

TRANSACTIONS

of the

WHARFEDALE NATURALISTS' SOCIETY

VOL. X

JANUARY - DECEMBER 1955

WHARFEDALE NATURALISTS' SOCIETY

Officers for the Session 1955-56.

President	E. Skinner
Vice-President	C.G. Booth
Acting Secretaries	
General	Miss J.E. Bartle
Syllabus	Miss E. Gill
Hon. Treasurer	H.J. Williamson
Committee	Mrs. M.M. Kennedy, Mrs. O.M. Pennock, Dr. K.C. Crosbie, A.C.M. Duncan, W.F. Fearnley, H. Majoram.

Recorders

Botany	Miss J.E. Bartle
Vertebrates (other than birds)	H. Marjoram
Ornithology	W.F. Fearnley
Geology	P.D. Lamming

MEMBERSHIP

In March 1955 there were 81 members, 2 junior members and 5 honorary members.

FINANCIAL POSITION

During the year 1954-55 there was an excess of income over expenditure of £1.18.1d. At the Annual Meeting in March 1955, the subscription for the ensuing year was fixed at 7/6, and 2/6 for junior members.

YORKSHIRE NATURALISTS' UNION

The Society has continued its affiliation to the Y.N.U., and members have attended both meetings and excursions of the Union.

DINNER

After the Annual Meeting in March 1955, a dinner was held for members for the first time. As this was a success, it was decided to hold another in 1956 on a date apart from the Annual Meeting, and it is hoped to make the dinner an annual event.

THANKS

Our thanks are due to all those, both visitors and members, who have given their services as lecturers during the session. The attendance at indoor and outdoor meetings was good, showing a general increase on the previous year.

We are also grateful to the Editor of the Ilkley Gazette for the interest he has taken in the Society, and for publishing reports of our meetings and extracts from our records.

ENTOMOLOGY

There were no entomological records of any value during 1955, and the office of Recorder of the section is at present vacant. The Society hopes that in the near future some expert member will be found to take over the recording of insects, or perhaps of one specific group of insects, such as Lepidoptera.

SUMMER PROGRAMME 1955

May 3	Botany	Middleton to Denton	Leader A.C.M.Duncan
May 10	Geology	Otley Chevin	Leader P.D.Lamming
May 17	Ornithology	Lindley	Leader W.F.Fearnley
May 24	General	Riffa	Leader H. Marjoram
June 7	Botany	Draughton	Leader Miss J.E.Bartle
June 14	Ornithology	Beamsley	Leader E.S.Skinner
June 21	Geology	Middleton	Leader P.D.Lamming
June 28	General	Bolton Abbey	Leader C.G.Booth
July 5	Botany	Spicey Ghyll	Leader Miss J.E.Bartle
July 12	Ornithology	Askwith	Leader W.F.Fearnley
July 24	General	Harewood	Leader P.Hirst

WINTER PROGRAMME 1955-56

Oct. 4	An Introduction to Butterflies and Moths	G.E.Hyde
Oct. 18	Starlings and their Migration	Clifford J. Smith, B.A.,
Nov. 1	The Plants of Limestone	Miss H.M.Twigg
Nov. 15	Birds and Mammals of the Cairngorms	D.F.Walker
Nov. 29	A Naturalist's Year	H.Marjoram
Dec. 13	The Care of Domestic Animals	A Veterinary Surgeon
Jan. 3	Some aspects of Sea Bird Life	J.B.Nelson
Jan. 17	Recorders' Reports and showing of Members' Slides	
Jan. 31	Birds of a Country Estate. R.S.P.B. Colour Film	George Edwards
Feb. 14	A Bird Artist's Wanderings in 1955	K. Dawson
Feb. 28	Rocks and what they are made of	P.D.Lamming
Mar. 9	Annual Dinner	
Mar. 13	The Harriers and some of their Neighbours	Ralph Chislett, M.B.O.U.
Mar. 27	Annual General Meeting	

BOTANICAL SECTION

After a few very early flowers, spring flowers were slow to appear, but at the end of June the warm weather produced vigorous flowering. Owing to the long spell of hot dry weather, many plants had a short flowering season, and there were few flowers out in late autumn, unlike the two previous years.

This year fruiting of bramble was particularly good. The autumn colours were striking but short-lived, since frosts at the end of October brought leaves off many of the trees.

In the Washburn valley the reservoirs were very low owing to the drought; on the exposed mud there was a good growth of plants, of which the flowers of Scentless Mayweed were abundant. Shore-weed was also seen in flower.

EARLY DATES

Jan. 1	Barren strawberry.	Dog's Mercury	A.E.P.
Feb. 2	Colt's-foot		A.E.P.
Mar. 3	Celandine		A.E.P.
Mar. 10	Alternate-leaved golden saxifrage		A.E.P.
Mar. 31	Moschatel		A.E.P.
Apr. 2	Wood Anemone		J.C.S.

NEW RECORDS FOR THE SOCIETY

The following species were recorded for the first time in 1955:

Ranunculus ficaria, var. ficaria (a Celandine which has bulbils in the leaf axils)	Weston and Otley	J.E.B.
Claytonia alsinoides (?garden escape)	Askwith	J.C.
Ribes uva-crispa: Gooseberry (?garden escape)	Askwith	J.C.
Bidens tripartita: Three-cleft bur-marigold	Fewston	J.E.B.
Matricaria inodora: Scentless mayweed	Fewston	J.E.B.
Matricaria matricariodes: Rayless mayweed	Askwith	J.C.
Fraxinus excelsior: Ash	Askwith	J.C.
Mentha arvensis: Corn mint	Fewston	J.E.B.
Polygonum persicaria: Persicaria	Askwith	J.C.
Polygonum hydropiper: Water pepper	Fewston	J.E.B.
Quercus petraea: Sessile oak	Askwith	J.C.
Juncus Bulbosus: Rush		M.D.
Catabrosa aquatica: Water catabrosa		M.D.
Molinia caerulea: Purple moor grass	Langbar	H.J.W.
Eupatorium cannabinum: Hemp agrimony	Appletreewick	R.F.
Carex pulicaris: Flea sedge		J.E.B.

I am grateful to all those who have sent in records which are helping towards the Botanical section's part in the mapping scheme of the Botanical Society of the British Isles.

INITIALS

Miss J.E.Bartle	Miss J.C.Salter
Miss J.Clarkson	A.E.Pullan
Miss M.Dalby	H.J.Williamson
Miss R.Payne	

J.E.Bartle,
Recorder.

GEOLOGICAL SECTION

The geological activities of the Society were focused mainly on the two excursions. In the course of the first members visited Great Dib, on Otley Chevin and there examined the exposure of the remarkable fossiliferous beds below the Caley Crags Grit. The weather had made the ground wet and there was some difficulty in moving about on the steep cliff.

The rocks which were the particular object of the visit occur in the 20 feet or so of strata below the massive grit which caps the cliff face. A very good account of them is given in the Geological Survey Memoir, and in that work there are listed some 70 different species of fossils which have been found at the Great Dib. During the visit most of the typical fossils were found, principally the siliceous sponge spicules (*Hyalostelia*) and crinoid ossicles. Both of these were well displayed in a thin section ground from a specimen of the rock from the one-foot limestone bed. Attention was drawn to the fact that that these beds occur in the Millstone Grit (Namurian) Series; a group consisting largely of deltaic sands and muds with occasional marine shales. These marine shales occupy comparatively narrow bands but are of wide geographical extent. The fauna of the marine bands is characteristic and differs markedly from that of the Otley 'Shell Beds' which the rocks at Great Dib are called. The extent of the Otley Shell Beds is not known but it must be very limited. These facts indicate the existence of very special and local conditions of deposition. The only other near occurrence of fairly similar rock is that known as the Keighley Bluestone.

Later in the season and in ideal weather the Society made a traverse of the rocks in Dean Beck near Nessfield. The succession is straightforward. The lowest rocks seen were the grits of the Nessfield Sandstone which on bedding planes exposed in the stream bed displayed clear ripple marking. Above the grit there was a large thickness of shales from which a few fossils were extracted. It was while searching for these that attention was directed to hard thin bands of dark grey rock occurring at irregular intervals in the shale. A specimen was taken and a thin section prepared from it showed the rock to be composed of fine grained sandy mudstone. The section displayed no microfossils. The rock, which was partly weathered, contained no appreciable Calcium Carbonate. Progress up the stream brought the party to the next grit, the Middleton Grit, and mention was made of the cyclic variation in the lithology of the rocks under examination.

Of members' independent activities in the year it may be reported that in the Yoredale Series rocks at High Greenfield, especially in the stream behind the farmhouse, there are fossiliferous beds in which the variety, abundance and preservation of the fossils is unusually good. The corals are especially noticeable because they tend to weather out easily. Downstream from High Greenfield, at Deepdale, a pseudobreccia was noticed. (This rock when wet has a piebald appearance).

One member was very kindly conducted round a large gravel quarry at Otley and there saw fluvio-glacial gravels of post glacial date in beds up to 20 ft. thick. Only rocks of Peninne origin were seen in the gravel but various mammalian fossils were inspected in the Quarry office. Among them were:- a fine horn of Bos; a very large vertebra; a jaw bone and an antler of Red Deer. The first mentioned was about two feet long and about five inches in diameter at the root.

On the road between Conistone and Kettlewell at a point about three hundred yards downstream from the confluence of the Skirfare and The Wharfe a stream crosses the road in a culvert and leaps into the Wharfe over a waterfall of some 20 or 30 feet. As it is highly charged with lime it has built an extensive tufa screen in which every stage in the petrification of the moss can be seen to advantage.

P.D. LAMMING,
Recorder.

VERTEBRATE SECTION

Stoat, Seen in this district on 20th January, 15th February, 20th July,
Weasel, Seen in this district on 14th March, 18th August,
One found dead on 15th December. H. Marjoram
Grey Squirrel, Common in all areas.
Red Squirrel, One killed by cat in Panamora Wood 23rd
October. O. M. Pennock
One seen running on the ground in Riffa
Wood on 2nd November. H. Marjoram
Rabbits, Still a few left in this district

SOME OBSERVATIONS ON THE EFFECTS OF MYXOMATOSIS IN LOWER WHARFE DALE

During the summer and autumn of 1955 Myxomatosis was rife in the lower reaches of the Wharfe Valley.

The disease spread rapidly and with deadly results to the rabbit population, the field and roadsides were littered with dead and dying animals.

Large numbers of gulls and carrion crows were observed feeding on the diseased carcasses. In some districts, particularly in the vicinity of reservoirs and catchment areas the carcasses were so numerous that men had to be employed to remove and destroy them.

The destruction of the rabbit population has brought about changes in the ways of animal life in the valley. On the south side of the river where small areas have escaped the disease large numbers of foxes have appeared where before only an odd fox could be found. Foxes have been driven to raiding poultry houses in several districts.

The stoat, deprived of his natural food, has taken to raiding the poultry run. In one poultry house after 20 or 30 eggs were destroyed 2 stoats were finally killed in a steel trap, these stoats also killed several fowls. Large numbers of ferrets have been released by the poaching fraternity and these are causing havoc in the poultry yard, a large polecat ferret killed five hens in less than half an hour before it was caught in a steel trap. One effect of the disease will be felt in the spring when the fox, deprived of young rabbits for food, will certainly turn his attention to the young lambs. The local agricultural committee are hoping to completely exterminate the rabbit from this area. I do not think this will be possible; in some areas they are already returning in small numbers.

It is an undisputed fact the rabbit does a large amount of damage in some districts but as a lover of our wild life I consider a country walk will have lost some of its charm without the bobbing white tail of the wild rabbit as he rushes to the safety of his burrow in the woodland bank.

H. MARJORAM,
Recorder.

ORNITHOLOGICAL SECTION

- HAWFINCH March 12th at Middleton. C.G.B.
Sept. 21st in an Ilkley garden. O.M.P.
- SISKIN Jan. 22nd 9 with Coal & Marsh tits at Riffa. H.M.
Nov. 27th with Redpolls at Riffa. H.M.
Dec. 18th 1 near Swinsty reservoir. E.S.S.
- BRAMBLING One ringed at trap in January. E.S.S.
- TREE SPARROW One ringed at trap in April. E.S.S.
- TREE PIPIT April 30th 2 seen at Ben Rhydding also on the same date
several seen at Bolton Abbey. E.S.S.
- YELLOW WAGTAIL April 6th at Riffa. H.M.
Sept. 11th at Ben Rhydding. R.P.
- GT. GREY SHRIKE Nov. 13th in an Ilkley garden. O.M.P.
Nov. 26th near Ben Rhydding filter beds. E.S.S.
- SPOTTED FLYCATCHER May 13th at Ben Rhydding. R.P.
6 or 8 on W.N.S. outing on June 28th seen hovering and
swooping over water catching flies at Bolton Abbey. W.N.S.
August 27th at Ilkley. E.S.S.
- PIED FLYCATCHER April 30th Bolton Woods. E.S.S.
June 28th were seen to be nesting in an old Nuthatch hole
in Bolton Woods. E.S.S.
An experiment has been tried with this species, we have
put up 19 nesting boxes in local woods, 11 of which were
occupied, 2 by Pied Flycatchers, both broods were reared
successfully.
- CHIEF CHAFF April 6th Ilkley. E.S.S. This species seems to be
increasing in our district.
- WILLOW WARBLER April 6th Ilkley. O.M.P.
- SEDGE WARBLER April 30th 2 at Ben Rhydding, one of which was singing.
E.S.S.
August 25th last date reported. E.S.S.
- GARDEN WARBLER April 30th at Ben Rhydding also on same day at Bolton
Abbey. E.S.S.
- BLACKCAP On May 13th seen carrying nesting material in Middleton
Woods. 1 ringed at the trap in July. E.S.S.
- WHITETHROAT April 14th at Ilkley. O.M.P.
Sept. 11th last date at Ben Rhydding. R.P.
- FIELDFARE April 12th flock at Burley. E.S.S.
Oct. 16th Flock near Ilkley. C.G.B.
Very few large flocks have been seen this year by our
observers.

Ornithological Section - continued

- REDWING Oct. 7th Ilkley. W.F.F.
- RING OUSEL April 3rd 2 pairs on Burley Moor. W.F.
- WHEATEAR March 30th at Fewston. G.H.
March 30th at Burley Moor. W.F.
Sept. 17th Addingham. R.P.
- REDSTART April 12th Harewood. C.G.B.
- SWALLOW April 6th at Ben Rhydding. W.F.F.
Oct. 27th at Ilkley. H.J.W.
- SANDMARTIN April 6th at Riffa.
A large number have been ringed at their nesting sites.
E.S.S. C.G.B. E.A.W.G. R.P.
- SWIFT May 1st Ben Rhydding. E.S.S.
August 16th Ilkley. H.J.W.
- NIGHTJAR May 10th one found in a mill shed at Guiseley and ringed
by E.S.S.
August 5th 2 seen at Barden Bridge. A.E.P.
Sept. 8th one at Timble. R.P.
- GREEN WOODPECKER One seen drumming in Pancrama rather an unusual sight.
H.J.W. O.M.P.
Was watched from a car at a distance of 10 ft. at Denton,
the bird continued feeding without undue alarm.
W.F.F. E.A.W.G.
- GT. SPOTTED WOODPECKER April 7th heard drumming in a wood at Middleton. A.C.M.D.
- CUCKOO First seen and heard April 21st Burley. E.S.S.
This species does not appear to be as abundant in our
district as in former years.
- LITTLE OWL Reports have been received from many places.
- SHORT-EARED OWL July 12th near Burnsall. E.S.S.
- BARN OWL Seen at Addingham June 24th. A.C.M.D.
One seen near stepping stones at Ben Rhydding Dec 31st.
E.S.S.
- PEREGRINE FALCON August 31st and Sept. 1st flying over Ilkley Moor. G.H.
- KESTREL Of the nest of Kestrels ringed last year in June 2 rings
have been recovered, one from Langbar and the other from
Lancing, Sussex, this bird had flown 220 miles from Ilkley.
S.S.E.

Ornithological Section - continued

<u>MERLIN</u>	March 19th Chelker reservoir. K.C.C. March 13th Ben Rhydding. E.S.S.
<u>BUZZARD</u>	January 26th at Ilkley. E.S.S. and seen several times during August over Ilkley Moor. G.H.
<u>WHOOPEE SWAN</u>	March 20th 3 on Swinsty. W.F.F. April 9th 3 on Fewston. C.G.B. Nov. 30th 1 on Fewston. A.C.M.D.
<u>SHELD-DUCK</u>	Jan. 9th 1 at Harewood. C.G.B. Aug. 28th 1 at Grimwith. E.S.S.
<u>WIGEON</u>	1 seen at Grimwith reservoir in May when it was suspected they were nesting. K.C.C. July 2nd 1 female with one chick at Grimwith. E.S.S.
<u>PINTAIL</u>	Mar. 27th one at Fewston. C.G.B.
<u>SHOVELER</u>	Sept. 18th 2 on Swinsty. O.M.P. Sept. 18th 6 on Lindley. E.A.W.G.
<u>SCAUP</u>	July 30th one female at Grimwith. E.S.S.
<u>GOLDEN EYE</u>	Reported from all the reservoirs.
<u>GOOSANDER</u>	Jan. 31st. 2 pairs displaying at Fewston reservoir. K.C.C. Feb. 9th 2 male and 1 female at Chelker. W.F.F. H.J.W. Mar. 12th 3 near Mickle Ing at Otley 1 male, 2 female. W.F.F. Mar. 20th 1 at Grimwith reservoir. K.C.C. Dec. 11th 5 on Washburn reservoirs. W.N.S.
<u>CORMORANT</u>	Jan. 16th one on Lindley Wood Reservoir. H.J.W. O.M.P.
<u>GREY PHALAROPE</u>	Oct. 22nd for one week at Ben Rhydding filter beds. W.N.S.
<u>DUNLIN</u>	April 17th at Grimwith reservoir. K.C.C.
<u>PURPLE SANDPIPER</u>	Oct. 19th one at Chelker reservoir. W.F.F. O.M.P.
<u>COMMON SANDPIPER</u>	April 17th 1 at Grimwith reservoir. K.C.C.
<u>RUFF</u>	Sept. 22nd in company with Spotted Redshank at Chelker reservoir. R.P.
<u>GREEN SANDPIPER</u>	July 10th one on Denton Lake. K.C.C. July 10th and 27th on Ben Rhydding filter beds. E.S.S.
<u>COMMON REDSHANK</u>	First date Feb. 27th.
<u>SPOTTED REDSHANK</u>	Sept. 14th on Chelker. K.C.C. Later joined by Ruff.

Ornithological Section - continued

<u>GREENSHANK</u>	August 21st 2 at Swinsty reservoir. W.F.F. Sept. 10th and 11th, 2 at Ben Rhydding filter beds. E.S.S.
<u>OYSTER CATCHER</u>	April 27th, one at Esscroft near Burley. K.C.C. July and August a pair at Starbotton. H.J.W.
<u>BLACK TERN</u>	Oct. 1st one at Ben Rhydding filter beds. E.S.S.
<u>LITTLE AUK</u>	Nov. 1st one very tired on Beamsley Moor. W.N.S.
<u>CORNCRAKE</u>	April 13th one taken from a cat at Riffa. H.M. Heard at Burley Woodhead calling in June but as the long grass was cut it is doubtful whether they nested successfully. E.S.S.

List of Initials.

C.G.B.	Mr. C.G. Booth
O.M.P.	Mrs. O.M. Pennock
H.M.	Mr. H. Marjoram.
E.S.S.	Mr. E. Skinner
R.P.	Mr. R. Parkinson
W.N.S.	Wharfedale Naturalists' Society
W.F.F.	Mr. W. Fearnley
G.H.	Mr. G. Harrison
H.J.W.	Mr. H.J. Williamson
K.C.C.	Dr. K.C. Crosbie
E.A.W.G.	Miss E. Gill
W.F.	Mr. W. Flesher
A.C.M.D.	Mr. C. Duncan
A.E.P.	Mr. A. Pullan

TRAP REPORT

This year we have ringed 1,745 birds of 55 species, against 654 birds and 44 species last year. Since we built our first trap in 1948 a total of 4,392 birds have been ringed of 72 different species. New species ringed this year are Blackoap, Pied Flycatcher, Jay, Fieldfare and Nightjar.

We have had quite a number of local recoveries and three good long distance ones namely:-

A Kestrel ringed 27.6.54. at Ilkley was recovered on 9.1.55. at Lancing, Sussex.

A Lapwing ringed 22.5.54. in Scotland by one of our members was recovered in Denmark a year later.

A Blackbird ringed on 17.10.55. in Ilkley was recovered on 19.11.55. in Hossegor (Landes) France.

W.F. FEARNLEY,
Recorder.

WILDFOWL COUNTS 1955.

As in previous years, various members of the Society have taken part in the National Wildfowl Counts, which are now organised by the Wildfowl Trust at Slimbridge. Lindly, Swinsty, Fewston and Grimwith Reservoirs have been counted regularly, and Farnley Lake occasionally.

The weather apparently affected the number of wildfowl visiting the waters counted, as fewer ducks were seen this year. In the first three months, all reservoirs and lakes were partly frozen, and sometimes completely frozen over. During the summer, a very long dry spell caused a drought, and the reservoirs were very nearly empty by September. Even by 11th December, the levels were still very low, but snow and rain after that date filled them before the end of the year.

The most important details from the Counts were as follows:-

MALLARD

Maximum number of 400 on 23rd Jan, on all waters.
On 23rd July the total was only 70.

TEAL

A few usually seen on most water, but not always present.
75 were seen on Grimwith on 28th August. About 100 were found on Farnley Lake on 11th Dec. and about 150 on Fewston on 29th December.

WIGEON

Rather irregular during the winter. 35 seen on Lindley and 20 on Grimwith on 20th March. About 30 were seen on Swinsty on 29th Dec.

PINTAIL

A single drake was seen on Swinsty on 29th Dec. and on several days afterwards.

SHOVELER

A party of 6 were recorded on Lindley on 18th Sept. and 2 on Swinsty on the same date. 2 were seen on Farnley Lake on 11th Dec.

SCAUP

A female was seen on Grimwith on 31st July and on subsequent dates by a number of observers. There were 8 Tufted Ducks on the reservoir for comparison.

TUFTED DUCK

Usually recorded on Lindley and Farnley Lake, but also recorded on all waters on various dates. 28 were seen on Lindley on 23rd Jan.

POCHARD

On 23rd Jan. 3 were seen on Lindley and 6 on Swinsty. Not recorded again until 3 turned up on Swinsty on 13th Nov.

GOLDEN-EYE

Recorded on most reservoirs from January to March. A maximum of 16 were seen on 6th March on Lindley, and 9 on Fewston on 20th Nov.

COMMON SCOTER

5 were seen on Fewston on 13th November.

GOOSANDER

1 was seen on Fewston on 23rd January. 5 males and 4 females occurred on Grimwith on 20th March. 2 males and 3 females were seen on Farnley Lake on 11th Dec.

Wildfowl Counts 1955 - continued

SHELDUCK

A single bird stayed for about half an hour on Grimwith on 28th August.

CANADA GOOSE

Several records of a few birds on all reservoirs but Lindley, probably from the flock at Harewood Park. A maximum of 33 was recorded on Fewston on 29th Dec.

For breeding records, see Ornithological Report.

E. SKINNER.