on Westfield, although work has begun to open up links into Strickland Wood and re-open one of the old rides that runs up to the summit. Work was supported this year by the Trust's volunteering



Heysham Moss (Reserves Reports)

Reuben Neville



Wealth of Wildlife Photography Course

Jason Smalley



Dragonfly spotting at Middleton NR

Emma Garston



Treecreeper egg clutch (Aughton Wood nestboxes) A Draper



Cladonia portentosa (Lichen report)

Cis Brook



Treecreeper young after 10 days

A Draper



Xanthoria parietina (Lichen report)

Cis Brook



Lobaria pulmonaria (Lichen report)

Cis Brook



Adder (Amphibians & Reptiles report)

Linda Renshaw



Grass Snake (Amphibians & Reptiles report)

Linda Renshaw

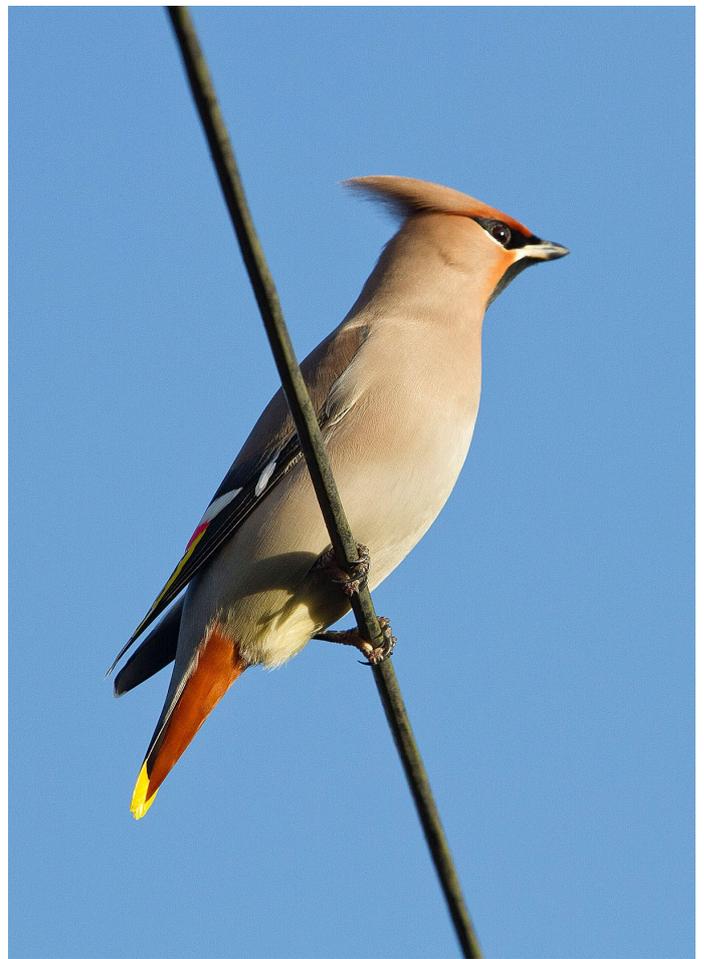


Hawthorn Shieldbug (Shieldbug report)

Anne Smith

Lesser Yellowlegs (Bird report)

Dave Talbot →



Waxwing (Bird report)

Peter Last



department with weekly working parties organised with Lancaster University students over the winter period. An enclosure was set up this year on one of the thin soil banks within Westfield to look at the impact of grazing on the areas of limestone grassland and scrub, particularly with reference to maintaining suitable habitat for Northern Brown Argus, amongst other species.

This year, the Trust has also been working to put together an English Woodland Grant Scheme (EWGS) application to the Forestry Commission, with the intention of re-opening a derelict coppice plot and establishing a network of rides around the old ramparts. It is hoped that the work will create additional habitat for Pearl-bordered Fritillary in

particular, as well as link with suitable habitat within Westfield. Some of the newly opened areas appeared to be favoured by Ringlet as well this year.

A big thank you to all the volunteers who came out to help this year, particularly Anne Smith and Mike Bloomfield who travel up from well outside their home patch. Likewise to Jennifer Newton and Barbara Crooks who have again given up a huge amount of time over the summer months to ensure that we undertaken annual monitoring of the butterfly populations through the weekly transect.

Reuben Neville

Middleton Nature Reserve

The Wildlife Trust is now into the fourth year of managing this County Wildlife Site as a Nature Reserve through an agreement with Lancaster City Council. Happily, this agreement has now been renewed, enabling continued conservation work. Another year of poor weather hampered Odonata recording, although some notable records were gathered. In early season, 24 Four-spotted Chaser were recorded across the reserve (28th May) and, in early July, 6+ male Black-tailed Skimmer were defending territory along the bare margins of the 'model boat' pond (mbp) with females also observed ovipositing. Damselfly records included 200 Common Blue (mbp, 12th July); peak counts for Blue-tailed and Azure Damselfly were lower but remained in line with previous years. On the 21st May, 30+ Large Red Damselfly were recorded in the central marsh but Emerald Damselfly records were few this year. Emperor Dragonfly (2+) was recorded from the mbp and central marsh, with ovipositing observed, and Common Darter counts were encouraging (15+ observed around the mbp on 15th July, for example). A male Broad-bodied Chaser (28th May) and a female Common Hawker (21st Aug) were recorded on the reserve, although there is no evidence these species bred this year. Notably, a male Ruddy Darter and 2 male Red-veined Darter were recorded during the first 3 weeks of July. Both species have bred on the reserve in the past, but poor summers probably caused the loss of the reserve's colonies, and this year's records seem likely to be new migrants.

Migrant, Southern and Brown Hawker were recorded from the adjacent Heysham NR this year (where recording effort is greater) and so may well have been present on Middleton. Records suggest these two reserves are combining to provide valuable habitat for 10-12 regularly breeding Odonata species.

Survey work in late March was able to confirm the presence of Palmate Newt on the reserve. Breeding is suspected and, if confirmed, would bring to 5 the number of breeding amphibian species supported by this reserve.

Ringling records and other observations suggest this year's poor summer suppressed warbler breeding success, most notably in Grasshopper Warbler (4 territories), Sedge Warbler (8) and Whitethroat (4-5). Willow Warbler (4-5 territories) and Chiffchaff (2+) fared better. There were 5-6 Reed Bunting territories, 9-10 Linnet and 5 Reed Warbler territories; also 3+ Lesser Whitethroat and 2 Song Thrush territories.

Gadwall (1 pair) and Tufted Duck (2 pairs) are suspected as having bred. Numbers of breeding Little Grebe were slightly reduced on recent years (c. 4 pairs).

A male Lapwing was observed in March in an area of open ground where breeding attempts have been made previously, and a Skylark was singing for an extended period over the western side of the reserve. No breeding attempts, however, were recorded for either species (and there were no Meadow Pipit breeding attempts) highlighting concerns about disturbance on a site where informal public access has been established for some 30 years.

Records of wintering birds included Cetti's Warbler (13th Feb), Grey Wagtail and Water Rail. There were 727 Barn Swallow and 23 Sand Martin ringed from the reedbed roost in the western marsh. Passage visitors included Lesser Redpoll, Whinchat and Garden Warbler.

A new project has recently begun on the reserve that will enable increased effort with tasks such as Sea Buckthorn removal (to limit its impacts on priority habitats) and wetland habitat enhancement. It is hoped also to be able to have specialist invertebrate surveys done to improve our understanding of the ecology of this remarkable Brownfield site.

A great deal of thanks goes once again to the volunteers and naturalists that provide invaluable help with the management and recording on this reserve. If you have any records from the reserve, please get in touch!

Steve Ryder, North Lancs Reserves Worker

Recorders' Reports

Lichens

As a beginner in lichen identification, my first year as recorder has been spent familiarising myself with their biology and the sheer variety of forms and species. I have received photos and information from Linda Renshaw to encourage me and specimens from Jennifer Newton, for which I am grateful.

I have managed to identify a few of the commoner species such as *Xanthoria parietina*, often called the 'golden shield lichen' - a bright, foliose lichen with flat, yellowish, spreading lobes bearing orange cups. I have found this in a variety of habitats, including hawthorn branches in my local fields and on the apple twigs passed to me by Jennifer. The surface colour appears duller in shady habitats. This species is pollution-tolerant and, therefore, is common in many nitrogen-rich habitats such as farmland buildings and walls as well as on trees. Lichens are formed from an association between fungi and algae. The fungus element (the main body) of *Xanthoria parietina* creates a compound that protects the alga component from the sun, enabling the alga to thrive and produce nutrients, which in turn feed the fungus.

Jennifer's apple twigs also held the foliose *Physcia tenella*, not surprising as this is another nitrogen-tolerant species which often associates with *Xanthoria*. *Physcia tenella* has greyish lobes with conspicuous, spiky-looking cilia on their margins which appear to darken towards their tips.

On Clougha, I found the shrubby, fruticose lichen *Cladonia portentosa* amongst heather and moss. Although this is commonly known as reindeer lichen, it is not to be confused with the true reindeer 'moss', *Cladonia rangiferina*, which is similar but more likely to be found in the Scottish Highlands.

From the lower slopes of Clougha, I identified *Cladonia coniocraea* in one of its typical habitats at the base of an oak tree. This is a common species often also found on rotten branches in woodland. The grey-green podetia (stalks) of *Cladonia coniocraea* are simple and taper to a point in contrast to those of *Cladonia portentosa*, which branch into three tips and form thick cushions on the moorland.

One of the most striking lichens I have come across this year is the 'Tree Lungwort', *Lobaria pulmonaria*, which I found on several tree trunks in woodland on the North-eastern coast of Jura. From a distance, it looked to me like crinkled lettuce. This species is found most frequently on the western side of Scotland, being less common and more localised in England and Wales. It is sensitive to atmospheric pollution and is a good indicator of ancient woodland. In wet conditions, the upper surface of the lichen appears bright green, but in drier periods it can vary from olive or grey-green to yellowy-brown; the underside is generally paler. The October rain ensured that I saw it at its greenest! I was particularly pleased to observe the orangey-brown apothecia (fruiting bodies) on the leafy thallus as, apparently, these occur infrequently. The specimens I found were on oak, but *Lobaria pulmonaria* occurs on the bark of other broad leaved trees such as rowan, hazel and willow, and occasionally on rock.

On various excursions over the past few years, both locally and in Scotland, I have taken photos of all sorts of lichens just because I've found their structures so interesting, especially when I've come across mixed colonies of *Cladonia* 'cup' lichens. I am looking forward to learning more, returning to those areas and one day being able to identify more of them – hopefully!

Cis Brook

(Photos on pages 7 & 8)

Amphibians and Reptiles

It has been a good year for amphibians, if nothing else!

I received a few records from members. Brian Townson had Frogs in his garden pond at Torrisholme on the 12th February. Jennifer Newton had frogspawn in hers at Hornby on the 28th February; the same day that Jim Thomas found a Toad *Bufo bufo* in his garden at Borwick.

In March, a tour of local ponds found frogspawn present at Woodwell, Hale Moss, Heysham NR, Docker Moor, Capernwray Tarn and, further afield, at Foulshaw Moss NR. Interestingly, at the latter, frogspawn was seen dripping off the wooden corner supports at the top of the viewing platform - where a raptor had perched to eat spawn filled frogs perhaps?

Two, very vocal Toads were mating on the boardwalk at Haweswater (Silverdale) on the 10th March and there was toadspawn in the Nature Park pond at Heysham NR on the 12th March. Toads were also recorded at Middleton NR, Middlebarrow Quarry, Foulshaw Moss NR and Roudsea NR.

Palmate Newts *Triturus helveticus* appear to be the most

common newt species in this area. In August, it was good to see 200 + juveniles in Middlebarrow Quarry pond, which usually dries up in summer. Palmate Newts were also seen at Woodwell, Trowbarrow Quarry, Yealand Village pond and odd ones at Middleton NR. Adult male Palmate Newts can easily be identified by the thread like tip at the end of the tail and their webbed back feet.

There are good numbers of Smooth Newts *T. vulgaris* at Middleton NR and at Heysham NR where, one afternoon in March, I counted 50 in the Nature Park pond.

Great-crested Newts *T. cristatus* seem well established at Middleton NR. I saw 8 under stones there on the 9th July and I have heard that Dave Orchard has found some in the Wray area this year.

Common Lizards *Zootoca vivipara* were seen locally at Gaitbarrows NR, Heathwaite (Arnside Knott) and the Plain Quarry at Burton, where they bask on the boards at the foot of the car park fence on sunny afternoons. On days out in Cumbria, I saw good numbers at Nichols Moss NR, Meathop Moss NR, Haybridge NR, Roudsea NR and Foulshaw Moss NR, where 57 were sunbathing on the boardwalk on one of the

few sunny days. The most unusual report came from a Sunderland Point resident who phoned me on the 20th October; he had opened a drawer in his house and had found a lizard curled up fast asleep on top of a blanket. From his description and its torpid state, it appeared to have been a Common Lizard that thought it had found a good place to hibernate! The warmth from the man's hands roused it from its slumbers and it was gently relocated to a suitable site in his garden the following day.

Slow Worms *Anguis fragilis* are fairly common in the Silverdale/Storth area, with smaller populations in the surrounding countryside. We saw one on our NLNG field trip to Farrer's Allotment (Whitbarrow) and Jennifer and I found one on a woodland path at Heathwaite (Arnside Knott). The latter was carefully moved into the edge of the wood just seconds before a mountain biker hurtled past. In June, a friend of mine was near the entrance to Trowbarrow Quarry on Moss Lane at Silverdale when he saw a cockerel dash across the road and grab what he thought was a large

earthworm. Moving closer, he saw that the cockerel was attacking a Slow Worm, which it killed, leaving its unfortunate victim with a hole in its head.

I have no records for Grass Snakes *Natrix natrix* or Adders *Vipera berus* in our area this year, but I believe Adders are still present at certain locations in the Forest of Bowland. I saw my first Adder at Foulshaw Moss NR (Cumbria) on the 2nd March and another there in July. In October, I found an adult female Adder dying on the road at Haybridge NR (Cumbria) having been run over by a car. On a Spring visit to Haybridge NR, I was lucky enough to see 12-20 Grass Snakes and 6 Slow Worms all curled up together - a wonderful sight.

Please do let me know if you see Grass Snakes or Adders in North Lancashire and thank you to those who have sent records.

Linda Renshaw.

(Photos accompanying this article are on page 8)

Fish

In February, the half eaten remains of a very large Grass Carp were seen in rushes on the canal bank near Cinderbarrow Bridge at Yealand. Later the same day, another partly eaten large Grass Carp was seen further up the canal near Burton. Unfortunately, due to falling winter temperatures Grass carp slow down and become very lethargic, making them easy prey for Otters, who don't!

At the end of July, the large pond on Heysham N.R. Landscape strip was full of grey Goldfish fry about 1inch long (it can be months or years before the orange pigment appears). It is a great pity that people dump unwanted ornamental fish into wildlife ponds where they predate the newts, and can be very difficult to remove.

The Salmon run on the River Lune was very poor, despite copious amounts of rainfall making it easy for them to ascend the river and reach the spawning beds. Grilse were very scarce for the second year running which does not bode well for the Salmon's future. Grilse are small salmon that have spent one winter at sea or are returning the same year, in the autumn following the spring they went to sea. Sea Trout numbers in the River Lune showed a slight improvement on last year's.

A few Sea Trout redds were seen in the River Keer but redd counting was difficult with the river in flood for most of the spawning period (late October - late November). (Redds are troughs made in the gravel on the river bed in which the trout deposit their eggs).

On one redd counting foray on the River Keer at Docker, I noticed an abundance of Bullheads. A lover of stony bottomed rivers and streams, this little, mottled brown fish has a very large, wide, flat head with a body that tapers towards the tail and only grows to a maximum size of 18 centimetres. It has no swim bladder, and being mostly a nocturnal feeder, spends much of the daytime hiding beneath stones. When the female lays her eggs (March-May) beneath a large stone, the male guards them until they hatch some 3-4 weeks later. The Bullhead's diet consists mainly of the larvae of mayfly and caddis but it also eats the eggs and fry of other fish, so its presence may be detrimental to a trout water. It is still one of my favourite fish and I think it is now protected due to falling numbers in Europe and S. England.

The Marine Reserves are taking a long time to implement because divers are having to conduct underwater surveys of these areas, and there also has to be a consultation period for interested parties. Once established, I can foresee the protected zones being difficult to enforce, especially the ones far out to sea, and I wonder who is going to do this?

Rod and line fishermen on the shores of Morecambe Bay have been catching Whiting, Codling, Flatfish and some good sized Bass in the summer months. One early morning this summer at Morecambe, a fisherman friend who was walking down to the tideline to fish at low water, met a fox coming back the other way carrying a very large Plaice which it had helped itself to from the nets further out in the Bay!

Linda Renshaw

Mammals

Notable sightings this year included Polecat *Mustela putorius* (one seen at Waterslack, Silverdale, one near Bentham, and others found dead on the road at Challan Hall and at Yealand) and Stoat *Mustela ermine* (one climbing a pebble dashed wall to investigate a nestbox at Thurnham, and one which killed a rabbit in a Silverdale garden). Otters *Lutra lutra* have been mentioned frequently in the local newspaper in relation to the proposed new bridge over the Lune, and a couple of dead animals were reported - one near Caton Road in Lancaster and another juvenile next to the road at Crag Foot, Warton. Fresh signs (tracks and spraint) are still appearing in known otter haunts such as the Rivers Keer, Wenning and Lune, but also at new sites such as Silverdale Moss and a small tarn near Hutton Roof. Along with sightings of at least 5 animals together at Leighton Moss and the rescue of two cubs from the canal side near Garstang, this suggests the recovery of the otter population continues.

Other interesting observations include an interaction between a Fox *Vulpes vulpes* and a Marsh Harrier on Carnforth Marsh (neither was hurt), a Fox scavenging in Lancaster city centre, a Brown Hare *Lepus capensis* near Overton and a white Red Deer *Cervus elaphus* at Foulshaw. A Muntjac deer *Muntiacus reevesi* was reportedly seen on the causeway at Leighton Moss in the autumn, and was heard barking there in October.

More mysterious are reports of a huge, black cat seen at

Leck in August, and a possible Beaver lodge on the River Lune at Skerton. Any additional facts relating to these would be welcome.

Gail Armstrong reported that she rescued more than the usual number of abandoned baby Pipistrelle Bats over the summer due to the bad weather, which also prolonged the breeding season well into July. She was later able to release 23 of these after rehabilitation and flight training. A maternity colony of Soprano pipistrelles was discovered at Leighton Moss. A young Whiskered Bat *Myotis mystacinus* was found at Lancaster Royal Infirmary, and the same species was confirmed at a site at Out Rawcliffe by DNA analysis of a single dropping – a technique becoming more regularly used. A young Daubenton's Bat *Myotis daubentoni* – a species normally found near water – turned up near Sainsbury's in Morecambe in October: it may have been searching for a hibernation site (ringed Daubenton's from the Lancaster area have been found hibernating as far away as the Yorkshire Dales).

The thousands of mammal records collected by NLNG up to the start of 2012 have now been passed on to the regional recorder at Liverpool Museum for inclusion in the national mammal atlas which is being prepared by the Mammal Society. I have received about 130 records for 2012 – it's not too late to send more, which will be added to the system in due course.

Steve Bradley

Birds

Please excuse the unscientific way of presenting this i.e. in alphabetical order, but this is how the records for the year were extracted in the easiest fashion from the databases; kindly accumulated by Jean Roberts (Heysham area) and Rosie Briggs (LDBWS recording area).

A juvenile **American Golden Plover** on 5-6/9 was our contribution to a significant national influx of this species. Spring passage of **Arctic Tern** at Heysham was more mundane than in 2011, in the absence of easterly winds at the end of April/early May, and the maximum day count was just 440. **Avocets** had a good year at Leighton Moss due to a ground predator exclusion zone, but there was no successful nesting on the Lune estuary.

A **Black Kite** was seen well as it flew over Gilpin Bridge on 26/5 and it, or another, was reportedly seen at Leighton Moss on 2/6. **Black Redstart** comprised a 2011 'left-over' elusively around Heysham Harbour until mid-February, one at Cockersands 5-8/2, one at Aldcliffe 15/3 and another at Heysham 10/5. **Cetti's Warblers** bred for the first time at Leighton Moss and up to 5 were located during winter 2012/13.

The massive influx of **European White-fronted Geese** in autumn 2011 predictably spilled into 2012, with a maximum of 40 at Bulbeck in the Lune valley on 25-26/1. Similarly left-over was the juvenile **Glaucous Gull** at Heysham which remained until 14/1. The Leighton Moss **Glossy Ibis** became

more wide-ranging and elusive, including an overdue availability of this species to the keen Cumbrian 'listers', and was last seen on 10/5. **Great White Egrets** comprised individual(s) at Leighton Moss on 11-15/1, 11/3, 9-11/8, 10/10-24/11 and there was at least one sighting in the Pilling area. Continuing the 'leftover from 2011' theme, a **Green-winged Teal** was at Leighton Moss until 28/1.

A **Lapland Bunting** was spotted heading south by migration observers at Heysham on 26/9 and, in a poor autumn for **Leach's Petrels**, just 4-5 were seen on 16/9 and 30/9. A long-staying **Lesser Yellowlegs** was appreciated as it favoured flooded fields in the Aldcliffe area, along with a **Wood Sandpiper** from 21/10 until a short spell of freezing weather on 5/12. A long-staying **Long-tailed Duck** remained on the river Lune in central Lancaster 8/11-1/12.

One of the best birds of the year was a stunning **Montagu's Harrier** on the southern edge of the recording area at Pilling on 21/5. **Yellow-browed Warblers** appeared at Leighton Moss on 6/10, Pilling on 14-17/10 and Heysham on 17/10. Two fortunate observers encountered an adult **White-winged Black Tern** as it fed on insects, just long enough to be photographed at Leighton Moss public mere on 24/6. An elusive **Penduline Tit** came to light at Leighton Moss on 11/2 after a photographer realised that his "Bearded Tit" photograph was not in fact that species! It was also seen on 17/3 and 7/4 and seen to be bearing a ring, therefore presumably the bird ringed at Leighton the previous autumn.

The spring Skua passage was unremarkable but did include at

least 11 **Pomarine Skua** between 24/4 and 21/5. Two **Ruddy Shelduck** at Heysham on 2/7 were probably most likely to have been of European feral origin, but enquiries regarding the possibility of captive origin appeared to indicate that a stunning, out of season **Rustic Bunting**, which paused briefly on northbound migration at Heysham on 14/3, was a wild bird.

Three waterbird 'S's' comprised a maximum of 11 **Shag** blown into Heysham harbour during early January gales, a **Slavonian Grebe** off Pilling Lane Ends on 8/1 and a wandering **Smew** at several sites until 28/3. Three **Snow Bunting** were still on Carnforth slag tips on New Year's Day but only one thereafter, and the only record for the remainder of the year was at Cockersands on 25/3. Three, dodgy **Snow Geese** roamed the Leighton area until 26/2, reducing to 1-2 until 25/4. **Spoonbills** were predictably at Leighton on 1/5 and 4/6-20/8 but less-predictably on the

Lune Estuary 20/7-17/9. There were two midsummer records of **Storm Petrel** off Heysham.

Tundra Bean Geese accompanied the European White-fronted Goose influx in smaller numbers and singles were at Bulbeck 25-30/1, elusively on the Lune Estuary 2/2-11/3 and at least four in North Fylde during the same period. Three **Velvet Scoter** were off Heysham on 18/4; typical annual status.

The spring gave observers plenty of opportunities to study **Water Pipit**, as up to three were at Conder Pool 1-13/4. Finally, huge numbers of **Waxwings** passed through the area during November, especially on 17/11, with the largest numbers (250-300) feeding on yew berries on Arnside Knott during early December.

Pete Marsh

Shieldbugs

At first glance, many Shieldbugs could be mistakenly assigned to the enormous group of "Beetles". On turning them over, however, the long, sucking rostrum is obvious. They are some of the largest and most colourful True Bugs.

The larvae, known as nymphs, are quite different from the adults and also vary from instar to instar.

Thirty-three species live in the UK, of which seven or eight are regarded as common and widespread throughout Britain. A good number of species are common only in South and Central England and quite a few species are rarely recorded.

Shieldbugs appear to like the sunshine and emerge to bask on the sunniest leaves. On a wall or tree trunk, they will adjust their stance to angle their backs towards the sun. This being so, it is not surprising that sightings of Shieldbugs this year have been very poor. No records have been received by post or e-mail.

My own records are sparse; mainly Birch Shieldbug *Elasmotethus interstinctus*, Green Shieldbug *Palomena*

prasina and Hawthorn Shieldbug *Acanthosoma haemorrhoidale*, seen occasionally in my garden. Only two warm, sunny days produced a good show: eight adult and two late instar Green Shieldbugs on Raspberry canes on my allotment, on September 19th, and seven adult Hawthorn Shieldbugs on a small Mountain Ash in the garden on October 13th.

Field trips provided records of Birch Shieldbug at Yealand Hall Allotment on March 22nd, Sloe Bug *Dolycoris baccarum* at Latterbarrow on June 6th and *Picromerus bidens* at Heysham on September 8th.

Forest Bug *Pentatoma rufipes* was found at Brock Bottoms on July 18th (personal communication).

No Gorse Shieldbugs *Piezodorus lituratus* were recorded this year despite searching likely patches of Gorse.

Anne Smith

Photos accompanying this article are on pages 8 & 15

Ladybirds

Records of ladybirds have been few and far between this year, perhaps due to the dreadful weather we have experienced this summer. Nevertheless, nine species have been recorded - most of them in the drier spring months.

The first record was of a Kidney-spot Ladybird *Chilocorus renipustulatus*, observed on a felled ash tree on a Butterfly Conservation work party in Yealand Hall Allotments on March 22nd. Inhabitants of deciduous woods, they over winter on trees, often near the base. A chain-saw operator working there said he had seen several whilst felling.

A Cream-spot Ladybird *Calvia quattuordecimguttata* was found on the Group's Whitbarrow outing on May 20th and I

received reports from Barbara Crooks of a 14-spot Ladybird *Propylea quattuordecimpunctata* and Orange Ladybird *Harmonia sedecimguttata* in the Morecambe area. Other species were received from Anne Smith in Poulton-le-Fylde, which included an astonishing total of seventy-six 7-spot Ladybirds *Coccinella septempunctata* sunning themselves on a bush in her front garden! Another, quite large find, was of a cluster of eleven 22-spot Ladybirds *Psyllobora vigintiduopunctata* near the River Wyre.

Further to Jim Thomas's report of only the second record of a Harlequin Ladybird *Harmonia axyridis* in North Lancashire, in last year's annual newsletter, Anne Smith and I found another on the canal towpath at Garstang, quite close to the town centre. It was of the form *coccinea*, similar to the one in Jim's photograph shown in the newsletter.

On the same day, we also found a couple of 14-spot Ladybirds *Propylea quattuordecimpunctata*, one of which we thought quite unusual. Spot fusions on the elytra seem to be the norm (see photo.1) but on this particular one each spot was very clearly defined (see photo.2). As it was attempting to mate with one of "normal" appearance, we assumed it was a male of the same species. Photo 2 is not as good as I would have liked, but they were at the rear of a deep bank of vegetation and I was trying to avoid being stung by waist high nettles!

Hoverflies

Four years have passed since I first started recording hoverflies; the first ones being *Eristalis tenax*, the drone fly, and *E.pertinax* on 18.3.09 at Gait Barrows. There, I had met Barry Brigden (from Bispham) for the first time, who identified them for me. Today we keep in constant touch to identify new specimens collected by me each year.

Due to the inclement summer weather this year, numbers were substantially reduced and it was not until August that good numbers emerged. Of the 280 plus species that exist in the UK, I have found 48 this year; a slight improvement on last year's total of 45.

Roger Morris, who lives in the south of England, is the national recorder to whom I sent my 2012 records up to mid

In the list of recorders published in the 2011 edition of the newsletter, my email address was incorrectly shown. The correct address is: - michaelbloomfield36@btinternet.com. If anyone has been trying to pass records to me via the internet, I apologise for not spotting the error sooner.

Michael Bloomfield

Photos accompanying this article are on page 15

November. These totalled 937, an increase from last year's total of 807.

Finally, on going to press, a sighting and photograph of the rare *Volucella zonaria*, the UK's largest hoverfly, is causing quite a stir. It was seen on the 20th August by Sandra and Gordon Bagnall on Echinops in their garden at Hest Bank, and it is the furthest known northerly record away from its main locality around London. The photograph was taken by their daughter Alison Whiting.

My thanks go to Dave Talbot and Linda Renshaw for sending in their records.

Brian Hugo

Photo with this article is on page 15

Butterflies

2012 was one of those unforgettable butterfly years – for all the wrong reasons. Most of our most vulnerable species did poorly, or very poorly. It's difficult to make a true assessment based on transect data, as conditions were so wet and dull that it was impossible to do a regular transect unless everything else in the walker's life could be arranged around it, to take advantage of the few hours of sunshine that occurred in a week – but from the data available it seems to be the worst year on record for most sites.

Northern Brown Argus *Aricia artaxerxes*, Pearl-bordered Fritillary *Clossiana euphrosyne* and High Brown Fritillary *Argynnis adippe* had very bad years, and Duke of Burgundy *Hamearis lucina* numbers collapsed after doing much better for the previous couple of years. The conditions for emergence from the pupae were not right, and the pupae rotted and died – there is clear evidence of this from the captive-reared Dukes, and those in the wild seem to have been similarly affected, as they were notable by their absence from Gait Barrows, their last site in Lancashire. The few that did hatch, had very poor conditions for mating and egg-laying – borne out by the difficulty in locating any eggs or larvae for release in 2013.

Dark Green Fritillary *A. aglaja* did better, with reasonable numbers and increase at some sites. Small Pearl-bordered *Boloria selene* had its best ever year on Arnside Knott, and Dark Green Fritillary also did very well there – whilst High Brown Fritillary had the worst year there since 1994. However, Small Pearl-Bordered had their worst ever year at

Eaves Wood, no High Brown Fritillary were recorded there (the first time since the transect began there in 1997) but Gatekeeper *Pyronia tithonus* did well. Wall Brown *Lasiommata megera* records were restricted to the AONB, with the best count of 7 coming from the LWT section of Warton Crag.

The winter hibernators had a mixed bag of a year. Small Tortoiseshell *Aglais urticae* got off to a good start in spring and missed most of the bad weather, with adults appearing in gardens in reasonable numbers in late summer. Peacock *Inachis io* numbers were down, Brimstone *Gonepteryx rhamni* badly down for both the spring and summer broods, and few Red Admirals *Vanessa atalanta* were seen in the spring, suggesting poor winter survival.

The one species that did really well was the Ringlet *Aphantopus hyperantus*. This butterfly is known for being able to withstand dull weather, even flying in light rain – so even the summer of 2012 couldn't hold it back! It increased noticeably across the AONB. Common Blue *Polyommatus icarus* put on a good display at Heysham Landscape Strip with 80+ seen on the best days. Migrants were very thin on the ground all year. Painted Lady *V. cardui* was only recorded in 4 tetrads within the north Lancs area, Red Admiral numbers were well down and there were no Clouded Yellows *Colias croceus* at all.

Recovery from this could take a long time. For the most endangered species, low numbers can lead to inbreeding, which further threatens their future.

Laura Sivell

Photo for this article is on page 15



Green Shieldbug sunbathing (shieldbug report) Anne Smith



Volucella zonaria (Hoverfly Report)

Alison Whiting



Propylea quattuordecimpunctata 1 (Ladybird report)

Mike Bloomfield



Ringlet (Butterfly report)

Laura Sivell



Propylea quattuordecimpunctata 2 (Ladybird report)

Mike Bloomfield



6-spot Burnet larvae (Moth report)

Linda Renshaw



Burnet Companion (Moth report)

Janet Packham



Dusky Lemon Sallow (Moth report)

John Girdley



Lozotaeniodes Formosanus (Moth report)

John Girdley



Bedstraw Hawk-moth (Moth report)

Gary Jones



Golden-rod Brindle (Moth report)

John Girdley

Moths

This report deals mainly with moths seen in the Northern VC60 part of the recording area. Some interesting records from South Cumbria have been received and I have included a few of these.

2012 was a generally poor year for Moths in the area. Numbers recorded at fixed traps were perhaps 25% down on last year, based on personal observations from Morecambe, Sunderland and Heysham. The weather during the first three months was unexceptional and by the end of March there was the prospect of a reasonable year. April and early May were rather poor, with catches below normal. There was a brief, dry spell towards the end of May when catches did pick up somewhat. June, July and August allowed keen moth'ers to catch up a little, but excessive rain continued to reduce catches and to make trapping away from fixed sites difficult. The first week of September showed a little promise but almost continuous rain thereafter made ground conditions very difficult and put an end to mobile trapping for most. There were odd highlights after that but by then the season was largely over.

Some selected highlights:

January / February / March:

Millhouses remains the best "winter" site for moths in the area, being sheltered and near mature mixed woodland. The usual early starters such as Dotted Border, Mottled Umber, Pale Brindled Beauty, Winter Moth and Spring Usher all appeared early on (P Marsh – PJM).

Duponchelia fovealis is an adventive member of the Crambidae family, first seen in England in 1996 (and a continental pest species). It was found in Warton on the 20th Jan (M Elsworth – ME). Potted indoor plants were surely the origin of this moth.

February was an altogether colder month with long periods when the temperatures were unsuitable for moths. Amongst the few new arrivals were a Twentyplume Moth slumbering indoors at Heysham (J Holding – JH) on the 11th and a March Moth at light in Millhouses (J Girdley – JG) on the 12th.

On the same night, the first Small Brindled Beauty of the year appeared at Millhouses (PJM) but, as is usual, the species was on the wing for only a few weeks and was restricted to four sites at or near Millhouses.

March proved to be one of the better months of 2012: Shoulder Stripe appearing in High Tatham on the 1st (PJM).

In Morecambe, a shout of, "remove this moth before I squash it" turned into Lancashire's second *Mompha jurassicella*, located indoors on the 13th (JG) just a few miles up the road from where he found the first in 2011.

Grey Shoulder-knot is an elusive species in VC60. The only record received of this species during 2012 was one on the 25th March in Yealand Redmayne (S Stokes – SS).

Late March is when the day flying Orange Underwing can sometimes be seen around birches on sunny calm days. One such was at the Old Iron Works Carnforth on the 27th (Linda Renshaw- LR). Heysham Moss is another site where this species can be found locally.

The month drew to a close with the first sightings of Barred Tooth-striped in Yealand Redmayne (SS).

April: the specialist early spring species were heavily hit by the rain but determined recorders did find a few goodies. One of these was the Blossom Underwing. Records came from Eaves Wood (Graham Jones - GJ) on the 7th and at light in Yealand Conyers on the 20th (B Hancock – BH). Scarce Prominent, Barred Umber and Square-spot were all very thin on the ground this year but were noted at Silverdale Moss woodland on the 21st (JG). The following day, Rob Petley-Jones (RPJ) found *Carpatolechia decorella* in a light trap set at Gait Barrows, only the third county record and all from this site.

Comment from Steve Palmer about Belted Beauty Moths:

"The annual, daytime count of the Belted Beauty colony at Potts Corner on the 23rd April was very well attended. Unfortunately, the numbers of the moth located were well down on previous years, this being almost certainly due to a high tidal inundation earlier in the month followed by cold conditions. Of the 170 found, 107 were females and 63 were males. The value of this regular search and, even more so, the regular transect counts carried out each year, has been proved by the weight of data the Lancashire Moth Group have been able to present to the Energy Company (Dong Energy) that has applied to lay cabling through the marsh. The fight to oppose this particular route for the cable is still on-going and Graham Jones, Butterfly Conservation, Natural England and Steve Palmer have all been heavily involved in discussions with the company. As this now appears to be the only viable population of the moth in England and Wales, it is vitally important we win this battle."

May: overnight catches remained generally poor until the end of the month, although some sites produced moths of note. For example, Puss Moth in 2012 was at Heysham (JH), and Carnforth (L Lyon – LL) and, at a separate site, J Rae – (JR).

Perhaps the most astonishing record of the year was a count of 21,398 Six-Spot Burnet Moth larvae seen and counted by Linda Renshaw and friend in Middlebarrow Quarry.

Apparently, this was a minimum number as they ran out of time and didn't search the whole quarry floor!

Linda returned on the 3/6 and recorded 5,325 day flying adults over a 2-3 hour period, including many mating pairs.

One local species bucking the trend by further consolidating its range in the county was Devon Carpet, with the first of the year in Lord's Lot Wood on the 12th May (JG) and six at the same site on the 26th. It also put in appearances during 2012 over two broods in Thrushgill Plantation (PJM, T Whitaker – TW), Millhouses (PJM), Bay Horse (NR) and Conderside Barn (J Chadwick – JCh) with 21 moths reported and more known records yet to be submitted.

Mother Shipton was very thin on the ground and none were seen at any of its local strongholds, including Heysham.

On the 24th May, the first *Paratalanta pandalis* since 1999 was found at Gait Barrows (GJ), its only site in the county, but more unusual was the first Glaucous Shears for a Yealand Conyers trap (BH) - presumably having been blown down from the moors in the strong easterlies. A visit to Gait Barrows on the 25th produced a new VC60 record in the form of *Coleophora frishella* (GJ) as well as the local Satin Wave, while an unexpected new species to a well recorded Heysham garden on the 26th was Early Toothstriped (JH).

On the 27th, some uncommon micro moths were found: *Aroga velocella* in Bay Horse (NR) and *Ancylis mitterbacheriana* and *Pamene obscurana* on White Moss (JG) (the latter two were both 3rd records for VC60).

Elsewhere, Ruddy Highflyer came to the reserve trap at Heysham (28th May) followed the next day by a new species for the site in the form of White-pinion Spotted (both JG).

In Early **June**, Grey Scalloped Bar occurred at Bay Horse (NR), Grass Wave at its single Lancashire site on Winmarleigh Moss (JG) and, on the 5th, the very local, Poplar Kitten, appeared in Carnforth (LL).

Records of Moorland Moths, of which the specialities emerge in late May / Early June, were well down this year, doubtless because of the heavy rain making conditions difficult.

Many species were down in numbers during 2012 but this was not the case for the Small Elephant Hawk Moth. 2011 had been a particularly poor year for this moth but it made a bit of a come-back in its usual moorland, coastal dune and limestone locations with eight scattered records, including the first for Heysham Nature Reserve (29th May).

On the 10th, four Cistus Forester were seen on Warton Crag (BH) and a visit to Lundsfield Quarry (BH, SMP) provided excellent views of at least 30 freshly emerged Burnet Companion – there were probably many more than that present. This species also appeared in respectable numbers at Heysham NR where it appears to have colonised last year (3 records of 6 moths).

On the 12th, Double Dart appeared at Middleton (JG). The latter species is just about hanging on by the skin of its teeth in the county, although it remains common at Heysham. The only other record being Millhouses on the 26th (PJM).

Elsewhere, on the 18th, three of the elusive Least Minor were spotted at Yealand Hall Allotments (BH).

Later that day, dusk searching with a head torch allowed good views of Netted Pug going about its business in Carnforth (BH) and light trapping turned up two Beautiful Snout in Lord's Lot Wood (JG). Mullein Wave came to a garden trap in Heysham on the 21st (JH) and further dusking with a head-lamp on the 24th at Cinderbarrow illuminated two Valerian Pugs (BH).

Over the last few days of June, despite overall poor numbers of moths, there were a few highlights to cheer some recorders up. These included, on the 27th, the declining and local Spinach in Heysham (JH), Thyme Pug and Ash Pug in Carnforth (BH & M Tordoff), as well as Striped Wainscot in Bay Horse (NR), the fifth Lancashire site (and 2nd NLN's) for this moth since its arrival in 2009.

On the 28th, a Garden Tiger came to light in Carnforth (LL); however, there were none in my garden in Morecambe, which has recently been the most productive site in Lancashire for them!

The month was rounded off with the very local Triple-spotted Clay in Yealand Conyers on the 30th (BH).

July started slowly with few species of note found during the first few days. A fairly widespread influx of Silver Y at this time peaked with 17 being recorded on Warton Crag (C Peacock) on the 5th. No doubt linked with this influx, Dark Sword-grass was found at Sunderland Point on the 6th (JG) while non-migrant of note on the same date, and a garden rarity, Lesser Cream Wave in Warton (ME).

Another moth spreading at a much faster rate is the Blackneck. It was new to Conderside Barn on the 8th (JCh), Bay Horse on the 21st (NR) and record numbers were seen at Heysham NR (with 19 records of 41 moths, more than all previous records in the area put together).

Dingy Shell has always been a local moth in Lancashire but it did well in 2012, including records from Botton Mill (JG), and Millhouses (PJM).

On the 13th, Triple-spotted Pug was an exciting and unexpected find in Morecambe (JG) (2nd Lancashire record and the first for this area). Both of these were confirmed by dissection, indicating the difficulties recorders have with this difficult species group (worn pugs always need dissection before even thinking about identification).

It was clearly a purple patch for this site because on the 15th, colourful, pine feeding micro, [Lozotaeniodes Formosanus](#) turned up, which whilst more frequent further south, was the most Northern VC60 record so far and new for this area. The rare Grass Moth, *Crambus uliginosellus* was seen at Leighton Moss (SMP) the next day. Other moths of note found around this time were *Ypsolopha nemorella* on Myers Allotment, together with a single Dark Dagger (AB, GJ, RM), a mating pair of Dark Umber at Leighton Moss (BH) and two *Apotomis capreana* and three *Celypha rufana* on Trowbarrow (JG).

A visit to a very blustery lane near Jenny Brown's Point on the 14th found moths nectaring in reasonable numbers in sheltered areas (BH, SMP) – these included at least 20 Haworth's Pug and half a dozen or so Pretty Chalk Carpet.

A *Bryotropha politella* at Loftshaw Moss on the 14th July was new for SD66.

Eight Annulet on Yealand Hall Allotments (BH) were notable (21st July).

On the 23rd the first of what turned out to be a bumper year for the Blue-bordered Carpet appeared at Millhouses. In the end there were eight records from four sites - the first records since 2009.

An agreement to host a trap very high in the moors at Crossdale Grains produced three exceptional moths in three visits, the first a migrant Bedstraw Hawk Moth (PJM) on the 24th.

On the 30th, *Agonopterix liturosa* was found at Heysham (A Draper – AD); only the third county record for this moth and the first since 1986.

August

Netted Carpet News (from Steve Palmer): “Late July and early August is the time for another of our BAP species surveys, this time for Netted Carpet, and one count on the 2nd of August at the Hyning Wood site produced 19 moths (GJ) together with an impressive haul of 14 Blomer’s Rivulet. Larval searches for this moth later in the year were very productive, showing the population is doing well. Over-winter work on maintaining suitable habitat for the foodplant (Touch-me-not Balsam) has already commenced (BH, GJ) - for further details on helping with this contact Graham Jones.” (See Lancashire Moths website.)

A visit to one of the highest points in north-east Lancashire, at Leck Fell, produced Pale Eggar and Grey Mountain Carpet (PJM) on the 3rd.

On the 7th, Scarce Silver Y was found at Crossdale Grains (PJM) and on the same date migrant Pearly Underwing came to light in Yealand Conyers (BH).

Barred Rivulet was a good addition to the Warton garden list on the 10th (ME) and also a new 10km record.

A wander around Gait Barrows on the 11th by M & J Clerk produced views of *Nemophora cupriacella*, only the third time it has been found in Lancs, the last being in 2000 also at Gait Barrows. *Prochoreutis myllerana* turned up at Conderside Barn (JCh) a few days later.

Golden-rod Brindle at Crossdale Grains was the first record of this species for some years (JG).

New for Lancashire

Quoting Steve Palmer: “The best find of this period came when *Acleris effractana* was at last confirmed as occurring in the county, with one at light in Bay Horse (NR) on the 18th. This species looks very similar to the common and distinctive *Acleris emargana*, and potential specimens of *A. effractana* which have a less strong indentation on the leading edge of the forewing and are often quite dark and inconspicuously marked, should be kept for dissection. Subsequent examination of another specimen from 2011 proved Nigel also had the species a year earlier at his home site near Bay Horse.”

On the 22nd, Oak Lutestring was found at Millhouses (PJM) and on the following night forty came to light at Baines Crag, their Lancashire stronghold, along with Barred Chestnut and an Oak Hook-tip (JG).

On the 24th Old Lady appeared as a new moth for Sunderland Point - it remains a scarce species in this area with just two records this year.

September

One of our latest records for Magpie Moth appeared at Warton on the 7th (ME).

Over the first week or so of September, a few migrant species put in an appearance, suggesting things were about to pick up at last on this front. The final haul in September amounted to a Rush Veneer in Bay Horse (NR), a Scarce Bordered Straw in Heysham (JH) on the 3rd, a Rusty-dot Pearl at Millhouses on the 5th (PJM) and a few Dark Sword-grass scattered over the following few weeks.

October / November / December

A reasonable haul of local species which included Orange Sallow, a late Juniper Pug, a Merveille du Jour and a migrant Dark Sword-grass were at Gait Barrows in the first week of October (GJ).

At Sunderland Point on the 24th, the scarce Dusky Lemon Sallow came to a light carefully placed below a huge patch of ivy blossom. This was only the second local record of this species in ten years.

Demonstrating how things can be very different at this time of year, in a sheltered site adjacent to long-established, mature, deciduous woodland, 28 Sprawler, 9 Mottled Umber, 5 Northern Winter Moths and 4 Figure of Eight were amongst nearly 20 species which came to light at Millhouses (PJM) in late October.

This pattern of 100+ catches continued in mild weather right to the end of the year at Millhouses, in marked contrast to coastal sites that were often lucky to produce one moth a night!

Migrant moths

With the exception of some previously noted species, 2012 was a generally poor year for migrants: Silver-Y was seen in reasonable numbers especially in Autumn, there was a scattering of records of Dark Sword Grass and just a small number of Rusty Dot Pearl and Rush Veneer. Most of these occurred along the Sunderland to Morecambe coastal strip, with few records inland.

Bibliography:

2012 Lancashire Moth Group Newsletter – Steve Palmer.

Lancashire Moths – Yahoo Group. (Various contributors).

John Girdley

Photos accompanying this article are on pages 15 & 16

Dragonflies

This was a very poor year for dragonflies, and this allows me space to re-dress the telling off last year as my VC60-orientated approach to life failed to mention the White-faced Darters *Leucorrhinia dubia* just over the border, but well within the NLN recording area. They were re-introduced on Foulshaw using nymphs from extant British colonies and successfully emerged in 2011 and, as I understand, also in 2012.

Here is some background information: David Smallshire, convener of the [British Dragonfly Society's](#) conservation group, said, "The white-faced darter has been lost from half of its English sites in the past 50 years, so this initiative is an exciting opportunity to reverse that trend."

The decline of the species in the UK has mainly come from the significant loss of its lowland raised bog habitat, as a result of afforestation, commercial peat-cutting for garden compost and lack of sympathetic management. It is now listed within the Cumbria Biodiversity Action Plan which aims to maintain existing populations and, possibly, consider reintroductions to previously known sites, if habitats can be restored and management revised to secure the species. John Dunbavin, Reserves Officer for Cumbria Wildlife Trust, said, "The restoration work at Foulshaw Moss has really played a significant part in conserving the many threatened species that are only found on our lowland raised bogs. It has been a great pleasure to assist the British Dragonfly Society to re-establish the White-faced Darter in the Witherslack area and, with suitable management, we hope it will be another species that will be seen by future generations on the Witherslack Mosses for many years to come."

A small, national influx of Red-veined Darter *Sympetrum fonscolombii* either "miraculously" produced two males at the Middleton model boat pond site, or they have survived the last three years there at very low level. They were seen between 9th and 21st July with two definitely confirmed on 12th July. The first was seen on an organised dragonfly event which, amazingly in the context of the 2012 summer, took place on perhaps the most suitable day of the whole year (Steve Ryder et al). At the same time, there were two records of male Ruddy Darter *S. sanguineum* at Middleton but none, as far as I am aware, from the 'stronghold' at

Bankwell. After making this same statement last year, I received a photo of a Ruddy Darter there, so perhaps another will turn up again .

The numbers of the commoner dragonflies at Middleton/Heysham were rather low this year with Four-spotted Chaser *Libellula quadrimaculata* only reaching a maximum of 24, Black-tailed Skimmer *Orthetrum cancellatum* only reaching 9 and Emperors *Anax imperator* very scarce, with just twos and threes during comprehensive searches. There was a similar pattern at the back end of the year with no large concentrations of Common Darter *S. striolatum* at Middleton/Heysham (max 27) or Migrant Hawker *Aeshna mixta* (max 12). Common Hawkets *A. juncea* are scarce at Heysham and "out of their normal acidic habitat" so it was good to see a female ovipositing at Middleton on 21/8. Southern Hawker *A. cyanea* is also scarce at Heysham/Middleton with two records on 9/8 and 28/8 and, similarly, just a singleton Broad-bodied Chaser *L. depressa* on 28/5.

In contrast, Broad-bodied Chaser is becoming one of the most widespread dragonflies in the Silverdale area with loads of records from quarry pools and especially around Leighton Moss.

Another positive from 2012 was the continued consolidation of Banded Demoiselle *Calopteryx splendens* on the regions slower moving, lowland rivers, with regular reports from the Conder, Keer, Winster and singletons from the lower Wenning and Lune near Halton. Beautiful Demoiselle *C. Virgo* also can be found on the Winster, near Helton Tarn.

Upland dragonfly records, rather like upland moth-trapping opportunities, were at a premium but did include a visit to Birkbank by Dan Haywood recording 3 Golden-ringed Dragonfly *Cordulegaster boltonii*, 25 Black Darter *S. danae* and about the same number of Common Darter *S. striolatum*. Golden-ringed Dragonflies *Cordulegaster boltonii* were also reported from upper and middle Hindburndale, Tower Lodge area and upper Leck valley.

Thanks to Ian Brodie, Kate Hughes, Dan Haywood, Sandra and John Truran, Linda Renshaw, Steve Ryder, Michael Foley, Reuben Neville, Janet Packham and various Leighton Moss observers.

Pete Marsh

Recorders 2013

Herbaceous Plants, Shrubs, Trees	Martin Sherlock	01524 66131 martin@phytophile.me.uk
Ferns, Clubmosses, Horsetails	Trevor Pearce	01524 67500 t.pearce@lancaster.ac.uk
Lichens	Cis Brook	01524 752280 cissy@brookh.plus.com
Seaweeds, Algae	Roy Merritt	01524 411193 Roymerritt2@aol.com
Hoverflies	Brian Hugo	01524 854300 bribar@live.co.uk
Mammals inc. Bats	Steve Bradley	01524 33056 bradfamilly@btinternet.com
Amphibians, Reptiles, Fish	Linda Renshaw	01524 733036
Moths	John Girdley	01524 419234 john@birdtours.co.uk
Butterflies	Laura Sivell	01524 69248 laura.sivell@mypostoffice.co.uk
Birds, Dragonflies	Peter Marsh	07532 433043 pmrsh123@aol.com
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Shield Bugs	Anne Smith	01253 884378 wainscot@hotmail.co.uk
Ladybirds	Mike Bloomfield	01253 353148 michaelbloomfield36@btinternet.com

Please send in your observations and help build up a detailed knowledge of what lives where in this area so that we can:-

Conserve particularly interesting sites.

Monitor changes in numbers and distribution of species.

Add to National recording schemes (your flower/earwig may provide a new dot on a national map).

Please try to include these details:

Recorder's name, species, grid reference (ideally 2 letters and 6 figures e.g. SD486605) with place name (e.g. Lancaster), date.

The A4 **NLNG recording sheet** is specially designed for this purpose. Copies from Jennifer Newton or Mike Moon.

Remember that any observation may be valuable, not just the rare and unusual.

NLNG Library

A list of all the books can now be found on our website at www.nlng.co.uk.

A new acquisition this year has been 'Flora of North Lancashire' by Eric Greenwood (I refer you to the article written by Eric in this newsletter).

If any member wishes to borrow a book, they can contact Librarian Tony Ball by telephone on 01524 854229, or see him at one of the monthly indoor meetings.

Barbara Crooks

Farrers Allotment, Whitbarrow May 20th

On a bright, sunny morning, twelve of us met at Raven's Lodge to begin a walk through Farrer's Allotment, led by Linda Renshaw. Some of us weren't expecting a lot after several weeks of cold, wind and rain, but we knew we were going to have a special day when we were greeted in the car park by a pair of Nuthatches feeding young in a nest-box. They had no fear and flew within a few feet of us.

Leaving the Palmate Newts *Triturus helveticus* to enjoy their muddy pond, we set off on a wide track which soon provided plenty of interest. Our attention was drawn to the great variety of flora which attracted many insects. We soon found plenty to identify, including Cream Spot *Calvia 14 guttata* and Orange *Halyzia 16 guttata* Ladybirds. A perfect day for bees, we spotted Buff-tailed Bumblebee *Bombus terrestris*, Common Carder Bee *Bombus pascuorum* and a Cuckoo Bee *Bombus vestalis*. Four species of hoverflies were identified as *Eristalis tenax*, *Syrphus ribesii* *agg.* *Sericomyia silentis* and *Platycheirus granditarsus*.

As the track began to climb, we added Speckled Wood to the Orange Tip and Peacock butterflies we had seen in the car park, and then, around lunchtime, Green Hairstreak, Dingy Skipper and Pearl-bordered Fritillary. In the shattered limestone beside the track, a Rosy Woodlouse *Androniscus dentiger* was found - new to most people.

Reaching the open fell, we found Green Tiger Beetle *Cicindela campestris* and a Snail-eating Beetle *Silpha atrata*, and were able to confirm that the yellow flower festooning the crags was Horseshoe Vetch *Hippocrepis comosa*, as suspected. At the foot of the scree, Fairy Foxglove *Erinus alpinus* was a nice surprise. We were also delighted to suddenly find a Slow worm *Anguis fragilis* moving through the bracken.

The flat top of the fell had previously been planted with conifers, mainly Scots Pine, but they had been clear-felled about ten years ago. This had created a mixture of habitats and diverse plant communities – woodland species flourished without a tree in sight and limestone and peat specialists grew within a few yards of each other. We were pleased to see quite a lot of Juniper *Juniperus communis* surviving here, as it has become a species in decline further north on the Cumbrian fells.

We returned to the car park by the same route, having noted over sixty flower species and added Stone Bramble *Rubus saxatilis* and several ferns and sedges to our list.

We thanked Linda for showing us a site with such bio-diversity, which meant that there really was something for everyone, whatever their speciality.

Photo with this article is on page 23

List of Other Recorded Species

Spiders

Araniella cucurbitina s.l.; *Metellina mengei*; *Evarcha falcata*
Salticus scenicus

Beetles

7 spot Ladybird, *Coccinella 7 punctata*; Click Beetle, *Athous haemorrhoidalis*; Tiger Beetle, *Cicindela campestris*; Leaf Beetle, *Chrysomela spp.*; Bloodsucker, *Rhagonycha fulva*

Butterflies and Moths

Shaded broad bar, *Scotopteryx chenopodiata*; Privet leaf miner, *Caloptilia syringella*; Brown Silverline, *Petrophora chlorosata*

Damselfly

Large red damselfly, *Pyrrhosoma nymphula*

Ferns

Hart's Tongue Fern, *Phyllitis scolopendrium*; Rigid Buckler Fern, *Dryopteris villarii*; Male Fern, *Dryopteris felix-mas*; Hard Shield Fern, *Polystichum aculeatum*; Maidenhair Spleenwort, *Asplenium trichomanes*;

Flowering Plants (abridged)

Heather, *Calluna vulgaris*; Fairy Foxglove, *Erinus alpinus*; Lady's mantle, *Alchemilla vulgaris*; Tormentil, *Potentilla erecta*; Wood Sage, *Teucrium scorodonia*; Dog's mercury, *Mercurialis perennis*; Barren Strawberry, *Potentilla sterilis*; Wild Strawberry, *Fragaria vesca*; Horseshoe Vetch, *Hippocrepis comosa*; Ground Ivy, *Glechoma hederacea*; Common Dog Violet, *Viola riviniana*; Early Dog Violet, *Viola reichenbachiana*; Eyebright, *Euphrasia officinalis agg.*; Bush Vetch, *Vicia sepium*; Red Clover, *Trifolium pratense*; Bluebell, *Endymion non-scriptus*
Germander Speedwell, *Veronica chamaedrys*; Thyme-leaved Speedwell, *Veronica serpyllifolia*; Bird'sfoot Trefoil, *Lotus corniculatus*; Wood Sorrel, *Oxalis acetosella*; Heath Milkwort, *Polygala serpyllifolia*; Yellow Pimpernel, *Lysimachia nemorum*; Thyme, *Thymus serpyllum agg.*; Early Purple Orchid, *Orchis mascula*; Herb Robert, *Geranium robertianum*; Sweet Woodruff, *Galium odoratum*; Primrose, *Primula vulgaris*; Cowslip, *Primula veris*; Honeysuckle, *Lonicera periclymenum*; Water Avens, *Geum rivale*; Ramsons, *Allium ursinum*; Lesser Celandine, *Ranunculus ficaria*; Wood Avens, *Geum urbanum*; Lady's Smock, *Cardamine pratensis*; Hedge Garlic, *Alliaria petiolata*; Common Rockrose, *Helianthemum nummularium*; Traveller's Joy, *Clematis vitalba*; Wild Arum, *Arum maculatum*; Coltsfoot, *Tussilago farfara*; Crosswort, *Cruciata laevipes*; Black Medick, *Medicago lupulina*; Small-leaved Lime, *Tilia cordata*; Bird Cherry, *Prunus padus*; Glaucous Sedge, *Carex flacca*; Pendulous Sedge, *Carex pendula*.

Anne Smith and Mike Bloomfield



Nuthatch (Whitbarrow)

David Poole



Bee mimic (possibly *Eristalis intricarius*) (Conder Green)

Mike Bloomfield



Short-winged Conehead (Conder Green)

Peter Ross



Four-spotted chaser (Lord's ot)

Peter Ross



Large Red Damselfly (Lord's Lot)

Peter Ross



Bee Orchid (Flora of North Lancashire)

Eric Greenwood →



Mossy Saxifrage (Flora of North Lancashire) Eric Greenwood



Anoplotropes slercorosus (Scarab beetles) Jim Thomas



Newton Fell looking West (Flora of North Lancashire) Eric Greenwood



Image of Scarab beetle and sun on papyrus (Scarab beetles) Jim Thomas



Northern Marsh Orchid (Dock Acres North) Jim Thomas

Lord's Lot July 22nd

On a sunny, warm afternoon, eleven of us met Andrew Cadman in the layby at the southern end of the Forestry Commission's woodland known as Lord's Lot Wood. Andrew knows the reserve well and he was to be our guide around the site, looking for dragonflies and other wildlife. He explained that although the reserve is still listed as a L.W.T. site, it is now solely managed by the Forestry Commission which owns the site: the 1.2 hectare reserve is a Lancashire Biological Heritage Site. The area has always been a wetland one but, in Victorian times, a dam was built to create a pond, possibly for shooting or boating. Over time, the pond became covered by Sphagnum mosses, becoming an example of a 'Schwingmoor' - a floating raft of acid mosses in a basin mire. This is an unusual and rare habitat and, if left unmanaged, would eventually change to woodland.

We set off along the track of the Thirlmere to Manchester water pipeline; it had become a wide, sunlit woodland ride with trees such as Birch (both Silver *Betula pendula* and Downy *B. pubescens*), Rowan *Sorbus* and Holly *Ilex*. Andrew pointed to the area on the right of the path which he said had been clear felled of conifer about 5 years ago and replanted with deciduous trees - these he thought had been rather slow growing. Since then, on his regular visits to the site, he had not been aware of any more recent management work. There were plenty of flowers including: Greater Bird's foot Trefoil *Lotus pedunculatus*, Tormentil *Potentilla erecta*, Perforate St. John's Wort *Hypericum perforatum*, Honeysuckle *Lonicera periclymenum*, Enchanter's Nightshade *Circaea lutetiana*, Lesser Stitchwort *Stellaria holostea*, and Marsh Bedstraw *Galium palustre*. Three types of Thistle were seen (Creeping, Spear and Marsh) as well as Knapweed *Centaurea nigra*. These were all attracting a number of butterflies: Speckled Wood, Meadow Brown, Small White and Skipper (probably Large) as well as an abundance of colourful 'soldier' beetles *Rhagonycha fulva*. As we continued down the track, Martin showed us how to identify Compact *Juncus conglomeratus* from Soft Rush *J. effusus* (the former has a ridged stem) and we heard Common Green Grasshoppers *Omocestus viridulus*

stridulating in the grasses which included Tufted hair Grass *Deschampsia cespitosa* and Cocksfoot *Dactylis glomerata*.

At the end of the track we came to the dam, and turned to walk carefully down the eastern side of the bog. Andrew had warned us to be very careful not to step off the narrow path as the water is deep beneath the blanket of moss. We soon discovered that in places our feet began to slowly sink into the wet ground and it was best not to stand for too long in one spot. The pond was almost completely covered in Sphagnum moss interspersed with small hummocks of *Polytrichum* moss. Although there were a number of small trees growing within the bog, Andrew thought they did not pose much of a problem because of their small growth (determined by the habitat). Bottle Sedge *Carex rostrata* grew around the edge and there was also Sharp-flowered Rush *Juncus acutiflorus*, Cotton Grass *Eriophorum angustifolium*, Bilberry *Vaccinium myrtillus*, Cranberry *V. oxycoccus* and Cross-leaved Heath *Erica tetralix*.

A number of dragonflies were patrolling across the bog and we identified Four-spotted Chaser, Large Red Damselfly and Southern Hawker, some conveniently resting on bushes along the path. We also came across a striped millipede, a spider with a white egg sac (*Pardosa* sps) and a harvestman. Numbers of young frogs and toads were hopping around at the edge, much to the delight of several ladies in the group.

Leaving the bog behind, we returned through mixed woodland where we found the sterile fronds of Hard Fern *Blechnum spicant*, Broad Buckler Fern *Dryopteris dilatata* and, amongst a variety of trees, a North American Red Oak *Quercus rubra* and a Western Hemlock *Tsuga heterophylla*. Along the side of the minor road were Common Hog Weed *Heacleum sphondylium* and Hedge Woundwort *Stachys sylvatica*.

We thanked Andrew for introducing us to this unusual and rare habitat which provided such an enjoyable outing.

Barbara Crooks

Photos with this article are on page 23

Conder Green Saltmarsh August 26th

Seven of us met on a sunny, Sunday afternoon in the popular car parking area at Conder Green, near Glasson Dock. Led by Martin, we were to look for the plants which grow on the saltmarsh, which lies between the Lune estuary and the old railway track (now a cycle route). Although it is a popular place for visitors, we were the only people heading out onto the marsh itself, which is at its best in late summer.

Martin told us that this is an unusual saltmarsh as, unlike others, it is not grazed at all by sheep or cattle; this makes it a particularly rich habitat for plants. A saltmarsh develops over time: as the sea comes in it drops silt which gradually raises the height of the land which forms the marsh. As we walked out, we noticed a number of small areas where the higher grasses had been flattened and concluded that this could only have been done by deer (probably Roe) lying

down. Perhaps they came to browse in the early morning, well before people arrived?

We soon identified Sea Aster *Aster tripolium*, Sea Milkwort *Glaux maritima*, Parsley Water-dropwort *Oenanthe lachenalii*, Sea Arrowgrass *Triglochin maritimum* and Sea Plantain *Plantago maritime*. Jennifer had brought a book about foraging for food on the coast and was interested to find possible edible plants. Common Orache *Atriplex patula* was edible, but didn't have much taste (possibly best in a mixed salad) and Sea Purslane *Atriplex portulacoides* (a member of the Fat Hen Family) could also provide some nourishment from its leaves. Amongst other flowers, we found Greater Sea Spurrey *Spergularia media*, Annual Sea Blite *Suaeda maritime* and two Sea-lavenders, Lax *Limonium humile* and Common *L. vulgare*, which greatly enhance the beauty of the saltmarsh in summer.

Martin pointed out several grasses: Common Saltmarsh Grass *Puccinellia maritima* (noting how the stems lie on the ground), Cordgrass (*Spartina* spp.) which has spread extensively, and a glaucous Couch grass, probably common on the saltmarsh. Creeping Bent *Agrostis stolonifera* was growing at the top of the marsh and we also found Red Fescue *Festuca rubra*, Saltmarsh Rush *Juncus maritimus* and Long Bracted Sedge *Carex extensa*.

Sunshine and the profusion of flowers attracted a number of butterflies: Tortoiseshell, Peacock and Large White; a Brown Hawker was also seen.

Conder Green is well known for its bird life, and from the marsh we counted approximately 30 Swans at the other side of the estuary, and saw Curlew, Lapwing and Redshank. As we walked along the edge of the saltmarsh, enjoying the peaceful surroundings, we found Bladder wrack seaweed *Fucus vesiculosus* and 4 small crab specimens (they wouldn't have provided much of a meal).

We walked back up to the top of the marsh area, where it meets the bank of the old railway line, and found a different

group of flowers. Here was Grass Leaved Orache *A. littoralis*, Lesser Sea Spurrey *S.marina*, Marsh Woundwort *Stachys palustris* and pink, striped Bindweed, an unusual west coast form, ssp *roseata*, of the Hedge Bindweed *Calystegia sepium*. A good display of Field Sow Thistle *Sonchus arvensis* attracted many insects, including a male White-tailed *Bombus lucorum* and a Queen Buff-tailed *B.terrestris* Bumblebee. A furry bee mimic was thought to be the Hoverfly *Eristalis intricarius* and we heard the stridulations of the Common Green Grasshopper *Omocestus viridulus* amongst the grasses. A bat detector helped us to locate a Short-winged Conehead *Conocephalus dorsalis* as it rested briefly on a grass stem - a first for several of the group.

We thanked Martin for leading us on this glorious afternoon and showing us the specialities and the diversity to be found in this corner of the Saltmarsh.

Barbara Crooks

Photos accompanying this article are on page 23

Miscellany

Flora of North Lancashire

Fifty years ago, the first *Atlas of the British Flora* was published. This provided a systematic methodology for describing the distribution of British and Irish vascular plants using 10km grid squares of the National Grid. However, I and members of the natural history section of the then Preston Scientific Society realised there were many gaps in the cover for Lancashire.

In subsequent correspondence with the late Drs Frank Perring and John Dony of the Botanical Society of the British Isles (BSBI) I became vice-county recorder for West Lancaster (VC 60). The idea was that I might produce a supplement to Wheldon and Wilson's *Flora of West Lancashire*, published in 1907.

Through Preston Scientific Society, I organised the collection of data on a 2 x 2km square basis and during the late 1960s and early 1970s thousands of records were amassed. This showed, however, that there had been so many changes to the flora that a supplement would be inadequate to reflect them. My own circumstances changed and pressure of work and family allowed little time for active field work. Also, Lancashire's boundaries were altered with a large part of Yorkshire, covering eastern Bowland, added to the administrative county of Lancashire. Clearly the concept of vice-county 60 would mean little to most people, but an account of the flora of north Lancashire would perhaps be more useful. Unfortunately, there were no resources to carry out the field work.

During the following years, the late Len and Pat Livermore carried out valuable and thorough surveys in the Lancaster District, all of which were published. Len also became inter-

ested in critical groups, and his work on dandelions forms the basis of the account I published in the *Flora of North Lancashire* this year. Also in the 1990s, Phyl Abbott started to assemble data for eastern Bowland for her *Plant Atlas of Mid-west Yorkshire*, published in 2005.

In 1998 I retired and was able to devote time to assist Phyl Abbott in her work and to generally fill in gaps for the rest of north Lancashire. After about ten years, I felt that with the assistance of many people I was able to write and publish a *Flora of North Lancashire*. Over the years, I had also done a considerable amount of literature, archive and herbarium research so that the eventual account could describe the flora since the retreat of the last ice age, 10,000 years or so ago. Our understanding of the British flora had undergone a massive improvement, therefore it was possible to characterize our flora in terms of floras elsewhere in the British Isles and the world.

One problem that my own lack of expertise could not overcome was solved when M.J. Wigginton published his *Mosses and Liverworts of North Lancashire* in 1995. Bryophytes and lichens were both covered by Wheldon and Wilson in 1907 but a new account of lichens remains to be written.

Flora of North Lancashire, published in March 2012, is the first account of the flowering plants and ferns to be compiled for the region. Following Wheldon and Wilson's account, only a few notes were published until Len and Pat Livermore's work. Apart from a few papers written mostly by Joseph Pickard in the early 1900s, nothing was published on the flora of eastern Bowland until Phyl Abbott's work of 2005. The largest chapter in the Flora is the systematic account of the distribution of over 2000 species and hybrids found at some time in the region. The distribution of most species found in five tetrads (2 x 2km squares of the national grid) since 1964 are illustrated by dots on colour contoured base

maps.

Introductory chapters describe how the flora got here and the habitats and plant communities that may be found. Northern Lancashire is exceptionally diverse and this is reflected in huge discrepancies in species diversity. The combination of coastal and limestone areas with sub-urban gardens gives rise to some of the most floristically rich tetrads in the country in the Silverdale area, whilst the peat and eroding peat covered Bowland Fells support some of the least diverse areas.

Overall, the flora is richer now than it has ever been despite the continuing losses of native species. The naturalisation of garden escapes more than compensates for these losses. The landscape is also much more wooded than it has been for centuries, but a woodland flora is absent from plantations even as old as 200 – 300 years.

The most important cause for the loss and decline of native species is the destruction of habitats by building and agricultural developments. Air pollution, especially atmospheric nitrogen deposition, is currently the next most important reason for the decline of species diversity. On the other hand, seemingly destructive activities have produced new areas for plants to colonise. These include marl pits, canals, quarries, gravel pits, mineral waste heaps, reservoirs and perhaps even motorways. Even the conifer plantations of Gisburn Forest shelter some of the most important habitats in the county.

However, the landscape we have today is the relic of a Bronze Age countryside where humans had not yet made

such an impact as to destroy all of the natural habitats. By that time, the climate had deteriorated from the warmer periods of 5000 – 6000 years ago to one not too dissimilar to that of today. It gave rise to a wet and wooded landscape of fens, bogs and woodland. Today, we have a remnant of this landscape in amongst one shaped and moulded by humans. This is a very precious landscape where the woodlands are especially significant. They are the remnant of a temperate, deciduous rainforest found elsewhere only in western parts of the British Isles and in a few southern hemisphere localities, notably southern Chile.

So far, a changing climate does not seem to have had much affect. Perhaps there is a suggestion that with slightly warmer winters the climate has become slightly more oceanic. Maybe one of the indicators of this is the discovery of seedling Royal Ferns on the top of the fells.

It is now up to my successors to continue recording and reporting the changes in the coming years.

E.F. Greenwood

October 2012

Editor's Note: An excellent review can be read at <http://www.chicagobotanic.org/book/14.6/green.php> - written by Marilyn K. Alaimo, garden writer and volunteer at Chicago Botanic Garden.

Images with this article are on pages 23 & 24.

Dock Acres North

In early June 2007, I first alerted Jennifer to the spectacular display of orchids on the damp, disused gravel workings - a brown field site known as Dock Acres North. She visited the site on 6th June 2007 and said, "It is excellent. There were hundreds of Northern Marsh....also four or five Early Marsh." She also reported finding over twenty Bee Orchids *Ophrys apifera* on an old spoil heap along with Wild Pansy *Viola tricolor* and Common Cudweed *Filago vulgaris*. Common twayblade *Listera ovata* is also very common in places.

Alan Gendle, a member of the B.S.B.I., took members of the Hardy Orchid Society to the site in June 2009 and they regarded it as the best of ten sites that they had visited during their annual field trips of that year. Staff from Kew Gardens also expressed interest in the site when they were shown photographs of its orchids. The only classification that the site has is as a Biological Heritage Site, approved as such on 08/09/1993. Such designation offers little in the way of encouraging suitable management but does offer some protection through the planning system, as biodiversity is a material consideration in planning.

Over the last five years there has been no management and the damp area has been progressively invaded by willow whilst the hard standing has also been extended and has encroached upon the main orchid area.

I understand that Pure Leisure Group which owns the land as well as the leisure facility known as Water's Edge, on the south side of Borwick Lane, is preparing to submit plans to erect 122 holiday caravans and 8 holiday lodges on the site. This would necessitate the construction of drainage and road systems to the obvious detriment of the wildlife.

Because of the natural invasion of the willows and the imminent development of the site, I suggest that June 2013 may well be a last chance to see the orchid display, and recommend anyone who has not been there to try to find time to visit the site next year. The site actually lies within Warton Parish and its Grid. Reference is SD 516 731.

Jim Thomas

Photo accompanying this article is on page 24

Nature Printing

Nature printing, the making of impressions from natural objects, began in prehistoric times if we include the hand prints on cave walls made tens of thousands of years ago. Roderick Cave's book *Impressions of Nature: a History of Nature Printing* (British Library, 2010) gives a fascinating account of how the technique has been used down the centuries. Five hundred years ago, Leonardo da Vinci described how to make impressions on paper using a sage leaf coated in oil paint. Amongst the finest examples of the technique are *The Ferns of Great Britain and Ireland* (1855-7) and *The Nature-printed British Sea-weeds* (1859-60) both with coloured plates printed by Henry Bradbury. The illustrations were made by pressing the plant between steel and lead plates to make an impression in the soft lead, removing the plant and then making an electrotype copy to use as a printing plate. The resulting printed illustrations were very detailed and faithful to the original, but could only be life-size - a bit awkward when dealing with large fronds!

Nature printing has been used to make a pictorial record of animal fossils as well as plants, and as a way of decorating pottery, furniture and other household items. In the mid 1700s Benjamin Franklin used leaf impressions to mark bank notes to prevent forgery. Leaf silhouettes can be created by spraying paint or stain onto a surface which has a leaf on it. Some particularly attractive decorative work was done in this way in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, using successive layers of leaves on a wooden surface that was deeply lacquered after staining, giving a three dimensional effect. The technique is particularly associated with the town of Mauchline, in Scotland; Mauchline ware is popular with collectors.

Laura Bethmann's *Nature Printing with Herbs, Fruits and Flowers* (Storey Books, 1996) describes a variety of simple ways to make nature prints for yourself. For enthusiasts, there is *The Nature Printing Society*, based in America.

Trevor Pearce

Not The Ideal Topic For Dinner Party Conversation!

Whilst most people are aware of the significance of the sacred scarabs to the ancient Egyptians, it is not always realised that similar beetles played a role in the religious beliefs of several other peoples, including the Chaco Indians of South America and Taoist peoples from Asia. In Egypt, the dung ball produced by certain ball rolling species was regarded as an earthly manifestation of the sun being pushed through the sky each day by the sun god Khepri.

In 1788, the first Australian settlers had taken with them cattle, horses and sheep; the first large herbivores to graze the continent's grassland. As there had been no dung feeding insects evolving alongside the big herbivores that had been such an important feature of other continents such as Africa and Europe, their droppings simply dried where they fell. Even as late as the middle of the twentieth century, dried cowpats littered some of the Australian cattle pastures, becoming more and more desiccated and taking up to four years to rot. Over fifty species of dung beetle were eventually introduced and, as a result of their activities, the cow pats now disappear in as little as two days and the soil is enriched in the process.

So what of our native dung beetles? Though we don't have any of the more entertaining dung rollers whose activities were so amusingly described by the French entomologist J.H. Fabre, a study of local species can be very interesting. Scarabs typically inhabit areas with warm climates and light sandy or chalky soil. They are most common in the southern parts of the U.K. and in the north west of the country are most frequent on sandy soils. The dunes and pastures south of Southport support a very large and varied population, whilst I am in the process of compiling what appears to be a very impressive list of species from the Witherslack area. A pitfall study at Jack Scout in 2004 yielded 20 species and I have so far recorded 18 species on Drigg dunes. Nationally, the number of species and of individuals has fallen in recent

years due to the increasing use of chemicals, both on the land and administered to livestock.

The biggest of our dung-feeding species are the large, blue-black dor beetles or dumble dors, often met with on the ground in pastures and woodland, but also occasionally seen flying at dusk and taken in light traps. They excavate burrows under or close to fresh dung. The common dumble dor *Geotrupes spiniger* feeds on the dung of larger herbivores and is common in the woodland around Plain Quarry and on Warton Crag. The woodland dor beetle *Anoplotropes slercorosus* feeds frequently on rotting fungi as well as dung, and is the species that you meet most commonly on the Lake District fells. As its common name suggests, it is equally to be found in the deciduous woodland of north Lancashire and southern Cumbria. *Typhaeus typhoeus*, the minotaur beetle, so-called because of the two large, forward pointing horns on the front of the male pronotum, prefers sheep or rabbit dung. It reputedly digs egg-laying burrows up to a metre deep but can be found walking on paths in places such as Gait Barrows, Warton Crag and Whitbarrow where any such achievement seems rather remarkable!

The much smaller species of *Aphodius* also occasionally occur in light traps, but are most often found actually in the dung itself, upon which they feed as both adults and larvae, prior to pupating in the surface layers of soil beneath the dung. One of the easiest ways of collecting these beetles is to collect a sample of the dung and drop it into a bucket of water when the beetles will float to the surface, often in surprisingly large numbers. Common species in our area include the bright red and black *A. fimetarius*, the all black *A. depressus* and the slightly smaller all black *A. ater* which may be found all through the year. We have several yellow and black species: *A. contaminatus* is most common in autumn whilst *A. prodromus* and *A. sphacelatus* are most likely to be found in spring. A large, dark brown or black species that often flies to light is the cuckoo parasite *A. rufipes* whose

larvae are known to feed on dung that has been taken into burrows as a larval food supply by *Geotrupes spiniger*.

Whilst the dor beetles construct quite deep burrows beneath the dung and *Aphodius* live as adults and larvae actually within it, members of the third group, which belong to the genus *Onthophagus*, construct breeding chambers just beneath the dung in the surface layer of the soil. The eight recorded British species of this genus are generally much scarcer, and only three are likely to occur in the northwest where they are largely confined to coastal areas, well-drained soils on hillsides or good quality grassland that has not been ploughed for a great many years. Ideally, there should have been a continuous supply of dung for 400 years or more so that areas of common grazing are especially fruitful. I have recorded all three of the more northerly species in Cumbria. *O. similis* is the most widespread and abundant species in the U.K. It occurs, often in quite large numbers, on the dune grassland at Drigg in sheep and cow dung. I also found a single specimen near Hawkshead Hill on upland sheep pasture this July, and several on limestone

sheep pasture on Yewbarrow above Witherslack in September. *O. coenobita* is the next most common species and I was presented with a specimen from the path in Plain Quarry in May 2010: Despite regular searches I have not found any since. *O. joannae* is generally smaller and darker in colour and Chris Rayden passed on a record of a single specimen found in May 1989 on a hillside near Witherslack, whilst I recorded another single specimen near Nichol's Moss in June 2005.

This herbivore dung community is an interesting one to study and the larger beetles are quite easy to identify from digital photos. If you wish to see which species you have discovered, there is an excellent guide to the British Dor Beetles produced by John Walters (On line at: www.johnwalters.co.uk).

Jim Thomas (December 2012)

Illustrations for this article are on page 24

The Alder Leaf Beetle – one to look out for!

Agelastica alni (L.) (Chrysomelidae) the Alder Leaf Beetle, though common on the continent, has always been a rarity in England. There is just one example in the Tullie House Museum collection in Carlisle and that has no data attached, so it was probably collected abroad. There are very few records for the beetle in the U.K. throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. Most of the more reliable sightings are from the south coast and the River Thames area, suggesting occasional and short-lived introductions via the ports in those areas. The last 20th century record was from Dorset in June 1958 and some coleopterists regarded the beetle as being extinct in Britain.

On 20th May 2004, Don Stenhouse discovered a single specimen of a bright blue leaf beetle crawling on a post in Oxford Road Manchester and it was confirmed as *A. alni* by comparison with specimens in the Manchester Museum collection. Since that date there have been numerous recordings of the beetle from each of the vice-counties around Manchester: Derbyshire (VC57), Cheshire (VC 58), South Lancashire (VC 59) and South-west Yorkshire (VC 63) and possible sightings in five other nearby vice-county areas. The most likely explanation for the arrival of the beetle is an introduction via imported trees, probably *Alnus* species but possibly also *Betula* and *Salix*, as adults in the root balls of those trees. It is suggested that the apparently successful colonisation by the beetle of this area of northwest England is due to climatic change, which may have made over-wintering less hazardous.

On 8th October this year, Mike Foley showed me a couple of photos of leaf beetles that he had taken earlier in the day at Brockhole Wetlands near Preston. One of the beetles was the common and widely distributed *Phratora vulgatissima* whilst the other was *Agelastica alni*. Mike informs me that the beetle was quite common, even at this late date, and that he had seen it at Brockhole on previous occasions. In

fact, it overwinters as an adult in leaf litter and moss around the base of the host species, prior to emergence in March and April. The adult beetles then feed on the food plant, typically *Alnus glutinosa*, until May when copulation and egg laying take place.

Bearing in mind the apparent, fairly rapid spread of the beetle from the original site in Manchester, it seems likely that we can expect its arrival in the northern part of the county in the not too distant future. Alders, in particular, should be examined fairly carefully for significant leaf damage and for the adult beetles next springtime.

Thanks are due to Mike for the information relating to his discovery and for permission to use his photograph.

Jim Thomas

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Photo with this article is on page 31

Carabus Violaceus?

Whilst on a work party in Yealand Hall Allotments last April, a member of the party found a beetle under a log. Cupping it in his hands, he brought it over to us to ask if we could identify it. Much to his consternation (and our amusement) the moment he opened his hands it tried to crawl up his sleeve. With its mauve colouring and aversion to daylight, we concluded that it must be the Violet Ground beetle *Carabus violaceus*. Photographs were taken and no more thought about it.

Re-reading Jim Thomas's report in the 2011 Newsletter recently, I came across his comment that some of the records he'd received of *Carabus violaceus* might have been of the Ridged Violet Ground beetle *Carabus problematicus*.

Examining the photograph I had taken last April, I searched any beetle literature I had to determine if our original ID had been correct. One handbook describes *Carabus violaceus* as a beetle predominantly of woodland and areas of intermediate moisture content and *Carabus problematicus* as one of uplands and fairly dry areas. I felt little the wiser. Comparing my photograph, however, with images on the Coleoptera website, mine appears to be very similar to that of *Carabus problematicus*.

If anyone could be more positive about identification, I should be pleased to hear from them. The photo is on page 31.

Mike Bloomfield

Unexpected Guests

About ten years ago, I became interested in moths and began to trap them, using a 15W actinic Heath trap, in my small, back garden on the edge of Poulton le Fylde. Until I started trapping, I naively thought that the insects attracted to the light would be wellmoths.

Like most beginners, I presented the micromoth recorder with several "rare" micromoths which turned out to be small caddis flies. Once I had learned to tell the difference between hairy wings and scaly wings, I turned my attention to the other gatecrashers. Some were surprising but familiar, such as earwigs, wasps and daddy-long-legs. Three species of shieldbug were recorded. Some less familiar and difficult to classify were the ichneumons, lacewings, weevils and a variety of smaller bugs. Among the more spectacular beetles which flew in was a dung beetle and two sexton or burying beetles.

In March 2011, I excavated a small pond in the garden and since then two species of water beetle and several more species of caddisfly have joined the list. At least four species of hoverfly come in occasionally but, so far, never any species of bee despite my having two, well occupied bee boxes, and common wasps being a regular feature in late summer. A wide variety of flies have been attracted and I am frequently unable to identify them but, with the help of friends, quite a few have been named and are included in the list below.

All the creatures have been potted, photographed for ID if necessary and later released, although I cannot promise the same if a cleg fly ever homes in – she'll be for the killing jar!

Whether the large *Tegenaria* spider, which takes up residence from time to time, comes to the light or enters the box while it is stored in the garage, I don't know, but she certainly dines well before she is evicted.

GUEST LIST TO DATE

Common earwig	<i>Forficula auricularia</i>
Common wasp	<i>Vespula vulgaris</i>
Crane fly	<i>Tipula oleracea</i>
Spotted crane fly	<i>Nephrotoma appendiculata</i>
Ichneumon	<i>Ophion luteus</i>
Green lacewing	<i>Chrysoperla carnea</i>

Brown lacewing	<i>Hemerobius humulinus</i>
Weevil	<i>Otiorrhyncus clavipes</i>
Lesser water boatman	<i>Corixa punctata</i>
Birch shieldbug	<i>Elasmotethus interstinctus</i>
Hawthorn shieldbug	<i>Acanthosoma haemorrhoidale</i>
Green shieldbug	<i>Palomena prasina</i>
Common froghopper	<i>Philaenus spumarius</i>
Mirid bug	<i>Deraeocoris ruber</i>
Dung beetle	<i>Aphodius rufipes</i>
Burying beetle	<i>Necrophorus humator</i>
Burying beetle	<i>Necrophorus vespillo</i>
Water beetle	<i>Agabus bipustulatus</i>
Water beetle	<i>Ilybius fenestralis</i>
Caddis fly	<i>Limnephilus lunatus</i>
Grouse wing caddis fly	<i>Mystacides longicornis</i>
Caddis fly	<i>Limnephilus marmoratus</i>
Caddis fly	<i>Limnephilus affinis</i>
Caddis fly	<i>Anabolia nervosa</i>
Caddis fly	<i>Polycentropus flavomaculatus</i>
Caddis fly	<i>Tinodes waeneri</i>
Hoverfly	<i>Rhingia campestris</i>
Hoverfly	<i>Eristalis tenax</i>
Marmalade hoverfly	<i>Episyrphus balteatus</i>
Hoverfly	<i>Eristalis arbustorum</i>
Hoverfly	<i>Volucella pellucens</i>
Soldier fly	<i>Sargus iridatus</i>
Soldier fly	<i>Microchrysa polita</i>
Picture winged fly	<i>Phagocarpus permundus</i>
Mayfly	<i>Cloeon simile</i>
Non-biting midge	<i>Chironomus plumosus</i>
Window midge	<i>Sylvicola fenestralis</i>
Garden spider	<i>Araneus diadematus</i>
Giant house spider	<i>Tegenaria</i> sp.

The absence of butterflies and dragonflies from the list was not unexpected, but I was surprised by the absence of ladybirds as I have decent populations of at least four species in the garden, and other types of beetle come in regularly.

While the variety and numbers of moths in the trap this year has been well below average, I would say that for gatecrashers it was as good as or better than ever before.

Anne Smith

Illustrations are on page 31



Alder Leaf Beetles

Jim Foley



Burying Beetle (Unexpected Guests)

Anne Smith



Violet Ground Beetle?

Mike Bloomfield



Weevil (Unexpected Guests)

Anne Smith



Ichneumon (Unexpected Guests)

Anne Smith



FAUNA Reserve

Helen Hicks



Park cow and calf at FAUNA reserve

Laura Sivell

Northwest Naturalists' Groups of the Past

In northwest England 200 years ago, groups of working men got together to form botanical societies. The weavers, shoemakers and others who made up the all-male membership mostly had little education or spare time, and had limited resources for buying books. They met together on their one free day, Sunday, in public houses, to examine plants brought along by members and in the society's collections, and to borrow and return books from the society library. Prestwich Botanical Society charged members sixpence a month to cover the cost of drink and purchase of books. It also imposed fines for swearing, coming to meetings without specimens, and *arriving* drunk. Some disapproved of Sunday meetings: one publican was fined five pounds for serving drink to working men botanists during the hours of church service. Little record of the existence of these societies remains. The Railway and Naturalist public house in Prestwich now only has a framed note on the wall recording its glory days for naturalists.

From around 1840, natural history became a very popular pursuit, helped by railways making the countryside and coast more accessible, increased literacy and a flood of well

illustrated and inexpensive books and magazines, and a very efficient postal service. By the 1870s there were over 100 field clubs in Great Britain and Ireland. The mid nineteenth century passion for collecting and growing ferns was very much a pursuit for middle class Victorian ladies. Although women were excluded from membership of learned societies they were welcome in naturalists' groups. The Liverpool Naturalists' Field Club, founded in 1860, had over 700 members in 1867. Organising field trips must have been difficult at times; 350 members went on one excursion to the Great Orme in North Wales. Prizes were awarded for the greatest number of plants collected, and there was a ladies' prize for the best bouquet. How things have changed!

Anna Secord has given a well-researched account of artisan botanists in *Cultures of Natural History* (C.U.P., 1996) and David E. Allen's books, *The Naturalist in Britain* (Princeton University Press, 1976) and *Books and Naturalists* (HarperCollins, 2010) provide fascinating details of the world of the Victorian naturalists.

Trevor Pearce

FAUNA Nature Reserve, Lancaster: report on the year 2012

FAUNA is a small (16-acre) nature reserve in a pocket of open fields just to the south of Lancaster city centre. It is leased from Lancaster City Council and managed by The Fairfield Association, a registered environmental charity (reg. no. 1058030), under a Higher Level Stewardship agreement with Natural England. When I last wrote in January 2012, the main capital project (construction of the new footpath, associated fences and hedges, ponds etc) had only just been completed and the areas round the footpath had a distinct air of World War I desolation, while the newly laid and planted hedges looked pretty raw as well. It's a commonplace that such scars mend quickly, but it was still very satisfying to watch as the mud dried and grassed over, and the hedges leafed up and began to grow, in last year's not particularly encouraging spring and summer weather. The hedges have a long way to go, of course, and the fences could do with some more weathering; but from an aesthetic point of view FAUNA is already an attractive sight, much approved by almost all of the many users of the footpath. (A rough tally suggests a footfall of a good 1500 per week, so if nothing else, we can congratulate ourselves on a helpful addition to the local footpath network.)

The last twelve months have been predictably busy. We borrowed a specialist tractor and mower, plus specialist driver, to cut most of the soft rush areas, hoping that the cattle would follow on and start to graze the new growth. So they have, and the Snipe seem to have been impressed (see below), but the rushes are growing fast and we may have to repeat the process more often than we had originally expected. The new ponds have taken a while to settle in, especially those that rely on bunds and sluices to keep them full. One sluice is thought to have been the

death of a foolhardy Moorhen which was last seen struggling, and almost certainly failing, to get out. We've shut that stable door with some judicious wire netting: a shame we hadn't anticipated it. Another pool in Lucy Brook is persistently leaking – possibly a construction fault but probably not helped by cows using the narrow top of the bund as a route across the beck. We've now fenced it off with home-made hurdles made with hazel coppice staves – it's wonderful the number of different skills our volunteers are acquiring. It looks, however, as if it will need some thorough reinforcement with clay, so maybe we'll have to send someone on a canal-building course. With the aid of a large group of Lancaster University students we planted lots of reeds in Upper Sowerholme, our most remote wet area, hoping among other things to protect future nesting wildfowl. A family of foxes bred there last spring and not only deterred who knows what, but consumed several mallard and probably some teal as well (the remains were unidentifiable by amateurs). Which reminds me that, prompted by the need to produce a definitive map for our new notice board, and also by the difficulty of locating observations in a somewhat amorphous area, we even succeeded in agreeing on names for all our fields and ponds, which seem to have satisfied most of the competing claims we received, including both well-attested and, shall we say, speculative local history. (The alleged visits of medieval Friars and Oliver Cromwell to what is now FAUNA have not yet been fully corroborated, and though there are a number of plausible theories as to the origin of the name Lucy Brook, the Lucy who gave her name to Lucy's new Pool is, to be frank, an invention.) If you don't have time to inspect the notice board on site, the map is also viewable at <http://www.fairfieldassociation.org/fauna/images/faunanaturereserve.jpg>.

After our titanic struggle with Ragwort in 2011, we were determined to get ahead rather than face a similar process yet again, so, on professional advice and with Natural England's permission, we embarked on an early summer process of spot-spraying all the young plants we could identify in all of our fields. It is surprisingly difficult to walk across every foot of uneven ground in straight lines, and despite the best and most ingenious efforts of Ian Procter, our Volunteer Coordinator, who devised an elaborate system using movable marker posts, inevitably we didn't by any means kill every plant. We couldn't spray any plants growing in standing water, which our Ragwort seems to tolerate much better than the textbooks would have you believe, so there were still plenty of flowering plants for the volunteers to pull in August and September. The volume was manageable, however, and we are reasonably confident that very few plants set seed, so we believe that we have now really cracked the problem. Indeed, we shall probably soon have to start worrying about Cinnabar Moths and other ragwort-loving species. The very satisfactory outcome was that the hay which Reuben Neville and Steve Ryder kindly cut and baled for us – well into September, so wet had August been – was of good enough quality to be sold to our grazier, and the cattle are now happily munching through it as part of their winter diet. As we'd discovered the previous year, haymaking is one of our most popular volunteer activities, especially with the older generation. (I wonder whether childhood memories of haymaking itself attracts people, or an early exposure to Enid Blyton's account of its joys?). Certainly the mix of activities, and no doubt the extra exposure brought by the footpath, has resulted in our highest ever number of volunteers. Newcomers are always most welcome: please see <http://www.fairfieldassociation.org/volunteering/workparties.html> for more information.

We are fortunate to have a number of dedicated volunteer recorders. Much of the reserve has been designed with birds in mind, and Dan Haywood carried out a full BTO-style breeding birds survey in 2012. We hope shortly to post detailed results on our website, which is in the middle of a major redesign, but some of the highlights were a total of approximately 40 breeding species across FAUNA and Fairfield Orchard, including two red list species (Song Thrush and House Sparrow) and 8 amber list, if you include Swallow, Swift and House Martin feeding in FAUNA and probably breeding nearby. No sign of Reed Bunting which have bred in earlier years – possibly deterred by the rush mowing? We will have to watch this. The wet area of Big Meadow was sized up by a solitary male Lapwing in April, possibly looking for a mate (they bred there regularly until a few years ago), and a male Stock Dove and a pair of Shelduck also visited but didn't breed. We have recently started winter flush counts, and the first of these in late January revealed no less than 95 Snipe in the Big Meadow and 10 Teal in Upper Sowerholme (with no sign as yet of last year's foxes). On the minus side, the School Pond which used to attract quite a variety of species is now overlooked by the new footpath, and until the hedges grow there will be very little screening. The result is that only Mallards and Moorhens now seem to venture there. More positively, though, Dan tells us that the passage migrants which used to follow the main north-south FAUNA hedge line don't

seem to have been discouraged by the fairly drastic work on that hedge: evidently the healthy trees that remain have been enough to keep them coming.

The hay meadows had been surveyed for the first time in July 2011 and the survey was followed, as reported last year, by our first cycle of haymaking and selective seeding (using green hay and locally collected seed, predominantly of Yellow Rattle). A group of volunteers led by Graeme Skelcher repeated the previous year's survey in late July 2012. A torrential rainstorm not only led to the untimely death of your correspondent's camera but almost wrecked everyone's notes: nevertheless the results were encouraging. The herb/sedge cover is now around 15% on average, but some smaller areas which had been seeded in 2011 were up to almost 40%. There was good cover of Yellow Rattle in the seeded areas (none had been found previously). As noted previously, there is already a surprisingly good diversity of the finer grasses. The overall result was that whereas in 2011 the main Hay Meadow was classified as 'improved grassland' on the basis of the herb species, it now qualifies as 'semi-improved grassland', with one Go2 species (Meadow Buttercup) abundant and three others (Red Clover, Ribwort Plantain and Yellow Rattle) occasional. Self-heal and Yarrow were both present in 2011, but one or two of the seeded Yellow Rattle patches appeared also to contain good new patches of Yarrow. On the minus side, Common Sorrel was present in large quantities in the marshy areas (not surveyed) in 2011. It appears to have diminished considerably in 2012, presumably because the water level has been raised.

Lastly, we undertook our first invertebrate survey, also in late July. Six Fairfield volunteers were led and instructed in invertebrate survey and identification methods by five members of NLNG, led by Chris Workman and Jennifer Newton. The meadow was very wet but the rain held off for most of the time spent at the site. Sweep netting, beating, hand-searching the sward and butterfly netting were demonstrated. No quantitative sampling was undertaken. The meadow habitat and wet meadow verging towards both still and running water were sampled: there were no surprising specimens or any particularly rare. However, there was a healthy population of Figwort beetles on the Water Figwort near the watercourse of Lucy Brook, and the Tree Bumble Bee was recorded, which appears to be slowly spreading its range northwards.

This survey is only one of several examples of collaboration between The Fairfield Association and Lancashire Wildlife Trust / NLNG. In addition to the invaluable help provided by LWT through Reuben Neville and Steve Ryder in haymaking, meadow seed donation and expert advice of all kinds, the FA is a partner in LWT's Morecambe Bay Wealth of Wildlife project. We also gratefully acknowledge the help of a number of LWT/NLNG members and volunteers: in exchange, several of our volunteers have begun joining work parties on Warton Crag, Freeman's Pools etc. It seems only natural that this collaboration should increase and we are keen for it to do so.

As mentioned earlier, the Fairfield Association's website is in the middle of a substantial upgrade, which we believe will make it not only easier to use but more comprehensive, easier to update with news and events and more attractive

to the visitor. There are now a series of blogging sub-sites, including one for volunteer activities and another for wildlife, with the capacity to upload images and even videos as well as text. Please visit the site, read the wildlife blog and feel free to comment on posts; and when you visit FAUNA, please post your own observations. Registering to blog is quick and easy, and you only need to do it once.

I have saved the most exciting news for last. Some readers will know that a group of fields immediately south of FAUNA has been (more or less) on the market for several years. After considerable alarms and excursions, the Association has purchased 2 acres in the middle of the group, and has successfully negotiated a contract to buy a further 26 acres, subject to our raising sufficient funds by mid-summer 2013. This whole block of land, which we are calling FLORA, includes agriculturally-improved pasture, several ancient hedges in neglected condition and Pony Wood, a copse first planted in the 1820s and overdue for care and renewal. Much of the land is poorly drained and suitable for conversion to bird-friendly wetland to complement that in FAUNA. We have tentative plans for the rest, which include woodland and hedge restoration and extension, spring-sown arable crops with autumn/winter stubble, bird-friendly widened field margins and hay meadow restoration. Natural England have told us that if/when the sale goes through, it should be possible to extend our current Higher Level

Stewardship agreement to include the new acquisition, thus almost trebling the current size of the reserve as a whole. At the time of writing we have raised over 75% of the purchase price through donations and pledges plus Gift Aid, almost entirely from neighbouring residents, and we have applied to the Heritage Lottery Fund for a grant to cover the balance. But getting Lottery funding is ... well, a bit of a lottery, and so we are still actively fundraising. In addition, there are a final six acres, sandwiched between FAUNA and FLORA, which we hope, but have not yet contracted, to buy. If you would like to contribute a donation or pledge, however small (or large!), to the FLORA funds, can raise money through sponsorship, or indeed have any suggestions for fund-raising which we might not have thought of, we'd be delighted to hear from you: please visit www.florafields.org and follow the instructions there, or contact Mick Short directly on 01524 63890. With luck, and continued generosity from donors and supporters, the next annual Newsletter will bring the news that FLORA is on the way.

Oliver Fulton, Trustee, The Fairfield Association

with thanks to Chris Workman for the invertebrate survey report.

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