

# THE WHARFEDALE NATURALIST

VOLUME 74

## Review of the year 2019

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<b>Botany</b>	
<i>Higher Plants, Ferns &amp; Allies</i>	Bruce Brown
<i>Bryophytes</i>	Gordon Haycock
<b>Butterflies</b>	Paul Millard, Diane Morris
<b>Dragonflies</b>	David Alred
<b>Hoverflies</b>	Ken Limb
<b>Ladybirds</b>	Anne Riley
<b>Moths</b>	Mike & Joyce Clerk
<b>Spiders</b>	Stef Pearse
<b>Vertebrates other than birds</b>	Denis O'Connor
<b>Weather</b>	Peter & Sheila Bancroft

## WHARFEDALE NATURALISTS SOCIETY

Membership 440 December 2019

[www.wharfedale-nats.org.uk](http://www.wharfedale-nats.org.uk)

Affiliated to the *Yorkshire Naturalists Union*

Member of the *Yorkshire Wildlife Trust*

Founded 1945

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## FOREWORD

Amid so much negative news about the environment in general and wildlife in particular, I am delighted to be able to report another successful year for our Society. We seem to be able to continue to buck the national trend of decline for Societies such as ours as witnessed by our overall membership numbers and attendance at our official events. This level of activity was no doubt assisted by our wonderful summer, the like of which we may not see again for a long time.

Our Indoor Meetings were all well attended, with some exceeding our expectations for reasons which can be difficult to pinpoint. Not that this is a comment which would apply to the evening with Dr George McGavin on 23rd October which, by common consent, was a huge success. Every aspect of his TV persona came across in a presentation full of insight and rib-tickling humour. Such was his reception from the Christchurch full house that, all being well, he intends to come back in 2019 and in 2020 for our 75th Anniversary Year. Otherwise the overall mix of topics for our Christchurch Meetings covered everything from peat bogs to Borneo, and members responded well to this. We will continue to try to both educate and entertain even as it becomes increasingly clear that our wildlife needs all the help it can get, and we will need to reflect this in our choice of Speakers.

Our involvement in local conservation initiatives continues at Ben Rhydding, Gallows Hill, Grass Wood, Otley Wetlands and Sun Lane and we have every right to feel proud of the work we have contributed to at these sites over many years. In addition we continue to support other nature conservation initiatives in and around Wharfedale by providing funding where appropriate and I can assure you this support is much appreciated by the numerous recipients over the years.

There are of course a variety of other activities we offer our members, all made possible by the efforts of numerous volunteers. These include Microscope Evenings, Coach Outings, Botany and Bird Outings, a Fungus Foray, Summer Visits and Tuesday Evening Nature Walks. My warmest thanks to all those whose efforts make these activities happen especially Helen Steward who continues to organise our Summer Programme so effectively.

As usual I need to thank all our Committee Members for their support and for 'keeping the show on the road'. Gordon Haycock's humorous emails advertising our events are now part of our staple fare not to mention his support to Committee as Secretary. Ian Watt completed seven years as Treasurer doing a faultless job and went on to help us through a difficult period whilst we found a replacement – we eventually welcomed Jeff Davitt into this role. Jenny Watson has embraced the Data Controller role with efficiency and enthusiasm whilst Ros Lilley continues to make a sterling contribution as Membership Secretary. Tim Howson continues to broadcast our activities very effectively though his management of our website. A special mention must also be made of Karen Shackleton for all her support – in addition her work in highlighting the problems of pollution from the Ben Rhydding Sewage Works has been exemplary. Our Publications Officer, John Stidworthy, produced a superb updated recruitment leaflet which we can use at any public events to help us fulfil our essential need to get new members onboard.

Our Recorders are, of course, one of our great strengths and they have delivered yet again with their reports for this Review. We were sorry to lose our Bird Recorder, Richard Fuller, when he moved out of the area but we are very grateful to both Catherine Burton and Andrew Kelly who have stepped in to fulfil this role between them.

One of the things we must do as a Society is keep up to date and concentrate our activities in those areas that are most attractive for our members and, of course, for our threatened wildlife. We will continue to keep all our activities under review and not hesitate to discard those that are no longer delivering for us in any meaningful way.

On a final note I cannot finalise this Foreword without further reference to our beleaguered wildlife both in this country and throughout the world. It is becoming increasingly clear that the forecast Anthropocene – the sixth great extinction – is now happening all around us, not least amongst the basis for everything else, the insects. The main culprits are clear, namely agricultural intensification, climate change and over-population. It is incumbent upon us therefore, as a natural history society, to bear witness to this potentially cataclysmic trend and to try to make a contribution, however small, to both drawing attention to these trends and mitigating their effects wherever possible at a local level. You can rest assured that we will not lose sight of these vital obligations.

We yet again held our membership fees at a very modest level simply because we saw no need to recommend an increase. We would rather gather the money we need to run all our activities by charging a small amount for a consequently larger number of members than a larger amount for what would inevitably then be a smaller number of members. In terms of our membership and the attendances at our Indoor Meetings, we must be one of the best supported, wholly voluntary, natural history organisations in the country and I would like to keep it that way!

This Review is a splendid reflection of our 2019 year and we are indebted to all those who have contributed to its production, especially of course John Stidworthy, the Editor, who has done such a professional job of pulling it all together.

**Peter Riley**

***President***

# Events Programme – May 2019 to April 2020

## TUESDAY EVENING NATURE WALKS

May 7	<b>Barden &amp; Strid Wood</b>	Ros Lilley
May 14	<b>Rombalds Ramble</b>	Karen Shackleton
May 21	<b>Gallows Hill Nature Reserve</b>	Bruce Brown
May 22	<b>St Chad's Church, Far Headingley</b>	David Leather
May 28	<b>Denton Moor to Timble Ponds</b>	Diana Penny
June 4	<b>Fewston Reservoir West Side</b>	Peter & Anne Riley
June 11	<b>Ben Rhydding Gravel Pits</b>	Steve Parkes
June 18	<b>Walk around Addingham Village</b>	Diane Morris

## SUMMER VISITS

May 18	<b>Old Moor RSPB Reserve Coach Outing</b>	
June 22	<b>The Birds of Ilkey Moor</b>	Tracey Gray
July 2	<b>Rodley Nature Reserve</b>	Peter & Barbara Murphy
July 13	<b>Humberstone Bank Farm</b>	Jonathan Grayshon
July 18	<b>Duck Street Quarry</b>	Paul Millard & Diane Morris

## BOTANY OUTINGS

April 11	<b>Walk to Farnley Lake</b>	Nyree Fearnley
May 2	<b>Bolton Abbey, Dale Head Survey</b>	Mark Jeffery
May 16	<b>Threshfield Quarry</b>	Heather Burrow
May 30	<b>Otley Wetlands Nature Reserve</b>	Nicky Vernon
June 6	<b>Trollers Gill</b>	Audrey Gramshaw
June 20	<b>Hetchell Wood Nature Reserve</b>	
July 4	<b>River Walk upstream to Barden Bridge</b>	Bruce Brown
July 25	<b>Humberstone Bank</b>	Heather Burrow

## BIRD OUTINGS

May 9	<b>Strid Wood</b>	Ernie Scarfe
May 25	<b>Oakhill NR near Goole</b>	Brenda & Derek Parkin
June 15	<b>St Aidans RSPB Reserve</b>	Ernie Scarfe
June 20	<b>Stainburn Forest – Nightjars</b>	Ernie Scarfe

## SPECIAL EVENTS

Oct 3	<b>Climate Change and Environment</b>	Tim Benton
Oct 12	<b>Fungus Foray</b>	Andrew Woodall
Oct 19	<b>Coach Trip to Potteric Carr YWT</b>	
Jan 11	<b>Winter Walk round Fewston Reservoir</b>	Peter & Anne Riley

## MICROSCOPE EVENINGS IN OTLEY

Nov 14      Dec 12      Jan 9      Feb 13      Mar 12

## TUESDAY EVENING TALKS

### Autumn 2019

Sep 17	<b>All Creatures Great &amp; Small</b>	Peter Smith
Sep 24	<b>Wildlife in Lower Wharfedale</b>	Rich Bunce
	<b>Weeds Glorious Weeds</b>	Ian Brand
Oct 8	<b>What Have Insects Ever Done for Us?</b>	George McGavin
Oct 22	<b>Images from a Warming Planet</b>	Ashley Cooper
Nov 12	<b>Yorkshire Coast Nature</b>	Steve Race
Nov 26	<b>Scenic Voyage to the South Pacific</b>	Pam Hutchinson
Dec 10	<b>Colombia, a Biodiversity Hotspot</b>	Peter & Barbara Murphy
	<b>Colombia, Bug Heaven</b>	Anne Riley

### Spring 2020

Jan 14	<b>Gardening for Wildlife</b>	Peter & Anne Riley
Jan 28	<b>Limestone Lepidoptera</b>	Dave Wainwright
Feb 11	<b>National Parks of the Western USA</b>	David Alred
Feb 25	<b>The Burren</b>	Neil Barrett
March 10	<b>Recorders Evening</b>	
March 24	<b>AGM, followed by Causes &amp; Consequences of the 2015 Nepal Earthquake</b>	Pat Werrity

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Short resumés of the  
talks during year

**2019**

can be found on pages 6 – 8

## TUESDAY EVENING TALKS

8 January 2019

### Rainforest Wildlife

Melvin Grey

WNS member and acclaimed professional photographer, he gave a superb presentation featuring images captured on his travels in many different areas, including Brunei and South and Central America. All the wildlife demonstrated extravagant colours, exotic shapes and fascinating behaviours, many of which Melvin has meticulously observed and lovingly recorded. His affection and admiration for the creatures photographed shone out, and combined with his camera skills to deliver a lavish feast for the eyes.

Melvin focused on tiny details, such as the stunningly beautiful eyes of a caiman, perhaps the very one which grabbed his toe while he was cleaning his boots from a jetty. Not everyone would have been so kindly disposed!

Other images showed tiny poison dart frogs, and he explained how the local people would collect them in a container, place it near their fire and scrape the frogs' sweat on to their arrow tips. These treasures would adorn any jeweller's window, as would any of the glorious hummingbirds whose flight he captured with high-speed flash to show their wings seemingly immobile in positions which anatomists insist are impossible.

We also feasted our eyes on other birds, orchids and spiders, although to my mind the two most magnificent photographs were a racer snake rearing up with its mouth open, slender as a ribbon, and a bright green praying mantis swaying on a vertical surface. Melvin invited us to consider the engineering implications of supporting and balancing such a relatively huge, awkwardly shaped weight on just the tips of those tiny but immensely strong legs. This is the kind of observation that shows just what an enquiring, marvelling mind he brings to his task as a photographer. All in all, a presentation that simply could not have been better.

Lyn Loader

22 January 2019

### Ben Rhydding Gravel Pits

Steve Parkes

With the many threats to Britain's wildlife it is important help is given to preserving it and encouraging public access and involvement. The history of two local sites doing exactly that was the basis of a lecture to the Wharfedale Naturalist's Society by the current site organisers.

Steve Parkes spoke of the creation of the Ben Rhydding Gravel Pits in the 1960s when gravel working near Ilkley ceased. Joan Duncan, a WNS member, approached Bradford Council suggesting that the site be turned into a nature reserve run by volunteer members of WNS. This was agreed.

In 2014 it was officially opened with Local Nature Reserve status and a notice board funded by Bradford Council. Two large grassed areas, a lake (a second lake is run by Ilkley Anglers), some woodland and a stretch of river bank give varied habitats, home to many species including otters, kingfishers, orchids and two nationally scarce species of butterfly. There are plans to provide wider paths, a hide and new signage.

### Gallows Hill

Gordon Haycock

The current organiser of this reserve told of the conversion of a sewage site just east of Otley into a reserve in the 1990s. From a mainly grassed area it now contains many trees which are being coppiced to form open areas enabling ground flora to establish, with leaf litter from local woods being spread with their incorporated seeds, fungi and insects

to encourage diversity on the site. Ponds and an orchard area are also being created.

The two reserves depend on the support and help of volunteers. The local councils and various other organisations provide advice and financial support. Both reserves enjoy access with good, mainly level paths. Gordon also showed maps illustrating how isolated wildlife areas are being linked by corridors encouraging movement of species.

Peter & Janet Burns

12 February 2019

### Wildlife of the Galapagos Islands

Dave Johnstone

Where in the world might two people on a bench near the sea find themselves sitting next to a sun-bathing sea-lion? Answer: The Galapagos islands, a province of Ecuador situated 973 km off the west coast of South America. Volcanic in origin and mostly composed of basalt these islands were visited by Charles Darwin in 1835. His scientific studies during his five week visit formed the basis of his theory of evolution and natural selection.

Dave described his burgeoning interest in wildlife whilst young, inspired by Peter Scott and a keen and inspirational biology teacher who enthusiastically shared his interest in evolution and genetics. This was crowned by a visit two years ago, now shared with WNS members through an interpretative talk supported by his excellent photos.

During his visit Dave managed to see much fascinating wildlife, for example the only known night feeding gulls and the vampire finches which peck the feet of the red-footed boobies, perhaps an example of evolutionary opportunity. Sadly, he also described the decline in numbers of waved albatross, surface feeders which fall victims to long-line fishing.

As an example of observable speciation and of recent great scientific interest has been the identification of a new breed of finch on Daphne Island. A large cactus finch is thought to have flown here from another island and was seen mating with a finch of a local species. This produced fertile young and 40 years later the progeny of the original pair mate only with each other and are thus confirmed as a new species. The above are just a few of the extraordinary species seen and photographed by Dave.

Alison Roberts

26 February 2019

### St Aidans' Nature Reserve

John Ingham

One of the wonders of Nature is how it can quickly reclaim ex-industrial sites, especially when carefully managed by expert RSBP conservationists working in tandem with a local authority. Such is the case of St Aidan's, once an open cast coal mine, now a 400 hectare leisure and nature reserve located within a triangle south of Leeds made of the M1, A1 and the M62 and only 4 miles from Fairburn Ings. In 1988 the Aire, which borders the site to the west and south, breached and flooded the whole site suspending mining for several years. This alerted the authorities to the need for a flood capture area. Our speaker, John Ingham, now warden of St Aidan's, related how when mining ended in 2005, Leeds Council granted the RSPB a 99 year lease of the site to develop

- Recreation and leisure for local people
- Nature Conservation
- Flood protection under the auspices of the Environment Agency

Opened as a reserve in 2017, the reserve now provides an area for runners, cyclists, (well-behaved) dog walkers, outdoor experiences for families and children and of course a rich resource for birders and nature lovers. A wide variety of habitats, ponds, islands, reed beds, flower meadows, grasslands and a small area of woodland has encouraged a wide variety of birds to recolonise the site. Little owls, stock doves, barn owls and kestrels nest in abandoned industrial plant. Bearded tits and bitterns can be seen in the reed beds while one of Britain's rarest breeding waders, the black-necked grebe, seems to like to associate with the hundreds of noisy black-headed gulls who breed at St Aidan's. The numbers and noise of the gulls may protect the grebes from predators. This is a reserve well worth visiting.

**Peta Constable**

**19 September 2019**

### **All Creatures Great and Small**

**Peter Smith**

Peter has a passion for wildlife and photography. He entertained us with incredible photos of creatures of all sizes, together with interesting facts and amusing anecdotes.

It is no surprise that changes in global conditions are having an impact on what we might see. For example the song thrush, yellow hammer, kestrel and cuckoo have become less common. Whereas little egrets are becoming a more common sight.

However, changes in agricultural practices mean ground nesting birds and creatures that nest in fields such as harvest and field mice are threatened by more frequent cropping using heavy farm machinery from which there is no escape.

Peter also studied the feeding patterns of barn owls. He was able to study a nesting pair and noted catching prey for chicks occurs mainly in the late evening and at first light. The feeding habits of swifts which arrive in early May and leave in early August are also interesting and very different from that of swallows. Swifts leave their chicks for up to 45 minutes, returning with a crop full of insects to ensure that their chicks get a good filling meal.

And where to see a dramatic murmuration of starlings? Blackpool north pier in October is a good spot. Finally Peter may not be the only person to have a spider living in the wing mirror of his car. His has travelled over 8,000 miles with him and refuses to be dislodged.

**Alison Roberts**

**26 September 2019**

### **Wildlife in Lower Wharfedale**

**Rich Bunce**

Rich, a prize-winning wildlife photographer, shared some pictures taken as part of a fascinating project called *Revelations from the Terrace*, in which Rich is exploring the wildlife visible from the vicinity of a block of terraced housing in Burley-in-Wharfedale. Rich began with a range of photographs of wildlife visible from his own house, including starlings perching on the chimneys and aerials; jackdaws nesting in the chimney-pots; swifts nesting in the eaves; and a wide range of garden birds and butterflies. He then shared photographs of a heron fishing at the Cornmill pond; tree sparrows and common toads at the Sun Lane reserve; and dippers and sand martins on the River Wharfe.

### **Weeds, Glorious Weeds: Gardeners' Foe or Botanists' Friend?**

**Ian Brand**

Ian took us through some interesting strategies adopted by various well-known weeds in order to survive and reproduce. Annuals are opportunists. They need to germinate, grow,

flower, fruit and disperse seeds in a single season so seek to establish themselves on any bare ground and adopt strategies for speed such as self-germination. Perennials, such as stinging nettles and ground elder are bullies, developing aggressive strategies to spread by means of rhizomes and runners. Ian is a great storyteller and I particularly enjoyed the story of the spread of Oxford ragwort. Originally brought from the slopes of Mount Etna to the botanical garden in Oxford, they spread throughout Britain, by means of the railway lines whose clinkers offered an environment very similar to that on the Sicilian volcano.

**Helen Steward**

**8 October 2019**

### **What have insects ever done for us?**

**George McGavin**

This saw the triumphant return of entomologist extraordinary Dr George McGavin to Wharfedale with his hard-hitting lecture entitled *What have Insects ever done for us*. Well actually quite a lot. Many different species have acted as pollinators, such as honey bees. Others, like dung beetles, have cleared away thousands of tons of animal poo. In Africa for instance a whole savannah can be covered in animal waste one minute and fully cleared by dung beetles in a matter of three to four hours. A dung beetle lays its eggs in the poo and then buries it, and the rebirth cycle begins. No wonder, as Dr George pointed out, the ancient Egyptians noted this and worshipped these insects in the form of the scarab.

Other flies, and insects such as the sexton beetles help by burying the cadavers of dead beasts and laying their eggs in them. He proved this by showing a short film of maggots in a dead rat's innards. Countless other insects fall victim to animal and bird predators providing nutrition for others, in some cases us humans.

Dr. George went on to tell us that insects have been on earth for millions of years and will be still here when man is long gone from the planet. In spite of many attempts to count them we will probably never know exactly how many different species we have amongst us as there are so many and new types may be discovered daily.

Altogether, although strong stomachs were needed in one or two scenes, everybody there enjoyed a splendid evening's entertainment, including a mind blowing impression of Sir David Attenborough worthy of Rory Brenner or Jon Culshaw

Afterwards our President Mr Peter B. Riley paid a robust vote of thanks to Dr. McGavin for such a great lecture and the thunderous ovation which followed spoke for itself.

**Chris Hartley**

**22 October 2019**

### **Images from a warming planet**

**Ashley Cooper**

'Stop the destruction', 'Start the healing' demanded protestors' banners outside Tar Sands in Canada. Here bitumen is extracted and processed to produce oil. The resulting pollutants destroy the environment and affect the First Nation Canadians who live there. Those words could have been the title of the talk given to the Wharfedale Naturalists Society. Ashley, a freelance environmental photographer, has spent the last fourteen years travelling around the world photographing evidence of climate change.

By the interval the audience was left feeling a sense of despair at the effects of climate change. These included: extreme weather, flooding, drought, pollution, civil war and refugees, hunger and disease. The photographs were

stunning but the message was stark: it is that those least responsible who are most impacted by climate change and we all have a duty to care for the planet, not to be part of the problem.

The talk was very much of two halves. The first highlighted the destruction part. The second was more optimistic. Provided that we as individuals, and more importantly as nations, stop using fossil fuels, adopt renewable energy sources and tackle our carbon emissions.

The most inspirational example he gave of such practice was the Danish company DONG, (Danish Oil and Natural Gas.) They have done all three and now call themselves Orsted. Iceland uses 100% of its energy from renewable sources. In the UK we could do the same if we developed wave and tidal energy. With an endorsement of Extinction Rebellion who are keeping the debate and lack of progress in the public domain, Ashley Cooper spelt out the need to adopt the second command of the protestors, 'Start the Healing'.

**Polly Hosking**

**12 November 2019**

### **Yorkshire Coast Nature**

**Steve Race**

The wildlife of Yorkshire is diverse. This theme was the subject of the talk given by Steve Race, an award winning photographer and outstanding naturalist, and illustrated by his superb photographs. His company, Yorkshire Coast Nature, runs courses on wildlife photography and the field craft necessary for success. One of the outstanding experiences of his career was helping the BBC to get close-up shots of gannets diving for fish at 60 mph. into the sea off Bempton cliffs. Ellie Harrison, the presenter, seemed really impressed by the spectacle.

As Steve lives and works on the Yorkshire coast much of the talk was based on this iconic region. It included images of wading birds very close to the photographer. His advice on how to get these was to lie flat on the beach, being careful not to be seen by the public as a casualty! The birds should then come towards the photographer, driven shoreward by the incoming tide.

There were also shots of nesting peregrine falcons on the roof of Scarborough's Grand Hotel, kingfishers driven to the coast in winter in search of food and amusing video of seals relaxing on shore. These are not the only mammals which can be photographed near our coastline as minke whales and 3 species of dolphin are increasingly regular visitors.

The Wolds and North York Moors also figured in the talk, where some coastal birds can be watched when they come inland to nest. The magnificent goshawk can also be seen by those who know where to look. Mammals such as roe deer, red deer, badgers, hares and foxes also got a mention, accompanied by more fine photos taken from a hide.

**Peta Constable**

**26 November 2019**

### **Scenic journey to the South Pacific Pat Hutchinson**

In Brazil there is a folk story that if a beautiful princess kisses a pink river dolphin or boto he will turn into a handsome prince. Having seen a photograph of this rare but ugly animal taken by on a visit to the Amazon, I think you would have to be pretty desperate!

Travelling for three months by sea and river, Pat and her husband took thousands of photographs of a trip that started in the Caribbean, went down the coast of South America, up and down the Amazon, around the Straits of Magellan and across the South Pacific to Australia. At each landfall, she

commented on the history, economy and wildlife. It was a fascinating talk, full of information, humour and anecdote. However, she emphasised that she wanted her audience to take away two important points.

The first was, "Seize the moment," a poignant reference to her own personal circumstances. The second was to be aware of the fragility of the environment and how humans can destroy this by plundering natural resources. The inhabitants of Easter Island did just that, leaving the land unfit for human habitation.

We were shown pictures of the deforestation of the Amazon and in contrast the planted Tijuca Urban forest in Rio de Janeiro which provides a much-needed antidote to the pollution and high density housing. Some countries she visited are planning for the future and conserving the environment. Others not. Throughout her journey she witnessed the effects of global warming, none more so than the Great Barrier Reef visited at the end of her tour.

**Polly Hosking**

**10 December 2019**

### **Colombia - a Biodiversity Hotspot**

**Peter & Barbara Murphy**

Think Columbia and think biodiversity. Think coffee but forget about drugs and FARC. Columbia is now safe and building up its ecotourism profile. And rightly so. This enormously varied country with both Pacific and Caribbean coast lines, and rising from sea level to over 18,000 feet, is second in overall diversity only to Brazil. It is first for birds (1600 species) and orchids (6000 identified species) and boasts 9,000 endemic species of flora and fauna. Earlier this year Peter and Barbara Murphy, of Rodley Nature Reserve, visited 3 nature reserves in different biomes with Anne and Peter Riley. In the cloud forest, Peter Murphy related hearing the awakening chorus of the red howler monkeys but was not lucky enough to see the rare and endangered mountain tapir. But he did see dramatic birds such as the red-throated fruit crow and came upon an Andean motmot - a bird about the size of a blackbird - trying to swallow a snake that was rather too long for it.

### **Colombia - Bug Heaven**

**Anne Riley**

Anne's passion is bugs. Not everyone's cup-of-tea but by the end of her fascinating and often very amusing talk, together with her amazing close-ups of bugs of every imaginable size, shape and habit - both endearing and disgusting - I wondered why we aren't all intrigued by these essential creatures and their often phenomenal beauty.

Are you fascinated by the OSTROBOGULOUS? A new word for you? Me too. Ann says it means weird or bizarre. My dictionary gives risqué and slightly indecent as possible meanings too. Some of the bugs Anne showed us were all four of the above.

Just how bizarre is a hoverfly being eaten by eaten by its own offspring? Emailed about this, entomologist George McGavin replied: "Bloody ungrateful kids. You do everything for them and then they suck you dry"!

**Peta Constable**

## PESTICIDES – NO THANKS

Members of the WNS, along with all the speakers, share an intense dislike of pesticides and poisons in view of the damage they do to the environment and wildlife generally. The damage extends to animal life as Vets well know.

Max, a brown furry character of a terrier was brought to the surgery severely jaundiced and close to the end of life. The cause of the trouble was undoubtedly a pesticide or a poison that he had ingested when searching a local barn for rats, one of his favourite occupations when he wasn't chasing cats.

The pathetic shivering little dog was immediately taken into intensive care where he remained for several days until fit enough to be taken home. There, as do children, animals recover better by being in their own surroundings. So Max spent his time carefully blanket-wrapped, lying on an armchair in the lounge, whilst being hand fed a diet of chicken. If a turned-up nose said, "Not chicken again!" it was changed to rabbit or lamb.

Veterinary visits became less frequent until the day I said, "Right, I think that's it, we are there." and Max trotted happily out of the surgery for the last time. Four or five days later came a frantic phone call asking for a visit ASAP as Max was dying! Totally bewildered as to how this could have happened, I arrived at the house to be greeted by a tearful owner who showed me into the lounge. There, stretched out on an armchair lay my patient. He looked almost dead, totally relaxed with his head hanging limply over the end, eyes closed.

However, when I examined him there was a normal heartbeat and breathing as well as a nice pink membrane. Unfortunately for Max, at that moment he opened one eye and looked at me. It was a look every parent knows. It read "Has she fallen for it?"

When one of the owners inquired sadly, "Will he be all right?" I could not resist replying, "Well put it this way. He has only two more minutes in this condition!" Not the best of comments as they both became a bit tearful. With a further, "I must just go and wash my hands first", I went through the hall to the kitchen making sure there was a clear passage as I passed.

Once there, with a shout of "There's a CAT in the garden, shoo you devil shoo," I unlocked the back door and flung it open. From the lounge came a yelping which was the canine equivalent of "Leave this to me - I'll deal with it!" as Max twisted himself round, jumped off the chair and ran at full speed out of the house and up the garden path towards the apple trees.

The owners' screams turned to laughter as they watched him, unable to believe what had happened. But I knew! After four days back in his basket in the kitchen with his usual dog food served in a bowl, Max had decided he preferred the previously forbidden armchair and a diet of chicken. When his owners left the house he had crept back to the lounge, settled in, and flaked himself out as he heard their return.

At this point, Max trotted back, jumped in the chair and sat upright with a sad expression which read, "I've been rumbled haven't I, thanks to you". What intelligence! I adored that dog, but the feeling wasn't mutual.

With my dislike of pesticides well established, I distributed numerous small bowls full of lager round the front garden to help catch the slugs. It usually works, but next door's labrador came through the fence and drank them all dry! You can't win!

**Pam Braithwaite**

## PLANT EXTINCTION – bad news for all species

The future of plants and, incidentally, the future of you and me.

Last year, I thought that my column about Himalayan balsam for the Annual Review might be my last one, but you never know. Here is a new one.

I'm sure that, by now, we have all woken up to the threat of climate change. In June 2019 the newspapers published an article from Kew and the Universities of Stockholm and Oxford, which aimed to wake us up still more. Times are changing and there is trouble ahead!

We are now gradually discovering that for centuries we have been living in a cluttered world, and the cluttering goes far beyond the Himalayas. Much bigger issues are now demanding our attention, though some international leaders, such as in the USA and Brazil, could not care less about population growth, climate change, sea-rise and melting glaciers. Where will this all end, and what should we be doing about it now, before it begins to destroy us all? Perhaps we should move to another planet? But how, and which one? Who'll go first?

One thing we could all do is to start to take the whole thing more seriously: it is nothing new. If you know a bit about the world in prehistoric times you will realise that it has always been going this way, but only now is our generation beginning to wake up to the fact. Our world has been changing since forever, without our noticing it, and the huge destruction of plant growth since 1940 (when we were at war) is just one recent example of this.

Go back 66 million years and recall that the entire globe was blown up by the disastrous explosion near the Yucatan peninsula in Mexico, and this destroyed the dinosaurs and other large creatures then living on Earth. The effects lasted for many years. This could happen again!

Millions of years later, and long before humans had occupied the whole planet, all Britain north of the Thames, including Ilkley and the Washburn Valley, was entirely covered by millions of tons of hard ice. Where were we then? Answer: sitting in caves near the Rock of Gibraltar. It was not until 13,000BC that the world, as a whole, started to get warmer and plants such as the beech trees began to spread from the Greek area and colonise new environments. It has taken about 8,000 years for them to reach Britain and the Thames. If you go to northern Greece you will find fantastic displays of immensely tall beeches, all producing real seeds. In northern Britain they cannot do this, and most British beeches, including those in Ilkley and Otley, were planted by us.

By Tudor times (1500AD) we had also planted sycamores, and these became part of the treescape. They too came originally from the Greek area. Himalayan balsam arrived in the UK as late as 1839, along with giant hogweed and Japanese knotweed. Things just go on, many of them thanks to **humans**. In 2005, opposite the main post office, I found *Sutera cordata* growing. (Some may know this figwort as *Bacopa*). How had that got here? You guess!

We live, and have always lived, in a changing world, and we just carry on with our habit of thinking of it today as unchanging, and we suppose it will see our time out. We regard it as simply ours, to do with, or ignore, just as we like, without giving any thought or understanding to future generations. We have lived here for a mere 70,000 years, much less than our predecessors the dinosaurs, or the Neanderthals, but we are rapidly stripping ourselves of plants and animals.

Earth's air and water comes to us through various sources, especially plants. Without plants we would have no butterflies, bees, buzzards or barn owls, and there'd be no water to drink.



How will the world, and us, who ultimately depend on it, survive without plants? This is a huge question, and we need to ponder on it, and act and respond in ways that we can undo if we wish, and which will not permanently damage us and our grandchildren.

My suggestion is that we follow David Attenborough, and also go back to the Hopkins motto that I quoted last year about all the animals and plants, and all life on Earth. Just let them be, protect them and steer our way round them without damaging them or killing them all off, and us too.

This was written before Professor Benton came to speak to us, so I hope it isn't too far off what he said. Not being able now to get to Nats meetings I didn't hear him, so I'll just have to apologise for any errors, and say trust him, not me!

**Mike Atkinson**

## **BEN RHYDDING GRAVEL PITS NATURE RESERVE**

### **A great start to the year**

Our conservation work was boosted by the great response following my talk to the society in January, welcoming new volunteers Brian, Frank, Ian, Peter, Steve and Tom.

### **Dalesman**

In March we were joined by the Open Country team from Harrogate. We constructed a willow screen bird hide and improved the riverside path with a ton of gravel. We put our second bench in thanks to a generous donation.

A journalist from the Dalesman magazine joined us for the day and wrote a great feature about Open Country's work. You can see it in the June issue.

### **June Buzz**

June is always a busy month, as we encourage groups to come mid month to coincide with peak in southern marsh/common spotted orchids. Sadly orchid numbers have dropped considerably following their peak a few years ago, and are now down to about 300 flowering plants. We think the hot dry end to the summer of 2018 was a contributory factor.

However, on the WNS evening walk we were delighted to see our first bee orchid for over 15 years and the mysterious appearance of a large colony of false caper. We have only had an occasional plant in the past.

I hosted the Burley Walking Group and Steve Peel, our first ever Bradford Council Countryside walk. I was also delighted to give a talk on the reserve to Bradford Ornithological Group and meet up with some old friends.

### **Mini Meadow**

We continued to make progress, increasing the extent of this educational feature and adding rabbit proof fencing. Over the year we added 80+ flowering plants that a number of us grew from seed in our back gardens and look forward to see how they progress in coming years.

### **Otters**

After a number of brief sightings at work groups we were saddened to hear that in September an otter had been run over after leaving the river near the Manor Row end of the reserve.

We believe it was one of a family group of 3 that Dave Varney had filmed nearby in August. You can see the footage on the BRGP website.

### **Small mammals and little people**

Our October workday turned into a big event. Ann Hanson of the Yorkshire Farming & Wildlife Partnership very kindly ran a

small mammal survey. I managed to make this coincide with the visit of a scout group from Beeston who were camping at Curley Hill.

We set up 50 traps the night before and it was great to see the excitement of the youngsters as each trap was opened.

A good proportion of traps succeeded. We recorded wood mouse, common shrew, field and bank vole. The scouts also enjoyed coppicing. I am sure it was the first time many had used a saw. The poles were used to construct a play shelter. They all left with their fingers intact and smiles of their faces!

### **Winter workout**

We were delighted to add a third bench with Open Country, some 40 metres into the reserve, making the site more accessible for those with limited mobility, and making another great spot for viewing kingfisher. We added a further 100 trees to an area behind the hedgerow and the workgroup removed dense stands of hawthorn as we continue to open up the overgrown riverside path area.

### **2020 Nature Trail**

I am passionate about improving accessibility to the countryside and helping young children engage with wildlife. With this in mind in 2020 we will develop a nature trail. After a lot of work we managed to get monies from the Betty's 'Trees for Life' project via Open Country. The WNS committee then very kindly agreed to fund the remainder of the cost.

So a massive thanks to the Society and our amazing work group as none of this would happen without their support.

If you would like to help out my email address is [parkes.steve@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:parkes.steve@hotmail.co.uk)

You can now also follow us on Facebook.

**Steve Parkes**

## **UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES**

Early in 2019 the stretch of path on Ilkley Moor from the Swastika Stone to the wall at the western end of the field was 'improved' by giving it a thick gravel surface. This certainly improved it for walkers, turning a rutted, sometimes muddy, surface into a much smoother path. Unfortunately, in the process, large sandy areas along the path were obliterated. In the spring these were always colonised by burrowing *Andrena* bees, and the moor has lost one of its best locations for this species.

At the same time as the path was surfaced, the pond near the end wall was dug out and cleared. This allowed much more water to collect, and one Monday in spring I was surprised to see abundant frog spawn in a pond that had not housed any in the previous nine years. Joy was somewhat doused when passing the pond two days later it was apparent that digging out the pond had damaged its waterproof layer, and the water level was dropping alarmingly. Many clumps of spawn were already beached and drying out.

It seemed sensible to try to rescue at least some of those remaining, so I walked home to fetch two buckets. Returning to the pond I scooped up two generous buckets full and set off home. It is surprising how heavy two buckets of frog spawn feel when you have walked almost a mile, and down some tricky slopes. Reaching home, the spawn was decanted into the larger of our two ponds. Coming out into the garden at 10pm with the dog and a torch, I went to have a look in the pond. Eight or nine newts were busy on the surface of the spawn and within it. By the end of the next day the spawn was empty jelly, but the newts were very happy. Quite a lot of effort for nil frogs. The newts always thrive anyway.

The few frogs that came to the pond of their own accord only managed a couple of clumps of spawn in 2019, and the toads we saw (three male and one female) only made one long string of spawn. Nothing came of any of it, and newts are under suspicion. Having said that, frogs and toads have done well some years, even though newts are always present.

**John Stidworthy**

## **ANNUAL WINTER WALK AROUND FEWSTON RESERVOIR**

This annual winter walk led by Peter and Anne Riley has now been running for 10 years and took place this year on 10th January. The turn-out was once again excellent with some 20 members attending despite rather miserable weather – mild but somewhat drizzly and drear with a strong wind from the west.

We set off in a clockwise direction on the south west shore and, inevitably, given the time of year, the emphasis was on the birds and despite the windy conditions, they did not disappoint. There were several mixed flocks full of blue and great tits, but also featuring treecreepers, long-tailed tits, nuthatch, coal tit and goldcrest. A highlight was a small group of some six siskin feeding busily in a clump of alder trees at a height which made them relatively easy to observe without breaking a neck!

Thrushes were represented by several blackbirds and a mistle thrush the latter singing loudly, thereby providing a lesson in why they are often referred to as ‘stormcock’, throwing their voice out against the wind. One great spotted woodpecker was also easy to view as he called almost continuously for a short while.

The reservoir itself was relatively quiet although black-headed gulls were moving through all the time occasionally accompanied by common gull. Wildfowl were well represented at the upstream end of the reservoir and featured mallard, tufted duck and teal. Moorhens and cormorants were also in evidence.

The upstream end of the reservoir provides a good example of vegetative succession which, if left unchecked, will eventually produce dry land. Twenty years ago there were only a few willows here but, with the frequent reduction in reservoir water levels these days over this shallow area, willows have now gained a foothold and have effectively produced a mini-woodland which easily copes with having its roots regularly underwater. For water birds this produces excellent ground cover and nesting habitat.

The return walk on the north east side of the reservoir was somewhat marred by exposure to the by-now strong wind but, even so, there was one more mixed flock to excite our interest albeit extremely high up in a sheltered plantation.

As usual the walk had been a pleasant social event and leg stretch with enough natural history interest to ensure overall satisfaction with the occasion, judging by the comments received at the end.

**Peter Riley**

## **TREE SPARROW INVASION**

One of the delights of our garden bird watching in recent years has been the arrival and establishment of the Tree Sparrow.

When the Burley Village Wildlife Group started work at Sun Lane in 2003 we were aware that Tree Sparrows were in the area and appropriate nest boxes were soon installed to try to ensure the species thrived. These have been tremendously successful with large numbers of broods using them successfully every year and even taking to using bat boxes such was the demand for homes! Our house is about 600 metres from Sun Lane and we had hoped for many years that they may

reach us especially given that we follow the RSPB advice to feed throughout the year but, apart from an odd sighting, it wasn't until 2017 that they arrived in force to the extent that they are now well established and breeding. We have always assumed that this invasion came from the Sun Lane population but do not know this for sure. One argument against this assumption is that gardens nearer to Sun Lane where birds are fed have not been so lucky in attracting Tree Sparrows.

Although they often like to nest colonially, for example in the base of White Stork nests on the continent, they may use isolated nest boxes and this has been the case in our garden where, contrary to my expectation, only isolated nest boxes have been used. This does not seem to have affected productivity as, for two years now, significant numbers of juveniles have been present so they must be breeding elsewhere in the vicinity. We certainly know of one location just a stone's throw away from us where a nest box has been used successfully.

Tree Sparrows are present in most northern mid-latitude areas of the world and, indeed, in some places have been considered an agricultural pest. However, in the UK, from 1975 to 2000, they suffered a catastrophic 90% decline almost certainly due to agricultural intensification. They feed on seeds almost throughout the year but especially in winter, and the virtual elimination of winter stubble in the countryside has a severely deleterious impact on Tree Sparrows along with many other farmland bird species. In recent years there has been a slow upturn in populations – my own walks in the Washburn Valley are now more likely to come across them at selected locations (i.e. where food is available) than was the case twenty years ago.

To the untrained eye it can be difficult to separate Tree Sparrow from House Sparrow but the smaller size of the Tree Sparrow and the distinctive black mark on the cheek make the distinction clear with a bit of practice. There are no distinguishing features between the sexes or even juveniles although the latter will look somewhat ‘washed-out’ when they first appear away from the nest. It has always intrigued me that our very bird-friendly garden has never established a year-round population of House Sparrow even though they are present throughout the year in locations no more than 150 meters away. Sightings with us are usually restricted to summer when they have hungry young to feed when they will be regular for several weeks.

To sum up – we are delighted to have Tree Sparrows regularly present in the garden year-round, not least because we have every reason to think that we are making a small contribution to the recovery of this species. However, it should be borne in mind that this species is notorious for arriving and disappearing almost overnight seemingly without reason – we just hope that this doesn't happen to us!

**Peter Riley**

## **GUARDIAN MOTHER**

Walking on Ilkley Moor during the summer on a path near the Keighley Old Road, our spaniel diverged from the path a couple of metres, evidently interested in a patch of sedges.

Before it got there, from a hundred or more metres away, a roe deer doe galloped towards it. The dog was as surprised as we were, and removed itself from the line of fire, while trying to maintain its dignity. We can only suppose that a young fawn was hidden in the vegetation. It is pretty unusual for a deer to run towards dogs or people. We did not investigate further, but hoped that any young deer would be left in peace.

**John Stidworthy**

## INTRODUCTION OF WATER VOLES TO TIMBLE INGS BY YORKSHIRE WATER

We are in great danger of losing the water vole as an indigenous mammal. 97% of the species has been lost already. There are less than 100,000 water voles in the UK now. Their decline is linked to habitat loss from increasingly intensifying agriculture and predation by mink, which began to be released in the 1930s. Water voles have become compressed into narrow riparian areas. Female mink always live and raise their young along water courses.

Larger populations at lower levels perish first because of mink predation. This means that on higher ground, there is more likelihood of water voles being found in fingerling ditches and water courses. However, reproductive success declines as the water voles are forced to move higher up, meaning that such groups are largely functionally extinct because the braver young individuals leave the area to find new mates.

We may lose not only a cute mammal [Ratty in Wind in the Willows] but one which has an important place in the ecology of streams and other water courses. The water vole is prey for predators. But also, by its feeding habits and other behaviour, it changes the very features of water courses. Holes provide refuges for amphibians and snakes, regular passageways provide highways for other species. The feeding habits of the water vole change the tapestry of the vegetation on the banks, bringing more diversity to grassland. Its latrines provide some nutrients to plants, and spoils from tunnelling bring bends and curves to the waterway. 'Slumpages' provide fishing perches for kingfishers and amphibians.

Yorkshire Water has experience of supporting water vole populations at Tophill Low Reserve, in the East Riding. The decision has been made to try a re-introduction on their land at Timble Ings, in our area. Derek Gow, national expert on water vole re-introduction, led a training session at Malham Tarn Field Centre, to which Wharfedale Naturalists Society representatives were invited with National Trust and Yorkshire Water officers and volunteers.

We learned that familiar field signs of water vole presence are:

- Latrines, with typical 'Tic-Tac' sized droppings
- Leaves of plants cut at a 45-degree angle
- Feeding piles left on the banks and mown areas outside holes
- A loud 'Plop!' as the water vole enters the water

Although these field signs are very reliable in the lowland environment, in upland areas it is more difficult to find classic clues. Field voles and hares leave similar signs.

In a good environment a female can have 22 births in a year. All water voles, but especially the matriarch, are very aggressive and, after 14 days, the babies become uneasy around mother. However, when the babies are very young, unlike species which eat their babies for protein when in danger, voles save their babies if under attack, e.g. carrying on back if water level rises. This is a relic behaviour from when water voles lived near beavers [beavers will suddenly decide to dam an area, causing a swift rise in water level]

Human involvement with the water vole can be traced back a very long way, which is quite unusual for a small, relatively unobtrusive mammal. Records suggest it may have been used as a food source during Lent, when 'meat' was forbidden. It may have been handily classified as a fish, like the heron.

In the afternoon we walked in pouring rain round the boardwalk at Malham Tarn, where water voles have been

reintroduced. Already, after a few years they have altered the water courses in the marshy areas so that they are less straight.

Between July and October Philip Tennyson, Countryside and Recreation Apprentice, Yorkshire Water, has been using clay rafts floating in 6 locations around Timble Ings Woods to monitor any small mammal presence by checking for animal prints. "Thankfully, we didn't receive any mink prints, we only received grey squirrel, rat and one half of a dog paw print." The clay rafts will be out in Spring 2020 to check if any mink have moved into the area.

"All being well, we'll be releasing Water Voles in July 2020." Philip is meeting with Derek Gow to choose suitable locations.

This is an exciting project for our area and Wharfedale Naturalists hope to be involved in the monitoring of its success.

**Ros Lilley**

## FREDA DRAPER ARTICLE FROM 1973

Freda Draper was undoubtedly one of the best naturalists that our Society has ever had. She was considered an outstanding botanist but, in truth, she was an all-round naturalist who lived and breathed natural history. Through the sixties and seventies many of the insect reports for the Review (or 'Transactions' as it was called in those days) were prepared by Freda including butterflies, dragonflies and ladybirds. The following article, from the 1973 'Transactions', is a testament to her breadth of natural history interest and her outstanding powers of observation. When Anne and I got involved in the renovation of the Sun Lane Nature Reserve it was Freda who provided us with the inspiration to pursue this project; she well remembered being taken round the site as a young child and was much aggrieved at its decline following the 1995 reclamation. She became a great friend and we were privileged to have the opportunity to go through her slide and print collection with her thereby having our interest in natural history thoroughly stimulated. With some difficulty we persuaded her to again give talks at our Tuesday evening meetings for several years, which replicated her earlier involvement in this way on an annual basis several decades earlier. This guaranteed a full house not least because it was mesmerising to see this by then quite frail figure standing at the front imparting her amazing knowledge without any pause or hesitation.

Freda died in 2016 and, as I said in my eulogy at her funeral - cliché though it might be - our Society will never see her like again.

**Peter Riley**

## GARDEN VISITORS - THE BLACKBIRDS

A garden often gives the opportunity to observe closely bird behaviour that might otherwise go unnoticed, and last spring we found the domestic arrangements of our resident blackbirds very interesting.

One pair built a nest and successfully raised a family of four in the beech hedge at the front of the house. We christened the bird 'Tailless' because this had been his condition since early March when he took part in numerous territorial fights with the cock from another pair. These bouts were often very noisy and prolonged, round and round the bushes in the front garden and up and over the roof of the house. Once both birds fell from the guttering to the garden path below with a resounding thump, still fighting fiercely. From all this tailless had emerged the victor, but minus his entire tail and most of the feathers on his head. He was rather unbalanced and looked like an out-of-season fledgling but despite this he occupied the now undisputed house roof and sang triumphantly. The other cock

retired over the garden hedge and his mate built her first nest in my neighbour's garden.

For their second brood Tailless and his mate moved to the large clematis growing on the west wall of the house and the other pair of birds also returned to our garden, building in a hedge about fifteen yards away at the end of the vegetable patch. There was a certain amount of skirmishing between the two males but nothing as serious as earlier in the season.

The second pair's young hatched first and after a day or two we were very surprised to see Tailless taking food to the nest, where he was accepted quietly by the hen bird. Careful watching established that there was no sign of the other cock, he did not come to the nest and was not at his usual singing post in the evenings. Tailless continued to feed his adopted family and when his own young hatched helped in the feeding of these too. It was not unusual to see him visit one nest with a batch of worms and then go to the other with the next lot.

By this time, he had a stumpy and ragged new tail but was still very bald and most unprepossessing. His wife would not allow the other blackbird hen on the lawn with her, but otherwise did not interfere. We had found Tailless to be a good father sitting on guard on the edge of the nest when the chicks were small and his mate was away and he sometimes performed this service for the other hen too.

Both broods were safely reared but the other cock never returned and we wondered what had happened to him. Was Tailless a noble fellow who fostered a family that had accidentally lost its father or was he a villain who had finally done away with his rival?

**Freda Draper**

## **ROUDSEA WOOD AND MOSSES**

The small village of Low Wood lies close to the River Leven which drains Lake Windermere. Behind the village lie steep, densely wooded slopes of around 500 feet leading to moorland around the summit of Bigland Hill which overlooks Bigland Tarn and has views to southern Lakeland and Morecambe Bay.

In front of the village fields give way to a raised peat bog and then to woodland near the estuary of the Leven leading to Morecambe Bay. It was here I grew up, able to explore these areas at a time when the only usual warning for children was not to be late back for a meal. The echoes of Swallows and Amazons (though without the dinghies!) in being able to play and explore here was enhanced by the presence of Arthur Ransome himself who lived nearby. He was sometimes seen in the evening coming down to the river to fish for sea trout.

What we didn't appreciate as children was the rarity value of the peat bog and its nearby woods, which soon afterwards became the site of the Roudsea Wood and Mosses National Nature Reserve. The raised bog was of interest at that time as a source of eggs from the small colony of gulls which nested on it. The horror of the warden when we told him about this on a visit a few years ago has to be tempered by the reality of the wartime and post-war food shortages and rationing. The surface of the bog was much dryer then though Sundew grew there quite happily. Now the old channels which drained the area for the cutting of peat are being blocked, the surface is wetter and no access is allowed, unlike when we roamed there and leapt the channels. A boardwalk has been built along the edge of the bog to allow a look at what this area is like. A link to the time when peat was cut here was the fact that the large stone built outhouse we shared with my grandparents next door went by the name of 'the peat house'.

Access to the reserve is down a lane, narrow and with limited passing opportunities, though very little used as it gives access only to the reserve. Cycles are encountered though, as it is part of National Cycle Route 70. A permit to visit and park can be obtained by applying to Natural England. This may be done by ringing 0300 060 3900 or online at [enquiries@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@naturalengland.org.uk). The reserve lies at a distance from the Ilkley area which may deter a day trip but anyone on holiday in the southern Lakes area would enjoy some time spent in this unique place. The woodland lies on a mix of Carboniferous limestone and Silurian slate, bordered on one side by damp woodland and fen which lead to the raised peat bog. This combination of diverse habitats gives an equal diversity of wildlife.

For several centuries the woods were managed for the production of charcoal for the gunpowder works at Low Wood and of bark for local tanneries. At one point a building once used for the storage of gunpowder is seen, located in this fairly remote spot for obvious reasons. The modern management consists of maintaining and enhancing the habitat to ensure the survival of the long established wildlife and encourage and help establish any recent additions. Prominent among these are Ospreys which nest nearby and the Rosy Marsh Moth. On a visit this summer we were lucky enough to get a prolonged look at the Osprey as it circled over the peat bog and a distant view of the nest which contained 3 young. The Rosy Marsh Moth was rediscovered here in 2005 after being thought extinct in Britain for around 150 years. It benefits from the presence of its host plant, the Bog Myrtle, which grows well here. Another scarcer damp loving plant is found, the Large Yellow Sedge, which is more abundant here than anywhere else in Britain. A small patch was in flower on our visit in June.

The variety of habitats on the reserve means there is interest for whichever branch of natural history is special for you. The bird life is varied and abundant and a number of species of dragonfly are present in some areas. Others will appreciate the botanical variety found on the 2 trails, the Bog Trail and the Woodland Trail. Butterfly enthusiasts stand a chance of seeing Pearl-bordered and Silver-washed Fritillaries, Gatekeeper, the very localised Large Heath found here on the bog, as well as numerous Speckled Wood and other common favourites.

The minor difficulties of obtaining a pass and accessing the reserve down the quiet lane are well worth the trouble for this is a special place. I wish now I had been more aware of that when I had so much easy access when young.

**Peter Burns**

## **OTLEY OLD RAILWAY LINE PLANT SURVEY**

Following the Beeching cuts of the 60s, the last train from Otley ran in 1965 and within a year or so the track was lifted. The area near Otley station subsequently became the Otley Bypass (Rotary Way), but the route further west to Burley has remained more or less intact once the iron bridges over Ellar Ghyll and Bradford Road Burley had been dismantled. For years it has been used as an unofficial path but more recently under public ownership the section between the bypass and Ellar Ghyll has undergone some slight improvement in drainage to make it more easily walkable. Access is provided from the roundabout at the east end and at the other end there is a link onto the public footpath joining Bradford Road. This is the section of line that has been surveyed, about 1.5km in length.

BNB had considered doing a plant survey in the past but was rather put off by the large number of alien plants particularly



garden throw-outs or plantings carried out from adjacent gardens that back onto the railway line. However it was decided to take up the challenge when notices by the line appeared early in 2019 from Otley Town Council seeking planning permission to create a cycling route between Otley and Burley as part of the Wharfedale Greenway. This would be expected to involve much cutting back of the current vegetation and installation of a

tarmac or other hard surface a few metres wide suitable for cycling. So now seemed a good time to record the existing vegetation and plant species present before any structural changes occurred, and BNB started recording in March 2019 continuing to the end of the season.

On one of the early visits, with BNB in the company of fellow botanists MW and BAT, we had the good fortune to meet up with Lesley and Alan Wilson, who are keen gardeners and their garden backs onto the edge of the railway near the public path. They were very helpful in identifying some of the garden escapes and could remember when Common Spotted Orchid *Dactylorhiza fuchsii* regularly appeared on the line up to about 10 years ago. They also recalled Florence Houseman (1909-1989) who was a keen Otley botanist and became the Alien Plants expert for the YNU. Florence recorded plants along the railway from 1923-1934 and a few additions in 1959, a copy of which was given to us. It contains over 100 species, at least two-thirds of which are still present today. Of the rarer ones that have gone now are Twayblade *Neottia ovata* and Small Toadflax *Chaenorhinum minus* as well as the orchid mentioned above.

Around a dozen visits were made over the 2019 season and the list of species gradually built up to around 200. Here though, let's just mention a few of the more interesting as we walk along the line from east to west.

The eastern end is well shaded with some larger trees of sycamore, wych elm, horse-chestnut, goat willow and a nice Lime *Tilia x europaea*. Early spring flowers included Ivy-leaved Speedwell *Veronica hederifolia* and Sweet Violet *Viola odorata*. A small *Prunus* full of white blossom before leafing was a Cherry Plum *P. cerasifera*. A couple of open areas had colourful shrubberies of Flowering Currant *Ribes sanguineum*, and later in the season, Meadow Crane's-bill *Geranium pratense*, Knapweed *Centaurea nigra*, Musk-mallow *Malva moschata*, Buddleja *Buddleja davidii* and juicy blackberries. It was also an area for *Polystichum* ferns - one plant of Hard Shield-fern *P. aculeatum* and around 4 plants of Soft Shield-fern *P. setiferum*.

A more shaded area in a cutting then follows with holly and Cherry Laurel *Prunus laurocerasus*, and the handsome fronds of Male-fern *Dryopteris filix-mas*, Scaly Male-fern *D. borrieri* and Broad Buckler-fern *D. dilatata* are seen. There are a few Pedunculate Oak *Quercus robur*, beech, ash and a four-trunked sycamore with Three-nerved Sandwort *Moehringia trinervia* at its base. The path becomes muddy with a wet ditch alongside containing Remote Sedge *Carex remota* and various Willowherbs *Epilobium*. Alder likes it here. A ramp is reached, built up to replace an old bridge and allow access into a field, with the lane on the other side dropping down to Bradford Road. Beyond this is another wet section where the path is crossed by a couple of springs. Gardens now reach the top of the bank on the north side and the numbers of horticultural aliens

increase. Cotoneasters and currants have probably been spread by birds, but lilac and forsythia were most likely planted. Atlantic Ivy *Hedera hibernica* provides a continuous carpet for taller herbs to grow through - lots of hazel, raspberry, dog-rose, Wilson's Honeysuckle *Lonicera nitida* and a clump of Yellow Iris *Iris pseudacorus*. Around the springs are native Brooklime *Veronica beccabunga* and Floating Sweet-grass *Glyceria fluitans*.

After passing another dense shrubbery of Mock-orange *Philadelphus* 'Lemoinei Group' and Red-osier Dogwood *Cornus sericea*, an open area with Cut-leaved Crane's-bill *Geranium dissectum*, Meadowsweet *Filipendula ulmaria*, Perennial Cornflower *Centaurea montana* and Canadian Goldenrod *Solidago canadensis* takes us up to gates where a farm access road crosses. A spreading colony of Hedge Bedstraw *Galium album* occurs in the hedgerow here, an uncommon native around Otley. The next section to the stone arched railway bridge is shaded again with more *Cornus*, a garden privet tree and the hybrid holly *Ilex x altaclerensis*. On the opposite bank amongst the snowberry is a sprawling mass of Greater Periwinkle *Vinca major* which has been identified as the variety 'Oxyloba' and sports star-shaped purple flowers in May. Close by Henry's Honeysuckle *Lonicera henryi* has spread itself over the boundary fence from an adjacent garden but this has not flowered.

An unusual fern was spotted by BNB in winter 2017/18 but then disappeared amongst a sea of brambles and nettles over the summer. It was Fortune's Holly-fern *Cyrtomium fortunei* from East Asia and is totally unrelated to our native Holly-fern *Polystichum lonchitis*. When



studied more carefully last winter 3 plants of it were found near to the railway bridge. Lesley said it had not been planted to her knowledge, so likely that spores have drifted in from someone's garden. Other ferns liking this shady bank are male-ferns and Scaly Male-fern *D. affinis*, also another soft shield-fern.

The public footpath crosses over the bridge and can be joined to reach Bradford Road near the golf course. Between the path's boundary hedge and the old track bed is a patch of open ground that apparently was used as a hen-run in the past, which would account for its fertile soil. Nowadays it has been extensively taken over by nettles and garden throw-outs, typically the more 'thuggish' species which rapidly spread and naturalise themselves - Abraham-Isaac-Jacob *Trachystemon orientalis*, Hidcote comfrey *Symphytum x hidcotense* and various Geraniums. Plants of Blood-veined Dock *Rumex sanguineus* ssp. *sanguineus* with bright red veins were present as was Purple-loosestrife *Lythrum salicaria*, and Dotted Loosestrife *Lysimachia punctatum*, the garden form of Yellow Loosestrife. Tall spikes of Honeybells *Nothoscordon borbonicum* raised their heads above the nettles later in summer, but one plant with large leaves that remained buried by the nettles and didn't flower was identified by Alan as a Rodgersia *R. podophylla*.

Back on the track bed we pass another wet area with Water Avens *Geum rivale*, and this is likely to be the location for the Common Spotted-orchid of the past, but now being taken over by Himalayan Balsam *Impatiens glandulifera*. Large colonies of Bistort *Bistorta officinalis* occur at this end of the line spreading up the sides of cuttings and down the embankments. It was on Florence's list so must have been here for many years. The

walkable limit is reached at a fence guarding the vertical drop into Ellar Ghyll where the old iron bridge originally crossed Bradford Road. This area is shaded by Silver Birch *Betula pendula* and has native woodland plants such as Lords-and-Ladies *Arum maculatum*, Pignut *Conopodium majus* and Wood Speedwell *Veronica montana*, a fair sized crab-apple tree and a few shrubs of Guelder-rose *Viburnum opulus*.

Whilst it is interesting to see the often colourful alien plants and shrubs along the old line they cannot be said to have any real conservation value. Native plants and ancient woodland indicators such as Bluebells, Wood anemone, Three-nerved Sandwort, Wood Speedwell and the ferns are more important to conserve but they tend to grow on the banks away from the track bed. So if the cycleway plans do come to fruition it is unlikely that many important plants will be eradicated by putting down a new 'permanent way'. But hopefully there will be a sympathetic treatment of the more mature trees present, such as oak, ash, elm and lime, as these cannot be so readily replaced.

**Bruce Brown**



**Comma butterfly (NF)**

## POEMS

### **BOTANISING AT BURNBRAES**

There's a house in Evie town,  
 Where the land goes up and down,  
 And a burn runs down the hillside through a bog,  
 And Magellan's Ragwort grows  
 And a pretty Burnet Rose,  
 And Mimulus and Blinks and Yorkshire Fog.  
 I couldn't care a whistle for the Prickly Sow-thistle.  
 Hemlock Water Dropwort would be bad,  
 I don't give a jot for the Marsh Forget-me-not,  
 Stinking Hellebore just makes me sad.  
 You could plant a flower or two of perhaps a different hue;  
 Some Melancholy Thistle would be nice.  
 But you'll have to go to Lunga for a bit of Beccabunga,  
 That's good enough for Orkney Voles and Mice.

### **FUNGAL FEAST?**

Thrusting through dry pine needles  
 and dead oak leaves, first an orange ball  
 bursts towards day from darkened earth.  
 Ruptured veil on crimson sphere  
 as slimy shine dries to tough touch –  
 A virgin's deflowering in reverse.  
 Hallucinating slugs slink crazily around  
 the fly agaric, one October day, alone.

### **ILKLEY TARN – DECEMBER EVENING**

Icicles hanging on nibbled bent rushes  
 rattle impatiently in the bleak breeze,  
 acknowledge the tinkle of frozen gorse bushes –  
 everything growing here's sick of the freeze.  
 Trapped in frustration the water can't trickle  
 down to the tarn where it waits for a while.  
 Western skies glow, the moon like a sickle  
 pops up to look down, and forces a smile.

**Midge Leather**

### **BIODIVERSITY**

**Then**  
 Martins nest outside my window  
 their twitters threading early morning sleep.  
 Starlings raise rowdy young in bathroom vent  
 their fleas patterning the tub.  
 Bluebottles, houseflies, moths  
 cruise the living room, bat the pane.  
 Mice, living in the coal shed,  
 ease into the house when winter bites.  
 Wasps build a Chinese lantern nest  
 recycling the outside window frame.  
 A hermit toad keeps vigil in the cellar.  
 Our home sails on with all its many souls.  
 and, somehow, it survives.

**Now**  
 Crafted clay can't stick to plastic fascias.  
 Holes in guttering are all plugged firm.  
 No flypaper with its gummed crew of corpses  
 nor swatter on a stick, instead sprayed toxins,  
 electric Buggit-offs ensure exquisite hygiene.  
 We poison slugs and bugs, and puff  
 insecticide on plants. By all means,  
 encourage songbirds, but exclude the nasties  
 the magpies, jackdaws and bright jays;  
 beware of mess – or worse – of rats!  
 The lawn's our pride and joy, kept free of moss,  
 devoid of weeds, of insects, anything  
 but neatly mown grass.

**Jenny Dixon**

# BUTTERFLIES

## Highlights

- Painted Lady steals the show
- Silver-washed Fritillary makes surprise appearance
- Small Tortoiseshell fighting back
- Orange-tip has best results this Millennium
- Dramatic surge in Green Hairstreak numbers
- Purple Hairstreak missing

## Summary of 2019

A number of overwintering adults such as the Peacock, Comma and Small Tortoiseshell emerged earlier than last year and were grateful for what flowering plants were about. *Viburnum tinus*, perennial wallflower and snowdrops were some of the welcome nectar sources.

As the year progressed sightings of other butterflies shot up. The Peacock continued to flourish, we had twice as many Orange-tips and numbers of Dark Green Fritillary, Skippers, Brimstone, Ringlet and others all increased. The Silver-washed Fritillary reached our area and the Dingy Skipper returned after disappearing last year.

Migrants such as the Red Admiral and Peacock did really well but the highlight was undoubtedly the Painted Lady invasion with over 2,000 seen in Wharfedale compared to less than 100 in 2018. So-called 'Painted Lady Years' only come around once every so often. The last time we had a good year in Wharfedale was 2009 but even then there were fewer than 1,000 reported sightings.

Green Hairstreak numbers soared as a result of David Leather's and others stalwart efforts to record the butterflies on our local moors.

The main disappointments were no sightings of the Purple Hairstreak and the small numbers of the White-letter hairstreak, but all in all it's been an exciting year as the detailed report below will show. And to cap it all we've managed to complete the task of recording a butterfly in each of the tetrads in our area (a tetrad is four square kilometre box on the OS map), so well done everyone!

## The Big Butterfly Count

Nearly half a million Painted Ladies were counted in British parks and gardens as part of the biggest butterfly survey in the world. It topped the charts of the annual count with 420,841 recorded during high summer after their first big influx on British shores in a decade. This year too there were greater numbers of common species than last year. There were a combined 1.1 million of the most common five species seen, compared with 660,000 in 2018. [More detailed information is on the survey's website].

## WNS Reserves

Ben Rhydding gravel pits is well known for its display of orchids in early summer but there are always plenty of butterflies to see there too. This year Steve Parkes and his team of volunteers have been busy planting wild flowers to improve the biodiversity of the site and hopefully these extra nectar sources will encourage even more butterflies to the reserve.

Sun Lane continues to flourish with its wealth of butterflies and other insects. Otley Wetlands had an increase in butterfly sightings this year. Grass Wood and Bastow Woods are also

doing well and in particular Scotch Argus numbers (as mentioned in the species report) are booming.

## Spotlight on Gallows Hill Nature Reserve – hard work and determination pays off

An increase in butterfly sightings at the reserve this year sparked me into asking Gordon Haycock what the management team and volunteers are doing there that is making such a difference. His comments are as follows, and show that hard work and commitment can bring rewarding results.

“Butterflies are regarded as one of the key biodiversity indicator species at the reserve and we monitor diversity and abundance as an indicator of the success of management at the site. We maintain a wildflower meadow using traditional methods (cut and rake off arisings each September) which supports species such as common sorrel, meadowsweet, agrimony, yellow loosestrife and black knapweed. Our ongoing coppicing programme creates woodland glades which provide sheltered basking sites for thermophilous insects including butterflies.

Being a former sewage works, we have an abundance of common nettle and thistles which aren't readily appreciated as valuable by the public. This year we have installed an interpretation board which celebrates these plants pointing out that more than 40 species of insect are known to be completely or partially dependent on common nettle including peacock, comma, red admiral and small tortoiseshell butterflies all of which are abundant on the reserve.

We did some work with Buglife in spring 2018 which involved seeding a large area around the new ponds with native wildflowers, these gave a good show in 2019 after establishing in the first year. This was a wet meadow mix so included ragged robin, flag iris, gypsywort and purple loosestrife as well as hedge bedstraw, red campion and perforate St John's-wort. This has proved to be a great resource for nectaring insects including butterflies”.

## BUTTERFLY NUMBERS ON WNS RESERVES

	Observers	No. Days visited	Records	Most recorded butterfly	Total butterflies
Ben Rhydding Gravel Pits	7	11	44	Comma (5)	127
Sun Lane	5	32	157	Spec. Wood (19) Peacock (19)	917
Otley Wetlands	5	22	148	Spec. Wood (16)	1,113
Gallows Hill	6	33	162	Small Tortoiseshell (20)	588
Grass Wood & Bastow Wood	9	18	154	Spec. Wood (22)	847

The table above shows, for each of our local nature reserves, how many people visited and sent in records, the number of days these visits took place, the number of records sent in, the species that had the most records (and total number of records), and the total number of butterflies counted. There will be some duplication in butterfly numbers. For example if two people visited the same day but at different times, some of the same butterflies will have been counted twice.

## BEST PLACES TO SEE BUTTERFLIES

### Locations of peak counts

**Addingham** Small Tortoiseshell, Holly Blue  
**Bastow Wood** Scotch Argus  
**Ben Rhydding Gravel Pits** White-letter Hairstreak  
**Duck Street Quarry** Common Blue, Ringlet  
**Farnley** Large White  
**Fewston area** Green-veined White, Painted Lady  
**Gallows Hill NR** Brimstone, Small Tortoiseshell, Comma, White-letter Hairstreak  
**Grassington** Dingy Skipper  
**Ilkley/Addingham Moor** Green Hairstreak  
**Ilkley riverside** Meadow Brown  
**Kettlewell, Park Rash** Peacock  
**Kilnsey** Small Heath, Dark Green Fritillary, Northern Brown Argus  
**Leathley** Red Admiral  
**Otley Wetlands** Speckled Wood  
**Sandwith Moor** Painted Lady  
**Simons Seat** Small Copper  
**Skyreholme village** Small White  
**Stainburn Forest** Small Skipper, Large Skipper  
**Strid Wood, Bolton Abbey** Orange-tip  
**Sun Lane NR** Brimstone  
**Timble Ings** Wall, Ringlet, Meadow Brown  
**Upper Barden reservoir** Green Hairstreak  
**Weeton** Gatekeeper

### 2019 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 4,177 records this year compared to 3,095 in 2018, a 35% increase. 29 species were reported, the Ringlet once again being the most abundant with a total of 2,369 sightings followed by the Painted Lady with 2,037 sightings. Missing this year was the Purple Hairstreak but welcome appearances of the Clouded Yellow, Dingy Skipper and Silver-washed Fritillary boosted the tally.

## 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 2019 is compared with the average of the TEN previous years, and the percentage change is given.

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 (SKIPPERS)

#### Dingy Skipper *Erynnis tages* 1532 (57.001)

*Records: Only 1 record received.*

*First and last sighting 15/5/19* Lea Green, Grassington [TC]

Good news we have a new location for Dingy Skipper in our recording area. The caterpillars feed on Birds-foot Trefoil *Lotus corniculatus* which is often to be found in post industrial brownfield sites where the plant can form carpets of yellow flowers but because of this predilection it is always vulnerable to development or the land scrubbing over. We have not seen it at the Middleton Hospital site since 2014 and we have not found it at Thruscross since 2017. So a report of two individuals at Lea Green near Grassington on the 15 May was very welcome, not least because this protected site is a SSSI with stable management and not brownfield at all. Perhaps with a fair wind we will be able to follow its fortunes for years to come.

#### Small Skipper *Thymelicus sylvestris* 1526 (57.006)

*Records 17% UP, 37 sites, 22 observers, 1,038 individuals*

*First sighting 6/6/19* edge of Stainburn Forest, [DA]

*Last sighting 28/8/19* Timble Ings [DA]

*Peak Count 24/7/19* Stainburn Forest when around 100 were counted [KL]

Another good year for the Small Skipper with 25% more records than last year, and about the same increase in butterflies counted. The Stainburn Forest area appears to be the best place to see both the Small and Large Skipper with peak counts for both species at this site.

Sightings started earlier this year and over a longer period. The last record in 2018 was 5 August but this year we had 22 records after this date, the last record being at Timble Ings on 28 August. The highest count at Timble Ings was on 30 July when 35 were seen by David and Joan Alred. Not as good as last year when they saw 100 there on several days. We had good counts again this year at Ilkley Moor (DL counted 57), at Threshfield Quarry and Long Ashes (KS counted 58) and at Scargill House, Kettlewell when PM counted 32. At our nature reserves peak counts were as follows: Otley Wetlands (23), Bastow Wood (11), Sun Lane (6), Ben Rhydding Gravel Pits (4), Gallows Hill (1).

The Large Skipper and Small Skipper are often seen in the same habitats yet the Small Skipper is more numerous. The total count for the Small Skipper is 1,038 compared to only 116 for the Large Skipper. They each have different grass food plants: the Small Skipper mostly using Yorkshire Fog and the Large Skipper liking taller and uncut grasses including Cocks Foot, Purple Moor Grass and False Brome.

#### Large Skipper *Ochlodes sylvanus* 1531 (57.009)

*Records 35% DOWN, 19 sites, 12 observers, 116 individuals*

*First sighting 6/6/19* Timble Ings [NF]

*Last sighting 6/8/19* Thruscross [KS]

*Peak Count 13/7/19* Stainburn Forest when 15 counted [NF]

A few more records than last year (34 compared to 28) but still 35% down on the average for the last 10 years. The



number seen on each occasion has increased by over 60% so there is hope that the long term situation will improve.

The flight period last year was for only 5 weeks from 7 June to 11 July. This year it has increased, with records dated from 6 June to 6 August.

Stainburn Forest had the peak count (15) but this is nowhere near the counts we had from this area earlier this Millennium. There was a count of 140 in 2001, 200 in 2002, 115 in 2003, 40 in 2004 and 52 in 2005. All records from Dave Howson.

## **PIERIDAE (WHITES)**

### **Orange Tip *Anthocharis cardamines* 1553 (58.003)**

*Records 82% UP, 90 sites, 29 observers, 526 individuals*

*First sighting 29/3/19 Gallows Hill [SBry] and Ilkley [PB]*

*Last sighting 20/6/19 Bolton Abbey [PP]*

*Peak Count 14/5/19 at Strid Wood, Bolton Abbey when 14 were counted [AG]*

An excellent year for the Orange-tip with its highest number of records this Millennium and the number seen almost double last year. Records came from throughout lower Wharfedale. Reports further north were few, with Paul Millard spotting one at each of the following sites: Yockenthwaite, Hawkswick Wood and Dib Scar (Conistone).

Otley Wetlands had the peak count of 12 last year but this year the highest count there was 5 on 13 May [PP]. Sun Lane was the reserve with the highest count, 8 on 20 April [JK].

The flight period started over three weeks earlier than last year. We received 37 records before the date of the first butterfly seen last year. The last date one was reported was 20 June, much sooner than last year's date of 9 July.

Nyree and David Fearnley were our top egg spotters: 30 were counted at Stainburn Forest, 25 at Lindley Fish Farm and one at Thruscross reservoir. Almost all of the eggs were found on its main foodplant – Milk Maid – but one was seen on Large Bittercress and Garlic Mustard.

### **Large White *Pieris brassicae* 1549 (58.006)**

*Records 13% UP, 61 sites, 25 observers, 383 individuals.*

*First sighting 11/4/19 Otley, Weston Village, [PP]*

*Last sighting 15/10/19 Otley, Whiteley Croft, [DJ]*

*Peak Count 23/8/19 Farnley, Sawpit Gill, when 20 were counted [NF]*

Records not as good as last years. We had 8% fewer records but the numbers counted were down by 40%. In the national Big Butterfly Count sightings were also down by a similar amount.

Last year we had 9 sites with counts of 10 butterflies or more but this year just 4.

The majority of records came from lower Wharfedale but good to have a record as far as Starbotton where Gordon Haycock spotted one on Moor End Fell.

### **Small White *Pieris rapae* 1550 (58.007)**

*Records 30% UP, 72 sites, 28 observers, 682 individuals*

*First sighting 28/3/19 Ilkley, Middleton Woods, [DH]*

*Last sighting 2/10/19 Otley garden [DJ]*

*Peak Count 29/7/19 Skyreholme village when 15 counted [PM]*

A similar story to the Large White. Records down just 3% but numbers seen are down nearly 40%. In the national Big Butterfly Count its numbers were down 42%, the same as the Large White.

Last year's peak count was 80 compared to this year's 15. In 2018 the peak count was at Tumble Ings where only 3 visits were made by members. This year 5 visits were made but the highest count was only 3.

The majority of records were from lower Wharfedale and the Washburn and the furthest sighting up the dale was in Kettlewell.

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

*Records 14% DOWN, 79 sites, 29 observers, 614 individuals*

*First sighting 19/4/19 Middleton Woods, [DH]*

*Last sighting 26/9/19 Otley garden, [ES]*

*Peak Count 1/8/19 Fewston reservoir, when 20 counted [JW]*

The 223 records we received is only 3% lower than last year but the number of butterflies counted is nearly 50% less. The majority of records came from lower Wharfedale but we also had a few sightings further up the dale as far as Buckden and Yockenthwaite. Aside from the peak count of 20 at Fewston we also had good counts at Gallows Hill NR (18), Ilkley river (18), Otley wetlands (14), Ilkley Moor (11), and Fewston reservoir (10).

The butterfly was out and about much earlier than last year. The date of the first sighting being 6 weeks earlier. We had 88 records before last year's date of first sighting was reached!

### **Clouded Yellow *Colias croceus* 1545 (58.010)**

*Records: Only 1 record received.*

*First (and last) sighting 11/6/19 Duck Street quarry, [PM]*

One was seen at Greenhow by Paul Millard on 11 June. It was flying rapidly from the east and disappeared heading toward Upper Wharfedale. This was probably a first wave migrant. There were ten observed together at the new Ripon City Wetlands reserve on 24 August, which is strongly suggestive that they were breeding there maybe from another individual in that first wave of migration. The Clouded Yellow is an infrequent migrant to the UK, it breeds on arrival, feeding on leguminous plants like Clovers and Lucerne. It seems to be unable to survive our winters. The societies records show that it last paid us a visit in 2014 when it was seen several times at the Sun Lane and Otley wetlands reserves.

### **Brimstone *Gonepteryx rhamni* 1546 (58.013)**

*Records 19% UP, 31 sites, 24 observers, 78 individuals*

*First sighting 15/2/19 Otley [RP]*

*Last sighting 19/9/19 Burley [DA]*

*Peak Count 30/4/19 Gallows Hill [SBry] and 21/5/19 Sun Lane NR [JK] when 4 were counted on each occasion.*

After last year's disappointing records it was good to see an increase this year from 34 to 59 and the numbers seen were almost twice as many. The Brimstone was mainly seen in lower Wharfedale with only one reported north of Grassington at Hawkswick Wood [NF] The first sighting is over 3 weeks earlier than last year.

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

### **Wall *Lasiommata megera* 1615 (59.002)**

*Records 71% UP, 24 sites, 13 observers, 65 individuals*

*First sighting 13/5/19 Stainburn Forest, [NF]*

*Last sighting 5/9/19 Ilkley, [PJB]*

*Peak Count 28/8/19 Timble Ings, when 8 were counted [DA]*

We had the same number of individuals as last year and the 36 records we received, although slightly less than last year, still compares favourably with the average over the last 10 years (71% up). Last year sightings in our vice-county area (VC64) increased from 107 to 340 which was the largest increase of the Yorkshire VCs. So the Wall continues to be doing well in our area though nationally it remains a 'species of concern'.

Sightings in Wharfedale were in the main from lower Wharfedale but we did have one record for Skyreholme in August from Paul Millard. There were sightings in only two of our nature reserves: Sun Lane [DA] and Otley Wetlands [PP].

The date of the first sighting is two weeks earlier than last year.

### **Speckled Wood *Pararge aegeria* 1614 (59.003)**

*Records 17% DOWN, 91 sites, 32 observers, 720 individuals*

*First sighting 6/4/19 Farnley Lake [NF]*

*Last sighting 3/10/19 Ben Rhydding Gravel Pits*

*Peak Count 10/9/19 Otley Wetlands when 41 counted [PP]*

The Speckled Wood did not appear from its hibernation as a caterpillar/chrysalis last year until 5 May, possibly as a result of the Beast from the East. This year hibernation was more successful and we had 39 records before this date was reached.

Despite this good start we had slightly fewer records than last year and 17% down on the 10 year average the same as last year). The date of the last sighting is over a month earlier than last year.

Again the peak count was at Otley Wetlands but there were also good counts at Beecroft Plantation, Fewston reservoir when 22 were counted [NF], at Sun Lane when 14 were counted [JK], and Stainburn Forest [NF] when 14 were also counted.

In the national Big Butterfly Count abundance was down 18%.

The furthest sighting last year was at Kettlewell so it was good to have a record from Buckden this year on 22 June [MC].

### **Small Heath *Coenonympha pamphilus* 1627 (59.005)**

*Records 23% DOWN, 36 sites, 18 observers, 838 individuals*

*First sighting 29/5/19 Kilnsey Low Ox Pasture, [PM]*

*Last sighting 27/8/19 Grimwith Moor, [PM]*

*Peak Count 3/7/19 Kilnsey Low Ox Pasture, when 97 counted [PM]*

Once again we have a good number of records and an increase in the number of individual insects seen. The Small Heath continues to cause concern nationally with it becoming a scarce finding in lowland Britain. The benefit of being a member of Wharfedale Naturalists is that we have both

lowland and upland, and both limestone and acid moorland habitats to explore. In microcosm we can see from the distribution of the Small heath in our area the problems that it is having nationally. The Small heath has retired to the uplands. It is not unreasonable to blame climate change and habitat loss. In time it may well evolve a warm tolerance, it is after all commonly found in much hotter climates in Europe. The Society's records for instance, show that it was once common at Ben Rhydding Gravel Pits with counts regularly of 40 individuals in the ten years from 1974 to 1984, just 16 were seen here in 1996 and then singletons in 1997 and 2014. There have been none since and yet the habitat should be acceptable to it. The flight period is again consistent with there being two generations this year.

### **Scotch Argus *Erebia aethiops* 1618 (59.008)**

*Records 76% UP, 4 sites, 7 observers, 328 individuals*

*First sighting 3/8/19 Bastow Wood, [AG]*

*Last sighting 18/8/19 Bastow wood [NF]*

*Peak Count 12/8/19 Bastow Wood when 114 seen [ES]*

It was only in 2011 just eight short years ago that this Northern specialist butterfly was re-discovered at Park Rash near Kettlewell. Two years later it appeared in Bastow Wood and then Sleets Gill in Littondale, most recently just two years ago a colony was discovered in Scargill House near Kettlewell. DNA barcoding carried out by researchers at the University of Lancaster has proved that the colony now established at Bastow Wood shares its genetic makeup with the natural colony found at Smardale Gill in Cumbria. The Smardale Gill colony is very strong, it is one of the two remaining natural English populations, the other being at Arnside Knott. It is presumed that there have been unofficial translocations taking place. It does beg the question how long a butterfly must be breeding independently before we can regard it as natural to the area. Some people regard five years as being about right so our colonies are now coming of age, so to speak.

It does not move easily from one area to another under its own steam, the females fly very short distances, just a 100 metres or so in its lifetime. The colony at Arnside Knott is genetically distinct from that at Smardale Gill and is diminishing in numbers despite much work to improve the habitat for butterflies, this may be because the Smardale colony has somehow developed tolerance to warmer climates. The peak count of 114 this year was by Ernie Scarfe at Bastow Wood on 12 August. It is comfortably the highest count, in 2018 by comparison the peak count at this location was 77. This location at the turn of the 19th Century used to support thousands of insects, Victorian collectors used to travel miles to visit the site. The Scargill House location saw a peak count of 65 which is far higher than the previous highest count of three in 2017. Even though the visit in 2017 was not as thorough and figures are not strictly comparable there is no doubt that it is very happy at this location and is expanding numbers rapidly.

### **Ringlet *Aphantopus hyperantus* 1629 (59.009)**

*Records 8% DOWN, 70 sites, 29 observers, 2,369 individuals*

*First sighting 6/6/19 Burley garden [SB]*

*Last sighting 20/8/19 Duck Street Quarry [MB]*

*Peak Count 16/7/19 Duck Street Quarry when 370 counted.*

Last year records in Wharfedale slumped by 30% but this year sightings recovered and increased by 27%. The records

received (199) are only 8% down on the average number over the last 10 years so all in all good news for this popular butterfly.

Nationally in the Big Butterfly Count the butterfly did extremely well with numbers seen up by 132%.

The sighting by Susan Barton on 6 June this year is well ahead of the next reported sightings on 27 June at Gallows hill NR and Addingham.

The 370 counted at Duck Street quarry is the 5th largest count in Wharfedale since our records began in 1946. The highest ever count in our area was in 2007 when 500 were counted at Otley Wetlands. The highest count there this year was 231 [PP].

Records came from throughout lower Wharfedale and the Washburn where we also had good counts at Timble Ings (100 counted by Pat and Ken Limb and at the site of the old Primary school Addingham, where 65 were counted [DM].

### **Meadow Brown *Maniola jurtina* 1626 (59.010)**

*Records 10% DOWN, 89 sites, 32 observers, 1,786 observers*

*First sighting 16/6/19 Otley Wetlands [PP]*

*Last sighting 10/9/19 Burley Woodhead [DA]*

*Peak Count 8/7/19 when 100 were counted at Ilkley river [DL] and on 23/7/19 when 100 counted at Timble Ings [KL]*

A similar year to last with only a slight increases in records and numbers counted about the same.

Aside from the peak counts above we also had good numbers from a variety of places including Otley Wetlands when 50 were counted [PP], Lindley reservoir [NF] and Middleton Hospital site, Ilkley [DL] when 50 were counted at each. At Sun Lane we had a count in the forties for the third year running, a far cry from the 223 counted there in 2001.

### **Gatekeeper *Pyronia tithonus* 1625 (59.011)**

*Records 5% DOWN, 15 sites, 11 observers, 115 individuals*

*First sighting 13/7/19 Otley [MC]*

*Last sighting 22/8/19 Sun Lane NR [JK]*

*Peak Count 1/8/19 Dunkeswick, Weeton when 20 were counted by the Botany Group*

*Behaviour:* Overwinters as a caterpillar. Broods: one. The northern limit is a line between Flamborough and Ripon, though this line moves year by year depending on the weather that season. Currently expansion appears stalled.

The Gatekeeper has fared better in Wharfedale this year than of late. The 43 records received is an improvement on the last three years when records were less than 30. We are now almost back to the 10 year average for Wharfedale but overall Yorkshire is doing poorly. In 2018 Butterfly Conservation's Yorkshire records had the lowest total in 13 years. By contrast, the Gatekeeper is doing very well nationally. In the Big Butterfly Count this year 95% more were counted than the previous year.

Last year we only received records from five sites but this year the number of sites have more than doubled with sightings in the Washburn valley and Bastow Wood.

### **Marbled white *Melanargia galathea* 1620 (59.012)**

No records

### **Dark Green Fritillary *Argynnis aglaja* 1607 (59.019)**

*Records 12% UP, 30 sites, 18 observers, 311 individuals*

*First sighting 2/7/19 Dib Scar, Conistone, [PM]*

*Last sighting 28/8/19 Timble Ings, [DA]*

*Peak Count 17/7/19 Low Ox Pasture, Kilnsey, when 47 counted [PM]*

This was another good year for this large fritillary which is often seen in upland areas in July and August. It has once again been seen more often, and in greater numbers. On a sunny day it is easy to locate in the large clearing in the YWT Grass Wood reserve and a little further on into Bastow Wood. Now that the Silver-washed Fritillary has arrived in our area we have to be more careful in making the identification. The larger Silver-washed is more usually seen in woodland glades where it particularly likes feeding on bramble flowers.

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

*Records: Only 1 record*

*First sighting 3/8/19 Fewston reservoir, [MH]*

As expected this large fritillary has arrived in Wharfedale. Two were seen with photographs on 3 August at Fewston Reservoir nectaring in a sunny woodland glade. They have fairly raced up the country this year with reports from Bedale, Richmond and further up into County Durham. More than a dozen were flying in Skipton Quarry woods in a location where it was seen the year before. It would appear to be breeding there. The society's records show that occasional wandering individuals have shown up in the past, one was observed four times in Menston in 2006 and another was seen in 2013 in Ilkley but these were just scouts or perhaps inappropriate releases, now they seem to be in Yorkshire to stay. This strong flying butterfly is a beneficiary of global warming. It would appear that the migration route is up the Eastern side of the country over the last few years conquering Norfolk, Lincolnshire and South Yorkshire before taking the Vale of York Northwards. This is interesting to compare with the route taken into our area of the Dark-green Fritillary which moved in from the West on the high ground from its strongholds in the South Lakes and Morecambe Bay.

### **Red Admiral *Vanessa atalanta* 1590 (59.023)**

*Records 27%, 94 sites, 34 observers, 763 individuals*

*First sighting 22/2/19 Burley, The Copse, [DH]*

*Last sighting 29/10/19 Otley garden, [ES]*

*Peak Count 16/10/19 Leathley village, when 15 counted [PP]*

Again, like last year only a few reports were received up to the end of May showing that the butterfly is not yet ready to overwinter in Wharfedale in any great numbers, though in the warmer, southern half of the UK, numbers are higher.

The Red Admirals you see in spring and early summer will therefore be migrants that have arrived in the UK from North Africa and continental Europe. Records here soared from the second half of June as a result of the migrant butterflies. On arrival the females lay their eggs (usually on nettles) and consequently there is an emergence of fresh butterflies from the latter half of July. Our records show 4 records to the end of May, 41 in June and 263 for July – September.

We received records this year totalling 334, 39% up on the previous year. Not such a huge migration as the Painted Lady (see separate report) but nevertheless very encouraging. The majority of records came from lower Wharfedale. North of

Grassington we received reports from Kilnsey, Kettlewell and Starbotton, where on 21 June Gordon Haycock saw one on Moor End Fell – a keen migrant to travel so far!

### **Painted Lady *Vanessa cardui* 1591 (59.024)**

*Records 439%, 127 sites, 41 observers, 2,037 individuals*

*First sighting 6/6/19 at Low Ox Pasture, Kilnsey [AR]*

*Last sighting 12/10/19 at Lindley Reservoir [NF]*

*Peak Count 29/6/19 at Sandwith Moor [AJ] and 3/8/19 at Beecroft Plantation near Fewston [MH] where 100 or more butterflies were counted at each.*

Well, what an amazing year for the Painted Lady – a staggering 2,037 butterflies were seen compared to just 75 last year! We received 419 records which is the highest this millennium.

This weather-dependant immigrant from North Africa arrived in Wharfedale from early June onwards. With successful breeding, numbers remained high throughout the summer months. Although a number of people reported seeing only a single specimen, we had 45 reports of sightings of ten and above up to two peak counts of 100.

Records were received throughout Wharfedale and as far as Conistone and Sleets Gill in Littondale. Lots of people reported Painted Ladies in their garden, especially on Buddleia. The highest number seen in gardens was 30 on 1 August at Anne and Peter Riley's garden in Burley. In our nature reserves the butterflies made a bee-line for Sun Lane, Burley where 50 were counted on 3 August. Our other nature reserves had peak counts as follows: Ben Rhydding Gravel Pits (10), Gallows Hill (7), Otley Wetlands (6), and Bastow and Grass Wood (4),

### **Peacock *Aglais io* 1597 (59.026)**

*Records 31% UP, 135 sites, 40 recorders, 1,874 individuals*

*First sighting 22/2/19 Middleton Woods [DH]*

*Last sighting 17/10/19 Sun Lane, [JK]*

*Peak Count 8/8/19 Park Rash, Kettlewell, when 61 counted [PM]*

Three times as many Peacocks seen this year compared to 2018 and over twice as many records. The milder winter resulted in more adult butterflies surviving and the first date one was seen was 6 weeks earlier than 2018. We had 41 records before 9/4/18 (the date of the first sighting last year) which shows how successful their hibernation was.

The increase in numbers would also be due to the migration of adults from Europe as summer progressed. Sightings came from throughout Wharfedale and as usual, August was the month when most were seen. Last year the highest number counted at any one time was 121 at Duck Street quarry. This year the highest count there was 4. There were only four visits to the quarry so who knows, on other days, there may have been more. We also had a count last year of 100 at Timble Ings but the highest this year was 35 on 1/8/19 [DA].

### **Small Tortoiseshell *Aglais urticae* 1593 (59.027)**

*Records 19% UP, 137 sites, 41 observers, 1,023 individuals*

*First sighting 22/2/19 Middleton Woods [DH], Otley garden [DO], Skyreholme [PM]*

*Last sighting 30/10/19 Otley garden [PP]*

*Peak Count 11/7/19 and 3/8/19 Low Moor Addingham when 23 were seen [DM].*

Like the Peacock and Comma the Small Tortoiseshell had a successful hibernation with 55 reports received in February and March compared to only 1 last year.

Records for the whole year increased by 40%. Aside from Addingham, high counts also came from Gallows Hill where Simon Bryant counted 20 on 23 July, and at the edge of Ilkley Moor, David Alred counted 14 on 25 July.

Although the butterfly had a good year in Wharfedale, nationally the butterfly is still in decline, numbers having fallen by 78% since the 1970s. The national Big Butterfly Count revealed that global heating could be the cause of the mysterious decline of this once ubiquitous butterfly. Last summer was the worst for the species since the scheme began although this year it bounced back: 70,000 were spotted, bringing its highest number for five years.

Richard Fox, of Butterfly Conservation, said “the Small Tortoiseshell showed up well in Scotland and Northern Ireland, where it was the second most seen species, but struggled to make the top 10 in England and Wales. On average, count participants in Scotland and Northern Ireland saw more than twice as many small tortoiseshells as people in England”.

“We’re still trying to establish what is behind the long-term decline of the Small Tortoiseshell and while it is good news that the butterfly fared better this summer, the poor results in southern England in particular suggest that climate change may be having more of an impact on this species than we have previously realised,” Fox said.

### **Comma *Polygonia c-album* 1598 (59.031)**

*Records 42% UP, 66 sites, 29 observers, 390 individuals*

*First sighting 23/2/19 at the woodland edge, Ilkley Lido when 3 were seen [NF]*

*Last sighting 16/11/19 Norwood edge [NF]*

*Peak Count 23/7/19 Gallows Hill NR when 15 counted [SBry]*

Another good year for the Comma with records slightly increased from last year. More notable however is the 42% increase in records this year compared to the average for the last 10 years.

Last year's mild autumn and winter has benefited the species with its emergence, like the Peacock and Small Tortoiseshell, over 6 weeks earlier than 2018. We had 49 records before last year's first sighting on 9 April.

Aside from the peak count at Gallows Hill we also had good numbers at Ghyll House Farm, Skyreholme when Paul Millard counted 10 on 21 August. Paul has planted many trees, shrubs and wildflowers on his land to improve its biodiversity and all his hard work is certainly paying off with 17 different species seen there this year, including Green Hairstreak. We never see the Comma in vast numbers but other good counts were at Sun Lane and Timble Ings when 6 were counted at each site.

The majority of records again came from lower Wharfedale but with a couple of records from Kettlewell.

## **LYCAENIDAE (BLUES AND HAIRSTREAKS)**

### **Small Copper *Lycaena phlaeas* 1561 (61.001)**

*Records 13% DOWN, 31 sites, 17 observers, 115 individuals*

*First sighting 2/4/19 Burley Moor [PR]*

*Last sighting* 28/9/19, Addingham garden, [DM]

*Peak Count* 6/6/19 Moor track to Simon's seat when 12 were counted [DM]

It was disappointing to receive only 60 records this year following last year's high of 97. Individuals counted were consequently much lower, at 115 compared to 179. The majority of records were once again from lower Wharfedale, Kettlewell being the furthest sighting north [PM].

The peak count of 12 is the number I saw while walking along a small stretch of path from Barden Fell to Simon's Seat and is probably an under-estimate. If I'd had time to stop and walk off the path and explore I'm sure the number would have been much higher by the movement above the heather I saw in the distance.

At Lindley Fish Farm where we had a peak count of 10 last year, the highest count this year was 3 on 24/8/19 [NF]. The most visited site where the butterfly was seen was Timble Ings, and on 6/6/19 there was a count of 6 [NF]. 6 June must have been a very sunny day as by coincidence it's the same date I counted the 12 near Simon's seat. The highest count in our records for Timble Ings is 100, seen in August 1997 [DA].

No sighting reported at Bastow Woods this year but good to have two sightings record from Gallows Hill [SBry].

### **Purple Hairstreak *Favonius quercus* 1557 (61.004)**

*Records: NONE*

No records. This doesn't mean that there were no butterflies in our area. It is quite likely that they were here, but nobody saw one and reported it.

This hairstreak is very difficult to see from the ground as it spends most of its time at the top of oak trees (which are its food plant). Often you'll need binoculars to see them. If any of our members, be they naturalists or just walkers, are out and about next year perhaps they could take a pair of binoculars and have a look out for this butterfly. July and early August are the best months. Last year they were seen at Fewston reservoir, Norwood Edge, Gallows Hill NR, Ben Rhydding gravel pits, Otley Chevin and Burley but they could be anywhere there is an oak tree, especially if it is a mature specimen.

### **Green Hairstreak *Callophrys rubi* 1555 (61.005)**

*Records* 30% UP, 24 sites, 18 observers, 699 individuals

*First sighting* 17/4/19 Otley Chevin [NF]

*Last sighting* 6/6/19 Timble Ings [DA]

*Peak Count* 28/4/19 from Upper Barden reservoir to Halton heights when 50 counted [ES]

The individual count of 699 butterflies compares to 103 last year. This huge increase in numbers is due in the main to David Leather who painstakingly scoured Ilkley and Addingham moors in April and May hunting out the butterflies. His tally of 299 is commendable. As a result of his enthusiasm several other naturalists continued his fine work and sought out even more butterflies on the moors. The combined total for Addingham and Ilkley moors reaching 391 butterflies – a great effort! A detailed account of David's work is contained separately in this review.

There were also a good number of records from Burley Moor from Anne Riley and the peak count there was 20 on 21 April. Several people sent in records from Otley Chevin where the peak count was 25 on 21 April [NF]. Additional

records came from Tibble Ings, Thruscross, Skyreholme, Greenhow and the Grassington area.

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

*Records* 39% DOWN, 8 sites, 9 observers, 23 individuals

*First sighting* 29/6/19 Ben Rhydding Gravel Pits [SP]

*Last sighting* 2/8/19 Burley, garden [PR]

*Peak Count* 7/7/19 [MG] & 13/7/19 [DA], Ben Rhydding Gravel Pits and 23/7/19 [SBry] Gallows Hill NR, when 3 were counted at both sites.

Last year Paul Millard found an egg at Grass Wood but we have had no sightings from the reserve this year so are unable to confirm whether the butterfly is there.

It is another butterfly (like the Purple Hairstreak) that spends most of its time at the top of trees (in this case Elm). However it is often seen feeding on nectar-rich plants below the trees.

You will only see the butterfly in gardens if there is an elm tree in the vicinity. This year we had reports from four gardens: Burley [PR] and [CP], Otley [GH] and Addingham [MT]. Aside from the sites already mentioned we also had sightings at Wharfebank Mills, Otley [GH] and at Howgill [PM].

We only had a few more records than last year but it was good to have sightings again this year from our nature reserves at Ben Rhydding and Gallows Hill.

### **Holly Blue *Celastrina argiolus* 1580 (61.012)**

*Records* 180% UP, 40 sites, 26 observers, 197 individuals

*First sighting* 29/3/19 Gallows Hill, Otley, [SBry]

*Last sighting* 14/9/19 Burley garden, [FP]

*Peak Count* 13/5/19 Addingham vegetable garden, [HB]

The Holly Blue continues to do extremely well. The number of reports this year (139) is even higher than last year's record breaking total of 132, and the total number counted only down a little. Again, like last year many people saw more than just single individuals.

The Holly Blue overwinters as a chrysalis/pupa and this year the first one seen was two weeks earlier than last year. The last sighting was three weeks before last year's date.

Almost all the records came from lower Wharfedale and the Washburn. No records in Grassington or beyond. The furthest north being from Skyreholme [PM] with singletons in May and August.

In the Big Butterfly Count (where the butterfly had its best ever count in 2018), the butterfly had a disappointing result with the second brood of butterflies 50% down on 2018. Records in Wharfedale also reflected a decrease in the second brood: 42% of the total records this year compared to over 60% last year.

### **Northern Brown Argus *Aricia Artaxerxes* 1573 (61.016)**

*Records* 42% DOWN, 4 sites, 5 observers, 256 individuals

*First sighting* 6/6/19 Conistone, Dib Scar and Bastow Wood [IB] and Kilnsey, Low Ox Pasture, [AR]

*Last sighting* 8/8/19 Kilnsey, Cool Scar, [PM]

*Peak count* 29/6/19 Kilnsey, Low Ox Pasture, when 82 counted [PM]

After the drought in 2018 which dried the Common Rock Rose to a crisp during the critical larval stage of this habitat specialist we were predicting a collapse in numbers in 2019. The good news is that it did not happen. Numbers of sightings and absolute counts were a very welcome normal steady as she goes. There must have been enough moisture at the base of the plants to produce a few leaves for the tiny newly hatched larvae. It must have been surviving summer droughts and extreme desiccation events for thousands of years. It will have evolved behaviours enabling it to survive these extremes. The similar Brown Argus butterfly once again did not show up in our area. This insect which has recently undergone a behavioural change and changed its principal foodplant to Geraniaceae is benefitting from global warming and expanding its range in Yorkshire, just not yet into Wharfedale.

**Common Blue *Polyommatus Icarus* 1574 (61.018)**

*Records 51% DOWN, 22 sites, 16 observers, 1,389 individuals*

*First sighting 17/5/19 Green Lane, Otley [MC]*

*Last sighting 23/8/19 Timble Ings, [DA]*

*Peak Count 16/7/19 at Duck Street Quarry, Greenhow when 691 were counted [MB]*

The number of records we receive continues to decline and the 45 received this year is 50% down on the average over the last 10 years.

The largest count as usual was from Duck Street Quarry. Two days after Mike Barnham’s visit when he counted 691 the Wharfedale Nats also visited and counted around 500. (see separate report also in this Review). The second best site was Sandwith Moor Pit, Norwood (near Little Alms Cliff) when on 29 June 50 were counted [AJ]. This site is only just in the Wharfedale boundary and we have had no records of Common Blue from here in the past. We also haven’t had many records in the surrounding areas, with Swinsty, Tiimble and Stainburn Forest producing counts of less than five. So Sandwith Moor will be worth visiting again next year especially as around 100 Painted Lady were also seen the same day!

Elsewhere in Wharfedale we had records from the usual sites north of Grassington (Kilnsey, Conistone, Kettlewell and Arncliffe). At Otley Wetlands the peak count was 10 on 21 June [PR] and [PP], compared to 16 last year and 26 the year before.

**LOOKING FORWARD TO 2020**

In 2020 it would be good if even more people reported their butterfly sightings to recorders. For those people up for a challenge, then what about looking high above the oak trees for Purple Hairstreaks or on vegetation near elm trees for the White-letter Hairstreak? Where there are dry stone walls or rocks in a sunny spot have a look out for basking butterflies such as the aptly named Wall.

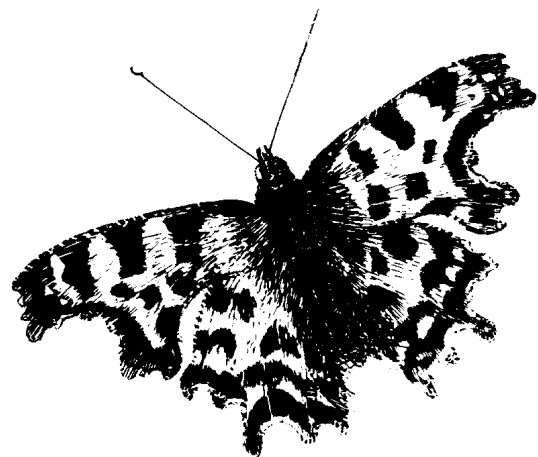
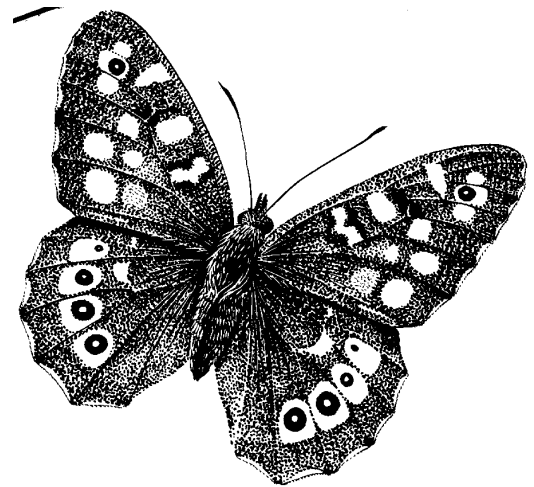
For most of the popular species we always get more records from lower Wharfedale where the population density is greater and people go looking for butterflies nearer to home. But there will be many butterflies in the north of our area which are under reported, in particular the Speckled Wood has never been reported from the conifer plantations in Greenfield (west of Beckermonds), it must be present there, so if you do manage to get further afield please keep a look out and let us know what you see. Many thanks!

**Diane Morris and Paul Millard**

**Butterfly Recorders 2019**

Without our stalwart observers this report would not have been possible. Many thanks to everyone who sent in records:

Alder, Chris & Joan, (CA); Alred, David, Helen & Joan (DA); Austin, David and Ann (DAA); Bancroft, Peter (PB); Barnham, Mike (MB); Barton, Susan (SB); Blomfield, Ian and Barbara (BIB); Bryant, Simon (Sbry); Burns, Peter & Janet (PJB); Burrows, Heather and Dick (HB); Clerk, Mike & Joyce (MC); Crawford Terry (TC); Dixon, Jenny; (JD); Falls, Richard (RF); Fearnley, David & Nyree (NF); Gramshaw, Audrey (AG); Grey, Melvin (MG); Haycock, Gordon (GH); Healey, John (JH); Hockey, Mark Horner (MH); Horner, Carmen & Fred (CH); Howson, David (DH); Howson, Tim (TH); Howson, Phil, (PH); Jakeways, Diana (DJ); Jowett, Andy (AJ); Kay, Julia (JKay); Kelly, Andrew (AK); Kyriakides, Janet & Kyriacos (JK); Leather, David & Midge (DL); Light, Gerald (GL); Lilley, Ros (RL); Limb, Pat and Ken (KL); Longden, Margaret, (ML); Millard, Paul (PM); Miller, Peter, (PeM); O’Connor, Denis, (DO); Diane (DM); Parkes, Steve, (SP); Paynter, Ruth (RP); Penny, Mark, (MP); Penrose, Jessica, (JP); Pierce, Jim; (JP); Prest, Fiona and Charles (FCP); Purvis, Paul (PP); Rhodes, Andrew, (AR); Rich, Will (RW); Riley, Peter & Anne (PR); Scarfe, Ernie (ES); Secrett, Malcolm; (MS); Shackleton, Karen (KAS); Smith, Kelvin (KS); Speed, Bruce (BS); Stidworthy, John and Sue, (JOS); Sumnall, Andy, (AS); Tetley, Julia (JT); Thorne, Bill, (BT); Thwaites, Maeve, (MT); Waley, Vladislava, (VW); Watson, Jenny (JW); WHS Botany Group (WNSBOT); WNS Butterfly Walk, (WNSBW).



## BOTANY REPORT

After 16 years as Botany Recorder Nicky Vernon has decided that now is the time to retire, and so this is my first report for the Review. We are pleased to hear that Nicky is continuing to be involved in compiling database records and intends to get to future botany meetings as much as she can.

My first botany meeting was in April 2005. By then I'd taken an interest in ferns but general botany knowledge was much more limited, so over the succeeding years I have learned much from the abundant skills of Nicky and other regular members, and indeed still do.

My general review notes seem to have fitted into a geographical order this year, and are followed by reports of meetings and surveys with many thanks to the members who have contributed.

### Lower Wharfedale

In March CH visited a few sites finding Sweet Violet *Viola odorata*. At Castley in the centre of the village she came across a beautiful all-purple colony with around 100 flowers out - purple ones are much less common locally.



**Stellaria neglecta**

Greater Chickweed *Stellaria neglecta* is rather rare in Yorkshire, occurring usually to the east of us in low-lying wet habitats. So it was a nice surprise to come across it, a new record for our area, on the riverbank at Rougemont Carr in April when CH and BNB were doing a recce for a BBG meeting. Its 5 white petals split to the base looked too large for Common Chickweed *S. media* and its green sepals showing through from the back were nearly as long as the

petals (which ruled out Wood Stitchwort *S. nemorum*). It also had that single line of white hairs on its upper stem typical of chickweeds. The final piece in the ID jigsaw is that Greater Chickweed has 8 or more stamens (our plant had 10) whereas Common Chickweed has less than 8, often only 3-4. It was still in flower a week later for the official BBG meeting. We started from Weeton Church following quiet lanes to Rougemont, and on entering the woodland had a fantastic show of bluebells once again (WNS were there to enjoy them in 2013). Later in the year the Rougemont landowner invited us to explore his fields at Dunkeswick - see Carmen's report.

### Gallows Hill Nature Reserve

BNB led a Nats Tuesday evening walk round Gallows Hill nature reserve on 21 May. It was a lovely evening and 25 members came along to enjoy it. We'd barely left the carpark when someone heard sounds from a hole in the gatepost which turned out to be a great tit's nest. We quietly moved on along the path lined with Wild Cherry *Prunus avium* on the left side and Bird Cherry *Prunus padus* on the right, eventually reaching some specimen trees, all doing well; there was London Plane *Platanus x hispanica*, Hornbeam *Carpinus betulus*, Large-leaved lime *Tilia platyphyllos* and others. On a section of the riverside path AR drew our attention to Kidney-spot Ladybirds on an ash tree, new to most of us. We headed slightly south passing through the

new orchard area with young apple, pear and plum trees coming along nicely now having got themselves above nettle bed height. The medlar noted last year was still present and a Fig *Ficus carica* was spotted this time along with Cockspur thorn *Crataegus crus-galli*. We stayed on the lesser known minor path around the southern perimeter of the reserve, fortunately kept nettle free. The number of birds in evening song mounted up - blackbird, swift, blackcap, robin, mallard ducklings and chiffchaff.

The newly dug ponds are starting to look more naturalised now with surrounding vegetation building up over the liner edges. As well as much Soft Rush *Juncus effusus* there was Purple-loosestrife *Lythrum salicaria*, Celery-leaved Buttercup *Ranunculus sceleratus*, Square-stalked St John's-wort *Hypericum tetrapterum* and Marsh Cinquefoil *Comarum palustre*. A newt was spotted, and rabbits and grey squirrel also seen as we wended our way back along the riverside path to the carpark. A little later in the season BNB revisited the new ponds finding also two forget-me-nots Tufted *Myosotis laxa* & Creeping *M. secunda* and Gypsywort *Lycopus europaeus* by the water edge. A large colony of Hedge Bedstraw *Galium album* was spreading rapidly around the pond margins. This has not been recorded before so could have arisen from exposing the seed bank during digging or maybe brought in during these operations. In the water there was Nuttall's Waterweed *Elodea nuttallii* and another new record, Least Duckweed *Lemna minuta*, distinguishable from Common Duckweed *L. minor* by its tiny nearly see-through leaves only 3-4 mm across.

Just outside the reserve on the access lane was Barren Brome *Anisantha sterilis*, more often found as an arable weed, but occasionally pops up on roadsides. Nearer the main road on the old Otley Cemetery wall GH reported 9 plants of Rustyback fern *Asplenium ceterach* - a good find as this is quite rare in lower Wharfedale. The size of the plants indicates they have been there for a number of years, yet we have all passed by many times without spotting them up to now.

### Other Otley sites

A survey along the old railway line has been carried out this year and is reported separately. Urban sites awaiting redevelopment or left as waste ground can be interesting places to watch colonising plants move in. The old Reg Jeffries yard off Beech Hill and the old cattlemarket site by Otley Bridge are two examples that BNB has visited on occasions. Narrow-leaved Ragwort *Senecio inaequidens* is a common alien in Airedale especially around Shipley but not seen in Otley before 2014. It is now spreading rapidly on both these sites, seeding itself amongst the cracks in the concrete. Apart from its narrow pinnate leaves it looks much like Common Ragwort *Jacobaea vulgaris* which is also present.

Other recent colonisers on the cattlemarket site seen this year were Red Valerian *Centranthus ruber*, Weld *Reseda luteola*, Red Deadnettle *Lamium purpureum* and Purple Toadflax *Linaria purpurea*. Less common arrivals were Italian Rye-grass *Lolium multiflorum* (like a larger Perennial Rye-grass with awns), not seen since 2003; Long-headed Poppy *Papaver dubium*, first Otley record; White Comfrey *Symphytum orientale*, an occasional escape in Wharfedale and Common Stork's-bill *Erodium cicutarium* still in flower in late October, not seen since 2005. Silver Ragwort *J. maritima* is a common bedding plant in Wharfemeadows Park, but a plant found on the adjacent cattlemarket site in May was determined by MW to be the hybrid of Silver Ragwort with Common Ragwort, *J. x albescens*, a new record for us.

Meanwhile at the Jeffries site Hemp-agrimony *Eupatorium cannabinum* appeared, the alien Hoary Mustard *Hirschfeldia incana* continues to do well, and Lamb's-ear *Stachys byzantina* popped up here and on the pavement edge in Beech Hill, originating from plantings outside Lunds carpet shop. Other BNB finds: the waste ground next to Otley Cemetery sported Columbine *Aquilegia vulgaris*, and within the cemetery grassy areas there was Bulbous Buttercup *R. bulbosus* plus London Pride *Saxifraga x urbium* which was successfully naturalising itself away from graves. There were some big clumps of Yellow Corydalis *Pseudofumaria lutea* adorning the river edge wall below the weir in Wharfemeadows Park. Further on in the Park near the tennis courts, were two large Small-leaved Limes *Tilia cordata* which we have passed by on many occasions but not recorded them before. In October their fruits which stand upright above the leaves are quite distinctive (other lime fruits are pendent).

A neglected corner of Charles Street carpark in Otley has yielded a few interesting plants previously. And this year in March an attractive bright blue *Veronica* appeared, confirmed by MW and BAT to be *V. peduncularis* (or possibly *V. umbrosa* - taxonomy still uncertain) and very likely to be the cultivar 'Georgia Blue'. So it is obviously a garden plant that maybe has managed to seed itself or re-occur here. A planted street tree by the pelican crossing at Cross Green had unusual maple-shaped leaves, attractive white flowers and later on small crab apples. It turned out to be Maple-leaved Crab *Malus trilobata*, an uncommon street tree and the first BNB has seen. Finally a late November record was Sun Spurge *Euphorbia helioscopia* on the pavement outside Union Court, seen last in Otley in 2011 and much less common than Petty Spurge *E. peplus*.

#### Washburn and Thruscross

The season started early with NF recording Coltsfoot *Tussilago farfara* and Lesser Celandine *Ficaria verna* in flower on 23 February in Cinder Lane, Leathley. Then in March CH studied the petal colour variations in Sweet Violets around Leathley. They were all white flowered forms, but mostly with purple spurs or a variety of purple lines or marks on their petals. CH was pleased with the large numbers of plants this year (228 recorded) in Watery Lane and along both sides of the B6161 road through the village. She continued up the east side of the River Washburn for more spring flowers - Moschatel *Adoxa moschatellina*, Wild Daffodil *Narcissus pseudonarcissus*, Alternate-leaved Golden-saxifrage *Chrysosplenium alternifolium* and Meadow Saxifrage *Saxifraga granulata*.

In April PR counted 300 flower spikes on the colony of Giant Butterbur *Petasites japonicus* at Dob Park, and commented they were quite a sight! So previous counts of 150+ spikes have been well beaten this year - how big can it get! NF found Bitter-vetch *Lathyrus linifolius* along the Swinsty Reservoir path, and read also Nyree's report of our Farnley botany meeting to find our surprise plant of the day.

NV explored along Askwith Moor Road, Snowden in June finding 3 clumps of Common Bistort *Bistorta officinalis* and a patch of Leopard's-bane *Doronicum pardalianches*. Then moving to the Thruscross area she confirmed Ribbed Melilot *Melilotus officinalis* near the Stonehouse pub cross roads. It can best be distinguished from the similar looking Tall Melilot *M. altissimus* by its glabrous brown fruits (the latter has hairy black fruits). Both occur in our area.

On the way back from Humberstone Bank in July BNB stopped at the Thruscross Dam carpark, and walked the road over the dam to the east side of the reservoir where there is a

little alcove at the dam end just where the road bends. Its short turf and wet patches make it an interesting area for plants which we have botanised in the past. The usual suspects were doing well - Common Spotted-orchid *Dactylorhiza fuchsii*, Common Centaury *Centaureum erythraea*, Mouse-ear-hawkweed *Pilosella officinarum*, Bird's-foot-trefoil *Lotus corniculata*, Lesser Trefoil *Trifolium dubium* and a quick list totalled 40 species. A couple of new plants were noted this time - Fern Grass *Catapodium rigidum* a tiny annual which we occasionally see in bare waste places. The other was Trailing Tormentil *Potentilla anglica* which has creeping runners rooting at its nodes as it spreads itself about. Its yellow flowers are similar to Tormentil *P. erecta*, but usually larger and can have 4-5 petals rather than always 4. Its basal leaves are 5-fingered, not ternate, and its stem leaves are generally well stalked, not sessile as in Tormentil. Hybrids do occur with Creeping Cinquefoil *P. reptans* or Tormentil and sometimes it can be difficult to Later in April SP re-found Caper Spurge *Euphorbia lathyris*, not seen for about 7 years. There were 12 shoots amongst dead brambles, probably acting as protection from grazing rabbits. In June he reported a good show of Marsh-orchids, over 500 spikes of Common Spotted, Southern Marsh *Dactylorhiza praetermissa*, and the cross between them *D. x grandis* in a hybrid swarm. Ragged Robin *Silene flos-cuculi* covered large areas, but the Marsh Fern *Thelypteris palustris* by the NW lagoon only had a few shoots this year. One Bee Orchid *Ophrys apifera* seen was the first for 15 years here.

Moving downstream from the BRGP the riverbank can be followed to the Kashmiri restaurant (Riversdale to older members). The sandy banks in early season are good for Moschatel and Alternate-leaved Golden-saxifrage but BNB searched in vain for any Yellow Star-of-Bethlehem *Gagea lutea* (which occurs sparingly at a few sites along the Wharfe). Toothwort *Lathraea squamaria* was sprouting round the base of a willow and a very big patch of Sanicle *Sanicula europaea* was seen on top of the bank opposite the restaurant. In spring its leaves were surprisingly similar to a garden geranium, but its identity became obvious later on. The distinctive basal leaves of a Monkshood were also seen in spring, but no flowering stem developed as the plant became inundated by the stronger native vegetation as the season progressed. Chances are it was the garden hybrid *Aconitum x stoerkianum*.

Meanwhile in Menston AMG was delighted to find Broad-leaved Helleborine springing up again for the third year in her garden. Its first of 46 flowers came open on 24 July and lasted through October.

#### Ilkley

BNB was walking a path from Heber's Ghyll to Addingham on Easter Saturday and noted heavy smoke on the moor above Ilkley. On arriving back off the bus into Ilkley flames could be seen on the moor above the rooftops, potentially serious, but according to press reports were efficiently dealt with by the fire brigade. It was well into October before a chance came to walk onto the moor and assess the consequences. The area affected was from the Tarn up to Rocky Valley in sporadic patches. Some burnt areas were already being colonised by newly grown bilberry and bracken was well spread over the area suggesting its underground rhizomes had been unaffected by the blaze. Some patches were burnt down to the stony under-surface and will take longer to recover, and a few isolated trees were burnt but look like new shoots will arise from their roots. A plant rich spring flush was just on the edge of the fire zone and so unaffected. All in all it seems that the moor will soon fully recover, no doubt helped by the prompt action of the fire



## ***Gaultheria mucronata***



fighters. Fortunately it was nothing like the severity of the 2006 blaze that devastated a large area to the west side of the Keighley Gate road and which has still not completely recovered after 13 years.

Moving on to plant records, in February JW found Prickly Heath *Gaultheria mucronata* in the Spicy Gill area of the moor. This is an evergreen ericaceous shrub with spine-tipped leaves, white flowers and purplish berries, originally from Chile but seems happy on Ilkley Moor and occasional bushes occur; maybe it is spreading slightly, but not aggressively. Another much smaller mat-forming plant that can spread rapidly from gardens onto surrounding walls and gravelly areas is Mind-your-own-business *Soleirolia soleirolii*. BNB noted it with tiny flowers in Parish Ghyll Lane in April.

American Skunk-cabbage *Lysichiton americanus* is an impressively large plant easily recognisable by its bright yellow spathes and large leaves, but is a notifiable alien because of its rapidly spreading invasive character - it can be a real thug! It has already occurred twice at Ilkley Tarn and been treated to eradicate it. Despite this it re-occurred a third time this year and PB & JB reported its presence to Richard Perham, Bradford Met.

Later in October, AB found 5 plants of Broad-leaved Helleborine some still with a few flowers amongst brambles in Yewbank Terrace.

### **Addingham**

There has been a good crop of botany records from the Addingham area this year with a number of different members sending them in, which was very pleasing - keep them coming!

On the Silsden road around the allotments NV recorded 6 species at the end of March including Common Field-speedwell *Veronica persica* and Creeping-Jenny *Lysimachia nummularia*. Stegholes and Lumb Beck are on the south side of the village beyond the bypass and near Small Banks. It is floristically interesting with some unimproved grassland and wetland areas which we have visited in past WNS botany meetings. In May this time NV noted Lousewort *Pedicularis sylvatica*, Marsh Foxtail *Alopecurus geniculatus* and Bugle *Ajuga reptans*, likers of wet conditions, and along the tree-lined banks of Lumb Beck Greater Stitchwort *Stellaria holostea*, Wood-sorrel *Oxalis acetosella*, Wood Speedwell *V. montana* and Common Dog-violet *Viola riviniana*, all shade lovers.

The banked verge on the Skipton road near where it joins the bypass has been surveyed over the last two years. 45 plant species were noted by HMB this year, including some

new ones - Field Wood-rush *Luzula campestris*, Lesser Burdock *Arctium minus*, Field Forget-me-not *Myosotis arvensis* and Cowslip *Primula veris*. ST also reported Cowslip and Primrose *P. vulgaris* there. Near the golf club turning HMB noted a Smooth Sowthistle *Sonchus oleraceus* 8 feet tall!

In June NV helped the 2nd Addingham Brownies to find 24 flower species in Church Field amongst which were Green Alkanet *Pentaglottis sempervirens*, Fox-and-cubs *Pilosella aurantiaca*, Common Bistort and Bulbous Buttercup. Outside the door of Church Hall were a couple of plants of Hairy Tare, known for many years by its Latin name *Vicia hirsuta*, but now changed in the latest Stace 4th edition to *Ervilia hirsuta* (the genus *Vicia* has now been split into three sections, the third being *Ervum*). A number of other name changes have occurred which we are trying to learn and appear where appropriate within this report.

In July, still in Church Field, DM found a large plant of Wild Angelica *Angelica sylvestris*, then in the beck NV reported a couple of plants of Chinese Ragwort *Sinacalia tangutica*. This tall garden escape was earlier mentioned by DAB and is similar to Przewalski's Leopardplant *Ligularia przewalskii*, another potential garden escapee. NV explained that the former has non-sheathing pinnately-lobed leaves whereas the latter has leaves that are sheathed and palmately-lobed and a narrower cylindrical inflorescence.

Another survey site was Hofmann-Wood Field on the opposite side of Church Street. The Parish Council had agreed to leave a 2 metre strip unmown around all sides of the field, which JH, NV and HMB surveyed in May totalling 19 trees and woody shrubs, 8 grasses, 1 fern and 47 other flowering herbs. Later on PH added 4 extra species including Hedge Bindweed *Calystegium sepium*, Yarrow *Achillea millefolium* and Wild Marjoram *Origanum vulgare*. NV also recorded Bittersweet *Solanum dulcamara* in Church Street and Park Crescent.

The Dawson Crossley Field is another public access piece of land next to High Mill by the river bank. Its perimeter trees and shrubs were surveyed last year and in August this year PH added 9 flowering plants including Himalayan Balsam *Impatiens glandulifera* which will no doubt spread if unchecked, and Meadow Crane's-bill *Geranium pratense*. The final survey to mention was the Methodist Church Graveyard carried out over two visits by JH, HMB and NV who recorded a specified part of the site within a taped-off area. There were 9 woody species including several ash trees which appeared to be showing early signs of ash-dieback disease. 10 species of grasses were easily the most abundant component of the sward along with 34 other flowering plants and no ferns. Of these, few were true meadow species and it was thought that some introduction of suitable plants as well as Yellow-rattle *Rhinanthus minor* would help to create a better balance of species. Some fern introductions would help in more shaded areas to compete with nettles and bramble.

Other Addingham records were Betony *Betonica officinalis*, Field Scabious *Knautia arvensis* and Common Knapweed *Centaurea nigra* on the playing field (JH), also the first two seen on Old Station Way meadow looking very good (DR). Harebell *Campanula rotundifolia* was near Highfield Farm in good quantities (DM) - pleasing to see as it is less frequent nowadays in some locations. Perennial Sowthistle *S. arvensis*, Tufted Vetch *Vicia cracca* and Black Bryony *Tamus communis* were seen on Cocking Lane (NV), no doubt a colourful sight with their bright yellow and purple flowers and orange-red berries.

## Mid-Wharfedale

Violet Hill Farm at Hazlewood near the A59 is well named being notable for its good show of Sweet Violets in early spring (white petals and pale purple spur). ML & DL reported them to be doing well, maybe a 1000 flowers in mid-March and still in flower for CH at the end of the month. CH also found three more patches of the violet as well as Moschatel on nearby Storiths Lane. Scattered in a field nearer Hazlewood she also noted Field Wood-rush, Pignut *Conopodium majus* and Common Dog-violet.

AMG and JA counted 9 Yellow Star-of-Bethlehem plants with a few in flower in April at the usual Strid Wood site on the river edge just above the island. Then a good group of Goldilocks Buttercup *Ranunculus auricomus* turned up in May. Later AMG found 7 spikes of Nettle-leaved Bellflower on the east bank of the river (they used to be recorded on the west bank). Above the Strid near the Aqueduct HMB spotted a Bee Orchid in June, also Moschatel on the verge of the Barden to Storiths road earlier in April.

Draughton is near the watershed between Wharfedale and Airedale but the village is still within our WNS recording area. NV made a list of plants along Church Lane leaving the main street to a bridge over Howgill Beck. 63 plants were reported on the verges and wall tops, many of them typical hedgerow and roadside plants, but the star species was Common Blue-sowthistle *Cicerbita macrophylla*, in huge colonies by roadside, beck-side and completely filling a small field.

Those members who went on the July botany walk from Barden Bridge could not help but be amazed by the sight of thousands of flowering foxgloves opposite Barden Tower. This was the site of Bull Coppy Wood which had been clear-felled two years earlier. The dormant seeds had been lying in wait for that sudden increase in light and soil warmth to germinate and then come up 'en masse'. They even attracted the attention of the press with a photo in the Craven Herald and caption referring to 'millions of foxgloves'!

AT climbed up Simon's Seat at the end of May and recorded masses of Cloudberry *Rubus chamaemorus* including 1 in flower, the colonies being larger than what she remembered from previous years. Lots of Cowberry *Vaccinium vitis-idaea* in flower and some Creeping Corydalis *Ceratocarpus claviculata* were also seen.

HMB, CH and BNB visited a Burnsall field in July which the owners were planning to improve and invited us to carry out an initial survey of its plants. Its past use was mostly for pasture and there had been some disturbance in the last few years to install pipes, so the ground was rather uneven and still recovering in parts. We recorded 55 species, mostly damp grassland plants such as Yorkshire Fog *Holcus lanatus* and Creeping Buttercup *R. repens*. There were 6 other grass species but relatively few herbaceous plants, mainly White Clover *Trifolium repens* and Common Mouse-ear *Cerastium fontanum*, so we commented that it would be beneficial to increase the herbs to grasses ratio.

## Upper Wharfedale

Holly-fern *Polystichum lonchitis* is a rare plant of limestone pavement and mountain crag in northern England with its population threat currently classified as 'Endangered' in the English Red List. Information on the actual number of plants and the English sites for it was however rather vague and in need of updating. So the Yorkshire Fern Group which included WNS members BNB, CH and PN spent much of last winter 2018/19 monitoring sites for it in the Yorkshire Dales National Park which nowadays extends to the M6 motorway in Cumbria.

Just 8 sites were found for the fern in the Dales Pennine area, but one of them happens to fall within the WNS recording area - it is on limestone pavement near the Monk's Road as it crosses from Littondale over to Malham Tarn, and turned out to be the second largest population in the Dales (and no doubt in England too!) with 121 plants recorded. Previous visits going back to 2004 have noted 63 plants so clearly the ferns are doing well here. Many smaller plants with relatively few fronds are present indicating active growth of the population with young plants coming through. The area is cattle grazed in controlled numbers now and they are obviously less inclined to clamber onto well-developed pavement than sheep, so the ferns are at worst only partially nibbled, and the majority untouched where they hide in the less accessible grykes. Over-grazing has been considered a major factor in the decline of Holly-fern populations in England.

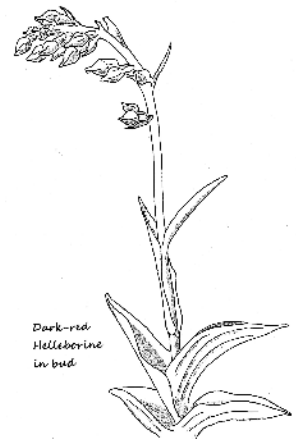
Also in winter CH found a good sized plant of Green Spleenwort *Asplenium viride* on the hillside by the 'stone men' cairns above Hawkswick. Blue Moor-grass *Sesleria caerulea* is common for us in Dales limestone country but actually rare over much of Britain and is one of the earliest grasses to flower. CH saw it near Conistone on 20th March with its clear blue flowers opened, very attractive at this time of year.

In June HMB made a list of 60 plant species whilst walking from Conistone village over the head of Dib Beck to the edge of Grass Wood, which included Early-purple Orchid *Orchis mascula*, Bloody Crane's-bill *Geranium sanguineum*, Common Rockrose *Helianthemum nummularium* and Mountain Pansy *Viola lutea*. Dropwort *Filipendula vulgaris* was just coming into bud.

JW reported more than 25 Greater Butterfly-orchid *Platanthera chlorantha* along the Dalesway path from Yockenthwaite to Cray. Also in July PM found Dark-red Helleborine *Epipactis*

*atrorubens*, a rare plant for us, but doing well this year on High Ox Pasture above Kilnsey. Sometimes they get eaten by slugs or livestock before getting chance to develop flowering stems.

Then in early September SW reported another exciting orchid find in spring-fed runnels by the riverside path below Grassington. It had gone over into its fruiting stage but NB was able to determine it as Marsh Helleborine *E. palustris*, a rare plant in Wharfedale (just a few records from higher up the dale). She also noted much Grass-of-Parnassus *Parnassia palustris*, Devil's-bit Scabious *Succisa pratensis* and leaves of Bird's-eye Primrose *Primula farinosa*.



## Botany Section Outings

**Walk to Farnley Lake, 11 April** Leader Nyree Fearnley

It was the first meeting of the year and a lovely sunny day so there was a good turnout. The walk was also all on private and so an opportunity to see places that you can't normally go to, and thanks to the Farnley Estate for allowing us access.

The walk started from the Square, Farnley and followed a track bordering arable land, then down a sheltered grass

field, and finally into woodland and a full circuit of Farnley Lake. So there was a large range of habitats to explore.

On the track we saw arable weeds such as Pineappleweed *Matricaria discoidea*, and one of my favourite spring flowers, Lesser Celandine.

In the field there wasn't much in the way of colourful plants in flower, but there were lots of different grasses, many of them seen for the first time this year, such as Yorkshire Fog, Meadow Foxtail *Alopecurus pratensis*, and Cock's-foot *Dactylis glomerata*.

The woodland is my favourite, and we didn't get far in before it was time for lunch. Whilst eating we watched a couple of butterfly species, Brimstone and Small Tortoiseshell.



**Fritillary (NF)**

Soon after setting off again we saw the surprise of the day, a small patch of Fritillary *Fritillaria meleagris*. What a beautiful flower and totally unexpected even to me who knows the area well. There were also some nice trees of Western Balsam-poplar *Populus trichocarpa* and Wild Cherry, which I think has a very pretty bark.

Around the lake-side is wonderful mixed woodland of both conifers and deciduous trees, mostly deciduous. On the ground below are many woodland spring flowers. The Bluebells *Hyacinthoides non-scripta* were only just starting to come out but we did see quite a few in flower. There was also Wood Anemone *Anemone nemorosa*, Moschatel, Butterbur *Petasites hybridus*, Ramsons *Allium ursinum*, Primrose, Wood Sorrel, and some Wild Daffodil, which were still quite fresh.

We had a steepish, rough climb to get out of the wood, not helped by the fact that they have been doing some tree felling over the winter, and then a final stretch on a grassy strip bordering the other side of the arable field where we set off from. In conclusion, it was a very enjoyable day with a good range of habitats and species, fantastic weather, and good company.

**Nyree Fearnley**

### **Threshfield Quarry, 16 May**     *Leader: Heather Burrow*

Threshfield Quarry finished their operations in 2000 and so at first sight appears to be an unlikely site for botanising with sheer cut rock faces and huge piles of boulders and gravel on its quarry floors. But to nature this is a blank canvas, an opportunity for colonising plants to move into a brand new habitat. On bare soil-less rock this inevitably will take a long time and it is interesting from a botanical viewpoint to watch this gradual transformation over the years. Our first visit here was in 2014 and the site does seem to be slowly improving. An additional bonus is the paths that skirt the quarry edges and pass through limestone outcrops and woodlands full of interest, which we've only been able to explore since the old quarry was considered to be stable and safe enough for public access.

12 people met at the entrance road in warm sunshine and walked up to the gate passing two beautiful Bird Cherry trees at the peak of flowering. Through the gate a clump of

Germander Speedwell *Veronica chamaedrys* and Crosswort *Cruciata laevipes* made a colourful patch of blue and yellow. Two species of St John's-wort, Hairy and Perforate *Hypericum perforatum*, were seen then Carline Thistle *Carlina vulgaris* and a plant with tiny leaves, identified after some debate as Thyme-leaved Speedwell *V. serpyllifolia*.

As we climbed up the track above the lower quarry we noted four different species of Lady's-mantle *Alchemilla* growing close together. This was a good revision opportunity: *A. glabra* is virtually hairless, *A. xanthochlora* has hairy leaf stalks and leaf undersides, *A. glaucescens* has fine silky hairs all over, and *A. mollis* a garden escape with dense velvety hairs which hold water as small spherical beads after rain. A variation of the common Smooth Meadow-grass *Poa pratensis* was also noted along here - Spreading Meadow-grass *P. humilis* identifiable by its hairy ligule and lower glume with three veins (rather than one).

At a signpost before reaching the upper quarries we detoured right (east) following a path up to a viewpoint which looks down into the higher two quarries. On the way we came upon a large area of Bird's-eye Primrose, just beginning to flower - an outstanding sight of fresh pale pink petals among the rocks, and an ideal spot for lunch. Reaching the plateau top we had good views across Wharfedale to Grass Wood. At our feet was the short turf of Common Rockrose and other calcareous loving plants. Frog Orchids and Autumn Gentian have been seen on past visits but eluded us today. The plateau rim is defined by limestone outcrops, good places to find Twayblade *Neottia ovata*, Limestone Bedstraw *Galium sternerii*, Bloody Crane's-bill, Stone Bramble *Rubus saxatilis*, Purging Buckthorn *Rhamnus cathartica*, Wall-rue *Asplenium ruta-muraria* and Black Spleenwort *A. adiantum-nigrum*. A new record here was Rustyback, also to be seen lower down on the edge of the southern quarry.

On the return leg we detoured off the track to descend through a woodland section on a sketchy path. Under the shade of hazels, bluebells were still in flower along with Common Dog-violet, Ramsons, Bugle, New Zealand Willowherb *Epilobium brunnescens*, a nice patch of Herb Paris *Paris quadrifolia* and Enchanter's Nightshade *Circaea lutetiana* - very much an enchanting area and an example of one's first impressions not being the full story.

**Heather Burrow & Bruce Brown**

### **Troller's Gill, 6 June**

*Leader: Audrey Gramshaw*

Audrey knows the area around Parceval Hall and Troller's Gill very well, so was our leader for today and had already done a recce with Anne Tupholme a week earlier. We thought parking might be a problem on the narrow access road so Paul Millard kindly offered to let some cars onto his drive, which coupled with some verge parking spaces worked out fine for the 9 of us present. We had a sunny day in prospect as we set off up the Troller's Gill footpath from the road bridge following Skyreholme Beck.

To fit in with the grid squares on the O.S. map we started recording as we entered the second field. So progress then became much slower as we 'clocked-up' many mostly common species in the damp neutral grassland habitat, e.g. Common Knapweed, Pignut, Water Avens *Geum rivale*, Rough Hawkbit *Leontodon hispidus* and Crested Dog's-tail *Cynosurus cristatus*, as well as the wetter loving beck-side plants, Common Spotted-orchid, Marsh Hawk's-beard *Crepis paludosa*, Bugle *Ajuga reptans* and Brooklime *Veronica beccabunga*. So it was lunchtime by the time we reached the old dam. A brimstone butterfly flitted by and the colony of Mossy Saxifrage *Saxifraga hypnoides* was doing well amongst the stones of the embankment.

We now reached more calcareous country and small limestone outcrops were florally attractive with Common Rockrose, Parsley-piert *Aphanes arvensis*, Carline Thistle, Blue Moor-grass and Meadow Oat-grass *Helictochloa pratensis*. Troller's Gill now beckoned us, a craggy limestone gorge full of boulders through which one has to carefully thread one's way. The beck is underground and emerges as springs at the valley bottom meandering through beds of Marsh-marigold *Caltha palustris*, Water-cress *Nasturtium officinale* and Water Mint *Mentha aquatica*. It's exciting going scrambling up the gill finding the vertical crags adorned with Hairy Rock-cress *Arabis hirsuta*, Brittle Bladder-fern *Cystopteris fragilis*, large colonies of polypody well out of reach, and even a few human rock climbers! The beck re-appears as height is gained and we noted Bottle Sedge *Carex rostrata* and Common Spike-rush *Eleocharis palustris* at the water edge.



**Studying Spring Sandwort**

By now we were committed to doing the full round over the moor and back via the mines, so we continued up to the footbridge with adjacent Intermediate Polypody. Crossing over the moor we recorded acid loving plants such as Heath Rush *Juncus squarrosus*, Heath Wood-rush *Luzula multiflora*, Wavy Hair-grass *Avenella flexuosa* and a few sedges, Oval *Carex leporina*, Common *C. nigra* and Carnation *C. panicea*. Then dropping down to the mines we couldn't resist photographing the starry white flowers of Spring Sandwort *Sabulina verna* on the spoil. But time was pressing and it was nearly five o'clock when we got back. So it was quite a long but enjoyable day with around 180 species recorded. AMG also identified the small greyish-brown fungus *Panaeolus paponacea* which likes old dung patches in grassland.

**Bruce Brown**

### **Hetchell Wood Nature Reserve, 20 June**

*Leader: Karen McDiarmid, YWT*

Hetchell Wood Nature Reserve is situated near Bardsey, seven miles northeast of Leeds on the Magnesian Limestone, and it belongs to the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust (YWT). We were lucky to have a lovely day and there was a good turnout of members. We were welcomed by Karen McDiarmid, YWT officer for the area, and she started our walk with us, setting us on the right path.

We began by going through the beechwoods, where Sanicle was a prominent understorey plant. The wood curves round a ridge of limestone which has meadows of species-rich grassland.

We reached the main meadow quite quickly and were delighted by the wealth of species. The most amazing was the profusion of the bright yellow Dyer's Greenweed *Genista tinctoria*, remains of which have been found in Viking

archaeological sites. It has a long history of use as a dye. On the same slope were lots of Rockrose, and also Common Spotted-orchid, Twayblade, Agrimony *Agrimonia eupatoria* and Zigzag Clover *Trifolium medium*. Climbing up the slope of the meadow we also found Salad Burnet *Poterium sanguisorba* (the leaves tasting of cucumber), Black Bryony, Tufted Vetch, Meadow Vetchling *Lathyrus pratensis*, Burnet Rose *Rosa spinosissima* and False Oat-grass *Arrhenatherum elatius*. A grass new to some of us found here was Tor-grass (or Heath False-brome *Brachypodium rupestre/pinnatum* - some doubts remain on its exact taxonomy), a tough species which can become a problem on Magnesian Limestone grassland.

Moving along the path through the sloping meadow to the top of the ridge, we saw the leaves of Hairy Violet *Viola hirta*, and also Goldenrod *Solidago virgaurea*, Wild Basil *Clinopodium vulgare*, Greater Knapweed *Centaurea scabiosa* and Giant Bellflower *Campanula latifolia*. Eventually we reached the site of the Thistle Broomrape *Orobanche reticulata*, parasitic on the surrounding thistles and a very rare plant, growing only in Yorkshire in the U.K. We found several flowering stems as we climbed further up the slope, though it was not too easy to spot in the long grass, but we made a rough count of 14 or 15 stems. Each year, a count of the flowering stems is made, and NV found out later that our score was better than in the two previous years (7 & 10), but a long way short of the 2015 score of 200 spikes!

After making this area our lunch stop, we continued the circuit of the reserve, reaching a striking sandstone area high amongst the great rocks. There were many more plants of interest including Three-nerved Sandwort *Moehringia trinervia*, Cut-leaved Crane's-bill *Geranium dissectum*, Common Hemp-nettle *Galeopsis tetrahit*, Wall Lettuce *Mycelis muralis* and Upright Hedge-parsley *Torilis japonica*. Our return path took us through an area of woodland where the practice of coppicing, particularly of Hazel *Corylus avellana* has been re-introduced, letting more light reach the woodland floor, where Bluebells had flowered, and Red Campion *Silene dioica* had taken over.

**Sarah Ward**

### **Barden Riverside Walk North, 4 July**

*Leader: Bruce Brown*

We've met at Barden Bridge a few times in the past, generally exploring downstream or visiting Bolton Abbey Estate woodlands, but I can only recall one meeting heading north upstream, and that was an early season visit in April 2009 which was interesting for its spring flora. This year we decided to return in mid-summer when the fertile river bank flowers should be at their best in terms of abundance and variety of species. The parking area next to the bridge can be quite busy nowadays but our 9 members managed OK and we set off on the Dalesway riverside path heading north in pleasant sunshine.

For the first 200 metres or so the path squeezes between the roadside and the wooded river bank. NV announced that on the last meeting no less than 80 species had been recorded in this short section, which must have spurred us on as we managed to equal that number again. There was Rue-leaved Saxifrage *Saxifraga tridactyles* and Wood Melick *Melica uniflora* on the roadside wall, Downy Currant *Ribes spicatum* and Giant Bellflower by the river edge, and CH spotted Sanicle and Wood Speedwell in the woodland, just to mention a few.

The first two fields we crossed were slightly acidic to neutral with fescue and bent grasses plus Sweet Vernal-grass *Anthoxanthum odoratum* and Heath-grass *Danthonia decumbens*, and herbs such as Betony, Field Wood-rush and

Heath Speedwell *Veronica officinalis*. A wet flush emanated from a small spring by the wall side. Here we searched for Alternate-leaved Golden-saxifrage which had been recorded in 2009, not in flower in July, but eventually patience was rewarded by the sight of its distinctive kidney-shaped leaves hiding amongst the tall rushes. Two stitchworts were also seen here, Bog *Stellaria alsine* and Lesser *S. graminea*.

The next field was calcareous grassland and much more to the liking of the sheep judging by the well munched turf. We found a nice bank close to the riverside for lunch sitting amongst Lady's Bedstraw *Galium verum*, Common Bird's-foot-trefoil, Wild Thyme *Thymus drucei* and Salad Burnet. The thistles in view were initially puzzling but we agreed on them being Welled *Carduus crispus*.

Over the next stile, the path was fenced off from the fields allowing the riverside vegetation to become more luxuriant with taller species such as Field Scabious and four mints Water, Spear *Mentha spicata*, Whorled *M. x verticillata* and Apple-mint *M. x villosa*. On the riverside shingle was Creeping Yellow-cress *Rorippa sylvestris* and Hybrid Monkeyflower *Mimulus x robertsii*. Several sedges occurred including two uncommon ones - Slender Tufted-sedge *Carex acuta* and Bladder-sedge *C. vesicaria*. Willows like the waterside habitat and help to stabilise the bank from erosion. Apart from the most common osier and sallow there was Purple Willow *Salix purpurea*, recognisable by its opposite rather than alternate leaves, and Sharp-stipuled Willow *S. x mollissima*, a hybrid between *S. viminalis* and *S. triandra*.

BNB had noted Creeping-Jenny in 2017 hanging on despite being surrounded by taller vegetation. After a little searching we managed to find a few surviving strands of it at the base of a sandy bank. ML spotted Hairy Rock-cress *Arabis hirsuta* and CH some spikes of Sand Leek *Allium scorodoprasum*. The sand martins were actively chasing insects whilst we had time for a leisurely rest in the sunshine before returning back to enjoy an ice cream from the van in the car park. Around 200 species had been recorded over the day.

**Bruce Brown**

## Surveys

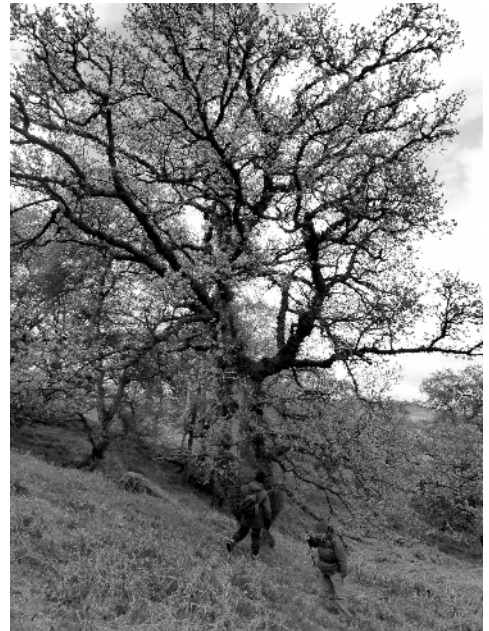
**Bolton Abbey Estate - Dale Head, Howgill Lane, 2 May** Leader: John Everitt, Chatsworth Head Forester

We usually have a good turn-out for our annual visit and survey at Bolton Abbey and this year was no exception with 12 members meeting at the village car park. Here we were joined by Mark Jeffery our usual contact and also John Everitt from Chatsworth who made us very welcome and was keen for our annual surveys on the Estate to continue.

This time we were to visit Dale Head, a large area of hillside below Simon's Seat and above Howgill on the Appletreewick road. We squeezed into three cars with John leading us (Mark had an appointment to attend) and parked at a gate entrance on Howgill Lane beyond the campsite. John explained that this area had SSSI status for its gill and hill-slope with widely spaced shrub woodland and wet areas. It has never been planted up with conifers. However Roy Lingard had planted extra native species in the early 2000's to enhance the diversity of the area. No official stock grazing is carried out here, but we did see signs of deer presence.

Once away from the entrance gate the going became very rough with no paths hereabouts. So we made our way slowly through the dense old bracken with bluebells adding some colour, gradually gaining height and zig-zagging through wet flush areas which were botanically more interesting - with Alder *Alnus cordata* and its understorey of Moschatel, Marsh Valerian *Valeriana dioica*, Opposite-leaved Golden-saxifrage *Chrysosplenium oppositifolium*, Bugle and Remote Sedge

*Carex remota*. Our aiming point was a forest track around the 240 metre contour and it was a relief to reach it, although interest on the way up was maintained by some of the shapely old oaks we passed, along with birch, hawthorn and Bird Cherry. John left us here for an afternoon appointment and our thoughts turned to lunch, but first we had to endure a



prolonged shower with really heavy rain whilst we sheltered under a dripping tree, but eventually brighter skies moved in from the west and it improved.

We had only seen a small portion of the Dale Head SSSI being at its southern end, and our route now was to exit it and follow the forest track south into a coniferised area, but at least we had a good surface to walk on. Before reaching the conifers we admired a lovely old crab apple and noted good specimens of Scots pine, whitebeam, holly, rowan and juniper some of which had no doubt been planted by Roy. The unsurfaced track with its short turf and banked sides did provide some botanical interest as we passed by the serried ranks of Norway and Sitka spruce - there was Heath Speedwell, Ground-ivy *Glechoma hederacea*, Barren Strawberry *Potentilla sterilis*, Field Wood-rush along with Hard Fern *Blechnum spicant* and Scaly Male-fern *Dryopteris affinis*.

After passing the aqueduct wall adorned with Common Polypody *Polypodium vulgare* we arrived at the Simon's Seat path climbing up from Howgill. On our descent from here we spotted New Zealand Willowherb, Hairy St John's-wort and Mouse-ear Hawkweed. On reaching Howgill Lane we followed it northeast back to our cars.

**Bruce Brown**

**Otley Wetlands Nature Reserve Survey, 30 May**

Leader: Nicky Vernon

Our survey day started cloudy and showery, and we set off along the main access track. Our aim was to survey the verges of the access track, on the section running south to north, also the overflow channel running along the west side of it, as well as the strimmed area at the northern end, known as 'Nevil's Meadow'.

Our first 'find' was several clumps of Spiked Sedge *Carex spicata*, below the new hedging. This was actually reported first in 2018 on a BBG walk, led by Anne Riley. It is a new species to the site. Not far away, our first Bee Orchids were seen.

The two verges of the Access Track in our survey area were more colourful than we had seen before, the main colours coming from large patches of Common Bird's-foot-trefoil, Mouse-ear Hawkweed, Cut-leaved Crane's-bill and Field Forget-me-not.

A further addition to our overall site list was Hybrid Avens *Geum x intermedium* - both its parents, Water Avens *G. rivale* and Wood Avens *G. urbanum* are present nearby, and are increasing in numbers. Another 'newbie', this time in the trimmed area, was Greater Burnet *Sanguisorba officinalis*, a plant typical of northern hay meadows, and obviously finding suitable conditions here!

Overall, Nevil's Meadow was full of colour and promise, with Wood Crane's-bill *Geranium sylvaticum* and Meadow Crane's-bill both on the increase, also lots of Changing Forget-me-not *Myosotis discolor* and the Betony doing all right. Two fat orchid spikes were budding up nicely, too young to identify. Black Medick *Medicago lupulina*, Zigzag Clover and, of course, Yellow Rattle were all doing well. The Yellow Rattle is a testament to all Nevil Bowland's hard work in gathering and transferring seed to this area. This small patch is turning very nicely into an upland hay meadow!!

We recorded two new grasses for the site - Sheep's Fescue *Festuca ovina* and Sweet Vernal-grass. Hemp-agrimony, a plant of damp ditches, was recorded at its second site on the reserve, and we also had a second site for Lady Fern *Athyrium filix-femina*.

Concern was expressed about the state of the overflow channel, particularly near the southern corner, where scrubby growth of Alders, Willows and Brambles are preventing much light and air flow for aquatic plants and marginals. JW and BNB nobly undertook a short jungle safari and came up reporting that the two clumps of Green Figwort *Scrophularia umbrosa* still survived there, but such plants will not keep going unless some ditch clearing is undertaken.

The afternoon was warm and humid, and we noticed a good variety of insects about, including caddis flies, damselflies, ladybirds, moths, including 7-spot Burnet Moths, a Holly Blue and an Orange-tip butterfly. The young growth on the Alders was covered with small black beetles, and lots of holes!

On our walk back to the parking area, JW noticed several plants of Fern-grass in the verge. This is another second record for this attractive little grass, but it is in a different compartment, and it has not been recorded on the reserve for several years.

Overall, we had a successful day. We recorded 106 species in the verges, and also 65 species in the overflow ditch and its sides, as far as we could get to them.

**Nicky Vernon**

### **Humberstone Bank, 25 July**     *Leader: Heather Burrow*

Our botany meeting at Humberstone Bank followed on a couple of weeks after a general WNS meeting here. So those of us who had attended the earlier meeting had a good idea of the public facilities provided and the environmentally friendly farm management carried out by Jonathan Grayshon on this 900 hectare estate. Two of the old farm buildings have been converted into meeting rooms as part of the Upland Hub at Humberstone Bank with up to date facilities and kitchen, all part of the Nidderdale AONB organisation.

The plan for today suggested by Joanne Squires, Nidderdale AONB was to survey the plants in two fields on the south side of the farm access drive, then move on to the moorland and try to relocate 10 year old records for Cranberry *Vaccinium oxycoccus* and other upland species. 10 members arrived on what turned out to be a very hot and humid day.

The fields were very rushy with wet flushes and ditches and are an important habitat for waders and ground nesting birds. But to attain an ideal environment the rushes need to

be controlled to around 30% cover and a number of belted Galloway cattle have been introduced to help achieve this. The first field we explored had some boggy areas with interesting wetland plants such as Marsh Violet *Viola palustris*, Ragged Robin, Marsh Foxtail and lots of Round-leaved Sundew *Drosera rotundifolia*. In the ditch was Marsh Marigold, Bog Pondweed *Potamogeton polygonifolius*, Creeping Forget-me-not and a number of sedges were noted - Yellow *Carex demissa*, Star *C. echinata* and Carnation Sedge.

The second field was a little drier with more grasses, Heath Rush, Oval Sedge *C. leporina* and Foxglove *Digitalis purpurea* amongst the tall rushes. A stream crossing the SE corner and forded by a rough track had some interest. Here was a colony of Blinks *Montia fontana*, a tiny straggling plant with white flowers that likes damp and trampled ground lacking tall vegetation. Also present were Common Water-starwort *Callitriche stagnalis*, Toad Rush *Juncus bufonius*, Jointed Rush *J. articulatus* and in the water Floating Sweet-grass *Glyceria fluitans* and Brooklime. The day was becoming hot so we decided to have lunch in the Hub and make use of the kitchen facilities.

Refreshed, we headed west through the gate onto open moorland and followed the track passing Climbing Corydalis and Sheep's Sorrel *Rumex acetosella* in the bracken and down to the bridge over the infant River Washburn. This was a good site for Lemon-scented Fern *Oreopteris limbosperma*, Marsh Valerian, Hoary Willowherb *Epilobium parviflorum* and Marsh Ragwort *Jacobaea aquatica*. We trended south to Seeds Brow on a faint path parallel to a plantation edge and soon came across the stems and leaves of Cranberry creeping through the sphagnum moss, but not in flower. Other wet-loving plants recorded were Cross-leaved Heath *Erica tetralix*, New Zealand Willowherb, Marsh Pennywort *Hydrocotyle vulgaris*, Deergrass *Trichophorum germanicum* and Bog Asphodel *Narthecium ossifragum*. The drier areas had Eyebright *Euphrasia* agg, Heath Milkwort *Polygala serpyllifolia*, Tormentil and Western Gorse *Ulex gallii*.

By this time we were wilting in the heat, so satisfied with our finds decided to make our way back to the cars. In addition to the plants we spotted six species of butterflies and saw many grasshoppers. Thanks are due to Jonathan Grayshon and Joanne Squires for inviting us here and making us very welcome.

**Heather Burrow & Bruce Brown**

### **Hawthorne House Farm, Dunkeswick, 1 August**

*Leader: Patrick Snowdon, landowner*

Mr Patrick Snowdon, the owner of Rougemont Carr, (where we have botanised before), contacted me to ask if we could botanise in several fields closer to the farm. We didn't know what we would find there because the BSBI database shows only 3 post 1987 records for the whole of this tetrad (SE34D), so quite exciting. We were in OS grid square SE3046 which lies only just outside the official WNS recording area (boundary on SE30 grid line). But it is still on the west side of Harewood Bridge and in the same ownership as Rougemont, so there seems to be a good case for us to adopt it, albeit unofficially.

Patrick is obviously quite interested in plants because he particularly wanted us to confirm a speedwell he had seen. It turned out to be Common Field-speedwell. Patrick started out with us and gave us a general outlook of the land. There were crop fields of wheat and oats. The field edges held a variety of plants, which spilled out onto the grassy area in the middle of the track. We saw some nice arable plants that are

not so common to us, Scarlet Pimpernel *Lysimachia arvensis*, Common Poppy *Papaver rhoeas*, Charlock *Sinapis arvensis*, Red Goosefoot *Oxybasis rubra* and Hairy Tare. Field Forget-me-not was looking colourful as was Wall Speedwell *Veronica arvensis* (a lovely bright blue), Cut-leaved Crane's-bill and Dove's-foot Crane's-bill *Geranium molle*. The hedgerow on the north side of the path had a good variety of trees and shrubs, which suggested it was quite old. Some plants seen were Field Maple *Acer campestre*, Ivy *Hedera helix*, Holly *Ilex aquifolium*, Dog-rose *Rosa canina*, Bramble *Rubus fruticosus* agg., Hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*, Blackthorn *Prunus spinosa*, Hazel and Guelder-rose *Viburnum opulus*. We were blessed with a warm sunny day and the butterflies were attracted to the hedgerow. The first to appear was Red Admiral, followed by Green-veined White, Meadow Brown, Peacock, and we were delighted to see Gatekeeper. We didn't know then that we were going to see good numbers throughout the day. Moving along, a bracket fungus was seen, quite high up on a tall tree. AMG identified it as *Inonotus hispidus* and she identified two other fungi,



**Oat (left) and wild oat (BB)**

including Fairy Ring *Marasmius oreades*, the best known species that makes rings. Soon a sunny lunch spot was found, and after we had eaten some of us laid out to soak up the sun for a few minutes!

The track started to open out into wide headlands where strips of fodder crops had been planted to attract birds and insects. This Conservation area was a very colourful array of Chicory *Cichorium intybus* - a lovely bright blue, Wild Carrot *Daucus carota*, a Cabbage species of *Brassica*, Borage *Borago officinalis*, Common Knapweed - purple, Musk-mallow *Malva moschata* - pink, Field Scabious, Devil's-bit Scabious, Red Clover *Trifolium pratense*, Charlock - yellow, Stinging Nettle *Urtica dioica* and three Thistles *Cirsium* species, all plants that butterflies are attracted to. The Conservation is obviously working because the butterflies kept flying, and added to our previous sightings were Small Skipper, Small White and Painted Lady. Various grasses were seen, one

being Black Bent *Agrostis gigantea*, a tall, arable grass which is not common near us. Also noted was Wild Oat *Avena fatua* mingling with the cultivated oat crop, then False Oat-grass *Arrhenatherum elatius*, Soft-brome *Bromus hordeaceus*, Crested Dog's-tail and Yorkshire Fog. Continuing south, heading towards the river we were seeing taller trees interspersed amongst the ancient hedgerow, including Sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus*, Ash *Fraxinus excelsior*, Horse-chestnut *Aesculus hippocastanum*, Apple *Malus domestica* and Crab Apple *M. sylvestris*. In this area also was Sitka Spruce *Picea sitchensis*.

We were told that the field next to the river was in stewardship and left to naturalise, so it was quite productive in this riverside habitat. The field was wooded and damp and the yellow fungus *Bolbitius vitellinus* appeared here. We were finding Angelica, Meadow Crane's-bill, Red Campion, Wood Dock *Rumex sanguineus*, Wych Elm *Ulmus glabra* and, unfortunately, Himalayan Balsam was here also. Closer to the riverside Sweet Cicely *Myrrhis odorata*, Meadowsweet *Filipendula ulmaria*, Dame's-violet *Hesperis matronalis*, Winter-cress *Barbarea vulgaris* and Bearded Couch *Elymus caninus* were found. At the water edge, the trees that like their feet wet were Alder *Alnus glutinosa*, four Willows, Goat *Salix caprea*, Grey *S. cinerea*, Crack Willow *Salix x fragilis* and Osier *S. viminalis*. Reed Canary-grass *Phalaris arundinacea* and Water Figwort *Scrophularia auriculata* were noted, BNB having to stand precariously in the river to identify the Figwort correctly!

Patrick told us that there was an old reservoir that had become a pond. It was exciting finding this as it was well hidden by a shelterbelt of trees and we had to get through the shrubbery to find it. Some noteworthy finds were: Dogwood *Cornus sanguinea*, Red-osier Dogwood *C. sericea*, Hjelmqvist's Cotoneaster *Cotoneaster hjelmqvistii* and Himalayan Cotoneaster *C. simonsii*. It was almost impossible to get right around the pond and the bank was a very steep and slippery. It was fortunate that BNB had his wellies on, so he went to the water edge to identify the water plants, recording Common Spike-rush, Least Duckweed, Broad-leaved Pondweed *Potamogeton natans* and Bulrush *Typha latifolia*. Exiting by our entrance point, we then found an easier entrance to the pond area further on. The vegetation was shorter and less dense, so notable plants seen here included Male-fern *Dryopteris filix-mas*, Lady's-smock *Cardamine pratensis*, Square-stalked St John's-wort, Fox-and-cubs and Primrose. Walking back to the farm we were still seeing butterflies in the hedgerow, at one spot we counted 20 Gatekeeper right in front of us. We had a very interesting and productive day, seeing 148 plants in a number of habitats, including some fodder crop and arable species that would be new WNS records if we decided to add this grid square to our recording map.

**Carmen Horner**

#### **Acknowledgements:**

I am very grateful to everyone providing records or helping with information and plant identification, also leading walks or taking part in surveys, including the following whose initials appear in the text.

AB Ann Bickley

AR Anne Riley

AT Anne Tupholme

AMG Audrey Gramshaw

BBG Bradford Botany Group

BNB Bruce Brown

CH Carmen Horner

DR Daniel Ross  
DAB David Broughton VCR64  
DM Dianne Morris  
GH Gordon Haycock  
HMB Heather Burrow  
JH Jan Hindle  
JW Jenny Watson  
BAT Jesse Tregale  
JA Joan Armitage  
JW John Webb  
MW Michael Wilcox  
ML & DL Midge & David Leather  
NB Neil Barrett

NV Nicky Vernon  
NF Nyree Fearnley  
PM Paul Millard  
PH Pauline Harrowell  
PB & JB Peter & Janet Burns  
PR Peter Riley  
PN Phil Newberry  
SW Sarah Ward  
SP Steve Parkes  
ST Stuart Tomlinson  
2nd Addingham Brownies

**Bruce Brown**

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## DRAGONFLY AND DAMSELFLY REPORT

In previous years' reports I have, for each species of Dragonfly, Damselfly and Demoiselle, shown sites where seen, first and last dates and any notable numbers.

Those of you with an interest in Dragonflies etc. will be aware from your own experience and from previous years' reports where and when, with luck, you can see the species we encounter in our area.

This year has produced records, from the few who supply them, very similar to previous years, no particularly early or late dates and almost all records from sites previously noted so for 2019 I am only listing below a few observations.

**EMPEROR** 4 Males present at Timble Ings 25th July, and on a few occasions females seen ovipositing.

**BROAD BODIED CHASER** A few emergences and immature flying seen at Timble. 1 female 5th August showing blue coloration on abdomen, which very occasionally occurs in old age.

**HAWKERS** Brown, Common and Southern had a good year at Timble. Brown in good numbers at OWRN with 17 on 8th

August. Brown present with a few Common, Southern and Migrant in Stainburn Forest in July and August. 15 Migrant at OWRN 20th September.

**BLACK TAILED SKIMMER** 3 present at OWRN 29th July including an ovipositing female.

**BLACK DARTER & EMERALD DAMSELFLY** Regular counts of 100+ each at Timble Ings in late August.

**BANDED DEMOISELLE** Regularly seen in small numbers alongside the Wharfe. The species had a good year, with 22 at Castley 29th June. Singles also noted far from the river, eg. 1 at Timble Ings 29th June and 1 at Low Dam 14th July.

**RUDDY DARTER** No records.

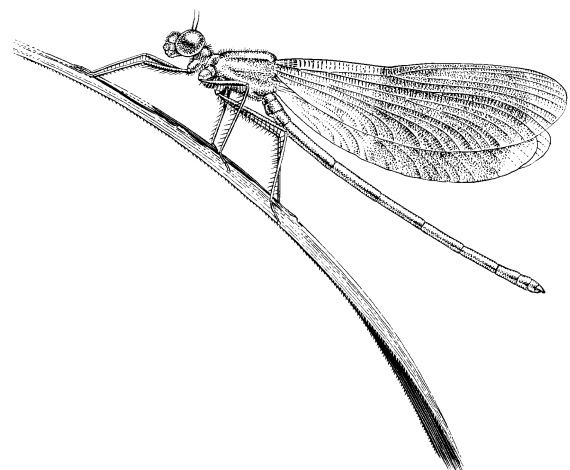
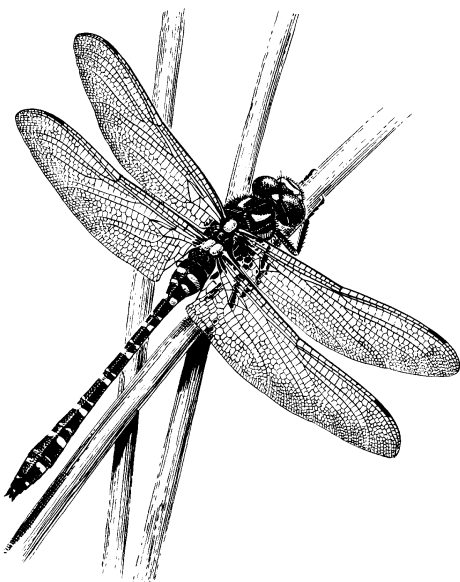
In addition to the ponds we know well, there are now new ponds at Gallows Hill Otley, Stainburn Forest on the Little Almscliff Crag side and Timble Ings.

Records this year have been supplied by:

D & J Alred, P & S Bancroft, G Haycock,

P & K Limb, D O'Connor, P Purvis, A & P Riley and K Smith.

**David Alred**





## WNS SUMMER OUTING

### Duck Street Quarry 18th July

Well you don't go to Duck Street quarry in July and not expect to see an abundance of Common Blue butterflies, and on this visit we were not disappointed! The timing was perfect and Duck Street lived up to its high reputation.



Common blue (DM)

The butterflies put on a fabulous show but what we didn't expect was a whole load of moths too!

Although it was the middle of July the weather was disappointingly dull as 22 enthusiastic naturalists turned up promptly at 11am. Paul gave a brief introduction about the site. The quarry, disused for many years, is one of the finest examples of a galena-fluorite vein mineralization in the area, and is a geological Site of Special Scientific Interest.

Paul had set a couple of moth traps the day before and while doing so counted hundreds of butterflies. As we all quietly looked around we could only see a handful, but Paul reassured us that they'd appear in abundance once the weather perked up.

According to the forecast the weather was set to improve around lunch time and Paul suggested we examine the moth traps first - and what a treat was in store!

A full list of the species seen is at the end of the report but these were the highlights:

A large count of Northern Rustic - unusual, as the moth is scarce. It is found in coastal areas around the British Isles and in the Western half of Yorkshire.

*Eana penziana* - probably the furthest east Yorkshire record. It is known from the Malham Tarn area, but is very rarely recorded in the County.

The Thyme Pug - also very rare in the County. There is a record from Kettlewell in 2009 on the Yorkshire Moths website.

*Eucosma hohenwartiana* - uncommon and we think it has not been seen in Wharfedale before, though you could reasonably argue that Duck Street is in Nidderdale!

Looking at the moths took some time and in the meantime the weather was brightening up so people started seeking out the butterflies. After a lunch break people set off in earnest. Lots of Common Blue butterflies were seen on the thistles and many were mating, often with a third butterfly looking on! When the sun went behind the clouds and a shadow cast over the vegetation the insects disappeared. Then, as soon as the sun came out the Common Blues appeared as if from nowhere and flew around briskly, seeking their nectar sources.

In the long grasses Ringlets and Meadow Browns bounced along. At the top of the rock face many Dark Green Fritillaries were seen, their bright colours glistening in the sunshine that popped out from the clouds. A few accommodating fritillaries were happy to stay lower down at the side of the quarry so that others, less keen on the climb to the top, could enjoy their beauty.

Many wildflowers clothed the thin limestone soil typical of quarries including birds-foot trefoil (the food plant of the Common Blue) and pink stoncropps. In the longer grasses there were thistles, knapweeds and yellow hawkweeds.

All in all it was a super day and smiles all round on departure.

Many thanks to Paul for all his work in setting up the traps and to Mike McEvoy for allowing us access.

### List of Butterfly Species

Common Blue x 500
Small White x 3
Small Tortoiseshell x 6
Painted Lady x 4
Red Admiral x 1
Ringlet x 15
Meadow Brown x 10
Small Heath x 12
Dark Green Fritillary x 17

### List of Moth species

Bradley Fletcher no.		Quantity
169	<i>Zygaena filipendulae</i>	
	Six-spot Burnet	4
796	<i>Aroga velocella</i>	1
937	<i>Agapeta hamana</i>	6
1031	<i>Eana penziana</i>	2
	form bellana photo verified CHF	
1200	<i>Eucosma hohenwartiana</i>	1
1201	<i>Eucosma cana</i>	10
1304	<i>Agriphila straminella</i>	6
1344	<i>Eudonia mercurella</i>	1
1727	<i>Xanthorhoe montanata</i>	
	Silver-ground Carpet	2



Six-spot Burnet (KS)

742	<i>Camptogramma bilineata</i>	
	Yellow Shell	1
1776	<i>Colostygia pectinataria</i>	
	Green Carpet	2
1843	<i>Eupithecia distinctaria</i>	
	Thyme Pug	2
	Gen.det CHF, an important new record for the HDNS and WNS areas	
1846	<i>Eupithecia nanata</i>	
	Narrow-winged Pug	3
1870	<i>Odezia atrata</i>	
	Chimney Sweeper	1
1984	<i>Macroglossum stellatarum</i>	
	Humming-bird Hawk-moth	1
1992	<i>Deilephila porcellus</i>	
	Small Elephant Hawk-moth	1
2038	<i>Nudaria mundana</i>	
	Muslin Footman	1
2088	<i>Agrotis clavus</i>	
	Heart and Club	7
2089	<i>Agrotis exclamationis</i>	
	Heart and Dart	6
2092	<i>Agrotis puta</i>	
	Shuttle-shaped Dart	2
2104	<i>Standfussiana lucernea</i>	
	Northern Rustic	6
	A large count for this scarce moth	
2107	<i>Noctua pronuba</i>	
	Large Yellow Underwing	21
2118	<i>Lycophotia porphyrea</i>	
	True Lover's Knot	22
2120	<i>Diarsia mendica</i>	
	Ingrailed Clay	1
2130	<i>Xestia baja</i>	
	Dotted Clay	4
2163	<i>Melanchra pisi</i>	
	Broom Moth	1
2176	<i>Cerapteryx graminis</i>	
	Antler Moth	2
2198	<i>Mythimna impura</i>	
	Smoky Wainscot	1
2250	<i>Blepharita adusta</i>	
	Dark Brocade	4
2321	<i>Apamea monoglypha</i>	
	Dark Arches	14
2330	<i>Apamea remissa</i>	
	Dusky Brocade	22
2340	<i>Oligia fasciuncula</i>	
	Middle-barred Minor	5
2434	<i>Diachrysis chrysitis</i>	
	Burnished Brass	1
2439	<i>Plusia festucae</i>	
	Gold Spot	3
2442	<i>Autographa pulchrina</i>	
	Beautiful Golden Y	1
2477	<i>Hypena proboscidalis</i>	
	Snout	1



## OBITUARY: AUDREY BOWLAND

Audrey was born in Bombay in India on 9th November 1930 and died on 13th June 2019 aged 88. Her father was serving there in the Army but sadly died when Audrey was three years old. This resulted in her mother returning to her home town of Bolton with Audrey and her sister. Audrey had a variety of happy memories of being looked after by her extended family as she grew up but, at the age of eight, she was sent to the Royal Masonic School in Rickmansworth in Hertfordshire until the age of eighteen. This school specifically catered for girls who had lost their fathers.

She enjoyed her time away at school and was good at all her academic lessons and loved all types of sport. After the war she took a teacher training course in Bingley gaining her Certificate after two years. She met Nevil Bowland, who became her husband, at a dance at Menston Village Hall when she was nineteen and they married in 1954 this being the start of a happy relationship that lasted 65 years and produced three children. They lived at the same house in Nethercliffe Crescent, Guiseley throughout their life together. Audrey taught full time until her children came along and, some years later, went back as a supply teacher. Eventually she became head of the Guiseley Nursery School and worked beyond her retirement age to ensure a successful amalgamation with Guiseley Infants School.

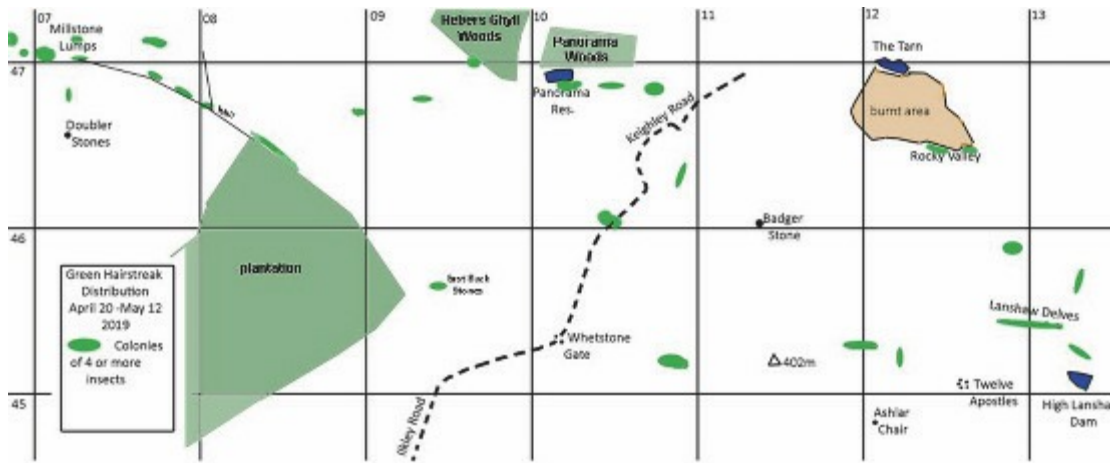
Nevil had no formal training as a naturalist but had developed a passion for all forms of wildlife from an early age. As a boy he was effectively a founder member of the Wharfedale Naturalists and Audrey enthusiastically supported him in everything he did with the WNS throughout their marriage, including serving as Membership Secretary from 1995 to 1998. She was renowned for her positive and enthusiastic disposition and willingness to assist on nature outings and social events. On a personal level, I much appreciated her help and encouragement in my early years as President of the Society.

**Peter Riley**

## Diane Morris



**Barn Owl at  
Timble Ings (DV)**



wing. It was mid-April 2019 that my son told me he had seen lots of green hairstreaks along Lanshaw Delves and this that decided me to begin a survey. I was aware that these butterflies occur in small colonies in sheltered parts of the moor, like the sheltered 'delves' along this 600m

## GREEN HAIRSTREAKS ON ILKLEY MOOR

Look out for this pretty butterfly on local moorland from about mid-April to early June where the caterpillars feed on bilberry. It is among these plants in sheltered places that the adult insects are most evident. In flight they are difficult to follow and appear like a piece of brown paper flying fast close to the ground, then they will land and suddenly turn bright green as closed wings are directed towards the sun. When the insect is at rest like this, the size, shape and colour is very much the same as a bilberry leaf, providing good camouflage but making them vanish from sight. As the sun reflects on the wing scales at different angles, the green can vary from bluish-green to yellow-green, and the butterfly may look so bright it can be visible from several paces. Male and female are very much the same, but it is the male which perches territorially in a prominent position and, on being disturbed, may return to the same spot. Bilberry is the main food plant on the moors, but this adaptable insect can be found on limestone, lowland heath, embankments, chalk downs and wasteland where it lays its eggs on a variety of species including gorse, rockrose, bird's-foot trefoil and dyer's greenweed. The adults nectar on a variety of flowers out in the spring and I've seen them on honeydew on sycamore leaves at the edge of the moor. It is in the chrysalis form that the insect overwinters, spending about eight months in this state.

Since the green hairstreak always settles with its wings closed, you never see the colour of the upper sides of the wings which are brown, though sometimes a patch of brown is visible where the wings overlap. The 'hairstreak' refers to the white line across the green underside, as in the white-letter hairstreak and purple hairstreak, which in the green hairstreak is broken into a series of dots. I was surprised to find, after studying several photographs, that there was quite a variation in the number of dots across the two wings, from no dots at all to twelve dots spread across the two wings. Most common were those with white dots across both wings and fairly common were those with dots only on the hind

lateral moraine, with plenty of other sheltered habitats to examine along walls, among groups of rocks, in hollows or along a sunny slope where there was protection from strong winds.

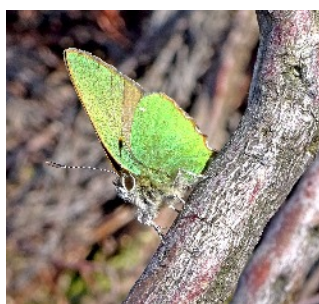
I decided to record the sightings on a map of Ilkley Moor and made use of my Garmin GPS meter to pinpoint localities more accurately. Intermittent sun made it easier to photograph the butterflies when they were less active, although in complete shade they drop down into the vegetation, not to be seen again. Overall, I mapped 22 colonies of green hairstreak, reckoning arbitrarily that a colony was four or more individuals. The most I counted was 47 at Lanshaw Delves on 11 May. I found many colonies are not so discrete with insects up to 50m or more away, and large parts of the moor appeared to have no green hairstreaks at all, even though the food plant was present. The number of colonies and localities marked on the map have been added to by other Nats members.

A few years ago, when we were on a walking holiday in the Cantabrian Mountains of northern Spain, it was nice to see green hairstreaks there too, looking the same as those at home. In fact, the map of global distribution of *Callophrys rubi* shows them to cover all of Europe and into Siberia, with their freezing winters, as well as the warm Mediterranean and North Africa, but sadly not in Orkney, Shetland or the Hebrides. Nonetheless it shows the beautiful green hairstreak to be a very sturdy little survivor.

The sketch map shows the result of my 2019 survey with colonies of green hairstreak across Ilkley Moor. Other colonies have been added around Windgate Nick (by Diane Morris), along the Keighley Road (Ernie Scarfe), near Panorama Reservoir (Peter and Janet Burns) and in Rocky Valley (John Stidworthy). The burnt part, which happened on the weekend of 20th May, covers the rock-strewn landslip area between the Tarn and Rocky Valley which must have been responsible for the extermination of all insects and other wildlife in that part of the moor.

The three photographs indicate variations in the number of white dots on the underside (verso) of green hairstreak and some variation in colour. A very small 'tail' is visible at the point of the hindwing in some specimens.

**David Leather**



## THE SMALL PEARL-BORDERED FRITILLARY *BOLORIA SELENE* IN UPPER WHARFEDALE

The Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary used to be resident in Upper Wharfedale. I quote John Crowther from his book *Silva Gars* published in 1930;

“Among characteristic lepidoptera in Grass and Bastow woods are:

*Erebia (blandina) aethiops* (Scotch Argus)

*Lycoena astrache* (Northern Brown Argus)

*Ino geryon* (Cistus Forester)

*Larentia flavicinctata* (Yellow Ringed Carpet)

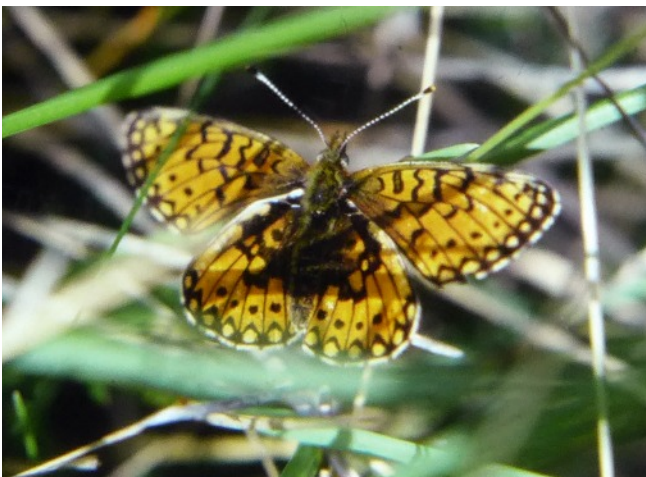
*Phoedhes captiunculus* (Least Minor)

*Enychia octomaculata (Anania funebris)*  
(White Spotted Sable Moth)

A little lower down the valley, in heathy gills on gritstone slopes, the Green Hairstreak butterfly, and the Small Argent moth *M. tristata* (Small Argent and Sable) are locally common, and the two Pearl-bordered Fritillaries still survive.”

There are many back stories to this short extract. Most notable is that the accepted Latin names have changed beyond recognition unlike the usual common names we use in the UK. So much for the Linnaean binomial system being the global unchanging standard. I have put in brackets the common names.

But it is the final line in which we are interested today. Both the Small Pearl-bordered and Pearl Bordered Fritillaries were still resident in Wharfedale in 1930 though the location is not specific.



Today in Yorkshire the Pearl-bordered Fritillary is only present on the North York Moors near Pickering. The is more widespread. Though it can do well in woods, the Yorkshire colonies are all associated with Marsh Violet in damp unimproved grassland. The nearest known colony to us is Ha Mire at Malham Tarn and this colony has only just established itself having originated from further west.

So what chance of the Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary making it to Wharfedale again? There are undoubtedly patches of suitable habitat.

We have had a massive increase in the numbers of Dark Green Fritillary recorded over the last few years. Then in

2019 we have seen a significant arrival of the impressive Silver-washed Fritillary.

I have been speculating that the next to re-colonise might be the Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary. It might make its way from Malhamdale into Littondale and so I have been keeping an eye on suitable patches of habitat in the spring.

Then out of the blue I get a phone call from Peter Summers wanting to know if I was interested in a record of a Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary from 1978 with photographs of a female seen on the opposite side of the valley to Grass Wood. Well of course I am interested, this must be the last certain record. I have digitised the slides to show here.

**The last known Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary in Wharfedale – Photograph Peter Summers 30/06/1978 Robin Hood’s Well.**



This is a female, with the eye of faith it is possible to see the number 730 on the left upper forewing a feature that helps to distinguish the SPBF from the PBF in the field.

So there we are, certain evidence it was here in 1978. Was this an individual flown far from home? was it the last gasp of the colony as described by John Crowther in his book *Silva Gars*? Is there even the slightest chance that it is still there? That will have to wait for 2020.

**Paul Millard**

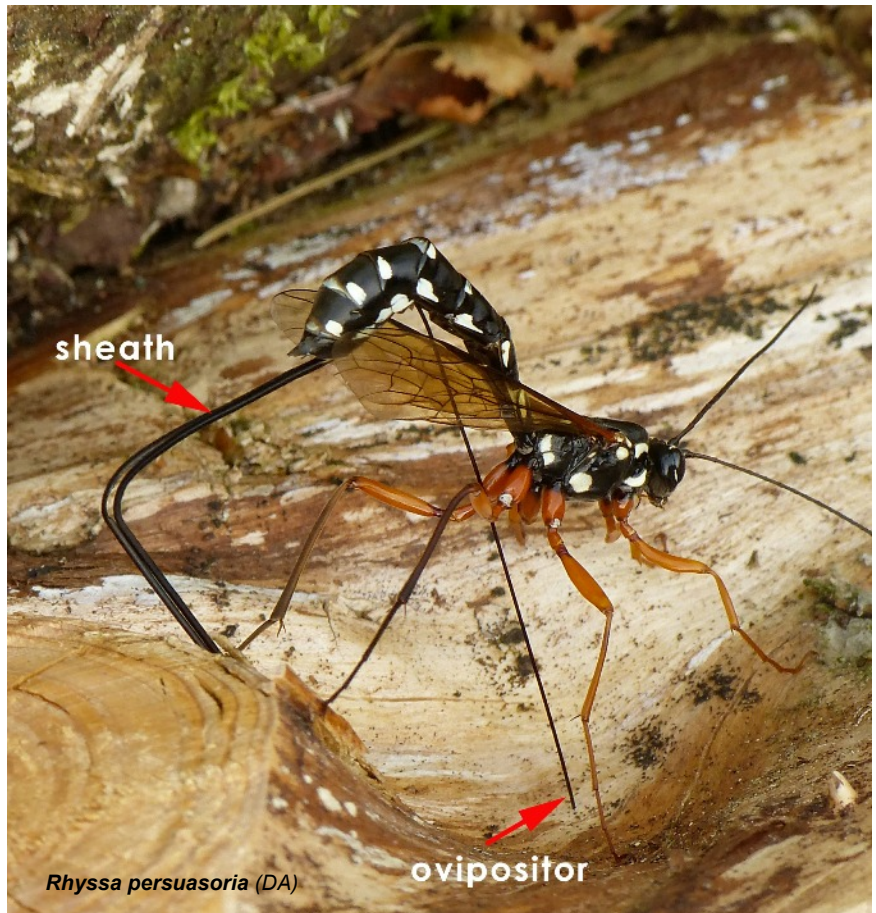


## A TALE OF TWO WASPS

*Rhyssa persuasoria*, the sabre wasp, is Britain's largest parasitoid wasp. It is a spectacular insect with a body around 1.5 inches long, and in the female, an ovipositor as long again. It has striking black and white markings on the body and red legs. You would know it if you saw it – the best chance is in conifer woodland hanging around log piles in July and August. It's looking for a place to lay an egg, tapping on the wood with its antennae to smell out a host for a larva to feed on.

Our second 'wasp' (it is actually a sawfly) is the giant woodwasp, or horntail, *Uroceras gigas*. Equally impressive with black and yellow bands and a 'horn' on the end of its abdomen, it can reach 1.5 inches in length. The female lays her eggs deep in wood, often pine, where the larvae develop, feeding on the wood. Remarkably, when the female drills into the wood with her ovipositor, she not only lays an egg, but also adds a culture of a wood-rotting fungus that she keeps in her reproductive tract. This helps to break down the wood so that the larva can digest it more easily. I guess wood is not very nutritious, because the larva can take several years to develop before the adult emerges.

So, there you have a horntail larva buried deep within a log munching away when along comes a sabre wasp. She taps on the wood with her antennae 'smelling' for the fungus or for the larval frass. When she finds a larva in its burrow, she starts to do a test drill. Her ovipositor is a truly remarkable structure. The needle-like ovipositor proper is encased within a sheath which is in two halves 'zipped' together. The tip of the ovipositor is hardened with metals – up to 10% zinc and manganese. The 'needle' is composed of 'valves' which can move independently to push, pull and bend so it's both flexible and strong at the same time. After a few test drills or 'probes' which only go down a few mm, she starts to drill for real. As the 'needle' gets deeper, the sheath splits into its two halves and folds out of the way. This ability of a fragile-looking ovipositor to drill



into solid wood without getting damaged has inspired scientists at Imperial College London to try and develop a surgical probe for delicate neurosurgery that operates like a wasp ovipositor – another example of what we can learn from insects. Biomimetic technology it's called. The probe project has the acronym STING – soft tissue intervention neurosurgical guide.

Anyway, back to the wasp. When she's got down to a horntail larva, she stings it to paralyse it (her ovipositor can deliver venom as well as eggs) and then lays an egg close to it. Her larva is an ectoparasite on the horntail larva. It consumes its victim alive leaving the vital organs until last. It goes through four instars, pupates in the wood and the adult

emerges from the pupa and chews its way out of the burrow in the wood next spring.

Well, in July 2019 David Alred was lucky enough to witness first the sabre wasp, then a few days later the horntail, drilling into the wood and laying their eggs. This was at Timble. He took the amazing photographs that go with this article.

Of course, I went to the site myself, camera at the ready, but watched the logpile to no avail! Maybe 2020.....

Anne Riley



## WASP MIMIC HOVERFLIES



**Volucella inanis larva (left) (AR)**

sucks dry. We have a wasp nest at the back door. It all fits!

I have seen *Volucella inanis* in the garden over the last few summers. It used to be confined mainly to Southern England, but like many insects, has spread further north in recent years.

There is another *Volucella* – *zonaria* – our largest hoverfly and quite a spectacular insect, which has also spread north recently. I saw it in the garden for the first time this year, and Alastair and Jenny Watson also had one in Otley. *Volucella zonaria* is also a wasp/hornet mimic (sometimes called the Hornet Hoverfly because of its resemblance and size). Its larvae live in wasp (and hornet) nests where they are

**Volucella inanis (below) (AR)**

When I saw this on the utility room floor, I thought it was unusually pale for a woodlouse (we get a lot in the house!), So I went to get my camera for a closer look (I use the camera as my hand lens!).

I managed to turn it on its back, and no, no legs – just these stumpy little bumps with hooks on. It's definitely not a woodlouse which is a crustacean and has 7 pairs of legs. Okay, it must be a larva of some sort. Looking at the little tube coming out of its rear end reminds me of a hoverfly larva (it's a breathing tube). An internet search of hoverfly larvae images reveals the identity – *Volucella inanis*. Now this is interesting, because *Volucella inanis* adults are wasp mimics who lay their eggs in wasp nests where the larva develops as an ectoparasitoid on a wasp larva. The flattened shape allows it to snuggle down in a cell in the comb next to its victim which it



scavengers, feeding on the debris at the bottom of the nest.

The clever mimicry of both these species allows them to get into the wasp nests undetected. They find a host nest probably by detecting the host smell. Looking like a wasp is also a helpful strategy to warn off predators, but the hoverflies of course are bluffing and don't have a sting – an example of Batesian mimicry. Isn't evolution wonderful!

**Anne Riley**

**Volucella zonaria (AW)**

## IN SEARCH OF THE PIGGYBACK GOOSE

Before standardised taxonomy and the field guide revolution the common names conferred on our native birdlife were variably derived from the song, prominent features of anatomy, plumage and habitat preference of an individual species. These names show considerable provincial variation, perhaps reflecting that species' significance in local culture, and some still survive in the local vernacular. Indeed, in parts of our own Yorkshire Dales, lapwing are still known onomatopoeically as tewits, tree sparrows as copper tops and short eared owls as bog owls. This tendency for idiosyncratic description can even extend to an individual household although the origins here may stem more from ornithological ineptitude than tradition. Such was the case in my family when, on a lads fishing trip, my young cousin rather endearingly rechristened a female goosander, apparently weighed down with the burden of her brood, as that 'piggy-back' goose'. Family bloopers are poignant aides-memoire and it was a recollection of that excursion that kick started a quest for my mind's eye image of that distinctive, low-slung bird with her offspring aboard elegantly mirrored in the river. A bird with a taste for trout and salmon inevitably risks the wrath of anglers and goosander are understandably wary of man.

Knowing however that my photographic quarry often nested in tree holes I started to research those parts of the river Wharfe with both wooded banks and busy footpaths. After several sorties I found a female with a family of nine quite young ducklings who appeared relatively undisturbed by casual human presence. The river was swollen from a recent downpour and, with both heron and lesser black back gull on that stretch, I wondered how many of her brood she might already have lost and whether any would survive until the water level had fallen sufficiently for photography.

I returned on a bright still morning a couple of days later and was pleasantly surprised to relocate mother and brood, sadly now only seven strong, and began what can only be described as a strenuous riverside yomp shadowing the family's movements. Successful wildlife photography often requires the recognition a repeated pattern of behaviour based round a species' basic requirements. For ducklings, most breeds of which assume a remarkable level of independence after leaving the nest, that pattern consists of enthusiastic bouts of feeding interspersed with short intervals of drying off or, in cold weather and when very young, brooding by their mother. Small waterfowl are bite sized and high on the menu of several well-known riverine predators which requires female ducks to remain vigilant for potential danger as their brood spread out to forage the surface of the river.

Unsurprisingly at first therefore, whenever my proximity began to concern her, the female goosander would utter a persistent grunt call her brood together and move on. Conscious to avoid unwarranted disturbance; minimal compared to the frequent canine incursions into the river, but rather frustrated that my innocent intentions should cause her to take evasive action I began to imitate her grunts and to my pleasant surprise her tolerance increased. With this newly found acceptance the brood's activities changed and, instead of hugging the opposite bank, they began to zigzag across the river closer to my position and even tolerated my presence in the water where, now at subject

level, I was afforded a much better photographic viewpoint. Watching young waterfowl, rather like contemplating a fish tank, can be a relaxing experience and I soon became fascinated by their adventures as they explored every swirl and eddy and had obviously already built up an intimate familiarity with their home range. Their recollection for shallow stretches, where minnows abound, seemed instinctive and often precipitated a bout of frenzied activity as they abandoned their mother and like turbo-charged humbugs raced to ambush the unsuspecting shoal. When mum caught up they reassembled and returned to a less frenetic style of feeding but invariably failed to assume the formation I was seeking, at least within acceptable photographic range. In my efforts to keep up with the family



it was sometimes necessary to negotiate faster flowing stretches of river with overgrown banks at which point I would lose visual contact with the brood as they shot the rapids and I had to portage my camera gear. Luckily I always caught up but occasionally it was also necessary to switch banks and as I waded the river no doubt bemused early morning walkers as, knee deep in water and tripod in hand, I grunted at the barely discernible brood while struggling to remain upright. In early summer the river is alive with new life and some coming together of broods is inevitable allowing interspecific behaviour to be observed.

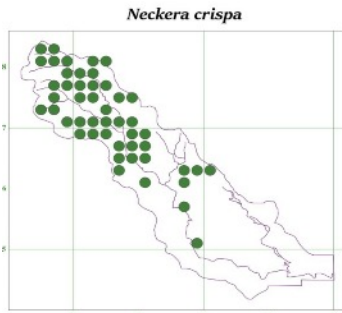
On several occasions a lone mallard duckling, delicately picking midges from the surface film, would suddenly be surrounded by a crazy gang of hoodlum goosander and, having reluctantly got used to the new kids on the block, would equally suddenly find itself unceremoniously dispatched back to its own brood by the crested assailant that was their mother. While all this duck family interaction was fascinating to observe it was the more tranquil intervals travelling over deeper water that I hoped might yield the image I sought.

Eventually we reached a quieter stretch and as the avian pandemonium subsided my charges fell in line, began hopping aboard the maternal ferry, and I bagged my picture. The trudge back to the car was a damp one and the full English in the Old School House Tearooms very welcome as I relived my adventure and once again felt privileged to have gained insights in to the lives of wild creatures and at the same time managed to crystallize my childhood memory of the piggy-back.

**Kelvin Smith**

## BRYO-DIVERSITY HOT-SPOTS. WHERE ARE THEY AND WHAT IS THEIR SIGNIFICANCE?

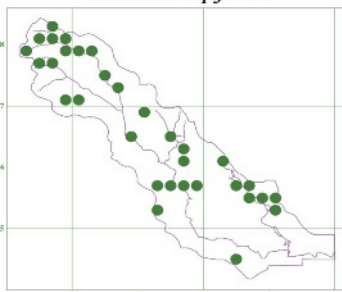
Each year I collate all the moss and liverwort records known for our recording area since 2000. These are then turned into an annual 'Atlas' which has maps showing where each bryophyte has been recorded. The atlas allows consideration of the distribution of each species, and a 'co-incidence map' indicates where the most diverse tetrads are (a tetrad being a 2km by 2km square).



*Neckera crisper*



*Dicranum scoparium*



*Fontinalis antipyretica*

watercourses, flushes and usually woodland. However, perhaps the definitive factor in each case is that these tetrads have been visited by expert bryologists from the British Bryological Society during the spring meeting in 2011 which was held in Kettlewell!

There is another striking observation associated with the co-incidence map; rare species in Wharfedale do not necessarily occur in bryo-diversity hot spots. As the bryo-diversity hotspots pick out places where expert bryologists have been, it is possible to conclude that these species are genuinely rare in Wharfedale (rather than simply under-recorded because they are obscure species) as if the rare species were present in a bryo-diversity hot spot one might have expected them to be found. A case in point is Handsome Woollywort *Trichocolea tomentella*, a delicate leafy liverwort whose ancestors hitched a ride from Gondwanaland and drifted north on the Indian sub-continent before colonising Asia and ultimately Upper Wharfedale. Recorded only once in our area this century this species grows in an unremarkable rush-pasture below Pewett Moss near Beckermonds. The

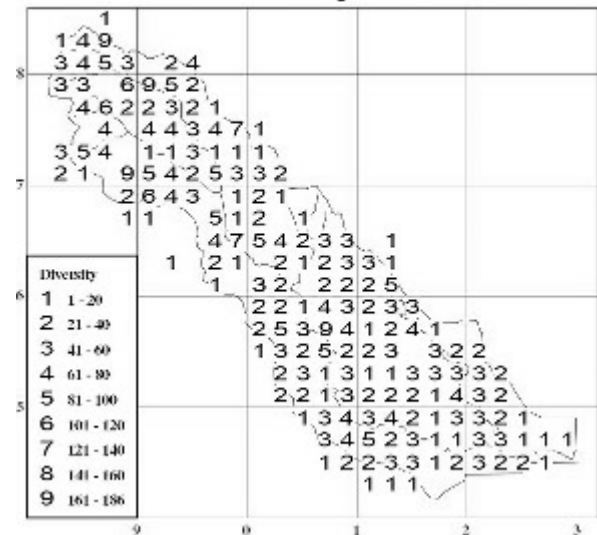
occurrence of Handsome Woollywort in this place demonstrates the need to conserve apparently commonplace habitats in Wharfedale as well as our known special sites.

Clean air acts

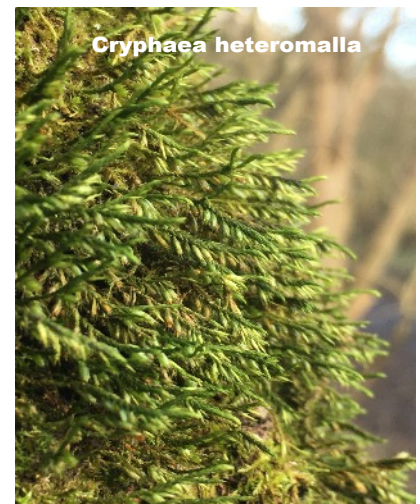
One other observation for 2019 is the apparent rise in epiphytic and saxicolous bryophytes in Lower Wharfedale. Trees and rocks in more humid spots are increasingly being colonised by a variety of bryophytes which were previously absent or very rare in the locality. Species such as Dilated Scalewort *Frullania dilatata*, Even Scalewort *Radula complana* and Lateral Cryphaea *Cryphaea heteromalla* amongst others are becoming commonplace. This may well be part of the re-colonisation of habitat by bryophytes occurring now that air is cleaner. Winter is a great time to enjoy bryophytes growing on trees and rocks; there are no leaves to obscure your view, bryophytes are in rude health (they grow all year round) and often bear their 'fruits' (sporophytes) in winter. I would urge all naturalists to indulge in some 'moss-bathing' this winter - head out into your local woods and crags, lie in the moss and breathe deeply!

The co-incidence map indicates four clear 'bryo-diversity hotspots' where over 160 species have been recorded in a single tetrad; but what does this indicate? Looking at the diversity of species present we can elucidate that these tetrads have a wide variety of habitats including limestone outcrops, shaded gills, moorland, bog,

All species



*Frullania dilatata*



*Cryphaea heteromalla*

Gordon Haycock



## LADYBIRDS

2019 was another good year for ladybird sightings. There was a total of 126 records of all native species (40 more than last year) representing over 700 individual ladybirds. Harlequin records fell to just 47 representing around 200 individuals (considerably down on 2018). These figures probably have more to do with the opportunities for recording rather than a relative increase of native species, but it does seem to have been a good year for the 7-spot. It was however a disastrous year for the once common 2-spot – just three records. The highlight of 2019 was the discovery of large numbers of kidney spot ladybirds at Gallows Hill Nature Reserve. This species was first recorded in our area in 2000 with the finding of 20 on a wall under an ash tree at Lindley Wood. There were other odd records in 2004,5,6 and 7 but nothing else until this year (although perhaps it has just been overlooked – at around 4mm in size it blends in to tree trunks where it feeds on scale insects (tiny bugs of the superfamily Coccoidea; order Hemiptera).

### 7-SPOT LADYBIRD *Coccinella 7-punctata*

74 records of around 250 insects – a good year for the 7-spot.

The first record of the year was on 21 February – Paul Purvis (PP) found one by his compost heap. Peter and Janet Burns (PJB) found two on a *Pyracantha* when tidying the garden on 24 February. Another turned up on Otley cemetery wall also on 24 February (PP) and on 25 February Diane Morris (DM) found 13 on a box hedge in warm sunshine in Addingham. My first record was of eight on gorse on Burley Moor on 15 March and Peter (PR) found our first garden record on 17 March. DM found the first mating pair among eight individuals in Addingham on 25 March. Further records through March and April from Ilkley, Burley, Otley and Gallows Hill including 14 on nettle leaves at Gallows Hill (PP), 14 on nettles Hag Farm Burley (AR), 10 on gorse Ilkley Moor edge (PJB) and PP counted 43 along the Farnley to Leathley footpath on 21 April. There were nine May records of up to eight individuals (on hogweed; PJB). On 17 June there were larvae as well as adults at Scalebor in Burley, and larvae and pupae on Weston Lane on 13 July. Four July records from around Ilkley of ones and a two (PJB). Four newly emerged adults appeared at Scalebor on 3 August with several the following day in our garden in Burley. PP found three on heather and bilberry on Otley Chevin on 28 August. Just three September records, all from PP from Otley. I was still finding odd ones through October (Scalebor) as was PP round Otley, Weston and Leathley. The last record was from PP at Gallows Hill on 29 October.

### EYED LADYBIRD *Anatis ocellata*

No records

### CREAM SPOT LADYBIRD *Calvia 14-guttata*

Five records each of one individual. I found one at Woodhill on 5 April and again on 6 April. Gordon Haycock (GH) reported one from Gallows Hill on 7 April. I was surprised to find one on heather on Burley Moor on 23 April (its preferred habitat is deciduous woodland). My last record was 27 May – one at Scalebor. PJB found one in Ilkley on 29 July – this was the last record for the year.

### 2-SPOT LADYBIRD *Adalia 2-punctata*

PP found one *f typica* on his kitchen floor in Otley on 30 May and another, also *f typica* on a lily leaf in the garden (with whitefly) on 3 June. I photographed a mating pair at Addingham on the Nats visit on 18 June.

### ADONIS LADYBIRD *Hippodamia variegata*

No records.

### 10-SPOT LADYBIRD *Adalia 10-punctata*

PR found one in the garden at Woodhill on 21 July. Gordon Haycock (GH) found one on Limestone in the Dales (an unusual form with very large spots) on 11 September.

### 14-SPOT LADYBIRD *Propylea 14-punctata*

9 records, 10 ladybirds (one mating pair)

The first record for the year came from PJB on 15 May off Coutances Way in Ilkley. One in the garden at Woodhill on 1 June (AR), a mating pair on mock orange in PP's garden in Otley on 10 June, one at Scalebor on 14 June, two on 17 June, one on 20 June, all at Scalebor. One at Woodhill on 22 June, one at Scalebor on 23 June and one at Woodhill on 27 June. On the same day, PP found a larva on a plastic pot in his garden in Otley, but never found an adult. I found my last one for the year at Scalebor on 13 July.

### 22-SPOT LADYBIRD *Psyllobora 22-punctata*

12 records; 83 ladybirds

The best ever year for records of this species in WNS area.



I found one in the front garden at Woodhill on 7 April. 22-spots are only about 3-4mm but are very bright yellow so quite easy to spot on a leaf. Then in August I started discovering several along a short length of path at Scalebor in Burley. There were several hogweed plants with some mildew on the leaves and this is what the 22-spot feeds on. Once I started looking, I got up to 21 individuals (couldn't find number 22!) on 9 August. From 15 August I was finding larvae as well – the same colour pattern as the adults which is not the case with most ladybirds. I was still finding odd ones into mid-October, 12 October is my last record.

### ORANGE LADYBIRD *Halyzia 16-guttata*

Just one record – PR found two in the moth trap at Woodhill on 23 July. It is well documented that orange ladybirds come to light and are often reported from moth traps.

### LARCH LADYBIRD *Aphidecta oblitterata*

Three records of three individuals.

Karen Shackleton (KS) found one in her garden in Ilkley on 16 July. Paul Millard (PM) reported one from his moth

trap at Skyreholme on 26 August, and I found one dead in the garden at Woodhill on 26 September.

**PINE LADYBIRD** *Exochomus 4-pustulatus*

No records this year.

**KIDNEY SPOT LADYBIRD** *Chilocorus renipustulatus*

This species was rediscovered in our area after an apparent absence of 12 years.



There were 11 records totalling several hundred ladybirds – it's probably just a question of knowing where to look! Paul Purvis found three on the trunk of a riverside willow at Gallows Hill on 24 February and then increasing numbers on riverside willows through March until mid-April when they switched to ash trees – the most usual site apparently. They feed on tiny scale insects, so it depends which trees their food source is on. The biggest actual count (PP) was 116 on ash trees in one glade (all records from Gallows Hill). I visited the site on 30 April and found lots scattered around on ash trees – up to 10 at a time. At the WNS visit on 21 May it was the same picture with more than 10 on one tree. Independently, Gordon Haycock found one (at Gallows Hill) on 8 April and reported it straight away. At this stage, I thought it was new for WNS area and got very excited! It will be interesting to see if they are there in good numbers next year.

**HARLEQUIN LADYBIRD** *Harmonia axyridis*

47 records of around 200 ladybirds

Harlequins were recorded from 7 January to late November. Most of the records came from Paul Purvis, but Susan Barton, Peter and Janet Burns, Audrey Gramshaw, and John Stidworthy (and AR and PR) also submitted records. John Stidworthy reported, with photo, a very small ladybird from his lounge in Ilkley on 21 March in the hope it might be something else, but it was a harlequin – there is a considerable variation in size.

On 17 April, Paul Purvis found a small, very dark ladybird with faint red markings and wondered about hieroglyphic ladybird (which would have been nice!). In the end I sent both photos and then the actual specimen to Helen Roy, ladybird expert, and she confirmed harlequin (and will put the specimen in her collection of unusual forms).

Peter and Janet Burns found four at Denton Road sports ground on 28 May and Audrey Gramshaw had one inside her kitchen window in Menston on 13 July. Susan Barton's record came from her Burley garden where she found one on

'manky' borage along with 7-spots on 4 August. Paul Purvis recorded harlequins from his house and garden and all round Otley, Farnley and Leathley. There were several records in the teens and in November he found 26 on the north sides of gravestones (not marble!) in Otley Cemetery. My records are from April to July from the house and garden (small numbers) and from Hag Farm and Scalebor. I found 12 at OWNR on the silt island on 21 June. The majority are 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



**4-spot orb weaver spider *Araneus quadratus* wrapping a common blue butterfly (KS)**

**Damselfly (AK)**



## ON THE TRAIL OF STOATS AND MARTENS

Unapologetic serendipitists, my husband and I compensate for our limited natural history knowledge by walking the countryside with an active interest in any wildlife that catches our eye. Over the years we have been rewarded with many special, but usually fleeting, moments as some creature or other dashes for cover.

One morning, towards the end of July, we decided to walk along the River Wharfe and into the Otley Wetlands Nature Reserve with the intention of watching and maybe photographing butterflies and dragonflies. As we walked along the access track towards the reed bed, Alastair



**Stoat cub (AW)**

suddenly paused and gestured to a point further along the track where a female stoat and two cubs were darting about and playfighting in the long grass at the edge of the track. We watched for a few minutes before the family disappeared into the vegetation at the western side of the track.

We continued our perambulations around the reed bed and, as well as nameless, to us, dragonflies, we enjoyed watching a small colony of speckled wood butterflies, quite a few six-spot burnet moths and a pair of roe deer.

On our return journey, now conscious of the stoats' existence, we approached the bend in the access track cautiously with a camera at the ready. To our delight the stoat cubs were once again playfighting on the track. We froze as the cubs, quite unaware of our presence, moved closer and closer, jumping over puddles and chasing each other in and out of the vegetation. After five long minutes, when they were just a couple of metres from us the inevitable happened - we were spotted and they vanished into the undergrowth, but not before Alastair had recorded some great video!

A few months later we experienced another remarkable encounter with a member of the weasel family.

This time we were enjoying a week in a remote cottage that was situated alongside a forest track and a mile away from the road in the wilds of Dumfries and Galloway. On arrival we read through the owner's information pack which referred to occasional pine marten sightings at the cottage and suggested that those wishing to see it left an egg and some jam sandwiches on a conveniently placed tree stump in the yard.

That evening we put out an egg and watched, and waited, but no pine marten. In the morning the egg was still there. The next night, we put the same egg back on the stump and in the morning it had gone.

Intrigued, we put another egg out the next evening along with some pine marten sized peanut butter sandwiches. We waited and watched, watched and waited. Then, at around 10.30pm, a fox arrived, circled around the tree stump a few

times, took the egg and disappeared into the darkness.

Ten minutes later the fox returned and helped itself to a sandwich before once again fading into the night. A few more minutes ticked by and back came the fox, who by now seemed to have developed quite a liking for peanut butter sandwiches.



**Pine marten (AW)**

Alastair had just retreated to the lounge when a flash of fur shot out from the side of the cottage, leapt onto the log and without pausing streaked into the gloom. Had I just seen my first ever pine marten?

When we returned to the cottage the following afternoon, we noticed that during our absence some log piles that had been stacked up next to the track a few hundred metres from our abode had been cleared away. Once again, we put out an egg together with some pine marten sized peanut butter sandwiches and a jam sandwich with some specially purchased jam. That evening a very nervous fox turned up. It warily circled our banquet a few times, sniffed it, circled it again and then without touching the food trotted away. Had it been spooked by the daytime forestry operations? We didn't see it again. The pine marten didn't turn up either so before leaving the cottage the next day we left the sandwiches by the bird feeders at the other side of the cottage.

Our attempt to see this pine marten had now become an obsession. That evening we put on the log: an egg, some pine marten sized peanut butter sandwiches and some jam ones too. We waited and we watched, we watched and we waited. Finally, around 10.30pm, a pine marten appeared from behind a tree, ran boldly to the stump, took the egg and disappeared. Ten minutes or so later it returned for a sandwich and then after a further ten minutes it came back for more.

Having now captured a few photographs for our records, Alastair decided to start rearranging various logs in the yard to try and draw the creature nearer the window and the light. With this new objective in mind, the next evening he placed the egg and a handful of peanuts on the original stump and on a nearer log he placed the sandwiches. Our pine marten turned up just after 9pm and tucked in while Alastair clicked his camera happily.

Our final evening at the cottage arrived. Alastair placed the log much closer to the window and moved the original stump a little closer too. On each he placed an egg, and on the nearer one the sandwich collection. A trail of peanuts led between the two. Camera poised we waited and watched as late as we could.



**Pine marten faeces (AW)**

The pine marten didn't come, but the next morning the food had all gone and a deposit of pine marten poo was next to the log.

**Jenny Watson**



**At Easter 2019 Ilkley Moor was set on fire. Firefighters worked hard to control the fire, and this helicopter spent most of three days going backwards and forwards between Panorama Reservoir, on the moor close to Heber's Ghyll, and the area above the Lower Tarn and west of White Wells which was ablaze, scooping up water and taking it to drop on the fire. (JS)**

**Dyer's greenweed at Hetchell's Wood (SW)**



***Sanguisorba officinalis* at Otley Wetlands (BB)**



**Thistle broomrape (SW)**





**Gagea lutea (BB)**



**False death cap (KS)**



**Larch female flowers (DL)**



**Carduus crispus (BB)**



**Ash stump with dark rot (BB)**



**Red and white wild thyme (DL)**



**Tachina grossa R, greenbottle L & soldier beetles (DL)**



**Redshank (KS)**



**Honeybells (BB)**



**Nettle rust, with 'legs' (AR)**



**Winter aconite (IB)**



**Snipe (KS)**



**Short-eared owl (KS)**



**Male adder (KS)**



**Kingfisher (DV)**



**Mullein moth caterpillar (KS)**

# WHARFEDALE WEATHER 2019

## Rainfall

Total rainfall for the year was 1291 mm which compares with the baseline average, since 1926, of 931mm. This is the highest we have ever recorded.

What makes the figure more astonishing is that we began the year with only 6mm In January & 39mm in February.

The lowest ever was recorded in 1964 at 605mm.

The highest rainfall month was October, 187mm, but in September there was 170mm of which only 26mm was recorded prior to 22 September (i.e. 144mm in 9 days).

The highest daily rainfall was 42mm on 25 October.

Alongside is a table of average rainfall per decade which despite predictions & current year data show the past decade to be below average.

Decade	PPT
1930-39	933
1940-49	883
1950-59	927
1960-69	891
1970-79	837
1980-89	949
1990-99	965
2000-09	1043
2010-19	916

## Temperature

The average temperature for the year was 9.46°C which compares with the highest recorded in 2004 & 2007 of 10.4°C.

There were below zero temperatures recorded in months (only May - September not).

The lowest daily temperature of -7°C was recorded on 31 January & February.

The average monthly temperature followed a normal distribution curve peaking in July.

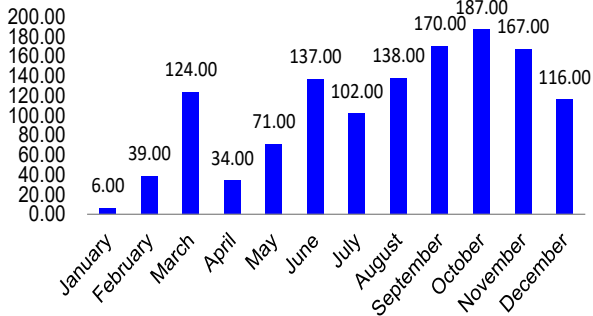
The highest daily temperature recorded was 35°C on 25 July with highs of 30°C & 28°C in August & June respectively.

Alongside is a table of average temperatures per decade which shows the past decade was not as warm as the previous one but warmer than all others.

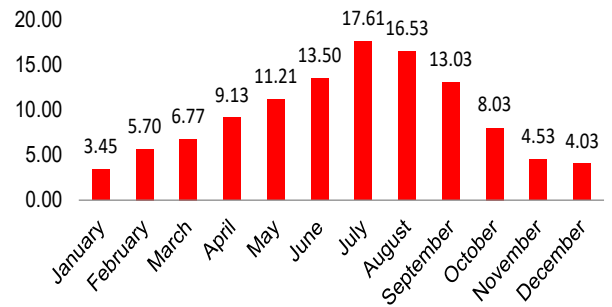
Decade	Average temp °C
1940-49	9.01
1950-59	8.88
1960-69	8.73
1970-79	8.81
1980-89	8.60
1990-99	8.67
2000-09	9.85
2010-19	9.51

7  
3

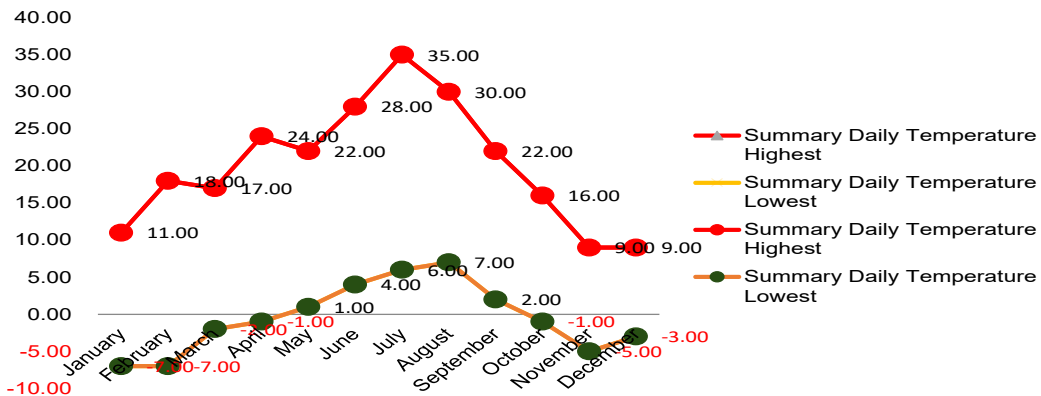
### Monthly Rainfall mm



### Average Monthly Temperature



### Maximum & Minimum Monthly Temperature



Peter & Sheila Bancroft



## MAMMALS

### INSECTIVORA -- INSECTIVORES

#### Hedgehog *Erinaceus europaeus*

There were 29 records this year with those of dead hedgehogs (16) outnumbering live ones (13). 19 of the total came from Otley, most notable among them six live hedgehogs seen by Rachel Whitaker at different points on Prince Henry Grammar School playing fields on 13th August. Burley in Wharfedale appears to be a hedgehog-free zone with no sightings reported.

There were only two records from Ilkley, one of droppings in a garden and the other of at least three hedgehogs visiting Jenny Dixon's garden, interspersing their visits with those of badgers (For details, see the Badger entry. To read about her strategies for marking and studying hedgehogs a fascinating account appeared in the WNS Review for 2008, page 11).

Further up the dale there were three single records from near Bolton Abbey, one near Appletreewick and two near Hebden, all for dead animals on the road. There were no records from further north.

Other records received from M&JC, GH, D&ML, PP, ES.

#### Mole *Talpa europaea*

No records were received, presumably because molehills are so obvious throughout Wharfedale.

#### Common Shrew *Sorex araneus*

Just two records, one of an animal coming from a crack in a stone wall near Otley (DOC) and one dead at Norwood (PR).

### CHIROPTERA -- BATS

#### Common Pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pipistrellus*

Five records identified as Common Pipistrelles using a bat detector, in August from Riverside Park and Farnley Lane, Otley, from near Clifton and from Burley.

There were four other records from Otley, Burley and Ilkley of pipistrelles not identified as either common or soprano. Records from M&JC, D&ML, DOC, PP, P&AR.

#### Soprano Pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pygmaeus*

Records from Riverside Park in April and August from a garden with four ponds (This species is often found around water) at the edge of Farnley Hall Woods (DOC).

#### Brown Long-eared Bat *Plecotus auritus*

One record from Wharfemeadows Park, Otley on 31st August, their quiet ticks picked up on a bat detector. These bats are probably much more common than this one record would indicate as one of their main prey is the Large Yellow Underwing moth, attracted in hundreds to moth traps during the summer (DOC).

#### Daubenton's Bat *Myotis daubentonii*

Records only from around Otley Bridge, at least three on 23 May and 31 August (M&JC, DOC).

#### Noctule Bat *Nyctalus noctula*

Several single animals flying over Riverside Park, Otley at the edge of Farnley Hall Woods (DOC).

### LAGOMORPHA -- RABBITS AND HARES

#### Rabbit *Oryctolagus cuniculus*

Only reported from Otley Wetland Nature Reserve (OWNR) and Riverside Park, Otley although rabbits are much more

widespread throughout Wharfedale so not generally reported.

Two young black rabbits of different sizes, so from different litters, were in a Riverside Park garden backing on to Farnley Hall Woods. The same garden witnessed an attack by a female sparrowhawk, which would normally prey almost exclusively on birds, on a half grown rabbit which dashed to safety at the last second. Rabbits are frequently seen around the Riverside Park estate during the day until the winter months when they become much more nocturnal (D&MOC).

It would be interesting to receive more records of rabbits given their crucial place in the food chain as prey and carrion for a variety of mammal and bird predators and because of their fluctuating numbers due to their susceptibility to myxomatosis and rabbit hemorrhagic disease.

#### Brown Hare *Lepus capensis*

30 sightings were reported, mainly in the southern third of our area with ten concentrated around OWNR and the surrounding fields, eight on the fields and slopes of the Washburn Valley between Farnley and Swinsty, the others on fields and hillsides bordering the Wharfe as far as Strid Wood. There were only two records from Upper Wharfedale, one near Buckden, the other near Kettlewell. A hare killed in a garden bordering Ilkley Moor was thought to have fallen victim to a stoat.

Records from M&JC, GH, D&ML, DOC, PP, P&AR, ES.

Paul Purvis found corpses of at least two hares in a plastic bag dumped in a layby near Weston. These could have been the victims of illegal hare coursing which is still a problem in both North and West Yorkshire. Typically there is an increase in hare coursing from September after crops have been harvested and fields left empty. Both West and North Yorkshire Police have Wildlife Crime Officers trained in wildlife crime offences and welcome reports, either by phoning 101 or 999 for a crime in action.

### RODENTIA -- RODENTS

#### Grey Squirrel *Sciurus carolinensis*

Only five records were reported with a maximum of five animals in one Otley garden (PP). They are obviously massively underreported and are a constant presence in woods and gardens with trees, as well as a source of fascination and annoyance to those trying to limit their access to bird feeders.

It would be interesting to know how far their range extends up Wharfedale, especially with red squirrels now regaining a toehold in the north of our region.

#### Red Squirrel *Sciurus vulgaris*

Red squirrels were first reported from Nethergill Farm, near Oughtershaw in the far north of our recording area, in 2016. They have been encouraged by tree planting on the farm by Chris and Fiona Clark over a period of 14 years and the squirrels are thought to have originated from the nearby Greenfield Red Squirrel Reserve. They have now arrived on the farm in force and are regular visitors to hazelnut feeders with 47 views in 2019.



## Mice, rats and voles

These are unrepresented by records received despite their large numbers in the rural and urban environment because of their nocturnal habits and the difficulty of identifying them at species level.

### Wood Mouse *Apodemus sylvaticus*

Just one record for a Burley garden in January (P&AR).

A regular visitor to Ernie Scarfe's Otley garden from April to June plus two other Otley records, one of a live animal and one dead on Green Lane (M&JC). One other sighting at Hazlewood (D&ML).

### Field Vole *Microtis agrestis*

Just one report of one which fed with increasing confidence below bird feeders in a garden bordering Farnley Hall Woods, Otley, a regular visitor during July and August (DOC).

### Bank Vole *Clethrionomys glareolus*

One report from Gallows Hill Nature Reserve (PP).

### Brown Rat *Rattus norvegicus*

Reported in ones and twos from a garden bordering Ilkley Moor on a number of days in July (D&ML). One was on a wall of Tittybottle Park, beside the Wharfe in Otley. One report of one killed on the road at Ben Rhydding (PP).

## CARNIVORA -- CARNIVORES

### Fox *Vulpes vulpes*

There were five records. On 29 May a juvenile fox was watched exploring a garden at the edge of Farnley Hall Woods, Otley, attempting at one point to walk across one of the ponds before pulling back (MOC). Another juvenile was seen near Almscliffe Crag on 7 June (PP). Peter Riley saw a fox on two occasions in the Washburn Valley in October with the fox apparently as interested in him as he was in the fox. On 17 December one dashed across the East Chevin Road outside Otley in the dark (DOC).

### Stoat *Mustela erminea*

One was seen on the entrance track at OWNR on 26 April then at exactly the same spot on 13th May, both times by Paul Purvis. On 26 July an adult and two cubs were playing on the same track with one of the cubs posing for a photo (A&JW). One was seen north of Lindley Wood Reservoir on 30th April (P&AR).

### Weasel *Mustela putorius*

Only two records received, one from an Ilkley garden (D&ML) and one dead on the road at Kettlewell (GH).

### American Mink *Mustela vison*

Only one record, of one dead near Ikley Golf Club (PP).

### Badger *Meles meles*

There were six sightings of single badgers, two of live animals near Otley and Burley and four of dead animals beside the road at Lindley Wood bridge, Weeton, Bolton Abbey and Blubberhouses. Records from SC, GH, JM, DOC.

In addition, setts with recent activity were reported from the area around Lindley and Upper Wharfedale near Buckden (GH, ES).

The most intriguing observations came from Jenny Dixon in Ilkley who has been studying badgers, hedgehogs and their interactions for years, attracting them into her garden with peanuts and peanut butter sandwiches. She had found that usually when badgers were visiting there would be no hedgehogs (Badgers will kill and eat hedgehogs, just leaving

the skins) but this year, having set up an automatic camera to record night-time visits, she recorded hedgehogs fitting visits between those of badgers. At one point a badger and a hedgehog were feeding just two yards apart and ignoring one another. Her regular badger, Seamus, continued to visit into September but she thinks he does not wander far from his sett in cold weather as he is 'getting on a bit.' She has had occasional visits from two other badgers but no more instances of hedgehogs and badgers feeding alongside one another.

### Otter *Lutra lutra*

There were eight records of live otters, five being of single animals, one of two animals together and another of three. There was one report of a dead animal and another of one so badly injured it had to be put down.



The two animals together could have been a mating pair for otters will mate at any time of year with the couple usually staying together for several weeks. Alternatively they could have been a female with a large cub for the young stay with the mother for up to a year.

The sighting of three together would have been a female with two cubs for the males take no part in rearing the young.

The two together were seen at OWNR on the 16 December by Paul Purvis who was also told by a neighbour of a single otter emerging from the Wharfe close to OWNR on 24 August. In addition, spraint, footprints and fish scales on the bank are regularly seen at OWNR.

The sighting of mother and two cubs was on the Wharfe near Hebden where regular sightings were reported to RS and where shellfish remains were found on the river bank. The injured animal was found on the road near Otley.

A neighbour of PR reported an otter on the Wharfe at Burley on 25 and 26 July while further upstream one was near the Cavendish Pavilion on 4 February. There were unconfirmed reports of two together around the same area in March. A single otter was seen on the river by Strid Wood on 7th May during a WNS evening walk.

Much further upstream there was a report of an otter near Kettlewell Bridge on 3 October. There were two records from the edge of an area east of the Washburn with one at John O'Gaunt's Reservoir on 18 June which had apparently been seen by a number of people during the year. The other was of a dead otter on the road near Menwith Hill where the Black Dyke runs under the road.

The spread of records along the Wharfe is very encouraging and indicates that they cover virtually the whole river in our area. Otters are strongly territorial with territories on rivers varying from one to 25 miles (about 11 miles is average). Male and female territories may overlap.

Road kill deaths have become a significant threat to their re-establishment.

Records from M&JC, RF, RL, PP, PR, RS, SR.

## CERVIDAE -- DEER

### Roe Deer *Capreolus capreolus*

31 records, nearly all from the south of our area. There were five records from OWRN and surrounding fields, nine records from the Washburn Valley from Lindley Wood to Thruscross Reservoir, five from the Farnley/Leathley area, two from Timble Ings, two from Stainburn Forest, just one from Otley Chevin, one from the edge of Rombalds Moor. 14 were of single animals, seven of two animals, five of three and one sighting of four.

There was a single record from Upper Wharfedale, one seen near Buckden.

In addition, two were found dead, one near Denton Hall and one at OWRN.



Records from GH, D&ML, D&MOC, PP, P&AR, ES, JW.

## AMPHIBIANS

### Great Crested Newt *Triturus cristatus*

These were introduced to Nell Bank, Ilkley, by Gordon Haycock during the three years 2009 to 2011 with 600 eggs transferred there each year. There was no survey carried out in 2019 but in 2018, when no records were published by WNS, many were seen with eggs present on 20 April.

A much smaller population was discovered in a garden pond in Riverside Park at the edge of Farnley Hall Woods, Otley. There was peak counts of eight males and three females on 26 April 2018 and of 10 males and two females on 22 April 2019, indicating possible breeding (GH).

### Palmate Newt *Lissotriton helveticus*

Earliest records were during the last week of February. A garden with four ponds in Riverside Park, Otley, recorded a peak of 130 on 20 March (DOC). Another Riverside Park garden with a pond had up to nine males and four females while seven males were recorded at Gallows Hill Nature Area. There were no 2019 records from Nell Bank but the newt survey of 20 April 2018 came up with a grand total of 200 (GH).

### Smooth or Common Newt *Lissotriton vulgaris*

One record of two males from Riverside Park. Four were recorded from the same site in 2018 (GH).

### Alpine Newt *Ichthyosaura alpestris*

An introduced species, found throughout much of Europe. No records for 2019. In 2018, a total of 40 were counted at Nell Bank on 20 April.

### Common Toad *Bufo bufo*

Toads were recorded in small numbers, mainly from around Otley at Gallows Hill, OWRN, Riverside Park and Green Lane (M&JC, GH).

There were no indications of numbers at known important breeding sites at Gallows Hill, Low Dam in the Washburn Valley, High Royds in Guiseley or Owlet Park Road in Ilkley from which large numbers have been recorded in the past.

### Common Frog *Rana temporaria*

Around Otley there were hundreds of frogs and masses of spawn at West Chevin Quarry, a maximum of 30 and lots of spawn at Riverside Park, spawn and tadpoles at Gallows Hill. Adults and spawn were also seen at Sun Lane, Burley.

In Upper Wharfedale, at Nethergill Farm there were more than 100 frogs and 50 clumps of spawn in a moorland pond. Records from M&JC, GH, DOC, PP.

## REPTILES

### Common Lizard *Zootica vivipera*

Two records from Denton Moor in April, one of a single lizard and another of two (AJ). Also in April there were two records of single females from Nethergill Farm, Oughtershaw (GH). In June, one was near Simon's Seat (DOC) and three singles were found at different sites on the slopes southwest of Buckden (GH).

### Adder *Vipera berus*

In 2019 the only sightings reported were by David Alred who saw odd ones and twos on two occasions with his best count being of three in the Hoodstorth area, north of Thruscross Reservoir.

In 2018, when no WNS records were published, two were seen on a derelict dry stone wall at Thruscross on both 5 April and 18 May, basking at an aggregation site (GH).

### Slow-worm *Anguis fragilis*

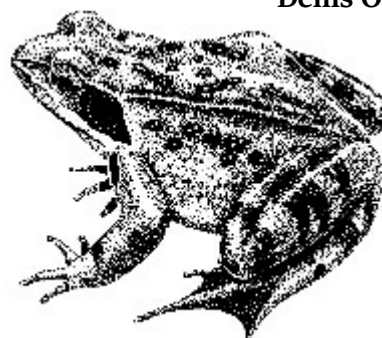
No sightings were reported for 2019. One sloughed skin was found at Thruscross in 2018 (GH).

## CONTRIBUTORS:

David Alred (DA), Fiona Clark (FC), Mike & Joyce Clerk (M&JC), Susan Collins (SC), Jenny Dixon (JD), Roger Fox (RF), Gordon Haycock (GH), Andy Jowett (AJ), David & Midge Leather (D&ML), Ros Lilley (RL), Jon Middleton (JM), Denis & Margaret O'Connor (D&MOC), Ruth Paynter (RP), Paul Purvis (PP), Shaun Radcliffe (SR), Peter & Anne Riley (P&AR), Ernie Scarfe (ES), Colin Slator (CS), Jenny & Alastair Watson (JW).

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

Denis O'Connor



## MOTH REPORT

The 'Checklist of the Lepidoptera of the British Isles' - **Agassiz DJL, Beaven SD& Heckford RJ(2013)**, which replaces the Bradley 2000 list, has been used for this moth report (Bradley log numbers and any former names are also shown with each species to aid cross referencing with earlier publications). The **Agassiz et al.** checklist is in line with European scientific colleagues and the latest DNA analysis which attempts to arrange 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 is the 'Species' in that family.

Moths have been regularly recorded throughout 2019 in Wharfedale, part of the larger vice-county recording area Mid-west Yorkshire (**VC64**). The earliest moths sighted were in January: Pale Brindled Beauty (70.247 - *Phigalia pilosaria* - 1926), February: (32.007- *Agonopterix ocellana*- 701), Red Chestnut (73.336 - *Cerastis rubricosa* - 2139), Small Quaker (73.245- *Orthosia cruda* -2182) and Early Grey (73.069- *Xylocampa areola*- 2243), March: (32.018- *Agonopterix heracliiana*- 688), Mottled Grey (70.101- *Colostygia multistrigaria*- 1775), Early Tooth-striped (70.202- *Trichopteryx carpinata*- 1881) and Clouded Drab (73.242 - *Orthosia incerta*- 2188). The latest moths sighted were in October: Beautiful Plume (45.010- *Amblyptilia acanthadactyla*-1497), (32.017 - *Agonopterix arenella* - 0697), Garden Rose Tortrix (49.077 - *Acleris variegana*-1048), Ruby Tiger larval (72.024 - *Phragmatobia fuliginosa* - 2064), Canary-shouldered Thorn (70.234 - *Ennomos alniaria*- 1913), Merveille du Jour (73.224 - *Griposia aprilina* -2247 - *Dichonia aprilina*), Green-brindled Crescent (73.068 - *Allophyes oxyacanthae* - 2245), November: Pale Tussock larval (72.015 - *Calliteara pudibunda* - 2028), December Moth (66.001 - *Poecilocampa populi* -1631) and Red-green Carpet (70.095 - *Chloroclysta siterata*- 1760) then finally in December: Scarce Umber (70.254 - *Agriopsis aurantiaria* - 1933). Some sites in Burley-in-Wharfedale, Skyreholme, Ilkley, Menston, Otley and Pool-in-Wharfedale were regularly monitored using light trapping and wine roping. Further moth sightings came from occasional moth traps, country walks and house and garden searches. The busiest months for moth sightings were May 324 records (77 micro, 247 macro), June 662 records (108 micro, 554 macro), July 1,558 records (334 micro, 1,224 macro), August 930 records (237 micro, 693 macro) and September 239 records (41 micro, 198 macro). A total of 4,334 records (831 micro and 3,503 macro) were received for 456 species (158 micro and 298 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 transect recorders, which all add to the overall picture of local moth activity.

Incredibly warm start to the year so the first moth was spotted on 5 January, but alas the keen 'moth-er' did not manage to identify it before a wren got it! However on the same day a Pale Brindled Beauty (70.247- *Phigalia pilosaria*- 1926) was later attracted to a porch light. Lower temperatures from 15 January, for example, minus 4.9 degrees C, then warmer nights from 25 January but often changed to heavy rain before dark! Amazing weather from mid-February onwards so with warmer

evenings and early hazel catkins many moths were sighted and caught in traps - 330 individuals of 15 macro species were seen on 63 occasions - including Pine Beauty (73.241- *Panolis flammea* - 2179), Red Sword-grass (73.209 - *Xylena vetusta* - 2241) and hibernating adult Tissue (70.123 - *Triphosa dubitata* - 1790) (162 at one site) and Herald (72.001 - *Scoliopteryx libatrix* - 2469) (33 at one site) in local caves. After a wet, windy and stormy fortnight the last couple of weeks of March gave good warm weather so various moths were flying - 7 individuals of 5 micro species were seen on 6 occasions - including (29.001 - *Diurnea fagella* - 663) and 738 individuals of 23 macro species were seen on 153 occasions - including Yellow Horned (65.016 - *Achlya flavicornis*- 1659) and again hibernating adult Tissue (70.123 - *Triphosa dubitata* - 1790) (270 individuals) and Herald (72.001 - *Scoliopteryx libatrix* - 2469) (74 individuals). Early April with clear nights and temperatures down to as low as minus 5.7 degrees C reduced moth sightings before later days improved. Eventually micro moth sightings of 30 individuals of 14 species were recorded in April including: Bee Moth (62.001 - *Aphomia sociella* -1428), Mint Moth (63.006 - *Pyrausta aurata* -1361) and White-shouldered House-moth (28.009- *Endrosia sarcitrella* -648); and 305 macro records for 987 individuals of 55 species: including Purple Thorn (70.239 - *Selenia tetralunaria* - 1919), Streamer (70.067 - *Anticlea derivata* - 1747) and Common Heath (70.275 - *Ematurga atomaria* - 1952). The sunny, dry hot spell from May to late Sept gave excellent moth day sightings: including (7.006 - *Adela reaumurella* - 0150), (49.166 - *Celypha lacunana* - 1076), (49.091- *Pseudargyrotoza conwagana* - 1011), (18.001- *Plutella xylostella* - 0464), (63.086 - *Crambus lathoniellus*- 1301), (49.029 - *Lozotaenia forsterana* - 1002), Pearl-band Grass Veneer (63.100 - *Catoptria margaritella* - 1314): Antler Moth (73.254 - *Cerapteryx graminis* - 2176), Six-spot Burnet (54.008 - *Zygaena filipendulae* - 0169), Clouded Magpie (70.206 - *Abraxas sylvata* - 1885), Engrailed (72.270 - *Ectropis crepuscularia* - 1947), Small Dusty Wave (70.008 - *Idaea seriata* - 1707), Chimney Sweeper (70.130 - *Odezia atrata* - 1870), Mother Shipton (72.084 - *Euclidia mi*- 2462) and Silver-ground Carpet (70.054 - *Xanthorhoe montanata* - 1727). Also regular early evening sightings or moth trapping nights for species like (63.037 - *Udea olivalis*- 1392), Small China-mark (63.116 - *Cataclysta lemnata*- 1354), Small Magpie (63.025 - *Anania hortulata*- 1376), (63.033 - *Udea lutealis*- 1388), Barred Fruit-tree Tortrix (49.025 - *Pandemis cerasana* - 0970), Ghost Moth (3.005 - *Hepialus humuli*- 0014), Iron Prominent (71.012 - *Notodonta dromedarius*- 2000), Humming-bird Hawk-moth (69.010 - *Macroglossum stellatarum* - 1984), Scarce Silver Y (73.021 - *Syngrapha interrogatoris*- 2447) and Tissue (70.123 - *Triphosa dubitata* - 1790) in a garden. Various caterpillars Northern/Oak Eggar (66.007 - *Lasiocampa quercus*- 1637), Mullein (73.058 - *Shargacucullia verbasci* - 2221) and Yellow-tail (72.013 - *Euproctis similis*- 2030) were found in gardens and on walks. Moth trapping in Autumn (often ideal for evenings {5pm to 11pm} or overnight near ivy or trees) was less easy in 2019. After 22 September the regular heavy evening rain resulted in fewer moth sightings.

**The most abundant micro-moths over the 2019 season were:**

**Straw Grass-veneer (63.093 - *Agriphila straminella* - 1304)** 47 records for 327 moths (29 May to 17 Aug);

**Light Brown Apple Moth (49.039 - *Epiphyas postvittana* - 998)** 45 records for 84 moths (20 Mar to 15 Oct);

**Garden Grass-veneer (63.080 - *Chrysoteuchia culmella*- 1293)** 36 records for 893 moths (20 Jun to 7 Aug);

**(63.074 - *Eudonia mercurella*- 1344)** 32 records for 59 moths (22 June to 29 Aug);

**(63.067 - *Eudonia lacustrata*- 1338)** 31 records for 120 moths (24 June to 07 Aug);

**Bird-cherry Ermine (16.001 - *Yponomeuta evonymella*-424)** 28 records for 70 moths (16 May to 27 Aug).

**The most abundant macro-moths over the 2019 season were:**

**Large Yellow Underwing (73.342 - *Noctua pronuba* - 2107)** 168 records - 5,687 moths (19 Jun to 06 Oct)

**Dark Arches (73.162 - *Apamea monoglypha* - 2321)** 118 records for 1,533 moths (01 June to 22 Aug)

**Common Quaker (73.244 - *Orthosia cerasi*- 2187)** 93 records for 393 moths (22 Feb to 30 Apr)

**Hebrew Character (73.249 - *Orthosia gothica*-2190)** 85 records for 296 moths (18 Mar to 05 May)

**Heart and Dart (73.317 - *Agrotis exclamationis* - 2089)** 78 records for 892 moths (05 May to 15 Aug)

**Common Rustic agg. (2343x - *Mesapamea secalis* agg.)** (= *Common Rustic* and *Lesser Common Rustic* because these can only be differentiated by dissection) 68 records for 307 moths (11 July to 11 Sept).

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

<http://www.yorkshiremoths.info/> or

<http://www.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 2019 were:**

**1.003 *Micropterix aureatella* (0003)**

1 individual on 29 May at Timble Ings for a rare **Local** moth with few County records since 1859. An attractive day-flying moth occupying woodland and heathland. The adults are among those moths with working mandibles so feed on the pollen of a variety of flowers, especially Sedge (*Carex* spp.). The larvae have not been described in this country, but it is thought they may feed on Bilberry (*Vaccinium myrtillus*).

**4.003 *Stigmella confusella* (0117), 4.030 *Stigmella hybnerella* (0099), 4.032 *Stigmella floslactella* (0075)**

**4.034 *Stigmella tityrella* (0077), 4.055 *Stigmella hemargyrella* (0081)**

Leafmine records for the above attractive **Common** moths on 16<sup>th</sup> September at Grass Wood. These species are identified by the structure of the leafmine created by the larva on Birch (*Betula* spp.), Hawthorn (*Crataegus* spp.), Hazel (*Corylus avellana*) and Beech (*Fagus* spp.) leaves.

**15.081 *Phyllonorycter nicellii* (0359)**

This **Common** moth hatched from a mine on Hazel (*Corylus avellana*) collected 7 Oct 2018 at Skyreholme. The long mine between the veins which was strongly arched had been incorrectly identified in 2018 as the similar 15.029 *Parornix devoniella* (304) and highlights the benefits of breeding through to confirm leafmine species.

**28.024 *Tachystola acroxantha* (0656)**

2 records for 2 individuals on 30 April and 23 August at Ilkley for this **Local** very rare adventive moth, probably imported with Australian plants and first noted in Devon in 1908. Recently it has expanded its range northwards reaching VC64 in 2013 however there has only been a couple of sightings since. The larvae feed on withered leaves and leaf-litter, and the colourful adults can occur between May and Sept.

**32.007 *Agonopterix ocellana* (0701)**

1 individual on 28 February at Skyreholme. First sighting in this 10km sq for this **Common** moth which overwinters as an adult so is often found in early Spring after hibernation. It is easily identified by the combination of rufous, black and white in the centre of the forewing. The larva feeds on various Willows (*Salix* spp.), feeding between leaves spun together with silk.

**32.031 *Agonopterix alstromeriana* (0695)**

1 individual on 1 April at Otley for this **Common** moth. One of the more colourful of the Depressariinae family. The adult can be found on the wing between August and April, and is quite easily attracted by light. The larvae feed on the flowers and leaves of Hemlock (*Conium maculatum*) between May and July.

**34.004 *Limnaecia phragmitella* (0898)**

1 individual on 22 July at Otley for this **Common** thinly distributed resident fen and marsh moth. The larvae feed inside the seedheads of Bulrush (*Typha* spp.) throughout the winter. They can often be detected by the presence of quantities of protruding down.

**35.026 *Acompsia cinerella* (0855)**

1 individual (\*\* gen. det.) on 14 August at Yockenthwaite for a rare **Local** moth with few County records since 1859. An unmarked brownish moth with long upwardly-curved labial palps which flies in June and July. The larva is unknown, but is believed to feed on moss, often at the base of a tree.

**35.094 *Aroga velocella* (0796)**

2 records for 5 individuals between 17 July and 3 Aug at Greenhow and Grass Wood for a rare **Local** moth with few sightings in VC64. This species has a predominantly eastern and central distribution in Britain. The moths fly in afternoon sunshine and after dark. The favoured habitat is moorland and heathland. The larva feeds in a silken gallery at the base of Sheeps' sorrel (*Rumex acetosella*).

**35.109 *Scrobipalpa acuminatella* (0822)**

1 individual on 6 July at Skyreholme for this **Common** thinly distributed moth which occupies rough and open ground where Thistles abound. The larvae mine the leaves of various Thistles (*Carduus* spp. and *Cirsium* spp.), forming a pale, sometimes slightly inflated blotch. Generally there are two generations, with adults on the wing in April to June and again in July to September.

**35.145 *Teleiodes sequax* (0775)**

1 individual on 7 July at Bastow Wood for this **Local** and rare moth with very few records in the County since 1859. The distribution of this species follows that of its principal foodplant, Common Rock-rose (*Helianthemum nummularium*). The larva feeds in May and early June in a spun terminal shoot and spinning is often a tight ball, rendered prominent by the exposure of the whitish undersides of the leaves.

**35.159 *Exoteleia dodecella* (0760)**

2 individuals on 16 July at Stainburn Forest for this **Local** and rare moth. The moth flight period is from June to July in Conifer plantations. The larvae feed initially internally on the needles of Pine (*Pinus sylvestris*), and subsequently externally on the shoots, spinning the needles together.

**38.025 *Elachista atricomella* (0597)**

1 individual on 16 July at Stainburn Forest for a **Common** thinly distributed grassland species on the wing any time

- between May and September. Like related species, the larva mines blades of grass, in this case usually Cock's-foot (*Dactylis glomerata*), forming a thin whitish mine.
- 45.008 *Gillmeria pallidactyla* (1504)**  
1 individual on 14 July at Lindley reservoir of this **Common** scarce and thinly distributed moth. Flying in June and July, the adults hide amongst low foliage during the day and become active from dusk onwards. Main foodplant of the larvae is Yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*) and sometimes Tansy (*Tanacetum vulgare*).
- 45.012 *Stenoptilia pterodactyla* (1509)**  
2 records for 2 individuals on 7 July and 4 August at Bastow Wood of this **Common** scarce and thinly distributed moth. Adults fly in one generation between late June and early August. The larvae mine the shoots and stems of Germander Speedwell (*Veronica chamaedrys*) from August to March. In April and May they feed on the flowers and are very well camouflaged against the plants' stems, dropping to the ground when disturbed.
- 45.033 *Merrifieldia leucodactyla* (1510)**  
3 records for 5 individuals between 3 and 8 July at Dib Scar and Kilnsey area of this **Local** rare moth with few records in the County. The adult flies by night from June to August, and is easily disturbed by day. This moth can only be found in limestone or chalk habitats where Wild Thyme (*Thymus polytrichus*) is available for the larvae.
- 49.048 *Eana penziana* (1031)**  
1 individual (*Ssp. bellana*) on 17 July at Greenhow is a significant record in VC64 and WNS area for this **Nationally Scarce B (Nb)** moth occasionally recorded at Malham or Grassington. In Britain there are two subspecies recognised of this distinctive large tortrix with quite narrow forewings. The *Ssp. bellana* one is generally paler, has more pattern contrast and is associated with inland hills where its larvae feed on Sheep's Fescue (*Festuca ovina*).
- 49.201 *Ancylis unguicella* (1117)**  
1 individual on 31 May at Stainburn Forest is first in WNS area for this **Local** moth - with only 4 earlier VC64 records from 1886. Flying between May and July, the adults are quite distinctive with narrow, pointed forewings and strong cross-markings. The larvae feed on Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*) and Bell Heather (*Erica cinerea*).
- 49.299 *Pseudococcyx posticana* (1208)**  
1 individual on 31 May at Stainburn Forest is first in VC64 and WNS area for this **Nationally Scarce B (Nb)** moth - with only 4 other County records since 1941. This pine-loving species is to be found on the wing during May and June when it becomes active towards evening after resting in the foliage by day.
- 49.313 *Dichrorampha acuminatana* (1279)**  
2 records for 2 individuals on 24 June at Skyreholme and 6<sup>th</sup> August at Grass Wood for this scarce **Local** moth only seen at five locations in VC64. At first glance the moth appears rather nondescript however when viewed closely a subtle mix of submetallic and chestnut markings are evident. The larval foodplants are Ox-eye Daisy (*Leucanthemum vulgare*) and Tansy (*Tanacetum vulgare*) and the larvae burrow into the rootstock and feed from within.
- 49.325 *Cydia ulicetana* (1255)**  
1 individual on 25 May at Burley-in-Wharfedale for a **Common** thinly distributed moth of heathland and moorland. The males fly in sunshine, but the females tend to be more crepuscular. The larvae feed internally in the seedpods of plants such as Gorse (*Ulex europaeus*) and Broom (*Cytisus scoparius*).
- 49.376 *Pammene aurita* (1233)**  
2 individuals on 21 June at Burley-in-Wharfedale for a scarce **Local** adventive colonist first seen in Kent in 1943 and nearly 60 years later in VC64. The adult moths are on the wing from late afternoon onwards and are often encountered at light. The larvae feed inside the seeds of Sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*), and their presence is sometimes betrayed by small exit holes in the seeds themselves.
- 54.003 *Cistus Forester Adscita geryon* (0164)**  
72 individuals were seen between 6 June and 3 July in the Kilnsey area, Dibb Scar and Arncliffe. Good records for a **Nationally Scarce B (Nb)** day-flying species of limestone outcrops and chalky habitats.
- 62.012 *Matilella fusca* (1451 - *Pyla fusca*)**  
1 individual on 8 Sept at Ilkley for a **Local** scarce moth of the heathland and moorland with few records in VC64. The adults have a habit of resting amongst areas of burnt heath, where their coloration makes for excellent camouflage, although they are easily disturbed. The larvae feed in a web on Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*), Bell Heather (*Erica cinerea*) and possibly Bilberry (*Vaccinium myrtillus*).
- 63.008 *Pyrausta ostrinalis* (1363)**  
11 records for 17 individuals seen between 6 June and 15 August in the Kilnsey area, Arncliffe area, Dib Scar, Kettlewell, Yockenthwaite and Bastow Wood. Excellent sightings of this **Nationally Scarce B (Nb)** day-flying species. *P. ostrinalis* has a narrower forewing and paler yellow markings than the similar *P. purpuralis* species and there are also subtle differences in the underside wing pattern.
- 63.062 *Scoparia subfusca* (1332)**  
29 individuals on 16 July at Stainburn Forest for a **Common** moth. One of the plainer-looking members of the *Scopariinae*, though rather variable which is sometimes found resting on tree-trunks or stones during the day. The larvae feed on the roots of Ox-tongue (*Picris hieracioides*) and Colt's-foot (*Tussilago farfara*).
- 63.073 *Eudonia truncicolella* (1340)**  
2 records for 2 individuals on 16 July at Stainburn Forest and 18<sup>th</sup> July at Burley-in-Wharfedale for a **Common** scarce and thinly distributed moth. A moorland species differentiated from other members of the *Scopariinae* by its more 'scratchy' appearance and more pointed forewings. The larvae feed on mosses on the ground, living in a silken gallery.
- 63.075 *Eudonia pallida* (1336)**  
1 individuals on 2 August at Otley for a **Local** thinly distributed moth. The palest of the *Scopariinae* and quite distinctive, although care must be taken not to confuse with small, worn specimens of related species. The moth is found in damp situations such as fens or marshes & larvae may feed on lichen or mosses.
- 63.115 *Acentria ephemerella* (1331 - *Acentria nivea*)**  
3 records for 23 individuals between 24 July and 25 August at Otley. A small and unassuming **Common** species with a

remarkable life history, living in and around ponds and slow moving waters. The larvae are entirely aquatic, feeding on various aquatic plants like pondweeds (*Potamogeton* spp.). There are two forms of the female; one wingless, which lives under the water, and one winged. The fully-winged males mate with the females usually on the surface of the water.

**65.007 Chinese Character** *Cilix glaucata* (1651)

1 individual on 3 Aug at Grass Wood of this **Common** fairly widespread moth. This unusual-looking moth combines its wing-pattern and resting posture to give the appearance of a bird-dropping, thus avoiding the attention of hungry birds. It has two generations in the year, May and June, then again in August and can be found in hedgerows, gardens and woodland.

**69.017 Small Elephant Hawk-moth** *Deilephila porcellus* (1992)

8 records for 12 individuals between 14 May and 17 July at Skyreholme, Ilkley and Greenhow for a scarce thinly distributed **Local** moth. The distribution of this slightly smaller and more brightly-coloured species is still more patchy than the Elephant Hawk-moth (69.016 - *Deilephila elpenor* - 1991) which had 36 records of sightings as both adults and larvae.

**70.004 Least Carpet** *Idea rusticata* (1699 - *vulpinaria*)

1 individual on 1 Aug at Burley-in-Wharfedale for this very rare **Local** migrant/wanderer with very few County records. Normally on the wing in July and August the larvae feed on Ivy (*Hedera helix*) and Traveller's Joy (*Clematis vitalba*) among other plants.

**70.038 Vestal** *Rhodometra sacraria* (1716)

1 individual on 22 July at Menston for this scarce **Migrant** wanderer with sporadic County records. It flies mainly at night and is regularly attracted to light. The amount and intensity of the pink pigmentation is somewhat variable. This species breeds in southern Europe and North Africa, and larvae live on Knotgrass (*Polygonum* spp.), Dock (*Rumex* spp.) and other low plants.

**70.048 Red Carpet** *Xanthorhoe decoloraria* (1723)

1 individual on 12 Aug at West End for this scarce and local **Common** moth. Mainly a species of rocky moorland, where the larvae feed on Lady's Mantle (*Alchemilla* spp.) and also possibly on other low plants.

**70.087 Purple Bar** *Cosmorhoe ocellata* (1752)

1 individual on 31 Aug at Dob Park for this infrequently seen **Common** moth. This smallish member of the 'carpets' has a velvety look to the forewings. It flies from May to August, usually with two generations in the south, but a single brood further north. The larvae feed on various types of Bedstraw (*Galium* spp.).

**70.092 Spinach** *Eulithis mellinata* (1757)

1 individual on 24 June at Burley-in-Wharfedale for this **Common** scarce thinly distributed moth which is declining in numbers. This species feeds on various *Ribes* species, such as Redcurrant and Blackcurrant, and can therefore be found in suburban areas as well as woodland and similar habitats. The adults fly from June to August in a single generation.

**70.104 Devon Carpet** *Lampropteryx otregiata* (1751)

2 records for 5 individuals on 12 and 31 Aug at Dob Park is first sightings in WNS area for this **Nationally Scarce B (Nb)** moth - with few other County records. There are two

generations, with adults on the wing in May and June, then again in August and September. The caterpillars are brown with paler buff markings, and feed on Common Marsh Bedstraw (*Galium palustre*).

**70.110 Small Autumnal Moth** *Epirrita filigrammaria* (1798)

1 individual on 29 Aug at Ilkley of a scarce **Common** moth which ought to be easier to identify than the other three *Epirrita* species. It flies in late Aug/early Sept (ie a month before the others), is significantly smaller, and favours upland areas. Larvae feed on Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*) and Bilberry (*Vaccinium myrtillus*).

**70.139 Barred Carpet** *Perizoma taeniata* (1801)

3 records for 4 individuals on 3 and 6 Aug at two locations in Grass Wood. Excellent records for this **Nationally Scarce A (Na)** moth which is rare and only has populations in the county at Grass Wood and a site on the North Yorkshire Moors. Larvae has not been recorded in the wild but mosses may be the foodplant.

**70.172 Thyme Pug** *Eupithecia distinctaria* (1843)

1 individual on 17 July at Greenhow for a **Nationally Scarce B (Nb)** is a significant record in VC64 and WNS area. A scarce and local species of limestone outcrops and chalky habitats. The larvae feed on the flowers of Thyme (*Thymus* spp.).

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

4 records for 11 individuals (inc 3 attracted by use of pheromone) of this **Nationally Scarce A (Na)** moth between 9 and 18 April mainly near Wild Privet (*Ligustrum vulgare*) at Grass Wood and again at a Littondale site. Later a larval search at Grass Wood found 17 caterpillars on 9 and 12 June.

**70.229 Speckled Yellow** *Pseudopanthera macularia* (1909)

3 records for 13 individuals between 12 May and 9 June at Bastow Wood and Lower Grass Wood for this **Common** day-flying limestone species which is rarely seen in Wharfedale. It inhabits woodland and scrubland, and the larvae feed mainly on Wood Sage (*Teucrium scorodonia*).

**70.248 Brindled Beauty** *Lycia hirtaria* (1927)

1 individual on 18 April at Littondale was first Upper Wharfedale record for a **Common** scarce moth. The moths fly in March and April, and the males at least, are attracted to light. It prefers woodland and suburban habitats, and feeds on a range of deciduous trees.

**71.011 Lunar Marbled Brown** *Drymonia ruficornis* (2015)

1 individual on 20 April at Rougemont of this scarce **Common** thinly distributed moth. This species is recognisable by a black crescent in the white area of the forewing and inhabits deciduous woodland where its caterpillars feed on Oak (*Quercus*). It is on the wing in April and May (flying slightly earlier in the year than similar Marbled Brown (71.010 - *Drymonia. dodonea* - 2014).

**72.042 Red-necked Footman** *Atolmis rubricollis* (2039)

2 records for 3 individuals on 5 and 6 July in gardens in Burley-in-Wharfedale and Otley for a **Local** day-flying moth rarely sighted. This species is also nocturnal and attracted to light traps. Its larvae feeds on lichens and algae growing on tree-trunks and the species overwinters as pupa.

**72.063 Blackneck** *Lygephila pastinum* (2466)

1 individual on 10 July at Otley for this scarce **Local** moth. Occupying woodland and marshy areas, it is locally common in the southern half of Britain, with only scattered

occurrences further north. The species overwinters as a larva, which feeds mainly on Tufted Vetch (*Vicia cracca*).

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

2 records for 3 individuals on 11 and 19 October in Otley for this **Common** moth which is possibly under-recorded due to its sporadic late short flight period. The larvae feed on Hawthorn (*Crataegus* spp.), Blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*) and Apple (*Malus* spp.).

**73.129 Crinan Ear** *Amphipoea crinanensis* (2359)

2 individuals (\* gen. det.) on 14 Aug at Yockenthwaite for this rare **Local** moth. The larvae are believed to feed inside the stems of Yellow Iris (*Iris pseudacorus*). One of three moths which look very similar so its identity should only be confirmed by dissection otherwise it should be recorded as Ear Moth agg. (2360x - *Amphipoea oculate* agg.) (= *Ear Moth*, *Large Ear* & *Crinan Ear* if not differentiated by dissection).

**73.146 Least Minor** *Photedes captiuncula* (2344)

3 records for 27 individuals day-flying between 29 June and 17 July in the Kilnsey & Arncliffe areas. Excellent records for this scarce **RDB3** moth restricted to open limestone grassland. The larvae feed internally in stems of Glaucous Sedge (*Carex flacca*).

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

1 individual on 14 Sept at Otley was the only sighting of this **Nationally Scarce B (Nb)** moth associated with heaths and open woodland. The larvae feed on Silver Birch (*Betula pendula*) and Downy Birch (*Betula pubescens*). Sightings are particularly unusual this far north-west in Yorkshire.

**73.213 Olive Ipimorpha** *subtusa* (2312)

1 individual on 31 July at Burley-in-Wharfedale of this scarce **Local** moth which flies in July and August. The species inhabits woodlands and marshy areas and is thinly distributed across lowland Yorkshire in small numbers. The caterpillar spins together the leaves of its foodplants, which are Aspen (*Populus tremulosa*) and other Poplars (*Populus* spp.).

**73.238 Dark Brocade** *Mniotype adusta* (2229 - *Blepharita adusta*)

8 records of 13 individuals between 31 May and 17 July at Stainburn Forest, Skyreholme, Dib Scar and Greenhow. This **Common** thinly distributed moth inhabits moorland and upland areas. This moth can often be identified by the shape of its reniform stigmata, which usually show a triple-toothed appearance on the outer edge. It also has a generally longer-winged appearance than other similar species.

**73.255 Nutmeg** *Anarta trifolii* (2145)

1 individual on 11 Aug at Otley for a **Common** thinly distributed moth flying between May and September. The moth inhabits waste ground, agricultural land and a range of other habitats and larval foodplants include Orache (*Atriplex* spp.) and Goosefoot (*Chenopodium* spp.).

**73.320 Heart and Club** *Agrotis claviv* (2088)

7 individuals on 17 July at Greenhow. A scarce **Common** moth which prefers dry calcareous soils and only has scattered records across the county. The caterpillars feed on the leaves and roots of low-growing plants including Knotgrass (*Polygonium* spp.) and Clovers (*Trifolium* spp.).

**73.341 Northern Rustic** *Standfussiana lucerneae* (2104)

6 individuals on 17 July at Greenhow was a large count for this **Local** rare moth. A hill species frequently found inhabiting quarries, scree slopes and similar rocky places. The larvae feed on grasses and low plants including Stonecrop (*Sedum* spp.).

**74.007 Scarce Silver Lines** *Bena bicolorana* (2421)

1 individual on 22 July at Burley-in-Wharfedale of this scarce thinly distributed **Local** moth. An immaculate-looking moth, this is one of the few green species in Britain, and one of the brightest. Flying from June to August in woodland and parkland. The caterpillars feed on the leaves of Oak (*Quercus* spp.).

**\*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.

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, Chris Alder, Ian & Barbara Blomfield, Bruce N Brown, Karen Bullimore, Peter & Janet Burns, Caroline Clay, Robin Costello, Mark Cubitt, Richard Falls, David & Nyree Fearnley, Charles Fletcher, Audrey Gramshaw, Gordon Hancock, Colin Harrison, Fred & Carmen Horner, Diana Jakeways, David & Midge Leather, Pat & Ken Limb, Paul Millard, Diane Morris, Amanda Newham, Denis O'Connor, Peter & Anne Riley, Andrew Rhodes, Anne Tupholme, Martin Wain, Dave Wainwright, Sarah Ward, Jenny & Alastair Watson, Ian Watt and Jane Willis.

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](mailto:naturefind@clerk54.plus.com)

**Mike & Joyce Clerk**



## WHARFEDALE NATURALISTS' FUNGUS

FORAY      Saturday 12th October

The day dawned nicely bright and clear for the annual Foray, this year at Swinsty in the Washburn Valley. 16 of us set off from Swinsty Moor Car Park, led by our very own expert Andy Woodall, ably assisted by Mike and Joyce Clerk. We started promptly at 10.00am as planned, although Andy had already done a bit of a recce beforehand. The dry weather in late summer/early autumn had contributed to the fungus season starting rather unpromisingly so it was with a little trepidation that we started our search. In fact, however, the wet weather through late September and early October had done the trick and, somewhat to our surprise, it took a whole hour just to get out of the car park, such were the numbers of different fungi around the grassy picnic area and in the edge of the surrounding woodland. This glut continued for the rest of the Foray so that by the end, around 12.30pm, we still had not strayed far down one of the woodland tracks and the number of species discovered far exceeded recent previous years.

Andy was on top form, identifying most of the fungi straight away and recalling old names as well as new with alacrity where recent nomenclature changes had occurred. For those of us with very little detailed knowledge of this fundamental component of our eco-system it is always a great pleasure to be shown so much variety in such a short space and time especially when a significant number are really attractive - and I don't just mean the Fly Agaric!

As always, the Society is indebted to Andy for giving us a morning of his time especially given the demands on his expertise at this time of year. This particular location was so productive that Andy has already agreed to lead the same event for WNS at the same location at a similar time next year.

**Peter Riley**

**The full list of fungi** seen is below

(Any very new name has the old name in brackets first.)

*Amanita muscaria* Fly Agaric  
*Amanita rubescens* The Blusher  
*Amanita vaginata* Grisette  
*Armillaria mellea* Honey Fungus  
*Boletus pruinatus* Matt Bolete  
*Calocera viscosa* Yellow Stagshorn or Sticky Calocera  
*Claviceps purpurea* Ergot  
(*Clitocybe*) *Ampulloclitocybe clavipes* Clubfoot Funnel  
*Clitocybe gibba* Common Funnel  
*Clitocybe metachroa*  
*Clitocybe nebularis* Clouded Funnel  
*Clitopilus prunulus* The Miller  
(*Collybia*) *Rhodocollybia butyracea* var *butyracea* Buttercap or Greasy Tough Shank  
(*Collybia*) *Gymnopus confluens* Clustered Tough Shank  
*Conocybe* sp. Conecap  
*Coprinus comatus* Lawyer's Wig or Shaggy Inkcap  
*Coprinus lagopus* Hare's Foot Inkcap  
(*Coprinus*) *Coprinellus micaceus* Glistening Inkcap

*Crepidotus cesatii* Round-spored Oysterling  
*Dacrymyces stillatus* Orange Jellyspot  
*Entomophthora muscae* Fly Fungus  
*Gymnopilus penetrans* Common Rustgill  
*Hebeloma crustuliniforme* Poison Pie  
*Hebeloma mesophaeum* Veiled Poison Pie  
*Hemimycena lactea* Milky Bonnet  
*Heterobasidion annosum* Root Fomes  
*Hygrophorus hypothejus* Herald of Winter  
*Hypholoma capnoides* Conifer Tuft  
*Hypholoma fasciculare* Sulphur Tuft  
*Inocybe rimosa* Split Fibrecap  
*Inocybe* sp. Fibrecap sp.  
*Laccaria laccata* The Deceiver  
*Lactarius glyciosmus* Coconut-scented Milkcap  
*Lactarius hepaticus* Liver Milkcap  
*Lactarius tabidus* Birch Milkcap  
*Lactarius turpis* Ugly Milkcap  
*Lycoperdon excipuliforme* Pestle Puffball  
*Lycoperdon perlatum* Common Puffball  
*Lycoperdon foetidum* Dusky Puffball  
*Melanoleuca polioleuca* Common Cavalier  
*Mycena aetites* Drab Bonnet  
*Mycena arcangeliana* Angel's Bonnet  
*Mycena epipterygia* Yellowleg Bonnet  
*Mycena filopes* Iodine Bonnet  
*Mycena galopus* Milking Bonnet  
*Mycena pura* Lilac Bonnet  
*Phallus impudicus* Stinkhorn  
*Phragmidium violaceum* Bramble Rust  
*Piptoporus betulinus* (*Fomitopsis betulina*) Birch Polypore  
*Postia caesia* Conifer Blueing Bracket  
*Postiaptychogaster* (no common name) Sexual (rare) and asexual stages  
*Postia tephroleuca* Greyling Bracket  
*Psathyrella corrugis* Red-edged Brittlestem  
*Puccinia poarum* Coltsfoot Rust  
*Rhytisma acerinum* Sycamore Tarspot  
*Russula betularum* Birch Brittlelegill  
*Russula ochroleuca* Ochre Brittlelegill  
*Rickenella fibula* Orange Moss-cap  
*Suillus bovinus* Bovine Bolete  
*Suillus grevillei* Larch Bolete  
*Suillus luteus* Slippery Jack  
*Tricholoma sciodes* Beech Knight  
*Tubaria furfuracea* Scurfy Twiglet  
*Xylaria hypoxylon* Candlesnuff Fungus

**IDs by Andy Woodall and Mike and Joyce Clerk**

# BIRD REPORT

## Introduction

The main factor to bear in mind when reading this are the big changes in the number and distribution of records in our area over the past few years. These are summarised in the table below, but essentially, over the past two years, we have seen in the north a 60% drop in the number of records, and the proportion of the records they represent drop from 24% to just 13%. In the same period, Bolton Abbey and Washburn records have both dropped around 45%. Quite remarkably, and due to some sterling work by a few individuals, one area, Otley Wetland, has seen a rise of over 250%. Overall, southern records, although declining, have risen from 76% to 87% of the total.

This will inevitably have an impact. What that impact is, and how big it is, will be difficult to separate from changes in the bird populations themselves. For the moment it does not seem to be impacting severely on identifying species in our area: this year's figure of 157 is one of the highest in recent years. Where it might be having an effect though is in establishing the geographical range of species. There is a steep decline pretty much across the board in the number of sites where each species is being reported (with some exciting exceptions!), and it is in this detail that the real value of keeping these records lie, not just in ticking off a list of birds.

There are a number of good reasons why this is happening, not least, at least in the northern area, the loss of a co-ordinated contribution from the Upper Wharfedale Field Society with the loss of their bird recorder. Elsewhere, it's harder to identify precise reasons for why, but the fact is that the number of people who are actually getting out beyond our residential areas and looking to return numbers is in a distinct decline, and we are increasingly reliant on a relatively small body of committed individuals: last year some 50% of all our records came from 4 individuals. This year it was 56%, in spite of the fact that we lost one of our most prolific recorders entirely (my predecessor!) and two others, for various reasons, had to cut back on the amount they did.

So my major plea this year is this: if you are getting out into our fabulous countryside, please think of maintaining a record of what you see, and please send those details in. Far better that 100 people send in 40-50 records a year than we have to rely on 4 people have to send in 1000-1200 (although one or two do, and it's even better when both happen!) Please particularly bear this in mind when travelling to some of the more distant areas of our catchment: most of the Upper Wharfe returns this year came from 2 family walks along the Dales Way. (And I promise my fellow recorders that I will make greater efforts to send in my records for other wildlife!).

So, a huge thank you to all those who have contributed. 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.

## Some highlights

2018 was another good year for scarcer species. Visitors included: barnacle goose, ruddy shelduck, common scoter, red-breasted merganser, white stork, bittern, honey-buzzard, goshawk, whimbrel, black-tailed godwit, ruff, Mediterranean gull, great grey shrike, hooded crow, yellow-browed warbler, and snow bunting.

The long-term presence of a pair of ospreys in the Washburn valley during the summer. They may not be breeding, but one can live in hope.

As last year, several raptors showed an increased presence. In particular, hen harrier, peregrine, merlin and hobby were all observed more often and more widely. With our area overlapping one of the UK's wildlife crime hotspots, particularly for raptors, it can only be hoped that this trend can continue without interference.

The ongoing success of the barn owl seems to be growing ever apace as a direct result of the box building programme. Breeding returns continue to confirm the ongoing progress.

## A few fact and figures

The numbers of species and sightings for 2019 are summarised in the table below. For each region, North and South, figures are also given for three or four areas within those regions. 2018 and 2017 figures follow in brackets, in that order.

	Species	Sightings
<b>North</b>	95 (98, 109)	775 (1226, 1867)
Upper Wharfe	37 (52, 61)	62 (189, 225)
Littondale	43 (45, 53)	91 (124, 198)
Grassington	58 (88, 105)	150 (483, 700)
Grimwith	40 (59, 59)	48 (129, 167)
<b>South</b>	154 (152, 142)	5001 (6346, 5936)
Bolton Abbey	94 (93, 95)	422 (807, 769)
Washburn	126 (133, 125)	926 (1442, 1722)
Otley Wetlands	94 (91, 86)	1358 (523, 769)
<b>Total</b>	156 (153, 147)	5776 (7572, 7803)

The blackbird retained its place as the species with the largest number of records, followed by last year's runner-up, the woodpigeon. The blue tit was third, these three species being the only ones with over 150 records. Last year's third place, the robin slipped to fourth equal with the buzzard to make up the top five. The curlew, first last year, was recorded at the greatest number of sites this year (48), just ahead of the blackbird (47), third last year, just overtaking the woodpigeon (46). Fourth equal were the red kite and buzzard, both on 45.

## 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 last 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 Upper Wharfedale Field Society since 2005, and 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. *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** [wnsbirds@gmail.com](mailto:wnsbirds@gmail.com)

Other formats are welcome, but please bear in mind that these will require manual transfer into the records database. Voluminous handwritten notes can take a VERY long time to transcribe.

Regular garden recorders, please note that regular visiting birds will be concentrated into records of quarterly or monthly maximums, plus any commentary notes.

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.**

**Please submit reports from sightings prior to October 31st before the end of November at the latest, and sightings from November and December by Sunday January 3rd, 2021.** Inclusion of any records received after these dates cannot be guaranteed. Sadly, some records arrived too late this year to be included in this report.



## SPECIES REPORTED IN 2019

### CANADA GOOSE *Branta canadensis*

#### 18 sites (18) Common resident breeder and visitor

Northern sightings in 2019 were limited to one of 11 individuals at Grimwith in February. Reports from the Bolton Abbey Estate were equally limited, a single sighting of 4 in the same month. Otley Wetland continues to be the most favoured site, with a presence throughout the year, and quarterly highs of 70, 75, 75 and 200+ respectively. The largest count, however, was at Fewston on Oct 16th, over 300 (PP), the other 3 Washburn reservoirs also attracting numbers. Thruscross saw a highest count of 30 in March, Swinsty 30 in January, and Lindley Wood 90 in February.

### BARNACLE GOOSE *Branta leucopsis*

#### 1 site (0) Scarce

One or two birds are recorded most years in our area, although there were none in 2018. A single bird was seen at Grimwith on Feb 23rd (JF).

### GREYLAG GOOSE *Anser anser*

#### 23 sites (34) Common resident breeder and visitor

This successful species continued to receive a high level of sightings, with records evenly distributed across our area from the Grassington-Grimwith line southwards, although the number of locations was down by almost one-third. To the north of this range, the highest count was 250 at Grimwith in February. This was only exceeded in the south at Otley Wetland, where quarterly counts reached 60, c350, 134 and 46. Otherwise there were recordings for most major areas of water in the south, with larger counts at Lower Barden Reservoir (90 in Feb), Chelker (48 in May), Fewston (c50 in Sep), and Kex Gill (44 including young in April); none of the Washburn reservoirs reached the three figure counts of last year. Overflying birds were also recorded throughout the year, the largest being one skein of 50 on the Chevin in September (E&PS). Successful breeding was noted at Appletreewick, Barden Bridge, Howgill, Grimwith, Barden Bridge, Kex Gill, Burley Moor, and Otley Wetland.

### PINK-FOOTED GOOSE *Anser brachyrhynchus*

#### 8 sites (8) Regular passage migrant

As last year, 2019 saw only 2 sightings in the first quarter of the year, with all others in the final third. On Jan 24th a flock of 80 flew over Otley (E&PS), whilst a singleton was seen at Chelker on Feb 15th (JM). The Guiseley Gap proved the most productive location, with groups seen overhead (all DS) on Oct 12th (100), 17th (30) and 18th (200+), whilst there was just one sighting in the Washburn, 15 over Swinsty on Oct 12th (M&JC). Other flocks were also seen during this season over Barden Moor (90 on Sep 30th), BRGP (40 on Oct 14th), and Otley (130 on Oct 23rd), with the last on Nov 2nd, seen over both Menston (AK) and Pool (AJ).

### BAR-HEADED GOOSE *Anser indicus*

#### 1 site (1) Escapee

This species is **not** on the British list, but has been recorded in our area at least once annually since 2015. A pair was recorded at Otley Wetland from July 12th to 16th (PP).

### MUTE SWAN *Cygnus olor*

#### 10 sites (9) Locally common resident breeder

Unusually, 2019 saw this species recorded in the northern region, with an immature singleton observed at Kilnsey Trout Farm on Jan 9th and 10th (EC\* and JF). Otherwise, all sightings were south and east of Ben Rhydding, with the

majority of records split between Otley Wetland and Knotford Nook, as previously. Maximum count at the former was 17, at the latter 8. Farnley Lake recorded the next largest count, with 5. Single birds were also seen in the Washburn Valley at Fewston on Jun 5th, and Lindley Wood on Mar 25th.

**WHOOPER SWAN** *Cygnus cygnus*

**7 sites (5)** *Uncommon but regular passage migrant*

Numbers very much fitted into the recent range, up from last year but slightly down from 2017. 5 birds were seen at Fewston on Jan 21st, 3 on Lower Barden Rsr on Feb 13th. A large flock of 25 were at Chelker on Feb 15th (JM), whilst a flock of 22 were seen over Otley on Mar 19th, flying north (JA\*\*). A week later, a slightly smaller group of 15 overflew Barden watchpoint (HC\*\*). Autumn sightings were limited to 5 at Lindley Wood on Sep 19th (RW\*\*), and a trio at Otley Wetland on Nov 12th (PP).

**EGYPTIAN GOOSE** *Alopochen aegyptiaca*

**1 site (1)** *Uncommon visitor from feral populations*

A single bird was recorded at Otley Wetland on May 13th (PP).

**SHELDUCK** *Tadorna tadorna*

**5 sites (3)** *Uncommon passage /winter visitor*

2019 was a relatively bumper year for this species, with more recorded than in any other year in the past decade apart from 2012. This year also saw successful breeding, with a family of up to 10 young observed at Kex Ghyll in Jun/Jul (AJ, TK). Riffa pond in Pool proved most productive, with sightings of one or two birds on four occasions in February-May (AJ). A pair was also seen on flooded fields in Arthington on Apr 12th, 4 at Otley Wetland on Mar 21st (RF), and another pair overflying Menston on May 13th - a first for the garden! (AK).

**RUDDY SHELDUCK** *Tadorna ferruginea*

**2 sites (0)** *Rare passage migrant / local escapee*

Just one bird has previously been seen since 2005, a possible drake on Otley Wetland in 2011. On May 4th, a single individual was reported from Bolton Abbey, near the Devonshire Arms, with the comment 'not sure if an escapee or not' (RG). On the same day, it was reported (AJ) that the local farmer had twice previously this year seen one of this species on March Ghyll Rsr, 3 miles from Bolton Abbey. Most recent British birds are thought to have been of escape origin.

**MANDARIN DUCK** *Aix galericulata*

**20 sites (24)** *Common resident breeder, winter visitor*

Numbers and sites remained generally similar to the previous two years, ranging fairly evenly along the Wharfe from Hebden to Knotford Nook and below Swinsty in the Washburn, although no large flocks were seen this year. Largest numbers of adults seen were 9 in Strid Woods and 8 at Bolton Bridge in May, 9 at Lindley Wood in March. A family of 10 was the sole breeding record, at Strid Woods in May. Most unusual sighting has to be a pair in trees in a back garden in Menston on May 4th, a long way from any water!

**SHOVELER** *Spatula clypaeta*

**2 sites (1)** *Uncommon passage/winter visitor*

This species is very variable in where it appears in our area, although there are usually one or two reports each year. 2019 maintained that record, if only just, with a single sighting of a pair at Riffa pond on Jan 27th (AJ).

**GADWALL** *Mareca strepera*

**3 sites (2)** *Uncommon passage/winter visitor*

Sightings of this species have become more infrequent in our area in recent years, although 2019 was the first year in over a decade to record this species at more than 2 sites. Up to 6 birds were seen at Knotford Nook on several occasions throughout February by various observers. High Royds pond featured for the second consecutive year, with a pair on May 7th (DS), whilst Otley Wetland had a pair on Mar 18th and a single bird on May 13th (both PP).

**WIGEON** *Mareca penelope*

**8 sites (9)** *Common winter visitor, passage migrant*

Otley Wetland is the main stronghold for this species in our area, with a presence throughout the year in 2019. Numbers in Jan and Feb were consistently above 100, with a maximum of 171 on Feb 26th, dropping away to a high of 44 in March, and 8 in April. 2 birds were recorded in May and June, 4 on Oct 9th, 9 on Nov 15th, up to 100 on Dec 9th and a high of 137 on Christmas Eve. Other significant counts included 60 at Knotford Nook in January, and 84 at Grimwith in February. Smaller numbers were also counted at Denton Hall pond, Riffa pond, Farnley Lake, and Scargill Resr.

**MALLARD** *Anas platyrhynchos*

**(C)** *Common resident breeder, passage migrant, winter visitor*

The Mallard continues to be the ubiquitous water bird in our area throughout the year, with numbers boosted in the winter months. Contrary to the trend of the past few years, peak counts rose in 2019: 197 were seen on Fewston and 150 on Swinsty on Jan 24th (JF), 133 at Thruscross on Oct 10th (JP), 83 at Lindley Wood and 55 at Grimwith in February. Even smaller sites appeared to support significant numbers, eg 39 at High Royds pond in Menston and, furthest north, 22 at Yockenthwaite, both also early in the year. Extensive breeding was also evident throughout the length of the Wharfe.

**TEAL** *Anas crecca*

**8 sites (10)** *Common passage/winter visitor, occasional breeder*

Teal sightings declined yet further from the low of 2018, even though national numbers have apparently risen. Peak count was less than half that of 2018, just 20 at Fewston on Jan 24th. 18 were at Lindley Wood and 15 at John O'Gaunt in February, again less than half the numbers recorded for these sites in 2018. Otherwise, sightings were all in single digits: 6 at Otley Wetland and 3 at Low Dam in January, 8 at High Royds pond in March, 3 at Kex Ghyll in April. The only other site, BRGP, saw a pair briefly in November.

**TUFTED DUCK** *Aythya fuligula*

**13 sites (14)** *Common resident, winter visitor; occasional breeder*

There were just 2 recorded sightings in the northern region in 2019, both at the Kilnsey fishing lakes: 10 on Jan 10th, 21 on Apr 18th (both JF). Largest count of the year was at the other end of our area, with 70 at Knotford Nook in January (at least double any other count there during the year). Otley Wetland had a presence throughout the year, with quarterly maximums of 22, 15, 6 and 15. Other sizeable (20+) flocks were recorded at Chelker (21 on Feb 16th), and Fewston (26 on Jan 21st). Breeding was recorded at Kex Ghyll, including a brood of 12, whilst a pair overflew a Menston garden on Apr 20th to be the first recorded sighting in the village.

**COMMON SCOTER** *Melanitta nigra*

**1 sites (1)** Scarce passage migrant

This species consistently produced one or two annual sightings until 2013, after which it has become scarcer, with single sightings in 2016 at Grimwith and 2018 at Otley Wetland. This year, another single bird, a male, was seen at Chelker on Oct 17th (BV\*\*).

**GOLDENEYE** *Bucephala clangula*

**6 sites (7)** Locally common winter visitor, passage migrant

Whilst numbers for this species are nationally declining, they appear to be holding up reasonably well in Wharfedale. Both Knotford Nook and Otley Wetlands support a consistent population each winter: this year, numbers peaked at 26 and 18 respectively; there were also up to 7 at Farnley Lake. Chelker saw more sightings this year, with a maximum 23 in February. 4 were also seen on Scargill Rsr on Jan 3rd.

**GOOSANDER** *Mergus merganser*

**29 sites (24)** Common resident breeder, winter visitor

After a significant dip in 2018, recorded sightings rose closer to previous years in 2019. Mainly focused on the main rivers as far north as Hawkswick in Littondale (2 in April, JF) and Kettlewell in Wharfedale (3 in Feb, AK), there were again no sightings at Grimwith and only a handful in the Washburn. Adult counts rarely exceeded 6, although an exceptional 21 were recorded at Otley Wetlands in December (RF), the next highest being 9 at Barden Bridge in March (JP). Evidence of successful breeding was seen along most of the river. Beyond the river, sighting locations included Ilkley Tarn, Lower Barden Rsr, and Carr Bottom Rsr on Burley Moor. Up to 6 were seen at Lindley Wood and a single bird at Scargill in February.

**RED-BREASTED MERGANSER** *Mergus serrator*

**1 site (0)** Rare visitor



Once a fairly regular visitor to our area, in 26 years between 1954 and 2003, the only record since then was one of 4 birds on Grimwith in 2011. This year, a drake was sighted on the

sailing lake at Otley Wetland on Dec 26th (AJ), and spent several days there, being last seen on Dec 30th.

**BLACK GROUSE** *Lyrurus tetrix*

**1 site (0)** Scarce resident breeder

No count available, but the owner of Nethergill Farm reported in a letter of regular sightings during the year of this species above their farm at Oughtershaw.

**RED GROUSE** *Lagopus lagopus*

**(C)** Common resident breeder

This species tends to be taken for granted in this area, perhaps because they are effectively farmed rather than 'pure' wild birds, and numbers are without a doubt significantly underreported. Of those records received, the largest number, 123, was seen at Rocking Hall Moor in October (JP). 40 were recorded on Ilkley Moor in February ("everywhere on Ilkley Moor, virtually none on Burley Moor"), with similar numbers at Bolton Abbey the month before.

**RED-LEGGED PARTRIDGE** *Alectoris rufa*

**(C)** Common resident breeder, all from released birds.

Sightings continued to provide a wide and even spread in our area, at least geographically, as all were recorded in the first seven months of the year, mostly in small numbers. A flock of 16, and 22 in total, at Hebden Beck on Jul 16th was an exception to this, as were the 12 on Barden Fell on Jan 3rd and 15 in fields on the outskirts of Arncliffe on the 31st of the same month (all JF). A pair made an unusual garden sighting ("just over the garden fence") in Otley on May 9th (M&JC).

**GREY PARTRIDGE** *Perdix perdix*

**4 sites (5)** Uncommon resident breeder

Records continued to drop away this year, with just four records in our area: a single bird at Thruscross on Mar 23rd (AJ), an adult with 4 juveniles on Sep 6th on the north side of Otley (seen from the garden, M&JC), 6 individuals in the Weston Lane area of Otley on Oct 21st (PP), and 8 near the smokehouse on the Greenhow Road on the same day (TK).

**PHEASANT** *Phasianus colchicus*

**(C)** Common resident breeder subject to extensive rearing/releases

This species is common throughout the area and in all varieties of habitats, including gardens, with numbers artificially boosted by importing, rearing and mass releases. Notable records included 41 at Grimwith on Feb 23rd, 25 at Hawkswick on Apr 18th, and 21 on Barden Fell in January. Daily garden sightings were recorded in several gardens in Ilkley and Otley, with 7 the highest count, in December (M&JC).

**LITTLE GREBE** *Tachybaptus ruficollis*

**9 sites (4)** Uncommon resident, winter visitor; occasional breeder

After 2 years of decline, numbers picked up again in 2019, even if not quite back to 2016 levels (12 sites); as recently as 2010, an exceptional year, the species was seen at 26 sites in our area. John O'Gaunts is a traditional stronghold, and the highest count of the year, 7, was recorded here on Sep 3rd (AK), almost double the 2018 high but still down on earlier years. Furthest north on the Wharfe, a single bird was seen at Bolton Abbey on Jan 14th (K&PL), with other sightings along the river at Manor Bends (Feb 10th), Otley Wetland (Jan/Feb/Nov/Dec), and Knotford Nook (Jan/Feb). In the Washburn valley, a single bird was seen on Jun 6th at Low Dam (JP), another on Scargill on Sep 3rd, but, most significant, an adult with 4 young was seen at Kex Ghyll on Jun 26th (AJ,TK).

**GREAT CRESTED GREBE** *Podiceps cristatus*

**5 sites (8)** Common resident breeder, winter visitor

This species' core sites of Knotford Nook, Otley Wetland, the Washburn reservoirs and Chelker made up all the sites for 2019 recordings. As usual, the largest counts were at Knotford Nook, where a peak count of 8 was recorded on Feb 25th, and where there was otherwise a presence of up to 4 birds throughout the rest of the year. Up to 3 birds were seen throughout the year from March to November at Otley Wetland. Other sites were more occasional: a singleton in March and a pair in May at Chelker, a single bird at Lindley Wood in February, and another in March on Swinsty.

**WHITE STORK** *Ciconia ciconia*

**1 site (0)** Rare passage migrant / local escapee

This species was first recorded in our area in 1997, and then seen in most years until 2008, when 12 birds were seen in 8

locations. Some of these sightings are thought to have been escapees from Harewood House, with the first wild bird not confirmed until 2004. Since then, there have been just 2 further sightings, a single bird seen in 2010 in the Otley area over 3 days in April 2010, and another on an early morning flight over the Chevin in May 2013. This year, one was seen at the same time of year as these two, on Apr 25th, over Burley by-pass, before dropping into the weir area (AJ).

**BITTERN** *Botaurus stellaris*

**1 site (1)** Scarce visitor

Last year saw the first bittern in our area since 2015 at Otley Wetland. This year, another was seen in the northern reedbeds at Otley Wetland again, by a WNS work party on Nov 17th, with a follow up, probably the same one, recorded three weeks later in December.

**GREY HERON** *Ardea cinerea*

**26 sites (31)** Common resident breeder



The number of sites where this species was recorded this year was down a similar percentage to the 20% decline seen in 2018. However it does still remain one of the more widely distributed birds across our area, right up to the source of the Wharfe and beyond, the most northerly seen above Oughtershaw. None were noted below Knotford Nook, but that is more likely due to the lack of observers rather than the lack of birds. Most were singletons or pairs, but 5 were seen close together at Lindley Wood on Mar 25th, and 4 at Otley Wetland by various observers at different times throughout the year.

**LITTLE EGRET** *Egretta garzetta*

**8 sites (8)** Uncommon visitor

Sightings of this increasingly prevalent bird continue to centre mainly on the Wharfe between Burley and Addingham, with a succession of them, mostly single birds, throughout the year. However, there was one seen as far north as Burnsall this year, on Jan 20th (D&NF). Further south, this species was recorded more regularly at Otley Wetland than in previous years, with 2 early sightings in January, then 4 more through August to December. Away from the Wharfe, there was just one reported at Lindley Wood on Jan 28th (AJ).

**CORMORANT** *Phalacrocorax carbo*

**13 sites (19)** Common resident/visitor; occasional breeder

2019 saw yet another decline in the range of cormorant sightings, half the average 26 of the previous decade, although the range remained wide. As in 2018, there were just a handful of sightings north of the A59, at Strid Woods

(Jan 3rd), Barden Moor (Feb 3rd), Grimwith (Feb 23rd), Kettlewell (Mar 24th), and Conistone (June 23rd). Further south, Lindley Wood retained a strong, largely resident, population, although a peak count of 23 was less than half that recorded in 2018. A year round presence at Otley Wetland, rarely less than 20 birds, peaked in December at 42 (PP), whilst Knotford Nook didn't rise above 4 the whole year. A single count of 20 at Chelker finished the year off on Dec 29th.

**OSPREY** *Pandion haliaetus*

**6 sites (5)** Scarce but regular passage migrant

In one of the most interesting developments in our area recently, a pair of non-breeding ospreys spent most of the summer in the Washburn valley. First seen on May 28th (PBR), one or other or both were observed on numerous occasions over the 3 southern reservoirs, with the last sighting (of both birds) on Sep 2nd at Fewston. In the Wharfe valley, single birds on passage were observed on Aug 12th at Barden Scale, Aug 24th over Otley Wetland and then east across Otley, again on the 28th over Otley Wetland (seen by members of the sailing club) and on the 29th over east Otley. The final sighting was on Sep 21st back at Barden Scale.

**HONEY-BUZZARD** *Pernis apivorus*

**2 sites (0)** Rare passage visitor

Last recorded in 2011, a single bird was reported from Lindley Wood on Jun 24th (AJ), with another sighting at Stainburn Forest on Jul 25th (TK).

**SPARROWHAWK** *Accipiter nisus*

**26 sites (18)** Common resident breeder

Widespread throughout the southern area, there were only two recordings in the north this year, a single bird at Howgill on Jun 1st (JF), and another over a Hebden garden on Aug 5th (RL). Further south, garden observations continued to predominate, with single birds recorded as such in Addingham (several), Ilkley, Burley, Menston and Otley, most multiple sightings of single birds. Singletons were also recorded throughout the year at Otley Wetland, although a pair was seen on Dec 16th (PP). Records continue to increase in the Washburn valley, including a peak count of 4 at Thruscross on Mar 22nd; in one exciting moment, one observer was taken completely by surprise when struck a glancing blow on the shoulder from behind by a close passing sparrowhawk chasing a wren at Norwood Bottom (Mar 24th, AK). The wren escaped!

**GOSHAWK** *Accipiter gentilis*

**1 site (0)** Scarce passage migrant

Records for this species have become increasingly scant, not more than 2 sites in a year since 2014, only occasional sightings at each, and with some years, as in 2018, completely blank. This year there were 3 sightings at just one location, Barden Scale, on Mar 23rd, 26th and Apr 30th (HC\*\*).

**MARSH HARRIER** *Circus aeruginosus*

**3 sites (2)** Uncommon passage migrant/visitor

As usual, the Barden area dominated the recordings in 2019. First sighting was on Feb 22nd, another on Mar 26th (both HC\*\*). The only other first half sighting was at Scargill on Apr 20th (AJ). There was then a string of sightings throughout August: 2 juveniles at Barden Scale on the 5th, a single bird there again on the 8th and 12th (all DD), a juvenile at Grimwith on the 12th as well (IC), and a cream crown at Barden again on the 27th. Final sighting was on Sep 13th (both BV\*\*).

**HEN HARRIER** *Circus cyaneus*

**12 sites (11)** *Uncommon passage/winter visitor*

With numbers similar to 2018, itself a recent high, the year got off to an early start with a ringtail seen on Hazlewood Moor on New Year's Day (RN\*\*). The next sighting was of a juvenile ringtail from Barden Scale on Feb 6th (BV\*\*), followed by a series of sightings in the Bolton Abbey estate area throughout the rest of the month and into March that included at least one adult ringtail. During the same period, a ringtail was also seen on occasions on Denton Moor (AJ), and also once, on Feb 12th, at Whetstone Gate (BV\*\*). The first autumn sighting was of a ringtail again at Barden Moor, on Sep 10th (DD), closely followed by an immature in the Washburn on Sep 20th (AJ). 3 birds including a male were sighted over Middleton Moor on Oct 12th (AJ), with follow up sightings over the next couple of days. An adult ringtail was seen back in the Washburn on Oct 18th, the first of a string of sightings throughout the rest of the year of up to 3 birds, 2 ringtails and a male. Further north, 2 ringtails were observed on Little Whernside on Oct 29th (DB), and a single bird at Barden Moor on Dec 9th (DD).

**RED KITE** *Milvus milvus*

**45 sites (51)** *Common resident breeder*

Numbers and sites recorded were less than last year, but this species remains widespread throughout our area and well established. As noted last year, there is evidence to suggest that it has become so common that it is now being underreported. Most sightings are of ones and twos, but there were occasional large gatherings, often over farming activity: 14 were seen at Pool on Jun 18th following spinning hay, the same number at Farnley Lake 4 days later. A year high of 40 was seen at Middleton Moor on Oct 12th, all heading south-east in the late afternoon, probably to roost, 12 at March Ghyll Rsr a week later (both AJ), whilst 20 were seen at Burley on Nov 5th (RG). Furthest north was a single bird over Great Whernside summit on May 10th (JP), with birds seen on a number of occasions in the Kilnsey area in February. Peter Roe reported 18 young ringed from 11 nests in our area.

**BUZZARD** *Buteo buteo*

**45 sites (51)** *Common resident breeder, passage migrant, winter visitor*

Numbers of sightings and sites declined for the third year, with the number of sites the lowest in the past 12 years. However, they still represent a widespread and fairly even geographical distribution, although 90% of sightings are from the south. This may be a result of the distribution of observers, as the owner of Nethergill Farm near Oughtershaw reports seeing them regularly, and a bird was seen on each recording visit to Yockenthwaite through the early months (AK). Sightings were made throughout the year the full length of the northern area, including up to 3 birds on several occasions at Kilnsey (EC\*), and at Grass Wood in August (E&PS); they were also seen regularly from a Hebden garden (RL). Highest counts of the year were, however, in the southern part of our area, with 9 at Sandwith Moor Plantation on Jul 21st (JM), and 5 at Timble Ings on Apr 3rd (K&PL). A permanent population, with up to 3 birds seen, was noted throughout the year by several observers at Otley Wetland. Peter Roe reported 21 young ringed from 13 nests.

**WATER RAIL** *Rallus aquaticus*

**1 sites (4)** *Uncommon passage/winter visitor*

This is a species that is recorded consistently annually, but rarely at more than two sites or reaching double figure

sightings. This year the only site with recordings was Otley Wetland, where birds were noted several times both early and late in the year, with no records from mid-March to early October, commensurate with a winter visitor. All were of single birds, with three exceptions, on Oct 9th (RF) and consecutively on Dec 23rd and 24th (AJ).

**MOORHEN** *Gallinule chloropus*

**16 sites (24)** *Common resident breeder, passage visitor*

The population of this species appears to remain stable, with a wide geographical spread. Northern sightings were similarly distributed to last year, the most northerly again in the Kilnsey-Conistone area, where successful breeding was noted on Jun 1st (EC\*) and others further south at Linton, Howgill and Appletreewick, never more than 3. The only record in the Bolton Abbey area was one at Barden Bridge on Mar 18th (JP). Well distributed along the Wharfe to the south of Bolton Bridge, with breeding noted in several places, highest counts were recorded at Otley Wetland with up to 7 adults seen regularly. Away from the river, 6 were seen at Bleach Mill pond in Menston on Jan 4th. Sightings in the Washburn valley were limited to Farnley Lake (up to 4), Fewston Rsr (2) and John O'Gaunts Rsr (2).

**COOT** *Fulica atra*

**5 sites (6)** *Locally common resident breeder, passage/winter visitor*

Whilst sightings increased slightly from 2018, the number of sites continued to decline to record a new low, with none north of the A59 again. Otley Wetland and Knotford Nook continued to be the main strongholds, but, even here, numbers were small compared to the treble figure peaks reached as recently as 2006. Peak count at Knotford this year was 90 on Jan 28th, almost double last year, but back down to no more than 20 in February; the highest autumn-winter count was 26 on Dec 16th. Otley Wetland, with a January high of 26 and autumn high of 11, showed a similar pattern. Other sites were limited to low single figure counts, with Chelker's 4 in May being the highest. Farnley Lake, and Kex Ghyll made up the rest of the locations, both single bird sightings in February and April respectively.

**OYSTERCATCHER** *Haematopus ostralegus*

**36 sites (43)** *Locally common migrant breeder*

For the second consecutive year, sightings and sites dropped significantly, although the geographical range continues to be widespread. The proportion of northern sightings dropped from around 33% to 22%, perhaps reflecting the lower coverage of the northern area this year. Where birds were seen, numbers were similar, even slightly higher, than in 2018. Early year counts tended to be the highest: 180 were seen at Grimwith on Feb 23rd (JF), although only 50 next day (EC\*). 50 were also seen just upstream from Bolton Bridge on the same day (24th, DO), whilst in the same week there were 45 at Lindley Wood Rsr (20th, JP) and 50 at Thruscross (23rd) where they continued to rise to a high of 82 at the end of March. February numbers were only in single figures at Chelker, but they were also up to 50 on Mar 2nd (JM). 35 were recorded at Hawkswick on April 18th. After this, numbers tended downwards, with summer highs of 17 at Hebden and 15 at Kilnsey on June 1st, and 20 at the latter location on Jul 29th. In the south a consistent population between 10 and 14 was recorded by several observers throughout the spring and summer. The last record was of 2 birds on Aug 12th at Ilkley tennis club.

**LAPWING** *Vanellus vanellus*

**34 sites (50)** Common resident breeder, winter visitor

Sightings were down by one-third in 2019, although this species continued to show widespread distribution in our area. Highest count of the year was recorded on its first day, with 950 at Middleton Moor (AJ). Other early year highs included 400 in the fields north of the river at Manor Bends, Burley (Feb 10th, AK), 200 on the moor above Wood Nook (Feb 12th, D&ML), 200 at Chelker (Feb 16th, JT), 174 at Grimwith (Feb 23rd, JF), 98 at Denton (Feb 28th, JF), and 90 "the largest flock of several" at Timble Ings on Feb 16th (MD). Summer numbers were generally in single or lower double digits, although 350 were seen at Kex Ghyll on Jul 24th (TK), 80+ at Otley Wetland on Aug 8th (PP) and 'several hundred' with starlings at Chelker on Aug 18th (JM). Evidence of breeding was seen at Kex Ghyll, Arncliffe Cote and Lindley Wood. Chelker was the only site where significant autumn numbers were recorded, 47 on Oct 12th and 78 on Dec 29th (both JM).

**GOLDEN PLOVER** *Pluvialis apricaria*

**15 sites (17)** Locally common resident breeder, passage/winter visitor

After three years of decline, recorded numbers stabilised in 2019. Sightings in the northern region remained low, with just 3: 10 birds on the moor above Wood Nook on Feb 12th (D&ML), and 2 birds each at Dowber Gill on May 10th (JP) and on Grassington Moor on May 22nd (NH). Large flocks were, however, seen in the south, starting with 300 at Middleton Moor on New Year's Day, a similar number being seen in the same area throughout the first third of the year. 700, the highest of the year, were seen on Ilkley Moor on Feb 17th (DS), slightly fewer, 500, a few days later at the same location on Feb 26th (TK). After mid-April, numbers declined to occasional single figures until Jun 15th, the start of a 2 month summer hiatus, with no breeding observed this year. This was broken on Aug 19th with a flock of 550 observed at Sandwith Moor, followed by similar observations here and around Scargill Rsr throughout the autumn through to the end of the year. Middleton Moor provided the only other significant autumn numbers, up to 100 by Dec 22nd, whilst Chelker had 4 on Oct 12th.

**RINGED PLOVER** *Charadrius hiaticula*

**2 sites (1)** Uncommon passage visitor, occasional breeder

Grimwith was once again the primary site in our area for this visitor: 10 birds were seen on Feb 23rd (JF), including 2 in the car park(!), 2 the next day (EC\*), and a presence noted on Apr 6th (JM). A single bird was also first noted at Lindley Wood Rsr on Jun 11th (AJ) and recorded on a number of occasions over the next 12 days.

**LITTLE RINGED PLOVER** *Charadrius dubius*

**5 sites (1)** Uncommon migrant breeder, passage visitor

Sightings picked up this year after the low of 2018 to return to the previous levels. The first were at Kex Ghyll on Apr 13th (MD) and on the 21st (JF), followed on the 23rd by the first of a number through the summer at Barden Moor (DD). Others were all in the Washburn valley: 2 at Scargill on the 28th, a singleton at Fewston on May 12th (DO), and then, most significantly, a string of sightings at Lindley Wood from Jun 12th to Jul 12th of up to 6 birds including young.

**WHIMBREL** *Numenius phaeopus*

**1 site (2)** Scarce passage migrant

A single annual sighting is typical for this species, rarely more. 2018 was unusual with 2 sightings, but 2019 reverted

to type, with a single bird seen overhead at Scargill on Apr 28th (AJ).

**CURLEW** *Numenius arquata*

**48 sites (63)** 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. However, there is evidence to show that numbers are in decline, with the numbers of sites falling again, and down from previous counts of over 80, last achieved in 2011. First quarter counts were down significantly, with nothing over the 40 birds seen at Norwood Edge on Feb 23rd (DS), the highest being 35 at Denton, and 22 at Menston (in fields under threat from development), also in February. Other smaller flocks were seen at Knotford Nook, Otley Wetland, Kilnsey, Scargill, and Kettlewell, with singletons and pairs more widely distributed. Records from April to mid-June were almost daily, spread throughout the area from Pool to Yockenthwaite and all in single digits, other than a flock of 10 at Arncliffe Cote on the May 7th. The autumn saw some larger numbers than the early part of the year witnessed, with the first big flock seen at Denton on Oct 7th with over 200 birds, followed by 100+ at Ben Rhydding on the other side of the river on Oct 14th and 300+ in the same area, near Denton Bridge, on Oct 30th. As a final note, 7 birds were seen on Christmas Eve at Otley Wetland.

**BLACK-TAILED GODWIT** *Limosa limosa*

**1 site (0)** Rare passage migrant

Only the second sighting since 2012, a single bird was seen at Otley Wetland on Mar 19th (JA\*\*).

**DUNLIN** *Calidris alpina*

**2 sites (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 is no exception: 5 birds were reported between Blubberhouses and Greenhow on Apr 6th (JM), whilst a single bird was seen on the Chevin on July 21st (E&PS).

**RUFF** *Calidris pugnax*

**1 sites(0)** Rare passage migrant

This species has not been recorded in our area for over a decade. A single bird was seen amongst a mixed flock of lapwing and golden plover at Chelker on May 25th (BV\*\*).

**WOODCOCK** *Scolopax rusticola*

**6 sites (14)** Resident breeder, passage migrant, winter visitor

A big tumble in sightings this year, equivalent to the poor years of 2014-15, but marginally even lower. Stainburn Forest and Timble Ings in the Washburn area remain the main sites, with several sightings each throughout the year of up to 4 birds. Nearby Denton Moor also saw 3 sightings in February, March and May of up to 2 birds. Single birds were recorded at Thruscross on Jan 3rd, Strid Woods on May 30th, and Otley Wetlands on Jan 10th and Feb 26th.

**SNIPE** *Galliano gallinago*

**13 sites (14)** Resident breeder, passage/winter visitor

After some serious recent declines, numbers plateaued out slightly in 2019. Again, it was more widely reported in the south of our area, although this could be more down to the lack of recorders than the lack of birds: of the 4 northern sightings this year, 3 were recorded by one observer on one day during a walk along the valley, single birds being seen at



he confluence of Cray Gill and the Wharfe near Buckden, at Kilnsey, and by the road side at Long Ashes (AK). The other was at Grimwith on Oct 5th (DB). In the south, most sightings were at Otley Wetland, with up to 3 birds seen throughout the year. However, the highest count was 20 at Scargill on Oct 15th, whilst up to 6 were seen regularly through the summer at High Royds pond in Menston. Other sightings were recorded on Burley Moor, Chelker and in the Washburn valley at Rocking Hall Moor, Low Dam, and Timble Ings, all of 1 or 2 birds.

**COMMON SANDPIPER** *Actitis hypoleucos*

**18 sites (25)** Common migrant breeder, passage visitor



The 2017 report commented that, whilst the national population was in decline, none was apparent locally. This is no longer the case, with last year's decline from a decade long average of 31 sites to 25 matched by another large drop. The range of this species in our area, however, remains wide, mostly focused along the Wharfe and the

southern Washburn reservoirs. First sighting of the year was on Apr 6th at Grimwith (JM), after which records become extensive and almost daily, until Jun 23rd with 2 birds at Conistone (EC\*) and 5 at Lindley Wood, a site where birds had been seen regularly since May 15th. From then on, the only 2 sightings were at the latter location, with 8 birds on Jul 12th and 1 on Sep 9th (both AK). Most sightings were of one or two birds, but an exceptional 42 were seen between Barden and Water's Laithe on Jun 1st (JF). Furthest south was a single bird, seen on 3 occasions at Otley weir. No evidence of breeding was noted.

**GREEN SANDPIPER** *Tringa ochropus*

**2 sites (3)** Uncommon passage migrant

As with most recent observations, and with all those in 2018, the first of the year was in the Washburn valley, 2 birds seen at Lindley Wood on Jul 9th (PS). The only other of the year was exceptionally away from there, at Otley Wetland on Aug 24th (JM).

**REDSHANK** *Tringa totanus*

**15 sites (14)** Migrant breeder, passage visitor

First birds of the year were recorded on Mar 9th, 4 individuals at Thruscross (JP). A pair were then seen at High Royds pond in Menston on the 26th, staying for around a month. Also seen in March was a single bird at Kilnsey (EC\*), with other sites in the north including Kettlewell, Conistone, Burnsall, and Hebden. April saw the majority of the year records, mostly ones and twos, but including 4 near Linton on the 15th, and another 4 at March Ghyll on the last day of the month. Other southern sites included Barden Bridge, Hollin Hall Peat Hags, Kex Ghyll, Scargill and, with the last sighting of the year on Jul 12th, Lindley Wood.

**BLACK-HEADED GULL** *Chroicocephalus ridibundus*

**(C)** Common resident breeder, passage/winter visitor

This species is widespread throughout our area, with around 20% of recordings in the northern area, almost all in the first 4 months of the year, and a high of 55 at Linton on Apr 15th. After this date, the only northern records were a couple of singletons at Greenhow and Grassington in July, and 14 at Hebden in June. Highest counts in the south came not surprisingly at each end of the year: 500 at Lindley Wood on

Feb 11th, and 400 at Otley Wetland on Dec 16th. Both sites saw high if lower counts throughout the first and last two months of the year. Other significant counts were recorded at Gallows Hill (320 on Sep 2nd), Knotford Nook (130 on Jan 28th), Swinsty (141 on Jan 24th), Thruscross (150 on Mar 9th), Chelker (100+ on Dec 29th).

**MEDITERRANEAN GULL** *Ichthyæetus melanocephalus*

**2 sites (1)** Scarce passage/winter visitor

2018 saw the first record for four years, whilst this year two birds were seen, one on Jul 9th at Lindley Wood (PS), and another on Dec 1st in fields to the west of Knotford Nook (AJ).

**COMMON GULL** *Larus canus*

**20 sites (25)** Common passage/winter visitor

With many continental common gulls wintering in Britain, the largest numbers were not unexpectedly found during these months. No large flocks were actually recorded in our area during this period - the only returns from Grimwith, for instance, normally a substantial roost well into four figures, recorded just 2 birds on Feb 23rd, and 'several' the day after. Largest count was 500+ at Little Almescliff on the same day (23rd, AJ), followed by approximately 350 on Lindley Moor on Mar 1st (AK). The only other three figure counts were in the northern region: 220 in fields between Arnecliff and Hawkswick on Jan 31st (NL), and 140 at Kettlewell on Mar 24th (NM). Very few counts were taken in the autumn, the largest being a relatively small 29 at Otley Wetland on Nov 18th (compared to a high of 82 for the site on Mar 17th). No sightings were recorded during the middle third of the year.

**GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL** *Larus marinus*

**1 site (4)** Uncommon passage/winter visitor

Only one bird was recorded in our area in 2019, a single adult at the upper reservoir on Barden Moor on May 21st amongst a flock predominantly of black-headed gulls and a handful of lesser black-backed (AK).

**HERRING GULL** *Larus argentatus*

**8 sites (7)** Uncommon visitor

As in 2018, the large majority of sightings were at Otley, and all in the south. Most of those Otley sightings were at Otley Wetland, where up to 7 birds were present throughout the first 5 months of the year and seen both on the reserve and from gardens nearby (PP), then none until December when 3 birds were seen again. Up to 4 birds were seen between Jan 28th and Feb 2nd at Knotford Nook (AK), probably the same as 2 birds seen mobbing a buzzard at Gallows Hill on Jan 27th (PP). Away from Otley, the largest counts came towards the end of the year, with 27 seen south of the reservoir at Scargill on Oct 19th (AJ), and 17 at Chelker on Dec 29th (JM). A single bird was seen at Denton Moor on Mar 31st, and another making a good garden tick over Ilkley on Apr 16th (SB).

**LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL** *Larus fuscus*

**16 sites (31)** Common resident, passage visitor; has bred.

Sightings and sites plummeted to barely half the previous lowest year in the past decade; whilst recent years have seen an approximate 50-50 split between north and south, 2019 saw the northern proportion drop to 30%, perhaps reflecting the lower number of observers. In contrast, Otley Wetland represented almost 40% of sightings, all between February and August. Highest count was, however, in the north, with 15 recorded on Apr 15th between Hebden suspension bridge and Linton sewage works; 5 were also seen in a group on the

river between Arncliffe and Hawkswick (both JF). Highest southern count was 8, on Mar 28th over Otley - 2 adults and 6 immature (TK). Otherwise, records were of mostly one or two birds, occasionally up to 4. No records after Sep 3rd, when a single bird was seen at Scargill.

**COMMON TERN** *Sterna hirundo*

**2 sites (2)** *Uncommon passage/summer visitor; occasionally breeds*

All reports this year are likely to relate to a pair of birds based at Otley Wetland, the site of the first recording on Apr 26th by two separate observers, later than the past 2 years but virtually the same as in 2016. A bird was also seen flying east over Asda in Otley on the same day. Up to 2 birds were then seen regularly throughout the summer at Otley Wetland until Jul 29th, whilst one was reported over eastern Otley on May 2nd. One of the Wetland sightings recorded a bird carrying food, but no evidence of breeding was noted.

**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, be it suburban garden, town centre, isolated farm or sheep field. Bucking the trend of most species, the proportion of northern sightings rose in 2019 from 25% to 40%, with multiple sightings at each of Arncliffe, Howgill, Water's Laithe and Appletreewick, where 16 were seen on Apr 29th (JF). A handful of birds was seen on several occasions near Cavendish Pavilion, but the majority of southern sightings were in the Otley area, where a resident flock of up to 100 was seen on numerous occasions, centred near the bridge, and recorded over both town centre and Otley Wetland. The only recorded sighting in the Washburn was a small flock of 14 at John O'Gaunt's on Feb 28th.

**STOCK DOVE** *Columba oenas*

**12 sites (26)** *Common resident breeder*

As with most of the *Columba* species, this species is likely to be significantly underreported. Even so, recordings for this widespread species were drastically fewer in number compared to previous years, especially in the northern region, where there were just three: 3 birds on Jan 31st at Arncliffe, single birds at Grimwith on Feb 23rd and at Kettlewell on Mar 24th. In the south, up to 7 birds were seen most months of the year at Otley Wetland, otherwise there were individual sightings at Barden Moor, Bolton Abbey, Addingham (during an RSPB garden birdwatch), Knotford Nook and Stainburn, whilst the only Washburn records were at Fewston in March and Norwood Bottom in May.

**WOODPIGEON** *Columba palumbus*

**(C)** *Common resident breeder*

One of the most ubiquitous birds in our area, the 150 or so records for this species must represent substantial underreporting. Unusually, no major flocks were reported this year, with the peak count being just 46 at Otley Wetland in April, not dissimilar to counts in most other months in that area. In the north, 30 were seen at Kilnsey show field in February, whilst in the Washburn another 30 were recorded at Lindley Wood in September, otherwise nothing over 20. Present in pretty much all reporting gardens, 17 proved the highest count, in Burley in September.

**COLLARED DOVE** *Streptopelia decaocto*

**(C)** *Common resident breeder*

A regular garden visitor throughout the year in Hebden, Addingham, Ilkley, Ben Rhydding, Menston and Otley,

reported locations outside areas of population dropped to almost half the annual average of the past decade, although whether this is due to an actual decline or a drop in observers is uncertain; the suspicion is the latter. Early in the year, on Jan 10th, 14 birds were reported in Kettlewell "everywhere in the village", confirmed by further observations through the spring. Otherwise, all reports were of singletons or pairs, the one exception being a foursome in an Otley garden in January. Furthest north was another January sighting, a single bird recorded in Buckden.

**CUCKOO** *Cuculus canorus*

**16 sites (26)** *Migrant breeder*

The long-term decline in sightings and locations sites steepened dramatically in 2019, with both dropping to barely half those of 2018, itself a poor



year. First arrival was heard on Apr 23rd on Barden Moor, 4 days later than in 2018, but still within 2 days of the average, the 21st (DD). Three days later, birds were heard in the Ilkley Moor area (D&ML), and two days later on Burley Moor (AK). They were also heard in the Denton Moor/Timble Ings area before the end of the month. These areas provided the bulk of the rest of the summer sightings, particularly Barden Moor where up to 4 birds were recorded at one time. Individual birds were also noted at Barden on May 6th, Hebden on May 12th, Conistone on May 14th, Hanging Wood below Thruscross on May 18th, Hebden Beck and Troller's Ghyll on Jun 6th, and Parkinson's Park in Guiseley on Jun 25th, also the last record of the year, almost a fortnight later than in 2018.

**BARN OWL** *Tyto alba*

**30 sites (24)** *Resident breeder*

Given the declines in so many species, it's heartening to recall that only as recently as 2009, this species was recorded at just one location in our area. The extensive efforts in the provision of nest boxes by local ringers has proved immensely rewarding, as both sightings and locations saw yet another increase in 2019, by some 20%. Reports this year extended throughout the full length of our area, the most northerly yet recorded being a single bird seen hunting in daylight in the snow at Cray on Feb 3rd, the most southerly also daylight hunting at Castley on Mar 19th (both AK), along with another sighting on Mar 3rd at Pool (AJ). Overall though, distribution proportions almost exactly mirrored 2018, with, around 20% of sightings north of the A59, other more northerly birds being seen at Hebden on Nov 9th (RL), Skyreholme on Oct 19th, and at Threshfield, Barden Scale, Greenhow and Thruscross on several occasions throughout the year. About one-third of all sightings came from the Washburn, slightly down from last year but reflecting more the increase in observations elsewhere than any decline in this area, birds being observed at Kex Ghyll, Blubberhouses, Timble Ings, Scargill, Leathley and the three northerly reservoirs. In the main valley, there were regular observations on the moors to both west and east, the Cow and Calf proving particularly productive through February and March. One pair was seen as part of the RSPB Garden Birdwatch in Addingham on Jan 26th, another location with multiple sightings throughout the year. Further down the

valley, Burley/Sun Lane and Otley Wetland also saw birds recorded throughout the year. Peter Roe reported a total of 14 adults and 25 young from 9 nest boxes, whilst Colin Harrison reported 4 broods with 8 young in the Washburn valley (down on last year's 5/18).

**TAWNY OWL** *Strix aluco*

**11 sites (23)** *Common resident breeder*

After a rise in numbers in 2017, records were significantly down in 2018, well below those of any year in the past decade or more. Unfortunately, numbers were even lower this year, markedly so, with less than half the records of 2018, and less than one-third those of 2017. Northerly records were limited to just 5: one at Kettlewell on May 10th (JP), three all at Kilnsey in February (13th and 25th ) and September (30th, all EC\*), the latter of 2 birds calling; however the fifth was an all year round presence in Hebden (RL). None of the Grassington area birds that made up the full contingent of northerly sightings in 2018 were noted, suggesting that part of the problem may be a lack of recorders; unlike 2018 too, none were recorded in the Bolton Abbey area either. In the south, most records were of birds heard around residential areas: Addingham, Ilkley, Ben Rhydding, Menston and Otley all recorded aural reports as well as occasional visuals: one immature bird was found sat stunned on the ground outside Menston Community Centre on Sep 9th, and took around 15 minutes to recover before it flew off and over 2 observers (AK); here, birds were heard most weeks of the BTO Tawny Owl survey. Further out from residential areas, a single bird was seen through August to October at Otley Wetland, and a single bird was heard at Stainburn Forest during a nightjar evening in July. In the Folly Hall Wood area of the Washburn, 5 broods produced 10 chicks, similar to last year (CH).

**LITTLE OWL** *Athene noctua*

**8 sites (9)** *Resident breeder*

As recently as 2010 this bird was recorded at 29 sites, the decline perhaps reflecting the challenges this species faces nationally. The only northern records were 2 sightings at Howgill, one of 2 birds on Apr 30th, the second a singleton on May 11th (EC\*). Last year's most productive sites barely featured this year: Bolton Abbey, the site of half of 2018's sightings, drew a complete blank. Addingham, next on last year's list, yielded just one sighting, a single bird on Mar 20th (DM). Further east, Denton also drew a blank. Almost all records were to the south of the area: single birds at Menston in April and July (where attempted breeding failed), 2 at Otley Wetland in July and August, another to the north of Otley, one at Pool in March. There were just 2 sightings in the Washburn, one at Norwood Edge on Feb 23rd (DS), another at Fewston on Apr 14th (AJ); a single brood in the Folly Hall Wood area produced 3 young (CH).

**LONG-EARED OWL** *Asio otus*

**3 sites (5)** *Uncommon migrant breeder*

There were just three records in 2019, less than the previous year, but better than the low years of 2016-17: a single bird on Denton Moor on May 5th, a young individual on Jun 28th at Timble Ings (both AJ), and a third, unfortunately roadkill, on Apr 16th on the Nesfield road at Low Austby.

**SHORT-EARED OWL** *Asio flammeus*

**4 sites (13)** *Uncommon resident /migrant breeder*

After the excellent year in 2018, sightings went into complete reverse this year, back to the previous low of 2017, with just 4 sites. The first of these was as early as Jan 4th at Timble Ings, the next two on nearby moors in February (all AJ), before a final sighting in the immediate area on Jun 6th. The

only other location was Kex Ghyll, with a couple of sightings on Apr 3rd (RN\*\*) and Aug 1st (DD).

**NIGHTJAR** *Caprimulgus europaeus*

**2 sites (3)** *Scarce migrant breeder*

Numbers of sightings and sites in 2018 were consistent with recent years. All were in the Washburn area, primarily in and around Stainburn forest. First sighting was on May 20th (PS), the last on Aug 6th (RG), with up to 5 birds recorded. A single bird was noted at Timble Ings between May 30th and June 28th (AJ).

**SWIFT** *Apus apus*

**(C)** *Common migrant breeder, passage visitor*

First records were about a week later than the historical average for our area, with sightings at Barden Bridge and Otley on the last day of April. Locally, though, some were early - the next records were in Menston where birds were seen on May 2nd, 3 days earlier than for the previous 3 years. Over 200 were seen at Chelker on the 9th, whilst numbers elsewhere also built: 20 over the market square in Otley on the 12th, 40+ over Westgate later in the month, although counts were more generally low. First northern birds, 3 at Kilnsey and 1 at Kettlewell, were seen on the 10th, with sightings subsequently ranging throughout the full range of our area, up to and including Oughtershaw where they nested at Nethergill Farm; 27 were counted in Hebden at the end of July (RL). Birds were generally seen in single digit numbers, with larger counts limited to Otley, Pool (10 on Aug 8th) and Menston (17 on Aug 22nd). Birds appeared to linger later this year: the last northern sighting was on Aug 15th at Grassington (C&JA), whilst birds were present in Menston until Aug 28th, long after the usual last day around Aug 5th. Last sighting was a single bird flying east over Otley Wetland on Sep 7th (JM).

**KINGFISHER** *Alcedo atthis*

**15 sites (19)** *Resident breeder*

Numbers and sites look to be stable. Sightings featured in every month of the year, from Jan 7th through to Dec 27th, milder winter conditions particularly helping survival rates. Birds were reported the full length of the Wharfe from Buckden in the north, where a pair was observed in and around a nest hole in April, to several sightings throughout the year at Knotford Nook (all AK). Most were in ones and twos, but 3 were seen at Otley Wetland on Christmas Eve (AJ). There was just one sighting in the Washburn, a pair fishing in the river by Lindley Bridge on Sep 3rd.

**LESSER SPOTTED WOODPECKER** *Dryobates minor*

**3 sites (1)** *Scarce resident breeder*

This species is known to breed in only one place in our area, in private woodland in the Washburn, where one was seen on 28th Feb. Another sighting was recorded nearby, at Leathley Trout Farm, on Dec 22nd (both AJ). This area has been the only site where this species has been seen in recent years, however a single bird was also seen at High Royds, Menston, on Apr 12th by a member of BOG (RW\*\*).

**GREAT SPOTTED WOODPECKER** *Dendrocopos major*

**31 sites (36)** *Common resident breeder*

A species that has actually increased nationally over many years, the population in Yorkshire seems to have stabilised recently, although in our area the number of sites recorded has declined year on year for almost a decade to a site figure of exactly half that in 2011. However, it remains common and recorded in all parts our area with woodland. Inevitably, more 'sightings' were noted during the earlier parts of the

year, when birds are easily identified by their distinctive drumming, but birds were recorded in every month of the year. Most were of 1 or 2 birds, although 6 were recorded in Stainburn Forest in July, and 4 at Fewston and back in Stainburn in March. Garden visitors were noted in Kilnsey, Grassington, Hebden, Addingham, Burley, Ilkley ("only the 4th since 2005", JF), Otley and Menston, where one central garden recorded its first ever (resident 23 years). Grassington, Ilkley and Otley included juveniles.

**GREEN WOODPECKER** *Picus viridis*

**28 sites (26) sites** *Common resident breeder*

Whilst numbers of records fell in 2019, the number of sites moved back up slightly, and showed the same wide geographical spread in wooded areas of previous years. The species continues to maintain a strong presence in the north, with around 50% of records, extending as far north as Yockenthwaite and into Littondale, although the spread into the south reached all the way to Weeton. Over half of all sightings were in the March-May period, with many noted as 'heard' only, a natural result of this being the main time of year for the bird's distinct yaffle song. Records were mostly of single or two birds, with multiple instances at Hebden and Stainburn.

**KESTREL** *Falco tinnunculus*

**34 sites (46)** *Common resident breeder, passage migrant.*

Another bird where the number of sites recorded has dropped markedly, by almost a third in this case. However, the geographical range remained as wide, although Littondale remains a blank spot. Sightings were recorded as far north as Oughtershaw, all singletons except for a pair seen at Kettlewell on Apr 12th. To the south, only two birds were recorded in the Bolton Abbey area, but further south the density was greater, with regular sightings most notably at Menston (High Royds) and Otley Wetland - again, all singletons other than a pair calling to each other at Beamsley on Mar 29th. Garden sightings were recorded at Addingham Moorside (RSPB Garden Birdwatch), Menston and Otley. Seen throughout the Washburn Valley, a family with 4 young was noted at Scargill on Jul 16th; in the Folly Hall Woods area 4 broods produced 11 young, slightly down on last year (CH), whilst 4 young were ringed in one nest in Menston (PR).

**MERLIN** *Falco columbarius*

**7 sites (11)** *Uncommon resident breeder, passage migrant, winter visitor*

After two higher years, numbers of sites fell back to 2016 levels, although sightings remained the same. The main centres appeared to be Barden Moor and the moors around Timble: at the former there were a string of sightings between February and August, mostly of a single bird, although 2 were seen on Feb 4th (all DD). On the other side of the valley, in the Valley of Desolation, there was a single sighting on Aug 15th (JP). At the latter, birds were largely seen later in the year, the first on Apr 18th in Timble itself, the rest between October and December, all on the neighbouring moors. Individual birds were also seen in March and October at Kex Ghyll. A single sighting was also recorded at Scargill on December 23rd.

**HOBBY** *Falco subbuteo*

**11 sites (6 sites)** *Uncommon but regular summer visitor*

The increase in sightings in 2017 was more than matched by the improvement in 2019, as numbers rose from the low of 2003 to the best figures since 2009, although this bird's elusive nature means that actual numbers and breeding

activity remain largely unknown. Confirmed sightings centred on three main areas: Barden Moor produced a string of sightings, 9 in total, between Jul 15th and Sep 21st, mostly of single birds, but peaking at three on Jul 23rd (all DD). As last year, the Wharfe valley between Otley and Arthington also saw multiple sightings, from Jul 5th to Sep 3rd (AJ, TK), starting with one seen attacking a red kite over Waitrose car (PR). This year, however, also saw a sequence of multiple records from the Stainburn-Scargill area, starting on Jun 2nd and extending through to Sep 20th, including the first and almost last sightings in our area (the latest being on Sep 21st at Barden). Outside these three main areas, there were just 2 sightings of single birds: Kex Ghyll on Aug 1st (DD) and Grimwith on Aug 18th (IC).

**PEREGRINE** *Falco peregrinus*

**13 sites (13)** *Resident breeder, passage migrant*

2019 confirmed the improvement in 2017-2018 over the poor years for Peregrine records in 2015 and 2016, with levels back up to those seen previously. It was good to see a slight improvement in northern sightings: last year's single sighting at Grimwith was matched on Aug 13th (JP), whilst there were two more further west this year, one on April 13th over Kilnsey Crag (EC\*), another over the top of Arncliffe Cote on May 7th (AK). As last year, the bulk of records came from the Barden Moor and Washburn areas. At the former, the earliest bird was seen on Feb 19th (DD), followed by a string of sightings throughout Feb and Mar, followed by a 5 month hiatus before another sequence. 7 in all, in August-September; in the latter area, an even earlier sighting was registered on Jan 2nd at Timble, then at Lindley Wood on Feb 19th and Stainburn on Apr 4th, a quartet between Aug 1st and Oct 2nd, at Kex Ghyll (juvenile), Lindley Wood, Scargill and Timble Ings respectively, before a final record on Dec 4th at Lippersley Pike. Outside these two areas, a single bird was seen at Chelker on May 9th (JM), and an immature bird at Otley Wetland on Sep 7th.

**RING-NECKED PARAKEET** *Psittacula krameri*

**1 site (1)** *Possible escapee*

A population of this species has been established in Shipley for some years, and may be extending northwards. A pair of birds was seen within the Wharfe watershed in a Guiseley garden on Dec 15th (DB). Further sightings just outside the catchment in the Nunroyd Park area suggest that it may only be a matter of time before this species establishes itself more firmly in our area.

**GREAT GREY SHRIKE** *Lanius excubitor*

**2 sites (0)** *Rare passage migrant*

Only seen once since 2011, in 2017, at least 2 separate birds were reported this year, the first on Apr 11th on Sandwith Moor (AJ) where it remained until at least the 14th. The next was on Nov 2nd at Kex Ghyll (PD&JBP); a bird reported on Nov 6th back at Sandwith Moor, near Little Almscliffe, may have been the same as the latter.

**JAY** *Garrulus glandarius*

**17 sites (28)** *Common resident breeder*

This year there were no sightings of this species in the northern area, and only two north of the A59, at Barden Fell on Jan 3rd (JF), and Barden Bridge on May 23rd (PP), accounting for nearly half the decline in sites. Further south, distribution was much wider and denser, but site numbers still fell. Washburn records were concentrated on the John O'Gaunt's-Stainburn area and below Lindley bridge, mostly single birds, but 4 were seen at Stainburn Forest on Oct 3rd (TK). 5 were seen together on the old railway line south of

Knotford Nook on Jan 30th (E&PS), whilst 1 or 2 birds were seen in virtually every month at Otley Wetland. Garden sightings were recorded in Ilkley, Burley, Otley and two in Menston, one of which was a first for that house in at least 23 years.

**MAGPIE** *Pica pica*

**(C) Common resident breeder**

The species remained common along the Wharfe south of the A59, and rather scarcer in the north, although the drop from 10% to less than 2% of the sightings is almost certainly down to the reduction in records submitted. Just 3 individual sightings were recorded north of the A59, on Feb 3rd at Lower Barden Rsr, on Mar 25th at Skyreholme (K&PL), and on Jun 1st at nearby Appletreewick (JF), although it was reported in a Hebden garden "all year" (RL). There were also just 4 sites recorded in the Washburn, all between Feb 27th and Mar 23rd and all single birds: Stainburn Forest, Timble Ings (2 sightings), Norwood Bottom and Farnley Lake. Sightings were much more numerous, although concentrated on a few areas, mostly centred either on Otley or Ilkley. A large flock of 18 was recorded at High Royds, Menston on Mar 14th, whilst the Otley Wetland maximum count, where birds were seen all year round, was 11 on Aug 8th. 13 were seen in an Ilkley garden on Mar 19th (SB). Other garden sightings were in Addingham (max 6), Low Mill, Addingham Moorside, Burley, Menston and Otley (max 5).

**JACKDAW** *Coloeus monedula*

**(C) Common resident breeder**

The jackdaw remained one of the most widespread species throughout our region, reported from all areas, even Grimwith, where one was seen on Feb 23rd. Large counts were equally widespread, with the maximum one of the furthest north records: c 250 at Yockenthwaite, both above and in the settlement, on Feb 3rd (AK). Other site highs included 147 at Otley Wetland on April 1st, 170 at Fewston on Oct 17th, and 100 at Thruscross a week earlier. This species was a common garden visitor, mostly in small numbers, with 14 the maximum in an Addingham Moorside garden, although c60 were seen overhead from one in Menston on New Year's Day.

**ROOK** *Corvus frugilegus*

**18 sites (35) Common resident breeder**

This was another species where reporting has dropped massively, barely half the numbers of last year, although the range remains much the same, from Otley (max 18) through to Yockenthwaite (12 amongst Jackdaws). Peak count was lower again this year, 76 at Stainburn on Oct 3rd. Other maximum counts included 73 at Fewston (Oct), 52 at Rocking Hall Moor (Oct), 35 at Arncliffe (Jan), 29 at Burnsall (Feb), 27 at Kettlewell (Feb), 25 overhead at Strid Woods (Jan)

Several gardens were visited by up to 6 birds, with 10 recorded in one at Otley in March (M&JC).

**CARRION CROW** *Corvus corone*

**(C) Common resident breeder**

This species is numerous and widely reported across our area. However, this year there were none of the large three figure counts of previous years. Largest was in fact a relatively small 28, recorded at both Otley Wetland on Mar 18th and Gallows Hill on Sep 2nd. Largest in the north was only in single figures, 8 at Howgill on Jun 1st. Records from gardens remained somewhat lower than for some other

garden species, and were mostly of 1 or 2 birds, never more than 4.

**HOODED CROW** *Corvus cornix*

**1 sites (0) Rare visitor**

Not recorded since at least the last century in our area, a hooded crow was reported from near Lindley Wood on Feb 8th (PR).

**RAVEN** *Corvus corax*

**16 sites (15) Resident, scarce breeder**

The number of sites in 2018 represented a decade low, so it was good to see this rise this year, even if only marginally. The distribution, however, continues to show a good range. Three records came from the northern area, one on Jan 18th at Kilnsey (EC\*), one at Kettlewell on Apr 12th, and one at Greenhow Jul 21st (JM). In contrast to last year, when about one-quarter of the sightings were in the Bolton Abbey area, there were only 2 this year, on Feb 19th and then the year's highest count of 9 on Sep 23rd (both DD). Timble Ings proved the most productive site, with a string of sightings throughout the year, including a maximum count of 6 on Oct 10th; others were seen on nearby Middleton Moor and March Ghyll Rsr. The other side of the valley, north of Norwood Edge, was almost as rewarding both in sightings and maximum count, with 5 on Nov 18th (DgS). Elsewhere, one or two birds were seen on a number of occasions during the first 3 months of the year over Menston-Guiseley. No breeding was recorded this year.

**WAXWING** *Bombycilla garrulus*

**5 sites (0) Scarce winter visitor**

There was just one significant sighting in our area in 2019, a flock of at least 33 birds that descended on Aldi car park at White Cross on Feb 28th, and was seen moving between there and High Royds by several observers, attracted within minutes of the initial report (JC)! Other sightings were of just singletons or pairs: Middleton Moor on Jan 1st, Denton Moor on Feb 15th (both AJ), Timble Ings on Oct 28th (JM), and a garden sighting in Ilkley on Dec 9th (KA\*\*).

**COAL TIT** *Periparus ater*

**21 sites (24) Common breeding resident**

Whilst the number of sites in the south stayed roughly the same as in previous years, the drop in northern records accounted for most of the decline this year. Only 3 records were submitted in the latter region: gardens in both Kilnsey (EC\*) and Hebden (RL) saw an all-year round presence, whilst 2 birds were together in the car park at Grimwith on Feb 23rd. Bolton Abbey records were equally sparse, with reports from Bolton Abbey itself on Jan 14th (K&PL), and a pair in Strid Woods on Mar 28th (JF). In contrast, several gardens in the south, including those in Addingham, Ilkley, Otley and Menston, reported a year-round presence, although never more than 3 birds. It was similarly so at Otley Wetland. Rather more intermittently reported, similar numbers were also present around the three southern reservoirs and at Timble Ings in the Washburn valley.

**WILLOW TIT** *Poecile montanus*

**1 site (0) Rare resident**

Not seen in our area for 5 years, although with populations near to our borders in the south-east, and suffering from 99% population decline in recent years nationally, a single bird was reported at Otley Wetland on Christmas Eve (AJ).

**BLUE TIT** *Cyanistes caeruleus*

**(C) Common resident breeder**

One of the most common birds throughout our area, numbers in individual counts remain modest, particularly in gardens. However, whilst numbers of this species 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. Highest counts throughout the year were at Knotford Nook, with a peak count of 30 in December. The only other area where double figure numbers were recorded was at Otley Wetland, throughout the year. Maximum adult counts in gardens, where it remained one of the most frequent species, were nearly all in low single figures, although 12 were seen in Hebden. Peter Roe reported 2 nest boxes at Menston school with 10 young, 2 at Sun Lane with 6 young, 8 at Dob Park with 49 young, and 9 at Low Snowden with 33 young. Colin Harrison recorded 83 broods in the Folly Hall Wood area.

**GREAT TIT** *Parus major*

**(C) Common resident breeder**

Counts for this widely and commonly reported species tended to be in single figures, exceptions being 20 at Knotford Nook and 10 at Otley Wetland in February, and 11 in Farnley Wood in March. Garden sightings were almost as commonly reported as blue tits, mostly as singles, although 8 were noted in an Addingham Moorside garden. Peter Roe reported 1 box with 8 young at Menston school, 2 with 5 young at Sun Lane, and 4 nests with 27 young at Dob Park. Colin Harrison reported 34 broods in the Folly Hall Wood area but several failing at the newly hatched stage; at Low Snowden Peter Roe ringed just 18 young from 6 nests after several were predated by woodpeckers.

**SKYLARK** *Alauda arvensis*

**13 sites (18) Common resident breeder, passage migrant**

As with the last 2 years, around two-thirds of all sightings were from the south of the area, the opposite of 2016, when two-thirds came from the north. As with other species, this is at least as likely down to the lack of recorders as the distribution of the birds themselves. Indeed, the highest count of the year by far was on Arncliffe Cote in May, when over 30 singing birds were recorded in one walk across the area (AK). Smaller but significant numbers were also recorded during the same month at Dowber Gill, Great Whernside (both JP), and Grassington Moor (NH). However, these were the only counts in the north that were reported. Numbers in the south were never more than 4 (John O'Gaunts), but the bird was present throughout the area south to the Chevin, the field opposite the Royalty being a regular site.

**SAND MARTIN** *Riparia riparia*

**17 sites (22) Common migrant breeder, passage visitor**

One of the earlier hirundines to return, first birds were seen at Knotford Nook on Mar 22nd (DS), a week earlier than the past 2 years. Another was seen at Barden Bridge on the 29th. April saw flocks of 50+ "around their usual colony" near Hawkswick (JF), over 100 at Otley Wetland and Knotford Nook (PR), and 40+ at Burnsall, with another 100+ at Chelker on May 9th - all larger than any flock seen in 2018. However, in the north, JF reported "only one colony between Barden and Howgill and numbers down" with 18 birds recorded. This appears to have been reflected throughout our area as sites were down again, not even half those seen 2 years ago (34). The only other site with double digit figures

recorded during the breeding season was Otley/Otley Wetland where counts over Wharfemeadows did reach a better than normal 50+. As birds gathered again at the end of the season, the single digits at Lindley Wood rose to 100+ on Sep 3rd, mixed in with other hirundines. 4 days later, the last birds in our area were noted at Otley Wetland (JM).

**SWALLOW** *Hirundo rustica*

**(C) Common migrant breeder, passage visitor**

Distribution of this locally common bird remained widespread, one-third of the sightings being in the northern part of our area, including Littondale and Grimwith. First sighting was of a single bird between Menston and Guiseley on Mar 28th (DS), the next not being noted until Apr 6th at Grimwith (JM). However, it wasn't until the 11th (Hebden) that sightings started to become regular with birds appearing throughout our area over the next week between Otley and Kettlewell, although birds were recorded breeding as far north as Oughtershaw later in the season. Numbers tended to remain low throughout the early months, with the only double-digit sightings being on Apr 17th at Ilkley, and amongst other hirundines at both Chelker and Otley weir on May 9th. They then started to pick up in July: 11 at Lindley Wood on the 23rd, 17 at Conistone on the 29th, 24 over Hebden on Aug 5th, with the largest flocks as birds gathering prior to departure - 59 at Bolton Abbey on August 15th (JP). 55 birds were ringed at Otley Wetland on Aug 24th (JM), whilst nest recording at Sourby Farm in the Washburn saw 33 young from 7 nests, and at Menston 31 young from 9 nests. Last birds were seen over the Chevin on Sep 10th (12 juveniles) and 19th, whilst a single bird was seen at Lindley Wood on the 28th (E&PS).

**HOUSE MARTIN** *Delichon urbicum*

**12 sites (24) Common migrant breeder, passage migrant**

A further steep drop in recording sites meant that 2019 numbers were only just over one-quarter those of those in 2016. As with so many other birds, it is hard to judge how much may be down to decline and how much to lack of recorders - it was noticeable that a visit to a number of farms in May just outside our catchment in the Dales reaped several very active colonies. However, in our area the only northern area counts were of single birds at Kettlewell on Apr 19th (first of the year in our area, JF) and at Grassington on Jul 15th and Aug 15th, although the owner of Nethergill Farm reported nesting birds north of Oughtershaw. In the south, larger flocks of mixed hirundines were counted at Chelker (100+ on May 9th) and Otley (50+, same day), otherwise the largest count before the end of August was 16 over High Royds, Menston. September saw a similar number at Fewston on the 4th, then around 200 at Pool on the 24th (AJ). Only 'several' birds seen back at High Royds on Oct 5th were recorded later, 3 weeks after last year's latest date.

**LONG-TAILED TIT** *Aegithalus caudatus*

**25 sites (27) Common resident breeder**

Northern locations rose from 3 last year to 5: Hubberholme (12 birds on Feb 3rd, AK), Kilnsey (a string of first and last quarter garden sightings, EC\*), Arncliffe, Grassington and Hebden. The last three were all mainly in Jan-Feb, although larger numbers were seen at the latter later on in the year (up to 18 in one garden); all three Bolton Abbey area sightings were also in the first quarter of the year. South of the A59, the vast majority of sightings were either in gardens or at Otley Wetland. Most were low single digit records, although 25 were seen in one Otley garden in September (TK), and 10 in another (JW); Otley Wetland maximum count

was 11 (Feb and Sep). Similar counts were recorded in the Washburn, with 12 a maximum at Thruscross on Oct 10th.

**WOOD WARBLER** *Phylloscopus sibilatrix*

**2 sites (3)** Uncommon migrant breeder



Sightings of this increasingly scarce bird were limited to two well-established sites of recent years, with all records within the space of a month. First sighting was at Strid Woods on Apr 25th (JH), with other records of up to 2 birds over just 10 days to May 4th. Heber's Ghyll proved very productive this year, with up to 5 birds singing and showing remarkably well. First sighting was on Apr 30th (KS), last on May 28th.

**YELLOW-BROWED WARBLER** *Phylloscopus inornatus*

**1 site (0)** Scarce passage migrant

Single individuals have been recorded in our area every odd year since 2013, and 2019 was no exception, with one netted and ringed at Timble Ings on Oct 12th (JM).

**WILLOW WARBLER** *Phylloscopus trochilus*

**30 sites (38)** Common migrant breeder / passage visitor

Recording sites were down again this year to just over half those of 2016. Again, approximately one-third of all reports came from the north, continuing the trend of proportionally greater northern numbers. First sightings came on Apr 9th, fairly average, with single birds at Gallows Hill (PP) and in an Ilkley garden (SB), and gradually moved north: Bolton Abbey on the 13th, Linton on the 15th, Littondale on the 18th (a year high count at Hawkswick of 13), Conistone and Kettlewell on the 19th. Numbers were generally single digit throughout the summer, although 11 were recorded at Fewston on Jun 5th. The last northern bird was recorded on Sep 3rd in a Hebden garden, whilst the last overall were 3 in an Otley garden on Sep 26th (TK), a month later than last year.

**CHIFFCHAFF** *Phylloscopus collybita*

**32 sites (30)** Common migrant breeder, passage / winter visitor

This species is very much one of the southern part of our area. First bird of the year was recorded as early as Feb 26th at Otley Wetland (PP), with the second not until Mar 14th at Knotford Nook, after which there was a steady stream of almost daily records. However, only a few of these of these were from the northern area - at just Grass Wood, Grassington and Hebden. Birds were in the Bolton Abbey area from Mar 28th, the last recorded being on Sep 30th. To the south, records were widely spread geographically, mostly of 1-6 birds, with 11 noted at Norwood Bottom in May. Records extended into October, 2 birds being at Stainburn on the 3rd, and a last singing individual in Parkinson's Park, north Guiseley, on the 17th, 3 weeks later than last year.

**SEDGE WARBLER** *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*

**5 sites (2)** Uncommon, increasingly scarce, migrant breeder

After a couple of years with only 2 recording sites, the number spiked sharply this year, up to a level last seen in 2015. All were in the 3 weeks from Apr 30th to May 20th.

Unusually, one was the northern region, a single individual seen singing on May 7th



a hedge along the entrance driveway to Littoral Holiday Park on the road to Arncliffe (AK). Another unusual setting was one recorded in an Ilkley garden in full song on Apr 30th - with a note that the neighbours have a large pool! (SB). The other three sightings were in more conventional settings: Otley Wetland reedbeds (Apr 30th), High Royds pond (May 12th), and a reedbed on the edge of Knotford Nook (May 20th).

**REED WARBLER** *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*

**3 sites (2)** Scarce migrant breeder, passage visitor

Otley Wetlands remains the stronghold for this species in our area, confirmed by a series of sightings throughout the summer, the earliest being 6 singing birds on Apr 26th (AK), rising to 11 by May 3rd, with records extending to Sep 7th. A single bird was also recorded the other side of Otley at Knotford Nook on May 20th. High Royds pond in Menston hosted this species for its second year, where a single adult was first seen on May 2nd, and subsequently viewed on several occasions over the next week.

**GRASSHOPPER WARBLER** *Locustella naevia*

**2 sites (6)** Scarce visitor, very occasional breeder

Numbers reverted to the norm in 2019 after the successful year in 2018, with just 2 sightings of individual birds: May 5th on Denton Moor (AJ), and Jun 23rd at Sandwith Moor Plantation (E&PS).

**BLACKCAP** *Sylvia atricapilla*

**15 sites (38)** Common migrant breeder, passage / winter visitor

Having dropped in 2018 to the lowest in a decade, numbers of sightings and sites dropped even more steeply this year. In the first quarter, over-wintering birds were seen in several gardens in Ilkley and Menston, otherwise the first bird recorded was at Otley Wetland on Mar 28th. Most sites were from Ilkley southwards, but there was a handful of records in the north at Hebden, Water's Laithe, Appletreewick and Barden Bridge, along with a couple in the Bolton Abbey area at Barden Bridge and Storiths. Garden records predominated through Ilkley, Menston and Otley, although up to 4 birds were recorded at Heber's Ghyll. Otley Wetland held up to 7 birds (Apr 26th), whilst there were just 2 records in the Washburn area, 7 in Norwood Bottom in May and 4 at Fewston in June. After Sep 7th there was just one record, on Dec 12th, in one of the Ilkley gardens where over-wintering birds were recorded at the start of the year.

**GARDEN WARBLER** *Sylvia borin*

**5 sites (18)** Common migrant breeder / passage visitor

After a brief tick up in 2017 to pre-2011 levels (23 sites) and the reversion to the recent average last year, sightings this year plummeted to the lowest on record, with only 5 sites seeing this species reported. Strongest of these was Otley Wetland, where up to two were recorded regularly between Apr 26th (AK) and Jun 21st (PP). Others were all one-off reports of single birds: Apr 28th at Scargill (AJ), May 4th at Bolton Abbey (RG), May 15th at Norwood Bottom, and Jun 5th at Fewston (both JP).

**LESSER WHITETHROAT** *Sylvia curruca*

**3 sites (2)** Scarce migrant, passage visitor

Three sightings represent a good count, such is the scarcity of this species in our area; there were none recorded in 2016, just one, at John O'Gaunt's, in 2017, and two last year at Leathley and Otley Wetland. This year, the first was seen right on the edge of the Wharfe catchment, in Parkinson's Park, Guiseley on Apr 30th (DS). A second was heard singing at Leathley Bridge on Jun 22nd (JA\*\*), whilst the third was surprisingly recorded in the north of our area, at Grimwith on Aug 12th (IC).

**WHITETHROAT** *Sylvia communis*

**4 sites (5)** Increasingly uncommon migrant breeder, passage visitor



Reports of this species, in steady decline for the previous five years, dropped to a new all-time low, with just 4 locations producing records. The first bird of the year was on a WNS walk between Barden Bridge and the Strid on May 7th, followed by another at Weston on May 10th (PP), a site previously unrecorded, at least in recent years. Previous stronghold, Otley Wetland, was down to just one sighting, on Aug 28th (latest this year, JM). The Chevin again provided the most records, with up to 3 pairs seen feeding young on Jul 8th (AK) in its favoured scrubland, and single birds seen on the 21st and Aug 1st (E&PS).

**GOLDCREST** *Regulus regulus*

**16 sites (21)** Common resident breeder, passage / winter visitor

With another decline in recorded sites, numbers have now dropped to half those seen as recently as 2017. Numbers of sightings and sites were down around one-third compared to the average up to 2017. Northern and Bolton Abbey areas returned just three sightings between them, the former at Grass Wood on Apr 5th (EC\*) and in a Hebden garden on Nov 20th (RL), the latter amongst a flock of tits in trees along

the road at the base of Barden Fell on Jan 3rd (JF). Small numbers were noted along the length of the Washburn from Thruscross to Norwood Bottom, all in the first and last quarters, the highest count being 9 at Fewston on Oct 17th (JP). In the main Wharfe valley, there was a wide spread of garden visits, mostly single birds, in Addingham, Ilkley, Menston and Otley, and small numbers elsewhere, although 8 were seen in one Otley garden in March (E&PS).

**WREN** *Troglodytes troglodytes*

**(C)** Common resident breeder

As with so many species this year, counts were markedly down even on 2018 lows, now at just under two-thirds the average of the decade to 2017. Distribution was, however, still spread widely throughout the whole area. High count numbers were also low, the highest being just 13 on a walk between Barden and Water's Laithe in June (JF). Other double digit counts were limited to 11 at Kettlewell on Apr 19th, 12 at Strid Woods on Mar 28th, 10 at Knotford Nook on Feb 25th, and three counts of up to 12 at Otley Wetland in March, April and June. Birds were widely reported from gardens, nearly always singly.

**NUTHATCH** *Sitta europaea*

**22 sites (30)** Common resident breeder

This is another species where record sites have dropped dramatically in the past couple of years, down to half those of 2017. As reported last year, though, the geographical spread of those places was slightly greater, with sightings extended up to Hubberholme, pairs seen both here and in Buckden on Feb 3rd (AK), and into Littondale at Hawkswick and Arncliffe (JF). There were no large counts, the most being just 5 at Bolton Abbey on Jan 14th (K&PL). Garden sightings were down too, with reports only from Kilnsey, Addingham, Ilkley and Otley. 5 broods produced 20 pulli in boxes in the Folly Hall Farm area, down 50% on last year.(CH).

**TREECREEPER** *Certhia familiaris*

**17 sites (22)** Common resident breeder

Recorded numbers held up better than some other woodland species this year, but still continued a year on year decline since 2015. Sightings stretched virtually the full length of our area, the most northerly being at Hubberholme in February, although the only other northern sites were gardens in Kilnsey and Hebden. There was only one return from the Bolton Abbey area, on Jan 14th (K&PL). The first quarter also saw a handful of sightings in the Washburn, at Farnley Lake, Fewston and John O'Gaunts. Almost all sightings in our area were of just one or two individuals, but 6 were seen at Middleton Woods in February (E&PS). Garden records in the south were limited to Burley and Otley, although the latter was of a regular visitor.

**STARLING** *Sturnus vulgaris*

**28 sites (42)** Common resident breeder

Sightings were down by one-third for this widely reported species. It was recorded in all parts of our area, other than Grimwith and the Washburn north of the A59, with northern records making up just under 20% of all sightings. Highest counts nudged back up into the four figures with around 2000 birds seen on the moor above Wood Nook in February (D&ML), otherwise they stayed down in the lower hundreds: 500 on Middleton Moor at the end of May (AJ), 300 at Weston Park in December, 'several hundred mixed amongst lapwings' at Chelker on Aug 18th (both PP), 100+ at Yockenthwaite and Cool Scar Quarry in January and June respectively. Small murmurations were reported from Otley Wetland at the end of the year, but the only count was one of



200+ on Dec 23rd (AJ). This species was one of the most widely reported garden birds throughout our area, although numbers were lower than previous years, never more than 20.

**RING OUZEL** *Turdus torquatus*

**5 sites (4)** *Uncommon migrant breeder, passage visitor*

After several years of decline, numbers appear to have stabilised, although they remain low. All sightings bar one were during April. First report was of a single bird at Whetstone Gate on Apr 2nd (DD), followed by a male and female in separate sightings on Beamsley Beacon and Round Hill respectively on the 19th (AJ). Hebden Ghyll again returned multiple sightings, of a male, a female and three females, around the 20th (all PD&JBP). Highest count was at Barden Moor, where 4 were seen on the 28th (DD), with a pair also seen there on May 21st.

**BLACKBIRD** *Turdus merula*

**(C)** *Common resident breeder, winter visitor*

The Blackbird remains common and widespread across the area. As in the past 2 years, it received the highest number of sightings of any species. The highest countryside counts were several in the low twenties at the end of the year at Otley Wetland and 17 at Kettlewell in April. Otherwise numbers were largely in single digits. This species also continued to be one of the most frequently reported garden visitors, with maximum numbers of 10 at Addingham in February, probably including migrant visitors.

**FIELDFARE** *Turdus pilaris*

**17 sites (29)** *Common winter / passage visitor*

In contrast to 2018, when sightings and sites were slightly more than in 2017 but flocks tended to be smaller, this year, the former numbers are down significantly, but a greater number of larger flocks were reported. In the early months, a 200+ flock was seen on slopes above the river and road at Yockenthaite both on Jan 20th and Feb 3rd (both AK), whilst other early flocks were smaller: 60 in a mixed thrush flock on Barden Fell on Jan 3rd, 30 at Timble Ings on the 15th, 50 at Strid Woods on the 23rd, 60+ mixed in with redwings at Knotford Nook on Feb 25th. In the latter months, generally large flocks were seen, with 200+ at Barden Bridge (Oct 21st, DD), Stainburn Forest (Nov 2nd, AJ), Sandwith Moor (Nov 21st), and Middleton Moor (Dec 29th, all AJ). Smaller numbers were seen in fields and parks around Menston and Otley, and at John O'Gaunts.

**REDWING** *Turdus iliacus*

**12 sites (22)** *Common winter visitor*

2019 numbers for this species continued to fall away yet further off the highs of 2016, even below the previous decade



low in 2012. None were recorded in the northern region, and only two in the Bolton Abbey area, where birds were mixed in with other thrushes in a flock of 60+ in trees along the road below Barden Fell on Jan 3rd, and in a larger flock of 200+ at Barden Bridge on Oct 21st. Larger southern flocks in the first months of the year included 40 at Addingham, 60 at Knotford Nook, 30 at Weston Park, Otley Wetland and in the fields between Menston and Guiseley. In the last quarter, numbers at Otley Wetland rose to 50+, whilst a flock of over 80 were at High Royds pond in Menston. There were just 2 sightings in the Washburn valley, 6 at Timble Ings on Jan 15th, and 27 at Stainburn on Oct 3rd. Early year garden sightings were limited to one garden in Ilkley, but later on in the year they were recorded in Burley, Ilkley, Menston and Otley, the largest flock being 24 in Burley.

**SONG THRUSH** *Turdus philomelas*

**29 sites (43)** *Common resident breeder, winter visitor*

Whilst the Song Thrush is included on the UK red list owing to its declining breeding populations, numbers in our area appeared to remain stable until 2017. Since then, numbers have dropped by around a half. However, the geographical range remains widespread through all areas. In the north, birds were recorded in most valley areas as far north as Kettlewell and into Littondale, as well as at Grimwith, from where a northern peak of 5 birds was reported on Feb 23rd. Similarly, in the Bolton Abbey area, a peak of 5 was recorded in March in Strid Woods. South of the A59, 7 were seen at Norwood on the same day as the Grimwith count. Otherwise, single birds predominated, especially in the wide range of gardens where this species was recorded: Kilnsey, Hebden, Addingham, Ilkley, Burley, Menston and Otley.

**MISTLE THRUSH** *Turdus viscivorus*

**25 sites (40)** *Common resident breeder, passage migrant*

Record numbers of this red listed species reached a peak in 2016 in our area, returned to previous levels for the past 2 years, but have slipped further this year. Fortunately, this species remains widespread in our area, found in almost all parts this year, recorded from Otley to Yockenthaite and into Littondale, at Grimwith, and around the southern Washburn. Few notable numbers were counted, with the only mildly significant number being a flock of 11 overhead at Chelker in October. 7 were seen in a garden at Grassington on Sep 3rd feeding on rowan - "never seen so many here before" (C&JA). The only other garden records were two spring sightings in Hebden and a trio mid-year in Burley (SB).

**SPOTTED FLYCATCHER** *Muscicapa striata*

**10 sites (14)** *Migrant breeder, passage visitor*

The 2017 report described the population as 'decreasing at an accelerating rate but with a good presence in the north of the region'. The slide continued this year, down to 19 sightings/10 sites compared to 49/26 in 2017. Records particularly slipped in the north: none in Littondale or north of Kettlewell, and were limited to that village plus Grass Wood, Hebden, Howgill and a garden in Kilnsey, where a nest boxing pair successfully bred a brood of 4 (EC\*). Sightings in the Bolton Abbey area were limited to just 4 along the valley. Further south, they were restricted to a single bird at Lindley Wood on Jun 11th (AJ), and three records from Stainburn Forest in July, where a pair was seen feeding one juvenile near the car park (AK).

**ROBIN** *Erithacus rubecula*

**(C)** *Common resident breeder / winter visitor*

This species remains one of the most reported and widespread in our area, throughout the year. Highest count

was recorded at Knotford Nook, where 19 singing birds were recorded on Feb 25th; 16 were recorded on a circuit of Fewston Reservoir on Mar 21st (JF). It remained widely and frequently reported from gardens, mostly in ones and twos.

**PIED FLYCATCHER** *Ficedula hypoleuca*

**6 sites (7)** *Migrant breeder, passage visitor*

The number of sites where this species was recorded slipped further this year to a new low, continuing the trend since 2015. There were, again, no records from the northern part of our area, with all bar one recording in the Bolton Abbey Estate or the Washburn valley, the exception being a single bird in Walking Stick Wood at Denton Moor on Apr 21st (AJ). Colin Harrison reported 19 broods producing 115 pulli, with 9 adults ringed and 10 retrapped. This was slightly down on last year but well up on the 5-year average. Peter Roe ringed another 30 young from 10 broods in the Washburn as well.

**REDSTART** *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*

**14 sites (24)** *Common migrant breeder / passage visitor*

The fall-off over the past 2 years in locations for this species has been particularly marked, the 2019 figure being down to just one-third of those just 2 years ago. Northern records were even more limited than last year, just 2 sightings on Mastiles Lane (a single bird on May 11th, an adult male and 2 juveniles on Jun 23rd, both EC\*), and one in a Grassington garden on Aug 9th "a rare visitor for us" (C&JA). First sighting for the year was at Bolton Abbey, traditionally strong for this species and no different this year, on Apr 17th (DD), the start of a steady stream of records in this section of the valley through to Jun 18th. The other main recording area was in the Washburn valley where two singing birds were heard on Apr 21st at Timble Ings. Again, there was a steady stream of sightings across the area, with the last in the east at Stainburn Forest on Aug 8th (DB). Beyond these two main areas, southern sightings were restricted to 2 singers in Walking Stick Woods at Denton Moor on Apr 21st (AJ), one at Knotford Nook on Apr 30th, and another pair at Heber's Ghyll on May 28th. Colin Harrison reported 2 broods again producing 12 young in the Folly Hall Wood area.

**WHINCHAT** *Saxicola rubetra*

**4 sites (4)** *Uncommon migrant breeder, passage visitor*

Numbers matched 2018, at the low end but within the range for the past decade. All bar one sighting were in the Washburn valley, the exception being one at Storiths on May 21st. An earlier individual was found at Low Snowden on May 16th (TK), otherwise sightings started on August 24th, with 2 seen at Scargill followed by a single individual on Sep 20th in the same area. The only other sighting was a single male at John O'Gaunts on Sep 3rd. No evidence of breeding was recorded.

**STONECHAT** *Saxicola torquata*

**10 sites (12)** *Resident breeder, passage / winter visitor*

Although numbers slipped for the second year in a row, they were within the range seen over the past decade, 2016-17 having been particularly strong years. Unlike 2018, there was a sighting in the northern area, even if just the one, a 1st year



female showing typically prominently on the fellside near Yockenthwaite on Jan 20th. Of the rest, all but a handful were seen either on the Bolton Abbey Estate or in the Washburn (including the moors running over towards Ilkley), including breeding birds. Further south, an early male was first seen at Knotford Nook on Feb 4th and subsequently for several days, whilst another individual was seen on Ilkley Moor near Panorama Drive on July 5th. During late May and early June, young were seen at Kex Ghyll and Denton Moor.

**WHEATEAR** *Oenanthe oenanthe*

**16 sites (19)** *Common migrant breeder / passage visitor*

Although the number of sites has only slipped a bit since 2018, the number of sightings was down significantly. First for the year was on Apr 1st, again in the Bolton Abbey area, this time on the road at Storiths (DD), followed by 5 along the path just above the intake fields just north of Kettlewell on Apr 12th (AK). Other northern sightings during April and May included a single bird on Arncliffe Cote, 2 at Kilnsey, 3 at Dowber Gill, and 3 on Great Wherside. 5 were seen at Hebden Beck on Jul 16th, including 1 juvenile, whilst 8 were seen above Conistone along the Dales Way in August. Varying numbers of birds up to 8 were seen on several occasions in the Bolton Abbey area, the last on Sep 14th in the Valley of Desolation. South of the A59, April saw individuals on the Chevin and Denton Moor, whilst in September birds were recorded at John O'Gaunts and Scargill, the latter being the last of the year on Sep 20th.

**DIPPER** *Cinclus cinclus*

**18 sites (24)** *Common resident breeder*

With an average of 34 reporting sites in the decade to 2017, numbers this year represent a decline of around 50%. However, there is evidence to suggest this, as with other species, is at least as much a result of a decline in recording as one of birds, and may explain all of it. This species was recorded fairly comprehensively along the Wharfe from Yockenthwaite to Knotford Nook, if somewhat more thinly downstream of Ilkley, although there were no records for the Skirfare, and only from Low Dam and Leathley on the Washburn. Traditionally, its strongest presence is between Barden and Bolton Bridges, and that was the area where there were most sightings, but observation above Kettlewell suggest that closer recording would see this section as equally productive.

**HOUSE SPARROW** *Passer domesticus*

**15 sites (18)** *Locally common resident breeder*

Sightings in 2019 were at similar levels to previous years, although down from the 2018 spike. Geographically, they remained widespread, After several years decline, northern sightings represented some 30% of reports, showing a well dispersed population: 28 in Kettlewell ("seen everywhere in a walk through the village", JF), 17 in Arncliffe, 15 in Hawkswick, as well as smaller numbers as far north as Buckden. Throughout the area, the species reflected its name with a presence in most reporting gardens, the largest presence being in Menston with 2 colonies of 20+ and 15+ birds recorded. None were reported from the Washburn. Evidence of successful breeding was widespread.

**TREE SPARROW** *Passer montanus*

**7 sites (10)** *Resident breeder*

Numbers decreased again this year, now below half the recent annual average of 15. Sadly, the recent expansion into Hebden also appears to have failed with no birds reported this year, leaving the only northern record to

be a one-off sighting of 4 birds in a Grassington garden in September, "a rare event for us" (C&JA). Sightings in the south were mainly focused on gardens in Addingham, Ilkley, Menston and Otley, and at the Sun Lane reserve in Burley. A good count of 31 seen on garden feeders at the end of Beaverdyke near John O'Gaunts made up the only Washburn count this year for either species of sparrow. Peter Roe reported 27 young from 10 nests at Menston school, a "good" rate of return, and 39 from 17 boxes at Sun Lane NR, but only 18 young surviving from 7 boxes in Clifton.

**DUNNOCK** *Prunella modularis*

(C) Common resident breeder.



The population of this species remains stable and widely spread across our area. The number of northern records continued to fall back, although there were sightings in all parts of the region, except Grimwith, with birds seen as far north as Starbotton. Four was the maximum garden count in Hebden, 5 at Dowber Gill in May. Numbers also remained low in the Washburn, with sightings at Farnley Lake, Folly Hall Wood and John O'Gaunts. A high proportion of sightings were from gardens, and one of these produced the peak count for our area: 6 in Otley in July

(M&JC), including immatures. Garden breeding was also recorded in Menston and Ilkley.

**YELLOW WAGTAIL** *Motacilla flava*

**1 site (1)** Uncommon migrant breeder, passage visitor

There was just one sighting of this increasingly scarce species for our area, a single bird overhead at Otley Wetland on May 3rd (JM).

**GREY WAGTAIL** *Motacilla cinerea*

**17 sites (22 sites)** Common resident breeder, winter visitor

After the sharp dip in numbers last year, this year's drop looks less significant, but it takes recorded sites to barely 40% those of 2015. Along the Wharfe itself the species remains well distributed from Grassington down to Knotford Nook, mostly in ones or twos, although 7 were seen at Strid Woods in March (JP), and one carrying food over a garden at Hebden in June. Elsewhere, numbers were sparse: none north of Grassington, none in Littondale or at Grimwith, and just 4 sightings in the Washburn at Thruscross, Low Dam, Folly Hall Wood and Lindley Wood, all between late February and early June.

**PIED WAGTAIL** *Motacilla alba*

**20 sites (34)** Common resident breeder, passage migrant, winter visitor

Reporting sites dropped significantly in 2019, and now represent less than one-third of those in 2014. Yet, whilst coverage was thin, with many sites with only one record, there was a good geographical spread, with birds reported all along the main valley from Starbotton to Otley, as well as Arncliffe and Hawkswick in Littondale, and the southern reservoirs in the Washburn valley. Largest count by far was the 200+ birds seen at an evening roost at High Royds (DS) in November, up from 40+ birds recorded in May (CB).

Indeed, the only other double digit record was of 18 at Otley Wetland on Mar 17th (AK).

**MEADOW PIPIT** *Anthus pratensis*

**11 sites (27)** Common resident/migrant breeder, passage visitor

Numbers showed one of the biggest one year declines of any species this year, with recording sites down to only just over one-third those of 2018, and only a quarter of those in 2015. Maximum counts were, however, slightly up, especially with no vismig numbers included. 50+ were counted on Burley Moor on Apr 28th, whilst over 100 were seen on Arncliffe Cote on May 7th, where it was hard to avoid tripping over nests buried in the tussocks (both AK), whilst, at the end of the season, 72 were recorded at Valley of Desolation on Sep 14th. There were smaller counts on a number of other upland areas: Great Whernside, Hebden Moor, Timble Ings, Whetstone Gate, and, most southerly, a single bird on the Chevin. First sighting was on Mar 17th at Otley Wetland, of 2 birds, whilst last was on Sep 28th of 10 birds at Lindley Wood.

**TREE PIPIT** *Anthus trivialis*

**4 sites (3)** Uncommon migrant breeder, passage visitor

This year, all sightings were in the Washburn area, the first being 3 birds at Stainburn on Apr 11th (JP). On Apr 19th another individual was seen at Lippersley Pike, whilst a third was recorded at Low Dam on the 28th (both AJ). There were then a string of sightings at Sandwith Moor Plantation through May and June, with the last record being one of 7 birds on Jun 28th, with young being fed. Final sighting was back at Stainburn on Jul 3rd.

**CHAFFINCH** *Fringilla coelebs*

(C) Common resident breeder, passage/winter visitor

Recorded numbers continued to decline, with site numbers down from 48 to 39 this year. This species, however, remains very widespread, present in all areas. Flocks of over 200 were seen at Stainburn Forest on a number of occasions through the year, usually mixed in with other finches. Otherwise largest counts were 30 at Grimwith and 26 at Knotford Nook in February, and 19 at Starbotton in March. The species was widely recorded in gardens in most settlements with recording gardens between Otley and Kilnsey, with up to 6 counted.

**BRAMBLING** *Fringilla montifringilla*

**8 sites (10)** Uncommon winter visitor

All sightings were in the south of the area, mostly along the main valley between Pool and Addingham, and almost all in low single digit numbers. Garden sightings predominated, with records from Addingham, Ilkley, Otley, Pool and Menston, where 10 were seen in one garden in April (AG). All were recorded between Feb 15th and the end of April. Other sightings were 3 in Catton Wood, Burley, 1 on the Chevin on Nov 17th. The only area outside the main valley where birds were noted was at Timble Ings, where there were 2 sightings of up to 4 birds in Jan-Feb, and 2 sightings of single birds in Oct-Nov.

**BULLFINCH** *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*

**13 sites (19)** Common resident breeder

The only sighting north of the A59 was at Barden Fell on Jan 3rd (JF), whilst in the main valley, only one other bird featured north of Ilkley, a pair in Addingham on Mar 29th (DM). Reports, mostly of pairs, came from gardens in Ilkley, Ben Rhydding, Burley, Menston, and Otley, with one garden there actually benefiting from 2 pairs, whilst another was the

only one to record young. Other sites with regular sightings throughout the year included Otley Wetland, Knotford Nook, Gallows Hill and High Royds, whilst there were also sightings on the Chevin, and at Timble Ings and Fewston.

**GREENFINCH** *Chloris chloris*

**15 sites (23)** Common resident breeder, passage / winter visitor

Just 15 sites represents the lowest figure on record, mostly based on garden sightings. In the north, birds were seen through April and May in one Hebden garden (with a single record in September, RL), throughout March in another at Kilnsey (EC\*). Otherwise there was just two other records from north of the A59, 2 birds heard in Arncliffe on Apr 18th (JF), and a single bird seen at Strid Woods on Mar 18th (JP). Equally, there was just one sighting in the Washburn valley, at Norwood Bottom on Feb 23rd (AK). Southern garden sites included Addingham, Ilkley (including Ilkley Golf Club), Menston, Otley and Burley, where a count of 8 on Dec 6th was the highest in our area. Birds were also recorded at Sun Lane, Otley Wetland and Knotford Nook.

**LINNET** *Linaria cannabina*

**7 sites (7)** Uncommon migrant breeder, passage migrant



After the recent falls in records, numbers plateaued this year, even if at a very low level. Earliest and most northerly, was a sighting at Grimwith, where 3 birds were together on Feb 23rd (JF). The next two records were towards the southern end of our catchment, with 2 birds at Burley on Apr 6th (JY\*\*), and 4 on Cooper Lane above Menston (AK). A single bird was at Weston on May 10th (PP), whilst a pair with

young was seen in the Washburn valley at Low Snowden on Jun 18th (SR\*\*). 3 birds were seen overflying the scrubland on the summit of the Chevin on Jul 8th. Finally, several were seen in a large, mixed, flock of finches at Stainburn Forest on Jul 26th (both AK).

**LESSER REDPOLL** *Acanthis cabaret*

**12 sites (15)** Resident breeder, passage/winter visitor

As with a number of other passerines in 2019, there were a similar number of sightings to the previous year, but at fewer locations. In particular, northern sites were reduced to just one, a garden in Kilnsey, where up to 2 birds were seen regularly throughout the first half of the year (EC\*). Equally, just one bird was seen on the Bolton Abbey Estate, on the Storiths road on Apr 1st (DD). In contrast, birds were seen at a number of locations in the Washburn valley in the first and last quarters, with over 50 at Timble Ings on Jan 15th (K&PL), and over 100 on Oct 2nd, of which 56 were ringed (JM). Up to 35 were seen at Stainburn Forest during the same month, and 14 at Thruscross. In the main valley, a large flock of 60+ was recorded on the Chevin on Mar 19th, otherwise gardens in Addingham, Menston and Ilkley constituted the main sites throughout the first quarter, with up to 20 at the last in March.

**CROSSBILL** *Laxia curvirostra*

**12 sites (9)** Passage/winter visitor, occasional resident / breeder

Numbers can be erratic with a species such as this, where irruptions can play a significant part in shaping population patterns. 2018 was reckoned a good year with the most sites recorded since 2012. Whilst sightings were down from then, the number of sites actually increased. All but 3 were in the Washburn valley, the exceptions being: 2 birds overflying a garden on the edge of our area at Guiseley on Feb 10th (DS); 2 sightings on Denton-Middleton Moor in March and June (AJ); several birds on the Storiths road at Bolton Abbey on Apr 1st (DD). Main centres were inevitably the large pine forests of Norwood Edge-Stainburn and Timble Ings. At the former, up to 17 were seen regularly throughout the first six months, after which there was a hiatus, then 2 sightings in November of up to 18 birds. At Timble, all sightings were in the first quarter, with 20 individuals counted on Jan 12th. There were also 10 seen at Fewston in the same month.

**GOLDFINCH** *Carduelis carduelis*

**27 sites (32)** 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, been coming down in recent years, and this year was no exception, the largest being a mere 40, at Fewston on Sep 4th, compared to the 100+ seen even last year. Other larger numbers included 30 at Norwood Bottom on Feb 23rd, 24 at Otley Wetland on Mar 17th, and 'tens' of birds in a mixed flock at Stainburn on Jul 26th, whilst the largest garden count was 24 at Burley on Dec 6th (SB). In the north, no more than 6 were seen at one time, at Hawkswick in April. Colin Harrison reports some 50 birds mist-netted and ringed in his Menston garden.

**SISKIN** *Spinus spinus*

**17 sites (14)** Resident breeder, passage / winter visitor

This was one of the few species to see records increase in 2019. As previously, the bulk of sightings in the Wharfe valley itself came from garden sightings, with multiple sightings in gardens in Kilnsey, Hebden, Addingham, Ilkley, Burley, Menston and Otley, reaching double figures in Ilkley. Northern gardens recorded birds for the first six months, whilst southern gardens were largely limited to the first quarter. Ex-Washburn, birds were also recorded during this period at Knotford Nook and Otley Wetland in the first quarter, and at Grimwith Moor ("in good numbers", JF), Barden Moor (6), and Otley Wetland again in the last quarter. In the Washburn, first quarter numbers kept relatively low, sightings at Farnley Lake, Fewston, Norwood Edge, Stainburn and Timble only producing a highest count of 18, whilst in the last quarter there were over 20 at Fewston, and 100 at Leathley.

**SNOW BUNTING** *Plectrophenax nivalis*

**1 site (1)** Scarce passage migrant, winter visitor

A visit by this species is never guaranteed in our area. After single birds on Fleet Moss in 2015, at Lower Barden in 2017, and at Fewston dam in 2018, just one recording was returned again this year, a single bird at Middleton Moor (AJ).

**YELLOWHAMMER** *Emberiza citrinella*

**1 site (2)** 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 3 individuals being recorded on three occasions through May and June (PP,AK) - the three were all heard singing distinctly in the hedgerows between Weeton and Dunkeswick during a bike ride!

**REED BUNTING** *Emberiza schoeniclus*

**7 sites (16)** Resident breeder, passage visitor

An unusually large number of records from Otley Wetland explains why sighting numbers increased but site numbers crashed in 2019. Only one site featured in the north, with a single bird at Grimwith on Feb 23rd. There were also few sightings in the Washburn, two at Stainburn, one at Timble Ings, all in the autumn. Otherwise, almost all sightings were towards the southern limits of our area, at High Royds pond in Menston in the spring (with another single bird, still in Menston, near High Royds Hall), up to 13 birds in an Otley garden in December (M&JC), and multiple sightings throughout the year at Otley Wetland, to a maximum of 60 flying into roost on Christmas Eve (AJ). An Ilkley garden also saw a sighting at end of the year (KA\*\*).

**Andrew Kelly**

**Bird Report Acknowledgements**

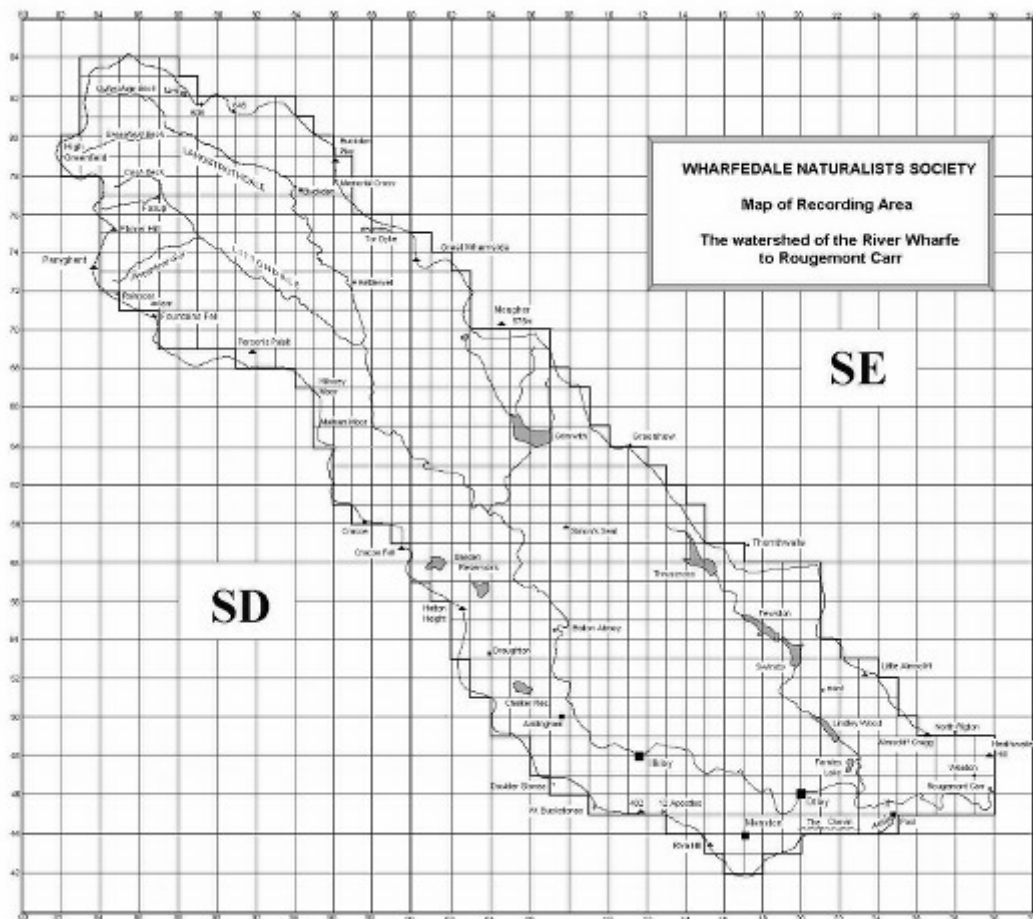
All those listed below have contributed records to the database, either directly to the recorder, or indirectly, including through Bradford Ornithological Group, the Addingham Environment Group, or a number of social media channels. Not all appear in the species accounts, but their contributions are all equally highly appreciated as helping inform the accounts and adding to the body of information available.

\* = member of UWFS

\*\* = member of BOG

- A&DB Avril & David Benson
- AG Audrey Grimshaw
- AH Anne Hodgeson
- AJ Andrew Jowett
- AK Andrew Kelly
- AP Arnold Pacey
- AT Alan Tremethick
- BV\*\* Brian Vickers
- C&JA Chris & Joan Alder
- CA Chris Acomb
- CB Catherine Burton
- CH Colin Harrison
- CN Clive Nutton
- D&AA David & Ann Austin
- D&ML David & Midge Leather
- D&NF David & Nyree Fearnley
- DB Debs Griffith
- DD Dave Dimmock
- DgS Doug Simpson
- DM Diane Morris

- DO Dennis O'Connor
- DP\*\* David Parker
- DS Darren Shepherd
- E&PS Ernie Scarfe & Pauline Sweet
- EC\* Win Clements
- GH Gordon Haycock
- GL Graham Lingard
- H&BJ H&B Jevons
- HC\*\* Howard Creber
- HS Helen Steward
- IC Ian Court
- IM Iain Manners
- JA\*\* John Armstrong
- JB James Bloomer
- JC Jane Charlesworth
- JF John Flood
- JH Jean Hall
- JK Julia Kay
- JM Jon Middleton
- JP John Poland
- JR Jim Robinson
- JT Julia Tomlinson
- JT\*\* Jeremy Taylor
- JV Jill Varley
- JW Jane Winter
- K&PL Ken & Pat Limb
- KA\*\* Keith Allen
- KB Karen Bullimore
- KS Karen Shackleton
- M&JC Mike & Joyce Clerk
- MB Mick Baron
- MD Mark Doveston
- MG Mark Gurney
- MJ Mary Jenner
- MK Malcolm Keeble
- ML Margaret Longden
- MR Margaret Robley
- MW Mark Waller
- NH Naomi Houldershaw
- NT\*\* Nick Tonge
- P&JB Peter & Janet Burns
- PBR Peter Riley
- PD&JBP Derek & Brenda Parkin
- PM\*\* Paul Morris
- PP Paul Purvis
- PR Peter Roe
- PS Paul Singleton
- RF Richard Falls
- RG Richard Greenwood
- RL Ros Lilley
- RN\*\* Roger Nelson
- RW\*\* Roger Wilkinson
- SB Susan Barton
- SP Steve Parkes
- SR\*\* Sean Roche
- TK Theo Keuchel
- WF Wendy Fontana



## 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.

## 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

Apologies to anyone inadvertently left off the credits.

### **Thanks to everyone who has contributed.**

Keep the contributions flowing for 2020.

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.

AK	Andrew Kelly
AR	Anne Riley
AW	Alastair Wtson
BNB	Bruce Brown
DA	David Alred
DL	David Leather
DM	Diane Morris
DOC	Denis O'Connor
DV	D Varney
IB	Ian Brand
JS	John Stidworthy
KS	Kelvin Smith
NF	Nyree Fearnley
SW	Sarah Ward

B&W photos in bird report are modified from photos taken by AK.

**Cover photos** by Kelvin Smith



**Hare (AK)**

### **Review of the year 2019**

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