



## Contents

Diary dates, 3  
 Weather, 4  
 Amphibians and reptiles, 5  
 Birds, 5  
 Botany, 9  
 Butterflies, 9  
 Moths, 9  
 Orthoptera, 9  
 Insects and others, 10  
 Plant galls, 10  
 Mammals, 10  
 Bats, 12  
 Minutes of 2014 AGM, 14

## WELCOME TO THE NEW FIELD FARE!

Welcome to your first *Field Fare* of 2015 - which covers all the same areas as the old one. We are experimenting with the use of colour and technology, and there may well be more changes to come, but we hope you enjoy what we are doing. As always we need to thank Hendrina for her skill and expertise, and the effort she puts into producing *Field Fare*. Thanks to those of you who contributed photos – keep them coming in!

## 50 YEARS OF THE RNHS

This is a big year for the Society! On March 3, we start with the AGM (as short as we can make it) and then start our anniversary celebrations. We really hope lots of you will join us for a glass of wine and refreshments and look forward to having the opportunity to talk to you all, and to hear your wildlife news. The focus of the evening is on our Recorders, who organise our findings into the reports you read in *Field Fare*, summarized in the *Annual Reports*, and sent on to the various recording communities and then to the National Records.

They have much to say and show you – they are at the heart of recording changes to the wildlife in Rutland over the past fifty years!

There will be boards on display showing the work of the Recorders and the Society, and there will be a *Field Fare* desk at the meeting, where editor Hendrina Ellis would love to talk to you about the changes!

## 2015 MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTIONS

The annual membership subscription for 2015 is now due. Thank you to all members who have already renewed their membership. Please note that if we don't receive your renewal, your membership will cease, and you will not receive any further copies of *Field Fare*, and your membership card, and existing permits, will be invalid. We do hope that you will choose to renew your membership.

The subscription has been maintained at £10 per adult, children free. You can pay in one of four ways:

- see me (Margaret Conner, Membership Secretary) at the next indoor meeting
- send a cheque to the Membership Secretary payable to RNHS (address on right)
- standing order – if you currently pay by standing order you do not need to do anything
- pay directly into the RNHS bank account using internet banking. Our account number is 13123968, sort code 77-15-19 with Lloyds Bank. If you choose this method, please include your name in the reference field, and send me an email at mjconner100@gmail.com to let me know you have done this.

**Gift Aid** rules have recently changed and for us to reclaim Tax, – if you have not already done so – please can you also complete an updated Gift Aid Declaration and send the form with your subscription renewal or post/email it to me. Forms were printed on the back of the September *Fieldfare*, are available to download from the website, or at meetings.

Please complete the form below and send with your cheque to the Membership Secretary.

### 2015 RNHS Membership Subscription

**Name:**

**Address:**

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I would like to receive *Field Fare* and the *Annual Report* by:

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*Field Fare* is the RNHS newsletter. It is published six times a year and is free to members. It is available either as a paper copy or online. This issue is Number 284(296).

Printed by Lonsdale Printing 01933 228855

RNHS Registered Charity Number 514693



Speckled Bush Cricket, male : P Rudkin

A group of your committee have been working on the production of our new website, and we hope to be able to show you some progress. Website editor Peter Scott will be there to field questions and listen to suggestions. And of course the rest of the Committee will be there, anxious to use this opportunity to discuss anything to do with the RNHS.

Look out for our planned programme for the summer – it is a special one for our 50th birthday, and we hope there will be something for everyone! The most exciting event – keep the date in your diary – will be a special Celebrity Lecture on Friday 8th May at the Charles Wilson Lecture Theatre in Oakham School. Details to follow!

And don't forget our own Phil Rudkin is talking on '50 years of the RNHS' in April!

Linda Biddle, *Chairman*

## AGM business

The minutes for the 2014 AGM are on pages 14–15, to be passed at the 2015 AGM. All officers and other committee members automatically stand down at the AGM. If you would like to nominate someone or offer to be nominated yourself, please contact the Secretary Roy Edwards as soon as possible. Also please let him know before 20 February if you want to raise any other business at the AGM.

## Membership

Unless you have joined since September, your Annual Membership is now due for renewal. For more details and a form, see page 2.

## DIARY DATES

### RNHS indoor events

*The venue for RNHS indoor events is Voluntary Action Rutland (VAR), Lands End Way, Oakham LE15 6RB. There is no charge for tea/coffee.*

**March 3, Tuesday 7.30 pm** AGM and MEET THE RECORDERS

A brief AGM and then a get-together with wine and good cheer - see above.

**April 7, Tuesday 7.30 pm** CELEBRATING 50 YEARS OF THE RNHS

Phil Rudkin, longtime member, Vice President, ex-Chairman, birdsound expert and Orthoptera Recorder, is an excellent person to give us a history of the Society!

### RNHS field trips

*Full details of all these events can be found on our website at [www.rnhs.org.uk](http://www.rnhs.org.uk). If the weather is bad, please call the 'Queries' phone number in case of cancellation.*

**February 22, Sunday 10.00** RUTLAND WATER

Leader Tim Mackrill of the Osprey Project. Meet at Egleton Reserve Visitor Centre, admission charges apply. Queries: Dawn Whitefield on 01664 454578

**March 29, Sunday 10.00** WHISBY NATURE PARK LINCOLN

Leader Phil Porter. Meet in reserve car park which is located off the A46 just after the North Hykeham roundabout (OS Landranger 121 grid ref SK 915661). Normal car park charges apply. Queries: Linda Biddle on 01780 762108

**April 12, Sunday 10.00** PICKWORTH WOOD

Leader Linda Biddle. A spring meeting, starting near Quarry Farm, OS Explorer 247, grid ref: SK987156. Queries: Linda Biddle on 01780 762108

## LEICESTERSHIRE AND RUTLAND WILDLIFE TRUST

For events in Leicestershire and Rutland, including guided walks, see [www.lrw.org.uk](http://www.lrw.org.uk) or phone 0116 2720444 in office hours.

## LINCOLNSHIRE WILDLIFE TRUST

For details of LWT Lincstrust events, see [www.lincstrust.org.uk](http://www.lincstrust.org.uk), or phone 01507 526677 in office hours.

### November 2014

**Atmospheric pressure and wind** Pressures were low from the start of the month until the 18th; and from the 19th to the end of month they were higher, but not markedly so. The highest I recorded was 1025 mb on the 20th, 24th and 25th. The lowest was 988 mb on the 7th.

**Winds** were mostly SE-SW up to the 14th, then there was a period of low wind speeds and early mist from 15th to 21st, and a very variable picture to the end of the month. There was fog overnight on the 20th–21st and visibility of 150 m at 09:00 on both the 5th and 16th. Nationally this was an averagely windy November.

**Temperature** From my records November 2014 was the fourth warmest overall in the decade and the mean overall temperature was 7.78 °C, behind 2011, 2009 and 2006. The mean minimum was 4.33 °C and the mean maximum was 11.22 °C, both fourth in their respective categories. There were three air frosts, –1.0 °C on the 4th–5th, –2 °C on 23rd–24th, and –0.9 °C on the following night. The site here is a relatively sheltered one and temperatures in the open countryside were probably lower. The Central England Temperature for the month was 8.7 °C, some 1.5 °C above the average. Nationally in the last 100 years just three Novembers were warmer, one was the same, the rest colder.

**Rain** I recorded a total of 69.0 mm (2.72 in), which is 119% of my LTM of 24 years. Daily amounts were small, the highest being 12.0 mm on the 16th, and there were 12 days when no precipitation was recorded. The general impression was of a damp month, as there was a marked absence of drying winds. Averaged nationally, rainfall was 124 mm or 4.88 in, which equates coincidentally to 124% of the norm for the standard reference period 1981–2010, the same percentage as last month.

**Sunshine** Averaged over E and W, the total was 62.5 hours or 96% of the LTM, the dullest November since 2004.

### December 2014

**Atmospheric pressure and wind** Apart from 9th–19th, pressures were high this month, the highest being 1038 mb on both the 29th and 30th; and the lowest, 992 mb, occurred on the 12th, in the period referred to above. Winds were northerly for the first 3 days of the month and then markedly westerly for the rest, apart from the 27th, 28th and 29th when they were NW–NE. There were 3 days on which the wind, at 09:00, was both of high velocity and gusty; for example, on the 22nd the wind gusted between 7 and 11 knots in the open.

**Temperature** The mean temperatures were all in fourth place in the past decade. The mean minimum was 2.11 °C, the mean maximum 7.95 °C and the overall mean 5.03 °C. There were 7 nights when the temperature fell below 0 °C, the lowest being –2.5 °C on both the 27th–28th and the following night; and the highest daytime was 13.0 °C on both the 21st and 22nd. Nationally the CET was 5.3 °C, some 0.61 °C above the average.

**Rain** The total here was 49.8 mm (1.96 in), which is 100% of LTM for 24 years. This fell on 15 days in the month and amounts generally were small, except on the 26th, when 24.5 mm (0.96 in) fell as snow, giving a depth of about 5 cm. Total rainfall averaged over E and W was 77.47 mm (3.01 in), which is 80% of normal for the standard reference period.

Total rainfall here for the year 2014 was 704.0 mm (27.1 in) which equates to 115% of my LTM of 24 years.

**Sunshine** The total averaged over E and W was 79.7 hours, 152% of LTM – this was the sunniest December since 2001.



Fieldfare : P Scott

## AMPHIBIAN AND REPTILES RECORDER Dr C H Gallimore

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E-mail: chasgall@hotmail.com*

### November/December 2014

Although no records have been received from members, I have seen a number of amphibians in Wing during these two months. A **Common Frog** was disturbed by my pond on 17 November and two **Common Toads** were found under shelters in my garden on the same date. A fresh road casualty was also found in Wing on 16 November. Finally, **Great Crested Newts** continue to dwell in my cellar and singles were seen on three occasions in both months, the last being 18 December.

## BIRDS

### RECORDER Terry Mitcham

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### November/December 2014

A pair of Great White Egrets at Rutland Water throughout both months was an exotic end to the year. Scarce wildfowl – Whooper (see p. 16) and Bewick's Swan, Ring-necked Duck, Scaup, Long-tailed Duck and Common Scoter – plus all five grebes provided a good excuse for scanning the reservoirs, with Great Northern Diver also present. Winter thrushes arrived at last with Chiffchaffs and Stonechats at Rutland Water, whilst Jays are visiting more gardens to brighten feeding stations.

**Bewick's Swan:** one in flight SE at Leigh on 30/11

**Whooper Swan:** 24 flew ENE over Tin/Stam on 05/11 when six were at EBR. Four were at EBR on 02/12, with one at RW(Dam) on 05/12, and two there on 28/12

**Pink-footed Goose:** a juvenile was at EBR throughout both months with two on 30/11. Two were at RW on 13/12, with one to the end of the month

**Greylag Goose:** at FHP there were 217 on 01/12 and 165 on 29/12

**White-fronted Goose:** a juvenile Greenland bird was at RW from 13/11 to the end of the year. Two European race birds were at RW from 29/11, to at least 26/12

**Egyptian Goose:** away from RW pairs were noted at Ext Park, Pilt, Martinthorpe, Lynd and FHP.

**Barnacle Goose:** one was at FHP on 01/12.

**Shelduck:** one was back at RWEg on 16/11.

**Wigeon:** c.200 flew N at Leigh on 20/11, and there were 74 at FHP from 21-31/12.

**Red-crested Pochard:** noted on six dates at RW between 03/11 and 01/12, with at least 13 on 10/11. Six were at EBR on 06/11.

**Ring-necked Duck:** a female was at EBR on 30/11.

**Scaup:** noted at RW from 16/11 to the end of the year, with a max of only three on 08/12.

**Long-tailed Duck:** a female was at RWNA/SA between 10/11 and 08/12.

**Common Scoter:** six were in RWNA on 30/11, declining to four on 14/12, with one to at least 25/12.

**Smew:** a redhead was at EBR on 28/11. At RW/BFP a male was noted from 02/12 to the end of the year with up to seven, mainly redheads, by 31/12.

**Red-breasted Merganser:** a female/imm was at RWNA between 26-28/12.

**Goosander:** few records were received. One was at RWEg1 on 15/11, with a max of ten there on 15/12.

**Red-legged Partridge:** a covey of 12 was near Woodhead on 19/11.

**Red-throated Diver:** one was reported at RW(Dam) on 05/12.

**Great Northern Diver:** one at RW from 08/11 to the end of the year was joined by a second from 18/12 to at least 23/12.

**Bittern:** one was seen irregularly from 19/11 to the end of December at RWEg3 with three there on 31/12. One was at EBR inflow from 09/12 to 31/12.

**Cattle Egret:** one was at RWEg on 11/11.



Black-necked Grebe

- Little Egret:** singles were at Banthorpe Gravel Pit on 05/12 and FHP on 29/12.
- Great White Egret:** both birds remained at RWNA/Eg to the end of the year.
- Red-necked Grebe:** RW records involved three birds; one at the Dam to 02/11, a first winter at Eg3 from 13/11 to 01/12, and one off the peninsula from 12/12 to the end of the year.
- Little Grebe:** the wintering flock at FHP peaked at 23 on 14/12.
- Slavonian Grebe:** one was at RWNA from 16 to 24/11.
- Black-necked Grebe:** two were at RWNA from 03/11 to the end of the year.
- Marsh Harrier:** one was at RWEg on 16/12.
- Kestrel:** a road casualty was near Horn Mill on 03/11 but two were along North Brook nearby on 16/11. Also noted at Shacklewell and Barns.
- Merlin:** singles were noted near Martinsthorpe on 05/11, Barns on 21/12 and Pilt on 24/12.
- Peregrine:** there were December records of singles from RWEg, LFP and Leigh.
- Water Rail:** one was at LFP between 03 – 16/11. Two were at FHP on 01/12, with one there on 14/12.
- Golden Plover:** peak counts were 348 in Ext Park on 06/11, 43 at RW and 500 at EBR on 09/11, with 150 at EBR on 07/12. Just four were at RW on 21/12.
- Lapwing:** counts included 410 at EBR and 1773 at RW on 09/11, 151 at Banthorpe Gravel Pit on 05/12; and on 07/12, 2479 at RW and 1200 at EBR.
- Ringed Plover:** two were at EBR on 02/11.
- Curlew:** present at RWEg throughout both months with a max of 12 on 12/12.
- Black-tailed Godwit:** two were at EBR on 05/11. Noted at RWEg from 08/11 to 13/12, with six on 09/11.
- Ruff:** at EBR one was present from 03 to 11/11, with four on 03/12.
- Dunlin:** noted at EBR from 02/11 to 11/12, with a max of 23 on the latter date. At RW, up to nine were present between 09/11 and 26/12.
- Green Sandpiper:** one was at EBR on 02/11. At RW one or two were noted at Eg, BFP and NA between 11 and 26/12.
- Redshank:** 18 were at RW on 09/11 and 07/12.
- Woodcock:** noted between 03/11 and 24/12, with one or two at Leigh, Pilt, PickW and LyndW. Five were west of Rid on 09/11, and there were four in TunnW on 15/11 and five on 21/12.
- Snipe:** at LFP up to eight were noted between 03/11 and 25/12. The peak RW count was 12 on 07/12, whilst at least ten were at EBR on 21/12, and there were two at FHP on 21/12 and at QF on 29/12.
- Black-headed Gull:** c.800 were at FHP on 29/11 with 500 on 24/12. A colour-ringed bird at RW on 10/12 had been ringed as a chick near Poznan in Poland in June 2011 and has been seen at RW in each subsequent winter.
- Mediterranean Gull:** singles were at EBR on 15/11, and at RW on 25/11 and 12/12.
- Stock Dove:** c.90 flew from a Pilt roost on 14/12.
- Woodpigeon:** between 01 and 05/11, some 3020 flew S or SW over Leigh/Pilt and Martinsthorpe.
- Barn Owl:** well reported with birds at FHP, Ext Park, Rid, RW, Man (two), Pilt and Leigh. A road casualty was at Strett on 06/12.
- Tawny Owl:** calling birds were widely reported with singles at Barleythorpe, RWEg and Oak. A pair duetted at Upp on 15/11, whilst three were noted at Leigh and four at Martinsthorpe on 18/11.
- Kingfisher:** two were at RW(Norm) on 11/11, with one there on 18/12. One was by the R.Gwash at Ryll on 20/12.
- Green Woodpecker:** three were at Eg4 on 09/11 with regular sightings at FHP in both months and one in PickW on 19/11.



Fieldfare : P Scott

- Great Spotted Woodpecker:** one was drumming in TunnW on 21/12.
- Maggie:** six were noted around a Bden garden in Dec. On 18/12, 29 were counted going to roost at Wytchley Warren.
- Jay:** reported from gardens in Wg, Oak and Upp with woodland records from Pick and Tunn.
- Raven:** three or four were regular at Leigh in November with four at FHP on 06/11. One or two were noted at Martinsthorpe, Pilt, Greet GC and QF.
- Willow Tit:** one or two were reported from LFP, Pilt and RWLynd.
- Marsh Tit:** two were regular at TunnW feeders throughout both months with one or two also at Leigh, RW(Gorse Close and Ggorse), Man and HambW.
- Long-tailed Tit:** seven were in a Bden garden on 13/11.
- Cetti's Warbler:** singing birds were at RWEg3 on 09 and 16/11.
- Chiffchaff:** noted at four sites around RW between 15/11 and 18/12, with four at Lynd on 07/12. Two were at LFP on 03/11 with one at Martinsthorpe on 24/11.
- Nuthatch:** regular at TunnW feeders in both months with others noted at HambW and PickW and one at feeders in an Upp garden in November and December.
- Starling:** between 04 and 08/11, 2,770 passed W/SW over Pilt, Leigh and Martinsthorpe. A pre-roost of c.350 was at North Brook, HM on 16/12.
- Blackbird:** counts included 47 at Leigh on 09/11, 54 at RW(South Shore) on 25/11 and 57 at RWEg on 10/12.
- Fieldfare:** c.50 were near Belmesthorpe on 02/11 with similar flocks at Greet GC on 07/11 and HM on 16/11. 2,110 passed SW over Leigh and Martinsthorpe between 01 and 08/11. Flocks of 30-60 were noted over Upp between 08 and 28/11, and c.45 perched in Bden gardens on 29/12.
- Song Thrush:** autumn song was heard at Holywell on 19/11.
- Redwing:** fifty were over Lang on 11/11 and c.270 flew W over Pilt on 07/12.
- Stonechat:** three were at EBR on 02 and 09/11, reducing to two on 18/11 and one on 02/12. At RWEg there were three on 30/11, two on 10 and 12/12, and one on 17/12.
- House Sparrow:** at an Oak garden c.30 were regular throughout November.
- Grey Wagtail:** singles were at RWEg on 09/11 and RWLynd on 07/12, with one at FHP on 0/12.
- Rock Pipit:** one was at RW-Goldeneye Hide, on 03/11.
- Chaffinch:** the Leigh finch roosts produced counts of 480-500+ between 30/11 and 13/12. A small roost at Pilt held c.55 on 26/12.
- Brambling:** in a poor winter for this species, the only birds were one or two between 01/11 and 25/12 (but four on 06/11). Singles were at Pilt on 04/11 and 26/12, and at RWGgorse on 22/12.
- Greenfinch:** at LFP there were c.80 on 03/11 – a good count these days.
- Goldfinch:** c/100 were at RWLynd on 25/11.
- Siskin:** the only records were of c.50 at RWLynd on 07/12 and one over Pilt on 20/12.
- Lesser Redpoll:** eight were in PickW on 11/12. Ten were on silver birch at RWLynd on 04/12 with 12 there on 27/12. Also noted on Eg reserve on 23/12.
- Bullfinch:** small flocks of up to seven were noted on 19/11 at Holywell Cottages and in three areas of PickW and on 07/12 at RWLynd.
- Snow Bunting:** a male was at RW on the Green Bank on 03/11.
- Reed Bunting:** a female was in a snowy Stam garden on 28/12.

*My thanks to the following for their records, and a belated Happy New Year to all contributors during 2014.*

*V Arnold, P Bennett, A & L Biddle, T Caldicott, M Collins, A & J Comber, Dr C H Gallimore, M Grimes, T Land, P Langston, A Lawrence, LROS, T Mackrill, K Mather, I Misselbrook, T Mitcham, D Needham, L & B Nicholls, L Park, P Rudkin, P Scott, L Worrall.*

**Wildfowl Counts** November & December 2014

<i>Date</i>	<b>Rutland Water</b>		<b>Eyebrook Reservoir</b>		<b>Ft Henry Ponds /Exton Park</b>		<b>Holywell Lake</b>		<b>Banthorpe Gravel Pit</b>	
	<i>09.11</i>	<i>07.12</i>	<i>09.11</i>	<i>07.12</i>	<i>06.11</i>	<i>08.12</i>	<i>09.11</i>	<i>07.12</i>	<i>06.11</i>	<i>05.12</i>
Mute Swan	291	312	86	91	17	17		2	4	1
Goose:										
Pink-footed		2	1	1						
European White-fronted		2								
Greenland White-fronted		1								
Greylag	332	595	390	332	197	74	148	151		
Canada	767	529	185	202		2	64	56		
Barnacle	3	1								
Egyptian	70	68			3					
Shelduck		12	1	3						
Wigeon	2717	2648	371	295	78	96	2	10		
Gadwall	633	374	72	52	172	114	16	16		
Teal	1693	1339	412	531	83	36	16	13	9	51
Mallard	1094	1249	226	188	151	131	79	154	57	28
Pintail	59	137			1	1				
Shoveler	182	169	11		9	3	2			
Red-crested Pochard	35									
Pochard	228	120	13	115	1	2				
Tufted Duck	3841	3479	39	145	36	57	31	30		1
Scaup	4	2								
Long-tailed Duck	1	1								
Common Scoter		5								
Goldeneye	142	250	22	28						
Smew		2								
Goosander		14								
Great Northern Diver		1								
Cormorant	188	143	19	57						
Little Egret	41	24								1
Great White Egret	2	2								
Grey Heron	19	18	1	3	1	1	1		1	1
Little Grebe	121	151	2		8	22	10			
Great Crested Grebe	418	242	58	35						
Black-necked Grebe	3									
Water Rail	4	2								
Moorhen	152	115	5	6	41	18	14	15	3	1
Coot	3324	2528	72	67	117	111	4	7		
Kingfisher				1			1	1		



## BOTANY

November/December 2014

### RECORDER John Rodgers

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E-mail: rnhbotanyrecord@gmail.com

Happy New Year to all and especially to all those who sent in records. Are there any outstanding? If so, please send them in. We have been very dependent on a few individuals, most of whom are also Verge Recorders, so we need more contributions. Please send in records no matter how mundane they seem to be. Everything counts. How about making flower recording a (late) new year resolution?

It has been a mild and uneventful winter so far, earthquake excluded. There are snowdrops and aconites in flower (wild or escapees?), white deadnettle, groundsel and daisy too (and look out for p.16); not long till there are flowers galore.

## BUTTERFLIES

November/December 2014

### RECORDER Alistair Lawrence

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I should like to begin these notes by wishing everyone a happy new year with lots of good sightings in 2015, and to thank all those members who contributed butterfly records during the past twelve months.

As autumn turned to winter and temperatures dropped, butterfly activity correspondingly decreased and so there is only a handful of sightings to report.

**Red Admiral** – this species was seen frequently on the wing in Market Overton between 4 and 12 November. A single specimen was also clearly observed in flight near Fort Henry Pond, Exton, on 10 November.

**Small Tortoiseshell** was seen at Market Overton on 9 November.

**Peacock** – one was seen in flight at the North Arm of Rutland Water, 30 November.

**Brimstone** – one male of this species was observed fluttering around Ivy and winter honeysuckle flowers on 17 December in Morcott (see p. 16).

My thanks to the following for their contributions:

*C Butterfield, A Lawrence, T Mitcham, D Needham, P Simmonds and B & J Taylor*

## MOTHS

November/ December 2014

### RECORDER Jean Harvey

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During the past two months, it would appear that there have been smaller numbers of moths on the wing than in the comparable period in 2013.

The trap in the reed beds at Rutland Water was run weekly by Ron Follows up until Christmas with the following results:

10 November: 12 moths of 4 species.

17 November: 9 moths of 7 species and this catch contained a **Rusty Dot Pearl**, showing that some migrants were still around.

1 December: one **Winter moth** was in the trap with zero catches thereafter due to the cold weather.

Not unexpectedly, I have not received any casual sightings from members for these notes but now look forward to the start of the 2015 season!

A Happy New Year to all.

## ORTHOPTERA

November/December 2014

### RECORDER Phil Rudkin

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Email: phil.rudkin@talktalk.net

After the wonderful summer conditions, autumn seemed suddenly to appear from nowhere! The first appreciable hard frost was on the evening of the 5th and the morning of the 6th November. These frosts usually spell the end of the orthopteran season (certainly for the grasshoppers), but often there are a few late, struggling crickets that defy the odds.

With this in mind, I briefly searched a haunt a few days later, but with no luck. But, always an optimist, I decided not to dust off the bat detector and take out the batteries (and wait for a sunny day). On Sunday morning, 9th November, I attended the Remembrance Parade, in Broad Street, Stamford. It was a lovely day, sunny and dry, with a gentle breeze. After the ceremony and the marches (I had left the bat detector safely in the car), I drove off to visit Walk Farm, Great Casterton. It was now 12.10 pm, and 14 °C. My search of the entrance lane revealed no orthopterans (I had hoped for Long-winged Conehead and/or Speckled Bush Cricket).

On my way back home I am close to Verge 7, Great Casterton. So, more in hope than expectation, I stopped off at the first gateway. It was now 1.00 pm, and the sun was warm (still 14 °C). Checking all the sites (hedgerows and grass verges), about 100 yards from the car, I heard no sounds, and thought that is it for this year.

Arriving at the car (bat detector still optimistically switched on), suddenly there it was! A weak stridulating of a **Speckled Bush Cricket** (see p. 2), in an old Blackthorn hedge, growing alongside the dry stone wall. During the next 15 minutes along this hedge, a total of four males gradually began to speed up and give me the last record for 2014; very satisfying!

*This season has been excellent for many invertebrate species, and the Rutland Orthoptera was well covered, with more new sites surveyed, adding greatly to our knowledge of the distribution of these insects. Numbers were high for most of them; and all are in a healthy position, boding well for nymphs to appear about April time in 2015.*

## Bush Crickets

**Speckled Bush Cricket** *Leptophyes punctatissima* Four stridulating males, located with Bat Detector at 35 kHz, in old, patchy Blackthorn hedgerow, at 1.30 pm, Verge 7, Great Casterton. This was near the first farm field gateway. Temperature: 14 °C, warm, sunny, force 1, 2/8 cloud, dry (SK999097). The last stridulating for 2014!

## INSECTS & OTHERS

### RECORDER Gill Chiverton

20 Victoria Road, Stamford PE9 1HB. Telephone 01780 753820.

Best wishes for the new season. Lots of records please. Now that we have colour photos in *Field Fare*, there is a big incentive to send in photos with your sightings.

## PLANT GALLS

### RECORDER Roy Lemmon

87 Empingham Road, Stamford PE9 2SU. Telephone: 01780 662051

No report for this issue, please continue sending in your findings.

## MAMMALS

### RECORDER Linda Biddle

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E-mail: [rnhs mammals@talktalk.net](mailto:rnhs mammals@talktalk.net)

## Catching up

Several records were overlooked from August and September, and I include them here. Two **Bank Voles** were found in July in a Seaton garden, one dead but the other very much alive and observed regularly. Also at Seaton a **Brown Hare** was seen in a rape stubble field. In a field at Bisbrooke a **Fox** was observed at dusk, and a **Muntjac** was seen.

## September/December 2014

**Otters** have again been active at Rutland Water. At Dog Kennel Cottage the resident otter had dug out the clay from the mink raft, each time it was inspected in October, November and December, making us wonder if it's worth replacing it. There may be no reason from the point of view of finding evidence of mink, but at least we know the regular inhabitant is still there, this being the only otter that doesn't like the clay! The mink raft at Manton Bay showed signs of otter, prints and spraint in October, as did the one at Heron Bay in November. These may well be the same otter, as they are well within the distance apart that an otter can easily travel. This one doesn't dig out the clay though, so is obviously another animal. At Leighfield Fishponds Tim Caldicott had a good view of an otter in November, as it swam under a small



Stoat : P Scott

bridge. Two otters were reported swimming and playing in Oakham Canal in early November, and the sight was confirmed later in the month, when clear prints were found on the mink raft at the Oakham end of the canal. While it's good to know that otters are doing well, I have also had complaints from two separate people that there are 'no fish left in the rivers' and 'there are too many around'!

Active **Badger** setts were found at Lincolnshire Gate, Walk Farm and Pickworth Wood, though no live badgers were seen this month.

A **Stoat** was seen near Cuckoo Farm Exton in September, and in October they were reported from Little Casterton, Exton Park – in the outfall channel between the two lakes at Fort Henry, and in Tunnely Wood, compartment C. In November stoats were seen at Martinthorpe, and at RW near Lagoon 7, crossing the track, and Charles Gallimore saw one in the borders of his garden. Three **Weasels** were seen, one in September crossing the road at South Luffenham, another in October between Morcott and Wing, and the third between Wing and Manton in November

Only three reports of **Fox** were received, two from Pickworth Wood, where one was observed on two occasions crossing a ride, and the third was disturbed in a small reed bed at Heron Bay RW as we passed within two feet of it in one direction, but laid low until we passed. As we returned the animal made a break for it, obviously not wishing for another close encounter, and disappeared into scrub.

**Brown Hares** have been seen at Exton Park, Pickworth, and regularly at Greetham Valley Golf course. **Rabbits** have been seen at Egleton Reserve – near the 360 hide one sat on top of a mound of gravel, and others were observed near field 16 ponds. Active warrens are present at Tolethorpe, near the entrance to Tolethorpe Hall, at Walk Farm and along the Drift at Pickworth.

**Grey squirrels** are active in many areas – Pickworth Wood, regularly at Greetham Golf Club, and evidence in the form of footprints in clay on mink rafts is frequently found near Fishponds Cottage. **Brown rats** also leave prints in the raft at Manton bay, and are often seen at Dawn's Paddock. **Moles** have left evidence of their activity along the valley between the lower lake and the trout farm at Fort Henry.

**Water Voles** (see p. 16) have again demonstrated their presence through the autumn, droppings being found regularly in many areas of RWNr, and Oakham Canal continues to host a thriving population.

While investigating damage to the verge at South Luffenham in September, a large **Bank Vole** ran from under our feet into the hedgerow, closely followed by a much smaller one. A **Short-tailed Vole** ran across the road near Taylor's Farm on the Pickworth to Great Casterton road in December, and a **Common Shrew** was found dead by the small lake at Exton Park in October. At allotments in Oakham **Long-tailed Field Mice** have made a home in a compost heap, and commandeered a bird box which should have been home to a pair of Robins. In the middle of Pickworth Wood in September a field mouse ran out of a dormouse box. One was also seen feeding on tasty peanuts in the carport of Redland Road Barrowden in December.

The **Hedgehogs** of Barrowden were active and regularly seen in Linda Worrall's garden until the middle of October when they seemed to stop appearing, but one was heard near a nest close to peanuts in early November, and two medium large ones were feeding on the patio on 20th November. One was found as a road casualty in Tippings Lane later in the month, and one small one was found by a villager on the roadside and rescued, put in a box with food available. At Glaston hedgehogs were regularly seen in September.

There have been two reports of **Roe Deer**. In October one was seen in Tunnely Wood, and in November, unusually, a group of 7 was at Greetham valley Golf club.

For the first time in many years there has been no record of **Fallow Deer** rutting being heard. Numbers are greatly reduced, and there has been much disturbance in Pickworth and Clipsham Park Woods. 3 deer and a fawn were seen at the edge of Turnpole Wood in September, and 2 were seen feeding peacefully in Holywell Wood. In November a handsome buck with large antlers and in great condition



Brown Hare : L Biddle

was observed at Greetham Valley Golf Club, and another buck with large antlers ran proudly through the central part of Pickworth Wood. In December 7 were seen south of the wood and 2 were seen browsing at the edge of Newell Wood.

In September a **Muntjac** was recorded from Gower Lodge Uppingham and another in Main Street Barrowden, and in October one was disturbed in the middle of Pickworth Wood and ran shrieking into a wire fence where it became trapped for a few moments, then managed to extricate itself and raced away along the ride, still making a horrible noise. At Dawn's Paddock one was seen in October, and 2 road casualties were recorded in December, one at Gunthorpe, and the other at Wing, where a Red Kite was making sure its carcass did not go to waste.

Thank you for records from:

A J Biddle, M Branston, T Caldicott, C Gallimore, J Harris, C Jones, P Langston, T Mitcham, P Rudkin, A Tomlinson, C Tring, L Worrall

## BATS

### RECORDER Jenny Harris

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E-mail: [jharris@lrwt.org.uk](mailto:jharris@lrwt.org.uk)

### November/December 2014

There was only one record for the period, and that came from Linda Worrall, who espied one bat flying across the close outside where she lives in Barrowden. This was on 22.11 at 4.25pm on a mild, damp day. Following the warm autumn, with potentially plenty of feeding opportunities, fat bats should now be hibernating, secreted away safely in cool, well-insulated crevices until April. However, bats such as brown long-eared *Plecotus auritus* and Natterer's *Myotis nattereri* can take advantage of winter-active moths, and may come out on milder nights to feed. Bats are sometimes seen flying during the day, perhaps because of disturbance to their roost site, dehydration or a sudden change in temperature that makes their roost unsuitable. Both warming and the risk of freezing will precipitate arousal, but whatever the reason for daytime flying it is not usually a good sign.

## Big changes in bat recording

Since I became the Society's Bat Recorder in the 1980s, there have been tremendous changes in the way in which bats are studied and the implications this has for their conservation. The number of species recorded in Rutland has also changed, with several rarer species and one completely new one added to our list. The advent of bat detectors that were within the price range of amateur bat enthusiasts led to a huge increase in the amount that could be learnt about bats and how they use habitats. Then came the development of devices that could record bat sounds, together with computer programmes enabling identification from sonograms; this led directly to the discovery that the common pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pipistrellus* was in fact two species and the soprano pipistrelle *P. pygmaeus* was added to the world list of new species. The different ecological requirements of the two species have also now been recognised, with soprano pipistrelles shown to be more reliant on wetlands and habitats close to water. It is perhaps not surprising therefore that a number of maternity roosts of soprano pipistrelles numbering over 500-600 bats have been found around Rutland Water.

In 2005, a colleague from the Bat Group, Ian Howden, and I were using a Batbox Duet detector to record bats in Burley Wood when we heard an unfamiliar bat sound. Later, Ian identified Nathusius' pipistrelle *Pipistrellus nathusii* from a computer-generated sonogram, a species that had not long been recognised as occurring in the UK, and the first time the species had been recorded in VC55. This led to the recognition that the bat roost in a high seat in Burley Wood, which Phil Rudkin had often mentioned to me, was a summer roost (and probably a maternity roost) of Nathusius' pipistrelle. Even now, this roost is one of only three known maternity roosts in the UK (Jon Russ, 2015). Although this site has now been damaged by winter gales there is no doubt in my mind that the species still breeds somewhere nearby. It was very exciting in September 2014 to be part of a survey group on the south shore of Hambleton Peninsula when two male Nathusius' pipistrelles were caught in a harp trap and for the very first time, after hearing them on so many occasions, I finally had one in my hand. As part of a study organised

by The Bat Conservation Trust, the bats were ringed on the forearm and fur samples were taken. The fur will be subjected to stable isotope analysis. The Bat Conservation Trust says “Stable hydrogen isotope ratios are linked to latitude and studying them in bat fur samples will help to determine patterns of movement of this species in and out of the UK”. The samples taken last year are therefore likely to show where these bats have originated: are they part of a long-existing breeding population or are they migrants, just passing through? And if they are migrants, where in Europe might they have come from?

The increase in the number of records of the rare barbastelle bat has also been an exciting development. The first two bats were found roosting in the old stables at Barnsdale in September 1986, before the building was re-developed. Since then the species has been found in a hibernation site in east Rutland and recorded on detectors at Ketton, Woolfox, Tolethorpe and in Burley Wood. I hope we are on the verge of discovering that they too are breeding in Rutland.

Another first for Rutland was a grounded bat at Rutland Water, handed in to Joelle Bryan in 2013 that turned out to be a Brandt’s bat *Myotis brandtii*. This could have just been a chance occurrence, but the species’ presence round Rutland Water was confirmed by the use of another innovation in the study of bats: the harp trap and acoustic lure. Harp traps combine two parallel rows of fine wire in a metal frame with a catching bag at the bottom of the frame. Confused by the wires, the bats slide down them into the bag below, where they are safely held so that they can be caught and examined. The acoustic lure sends out signals that mimic the calls of a wide range of bats, which are attracted to the calls and thus to the traps. A further three Brandt’s bats, all of them females, were caught in autumn 2014 by this method; one at Egleton on 24.8 and two in Hambleton Wood on 13.9.

Bat detectors and their users have become even more sophisticated. The development of the Anabat and similar detectors means that the detector can be left unattended in situ to record bats for weeks or months so long as the battery lasts; they are triggered only when a bat passes which saves a lot of time during the analysis process.

With the discovery of four new species added to the Rutland county list, these last 30 years have been exciting times for those of us who are interested in the study and conservation of bats. And I can sense that there are more exciting times ahead.



Soprano pipistrelle on left, Nathusius' on right (see also p. 16) : L Griffiths

# MINUTES OF RNHS (RUTLAND NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY) AGM 2014

The Annual General Meeting was held on Tuesday 4th March 2014, at Voluntary Action Rutland, Lands End Way, Oakham, with 59 members present and the President Mr J Hanbury in the Chair.

## 1 Apologies

Mr and Mrs Mann, Linda Worrall, Hendrina Ellis, Tim Newton and Mary Nourish.

## 2 Minutes of the previous AGM 2013

As circulated in *Field Fare* January 2014, but item 7 should have included 'Membership Secretary Mr Graham Worrall'. The corrected Minutes were approved and signed. Proposed Roy Lemmon, seconded Clive Jones.

## 3 Honorary Treasurer's Report and approval of accounts

Martin Grimes circulated the Society's accounts for year ending 31/12/2013, checked by George Kirk. Martin commented '*The total income was £4158, with a small increase in subscriptions. The total expenditure was £3156. We have managed to keep costs well under control but they will no doubt increase. However there is no need to consider raising the subscription rates. There was a surplus of £1002 for the year and we have reserves of over £10,000 including £2000 put aside to cover equipment not insured.*'

Proposed by Phil Rudkin, seconded by Dave Needham, the Report was adopted and Mr Grimes thanked.

## 4 Re-appointment of Independent Examiner

Proposed by Dawn Whitefield, seconded by Ann Tomlinson. Mr George Kirk was re-appointed.

## 5 Chairman's Report

Linda Biddle stated that it was a great honour to continue the work of the able, enthusiastic and dedicated people who had preceded her.

**Venue** In her first year there were unexpected changes. The first was the need to find a new indoor meeting venue. The committee quickly shortlisted three venues before deciding on Voluntary Action Rutland.

We hope that members find it a pleasant and comfortable venue, and now that most members have managed to find the way in, that it is not too difficult to reach for most. Thanks to Jenny Rivett, who donned a yellow jacket, made some signs, and has become Honorary Car Park Manager! There are teething problems with all changes, and temperature control was one, but now we know how to open the windows, it has been remedied. Sound systems are always a problem, but we plan to purchase a new microphone, with amplification, so that we can provide an effective and independent sound system during 2014.

**Loss** The sudden death of Graham Worrall, our Vice Chair, Membership Secretary, Botanical Recorder, Planning Liaison, and together with his wife, Linda, *Fieldfare* distributor, came as a shock to us all, he is greatly missed.

Again your Committee worked amazingly hard, every single member doing their very best to cover the huge gap left by Graham's absence. Peter Scott agreed to be Vice Chair, and has helped me in many capacities during the year. Bravely Margaret Conner volunteered to take on the office of Membership Secretary, with help from Peter Scott and Hendrina Ellis, and subsequently Margaret has also taken on a large part of *Fieldfare* distribution, greatly assisted by Linda Worrall, who as always, has the interests of RNHS at heart. We are all indebted to Margaret for her efficient and careful management of the subscriptions and membership details, and greatly admire her skills in handling the database!

The role of **planning liaison** has been taken on by two volunteers, John Rodgers and Paul Stevens, who peruse the weekly planning applications to spot any with natural history implications.

The hard work of the **Recorders** is at the heart of the true reason for the existence of the Society. We now need several new people to take up the roles of Botany, Verge, Fungi and Fish Recorders. It is important that we continue this work, while also continuing to enjoy the delights of wildlife in the company of friends and colleagues.

**Meetings** Your Committee has organised a programme of interesting and educational indoor meetings, and a varied set of outdoor activities, combining some with social activities. While indoor meetings continue to be well supported we are concerned that some outdoor meetings do not attract many members, and we are keen to hear members' ideas and suggestions for future meetings. Thanks to Dawn Whitefield for her efforts in continuing to organise the meetings, in spite of having a hip operation, and from which we are pleased to see she is making a good recovery.

**Digital recording** Ann Tomlinson, as a parting message when she retired as Chair last year, stressed the importance of recording, and moving to update our system. In addition to the unexpected changes, your committee has been working on the way in which we record our observations. We know many members find the

prospect daunting, but recording our findings digitally and making them accessible, is the only way in which we can continue to be respected as an organisation which cares for nature and has the knowledge to support its conservation in the 21st century.

We are determined that it shall be done in as simple a way as possible, and very much hope that members will find the new system preferable to the card system. However, members will be able to continue to send in reports on paper if they cannot access the new system. Most members are able to send emails, and this is really the way in which you will be asked to send in your reports.

**Future activities** 2014 is the 49th year of RNHS. Next year will be our 50th Anniversary! We are already making plans for a special guest speaker, and have delayed our weekend visit so that it can be held next year. Your Committee plans a relaunch of the society, and recruitment campaign, and invites your ideas for projects and explorations suitable to commemorate 50 years of the RNHS. An active society is one which attracts attention, and hence recruits new members.

**Thank you** I would like to thank Roy Edwards, who in his first year as secretary has had to deal with a new and insecure chairman, while fulfilling tasks efficiently, reliably and promptly. It cannot have been easy!

Martin Grimes has continued to control our finances carefully and thoroughly, through all the ups and downs of the year.

*Fieldfare* and the *Annual Report* were produced with style and accuracy by Hendrina Ellis.

Jenny Harris, Gill Chiverton and Jenny Rivett have supported, encouraged, and given positive ideas to the committee proceedings.

Throughout the winter months at indoor meetings, Shirley Hope has continued to provide our cups of tea and coffee, a task which she unflinchingly fulfils with good humour, assisted by other members, who we thank too!

Your Recorders have also maintained the high standard of reports and recordings during the year, and we are grateful to them all. While the future of recording may be a concern to some of them, they have been willing to give their honest and careful consideration to the changes we propose. We sincerely hope that we shall go forward together, and achieve an outcome at least satisfactory, and perhaps pleasing to us all.

Alistair Lawrence proposed and Jenny Harris Seconded that the Chairman's Report be adopted.

#### **6a Election of officers**

The following officers, proposed by Clive Jones and seconded by Ann Tomlinson, were elected en bloc:

*President:* Mr J Hanbury

*Chairman:* Mrs Linda Biddle

*Honorary Secretary:* Mr Roy Edwards

*Honorary Treasurer:* Mr Martin Grimes

*Membership Secretary:* Mrs Margaret Conner

*Programme Secretary:* Mrs Dawn Whitefield

*Field Fare Editor:* Mrs Hendrina Ellis

#### **6b Election of committee**

The following committee members, proposed by Julie Comber and seconded by Shirley Hope, were elected en bloc:

Mrs Gill Chiverton, Mrs Jenny Harris, Mr Peter Scott, Ms Jenny Rivett.

#### **7 Honorary Life Members**

Honorary Membership was bestowed upon Ann Tomlinson, the past chairman, and also to Linda Worrall, in recognition of the many years of outstanding service both had given to Rutland Natural History Society.

Proposed by Alan Comber and seconded by Peter Scott

#### **8 Any other business**

Mr J Hanbury reported that in July 2014 the Douglas Fir area in Burley Wood is to be felled and planted with English species such as Oak and Ash. He asked if the members have any proposals for species to be planted.

Mr Hanbury also volunteered his farm at Nevers, near the Loire, in France as a venue for a Society visit.

Phil Rudkin thanked Mr Hanbury for allowing the society the privilege of access to Burley Wood.

#### **9 Date of next AGM**

Tuesday 3rd March 2015



Brimstone : A Lawrence



Soprano pipistrelle (l), Nathusius' (r) : L Griffiths



Water vole : P Scott



Coltsfoot : P Scott



Whooper Swans at Eyebrook : P Scott