



Hares at Lax Hill, Marian Markham

Diary dates, 4
Weather, 5
Amphibians and reptiles, 6
Birds, 7
Botany, 11
Butterflies, 11
Moths, 11
Orthoptera –
Other insects & invertebrates –
Plant galls, 12
Glow worms –
Mammals, 13
Bats, 14
Sir Clifford Boulton, 15
RNHS contacts, 16

January and February have been wet and cool, but the darkest part of winter was brightened by early flowering primroses, and cheered by two pleasant outdoor meetings, first a bracing January walk to Hambleton peninsula, second a great morning's birdwatching at Egleton. The highlights of the morning at Egleton were the sight of two male and two female **Smew**, and an encounter with a beautiful female **Peregrine falcon**. Relatively few members were there to enjoy it – where were you all?

The AGM and following photographic extravaganza was well attended and hugely enjoyed by all. A great fun evening thanks to audience participation, and a great job of organisation and presentation by Peter Scott and Dave Needham, so many thanks to them. The standard of photographs was amazing, and they were all improved by the personal anecdotes and background recounted in person by members. Several members have commented on how much they enjoyed it, and some requested repeat performances!

We look forward to the coming spring season of events and activities, and hope you will all find something to entertain or educate or both!

Moles and Molehills

I have been doing distribution maps for some species recently and it is apparent that we under record certain areas of the county, and certain species. According to my records there are no moles in most of Rutland! Many members have never sent in a record card. I would like to encourage all of you to send in your observations, so the common mole is my target for this coming season.

Everyone can see molehills – without even getting out of the car! Please will you carry a notebook, or even a record card, and note down all the molehills you see, then either send me your reports electronically or by post at the end of the month. I would like to see a tick on every square of the map for moles by the end of the summer. Let's see how well we can do!

If you have a computer and internet you can download the recording sheet from the website. You all received copies of the paper recording form in your January Fieldfare, so should have one or two left. If not ask me to send you some – or you could copy them from the originals you have.

Linda Biddle

Dawn Chorus Revisited

It is many years since the Society has undertaken a dawn chorus, and so it has been decided to carry out a new one this spring. The RNHS first became involved as part of a national survey where members noted the start time and species of the birds as they began singing. In the years following, the national scheme continued and the Society was able to record in Burley, Hambleton Wood and Barnsdale and on occasions in Morkery Wood.

The data from the surveys were correlated nationwide providing valuable information regarding species distribution and singing start times in relation to region, latitude and weather etc.

After the national surveys ended, the Society continued monitoring, mostly in Burley Wood with occasional visits to Barnsdale. By 1988, it was felt that the presence of the adjacent large body of the reservoir may have affected the woodland microclimate and this had shortened the duration time and volume of the singing through a decline in the numbers of birds of all species. It was decided, after a final public dawn chorus survey in Barnsdale in 1999, to call a halt to this regular event.

However, there have been lots happening over the years. The bird populations have altered as a result of the proximity and 'settling down' of Rutland Water, the developments in and around Burley Wood and indications that the climate is changing, all may have affected the timing of the bird song and the orders in which the different species begin singing.

Therefore it will be an interesting exercise to run the Rutland survey again this spring using Burley Wood as the recording site.

We have chosen the same weekend as all the previous surveys and Saturday morning 7 May is the date of this year's survey.

The start time is early, 03:00h. Many think that the dawn chorus begins at first light but this is not always true so we need to be in position before the first calls are heard.

We have detailed records of the timing and species from all of the previous Rutland surveys from Phil Rudkin and these have been collated by Paul Ellis so that we can eventually carry out a comparison.

It can be difficult in identifying the different bird song but fortunately we will be joined by a couple of experts so we can all learn.

At the end of the survey (around 05:00h) we will then make our way to the LRWT Volunteer Training Centre for bacon rolls and coffee or tea (by kind permission of LRWT).

Safety is an issue as it will be a moonless night (moon-rise is about 05:30h) and the wood is extensive. **If you wish to attend it is essential that you book a place** as we need to know who is likely to attend. For more detail see page 4.

Anthony Biddle

AGM 2016

An AGM was held on 1 March 2016, and the committee and officers were reelected en bloc, with the exception of Treasurer. Margaret Conner being officially elected, replacing Martin Grimes after 5 years of efficient and careful work.

After 8 years editing our Annual Report Hendrina Ellis has decided to step down, we are grateful to her husband Paul who has taken on this task. She continues as Fieldfare Editor.

Dawn Whitefield stepped down as Programme Secretary, but is kindly continuing in post until her replacement can be found. Derick Hill was elected onto the committee to work on members' behalf.

2016 Officers and Committee

<i>Chairman</i>	Linda Biddle
<i>(Hon) Secretary</i>	Roy Edwards
<i>(Hon) Treasurer and Membership Secretary</i>	Margaret Conner
<i>Programme Secretary</i>	<i>vacancy</i>
<i>Fieldfare Editor</i>	Hendrina Ellis
<i>Annual Report Editor</i>	Paul Ellis
<i>Committee</i>	Gill Chiverton, David Cotter, Jenny Harris, Derick Hill, Jenny Rivett, Peter Scott

DIARY DATES

RNHS EVENING MEETINGS

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 5 April, 7:30 pm **Mammals in Rutland**

An illustrated talk by Dr Helen O'Brien, the VC55 (Leicestershire and Rutland) Recorder for Mammals. This is the last inside evening meeting until October.

RNHS FIELD TRIPS

Full details of all these events appear on our website at www.rnhs.org.uk. If the weather is bad, check the website or call the 'Queries' phone number for changes.

Saturday 26 March, 7:30 pm **Astronomy evening**

At Egleton Birdwatching Centre car park, with David Conner and Melton Astronomical Society (OS SK 877 073). Carry a torch.
Queries: David Conner 01664 454532

Saturday 16 April, 10:00 am **Tortoiseshell Wood**



photo Anthony Biddle

Off the South Witham to Castle Bytham road
OS SK 963 197.

To be led by Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust, visiting Tortoiseshell Wood involves crossing traditionally managed meadows to get to this SSSI wood with rich, varied ground flora.
Queries: Hendrina Ellis 01780 482048

Saturday 7 May, 3:00 am Dawn chorus at Burley Wood

There are safety issues so numbers may have to be limited. For those interested in the experience please reserve a place by email or telephone.

We will meet at 03:00h by the gate off the A606. Park along the verge, to be in position by the start of the dawn chorus it is important to be on time. The nights can be very cold, carry a torch. Finishes around 05:00h.

Reservations & queries: Anthony Biddle antjbid21@gmail.com or 01780 762108

Thursday 19 May, 6:30 pm Castor Hanglands nightingales

Meet at Willow Brook Farm, PE6 7EL, Stamford Road between Marholm and Ufford (OS 118 030) Ample parking. 6:30 there is an *option* to join up for supper at the Granary Tea Shop before the walk. Book food beforehand from a menu on RNHS website with Dawn Whitefield (01664 454578).

Otherwise at 7:30 we set off from the yard walking through the John Clare countryside of Castor Hanglands. With good weather we expect to hear nightingales (possibly cuckoos too) amongst the glorious evening chorus, and perhaps find orchids and numerous other wild flowers. Bring a torch.

Queries: David Cotter 01780 765952 or 07887 392308

Friday 3 June, 6:00 pm An evening walk at Dawn's Paddock

Birds, butterflies, moths and possibly badgers and bats too, at this historic piece of church meadowland. Leaving Oakham on the Braunston road after 1.5 miles there is a large lay by on left, just before the Woodland Trust The Seek. Dawn's paddock entrance is accessed from the lay by. (SK 841 074)

Queries: Dawn Whitefield 01664 454578

Friday 1 July, 2:00 pm Seaton Meadows

Joe Costley of Plant Life will introduce our members to survey methodology before directing the afternoons activity. The finish will be around 4.00pm. This activity is linked to National Meadow weekend, and may become an annual event.

From Harringworth towards Seaton, after passing under the rail viaduct take the first right towards Morcott, park up after 200m.

Queries: Dawn Whitefield 01664 454578



LINCOLNSHIRE WILDLIFE TRUST, BOURNE GROUP

For details of LWT events, see www.lincstrust.org.uk, or phone 01507 526677 in office hours. Meetings are held at the Methodist Church Hall, Bourne.

Friday 18 March, 7:30 pm Dragonflies: Ancient aerial predators

Lecture: Mick and Sue Parfitt of the British Dragonfly Society provide an insight into this ancient group of insects, their complex life cycles, habitats and conservation.

Sunday 24 April, 10:30am Dole Wood: Open Day

One of Lincolnshire's prettiest bluebell-packed ancient woodlands. Nature reserve open day with Bourne Area Group members selling native plants, refreshments, homemade cooking etc. Finishes about 4:00pm. Park on the verge in Obthorpe Lane not on the access trackway to the wood.

Sunday, July 17, 1:00pm Stantons Pit LWT Reserve

Joint meeting with British Dragonfly Society. Use car park at TF 034173 (nearest postcode PE10 0JN), about half-way off a minor road running between Little Bytham and Witham-on-the-Hill. Nearest facilities in village pubs.

Habitats: Dragonfly rich former sandpit with lake, marsh, acid grassland and scrub. Leader: Brian Hedley 07989 665794 brian_hedley@hotmail.com

LEICESTERSHIRE & RUTLAND WILDLIFE TRUST, RUTLAND GROUP

For events in Leicestershire and Rutland see www.lrwf.org.uk or phone 0116 262 9968. Meetings are held at the Volunteer Training Centre, Hambleton Road, LE15 8AD. Entry £1.

- Monday 21 March, 7:30 pm** **Nene Washes nature reserve**
Meeting: Charlie Kitchin, RSPB Nene Washes Site Manager, talks about this wetland nature reserve noted for wildfowl, wading birds, owls, harriers and red kite.
- Saturday 16 April, 10:00 am** **Dragonfly workshop**
Claire Install, Senior Conservation Officer, formally with British Dragonfly Society leads a morning workshop. Booking essential, charge £3pp.
- Saturday 23 April, 7:00 am** **Lyndon bird ringing demonstration**
Starting at Lyndon Visitor Centre, demonstration of bird capture, ringing and release. Also meet the osprey team and see the birds and developments at the reserve, ends with cooked breakfast. Booking essential, £20.00pp. For more detail see the website.
- Monday 25 April, 10:00 am** **Dragonfly workshop**
see 16 April, booking essential, charge £3pp.
- Saturday 14 May, 1:30 pm** **Launde Big Wood bluebell walk**
Andy Lear leads walk through ancient woodland nature reserve with noted range of spring flowers. Can be very wet underfoot. Booking essential, charge £3pp.
- Sunday 15 May, 2:30 pm** **Prior's Coppice nature reserve**
Yet another opportunity to get wet feet with Andy Lear who leads a walk through the reserve of ancient woodland. A really wonderful wood which is south of Braunston.
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WEATHER

RECORDER Roy Lemmon

87 Empingham Road, Stamford PE9 2SU. Telephone 01780 762051
E-mail: Roy.Lemmon@yahoo.co.uk

January 2016

Atmospheric pressure and wind In the first half of the month pressures were markedly low, the lowest I recorded was 982mb at 09:00 hours on the 7th, and in the second half they were all higher including the highest, on the 23rd, at 1028mb. Winds were generally low in velocity and SW during the first half but were noticeably higher and more blustery in the second half with gusts up to 31.5mph again at 09:00 hours on the 29th. This was down to storm Gertrude.

Temperature In the decade 2007~2016 the mean minimum, 2.09°C was in third position and the mean maximum was fifth. There were 8 air frosts and the lowest overnight minimum, - 5.0°C on the 19th~20th occurred during the coldest part of the month, the 14th~21st. The highest daytime maximum I recorded was 14.2°C on the 27th and this happened in the warmest section of the month, the 22nd to the end.

Rainfall A wet month with a total of 59.7mm (2.35 inches) recorded here, which is 119% of my long term mean of 26 years. 84% of this fell in the first half of the month, including the highest daily amount, 13.0mm on the 6th. There was a small amount of snow on the 16th, difficult to measure but about 1.5~2cm, and it had melted by the early afternoon. This was the 3rd wettest January in the aforementioned decade, with 2014 at 111.0mm and 2008 at 78.7mm.

Nationally over the UK, rainfall averaged at 152% of LTM, provisionally the fourth wettest January since 1910.

Atmospheric pressure and wind This was a cyclonic month, i.e., the atmospheric pressures were generally low and this was especially noticeable in the first half when the month's lowest, 979.5mb, occurred at 09:00 hours on the 8th. Winds at this time were often both of high velocity and blustery, on both the 1st and 2nd I recorded gusts up to 25mph and this was a result of the named storms which come in from the Atlantic. The pressure briefly attained 1033.5mb on the 16th but after this it was lower and winds were correspondingly much lower in velocity and less blustery.

Temperature The mean minimum temperature was 1.30°C, the fourth warmest in the decade 2007–16 and the mean maximum, 8.75°C was fifth in the same period. There were 10 air frosts (when the temperature was 0.0°C or below), the lowest, –4.0°C, occurred overnight of 22/23. The highest daytime maximum was 14.1°C on the 21st with the next highest 13.7°C on the first of the month. The provisional Central England Temperature for this winter (December–February inclusive) is 7.0°C which is the highest since this particular set of readings began in 1659 and beats the previous highest 6.8°C, set in 1868–69.

Rain The total here was 33.4mm (1.31 inches) which is 92% of my long term mean of 26 years. No rain was recorded on 17 days and the highest daily amount was on the 17th when 11.2mm (0.44 inches) fell.

Nationally the provisional rainfall for this winter is 515mm, which is the second wettest winter on record after the 545mm recorded in 2013–14. The total here for this winter is 154mm while that for 2013–14 is 207mm, again illustrating that this is a comparatively low rainfall area.

AMPHIBIANS & REPTILES RECORDER Dr C H Gallimore

*The Stone House, Reeves Lane, Wing LE15 8SD. Telephone: 01572 737343
E-mail: chasgall@hotmail.com*

Amphibians are just beginning to wake up during this two months period (apart from the newts in my cellar, which have been sluggishly active throughout the winter).

Frogs were first heard croaking on 25 January in Barrowden. Croaking was not heard again until 20 February and subsequently. Spawn was found on 1 March. Although this is not in this period it may well have been laid 29 February. The only two **toad** records were of two toads disturbed in my garden in Wing on 18th and 20th January whilst gardening – one in a wall and one under a pile of woody bonfire material. Both were quite active and were assisted in finding new winter quarters.



Smooth newt: photo Peter Scott

Apart from a dead **Smooth Newt** found in the Rutland Water Visitor Centre in Egleton on 21 February, all the other newt records were from my pond and cellar in Wing. The first pond sightings of both **Smooth** and **Great Crested Newt** were on 11 January, when there were already seven **Smooth Newts** in the pond, although only one **Great Crested**. Thereafter **Smooth Newts** increased to 18 by 25 January, although **Great Crested** kept a low profile with three on 10 February being the only other sighting, although numbers have picked up by March.

My thanks to T Appleton, T Mitcham and L Worrall for their records.

January/February 2016

There was plenty of interest to begin the New Year when a **Great Skua** spent several days at Rutland Water, joining the long-staying scarce grebes and **Great Northern Divers**. A good variety of wildfowl included **Red-crested Pochard**, **Scaup**, **Common Scoter** and **Red-breasted Merganser** with a **Green-winged Teal** for good measure. A **Chiffchaff** of the Siberian race was found at Geeston sewage works, a much overlooked site for small birds in winter. More rarities appeared in February with (another !) **Great Skua** and a **Long-billed Dowitcher** at Rutland Water and a **Great Grey Shrike** near Great Casterton.

My thanks to the following for their records: *T Appleton, P Bennett, A & L Biddle, T Caldicott, A & J Comber, Dr CH Gallimore, C Debney, M & G Griffin, J Harris, AHJ Harrop, P Langston, LROS, S Lister, D Masters, I Misselbrook, T Mitcham, B Moore, D Needham, L & B Nicholls, L Park, JS & J Rodgers, P Rudkin, RWNr, S Todd, L Worrall.*

For Wildfowl Counts see page 10

Whooper Swan	Two flew over Wg on 16/01. There were seven at RWEg on 18/01 and 24/02 12 flew over QF on 28/02, and two were at RWEg on 29/02
Greylag Goose	Good counts at FHP were 115 on 03/01 and 189 on 10/01. There were 135 at Banthorpe GP on 23/01
Pink-footed Goose	One was at FHP on 10/01
Egyptian Goose	Five were at LFP on 01/01
Shelduck	A pair were regular at FHP from 11/02 and there was a pair at LFP on 14/02
Teal	27 were on a pond at KQ on 13/01
Green-winged Teal	A male was at Banthorpe GP between 19/01 and 05/02
Red-crested Pochard	Noted on four dates at RW between 01/01 and 11/02 with nine on the first date
Pochard	There was a good count of 19 at FHP on 24/01
Scaup	One or two were at RWNorm/SA between 15/01 and 29/02
Common Scoter	One was at RWLynd on 24/01
Smew	Present at both reservoirs throughout both months with max. counts of 11 at EBR on 18/01 and four at RW on several dates
Red-breasted Merganser	A female was at EBR from 01/01 to 10/01
Goosander	Singles were on Rygate Lake in Ext Park on 03/01, and the R.Welland at Stam on 23/02, with three there on 27/02. Two flew over LFP on 06/01, with three over on 11/02
Grey Partridge	Two or three calling birds were noted in the Wg, Pres and Rid areas from 08/01 to 28/02. Three were on stubble near GtCast on 01/02
Great Northern Diver	Four were at RWWhit to at least 30/01, with two to the end of Feb.
Bittern	One was noted at RWEg on 04/01 and 15/02
Cattle Egret	One was reported flying south over Oak on 22/01
Little Egret	Two were at Tole Mill on 24/02, probably the same as two on the R.Gwash near Belm on 08/01. One was at LFP on 11/02 and 28/02
Great White Egret	Two were at RWEg on 01/01, with one on 15/01
Little Grebe	Peak counts at FHP were 22 on 24/01 and 21 on 11/02
Red-necked Grebe	One was at RW between 03/01 and 09/01, and again from 22/01 to the end of Feb.
Slavonian Grebe	One was at EBR between 04/01 and 23/01 with one at RWNA from 23/01 to the end of Feb.
Black-necked Grebe	Two were at RWNA to 19/01 with four on 22/01, and three to the end of Feb.
Red Kite	Four over Bden on 25/01 and seven between Wg/Mor on 23/02 were the peak counts
Marsh Harrier	One passed through RWEg on 23/02

Sparrowhawk	There were records from four Oak and one Stam garden
Kestrel	Reported from FHP/Ext Park, Kett, Tollbar, RWEg and Banthorpe GP
Merlin	A male was near GtCast on 01/02
Peregrine	One was regular at RWEg throughout both months and one flew over Banthorpe GP on 19/01
Water Rail	Heard calling at LFP on 01/01 and 25 & 26/02, and at RWEg on 24/02. One was at Geest on 21/01
Oystercatcher	One was at RWNA on 16 & 17/01 with seven on 21/02
Golden Plover	On 10/01 there were 40 on pasture at Lydd Crossing and c.350 at Seat Meadows. On 17/01 there were two at EBR and 17 at RW with 30 at EBR on 21/02
Lapwing	c.500 were on Seat Meadows on 10/01 and on 17/01 there were 290 at EBR and 1514 at RW. On 21/02 1681 were at RW with 2000 at EBR.
Ringed Plover	The first returnee at RWEg was on 22/02 with four present on 26/02
Curlew	13 were at RW on 17/01 with 12 noted on 21/01 and 29/02
Dunlin	Regular at EBR throughout Jan. with 37 on 19/01. Fewer were noted at RW with eight on 04/01 and six on 23/02 the high counts.
Green Sandpiper	One was at RW on 05/01, 17/01 and 24/01
Redshank	Eight were at RW on 17/01 with one at EBR. Five were at RW on 21/02
Jack Snipe	Singles were at RW on 01/01 and 03/02
Long-billed Dowitcher	One was at RWeg from 23/02 to the end of the month, the first since Aug. 2005. This Alaskan and Siberian breeder should be wintering in the southern USA or Central America.
Woodcock	Birds were flushed at Norm, Wg, Leigh and RW with peak counts of five at Greet on 01/01 and four in TunnW on 19/01
Snipe	Up to three were noted at Banthorpe GP, FHP, Geest and LFP. At the reservoirs there were 19 at RW and 28 at EBR on 17/01 and 21 at RW and two at EBR on 21/02
Great Skua	One remained at RWSA/MW between 01/01 and 06/01 with a second bird present on 14/02
Little Gull	Two were at EBR on 03/01 with singles there 16/01, 19/01 and 16/02
Mediterranean Gull	Singles were at RW on 07, 10 and 14/01 with two on 08/01
Caspian Gull	One roosted at RW on 09/01
Barn Owl	Birds were reported from Wg, Pres, LFP, Man, Strett and QF. One roosting at RW on 09/02 had been ringed as a chick in one of our nestboxes near Wg on 11 June 2007.
Tawny Owl	Calling birds were noted in TunnW, RWLynd(three), Leigh(five), Wg(five), HM, Greet and PGW
Kingfisher	One was in RWNA on 03/01 and one was found on the count there on 21/02 – our only records
Green Woodpecker	Yaffling birds were heard at QF, KQ, FHP, TunnW, RWEg and BarnsW
Great Spotted Woodpecker	Despite the relatively mild weather, drumming birds seem strangely quiet, with records from only RWBFP, Wg, Ryll Heath, QF and TunnW. No records of birds visiting feeders were received – where are they all?
Jay	Records were received from CQ, PGW, FHP TunnW and Westland Wood
Jackdaw	c.5,000-6,000 were still using the GlastW roost in Jan. with 4,000 there on 05/02
Raven	Singles or pairs were noted at three of last year's breeding sites and another potential nesting site. Five flew east over TunnW on 24/01, and two landed in a tall Wellingtonia in Wg on 10/02.
Willow Tit	Four were at Leigh on 01/01, with one at LFP on 20/01, and regularly in Feb. One was at RWGgorse between 15/02 and 21/02
Marsh Tit	Records were received from TunnW feeders (three), Wg Fishing Lakes, HambW, CQ and PC (four)
Skylark	c.120 flew south over RWLynd on 17/01

Long-tailed Tit	Records came from three Oak gardens, with a max. of eight in one on 01/01
Chiffchaff	Calling birds were at LFP on 01/01 and Wg on 16/01 and 19/01. Two were at Geest sewage works on 23/01 and one at RWEg on 25/02
Siberian Chiffchaff	A bird of this race, much paler than the Common Chiffchaff, was at Geest sewage works from 21/01 to at least 05/02
Blackcap	A male frequented a Man garden between 06 and 22/02. A male was in an Oak garden on 25/02, eating apple and a female was in a second Oak garden from 27/02 to the end of the month.
Nuthatch	Records were received from Ext Park woodlands, BarnsW and a Wg garden.
Blackbird	93 were noted around Wg on 14/01 and 43 were around Leigh on 26/02
Fieldfare	60 were near TunnW on 19/01, 30 were at QF on 23/01 with larger flocks of 100 near FHP on 04/02 and 300 near LFP on 13/02
Redwing	c.12 visited a Bde garden on 17/02 and c.300 were near PC on 26/02
Stonechat	A male was at EBR on 10/01 with a pair from 19/01 to at least 22/02, two were at RWEg on 04/01 with singles at BFP on 12/01 and Eg on 16/02. There was a pair at Luff Airfield on 05/02.
Tree Sparrow	The only record was of three near Rid on 25/02
Grey Wagtail	Singles were noted in an Oak garden on 05/01, Geest sewage works on 21/01 & 23/01 and central Stam throughout both months
Chaffinch	The Leigh finch roost attracted 200 on 08/01, 150 on 13/02 and 135 on 28/02
Brambling	Two were at EBR on 03/01 and on 08/01 one was found dead in an Oak garden, probably the victim of a cat. Peak counts at Leigh between 08/01 and 28/02 were 48 on the first date, 38 on 13/02 and 20 on 28/02
Greenfinch	c.120 were at LFP on 01/01 with a similar number at Wg sewage works on 28 and 31/01
Goldfinch	The peak garden count was 14 in Stam on 09/02
Siskin	c.ten were in alders by Oak Canal on 16/01 with high counts of c.100 at RWManBay on 06/02 and c.150 on Lynd reserve on 24/01 and 12/02. Garden feeders were visited from 09/02 to the end of the month with up to four in Stam and three Oak gardens.
Linnet	c.150 were on game crops at Banthorpe GP on 21/01, and there was an interesting record of 74 roosting in an Oak garden on 20/02 with numbers declining to c.30 by the end of the month. They showed no interest in food there and only arrived during late afternoon to roost.
Lesser Redpoll	Game crops continued to attract good nos. with 80 at Leigh on 01/01, 50 in Ext Park on 31/01, and 120 still at Leigh in Feb. with 200 near PC on 25/02. Up to 12 were noted at RWLynd between 28/01 and 25/02 and one took sunflower hearts in an Oak garden on 23/01.
Bullfinch	Records came from Wg, (24 on 14/01), Oak Canal, CPW and PGW
Yellowhammer	Flocks of c.30 were reported from GtCast, Ryll Heath, PGW and Ext Park
Corn Bunting	It is always pleasing to conclude the field notes on a high and the location of three with Yellowhammers near GtCast on 09/02 was an excellent record. Let's hope we soon have singing males in the area.

January and February 2016 Wildfowl Counts

	Rutland Water		Eyebrook		Fort Henry Ponds/Exton		Holywell Hall Lake		Banthorpe Gravel Pit	
	17/01	21/02	17/01	21/02	19/01	19/02	16/01	18/02	18/01	22/02
Mute Swan	121	128	66	49	7	6		1	4	5
Greylag Goose	835	310	310	2	145	281	75	29		5
Canada Goose	595	244	7	19	2		34			
Barnacle Goose	2	2								
Egyptian Goose	22	33			2	5		1		
Shelduck	19	25				2				
Mandarin Duck		1								
Wigeon	2993	2430	738	426	110	129	4	6		
Gadwall	520	164	71	32	78	22	24	30		
Teal	961	265	1087	485	19	55	4	6		2
Green-winged Teal									1	
Mallard	588	473	381	73	161	81	128	49	6	4
Pintail	49	10	2		1					
Shoveler	25	15			4	2				
Pochard	71	35	12	6	14	7				
Tufted Duck	1391	773	292	365	48	45	22	23		
Scaup		2								
Goldeneye	250	307	76	48						
Smew	3	7	11	11						
Goosander	14	2			1					
Great Northern Diver	4									
Cormorant	93	88	38	37	7	5	1			
Little Egret	3	4	4	7				1		
Grey Heron	6	10	3	2	1	1				
Little Grebe	97	58	1		19	15	14	13		
Great Crested Grebe	170	127	36	24						
Red-necked Grebe		1								
Slavonian Grebe		1	1							
Black-necked Grebe	2	3								
Moorhen	64	65	4	6	23	21	17	12	1	1
Coot	302	556	211	27	111	56	6	10		
Kingfisher		1	1				1			

BOTANY

RECORDER John Rodgers

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The winter continues mild and wet and more plants begin to flower. The red, female flowers of Hazel, which look just like sea anemones, have been seen in several areas, and Coltsfoot, always an early bird, has appeared. Winter Heliotrope is in its usual place by the Oakham Canal, and Hedge Parsley, Fool's Parsley and Field Pansy are all in bloom near Great Casterton. Some of the cress species and the chick weeds are in flower on the roadsides; the plants that are usually dismissed as 'just weeds', whilst Primroses are making a show up at Clipsham Yew Tree Avenue. There are lots of blossom in the hedgerows, Blackthorn and Flowering Cherry. Last year was a good one for Cowslips; perhaps there won't be quite so many this time?

Records received from R & C Edwards, M Grimes, R Lemmon, T Mitcham, D Needham, P Rudkin, JSR

Don't forget to send in your records.

BUTTERFLIES

RECORDER Richard Brown

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Given the bleak weather it is perhaps not surprising that there have been no butterfly recordings reported yet this year for Rutland.

However elsewhere there has been more news – no less than seven species recorded by the 17 January on the national Butterfly Conservation website, mostly near the South Coast. And locally for 2016 two species have been recorded in Leicestershire and four in Nottinghamshire the usual winter hibernators waking up.

MOTHS

RECORDER Paul Bennett

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No records have been received during this period. The weather has been too wet and windy and latterly too cold at night to encourage much moth activity.

It is good to see that Rutland Water are running *Build your own moth trap courses* in April and June and pleasing to hear that some of our members have enrolled on them. I therefore look forward to receiving good numbers of records in the months ahead! Records can now be sent digitally although I am of course willing to accept records by any other method.

For anyone thinking of moth trapping in their own garden I would encourage you to do so; if you cannot make a course a variety of traps are available to purchase from suppliers at a reasonable price including one from our own VC55 recorder. Books can be purchased from the shop at Egleton and I would also recommend a recently published book entitled *The Larger Moths of Northamptonshire & the Soke of Peterborough* by John and Brenda Ward available direct from the authors bjward@btinternet.com.

This is my first report as moth recorder in succession to Jean Harvey and I would like to express the society's thanks to Jean for her work as a recorder and my own thanks for the help and advice she has given me since I took over. She also mentioned that she intends to continue mothing her local patch at Eyebrook Reservoir.

Butterfly and moth study in France?

David Moores is an expert on moths and butterflies and an avid collector and recorder. He lives in France on the Charente/Dordogne border (about halfway between Angouleme and Perigueux), and from his house woodland, marsh and limestone grassland habitats can all be accessed in under an hour by car. Locally

there are c.120 species of butterfly and he has trapped over 350 moths in the garden — very much a work in progress!

He can offer accommodation for up to three people who have access to his reference collection, library and study centre. Presently he has vacancies July–September.

Address: Le Bourg, Blanzaguet St Cybard, 16320, Charente. Telephone 00 33 54 56 20 566

NOTE: Although Phil Rudkin has stayed, any arrangement made by members as a result of this entry is a private matter in which RNHS has no interest.

ORTHOPTERA

RECORDER Phil Rudkin

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no reports

OTHER INSECTS AND INVERTEBRATES

RECORDER Gill Chiverton

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E-mail: gill.chiverton@gmail.com

no reports

GLOW-WORMS

RECORDER Linda Worrall

6 Redland Close, Barrowden LE15 8ES. Telephone: 01572 747302
E-mail: worrall6redland@talktalk.net

no reports

PLANT GALLS

RECORDER Roy Lemmon

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There were no galls reported in these two months so I shall take the opportunity to review the literature commonly available to help identify galls in this country.

The Field Studies Council do a very good pull-out card guide called appropriately *A Guide to Plant Gall in Britain* of which the society has 6 copies which are available to loan to members. If you would like to borrow one please let me know and they will also be available at the joint RNHS–British Plant Gall Society meeting at Prior's Coppice on 4th September. Also available to borrow is a copy of *Plant galls, Naturalists Handbooks No.17*; the latter goes deeper into the subject but still has lots of detailed drawings of both galls and gall causers.

A recent addition to the literature is *Britain's Plant Galls, a Photographic Guide* by Michael Chinery, which has many excellent close-ups and which must point the way forward for this sort of publication. The cost is about £14 and it is published by WILDGuides.

The 'big one', i.e., the most comprehensive and also the largest guide is *British Plant Galls* by Margaret Redfern and Peter Shirley with illustrations by Michael Bloxham. This is an AIDGAP publication by the Field Studies Council and while it is pricey at about £31 it is the product of virtually a lifetime's expertise in the field and really, for the money, excellent value.

Should any member be interested in any aspect of plant galls I shall be only too pleased to help.

After the great news of **Polecats** in the area in December we had further excitement in January when one was recorded on trail cam at Rutland Water NR near Field 16 ponds. The animal is quite clearly seen, and the distinctive face mask is obvious, so confirmation indeed that they are now with us. Do keep your eyes open for them. On the naturespot website there is a distribution map, and it is clear that they are well recorded all around us, so it was only a matter of time before they strayed into Rutland.

On a much less happy note, a beautiful, healthy young male **otter**, large and weighing at least 15kg, was found killed on the Hambleton Road near fishponds cottage in January. It is very sad that such a lovely animal should be killed, and we were most concerned that this was our resident otter, which habitually scratches out the clay from the mink rafts at Dog kennel Cottage, Burley Fish ponds and the reedbeds. However, on a visit in early March we found that those rafts had all been visited by otters, so it looks as though this was a wandering male otter, or at least if he was our resident then he has very quickly been replaced in the territory. Signs of otter were found also at Heron Bay and Manton Bay, and one was observed swimming near to Deep water hide on the Lyndon reserve. Another Otter was seen as it fished in Leighfield Fishponds at the end of February. Two freshly killed large **Bream** were found on the shores of Fort Henry lower lake on a New Years walk, so otters have been busy there too. The water **voles** have been out and about, signs found at all sites at RWNr, though not at Oakham canal so far this year.

At this time of year we usually record lots of **brown hare** activity, but this year we have not seen many. However in the Ashwell Burley area a total of around 30 were seen on one day. Two were sitting in the middle of a field opposite the church in Pickworth, and at Lax Hill four were observed, two of which were 'boxing' and photographed by Marian Markham, one with a mouthful of fur! Her image appears on the cover of this *Fieldfare*.

No stoats or weasels have been recorded this month, but the **fox** still visits Marian Markham's garden in Langham almost every night, at least once, and up to 3 times per night. The **badger** visits less frequently, and on one occasion beat the fox to the food, polishing off the lot, so that when the fox arrived minutes later there was none left. A fox is still occasionally seen near the old canal in Oakham, but there are fewer fox reports in recent years, for whatever reason. It is possible that since foxhunting was banned farmers are shooting them, and numbers reducing, or possibly the hunt used to disturb the foxes, with the result that members could see them more easily.

Grey squirrels also appear on trail cam at Langham regularly, (as do **Muntjac** and various **voles** – not easy to identify in the dark!) and they are also reported from Pickworth Wood and Tickencote. Two lucky specimens were seen feeding on dropped birdseed behind the ringing hut at RWNr.

In January the unseasonable warm weather tempted **hedgehogs** out to nibble peanuts in Barrowden gardens, and fortunately they were provided with food by several villagers. They continued to be active in February when the temperature was much lower – though none were seen their droppings betrayed their presence. One Oakham hedgehog was disturbed in slumber when a member was clearing a rough area in their garden, but the cover of dead leaves was replaced, and the hog allowed to go back to sleep until the warmer weather returns.

Few **fallow deer** have been seen, the largest group 19 seen crossing the road by Ryhall Grange, more usually ones and twos, reported from Pickworth Wood, Barnsdale, Exton park and Greetham valley golf club.

Many thanks to everyone for their reports. T Appleton, A Biddle, M Branston, C Gallimore, M Grimes, F Ingall, P Langston, M Markham, Terry Mitcham, P J Rudkin, P Scott, L Worrall

BATS

RECORDER Jenny Harris

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There were no records of bats in flight during January and February, but the usual hibernation checks were carried out at the East Rutland hibernaculum. The results were well down on last year, possibly because of the mild weather in January. The hope of finding barbastelles drew bat workers from Leicester, Rutland, Loughborough and Hinckley, but unfortunately none showed up this time.

Survey results	24 January	21 February
External temperature	10 °C	10.5 °C
Internal temperature (coldest)	9 °C	9 °C
Daubenton's bat	–	1
Natterer's bat	5	6
Whiskered/Brandt's bat	–	1
Pipistrelle sp.	1	–

The **whiskered/Brandt's bat** showed well for identification purposes, but it was very low and I think our close scrutiny woke it, so that when we walked back through the site it had roused and was moving about, which was not good news for the bat.

A recent study of hibernating bats at Greywell Tunnel in Hampshire, has found that bats in hibernation rouse quite frequently, especially on warmer nights, at around sunset, which of course fits in with their diurnal rhythm during the other seasons. It is nevertheless important not to disturb and rouse bats 'artificially', especially during the day when they cannot go out to feed. Analysis of droppings found below bats at Greywell showed that they were eating a wide range of prey, including non-flying invertebrates such as moth caterpillars, spiders and even woodlice. The study concluded that it is important to maintain foraging habitat close to the entrance of hibernation sites to support bats.

A **Natterer's bat** found grounded in a Stamford garden was just outside the Rutland boundary, is likely to have been a hungry bat that got caught out, as its weight, at 7.2g, was rather low. It has recovered well and will be released when the weather is milder.

RIVERS

RECORDER David Roome

5 Main Street, Ridlington. Telephone: 01572 821416. E-mail: davr333@btinternet.com
no reports



photo: David Cotter

AN APPRECIATION

Sir Clifford Boulton

Members will be sad to hear that Sir Clifford Boulton died on Christmas day, aged 85. He was our president from 2001 until 2011, and while in office was a regular attender at both indoor and outdoor meetings, and enjoyed seeing and hearing about wildlife in the company of other members together with his wife Lady Anne. He was a modest, unassuming and straightforward man, and it is not surprising to hear that he was a very shy person.

Most RNHS members will have been unaware of his eminent position as Clerk to the House of Commons the 44th holder of an office created in 1363. On graduating in 1953 he joined the clerk's department, and in 1987 was appointed Clerk of the Commons. His term in this post – almost 40 years – being one of the longest in modern times.

After retirement in 1994 Sir Clifford became much involved in local life here in Rutland, serving as Rutland Deputy Lieutenant, Chairman of Rutland County Council Standards Committee, Chair of Rutland Historic Churches Preservation Trust, and a trustee of Oakham School.

We are grateful for the time Sir Clifford spent with us, and for his work as our president, we send our condolences to his family.



Sir Clifford Boulton with vice president Clive Jones at Beaumont Chase Farm



photo: Anthony Biddle



photo: David Cotter

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