

THE WHARFEDALE NATURALIST

VOLUME 75

Review of the year 2020

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Moths	Mike & Joyce Clerk
Spiders	Stef Pearse
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Weather	Peter & Sheila Bancroft

WHARFEDALE NATURALISTS SOCIETY

Membership 461 December 2020

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FOREWORD

Given the pandemic it will be no surprise to anyone that this Review will be somewhat different to the norm. However, in considering the past year our Society has many positives to report, indeed, far more than I could ever have imagined earlier in the year as the pandemic took hold. Not least of these is the ways in which we have been able to keep close to our members through several initiatives which have both fulfilled the need to keep in touch and entertained us. I am delighted to be able to say that these initiatives have come to fruition thanks to the efforts of a variety of Committee members who have proved more adept than me in coming up with ideas and getting them off the ground!

In truth, when it finally dawned on me the extent to which we would have to close down our activities I really thought that it would be a year of decline for the Society in every way but this has most certainly not been the case. The weekly circulation of Nature Notes, the 'Zoom' Webinars, the Competitions etc., have led the way in keeping our supporters engaged, entertained and informed and you have responded accordingly. Indeed I have been truly humbled by your loyalty and support, such that, as I write, our membership numbers have again increased and the year has been characterised for me by the many positive and supportive (mostly telephone of course!) conversations I have had with members on a variety of topics. In sum, despite circumstances that none of us could have imagined, for the Society this has been a year of advance and progress and I want to thank each and every one of you for making this possible.

However we cannot escape the fact that the positive news for our Society has not been matched by trends in the wider world of the environment and natural history with shocking species declines and dreadful climate change developments both of which will need drastic local and worldwide action to reverse. It has been good to see the rise of other local environmental initiatives. I am delighted we are increasingly liaising with organisations such as Climate Change Ilkley, the Addingham Environment Group, Wildlife Friendly Otley, Ilkley Clean River Campaign and the Environment Group of the U3A. All are contributing to raising awareness of environmental issues and, in many cases, taking action at the local level to mitigate the damaging trends. In this context you can rest assured that your Society is continuing to contribute through being major players in the running of five local nature reserves as well as providing grants for environmental projects throughout Wharfedale. This is an aspect of our work of which I am especially proud and please remember that it is your membership subscriptions, and donations where applicable, that enable us to develop this aspect of our activities.

For the 2020 Financial Year your Committee again opted to keep our subscription level at a low level, not least because this does seem to be attractive to our members, both new and long-standing, and therefore contributes to keeping our membership numbers at a very high level thereby increasing the monies available for environmental initiatives. In this regard any donation, however small, helps us to do more. So, if you feel you can assist us in this way, please do so.

As a counterpoint to the good news about the Society's current position it has been a wrench to be unable to meet at Christchurch because of the pandemic. Getting together on a winter's evening for a wildlife/environmental talk is understandably not to all members liking but I and many other members do value the opportunity to meet up and enjoy a social occasion whilst being entertained and informed at the same time. As I write it does look like we will lose the whole of the 2020/21 Christchurch season but we are planning ahead on the assumption that we will be able to proceed with a normal Summer Programme and be back at Christchurch in September 2021. This is not to take anything away from the great impact of the Webinars and I am hopeful we may be able to offer this option on occasion in future winter seasons when things are back to normal.

I was particularly saddened that the pandemic disruption severely impacted on our celebrations for the Society's 75th Anniversary year. Several of the planned activities had to be abandoned although we were able to proceed with the planting of a 75 metre native species hedge at Nell Bank Outdoor Centre and the printing of a superb memento 'Nature Notes' Booklet thanks to the efforts of John Stidworthy and our four 'Nature Notes' regular contributors. We had two celebrity/celebratory lectures planned but still hope to run these later in 2021.

I see no sign that the pandemic has reduced the wildlife recording efforts of our members so I am delighted that our stalwart and dedicated Recorders have still been able to produce their usual Reports which are, of course, a mainstay of this Review. As usual I want to use this opportunity to praise and thank our Recorders for all their work through the year and their prompt submission of their Reports which enables the amazingly speedy publication of this Review. Special thanks to Diane Morris who has resigned this year as one of our two Butterfly Recorders. Welcome to Nyree Fearnley who has replaced Diane.

Many thanks are also owed to John Stidworthy and all Officers and Members of the WNS Committee who this year have excelled themselves in 'keeping the show on the road'. It has been a massive pleasure for me to work with them.

Finally, thanks to you, our members, for all your brilliant support.

Peter Riley *President*

Events Programme – May 2020 to April 2021

The usual summer programme of walks, botany outings and bird watching was postponed when the first coronavirus lockdown was introduced in March, and eventually abandoned as unworkable under the restrictions that followed. This was a great disappointment to the Society and its members, but members soon settled into a routine of taking even more notice than usual of the natural history in their gardens and their immediate neighbourhood.

By the autumn, gatherings of people indoors were still not possible, and the usual programme of talks on Tuesdays evenings in Christchurch, Ilkley, were obviously not going to happen. The committee decided to trial short talks via the medium of Zoom on a Tuesday evening instead. A format of a 45 minute presentation by a speaker, followed by a chance for questions, has been a hit. It is not quite the same as all being able to meet together, but is a welcome substitute, and looks like continuing until such a time as the traditional meetings are once more possible

TUESDAY EVENING TALKS EARLY 2020

14 January

GARDENING FOR WILDLIFE Peter & Anne Riley

Creating a garden that is a haven for wildlife and benefits the environment has been the ambition of Peter and Anne Riley for 20 years and they have clearly been very successful. Awareness of the effects of agricultural intensification, climate change and population growth resulting in habitat loss has been a spur along with their passion for the living world and concern for its protection.

Peter's talk to Wharfedale Naturalists provided a fascinating insight into their approach to gardening.

So how can we utilise some of their practices?

Suggestions include not using any chemicals in the garden, introducing trees and providing cover and nesting for birds. Avoid buying peat based compost and ignore the moss in your lawn. Moss helps the soil retain water and provides nesting material. Worms are to be encouraged, they aerate and fertilise a lawn and enhance drainage.

Ivy is a good source of pollen from flowers and later food from berries. Wasps feed their larvae on aphids so are helpful and a pond provides an environment for frogs, newts, aquatic plants and many insects. Ladybirds are your best friend for controlling aphids. Many varieties are beneficial but the non-native Harlequin species can cause harm by eating the eggs and larvae of other varieties which may have led to the increasing rarity of the 2 spot Ladybird.

Numerous insect attracting plant species were mentioned including Buddleia, Scabious, teasels, Cosmos and many more.

Peter's talk was illustrated by superb photographs taken by Anne demonstrating the diversity of small insects, moths, butterflies, birds, mammals and plant life found at varying times within their thriving garden.

A memorable talk given by a real enthusiast. Lots to think about as spring approaches.

Alison Roberts

8 January

LIMESTONE LEPIDOPTERA Dave Wainwright & Kay Andrews

Our speakers were two representatives of Butterfly Conservation who talked about conserving key species of butterflies and moths, with an emphasis on those in Yorkshire. Dr. Dave Wainwright, regional officer for Northern England, spoke of the decline in butterfly numbers and the even greater decline in moth populations and efforts being made in

Yorkshire to conserve those species most at risk. The decline has a direct effect on other wildlife, especially birds, as Lepidoptera are an important source of food.

One butterfly, the Duke of Burgundy, has declined substantially in the North York Moors. Dave spoke of the efforts being made to halt this decline and of negotiations with landowners for the improvement of habitat. This can be difficult due to possible clashes with the interests of profitable game shooting preserves in the area. This butterfly is now increasing in numbers although the project has been difficult and expensive as much brushwood had to be cleared. A critically endangered moth is the Dark bordered Beauty whose food source, Creeping Willow, is threatened by overgrazing on its one remaining site in Yorkshire. Factors other than habitat also affect moth numbers e.g. climate change and increasing light pollution around towns.

After an interval Kay Andrews spoke of her work as Project Officer for the Limestone Lepidoptera Project aimed at conserving threatened butterfly and moth populations in the Dales. She thanked various organisations, including the Wharfedale Naturalists who are supporting this initiative financially. She asked for support from volunteers in counting and recording, gathering information on where these species have been seen, habitat improvement etc. Anyone wishing to help in any way can contact Kay at

kandrews@butterflyconservation.org.

Peter and Janet Burns

11 February

NATIONAL PARKS OF THE WESTERN USA

David Alred

Wharfedale Naturalists were treated to an excellent presentation by David, a long-standing member and former President of WNS. The talk ranged over a huge variety of landscapes, from the red, weathered stones of Utah, Nevada, Colorado and Arizona, to the temperate rainforests of the Pacific Northwest, to the geothermal geysers and hot springs of Yellowstone, to the mountainous Grand Teton National Park, which rises to 13,500 feet. The focus was rather more on landscape than on wildlife overall. David has a real eye for the effects of light and shade on rock, the almost architectural structures of the weathered sandstone in Bryce, Zion and Arches National Parks, and the varied colours of spring flower meadows in the more mountainous regions.

As well as familiar vistas, such as that from the south rim of the Grand Canyon, David treated us to glimpses into some of the less well-known National Parks, such as the very lush Olympic Park, close to Seattle, where moisture-laden cloud has

created a temperate rainforest; Coral Pink Sand Dunes, an inland area where dunes reach heights of up to 750 feet; and Glacier National Park, on the border with Canada, which contains 'Triple Divide Peak', a three-way watershed where waters drain from the summit to the Pacific, Atlantic and Arctic Oceans.

The audience will have come away with a much greater appreciation of the huge variety and grandeur of the scenery across the Western United States and in many cases, undoubtedly, a desire to visit some of these beautiful landscapes.

Helen Steward

25 February

THE BURREN

Neil Barrett

The Burren is an area of limestone found in the far west of Ireland a little south of Galway Bay and Neil has been fascinated by it since a first visit in 1980 showed him the unique character of the area and its wealth of flora. Despite occupying less than 1% of the total area of Ireland it contains around 75% of the plants found there and has 24 of the 28 species of Irish orchids.

This is due to several factors: limestone areas being naturally rich in a wide variety of species, the Gulf Stream which has a warming effect along these western shores and the grazing of the region by feral goats as well as cattle taken there to graze in an Irish form of seasonal transhumance. This has the effect of keeping down long, coarse grasses and allowing the smaller species to flourish.

The great variety of plant life, which includes Mediterranean species as well as Arctic alpiners which survived the last ice age, is also created by the different types of limestone landscape present. Neil explained how these differences helped create such a wide variety of species. The oddest features are areas called turloughs, temporary lakes which drain away through the underlying limestone. There are also large areas of limestone pavement, limestone grassland with very thin soils, and areas of limestone heath, with acid soils which have formed in hollow areas.

Neil's lovely photos illustrated the beauty and occasional strangeness of the plants, many of which are familiar to us but sometimes in a slightly different Irish form. All of the above should arouse a desire to visit this amazing area.

Peter and Janet Burns

TUESDAY EVENING ZOOM MEETINGS

6 October

YORKSHIRE WILDLIFE TRUST

Graham Standring

Amidst all the heartbreak and hardship of Covid has emerged amazing creativity that allows us to attend and participate virtually in many of the activities we enjoyed BC. Wharfedale Naturalists Society has swiftly moved into this new virtual world such that its members can still enjoy a winter programme of talks, from the safety of our homes.

About 90 members joined this Zoom presentation. Graham Standring has worked in conservation for years, for the last three mostly developing and protecting the Trust's 13 nature reserves in Yorkshire. He gave us a whistle stop tour of all 13 of them and the wildlife treasures to be found in each. His fascinating and informative talk was beautifully

illustrated with his photographs. Five of the reserves, some very small, are to be found in the Ingleborough area. From meadows of brilliant yellow globeflowers and a variety of orchids including the rare small white, to elephant hawk moths, barn, little and short-eared owls, interpretative panels built into Stories in Stone pedestals, to the extensive restoration of dry stone walls, these reserves offer hours of pleasure and discovery for visitors, volunteers, trainees and groups of city-based asylum seekers getting possibly their first taste of the English countryside.

Of the other sites in different parts of Yorkshire, the one closest geographically and emotionally to us here in Wharfedale, is of course, Grass Wood, a 78 hectare SSSI, and one of the local sites in which the WNS has carried out volunteer work for decades. Sadly Grass Wood is badly affected by ash dieback with trees having to be felled for safety reasons. A few trees are showing resistance, so the hope is that their seeds can be used for replanting. Graham ended with a photo from Grass Wood that must have won all hearts: a tawny owl so confident of not being disturbed during lock-down that it was nesting in the hollow base of a large tree.

Peta Constable

20 October

BEAVERS & PINE MARTENS

Sarah King

The question of the impact on the local environment of the reintroduction of beavers and pine martens was presented, analysed and discussed at yesterday's evening zoom meeting. Jointly hosted by the society and Yorkshire Rewilding Network,

Sara King put the case for rewilding very strongly. A slide of a typical beaver habitat showed the beneficial impact of dam structures, standing water, and the opening up of the woodland canopy. She emphasised that her study was to measure in a consistent way and analyse data rather than rely on guesswork or anecdotal evidence. She explained how a study begins and how the framework for monitoring is devised and implemented. In the case of the beaver projects, aquatic invertebrates, bats and bryophytes, were monitored to establish whether there were changes in prevalence and variety before and after beaver introduction. Monitoring was enabled by technology, scientists and volunteers. In a relatively short space of time, results were demonstrated. It was the increase in both bat numbers and rarer species that was particularly striking.

Turning to the re-introduction of pine martens, Ms King said these were harder to monitor as the animals move around more and impacts are more subtle. Studies have shown that their presence benefits red squirrels as pine martens predate grey squirrels. A concern was that pine martens might affect the success of breeding birds, but after two years of pine marten introduction it has been found that there was no crash in bird breeding numbers. This was a talk which was very well presented, well received and provoked a lot of questions which the speaker answered with detail, passion and humour.

Polly Hosking

3 November

SPIDERS

Stef Pearse

Stef Pearse was welcomed to last night's virtual meeting of Wharfedale Naturalists. Her aim was "to make spiders interesting". Stef succeeded by providing an enlightening

insight into her role as spider recorder for Wharfedale Naturalists alongside her day job as an ecologist.

Stef outlined the classification and prevalence of spiders which can be found inside and outside in a wide range of habitats.

They prey on invertebrates including other spiders and are in turn eaten by small creatures. They can be helpful to farmers by eating pests and thus enhancing crop yield.

How do you identify a spider? It may seem obvious but isn't always. Spiders come under the class of Arachnids as do daddy long legs and scorpions (which are not spiders)

Spiders have 2 body parts (head/thorax and abdomen) 4 pairs of legs, 6-8 eyes, no wings and no antennae.

There are 670 species of spider in the UK of which two (the Fenraft and Ladybird spiders) are legally protected under The Wildlife and Countryside Act.

Common varieties that we might all encounter are the Cellar Spider which is found in the house often in cupboards or around ceilings, the Walnut Orbweb spider which is brown, has a squashed appearance and is generally found in gardens and parks. The Garden Spider is bright red or brown with spiny legs and the Crab Spider which can be well camouflaged on plants awaiting an unsuspecting insect that is searching for nectar.

If you are keen to learn more Stef recommended two guides: 'Britain's Spiders' and 'Spiders of Britain and Europe'. The Field Studies Council also produced an article about spider identification this year.

Take home message? Live with your spiders, they are harmless and helpful. If they are inside your house it is because they don't want to be outside!

Alison Roberts

16 November

PLANTS, PILLS AND POISON: HOW PLANTS BECAME TODAY'S MEDICINES Ian Brand

Humans from antiquity have been fascinated by the medicinal properties of plants and indeed, With a career in medicine and a passion for botany, Ian talked most fascinatingly about the relationship between plants and modern drugs. He regrets the modern tendency to see a clear split between the two camps of herbal and pharmaceutical medicine, especially as about one third of modern drugs were originally derived from plants, even though some of these can now be chemically manufactured. He cited quinine, morphine, digoxin, aspirin and steroids as examples.

Ian took us through the stories that led to the treatment of diseases such as heart failure (digitalis) malaria (quinine), pain relief (opium) anti-coagulants (aspirin and warfarin) and others. We are all familiar with aspirin, sometimes known as the willow to wonder drug. The Rev Edward Stone in the 18th century is credited realising the potential of dried willow bark after noting its similarity in taste to the cinchona tree of Peru and Bolivia. He experimented on himself and others with dried willow bark and concluded it was effective in the relief of pain and fever especially when quinine from the dried bark of cinchona was added. The use of dried willow bark led to the later identification of salicylate the precursor of aspirin.

50% of the world's population is at risk from malaria. Known way back into antiquity, and probably originating in Africa, malaria, also known as ague and marsh fever, was prevalent in parts of Europe including in the marshes of Kent and Essex until recent times. Following the conquests of South America it was transmitted by Europeans to colonies like Peru and Bolivia where the indigenous people learnt to use dried

cinchona bark to treat it. Exploited ruthlessly by the colonials, quinine was for decades used to combat the effect of malariaand tastes good in gin and Dubonnet as attested to by the late Queen Mother!

Peta Constable

8 December

WATER IN THE DALES Prof Rick Batterbee

Joint Meeting given by Climate Action Ilkley and the Ilkley Clean River Group

Professor Rick Battarbee asked, 'Water in the Dales, are we keeping up with Climate Change?' to which the answer was a resounding, NO! In it he illustrated the effects that increasingly frequent intense rainfall events have on the water systems

We all remember Boxing Day 2015 when Ilkley became an island, cut off by flooding not only on the A65 and the Moor road but via Silsden as well. Storms and heavy rainfall are becoming more frequent and the effects are more far reaching than traffic disruption, pollution being a major one. During extreme wet weather conditions sewage plants such as Ashlands Water Treatment Works become overloaded and excess influent is diverted straight into the river without prior treatment. What should be a rare occurrence is not any more. There were 201 spills in 2019. A survey staffed by volunteers, with grants from local charities, has taken samples of the water at strategic intervals and after heavy rainfall, between Addingham and Burley in Wharfedale. These samples have analysed the density of E.coli bacteria in the water, of special importance if Ilkley is to be granted a Bathing Water Beach Status. An important outcome is to increase the pressure for the responsibility of cleaning up, on to Yorkshire Water, but waste from livestock is an issue too.

However the main cause of too much water in the Dales is climate change and until that issue is properly addressed the situation will continue. We can all make changes in our lives and gardens which will help, alongside the need for massive investment in river infrastructure. As in past talks, the question and answer session provided a lot of interesting views.

Polly Hoskins

LADYBIRDS REPORT

There was a total of 113 records of all native species (13 down on last year) representing over 750 individual ladybirds, slightly more than last year. Harlequin records fell for the second year in a row to just 41 representing around 150 individuals (down again from 2019). It's difficult to draw any conclusions from this. Whilst there may have been more opportunities for recording in a very local area there has been less opportunity to range more widely in Wharfedale because of Covid restrictions.

7-SPOT LADYBIRD *Coccinella 7-punctata*



51 records of around 420 insects. A good year again for the 7-spot. The most notable records came from Otley Wetlands (OWNR) where Paul Purvis recorded counts of 144 and 98 in June. Nettles and thistles are good places to look because they often support good numbers of aphids, and on fences and under leaves in the autumn when ladybirds are looking for a safe place to hibernate.

The first record of the year was on 16 March. Peter Riley (PR) found one by the garage at Woodhill. Also on 24 March Peter Bancroft found one in his garden in Burley, as did David & Joan Alred (DJA) and Ruth Paynter in Otley, all on the same day. I (AR) found one in Moor Lane in Burley on 27 March. Through April there were nine records of ones and twos from Woodhill, PP's garden in Otley, OWRN, Burley Moor, Burley Woodhead (Ken & Pat Limb, KPL), and Gallows Hill. Just three records for May, all around Otley (PP, AR). Mike and Joyce Clerk (MJC) found one in their Otley garden on 2 June. Through June, the best sightings were from OWRN with 50+ with larvae and pupae on aphid infested nettles on 14th. 144 by the access track and round the stockyard (mostly on nettles) on 16th and 98 on 26th. Numbers were lower in July with a peak of 10 on thistles at OWRN on 17th. Sightings also came from West Chevin Quarry, Gallows Hill, The Chevin (PP), Woodhill and Stead (AR). 10 records in August from PP and AR with a maximum of seven on the Bull Farm path towards Stead on 6th (AR). Six records in September, same places, same recorders! Just three records in October: maximum four on fence posts on the Farnley - Leathley footpath. In November I was finding small clusters of up to eight under ivy leaves on fences.

EYED LADYBIRD *Anatis ocellata*

No records

CREAM SPOT LADYBIRD *Calvia 14-guttata*

Five records each of one individual.

PP had one land on his garden table in Otley on 19 April, MJC had one in their Otley garden on 1st July. I had one around the Bull Farm on 22 August and another in the same area on a fence

on 5 November. The other sighting was in Otley Cemetery on 31 October (PP).

2-SPOT LADYBIRD *Adalia 2-punctata*

Seven records of 12 individuals - a slight improvement on 2019. DJA started the year with two in their Burley garden on 23 March. I found a nice 4-spotted form on the Bull Farm path on 5 June. PP found two of the typical form at OWRN on 16 June. I was delighted to find one on ragwort at Woodhill on 19 July. PP found another of the typical form in Otley Cemetery on 31 August. I found four at OWRN on dogwood (seems to be a stronghold) on 14 September. The last sighting was of one on a fence near Stead with a harlequin on 4 November (AR).

ADONIS LADYBIRD *Hippodamia variegata*

An exciting finding of a mating pair plus one at OWRN on 14 June. (PP)

This species is only recorded in occasional years.

10-SPOT LADYBIRD *Adalia 10-punctata*

A small ladybird (~4mm) which like the 2-spot it is very variable in colour and pattern. It has brown legs whereas the 2-spot has black legs. A very good year comparatively for this species with seven records, each of one individual.

First record - one (*decempustulata*) on willow at Gallows Hill on 25 March (PP).

One on a fence near Stead Wood on 23 April (also *decempustulata*) (AR). One on grave flowers in Pool Rd Cemetery on 7 May (PP). Two sightings in Woodhill garden: 27 May and 22 July (*decempunctata*) (AR).

One at Gallows Hill, also 22 July. This had only six obvious spots, but size and leg colour confirm 10-spot. (PP) and a last one on a fence amongst ivy leaves near Stead Wood on 5 November (AR).

14-SPOT LADYBIRD *Propylea 14-punctata*

11 records, 17 ladybirds. A good year. Sightings between 16 May and 17 August from Woodhill, Stead, Bull Farm path and on Burley moor, all AR.

22-SPOT LADYBIRD *Psyllobora 22-punctata*

16 records; 206 ladybirds - a very good year, but mostly because of a good population on the Bull Farm path near Scalebor.

First record 24 March from Ruth Paynter's Otley garden. Phil Galtry found one on rhubarb on his Ilkley allotment on 15 April. One landed on a chair in PP's garden on 9 May and Gordon Haycock found one on his Otley allotment on 21 June. They were slow to appear on the Bull Farm path and my first record wasn't until 20 May. By the beginning of August numbers started building with 12 on the 5th, 44 on the 6th, 33 on the 9th and a record 55 on 17 August and still 46 on 30 August. Nearly all were found on mildewed hogweed. Several sightings at Woodhill through July and August on mildewed meadowsweet. The last record was 14 September at OWRN (AR)

ORANGE LADYBIRD *Halysia 16-guttata*

Four records, six individuals of this mildew feeding species. Ken and Pat Limb (KPL) found two at Bolton Abbey on 20 May. I found one at the top of Moor Lane on 1 July, one in the moth trap at Woodhill on 12 August (PR) and two on a fence near Stead on 4 November.

LARCH LADYBIRD *Aphidecta obliteratea*

Just one late record

On 9 December I found one on a fence near pine trees past the Bull Farm whilst I was photographing what turned out to be pine aphids.

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PINE LADYBIRD *Exochomus 4-pustulatus*

No records this year.

KIDNEY SPOT LADYBIRD *Chilocorus renipustulatus*

Six records of 82 ladybirds

All on ash trees at Gallows Hill between 25 March and 2 June. Maximum 36 on 7 April. All records PP.

HARLEQUIN LADYBIRD *Harmonia axyridis*

41 records of around 150 ladybirds

Harlequins were recorded from 14 January to late November. Most of the records came from Paul Purvis, but Susan Barton, Audrey Gramshaw, (and AR and PR) also submitted records

The majority are still the colour form *succinea* with just a few *spectabilis* and even fewer *conspicua*.

Thanks to everyone who submitted records, and apologies to anyone not mentioned in the text. Special thanks again to Paul Purvis for his meticulous recording.

Anne Riley

Ben Rhydding Gravel Pits Local Nature Reserve Some highlights of 2020

Families Engaging with Nature

It was wonderful to see so many local families, couples and individuals discover the reserve for the first time and become regular visitors. During lockdown this special little place provided much needed space, fresh air and the opportunity to engage with nature. The glorious weather in March and April certainly helped.

Nature Trail

With funding from Betty's, the Harrogate based Open Country team put in oak way marker posts and zinc rubbing plaques as the first stage of our nature trail just in time before the first lockdown hit.

Trees in the Right Place

We have all heard about the importance of planting trees in the 'right' place. BRGP is no exception. Our workgroup team put in over 100 trees donated by the Woodland Trust along the roadside hedge, filling in gaps. These were supplemented by plantings of mainly holly by Open Country with the balance of the Betty's funding. Hopefully we will be able to attract first brood holly blue in years to come.

We also removed a lot of old hawthorns that were in the 'wrong place'. Between the pond and the river, we had dense stands in an area that, in Freda Drapers day, were alive with all manner of flowering plants. Today nothing much grew in the understorey, so it will be great to bring this area back to life. We utilized the wood to create a 30m long dead hedge along the top of the river cliff. The original purpose was to construct a barrier to stop folk falling five metres into the river on this stretch of eroded bank but it was great to create a new habitat in the process!

Mini Meadow

This was the first year of our now extended mini meadow which has proved a real magnet for flying insects. We planted it up with home grown wildflowers appropriate to the site, under the guidance of Steve Peel. The fencing showed its worth as inside the fence the new plants flourished, showing that it was the rabbits more than the very dry spring that was curtailing growth elsewhere.

Records Over the Season

Mark H visited almost every day and recorded an impressive 22 species of butterfly including purple hairstreak but sadly only one white-letter hairstreak.

Steve Amos did a great job posting monthly bird records for visitors to see on the noticeboard. The site remains a reliable spot for kingfisher, little egret, sand martin and scrub warblers.

Tom and Susan did a very thorough job resurveying our plants, recording 138 species, 7 of which were new. For more details, please visit the BRGP website. It was another poor year for our southern marsh and common spotted orchids with fewer than 30 flowering spikes.

Volunteers

A big thank you to our volunteers, the established team and newcomers alike for their hard work and enthusiasm This special local place is and will continue to be a source of escape and renewal for nature and people alike.

Steve Parkes



Annulet (PM)



Puss moth (DoC)

BUTTERFLY REPORT

Summary

In the past, a large proportion of our records have been received from Lower Wharfedale where the majority of recorders live, but this year we received even fewer from further up the Dale, possibly due to the circumstances of Covid 19.

Small Tortoiseshell, Orange-tip, and Green Hairstreak all had excellent years with numbers significantly up on 2019, which in itself was a good year for all these species. It was good to see a return of Purple Hairstreak, after an absence last year, and also that it was recorded at 3 different sites.

Large White, Small White, and Brimstone all had fantastic years too. As well as the Addingham Transects we noticed that there were many garden records too for Large and Small White. We hope that watching and recording butterflies during lockdown brought some joy to people's lives at that difficult time.

The most dramatic loser of this year was without doubt the Painted Lady, which fell from 2,037 individuals in 2019 to just 13 individuals this year. However, there is hope in the fact that it is known to have exceptional years, which usually fall around every 10 years, and 2019 was definitely a Painted Lady year, so we should be able to look forward to better counts again in future years.

It was a shame not to have a sighting of a Silver-washed Fritillary this year, but we feel that this is a species to watch out for, as we suspect that it will be seen again in our area in the near future, and it is a stunning butterfly.

The ups

Small Tortoiseshell	continues to do well
Green Hairstreak	beters the excellent 2019
Purple Hairstreak	back after last year's absence

The downs

Wall	declining
Gatekeeper	only reported by 6 members
Comma	showed major decline
Painted Lady	severely dramatic decline

Addingham Transects

One of the principal aims of the Addingham Environment Group is to record village wildlife populations. The Group began recording birds and butterflies in 2017. In May 2019 following discussions with experienced bee recorder Maurice White and a successful volunteer recruitment drive the group started a joint bumblebee and, with the assistance of Diane Morris, butterfly recording scheme.

Having established a number of small wildflower sites within Addingham's Green Spaces the recording scheme was designed not only to document the abundance and composition of bees and butterflies in the village, but also to assess the effectiveness of the wildflower projects in attracting pollinators.

In 2020 volunteer observers recorded bee and butterfly populations along 10 village transects at approximately weekly intervals from 1 April to 30 September (bees) and 1 April to 31 October (butterflies).

In total 1,400 bees and 1,092 butterflies were recorded.

The number of butterfly records added to the WNS database from the transects was 535, which accounts for 15% of the total WNS records.

Seventeen species of butterfly were identified. The most common butterflies were the Small White, Large White and Small Tortoiseshell.

This is a fantastic start. We look forward to next year's results.

The Big Butterfly Count

Wildlife charity Butterfly Conservation reports that this year's Big Butterfly Count (17 July – 9 August 2020) has seen a reduction in the average number of butterflies logged per count of -34% in comparison with 2019, and the lowest average number of butterflies logged overall since the event began eleven years ago. In all, during this year's Big Butterfly Count, over 1.4 million butterflies were counted across the UK.

The reports stated that the fall in butterfly numbers may be due to a number of factors. An unusually warm spring led many species to emerge earlier than usual. So only the tail end of the flight period for many species may have been caught during this year's Big Butterfly Count. It's important to look at butterfly trends over longer periods, so BC's scientists will be using these results alongside other datasets to get a clearer understanding of what is happening.

Encouragingly, 2020 also saw the highest number of butterfly sightings ever submitted by the general public with 111,628 participants submitting a record-breaking 145,249 counts this year, an increase of 25% on 2019. It seems that, in a very dark and challenging year, the opportunity for getting out into nature and helping as citizen scientists was very welcome to people who were able to participate in the Count this year.

2020 in detail

As always, our analysis is based on records we receive, and influenced by a number of factors. For example, if people no longer visit a site, visit less frequently, or don't send in records, then consequently numbers will be down. Our recording system is not scientific, but it does give us an *indication* of what is happening in our countryside and continues to be extremely valuable for this reason. In particular, our records may be used to assist the opposition of proposals for the development of wildlife rich land in our area.

We received 3,814 records this year, compared to 4,177 in 2019, which is only 10% less, and still over 800 more than in 2018. Small Tortoiseshell has knocked the Ringlet from top spot in abundance this year with 1601 sightings. In fact, Ringlet was down to 5th place, after Meadow Brown, 1030 sightings, Green Hairstreak, 852 sightings, and Peacock with 839 sightings.

Records this year were definitely boosted by the Addingham Transect walkers, but we also perhaps received fewer records for some species due to Covid 19 restrictions. You could perhaps also speculate that we may have received more garden, and local records, due to Covid 19.

28 species were recorded, which is one less than in 2019. We had no records of Clouded Yellow, Marbled White, or Silver-washed Fritillary this year, but we did have Purple Hairstreak back, after an absence in 2019.

BEST PLACES TO SEE BUTTERFLIES

Locations of peak counts

Site	Butterfly peak count
Bastow Wood, Grassington	Dingy Skipper, Scotch Argus
Stainburn Forest	Small Skipper
Timble Ings	Large Skipper, Meadow Brown
Farnley	Large White, Green-veined White

Addingham	Small White, Small Tortoiseshell
Otley	Orange-tip, Green-veined White
Sun Lane NR	Brimstone
Fewston & Lindley	Wall
Otley Wetlands NR	Speckled Wood, Gatekeeper
Kilnsey	Small Heath, Dark Green Fritillary Northern Brown Argus
Duck Street Quarry	Ringlet, Common Blue
Skyreholme	Red Admiral
Burley	Painted Lady
Norwood Edge	Peacock, Comma
Barden Moor	Small Copper
Gallows Hill NR	Purple Hairstreak White-letter Hairstreak
Ilkley / Addingham Moor	Green Hairstreak
Menston	Holly Blue

INDIVIDUAL SPECIES REPORTS

Details of individual species follow. For each species the common name is followed by the Latin name. The first reference number is that of the old Bradley Fletcher numbering system which has now been replaced by the Aggasiz numbering system (figures in brackets).

The number of records in 2020 is compared with the average of the TEN previous years, and the percentage change is given.

Number of sites is based on number of 1km squares.

The initials in square brackets denote individual observers whose names are at the end of the report. A number of records came in after the report was prepared and are therefore not included. These records however will be added to the WNS database.

HESPERIDAE (SKIPPER)

Dingy Skipper *Erynnis tages* 1532 (57.001)

1 site, 1 observer, 1 individual

First sighting 30/5 Bastow Wood, Grassington [LW] when 1 was seen

Last sighting As above

Peak Count As above

Unsurprisingly there was just one record this year. It is an elusive butterfly at the best of times, add to that the fact that it was flying around the first period of lockdown when we were restricted in our outdoor activities we have this welcome confirmation that the Dingy Skipper is to be found at the new location at Bastow Wood. This is not its usual adopted habitat of brownfield sites recolonising with Bird's-foot Trefoil, but open limestone pavement. Furthermore just outside our recording area in Skipton Quarry a peak count of 23 was made on 25 May, so we can conclude that even without us watching it probably had a good year.

Small Skipper *Thymelicus sylvestris* 1526 (57.006)

Records 58.8% DOWN, 21 sites, 15 observers, 181 individuals

First sighting 15/6 Addingham [JT] when 1 was seen

Last sighting 24/8 Bastow Wood, Grassington and Skyreholme [PM] when 4 were seen at Bastow Wood, and 1 was seen at Skyreholme

Peak Count 30/7 Lindley, Stainburn Forest [NF] when 70 were counted

This was a very bad year after the 2019 total of 1038 individuals, but the number of observers and sites was also down. Last years peak count was around 100, compared to 70 this year, although that is still not a bad count. There were only 3 counts in double figures, at Bastow Wood, Grassington [DMc] when only 10 were seen, and at Stainburn Forest, Lindley [NF] on 2 occasions with counts of 25 and 70. Bastow Wood and Otley Wetlands had the most reports.

The flight period was very similar to 2019. 2019 was a good year with records 17% up on the 10 year average, and the most reports since 2014, so it will be interesting to see what 2021 brings.

Large Skipper *Ochlodes sylvanus* 1531 (57.009)

Records 50.3% DOWN, 17 sites, 9 observers, 77 individuals

First sighting 31/05 Otley Wetlands NR [KL] when 3 were seen

Last sighting 30/07 Lindley, Stainburn Forest [NF] when 5 were seen

Peak Count 25/06 Timble Ings [KL] when 11 were counted

As with Small Skipper this wasn't a good year, with the fewest number of reports since 2001. The number of individuals was down by over 33% from 2019. The peak count of 11 was the only one in double figures, when in 2001, 2002, and 2003 the peak counts were in triple figures, so is it declining generally?

The first and last sightings were about a week earlier, so the same length of flight period. As with Small Skipper it will be interesting to see what 2021 brings. I [NF] can't think that Covid 19 restrictions were the cause as by the time that these 2 species were flying we had a bit more freedom. But then again, they are not seen in gardens very often, so perhaps there was a decline in records due to Covid 19?

PIERIDAE (WHITES)

All of the Whites, except for Green-veined White had significant increases on the 10 year average for number of records which is excellent, and numbers were up on individuals from 2019 on all of the Whites. Numbers were boosted by a group of transect walkers in Addingham, who this year added a large number of records. It was also noticed that we had a large number of garden records, so perhaps the numbers were also boosted by people being restricted this year due to Covid 19, and spending more time in their gardens.

There is also the problem of identifying Whites, which can be impossible in flight, especially as they are often flitting about too far away, and very rarely seem to settle. There were numerous unidentified Whites, as is always the case, including ones seen by ourselves as recorders. As we can only enter ones with confirmed identification it can be frustrating. Binoculars are definitely handy, but even then I often struggle, so don't be put off if you can't identify them all.

Orange Tip *Anthocharis cardamines* 1553 (58.003)

Records 122.9% UP, 71 sites, 38 observers, 740 individuals

First sighting

07/04 Burley

[DA] Addingham

[DM] Otley [DOC]

and Castley [PP]

when 2 were seen

at Burley, and 1

was seen at each of

the other 3 sites

Last sighting 21/07

Hebden [RL] when

1 was seen



Male Orange Tip (NF)

Peak Count 21/04 Otley Golf Course [CH] when 20 males and 10 females were counted

This was an excellent year with the number of individuals up by over 40% from 2019. I wonder if this is partly due to Covid 19 and the fact that people were out locally, and in their gardens more this year? For the peak count at Otley Golf Club it was noted that they were all over when walking in the Mickle Beck area [CH]. I believe that this area is normally out of bounds when the Golf Club is open, but this was when it was closed due to lockdown.

Almost all the records came from lower down the dale, with Grassington being the furthest north that they were seen, although they were seen there at 3 different sites, by 3 different recorders. The last sighting was over a month later than the next latest record, and also a month later than the latest record of 2019. In fact, there are only a handful of July records, with only one in all our records that was later than this year, on 28 July 2006.

Large White *Pieris brassicae* 1549 (58.006)

Records 127.3% UP, 43 sites, 29 observers, 566 individuals

First sighting 07/04 Menston [AG] when 1 was seen

Last sighting 29/09 Lindley Reservoir [NF] when 1 was seen

Peak Count 05/08 Farnley [NF] when 25 were counted

The number of individuals was up by almost 50% on last year, with lots of records from gardens, and also a lot from the Addingham Transect walkers. The number of records was also greatly increased by the Addingham Transect walkers, who accounted for just over 45% of the records.

The furthest up the dale that it was seen was at Kettlewell [PM]. In the Farnley and Lindley area there were some areas planted as pheasant crops which proved a magnet for this species.

Otley and Burley also had multiple records. There were 6 records into double figures this year, 3 of which were at Gallows Hill NR [SBr], 2 in a pheasant crop at Farnley [NF], and the third site was one of the Addingham Transects [MD].

Small White *Pieris rapae* 1550 (58.007)

Records 97.7% UP, 46 sites, 33 observers, 761 individuals

First sighting 24/03 Otley [PP] when 1 was seen

Last sighting 01/10 Addingham [DM] when 1 was seen

Peak Count 12/08 Addingham [MD] when 14 were counted

Again the number of records was boosted by the Addingham Transect walkers, who accounted for 40% of the records. There were slightly more individuals this year, but recorded at only 46 sites, compared to 72 in 2019.

The vast majority of records were of only 1, 2, or 3 individuals, with only 4 records out of 400 in double figures, 3 of which were at Gallows Hill NR. The furthest up the dale that it was spotted was at Kettlewell, which is the same as in 2019. The flight period was almost identical to 2019.

Green-veined White *Pieris napi* 1551 (58.008)

Records 21.7% DOWN, 71 sites, 24 observers, 677 individuals

First sighting 07/04 Otley, Gallows Hill [IW] when 1 was seen

Last sighting 13/09 Hebden [RL] when 2 were seen

Peak Count 05/08 Farnley [NF], and Knotford Nook [CH] when 25 were counted

There were 10% more individuals than 2019, at a similar number of sites. It seems perhaps a bit odd that for this White there were only 3 records from the Addingham Transect walkers, and indeed only 1 other record from Addingham [DM],

yet it was seen at multiple sites all the way up to Kettlewell in Wharfedale [PM], and Arncliffe in Littondale [PM].

Otley produced the greatest number of records by far. This White had the largest number of counts in double figures with 19 counts of 10 or more.

Clouded Yellow *Colias croceus* 1545 (58.010)

No records.

Brimstone *Gonepteryx rhamni* 1546 (58.013)

Records 76.0% UP, 31 sites, 28 observers, 114 individuals

First sighting 23/03 Otley [DA], Addingham [HB], and Ben Rhydding [JD] when 1 was seen at each site

Last sighting 15/09 Stainburn [NF] and Skyreholme [PM] when 1 was seen at each site

Peak Count 06/05 Burley, Sun Lane Nature Reserve [DA] when 6 were counted

It has been another good year with individuals up 13% from 2019, and the number of reports up from 59 in 2019 to 91 this year. And the above figures don't take into account some late records which added another 17 records of 32 individuals [JK and DL].

The first sightings this year were over 5 weeks later than in 2019, but the last sighting was 5 days earlier so a much shorter flight period. It was seen all over between Pool [AJ] and Bastow Wood, Grassington [PM], but only ever in low numbers. It is rarely seen in large numbers, but it is always a delight to spot that beautiful, unmistakable flash of yellow.

NYMPHALIDAE (NYMPHALIDS – THE MULTI-COLOURED SPECIES PLUS THE BROWNS)

Wall *Lasiommata megera* 1615 (59.002)

Records 26% UP 20 sites, 11 observers, 55 individuals

First sighting 6/5 Burley when 1 counted, [DA]

Last sighting 15/9 Thruscross when 3 counted [MB]

Peak Count 19/8 Fewston [PR], 20/8 Lindley [NF], when 6 were seen at each site

Since 2006 (when we had 133 sightings), reports of the Wall have deteriorated quite dramatically in Wharfedale. At Otley Wetlands for example we had a peak count of 30 in 2006 but since then only ones and twos have been recorded at any one time.

This decline is also evident throughout the UK where overall records have declined since 1976 by 86%. It has been suggested that due to the warmer weather generations are hatching out too late in the year to survive the winter. In the past there has been two broods, and offspring of the second brood would overwinter as caterpillars. However, due to warmer weather some have a third brood but offspring can't find enough food before winter and so die by then.

In Yorkshire as a whole the Wall has had some good years lately, particularly VC64. It is yet another species to make a special effort to locate and record in the future. The butterfly is occasionally seen in gardens but its main habitat is rough open grassland where there is plenty of sun-baked ground. As its name suggests it also enjoys basking on walls and stones.

Speckled Wood *Pararge aegeria* 1614 (59.003)

Records 23% DOWN 63 sites, 33 observers, 447 individuals

First sighting 15/4 Otley Wetlands [[PP] when 1 was seen

Last sighting 7/10 Grass Wood [CH] when 2 were seen

Peak Count 13/9 Otley Wetlands [ES] when 17 were counted

The Speckled Wood started expanding northwards into Yorkshire in the 1990s.

Last year Otley Wetlands had the peak count of 41. This year it also has the peak count, but only 17 this time. We only had 4 counts in double figures: In addition to Otley Wetlands we had a count of 15 at Timble Ings [NF], 12 at Knotford Nook, Otley [ES], and 10 at Addingham [SA].

The first sighting of 15/4 is 9 days later than last year. The majority of records came from lower Wharfedale and the Washburn but a few from Grassington, Hawkswick, Skyreholme and Hebden.

The butterfly experienced its worst year in the national Big Butterfly Count since the scheme began with abundance down by 36%.

Small Heath *Coenonympha pamphilus* 1627 (59.005)

Records 37% DOWN, 38 sites, 16 observers, 566 individuals

First sighting 21/5 Low Ox Pasture, Kilnsey when 3 were seen [PM]

Last sighting 13/9 Addingham when 1 was seen [MOd]

Peak Count 23/6 Low Ox Pasture, Kilnsey on when 59 were counted [PM]

The Small Heath had its usual two generations and can still be found in high numbers in the upland areas of Wharfedale. The UKBMS transects above Kilnsey have a couple of areas which are reliable and highly productive registering a peak count of fifty-nine on the 23 June, it is reasonable to suppose that 2020 was another steady year. This is good news as the Small Heath has been seeing catastrophic declines in lowland England.

Scotch Argus *Erebia aethiops* 1618 (59.008)

Records 3% UP, 5 sites, 4 observers, 55 individuals

First sighting 31/7 Bastow Wood, Grassington when 1 male was seen [NF]

Last sighting 24/8 Bastow Wood, Grassington when 11 were seen [PM]

Peak Count 9/8 Bastow Wood, Grassington when 15 were counted [NF]

The centre of the colony of this re-introduced butterfly in Sleets Gill in Littondale is at higher altitude than we first thought. A respectable count of eight was made on 7 August at this location. So there are at least four colonies of Scotch Argus in our recording area. There was no visit made to the Scargill House colony in 2020, a situation we hope to remedy in 2021. They are relatively easy to locate at the Bastow Wood site which provided us with a peak count of fifteen individuals. There is a possibility of a fifth colony between Kettlewell and Starbotton, this potential site was visited three times but there were only elusive, distant glimpses of a dark brown butterfly that had the right appearance. The steep slopes on this site made chasing it to confirm just a bit too risky, so that is also a task for 2021.

Ringlet *Aphantopus hyperantus* 1629 (59.009)

Records 48% DOWN, 48 sites, 29 observers, 778 individuals

First sighting 16/6 Otley Wetlands [NF] when 1 was seen

Last sighting 6/8 Skyreholme [PM] when 6 were seen

Peak Count 12/7 Duck Street Quarry [MB] when 91 were counted

Normally on the wing from June to early August, though occasional records are received later. This year saw only 6 records in early August. The majority of records came in July.

The 114 records received is the lowest since 2003 and 43% down on the previous year. Records are also down for the following grassland species (with percentage decrease in brackets): Meadow Brown (18%), Gatekeeper (35%), Large Skipper (27%), and Small Skipper (64%).

Aside from the peak count at Duck Street we also had good numbers from Thruscross where 81 were counted [MB], Leathley where 70 counted [DA] and 50 at Timble Ings [NF]. At our nature reserves we had peak counts of 18 at Otley Wetlands [PP], 18 at Gallows Hill [SBr], 7 at Bastow Wood [AG, AT], 4 at Ben Rhydding gravel pits [DM], (though not all records are in at time of writing), and 8 at Sun Lane [JK].

Meadow Brown *Maniola jurtina* 1626 (59.010)

Records 26% DOWN, 71 sites, 34 observers, 1,030 individuals

First sighting 17/7 Otley Wetlands [PP] when 7 were seen

Last sighting 24/8 Otley garden [MC] when 1 was seen

Peak Count 25/6 Timble Ings [KL] when 82 counted

The number of records received this year (178) is 18% down on last year and the number of individuals seen is down by 42%. The peak count of 82 is below last year's counts of 100 at Timble Ings and the river at Ilkley.

Other good counts came from Otley Wetlands where 74 were counted on 7/8 [PP] and at Swinsty reservoir on 15/6 when 70 counted [NF].

Records were mainly from lower Wharfedale but we did get some for Kilnsey, Kettlewell and Littondale (Sleets Gill).

Gatekeeper *Pyronia tithonus* 1625 (59.011)

Records 35% DOWN, 10 sites, 6 observers, 75 individuals

First sighting 31/7 Burley garden [PR] when 1 was seen

Last sighting 7/8 Otley Wetlands [PP] when 21 were seen

Peak Count As per last sighting

As its English name suggests, the Gatekeeper is often encountered where clumps of flowers grow in gateways and along hedgerows and field edges. It is often seen together with the Meadow Brown and Ringlet. It can sometimes be confused with the Meadow Brown (which is much larger) from a distance, but when seen close up its grey-brown borders enclosing large orange patches are clearly visible. The patches are especially bright in the males.

Only 6 members reported seeing the Gatekeeper this year; the reports came from five main areas: Ilkley, Burley, Otley, Farnley and Lindley.

Wharfedale is not far from the Gatekeeper's northern limit and so it is unlikely we will get high numbers. But it is a butterfly that is more widespread in Wharfedale than this year's records infer and so it is one to keep a special look out for in future years.

Marbled white *Melanargia galathea* 1620 (59.012)

No records

Dark Green Fritillary *Argynnis aglaja* 1607 (59.019)

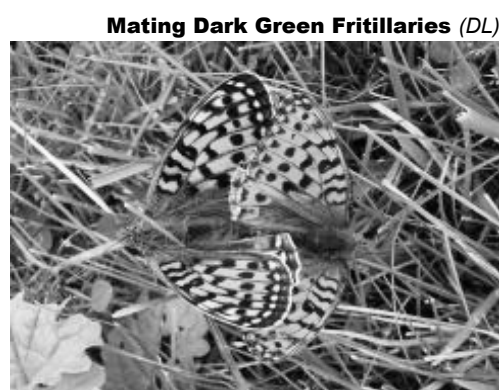
Records 18% DOWN, 15 sites, 11 observers, 195 individuals

First sighting 21/5 Grass Wood, Grassington when 2 were seen [CH]

Last sighting 20/8 Gross Wood, Kettlewell when 2 were seen [PM]

Peak Count 19/7 Low Ox Pasture, Kilnsey when 30 were counted [PM]

In 2020 our only fritillary



Mating Dark Green Fritillaries (DL)

butterfly was recorded in good numbers in plenty of our upland sites. It is often to be seen taking nectar from the purple flowerheads of spear thistle. If you are in the uplands in July and August then try to seek out patches of thistle, you can often see a dozen at once. This is not a habitat favoured by the slightly larger Silver-washed Fritillary so you are unlikely to mistake the identification. With a slow cautious approach it is relatively straightforward to get to see the dark green on the underside hind wing. It is of course also very photogenic. A peak count of 30 at Kilnsey equates well with previous years and it is reasonable to assume that it had a successful year.

Silver-washed Fritillary *Argynnis paphia* 1608 (59.017)

No records in our area this year. Unlike 2019 when this powerful butterfly made a determined expansion right up to County Durham it appears to have had a retrenchment in 2020. The strong colony in Skipton Woods just outside our recording area had only one insect observed and that was despite many visits to the location. Given the global warming situation it is only a matter of time before we see it again.

Red Admiral *Vanessa atalanta* 1590 (59.023)

Records 34% DOWN, 57 sites, 37 observers, 356 individuals

First sighting 17/4 Addingham [MOd] when 1 was seen

Last sighting 16/10 Hebden garden [RL] when 1 was seen

Peak Count 9/9 Skyreholme [PM] when 17 were counted

Like the Painted Lady this is a migrant from Southern Europe/North Africa, but it is increasingly overwintering in the UK due to our warmer winters. We had 179 records this year compared to 334 last year. The lowest since 2012. The majority of records were for June to September and came from lower Wharfedale and the Washburn.

The Peak count of 17 occurred in a warm corner of Paul Millard's garden that was planted with Buddleia, *Verbena bonariensis*, ice plant and Hemp Agrimony. The butterflies are breeding on large patches of nettles in a meadow and woodland that Paul has developed on his land.

Other good counts were 12 at the Kilnsey Cool Scar transect [PM] and 10 at Stainburn Forest [NF].

Painted Lady *Vanessa cardui* 1591 (59.024)

Records 88% DOWN, 8 sites, 6 observers, 13 individuals

First sighting 7/4 Burley garden [DA] when 4 were seen and at Addingham [MOd] when 3 were seen

Last sighting 19/9 Hebden [RL] when 1 was seen

Peak Count As per first sighting in Burley garden [DA]

What's there to say! Sometimes it's a bumper year for this migrant from North Africa and sometimes it's not. 2020 was definitely NOT a good year!

Just 10 records of 13 individuals seen, and only 6 lucky people saw one. The sites they were reported at were Addingham, Burley, Kilnsey, Skyreholme, Otley, and Hebden. 7 were spotted in April and then 2 in June, 1 in August and 3 in September. Let's hope next year is better!

Peacock *Aglais io* 1597 (59.026)

Records 23% UP, 90 sites, 42 observers, 839 individuals

First sighting 17/1 Burley garden [PR] when 1 was seen

Last sighting 22/11 Skyreholme garden [PM] when 1 was seen

Peak Count 7/8 Norwood Edge Lindley [AJ] when 60 were counted

The Peacock hibernates in the UK over winter but numbers are boosted in summer by migrants from Europe. Last year the first adult spotted was on 22 February, six weeks earlier than the

previous year (2018). This year the first sighting on 17 January is even earlier, and we had 89 records up to the 9 April (last year we had 41 up to this date) so it really is liking our warmer winters! We had a count of 18 as early as 25 March at Otley Wetlands [PR] and on the same date a count of 12 at DA's garden in Burley. Obviously some good hibernation sites there!

Later in the year Andy Jowett had the peak count of 60 at Lindley and a count of 30 at his own garden in Pool in Wharfedale; CH counted 15 at Stainburn Forest and PM counted 13 in his garden at Skyreholme.

The Peacock really did very well in Wharfedale again this year. The 407 records received is only slightly lower than last year and 22% higher than the 10 year average.

The majority of records came from lower Wharfedale. At Duck Street quarry this year we had another low count (3 on 12/7 [MB]), but the site was visited less often than usual.

Small Tortoiseshell *Aglais urtica* 1593 (59.027)

Records 49% UP, 97 sites, 45 observers, 1,601 individuals

First sighting 11/3 in two sites in Addingham [DM] where 1 was seen at each

Last sighting 20/10 Skyreholme [PM] when 1 was seen

Peak Count 14/9 Addingham garden [DM] when 45 were counted

Despite concerns about the Small Tortoiseshell nationally, it had another excellent year in Wharfedale according to the records received. Records are 33% up on last year and the number counted (1,601) is over 50% up. The results of the Big Butterfly Count for 2020 showed that numbers seen nationally for the 3 week count were down 41%, even though the number of people taking part in the count this year had increased by 25%.

Conditions this year were ideal for the Tortoiseshells coming out of hibernation. In March and April we had warm and sunny weather and for these two months we received a total of nearly 200 records. In June and July when the second brood emerged we received just over 200 records.

The majority of records came from lower Wharfedale and the Washburn. The Peak count of 45 at my [DM] garden in Addingham was a treat to see. They were mostly in my south facing small front garden on a white flowered buddleia, verbena bonariensis, and perennial wallflower (Erysimum 'Bowles Mauve'). We also had good numbers from Leathley (42 counted by DA), Skyreholme (where 27 were counted by PM) and Gallows Hill (where 25 were counted by SBr).

Comma *Polygonia c-album* 1598 (59.031)

Records 39.4% DOWN, 32 sites, 26 observers, 135 individuals

First sighting 14/03 Ben Rhydding [JD] when 1 was seen

Last sighting 21/10 Hebden [RL] when 1 was seen

Peak Count 07/08 Lindley, Norwood Edge [AJ] when 6 were counted

Last year records for the 10 year average were 42% up, and this year they were 39.4% down, so not a good year for this butterfly. The number of individuals was down by almost 300% from 2019. The first sighting was almost 3 weeks later than in 2019. Last year's peak count was 15 at Gallows Hill NR, and this year there were 2 counts of 5, and 1 count of 4 at Gallows Hill NR [all SBr]. 84% of records were of just a single butterfly.

The furthest up the dale that it was seen was at Skyreholme [PM]. Otley had the most sightings, closely followed by Burley, and Addingham.

LYCAENIDAE (BLUES AND HAIRSTREAKS)

Small Copper *Lycaena phlaeas* 1561 (61.001)

Records 24% DOWN, 31 sites, 21 observers, 92 individuals

First sighting 21/4 Addingham [SA] when 1 was seen

Last sighting 11/10 Hebden garden [RL] when 1 was seen

Peak Count 27/5 Barden Moor [KL] when 13 were counted

Good to see a peak count of 13 at Barden Moor [KL] the same moor where 12 were counted last year. The next highest count was at Swinsty where 6 were counted on 25/5 [JH] and 6/8 when 5 were counted [CH]. The remaining records giving counts of 3 or less.

The butterfly has two broods each year (May and August). The second brood often produces higher numbers but this year they were about the same for Wharfedale.

Only 3 people reported seeing the butterfly in their gardens: Ros Lilley at Hebden; Anne and Peter Riley at Burley and Paul Millard at Skyreholme. All others were seen in open countryside mainly in lower Wharfedale and the Washburn with single sightings at Yarnbury near Grassington [DA] and Duck Street Quarry [MB].

Purple Hairstreak *Favonius quercus* 1557 (61.004)

Records 30.6% DOWN, 4 sites, 4 observers, 7 individuals

First sighting 08/07 Farnley, Washburn Valley [DA] when 1 was seen

Last sighting 08/08 Lindley [NF] when 1 was seen

Peak Count 12/07 Otley, Gallows Hill [SBr] when 3 were counted

Although records are down on the 10 year average this year was much better than 2019, with no records at all, whereas this year there were 5 separate reports totalling 7 individuals.

This year I [NF] specifically went looking for it at Lindley, in an area of mostly private land with large numbers of Oak trees, some in areas of woodland, but also many large individuals scattered over approximately 45 acres. Over several visits I saw 2 individuals on different dates, on different trees, some distance apart, with a couple of other possible sightings, but unable to be sure.

It is a very tricky butterfly to spot and identify, as it lives high in Oak trees, and often sits for ages without moving, but it is worth looking for it with binoculars in any Oak tree. I am convinced that it is under recorded and that it is most likely present in more locations than we currently have records for.

Green Hairstreak *Callophrys rubi* 1555 (61.005)

Records 76% UP, 42 sites, 20 observers, 852 individuals

First sighting 05/04 Otley Chevin [PP] when 1 was seen



Mating Green Hairstreaks (NF)

Last sighting 31/05 Timble Ings [NF] when 2 were seen

Peak Count 25/04 Ilkley Moor [DL] when 90 were counted

This was another excellent year with individuals up 22% on 2019, which in itself was a fantastic year. David Leather was again on the hunt on Ilkley Moor, and contributed 194 individuals. We are very lucky as the WNS recording area is great for this species with it being found all over on moorland at numerous sites. In fact the records this year for the WNS recording area account for just over 47% of the records for the whole of Yorkshire. It is worth looking out for it anywhere with even small areas of Bilberry, it's preferred caterpillar foodplant. The backs of walls, and little hollows which are sheltered are the best places to look in my experience [NF].

Where it is present it can be seen in good numbers, there were 23 counts in double figures, at a wide range of sites. The first sighting this year was almost 2 weeks earlier than 2019, and the last sighting 6 days earlier than last year. However, we had some lovely sunny weather during its flight period, and this butterfly loves sun. So perhaps 2021 could be even better?

White-Letter Hairstreak *Satyrrium w-album* 1558 (61.006)

Records 85.2% DOWN, 3 sites, 3 observers, 6 individuals

First sighting 27/06 Ben Rhydding Gravel Pits [MH] when 1 was seen

Last sighting 24/07 Otley, Gallows Hill [SBr] when 1 was seen

Peak Count 12/07 Otley, Gallows Hill [SBr] when 4 were counted

Adults were seen at only 2 sites which were Ben Rhydding Gravel Pits NR and Gallows Hill NR, totalling 6 butterflies. However, at the third site at Howgill, near Appletreewick there was a record of 6 eggs [PM], which despite suffering a hedge cutting incident are hopefully still there.

It was one of the worst years in recent times, although not quite as bad as 2017 when only 4 individuals were seen. But again, it can be a difficult species to spot, living high in Elm trees, although it does at least sometimes come down to nectar, seeming to have a liking for Creeping Thistle, which is not uncommon.

Holly Blue *Celastrina argiolus* 1580 (61.012)

Records 44% DOWN, 12 Sites, 11 observers, 35 individuals

First sighting 7/4 Burley Woodhead [KL] and Otley [Doc] when 1 was seen at each site

Last sighting 17/9 Menston garden [AG] when 1 was seen

Peak Count 8/5 Menston to Otley golf course [KL] when 2 were counted

The last two years saw record numbers of Holly Blues (132/139) but this year we had a big drop down to 34. Again this year the second brood had lower numbers with 35% of the total records (42% last year).

Records came from 5 areas only: Burley, Menston, Otley, Pool in Wharfedale and Skyreholme. Apart from the two seen on 8 May [peak count] all others were individuals. In our nature reserves it was only at Otley Wetlands that one was seen (6/5/2020 [PP]).

The Holly Blue undergoes large fluctuations in numbers from year to year. Let's hope next year is a better one!

Northern Brown Argus *Aricia artaxerxes* 1573 (61.016)

Records 66% DOWN, 6 sites, 5 observers, 224 individuals

First sighting 20/05 Lea Green, Grassington [PM] when 2 were seen

Last sighting 24/06 Bastow Wood, Grassington [NF] when 12 were seen

Peak count 15/06 Kilnsey [PM] when 72 were counted

The striking feature of this butterfly's 2020 records are that the season started remarkably early. 20 May is the first recorded date for all of the UK for 2020 and is equal first for the UK ever. There is a record on the same date from Cumbria in 2010. The next day two were recorded on the Kilnsey transect indicating that this was the start of a very early season. On the WNS database the next earliest flight date is 23/05/2012 at Bastow Wood. This is in advance of our normal flight dates which usually start in early June. This is almost certainly an effect of climate change. The other notable feature of this butterfly is the total absence of its cousin the Brown Argus *A. agestis* from our recording area. The Brown Argus has been hybridising in Derbyshire and as it rapidly expands northward is overlapping with Northern Brown Argus sites in County Durham and further up the East Coast. Currently the Wharfedale Northern Brown Argus colonies remain isolated and genetically distinct. This population may become more important in years to come allowing our NBA to continue its current process of speciation. Arguably these two butterflies are the same species and are best labelled as subspecies. If in future they become sufficiently different from each other and become unable to interbreed then the arguments will become settled. You don't need to study finches in the Galapagos when evolution is happening right here on our doorstep!

Common Blue *Polyommatus icarus* 1574 (61.018)

Records 40% DOWN, 25 Sites, 15 observers, 522 individuals

First sighting 20/5 Ilkley [PJB], Addingham [RLe] when 1 was seen at each site

Last sighting 20/8 Lindley reservoir [NF] when 3 were seen in the area

Peak Count 12/7 Duck Street Quarry [MB] when 93 were counted

The number of records is slightly higher than last year (45). The peak count of 93 at Duck Street Quarry is the lowest count there since 2008. The next best site to Duck Street was Swinsty Reservoir where John Healey counted 80 on the dam embankment on a lovely hot and sunny day on 25 May. What a super sight that must have been!

Timble Ings also did well with a count of 10 on 25 June [KL]. No records for Sandwith Moor where we had a count of 50 last year. One was seen at Sun Lane on 12 August [JK].

FINALLY

Firstly, we would like to say a big thank you to everyone who has sent us records this year. All records are very welcome, as the more that we receive the better the overall picture we can get of our area.

For anyone reading this who has never sent in records, or who has just sent in perhaps the odd one, then we are very happy to help you in any way that we can. We are happy to look at photos, if you can get one and are unsure of the ID, and we can also advise you on what species you are likely to see depending on the habitat and the time of year.

We have an excel spreadsheet for sending in records which is very easy to use, and as it is in the same format as our master spreadsheet we can copy and paste your records directly, saving us a huge amount of time, and also cutting down on us accidentally mistyping a record. But we are still very happy to receive records in any way that you are happy to send them in. On a spreadsheet that you already use, in an email, or written records are all gratefully received. All that we need is your name, where you saw it (ideally with a grid reference), date, what species, and how many.

For 2021 it would be great to find more sites for Purple and White-letter Hairstreak, which we are sure exist. It would also

be fantastic to get more records from higher up the dale, especially beyond Grass Wood, Grassington. Even without the Covid 19 restrictions we don't get anywhere near as many records from further up both Wharfedale, and Liddedale.

Nyree Fearnley, Paul Millard and Diane Morris Butterfly Recorders

OBSERVERS

Records were received from the following people:

Acomb, Chris (CAc); Alder, Chris (CA);
Alfred, David & Joan (DA); Arrowsmith, Sara (SA);
Barnham, Mike (MB); Barton, Susan (SB);
Blomfield, Ian & Barbara (IB); Bolton, Shirley (SBO);
Brown, Bruce (BB); Bryant, Simon (SBr); Burns,
Peter & Janet (PJB); Burrow, Dick & Heather (HB);
Clerk, Mike & Joyce (MC); Dixon, Jenny (JD);
Dunne, Mick (MD); Falls, Richard (RF);
Fearnley, David & Nyree (NF); Galtry, Philip (PG);
Godden, Claire (CG); Gramshaw, Audrey (AG);
Harrowell, Pauline (PH); Haycock, Gordon (GH);
Healy, John (JH); Hindle, Janet (JHi); Hockey, Mark (MH);
Hockridge, Katy (KH); Hodgson, Anne (AH);
Horner, Carmen & Fred (CH); Jakeways, Diana (DJ);
Jowett, Andy (AJ); Kyriakides, Janet (JK); Leather, David (DL);
Leleux, Rita (RLe); Limb, Pat and Ken (KL); Lilley, Ros (RL);
Longden, Margaret (ML); McMahon, Dave (DMc);
Millard, Paul (PM); Miller, Peter (PMi); Morgans, Sophia (SM);
Morris, Diane (DM); O'Connor, Denis (DOc);
O'Donnell, Maire (MOD); Parks, Steve (SP); Penny, Mark (MP);
Penrose, Jessica (JP); Prest, Charles & Fiona (CP);
Purvis, Paul (PP); Rhodes, Andrew (AR);
Riley, Peter & Anne (PR); Roberts, David (DR);
Robley, Margaret (MR); Scarfe, Ernie (ES);
Shackleton, Karen (KAS); Speed, Bruce (BS); Sykes, John (JS);
Tomlinson, Julia (JT); Tupholme, Anne (AT);
Vernon, Nicky (NV); Watt, Ian (IW); Wells, Pamela (PW);
Wiseman, Lee (LW).

Brimstone (KS)



BOTANY REPORT

The Covid pandemic has continued throughout most of 2020 and meant that no formal botany meetings were able to take place this year. Fortunately members could take advantage of walking and exercise that the restrictions allowed, initially very locally, but later in summer, we were allowed to travel more widely throughout Wharfedale, and records have been gratefully received to compile this report.

The interruption from normal activities gave BNB the opportunity to look more closely at plant records across the WNS recording area, and to separate well-recorded areas from those less visited and with fewer species seen, and so a focus for future attention. The BSBI database allows the general public to access lists of plant species down to tetrad level (i.e. blocks of 4 x 1km grid squares on the OS map). These tetrad species lists cover not only the total records received (dated back to 1987) but also species recorded between years 2000 to the end of 2019, a useful comparison for checking botanical activity over the last 20 years. Our WNS area covers 194 tetrads including a number of partial tetrads along our boundaries, so plenty to go at and a good way of getting to know our patch more thoroughly.

The number of plant species per tetrad varied widely. So for example, Southwest Ilkley in tetrad SE14D had 388 species in total, with 319 of them recorded between the years 2000-2019, so good recent coverage. In contrast Menston High Royds in tetrad SE14R had a smaller total of 162 species but only 41 of them recorded in the last 20 years. This gave an impetus to recording here this year and after two visits in July the species count had climbed to 246 and the exploration of this less known area proved to be very interesting. Likewise other tetrads scattered throughout our recording area were explored, many of them with CH who took an equal interest in this tetrad recording, and further details follow in the report, which has been compiled geographically as last year.

Joyce Hartley was our botany recorder prior to Nicky Vernon, and sadly passed away during the year. Despite the restrictions a few botany members who knew Joyce in her active years were able to attend the funeral, and ML kindly collected and passed round a few of their fond memories of being out with Joyce.

I would also like to give a particular mention to IB who came up with the great idea of a public poll to 'Pick a Flower for Wharfedale', well supported by the local press and good publicity for the Society in its 70th year. And as I write this report IB has invited members to join in a Christmas Plant Hunt and Birding competition, so thanks and well done Ian.

Huby and Lower Washburn

Huby, which lies well to the east end of our area, has seen few plant records over the last 20 years especially on its northern side. So BNB/CH explored the area in autumn starting at Almscliff Crag working down to the north end of Huby village finding 130 species. Around the village was Sweet Violet *Viola odorata*, large colonies of Creeping Comfrey *Symphytum grandiflorum*, a clump of Stinking Iris *Iris foetidissima* and Field Rose *Rosa arvensis* in the hedgerow. In the pasture fields above, we found Barberry *Berberis vulgaris*. This interesting but uncommon native shrub acts as co-host with wheat for the black rust fungus. The rust spends part of its life cycle on one plant then moves to the other, contaminating the wheat in the process. Thus Barberry has by association become an unwelcome hedgerow shrub in arable areas, and nowadays is hard to find. Late season news from GH was his good find of Rustyback fern *Asplenium ceterach* on a wall in Huby.

NF supplied a number of records from the Farnley, Leathley, Lindley and Dob Park areas of Lower Washburn. After a mild winter some springtime plants were in flower in February and

March - celandines, coltsfoot, marsh marigold, wood anemone, and a few bluebells were starting to open their buds. The known colony of Giant Butterbur *Petasites japonicus* in Dob Park had over 300 flower spikes on 22nd February. Interestingly BNB/CH also noted the plants around a house on the Norwood Bottom road, a little up the hillside, so might just be the origin of NF's colony which has become so well naturalised now by the riverside. In May there was Bugle *Ajuga reptans*, Yellow Pimpernel *Lysimachia nemorum*, and at Farnley Lake, eight Fritillary *Fritillaria meleagris* were up, with flowers starting to go over and seeds developing. NF is interested to hear of sites for Alder Buckthorn *Frangula alnus* as a food source for Brimstone caterpillars, but she eventually found two at the Lindley Trout-farm car park. In late July 150 Betony *Betonica officinalis* were counted at Lindley Reservoir along with Goldenrod *Solidago virgaurea*, and there was Monkeyflower *Erythranthe x robertsii* at the Trout-farm. CH has also been working at sites in Lower Washburn and reports separately.

Stainburn Forest to Norwood Edge

2020 has been a good year for Common Spotted-orchids *Dactylorhiza fuchsii*, no more so than in Stainburn Forest (or Lindley Moor Plantation as it is also known) with literally 100's of plants alongside the main track heading north from the minor road corner at SE225506. But there is one particular variant known as var. *rhodochila* that BNB was keen to see, in which the purple anthocyanin pigment is in excess, and it suffuses the petals to give large purple blotches rather than the usual delicate spots. Even the leaves, bracts and stems can take on a darker purple appearance. '*Rhodochilas*' were first mentioned by WNS members here in 1998, but vary in numbers from year to year. CH showed me her pictures taken in 2013.

Our first visit was on 14 June when CH luckily spotted one *rhodochila* amongst hundreds of normal plants. Its flower spike had one bud just starting to open and reveal its purple blotch. By the time of our second visit, on 26 June, there were 12 in total. Also of interest was the presence of 5 'albinos' - pure white with no pigment present (apart from chlorophyll) in their petals, bracts, stems or leaves. So quite a strange contrast - plants growing more or less side by side with normal, excess and zero anthocyanin pigment concentrations.

A clearing in the trees nearby is where we think numbers of marsh orchids have been recorded in the past, but not found now. The clearing is still of interest however with Common Centaury *Centaureum erythraea*, Heath Speedwell *Veronica officinalis*, Lemon-scented Fern *Oreopteris limbosperma* and a small Bay Willow *Salix pentandra*. Lesser Periwinkle *Vinca minor* is naturalising into large spreading colonies and tends to have the occasional blue flower throughout most of the year. Although the forest was originally planted on acidic moorland, there does appear to be a calcareous influence along the trackside and its adjacent ditches where the orchids grow, maybe with limestone in its foundations, as shown by the occurrence of Hairy Violet *Viola hirta*, Hoary Ragwort *Jacobaea erucifolia*, a Twayblade *Neottia cordata* spotted by NF, and a big colony of Silky Lady's-mantle *Alchemilla glaucescens*. Ostrich Fern *Matteuccia struthiopteris* has established itself and the two small ponds by the entrance gate have plants of interest including a splendid iris which seems likely to be Purple Iris *Iris versicolor*.

On the north side of the forest, a car park gives access to the network of forest tracks and also the rocks of Little Almscliff. Some aliens have become established by the roadside - Stinking Iris, Japanese Honeysuckle *Lonicera japonica* and Purple Crane's-bill *Geranium x magnificum*. Mostly common native species occur along the tracks, but one less common species and new for us, Smooth Tare *Ervum tetrasperum* was noted. Right on the eastern edge of the WNS area BNB/CH came across a big

colony of Prickly Sedge *Carex spicata* at the side of the track heading for the B6161 road.

Stainburn Forest merges imperceptibly into Norwood Edge Plantation, the linking path rather rough and miry in places and showing relics of the previous moorland vegetation. To the east of the Hunter Stones BNB/CH found a large open clearing at SE220516 where it was too wet for trees to flourish. Here was a well-developed sphagnum bog with copious Round-leaved Sundew *Drosera rotundifolia*, Bog Asphodel *Narthecium ossifragum* and Cranberry *Vaccinium oxycoccus* - superb! Another smaller bog close to the B6451 road with similar species of interest was reported by HMB and others. There was some concern over a new extraction track being cut through the forest, but hopefully this and the subsequent tree felling will not obtrude too much and spoil this wet habitat.

Many of the paths around Norwood Edge are used or created by off-road cyclists so one needs to keep alert on narrower sections. A more open ride with wet flushes gave some interesting finds for BNB/CH in early July: Marsh Ragwort *Jacobaea aquatica*, Common Spike-rush *Eleocharis palustris*, Marsh Foxtail *Alopecurus geniculatus* and Red Bartsia *Odontites vernus*. We then climbed to the summit and the masts which are fenced off inside a grassy area. Around this, other interesting species were noted - Ox-eye Daisy *Leucanthemum vulgare*, Eyebright *Euphrasia* agg., Fairy Flax *Linum catharticum*, Trailing Tormentil *Potentilla anglica*, Hedge Bedstraw *Galium album* and Knotted Pearlwort *Sagina nodosa*.

Upper Washburn Valley

Soft Shield-fern *Polystichum setiferum* and Flowering Currant *Ribes sanguineum* were found by BNB/CH near the access road on the east side of Swinsty Reservoir in August, and later on CH spotted a plant of Eastern Gladiolus *Gladiolus communis* in flower nearer the reservoir side. BNB/CH's survey included the drawdown zone of the eastern arm of the reservoir finding typical species of this specialised habitat reported in previous Reviews, including Mudwort *Limosella aquatica* and the rare Small Water-pepper *Persicaria minor*. Meanwhile along the western side of nearby Fewston Reservoir NF noted that Betony was everywhere, around 200 plants, and numerous on the north side too.

To the west of Fewston Reservoir on the moorland edge is Timble Ings Plantation where Yorkshire Water have been carrying out conservation projects for a number of years, resulting in the creation of several new ponds, and this year's finale being the release of water voles and the hope they will successfully colonise the area. The last botanical survey of the Plantation was carried out in 2010, so BNB/CH decided to do a repeat in late August, concluding that little overall change in the flora had occurred, which was good news. The tracksides, ditches and ponds had interesting wetland species such as Broad-leaved Pondweed *Potamogeton natans*, Angelica *Angelica sylvestris*, Bristle Club-rush *Isolepis setacea*, Water-purslane *Lythrum portula*, some sedges, and in places, lots of Common Spotted-orchids. Another habitat was acidic sphagnum bog with Bog Asphodel and Cranberry, and slightly more enriched fen mire with Wood Horsetail *Equisetum sylvaticum*, Smooth-stalked Sedge *Carex laevigata* and Bay Willow. Much of the Plantation has developed into high forest with well-scattered mature trees (both evergreens and broad-leaved) allowing carpets of Bilberry *Vaccinium myrtillus*, Cowberry *V. vitis-idaea* and ferns to flourish on the forest floor, and it is delightful to explore along the network of paths provided. Around 250 taxa were recorded and results passed on to Yorkshire Water and Nidderdale AONB.

The main A59 road west of Blubberhouses is well known for landslips as it climbs up to Kex Gill Head and a planned bypass

is imminent, but still awaiting final approval. It will run approximately on or parallel to the bridleway on the hillside above Hall Beck to the north, so hopefully the valley area by the beck with its sphagnum bogs of Bog Asphodel, Round-leaved Sundew and Marsh Violet *Viola palustris*, and the lower level rush mires of Sharp-flowered Rush *Juncus acutiflorus*, Bottle Sedge *Carex rostrata*, Greater Bird's-foot-trefoil *Lotus pedunculatus* etc. will be unaffected. Once the new road is open the old A59 will become a footpath and pleasant to botanise away from the diverted fast-moving heavy traffic. HMB reported a large clump of Dittander *Lepidium latifolium* growing at the roadside near the landslips, and BNB came across a superb veteran Pedunculate Oak *Quercus robur* in a field near Blubberhouses Hall. Its girth (circumference at breast height) was quoted on the Woodland Trust's Ancient Tree Hunt website to be 4.50 metres. Other records were Common Centaury outside the disused Kex Gill Quarry and several wall sites for Common Polypody *Polypodium vulgare* along the A59.

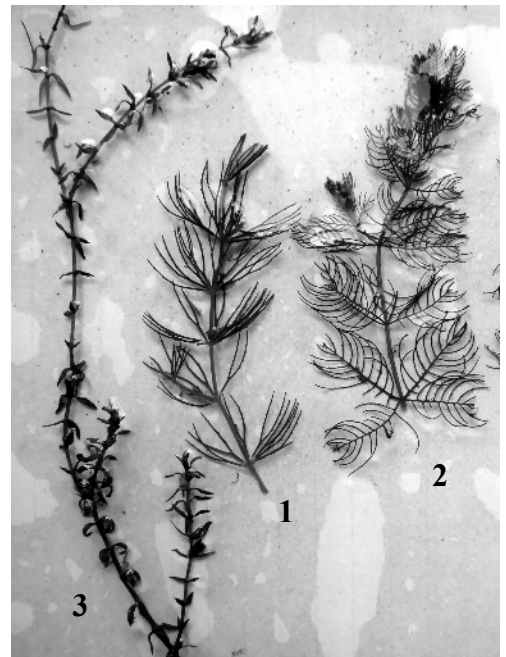
Knotford Nook

Between Otley and Pool a side road leaves the main A659 road, looping round old sand and gravel workings now converted into lagoons used by fishing clubs. Access can also be made along the riverside path from Gallows Hill nature reserve; it peters out by the northern lagoon which is surrounded by a fence. CH was recording plants here in August outside the fence and met Steve, the warden for Leeds Angling Club, who invited her and BNB to carry out a plant survey of the lagoon inside the fence. Steve informed us that the water is up to 11 feet in depth and although several fish species are present, the most valuable are the large carp, one of which we saw deftly landed, carefully unhooked, photographed, weighed and returned back to the lake. Because of their value and earlier losses the Club has invested in a six foot high otter fence which totally surrounds the lake.

Several aquatic plants were found in shallower water near the lake edge: Nuttall's Waterweed *Elodea nuttallii* (3) was abundant, Spiked Water-milfoil *Myriophyllum spicatum* (2) common, plus Rigid Hornwort *Ceratophyllum demersum* (1)

and Common Duckweed *Lemna minor*. There were some large stands of Yellow Water-lily *Nuphar lutea*, a problem for anglers if allowed to become too rampant, along with less problematic shallow water rooted plants such as

Common Spike-rush, Water Horsetail *Equisetum fluviatile*, Amphibious Bistort *Persicaria amphibia* and Gypsywort *Lycopus europaeus*. There were also one or two inlets with Common Reed *Phragmites australis*, Bulrush *Typha latifolia* and Reed Canary-grass *Phalaris arundinacea* which provide good cover for birds. The anglers we met were friendly, interested in their environment and in the plant species we recorded, a total of 140 taxa.



Along the minor road through Knotford Nook BNB discovered a comfrey at the roadside with yellow flowers in May, which soon became swamped by nettles later in summer. Its hooked hairs and other leaf features plus yellow petal colour and calyx divided down to the base indicated it to be Tuberos Comfrey *Symphytum tuberosum*, rare in Wharfedale. Also noted was a large spreading colony of Reflexed Stonecrop *Sedum rupestre* and CH found some clumps of Tansy *Tanacetum vulgare*. By the riverbank were a couple of mature Tree Cotoneaster *Cotoneaster frigidus*, maybe 15 feet tall.

Otley

The western end of the Otley bypass has taken traffic away from the old Ilkley Road, which nowadays peters out by the side of the Wharfebank Mills complex, thus allowing vegetation to grow largely unhindered with a few interesting species noted by BNB in the hedgerow and on the wide grassy verge of the bypass. Examples were Spearmint *Mentha spicata*, Hemlock *Conium maculatum* and Welshed Thistle *Carduus crispus*.

Amongst various roses was Glaucous Dog-rose *Rosa vosiagica*, a glabrous form of the Northern Dog-rose, which differs from common dog-roses *Rosa canina* agg. in having hips with sepals which do not readily reflex and a wide orifice in the disc between the ring of sepals. Japanese Rose *R. rugosa* with its tomato-shaped hips was also present here. In short turf near



the Mills entrance, but protected by a bollard from being too regularly mowed, was a small patch of Small-

flowered Crane's-bill *Geranium pusillum*. This rarer crane's-bill differs from the commoner ones in having a dense coating of very short hairs, about 0.2mm, on its leaf stalk. On the bypass verge were two vetches - Common Vetch *Vicia sativa* with bright purple petals and Hairy Tare *Ervilia hirsuta*, tiny whitish mauve flowers. One clump of Upright Brome *Bromopsis erecta* appeared in late May at the roadside edge, a calcareous-loving grass not typical in our local soils, so maybe its seeds were dropped from a passing vehicle.

CH reported Early Dog-violet *Viola reichenbachiana* at Grove Hill Park in March, Garden Lobelia *Lobelia erinus* on a Beech Hill doorstep in April and listed 52 species growing in waste ground off Westgate. BNB noted Hemp-agrimony *Eupatorium cannabinum* by the Leeds Road advert holdings and Common Mallow *Malva sylvestris* on West Busk Lane in late June. Back in July 2016 a couple of Great Mullein *Verbascum thapsus* plants sent up their tall woolly yellow-flowered spikes in Otley churchyard. Four years later, having been left unchecked, they produced no less than 110 flower spikes this July within 20 metres or so of the originals - not a bad reproduction rate for this biennial over four years!

Bee Orchids *Ophrys apifera* have been less common than usual this year, so it was a pleasant surprise to hear that Alan and Lesley Wilson spotted one growing in a grassy crescent along Bradford Road. There was just the one plant with rather pale petals, two flowers open in early June and three buds still to come through. It was marked with sticks to prevent accidental mowing and allowed to set seed, so thanks to the Wilsons for looking after it and let's hope to see more next year.

Otley - old railway line

In last year's Review a plant survey along the old railway line from Otley bypass to Ellar Ghyll on Bradford Road A6038 was described. So with Covid restrictions coming into force this spring, the opportunity was there to stay local and extend the survey westwards to the A65 Bradford Road, Burley. This section, about 1.5 km, crosses more open country with much of the route in a wooded cutting and a particularly steep bank on its south side. The north side is adjacent to the Otley golf course which CH explored during lockdown (see Carmen's report). About halfway along the line a path crosses from Acrecliffe Farm to the golf course and here there was once a signal box for Milner Wood Junction. The tracks divided with one leg for Menston and the other to Burley, but they remained side by side until diverging by the A65. Many will recall the higher level arched brick-built bridge for Menston and the lower iron bridge for the Burley line with a dip in the road to accommodate buses and lorries.

Milner Wood and the wooded ravine of Ellar Ghyll have relics of continuous woodland going back to the Middle Ages as protected manorial woodland, so it is not surprising to find ancient woodland indicator plants still flourishing. The overhead shade canopy in the cuttings restricts the flora, but dominant in late April and early May were sheets of Bluebells *Hyacinthoides non-scripta* and white rafts of Ramsons *Allium*



Ramsons on old Otley railway line

ursinum, amongst Enchanter's-nightshade *Circaea lutetiana*, Wood Avens *Geum urbanum* and Dryopteris ferns. Two grass species present indicating old woodland were Wood Melick *Melica uniflora* with large clumps in several places and Wood Meadow-grass *Poa nemoralis* which preferred the steep banks on the south side. Other interesting species included Wood Anemone *Anemone nemorum*, Pignut *Conopodium majus*, Wild Strawberry *Fragaria vesca*, Goldilocks Buttercup *Ranunculus auricomus*, Field Rose, Sanicle *Sanicula europaea* and Woodruff *Galium odoratum*. Nearer to Ellar Ghyll the banks were invaded by a number of aliens, colourful at different times of the year - Daffodils *Narcissus agg.*, Monbretia *Crocsmia x crocosmiiflora*, Garden Peony *Paeonia officinalis*, Perennial Cornflower *Centaurea montana*, Steeple-bush *Spiraea douglasii* and Tutsan *Hypericum androsaemum*, mixed in with some natives such as Ox-eye Daisy, Ragged-robin *Silene flos-cuculi*, Hairy Woodrush *Luzula pilosa* and Soft Shield-fern.

Next to the A65 between the diverging tracks is a stream with accompanying waterworks below the roadside in a hollow partly hidden by the tree leaf canopy. A wild garden of plants attracted to the water side was discovered here with Angelica, Large Bittercress *Cardamine amara*, Brooklime *Veronica beccabunga*, Hart's-tongue *Asplenium scolopendrium* and Lady Fern *Athyrium filix-femina* intermingled with well-naturalised

aliens such as Trailing Bellflower *Campanula poscharskyana*, Fringecups *Tellima grandiflora*, Astartia *Astrantia major*, Wolf's-bane *Aconitum lycoctonum*, Knotted Crane's-bill *Geranium nodosum* and the inevitable Himalayan Balsam *Impatiens glandulifera*. Just to the south side of the old railway is Burley Cemetery, which also has an interesting flora, mainly explored by CH and described separately.

Otley - Station Top

At the south end of Station Road is a long slice of rough ground adjacent to the bypass which is known generally as Station Top and was originally part of Otley station and goods yard sidings. Some of it near to East Chevin Road is hard standing used occasionally for parking. At the west end it merges into woodland scrub next to the bypass with an unofficial path along it which joins up with the end of Burras Lane near West Chevin Road where there is an area of managed grassland. The bypass edge has been planted up with trees and shrubs for screening, including a number of cherry trees which have produced delicious ripe fruit this year. Other fruit trees present include apple, pear, plum and Cherry Plum *Prunus cerasifera*, as well as the sloes of Blackthorn *P. spinosa*, and Bird Cherry.

A lot of Ash *Fraxinus excelsior* was also planted along the bypass, soon followed by much regeneration of saplings. Unfortunately the latter are mostly dead now, due to severe ash-dieback disease, and even the taller trees are displaying many bare branches, not helped by the early summer drought. The spores of this fungal disease are no doubt more readily spread by the fast moving bypass traffic. An unusual tree species along the old sidings was Red Alder *Alnus rubra* with three good sized trees. Its leaf shape resembles Grey Alder but the leaf edges are noticeably inrolled and yellow glands are present. There was also a splendid mature Weeping Willow *Salix x sepulcralis* with drooping branches reaching the ground, and CH reported a Fuchsia *Fuchsia magellanica* and a large flowered Himalayan Clematis *Clematis montana*, escaping from the neighbouring garden by using an elder bush for a piggyback. Cotoneaster berries are easily spread by birds and a number of species have occurred, some now are good sized bushes producing masses of flowers and red berries, yet others are tiny non-flowering saplings. So far Diel's *Cotoneaster dielsianus*, Franchet's *C. franchetii*, Stern's *C. sternianus* and Rehder's *C. rehderi* have been identified as shrubs. Waterer's *C. x watereri* is a small tree and Bearberry Cotoneaster *C. dammeri* a prostrate ground hugging type. Leaf size and berry features including number of stones help with identification.

The site is also good for studying wild Dog-roses, which in the latest Stace 'bible' for botanical ID have been split into a number of separate species. All the Station Top plants are part of the common *Rosa canina* aggregate with curved prickles and hips with reflexed decaying sepals and a stylar orifice in the disc between the sepals which is small, i.e. 20% or less of the disc face. Plants with glabrous non-glandular leaflets are now designated as the true *R. canina*; hairy leaflets and rachis indicate *R. corymbifera*, whereas very glandular but glabrous leaflets and rachis become *R. squarrosa*. Examples of each are present on Station Top to Burras Lane, but also some intermediate forms that are probably somewhat hybridised, so difficult to assign and best left as *R. canina* agg.

Much of the ground flora consists of weedy species typical of rough ground and road edges but, backing on to suburban gardens, there are additionally many escapes thriving and enjoying their freedom to expand unchecked. Examples include Garden Wood Spurge *Euphorbia amygdaloides* ssp. *robbiae*, Three-corned Garlic *Allium triquetrum*, Stinking Iris, Hedgerow Crane's-bill *Geranium pyrenaicum* and the purple form of Coralbells *Heuchera* agg. A large colony of Sand Leek *Allium scorodoprasum* by the bypass edge may be native.

East Otley - Development area

The old railway extends eastwards from the Leeds Road roundabout at the start of the Otley bypass, and can be followed at least a half mile to where the East Busk Lane footpath crosses, and will eventually be part of the Wharfedale Greenway. On its north side a large housing development is planned, conditional on the bypass being extended as a new road arcing round from the roundabout to join Pool Road, with the west side of this available for building. A large field, Ings Tip, was a waste disposal site many years ago, and gave a number of records, many aliens, to past botanists. It has long since been grassed over and today is a large field, slightly domed with surrounding stream and ditches. This will remain an open area. As much of the development area is currently accessible, BNB took the opportunity to make a plant survey before building starts.

Along the ditches and stream were Bulrush, Watercress, Nasturtium officinale, Yellow Flag *Iris pseudacorus*, Water Horsetail, Bittersweet *Solanum dulcamara* and Marsh Marigold *Caltha palustris*. Damp grassy areas had Lesser Pond-sedge *Carex acutiformis*, Oval Sedge *C. leporina* and Meadowsweet *Filipendula ulmaria*. A number of trees planted in the past have now become well-established and attractive (will any be retained?), including Poplars *Populus nigra* 'Planteirensis' and *P. x canadensis*, Weeping Willow and other willows, Hornbeam *Carpinus betulus*, Plum *Prunus domestica*, Pedunculate Oak, red-flowered Hawthorns *Crataegus x media* and two Alders *Alnus glutinosa* and *A. incana*. In the shady hedgerows Variegated Archangel *Lamiastrum galeobdolon* ssp. *argentatum* and Early Dog-violet could be found, and twining along a fence was Field Bindweed *Convolvulus arvensis*. Many naturalised daffodils brighten up the scene in spring. 159 different species have been recorded.

At the roundabout CH spotted the first Goatbeard *Tragopogon pratensis* of the year in late April. Later in the season, a Hawkweed species was doing well at the pavement edge. This family is hard to identify exactly as they form a large number of microspecies, so BNB sent a specimen to the specialist referee Brian Burrow who kindly determined it to be *Hieracium argillaceum*, a fairly common hawkweed apparently. Another species growing on the wall at the bottom of nearby East Chevin Road was also determined by Brian to be *H. triviale* ssp. *subfasciculare*, also not uncommon.

Otley - Riverside sites

The old cattlemarket site by Otley Bridge produced a few more records in the first half of the season. Common Cudweed *Filago germanica* is a new species for us, first spotted by CH on 7 June, then seen to be spread all over the site. It is only a few inches tall with branched woolly stems, adpressed leaves and globular clusters of tiny yellow flowers, not that attractive other than by its rarity for us. Other small plants seen, typical of urban waste ground, were Parsley-piert *Aphanes arvensis*, Fern Grass *Catapodium rigidum*, Thyme-leaved Sandwort *Arenaria serpyllifolia*, Cut-leaved Crane's-bill *Geranium dissectum* and Fox-and-cubs *Pilosella aurantiaca*. Taller plants included French Meadow-rue *Thalictrum aquilegifolium* nearer Kell Beck and Dotted Loosestrife *Lysimachia punctata*. Mike Wilcox took an interest in some of the sowthistles finding potential examples of *Sonchus tenerrimus*, a European species which is genetically similar to native Prickly *S. asper* and Smooth Sowthistle *S. oleraceus* and somewhat intermediate in appearance. Further research is required to establish definitely if it occurs in Britain and MW collected seed samples to grow on. Fortunately this happened just before landscaping and tidying up of the site occurred, when all tall vegetation was scythed back to ground level.

CH did some plant surveying in Otley Wetlands nature reserve totalling 205 records. Early season finds included 8 plants of Toothwort on willows by the riverside, 7 plants of Early Dog-violet and Druce's Crane's-bill *Geranium x oxonianum*. In June Sweet-briar *Rosa rubiginosa* and Japanese Rose were added. Bee orchids were scarce this year, but eventually a couple were found to the east of the car park in the old concrete mixing works area, a new location. There were many Common Spotted-orchids well-scattered over the reserve. Northern Marsh-orchid *Dactylorhiza purpurella* were fairly common on the island (Grazing Lawn), and a few Southern Marsh-orchid *D. praetermissa* were in their usual ditch location near the Conservation Lake. Some atypical plants were determined by Neil Barrett to be the hybrids *D. x venusta* (CSO x NMO) and *D. x grandis* (CSO x SMO). Other additions to the site list were Quaking-grass *Briza media*, Marsh Cinquefoil *Comarum palustre*, Twayblade and Large-flowered Evening-primrose *Oenothera glazioviana*.

Downstream of Otley Bridge, Wharfemeadows Park has given a few extra records along the tree-lined riverbank. Two mature White Poplar *Populus alba* were noted nearer the kids playground (additional to the remaining one by the tennis courts). Near the skateboard park was a Black Poplar hybrid *P. x canadensis*, opposite a line of similar poplars on the south side of the river. Some of these are females and shed large amounts of woolly fluff when their catkins mature. Their outspreading branches suggest the cultivar 'Regenerata'. The last poplar to mention has been blown down into the river, but with some roots still attached has so far remained healthy. This is a true Black Poplar *P. nigra* ssp. *betulifolia* indicated by its hairy leaf petioles with spiral galls and a heavily burred trunk - a native tree so hopefully it will survive. Other interesting trees along the riverbank include two tall False Acacia *Robinia pseudoacacia* near the tennis courts and a Silver Maple *Acer saccharinum*. On the north side of the Park are three evergreen Holm Oak *Quercus ilex*.

On a late season walk in November BNB/CH were surprised to see a crane's-bill with small pink flowers still out, growing profusely and weedily in one of the Wharfemeadows Park flower beds. Its stems were covered in numerous red-tipped glands, quite attractive when viewed close-up through a lens, and confirming it to be Round-leaved Crane's-bill *Geranium rotundifolium*, rare in the North and a first for us. Presumably it was inadvertently introduced with garden bedding plants and not subsequently weeded out. We then explored an old tarmac track, now well vegetated over, near to the Riverside Park estate and found good quantities of Field Madder *Sherardia arvensis* still with a few flowers, which CH had seen before in 2017.

By Gallows Hill nature reserve CH noted a plant of Hollyhock *Alcea rosea* with two pink flowers in August. BNB had been checking a large meadow-rue in nettles near the reserve car park over the last two years. It eventually reached nearly six feet tall although tending to fall over, had large heads of pale yellow flowers and blue-green glaucous hairless leaflets with pronounced raised veins underneath, thus indicating it to be Tall Meadow-rue *Thalictrum speciosissimum*.

Otley - Northwest to Askwith and Clifton

Beyond the old cattlemarket the footpath closely follows Kell Beck up to Weston Lane. A small patch of Sweet Violet was seen in March, and in May the hedgerow was colourful with masses of the escaped Two-flowered Everlasting-pea *Lathyrus grandiflorus*. The path continues north between gardens and past a thicket of elm, which turned out to be English Elm *Ulmus procera*, and some suckering White Poplar. Weston Lane was also interesting with Musk-mallow *Malva moschata*, Dusky Crane's-bill *Geranium phaeum*, Rat's-tail Fescue *Vulpia myuros*, Bristly Oxtongue *Helminthotheca echioides* and Charlock

Sinapsis arvensis. Some of these are becoming less common nowadays in our area.

Above Weston Park is East Wood which was carpeted like snow with Ramsons in May. An 'ancient road' continues north to Clifton as a tree-lined track, with some of these trees being listed as veterans or heritage trees on the Woodland Trust Ancient Tree Hunt website. There are five huge Pedunculate Oak, the biggest with a recorded girth of 5.40 metres. Another oak is double-trunked and looks like it may have been originally layered for hedging. Another double-trunked tree, this one a Crab Apple *Malus sylvestris* was measured with girths of 1.3 metres and 1.9 metres for each trunk. Some of the hawthorns in the hedgerow also appeared very old, and the banked sides of the lane were full of woodland flowers. A path east from Clifton village passes a miry flush before reaching Newall Carr Road at the Roebuck (Spite). Wetland plants here included Marsh Foxtail, Square-stalked St John's-wort *Hypericum tetrapterum*, Watercress and Marsh Ragwort.

In Askwith BNB noted Hop *Humulus lupulus* climbing a garden boundary hedge by the path to the Stepping Stones. The roadside and bridleway heading in the Weston direction were lined with a few elms, not true Wych Elm but hybrids, probably Dutch Elm or Huntingdon Elm. Both are crosses between Wych Elm *Ulmus glabra* and Small-leaved Elm *U. minor*. All forms of elm are susceptible to Dutch Elm Disease, but so far so good with these trees. Along the Ilkley road IB recorded Hoary Cress *Lepidium draba* and Leopard's-bane *Doronicum pardalianches*, last noted a few years ago, so continuing to do well. Heading north on Askwith Moor Road, a large layby used for storing road chippings is a good pull-in place high up amidst heather moorland. BNB recorded 70 species here, the most unusual being an escaped Hebe, *Veronica brachysiphon* 'White Gem', at the moor's edge that had been weathered into a three feet high domed cushion, happily flowering and seemingly well at home in this bleak spot.

Menston

Winter Aconites *Eranthis hyemalis* are amongst the earliest flowering plants of the year, cheerfully displaying their attractive buttercup yellow tepals and ruff-like bracts, so aptly described by IB in one of his excellent Nature Notes in the local paper. But they are rarely seen truly wild in our area. I tried once with some bulbs in the garden but no shoots ever appeared, and others say they can be tricky. So I was keen to see the Clarence Drive site mentioned to me by IB. SW has since told me they were originally planted, but they have now become well naturalised in short grassland away from gardens, and were a splendid sight in late January. NF also knows Winter Aconites on a roadside verge in Leathley village, in flower when seen on 6 February. These early flowering times are becoming typical of our milder winters nowadays.

By late April SW found the Clarence Drive site to be then covered in sheets of Goldilocks Buttercup. This is another plant that has done very well this year: CH came across it in similar bounty in Burley Cemetery, and BNB a good sized colony by the river in Manor Garth, Otley. In July AMG reported Fiddleneck *Amsinckia micrantha* from just outside Menston station. This annual plant is an alien from N. America and pops up occasionally with us. Its yellow flowers behave similarly to forget-me-nots, opening one by one as the crozier of buds gradually unfurls. Another plant was spotted by BNB at Cross Green, Otley.

The area around High Royds Hospital produced little of botanical interest in the past, but more recent housing developments have included work on landscaping and tree planting, a pond has been dug and grassland areas developed. This has greatly improved the habitat value when added to

existing mature woodland, copses, shrubberies and the cricket field retained from the old hospital grounds. Moreover, many paths have been created and public access is much more encouraged. The pond vegetation is still sparse but Common Reed, Bulrush, Water Mint *Mentha aquatica* and Willows *Salix alba* and *S. viminalis* are slowly expanding. In damp grassland areas an interesting mint was found, with flowers in its leaf axils but no spike at the stem top like Water Mint. A slight spearmint aroma suggested it may be Bushy Mint *Mentha x gracilis*, the hybrid between Spearmint and Corn Mint *M. arvensis*. On the recently landscaped areas ruderals were abundant, and it was a good place to compare two daisy-like species: Scentless Mayweed *Tripleurospermum inodorum* and Scented Mayweed *Matricaria chamomilla*. Both have a central yellow disc and outer white ray petals, slightly longer with the Scentless and pleasant scented with the latter. To confirm their ID, cut vertically through the central disc - the Scentless is completely solid inside whereas the Scented has a hollow centre.

Heading south on the bridleway soon leads to Mire Beck, where there was an excellent wetland area with many Common Spotted-orchids, Common Valerian *Valeriana officinalis*, Great Burnet *Sanguisorba officinalis* and Plicate Sweet-grass *Glyceria notata* amongst the beds of Sharp-flowered Rush. The stream edge had a colony of Common Bistort *Bistorta officinalis*, Angelica and Brooklime *Veronica beccabunga*. A path from nearby High Royds Hall headed south to Odda Hill close to the WNS boundary. Wetter slopes on the ascent had more of a moor edge vegetation with Marsh Cudweed *Gnaphalium uliginosum*, Creeping Forget-me-not *Myosotis secunda*, Bristle Clubrush, various rushes and more acid-loving grasses like Mat-grass *Nardus stricta* and Wavy Hair-grass *Avenella flexuosa*.

Burley

There are some old records for Yellow Star-of-Bethlehem *Gagea lutea* at Burley Holme/Foster's Hill, e.g. 1959 and 1992, noted then as a 'well known station', although nowadays no-one seems to remember exactly where, no records having been received since. However BNB learnt from Lesley Wilson that she had seen some plants that occasionally flowered, situated on the roadside bank at Foster's Hill. A BNB visit on 7 March revealed, after much searching, some characteristic grass-like leaves with a hooded apex topped by a prominent 'peg', which was confirmed by Jesse Tregale to be the *Gagea*. They did not flower this year, but it was good to find them, whether or not this was exactly the same location as before. CH also visited at the end of March and also noted a dozen Cowslip *Primula veris* in flower and the wall below the bank covered with Shining Crane's-bill *Geranium lucidum*.

The dry weather spell and low water levels in May were ideal for crossing the River Wharfe by the Stepping Stones and BNB/CH took advantage to botanise on the north bank. Amongst the rock and short turf were Restharrow *Ononis repens*, Thyme-leaved Sandwort, Spring Sedge *Carex caryophylla*, Rough Hawkbit *Leontodon hispidus* and Smooth Hawksbeard *Crepis capillaris*. Plants along the water edge included Spearmint, Hemp-leaved Agrimony, Branched Bur-reed *Sparganium erectum* and both Green *Scrophularia umbrosa* and Water Figwort *S. auriculata*. The latter two look quite similar, but on close examination of the leaves side by

side, Green Figwort has slightly more acute teeth, and Water Figwort more crenate. Other features such as extra small leaflets in Water Figwort and slight flower differences also help to distinguish between them. On the Burley side of the river is the Goit, not publicly accessible, but Yellow Water-lily floating on the water surface was seen through the hedge from the permissive path, and a clump of polypody fern was just reachable for a closer examination to determine it as Common Polypody. Along Leatherbank, the lane leading to the village, were some good-sized trees of Cherry Plum, Hornbeam and English Elm. The largest of the latter has developed DED over recent years and only its lowest branch now appears to be alive, but nearer the village some younger trees looked quite healthy.

At Sun Lane nature reserve PR reported two positive developments. Marsh Marigold, 30 plants in 2012 have now become 173 plants along the main stream and back ditch. Also 33 flower spikes of Toothwort in 2013 have now increased to 176, mostly near the western end of the lane. In May SW mentioned that the Crab Apple at the end of the far paddock was looking amazing. IB reported Three-corned Garlic along the lane and in the housing estate nearer the railway was Common Cornsalad *Valerianella locusta*. Then in July Chris Shaw (CS) got in touch to mention his orchid project at Sun Lane. CS has produced a plan of the reserve marking the positions of the orchids growing there - Common Spotted, Southern Marsh, hybrids and Bee Orchids totalling 407 which he intends to monitor over future years to see how they spread. At the moment many are concentrated along the site peripheries but are expected to increase their range in time. We look forward to future results from Chris.

BNB/CH explored around Burley station later in the year. On the wall below the railway bridge was Reflexed Stonecrop, ivy-leaved Sowbread *Cyclamen hederifolium* and Three-nerved Sandwort *Moehringia trinervia*. A little further up Moor Lane CH discovered a polypody on the wall hiding under overhanging branches, which turned out to be Intermediate Polypody *P. interjectum*, a good find. On the verge opposite the station carpark we surprisingly came across a colony of Woodruff. Moving to the other side of the line at the start of Hag Farm Road were a number of garden escapes in rough ground including Columbine *Aquilegia vulgaris*, Winter Heliotrope *Petasites pyrenaicus*, Variegated Archangel, Spindle *Euonymus europaeus* and even a few pink Cosmos *C. bipinnatus* still flowering in November. Further up Hag Farm Road was Great Burnet but an older record for Betony eluded us.

Burley Woodhead

The path alongside Carr Beck is a pleasant way to reach Burley Woodhead starting by the railway triangle south of Burley village. The interesting wooded area where the old Otley branch diverged from the current Guiseley line was noted by SW to have Large Bittercress and Opposite-leaved Golden-saxifrage *Chrysosplenium oppositifolium* by the stream, plus lots of Wood Anemone and Butterbur *Petasites hybridus*. Then along the stream side all the way up to Bleach Mill Angelica was commonplace. Also in the stream and adjacent wet areas BNB/CH found two other closely related species - Fool's Watercress *Helosciadium nodiflorum* and Lesser Water-parsnip *Berula erecta*. The former has basal leaves consisting of at most





4 leaflet pairs, whereas the latter normally has around 6. The *Berula* displays a whitish ring mark lower down the leaf stalk which is always absent in the other, so definitive for ID. Other plants in Carr Beck included Watercress, Water Mint and Marsh Marigold.

Bleach Mill house can also be reached along a lane from Menston where CH spotted the pale pink flowers of the hybrid

campion *Silene x hampeana* whose parents Red Champion *S. dioica* and White Champion *S. latifolia* were both growing close by. IB provided a number of records for Burley Woodhead. Near Hag Farm Road a path crosses a small damp woodland with Bog Stitchwort *Stellaria alsine*, Yellow Pimpernel, Large Bittercress and Common Figwort *Scrophularia nodosa*. In the village a patch of Sweet Violet has been regularly seen on a grass verge for 26 years, and appropriately on a wall nearby, Pellitory-of-the-wall *Parietaria judaica*. Closer to the moor on a path in damp grassland was Pink Purslane *Claytonia sibirica*.

The Stead community consists of a few scattered farms and houses nearer to the Cow and Calf. In a private field IB noted a good-sized colony of Ostrich Fern, spreading readily via its rhizomes. SW mentioned two different colour forms of Broom *Cytisus scoparius* on the path to Stead Hall Farm. Nearby BNB/CH noted Purple Deadnettle *Lamium purpureum* and Cherry Plum, then later in the year a few other findings. A large colony of Alternate-leaved Golden-saxifrage *Chryso-splenium alternifolium* was spreading along the stream above Catton Wood. A fine mature Crab Apple by the path to Riversdale had a measured girth of 1.9 metres. Smaller Cat's-tail *Phleum bertolonii*, typical of unimproved grassland, was doing well (still with old flower heads in December) along a track up to Hangingstone Road on the moor.

Burley Moor

Lanshaw Delves on the moorland between Burley and Ilkley is a fascinating place - a grassy green ridge of humps and hollows set amongst the heather and heath. On a visit in August BNB/CH took shelter for lunch in one of the hollows and collected a small rock fragment from within it. Treating with a drop of acid later on at home gave off a fizz of carbon dioxide proving the rock to be limestone. No doubt it had been transported from Upper Wharfedale during the Ice Age and dumped as moraines when the ice slowly melted. Over successive time periods man has dug out the limestone boulders and glacial debris and burnt it to make lime for local soil improvement, leaving the pock-marked surface we see today. The calcareous influence is still present in its more diverse vegetation compared with the usual acidic moorland flora and has much attraction for sheep and rabbits to graze, so the plants

amongst the short turf remain very tiny, and an interesting challenge to identify. They included Yarrow *Achillea millefolium*, Eyebright, Fairy Flax, Bird's-foot-trefoil *Lotus corniculatus*, Selfheal *Prunella vulgaris*, Dog-violet *Viola riviniana*, Heath Speedwell, Glaucous Sedge *Carex flacca*, Pill Sedge *C. pilulifera* and several grass species.

Below the Delves is a shallow valley of rush mire and bog slowly draining into High Lanshaw Dam, which must also benefit from slight enrichment, judging by the diverse number of species we found, including Marsh Cinquefoil, Bog-bean *Menyanthes trifoliata*, Marsh Violet, Marsh Pennywort *Hydrocotyle vulgaris*, Bog Pondweed *Potamogeton polygonifolius*, Narrow Buckler-fern *Dryopteris carthusiana* and Lady Fern. Six sedge species were recorded including White Sedge *Carex canescens* and Bottle Sedge.

Above the dam is a shooting house with a gravelly area outside used for parking. Here was much Knotted Pearlwort, New Zealand Willowherb *Epilobium brunnescens* and an interesting alien Upland Leptinella *Cotula alpina*. This cushion forming plant originated from Australia and occasionally crops up in grouse-shooting areas, such as along the moorland tracks between Nidderdale and Wensleydale, but is only the second record for the WNS area (so far). Other interesting plants on Burley Moor include the hybrid forget-me-not *Myosotis x bollandica* mentioned in previous Reviews from Woofa Bank and still thriving there. Cross-leaved Heath *Erica tetralix* is common in wet areas, but at the head of Coldstone Beck BNB/CH came across a pure 'albino' form.

Ilkley

An illustrated Ilkley Tree Trail was produced and published in August by members Sue and Neil Stevens (SS), and sponsored by Climate Action Ilkley. This excellent booklet (also available as a download) describes 40 trees by the riverside and swimming pool areas, starting and finishing at the Manor House. It includes both conifers and broad-leaves with a full description and photos of each tree, and a map of the route. Then in early September SS met up with HMB/CH/BNB to recce a potential second tree trail. Our route this time was along the Grove, up past St Margaret's Church to Darwin Gardens and back down Mill Gill, finding further interesting trees along the way. Hopefully SS will be able to progress this further in 2021.

A suggested challenge for BBG members during lockdown was to select a local 1km O.S. grid square and see how many plant species could be recorded in it over the season. SS decided to tackle two grid squares in Ilkley - SE1148 and SE1248, both extending from the riverside north through Middleton Woods. Sue's totals amounted to around 200 taxa in each square, very impressive. One record for Common Stork's-bill *Erodium cicutarium* on the Lido field was also reported by SW, and another, Himalayan Honeysuckle *Leycesteria formosa* was seen by BNB/CH at the field side near the Old Bridge.

The river normally throws up a few extra species onto the bank most years after winter flooding. In February BNB found a plant of Corsican Hellebore *Helleborus argutifolius* in flower at the water edge just upstream of the Old Bridge, recognisable by leaves with just three leaflets and a new record for WNS. A young plant of American Skunk-cabbage *Lysichiton americanus* was spotted by SS/BNB in the shallows near the Riverside pub, whose identity became clearer as it grew taller a month later. Amongst the boulders used in the river bank repairs near Nesfield Road was Wild Basil *Clinopodium vulgare*, seen in July by BNB. Other Ilkley records received were Swedish Whitebeam *Sorbus intermedia* in Panorama Woods (ML), Creeping Comfrey on roadside at Heber's Ghyll and Blue Sowthistle *Cicerbita macrophylla* on path above St Margaret's Church (BNB).

Slightly further afield ML found Hedgerow Crane's-bill near Nesfield and on the lane to Denton Hall.

A few members have reported Giant Hogweed *Heracleum mantegazzianum* this year - along the river bank at Ilkley (IB), as well as further downstream at Burley Holme (SW) and Otley Mile Field riverside path (NF), so it must be having a good year. It is mostly biennial, i.e. it remains as a basal rosette in year one, sends up a flowering stem that can be 6 feet or more high in its second year, then dies. Fertile seeds transported by the river need to be produced at least every one to two years to keep the population going successfully, so numbers do vary from year to year. Despite being originally introduced as garden plants, they can be harmful and cause dermatitis on contact with skin in sunlight, so best treated with caution, but are only a real problem if growing very close to a public footpath.

Ilkley Moor

Chickweed Wintergreen *Trientalis europaea* is scarce in Wharfedale, but members saw it in one site at Humberstone Bank in 2018. It used to be better known though from near the Pancake Rock above the Cow & Calf Hotel up to the mid 1990's, then not recorded since despite searches by WNS members around 2004. It was assumed to have been swamped by rampant bracken growth. However this year it re-appeared in quantity, a splendid sight seen by a number of people, but BNB's first note of it was from Ian Hunter (IH) of the BBG who reported it to be prolific by the path-side under the Pancake Stone. BNB visited on 20 May. Its habitat was the steep slope below the plateau edge, with the plants growing particularly well in the bracken brash (debris from the previous year's dead fronds). New bracken stems were starting to come up but the fronds were as yet barely unfurled and not casting any serious shade. So maybe the Chickweed Wintergreen's ideal flowering period is to peak before the bracken matures. The dead brash is devoid of most other plants thus giving free rein to the Chickweed Wintergreen, other than Wood-sorrel *Oxalis acetosella* which shares this same habitat and was also doing very well. Perhaps bracken growth was slowed down this year during the late spring drought, and in years when it does sprout earlier the Chickweed Wintergreen fares more poorly.

IH also mentioned Beech Fern *Phegopteris connectilis*, a colony he found at the Cow & Calf growing in a large cave-like crack at the foot of the Cow. There must be just the right nutrient levels there for this fern to flourish in what seems to be a very base-poor environment, with acid-loving Broad Buckler-fern *Dryopteris dilatata*, Lady Fern and Hard Fern *Blechnum spicant* as neighbours. Also near the hotel on a path to the rocks AMG found Pink Purslane.

Our planned botany meeting to Ilkley Tarn was cancelled but will hopefully go ahead next year, so BNB/CH decided to carry out a recce this July and SS joined us. A circuit of the Tarn gave us a good range of species, notably Round-leaved Crane's-bill, Wild Carrot *Daucus carota* and several Scaly Male-ferns, *Dryopteris affinis*, *D. borrieri* and *D. cambrensis*. A good variety of trees and shrubs were present including Small-leaved Lime *Tilia cordata* and Darwin's Barberry *Berberis darwinii*. Nearby mires and flushes were interesting with Round-leaved Sundew, Bog Asphodel, Green-ribbed Sedge *Carex binervis* and others. But by the Tarn we failed to spot the American Skunk-cabbage that PB has mentioned in past years. He kindly returned with BNB to pinpoint its location, fortunately not considered to be too invasive at the moment, but an eye will be kept on it. We then dropped down to the moor edge boundary where PB knew of a number of Broad-leaved Helleborine *Epipactis helleborine* within a small group of trees. There were still a half dozen spikes poking out of the brambles, although the flowers were a little past their best by then.

Addingham

The Addingham Environment Group has been surveying the banked verge on the Skipton road near where it joins the bypass for a few years now. HMB with help from JH took advantage of Covid lockdown restrictions to make regular observations over the growing season, and watch spring plants emerging at the end of March (celandine, primrose, field woodrush), through to grasses ripening in early June (cock's-foot, Yorkshire fog, false-oat), then to a larger number of main summer species in early July (37 species, e.g. ox-eye daisy, yellow rattle, knapweed), and later summer plants by mid-August (timothy, autumn hawkbit, brambles starting to ripen fruit, new birch seedlings). It is interesting to observe the niches of early flowering species being replaced later on by other species, each having its own growing space and time period to develop stems, flowers and set seed.

NV has been restricted this year by Covid shielding, but nevertheless managed to carry out a survey of all the plants growing in her local street in Addingham. She was surprised to find over 50 species, which is an impressive total for quite a short street. They included a good mix of natives, garden escapes, wall-loving plants and a few tree seedlings. Examples were Common Whitlowgrass *Erophila verna*, Rue-leaved Saxifrage *Saxifraga tridactylites* and Cornsalad. Annual Meadow-grass *Poa annua* was probably the commonest and Cuckoo Pint *Arum maculatum* was growing out of a brick! The survey was conducted in late April before the drought had become too prolonged and before council weed spraying commenced.

Dittander forms tall clumps, easily spotted when at the roadside, and although not common has been recorded in the Addingham area, especially along the bypass since 2006. HMB noted it this year on the bypass as well as on the Skipton road near Chelker Reservoir, and further afield on the A59 in the Kex Gill landslip area. So it continues to do well in known areas. Danish Scurvygrass *Cochlearia danica* is much more common nowadays along main roads enjoying the salty conditions of road edges. It was noted on the Addingham bypass (HMB), and the A6034 Silsden road (BNB) along with two other halophytes Reflexed Saltmarsh-grass *Puccinellia distans* and Lesser Sea-spurrey *Spergularia marina*.

BNB checked the wooded area adjacent to the bypass near the Cocking End turn-off in late February finding a few fern species - Hart's-tongue, Scaly Male-ferns *Dryopteris affinis* and *D. borrieri* and Hard Shield-fern *Polystichum aculeatum*. Where Ram Gill crosses, there was a large colony of Pick-a-back Plant *Tolmiea menziesii*. Lungwort *Pulmonaria officinalis*, a garden throw-out, was doing well by the parking layby at the road junction. Other Addingham records were Opposite-leaved Golden-saxifrage, Cuckoo-pint and Ramsons by Heathness Gill (HMB); Bulbous Buttercup *Ranunculus bulbosus* on a field path near Riddings Lane (HMB); 7 species including Meadow Crane's-bill *Geranium pratense*, Shining Crane's-bill and Spindle near Bracken Ghyll Golf Club (HMB); Marsh Woundwort *Stachys palustris* on Parson's Lane (BNB).

Hazlewood and Storiths

Meadow Saffron *Colchicum autumnale*, whether native or naturalised, has only been recorded twice in our area, so it was interesting to receive SW's news of three clumps of the plant by the A59 road near Hazlewood in May. This tied in with the 2008 record, the other being near Cat Steps, Addingham. Its parallel-veined basal leaves, around 4 cm wide, appear in spring but then die back before the flowering stems shoot up in autumn. Rosy pink flowers distinguish it from the rather similar looking but purple flowered Autumn Crocus (not so far recorded

growing wild in WNS area), and there are differences in the number of stamens as well as leaf features.

BNB explored plants in the Storiths area. The roadside verge at Hill End still had a flourishing colony of Blue Sowthistle (also recorded here in 2008). A stray plant of Lucerne *Medicago sativa*, up to now absent from our records, was spotted at the roadside in Storiths. It is sometimes planted as a fodder crop so maybe some seeds had fallen off a vehicle. Nearby was Horseradish *Armoracia rusticana* on waste ground by a layby. Two downy-rose species were growing on Storiths Lane. Soft Downy-rose *Rosa mollis* is quite common with straight prickles and large glandular hips and persistent erect sepals. The other was Sherard's Downy-rose *R. sherardii*, rather similar looking but rarer, with curved prickles, less persistent sepals and leaves lacking red-tipped glands amongst other features that are best determined with a flower key. The track past Witchey enters open moorland where Cross-leaved Heath and large colonies of Cranberry were found. Ditches and flushes were quite plant rich with Sneezewort *Achillea ptarmica*, Square-stalked St John's-wort, Marsh Pennywort, Blinks *Montia fontana*, Round-leaved Water-crowfoot *Ranunculus omiophyllus*, Marsh Cudweed and Quaking-grass.

Around Grassington

Along the riverside path from Grassington to Hebden close to Lythe House is a small area of springs and calcareous fen which produced 80 plant species when visited by BNB/CH/AS in July. We had been alerted to the site by SW who told us to look out for its main highlight, Marsh Helleborine *Epipactis palustris*, and so were really pleased to find around a dozen plants, even if slightly past their best by 1-2 weeks. SW/HMB also visited in early August recording Grass-of-Parnassus *Parnassia palustris*, Bird's-eye Primrose *Primula farinosa*, Fool's Watercress, Monkeyflower and Bog-bean as additional species. They also mentioned that the 'avenue' of Horse-chestnuts *Aesculus hippocastanum* along the riverside towards Hebden looked to be in poor condition with many bare branches and dying leaves. This could have been due to the unusually dry weather conditions in spring or maybe they are succumbing to a disease, so let us see how they fare in 2021. Members on the July visit worked their way up river to Ghaistrills noting Flat Sedge *Blysmus compressus*, Northern Dog-rose *Rosa caesia*, Smaller Cat's-tail and hybrid Marsh x Field Woundwort *Stachys x ambigua* along the way.

Grass Wood, Bastow Wood, Dibb Beck Scar and Lea Green form a bloc of SSSI designated limestone woodlands, scar and grassland to the north of Grassington, and are great areas for natural history exploration. PM came across a tall Allium in a patch of limestone pavement on Lea Green, its head in tight bud in late May. BNB visited a couple of times until late July when it finally opened its spathe, splitting into two segments, to reveal a mixture of flowers and vegetative bulbils. The opened flowers were brownish coloured which confirmed Field Garlic *Allium oleraceum*, a native plant. There is a similar Allium, Keeled Garlic *A. carinatum* which has bright purplish-pink tepals and long protruding stamens, and is an alien that is known on the roadside outside Grass Wood. Both look very similar until the spathe opens and the flowers develop. Yet another Allium is Sand Leek with purple tepals and bulbils but much broader leaves. This has been known from one site in Grass Wood for many years (first recorded by Rosemary Payne, AMG recalls) but has rarely flowered due to too much tree shading. However recent hazel coppicing has given it a new lease of life and AMG/AT saw 8 plants flowering in July this year, the best they have seen it.

NF was in the area on 24th June and counted over 200 Dropwort *Filipendula vulgaris* above Dibb Beck, splendidly large with clusters of creamy white flowers. 100s of Rock-rose

Helianthemum nummularium, 30 Betony and 10 Bloody Crane's-bill *Geranium sanguineum* were noted in Bastow, plus 15 Herb Paris *Paris quadrifolia* along with Enchanter's-nightshade *Circaea lutetiana* in Grass Wood. Stinking Hellebore *Helleborus foetidus* is considered to be an introduction in Grass Wood and was not recorded before the 1980s, since when it became established, helped by its liking for limestone soils. But more recently its population seems to be declining somewhat. Around the year 2000 it was found in 8 compartments of the Wood, but now reduced to 3. CH visited on 5 February, a good time to see it in flower, and counted 13 plants in the Fort Gregory and Dewbottom Scar compartments.

CH also explored Lea Green, Bastow and Grass Wood on 13 May, a lovely time of year here for its flora, and recorded over 100 taxa. Some of the highlights were Spring Sandwort *Sabulina verna*, Early-purple Orchid *Orchis mascula*, Early Dog-violet, Lily-of-the-valley *Convallaria majalis*, Creeping Willow *Salix repens*, Mountain Pansy *Viola lutea* and False Oxlip *Primula x polyantha*, along with its primrose and cowslip parents. The yellow flowered cinquefoils of Lea Green and Bastow are difficult to call because they appear intermediate between Alpine Cinquefoil *Potentilla crantzii* and Spring Cinquefoil *P. verna*. Two schools of thought prevail - either they are somewhat introgressed Alpine Cinquefoil or they are the hybrid between the two, postulated as *P. x beckii*. It depends on where you draw the boundary line between species or hybrid and is a consequence of several different chromosome numbers and very variable genetics in *Potentillas*. More work for taxonomists.

PM reported a new site for Dark-red Helleborine *Epipactis atrorubens* in a Dib Scar meadow on a patch of limestone scree, just the one plant in bare scree, a hostile environment that it seems to prefer. It is very rare in Wharfedale with only a few occasional scattered earlier records, so a good find. A 2016/2017 sighting in the Dibb Head area has gone. The other PM site on High Ox Pasture continues to be OK. Around 4 miles to the east is Grimwith Reservoir where SW found many Twayblade below silver birches on the north end of the car park.

Upper Wharfedale

High Ox Pasture above Kilnsey is also a known hotspot for the scarce Field Gentian *Gentianella campestris* as well as the more common Autumn Gentian or Felwort *G. amarella*, but numbers of plants, especially the former, seem to vary widely from year to year, sometimes a few and occasionally locally abundant. PM reported on 25 July that Field Gentians were few and far between up there, then just a fortnight later amended that to be '1000s of plants getting ready to flower'! So timing of visits seems to be an important factor in population counting, maybe by just a few weeks. When BNB/CH/AS visited on 20 August nearly all had gone over, only a few dead heads remaining, but by then 100s of Felworts were in flower.

HMB/SW walked the botanically rich path from Conistone towards Dib Beck Head in August, also finding Felworts in flower. Nearer the village was Parsley-piert and Field Madder in profusion. HMB a few days earlier had been in the same area but climbed up to the limestone pavement to check the known location (first recorded in 2010) for Angular Solomon's-seal *Polygonatum odoratum* which was still present, but not in flower. The Dropwort was still out and a list of around 25 species compiled.

BNB/CH explored a tetrad to the north of Conistone reached by the flowery Scot Gate Lane to Conistone Pie, a squat square-shaped limestone tor with tiny plants of Dove's-foot Crane's-bill *Geranium molle* and Common Whitlowgrass hiding in the cracks between the rock ledges. We continued north on the Dalesway path to reach Swineber Scar, along the top of which

was Bloody Crane's-bill, Wild Basil, Greater Knapweed *Centaurea scabiosa*, Hairy Violet and Buckthorn *Rhamnus cathartica*. On another day we climbed up the Conistone Turf Road to a very different acidic moorland habitat, with Cottongrasses *Eriophorum angustifolium* and *E. vaginatum*, Deergrass *Tricophorum germanicum*, Mat-grass, and Bottle Sedge in a small pool.

Northern Hawksbeard *Crepis mollis* has been described as one of Yorkshire's threatened plants with only a handful of sites, but that does include one or two locations in Upper Wharfedale. BNB/CH/AS headed for a known site on steep open grassland above Starbotton in August, knowing it was rather late for it to be still flowering. Despite this, we were lucky to find just the one plant with its yellow dandelion-like flowers still out and a few more with their 'clocks' of pure white pappus (an ID feature). Associate plants seen were Agrimony *Agrimonia eupatoria*, Devil's-bit Scabious *Succisa pratensis*, Meadowsweet, Lady's Bedstraw *Galium verum* along with some Grass-of-Parnassus. Down in the valley by the river bridge we spotted a plant of Blue Water-speedwell *Veronica anagallis-aquatica*.

In 2014 a group of WNS Botany members surveyed some National Trust hay-meadows at Beckermonds, finding two locations (with 3 plants in total) for Small-white Orchid *Pseudorchis albida*, a very rare plant for us with just a few Upper Wharfedale records. GH returned there this June recording a total of 18 plants at 7 locations within the same meadows, a really healthy increase that shows how well the National Trust are maintaining their conservation of these upland hay-meadows. There were also two new records from GH for Montane Eyebright *Euphrasia officinalis* ssp. *monticola*, a rare hay-meadow specialist, occurring in the same fields.

Littondale

Early in the year NF visited Dowkabottom Cave, between Kilnsey and Arncliffe in the limestone uplands above Sleet's Gill. The ferns at the cave entrance were looking splendid with Hard Shield-fern, Green Spleenwort *Asplenium viride* and Hart's-tongue, some of the latter with forked fronds, not that unusual but interesting to see. At a lower level the Sleet's Gill fields are a botanically rich area with Marsh Helleborine being one of its notable species. CH surveyed the area this September (see Carmen's report) 5-6 years on since last visited by WNS Botany and BBG members.

Hawkswick is a delightful village on the opposite side of the River Skirfare, but has received very few botanical records over the last 20 years, so an excuse for BNB/CH to add to their tetrad surveys in September. Parking was a potential problem, there being none in the village, but the large layby near Warren House on the main Arncliffe road is convenient with just a half mile walk across fields. Alternative parking is by Skirfare Bridge or in Arncliffe village. The narrow lanes were heady with aniseed scents from the masses of Sweet Cicely *Myrrhis odorata*, along with Angelica, Great Burnet, Common Valerian, Meadow Crane's-bill and Northern Dock *Rumex longifolius*. On the northerly lane to Arncliffe Melancholy Thistle *Cirsium heterophyllum*, Sherard's Downy-rose and the rarer Rustyback fern were seen. The path above Arncliffe Cote gives access to the gill sides with some interesting flush areas, containing Flat Sedge, Butterwort *Pinguicula vulgaris*, Grass-of-Parnassus and Bird's-eye Primrose.

A recommended path starts from the north side of Hawkswick village, soon turning northwest to gradually climb diagonally up the hillside, with fantastic views of Littondale opening up as height is gained. Bracken on the lower slopes was interspersed with small limestone outcrops and gravel scree with Blue Moor-grass *Sesleria caerulea*, Thyme *Thymus drucei*, Parsley-piert, Thyme-leaved Sandwort and lots of Rockrose.

Small calcareous spring runnels had Long-bracted Yellow-sedge *Carex lepidocarpa* and Dioecious Sedge *C. dioica*. On mine-workings higher up was Spring Sandwort and more acidic boggy areas with Cowberry, Bog Asphodel and Marsh Violet.

At the head of Littondale the Foxup tetrad is of particular botanical interest, although the last WNS Botany meeting held there goes back to 2003. Before then, there was a flurry of botanical records in the 1990s when a Foxup Beck Access Area was agreed (no open access then) resulting in a total of 284 species, but only around 140 since 2000. There was a visit in 2013 to survey two fields for Lesser Butterfly-orchid but it was not re-found. BNB/CH surveyed the tetrad this year in October, so too late for this orchid and other early season species. Nevertheless just over 200 records were made and hopefully further visits will continue next year with Yellow Saxifrage *Saxifraga aizoides* and various orchids as target species.

The adjacent area of Upper Heselden was also briefly visited by BNB/CH, but in rather inclement weather, so there is still plenty of ground to cover next year. The steep sided ravine of Penyghent Gill was spectacular. And finally, GH visited Darnbrook Fell in July finding a small plant of Royal Fern *Osmunda regalis* on marshy ground - pretty much in the middle of nowhere so how it got there is anyone's guess!

Bruce Brown

Acknowledgements

I am very grateful to everyone providing records, taking part in surveys or helping with information and plant identification including the following whose initials below appear in the text. Group participation has been very limited this year with no formal meetings to stimulate us, so thanks to those acting alone or in small numbers for continuing to make records (including John Webb whose Keighley exploits are outside the scope of this Review). And a particular mention is given to Carmen Horner (usually accompanied by Fred) for her considerable recording input over the year and to this report.

ALW Alan & Lesley Wilson,	IH Ian Hunter,
AMG Audrey Gramshaw,	JH Jan Hindle,
AS Alan & Carolyn Schofield,	ML Midge Leather,
AT Anne Tupholme,	MW Michael Wilcox,
BAT Jesse Tregale,	NB Neil Barrett,
BB Brian Burrow, BBG	NF Nyree & David Fearnley,
Bradford Botany Group,	NV Nicky Vernon,
BNB Bruce Brown,	PB Peter Burns,
CH Carmen & Fred Horner,	PM Paul Millard,
CS Chris Shaw,	PR Peter Riley,
GH Gordon Haycock,	SS Sue Stevens,
HMB Heather Burrow,	SW Sarah Ward
IB Ian Brand,	

BOTANY REFLECTIONS

The Washburn/Wharfe Confluence

This is a lovely productive area where the rivers Wharfe and Washburn meet. It is on private land and I (CH) had permission to go there. I visited the site in early April, walking from Otley going east, crossing the footbridge and continuing east by the river Wharfe. The path verges on both sides were strewn with Sweet Cicely *Myrrhis odorata*, Few-flowered Leek *Allium paradoxum*, Himalayan Balsam *Impatiens glandulifera*, Fringedcups *Tellima grandiflora*, and occasionally, Butterbur *Petasites hybridus*. Closer to the confluence were a few mature Weeping Willows. Every year the parasitic plant Toothwort *Lathraea squamaria* pops up around these trees, sometimes in large numbers. This year I counted 18 flowers. There is normally a good colony of Creeping Comfrey *Symphytum grandiflorum*, and this year was no exception. Also, just one plant of Water Figwort *Scrophularia auriculata* was seen. This quiet area by the Rivers is also interesting for wildlife. Fred (FH) was with me and we were blessed with a warm sunny day, and Curlew were calling and Kites flying overhead and butterflies flitting by, seeing a lovely Brimstone and a number of Peacock and Small Tortoiseshell. Rounding the corner by the confluence, we were surprised by a Heron standing in the middle of now the river Washburn, very close to us, and while we ate lunch a Kingfisher flew by. It must have been our lucky day! The bank here was covered in Spring flowers in profusion, Moschatel *Adoxa moschetalina*, Wood Anemone *Anemone nemorosa*, Lesser Celandine *Ficaria verna*, Wild Daffodil *Narcissus pseudonarcissus*, to name a few. Close to the Weir I saw Great Wood-rush *Luzula sylvatica* that was happily growing on a fallen tree trunk in the river. Approaching Leathley bridge, there was the usual large colony of Meadow Saxifrage *Saxifraga granulata*, in leaf and covering the bank for approx 50m.

I returned later in the year, hoping to see some Meadow Saxifrage in flower but was very disappointed to see that all the leaves had shrivelled with the hot weather we had early in the season. There was not a flower to be seen – I am hoping for better luck next year! I did, however see Pink Purslane *Claytonia sibirica*, and Wood Speedwell *Veronica montana* in the area. Returning by the same route I had two nice finds, a number of Large Bitter-cress *Cardamine amara* at the river edge and a good colony of Goldilocks Buttercup *Ranunculus auricomus* close to the path.

Leathley to the Lindley Trout Farm

On a lovely warm sunny day at the end of April CH and FH set off from Leathley. Starting with the majestic Red Oak *Quercus rubra* close to the village hall, it had few leaves still clinging to the branches, but scattered on the ground were its distinctive large leaves with pointed lobes. Soon the Sweet Violets *Viola odorata* were appearing in good numbers on the roadside verge, all were white but most had some variations. All flowers seen were scented, all with purple spurs, some had pale violet lines or marks, and a few were pure white. They were growing on both sides of the B16161 for approx 100m. By the roadside path and hedge Italian Lords-and-Ladies *Arum italicum*, Field Maple *Acer campestre* and a colony of Honesty *Lunaria annua* with both white & mauve flowers, stretched from the village to Hartmires junction. Joining the footpath at Leathley Mill, in the wood by the snicket near the house, Stinking Iris *Iris foetidissima* was seen, and by the old mill goit Hart's-tongue *Asplenium scolopendrium* was spotted. The riverside banks on both sides of the river were strewn with Wild Daffodils, Wood Anemone, Lesser Celandine, and Bluebells. It was wonderful. Nearing the Millstone, I started looking for Meadow Saxifrage. The leaves started to appear at the top of the riverbank and

continued for approx 7m. The path then climbed above the river going east. Here was an interesting bank supporting many plants, Field wood-rush *Luzula campestris*, Tormentil *Potentilla erecta*, Bulbous Buttercup *Ranunculus bulbosus*, Pignut *Conopodium majus*, and many more. By the mill goit there were some stunning ferns. At the side of the goit was Soft Shield-fern *Polystichum setiferum*, Western Scaly Male-fern *Dryopteris affinis* ssp. *affinis*, Broad Buckler-fern *D. dilatata*, Male Fern *D. filix-mas* and Lady Fern *Athyrium filix-femina*.

Retracing our steps, I was concentrating on the West side of the path, close to the river. Here the ground was covered in Ivy and the dense Brambles were taller than me in parts making it difficult to find the smaller plants. I persevered and had some good finds – a small clump of Sanicle *Sanicula europaea*, and a good colony of Yellow Archangel *Lamiastrum galeobdolon*, approx 3 x 3m, Wood Stitchwort *Stellaria nemorum*, approx 2 x 3m. Searching under the Ivy I found Moschatel and Meadow Saxifrage, a colony of approx 1.5m.

Otley Golf Course

Difficult though it may have been, the lockdown did have advantages. From 1st April – 12 May CH & FH visited the site 6 times and CH did a lot of recording. The golf course was closed and it was possible to walk in places not normally possible. This area was my stamping ground as a child, I only lived across the road. It was very different then, only a fraction of it was the golf course and the rest was fields, it was a playground for my friends and me. The fields were full of flowers, and I especially remember them being yellow with Buttercups in May. While recording the groundsman called to me, I thought he was going to tell me off for being there, but he had seen my book and pen and was interested in what I was doing. He proudly showed me the trees that he had planted 20 years ago, and they are now very fine trees. We chatted for ages and he was very interested when I told him what it was like 70 years ago!

Gill Beck and Mickle Ing Beck run through the site and this wet area is the most productive for plants. Entering the site, we followed Gill Beck as it meandered around. A lovely thing about the lockdown was that we were getting out most days and it was wonderful to see the tree foliage, virtually opening up before our eyes. The warm spell had obviously made a difference and we watched the trees changing day by day. Different flower species were seen day by day as the weeks unfolded. Quite a few friends and neighbours had noticed this too. Approaching the woodland, there were many species of trees – some like Ash, Hawthorn, Holly and Pedunculate Oak *Quercus robur* are long established, others close to the golf course were the ones that had been planted by the Groundsman 20 years ago. Field Maple *Acer campestre*, Blackthorn *Prunus spinosa*, and Hazel were seen in the hedgerows. Bluebells were now covering the woods and banks, also there were many ferns: Lady Fern, Scaly Male-fern, Broad Buckler fern and Male-fern, all looking beautiful! There was a lovely colony of Water Avens *Geum rivale*, approximately 3 x 3m, in a damp area of the wood and also Bugle *Ajuga reptans*. Eventually both becks converge and run into the R. Wharfe, but we now turned west to follow Mickle Ing Beck, which twists and turns around the Golf Course. Plants of note close to the beck included a good colony of Alternate-leaved Golden-saxifrage *Chrysosplenium alternifolium* growing close to Opposite-leaved Golden-saxifrage *C. oppositifolium*. Also a crested form of Lady Fern, one flower of Dusky Crane's-bill *Geranium phaeum* and Great Lettuce *Lactuca virosa* were unusual finds. Today, on my own, it was particularly warm and sunny and I saw a lot of different butterflies. The Orange-tips were abundant, flying all around me and settling on my arms and sun hat while I sat and ate lunch. Further along the beck in a different monad, Dame's-violet *Hesperis matronalis*, Brooklime *Veronica beccabunga* and



Great wood rush (BB)

Water Figwort were seen. Large Bitter-cress was growing at the water edge, in full flower, showing lovely violet anthers. It was growing at both sides of the beck for approximately 100m. In Eastfield Lane I saw Spring Squill. Today was the last day of lockdown and we thought it was the end of our recording there, but we were speaking to Bruce (BNB) later and he asked if we had seen the four Black poplar trees. We hadn't found them, so Fred and I went back in the evening - tomorrow would be too late, the course would be open again. We found them looking very majestic in the evening sun. Black-poplars *Populus nigra* ssp. *betulifolia* are native, majestic, broad-crowned trees. They can grow to 30m tall, having rough, dark grey bark, downy young shoots, triangular to ovate leaves 10cm long. They can live to 200 years old and are not common.

Burley Cemetery

On 1 May I went into Burley Cemetery hoping to find a place to sit for lunch. I had never been there before, and found that it was a filled with wild plants meandering between, and onto the graves. It was lovely. The ground cover was predominantly yellow. As I looked closer, I realised it was all Goldilocks Buttercup, covering approx a quarter of the ground amongst the graves. It was the most I had ever seen of one of my favourite flowers. The whole graveyard was full of wild plants. Close by was Early Dog-violet *Viola reichenbachiana*, Cowslip *Primula veris*, and Primrose *P. vulgaris*. Common Dog-violet *V. riviniana* was scattered all over the ground, along with Bulbous and Creeping Buttercups, Lesser Celandine, Rough Hawkbit *Leontodon hispidus*, and Wood Anemone. There was an interesting damp area, ideal for Water Avens and Devil's-bit Scabious *Succisa pratensis*, they grew happily here. The whole site was full of colour with more delights - Bluebells, Daffodils, Forget-me-nots, six species of Speedwell, and Hairy Lady's-mantle *Alchemilla filicaulis* which was a nice find. There were a number of garden plants on some of the graves that had spilled over and were now scattered around. These included Garden Solomon's-seal *Polygonatum x hybridum*, Green Hellebore *Helleborus viridis*, Sowbread *Cyclamen hederifolium*, and Garden Bluebell (Spanish hybrid) *Hyacinthoides x massartiana*. Around the Cemetery edges, Enchanter's-nightshade *Circaea lutetiana*, Yellow Iris *I. pseudacorus*, Great Wood-rush and Pendulous Sedge *Carex pendula* were growing. The trees were looking very fresh at this time of year - Field Maple, Holly, Alder, Ash, Scots Pine, some fine Pedunculate Oaks, Yews, and a Horse-chestnut in flower. The different shades of green of the leaves of the deciduous trees and conifers complimented each other.

Sleets Gill Littondale

This area is on private land and I have the owner's permission to be there. In early September I visited about three times. It can be quite exposed up there, but very beautiful in this limestone area. The land is grazed mainly by cattle. Entering the gate, Sea Plantain *Plantago maritima* was found. This is normally found close to the sea but also likes the inland limestone areas of Northern Britain. I continued recording at the bottom of the field where it was quite wet, with a small stream trickling down. Here it was interesting to find Jointed Rush *Juncus articulatus*, Lesser Spearwort *Ranunculus flammula*, Carnation Sedge *Carex panicea*, and Saw-wort *Serratula tinctoria* at the water edge. Close by was Devil's-bit Scabious, and a few Bird's-eye Primrose *Primula farinosa* were still in flower, but their new leaf rosettes were appearing all over the field. There was a good scattering of Autumn Gentian *Gentianella amarella*, at least 100+ in flower and as many more where the flowers had gone over. Also in abundance was Grass-of-Parnassus *Parnassia palustris*, mainly in flower, and spreading all over the calcareous meadow from the wet flush all the way up to the open access area. Walking further up the steep field the terrain became drier and in this calcareous meadow there were three Bedstraws - Lady's *Galium verum*, Limestone *G. sternerii* and a good colony of the rarer Northern Bedstraw *G. boreale*; also Melancholy Thistle *Cirsium heterophyllum*, Yellow Rattle *Rhinanthus minor*, Crested Hair-grass *Koeleria macrantha*, Hairy Violet *Viola hirta*, Great Burnet *Sanguisorba officinalis* and a colony of Bloody Crane's-bill *Geranium sanguineum*. Smaller Cat's-tail *Phleum bertolonii* was present, a grass rarely seen a few years ago but now appears more often.

To the west of the field there was evidence of orchids. All had gone over but the broad twin leaves of Common Twayblade *Neottia ovata* were scattered around and a few also with dead flowers. Quite a good number of Fragrant Orchid *Gymnadenia conopsea* and *G. borealis* were about - the heads were brown but complete and the leaves were still in good condition. I know these orchids from previous years. Heading higher, Common Rockrose *Helianthemum nummularium* was starting to appear along with Primroses and Cowslips. We were now above Sleets Gill Cave and entering open access land. At the very top of the cave a superb Rock Whitebeam *Sorbus rupicola* was growing almost out of the rock. The tree is nationally scarce. This rocky area is home to Limestone Fern *Gymnocarpium robertianum*, its fronds covered with minute glands which give it its grey appearance. If the fronds are gently bruised a sweet, apple-like scent may be perceived. Green Spleenwort *Asplenium viride* also grows here and the two ferns often grow together. Nearing Dowkabottom Cave we come to the enclosures, a steep rocky area good for ferns such as Hard Shield-fern *Polystichum aculeatum*, Brittle Bladder-fern *Cystopteris fragilis*. Maidenhair Spleenwort *A. trichomanes* ssp. *quadrivalens* and Wall-rue *A. ruta-muraria*, Also in the rock crevices, Wall Lettuce *Mycelis muralis*, Nipplewort *Lapsana communis* and Lesser Meadow-rue *Thalictrum minus* were hiding.

Carmen Horner

AN UNEXPECTED VISITOR

In April last year smoke was seen blowing across the lower part of Ilkley Moor. This was coming from the direction of the Cow and Calf and blowing across towards White Wells. A succession of fire engines heading up Cow Pasture Road confirmed that this was a serious blaze.

On walking up the path from Ilkley Tarn towards the moor top the scale of the problem became apparent. Firemen were dealing with a substantial amount of flames and still smouldering moor but seemed to be in control. Later however we saw an increase in the volume of the smoke and another visit to the lower moor showed the wind had changed and brought the flames down towards the Tarn. The fire service were obviously making it their aim to prevent them progressing down further towards the houses, care home and hotel bordering the moor.

The following morning it was clear they had been successful though the smouldering part of the moor now stretched right down to the Tarn itself. A helicopter was ferrying water to douse the smouldering section and the fire service were still working. Later, in mid-May further fire damage occurred nearby though not on the same scale and by mid-summer the moor was starting to recover though large stretches were still blackened.

The significance of the blaze to us, recording moths in the garden, only became apparent in September. The nearest burnt part of the moor lies not too far from the house and common moorland moths form part of the annual records we send in. On 8 September one of the moths in the trap was obviously of interest as we'd seen nothing like it before. Only around 12mm in length it was apparently a micro moth, very dark in coloration and with only a faint white zig-zag across the centre of the wing to help with identification.

Our normal procedure then, when attempting to identify a species we are unfamiliar with, is to take a macro-zoom photo and a shot from above was taken, showing the white markings. When the illustrations in the standard modern text on micro-moths were consulted nothing identical was found but many of the illustrations were of the side view only so any illustration that showed dark moths that were slim in outline and of a similar length to the one we had was noted. A search for photos

of all these on the UK Moths site and on Yorkshire Moths showed a probable called *Matilella fusca* on the UK site. This also revealed that it went under the synonym of *Pyla fusca* and on Yorkshire Moths under this title there was a photo of one almost identical to ours which was taken by the vice-county moth recorder himself, Charles Fletcher. A photo submitted to him was quickly confirmed as *Pyla fusca*, now normally referred to as *Matilella fusca*, the latter name coming from the Latin *fuscus*, meaning dusky.

This moth is described as 'a scarce and local resident' on the Yorkshire Moths site and only 10 adults had been recorded in our vice-county up to 2014, the most recent list available. It is also described as found 'on heaths and moorland, particularly favouring burnt areas for camouflage' so we have probably only seen it because of the local fire damage. We caught this moth again in July this year so it must still be finding the cover it needs nearby but if this sort of local disaster is required for its presence one can only hope we have seen the last of it for now.

Peter & Janet Burns

Matilella fusca

12mm



THE ANGRY BIRD

Almost as soon as the bird feeder was filled and hung from the cherry tree a jackdaw spotted it and homed in. Once there he dealt with it, as do all corvids, by taking a firm grip with his feet and knocking it violently back and forth using body and wings so that the contents fall to the ground where he could get at them.

At the same time a mallard drake wandered up the garden path, and on reaching the tree realised he was in heaven as a large variety of seeds showered down on him. They were quickly consumed as soon as they touched the ground. And he was one happy bird.

After ten minutes or so an exhausted jackdaw flew down to land facing the drake and proceeded to look round for the mound of seeds that were sure to be there. As I watched he realised that there was not one single item left, everything had all been eaten by that greedy duck.

Birds can show anger, and this one certainly was literally hopping mad!

With wings flapping, body puffed up and feet jumping he confronted the drake, but it was too big an adversary for him to attack!

Swallowing the last of its meal, the mallard stared at the performer with an expression that seemed to read, "What are you on about?"

Soon after the poor jackdaw flew to a nearby tree where he rearranged his ruffled feathers before heading to another rooftop.

The drake walked back across the lawn to the pond where he settled on the stony edge and rested peacefully.

This leaves a thought. Was the incident sheer chance or are birds aware of this corvid habit and deliberately keep a watch out for it?

Pam Braithwaite

MAMMAL REPORT

INSECTIVORA -- INSECTIVORES

Hedgehog *Erinaceus europaeus*

There were 52 records this year, the first on 24 March.

During the first Covid-19 lockdown, with little traffic on the roads, hedgehogs fared well with 13 reports totalling 23 live animals against eight records of singles killed on the roads.

After that things returned to normal with 25 records of roadkill victims compared to six of live animals, although two of these recorded multiple visits to gardens, encouraged by the provision of peanuts, peanut butter sandwiches, hedgehog biscuits or meaty cat biscuits.

One Ilkley garden recorded up to four. In another, Jenny Dixon estimated up to seven or eight visiting during the night, captured on her trail camera. Until recent years she had found that hedgehogs withdrew from the garden once badgers, their main predator, arrived. However, over the last two years, with just one regular old badger visiting, the hedgehogs have become bolder fitting their visits between those of the badger. Occasionally a hedgehog was seen feeding alongside the badger with, on one occasion, the badger snatching a sandwich fragment from between the hedgehog's paws before swiping it aside to eat peanuts lying beneath it. With the snacks gone, the badger departed leaving the hedgehog unharmed.

Nationally, hedgehogs are in serious decline. Their numbers are difficult to monitor but are thought to now total less than one million, down from 30 million in the 1950s, with between 30 and 50% of the population lost since 2002. This is ascribed to deaths on the roads, habitat loss with changes from pastoral to arable farming and hedgerow removal and the use of chemicals in gardens (especially slug pellets) and for intensive farming.

Mole *Talpa europaea*

Widely reported around Otley and Ilkley with a few as far north as Kilnsey. Moles are ubiquitous in most habitats although likely to be much less common on moorlands and in conifer forests.

One dead at the roadside from no obvious cause was reported from Braythorn in July. Moles spend more time above ground in the summer, looking for food, bedding, females or dispersing in search of a territory of their own after leaving their mother's underground range of tunnels. Above ground they are widely predated but are apparently distasteful so are often left uneaten.

Common Shrew *Sorex araneus*

Given that they are the second most numerous British mammal with an estimated population of 42 million they are seldom seen. There were just three sightings this year, one beneath a corrugated iron sheet at Sun Lane, one dead on Cracoe Fell and an unusual record of one caught in a mouse trap in a kitchen at Skyreholme.

A half-eaten shrew in a garden at the edge of Ilkley Moor was initially thought to perhaps be that of a pygmy shrew. Its skull was collected and measured 19mm which is more consistent and logs. They can apparently be attracted to hide below pieces of tin or black plastic placed on the ground to act as heat attractors.

with common shrew. Both species could be present although the pygmy does occur more frequently on moorland.

CHIROPTERA - BATS

In 1999, the Common Pipistrelle was split into two species, based on the peak frequencies of their echolocation calls, with the Common peaking at 45kHz and the Soprano Pipistrelle at 55kHz. Both species are common and widespread.

Common Pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pipistrellus*

These were reported from seven sites around Otley and from Farnley, Farnley Lake and Leathley as well as further north at Hebden. Pipistrelles not identified as either common or soprano have been included in common

Soprano Pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pygmaeus*

Identified at Wharfemeadows Park, Otley Wetland Nature Reserve (OWNR) and Farnley Lake.

Brown Long-eared Bat *Plecotus auritus*

Known as the 'Whispering Bat' because its calls are so quiet. It is thought to often hunt by hearing and sight without using echolocation. The most common British bats after the pipistrelles but impossible to pick up with a bat detector in the presence of other louder bats.

Recorded from Farnley Hall Woods and Wharfemeadows Park in Otley and in the Washburn Valley between Lindley Wood and Dob Park Bridges as well as at Lindley Bridge.

Daubenton's Bat *Myotis daubentonii*

Sometimes called the 'Water Bat' because it spends most of its life close to water, typically living in buildings or bridges close to rivers and lakes. It tends to fly low over the water, at times picking insects off the surface with its large feet.

They were regularly recorded emerging from the first arch on the north side of Otley Bridge. On one visit in August, common pipistrelles were the first to emerge from 20 to 30 minutes after sunset followed by Daubenton's bats from 40 minutes after. Noctules had already appeared from elsewhere and all three species could then be seen swooping and turning over the water below the weir, illuminated by the streetlight above the adjacent path.

Along the Washburn, in June, Daubenton's were recorded around Dob Park Bridge and the small bridge between that and Lindley Wood Reservoir Bridge. There were none around the latter, much higher bridge. They were also recorded on several visits at Lindley Bridge.

Noctule Bat *Nyctylua noctula*

The largest bat found in Yorkshire, one of the earlier species to be seen in the evening with fast direct flight or hunting around treetops soon after sunset. They occasionally fly by day.

Recorded from March onwards from several spots around Otley and from Leathley, Farnley Lake, OWRN and along the Washburn.

A large bat seen twice in daylight and photographed near the Wharfe at Hebden was almost certainly a noctule.

A crucial factor in identifying these bats is picking out the peak frequency of their calls using a bat detector. However, given that all bats emit calls across a wide frequency range, the peak frequency can be difficult to isolate with this observer being nonplussed at times as to which bat he is hearing.

LAGOMORPHA - RABBITS AND HARES

Rabbit *Oryctolagus cuniculus*

Widespread throughout Wharfedale especially in the lowland areas. It is unclear how common they are in Upper Wharfedale.

Of 15 records received most were from areas at the fringes of Otley such as OWRN, Pool Road Cemetery and Riverside Park housing estate where they range around roads and gardens by night before retreating once human activity begins.

In the wider countryside, they were seen sharing several badger setts despite badgers being recorded as predators of young rabbits (Not unusual to find them together according to AJ who has long experience of badger watching).

Black rabbits were seen at four locations, including one at Linton. These are not descendants of domestic animals but a melanistic colour phase seen in fairly constant numbers in the rabbit population.

It would be interesting to receive more records of rabbits, especially from further up Wharfedale given their fluctuating numbers due to disease and their crucial place in the food chain for many predators.

Their vulnerability to predation was illustrated by a half-size rabbit on the track beside Farnley Lake Woods which was ambushed by a stoat and narrowly escaped into the adjacent stubble field. The stoat gave up and returned to the wood while the rabbit was still sitting in the field twenty minutes later. It too would have to return to the wood. It is hardly surprising that 90% of rabbits die in their first year, the majority within the first three months.

Brown Hare *Lepus capensis*

47 records were received with the largest number of sightings in the Washburn Valley and in the fields between OWRN and Weston Lane, Otley, where four 'mad' March hares were seen chasing on 17 March. Two were watched boxing on Denton Moor on 11 May.

Other sightings ranged far and wide, from Braysthorpe and Almscliff Crag in the east to Chelker Reservoir in the west and from further up the valley from Bolton Abbey, Burnsall, Thorpe, Hebden and Threshfield with Kettlewell the furthest north.

Numbers of hares have declined with the increasing specialisation of farming and the use of modern machinery and pesticides which kill many. They have little legal protection although hare coursing, illegal since 2002, is still a problem in both North and West Yorkshire, especially from September when fields have been left empty after harvesting. Both West and North Yorkshire Police have Wildlife Crime Officers and welcome reports, either by phoning 101 or 999 for a crime in action.

RODENTIA - RODENTS

Grey Squirrel *Sciurus carolinensis*

Only 14 reported sightings, mainly from the Otley - Ilkley areas with one further north in Skyrholme. They are obviously underreported and are a constant presence in woods and gardens, attracted in many cases by bird feeders.

The maximum seen was five in an Ilkley garden. In June, five were also seen together at the edge of a wheat field beside Farnley Lake Woods, feeding on fallen grain and very reluctant to flee. The ears of wheat had been neatly bitten off the first two rows of wheat along a 30 yard stretch. It was unclear whether the squirrels had done this themselves or were simply picking up seeds after roe deer had inflicted the initial damage.

Sightings from further up Wharfedale would be welcomed, especially in view of ideas put forward to extend the range of red squirrels south from their present stronghold of the Greenfield Forest Red Squirrel Reserve which would require culling of greys. In the 15 years that the Clarks spent at Nethergill Farm, adjacent to Greenfield, a grey squirrel was seen only once.

Red Squirrel *Sciurus vulgaris*

For an account of the local history of our one native squirrel and the possible reasons and implications of their movement further south as far as Ilkley this summer, see their article 'Red Squirrels in Wharfedale'.

They have been reported from Nethergill Farm, near Oughtershaw in the far north of our recording area, since 2016, spreading from the nearby Greenfield Red Squirrel Reserve. Fiona Clark reported that they had not been seen on the farm

up to July when they left but that they had been seen in Oughtershaw. The new owners of Nethergill, the Thomases, are continuing to encourage the squirrels and report seeing at least three different animals.

In June, a red squirrel was filmed at Scargill House, Kettlewell, and thought perhaps to be an escapee from Kilnsey Park. One was then seen at Grass Wood on 20 July and another near Beamsley on 3 August. Records then came in between 10 and 20 August from two gardens at opposite ends of Ilkley, at the edge of the Moor. Both were backed up with photos. A final sighting was of another seen in a Beamsley garden on 2 September.

All these gardens also host grey squirrels and sadly the truth is that red squirrels are unlikely to survive long once they come into contact with greys which carry squirrelpox which is fatal to reds.

Wood Mouse *Apodemus sylvaticus*

The name can be confusing as they are also sometimes called Field Mouse or Long-tailed Field Mouse.

The UK's most common and widespread mouse with an estimated population of 38 million, mainly inhabiting woodland and fields but highly adaptable, at times invading buildings as was reported from houses at Otley and Burley-in-Wharfedale. They live in complex underground burrow systems which include nest chambers and food stores.

A nest containing five juveniles was dug up while gardening at Skyreholme.

Mainly nocturnal they were recorded on remote trail cameras set up overnight at Leathley, Otley and Ilkley as well as several times during the day, usually foraging below bird feeders.

Field Vole *Microtus agrestis*

An estimated British population of 75 million makes this perhaps our most common mammal although it is not as easily spotted as the bank vole. They are greyish brown on the back with a shorter tail than the bank vole at less than 30% of the body length. They are more often found in grassland and moorland but the habitats of the two small voles can overlap.

Singles were seen three times in a garden bordering Ilkley Moor, eating red currants. Another was below a corrugated metal sheet, at OWRN.

Bank Vole *Clethrionomys glareolus*

Seldom seen despite a population estimated at 25 million. Difficult to distinguish from the very similar field vole. The bank vole is reddish brown on the back with a tail about 50% of its body length. They are usually found in woodland, hedgerows, parks and gardens.

In January, one was seen at OWRN and two were seen below bird feeders in an Otley garden backing on to Farnley Hall Woods. In the same garden, in May, a bank vole was disturbed from a still empty nest under an old plastic dustbin lid in a bramble patch. It was a slightly flattened globe, five inches across and made of dried grass with a little moss. Six inches from the nest was a neat pile of 100 black droppings.

Their true prevalence in even this one garden was revealed by a trail camera set up overnight pointing at sunflower seeds spread at the edge of a hedge. It recorded 130 visits by up to three voles.

There was one other record of a vole, not identified by species, at Knotford Nook.

Water Vole *Arvicola amphibius*

According to WNS records, "In 1980 water voles were still quite common in the Wharfe and streams from Ilkley to Pool. By 1988 they had disappeared. During the same year a party of black mink were spotted at Manor Park." There have been no verified sightings in our area since.

Water voles are now classified as endangered having undergone a long decline in Britain. They have disappeared from 94% of their former sites with much of the blame attributed to the introduction of American mink plus habitat degradation and pollution.

In summer 2019, several members of WNS attended a training session at Malham Tarn, where water voles have been successfully reintroduced, to learn about the animals and to hear about their possible reintroduction to Timble Ings by Yorkshire Water (See the account by Ros Lilley in the WNS Review for 2019, page 11). In September 2020 it was reported that this is going ahead with the proposed release of 100 water voles, bred in captivity, which will first be placed in large release pens to let them get used to their new environment, before being released into the wild.

Brown Rat *Rattus norvegicus*

Only eight records, three of live rats in Otley, one at Ilkley and four roadkill victims scattered between Otley and Barden.

The relative scarcity of the sightings perhaps gives the lie to the urban myth that "We are never more than six feet from the nearest rat." Estimates of their numbers vary widely but the most reliable one, from the Food and Environment Research Agency, reckons the urban population to be about three million (out of a UK total of ten million), making it unlikely that in an urban area you would be nearer than 164 feet (50 metres) to the nearest rat!

CARNIVORA – CARNIVORES

Fox *Vulpes vulpes*

There were nine widely scattered records between May and December. Five of these were daytime sightings, one from a garden in Riverside Park in Otley, another from gardens bordering the river in Otley, one from the edge of Farnley Lake Woods, one from near Embsay and one from Grass Wood.

Three were picked up on trail cameras set up overnight. One was from the banks of the Washburn near Leathley, another from OWRN where a fox came in to sniff a log used by otters as a spraint point to mark their territory, some hours before an otter appeared. A third was from the same Riverside Park garden mentioned above while a neighbour, who had just had security cameras installed, twice recorded a fox playing on his lawn, oblivious to the scent markings of his dog which was locked up indoors. Previously, the same person had discovered a cache of the dog's toys over the fence at the edge of the woods, presumably deposited there by a fox.

Weasel *Mustela nivalis*

Widespread with a British population between 4 and 500,000. Just four records, three of animals crossing roads so typical sightings of this small, fast, elusive predator. One was on top of the Chevin, one between Burnsall and Threshfield and another at Hardisty Hill, north of Blubberhouses. The fourth was seen hunting along the river edge at Ilkley.

Stoat *Mustela erminea*

Its population is thought to be similar to that of the weasel but seen more often with 14 records. Two were sightings from OWRN near the portakabin/ parking area where they have been seen previously. Others were from the Chevin, Lindley, Farnley (where one was seen to ambush a rabbit which narrowly escaped), Braythorne, Stainburn Forest and Weeton.

Further up the Wharfe, there were three sightings between Nesfield and Beamsley, another from Skyreholme.

An animal crossing the A65 near Chelker Reservoir at night was probably a stoat although might have been a polecat (A dead polecat was found close to the same spot in 2017. There is a polecat population in Cumbria which could spread to the Yorkshire Dales).

American Mink *Mustela vison*

The first mink farm opened in England in 1929, the first in Scotland in 1938, the same year they were recorded in the wild. The present population is descended from escapees or from those freed by animal liberationists. They have had a devastating effect on our native wildlife, especially on water voles. The last British fur farm closed in 1993.

There were just three records, two of them in June. One picked up on a trail camera was searching the banks of the Washburn in daylight. The second was at OWRN with "moorhens going crazy." The third was seen several times in November hunting along the edges of the Wharfe at Ilkley.

A mink is also believed to live around the angling ponds at Knotford Nook.

Badger *Meles meles*

In JD's Ilkley garden Seamus, an old badger and a regular visitor for many years, visited until late autumn. The saga of his interactions with hedgehogs has continued to unfold.

In another Ilkley garden deliberately left wild, the owner and his dog came face to face with a badger. The dog sensibly fled.

Elsewhere in Lower Wharfedale, regular visits were paid to half a dozen badger setts using information mainly provided by Andy Jowett. Most of the setts produced between two and four cubs with most of them surviving until late summer.

In several setts rabbits were also in residence (AJ has seen rabbits and foxes sharing setts with badgers in the past).

Trail cameras were used to record badger activity in JD's garden, at several badger setts and overlooking well worn badger paths.

Further up the dale, near Cracoe, an active sett with much bedding and digging was reported.

There were three reports of badgers killed on the roads.

Several of the setts visited were on farmland and apparently tolerated by the landowners although one had reportedly been ploughed over in the past but then left undamaged after an intervention by the North Yorkshire Police Wildlife Unit.

Not all the setts in our area are left alone with many in Upper Wharfedale reportedly dug out, perhaps with the aim of protecting game birds. Setts in Lower Wharfedale are also dug out regularly and the barbaric practice of badger baiting with dogs is said to continue. In May, North Yorkshire Police appealed for information after a dead badger was discovered at Farnley under unusual circumstances with criminal activity suspected.



Under the Protection of Badgers Act 1992 it is illegal to kill, injure or take a badger or to damage their setts, making it all the more ironic that in September 2020 the government extended the badger cull to 11 new areas so that 60,000 more badgers could be killed. This was despite a clear government commitment to phase out badger culling in favour of TB vaccination of badgers and cattle. The areas include some where successful badger vaccination projects are under way.

Otter *Lutra lutra*

For 50 years, from 1948 to 1998 no otters were seen in Wharfedale as a result of poisoning by organochlorine pesticides and the “sport” of otter hunting with hounds.

Since their return their numbers have gradually increased with spraint (droppings used to mark their territories), tracks and fish remains regularly reported from OWRN and the Washburn Valley although sightings were scarce. There has been an upsurge of records since 2016 when WNS reported many sightings, including juveniles.



In 2019 there were eight reports of live otters seen with two more killed on roads.

In 2020 there were an incredible 29 sightings of live animals with another seven of otter spraint or footprints. A dead carp on an island at Otley Angling Pond at Knotford Nook was thought to have been killed by an otter.

Of these live sightings, nine were from OWRN of which five were of single animals and two were of two animals (either a mating pair or a female with a cub) seen during the day. Two sightings were from a trail camera set up overnight.

There were nine sightings on the Wharfe at Otley. Eight of these were of single animals of which one was seen foraging for some time above the weir, perhaps catching bullheads, and three were seen by Paul Purvis and his neighbours who have the rare privilege of sometimes seeing them from their gardens backing on to the river opposite OWRN. On one occasion the otter had a probable mandarin duckling in its jaws.

One sighting, in November, was of two otters below Otley Bridge heading for the weir, just after salmon had been seen trying to leap it (Salmon have also returned to the Wharfe in recent years and run upstream during October and November).

Along the Wharfe at Ilkley, Rachel Huxham recorded otters six times between January and October, on the stretch between Ilkley and Denton Bridges, including an adult with two cubs once and two probable subadults on another occasion. Two youngsters were also recorded in the river by the golf club. The mother and cubs were seen again in December.

Further north, there were several reports of single animals as well as riverside footprints at Hebden. The final sighting of the year was of one at Chelker Reservoir on 30 December.

There was just one report of a road death, a cub found on the A65 between Burley and Ilkley.

Otters seem to be well and truly re-established in Wharfedale.

CERVIDAE – DEER

Roe Deer *Capreolus capreolus*

Nationally roe deer are on the increase and may now number 500,000.

In our area there were 61 records in 2020, up from 31 in 2019. Of these 47 were in Lower Wharfedale including 13 from OWRN, 21 from the Farnley/ Leathley/ Lower Washburn area, five scattered around the fringes of Otley, one from Timble, one from Burley-in-Wharfedale and five from Ilkley.

In Upper Wharfedale there were ten sightings, mainly of single animals, from Burnsall, Hebden, Grassington, Grass Wood, Kilnsey, Kettlewell and Litton Fell.

The greatest numbers seen were groups of five in the Washburn Valley in January and on Ilkley Moor in April (In parts of the country with higher densities, herds of 15 or more are not unusual). Other notable records were three on three occasions at OWRN, a doe with a white-spotted fawn crossing the Washburn on an early morning in June, caught on a trail camera (Small fawns are usually left concealed by their mothers to lie up during the day) and two bucks fighting, also in June, perhaps practising for the rut which usually runs through July and August.

Red Deer *Cervus elephus*

There was an intriguing report on 13 August when a farmer contacted AJ to say she had seen a red deer stag at Dearncomb Head on Denton Moor. He went there with her on the following night but could not locate it.

There are no WNS records of red deer going back to at least 2008 although AJ had seen a couple at nearby Timble Ings years before. The nearest red deer to our area would usually be thought to be those at Studley Royal Deer Park.

Muntjac *Muntiacus reevesi*

Reeves muntjac, native to SE China, were introduced in 1894 to Woburn Park, Bedfordshire. They were deliberately released in 1901 and have been spreading ever since. There have been no sight records of muntjac in our area although a skull was reported in 2012 and they have been confirmed in other parts of Yorkshire.

In mid-April a small deer ‘bigger than a badger, smaller than a roe deer’ was seen crossing Carter’s Lane, on the north side of the Wharfe opposite Ben Rhydding. This could well have been a muntjac.

AMPHIBIAN REPORT

CAUDATA -- NEWTS AND SALAMANDERS

Great Crested Newt *Triturus cristatus*

Despite being recorded from sites in both North and West Yorkshire there were no sightings from Wharfedale until after Gordon Haycock, during 2009 to 2011, introduced 600 eggs per year to Nell Bank, Ilkley. There were no surveys reported from there during 2019 and 2020 although in 2018 many had been seen with eggs present.

However, in the last few years a small population was discovered in a garden pond in Riverside Park, bordering Farnley Hall Woods, Otley. On 22 February 2020, seven males were recorded with six males and eggs present on 6 April.

A bigger population has been found at Gallows Hill Nature Reserve, Otley, with many newts and eggs present on 1 March, a total of 32 males and 4 females counted on 6 April and many males and eggs present on 10 May.

Palmate Newt *Lissotriton helveticus*

As in 2019 the earliest record was in the last week of February when four were recorded in a garden pond in Riverside Park, Otley. Numbers in that pond peaked with 16 in April.

In another nearby garden with four ponds a total of 54 was counted on 13 March with a lot of mating activity at night and on sunny afternoons in April.

At Gallows Hill NR, 18 males and three females were recorded on 6 April.

There were no records from Nell Bank during 2019 and 2020 although 200 had been counted in 2018.

Smooth or Common Newt *Lissotriton vulgaris*

The earliest record was of one dead on an Ilkley lawn on 15 February after a cold night. Up to four were seen in the same garden throughout February and March on warmer days.

All the other records were of small numbers between late March and the end of May from ponds around Otley with up to five in a pond on St David's Road, up to five at Gallows Hill NR, two at OOWNR, three in a Riverside Park pond and nine newts, possibly smooth in West Chevin Pond. They were also present in a garden pond at Burley-in-Wharfedale.

In September, one was under a corrugated sheet at OOWNR.



Smooth newt (JS)

Alpine Newt *Ichthyosaura alpestris*

An introduced species found throughout much of Europe. Their presence in our area is perhaps due to their distribution to Bradford schools in the 1990s with children allowed to take them home during the holidays. They are now common in ponds mainly south of the river, except for Nell Bank where 40 were counted in 2018.

In March 2020 many were in a garden pond at Burley-in-Wharfedale. In April three were seen at Gallows Hill NR.

Fire Salamander *Salamandra salamandra*

A species found in western, central and southern Europe.

Ruth Paynter reported that one of these vividly coloured black and yellow salamanders had been found lurking by a car at Scargill House near Kettlewell at the end of October. She investigated further, sent a photo to confirm it and was told of one seen five years previously and again in 2019. This was obviously a released pet as they are sold by shops specialising in amphibians. It was not clear whether this was an isolated individual or one of a small colony. They are usually nocturnal and rarely move more than a few yards from their daytime refuges below logs or rocks. They can live for 20 years in the wild.



ANURA -- FROGS AND TOADS

Common Toad *Bufo bufo*

Widely scattered sightings, the first two males in an Ilkley garden on 10 March. On 6 April a total of eight males were seen at Gallows Hill NR plus a pair in amplexus. On 8 April about 20 were on paths near Carr Bottom Reservoir on Burley Moor. Spawn and toadlets were at Upper Tarn on Ilkley Moor on 10 April.

There were no reports of bigger numbers at known important breeding sites. Later in the year singles were recorded from several Otley gardens and two below a corrugated iron sheet at OOWNR with a last record from an Ilkley supermarket car park on 14 November. That one was relocated to a toad shelter in the finder's garden.

Common Frog *Rana temporaria*

Frogspawn and mating frogs were widely reported from the first week of March from sites around Otley, at OOWNR, Gallows Hill NR (with 43 clumps of spawn in the big pond), Danefield, West Chevin Quarry and Riverside Park as well as ponds at Timble Ings, Menston and Ilkley Moor, followed by tadpoles in most of these places.

Later in the year, small numbers of frogs were reported from several Otley gardens, Timble Ings, Grimwith Reservoir and



Grassington.

On the nights of 27 and 29 November strange deposits of small heaps of white, globular jelly, each with an attached mass of tiny black eggs were reported from beside a small garden pond on Bridge Avenue, Otley, very close to the river.

This very unusual find was thought to be Star Jelly (first reported in the 14th century when it was thought to have fallen to earth during meteor showers, hence the name) and to have originated after a predator has eaten a female frog and then vomited up the undeveloped eggs and ovum jelly. Female frogs

create their eggs in late summer and then carry them until the spring. The probable identity of the predator was revealed by a trail camera set up overnight which recorded two cats approaching the pond with one then sat expectantly on the edge. The most likely explanation seems to be that the predator was a cat that had surprised frogs on their way to hibernate in the pond or which had emerged from the pond on a warmish evening.

REPTILE REPORT

SQUAMATA

Common Lizard *Zootica vivipera*

The UK's most common and widespread reptile, emerging from hibernation in spring, most easily seen on sunny days.

Seven records, four of them in April of which three were at different spots on Ilkley Moor and one on Burley Moor; three records in May, one on Burley Moor, one from Timble Ings and a female at Grimwith Reservoir

Adder *Vipera berus*

On 26 February, six males and two females were found in a narrowing part of the Washburn Valley, some way upstream from Thruscross Reservoir.

Adders normally hibernate from October to March, a strategy to enable them to survive a cold winter but as the climate has warmed their hibernation period has become shorter. This is likely to lead to their decline as they can then be susceptible to cold weather following a warm spell as well as making them more vulnerable to predation and disturbance at a time when they are sluggish and basking in the sun. On 11 April a juvenile was seen sunning itself on the face of Simon's Seat.

In late April, four sloughed skins were found on the eastern shore of Thruscross Reservoir. They measured between 45 and 63cm (Adders usually measure up to 65cm although exceptionally up to 90cm).

Slow Worm *Anguis fragilis*

Just one record on 6 August of an adult sunning itself at Dewbotton Scar, Grass Wood, found by Paul Millard. Although they will bask in the sun occasionally they are mostly active at



twilight and are more often found hiding beneath rocks and logs. They can apparently be attracted to hide below pieces of tin or black plastic placed on the ground to provide warmth.

CONTRIBUTORS:

Many thanks to the following 38 individuals or couples who sent in records this year (up from 19 in 2019):

Bruce Brown, Fiona Clark, Mike & Joyce Clerk, Tom & Merle Collins, Robin Costello, Jenny Dixon, Gordon Haycock, John Healey & Rachel Cavanagh, Philippa Higgins, Carmen Horner, Rachel Huxham, Stewart Jobbins, Julia Johnson, Andy Jowett, Andrew Kelly, Midge & David Leather, Ros Lilley, Linda Lukats, Paul Millard, Alan Moore, Brian Morris, Denis O'Connor, Ruth Paynter, Paul Purvis, Fiona & Charles Prest, Ingrid Richter, Peter and Anne Riley, Jamie Roberts, Ann Saunders, Ernie Scarfe, Will Steele, John Stidworthy, Dave & Helen Thomas, Richard Thompson, David Varney, Amanda Wood, Ian & Janet Watt, Steve Westerman.

Given that mammals, amphibians and reptiles are often seen infrequently, many contributors may have just a few records. I am happy to receive them by email, post or phone with paper records or spreadsheets equally acceptable.

Denis O'Connor



Roe buck in velvet (KS)

Bank vole nest (DoC)



DRAGONFLY AND DAMSELFLY REPORT

LARGE RED DAMSELFLY (*Pyrrhosoma nymphula*)

Recorded between 6 May and 14 June at Otley, Otley Wetlands (OWNR), Timble Ings (Timble) and Ben Rhydding Gravel Pits (BRGP). *Largest count 27 May Timble 20.*

BLUE TAILED DAMSELFLY (*Ischnura elegans*)

Recorded between 25 May and 21 July at OWRN only. *Largest count 25 May OWRN 3*

AZURE DAMSELFLY (*Coenagrion puella*)

Recorded between 8 May and 24 June at Timble, OWRN, Otley, Gallows Hill, Burley and Lindley. *Largest count 25 May OWRN 15.*

COMMON BLUE DAMSELFLY (*Enallagma cyathigerum*)

Recorded between 8 May and 7 August at Timble, OWRN and Gallows Hill. *Largest count 2 June Gallows Hill Large Numbers.*

EMERALD DAMSELFLY (*Lestes sponsa*)

Recorded between 21 July and 7 August at OWRN only. *Largest count 21 July OWRN 2.*

BANDED DEMOISELLE (*Calopteryx splendens*)

Recorded between 22 May and 21 July at OWRN, Otley, Castley, Leathley, Rougemont Carr and Gallows Hill. *Largest count 22 May Rougemont Carr 20.*



Female banded demoiselle (HF)

BROWN HAWKER (*Aeshna grandis*)

Recorded between 25 June and 14 September at Otley, OWRN, Knotford, Gallows Hill and Lindley. *Largest count 7 August OWRN 12.*

COMMON HAWKER (*Aeshna juncea*)

No records this year.

SOUTHERN HAWKER (*Aeshna cyanea*)

Recorded between 20 June and 18 October at Otley, OWRN and Burley. *Largest Count 7 August Burley 2, but 10+ excuvia in July at an Otley pond.*

MIGRANT HAWKER (*Aeshna mixta*)

Recorded at OWRN only. *Largest count 14 September 15.*



COMMON DARTER (*Sympetrum striolatum*)

Recorded between 17 July and 14 September at Otley and OWRN. *Largest count 29 September OWRN 33.*

Female common darter (HF)

BLACK DARTER (*Sympetrum danae*)

Recorded at Timble only 5 July 1.

RUDDY DARTER (*Sympetrum sanguineum*)

No record this year.

BLACK TAILED SKIMMER (*Orthetrum cancellatum*)

Recorded at OWRN only. 16 June 2.

GOLDEN RINGED DRAGONFLY (*Cordulegaster boltonii*)

Recorded between 20 June and 12 July at Timble, below Thruscross and Lindley Wood Reservoir. *All records of singles.*

EMPEROR DRAGONFLY (*Anax imperator*)

Recorded between 16 June and 21 July at OWRN only. *Largest count 16 June OWRN 2.*

FOUR SPOTTED CHASER (*Libellula quadrimaculata*)

Recorded between 8 May and 24 July at Timble, Otley, OWRN and Lindley. *Largest count 31 May Timble 40+.*

BROAD BODIED CHASER (*Libellula depressa*)

Recorded between 19 May and 24 June at Timble, Gallows Hill and Burley. *Largest Count 27 May Timble 6.*

Broad bodied chaser (KS)



Our movement restrictions have resulted in far fewer records this year, and for some species an impression of far shorter flying seasons than is reality and in the case of Common Hawker the nonsense of a NIL result.

Overall we do have a far greater presence of dragonflies in our area than this year's records would suggest.

My first record of the year was a bit different. An unfortunate Large Red Damselfly in the beak of a Tree Creeper being taken as prey to feed nestlings in a tree beside the river at BRGP.

Records received from:

D & J Alred, B Brown, N & D Fearnley, P & K Limb, L Lucatis, D O'Connor, P Purvis, A & P Riley and E Scarfe.

David Alred



Male banded demoiselle (HF)

RED SQUIRRELS IN WHARFEDALE

A century ago, red squirrels were common throughout Yorkshire but they were virtually wiped out by squirrelpox carried by grey squirrels relentlessly spreading northwards.

According to Wharfedale Society records, 'Between 1949 and 1955 red squirrels were still being seen around our area. By 1969, however, grey squirrels were being seen in all areas and reds had virtually vanished.'

No more wild reds were seen in upper or lower Wharfedale until, in 2004, they were confirmed as being present in Greenfield Forest in Langstrothdale, a massive plantation of maturing pine trees well isolated from other areas of conifers further south.

Greenfield, being planted almost exclusively with conifers like spruce, is ideal habitat for reds because the trees produce small seeds, to which the reds are much better adapted than greys. These reds were thought to be an offshoot of the population in Cumbria where the nearest reserve is that of Garsdale/Mallerstang to the west of Hawes.

In 2008, 1000 hectares of the forest were designated as England's 17th red squirrel reserve. It is managed by forestry company UPM Tilhill, in cooperation with the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority, the Forestry Commission and other organisations under the umbrella of Red Squirrels Northern England.

The red squirrels are difficult to see in the vastness of Greenfield, but just a few miles away, near Oughtershaw, is Nethergill Farm which welcomes visitors and where red squirrels have occurred regularly since 2016, encouraged by tree planting over a period of 14 years and the provision of hazelnut feeders by the previous owners. They were recorded 47 times in 2019. The farm changed hands this year and the present owners continue to run the farm along environmental lines and to cater for red squirrels, with at least three different animals seen recently.

Not far away, just out of Wharfedale in Wensleydale, is the smaller Widdale Red Squirrel Reserve, three miles southwest of Hawes. This has a viewing area, a short walk along the valley of Snaizeholme, where it is also easier to see wild red squirrels than in Greenfield.

Captive red squirrels can be seen further south at Kilnsey Country Park where a breeding programme was established in 1998 by Vanessa Roberts, the mother of the current owner. Each year on average they breed four to six red squirrel kittens which over the years have been sent to help repopulate and maintain genetic diversity in squirrel reserves as far away as the Scilly Isles.

Until this year there had been no recent records of reds from further south in Wharfedale. However, between June and September, records came in to Wharfedale Naturalists from Kettlewell, Grass Wood, Beamsley and the opposite ends of Ilkley along the edge of the Moor, several backed up by photographic evidence.

A suggestion that these had been the result of an escape from Kilnsey Park was initially thought to be incorrect until it was discovered that there had been a mass escape of at least four reds perhaps dating back to July. Vandalism was suspected after a hole was discovered in the perimeter wall of one of the enclosures.

Even so, while the sightings in Upper Wharfedale could well be explained by the escapees it would be incredible if some of these individuals had travelled as far south as Ilkley Moor in just a couple of months.



Red squirrel (JS)

An alternative explanation could be that conifers in Greenfield are being progressively felled, forcing squirrels to move out. Another suggestion, put forward in a Yorkshire Post article, was that red squirrels have had a bumper breeding season caused by an abundance of pine cones resulting in young squirrels being forced to explore outside their parents' territories.

Although the sightings from further down Wharfedale represent an exciting development, sadly it is very unlikely to be sustained. Pine crops are cyclical and any expansion of the red squirrel population will decline again once there is less food available.

Much more importantly, once they come into contact with grey squirrels, as is inevitable especially where they are attracted to the easy pickings of garden bird feeders, their days are numbered. Greys carry the viral disease squirrelpox to which they have developed immunity having been exposed to it for many years. The reds have no such immunity and the disease spreads quickly from greys to reds, possibly by aerosol infection, by direct contact or borne by parasites. Once it has taken hold it causes skin ulcers, lesions and scabs. Infected animals become lethargic and are said to resemble rabbits with myxomatosis.

Although there is recent anecdotal evidence of resistance to squirrelpox among reds including a healthy red squirrel in Cumbria with antibodies to the virus, mortality rates for infected reds are usually 100% with most succumbing within four to five days.

Jamie Roberts of Kilnsey Park has an ambition to repopulate more of Upper Wharfedale with reds, perhaps as far south as Grass Wood near Grassington. This would obviously require cooperation between landowners, conservation organisations and volunteers in the cull of grey squirrels to the point where every grey squirrel within an exclusion zone of five kilometres would have to be removed, a system that is operated by all the 17 red squirrel reserves in the north of England.

Wharfedale Naturalists Society would be in favour, in principle at least, and it will be interesting to discover how much support there is for the scheme when a meeting of interested parties can go ahead, hopefully next year.

In the meantime, it is to be hoped that a few of the red squirrels, seen during their southward expansion this summer, have survived in isolated pockets of conifers which have not been penetrated by greys.

Denis O'Connor

JOYCE HARTLEY

30 DECEMBER 1928 - 13 MAY 2020



Joyce came into the world in Huddersfield on 30th December 1928. Sadly, her mother died soon after Joyce was born. Her father's work as a cattle dealer meant he was away from home a great deal, travelling around the country and over to Ireland and so he was left with no alternative but to leave his little daughter in the care of her grandmother, and later with an aunt, when her grandmother became too old to care for her.

Joyce will have been a very bright little girl, and would have been a willing student. Had she been born a decade or so later she would have gone to university, to pursue an academic career. But as it came time for Joyce to leave school, young men returning from the war were competing for university places, and had she been lucky enough to gain a place, she would have found it difficult to afford. She began teacher-training, but realised the career would not suit her, and went into office work. For many years she worked for Commercial Union Insurance on Park Row in Leeds.

Joyce didn't make friends with everyone she met, but once she befriended someone, they found they had a good and loyal friend in her. Settling down rather later than many of her peers, Joyce was thirty-six when she married Sam Hartley. They had met through Leeds Photographic Society, and discovered that photography was not their only mutual interest. They were both keen ramblers and became members of a hiking club. They also shared a deep love of botany, as anyone who had the pleasure of seeing their beautiful garden in Rawdon would realise.

They both joined Swarthmore Field Club, where they learned much about the natural history of our local area, and also Bradford Botany Group, with whom they enjoyed excursions and short breaks. The holidays they took together naturally involved their love of walking and visiting botanically-rich areas in many parts of the United Kingdom and in Europe. Being out in nature and taking in wonderful scenery made them both happy. Joyce was fascinated by clouds, and sometimes said wistfully that she would have loved to study meteorology.

Joyce and Sam joined the Wharfedale Naturalists in April 1981. Over the years, Joyce gradually took on the work of Botany Recorder from Joan Duncan, working assiduously in planning and leading walks, and also keeping immaculate records. These were not only on the Society's record card system, but also in her Boots Scribbling diaries - so easy for anyone to follow, as she always put in places, way-markers such as field gates, and also grid squares. Joyce was Vice President of the Society from 1990 to 1991, and President from 1991 to 1992.

She was extremely knowledgeable when it came to wildflowers, and her friends know how much she loved them.

For example, she called many of the numerous yellow plants of the Daisy family "Dandelion's cousins", and to look for "squishy heads". Hard Rush stems were "grey knitting needles" and Glaucous Sedge (*Carex flacca*) was "floppy flacca", because its spikelets hung from the main stem. Early Dog-violets had "rabbit's ears", unlike Common Dog-violet, because the top two petals were slim and stood up straight. On one botany visit along the Wharfe near Otley, after a long morning we still hadn't reached Joyce's lunch spot. It took several comments about hunger and "Is that a good lunch place?" before she at last agreed to stop.

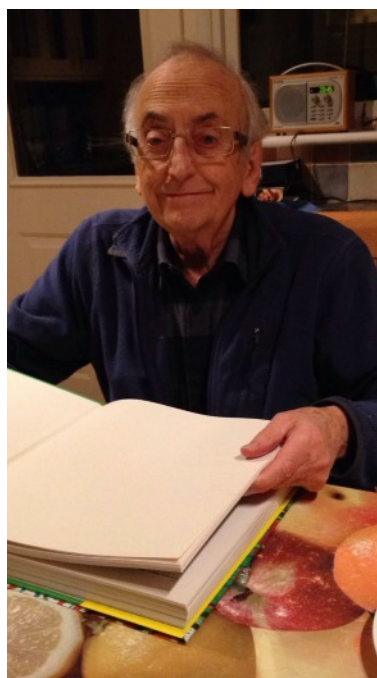
Joyce took time to teach her group members how to use a hand lens correctly, to see the puzzling botanical parts such as sepals, stamens, stigmas, styles and anthers, along with mucronate tips, and the direction of hairs on the edge of a leaf! After a day on a limestone pavement at Cowside, above Darnbrook House, one member reported that she could still confidently identify Knotted Pearlwort many years later - (5 rounded white petals twice as long as the sepals, 10 stamens, 5 styles and, just to check, you could feel the leaf-knots all the way up the stem) - and even produce its botanical name, *Sagina nodosa*! As Joyce would have said, "Isn't it bonny?"

After more than forty years, Sam & Joyce left their house in Rawdon, and the garden they had tended so lovingly for all those years, and moved to sheltered accommodation in Otley. Friends knew what a bitter wrench that was for Joyce, and how heart-breaking when just a short time later Sam passed away.

Despite failing eyesight and becoming increasingly deaf, Joyce believed wholeheartedly in 'keeping going'. Even though she found it increasingly difficult to get around, she still made a point of visiting friends in care homes. Almost to the end she insisted on going out to the Post Office, or to shop at the market, although her progress was slow and unsteady. She much appreciated the visitors who took the time to visit her in her flat, because she found herself on her own too much. In late 2019 she moved into a nursing home at Guiseley. Early in 2020, she fell and broke her hip, and was admitted to Leeds General Infirmary, where she died after a short illness. It was fitting that her funeral service took place out of doors, surrounded by blue skies, green trees and birdsong.

Nicky Vernon, with help from Joyce's friends

DAVID HOWSON 1930-2020



David Philip Howson was born in Sutton Coldfield in 1930. As an only child, he often amused himself by, as he put it, 'poking about in the bushes' leading to a keen interest in insects, particularly butterflies.

His family moved around the country with his Dad's job from the Midlands, to Lancashire and later South Wales. He found changing schools so often difficult, but all the moving around expanded his regional knowledge of flora and fauna. He was especially fond of the Gower after his parents settled in Swansea.

He always had an active mind, and despite not

always being physically fit, he was quite gifted at school and went on to study at Bristol University where he met his wife, Rosemary with whom he set up home in Mid Wales. After studying mathematics, he was pleased to get a job as an engineer in Newport as he always admitted to being more practical and found his mathematics course 'very abstract'.

However, it was his background in mathematics that landed him a teaching job at Birmingham University after he took an MSc in the at the time new field of electrical engineering . He managed to come up with a mathematical solution to prove a theory his boss had published that other academics had disputed. From Birmingham, he got a chair at Bradford University. His then expanding family came to live in Ilkley. The family spent much time exploring the Dales, where he discovered a colony of Scotch argus and enjoyed looking for the northern brown argus on the areas of limestone. He and Rosemary joined the Wharfedale Naturalists, and he eventually took on the butterfly recorder's role which he pursued diligently for many years. A frequenter of the Ben Rhydding Gravel Pits, he also discovered a colony of white-letter hairstreak living on the elm trees there. He was pleased when Steve Parkes took over the management of what is now a Local Nature Reserve. His regular trips to the reserve and other local butterfly spots were what kept him going until the age of 89.

Tim Howson



MICHAEL ATKINSON 1933-2020

Michael Atkinson, who died in December after a short illness, aged 87, was, in the words of a long-time friend, 'a lovely man with a keen mind'. In his teens in Ilkeston, Derbyshire, he was already compiling records of flower sightings, something which continued on National Service with the Sherwood Foresters in Libya. At the University of Oxford he

changed degree course from Law to Theology, attracted to the clever, humane thinkers that he found in the faculty. He also met Dorothy, the beginning of a 60-year relationship. They married in London in 1959 and later had three sons, Paul, John and Chris.

From Oxford Mike entered the Church of England ministry. Though he did eventually work as a vicar (in High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire), he spent most of his career less conventionally, the greater part of it as an industrial chaplain. He moved easily with management, unions and shopfloor. His work took place in the lunch breaks in the 'snap' cabins of Sheffield's steel works. He'd bang his mug loudly on the desk then offer a few sentences of introduction before a free-for-all exchange began on the topic he'd raised. At times of festivals, Easter, Christmas, the topic might be religious, but mostly the themes were social and political, always underpinned by a moral message. Later he was on the Church's central staff in its Board for Social Responsibility. Mike was a keen amateur botanist who amassed thousands of photos and records, as Ilkley Naturalists will recall, but he was also devoted to fell walking, not to mention rock climbing in his earlier years, with a special love for the Lake District and northwest Scotland. And no account of Mike would be complete without noting his fondness for classical music, as a singer, a pianist and a listener.

Following retirement, Mike moved to Ilkley in the mid-1990s joining WNS in 1997. This was followed by his joining the Committee in 1999, becoming Secretary in 2000 and then Vice-President from 2006 to 2010. In all these roles with WNS, Mike used his organisational experience and people skills to great effect, in particular helping and advising the current President after his appointment in 2003.

Paul Atkinson & Peter Riley

NEVIL BOWLAND An outstanding naturalist

The Wharfedale Naturalists' Society has lost its longest serving member, Nevil Bowland, who has died at the age of 90. The Society was founded in October 1945 and Nevil became a schoolboy member before the end of that year. From as early as he could remember Nevil was interested in all aspects of natural history and could often be seen in his spare time wandering around the village of Menston, where his father was the village policeman, looking and learning about everything from flowers to birds.



Eventually Nevil married Audrey and they settled in the house in Guiseley where they lived for the rest of their lives bringing up their three children. Nevil had several jobs in his working career, the last one being running his own horticultural business concentrating on alpine plants. Natural history was always his main leisure interest and Wharfedale Naturalists was the main vehicle for indulging his passion, always supported by Audrey, throughout his lifetime. He regularly attended the Society's indoor and outdoor events throughout the year treating other attendees to his knowledge and experience. He was both Vice-President and President twice and his second year as President in 1995 coincided with the Society's 50th Anniversary which involved chairing a number of celebratory events including a Dinner at the Craiglands Hotel where the Guest Speaker was Alan Titchmarsh, a long-standing and valued member of WNS. In addition, Nevil was the Society's Vertebrate Recorder for over 30 years, faithfully documenting sightings he received from members throughout Wharfedale. This interest led to a passion for identifying species from their skeletons, including dissection of owl pellets through which he was able to discover exactly what the bird had eaten no matter how small the skeletal remains.

Nevil will be especially remembered for his wholehearted enthusiasm for all matters natural history and his enthusiastic imparting of this knowledge to other Society members. He was always keen to enhance his own knowledge but, just as important to him, to pass this on to anybody else who might be interested. He had a most sunny disposition and was always likely to find the humour in any situation. In his later years Nevil became involved as a founder Trustee for a local nature reserve which became a real passion for him. He rarely missed work parties, in denial of his age, but also spent many happy hours with Audrey just walking round and observing. His legacy on this site will include the maturing native species hedgerows and the ponds he either helped to dig or to create by the damming of small streams.

Nevil will be remembered by all who knew him as a wonderful ambassador for the natural history of Wharfedale and his sunny and friendly character will be sorely missed.

Peter Riley

SPRING IN HEBDEN 2020



This spring we all experienced the first Covid 19 lockdown. The weather was warm but there were only locals on the paths around Hebden. Neighbours contacted me with news about birds seen in the area.

So here are some highlights from that period. First, pre-lockdown, tawny owls were vociferous in the evenings. Male and female goosanders were pairing up on the R Wharfe. By the end of January, kingfishers were seen in pairs. Flocks of oystercatcher were gathering near Linton stepping stones at the start of February. The first pipistrelle bat ventured out on 6 February and by 15 Feb a song thrush was flooding our garden with its compelling song. Lapwing and curlews made their way back here mid -month. The first pied wagtails came back at the start of March.



Wheatear

Lockdown began on 24 March and the first tortoiseshell and peacock butterflies visited the garden. Time for the summer birds to arrive. Two swallows

Meadow pipit



scudded over on 6 April and sand martins were recorded on the 7 April. Northern wheatear and meadow pipit appeared up the gill on the same days. Early April saw the return of redshank with

several pairs along the River Wharfe between Linton Church stepping stones and Hebden swing bridge.

I recorded our first willow warbler on 7 April, a chiffchaff two days later.

This felt like the spring of the willow warbler. The beautiful downward tumbling song accompanied us everywhere. On 19 April, and again on 24 April, I recorded 12 between Hebden swing bridge and Linton Church stepping stones.



Willow warbler

They were singing from every suitable shrubby tree.

We were all waiting for the ring ouzels. Early news of sightings came to me on 9 and 10 April. We spotted them, singles and pairs, in the Bolton Gill area for several weeks. My last record is on 6 May, but hopefully some of these birds bred further up on Grassington Moor.

The first common sandpipers arrived on 12 April and by 3 May there were five pairs between Hebden swing bridge and Linton Church stepping stones. A cuckoo called on 26 April. I saw my first swift on 23 April. In summer, a flock of 30 would be screeching round the village. A yellow wagtail was spotted on its way up the dale at the start of May and the first spotted flycatcher was recorded in the village on 9 May.

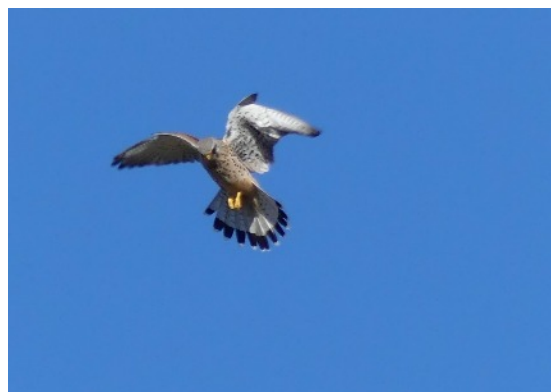
One of the most unusual highlights was a pair of little ringed



Little ringed plover

plover. One was first spotted near Linton Church stepping stones on 14 April. They were visible on and off until 1 June when they were driven away, either by the heavy footfall of

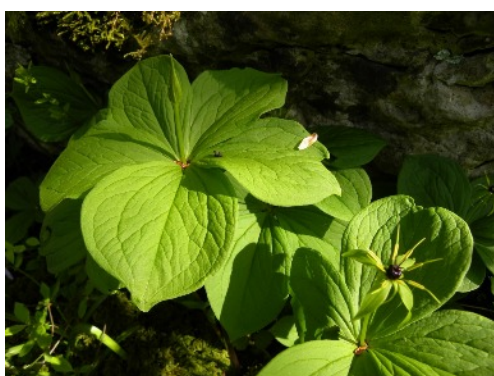
Kestrel





Pied flycatcher

cows or the suddenly ubiquitous sound of river parties of humans.



Herb Paris (NF)

perhaps you didn't miss so much. We did have great sightings of pied flycatcher taking food to the nest boxes and on our way back, a good showing of herb Paris. Hope to see you there next year!

At last allowed to venture further, on 13 May we led ourselves on the traditional Wharfedale Naturalists Society Barden bridge walk. Well, no cuckoo, redstart, whitethroat or otter, so

Ros Lilley

CRAB SPIDERS

What to look for

Worldwide, there are approximately 109 families, and at least 45,000 known species of spider (although the actual number is likely to be much higher). Of these, there are 37 families and approximately 670 species found in the UK. Spiders are arachnids, as are harvestmen, pseudoscorpions and mites. Spiders are important pest controllers, and while they do eat agricultural pests they don't eat or damage crops. The spiders present in the UK are no risk whatsoever to human health, but are generally misunderstood. They are under represented in terms of species records. Partly this is due to difficulties in identification of most spider specimens, but also due to the low number of spider experts in the UK.

What are crab spiders?

When we refer to crab spiders we are actually referring to the *Thomisidae* family of spiders, a single taxonomic family which contains seven genera and currently 27 species known to be present in the UK. Crab spiders are quite easily distinguished from other spiders; their front legs are longer than their back legs, giving them an overall crab-like and rather squat appearance. Their appearance is perfectly adapted to their method of predation. They wait patiently to ambush an unsuspecting invertebrate (a fly, bee, beetle, or another spider) which comes close. The front two pairs of legs trap their prey to

prevent it escaping, while the spider's jaws deliver a highly deadly poison, which kills the prey very quickly. The back two pairs of legs are shorter and anchor the spider to the substrate.

How to identify crab spiders

Most crab spider species are quite plain-looking in appearance, often of varying hues of brown which enable them to blend in with their surroundings. These spiders are so well camouflaged that they may not be seen until they move! Some *Thomisidae* species can change colour to match the plant that they are hiding in. One of these species is *Misumena vatia* (commonly called flower crab spider). This species is widespread only in the southern half of England and Wales. It is most commonly found in the boundary region between grass and scrub, although it has been found in more open locations. It will usually lie in wait on a flower head waiting to ambush its prey. Females can alter their colouring from white, yellow or green to match the flower but often also have a red/pink candy-stripe line on the abdomen. The males of this species are more drab in appearance and are much smaller than their female counterparts. It is thought that the colour difference reflects the males and females occupying different ecological niches.

When looked at with a hand lens, crab spiders have a distinctive eye arrangement. Their eyes are small and 'beady', and often encircled by white. In most cases, you won't be able to identify crab spider species with the naked eye, or even with a hand lens. Identification of the majority of crab spiders involves the use of a high-powered microscope under lots of light to be able to differentiate the species based on the appearance of genitalia. The female epigyne can be found on the underside of the abdomen, and male pedipalps (which look like boxing gloves when a male is sexually mature) hang next to the spider's jaws.



Misumena vatia female with prey Helen Smith

Unfortunately, it is often the case that a spider cannot be identified to species level until it has reached sexual maturity, as until this stage the genitalia are undeveloped and cannot be distinguished.

There are only two species of crab spider that you might come across in Yorkshire that can be identified without the use of a high-powered microscope. These are *Misumena vatia* (described above) and *Diaea dorsata*.

Diaea dorsata (Green crab spider) is found mainly in southern England, but its northernmost distribution is in Yorkshire. Both males and females are bright green and the species is unlike any other native crab spider.

Where to find crab spiders?

Being ambush hunters, they are not particularly speedy runners. They are more adept at camouflaging themselves and



Diaea dorsata female on ivy Tone Killick

remaining stationary for long periods of time. They are usually found on vegetation such as rank grasses, trees, shrubs or flower heads, waiting patiently for their prey. Being reliant on other invertebrates for food, and vegetation for hunting and hiding, these spiders are mainly active from spring to autumn. Spiders often overwinter in sheltered places such as leaf litter or log piles in order to avoid the harsh winter weather. Spiders have soft bodies and are susceptible to frost damage.

A similar family of spiders is the running crab spider family *Philodromidae*. Species of this family do also have the distinctive crab-like legs, but are visibly much more agile than the *Thomisidae*, as they tend to chase their prey rather than lie in wait. An example of a species from the running crab spider family is shown below:



Philodromus dispar female Tone Killick

The state of Britain's spiders

For those that haven't already, I encourage you to read the State of Nature Report, which can be found at <https://nbn.org.uk/stateofnature2019/>

The report has found that Britain's invertebrates are disappearing at an alarming rate due to numerous factors, including habitat loss, pollution and habitat degradation as a result of agricultural land management and non-sustainable woodland management. As many as 16% of our species are threatened; 18 species are considered Critically Endangered, 30 Endangered and 54 Vulnerable. Three species are thought to have already become extinct. It isn't easy reading, but it is important to not bury our heads in the sand and do what we can to prevent further loss of species.

Ways to help

There are some really simple ways to help encourage spiders (and other invertebrates) in your local area. Aside from the bigger, more long-term changes that we can all make to help slow the rate of decline of our global biodiversity (such as reduction in our carbon footprint and reducing the amount of waste we produce) here are a few small-scale changes that we can make to help improve biodiversity:

Create a pond in your garden. Any size pond is better than nothing, even an old washing up bowl can serve as a pond with the right amount of care and attention.

Leave some wild, untidy areas in your garden. The larger the area the better, but nature will find a way to use whatever you can afford to leave it.

Plant native bee or butterfly-friendly flowers* (or don't remove all of the 'weeds'). Many of our native invertebrates (a.k.a breakfast for spiders) can only survive if their specific food plant is available for them, and all our native invertebrates are adapted to live with our native plants. Nettles, ragwort, brambles will all be of much more benefit to wildlife than a manicured lawn.

Leave safe spaces for invertebrates to survive the winter; such as piles of stones, bricks, logs or leaf litter.

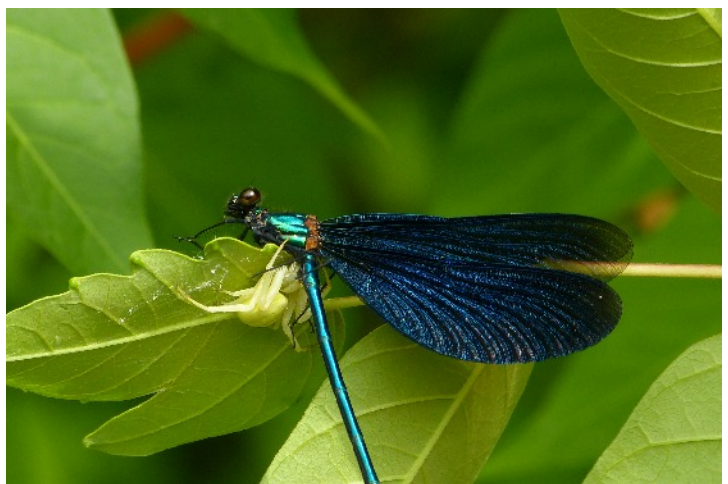
Submit records to your recorder. Without records we would not have an understanding of which species are at risk of extinction. Additionally, recording can be useful to show us long-term trends, such as species responses to climate change, and can also help to prioritise important conservation work.

Stef Pearse

Photos in the article above are by the photographers named, and come from <http://srs.britishspiders.org.uk>

* Native wildflower seeds for garden use can be purchased from Plantlife at <https://shop.plantlife.org.uk/collections/wildflower-seeds/products/perfect-for-pollinators-wild-flower-seed-mixture-by-john-chambers-seeds?variant=16982762629>

Crab spiders tackle prey much larger than themselves. This spider in Bulgaria has caught a damselfly. (DA)



APHIDS

With the enforced shrinkage of my horizons this summer, I have turned my attention even more to the insects in our garden and I have become fascinated by aphids. Yes, 'greenfly and blackfly' (although they may also be pink, yellow or brown)! They are not flies at all of course, but bugs belonging to the order Hemiptera. This means they have mouthparts specially adapted to piercing and sucking. They insert their needle-like rostrum or 'beak' into plant tissues and suck up the sap making them the enemy of many gardeners, who will sadly often resort to chemical means to get rid of them. However, aphids have many natural predators for whom they are a source of food: wasps, lacewing and hoverfly larvae, ladybirds, predatory bugs like this *Anthocoris* (flower



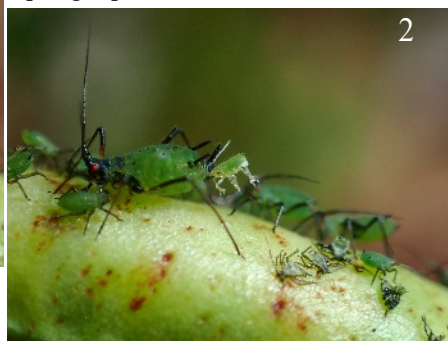
***Anthocoris* attacking aphid**

bug) and even birds will eat them in large numbers. In a well-balanced garden these will keep aphid numbers down without the need for toxic pesticides. For a really bad infestation on a favourite plant you can effectively remove them with a soap and water spray (or just use your fingers!).

There are over 500 species of aphids in the UK. Some of these are host specific and stick to one plant, and some have a wide range of hosts. Some live part of the year on one sort of plant e.g. woody shrub over winter and the summer months on another. They 'host alternate'. Aphid life cycles are very complicated and vary between species, but briefly may involve both sexual and asexual reproduction. Typically, wingless females which hatch in spring reproduce



by parthenogenesis, giving birth to live female young (which are already pregnant) exact replicas of themselves. Later in the year winged females and males may appear allowing colonisation of other plants away from the source, and sexual reproduction. For more information see Wikipedia!



The parthenogenesis bit fascinated me, and I determined to photograph a live birth. It actually takes quite a long time from the head appearing to the baby plopping to the ground on its spindly little legs (rather reminding me of a wildebeest giving birth in Africa!). If you passed my garden at the right time, you might have seen a bent-over figure with a camera muttering 'push'!

Anyway, the thing that sparked my interest in the first place was this, which I found on a tansy plant.

Bearing in mind the whole thing is only about 3mm, I couldn't make out what was going on with this pale pink aphid. I gave up and sent the photo to George McGavin. He explained 'It's been parasitised by a small wasp that has now finished eating and has come out of the aphid and spun its cocoon beneath. So I looked up 'aphid mummy' and far from being anything to do with live births, I discovered the macabre truth. Aphids have many predators, but the most gruesome fate they can face is being injected with the egg of a tiny parasitoid wasp. The developing larva eats away its insides, saving the vital organs until last to keep it alive and feeding for as long as possible. The wasp larva eats its way out of the now hollow shell or 'mummy' and pupates beneath. A new wasp eventually emerges, cutting a hole in the mummy or the cocoon and flies off to find a mate and start it all again.

So I wanted to photograph a wasp injecting its egg and of course a wasp cutting its way out of a mummy.

The wasps (probably *Aphidius* species) are only about 2mm long, but I did manage to witness egg laying on more than one occasion. I never did see a wasp cutting its way out despite amassing quite a collection of 'mummies' which I kept in a box, but I did find several that had already gone.

Of course, there are also hyperparasitoids which may lay their eggs in developing *Aphidius* larvae insects are just fascinating! So, the next time you squash an aphid, just think - you are the least of its problems!



Aphid mummy

CAMPION

In our wildlife garden, we leave most dead heads on flowers until early next spring. They provide valuable food for birds such as goldfinches, and shelter for insects and spiders.

As I stood in the garden one day in June (with my camera of course), my attention was drawn to something in a red campion seedhead. (1) A spider, I thought, seeing the pattern. I often use the camera as a 'hand lens' on small creatures, so I took several photos and then looked at the screen. Not a spider, but some sort of larva I thought. (2) But where to start looking to identify it?

It looked to have fearsome jaws, (3) and I wondered about beetle larva, but then inspiration struck. "I wonder where the campion moth gets its name – could the caterpillars develop in red campions?" I rushed inside to the computer and Googled it. Yes, its eggs are laid on the flower heads of ragged robin and red campion and the larvae develop within the seed capsule feeding on the seeds. I soon found several more inhabited seed capsules. I carefully peeled one apart to examine the contents, and there was a caterpillar nearly filling the space with just one or two seeds left (4) (and a lot of frass).

I also found one caterpillar grown so fat it would no longer fit in the capsule and was draped outside. (5)

I even caught one transferring to a fresh capsule. (6)

One caterpillar had a seed grasped firmly between its last prolegs (7) raising the question whether this was intentional to get a better grip to bite into it, but perhaps it was just because that's what prolegs do – grasp!

Eventually the caterpillars pupate just under loose soil. I never managed to find this.

Finally, they will emerge either later in the summer (there is a small second generation), or the following spring as the adult campion moth. (8)

Just as a footnote, the very similar moth (and caterpillar) The lychnis, also feeds on red campion, but it makes a better story if it's campion!

Anne Riley





Chickweed wintergreen (NF)



Australian button weed (DL)



Barberry (BB)



Oak at Blubberhouses (BB)



'Rhodochila' form common spotted orchid (BB)



Chusan Palm, Ilkley (BB)



Goldilocks buttercup (BB)



Black poplars, Otley golf course (BB)



Crested lady-fern (BB)



Grass of Parnassus (BB)



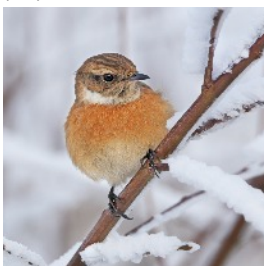
Giant hogweed (BB)



2-banded longhorn beetle (DL)



Three-cornered garlic (BB)



Female stonechat (KS)



Barn owl with shrew (KS)



Common gull (KS)



Cormorant at Kilnsey Trout Farm (KS)



Heron with brown trout (KS)



Oystercatchers (KS)



Mistle thrush (KS)



Meadow Pipit (KS)



Rabbit kits (KS)



Tawny owl out in daylight (RL)



Snipe (KS)



Tawny owl chick (DoC)



Muntjac (JS)

WHARFEDALE WEATHER 2020

RAINFALL

Total rainfall for the year was 1391 mm which is the **highest ever** annual recording since we began in 1926 & follows 2019 1291mm which was the previous record

This is why the land is **supersaturated**

This compares with annual average rainfall of 938mm since 1926

It is all the more remarkable as there were **only 16mm in April & 13mm in May**

The **highest monthly rainfall** was recorded in February with **299mm**, which is the **highest monthly total ever recorded**; there were high recordings of 183mm in October & 154mm in June & December

The **lowest annual rainfall** was recorded in **1964** with **605mm**

TEMPERATURE

The **coldest months** were December (3.42C) & February (4.82C)

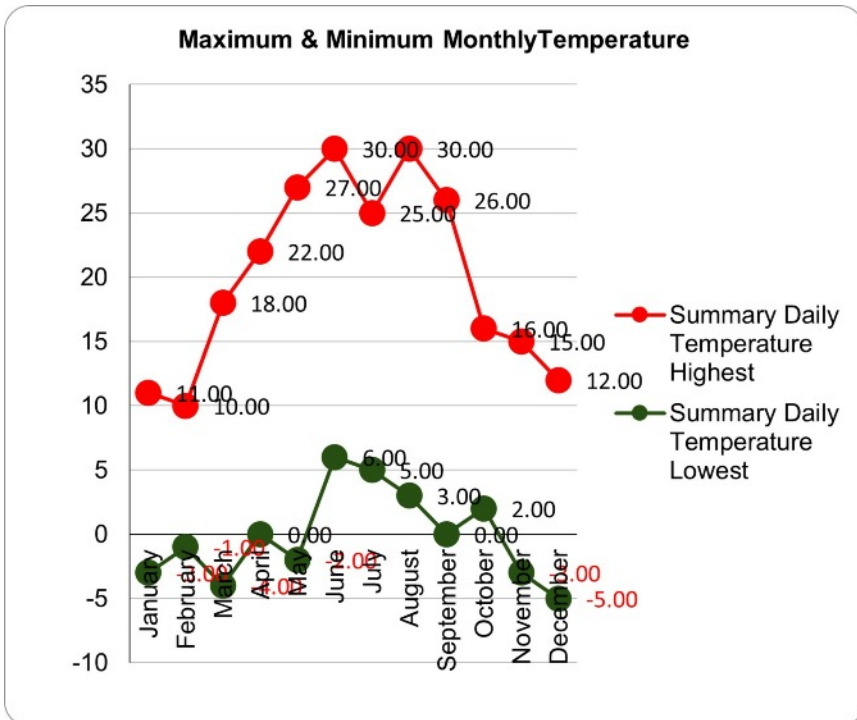
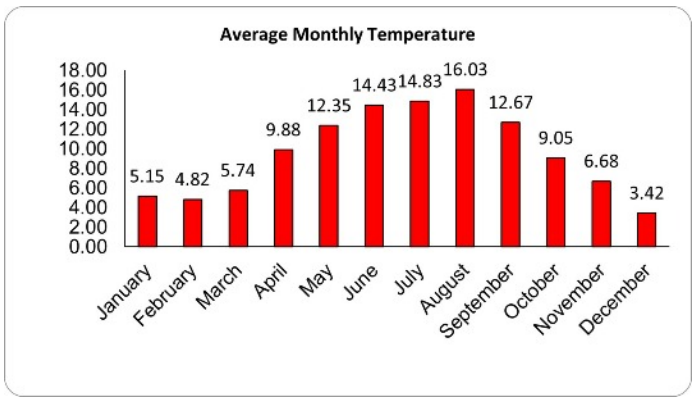
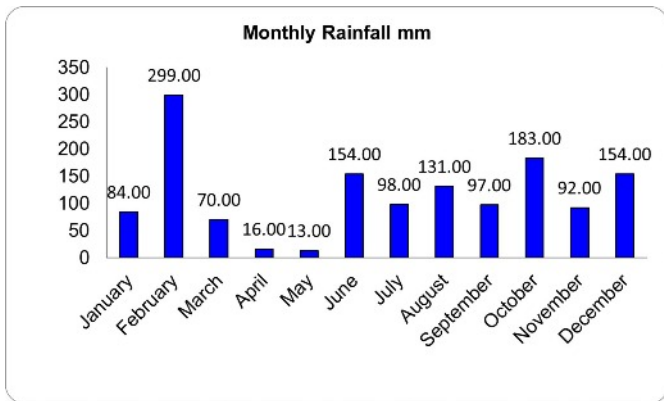
The **warmest month** was August at 16.03C & the highest daily temperature was 30C recorded in June & August

The average daily temperature was 9.59C (9.80C for 2019) compared to the average since 1936 of 9.03C & 9.70C for this century.

The coolest year was 1986 at an average of 7.1C & the warmest was in 2004 & 2007 at 10.4C; the only year above 10C outside this century was 1959 at 10.1C

Temperatures of **zero & below** were recorded in **8 months** of the year with -2C as late as 13 May & 0C on 27 September

The **lowest recorded** temperature was -5C which occurred on 30 December



DO THEY TALK TO EACH OTHER?

Some reflections on vocalisation and communication

Looking back over my records for 2020, I realise that I became totally obsessed with observing and recording the hedgehogs which visited my garden over what was, let's hope, a unique season. These national favourites returned to our garden last summer after an absence of several years. I have been feeding badgers in my garden since 2010 and the hedgehogs ceased to come. Badgers are the only serious predators (except us) that they have to fear and I hoped my spiny visitors had prudently decided to go elsewhere rather than being eaten in a very gruesome manner. (Don't ask!). Now the elderly boar, Seamus, is the only badger visitor. He comes late, hoovers up his snack of peanut-butter sandwiches and peanuts and then ambles off. Last summer my trail camera showed that hedgehogs and Seamus were both coming, occasionally at the same time.

Hedgehogs are solitary creatures. Except for a mother and her hoglets, they live alone and avoid meeting other hedgehogs. They like it that way. They have an exceptionally keen sense of smell. Reference works I've consulted suggest that they can detect another hog from quite a distance. What is more they can tell its sex, health, possible readiness for mating and even its status in the area's hedgehog hierarchy. By putting out food for them, in limited space because of the camera I did two things. I probably attracted more animals for longer visits than would usually happen. I also brought them into close proximity with others. Some animals seemed quite unfazed by this, others were clearly agitated. Sitting so close to them on the lit patio I was able to see and hear some of these encounters. A sensitive hedgehog finding another animal within its personal space would react by emitting short snorting huffing sounds. Often this was accompanied by a quick-paced little dance on stiff legs, advancing and retreating. At first, I assumed this was threat behaviour. Often the confronted animal would scurry off leaving the huffer in possession of the space and food. However, further observation showed this not to be the case. On several occasions it was the huffer that, having given its display, bolted from the scene leaving the other hog still serenely feeding. I decided that the vocalisations, really just rapidly expelled air with a snorting, nasal twang, were expressions of agitation and not designed to communicate.

This was further confirmed on a later, very warm evening. I was sitting out again and, at first, all was as usual. The early comer with the luxuriant blond ruff came before twilight, had a hearty meal with much biscuit cracking and peanut munching, drank from the water container near my chair and trotted off. A few others soon followed but only stayed for a short time and seemed restless. As night fell individuals scurried through the garden without stopping to feed or drink. It seemed something was happening in the local hog community. One hog seemed to be questing, sniffing the air and ground. It occurred to me that he was following the trail of a female on heat. A few minutes later the sniffer returned and crossed the patio in front of me – following the path Early-come had taken. As he passed I could hear him emitting a sort of snoring/crooning sound to himself. There was certainly no other hog present so it wasn't a communication. Was it just an extreme version of the agitation huffing perhaps?

Hedgehogs are generally described as noisy – disturbing garden peace with their snorting and snuffling. We were once woken in the early hours of the morning by a sound just like a hacksaw cutting through metal. A burglar? Well, no, it turned out to be a mother hedgehog showing her three hoglets around the garden and emitting this really loud snorting as they sniffed and scurried in her wake. It was very loud and, perhaps, had an element of, "Follow me", but really was just an extreme and explosive kind of huffing. Similarly, the loud snorting when

hedgehogs are courting may just be an expression of individual agitation rather than a love-duet. After all, the mating of two such prickly individuals requires a high degree of cooperation if no one is to get hurt. So, courtship is a lengthy affair – the male circling the female in ever-closer loops emitting his huffs while she revolves to keep her side towards him and complains. It can go on for hours and sometimes they just get bored and wander off separately.

So – I have a theory but still need lots more observation and collection of evidence. My trail camera is only occasionally set to video so most of the night material is only a snapshot. I now know that it is possible for hedgehogs and badgers to share a space and feed in close proximity without visible distress to either party. Seamus will occasionally nudge a hog aside, or



even, if in a hurry, cuff it aside with his great paw. But this is more in irritation, "gerroff my supper", rather than aggression and the hedgehog quickly unrolls and resumes feeding. I'm pretty sure Seamus, as an elderly, regular and familiar presence in the garden no longer poses much of a threat. If more badgers started to visit I guess/hope that they would be much more wary.

I suppose the whole question came to a head when one night there was a loud squawking cry from the dark garden. I looked out and could see that Seamus had just biffed a hog out of the way. Who had made this noise? I finally decided it was probably a badger expression of irritation. Badgers are social animals: they share their setts with other, usually related, members of the same clan, and spend a lot of time mutually grooming, scent-marking each other and playing a kind of rough and tumble involving cubs and adults together in one glorious wild rumpus. They therefore need an extensive vocabulary, not just of scents and body language but also of sounds. And, they certainly have it, from excited yipping in the chase, to vicious snorting snarls in confrontation with alien badgers, to the humming purr which I once heard a boar badger crooning as he tried to invite a female on heat to come out of the sett and join him. She did!

Now everything has shut down for the winter. Each hedgehog is sound asleep in its hibernaculum and Seamus doesn't stray far afield once the cold weather begins to bite. I shall have to wait patiently for next spring before I can test my, rather sketchy, theory in observation and on film.

Jenny Dixon



MOTH REPORT

Moths have been regularly recorded throughout 2020 in Wharfedale, part of the larger vice-county recording area Mid-west Yorkshire (VC64). First records of the year were Chestnut (73.194 - *Conistra vaccinii* - 2258) and Herald (72.001 - *Scoliopteryx libatrix* - 2469) seen on 1 January, then Pale Brindled Beauty (70.247 - *Phigalia pilosaria* -1926) and Fox Moth (66.008 - *Macrothylacia rubi* -1638) larval. February: Oak Beauty (70.251 - *Biston strataria* - 1930) and Dotted Border (70.255 - *Agriopis marginaria* -1934). March: White-shouldered House Moth (28.009 - *Endrosia sarcitrella* - 648), Twenty-plume Moth (44.001 - *Alucita hexadactyla* - 1288), Common Plume (45.044 - *Emmelina monodactyla* - 1524), (15.010 - *Caloptilia stigmatella* - 0288), Satellite (73.210 - *Eupsilia transversa* - 2256), Yellow Horned (65.016 - *Achlya flavicornis* - 1659) and Brindled Ochre (73.234 - *Dasypolia templi* - 2229). The latest moths sighted were in October: (49.255 - *Epinotia nisella* -1138), (49.066/49.065 - *Acleris laterana/comariana* agg. - 1038/1039), Diamond-back Moth (18.001 - *Plutella xylostella* - 0464), (32.017 - *Agonopterix arenella* - 0697), Lunar Underwing (73.193 - *Omphaloscelis lunosa* - 2270), Brown-spot Pinion (73.187 - *Agrochola litura* - 2266), Autumn Green Carpet (70.096 - *Chloroclysta miata* -1761), Pink-barred Sallow (73.181 - *Xanthia togata* - 2273), November: Garden Rose Tortrix (49.077 - *Acleris variegana* -1048), Rusty-dot Pearl (63.031 - *Udea ferrugalis* - 1395), Brick (73.192 - *Agrochola circumcellaris* - 2262), Grey Pine Carpet (70.081 - *Thera obeliscata* -1768), Angle Shades (73.113 - *Phlogophora meticulosa* - 2306) and Winter Moth (70.106 - *Operophtera brumata* - 1799) before cold wet December weather ended trapping. Some sites in Burley-in-Wharfedale, Skyreholme, Ilkley, Menston, Otley and Pool-in-Wharfedale were regularly monitored using light trapping and wine roping. The busiest months for moth sightings were May - 804 records (142 micro, 662 macro), June - 1,650 records (392 micro, 1,258 macro), July - 1,283 records (377 micro, 906 macro), August - 1,385 records (438 micro, 947 macro) and September - 500 records (72 micro, 428 macro). A total of 6,391 records (1,482 micro and 4,909 macro) were received for 516 species (202 micro and 314 macro). The sightings and species recorded in any year always fluctuates according to the weather patterns, abundance of common species and the opportunities for regular trapping by WNS moth recorders.

Some photographs of moths regularly seen can be viewed on the Wharfedale Naturalists' Society website <http://www.wharfedale-nats.org.uk/moths/>. Many of the moths selected for this website can be seen without a moth trap. Every year we get some good records from what we term our 'roving moth-ers': gardeners, walkers, shoppers and butterfly recorders, which all add to the overall picture of local moth activity.

Early flying Common Quaker (73.244 - *Orthosia cerasi* - 2187) caught on 23 January, however frequent nights of low temperatures, below zero, and consecutive cold days gave some empty traps. Three storms crossed the UK in February bringing regular strong winds and heavy rain. Again good numbers of hibernating adult Tissue (70.123 - *Triphosa dubitata* - 1790) and Herald (72.001 - *Scoliopteryx libatrix* - 2469) were found in local caves in February and October. March started sunny and dry but these warmer days were often followed by clear skies and very cool evenings. Wet and gusty days returned later in the month so again a poor one for regular trapping. The sunny, dry hot spell from late April to mid October gave excellent moth sightings including: (29.001 - *Diurnea fagella* - 663), Bee Moth (62.001 - *Aphomia sociella* -1428), (28.004 - *Denisia similella* - 636), Mint Moth (63.006 - *Pyrausta aurata* -1361), Beautiful Plume (45.010 - *Amblyptilia acanthadactyla* -1497); (28.014 - *Crassa unitella* - 0642), (63.033 - *Udea lutealis* - 1388), Gold Triangle (62.075 - *Hypsopygia costalis* - 1413), (63.018 - *Anania*

coronata - 1378 - *Phlyctaenia coronata*), (62.012 - *Matilella fusca* - 1451 - *Pyla fusca*), (49.022 - *Ptycholoma lechearia* - 1000), White Plume Moth (45.030 - *Pterophorus pentadactyla* - 1513), (63.075 - *Eudonia pallida* - 1336), Spotted Shoot Moth (49.307 - *Rhyacionia pinivorana* - 1212), Meal Moth (62.072 - *Pyralis farinalis* -1417), (42.002 - *Stathmopoda pedella* - 0887), (63.102 - *Catoptria falsella* - 1316), Small China-mark (63.116 - *Cataclysta lemnata* - 1354), (17.013 - *Ypsolopha vittella* - 463), (17.012 - *Ypsolopha sequella* - 462): Emperor Moth (68.001 - *Saturnia pavonia* - 1643), Brindled Pug (70.156 - *Eupithecia abbreviata* - 1852), Cinnabar (72.031 - *Tyria jacobaeae* - 2069), Barred Straw (70.093 - *Gandaritis pyraliata* - 1758 - *Eulithis pyraliata*), Blood-vein (70.029 - *Timandra comae* - 1682), Small Elephant Hawk-moth (69.017 - *Deilephila porcellus* -1992), Speckled Yellow (70.229 - *Pseudopanthera macularia* - 1909), Red-necked Footman (72.042 - *Atolmis rubricollis* - 2039), Humming-bird Hawk-moth (69.010 - *Macroglossum stellatarum* - 1984), Pinion-streaked Snout (72.061 - *Schranksia costaestrigalis* - 2484) and Bright-line Brown-eye (73.267 - *Lacanobia oleracea* - 2160). Adults and caterpillars recorded in gardens and on walks for: Clouded Drab (73.242 - *Orthosia incerta* - 2188), Narrow-bordered Five-spot Burnet (54.009 - *Zygaena lonicerae* - 0171), Wood Tiger (72.025 - *Parasemia plantaginis* - 2056), Vapourer (72.017 - *Orgyia antiqua* - 2026), Lime Hawk-moth (69.001 - *Mimas tiliae* - 1979), Burnished Brass (73.012 - *Diachrysis chrysitis* - 2434), Mullein - larval only (73.058 - *Shargacucullia verbasci* - 2221) and Grey Dagger - larval only (73.038 - *Acronicta psi* - 2284).

The most abundant micro-moths over the 2020 season:

Light Brown Apple Moth (49.039 - *Epiphyas postvittana* - 998) 87 records - 155 moths (10 Apr - 17 Nov);

Garden Grass-veneer (63.080 - *Chrysoteuchia culmella* - 1293) 73 records - 352 moths (02 Jun to 13 Aug);

(63.067 - *Eudonia lacustrata* - 1338) 67 records for 213 moths (9 June to 28 Aug);

(41.002 - *Blastobasis adustella* - 873) 57 records for 204 moths (12 July to 06 Oct);

Straw Grass-veneer (63.093 - *Agriphila straminella* - 1304) 50 records for 137 moths (14 June to 25 Aug);

(63.074 - *Eudonia mercurella* - 1344) 45 records for 132 moths (13 June to 26 Aug).

The most abundant macro-moths over the 2020 season:

Large Yellow Underwing (73.342 - *Noctua pronuba* - 2107) 257 records - 6,837 moths (02 Jun to 22 Oct);

Heart and Dart (73.317 - *Agrotis exclamatoris* - 2089) 130 records for 808 moths (15 May to 13 Aug);

Dark Arches (73.162 - *Apamea monoglypha* - 2321) 125 records for 408 moths (02 June to 12 Sept);

Silver Y (73.015 - *Autographa gamma* -2441) 97 records for 222 moths (29 May to 08 Oct);

Hebrew Character (73.249 - *Orthosia gothica* - 2190) 95 records for 340 moths (14 Mar to 25 May);

Riband Wave (70.016 - *Idaea aversata* -1713) 92 records for 222 moths (29 May to 08 Oct).

Photographs and further details of the moths highlighted in this report are available on the following websites:

<http://www.yorkshiremoths.info/> or <http://ukmoths.org.uk/>

(<http://www.yorkshiremoths.info/> - illustrates records until end of 2014. Unfortunately this website has not been updated with the latest National Moth Recording Scheme (NMRS) data)

Highlights from 2020 were:

12.016 Cork Moth *Nemapogon cloacella* (0216)

2 individuals on 10 July and 7 Aug at two sites in Otley for a thinly distributed Common moth. Mainly found in woodland, especially where there is dead wood with types of bracket fungus on it for the larvae.

15.006 *Caloptilia rufipennella* (0284) & 15.010 *Caloptilia stigmatella* (0288)

4 records for 4 individuals between 24 March and 18 Oct in Burley-in-Wharfedale and Otley for **Common** thinly distributed moths. Small but distinctive species, resting in the characteristic erect posture typical of the Genus *Caloptilia*. These moths emerge in July and overwinter, reappearing in the following Spring and larvae feed on Sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*), Willow (*Salix*) and Poplar (*Populus*).

19.002 *Glyphipterix thrasonella* (0397)

1 individual on 18 July at Skyreholme for a rare **Common** moth with few County records since 1859. A rather distinctive species of *Glyphipterix*, with its silver and black markings against a bronzy forewing and peculiarly indented termen. The larvae are believed to feed internally in stems of Rushes (*Juncus*).

20.007 Cypress Tip Moth *Argyresthia cupressella* (0409b)

3 individuals between 15 June and 2 July at Otley a rare **Local** moth. Originating from North America, this adventive species has evidently been introduced with ornamental conifers. The larvae feed internally on the leaves and young shoots of Cypress (*Chamaecyparis* and *Cupressocyparis*) and Juniper (*Juniperus*).

20.021 *Argyresthia pruniella* (0420)

5 records for 6 individuals between 25 June and 27 July at Burley-in-Wharfedale and Otley for a **Common** local resident moth. If you look closely at a cherry tree on a calm evening in July, you may find a number of these moths flitting around and resting distinctively 'nose-down' on the leaves.

20.022 *Argyresthia bonnetella* (0421)

1 individual on 12 Aug at Burley-in-Wharfedale for a **Common** thinly distributed moth. Very similar to the Cherry Fruit Moth (*Argyresthia pruniella*) in appearance, this species can be distinguished with care by the angle of the markings on the forewing. Flying between June and August, it can be attracted to light, but is often best looked for around Hawthorn (*Crataegus*) hedges and bushes.

35.017 *Neofaculta ericetella* (0797)

2 records for 3 individuals between 21 May and 8 June at Skyreholme and Otley for a **Common** scarce moth. This species lays its eggs on Heather (*Calluna*). The larvae emerge to feed on the flowers, later feeding in larval spinings on the shoots.

35.039 *Bryotropha politella* (0788) & 35.046 *Bryotropha senectella* (0782)

2 records for 3 individuals (23 July - *B. politella* and *B. senectella*) (6 August - *B. senectella*) in the Grass Wood area for these rare **Local** moths with few County records since 1859. Two of several rather similar *Bryotropha* species which occurs in dry grassy habitats and are thought to feed on grasses or moss.

35.065 *Monochroa cytisella* (0728)

1 individual on 26 July at Ilkley for this **Local** rare moth. A single-brooded species, flying in July, and preferring sheltered sunny sites where its food plant, Bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*), occurs. The colourful larvae feeds May - June in a slight gall in the main stem of bracken, often withering an adjacent side stem.

35.085 *Athrips mouffetella* (0762)

1 individual on 26 June at Otley for a rare **Common** moth with few sightings in VC64. A small, but distinctively marked moth, occurring in woodland and gardens. The adult flies at night during June to September, and is attracted to light. The larvae feed mainly on Honeysuckle (*Lonicera*) during May and June, spinning together terminal shoots.

35.148 *Carpatolechia fugitivella* (0772)

6 records for 6 individuals between 22 June and 11 Aug at 2 sites in Otley for a rare **Local** moth with few County records since 1859. The adult moths are on the wing from June and can be found during the day by searching tree trunks but are more often encountered at light. The larvae feeds in a spun or folded leaf of Elm (*Ulmus* spp).

36.001 *Batrachedra praeangusta* (0878)

2 individuals on 29 and 31 July at Otley for this **Common** moth which is a scarce and local resident. This small, inconspicuous species can be found in a wide range of habitats, where the larvae feed on the catkins and leaves of Poplar (*Populus*) and Sallow (*Salix*). The nocturnal adults, which have elongated narrow forewings, fly during July and August, and come to light.

37.033 *Coleophora trifolii* (0516), 37.048 *Coleophora mayrella* (0518), 37.063 *Coleophora albicosta* (0544)

4 records for 5 individuals of *Coleophora* species between 2 and 15 June at Burley-in-Wharfedale, Skyreholme and Otley. *C. trifolii* (metallic green sheen) is a rare **Local** species with larvae feeding on seeds of Melilot (*Melilotus*). *C. mayrella* (bronzy or greenish metallic sheen) and *C. albicosta* (whitish streak along the costa), are Common thinly distributed moths with larvae feeding on White Clover (*Trifolium repens*) and Gorse (*Ulex europaeus*) respectively.

39.001 *Blastodacna hellerella* (0905)

6 records for 6 individuals between 15 June and 8 Aug at 3 sites in Otley for a **Common** thinly distributed species. A fairly distinctive moth found in woodland margins, parks and gardens, where Hawthorn *Crataegus* is to be found. The larvae burrow into the berries.

40.002 *Mompha ochraceella* (0886) & 40.004 *Mompha propinquella* (0888)

4 individuals of the **Common** *M. ochraceella* (Skyreholme & Burley in Wharfedale) and the **Local** scarce *M. propinquella* (Burley in Wharfedale) were recorded between 19 May and 5 August. The adults of *Momphidae* species are often brightly-coloured with raised scale-tufts. Also records (30 May -21 Sept) for the **Common**, thinly distributed, 40.008 *M. subbistrigella* (0892) & 40.015 *M. propinquella* (0883) species.

40.006 *Mompha jurassicella* (0890), 40.007 *Mompha bradleyi* (0889a), 40.013 *Mompha locupletella* (0882)

The **Nationally Scarce A (Na)** *M. jurassicella* (22 Oct), **Nationally Scarce B (Nb)** *M. bradleyi* (20 Oct), and the **Local** rare *M. locupletella* (15 & 22 June) were caught in Otley. Associated with open habitats, like grassland, the larvae feed on Great Willowherb (*Epilobium hirsutum*) and emerged adults can overwinter.

43.001 *Scythris fallacella* (0913)

1 individual (m ** gen. det.) on 18 May at Grassington & another near Kilnsey on 23 June. A possible **Red Data Book 1 (pRDB1)** moth last seen at Grass Wood in 1984 and before that in 1882. A very rare local species, occurring only on the limestone soils of north-western England, Lancashire, Cumbria and Yorkshire (A pair were seen at Colt Park Meadows in 2010). The larva feeds on Rock-rose (*Helianthemum* spp.), creating a silken

web. Adult moths fly in May and June, with a possible second generation in August.

49.043 *Exapate congelatella* (1026)

1 individual on 8 Nov at Skyreholme was the first Upper Wharfedale record for this **Local** moth. One of the latest of the Tortricidae to be on the wing, from October to December, it occurs regularly on lowland heaths and moorland in Yorkshire. A rather peculiar distinctly marked species, the male with elongated forewings, and the female with much reduced vestigial wings.

49.047 *Eana incanana* (1030)

3 records for 3 individuals between 23 July and 9 Aug in Grass Wood area and Otley for this rare **Local** moth. The curved dark bands at the base of the forewings are quite distinctive, but their intensity varies, and the female is generally paler than the male. The larvae feed on the flowers of Bluebell (*Endymion non-scriptus*) and Oxeye Daisy (*Leucanthemum vulgare*).

49.051 Flax Tortrix *Cnephasia asseclana* (1021)

1 individual on 13 June at Ilkley for this **Common** thinly distributed moth. A species occupying gardens, farmland and other open habitats, where it can often be found resting on trees and fences. The larvae feed on a wide range of herbaceous plants.

49.110 *Agapeta zoegana* (0938)

1 individual on 17 July at Otley. This distinctive **Common** species is scarcer in northern parts of Britain. Like its close congener, 49.109 *A. hamana* (937), it flies from May to August from dusk into the night, and is attracted to light. Its main foodplant is Common Knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*).

49.127 *Aethes cnicana* (0945)

5 records for 7 individuals between 2 June and 12 July in Skyreholme and Otley for a **Common** moth which is uncommon and thinly distributed in VC64. Various species of Thistle (*Cirsium*) form the food plant, where the larvae devour the seeds before entering the stem where they pupate.

49.128 *Aethes rubigana* (0946)

2 records for 2 individuals on 15 and 12 June in Otley. This uncommon thinly distributed **Common** moth inhabits waste ground and dry open areas, where the larvae feed on the seedheads of Burdock (*Arctium*). The moths fly from late June to August, from dusk into the night.

49.144 *Eudemis profundana* (1113)

1 individual on 23 July in Grass Wood area. A **Common** rare moth with very few County records since 1868. Adults can be found resting on Oak (*Quercus*) trunks during the day and larvae feed in rolled leaves.

49.150 *Apotomis betuletana* (1093)

3 records for 3 individuals between 23 July and 6 Aug in the Grass Wood area and Otley for a **Common** moth. A Birch (*Betula*) feeder, this fairly common species can be found throughout Yorkshire, in woods and woodland margins. The moths are on the wing from July to September and fly from late evening into the night.

49.186 *Endothenia gentianaeanana* (1097)

1 individual on 11 Aug at Otley for a **Common** rare moth. One of several species of *Endothenia* in which the adults closely resemble each other, and require dissection of the genitalia for accurate identification. Adults fly in June and July, usually in the vicinity of Teasel (*Dipsacus fullonum*).

49.215 *Ancylis achatana* (1115)

2 records for 2 individuals between 30 June and 3 July in Otley for a thinly distributed **Common** moth. Flying in June and July,

it inhabits hedges and thickets, from where it can be disturbed during the day. The spin or roll together leaves of Hawthorn (*Crataegus*) or Blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*) and feed within.

49.259 Spruce Bud Moth *Zeiraphera ratzeburgiana* (1163)

1 individual on 25 July at Skyreholme of this **Local** uncommon moth. An attractive tawny and black marbled moth flying in July and August from sunset into the night. The larvae feed on the young shoots of various coniferous trees.

49.265 *Eucosma cana* (1201)

11 records for 12 individuals between 21 June and 8 Aug at Otley, Skyreholme, Grass Wood area and Ben Rydding. A **Common** fairly distinctive moth with its greyish ground colour and darker longitudinal streaks. Larvae feed on the flowerheads of Thistle (*Carduus*) and Black Knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*).

49.281 *Gypsonoma sociana* (1168)

1 individual on 12 Aug at Otley for a **Common** scarce moth with few County records since 1868. It has a distinctive blackish triangle on the lower edge of each forewing, which join together to form a diamond shape when the moth is at rest. The larvae burrows into a twig of Poplar (*Populus*) or Sallow (*Salix*).

49.341 *Cydia splendana* (1260)

3 records for 3 individuals between 23 and 30 July at Otley and Burley-in-Wharfedale for a **Common** moth thinly distributed. The greyish adult has a slight 'speckled' appearance caused by pale tips to many of the scales. Occupying deciduous woodland where Oak (*Quercus*) or Sweet Chestnut (*Castanea*) occurs, the larvae feed internally on the acorns or chestnuts.

54.003 *Cistus Forester Adscita geryon* (0164)

303 individuals were seen between 8 May and 24 June in the Kilnsey, Grass Wood and Arncliffe areas. Good records for a **Nationally Scarce B (Nb)** day-flying species of limestone outcrops and chalky habitats.

62.035 *Acrobasis advenella* (1439 - *Trachycera advenella*)

13 records for 25 individuals seen between the 26 July and 20 August in Otley and Burley-in-Wharfedale for this **Common** moth which prefers areas of old uncut Hawthorn (*Crataegus*) hedge for its larvae. It has one brood, which flies in July and August, and is often attracted to light-traps.

63.008 *Pyrausta ostrinalis* (1363)

6 records for 38 individuals seen between 21 May and 25 June in Kilnsey and Grassington areas, Bastow Wood and Troller's Gill. Excellent sightings again of this **Nationally Scarce B (Nb)** day-flying species.

63.090 *Agriphila inquinatella* (1306)

2 individuals on 23 July in the Grass Wood area for this **Common** thinly distributed local moth. Quite distinctive, but variable, with its whitish or creamy ground colour suffused with darker markings, this species prefers dryer grassy areas and larvae feed on low grasses such as Sheep's Fescue (*Festuca ovina*).

63.092 *Agriphila selasella* (1303)

4 records for 4 individuals between 24 July and 14 Aug at Otley, Littondale and Burley-in-Wharfedale for this uncommon **Local** moth. Superficially resembling 63.089 *A. tristella* (1305) its forewing tip is more squared, facial cone is much reduced and the whiter longitudinal streak does not have such obvious 'fingers' at the rear. The larvae feed in a silken gallery on grasses, including Sheep's Fescue (*Festuca ovina*).

70.037 Clay Triple-lines *Cyclophora linearia* (1681)

1 individual on 14 June at Burley-in-Wharfedale for this scarce **Local** moth. Moths fly from May to July, and sometimes again in the Autumn. The second brood individuals are often different to

those of the first and closely resemble 70.036 Maiden's Blush C. *punctaria* (1680). Larvae feed on Beech (*Fagus*) leaves.

70.071 Yellow-ringed Carpet *Entephria flavicinctata* (1743)

1 individual on 23 July in the Grass Wood area for a rare **Nationally Scarce B (Nb)**. A species of rocky upland habitats including quarries, the adults can be found resting on stones during the day. The larvae feed on various species of Saxifrage (*Saxifraga* spp.) and Stonecrop (*Sedum* spp.).

70.082 Juniper Carpet *Thera juniperata* (1771)

4 individuals between 16 Oct and 9 Nov in Grassington for a **Common** moth which flies in late Autumn and is often active during the day. A scarce species, restricted to a few scattered localities, it does however appear in gardens where cultivated varieties of Juniper (*Juniperus*) are grown.

70.092 Spinach* *Eulithis mellinata* (1757) (**Common** - Recorded - 24 June 2019 - Burley-in-Wharfedale).

70.105 Northern Winter Moth *Operophtera fagata* (1800)

4 individuals between 5 and 10 Nov in Skyreholme for a scarce **Common** moth. Flying only from Oct to Dec the females have only vestigial wings. The Northern Winter Moth is larger, paler and more silky in appearance than the similar 70.106 Winter Moth *O. brumata* (1799) and small late *Epirrita* species.

70.119 Dark Umber *Philereme transversata* (1792)

1 individual on 23 July in Grass Wood area for a very rare **Local** moth. Varying in colour contrast, it is normally a dark brown species with the trailing edges of the wings distinctly scalloped. It has two forms of larvae, one pale green and the other dark brown and cream, feeding on Buckthorn (*Rhamnus catharticus*).

70.121 Scallop Shell *Hydria undulata* (1789 - *Rheumaptera undulata*)

1 individual on 15 June at Burley-in-Wharfedale for this rare and infrequently seen **Common** moth. A highly distinctive moth of open damp woodland and sallow scrub but only ever found in small numbers. Larvae spin together leaves at the tips of shoots of Sallow (*Salix*) and Bilberry (*Vaccinium myrtillus*).

70.139 Barred Carpet *Perizoma taeniata* (1801)

2 records for 7 individuals on 23 July and 6 Aug in Grass Wood area. Excellent records for this rare **Nationally Scarce A (Na)** moth, only found at another site on the North Yorkshire Moors.

70.145 Bilberry Pug *Pasiphila debiliata* (1861)

1 individual on 14 July at Otley for a **Nationally Scarce B (Nb)** is a significant record in VC64 and WNS areas. A fairly distinctive, broad-winged pug, with a very pale green background colour, distinct broken blackish fasciae, plus an obvious dark discal spot. The moth occupies open woodland with an undergrowth of Bilberry (*Vaccinium myrtillus*).

70.147 Slender Pug *Eupithecia tenuiata* (1811)

7 records for 7 individuals seen between 16 July and 9 Aug at Otley and Burley-in-Wharfedale. This scarce **Common** moth flies as a single generation in June and July in woodland edges, meadows and marshes. Flight time and moth size is essential for ensuring correct identification of this small pug.

70.161 Golden-rod Pug *Eupithecia virgaureata* (1851)

2 records for 2 individuals on 19 May and 6 July at Burley-in-Wharfedale. This scarce **Local** moth flies in May and June, and again from July to early August. Larvae of the second-brood feed on flowers of Golden-rod (*Solidago virgaurea*) and Ragwort (*Senecio jacobaea*) but what the first brood use is not clear.

70.165 Pimpinel Pug *Eupithecia pimpinellata* (1845)

1 individual on 23 July in Grass Wood area for a rare **Local** moth of chalky habitats. A well-marked pug, with distinct cross-lines

and a prominent blackish discal spot. Forewing ground colour can exhibit a kind of two-tone greyish/rufous effect. Larvae feed on Burnet-saxifrage (*Pimpinella saxifraga*, *Pimpinella major*).

70.201 Barred Tooth-striped *Trichopteryx polycommata* (1880)

Larval search at Grass Wood found 3 caterpillars on 28 May and 2nd June for this **Nationally Scarce A (Na)** moth. Adults fly in April mainly near the main larvae food plant Wild Privet (*Ligustrum vulgare*).

70.235 Dusky Thorn* *Ennomos fuscantaria* (1914)

6 records for 8 individuals between 15 Aug and 15 Sept at Burley-in-Wharfedale, Skyreholme and Otley. The populations and spread of this **Common** moth have varied greatly since 1883 however recently it has experienced a consistent dramatic decline. It is found in deciduous woods and their margins where the larval food plant Ash (*Fraxinus*) grows.

70.236 September Thorn* *Ennomos erosaria* (1915)

2 individuals on 11 and 18 Aug at Otley for this scarce thinly distributed **Common** moth. Thorns are hard to distinguish but September Thorn holds its wings at a much steeper angle than the similar 70.233 August Thorn *E. quercinaria* (1912). The larvae food plants include Oak (*Quercus*) and Beech (*Fagus*).

70.253 Spring Usher *Agriopis leucophaearia* (1932)

1 individual on 22 February at Skyreholme was first Upper Wharfedale record for a **Common** scarce oak woodland moth. The adults emerge in February and March. The wingless females climb up tree trunks and the males fly weakly to them and are also attracted to light traps. The larvae feed mainly on oak (*Quercus*).

70.287 Annulet *Charissa obscurata* (1964)

3 individuals on 23 July in the Grass wood area for this rare **Local** moth. A variable species, whose ground colour generally reflects the area it inhabits; whitish or pale grey in limestone and chalky districts and darker forms from peaty soils. Adults are on the wing in July and August, and the larvae feed on Heather (*Calluna* spp.) and a range of herbaceous plants like Rock-rose (*Helianthemum* spp.).

70.292 Grey Scalloped Bar *Dyscia fagaria* (1969)

1 individual on 28 May at Skyreholme. This scarce **Local** moth inhabits open moorland, heathland and peat bogs. The larval food plants are Heathers (*Calluna* spp.) .

72.046 Scarce Footman *Eilema complana* (2047)

1 individual on 25 June at Skyreholme for this rare **Common** moth. In the field *E. complana* holds its wings furled tightly around the body and presents a much different aspect to the flatter appearance of the similarly patterned 72.045 Common Footman *E. lurideola* (2050).

72.078 Red Underwing *Catocala nupta* (2452)

2 individuals on the 19 Aug and 14 Sept at Otley. One of the larger British **Common** moths flying in Aug and Sept and often comes to light and sugar. Larvae feeds on Willow (*Salix*) and Poplar (*Populus*).

73.033 Figure of Eight* *Diloba caeruleocephala* (2020)

2 records for 2 individuals on 6 and 19 Oct in Otley. This **Common** moth, possibly under-recorded due to its sporadic late short flight period, has recently disappeared from many previously recorded sites.

73.146 Least Minor *Photedes captiuncula* (2344)

2 individuals day-flying on 19 July in Kilnsey area. Good records for a scarce **Red Data Book 3 (RDB3)**.

73.211 Angle-striped Sallow *Enargia paleacea* (2313)

1 individual on 14 Aug at Burley-in-Wharfedale was the only sighting of this **Nationally Scarce B (Nb)**.

73.252 Hedge Rustic* *Tholera cespitis* (2177)

1 individual on 8 Sept at Menston. Flying in Aug and Sept this scarce **Common** moth prefers open grassland where its caterpillars feed on various grasses, including Mat-grass (*Nardus stricta*) and Hair-grass (*Deschampsia* spp.). Once locally common this moth has experienced a recent decline in numbers.

73.280 Small Ranunculus *Hecatera dysodea* (2165)

1 individual on 5 July at Otley for a very rare **Red Data Book (RDB)** moth. Fine mottling of black and orange-gold scales on forewing is distinctive. Flying in June and July and associated with allotments because larvae feed on flowers and seeds of various wild and cultivated lettuce (*Lactuca* spp.).

73.282 Varied Coronet *Hadena compta* (2170)

4 records for 4 individuals seen between 13 June and 6 July in Otley and Burley-in-Wharfedale for this scarce **Common** moth. Flying in June and July it comes to garden light traps. The larvae consume the seeds of Sweet William (*Dianthus barbatus*) and Bladder Campion (*Silene vulgaris*).

73.313 White-line Dart* *Euxoa tritici* (2081)

1 individual on 22 Sept at Burley-in-Wharfedale for this local **Common** moth. Difficult to distinguish from similar Dart species, and commonest in coastal areas, it is very local in Yorkshire inland areas.

73.331 Barred Chestnut *Diarsia dahlia* (2121)

2 individuals on 8 and 9 Sept at Skyreholme for a scarce **Local** moth. The females are usually darker than the males, some of the darker forms resembling 73.332 Purple Clay *D. brunnea* (2122). It inhabits woodland and moorland, where the caterpillars live on Birch (*Betula*) and Bilberry (*Vaccinium myrtillus*).

73.335 Fen Square-spot *Diarsia florida* (2124)

2 records of 2 individuals on 25 July and 5 Aug at Skyreholme for this very **Local** scarce moth. On the wing late June, July and early Aug and reputed to fly later at night so it rarely appears before midnight. Very difficult to distinguish from the double brooded 73.334 Small Square-spot *D. rubi* (2123) but the Fen Square-spot is larger, paler and brighter and likes fens and acid bog areas.

73.365 Autumnal Rustic* *Eugnorisma glareosa* (2117)

13 individuals between 31 Aug and 14 Sept at Kilnsey, Otley and Skyreholme. Good sightings of this once **Common** moth of woodland fringes which has suffered a drastically declined in numbers over recent years. Larvae are polyphagous, living on a wide variety of plants and grasses.

*** International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) - Category - Endangered**

Species with populations which have declined by between 92% and 98% over the last 35 years.

(extract from Page 9 - Butterfly Conservation - The state of Britain's Larger Moths)

<https://butterfly-conservation.org/sites/default/files/sobm-final-version.pdf>

***gen.det. - some moths require examination of a specimen's genitalia to determine to species level.*

Conservation status of species categories:

RDB3: Red Data Book 3: Recorded from 11-15 10 km squares in Great Britain.

Nationally Scarce A (Na): Recorded from 16-30 10 km squares in Great Britain.

Nationally Scarce B (Nb): Recorded from 31-100 10 km squares in Great Britain.

Local: Recorded from 101-300 10 km squares in Great Britain.

Common: Recorded from over 300 10 km squares in Great Britain.

Migrant: Moths travelling to the UK.

BRC '1945 to 65': Biological Records Centre scheme (run by John Heath)-with inclusive dates for sightings.

'Checklist of the Lepidoptera of the British Isles' - Agassiz DJL, Beaven SD& Heckford RJ(2013), which replaces Bradley 2000 list (Bradley log numbers and any former names are included with each species to aid cross referencing with earlier publications). The **Agassiz et al.** checklist is in line with European scientific colleagues and latest DNA analysis which arranges families from the most primitive to most developed based on current knowledge. The **Agassiz et al.** checklist assigns a number to each moth: the number before the decimal point relates to the 'Family' and the post-decimal number to the 'Species'.

We forward all Wharfedale Naturalists' Society (WNS) moth records to the VC64 Co-ordinator for inclusion in the National Moth Recording Scheme (NMRS) for moth species in the UK organised by Butterfly Conservation. Thanks again to Dr. Charles Fletcher (VC 64 Co-ordinator) for his support to fellow moth observers over the last year.

We are grateful for all the records received from:

Chris Acomb,	Paul Millard,
Chris Alder,	Sophia Morgans,
David & Joan Alred,	Diane Morris,
Mark Breaks,	Denis O'Connor,
Karen Bullimore,	Keith Parker,
Peter & Janet Burns,	John Pitchers,
Win Clements,	Peter & Anne Riley,
Richard Falls,	Andrew Rhodes,
David & Nyree Fearnley,	Susan Rosborough,
Charles Fletcher,	Ernie Scarfe,
Audrey Gramshaw,	Aidan Smith,
Gordon Haycock,	Ann Thompson,
Colin Harrison,	Anne Tupholme,
Gilly Hart,	Jenny & Alastair Watson,
Rita Leleux,	Jane Willis and Stephen
Pat & Ken Limb,	Wilson.

If anyone is interested in taking up moth recording and would like further advice we will be happy to help.

Our e-mail address is: naturefind@clerk54.plus.com

Mike & Joyce Clerk.

WHARFEDALE NATURALISTS GREAT CHRISTMAS PLANT HUNT AND BIRDING COMPETITION

2020 was a tough year for everyone. The countryside, our local parks and gardens have been our salvation, nature our anti-depressant. Which is why we wanted to celebrate the diversity of plant and wildlife here in Wharfedale by asking you to join us in our first ever Christmas plant hunt and birding competition! Aiming to end 2020 on a high, looking forward to happier times ahead.

Just to remind you of the task. We wanted a record of as many plants in flower (excluding those in gardens) or birds you spot either in the garden or countryside over the festive period (Saturday 19 December and finishing Sunday 3 January). We asked everyone to keep within the spirit of the times and restrictions, submitting records from within 5 miles of your home, as the crow flies. To tempt you further we had four £10 book tokens to give away. Two for the most plants or birds recorded, and a further two for a 'star' bird or flower.

The results were amazing, 92 birds were sighted over the two-week period, and 86 plants found in flower (full lists in Appendix 1 & 2). And the winners were:

Most birds sighted: 80, by **Andrew Kelly**

'Star' bird: Whooper Swans seen by **Isobel TateSmith, (13yr)**

Most plants found in flower: 40, by **Carmen Horner**

'Star' plant: Climbing Corydalis found by **Sarah Ward.**

Originally the main aim of the festive plant hunt and birding competition was to provide fun and an engaging project during the quieter winter months. However, it also provides valuable insights into how many species of plant are in flower in winter, and the number of both resident birds and winter visitors we have within the dale. Many of you will be surprised at the results. I have had my eyes opened and I want later in the article, to examine in more detail:

- Why birds might want to visit us in winter?
- And ask the question. Which plants come into flower in the depths of winter and why?

First a closer look at our results:

92 different bird species is a phenomenal number. All resident species, apart from 10 that could be regarded as winter visitors (see appendix 1) and one exotic, a Ringnecked Parakeet! The most commonly recorded species was Robin, closely followed by Blackbird, Chaffinch, Carrion Crow, Dunnock, Wood Pigeon, Wren, and Blue, Great and Long-tailed Tits. 42 birds were seen by half or more of the recorders. Encouraging all of us to get out our binoculars and take a look, there are so many different common species visiting our gardens and local countryside.

Even more surprising were the 86 plants found in flower, however unlike the birds many plants were often only seen by a single observer. Just 17 of the commoner species were recorded by half or more of the entrants. The commonest plants in flower were Gorse and Herb Robert, other common finds included Creeping Buttercup, Groundsel, Hairy Bittercress, Ivy-leaved Toadflax, Shepherds Purse, Common Chickweed and Smooth Sow-thistle. Not all were prime specimens, but certainly worth keeping your eyes open as you enjoy a winter walk.

Why birds visit Wharfedale in Winter

Not all birds migrate, and a few such as Partridges, never move more than a kilometre from where they were hatched. The most well known are long distance migrants such as Swallows, which breed in Europe and spend the winter in Africa. But you might be surprised to

learn that many others do as well. Even the Blackbirds in your garden at Christmas could well be visitors from Eastern Europe.

Irruptions are a mass arrival of birds that do not usually visit the UK in large numbers. This happens with northern species, such as Waxwings, when their population grows too large for their winter food supply of berries in Scandinavia. They fly west across the North Sea. This only occurs approximately one year in ten, but is a wonderful spectacle when it does happen.

Instead of migrating north and south, or east and west, some birds migrate up and down. This is called altitudinal or vertical migration. Birds that breed in upland areas in the summer head down to lowland areas in winter in search of milder climate and more food. Which is why we say goodbye to many of our Skylarks, Meadow Pipits, Curlew and Stonechats from their moorland habitats, as they head for lower altitudes.

Winter visitors or migrants are birds that arrive in autumn from the north and east to spend the winter in the UK, where the weather is milder and food easier to find, returning in spring to their breeding grounds. These include many of the birds regularly seen in Wharfedale in the winter months; Fieldfares, Redwings, Whooper Swans, Goldeneye, Wigeon, and Scaup. If we lived near the coast there would also be large numbers of ducks, geese and wading birds.

One bird recorded on our list, a Green Sandpiper may have been a passage migrant, stopping off in the UK during its journey south. Using Wharfedale like a motorway service station, refuelling en route.

Lastly partial migrants that may not even be noticed. In severe winters, birds normally resident in Eastern Europe may migrate west for the milder UK joining their British cousins. This includes many of our common birds, including Starlings, Blackbirds, and Tits. Returning home and saying their goodbyes when the weather improves.

For whatever reason birds visit us here in Wharfedale in winter, they are a welcome sight. You just never know what you might see.

Which plants come into flower in the depths of winter and why?

It is amazing to think 88 plants were found in flower in Wharfedale over the festive period. Often not good specimens, remembering that plants have a 'plastic response' to poor and difficult growing conditions. Their overall height and leaf size may be reduced, but rarely the size of flower, which are reduced in number but not in dimensions.

The British Botanical Society of Britain & Ireland (BSBI) has been running an annual New Year plant hunt for the last ten years. Their results are similar to ours, with Native and NonNatives species accounting for roughly equal numbers of Christmas/New Year flowering plants. As you might expect more species were in flower the further south or west you went, and at lower altitudes. Their 'top four' has always remained the same, Daisy, Groundsel, Dandelion and Annual Meadow-grass, all of which make an appearance on our list.

Looking closer at those plants in flower. We can recognise four categories:

Autumn stragglers - flowering late

All year-round flowerers

Winter Specialists - mid-late winter flowering plants

Early Spring flowers - flowering early

Autumn stragglers account for the most, amounting to approximately 50% of species recorded. This is even more marked when November and December are warm, with

temperatures not dipping below 4°C as in 2015. Such conditions allow plants to continue flowering well into winter, presumably because of the absence of frosts which would normally kill any late flowering shoots.

All year round flowerers and winter specialists (those plants you might expect to be in flower in December/January) made up a further 25%.

These included Gorse (as the saying goes "when Gorse is not in flower, kissing is not in season"), Hairy Bittercress (many a gardener's curse), Annual Meadow-grass, Petty Spurge, Common Chickweed and Shepherds Purse, all of which can be found flowering in any month of the year. Examples of mid and late winter specialists might include Winter Aconite and Snowdrops, both welcome harbingers of spring.

Spring flowers flowering early make up the remaining 25%. Given global warming and climate change, you might have expected more spring plants like Primrose, Cowslip, and Lesser

Celandine. However the evidence from the BSBI and our list is less marked with more species flowering late than early. This is because very large advances in flowering would be needed for plants normally flowering in March or April to flower at Christmas. In addition, many spring flowering (vernal) species require periods of freezing temperatures (stratification) to break dormancy and begin growth.

Coming across a plant in bloom in winter always brings a smile to my face. Stopping for a period of reflection and amazement.

So I finish, by thanking everyone who took part in the competition, everyone made a tremendous effort. Judging by your comments, it sounds as if you all enjoyed the experience and are up for the same challenge next Christmas.

Ian Brand



Appendix I

'Festive' Bird Sightings 19 December to 3 January 2021

All are "All-year Round Residents" apart from where indicated.

* = Commonest birds. Recorded by at least 50% of observers

Barn Owl

Black-headed Gull *

Blackbird *

Blackcap *Now regarded as year round resident*

Blue Tit *

Bullfinch *

Buzzard

Canada Goose

Chaffinch *

Coal Tit *

Collared Dove *

Common Gull

Coot

Cormorant *

Carrion Crow *

Curlew

Dipper

Dunnock *

Feral Pigeon *

Fieldfare * *Winter Visitor*

Gadwall *Winter Visitor/ Resident*

Goldcrest *

Golden Plover

Goldeneye *Winter Visitor*

Goldfinch *

Goosander *

Greenfinch *

Green Sandpiper *Scarce Winter Visitor*

Green Woodpecker

Great Crested Grebe

Great Tit *

Great Spotted Woodpecker *

Grey Heron *

Grey Wagtail

Greylag Goose

Hen Harrier

Herring Gull

House Sparrow *

Jackdaw *

Jay *

Kestrel

Kingfisher
 Lapwing *
 Lesser Black-backed Gull
 Lesser Redpoll
 Linnet
 Little Egret *Scarce Resident*
 Little Grebe
 Little Owl
 Long-tailed Tit *
 Magpie *
 Mallard *
 Mandarin Duck
 Marsh Tit
 Meadow Pipit
 Mistle Thrush *
 Moorhen *
 Mute Swan
 Nuthatch *
 Oystercatcher
 Pheasant
 Pied Wagtail
 Pink-footed Goose *Winter Visitor*
 Raven
 Red-legged Partridge
 Red Grouse *
 Red Kite *
 Redshank
 Redwing * *Winter Visitor*
 Reed Bunting
 Ring-necked Parakeet *Exotic*
 Robin *
 Rook *
 Scaup, Great *Winter Visitor*
 Shelduck *
 Siskin
 Snipe
 Song Thrush *
 Sparrowhawk *
 Starling *
 Stock Dove
 Stonechat
 Tawny Owl
 Teal
 Tree Creeper *
 Tree Sparrow
 Tufted Duck *
 Water Rail *Winter Visitor/ Resident*
 Wigeon *Winter Visitor*
 Whooper Swan *Winter Visitor*
 Wood Pigeon *
 Wren *
Total= 92

Appendix II
'Festive' Plant Hunt 19 December to 3
 January 2021
 * = Commonest plants. Recorded by at
 least 50% of observers
 Adriatic Bellflower
 Alder
 Alison Sweet
 Angelica
 Annual Meadow Grass
 Aubrietia
 Bramble *
 Broad-leaved Willowherb
 Broom
 Canadian Fleabane
 Castor Oil plant
 Cleavers
 Cocksfoot
 Common Chickweed *
 Common Ragwort *
 Common Mouse-ear
 Cow Parsley
 Cowslip
 Creeping Buttercup *
 Creeping Corydalis
 Cyclamen
 Daisy *
 Dames Violet
 Dandelion
 Dogs Mercury
 Druce's Cranesbill
 False Oxlip
 Feverfew *
 Field Forget-me-not
 Fool's Parsley
 Fuchsia
 Gorse *
 Green Alkanet
 Groundsel
 Hairy Bitter-cress *
 Hazel
 Hedge Mustard
 Hedgerow Cranesbill
 Herb Robert *
 Himalayan Honeysuckle
 Hogweed *
 Holly
 Hybrid Ragwort (Common x Marsh)
 Ivy
 Ivy-leaved Toadflax *
 Laurel
 Lesser Periwinkle
 Ling (Common Heather)

Meadow Buttercup
 Mexican Fleabane
 Musk Mallow
 Narrow-leaved Ragwort
 Nasturtium
 Nipplewort
 Ox-eye Daisy
 Oxford Ragwort
 Petty Spurge
 Prickly Sowthistle *
 Primrose
 Procumbent Pearlwort
 Pineappleweed
 Pot Marigold
 Red Champion
 Red Dead-nettle
 Red Valerian
 Rosemary
 Santa Barbara Daisy
 Scented Mayweed
 Scentless Mayweed
 Shepherd's Purse *
 Shining Cranesbill
 Smooth Sowthistle *
 Snowdrop
 Stinging Nettle
 Thale Cress
 Tuberosus Comfrey
 Trailing Bellflower
 Wallflower
 Wargrave Pink Geranium (*Geranium
 oxoianum*)
 Wavy Bitter-cress
 Welsh Poppy
 White Dead-Nettle
 White Melilot
 Wild Strawberry
 Wood Avens *
 Yarrow
Total = 86



Gorse

BIRD REPORT

Introduction

2020 was, of course, the year Covid-19 hit. It will of course have had no impact on the birds themselves, at least not directly, but it certainly had one on the birdwatchers! What the precise effects were are a little harder to distinguish, mixed in with so many other influences. However, from a purely birdwatching point of view, 2020 did have some rewards, with birdsong so much more audible against the quieter background of lockdown and wildlife able to re-assert itself more readily in places with less human interference - thin silver linings in very difficult times, but nonetheless welcome.

As recorder, one of the good things to see in 2020 was the big hike in sightings submitted. In fact, the final figure was the highest number ever, at just over 12,800 (see table below)! This was certainly at least partly down to the huge effort made by the committee members to encourage members to submit their records this year after the lows of 2019. Last year I also commented on how reliant we had become on a small number of committed individuals, and whilst they remain amongst the most prolific recorders (and a huge thank you to you all!), the spread is happily much greater this year: in 2019 the 'top 4' provided 56% of our records, this year it was down to 34%, and yet they were, if anything, even more prolific! We are also fortunate to benefit from links with other local organisations, and a large tranche of data was kindly provided by both the Addingham Environment (over 2000 records alone) and Bradford Ornithological Groups; additional data was also gleaned from social media sources, in particular two local WhatsApp groups (another 1600+ records). However, I strongly suspect that a substantial reason for the tremendous return was the fact that we couldn't travel as much, which meant that many more people stayed at home, and birdwatched very locally far more than in previous years. The growth in nature appreciation was one of the most noted social trends of the pandemic, and it certainly seemed to show here in a thoroughly practical way!

It also looks as if Covid-19 may well have also affected the distribution of records in our area. Largest increases were in those areas with most inhabitants, i.e. the main valley in the south, and in and around Grassington in the north. Areas with fewer inhabitants or further away from centres of habitation saw much smaller growth, although it was good to see at least some improvement everywhere.

Sadly, the bounceback doesn't hide the fact that there are still far fewer records from the north than only a few years ago, particularly in Langstrothdale and Littondale. Fortunately a small group of regular observers means that there isn't a complete blank either, and there are developments that hopefully will help in the future. This year, for the first time, records from the BTO's national BirdTrack project will also be included in the WNS database. The 2020 dataset arrived from the BTO just days before writing this, and an initial examination suggests that it will effectively double the size of the database, providing (after some necessary filtering and reorganisation) some additional 10-12000 records. Whilst it will obviously add to the coverage of all areas, its greatest impact is likely to be on those with least records currently available.

This extra data will be of great benefit, but it also has implications for the preparation of the annual review. This is always a high-speed, very intensive job, one that, given the nature of records submission, has mostly to be undertaken after the year's end. Most organisations aim to produce their bird reviews in the following autumn at the earliest, but Wharfedale Nats has always aimed for publication in time for the March AGM. With records in the single digit thousands, it was just about possible to hit the early February completion dates to

achieve this. With numbers now moving into the realms of 20,000+, that no longer remains a practical proposition. A change in process is thus being experimented with this year. What you have here is an interim report, a report that attempts to paint a picture of what members and other local people have seen over the previous year derived from the directly submitted sightings. However, once this report is completed, then work will begin on incorporating the BTO data, along with extra material from one or two other smaller sources, with the aim of producing an updated, more detailed report, including a stronger element of analysis, to go alongside reports from other bird and nature organisations later in the year. The precise publication format has yet to be finalised, but it is likely to be, at least, available in electronic form.

Above all else though, a huge thank you is due to all those who contributed this year. As I wrote last year, this report is genuinely only possible because of the work and commitment of many volunteers, and a list of them appears at the end of the report. I find it remarkable that, at a time when there are so many challenges and pressures, so many find the time and energy to get out, record and send in details of their sightings. It's a real privilege to have an opportunity to see, record, learn from and report on those experiences. Thank you!

Some highlights

- Species seen for the first time in over 5 years (with last year of sighting in brackets): pintail (2013), knot (pre-2010), spotted redshank (pre-2010), sandwich tern (2011), Cetti's warbler (first), rock pipit (pre-2010), Lapland bunting (2010).
- Other species returning to the list again this year after an absence (year last seen in brackets): pochard (2018), scaup (2016), kittiwake (2016), marsh tit (2018), greenshank (2018).
- Species missing this year that were present in 2019: ruddy shelduck, white stork, bittern, ringed plover, ruff, Mediterranean gull, great grey shrike, hooded crow, waxwing, yellow-browed warbler, lesser spotted woodpecker
- It was generally a good year for raptor sightings in spite of continued persecution: red kite, buzzard, sparrowhawk, hobby, barn owl all appear to be doing well. Goshawk sightings were up, whilst a single female honey-buzzard was only the third sighting in the past decade. Some causes for concern: merlin and peregrine records were substantially down; numbers of little, long-eared and short-eared owls also looked fragile.
- Not sure anything of this colour can be a highlight (!) but notable this year was the fate of two contrasting 'grey's: grey wagtail records shot back up this year to 2015 levels, over double the last couple of years (pieds and yellows appeared to do well too); in contrast, grey partridge sadly continued to decline, to almost negligible levels this year with just 2 sightings.
- Little egrets continue to gain ground rapidly, with locations doubling in 2020 - almost a common sight in some places now! In the future, look out for ring-necked parakeet which threatens/promises to break through into Wharfedale in the not too distant future.

	Species	Sightings
North	98 (109, 98, 95)	1801 (1867, 1226, 775)
Upper Wharfe	42 (61, 52, 37)	102 (225, 189, 62)
Littondale	46 (53, 45, 43)	162 (198, 124, 91)
Grassington	87 (105, 88, 58)	903 (700, 483, 150)
Grimwith	45 (59, 59, 40)	123 (167, 129, 48)
South	155 (142, 152, 153)	11026 (5936, 6346, 5001)
Bolton Abbey Estate	98 (95, 93, 94)	669 (769, 807, 422)
Washburn	136 (125, 133, 126)	1674 (1772, 1442, 926)
Otley Wetland	101 (86, 91, 94)	1514 (769, 523, 1358)
Total	156 (147, 153, 155)	12827 (7803, 7572, 5776)

Burley refers to Burley-in-Wharfedale. *BRGP* refers to Ben Rhydding Gravel Pits.

Notes on submissions

Contributions to the sightings records are welcome, and much appreciated - this report would be impossible without them! Please bear the following, mostly long standing, notes in mind.

Regular birders' views about local species populations and trends are welcome.

The inclusion of maximum flock sizes is a valuable indicator of the state of populations for many species.

Examples of breeding and interesting or unusual behaviour and, of course, garden records, are all valuable contributions to a full and interesting report.

Individual sightings can be submitted via the website, alternatively by email or hardcopy. However for greater numbers, the preferred method is via email, using the standard Excel spreadsheet or Word document template available from the recorder directly. **Email address is andrewkelly58@gmail.com.**

Other formats are welcome, but please bear in mind that these will require manual transference into the records database. In particular, voluminous handwritten notes can take a VERY long time to transcribe, and complex spreadsheets can take an almost equally long term to reconfigure to enable records to be merged into the database.

Regular garden recorders please note that regular visiting birds will be concentrated into records of quarterly or monthly maximums, with indications of frequency plus any commentary notes.

Records submitted to BTO's BirdTrack project do NOT need to be forwarded to the recorder as well: the recorder will obtain them from the BTO at the year end. All BTO records are made anonymous by the BTO. Records are forwarded to the Yorkshire Naturalists' Union and to the relevant environmental data archivists in North and West Yorkshire.

If you generate a lot of records, you can greatly assist by submitting as soon after the event as possible, or in batches preferably monthly or quarterly. **Please avoid submitting large amounts all at the end of the year.**

As a result, please submit reports from sightings: prior to 31 October before the end of November at the latest. November and December sightings 2 January, 2022.

Inclusion in the interim report of any records received after these dates cannot be guaranteed. Sadly, some records arrived too late this year to be included here, although they will be included in the final report later this year.

A few fact and figures

The numbers of species and sightings for 2020 are summarised in the table above. For each region, North and South, figures are also given for three or four areas within those regions. 2017-19 figures follow in brackets.

The blackbird retained its place as the species with the largest number of records (312), followed by the robin (up from 4th). The blue tit was third again, whilst the woodpigeon swapped places with the robin, dropping from 2nd to 4th to make it the same top 4 if in a different order. Our most common bird nationally, the wren made up the top 5, whilst others with over 200 records were jackdaw and crow together, and chaffinch squeezing in by one.

In terms of locations, the curlew stayed on top, at 66 locations, just ahead of the buzzard (64). Chaffinches were seen in 62 locations, red kite 61, with the top 5 completed by the willow warbler (59). Wren (57), oystercatcher, robin (both 55), song thrush (53), kestrel and blackbird (both 52) made up the rest of the top 10.

Notes on the species reports

Taxonomy: The species accounts reflect the extensively revised taxonomic order and scientific nomenclature of the BOU British List 9th edition (Dec 2017).

Sites: sites have been standardised for some years, so are comparable year on year. Figures are given for sites this year, with the last two year's figures in brackets. They are intended to give an indication of the strength and spatial diversity of the species population.

Descriptors: *Rare:* a migrant or visitor seen less than one year in three, in very low numbers. *Scarce:* a species seen in very low numbers, and usually at very few sites (<5); if a visitor, not every year. *Uncommon:* may be seen annually, but usually at few (<10) sites and in low numbers. *Common:* seen frequently and widely (>20 sites), or at fewer sites in large numbers.

Sources: The Society has been exchanging records with the Bradford Ornithological Group since 2011. The report also includes data provided by the Addingham Environment Group. The Society would like to thank these organisations and/or members for their contributions and advice.

Location names: *The northern region* is that above Barden Bridge, *the southern region* downstream. Barden Moor and Fell are included in the southern region, as is all the Washburn valley. *Mid-Wharfedale* is the area between Barden and Pool Bridges. *Upper Wharfedale* is thus the area above Barden Bridge, whilst *Lower Wharfedale* is below Pool Bridge. References to Beaverdyke, Chelker, Fewston, Grimwith, John O'Gaunt's, Lindley, Swinsty, Scargill, Thruscross, Upper and Lower Barden mean the reservoirs or the area in their vicinity.

Bird Sightings 2020

CANADA GOOSE *Branta canadensis*

20 locations (18,18) Common resident breeder and visitor

Otley Wetland remains the main site in our area, with the Washburn also attracting numbers. **North:** 3 records, all from Grimwith, in Mar, Jun and Dec, the last of 50+ birds (JF). **Bolton Abbey:** 3 sightings, all in Apr-May, all in low single digits. **Washburn:** seen on all the main stretches of water throughout the first 6 months and the last 2. Highest counts: 177 on Thruscross on 5 Nov (JF), 59 also at Thruscross on 1 Jun, 55 at Swinsty on 9 Jun. **Otley Wetland:** present throughout the year, never less than 20 adults. Quarterly highs (all PP) were 99 (20 Jan, 23 Mar), 87 (16 Jun), 131 (7 Aug, plus 116 on 1 Sep), 63 (14 Dec). Up to 12 young were seen in May (DO, JF). **South:** pairs were seen at various times at Denton Hall pond, High Royds pond (rare here), BRGP and March Ghyll Rsr.

BARNACLE GOOSE *Branta leucopsis*

1 location (0,1) Scarce

Rarely more than one sighting is recorded in our area in any one year, and 2020 was no different: a skein of 14 birds was seen overhead from Snowden Moor on 27 Sep (BOG).

GREYLAG GOOSE *Anser anser*

34 locations (34,23) Common resident breeder and visitor

Widely distributed throughout our area, often in significant numbers, with Otley Wetland the main centre. **North:** present at Grimwith throughout the year, with a high count of c340 on 21 Sep. Also 131 on 15 Jun and c180 on 1 Dec (all JF). Other sightings, of up to 16 birds, all in neighbouring locations in Apr. **Bolton Abbey:** most records were from the spring, recording successful breeding on Barden Moor and in various places along the river. Only one autumn record: 6 on Barden Fell on 26 Nov. **Washburn:** present throughout the year on the main stretches of water, with a peak count of 240 at Thruscross on 4 Jun (D&NF). Breeding was recorded at Kex Gill, Blubberhouses Moor, Thruscross and Fewston. **Otley Wetland:** present throughout the year in significant numbers, peaking at over 600 in Aug-Sep. Up to 40 young (DO, 17 May) recorded. **South:** present throughout the year and area, with successful breeding recorded on the reservoirs on Burley Moor, at Knotford Nook, and along the Wharfe between Addingham and Ben Rhydding.

PINK-FOOTED GOOSE *Anser brachyrhynchus*

14 locations (8,8) Regular passage migrant

Overhead skeins of this species were seen regularly throughout the spring and autumn migration seasons, often in the hundreds, from a number of locations, mostly along the southernmost edge of our area and over Stainburn and Sandwith Moors. Sightings of landed birds were limited to singletons at Thruscross (5 Feb, BTO), John O'Gaunts (9 Mar, in a flock of greylags, JF), and at Otley Wetland (22Apr, AJ).

BAR-HEADED GOOSE *Anser indicus*

1 locations (1,1) Escapee

This species is not on the British list, but has been recorded in our area at least once annually since 2015. A single bird was recorded on 9 Nov at Swinsty (MC), with probably the same bird seen again 9 days later at Thruscross (D&NF).

MUTE SWAN *Cygnus olor*

13 locations (9,10) Locally common resident breeder

As in previous years, almost all sightings were south and east of Ben Rhydding, with exceptions noted below; Otley Wetland and the adjacent river continue to see the largest numbers and most successful breeding. **North:** a single bird was recorded between

6 May and 11 Jul on the Wharfe between Grassington and Linton (JF,RL,PP). **Washburn:** a pair was recorded on Farnley Lake on 1 Mar (PR), a single bird on 13 May (D&NF). **South:** the highest counts for the year-round population at Otley Wetland were 17 early in the year (20 Jan) and 19 at the other end (29 Sep); up to 6 cygnets were seen at Wharfebank Mills and at Otley bridge in Apr-Jun. Up to 4 birds were at Knotford Nook throughout the year, 3 through May at Chelker, a pair at Arthington Mar-May, and singletons elsewhere along the river east of Ilkley. A single immature was an unusual sight for a fortnight in Feb-Mar at High Royd ponds. Sadly, a pair that successfully bred at BRGP saw all their cygnets killed due to uncontrolled dogs.

WHOOPEE SWAN *Cygnus cygnus*

7 locations (5,7) Uncommon but regular passage migrant

32 birds were briefly seen at Knotford Nook on 1 Mar (inc 4 young, AJ), thoroughly harassed by the resident mute swans; a single bird was on the adjacent river on 28 Mar (D&NF), and a couple of days later on 1 Apr at Otley Wetland (JF). 2 birds were also seen at the same location on 22 Nov, whilst 7 took a short rest at Chelker on 20 Oct (KS). Several flocks were noted in Mar and Nov-Dec overflying locations in the south of our area between Menston and Little Almscliffe, up to 57 in number.

EGYPTIAN GOOSE *Alopochen aegyptiaca*

1 location (1,1) Uncommon visitor from feral populations

A single bird was recorded at Strid Woods on 26 Jun (S&JA).

SHELDUCK *Tadorna tadorna*

7 locations (3,5) Uncommon passage /winter visitor

All records were in the south, all bar one in the first six months. **Washburn:** 4 birds were at Scargill Rsr on New Year's Day (AJ), 2 at Lindley Wood from 27 May onwards for a month (T&RP). As in 2019, a pair bred successfully at Kex Gill, with 4 young seen on 25 Apr (JF). **South:** as in 2019, Riffa pond proved the most productive location, with 2 birds seen on several occasions throughout the spring. A single bird was at Otley Wetland in Feb-Mar, 2 females at East Otley on 27 Apr (TK). A single male was seen on temporary flashes just west of Burley on 27 Dec (AK).

MANDARIN DUCK *Aix galericulata*

26 locations (24,20) Common resident breeder, winter visitor

North: numerous records south of Appletreewick between 31 Mar and 19 May, 7 being the highest count at Loup Scar near Burnsall on 9 Apr (S&PW). **Bolton Abbey:** large counts of 54 at Strid Wood (1 Jan) and 41 at Bolton Abbey (2 Feb, both JF); subsequently regular sightings of up to 7 birds were noted to the end of Jun. **Washburn:** birds were seen throughout the year along the valley below Swinsty dam, mostly small numbers, with a high count of 15 at the end of Sep at Lindley Wood (PR). A female with 9 young was seen at Farnley Lake on 13 May (D&NF). **South:** numerous sightings of small numbers were had along the Wharfe throughout Q2 and into early Q3, with successful breeding noted at Farfield Hall, Addingham, Burley, western Otley and Gallows Hill; an otter was seen taking young at Otley on 1 Jul (PP). Away from the river, a brood of 6 was recorded at Bleach Mill pond, Menston, on 6 Jun (AK).

SHOVELER *Spatula clypeata*

3 locations (1,2) Uncommon passage/winter visitor

This species is very variable in where it appears in our area, although there are usually one or two records each year. 2020 saw a pair at Kex Gill on 8 Apr (JF), a female reported at BRGP on 21 Apr (MB), and another 'feeding busily' at John O'Gaunts on 17 Nov (PR).

GADWALL *Mareca strepera*

6 locations (2,3) *Uncommon passage/winter visitor*

Six locations, all in the south, is double any other year in the past decade. A pair was at Otley Wetland throughout the first half of the year. Apr also saw a pair at High Royds pond, another at Knotford Nook; a single bird was at Farnley Lake on 15 Jun. In the autumn, both High Royds (Oct) and Knotford Nook (Nov-Dec) saw the reappearance of single pairs, whilst birds were recorded at Otley Wetland throughout Dec, peaking with 4 pairs seen on Christmas Eve.

WIGEON *Mareca penelope*

9 locations (9,8) *Common winter visitor, passage migrant*

Otley Wetland is our main stronghold for this species, although, unlike 2019, none were recorded in the summer. Numbers in Jan and Feb were regularly above 130, peaking at 163 on 4 Jan. There were 110 on 17 Mar, numbers subsequently declining: 67 on 1 Apr, 23 on 6 Apr, 1 on 22 Apr. 6 birds were seen on 20 Sep, 12 on 21 Oct, 28 on 22 Nov, 150 on 14 Dec and a high of 175 on Christmas Eve. Other significant counts included: 100 birds at Grimwith on 7 Feb (BTO), with an autumn peak of c.50 on 26 Nov (PR); 80 at Swinsty on 9 Nov (MC); the same number at John O'Gaunts on 17 Nov (PR). Winter 2019-20 was poor for Wigeon at Knotford Nook with only single digit counts, but the end of the year did see numbers reach 40 on 21 Dec. There were smaller counts on the other 3 main Washburn reservoirs, and at Riffa pond.

MALLARD *Anas platyrhynchos*

(C) *Common resident breeder, passage migrant, winter visitor*

This species continues to be the ubiquitous year round water bird in our area, with numbers boosted in the winter. Highest count was 240 at Grimwith on 21 Sep (JF), and 50+ were regularly recorded on most major stretches of water. Even small sites like High Royds (49, AK) and Saw Mill in Addingham (45, AEG) achieved significant counts. Extensive breeding was also evident the full length of the Wharfe.

PINTAIL *Anas acuta*

1 locations (0,0) *Scarce, increasingly rare, passage migrant/winter visitor*

Recorded 2-3 times annually until as recently as 2013, but not seen since then. However, a single female was observed on Thruscross on 10 Nov to break the 7-year duck (PR).

TEAL *Anas crecca*

11 locations (10,8) *Common passage/winter visitor, occasional breeder*

2020 saw a slight uptick in the number of records and locations after recent lows, although peak count continued to decline.

North: 6 birds were recorded at Grimwith on 17 Feb (GL), 4 on 21 Sep and 8 on 1 Dec (both JF). **Washburn:** Single digit adult numbers were recorded at Fewston, John O'Gaunts, Kex Gill in the spring, and at Scargill Rsr and Lindley Wood in the autumn. 4 adult and 11 juveniles were seen at Farnley Lake on 14 Aug (DO). **South:** Up to 6 birds were seen at Otley Wetland between 27 Feb and 22 Apr, whilst our area's peak count of 16 was recorded here on Christmas Eve. Menston saw regular spring and autumn counts of up to 6 birds at High Royds and on flashes in nearby fields. 2 individuals at March Ghyll Rsr on 28 Aug were the earliest autumn birds in our area (AJ).

POCHARD *Aythya ferina*

3 locations (1,0) *Uncommon passage/winter visitor*

After an unusually blank year in 2019, we had to wait until 14 Oct this year for the first record, a single male at Fewston (JF). Two males were then at Otley Wetland on 7 Nov (PP), whilst a female was seen mixing with tufted ducks back at Fewston on

10 Nov (PR), likely to be the same (gender unidentified) as seen the day before at Swinsty (MC).

TUFTED DUCK *Aythya fuligula*

17 locations (14,13) *Common resident, winter visitor; occasional breeder*

North: A single bird was recorded at Grimwith on 7 Feb (GL), another on nearby Mossy Moor on 26 May (RL). Furthest north, there was a single individual at Kilnsey fishing lake on 3 May (PP). **Washburn:** there were single digit sightings through Mar to Jun at Kex Gill, John O'Gaunts, Scargill Rsr. A single bird was at Lindley Wood on 2 Jun (PG). 25 were seen at Fewston on 2 Oct, and again on 14 Oct, rising to 60 by 10 Nov, the most ever seen there by the observer (PR). Swinsty, Scargill and Thruscross all saw birds during the autumn. **South:** Otley Wetland and Knotford Nook both had a presence throughout the year, up to 26 birds at the former for the first 4 months, but no more than 8 after 22 Apr. At Knotford, there were up to 25 birds at both ends of the year, single digits from May to Nov. Other locations with small numbers included BRGP (Mar), Burley Moor reservoirs (Apr-May, AK), Ilkley Moor (27 May, D&NF), and Chelker (2 Sep, D&AA).

SCAUP *Aythya marila*

1 locations (0,0) *Rare passage migrant*

A single first winter male drake was seen at Otley Wetland during the last 3 days of the year, and into the New Year when it was joined by a female. This is the first record for the species in our area since 2016 (MC).

COMMON SCOTER *Melanitta nigra*

7 locations, 4 landed (1,1) *Scarce passage migrant*

A major west-east movement of this species at the beginning of Apr led to a number of reports of flocks between the 1 and 6 Apr over Ilkley, Menston and Otley. Five birds, 4 male and one female were at Lindley Wood on 16 Jun, the same number at Scargill Rsr on 30 Jun (both AJ). A 'tight raft of 12 males and two females' was reported at Chelker on 10 Jul (JF). A single adult female was recorded for several days from 7 Dec at Otley Wetland (MC) to finish off a bumper year for this sea duck.

GOLDENEYE *Bucephala clangula*

6 locations (7,6) *Locally common winter visitor, passage migrant*

Both Knotford Nook and Otley Wetland support a regular population each winter, although Otley numbers appeared down at the end of the year: earlier in the year, numbers peaked at 30 and 29 respectively, latterly at 33 and 8. There were also up to 7 at Farnley Lake. Other sightings were limited to one at Farnley Lake on 13 Jan (PR), 9 at Chelker on 31 Jan (JM), 1 at Fewston on 14 Oct (JF) and 1 at Swinsty on 9 Nov (MC),

GOOSANDER *Mergus merganser*

29 locations (24,29) *Common resident breeder, winter visitor*

Widely present along the main river, with limited sightings elsewhere. **North-Bolton Abbey:** furthest north sighting was a single bird at Starbotton on 26 Mar, with 3 birds on the same day at Kettlewell (JF). Unusually, there was also a single bird at Grimwith on 7 Feb (GL). Below Grassington birds, up to 4 at a time, were observed frequently throughout the year, with breeding noted at Grassington, Hebden, Burnsall and Barden Bridge. **Washburn:** a single sighting of 5 birds (2 male, 3 female) at Lindley Wood on 8 Jan (PR). **South:** present throughout the year mainly along the river or on adjacent lakes, with highest counts being 12 at Knotford Nook on 21 Dec (AK), and 11 at Otley Wetland on 7 Dec (MC). Breeding was noted at Addingham, BRGP and Otley (single female with 11 young!), Beyond the river, a single bird was seen at Panorama Rsr on 22 Mar (JF), whilst a brief visit from a female, observed bullying the

gulls before flying south, was a first record at High Royds pond (AK).

RED-BREASTED MERGANSER *Mergus serrator*

1 location (0,1) Rare visitor

Once a fairly regular visitor to our area, the only records since 2003 have been 4 birds at Grimwith in 2011, and a single drake at Otley Wetland at the end of 2019. This year, a single bird was seen overhead from Snowden Moor on 18 Sep (BOG).

BLACK GROUSE *Lyrurus tetrix*

1 location (0,1) Scarce resident breeder

A single bird was reported from the Oughtershaw area on 15 Dec, and another just beyond our catchment in Coverdale on Oct.

RED GROUSE *Lagopus lagopus*

(C) Common resident breeder

This species tends to be taken for granted in our area, and is without a doubt significantly under-reported. Actual numbers in particular are rarely recorded, the highest count this year just 23 at Middleton Moor on 5 Apr (HS), when an albino was seen. One observer out on a run was attacked by a highly aggressive bird defending territory at Hawksworth Moor on 7 Apr. Reports of other attacks on runners in the same area were also received (AK)!

RED-LEGGED PARTRIDGE *Alectoris rufa*

(C) Common resident breeder, all from released birds.

Sightings, almost all in the first 7 months of the year, continued to provide a wide and even geographical spread in our area, mostly in small numbers. 27 at Grimwith on 25 Jun, 23 again on 21 Sep, was an exception to this, as were the 11 seen at Barden Fell on 1 Jan and at Burnsall on 30 Jan (all JF).

GREY PARTRIDGE *Perdix perdix*

2 locations (5,4) Uncommon resident breeder

This year there were only 3 sightings in our area: 10 birds were seen in the Kettlewell area on 9 Jun, and a single bird on both 31 Aug and 8 Sep near Little Almscliffe (all BTO).

PHEASANT *Phasianus colchicus*

(C) Common resident breeder subject to extensive rearing/releases

This species is common in all varieties of habitats, including gardens, numbers artificially boosted by importation, artificial rearing and mass releases. Notable records included 70 at Grimwith on 21 Sep (JF), along with other 20+ counts, 25 at Barden Fell on 26 Nov, and, locally, 16 at Otley Wetland on 27 Nov. Garden sightings were recorded regularly in Hebden, Ilkley, Burley and Otley, with single sightings in Menston and Grassington.

LITTLE GREBE *Tachybaptus ruficollis*

7 locations (4,9) Uncommon resident, winter visitor; occasional breeder

This species was seen throughout the year at Otley Wetlands, usually singly but up to 3, and at John O'Gaunts in greater numbers, where 12 were recorded on 19 Aug including 6 juveniles (PR). Furthest north a bird was seen by Grassington Bridge on 10 Jan (C&JA), another on Christmas Day at Bolton Bridge (PP). Other sightings were all in the Washburn valley: 1 Jun at Kex Gill (JF), 15 Jun on Farnley Lake (DO), and 2 on 6 Sep at Scargill Rsr (AJ).

GREAT CRESTED GREBE *Podiceps cristatus*

6 locations (8,5) Common resident breeder, winter visitor

This species' core sites of Knotford Nook, Otley Wetland, the Washburn reservoirs and Chelker made up all bar one of the

sites for 2020. As usual, the largest counts were at Knotford Nook, where a year round presence peaked at 10 on 4 Apr. Up to 4 birds were seen throughout the year at Otley Wetland. Up to 4 birds were seen in 2 sightings in May at Chelker, whilst single birds were seen at Swinsty on 9 Jun, and Lindley Wood on 29 Jun. An unusual sighting away from these locations was a single bird on 3 May at Saw Mill pond in Addingham (AEG).

GREY HERON *Ardea cinerea*

33 locations (31,26) Common resident breeder

This species continues to be one of the more widely distributed birds across our area, mostly seen singly or in pairs, although up to 5 were noted on a number of occasions at Otley Wetland. Regularly recorded the length of the Wharfe between Kettlewell and Knotford Nook, and along tributary valleys, there were also garden sightings in Skyreholme, Hebden, Linton, Burley, Otley and Menston, where one was seen to land on rooftops and in neighbours' gardens on a number of occasions, even where no pond was available!

LITTLE EGRET *Egretta garzetta*

16 locations (8,8) Uncommon visitor

Sightings of this species, mostly singly or in pairs along the Wharfe, continue to grow, with locations doubling in 2020. They appear to be moving ever northwards, with one seen this year as far up the river as Grassington Bridge in Jan (C&JA, NH). Further south, almost sightings were in the first or last 4 months of the year. There was a single Washburn sighting on 10 Sep at Lindley Wood (D&NF), although there were 2 overhead views from Snowden Moor in the early autumn, along with overhead garden records, both unusually in Aug, in Menston and Otley.

CORMORANT *Phalacrocorax carbo*

25 locations (19,13) Common resident/visitor; occasional breeder

After several years of decline, recorded location numbers were back up to those seen in the previous decade, with sightings spread evenly along the Wharfe from Grassington southwards. **North-Bolton Abbey:** 3 birds were seen near Burnsall on 3 Apr (S&PW), otherwise single birds were the rule throughout the year. **Washburn:** Lindley Wood retains a breeding population, with a peak count of 35 birds and 16 nests noted on 1 Jul (PR). **South:** a year round presence at Otley Wetland, stronger in winter, peaked at 35 at the end of Nov (PP). 14 were noted at Knotford Nook on 24 Jan, an unusually high recent count for this location (AK).

OSPREY *Pandion haliaetus*

4 locations (5,6) Scarce but regular passage migrant

Up to 2 birds were seen at Lindley Wood during the first 3 weeks of May. Single birds on passage were seen unsuccessfully fishing at Knotford Nook on 21-22 Apr, over Norwood Edge on 11 Jul, and on 9 Aug and 4 Nov over Grass Wood (both D&NF)

HONEY-BUZZARD *Pernis apivorus*

1 location (0,2) Rare passage visitor

A single female was seen over Norwood Edge on 25 Jun (AJ, JM, DB). This is only the third sighting in our area in the past decade, the other two being last year, both also in the Washburn area.

SPARROWHAWK *Accipiter nisus*

36 locations (18,26) Common resident breeder

Sightings of this small raptor appear to be on the increase in our area, with location numbers doubling in the past 2 years. **North-Bolton Abbey:** There were regular sightings in and around Hebden (RL), a number of autumn garden visits in Grassington (C&JA), single views at Skyreholme on 8 Mar

(carrying prey,DD), and Linton on 8 May (JF), and just 2 recordings in the Bolton Abbey area, both in Mar. **Washburn:** widespread throughout, particularly in the southern half, with indications of successful breeding in 2 locations. **South:** recorded widely, including regular garden sightings at Addingham, Ilkley, Burley, Menston, Otley and Pool. A high count of 4 was noted on Denton Moor on 31 Aug (JM).

GOSHAWK *Accipiter gentilis*

5 locations (0,1) Scarce passage migrant

2020 saw the highest number of sightings in the past decade of this scarce species. Most were of up to 2 birds in the Washburn valley through the middle six months, with additional sightings over Ilkley in Mar (PG), and Ilkley Moor in Jul (JH).

MARSH HARRIER *Circus aeruginosus*

6 locations (2,3) Uncommon passage migrant/visitor

A female was present in the upper Washburn area for a fortnight in mid-May and recorded by several observers; a 'cream crown' was also reported on 30 Aug near Greenhow. An immature bird was seen over Ilkley Moor on 26 Sep, and again on 29 Sep in the Washburn valley. Finally, a 'female or immature' was briefly seen from a car near Little Almscliffe on 5 Nov (PG).

HEN HARRIER *Circus cyaneus*

14 locations (11,12) Uncommon passage/winter visitor

Up to 4 birds were seen regularly throughout Q1 in the Washburn area, the last sighting on 21 Mar. The only other early record was of a single bird circling above Addingham on 15 Apr (AEG). Single birds were observed above Middleton on 3 occasions through Jul and Aug. The first autumn sighting back around the Washburn was on 26 Sep with birds seen hunting and into roost regularly through the rest of the year, peaking with a counts of 'at least' 6, mostly ringtails, on 18 Oct and 3 Nov.

RED KITE *Milvus milvus*

61 locations (51,45) Common resident breeder

This species has become so commonly seen in the southern part of our area that, in spite of the rise in recorded locations, it remains almost certainly under-reported. Most sightings were of ones and twos, but there were occasional large gatherings, often over farming activity: 56 were counted over Denton Moor on 9 Jan (DSi), 20+ in the same area again at the end of Aug; 25 were seen over Arthington on 15 Jan (AJ). Highest winter count in the Washburn valley was 32 on 4 Jan over Sandwith Moor (BTO), whilst later, on 29 May, 19 were seen following a silage tractor at Farnley (AJ). Numbers remain lower in the north, the highest being the only record from north of Grassington: 10 birds in the Hubberholme-Yockenthwaite area on 10 Jun (BTO); 6 were also seen together just north of Stump Cross Caverns on 4 Aug (RL).

BUZZARD *Buteo buteo*

64 locations (51,45) Common resident breeder, passage migrant, winter visitor

After three years of declining sightings, recorded locations rose by over 40% in 2020, and the species remains the most geographically widespread and recorded raptor in our area. **North:** recorded all over, including breeding evidence, with feeding observed at Greenfield on 24 Jun (PG) and a family group in Langstrothdale on 31 Jul (SP). A pair was also noted in Littondale on 23 Jun (PP). Birds were seen throughout the year in the Grassington-Hebden area, with a resident pair suspected at Grass Wood (C&JA). **Bolton Abbey:** birds were seen throughout the year, with 13 noted over fields below Barden Fell on 26 Nov (JF). **Washburn:** again seen throughout the year, with counts over 6 on a number of occasions, and a peak of 13

on 20 Mar. **South:** birds were seen regularly throughout the year the length and breadth of the valley. Peak counts were 9, including young, on Denton Moor on 31 Aug, followed by 7 feeding in a field next to Nell Bank Centre (alongside 2 hares!) on 30 Oct (AK). Other successful breeding was noted at Farnley Lake (AJ).

WATER RAIL *Rallus aquaticus*

1 location (4,1) Uncommon passage/winter visitor

For the second year running, the only site with records for this species was Otley Wetland. Numbers for this elusive species were recorded most months, peaking at 4 on 21 Oct. 2 adults with 1 young were observed on 15 Jun (JM).

MOORHEN *Gallinula chloropus*

27 locations (24,16) Common resident breeder, passage visitor

North-Bolton Abbey: small numbers were recorded all along the river between Bolton and Grassington bridges, whilst the most northerly sighting was, as in previous years, near Conistone, where 2 adult were seen with 4 young on 10 Jun (PP). Breeding was also noted on the river near Linton church. 7 were seen on a pond at Fletcher's Brow on 10 Jan (C&JA).

Washburn: up to 4 birds were recorded at each of Lindley Wood, John O'Gaunts, Kex Gill and the ponds at Tumble Ings, the latter both with young. **South:** small numbers were noted at many areas of water, even small ponds (eg Bleach Mill), highest counts being 10 at Otley Wetland in Mar, and 8 at High Royds pond in Dec; young were seen at both sites.

COOT *Fulica atra*

5 locations (6,5) Locally common resident breeder, passage/winter visitor

The number of sites stayed at the 2019 record low, all in the south. Otley Wetland and Knotford Nook continued to be the main centres, but, even here, numbers were much smaller than in even 2019. Peak count at Knotford this year was just 28 on 24 Jan (90 at the same time in 2019); the highest autumn-winter count was 18 on 21 Dec (c.f. 26). Otley Wetland, with an early high of just 8 (26) and autumn high of 13 (11), showed a similar pattern. Other sites were limited to low single figure counts, Riffa pond (2), John O'Gaunts (4) and Kex Gill (1) being the only other locations.

OYSTERCATCHER *Haematopus ostralegus*

55 locations (43,36) Locally common migrant breeder

North-Bolton Abbey: Recorded widely and, in places, in large numbers. with sightings at Yockenthwaite, Buckden and into Littondale where 50 were seen on 13 Feb (DM). Other larger counts included 30 at Kettlewell on 26 Mar, 36 at Linton Church stepping stones on 6 Apr increasing to 60 on 17 Jul, up to 70 by Hebden suspension bridge through Mar, and 107 at Grimwith on 14 Mar. Whilst seen regularly in the Bolton Abbey throughout Feb-Jun, counts were all in single digits. **Washburn:** present throughout the first six months at Lindley Wood, and from Mar-Jul at the other main reservoirs, with counts of 40 at Thruscross on 8 Jul (A&JW), 19 at Lindley Wood and 18 at Kex Gill in mid-Mar. Two at Fewston on 10 Nov was the only post-Jul sighting (PR). **South:** present at Otley Wetland all year, peaking at 32 on 9 Mar. Elsewhere, landed birds were recorded between 12 Feb (Knotford Nook) and 14 Jul (Middleton Moor), all single digit numbers except for 23 by Denton Hall ponds on 27 Feb (JF). Outside this period, a single bird was seen in fields near Middleton Woods on Christmas Day (PP). Overhead garden sightings were recorded in Ilkley, Burley, Menston and Otley.

LAPWING *Vanellus vanellus*

50 locations (50,34) Common resident breeder, winter visitor

North: geographically widespread, mostly single digit numbers, seen as far north as Hubberholme and Cray (both 20 May), and into Littondale, where 14 were seen 22 Jun (JF). Largest count was 50+ on Grassington Moor Lane on 28 Mar (C&JA), whilst peak count at Grimwith was 24 on 7 Feb. **Bolton Abbey:** present all over, with peak counts of 50 and 57 recorded at Barden Fell on 20 Mar and 30 Aug respectively. **Washburn:** seen throughout the year, if in single digit numbers from Apr to Aug, and in large numbers particularly at Sandwith Moor whilst on passage: counts there reached 357 on 27 Feb, 175 on 2 Aug (AJ), and 'many hundreds, too far away to estimate, but could have reached c.1000' on 17 Nov (PR). C.200 birds were also seen near Thruscross on 29 Jan (TK). **South:** present all year at Otley Wetland, where early numbers reached 500+ on 13 Jan (PP). Summer counts reached 100+ on 17 Jul and 300+ on 1 Aug (RF), with autumn numbers also reaching 300+ through Nov and Dec. Other larger counts included c500 at Chelker on New Year's Day (JM), 200 at BRGP on 11 Jan (SP), and 400+ at Weston on 29 Dec (linked to Otley Wetland?, AK). Little breeding was noted, just one instance at Otley (T&RP).

GOLDEN PLOVER *Pluvialis apricaria*

20 locations (17,15) Locally common resident breeder, passage/winter visitor

North-Bolton Abbey: sightings remained low in number, with just 4 records: 2Mar at Barden Scale where a peregrine was seen to unsuccessfully attack an uncounted flock (DD), 30+ on 28 Mar at Grassington Moor Lane, 19 at Yarnbury on 23 Apr (both sets intermixed with lapwing), and 5 on Grassington Moor on 28 May (all C&JA). **Washburn:** large counts of c1500 and 800+ were recorded along the Greenhow Road near Thruscross on 29 Jan and 16 Mar (TK), otherwise all significant numbers were recorded at Sandwith Moor. Numbers on passage in Q1 reached 380 on 12 Feb. c500 were recorded there on 2 Aug, c800 on 2 Oct (both AJ), and c500 on 3 Nov. **South:** 17 were seen at Chelker on New Year's Day, but the largest counts were recorded over on Middleton Moor, with 82 in 3 separate flocks on 5 Apr (HS). The moors south of the Wharfe mostly saw single digit records through the summer, but come Oct onwards a flock of c80 was seen on a number of occasions near Whetstone Gate.

LITTLE RINGED PLOVER *Charadrius dubius*

6 locations (1,5) Uncommon migrant breeder, passage visitor

The first, most northerly, sighting this year was at the pool near Linton Church stepping stones on 14 Apr, where up to 2 birds were recorded until 1 Jun (RL). 2 were also seen at Barden Moor on 15 and 27 May. In the Washburn, birds were observed between 2 May and 23 Jun at Lindley Wood, with reports of successful breeding, whilst there were single birds at Blubberhouses (15 May,TK) and Swinsty (23 Jun,MC).

WHIMBREL *Numenius phaeopus*

3 locations (2,1) Scarce passage migrant

A single annual sighting is typical for this species, rarely more. On 8 Apr, a single bird was recorded over a garden in Pool; another singleton was seen at Scargill Rsr on 30 Jun (both AJ). Finally, a small flock of up to 7 birds was heard over a garden in Burley on 8 Oct (SB).

CURLEW *Numenius arquata*

66 locations (63,48) Common resident breeder, passage visitor

At a time when curlew numbers appear to be in crisis nationally, we are fortunate to be able to describe the curlew as 'common' and have such a strong population. Recorded counts early in the year were higher than in 2019: 150 at BRGP on 11

Jan, 100 at Burley water treatment centre on 30 Jan, 360 at Denton Park on 23 Feb. During the summer, birds were scattered more thinly across the moors, counts rarely into double figures, although a flock of 50+ was seen in roadside fields at Bolton Abbey on 17 May (PP); breeding was noted at Howgill, Hebden and Bolton Abbey. The first larger autumn gathering seen was on 27 Jul, c.100 birds at John O'Gaunts, with 160+ in fields north of BRGP on 7 Aug (PG). Largest autumn flock was that in the fields now threatened with building development, adjacent to Ben Rhydding, where over 150 were recorded several times, reaching 250 on 12 Nov. A flock of 200+ was also seen at Weston on Christmas Day (PP).

BLACK-TAILED GODWIT *Limosa limosa*

1 location (0,1) Rare passage migrant

Only the third sighting since 2012, a single bird was seen at the pool by Linton Church stepping stones on 20 Jul (S&PW).

KNOT *Calidris canutus*

1 location (0,0) Rare passage migrant

This species has not been recorded in our area for over a decade. A single bird was recorded at Fewston on 9 Nov (MC).

DUNLIN *Calidris alpina*

2 locations (2,2) Uncommon passage migrant

This species consistently averaged 3-4 sites up to 2016. Since then there have been just 1 or 2, and this year continued that trend: a single bird was seen at Lindley Wood on 22 May (AJ), another overhead at Snowden Moor on 12 Sep (AHa).

WOODCOCK *Scolopax rusticola*

6 locations (14,6) Resident breeder, passage migrant, winter visitor

Stainburn Forest and Timble Ings in the Washburn area continue to be the main sites, with several sightings each in May-Jun (Stainburn) and Oct-Nov (Timble) of up to 4 birds. Single birds were recorded at Farnley Hall on 10 Apr, Barden Moor on 16 May, 27 May and 14 Jun, and Otley Wetland on 27 Nov.

SNIPE *Galliano gallinago*

15 locations (14,13) Resident breeder, passage/winter visitor

North-Bolton Abbey: 3 sightings: 1 at Kelber Gate on Conistone Moor on 15 Apr (C&JA), 2 by Dibbles Bridge at Grimwith on 7 May (PM), 1 at Barden Scale on 27 May (S&JA). **Washburn:** highest count was at Kex Gill, with c15 seen on 6 Oct (PR); up to 9 birds at a time were seen throughout the year at Sandwith Moor, whilst 5 males were seen drumming on Blubberhouses Moor on 4 May (HS). **South:** up to 5 birds were seen and heard drumming on Middleton and Langbar Moors through Apr; 3 birds were also noted on a number of occasions across the valley at Hawksworth Moor in May. 1 or 2 birds were recorded throughout the year at Otley Wetland, whilst up to 4 birds were present at High Royds pond from 1 Oct to the end of the year.

COMMON SANDPIPER *Actitis hypoleucos*

37 locations (25,18) Common migrant breeder, passage visitor

From the low of 2019, records doubled in 2020, and this species showed a wide geographical distribution. First sighting was on 9 Apr near Hebden (S&PW), after which records were returned almost daily, until the end of Jun. 10 birds were noted between Hebden and Linton Church stepping stones on 3 May (RL), 9 at Lindley Wood on 10 May (AJ), 8 at Strid Woods on 4 Jun including chicks, and 6 along Littondale on 22 Jun (JF). Breeding was also noted at Kex Gill and Grassington. Most northerly was a bird seen at Greenfield on 24 Jun (PG). A smattering of records through Jul and Aug included one in Langstrothdale on 31 Jul. After Aug, the only record was a single bird observed on a number of occasions during the autumn at Otley Wetland (PP).

GREEN SANDPIPER *Tringa ochropus*

3 locations (3,2) Uncommon passage migrant

2020 mirrored 2019 with records at Otley Wetland and in the Washburn area. First of the year was on 15 Jan at the dam end of Swinsty (PR), soon followed by another at Otley Wetland on 8 Feb (RF). A third was seen at Scargill Rsr on 2 Sep (AJ). The final records of the year were from 2 separate observers of 2 birds on the western lake at Otley Wetland on 7 Dec (PR,MC).

REDSHANK *Tringa erythropus*

15 locations (14,15) Uncommon migrant breeder, passage visitor

First birds of the year were recorded on 14 Mar, 2 individuals in fields near BRGP (SP).

North-Bolton Abbey: single birds were seen at Kettlewell on 26 Mar and 4 Jun. Further south, up to 3 birds were recorded throughout Apr-Jun in the Grassington-Hebden area; there were 2 birds at Mossy Moor Rsr on 9 Apr. At Bolton Abbey, a single bird was seen on 22 May (K&PL). **Washburn:** up to 2 birds were seen at each of Kex Gill (Apr-May), John O'Gaunts (19 Mar) and Lindley Wood (May-Jun). **South:** 2 birds were present at Otley Wetland from 23 Mar to 6 May. Other sightings included singletons at Menston at the end of Mar and at Ilkley Tennis Club on 7 May, up to 3 birds on Middleton Moor in early Apr, and 4 at neighbouring March Ghyll Rsr on 16 Jun (AJ), also the last sighting of the year.

SPOTTED REDSHANK *Tringa totanus*

1 locations (0,0) Rare passage migrant

Not seen in our area for over a decade, a single bird was seen at Kex Gill on 27 Aug (PR).

GREENSHANK *Tringa nebularia*

2 locations (2,0) Scarce passage migrant

A single bird was seen at Otley Wetland on 8 Mar, flushed from the field adjacent to the south lake (AJ). Another singleton flew low over East Otley early on the morning of 30 Jul for a distinctly unusual garden tick (TK)!

KITTIWAKE *Rissa tridactyla*

2 locations (0,0) Scarce passage visitor

The last record of this bird in our area was in 2016; there were two this year. The first was a single bird seen flying north up the Washburn valley on 24 Mar (AJ). The other was the corpse of an immature kittiwake found and photographed on Moor Lane above Grassington on 12 Sep (C&JA).

BLACK-HEADED GULL *Chroicocephalus ridibundus*

(C) Common resident breeder, passage/winter visitor

Easily the most common gull in our area, this species is widespread throughout, and often ignored by observers. **North-Bolton Abbey:** most sightings were in the first half of the year, largest counts being c.100 at Hebden on 7 Apr, 85 at Appletreewick on 27 Apr, and 80 at Grimwith on 7 Feb. Almost all Bolton Abbey records indicate a presence but no count.

Washburn: 90% of records were from the first six months, the largest of these being c50 at Kex Gill on 6 May. Counts of c.300 in Nov and c.225 in Dec from a newly resumed monthly survey at Lindley Wood suggest that numbers here have previously been under-reported. **South:** Otley Wetland saw counts up to 500 throughout the first and last thirds of the year, and a summer high of 60 on 12 Jul (JF). 200 were at Chelker on 31 Jan (JM), 300+ in a mixed flock on fields between Knotford Nook and Gallows Hill on 12 Feb, whilst, on 26 Feb, 450 were seen on flooded fields adjacent to Ben Rhydding and 250 on similarly affected fields between Burley and Otley (all AK). Highest autumn count was 300 on the Knotford Nook-Gallows Hill fields on 9 Nov (E&PS).

COMMON GULL *Larus canus*

26 locations (25,20) Common passage/winter visitor

Widespread in large numbers during winter months, these drop to occasional single figure counts in the summer. **North-Bolton Abbey:** recorded up the valley as far as Buckden, where c110 birds were noted on 19 Jan (JF). There were also 230 at Grimwith on 7 Feb (GL), 34 at Hawkswick in Littondale on 2 Sep, and 100 at Hebden on 6 Oct (RL). Other records, particularly those in the summer, rarely rose above single digits. **Washburn:** large numbers, up to 800, were recorded during migration watch at Little Almscliffe during Feb, otherwise the only significant numbers were c200 on Sandwith Moor on 20 Sep (AJ), and 75 mixed in with black-headed gulls at Lindley Wood on 17 Dec - the latter part of a newly resumed monthly survey which suggests this species has been significantly under-reported here and elsewhere. **South:** large flocks of 500+ birds were reported early in the year from Stainburn (PP) and Knotford Nook (AK); 150 were mixed in with black-headed gulls on flooded fields at Ben Rhydding on 26 Feb. Another 200 were seen at Low Mill, Addingham on 1 Apr; 2 birds were present through the summer months by Addingham weir. Early year counts at Otley Wetland exceeded 100 on several occasions; largest autumn count was 50 in fields near Gallows Hill on 9 Nov.

GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL *Larus marinus*

3 locations (4,1) Uncommon passage/winter visitor

Several sightings of a single bird were made during migration watches at Little Almscliffe through Jan-Feb. Two birds were at Conistone Moor on 22 Jan, and at nearby Kilmsey on 9 Dec (all BTO).

HERRING GULL *Larus argentatus*

14 locations (7,8) Uncommon visitor

Unusually, 2 birds were recorded as far north as Threshfield from a garden on 6 Feb (GL). Otherwise, all sightings were again in the south, and again mostly at Otley Wetland where a year round presence peaked at 5 birds in Mar, all but one 1st/2nd winter birds. 10 were seen at Little Almscliffe on 19 Feb. Almost all other sightings were in single figures, between Ilkley and Otley, and in the first 7 months of the year, the only exception being 2 at Lindley Wood on 26 Nov.

LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL *Larus fuscus*

32 locations (31,16) Common resident, passage visitor; has bred.

North-Bolton Abbey: 42 birds were recorded as far north as Kettlewell on 4 Jun (JF). Over 100 were seen in fields between Threshfield and Linton on 14 May, 20+ at Halton Gill in Littondale on 29 May (both PP), 47 at Grimwith on 19 Jun. There were single digit sightings throughout this area the length of the year, but only between May and the end of Aug round Bolton Abbey. **Washburn:** a handful of sightings of up to 2 birds between Jan and the end of May, 5 at Scargill Rsr on 13 Jun, 8 at Norwood Edge on 6 Aug (AJ). **South:** with the exception of a flock of 16 seen in fields near BRGP on 21 Jun (AK), all sightings were of no more than 4 birds. Except for in and around Otley Wetland, all were also in the first 7 months of the year (last 2 Aug). Here there was a presence most months from Apr onwards of 1-2 birds, the last being on 28 Dec.

SANDWICH TERN *Sterna hirundo*

1 locations (0,0) Rare passage/summer visitor

A pair of birds was seen overhead in East Otley on 3 May, calling as they flew north (TK). This was the first sighting in our area since 2011.

COMMON TERN *Sterna hirundo*

4 locations (2,2) Uncommon passage/summer visitor; occasionally breeds

First sighting of 2020 was of 7 birds flying around the eastern lake at Otley Wetland, an unusually high count (PP). The large majority of sightings were, as usual, here, of up to 4 birds throughout the rest of the summer, the last on 26 Aug, successful breeding being noted. During the first 2 weeks, up to 3 birds were also seen over East Otley apparently commuting between the fishing lakes off East Busk Lane and the Wetland site; one was seen with a fish (TK). Two birds were then at Swinsty on 23 Jun, thought to be the first sighting here this century (MC), followed by a singleton on 17 Jul at Lindley Wood (JM).

FERAL PIGEON *Columba livia*

(C) Common resident breeder

Records suggest that this species is somewhat under-recorded, but do reflect its adaptability to a wide variety of habitats.

North: only a handful of records this year, the most notable being 14 birds at Kettlewell on 19 Jan and 42 birds at Grimwith on 1 Dec (both JF). **Bolton Abbey:** Again, a handful of records, the most significant being 30+ birds seen by Bolton Bridge on 5 Apr. **Washburn:** 2 sightings of up to 4 birds at Long Liberty Farm near John O'Gaunts on 19 Mar and 3 May, with a foursome also at Kex Gill on 13 Apr. **South:** by far the largest proportion of records were in this area with sightings throughout the year and almost all from gardens in Otley, Menston, Ilkley and Addingham, a garden in Otley regularly noting 12-24 individuals (T&RP). A population of 60+ birds is resident by the weir at Otley.

STOCK DOVE *Columba oenas*

17 locations (26,12) Common resident breeder

North-Bolton Abbey: just 4 records in 2020: 13 Jan at Bolton Abbey, 25 Apr at Ghaistrill's Strid, 4 Jun at Strid Woods and 21 Sep at Grimwith (2 birds). **Washburn:** just 2 records here. With one commenting 'regularly seen in single figures on long walk' on 1 Jan (PR), and the other 'seen regularly in smaller numbers [up to 5]' at Little Almscliffe (AHa), there is a strong suggestion of under-reporting. **South:** primarily a bird of garden sightings, seen in Addingham, Ilkley, Menston, Otley and Pool. Regularly noted at Otley Wetland through the year, 4 at most.

WOODPIGEON *Columba palumbus*

(C) Common resident breeder

One of the most ubiquitous birds in our area; records increased this year from last year's 150 or so to 368, which still suggests substantial under-reporting! Most dramatic of these must surely be the 1000+ seen on 4 Nov at Dob Park: 'literally thousands flying south very high' (PR). Aside from this, larger flocks were seen on 13 Mar with 103 in fields opposite BRGP (AK), on 19 Mar with 87 at Denton (JF), and on 19 Apr with 100+ in ploughed fields next to the Pool-Leathley road (PP). In the north, 13 was the peak count, at Linton on 13 May. Present in virtually all reporting gardens, 24 proved the highest count, in Otley in Jul.

COLLARED DOVE *Streptopelia decaocto*

(C) Common resident breeder

North: reported at various times of the year in low numbers in Buckden, Starbotton, Kettlewell, Kilnsey, Grassington, Hebden, and Linton. **Bolton Abbey:** a single bird was at Barden Bridge on 28 May. **Washburn:** 3 were seen in Timble village on 4 May, a singleton at Thruscross on 1 Jun. **South:** recorded predominantly in low single digits in multiple gardens at each

of Addingham, Ilkley, Menston and Otley. A small flock of 6 overwintered in a field near Menston.

CUCKOO *Cuculus canorus*

30 locations (26,16) Migrant breeder

First 2020 record was on 20 Apr, on Ilkley Moor (HS), just one day earlier than the average (2019 23 Apr, 2018 19 Apr). **North:** an early bird was heard from a Skyreholme garden on 24 Apr (PM), another 2 days later in Hebden (RL), where the last northern bird was also heard on 28 Jun. Others were also heard in May further north at Buckden and Hubberholme, and into Littondale at Arncliffe and Hawkswick. **Bolton Abbey:** recordings at both Bolton Moor and Fell from 24 Apr to 4 Jun, up to 2 at a time. **Washburn:** a male was heard near Kex Gill on 25 Apr, the last noted at Timble Ings on 8 Jul, with others also at Thruscross, Fewston, Low Snowden, Norwood Bottom, Norwood Edge, and Stainburn Forest. **South:** birds were recorded on eastern hills between 26 Apr at Beamsley Beacon and 16 Jun at Middleton Moor. A juvenile was seen being fed by a meadow pipit near Panorama Rsr on Ilkley Moor on 31 Jul and 1 Aug, the last for 2020. Birds were also noted at Addingham Moorside and Burley Moor.

BARN OWL *Tyto alba*

40 locations (24,30) Resident breeder

This species continues to show healthy expansion in our area; it is only 11 years since there was only one recorded location locally! **North-Bolton Abbey:** multiple sightings from Hebden, Skyreholme (a regular garden visitor) and Greenhow, with single sightings at Kettlewell, Grass Wood, Grassington, Burnsall and Grimwith. There were also 2 sightings round Bolton Abbey. **Washburn:** seen extensively throughout the year with multiple sightings most months and breeding noted at Leathley and Scargill Rsr. **South:** almost always single birds, occasionally two, seen throughout the valley from Addingham to Weeton, and on to the moors either side. Unusually there was just one record at Otley Wetland, on 13 May. The only record of breeding was at Stainburn village.

TAWNY OWL *Strix aluco*

21 locations (23,11) Common resident breeder

Although up since 2019, numbers recorded compared to previous years remain low. **North:** birds were noted in Q1 at Skyreholme, Grassington and Yarnbury, whilst another was recorded in and around a Hebden garden throughout the year, especially in Q4 (RL). **Bolton Abbey:** there were just 3 records, all from the end of May/first half of Jun at Barden Scale and Strid Woods. **Washburn:** multiple sightings through May-Jun at Stainburn Forest, and also at Timble Ings both in Mar and through the autumn. Single records came from Lindley Wood (Jan), Farnley (Sep) and Norwood Edge (Dec). **South:** mostly garden records, mostly heard rather than seen, at Addingham, Ilkley, Burley, Menston, Otley, Pool, with young noted at Addingham, Menston and Otley.

LITTLE OWL *Athene noctua*

10 locations (9,8) Resident breeder

There were no northern records this year for this nationally declining bird, and just one from the Washburn valley: at Low Snowden on 24 Sep (AHa). All other sites were in the south between Addingham, where there were multiple records of up to 2 birds, mostly in Aug (AEG), and Otley, with records from Burley, Burley Woodhead, Menston, Danefield, Otley Wetland, and East Otley. One west Otley garden had multiple records throughout the first half. A local brood of 3 young was successfully ringed (CH).

LONG-EARED OWL *Asio otus*

2 locations (5,3) *Uncommon migrant breeder*

There were just two records in 2020: a single bird photographed near Timble Ings on 29 Aug, and another caught by a camera trap on Ilkley Moor on 4 Oct (RG).

SHORT-EARED OWL *Asio flammeus*

5 locations (13,4) *Uncommon resident /migrant breeder*

Another poor year after an exceptional 2018. In the north, a single bird was seen on Conistone Moor on 25 Mar (EC). Another was at Greenhow on 20 Sep, with two other sightings at nearby Hoodstorth on 19 Jan and 14 Jul (SB). Denton Moor also produced a brace, at opposite ends of the year on 1 Feb (2 birds, AJ) and 1 Dec (PG). A single sighting was also recorded at Sandwith Moor on 1 Oct.

NIGHTJAR *Caprimulgus europaeus*

5 locations (3,2) *Scarce migrant breeder*

As in previous years, the large majority of reports were from Stainburn forest, with the first on 26 May. Up to 4 birds were then noted in a series of records up to 9 Aug. Up to 4 birds were also seen in 3 records from around Barden Towers from 27 May to 14 Jun, whilst a single bird was reported from woodland on the edge of Denton Moor on 6 Aug (AJ).

SWIFT *Apus apus*

(C) *Common migrant breeder, passage visitor*

First records were a good week earlier than in 2019, back near the historical average for our area. The first was on 23 Apr, a brief glimpse in Hebden (RL), others within 2 days at Grassington, Burley and Otley. There were almost daily sightings then until 12 Aug, when a singleton was seen in Grassington (C&JA), with just one outlier on 3 Sep in Burley (RG). **North:** furthest north were 5 birds at Buckden on 20 May (JF), with nesting observed at Kilnsey (EC) and Scargill House (T&RP). **Bolton Abbey:** 5 records between 13 and 23 May, the last being the only count, of 10 at Storiths. **Washburn:** again just 5 records, 3 at Norwood Edge where c50 birds were reported on 13 May and 120 on 24 Jul (both AJ); another observer commented on 1 Aug, "only 5 seen in whole of Washburn this year - dreadful!" (PR). **South:** up to 30 birds were seen throughout 29 Apr to 7 Aug at Otley Wetland, mostly in single digits. Elsewhere, breeding colonies were recorded at Menston and Otley, with up to 150 birds seen at the latter (31 Jul). Other, mainly garden, sightings were recorded at Addingham, Ilkley, BRGP, and Burley, primarily in single figures and close to the river. Near the season end, flocks of 250 and 100 were reported over Middleton Moor on 14 and 16 Jul (JM).

KINGFISHER *Alcedo atthis*

24 locations (19,15) *Resident breeder*

Sightings featured in every month of the year, the continued milder winter conditions helping survival rates. Birds were reported the length of the Wharfe from Cray in the north (17 Sep, JF), to Knotford Nook. Most were in ones and twos, although 4 were seen at Hebden on 2 Sep (RL) 3 at Gallows Hill on Aug 2nd and Otley Wetland on 7 Dec (both MC). There was just one sighting in the Washburn above Lindley Wood dam: a single bird at Norwood Bottom on 17 Nov (PR).

GREAT SPOTTED WOODPECKER *Dendrocopos major*

41 locations (36,31) *Common resident breeder*

A species that is widespread in our area, seen as far upstream as Buckden and Foxup in Littondale, all the way down to Huby, with records throughout the Washburn below Thruscross. Inevitably, more 'sightings' were noted during the earlier parts of the year, when birds are easily identified by their distinctive

drumming, but there were records in every month. Most were of 1-2, although 8 were recorded along a 1-mile stretch below Foxup on 22 Jun. Garden visitors were noted in Kilnsey, Grassington, Skyreholme, Hebden, Addingham, Burley, Ilkley, Otley and Menston. Young were reported from Kilnsey, Scargill House, Grassington, Hebden, Barden Bridge, Ilkley, Burley, Weston and Leathley.

GREEN WOODPECKER *Picus viridis*

28 locations (26,28) *Common resident breeder*

Geographically well spread, most records were of single birds, most recorded in the spring months when more readily heard. **North:** locations included Hubberholme, Kettlewell, Hawkswick, Grass Wood, Grassington and Hebden Gill. Up to 4 birds were recorded most months in Hebden, including a juvenile in Jul. **Bolton Abbey:** 2 birds were heard on News Year Day in Strid Woods (JF), otherwise all reports were of single birds in May-Aug. **Washburn:** reported throughout the first 8 months across most wooded locations in the valley south of Swinsty between Timble Ings and Little Almscliffe. Another singleton was seen at Thruscross on 8 Jul (A&JW). **South:** birds were recorded throughout the first 9 months at Beamsley, Low Mill (including 2 on 10 Sep), Middleton Moor, Sun Lane, Otley Chevin, and East Otley.

KESTREL *Falco tinnunculus*

52 locations (46,34) *Common resident breeder, passage migrant*

Widespread geographically, sightings were mostly of single birds, occasionally pairs, although there were some larger counts around Middleton-Denton Moors. **North:** 3 birds, including a pair, were the furthest north sightings, on 31 Jul (SP). Unusually, one was also recorded in Littondale, at Hawkswick on 2 Sep (JF). Other sightings were evenly spread throughout the year at Kilnsey, Threshfield Moor, Grassington, Hebden, Hebden Gill, Skyreholme, Grimwith. **Bolton Abbey:** single birds were seen most months. One was involved in a tussle with a hobby at Storiths on 7 Aug (DD). **Washburn:** several sightings most months the length of the valley, most notable being a young family at Norwood Edge on 11 Jul. **South:** 8 birds were seen on Middleton Moor on 1 Jul, 6 at March Ghyll Rsr on 3 Aug (both AJ), and 7 over Lippersley Pike on 31 Aug (JM). There were garden sightings in Ilkley, Menston, Otley and Pool; young were noted at Middleton Moor and a 1st year juvenile seen on the Chevin on 4 Nov (E&PS).

MERLIN *Falco columbarius*

6 locations (11,7) *Uncommon resident breeder, passage migrant, winter visitor*

There were fewer sightings than usual this year, mostly in the Stainburn Forest area, with 5 scattered throughout the year. Elsewhere, individuals were seen on Denton Moor on 3 Jan and at Barden Scale twice in Mar, with two over Burley Moor on 10 Sep (AJ).

HOBBY *Falco subbuteo*

17 locations (6,11) *Uncommon but regular summer visitor*

Sightings for this summer visitor have grown steadily recently, although this bird's elusive nature means that actual numbers and breeding activity remain largely unknown. Records continued to come exclusively from the southern end of our catchment, the most northerly being half a dozen sightings of up to 4 birds in the Barden-Storiths area 7 Aug - 21 Sep, the first being of one in a tussle with a kestrel at Storiths. There were sightings of single birds in the Washburn valley 2 May -11 Sep, mostly around Norwood Edge, whilst the Wharfe valley saw the first record of the year, in Pool on 6 Apr, with subsequent views at Menston, Denton Moor and Whetstone Gate, before the last at Weeton on Sep 21st. 2 birds were also seen at Otley Wetland

31 Aug - 3 Sep, an adult and a second calendar year, the latter ringed (JM).

PEREGRINE *Falco peregrinus*

4 locations (13,13) Resident breeder, passage migrant

2020 was a poor year for records after the improvements of 2017-2019, with only 7 records, all in the south, all of single birds. The first sighting was at Barden Scale on 2 Mar where an individual was seen stooping unsuccessfully on a flock of golden plover; another was there a fortnight later. There were 3 sightings at Norwood Edge, in Mar, Jun and Sep. One individual made an excellent garden tick in Pool on 25 Apr (AJ), whilst the last sighting was a bird 'flying through at speed' at Kex Gill on 22 Sep (PR).

RING-NECKED PARAKEET *Psittacula krameri*

2 locations (1,1) Possible escapee

With a population now established as close as Yeadon, and regular sightings in Nunroyd Park, it's almost inevitable that records in our area will increase. There were 2 positive identifications in 2020: 2 birds by Brook Street Bridge in Ilkley on 27 Aug, and 4 over High Royds pond on 27 Nov. Another probable sighting of one overflying Otley Wetland was made on 26 May.

JAY *Garrulus glandarius*

26 locations (28,17) Common resident breeder

North-Bolton Abbey: the sole sighting this year was at Skyreholme on 30 Mar (PM), one of just three north of the A59, the others being 2 birds the day before at Hazlewood, and an individual at Strid Woods on 4 Jun. **Washburn:** although spread throughout the year, half the sightings were in May. Birds were recorded at John O'Gaunts, Stainburn Forest, Norwood Edge, Timble Ings and Lindley Wood. **South:** widespread throughout the south of our area, with most records 1-2 birds from gardens in Addingham, Ilkley, Burley, Menston and Otley, although 4 were seen in Jan in one Ilkley garden (JF), and in another during the summer (CG).

MAGPIE *Pica pica*

(C) Common resident breeder

North-Bolton Abbey: rather scarcer here than further south, individuals were seen at Kilnsey, Burnsall, Grassington and Hebden, whilst 2 were noted at Linton on 8 May (JF). Two at Barden Fell on 1 Jan made up the only record of the year in the Bolton Abbey area. **Washburn:** 3 sightings were recorded, max 12 birds, during migration watch at Sandwith Moor in Feb. The only other record was of a single bird at Timble village on 4 May (HS). **South:** In contrast to other parts of our area, there is a dense widespread population of this species here. Highest count was 23 at High Royds on 11 Mar. There were many garden counts from all settlements between Addingham and Otley, the highest being 12 in Ilkley.

JACKDAW *Coloeus monedula*

(C) Common resident breeder

The Jackdaw remained one of the most widespread species throughout our region, reported from all areas in large numbers. Even Grimwith, where none were seen in 2018 and just one in 2019, saw a count of c.200 on 21 Sep (JF). Others over 50 included 56 in Langstrothdale, the same at Kettlewell, 66 at Hawkswick, 65 at Burnsall, 105 at Sandwith Moor, 68 at Menston, 143 at Otley Wetland (the highest of several over 100), 50 at East Otley. There were numerous garden counts, mostly in single figures but with the highest at 60+ over Menston.

ROOK *Corvus frugilegus*

30 locations (35,18) Common resident breeder

North: double-digit numbers were recorded throughout the year, mostly in settlements: 26 at Buckden, 24 at Kettlewell, c50 at Arncliffe, 22 at Hawkswick, 19 at Burnsall, with smaller numbers elsewhere. 15 were seen at Grimwith on 21 Sep.

Bolton Abbey: small numbers were seen throughout the year, 10 being the highest count, at Barden Fell on 1 Jan. **Washburn:** numbers up to 10 were recorded near all the main valley reservoirs, with an exceptional 44 in fields by Thruscross on 14 Oct (JF). 129 were noted in a migration count on 2 Feb at Sandwith Moor, with others that month between 30 and 60.

South: 60+ birds were counted at the Pool rookery on 9 Mar, 19 at the one in Menston 10 days later (both AK); 25 nests were recorded at the East Wood rookery in Weston on 16 May (PP). The highest of several garden counts in Addingham and Otley was 15 at the latter (M&JC).

CARRION CROW *Corvus corone*

(C) Common resident breeder

Whilst remaining numerous and widely reported, there were again none of the large three figure counts of 2018 and earlier. Largest was one of 50+ in fields next to a north Otley garden in Aug (M&JC); 43 were also noted on the east side of the town feeding in sheep fields on 18 May. In the north, 11 birds were seen on a walk in Langstrothdale, otherwise counts were all in single digits. as were garden counts throughout the area from Skyreholme southwards.

RAVEN *Corvus corax*

33 locations (15,16) Resident, scarce breeder

After the lows of 2018, report locations doubled this year. **North:** just 2 records here: one individual at Threshfield Quarry, not recorded here before, was seen on 25 Mar (C&JA); 3 birds were seen at Kilnsey Crag on 19 May (PP). **Bolton Abbey:** 7 were seen from a lay-by at Barden Bridge on 2 Jul, 5 at Barden Scale on 10 Aug, and 2 on three well spaced occasions on Barden Moor. **Washburn:** widely and often recorded across the southern half of the Washburn catchment, including 8 at Lindley Wood on 15 Mar. North of the A59, 2 were seen at Rocking Moor on 27 Sep (AJ). **South:** increasingly widespread here, with numerous records returned from high ground on both sides of the valley, including 6 at March Ghyll Rsr on 17 May, and the same number over the Chevin on 1 Aug. There were even garden sightings in the Menston area on three occasions, whilst one was seen and heard cronking over Otley Hospital on 6 Oct (AK).

COAL TIT *Periparus ater*

33 locations (24,21) Common breeding resident

North: records jumped from just 3 last year to 8 this. Furthest north, an individual was seen at Hubberholme on 17 Sep. In Littondale, one was at Arncliffe on 5 Jan, and another further east at Grimwith on 7 Feb. All other records were in the main valley at Grass Wood, Howgill, Linton, along with a regular garden visitor in Hebden (RL). **Bolton Abbey:** up to 6 birds were seen in six sightings scattered throughout the year, mostly in Strid Woods. **Washburn:** a national influx of this species at the beginning of Oct saw counts of 42 and 26 during migration watch at Snowden Moor on 1 and 4 Oct (AHA). Otherwise, 1-2 birds were seen throughout the year across the southern half of the valley catchment. **South:** almost all sightings were in gardens and nature reserves spread across lower altitudes. Highest count was 6, in Menston and Ilkley gardens, both early autumn.

MARSH TIT *Poecile palustris*

1 site (2,0) Scarce resident

This increasingly scarce species in our area, not recorded in 2019, was reported just once in 2020: 2 birds amongst a mixed flock of passage birds in a Menston garden on 1 Oct (R&HG).

WILLOW TIT *Poecile montanus*

2 locations (0,1) Rare resident

Willow tits have suffered a 99% decline nationally in recent years, and are rarely recorded in our area now, although one was seen at Otley Wetland last year. There were two reports in 2020: a single bird 'well seen' at BRGP on 15 Mar, another at Stainburn Forest on 13 Jun (both BOG).

BLUE TIT *Cyanistes caeruleus*

(C) Common resident breeder

One of the most common birds throughout our area, count numbers remain modest, particularly in gardens. However, whilst numbers may not be heavily concentrated, it is very widely spread, providing what looks like a strong and stable population. It is also likely that this species is, outside garden watching, under-reported. Indeed, highest count this year was 20 from a garden on the edge of Otley (DO). Other double figure counts illustrate the widespread nature of this species: 14 at Arncliffe on 5 Jan, 12 at Bolton Abbey on 19 Feb, 18 at High Royds on 11 Mar, 15 at Otley Wetland on 23 Mar, 10 at Gallows Hill on 15 Apr, 12 at Lindley Wood on 26 Nov. There were numerous reports of birds breeding, many in garden nest-boxes.

GREAT TIT *Parus major*

(C) Common resident breeder

Counts for this widely and commonly reported species tended to be in single figures, exceptions being 12 at Bolton Abbey on 19 Feb, 11 at High Royds on 11 Mar, and 2 counts at Otley Wetland: 14 also in Mar and 13 at the end of Dec. Garden sightings were almost as commonly reported as blue tits, mostly singles or pairs, although 5 were noted in Addingham and Ilkley gardens, the former during the RSPB Garden Birdwatch. There were surprisingly few reports of breeding, just a handful in Ilkley, Addingham and Burley, with just one 'in the wild' of an adult carrying food at Strid Woods on 28 May (JF).

SKYLARK *Alauda arvensis*

26 locations (18,13) Common resident breeder, passage migrant

North-Bolton Abbey: In a year when the number of reported locations almost doubled back up to levels last seen in 2017, the proportion of records from the north of our area continued to decline, representing this year just 18% compared to 67% in 2016; this is almost certainly due to the distribution of recorders rather than birds, exacerbated by the lock-down. Sightings north of the A59 were limited to single digit reports from Conistone Moor, Lea Green, Cam Gill Beck, Threshfield Moor, Yarnbury and Skyreholme from Mar to Jun, and two reports of presence at Barden Scale in the same period.

Washburn: up to 26 birds were reported daily during migration in Feb. The first singing bird was on 13 Mar at Stainburn Forest. There were barely half a dozen more sightings during the year, but they did extend as late as 22 Sep on Roundell's Allotment near Thruscross (PR). **South:** 20 birds were seen 'singing and displaying' over Middleton Moor on 5 Apr, otherwise they were seen widely from Mar to Jun on higher ground but only in low single digit numbers. 4 birds over a north Guiseley garden on our southern border was a late record on 18 Sep (DSh).

SAND MARTIN *Riparia riparia*

34 locations (22,17) Common migrant breeder, passage visitor

First report of this early returning hirundine was later than usual, on 5 Apr, only one day earlier than the first swallow and house martin, with several small groups seen over the Chevin (DB), and other single digit sightings at Arthington, Pool, BRGP,

and Hebden, over the next 2 days. 30+ birds were seen in nest holes at an established riverside colony west of Otley on 8 Apr. Subsequent larger counts during the spring included c40 at Howgill, 200+ at Otley Wetland (29 Apr, AJ), c40 in a nesting colony at Ilkley Tennis Club (JF), over 200 (incl c40 young) at another at Norwood Bottom (D&NF), c35 'around their usual colony' at Hawkswick, and other smaller colonies near Bolton Bridge, Addingham and BRGP. Unusually, no large late season numbers were recorded; there were 3 reports in Sep of 14 at Hawkswick on 2 Sep, 20 at BRGP on 3 Sep, and finally of a single bird at Barden Bridge on 13 Sep (DD).

SWALLOW *Hirundo rustica*

(C) Common migrant breeder, passage visitor

First sightings of the year were on 6 Apr, with multiple reports from each of Otley, Ilkley Moor and Grassington, others coming in thick and fast in the days after. **North-Bolton Abbey:** 11 birds were counted across Yockenthwaite, Hubberholme and Cray on 20 May (JF), with larger numbers into the upper reaches of Littondale, including 22 at Arncliffe on 2 Sep. Largest count was 100 over the river near Hebden on 10 May.

Washburn: seen across the southern half of the valley as late as 15 Sep, but numbers remained low, never exceeding 7. **South:** seen throughout the valley, the most sizeable counts were recorded on three consecutive days in Apr: 50+ at Knotford Nook on 28 Apr (A&JW), 200 at Otley Wetland on 29 Apr (AJ), and 35 at Burley on 30 Apr (K&PL). Once dispersed to breeding areas, counts stayed at 12 or less. At the other end of the season a 'cloud' of uncounted birds over Panorama Rsr on Ilkley Moor was both the only record of substantial numbers and the last sighting of the year.

HOUSE MARTIN *Delichon urbicum*

34 locations (24,12) Common migrant breeder, passage migrant

As with swallows, the first sighting was on 6 Apr, 2 over the river at Farfield Hall, in a season where numbers were significantly up compared to recent years. **North-Bolton Abbey:** seen the length of the valley as far north as Hubberholme, and along the Skirfare up to Foxup. 16 at Hawkswick on 12 May (JF) and 30 at Strid Woods the day after (RL) were the highest counts. **Washburn:** just one record here, 5 birds on Snowden Moor on 12 Sep (AHa). **South:** records were widespread, with counts of 20+ at Addingham, Addingham Moorside, Ilkley, Burley, Menston and Otley at various times. At Menston, 40 nests, mostly active, were reported under the eaves of one house, with nesting also seen in High Royds. Successful breeding was also noted at multiple locations in Addingham and Otley. Last record was also in Addingham, 4 birds on 2 Oct, almost a fortnight after the previous sighting, but 3 days earlier than in 2019.

CETTI'S WARBLER *Cettia cetti*

1 location (0,0) Rare passage migrant/summer visitor

A single bird was reported heard singing at Otley Wetland on 15 Apr (T&RP). This is the first for this species in our area, although the wetlands have been identified as a promising habitat for some time. Another bird was heard at the BOG reserve near Keighley later in the year, a first for that site too, which suggests that more reports might be anticipated in future years.

LONG-TAILED TIT *Aegithalus caudatus*

32 locations (27,25) Common resident breeder

North-Bolton Abbey: most records were along the Wharfe from Kettlewell southwards, the exception being a single bird at Hawkswick on 12 May. There were garden sightings in Grassington, Hebden and Skyreholme. A family party was seen at Bolton Abbey on 22 May. **Washburn:** just a handful of

records, all bar one in the Lindley Wood area, where 12 were seen on 26 Nov, the exception being at Timble Ings in Mar. **South:** widely reported in lower level woodland and gardens, with 20+ in an Otley garden several times in Jun being the highest count (M&JC). The only record of successful breeding was at BRGP in May.

WOOD WARBLER *Phylloscopus sibilatrix*

2 locations (3,2) *Uncommon migrant breeder*

Sightings of this increasingly scarce bird were limited to two well-established sites, with all records within the space of a month. First was at Heber's Ghyll on 28 Apr, with a series of records of up to 3 birds until 6 Jun (BTO). There were two reports from Strid Woods this year, the first on 23 May (BOG), the last on 22 Jun (BTO).

WILLOW WARBLER *Phylloscopus trochilus*

59 locations (38,30) *Common migrant breeder / passage visitor*

After several years of decline, recorded locations bounced back up to 2016 levels with almost daily reports from Apr to Sep. **North:** the first of the returning birds in our area was first seen on 3 Apr in Grassington (C&JA). Highest count was 18 at Hawkswick on 12 May, with other double digit counts along the Wharfe at Yockenthwaite, Hubberholme, Grass Wood, Hebden and Burnsall. The last anywhere in our area was in a Hebden garden on 16 Sep (RL). **Bolton Abbey:** numerous reports between 24 Apr and 26 Jun, the first being 16 mostly round Lower Barden Rsr (JF). **Washburn:** again, numerous reports over almost exactly 2 months, but shifted forwards a few days to 13 Apr - 13 Jun. John O'Gaunts in May and Fewston and Thruscross in Jun all saw double digit counts. **South:** one outlying record was in an Addingham garden on 23 Feb (AEG), otherwise the season ran from 7 Apr on Burley Moor to 6 Sep back in a different Addingham garden, where an individual was recorded several times through Aug. There were several larger counts on Ilkley Moor, where a 'full orchestra' was reported singing on the margins of the moor on 23 Apr (PG). Strong number were also reported from Chevin top on several occasions, numbering up to 14.

CHIFFCHAFF *Phylloscopus collybita*

42 locations (30,32) *Common migrant breeder, passage / winter visitor*

The first returner this year was heard just one day earlier than in 2019, at BRGP on 13 Mar, with steady stream of almost daily records subsequently, until most singing ceased at the end of Jun. A string of Sep sightings culminated in 3 birds at Otley Wetland on 29 Sep. **North-Bolton Abbey:** although predominantly a southern bird in our area, there were reports of mostly single birds throughout the summer from the Grassington-Hebden-Skyreholme area, including one at Grimwith on 7 May (PM). There were one or two records of single birds most months throughout the summer around Bolton Abbey. **Washburn:** multiple reports from Lindley Wood, Norwood Edge and Stainburn Forest on 16 Mar started the season off, which ran through here until 17 Sep. Highest counts were along Norwood Bottom, where there were 7 in mid-Apr (JF). **South:** widely spread here, although counts never quite reached double figures, with 9 heard on Chevin top on 10 Apr and several of the same number Apr to May at Otley Wetland.

SEDGE WARBLER *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*

5 locations (2,5) *Uncommon, increasingly scarce, migrant breeder*

First record was on 25 Apr at Knotford Nook (TK), followed by another heard at High Royds pond in Menston 5 days later, and singing there for a fortnight (DSh). Other individuals were at

BRGP on 16 May (K&PL), Chelker on 24 May, and Otley Wetland on 13 Jun (AJ), all bar BRGP being recognised sites for this species.

REED WARBLER *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*

2 locations (2,3) *Scarce migrant breeder, passage visitor*

Otley Wetlands remains our stronghold for this species, confirmed by a series of sightings from 20 Apr to 1 Aug, peaking at 15 heard on 26 May (PP). High Royds pond in Menston hosted this species for the third consecutive year, a single adult heard singing during the week beginning 16 Jul.

GRASSHOPPER WARBLER *Locustella naevia*

3 locations (6,2) *Scarce visitor, very occasional breeder*

There were just 2 positive records this year, from Stainburn Forest on 29 May (MC) and nearby at Sandwith Moor on 13 Jun (AJ). A third bird was identified twice by different reporters, both as a 'possible' on 6 and 9 Jun on Ilkley Moor above Panorama Rsr. Do 2 possibles make a 'right'?!

BLACKCAP *Sylvia atricapilla*

52 locations (38,15) *Common migrant breeder, passage / winter visitor*

The number of recorded locations jumped this year by a remarkable 450% to the highest since 2011. Notable were the growing number of overwintering birds, seen this year in gardens in Addingham, Ilkley, Menston and Otley. These threaten to merge in with returning birds, but the records suggest that the latter were first seen on 22 Mar, and certainly before the end of the month, again in southern gardens. The first non-garden bird was on 1 Apr at Otley Wetland. **North-Bolton Abbey:** first recorded on 27 Apr at Howgill, Appletreewick and Barden Bridge (JF), and subsequently throughout Littondale and the main valley until the end of Jun, with 6 at Hawkswick on 12 May. A 'very uncommon visitor' was recorded in a Grassington garden on 20 Oct (C&JA). **Washburn:** records ran from 16 Apr to 15 Jun here, peaking at 7 on a walk round Fewston on 9 Jun, with several multiple counts along Norwood Bottom. **South:** almost daily sightings from the end of Mar to mid-Jun across the whole area, the highest count being 10 at Otley Wetland on 6 May; the only evidence of breeding reported was on Burley Moor. After this period, one bird was heard singing on Ilkley Moor on 9 Jul ('only short phrases, maybe a youngster?', PG), and others were noted in gardens in Addingham (Aug), Pool (Nov-Dec) and Ilkley (Dec).

GARDEN WARBLER *Sylvia borin*

20 locations (18,5) *Common migrant breeder / passage visitor*

North: just one record this year, an individual just north of Howgill gorge on 27 Apr (JF). **Bolton Abbey:** a steady string of reports from 13 May to 4 Jun of 1-2 birds along the river between Bolton Abbey and the top of Strid Woods, another on Barden Fell on 28 May. **Washburn:** up to 3 birds, including a nest, were recorded at Stainburn Forest throughout May and Jun; others were reported from Thruscross, Timble Ings, Fewston, Norwood Edge, Lindley Trout Farm and Leathley between 24 Apr and 6 Aug. **South:** first record was at BRGP on 21 Apr, observed repeatedly until 24 Jun; others were at Gallows Hill (last on 2 Aug), Knotford Nook, Middleton Woods, and an Ilkley garden (all Apr).

LESSER WHITETHROAT *Sylvia curruca*

4 locations (2,3) *Scarce migrant, passage visitor*

Four locations is the highest number since 2011. Most observed was a singing male, at High Royds pond for a week from 23 Apr (DSh). On 5 May, one was at Leathley, again on 15 Jun (AJ). On 6 May, it was the turn of Sun Lane (RG), whilst a fourth was heard north of Otley golf club on 8 May (BTO).

WHITETHROAT *Sylvia communis*

8 locations (5,4) Increasingly uncommon migrant breeder, passage visitor

Most reports centred on Otley: up to 3 birds were seen on Chevin top throughout May, where breeding was also noted; singletons were seen twice at Gallows Hill in Apr, twice in May nearby at East Busk Lane, and 3 times during Jun at Otley Wetland. A single bird was also in a north Otley garden twice during Apr (IW). Otherwise, a bird was at Sun Lane on 5 - 6 Jun (RG), another heard singing in a Burley garden on 14 Jun (SB). Outside Otley-Burley, the only record was at Sandwith Moor on 2 Jun (AJ).

GOLDCREST *Regulus regulus*

22 locations (21,16) Common resident breeder, passage / winter visitor

North-Bolton Abbey: reports of 1-2 birds from two gardens in Hebden and Grassington, Grimwith, Barden Moor, Strid Woods and Bolton Abbey, scattered throughout the whole year.

Washburn: 3-4 sightings at each of Lindley Wood, Timble Ings and Stainburn Forest throughout the year, all 1-3 birds except for a count of 6 at LW on 26 Nov (AK). **South:** records, mostly of single birds, were predominantly made up of garden sightings at Addingham, Ilkley, Menston, Otley and Pool, the one significant exception being a group of 6 birds on Hag Farm Lane at Burley on 12 Nov (AK).

WREN *Troglodytes troglodytes*

(C) Common resident breeder

Our commonest national species of bird, and equally common in our area. **North:** recorded as far north as Yockenthwaite, and along Littondale to Foxup where 6 were counted on 22 Jun. 13 were recorded between Burnsall and Hebden suspension bridge on 22 May (all JF). **Bolton Abbey:** reports from most locations throughout Jan-Jun, with 13 at Strid Woods on 28 May, although nothing returned for the second half. **Washburn:** regularly reported throughout the year from a wide range of locations up to Thruscross, with counts of 12 at John O'Gaunts on 3 May, 14 at Norwood Bottom on 16 Apr, and 14 at Fewston on 9 Jun. **South:** widely reported from gardens throughout the valley, mostly in ones and twos. 16 were recorded at Hebers Ghyll on 5 May, 12 on Ilkley Moor on 8 Jun.

NUTHATCH *Sitta europaea*

32 locations (30,22) Common resident breeder

As in 2019, birds were seen as far up as Hubberholme, at Hawkswick and Arncliffe in Littondale, extensively in the south, and along the line of the Washburn up to Fewston. Counts were mostly ones and twos, the highest being 5 in High Royds Woods, Menston, and Middleton Woods in Mar and Apr respectively. There were widespread garden sightings, at Grassington, Hebden, Addingham, Burley, Ilkley and Otley. 2 broods in Washburn nest-boxes produced 13 young ringed, whilst 3 other broods successfully fledged before they could be ringed (CH).

TREECREEPER *Certhia familiaris*

22 locations (22,17) Common resident breeder

North: Birds were only seen southwards from Conistone this year, but more extensively there, with sightings at Lower Grass Wood, Grassington, Hebden, and Burnsall. **Bolton Abbey:** just 2 sightings here (1 more than 2019!), at Bolton Abbey itself on 13 Jan, and Strid Woods on 26 Jun. **Washburn:** again just 2 sightings, at Fewston on 9 Jun, and at Lindley Wood on 17 Dec. **South:** extensive records throughout the year from AEG suggest that this species is much more widely present than records generally might suggest. Elsewhere, 1-2 birds were seen at Ling

Park Plantation, Low Mill, Hebers Ghyll, BRGP, High Royds, the Chevin, Gallows Hill, and gardens in Ilkley, Burley and Otley.

STARLING *Sturnus vulgaris*

48 locations (42,28) Common resident breeder

North-Bolton Abbey: recorded in all parts, with single digit numbers seen as far north as Hubberholme, and up to Halton Gill in Littondale, with an adult noted carrying food to a nest hole at Buckden on 20 May (JF). There were counts of c.200 at Mossy Moor on 9 Jun, and c.150 at Grimwith on 21 Sep. 30 at Hazlewood on 29 Mar was the largest round Bolton Abbey.

Washburn: local numbers were limited to single digit counts between Thruscross and Timble village, but migration watches during Feb regularly recorded figures in the hundreds, reaching over 2000 on 26 Feb. A similar number was at Greenhow on 29 Jan. **South:** seen widely in gardens and in the 'wild', peak numbers were at Otley Wetland on 12 Nov when a murmuration of 1000-2000 birds was recorded, other smaller murmurations also being reported on other evenings. 17 birds were successfully ringed in a Menston garden on 20 Jan (CH).

RING OUZEL *Turdus torquatus*

5 locations (4,5) Uncommon migrant breeder, passage visitor

A garden sighting was the first of the year, a distinctive male at Skyreholme on 17 Mar (PM). Nearby Hebden Ghyll again returned multiple sightings from 9 Apr to 6 May of up to 2 birds (all RL). The highest count was, as in 2019, 4 birds at Barden Moor on 24 Apr (28 Apr last year!), with 2 seen again on 16 May. Addingham Moorside returned 2 reports this year, two birds on the edge of the moor on 14 Apr, and a juvenile as late as 29 Sep. 2 birds were also reported near the Swastika Stone on Ilkley Moor on 9 May.

BLACKBIRD *Turdus merula*

(C) Common resident breeder, winter visitor

The blackbird remains common and widespread across the area; as in the past 3 years, it received the highest number of sightings of any species. The highest countryside counts were several in the low twenties at either end of the year at Otley Wetland, and 16 at Addingham (Feb) and Menston High Royds (Mar). Otherwise these were largely in single digits. This species also continued to be one of the most frequently reported garden visitors, with a peak count of 11 at Ilkley in Jan (HS), probably including migrant visitors.

FIELDFARE *Turdus pilaris*

23 locations (29,17) Common winter / passage visitor

North: sightings were limited to a single bird at Kettlewell on 26 Mar (JF), and a handful of garden sightings in Grassington at both ends of the year, with a flock of 20 seen on 8 Feb (C&JA).

Bolton Abbey: c25 were seen on New Year's Day in a mixed flock at Barden Fell, 30 'late in the season' at Hazlewood (HS). A 'surprise sighting' was a single bird at the top of Lower Barden Rsr on 24 Apr (JF). **Washburn:** three figure numbers were recorded throughout the early part of the year during migration watch at Sandwith Moor, peaking at 544 on 26 Feb. 200 were also seen nearby at Scargill Rsr on 15 Oct, Bland Hill next day. Smaller flocks, c.30, were at Hoodstorth in Jan, John O'Gaunts in Mar, and Greenhow in mid-Oct. **South:** largest flocks at each end of the year were west and north of Otley: c.100 at the beginning of Apr, a mixed flock with redwings of up to 400 on 7 Nov. There were also c.50 at Beamsley on 28 Mar and 60 at Burley Moor on 20 Oct, with smaller flocks at the same time on Ilkley Moor and at Stainburn village.

REDWING *Turdus iliacus*

16 locations (22,12) Common winter visitor

North-Bolton Abbey: records were limited to garden sightings of 9 birds max at Grassington in Jan-Feb and Oct (C&JA), and

members of a mixed winter thrush flock at Barden Fell on New Year's Day (JF). **Washburn:** aside from a handful of individuals in migration counts at Sandwith Moor, the only early year record was a flock of 30 at John O'Gaunts on 15 Mar. A mixed flock of 100+ fieldfares and redwings was seen a number of times at Bland Hill during Oct, a presence also noted at Timble Ings in Nov. **South:** largest numbers at each end of the year were seen in fields to the west and north of Otley respectively, up to 200 birds mixed with additional fieldfares. Smaller numbers were present at both ends of the year at Ilkley, Menston High Royds, Otley Wetland and east of Otley; there were also early reports from Addingham and BRGP, and late reports from Weeton.

SONG THRUSH *Turdus philomelas*

53 locations (43,29) Common resident breeder, winter visitor

This species remains one of the most widespread in our area.

North-Bolton Abbey: recorded in most valley areas as far north as Hubberholme and into the upper reaches of Littondale at Foxup, as well as at Grimwith, all no more than 4 individuals. Young seen in a Kilnsey garden (EC) and at Burnsall.

Washburn: All records were in Mar-Jun, with a high of 4 at Norwood Edge on 14 Ma. **South:** reported extensively Feb-Jul, with just a handful of records outside this range, in small numbers up to 4. Young noted in gardens in Otley and Burley.

MISTLE THRUSH *Turdus viscivorus*

31 locations (40,25) Common resident breeder, passage migrant

North-Bolton Abbey: although otherwise widespread, none were recorded this year north of Starbotton or in Littondale. A flock of 30+ was seen on 14 Jul in the field opposite the car park at Strid Woods (PP); 5, including juveniles, were seen at Grassington on 23 May (RL); otherwise all records were of singletons. **Washburn:** 1-2 birds were recorded in a variety of locations across the southern half of the valley throughout the year. **South:** reported from Jan-Jun, and again in Nov-Dec, mostly in low single digits, the one exception being 12 seen at Menston High Royds where the woods were 'alive' with birds on 11 Mar (AK). There were garden records in Hebden, Ilkley, Burley, Menston (a first ever in this garden), and Otley.

SPOTTED FLYCATCHER *Muscicapa striata*

18 locations (14,10) Migrant breeder, passage visitor

Although still low historically, sightings were up in 2020 compared to the 2018-19. **North:** all records were south from Kilnsey this year, but there were multiple reports in the Burnsall area, including 2 broods at Hartlington Hall. Another, with 4 fledglings, was successful in a Hebden garden (RL). Unlike last year, there was a report of a bird in Littondale, at Hawkswick on 12 May (JF). **Bolton Abbey:** recorded between 19 Jun and 19 Aug, mostly around Strid Woods, with young noted on 2 occasions including 'lots' in early Aug. **Washburn:** records extended for 4 months here, from 16 May to 16 Sep, with an adult seen feeding young at Thruscross on 17 Aug (PR) and 3 pairs on 23 Jun at the heritage centre the highest count (PW). **South:** after none in 2019, up to 4 were seen at Hebers Ghyll between 26 May and 25 Jun, another individual in the Steg Holes area of Addingham Moorside on 13 Jun (AEG). and a family of 2 adults feeding 2 young near Bleach Mill House in Menston, the first sighting here since 2013 (JH).

ROBIN *Erithacus rubecula*

(C) Common resident breeder / winter visitor

This remains one of the most commonly reported resident species throughout our area. Highest count was at Otley Wetland, where 17 birds were recorded on 21 Oct (PP); 14 were noted on a circuit of Fewston Reservoir on 14 Oct (JF). It remained widely and frequently reported from gardens, mostly

in ones and twos, although 6 were recorded at one in Addingham on 18 Apr.

PIED FLYCATCHER *Ficedula hypoleuca*

10 locations (7,6) Migrant breeder, passage visitor

Sightings were split across two main breeding areas: birds were seen in and around Strid Woods between 13 May and 11 Jul, a maximum of 3 pairs, and feeding was noted at multiple nest boxes on two occasions. Washburn records ran from 5 May to 10 Jun; young were seen being fed at Swinsty on 9 Jun, and 32 were recorded in a ringing session at Low Dam on the last day, including 24 young (JM). 15 recorded broods produced 96 young, slightly above last year's average, with a further 4 broods at Folly Hall unringed.

REDSTART *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*

29 locations (24,14) Common migrant breeder / passage visitor

After 3 years of decline, recorded locations in 2020 bounced back almost to pre-2018 levels. **North:** records were more widespread than the mere 2 locations last year, with 10 birds seen in a variety of locations in Langstrothdale on a May walk (JF), and even one in Littondale, at Hawkswick the next day, 21 May (PP). **Bolton Abbey:** birds were seen mainly in ones and twos along the river between 13 May and 19 Aug, although 4 were noted on one occasion in Jun (PG). An individual was recorded on Barden Fell on 28 May (JF). **Washburn:** 4 were seen as early as 16 Mar at Kex Gill (PR), but subsequently, from 3 May to 28 Sep, in just ones and twos, in various locations south of the A59. **South:** most of the limited number of sightings were in Hebers Ghyll during May-Jun, others being at Otley Wetland on 28 Aug, Burley Moor on 10 Sep, and adults with a juvenile at Hunger Hill, Middleton on 22 Jul (HS).

WHINCHAT *Saxicola rubetra*

4 locations (4,4) Uncommon migrant breeder, passage visitor

Numbers matched 2018-19, at the low end but within the past decade's range, although the geographical spread widened this year. All records were late in the season too, the first being at Chelker on 19 Aug (JM), the next at Barden Moor on the last day of the month (DD). 2 days later individuals were seen at both Denton and Sandwith Moors, the former amongst stonechats (PR,AJ). A final sighting, uniquely of 2 birds, was also at Sandwith Moor, on 9 Sep (DSi).

STONECHAT *Saxicola torquata*

15 locations (12,10) Resident breeder, passage / winter visitor

North: 2 records at Grimwith were the only records here this year, 'a rare sight since the big freeze of 2010/11' (JF). **Bolton Abbey:** up to 3 birds in a handful sightings all on Barden Moor between 22 Mar and 6 Oct. **Washburn:** first sighting was as late as 13 Jun at Sandwith Moor, but birds were then seen fairly regularly in a variety of locations south of the A59 until 29 Sep, although that recorder, who noted 15 in a walk around the valley, commented that they were 'seen in all my Washburn walks in Sep/Oct' (PR). Last sighting was of 2 at Sandwith Moor on 5 Nov. **South:** seen extensively across moors on both sides of the valley from mid-Mar to mid-Sep. One was seen just below Surprise View on the Chevin on Christmas Eve (RF).

WHEATEAR *Oenanthe oenanthe*

22 locations (19,16) Common migrant breeder / passage visitor

North-Bolton Abbey: over one-third of all sightings were in locations around Hebden, between 6 Apr and 18 Jul in counts up to 12, when 4 adult and 8 juvenile were seen at Hebden Beck on 9 Jun (RL). Others were on high ground along both sides of the valley as far north as Hubberholme, the first at Barden Moor on 19 Mar (DD), the last at Yarnbury on 13 Aug (RL). **Washburn:**

all 6 records of 1-3 birds were late, between 22 Jul and 2 Oct, and all at Sandwith Moor, bar one at Timble village on 29 Sep (PR). **South:** all records bar one were of 1-2 birds, either along Rombald's Moor or between Langbar and Denton Moor, the exception being an individual at Chelker on 19 Aug (JM).

DIPPER *Cinclus cinclus*

27 locations (24,18) *Common resident breeder*

North: no records north of Kilnsey this year, almost certainly reflecting a lack of recorders rather than birds, but southwards they were seen extensively along the Wharfe, with 3 sightings in 3 different seasons on the Skirfare as well. 3prs with young at Strid Woods on 19 Jun was the high count (PW). **Washburn:** all sightings were at Low Dam or Leathley (both locations showing evidence of successful breeding) except for 2 birds seen at Norwood Bottom on 20 May, and another on Timble Gill Beck on 4 Dec (PP). **South:** seen extensively along the river between Farfield Hall and Otley weir throughout the year, with evidence of breeding at Ilkley and Otley. Unusually, one was seen even further downstream at Pool on 22 Oct (AJ).

HOUSE SPARROW *Passer domesticus*

23 locations (18,15) *Locally common resident breeder*

This species remains widespread in our area, with colonies in most settlements from Buckden southwards, and a presence in most reporting gardens. Higher counts included 78 in Kettlewell, 49 in Arncliffe, 20+ at two sites in Menston. Away from settlements, numbers were lower, with records limited to 1 or 2 sightings at each of Cam Gill Beck, Barden Moor, Bolton Abbey, and John O'Gaunts, the first from the Washburn in 2 years (when John O'Gaunts was also the location). There was widespread evidence of breeding.

TREE SPARROW *Passer montanus*

8 locations (10,7) *Resident breeder*

Reports continue to remain low. None were recorded north of the A59 this year. Southern sightings were almost completely limited to the breeding population at Sun Lane reserve plus gardens in Addingham, Burley, Menston (including school ground nest boxes), and Otley; one was also seen in an Ilkley garden "for only the third time in 28 years" (PG). There were just two mid-year sightings in the Washburn area, at Timble Ings and Timble village.

DUNNOCK *Prunella modularis*

(C) *Common resident breeder.*

The population of this species appears stable and widely spread across our area. The number of northern records continued to retreat, although there were sightings in all parts except Grimwith, with birds seen as far north as Buckden. 4 was the highest garden count, in Hebden. Numbers also remained low in the Washburn, with sightings at only Lindley Wood and John O'Gaunts. A high proportion of records were from gardens, and one of these produced the peak count for our area: 5 in Addingham during the RSPB garden birdwatch in Jan. Breeding was more widely observed this year, in gardens in Kilnsey, Addingham, Ilkley, Burley, Menston and Otley.

YELLOW WAGTAIL *Motacilla flava*

6 locations (1,1) *Uncommon migrant breeder, passage visitor*

Six locations is a large hike in number, although those from 3 adjacent ones may well represent the same birds. The first sighting was at one of these, with a pair seen at Knotford Nook from 18 to 21 Apr. Two males were then on East Busk Lane on the 25 Apr, with a single bird there until 3 May, and then a pair seen mating on the 11 May. A pair was then at Gallows Hill from 13 to 26 May. Finally, a single individual was noted in the same location on 2 Aug. Elsewhere, individuals were recorded at

Burnsall on 4 May, another at Hebden Beck on 5 May (S&PW), and one in the Washburn at Sandwith Moor on 2 Jun (AJ).

GREY WAGTAIL *Motacilla cinerea*

42 locations (22,17) *Common resident breeder, winter visitor*

After several years of declining records, it was good to see reported numbers back up to the levels of 2015. The species remains well distributed along the Wharfe, with reports from Greenfield, where 2 were seen, one carrying food, on 24 Jun (PG), down to Pool, with birds were seen at both the business park and Riffa pond, the latter a pair vociferously calling and carrying food on 9 Jun (both AK). There were also reports all along the Washburn from above Thruscross. Highest count was 12 at Farfield Hall on 30 Mar. There were garden sightings at Skyreholme, Hebden, Addingham, Ilkley and Menston.

PIED WAGTAIL *Motacilla alba*

49 locations (34,20) *Common resident breeder, passage migrant, winter visitor*

Numbers were back up to pre-2019 levels this year, representing a good geographical spread as well. Furthest north, up to 4 birds were seen in the Hubberholme-Yockenthwaite area on several occasions, and also into Littondale as far as Foxup (all JF). Furthest south was a bird at Cockpit Farm, Weeton on 22 Mar. Most counts were in low single digits, but 15 were seen feeding around the water's edge by the dam wall at Fewston on 10 Sep (PR); a 'large' roost was also noted at High Royds pond during the autumn months, but no numbers recorded. One male of the 'alba', Continental Europe, race was reported in East Otley on 29 Apr (TK).

MEADOW PIPIT *Anthus pratensis*

29 locations (27,11) *Common resident/migrant breeder, passage visitor*

All indications are that this largely moorland species is significantly more under-reported than even other common species. **North-Bolton Abbey:** known to be widespread but with peak counts this year of just 17 at Grimwith on 21 Sep and 10 at Barden Moor on 24 Apr (both JF), and none from Littondale or north of Kettlewell. **Washburn:** 458 were recorded at Snowden Moor during a migration watch on 12 Sep (AHa), c.100 later in the month around the moor edges along the valley during migration movement (PR). 40 were reported well spread on Blubberhouses Moor in May (HS), otherwise counts were mostly of low single digit numbers. **South:** when birds were reported, comments such as 'many displaying' 'all over upland areas' were common, but of records there were few, the highest counts being 60 at Middleton Moor on 5 Apr and c.15 at Ilkley Moor on 30 Aug.

TREE PIPIT *Anthus trivialis*

4 locations (3,4) *Uncommon migrant breeder, passage visitor*

Stainburn Forest continued as the main source of sightings, with a string of reports of 1-5 birds from 8 May to 6 Aug at Sandwith Moor plantation and Norwood Edge. Others were also reported at Timble Ings on 20 May (K&PL) and, at Bastow Wood on 25 Apr (JF).

ROCK PIPIT *Anthus petrosus*

1 locations (0,0) *Rare passage visitor*

A single bird was reported from Barden Moor, on the track by the tarn at the top of Gill Beck, on 6 Oct (AJ). This was the first sighting in our area in over a decade.

CHAFFINCH *Fringilla coelebs*

62 locations (48,39) *Common resident breeder, passage/winter visitor*

Whilst sightings for this species bounced back up in 2020, peak counts continued to decline, with no large flocks observed at all.

Geographically, it remained very widespread, present throughout from Yockenthwaite to Weeton. Highest count was just 21, at Menston High Royds woods in Mar (AK), with others in high teens at Kettlewell, Grimwith, and Bolton Abbey, also in the spring (all JF). Widely recorded in gardens in most settlements between Otley and Kilnsey, with a peak count of 11 in Addingham.

BRAMBLING *Fringilla montifringilla*

6 locations (10,8) Uncommon winter visitor

All sightings were in the south of the area, mostly around the Washburn. There were 30 at Norwood Edge on 29 Feb, and, up to 2 birds at Stainburn Forest, Swinsty and Timble Ings in Mar. In the autumn, there were up to 11 birds were seen at Timble Ings between 27 Oct and 12 Nov. Elsewhere, there were 3 sightings of a mixed 100-strong chaffinch-brambling flock at Strid Woods during the first week of Feb, and a single male in an Otley garden on 26 Jan (PR).

BULLFINCH *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*

22 locations (19,13) Common resident breeder

North-Bolton Abbey: although decreasingly seen north of the A59, 1 or 2 birds were recorded at Grass Wood, Grassington and Hebden this year, including garden visitors at the latter two locations. **Washburn:** 1-3 birds were seen on half a dozen occasions throughout the year along the valley bottom between Fewston and Leathley. **South:** widespread throughout this area and the year, especially in gardens, counts were mostly in the lower single digits; exceptions included 6 at Gallows Hill, 8 at Parkinson's Park, and 9 at Otley Wetland

GREENFINCH *Chloris chloris*

24 locations (23,15) Common resident breeder, passage / winter visitor

North-Bolton Abbey: seen as far north as Hubberholme, most sightings were in the Grassington-Hebden area, with up to 4 seen regularly in one local garden (RL). There were also single records from Buckden, Kettlewell, Arncliffe, Kilnsey (garden), and Bolton Bridge. **Washburn:** a single bird was seen during a migration watch at Snowden Moor on 12 Sep (AHa). **South:** numbers were mostly recorded in and immediately around settlements, with garden records in Addingham, Burley, Menston, Otley and Ilkley, where 8 was the highest garden count in Dec. Young were seen at Burley, Ilkley and Kilnsey.

LINNET *Linaria cannabina*

7 locations (7,7) Uncommon migrant breeder, passage migrant

All sightings were south of the A59. 2 were seen during migration watch at Sandwith Moor at the end of Feb, otherwise the earliest record was of 3 birds in trees near Bow Shaw at Middleton Moor (HS), followed by others on adjacent Langbar Moor in Apr and Jun. The first of a series of spring records of 1-3 birds in an Addingham garden was 9 Apr (D&AA). 1-2 birds were seen in a trio of sightings at Scargill Rsr and Stainburn Forest from 7 May to 13 Jun. The final record and highest count, was of 8 birds in the woods below Lindley Wood on 27 Dec (AK).

LESSER REDPOLL *Acanthis cabaret*

10 locations (15,12) Resident breeder, passage/winter visitor

Location numbers for this species dropped for the 3rd consecutive year, now less than a half of the 2017 number.

North-Bolton Abbey: 2 sightings this year, 5 at Grimwith on 14 Mar (JF) and others at Scargill House on 21 Jun (T&RP).

Washburn: the total of 150 birds recorded (c.60 ringed) at Timble Ings on 15 Sep, and 40 counted in the same area on the 17 Sep, are probably the most reliable indicators of real numbers, but otherwise almost all counts were in the low single

digits, mostly at Timble Ings or along the length of Stainburn Forest. An exception was c.10 at Fewston, at the north end of Fewston on 22 Jan (PR). **South:** flocks of 20 were seen at Otley Wetland on 29 Feb (AJ) and in an Ilkley garden on 20 Dec (HS), otherwise sightings were restricted to single birds in several other Ilkley gardens throughout the first half of the year.

CROSSBILL *Laxia curvirostra*

13 locations (9,12) Passage/winter visitor, occasional resident / breeder

By far the most sightings were in the Washburn Valley. In particular, birds were regularly reported throughout the first 9 months at Stainburn Forest/Norwood Edge, peaking at the latter with 'several groups, 34 the largest' on 6 Aug (AJ). Timble Ings also saw regular counts Apr-Dec, peaking at 60 on 25 Jun "mainly juveniles" (BOG), whilst there were 10 on the edge of neighbouring Denton Moor on 8 Jan. Around 20 birds were also seen at Lindley Wood on 23 Jun, and 3 at Fewston on 22 Sep (PR). Outside the Washburn, there were 5 birds at Hebers Ghyll on 22 Jul (KS), and single garden overfliers in Pool and Menston on 20 Aug and 11 Oct respectively.

GOLDFINCH *Carduelis carduelis*

39 locations (32,27) Common resident breeder, passage visitor

Once regarded as, at least, unusual, this species has become almost ubiquitous, especially in gardens, and featured in every area within our catchment. Flock counts have, however, declined in recent years. Largest in 2020 was a relatively small 50+, seen in a field on East Chevin on 9 Aug (PP). Other larger numbers included 33 at Otley in Waitrose car park on 28 Nov, 30 by Burley water treatment centre on 30 Jan, and another 30 at Addingham Moorside on 15 Aug. The largest garden count was 24 at Ilkley in Oct (A&DB), although 50+ were ringed in another garden in Menston on 20 Jan (CH). In the north, no more than 6 were seen at one time, at Grimwith in Sep.

SISKIN *Spinus spinus*

13 locations (14,17) Resident breeder, passage / winter visitor

Running counter to trends again, records for this species decreased in 2020 after increases in 2019. **North-Bolton Abbey:** garden sightings in Kilnsey, Grassington ("not common here") and Hebden made up the full set of records in the north; 8 were seen at Bolton Abbey on 19 Feb (BTO). **Washburn:** regular sighting throughout the year in the Norwood Edge-Stainburn Forest woodlands, peaking at 100+ on 29 Feb; after a 5 month gap at Timble Ings, c.40 were seen there on 31 Aug. **South:** up to 40 birds were recorded in both the first and last 2 months of the year at Otley Wetland. Elsewhere, a flock of 30 birds was in an Ilkley garden on 16 Sep. Other counts were almost all limited to garden sightings too, up to 6 birds.

LAPLAND BUNTING *Calcarius lapponicus*

1 location (0,0) Rare passage migrant, winter visitor

Last recorded in Wharfedale in 2010, a single bird was seen overhead at Burley Moor on 19 Sep (AJ).

SNOW BUNTING *Plectrophenax nivalis*

2 locations (1,1) Scarce passage migrant, winter visitor

Up to 4 birds were seen in a series of sightings near Oughtershaw from 17 Nov to 19 Dec (BTO). Two birds were also seen in the Stainburn Forest area on 27 Nov.

YELLOWHAMMER *Emberiza citrinella*

1 location (2,1) Scarce resident, probable breeder

A small population in the Weeton area continued to sustain the recording of this increasingly scarce species in our area: up to 4 individuals were recorded on 2 occasions in Apr and Jun (PP).

REED BUNTING *Emberiza schoeniclus*

16 locations (16,7) Resident breeder, passage visitor

After the crash in location numbers in 2019, numbers were back up to 2018 levels. **North-Bolton Abbey:** again, only one site featured in the north, with singletons at Grimwith on 14 Mar (JF) and 5 Dec (RL), although a presence was noted at Barden Scale on 27 May (S&JA). **Washburn:** just three sightings with a single bird at John O'Gaunts on 19 Mar, another at Kex Gill on 8 Apr, and two on Blubberhouses Moor on 4 May. **South:** a year round presence at Otley Wetland peaked with a roost count of c.25 and 6 birds ringed on 25 Jan (JM). Elsewhere, almost all records were of individual birds, although 8 were seen feeding together on the edge of Denton Moor on 25 Nov (PR). Menston High Royds, Ilkley Moor and gardens in Otley and Ilkley saw multiple sightings, whilst there were single views were at Addingham, Chelker, Middleton Moor and Middleton Woods, all in Mar-May.

Bird Report Acknowledgements

An enormous number of individuals (well into three figures) have contributed records to the database, either directly to the recorder or indirectly through other groups and social media channels. Not all appear in the species accounts, but their contributions are all equally highly appreciated as helping inform the accounts and adding to the body of information available. Sadly, there is simply not the space to acknowledge each individually, so I hope that a huge, collective thank you will suffice. I have tried to include a range of citations in the text, mostly focused on individual records of what I think might be particular interest, and the abbreviations used are explained below. My apologies for any omissions or mistakes.

A&DB - Avril and David Benson,
A&JW - Alistair and Jenny Watson,
AEG - from the AEG database,
AH - Andrew Handy,
AJ - Andy Jowett,
AK - Andrew Kelly,
BOG - from the BOG database,
BTO - from the BTO BirdTrack database,
C&JA - Chris and Joan Alder,
CG - Christine Grimshaw,
CH - Colin Harrison,
D&AA - David and Ann Austin,
D&NF - David and Nyree Fearnley,
DB - Dean Beswick,
DD - Dave Dimmock,
DM - Diane Morris,
DO - Dennis O'Connor,
DSh - Darren Shepherd,
DSi - Doug Simpson,
E&PS - Ernie Scarfe and Pauline Sweet,
EC - Win Clements,
GL - Gerald Light,
HS - Helen Steward,
IW - Ian Watt,

JF - John Flood,
JH - John Healey,
JM - Jon Middleton,
K&PL - Ken and Pat Limb,
KS - Karen Shackleton,
M&JC - Mike and Joyce Clerk,
MB - Michael Brear,
MC - Morgan Cayhill,
NH - Naomi Houldsworth,
PG - Philip Galtry,
PM - Paul Millard,
PP - Paul Purvis,
PR - Peter Riley,
PW - Paul Wheatley,
R&HG - Roger and Hazel Goulden,
RF - Richard Falls,
RL - Ros Lilley,
S&JA - Steve and Juliet Amos,
SB - Susan Barton,
SP - Steve Parkes,
T&RP - Tom and Ruth Paynter,
TK - Theo Keuchel



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When I moved house some years ago I had a chat with the vendor, and it emerged he was a bird ringer. He had thought he would ring the half-dozen blue tits that came regularly to the smallish garden, to keep track of them over time.

He set about this. When he had rung 57 it became obvious that there were many more birds than he thought coming to the garden, and he eventually abandoned the project.

This seems to be an inherent problem in bird counts. What are we missing? On many days this winter I have had 15+ siskins tweeting away in a tree at the bottom of the garden, and from 1 to 8 at a time coming to the feeders. Is it the same birds each day, or different? Am I the only person in Ilkley lucky enough to have siskins, or are there dozens of gardens with similar numbers. We shall never know, and this is one of the (many?) difficulties in counting birds.

John Stidworthy

A HEDGEHOG SUMMER

We have lived in Ilkley for ten years, and during that time we had not seen a single hedgehog in Ilkley, until 2020. Early in summer, I opened the back door to let our dog out last thing at night, and there was a hedgehog just at the bottom of the steps.

This was the signal to put out a trail camera that I had recently bought. It transpired that this year, at least, there was one hedgehog regularly crossing the lawn, but as it chose to do this mainly between one and three o'clock in the morning it was not surprising I had not made its acquaintance before. This was quite encouraging, and we continued putting out the camera. From appearances, it seemed like there could be more than one, but as only one showed up at a time it was difficult to be sure.

Then there was a disaster. I went down the garden a breakfast time, and there was a hedgehog at the edge of a shrubbery, upside down and very dead. Puzzlingly, it appeared in very good condition, with no injuries and a good weight. I saved the corpse, and contacted my son, a veterinary pathologist, to arrange a post mortem. This revealed no obvious problem. Most of the tissues appeared sound. There were a few thorny-headed worms in the gut, but not enough to cause much trouble to an otherwise healthy animal. My son was about to go away, so he saved some tissue samples for examination on return. These samples had a virus present, in low concentration. It is not certain that this could have caused death. However, there are some newly discovered viruses in circulation, particularly where the animals are crowded in care homes. They are not usually a problem in the wild, as hedgehogs are basically solitary.

The trail camera continued in use, and sometimes revealed not just one, but two, hedgehogs at once. Looking at the images, it looked like two large, and one smaller hedgehog, were using the garden. One night a tawny owl landed just in front of the camera, filling the frame with great detail. Moths and other insects passed by.

Then one morning a neighbour knocked on the door. Could I come and deal with a hedgehog on the lane? It turned out to be very tiny, with no apparent injury, but possibly disorientated, and with a very wobbly gait, which is not a good sign. This can signify that it is too cold, or otherwise stressed. I brought it indoors, then we found a cardboard box as a temporary home. It turned out to be hungry, but even in the warm it was still wobbly. We didn't really feel equipped to deal with the sick hedgehog, especially as we had an excitable dog coming to stay, and searched for a better home. We found PricklyPigs in Otley, who were set up for hedgehog care. They had space, just, to take the youngster in, and we took it across there. We met some of the other inmates, and it was obvious that the care was going to be good. But they couldn't guarantee survival. We went home with a sigh of relief.

Next morning I went down into town to check on my son's house, as the family were away. Just as I got to the turning into his road I spied, right in the middle, on the white line, a tiny hedgehog having a little snooze. This didn't appear to be the best place to do that, so I scooped it up and took it home. We got a couple of large cardboard packing cases from a neighbour who had recently moved in, and fashioned an indoor run and sleeping compartment. The hedgehog looked too small to make its way safely in the world, so we were resigned to looking after it for a bit, safely out of the way in a storeroom. Luckily it had a good appetite, and guzzled the hedgehog food we provided. It put on weight to the point that it should have been safe for the winter (although the winter was still some way off). We thought it was unkind to keep it any longer from being a wild hedgehog. A hedgehog shelter was put in the garden, then in the evening the hedgehog was introduced to its new home. And that's the last we saw of it.

Hedgehogs were still appearing on camera. Sometimes there were two, and one would shoulder the other out the way at the feeding bowl. One evening we got an extraordinary video of two hedgehogs facing one another and running and butting like stags.

Then the rats turned up. At first, there was just a fleeting glance in the distance. Then, one night, a rat spent a whole hour shuttling between the hedgehog feeding bowl and the decking round the pond. Presumably it had a nest with young. The rat presence seemed to put off the hedgehogs, so we removed the hedgehog bowl. Then the rats moved on to gathering food below the bird feeders, so we removed those for a while, immediately after one was seen running along the outer sill of our open (downstairs) bedroom window. The rats eventually took the hint and went away, or at least stopped making their presence felt, but by then it was time for hedgehogs to hibernate, so we will have to wait until next year to see how they are faring.



P.S. PricklyPigs rang up to say that the hedgehog we had taken in had recovered and grown well. It was set free.

A SURPRISING COLOUR CHANGE

Some five years ago the goldfish in one of our ponds bred, and a dozen or so offspring were swimming around a year later. Most were just what you would expect, gold coloured, but one was dark grey, almost black. This was presumably a throwback to the colour of the original wild goldfish, and much better camouflaged than the domestic gold. This was tested a couple of years ago when a heron visited the pond and took almost all the fish, leaving one gold individual and the dark fish. These have survived quite happily, and the heron has kept away.

However, this year a surprising transformation has taken place in the dark fish, which over the course of the summer lost virtually all its pigment, becoming white. Not satisfied with this change, it has started to produce gold on much of its body. The process has been interrupted by the onset of winter, but it looks as though next year it may be a 'real' goldfish.

BULLFINCH INVASION

In previous years we have had bullfinches visiting the garden bird feeders, but just the odd one or two, perhaps a single pair living nearby. In 2020 it has been almost impossible to look out at the feeders and not see a bullfinch. They come and stay for longer than most birds on the feeder, and when they are not feeding they can often be seen perched on trees at the bottom of the garden. There seem to be at least four pairs in the vicinity, and it was a good year for breeding. There have been at least three waves of youngsters appearing with their parents.

It is nice to see these colourful birds, but you wonder what has brought about this sudden increase, and whether it is just in our garden or more general. Have any readers noticed the same thing?

John Stidworthy

A TONIC FOR THE LOCKDOWN BLUES

In common with fellow naturalists I found the ban on my regular, and in my opinion harmless, trips to reserves and wildlife hotspots at nature's most captivating time of year frustrating to say the least. So, when it appeared that I might largely miss out on a whole season's worth of observation and photography in Wharfedale, I turned my attention to my own Nidderdale backyard and the daunting prospect of sorting out several years of under-management on my small rewilding project. Abandoned hedges had grown out and, those well-known bullies of the plant world, nettles and brambles were beyond mild encroachment and threatened to finally take over my embarrassing attempts at wildflower meadow restoration.

Although undoubtedly gratifying, undiluted habitat management can become tedious and I needed the challenge of a photographic wildlife project. Having worked with many of the diurnal creatures on my patch, and with encouragement from fellow trail-cams enthusiasts, I turned my attention to more crepuscular wildlife. The cameras recorded the usual suspects: grey squirrel: stoat: woodmouse: various common birds, the occasional welcome badger and a less welcome, hopefully itinerant, feline. I deemed none of these suitable for traditional photography so decided that I would, at least until I was allowed to wander again, focus my attention on an infrequently recorded fox that crossed my small paddock just after dusk each evening.

For those living in more suburban surroundings that might not seem a particularly ambitious undertaking; I have lost count of the number of people who suggest that foxes are abundant, tame and regularly seen in some town centre or other, or that a friend or relative regularly feeds them on their back lawn. This was a country fox with all the associations of guile and cunning attributed to an animal persecuted in the dales by anyone with a bloodlust or a vested interest in preserving artificially high levels of game birds.

This relatively recent plight of the now rarely encountered Dale's fox has largely occurred since the much heralded hunting ban came in to force and casts serious doubt on the mantra, regularly voiced by the pro hunting lobby, that theirs really is the most effective way of controlling this much maligned and beautiful creature. In truth our top mammalian predator is now a rare sight in the Mid and Upper Dales and it would be challenge for this one to survive and for me to catch her on film; just the fix I needed to compensate for my confinement.

I began varying the trail camera positions and soon identified regular routes and crossing points which were suitably baited with roadkill and small pieces of diced offal. Although never in daylight, the visits soon became regular and reasonably predictable so I hoped with the lengthening days of spring and summer I might get the chance of a picture. In the weeks immediately before lockdown sightings had become infrequent but in early April they resumed, appeared more urgent in nature, and I noticed the tell-tale distended abdomen and teats that could mean only one thing; there were cubs. What's more if the vixen was leaving them unattended at a very tender age. Cubs are generally born in March. They were not very far away.

Discreet enquiries with trusted neighbours suggested a large bramble patch next to a wall several hundred yards from my boundary was the possible site of the earth and with the help of a light dusting of snow my suspicions were confirmed. Another adult, possibly the dog fox or more probably a closely related helper vixen was now also taking food away without eating it; almost certainly to feed the litter. In early May as I scrutinised the previous night's recordings I noticed the vixen glancing over her shoulder as she approached the food and was thrilled to get my first glimpse of two, of what turned out

to be four, of her cubs in eager pursuit. They would surely be more biddable than an ultra-cautious adult so I transferred my photographic ambitions to them and started to work out how I might tempt them close to a conventional camera.

I understood from game-keeper associates that from late May a vixen, whether through lack of space underground or as part of the process of pushing her cubs towards independence, will start to spend the daylight hours lying up some distance away from the family earth. It is then, when left to their own devices, that inquisitive hungry cubs begin to explore the wider area in daylight. The plan was to make my land a familiar extension of their expanding home range and in doing so attract them to a suitably photogenic position. Soon my trail cams showed them eagerly squeezing under the fence and racing to be first to the food and I had great fun hiding little treats under plant pots and logs and watching them on playback hunt out and discover the stashes. I cut a path through my meadow and even restricted their direction of approach to the food with some makeshift fencing. They soon began to exhibit the fox's well documented collect-and-hide or caching behaviour; the one that encourages non-naturalists to attribute vicious killing sprees to an animal which, when it gains access to the unexpected bounty of a chicken coup, often plans several meals in advance. A bit like us going to the cash and carry.

With lengthening days fox cubs become more adventurous and neophobia, or the fear of anything new, becomes a prominent part of their survival strategy. With that in mind, I slowly introduced a hide and dummy camera which they soon accepted. I sat out and watched only to find, in spite of my attempts at training, the cubs approached the hide from any direction and indeed on one memorable occasion found my glance through the hide's side panel being exchanged with that of an inquisitive little fox. I didn't move or make a sound, and presumably offered no threat, so my careful plans were mercifully not ruined. The eventual approach to the camera that I hoped to encourage was through an avenue of rapidly growing foxgloves so I began to restrict my feeding accordingly. At about that time the cubs became much less tolerant of each other and I noticed that one individual was staking a claim to the area and began to defend it rigorously against her siblings. She would be my chosen subject. I built a second hide by cutting a hole in a *Leylandii* hedge which restricted her direction of approach and began to bait the set.

Her appearances were regular but invariably at dusk, when lighting conditions were challenging for photography, and I decided my food source was too dependable. To focus her attention, if it had not been taken by a certain time, I began removing the food progressively earlier each night. To prolong her stay I swapped the usual chunky fare for crumbled black pudding which could not be wolfed down quickly or picked up and cached elsewhere. Slowly she seemed to realise that feeding time was about half past nine, give or take a few minutes depending on cloud cover, and I enjoyed several enchanting encounters with this still ostensibly wild animal.

None of my photographic sessions were blessed with decent light but with the low-light capability of modern digital



The cover girl

cameras and the use of a substantial tripod I managed a few passable images. Now fully grown she occasionally still visits and, as long winter nights herald the onset of the fox mating season, I will listen expectantly for the distinctive bark of any prospective mate. With luck she will survive, remain sufficiently unwary, and with luck introduce the next the generation of cubs to my little wild patch.

Kelvin Smith

GARDEN BIRDING IN A PANDEMIC

I have enjoyed feeding and observing birds in our garden for as long as I can remember. Indeed I was a founder participant in the British Trust for Ornithology's Weekly Garden Birdwatch initiative which started some 25 years ago. The pleasure this has given me (and Anne) would be hard to over-estimate especially since the restrictions on our lives and movements were introduced in late March.

As you might expect in this sort of situation some observations were consistent with my expectations and some were a surprise. The latter demonstrated the value of taking the time to simply observe. Care needs to be taken in drawing conclusions from the surprises as the behaviour might have been prevalent all along but simply not observed because I did not have the time to observe in the 'normal' situation of previous years.

One thing that was different in 2020 was the use of bird nest boxes round the garden – we have 14 in total. These have been monitored for many years but the use this year was minimal. One great tit nest and one blue tit were definite although the fledging rate was poor. However the highlight of the nesting activity was a pair of Nuthatches who considerably nested in a box about 20 yards from a garden seat which gave me a clear view. This species' nest is very different to the norm, basically consisting of dead leaves and small pieces of bark with both sexes providing materials. The nest box itself was a Woodcrete one which had a front panel which can easily be removed to check the contents. The hole itself was tight for a nuthatch but this did not deter them even though this did mean that they could not easily indulge in an instinctive activity which all members of this species undertake, namely plastering around the hole with dried mud. Nonetheless this activity is so instinctive for this species that I suspect a solution had to be found for breeding to progress – and found it was! They brought the wet mud to the box and plastered it around the edge of the front panel making it immovable as the mud set firm. This made no difference to the size of the nest hole but made it impossible to remove the panel. The nest was successful with four young emerging and entertaining us around the garden for a week or two afterwards. The sight, and the noise for nuthatches are very vocal, proved wonderfully entertaining. Naturally I was keen to remove the panel to observe the nest once it had been vacated and I am not exaggerating when I say it required a hammer and chisel!

The other spring activity that was especially noteworthy featured a chiffchaff. The bird frequented the garden for several weeks, occasionally calling. But the behaviour that most caught my attention was its bathing in the back pond. It was incredibly cautious, approaching slowly through a nearby lilac and suddenly, when I guess it deemed the coast to be clear, dropping directly into the pond to bathe in a vegetated area where presumably it felt safer. It didn't linger but, on each visit, repeated the behaviour several times. There was no evidence of breeding but, given previous years had been limited to maybe an odd sighting in spring if I was lucky, this was a real treat.

Less welcome in spring was the dearth of bullfinch which have been fairly regular for many years no doubt consistent with their population being on an upward trajectory. This scarcity in 2020 was consistent with BTO findings but as yet no obvious cause of the downturn has been identified.

The most noteworthy development in summer was the regularity of great spotted woodpecker sightings which continued in fact right through to November, much to my satisfaction. Juveniles arrived more or less on cue in the second week of June, but instead of disappearing after several weeks they kept on coming to the extent that we were able to observe



the red cap of one juvenile gradually moult into a male characteristic namely a single red line at the rear of the black cap. Their antics never fail to amuse and it was a real treat to see them right through to early winter.

Another summer event was the arrival on time, namely 1st August, of our first juvenile willow warbler sporting his canary-like plumage and very smart too! These sightings were again far more frequent than in past years and eventually gave way to yet more chiffchaff as the willow warblers moved on south for their epic migration to Africa.

Tree sparrows were an enigma since, despite seeing good numbers through winter and spring and also despite successful nesting in the garden in the previous year, there was no discernible nesting activity at all. To some degree this was made up for by the regular appearance of juveniles through the summer but this made it all the more strange to observe their almost total disappearance through late autumn despite the plentiful feed available in the feeders.

Another phenomenon that bewildered me related to a young oak and a hawthorn growing side by side in a corner of the garden. This is a very popular place for perching birds which I can observe well from our lounge. The intriguing thing is this – why did all the different species perching there invariably prefer the hawthorn to the oak? They were a similar height with a similar density of foliage and with a similar view. The oak is renowned for its diversity and abundance of insects certainly more than the hawthorn so why did this happen right through the year. Any ideas?

The final highlight of the year was a tawny owl settling into and around the garden in November. On several occasions mobbing blackbirds and other smaller species gave the game away that an owl was present and I was able to find it on a branch hugging the tree trunk. The highlight was one morning when it perched at the entrance hole of a tawny owl nest box for a couple of hours giving clear views and great photo opportunities for Anne. Funnily enough as it sat in clear view there were no mobbing birds at all. Perhaps the explanation is that they don't worry when they can clearly see it but are always worried if its perch is obscured. The box has been there for years but never used. Maybe next year?

There has been much talk in the pandemic of the therapeutic value of nature to our mental well-being, a benefit which has been demonstrated in scientific experiments a number of times. As you will gather from the above I did not need anybody to tell me this as my observations in the garden (which naturally embraced far more than just birds) are a most wonderful way to relax and reflect on the wonders of natural history.

Peter Riley

THANKS

Many thanks to all the members who provided material for this publication.

The recorders' reports give a valuable amount of data on the state of wildlife in our area which can be compared with records from former years.

Others have contributed notes on the Society's activities, or articles on a variety of topics with wildlife in mind.

There are also many beautiful and informative photographs

Thanks to everyone who has contributed. Apologies to anyone inadvertently left off the credits. Keep the contributions flowing for 2021

Most of the photographs have captions, with the initials of the photographer appended.

A key to the names is on this page.

Where a photograph is within an article, it is by the author unless labelled otherwise. Similarly, captions may not appear if the subject is obvious from the surrounding text.

Anne Riley	<i>AR</i>
Bruce Brown	<i>BB</i>
David Leather	<i>DL</i>
Harry Ferraby	<i>HF</i>
John Stidworthy	<i>JS</i>
Kelvin Smith	<i>KS</i>
Mike Clerk	<i>MC</i>
Nyree Fearnley	<i>NF</i>
Paul Millard	<i>PM</i>
Ros Lilley	<i>RL</i>

Front Cover	<i>Kelvin Smith</i>
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Review of the year 2020

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Notes for contributors

As well as the important data about Wharfedale contributed each year by the Recorders of various groups of plants and animals, members are encouraged to send in many other types of material for possible publication.

Alongside accounts of visits to sites in Wharfedale, the Annual Review publishes stories of members' visits to other parts of the British Isles, or wildlife holidays abroad. Poems are welcome too.

Photos are also important. If they are really good they may merit 'standalone' treatment on the colour pages, but photos that illustrate articles are of particular interest. Unfortunately, we only have a limited number of pages in full colour, so we have to be selective, and some articles with photos are published in black and white.

We cannot promise to print all material sent in, but it is better to have more to choose from rather than too little, so do not be shy about sending in your contributions.

Photos

These are preferred in electronic form as JPG files or similar, and can arrive by email. These can easily be manipulated for publication. However, prints can also be sent in if this is what you have, and they will be scanned for use.

Please label all photos with your name or initials and species name (if relevant), so they can be kept track of, and can also inform editors who may not be familiar with every little brown bird or moth.

Text

The advice is: keep it simple. Word files or Open Office files are usually fine.

Format text as little as possible. Just type, and use Return or Enter keys only for a new paragraph. Just leave a **single** space between sentences.

Do not do elaborate formatting. (Indents, bullets, etc). When your file is transferred into a desktop publishing program anything like this will probably not fit, and sometimes has very peculiar consequences.

Likewise, photos or tables **should not** be included in text files. The receiving program may omit them or refuse to load the file. Please send them separately, with an indication in the text file of where they fit if not obvious.

If you are using quotation marks, use single ones, **unless** it is a direct quote of speech, when they should be double.

Keep punctuation conservative. Full stops and commas can do most of the work. Dashes, exclamation marks etc., are generally superfluous.

Use *italics* for species names. Brackets are superfluous. In general text, common names are preferred in lower case. Use **bold** type if it has a special purpose, otherwise sparingly.

Express **dates** as 24 April, 6 June.

To sum up, keep the text straightforward. This will make editing and typesetting much less time consuming.