

The elusive Eyebrook bittern (see field trip page 15) Peter Scott photographed this one earlier.



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It has been a lovely spring – on and off! Bluebells at Burley, Pickworth and Barnsdale were as beautiful as ever, birdsong has been in full flow. Nightingales seem to have come back to the area and are singing in places where they haven't been heard for years. (See photograph page 16.) The Dawn Chorus had fine but overcast but overcast weather, a wide range of species and good volume of sound (see full report page 16). We look forward to enjoying the Green Winged orchids at Merry's Meadow and the visits to Beaumont Chase Farm and the Allerton Project – hoping for fair weather. Do come along if you can. While indoor meetings are very popular, the summer outdoor visits are less well supported, but are often fascinating experiences, see pages 15–16 for their reports.

Don't forget to take lots of photos wherever you are so that you can enter the photographic competition. We have arranged an independent panel of judges, so that it will be a fair competition! (For rules, see page 3.)

Do drop in to see us at our stand in **Oakham Show on June 4th**, your committee and some stalwart members will be promoting the Society there.

Looking forward to seeing you all, and receiving your records.

Linda Biddle *RNHS Chairman*

Note: Look out for the Midsummer glow-worm invitation on page 12!

THE ANNUAL REPORT IS NOW ON THE WEB

How to find it

Go to [RNHS Homepage](#) > *click on NEWS & REPORTS: read on* > *click on Annual Report Archive* (line 10, bronze box top right). You can print just those pages of interest on your home printer, so saving trees!

What you get

The 2016 Report is in twelve sections that cover the material appearing in previous years. But an attempt has also been made to bring a wider dimension to the basic data using a combination of mapping and simple analysis.

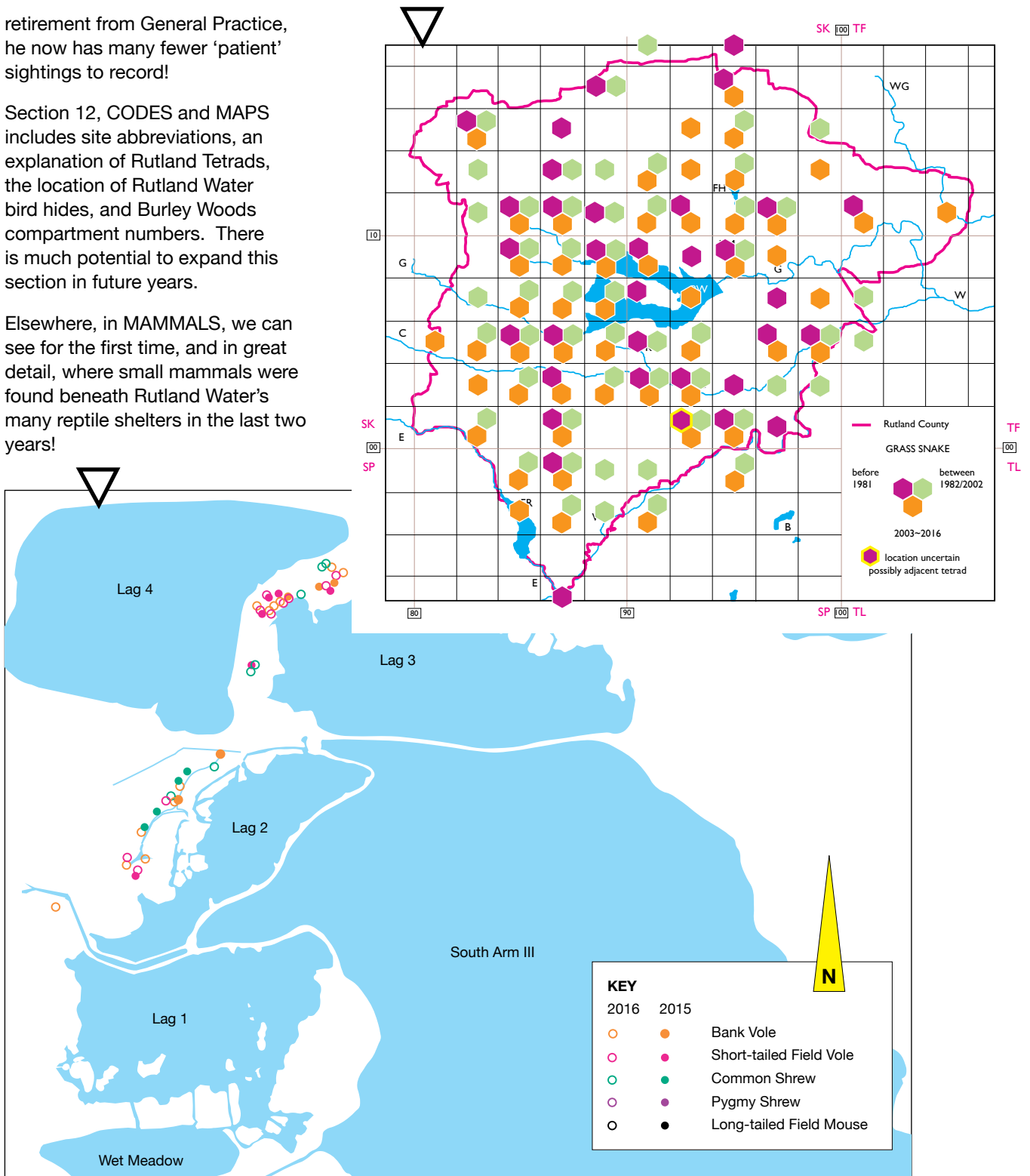
Three highlights

retirement from General Practice, he now has many fewer 'patient' sightings to record!

Section 12, CODES and MAPS includes site abbreviations, an explanation of Rutland Tetrads, the location of Rutland Water bird hides, and Burley Woods compartment numbers. There is much potential to expand this section in future years.

Elsewhere, in MAMMALS, we can see for the first time, and in great detail, where small mammals were found beneath Rutland Water's many reptile shelters in the last two years!

In Section 2, AMPHIBIANS and REPTILES we can see how the distribution of reports has changed over some 40 years, but, as our Recorder points out, since his



A future direction?

Fieldfare and the website are the Society's primary ways to keep in touch with Members.

Our *2016 Annual Report* (on the website) suggests a possible way for the Society to enrich our understanding of our County flora and fauna, by building patterns of data over a longer time frame (such as Roy Lemmon's 25 years of weather information, and Terry Mitcham's Beaumont Chase Farm bird territories data).

If future *Annual Reports* follow this format, it will be far easier for comparisons to be made between years, and given enough data, trends to be examined. It is hoped that other organisations holding records might be persuaded to buy into this philosophy and allow their data to be incorporated into this exercise.

PHOTOGRAPHIC COMPETITION

As we announced in January *Fieldfare*, we would like in true Countryfile style/tradition/imitation to hold a competition, and use the best 13 photographs to compile a **RNHS calendar** for 2018. Photographic entries can be of any Rutland wildlife or countryside. Members can submit up to 3 photographs, but only one per entrant will be used for the calendar.

The closing date for entries has to be **Friday 15th September**, so that we can decide the winners of the competition and organise the printing of the calendar. You will be able to see all the photographs at the Photography indoor meeting on November 7, where calendars should be ready for sale.

Please send entries to **Peter Scott**, email: peter.scott27@btopenworld.com, address: 12 Tees Close, Oakham, Rutland LE15 6SP.

DIARY DATES

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.

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.

Friday June 30, 2.00 pm

Flowers at SEATON MEADOWS

Joe Costley, *Plantlife warden*, leads. From Harringworth towards Seaton, after passing under the rail viaduct, take the first right towards Morcott, park up after 200 m. Grid ref: SP 913 987.

Queries: Jenny Harris, 01572 755274.

Sunday July 2, 10.30 am

Dragonflies at WICKEN FEN

Mick Parfitt of the *Dragonfly Project* will show us round. Entrance just before main reserve. Grid ref: TL 564 705. Lode Lane, Wicken, Ely, Cambs CB7 5XP.

Queries: Gill Chiverton, 01780 753820.

Saturday August 5, 10.00 am

FINESHADE – A walk in the woods: butterflies and flowers

Barrie Galpin of Friends of Fineshade leads. Grid ref: SP 980 983. Parking £4. Queries: Richard Brown, 01780 590707.

Sunday August 27, 10.30 am **CLIPSHAM PARK WOOD – joint meeting with British Plant Gall Society**

Roy Lemmon RNHS leads this walk starting at Yew Tree Avenue, Clipsham, car park. Grid ref: SK 980 169.
Queries: Roy Lemmon, 01780 762051.

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. The autumn season starts on October 3.

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 (VTC), 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 LRWT 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. Check their website for whale watching!

Sunday June 4, 10.30–4.00 **Deeping Lakes Nature Reserve Open Day**

Come along to view this stunning nature reserve. Located on the B1166, 1 km south of the automatic barrier level crossing in Deeping St James. Trust sales, refreshments, excellent home made cooking and locally grown plants will be on sale. With the Bourne Area Group.

Saturday July 1, 2.00–4.00 pm **Woodhall Spa Airfield**

Woodhall Spa Airfield was formerly the home of four brave RAF squadrons, including 617 Squadron, the Dambusters, but more recently was used as a sand and gravel quarry. As a nature reserve it is a haven for wildlife as well as a place where visitors can share in the unique and peaceful atmosphere of this former airfield. The reserve entrance lies on the B1192, Woodhall Spa–Coningsby Road, approximately 500 m south of the Lodge Road junction (TF205 607).

WEATHER

RECORDER Roy Lemmon

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

March 2017

Atmospheric pressure and wind Generally a month of low pressures with just a couple of periods when they were elevated. The first of these was from the 13th–16th inclusive and the second, slightly longer, was from 24th–30th, during which the highest pressure of 1032.5 mb was recorded. Winds were generally SW–W except during the latter period when they were NE–E.

Temperature This was a warm March, easily the warmest in the decade 2008-2017, and was principally due to a high mean minimum of 4.97 °C. This was considerably more than the second highest which was 2014, with a mean of 3.3 °C. The mean maximum was 13.18 °C, which is third in the decade after March 2012, 13.75 °C, and 2014, 13.27 °C. There were no air frosts, i.e. below zero, and the highest daytime maximum was 21.2 °C on the 30th. On that same day, the maximum at Gravesend was 21.8° C.

Rain This can be very variable in March. 3 years in the last 6 it has been about 70% of the expected long-term mean, but in 2013 it was 188%, and last year 212% of LTM. Here this year 38.3 mm (1.5 in) was recorded, just 103% of LTM.

April 2017

Atmospheric pressure and wind This was a high-pressure month; apart from the first and last days of the month, pressures were all above 1014 mb. The highest I recorded was 1036 mb at 09.00 on the 19th. Winds were predominantly NW-N and especially in the first half were blustery, although there were no named storms.

Temperature The overall mean, 9.88 °C, places April 2017 in fifth place in the decade 2008-2017. There were three air frosts, the lowest being -1.5 °C on 17th-18th, and the highest daytime temperature was 24.7 °C on the 9th.

Rain A dry April, a total of 13.7 mm (0.54 in) being measured here. This equates to 32% of my long-term mean of 27 years. Looking back at my records it becomes apparent that April rainfall can vary considerably. In 2011 it was just 2.3 mm (6% of LTM), 2012 150.2 mm (321%), 2015 16.5 mm (38%), and last April 56.1 mm (128%).

AMPHIBIANS & REPTILES RECORDER Dr C H Gallimore

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

March/April 2017

After the early spawning by **Common Frogs** in February in Barrowden, further spawning was not reported until 7th March in Wing, 8th March in Little Casterton and 14th March in Exton and Prior's Coppice. At Rutland Water Nature Reserve it was not until 21st March that spawn first appeared; and in a field pond in Wing spawn a few days old was not seen until 3rd April.

Common Toads were active in March and were seen in Wing and two sites in Ketton Quarry in early March. On March 15th Phil Rudkin reported 56 pairs of toads in amplexus at Quarry Farm plus 8 strings of spawn and what he described as mingling between frogs and toads. (See March *Fieldfare* page 16.) Toads were also seen at Leighfield, where there were some road casualties.

An estimated 30 to 40 **Smooth Newts** were reported from a garden pond in Langham where eggs were noted on the pond vegetation. They were found in 7 ponds at Rutland Water Nature Reserve as well as one under a reptile shelter there. Both species were found in my pond in Wing although numbers were not easy to assess due to cloudy water. **Great Crested Newts** were found in 3 ponds at Rutland Water and a single female was seen in Langham.

There were two records of **Viviparous Lizards** at Ketton Quarry during March, but there were no Slow Worm records.

There was a single **Grass Snake** under a reptile shelter at Rutland Water and another in Exton in mid-April. **Adders** were seen at Ketton Quarry on 3 occasions between 14th March and 9th April, when two were seen together.

My thanks to the following who sent records: T Appleton, T Caldicott, M Grimes, P Langston, R Lemmon, M Markham, T Mitcham, D Needham and P Rudkin.

BIRDS

RECORDER Terry Mitcham

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

E-mail: joterpat@btinternet.com

March/April 2017

Low temperatures and unfavourable winds hampered incoming migrants with low numbers of some species by the end of April – Cuckoo, Wheatear and some warblers. There was a good passage of Ring Ouzels again and several Redstarts were found but no Whinchats. A notable number of waders passed through Rutland Water in April with a spectacular total of Black-tailed Godwits, along with Bar-tailed Godwits, Turnstones and Dunlin at the end of the month. Lesser Spotted Woodpecker and Nightingale were noted but few drumming Great Spotted Woodpeckers were reported – are they the latest of our regular species to decline? Please confirm this or otherwise by submitting all records for this species.

My thanks to the following for sending in records: T Appleton, D & J Ball, P Bennett, T Caldicott, A & J Comber, Dr C H Gallimore, G & M Griffin, M Grimes, P Langston, T Land, LROS, R Lemmon, S Lister, T Mitcham, D Needham, C Park, J S & J Rodgers, P Rudkin, RWNR, S Woodward, L Worrall.

(See also Wildfowl Counts).

Whooper Swan	Five were at RWEg on 23.03. There were 12 at RW Dam on 28.03 and six there on 05.04.
White-fronted Goose	An adult was at RWNA on 10.03.
Egyptian Goose	One or two were at Leigh from 22.03 to 27.03.
Shelduck	A pair were regular at FHP in both months with one or two at LFP in April.
Mandarin Duck	One was near Wg on 19.03, and two were in flight near Wg on 07 and 25.04. At RW Dam, one flew over on 20.04 and two on 24.04. One was at FHP on 17.04.
Wigeon	The peak FHP count was 120 on 25.03, with the last (27) on 31.03.
Mallard	Ducklings were seen at FHP from 24.04, and 27.04 at RWNorm.
Garganey	Three were at RWEg on 25.03, with one or two between 04.04 and 14.04.
Shoveler	A pair was regular at FHP throughout both months with two pairs on 14.04. A pair was at LFP on 23.04.
Scaup	Eight were at RWSA3 on 01.03, declining to three by 11.04, with a female remaining to the end of April.
Smew	Nine were at RWEg on 01.03, with ten on 07.03, and the last two at RW on 25.03. Two were at EBR on 04.03.
Red-breasted Merganser	A male was at RWNA on 11–13.03.
Ruddy Duck	The RW female was relocated and noted between 08 and 20.04.
Grey Partridge	One was heard near Rid on 17.03, and two at QF on 23.03.
Great Northern Diver	One was at RWSA on 01.03.
Little Grebe	Last seen at FHP on 17.03. Two pairs were at Holywell Lake on 26.03.
Red-necked Grebe	One remained in RWNA to 01.04.
Slavonian Grebe	Two were at RWNA to 02.04.
Black-necked Grebe	Four at RWNA on 03.03, with three to 14.03, and one to 30.03.
Bittern	One was at RWEg3 on 02.03, and one at EBR inflow between 04 and 11.03.
Great White Egret	One was at EBR on 04, 10–12 and 21.03. At RW one was present to at least 02.04.
Red Kite	Four were over RW Dam on 24.03 and three at Barns Gardens on 23.04. Ones and two were widely reported.
Marsh Harrier	Singles were at EBR on 24 and 29.03, and at RWEg and FHP on 13.04.
Hen Harrier	A ring-tail was at EBR on four dates between 19 and 30.03.
Sparrowhawk	One freed itself from a bird feeder in a Barrow garden but killed a Dunnock on 19.04. One was in an Oak garden on 30.04.
Buzzard	Pairs and singles noted over several woodlands in both months.

Osprey	The first bird returned to RW on 17.03. 22 different birds have been recorded and the Manton pair, which were back on 24.03, are incubating a clutch of four eggs – a first for the Project. One was at FHP on 10.04, and two flew over LFP on 13.04.
Avocet	One was at RWEg on 09.03, with a pair noted from 14.03 and throughout April.
Oystercatcher	At RW there were 39 on 12.03, and 23 on 10.04.
Grey Plover	Singles were at RWEg on 24 and 26.03, and 09.04. Five were present on 30.04.
Lapwing	Three were at EBR and 135 at RW on 12.03, with 37 at RW on 10.04. Displaying birds were noted from 11.03 near GlastW and Ext Park.
Little Ringed Plover	At RWEg there was one on 17.03, and two on 19.03 and 10.04.
Ringed Plover	One was at RWEg on 01.03 with two on 12.03, seven on 19.03 and 10 on 10.04. On 30.04 there were 35 on Eg4.
Whimbrel	The overwintering bird at RWEg was seen to at least 25.03. Spring passage was from 19.04 to 30.04 with one or two on nine dates; five on 20.04, four on 22.04 and seven on 30.04.
Curlew	Four were at RW on 12.03, with a pair at Cott Airfield next day, and on 25.03 when one was over FHP. Birds were calling near Barrow in March and well into April.
Black-tailed Godwit	18 were at RWEg on 10.03, with up to three on five dates to 04.04. An impressive passage of Icelandic birds began on 17.04, with 557 passing through, 255 on 19.04 and 234 on 22.04. A further 148 were counted on 28.04, and just two next day.
Bar-tailed Godwit	Singles were at RWEg on 10 and 19.04, with ten on 30.04.
Turnstone	One was at RW on 13.04, with three there on 30.04.
Ruff	Singles were at RWEg on 22 and 30.04.
Curlew Sandpiper	One was at RWEg on 30.04.
Sanderling	One was at RWEg on 13–15.04.
Dunlin	Present at RW throughout both months, usually below 13 present, but 20 on 02.03 and 97 on 30.04. The only EBR birds were two on 13.04.
Common Sandpiper	First noted at RW on 04.04, with one or two present to 30.04. One was at EBR on 17.04.
Green Sandpiper	Two were at RWEg on 19.04.
Greenshank	Two were at RWEg on 20.04, with one on 30.04.
Redshank	Six were at RW on 12.03, with 19 on 10.04. One called over LFP on 30.03.
Woodcock	Near Wg there were three on 03.03 and one on 31.03.
Snipe	23 were at EBR and 25 at RW on 12.03. Up to three were at FHP, LFP and Wg to 22.04, and there were four at Peter's pond on Tin Meadows on 27.04.
Little Tern	One was at RW on 30.04.
Black Tern	On 24.04, there were two at RWSA and three at EBR. One was at RW on 25.04 and 23 on 30.04.
Sandwich Tern	A good series of records began with four at RW on 09.04, and one there on 14.04. One was at EBR the next day and two at RW on 30.04.
Common Tern	One at EBR on 03.04, was the first with three at RW on 09.04. There were c. ten at EBR by the end of April.
Arctic Tern	The first birds were singles at RWEg on 14.04, and EBR on 17.04. Six were at EBR on 24.04, and 50+ at RW on 26.04, with 66 on 27.04, and up to three to 30.04.
Little Gull	Six were at RWEg/SA on 27.03, with one or two there on four dates to 23.04. Two were at EBR on 01.04.
Mediterranean Gull	Singles were at RW on 14, 18, and 24.03.
Common Gull	c.3500 were at Leigh on 19.03, with c.1800 on 30.03.
Lesser Black-backed Gull	c.180 flew south near Wg on 07.04 and c.270 on 18.04.
Yellow-legged Gull	Four were at RW on 10.04.
Caspian Gull	Singles were at RW on 24 and 26.03 and 05.04, with two on 10.04.
Cuckoo	The earliest birds were at RWNA on 17.04 and 22.04 at BCF, with further records from Hamb, BW and Wg by the end of the month.

Barn Owl	Records came from Ext Park, Prest, Leigh, Man and Wg.
Little Owl	Calling at Barrow to 08.03.
Tawny Owl	Calling birds were at BW, TunnW and Ext Park.
Short-eared Owl	Up to four were at Luff Airfield between 05 and 22.03. One was at RWEg between 26–30.04.
Swift	One at RWEg on 19.04 was the first.
Kingfisher	Two were at LFP on 27.03 and along the R.Chater near Wg on 31.03.
Green Woodpecker	Well reported with birds at FHP, TunnW, BW, CQ, Leigh, Barrow and QF, where a nest was watched on 19.04.
Great Spotted Woodpecker	Two visited feeders at Norm regularly throughout both months and they were also regular at Barrow in both months. Drumming was heard at TunnW, BW and Barns Gardens.
Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	One was drumming in a copse near Mor on 02.04.
Kestrel	Hunting birds were noted at Shacklewell, Ext Park, FHP, Pick and RWEg.
Hobby	Singles were at RW on 26/27.04.
Peregrine	There were March records from Leigh and RWEg.
Jay	Birds were heard at TunnW, BW and RWEg in both months.
Raven	Birds were noted at three known breeding sites. On 24.03, 16 flew over Leigh.
Willow Tit	Two or three were at Leigh throughout both months with song noted regularly. One sang in Ggorse at RW on 13.03, and one was reported at Barrow on 04.04.
Marsh Tit	Recorded at TunnW, BW and HambW.
Skylark	Six were in song over QF on 01.03.
Sand Martin	One at RWMan Bay on 01.03 increased to 40 at Eg by 16.03, and c.100 on 28.03. From 21.04. onwards birds were investigating possible nest-sites in stone walls at Park House and the hotel at Norm.
Swallow	First noted at RWEg on 21.03 and Wg on 31.03. One was near Pick village on 02.04 and breeding birds returned to a traditional breeding site at Bden on 10.04.
House Martin	One over Leigh on 01.04 was the earliest with three at Barns on 07.04. One was at Bden on 19.04 but few were present there or at other sites by 30.04.
Long-tailed Tit	One or two were in an Oak garden to 10.03 and a pair were nest building at CQ on 26.03.
Chiffchaff	Full song was heard near Man Bay at RW on 06.03 with nos. increasing and spreading throughout the month. Seven sang in TunnW on 25.03, five in KQ on 27.03, and 28 around Leigh on 30.03. Birds were widely distributed in April with six in PGW on 02 and BW on 07, four by Oak Canal on 17, and 32 around Leigh on 28.
Willow Warbler	Singing singles at Leigh on 30.03 and FHP next day were the first. Six were at QF on 13.04 and 29 were around Leigh on 28.04. Seven were heard in BW on 30.04.
Blackcap	Song was heard at RWEg on 19.03 with the next near Wg on 29.03. Ten were in song at PGW on 02.04 and in BW on 07.04. Widespread by mid-month with 25 singing around Leigh on 28.04.
Garden Warbler	One was singing by Oak Canal on 17.04 with two in BW and at RWEg on 21.04. Seven were singing in BW on 30.04.
Lesser Whitethroat	Singles at RWEg and EBR on 08.04 were the first birds with one at QF on 13.04. By the end of April birds were also at Wing (three), Leigh (six) and RWSA (five).
Whitethroat	One was at RWEg on 19.04 and two near Mounts Lodge next day – the only records. Not the start of another crash, I hope.
Grasshopper Warbler	Singles were singing at Leigh on 11.04 and RWEg on 23.04.
Sedge Warbler	The first bird was at RWEg on 01.04 with birds well established there by mid-month. On 23.04, singles sang at FHP and GHW.
Reed Warbler	Singing birds were at RWEg on 26.04.
Nuthatch	Singing birds were well reported: BW (ten on 07.04.), by Holywell lake, FHP, TunnW, WardW, Ext Park and HambW.
Treecreeper	Reported from RW, BW, FHP and Norm.

Waxwing	Two flew north at RWEg on 04.03, and three were in Oak on 02.04.
Ring Ouzel	Single males were at Crown Well Bridge near Wg on 18 and 21.04, and at RWSA on 20.04.
Blackbird	c.62 were noted around Leigh on 28.04, with 28 in song.
Fieldfare	c.300 flew north at Leigh on 17.03, and there were 60 at BCF on 30.03. The last were three at Lynd Top, RW, on 27.04.
Song Thrush	More reports this spring with singing birds noted in woodlands and gardens. Three were in an Oak garden on 14.04 and 16 sang around Leigh on 28.04.
Redwing	Few were reported. 20 were in Ext Park on 10.03 with 14 there on 13.03. Six were at BCF on 30.03.
Mistle Thrush	Singing birds were reported from Norm, FHP and TunnW.
Nightingale	A single sang at RWEg from 22.04, with one in the north of the county on 23.04.
Redstart	Single males were at Crown Well Bridge, Wg, on 04. And 15.04 with one at Martinthorpe on 11.04. One was at the VTC Centre at RW on 24.04.
Stonechat	Four were at RWEg on 02.03, declining to two by 21.03. A pair at the filter beds there on 06.04 were still present on 28.04.
Wheatear	One at RWEg on 14.03 was the first arrival with up to four there, at the Dam and Luff Airfield on 11 dates to 30.04. Five were at Luff Airfield on 19.04.
House Sparrow	c.20 were at Barns Garden feeders on 23.04.
Tree Sparrow	The only record was of one at a Barrow feeder on 06.04.
Yellow Wagtail	A very poor showing with one or two at RW Dam and Eg from 04.04. Ten flew over Martinthorpe on 23.04 and nine on 28.04.
Grey Wagtail	One was at FHP from 17.03 into April.
White Wagtail	One was at RWWhit on 24.03, and there were singles at the Dam on 19 and 24.04. One was at EBR on 18.04.
Tree Pipit	Singles flew over Leigh on 03 and 22.04, with two on 11.04.
Meadow Pipit	Passage was noted at RWSA with c.50 NW on 15.03. At Leigh birds were reported between 17 and 24.03, with at least 50 on four dates and c.270 on 21.
Chaffinch	The Leigh roost was present to 26.03 with c.100 on 03 and 87 on the last date. Very few are on territory at the BCF CBC plot this year.
Brambling	One was at EBR feeders on 07.03 and one was with Chaffinches at FHP on 13.03. The Leigh roost was watched to 07.04. The peak no. was 26 on 17.03, with four seen on the final date.
Linnet	Flocks counted at Leigh were c.180 on 02.04, 170 on 13.04 and 73 on 22.04.
Crossbill	Singles were heard over RW on 05.03 and 24.04, and Leigh on 21.03.
Siskins	11 were at Greet GC on 11.03. In April singles were over Martinthorpe on 23, RW Dam on 24, and Leigh on 28.
Lesser Redpoll	In April one was over Crown Well Bridge on 12, three flew over RW Dam on 20 and one was over Leigh on 28.
Bullfinch	Noted at PGW, BCF, TunnW and Leigh, where there were 18 on 17.04.

March/April Wildfowl Counts (no April count at Holywell)

	Rutland Water		Eyebrook Reservoir		Fort Henry Ponds /Exton Park Lake		Banthorpe Gravel Pit		Holywell Lake
	12.03	10.04	11.03	09.04	10.03	10.04	10.03	07.04	13.03
Mute Swan	159	175	55	55	6	8	2	2	2
Greylag Goose	73	220	19	21	181	17	22	10	35
Canada Goose	134	94	3	4	2	3	2	2	15
Barnacle Goose	2								
Egyptian Goose	19	20			1				

(continued over page)

	Rutland Water		Eyebrook Reservoir		Fort Henry Ponds /Exton Park Lake		Banthorpe Gravel Pit		Holywell Lake
	12.03	10.04	11.03	09.04	10.03	10.04	10.03	07.04	13.03
Shelduck	31	35	1	3		3			
Mandarin Duck					2	2			
Wigeon	2063	36	744		231				44
Gadwall	217	98	44	22	72	60			2
Teal	294	118	204	46	14	2	15		
Mallard	402	283	73	52	53	56	2	4	35
Pintail	22	4	9						
Shoveler	65	46	5	5	2	2			
Red-crested Pochard	8								
Pochard	26	4							
Tufted Duck	1297	495	98	10	96	63	10		10
Scaup	5								
Goldeneye	239	3	69	1	1				
Red-breasted Merganser	1								
Smew	8								
Goosander	13								
Cormorant	195	143	10	8	1	1	1		
Bittern			1						
Little Egret	16	12	8	7	1	1			3
Great White Egret	1		1						
Grey Heron	7	10	2		1	1	1		
Little Grebe	3	4							8
Great Crested Grebe	270	199	44	53					
Slavonian Grebe	2								
Black-necked Grebe	3								
Water Rail			1						
Moorhen	94	66	5		15	11	2	1	11
Coot	431	278	25	21	60	43	3		14
Kingfisher				1					

BOTANY

RECORDER John Rodgers

8 Summerfield, Oakham LE15 6PZ. Telephone: 01572 757278

E-mail: rnhsbotanyrecord@gmail.com

No report this time, please continue sending in your sightings.

BUTTERFLIES

RECORDER **Richard Brown**

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NATIONAL BUTTERFLY NEWS OF LOCAL INTEREST

1 Chequered Skipper reintroduction at Fineshade Wood This very attractive species used to be common in southern England. For reasons unknown its distribution shrank in the 19th century, so that by the early 20th century it could only be found in the East Midlands in England. It was still present in Rutland until 1975, when a last singleton was noted from Luffenham Heath. This is the last record from England since that date - the species is now confined to the west of Scotland. BUT NOT FOR LONG!

The Heritage Lottery Fund is supporting the *Back from the Brink* project to help twenty species threatened with extinction. The **Chequered Skipper** is one of the twenty, and it is planned to attempt reintroduction in Rockingham Forest, a former stronghold. Fineshade Wood will be the centre for the attempt, starting in 2018. Not far down the road from Rutland – so get going revising how to distinguish the Chequered from other Skippers!

2 And still talking of Skippers Nottinghamshire have just had (9 April) a record of a **Grizzled Skipper**. This is unusually early. Our own earliest observations from Rutland have been 28 April 2014, 2 May 2013, 4 May 2015 and 10 May 2012. Given that, up until the last ten days of April there were other hints of an ‘early’ year for butterflies – e.g. **Painted Lady** records are already frequent further south – it will be worth a double check for the Grizzled at our usual sites.

LOCAL RUTLAND BUTTERFLY RECORDS

We are now up to 7 species recorded for Rutland in 2017, in first date order:

Peacock (2 Feb)

Small Tortoiseshell (3 Feb)

Brimstone (3 Feb)

Red Admiral (4 Feb)

Comma (9 Mar)

Orange Tip (6 April)

Speckled Wood (9 April).

Brimstones, Peacocks and Commas are the only species recorded in good numbers.

Thanks for the records received from P Bennett, A Biddle, R Brown, C Butterfield, M Grimes, A Lawrence, R Lemmon, T Mitcham, N Webb and L Worrall.

MOTHS

RECORDER **Paul Bennett**

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March/April 2017

The cool weather and low humidity levels have prevented an early start to moth trapping at Lyndon. Only three reports have been received – several **Common Heaths** were observed at Ketton Quarry on one of our warmer days, a pair of **Ruby Tigers** were seen mating in a Langham garden on 30th April and a freshly emerged **Purple Thorn** was resting on the outside wall of the car park toilets at Eggleton on 10th April, which shows that it is worth keeping your eyes peeled even in the most unlikely of places.

For bibliophiles, the 3rd Edition of the *Field Guide to the Moths of Great Britain and Ireland* by Waring and Townsend has recently been published with updated information on taxonomy, occurrence and with new distribution maps. Some wildlife organisations are currently offering a 20% discount on the purchase price plus postage and packing.

Thanks to the following for their records: P Bennett, M Markham.

PLANT GALLS

RECORDER Roy Lemmon

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March/April 2017

A total of 22 galls were reported in these two months, again mostly fungi but there were 2 reports of a mite gall on Wood Avens, one from Hambleton Wood on 30th March and another from Ketton Quarry on April 23, together with a leaf curl gall on Spindle from Bloody Oaks Quarry on April 28. This is also caused by mites.

Of the fungal galls, most were rusts, perhaps the most interesting one is on Betony – clue to the fact that Betony isn't common in Rutland. This record came from Yew Tree Avenue Clipsham on April 20. The non-rust fungal gall was on Cow Parsley and presents itself as a thickening of the stalks which is not all that obvious. It was found on Verge 5 (Essendine) on March 13 and also at Horn Mill roadsides on the 30th of the same month and appears to be a new gall for our records.

The rusts, both gallers and non-gallers, seem to be earlier and more developed than usual, possibly due to a relatively warm winter. The Society's visit to Burley Wood on April 30 was a good illustration of this and we saw galling rusts on Bramble, Meadowsweet and Dog's Mercury, the latter being well advanced, illustrating how the fungus can distort both leaves and stems.

Thanks to M Grimes, R Lemmon, D Needham, P Rudkin.

ORTHOPTERA

RECORDER Phil Rudkin

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Photo, P Rudkin

It was a nice moment during the RNHS Field Meeting to Burley Woods (see report page 15) as we were setting off along the first lower ride, when Anthony Biddle suddenly noticed very small creatures moving around in the dry, muddy ruts of Compartment 23. Martin Grimes promptly 'potted' one, which turned out to a **Slender Groundhopper**; this site is a stronghold for this tiny hopper, and we spotted others moving about. The Groundhoppers can be found almost any time of the year (apart from strong frost and snow periods), however it is always pleasing to find an orthopteran this early: into the record books for the first sighting of season 2017! We hope to start finding hatched nymphs of some of the other Crickets and Grasshoppers in late May early June.

OTHER INSECTS AND INVERTEBRATES

RECORDER Gill Chiverton

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No report this issue, please continue sending in your records (and photographs).

GLOW-WORMS

RECORDER Linda Worrall

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Fast-forward yourself to a Midsummer Night: deep twilight with a new moon due. Raining or not, adult glow-worms should be on the move. Having just stopped being larvae and newly hatched from their pupae, the females ought to be turning on their green tail-lights and showing off up a grass stalk, while the males should have their eye-shields in place and their wings buzzing and finding every one of them. This may well be a Midsummer Night's Dream. There's only one way to find out: go hunting for them on any night between June 1st and July 30th, well after sunset, around 10.30 pm to 11.15 pm.

The Barrowden glow-worms have fallen on hard times recently, with habitat loss in a vital field as well as verge-mowing incidents. A new quarry and access road

currently being developed just across the Welland below Wakerley Wood is also causing concern.

INVITE!

On Midsummer's Eve, Friday 23rd June, and Midsummer's Night, Saturday 24th June, I've told Barrowden villagers I'll wait for them to join me in Back Road, by the new houses in Drift Close, at 10.30 pm on both nights and we can give it a go together, and then walk up The Drift (Luffenham Road). You too would be most welcome on either or both nights: parking is awkward; probably best by the village green and then walk up. Bring a torch and wear something light or reflective.

I hope you are also able to visit our other usual sites, for example the lane in Essendine alongside the mainline railway cutting, also Ketton Quarry and Burley Wood, around the level crossing at South Luffenham, and maybe venture into Tixover. The proposed holiday development in Fineshade Woods is currently on hold, so that would be a useful place to explore now. The lanes from Wakerley to the A43 near both Wakerley and Duddington are involved with the new quarry work, so I don't recommend them. Barnack Hills and Holes could be well worth a visit though. Maybe somebody's Midsummer Nights' Dream will come true!

MAMMALS

RECORDER Linda Biddle

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January/April 2017

In January *Fieldfare* I reported on the exciting discovery of a female **Otter** and three cubs seen and heard at Ketton. Following the observations, camera traps were set up, and the family successfully videoed on several occasions. It's delightful that we can see that otters are breeding in our area, and not on a nature reserve. At Rutland Water otters are still very obviously thriving, spraint on mink rafts and otter slides seen nearby on every visit to the mink rafts this year. Not all is good though – otters are still causing problems at Greetham Valley Golf Club, where a large Koi carp was removed from the lake in February. Very sadly, a large apparently healthy juvenile otter (not one of those above) was found as a road casualty opposite to the Ketton Cement entrance, and was sent to Cardiff University for investigation. A sad end to a beautiful animal, but at least some information will come from its death.

Badgers too are causing damage at Greetham Valley GC, some of the greens being dug up in the search for worms. The very dry spring weather has meant that badgers are having difficulty finding enough food, so a lot of digging has been going on! Latrines have been found near Ryhall, and at Ketton, and a new sett discovered to the east of the county. 7 badger road casualties have been reported.

In January a **Stoat** in full ermine was seen at Brooke, and another was observed hunting along the verge between Clipsham and Holywell. At RW in February a stoat was seen in Manton Bay, and another in April at Hambleton. Also in April a stoat was observed carrying prey in Clipsham Quarry. There was only one **Weasel** spotted, this in April, at RW Field 16.

Foxes have been reported from Ketton, Beaumont Chase Farm, Langham, Normanton, Hambleton, by the pond in a garden at Barrow, and a limping fox was seen crossing a garden in Pickworth.

An unusual record came from a trapping session carried out in Barrow, using the Society's Longworth traps. A **Water Shrew** was trapped and released, as well as a **Common Shrew**, a **Short-tailed Vole** and two **Long-tailed Fieldmice**. Three dead common shrews were also found, one at Burley on the RNHS visit, also at Barrow and in Wing, and two other short-tailed voles were found under reptile sheets. A single **Bank Vole** was reported from Wing, and two seen under reptile sheets at RW. At Langham two records of **House Mouse** came from the camera trap in Marian Markham's garden – a very unusual record, though you would expect house mice to be commonly seen. A **Brown Rat** was reported too in Langham, and others seen at Lyndon RW and Barrowden, where it has resulted in fewer **Hedgehog** reports than usual, since members have resisted putting out food to attract them! The camera trap at Langham recorded hedgehogs most nights during March, and 3 reports came from Barrowden in March. **Grey Squirrels** are also commonly seen,

on the camera at Langham, Lyndon NR, Ketton and Clipsham Quarries, Burley, and Quarry Farm Gt Casterton.

There was a total of 21 **Brown Hare** records, some in large groups – up to 11 at one time, including 4 reports of ‘boxing’. Few **Rabbits** are reported – a warren near Ryhall, and individual animals – but this does not reflect the populations in our area.

Fallow Deer have been seen in the Pickworth and Clipsham area, and also at Greetham Valley Golf Club and Tunnely Wood, the largest group being 20 animals; and **Roe Deer** were seen in Barnsdale Wood on three occasions, a small group of 4 seen twice, and one single animal. It is unusual to see more than one or two Roe together. **Muntjac** have been commonly seen, in many parts of the county.

Thank you to all of you who sent in reports: D & J Ball, A Biddle, C Gallimore, M & G Griffin, M Grimes, P Langston, R Lemmon, M Manson, M Markham, D Masters, T Mitcham, D Needham, P J Rudkin, W Smith, L Worrall

BATS

RECORDER Jenny Harris

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March/April 2017

There were several milder evenings in March, which resulted in a small number of bat sightings, usually not identified to species. In Redland Road, Barrowden the first two records of bats in flight this year were of single bats foraging over a garden. These were in the first half of March and on 18 March. The former was flying slowly at dusk, possibly long-eared bat; the latter was a smaller animal, possibly pipistrelle (there is a summer maternity roost nearby). On 31 March a bat described as very small was flying at around dawn at Crown Well Bridge, between Manton and Wing.

In April the weather turned cold, with a number of overnight frosts and a proposed batting visit to Burley Wood on 24 April was cancelled because it was considered too cold for bats to be foraging. Adrian Russell (VC55 moth recorder) described April as being worse for moth records than March, which will have affected foraging bats, especially brown long-eared and Natterer's. However, the first few days had continued mild, and plenty of bat droppings were seen on a patio in Wing on the 1st, although no bats were seen. Bat droppings are distinctive, being loose-textured and easily crumbled, unlike the hard, smooth droppings of mice.

Pipistrelle spp.

Several pipistrelle bats were feeding over gardens of 43 to 47 Woodland View, Oakham, especially in the shelter of conifer hedges, on 6 April. On the bat detector **Common Pipistrelle** *Pipistrellus pipistrellus* was detected, together with at least one **Soprano Pipistrelle** *Pipistrellus pygmaeus*. A male common pipistrelle was brought into a house in West Farm Drive, Barrowden, by a cat on 4 April. It had a wound on its neck and a broken shoulder so was taken for euthanasia at a local veterinary hospital. During a bat box check carried out at Barnsdale Wood by Joelle Woolley, 57 soprano pipistrelles were found in 51 boxes. The check was on 21 April, and both male and female bats were found, but I do not have a breakdown of numbers. An interesting feature of the check was that one of the male soprano pipistrelles had a broken finger, with the finger bone projecting through the wing membrane, but after being disturbed it showed it was perfectly able to fly by decamping from the box and flying to a tree roost some 80 yards away.

Nathusius' pipistrelle

Pipistrellus nathusii

During the bat box check of 21 April four **Nathusius' pipistrelles** were found in the Barnsdale Wood scheme. A male and female were found together, while single males were found in two other boxes.

Whiskered bat

Myotis mystacinus

A female **Whiskered Bat** was found ‘grounded’ in Aldgate, Ketton, on 2 April. It was dehydrated and very thin and in spite of attempts to revive her, she died on 5 April. This species is not much larger than the pipistrelle species, and almost indistinguishable in flight. In the hand whiskered bats are much darker than pipistrelles but with a pale greyish tummy. This bat had a forearm length of 36 mm, compared to that of the common pipistrelle at 32mm. This is the first record of whiskered bat in Ketton since the mid-1990s, when one was a cat victim, also in Aldgate.

*Thanks for records from:
T Caldecott, Dr C Gallimore,
J Harris, L Worrall.*

RNHS Field Trip reports

Sunday March 5, 10.30 am

A walk by Eyebrook Reservoir



Another bittern. Photo, P Scott

After the poor weather conditions for last month's trip to Frampton Marsh, we were again faced with less than ideal weather for this walk. The bad weather obviously put members off and only a small party risked the weather.

Starting in the car park near Stoke Dry, the feeders produced **Blue Tit, Great Tit, Coal Tit, Long-Tailed Tit, Robin, Chaffinch, Dunnock, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Yellowhammer** and **Tree Sparrow**.

The walk to the bridge turned up **Goldeneye, Wigeon, Teal, Mallard, Great Crested Grebe, Coot, Mute Swan, Greylag Geese, Canada Geese, Black-Headed Gull, Common Gull, Grey Heron** and **Little Egret**, and **Moorhen, Woodpigeon, Carrion Crow, Magpie, Red-Legged Partridge, Pheasant, Pied Wagtail, Wren, Blackbird, Goldfinch**, and **Red Kite** were also spotted during the course of the walk.

Apart from the birds, a couple of **Hares** were out in the fields looking a little damp but still nice to see. The main disappointments were the no show by the Bittern that had been seen by the bridge the previous day; and the Great White Egret which had been at the inflow end during the week.

The weather gradually improved as we made our way back to the cars and we had in fact dried out by the time it came to go home.

Peter Scott

Sunday April 30, 9.30 am

Springtime in Burley Wood



Photo, P Rudkin



Photo, P Rudkin

A **Garden Warbler** was singing just inside the gate as 19 members of the Society assembled at Burley Wood for a walk with Phil Rudkin. We could hear it clearly despite the noise of the traffic and eventually it was spotted. We had a leisurely walk, turning first westwards and then climbing the hill towards the top and the site of the Raven's nest of previous years. There was lots of bird song, though it proved more difficult to see the singers through the leaves. There were plenty of **Garden Warblers** and **Blackcaps**, giving us a chance to distinguish the songs of the two, but whether what we learnt sticks is another matter. Martin Grimes managed to catch a 'hopper' which Phil identified as a **Slender Groundhopper**. There are colonies of this and of the Common Groundhopper in the wood.

There were a number of flowers, **Greater Stitchwort, Ground Ivy**, and **Bugle**, and as we began to climb the hill the **Bluebells** which made a beautiful display as the sun came out – one of the treasures of the British countryside. We made a special turn to see the rare lichen, *Graphis Scripta*, which was discovered about 10 years ago, and is the reason for that part of the wood being a designated SSSI. Near there Roy Lemmon found several specimens of a yellow-orange fungus which lives on Dog's Mercury, *Melempsora populina*, which is also an important pest on poplars. He also found a fungus of Meadowsweet, *Triphraymium ulmaria*.

As we came back downhill towards the entrance the sun had brought out a number of different species of butterfly including male and female **Orange Tips**. The annoying thing about butterflies is that as soon as they realise that you are interested in them they fly away. If they were more narcissistic they'd stay to be admired. Our last find was two snails, just by the gate: *Cepaea nemoralis*, a yellowish snail with a brown line in the spiral; and a smaller whitish Kentish snail called *Monacha cantiana*.

A very interesting morning walk and a great introduction to the summer outings.

Phil Rudkin

NOTE: A full list of birds, butterflies and flowers found at this event, compiled by John Rodgers, is on the RNHS website.

An early start – but it was well worth it.

Eight members met at the gate of Burley Wood on May 6 at 03.45 for the 2017 RNHS dawn chorus survey. It was still dark by the time we had made it to the Eight Riding Tree where we set up the chairs and sat and listened. The temperature was relatively comfortable at 8 °C but it was obviously overcast. There was a very slight breeze but in no way disturbing. Then at 04.12, a noise was heard which was like a chair creaking, but when it repeated together with a thin short whistle, we recognised it as a roding **Woodcock**. This was particularly exciting as it signified that summer breeding woodcock were present in the wood, and that has not happened for many years. Woodcock continued to rode until 04.46, offering the observers some good views of the silhouette as the bird or birds flew over us.

The **Robin** was the first bird recorded at 04.35 quickly followed by several other robins all round us. However, the second surprise of the morning came at 04.40 when we all heard the distinctive notes of a **Nightingale**. Again, the nightingale has not been recorded in Burley Wood for many years.

The peak of the chorus was around 5.00 am, with **Thrush, Wren, Blackcap, Blue** and **Great Tits** and **Cuckoo**, along with **Woodpigeon, Tree Creeper, Goldcrest** and **Chiffchaff**. By 05.45 we moved off along the ride towards the west where we picked up **Willow Warbler, Garden Warbler** and **Nuthatch**. Last but not least we heard the **Green Woodpecker** and **Coal Tit** and observed **Roe Deer** grazing in the ride. The Lesser Spotted Woodpecker (last year's surprise) failed to appear.

Then it was back to the Trust VTC for breakfast where Becky Corby had opened up extra early and was waiting for us with welcome cups of tea. Many thanks Becky.

Compared with last year, the chorus seemed a little louder but the weather conditions were different, in that in 2016 it was clear and much cooler.

Anthony and Linda Biddle



Roe deer, D Cotter



Nightingale, P Scott

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