



Jackdaws squabble in the snow, December 2017. D Cotter.

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Our November meeting showed just what excellent photographers we have in the Society, and was a most enjoyable evening, thanks to the enthusiasm of our members. I hope you're all enjoying the pictures in the Society's Calendar and finding it useful. We shall be repeating the competition again in 2018, so do get out shooting the photos ready to enter! Details for this year's competition will be in the next edition of *Fieldfare*.

In December Jim Egan impressed us with the work done at the Allerton Project at Loddington, so much so that members requested a visit, and this has duly been arranged for a June evening. Details of this and all the other events for the coming year are on the **Annual Programme**, enclosed with this *Fieldfare*. **Please be sure to save it**, and mark all the events onto your calendar, so that you don't miss them.

The snow in mid-December brought more than its share of problems, and wishing for snow is not a good idea, but writing this on a dark and dismal January day I'm not sure which I prefer! On a cold snowy morning we were able to spot hare, fox, deer and badger prints, on paths where we didn't expect them to be, and at Rutland Water we could follow the tracks of an otter. We are now searching for signs of spring – woodpeckers drumming and great tits belling have been heard, so already things are starting to move.

A very happy 2018 to you all, and I wish you many good wildlife experiences in the coming year.

**Linda Biddle**, RNHS Chairman

## Membership subscription

There are a number of members who have not yet paid their subscriptions for 2018. November's *Fieldfare* came with a Membership Subscription form which you can use to send with your subscription, or you can just send me a cheque with your details, as soon as possible. If we don't receive your fees, your membership will lapse and this will be the last *Fieldfare* you receive. (Remember that you can also set up a standing order so that your subscription is automatically renewed each year.)

Thank you to all members who have already paid their subscriptions.

**Margaret Conner, Treasurer/Membership**

## DIARY DATES

## RNHS FIELD TRIPS

*Full details of all these events appear on our website at [www.rnhs.org.uk](http://www.rnhs.org.uk). If the weather is bad, check the website or call the 'Queries' phone number for changes.*

**Saturday 24 February, 10 am**

### What's happening at Rutland Water?

Dr Mat Cottam, new Reserve Manager at Rutland Water, gave us a very stimulating talk at the first evening meeting of the year, and is following this up with an outdoor event starting at the Egleton Centre. (A charge is made for access to the Reserve, which includes car parking. Adults £5.70, concessions £4.50, 10% off day permits for LRWT members.)

Queries: Hendrina Ellis, 01780 482048 / 0751 5555 486.

**Saturday 24 March, 2 pm**

### Great Merrible Wood

Andy Lear, LRWT Conservation Officer, will lead this visit to Great Merrible Wood, an SSSI and owned by the LRWT. It lies in the Eye Brook Valley 4 km south-west of Uppingham. The entrance to the reserve is off the Horninghold to Great Easton road, about 0.5 km south-east of the crossroads with the B664 Uppingham–Medbourne road. Park on the roadside verge at SP 831958. Enter by a field gate, walk along the field with the hedge to your left to the next field, then across it to the entrance to the wood.

Queries: Linda Biddle, 01780 762108 / 07749 636919

## RNHS EVENING MEETINGS

*Indoor meetings are held at Voluntary Action Rutland (VAR), Lands End Way, Oakham LE15 6RB. Tea and coffee, free. Visitors are asked for a donation of £2.*

**Tuesday 6 February, 7.30 pm**

### Back from the Brink Project

By Susannah O'Riordan, who is the 'Back from the Brink' Rockingham Forest Project Officer. This project, part of a nationwide project, aims to improve the woodlands for special species such as Barbastelle Bat, Adder, Willow Tit, Fly Orchid and the Concolorous moth. However, the headline species is the Chequered Skipper butterfly. Fascinating.

**Tuesday 6 March, 7.30 pm**

### AGM + A Journey to the Russian Arctic

After the AGM, Maggie Manson and Peter Farmer, RNHS members, will be talking about their exciting shipboard visit to the Russian Arctic which they made last summer. Not exactly a cruise, but certainly an adventure! Among other things they saw many marine mammals, including beluga and whales. Their photography (we had a taste at the members' photographic evening) is excellent.

(Minutes of the 2017 AGM are on page 14 of March 2017 *Fieldfare*.)

Tuesday 27 March, 7.30 pm

### Bees and Wasps

Many RNHS members will already know Steve Woodward and Helen Iken. Helen is the President of Loughborough Nats, and Steve does a lot of the work for their bulletin, and edits the *Rutland and Leics Recorder*. They are acknowledged experts on many insects, particularly bees and wasps. They spent some time in Rutland last year, surveying interesting wildlife sites.

## LEICESTERSHIRE & RUTLAND WILDLIFE TRUST, RUTLAND GROUP

*For events in Leicestershire and Rutland see [www.lrwt.org.uk](http://www.lrwt.org.uk) or phone 0116 262 9968. Rutland group meetings are held at the Volunteer Training Centre (VTC), Hambleton Road, LE15 8AD. Entry £1.*

Monday 19 February, 7.30 pm

### The story of Britain's urban badgers

Ben Devine, Community Engagement Officer (Black to Green Project) at the Trust, will talk about the rise of the urban badger, how they live amongst us and the challenges this can present.

Monday 19 March, 7.30 pm

### AGM and Wild Bees

Following the Rutland Group's AGM, Peter Chatwin and Pamela Martin will talk about wild bees and pollination – their art and science pollination adventures as they nicely put it!

## LINCOLNSHIRE WILDLIFE TRUST, BOURNE GROUP

*For details of LWT events, see [www.lincstrust.org.uk](http://www.lincstrust.org.uk), or phone 01507 526677 in office hours. Bourne group indoor meetings are held at the Methodist Church Hall, Bourne. Refreshments available. A donation of £1.50 is requested, children free.*

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## WEATHER

### RECORDER Roy Lemmon

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November 2017

**Atmospheric pressure and wind** Pressures this month have not shown great variation, the highest I recorded was 1028 mb at 09.00 on the 17th and the lowest was 993 mb at the same time on the 23rd. Winds were predominantly SW-W except for the 8th-13th inclusive when they were NW; and in the last three days of the month they were NW-N when, as might be expected, it was cold. A feature of the winds this month has been that they were often blustery.

**Temperature** The overall mean, 6.92 °C, places November 2017 at 6th place in the decade 2008-2017. The mean minimum was 3.39 °C and this included five air frosts, the lowest 0.5 °C on 4th-5th, and the mean maximum was 10.44 °C. The highest daytime maximum was 15.5 °C on the 22nd and the lowest was a mere 3.2 °C on the last day of the month.

**Rain** A total of 28.1 mm (1.1 inches) was recorded here, this being 48% of my long-term mean of 27 years. There was no rain recorded on 15 days of the month and the highest daily amount was 6.0 mm (0.24 inches) on the fourth. The full picture for the year will only be seen clearly after December's total, but 2017 seems to be on course to be a very dry year.

December 2017

**Atmospheric pressure and wind** Pressure was high at the beginning of the month, the 1st-6th, and then again later, the 17th-24th; this latter included the highest I

recorded, 1033.5 mb on the 22nd. There were two periods of low pressure, the 10th-16th and 25th-31st, and in both these snow fell. Winds were predominantly NW-N but also variable at times. Winds speeds were often high and gusty. Storm Caroline on the 6th and 7th gave gusts up to 19 mph at 09.00, and Storm Dylan gusted up to 31 mph at the same time on the 30th. Both of these storm systems were from the Atlantic and had lost their intensity when they reached us.

**Temperature** The mean minimum, 2.1 °C, and the mean maximum, 7.46 °C, placed this month in 6th position in the decade 2008-2017. There were 8 air frosts, the lowest was -4.6 °C on the 10th-11th, and the highest daytime maximum was 12.6 °C on the 30th. In contrast the lowest daytime maximum was 1.2 °C on the 10th.

**Rain** The monthly total was 77.3 mm (3.04 inches), which equates to 155% of my long-term mean of 27 years. This fell as snow on the 9th and 10th, 11.7 mm measured as liquid, and had gone by the 11th. Rain, which turned to snow, fell on the 26th-28th, a fall of 35.8 mm (1.4 inches) and this had gone by the 30th.

### 2017 Annual rainfall

The total I recorded was 511.0 mm (20.1 inches) which is 84% of my LTM. 2011 was much drier with a total of 435.2 mm.

The Rev. Gilbert White in his letter VIII, dated 20 December 1770, gives the mean annual rainfall for Rutland as 20.5 inches. This contrasts with my LTM of 23.9 inches.

## AMPHIBIANS & REPTILES RECORDER Dr C H Gallimore

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### November/December 2017

Amphibian records have been confined to newts found in my cellar in Wing. Three **Great Crested Newts** of various sizes were present on 11th November, as well as a **Smooth Newt**. Great Cresteds were present again on 13th November and 20th December (as well as in January). A dead **Grass Snake** found on 6th December at Leighfield was the only other herp record for this period.

*My thanks to T Caldicott for his record.*

## BIRDS

### RECORDER Terry Mitcham

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### November/December 2017

The highlight of these months was a **Cory's Shearwater**. Only the fourth inland record in the UK, this extreme rarity should have been in the north Atlantic or Mediterranean Sea instead of drifting among **Great Crested Grebes** in Rutland Water's North Arm. **Hawfinches** attracted much interest, especially at Exton, with birds present up to the end of December. Scarce wildfowl included long-staying **American Wigeon** and **Red-necked Grebe** at Rutland Water and the **Ferruginous Duck** at Eyebrook, with Rutland Water also attracting **Red-breasted Mergansers** and **Great Northern Divers**. A **Ring-necked Parakeet** was the star garden bird and the cold snap in December produced several interesting records.

*My thanks to the following for their records and best wishes for good bird watching in 2018: R Bakker, D & J Ball, P Bennett, A & L Biddle, T Caldicott, A & J Comber, R Edwards, Dr C H Gallimore, M Grimes, S Hope, T Land, P Langston, A Lawrence, LROS, I Misselbrook, T Mitcham, B Moore, D Needham, M & J Nourish, J S & J Rodgers, P Rudkin, RWNr, B Smith, P Tomalin, L Worrall.*

	See also Wildfowl Counts page 8.
<b>Bewick's Swan</b>	An adult was reported in RWNA on 20.12.
<b>Whooper Swan</b>	At RW there were six on 02/03.11, nine on 13.11 and eight on 08.12. Four flew over Pilt on 19.12, when there were also four at RW.
<b>Pink-footed Goose</b>	c.100 flew over Lynd Wood on 02.11 and 110 over RW Dam on 19.11.
<b>Brent Goose</b>	A dark-bellied bird flew over LFP on 09.11.
<b>Egyptian Goose</b>	Present at LFP during both months with six on 24.11. Two were near Pilt on 21.12.
<b>Shelduck</b>	One was at FHP from 05.11 to the end of the year.
<b>Mandarin Duck</b>	In November two were over Wg on 02.11, with one over the village on 16 and nearby on 20.
<b>American Wigeon</b>	The male at RW was at Eg throughout both months.
<b>Red-crested Pochard</b>	Present at RW throughout both months with a peak of 38 on 13.11.
<b>Ferruginous Duck</b>	The EBR male was seen between 06.11 and 03.12.
<b>Scaup</b>	One or two were at RWNA/SA from 02.11 to the end of Dec. A male was at EBR on 02/03.12 and a female on 14.12, with two on 16.12.
<b>Common Scoter</b>	A female was in RWNA/Dam from 21.11 to at least 17.12, with two on 25/26.11.
<b>Smew</b>	A redhead was at RWEg on 09.11, with up to four (05.12) present by 16.12. One at EBR on 24.11 increased to six by 24.12.
<b>Red-breasted Merganser</b>	Three females were at RWDam between 13 and 19.11.
<b>Goosander</b>	Three were at RWNorm on 11.11, seven were at Lynd on 24.11 and ten at Eg1 on 27.11. One flew over Leigh on 25.11.
<b>Great Northern Diver</b>	One was at RWDam from 13.11 onwards with two on 19.11, three from 09.12, and four on 26.12.
<b>Cory's Shearwater</b>	<b>Definitely the bird of the year.</b> Found in RWNA on 02.11 and giving excellent views as it drifted among Great Crested Grebes and made short flights over the water. The species breeds on Mediterranean islands, the Azores and Canary Islands, and in Britain is usually seen off the south-west coast and on pelagic boat trips in the autumn.
<b>Glossy Ibis</b>	One was reported at EBR on 24.11.
<b>Little Egret</b>	Two were near FHP on 27.11.
<b>Great White Egret</b>	Present at RW throughout both months with nine noted on 05.11. One was at EBR on 06.11.
<b>Red-necked Grebe</b>	One was at RWSA throughout both months, usually near the Old Hall.
<b>Black-necked Grebe</b>	One was in RWNA from 18.12 to the end of the year.
<b>Marsh Harrier</b>	The female remained at RW throughout both months. One was at EBR on 02.11.
<b>Sparrowhawk</b>	Garden records from Stam and Oak. Also seen near Ry, FHP and Ext Park.
<b>Water Rail</b>	One or two were heard at LFP and Geest in Nov with one at RWEg on 24.11. One attempted to cross a road in snowy weather near Mor on 11.12.
<b>Oystercatcher</b>	One was at RWEg4 on 02.12.
<b>Golden Plover</b>	c.80 flew north at Rid on 09.11, with 200 there on 12.11. c.800 were at EBR on 24.11. At RW there were c.550 on 27.11 and 85 on 09.12.
<b>Lapwing</b>	c.700 were at EBR on 05.11, with 53 on 19.11. 207 were at RW on 19.11 and 166 on 09.12. c.210 flew north-west over Pilt on 26.12.
<b>Whimbrel</b>	One was at RW throughout Nov and to at least 09.12.
<b>Curlew</b>	Present at RW throughout both months with eight on 19.11, and six on 09.12.
<b>Black-tailed Godwit</b>	Present at RW from 08.11 to at least 09.12, with five on 19.11 and six on 09.12.
<b>Knot</b>	One was at EBR on 25.11.
<b>Ruff</b>	At EBR there were three on 03.11, six on 05.11 and one to 16.12.
<b>Curlew Sandpiper</b>	One was at RW Man Bay on 10.11 and on 21/22.11. One was at EBR on 13.11.
<b>Dunlin</b>	Present at both reservoirs during both months with peak counts of 90 at RW on 09.12 and 35 at EBR on 02.12.

<b>Common Sandpiper</b>	An unseasonal bird was at the end of Ham peninsula at RW from 12.12 to the end of the year.
<b>Green Sandpiper</b>	At RW there were four on 19.11, and three on 09.12. One was at FHP between 20.11 and 03.12 and one flew through at LFP on 09.12.
<b>Spotted Redshank</b>	One was in RWSA on 04.12.
<b>Redshank</b>	One was at EBR on 19.11 when there were 16 at RW. 15 were at RW on 09.12.
<b>Jack Snipe</b>	Singles were at RWEg2 on 03.11, and EBR on 18.12.
<b>Woodcock</b>	Between 19.11 and 30.12, one or two were flushed at Pilt, Leigh, RWLynd and TunnW. Three were flushed at Pilt on 31.12.
<b>Snipe</b>	16 were at RWLynd on 09.11, with 15 at RW on 19.11. Ten were at EBR on 24.11, with eight flushed near Wg on 10.12 and five the next day.
<b>Mediterranean Gull</b>	Singles were at EBR on 03.11, 25.11, and 21.12, and at RW on 11.11.
<b>Yellow-legged Gull</b>	One was in RWNA on 02.11.
<b>Caspian Gull</b>	One at RWDam on 11.11 had been ringed as a chick in SW Poland in May 2015.
<b>Glaucous Gull</b>	A juvenile roosted at EBR between 14-21.12.
<b>Feral Pigeon</b>	Over the past year I have noted birds colonising solar panels on house roofs in Stam, with one property supporting c.20 birds. Have other members seen this trend? It would be interesting to find out how widespread it is.
<b>Stock Dove</b>	48 flew SW over LFP on 21.11. 83 were around Leigh on 06.12, and nine were in a Barrow garden on 12.12.
<b>Collared Dove</b>	21 flew over Pilt on 14.11.
<b>Barn Owl</b>	Hunting birds were well reported with records from FHP, Geest, MM, Leigh, LFP, RW, Man and Foster's Bridge.
<b>Little Owl</b>	Calling birds were at Leigh on 27.11, Barrow during both months and Lydd on 24.12.
<b>Kingfisher</b>	Birds were noted by the Oak Canal, Ext Park lake and EBR.
<b>Ring-necked Parakeet</b>	One visited a Barleythorpe garden between 01 and at least 08.11, and one was seen in flight over Oak on 19.11. Are we due for colonisation?
<b>Green Woodpecker</b>	Records came from CPW, FHP, Barrow and Greet GC.
<b>Great Spotted Woodpecker</b>	Gardens at Oak and Barrow were visited. Other records from TunnW, KQ and FHP.
<b>Kestrel</b>	An excellent response to the request for records found birds in 42 1-km squares, mainly in the centre and east of the county – these will be forwarded to LROS.
<b>Peregrine</b>	November singles were at RWEg and Greet GC with one at Leigh in Dec.
<b>Merlin</b>	Singles were at EBR on 12.11 and RWLynd on 21.11.
<b>Jay</b>	Noted at FHP, CPW and BarnsW, where nine were scattered through the wood on 19.12.
<b>Jackdaw</b>	The GlastW roost held c.4000 on 26.11 and c.2800 on 31.12. c.500 flew over Man on 12.11.
<b>Raven</b>	Noted at three regular breeding sites, with flyover birds at Wg and Barrow.
<b>Coal Tit</b>	Up to eight at once frequented TunnW feeders in Nov, with two regular at an Oak feeding station.
<b>Willow Tit</b>	Three were at LFP on 05.11, with one or two also at Leigh and Wg.
<b>Marsh Tit</b>	Birds visited feeders at Hall Farm, Ext, TunnW and a Wg garden, the first there for some time.
<b>Skylark</b>	c.80 flew SE near Wg on 11.12. Presumably a weather movement linked to the snowy weather.
<b>Cetti's Warbler</b>	Present at LFP between 05 and 30.11, with two present on 09 and 15.
<b>Long-tailed Tit</b>	Noted in Oak and Barrow gardens with 8 at the latter site. Up to ten were at HambW, FHP and TunnW and flocks of ten and 14 were at KQ on 21.11.
<b>Chiffchaff</b>	Singles were at Pilt on 02 and LFP on 13.11.
<b>Blackcap</b>	A female was in an Oak garden on 03.12, and a pair took seeds from a feeder in Oak on 31.12.

<b>Nuthatch</b>	Regular in Ext woods and Park, FHP and CPW. Fed occasionally at a nut feeder in an Upp garden in both months.
<b>Treecreeper</b>	Reported from RWNA, HambW and FHP.
<b>Starling</b>	Counts on nine dates between 01.11 and 03.12 produced the staggering total of 7,288 birds passing west along the Chater valley area. The peak counts were 1620 on 07.11, 1140 on 09.11, and 1334 on 12.11.
<b>Fieldfare</b>	There was a strong passage between 07.11 and 18.11 in the Pilt area, with 750 on the first date and 250 on 08.11. Few remained in our area, perhaps due to a mediocre berry crop. c.50 were at Bden on 06.12 with 50 on Pickworth Plain on 08.12. One fed on apples in a Stam garden during cold weather on 16.12.
<b>Redwing</b>	Passage flocks were generally smaller than Fieldfares. c.320 flew west at Pilt on 08.11, with c.290 west next day at LFP. On 02.12, 235 flew west along the Chater valley at Wg and 325 over Leigh next day. Two stripped a Pyracantha bush of berries in a Lydd garden during the snowy period of 11/12.12.
<b>Stonechat</b>	One was at EBR regularly from 03.11 to at least 25.12. A pair were at FHP on 09.11, with one on 14.11 and 19.12; and a male was at RWLynd from 05.11 to 17.12.
<b>Tree Sparrow</b>	The only record was of one in a Barrow garden on 08.11.
<b>Grey Wagtail</b>	Records were received from RW (three on 19.11), FHP and Geest sewage works. Garden ponds were visited at BCF on 01.11, and Clips on 03.11.
<b>Rock Pipit</b>	One was at the end of Hambleton peninsula, RW, from 08 to 16.12.
<b>Chaffinch</b>	c.150 flew from the Leigh roost on 19.11 and 160 on 18.12. c.135 flew from a roost near Wg on 30.11.
<b>Brambling</b>	16 were at LFP on 09.11, with 13 in the area on 15.11. Up to ten were in the Pilt/Man area to the end of Nov. In Dec, up to 19 (on 18.12) were noted, mainly in the Leigh area on seven dates between 03 and 31.
<b>Hawfinch</b>	Where to start! The well reported national influx of European birds brought unprecedented numbers to Rutland. At TunnW there were c.15 on 04.11 and 12 on 06.11, declining to five on 08 and two on 11.11. Yew berries at the cemetery in Ext Park attracted seven on 05.11, with six present on 11.11, and one or two to the end of Dec. One was at Clips Hall on 04.11. On 23 dates between 05.11 and 22.12, birds were noted passing through the Leigh and Pilt areas; usually one or two but five on 07.11 and three or four on 19.11 and 03.12.
<b>Siskin</b>	20 were at LFP on 05.11, one at RWWhit on 26.11, and 25 at RW Man Bay on 30.11.
<b>Lesser Redpoll</b>	28 were at LFP on 05.11 and 20 at Pilt on 14.11. Six were at RWLynd on 19 and 21.12.
<b>Common Redpoll</b>	Two were reported at RWLynd on 20.11.
<b>Bullfinch</b>	A well reported species with records from Leigh (27 on 01.11), Wg, RWEg, TunnW, KQ and CPW (14 on 28.11).



## Wildfowl Counts for November and December

	Rutland Water		Eyebrook Reservoir		Fort Henry Ponds/Exton Park		Banthorpe Gravel Pit		Holywell Lake	
	19.11	9.12	19.11	No count	16.11	8.12	16.11	7.12	No count	8.12
Mute Swan	383	282	109		18	17	2	2		2
Greylag Goose	276	440	268		251	389				
Canada Goose	795	560	11							34
Barnacle Goose	2	3								
Egyptian Goose	71	48								
Shelduck	5	10	2		1	1				
Wigeon	2962	3932	724		82	115				45
American Wigeon	1	1								
Gadwall	967	1013	150		15	33				14
Teal	1310	1645	496		19	78	24	52		15
Mallard	1082	941	241		202	152	46			70
Pintail	198	185	5							
Shoveler	136	102	8		13	16				
Red-crested Pochard	42	18								
Pochard	81	76	73							
Ferruginous Duck			1							
Tufted Duck	2995	5403	201		9	27				13
Scaup	2	2								
Common Scoter		1								
Goldeneye	146	253	29							
Smew	1	2								
Red-breasted Merganser	3									
Goosander	4	20								
Great Northern Diver	2	3								
Cormorant	327	205	96		1	2	4			
Little Egret	35	20			1	1	4			2
Great White Egret	15	4								
Grey Heron	33	28	1				1			
Little Grebe	146	101			14	18				26
Great Crested Grebe	451	336	54							
Red-necked Grebe	1									
Water Rail	15	6								
Moorhen	257	132	13		34	33	2			17
Coot	3316	2869	504		101	100				2
Kingfisher	1	2				1				
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>16060</b>	<b>18643</b>	<b>2985</b>		<b>761</b>	<b>983</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>56</b>		<b>240</b>

## BOTANY

### RECORDER John Rodgers

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There haven't been any new records since the last *Fieldfare*, though perhaps there are some hiding which might soon be on their way? It is not really surprising, there aren't many flowers about and what there are tend to be overlooked, that is if the weather has been kind enough to encourage going out for a walk. There are some to be found, **Winter Heliotrope** is in flower along the Oakham Canal, and **Common Ragwort**, **Groundsel** and **Valerian** are on the Oakham bypass and Land's End Way. The same flower specimens were recorded by mid-January in 2017.

Two of the last records received were for **Redshank** (*Persicaria maculosa*) and **Pale Persicaria** (*Persicaria lapathifolia*) growing side by side in Oakham, allowing a comparison of these two similar members of the Dock family. Both can have black blotches on the leaves, which according to Geoffrey Grigson in *The Englishman's Flora*, gives rise to old names, Pinchweed, Virgin Mary's Pinch or Useless. These latter names are supposed to stem from the fact that the Virgin pulled up a plant, left her mark on it and then threw it away saying 'useless' because it does not taste peppery like the related **Water Pepper**. This plant was often also called Arsemart because it was used to keep fleas at bay, but if it came into contact with bare skin, as it was likely to, it could make that smart. Quite direct many of the old names.

Let us hope that 2018 gives lots of opportunities for finding and recording plant life in Rutland.

## BUTTERFLIES

### RECORDER Richard Brown

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### Annual summary to end December 2017

No new species were observed during November and December, so the 2017 species count remains at 30, the same as last year. The addition of **Purple Emperor** this year was matched by the absence of **Clouded Yellow**.

### November/December 2017

<b>Red Admiral</b>	Several records until 19th November. A very long season since first noted in flight on 4th February.
<b>Small Tortoiseshell</b>	1 site, 1 individual on two occasions. Last individual noted in flight on 6th November – again note the long season with first record on 3rd February. <i>Many thanks to: D and J Ball, T Caldicott, and L Worrall.</i>

## MOTHS

### RECORDER Paul Bennett

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### November/December 2017

Only one record has been received during the reporting period. Lyndon Centre was trapped on the 15th November and produced 22 macro-moths of 6 species and 1 micro-moth. These were 12 **December Moths**, 3 **Winter Moths**, 3 **Feathered Thorns**, 2 **Sprawlers**, a **Scarce Umber**, **Yellow-line Quaker** and *Acleris literana* (Lichen Button).

*Thanks to the following for their records: V Arnold, P Bennett.*

## PLANT GALLS

RECORDER Roy Lemmon

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### November/December 2017

A brief report as befits the end of the gall season, Braunstone churchyard on the 2nd November gave just one record of an ascomycete which galls Ground Elder, producing quite obvious swellings of the leaf and petiole. The same gall was found in Exton Park on the 9th along with another ascomycete of the same genus which galls Dandelion. This is a new record for the county. Tunneley Wood on the same date gave 11 galls, one of which on Beech has until now proved elusive this year. Lyndon and Gibbett Gorse on the 16th rounded off the year, with a further 6 galls including a rust-like fungus gall on Creeping Buttercup.

There were no reports in December.

*Thanks to M Grimes and R Lemmon for their reports.*

## ORTHOPTERA

RECORDER Phil Rudkin

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No records this time, Phil tells me. He explains that for many years past he has made a point of going out with his bat detector after the Remembrance Day service – and this is the first time for years that he *hasn't* found an orthopteran! (See page 11 of January 2017 *Fieldfare* ...)

## MAMMALS

RECORDER Linda Biddle

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### November/December 2017

December snow made mammal tracks easier to spot than usual, and several members have been out and about in November and December, so a good number of records are included this time. **Badger** tracks were spotted in the field near Shoveler Hide, and prints showed where a badger had crossed over the little bridge near Badger Hide. A badger crossed the A606 near Sykes Lane in mid-November. The only other records of badgers this time were sadly road casualties, from Barrow–Market Overton, Ketton, Thorpe-by-water and Shacklewell Hollow.

On two occasions in November an **Otter** was seen swimming in Leighfield Fishponds, and spraint and footprints were found on many of the mink rafts at RWNr in November and December. Prints in the ice were found at Redshank Hide on 13th December. **Stoats** were recorded at Bunkers Hill near Empingham and Little Casterton Road Stamford, and a road casualty was found on the Pickworth Road south of Taylor's Farm. A record of a **Weasel** crossing the road by Barnsdale Lodge back in August is the only weasel recorded. The **Fox** is still a regular visitor to Marian Markham's garden, caught on camera sometimes several times a night. Clear tracks in snow close to Pickworth village, and across the bridge near Badger Hide, were found in mid-December, and a fox visited Duncan and Jane Ball's garden at Barrow just before Christmas.

**Hedgehogs** were also caught on the camera at Langham up to the 18th of November, and then on three evenings in early December. **Molehills** are reported from Barnsdale Hill, Manton Bridge, Pickworth Wood, Egleton meadows, Fort Henry, Heron Bay and Bloody Oaks Quarry. **Grey Squirrels** are seen regularly in The Willows garden at Barrow, and have also been recorded between Pickworth and Great Casterton, and at Langham on the trail-camera.

Two **Brown Hares** were seen at Exton Park in December, and singletons seen also in Exton Park. Clear tracks were found in the snow in mid-December, and a road



Water vole, L Biddle

casualty was found near Hambleton Bakery at the beginning of December.

Evidence for the presence of **Rats** at Manton Bridge was found in the rat runs underneath the beached mink raft, which had been blown on shore by the strong winds. In the quarterly survey of **Water Vole** rafts at RWNr in November, droppings were found at Dog Kennel Stream, Pollards reedbed, Fishponds reedbed, Fishponds cottage, Shoveler Hide, Heron Bay, Field16 ponds and Snipe Hide channel. At Oakham Canal very few signs were found, but there is still evidence that water voles are present both N and S of the road.

A single female **Roe Deer** was seen at Banthorpe Gravel Pits. **Muntjac** were recorded in the garden of the Stone House Wing, The Willows garden Barrow, Wader Scrape Hide RWNr, and Tunnely Wood, Ryegate Lake and Hall Farm Exton. Far fewer **Fallow** are seen than there used to be, but this time three were seen at Clipsham Park Wood, and two on three occasions in Pickworth Wood. At Exton Park on December 16th, a group of eight fallow ran across open fields southwards from Tunnely Wood and then halted in a depression in the middle of the fields, and stood and watched as we walked by, then continued southwards.

*Thank you to all contributors: J and D Ball, T Caldicott, C Gallimore, L Worrall, R Lemmon, T Mitcham, M Markham, M Manson.*

## BATS

### RECORDER Jenny Harris

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### November/December 2017

There were no records of bats at all in Rutland during the period, which I hope means our bats have gone into hibernation fit and fat! Grounded bats found away from roosts at this time have, in the past, usually been low-weight adult male pipistrelles that have probably spent late summer and autumn mating and actively holding territory so not thinking too much about putting on fat reserves.

Cold weather in November is likely to encourage bats to find hibernation sites with stable cool temperatures, insulated against rises in temperature as well as extreme cold. Both may cause arousal that can use up bat reserves; the former can tempt bats to venture out foraging for insects, while the latter may mean they have to move to avoid freezing to death. Cavities inside living trees are usually insulated against freezing but most bat boxes are not suitable, being usually too thin. Bats have occasionally been found with damage to their ear tips that appears to have been caused by frost bite, especially Daubenton's bats. Churches and stone barns, with thick walls, often also have suitable cavities where bats have been found hibernating. How Barbastelle bats survive in the exposed sites where some have been found in winter (e.g. in the exposed root plate of fallen trees or under loose bark) is still a mystery, as is the apparent ability of long-eared bats to lower their core temperature *below ambient*. Most bats finding themselves hibernating in a site that becomes dangerously cold for them either have to move to somewhere more suitable or raise their core temperature to avoid freezing to death. Both strategies use up energy stored as fat, potentially causing them problems at the end of hibernation. Poor site choice may be a major cause of mortality of juveniles in their first winter.

We know that bats store much of their fat for hibernation as *brown fat*. This is used to help them rouse from deep torpor without using too much fat, but I am not sure what conditions are needed to enable brown fat to be laid down. As a bat carer, I am always anxious that a bat found grounded with low weight at this time of year cannot be given appropriate conditions in captivity in which to accumulate brown fat. Even though such bats often gain weight rapidly when they have access to unlimited high-protein mealworms, can they lay down sufficient brown fat to survive hibernation if released with no insects around? On the other hand, will a mealworm diet leave them with depleted calcium levels after months in captivity? Different bat carers have different views. I usually play it safe and retain them until spring, but feed the mealworms on a calcium supplement.

## Norfolk coast weekend (October 29-30, 2017)

At the end of October around a dozen members enjoyed a series of visits along the North Norfolk coast. First thing on Saturday morning we met at Morston Quay and took a Bean's Boats cruise across the harbour to see the grey seal colony, which had started pupping a few days earlier. Members had great views of the bull seals in the water along with a good number of females and the sight of the odd calf on the beach. A few waders were spotted as we travelled and good groups of Brent geese were present. Although the wind started to get up the sea was reasonably calm and all were well pleased with the experience.

We then travelled to the Cley Bird Centre run by the Norfolk Wildlife Trust (NWT) where we first enjoyed lunch in the café and had great views across the marshes through the large windows at the Centre. We had arranged for reserve permits and the afternoon was spent in the hides on the marshes where Marsh Harriers were flying around. We had good sightings of many waders, ducks and geese although it was too windy to see Bearded Reedlings (aka bearded tits).

Members made their own arrangements for the evening but we met up again on the Sunday morning (enjoying the extra hour in bed) at the RSPB reserve at Titchwell. It was a bright but windy morning, and the group saw Black-tailed Godwit, Curlew, Ringed Plover, Redshank, Wigeon, Little Egret, and many other species. A few members visited the beach where Sanderling and godwits were in good numbers in the surf.

We then moved on to Holme Dunes visitors' centre (The Firs), again run by NWT, and after lunch we had the good fortune to meet two of the wardens who first took us for a coast watch. The wind by then was extremely strong and although birds were seen flying past, only the experts could identify them! A calmer end to the afternoon was spent in the hide overlooking the marshes and there we saw the Pinkfooted Geese returning from the fields to their roosting sites. An excellent weekend was had by all.



Norfolk weekend 2017. A Biddle.

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