



Photo, Dave Cotter.

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Spring is very confusing this year. One day it's like summer, and then the next it's back to winter again. Flowers are convinced that spring is here: banks of violets are appearing, both blue and white, with celandines, primroses, speedwell and even wood anemones showing their faces to the sun – and wind and rain – creating a colourful carpet in woodland. The first chiff-chaff has arrived. Hares have also decided that it's time to get together again, boxing parties being seen from the end of February, and where hares have been remarkably scarce, groups of up to 11 in one field have appeared. Whatever the weather, those hormones just can't be suppressed!

Let's make spring and summer 2017 a good season for wildlife.

As a start, in order to commemorate 50 years of RNHS we, together with the Leicestershire Bat Group, have funded bat boxes for the Nathusius' pipistrelles in Burley Wood; and will have them erected with the very kind assistance of the Rutland Water Osprey team in good time for the bats' return later this spring. We can achieve much more when we cooperate with other conservation groups. We are also supporting Paul Bennett, our Moth Recorder, by providing funding for a moth trap to assist with collecting records this summer.

Less happily the wonderful signs on the verges courtesy of RCC have been less than effective in protecting the verges. In February the transport department sent out diggers to 're-establish' the drainage grips in many parts of the county, including the protected verges. The grips have been enlarged, some to a depth of 60 cm, and added to, in many cases unnecessarily on hills and sloping verges and

only a few metres apart, and spoil dumped alongside each grip. Those on the SSSI at Ryhall have been reinstated, following protests from many of us, with the support of English Nature. In other areas, though complaints have been made RCC say they cannot afford to do anything else.

Monitoring the protected verges continues to be a priority activity for the RNHS. **We plan to do our first joint survey on Tuesday May 2, and will meet at Greetham verge near Merry's meadows at 9.30 am.** Please do join us if you are interested in taking part, or just want to learn a few more wild flowers and would enjoy a morning out!

Linda Biddle, *Chairman*



The RNHS Dawn Chorus

The 2017 Dawn Chorus Survey will again take place in Burley Wood on Saturday morning May 6th at 4.00 am. The Survey will be a repeat of the previous year and follows on from Surveys that the RNHS had carried out over many years from the early 1970s until the 1990s. The identity and time of the first song of each species was recorded.

Much has changed in Rutland since those early days, notably the completion of Rutland Water, and now that the area has had several years to settle down, it was felt last year that the Survey should be restarted so that some comparisons could be made between then and now.

The choice of site was determined in the first surveys and although it was not the only site surveyed then, the data generated will compare with those collected over the last two years. Both changes in habitat and bird species were anticipated including the near loss of redstarts, but other species have now moved in including ravens and red kites.

Last year's results showed that the first bird heard was a tawny owl at 3.36 but the calling of woodpigeons was really the first song at 4.00 followed by carrion crow calls and pheasant, with robin singing at 4.17 quickly followed by blackbird and song thrush. Between 4.30 and 5.00 most songbirds had made their presence heard and it was after 5.00 that the number of species was diminishing as the day had well and truly dawned. However the lesser spotted woodpecker was seen in flight after 5.00 am and the last three birds singing were the nuthatch, willow warbler and garden warbler.

How will this compare with this year? We wait with anticipation. Next year we will be able to compare the results with the earlier surveys and see if any trend is showing. Anyone wishing to share the experience with us should follow the instructions given in the Events Programme in this issue.

Anthony and Linda Biddle



STOP PRESS!

Here are the bat boxes! (See page 1.)



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.

The Great Fen Project is the last evening meeting until the autumn season starts on October 3.

Tuesday April 4, 7.30 pm

Great Fen Project

Henry Stanier is the Great Fen Ecology and Recording Officer, a longstanding RNHS member, and just the person to give an authoritative account of the Great Fen. This is one of the most important restoration projects in Europe, see <http://www.greatfen.org.uk>.

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.

Sunday April 30, 9.30 am

Springtime in BURLEY WOOD

Note earlier start time. Phil Rudkin will lead this annual Spring walk to Burley Wood, please bring your membership card which gives permission for entry. It can be very muddy, appropriate footwear essential. Meet at the entrance gate on the A606, park with care on the verge. Grid ref: SK 892 093.

Queries: Phil Rudkin, 01780 762998.

Saturday May 6, 4.00 am

Dawn Chorus in BURLEY WOOD

Led by Linda and Anthony Biddle, enjoy the Dawn Chorus in this ancient woodland, followed by breakfast at the VTC (Volunteer Training Centre). Warm clothing, suitable footwear and membership card needed, and perhaps a picnic chair! Places must be booked in advance through our phone numbers (below).

Meet at the entrance gate (on the A606), just before 4.00 am, so that we can have a prompt start. Park with care on the verge. Grid ref: SK 892 093.

Queries: Linda and Anthony Biddle, 01780 762108 or 07749 636919.

Sunday May 21, 2.30 pm

MERRY'S MEADOW – A Green-winged Spring meadow

Jenny Harris, RNHS Bat Recorder as well as LRWT Conservation Officer, leads this walk at Merry's Meadow SSSI. Meet outside entrance, park on verge near gate, please do not obstruct any gateways. If distance from road is a problem, there will be a shuttle with 4WD vehicles. Wear appropriate footwear. Grid ref: SK 831 174.

Queries: Jenny Harris, 01572 755274.

Thursday June 1, 7.00 pm

Farm walk at BEAUMONT CHASE FARM

A Thursday evening walk with farmers Jo and Mary Nourish (RNHS). This is the beautiful farm where Terry Mitcham has been recording bird breeding data for years beyond recall (see *Annual Reports*). Grid ref: SP 846 988.

Queries: Linda Biddle, 01780 762108 / 07749 636919.

Sunday June 18, 10.00 am

THE ALLERTON PROJECT – Farming Methods And Wildlife

Jim Egan and Amelia Woolford from the Allerton Project will show us round. Maximum number on the tour is 20 people, phone Linda Biddle to book beforehand. Meet at Loddington House, Main Street, Loddington, LE7 9XE. Grid ref: SK 791 024.

Queries: Linda Biddle, 01780 762108 / 07749 636919.

LEICESTERSHIRE & RUTLAND WILDLIFE TRUST, RUTLAND GROUP

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

Check their website for Osprey cruises and Badger watching amongst a wide selection of events.

Sunday June 25, 2.00 pm

Wymondham Rough

Wymondham Rough (12.5 ha) is owned by LWRT and has an interesting history. The 4 ha grassland part is a SSSI. Much interesting botany on this reserve, including cowslip, bugle and water avens in the spring; dropwort, great burnet, betony, devil's-bit scabious and yellow rattle bloom later. Butterflies are abundant. Led by Jenny Harris of LRWT and RNHS. Park on the eastern verge of the road north of the level crossing (SK 831 174), nearest post code LE14 2SD, 8 km east of Melton Mowbray and 2 km from Wymondham.

LINCOLNSHIRE WILDLIFE TRUST, BOURNE GROUP

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

Sunday April 23, 10.30–16.00

Dole Wood Open Day

As spring gets into its stride, one of our most breathtaking natural spectacles is unfolding within ancient woodlands - bluebells are bursting into colour. Discover one of our prettiest of bluebell woodland nature reserves on this special open day. Trust sales, refreshments, excellent homemade cooking and locally grown plants will be on sale. With the Bourne Area Group.

Saturday May 13, 2.00–4.00

Visit: Aveland Trees

By kind invitation of Hugh Dorrington, the Bourne Area Group are visiting Hugh's native tree nursery and his woodland restoration. Aveland Trees is situated on the B1177 at the northern end of Dunsby village (on the left if coming from the south).

Sunday June 4, 10.30–4.00

Deeping Lakes Nature Reserve

Come along to view this stunning nature reserve. Trust sales, refreshments, excellent home made cooking and locally grown plants will be on sale. With the Bourne Area Group.



Photo, Dave Cotter

WEATHER

RECORDER Roy Lemmon

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January 2017

Atmospheric pressure and wind This was essentially a high-pressure month with two periods, the 2nd to the 8th and the 15th to the 26th, all dates inclusive, in which the pressure was above 1017 mb. During these dates wind speeds were low, often zero at 0900, and especially in the last week visibility was often much diminished due to fog and/or low cloud. Winds in the first half of the month were NW–N and thereafter SE–SW.

Temperature A cold January, a mean minimum of 0.47 °C and a mean maximum of 6.57 °C put it eighth coldest in the decade 2008–2017. There were 16 ground frosts and the lowest overnight minimum was –5.4 °C on the 25/26th followed by the lowest daytime maximum of –0.8 °C on the 26th. The highest daytime maximum was 10.9 °C on the 10th.

Rain A total of 39.8 mm (1.6 inches) corresponds to 80% of my long-term mean of 27 years. Three other Januaries had lower rainfall in the above-mentioned decade, and 2012 had the lowest with 28.2 mm. Daily amounts were small and there were 15 days on which no rain fell.

February 2017

Atmospheric pressure and wind Pressures were low in both the first and last weeks of the month; during the middle fortnight they were much higher, with the highest, 1029 mb on the 9th. Winds were very variable during the month and generally of low velocity except during the last week, which saw Storm Doris on the 23rd, and at 0900 I recorded wind speeds up to 40 mph. As I use a hand-held anemometer in a nearby playing field, it took me all my time to remain upright. RAF Wittering recorded wind speeds up to 49 mph at 1530 on that same day. The 23rd also saw the lowest air pressure of 987 mb at 0900.

Temperature This was a warm February, the 3rd warmest in the decade 2008–2017. The mean minimum was 3.05 °C and the mean maximum was 9.06 °C. The mean minimum on its own was the 2nd highest in that decade. There were just 4 air frosts, the lowest –2.0 °C on the 4/5th; and the highest daytime maximum was 15.0 °C on the 20th.

Rain A total here of 39.4 mm (1.55 inches) which is 108% of my long-term mean of 27 years. The 2.2 mm that fell on the 10th did so as sleety snow and didn't settle.

AMPHIBIANS & REPTILES

RECORDER Dr C H Gallimore

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

January/February 2017

All four species of amphibian have been recorded in these two months.

Frogs were noted in amplexus in Exton on 18th February and were active in Barrowden on 20th and in Wing on 23rd. The first spawn was laid in Linda Worrall's pond in Barrowden on 22nd February and by the 28th she had 22 clumps. This is the earliest date in the county for 10 years. Frog spawn was also reported from Oakham and Stamford on 28th February.

Toads were also about early this year with a toad crossing Reeves Lane in Wing on 2nd February. On 21st February three less fortunate toads were found dead on other lanes in Wing.

Both species of newt were present in my cellar in Wing in these months – a **Smooth Newt** on 7th January and a **Great Crested Newt** on 2nd February. Six Smooth Newts were in my pond by 4th February and by 21st there were ten. Great Crested Newts were not seen in my pond until 21st February, when there were fifteen, on which date there was also a road casualty near my house. Unfortunately

since then three randy mallards arrived at my pond and have made it rather opaque, interfering with subsequent counts.

My thanks to the following who sent records: D Cotter, A Hill, P Langston, A Lawrence, L Worrall.

BIRDS

RECORDER Terry Mitcham

30 Sutherland Way, Stamford PE9 2TB. Telephone: 01780 751268.

E-mail: joterpat@btinternet.com

January/February 2017

The year began well with Green-winged Teal and Surf Scoter still at Rutland Water, as well as the scarce grebes. There was a good showing of egrets with three species recorded as well as Bittern. Waders were noted at both reservoirs, especially Lapwings along with returning Oystercatcher, Ringed Plover and Curlew. A few Waxwings appeared but did not linger and garden birds brought few surprises. The mild weather did benefit Stonechats which were recorded at four sites and an early Sand Martin just made it into these notes.

My thanks to the following for their records: D & J Ball, P Bennett, A & L Biddle, P & C Brown, T Caldicott, A & J Comber, Dr C H Gallimore, M & G Griffin, M Grimes, T Land, P Langston, LROS, M Markham, I Misselbrook, T Mitcham, B Moore, D Needham, B & L Nicholls, J W Nourish, P Rudkin, J S & J Rodgers, RWNR.

(See also Wildfowl Counts on page 9)

Whooper Swan	Five were at EBR on 10.01, with seven at RW on 17 and 21.01. 17 flew north over LFP on 20.01 and four flew south-east at RW on 15.02.
Egyptian Goose	In Jan two flew south at Pilt on 03. Three were at Wg on 07 and up to five were at LFP to 20.
Shelduck	Noted at FHP from 04.01, with three on 07 and 09.02. Two were at PC ponds on 27.02.
Mandarin Duck	Three were near the R.Chater near Wg on 14.02, with one on 19.02, and two males at FHP on the same date.
Wigeon	Away from the reservoirs there were c.200 at PC ponds for most of Jan, with 250 there on 27.02. There were 78 on a flooded field at Cott on 11.02, and the peak FHP count was 149 on 19.02.
Green-winged Teal	The male at RWNA was present throughout Jan and last noted on 01.02.
Pintail	A male was at FHP on 08.01 and 07.02.
Shoveler	Five on 04 and 28.01 was the peak FHP count. Two were at LFP for most of Jan, and one was on a flooded field at Cott on 11.02.
Red-crested Pochard	Present at RW throughout both months with a peak of 34 on 28.01 with 33 on Eg Lagoon 3.
Scaup	Present at RWSA in both months with a max of seven on 11/12.02.
Common Scoter	A female was at RW between 02 and 08.01.
Surf Scoter	The first-winter male was last reported at RWNA on 11.01.
Smew	Well reported from RW from 06.01 to the end of Feb, with a max of 19 on 01.02. At EBR there were two on 06.01 and 22.01.
Goosander	Noted only at RW where nine were at Eg on 06.02.
Ruddy Duck	The RW female remained to 27.01.
Grey Partridge	A calling bird was in the Rid area between 04 and 26.02.
Bittern	Two were at RWEg on 14.01, with three present on 23.01 and one to at least 12.02.
Cattle Egret	One was at RWEg on 05.01 but, sadly, did not linger.
Little Egret	Away from the reservoirs there were two at HM/FHP between 04.01 and 29.01, with singles at Lang Brook on 14.01, one over Oak and one near Ashwell on 29.01.
Great White Egret	Present at RW throughout both months with five to at least 12.02, and two on 28.02. One was at EBR on 24 and 27.02.
Red-necked Grebe	One remained at RW Old Hall to at least 15.02.

Slavonian Grebe	Two remained in RWNA throughout both months.
Black-necked Grebe	Three were in RWNA throughout both months.
Red Kite	Twos and threes were widely reported with a max of six over HM/FHP on 24.02.
Buzzard	One regularly visited a Wg garden in both months, prospecting for moles. Three was the max at QF on 20.02.
Sparrowhawk	Garden records came from Barrow and Oak.
Water Rail	One was at FHP on 08.01; and one was heard by Lagoon 3 at Eg on 27.01.
Moorhen	30 were on ponds at Greet GC on 11.02.
Oystercatcher	Six were at RW on 12.02, with four on Lagoon 4 on 24.02.
Golden Plover	A wintering flock south of PGW was present from early Jan to at least 29.01, with 112 on 22.01 and 200 on 28.01. 211 were at RW on 12.02.
Lapwing	Large counts at RW were 2019 on 15.01 and 2446 on 12.02. Other large flocks were c.600 north-west over Pilt on 08.01, and 200 there on 03.01, with similar nos at Ext Park on 29.01 and EBR on 12.02.
Ringed Plover	In Feb, there were three at RWEg on 18/19.02, with six on 20 and eight on 24.
Whimbrel	The overwintering bird at RW was present to at least 15.02.
Curlew	Ten were at RW on 15.01, with eight on 12.02. A calling bird near Barrow indicates an early return to a regular breeding site.
Dunlin	27 were at EBR on 01.01. Present at RW throughout both months, with 73 on 15.01 and 86 on 12.02.
Green Sandpiper	One was at EBR on 01.01 and singles were at RW on 15.01, 27.01 and 15.02.
Redshank	Ten were at RW on 15.01 and eight on 12.02.
Jack Snipe	One was flushed at Banthorpe GP on 06.02.
Woodcock	Noted from 02.01 to 25.02, with up to three at Wg, TunnW, Leigh, PGW and Westland Wood. An impressive 14 were flushed during a shoot at Stoke Dry Wood on 28.01 – they were not targeted.
Snipe	Between 08.01 and 25.02, up to five were flushed at FHP and LFP. Two were at EBR on 15.1. There were good totals at RW in Feb, with 43 at Eg on 06.02 and 36 on 12.02.
Kittiwake	An adult was at RWWhit on 24.02.
Mediterranean Gull	Singles were at RWEg on 18.01 and EBR on 22.01.
Iceland Gull	A second-winter bird was at EBR on 04 and 06.01.
Glaucous Gull	At EBR there was a juv on 01.01 and an adult on 07.01. A juv was at RWEg on 07.02.
Barn Owl	There were records from nine sites, all but two from the area west of Oak and Lynd – an encouraging situation for the coming breeding season.
Little Owl	The only record was of a calling bird at Barrow between 07.01 and 21.02.
Tawny Owl	Calling birds were reported from Lang, FHP, TunnW and Barrow. One flew across the A606 near Emp on 20.02.
Kingfisher	One was along the Lang Brook on 20.01 and one at RW Norm on 24.01.
Green Woodpecker	Records were received from regular sites at FHP, PGW, CottW, CPW, BarnsW, QF and RWEg.
Great Spotted Woodpecker	Drumming birds were at QF, Geest, TunnW, Barrow and RWEg. One visited TunnW feeders on 26.02.
Kestrel	Hunting birds were noted at Shacklewell, RWEg, Barrow, Ext Park and FHP, where a displaying pair was watched on 25.02.
Peregrine	The female ringed at Derby Cathedral remained at RWEg throughout both months. Other records came from LFP, RWLynd, Man and Prest. A pair were at a regular breeding site on 18.02.
Jay	Records came from Geest, PGW, TunnW and RWEg.
Jackdaw	Birds from the GlastW roost were noted over Pilt on three Jan dates, with between 3,000 and 3,500 noted.

Raven	Singles were noted at FHP, TunnW and PGW with five over Ashwell. Pairs were at two nest-sites, with nest-building noted at one on 07.02.
Goldcrest	Two were in an Upp garden for several days from 18.01, and four were noted at CPW on 29.01.
Willow Tit	Records came from Pilt, Barrow, LFP (four on 26.02) and Leigh.
Marsh Tit	Records of pairs came from TunnW, PGW, and CPW. One was in a hedgerow near HM on 25.02.
Skylark	The rough grassland at QF is an important breeding site for this species – ten were in song there on 20.02.
Sand Martin	An early bird was at RW Man Bay on 28.02.
Long-tailed Tit	The peak garden count was ten in Oak on 13.01. 28 were counted in three flocks at RW Ggorse on 24.01.
Chiffchaff	Three were on the filter beds at Geest sewage works on 29.01.
Waxwing	c.22 were in Oak on 02.01, declining to 12 by 08.01. Singles were at LFP on 10.01, with one in Man on 15.01 and two there next day. 11 were along Ryhall Road in Stam on 17.01.
Nuthatch	Records were received from FHP, Ext Park woodlands, Greet GC, PGW and CPW.
Treecreeper	There were Jan records from gardens in Barrow and Wg. Also noted at RWeg and FHP with song there from early Feb.
Starling	A large flock of c.2,500 flew west over Man on 11.02. On a (much !) smaller scale, c.300 fed with Fieldfares in Ext Park on 25.02.
Blackbird	There were some high counts in both months. 82 were noted around Wg on 07.01, 64 around RWeg on 18.01, 76 at Leigh on 08.02 with 40 in a different area there next day, and 77 along the cycle track along the western side of RW on 13.02.
Fieldfare	The only record was of c.50 at QF on 20.02.
Redwing	c.40 were at RW Norm on 14.01 and c.30 at QF on 20.02.
Song Thrush	c.25 were at Leigh on 16/17.02, and 22 along the RW cycle track on 18.02.
Robin	In Jan, 28 were along the RW south shore between Ggorse and the Sailing Club on 19, with 36 in the same area on 31. On 08/09.02, 56 were in two areas at Leighfield.
Stonechat	Two were regular at EBR throughout both months with up to four resident at RWeg. One was at FHP/HM on 05.02 and 20.02, with three males at FHP on 25/26.02. A male was at LFP on 17.02.
Dunnock	Eight were counted beneath feeders at Norm on 14.01.
Tree Sparrow	At FHP there were three on 08.01 and two on 25.02. Two were at RW Lynd feeders on 18.02. Eight were at Leigh on 16.02, with ten there on 27.02.
Grey Wagtail	Singles were noted from 29.01 at Geest sewage works, FHP, RWBarns, and North Brook. Two were at Greet GC on 11.02.
Meadow Pipit	c.30 noted along RW south shore on 19.01.
Chaffinch	The Leigh roost was monitored between 02.01 and 25.02, with a max of 190 present on 05.01.
Brambling	The Leigh roost produced a max of 42 on 05.01, 37 on 04.02 and 36 on 26.02. Five were at Holywell on 22.01 and up to three at Wg, RWLynd, Ext and Whiss between 02.01 and 02.02.
Bullfinch	Records came from EBR, Barrow, PGW, Leigh (22 on 28.01 and 27 on 16/17.02), Wg (28 on 07.01) and RWeg.
Greenfinch	It is rare for negative records to be included here but at Norm no Greenfinches visited feeders in the six weeks preceding 14.01.
Linnnet	c.50 roosted by an Oak garden from 14.01, and c.60 were on game crops near Mounts Lodge on 22.01. Also on game crops were c.70 at Martinsthorpe on 25.01. 60 were at Leigh on 27.02, with c.150 at Eg next day.
Lesser Redpoll	32 were at RW on 04.01, with ten at Eg reserve on 27.01. Seven were in Ext Park on 25.02.
Crossbill	One was heard over Leigh on 26.02.
Goldfinch	11 were on feeders in an Oak garden on 01.02, and c.25 were at QF on 20.02.

Siskin	Few were recorded. c.48 were at RW on 26.01, a male was in song at TunnW on 29.01 and six were in Ext Park on 26.02.
Yellowhammer	c.110 fed on unharvested cereals at Mounts Lodge on 24.01.
Reed Bunting	c.45 were at the Mounts Lodge site on 24.01 with 13 at Martinsthorpe next day. One fed in a Stam garden on 23.01, with three present there on 25.01.

January/February Wildfowl counts

	Rutland Water		Eyebrook Reservoir		Fort Henry Ponds /Exton Park Lake		Banthorpe Gravel Pit		Holywell Lake	
	15.01	12.02	15.01	12.02	13.01	09.02	22.01	13.02	13.01	09.02
Mute Swan	291	212	105	63	6	6	3			2
Greylag Goose	84	45	188	54	152	264	81	60		79
Canada Goose	184	198	32	99			36	24		2
Barnacle Goose	2	2								
Egyptian Goose	27	13			3					
Shelduck	11	17				3				
Mandarin Duck								2	2	
Wigeon	4118	3432	689	527	253	155	31	31		
Gadwall	733	515	76	87	104	96	15	22		
Teal	1667	495	376	1	36	18	15	10	49	45
Mallard	796	443	198	52	153	137	204	83	22	7
Pintail	182	21	8	3						
Shoveler	62	37			4	1				
Red-crested Pochard	26	17								
Pochard	61	80	18	28		1				
Tufted Duck	2579	1661	247	244	98	76	16	30		
Scaup	4	7								
Goldeneye	295	287	64	107						
Smew	9	5	2	1						
Goosander	17	22								
Ruddy Duck	1									
Great Northern Diver		1								
Cormorant	175	199	16	45		2				
Bittern	2	1								
Little Egret	29	24		1	3		2		1	
Great White Egret	2	5								
Grey Heron	21	5	3	1		1			1	2
Little Grebe	71	75			17	19	14	19		
Great Crested Grebe	418	350	59	119						
Red-necked Grebe	1	1								
Slavonian Grebe	2	2								
Black-necked Grebe	3	3								
Moorhen	164	78	4	1	25	21	22	11	3	3
Coot	2579	1747	167	73	86	83	6	4		1
Kingfisher							1			

BOTANY

RECORDER John Rodgers

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There's a noticeable change in the length of the days, and spring is upon us; starting slowly perhaps but soon to burst out all around us. Flowers in the garden come out earlier than those in the wild, but we have already had two months worth or more of some flowers. Primroses were in bloom by the middle of January at Lyndon, whilst Red Dead Nettle, Groundsel, Dog's Mercury, Ground Ivy, and Winter Heliotrope had all appeared at the beginning of February. So too had Snowdrop and Winter Aconite, at Pickworth, by the 4th of the month. Coltsfoot was seen at Ketton and Quarry Farm by the third week of February, and Lesser Celandine at Egleton on the 16th. Those at Seaton church didn't appear until the end of the month, rather later than in other years. Sweet Violet was growing underneath the beech trees at the end of Ashwell Road this week. There is blossom in the hedgerows. We had a record of Cherry Plum in flower by the 23rd. It is easy to mistake this flower for Blackthorn.

Let us hope we have a good year, with new recorders and lots of records.

This month's records came from R Lemmon, M Grimes, A & L Biddle, L Worrall, P Rudkin, D Needham and E Northern.

BUTTERFLIES

RECORDER Richard Brown

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January/February 2017

It is traditionally the species that hibernate as adults that emerge first in the spring, and this year is looking to be no exception, though only three records, all for the Peacock, have been received so far this year. The table below lists the first records for each of the last four seasons. Despite the cool, damp weather in 2017 the Peacock has been seen much earlier than in previous years – is this a tribute to the butterflies being up early, or to our observers getting out early ?!

2014		2015		2016		2017	
Small Tort	26 Feb	Brimstone	25 Feb	Small Tort	20 Mar	Peacock	02 Feb
Brimstone	04 Mar	Red Admiral	27 Feb	Brimstone	20 Mar		
Comma	07 Mar	Small Tort	07 Mar	Comma	31 Mar		
Peacock	08 Mar	Comma	07 Mar	Orange Tip	10 Apr		
		Peacock	20 Mar	Peacock	10 Apr		

By way of comparison, Nottinghamshire have already recorded four species by the end of February, with their first Peacock also being seen exceptionally early on 20th January.

Local news of interest is that Andrew Harrop's book *Rutland Butterfly Atlas* is now available from the Egleton Reserve shop, or from Walkers in Oakham, price £12.

MOTHS

RECORDER Paul Bennett

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No report for this period, please continue sending in your records.

PLANT GALLS

RECORDER Roy Lemmon

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January/February 2017

There were galls to be found at this time of year, admittedly very few and by definition 'left-overs' from the previous season. Examples are these are the Witch's Brooms found on birch, which are perennial of course, and various woody galls on Oak such as the Cherry Gall, which eventually falls away from the plant.

On February 4 there was a report from Bloody Oaks Quarry of two related species of rust which are also gallers. At this time of the year any rusts found are usually in their telial or over-wintering stage, when they appear as small groups of black fluff on the underside of leaves, in this case Bramble. They don't produce galls that are obvious so we have to consult the literature to be sure.

There should be more happening in the next couple of months and I look forward to any records you might have.

ORTHOPTERA

RECORDER Phil Rudkin

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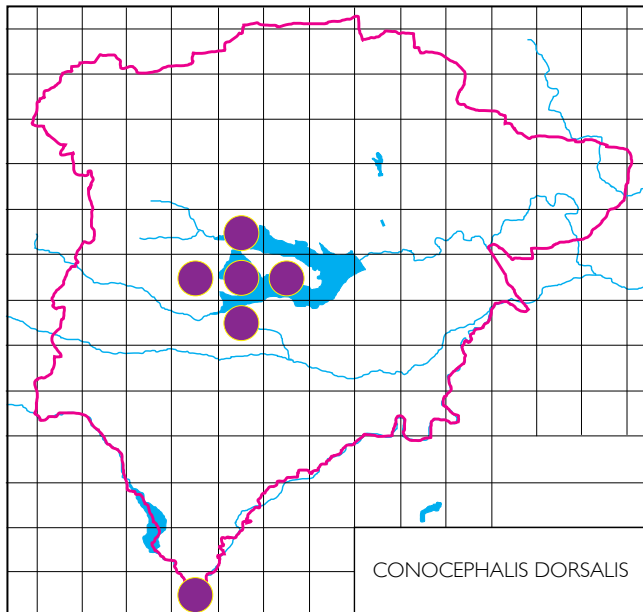
The following article is reprinted, with permission, from the Leicester Entomological Society newsletter number 56, January 2017.

Status of the Short-winged Conehead in Rutland

I am a member of the Wildlife Recording Group at Rutland Water. Since the re-emergence of this group in November 2011, all the various species data has each year been submitted to the Nature Reserves records base. It was originally intended that there would be an Annual Report printed. However, there was only one produced during that time.

In March 2016, the Wildlife Recorders received news from the reserve organisers that, as from April 2016, in future we are to submit our records to *NatureSpot*. Therefore, at the end of season 2016, I began to input the Rutland Water Reserves Orthoptera data in to *NatureSpot*. An interesting problem occurred as I attempted to enter Short-Winged Conehead, *Conocephalus dorsalis*. *NatureSpot* would not accept this species (every other one inputted OK)! I then contacted the controller David Nichols about this situation, and received a prompt reply. To my surprise, David told me that there has never been a Short-winged Conehead entered into their system. Moreover, this suggests that this cricket has only been recorded in VC55 (Rutland). *NatureSpot* have not received a sighting for VC55 (Leics). Or has it simply not been entered into their database? So David Nichols set up the link for me; and 'job completed'!

This news was very revealing, as this species only arrived in Rutland in 2007. This was a small colony located on a rough grass verge, along the Hambleton Peninsular Road. It was a surprise; as the habitat was unusual for the Conehead. One year later in 2009, a small Rutland Natural History Society Group was 'out and about' on the North Shore, South Arm, of Rutland Water, when I heard the distinctive stridulating of the males. We converged on a large patch of *Juncus* at the edge of the water, (this time a typical habitat). Males and females were caught and photographs taken, a large colony indeed! In July 2010, the Short-winged



Conehead finally made the short journey onto the Egleton Reserve; and was recorded there for the first time. It spread very slowly over most of the reserve, and was diligently monitored!

Since then, this damp vegetation lover has thrived in the Rutland Water complex. The distribution map shows this clearly! Despite searches in other parts of Rutland over the years, whilst carrying out regular Orthoptera surveys, we have found only one other colony, and this was on 28 September 2011, a large number of stridulating males in rough, damp vegetation, on the southern edge of Rutland, just outside Caldecott. Finally, in July 2015, a small pioneering colony at last made it onto the Lyndon Reserve, which I located in a small, but typical damp patch of *Juncus* along the farm track, near Tufted Duck Hide.

OTHER INSECTS AND INVERTEBRATES RECORDER Gill Chiverton

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August to end December 2016

BUGS Hemiptera

Red-legged/Forest Shieldbug <i>Pentatoma rufipes</i>	August	A total of 285 Forest bugs were counted after overnight mothtrapping at EBR in 5 moth traps
Hairy Shieldbug <i>Dolycons baccarum</i>	September	One noted near RW Lyndon centre
Dock Bug <i>Coreus marginitus</i>	September	One noted near RW Lyndon centre

ODONATA Damselflies

Common Blue Damselfly <i>Enallagma cyathigerum</i>	September	One noted near RW Egleton centre
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ODONATA Dragonflies

Common Darter <i>Sympetrum striolatum</i>	September	One noted near RW Lyndon centre
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BEETLES Coleoptera

Devil's Coach Horse <i>Ocyopus olens</i>	September	One crossing road in Wing
Harlequin Ladybird <i>Harmonia axyridis</i>	October	More than 10 noted at LRWT paddock at Aldgate
7-spot Ladybird <i>Coccinella 7-punctata</i>	October	More than 4 noted at LRWT paddock at Aldgate

BEES, WASPS Hymenoptera

Hornet <i>Vespa crabro</i>	September	One noted in garden at Barrow
Common Wasp <i>Vespa vulgaris</i>	October	A half excavated but still active nest noted at Aldgate LRWT paddock
Red-tailed Bumblebee <i>Bombus lapidarius</i>	October	One large insect noted in Barrowden

LAND SNAILS Gastropoda

Snail <i>Columella edentula</i>	October	Two examples of this tiny snail (<2 mm high) were at Ketton Quarry
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No records received in November and December.

January/February 2017

BEES Hymenoptera

Wild Honey Bee *Apis mellifera*

February Many wild honey bees with very evident pollen sacs were noted on winter honeysuckle at Barrowden.

Note: there are previous records of wild honeybee nests in Barrowden. The recorder made enquiries from known beekeepers in the village and their bees were overwintering at an apiary in Ridlington.

Many thanks to the following recorders: D Ball, R Followes, C Gallimore, M Grimes, J Harvey, R Lemmon, L Worrall

MAMMALS

RECORDER Linda Biddle

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Thank you to all the regular contributors for sending in your mammal reports this month. I am sorry that I have been unable to complete my notes in time for this edition of *Fieldfare*. They will appear next time.

BATS

RECORDER Jenny Harris

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January/February 2017

During the period, I received no records of bats in flight or grounded, or disturbed by building work, etc., in Rutland. It is usually a quiet time of year for sightings, as there is nothing much for the bats to feed on.

I did, however, take two **Brown Long-eared Bats** *Plecotus auritus* into care that had been found in The Outwoods, Loughborough. The Outwoods is managed by Charnwood Borough Council with open access and these two bats were found on 3 March while clearing fallen trees following Storm Doris. The male bats were hibernating in an ash tree cavity and were found when the fallen trunk was being cut up. They were (and still are) small, weighing 6 g and 7 g when found, and they subsequently lost weight until I could persuade them to feed properly. They spend most of their time in torpor, saving energy, and by 8 March their weight had risen to 8.1 g and 8.9 g respectively. This weight gain was not stable, though, and both lost 0.5 g during a two-hour stint in an exercise net. They will be released when there are more insects, especially moths, to sustain them.

The only Rutland records were from the two annual visits to the east Rutland hibernaculum for the National Bat Monitoring Programme. On 22 January nine members of the Bat Group (including four holders of Natural England scientific licences) surveyed the site when the external temperature was 0 °C. The internal temperature was 2.1 °C, with humidity of 85%. On 19 February seven surveyors attended; the external temperature was approximately 8 °C, the internal temperature 7.6 °C and humidity 83%.

Results

22 January	Natterer's bat <i>Myotis nattereri</i>	6
	Pipistrelle <i>Pipistrellus</i> sp.	1
	<i>Myotis</i> sp.	2
19 February	Natterer's bat	5

It is probable that milder weather in February encouraged bats to change roosts, perhaps to take advantage of foraging opportunities on suitable nights, hence the lower number found.

Minutes of RNHS Annual General Meeting 2017

The Annual General Meeting was held on Tuesday 8 March 2017 at Voluntary Action Rutland, Lands End Way, Oakham with 65 members present and President Mr Joss Hanbury in the chair.

Apologies

Dave Needham, Angie Humphries and Linda Worrall.

Minutes of previous AGM 2016

Minutes had been circulated by email, and were on the website. Paper copies were provided for members at the meeting. No comments were received. The Minutes were approved and signed.

Honorary Treasurer's Report and Approval of Accounts

Margaret Conner circulated the Society's accounts for the year ending December 31st 2016, which had been checked by Mr George Kirk, ACIB. Overall income for 2016 was £3,268, and expenditure was £3,467, yielding a small deficit of £199 for the year. Allowing for this deficit the Society reserves remain comfortable at £6,262. Income for 2016 was less than that for 2015, because in 2016 there was no Celebrity lecture. Subscription income, the main source of annual income, remained constant at £2,580 compared to £2610 in 2015. Expenditure in 2016 showed a slight decrease in the costs of meetings, and an increase in publication costs. With the website now established, its costs in 2016 were less than the setting-up costs incurred in 2015. With the increase in subscriptions for 2017 Margaret predicted a surplus for the year. A question was asked about the costs of the Rutland Show stall. Margaret replied that the costs and the value to the Society of the stall would be reviewed after the 2017 Show.

Acceptance of the minutes was proposed by Dave Cotter and seconded by Roy Lemmon. Chairman Linda Biddle thanked Margaret Connor for her report.

Re-appointment of Mr George Kirk as Independent Examiner

Mr Kirk was re-appointed as Independent Examiner for 2017. Proposed by Phil Rudkin and seconded by Jenny Harris

Chairman's Annual Report

Chairman Linda Biddle reported that 2016 was a quieter year than the Anniversary year, but that the Society remained active. Membership in 2016 was 264, compared to 284 in 2015, and 265 in 2014. Figures for other local natural history societies (courtesy of Adrian Russell) suggest that RNHS membership numbers are strong both in absolute numbers and particularly in relation to the local population. The Society's new subscription also compares well with that of other local societies.

The Society committee started 2016 unchanged, and Linda thanked all the members for their contributions. During the year Secretary Roy Edwards and Programme Secretary Dawn Whitefield stepped down, and their contributions were particularly recognised. Replacements for them are still being sought. Two recorders have also stood down (Alistair Lawrence for Lepidoptera and Jean and Ron Harvey for Moths) after years of much appreciated service, and were replaced respectively by Richard Brown and Paul Bennett.

The new model of *Fieldfare* continues to gain great approval, and Hendrina's husband Paul has taken over editorship of the *Annual Report*. They were both thanked for their work. The Society was reminded that the 2017 *Annual Report* will be primarily published on-line. Members requiring a print copy should inform Margaret Connor before the end of April 2017, and should expect to pay for the copy at cost price with postage.

The Society's winter programme was well received, particularly the two 'internal' meetings, one for the recorders and one for photographers. The outdoor meetings were overall a success, though a little weather blighted, with two meetings cancelled because of bad weather, and one because it was too hot!

The Society's Anniversary visit to Morvan in France was greatly enjoyed.

At the Rutland County Show in June, the stall proved a valuable exercise to remind Rutland that the Society was still active – some visitors expressed surprise to see us! One new member joined on the day.

The Society's younger members' group (age 18-30) has been renamed *Wild Horizons*. It continues to find its feet. One member has been co-opted onto the Society committee.

Reference was made to the stalwart work of the verge recorders. A particular effort will be made in 2017 to revitalise this aspect of the Society's work. Note was made of the recent drainage channel diggings across some of the verges.

In conclusion the Chairman reported an active and healthy Society.

In an historical comment Phil Rudkin reminded the Society of its previous venture abroad to Holland.

Acceptance of the Chairman's report was proposed by Jenny Harris and seconded by Phil Rudkin.

Election of Officers (with Mr Hanbury taking the Chair of the meeting)

Election of the following officers was proposed by John Rodgers and seconded by Roy Lemmon.

President : Mr Joss Hanbury

Chairman: Mrs Linda Biddle

Secretary: Post vacant

Treasurer and Membership Secretary: Mrs Margaret Connor

Programme Secretary: Post vacant

Fieldfare editor: Hendrina Willoughby-Ellis

Honorary Vice-Chairman: Peter Scott

Election of committee

En bloc election of the following committee was proposed by Dawn Whitefield and seconded by Anthony Biddle: Gill Chiverton, Dave Cotter, Jenny Harris, Derek Hill. At this point it was noted that Jenny Rivett had stood down from the committee. She was thanked for her many years of contribution.

Any Other Business

The chairman informed the Society that the committee had agreed that the Society would fund two projects as permanent reminders of our 50th Anniversary. First, some bat boxes in Burley Wood will be replaced, to serve as roosts for Nathusius' Pipistrelles [see page 2]. And second, a new moth trap will be purchased for the Society's use. There was no other business.

Date of next AGM

Tuesday 6th March 2018.

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Hendrina Ellis

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Position vacant

Wildlife Recorders

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Position vacant

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Spectacular Spring Scene Quarry Farm, Stamford, 15 March 2017



Although in the past 4 weeks there have been Frogs and spawn in many local garden ponds, the large hill pond at Quarry Farm is always later (it is in the open wild area), and therefore slower to become active. I paid a visit to the pond on the March 4, but all was quiet, no amphibians to be seen. I returned again on March 8, and a few Frogs were croaking, and one pair was observed clasping. The weather in the next few days was dull and cold, but the forecast promised a chance of a fine day on March 15.

So, complete with sound-recording equipment and camera, I set off at 12.30 pm, heading for the hill pond. The weather was unbelievable: warm, dry, clear blue sky, the wind force 3, in gusts. Two male **Brimstone** butterflies flew low over the field, enjoying the sudden warmth and sunshine.

Arriving at the site, I made for the very sloping shallow end at the north side of the pond – a big disappointment; there were large clumps of spawn, but only two docile frogs; all was quiet, and no movement in the vegetation. It was all over and done with!



I decided to wander around the pond, and using my binoculars scanned the deep end of the south side; it all happened when I reached that side, and in the next two hours I witnessed a marvellous and magnificent spring spectacular. I counted approximately 56 clasping pairs of Common Toads, and listened to their high pitched calls, as the males scrambled onto the backs of the females (occasionally 4 males on one female). The 'necklace' strings of black spawn were tangled in typical fashion in and around the pond vegetation. Then, to my surprise and delight, at the very edge was this scene of frogs and toads mingling together (some frogs actually attempting to clasp female toads!).



I then decided to set up my two open short-gun microphones, and record the astounding sounds of so many toad calls, intermingled with a few croaks of frogs. Meanwhile, as all this wildlife spectacular was being played out, **Skylarks** were constantly singing overhead, **Green Woodpeckers** were 'yaffling' from the nearby spinney, and **Red Kites** and **Buzzards** circled lazily overhead. The grass bank was resplendent with the yellow flowers of **Coltsfoot**, and a few **Lesser Celandines**.

As I stood there listening to the myriad toad calls, and two frogs croaking, Dave Needham appeared on the horizon (complete with camera and long lens). Dave was as fascinated at the spectacle before us as I was. Finally, to complete the early spring setting, two male **Chiffchaffs** were heard singing in the spinney behind us; these tiny warblers are one of the earliest arrivals each year!

Dave took several images of the amphibians; and we both agreed that this was an opportunity not to be missed!

Phil Rudkin



Editor's apology – this handsome photo of an egret has turned up, but I've lost the connection to the sender. Let me know, and I'll acknowledge you next issue!



This glorious Yellowhammer was taken by Peter Scott on the walk he led at Eyebrook Reservoir on March 5; see the website for the report.